

Carnegie Council Activity on Just Peace (75 minutes)

Overview

This 75-minute interactive classroom activity introduces students to just peace theory by exploring how conflicts can be resolved in ways that promote both peace and justice. Students begin by understanding the differences between just war and just peace. They then apply the concept of ethical realism in a simulation where three countries negotiate the terms of peace after a conflict. Through the negotiation process, students examine how competing national interests, obligations to human rights, reconstruction needs, and regional stability shape efforts to build longstanding peace after war, including the trade-offs those efforts require.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of engaging in this activity, students will:

- Articulate the theory of “just peace” and how to resolve a conflict justly.
- Understand the differences between the concepts of *jus in bello* and *jus post bellum*.
- Explore concepts of justice and peace after a conflict has ended.
- Apply the concept of ethical realism to explore terms for ending a conflict and building a sustainable structure for peace.

Carnegie Council principles that the activity addresses:

1. **The commitment to international cooperation** is a moral proposition because it goes to the essence of ethics—recognizing what is common for all, while managing the intrinsic and inevitable differences between and among people.
2. **The defense of democracy in the U.S. and globally** requires confronting autocrats who discriminate based on ethnicity, gender, and religion, and who deny basic freedoms to their citizens.
3. **The humanitarian imperative** is the duty to save lives and alleviate suffering through humane and equal treatment. As violence and cruelty abound in conflict zones around the world, mounting effective humanitarian responses remains the essential moral imperative of our time.

Pre-Activity Resources:

- [“Re-examining our Capacity for Just Peace,” *Ethics Empowered: Leadership in Practice*, December 11, 2025 \(Event Recording & Transcript\)](#)
- [Ethical Realism](#), Carnegie Council Key Terms page
- [Just War Theory](#), Carnegie Council Key Terms page
- [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: War](#)
- [Ethics Explainer: Just War Theory](#)
- [Just War Theory Explainer by the Ethics Centre](#)

Sequence of the Activity:

- 1) Begin with a small group activity that engages students with the concepts of peace and justice.
- 2) Continue with a simulation that places students in the role of negotiating the end of a war or armed conflict by drafting treaty terms and identifying the values behind them.
- 3) Students then negotiate with other groups to finalize a shared agreement.
- 4) At the end of the activity, students answer reflection questions on the process of negotiating a long-term sustainable structure for peace.

1. Small Group Activity (10-15 minutes)

Before the simulation, students work in small groups to ensure they understand the concepts of just peace and just war. Have them reflect on the following questions:

- What is the difference between just war and just peace?
- What makes both terms listed above “just?”
- What is an example of a peace agreement that might be peaceful but not fully just?
- How can countries that have ended a war pursue both peace and justice for everyone affected by the conflict?

2. Simulation (40-minutes)

For the simulation, students will negotiate a peace treaty among three countries after a war has ended. Upon giving them the scenario below, assign students to the roles and ask each group to represent their country’s interests while also considering what a just and sustainable peace would require.

Scenario:

Country B is a landlocked country facing severe water insecurity as droughts and rising temperatures deplete its rivers. Country A borders Country B and controls access to a major lake and the ocean. Due to water security issues, citizens of Country B crossed Country A's border attempting to take over the lake, causing both countries to go to war. During the war, Country A's military advanced into Country B and now occupies 10 percent of their land at the border. Country C, which borders both countries and has strong economic ties with each, began to experience trade disruptions and broader economic strain. Country C stepped in to mediate a peace treaty to end the war. Outcome is below:

- **Country A:** won the war and has significant resources. Many citizens from Country B migrated to Country A because of the war. Because of this, Country A must consider economic security, human rights obligations and the status of displaced peoples moving forward.
- **Country B:** lost the war and is at risk of losing territory. Its infrastructure (government, healthcare system, and educational system) is unstable. Because of this, Country B must consider sovereignty, reconstruction support, security, and protection for its population moving forward.
- **Country C:** was not involved in the war but mediated the conflict's end. Because of its strong economic ties to both countries, Country C has a vested interest in regional stability and wants a resolution that minimizes the risk of renewed conflict between Country A and Country B.

In these groups, provide students with the following questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) Understanding that ideals and power (ethical realism) are linked in real-world conflict resolutions, what terms or policies would you recommend to support long-term peace to the region?
- 2) What values are reflected in your proposed terms or policies?
- 3) What unintended consequences could result from your proposed terms or policies?
- 4) What moral questions should your group consider when decided with terms will have the best outcome to ensure just peace?

By the end of 20 minutes, each country needs to have a draft negotiation written (5-10 sentences). With the draft, the students then need to convene as a group and hammer out the terms of the negotiation together

Once the negotiation drafts are complete, gather the students together to present their proposed terms and negotiate a shared agreement. (20 minutes)

3. Post-Activity Reflection (20 minutes)

After the simulation and negotiation process is completed, ask students to reflect on the process using the following questions:

- 1) Does the agreement produce peace, justice, or both?
- 2) Which terms were difficult to agree on, and how did the group reach a reasonable conclusion?
- 3) How did you apply ethical realism to achieve the best outcome given the circumstances?

What have you learned about the process of making sure that ending wars have a sustainable path to promoting long-standing peace?

Post-Activity Reading

- ["Peace: What Is it Good For?"](#) Joel Rosenthal, Carnegie Council, September 19, 2012
- ["Reconciliation for Realists,"](#) Susan Dwyer, *Ethics & International Affairs*, March, 1999