

## **National Interests and the Sanctions Strategy 1959-2013**

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### **Abstract**

*The great powers using either their military and economic muscles or the emblem of the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on the members threatening the international system. On the contrary, globalisation encourages nations to open up and interact instead of isolating each other consequently contradicting the major goal of the sanctions strategy. This presentation attempts to answer three questions; what is the nexus between globalization and sanctions?, how have national interests and state relations affected the sanctions strategy as a foreign policy tool in a globalizing world? and have sanctions met the objectives of the imposer? Using Cuba, Rhodesia, Burma, Iran and Zimbabwe we argue that, the sanctions strategy was used for the furtherance of national interests and this development led to its failure in capturing the objectives of the imposer(s). In addition, it asserts that the targeted few escape the dehumanising effects of sanctions in the name of advancing national goals. Furthermore, they exploit the globalisation strategy to circumvent sanctions at the expense of the suffering impoverished majority. It is our compliance that the sanctions strategy gravely deteriorated the welfare of the poor, powerless and defenceless majority. Given this dilemma we propose that the imposers of the sanctions be encouraged to employ strategies whose short and long term wider impact do not jeopardise the security and livelihoods of the vulnerable majority as was the case in Burma, Iran and Zimbabwe. We conclude that great players in diplomacy (permanent members of the United Nations Security Council) should be encouraged to acknowledge the fundamental reality that the sanctions scheme though a nonviolent strategy in most cases turns violent as it jeopardizes the welfare of the people it seeks to protect and ameliorate.*

**Key Words:** sanctions, national interests, Burma, Cuba, Iran, Zimbabwe

## Introduction

Following the devastating effects of World War 1 (1914-18), governments started seriously recognizing and considering the sanctions strategy following the establishment of the League of Nations on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1920 as a peace preserving mechanism. The League of Nations was established among other things to use nonviolent ways including the sanctions strategy to handle conflicts (Walters, 1965; Mitrany, 1925; Clark 1932). It became ineffective with the absence of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) whose presence could have been of psychological and financial benefit. In the post First World War period the first sanctions were imposed against the aggressive Japan for invading Manchuria in 1931 and Italy for attacking Ethiopia in 1936 in pursuit of national interests.

Half hearted or ineffective sanctions were imposed on the two aggressors who pulled out of the League of Nations (Taubenfeld, 1958; Walters, 1965; Baer, 1967). When Britain and France remained the members of the League of Nations they harboured divergent strategies of dealing with Germany's continuous hegemonic advances under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. The differences emerging between Britain and France plus the socio-economic challenges caused by the First World War gave Hitler an opportunity to plan and ignite the Second World War in 1939 in his attempt to conquer the world. At the end of the Second World War the idea of the League of Nations' collective security was revived under the United Nations in 1945 whose members were divided on ideological affiliations to either capitalism or communism.

The period of these ideological incompatibilities was popularly known as the Cold War. Even then the national interests were pronounced in the Korean War 1950-3, the Cuban Missile Crisis 1962 and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 by the late Ian Smith in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In the post Cold War era or the globalization of world politics took a shift and the use of military force to resolve disputes lost its credibility. Indeed the world witnessed an enormous increase in the imposition of sanctions by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the US and other actors.

Most of the sanctions were inflicted by the Security Council from 1990 to the present against; Iraq (1990), the former Yugoslavia (1991), the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992), Libya (1992), Somalia (1992), Haiti (1993), UNITA (1993), Rwanda (1994), Liberia (1994), the Bosnian Serbs (1994), Sudan (1996), Sierra Leone (1997), the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1998), the Taliban (1999), Eritrea and Ethiopia (2000), Zimbabwe (1998), Iran (1979), Libya (2011), Syria (2011) and Iran (2012) (Hove, 2012: 73). This demonstrates attempts to limit the use of military force by resorting to sanctions which became a popular strategy of foreign policy dubbed *coercive diplomacy* and was used to compel offending countries and organisations to transform their behaviour, perceptions or policies.

Sanctions as foreign policy tool are used by states or international organizations to persuade a particular government or group of governments to change their policy by restricting trade, investment or other commercial and military activities. Their objectives include; deterring a target from engaging in wrongful behaviour and compelling an offending state to abandon or cease behaviour that the imposers of sanctions consider wrong. The sanctions scheme plays a punitive role or is used to express a policy position symbolically to one's own public or to other states in the international system and believably coerce the state practising objectionable policies to halt them.

This presentation attempts to answer three questions; what is the nexus between globalization and sanctions? How have national interests and state relations affected the sanctions strategy as a foreign policy tool in a globalizing world? and have sanctions met the objectives of the imposer?

Using Cuba, Rhodesia, Burma, Iran and Zimbabwe we argue that the sanctions strategy was used for the continuance of national interests and this development led to its complete failure in capturing the objectives of the imposer(s).

Admittedly, the call for the imposition of sanctions under the emblem of the United Nations Security Council is largely done to fulfil a given state or group of states' interests away from the need to improve the welfare of the citizens of the sanctioned country. Therefore, instead of accomplishing the objectives of the imposer the sanctions aggravate the welfare of the people they intend to liberate. In addition, the effectiveness of the sanctions strategy was derailed by the concept of globalisation which became popular especially at the end of the Cold War. Logically, the objectives of globalization and those of the sanctions strategy are diametrically opposed in that as the former seeks to unify states the latter seeks to disengage states. On the one hand, globalization has rendered sanctions ineffective by giving the sanctioned countries options in terms of which countries to trade and cooperate with.

The global village on the other hand, has made it easier for sanctions to be inevitably applied as the inter-connectedness and inter-linkages which allow states to have an alternative to either engage or disengage accordingly. It is apparent from the cases examined that with or without globalisation wherever sanctions were imposed national interests were accorded the first priority.

### ***The Nexus between Sanctions and Globalisation***

We find it imperative to provide some scholarly definitions of the concepts; sanctions and globalisation in a drive to explain the contradictions between the two. Anthony McGrew asserts that globalization is made up of:

A multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation states (and by implication the societies) which make up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have a significant consequence for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe (McGrew, 1990).

In addition, Philip Cerny advocates that globalization explains the rapport between territoriality and authority, changing authority from the stage of the state to supra-national and sub-national units (Cerny, 1997: 270-1). More so, Lawrence is insistent in asserting that globalization transfers authority—to distinctively 'the local and the regional level' (Lawrence, 1996: 8). From a broad-based standpoint, authors like Drezner (2001:1) define globalisation "as the cluster of technological, economic and political innovations that have drastically reduced the barriers to economic, political and cultural exchange."

The importance of this common concept is evident especially after the 1999 World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial meeting in Seattle. Of significance to note is that it is saturated, as a notion and as an axiom, within an international intricacy of incorporating and disseminating facets pertaining to issues such as market groupings, consumer safety, industrial standards, social dialectics, labour rights and harmony of operation.

The union and difference of these aspects impinges variously upon standard and contemporary definitions and perceptions of sanctions in general and their breadth and extent of effectiveness in particular. The use of economic sanctions to compel the targeted country to respect the law is not a new occurrence in written history.

A lot has been documented outlining the factors which lead to the imposition of sanctions and their results. In response to international crisis three broad options are used. They embrace taking no action, deciding to take military exploit and to enforce economic sanctions (Renwick 1981: 2).

The three alternatives are engaged to cause suffering on the offending country. Economic sanctions are intended to reprimand the rule breaker and to defend the economic interests of the imposer (Miyagawa 1992: 9). Sanctions may be initiated as a scheme of discouraging states from wrongdoing in order to implement collective security (Hove, 2012: 73). In other words an offending state endangers international security both by acts of hostility or by crafting domestic state of affairs that kindle international disorder. In addition, sanctions are considered a better alternative than military compulsion or force.

On the other hand, globalization is normally depicted as an amplified opening up of markets for commodities and services, the means of production, financial organisations, contestation, and the survival of conglomerates, expertise and industries. Clearly, globalization is weakening the capability of governments to control and mitigate the detrimental effects of free market consequentially increasing the economic causes of war. Despite these negative sentiments on globalization, not only does it play a unifying role, but it also plays a pivotal role in increasing trade and engagement between and amongst actors hence in this case sanctions and globalization are seemingly contradicting strategies. While sanctions ensure the frequent disruption of free flow of goods and capital across nations, globalization is actually characterized by these as reflected in the cases of sanctioned states such as Burma, Iran and Zimbabwe.

Sanctions are contrary to globalisation because they are designed to ostracise the targeted country, therefore prevents international integration whereas on the other hand globalisation has been a major impediment to the effectiveness of sanctions. Sanction activities (such as trade embargoes, sports isolations and restrictions in travelling) short circuits the encouragement of the exchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture meant to be accomplished by globalisation. Whether, comprehensive, targeted, bilateral or multilateral sanctions limit and curb interdependence and generate divisions between the imposers and the targeted thereby disrupting economic and cultural interaction.

For example sports boycott do not promote cultural connectivity and exposure, hence to this end globalisation weakens the objectives of sanctions. On the other hand since sanctions are implemented to discourage interaction between the targeted country and a group of sanction imposers they derail efforts towards globalisation.

### ***A Reflection on the use of Sanctions Strategy 1959-2013***

Reader we do not intend to mislead you that before the popularization of the concept of globalization there were no countries which openly or clandestinely continued to trade with the sanctioned country for the furtherance of their national interests. Even then great powers imposed sanctions on other states for the advancement of national agendas. The UN Charter engaged sanctions largely as an economic weapon (Taubenfeld & Taubenfeld 1964). In the 1960s several sanctions were instigated for national interests largely by great powers outside the construction of the UN.

For example Cuba and the Dominican Republic were slapped with sanctions by the US, Albania and China by the USSR, Portugal, South Africa and Rhodesia by Afro-Asian states (Wallenstein 1968). Sanctions, whether manoeuvred inside the UN or outside, have never been effective in accomplishing the objectives of the imposer(s).

This presentation provides cases of Cuba, Rhodesia, Burma, Iran and Zimbabwe where the sanctions strategy were applied used by states and the UN for the advancement of largely state-centred objectives.

## Cuba

After Castro's mission to the US in April 1959 to resolve Cuba's economic dependence on the US especially the socio-economic imbalances and injustices to Cuba failed, Castro turned to communists for economic, political and military support and liberation. Before the revolution in 1956 Americans possessed '80% of Cuban utilities, 40% of Cuba's sugar, 90% of Cuba's mining wealth' (Kraft and Anderson, 2004). In order to obtain resources to finance the socio-economic transformations he had promised Cubans before he rose to power Castro appropriated or nationalized the once privately owned property without compensation to the original owners. Property nationalised included sugar companies, refineries, banks and telephone companies.

To circumvent the imbalances caused by the domination of the US, Cuba signed a trade agreement with the Soviet Union in 1960 and began to trade her sugar for oil and machinery. The US adopted its policy of containment designed to forestall the spread of communism into other countries in Latin America. As its initial response, the US stopped buying Cuban sugar in July 1960 as a strategy meant to hurt the economy, but on the contrary this tactic saw trade with the Soviet Union accounting for 80% of all Cuban trade by 1961 from about 2% in 1960 (Ibid). In August 1960, the US began a propaganda onslaught against Cuba across the Western Hemisphere.

This was initiated to defend other Latin American nations from the scourge of communist revolutions similar to the one that had rooted itself in Cuba. To bolster the achievement of this scheme in 1959 President Eisenhower set up the *Inter-American Development Bank* to grant low-interest loans to Latin American countries for economic development. This was implemented in the belief that communism flourishes in impoverished countries of the world, hence development would avert its spread. Added to this, in March 1961, President Kennedy suggested the "Alliance for Progress" to ameliorate Latin American growth and inter-hemispheric relations, but this achieved very little progress.

In a desperate effort to forestall the continued existence of the Castro led government, the US tried to overthrow Castro in the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, using poorly organised and ill armed Cuban exiles. There was no airpower support from the US and the exiles were brutally crushed as the US denied any responsibility. In 1961, Castro declared Cuba a socialist state. As part of its effort to contain the spread of communism from 1961 the Kennedy administration deployed Intermediate range "Jupiter" missiles in Italy and Turkey and these could hit western USSR including Moscow and Leningrad.

Worse still the US had stationed other nuclear armed "thor" missiles in Britain targeting the Soviet Union. Given this dilemma the historian Philip Nash's elegant 1997 study noted that the "Jupiter" missile "was a key reason for Khrushchev's decision to send missiles to Cuba." Khrushchev pointed out that Americans "have surrounded us with bases on all sides" and that missiles in Cuba would help to counter an 'intolerable provocation' (Schwarz, 2013). Khrushchev exposed his thinking about the missiles to the American journalist Strobe Talbott when he said Americans "would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointing at you; We'd be doing nothing more than giving them a little of their own medicine" (Ibid).

Furthermore, he was motivated by the fact that the US wanted to destroy Cuba which was evident in the failed invasion and huge clandestine military exercises in the Caribbean. The USSR-Cuban cooperation posed a threat to the US. Ultimately, on 16 October 1962 US spy planes photographed Soviet missile installations in Cuba which is located 90 miles from the US state of Florida. This sparked a 13-day crisis popularised as the *Cuban Missile Crisis*. Tension increased when a United States U 2 spy plane was shot over Cuba.

There were several options the US could take which encompass invading Cuba, doing nothing, fighting the Soviet Union and blockading the island of Cuba. The US chose a naval blockade to prevent Soviet ships from landing additional missiles and other military equipment. The conflict between President Kennedy and the Soviet Chairman Nikita Khrushchev brought the powers close to the brink of a nuclear war. War almost took place as the second group of Soviet ships and supplies came into the Cuban waters. At this point the US could back down and allow the ships to dock in Cuba, the Soviet Union could back down and leave, or military confrontation which could soar into a nuclear war (Kraft and Anderson, 2004). Ultimately, the crisis ended when Khrushchev summoned the Soviet ships to quit Cuban waters after getting assurance that Cuba would not be invaded or attacked.

The two super-powers improved their communication through the establishment of a direct hot-line between Moscow and Washington. The US passed several laws and acts against the Cuban government some of which are operational to this day against the Castro government, although the founder is no longer in charge. The sanctions imposed on Cuba were due partly to the ideological incompatibilities between the USSR and the US which reveal the major powers' national interests. Since 1959 the economic measures inflicted on Cuba were not effective in getting rid of Fidel Castro because his country had alternative markets for her sugar particularly in the Soviet Union.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia and a significant number of the Non Aligned Movement (whose members include Iran, Libya, Angola, Zimbabwe and Venezuela) members continued to interact and trade with Cuba. Such developments reduced the impact of the US economic sanctions on Cuba as other countries pursued their interests. The US maintained economic sanctions against the island of Cuba because of her belief that sanctions have a strong dislocating effect on any economy. The Americans believe that the longer the economic sanctions are operational against the targeted state, the stronger their effect will be.

Indeed they overlooked the fact that the longer other countries maintained their trading activities with the sanctioned country the longer it delayed the collapse of the economy of the targeted country. It might be the main reason why Cuba managed to withstand the US sanctions for the past 54 years.

## **Rhodesia**

The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by the Smith establishment in Southern Rhodesia in 1965 led to the imposition of the first UN compulsory sanctions as a major weapon of the global machinery. The sanctions were initiated without delay after UDI by Britain the colonial power, then internationalised and declared mandatory by the UN Security Council in 1966 and were maintained until the end of 1979. Following the signing of the Lancaster House agreement on the future of Zimbabwe the measures were removed.

At the time, the sanctions on Rhodesia were the most inclusive ones imposed by the UN. They were meant to coerce the Ian Smith regime to end violations of the rights of the Black majority. Put differently they called for an end to colonisation, discrimination and demanded democratic rule.

In response to these UN driven sanctions a number of countries considered their national interests first than the violations of the rights of the Black majority in Rhodesia. Consequently, it became the norm that wherever embargoes were inflicted they were dishonoured as nations favoured their interests. UN sanctions on Rhodesia were an ingredient of a decolonisation scheme, an aspiration that was extensively shared. The sanctions even though concerned with internal affairs, were globally legal because they were linked to the decolonisation process which was shared by the two contending coalitions of the Cold War and is one of the few agreements reached between the two camps (Wallenstein, 2000: 2). This was successful due to the fact that the powers concerned were advancing their national interests. Britain and her allies were punishing a government of rebels led by the late Ian Smith and the communist countries were advancing their ideology of communism which assisted in liberating several countries from capitalism. Rhodesia was a common enemy to some countries including those, which 'usually objected interference in domestic affairs of other states because they participated in the imposition of these sanctions (Ibid).

The sanctions imposed were made up of an almost total ban of exports and imports. Oil was explicitly targeted, including; arms, travels, air associations, financial utilities and diplomatic relations. The oil embargo had an impact on Rhodesia. A Lonrho subsidiary built the oil pipe- line from Beira to Rhodesia, but the sanctions forced the pipeline to close, and the oil companies decided to send oil products to Rhodesia from South Africa in breach of the contract which they had signed with the Lonrho subsidiary (The Africa Fund). In mid-October 1965, Rhodesia had only a 24-day reserve of petrol and gas amid the possibility of international sanctions, so UDI was deferred for almost a month until November 11.

During this period the oil companies increased their stocks inside Rhodesia up 90-day reserve. Zambia was by then obtaining her fuel supplies through Rhodesia and by early December 1965, Zambia had 13-day stockpile because the companies violated the standing agreements in favour of Rhodesia. Indeed this was an attempt by Rhodesia "to hold Zambia as a hostage" by undercutting Zambia's stockpile in a drive to obviate the imposition of sanctions (Ibid).

Initial oil was brought into the country by road, then by rail from South Africa to Rhodesia via Mozambique. Finally, from mid-1966 to the independence of Mozambique, most of the oil was moved by the pipe-line built from Beira to Umtali (now Mutare). To burst the sanctions in 1967 the London *Sunday Times*, in two main articles, disclosed that South African subsidiaries of Shell, BP, Mobil, Caltex and Total were providing Rhodesia both directly and through Mozambique. In 1976 following the closure of the Rhodesia-Mozambique border there were only three ways by which oil got into the country by; the rail route from South Africa to Rhodesia, the road from South Africa to Rhodesia and the rail road from South Africa via Botswana to Rhodesia.

The sanctions imposed on Rhodesia instead of alleviating the suffering of the people who were exploited by the then Ian Smith led government, they led to the decline of the conditions they were designed to improve (Strack, 1979: 44). It is of importance to note that all countries did not back the imposition of sanctions against Rhodesia as a result of their national interests. This created loopholes for pragmatic reasons. Portugal and South Africa were Rhodesia's allies. They could not afford to have Rhodesia collapse since similar sanctions could be initiated against them for decolonization and violation of democratic principles.

Zambia, Malawi and Congo were not totally in support of the sanctions because they were worried about the susceptibility of their economies due to these restrictions than their impact on Rhodesia in quest for Black majority rule.

West Germany, France and the United States had varied interests in Rhodesia hence could not adhere to a hundred percent implementation of the sanctions strategy. Accordingly, the imposition of sanctions on Rhodesia during the war against the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army forces in their struggle for Zimbabwe, apartheid South Africa, Israel, US and Portugal did not uphold the sanctions as they continued to trade with the Rhodesian Government (Hove, 2012: 73).

In addition, after Mozambique closed her border with Rhodesia in 1976 in support of Black majority rule, the Rhodesian government resorted to using the Rutenga-Beit-Bridge to South Africa railway line which had been swiftly built. From the foregoing it is apparent that countries supported the imposition of UN led sanctions where they were not breaching their national interests. Some countries endorsed the UN driven sanctions just to deceive other UN member states, but in reality contributed in bursting the sanctions by trading with Rhodesia in defence of their national interests.

### **Burma or Myanmar Sanctions**

Burma or Myanmar's specific sanctions began following the Burmese military's violent suppression of popular protests in 1988. The practice of international seclusion was widened in 1990 when the military regime refused to hand over power to the National League for Democracy (NLD) which won a massive victory of more than eighty percent of the popular vote (Fink 2001; Maung 1998; Steinberg 2001). The military regime instead commenced a nationwide onslaught on the victorious party and its supporters. Ensuing protests and demonstrations were met by violence and thousands were murdered as the military sought to regain control. Such an action threatened the principle of democracy propagated by European countries and the US.

In response to human rights violations, in 1988, Australia, Canada, the US and the European Union slapped Burma with sanctions. Amid escalating levels of repression the leaders of Burma managed to stall the political impact of sanctions. Burmese military leaders used the negative escapist route of globalisation and continued to trade with her neighbours; China, India, Singapore and Thailand who denigrated sanctions from the beginning in pursuance of national interests. As a result of globalisation and state centred interests a number of countries including China were opposed to the further tightening of sanctions on Burma. In addition, Burma was involved in illicit arms trade with Syria and North Korea, rendering the sanctions less effective.

Using its veto power China did not vote for further economic or military measures against Burma. Accordingly the United States stance to lift most sanctions on Burma was received with great enthusiasm by the Chinese government. The Burmese sanctions could have been effective if they were targeted to cost the regime significantly (Kaempfer and Lowenberg, 2000). In the case of Burma sanctions failed to weaken and cut off the ruling junta and her economy also remained firm due to a significant number of factors;

The sanctions were not multilaterally imposed under the emblem of the United Nations regardless of several decades of extensive human rights violations, but the Burmese sanctions regime were inflicted by the US and the EU; There was lack of cooperation by the trading partners of the US and EU including the trading partners of the Burmese regime to sanctions measures; the US was the solitary foremost state to inflict a string of sanctions and the measures imposed by the EU were less effective and significant because Europe was the principal investor in Burma between 1995 and 2005 with growing Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) worth US\$1.8 billion; there was modest contribution by the regional organisation the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to the sanction measures; the two regional powers China and India were against the punitive measures and instead exploited the productive commercial prospects of Burma, and sanctions exacted had crucial loopholes that benefited both the imposer states and targeted regime and were slowly imposed (Burma Independence Advocates, 2011: 36-37).

Given the above weaknesses and loopholes the military administration in Burma spent extremely on underpinning its military power. The Military expenditure in 1991 was approximately US\$ 2.5 billion and went up sharply to above US\$5.6 billion by 2001 (Burma Independence Advocates, 2011: 34). Defence expenditure went above US\$7 billion in 2003 and oscillated between US\$ 6 billion and US\$7 billion until 2007 (Ibid). The energetic military manpower of the government went up since the take over by the military in 1988 with 200,000 armed forces in 1989, rising to over 400,000 since 1997. The military leadership enjoyed the height of its military strength in 2004 and 2005 when the whole active military manpower was about 500 000 (Ibid).

Furthermore, the Burmese junta were involved in sanctions-busting through unofficial commission “cuts” on imported luxuries. Nay Min Maung, the director of Burma Egress says “No one who understands transaction costs would support sanctions. As an empirical reality sanctions affect the grassroots” (Mckinnon 2011). The sanctions by Australia, Canada, the US and EU in the last two decades or more have failed to produce significant impact on the military regime in Burma due to globalisation and national interests which led to lack of cooperation. The 7<sup>th</sup> November 2010 election was used by the Burmese junta to reclaim its degraded reputation on the international scene.

In fact the 2010 election was an opportunity to swindle the international community into thinking that the country was experiencing a legitimate change towards civilian rule. It is clear from the subsequent events that the 2010 election led to cosmetic changes because the Burmese people were impoverished and their basic rights and liberties were eliminated, the civil society in totalitarian Burma was under constant scrutiny and harassment (Turnell, 2009). Even with the change in leadership the country was by 2013 still deeply entrenched in poverty as it was 25 years before. The ruling junta of generals in Burma became richer and corrupt in the process.

Around 400 kilometres to the north of Rangoon, the city of Naypyidaw, a new capital was under construction and the IMF estimated that between 1-2% of the national GDP went to this project since 2005. On the contrary Burma was awash with high rates of malaria, HIV/AIDS and the dengue fever but only managed to dedicate 0.5% of its GDP to the health sector. By 2013 Burma was the second most corrupt country in the world only better than Somalia. Among Asian countries, only Afghanistan was poorer than Burma where more than 10% of children died before the age of five.

As a significant number of countries enjoyed trade with Burma the lives of thousands of the minority Muslims were in jeopardy in that country. The origins of the Rohingya Muslims can be linked to Bangladesh during British rule from 1824. The country regained independence in 1948 and leadership attempted to restrict citizenship to those whose roots in the country predated British rule. Consequently the *1982 Citizenship Act* excluded Rohingya from the country's 135 accepted ethnic groups. This rendered them stateless and Bangladesh disowned the Rohingya thus refused to grant them refugee status since 1992. To date about 140 000 Rohingya and non-Rohingya Muslims, and a smaller number of Arakanese, have been displaced from *Arakan State* and hundreds killed since June 2012.

When this article was written Security forces were acting as jailers of the Rohingya people by denying them access to markets, livelihoods, humanitarian assistance and they even faced a threat of deadly waterborne diseases on the lower grounds where they were encamped (Human Rights Watch, 2013). That is why it was reported that “Myanmar actually is poised on the abyss of implosion.” Amid this, the US painted Burma “a model of emerging democratization” and welcomed its military leader after a 50-year ban (Kurlantzick, 2013), ignoring the abuse of the rights of the minority Muslims in pursuance of its national interests.

Indeed this was a gross violation of the responsibility to protect which took place in broad day light and could instead be dealt with urgently, with seriousness saving life deserves but was a slap in the face of the international community which then was slowly losing credence. The civil society could not become strong and vibrant as long as dictatorship flourished and it was very doubtful that the Burmese middle-class could initiate democratic transition in the anticipated future since it was comprised of serving or retired military officers and businessmen who benefited from the corrupt strategies of dictatorship. Overall, the countries that maintained trade with Burma took this their position in order to protect their national interests since they ignored the abuses of the Burmese people by the military leadership.

### **The Case of Iran**

The US major sanctions began in 1979, following the Islamic Revolution and the hostage calamity. In reaction, President Carter set out a series of economic sanctions that were projected at punishing Tehran and to transform its behaviour (Cordesman, 2012: 38). The Reagan government declared Iran a supporter of international terrorism, leading to the exclusion of Iran from different types of US foreign help including US arms trade to Iran, the *Executive Order 12613* imposed a ban on US imports of Iranian crude oil and all other Iranian imports in 1987 (Ibid). The G.W. Bush government called for the sanctioning of any individual or organisation that helped Tehran in weaponry advancement or attainment of chemical, biological, nuclear, or undermining numbers and types of sophisticated conventional weapons (<http://www.mafhoum.com/press3/108E16.htm>).

One-sided sanctions against Iran extended under the Clinton administration where Executive Order 12957 banned all US contribution in the Iranian petroleum industry and *Executive Order 12959* broadened the sanctions to include an entire trade and investment restriction (*Executive Order 12957*, <http://www.iraniantrade.org/12957.htm>, *Executive Order 12959*, <http://www.iraniantrade.org/12959.htm>). In 1996, Congress tremendously approved the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), intensifying US sanctions legislation to include foreign companies and accordingly the ILSA was extended during the George W. Bush government in 2001 and 2006 when it was transformed into the Iran Sanctions Act (Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996, <http://www.mafhoum.com/press3/108E16.htm>).

In 2006, the US Congress approved the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Non-proliferation Act (INKSNA), penalised the transfer to, or acquisition from Iran, of equipment and technology inhibited under multilateral control lists (US Department of State).

As Iran's nuclear program grew closer to nuclear weapons development capability, the US Congress and the Obama Administration considerably amplified the volume and range of US sanctions. In 2010, Congress increased the Comprehensiveness of Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) which imposed sanctions on individuals who; make investments of \$20 million or further in Iran's petroleum industry; provide Iran with goods, services, technology or information or tribute to Iran's ability to import gasoline (Comprehensive Iran Sanctions).

The new sanctions imposed by the US affected several vital sectors in Iran's economy. For example they froze the assets of the Iranian government and prohibited all Iranian financial resources in the US from being "transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt with" (Executive Order—). The order compelled US banks to confiscate the funds of those on the Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list, even if the funds were not intended for a US organisation or firm. President Ahmadinejad acknowledged that oil and banking sanctions have affected Iran when he said:

One factor is from outside, and one factor is from inside. The enemy has stated that it will impose (more) sanctions, and part of the oil purchases from Iran has decreased, and a considerable segment of our foreign currency revenues was generated through oil sales...What is worse than the oil sanction is the sanctions on banking transactions. If oil is sold, the payment cannot be transferred, and a massive and great secret war (against Iran) is actually underway in the world (<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/102022>).

Furthermore on 5 September 2012 he said the sanctions comprised an, "...all-out, hidden, heavy war" obstructing the economy. In response Iran announced grave threats to "close the Gulf," carried out missile tests and military manoeuvres. In February 2013 the Iranian currency Rial hit an all-time low against the dollar, trading between 39,000 and 40,000 Rials per dollar (Cordesman A. H. et al., 2013: III).

The impact of globalisation reduced the effectiveness of United States sanctions on Iran when China and Russia did not recognise the punitive measures. The newly widened imposed sanctions on Iran seemingly did not cause the blow they would have delivered had other countries not continued or even increased their trade with Iran. After the imposition of more sanctions, Iran welcomed countries willing to trade with her in the process de-linking with United States and her European allies. Furthermore, the United States was unable to control the bulk of interactions between Iran and other countries such as Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Zimbabwe and Djibouti hence its sanctions up to 2013 had not collapsed the Iran regime.

Moreover, the sanctions imposed on Iran exposed ideological incompatibilities and national interests. The US and China were at the time competing in the Middle East where the US want Israel to remain the dominant power especially if Syria and Iran the allies of Russia and China capitulated to the hegemonic tendencies of the former. China had over 100 Chinese companies operating in Iran and China did not want to end economic ties with the Islamic Republic because its growing economy relied heavily upon Iranian oil (Taylor, 2010 ) China was convinced that the true factor for the US interference was not the non-proliferation regime, but the need to ensure its supremacy in the region. Russia and China were reluctant to back additional sanctions against Iran in favour of their national interests.

Given the defiance by Russia, India and China to impose more multilateral restrictions against Iran it appeared that the effectiveness was seriously impeded. The outstanding factors which led to this scenario were conflicting Great Power competition, national interests and rivalry imbedded in the Iran-US conflict. China gained significantly from US unilateral sanctions passed by the Clinton administration and began to trade with Iran. To this end the concept of globalisation impacted negatively on the US sanction scheme because Iran's oil was directed to other markets after the US and allies abandoned it.

We propose that the US and allies seriously reconsider the degree to which they have violated the rights of the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran in quest for a Middle East dominated by Israel. History has after all shown that imposing sanctions against a state does not make it friendly to the initiators of the sanctions. If their fear is a nuclear bomb, there is need to be cool and calm because the moment Iran becomes a nuclear power she will seize to be a rogue state, she instead will be responsible like many other nations before her.

**Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe was already troubled way before the imposition of sanctions in 1998. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) came to Zimbabwe with a package of strategies in the form of the 10-Point Washington Consensus after the African nation experienced a massive budget deficit and paltry Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the mid-90s popularly known as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) hardly benefited Zimbabwe. During its first stage 1991-4 ESAP led to decline in industrial and agricultural production, retrenchments, poverty, social and moral decadence, public disgruntlement and instability (Hove and Gwiza, 2012: 285).

Consequently ESAP had to be prematurely abandoned. In this case globalisation was employed not solely to relax the economic problems which were faced by Zimbabwe but to aggravate the socio-economic conditions. Zimbabwe was drawn within the matrix of conflict between the East and the West as a result of the land issue which took long to handle due to the skewed Lancaster House Willing Seller-Willing Buyer principle of 1979. The US, Australia and the EU inflicted sanctions against Zimbabwe for the continuance of their objectives, after the violation of human rights was record high. The main cause of the infliction of sanctions was ignited by the government's attempts to redress the colonial land imbalances without compensating for the developments which were carried out on the then White owned farms.

The government refused to allow an audit (recommended at the 1998 donor conference) on how the land acquired through the Willing Seller-Willing Buyer strategy after independence had been distributed. This was followed by the removal of Zimbabwe from the Breton Woods Institutions' credit lines and "the ZANU-PF government was challenged by the rise of a vibrant political party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. Afraid of losing the electorate the government authorised the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP)" (Hove and Gwiza, 2012: 282), without a deeper scrutiny on its short and long term domestic ad international repercussions.

The FTLRP was not implemented as a legal and organised programme that is why it was condemned as a gross violation of democracy since it led to the loss of; employment, life and property. Notably, the harmful consequences of sanctions gave the government an excuse to establish anti-democratic policies and legislation bent on furthering consolidation of its power at the expense of the welfare of the majority of the impoverished Zimbabweans.

A glut of socio-economic challenges were kick-started as a result of the sanctions strategy and these were made up of; galloping inflation, the outcropping of parallel markets, paucity of basic goods, abject poverty, brain drain, rapidly declining GDP levels, grossly dampened investor confidence, money laundering, externalization of foreign currency, poor delivery of health, education, water and sanitation services, outbreak of water related diseases which include cholera and typhoid, widespread unemployment, low agricultural production, divisions on the basis of political affiliation and corruption among other ills (Sachikonye, 2009; Hove, 2012; Hove and Gwiza 2012).

These various consequences prompted citizens to find other illicit means of survival. As the government politicised every section of the society; electoral violence, voter lethargy, media propaganda, banning of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), antagonism towards civil society, preferential treatment and inequitable distribution of resources became the order of the day (Sachikonye, 2011).

The violation of these among other human rights was lamented by the US, Australia and the EU leading to further sanctions on the country. Confronted with direct and indirect denigration by the West, Zimbabwe resorted to a dramatic and far-reaching “Look East” route since 2002 to loosen up the effects of sanctions.

In the “Look East” policy, Zimbabwe began to trade with China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Iran, amongst other countries consequently rendering the sanctions ineffective on its intended target. Although the targeted leadership escaped the wrath of the sanctions strategy, the effects of the sanctions were dehumanising on the ordinary Zimbabwean as service delivery in water and sanitation, education, health and food production collapsed.

Besides looking to the east, a significant number of Pan- African states such as Zambia, South Africa, Namibia and the Democratic Republic of Congo opposed sanctions against Zimbabwe evident in their continued trade with Zimbabwe. Within the geopolitical construction of polarity expressed within the niche of the UN Security Council (UNSC), US perception and China’s views of Zimbabwean sanctions were totally divergent.

This conflict of perception goes further than sheer meanings to value hypothesis which directly impact on the interests of the two global contenders’ foreign policy. For instance the statement from the Zimbabwe Democracy Recovery Act (ZIDERA) which was initiated by the US government in 2001, reads in part “...until the US President certifies that the rule of law has been restored in Zimbabwe...” (ZIDERA, 2001). This foregoing US stance is contrary to the Chinese basic principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of another sovereign country.

To the United States Congress ZIDERA, was adopted to “support the people of Zimbabwe in their struggle to effect peaceful, democratic change, achieve broad-based and equitable economic growth and restore the rule of law” To this end such policy-makers in “small proxies” in light of the global village have taken the route of least resistance by creating friends with and working together with allies in the East or West in pursuit of their national interests.

Micro and macro-economic “sanctions-busting” strategies designed internally and abroad were implemented with success or failure. This was done in a drive to curtail an economic domino-effect capable of catapulting the drastic effects of economic meltdown and political instability onto the majority of Zimbabweans. However, the West supposed the “Look East” scheme as a purposeless and half-hearted political manoeuvre ‘meted out in desperation by a power-hungry cluster of weird despots.’ Accordingly, sanctions have not been lifted and their effects, whether convincing or deceptive, have been noticed.

In fact the sanctions did not cripple their “intended victims,” the civilian politicians and the stratocracy politicians, but had far dehumanising effects on the majority impoverished Zimbabweans whom they hoped to liberate. This is true because the poor many could not afford to travel to Malaysia, China, Singapore and Indonesia despite the “Look East policy.” It is therefore evident that the policy adopted by the government benefited largely the politicians who could afford to travel for shopping and medication.

In addition, the politicians, their families and friends were able to send their children outside Zimbabwe to good educational institutions as the standards of education went down alarmingly. More so politicians and members of the security sector were the largest beneficiaries of the Chinese investment in the country in particular at the Chiadzwa diamond fields (Human Rights Watch, 2009; Southern Africa Resource Watch, 2009).

### ***The effectiveness of sanctions***

National interests have rendered economic sanctions ineffective as a coercive diplomatic tool because like globalisation they foster the phenomenon of interdependence which enables sanctioned countries to “survive” through trade, cooperation and financial support from sympathiser countries opposed to the imposed sanctions.

The aspect of globalisation complimented the long rooted ideological incompatibilities between capitalism and communism (despite the belief that it collapsed in 1991) in rendering sanctions ineffective. Furthermore, the great powers and permanent members of the UNSC used the power of veto for the furtherance of their national interests.

In Zimbabwe the ten plus years old sanctions did not lead to the intended quick political resolution. If they were targeted at triggering volatile political disharmony, they have succeeded only thus far. However if sanctions were aimed at ensuring return to “democratic” transitional mechanisms, they had botched miserably up to 2013 in view of yet another deeply contested election. A delicate, yet *de facto* Government of National Unity (or rather a government of national “disunity”) existed, effectively superintending over policy disagreement and discrepancies and over a modicum economic stability and performance, but ended miserably without a sustainable political and economic solution. Such has been the case in North Korea, Burma, Iraq, Iran and Cuba among a surplus of other “little proxies”.

Cuba managed to resist the US led sanctions with the insurmountable audacity for over five decades since the Cuban Revolution of 1959 which led to the establishment of the communist state. The Burma case cited above draws salient parallels with the Zimbabwean situation. The ZIDERA of 2001 was instituted to “achieve democratisation” but failed like the sanctions imposed on Burma. However, practically on the ground, not much was transformed by mid 2013 except the constitutional reforms whose applications were yet to be seen. More so, the impact of the unplanned FTLRP especially food insecurity had not been reversed and President Mugabe had retained political control. Domestic politics, with the dubious exclusion of increased pluralism within the 2008 structure of the GNU remained immensely obsolete.

Karel de Gutch the EU Commissioner for aid announced in 2008 that between 2002 and 2009, around 600 million Euros had been spent on humanitarian aid. She promised that the EU would be switching to more structural aid in the form of transitional aid for education. Therefore 2009 saw the investment of 90 million Euros in Zimbabwe. Was this being apologetic for an ineffective or flawed sanctions policy? or was this a circumlocutory emphasis of the popular fact that the sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe are “smart” and “targeted”?

However, the United States of America was unable to control the bulk of interactions, trade and interdependence between Iran and other countries and hence its sanctions did not yield adverse effects. Iran also imposed country sanctions against the United States and after 2011 Iran adopted a much tougher stance on the United States and at one point even threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz. China is and has been instrumental in restraining the effects the sanctions on Burma, North Korea, Iran and Zimbabwe.

China therefore served as an economic and technological messiah. The imposition of sanctions was unlikely to cause positive behavioural changes to Burma, Zimbabwe and Iran. The sanctions surely led to the continued suffering of the civilians in the sanctioned countries. Using the cases cited above the sanctions are a rift widening strategy at the expense of the majority they are designed to protect and liberate.

Furthermore, China was opposed to the widening of sanction on Burma and the US stance to lift most sanctions on Burma was received with great enthusiasm by the Chinese government. As a result of her veto power status, China could not afford to vote for further economic or military measures against Burma, Iran and Zimbabwe. Burma's economy also stood firm due to her trade with China. Burma engaged in illicit arms trade with Syria and North Korea, thereby weakening the effectiveness of sanctions.

The Burmese, Zimbabwean and the Iran sanctions had damaging long term impact on the civilians they intended to protect. After all, any government whether authoritarian or democratic, requires the same civil service for the implementation of its policy objectives. Blocking technical aid from the international financial institutions and manpower development endangered the economic future of the ordinary people not the despotic and military leadership.

The threats by the US to inflict sanctions on China were likely to back-fire against the US itself because by then the US chiefly depended on China. Sanctions against China would have been counterproductive. Accordingly the main victim, if any sanctions were imposed on China would have been US business and China would not have suffered. China's veto power in the UN Security Council resolution made sanctions ineffective in the globalization era, especially when she vetoed the tightening of Burma sanctions; attempts to have Zimbabwe denoted a specified country and the widening of sanctions on Iran.

### ***Conclusion***

National interests and at times globalisation threatened and continued to endanger the effectiveness of sanctions as a conflict resolution strategy. Indeed Russia including other Latin American states assisted Cuba to this day to survive the debilitating impact of sanctions. Israeli, Portugal, Apartheid South Africa and the US helped Rhodesia to burst sanctions. Moreover, Zimbabwe reduced the impact of the injurious sanctions by depending on South Africa, Iran, Malaysia and China among others. More so, Iran traded with China, India, and Zimbabwe among other countries in an effort to circumvent and lessen the negative effects of the detrimental sanctions strategy.

To this end national interests and globalisation enabled the few top echelons of power to escape the biting effects of sanction at the expense of the welfare of the suffering majority in Cuba, Burma, Iran and Zimbabwe. It is our recommendation that great players in the imposition of the sanctions strategy use it cognisant of its wider domestic and international consequences on the poor, powerless and defenceless civilians of the sanctioned country. If one is to be guided by the preceding cases it would be convincing to conclude that sanctions do not meet the objectives of the imposers without harming the intended beneficiaries. Where the aim is to influence civilians to turn against their governments it would be imperative to reconsider the cases in which the sanctions strategy worked in comparison with where it failed.

Despotic leadership and the stratocracy did not bear the full wrath of sanctions because they had access to whatever resources existed or were available in their countries. Suffering could only have descended on those in power had the obtainable resources in their countries been depleted and this means that sanctions as a strategy may affect those in power to a limited extent, but with devastating outcomes on the subjugated and poor many. To this end we conclude that great players in diplomacy (permanent members of the United Nations Security Council) should be encouraged to acknowledge the fundamental reality that the sanctions scheme though a nonviolent strategy in most cases turns violent as it jeopardizes the welfare of the people it seeks to protect and ameliorate.

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