DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE H. KROONEMAN

I hereby declare that this thesis, “God and Geopolitics. A Christian just war perspective on the use of armed force in the contemporary international security environment”, is my own work and my own effort and that it has not been accepted anywhere else for the award of any other degree or diploma. Where sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

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GOD AND GEOPOLITICS
A Christian just war perspective on the legitimate use of armed force in the contemporary international security environment

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Foreword

A master’s thesis is the single most academically significant and time-consuming study project. For this ‘crown project’, I decided to select a theme that has my natural interest, namely the ethics related to war and peace. Researching a topic around this theme would give me the opportunity to increase my knowledge of Western philosophy and Christian theology as an intellectual basis of the field of International Relations in general and of the just war doctrine in particular. Moreover, I wanted to study the intellectual and practical value of Christian thinking for the contemporary international security environment. Due to my great interest in the theme, it never became tedious to bring this thesis, which is now lying in front of you, to completion. I want to thank several people in particular for supporting me during the process of writing this thesis.

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor at the University of Groningen, Dr. Ir. M.R. Kamminga, for guiding me through the research process. It has always been very pleasant and instructive to discuss the structure and substance of my slowly developing thesis with him. In my (of course highly personal) experience, our feedback-sessions took place in a relaxed but at the same time perspicacious atmosphere. After the sessions, I usually continued writing my thesis with fresh insights and renewed motivation.

Furthermore, I want to thank ‘amici’ Arjan Klok and Egbert Minnema for their often highly valuable comments on preliminary drafts. They may have made me a little bit nervous by pointing at a number of points of improvement with limited time left to process all this feedback. Nonetheless, I am grateful for their advises, which – hopefully – have helped me to further enhance the academic quality of this thesis.

Finally, I want to thank my fiancée Wijnanda for her support throughout this very last study-related project before our marriage. Even though I had to invest a lot of time in this thesis, while at the same time we had to arrange numerous things for our wedding and married life thereafter, Wijnanda kept encouraging me to perform to the best of my abilities. I couldn’t have completed my thesis in this way without her and the loving support of both our families.

While writing this thesis, I gained many valuable insights in the origins and substance of Christian theology and Western philosophy. I sincerely hope that these insights will one day prove to be a valuable guide for my actions and decisions in professional and even personal contexts. Lastly, I want to thank God, the ultimate giver of wisdom, knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:6), for giving me the opportunity and strength to complete, with this master’s thesis, my studies in International Relations and International Organization.
Introduction

Statement of the problem

Some contemporary developments pose new and complex challenges to actors in the current-day international security environment.\(^1\) A general example hereof is the growing impact of violent non-state actors as central players in the international security arena and the increased study hereof since 2001 (Kledja 2010, 1-25). In this respect, the rise of Islamic State (IS), an organization that manifested itself initially as a terrorist group but now calls itself an Islamic Caliphate, seems to be a particularly interesting case. By undermining the official political authorities in and beyond Iraq and Syria, attracting jihadist fighters from all over the world, using extreme violence against combatants as well as non-combatants, and ignoring state-borders for the sake of expanding the Caliphate, the IS leadership threatens the moral values, economic and political interests, and security prospects of a wide range of actors both within and outside the Islamic world (Der Spiegel 2014). Worldwide, political leaders are challenged to develop proper responses to counter the threats posed by IS, for example through economic and political assistance for those under attack by IS in Iraq and Syria, or ultimately through the use of armed force.

In this context, in particular with regard to the issue of responding to IS with armed force, the ‘just war tradition’ is of key relevance as a source of knowledge and inspiration for political leaders. This tradition provides a wealth of ideas about whether and when the use of armed force might be morally just. As the modern-day political scientist Cian O’Driscoll eloquently states it, “the just war tradition constitutes the predominant medium of inquiry through which we encounter, interpret, and debate the moral questions that the use of force in international society provokes” (O’Driscoll 2008, 189). Concretely, the just war tradition, as it developed in Western history, is about limiting the violence of war by restraining the use of force, ‘jus ad bellum’, and by limiting the scope of the violence itself, ‘jus in bello’. A third, more recent and contested element, is the need to restore a just and stable order after the war, ‘jus post bellum’ (Brown 2002, 102-110, Amstutz 2013, 114-115, see also Elshtain 1992, 1-8). Essentially, the use of force is not seen as intrinsically evil from a just war perspective, but as a potentially legitimate instrument of statecraft, depending on the agents, purposes, and methods of those who use it (Guthrie 2007, Amstutz 2013, 113-114, Walzer 2006, 21).

\(^1\) With this, I mean to say that certain political, religious, economic, social or technological developments and events alter the general situation of peace and security in the international relations, urging actors influenced by this change, such as states, international organizations, international non-governmental organizations and international corporations, to respond appropriately.
According to the American political theorist James Turner Johnson, who has over the past decades extensively researched the development of the just war tradition, the requirement of legitimate political authority held first place in the just war idea as it originally developed. He argues that “something has been lost” during the gradual shift in the treatment of the requirement of authority from classic to contemporary thinking about the just use of armed force (Johnson 2013, 19-21, 23-24). For Johnson, this ‘lost something’ can be found for a significant part in classic and medieval Christian philosophy. He argues that this shift in thinking occurred when territorial defense became priority in the sixteenth century, followed by the rise of internationalism, and by attempts to abolish war altogether from the relations between states. These developments, in turn, were instigated by changing conceptions of sovereignty, the creation of an international structure of government above that of states, and the origin of the idea that war is altogether destructive beyond possibility of restraint (Johnson 2013, 21-23). As a result, the just war idea has come to be understood differently today compared to the tradition’s early days. In fact, the just war doctrine nowadays seems to be broadly speaking about the advancement of peace and protection of the rights of states and individual human beings under the framework of international law and international institutions like the United Nations (UN) and United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Although the shifting just war idea has in different times and changing contexts undoubtedly provided valuable answers to a variety of international security issues, certain issues in the contemporary international security environment might not be understood or addressed properly through the modern-day ways of thinking about the justified use of armed force (Johnson 2013, 27-31). Perhaps, the already mentioned case of IS constitutes one of the most pressing present-day examples of such security issues. A part of the reason why modern-day just war ideas may fall short in this particular case, is that a group such as IS in various ways, such as aggression against non-combatants and its trans-border advancement, explicitly dissociates itself from the rules and principles of the international state system which form the generally accepted guidance of the behavior of both states and non-state actors.

Following from the developments sketched and questions raised above, the main research question of this thesis is: “To what extent can the ideas of classical and medieval Christian philosophers, as part of the broader Western just war tradition, contribute to addressing challenges regarding the just use of force in the contemporary international security environment?”
Scientific and social significance

In several respects, an answer to the main research question may have scientific and social value. By relating historical ideas about the morality of war in Western philosophy directly to a present-day security issue,\(^2\) this thesis may first of all provide a theoretical contribution to the field of International Security Studies (ISS) as a subfield of International Relations (IR). Whereas extensive debates about the role of ethics and religion in international politics do take place within IR (see for example Brown 2002, 40-51), the study of the ‘natures’ of religions which impact the international security environment,\(^3\) seems to be largely absent within ISS.\(^4\) All in all, with this thesis I aim to fill in this apparent gap and to offer as such a scientific contribution to ISS and the broader field of IR.

Furthermore, analyzing the concepts and ideas that are central in the just war-thoughts of authoritative Christian philosophers may give further insights in the foundations of the just war tradition and the substantive shifts therein. This is another reason for choosing classical and medieval Christian philosophers, who played a significant role in the development of the ‘classic’ just war idea, as focus of this research. By discerning such substantial shifts, or trends, and by relating early and medieval Christian just war thoughts directly to the current-day international security environment, I seek to provide a theoretical contribution to IR.

Finally, this thesis may have socio-political significance if its findings about whether and how classical and medieval Christian just war thoughts have theoretical relevance for IR, also provide insights with regard to the formulation of actual policies by political leaders of states and non-state actors within the international relations. The present study of central Christian ideas and concepts within the just war tradition, in order to address the questions of whether, why, how and by whom the use of force is morally legitimate in the case of IS, may clarify which policy alternatives can be considered legitimate and just from a Christian philosophical point of view. All in all, a focus on Christian just war thought might give new insights in how to cope with modern-day security questions related to the use of force as a way to address the security challenges of actors such as IS (Johnson 2013, 22-23).

\(^2\) From early Christianity until Enlightenment, ‘historical philosophical ideas’ are inherently Christian, as they developed and should be understood in their specific, theistic contexts (see Cameron 2005, vi-xii, 1-9, 163-228).

\(^3\) I.e., the spiritual and theological principles of religions may impact the interests and actions of international security actors. Indeed, moral (and religious) convictions help actors to for example define their security goals, they provide a basis for judgment, and give motivation for policy development (Amstutz 2008, 12-16).

\(^4\) Within ISS, the role and impact of religion is mostly analyzed from the perspectives of Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations thesis, and 9/11 and the Global War on Terror. Normative and moral arguments also play a role in the debates between Strategic Studies, Arms Control and Peace Research (Buzan 2009, 104-106, 137, 161, 177, 185), but otherwise, ethics and morality seem to play a rather marginal role. Instead, ISS scholars focus largely on the rationality of e.g. the use of armed force as a rational way of pursuing national interests.
Research design

In order to answer the main research question, I aim to examine three sub-questions. The first is: “What characterizes classical and medieval Christian thinking about the just use of force as part of the broader Western just war tradition?” The just war tradition, as mentioned above constituting the primary medium of inquiry for engaging questions on the morality of using armed force, forms the theoretical framework through which I go about addressing the main research question. Generally speaking, scholars like Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Grotius and Walzer are often seen as important contributors to the development of the tradition. A key part of the answer to the first sub-question is the theoretical analysis of, and debate about, what distinguishes the just war ideas of the classic and medieval Christian theologians and philosophers Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Martin Luther vis-à-vis other philosophers that are part of the broader just war tradition. I focus on these three Christian philosophers because they arguably shaped a large part of the ‘classic’ conceptions of just war within the Western just war tradition, as well as Western political thought, history and culture in the broader sense. This makes that I can consider them rightful and credible representatives of ‘classical and medieval Christian thinking’.

In this chapter (1), special attention will be given to the morality of going at war, ‘jus ad bellum’, which has been defined in various ways over time. An analysis of classic and medieval Christian and non-Christian just war thought may clarify which concepts originally held first place, in contrast to the modern-day general consensus about ‘jus ad bellum’ as consisting of the core criteria of just cause, competent authority, right intention, limited objectives, last resort, and hope of success (Amstutz 2008, 101). To examine the just war tradition and the Christian ideas therein, the literature review in this chapter consists of an analysis of mainly secondary scholarly literature which debates historical and present-day just war ideas and the substantial development of the just war tradition.

Subsequently, the second sub-question is: “What is the further meaning of central ideas and concepts within classical and medieval Christian just war thinking in light of their...
potential value for the contemporary international security environment?” The reason for formulating this sub-question is that, precisely if one aims to apply early Christian just war thinking to the contemporary international security environment, the general characteristics of Christian thinking as analyzed in chapter 1 need further and deeper clarification and scrutiny. In other words, in continuation of the broader analysis of Christian just war thinking vis-à-vis the trends within the Western just war tradition, this chapter (2) turns to a more detailed theoretical analysis of merely those concepts that seem to be most central in Christian just war thoughts – with the purpose of discerning to what extent and how these concepts can function as helpful criteria when it comes to addressing contemporary security challenges regarding the just use of armed force. Not only secondary literature, but also primary sources of Christian theology and philosophy, will be reviewed more thoroughly in this chapter. This review inevitably includes my personal argumentative reasoning about the content and value of central Christian just war ideas.

Finally, I aim to examine the third sub-question: “To what extent can the ideas and concepts that are central in classical and medieval Christian just war thinking serve to address the issue of the just use of armed force against the Islamic State (IS)?” In this chapter (3), I aim to apply the ideas of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther to IS as urgent and thought-provoking present-day security challenge, by way of a qualitative case study of the case of IS. Concretely, I aim to analyze firstly how IS challenges the contemporary security environment in ways that are hard to address through modern-day ideas about the just use of armed force, and subsequently I review the extent to which key Christian just war ideas as sketched in chapter 1 and elaborated more extensively in chapter 2, provide helpful insights as potential criteria to determine the possibilities of a just war in the case of IS.

The case of IS constitutes the reason for conducting the present research, as laid out at the beginning of this introduction; but moreover, its distinctive features make it an academically interesting and practically suitable case for further examination. IS forms a key example of a non-traditional security challenge that many governments worldwide nowadays need to understand and respond to. As such, IS ‘by nature’ challenges the just war tradition to come up with new or renewed insights (whether drawing from its ancient Christian legacies or not) on the just use of armed force, since the answers provided within the modern-day just war tradition may not (always) be able to answer the questions posed by present-day security issues conclusively. Moreover, IS is an urgent current-day international security threat; not

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9 At the beginning of this introduction, I have mentioned some ways in which IS sets itself apart as a security challenge, but in whether and how this is the case will be analyzed in further detail in chapter 3.
just theoretically, but especially from a political and military point of view. Indeed, the legitimacy of the use of armed force against IS is, and has been, subject of widespread public and political debate. In this context, the argumentative reasoning in this thesis might inform concrete policy alternatives for players in the contemporary international security arena.

Furthermore, a qualitative case study methodology is chosen since revealing the particular qualities and characteristics of this case may further shape this chapter’s analysis and findings regarding the extent to which a recourse to early and medieval Christian perspectives on the just use of force is valuable for the present-day political world (Moses 2012, 133-143, Bennett 2004, 22, 30, 34-35). In other words, the in-depth analysis of the case of IS guides my analysis when discerning the value of a Christian just war perspective over a modern-day just war perspective as regards the ways to address the security challenges posed by IS, as it may not be the generic picture, but the detail of the case, that may point out whether and how classic and medieval Christian just war ideas offers valuable insights or criteria with regard to justifying the use of armed force today. This is why the opportunity is needed to conduct research with creativity and responsiveness. However, the downside of using a qualitative case study methodology is that the general applicability of findings is limited, so that further research will presumably be needed to assess the broader value and applicability of Christian just war thoughts for the present-day scientific and political world.

Ultimately, examining these three sub-questions will pave the way to formulating an answer to the main research question in the concluding section. In the conclusion, I aim to summarize the main findings in chapters 1, 2 and 3, and debate an answer to the main research question. I will also review the value and usefulness (and boundaries thereof) of this thesis’ findings for IR and ISS as fields within the political sciences and for actors that need to arrive at policies concerning the just use of force in light of contemporary international security challenges such as IS.
Chapter 1 – Just war in Western history

Introduction

In order to answer the first sub-question, “What characterizes classical and medieval Christian thinking about the just use of force as part of the broader Western just war tradition?”, this chapter provides an analysis of some trends throughout the history of the just war tradition regarding substantial claims about what constitutes a just war, especially in relation to the idea of ‘jus ad bellum’. When aiming to discern the particular qualities of classical Christian just war ideas, I deem it necessary to understand these broader, and contrasting, trends in the development of just war thoughts. Partly based on the detailed analysis of historical developments in the just war tradition by Bellamy (2006), and inspired by a lecture by James Turner Johnson (2015), but ultimately based of my personal reasoning in view of this thesis’ research specific purpose (which requires to make generalizations to reduce the tradition’s substantive complexity), I maintain that the just war tradition can be divided in three trends which seem to align roughly with three periods in Western history. After analyzing these three historical trends in detail, which in my view also forms a necessary and adequate way to structure this chapter, I aim to conclude at the end of the chapter what characterizes Christian just war ideas vis-à-vis these broader trends.

However, this does not mean to say that just war ideas originated solely in Western philosophy. Early ideas about the morality of war outside the Western just war tradition can be found for instance in ancient Chinese and Hebrew philosophy.10 The Art of War-corpus in pre-modern China prescribes that a righteous or virtuous ruler should not wage wars, but that nonviolence is sometimes outweighed by the necessity to restore stability and order for the people, to free the people of tyranny, or to stop an aggressive war (Lo 2012, 412-416). Furthermore, in ancient Hebrew texts, just war ideas are for instance being related to the legitimacy of expedient violence by a powerful ruler to achieve justice (Niditch 1995, 404-407). Although these works indicate that just war thinking does not begin or end at the borderlines of Western philosophy, the Western just war tradition will nonetheless occupy the central place in this thesis, partly for the sake of practical clarity, but especially as it is this thesis’ aim to examine the value of ‘Western’ Christian just war ideas for today’s world.

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10 Some scholars argue that just war-ideas also developed within the Islamic tradition, for example regarding the status of noncombatants and reasons for going at war (Zehr 2013, 97-100). All in all, non-Western just war-ideas may have impacted the Western just war tradition. For example, Judaism, Christianity and Islam have been considered to share “a prophetic tradition, sacred literature and moral code. Their histories and cultures have been intertwined, each drawing from the other and from secular, particularly ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, that itself inspired the just war tradition” (see Fisher 2010).
The first trend

The classical world

Following suggestions in various scholarly works, I begin with classical philosophy, and more specifically the Greek philosopher Plato (about 427-347 B.C.), as starting point of the Western just war tradition. In *Republic* and *Laws*, Plato debates the right way to live and the proper way to organize a city, with the presumed aim of educating about the virtue of political justice. In *Republic*, the theme of war is linked to Socrates’ questions about the origins and characteristics of an ideal, just city. Socrates argues that a luxurious city leads to war in things whose presence in cities produce private and public evils. As the path to happiness lies in justice as a matter of knowledge, education might be the way to transform a luxurious city into a just city. The moral quality of the guardians of the just city, both soldiers and rulers, is thereby of key importance: the king should be the best in philosophy and warfare (Syse 2010, 104-110, 113-114, Ryan 2012, 47-55, 58-63). The justice that needs to be pursued, through education or war, is to harm nobody, live honestly, and give everyone his due. In addition, the dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon about tempering civil war provides a code of military conduct for Greek wars. Ravaging of land should be avoided, the ones responsible for the war should be punished as enemies, the defeated population should not be enslaved or killed, and a just and mutually acceptable peace must be built to end the war (Syse 2010, 120). All in all, the virtue of justice should govern the virtues of temperance, courage and reason (Ryan 2012, 50, 63-65), also with regard to discerning right authorities and causes for politics and war.

Another authoritative Greek thinker is Aristotle (384-322 B.C.). Aristotle argues that war should always be fought for the sake of the protection or establishment of a just ‘polis’, through the right acquisition of property, the establishment of proper leadership, and the maintenance of peace. Justice depends on human relations, with all humans having their own position within nature (Bellamy 2006, 18). Although Aristotle’s ideas about war as a way to seek peace are arguably influenced by his temporal and spatial context, as he justified a war to establish the ‘natural hierarchy’ of Greeks over non-Greeks and of masters over slaves (Husby 2009, 79, 83), Aristotle nevertheless maintains that the proper goal of war should always be to achieve peace for the just city (Husby 2009, 4-14).

A third influential classic thinker with respect to the just war tradition is the Roman philosopher Cicero (106-43 B.C.). Justice is a foundational element in Cicero’s ideas about

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11 See Syse 2010, 104-123. Some scholars argue that the just war theory is in its origins a synthesis of classical Greco-Roman and Christian values (Orend 2008, see also Elshtain 1992, 1-7).
war as well. For him, justice is about keeping people away from harming each other unless provoked by a wrong, and about leading man to use common possessions for the common interests and private possessions for their own. In line with Plato, Cicero argues that men are not born for themselves, but that the country may claim a share of their being. Men are born for the sake of men, to help each other. Nature should be followed as guidance “to contribute to the general good by an interchange of acts of kindness, by giving and receiving, and thus by our skill, our industry, and our talents to cement human society more closely together, man to man” (Cicero 2014, I.vii). In other words, justice is selflessness in the performance of one’s civic duties (Regan 2013, 16, 17). In spite of certain differences, Plato, Aristotle and Cicero seem to highlight the relation between politics, war and the supreme virtue of justice that must guide the virtuous guardian of the ideal city (Plato); the protector of the just polis (Aristotle); or the men that protect private and common interests within a human society (Cicero).

Understanding these philosophers, I believe, enables one to better understand the ideas of the first Christian philosopher occupying a central place in this thesis, Augustine (354-430). Augustine’s thoughts show significant similarities with those of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero, as the virtue of justice is at the heart of Augustine’s just war-thoughts as well. In The City of God, but also in Confessions, Augustine writes about the nature of justice, politics and war. Essentially, Augustine defines justice as the virtue which gives to each whatever is their due (Augustine 2007, XIX.xxi). Importantly, for Augustine, defense against destruction, or righting a wrong perpetrated against the property or rights of a state by another state are two just causes for going at war (Bellamy 2006, 25-29). Apart from situations in which a ruler receives a divine (godly) command, wars can never be fought without the commission of injustice against the state (Mattox 2006, 51, Bellamy 2006, 28).

To conclude, there are important similarities and differences between Augustine and other classic philosophers. Augustine’s ideas show similarities with those of the classic philosophers Plato, Aristotle and Cicero when stating that a war can only be fought legitimately by a civil government that defends a relatively just order for the sake of punishing the evildoer and restoring order and peace (Mattox 2006, 57, 58, 72-74, 81, Christopher 1994, 47, Bellamy 2006, 29). At the same time, a central difference lies in their understanding of God as the ultimate source of justice, good and evil, and in the role of political institutions as instruments of mankind’s redemption in God’s divine design. Augustine is particularly original in making the heavenly and earthly spheres overlap (Somos

12 Plotinus’ Neoplatonism was for Augustine a gateway to the Christian faith (Ryan 2012, 151), and to becoming a theologian who fundamentally influenced Christian theology and Western philosophy (Zwitter 2014, 318).
the ideal of justice and peace is reserved for the city of God, but justice and peace are proper goods of the temporal world (Christopher 1994, 38-48, Ramsey 1992, 12).

The medieval world

In the context of the medieval, feudal world that developed from the remnants of the Roman Empire, there occurs a struggle between proponents of a unified Christian society and those of a society of equal sovereigns. In this historical context, Gratian of Bologna is an important contributor to Canon Law with his *Decretum* (12th century). This book proscribes that a war can be declared legitimately by secular authorities if it is aimed at righting a wrong, or by ecclesiastic authorities to defend the faith and its orthodoxy. In both cases, non-combatants are immune (Bellamy 2006, 33-34, Johnson 2008, 543-549). Ultimately, Canon lawyers synthesize Canon Law, Scripture, theology and philosophy to formalize the rules of war.

In later times, the theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the second Christian philosopher whose ideas are scrutinized closely in this thesis, introduces political philosophy into medieval Christianity (Fortin 1997, 92-93). Aquinas agrees with Augustine on mankind’s sinful nature but, like Aristotle, he believes that the state exists to shelter forms of social life that are at least relatively good (Ryan 2012, 225, 236-240). He argues that eternal law, written in the mind of God, can be accessed by men by discerning the fundamental tendencies of nature (i.e. natural law). In this way, rational agents can know the principles underlying moral judgment as ground for human laws. Importantly, for Aquinas, a ruler’s authority does not extend to decisions about the end for which states exist, namely justice and order, but only to the means whereby this end might be realized (Brown 2002, 52-53).

The first important contribution of Aquinas to the just war tradition is that he closely follows and summarizes the key elements on Augustine’s work on just war, and reduces them to abstract rules grounded in clearly stated principles. A second contribution is Aquinas’ comprehensive statement regarding just war. In *Summa Theologiae*, he discerns the prince or sovereign as the proper authority, and protecting justice or punishing evildoers as just cause (Brown 2002, 54-56, Ryan 2012, 247-248, Bellamy 2006, 39). In short, Aquinas’ just war ideas are about good politics rooted in order, justice and peace. Although Augustine’s and Aquinas’ just war ideas have in common that justice defines the responsibilities of the government and the right causes for going at war, an important divide between them seems to

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13 Canon Law was the system of law governing the Church and citizens under its jurisdiction. Partly based on Roman and Augustinian thought, it provided three legitimate causes for war, namely to recover stolen goods, war to avenge injuries, or war in case of self-defense (Bellamy 2006, 31-37). The Reformation made that Canon Law’s authority declined from the 15th to 17th century.
lie in whether only passive disobedience is allowed in case a ruler rules unjustly (Augustine), or also active disobedience and popular resistance (Aquinas) (Ryan 2012, 251, 255).

The theme of disobedience or resistance towards unjust rulers is also present in the political thoughts of the Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546). Starting with his ninety-five theses with critique against the Roman Catholic Church, Luther fundamentally challenges the authority of the pope and the institute of the Church. Although Luther’s work is essentially religious in nature, his ideas do have implications for politics, secular authority and war. In An Address, he initially argues that a ruler’s ungodly command may only be passively disobeyed, but later he argues more in line with Aquinas that the ruler should employ the sword on behalf of earthly justice (Ryan 2012, 331-335, 342). Luther argues that the sword is rightly employed by the agents of the law and soldiers. Even Christians should serve as law enforcers, as it is needed to avoid the bloodshed that would exist in the absence of laws and law enforcement (Höpfl 1991, 15, Ryan 2012, 336-337).

Taking it all together, after the above analysis of the thinking of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther within the broader context of classic and medieval philosophy, it can be concluded that they stand out in the sense that is the virtue of ‘divine justice’ that should guide politics and war, the legitimacy and responsibility of rulers, and the causes they strive for. Indeed, according to these Christian philosophers, politics and war are means to achieve a just order, meaning a peaceful, stable society in which the virtue dominates of giving everyone their due. In line with classical philosophers, Augustine, Aquinas and Luther place the responsibility to maintain order, effect justice and seek peace on the shoulders of civil government. However, what is good or just is for them ultimately derived from God, from divine natural law that can be apprehended through moral reasoning. The consensus seems to be that war can be waged by a righteous ruler to combat injustice, to defend the relatively just state against destruction (self-defense) and serve the well-being of the people, or at divine command to the ruler.

The second trend

A period of transitions

After Luther’s death in 1546, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) outlaws Lutheranism and sows as such the seeds for the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) that ravages Europe in the seventeenth century (Ryan 2012, 343-344). In the same period, the doctrine of sovereignty as absolute power emerges, and the intellectual descendants of Aristotle and Schoolmen like Aquinas slowly transform from natural lawyers in the medieval sense into proponents of the law of nations, and later into ‘international lawyers’ in the modern-day
sense (Brown 2002, 27). Territorial defense became priority – marking the beginning of an important substantive shift within the just war tradition (Johnson 2013, 21-23). Although the Italian philosopher and ‘realist’ Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) and the Dutch philosopher and humanist pacifist Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) are not part of the just war tradition per se, I maintain that they should be mentioned here as they represent the extremes or poles between which the just war tradition developed substantively.\(^{14}\) Machiavelli replaces the idea of moral just causes with the idea that a war fought by a sovereign to serve the state is in itself a just cause (Bellamy 2006, 56-58). On the other hand, there occurs a rise of internationalism and of attempts to abolish war altogether. Erasmus’ writings, most notably *The Education of a Christian Prince*, pose questions about war in a world of sovereign states. In considering an unjust peace to be morally preferable to a just war, he questions the very foundation of classic just war thinking (Nelson 1985, 44). Erasmus argues that a (Christian) prince is a man of peace, because he knows that war brings misfortune to the state. The prince should thus not wage war to defend his territory unless all other means are exhausted and he cannot possibly avoid it (Nelson 1985, 45).\(^{15}\) In this period of the creation of international structures of governance above that of states, state sovereignty and non-intervention became core concepts when thinking about war (Nye 1999, 163-201, see also Brown 2002, 19-37).

**The Enlightenment**

These political and philosophical thoughts point to the gradual demise of holy war thinking and Catholic scholasticism in the 17\(^{th}\) century; to the ‘secularization’ of political thought (Zehr 2009, 195). The just war tradition became primarily concerned with the advancement of stability and peace within the structures of the Westphalian international state system, whereby international agreements secured principles such as ‘cujus regio ejus religio’\(^{16}\) (Bellamy 2006, 67). Philosophers like the English realist thinker Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) argue that the absence of a central authority to enforce legal or moral rules creates an anarchical world in which the ruler is contracted by his people to go at his own sovereign will at war to protect the community form internal or external aggression (Tierney 1982, 396). On the other hand, the Dutch lawyer Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) understands international law as

\(^{14}\) Indeed, their thinking constitutes the boundaries within which the just war tradition is to be positioned. Also, they illustrate how conceptions of sovereignty shifted (Elshtain 2008, 77-118, Johnson 2013, 21-23).

\(^{15}\) Erasmus does not state whether or how a war is just or whether defending the common good justifies the use of armed force, but he examines criteria that hold direct relevance for just war thought: justifiable reasons, intentions of participants, and favorable outcomes. Furthermore, it was not his intention to “condemn those who undertake legitimate war to repel barbarous invasions or defend the common good” (Nelson 1985, 45).

\(^{16}\) ‘To each sovereign his own religion’: a departure from the authority of the Catholic Church and Canon Law.
a binding to state rulers and authoritative with regard to determining and evaluating when and how a war is legitimate. In Grotius’ works, international law synthesizes natural and human (positive) law in order to govern what is just and what is legal (Bellamy 2006, 71). This illustrates the gradual shift to a more secular and subjectivist perception of morality: when reference to God and divine justice decreases, what is just or unjust is determined in other ways, for instance through (international) agreements and positive law.

According to Grotius, there are three types of just wars: war as judicial act; war as litigation when a tribunal is ineffective or lacks jurisdiction, and war to defend the common good (Kingsbury 1992, 16, Johnson 1975, 209-232). Two of these types of war directly refer to the causes for which they are fought – comparable to how war as punitive action and for the common good are important elements in the just war thinking of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther –, but I argue that especially ‘war as litigation’ is a relatively new idea because of its explicit procedural and legal nature. This type concretely entails that war can only be legal after an attempt to solve the dispute with arbitration first, and that war is only legitimate if the sovereign satisfied other ‘jus ad bellum’-requirements such as just cause, rightful authority and prior declaration. At the same time, each sovereign keeps a legal right to wage war, whereby it is possible that either party is justly pleading his case (Bellamy 2006, 74, Grotius 1925). The question of going at war legitimately becomes more and more a procedural matter.

Another departure from the classic and Christian conceptions of just war in Grotius’ thinking is the relative marginalization of theological arguments in favor of arguments based on a combination of natural and volitional law (Bellamy 2006, 76). Indeed, Somos (2010) argues that Grotius eliminated God from political realm. In the late Renaissance and early modernity, political thinkers increasingly see the individual as the basis of their arguments, still heavily drawing on natural law discourse, but starting with the ‘alienated man’ (Somos 2010, 247-248). As long as the law of nations and positive law was still not fully developed, natural law could justify war for the above mentioned causes; the only universal law Grotius permits being the prohibition of acts that destruct society.

Partly based on Grotius’ works, there emerge several legalist sub-traditions. Pufendorf and Wolff focus on the absence of a global authority restraining sovereigns to wage war, and they zoom in on proportionality and estimated and required effectiveness as prerequisites for the just use of armed force during war (Pufendorf 1994, 257-260). Furthermore, Vattel argues that nations are free, independent and equal, and that sovereigns have an inherent right to wage war. Offensive and defensive wars can be legitimate ways to pursue the just causes of claiming property, punishing an aggressor or offender, and self-defense (Bellamy 2006, 79-
82, Vattel 1916, 235-244, see also Johnson 1975, 208-255). In other words, war should be waged in accordance with relevant legal rules, but the sovereign ruler remains a free and independent sovereign. Contrastingly, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) maintains that not one war could be regarded as just (Téson 1992, 90). In Perpetual Peace (1795), he argues that the main question is how the law of nations constrains states and how, if states voluntarily bind themselves to this law, this law of nations makes international society more peaceful (Bellamy 2006, 82-87). As Zwitter and Hoelzl point out, Kant’s reasoning shows interesting similarities with Augustine’s, for instance regarding the necessity of the use of practical reasoning (wisdom) in the process of reaching peace and ending war.\(^{17}\)

However, by seeing ‘concord’ among men, instead of the concord with God, as the key to peacemaking, Kant just like Grotius illustrates the secularization of just war-thought and how this secular thought combined Christian principles and ideas.

Altogether, these developments indicate how the just war tradition makes a substantive turn from classic and Christian views on morality based on ‘justice’, with a strong focus on just cause and proper authority, to a more secular and subjectivist perception of morality: how can one know what is just or unjust in the absence of God and divine justice? This question provokes further thinking about how to answer the question of what constitutes, for instance, a proper authority. It also stimulates debates about procedural aspects such as the legitimacy of war under international law through proper declaration and proper warfare.

**Modernity**

Ongoing societal and political secularization, but also technological developments that allow massive killings, further shape the just war tradition from the 18\(^{th}\) to the 20\(^{th}\) century. Although the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) rejects just war principles because of the alleged absence of ‘a priori’ moral standards that govern warfare, which for some makes defending the state and its interests the most important human endeavor (Bellamy 2006, 89-94, Meinecke 1957, 2-3), there nonetheless develops a growing framework of international laws aimed at governing politics, war and warfare. These laws are based on e.g. military codes, liberal humanism, and international treaties (Bellamy 2006, 94). While ‘jus in bello’-principles are prominent in the Geneva Conventions, ‘jus ad bellum’-principles become increasingly important after World War I.\(^{18}\) In a sense, the League of Nations’ arbitration system formalizes the procedural elements of ‘jus ad bellum’, but

\(^{17}\) However, Augustine’s account of universal peace as the ultimate objective goes beyond Kant’s perpetual peace as absence of war. The Augustinian ‘state of nature’ is peace by God’s grace (Zwitter 2014, 323).

\(^{18}\) This is visible in e.g. the Kellogg-Briand Pact, The Hague Conventions and the League of Nations.
Bellamy argues that the lack of attention for ‘jus in bello’-principles may have contributed to the failure of the League of Nations and the beginning of the World War II (Bellamy 2006, 94-103). This war leads to the third trend in the just war tradition.

All in all, in the period from the 16th to 20th century, the just war theory secularizes as theological arguments decline in favor of arguments based on natural and volitional law. While Grotius sees international law as a framework that synthesizes natural and human law to bind states to do what is just and legal – with the only legitimate wars being wars as judicial acts, wars as litigation, and wars to defend the common good –, other philosophers stress the primacy of state sovereignty and independence. There occur more subjectivist perceptions of morality. Consequently, whereas classic and medieval Christian philosophers relate proper authority to the righteousness of the ruler and the justice of the order he defends, there emerges a deeper divide about what constitutes proper authority (the sovereign ruler as being independent or the sovereign ruler under and in accordance with the international legal framework?) as well as on what constitutes a just cause for going at war (national interests or the common good?). Also, more attention is being paid to procedural aspects, such as the proper declaration of war guided by international law, and to the justice of warfare.

The third trend

Recent developments

In the decades after World War II, Hans Morgenthau and Reinhold Niebuhr, but especially Paul Ramsey, Michael Walzer, Jean Bethke Elshtain and James Turner Johnson become the foremost scholars contributing to the revitalization of the just war tradition (O’Driscoll 2008, 190). The American political scientist Hans Morgenthau (1904-1980) and the American Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1917) articulate a new type of realism imbued in just war thinking. Morgenthau argues that positive international law has failed because of the incongruence between law and international politics,\(^{19}\) and that political leaders have to prioritize moral considerations again. He proposes that violations of international law should be sanctioned (Lebow 2003, 222, 240). In a similar fashion, Niebuhr’s argument that each case related to war and peace should be judged on its own characteristics and merits, forms a ‘via media’ between irresponsible pacifism and unbridled realism (Bellamy 2006, 105-106).

However, the ‘resurgence’ of the just war tradition really takes off when the American Christian ethicist Paul Ramsey (1913-1988) puts it back on the map in the 1960s and 1970s

\(^{19}\) International laws or institutions were unable to prevent World War II or address nationalist sentiments.
For Ramsey, the just war idea is in essence about the moral permissibility and limits of the use of armed force during war. By focusing on the principles of discrimination (avoiding direct, intentional harm to noncombatants) and proportionality (ensuring that the benefits outweigh the harm from use of force), Ramsey’s theory is mostly related to ‘jus in bello’ (Johnson 2002, 137, 141). With regard to ‘jus ad bellum’, Ramsey argues partly on the basis of the Biblical parable about the Good Samaritan’s love and care for his Israelite enemy (Luke 10:25-37), that there may exist a moral obligation to engage in war to defend and protect one’s neighbor from an unjust attack (Johnson 2002, 138).

Furthermore, Michael Walzer (1935) adopts a rather communitarian approach with respect to the centrality of the concepts of territorial integrity and sovereignty of the political community (Walzer 2006, 53). For Walzer, ‘aggression’ – the term he uses for war – is the only crime a state can commit against another state, but an extraordinary serious and dangerous one because of the threats it poses to the imperfect structure of international society. Walzer argues that state sovereignty is a central concept, but that nonetheless any member of international society may start a war of law enforcement (Walzer 2006, 51, 58-59).

The American ethicist and philosopher Jean Bethke Elshtain (1941-2013), by contrast, connects war to good governance. Elshtain argues that a state’s right to war in international society is an invitation to responsible government. Essentially, a war is just when armed force is used to vindicate the international society or international order by disciplining those who disturb or undermine it (O’Driscoll 2007, 487). Elshtain, by drawing on Augustinian notions about responsible government, and the American political scientist James Turner Johnson whose works are being analyzed extensively in this thesis, are examples of present-day political theorists that are still inspired by more traditional conceptions of just war.

**The just war theory today**

As Johnson argues, the consultation of the ideas about ethics and morality of war within the just war tradition is nowadays remarkably widespread. It is based on both religious and secular political philosophy, military education and doctrines, and policy debates. It is often engaged in a dialogue with the international laws of armed conflict and international humanitarian law (Johnson 2002, 143). The trends in the just war tradition analyzed here have made that questions about the moral legitimacy of war are currently discussed under the headings of ‘jus ad bellum’, ‘jus in bello’, and since more recently ‘jus post bellum’.

The category of ‘jus ad bellum’ is also called ‘war-decision law’ (Amstutz 2008, 114). The general consensus among many modern-day just war theorists is that war is legitimate if

While the just war tradition, as well as the law of nations, has long been based on a combination of positive and natural law, contemporary normative thinking about war is increasingly based on merely positive law instead of natural law. This positive law is codified in written treaties such as the Geneva Conventions, in customary law, and in the ‘opinio juris’ of institutions like the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). The UN Charter and institutions like the ICC and ICJ symbolize the post-World War II legalism. Some remaining issues within contemporary just war thought concern the tension between positive law’s presumption against aggressive war (the secular perspective on war) and natural law’s presumption against injustice (a classical and Christian conception of war as based on e.g. Augustine, Aquinas and Luther), as well as the question whether and when concerns about justice should override the rules of positive law. In any case, the World Wars have fundamentally impacted our understandings of just war (Bellamy 2006, 107-114).

**Conclusion: Christian just war thinking vis-à-vis the three trends**

As analyzed above, the just war tradition has over time provided changing ideas and standards about the morality of war-initiation and war-conduct. In this chapter, I distinguished three substantive trends in just war-thought that roughly align with three periods in Western history: the classical and medieval world from the 4th century B.C. to the 16th century A.D., the 16th to 20th century, and the 20th and 21st century. Whereas early classic and Christian contributors to the just war tradition adopt a substantive approach in which war is seen as just if it conforms to divinely proscribed rules, as grounded in natural law and approved by authoritative
legislators, later theorists adopt a more procedural approach to just war, with as bottom line that the legitimacy of war is determined by (international) consensus-based agreements.

Nowadays, normative thinking about war is strongly influenced by the expanding and deepening structures of international law and institutions which guide the actions of states, governments and individual human beings. While Christian philosophers focus on the justice of a ‘warring’ state and on the moral quality of the sovereign, acts of war are currently mostly deemed legitimate if they are justified in terms of the common referents and perspectives provided by the just war tradition, and if those justifications are validated by other actors who act as ‘judges and juries’ who balance the different claims. Another contrast with modern-day just war thought is that having a right intention is for Augustine, Aquinas and Luther inextricably linked to waging war by the morally right authority for the morally right cause.

What thus distinguishes Christian philosophers most in the context of the three trends, is their strong focus on divine justice as the highest good which guides the political authority and responsibility of the ruler and the right causes of going at war. A just war is about the obligation of the relatively just sovereign ruler to serve and protect the common good of the people and to wage war to protect the people and the community in case the relatively just order is threatened. Moral reasoning enables human beings to apprehend what God has determined to be morally just, and this justice can then be translated in an ideal, just society. Although the authority of the ruler is important, respect for the well-being of the people, individually and collectively in this just society, seems to make the Christian perspectives on morality of war in essence more cosmopolitan than communitarian.

All in all, particularly the notions of legitimate authority and just cause, inextricably related to the idea of divine justice, seem to occupy the central place in Christian just war thinking. Right intention is another element, but this aspect is so intrinsically related to the other concepts that it is hard to see it as separate. Indeed, for Augustine, Aquinas and Luther, there does not seem to be any just cause or legitimate authority without right intention, and vice versa. The distinction between these three concepts is not clear in Christian classic and medieval just war-thought, and might be more of a modern-day, secular just war conception. In the next chapter, I aim to analyze the two central Christian concepts of legitimate authority and just cause in more detail, in order to discern to what extent these concepts may have value when engaging with present-day security issues such as IS.
Chapter 2 – Elaborating on central concepts in Christian just war thinking

In this chapter, I examine the second sub-question: “What is the further meaning of central ideas and concepts within classical and medieval Christian just-war-thinking in light of their potential value for the contemporary international security environment?” At the end of the previous chapter, I concluded that in comparison to the broader developments of the broader just war tradition, the concepts of legitimate authority and just cause, radically connected to the virtue of divine justice, occupy a central place within the just war thinking of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther. The present chapter will elaborate further on the further and deeper meaning of these core concepts.20 Thereafter follows a discussion to develop tentative arguments regarding the value of these concepts as potential criteria for coping with the issue of armed force in the contemporary security environment.

The first central concept

A first key concept in the just war thinking of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther is concerned with which authority is rightfully legitimate to go at war. When taking a closer look at this concept, first of all from an Augustinian perspective, it appears that the legitimate authority allowed to wage war is the government that defends a relatively just moral order (Mattoo 2006, 57, 58, 72–74, 81, Christopher 1994, 47, Bellamy 2006, 29). The just civil government has the responsibility to effect order, justice and peace. These notions are intimately related to Augustine’s understanding of Biblical good and evil. Political authorities are instruments of mankind’s redemption in God’s divine design. Augustine argues that, although the ideal of justice and peace is reserved for the city of God, justice and peace are still proper goods of earthly city; of the temporal world. The people need a political community to create social harmony and commodious living (Christopher 1994, 38–48, Ramsey 1992, 12), and only an authority that defends this harmonious, just community is legitimately allowed to wage a war. The righteous ruler should be obeyed, but if an earthly authority rules unjustly, the people are allowed to be passively disobedient.21

Although a ‘wise’ authority can wage a certain type of war, Augustine argues that he will keep them to a minimum, simply because war always remains cruel. This requires practical wisdom, ‘prudentia’ or ‘prudence’, a virtue that is hard to define but that plays a

20 As I furthermore argued, right intention is an additional, but not separate, central element of Christian just war thinking. Therefore, this chapter will analyze just cause and right intention as naturally related concepts.

21 For Augustine, it is a central belief that even tyrants derive their power from above: by God, kings reign, and tyrants possess the land. Therefore, Augustine argues that the proper response by the people to tyranny is submission and prayerful endurance rather than resistance (O’Driscoll, 490-491).
vital role in the just war tradition until the Enlightenment, and is often seen as a virtue that guides all other virtues. In line with Augustine and Aristotle, Aquinas states that virtues such as prudence are developed “through practicing virtuous behavior until it becomes a habit to act virtuously,” or by inspiration as an act of God (Zwitter 2014, 318). Through prudence, it is possible to arrive at a state that shelters forms of social life that are at least relatively good (Ryan 2012, 225, 236-240). With regard to war and warfare, a central point in Aquinas’s just war thinking is that the rightfully governing public authority may declare war on behalf of his polity. In his own words:

“Since the care of the commonwealth is entrusted to princes, it pertains to them to protect the commonwealth of the city or kingdom or province subject to them. And just as it is lawful for them to use the material sword in defense of the commonwealth against those who trouble it from within, when they punish evildoers… so too it pertains to them to use the sword of war to protect the commonwealth against enemies from without” (Dyson 2002, 240).

Indeed, the ruler has the responsibility to exercise his authority to serve public justice and order. The sovereign has the duty to secure peace by punishing the evildoers and helping good people, and he should use the sword of war in order to pursue true peace: ‘Those who wage war justly aim at peace, and so they are not opposed to peace, except to the evil peace’ (Dyson 2002, 241). Indeed, the just war is fought on princely authority with the goal of restoring good relations between communities where they have been disrupted by some instance of wrongdoing. It is an act of judgment undertaken by the prince on behalf of his polity (O’Driscoll 2008, 192-193).22

This refers to what Johnson later calls ‘vindicative’ justice, which is essentially an understanding of just war in which the sovereign prince uses the sword to restore a just and peaceful political order when it has been disturbed by misconducts of others. The prince is the public authority who may act as the minister of God on earth to execute his vengeance against the evildoer (Johnson 1981, 4, O’Driscoll 2008, 192-193). Both Augustine and Aquinas see the political authority as ordained by God, but unlike Augustine, Aquinas holds that an unjust ruler inherently loses his right to have the people obey his order, and may therefore be

22 Augustine develops this theme by focusing on the vocation of a judge. As social life is threatened by sin and darkness, the question is whether the wise man will take his seat on the judge’s bench or not. Augustine argues that he will, because the claims of human society draw him to this duty. The judge is motivated by a sense of responsibility for the public order. Personally, he would probably want to avoid bloodshed when sentencing, but he also does not want the public order to collapse. He is obliged to act in a certain way by his office, by his authority, by the demands of his situation (O’Driscoll 2007, 486-487).
actively resisted (Ryan 2012, 251). According to Aquinas, unjust rulers can be resisted both internally, by the people who are represented by the unjust ruler’s rightful successor, and externally, by other just rulers.

Initially, Luther argues in line with Pauline and Augustinian notions that a ruler is ordained by God (Höpfl 1991, 6) and that a ruler’s explicitly ungodly command may therefore only be passively disobeyed but not violently resisted. With a few exceptions, rebellion, even against an ungodly ruler, is rebellion against God as well (Ryan 2012, 331-335). Later, after discovering that the Christian rulers independent from Rome are not any better rulers, Luther argues more in line with Aquinas that the sword should be employed on behalf of earthly justice: the powers that be are ordained by God to be a terror to the evildoer. If a ruler fails to do so, he has morally abdicated by violating his trust, has ceased to be a ruler, and has become a private person. As such, Luther later accepts the constitutionalist claim that if the ruler was the aggressor, he is in rebellion against the lawful order and might lawfully be resisted. Indeed, the limit to authority lies in the Biblical passage of Acts 4, where the apostles Peter and John disobey the Sanhedrin as their official authority, which for Luther points out that men should essentially obey God rather than men. In Luther’s words:

“If a prince or a secular lord commands you to adhere to the papacy, to believe this or that, or to surrender books, then you should say: I owe you obedience with my life and goods (...) but if you command me to believe, or surrender my books, I will not obey. For then you [will have] become a tyrant and overreached yourself, commanding where you have neither right or power” (Höpfl 1991, 29).

It should be noted that Luther, in contrast to how the British philosopher John Locke later argued that “in rebelling on good grounds each of us represents all of us”, argues that this resistance cannot be conducted by all people, but only by the ones under the law to make decisions with the force of law (Ryan 2012, 342). In other words, resistance should not be conducted by the people individually, but rather under leadership of the ones under the law to make decisions with the force of law, namely the princes of the state or empire (Ryan 2012, 342). Luther adds that Christians should also be willing to participate in governance and serve as law enforcers since there would be chaos and bloodshed in the absence of law and law enforcement (Ryan 2012, 336). Laws need to be enforced to maintain peace and order. Altogether, Luther’s main point regarding the concept of legitimate authority seems to be that princes should employ the sword on behalf of earthly justice – that is, to punish the wicked and protect the just (Höpfl 1991, 7). Luther sees this as the ultimate responsibility of any ruler, secular or not.
In conclusion, when assessing the just war thinking of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther as regards the concept of legitimate authority, the following elements rise to the surface. Governments are ordained by God. They are ordained by God to be a terror to the evildoer and serve earthly justice or the common good of the people. A ruler that does so is called a just or righteous ruler and is the legitimate authority to go at war (Augustine, Aquinas and Luther). When a righteous ruler goes at war, he inherently has the right intentions (otherwise he is simply not righteous), and should fight for the just causes that will be elaborated on in the next section. If the righteous ruler aims to serve the common good by using peaceful means or the sword, the people should obey him (Augustine, Aquinas and Luther), and it is always the virtue of prudence that should guide his actions (Augustine and Aquinas). However, if the ruler fails to serve the common good, he is not righteous, has automatically ‘morally abdicated’ (Aquinas and Luther), and ceases to be a morally legitimate authority with regard to deciding to going at war and waging war. In all this, it is divine justice that determines a ruler’s legitimacy and authority and should guide his goals and actions when ruling the just society. This brings me to the concept of just cause.

The second central concept

A second key concept in Christian just war thinking of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther is related to the morally right and just causes to go at war. Beginning with Augustine’s philosophy first, Johnson argues that Augustine’s ideas about the morality of war, including with regard to what constitutes a just cause for going at war, are inspired by ancient Roman and Hebrew texts. Augustine aims at developing a systematic moral justification for Christian participation in violence through a systematic analysis of the morality of war, placing it in the context of a theological worldview that stresses the work of charity in transforming history (Johnson 1981, xxiv, O’Driscoll 2008, 194). Augustine builds upon Greek and Roman notions on the use of force as a response to early Christian pacifists like Tertullian (155-240), who states Christians are not allowed to wear a sword, and Lactantius (250-325), a tutor of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great (280-337), who likewise forbade the use of violence.23

Instead of stating that waging war is in any case conflicting with Jesus’ teachings, Augustine argued that self-giving love may demand Christians to go to war out of a desire to correct another’s sins and return them to righteousness (O’Driscoll 2008, 195). This Christian love comes from the love of God and supposes a ‘harmonious ordering of man’s regard for

23 These early Christian pacifists based their ideas on pacifist passages in the Bible such as Matthew 5:21-22 and 26: 50-53, with Jesus’ call for non-violence, and Romans 12:17-21, where it is prohibited to repay anyone evil for evil.
self, others, and the Divine’ (O’Driscoll 2008, 194). I argue that this entails that justice, love and war are for Augustine intimate related, even though the three seem contradictory at first sight. From a moral and theological viewpoint, it is thus precisely the virtue of justice that leads Augustine to adopt a nuanced view on the use of violence. Some scholars argue that, from a more practical and political perspective, Church leaders like Augustine seem to have hoped to sustain the Holy Roman Empire of Constantine by permitting Christian participation in just wars (Johnson 2013, 18-23). However, this is not an uncontested position.

Ultimately, Augustine seems to justify wars as defensive and punitive actions; as punishments for violations of the just or moral order (Mattox 2006, 45-47). Concretely, Augustine holds that defense against destruction or righting a wrong perpetrated against the property or rights of a state by another state are the only two just causes to wage war. Apart from receiving a divine command, wars can only be fought with the commission of injustice against the state and not for the aggrandizement thereof (Mattox 2006, 51, Bellamy 2006, 28). In other words, wars for the sake of religious orthodoxy might be just, but wars fought merely for the greater glory of the state are never permitted (Mattox 2006, 51, Bellamy 2006, 28). At the same time, although a just war is essentially waged against sin and restoring what is good, it may have the purpose of extending the virtuous kingdom if the alternative would be that kingdoms or empires ruled by unjust rulers would threaten to undermine peace. To put it differently, for Augustine, wars responding to wrongdoings are just (‘causa justa’), which in consequence leads to extending the borders of a political community under the condition that this bigger empire leads to a stable peace (‘intentio recta’) (Zwitter 2014, 319, see also Parsons 2013, 359-360). In that sense, political motives play a role as well, but inextricably linked to pursuing justice.

This also points out that the element of right intention is very closely linked to just cause. Indeed, Augustine opposes self-defense that results from a desire for earthly goods over heavenly goods, but he thought that it is not the killing itself that makes war sinful, but the hatred, greed and lust for power that it generates (Bellamy 2006, 25-29). War should always be fought with the right intentions, namely the punishment for violations of the just or moral order (Mattox 2006, 45-47). Although right intention and just cause are often seen and

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24 Augustine’s view is partly based on Biblical texts that can be interpreted in ways that justify violence in certain circumstances, such as Romans 13:1-4, Leviticus 14, 18, and Proverbs 25:21. These texts state for example that the government wears the sword to maintain a just order. For Augustine, this did not make warfare itself any less cruel, but nonetheless, he noted for example in The City of God, Book I, chapter 6, that the Romans were behaving relatively and exceptionally well and just during war (Zwitter 2014, 319).
treated as separate concepts or criteria within contemporary just war thinking. I do not analyze them as separate things, simply because the two are not easy to separate in Augustine’s thoughts, or those of Aquinas and Luther. The contemporary understanding of the difference between politics and morality is thus alien to classic virtue ethicists (Zwitter 2014, 320). For Augustine, there cannot be a just cause without right intention, and vice versa.

As a just cause to wage war is a stable peace, the same complexity comes back in Augustine’s argument about a universal and multidimensional peace. In addition to the ethical and theological dimensions of that peace (namely peace as harmony of body and soul within man; between God and man), the political dimension of it is the ‘concord’ between man and man which applies to different forms and levels of relationships (in the family as domestic peace and within the state as civil peace). Augustine extends this universal peace based on the well-ordered concord also to kingdoms amongst each other, and adds the spiritual dimension to universal peace as the harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God. The spiritual peace is based on obedience through faith, but among equal men, it is based on concord. Augustine understands peace as a state of nature; however, contrary to Immanuel Kant’s later understandings of perpetual peace, Augustine sees (eternal) peace as a gift from God. In the end, peace is grace (Zwitter 2014, 321-322). Ultimately, punishing sin and discipline wrongdoers in order to reach universal peace, out of love for the neighbor, means for Augustine that warfare can be just: “[for] it is the iniquity of the opposing side that imposes upon the wise man the duty of waging wars” (O’Driscoll 2007, 486). War is a tragic consequence of, as well as a remedy for, mankind’s fallen nature (O’Neill 2011, 29).

For Aquinas, then, a ruler may use armed force for the sake of protecting justice or punishing evildoers. Concretely, the sovereign prince has three duties: to maintain order in a community through defense against internal misconduct or external attack, to restore justice by punishing the wrongdoers as criminals, and to reclaim stolen property (Dyson 2002, 241). The violence of war is only just when used for the common good, and can never be justified when used for private ends (Parsons 2013, 360). Since any act of war may have intended and unintended consequences, Aquinas maintains that wars may only be undertaken with

25 As Steinhoff symbolically puts it, “just cause comprises all (valid) just war criteria apart from ‘right intention’ or, as it should be called, the subjective element of the justification of a war: there can be a just cause without anybody intending to fight for it; indeed, without anybody knowing it” (Steinhoff 2014, 43-44).

26 Aquinas’ ‘double effect-doctrine’ holds that since any act may have intended and unintended consequences, unintended bad consequences may be morally acceptable if one strives for the good. Indeed, doing evil is prohibited, but the use of neutral means for a good end is permitted, even if it has incidental evil results—so long as these are not disproportionate to the intended good, and so long as the means are necessary. Applying
proportionality and rightful intentions, such as the advancement of the common good, securing peace, punishing evildoers, or avoidance of evil (Brown 2002, 54-56, Ryan 2012, 247-248). Just as for Augustine, where Christian love implies that the one who wages war should have good intentions (O’Driscoll 2008, 197), just cause and right intention are strongly related for Aquinas as well. Right intention does not constitute a separate, third category that needs individual scrutiny, but an inherent element of just cause.

Additionally, whereas Augustine argues that passive disobedience is allowed in case a ruler demands an action explicitly forbidden by Christian teachings, Aquinas holds that such a ruler forfeits his right to have the people obey his order, and that the people could legitimately do what was morally acceptable for the just cause of restoring a stable, lawful, unoppressive regime (Ryan 2012, 237, 251). For Aquinas, enduring tyrannical rule would only be defensible if overthrowing the tyrant creates still worse evils (Ryan 2012, 255).

For Luther, just as for Aquinas, a ruler should use the sword to punish the wicked and protect the just (Höpfl 1991, 7). Both Christian and secular governments should do their work, the one to make [people] just, the other to create outward peace and prevent evil-doing (Höpfl 1991, 12). Luther holds that an unjust, aggressive ruler is in rebellion against the lawful order, and might lawfully be resisted for the cause of restoring the lawful order. He finds that good men do not need the law or the sword, but that since all men are sinful, all are under the law. And since there would be chaos and bloodshed in the absence of law and law enforcement, Christians should participate in the duties government and law enforcement with good conscience. “We should do so for others and serve God’s kingdom and the world’s at the same time, outwardly and inwardly; you both suffer evil and injustice and yet punish them; you do not resist evil and yet you do resist it (...) Christians serve others; you act in accordance with the command to love and you tolerate no injustice against him” (Höpfl 1991, 15). The sword is rightly employed by the agents of the law and soldiers, and Christians should be willing to serve as law enforcers (Ryan 2012, 336-337).

Overall, love for God and the neighbor is for Augustine and Luther a key factor when it comes to using the sword. Love creates a desire for justice, and protecting or restoring justice may require the use of force. In this sense, justice, love and just cause (including right intention) seem to be inextricably linked to war. For Augustine, universal peace with its theological, political and spiritual dimensions, is essentially ‘natural’; however, given mankind’s sinfulness it is a gift of grace. War is essentially defensive and punitive in nature,

the doctrine to the just war tradition, it holds that civilians may not be targeted unless damage to them is absolutely necessary and proportional to the objective (Asad 2010, 9).
as it is about protecting the just city and punishing evildoers. For Aquinas, securing peace, punishing evildoers, avoidance of evil and advancing the common good are just causes for waging war. In contrast to Augustine, he argues that it is possible to actively resist the ruler who is indeed ordained by God but inherently ceases to be a legitimate ruler if he rules unjustly. Luther’s ideas are in agreement with this latter position, as he sees war as just when it is fought for the sake of punishing the wicked, protecting the just, and restoring the lawful, just order. To obey God’s commandments is more important than to obey man.

**Debating the qualities and implications of the central concepts**

Augustine, Aquinas and Luther all consider the authorities, the civil government, to be ordained by God. For Augustine, an unrighteous ruler can for that reason only be passively disobeyed, while Aquinas and Luther maintain that since the unjust ruler is rebelling against the law he may be rebelled against. In any case, rulers should employ the sword on behalf of earthly justice and order, and Christians may be involved in that quest as soldiers. Augustine stresses that Christian love may urge a sovereign ruler to defend the just moral order, with or without armed force, under guidance of the virtue prudence. According to Aquinas, the same applies to the righteous sovereign ruler or the official successor of the unjust sovereign; and according to Luther, only the just sovereign ruler, his rightful successor, and the soldiers as agents of the law may legitimately be involved in waging war.

One central notion within Christian philosophy that keeps coming to the surface, is that an authority needs to be righteous, and defending a just moral order, in order to be legitimate with respect to going at war. Taking this notion as starting point for a ‘legitimate authority’-criterion for the security environment of today, it is not a morality based on international procedures or consensus that is decisive with respect to determining which authority or actor might wage war, but morality based on divine justice. In the next chapter, I will review the extent to, and ways in which this alters perspectives on just war.

An additional core idea, as venerably articulated by Thomas Aquinas but dating back to Augustine, is that force is the legitimate purview of the state and not private entities (see Johnson 2005, 38; Charles 2005, 133-134, Cole 2002, 78; Brown 2008, chapter 4). This is a way to mitigate the bad effects of war. Adopting this distinction, and the ‘justice perspective’ on authority, further enables one to make a distinction between lawful and unlawful combatants in the contemporary security environment, with unjust sovereign (state) rulers and non-state actors like terrorist groups clearly being unlawful and illegitimate.
When considering with the current-day requirements of state sovereignty and non-intervention under the framework of international law, there is less clarity about what constitutes a morally legitimate authority to wage war. Christian just war-philosophers point to the importance of the moral quality of the leaders as being wise, righteous rulers who are guided by the virtue of prudence. By contrast, in the contemporary world, the moral quality of leaders of IS and of decision makers within the UNSC seems to be only a part of the concerns and the overall picture. The complicated and politically colored consensus-building process within the framework of the UNSC oftentimes creates moral, political and practical difficulties when aiming to cope decisively and effectively with current-day security issues such as IS. Therefore, as Brown states it, although it might not be a perfect solution to leave judgments of just cause to righteous rulers of the just states, another system is neither, and indeed it would appear to be the best (or least bad) alternative (Brown 2011, 139). I will further examine this issue in chapter 3.

Yet another claim I aim to make here, is that since the Christian conceptions of legitimate authority and just cause points to the centrality of the well-being of the people, collectively and individually, within the just moral political order or community, this does not necessarily mean that such concepts as political sovereignty or territorial integrity are the highest goods within classical and medieval Christian just war thinking. On the contrary, Christian philosophers focus on the importance of the protection of a just moral as a way to secure justice for and well-being of the people whom the righteous ruler must serve. In that sense, those Christian philosophers seem to adopt a more cosmopolitan approach to political ethics and the morality of war. Although Augustine, Aquinas and Luther argue that the individual citizen is served best within a fixed political community in which justice prevails (Christopher 1994, 38-48, Ramsey 1992, 12), their ideas about just war are ultimately rooted in the protection of the safety, order, love and justice (the virtue of giving everyone his due) for the citizens. In other words, respecting the political and territorial sovereignty of a political community is not more important than the protection of its citizens. This is where Christian philosophers at least to some extent diverge from modern-day just war thinking and the principles of international law in which state sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-intervention are some of the leading principles.

Some of these considerations point to the idea of just cause. For Augustine, Aquinas and Luther, the right objective of war is the defense of a just order in which the virtue reigns

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27 This category is nowadays generally used in debates about ethics in politics or IR (Amstutz 2013, 44-63); however, one should keep in mind that Augustine, Aquinas or Luther did not know or use it.
of giving everyone their due, with the end-goal of achieving peace. According to Augustine, a war is just if it is a defense against destruction or if it is about righting a wrong perpetrated against the property or rights of a state by another state. Christian love can make war a legitimate instrument to punish violations of the just moral order. It is also possible to wage a war after a divine, godly command, but Augustine even those wars were in a Biblical context often fought for the sake of justice. Universal peace is ultimately a godly gift of grace. Likewise, Aquinas argues that war is about protecting justice or punishing evildoers. ‘Vindicative justice’ is a perspective on war with punitive justice aimed at restoring order by righting wrongs. Lastly, Luther argued that since all men are under the law, the sword is needed to avoid the chaos and bloodshed that would exist in the absence of law and law enforcement. War may be necessary to restore a lawful, just order in which the evildoers are punished and the just are protected.

To summarize, Augustine and Aquinas refer to punishing evildoers and protecting property and a just moral order and peace, and Luther seems to focus especially on the purpose of protecting or achieving a lawful order. Taking these notions as starting point for a ‘just cause criteria’ for the world of today, a war can legitimately be fought, under guidance of Christian love and prudence, against evildoers such as IS that are neither official ‘God-ordained’ sovereigns nor ruling justly as they massacre the (innocent) people instead of protecting them. These and other notions will be analyzed further in the next chapter, in order to discover whether and how Christian just war ideas form a useful alternative perspective on dealing with issues related to waging a just war in the world of today. Indeed, the following chapter serves the purpose of discerning to what extent classical and medieval Christian philosophical perspectives on the concepts of legitimate authority and just cause can offer useful criteria to provide answers to challenges regarding the just use of armed force in the contemporary security environment.
Chapter 3 – A Christian just war perspective on the case of IS

The third and final sub-question I examine is: “To what extent can the ideas and concepts that are central in classical and medieval Christian just war thinking serve to address the issue of the just use of armed force against the Islamic State (IS)?” In the previous chapters, I determined that legitimate authority and just cause, intrinsically linked to right intention and the virtue of divine justice, are key concepts within Christian just war-thought. Godly justice determines whether a ruler is just and whether he may justly wage war. Essentially, although a ruler’s authority is ordained by God and needs to be respected, Augustine, Aquinas and Luther stress that the ruler receives this authority in order to serve the common good of the people. In that sense, the well-being of the people is their principle concern. By contrast, phenomena such as the centrality of international legal principles like state sovereignty and non-intervention, and the requirement of consensus-building, have a strong influence on modern-day just war thinking. However, these contemporary conceptions may lead to difficulties concerning coping with non-traditional security challenges such as IS.

In the first part of this chapter, I conduct a qualitative case study of the emergence and characteristics of IS as a security case that poses theoretical problems to modern-day just war conceptions, and challenges actors in the contemporary security environment politically. Thereafter, substantively depending on the analysis of the qualities of the case, follows an analysis of the extent to which the just war ideas of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther with regard to the concepts legitimate authority and just cause, as analyzed in chapters 1 and 2, can function as intellectually valuable and politically useful criteria to determine whether and how a just war is possible in the case of IS.

The case of Islamic State

Origins and characteristics

When aiming to analyze the particular ways in which IS challenges the contemporary security environment, I find it necessary to know how this actor distinguishes itself in terms of its objectives, policies, operations and strategies. And in order to understand all of this, I deem it necessary to understand the multiple and complex socio-political and military developments in Iraq and Syria that contributed to the emergence and present-day manifestations of IS.28

A proper starting point of this historical analysis seems to be the year 2003, when after the War on Terror a political system is created in Iraq in which the Shia majority, which was

28 This historical analysis is largely based on the book of the Dutch Iraq-correspondent Judit Neurink, De Oorlog van ISIS (2015), and the article by Zachary Laub, “The Islamic State” (2015).
formerly excluded under Saddam Hussain, now becomes favored at the expense of the Sunni minority. In response, from 2004 onwards, Sunni militias fight against Shia’s. The violent methods of the Sunni leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, including the beheading of a U.S. citizen in 2004, make that the al-Qaeda leadership warn him not to lose popular support among Iraqi Sunnis. Zarqawi ignores this message and instead presents himself as emir of Iraq in the year 2006 (Neurink 2015, 7-29, Weaver 2006). As Sunni support for al-Qaeda in Iraq dissolves, al-Qaeda leaders decide to sideline Zarqawi’s organization and erect a new al-Qaeda network in the country, the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). The Iraqi leader of this group, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, manages to unite several groups under the heading of ISI before he is killed in April 2010. He is then succeeded by IS’ current-day leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

When uprisings against the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad start in March 2011, ISI becomes Islamic State in Iraq and Shams (the Levant) or Syria (ISIS or ISIL) (Neurink 2015, 29-33). By that time, al-Baghdadi’s goals coincide with those of many young Syrians who see the Caliphate of Omar (634-644, starting after the death of the prophet Mohammed and his son in law Ali) as the right and pure Islamic form of governance. Assad’s policies of taking harsh measures to suppress Muslim-extremist groups, increase resistance among Syrians. As a consequence, about thousand different armed resistance groups and hundred thousand fighters are active in Syria by 2013 (BBC 2014).

By conquering strategically significant places and cities via surprise attacks, ISIS wins more territory and political support. The fight in Syria attracts thousands of young men from over the whole world.29 Al-Nusra also becomes an important actor but ISIS claims that this group is a part of its Syrian branch. As jihadist groups gain influence in the Syrian civil war, it becomes clear that al-Qaeda is not the leading force among them. Ultimately, ISIS’ extremely violent methods, including the slaughtering of soldiers and civilians, killing children, lead al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri to cut ties with ISIS (Neurink 2015, 35-42, Holbrook 2015, 93-94, 97-99). However, this separation does not hinder its growth. Since 2013, part of ISIS’ attractiveness comes from the ‘ideal’ Muslim city-state of Raqqa, where daily life is directed by Sharia law under well-developed bureaucratic and institutionalized structures. Raqqa forms a politically, militarily and religiously strategically located safe-haven from where the pursuit of an Islamic Caliphate in Syria and Iraq is inspired and coordinated (Neurink 2015, 42-45).30

29 Some 3,000 from Europe, and many more from Arab and African countries (McCoy 2014).
30 In Raqqa and other parts of ISIS’ territory, there is room for one interpretation of the Islam. ISIS selects and applies mostly early, violent texts of the Quran and Sunna that may serve to achieve ISIS’ purposes. Following such texts, ISIS has no objections against beheading of soldiers or enslaving citizens. ISIS believes that such acts
The growing marginalization of Iraqi Sunnites since 2003, and since 2006 under prime minister Nouri al-Maliki’s allegedly corrupt and violent government, creates a momentum for ISIS to step in and fight against the Iraqi government with the support of part of the Sunni population. In May 2014, this leads to overwhelming victories over the surprised, demoralized and weakened Iraqi army. The 750,000 men Iraqi army collapses, 30,000 of them desert, and the Iraqi governance and security system disintegrates (Abbas 2014). Additionally, ISIS seizes advanced weaponry provided by the United States to the Iraqi armed forces, including artillery, mortars, armored personnel carriers and Humvees, and becomes as such equipped with state-of-the-art military material. Moreover, ISIS garners $425 million via Iraq’s Central Bank in Mosul and derives revenues from oil sales (Neurink 2015, 65-84, Phillips 2014, 352).

On June 29, 2014, ISIS takes a decisive step with the announcement of the Islamic Caliphate and the new name of Islamic State (IS) (Danforth 2014). To stabilize power, IS implements new and extreme measures, varying from the banning of music and alcohol and the damaging of holy statutes, to creating a state-like system of governance with large-scale oil exploitations, collecting taxes, and operating police forces. Many non-Muslims flee; those who stay have to convert to Islam, pay taxes, or face death (Neurink 2015, 109-150). Now stretching from Baghdad’s outskirts to Aleppo in Syria, IS alters Iraq’s political geography, posing serious humanitarian and security challenges requiring actors within the international community to think about reengaging in Iraq and the broader Middle East region.

Indeed, the humanitarian and security crisis following the creation of the Caliphate stirs political and moral debates within the international community about the legitimacy and proper strategies of armed force against IS. In the summer of 2014, an ideologically diverse international coalition is welcomed by Iraq to protect Yazidis and Christians, and to combat IS’ further territorial advances (Phillips 2014, 352-353, Hendersen 2014). Since then, this coalition is countering IS’ progress in Iraq, and retaking large parts of its territory. Although there is ample evidence supporting the claim that the military tide is turning, IS regularly demonstrates its ability to enforce a stalemate (Fromson 2015, 12-14). In addition to debates about the possible effectiveness and proper strategies for the deployment of armed force against IS by an international coalition, there also occur debates about the moral legitimacy of a war against IS. In the next section, I will zoom in on this by debate, by relating Christian just war ideas to the issue of using armed force against IS.

are not prohibited in early Sunna and Quran texts, but merely by the modern international legislations that ISIS rejects as being un-Islamic and thus irrelevant (Neurink 2015, 48-59).

31 An especially pivotal moment occurs on August 3, 2014, when IS attacks Sinjar in Iraqi Kurdistan. Some 200,000 Yazidis flee Sinjar; up to 50,000 of whom climb Mount Sinjar (Phillips 2014, 351-352).
IS as a contemporary security challenge

Scholars like Grotius, Kant, Ramsey, Walzer and Elshtain have strongly influenced modern-day just war ideas, but these ideas are also influenced by the political and societal context of the expanding and deepening structure of international law and international institutions such as the UN and ICJ. State sovereignty and non-intervention are important principles, but at the same time, the international legal and institutional framework proscribes the legality of rights and actions of states and individual human beings. War may only be fought via the UNSC or in extreme cases independently. ‘Jus in bello’ norms like discrimination and proportionality occupy a central place, and there is broad consensus about the ‘jus ad bellum’-criteria of right intention, just cause, limited objectives, last resort, estimated effectiveness, and proper authority. Whereas the requirements of legitimate political authority and just cause held first place in the idea of just war as it originally developed (Johnson 2013, 19-21, 23-24), acts of war are now often legitimated through justification in terms of the common referents provided by the just war tradition, and if the justifications are validated by other actors.

However, in the introduction, I followed Johnson by raising questions about whether challenges in today’s international security environment, such as the threats posed by IS can be understood or addressed properly through the modern-day ways of thinking about the justified use of armed force (Johnson 2013, 27-31). An important reason why this might not be the case is that IS, by ignoring the generally accepted framework international law and ethics of war, fundamentally challenge the value of the modern-day perspectives on war as related to principles like national sovereignty or the requirement of consensus within the UNSC. This is why it is relevant to focus on something new – in this thesis on Christian just war thoughts. In other words, when zooming in on the characteristics of the case of IS and its manifestations in relation to the changing dynamics within the contemporary international security environment, it might be possible to find out whether Christian just war-ideas are of theoretical and political value for addressing the case of IS.

A first phenomenon that is also visible in the case of IS and though which modern-day ways of thinking about war are being challenged, is the globalization-process as the increased global inter-connectedness of states and non-state actors on many terrains of life, including security (Schulte 2008, 19). I believe this globalization is apparent in the case of IS, since IS uses armed force against governments, civilians and non-state groups both within and beyond Iraq and Syria. IS also maintains bonds with (non-state) affiliates in many other countries, such as Libya and Nigeria (Zavadski 2014). Additionally, IS uses internet to spread its ideological message and to attract new support from all over the world. According to Europol-
director Rob Wainwright, some 45,000-50,000 Twitter-accounts are related to IS, and some 5,000 Europeans have joined the fight of IS thus far (Algemeen Dagblad 2015). Moreover, IS ignores state borders, especially those between Iraq and Syria (Tinsley 2015). It appears that IS’ cross-border, even global, interconnectedness makes that peace and security in the Middle Eastern region is indeed increasingly connected with security conditions in other regions, such as Europe and Africa. In this way, IS challenges the value of state sovereignty-centered conceptions of modern-day just war thinking.

Furthermore, the emergence of ‘rogue regimes’ and terrorist groups are some other key developments in the 20th and 21st century that challenge our understandings of security politics and governance. IS seems to exemplify this as well. ‘Rogue regimes’ generally show three characteristics, namely tyrannical policies against their citizens; frustration of modern economic possibilities for their own people; and peril for their own and other people (Schulte 2008, 20). From the background analysis of IS in the previous section – which shows that IS manifests itself as a guerrilla army, Sunni revanchist political movement, millenarian Islamist cult, and a ruthless administrator of territory32 –, I conclude that IS indeed forms a tyrannical ‘rogue’ regime for Muslims and for non-Muslims who do not adhere sufficiently to the rules of Sharia law as imposed and interpreted by IS. In addition, the previous background analysis shows that IS can be considered a terrorist group in that the group directly originates from another terrorist group (al-Qaeda), fights against governments, combatants and civilians to achieve its religious and political goals, and adopts terrorist-like strategies.33 Even though only states are allowed to use armed force in order to defend themselves or under mandate of the UNSC, IS as a non-state actor uses armed force on a large scale.

The point is that IS, with the combination of all these characteristics, apparently does not play according to the rules of the modern-day international state system, including the international legal framework, that forms the basis of the modern-day just war doctrine. Within this system, the highest authority is laid in the hands of states (acting under guidance of international law). Their sovereignty and territorial integrity ought to be respected at almost any time. However, by creating a Caliphate that, in contrast to for instance IS’ ‘mother organization’ al-Qaeda, prioritizes the conquering and governing of territory across state borders in Iraq, Syria and the broader Levant, IS undermines the core principle within the

32 This list of manifestations is based on Fromson 2015, 8.
33 According to Fromson, the key reasons for IS’ military progress towards gaining control over an estimated 7 to 8 million people between Iraq and Syria, are the number and quality of its fighters, who are well led and highly motivated, IS’ sophisticated military material, and IS’ aggressiveness and uncompromising commitment to expansion (Fromson 2015, 9-11).
international system of sovereign states. As an illustration, while many modern-day political theorists see the Sykes-Picot agreement, concluded through international consensus-building, as morally legitimate and lawfully binding, IS sees it instead as a symbol of the un-Islamic fragmentation of the Islamic world, as an invention and intervention by Western powers, and as a geopolitical institution that should symbolically be wiped off the map (Tinsley 2015). This illustrates not only how IS distinguishes itself as a transnational security actor, but especially how it dissociates itself from the moral and legal criteria regarding the use of armed force that form the basis for central concepts in modern-day just war thinking. All in all, not international agreements, legal rules, or ethical principles, but Salafist texts from the Quran and Sunna are guiding IS’ ideology, identity and cross-border actions.

With regard to the issue of legitimate use of armed force against IS, there is another factor that needs to be taken into consideration, namely the political context in Iraq, Syria and the broader regions of the Middle East (and Africa). The Iraqi and Syrian governments are responsible for combating IS, but the question is whether other states can combat IS as well if these governments fail to do so. Within the present-day international legal and institutional structures, the sovereignty of Iraq and Syria may not be breached, unless the government allows it, or in case of self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter\(^{34}\), or Under the heading of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in case large-scale human rights atrocities such as genocide are taking place.\(^{35}\) In ‘theory’, the use of force usually requires authorization by the UN, but in practice, the required consensus-building often undermines effective measures (Einsiedel 2015). Having established that IS challenges actors in the international security environment to come up with an effective response, but that it does so in ways that make it hard to address by adopting and applying modern-day just war conceptions within the international legal and institutional framework, I will in the next section elaborate further on the extent to which a Christian just war-perspective on the concepts of legitimate authority and just cause provides helpful insights in the matter of responding to IS.

A Christian just war perspective on coping with IS

In the previous section of this chapter, I analyzed that IS constitutes a complex security challenge because of its features as a globalized, tyrannical regime and a new type terrorist group. In this way, IS dissociates itself from the conventional moral and legal principles and


largely undermines their power and utility. As I laid out that Augustine, Aquinas and Luther maintain that a just war is about protecting justice and punishing evildoers for violating the just moral order, an important question is whether IS and its leadership can be classified as ‘evildoer’ in this particular, Christian philosophical meaning. The answer seems to be that in the ways IS manifests itself, for instance through extremely harsh violence against combatants and non-combatants, and by imposing Sharia law on anyone within the territory under its command, it is hard not to see IS’ leadership as an unjust, tyrannical ruler in the Christian philosophical sense. Put simply, because IS is rebelling against the lawful order in the states of Iraq and Syria and as such breaching international and national laws, and because IS does not serve but undermine the common good (stability, order, justice) of the people, IS may be rebelled against from a classical and medieval Christian just war-perspective. Luther argues that since all men are under the law, the sword is needed to enforce a lawful order and avoid chaos. The ‘tyrant’ IS clearly constitutes a threat to the lawful order within and beyond Iraq, Syria, and may thus be resisted by peaceful means or, if necessary, through the use of force, with the goal of restoring a just and lawful order.

As I found in chapter 1, and examined further in chapter 2, the concepts of legitimate authority and just cause are central in the just war thinking of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther. Part of how these Christian philosophers distinguish themselves in view of the broader trends within the just war tradition is through the ways in which divine justice guides both what constitutes a legitimate authority and a just cause with regard to waging war. In chapter 2, I elaborated on the meaning of these two concepts, and debated their implications for just war thinking. I also dedicated some thoughts to the question of to what extent these two concepts could be seen as useful criteria to determine by what authority, and for what cause, a war can be legitimate. In this section, I will continue to elaborate on this.

Within the philosophy of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther, the central concept of legitimate authority is fairly clear and unequivocal. The civil government is ordained by God to effect justice, order and peace in the earthly political community. This justice is not rooted in procedural or consensus-based morality, but in divine morality. It is a justice in which the virtue dominates of giving everyone their due. The civil government has the responsibility to create a political community in which social harmony and commodious, peaceful living is promoted. The rightful authority to wage war is the ruler that defends a relatively just order. This virtuous ruler must sometimes use force to combat evil and punish evildoers, in the same way a judge may be obliged to punish a criminal by his office and authority – even though he might personally want to avoid bloodshed (O’Driscoll 2007, 486-487). The political world
requires that the sword is sometimes used to achieve vindicative justice. And if a ruler fails to protect the common good of the people and the commonwealth, he may be resisted passively, according to Augustine, but because of his inherent ‘moral abdication’ also actively, according to Aquinas and Luther.

IS shows features of a ‘tyrant’ and may as such be combated by peaceful means or, if necessary, through the use of armed force. Specifically from a classical and medieval Christian legitimate authority perspective, IS should be combated first and foremost by the governments of the states in which it is active; mainly those of Iraq and Syria. As the governments of Iraq and Syria are the officially recognized, rightful, ‘God-ordained’ governments that arguably defend a comparatively just moral order, they are the first ones responsible for employing the sword to be a terror to the evildoers of IS on behalf of justice for Muslims and non-Muslims in their countries alike.

However, IS may not be resisted by the governments of Iraq and Syria alone, but by the governments of other states as well. This is because by ‘allowing’ the rise of IS to happen in the first place and by showing difficulties in combating IS, the governments of Iraq and Syria are apparently failing to protect the common good of their people independently. In Iraq, the use of armed force against IS by foreign governments to assist the national government seems to be uncontroversial from both a contemporary and a classical and medieval Christian just war perspective. The explicit consent of the Iraqi government means that the state sovereignty of Iraq is not undermined in case of foreign involvement in the war against IS (Hendersen 2014, 210). Christian philosophers would probably argue that resisting IS is indeed in the first place up to the Iraqi government, constituted to ensure that the well-being of all Iraqi people, Sunni’s, Shia’s, Kurdish or Christians alike, is served; however, if the Iraqi government cannot do this by itself and requests assistance, Christian philosophers would arguably not prohibit ‘external’ righteous rulers to wage war against IS as well. This relates to the Christian just war idea that any official sovereign ruler who defends a just moral order (Augustine), the just sovereign or official successor of the unjust sovereign (Aquinas), or the just sovereign ruler, his rightful successor, and soldiers as agents of the law (Luther) may legitimately wage war. It is an extension of this reasoning to state that, especially in the face of grave injustices, these Christian philosophers would allow any official, righteous state rulers, including governments other than the Iraqi government, to wage war in order to stop IS’ aggressiveness, to punish the tyrannical evildoers of IS, protect citizens like innocent Muslims, Yazidis or Christians, and ultimately to create a lasting peace.
Arguably, the same reasoning ultimately applies to the case of IS in Syria. However, from a modern-day just war perspective, combating IS by foreign rulers is more complicated here. As many Western officials agree that IS is primarily focused on consolidating its positions in Syria rather than attacking Europe, the United States or other regions, a request from the Syrian government or an official mandate by the UNSC is needed for other states to be legitimately involved.\textsuperscript{36} Even if Assad cannot fight IS to protect a just order, as long as these requirements are not met it is from a modern-day just war and international law-perspective not acceptable for other states to wage war against IS. As a result, the evildoers of IS are not punished, and the well-being of the Syrian people is not served. I maintain that the story would be different from a Christian-philosophical perspective. On the one hand, the Syrian people may disobey or resist both Assad and IS, as both ‘rulers’ fail to ensure the protection of the common good for the Syrian people. On the other hand, Christian philosophers might arguably find the brutality of the tyrannical regime instituted by IS worse than the policies of the Syrian government towards Syrian citizens. And if this would indeed be the case, the Syrian government defends a relatively just order who can legitimately wage war against IS. But it may be assisted in this by other relatively just rulers if it keeps failing to provide a just political order for all Syrians. The reference point here, again, is not a consensus-based authority to wage war, but authority based on moral righteousness.

Turning to the criterion of just cause, for Augustine, Aquinas and Luther, a ruler might wage war out of self-giving, neighborly love, for the sake of righteousness and justice. A war may be needed to achieve (eternal) peace through a harmonious concord between God and man, and man and man (Zwitter 2014, 321-322). In line with this, the end-goal of war should be the creation of a just order in which the virtue reigns of giving everyone their due, and which provides lasting peace. From a Christian perspective, such just causes cannot be seen as separated or separable from having the right intentions. Augustine argues that a war is just if it is a defense against destruction, or if it is about righting a wrong against the property or rights of a state by another state, Aquinas holds that a ruler may use armed force to protect justice or

\textsuperscript{36} The reason for this is that the Syrian president Assad still represents the officially recognized sovereign government, and is as such responsible for maintaining justice and order in the country. Even though the perceived illegitimacy of the Syrian government has been used to make the case for intervention against IS (Hendersen 2014, 213), and even though many states recognize the Syrian National Coalition as the ‘legitimate representative of the Syrian people’, no other party than Assad has yet been recognized as the new Syrian government (Hendersen 2014, 213). Therefore, states actually fighting in Syria without consent from the Syrian government or the UNSC, have to justify their actions as self-defense or as response to a humanitarian catastrophe caused by IS. Some state that the increased emphasis on the rights of peoples and populations over state sovereignty may make it possible ‘to justify forcible action in extreme circumstances of humanitarian need’ (Hendersen 2014, 218-220).
punish evildoers, and likewise, Luther maintains that a ruler should use the sword to punish the wicked and protect the just.

Using armed force against IS can be justified from a Christian philosophical point of view if it is aimed at stopping the IS-evildoers from doing evil against the citizens or the property of the states in and beyond Iraq and Syria, and if it is aimed at punishing them for that evildoing (‘vindicative justice’), ultimately to restore a just order. Concretely, using armed force against IS should serve the purpose of punishing IS’ members and especially its leadership, bringing them to justice, and thereby protecting the authority of the rightful governments as well as the lives, rights and properties of citizens in Iraq and Syria. Indeed, when waging war against IS, the Iraqi and Syrian governments should serve the common good of their peoples, and not their own interest of (re)gaining the seats of power for their own benefit or pleasure (either at the expense of parts of the population or not). The same applies when external righteous rulers, the governments of other states, are involved in the war: they should not wage war to conquer oil wells, gain lucrative trade contacts, increase political influence, or pursue own material or political interests in any other way, but to help the governments of Iraq and Syria achieving and safeguarding stable political communities.

These goals are also some of the main objectives of war under international law or under the heading of the present-day just war doctrine, but the difficulty thereof lies in the space for subjective interpretations about what is meant by such things as order, peace, self-defense, or humanitarian emergency; and moreover in the procedural and political aspects of consensus-building within international institutions like the UNSC or UN General Assembly. This leads to situations in which breaches of international law are not followed by forceful action, so that peace may not be restored in, e.g. Iraq or Syria. By contrast, a Christian perspective provides clear and unequivocal criteria: since IS is evil, without much nuance or doubt, ‘good men’ (righteous rulers) may and should employ the sword with good conscience “for God’s kingdom and the world’s kingdom at the same time” (Höpfl 1991, 15). The moral quality of the intervening authority is what matters. Likewise, the legitimate causes for, and goals of war are more unequivocal. National governments should aim to achieve a just society, and foreign governments should ‘simply’ strive to enable virtuous rulers to achieve a political order in which citizens can live safely and peacefully. Even if nothing is to be gained in terms of material or political interests, this moral objective should guide the intentions and actions of any actor involved in waging war.

In sum, war against IS by the people and national governments of Iraq and Syria is legitimate in the case of both Iraq and Syria, as IS rules unlawfully while both official
governments are the formal and arguably relatively just rulers. Furthermore, especially if the Iraqi or Syrian governments are unwilling or unable to protect their citizens, or when IS endangers the order of other states, it is possible for righteous foreign state-governments to be involved in the war to restore a just moral order – with or without consent by a ruler like president Assad or a mandate of an international institution like the UNSC. Again, the reason is that from a Christian viewpoint the reference point regarding the use of force against IS is not the prevalence of respect for state sovereignty, or the requirement of approval reached by consensus under and through an international legal and institutional framework, but the idea of divine justice, whereby the authorities are ordained by God to defend a political order that serves the well-being of (all) the people.

Concluding remarks on a Christian perspective on coping with IS

At the beginning of this chapter, I analyzed the case of the emergence and characteristics of IS as posing challenges to actors in the international security environment that are hard to address through modern-day ways of thinking about war. One main reason for this is the way in which IS manifests itself as a transnational tyrannical rule and security threat. Following modern-day moral and legal principles, a war against IS by the own and foreign governments is clearly legitimate in Iraq, but less clearly so in Syria, since foreign involvement can be blocked by the official Syrian government. Even if that government is unable or unwilling to protect its own people, a mandate within the UNSC would be needed for foreign actors to intervene. However, reaching consensus within the UNSC is complex and causes often a political deadlock. In that sense, new answers are indeed needed regarding the legitimacy of war in a case like IS, which presents a serious security challenge in today’s world.

From the foregoing analysis, I conclude that recourse to the just war ideas of Christian philosophers may to a certain extent have value for addressing the issue of the legitimate use of force against IS. This value lies essentially in the centrality of the concept of divine justice as ultimate reference point for determining both the legitimate authority to go at war (the righteous ruler who defends a just moral order), as well as the just causes for going at war (punishing the unjust rulers who do not serve the common good of the people and restoring a just moral order and peace). In comparison with secular, more subjectivist modern-day just war thoughts, a Christian perspective restructures moral reasoning by highlighting the ‘new’ concept of divine justice, and reduces the practical-political complexity of the issue (regarding the political paralysis or deadlock that I mentioned before). Whether war against IS is just does not depend on consensus within an international body like the UNSC, but on the
comparative righteousness of a governments and their willingness to wage war for the cause of achieving peace and justice for the people. Consequently, more concretely, a war against IS is legitimate from a Christian just war-perspective if it is fought by the governments of Iraq, Syria, or by other governments that are either directly or indirectly impacted by IS and/or defend a relatively just moral order. Indeed, such a war should be fought to punish IS, re-institute national order, stability and peace, and secure the safety and well-being of the people.

In conclusion, whereas the morality of war is more of subjective matter within modern-day just war thinking, and reaching a consensus about the proper interpretation of just war within international agencies such as the UNSC is highly complicated, a more ‘resolute’ Christian perspective on justice may solve the ethical issue of subjectivity and the political problem of consensus-building. A part of the answer to the third sub-question is therefore that the value of a Christian just-war perspective lies in reducing the theoretical and political complexity of the issue of the just use of armed force. Divine justice – which recognizes the basic security rights of citizens and noncitizens alike and is extended beyond national interests (O’Neill 2011, 30-31) – is the main determinant of what constitutes a legitimate authority or a morally right cause for which this authority is allowed to fight. One could call this alternative Christian perspective on just war the ‘re-spiritualization’ or ‘re-absolutization’ of the just war doctrine regarding the ultimate sources of moral reasoning when determining whether and how a war can be fought justly.

When addressing the security challenge posed by IS, this more absolutist perspective may be a way to circumnavigate the political paralysis seen when national governments and international institutions need to decide about the use of force. Another value is that it justifies decisive, effective and righteous action, even if a government is not cooperative. On the other hand, since this perspective does not take into account that international institutions like the UNSC form in actual fact the contemporary political arena for addressing international security-related issues, an arena that is moreover essentially aimed at promoting peace and welfare among all nations (see the preamble of the UN Charter), this perspective does presumably not provide all-encompassing answers for addressing security cases like IS. Therefore, I suggest that a Christian just war perspective, as analyzed here, needs to be developed further with the aim of implementing it in (instead of placing it entirely outside) the existing moral, legal and institutional conventions.
Summary and conclusion

In the introduction of this thesis, I suggested that certain security issues pose new and difficult challenges for actors in the contemporary international security environment. Furthermore, I stated that the just war tradition is the predominant means of inquiry to debate moral questions related to the use of force, but that the modern-day just war tradition seems to be theoretically and politically less serviceable for addressing modern-day security challenges. In this light, a particular interesting challenge is posed by the non-state actor IS, which dissociates itself from the generally accepted principles within the framework of international laws and institutions that shape the modern-day just war doctrine. Following these considerations, I raised this thesis’ main research question: “To what extent can the ideas of classical and medieval Christian philosophers, as part of the broader Western just war tradition, contribute to addressing challenges regarding the just use of force in the contemporary international security environment?” This question shaped the structure and substance of this thesis’ research project.

Summarizing the analysis and main findings therein

The first sub-question relates to distinguishing the substantive qualities of classical and medieval Christian just war ideas in contrast to other ideas within the just war tradition. I selected the authoritative Christian philosophers Augustine, Aquinas and Luther, since they strongly influenced the just war tradition and the broader (political) philosophy in Western history. A literature review of mainly secondary scholarly literature led to distinguishing three general trends in the Western just war tradition, roughly aligning with three historical periods: the classical and medieval world; the Renaissance, Enlightenment and modernity; and the period beyond modernity.

In the classical and medieval world, politics and war are generally seen as means to defend or achieve a just order in which the virtue dominates of giving everyone their due. Philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Aquinas and Luther all place the responsibility to maintain order, effect justice and seek peace on the shoulders of government. War and warfare is just if a relatively just ruler punishes evildoers and pursues justice for the peace and well-being of the people. Closely related to the ideal of justice, legitimate authority and just cause can be regarded as central concepts within Christian just war thought, both inextricably related to the requirement of having a right intention. Thereafter, from about the 16th century onwards, the secularization of politics, science and society makes that theological arguments decline in influence in favor of arguments based on volitional and positive law.
Under influence of scholars such as Grotius, there originates a framework of international law aimed at directing the behavior of sovereign rulers and states. There emerges a deeper divide about what constitutes proper authority (the meaning of sovereignty ‘under’ international law), and about just causes for going at war (national interests ‘versus’ the common good). What is moral comes to be determined through a more subjectivist, procedural approach, instead of by referring to divine justice. In the 20th and 21st century, the international legal and institutional framework develops further, with the UNSC as the authority to legitimize war, and with the ‘jus in bello’-principles of discrimination and proportionality and the ‘jus ad bellum’-criteria of right intention, just cause, limited objectives, last resort, estimated effectiveness and proper authority gaining importance. Nowadays, acts of war are generally deemed legitimate if they are justified in terms of the common referents and perspectives provided by the just war tradition, and if those justifications are validated by other actors.

I concluded that in contrast to more modern-day, secular, subjectivist and procedural approaches to war, Christian philosophers see war as a means to protect the divine justice that can be translated into an ideal, just society. War and warfare are related to serving the well-being of the people and not the interests of a state or ruler. The righteous ruler is the legitimate authority to wage war for the cause of defending a just moral order or punishing the ones who undermine it. And within Christian philosophy, having a right intention cannot be considered apart from being the right authority or fighting for the right cause.

In chapter 2, I analyzed the concepts and ideas, which I found in chapter 1 to be most central in Christian just war thought, in more detail. In this way, I expected it would be possible to assess later-on in this thesis their usefulness for addressing issues in the contemporary security arena. As said, Augustine, Aquinas and Luther see the civil government as ordained by God. Regarding the criterion of ‘legitimate authority’, for Augustine, any sovereign ruler that defends a just moral order may legitimately wage war, under guidance of Christian love and prudence; for Aquinas, war can be waged by the just sovereign ruler or the official successor of the unjust sovereign; and for Luther, only the just sovereign ruler, his rightful successor, and the soldiers (including Christians) as agents of the law. Love makes war at times a necessary means to serve the common good. With regard to just cause, Augustine states that a war is justified as defense against destruction, if it is about righting a wrong, or at a divine command. Aquinas likewise argues that war is about protecting justice or punishing evildoers; and Luther argues that the sword should sometimes be employed to avoid the chaos and danger that would exist in the absence of law and law
enforcement. For Augustine and Aquinas, protecting property and a just order and peace is a just cause, whereas Luther additionally focuses on the purpose of protecting a lawful order.

For those Christian philosophers, war is intimately related to preserving justice for the people by the righteous ruler. With this focus, Christian philosophers interestingly adopt a rather cosmopolitan approach to political ethics and the morality of war: respect for the sovereignty and borders of the state or community, which is central in contemporary just war thoughts, is not more important than the well-being of the people. This makes it all the more interesting to analyze the usefulness of Christian just war conceptions in relation to a contemporary security case in chapter 3.

After analyzing IS’ origins and characteristics, such as its global interconnectedness, cross-border tyrannical rule and sheer aggressiveness, it appeared that IS indeed challenges the central principles in modern-day just war thought and agreements of positive international law. From a modern-day perspective, waging war against IS is morally and legally legitimate in Iraq, but more complicated in Syria, e.g. because of the complexity of reaching consensus within the UNSC regarding the legitimacy of war against IS in Syria.

Recourse to the just war ideas of Christian philosophers might indeed provide useful criteria for addressing the issue of the legitimate use of force against IS. By taking justice as reference point, a Christian just war perspective circumnavigates the issue of moral subjectivity and political complexity related to the just use of armed force against IS. Consequently, from a Christian just war perspective, war against IS is just if fought by the official Iraqi and Syrian governments, or by other ‘external’ governments that are threatened by IS or defend a relatively just moral order. Their aim should always be to achieve a peaceful order that serves the well-being of the people in and beyond Iraq and Syria.

**Formulating an answer to the research question**

Following from this analysis, my answer to the main research question would be that the just war ideas of Christian philosophers may indeed to a certain extent contribute to finding ways to address challenges regarding the just use of force in the contemporary international security environment. The present-day secular, subjectivist and procedural approaches to just war are unable to solve situations in which, simply put, an unjust government that happens to be seated at the table of the UNSC is able to block any war against another unjust ruler such as IS – a situation is in itself unjust. Modern-day international lawyers or just war theorists would presumably find this situation unjust as well; however, in highly valuing principles such as state sovereignty and consensus-building, it is hard to let their beliefs be accompanied
by decisive actions. In other words, it is problematic to be consistent in matching theory with the political practice in the ‘real world’.

By contrast, classical and medieval Christian just war thinking provides more consistency between theory and political practice, as well as grounds for direct, effective measures, in that the selected Christian philosophers take the concept of divine justice as more absolute starting- and reference point for determining what are just authorities and just causes for going at war. This seems to reduce the theoretical and political complexity of questions of war. Furthermore, related to the foregoing, Christian philosophers seem to adopt a rather cosmopolitan approach to political ethics and the morality of war. For Augustine, Aquinas and Luther, individual citizens are best served within a fixed political community, a community in which justice prevails, but their ideas about war are essentially rooted in the protection of the safety, order, love and justice (the virtue of giving everyone his due) for that citizen individually and for ‘the people’ collectively.

In all this, by highlighting the concept of divine justice, a Christian just war perspective foregoes the practical-political complexity of the issue of waging war against actors like IS that manifests itself in vetoes within the UNSC and political paralysis. For Christian philosophers, the legitimacy of a war against IS would not depend on consensus reached about the legitimacy of war as justified through the contemporary ‘jus ad bellum’ and ‘jus in bello’-criteria, but on the moral quality of governments and their willingness to wage war for the cause of punishing evildoers and serving the well-being of the people. IS’ tyrannical rule arguably makes that the governments of Iraq and Syria, as well as other righteous governments, can and should wage war against it to punish IS leaders, re-institute national order, stability and peace, and secure the safety and well-being of the people. In this way, a Christian perspective on justice provides more resolute way to address the issue of force against IS. It seems to ‘solve’ the ethical issue of subjectivity and the political problem of consensus-building, and it justifies and enables decisive, effective and righteous action.

At the same time, this Christian just war perspective needs further elaboration as it should be aligned with, and implemented in, the existing agreements and conventions of international legal and institutional structures that are aimed at promoting peace. In that sense, recourse to Christian just war conceptions is not likely to provide all-encompassing answers with respect to addressing contemporary international security challenges like IS. Not theoretically, nor politically, as it would likely be hard to actually apply them to the ‘real world’. In fact, the very ‘secular, subjectivist, consensus-building system’ that is absent in
Christian thinking would probably be the mechanism that ultimately prevents the adoption and implementation of Christian just war principles.

Nonetheless, this thesis provides insights in the ways and extent to which a Christian just war perspective is actually useful when determining whether, by whom, how, and to what end a war against IS can be waged justly from a Christian point of view. Indeed, I maintain that the findings in this thesis have some scientific value for the fields of IR and ISS, as well as practical value for the political world. This thesis contributes to IR by discerning three trends in substantive claims in the just war tradition, and by balancing the Christian just war though of Augustine, Aquinas and Luther vis-à-vis these three trends. It is not the first time that theorists distinguish trends in the just war tradition, but I have drawn on extensive sources to shed a new light specifically on how the role of divine justice diminished in favor of more secular, subjectivist, legalist or consensual approach to justice, and how a more communitarian understanding of war and politics occurred at the expense of Christian views on the responsibility of the God-ordained government to care first and foremost for the well-being of the people through defense of political order.

Secondly, I have contributed to IR, as well as ISS, by reviewing the origins and characteristics of IS, and by relating it directly to modern-day and Christian just war thoughts. For the subfield of ISS, IS forms a relevant case to analyze, since IS poses serious threats to international security and stability. On the one hand, this thesis may contribute to ISS by providing enhanced insight in the origins and characteristics of this case, which is needed to develop proper security strategies; and on the other hand, insight is provided in answering this security dilemma from a Christian philosophical perspective (a religious perspective that is often absent within ISS, yet indispensable when coping with security challenges). Concretely, this thesis aims to improve understanding about how religious ideas and beliefs influence and have influenced the identity, ideology and actions of actors within today’s security arena, such as IS, but also about how Western philosophers now and in the past interpret and see the world and the role and position of security actors.

Thirdly, the above findings may inform actual policy choices of state leaders concerning the question of whether, how and why the use of force is morally legitimate in the case of IS. From a Christian just war perspective, a ruler should ask himself whether he is righteous and virtuous. This would entitle him to fight IS, with the aim of protecting the well-being of the Syrian or Iraqi (or other) people under tyranny of IS. A ruler should therefore also ask himself whether he is fighting for that just cause. If the ruler must find that he is ‘virtuous’ and has no other goals and intentions, he may legitimately wage war against IS –
even if the UNSC has not been able to provide a clear mandate. But if this is not who or what the political leader is, or what he wants, he should not be involved in a war against IS.

Final considerations

A Christian perspective on just war in which divine justice holds first place provides ways to get around moral and practical difficulties when addressing the security issue of IS. However, Christian just war thinking may have value beyond IS as well. For instance with regard to cases which show important similarities with IS, such as other violent non-state groups where a state government is not able to effectively defend a just moral order, or in cases where it is needed to respond to actions of ‘rogue regimes’ such as North Korea, where the rightful government has ‘morally abdicated’ by violating the most basic rights of its citizens. In many of such cases, a war to restore justice is highly complicated or impossible if one plays by the rules of the international system; however, following a Christian understanding of legitimate authority and just cause, it would in principle be possible for ‘any just government’ to begin a war with the aim of restoring justice in such a situation. In this way, the issue of a paralyzed consensus-based international system can be overcome beyond the case of IS as well.

Of course, this would pose additional challenges. There is room for interpretation and disagreement about what is meant by such things as a ‘Christian’ just order or just ruler. And as all wars are different, it makes sense to argue in line with Reinhold Niebuhr (see Bellamy 2006, 105-106) that it needs to be seen per case what constitutes the legitimate authority or just cause. Also, many states and other ‘security actors’ are unlikely to adhere to principles based on Christian teachings. But in a world where states would adhere to the basic ideas and values laid out in Christian principles – the protection of life, property, justice and order by righteous leaders for the sake of love, peace and the well-being of the people –, lasting peace and prosperity may be achieved more often and more than otherwise would be the case.

The arguments and insights offered in this thesis may be weighed and debated, accepted or refuted. But the price of not taking them seriously into consideration might be an ongoing inability to combat the evil acts of IS and many other actors. Instead of observing the atrocities executed by IS horrified but powerlessly, a Christian just war perspective opens up new windows on waging a horrible but just war to create a just and lasting peace.

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