

U.S. Sanctions: Weapons of Economic Warfare

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On July 22, 2021, the Biden regime inflicted punitive [economic sanctions](#) on Cuban government officials extending Trump era sanctions that targeted the tourism and energy industries and stopped remittances being sent to the beleaguered island.

Shortages of food, medicine and electricity caused by the U.S. embargo have provoked street protests encouraged on social media in what is ironically called the “[Bay of Tweets](#).” The U.S. State Department, National Endowment for Democracy, U.S. Agency for International Development and U.S. Agency for Global Media have provided grants to Cuban Hip-Hop artists, musicians, bloggers and journalists to spread discontent among the Cuban people. The NED and USAID are organizations used by the CIA to fund coup d’états around the world. The U.S. is currently spending [\\$48 million](#) per year to finance regime change in Cuba.

Cuba will never be forgiven for nationalizing the properties of American banks and corporations in the aftermath of a revolution that overthrew the U.S. sponsored dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959. A trade embargo was imposed on Cuba by the Eisenhower administration in response to Cuba’s nationalization of U.S. corporate owned oil-refineries that refused to refine Soviet crude oil in 1960. Eisenhower had prohibited the sale of oil to Cuba forcing the country to turn to the Soviet Union to meet its energy needs. President Kennedy extended the trade embargo in 1962 to include all products produced in Cuba. The Kennedy brothers, John and Attorney General Robert, were also responsible for authorizing the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and [CIA operation Mongoose](#) in 1962, to subvert the Cuban revolution.

The sixty-year economic embargo cost the small island nation an estimated [\\$130 billion](#) according to a United Nations agency. The Cuban government puts the cost at [\\$1.1 trillion](#).

The U.S. government imposes draconian economic sanctions on various countries around the world ostensibly to oppose terrorism and violations of human rights. That the policy is being implemented by the most violent, terroristic and lawless government on the planet is an irony not lost upon the victims of empire.

As of June 2021, the [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#) maintains sanctions on twenty-three

nations. Chief among them are Iran, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, Russia, China and the aforementioned Cuba. What do these countries have in common? They wish to exercise economic and political sovereignty in a world dominated by the U.S. hegemon.

Although economic sanctions may seem benign, they kill hundreds of thousands of people just as effectively as cruise missiles. And like cruise missiles, they are a weapon of war, the only difference being the victims of economic sanctions suffer a slow death. And a silent one.

A [report](#) by Mark Weisbrot and Jeffrey Sachs published by the Center for Economic and Policy Research documents the horrendous death of 40,000 civilians killed by U.S. sanctions in Venezuela. The authors rightly conclude that economic sanctions are a form of collective punishment prohibited by the Hague and Geneva Conventions, international law and U.S. law.

Weisbrot and Sachs note Venezuela earns foreign exchange by the sale of oil. The revenue is used to purchase food, medicine, medical equipment, spare parts and equipment needed to maintain water, electrical and transportation systems. By restricting the sale of oil on the U.S. and world market, freezing billions of dollars of assets and prohibiting access to U.S. financial markets, the American government effectively cut off major sources of Venezuela's income, precipitating an economic crisis in the impoverished country.

The result is economic privation, disease, death, mass migration and social turmoil in a nation suffering from hyperinflation and depression. Economic warfare extends political warfare. The U.S. government engineered coup attempts in 2002 against Hugo Chavez and 2018 against Nicolas Maduro. Both failed. The Bolivarian revolution persists but at a terrible cost in loss of life.

Exacerbating human suffering is a calculated aim of U.S. policy designed to engineer social instability and regime change.

The most horrific example is Iraq. A study by Thomas Nagy reveals how the United States used [U.N. sanctions](#) to deliberately destroy Iraq's supply of clean water during the 1991 Gulf War. Nagy uncovered Defense Intelligence Agency documents that calculated how many Iraqis would die from waterborne diseases resulting from the ban on chlorine imports during the sanctions regime. The DIA documents calculate the probability of cholera, hepatitis and typhoid epidemics that would result from the prohibition of chlorine imports needed to purify water.

The [U.N. sanctions](#) were kept in place after the United States intentionally bombed Iraq's water treatment facilities, hospitals, health centers, schools, textile factories, automobile plants, chemical, petrochemical, agricultural, transportation, communication and industrial facilities. Iraq was literally bombed into a [pre-industrial age](#) as [meticulously documented](#) by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark. The architects of the [Gulf War](#) and [U.N. sanctions regime](#) are guilty of war crimes, crimes against peace, crimes against humanity and violations of the U.N. charter. The George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton regimes positioned human barbarism at the core of U.S. policy while extolling democracy and human rights.

The sanctions targeted Iraq's children who died at a rate of 5,000 per month. Over the 13-year life span of the sanctions regime, over 1.5 million Iraqis lost their lives, including 500,000 children. The economic sanctions imposed on Iraq were as cruel and monstrous as

they were genocidal.

Iran is another country being targeted by U.S. sanctions. The Trump regime re-imposed economic sanctions on Iran after leaving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear agreement in 2018.

A [World Bank report](#) shows that Iran's GDP contracted at an accelerated rate of 4.7% in 2018/19 to 8.2% in 2019/20. Oil and gas value fell by 37% as production dropped to 2 million barrels per day, a three-decade low. Besides the oil and gas sector of the economy, Trump's sanctions targeted the construction, basic metals and petrochemical industries. Gas prices have doubled and inflation has skyrocketed seeing prices increase 34.8% for food, housing and consumer services. As in Venezuela, there are shortages of food and medicine in Iran. The Iranian government is now running a deficit because of the decline in oil revenue caused by sanctions that have compounded lower gas prices on the global market.

What the language of statistics obscures is the daily hardship and suffering of a people living in countries assaulted by the United States. A report by [Human Rights Watch](#) documents how U.S. secondary sanctions on any "non-US entity" that conducts financial or commercial transactions with Iran have impacted the health care system so extensively, that the "right to health" of the Iranian people is being jeopardized. Because of the sanctions, Iran cannot get essential medicines and medical equipment necessary for treating critically ill patients.

As with Cuba, Iraq and Venezuela, economic sanctions in Iran are punitive and constitute collective punishment of a people inflicted as part of a strategy of regime change embraced by the U.S. government.

The United States is the most conspicuous abuser of human rights, sponsor of terrorism and perpetrator war of any country in the world. Economic sanction/embargo is only one tool in the arsenal of imperialism. If any country needs to be sanctioned because of its lawless behavior, it is the [United States](#).

On March 18, 2021, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken took part in a [confrontational meeting](#) with representatives of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the meeting, he stated that actions of the Chinese government "threaten the rules-based order that maintains global stability." Blinken said that the United States wanted to "strengthen the rules-based international order." The arrogance of these statements is breathtaking.

For functionaries like Blinken, that the United States makes the rules in a global order dominated by American empire is beyond question, despite the Chinese Foreign Minister's observation that the "US does not represent the world, it only represents the government of the United States."

On March 17, 2021, Blinken announced [U.S. sanctions on Chinese officials](#) for alleged human rights abuses in their treatment of "pro-democracy" protesters in Hong Kong. It is the centrality of the [U.S. financial system](#) and the use of the dollar as the world's reserve currency that allows the United States to invoke sanctions on any country in the world to advance its imperialist agenda. The United States only supports "pro-democracy" activists in Hong Kong, Venezuela, Cuba and elsewhere if they can be used as pawns in a chess game where checkmate means regime change in the targeted country.

Sabotaging economies, fomenting coups, rigging elections, inciting popular uprisings, encouraging ethnic strife, funding death squads, promoting separatist and proxy wars, assassinating leaders, bombing and invading countries are the methods by which U.S. empire is sustained.

Sanctions are a form of economic warfare. The criminality of economic sanctions derives from their lethal and ghastly consequences. Economic warfare must be exposed for what it truly is: an insidious display of state violence and terror.

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