

Sanctions or Siege?

Overview

1. Hybrid Warfare
2. Economic War as 'Sanctions'
3. Addressing Siege Warfare

SDPCW, Supplementary Unit A
Dr. Tim Anderson
<http://counter-hegemonic-studies.site>

CENTRE FOR COUNTER HEGEMONIC STUDIES

1. Hybrid Warfare

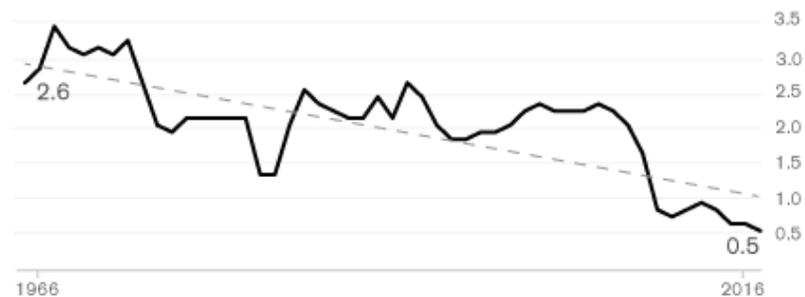
As Washington's relative economic power declines, it has launched a series of **'hybrid wars'** in attempts to preserve its position in the world, especially its influence in Europe and Asia, and in the linked West Asian region. The self-styled 'hegemon' faces a new **'great game'** and, like previous 'great games', this is the strategic context for many regional wars.

	'Great Game'	Regional wars
19th C	British v Russian Empires	Central Asia, Persia, India
20th C	USA v USSR (Cold War)	Korea, Vietnam, Africa, LatAm
21st C	USA v threat of Eurasian blocs (linked to China and Russia)	Middle East, Central Asia, Eastern Europe

US relative economic decline, and the consequences

The Growth Slowdown

% Annual growth rate in real GDP per capita over 10-year periods



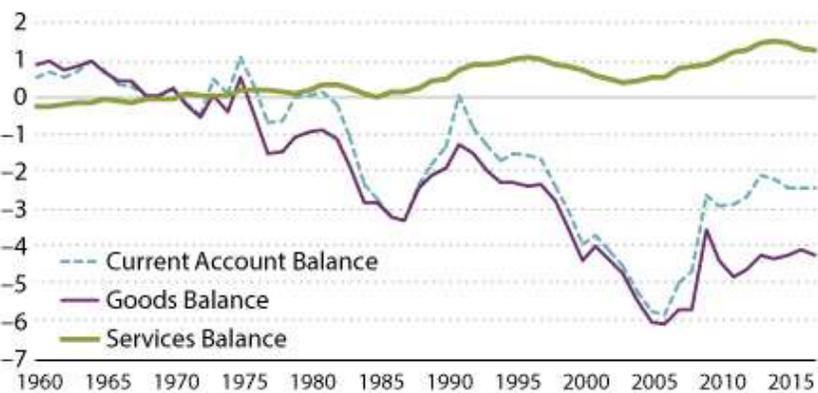
Source: The GDP per capita growth rate of Economic Analysis. Growth intervals and reported in annual

Long term US productivity and trade decline (reducing the US share of global GDP) since the late 1960s has led Washington to:

- Attempt to contain geopolitical rivals;
- Enforce US monopoly privileges and IPRs;
- With failing globalism, attempt regional blocs;
- Seek division and capture of 'peripheral' states.

Figure 1
U.S. Trade Balance

Percent of GDP



SOURCE: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Haver Analytics, and authors' calculations.

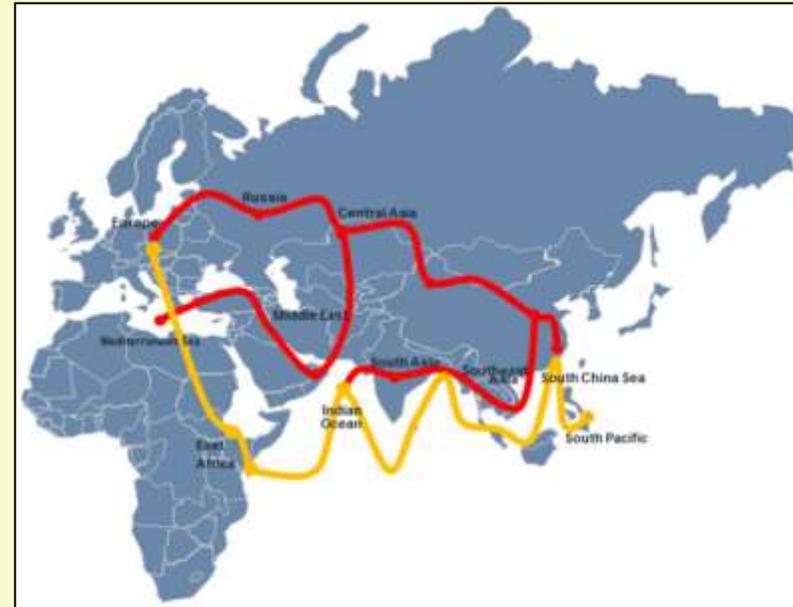
Gallup (2016) No Recovery: An Analysis of Long-Term U.S. Productivity Decline, online:
<https://news.gallup.com/reports/198776/no-recovery-analysis-long-term-productivity-decline.aspx>

Washington sees a 'threat' from Eurasia and other independent power blocs and in the 21st C. wanted to create a 'New Middle East'

- Traditional imperial aims: control an entire resource rich region and dictate the terms of access to others, especially in light of:
 - Russian influence in eastern Europe and Central Asia
 - China's expansion, esp. the 'belt and road' mega infrastructure network
 - The likelihood of strong links between formed between Europe, Russia and China, which would weaken US position in both Europe and Asia

Proposed by China's President Xi Jinping in 2013, the **Belt and Road Initiative** (BRI) is the world's largest project of connectivity in modern times. The "Belt" links China with South East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Russia and Europe by land, and the "Road" is a sea route connecting China with South East and South Asia, East Africa and the Middle East.

U.S.-China Tech Battle:
Huawei and the Fight for
Dominance in Wireless Technology



Washington could not pursue its **anti-Eurasian** and **New Middle East** objectives by conventional war or economic domination, so it resorts to **hybrid war**, using:

- **client states** to finance **mass terrorism** (e.g. Saudi Arabia and others);
- **economic siege** measures (called 'sanctions') against dozens of countries;
- **Mass propaganda**, through both state and corporate media and by gaining control of (of placing constraints on) social media;
- Reliance on **imperial doctrines** such as: 'smart power', 'full spectrum dominance', 'destroying disconnectedness', 'exceptionalism' and a 'responsibility to protect' (RTP).

If independent states cannot be made to submit, the 'Plan B' will be to weaken, divide and punish entire populations, until they 'scream'.

Speaking of measures against the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile, in the early 1970s, US President Nixon expressed the hope of forcing political upheaval and change by measures **"to make the economy scream"** (Kornbluh 2017).



2. Economic War as 'Sanctions'

- Sanctions under international law
- Unilateral coercive measures (UCMs)
- The impact of siege warfare



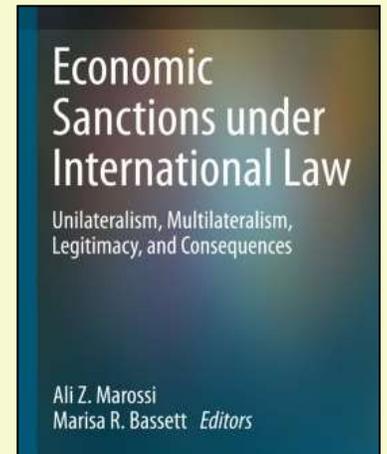
Economic Sanctions as Human Rights Violations:

International Law and the Right
to Life



What are 'sanctions' under international law?

- A 'sanction' implies the punitive or corrective outcome of some judicious process;
- In traditional international law there are two principles said to limit a state's retaliation against others:
 - ❑ the response should be 'in proportion' to an alleged action by the other; and
 - ❑ any reprisal only comes after attempts at negotiation (Shneyer and Barta 1981)
- So for example, it was said that initial US 'sanctions' against Cuba (before 1962) could have been justifiable during a breakdown in negotiations over compensation for property nationalised in 1960-61 (White 2018: 8); yet the later, coercive measures breached a range of international laws;
- US Legal Counsel acknowledged, during plans to launch a blockade of Cuba, that 'blockade' has a warlike meaning (OLC 1962); the US since then spoke of an "embargo"
- International sanctions against South Africa, however, followed a judicious course.



Sanctions against Apartheid South Africa

- The demand for boycott and sanctions on apartheid South Africa was charted carefully by a broad coalition of popular movements in the late 1950s. The call for sanctions came in the early 1960s, after mass organisations were banned;
- Importantly, the boycott call was endorsed by South African groups and unions, those most likely to be affected by economic pressures;
- In 1962 the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 1761 (XVII) which called on members states to impose sanctions on South Africa;
- In 1966 the UNGA designated Apartheid 'a crime against humanity', this was put into a Convention (treaty) in 1973, and in 1984 the UNSC endorsed it;
- Reddy (1965: 10): "the initiative for boycott and sanctions came from the national liberation movement of South Africa, and [was] carried forward internationally with the support of African and other states, as well as men and women of conscience in western countries";
- Only in the late 1980s did western states join in with sanctions. As apartheid was being dismantled, in the transition of the early 1990s, Nelson Mandela called for an end to sanctions (except for those on arms) (Preston 1993).



**RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED ON THE REPORTS OF THE SPECIAL
POLITICAL COMMITTEE**

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1761 (XVII). The policies of *apartheid* of the Government of the Republic of South Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling its previous resolutions on the question of race conflict in South Africa resulting from the policies of *apartheid* of the Government of the Republic of South Africa,

Further recalling its resolutions 44 (I) of 8 December 1946, 395 (V) of 2 December 1950, 615 (VII) of 5 December 1952, 1179 (XII) of 26 November 1957, 1302 (XIII) of 10 December 1958, 1460 (XIV) of 10 December 1959, 1597 (XV) of 13 April 1961 and 1662 (XVI) of 28 November 1961, on the question of the treatment of peoples of Indian and Indo-Pakistan origin,

Noting the reports of the Governments of India¹ and Pakistan² on that subject,

Recalling that the Security Council in its resolution of 1 April 1960³ recognized that the situation in South Africa was one that had led to international friction and, if continued, might endanger international peace and security,

Recalling further that the Security Council in its aforesaid resolution called upon the Government of South Africa to initiate measures aimed at bringing about racial harmony based on equality in order to ensure that the present situation does not continue or recur, and to abandon its policies of *apartheid* and racial discrimination,

Regretting that the actions of some Member States indirectly provide encouragement to the Government of

South Africa to perpetuate its policy of racial segregation, which has been rejected by the majority of that country's population,

1. *Deplores* the failure of the Government of the Republic of South Africa to comply with the repeated requests and demands of the General Assembly and of the Security Council and its flouting of world public opinion by refusing to abandon its racial policies;

2. *Strongly deprecates* the continued and total disregard by the Government of South Africa of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and, furthermore, its determined aggravation of racial issues by enforcing measures of increasing ruthlessness involving violence and bloodshed;

3. *Reaffirms* that the continuance of those policies seriously endangers international peace and security;

4. *Requests* Member States to take the following measures, separately or collectively, in conformity with the Charter, to bring about the abandonment of those policies:

(a) Breaking off diplomatic relations with the Government of the Republic of South Africa or refraining from establishing such relations;

(b) Closing their ports to all vessels flying the South African flag;

(c) Enacting legislation prohibiting their ships from entering South African ports;

(d) Boycotting all South African goods and refraining from exporting goods, including all arms and ammunition, to South Africa;

(e) Refusing landing and passage facilities to all aircraft belonging to the Government of South Africa and companies registered under the laws of South Africa;

5. *Decides* to establish a Special Committee consisting of representatives of Member States nominated by the President of the General Assembly, with the following terms of reference:



TOP: Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, New York, 30 November 1973, online: <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cspca/cspca.html>

LEFT: UN Resolution 1761 (XVII) of 1962 called for international boycott of Apartheid South Africa: online: <http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGA/1962/21.pdf>

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventeenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 87, document A/5166.*

² *Ibid.*, document A/5173.

³ *Official Records of the Security Council, Fifteenth Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1960, document S/4300.*

The **South African** case could be the model for broad international and legitimate sanctions against **Apartheid Israel**, that is:

- Declaration of Apartheid in occupied Palestine as a Crime Against Humanity;
- Clear consent from those likely to be affected by boycotts;
- Boycotts by as many of the 'front line states' as possible;
- UN General Assembly endorsement of boycotts and sanctions;
- In the final stages the Zionist internal morale would collapse and western states would be forced to lend support to dismantling the apartheid system.



How are '**unilateral coercive measures**' different and illegal?

Most of Washington's 'unilateral coercive measures' (UCM aka 'sanctions') are illegal, for these four reasons:

1. international law prohibits economic coercion, by the principle of non-intervention and an implied ban in the UN Charter;
2. The illegality is more obvious when there is an 'unlawful intent', such as damaging the economy of another nation for the purpose of political coercion;
3. Measures which damage the rights of third parties are also illegal;
4. They usually also breach international customary law and specific treaties, e.g. WTO, postal, maritime, etc.

Tim Anderson (2019) Sanctions as Siege Warfare, Chapter 3 in Axis of Resistance, also online here:
<https://counter-hegemonic-studies.site/sanctions-3/>

UNHRC (2021) Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, online: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/ucm/pages/srcoercivemeasures.aspx>



So, in practice:

- UCMs aiming at 'regime change' are a form of siege warfare;
- They are sometimes accompanied by land and sea blockades, and always by propaganda wars;
- Contemporary examples are the economic wars against Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Iran, Syria and Yemen;
- 'Partial sanctions' on particular resistance groups within Iraq and Lebanon are much the same, as they have few boundaries and embody political coercion in attempts to reduce the influence of those groups.



**UNILATERAL COERCIVE
MEASURES**

المنظمة العربية لمراقبة الحقوق
arwa
arabian rights watch association

Unilateral Coercive Measures taken by the Saudi-led Coalition (Source) to violate human rights and exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen (Target)
Online: <http://arwarights.org/unilateral-coercive-measures-complaint>

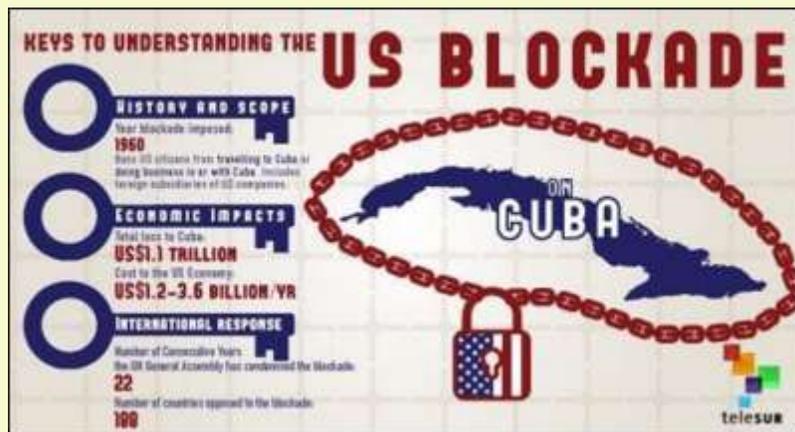
UCMs against Cuba, from 1962

In 1960 senior US official Lester Mallory argued for punishing economic attacks on the Cuban population, to undermine what they knew was a popular Revolutionary government:

“The majority of Cubans support Castro (the lowest estimate I have seen is 50 percent) ... The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship ... every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba ... to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government”

A series of laws and executive orders from 1962-2021 now comprise what Cuba calls a 'blockade' (= an act of war) and which the US calls an 'embargo';

In its report for the UN in 2018 Cuba said that US combination of ten laws and decrees breach the UN Charter and GATT-WTO trade law, while also violating the rights of third party sovereign nations. The sanctions in law are accompanied by “prohibitions, threats and blackmail” against third parties, by US Government representatives and aimed at “bringing the Cuban people to its knees by hunger and disease” (MINREX 2018: 51-55).



UCMs of the USA and the European Union

The USA and the EU have imposed unilateral coercive measures on dozens of countries, only some of these measures have any sort of UN equivalent.

For example, as at 2019, there were no type of UN sanctions against Belarus, China, Cuba, Nicaragua, Tunisia, Venezuela or Zimbabwe.

Countries 'sanctioned' by the USA and the European Union			
Country	USA	European Union	United Nations
Afghanistan		X	X
Balkans (6 countries)	X		
Belarus	X	X	
Bosnia and Herzegovina		X	
Burundi	X	X	
Central African Republic	X	X	X
China		X	
Cuba	X		
Dem Rep Congo	X	X	X
Egypt		X	
Eritrea		X	X
Guinea		X	
Guinea-Bissau		X	X
Haiti		X	
Iran	X	X	X
Iraq	X	X	X
Lebanon	X	X	X
Libya	X	X	X
Maldives		X	
Mali		X	X
Moldova		X	
Montenegro		X	
Myanmar (Burma)		X	
Nicaragua	X		
North Korea (DPRK)	X	X	X
Russia		X	
Serbia		X	
Somalia	X	X	X
South Sudan	X	X	X
Sudan	X	X	X
Syria	X	X	X
Tunisia		X	
Ukraine	X	X	
United States		X	
Venezuela	X	X	
Yemen	X	X	X
Zimbabwe	X	X	

Sources: European Union 2019; US Dept of Treasury 2019a

The USA enforces UCMs against 3rd parties

OFAC Major Penalties, 2008-2018

Year	Total USD million	Of which the largest were (USD million):
2008	3.5	--
2009	772.4	Lloyds TSB 217m; Credit Suisse 536m
2010	200.7	Barclays Bank 176m
2011	91.6	J.P. Morgan 88m
2012	1,139.1	ING Bank 619m; HSBC Bank 375m; Standard Chartered 132m
2013	137.1	Weatherford Intl 91m
2014	1,205.2	BNP Paribas 963m; Clearstream Banking 151m; Fokker services 50m
2015	8.9bn + 599.7	BNP Paribas 8.9bn; Credit Agricole 329m; Commerzbank 258m
2016	21.6	--
2017	119.5	Zhongxing Telecom 100m
2018	91	Société Générale SA 53m

Source: US Dept. of Treasury 2019b; Raymond 2015

Starting in 2009, under the Obama administration, Washington began to impose very large "fines" on European banks (third parties) for their business with Iran, Cuba and some other countries.

OFAC update:

Yearly total "fines", US\$:

2019	1,289,027,059
2020	23,565,657

OFAC = 'Office of Foreign Asset Control', a section of the US Treasury



Trump's 'maximum pressure' UCMs on Iran

President Trump added a series of new UCMs to the pre-existing measures against Iran, many of them nothing to do with nuclear matters;

In 2018 former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo then threatened the Iranian people with imposed hunger if their government persisted with military support for the independent peoples of the region (Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen): "the leadership has to make a decision that they want their people to eat" (Cole 2018), he said, trying to shift the blame for US aggression onto others;

Successive US administrations have normalised so-called 'sanctions' regimes as an aggressive practice which forms part of broader hybrid war and illegitimate 'regime change' strategy.



<http://www.ronpaulinstitute.org/archives/featured-articles/2018/november/09/irans-leadership-must-decide-if-they-want-their-people-to-eat-pompeo/>

UCMs against Lebanon: 'partial sanctions'?



<https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/lebanon-related-sanctions>



The US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has implemented a Lebanon sanctions program since August 1, 2007, when the President issued Executive Order (E.O.) 13441, "Blocking Property of Persons Undermining the Sovereignty of Lebanon or Its Democratic Processes and Institutions." They are assisted by Lebanon's Central Bank. The principal target is Hezbollah related operations, but also includes Iranian and Syrian linked businesses.

III. PROHIBITED TRANSACTIONS

E.O. 13441 and the Regulations block the property and interests in property of persons (which includes individuals and entities) determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State:

- To have taken, or to pose a significant risk of taking, actions, including acts of violence, that have the purpose or effect of undermining Lebanon's democratic processes or institutions, contributing to the breakdown of the rule of law in Lebanon, supporting the reassertion of Syrian control or otherwise contributing to Syrian interference in Lebanon, or infringing upon or undermining Lebanese sovereignty;
- To have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services in support of, such actions, including acts of violence, or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 13441;
- To be a spouse or dependent child of any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 13441; or
- To be owned or controlled by, or acting or purporting to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 13441.

The names of individuals and entities designated pursuant to E.O. 13441 or the Regulations, whose property and interests in property are therefore blocked, are published in the *Federal Register* and incorporated into OFAC's Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN List) with the identifier "[LEBANON]." The SDN List is available through the following page on OFAC's website at <http://www.treasury.gov/sdn>.

The US Secretary of Treasury is said, by US law, to be able to "block the property and interests of persons ... and entities", following the guidelines of US legislated 'sanctions'.

This has no basis in international law.

Washington's UCMs against Lebanon have included Syrian and Lebanese persons and companies, and senior FPM official Gibran Bassil.

US sanctions target Syria regime oil networks

State Department says US will continue to use 'available mechanisms' to pressure the Assad regime.

Friday 07/09/2018



US Sanctions Seven Lebanese Linked to Hezbollah

By CNN News
May 11, 2020 12:08 PM

US sanctions Lebanon's former foreign minister

Treasury Dept. says Gibran Bassil sanctioned due to his 'role in corruption' in Lebanon

Beyza Binur Doumaz | 06.11.2020

SPECIALLY DESIGNATED NATIONALS AND BLOCKED PERSONS ("SDN List"): [Lebanon examples ...]

AASI, Sheikh Yusuf ... Beirut, Lebanon (individual) [SDGT] (Linked To: MARTYRS FOUNDATION IN LEBANON).

ABAR PETROLEUM SERVICE SAL ... Azarieh Street, Beirut, Lebanon [SYRIA].

ABD-AL-KARIM ALI, Ali ... Syrian Ambassador to Lebanon (individual) [SYRIA].

NASCO POLYMERS & CHEMICALS ... Unesco Sector, Beirut, Lebanon; ... (Linked To: SYRIAN COMPANY FOR OIL TRANSPORT). ... etc

The impact of siege warfare

The Syrian economy had been hit hard with UCMs affecting all Syrian business for many years now, and strong third party UCMs since 2019 under Trump's 'Caesar Law'.



West sanctions on Syria hitting children's cancer treatment: WHO

Home / Middle East / Syria

Wed Mar 15, 2017 6



- EU claims food and medicines are exempt, but harsh financial sanctions on Syria block procurement;
- WHO says critical shortages of: cancer medication, insulin, anaesthetics, antibiotics for intensive care, serums, intravenous fluids and other blood products and vaccines.

The WHO statement (above) is from 2017. The WSJ headline (left) is entirely misleading. The 'Caesar Act' is not about the Assad family, it affects the whole of Syria and outside parties who do business with Syria, without Washington's approval

3. Addressing siege warfare

In response to the widespread **hybrid war** and **siege** measures, including occupation, terrorism, blockades and UCMs, there have been U.N. moves against the UCMs, distinct country strategies and the development of new commercial and financial architecture.

Independent UN rights expert calls for unilateral sanctions to be dropped against Venezuela



UN Representatives Declare Crippling Sanctions Have Caused Human Rights Violations Amid Pandemic

2021: Independent UN rights expert calls for unilateral sanctions to be dropped against Venezuela, online: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/02/1084642>

Moves against UCMs at the United Nations

UCMs proliferated so much that in 2014 the UN Human Rights Council adopted resolution 27/21 on human rights and unilateral coercive measures. It has since appointed experts to investigate UCMs used against several countries. UN Human Rights experts in other areas such as the right to food, have also engaged with the impact of UCMs, e.g. on Yemen.



2015: Hilal Elver UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, online: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/08/506142-yemen-amid-food-crisis-un-expert-warns-deliberate-starvation-civilians>

2021: UN expert: crippling US sanctions on Syria are illegal and hurting civilians, online: <https://thegrayzone.com/2021/01/14/un-expert-crippling-us-sanctions-on-syria-are-illegal-and-hurting-civilians/>

UN rights expert urges United States to remove sanctions hindering rebuilding in Syria

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1081032>



Cuba's anti-blockade diplomatic campaign



<http://www.cubadebate.com/noticias/2021/06/23/victoria-de-cuba-en-onu-184-a-favor-2-en-contra-y-3-abstenciones/>

Cuba puts a motion to the UN every year (since the 1990s) calling for an end to the 'blockade' of the island by the USA. In recent years the motion has been opposed only by the USA, Israel and sometimes one other country.

Distinct strategies:

Cuba has driven a successful diplomatic campaign against the US 'blockade', a campaign helped by Cuba's popular medical assistance missions and mass doctor training.

The Islamic Republic of Iran (a large state) has developed a 'Resistance Economy' model, while building stronger links with Russia, China and other independent states like Cuba and Venezuela.

North Korea (the DPRK), in a long term state of war, has maintained an assertive and self-reliant strategy ('Juche'), and is now re-building stronger links with China.



Strategic Resistance in West Asia: building new commercial and financial architecture

'Axis of Resistance': Iran led alliance, feared by Israeli and US leaders, its basis is opposition to Israel and US domination;

There are important allies who share only some of these objectives: Russia, China, Venezuela, Cuba and others;

The likelihood of a West Asian Alliance will have implications in these areas: military, infrastructure, finance, commerce, education and training;

Washington sees this alliance as a threat to the idea of an 'Arab NATO', centred on the Saudis and other Persian Gulf monarchies;

Of course, what is seen as a threat by Washington is seen as an opportunity for the besieged Resistance countries.

Anderson, Tim (2020) 'Iran's resistance economy and regional integration', Journal of World Sociological Studies, Volume 3, Issue 4, Autumn 2019, Pages 649-877, online: https://wsps.ut.ac.ir/article_77940.html

A highway linking Iraq and Syria becomes an opportunity for Tehran

Iran's 'resistance economy' can help build "an economically integrated regional bloc" (Anderson 2019)

Iran's entrenchment of strategic infrastructure in Syria threatens balance of deterrence in the Middle East

Counter weights: Russia and China

Strategic shifts: (1) Russian (and Venezuelan etc.) commitment to multi-polarity
(2) Russia and China increase massively trade and strategic cooperation with Iran
(2) the US dollar will soon be undermined by China's digital Yuan.

Namdar 2021: "It is over-simplistic to call [China-Iran] a \$400 billion deal, for its strategic significance will determine the future of the Middle East ... the most conspicuous [rationale] for the U.S.-Sunni Arab-Israeli alliance is curtailing Iranian hegemony and Chinese involvement in the region."

Goble 2021: Russia-Iran will expand "sectoral economic ties", mega infrastructure, weaponry, "upgrading Iranian ports ... [and] modernising the Iranian navy".



Moscow and Tehran Dramatically Expanding Economic and Security Cooperation

Publication: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 18 Issue: 88

By: Paul Goble



How the China-Iran Deal Could Reshape the Middle East

Farhang Faraydoon Namdar (2021) 'How the China-Iran Deal Could Reshape the Middle East', 6 May, online:
<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-china-iran-deal-could-reshape-middle-east-184581>
Vatanka, Alex (2020) 'Russia, Iran, and economic integration on the Caspian', 17 August, online:
<https://www.mei.edu/publications/russia-iran-and-economic-integration-caspian>
Goble, Paul (2021) 'Moscow and Tehran Dramatically Expanding Economic and Security Cooperation', 3 June, online:
<https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-and-tehran-dramatically-expanding-economic-and-security-cooperation/>

Summary:

- ❑ The USA in decline has expanded hybrid warfare in attempts to preserve its international influence;
- ❑ Economic siege wars are part of this hybrid warfare;
- ❑ Sanctions as legitimate instruments should be distinguished from the far more numerous 'unilateral coercive measures' (UCMs);
- ❑ There have been a range of responses to these UCMs:
 - ❑ UN mechanisms to report and denounce the impact of UCMs,
 - ❑ Distinct state responses (e.g. Iran; Cuba; DPRK Korea),
 - ❑ New international commercial and financial architecture.

