

4



WHEN ENCOUNTER
BECOMES CONFLICT: JUST
WAR AND JUST PEACE

MODULE FOUR

JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this module, we will focus on a better understanding of the **causes of conflicts** that can lead to war. We will guide you through different aspects of war, conflict, and a just society, fully aware that you would like to think about something more pleasant. In fact, your happiness is very important to us, which is why we need to address this issue – so we can have a **non-violent social discussion about emerging challenges**, and so you and your friends can enjoy peace and prosperity in the future.

Let us start with basic concepts.


Conflicts are serious and enduring differences in values, beliefs, interests, and attitudes between individuals or between social groups. As such, they **are part of human life**. They occur in various forms in the family, among friends, on the street and at school, and between nations, countries, and races. They can also often develop into **violence**.





Figure 4.1
Protest against unjust
Source: © JP Photography
Adobe Stock

Wars are intense conflicts between social groups (classes, races, nations, states, interstate communities, etc.) in which different groups fight to achieve their goals with military weapons. Wars have been a part of human history from the beginning.


Members of certain social groups worshipped their soldiers and their courage and wrote hymns about the military achievements of their community. But every war leaves its victims behind and deepens the gulf between the different social communities. To prevent wars and violence between nations, the most important thing is to establish a just order at the global level, meaning sharing goods and burdens fairly, thus enabling all people to live in dignity.

 What are your first thoughts when you hear the word “war”? What feelings does this word evoke in you?

 Write spontaneously your first thoughts and feelings about war in the box below.

 Underline in the textbox above those thoughts and feelings that you think are negative. Which thoughts and feelings are more negative or positive? Why does a certain attitude towards war prevail? Write a short comment in the textbox below.

4.2 VIDEO CLIP

 In this lesson, students in the video take a trip to a memorial for the victims of all wars. Pay attention to the spoken words and the reactions of students and the teacher.

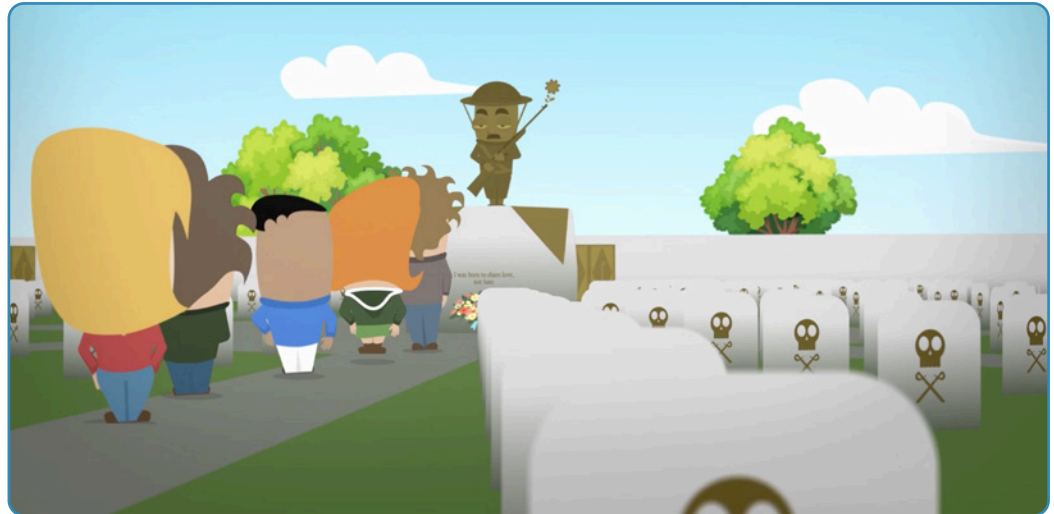



Figure 4.2
Video Clip

During a football match in the schoolyard, Ahmed and Pieter-Jan got into an argument about a foul play. Pieter-Jan claiming that Ahmed tripped him just before he could score a goal, Ahmed objects that the foul never happened. The other classmates take sides, and schoolmates are divided into two groups. The tension between the divided class rises is later interrupted by the teacher and is resolved during the school trip to the memorial for the victims of all wars.

 If you have questions, comments, or ideas while watching the video, you can write them down.

4.3 THE REALITY OF WAR, JUST WAR, AND PACIFISM

The results of archeological excavations show that **prehistoric societies** were quite **violent**. More than 10% of the deaths were due to murder. Wars have shaped the entire history of humanity.

4.3.1 FACTS ABOUT WAR

In the 20th century, **from 136 to 148 million people died as a result of wars**. The First World War caused about 9 million deaths and more than 21 million serious injuries. There were many more victims of the Second World War: 15,600,000 soldiers and 39,200,000 civilians. In the concentration camp in Auschwitz, more than 1.1 million prisoners were murdered. On 6 August 1945, an atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima, killing 140,000 people. From 1945 to the end of the century, 41 million people died in hundreds of wars around the world.



Figure 4.3
Little child standing on
ruins of destroyed
Source: © ruslanshug /
Adobe Stock

The **worldwide military budget is about \$1.8 million per minute**. Military spending is one of the main causes of poverty in the world. **In the 1990s, more people died of starvation worldwide than were killed in both world wars combined.**

Today, **conflicts within countries predominate** (civil wars, terrorist attacks, ethnic persecution, and ethnic cleansing), although there are also wars between countries. In 2020, there are military conflicts in 69 countries worldwide, 15 of which are wars, 23 limited wars, and 196 violent conflicts.

Today, countries no longer have a monopoly on the use of **weapons; they are easily accessible** to different groups on the world market. Even the aims of modern wars are not entirely clear, as they are a mixture of different motives and causes: greed for property, power, ideological beliefs, ethnic and cultural conflicts, corruption, and similar. All this makes it **difficult to end wars and create a lasting peace**.

4.3.2 JUST WAR

The international community (**United Nations**) is committed to intervene in countries where there is a clear **violation of human rights**. In such cases, the UN Security Council has the task of authorizing military intervention to prevent further human rights violations (for example, genocide, ethnic cleansing, use of weapons of mass destruction). The main elements of the theory of just war continue to serve as the basis for the use of military means against acts of violence.

The theory of just war argues that **under certain conditions it is moral to use military means** to bring about justice. Throughout history, six basic principles of a just war have been formed:

- a. Just cause:** self-defense, defense of others, protection of human rights (genocide, ethnic cleansing); not to acquire wealth or power;
- b. Right intention:** to promote good and avoid evil with the aim of restoring justice and peace; not to achieve other goals, such as economic interests or dominant geopolitical positions;
- c. Last resort:** when all peaceful solutions have been tried and failed;
- d. Probability of success** the probability of success must be real; it is not allowed to send soldiers on a mission for an unreachable goal;
- e. Proportionality:** The evil consequences of war must not be greater than the evil to be fought by the war;
- f. Competent authority:** The military action must be based on legitimate authority.

To be able to speak of a just war, therefore, **all conditions must be met**. Military means are sometimes necessary to protect life and human rights. The problem with the theory of just war is that it is often difficult to determine whether all conditions are met.



Think first of all about the reasons for the use of weapons today. What kind of war, if any, can be just? What do you think is a justified reason to use violence today? What conditions are justified for armed resistance?


4.3.3 NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

Many representatives of different religions and non-believers argue that **peace can only be achieved by non-violent means**. **Pacifism** is a movement that refuses to use weapons and violence to achieve its goals. In their view, no war can be justified. In its radical form, pacifism also rejects any violent defense against violence. It only permits non-violent defense.

An example of non-violent resistance was the struggle for Indian independence led by **Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)**. He defended the attitude of ahimsa (**non-injury**), which means “the avoidance of harm to any living being in thought, word or deed”. Millions of supporters defied the British by not cooperating with laws that were considered unjust. Their non-violent way of fighting for justice **has sparked movements for civil rights and freedoms around the world**. However, Gandhi did not advocate absolute pacifism in the sense that the use of force is never justified. He defended the position that it is better to resist with physical violence than to be a coward when one’s family is threatened by armed robbers.



Figure 4.4
Mahatma Gandhi
(1869–1948)
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

 What do you think about pacifism? Is the use of force always wrong? Even in self-defense? How should people fight against injustice and violence? Should a country remain passive when it is (unjustly) attacked?

4.3.4 ANCIENT MYTH OF ANTIGONE

Establishing peace and reconciliation after a war is a long process. Every war leaves many victims behind: those fallen in battle, the wounded, the displaced, the relatives of the fallen, and others. It is very important to respect all the victims in order to ensure the possibility of lasting peace.

In the animated film, the ancient Greek myth of the heroine Antigone was mentioned. Antigone was characterized by the courage **to follow the voice of her conscience** and bury her brother despite the king's ban on doing so. **Respect for all the dead is one of the fundamental elements of civilization.** Every person, regardless of his life, has the right to be buried.



Figure 4.5
Antigone in front of
the dead Polynices by
Nikiforos
Source: National Gallery
of Athens Collection via
Wikimedia Commons

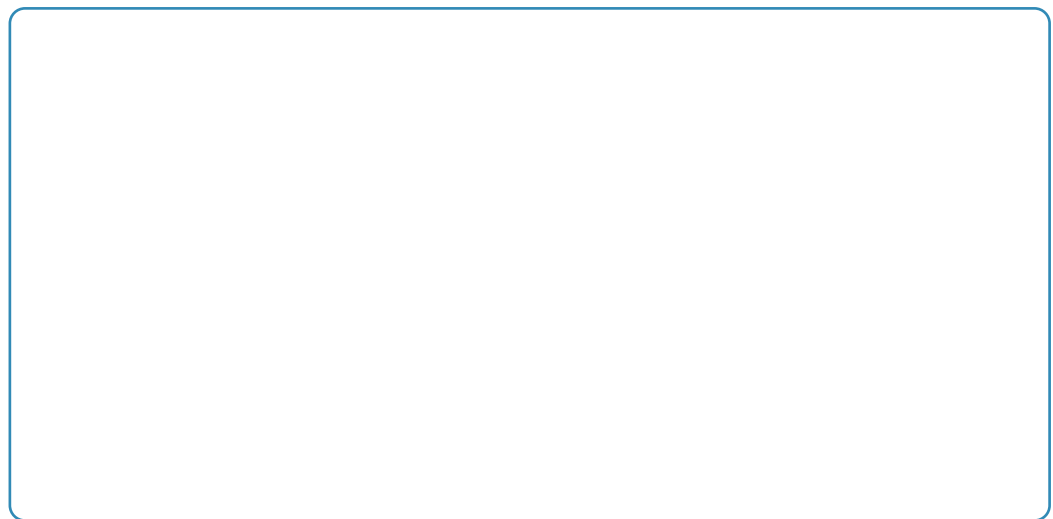
After the death of King Oedipus, ruler of Thebes, his sons Polynices and Eteocles fight for the throne, killing each other in battle. Therefore, their uncle Creon takes power. After a lavish funeral service for Eteocles, he forbids the transfer of Polynices' body, condemns it to lie unburied, and declares him a traitor. Antigone, moved by the love for her brother and convinced of the injustice of the order, buried Polynices

secretly. She is convinced that every man deserves to be buried. For this, she was ordered to be executed by order of Creon; she hanged herself before the order could be carried out. Her lover, Haemon, son of Creon, committed suicide. The king's wife, Eurydice, also committed suicide. In the end, Creon is left completely alone and crushed because he realizes that he has violated the basic laws of civilization.

In European culture, Antigone has become a symbol of respect for the fundamental values of civilization, expressed in particular by her words: "I was born to share love, not hate".

Many other thoughts about war and peace have been formed throughout history. Read the thoughts below and choose the one that appeals to you the most or write down a sentence of your own.

- "In peace, sons bury their fathers. In war, fathers bury their sons." (Herodotus, 484–425 BC)
- "I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word." (Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929–1968)
- "An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind." (Mahatma Gandhi, 1869–1948)
- "Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime." (Ernest Hemingway, 1899–1961)



4.4 GLOBAL JUSTICE & PEACE

Peace is not just being without war, but it represents a way of life that allows everyone in society to live **a dignified human life** and **develop their potential**. The unjust distribution of good and resources, exploitative attitudes and disrespect of dignity are constant sources of conflict and tension.



What do you think are the main steps we need to take to avoid our conflicts turning into wars? How could we ensure more just distribution of goods globally? Who is responsible for addressing the unjust situation in today's world?

4.4.1 TOWARDS A GLOBAL ETHIC

We often hear that religions, which are alleged to encourage the use of weapons to achieve their goals, are primarily to blame for wars and violence. Almost all religions are accused of justifying violence when it comes to asserting their interests. More thorough historical studies, however, show that **religions themselves were largely not the source of wars**, but politicians and military leaders abused religious sentiments in promoting military action. Today, leaders of different religions are united in the pursuit of **world peace**. Efforts are also being made to create **a global ethic**, which should serve as a basis for peaceful coexistence between different nations, religions, and cultures.

The initiator of the movement for the global ethic, **Hans Küng**, attempts to find the fundamental and **connecting elements** of all religions and non-religious people. The Global Ethic Project does not attempt to create new ethical values or norms but rather draws attention to values that all people, regardless of religion, worldview or nationality, already share in their traditions.

One of the common elements in all religions and cultures is **the golden rule**:

- Confucius (551-479 BC), Chinese philosopher: “What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others.”
- Rabbi Hillel (110-10 BC), Jewish religious leader: “Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.”
- Jesus Christ: “Treat others as you want them to treat you. This is what the Law and the Prophets are all about.” (Mt 7:12)
- Prophet Mohamed: “Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.”
- Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), German philosopher: “Do so that the maxim of your will could at any time be considered a principle of general law.”



Figure 4.6
Together strong
Source: © Jürgen Fälchle
Adobe Stock

4.4.2 GLOBAL JUSTICE AND PEACE

In 2015, UN members adopted **17 Sustainable Development Goals** as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice.

One of the goals is also peace, justice, and strong institutions. Sustainable development is only possible within communities that live based on just relations and mutual respect, which are the foundation of peaceful coexistence. This also requires efficient and trustworthy institutions at the local, national, and transnational levels.



Figure 4.7
Sustainable
Development Goals
adopted by the UN in
2015 to be reached on the
global
Source: © UN /
Adobe Stock

The work for peace and justice **begins with each individual**. We must know how to resolve conflicts peacefully and that we are looking for just and sustainable solutions. Conflicts arise because different parties want the same thing, such as economic resources, money, power, recognition, or social status. We see others as obstacles to the implementation of our desires. **If we deal with conflicts in a non-violent and constructive way, we become more creative and humane.** Conflicts can also be an opportunity to clarify the views of individual parties and to deepen cooperation between different actors. Dutch philosopher Bart Brandsma defines peace as follows: “Peace is a long series of conflicts that we have dealt with successfully.” We will never be able to avoid conflicts completely, but we must know how to deal with them in a peaceful and civilized way.



Think for yourself next to the questions below and write short answers in the box.

- What can I do personally and with my friends to strengthen justice and build a culture of peace?
- What are currently the biggest challenges in building peace at the local, national, and global levels?

4.5 ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: ARTISTIC PRESENTATION OF WAR

Throughout history, many monuments to the victors of wars have been erected, magnificent paintings depicted, hymns written and powerful musical works composed. Art is often used for propaganda purposes; however, the artists also have the power to remind the people about the atrocity of war and violence.

Two pictures below are from the same period of history and present both perspectives – from the side of military leaders and from the side of innocent victims.



Figure 4.8
Charles Baron von Steuben: Napoleon's Return from Elba
Source: Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Retour_de_Napoleon_d%27Isle_d%27Elbe_by_Charles_de_Steuben.jpg



Figure 4.9
Francisco de Goya: The Third of May 1808
Source: Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El_Tres_de_Mayo_by_Francisco_de_Goya_from_Prado_in_Google_Earth.jpg

Compare the two pictures with the following questions:



What do you see in the pictures?

- a. Who is the central person? Who are the other people? What is the relationship between them?

- b. What role do light and colour play in both images? What kind of atmosphere do they create?

- c. Where are the scenes set?



How do you feel when you look at the picture? What emotions overwhelm you?



What is the main message of the pictures? What is the difference between them?



Write what titles you would give to the first and second pictures.

4.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

1. ON THE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

Students are playing football on the school playground. During the game, Pieter-Jan falls on the ground claiming Ahmed committed a foul.

Pieter-Jan claims: "You tripped me!"

Ahmed raises his hands, objecting: "Not true. I didn't even touch you."

Two different interpretations divide the rest of the players. Some of the children side with Ahmed protesting there was no foul play, while others side with Pieter-Jan demanding the foul. Both parties are trying to persuade each other by yelling. During the heated situation, the teacher arrives and calls the students to head towards the bus stop. The students are on their way to the memorial to the victims of all wars. On the way to the bus stop, they are still arguing whether there was an offence or not, and who is right.

2. ON THE BENCHES – WAITING FOR THE BUS

While waiting for the bus, the youngsters are sitting on benches.

The teacher asks: "What happened?"

Pieter-Jan starts: "I almost scored a goal, and Ahmed tripped me!"

Ahmed replies: "Man, you know better than this. You threw yourself to the ground. There was no foul!"

Again, some of the class members side with Pieter-Jan, and the others support Ahmed.

From the back of the group, Sarah speaks out loud: "I saw Ahmed intentionally pushing Pieter-Jan. Ahmed always plays rough."

David murmurs in a low voice: "... so typical of Muslims..."

The teacher calms the situation: "Well, slow down now everybody, not so hasty. You need to cool down your heads and leave this issue aside. Or better still, we can use this dispute as an introduction for today's trip to the monument to the victims of all wars."

He continues with the question: "Why are there tensions and conflicts between people?"

Ahmed says indignantly: "Because some people are unfair, they cheat, and can't stand defeat..."

Lindsay tries to calm things down: "People are different, and sometimes we can't get along."

Everyone wants to be right – just like Pieter-Jan and Ahmed at football today."

The teacher continues: "let us look more broadly at who or what you think is to blame for the conflicts and wars in the world?"

Sarah says confidently: "I think religions are to blame for most wars. Religions have always encouraged wars. They used weapons to expand their power. Just look at what Muslim terrorists are doing today because of their faith in Allah."

Ahmed is still upset, as he is sure he didn't foul Pieter-Jan, and now these people condemn all Muslims for all the wars in the world, so he also responds emotionally: "Are Muslims now to blame for everything? What about the Crusades? At that time, Christians killed a lot of people in the name of the Christian God!"

In defense of Ahmed, Lindsay says: "Yesterday I saw the news on the internet that Hindus had set fires to Muslim homes in India. Some time ago, there was also talk of Buddhist violence against the Muslim minority in Myanmar. Muslims are victims of violence in those countries."

Pieter-Jan had calmed down a bit and feels like sharing his thoughts on the subject with confidence: "It's clear from history that religions are the cause of most wars to date. Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists - they are all violent. Therefore, it would be best if we all turn atheist! Don't you think it is foolish to argue about different gods for there is no evidence whatsoever they exist?! We live in the 21st century, and with all the technological progress, we should stop believing in things that are not scientifically proven. Those who believe in gods and supernatural power today are stupid!"

The teacher tries to reason with Pieter-Jan: "Pieter-Jan, I see your point, but don't you think your idea can be disrespectful towards people with different religious beliefs? Just as you have the right to hold your opinion and beliefs, so have your other classmates the same right to believe according to their tradition, world view or personal faith. Wouldn't you agree? Now, I don't believe faith in God in itself leads to violent acts. Our beliefs can, however, be manipulated when someone is trying to use violence

to reach their goals.”

3. CONVERSATION ON THE BUS

The bus is approaching, and the teacher encourages the students to talk in pairs on their way to the memorial.

Teacher: “We have a half-hour drive from here to the monument. During this time, you can talk to the person sitting next to you about what should be done to prevent new wars. What are the necessary steps if we want to maintain peace between us?”

Students get on the bus. On one side of the bus, Pieter-Jan sits together with Sarah; on the other side, Ahmed talks with Lindsay. You can hear the children’s chatter in the background.

4. VISIT THE MEMORIAL DEDICATED TO THE VICTIMS OF ALL WARS

The students get off the bus and walk towards the hill where the memorial is located. On the memorial, we read the inscription: “I was born to share love, not hate” (Antigone). Below: “Dedicated to the victims of all wars.”

The teacher breaks the silence: “This monument has been made to cherish the memory of those who have fallen in war and to all who have suffered as a result of the war. It is a place of remembrance and a living memory for us that we should never go to war again. Who will read the inscription out loud?”

Lindsay reads: “I was born to share love, not hate”

The teacher asks: “Who said these words?”

Ahmed replied first: “Antigone.”

The teacher replies: “We have already talked about Antigone in class, haven’t we? Why do you think this idea is on this monument?”

Lindsay says: “Because, despite the king’s ban, she buried her brother who had fallen in the war.”

David adds: “In the war, her brothers Eteocles and Polynices fought and finally killed each other.

King Creon buries Eteocles as a hero and declares Polynices to be a traitor to the state. The king issues an order threatening the death penalty to anyone who would bury Polynices.”

Sarah continues: “Despite the ban, Antigone courageously buries her dead brother, and the king sentences her to death. Antigone takes her own life in prison. Her fiancé Haemon, who is the king’s son, also takes his own life. In the end, the king’s wife Eurydice also committed suicide.”

The teacher sums up: “You see how the decision to sentence Antigone to death led to other deaths! Violence always gives birth to new violence. As you know from your own experiences, a violent act does not solve the problem, but on the contrary, it makes things worse.”

The students now reflect on the teacher’s words, some of them nod in agreement. Pieter-Jan, on the other hand, stands still.

The teacher continues: “Antigone resisted hatred and pledged her whole life to resist the king’s unjust laws. If we want peace, we must strive for justice. However, we must also be careful not to allow hatred towards others to spread inside us, but to resolve our conflicts promptly and peacefully. Let’s not forget: ‘I was born to share love, not hate.’”

The students walk towards the bus.

5. ON DEPARTURE FROM THE MONUMENT

Pieter-Jan approaches Ahmed and stops him.

Pieter-Jan: “I’m sorry. You were right. There was no foul, I was really eager to score a goal, and I couldn’t get through.”

Pieter-Jan offers Ahmed his hand. The class is closely watching to see what will happen next.

Ahmed shakes his hand saying: “No worries, mate, I’m glad we can put this behind us.”

There is silent relief for everyone in the group. Everyone is happy Ahmed, and Pieter-Jan have reconciled. Lindsay hugs Ahmed, Sarah taps Pieter-Jan on his shoulder: “You see, tomorrow is another game to be happy about.”

4.7 GLOSSARY

Conflict is a serious and lasting contrast in terms of values, beliefs, interests, and attitudes between individuals or between social groups.

Democracy is a form of government in which the people have the authority to choose their governing legislature.

Ethnic cleansing is the systematic forced removal of ethnic, racial and/or religious groups from a given territory by a more powerful ethnic group, often with the intent of making it ethnically homogeneous.

Genocide is the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular nation or ethnic group.

Global justice is a principle that requires just distribution of benefits and burdens throughout the world.

The Golden Rule is a principle that is found and has persisted in many religious and ethical traditions of humankind for thousands of years. It requires: "What you wish done to yourself, do to others."

Human rights are fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being and which are inherent in all human beings regardless of their age, ethnic origin, location, language, religion, ethnicity, or any other status. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

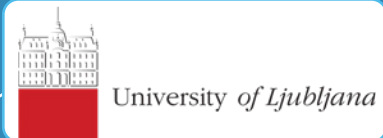
Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. For sustainable development to be achieved, it is crucial to harmonize three core elements: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected, and all are crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies.

The United Nations (UN) is an intergovernmental organization that aims to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations. It was established in 1945 and has 193 member states.

War is an intense armed conflict between states, governments, societies, or paramilitary groups. It is generally characterized by extreme violence, aggression, destruction, and mortality, using regular or irregular military forces.

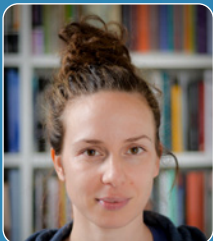
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Vojko Strahovnik (Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia, 1978) is an associate professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and senior research fellow at the Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. In his research, he focuses on the areas of moral theory, practical ethics, and epistemology. The impact of his work ranges from new and important theoretical insights into the nature of normativity (the role of moral principles in the formation of moral judgments, the authority of the normative domain, epistemic virtuousness) to considerations related to practical dimensions of our lives (e.g. the role of guilt and moral shame in reconciliation processes, the importance of intellectual and ethical virtues in dialogue and education, global justice, animal ethics).

Roman Globokar (Novo mesto, Slovenia, 1971) holds the Chair of the Department of Moral Theology at the Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana. He was a teacher of Religious Education in secondary school and for 12 years director of the largest Catholic School in Slovenia. He is a member of the National Medical Ethics Committee and participates in the National Experts Council for general education. He holds courses in the field of theological ethics, bioethics and social ethics. He is also responsible for international exchange at his faculty. He is co-author of the textbooks for Religious Education in Slovenian Catholic Schools and has written a monograph on Educational Challenges in the Digital Age.



Mateja Centa (Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1983) is a researcher at the Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, where she primarily deals with philosophy and theories of emotions, gestalt pedagogy, and experiential and holistic learning. In 2021 she will start her research a two-year postdoctoral project titled Outlining an extended cognitive theory of emotions in the context of a theology of emotions: Bodily sensations, cognition, and morality She also works on international projects in the field of ethics, research integrity, education, and prevention of youth radicalization.

Matej Purger (Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1983) researcher at the Faculty of Theology, Univeristy of Ljubljana is a Catholic theologian with special interests in psychology and applied ethics. His professional career has led him from theoretical studies of ethics to work in content review and knowledge transfer to young entrepreneurs in a business accelerator. When faced with a theoretical approach, he always looks at ways to implement it and when observing practices, he discerns theories behind them.



DUC8 Consortium



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