

CPN on Ethics of War and Ethics of Peacemaking

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The ethical framework that defines our worldview is, I think, shaped by our own journeys, both physical and spiritual – by what we have experienced and what we feel as much as by what we believe and what we value. I am acutely aware that I am looking at this question – the ethics of war and the ethics of peacemaking -- as a U.S. American with an experience of security at a personal level that is very real and an encounter with war that also is real, but more remote.

For Pax Christi and for Maryknoll I have spent significant time accompanying and learning from people (in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Israel-Palestine, Afghanistan, ...) whose lives were defined by profound insecurity and, too often, torn apart by the multiple brutalities of violence and war, both of which too often were perpetrated or supported by my own country. What I have witnessed and what I have learned I have tried to bring into the process of shaping U.S. consciousness and U.S. foreign policy. This also has an impact on how I think about the ethics of war and the ethics of peacemaking.

So I want to begin with a few general comments:

1. we need to be careful and honest about which role we play in the peacebuilding process – too often we may be perpetrators rather than peacebuilders
2. we should include in the situations we examine for guidance in understanding the ethics of peacebuilding those contexts where we would be perceived as part of the problem, such as in Iraq or the Middle East
3. we need to understand peacebuilding as work that has to be undertaken prior to violent conflict in an effort to prevent violent conflict as well as in post conflict situations

The primary ethic of war, rooted in the sacredness of every human life and the intrinsic worth of creation, is, quite simply, to avoid war, to stop it. The imperative of peacemaking, peacebuilding, conflict transformation – the essential work of making

peace – is at the center of the Gospel message. The now-known costs of war even beyond the loss of life -- the short and long term psychological and ecological consequences, the impact on relationships, the permanently broken bodies, the impact on family and personal finances, the regional, national and international economic consequences, and on and on – reveal a huge and growing “proportionality” gap. Some of Mary Ann Cusimano-Love’s observations are critical in terms of other just war criteria. For example, we need to talk about “legitimate authority,” in terms of participation – and to ask hard questions about what we mean by “success” when we measure its “probability.”

In reality, I no longer believe that the criteria for *jus ad bellum* in the just war framework can be met. The presumption against the use of *violent* force in war should now be an absolute prohibition. Whether we approach this question as Christian pacifists or by rigorous application of just war theory, I believe the conclusion is the same in terms of the ethics of war.

That makes it imperative that the peacebuilding process be continuous and inclusive. By continuous, I mean that it begins prior to the move to war, continues through any violent conflict and is sustained in the post conflict situation. By inclusive I mean that it engages the potential roots of violence and that it prepares alternatives to violent force well in advance.

I appreciate very much the different language now being used to describe an appropriate ethic for responding to situations of violent conflict or grievous threats to life. It helps all of us look in a new direction for security: an ethic of just peace ... an ethic of sustainable security ...an ethic of inclusive human security ... an ethic of just peace and sustainable security -- focusing our attention more rigorously on what is *required* of all of us as peacemakers in a global community and when, than on how we can ethically justify a move to war or conduct a war.

So I move very quickly to the ethics of peacebuilding, which I see as the obligatory engagement of nations in long term efforts to preclude war or to fulfill the obligation to

protect. I would like to focus on seven components of an ethical framework for adherence by the global community that I think might enable a just peace and sustainable security to flourish. They are fairly obvious:

1. The first is the responsibility to protect human life – the lives of citizens of our own countries certainly, but, because every life is sacred and we are all sisters and brothers and members of a global community, the family of nations also has a responsibility to protect when possible others whose lives are under immediate threat. Articulated fairly recently as the “responsibility to protect,” this ethic has thus far been hampered both by national sovereignty barriers and by a general unwillingness to get involved unless national self-interest is at stake.
2. A second ethic would preclude governments from deliberately placing any life at home or abroad in danger, eliminating violent force (but not necessarily all force) from their first line of security tools.
3. A third would be to actively minimize violence initiated by other actors.

The implications of these obligations are, I believe, grave. Rather than investing in the machinery and capacity for making war, these moral obligations would require governments to invest talent and treasure in protecting life even in dangerous situations with minimum violence or without violent force. It would require a complete rethinking of national security doctrine – not only to include diplomacy and development strategies, but to replace weapons and war-based strategies with nonviolent alternatives. Diplomatic skills would be emphasized and made widely available for providing good offices and support for negotiations in situations of actual or potential violence without self-serving motives.

This might suggest, for example, an investment in just policing, development of a major multinational capacity for interposition, international cooperation toward expert criminal investigation, regulation and transparency in banking and financial transfers and perhaps even a requirement that citizens undergo nonviolence training and serve a period of time in an international peacebuilding or peacekeeping service.

An ethic of peacebuilding obviously includes other components as well, like

4. A commitment to the global common good – none of us are secure unless all are secure. The tools of globalization have woven us so tightly together that we can no longer think about one nation's security over-against another's. *National* security is an illusion -- collaboration is a necessity if we are going to reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies and diminish opportunities for terrorists to act. Diplomacy would serve the global common good not national interests alone.
5. A commitment to participatory democracy, truth, a safe environment, social and restorative justice and other elements of subjective security;
6. A commitment to human security, guaranteeing that basic human needs are met, including the need for nutritional food and potable water, affordable shelter, health care, education, etc.; and finally,
7. The responsibility to protect the integrity of creation – an obligation that is inseparable from the responsibility to protect human life. Human security is dramatically decreased and human beings made increasingly vulnerable by the destruction of the ecosystem, including by ecocidal war. I think we are just beginning to see that enduring peace is not possible without attention to the security of the only *place* human beings can be.

These elements of a peacebuilding ethic for governments are not new and certainly are not inclusive, but I think this is an important direction in which to take the conversation. Something is desperately needed to shift our priorities. The application of these important moral values to the way we conduct our selves in the public square may help us contribute to peace on earth rather than to its destruction.

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