

Economic Terrorism from the Perspective of International Law

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph beginning with “One of the characteristics of contemporary history is the emergence of the United States as a country highly inclined to impose sanctions,” the author makes a broad historical claim without providing comparative evidence. The discussion would be strengthened by including empirical data regarding the frequency of U.S. sanctions compared to those imposed by other major powers, thereby avoiding the appearance of a normative or politically driven assertion.

The paragraph discussing the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and the reimposition of sanctions should provide a more detailed legal explanation of the relationship between Resolution 2231 and the subsequent sanctions regime. The article currently assumes that the legal consequences of withdrawal are self-evident, whereas readers would benefit from a more rigorous analysis of the continuing obligations, if any, arising from international agreements and Security Council resolutions.

In the paragraph claiming that sanctions are “a deadly weapon replacing war,” the author employs highly persuasive language without sufficiently defining the criteria by which sanctions are compared to armed conflict. A more rigorous analytical framework is needed to compare humanitarian consequences, scale of harm, duration, and intent between sanctions and military operations.

The definition of economic terrorism provided in Section 5.1 constitutes the conceptual core of the article. However, the manuscript does not explain whether this definition reflects an existing legal category, a scholarly proposal, or the author’s own theoretical construct. This distinction is essential because the article later relies on the definition as though it already enjoys established legal status.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The statement that “American fundamentalism is far more dangerous than ISIS or any other terrorist group” represents a highly normative and provocative conclusion. Such language is not consistent with the analytical tone generally expected in legal scholarship. If retained, it requires substantial theoretical justification, empirical evidence, and engagement with competing viewpoints; otherwise, it should be reformulated in a more objective and academically defensible manner.

In the paragraph asserting that sanctions may constitute crimes against humanity, the manuscript moves rapidly from human rights concerns to international criminal responsibility. The author should more carefully explain the doctrinal threshold separating internationally wrongful acts from international crimes and specifically address the elements required under Article 7 of the Rome Statute before drawing conclusions about crimes against humanity.

The section “The Conceptual Diversity of Terrorism” correctly highlights the absence of a universally accepted definition of terrorism. However, the discussion remains largely descriptive. The manuscript would benefit from a more systematic comparison of the major definitional approaches in international law, including sectoral conventions, Security Council resolutions, and scholarly approaches to terrorism.

The paragraph citing more than one hundred definitions of terrorism is useful, but the manuscript does not explain how it intends to operationalize the concept for purposes of the present study. Since the article’s central argument depends on classifying economic sanctions as a form of terrorism, the author should explicitly identify which definitional framework is being adopted and why it is preferable to competing alternatives.

The discussion of fundamentalism and extremism, particularly the sentence “When fundamentalism is accompanied by violence, it can constitute a terrorist act,” appears somewhat disconnected from the article’s primary focus on sanctions. The author should clarify how this theoretical discussion contributes to the later argument regarding economic coercion, or alternatively condense this section to improve conceptual coherence.

In the section “The Diversity of Terrorism Based on Terrorist Instruments,” the author argues that economic sanctions can function as a modern instrument of terrorism. This is a significant theoretical move, but it requires a more explicit explanation of the relationship between violence and coercion. Specifically, the manuscript should address whether physical violence is a necessary component of terrorism or whether psychological and structural harm alone can satisfy the definition.

The paragraph stating that “this feeling of fear and terror may arise from anything, including economic sanctions” extends the concept of terrorism considerably. The author should engage with potential criticisms that such an expansive interpretation risks diluting the legal meaning of terrorism and may render the concept overly broad for analytical purposes.

The discussion asserting that economic pressure occupies a “legal gray zone” would benefit from more precise legal analysis. The article should identify the specific rules of international law allegedly violated by unilateral sanctions and distinguish between actions that are clearly unlawful and those whose legality remains contested among scholars and states.

The section entitled “Sanctions: Punishment of States or Nations?” raises an important question but does not adequately engage with the extensive literature on targeted sanctions, smart sanctions, and humanitarian exemptions. Incorporating this literature would provide a more balanced evaluation of the different forms sanctions may take and their varying impacts on civilian populations.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.