#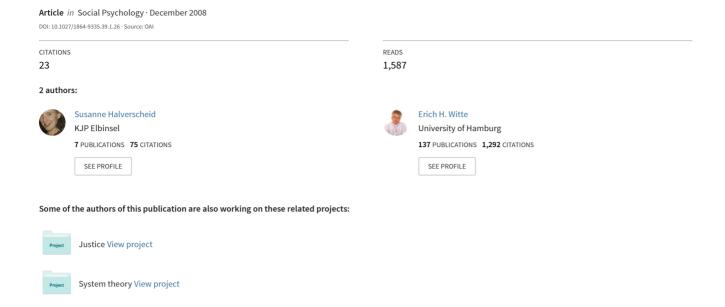 Justification of War and Terrorism: A Comparative Case Study Analyzing Ethical Positions Based on Prescriptive Attribution Theory

2 authors:

Susanne Halverscheid
KJP Elbinsel
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Erich H. Witte
University of Hamburg
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Justification of War and Terrorism

A Comparative Case Study Analyzing Ethical Positions Based on Prescriptive Attribution Theory

Susanne Halverscheid and Erich H. Witte

University of Hamburg, Germany

Abstract. In this study, we examined examples of war and terrorism from both Western and Arab countries with respect to the underlying ethical positions of justifications that have been publicized. In a rating process, we analyzed speeches and explanations of (1) the American government justifying the military strikes in Afghanistan (2001–) and the war in Iraq (2003–), (2) the Red Army Faction justifying terrorist attacks they perpetrated in Germany (1972–1984), (3) the former President of Iraq justifying the war against Iran (1980–1988), and (4) members of Al Qaeda justifying terrorist acts (2001–2004). The ethical justification patterns are presented, compared, and discussed with respect to the influences of culture and type of political violence. The results revealed significant differences between the kinds of aggression as well as between Western and Arab countries, with the cultural factor proving to be more essential.

Keywords: missing, please supply

For more than 2000 years, philosophers have tried to determine circumstances that may justify war and other acts of aggression from a moral point of view. Religious and political frameworks such as "just war theory" aim at establishing specific principles that are meant to evaluate whether military action is permissible (Christopher, 1999; Regan, 1996; Walzer, 1977). The traditional theory of just war comprises two sets of principles, one determining the initiation of war (*jus ad bellum*), and the other regulating the conduct of war (*jus in bello*). It demands that just aims be established before conducting military operations, that severe violence be used only as a last resort, and that reasonable proportionality be maintained in regard to violence (McMahan, 2004). Furthermore, it distinguishes between combatants and noncombatants, discriminating somehow between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" targets. In this respect, just war theory has also been applied to conclude that terrorist acts are not morally justifiable (Coady, 2004; Smilansky, 2004).

In psychology, we are interested in how people *actually* argue when justifying acts of violence, shifting the focus from a normative perspective to a descriptive one to examine the underlying ethical positions. This approach is based on the assumption that moralities are "relative to particular contexts or frameworks, which people choose to accept or reject" (Calhoun, 2001, p. 42). As a consequence, justifications are expected to vary according to different standards of right and wrong. Hence, the question in focus is not whether politically motivated acts of aggression are justifiable in an absolute sense, but rather to explore similarities and differences within the ethical positions of various groups engaging in politically motivated violence.

In a political situation in which terrorism is meant to be overcome by a "war on terror," it is of special interest how justifications of "war" compare to those of "terrorism." Terminologically, "terrorism" is often referred to as "intentionally targeting noncombatants with lethal or severe violence for political purposes" (Coady, 2001, p. 1697), while "war" has been defined as an "actual, intentional and widespread armed conflict between political communities" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005). Both war and terrorism exist in a variety of forms and for various historical, sociological, and psychological reasons. Most definitions, however, tend to oversimplify the phenomena. Nonetheless, it can be stated that both war and terrorism consist of politically motivated acts of severe violence. While acts of war are usually a condition of an "open and declared, hostile armed conflict between states or nations" (Webster's Dictionary, 2006), acts of terrorism constitute rather unpredictable acts of aggression toward civilians.

Being responsible for aggressive acts that violate other ethical norms, political leaders give justifications when anticipating negative evaluation of their action (Keller & Edelstein, 1991); in some cases, they might even acknowledge that the operations are somehow illegitimate. These justifications consist of reasons that are meant to outweigh the violations in question (Keller, 1984). Kienpointner (1992) notes that, in daily argumentation, normative reasoning does not follow strict logical rules as postulated by philosophers. He distinguishes between seven schemes of daily normative argumentation, such as schemes of comparing, contrasting, referring to authorities, arguing in causalities, etc. These schemes can also be used to identify

Table 1. The extended prescriptive attribution model based on Witte and Doll (1995)

	Ends/Consequence-oriented ethics	Means/Duty-oriented ethics
Individual level of judgment	Hedonism	Intuitionism
Group-specific level of judgment	Particularistic utilitarianism	Particularistic deontology
General level of judgment	Utilitarianism	Deontology

justifications given by leaders of political parties and terrorist organizations (Halverscheid & Witte, 2007).

The study at hand focuses on the underlying ethical principles of these justification patterns. The analysis relies on the prescriptive attribution model as proposed by Witte and Doll (1995). In contrast to attribution theories that describe how people explain the causes of behavior on a factual level (Heider, 1958; Jones & Harris, 1967; Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1985), prescriptive attribution theory examines the reasons people give for their actions on the value level. It draws on the widely known differentiation between means-oriented and ends-oriented ethics, focusing either on the duties upon which we base our behavior or on the consequences of our action. Besides these two sets of moral coordinates, ethics differ with respect to the extent of the moral community (Harman & Thomson, 1996). Some are restricted to the individual perspective, some include all people of a certain group, and others include all humans of whatever nationality or religion. The original model of prescriptive attribution differentiates between two levels of judgment, focusing either on the individual or on society in general. In order to apply the model to the field of politics, a third level, the group-specific level of judgment has been added (Table 1). In terms of social identity theory and self-categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1982**[not in refs]**; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), the group-specific level provides a promising amplification since social categorization, the identification with the own group, and the comparison with others play a major role in political argumentation. With the resulting two by three categories, it is possible to classify the following ethical positions: deontology, utilitarianism, particularistic deontology, particularistic utilitarianism, intuitionism, and hedonism.

The fundamental assumption of deontological ethics is that decisions be derived from principles that are regarded as universally valid. It holds that morality is an intrinsic feature of human action, determined by moral obligations without referring to the consequences that the action may have (Kant, 1797/1992). Utilitarianism, in contrast, forms one of the major theories of consequentialism that was originally proposed by Jeremy Bentham. From a utilitarian perspective, moral action demands a contribution to overall utility, while deontologists regard an action as fulfilling moral standards if it is consistent with general rights and duties. Particularistic deontology differs from the latter perspective insofar as it originates from group-specific obligations. Particularistic utilitarianism, on the contrary, aims at the greatest outcome for a specific group of people. Intuitionism considers the reason for an action to stem from individual and immediate judgment (Sidgwick, 1890). It postulates that we have the power of seeing clearly which actions are right and reasonable. Typically, these sorts of justifications are not supported by further reasoning. Finally, the hedonistic view focuses on increasing well-being and reducing pain for the individual. By stating that no action may harm an individual, hedonism goes far beyond egoism and constitutes a fundamental basis for an ethical norm.

Within the process of analyzing public justifications of politically motivated acts, it became evident that many justifications put emphasis on the adversary's violation of ethical principles. This observation led to the assumption that actions of aggression may also be justified *indirectly* by pointing at the enemy's amoral offenses that have to be compensated by taking counteractions. George W. Bush, for instance, stated that "understanding the threats of our time, knowing the designs and deceptions of the Iraqi regime, we have every reason to assume the worst, and we have an urgent duty to prevent the worst from occurring."[1] Accordingly, the Red Army Faction (RAF)[2] declared that "we will carry out attacks against judges and state attorneys until they stop committing violations against the rights of political prisoners."[3] Finally, the indirect argumentation pattern reflects ideas such as taking revenge, as stated by Al Qaeda: "The blood pouring out of Palestine must be equally avenged."[4] Because of the frequent occurrence of adversary-oriented justifications that stress the enemy's violation of ethical principles, a model of indirect justification patterns was developed, consisting of six negative expressions analogous to the six ethical positions presented above (Table 2). Indeed, all six indirect justifications were found in public speeches and explanations.

The ethical categories that have been developed a priori were found in empirical data material on personal, interpersonal, and social actions. Confirmatory factor analysis attested that the ethical positions are partially independent (Witte, 2002; Witte & Doll, 1995). Further, the importance

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[1] George W. Bush, speech held on October 7, 2002. Retrieved September 20, 2006, from http://www.whitehouse.gov/releases/2002/10/20021007-8.html.

[2] The Red Army Faction was West Germany's most active left-wing terrorist organization. It operated from 1970 to 1998.

[3] Taken from a statement on a bomb attack against Wolfgang Buddenberg, a judge of the Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe (Germany), on May 20, 1972. English version retrieved September 20, 2006, from http://www.germanguerilla.com/red-army-faction/documents/72–05–20.html.

[4] Bin Laden, O. (2002). To the Americans (October 6, 2002). In Lawrence (2005).

Table 2. Principles and examples of direct and indirect justification patterns

Direct justification patterns	Indirect justification patterns
Hedonism (H) *It has to be acted in favor of individual well-being.* "Should a man be blamed for protecting his own?"[a]	*Indirect hedonism (H-)* *The well-being of the individual is endangered by the enemy's action.* "Buddenberg, the pig, allowed Grashof to be moved from the hospital to a cell when the transfer and the risk of infection in the prison were a threat to his life."[e]
Intuitionism (I) *The action undertaken is based on individual insight on what ought to be done.* "In those critical moments, I was overwhelmed by ideas that are hard to describe, but they awakened a powerful impulse to reject injustice and gave birth to a firm resolve to punish the oppressors."[a]	*Indirect Intuitionism (I-)* *The enemy's action reveals a lack of common sense.* "Those who condemn these operations [9/11] have viewed the event in isolation and have failed to connect it to previous events or to the reasons behind it. Their view is blinkered and lacks either a legitimate or a rational basis."[f]
Particularistic utilitarianism (PU) *The action has to aim at a positive outcome for a certain group.* "Whatever it takes to defend the liberty of America, this administration will do."[b]	*Indirect-particularistic Utilitarianism (PU–)* *The enemy's action poses a (potential) threat to a certain group.* "We're concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using these UAVS for missions targeting the United States."[c]
Particularistic Deontology (PD) *It has to be acted according to group-specific duties, virtues and rights.* "Members of Congress are nearing an historic vote. I'm confident they will fully consider the facts, and their duties. Saddam Hussein's actions have put us on notice, and there is no refuge from our responsibilities."[c]	*Indirect-particularistic deontology (PD–)* *The enemy does not fulfill his specific duties.* "We will carry out attacks against judges and state attorneys until they stop committing violations against the rights of political prisoners."[e]
Utilitarianism (U) *All action must achieve the utmost good for the majority.* "By our resolve, we will give strength to others. By our courage, we will give hope to others. And by our actions, we will secure the peace, and lead the world to a better day."[c]	*Indirect utilitarianism (U–)* *The enemy's action poses a (potential) threat to all humanity.* "This enemy attacked not just our people, but all freedom-loving people everywhere in the world."[g]
Deontology (D) *It has to be acted according to universal norms and values.* "That's why I have said that if we don't have security, neither will the Americans. It's a very simple equation that any American child could understand: live and let other people live."[d]	*Indirect deontology (D–)* *The enemy violates universal norms and values.* "And by the will of God Almighty, we will soon see the fall of the unbelievers' states, at whose forefront is America, the tyrant, which has destroyed all human values and transgressed all limits."[h]

Notes. [a]Bin Laden, speech released on October 29, 2004, as broadcast by Al-Sahab Institute for Media Production. Retrieved September 20, 2006, from http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=sd&ID=SP81104. [b]George W. Bush, speech held on March 15, 2002. Retrieved September 20, 2006, from http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020315.html. [c]George W. Bush, October 7, 2002. Retrieved September 25, 2006, from http://amerikadienst.usembassy.de/us-botschaft-cgi/ad-detailad.cgi?lfdnr=1504. [d]Bin Laden, O. (2001). The example of Vietnam (November 12, 2001). In Lawrence (2005). [e]RAF, May 20, 1972. [f]Bin Laden, O. (2001). Nineteen Students. December 26, 2001. In Lawrence (2005). [g]George W. Bush, remarks made after meeting with the National Security Team on September 12, 2001. Retrieved September 20, 2006, from www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010912-4.html. [h]Bin Laden, O. (2001). To the people of Afghanistan (August 25, 2002). In Lawrence (2005).

of each ethical principle proved to vary with culture (Maeng, 1995**[in lit 1996]**), social identity (Gollenia, 1999), social roles (Witte & Heitkamp, 2005), and with professional socialization (Hackel, 1995). Witte (2002) examined editorial articles of a German daily, portraying the pros and cons of political actions, and found a frequency of utilitarian versus deontic arguments accumulating up to 2 to 1. Ethical standards of scientific organizations, meant to regulate empirical investigations, displayed an inverse proportion of 1 to 2. For the most part, they consisted of deontic principles; utilitarian aspects were stressed only when deviations from the rules needed justification. In respect to societal and cultural influences, Witte (2002) found different levels of judgment emerging between East- and West-German populations, with the latter stressing personal levels more than general levels of judgment. Further, Maeng (1995) found differences in the use of means- and ends-oriented ethics between South-Korean and German subjects, indicating that people in individualistic countries tend to focus on hedonistic and utilitarian aspects, while deontic principles are stressed more often in populations with a collectivistic background.

The study at hand analyzed underlying ethical positions of public justifications of political violence. Dealing with justifications of war and terrorism from Western and Arab actors, four political groups were examined. In a first step, the justification patterns of each group were inspected. In a second step, four research questions were explored using inferential statistics. First, we examined whether there are significant differences between the justification of war and the justification of terrorism in respect to the underlying ethical positions. It could be argued that both forms of political violence constitute a major violation of human rights and human integrity and that nothing leads us to the as-

sumption that acts of war and terrorism display different forms of justification. On the other hand, it might be expected that the two forms of political violence differ systematically in their claim to operate in favor of third parties – be it for national or religious groups, for a certain social class, god, or all humanity.

Second, we explored whether there are significant differences in the patterns of ethical justifications between the two cultures regarded in this study. Although cultural influences have been addressed in studies on ethical reasoning, findings within Arabian contexts are rather underrepresented (e.g., Consalvi, 1971). Maeng's (1995) finding that countries with a collectivistic background tend to emphasize means-oriented ethics might also apply to the Arabian groups examined, since Arab countries are described as clearly less individualistic than Germany and the United States according to Hofstede's cultural indices (Abdel-Fattah & Huber, 2003; Hofstede & McCrae, 2004).

Third, we examined whether utilitarian or deontic justifications are predominant in public justifications of politically motivated violence. Previous findings indicate that societal topics are rather discussed in terms of utilitarian ethics, considering the consequences of actions (Witte & Doll, 1995). Furthermore, utilitarian aspects are stressed if deviations from rules have to be justified. Since acts of violence are generally viewed as a "last resort," constituting a deviation from general principles, the justifications could be expected to be also ends-oriented.

The fourth question addressed the question whether universal or particularistic positions are the predominant justification patterns across groups. Dealing with adversary-oriented conflicts, it is very likely that the tensions between "ingroup favoritism" (Messick & Mackie, 1989) and attributional biases toward the "outgroup" (Perdue, Dovidio, Gurtman, & Tyler, 1990) foster the group-specific level of judgment.

After addressing the four research questions presented above, further differences between the four political groups were explored through pair-wise χ^2 testing.

Method

Sample

In order to contribute to the current political situation, the study design considered war and terrorism from both Western and Arabian parties and terrorist organizations. The four resulting combinations were exemplified by selected speeches and explanations from (1) the American Government justifying the military strikes in Afghanistan (2001–) and the war in Iraq (2003–), (2) the RAF justifying terrorist attacks that they perpetrated in Germany from 1972 to 1984, (3) the former President of Iraq justifying the war against Iran (1980–1988), and (4) members of Al Qaeda justifying terrorist acts between 2001 and 2004. All select-

ed speeches constitute explanations by political leaders addressing the public. Although it was impossible to control further context variables (e.g., video broadcasts vs. press releases and personal presence), the material represents speeches that are typical for the groups examined.

Material

All speeches and explanations were extracted from published material. The justifications of the war in Iraq (2003–) and the military strikes against Afghanistan (2001–) were exemplified by five explanations given by the White House, announcing decisions about the "war on terror." The speeches were translated into German by the "Amerika Dienst," the media information center of the US Embassy in Germany. The material on the RAF consists of ten press releases taken from a collection of documentaries about the German terror organization (Hoffman[in lit Hoffmann], 1997). The explanations had been printed shortly after the respective attacks between 1972 and 1984. With respect to the Iraq-Iran war, only one translated speech of the former President of Iraq could be found to address the matter in question. The speech was given on an Islamic summit conference in 1981 (Hussein, 1981). The explanations given by Al Qaeda consist of five speeches taken from a volume of statements by Osama Bin Laden that were translated into English (Lawrence, 2005). The five speeches meant to address the international community.

Procedure

Two rating procedures were conducted. The first rating process was based on argumentation analysis. The aim was to identify sentences containing at least one justification, defined as a positive evaluation of an action for which the subject is responsible (Klein, 1987), and operationalized by the seven categories of normative argumentation as outlined by Kienpointner (1992). Out of 1,728 sentences, 1,035 were identified by two independent raters as containing justifications of war or terror.

The selected statements were then rated in a second process in regard to the underlying ethics, based on operationalizations proposed by Witte and Doll (1995). In total, 1,253 ethical principles were revealed and categorized ($N_{USA} = 479$, $N_{RAF} = 125$, $N_{Iraq} = 217$, $N_{Al\ Qaeda} = 432$). The number of ethical principles exceeded the number of selected sentences because 249 statements contained more than one ethical position. The second rating procedure was conducted by three independent raters who were trained for this purpose. With respect to the rather complex material, the rating consistency ($\kappa = .537$) can be regarded as satisfactory (Wirtz & Caspar, 2002, p. 59).

Table 3. Proportional frequencies (%) for the individual level of judgment

Ethics	USA	RAF	Iraq	Al-Qaeda	Total (ethics)
Hedonism	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.8% (10)
Indirect hedonism	1.0%	4.8%	0.0%	0.5%	1.0% (13)
Intuitionism	4.6%	3.2%	0.9%	3.5%	3.4% (43)
Indirect intuitionism	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	3.2%	1.7% (21)
Total (group)	7.7%	8.8%	1.8%	8.1%	6.9%
(*N*)	(37)	(11)	(4)	(35)	(87)

Table 4. Group-wise and combined frequencies of ethical justifications

Eth.	USA	RAF	Iraq	Al-Qaida	War	Terror	West	Arab	Total
PU	7.5% (33)	5.3% (6)	3.3% (7)	3.0% (12)	6.1%	3.5%	7.0%	3.1%	4.9%
PD	15.2% (67)	8.8% (10)	11.7% (25)	11.1% (44)	14.0%	10.6%	13.8%	11.3%	12.5%
U	13.1% (58)	4.4% (5)	3.8% (8)	1.3% (5)	10.1%	2.0%	11.3%	2.1%	6.5%
D	19.7% (87)	12.3% (14)	11.7% (25)	23.7% (94)	17.1%	21.1%	18.2%	19.5%	18.9%
PU-	10.6% (47)	29.8% (34)	29.1% (62)	18.4% (73)	16.6%	20.9%	14.6%	22.1%	18.5%
PD-	12.0% (53)	8.8% (10)	30.5% (65)	20.2% (80)	18.0%	17.6%	11.3%	23.8%	17.8%
U-	14.9% (66)	14.0% (16)	1.4% (3)	4.5% (18)	10.5%	6.7%	14.7%	3.4%	8.8%
D-	7.0% (31)	16.7% (19)	8.5% (18)	17.9% (71)	7.5%	17.6%	9.0%	14.6%	11.9%
N	442	114	213	397	655	511	556	610	1166

Note. For abbreviations of the ethical justification patterns, see Table 2.

Results

Examining the results, it becomes apparent that the individual level of judgment was clearly underrepresented in the justification of war and terrorism, constituting no more than 6.9% of the ethical statements across all groups (Table 3). Hedonism, for instance, could only be found in justifications of the US government and in speeches given by Al Qaeda. Indirect hedonistic aspects, however, were also stressed by the RAF, indicating that the adversary was seen to be threatening hedonistic values. Intuitionism, postulating that the action is clearly reasonable, represented the most frequent form of individually oriented ethics, while indirect intuitionism, claiming that the enemy lacks common sense, was mainly employed by Al Qaeda.

Since the individually oriented ethics seemed to play a negligible role in the justification of politically motivated acts of violence, they were not considered further. Because the individual level displayed cell frequencies below five, it did not meet the statistical requirements for χ^2 testing. Thus, the relative frequencies of the eight remaining types of argumentation were recalculated (see Table 4).

The ethical basis of justifying the "war on terrorism" constituted a rather wide range of frequently used arguments. For the justification of the Iran-Iraq war, on the contrary, two types of justifications occurred strikingly often, namely, indirect particularistic utilitarianism (stressing that the enemy's actions have a negative impact on a specific group) and indirect particularistic deontology (stressing that the enemy is not fulfilling their duties). These two forms of vindication were also found to be characteristic for the explanations given by Al Qaeda. Here, the most frequently used arguments, however, were based on deontological ethics. For the justification patterns of the RAF, the indirect particularistic utilitarianism represented the most recurring form, emphasizing the negative consequences of the enemy's action for a certain group.

Comparing the direct way of justification (39.9%) with the indirect one that stresses the enemy's violation of ethical principles (60.2%), the data showed an excessive use of the latter practice. The former Iraqi government and the RAF emphasized such violations in more than two-thirds of their explanations. Members of Al Qaeda engaged in indirect justifications in 61% of their statements, while the US government applied this sort of argumentation in 44.5% of the sentences.

Exploration of the Research Questions

The *first research question* focuses on the differences between the justifications of war and the justifications of terrorism in respect to the underlying ethical positions. In order to test differences between the two groups, an omnibus χ^2 test was conducted, indicating a significant difference in the justification patterns between the two kinds of aggression, $\chi^2(7, N = 1166) = 70.639$, $p < .001$. To determine which ethical positions accounted for these differences, pairwise χ^2 tests were conducted. Because of multiple testing, the α level needed adjusting. Von Eye (1990) recom-

Table 5. Proportional frequencies of justifications containing utilitarian versus deontological, as well as particularistic versus universal argumentation patterns

	USA	RAF	Iraq	Al Qaeda	total (ethics)
Utilitarianism combined	46.2%	53.5%	37.6%	27.2%	38.9%
Deontology combined	53.8%	46.5%	62.4%	72.8%	61.1%
Particularistic combined	45.2%	52.6%	74.6%	52.6%	53.9%
Universal combined	54.8%	47.4%	25.4%	47.4%	46.1%
N	442	114	213	397	1166

mends controlling the α level by a Bonferroni adjustment, determining the level of significance by the number of r simultaneous tests with $\alpha^* = \alpha/r$. Conducting $r = 8$ simultaneous tests led to $\alpha^* = .006$ that is analogous to a significance level of $\alpha = .05$.

Table 4 shows that the two forms of aggression differed in two aspects. While utilitarianism occurred more often in justifications of war, $\chi^2(1, N = 76) = 31.058$, $p < .001$, indirect deontology was predominant in terror justifications, $\chi^2(1, N = 139) = 28.063$, $p < .001$. In order to interpret the size of proportional differences, Cohen (1977, p. 181) suggests standardizing the differences through an arcsine transformation. The resulting values can be interpreted as effect sizes, with $h = .20$ indicating a small difference between proportions, $h = .50$ pointing at medium differences, and $h = .80$ highlighting large effects. The difference of 8.1% on the utilitarian dimension constituted an effect of $h = .36$, while the effect size for the difference between deontological justifications of war and terrorism came to $h = .31$. Thus, the two forms of political violence differed in two aspects: Whereas war was justified more by outlining positive consequences for the majority, terrorism seemed to be vindicated more through underlining the adversary's violation of ethical principles that are seen as universally valid.

The *second research question* addresses possible differences in the patterns of ethical justifications between the Western and Arabian countries regarded in this study. Again, an omnibus χ^2 test was conducted, $\chi^2(7, N = 1166) = 132.381$, $p < .001$, indicating significant dissimilarities between the two groups. The pairwise χ^2 tests revealed six discrepancies on the cultural dimension. No significant differences existed for the deontological and particularistic deontological justification. In addition, the effect sizes indicating the magnitude of differences for the particularistic utilitarianism and indirect deontological argumentations can be only interpreted as tendencies. They implied that positive consequences for a specific group were mentioned more in the West ($h = .19$) while the opponent's violation of universal norms and values was stressed more often in Arabian countries ($h = .19$). The group-specific expression of negative deontology is frequently emphasized by the Arabian group ($h = .35$). The largest effect sizes on the cultural dimension were found for utilitarian justifications: Both the direct ($h = .39$) and the indirect utilitarian argumentations ($h = .45$) seemed to be typical for the Western

groups. The indirect expression of particularistic utilitarianism, instead emphasizing the bad consequences of the enemy's action for a certain group, appeared slightly more often in the justifications of the Arabian parties ($h = .21$). It can be pointed out that there was a clear tendency of the Western groups to underline general consequences for the majority. Negative consequences for a certain group, on the contrary, were highlighted more by the Arabian groups examined. On the deontic dimension, the adversary's violations of principles were more often stressed by the Arabian groups. The pursuit of group-specific values and universal principles as a form of justification was equally distributed.

The *third research question* explores whether utilitarian or deontic patterns of argumentation were predominant in public justifications of violent acts. In order to compare the overall frequencies, particularistic and universal utilitarian argumentations were combined and contrasted with the frequency of the combined deontological ethics. Table 5 shows the proportional distribution of justifications comprehending utilitarian (38.9%) and deontic (61.1%) reasoning, displaying a rate of utilitarian versus deontological arguments of 1 to 1.6. The predominance of deontic argumentation patterns contradicts previous research in which mostly utilitarian justifications were found in discussions on societal issues. Taking a look at the single groups, the data showed that the RAF was the only one stressing utilitarian aspects. A χ^2 test revealed, though, that the difference between utilitarian and deontological argumentation for the RAF was not significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 114) = 0.561$, $p = .454$.

The *fourth research question* considers the prevalence of group-specific versus universal justifications of politically motivated violence. Table 5 displays the proportional distribution of particularistic and universal ethics. It indicates that justifications originating from a group-specific perspective occurred slightly more often than ethics with a universal perspective. A χ^2 test confirmed that this difference was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 1166) = 6.947$, $p = .008$. However, the proportional difference of 7.8% constituted a rather small effect size of $h = .16$ and can only be interpreted as a tendency.

So far, the results revealed that
1. the justifications of war and terrorism differed substantially in regard to two ethical positions,
2. the justifications of the Western and Arabian countries examined in this study varied significantly in respect to six ethical argumentation patterns,

3. the percentage of deontological justifications was, in contrast to utilitarian ethics, unexpectedly high, and
4. particularistic justifications emphasizing group-specific aspects were slightly dominant across groups.

Exploration of Further Differences Between the Groups

In a third step, further differences in the argumentation patterns were explored. Von Eye (1990) proposes a two-step procedure in order to explore different frequencies of configurations between independent groups. The first step consists of χ^2 tests across all groups for each configuration. Should such a test reveal statistical significances, pairwise asymptotic hypergeometrical tests between the groups indicate group-specific types of argumentation. As outlined earlier, the α level needed adapting due to multiple testing ($\alpha^* = .006$).

The χ^2 tests conducted for each ethical configuration indicated that out of eight examined ethics, six were used to a different extent by the four groups. The groups seemed not to differ in respect to particularistic utilitarianism ($p = .016$) and particularistic deontology ($p = .162$). Significant differences, though, existed in the use of the remaining ethical positions, namely utilitarianism, deontology, and the four ethics of indirect expression. Pairwise significance tests revealed specific differences between the single groups, as described in the following section.

The US government and the RAF differed significantly in two aspects: The German terror organization engaged more frequently in indirect particularistic utilitarianism (pointing at the negative consequences of the adversaries' actions for a certain group of people) than the US government ($p < .001$, $h = .48$). Besides, the explanations given by the RAF referred more often to indirect deontology (stressing that the adversary's action are not compatible with general responsibilities) than the American government did ($p = .003$, $h = .31$).

The comparison of the justifications given by the US and the former Iraqi government revealed four significant discrepancies. The most striking difference lay in the use of indirect utilitarianism ($p < .001$, $h = .60$): While the US government justified the war against terrorism by stressing the terrifying impact of terrorist acts for mankind, the former Iraqi government engaged in indirect utilitarianism in only 1.4% of the statements. A similar effect was found on direct utilitarianism ($p < .001$, $h = .34$): The Iraqi government used more indirect particularistic deontological (emphasizing that the enemy does not fulfill their responsibilities; $p < .001$, $h = .47$ and indirect particularistic utilitarian argumentations (focusing on negative consequences for the Iraqi people; $p < .001$, $h = .46$).

Five significant differences existed between the US justifications and the explanations given by Al Qaeda. Among these, four differences were similar to the ones between the US and the Iraqi government: Compared with the US government, members of Al Qaeda tended not to justify their acts with utilitarian arguments, be it in a direct ($p < .001$, $h = .54$) or indirect manner ($p < .001$, $h = .34$); instead, they focused on indirect particularistic aspects on the utilitarian dimension ($p = .002$, $h = .20$) and indirect particularistic deontology ($p = .001$, $h = .22$). Additionally, the explanations given by Al Qaeda were likely to stress general indirect deontological matters more than those by the US government, taking the position that the enemy does not follow duties and values seen as universally valid ($p < .001$, $h = .34$).

The justifications of the RAF and the former Iraqi government differed in two aspects: As mentioned above, the statements given by the Iraqi leaders focused more frequently on indirect particularistic deontology (i.e., the enemy not fulfilling their duties, such as breaching particular agreements ($p < .001$, $h = .57$); instead, the RAF tried to justify acts of aggression more frequently by using indirect utilitarian argumentations, that is, pointing at the negative impact of the adversary's actions for the mankind ($p < .001$, $h = .57$).

Similar tendencies were observed between the RAF and Al Qaeda, although the effect size were smaller for the comparison between these two terror organizations ($p < .001$, $h = .32$, for indirect particularistic deontology, and $p < .001$, $h = .32$, for indirect utilitarianism).

Finally, four differences of rather small effect size were observed between explanations given by the former Iraqi government and by Al Qaeda. The biggest difference existed for deontology, which was used more frequently by Al Qaeda, be it in a direct ($p < .001$, $h = .32$) or in an indirect manner ($p = .267$, $h = .27$). The former Iraqi government, instead, engaged more often in indirect particularistic utilitarianism ($p = .003$, $h = .26$) and indirect particularistic deontology ($p = .005$, $h = .24$).

Discussion

The results indicate that certain ethical patterns of argumentation seem to be predominant in the justifications of war and terror. Based on the rather naïve assumption that the frequency of the 12 ethical justifications is equally distributed, one would expect a proportion of 8.3% for each configuration. Statistical analyses revealed that only three types of ethical argumentation corresponded to this assumption, namely, direct utilitarianism, indirect utilitarianism, and indirect deontology. The individual level of judgment was clearly underrepresented. In addition, particularistic utilitarianism represented a rather seldom form of justification, suggesting that the positive consequences for the own group resulting from the committed acts may not be stressed in public. Indirect particularistic utilitarianism, on the contrary, was a widely used type of argumentation, stating that a specific group will be affected by negative

consequences if the enemy is not hindered from engaging in reprehensible acts. At the same time, it was often stressed that the enemy is not fulfilling their duties (indirect particularistic deontology). Own behavior was likely illustrated as being based on group-specific virtues (particularistic deontology) and especially on universally valid rights and duties (deontology).

The statistical comparison revealed that the US government emphasized utilitarian aspects by stressing the positive consequences of their action for all of humanity considerably more often than the other groups did. Justifications that underlined the potential threat of the adversary's action for mankind (indirect utilitarianism) seemed to be typical for both the US government and the RAF. Particularistic utilitarianism, in contrast, was rarely used by the four groups, whereas pointing at negative consequences for specific groups (indirect particularistic utilitarianism) was one of the major justification patterns observed in the statements of the RAF and the former Iraqi government. Up to a certain degree, this argumentation pattern was also observed in statements given by Al Qaeda, whereas the US government did not put emphasis on specific groups when outlining negative consequences of the adversary's action.

The most prevalent ethical argumentation pattern on the deontological dimension was represented by the direct deontology, which mainly appeared in statements by Al Qaeda, albeit not significantly less often in explanations of the US government and the RAF. Thus, acts of aggression seem to be justified predominantly by referring to general principles, norms, and values that are regarded as universally valid. The former Iraqi government, on the contrary, engaged more frequently in indirect particularistic deontological argumentation, emphasizing the enemy's violation of specific duties. This is not astonishing, since one of the major disputes between Iraq and Iran arouse out of violations of the 1975 Algiers Agreement.

Taking a look at the similarities and differences between the groups, it can be stated that only a few, to be exact two, differences became manifest between the US and the RAF, between the RAF and Al Qaeda, and between the RAF and the former Iraqi government; four differences were observed between the US and the Iraq, and between Iraq and Al Qaeda, respectively. A clear difference appeared between the US and Al Qaeda, originating from five significant deviances. This is a striking result, since the US government and Al Qaeda are direct opponents. While the US demonstrated utilitarian thinking, stressing the utmost good for mankind in respect to its actions, Al Qaeda very rarely engaged in this sort of argumentation. Instead, this group outlined the negative impact of the enemy's action for the Muslim population. Furthermore, they portrayed the adversary's actions as not being in accordance with group-specific duties, but rather violating norms and values seen as universally valid. While both regarded it as their duty to undertake action against the other, the US took the standpoint of acting in favor of humanity and fulfilling the country's role as a world power, whereas Al Qaeda justified the committed acts with making a stand against immoral acts of the West and compensating for the suffering of the Muslim population.

The excessive use of indirect justifications displays the perceived need to proceed against specific outgroups. Only the US diverged from this pattern, showing less concern for external influence, but rather pursuing its own values. This, again, could reflect their superior position of holding global power. Accordingly, the use of indirect justification may express the degree of perceived threat caused by the opponent.

In terms of just war theory, the process of blaming the enemy for ethical violations might serve as a way to outline a "just cause" that is meant to permit the use of physical force within the conflict (e.g., Cohrs, Maes, Moschner, & Kielmann, 2003). On the whole, the enemies "get blamed for bringing suffering on themselves" (McAlister, Bandura, & Owen, 2006, p. 145). At the same time, imposing the responsibility for the conflict on the opponent deflects attention from the own violence, which is significantly less often mentioned in public, as the results showed.

With respect to the influence of aggression on ethical argumentation, two major results were obtained: While war seems to be justified by focusing on the best outcome for the majority, terrorism may intend to fend off external values that are somehow detested and not seen as universally valid. While both war and terrorism represent extremely violent operations, terrorism aims at the destruction of established values, whereas war is argued to pursue desirable values.

Regarding the cultural influences, it can be stated that Western countries may tend to utilize general utilitarian argumentations stressing that an action must focus on the utmost good for the majority. Arab countries, on the contrary, underlined indirect particularistic aspects on the deontological dimension, pointing at the enemy's violation of specific duties. While the Arab groups seem to pursue a rather tradition-bound preservation of group-specific values, the Western countries may tend to create a single, homogeneous culture.

We introduced the extended prescriptive attribution model as a means to analyze ethical argumentations that are meant to justify politically motivated acts of aggression. The model constitutes a framework that makes it possible to ascribe the divergent justifications to central aspects, considering both the mode of moral reasoning and the level of judgment. Further, the differentiation between direct and indirect practices of justification represents a considerable refinement in the analysis of argumentation patterns. At the same time, the study indicates that the prescriptive attribution model can be simplified by omitting the individual level of judgment when dealing with the justification of social acts affecting a broad majority.

It should be noted, however, that the results obtained in this study are based on a very limited sampling design. Because of the specific characteristics of each case, conclusions to other political situations cannot be drawn easily.

In addition, the material on the Iran-Iraq war was restricted to a single speech given by the former Iraqi president. Thus, the results need to be extended in further research. Further context variables should be considered in order to increase the understanding of interaction patterns between specific circumstances and the pursuit of values. Ethical principles that are extracted by analyzing public explanations illustrate primarily how political leaders try to convince a vast majority that their actions are permissible and legitimate. We cannot assume that public justifications exclusively reflect the personal beliefs of the actors. Thus, the context of communication needs to be considered more closely. While it has been found that, in order to induce social change, political speakers make use of different group representations when addressing specific audiences (Klein & Licata, 2003; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996), it is also very likely that ethical principles are emphasized differently according to the addressee. In this regard, a speech in the United Nations General Assembly might differ from the one addressing soldiers in a military base. In particular, the role of the actor's motivation (Lamnek, 2002) and the relationship between moral cognition and moral action merit examination (Blasi, 1980). In addition, it is very likely that means- and end-oriented ethics serve different functions within political crises. In general, it might be easier to convince the broad public that violence is needed by emphasizing duties and principles that are widely accepted. As a consequence, the extent of further public debates might be reduced. On the utilitarian dimension, horrifying scenarios for all humanity or certain subgroups might be depicted in order to underline the urgency to act.

The study revealed significant differences between the groups with respect to the emphasis given to ethical principles. It seems likely that peace negotiations can stall because of fundamental deviations of ethical principles. While some groups set up global standards expecting everyone else to proceed along a single line, others tend to relativize norms and values with respect to particular affiliations. The current war in Iraq is a prominent example showing that "global standards" regarded as universally valid by Western countries are not easily brought to a nation that also comprises its own group-specific standards. While the West may tend to see all cultures proceeding along a single (mostly Westernized) line, Arab countries strive at preserving their own local cultures. Obviously, both approaches do not offer an adequate framework for solving intercultural conflicts. While universalists might commit the fallacy to regard their own specific culture as universal, particularistic ethics do not answer the question of how international conflicts can be resolved (Evanoff, 2004). Evanoff (1999) outlines a constructivist approach to intercultural dialogs on ethics and postulates cultural disputes related to value differences. In this respect, it should be underlined that despite putting different emphasis on certain criteria, all groups examined displayed proportions of the very same principles in their thinking. Since general and particularistic argumentation patterns were employed

across all groups, none of the 12 ethical argumentation patterns occurred solely in the justifications of war or terror – and none occurred exclusively in Arab and Western countries. By shifting the focus to underlying ethical principles, the analysis of prescriptive attribution processes might help to detect important patterns of argumentation and to foster an understanding of what lies behind strong positions that are perceived as radical on both sides.

Acknowledgments

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Erich H. Witte

Universität Hamburg
Arbeitsbereich Sozialpsychologie
Von-Melle-Park 5
D-20146 Hamburg
Germany
E-mail witte_e_h@uni-hamburg.de