



Law Q3

Is Vladimir Putin a war criminal?

Recommended Readings

John Locke Works

1. Second Treatise of Government (1689)

Locke's analysis of political power, legitimate authority, and natural rights

Particularly relevant sections on war and conquest (Chapters 3 and 16)

Explores when rulers lose legitimacy through violation of natural rights

Establishes framework for understanding tyranny and legitimate resistance

2. A Letter Concerning Toleration (1689)

Examines limits of state authority and protection of individual rights

Useful for discussing international norms and state responsibilities

Historical Resources on War Crimes

1. The Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907)



First formal statements of laws of war in international law

Established principles for conduct during warfare and protection of civilians

2. Geneva Conventions (1949) and Additional Protocols (1977)

Cornerstone of international humanitarian law

Defines war crimes and protections for civilians and prisoners

Establishes standards for judging wartime conduct

3. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)

Established the ICC and defined modern war crimes, crimes against humanity

Provides legal framework for prosecution of war criminals

Outlines specific acts that constitute war crimes

Contemporary Resources on Putin's Actions

1. Human Rights Watch Reports on Ukraine (2022-2024)



Documentation of alleged violations of laws of war in Ukraine

Eyewitness accounts and evidence collection

Analysis of targeting of civilian infrastructure

UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine Reports

Independent investigation into alleged war crimes

Documentation of evidence and legal analysis

Preliminary assessments of responsibility

2. "Putin's War: The Battle for Ukraine and the New World Order" by Mark Galeotti

Analysis of strategic decisions and command structure

Discussion of responsibility for military actions

Context for understanding chain of command issues

3. "The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin" by Steven Lee Myers



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown
Law Category - Recommended Readings



Biography providing context on Putin's leadership style

Background on centralization of power in Russia

Useful for command responsibility arguments

4. ICC Prosecutor's Statements on Ukraine Investigation

Legal framework being applied to the Ukraine situation

Preliminary findings and areas of investigation

Procedural status of potential cases

5. "Just and Unjust Wars" by Michael Walzer

Modern philosophical framework for evaluating wartime ethics

Builds on tradition including Locke's thinking

Addresses moral versus legal culpability in warfare



Resources on Russian Military Structure

1. "Russian Military Reform: From Serdyukov to Shoigu" (RAND Corporation)

Analysis of command structure and decision-making

Relevant for command responsibility arguments

Outlines Putin's role in military affairs

- **Source Cliff Notes**

Second Treatise of Government (Locke): Locke argues that governments exist by consent of the governed to protect natural rights. When rulers actively violate these rights, they place themselves in a "state of war" with their people. Locke discusses when force is justified against tyranny and emphasizes that rulers who wage unjust wars become aggressors against humanity. These principles later influenced international humanitarian law.

Geneva Conventions: The foundation of modern war crimes law, these treaties define protected persons and prohibited actions during armed conflict. They prohibit deliberate attacks on civilians, torture, taking of hostages, and collective punishment. The Additional Protocols further restrict methods of warfare and strengthen civilian protections.

Rome Statute: This treaty established the International Criminal Court and codified war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. It defines command responsibility, whereby military



commanders and civilian leaders can be held responsible for crimes committed by forces under their effective control if they knew or should have known about the crimes and failed to prevent or punish them.

Human Rights Watch Reports: These reports document alleged violations in Ukraine including indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas, use of cluster munitions in populated areas, torture of prisoners, and forced deportations. They include photographic evidence, satellite imagery, witness testimonies, and analysis of weapons used.

UN Commission of Inquiry: This independent body has documented patterns of summary executions, sexual violence, and attacks on civilian infrastructure. Their reports analyze evidence under international humanitarian law standards and assess potential violations.

ICC Prosecutor's Statements: The ICC has opened investigations into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine. The Prosecutor has issued arrest warrants for some Russian officials related to the deportation of Ukrainian children. These statements outline their legal approach and progress of investigations.

"Just and Unjust Wars" (Walzer): This influential work examines moral questions of warfare beyond strict legality. Walzer explores philosophical traditions including Locke's work, addressing questions of necessity, proportionality, and responsibility. The book provides a framework for moral judgment that complements legal analysis.