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# *Jus Ante Bellum*: Enemy Love and Just War Theory

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Love for the enemy is a stated aim of just war. Yet, we rarely consider the conditions that best encourage enemy-love. I argue a state's relationship with the enemy prior to war will shape its love for the enemy during war. Specifically, if the just-war state and the targeted enemy had a loving relationship prior to war, then the just-war state is more likely to abide by the just war principles in the negotiations prior to war and in their actions during war. However, if they previously had a hostile relationship, then the just-war state is more likely to ignore just war principles prior to and during war. I demonstrate this argument by analyzing the Libyan regime change war in 2011. Christians must take seriously Christ's command to love our enemies, so that we might love well in peace and hopefully avoid the devastations of war.

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A stated aim of just war, dating back to Augustine, is to accomplish justice for the enemy aggressor as well as for those being threatened or victimized. Augustine (1962, 182) states, "Therefore, even in waging war, cherish the spirit of a peace-maker, that, by conquering those whom you attack, you may lead them back to the advantage of peace." Contemporary just war scholars acknowledge that just war requires showing love towards the enemy, though they emphasize that love for the enemy must not supersede love for the enemy's victims (Bell 2009; Biggar 2013; Miller 2021; Patterson 2023). Yet, even as love for the enemy is an aim of just war, there is often little consideration of how one develops and sustains enemy love. Loving the enemy means love must endure the grievances, hardships, and atrocities that come with war, and it must motivate the just state to help the defeated enemy rebuild following war. These difficulties should not be underestimated, and they place a heavy burden on love.

The just war tradition largely assumes love for the enemy can be generated volitionally, regardless of a state's prior relationship with the enemy or the difficult circumstances created by war. In this essay, I seek to challenge this assumption. Rather, I assert that love for the enemy is far more likely if there is a prior loving, or at least amicable, relationship between the two belligerents before the escalation to war. A pre-established love is much more likely to persist through war rather than somehow being developed during war, and it will likely moderate the belligerents' behavior

during war and strengthen their commitment to rebuild following war.

In this essay, I first walk through the principles of just war in light of enemy love. I then argue why a prior loving relationship is likely critical for accomplishing *jus post bellum*, the establishment of a just peace. I then discuss the diverging responses to Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi after he threatened to enact human rights abuses on Libyan rebels during the Arab Spring. Those countries that had a hostile relationship with Libya quickly advocated for war, in violation of the just war principle of war as a last resort. Those leaders who had a more loving relationship with Qaddafi, most notably South African President Jacob Zuma, prioritized peaceful negotiations to achieve an inclusive, stabilizing exit for Qaddafi. The rush to war by Arab and Western countries had devastating effects on Libya, from which the country has yet to recover.

My hope with this essay is to spur us to consider more deeply Christ's command to love our enemy. Enemy is a political term, but we rarely think of love in either political or collective terms. There is a well-developed academic literature on communal hatred and its political implications (Kaufman 2015), but scholars have not given the same attention to love. This essay aims to be a first step in more deeply considering love's political importance and implications.

## **Enemy Love in the Just War Tradition**

The priority of enemy love is reflected in just war principles. These principles are traditionally grouped as

*jus ad bellum* (justice before war), *jus in bellum* (justice during war), and more recently *jus post bellum* (justice following war). *Jus ad bellum* principles include just cause for war, legitimate authority to decide for war, war as a last resort to settling conflict, reasonable confidence in the likelihood of success, and the right intent of establishing justice for all involved. *Jus in bellum* principles include proportionality in the use of necessary force and discrimination regarding the use of force against only those who are armed (Bell 2009; Bellamy 2006). Just war scholars have more recently given attention to *jus post bellum* and the responsibility to establish stable and just governance for the defeated country following war (Bass 2004; Patterson 2012). In theory, the principle of right intent addresses these issues, but the difficulties of postwar stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya revealed the neglect of postwar just principles.<sup>1</sup>

This neglect of postwar justice is particularly problematic, because it is during the postwar period that enemy love is most positively expressed. When escalating to war and when fighting a war, just war principles express love through patience and restraint rather than through more active means. The principle of right intent prior to war expresses enemy love by rejecting vengeance as an aim of war. The principle of last resort expresses enemy love by requiring that all possible resolutions short of war be attempted before escalating to war. The principle of discrimination expresses enemy love by requiring restraint in the execution of war.

It is only postwar that love is primarily expressed positively through right intent and the establishment of a just order. The postwar establishment of justice requires that the just-war state successfully depose and uproot the aggressive or abusive regime, supervise and finance (at least partially) the defeated country's reconstruction, establish a just government, and provide security and social services in the meantime. These demands mark a shift from the negative love of restraint to the positive love of just state-building and (re)conciliation.

Just war principles assume that the love necessary to fight for just aims and to remain committed to these aims long-term occurs through the singular will and volition of the state or society engaging in just war. Love is treated as a duty rather than a relationship.<sup>2</sup> But the burdens of this assumption become evident when

carrying out the demands of love, and they only become heavier as war progresses. The patience of last resort may wear thin if it threatens one's own interests. The restraint of discrimination may be compromised if it hinders a quick victory or risks the lives of the just state's own soldiers or civilians. The rejection of vengeance may succumb to temptation given the stresses, horrors, and drudgery of war. The right intent of just, stable governance may crumble in the face of reconstruction's high costs, the enemy's persistent violent resistance, and the perceived ingratitude of the people you believe you are helping.

These difficulties are evident in the struggles inherent to the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. The United Nations developed this doctrine following the genocidal civil wars in Rwanda and Yugoslavia during the 1990s. The R2P doctrine states that the international community has a responsibility to protect the human rights of a country's citizens when that country's government is either unwilling to or unable to. R2P's responsibilities are often grouped as: the responsibility to prevent human rights abuses before they occur, the responsibility to react to human rights abuses once they occur, and the responsibility to rebuild a state that will respect human rights in the future. These responsibilities were designed to align with just war principles (Evans 2004). R2P is motivated by the just cause of defending human rights. The responsibilities to prevent and to react ensure that the use of military force is available but as a last resort. The responsibility to rebuild is based upon the right intent principle of establishing just and stable governance following armed conflict.

However, there has been a consistent disconnect between R2P's honorable aims and its often disastrous outcomes in several post-conflict countries. Roland Paris (2014) blames this disconnect on what he considers the doctrine's structural problems. These include what Paris calls the end-state problem and the mixed-motive problem. The end-state problem highlights the high costs involved in rebuilding another society's government and infrastructure. This effort may also include fighting against insurgent forces who oppose foreign occupation. Such fighting only makes stabilization efforts more difficult, leading to a vicious cycle of fighting and instability without a clear end in sight. And these postwar costs of reconstruction come on top of the financial, emotional, and psychological costs of fighting the prior war itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Patterson (2012, ix) expressed dismay that, in a month-long seminar on just war that he attended in 2004, there was no discussion of postwar just principles: "The fact that we could spend a month talking about the morality of going to war (*jus ad bellum*) and the morality of how war is fought (*jus in bello*) without discussing the morality of conflict settlement and postconflict (*jus post bellum*) should be startling to the outside observer."

<sup>2</sup> This is akin to the distinction Thomas Aquinas makes between charity and friendship. I thank Peter Campbell for this point.

The mixed-motive problem questions whether a state would pay such high costs without expecting something substantial in return. While just war and R2P principles assume states and leaders will seek justice for its own sake, this directly contradicts common understandings of state motivations for humanitarian action. Rather, state leaders must be able to show their supporters that humanitarian action and commitment will result in personal gain (Gent 2007).

These problems together severely undermine the just aims of just war. If countries must have selfish aims to engage in a just war, how likely is it that these selfish aims will be prioritized over the war's supposed just aims? Indeed, how can we know that any professed just aims aren't mere rhetoric to justify more selfish aims? And even if just aims are the primary aims, are these just aims sufficient for the just-war state to remain committed to justice in the face of the extremely high costs of occupation and reconstruction? US Secretary of State Colin Powell had such high costs in mind when, prior to war in Iraq, he warned President George W. Bush about the "Pottery Barn rule:" "you break it, you bought it" (Woodward 2004, 150). Even if one charitably assumes that the Bush administration's motives for war were primarily about bringing justice and democracy to Iraq, the administration still failed to prepare for the high demands of governing Iraq, resulting in catastrophe (Allawi 2007; Gordon and Trainor 2006).

### **Just War and the Impact of Prior Love**

Nevertheless, one could imagine a state taking on the high costs for achieving justice for another society if, prior to war, the two societies had a loving relationship. There has been little research, or even scholarly consideration, on love between countries, though there is developing research on interstate friendship (Koschut and Oelsner 2014), and there are case-study analyses of the "special relationships" between Israel and the United States (Bar-Siman-Tov 1998) and the United Kingdom and the United States (Dumbrell 2006). This research provides guidance in considering the nature of loving relationships between countries. Politically, love develops and is sustained through geopolitical and economic ties. Culturally, love develops and is sustained through shared racial/ethnic heritage, language, religion, or history. Interpersonally, love develops and is sustained through relationships between leaders, between ruling elites, and through people exchanges, such as immigration, tourism, and study-abroad programs.

The existence of a loving relationship helps overcome the problems Paris raises about the Responsibility to Protect doctrine and, by extension, just war. A loving relationship helps overcome the mixed-motive problem, because leaders and

communities in the just-war state are more personally invested in the well-being of the defeated enemy. This, in turn, helps address the end-state problem, as the just-war state would be more readily committed to making the long-term investments necessary for the defeated enemy's reconstruction. A prior loving relationship would also give the just-war state intimate knowledge of the targeted society's culture, norms, and perspectives, all of which are critical to sustainably establishing justice and order. It would also give the just-war state greater credibility with the occupied population and thus could deter, or at least mitigate, internal resistance.

A focus on the relationship between the war combatants, however, raises new questions about how the two sides escalated to war in the first place. For a just war to occur, it may not necessarily be the case that the two societies have personal animosity, but rather that one of them is persistently committing human rights abuses internally or acting aggressively towards another country. This, in turn, shifts the focus from the last resort of escalation to war to the "first resort" of asking why the country committed to justice could not convince its abusive ally to stop its aggressive acts. Rather than focusing on the decision for war, our attention shifts to the negotiations for peace. This has at least two notable effects. First, it moves just war scholarship closer to current international-relationships scholarship, which focuses on why states choose war despite the high costs of war (Blattman 2022). Rather than simply considering war in pursuit of justice, we should consider more broadly strategies in pursuit of justice and why these succeed or fail. Second, it highlights how prior relationships may affect such strategic choices. While a loving relationship will make a country more invested in another country's good, such a relationship may also discourage countries from holding each other accountable for aggression or abuses. Deeper analysis must consider these multiple potential effects.

### **Libyan Regime Change, 2011**

In February 2011, following the downfall of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, protests broke out throughout several cities in Libya. Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi's regime responded by brutally suppressing protests in Tripoli and threatening even worse violence elsewhere. Qaddafi, specifically targeting the rebellious northeastern region centered around Benghazi, made the "now infamous threat to go 'zanga zanga, dar dar' or from 'alley to alley, house to house' to 'cleanse' the 'cockroaches' and 'rats', [which to many] carried echoes of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, when the Hutus described the Tutsis in similar terms." In response, Libyan officials who broke with Qaddafi formed the National Transitional Council (NTC), called for a nationwide uprising against

Qaddafi, and sought international recognition and protection (Noueihed and Warren 2013, 178–179).

Qaddafi's long-time dictatorship over Libya meant that Libya's relationship with other countries depended almost entirely on Qaddafi's sentiments and actions. Qaddafi had long had turbulent relationships with many countries around the world. He understandably incurred the hatred of several African and Middle Eastern governments by calling for their overthrow and supporting revolutionary forces in these countries (de Waal 2013, 366; Pargeter 2012, 122–134). He likewise incurred the hatred of Western countries by sponsoring international terrorism, most notably in the case of the Lockerbie bombing in 1988. However, Qaddafi's relations with Western countries significantly improved in the early 2000s after he dismantled his weapons of mass destruction program and largely desisted from sponsoring terrorism (Chorin 2012). Nevertheless, this lingering hatred led a coalition of Arab and Western countries to propose UN Resolution 1973 in March 2011, which established a no-fly zone in Libya to prevent Qaddafi from using aerial forces to massacre the Libyan rebels. The no-fly zone succeeded in protecting the rebel forces in Benghazi, but it left Qaddafi in power with enough military force to defeat the rebels on the ground. Arab and Western countries, therefore, recognized the NTC as Libya's government and provided it with the military support necessary to defeat Qaddafi (Ibid., 215–232).

Throughout 2011, South African President Jacob Zuma advocated for a less aggressive approach in confronting Qaddafi. Unlike with other countries, Qaddafi maintained a very warm relationship with the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC), who led the fight against the South African apartheid government and then became South Africa's dominant political party. Qaddafi supported the ANC throughout its long struggle against apartheid, even as the Afrikaner regime received consistent US support. Nelson Mandela never forgot Qaddafi's steadfast support and maintained a close personal relationship with him, even while Libya endured international sanctions for its terrorism sponsorship. During a press conference with US President Bill Clinton, Mandela defended his friendship with Qaddafi, stating, "Our moral authority dictates that we should not abandon those who helped us in the darkest hour of this country. Not only did they support us in rhetoric, they gave us the resources for us to conduct our struggle." Mandela went on to say that anyone who criticized him for maintaining his friendship "can go and throw themselves in the pool" (Shogren 1998).

Mandela's affection for Qaddafi was matched by a broader philosophy that argued peace was best achieved through loving dialogue. In the same press conference with Clinton, Mandela stated, "The United

States as the leader of the world should set an example to all of us to help eliminate tensions throughout the world. And the best way of doing so is to call upon its enemies to say, 'Let's sit down and talk peace'" (Ibid.). Alexander Beresford (2015), in analyzing patterns of South African foreign policy, argues that the ANC's strategy for peacemaking mimics its successful strategy towards the apartheid regime. This strategy relies on patient, quiet diplomacy, which fosters relationships between the conflicting parties without shaming or embarrassing either side. The ultimate aim is establishing a transitional power sharing agreement that allows the "losing" side to safely and gracefully relinquish power.

Zuma adopted this strategy towards Qaddafi in 2011. Very soon after the uprisings against Qaddafi broke out, African leaders, including Zuma, met under the auspices of the African Union (AU) and quickly concluded that Qaddafi would need to step down and allow for the formation of an interim inclusive government. African leaders were concerned that Qaddafi's sudden overthrow would lead to a power vacuum and an expanding civil war that would destabilize Libya and create a widening humanitarian crisis. Zuma supported UNSCR 1973 authorizing a no-fly zone in Libya, in the hope that this would give space for the AU to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Unfortunately, he was stymied both by Qaddafi's intransigence and by Arab and Western impatience. In April, Zuma and the presidents of Mali, Mauritania, and the Republic of Congo flew to Tripoli and called on Qaddafi to negotiate with the NTC and allow for free and fair elections, or else be overthrown by foreign forces. Qaddafi refused, and Arab and Western governments largely ignored AU leaders thereafter (de Waal 2013, 370–372; Grovogui 2020).

Instead, Arab and Western leaders provided the rebels with more direct military support, which was in direct contravention of UNR 1973, which called for a cease-fire. Foreign military support only served to escalate the conflict. By ignoring ongoing AU attempts at a peaceful settlement, these leaders violated the principle of last resort, particularly since they themselves made no significant efforts to negotiate directly with Qaddafi. Zuma, however, maintained his efforts towards a peace settlement, flying again in May to Tripoli to try to convince Qaddafi to step down. Nevertheless, he was rebuffed once more. When the civil war reached a stalemate in June, Zuma called yet again for a cease-fire "with the aim of establishing an inclusive, consensual interim government, leading to democratic elections." Qaddafi finally expressed some interest in negotiating with the NTC, but by then most world leaders, including many African leaders, were set on overthrowing Qaddafi militarily (de Waal 2013, 374–375). Zuma was completely marginalized and even

villainized as sympathetic to a brutal dictator who helped pay Zuma's legal bills when he was facing rape charges (Kirchik 2011).

Sadly, the AU's concerns about postwar humanitarian crises proved prescient. Qaddafi's forces were defeated in autumn 2011, and Qaddafi was ultimately executed by rebels who found him hiding in a drainage pipe (Chorin 2012, 257). Following Qaddafi's downfall, the NTC was unable to provide the stable governance necessary to protect human rights in Libya, nor did any of the countries that militarily or financially supported regime change. Democratic elections initially led to a secular, moderate government, but the first prime minister lasted less than a month, and no subsequent government was able to provide order and unity. Several rebel militias refused to disarm, and radical Islamist militias, including al-Qaeda affiliates, took up arms against the newly installed government in Libya and foreign forces stationed there. Islamist attacks on foreign embassies—including the US consulate in Benghazi—caused Western countries to flee Libya, abandoning their responsibility to rebuild. Libya has since been wracked by a civil war between Islamist forces supported by Qatar, Sudan, and Turkey, and secular militarists with previous ties to the Qaddafi regime supported by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Rather than human rights improving following Qaddafi's downfall, they have significantly worsened (Kuperman 2015).

Moreover, what happened in Libya did not stay in Libya. Radical Islamists, having established a base in Libya, launched attacks into Mali, which until then had a stable democratic government. This created what the Chair of the US Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs called "the largest territory controlled by Islamist extremists in the world" (Ibid., 73). Ironically, Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré was one of the AU leaders most committed to negotiating a peaceful, incremental transition in Libya.

The decision-making from the AU leaders and Arab-Western coalition corresponds with their relationships with Qaddafi. The AU leaders, including Zuma and Touré, combined a loving posture towards Qaddafi personally with a commitment to a just outcome in Libya. In keeping with the principle of last resort, they persisted in negotiating with both Qaddafi and with the other UN countries to achieve a settlement in which Qaddafi stepped down peacefully. This would lay the groundwork for inclusive, democratic elections and provide consistent stable governance in the meantime. Zuma, in particular, went the extra mile to appeal to Qaddafi, reflecting the loving relationship between Qaddafi and the ANC leadership.

The Arab-Western coalition, on the other hand, had a long hostile relationship with Qaddafi, and as a result their pursuit of just war was contaminated by

mixed motives and a disregard for last resort. The no-fly zone's success removed the threat of an imminent massacre in Benghazi, so the Arab and Western countries had the space to negotiate a more peaceful transition. Moreover, the establishment of this no-fly zone came at the same time that Saudi forces invaded Bahrain to suppress Shi'ite demands for equal rights there. This assault sparked little international reaction, calling into question the motives of those who targeted Qaddafi (Noueihed and Warren 2013, 153-158). This does not minimize Qaddafi's crimes nor invalidate the reasons why other countries hated him. Yet, that is why just war must include the Christian call to love *enemies*. By definition, the target of just war has committed or threatened to commit egregious actions. But when just-war states refuse to love the enemy they are attacking, they will likely fail to uphold the just principles they are supposedly promoting.

## Conclusion

Just war doctrine aspires to love the enemy, but the way that is accomplished has been under-theorized. It assumes love can be generated during a crisis and expressed through the forbearance of right intent and the patience of last resort. If the crisis escalates to war, it further assumes love will endure the trials and horrors of war and express itself through the restraint of discrimination. If the just-war state is victorious, it assumes love will take on the heavy burdens of reconstruction, security and services provision, and statebuilding. It further assumes the just-war state can and will do this through its own principled volition without any subjective care for the enemy itself. These are herculean expectations.

That does not mean, however, that such aims are unattainable. These aims are achievable if the just-war state has a prior relationship of love with the targeted enemy. This relationship provides a foundation and motivation by which the loving practices of forbearance, patience, restraint, and sacrificial giving are possible. It also makes an escalation to war less likely and may make a postwar occupation less costly. It also shifts the focus from those whose grievance carries a greater justification for violence—whether Amharan, Oromo, or Tigrayan; Arab or Israeli; Russian or Ukrainian—to the recognition that such grievances will either end with annihilation or forgiveness (Tutu 1999). It shifts the imagination to ideas like those from John Paul Lederach (2005), who called for permanent platforms of continued dialogue and relationships post-violence. This, in turn, requires a shift in our strategic vision from one of justice through military victory to justice through loving dialogue, as Mandela envisioned. As Martin Luther King, Jr. (1962, 48) stated, "[L]ove is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.

We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of enmity.”

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