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TOPIC: Assessing the effectiveness of sanctions

“Sanctions are a sign of irritation; they are not the instrument of serious policies” – Sergei Lavrov

Sanctions have been prevalent throughout the history of Iraq and their effects continue to have unimaginable consequences even in the present day. Iraq has been continuously bombarded by sanctions from a plethora of countries and international organisations. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) imposed comprehensive sanctions on Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait (August 1990). These sanctions included strict limits on items that could be imported into and exported from Iraq. Subsequently, a comprehensive arms embargo was placed on Iraq in view of its accumulation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)

On 19th March 2003, the USA had invaded Iraq. This was an invasion that lasted just over a month and resulted in the deaths of 170,300 Iraqi citizens. The primary rationale for this invasion was the autocratic doctrine of Saddam Hussein and the alleged presence of Al-Qaeda. To this day, the true reason for the invasion of Iraq remains a controversy where many believe that this was a scheme crafted by the USA to secure the rich oil resources of Iraq. The excess sanctions and military interventions had yet another devastating effect on Iraq’s tourism industry. Travel sanctions on Iraq are commonplace even in the present globalised world thus harshly impacting its tourism industry. Coupled with economic sanctions on the import and export of goods into and from Iraq these restrictions have drastically slowed its economic progress. During all this not a single thought was given for the refugees who suffered terribly from inflation and lack of adequate provisions. Perhaps the most devastating effect of sanctions was the wide spreading malnutrition that took place throughout the sanction’s regime. In 1997, a UNICEF official informed that 25 percent of children in south and central governorates suffered from chronic malnutrition, which was often irreversible and 9 percent from acute malnutrition. These are but just a few of the innumerable consequences of the illogical and excessive use of sanctions on Iraq.

Therefore, a justified and rational use of sanctions has become the need of the hour. One must think twice before establishing a sanction. On must think about the repercussions of the sanctions not only in the present but also in the far future. One must weigh the purpose of the sanctions against the possible civilian casualties that may be caused by them. Sanctions must not be used by the powerful countries as yet another method of dominating the others. They must have a clear justification and must be verified with a plethora of countries and opinions to ensure that no one country can make decisions unilaterally. We must, at all costs prevent another “invasion on false pretences” from happening. The only way to succeed in this endeavour is to increase discussion and debate to reduce rash sanctions, thereby fostering diplomatic relations as after all there is only one world and we are in a desperate need to reconstruct the broken unity. The reassessment and monitoring of sanctions might just be the cornerstone for this goal.

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