



Philosophy Q3

"When civilians are the main target, there's no need to consider the cause. That's terrorism; it's evil." Is this correct?

Key Issues and Questions to Address

1. Define key terms:

Clarify what constitutes "civilian" status in different contexts

Differentiate between direct targeting and foreseeable civilian casualties

Examine how "terrorism" is defined in different traditions

Consider various conceptions of "evil" across philosophical frameworks

2. Consider competing ethical frameworks:

Deontological (Kant): Targeting civilians violates categorical moral duties

Consequentialist (Mill): Evaluate based on outcomes and potential justifications

Natural rights (Locke): Civilian targeting violates fundamental right to life



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Virtue ethics: What character traits are expressed in civilian targeting?

Care ethics: How does civilian targeting damage human relationships?

3. Explore key tensions:

Absolute prohibition vs. contextual evaluation

Moral equivalence between state and non-state violence

Relationship between structural violence and responsive violence

How power imbalances affect moral evaluation

Whether focusing only on methods obscures important questions about causes

4. Address challenging questions:

Does labeling all civilian targeting "terrorism" and "evil" preclude understanding causes?

Are there meaningful distinctions between different forms of civilian harm?

Does the statement apply equally to state military actions that harm civilians?



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How does intention figure into moral evaluation of civilian casualties?

Can extreme circumstances ever justify otherwise prohibited tactics?

5. Develop a nuanced position that:

Acknowledges the strong moral presumption against civilian targeting

Considers historical and political contexts without moral relativism

Applies consistent standards to all actors regardless of power or status

Recognizes the relationship between causes and methods without allowing the former to justify the latter

Examines how the labels "terrorism" and "evil" function in political discourse

6. Reference examples across history:

Compare insurgencies with different political goals and methods

Examine state bombing campaigns and their justifications



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Consider liberation movements and their tactical choices

Analyze how different philosophical traditions have evaluated specific cases

