THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC BLOCKADE AND ITS MAIN WEAPONS: GLIMPSES FROM THE PAST

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International economic blockades are an economic weapon used to change the behaviour of a target nation toward the direction of the blockading nation (nations) have, over time, become so intertwined with other types of economic weapons such as International sanctions, economic pressure and economic coercion that they are now considered as one thing. For example, international economic sanctions are a set of diplomatic, economic, and military procedures that are imposed by a nation (nations) as a reaction to another nation's policy. This sanction might be positive or negative, depending on the type of policies that are taken by the other nation. These International sanctions include a type of economic pressure in order to change the policy of the other nation to the direction of the sanctioning nations' interest. Meanwhile, the international economic blockade is considered to be a narrow definition for an economic war, since it uses many of the economic wars' weapons to achieve its main goals. On the other hand, economic coercion is a set of economic procedures and techniques that are used by different nations to achieve their national interests or to compromise disputations that cannot be solved by peaceful solutions, in addition to maintaining a minimal level of an international systematic theology. The economic coercion differs from the international economic blockades in its limitations of the reasons behind its imposition.

This article explains the evolution of the meaning of the international economic blockade and its main weapons through the use of some historical examples.

I. The evolution of the meaning of the International economic blockades:

While international economic blockades have been known for a long time, they have only become important in international law since 1980s. Its main legal principles however were been determined in the international law institution in 1887. These principles were: allowing the passing of foreign merchantmen freely regardless of imposing a blockade, needing to announce the blockade officially, and catching the neutral's merchant marines that do not comply with the legal principles of the blockade.

In its beginnings, it was limited to using military power to blockading the passing of merchant goods to and from enemies' coasts until it complies with the blockading nations' conditions. This blockade has been known in the history as the merchant military blockade, and differs from the pure military blockade in that the latter has pure military objectives such as occupying an enemy's military port. Merchant military blockades are regulated by a military power that issues legal licenses and documents for ships that can pass in the embargoed harbour freely. The threat of reviewing the documents of each ship was enough to prevent smuggling goods from and to the blockaded nations.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the means of blockading were changed as a result of the change in the shipments industry. However, the control of the military power on enemies' ports continued. In the wars of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the blockades were imposed through the use of the direct military control on the target's ports, as in the examples of the English's blockade of the French and the Spanish's harbours from 1803 until 1814, and the Japanese marine's blockade of the area surrounding Port Arthur's Harbour during the Russian - Japanese wars in 1904-1905, a situation that incurred huge costs and losses to the Japanese marine because of mines.

Over the course of the two World Wars, means of blockades have changed dramatically with the increase of the coast militaries' advanced control means, and technological advances (e.g., torpedo boats, mines, advanced guns, military planes). This has diminished the need for military blockades to be situated close to the enemies' harbours. , The use of wireless machines has also eased the conduct of the blockading marines, increasing the efficiency of blockades. Moreover, the dramatic evolution of the use of radars, marine planes, and dives has increased the efficiency of the night fights.

In 1939, the blockade took on a new name - the economic war - in order to include all the evolutions in its means. The marine blockade became one mean of economic war in addition to other economic means or weapons such as:

1- The import and the export controls,
2- Trade agreements with neutral nations,
3- Black listing,
4- Pre-emption (or preclusive buying), and
5- Financial measures.

The blockading nation (nations) uses these weapons against another blockaded nation for the following reasons:

1- Encountering a direct threat to its security or to its economic benefits; i.e., the international economic blockades that have been imposed on Iraq after its invasion to Kiewit in 1990 and after its Iranian Gulf war in order to push Iraq to comply with the cease-fire condition of the United Nations.
2- Achieving Moral or Ethical goals; i.e., the international economic blockades that were imposed on South Africa in the eighteenth as a result of the Apartheid system and that have occupied an enduring place in South Africa's history.
3- Imposing an economic sanction as a re-reaction of another nation's negative policy against the blockading country (countries) i.e., the trade embargo that was imposed on Brazil by the United States of America as a result of the termination of importing the American computers to Brazil.

On the other hand, the main objectives of the above weapons encompass:[1]

1- Incurring a limited change in the target's policies,
2- Destabilizing the target politically and economically,
3- Weakening the defensive powers of the target,

[1] These objectives have been highlighted by *Schott & Hafbauer. See* Lisa L. Martin (1992).

4- Defeating any potential planning of defensive powers in the target, and
5- Incurring a huge change in the target's policies.

According to the above discussion, international economic blockades can be defined by many analysts as a set of the procedures that can be taken by a nation (nations) against another nation for economic, political, or ethical reasons in order to change its behaviour to a specific direction.

II. Weapons of International economic blockades:

In general, the international economic blockades can be divided into trade embargo, investment or disinvestment embargo, financial embargo, and technological embargo. For each type of embargo, there is a set of different weapons.

1- Trade embargo:

A trade embargo is the total or the partial boycott of exports and/or imports of a target country. It uses different weapons to achieve its goals including export and import controls, trade agreements, preclusive and pre-emption, and navy blockades.

(i) Export and the import controls:

Export and the import controls boycott the import and the export of the target or controlling exported goods to specific countries that support the target country. This type of blockade was applied at the beginning of World War II in 1939, when England required that the United States decrease exports to Germany. This weapon has been also used against exports of neutral nations to deprive them from attaining foreign money so they cannot finance the target nation. In order for this weapon to be more efficient, the blockading nation may send their navy to the target's harbors to prevent the smuggling of goods from or to the target nation. However, this direct *censorship* has used various and different means over time. As a current example, Sweden used this weapon against South Africa in mid-1985 when it boycotted South African imports and exports in addition to preventing passing the goods via the neutral nations as a reaction against the apartheid system that was existed there. The western nations also used this weapon - in addition to both the English and the American's requests from Libya's neighbors to boycott their trade with this country - against Libya in 1991 after the Lockerby plane disaster in 1988.

(ii) Trade agreements:

Trade agreements are agreements between blockading nations and neutral nations aimed at tightening a target nation's trade and consequentially, force it to comply with the blockading nations' conditions. Trade agreements as a weapon of trade embargoes entail two weapons: preclusive & pre-emption and attracting other nations to cooperate with the blockading nation in its objective. The preclusive weapon is buying excessive quantities of specific products from the neutral nations before it be sold to the target nation. The blockading nations overprice products to encourage neutral nations to sell to them. For instance, the Germans used this weapon against Britain in the World War II when they tried to buy all Sweden's products of the control tools before they reached the hands of British. Yet, Sweden increased its products of these tools, and was able to meet the demand from both Britain and Germany. The other face of trade agreements is attracting a third nation (nations) to cooperate with the blockading nation (nations) against the target. For instance, the United States of America prevented shipments to Norway in 1917 because of its neutral trade behaviour toward both the First World War's rivals. As a result, Norway tightened its exports to Germany in 1918.

(iii) Shipping controls (or) naval blockade:

This type of direct blockade has been used by the marines of the blockading nation (nations) to isolate a specific port on the coast of a target nation in order to prevent the passage to or from the target nation. For instance, Japan used this weapon against Russia in 1904-1905 when the Japanese's marines blockaded Port Arthur's harbour. Over time, with the evolution of war techniques, the navy blockade was strengthened by an air blockade. The naval blockade has been used recently against Iraq when the Security Council allowed naval power to stop the commercial ships to and from Iraq in August, 25^{th}, 1990 (in addition to imposition another air blockade against Iraq in September, 25^{th}, 1990).

2- Investment, financial, and technological embargoes:

The investment or capital embargo means liquidating physical and the financial assets, withdrawing human capital, and preventing any new investment in the target nation by the blockading nation (nations). Liquidation of financial assets means selling financial assets that belong to foreigners in the target nation, while liquidation of physical assets means dismantling foreign plants and equipments, and liquidating them whereas liquidation of human capital means the withdrawal of skilled management, withdrawal of entrepreneurs and withdrawal of foreign scientists from the target nation by the blockading nation (nations). This type of weapon was used in the past through the use of blacklisting embargoed companies that accepted work from the target nation. The blacklist was known in Britain as the constitutionality list and in the United States as the announced list against specific persons (as well as embargoed institutions and companies). Recently, a comprehensive capital embargo was used for instance against South Africa in the mid-1985 by the western nations.

On the other hand, the financial embargo refers to a set of procedures taken by the blockading nation (nations) to create a liquidity crisis in the target nation. The financial embargo includes preventing the target nation from taking any loans or credits to finance its imports, depriving the target nation from obtaining easy loans from the international institutions such as the international bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), freezing the target nations' accounts abroad, withdrawing foreigners' deposits from the target nations' banks, requesting foreign interest payments promptly, or cutting any financial grants and aids to the target nation. For instance, when Holland was hesitating to give Indonesia its freedom in 1948, the United States threatened them cutting aid according to the Marshal project. This led to negotiations between Holland and Indonesia toward the independency of Indonesia. Recently, this type of blockade has been used against South Africa in 1986 by the United States because of the Apartheid system that was existed there. It was also used against Iran in 1980 because of Iran hostage crises[2] and against Libya in 1986 in retaliation for Libyan support of terrorism - as has been announced.

A technological embargo constitutes preventing the export of technical tools, technical machines, technical equipments, and technical designs that encompass advanced technical knowledge to the target nation and preventing technical licensing to the target nation, and preventing any agreements for further technical training with the target nation. For instance, the Security Council imposed a technical embargo on Libya in the end of 1993 following Lockerbie's crises.

According to the above exposition, the international economic blockades are a set of procedures and measures taken by a blockading nation (nations) against another nation for economical, political, or ethical reasons in order to push it to change its behaviour to a specific direction. These procedures are divided into trade embargo and investment, financial, and technological embargoes and each of these procedures and measures encompasses various weapons.

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[2] For more detail see: http://eightiesclub.tripod.com/id98.htm

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