The curse is real in Zimbabwe: economic sanctions must go!

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The Curse is Real in Zimbabwe: Economic Sanctions Must Go!

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Abstract:

Zimbabwe's economic hara-kiri has become so stupendous that it can no longer be addressed without dealing with economic sanctions first. If nothing is done now, Zimbabwe will continue to sink deep down into the sanctions-induced economic doldrums. To set Zimbabwe on a genuine economic recovery path, economic sanctions must be removed first. Empirical evidence indicates that economic sanctions are not only predatory but also cancerous for any economy and they must be removed. This study shows that economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe are detrimental to the economy; hence the urgent need for their removal. On the other side of the same coin, this paper also argues that the economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe are also backfiring against the imposers. Therefore, there is absolutely no need for their continued imposition since the sender-countries are also being hurt by the same sanctions! However, the need to "call a spade a spade" in handling the "issues" being raised by the sanctions-imposing countries is not unimportant given the gravity of the "sanctions game" in Zimbabwe. As Zimbabweans continue to lobby for the immediate removal of economic sanctions, this paper offers four-fold policy recommendations in order to boost Zimbabwe's resistance to economic sanctions.

I. Introduction

For thousands of years, economic sanctions have been a tool of economic statecraft (Chan & Drury, 2000). Sanctions continue to be viewed as an important tool in promoting and maintaining international peace and security (Bessler *et al*, 2004). The main objective of sanctions is to ensure government compliance with the imposer's interests and are usually seen as more humane than military intervention (Kaempfer & Lowenberg, 2007; O'Driscoll, 2017). A traditional argument in favor of the use of sanctions over military conflict has been that even if they have a lower probability of success than military conflict, the relatively low cost to both sender and target might still make them a viable policy option (Allen & Lektzian, 2012).
Sanctions are not like military conflict which is intended to kill civilians of the target country. They are a more humane but coercive policy (Drezner, 1998). Theoretically, sanctions are motivated by an implicitly humane rationale; although their implementation often wrecks great havoc and civilian suffering (Weiss *et al*, 1997). Most of the time it is claimed that sanctions and especially "targeted sanctions" aim at political leadership of sanctioned countries but, on the ground, sanctions can potentially hurt large numbers of people (Cheraghali, 2013). Sanctions are

an immoral foreign policy tool that indiscriminately and unjustly target poor and innocent elements of society (Damrosch, 1993; Al-Samarrai, 1995; Mueller & Mueller, 1999; Gordon, 2002).

Economic sanctions are one of the basic tools of international governance of the Post Cold War era that are always blamed for human suffering. Economic sanctions are questionable ethically because they impose disproportionate harm on innocent civilians (David, 1995). Although sanctions are intended to punish states to pressure them to change policies, it leads to predictable outcomes such as economic inefficiency, inequitable distribution of goods, civil conflicts and population movements (Garfield *et al*, 1995).

Economic sanctions cause a significant disruption in the distribution of food, pharmaceutical and sanitation supplies, it jeopardizes the quality of food and the availability of clean drinking water, it severely interferes with the functioning of basic health and education systems and undermines the right to work (Holmes, 2008). Sanctions imposed by the European Union (EU) against Zimbabwe are a clear example that sanctions most of the time fail to reach their originally specified targets (Cheraghali, 2013). As a contingency measure against EU sanctions, Zimbabwe shifted its focus from the EU and its Western allies and formed economic partnerships with the Eastern countries (Mbanje & Mahuku, 2011). The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has maintained that the economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe are hurting the entire southern African region and hence the economic bloc will embark on a campaign to speak with one voice until the sanctions are lifted. The Heads of State and Government have declared the 25th of October 2019 as the day of solidarity to lift the illegal sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe (Lopi, 2019). It is imperative to note that the 25th of October each year will be set aside as a public holiday and solidarity day against illegal sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe and all SADC countries have agreed to conduct various activities in their respective countries on that day to resoundingly call for the immediate removal of the sanctions.

Brief History of Economic Sanctions

Economic sanctions are not a new thing the international world. Since the ancient Greek, sanctions have existed. They were first employed when Athens embargoed Megara in 432 BC, and triggered a war between the two countries which lasted for decades (Haufbauer *et al*, 1990). Economic sanctions were also used by Napoleon in the Continental System commencing in 1806, by Thomas Jefferson in the Embargo Act of 1807, and by the League of Nations against Italy in 1935. Following the collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1990, there has been an acceleration of sanctioning activity that reflects their growing use by international organizations as well as by the one remaining world hegemon, the United States (Kaempfer & Lowenberg, 2007).

Economic Sanctions in Zimbabwe: An Overview

Zimbabwe's economy is battling for life due to sanctions imposed by the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada and the European Union (EU). The Land Reform Programme implemented in Zimbabwe in 2001 is believed to be the one that triggered the imposition of economic sanctions against Zimbabwe in the form of the socalled Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA). The violence accompanying the land reform exercise, as noted by Makaye & Munhande (2008); the deaths on the farms, and the allegations of human rights abuses on the part of the government were enough bases for the West's imposition of sanctions against Zimbabwe. Chigora & Dewa (2009) noted that the ruling party and its allies that comprise of war veterans, youth militia and service chiefs were accused of fomenting intimidation, arson, kidnapping and murder.

According to Hurungo (2010), the USA and EU then imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe in order to force politicians to refine government policies in a way that would ensure Zimbabwe is ruled in a democratic manner. The USA actually argues that the ZIDERA Act was endorsed to provide for a transition to democracy, to promote economic recovery and re-establish rule of law in Zimbabwe. ZIDERA is opposed to giving bilateral and debt relief and assistance to Zimbabwe until the government restores the rule of law, provides a platform for democratic elections, implements an equitable, legal and transparent land reform program, and establishes firm civilian control of the military, police and other state security forces amongst other things. The EU, in 2001, joined the USA, and slapped Zimbabwe with the socalled "targeted measures" on pro-ruling party entities, including high-ranking politicians, business figures, journalists and military personnel. According to Kurebwa (2019), when targeted sanctions are directed against political leaders and government officials of a particular country, it is usually the vulnerable groups of society who suffer and not the targeted group. It is imperative to highlight the fact that the sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe are basically aimed at influencing political decisions in Zimbabwe although the senders claim to be seeking to restore democracy and promote economic recovery. The sanctions game in Zimbabwe is simply a game of politics!

Objectives of the Study

i. To analyze the sanctions – economic growth nexus in general.
ii. To systematically review the impact of economic sanctions on the economy of Zimbabwe.
iii. To investigate the harm caused by economic sanctions on the sender countries, with special reference the to to the "sanctions game" in Zimbabwe.

Research Questions

i. What is the nature of the sanctions – economic growth nexus, in broad terms?
ii. How do sanctions affect the economy of Zimbabwe?
iii. Do economic sanctions hurt the sender countries too?

II. Literature Review

What Are Economic Sanctions?

Table 1: Definitions

Definition	Source
Economic sanctions are coercive economic measures taken against one or more countries to force a change in policies or at least to demonstrate a country's opinion about the other's policies	Rennack & Shuey (1999)
Economic sanctions can be defined as the deliberate, government-inspired withdrawal, or threats of withdrawal, of customary trade or financial relations	Boozer (2000)
Economic sanctions refer to the actual or threatened withdrawal of normal trade or financial relations, imposed by the sender against the target, for foreign policy purposes	Nyun (2008)
Economic sanctions are restrictions upon international trade and financial dealings one country or a group of countries impose on another, usually as punishment for following policies of the sanctioning country/countries disapproves	Kern (2009)
Economic sanctions can be defined as actions that one or countries take to limit or end their economic relations with a target country in an effort to persuade that country to change its policies or behavior	Morgan *et al* (2009); Prinslow (2010)

There is no universally accepted definition of the term "economic sanctions". Table 1 above is a summary of the most common definitions in literature. It is important to note that the definitions given by Rennack & Shuey (1999), Boozer (2000), Nyun (2008) and Kern (2009) are quite applicable in the case of Zimbabwe. However, the definition given by Morgan *et al* (2009) and Prinslow (2010) does not match the Zimbabwean scenario because the economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe cannot be described as seeking to "persuade" Zimbabwe to changer her policies or behavior. It is almost unnecessary to highlight the fact that economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe are coercive and they clearly portray foreign policy positions. Hence the definitions of economic sanctions given by Rennack & Shuey (1999) and Kern (2009) best describe the Zimbabwean scenario.

How Do Economic Sanctions Work (or not Work)?

Economic sanctions work by inflicting damage on the target country, its ruling elite and core support groups, the sanctions will prompt the leadership to choose to change its objectionable policy in response to a straightforward cost-benefit calculus (Kirshner, 1997). The mechanism through which economic sanctions are believed to achieve their ultimate objectives from an economics perspective is based on a reversal of the international trade theories, which assume that world economic welfare is maximized under conditions of free trade (Smeets, 2018). In all cases, economic sanctions are supposed to work by imposing some kind of pain on the target country, and particularly on its ruling regime, which then alters its policies in order to comply with the sender's demands and thereby avoid further sanctions damage (Kaempfer & Lowenberg, 2007). One of the core assumptions of traditional sanctions theory is that the pain inflicted by sanctions on citizens of target states will cause them to pressure their government into making the changes demanded by the sanctioning body (Mack & Khan, 2000). Given the increased interdependence and the close network of economic, trade and investment relations among Western countries, economic sanctions are increasingly less likely to work (Smeets, 2018).

According to Elliot *et al* (2008), there are basically four main methods of applying sanctions on the target country and these are:

i. Freezing financial assets.
ii. Suspension of technical and aid assistance.
iii. Trade controls.
iv. Blacklisting the target country.

Freezing Financial Assets

This includes the following:

- ✓ Freezing the off-shore assets of individual members of the target nation's ruling elite.
- ✓ Confiscation of different forms of assets.
- ✓ Stopping transfer payment and interest.
- ✓ Not paying the debt or rescheduling debt payment and interest.
- ✓ Refusal to do joint projects with a target country or company or individual in a target country.

Suspension of Technical and Aid Assistance

This includes the following:

- ✓ Cancellation or reduction of credit facilities at market rate.
- ✓ Cancellation or suspension of assistance in military, development and training.
- ✓ Inability (because of lower number of votes) to get grants, subsidies and loans in international organizations.

Trade Controls

These are also called the "goods and services" sanctions and include the following:

- ✓ Import or export quota.
- ✓ Limiting exports (embargoes) of the target country.
- ✓ Limiting imports of the target country (boycott).

- ✓ Tariff policy against the target country.
- ✓ Cancellation or restriction of fishing rights.
- ✓ Cancellation or suspension of trade agreements.
- ✓ Ban on export of technology.

Blacklisting the Target Country

This includes the following:

- ✓ Blacklisting target companies so that they are unable to do business with other countries.
- ✓ Blacklisting of the countries that are doing business with the targeted country.

How Targeted Regimes Respond To Sanctions

Regimes targeted by sanctions rarely try to counteract the impact of sanctions, but rather pursue policies and strategies that magnify the sanctions' negative effect on the economy with the aim of preventing the population from revolving. The government deliberately deteriorates economic activity in order to increase the economic hardship of the population so that any revolt proves costly for citizens. Even though the sanctions affect the elite, owing to their strong economic starting position, funds hidden around the world and international collaborators, it is the local population who feel the effect the most. The targeted regime will look for ways out of the sanctions, which will either be to find a suitable exile opportunity or to carry on with its strategy until the sanctions end (Oechslin, 2014).

Economically sanctioned countries like Zimbabwe often suffer from the "devil-may-care" syndrome where-by they tend to formulate and implement bad economic policies and consequently keep on putting the blame on economic sanctions. Surely, you can't argue that every socio-economic ill in Zimbabwe was caused by economic sanctions. That kind of thinking doesn't help us as a country. Thus, the government of Zimbabwe must stick to good public policy as a matter of urgency. For example: you can't argue that corruption is rampant in Zimbabwe because of economic sanctions; as a policy maker, you fail to keep inflation under control and claim it's because of economic sanctions; as a country, you face a natural disaster such as drought, and still think it's because of economic sanctions! The "sanctions must go" campaign is usually abused in countries such as Zimbabwe. Many governments whose economies are being affected by economic sanctions usually behave irresponsibly and then try to hide behind the economic sanctions menace. Yes, economic sanctions must go but bad economic policies cannot be an excuse.

The Sanctions – Economic Growth Nexus: Evidence From Other Countries

Table 2: The Sanctions – Economic Growth Nexus: Evidence From Other Countries

Author/Year	Country	Main Findings
Rarick (2006)	Myanmar	✓ The U.S sanctions had a negative impact on the economy of Myanmar. ✓ The only thing that sanctions succeeded in was destroying the country.
Wood (2008)	157 countries	✓ Sanctions lead to an increase in state-sponsored repression thus leading to negative economic growth rates. ✓ Military and arms sanctions are better than economic sanctions because they cause the population no harm.
Drury & Peksen (2010)	102 countries	✓ Sanctions cause economic hardships. ✓ However, economic hardship caused by sanctions can be used as a strategic tool by the regime to consolidate power and weaken the opposition.
Drury & Peksen (2014)	146 countries	✓ Economic sanctions have a negative impact on women's access to economic and social status. ✓ Economic sanctions lead to women experiencing a higher

		level of economic burden.
Choi & Luo (2013)	152 countries	✓ Economic sanctions intensify the suffering of the poor to a far greater extent than the rich. ✓ Thus, the imposition of economic sanctions triggers terrorist violence.
Neuenkirch & Neumeier (2015)	160 countries	✓ Economic sanctions have a significant negative impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
Aluoch (2015)	Sudan	✓ Economic sanctions contracted the economy of Sudan at a rate of -11.2% per annum.
Roshan *et al* (2015)	Iran	✓ Economic sanctions negatively affect health and hence harm sustainable development.
Francis & Duncan (2016)	Cuba and Soviet Union	✓ Sanctions unintentionally strengthened the links between Cuba and the Soviet Union. Trade increased between the two countries. Both countries benefited economically. ✓ Sanctions led to double digit growth rates in the tourism industry in Cuba, which stimulated the Cuban economy.
Kokabisaghi (2018)	Iran	✓ Sanctions on Iran caused the following: fall of Iran's revenues, devaluation of national currency, high inflation and unemployment.

The Sanctions – Economic Growth Nexus: Evidence From Zimbabwe

Table 3: The Sanctions – Economic Growth Nexus: Evidence From Zimbabwe

Author/Year	Country	Main Findings
Nzaro *et al* (2011)	Zimbabwe	✓ Sanctions have a negative effect on Zimbabwe's financial services.
Mbanje & Mahuku (2011)	Zimbabwe	✓ Sanctions hurt the economy.
Masaka (2012)	Zimbabwe	✓ Targeted sanctions on Zimbabwe brought with it bad publicity, record low credit rating and a pariah state; thus leading to economic collapse.
Hove (2012)	Zimbabwe	✓ Sanctions negatively affect the economy of Zimbabwe.
Hove & Chingono (2013)	Zimbabwe, Cuba, Rhodesia, Burma, Iran	✓ Sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe are dehumanizing on the ordinary Zimbabwean because service delivery in water and sanitation, education, health and food production has collapsed. ✓ Sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe have not yet led to the intended quick political resolution. ✓ Sanctions have succeeded in triggering volatile political disharmony.
Chipanga & Mude (2015)	Zimbabwe	✓ Sanctions hurt innocent civilians by destroying the economy. ✓ On the other hand, sanctions may be effective; for example, in Zimbabwe the formation of the GNU and the inherent drafting of the constitution were triggered by pressure from sanctions. The Mugabe regime had vowed not to negotiate with opposition parties, because of the pressure of sanctions, the regime succumbed to it, making it clear that sanctions were effective.
Mararike (2019)	Zimbabwe	✓ Sanctions negatively affect the economy of Zimbabwe.

III. Methodology

The research adopted a systematic review approach in order to gather up all the necessary information on the sanctions – economic growth relationship. Judgemental sampling was employed to choose the representatives of the sample. The standard criterion for selection was the relevance of topic and the geographical area of studies.

IV. Results & Discussion

Description of Reviewed Studies

Table 4: Description of Reviewed Literature

Author/Year	Country	Period Under Study	Method
Rarick (2006)	Myanmar	1974 – 2005	Descriptive and analytical approach.
Wood (2008)	157 countries	1976 – 2001	Probit models, interconnected linear regressions.
Drury & Peksen (2010)	102 countries	1972 – 2000	Simultaneous models.
Nzaro *et al* (2011)	Zimbabwe	2010 – 2011	Descriptive Survey Design
Mbanje & Mahuku (2011)	Zimbabwe	2002 – 2011	Descriptive and analytical approach
Masaka (2012)	Zimbabwe	2001 – 2011	Descriptive and analytical approach
Drury & Peksen (2014)	146 countries	1971 – 2005	Ordered logit regression models.
Hove (2012)	Zimbabwe	2001 – 2011	Descriptive and analytical approach
Choi & Luo (2013)	152 countries	1968 – 2004	Binomial regression analysis.
Aluoch (2015)	Sudan	1989 – 2014	Descriptive and analytical approach
Chipanga & Mude (2015)	Zimbabwe	2001 – 2013	Descriptive and analytical approach
Neuenkirch & Neumeier (2015)	160 countries	1976 – 2012	Panel data analysis.
Roshan *et al* (2015)	Iran	1960 – 2014	Descriptive and analytical approach
Francis & Duncan (2016)	Cuba and Soviet Union	1960 – 2015	Descriptive and analytical approach.
Kokabisaghi (2018)	Iran	January 2012 – February 2017	Systematic Review
Mararike (2019)	Zimbabwe	2001 – 2018	Descriptive and analytical approach

The Impact of Sanctions on Economic Growth: A Summary

Table 5: Summary of the Sanctions – Economic Growth Nexus

Argument	Source
Sanctions are detrimental to economic growth	Rarick (2006); Wood (2008); Drury & Peksen (2010); Nzaro *et al* (2011); Mbanje & Mahuku (2011); Masaka (2012); Hove (2012); Drury & Peksen (2012); Hove & Chingono (2013); Choi & Luo (2013); Aluoch (2015); Chipanga & Mude (2015); Neuenkirch & Neumeier (2015); Roshan *et al* (2015); Kokabisaghi (2018); Mararike (2019).
Sanctions yield positive effects on the economy	Chipanga & Mude (2015); Francis & Duncan (2016)

As shown in table 5 above, there is overwhelming empirical evidence to prove that sanctions are not good for any economy. However, few papers such as Chipanga & Mude (2015) and Francis & Duncan (2016) still argue that sanctions may be effective and beneficial to the target country.

Costs of Economic Sanctions Imposed Against Zimbabwe: Major Costs

It is almost unnecessary to reiterate the fact that economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe seldom directly destroy the infrastructure of Zimbabwe: what is actually happening on the ground is that Zimbabwe's infrastructure, especially roads, hospitals and sanitation systems are being neglected and thus fall into disrepair due to economic sanctions. This sanctions-induced neglect and scarcity has inflicted untold suffering on the ordinary, innocent and poor Zimbabweans. In Zimbabwe, economic sanctions have significantly reduced the quality and quantity of clean water. In all urban areas, it is now normal to experience water shortages and sometimes drinking water available from city councils would be dirty with visible objects of faecal-nature.

Furthermore, due to lack of unfettered access to nutritious food and clean water, the average level of health of Zimbabweans has significantly deteriorated. It is also imperative to highlight the fact that Zimbabwe's health sector is genocidal right now due to economic sanctions which have reduced the capacity of the public health system. Simple and treatable diseases have become life-threatening problems in Zimbabwe because of a perennially inadequate supply of medicines and medical and pharmaceutical equipments. As a result, a health worker in Zimbabwe is always demoralized and demotivated by the poor working conditions. Moreso, economic sanctions have significantly reduced available resources for Zimbabwe's health sector and as a result options for preventive care and curative medical services have become unacceptably limited.

Costs of Economic Sanctions to the Sender: Zimbabwe's Sanctions Backfiring?

Economic sanctions have the potential to backfire and consequently leave the sender with a negative net result (Drezner, 2000). Since trade is a two-way relation, restricting trade in one direction will automatically result in lost revenues or alternatively increased costs in the opposite direction. Furthermore, besides limiting trade through obstruction of financial flows, economic sanctions also have a backward effect in terms of declining capital flows into the sender country (Besedes *et al*, 2017).

Economic sanctions can provoke the leaders in the target country to use the sanctions as an explanation for the lower levels of growth and welfare, instead of failing economic policies, resulting in them digging in their heels and resisting the sanctions even more, thus making it even harder achieving the set objectives. For example, in the sanctions that were imposed against Iraq, Saddam Hussain was even more determined than ever before to resist the outside pressures, eventually leading to a military intervention (Smeets, 2018).

Economic sanctions are a form of "investment" that senders definitely pay costs for acquiring profits in the future. This means that, while the target country is obviously going to lose in the "sanctions-game", the sender country is also losing in one way or the other. While Zimbabwe is bound to be hurt by the sanctions, we cannot rule out the fact that the sender-countries are also going to "feel the heat". Therefore, the sanctions game can be a lose-lose game! For example, trade sanctions change the behavior of economic agents, thus several long-run trade contracts would not be able to continue. This usually damages the economy of the sender because the process of finding new trade partners instead of target is usually cumbersome and takes a long period of time. In business, time is money. Lost time is tantamount to lost revenues! Consequently, many people lose their jobs in the sender country. The sender country also loses the market of target by imposing trade embargoes. Thus the USA and other countries which have imposed economic sanctions on Zimbabwe; are also being hurt by the sanctions in terms of lost gains from trade and investment. If these losses were to be quantified, it would not be surprising to find that these sender-countries have suffered a lot due to sanctions, especially when it comes to lost jobs and revenues in their economies.

V. Recommendations

While we are still lobbying for the immediate removal of economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe, this is what we can do for now in order to boost our resistance to economic sanctions:

i. Take diplomatic steps to create an alliance with friendly countries such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Iran amongst others; in line with the Look East Policy.
ii. Develop an import-substituting industry.
iii. Divert Zimbabwe's trade to new trading partners.
iv. Zimbabwe should engage "sanctions busters" in order to create and sustain loopholes in the sanctions and thus undermine their effectiveness.

VI. Conclusion

While economic sanctions may be attractive policy tools for governments wanting to express discontent with a country's behavior, it is arguable if from an economics perspective sanctions can achieve the change that is often envisaged through the punitive measures taken (Smeets, 2018). It is ironic and paradoxical to note that the USA, UK, Australia, Canada and EU, who are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), continue to impose economic sanctions on Zimbabwe and yet WTO's main aim is to liberalize trade. One of the direct purposes of economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe is to restrict trade which they purport to liberalize through the WTO! Therefore, it is clear that these countries are desperately trying to deprive Zimbabwe from economic gains that Zimbabwe can obtain through trade. Last but not least, it is not unimportant to highlight the fact that economic sanctions are not the only problem that is frustrating Zimbabweans. Nyoni & Bonga (2017) actually noted that the economy of Zimbabwe is riddled with poverty, inequality, informality, chronic and recurrent phases of economic stagnation, poor institutional climate, cash crisis, rampant corruption, political volatility, low savings and investment, high interest rates, high costs of production, lack of competitiveness, low aggregate demand, poor infrastructure as well as high rates of unemployment. All these problems, together with economic sanctions have put Zimbabweans in a difficult situation.

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