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Empirical Investigation of Normative Discourse on War: The Case of the Donagan–Aquinas Thesis*

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Quantitative and analytical social scientists increasingly have become interested in analyzing traditional normative problems. In this article we discuss the operationalization of conjectures contained in the Donagan–Aquinas thesis about the agreement of lay people and ethicists with the substantive content of the system of common morality concerning use of force. The thesis focuses on the complexity of reasoning at various levels in a claimed linkage between the golden rule, intermediate moral precepts, and just war theory. It holds that both lay people and ethicists who accept the golden rule also will accept the distinction between killing and murder; and both groups will reject pacificism, aggressive war, and amorality in favor of the moral acceptability of defensive war. However, this consensus between lay people and ethicists will break down on the more complex issues of war. The system of common morality is described as to its structure, derivation, and content, and the thesis is tested using national level survey data from five American elite groups. Most of the individuals surveyed support the principle of the golden rule and its application through just war theory regarding the moral complexities of conventional war, but the results to mutual assured destruction warfare items suggest a secular norm of negative reciprocity, which is analogous to the international legal concept of reprisal. We conclude that the Donagan–Aquinas thesis is supported regarding problems of conventional war, but its predictions – and the consensus among contemporary just war theorists – break down under the onslaught of the problems generated by nuclear weapons.

1. *Introduction*

Recent studies have demonstrated the possibility that survey research techniques can be used to measure support for the doctrinal positions on the morality of war developed by traditional thinkers (e.g. Brunk et al., 1990; Tamashiro et al., 1989). Following this line of research, our purpose is to examine the validity of assertions made first by Thomas Aquinas and further developed by the contemporary US philosopher–theologian, Alan Donagan (1977), concerning the reasoning of common people and ethicists about the morality of the use of deadly force. Drawing upon survey data on five US elite groups, we focus on the particular claims of Aquinas and Donagan about the relationships between the golden rule, just war theory, and intermediate moral precepts.

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2. *The Donagan–Aquinas Thesis*

In elaborating the moral theology of the key developers of Judeo-Christian ethics like Augustine (c. 410), and particularly Aquinas (c. 1266), Donagan develops a philosophically-based theory of the structure, derivational source, and substantive content of a system of 'common morality' consisting of man's moral duties to man, as opposed to his moral duties to God (see Table I). Stated briefly, the *structure* of this system of common morality is deductive. At its first level it consists of one or more fundamental moral principles that yield a few secondary general moral precepts and, in turn, more specific precepts at the third level. The derivational *sources* of the entire system of common morality are either divine revelation or human reason. The exercise of simple reason leads to the discovery of the fundamental moral principles of common morality. Still further simple reasoning yields the general precepts, but more complex reasoning is needed to discover the

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specific precepts that logically follow from the latter.

As for the *content* of common morality, we focus here on the morality of the use of deadly force. The fundamental moral principle of common morality has several versions according to Donagan. These are 'love thy neighbor as thyself', positive or negative formulations of the golden rule, and Kant's requirement of treating others as an end in themselves. The natural law basis of these versions (as opposed, for example, to the theological virtue *caritas*) generates a 'right to life' for universal others as the supreme value of common morality.

The fundamental principal and the right to life value are the sources of the general precept that one should not violate the right to life of 'innocent' others (Donagan, 1977, pp. 57–74, 81–90). Such violation is 'murder', which is taking the life of anyone who is not threatening the biological life of innocent others, and it is condemned as immoral. An interrelated general precept states that it is morally acceptable to take the life of the murderer when this is the only way to defend the innocent. This action is termed 'killing' and it is reasoned that the murderer sacrifices his 'right to life' when he threatens an innocent. Accordingly, in this system of common morality, the key value of a right to life of 'universal others' is modified at the second level into one of a right to life for 'universal innocent others', and the conclusion is drawn that the morally motivated person has a higher obligation to respect the right to life of innocent neighbors than that of the murderous neighbor.

These fundamental moral principles and their general precepts are believed to logically yield more specific precepts at the tertiary level on more complicated issues such as the morality of abortion and many aspects of war. As for the substantive content of these derivative specific precepts concerning war, Augustine and Aquinas developed 'just war' theory as their response. In most contemporary Catholic and Protestant versions of this tradition, just war theory consists of seven principles or criteria that must be satisfied for a war to be considered 'just' (see Table II). The first six principles apply to the resort to war (jus ad bellum); the seventh plus just intent and proportionality apply to the waging of war (jus in bello).[1]

With this brief description of the system of common morality, we can now state the general form of the Donagan–Aquinas thesis. Firstly, it holds that one does not have to rely on divine revelation, be a Christian or a Jew, or be a philosopher or theologian, to recognize the intuitive appeal of the statement, 'Do onto others as you would have them do onto you'. According to Aquinas, both 'skilled moralists' and 'ordinary folk' can discover the golden rule through simple reason.

Secondly, those skilled moralists and ordinary folk who discover the golden rule can discover – through further rational reflection – the following general precepts concerning the morality of war. On the one hand, war waged to defend the innocent against attack is morally acceptable since it is analogous to 'killing' the 'murderer' in an

Table I. The Donagan–Aquinas System of Common Morality

Structure	Source	Content: Interpersonal Relations	Content: International Relations
Fundamental moral principles	Simple reasoning	Concern for right to life for others	–
Derivative general moral precepts	Simple reasoning	Concern for right to life of innocent others. Murder is wrong, but killing is not wrong	Aggressive war is immoral, but defensive war is moral
Derivative specific moral precepts	Complex reasoning	–	Just war theory

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Table II. The Seven Generally Accepted Criteria for a Just War

Name	Essence of Principle
1. Competent Authority	A war must be declared by politically responsible authorities and not by private individuals
2. Probability of Success	A war should not be undertaken if there is no obvious hope for success
3. Proportionality	The good brought about by a war should outweigh its evils in cost and destruction to both sides
4. Last Resort	A war must be a last resort after sincere efforts have been made to resolve the controversy peacefully
5. Just Intent	The object of a war must be peace and reconciliation and not the unlimited destruction of the enemy state
6. Just Cause	The war must be an act of defense in response to armed aggression
7. Discriminate Means	Military actions should not be waged that directly intend to take the lives of civilians

interpersonal setting. On the other, this outlook is incompatible with the central components of the doctrines of pacifism, holy war, and amoral reason of state. Pacifism does not allow for the defense of the innocent victims of aggressive wars. Holy wars launched to spread religious values or moral crusades to spread ideological belief systems are analogous to murderous attacks against the innocent. In its advocacy of amoral expediency as the statesman's guideline on issues of war, reason of state doctrine denies the essence of morality as defined by the golden rule, which is to have concern for universal others.

Thirdly, beyond these points of agreement between skilled moralists and ordinary folk, the consensus will break down on the more complicated moral questions concerning war, such as possible restraints on the conduct of warfare, the morality of preemptive war, or of deterrent strategies. Ordinary folk may well have opinions on these matters, but these opinions will be diverse and may lack logical coherence. According to the Donagan–Aquinas thesis, only skilled moralists have the abilities and training needed to apply the fundamental principles and derivative general precepts to discover logically consistent answers on the more complicated moral issues of war. Further, those skilled moralists who begin their logical deductions by assuming the primacy of the golden rule should maintain relatively unified positions (Donagan, 1977, pp. 15–17, 87, 109–111).

The Donagan–Aquinas thesis is summarized in the following passage in which Donagan paraphrases Aquinas:

> The first common principles are self-evident . . . to human reason, and the (relevant secondary) precepts . . . can be known from them straight off with a little thought. . . . As for the more specific precepts of morality, although they can be inferred from the precepts . . . by diligent inquiry . . . only the wise are capable of carrying out such inquiries. Ordinary folk will therefore receive the more specific precepts by instruction (Donagan, 1977, p. 60).[2]

Underlining the Donagan–Aquinas thesis is the assumption that the just war theory follows logically from the golden rule – even though the unsophisticated may not be able to discover or comprehend all the linkages. Donagan did not trace this derivation in detail since this was beyond the purpose of his work. Instead, he focused only upon the derivation of the fundamental moral principles and the secondary general precepts of the system of common morality. The seven generally accepted criteria for a just war are presented in Table II.

3. *Specific Hypotheses*

The Donagan–Aquinas thesis contains a number of interesting, separate propositions that can be investigated empirically. They can be summarized in a series of hypotheses:

1. There should be substantial support among any group of respondents for the golden rule.

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2. Among common people *who support the golden rule*, there should be a stronger association between support for the golden rule and the secondary general moral precepts than for the more specific rules developed by skilled moralists.
3. Since the component principles of just war theory can be derived from the golden rule, the following relationships should hold:
   A. There should be a strong relationship between support for the golden rule and support for just war principles *among those skilled moralists who accept the golden rule*.
   B. There should be a weaker relationship between support for the golden rule and support for just war principles among common citizens *who accept the golden rule*.
   C. This weaker correlation stems from the complexity of many morality and war issues and the type of sophisticated, technical reasoning needed to resolve them. The use of simple reasoning by common people will lead to a variety of 'answers' to these issues.

4. *Research Design*

A series of survey items designed to measure support for the various moral and amoral approaches to warfare that are found in the traditional literature were developed and tested by Tamashiro et al. (1989) and are reproduced in their appendix. Here we utilize the items designed to measure support for the golden rule, pacifism, holy war, reason of state, and just war principles. Our final questionnaire consisted of 34 such items, a series of separate demographic items tailored to each of the five elite groups, and various other questions regarding issues of warfare and international politics that are not utilized in the current analysis. The entire questionnaire was three pages in length and was mailed with an additional personalized letter.

4.1 *Five Elite Groups*

The groups utilized in this study are former congresspersons, retired US military officers, US foreign service officers, newspaper editors, and the Catholic clergy serving in the United States. Sampling the opinions of individuals from such varied backgrounds allows for a comparison of the normative belief systems that have developed from experiential reflection on war and from a more philosophical approach.

The American Catholic clergy can be assumed to be versed in just war theory since it is official Church doctrine and was utilized by the US Catholic Bishops in their examination of nuclear weapons issues during the 1980s (Castelli, 1983). In fact 97% of the clergy responded to one of our questions by indicating that they felt themselves to be 'fairly well informed about recent Catholic Church teachings on war and morality'. Hence, the Catholic clergy constitute one living version of the 'skilled moralists' described by Aquinas and Donagan.

But while the Catholic clergy have studied the moral issues involved in war, they are not skilled in the practice of war. The military officers in our study display the latter characteristic. It is likely that their military experiences – 54% had been in combat – have caused many of them to ponder the ethics and morality of warfare, but clearly these military officers are not 'skilled moralists'.

The foreign service officers in the study are professionals in various aspects of international affairs and foreign policy, but they are not so skilled in the moral issues of war as theologians, or in the practices of warfare as are the military officers. However, these diplomats no doubt have informed views on the moral issues involved in warfare that were formed from a totally different, and perhaps amoral, reason of state perspective.

The final two elite groups consist of newspaper editors and former congresspersons. They too should have distinction opinions about morality and warfare formed from their unique institutional experiences. Congress is given the ultimate power by the US Constitution to declare war, while the 'fifth estate' is relied upon to inform the people about the implications of US foreign policy decisions. Taken together these five elite

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groups should provide very different perspectives on the issues of morality and war.

4.2 *Sampling*

We chose our samples based on the available mailing lists of the five elite groups. The questionnaire was mailed to 1,000 retired members of a major organization of military officers, and 620 returned it to us. The survey was mailed to all 382 members of the US Catholic Church hierarchy, of which 84 returned the survey. It was also sent to a random sample of the 18,459 priests assigned to parishes in the United States. Of the 1,518 questionnaires mailed in this manner, 382 priests returned the instrument. The survey of foreign service officers (FSOs) was conducted by sending letters to the chief of mission and public affairs officers at each US diplomatic post. The letters described our project and asked for encouragement of voluntary FSO participation. A varied number of questionnaires was sent to each post for distribution to willing FSOs. We received 511 completed questionnaires from the FSOs, but we have no way of knowing how many actually were distributed as some ambassadors refused to encourage participation.

Our sample of congresspersons was gathered by sending a letter to the mailing addresses of the 583 members of the United States Association of Former Members of Congress. Undoubtedly a number of the letters never reached their intended destination and many were screened out by secretaries. In order to control for responses by staff, we included an item in this version of the questionnaire asking if one was a congressperson, senator, or staff member. The responses by staff were discarded for this analysis. Some 169 former congresspersons and senators returned completed questionnaires. Finally, our sample of editorial page editors of US daily newspapers was drawn at random from a list provided by the Editor and publishing company. It was sent to 1,586 individuals, and 371 returned completed forms.

5. *Measuring Support for Golden Rule and Just War Theory*

In our survey, at least three questions were used to tap separate aspects of each moral and amoral approach to international politics. The wordings for the golden rule questions are as follows:

5.1 *Golden Rule*

'If we do not want other nations to spy on us, we should not spy on them.'

'If we want other countries to keep their treaty promises, we should keep our treaty promises.'

'Our government should treat other countries in the same way that we want to be treated.'

Respondents were asked whether they 'strongly agreed', 'agreed', were 'neutral', 'disagreed', or 'strongly disagreed' with each of these five-point Likert items. Although there is a substantial difference in percentage agreement with the statements among the five surveyed groups, all the golden rule items correlate positively with one another. The dominant factor explains 53% of the variance in question responses.

The items used to measure support for the doctrines of holy war or moral crusade, pacifism, and reason of state are presented below. Each of the items in a group was designed to measure different aspects of the doctrine's basic position. Within each set of items, all items correlate positively with one another, and the principal factor for each group of items explains between 45% and 57% of the response variation.

5.2 *Holy War or Moral Crusade*

'When at war, we have a moral duty to punish and totally destroy the enemy.'

'It is all right to use military force to convert others to our beliefs.'

'There are moral values so important that we should not deal with those who disagree with these values.'

5.3 *Pacifism*

'If one must choose either non-violent resistance or participating in war, non-violent resistance is the only moral choice.'

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'Morality requires that a nation should not resist if attacked by a foreign country.'
'It is always wrong to kill another person, even in war.'

5.4 *Reason of State or Amorality*
'The only thing that matters in war is victory.'
'National interest, rather than morality, should determine our foreign policy.'
'We should go to war whenever it is to our advantage.'

The second reason of state item deserves comment as it reflects a 'moral' version of the reason of state doctrine (Brunk et al., 1990). Some scholars (e.g. Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985) claim that the goal of protecting 'national interests' has a moral quality since it reflects concern for others within one's own nation. However, most ethicists classify any nationalistic value system as immoral because it lacks concern for universal others.

Presented below are the items used to measure support for each of the seven just war principles previously described. The name by which they are generally known is also given in parentheses. All the items again correlate positively with one another. They comprise only one factor having an eigen-value greater than 1.00, which explains 40% of the variance in responses.

1. 'A war must be legally authorized before it can be considered to be moral' (Competent Authority).
2. 'It is not moral to fight a war that one has no chance of winning' (Probability of Success).
3. 'The amount of war damage and casualties to both sides is important in deciding whether a war is moral' (Proportionality).
4. 'It is not moral to fight a war until all peaceful alternatives have been tried first' (Last Resort).
5. 'A moral war must seek only to defeat the enemy's military and not to totally destroy his society' (Just intent).
6. 'A war must be an act of self-defense in order for it to be moral' (Just Cause).
7. 'Efforts to avoid killing civilians are necessary for a war to be moral' (Discriminate Means).

6. *Analysis*
Table III presents the level of support given by the five elite groups for the golden rule, just war theory, and the major opposing traditional viewpoints of reason of state, holy war or moral crusading, and pacifism. For ease of presentation, support is measured in this table by examining the average percentage of those responding 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to each component question of the various scales.

Substantial support from all five groups is evident for the golden rule. The four secular elites show very little support for either pacifism or holy war/moral crusading, but evidence weak support for amoral reason of state and close to majority support for just war theory. By way of contrast, the clergy give strong support to just war theory and very little support to the rival doctrines. The pattern of responses of the clergy is very consistent with the moral reasoning that underpins just war theory. Also, the pattern

Table III. Percentage of Average Support for the Ethical Schools

	Elite Group				
Philosophical School	Retired Congresspersons	American Diplomats	Military Officers	Newspaper Editors	Religious Leaders
Golden Rule	71.6	64.4	63.3	72.9	80.8
Reason of State	27.9	24.2	40.9	20.4	3.0
Just War	51.0	45.3	36.3	48.5	74.2
Holy War (Moral Crusade)	11.2	6.3	10.5	7.1	3.8
Pacifism	12.3	9.3	5.5	13.1	17.2
Total Number of Respondents	169	511	620	371	481

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of responses of the secular groups generally reflects agreement with the substantive content of the system of common morality except at its tertiary complex stage (see Table I). Both patterns are consistent with the Donagan–Aquinas thesis, but determining the validity of its propositions requires a more careful examination of the data.

6.1 *Proposition One*

The first proposition derived from the Donagan–Aquinas thesis holds that there should be a high level of acceptance of the golden rule principle 'Do onto others as you would have them do onto you'. As evident in Table IV, there is overwhelming support from all five elite groups for the golden rule item concerning how one's government should treat other nations (a mean of 90% of average support from the five groups) and whether we should keep our word by honoring treaty promises (98% support). At the same time, there is overwhelming opposition to the idea that, 'If we do not want other nations to spy on us, we should not spy on them'. This item only received 19% support from the four secular groups, and even 52% of the clergy did not consider spying to be immoral. Overall, the evidence supports the first proposition of the Donagan–Aquinas thesis in finding a general acceptance of the golden rule, although individuals differ widely on its specific applications. The average level of support for the golden rule across the three items is 68% for the four secular elites, while it is 81% for the religious elite sample.

6.2 *Proposition Two*

The survey response patterns generally confirm the second proposition that support for the golden rule should lead one to discover the derivative general moral precepts regarding taking a life, i.e. that there is a difference between 'killing' and 'murder'. The pattern of responses necessary to validate this proposition consists of rejecting the survey items representing the doctrines of holy war, pacifism, and amoral reason of state, coupled with support for those items that reflect the defensive aspects of just war theory (see below).

Looking again at Table III, we see that an average of only 12% of all those surveyed supported each of the pacifism items, and only 8% supported moral crusading. The differences between the secular and religious elites are not as great on these two doctrines as on the reason of state items. Only 3% of the clergy support the reason of state items, while 28% of the secular elites do so. The greatest support for reason of state not unsurprisingly comes from the military at 41% support.

As for support for the just war position, some just war principles embody second-level general precepts (see Table I). These precepts call for the condemnation of murder or aggressive war but the condoning of the defensive use of deadly force. The relevant just war principles are just cause and last resort, which require that the use of force should be a last resort for defensive purposes. The average support among the four secular groups for the last resort principle is 72% (see Table IV), and 94% among the clergy. These results again are in line with proposition two. However, only 40% of the secular elites support the just cause item, although 77% of the clergy do so.

All of these results generally support proposition two, except those from the secular elites on the just cause principle. However, an examination of the results on the reason of state, holy war, and pacifism items that deal with justifications for resort to war provides a better test of this proposition. In the case of reason of state, one item embodies the stark amorality or Machiavellian characteristic of the doctrine in using war as a policy instrument. Only 2% of the secular elites and 1% of the clergy indicate support for this totally amoral approach toward the resort to war. For the holy war doctrine, the relevant item also is soundly rejected. Only 5% of the secular elites show support for it, and even less with the clergy. On the relevant pacifism item, there is almost total rejection of the doctrinal position that nonviolence is the required moral response of a nation to aggressive attack. Overall, the results on these items indicate strong agreement among all five groups with the second-

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Table IV. Average Level of Support for Items Tapping Principles of the Golden Rule, Reason of State, Holy War, Pacifism, and Just War

	Elite Group				
Individual Item	Retired Congresspersons	American Diplomats	Military Officers	Newspaper Editors	Religious Leaders
Golden Rule					
Spying	24.3	12.6	8.8	28.9	48.2
Treaties	99.4	96.5	95.9	97.6	98.5
Conduct	91.1	84.2	85.3	92.1	95.6
Average	71.6	64.4	63.3	72.9	80.8
Reason of State					
Only Victory Matters	42.3	21.8	58.6	27.3	5.6
National Interest Paramount	49.4	48.4	61.0	33.1	2.1
Use Warfare if Useful	1.2	2.4	2.9	1.0	1.3
Average	31.0	24.2	47.8	20.5	3.0
Holy War or Moral Crusade					
Punish the Enemy	14.2	5.1	16.6	7.0	0.0
Convert Others	3.6	5.9	7.7	1.9	1.9
No Contact with Enemy	12.7	7.9	7.4	12.3	9.0
Average	10.2	6.3	10.6	7.1	3.6
Pacifism					
Non-Violence Only Morality	17.3	10.2	5.1	17.6	27.6
Should Not Resist Attack	3.6	1.6	1.8	3.0	4.0
Always Wrong to Kill	11.9	16.1	9.7	18.7	20.0
Average	10.9	9.3	5.3	10.4	17.2
Just War					
Competent Authority	29.8	16.3	21.8	25.5	46.8
Probability of Success	24.4	11.7	8.3	16.1	47.6
Proportionality	23.8	28.6	9.9	21.9	63.7
Last Resort	80.6	71.3	58.3	79.2	93.9
Just Intent	81.0	71.2	70.2	78.8	95.0
Just Cause	45.0	42.2	27.9	43.0	77.2
Discriminate Means	72.5	76.1	57.4	74.7	95.0
Average	51.0	45.3	36.3	48.5	74.2

ary moral precepts, which support the validity of proposition two.

6.3 *Proposition Three*

The third proposition argues that among trained moralists who accept the golden rule there should be substantial agreement with the more specific moral precepts that flow from it, but this agreement should not be evident among the common people. Thus, the four secular groups should have mixed views on these more complex issues. As for the substantive content of the more specific moral precepts that should flow from the golden rule, there is a general consensus among contemporary Judeo-Christian institutions favoring just war theory and its seven component principles. Johnson even states that the just war 'tradition', of which Christian just war theory is the central component, is 'the fundamental way we in the West think about the justifications and limitations of violence' (1981, p. 329).

The aggregate data presented in Tables III and IV show that the clergy gives strong support to both the golden rule and just war theory, and clearly evidences much greater support than do the secular groups. Overall, these tabular results are supportive of the first part of the third proposition.

Regarding the second part of proposition three, there are two extreme possibilities

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concerning the relationship between the golden rule and just war theory that are not represented in the Donagan–Aquinas thesis. Of the three empirically possible alternatives, one is Donagan's position, which is the middle ground. He argues that while the first principles and secondary general precepts are self-evident to all, more detailed prescriptions require complex derivations that are beyond the ability of ordinary folk. If he is correct, we should find a significant but moderate relationship between belief in the golden rule and support for the just war position among secular elites, and a stronger relationship between support for the golden rule and just war theory among the clergy.

The second possibility is that just war principles can easily be derived from a simple belief in the golden rule by all people, and no expertise in moral reasoning is involved. If this is the case, there should be a strong correlation between belief in the golden rule and support for the just war framework among all the five groups. The third possibility is that there really is no readily discernible logical relationship between support for the golden rule and support for the just war principles, and just war theory thus is not really a deductive approach to the problems presented by international conflict.

Our aggregate level findings (see Tables III and IV) largely confirm the second part of this proposition. Secular individuals support just war principles to a lesser extent than do the clergy, and the four secular elites clearly support these principles to a lesser extent than they support the golden rule. While an average of 68% of the secular respondents support the golden rule items and 81% of the clergy do so, only 45% of the secular individuals also support the seven just war principles. The highest level of overall support is for the last resort requirement, 'It is not moral to fight a war until all peaceful alternatives have been tried first'. But only 72% of the secular individuals support this principle, while 97% of them support the most accepted of the golden rule precepts regarding treaties.

Another way to determine if there is a likely causal connection between support for the golden rule and just war theory is to examine the correlation between support for each of these by the five groups (see Table V). Such an analysis shows that support for the just war principles generally increases with support for the golden rule. The correlation is 0.46 between the two scales across all the respondents. The relationship is highly significant in a statistical sense, but is only of moderate magnitude, explaining just 24% of the variance in adoption of just war principles. This is exactly what the Donagan–Aquinas thesis predicts. While there is a relationship between the golden rule and support for the just war theory, that relationship is not highly deterministic.

Turning to the third part of this proposition, the Donagan–Aquinas thesis contends that we should observe varied correlations between support for the golden rule and the seven component just war principles. This evidence is examined in Table V. While almost all the relationships are significant at the 0.05 level for the five groups, three of the sets of correlations tend to be low (Competent Authority, Probability of Success, and Proportionality) and four sets are moderate in strength (Last Resort, Just Intent, Just Cause, and Discriminate Means). These patterns again appear to support the Donagan–Aquinas thesis. However, the correlations are not significantly greater among the religious elite than the four secular groups. Why? This is because of the overwhelming support that the Catholic priests give to the golden rule, which greatly reduces the amount of potentially explainable variance. The explainable portion of the relationship between the golden rule and just war theory for priests statistically is to be found in their role as religious leaders.

To summarize what we have discovered so far, there is support among the four secular elites and the Catholic clergy for the golden rule, and also for the derivative general moral precepts which condemn the aggressive use of deadly force but condone the use of force as a last resort against aggressors. The clergy also explicitly support the just cause requirement that the use of force only

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be for defensive purposes, while the secular elites are not supportive of this principle. However, the strong rejection by the secular elites of every survey item that advocates aggressive war, coupled with their support for the last resort requirement, suggests that the secular elites favor some type of defensive orientation on the issue of the justifiable purposes for the resort to war.

7. *Types of Reasoning on the Moral Issues of War*

We can safely conclude that the contention of the Donagan–Aquinas thesis is correct that skilled moralists and others will not agree on all the requirements of morality in matters of war. However, the correlations between support for the golden rule and the various just war principles are similar for all five groups in that they are low in magnitude for the first three just war principles and moderate in strength for the other four. Expressed differently, these correlations indicate that the clergy themselves have mixed views toward the just war principles, and virtually the same pattern of mixed views that is apparent among the secular elites. As evident in Table V, the clergy give overwhelming support to three of the just war principles and decidedly less to the other four, including less than a majority on two items. In general, the secular elites' response patterns are similar, differing only in degree of support or opposition on various items.

In this section we will explore the issue of why many of the secular respondents only accept certain just war principles while rejecting others, even though they indicate agreement with the moral principles and general precepts that underlie just war theory. In this effort we will focus on types of moral reasoning as a possible explanation. Ethicists such as Frankena (1973) classify theories that deal with the moral rightness or wrongness of actions, such as war, as theories of moral obligation. These theories are based upon types of reasoning that are deontological, teleological, or mixed-deontological.

Deontological reasoning focuses on the nature of actions in judging their rightness, regardless of the circumstances or consequences of taking or not taking an action. This type of reasoning is associated with the argument that no end can justify certain means, and with the advocacy of rule-based norms such as 'thou shalt not kill' or 'thou shalt not murder'. *Teleological* or consequentialist reasoning evaluates actions based solely upon their consequences for the achievement of particular valued ends. This is an 'the end justifies the means' approach which can morally justify the use of means that are condemned by deontological reasoning. *Mixed-deontological* reasoning stresses deontologically derived norms, but holds that consideration of circumstances and consequences for valued ends is important for the moral evaluation of actions.

Table V. Correlations between Golden Rule Support and Specific Just War Principles

	Elite Group				
Individual Item	Retired Congresspersons	American Diplomats	Military Officers	Newspaper Editors	Religious Leaders
Competent Authority	0.17*	0.14*	0.07*	0.22*	0.11*
Probability of Success	0.10	0.09*	−0.04	0.09*	0.24*
Proportionality	0.06	−0.04	0.03	0.07	0.10*
Last Resort	0.46*	0.36*	0.26*	0.30*	0.37*
Just Intent	0.38*	0.29*	0.29*	0.23*	0.28*
Just Cause	0.29*	0.19*	0.18*	0.23*	0.27*
Discriminate Means	0.32*	0.22*	0.20*	0.16*	0.30*
Average	0.25	0.18	0.14	0.18	0.24

An asterisk indicates that a correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

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Pacifism is a product of deontological reasoning which requires behavior reflecting total commitment to the value of a right to life for universal others and strict adherence to the rule, 'thou shalt not kill', regardless of the possibly fatal consequences for those who are victims of aggressive attack. The holy war or moral crusading doctrine is teleological in stressing the supreme end of certain belief systems and judging the rightness of war only in terms of its consequences for protecting or advancing those beliefs. Reason of state doctrine is also teleological through its stress on judging actions in terms of their consequences for protecting or advancing 'national interests'.

Just war theory is mixed-deontological. As Donagan notes, the ethical system of 'traditional common morality' takes into account consequentialist factors and 'has been constructed at every point with careful attention to the nature both of human action and the world in which it takes place' (1977, p. 206). However, it rejects the teleological and consequentialist extremes of utilitarianism and situation ethics respectively in favor of deontological reasoning by holding that its 'precepts are to be observed no matter what the consequences' (1977, p. 206).

Turning to the survey results presented in Tables III and IV, the secular respondents reject doctrines that are primarily deontological (pacifism) or that are primarily teleological with goals that either are aggressively ideological (holy war) or amoral (reason of state). This suggests that the reasoning of the secular elites is generally of the mixed-deontological type. Since just war theory is also mixed-deontological but with component principles that stress certain types of reasoning, an examination of the responses of the secular elites on particular just war items may provide greater insight into the reasoning of these elites.

The just intent principle is mixed-deontological with an emphasis on the deontologically derived requirement which condemns destruction of the civilian sectors of the enemy society in the overall conduct of war. The most deontological just war principle is discriminate means. It strictly forbids military attacks intentionally aimed at civilians or those classified as non-combatants. The most teleological principle is proportionality. As defined by the US Catholic Bishops,

> . . . proportionality means that the damage to be inflicted and the costs incurred by (both sides at) war must be proportionate to the good expected by taking up arms. Nor should judgements concerning proportionality be limited to the temporary order without regard to a spiritual dimension in terms of 'damage', 'cost', and 'the good expected' (Castelli, 1983, p. 220).

Those respondents who accept the golden rule (i.e. virtually all of the clergy and roughly 90% of the secular elites on two of the golden rule items) are very supportive of the primarily deontological just war principles of discriminate means, just intent, and perhaps last resort. The secular elites are not supportive of just war principles that lean toward the teleological form of reasoning, in particular the principle of proportionality, or those principles which lack specificity, e.g. the probability of success criterion.

Two factors may account for the secular groups' strong rejection of the proportionality principle. One is the relative vagueness that is characteristic of teleological or consequentialist reasoning and which is evident both in the Bishop's description cited above and in the survey item on proportionality. Another factor, perhaps the key one in the case of secular elites, is the universalist value orientation embedded in the proportionality principle. Just war theory contains a value system which requires concern for universal innocent others, including enemy civilians and even enemy combatants (in bello proportionality). This value outlook can conflict with the value system of nationalism, which undoubtedly is pervasive among the secular respondents. Although the secular elites support just war principles which clearly stress the norm of the immunity of enemy civilians from intentional military attack (the discriminate means and just intent items), they draw back from any principle that requires concern over the 'amount of war damage and casualties' suffered by the enemy. The clergy also display doubts over the proportionality principle (see Table IV), although this may stem from the current controversy within the Catholic Church

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over the validity of consequentialist versus deontological moral reasoning (Hoose, 1987). The proportionality controversy is central on moral issues concerning abortion and nuclear deterrence.

This examination of the survey data in the context of moral reasoning does not disturb our earlier conclusion as to the validity of the Donagan–Aquinas thesis. Instead, these additional findings lend empirical support to Johnson's previously noted claim that the just war tradition constitutes mainstream Western normative thought regarding why and how force should be used. Moreover, the examination shows that important secular elites reason about the moral issues of war in a similar manner to those who are institutionally the main source of the just war tradition. At the same time, the findings suggest that the major difference between the secular and religious elites is in the realm of basic values embodying one's definition of the 'we' and the 'they'. It is unlikely that many secular elites feel real concern for the right to life of 'universal innocent others'. The secular elites favor restraints on the resort to war and its conduct, but not to the extent that they accept particular definitions of morality that condemn unspecified or vague types and degrees of damage to their mortal enemies.

8. *Elite Views on the Moral Issues of MAD*

Also included in the survey was a series of items about the morality of the doctrine of mutual assured destruction (MAD). Its uses as a possible war-fighting strategy and as a deterrence strategy are perhaps the central issues of the nuclear age. The patterns that we discovered in examining the applicability of the Donagan–Aquinas thesis to conventional warfare are reversed in the case of these nuclear issues. On those nuclear warfare issues where skilled moralists have a clear position, the secular elites do not agree with that position; and on nuclear issues where skilled moralists are divided, the secular elites are in general agreement. Further, the secular elites take positions on nuclear warfare policy issues which contradict their positions on analogous policy issues when formulated in a non-nuclear context.

The survey item dealing with the issue of the morality of MAD warfare reads, 'Destroying enemy cities with nuclear weapons is immoral even if our cities are attacked with nuclear weapons first'. On this issue there is unanimous agreement in condemning such action by *all* skilled moralists who adhere to just war theory. This condemnation includes the scenario where US cities already have been destroyed by nuclear weapons (on such policy issues, see Cohen, 1989; Johnson, 1981, 1984; Kegley & Wittkopf, 1985; Lackey, 1984, 1989; National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983; Ramsey, 1968; Tucker, 1966; United Methodist Council of Bishops, 1986; Walzer, 1977). This position is supported by 81% of the Catholic clergy. The fact that some of them actually support such warfare is surprising in view of official Church condemnation of such a policy and the overwhelming approval that the clergy give to the discriminate means and just intent principles. By contrast, an average of 72% of the secular elites approve of MAD warfare, a result which also is very inconsistent with their strong support for the discriminate means and just intent items.

The morality of MAD as a deterrence strategy item reads, 'It is morally acceptable to threaten the use of nuclear weapons against enemy cities as a way to prevent nuclear warfare against our cities'. Just war theorists are very divided on the issue. Some approve of this deterrence strategy, citing the 'moral paradox of MAD' argument, which is a consequentialist lesser of two evils approach. Making the immoral threat to use nuclear weapons paradoxically is moral because it is a lesser evil than suffering nuclear attack because the threat was not made. Others follow the Pauline injunction that it is wrong to 'threaten evil that good may come'. The US Catholic and United Methodist Bishops have condemned MAD as a deterrent, while the French and West German Bishops have supported it (*Origins*, 1983; *Wall Street Journal*, 1983). The clergy respondents also are divided on the issue as 46% find it morally acceptable and only 42% condemn it. In contrast to this division

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among just war theorists, religious institutions, and the clergy, the secular elites have a clear position as 79% consider the MAD deterrent to be morally acceptable.

9. *Discussion*

The golden rule is culturally and historically ubiquitous. It is found in all the world's major religions and is a proverb in many languages (Green, 1988; Singer, 1967). However, by itself the golden rule does not answer many questions concerning moral behavior. For example, it does not indicate *what* one should do to others, or what should be done to others who do not reciprocate one's own right actions. Over many centuries, Western just war theorists have come to the conclusion that nations should not engage in aggressive war against other nations. Countries may only engage in wars against those who violate this rule, and nations should wage war in the most restrained ways possible in order to limit the scope and degree of destruction, even if the aggressor conducts unrestrained and unlimited war.

Our empirical evidence shows that, except on one point, most members of major US secular elite groups support the principle of the golden rule and its application through just war theory regarding the moral complexities of war. The survey results on the MAD warfare items suggest a secular norm of negative reciprocity, i.e. return evil with evil, that is analogous to the international legal concept of reprisal. In a broad sense, just war theory also accepts the notion of reprisal against evil acts, although it insists that actions be directed against those responsible for such acts or their agents, the military 'combatants' (e.g. Walzer, 1977, pp. 207–222). The moral problem with MAD warfare from the just war perspective is that it reflects notions of reprisal, revenge, or 'eye for an eye' thinking against the 'innocent' rather than the 'guilty'. Although MAD is intended as punishment for the supreme evil of the mass slaughter of innocents, MAD itself constitutes a similar mass slaughter of innocents.

The development of nuclear weapons presents an overwhelming challenge for just war theorists as well as reason of state proponents. In the historical evolution of both doctrines, it was assumed that war could serve the moral purpose of defending the innocent or the 'reason of state' purpose of national survival, but the indiscriminate and destructive nature of nuclear weapons has made nuclear war both immoral and irrational in the eyes of most observers. However, the contrasting overriding value orientations of either concern for universal innocent others or 'we' versus 'they' nationalism may account for the consistent mixed-deontological responses of the clergy on the MAD warfare item and the inconsistent absence of such reasoning in the responses of the secular elites.

NOTES

1. The proportionality item listed is the ad bellum requirement. We did not include in bello proportionality in the survey instrument for practical reasons. Based in part upon the double-effect doctrine, in bello proportionality requires that enemy civilian casualties (the evil effect) resulting from attacks against military targets be neither intentional nor disproportionate to expected military gain (the good effect). Just war theorists have noted the difficulty of applying in bello proportionality because of the uncertainties of warfare as to the military benefits of particular battles and campaigns (Cohen, 1989, pp. 25–35), and because of the imprecision characteristic of teleological or consequentialist norms that require a balancing of a good effect (the military gain) against an evil effect (Cohen, 1989, pp. 124–132; Sichol, 1990, pp. 25–58; Walzer, 1977, pp. 127–133). We judged that several lengthy survey questions involving different levels of military action and specified good and evil effects would be needed, which seemed impractical for an already excessively long questionnaire. However, ad bellum proportionality includes the same notion contained in in bello proportionality of the need to weigh the good versus the evil consequences of war. In addition, the survey items on just intent and discriminate means deal with the factor of 'intent' as required by the double-effect doctrine in the case of warfare affecting enemy civilians.
2. In addition to deductive reasoning, 'diligent inquiry' in Donagan's description of common morality consists of consideration of situational and consequential factors analogous to casuistic reasoning (Donagan, 1977, pp. 60, 66–74).

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