

## Quote 2

### I. Introduction

In the contemplation of the motivations behind warfare activity, Francisco de Vitoria posits that there are moral limits to the actions that one should take. He claims that the engagement in war ought not be maligned with the intention of the enemies' destruction, but rather it should be done under the pretense of self defense and protection. As such, he implies that peace and security can then be possibly achieved through the process of defense.

In this essay, I will first underscore the assumptions that Vitoria makes to ground his philosophical understanding of the motivations behind warfare. Secondly, I will posit justifications to why the act of defense, in regards to the perspective of the prince, is a moral imperative. Thirdly, I will provide further reasoning as to why war ought not be done for 'the destruction of his opponents.' Fourthly, I will tackle the pragmatic implications of Vitoria's words that peace and security can be better established. Lastly, I will conclude.

### II. First Movement

In this section, I will first explain the fundamental assumptions that Vitoria makes in the attempt to justify his position on the motivations behind warfare. Then, I will critique those assumptions of their validity, given that in the absence of it, Vitoria cannot ground his philosophical conception of moral imperatives. To this extent, there are three assumptions that he makes:

1. That such war was declared under the pretense of 'just causes,' and as such, was an action that the prince, as a moral agent, must respond to.
2. That war will necessarily harm individuals caught in the conflict since the intention of 'establishing peace and security' implies the absence of it during times of war.
3. That the prince has the moral authority to 'press his campaign.'

On the first assumption, Vitoria argues that war is something that is necessary, and thus is something that the prince must engage with. This begs the question of what constitutes as war in the first place and the delineations we ought to place on it. Given that warfare is often a conflict characterized by the motivations of both sides fighting for a particular goal or objective – since a one-sided conflict would be just the eradication of a people group or genocide – it can be assumed, as a foundational idea, that war is something unavoidable for the prince since he, as an actor, also has the goal of protecting his 'homeland'. This means the interpretation of a 'just cause' in this instance is not a contemplation of whether war is good or not but rather a question of if it is necessary or not. As such, there is a moral imperative for the war to be engaged within, making this first assumption fair.

On the second assumption, Vitoria implies that war is something that will often put people into harms way since 'protection' can only happen when there is a threat to one's security. Given that war, as defined previously, happens as a consequence of often conflicting incentives, motivations, and goals, it can be assumed war often requires the sacrifice and trade-off of one's success for another. Moreover, since the manifestation of war often implicates the suffering of troops and civilians, Vitoria's statement can be assumed to be true that war includes harms and ramifications.

On the third assumption, Vitoria assumes that the prince has the authority to be able to 'press his campaign.' This implies that the prince, as an agent, holds a special position to enact this form of

defense. Given that the prince, in relation to average every day civilians, is an authority figure in many societies – regardless of democratic or authoritarian regimes – it can be assumed that the prince has ability to engage in the ways his state is able to respond to the conflict, making Vitoria's assumption true as well.

### III. Second Movement

In this section, I will first describe what Vitoria considers as the prince's 'right' to engage in the 'fight and the defence' of his homeland, arguing that the right stems from a moral necessity. Then, I will discuss more broadly why the prince has an obligation to engage in such a form of defense during times of war, providing three points of justifications. Throughout, I will also consider key objections and resolve them.

In general, Vitoria defines 'right' as a moral necessity. This definition, in and of itself, is independent of considerations of moral good or bad, so regardless of the outcomes of the prince engaging in his form of defense, Vitoria implies that the defense must occur. As a form of illustration, this looks like the moral necessity of parenting. While parents may be diverse in the way they raise their children – in both positive and negative ways – it is assumed the parent have the right and obligation to do so because it is a job that the state delegates to them. In the same vein, this is similar to the prince's position during times of war given that he must respond to the war due to his position and role. Understanding the actor who is undertaking this action is important because it describes their responsibilities to the state and those within it. To this extent, I would like to provide three points of further reasoning as to why the prince has an obligation to fight for the protection of his people.

Firstly, the prince has a moral obligation via the social contract to protect his own citizens. As John Locke posits in his social contract theory, citizens give up their rights to be governed, and as the consequence, the individuals who aggregates those powers – presumably the prince – has a moral obligation to protect their people. Given that the prince holds a disproportionate amount of power then, he has an obligation to protect his citizens since they have no alternative and less power to do so themselves. As such, the prince is in a moral position – granted to him by his people and constituents – to help establish peace and security. This helps us delineates why the prince should still engage in wars, even if it comes at the cost of the suffering of the opposing side. Given that the prince has a special relation to people within his own territory and jurisdiction, he has a greater moral obligations to protect them than to reduce suffering in totality. So above all else, regardless if the destruction of any opponents occurs, it is an action that the prince needs to take.

Secondly, the prince is in a special position within society which compels him both morally and imperatively to defend his homeland. As a royal authority figure, the prince was granted political legitimacy to rule through past precedences. Given that the conception of royal lineages start after conflicts are subdued and won, the royal line often has the respect and legitimacy of its people to rule and exist. For instance, this looks like the creation of the Japanese monarchy after their involvement in world wars or the Thai monarchy existing after contributing efforts in the Thai-Burmese conflict. This means that even if, by Locke's social contract, the prince has no transactional obligation to protect his citizen, he still has a political obligation – by virtue of people granting him legitimacy – to protect his people. If not, the people would not have granted the prince his legitimacy as a figure head of their nation. A potential objection to this claim may be the idea that the prince that the act or resistance is immoral since he has an equal obligation to protect all of his citizens, and as such, should not sacrifice the lives of some men while engaging in defense to save the lives of other men. However, the point of legitimacy helps elucidates on why the prince

is able to do so since the people grant him the authority and legitimacy to decide on what is the best action to take, even if it comes at the cost of some lives.

Thirdly, the prince also has an obligation to engage in the reduction of suffering for his people. As Bentham posits in his theory of utilitarianism, the goal of any action ought to be done with the intention of reducing human suffering and increasing the utility or 'goodness' in their lives. To this extent, the prince broadly has an obligation to reduce the harms of imminent death in the absence of defense in times of warfare. Since if people are powerless and doesn't have the military might or force to defend themselves, the prince is in the unique position to help provide them with safety and security. A potential objection to this point, however, may be that the prince engaging in the conflict may lead to more human suffering. Since if his moral calculus is purely based on the amount of lives lost, then he shouldn't engage in potential killings of enemy troops since that increases the aggregate suffering. I would like to respond in two ways.

Firstly, this decision, from the perspective of the prince, is made in the absence of perfect information and certainty. There is yet to be a guarantee of the would-be number of humans lives lost. This means that even if potentiality would suggest that more suffering may occur, there is still a non-zero chance that the prince may be able to save the lives of his own people, and thus his actions would be justified. Especially given that the alternative of no defense is the guarantee of all lives lost, there is likely to be the reduction of suffering. Secondly, and more importantly, however, the concept of utility must exist under the framework of moral obligations and approximate relationships. That is to say, the prince has a greater moral obligation to reduce the suffering of his own people than the suffering of the opposing side. This is due to the first two aforementioned reasonings I provided previously about political legitimacy and the social contract. Here, I would also like to provide a thought experiment. A mother sees two children drowning in a lake, one is her child and the other is a stranger. In the event that she can only save one, the mother has a greater obligation to save her child since she has a special relationship with her child that is developed through moral proximity as can be seen through giving birth, raising the child, etc. Assuming *ceteris paribus* then, this showcases that even if the utility of saving either child may be the same, she ought to save her child over the stranger. And as a consequence, this helps underscore the idea that utility and moral obligations are not concepts divorced from each other. In fact, in the case of warfare and the prince, these ideas must operate in tandem with each other to discern the moral imperative that the prince should adopt, which is one of self defense.

#### IV. Third Movement

In the previous section, I provided justifications, in addition to Vitoria's suggestion of moral imperatives, as to why the prince ought to pursue the right of defending his homeland and his obligations to do so. In this section, I would like to address Vitoria's qualifer that the prince should not fight for 'the destruction of his opponents' and further delineate where the line should be drawn. To be clear, this section will exemplify why, in theory, the destruction of opponents ought not be the goal, and not why human suffering in a vacuum is wrong. Given previous justifications on why some, but not all, suffering is necessary, this third movement will build upon the ideal theoretical limits to the prince's actions. Now, I will provide three additional justifications to explain why the destruction of the prince's opponents should not be the ultimate goal of his campaign.

Firstly, there is proportionality in the ways that the prince should respond with. The action that the prince takes should be done cognizant of what is appropriate, not just successful. This is because proportionality would allow the prince to achieve his goals of securing safety and peace without needing to inflict unnecessary suffering on the opponents, which is a more morally upright action to

take under the framework of utilitarianism. To illustrate, take the example of the methodologies governments can take to disincentivize petty theft. In regards to deterrence, the government can both set a fine on how much a thief should pay back or sentence the thief to the death penalty. It is clear that both of these solutions, in theory, are able to achieve the same outcomes of deterring theft, but the latter case causes more unnecessary suffering due to disproportionality. Similarly, the prince ought not destroy the enemy side in his quest to establish peace and security since it would lead to more moral harms.

Secondly, I would like to provide an additional reason as to why, although the opponents may hold less moral value to the prince, they still hold some moral value nonetheless. This is because many civilians from the opposing camp may not have consented into such a conflict. Especially in the real world, people often are arbitrarily born into states that may engage in conflict, and they themselves may never have a say in it. This can be seen most clearly in authoritarian states where people do not have the right nor vote to elect their own representatives. An example of this this looks like Russia and Ukraine, whereby the Russian people may not have consented into the Russian-Ukraine conflict since they are part of an illiberal democracy, but they still have to face the consequences of sanctions, attacks, and sufferings in response to their state's actions. This shows why some individuals ought not bear the moral consequence of their state's actions, given that they had no say in it. To this extent, we are able to extrapolate the same findings to the prince's actions since he shouldn't engage in the 'destruction of his opponents' since non-complicit civilians will also be harmed. This also further enforces the notion of proportionality given that self defense isn't just about the concept generally but also the extent to which it is exercised, which its boundaries can be drawn at the level of appropriate suffering and moral complicity.

Thirdly, the prince may no longer be fulfilling his original purpose of both peace and security. Perhaps security, in a vacuum, may be achieved by the destruction of his opponents, given that there would be no threat to the prince's own people any longer. However, this comes at the cost of human suffering, which I have already established as potentially being morally just but definitely not in its entirety. However, even if 'security' is achieved, it is unclear why 'peace' is achieved. Like war, peace is also a two-way street: it involves the participation of two or more entities living harmoniously. But given that such peace, if successful, was built off of the eradication of an entire different group, this means the tensions between the states involved in the war would still be inflamed. As such, in order for Vitoria to satisfactorily fulfill the goals of self defense, which is to 'establish peace and security,' it requires the former statement of 'not for the destruction of his opponents' to be true as well. Hence, this is why the prince should not engage in actions with the intentions of inflicting pain but rather to secure the liberty and prosperity of his own state.

## V. Fourth Movement

In the last part of Vitoria's quote, he implies a praxis-related consequence that will stem from the prince's attempt to fight the war: to establish peace and security. As such, in the last substantive movement, I will discuss the pragmatic implications of the prince's actions, how it necessarily leads to a better war effort, and how that ultimately produces peace and security. To do so, I will forward two arguments.

Firstly, the act of responding to war provides greater amount of protection for individuals in general. Given the structure of many societies – defined by various hierarchies and classes – there is often a vast power asymmetry between those at the top and bottom of the spectrum. As such, the prince involvement and intervention within the war would necessarily lead to better protection for vulnerable groups that have no resources, power, or know-how as they try to survive. Given that the

prince can supplement his people with his power, which could involve the military, he is able to ensure the safety of the many. And even in the instance where the war cannot be won by the prince's intervention alone, the sheer resistance itself provides a corollary good for his people. This is because, as the war rages on, the prince's protection, even if transient, provides a prolonged window of time for his people to stay safe or evacuate. Drawing from the same example of the Ukraine-Russian war, the resistance from the Ukrainian government was still beneficial even though buildings were crumbled and run down to the ground. This is because Ukrainians were able to seek refuge and leave their houses as the Ukrainian army slowed down the progress of the Russian army. In the same way, then, the prince's would necessarily increase the likelihood of lives saved. This further fortifies the aforementioned justification for the utilitarian framework of being able to reduce human suffering and casualties.

Secondly, the prince's act of self defense also instills a greater level of political legitimacy within his nation, which would necessarily help advance the war effort. Similar to my aforementioned explanation on how political legitimacy for royal lineages often emerge post-conflict, the same political legitimacy can also be aggregated whilst taking action in the war. The prince's decision to engage in defense may encourage further political participation. Take for example the United States during the second world war. When the US military was sent off to war, there was greater encouragement for participation from people across the country. This led to more men conscripting and more women working in factories to build machine parts and goods for the war. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, in the context of the prince engaging in his war, it increases the propensity for success. With more people working, believing, and reinforcing the political legitimacy of the prince, this leads to a involvement for the war effort overall, increasing the utilitarian justification for the prince's moral obligation to save his own people. But secondly, and more importantly, it shows the physical manifestation of political philosophy in the real world, whereby amorphous concepts such as legitimacy further guides efforts during desperate times. Not only, then, does the moral imperative of the prince lead to more trickle down benefits among his people, but it also encourages a greater moral conscience among the people as well.

## VI. Conclusion

In this essay, I first laid the foundation for Vitoria's philosophical argument through confirming his underlying assumptions. Then, I explained through three distinct lens why the prince has an obligation, as a moral agent, to pursue his right to fight and defend his homeland. Then, I set qualifiers on the extent to which this right to self defense should be exercised. And lastly, I examined the political and pragmatic consequences of the prince's actions to engage within the war, before finally concluding.