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Topic: Assessing the effectiveness of sanctions

“The current system has crashed and is now obsolete. Only a new system can solve today’s global problems”- David Gomadza

Sanctions are intended to be imposed on entire governments or specific individuals as a means of coercing them into complying with international law. The UN has taken steps to impose a variety of sanctions on countries deemed a threat to international safety, although, the outcomes of these sanctions have been subject to controversy. Consider the sanctions imposed by the UN on Iraq in the early 1990s, not only did the sanctions prove to be ineffective but they also drastically exacerbated malnutrition and lead to the deaths of thousands. However, that is not to say sanctions have not produced positive results. Examine the largely beneficial effects of the sanctions enforced by the UN on Libya. The odds of a sanction proving to be disadvantageous are undeniably far higher than the odds of a sanction being successful. Nevertheless, we remain aware of the potential sanctions hold, and advocate for the refining of the guidelines surrounding the use of sanctions to directly combat this issue. While Bangladesh has never received a sanction from the United Nations, in 2021, December 10th, the United States of America inflicted a sanction upon Bangladesh’s Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), denying them the ability to own property within the US or partake in financial transactions involving a US body or personal. The United States has also imposed travel sanctions on 7 of the RAB’s current and former top officials. The RAB is a unit of the Bangladeshi police force, formed in 2004 with the intent to combat extremism. The US, who previously took part in training the force unsubstantially accused them of executing 600 extrajudicial killings since 2018 and causing the disappearances of 600 individuals since 2009. The US misused the unfounded accusations to justify inflicting sanctions on Bangladeshi RAB officials without prior discussion or notice. It must also be taken into consideration that the US has penalized Bangladesh for these reasons while their police force maintains an average of 600 killings and 250,000 injuries of civilians annually. The US also sustains a disregard for the violation of human rights in other countries such as Israel, Yemen and India, and have decidedly prioritized condemning Bangladesh instead. This situation is a clear misuse of sanctions.

To counter the frequent failure and misuse of sanctions, it is necessary that we globally take more steps to enhance communication with the concerned parties. It is vital we construct improved strategies that include informing not just the public but also the individuals or government sanctioned prior to the penalty being imposed. Steps such as these should be made mandatory. Countries should also ensure that their sanction is part of a broader strategy rather than being a first resort as the effects may outlive the sanctions themselves.

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