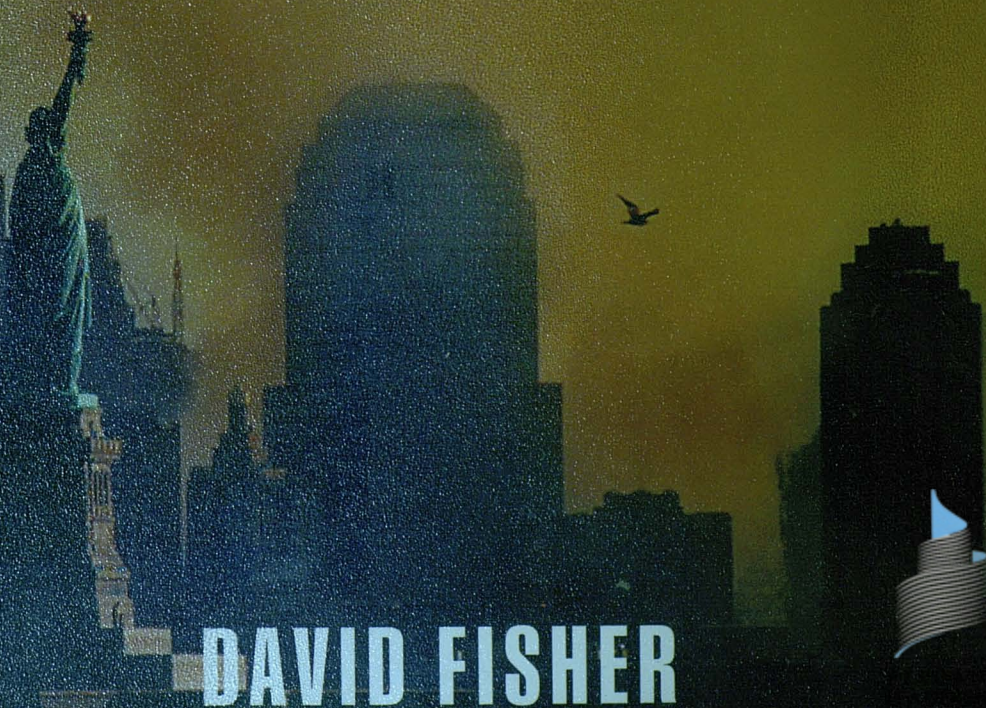


Morality and War

Can War be Just in the Twenty-first Century?



DAVID FISHER

The complexity and difficulty of moral decision-making requires a new ethical approach—here characterised as virtuous consequentialism—that recognises the importance of both the internal quality and external effects of agency; and of the moral principles and virtues needed to enact them. Having reinforced the key tenets of just war thinking, David Fisher uses these to address contemporary security issues, including the changing nature of war, military pre-emption and torture, the morality of the Iraq war, and humanitarian intervention. He concludes that the just war tradition provides not only a robust but an indispensable guide to resolve the security challenges of the twenty-first century.

About the author

David Fisher is a Visiting Senior Fellow at Kings College, London where he has recently completed a PhD in War Studies. He has served in senior positions in the Ministry of Defence, Foreign Office and Cabinet Office, including defence adviser to the Prime Minister in the Cabinet Office and the UK Defence Counsellor to NATO. He is co-Chairman of the Council on Christian Approaches to Defence and Disarmament. He regularly contributes to books and journals on defence and ethical issues. He is the author of *Morality and the Bomb* and co-editor of *Just War on Terror?*





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TUN DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

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To Sophia



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Foreword

The philosopher Immanuel Kant, in discussing the prevention of war and the preservation of peace, distinguished between the philosophers who proposed solutions to the world's problems and the bureaucrats who in practice had to deal with them. The bureaucrats, he said, should listen carefully to the philosophers, but the philosophers should respect the responsibilities of the bureaucrats.

David Fisher has the advantage of being both. He gained a double first in Mods and Greats at Oxford, perhaps the most demanding academic discipline in the United Kingdom if not the world, and there he learned the Aristotelian rigour and lucidity in argument so evident in the following pages. Had he so wished, he could have had an outstanding academic career. As it is, he has spent his life as a civil servant in the Ministry of Defence, eventually becoming senior defence adviser to the Cabinet Office and Defence Counsellor at NATO—roles in which he helped shape the complex political decisions involved in the ending of the Cold War and the Balkan crises of the 1990s. He has been a doer as well as a thinker, and that experience is reflected in every line of this book.

Fisher's thesis is as simple as it is important. There has been much discussion during the last decade about the morality of war in general and the Iraq War in particular, but it has been very largely based on conclusions that medieval theologians derived from a universally accepted moral framework that has now very largely disappeared. Today it is not enough to set out criteria of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* formulated by Augustine or Aquinas and then just 'tick the boxes' for whatever war we may be contemplating or waging. Both society and warfare have changed too much. Decisions for war and peace are no longer made by princes but by democratic assemblies responsible to public opinion. Responsibility for actions within war must rest with those who carry them out, not just those who ordered them. The applicable moral criteria are not conjured up by a specific military situation: they have to be derived from