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## Visions of just war in the framework of global terrorism. Jihadism versus the West

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## Visions of just war in the framework of global terrorism. Jihadism versus the West

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Visiones de guerra justa en el marco del terrorismo global. Yihadismo  
versus Occidente

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**ABSTRACT:** The war against global terrorism is a complex issue that seems to have no end at present. This article analyzes some jihadist's and presidents of Western countries' dialogues to show their connection to the just war tradition. The intention is to determine whether the jihadists who attack and threaten the West and the Western governments that combat them and have been their victims, viewing their cause as a just one. Especially given that these enemies see the other as the initial attacker. Ultimately, these parties' absolute conceptions could explain why a potential end to the conflict is undetermined.

**KEYWORDS:** extremism; Islamism; jihad; just war; religious conflict; terrorism

**RESUMEN.** La guerra contra el terrorismo global es un desafío complejo que no parece tener salida actualmente. Este artículo busca demostrar que tanto los yihadistas que atacan y amenazan Occidente, como los Gobiernos occidentales que los combaten y que han sido sus víctimas, tienen una visión de su causa como una causa justa, en contra de enemigos que, según la perspectiva de cada uno, los han atacado primero. Para esto, se hace un análisis de los discursos de algunos yihadistas, y luego de algunos presidentes de países occidentales, para mostrar cómo ambos se vinculan con la tradición de guerra justa. En últimas, esas concepciones absolutas que cada una de las partes tiene podría explicar por qué no se vislumbra aún un posible final para el conflicto.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** conflicto religioso; extremismo; guerra justa; islamismo; terrorismo; yihad

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## Introduction

As shown by Bellamy (2009), from Cicero to the present, politically organized societies (empires in antiquity and states in modern times) have categorically considered their causes for waging wars just. A mere look at human history is enough to see that every culture conceives the defense of their interests and the search for better ones legitimate reasons for justice. Today's states' concerns are the same as those of the empires, monarchies, and republics of the past, maintaining, safeguarding, and increasing their power. The issue is that currently, this power is not only threatened by other states—far or near— but also by some threats that, over time, have become known as “non-conventional.” Among these, terrorism, a type of violence that has reached sophisticated levels of complexity and effectiveness in the last decades.

In addition to terrorism, the specialized literature recognizes other types of non-conventional threats, also called “new threats” or “emerging threats,” in the words of Benítez (2004). Among these are drug trafficking, organized crime, and environmental degradation, which are characterized by a failure to recognize and respect national borders—which they permanently transgress— partly because they have no state basis, at least in the first instance. They also interact with other forms of crime, demonstrating that they are not reduced to their specific nature or objectives. Over time, they form real international networks that hinder identifying the problem's roots and produce increasingly global effects. As for the latter, recent history has shown that these networks have been able to form systems so extensive and powerful that they can affect societies utterly alien to the threats' place of origin (Bartolomé, 2013; Troncoso, 2017).

All unconventional threats are complex in at least two ways; on the one hand, because of their level of composition and systematization, on the other, the expansion they have achieved during globalization (Griffiths, 2009). This highly dangerous phenomenon threatens the stability of states and the international system. The latest terrorist attacks and the dimensions of drug trafficking show that this threat has the necessary qualities to challenge the nations' sovereignty, the societies' security, and international harmony (Sampó & Alda, 2018).

While it is true that they are equally harmful to international society, terrorism has two particularities that make it a unique phenomenon. In addition to having clear political objectives (concrete intentions to undermine the state) (Richardson, 2007), with marked ideological (or religious, as the case may be) overtones, its promoters are categorically convinced that they are waging a just war against their enemies.

Despite the marked antagonism between them, states and terrorist groups have one common point that significantly links them. With somewhat similar arguments, both parties claim that their causes are just. The Islamic or jihadist terrorists base their

actions on God and demand justice for the attacks from their Western enemies; on the other, Western governments appeal to defending their national interests. However, what happens when the opposing sides are fully convinced that they are advancing just causes? What elements do they rely on to demonstrate this potential justice? What kind of solution can there be to conflicts whose parties are equally convinced that they are carrying out acts of justice? Questions like these fill the current scenario with grey areas. Historical tradition has maintained that to speak of a just war, meeting some minimum aspects is essential.

In one of the most significant recent works on the subject, Bellamy (2009) states, “if there are no ethical or legal limitations to the decision to start a war (*jus ad bellum*) and the way to conduct it (*jus in bello*), it is nothing more than the use of brute force” (p. 21). Thus, just war must be an enterprise limited by morality and law; otherwise, it would lose all essence of legitimacy. However, recent history has shown that Western states and terrorist groups have not conformed to either morality or law when fighting each other, triggering wars based on “brute force,” which, according to Bellamy (2009), “is logically indistinguishable from mass murder” (p. 1). Terrorist groups have killed thousands of innocent people everywhere, in the most unusual ways, and Western states have applied measures that also violate unarmed subjects’ lives (Rapoport & Alexander, 1983, p. 156).

In this sense, this work has two objectives. First, it seeks to expose and analyze the visions of just war that exist within terrorist groups and some Western governments, mainly those that have been attacked by jihadism (the United States, France, and the United Kingdom) during the last years<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, it seeks to demonstrate that, according to the counterpart, neither side conforms to what the *just war* tradition has established. Neither complies with this concept’s two basic premises, a concept that emerged in the western world, reasoned in well-established moral canons and absolute adherence to international law concerning the beginning of the conflict and the killing of innocent civilians. However, Islamic groups do not share this definition; they may not even have one. Thus, this work proposes *just* as a war that fulfills some minimum precepts.

Since antiquity, several thinkers, like Cicero, Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Francisco de Vitoria, have reflected on war’s potential moral approach. Centuries later, Bellamy (2009) has done an extraordinary job exposing this long tradition and connecting it to contemporary problems. Indeed, there is a considerable amount of work,

1 According to Samuel Huntington (2011, p. 46), the “West” is formed by Western Europe, where the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Austria, and Germany, among other nations, are located, and by North America, with the United States at the head. However, it includes other countries, such as Australia and New Zealand. While this paper excludes other realities, such as Spain, Belgium, or Germany, which have also been victims of jihadist terrorism, it uses the term “West” to refer to the community of nations that include the United States, France, and the United Kingdom.

views, and proposals on just war accumulated over time. However, despite the multiplicity of contributions on this topic, the questions remain the same. Does a state have the right to attack another? Is it legitimate to intervene in other's conflicts involving societies other than one's own? Under what circumstances is it legal to defend oneself against outside forces that threaten occupation? These questions appear in the context of conventional confrontations, but what happens when the threats no longer have this character? Is it feasible to speak of a just war when the enemies are terrorists basing their actions and projects on Islamic jihadism? Questions like these invite us to review the concept.

In an era controlled by realism in international studies, Michael Walzer wrote *Just and Unjust Wars* (2001). His contributions were so significant that the academic and political community have revisited the moral sense of military conflicts. Walzer (2001) proposed that war must be understood by the states' reasons for initiating it and the mechanisms used to deploy and maintain it over time, a point that Bellamy (2009) revisited heartily. Some authors have called this the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello*. According to Walzer (2001, p. 51), this dualism "lies at the very heart of what constitutes the most problematic essence of the moral reality of war." Wars have the particularity that they can be justly initiated but quickly unfold unjustly, or vice versa. The important thing is that, for a war to be just, its cause and development must equally refer to every war's must-have moral norms.

Walzer believes that war will always be just when a state defends itself from attack by another state that violates its territory and political sovereignty, assuming that every society has the right to its independence, establishment, and existence without others' violation. From this assumption, Walzer provides a series of ideas that adequately synthesize his approach to just war: 1) Any force or threat of a state against another is aggression; thus, a criminal act; 2) Because aggression is criminal, it activates the right not only to self-defense but also to wage war against the aggressor state; 3) Once the aggressor state has been repelled, the attacked state can unload all the punishments it considers appropriate, always following the law. Therefore, only aggression can justify war. As will be seen, this is one of the most recurrent arguments between jihadists and Western governments to legitimize their causes.

However, Walzer insists on the limits that any war must have, beyond one state's legitimacy for attacking another. To discern if a cause is just or unjust, he brings forth his theory of the "war convention." By nature, war has specific rules that allow killing others without *a posteriori* judgment. However, this is not absolute; there will always be the risk of harming the lives of innocent people who may be affected by military actions collaterally. Therefore, this theory seeks to define the duties of those who carry out the act of war to distinguish combatants from non-combatants. According to Walzer, this distinction would make the distinction between a legitimate and an illegitimate war. A conflict's origin may not be lawful. However, the confrontation is entirely justified if the

parties respect civilians because civilians—which Walzer calls innocent—“have not done anything that implies any damage, thus, the loss of their rights” (Walzer, 2001, p. 205). However, soldiers do lose their rights because they decided to join an army that is facing or may face a war.

The latter motivated Walzer (2010, p. 368) to argue that terrorism is a categorically unjust form of grievance, in that it “is the random killing of innocent people driven by the hope of producing widespread fear.” Walzer emphasizes that these non-combatants “are not materially involved in the war effort,” so attacking them is utterly unjust. But what happens when terrorists use the same argument to attack the West? This question is no less important when one considers that jihadist groups would indeed be waging a just war, having claimed not only aggression but also the indiscriminate killing of civilians by forces they have labeled “invaders.” Faced with this dilemma, one must question, for example, the fate of a war waged by two sides that blindly believe they are pursuing substantially just causes.

## The “Just” Motivations for Jihad

Islamic terrorism is not a recent phenomenon. A series of events have transpired during the last fifty years produced by violent groups in the belief that they are following Muhammad’s teachings. Air raids perpetrated by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the murder of Jewish athletes in Munich in the 1970s (Aubrey, 2004), the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon in the 1980s (Rapoport, 2006), and the attacks on the Israeli diplomatic headquarters and the Israeli-Argentine Mutual Association (AMIA) in Argentina during the 1990s (Danon, 2012) come to mind. However, it could be said that the attacks on September 11th, 2001 (9/11) in New York and Washington D.C. launched a stage in which the jihadists acquired a global prominence<sup>2</sup>. In this regard, Godoy (2001) states, “my hypothesis is that the terrorist events of 9/11 mark a turning point in the direction of history,” based on “the emergence of a new war scenario” that can be seen in “the crisis of peace based on the supremacy of a superpower or on the balance of the strongest states” (p. 47). This “new war” was against the jihadists.

2 Some authors claim that Al-Qaeda was instrumental in the globalization of terrorism. It established an international Islamic front for jihad against the United States, Israel, and all its allies. Chandra (2006, p. 258) noted that the front created by Bin Laden coordinated its activities with several terrorist organizations, such as Hamas and other groups, with which they had common enemies based on Islamic extremism. Sometime later, new groups appeared on the international scene, forming what Lutz and Lutz (2013) called the “global jihad.” Currently, ISIS has become the most representative group of global terrorism. Among other reasons, because it has fulfilled one of the patterns that the authors identify as key to this new modality, despite the losses it has suffered from 2018 onwards, including global pretensions, use of the media, and the ability to have brought together thousands of people from all corners of the Earth. Indeed, because this group is jihadist and embodies global terrorism, this paper places both concepts in the same vein.

Jihad has several meanings that have emerged from interpretations of the Koran, written in the seventh century of the Christian era (Suárez, 2016). For some, it is an internal spiritual struggle against personal sin; for others, it is a fight against the infidels or non-believers, especially Christians and Jews. The leader of the Islamic State once stated that “Islam was never a religion of peace” but rather a “religion of struggle” (*BBC Mundo*, 14 de mayo de 2015). This approach can be defensive, but it can also be offensive because it is applied against peoples who supposedly endanger religion merely because they are different<sup>3</sup>. According to some authors (Godoy, 2001; Abdulla, 2007), the practice of jihad was initially regulated by norms that prohibit the violation of women, children, the elderly, and unarmed soldiers, a condition that undoubtedly seems obvious. But, as recent history has shown, jihadists have ignored this tradition by embracing “the use of violence without limit” through “nihilistic annihilation.” A term, which is, by the way, absolutely questionable because it does not distinguish between defensive and offensive actions, nor civilians from combatants, nor belligerence-free spaces (Godoy, 2001, p. 39; Ortiz & Caro, 2018).

This same author points out an important aspect for this discussion: “fundamentalist terrorism aspires to something diffuse and unspecific: the victory over evil, to reduce it to nothing” (Godoy, 2001, p. 39). Perhaps because of when it was written, but everything indicates that this contribution must be nuanced. In particular, one could argue that jihadism does not have diffuse and weakly specific claims. However, groups like Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and Boko Haram know exactly what they want (Staffell & Awan, 2016). They have clear objectives, including the dissemination, imposition, and defense of their culture, religion, and idiosyncrasy (and even their laws through the *Sharia*). The most obvious example could be the establishment of regional caliphates, like Boko Haram in the heart of Africa, or global, like ISIS, which aims to make everyone Muslim (Roy, 2017). In any case, for Godoy’s (2001) “the victory over evil,” this purpose makes sense for the hypothesis that this work seeks to defend: overcoming that evil implies an act of justice.

Among the factors that make Islamic Jihadism a complex phenomenon is its religious matrix: the only source of all good and justice is God, the creator of Heaven and earth, the foundation of everything. This faith gives jihadism the supernatural meaning recognized by its members and makes it more powerful and compelling among those who

3 As Osama Bin Laden pointed out in 1997, “The height of this religion [Islam] is jihad. The nation has had a strong conviction that there is no way to obtain faithful strength except by returning to this jihad. [...] Today, the nation is interacting well by uniting its efforts through the jihad against the United States. In collaboration with the Israeli government, it led the fierce campaign against the Islamic world to occupy Muslim holy sites. As for the young people who participated in the jihad, their number, by the grace of God, was quite large—praised and grateful to Him—, spreading in all places where the injustice of non-believers is perpetuated against Muslims”. (Arnett, 1997, author’s translation).



promote it<sup>4</sup>. For example, after the death of al-Qaeda's top leader, Osama bin Laden, the group issued a statement to the world indicating that the new head, Egyptian physician, Ayman al-Zawahiri, assumed "responsibility, guided by God." In the same message, bin Laden's successor stated:

[...] With Allah's help, we seek to uplift the religion of truth and incite our nation to fight, carrying out jihad against the apostate invaders, whose head is the crusading United States and its servant Israel, and against anyone who supports them. (*BBC News*, 16 de junio de 2011)

A similar slogan elevated the Islamic State when it attacked France in 2015:

Blessed attack against the crusader, France. [...] France and those who follow her voice must know that they remain the main target of the Islamic State and that they will continue to smell the smell of death for having led the crusade, for having dared to insult our prophet, for having boasted of fighting against Islam. (*The Guardian*, 14 de noviembre de 2015)

A few years later, on December 26th, 2015, the self-proclaimed "caliph," Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, called his followers to "be patient, because you are on the right path; be patient, because God is with you" (Mickolus, 2016, p. 513). The main head of ISIS, relying on divine inspiration, encouraged his people to fight the foreign "invaders," united in an alliance with Saudi Arabia and bringing together more than thirty countries. At that time, Baghdadi was calling for a war with strong religious overtones: "it is unprecedented in the history of our Ummah [Islamic nation] for the whole world to oppose it in a single battle, as is happening today; it is the battle of all unbelievers, against all Muslims" (Karam, 2015).

However, the reference to God is also present in suicide attacks perpetrated against innocent people, meaning that it is not only a theoretical attempt, an axiological assumption, or a theological allusion. Instead, it is the primary motivation behind these actions. In fact, one of the most recurrent phrases among Islamic terrorists at the time of martyrdom is "*Allahu akbar*," meaning "God is the greatest." This phrase was heard from an ISIS member as he ran over several people on a bicycle path in New York in 2018; from the attackers of the French newspaper, *Charlie Hebdo*, murdering the journalists and policemen who came to the site in the 2015 attack; and the men who ran over a British

4 In February 2019, *The New York Times* published an interview with two American women who had traveled to Syria to enlist in the Islamic state. One of them said, when explaining the reasons she had for leaving her country and taking part in this cause, "I was crying because I thought I was making a great sacrifice for God and I was giving up my family, my home, my comfort, everything I know, everything I love. I thought I was doing the right thing" (Callimachi & Porter, 2019, author's translation).



soldier who was later killed with a machete in 2013<sup>5</sup>. In part, this explains why radical Muslims label the *Mujahideen* as “holy warriors” who would give their lives, if necessary, to do God’s will<sup>6</sup>.

In late 2018, the German newspaper, *Der Spiegel*, interviewed Mohammed Haydar, an ISIS member captured by the Kurds in Syria with a long history of involvement in the wars in Bosnia in the 1990s and Afghanistan in the following decade. Haydar revealed a series of facts that account for the justice with which these groups believe they are struggling. When the journalist asked him why he chose to join ISIS once he had been released, considering that he had spent ten years in a Syrian jail, he replied:

In prison, I asked God to tell me where I should go. He heard me and let me know that I could stay in Syria without fear. It was terrible to be in prison. We were hungry. [...] I always wanted to wage jihad against the injustices committed against Muslims! [...] What made me give up the good life and good food there? The injustice! [...] Once I was well again, one of my brothers from the prison, who had become the governor of ISIS in Aleppo, asked me: ‘Haydar, Abu Adil, do you want to join us?’ Of course, I want to wage jihad against injustice, I said. So I pledged my loyalty. (Kareb et al., 2018)<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of its spiritual or material basis, jihadism promotes and defends Islam through violence. However, this religious promotion also has a political meaning, evident in the attempts to establish pan-Islamic theocracies and caliphates. At least, this is the intention that groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State have proposed over the past few decades. Therefore, radical Islamism must be understood as follows: it is not merely a religion; it is also a social, political, and economic system committed to fighting other systems or worldviews, like the West’s. Thus, the equation makes sense in reality. Jihadism commits acts of intentional violence against individuals, governments, or culturally distinct organizations to keep these from committing acts that could be contrary to Allah’s mandates. For these radical groups, cultures like the West and other places, such as Israel, where everything is different from what is stipulated by Islam, must be destroyed. The Koran itself states, “fight for Allah and know that Allah hears all things and knows all things” (El Corán, sura 2, v. 244).

If we add up the variables, it could be maintained, from this perspective, that the fight against the West is simply a divine obligation, understanding God as the source

5 In the same speech on December 26th, 2015, the ISIS leader pointed out to his people: “[the Americans] do not dare to come because their fears are total fear of the Mujahideen.” (Karam, 2015)

6 On July 5th, 2014, in the speech he gave to proclaim himself a prophet, Baghdadi, leader of the Islamic State, emphasized that “God gave the victory to his Mujahideen brothers after long years of jihad and patience,” referring to all those who offered their lives to God. (Chulov, 2014)

7 All textual quotations from English are the author’s translations.

of all justice. For them, it is God himself who invites his faithful to go against all those who place their faith at risk<sup>8</sup>. Although this association is not recurrent within the specialized literature, the truth is that some authors defend jihad as a means of opposing the West, which many Muslims consider “decadent” (Arciszewski et al., 2009). And in that counterweight, the caliphate is decisive<sup>9</sup>. This relationship between divine will, faith, and politics can be appreciated in a recent study by the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism, interviewing imprisoned jihadists. Umm Mohammed, a 32-year-old Dutch-Moroccan, said:

[...] Every Muslim has an obligation to live where he can practice his Islam. [...] When ISIS, which was very strong, conquered half of the Iraqi territory in three or four days, I wondered if maybe this was the state that the prophet predicted would come. (Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2018)

Another recurrent element of this justice in the terrorists’ rhetoric is revenge. Without going any further, the Koran categorically exhorts its faithful as follows: “When you are on a journey, there is no harm in abbreviating the Azalah [prayer] if you fear an attack on the infidels. The unbelievers are a sworn enemy to you” (sura 4, v. 1010)<sup>10</sup>. For groups like Al Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram, the infidels are precisely the Western countries. The most unpopular among them are the United States, Israel, and a few European countries. Gorka (2016) made a historical sweep of the main jihadist works and concluded that the authors agree that “the unfaithful nation of the United States” is not only responsible for the Muslim community losing relevance but also for having “infected the minds and souls of Muslims around the world” (p. 33). Therefore, “it must be destroyed to rid the world of *jahiliyyah*,” that is, the ignorance it represents.

Whether it is an Islamic or pre-Islamic issue (Matos, 2004; Orlando, 2010), Jihadist groups believe it is right to take revenge on their enemies, more so when they have at-

- 8 When Bin Laden was asked in 1997 what his position on Saudi Arabia was, he commented that “criticism of the ruling regime in Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula is its subordination to the United States. [...] By being loyal to the US regime, the Saudi regime has committed an act against Islam. And this, based on Sharia law, throws the regime out of the religious community. [...] The regime has ceased to rule the people according to what God revealed; praise and glory to Him. [...] When this main foundation was violated, other acts of corruption occurred in all aspects of the country, economic, social, government services, etc.” (Arnett, 1997, author’s translation).
- 9 Brian Jenkins (2014, p. 7), speaking of the Islamic State when it was living its moments of glory, noted the likelihood that “more volunteers will be inspired by jihadist ideology and take the opportunity to live in what they see as an authentic Muslim Caliphate.”
- 10 Bin Laden stated that it was “the duty of the Muslims to prepare as much strength as possible to terrorize the enemies of God” (Mowatt-Larsen, 2010, p. 2). This same notion of “duty” was expressed in the 1997 interview: “The trip to Bosnia, Chechnya, Tajikistan, and other countries is nothing more than the fulfillment of a duty. We believe that these states are part of the Islamic world. Therefore, any act of aggression against any of these lands implies a duty of the Muslims to send a sufficient number of their children to fight against that aggression.” (Arnett, 1997, author’s translation)

tacked them first. Anwar Al-Awlaki, one of the most recognized instigators of jihad, and head of an Al Qaeda cell (Gorka, 2016, p. 28), uploaded videos on the internet calling on young people to punish the infidels, reclaim the Muslim culture, and contribute to the caliphate that, according to his perspective, was taking shape around the world. In *Inspire*, one of the media he promoted on the web, this man, born and raised in the United States, said in 2010: “America was my home. I was an Islamic preacher involved in non-violent Islamic activism, but with the US invasion of Iraq and the continued aggression against Muslims, I could not reconcile living there with being a Muslim.” He added, “I finally came to the conclusion that jihad against the United States is mandatory for me, as it is for all other Muslims who are trained” (Gorka, 2016, pp. 28-29).

Awlaki advised Muslims living in non-Islamic countries, such as the United States, to be faithful to religion and always act on the basis of *Al-Wala*. This concept, literally meaning “love,” “support,” “help,” or “follow up”, incited all believers, no matter where they came from, to agree, always and everywhere, with the words, deeds, and beliefs pleasing to God and the brethren in faith. Appealing to their feelings, Awlaki wrote, “for Muslims in America, this I have to say”:

How can your conscience allow you to live in peaceful coexistence with a nation responsible for the tyranny and crimes committed? Against your own brothers and sisters? How can you be loyal to a government that is leading a war against Islam and Muslims? Therefore, my advice to you is this: you have two options: hijra [migration] or jihad. Either you leave, or you fight; you go and live among the Muslims, or you stay behind and fight with your hand, your wealth, and your word. I specifically invite young people to fight in the West or to join your brothers on the fronts of jihad: Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. (Gorka, 2016, pp. 28-29)

Awlaki's remarks are one more example of these terrorist groups' general perception. The West in general, and the United States in particular, must pay for the alleged abuses caused to their people for generations. In one of his first public appearances in media outlets, Osama bin Laden declared that the American power was “unjust, criminal, and tyrannical,” that they had “set a double standard, calling anyone who was against their injustice a terrorist.” This, according to the former al-Qaeda leader, translated into military occupations, “theft of our resources” and imposition of “agents who govern us.” Under his criteria, those three arguments were enough to initiate retaliatory actions; he stated, “then they want us to agree to all this. If we refuse to do so, they say we are terrorists” (Arnett, 1997). The interview continued:

The [United States] has committed acts that are extremely unjust, horrible, and criminal, either directly or through its support of the Israeli occupation in Palestine. Israelis

shoot Arabs. And, we believe that the United States is directly responsible for those who died in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq. The United States reminds us first and foremost of those innocent children who were dismembered, with their heads and arms cut off in the recent explosion in Qana, Lebanon. This American government abandoned even humanitarian feelings for these horrible crimes. It transgressed all limits and behaved in a way not witnessed before by any power or any imperialist power in the world. We have declared jihad because, in our religion, it is our duty to do so, so that the word of God is exalted to the highest, and we drive Americans away from all Muslim countries. (Arnett, 1997)

In that same interview, Osama bin Laden stated that his main target was American soldiers. However, he did not rule out the possibility that civilians visiting holy places like Mecca and Medina would be affected. He argued that his religion did not allow non-Muslims to remain in those areas; he stated, "Therefore, although U.S. civilians are not targets of our plan, they must leave." He would not guarantee their security in a territory with more than one billion Islamic people ready to react based on the alleged abuses committed by the United States, responsible for having executed "over six hundred thousand Muslim children in Iraq by preventing food and medicine from reaching them." bin Laden continued, "[The United States] are responsible for any reaction, because they extended their war against civilians. [...] The American people are not exonerated from responsibility because they elected this government and voted for it despite knowing its crimes." (Arnett, 1997)

A few months after 9/11, President George W. Bush's administration circulated the false news that bin Laden was dead. In response, one of the most important Taliban leaders, Mohammed Omar, rebuffed the US government's campaign by declaring that bin Laden was alive in Afghanistan. Omar, who recalled Osama's help "during the war with the Russians," assured that he "would not leave them now." He took advantage of the media to categorically maintain that "the holy war [was] just beginning," and that "the fire of this war will reach the United States and burn the capital that launched an unjust attack against the Muslims" (*Los Angeles Times*, 2002). This Al Qaeda member's position was not far from bin Laden's when he was asked about some explosive attacks in Saudi Arabia:

I have great respect for the people who carried out this action. I say they are heroes. We see them as men who wanted to raise the banner of "There is no God but Allah" and put an end to unbelievers and the state of injustice that the United States brought. I also say that what they did is a great job and a great honor that I missed. (Arnett, 1997)

This notion of revenge has been passed on from group to group and from generation to generation. In 2015, the leader of ISIS declared: "By Allah, we will take revenge! Even if it takes a while, we will take revenge, and every bit of damage against the Ummah will

be answered with more force against the perpetrator.” About the mistreatment that the Muslims would have received throughout history by the “invaders,” Baghdadi stated: “with Allah’s permission, the day will come when the Muslim will walk everywhere as a teacher, with honor, being worshipped, with his head held high and his dignity preserved.” Alluding to particular enemies, he clearly stated what the group’s goals were by the end of 2015:

Any person who dares to offend Him [God] will be disciplined, and any hand that attempts to harm Him will be cut off. So, let the world know that we live in a new era today. Whoever was not paying attention now must be alert. Whoever was sleeping now must wake up. The Crusaders and the Jews dare not come because they were defeated in Iraq and Afghanistan. Jews, you will soon hear from us in Palestine, which will become your tomb. (Howell, 2015)

However, this revenge also contemplated other dimensions. According to the jihadist mentality, the West had not only attacked these peoples militarily, killing thousands of innocent people; it had also interfered in their political affairs for clear economic purposes, altering their culture and exploiting their natural resources. In the 1997 interview mentioned above, Osama bin Laden referred to oil as “a product that will be subject to the market price according to supply and demand.” He argued that the amounts at that time were unrealistic “because the Saudi regime plays a role as an agent of the United States,” which, in turn, “put pressure on the government to increase production and flood the [international] market.” The effect he saw was “a sharp decline in prices” (Arnett, 1997). Although this is an important dimension, loaded with injustice, the truth is that the religious question is the fundamental motor of all his initiatives:

It is known that every action has its reaction. If the American presence continues, and that is an action, then it is natural for reactions to continue against this presence. In other words, the explosions and killings of American soldiers will continue. These are the troops who left their country and their families and came here with all the arrogance to steal our oil, and dishonor us and attack our religion. (Arnett, 1997)

According to jihadists, the United States is responsible for the world’s problems and worthy of punishment. Osama bin Laden declared that “wherever we look, we find them.” For him, this country is the “leader of terrorism and crime in the world.” He continued: “[The United States] does not consider it a terrorist act to drop atomic bombs on nations thousands of miles away when it would be impossible for those bombs to hit only military troops.” Alluding to the events that ended World War II, he noted: “those bombs were dropped on entire nations, including women, children, and the elderly, and to this day, the traces of those bombs remain in Japan.” (Arnett, 1997)

In general, literature has belittled the theological basis of the terrorists and their notions of just war. Bellamy (2009, p. 224) even pointed out that “one of the main problems with the divine mandate is the impossibility of denying it.” The author argues this point by stating that any person can expose it and use it to justify any act because “there are no limits to what God wants.” Turning to Vitoria, Bellamy proposes that there is no precedent or evidence that God commands war. However, this observation ignores that theological traditions differ from each other. The prophet who revealed the word of the Islamic God effectively invited his followers to war, which was not strictly spiritual<sup>11</sup>. In fact, the Koran invalidates what Bellamy (2009, p. 224) proposes, “but those who invoke such a mandate must prove its existence through more than faith.”

The Koran contains several precepts that urge its adherents to take up arms against their enemies. To relativize or qualify this condition is to underestimate a religion that does not like, does not desire, and does not see the separation of heavenly matters from earthly ones as an alternative. If these and other designs of God contained in the holy book are not a demonstration “through something more than faith,” it is because this phenomenon has not been properly understood. Jihadists are convinced that they are doing God’s will and that the fruits they will reap from it are clearly not in this world. The very source of their faith establishes this: “Believers! What’s wrong with you? Why, when you are told ‘go to war for God’s sake,’ do you remain on earth? Do you prefer life here to the other one? What is the brief enjoyment of life here compared to the other if not little?” (sura 9, v. 38). The founder of al-Qaeda had once pointed this out:

The United States does not consider it terrorism when hundreds of thousands of our sons and brothers died in Iraq from lack of food or medicine. Therefore, there is no support for what they say. But, that does not affect us, because we, by the grace of God —on whom we depend, praise, and glory, we are with Him!— obtain His help to go against the United States. [...] We are fulfilling a duty that God has decreed for us. We look at those heroes, those men who pledged to kill the American occupiers in Riyadh and Khobar, and we describe them as heroes. They have brought down the disgrace and submission of their nation. We ask Allah to accept them as martyrs. (Arnett, 1997)

11 “If you do not go to war, he will inflict a painful punishment on you. He will make another peoples replace you, without you being able to cause them any harm. Allah is omnipotent” (El Corán, sura 9, v. 39). “The only believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, without any doubt, and fight for Allah with their wealth and their people. Those are the true ones!” (sura 49, v. 15). “Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and fight for Allah with all your wealth and your people. It is better if you know. [...] Thus, he will forgive your sins and bring you into gardens where streams flow underneath and into pleasant dwellings in the gardens of Eden. That is the great success!” (sura 61, vv. 11 and 12).

At the same time that ISIS was under attack by the Western powers and their regional allies, its self-proclaimed “caliph” was calling on all its followers. He recognized that, due to the “seditions and difficulties” spread by the enemies, the group had retreated “from many areas it had taken over and controlled.” However, he urged them as follows: “be calm because your State is still good.” Baghdadi used the occasion to assure them that “each time the conspiracy of the nations against him [ISIS] increases, the more secure Allah’s support will be.” The group’s highest authority was convinced that “fighting this battle is a duty for all Muslims, from which no one is excused.” He promised that “anyone participating in the war against ISIS will pay a high price and regret it,” alluding to the United States, Europe, and Russia (Mickolus, 2016, p. 514).

Jihadists are so committed to their ideals that they are unwilling to give in to anything. Indeed, the only outlet they envisage on the horizon is death, which they do not fear because it is the most eagerly awaited moment for any Muslim committed to the cause to be closer to God and praise him in all glory<sup>12</sup>. For them, surrendering is not an option. It is a dishonor and, above all, a betrayal of God and their brothers and sisters of religion. It is something they would not do under any circumstances<sup>13</sup>. For example, the Saudi government threatened Osama bin Laden to freeze all his assets and take away his citizenship and passport. Knowing of this campaign they had launched against him, he responded with disdain, “They think that a Muslim can negotiate with his religion. I told them to do whatever they wanted.” He continued:

With Allah’s generosity, we refuse to go back. We are living in dignity and honor, those who thank Allah. It is much better for us to live under a tree, here in these mountains, than to live in palaces in the holiest land of Allah, while we are subject to the misfortune of not worshipping Allah, even in the holiest land on earth, where injustice is so widespread. There is no strength except with Allah. (Arnett, 1997)

As this section has shown, jihadists believe they are leading a just cause against the “infidels” and “non-believers” of the West. For them, this justice source is God himself, whom they serve with dedication and commitment. If the powers fail to understand that these groups operate based on fundamentally supernatural variables, any cause they direct

12 In April 2019, Baghdadi confirmed this judgment. He stated, “Americans and Europeans failed when we congratulated our brothers in Sri Lanka for their loyalty to the caliphate. We advised them to adhere to the cause of God and unity and to be a thorn in the Crusader’s side. We ask God to accept their martyrdom and help the brothers to fulfill the journey they began” (*First Post*, 2019).

13 Here is an excerpt from Osama bin Laden’s interview quoted in this paragraph: “To see that we are going to die in Allah’s cause is a great honor desired by our Prophet. He said in his Hadith, ‘I swear by Allah, I wish to fight for the cause of Allah and be killed; I will do it again and be killed, and I will do it again and be killed.’ To be killed for Allah’s cause is a great honor achieved only by those who are the elite of the nation. We love this kind of death for Allah’s sake as much as we love to live. We do not have to be afraid. It is something we want” (Arnett, 1997, author’s translation).



against them is likely to be sterile. Anyone thinking that faith is not a plausible source of support for movements like jihadism is not only mistaken but also unaware (and dismisses the possibility) that a good part of the world's inhabitants continue to base their actions on divine wonders that today's modern society has decided to ignore.

## The West and the “just war” against terrorism

If jihadist groups have raised the flag of justice to attack the West, governments have done the same to defend themselves and confront Islamic terrorists in all possible scenarios. Indeed, most Western administrations not only refute the possibility that the jihadist cause is just but also deny that they are responsible for the accusations that the leaders of these groups have made against them. There is no evidence to show that the governments of the United States, France, England, or others, have acknowledged any culpability in the events they are charged with. On the contrary, they firmly maintain that their counter-terrorism projects are fair and valid to the extent that they are responding to a previous aggression. For instance, appealing to the courage and optimism of the victims and American citizens, President Bush stated in a rather belligerent speech:

We will never forget everything we have lost and everything we are fighting for. Ours is the cause of freedom. We have defeated the enemies of freedom before, and we will defeat them again. We cannot know every turn this battle will take. However, we know that our cause is just, and our final victory is assured. We will face new challenges. But, we have our marching orders: my countrymen, we are going to fight. (Bush, 2001, p. 1365)

On July 16, 2002, Bush declared to the press that his government had designed a series of legislative and legal projects to strengthen the nation in the face of any terrorist attack. These initiatives were to reinforce what he called the “war against terrorism,” which involved various efforts in matters of security and national defense. It covered preventive military actions against all terrorist groups, regardless of whether they were inside or outside the national territory<sup>14</sup>. The project actually involved containing the terrorists in their places of origin. It also included establishing institutions such as the Department of Homeland Security, with a ministerial character and specialized structure. According to President Bush, his main objective was none other than to ensure that “every terrorist group with a global reach is found, stopped, and defeated.”

14 It is not possible to argue that all Western countries have replicated this approach. It is plausible to demonstrate that other nations have projected the fight against terrorism beyond their borders. After the attacks in Nice in July 2016, President Hollande stated, “Nothing will make us give up on our will to fight terrorism. We will continue to strengthen our actions in Iraq and Syria. We will continue to attack those who attack us on our own soil.” (*The Guardian*, 15 de julio de 2016)

For Western governments, terrorists violate the first and most important mantra of any just cause, avoiding the deliberate and indiscriminate killing of civilians. A few days after 9/11, Bush said: "I have made it clear that the war on terrorism is not a war against Muslims, nor is it a war against Arabs. It is a war against evil people who commit crimes against innocent people" (2001, p. 1129). Similarly, after the Paris bombing in late 2015, President Hollande stated, "terrorists believe that free people will be intimidated by horror, but this is not the case; the French Republic has overcome many other trials," "citizens will not give up." If "one of their children is knocked down, the rest will stand up." To conclude, he said: "those who wanted to destroy them by deliberately targeting innocents are cowards shooting into an unarmed crowd." He affirmed that this was not a "war of civilizations because these killers do not represent one." (Hollande, 2015).

Terrorists did not only murder innocent people; they also transgressed an inherent principle of justice, freedom (Hollande, 2015). When Bush was asked about the links between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's government, he did not hesitate for a moment to say that "anyone who harbors terrorists must fear the United States and the rest of the free world." He went on to say that "anyone who encourages terrorism will be held accountable. We are gathering all the evidence on this particular crime and other crimes against freedom-loving people." Adding other variables in this regard, President Hollande declared in late 2016 that "democracy, freedom, social rights, and even peace become vulnerable and reversible" to the terrorist threat. Such arguments would be sufficient to pursue terrorists in all possible scenarios (Euronews, 2017)<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the same context, David Cameron proclaimed the country's liberal values as the "strongest weapon" to combat Islamic extremism (cited by Grierson, 2015).

These points create a hypothesis that strains the views of jihadists and Western governments. If the former base their just cause on the precepts emanating from God, the latter does so by relying on humanity<sup>16</sup>. President Bush noted in early 2002 that "every civilized nation has a stake in this struggle because every civilized nation has a stake in its outcome." For him, it was impossible for there to be peace in a world "where differences and grievances become an excuse to attack the innocent by murder." Moreover, that the fight against terrorism is made "by the conditions that will make lasting peace possible," "by legal change against chaotic violence," "by the human choice against coercion and

15 In November 2015, after the attacks in Paris, Hollande pointed out at the United Nations that "[the attacks] were carried out by a jihadist army, by Daesh, who fights us because France is a country of freedom, because we are the birthplace of human rights." (Hollande, 2015, author's translation)

16 This point can be qualified, especially if we take into account President Obama's words on the same day that bin Laden fell: "Let us remember that we can do these things, not only for wealth or power, but for what we are: one nation, under God, indivisible, with freedom and justice for all." (Obama, 2011, author's translation)

cruelty,” and “by the dignity and goodness of each life.” Bush closed this speech, which commemorated the six months since 9/11, by stating the following:

[...] All nations must know that, for the United States, the war on terrorism is not just a policy, but a promise. I will not give in to this fight for the freedom and security of my country and the civilized world. (Bush, 2002)

According to this, the West would fight a just war, given that Western countries were first attacked by international jihadism. This is basically the same argument that Islamic groups use against countries they consider their enemies. After bin Laden’s assassination, Obama remembered the events of 9/11 as “our time of grief.” He said: we “offered a hand to our neighbors and our blood to the wounded,” “we reaffirmed our bonds with each other and our love for community and country,” and “we are united in our determination to protect our nation.” Al Qaeda took on a certain prominence because, according to Obama (2011), “it had openly declared war on the United States and committed itself to murder innocents in our country and around the world.” Therefore, the United States went “to war, to protect our citizens, friends, and allies” (Obama, 2011). This remembered speech clearly synthesizes the Western mentality in these matters. In the face of aggression, it is fair and necessary to fight back vigorously against the attackers, appealing to self-defense.

Because of the terrorist attacks, Western states have designed and implemented security systems unparalleled in history. They know that the enemies can attack at any time, in the most varied and unexpected ways (explosions, shootings, running over). They are aware that the threat is latent<sup>17</sup>. All of this has led them to promote a sense of permanent defense. They conceive themselves as the victims of this global war and not the victimizers; this place belongs to the terrorists. President Bush once said that “terrorism knows no borders, it has no capital, but it has a common ideology, and that is that they hate freedom and they hate people who love freedom. And they particularly hate America right now” (2001, p. 1131). About safeguarding, he continued: “our nation must do everything possible to protect the homeland, and we are doing it.” In October 2001, Bush was proclaiming the United States was harmed, not the others.

It is hard for Americans to imagine how evil the people who are doing this are. We have to adjust our thinking. We are a kind nation, we are a compassionate nation, we are a nation of strong values, and we value life. We are learning that people in this world want to terrorize our country by trying to take its life. (Bush, 2001, p. 1293)

17 After the attack in Nice in 2016, the French Minister of the Interior, Bernard Cazeneuve, declared: “We are at war with the terrorists who want to attack us at all costs and who are extremely violent.” (*The Guardian*, 15 de julio de 2016)

A decade later, his successor, President Obama, claimed that Bin Laden had “planned attacks against our country, our friends and our allies.” Bin Laden’s death, he said, was “the most significant achievement to date in our nation’s effort to defeat al-Qaeda,” evidencing that the fight against terrorism is nothing more than a proposal for a just war against an enemy that struck first. The jihadist leader’s assassination is not “the end of our effort,” said Obama. He did not rule out that the group would continue to “carry out attacks against us.” Therefore, he said, “We must —and will!— remain vigilant at home and abroad.” (Obama, 2011)

Western governments affirm that their causes are fair to the extent that their actions conform to international standards, unlike their enemies, who operate outside all legal boundaries. In another press briefing, President Bush stated that the United States would attack the sources of terrorist financing until they were defeated. This would not be illegal, he said. On the contrary, he continued, “I want to assure the world that we will exercise this power responsibly.” Addressing his fellow citizens, he said, “I want to assure the American people that, in taking this action and publishing this list, we are acting on clear evidence” (Bush, 2001, p. 1150). It should be noted that the war would also be fought in compliance with international law. Therefore, Bush and his secretary, Colin Powell,<sup>18</sup> appealed to agencies with the following:

The United States has signed two international agreements. One is designed to establish international standards for freezing financial assets. I ask members of the United States Senate to approve the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and a related convention on terrorist bombings and work with me on implementing the legislation. (Bush, 2001, pp. 1150 y ss.)<sup>19</sup>

On the Western side, jihad’s theological arguments are inconceivable; they have no basis in reality. Therefore, its highest representatives reject any possibility that it is feasible to attack civilians by embracing religion. In one of his visits to the FBI, Bush stated that terrorists “plan, promote, and commit murder, filling the minds of others with hatred and lies. And, by their cruelty and violence, they betray any faith they defend” (2001, p. 1576). He continued by saying that “Our war is not against a religion. Our war is

18 In the same press briefing, Powell said: “We will take this initiative to the United Nations and seek to obtain additional resolutions that will serve similar purposes. We are working with the European Union. We are working with the G-7 and the G-8. [...] We will work with Congress, as mentioned by the President, to get these two UN conventions ratified and the legislation implemented.” (Bush, 2001, p. 1150)

19 After the attacks in Paris, in November 2015, President Hollande declared “we are at war. But, this war is a different kind of war; we are facing a new kind of adversary. A constitutional framework is needed to address this emergency.” He went on to say, “I know that other proposals have been made to strengthen surveillance of certain individuals, especially those on file. The government, in a spirit of national unity, will ask the Council of State to examine whether these proposals are in accordance with our international commitments and our basic laws. That sentence will be made public and I will draw all the consequences.” (Hollande, 2015)

against evil,” and claiming that there were “thousands of Muslim Americans who love America as much as I do.” To them, the American president promised to secure their rights. In the same line, Obama clarified a point that makes one think that one way to delegitimize the jihadists quickly is by undermining the Islamic bases on which they sustain their struggle. He stated:

We must reaffirm that the United States is not, and never will be, at war with Islam. I made it clear that our war is not against Islam. Bin Laden was not a Muslim leader; he was a mass murderer of Muslims. In fact, al-Qaeda has killed dozens of Muslims in many countries, including ours. Therefore, their disappearance should be welcomed by all those who believe in peace and human dignity. (Obama, 2011)

It is interesting to see that Bush also questioned other aspects of Muslim culture and not just jihad. After asserting that the United States was “the target of enemies who boast of wanting to kill all Americans, all Jews, and all Christians,” he pointed out that the only response to such threats was to “confront and defeat them,” that enemy sought to “destroy our freedom and impose its views.” Meanwhile, he conceived the Americans as those who “value life” and “education” and groups like Al Qaeda as those who “do not believe that women should be educated or that they should receive medical care,” a far cry from the American culture. If bin Laden accused Westerners of murdering women and children, Bush employed the same rhetorical device<sup>20</sup>. At the same time, he appropriated the fight against terrorism as his personal project:

For terrorists, free expression can be grounds for execution. We respect people of all faiths and welcome the free practice of religion. Our enemy wants to dictate how to think and how to worship, even to his fellow Muslims. This enemy tries to hide behind a peaceful faith. But those who celebrate the killing of innocent men, women, and children have no religion, no conscience, and no mercy. We are fighting a war to save civilization. We do not seek it, but we must fight it, and we will prevail. (Bush, 2001, p. 1361)

Over time, these considerations led to other dimensions that further enhanced the postulation of a just war. “We are facing an enemy of ruthless ambition, with no legal or moral restraints,” Bush noted. He argued that not only do they “despise other religions,” but they have also “desecrated their own.” The American president posited that Al Qaeda was determined to increase its scale and reach, even to “strike at any center of civiliza-

20 Hollande used a similar resource in late 2015 when he said: “Today, our country is in mourning. We think of the innocents who were killed in Paris and the outskirts of the city by armed assassins. We think of their families who are experiencing the most inconsolable pain. We think of the hundreds of young men and women who were beaten, injured, traumatized by this terrible attack. As I speak, some of them are still fighting for their lives.” (Hollande, 2015)

tion”; therefore, there could be no “immunity or neutrality” regarding these enemies. This statement drives us to a key concept in understanding the notion of just war against international terrorism, namely, that these groups’ amoral actions had become a global problem. Thus, the conflict became the confrontation of two world views, each one arguing that its undertakings are entirely fair. Feeding the idea of being faced with a global threat, “where many nations and many families have lived in the shadows of terrorism for decades, enduring years of senseless and merciless killing,” Bush urged the nations of the world to follow in his footsteps.

9/11 was not the beginning of global terror, but the beginning of the world’s concerted response, [...] when the civilized world turned to anger and action. [...] A powerful coalition of civilized nations is now defending our common security. [...] A terrorist regime has been overthrown from power. Terrorist plots have unraveled, from Spain to Singapore. [...] Today, we are with representatives of many of our partners in this great work, and we are proud to display their flags at the White House this morning. [...] The power and vitality of our coalition have been tested in Afghanistan. More than half of the forces now assisting the heroic Afghan fighters [...] come from countries other than the United States. There are many examples of commitment. (Bush, 2002)<sup>21</sup>

In that same speech, the American president pointed out that “the nations of our coalition have shared the responsibilities and sacrifices of our cause.” From that moment on, this became a cause for their Western allies. Months after 9/11, the United States stopped presenting itself as the victim nation. It positioned itself as the power that would rid the world of jihadism. Not by chance, Bush himself stated that “part of that cause was to free the Afghan people from terrorist occupation, and we did that.” From that deliverance, Afghan schools would be open, and “many young women [would] attend for the first time in their lives.” The just war waged against the terrorists would also have “averted mass starvation” and “activated the clearing of minefields,” “rebuilding of roads,” and “improving health care.” In other words, Bush stated, we had to fight for “a better world” with justice (Bush, 2002).

One last point connects with the previous ones, which is equally important for understanding the notion of just war promoted by Western countries in recent times; that, paying those who attacked first in kind, but proportionally. In his speech on bin Laden’s death, Obama said his people understood the costs of war. He used the occasion to promise that his administration would not tolerate any threats to national security

21 President Bush stated: “Our good ally, France, has deployed nearly a quarter of its navy to support Operation Enduring Freedom, and Britain has sent its largest naval task force in twenty years, [...] along with teams from Australia, Canada, Norway, Denmark, and Germany. In total, seventeen nations have deployed forces to the region. We could not have done our work without the critical support of countries, particularly countries like Pakistan and Uzbekistan.” (2002)

and would never look at such threats passively. “We will be relentless in defense of our citizens and our friends and allies,” he said. On that occasion, he made it clear that his driving purpose was the same as the terrorists’ towards them. However, he appealed to an argument of solid equanimity: “True to the values that make us who we are; we can tell those families who have lost loved ones to the terror of Al Qaeda, justice has been done.” President Hollande made a similar statement sometime later.

Those who ordered the Paris attacks should know that, far from undermining France’s determination, they further strengthened our resolve to destroy them. [...] This organization [ISIS] must be destroyed, [...] to save the populations of [...] all the neighboring countries. And to protect us, to prevent foreign fighters from coming to our country, as was the case on Friday, to commit terrorist acts. (Hollande, 2015)

This second section reveals two elements that have intensely complicated the war against terrorism. For Western governments, the fight against jihadists is a well-founded act because jihad violates all the principles of just war, beginning with the indiscriminate killing of civilians. However, there is a second element revealed that radically distances itself from the worldview of terrorists. If they believe their cause is legitimate and necessary, Western nations have responded by making terrorism a criminal offense. A few months after 9/11, Bush noted that “the first objective” of his security policy was to “bring to justice” not only the terrorists but also the “organizations and governments that harbor them” (2001, p. 1134). Sometime later, referring to the terrorists, he said that “they try to operate in the shadows, to hide. But we will shine the light of justice on them. [...] Terrorism has a face, and today we expose it for the world to see” (2001, p. 1212). President Hollande made a similar statement in late 2015.

And since the threat will continue, and we will participate in the fight against Daesh for a long time, abroad and at home, I also decided to substantially strengthen the resources available to the justice system and security forces. First, investigative services and anti-terrorist judges must, within the context of judicial proceedings, make use of the full range of intelligence techniques offered by new technology, the use of which is authorized, in an administrative context, through the intelligence law. Criminal proceedings should also, to the extent possible, take into account the specific nature of the terrorist threat. (Hollande, 2015)

## Conclusions

This paper has proposed that, despite all the differences between jihadists and their Western enemies, they both have one element in common. Both sides are convinced that they are conducting entirely just wars; at least, that is what some jihadists and some rulers



of the nations attacked by global terrorism's speeches reflect. The first section showed that the jihadists believe that their struggle is legitimate to the extent that they are defending themselves against aggressors, "killers" of innocents, usurpers of wealth, and invaders of local sovereignty. A similar dynamic was demonstrated in the second section. Western governments think that the impiety of terrorists against innocent people is reason enough to repel them forcefully. In addition to attacking with deliberate and uncontrolled violence, they violate the number one principle of fights like this one: the indiscriminate attack of non-combatants.

The issue posed by this work becomes even more problematic when both parties firmly believe that they are victims of the injustice expressed by their enemies. What happens then, when the two sides in question believe that their duty is to establish justice corrupted by an adversary who attacked and killed first? This is the first question. The second is, perhaps, darker. What is the fate of a war driven by one party claiming to be fulfilling God's command? Could this be the cause of what Carl Schmitt called in the 1930s the *totaler Feind* (total enemy) and the *totaler Krieg* (total war) (Seifert, 1985)? Although, for several specialists, this is not a substantive explanation because it lacks "rigor" and "meaning," this work invites us to revisit the subject. Recent history has shown that groups that act motivated and compelled by God do so at ease and convinced and hopeful that they are fulfilling supernatural obligations that are no more than "illogical" reasons for today's world.

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