Introduction

Economic sanctions are imposed in order to change the decisions of the target country or organisation and normally threaten the party’s interests. Although a lot of these sanctions are poorly conceived and rarely provide the wanted outcome, many countries still stand by them and believe that they have become more efficient. To this day, sanctions are an essential tool for international relations as they are the primary way of dealing with a threat in a relatively peaceful manner. Sanctions have become the defining feature of responses to geopolitical challenges amongst the international community. These sanctions are imposed by one country to another when the former country feels that their security has been threatened by the latter, or when the latter treats its citizens unfairly. Sanctions are a more peaceful alternative for getting a desired outcome without the declaration of war as they don’t result in the loss of military or civilian life and allow international relations to remain the same, if not get better.

Economic sanctions have a large impact on international trade. This is because the sanctioned country will have its imports and exports limited, causing its economy to decrease and other countries to have a lowered supply of the exported goods from the sanctioned country. Therefore the imposition of economic sanctions have a large negative effect on international trade between the sanctioned country and others. However, the effect shown from imposing sanctions and threatening sanctions is very different. This is because when a country is threatened with economic sanctions, they would usually import and export more goods in order to compensate for the drop their economy will experience when the sanctions are imposed. This has the opposite effect because this increase in international trade allows for an increase in the economy, allowing the target country get ahead before the sanctions are officially imposed. In some cases, the sanctions do not end up being imposed, allowing the target country’s economy to remain at a high.
Definition of Key Terms

Diplomatic Sanctions
The reduction or cutting off of international ties, e.g. removal of embassies. This can cause a reduction or a complete stop to international trade with the target country and the country which imposed the sanctions or an ally of it.

Economic Sanctions
Actions taken by a country or an organisation with the intent to harm the economy of another country in order to force it to obey international law or a set of rules.

Embargo
An official ban on trade for a country, usually through the use of an air and/or naval blockade. This usually happens if the imposition of sanctions are not enough. However, some countries may see an embargo as an act of war due to the use of the military.

International Trade
The exchanging of goods across borders involving two or more countries. International trade helps drive up not only the economy of the countries involved, but also the global economy as a whole.

Military Sanctions
The use of a military intervention within the target country's borders. This is also only used when peaceful sanctions are not enough but it may also be seen as a declaration of war by the target country.

Sport Sanctions
Preventing a country's people and/or teams from participating in an international event. This type of sanction is rarely used as it isn't very effective in regards to preventing a country from acting in a certain way.

Targeted/Smart Sanctions
A form of sanction which aims to directly impact a group or individual within the target country whilst also trying to minimise any collateral damage.

Trade Sanctions
The implementation of limitations on international trade, e.g. tariffs or similar measures. This is very effective as many countries rely heavily on international trade. However, this type of sanction does hurt the general public and may not produce the desired outcome.

Background Information

Sanctions have been around for a very long time but they have only been properly imposed and upheld since the creation of the United Nations in 1945. After that, sanctions have been the main form of averting harmful outcomes from potentially harmful countries. The UN have a variety of types of sanctions to choose from, however, the economic sanction is the most common choice for the Security Council. In order for a sanction to be imposed, they must fall under one of three different categories. These categories are used to differentiate between the context of the sanctions due to the nature of the harmful act carried out by the target country. Those categories are as follows:

Cooperation with international law

This category houses sanctions which have the intent of forcing the target country to cooperate with the International Law. An example of this type of sanction would be when the UN placed these sanctions on Iraq due to their invasion of Kuwait on the 6th of August, 1990. The sanctions prevented any further advancements of Iraq and forced them to cooperate with international law.

The containment of a threat within a region

Sanctions which fall under this category come with the intent to keep the peace within a certain region. This sanction may be imposed due to a country creating destructive weapons. The principle of this type of sanction is to decrease and contain the possibility of violence within the target country’s neighbouring regions.

The condemnation of the actions or policies carried out by any nation

This category involves the UN condemning the actions or policies which a country has taken whether or not they are a member of the UN itself. This form of sanction could be seen when a white minority declared Rhodesia as an independent country on the 11th of November, 1965. In this case, the General Assembly voted in favour of condemning on all oil, petroleum, economic and military products. This later caused the UN to impose sanctions on the Rhodesian people.

These reasons for imposing sanctions are very general and apply to the economic sanctions which are being imposed today. However, they do not show that voting members share the same reason.
for imposing them in the first place. Many countries often vote on sanctions which favour their own country instead of the international community as a whole.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations is the main organization that issues sanctions to countries and other parties. The imposing of these sanctions has been carried out by the Security Council ever since the UN was formed in 1945. Since 1966, they have imposed sanctions on a multitude of countries and organisations that have disturbed the international community with their harmful and ill intent. The Security Council has a large variety of sanctions to choose from when they must impose them. These can range from light yet comprehensive trade and economic sanctions, to full-on embargoes and even the restriction of international movement from the target country’s citizens.

United States of America

The United States of America is by far the country which has imposed the highest number of sanctions on other countries, organisations and even individual persons such as Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman. As of May 2019, the US has 7,967 sanctions in place. This makes them a very large player in the field of imposing and upholding economic sanctions. However, many people fear that the US is being too harsh with these sanctions and is using them to their own benefit instead of to the benefit of the international community.

Iran

The US recently imposed a very harsh set of sanctions on Iran after they pulled out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), unofficially known as the 'Iran Nuclear Deal'. These sanctions targeted certain areas of Iran’s economy which prevented its growth. These areas include finance, shipping and energy. Iran has a large history of having sanctions imposed upon them by the US. For example, Ronald Reagan previously imposed sanctions on Iran in 1987 after Iran took actions against US and other shipping vessels in the Persian Gulf as well as for their general support for terrorism. These sanctions were later added upon in 1995 to include certain companies engaged in deals with the Iranian government.

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

The DPRK also has quite a few sanctions that are currently imposed on them by countries or international bodies as a whole. It started in the 1950s when the US began to impose sanctions on
DPRK for terrorist bombings and attacks against South Korea. However, these sanctions started to relax in the 1990s when South Korea pushed for talks and peace with the North. Unfortunately, this relaxation didn’t account to much as, in 2003, DPRK pulled out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (Nuclear NPT) and the sanctions were re-imposed. This led to more sanctions against the DPRK after they conducted nuclear tests from 2006-2017. Initially, these sanctions were trade bans aimed at goods and materials related to weapons but later expanded to luxury goods in order to target the elites.

**Timeline of Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
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<tr>
<td>October 24th, 1945</td>
<td>The United Nations is formed in San Francisco, California and creates the Security Council, the only council allowed to impose sanctions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 6th, 1990</td>
<td>Sanctions are placed on Iraq for their invasion of Kuwait. These sanctions later developed into an embargo through a naval and air blockade.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 10th, 2003</td>
<td>The DPRK pulls out of the Nuclear NPT, causing sanctions from multiple countries and international bodies to be re-imposed upon it. This prevents the DPRK from receiving weapons related materials which would have allowed them to continue constructing and testing nuclear weapons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 9th, 2010</td>
<td>The UN Resolution 1929 is passed, providing restrictions on materials that Iran can obtain in order to create destructive weapons during the 2010 Iran nuclear proliferation debate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 5th, 2018</td>
<td>The US fully re-imposes all the sanctions on Iran which were lifted under the JCPOA. These are the harshest sanctions Iran has ever received from the USA and are aimed at very crucial areas of Iran’s economy such as energy, shipping and financial sectors.</td>
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**Relevant UN Treaties and Events**
As the effects of sanctions become more of an issue in the international community, the UN has passed many resolutions and adopted many policies which allow sanctions to provide the desired outcome with as little collateral damage as possible. They have also produced multiple reports and other documents in regards to the issue of economic sanctions. The relevant resolutions and documents are as follows:

- A note from the president of the Security Council addressing what the Working Group will target in order to make UN sanctions more effective, 29 December 2005 (S/2005/841)
- A statement from the president of the Security Council affirming the Council's commitment to ensuring that sanctions are targeted and produce little to no adverse consequences, 1 January 2006 (S/PRST/2006/28)
- A resolution for the targeted sanctions regime on Mali. This is a modern example of how targeted sanctions work and how they are implemented into resolutions, 5 September 2017 (S/RES/2374)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

“Targeted Sanctions” or “Smart Sanctions”

Many economic sanctions imposed today have a side effect of harming the general public of the targeted country. This collateral damage can cause the sanction to be useless whilst also harming many innocent people. The idea of these “targeted sanctions” arose in the late 1990’s and the early 2000’s and quickly picked up a lot of traction as they target the root cause of a problem without causing the aforementioned collateral damage. They do this by keeping significant trade flows as they were, allowing the sanctions to be imposed with minimal cost to the general public. However, this attention was very short lived as evidence showed that these “targeted sanctions” are no better in generating change from the target country in comparison to normal sanctions. Although they solve the political problem of taking action against the targeted country, they do not solve the actual problem of coercing the target country and keeping the international peace. An example of a resolution which uses targeted sanctions would be the Security Council resolution S/RES/2374. This resolution provides a lost of targeted sanctions to be imposed on Mali. However, this resolution also shows the issue with targeted sanctions in the sense that they are hard to fully and properly implement. This is because the resolution uses sanctions such as a travel ban, limiting the movement of the people of Mali.

Sanction Committees

Sanction committees are subsidiaries of the UN Security Council where they discuss the sanctions and provide recommendations about them to the Council. Although this is still being used today, it obviously isn’t enough when it comes to the issue of sanctions. This may be due to the
committees not spending enough time looking into the sanctions or perhaps some countries have more influence within the Council than others. This prevents the committee from being able to get to the bottom of the issue and actually solve it.

Possible Solutions

The UN has already done quite a bit to refine and sharpen sanctions in order to ensure that they are effective and do not cause any unnecessary harm. However, there is still quite a bit of room for improvement. One of the main issues with sanctions is that they harm the general public of the target country, causing the sanctions to do more harm than good. A possible solution to this setback could be running the sanction through the Human Rights Council (HRC) or the Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC). This would allow them to review the sanctions and ensure that they do not damage the public and instead allow them to impact the necessary entities and achieve the desired outcome. Although this may take longer than it currently does to implement a sanction, it is a step in the right direction to ensure there is little to no collateral damage. Similarly, there could be a panel of experts in the field which the sanction deals with which analyses the sanctions and decides whether or not they should be implemented. This would also prevent any adverse consequences as the experts would have ruled out any sanctions that may have caused them.

Another solution to the issue could be consulting with nations whose general public has been previously affected by sanctions. This would help as it allows the root cause of the problem to be found and answers the question of how to not affect those who are not deserving when it comes to implementing sanctions. Obviously, the nation that is consulted would have to not be on the UN’s current list of sanctioned entities, however if done properly, this method can provide a lot of insight into how to solve the issue at hand.

Unfortunately, these are mainly short term to medium term solutions. A feasible long term solution is still yet to be found as the issue of sanctions is very vast and sanctions are very commonly used in the international community. Certain solutions have been ruled out as they may prevent certain countries from being sanctioned when, in fact, they should be.

Bibliography


“Sanctions Security Council.” *United Nations*, United Nations, 


**Appendices**


