

FIGHTING JUSTLY IN AN UNJUST WAR: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF *JUS AD BELLUM* AS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR *JUS IN BELLO*

MICHAEL KEWLEY (Philosophy)

Abstract

Just War Theory is a long standing tradition in the field of war ethics that assesses the morality of all political and military actions leading up to and during periods of conflict. Historically, the moral justifications for going to war and those relating to the battlefield have been considered as separate, since political and military decisions are confined to their own arenas. However, this orthodox model has been challenged by revisionists, arguing that, in order for a combatant to fight justly, the war in which they fight must first be just. This paper examines the orthodox and revisionist models in order to determine the necessity of *jus ad bellum* (justice for war) as a prerequisite for satisfying the criteria of *jus in bello* (justice in war). The analysis focuses on arguments in support of, and against, each model to provide a solution to a moral dilemma of fighting justly in an unjust war. Using this analysis, the paper will conclude that neither model is adequate to achieve this for different reasons and that a solution could be found in a new model.

Keywords: Just War Theory, *Jus ad Bellum*, *Jus in Bello*, Walzer, McMahan, Orthodox, Revisionist.

Introduction

Although the methods, technologies and tactics employed in warfare continue to evolve, the notion of justice is one aspect of war that has remained remarkably constant. Romanticised stories of ancient soldiers on open battle grounds engaging their foes for honour, virtue, and glory no longer hold the power of precedent that they once did. The Just War Tradition determines whether all political and military activity relating to war is judged as morally just or unjust. These activities are separated into two distinct areas of assessment: *jus ad bellum* (justice for war) and *jus in bello* (justice in war). The former is concerned with the political actions that lead to war. For a conflict to be determined as just, one must satisfy all six criteria: 1) having a good reason to go to war (just cause); 2) ensuring that a declaration of war is an appropriate response to the situation (proportionate cause); 3) having legitimate aims, such as founding a more enduring peace than would otherwise have been founded without a full-scale conflict (right intention); 4) being initiated by a legitimate power, such as a head of state or government (right authority); 5) achieving a realistic victory (reasonable prospect of success); and 6) being used only when all diplomatic attempts have failed (last resort) (Guthrie & Quinlan 2007, 12-13). Put simply, *jus ad bellum* examines why a war is fought. The latter, on the other hand, is concerned with all subsequent

conduct by those directly involved in war or, in other words, how a war is fought. Typically, assessment of this kind is limited to military action by ensuring that all action taken is essential to the war effort (necessity), no deliberate harm comes to those who are not liable to attack (discrimination), or that such harm only results from actions under which the military benefit outweighs any incidental damage (proportionality). Historically, the conditions of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* have been considered as logically independent, with only the latter determining whether a war is fought justly or unjustly. However, recent developments in the interpretation of military ethics have cast doubt on the consistency of this view.

The traditional view that *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* are necessarily separate is a position supported by Michael Walzer. For combatants to fight justly, he suggests that it is irrelevant whether the war itself is just or unjust. What matters is that combatants comply with the established rules of engagement and laws of war, thereby satisfying the conditions of *jus in bello*. If all concerned can successfully do this, then all combatants will have achieved a moral equality under which none can be condemned for killing one another in war. Contrary to this orthodox perspective is the idea that, in order to satisfy the conditions of *jus in bello*, one must first satisfy the conditions of *jus ad bellum*. This revisionist position is one developed and championed by Jeff McMahan. He believes that combatants who fight for an unjust war cannot fight permissibly since all methods used attempt to achieve unjust ends, including the killing of just combatants. In other words, a combatant without a just cause has no legitimate targets and so cannot satisfy *jus in bello*. Therefore, only those combatants whose war is *ad bellum* just may fight justly.

By critically analysing both the orthodox and revisionist accounts in light of a common moral problem, the arguments presented in this paper illustrate how neither model is adequately sufficient to identify whether it is possible to fight justly in an unjust war. It is my understanding that Walzer's position appears to reach the right conclusion, but fails in its justification. Meanwhile, McMahan, despite correcting some of the foundational mistakes made by Walzer, fails to provide an overall sound argument.

The problem of the *Luftwaffe* pilot

During the night of the 13th February 1945, Royal Air Force Bomber Command sent forth approximately 800 aircraft to firebomb the defenceless German city of Dresden. Not one anti-aircraft gun emplacement was stationed in Dresden that night as they had all been relocated to repel attacks on the Eastern Front. In addition, despite scrambling a number of aircraft to intercept,

the *Luftwaffe* was rendered ineffective due to British radar jamming. The first rays of sunlight on the following morning revealed the all too familiar scenes of devastation: 250,000 people left homeless and at least 30,000 lay dead, many of whom were refugees (Grayling 2006, 324). Despite conducting what was typically regarded as a just war, the morally impermissible status of Allied area bombing resided in its lack of proportionality, discrimination and military necessity. In other words, the principles of *jus in bello* were breached. Yet, the actions of the pilots in the *Luftwaffe*, whose war lacked a just cause, were not considered morally reprehensible in spite of attempting to prevent the just ends of the Allies.

Let us imagine that a German pilot defended Dresden on that fateful night. Being under the command of the Nazi regime with all of its associated military and political objectives, the pilot participates in an unjust war. However, like most combatants in being concerned only with how a war is fought rather than why, the pilot always engages his enemy discriminately, proportionately, and with necessity. On this occasion, his enemy is an Allied bomber whose war against the Nazi regime may be just, but whose methods of carrying out that conflict are nonetheless unjust. This scenario raises the following questions: Would it be reasonable to argue that the *Luftwaffe* pilot fights justly in an unjust war? If so, then how are the pilot's actions vindicated without a just cause? If not, then what reason does the pilot have for obeying the laws of war if he will inevitably be condemned for failing to satisfy the criteria of *jus in bello*? These dilemmas follow from the underlying question of whether or not a just cause is a necessary condition for just action.

The orthodox view

The orthodox view states that what makes a war just and what makes combat just are necessarily distinct constituents of war as a whole. The divorced nature between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* stems from considerations regarding the moral accountability and the moral equality of combatants.

Generally speaking, why a war is fought is the responsibility of government, whereas how a war is fought is the task of the Armed Forces. Under this position, the government is not accountable for the actions of an individual combatant and, likewise, an individual combatant is not accountable for the actions of the government. It is because of this separation of responsibilities that '[w]ar is always judged twice' (Walzer 1977, 21). These judgements, it is said, are 'logically independent' (Walzer 1977, 21). There is a firmly entrenched understanding between combatants that they are distinguishable from their political masters. Each recognises that they are merely instruments of the state, lacking any will to influence the decisions of government. Their loyalty and obedience toward

their respective countries has brought them together as adversaries. War, Walzer argues, 'isn't a relation between persons but between political entities' (1977, 36). Each soldier, whether rightly or wrongly, is committed to the idea that their war is just. Since it would be unusual for a combatant to be blamed for obeying the will of his country, Walzer summarizes the nature of war by saying, 'when soldiers fight freely, choosing one another as enemies and designing their own battles, their war is not a crime; when they fight without freedom, their war is not a crime' (1977, 37). Thus, their purely instrumental nature absolves them of any accountability, both moral and criminal, for the conditions which led them to war.

There are many examples that demonstrate the validity of this view. *Generalfeldmarschall* Rommel, a lifelong professional soldier with a reputation of humane and upstanding behaviour, famously burned the Commando Order issued by Hitler to kill all enemy soldiers encountered behind German lines (Walzer 1977, 38). Similarly, on the 8th November 2013, Royal Marines Sergeant Alexander Blackwell was convicted of murder for shooting an injured and unarmed Taliban insurgent in Helmand Province, Afghanistan (BBC News 2013). Furthermore, in recent years there has been a social phenomenon whereby the political leaders of unjust wars are accused of war crimes yet public support is readily shown for the troops fighting in the war (Frowe 2011, 119). Cases like these demonstrate a quality about war that goes beyond killing and wanton destruction. It necessitates a moral division between those who make war and those who engage in it on their behalf.

Central to the idea of the moral equality of combatants is the ownership and forfeiture of the right to life, and the threat that they pose to others. Before combatants enter into a theatre of war, they are no different from any other person; they possess, and are protected by, certain rights. However, on the battlefield, combatants on both sides enter into a mutual contract of forfeiture of their rights to life. They consent, through the acquisition of an equal right to kill, to be killed by any enemy in any war in which they are told to fight, even if they are unjust (Frowe 2011, 121). Yet, this does not make them liable to be killed at any time. They must also pose a threat, one which is both mortal and imminent, for such an attack to be justified. Consequently, when a combatant is killed during the course of his duties, he has not been wronged by this action. If the principles of *jus in bello* were followed, then he is a legitimate target for his enemy and, likewise, his enemy is a legitimate target for him. When combatants hold no criminal status, all conflict between them is a form of self-defence. Outside the parameters of war, it is unlikely that they would consider each other in this way, since acts of violence normally include an aggressor and a victim. But, as adversaries, Walzer

describes them as “‘poor sods, just like me,” trapped in a war they didn’t make. I find in them my moral equals’ (1977, 36).

Like the argument for moral accountability, there are cases which support the moral equality of combatants. The principle itself is rooted deep within national and international legislation and protocols of war, such as the Armed Forces Act 2006 and the Articles of the Geneva Convention. Even before such standards came into effect, the principle was repeatedly demonstrated during periods of armistice. One of the most notable examples is the peaceful meeting of German and Allied forces in no man’s land on Christmas Day, 1914, where songs, food, and games were shared by both sides. Despite the intention to kill their enemy in war, it is rare for combatants to harbour any ill will or hatred for them (1). Yet, although such a case is not necessarily representative of the whole, we intuitively recognise the importance of innocence in the form of non-combatant immunity, both for civilians and for soldiers *hors de combat*.

Returning to the problem of the *Luftwaffe* pilot, Walzer’s argument leads to the conclusion that the engagement of, and casualties among, any Allied bombers by German aircraft in this example is morally permissible. From the argument of moral accountability, the cause for war on either side lacks any relevance when determining their moral status as, during the normal course of war when the criteria of *jus in bello* is satisfied, all combatants are equal. Here, the Allies, through indiscriminate bombing, fail to satisfy the criteria and are, therefore, both morally and legally accountable for their actions. The *Luftwaffe*, in strict obedience of their duty, are not.

In short, under the orthodox model, a just cause is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for justice in war. It is perfectly feasible, then, for combatants to fight justly in an unjust war. While we can imagine the reality of war reflecting this principle, there are a number of issues surrounding the legitimacy of Walzer’s arguments that have raised cause for concern.

Arguments against the orthodox view

Typically, when an assailant attacks a victim in the presence of a third party, it is normally expected, though not from any obligation, for the third party to intervene at some level. This intervention could take on the form of defending the victim and/or killing the assailant. The victim’s rights to life and liberty are fully understood in this context. However, when the victim of aggression is a community and the assailant is a wave of combatants in war, the rights are not as clearly defined. Walzer, drawing upon interpretation of legal convention under which states are regarded as

contractual extensions of individuals, argues that the individual's rights to life and liberty are analogous with a community's rights to territorial integrity and political sovereignty respectively (1977, 54). Since these rights are recognised by all states within the international community, any injustice committed against one compels resistance and punishment from all others (Norman 1995, 133). Thus, this analogy serves to justify self-defence of others from an individual to an international level. However, the moral imperative does not necessarily follow from the premise given that it is merely an analogy. To justify a war of self-defence on behalf of another, one must recognise that 'what are being defended are not literally lives, but their collective analogues, the life (and liberty) of the community' (Norman 1995, 134). But, parenthesising that argument for a moment, the point of drawing the analogy was also to validate the killing of the assailant. In war, it seems that only something akin to a war of self-defence against genocide could justify the killing of aggressors on such a large scale (Norman 1995, 135). Yet, the campaign of Allied area bombing against German cities was not a campaign of genocide, despite the terrible number of civilian casualties. The targets were not the people that resided in the cities, but the cities themselves. Consequently, even when just combatants breach the principles of *jus in bello*, Walzer's model fails to provide adequate vindication for unjust combatants to kill in war through the defence of others.

The second consequence to be addressed is the somewhat paradoxical result from military engagements between morally unequal combatants. Walzer's argument for the moral equality of combatants, though valid, is not applicable to the problem suggested as only one side fulfils the criteria of *jus in bello*. However, if Walzer is right to suggest that just cause has no bearing on moral action, then the scenario ends with the *Luftwaffe* pilot possessing moral superiority over the Allied bomber, since the actions of the former are justified in this context and the actions of the latter are not. Now, on one hand, it could be argued that this is not paradoxical since the *Wehrmacht* was not fighting for the political aims of Nazi Germany. Instead, they were merely fighting at their leader's behest, with the political aims only being achieved as an unrelated by-product of their success in combat. On the other hand, even if the military do not fight for the political aims, they do, at the very least, act with the foreknowledge that military success will inevitably lead to the achievement of those aims. This implies a degree of epistemic responsibility for a combatant's moral action despite unquestioning obedience to the laws and protocols of war.

Although Walzer's model is one which draws the correct conclusions about the morality and nature of war, it nonetheless lacks sufficient grounding for his arguments. Consequently, his model is inadequate to determine whether an unjust war may be fought justly. As such, it has been suggested

by numerous philosophers that a rejection of the Just War Theory is required in order to account for moral action in war. One such philosopher, Jeff McMahan, examines the realities of war from an individualist perspective, serving as a foundation for a revisionist account.

A revisionist account

A revisionist account of war is one which denies the validity of the Just War Tradition on the basis that, instead of a logical division between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, the two areas of justification are necessarily linked. Thus, a just combatant is understood as one whose war is both *ad bellum* and *in bello* just. The groundwork for this position is one which rests on arguments concerning liability to attack and the connection between moral intent and moral ends in order to demonstrate that combatants without a just cause can never satisfy the conditions of *jus in bello*.

Under the Just War Tradition, the discrimination criterion of *jus in bello* uses the term 'liability to attack' as dependent upon holding combatant status by posing a threat to others. If one does not pose a threat, then one is not subject to attack, even through self-defence. Since only combatants pose a threat in this sense, only they are liable to attack. McMahan begins by stating that this use of the term is problematic since one can pose a threat yet not be a combatant, or be a combatant yet pose no threat (2009, 12). The physics professors assigned to the Manhattan Project during the Second World War posed a threat despite holding no form of combatant status. Conversely, an Army lawyer dedicated to ceasing an unjust war commenced by her own government is considered a combatant despite posing no threat. Where attacks result from self-defence, McMahan notes that if the synonymy were true, then it would be morally permissible for a murderer to target a police officer who takes lethal measures to prevent him from committing further atrocities (2009, 14). But, to kill the officer would be to commit a further impermissible act, for which the murderer would bear full responsibility. Since this would not be acceptable, it is false that posing a threat, by itself, necessitates liability to attack. Instead, liability to attack is dependent upon being morally responsible for posing an objectively impermissible threat to others. Just combatants, by definition, do not pose impermissible threats. Accordingly, when just and unjust combatants engage in war, the former do not sacrifice their right to life, as Walzer would have it. Rather, just combatants retain that right to life and, consequently, killing them would violate that right. Just combatants, like non-combatants, are not legitimate targets for unjust combatants, even in self-defence (McMahan 2009, 57). Therefore, since unjust combatants lack a just cause and no longer have any legitimate targets, they can never satisfy the discrimination condition of *jus in bello*. Only those whose cause is just may do so.

Although legislation and conventions on war are enshrined in the Just War Tradition, there is a compelling reason for supporting the above argument in the form of excuse. It is true that we do not hold combatants accountable for the justice of wars in which they fight. However, when we consider a war to be unjust, we do not say that the combatants were morally justified in fighting it. They still maintain some degree of responsibility, albeit diminished, for the impermissible threats that they pose to others. As such, we excuse them of their participation; a pardon for all acts performed in the line of duty. Yet, it does not follow from being excused that their actions were morally permissible (McMahan 2009, 112). Lawful obedience does not negate opportunity for moral enquiry, even for military personnel. In the twenty-first century, the mass proliferation of basic information streamed across the global media networks has only broadened such opportunities (Coleman 2013, 153). When most or all information regarding a war is classified, the fact that the public are aware of such confidentiality only raises suspicions about claims that the cause for war is just (Coleman 2013, 153). So, given the presence of diminished responsibility and the growing opportunity for personal reflection, if one is ordered to fight in a war which one considers to be unjust, then one has no justification for participating in it.

Following on from assessing acts of aggression toward just combatants, a further complication arises for unjust combatants in the form of all other acts committed during a period of hostilities. Consider the following example: if a person, *x*, had the intention of stealing from another person, *y*, then actualising that intention would necessarily result in theft from *y*. Where *x* lacks a justification for stealing from *y*, then stealing from *y* is morally impermissible. Thus, the means by which *x* plans to steal from *y*, whether by surreptitious pilfering or by brute force, are likewise unjust. Such an example demonstrates how unjust combatants are, effectively, 'morally doomed from the outset' (Frowe 2011, 124). The requirement of proportionality only authorises killing when the relevant goods outweigh the potentially undesirable ills. But, the extent to which such actions are validated is dependent upon what those goods are (Hurka 2005, 45). Whenever combatants attempt to achieve the unjust political ends of the state for which they fight, be it through campaigns of aggression or by more peaceful means, McMahan argues that 'since [they] have unjust goals, then all methods of achieving those goals are also unjust' (2011, 57). Therefore, in addition to failing to fight discriminately, unjust combatants also fail in all attempts to fight proportionately.

However, McMahan concedes that attacks made against just combatants can be proportionate if and only if they are liable to attack. Fortunately, there is one situation, as an exception to the rule, in

which this is so. Whenever just combatants pursue acts of war through unjust means, they become liable to attack, even from unjust combatants (McMahan 2011, 16). Effectively, when combatants with a just cause breach the principles of *jus in bello*, combatants without a just cause are no longer condemned in their actions against them, providing that they follow the proper rules of engagement. But, it is worth noting that McMahan believes that this situation does not reflect the reality of unjust wars, either in their entirety or even predominantly (2011, 25). Nonetheless, this exception to the standard revisionist account allows for a seemingly straightforward response to the problem of the *Luftwaffe* pilot. The pilot may not, under normal circumstances, target the Allied bomber, since only the latter has a just cause. But, as the bomber is currently engaged in using impermissible means to bring about his just cause by killing non-combatants, this allows for the *Luftwaffe* pilot to validly invoke the principle of self-defence of another in order to remove the threat posed.

To summarise, the revisionist account holds that just cause is a necessary condition for just action. The consistency of McMahan's arguments suggests that the logical distinction between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* is not necessarily true, thereby undermining the orthodox view. When the conditions of discrimination and proportionality are properly understood, supplemented by intuitions about the nature of intention, it seems impossible for a combatant lacking a just cause to conduct a war in a manner which may be considered just. Nevertheless, though McMahan's interpretation rectifies some of the foundational issues that troubled Walzer's analysis, the soundness of his argument is questionable.

Arguments against a revisionist account

An initial problem with McMahan's account is the underlying assumption that just and unjust combatants are partially defined as ones with and without a just cause, respectively. The implication for this assumption is that their just status is dependent upon the side for which they fight (Lazar 2011). One can possess a just cause and follow all of the rules of war yet still not be justified in fighting (Lazar 2011). The controversial use of Private Military Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq is one such example. Further problems concern McMahan's criticisms of, and the suggested alternative for, the standard interpretation of what makes a combatant liable to attack. Firstly, McMahan notes that the connection between liability to attack and holding a combatant status is not a necessary one. However, although McMahan is right to suggest that one can pose a threat yet not be a combatant, his example that one can be a combatant yet pose no threat is unsound on the grounds that it is not analogous. The Army lawyer, who campaigns to halt her government's unjust

war, is still a combatant in virtue of her membership in the military. One's profession, that is to say one's day-job, in the military is irrelevant (2). All military staff in times of war must be prepared to kill designated enemy combatants (3). The example of the criminal targeting the police officer in self-defence also suffers from a similar objection. A police officer, in performing their normal duties, does not hold the same moral, societal or political status as a combatant in war. Thus, the counter examples do not work.

On McMahan's redefinition of 'liability to attack' as being morally responsible for posing an objectively impermissible threat to others, objections have been made by critics both in support of, and against, the revisionist account. One criticism, dubbed the Contingent Pacifist objection, is that the interpretation of liability is too narrow. Combatants 'would not be able to fight in any wars if confined to targeting only liable targets since our weapons cannot distinguish the liable from the non-liable' (Lazar 2011). Meanwhile, other critics suggest that the interpretation of liability is too liberal as it allows just combatants to target potentially liable non-combatants, such as politicians responsible for the commencement of the unjust war, because posing a threat, in itself, is not necessary for liability (Lazar 2011). Moreover, the requirement for the impermissible threat to be objective raises its own difficulty. Kamm argues that if two people are debating an issue on which neither knows the correct answer, then McMahan's argument suggests that the one who is defending the untruth, albeit unknowingly, is not equal with the one defending the truth, again albeit unknowingly (2012, 87). Even if the consequence is that the one defending the untruth wins, we would still typically say that each are entitled to defend their positions. All this implies that unjust combatants, contrary to the revisionist account, could fulfil the requirements of discriminatory combat.

Given that McMahan's argument concerning the achievement of the proportionality criterion of *jus in bello* is contingent upon the possession of a just cause, the problem of what constitutes a just cause follows next. Although McMahan accepts that self-defence and the defence of others are the only permissible causes for war, both of these causes are a response to aggression. Yet, McMahan offers no account of what extent the aggression must take in order to warrant such a response. Normally, the term evokes images of the deployment of armed troops across international borders in the form of invasion. But, argues Fotion (2007, 140), does the deployment of a rocket barrage across international borders, or the destruction of a weather satellite, or the disruption of a national banking system, amount to the same degree of aggression? Justification of a just cause for war is rarely so easily established. Though this may be considered a more general objection, McMahan

appears to have overlooked the importance of taking such an objection into account. In short, McMahan's use of the criterion of just cause as a necessary condition for just combat is too loose to provide a firm foundation for his account. As a further consequence, given that foundations of the revisionist account are on the first count unsound and on the second count unspecific, McMahan's model cannot be used to effectively answer the question of whether it is possible to fight justly in an unjust war.

Conclusion

Michael Walzer's orthodox model, through the classical division between the principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, attempts to establish the moral accountability and moral equality of combatants, as well as the rights and liberties of combatants, non-combatants, and communities in war. The model accurately portrays the reality of war and the respective responsibilities of all those who partake in its commencement, continuation and cessation. This is supported by the nature of military and legislative structures implemented globally, as derived from the Just War Tradition. Although the conclusions drawn are reasonable, there are certain aspects of war for which this model cannot adequately account, including matters of self-defence, the defence of others, the classification of moral superiority among unequal combatants, and the epistemic responsibility of the military for the achievement of the political aims of government. This raises suspicions about the legitimacy of such a model. In order to salvage a Just War Theory, it has been suggested that the orthodox model must be rejected in favour of a new revisionist account of the morality of war.

Proponents of this new model, such as Jeff McMahan, argue that combatants are no longer considered to be moral equals who focus purely on the justness of their own actions toward each other. Instead, they are marked as the bearers of considerable moral responsibility, not only for themselves, but also, in part, for the actions of their leaders. Strict obedience to one's nation and its government no longer hold any weight in determining moral behaviour. Each combatant is judged as individually responsible for deciding whether the cause for war is just and, if not, establishing a moral justification for engaging in it. Furthermore, those who engage in an unjustifiable war also, by logical process, fail to achieve any form of justification in combat. With no legitimate targets, they become akin to murderers. However, careful analysis of this view demonstrates that McMahan's definition of just combatants, the liability to attack, and his arguments surrounding the fulfilment of the proportionality condition of *jus in bello* are on the first two counts unsound, and on the third count too loose to be adopted as a viable view.

Thus, neither the orthodox model nor the revisionist account is adequately sufficient to answer the question of whether unjust combatants can fight justly in unjust wars. Resolving this issue would require a further paper. But, I believe that the solution lies in the re-adoption of honour among combatants – something I consider to be a lost virtue. The incorporation of the warrior ethos into the orthodox model would perhaps make it possible for all combatants engaging in all wars to fight justly, even in unjust wars.

Notes

- (1) Sadly, due to changes in the symmetry of warfare and the popularisation of terrorist tactics in the twentieth century, conflicts have become more personal and ideological between combatants.
- (2) There is one special exception to this rule in the form of military chaplains. But all clergymen, regardless of their religious denomination, or affiliations with any professions, are always considered to be non-combatants.
- (3) In the British Armed Forces, page 1 of Her Majesty's Armed Forces Application Form Guidance Notes (AFCO Form 5, Apr 09) states that 'Applicants must bear in mind that by joining the Armed Forces it may lead to you serving in an armed conflict in any part of the world with the associated risks and responsibilities involved,' and 'You may also have to take life in the act of protecting life.'

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