

Lend Lease 19 Notes and Links - Why Sanctions are Bad

- <https://www.brookings.edu/research/economic-sanctions-too-much-of-a-bad-thing/> (June 1998)
 - I'm citing this paper purely for background commentary on the problems -- it's from Richard Haas who's not a good source in general -- and I'm not citing it for their version of better sanctions. Also important to note that it's from 1998 and lacks all the post-9/11 context.
 - "economic sanctions are fast becoming the policy tool of choice for the United States in the post-cold war world" ... "Sanctions can offer what appears to be a proportional response to a challenge in which the interests at stake are less than vital. In addition, sanctions are a way to signal official displeasure with a certain behavior"
 - Economic sanctions vs highly targeted sanctions on leadership & armed forces; also punitive sanctions vs coercive sanctions
 - "More generally, sanctions can have the perverse effect of bolstering authoritarian, statist societies. By creating scarcity, they enable governments to better control distribution of goods"
 - It's difficult to decide when to lift sanctions, especially when it becomes clear they are having little to no effect on changing or reversing behavior
- <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/28/sanctions-are-a-failurelets-admit-that/> (April 2016)
 - It was a heavy lift to get the successful short-term Iran sanctions coupled with diplomacy and then the US didn't really stick to it due to other political pressures
 - The Russia sanctions, while devastating to ordinary Russians, did not result in a Russian withdrawal from Ukrainian territories including Crimea and Russia is such a big economy that it's hard to envision that having worked (so it must have been punitive more than coercive but obviously eventually has to be lifted regardless of result)
 - *Cato research fellow Emma Ashford, an expert on the politics of energy, called the sanctions against Russia an "outright failure" that have led to food shortages and credit crunches for ordinary Russians, and ultimately "are harming U.S. economic and geopolitical interests."*
 - This article is locked:
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2015-12-14/not-so-smart-sanctions>
 - One big example of unintended consequences was an effort to curb the flow of money to al-Shabaab in Somalia which ended up cutting off remittance flows from the Somali diaspora to all their family back home
- <https://theweek.com/articles/832533/unexpected-cruelty-sanctions> (April 2019)
 - In the early spring of 2019, there was huge flooding across Iran, which devastated a number of communities, and there was almost no

international aid forthcoming due to sanctions (especially bank transfer sanctions and sanctions on equipment to repair rescue vehicles including helicopters) and political factors. Mike Pompeo told people to donate to Iranian Red Crescent with no explanation of how since that money can't reach them due to the US sanctions regime

- *One study of 85 sanctions systems published in International Security identified just four successes. Sanctions are "not likely to achieve major foreign policy goals," the survey concluded, but they reliably "inflict significant human costs on the populations of target states, including on innocent civilians who have little influence on their government's behavior."*
 - [http://web.stanford.edu/class/ips216/Readings/pape_97%20\(jstor\).pdf](http://web.stanford.edu/class/ips216/Readings/pape_97%20(jstor).pdf) "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work" by Robert A. Pape, *International Security* (Autumn 1997)
- *Venezuela food & medicine shortages: What if the sanctions "plan doesn't work? Suppose the [Maduro] government holds on, and then you've duplicated the suffering and you haven't solved the problem," Crisis Group analyst Phil Gunson, who is based in Caracas, told the Miami Herald. "The prospect that it can be apocalyptic but not produce an outcome can be quite scary."*
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/08/iran-sanctions-donald-trump-morally-wrong> (Aug 2018, columnist Afua Hirsch)
 - "Sanctions are so common a tactic now that we question their utility but rarely their morality."
 - *The lie of targeted sanctions: "Smart [sanction]" branding sounds impressive but is often too good to be true. Under Obama's sanctions, the percentage of Iranian families living in poverty almost doubled, millions were left without access to essential medical treatment, and child marriage – according to one measure – rose by a fifth, as struggling families pulled their girls out of school and married them off to alleviate extreme financial hardship. Sanctions that seem unrelated to innocent civilians often have unforeseen consequences, like the almost 2,000 Iranians who have died in plane crashes since the country's isolation from the international community began to limit access to spare parts.*
 - *In Apartheid South Africa, activists in South Africa were publicly campaigning for the international community to apply sanctions (often going to prison for it), but we rarely if ever hear that in places like Iran*
 - *state control if the recent history of Obama-era sanctions are anything to go by. They drove out legitimate middle-class businesses and helped the state monopolise the economy; exactly the opposite of what the US wants. Sanctions cannot be justified if it's already apparent that they won't work.*
- <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/05/seven-fallacies-of-economic-sanctions/>

- 1. “Kinder and gentler” than war
- 2. “If sanctions are hurting, they must be working”
- 3. Sanctions are “smart” and “targeted”
- 4. Way to uphold and promote human rights
- 5. Sanctions are an effective way to bring about regime change
- 6. Sanctions weaken the targeted governments
- 7. Sanctions are effective in preventing nuclear proliferation)
- <https://www.dw.com/en/the-human-cost-of-the-us-sanctions-on-venezuela/a-50647399> (January 2019)
 - 16,000 people who need dialysis, 16,000 cancer patients and roughly 80,000 people with HIV, according to a report published in April by the Washington-based Center for Economic and Policy Research.
 - "We understand that the Pan American Health Organization has had to change the accounts [used to purchase the medicine] four times, because they keep getting blocked," says Marcel Quintana, the person in charge of the distribution of antiviral meds to the country's HIV patients, something Venezuela has provided free of charge for decades.
 - According to representatives from Hidrocapital, the state water agency for the capital, Caracas, roughly 15%-20% of Venezuelans don't have access to potable water in their homes, because the government cannot acquire new foreign-built parts to fix broken pumps and pipes.
 - In response, Hidrocapital ships truckloads of water each week to needy communities. But the blockade, and the lack of parts for vehicles, is also impacting the number of water trucks Hidrocapital can keep on the road. Maria Flores, vice president of operations at Hidrocapital, says their fleet has been reduced by 75% over the last three years, to now only a handful of trucks.
- <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/05/venezuela-sanctions-trump-intervention>
 - The [study](#) in question, produced by economists Mark Weisbrot and Jeffrey Sachs, provides a virtual tour through the ravages brought on ordinary Venezuelans by Trump's sanctions. The authors determine the country experienced around forty thousand more deaths from 2017 to 2018, as well as 300,000 people put at risk through lack of access to medicine and health care, including eighty thousand HIV-positive Venezuelans who have gone without antiretroviral drugs for two years now and sixteen thousand people on dialysis. There are four million people with diabetes and hypertension, many of whom can't access the drugs they need.
 - Trump pressured other countries not to buy Venezuela oil, sending production dropping by 130,000 barrels per day this year, more than six times the average rate of decline seen in the final six months of last year. Sanctions have frozen more than \$17 billion worth of the country's assets,

barred the sale of billions of dollars in trade credits, and prevented the country from restructuring its foreign debt.

- Outlets like the [New York Times](#) and [Forbes](#) characterized at the time as “limited” and not going to “have much effect beyond the simply political.” This is important, because this economic and humanitarian crisis engineered by the Trump administration is typically blamed on Maduro alone, perversely then becoming a plank in arguments for regime change.
 - Most recently, the *Washington Post*, in a piece of [straight reporting](#), casually asserted that “corruption, mismanagement, and failed policies have brought Venezuela to its knees.” If you read only establishment media, Trump’s sanctions simply do not exist.
 - This is what DC-speak like “root for the people” means in reality: plunge them into such misery and suffering in the hope that they might install your favored leader out of despair.
 - The record of Western sanctions is clear, and it’s not one of ever helping “the people” regime change enthusiasts claim they speak for. Instead, they’ve caused misery, chaos, and death for already suffering populations while strengthening the hand of the rulers who repress them. If the political and media establishment wants to help the Venezuelan people, Weisbrot and Sachs amply demonstrate that the best thing they could do is push the administration to end this modern-day siege. But that’s never been their real goal, so expect them to continue cheering Trump on.
- Albright’s quote on sanctions on Iraq during the 1990s, which killed 500,000 children
 - In May of 1996, 60 Minutes aired an interview with Madeleine Albright, who at the time was Clinton’s U.N. ambassador. Correspondent Leslie Stahl said to Albright, “We have heard that a half-million children have died. I mean, that’s more children than died in Hiroshima. And — and, you know, is the price worth it?” Madeleine Albright replied, “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price — we think the price is worth it.”
https://www.democracynow.org/2004/7/30/democracy_now_confronts_madeleine_albright_on