**2)** *“There Is scarcely any peace so unjust, but it is preferable, upon the whole, to the justest war”- Desiderus Erasmus.*

This statement by Erasmus is an answer to an eternally perplexing and relevant problem, Erasmus himself clearly is of the opinion that a peace, no matter how unjust or horrible, is at all times more favourable to war, even, as he says himself, the most just. In this essay I am going to discuss the philosophical question: “Is peace preferable to war, no matter the circumstances?” and whether what Erasmus says is true or not.

The statement itself is quite interesting in its phrasing. Erasmus himself is of the belief that the peace he is referring to, and which I am unaware of, is so unjust that there rarely has been a more unjust peace, yet the any war, no matter how just, would somehow be less preferable. This in truth coincides quite well with Erasmus’ world view. He is seen as an integral part of early the Christian reformation, with large parts of his work condemning the corrupt and decadent catholic clergy. He was thusly a devout Christian and most likely being a strong believer in the word of Jesus Christ, and the message of peace, nonviolence and brotherhood found In the evangelical books. He even went as far as to when referring to the Turks (then the Ottoman Empire), he didn’t just condemn those calling for war against them, a sentiment popular in the 1500s, he even went as far as calling them Christians, something few modern historians and scholars would even dream to do, them clearly following the Islamic faith. This exemplifies his belief in peace and brotherhood, something clearly shown in the quote.

Is the statement true, is peace truly always preferable to war, no matter how just? On one hand one could come to the conclusion that this is in fact the case by looking at war as a concept. War, by definition, brings death and destruction. No matter the goal of a war, the means are mostly the same. Murder, destruction, fear, these are all tools generals, politicians and royalty use when waging war. No matter if it is the allies bombing the city of Dresden, a brave Napoleonic cavalry-charge or a primitive tribe clubbing the rival tribes warriors to death these are all examples of soldiers using killings and terror to achieve their goals. Assuming murder is unethical, as I’m sure most would agree on, this is clearly not the best way of achieving ones goals.

Besides, is not war itself a tyrannical concept? The people, most often young men, of nations at war is forced by leaders to sacrifice themselves for an implied, often obscure “greater good.” Peace benefits the people, and while a peace can be draconic and unjust itself, it rarely causes as much destruction as a war. Should we not then do what is best for the people, and not succumb to the tyrannical urge to wage war? One could argue that war in itself cannot be just and therefor a peace, no matter how unjust, is **always** better than war.

On the other hand one could easily argue that following Erasmus quote would in several cases be extremely immoral. As an example, imagine a nation in the process of a genocide. All the people of one ethnicity are rounded up, and systematically murdered. This is an example of one of the least just forms of peace. According to Erasmus a military intervention would be immoral in this case, meaning that other nations should wait and observe as the genocide is ongoing, leading to possibly millions of civilian, innocent lives lost. Most people would probably say that a war in this situation would be ethically justified, proving that in some cases unjust peace is sometimes less just than a war.

From this, one could discern that there is in fact a greater good, and as a result a greater evil. Even if a war is in itself unjust, shouldn’t one choose the lesser evil over the greater one? As a thought experiment, imagine a Fighter pilot roaming the skies, passing a passenger jet which has been hijacked, presumably by terrorists. By shooting down the jet, the pilot would be responsible for the murder of around 120 people. However, if the pilot does not shoot down the jet, the terrorists will crash the plane into a skyscraper, resulting in the death of 2000 human beings. Wouldn’t the fighter-pilot, by not shooting down the jet be responsible for the 2000 lives lost, by not preventing the terror-attack. Secondly, wouldn’t the lives of the 120 passengers of the jet go to waste by his inaction? It is probable that most human beings would be of the opinion that the pilot is, if not morally justified, morally **obligated** to shoot down the jet. Shouldn’t one look at war in the same way, choosing the lesser evil?

One could argue the case against Erasmus simply by Utilistic terms. Disregarding grey areas as “good,” “evil,” and “morality” one can look at the total pleasure every human receives and how much pain they receive by the war or peace. If several people are tortured and slaughtered by a mad dictator, and this could be prevented by few life losses, then shouldn’t you then choose the option that allows for the lesser amount of pain. In this case this would be war.

Another perhaps less popular argument is that of national pride and honour. One could argue that any Westphalian nation states has a right to be proud of itself and that its people are entitled to at least a miniscule feeling of nationalism. If your nation lost a part of your country to an aggressor ten years ago, are you not justified in taking this part, and as a result your people back into your country? Yes, perhaps several people would die, but is this not a sacrifice many people would be willing to make for the good of the nation, and its people. Death is horrible, but isn’t the virtues of honour and bravery meaningful?

In my opinion a just war is often better than a unjust peace. Choosing the lesser evil should always be justified and war can be this. In my opinion it is a great injustice, if not a moral “sin” to refrain to do something to prevent evil, even if it goes against your principles. I’d even go so far as to propose that even if the war failed to end the unjust peace, and ended up causing more harm it still is morally justified in most cases. However I still am of the opinion that war should be a last resort, and one should try to solve problems in a peaceful manner before resorting to violence. As for the argument from a nationalist standpoint I’m quite on the fence. On one hand I think an amount of patriotism, even nationalism is good, but on the other hand something as extreme as a war is rarely justified by nationalism alone.

To conclude, the subject of peace and war is a quite morally obscure area, and there are several arguments from both sides of the question “Is peace always preferable to war, no matter the circumstance.” On one hand one could argue that war in itself is a great evil, and is by definition unjust. War should therefor never be the option and peace is always preferable. On the other hand one could argue that war might be a necessary evil and that war is the righteous option if the peace causes more harm than good. Me myself is of the opinion that Erasmus is wrong in his statement, and that war actually sometimes is preferable to peace. One should also remember where Erasmus is coming from with the statement. He wrote it from a strong, fundamentalist Christian perspective, with no knowledge of the horrors a modern tyrant can inflict on his people, such as large-scale, industrialized genocide.