



US Economic Sanctions: A Controversial Foreign Policy Tool in International Politics



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Abstract

In this current century, the use of economic sanctions by the superpowers, particularly the US, has become regular and aggressive. The US imposes sanctions and economic embargoes on states and groups who do not follow US-designed standards regarding manufacturing weapons, nuclear technology and resolving international disputes. However, it has failed most of the time to alter behaviour of the sanctioned countries. Sanctions programs of Syria, Pakistan, Iran and North Korea are a few of the many examples which prove the failure of American sanctions. This qualitative research article examines the politics of the US behind its sanctions policy along with negative impacts on targeted countries. It also analyses Donald Trump's aggressive sanctions policy, which is said as record-breaking in American history of economic sanctions. The whole analysis explains targeted sanctions policy is controversial and ineffective. These sanctions kill civilians and restrict them from basic necessities like food, medicines, and employment. Additionally, in a globalized world, states do not get much affected by sanctions. If one market closes its door on a state, it starts looking for other trade partners.

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Introduction

The imposition of economic sanctions is a well-known and widely accepted method by states and international organizations which allows one state to influence the policies of another state. It has gained popularity since the end of the Cold War. This tool is used to avoid military conflicts and, at the same time, forces enemy states to behave in a certain way. The origin of economic sanctions can be seen since historical times when states used them to achieve their objectives. [_\(Kaempfer & Lowenberg, 2007\)](#) This mean is used by

early modern Europe for several reasons, but its very nature was linked with the military decision. Athens also imposed military sanctions in reaction to the Megrian embargo on Greek cities in 432 B.C. The historical perspective of the sanctions was the same as it is today. Economic power was seen as an important strength of a state. During wartimes, the enemy used to try to deteriorate it through blockades and other restrictions to weaken the state's position in the battleground. Moreover, it was also used to give hints or

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warnings to a state to avoid certain behaviour or policy. When Europe was fighting wars on religious ideologies, embargoes and economic sanctions were used several times to force minority Christian groups to stick to the treaty commitments. At the end of the nineteenth century, Europe used it during wartime to pressurize enemies. The use of blockades became common when countries began making sea routes and developed their naval power. Naval ships of enemy states were attacked and smashed. The situation remained the same for later years.

Economic sanctions were only adopted during wars, but in the 1920s, things started changing. When the League of Nations was created, it restricted its use. Now this means was only allowed to use if the state had committed some violent action. League of Nations tried to solve several international clashes through sanctions, but it did not stop powerful states from aggression. It imposed sanctions on Italy in 1935 to stop it from invading Abyssinia, but this was limited to only blocking few transactions, stock of weapons. Likewise, the League of Nations could not stop Japan from occupying Manchuria in 1931. Lack of unity among the members and reluctance of the United States to participate in the organization's decisions made the League of Nations unsuccessful.

(Alexander, 2009) Similarly, during World Wars, the United States and Great Britain used economic blockades many times against their enemies. With the growth of international trade and investments, enforcement of sanctions became easier and very frequent. It continued after the end of World War II. The United States afterwards modified its sanction policy and used it against communist countries. With the turnover of the new century, United States enforced a

whole new round of sanctions in reaction to the September 11, 2001 attacks. It imposed financial restrictions on several terrorist organizations and countries that were believed to be supporting them. With the passage of time, the use of sanctions by the United States became very frequent and victimized states or targeted states bear negative impacts on their economies for years. It became difficult to assess the effectiveness of these sanctions because, most of the time, the United States failed in accomplishing its goals.

This qualitative research paper is an attempt to analyze the United States' economic sanctions as a most used foreign policy tool yet a failed one. It first discusses the theory and practice of sanctions along with their weaknesses and limited scope. It also argues its impacts on targeted states. Furthermore, the paper explains the politics of the US behind economic sanctions and how it started the practice of unilateral sanctions. It also mentions examples of Syria, Pakistan, North Korea and Iran to explicate the United States' controversial use of its aggressive policy. Finally, the article analyses the imposition of sanctions during Donald Trump's regime, which is seen as record-breaking in US sanctions history. US sanctions became frequent than ever. For Trump, these were the only solution to deal with foreign challenges. Literature is taken mostly from recent research, online articles written by international authors and analysts. It also includes American newspapers commentaries along with BBC and Al-Jazeera reports.

Economic Sanctions: Theory and Practice (Why Sanctions Fail?)

When United Nations was established after the failure of the League of Nations, the use of economic sanctions received legitimate status. It was included in the

UN Charter, and since then, it has become a part of international politics. It is taken as diplomacy endeavours by states, international and regional organizations and financial institutions to maintain law and order and peace. [_\(United Nations Security Council\)](#) In chapter VII of the UN Charter, article 41 explains the Security Council will impose economic sanctions in matters of international peace and security. Those sanctions will be exercised after the mutual agreement of its member states. That article prohibits the use of the military. Military action will be taken when the problem would not be solved with the sanctions mentioned in article 42. UN Charter legalized the sanction system to create a peaceful environment and force states to solve disputes through means of mediation and talks. But this is just a theoretical picture of economic sanctions drawn by the United Nations. [_\(Doxey, 1983\)](#) In practice, this idea is never implemented in its original form. The concept of collective security is unreal. In fact, economic blockades disclosed foreign policy objectives of five big powers of the Security Council. League of Nations had defects, but United Nations is the modified form of the League of Nations; still, it remained incapable of uniting the member states on the ideologies of violations of laws. And that veto power is the most arguable aspect of the organization. Five permanent members have an individual right to nullify any decision taken by the General Assembly or by permanent or non-permanent members of the Security Council, which exclude them from any kind of sanctions' obligations and even they can protect their close allies from this.

In theory, UN Charter only allows authorized impositions of sanctions, but in practice, international politics is full of unauthorized actions taken by strong member states. Also, practical examples

explain economic sanctions will not always bring desired outcomes or restore peace or solve problems. [Hakimdavar \(2013\)](#) says that in the ongoing century, a new kind of method of economic sanctions has been introduced, called 'targeted sanctions'. It includes enforcing sanctions on governments and related institutions rather than the whole of the population of states. For instance, sanctions on Iraq and Iran in the early 2000s because they were accused of manufacturing weapons of mass destruction. [_\(Redcliffe, 2021\)](#) United Nations enforced resolutions 1803 to keep an eye on Iranian banks and put restrictions on its international exchange of goods. Targeted sanctions intended to freeze money, travelling, assets and bank accounts of the ruling class of a country. However, it threatens international peace. UN sanctions on Iran damaged all segments of its society. [_\(Hakimdavar, 2013, pp. 2-5\)](#) Targeted sanctions seem like a strong foreign policy tool in which one can expect that the angry population will revolt against their own leaders, but this cannot happen every time. These sanctions create social division, restrict innocent civilians from basic necessities like food, medicine, jobs. Also, a large part of the population is silenced by their own government. Due to this power politics and the interests of the big five, the UN is unable to work effectively and implement principles of its own Charter.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, United States became the sole superpower. It got the freedom to enforce its own foreign policy standards and protect its national interests. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in 2008 warned about sanctions not only to just one state but many states. The humanitarian impact of the sanctions is severe than ever. It has increased the infant mortality rate, low literacy and the decreased GDP of the states.

After examining a lot of examples, debates started in the international community and academia about the effectiveness of sanctions. The United States is the only country in the world that uses sanctions more than anyone. It kept sanctions on Cambodia for 17 years 1975-1992, strict economic restrictions on Cuba for more than 40 years, 7 years on Iraq 1990-2002. Japan endured sanctions for 24 days in 1985, Israel in 1992 for 68 days and Liberia in 1988 for 81 days (Hatipoglu, 2014). Furthermore, Treasury's official website has a list of countries that have been sanctioned by the United States as of 2020-2021 includes Cuba, Somalia, South Sudan, Libya, Iran, Republic of Congo, Russia, Ukraine, Iraq, North Korea, Zimbabwe, Lebanon, Burundi, Yemen, Mali, former Yugoslavia, Belarus, Syria, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Balkans, Hong Kong, Central African Republic, China and Sudan (US Department of the Treasury, n.d.).

Obama administration was full of sanctions orders, for instance, sanctions on Africa, Russia and North Korea. Now American allies are feeling the US has used its favourite tool so much that it reduces its effectiveness. A question was asked from Italian lawmaker Deborah Bergamini about the success of economic sanctions in the Rome forum 2016. She said the use of economic sanctions is a complete failure. Italy has lost 1.25 billion euro on export goods since 2014 due to UN and US economic sanctions. US State Dept. chief sanction policy coordinator countered her argument and said sanctions are useful. It has reduced war and military conflicts (Francis & Jakes, 2016). The US still believe in its sanctions though it has been failed many times. Examples of Iraq, Iran, Zimbabwe and North Korea are evident proves that sanctions do not always work. Sanctions also encourage black markets. Sanctioned

individuals or entities that are unable to reach their basic necessities legally move towards black markets. In the context of Saddam Hussein, he relied on Sunni groups for smuggling oil and other goods. They brought these things to him. Tyranny flourishes during economic repressions. And it cannot be said that sanctions removed Saddam Hussein. US physical military attacks removed him. Similarly, the US sanctioned Cuba to force its president to resign, but the country is still ruled by the Castro government. And even in North Korea and Iran cases, the US has been unable to achieve its objectives (Ouverson, 2018). (Cashen, 2017) Despite their importance, sanctions are limited in scope. Several empirical studies show during the period of 1915-2006; sanctions proved to be successful very few times. Furthermore, it has been argued targeted states, instead of getting threatened by sanctions or consider changing their policies, like to shift their focus. For instance, close allies of America, Great Britain and Japan became trade partners with Cuba after it enforced sanctions on Cuba during the Cold War era. Targeted states look for new trade partners, and the third party changes their commercial links. It can create a hindrance in the effectiveness of sanctions (Early, 2012). In the globalized world, states do not get much affected by sanctions. If one market closes its door on a state, it starts looking for other trade partners. A lecturer in Russian and East Asian Political Economy at Oxford University says that the reason behind the failure of this method is because the US and EU support it, but China, India, and South Korea does not favour sanction policy (Cashen, 2017).

It is true in few examples; sanctions were successful such as, after 30 years of facing different economic restrictions, the UN relaxes its sanctions on Iran in

January 2016 and compels Iran to limit its uranium enrichment. Similarly, in the 1990s, sanctions convinced Libyan leader Ghaddafi to hand over those suspects who were involved in terrorist activities and also declaring that Libya will no more support the manufacturing of weapons of mass destruction. However, in most cases, sanctions fail; the question is why? Sanctions are controversial foreign policy tools used by US policymakers that offer more power than diplomatic dialogues without military interventions. Sanctions cannot be called a total failure, but they can be fruitful if imposed multilaterally and with broader diplomatic endeavours (O'Toole, 2019).

The Politics of United States

Sanctions

At the end of World War II, the United States, along with other states, established a new economic order by determining principles and standards of international trade and liberalizing the economy. They established international financial institutions such as IMF, World Bank, WTO. This new international economic system allowed the US to increase its political influence across the Atlantic and other nearby areas. Together with its allies, it set rules and norms of global trade and economy. The US intended to counter growing regionalization and interdependence among states. It now felt responsible as the only superpower to spread western democratic principles and capitalism by funding those financial institutions. It started imposing sanctions and economic embargoes on those states and groups who were unwilling to follow the US designed standards regarding manufacturing weapons, nuclear technology and resolving international disputes (Alexander, 2009, pp. 51-53). The United States also used sanctions to win the Cold War. Congress adopted legislation to

increase the power of the president in order to impose trade sanctions on the capitalist's rivals. Washington persuaded Western Europe to block their imports to the communist's countries. China, Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea and Cambodia faced multiple embargoes. In the 1950s, Chinese products were scrutinized by the US. International Emergency Economic Power Act 1977 was introduced under the administration of Jimmy Carter, which permitted the president of the country to regulate the economy in emergency situations or if the United States is expected to face any danger. This Act allowed presidents to enforce sanctions whenever they feel like to. This authority still exists (Coates, 2020).

The United States started the practice of using sanctions unilaterally to pursue strategic goals. It enforced sanctions with or without the support of its allies and the United Nations. In 1979, after the Iran revolution, the new Iranian government held 52 American hostages. President Jimmy Carter blocked Iranian imports and assets in the United States. (Alexander, 2009, pp. 23-28) During the Iraq-Kuwait War, the US enforced sanctions on both countries. United Nations imitated it and adopted Resolution 661 in August 1990 with all member states to block Iraqi and Kuwait assets, followed by trade restrictions from European states. Debates were started about the impact and efficiency of economic sanctions when people start analyzing the economic and humanitarian costs faced by the civilians. UN learned a lesson that it needs to change its strategy towards targeted sanctions. Later on, in the 1990s, Security Council adopted this policy and imposed travel and financial restrictions on specific groups and government officials. The US stayed an active member in this regard. (Hanania,

2020) The most difficult and destructive sanctions program of the US is imposing sanctions on governments who pose a threat to America and who are involved in human rights violations. Cuba has endured the longest American embargo in modern history. Cuban products are completely banned in America, and Cubans are not allowed to do business with Americans. Problem gets severe when it is not only America who enforces blockades, but its allies follow its footsteps and support it in its every decision. This legalizes American sanctions. In the case of the United Nations, the organization needs SC members' approval to enforce sanctions which is a tough process. It cannot be successful every time because of the veto power of five permanent members. For instance, the UN could not impose sanctions on Syria and Venezuela because of Russian and Chinese opposition, but the UN and the US both have imposed sanctions on North Korea. (Hufbauer, Elliott, Cyrus, & Winston, 1997) A study by the National Association of Manufacturers 1997 estimated there were 35 countries that endured US economic sanctions during 1993-1996, and most of them were imposed unilaterally. A study of the Institute for International Economics estimated throughout the 1970s and 1980s, US sanctions brought positive changes in one out of five cases.

(Masters, 2019) After the September 11 attacks, US economic sanction policy shifted towards targeted terrorist organizations, groups and countries that were financing them. Later in the same month, the Bush administration signed an agreement with Treasury Department officials. This institution enforces economic restrictions against terrorists, narcotics dealers, those who are involved in manufacturing weapons of mass destruction and anyone or any group who are posing a threat to the United States

security (U.S Department of the Treasury). (Masters, 2019) That agreement said to freeze the assets of the suspects behind the attacks. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld said the use of economic power would be as important as military actions taken by the US against terrorism. (Hanania, 2020) American policymakers do not do empirical research before imposing sanctions; therefore, they often fail to achieve their objectives. Sanctions are good as it provides a middle path between using force and not taking military action, but it does have a severe impact on the economy of the targeted states. Furthermore, United States also threatens the third party not to do business with the restricted country or else they have to bear the punishment. This can immediately stop the poor countries from having ties with any developed state. It breaks off the economic relations of poor countries.

To examine more clearly the fact that US sanctions have only been able to achieve a little but remained a failure at large, we have taken examples of four countries;

Syria

In 1979, the US imposed sanctions accusing Syria of involving in terrorism. In 2003, the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 were introduced enacted additional restrictions because Syria was helping Lebanon. Obama enforced sanctions against the Bashar-ul-Assad government to pressure him to resign and froze Syrian imports. It prohibited Americans to do any sort of business with Syria. (Countryman, 2013) In 2013, Syria was accused of using chemical weapons, which are prohibited by the international community. (Humud, 2020, p. 31) It faced another round of economic sanctions by the US. The US had two objectives; first, to bring down Assad's

regime and establish a democratic government in Syria. It believed sanction policy would isolate Assad and his friends from the global financial system. [\(Bakri & Erlanger, 2011\)](#) Following his step, European Union also banned Syrian products, which was a severe blow to the country's economy because 95% of oil products were exported to Europe. [\(Hanania, 2020\)](#) The United States could not bring down Assad's regime, but it was successful in fracturing the Syrian economy. During the five years 2010-2015, Syrian GDP went down by 75%, and the IMF said it is greater than Japan and Germany's downfall during Second World War. The situation deteriorated when civilians were deprived of food and medicines. Most of the devastation was a result of the civil war that started in the country. Syrian sanctions proved two points; sanctions can cause thousands of deaths and affect innocent civilians, and secondly, US policy was not effective. It did not reach its goal. Developed countries use sanctions to avoid taking military actions, which is a direct attack on civilians and the infrastructure, but economic sanctions damage the infrastructure and kill innocents indirectly and slowly.

Sanctions in Syria are one of the most serious and complicated cases. [\(US Department of the Treasury, n.d.\)](#) These sanctions are also applied to any transaction which is linked with the US. Following its footsteps, its allies UK, Canada, Norway, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Australia and Japan have executed arm, travel restrictions as well as froze Syrians' assets. Human rights NGOs were unable to import basic medicines and get funds from abroad [\(Human Rights Council, 2018\)](#). There is an acute shortage of electricity in Syria, almost an hour per day, because the government does not

have enough fuel to produce electricity. The Syrian pound has dropped to 3,660 USD. International aid cannot access in Syria. [\(Ismaik, 2021\)](#). US sanctions brought devastations in Syria. This economic depression is making the government incapable of reconstructing the infrastructure that is badly damaged due to a decade-old civil war. This war has also completely damaged the country's oil production [\(The Carter Center, 2020, p. 16\)](#).

Pakistan

Pakistan has endured US sanctions several times since 1965 because of many reasons such as pursuing nuclear technology, supporting terrorist groups or using the US sent armaments against India. America has also lifted those sanctions whenever it found Pakistan as a frontline state in achieving US interests. The efficacy of these sanctions in the Pakistan context is debatable. None of the set of sanctions could stop Pakistan from acquiring a nuclear program. Pakistan took help from its closest ally during the sanction period, and China supported Pakistan in building its nuclear capability. US unilateral sanctions proved to be inadequate, and it was argued that they did not reach its objectives but negatively impacted Pakistan's economy. It also spoilt US reputation as a global power, and debates were started among experts regarding US influence in the geopolitics of the world. US sanctions were miscalculated and ineffective [\(Pandey, 2018, pp. 6-9\)](#). In the beginning, Pakistan was a potential, friendly ally for the US in South Asia. It was a frontline state during the Cold War and the Soviet's invasion of in Afghanistan in 1979. The United States supported Pakistan militarily and financially, but when Pakistan started having nuclear ambitions, the US was not pleased and tried pressurizing Pakistan

through military and economic sanctions. Pakistan successfully tested six nuclear tests in 1998, proving the US sanctions policy a total failure_(Karp, 1998). The US unintentionally gave the opportunity to Pakistan to strengthen its strategic partnership with China and find ways to survive and develop without US assistance.

Iran

Iran has been facing sanctions since 1979. It has remained the main target of US sanctions policy. Sanctions intensified in 2011 when Iran began pursuing nuclear technology. America saw it as a dangerous threat to its security that Iran would acquire nuclear bombs and pass them to Turkey, Egypt and its other allies. They will altogether use this weapon against Israel and America. Iran, however, denied such allegations, repeatedly calling them useless and irrelevant. Iran also participated in all international resolutions on nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction, but still, the West was never convinced and pressurized Iran in every way possible _(Mousavian, 2012). _(Brien & Williams, 2016, p. 292) To support the US in its decision, the EU and Canada also put travel restrictions on Iran. Iranian banks faced services blockades from international financial institutions. The impact of these sanctions remained uncertain on Iranian policy. Though, they impacted the reduction of its currency. Iran was unable to buy foreign products, but the economy at large did not cripple it. The political impact is even more uncertain. Iran is not ready to change its policies.

_(Gladstone, 2018) In 2018, the Donald Trump administration applied another round of economic sanctions, calling it the strongest sanction action against Iran in years. In response, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani criticized

Trump's policy and openly said that threats, pressure and force would not stop Iran; in fact, he pledged he would free Iran from these sanctions. _(Noack, 2020) Trump threatened other countries to stop Iranian oil imports, caused a decline in Iran's economy. Iranians faced a sudden rise in inflation on food and medicine. Living standards of people levelled down. In May 2019, Trump intensified sanctions on Iranian oil imports and said he intends to bring the country's oil imports to zero (BBC News, 2019). Iran's GDP dropped 7.6% in 2019-20, largely because of the reduction in oil exports, according to the World Bank update (2020). _(BBC News, 2019) Iranian's currency remained stable for four years, but since Trump's sanctions, its value has lowered by 50% against USD. And increasing inflation brought thousands of people to the streets. They protested against the government.

The three-years record shows US sanctions are unable to gain anything but caused serious economic damages to Iranians. Trump wanted to pressure Iran to stop its ballistic and missiles productions and threatens Iran to stop supporting its allies in Syria, but the question is how far these sanctions alter Iran's nuclear policies? US administration assured that its intention is not to target Iranians, but it is not the case. Innocent Iranians are suffering.

North Korea

North Korea has been facing American sanctions since the 1950s, when it attacked South Korea. In 2006, when North Korea successfully tested its nuclear tests, it endured nine rounds of sanctions from the United Nations and the US along with other fifteen countries. Its current dictator Kim Jon Un defended himself that nuclear weapons are necessary for the country's security. (Carbaugh & Ghosh, 2018) Over the years,

countries tried to pressure the dictator to step down from his position and destabilize the country's nuclear program. They isolated North Korea and tried to damage its economy, but so far, these sanctions are not much of help to stop the dictator. Pyongyang has protected the ruling class from economic damages.

Authoritarian regimes can save themselves by shifting economic costs to the citizens, and the leftover resources they have can be given to the regime's supporters. North Korea is ruled by the military, Korean Workers' party and high bureaucrats. Even if the Koreans are feeling dissatisfied with their rulers, still they cannot do much against them because their control is very strong on the public. Human rights abuses, torture, confining in the prison camps scare people to go against the government. Government informants keep an eye on schools, workplaces and other public areas to stop the organized revolts. Those economic sanctions are only affecting innocent civilians, lowering their living standards (Peksen, 2016). It is evident economic sanctions cannot convince Kim Jon Un to denuclearise or change his ambitions. They can only prolong or create hindrances in nuclear developments. Hence, it can be said that the US sanction tool is making little or no difference.

Sanctions Policy under Trump's Administration

Donald Trump administration found only one way to deal with international challenges; imposing economic sanctions. (Coates, 2020) He intensified economic blockades on Iran, Syria and Venezuela. He even thawed the diplomatic relations Obama started with Cuba by tightening the economic bans on the country. He added a thousand entities and individuals to his targeted sanction list. Trump believed he could defeat US foes,

particularly Iran, China and Venezuela, through this tool. (Al Jazeera, 2021) He unilaterally stepped back from Iran's nuclear deal and accused Iran that it is secretly enriching uranium. For Venezuela, the US wanted to put pressure on its president Nicolas Maduro to resign from its position. Furthermore, Trump's policy has been criticized on a large scale due to the pandemic crisis COVID-19 and the hardships of the common people living in those sanctioned countries.

Trump's sanction policy breaks record, announcing sanctions thrice in a single day. China and Russia also became a victim of it. Economic sanctions have become an important and central foreign policy tool for the United States, and it is finding new ways and techniques to make them more effective. Now the US is not caring about its close allies, that they do not agree to its every decision. Trump's policy of 'America first' made him find new ways like increasing tariffs, export controls and using secondary sanctions to punish US enemies. Trump even warned Turkey, a NATO ally and Germany. He ignored advice of experts and senior politicians about China that it is too big and America is linked with China's economy and put sanctions on China a number of times. Adam Smith, former senior advisor of Treasury, said that America has never seen the use of this tool in such a creative way. In the Iran case alone, Trump took 3,900 sanction actions and enforced many penalties on Iran. Previous administrations never went beyond 700 actions annually (Wadhams & Mohsin, 2020). (Politi, 2020) US Treasury said it has added around 2,800 entities and individuals in sanctions' lists in 2018 alone. The number exceeds the record of the past fifteen years. This raised concerns among Americans that this technique excludes the morality factor as it often affects vulnerable civilians. Secondly, it

compels sanctioned countries to move away from USD currency. And big American firms can lose their foreign market share. Despite these concerns, Treasury Department appreciated Trump's efforts that tougher economic bans prevent bad behaviour. America is not paying attention to the long term effects of these sanctions. They are creating a void for other powerful states like Russia and China, who are rapidly dominating global markets and challenging US hegemonic influence. China's focus is on developing states through Belt and Road Initiative.

[Fang \(2020\)](#) commissioner of Foreign Affairs of China in Hong Kong, said in his speech that unilateral sanctions are a breach of international law. Sovereignty and equality were one of the first seven principles of the UN Charter when it was established in 1945. Moreover, every state has legal obligations which say not to take such actions that cause human rights abuses. These powerful states have created a living hell for the civilians living in sanctioned states. A study by the Centre of Economic and Policy Research estimated 40,000 people have died in Venezuela from 2017-2018 due to tough economic sanctions by the United States. Human Rights Council also warned these sanctions are hindering Covid-19 patients from getting medical treatments and necessary medicines. [\(O'Toole, 2019\)](#) For Trump, sanctions became the end rather than a tool to resolve a problem. He ignored the negative impacts it can bring on the civilians. In the case of Venezuela, sanctions can put short term pressure on the government, but the long term effects on the Venezuelan population are immeasurable and can last for years. [\(Jazairy, 2019\)](#) US Treasury said that sanctions are actually helping Venezuelans, but it is hard to figure out when they are not even allowed to send

their home money. Venezuela central bank is blocked from carrying transactions in USD. [\(Politi, 2020\)](#) Treasury Secretary said that the department is confident about the economic sanctions that they would influence policies of the targeted states. If Iran would not be sanctioned, then it would have billions of dollars, and all this wealth would be used in terrorism and other hostile activities; now, they are facing a shortage of capital, so sanctions are surely doing their job.

Conclusion

If globalization has allowed the US to use sanctions alternative to maintain its hegemony over states, at the same time, it reduces sanctions effectiveness by opening a number of ways for the smaller states to look for other international trade partners. Iran, North Korea have found other contacts to continue their international businesses. In all the recent cases, America's main objective behind economic sanctions was to target particular individuals and entities of the ruling class to stop their financial funding and pressure them to step down from their positions. However, if we analyze their actual impact on whether America was successful in its attempts or not. The answer is negative. These sanctions have little or no impact on them. America has failed to cause any measurable damages to the Castro regime in Cuba, Bashar-ul-Asad of Syria or Kim Jong-un of North Korea. In fact, it is the innocent civilians of these countries who endured severe consequences of American sanctions. The US does not focus on the humanitarian impact of its policy. It shows its political agenda that the US wants to crush its foes without using force or weapons, and it has become almost successful in its goal. On the other hand, the US is ignoring that eventually, this will also affect its economy. It is compelling states to reduce

their dependence on US economic assistance and search for another third party. China, which is already eager for economic expansionism, filling that empty space and increasing its strategic partnerships.

However, sanctions cannot be taken as a total failure. They can be useful if used with the cooperation of the international community. Unilateral sanctions do not work, but multilateral will. The US should collaborate with its allies and other international financial institutions. Secondly, the US should check first whether the sanctioned country

is heavily dependent on the US or not or else it would not work. Many of the sanctioned countries have good trade relations with other states. Despite all its drawbacks and weakness, we cannot say that sanctions will disappear. They are here to stay as long as the US is controlling the financial system. And the chances are very low that USD will be replaced by any other currency, at least not anytime soon. The United States have the unique power to affect behaviours of states by leveraging the power of its currency. Besides, sanctions have a legitimate status by international law, so the US also have a right to defend its use.

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