

2015

## The Future of Just War: New Critical Essays by Caron E. Gentry & Amy E. Eckert

Niall Michelsen  
*Western Carolina University*

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### Recommended Citation

Michelsen, Niall (2015) "The Future of Just War: New Critical Essays by Caron E. Gentry & Amy E. Eckert," *International Social Science Review*: Vol. 90: Iss. 1, Article 9.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr/vol90/iss1/9>

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**Gentry, Caron E. and Amy E. Eckert, eds. *The Future of Just War: New Critical Essays*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014. 179 pages. Paperback, \$24.95.**

The premise of this collection of essays edited by political scientists Caron E. Gentry and Amy E. Eckert is that the world and the world of war are being transformed in myriad ways that call conventional wisdom into question. In this case the conventional wisdom is the concept and tradition referred to as Just War. This tradition dates back to early Christianity and was brought into the modern era with the publication of political theorist Michael Walzer's classic work, *Just and Unjust Wars*, in 1977. Readers do not need an understanding of the evolution of this tradition, nor do they receive much information except in episodic references within chapters. However, readers should probably be familiar with the basic framework and the basic concepts of "jus ad bellum" ("right to war") and "jus in bello" ("right conduct in war"). The introduction might have provided readers unfamiliar with this tradition a useful service by summarizing the essential and relevant parts of Walzer's work. Still the individual chapters do excellent jobs of setting the stage for the reader.

The central claim is that political and technological changes since the end of the Cold War have cast war in a new light and that various features of the Just War tradition may need to be reconsidered for the changed international and military environment. In some cases the authors conclude that fundamental changes are necessary, while other contributors maintain that Just War demands that political and military leaders reconsider their practices. In truth, some of the chapters are not predicated on any changing reality, but rather address gaps or weaknesses of the Just War tradition. Chapters range from purely theoretical in nature to some that are nearly purely pragmatic.

This book serves as a valuable guide for students and scholars in making sense of a shifting world in which (among other changes) wars are increasingly within states rather than between states, and in which machines are replacing humans in making and implementing decisions, and in which the search for non-nuclear weapons to fill the role of the nuclear weapons proceeds. The authors agree that none of these changes are simple and that they all tend to hide dilemmas that have not yet been adequately analyzed. For instance, the shift in the primary locus of warfare from the state vs. state model to the state vs. rebels model raises questions of sovereignty and legitimate authority. The Just War tradition assumes that sovereignty is non-problematic, and it has as one of its primary criteria that the decision to wage war is made by a legitimate authority. In the case of civil war this presumes that the state government is the legitimate authority and the rebels are illegitimate. This bias is not correlated with which side is on the right side of history, or any other basis for making a moral judgment.

Though covering a wide range of chapters, this edited collection manages to achieve a level of coherence that evades many edited books. The book's introduction briefly justifies this enterprise and places it within the contemporary literature on Just War. The book lacks a true concluding chapter that might bring the elements back together again. Thus, the coherence is largely due to a generally high quality of writing and a standard but not overly demanding structure to the chapters. Each chapter sets out a clear issue or dilemma and concludes with a section dedicated to answering the question of what should be done in light of the dilemma. Because the eleven chapters are each less than twenty pages, the reader is able to make a close reading of each chapter. Some of the chapters will pose challenges to the technically unsophisticated or the philosophically challenged. But the mix of chapters between these two types is well balanced.

The individual chapters were well researched, and even for someone who has followed these types of issues for a long time, there is much new to be learned. The collection will be useful for international security scholars to supplement their understanding of certain security issues, and to provide a primer of sorts to some of the debates within the field. Because the chapters are short, the sources are not exhaustive and there is no central index. But together they comprise a useful starting point. Citations range from Pentagon documents to the writings of critical theorists.

The notion of critical theory is not adequately treated in the introduction and is not religiously applied in the various chapters. If the meaning of critical theory goes beyond just the identification of weaknesses in something (in this case Just War), its use in this book is not evident. Some of the chapters take fundamental aim at the Just War tradition but the majority of the chapters apply the Just War concepts and categories to the changing world of conflict.

It is normal for edited books to face organizing questions that can provide various correct answers. The editors here chose to divide the text into three sections. The first is “jus ad bellum,” which focuses on the issues surrounding when a decision to fight is justified. The second section is “jus in bello,” which focuses on issues regarding how wars are fought. The final section is “jus post bellum,” which addresses issues involving ending wars and establishing a just post-war environment.

The last section has only one chapter, and in some ways this chapter makes its largest new contribution to the Just War tradition. It seems to add a new category to the standard two categories. The other chapters contribute to our understanding largely by using the Just War tradition to understand some of the new developments underway in this realm. As such it is a valuable tool for bringing to the attention of students and others the value of theory in helping us make sense of a changing world. This represents a valuable contribution to our understanding of modern conflict.

Niall Michelsen, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Affairs  
Western Carolina University  
Cullowhee, North Carolina