Pacem in Terris: War and other Obstacles to Peace

Sixty years have now passed since the publication of Pope John XXIII's encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). The famous line, "In this age which boasts of its atomic power, it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice" is perhaps the most widely quoted passage from *Pacem in Terris*.

Written in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962), war is today no less an urgent moral problem than when *Pacem in Terris* appeared in April 1963. Despite some notable advances, most notably the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the somber reality of war remains very much with us. In the last sixty years numerous wars have been fought, including the Ukrainian conflict that still rages in the heart of Europe. Nuclear weapons, once deployed over Japan, have since been silent, but their production, stockpiling, and modernization continues at a fast pace. Research in artificial intelligence has enabled the development of new automated weapon systems, while digital technologies are increasingly being used as weapons in cyberconflict. Potent forms of digital disinformation are on the rise, and hybrid warfare – mixing military, cyber, and economic measures – has intensified the dismal cloud of insecurity that looms large over the world.

Against this backdrop, ethical reflection on contemporary technologies of warfare – the restrictions that should be placed on them, the prohibitions that are in order, and the safeguards that should be established to ensure the protection of humankind – is an imperative of our age. *Pacem in Terris* provides a valuable roadmap for addressing these issues. The conference will accordingly focus on those sections of the encyclical §§ 109-116, 126-129 that deal with armed conflict and

associated problems, e.g., disinformation campaigns (§90). Experts have been invited who can address recent technological developments in armed conflict and provide an ethical assessment of the prospects for achieving a stable peace in this fast-changing context.

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