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THE BOMBING OF CITIES AND ECONOMIC SANCTIONS: A COMPARATIVE MORAL ANALYSIS USING THE CATHOLIC JUST WAR TRADITION

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Abstract. This essay analyzes two moral cases using the Church's just war teaching: the Allied bombing of German cities during World War II and modern-day economic sanctions imposed by certain governments on other countries. The first part of this paper discusses the arguments used by moral theologian John C. Ford, S.J., in his article "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," to condemn the Allied forces' policy of bombing civilian areas in Germany during World War II.[1] The second part of this article discusses how economic sanctions are used in international relations as a non-violent means to punish or correct the behavior or policies of certain governments. The third part of this paper attempts to apply Ford's moral critique of obliteration bombing analogously to the imposition of certain economic sanctions that affect civilian populations. This paper shows that imposing economic sanctions on basic goods and services that cause suffering to ordinary citizens of targeted countries is morally wrong and violates just war principles.

Keywords**:** economic sanctions; just war; proportionality; noncombatant immunity

1 John C. Ford, S.J., "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," *Theological Studies* 5 (September 1944): 261-309.

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I. "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing" by John C. Ford, S.J.

Fr. John Cuthbert Ford, S.J., was one of the leading moral theologians in the United States in the 1950s. Early in his career, he wrote the groundbreaking article "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing" in *Theological Studies* in 1944. This article is one of the best moral critiques of a particular strategy of waging war against Germany during World War II. The article's simple yet forceful application of moral reasoning to evaluate the ethics of obliteration bombing ran counter to the prevailing attitude of American and British military leaders to end the war at all costs. The timing of the article was also significant because World War II was still in progress, and any criticism of Allied military tactics could be interpreted as unpatriotic.

Ford defines obliteration bombing as the practice of bombing large areas of a city that often include both industrial and residential districts. This type of bombing was different from precision bombing, which targeted very definite, limited targets like bridges, airfields, munitions factories, etc. The purpose of obliteration bombing was to wipe out not only the industrial sections of a city but also the residences of the industrial workers in an effort to damage German war production capabilities. The homes of workers were bombed to increase worker absenteeism and disrupt industrial production.[2] Ford maintains that both British and American leaders shared moral responsibility for adopting and implementing the policy of obliteration bombing.[3]

The moral problem raised by obliteration bombing, according to Ford, is about the rights of noncombatants, particularly civilians, to their lives in wartime. Ford appeals to the natural law right to life of noncombatants. Ford raises the two moral questions: "Do the majority of civilians in a modern nation at war enjoy a natural law right to immunity from repression?" and "Does obliteration bombing

[2] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 264.

[3] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 261-2.

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necessarily involve a violation of the right of innocent civilians?"[4] In answering these two main questions, Ford attempts first to answer a more basic question: "Who are to be considered noncombatants in a war like the present one? (i.e., World War II)." This question is essential to apply the distinction between innocent and guilty and thus determine who can and cannot be targeted with military violence. Ford affirms the Catholic view that taking the life of an innocent person is always intrinsically wrong. The state of modern warfare in World War II has blurred distinctions between innocent and guilty, combatant and noncombatant, in the minds of military and national leaders. In modern economies, noncombatant citizens are seen as cooperating with the combatant citizens through their direct and indirect participation in the country's war production industry. They were considered guilty by association and became military targets of the enemy. While Ford acknowledges the difficulty of drawing the line between guilty and innocent in modern war, he still asserts that obliteration bombing goes beyond the line wherever it is drawn because this type of bombing makes no distinction between civilians and combatants. Ford says that it is defeatist to abandon making distinctions simply because they are hard to make.[5]

Using the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" as a starting point, Ford asserts that the burden of proof lies on those who wish to abandon distinctions and widen the number of targets to include civilians. It is not the burden of civilians to prove their innocence to avoid being bombed. Ford used in his article available military statistics, testimonies, and quotes from national and military leaders to present the clear intention of including civilian targets and the devastating effects of obliteration bombing on entire cities.

Ford firmly asserted that the majority of civilians in a modern nation at war enjoy a natural law right to immunity from military violence. The Church has long recognized this natural right in its just war tradition. In the 13th century, during the papacy of Gregory IX,

[4] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 271.

[5] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 273-81.

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canonists had made a list of eight classes of persons who should have complete security against the violence of war: clerics, monks, friars, other religious, pilgrims, travelers, merchants, and peasants cultivating the soil as well as their animals and goods. These are all persons, because of their social function, have nothing to do with war, and thus they should not have war made against them.[6] This attempt of the medieval Church to protect specific persons from the violence of war was called the Peace of War. It would eventually become the basis of the just war principle of non-combatant immunity enshrined in the Church's current just war teaching articulated in the pastoral letter on war and peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response (1983)." The US bishops asserted in their pastoral letter that "the intentional killing of innocent civilians or non-combatants is always wrong."[7] This recognition of the right of non-combatant immunity during war has also been adopted in international law through the Geneva Conventions.[8]

Ford also gave a counterargument against the Allied military forces' appeal to the principle of double effect as a moral justification for obliteration bombing. The principle of double effect is a traditional Catholic moral principle applied to situations in which one action produces both a good effect (beneficial) and an evil effect (harmful) simultaneously. The principle can only justify an action with both effects if four conditions are met: (1) The object of the act is not

[6] James T. Johnson, "Perspectives on the Birth of a Tradition: The Middle Ages," in *Just War Tradition and the Restrain of War: A Moral and Historical Inquiry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981) 127.

[7] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response," 1983, https://www.usccb.org/upload/challenge-peace-gods-promise-our-response-1983.pdf (Accessed December 21, 2025).

[8] American Red Cross, "Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols," April 2011, https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/ redcross/atg/PDF_s/International_Services/ International_Humanitarian_Law/IHL_SummaryGenevaConv.pdf (accessed December 23, 2025).

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intrinsically evil, (2) the good and evil effects happen simultaneously (i.e., not a result of a cause-and-effect relationship), (3) the good effect is intended while the evil effect is unintended, and (4) there is a gravely proportionate reason to tolerate the evil effect.[9]

Ford presented the Allied military's proposed application of the principle of double effect as follows: The destruction of war production was the intended good effect while the civilian casualties was the unintended evil effect; the destruction, deaths and suffering caused by obliteration bombing can be permitted because of weightier desired effects such as shortening the war, military necessity, and saving soldiers' lives; the solution to the moral problem was simply for the military planners to withhold their intentions of hurting civilians. In response, Ford clarified that the principle of double effect is not a mathematical formula but "a practical formula which synthesizes an immense amount of moral experience, and serves as an efficient guide in perplexing cases." It is open to abuse, however, and must therefore be applied carefully in challenging cases by an experienced moralist.[10]

Discussing the conditions necessary to apply the principle of double effect, Ford argued that the principle will not allow the use of obliteration bombing. Regarding the element of intention, for example, Ford cites in his article statistics and quotes from military and national leaders to prove that civilian casualties and destruction of civilian homes were directly intended in the case of obliteration bombing. The magnitude of destruction caused could not be considered incidental and unintentional. Ford cites the case of the use of precision bombing in Rome to preserve religious monuments and avoid adverse public reactions. In the case of Rome, the Allies had a clear intention to limit destruction. In the case of the Allied bombing of the German cities of Hamburg and Berlin, there was no intent to limit damage, hence the use of the term "obliteration bombing." The Allies directly intended

[9] James T. Bretzke, *Handbook of Roman Catholic Moral Terms* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013) 72 -73.

[10] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 289-90.

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to destroy non-military targets in Germany, which included civilian residential areas.

Regarding the condition of a proportionately grave reason that can justify obliteration bombing, Ford questions the belief that obliteration bombing can shorten the war and is thus a military necessity. Ford reveals that when Britain first adopted obliteration bombing as a war strategy, it was on an experimental basis, and it was not sure whether it would work. Ford cites the opinion of some military planners that such a bombing policy will only strengthen the bitterness and resistance of the German people against the Allies, as shown by the British during the German bombing of cities in the United Kingdom during the war. Instead of shortening the war, the policy of obliteration bombing may lengthen it by inciting resistance among the bombed German civilians. Ford concludes that the real and immediate evil effect caused by obliteration bombing (civilian deaths and destruction of cities) cannot be justified by a speculative and doubtful good effect (shortening of the war). There is no proportionate reason to warrant the use of the principle of double effect to justify obliteration bombing.[11]

Ford also points out that even if obliteration bombing shortens the war, its continued use in this war will legitimize its use in future wars, even by the enemies of the allies. If obliteration bombing is recognized as a legitimate means of war, this will lead to the recognition of a total war policy, where distinctions between combatant and noncombatant will be erased. In the long run, therefore, the continued use of obliteration bombing can lead to worse atrocities in the future, with the development of more destructive weapons and technology.[12]

Ford concludes his article by stating, "obliteration bombing is an immoral attack on the rights of the innocent." Obliteration bombing is also immoral "because no proportionate reason can justify the evil done; and to make it legitimate would soon lead the world to the immoral barbarity of total war."

[11] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 298-301.

[12] Ford, "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," 303-5.

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In summary, Ford's condemnation of the policy of obliteration bombing rests on the following reasons: a) the policy violates the natural law rights of noncombatants which exempts them from direct intentional attacks, b) the policy does not fulfill the conditions for an application of the principle of double effect, c) the policy will legitimate worse atrocities against civilians in the future.

II. Economic Sanctions

Societies in conflict have imposed economic sanctions for centuries. The oldest form of economic sanction used in war is the siege. In a siege, an enemy force restricts a community's economy by creating shortages of necessities such as food, water, and fuel. The first to suffer are the most vulnerable members of the community, namely the elderly, the children, the sick, and the injured. It is hoped that the civilian suffering caused by the siege would force the leaders of the community to surrender to the enemy forces. The suffering of noncombatants is directly intended and even desired so that the political or military goal of the siege may be achieved.[13] Modern-day examples of sieges that cause the deaths of thousands of civilians in targeted cities are the sieges of Leningrad (1941-1944) and Sarajevo (1992 – 1996).

Present-day economic sanctions, used as tools of coercion against countries, can be likened to sieges. Economic sanctions can be defined as:

> The use of economic capacity by one international actor, be it a state or international organization, or by a group of such actors, against another international actor or group of actors, with the intention of (a) punishing the latter for a breach of a certain rule or (b) preventing it from infringing a rule which the party applying the sanctions deems important.[14]

[13] Joy Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy: The Ethics of Economic Sanctions," *Ethics and International Affairs* 13 (1999): 123-142.

[14] Makio Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 7.

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Economic sanctions are applied not for economic benefit but to attain a political goal by forcing the targeted party to alter its behavior or policy.

All economic sanctions involved attempts to cripple or harm a state's economy. There are different methods of applying economic sanctions, such as (a) restrictions on the flow of goods, (b) restrictions on the flow of services, (c) restrictions on the flow of money, and (d) control of markets themselves to reduce or nullify a targeted state's chances of accessing them.[15]

Restrictions on the flow of goods can lead to export and import embargoes. Export embargoes prevent a targeted state from importing materials and supplies that it needs for industrial production, military build-up, or feeding its population. An example of an export embargo is the grain embargo imposed by the United States on the Soviet Union in 1980, in response to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.[16] Import embargoes prevent the targeted state from selling its goods, thus reducing its foreign exchange earnings and reducing its ability to import necessary supplies. An example of an import embargo is the total trade embargo that the United States imposed on Cuba in the 1960s and continues to the present. In the context of sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, the European Union has imposed an import ban on Russian oil as a non-military response to weaken Russia's wartime economy.

Restricting the flow of services involves cutting off transportation and communication links between the imposing state and the targeted state. For example, most NATO countries suspended commercial flights to and from the Soviet Union after the Russians downed a Korean airliner in 1983. Restrictions on the flow of money include suspending loans, freezing assets, delaying financial aid, and other monetary measures that can reduce a targeted state's ability to purchase goods.[17] For example, the European Union has frozen the assets of

[15] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?* ,16.

[16] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?* ,17-18.

[17] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?* , 20-22.

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Russia within the EU borders to prevent Russia from using these assets to fund its invasion of Ukraine.

Even if limited economic sanctions are used on a state, their effects can be severe on the population if a crucial good is involved, such as oil, grains, medicine, or capital. Some may argue that economic sanctions can be a peaceful option to military action against a state. Unlike military weapons that can kill combatants instantly, economic sanctions are a non-violent means of dealing with specific states. However, certain economic sanctions can be very destructive to a country's economy and can cause grave suffering to civilian populations. If the economic sanction is total, it can function as a "weapon of mass destruction" with genocidal effects.[18]

One example of sanctions that gravely affected a civilian population is the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations in 1990, immediately after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions included a ban on all trade with Iraq, including food trade. This fact is significant when one considers that Iraq imported approximately 70% of its food before the war.[19] The sanctions continued to be imposed on Iraq even after the end of the Gulf War in 1991. A UNICEF-recognized report by the Iraqi Ministry of Health reveals that a total of 878,856 children have died between 1990 and August 1997 due to sanctions, 338,149 of whom are children below five years of age.[20] A UNICEF survey in 1998 showed that 58% of children below five suffered from malnutrition.[21] Despite some adjustments to the sanctions that allow some medicine and food to enter Iraq, delays and inadequate supplies have led to severe deprivation of health care and nutrition for the majority of Iraqi citizens. The inability of Iraq to

[18] Geoff Simons, *Imposing Economic Sanctions: Legal Remedy or Genocidal Tool?* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 7.

[19] Thomas G. Weiss et al, ed., *Political Gain and Civilian Pain* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), pp. 100 -1.

[20] Simons, *Imposing Economic Sanctions*, 177.

[21] Simons, *Imposing Economic Sanctions*, 176.

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repair its damaged water and sanitation facilities due to the effect of sanctions has led to contaminated water and outbreaks of infectious diseases. The lack of even basic medical supplies has caused these diseases to result in many deaths.[22] The bishops of the United States and John Paul II called for an end to or at least a radical reduction of economic sanctions imposed on Iraq, which have caused so much suffering to ordinary Iraqi citizens.[23]

The Church does not object to all forms of economic sanctions. It is recognized as a valuable tool in international relations for correcting the behavior of certain governments. Some sanctions have limited effect on civilian populations, such as a ban on the sale of ammunition and military equipment to a targeted government or an import ban on luxury goods targeting the country's elite. However, church leaders also recognize that certain economic sanctions, when used indiscriminately, can cause grave suffering to the poor and vulnerable of a targeted country. Economic sanctions must be prudently applied to minimize unnecessary suffering. Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, stated that "some economic sanctions end up penalizing entire populations, including children, the elderly, and the sick (#51)." The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church states the following:

> *Sanctions, in the forms prescribed by the contemporary international order, seek to correct the behavior of the government of a country that violates the rules of peaceful and ordered international coexistence or that practices serious forms of oppression with regard to its population.* The purpose of these sanctions must be clearly defined and the measures adopted must from time to time be objectively evaluated by the competent bodies of the international community as to their effectiveness and their real impact on the civilian population. *The true objective of such measures is open to the way to negotiation and dialogue. Sanctions must never be used as a means for the direct punishment of an entire population*: it is not licit that entire populations, and above all their most vulnerable members, be made to suffer because of such

[22] Simons, *Imposing Economic Sanctions*, 121-2.

[23] US Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB), "Statement on Economic Sanctions Against Iraq," November 15, 1999, https://www.usccb.org/resources/statement-economic-sanctions-against-iraq-november-15-1999 (Accessed December 21, 2025).

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> sanctions. *Economic sanctions in particular are an instrument to be used with great discernment and must be subjected to strict legal and ethical criteria.*[1066] An *economic embargo* must be of limited duration and cannot be justified when the resulting effects are indiscriminate. (#507)[24]

III. Comparing Obliteration Bombing and Economic Sanctions

A comparison between economic sanctions and obliteration bombing using John Ford's process of argumentation can help critique the morality of certain gravely harmful economic sanctions. In the case of obliteration bombing, Ford had tried to establish that the majority of the population of a nation enjoys natural law immunity from repression because they are noncombatants. Ford emphasizes the need for drawing distinctions between combatants and noncombatants. The problem with the practice of obliteration bombing is that it ignores this distinction and kills indiscriminately.

In the same way, economic sanctions on basic goods and services, when imposed on a nation, affect every member of the nation's population. In fact, economic sanctions tend to affect the weakest and most vulnerable in society adversely. For example, a grain embargo will undoubtedly affect all citizens who depend on grain for sustenance. Still, it would be the poor who would feel the deprivation first, because the rich would have the extra financial means to buy and stockpile the precious commodity when it becomes expensive and scarce. In the same way, an import embargo on a nation's cash crop, such as sugar, would hurt sugar field workers first, as their wages and livelihoods would be immediately affected by a drop in sugar sales. In contrast, sugar traders and landowners have the means to shift to more profitable businesses.

In one sense, economic sanctions are a lesser evil than obliteration bombing. With economic sanctions, some members of the population

[24] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Documents, 2005, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/ justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html (accessed December 23, 2025).

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may have a better chance of survival than others, while obliteration bombing kills indiscriminately. In another sense, certain economic sanctions are similar to obliteration bombing because they purposely intend to make the civilian population suffer. There is a clear intent to impose burdens on a civilian population, even if the sanctions' primary target is the policies of government leaders. The wartime distinction between combatant and noncombatant is analogously ignored in the imposition of economic sanctions. While most sanctions are meant to coerce a nation's government toward certain political decisions or behavior, the entire nation's population feels the sanctions' effects. The effects of economic sanctions that target basic goods or services disregard the distinction between the guilty and the innocent.

Ford responds to the argument for military necessity as a proportionate reason for obliteration bombing by showing that there is no proportionate reason, given the uncertainty of success in such bombing in shortening the war and saving soldiers' lives. The possibility of shortening the war through obliteration bombing was at most speculative, while the death and destruction caused by the bombing was real and immediate. This imbalance between an uncertain good and an immediate evil showed a lack of proportionate reason. In the same way, broadly applied economic sanctions against a nation cannot be justified by a proportionate reason, given many factors that can limit their effectiveness despite the immediate suffering they can cause a nation's population.

For example, a sanctioned nation can be aided by trade with countries not subject to the sanctions. This shift in trading partners can help mitigate the effects of sanctions imposed by the sanctioning nation. A sanctioned state may actually present a commercial opportunity for other countries willing to exploit it. The fewer countries that are willing to trade with a nation, the greater the commercial possibilities for a government willing to trade with the sanctioned nation. For example, when the U.S. sought to persuade its allies to impose a grain embargo on Russia, Canada and Argentina declined to participate and continued to trade grain. They argued that the situation in Afghanistan was not severe enough to justify collective economic sanctions. These two

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countries may also have wanted to take advantage of the commercial benefits of the situation or at least safeguard present and future trade relations with Russia.[25] Similarly, the economic sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine are countered by the willingness of China and India to maintain strong trade relations with Russia.

A sanctioned nation can restructure its economy to survive the sanctions imposed on it. A targeted nation may begin stockpiling necessary goods, shift trading partners, increase domestic production, and increase self-sufficiency by reallocating resources from export industries to import-substitution industries. Once the sanctioned nation can economically adjust to the sanctions, continued or new sanctions would have minimal effect on the economy. If sanctions do not produce immediate results, their effectiveness diminishes over time, and their chances of success become less likely.[26] For example, Cuba and North Korea have managed to survive despite the numerous sanctions imposed on these countries.

Many economists and historians hold that sanctions have generally been politically ineffectual. The first large-scale study of the effectiveness of economic sanctions in the twentieth century, published in 1985, found that sanctions succeeded in only one-third of the cases in which they were imposed. Thus, while there is little likelihood that economic sanctions will achieve their intended goals, there is a high probability that they will harm the most vulnerable members of a sanctioned nation's population.[27] A more recent study on the effectiveness of economic sanctions, published in 2024, found that sanctions were successful only 26% of the time in influencing policy change in governments.

The comparison between the uncertain success of economic sanctions and the inevitable suffering of civilian populations reveals

[25] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?*, 61-2.

[26] Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?*, 86-7.

[27] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 135.

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a lack of proportionate reason for the use of economic sanctions. Just as obliteration bombing cannot justify military necessity as a proportionate reason because of the imbalance between uncertain success and inevitable suffering, economic sanctions cannot appeal to a proportionate reason due to the many possibilities of failure and the uneven results of sanctions, as shown by historical data.

In the case of obliteration bombing, an argument was made that bombing can be allowed by the principle of double effect if the death of civilians is not intended directly by the bombers. Ford rejects this argument in view of the fact that the very nature and purpose of obliteration bombing presume a direct intention to target civilians. In the case of economic sanctions, an argument can be made that the sanctions were not directed at civilians but at the sanctioned nation's leaders. The countries imposing the sanctions are not causing the harm; rather, it is the targeted nation's leaders who have not complied with the imposing nation's demands.[28] This argument seeks to absolve the imposing nation of moral responsibility for the suffering inflicted on the targeted nation. This argument ignores the fact that those who suffer most under economic sanctions are not the political elites but the weakest members of society. Those most affected are those who have no choice in the matter, and while the imposing nations have a choice in what kind or degree of sanctions they can impose, which can either limit or maximize the suffering of the population. To choose to embargo food does not mean merely targeting political leaders, but targeting all those who need food. An oil embargo does not mean simply a strike against a political leader; it means an attack on all aspects of life that require oil as fuel. By nature, certain economic sanctions target an entire nation's population. It would be intellectually dishonest for the imposing nation to claim to intend only a limited target within the targeted nation (e.g., a political leader or party) when the sanctions are designed to affect the entire nation. If the sanctions are designed to cause indiscriminate suffering, then the evil effects of the sanctions are directly intended, and therefore, the principle of double effect is not applicable.

[28] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 132.

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In the case of obliteration bombing, Ford anticipated the dangers of worse atrocities against noncombatants if the policy of obliteration bombing went unchallenged. Similarly, the continued use of economic sanctions as a tool of coercion in achieving political goals could lead to abuse. Sanctions are specifically designed to be used by more economically developed nations against nations with weak or dependent economies. The effectiveness of sanctions depends on the extent to which a targeted nation's economy depends on imports.[29] There is a danger that sanctions will be used opportunistically by powerful nations.[30]

The ease with which larger nations can impose sanctions at minimal cost to themselves can lead to the danger of using economic sanctions for non-political reasons, such as making a symbolic statement or as punishment. In the case of using sanctions to "send a message," an ethical problem arises, as the mode of communication entails the suffering of the most vulnerable citizens of the targeted nation. Human beings are reduced to means to an end, and human suffering is turned into a device of communication. The inherent dignity and value of persons are violated. This use of sanctions cannot be morally justified because of its utilitarian attitude to persons.[31]

When economic sanctions are used as punishment, there is a danger of equating political and economic strength with moral authority. When sanctions are used as punishment, the sanctioned nation is branded by the imposing nation as a "bad" nation.[32] This label falls not only on the targeted nation's political leaders but also on its citizens living within and outside the nation. Sanctions as punishment can cause not only economic suffering, but they can also encourage an attitude of suspicion, acts of discrimination, and even violent attacks on ordinary citizens of the targeted nation whenever they interact

[29] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 135-6.

[30] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 137.

[31] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 138-9.

[32] Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy," 139.

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with other nationalities. Even if the punishment stems from political or military action or policy primarily involving the targeted nation's leaders, every citizen feels its effects. If the suffering of the citizenry is the intended effect so that a punished government would feel pressure to step down or change policies, then, in that case, the same ethical problem of the utilitarian use of persons becomes present. The suffering of the innocent is used as a tool to punish the guilty. This objectification of persons cannot be morally justified.

In summary, the same moral reasoning that led John Ford to condemn obliteration bombing as immoral can be applied to the condemnation of certain economic sanctions that gravely affect general populations. Similar to obliteration bombing, economic sanctions on basic goods and services: a) are by designed to cause direct suffering to a majority of citizens, without any distinctions between innocent and guilty, b) are used with the direct intention of causing large scale human suffering, c) cause immediate suffering while uncertain of success due to various factors, and therefore the principle of double effect cannot be applied due to a lack of a proportionate reason, d) are open to abuse and can lead to worse applications in the future. Though non-violent compared to obliteration bombing, certain economic sanctions can be considered weapons of mass destruction against weak economies and are also instruments of repression against the innocent. The imposition of broad economic sanctions on basic goods and services needed by a civilian population deserves serious critique not only from the Church but also from political leaders and citizens worldwide.



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