

Prelude to the 1979 Lancaster House Constitutional Conference on Rhodesia: The Role of International Economic Sanctions Reconsidered

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Introduction

The Rhodesia Front Party under Prime Minister Ian Smith unilaterally declared Rhodesia's independence (UDI) from Britain in November 1965. This action was the result of the party being unhappy with Britain's unwillingness to grant independence to Rhodesia under white minority rule, as well as being anxious to forestall African majority rule at a time when the decolonisation process was fully underway in Africa. This decision plunged the nation into a deep crisis that was to see African nationalists under the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) pitted in a bitter armed conflict with Rhodesian government forces up to the resolution of the crisis, following a negotiated constitutional settlement at Lancaster House in London, England, in 1979.¹ The international world, led by the colonial power, Britain, imposed comprehensive economic sanctions against the rebel regime in Salisbury. These remained in force up to 1979, when the Rhodesian Government and leaders of the African liberation movements eventually negotiated an end to the country's crisis.

The factors accounting for the Lancaster House negotiations, particularly the willingness of the Rhodesian authorities to participate therein, have been a matter of much controversy. Disagreements have been particularly pronounced on the role of international economic sanctions (imposed on Rhodesia by the

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1. For coverage of the historical background to UDI, see K. Young, *Rhodesia and Independence A Study in British Colonial Policy* (J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, London, 1969); F.R. Metrowitch, *Rhodesia Birth of a Nation* (Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria, 1969); E. Windrich, *The Rhodesian Problem A Documentary Record 1923-1973* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1975); M. Hirsch, *A Decade of Crisis Ten Years of Rhodesian Front Rule 1963-1972* (Peter Dearlove, Salisbury, 1973).

international community soon after UDI) in pressurising the Rhodesian government into accepting the need for political change from white minority to African majority rule. Questions have been raised whether the economic sanctions weapon is effective in general and whether sanctions were effective particularly in the case of Rhodesia. These questions have not been satisfactorily resolved yet.

In the light of the above, this study seeks to re-examine the role of international sanctions in contributing to the conditions that made the Lancaster House Constitutional Conference possible. It argues that, while sanctions were by no means the only or even the most important factor in promoting dialogue between the Rhodesian authorities and the leaders of the liberation movements, they were, nevertheless, a significant factor and part of a combination of forces, which also included the effects of intensified guerrilla insurgency² and mounting international pressure, all of which brought about political change in Rhodesia in 1979.

International economic sanctions

When Ian Smith declared UDI on 11 November 1965, African leaders both in Rhodesia and elsewhere on the African continent hoped that Britain, as the responsible colonial power, would suppress the rebellion by military force. Rather than dispatching the British Army to remove the illegal regime in Salisbury, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson chose to impose economic sanctions. Indeed, the military option was never seriously considered, perhaps because there was fear that British soldiers would refuse to fire on their kith and kin, given the fact that out of the total white population of 219 500 in Rhodesia in 1965, some 58 000 were born in Britain and “many, if not most of the other whites, [were] of British descent.”³ Britain’s reluctance to use military means to end UDI was already known before November 1965, as is evident from the strong denunciation of the British position by the Fifth Session of the Council of Ministers in Accra, Ghana (October 1965). The latter deplored the United Kingdom’s negative attitude towards taking “drastic political and military

2. While this study focuses on the military side of the African insurgency, it fully acknowledges the role that civil society played in pressurising the Rhodesian government to accept political change. The important role of civil society organizations such as the Catholic and the Methodist Churches and the media in the resistance to Rhodesian rule is ably analysed in H. Solomon, “Lessons From Conflict Mediation in Southern Africa and the Role of Civil Society”, Centre for International Political Studies, <http://www.up.ac.za/academic/cips/publications>.
3. “Squeeze on Rhodesia: Who Will Really be Hurt?”, *US News and World Report*, 59, 29 November 1965, p 42. For Harold Wilson’s views, see H. Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970 A Personal Record* (Michael Joseph, London, 1971).

action against the white minority government bent on usurping power in Southern Rhodesia”.⁴

Such criticism notwithstanding, Harold Wilson went ahead on 11 November 1965 to expel Rhodesia from the Sterling Area, freeze Rhodesian assets in the United Kingdom, ban trade in arms and any further British investment in Rhodesia, suspend the country from the Commonwealth Preference Area, ban any purchases of tobacco from Rhodesia and decree that Rhodesian passports would henceforth not be recognised in Britain.⁵ At the time, Wilson was convinced that sanctions would work, because the Rhodesian economy was extremely vulnerable to external pressures and therefore in theory would collapse in a matter of “weeks rather than months”.⁶

In the same year, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 217, recommending that all states “break off all economic relations” with Rhodesia. In December 1966, the Security Council’s selective mandatory sanctions against Rhodesia followed, including a prohibition on exports of petroleum, armaments, vehicles and aircraft to Rhodesia. It also banned imports of Rhodesian agricultural products and minerals. Finally, in May 1968, the Security Council passed Resolution 253, imposing a ban on all exports to and imports from Rhodesia, prohibiting the transfer of funds to Rhodesia for investment, and severing all air links with the country.⁷

Wilson’s expectations of the rapid collapse of the Rhodesian economy were not entirely unreasonable, for the economy indeed was comparatively small, underdeveloped and based on a narrow range of export products, dominated by tobacco. The importance of the export trade to the well-being of the country’s economy was considerable, as is shown by the fact that in 1965, exports accounted for approximately 40 per cent of Rhodesia’s Gross National Income,

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4. Resolutions of the Fifth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers held in Accra, Ghana, from 14 to 21 October 1965, CM/Resolution 62 (V), Southern Rhodesia.
 5. U.K. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Official Report, 5, 720 (HMSO, 1966), columns 349-356.
 6. Cited in R. Renwick, *Economic Sanctions* (Harvard University, Cambridge, 1981), p 28.
 7. SEC Resolution 217 (1965); SEC Resolution 232 (1966); SEC Resolution 253 (1968). For a discussion of the United Nations sanctions against Rhodesia, see M.P. Doxey, *Economic Sanctions and International Enforcement* (Macmillan for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1980), pp 65-79; L.T. Kapungu, *The United Nations and Economic Sanctions against Rhodesia* (Lexington Books, Toronto, 1973); D.L. Lonsman, *International Economic Sanctions The Case of Cuba, Israel and Rhodesia* (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1979); Renwick, *Economic Sanctions*; H.R. Strack, *Sanctions The Case of Rhodesia* (University Press, Syracuse, 1978).

with tobacco accounting for no less than 30 per cent thereof. Furthermore, Rhodesia's export trade was dependent on Western European nations, mainly Britain, the very country that was imposing sanctions.⁸ It was argued that such an economy could not survive ostracism for long. As history was to prove, however, Wilson was not entirely correct in his analysis, for the Rhodesian regime was not brought to its knees for fourteen years.

According to Galtung,⁹ the Rhodesian economy did seem to be extremely vulnerable to international economic sanctions. In his opinion, sanctions works best in a country whose foreign trade represents a sizeable percentage of its Gross National Product (GDP) and one whose foreign trade is highly concentrated in one trading partner. The country's economy and exports should also be concentrated in one product. In a situation like this, sanctions are likely to cause a restriction of incomes in the foreign trade sectors, leading to a recession, which will spread to the rest of the country and cause a decline in national income. Dissatisfaction with such conditions will eventually lead to mounting criticism of and opposition to the policies of the ruling elite, thus making the target country's government more amenable to international pressures.¹⁰

On the basis of the above theory, it can be argued that in 1965, Rhodesia came very close to fitting the above specifications and should, therefore, have been particularly vulnerable to international economic sanctions. As noted, Rhodesia's exports were mostly concentrated in one export product, namely tobacco, which accounted for approximately 30 per cent of the nation's exports. Zambia and England accounted for 47,2 per cent of Rhodesia's exports, while 32 per cent of the country's imports were machinery and transport equipment and 30,4 per cent of Rhodesia's imports came from the United Kingdom.¹¹ It was, in fact, this apparent vulnerability of the Rhodesian economy that had convinced Wilson that Rhodesia would not survive sanctions for long.

The failure of sanctions to bring about the immediate collapse of the Rhodesian regime led some commentators to conclude that economic sanctions were not

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8. D.G. Clarke, "Zimbabwe's International Economic Position and Aspects of Sanctions Removal", in W.H. Morris Jones and D. Austin (eds), *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe Behind and Beyond Lancaster House* (Cass, London, 1980), pp 29-31; E.G. Cross, "Economic Sanctions as an Instrument of Policy: The Rhodesian Experience", in Zimbabwe Economic Society, *Symposium-University of Zimbabwe* (1980); Renwick, *Economic Sanctions*, p 26.
 9. J. Galtung, "On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions with Examples from the Case of Rhodesia", *World Politics* 19, 3, April 1967, pp 26-48.
 10. Galtung, "On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions", pp 26-48.
 11. Strack, *Sanctions*, p 15.

an effective tool of international diplomacy and that they did not work. According to Strack, Lonsman, Doxey, Renwick and others¹², sanctions against Rhodesia in particular were a failure. In Strack's opinion, sanctions against Rhodesia not only failed, but also produced unintended results in that they made Rhodesians more determined to defy the world than before and produced a *laager* mentality. He therefore concluded that:

Sanctions may be dysfunctional or counterproductive, producing results opposite to those desired by the initiators of sanctions. Sanctions can be counterproductive in the sense that they tend to increase the internal political cohesion of the target state and increase its will to resist the demands being made upon it by the sanctioning agency.¹³

Strack's conclusion was consistent with Galtung and the argument of other scholars that sanctions can sometimes induce a "rally-round-the-flag effect", resulting in increased support for national political leadership rather than, as expected by those who impose sanctions, antagonism to it.¹⁴ Similarly, a recent study by Bartlett argues that trade sanctions against Rhodesia failed because

... although the Smith regime was ultimately thrown out in 1979, it does not appear that the economic sanctions contributed much to that result ... [instead] the embargo ... led mainly to Rhodesia becoming more self sufficient.¹⁵

On his part, Selden is of the opinion that, far from working, economic sanctions against Rhodesia had the unintended consequences of strengthening the country's economy, as Rhodesians resorted to import substitution industrialisation (ISI), resulting in manufacturing output rising by 88 per cent between 1965 and 1975, while "the range of output expanded from 602 products in 1963 to 3 837 in 1970, [with] six of the nine fastest growing

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12. Strack, *Sanctions*; Lonsman, *International Economic Sanctions*; Doxey, *Economic Sanctions*; Renwick, *Economic Sanctions*. The debate begun then, still rages on as scholars debate the efficacy or otherwise of sanctions as a diplomatic weapon and whether the suffering they cause for the majority of the population is justified when the objective is really to change the behaviour of governments. See, for instance, M. Shane Smith, "Sanctions: Diplomatic Tool or Warfare by Other Means?", at <http://www.intractableconflict.org/m/sanctions.jsp>.
 13. Strack, *Sanctions*, p xii.
 14. Galtung, "On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions". See also I. Eland, "Economic Sanctions as Tools of Foreign Policy", in G.A. Lopez and D. Cortright (eds), *Economic Sanctions Panacea or Peace building in a Post-Cold War World?* (Westview, Boulder, 1995).
 15. B. Bartlett, "What's Wrong With Trade Sanctions", *Africa Recovery*, 14, 4, January 2001.

industries [being] in critical infrastructure sectors, including chemicals, petroleum products and construction”.¹⁶

In contrast, Baldwin, Claude, Minter, Schmidt and others have argued that sanctions against Rhodesia worked and that, even though they were not the only factor involved in bringing majority rule to Rhodesia, they did make a major contribution to that outcome.¹⁷ These scholars suggest that the “success” or “failure” of the Rhodesian sanctions has to be measured against the objectives of those who imposed them. In other words, if, as Galtung argues, sanctions are “actions initiated by one or more international actors (countries) against one or more others with either or both of two purposes: to punish the receivers by depriving them of some value and/or to make receivers (*target countries*) comply with certain norms the senders (*those imposing the sanctions*) deem important”¹⁸ [italics added], then the performance of sanctions against Rhodesia has to be measured by whether they succeeded in making Rhodesia “comply with certain norms” that those imposing them “deemed important”. The objectives of the international community in this case were to end UDI and to get the Rhodesian authorities to accept majority rule. The litmus test of whether sanctions against Rhodesia were successful or not, therefore, is whether these objectives were ultimately achieved. The answer is that, in the end, UDI did collapse and the regime did accept majority rule although, admittedly, the process took much longer than had been anticipated.

The delay in producing results is consistent with Steven McIntosh’s observation that “although comprehensive economic sanctions may not, in the short term at least, compel target states to alter their behaviour, they adversely affect the ability of those states to continue that behaviour”.¹⁹ Thus, the delay in impact should not be mistaken for the ineffectiveness of economic sanctions. In any case, with respect to the Rhodesian situation, it can be argued that the initial lack of effectiveness of the sanctions had little to do with the weakness of the sanctions weapon *per se*, but more with the specific circumstances prevailing at the time and the manner in which the sanctions were introduced, maintained

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16. Z.A. Selden, “Overused Tool”, *The New Democrat*, 1 November 1998.
 17. D. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1985); G. Claude *et al*, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered History and Current Policy* (Institute for International Economics, Washington D.C., 1985); W. Minter and E. Schmidt, “When Sanctions Worked: The Case of Rhodesia Re-examined”, *African Affairs*, 87, 347, April 1988, pp 207-239. See also *Zimbabwe News*, 17, 7, July 1986, p 10.
 18. Galtung, “On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions”.
 19. S. McIntosh, “Sanctions”, in K. Clements and R. Wards (eds), *Building International Community*, (Allen & Unwin, Australia, 1994), p 317.

and enforced. To understand why international sanctions did not achieve the desired result immediately, it is necessary to appreciate a number of factors.

Accounting for the initial ineffectiveness of sanctions

Sanctions were, initially, not very effective for several reasons. In the first place, Rhodesians had long expected these measures, having been informed as early as October 1964, that should they proceed with their plans for UDI, economic sanctions would be imposed on them. They therefore had ample time to prepare themselves for sanctions. Not surprisingly, they took appropriate steps to ensure that the declaration of UDI would be made at an opportune moment which would minimise damage to the country's economy and lessen the impact of economic sanctions. According to Haddon:

Rhodesia timed its declaration of UDI carefully. The big 137m 1964/65 tobacco crop sales had been completed, stocks of goods of all kinds, including motor vehicles and reserves of petrol, had been built up for months beforehand. More than half of foreign reserves (believed to have been in the region of 123m) had, as the Minister of Finance Mr John Wrathall revealed later, been moved out of London and Switzerland, in anticipation of Britain blocking these reserves. The regime imposed strict exchange and import controls a week before UDI, and the manpower controls under its Emergency Declaration enabled it to prevent factories affected by sanctions from sacking employees or closing down.²⁰

Secondly, because the "annual flow of financial payments from Rhodesia to Britain was much higher than that from Britain to Rhodesia ... the severing of relations benefited Rhodesia". Moreover, Rhodesia immediately defaulted on British and World Bank loans that had been guaranteed by the British Government; amounting, in all, to over £160-million.²¹ Thus, in a speech to Parliament, the Rhodesian Minister of Finance stated:

In consequence of the British government sanctions policy, Rhodesia considers herself absolved from the responsibility for servicing and repaying all London market debt, debt due to the British government and British government agencies, and debt which is under British

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20. E. Haddon, "Rhodesia's Ten Years of Sanctions", in C. Legum and J. Drysdale (eds), *Africa Contemporary Record Annual Survey and Documents* (Africa Research Ltd., Exeter, 1969-1970), A7-A8.
 21. E.S. Pangeti, "The Economy under Siege: Sanctions and the Manufacturing Sector 1965-1979" in A.S. Mlambo, E.S. Pangeti and I. Phimister, *Zimbabwe A History of Manufacturing 1890-1995* (UZP, Harare, Forthcoming), p 59.

government guarantee. Holders of this debt must look to the British government for satisfaction.²²

Thirdly, not all countries accepted or respected the United Nations sanctions. Rhodesia's two neighbours, Portuguese-ruled Mozambique and South Africa both refused to go along with the rest of the world and continued to trade with Rhodesia. Not only did they keep their transport routes open, but they also openly abetted Rhodesia's sanctions-busting efforts, making sure that all essentials important to the Rhodesian economy were brought into the country, while Rhodesia's major exports, disguised as South African or Mozambican products, were sold on the international market.

For instance, oil was easily smuggled into the country, sanctions notwithstanding. Apparently, Shell BP Company in the Middle East shipped oil to its sister company's refinery in Durban, South Africa, which then passed it on to Shell BP, South Africa. From there, it was sold to independent dealers, who then passed it on to the Rhodesian purchasing agency (CENTA), which in turn sold it to Shell BP, Rhodesia.²³ To ensure that no oil reached Rhodesia via the Mozambican port of Beira, the British Government deployed the Royal Navy off the Mozambican coast. According to Richard Mobley, however, this, so-called Beira Patrol failed in its mission, as oil deliveries meant for Rhodesia simply shifted to other Mozambican ports, such as Lourenço Marques (Maputo), which the patrol could not monitor.²⁴ According to former Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith, because of such evasive measures:

The oil embargo, one of Wilson's main weapons, was not working. There was an immediate sympathetic response from our friends in South Africa, who were privately ferrying in drums of petrol ... the cardinal point in our favour was that the South African government had made it clear that in principle they were opposed to sanctions, and it was their intention to maintain normal relations between our two countries, so bulk supplies were crossing our border at Beit Bridge by rail and road. Moreover, there was a large refinery at Lourenço Marques, so there was no problem in obtaining additional supplies from Mozambique.²⁵

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22. Minister of Finance, *Debates*, 25 February 1967, columns 2170-2171, cited in Pangeti, "Economy under Siege", p 59.
 23. C.E. Ngwa, "The Rhodesian Imperial Genesis, Colonial Recalcitrance and Sanctions Experiment", DPhil dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1973, p 115.
 24. R. Mobley, "The Beira Patrol: Britain's Broken Blockade against Rhodesia", *Naval War College Review*, 55, 1, Winter 2002.
 25. I. Smith, *The Great Betrayal The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith* (Blake Publishing Ltd, London, 1997), p 116.

In the fourth place, a number of “hostage states” such as Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi were in no position to cut all trade ties with Rhodesia, dependent as they were on Rhodesian, Mozambican, Angolan and South African transportation facilities for their international trade. Thus, Zambia’s copper-laden freight trains continued to cross the Zambezi despite Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda’s frequent and vociferous denunciations of the Smith regime, while Malawi’s President Kamuzu Banda openly courted the friendship and economic co-operation of the white governments of Rhodesia and South Africa.

A fifth reason why sanctions initially were not very effective, is that many countries which purported to abide by United Nations sanctions, circumvented them and continued to do a roaring trade with the illegal regime. France, Belgium, Italy, Greece, several North and West African countries, Brazil, Mauritius, West Germany and Taiwan flouted sanctions. The Soviet Union, for all its public stance as a friend of the struggling masses of Rhodesia, continued to import Rhodesian chrome through Mozambique, while the Japanese took advantage of the vacuum created by the withdrawal of British products to flood the Rhodesian market with cars, motorcycles and electronic gadgets of all kinds. The United States, equally, ignored sanctions.²⁶

A complex network of middlemen facilitated the breaking of sanctions. South African and Portuguese companies, Rhodesian holding companies in Luxembourg, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, as well as the Swiss banking system were all involved in the racket. It is revealing, for instance, that no less than 34 British companies were prosecuted for breaking sanctions between 1965 and 1978. As for the United States, its scant respect for sanctions became clear in January 1972 when the American Senate passed the Byrd Amendment, allowing the United States to import chrome from Rhodesia. The excuse was that the United States had no option, as failure to import the product from Rhodesia would mean that it would have to depend on more expensive, but poor quality chrome from its Cold War rival, the Soviet Union.²⁷

Lastly, Rhodesia did not immediately feel the full impact of sanctions because in 1965, it still had excess infrastructural capacity from investments during the Federation Era. It was able to harness this excess to take up the slack left by dwindling foreign investment. In fact, Rhodesia had 25 per cent of unused industrial capacity which was utilised during the sanctions period.²⁸

26. K. Flower, *Serving Secretly Rhodesia to Zimbabwe 1964-1981* (John Murray, London, 1987), chapter 4; Renwick, *Sanctions*, pp 37-39, 46-47.

27. Flower, *Serving Secretly*.

28. J. Hanlon and R. Ormond, *The Sanctions Handbook* (Penguin, London, 1987), p 206.

Given all of the above reasons, it is not surprising that economic sanctions were unable to bring the Rhodesian regime to its knees in “a matter of weeks”. Nevertheless, as will be shown below, sanctions did eventually have an impact on the Rhodesian economy and society.

Impact of sanctions

While it is true that the impact of sanctions on Rhodesia was very small up to the early 1970s, it did hit the country’s economy hard in the first two years of their imposition. For example, in 1966, Rhodesian exports decreased by 39 per cent, compelling the government to impose tight currency controls aimed at cutting imports by 30 per cent. In 1968, the total amount of Rhodesian exports were worth only slightly more than half of their value in 1965.²⁹ The motor industry was equally affected. The introduction of petrol rationing in the period before Rhodesia had found a way of evading the oil embargo led to a decline in car sales. As the cost of fuel shot up, spare parts became difficult to source and car purchases dwindled. The result was the collapse of the country’s two car-assembling plants, BMC and Ford.³⁰

The backbone of Rhodesia’s agriculture and exports, the tobacco industry, which had been responsible for 44 per cent of the total white settler output and 30 per cent of the country’s total exports in 1965, suffered considerably under sanctions. Not only did tobacco production drop drastically from 110-million kilograms in the 1965/1966 agricultural year to a mere 60-million kilograms in 1969/1970, but international markets for the product also shrunk to such an extent that tobacco worth £300-million had been stockpiled in the country by 1969 for lack of outlets. This compelled tobacco farmers to diversify into other crops in order to remain viable. Government assisted such diversification efforts by providing cash payments to farmers who surrendered portions of their tobacco production quotas and by setting up a diversification loan fund that was accessible at low interest rates. The Government also subsidised various agricultural inputs such as fertilisers and diesel fuel, as well as providing incentives such as high producer prices for wheat, groundnuts, soy beans, maize, cotton and beef.³¹

29. Hanlon and Ormond, *The Sanctions Handbook*, p 205; R.B. Sutcliffe, “Rhodesia Trade Since UDI”, *The World Today*, 23, 1967, p 420; Minter and Schmidt, “When Sanctions Worked”, p 221.

30. *Financial Mail*, 14 October 1966.

31. A.F. Hunt, “European Agriculture”, in G.M.E. Leistner, *Rhodesia Economic Structure and Change* (Africa Institute, Pretoria, 1976), p 80; *Financial Mail*, 14 October 1966.

With time, however, the economy recovered and even prospered. Agriculture was diversified to reduce the country's dependence on tobacco and to increase the production of wheat and other edible crops. Meanwhile, the government determinedly promoted import substitution industrialisation. Import licenses were issued only for goods that could not be produced locally. Government's import substitution policies stimulated food processing, textile, clothing and footwear manufacturing, in addition to other industries. The country became almost self-sufficient in certain areas of manufacture. Indeed, by the early 1970s, it was widely believed that Rhodesia had pulled off an "economic miracle" and that sanctions had completely failed. Writing in 1972, Guy Arnold and Alan Baldwin commented:

After four and a half years of full-scale Mandatory Sanctions ... sanctions have not worked in the sense of forcing the illegal regime to abandon its illegality and return to the status quo ante the rebellion. The Smith regime is still very much in control in Salisbury and there is every indication that it will continue in control indefinitely, if sanctions are only maintained at their present level.³²

Similarly, Paul Moorcraft commented that the sanctions saga "was all a charade", for

... sanctions did not destroy white rule ... Certainly there were shortages. Tall women could not get pantihose to fit them; razor blades and some electric light fittings were difficult to obtain sometimes; the chocolate "smarties", marmite and whisky were always at the top of the shopping list when Rhodesians visited South Africa. Luxury goods were not plentiful, particularly imported electrical goods; and cars cost a fortune. But in the booming conditions of the early seventies such privations were laughed off. British goods were scarce but the West German, Japanese and French substitutes proved to be superior to their British counterparts in respect of price, quality and promptness of delivery.³³

Recently, Hufbauer and Schott have also argued that the negative impact of sanctions was very marginal, as shown by the fact that:

... the annual cost of economic sanctions to Rhodesia was a mere \$130 million per year; a figure only slightly higher than the \$100 million annual cost to its neighbouring countries, Zambia and Mozambique,

32. G. Arnold and A. Baldwin, "Rhodesia: Token Sanctions or Total Economic Warfare?", *The African Bureau* (1972), cited in Windrich, *The Rhodesian Problem*, p 269.

33. P.L. Moorcraft, *A Short Thousand Years* (Galaxie Press, Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, 1979), p 184.

which lost trade and had to bear the increased costs of acquiring goods and raw materials elsewhere.³⁴

The above assessments of the impact of sanctions on Rhodesia provide only a partial view of the picture, for as Minter and Schmidt have argued, the reality was that by the mid-1970s, the boom years were ending as the import substitution industrialisation strategy had run its course and the economy, which had been growing at the average annual rate of 8 per cent per year between 1967 and 1974, had reached a plateau and began to slide. In a sense, the appearance of boom in the early seventies was misleading. The rapid industrialisation and diversification were not evidence of a rapidly growing economy as the country had, in fact, to run very fast in order to stay in one place.³⁵

Once the economy started on the downward slide, it deteriorated rapidly. Business confidence sagged, profits dwindled and the government tightened foreign currency laws. According to Renwick:

By 1978, the cumulative effects of the decline in economic activity since 1975 were serious. GDP had declined by over twelve percent in real terms, with a twenty percent fall in real per capita income ... agricultural production in real terms had declined progressively since 1975 ... Rhodesia experienced in this period a thirty percent deterioration in the terms of trade, with increases in the price of imports far outstripping export prices.³⁶

Indeed, according to Eddie Cross, Chief Economist of the Rhodesian Agricultural Marketing Authority, Rhodesia lost approximately 38 per cent of potential exports worth millions of dollars from 1975 to 1980. He also contends that, without sanctions, *per capita* income in 1979 would have been 42 per cent higher than it actually was.³⁷

Accounting for Rhodesia's economic decline

Several factors account for the decline of the Rhodesian economy in the mid-1970s. In the first place, the global economic recession of the 1970s that was in part triggered by the sharp increases of oil prices by OPEC in 1973, impacted negatively on the Rhodesian economy. As the economic fortunes of

34. G.C. Hufbauer and J.J. Schott, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered History and Current Policy* (Institute for International Economics, Washington D.C., 1985), pp 413-414, cited in Bartlett, "What's Wrong With Trade Sanctions", p 7.

35. Minter and Schmidt, "When Sanctions Worked", pp 221-223.

36. Renwick, *Economic Sanctions*, p 49.

37. Cross, "Economic Sanctions".

the Western countries that had sustained the Rhodesian economy through sanctions-busting activities confronted some economic problems induced by high fuel costs, the Rhodesian economy lost some of its erstwhile lucrative markets. In the meantime, oil price increases, which hit peripheral countries hard by increasing their energy costs and straining foreign currency reserves, hit Rhodesia even harder because the country had to pay above market prices for its oil imports due to various mark ups by middlemen in the sanctions-busting chain.

Secondly, the enforcement of sanctions improved. The closure of the Zambian border in 1973 and the Mozambican border in 1976 tightened the screws against Rhodesia. In 1977, the American government under President Jimmy Carter, repealed the Byrd Amendment and stopped the importation of Rhodesian chrome into America.

Thirdly, the previously hidden effects of sanctions were now taking their toll. Especially crippling was the shortage of foreign capital, technology and machinery which meant that no new projects could be started, while the maintenance of existing plants became increasingly difficult as the now old machines were wearing out and spare parts were not available to repair them.

In the fourth place, the escalating guerrilla war compounded the effects of sanctions, as more resources were diverted from civilian production to the war effort.

Lastly, South Africa increasingly put pressure on Rhodesia to resolve the crisis through negotiations. In any case, South Africa had by this time itself become a target of international economic sanctions designed to end apartheid. It was, therefore, no longer able to maintain earlier levels of supplies to the Rhodesian regime. Thus, when the Arab countries imposed an oil embargo on South Africa, it reduced its oil supplies to Rhodesia in turn, resulting in the re-imposition of petrol rationing in 1974 by the Salisbury regime.³⁸ What finally tipped the scales, however, was South Africa's decision to impose its own sanctions against Rhodesia as a way of pressurising it to negotiate with the African leaders.³⁹

What is evident from the above discussion, therefore, is that as an international weapon of diplomacy, sanctions did work in the Rhodesian case. This is, of course, not to say that sanctions alone brought about majority rule, for clearly there were other forces at work during the period to propel Rhodesia towards

38. Hanlon and Ormond, *Sanctions Handbook*, p 206.

39. Hanlon and Ormond, *Sanctions Handbook*, p 207.

the 1979 Lancaster House constitutional talks, as will be shown below. It is only to say that sanctions played a role in adding to the mounting pressure against the Rhodesian government. Admittedly, the Rhodesian government did not knuckle under in a matter of weeks, but in the end, sanctions achieved their goal by hamstringing the economy and raising the cost of Rhodesia's continued defiance of the world.⁴⁰

Intensified guerrilla insurgency

The role of sanctions must be seen within the context of Rhodesia's escalating human and financial costs. Especially from 1972 onwards, the guerrilla campaign, which had begun in the wake of the UDI declaration as African nationalists took up arms to overthrow white rule, entered a new and more intense phase. This meant that the Rhodesian government not only had to contend with heavier military expenditure, but also with the increasing disruption of economic activity, as it became necessary to call upon even more men for the military effort. Thus the escalation of the war, with the consequent direct and indirect costs to the economy in the form of destroyed assets, reduced incomes, unemployment effects, the diversion of money to non-productive military outlays and skill re-allocation as productive men were called up for military service, compounded the negative effects of sanctions, forcing the Rhodesian regime to the negotiation table.

What later became a serious military threat to the Rhodesian regime, had started very modestly in the early 1960s as a generally undistinguished sabotage campaign involving a few cadres trained abroad.⁴¹ At this early stage of the struggle, nationalist leaders were convinced that it would only take a few incidences of sabotage and military action to convince the whites of the folly of their ways and to persuade them to change their minds and grant majority rule to the Zimbabwean people.⁴² When the expected results did not materialise, both the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) were forced to reconsider their strategies and to

40. According to W. Minter and E. Schmidt, in "When Sanctions Worked", "Sanctions reinforced African opposition to the regime, undermined the country's ability to sustain the counter-insurgency war, undermined the confidence of the white community and made them feel isolated ... increased unemployment and poverty among Africans and led to increased support for the guerrillas."

41. For the history of the early guerrilla campaigns, see K. Maxey, *The Fight for Zimbabwe The Armed Conflict in Southern Rhodesia Since UDI* (Rex Collings, London, 1975); A. Seegers, "Revolution in Africa: The Case of Zimbabwe 1965-1980." PhD dissertation, Loyola University, Chicago, 1984; and J.K. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* (Croom Helm, London, 1985).

42. D. Martin and P. Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (ZPH, Harare, 1981), p 11.

prepare for a longer and more sustained war of attrition against the Rhodesian government before victory could be achieved.

Throughout the late 1960s, both parties infiltrated armed groups into the country, which were involved in numerous military clashes with the Rhodesian Security Forces in various parts of the country. Until 1972, however, the guerrilla campaign was a very low-key and modest affair that was easily contained by the Rhodesian Security Forces. Guerrilla incursions were little more than an irritation to the Rhodesian government at this time. Poor strategy and tactical errors, among other problems, made the guerrillas easy prey to the Rhodesians. According to Evans:

The Zimbabwean guerrillas who infiltrated Rhodesia from 1966 to 1971 were annihilated by the Rhodesian army. They made the elementary errors which, in insurgency, lead to death. Instead of dispersing, the guerrillas moved in columns, wore green fatigues and a standardised boot that made tracking easy.⁴³

Evans noted that the guerrillas' Che Guevaran approach, which was based on the concept of "detonating" a revolutionary situation by means of an insurgent vanguard, was not likely to succeed. Not only were the African masses in the country not ready to erupt in an all-consuming revolution against the Rhodesian regime, but also the Rhodesian Security Forces enjoyed the advantages of superior training and tactics, firepower and mobility, as well as the command of the air. In any case, the Rhodesian forces had to contend with nationalist infiltration from only one direction, namely from Zambia, whose border presented severe challenges to incoming guerrillas. Guerrillas had not only to cross the Zambezi River but also traverse dense jungles of sparsely inhabited areas where they could easily be detected and liquidated.

By the 1970s, the nationalist leaders had realised the weaknesses in their approach and revised their strategy accordingly. The new strategy was clearly spelt out by ZANU Chairman Herbert Chitepo when he observed that ZANU had, in the past, emphasized military attack at the expense of political struggle, but:

We have since tried to correct this tragic error by politicising and mobilising the people before mounting attacks against the enemy. After politicising our people, it became easier for them to cooperate with us and identify with our programme.

43. M. Evans, "Fighting against Chimurenga: An Analysis of Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia, 1972-1979" (University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe, 1981), p 5.

In the coming struggle, he added:

The strategical aim ... is to attenuate the enemy forces by causing their deployment over the whole country. The subsequent mobilisation of a large number of civilians from industry, business and agriculture would cause serious economic problems. This would have a psychologically devastating effect on the morale of the whites.⁴⁴

As a result of this revised strategy, ZANU guerrillas presented a more formidable military challenge to the Rhodesian forces from 1972 onwards. Following a long period of mobilising the peasants in the north-east of the country, ZANU's guerrilla force, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) embarked upon the second and more intensive phase of the armed struggle in December 1972. Soon afterwards, Ian Smith conceded that the security situation had taken a turn for the worse. Speaking to the nation in the same month, he stated:

... the security situation is far more serious than it appears on the surface, and if the man in the street could have access to the security information which I and my colleagues in government have, then I think he would be a lot more worried than he is today.⁴⁵

In the 1970s, both ZANU and ZAPU infiltrated increasing numbers of guerrillas into the country as the war escalated and Rhodesian Security Forces were stretched on all fronts from the western, northern and north-eastern to the south-eastern fronts. The guerrillas also began to use landmines, which made most of Rhodesia's roads unsafe and claimed many lives. As the war escalated and sanctions began to make their effect felt, white emigration increased dramatically. The Rhodesian government was forced to increase the size of its army and to spend more on defence than previously.

The independence of Mozambique opened Rhodesia's longer, more vulnerable and easily accessible eastern border to ZANLA guerrilla infiltration. By 1976, guerrillas had penetrated deep into the southern, western and central areas of the country. By 1979, the security situation had deteriorated so much that over 90 per cent of the country had been placed under martial law. At that point, it was estimated that ZANLA alone had over 10 000 guerrillas operating in the country, while thousands of others were ready for deployment. Over 12 000 were also undergoing military training in various countries. More than 15 000 were available for training in Mozambique.⁴⁶ According to J. Tungamirai, a

44. *Zimbabwe News*, 7, 9, September 1973, p 3.

45. Quoted in Flower, *Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p 135.

46. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency*, p 239; A.R. Wilkinson, "The Impact of the War", in Morris Jones and Austin (eds), *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, pp 110-123, gives

total of 66 367 people “were registered in the categories of refugees, recruits [sic] undergoing military training and combatants in the field by 1979.”⁴⁷ ZAPU’s Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) had about 20 000 trained guerrillas of whom about 3 000 were deployed in the country. The remainder were in camps in Zambia, while an additional 5 000 were undergoing training in Angola and Zambia. To these forces arrayed against the Smith regime should be added the countless thousands of *Mujibas* inside the country.⁴⁸

Evidence of the intensification of the war was the growing number of war casualties reported in the Rhodesian Security Forces’ communiqués in 1979. The latter showed that of the reported 310 white civilians, 760 Rhodesian soldiers, 3 845 black civilians and 6 000 guerrillas killed since 1972, respectively 60 per cent, 37 per cent, 45 per cent and 50 per cent, had been killed in 1978 alone.⁴⁹

Financially, the escalating war was taking a heavy toll from the Rhodesian exchequer. For instance, between 1971 and 1978, budget allocations to the Ministry of Defence, the Police, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Department of Roads and Road Traffic respectively increased by 610 per cent, 232 per cent, 305 per cent and 257 per cent, as Table 1 illustrates.

Table 1: Rhodesian Government Department Expenditures, 1971-1978 (in RS000,000)

	1971/2	1976/7	1977/8	1971/8 Increase
Ministry of Defence	19,98	98,42	141,84	610 %
Police	16,74	48,75	55,63	232 %
Internal Affairs	9,67	41,11	39,14	305 %
Roads and Road Traffic	7,84	27,32	27,95	257 %

Source:

Strategic Survey (International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1977), p 31.

different figures for ZANU guerrilla strength at this time. See also Flower, *Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, chapter 6.

47. J. Tungamirai, “The Qualitative and Quantitative Change in Recruitment by Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army, ZANLA.” Paper presented to the Darwendale ZANU History Project Seminar, Darwendale 1994, p 9.

48. Wilkinson, “Impact”, pp 113-114. *Mujibas* were young boys [often herd boys] who acted as the guerrillas’ eyes and ears, some of whom were later trained in sabotage techniques and the use of firearms.

49. Wilkinson, “Impact”, pp 113-114.

By 1979, Rhodesia was spending no less than R\$1 000 000 per day on defence. To meet the rising war costs, the Rhodesian regime was forced to increase taxes in 1978 and to introduce a National Defence Levy of 12,5 per cent in the same year.⁵⁰ Total defence-related spending rose from R\$77-million in 1975 to R\$197-million in 1978, representing an increase from 25 to 40 per cent of the country's total budget. The rise in defence expenses was combined with a declining growth rate as the GDP, in real terms, respectively fell by 3 and 7 per cent in 1976 and 1977.⁵¹

As more and more guerrillas infiltrated the country, the Rhodesian defence capabilities were stretched to the limit, making it necessary for the country to dig even deeper into its manpower resources to try to meet the onslaught. Consequently, in 1978, the military call-up was extended to cover various categories of white males who were required to spend a specified number of days per year on military duty. All white males between the ages of 18 and 38 were required to spend up to half-a-year on operational duty, while those between 38 and 50, spent 70 days, and those over 50 up to 40 days a year on military and police reserve duties.⁵² In 1979, the call-up was extended to Africans in a bid to beef up the country's defence.

The impact of the extended call-up duty on the national economy was critical as able-bodied and economically productive men were withdrawn from civilian production to serve the war machine. Military call-ups, together with the deteriorating security and economic situation, sparked off a growing emigration wave as whites took what was contemptuously known by those who stayed in the country as the "yellow route". Contemporary statistics reveal that total net negative migration amounted to 13 709 in 1978.⁵³ The seriousness of the situation becomes evident when one considers that the thousands of emigrants included skilled professionals whose services were vital to the efficient operation of the economy. In his 1979 New Year broadcast to the nation, Prime Minister Ian Smith acknowledged the danger which such high levels of emigration posed to the economy, by stating:

The main effect of the emigration of skilled personnel, which accelerated in 1978, will be felt in 1979 and become more severe unless the trend is stopped. This will be the main difference between 1978 and 1979. A growing shortage of skilled personnel will reduce rather than create employment.⁵⁴

50. Seegers, "Revolution in Africa", p 329.

51. Wilkinson, "Impact", p 113.

52. Wilkinson, "Impact", p 113.

53. *Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics* (Central Statistical Office, Salisbury, 1972-1979).

54. Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, p 286.

In a bid to stem the tide, the Rhodesian authorities had reduced holiday allowances in September 1976 to prevent prospective emigrants from using holiday allowances as a cover to transfer their capital from Rhodesia. That did not help, however, as emigration figures continued to swell. The Rhodesian immigration and emigration figures dating from 1972 to 1979 are documented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Rhodesia: White Migration Trends, 1972-1979

Year	Immigrants	Emigrants	Net Migration
1972	13 966	5 150	+ 8 816
1973	9 433	7 750	+ 1 683
1974	9 649	9 050	+ 599
1975	12 425	10 500	+ 1 925
1976	7 782	14 854	- 7 072
1977	5 730	16 638	-10 908
1978	4 360	18 069	-13 709
1979	3 416	12 973	- 9 557

Sources:

Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics (Central Statistical Office, Salisbury, 1972-1979);
Annual Reports of the Commissioner of the British South Africa Police, 1972-1979.

Another major casualty of the war was the country's tourist industry, one of its major income earners. From the beginning of the escalation of the guerrilla campaign in 1972, to the end of 1978, the number of tourist visitors to Rhodesia dropped from the high figure of 339 210 in 1972 to a mere 87 943 in 1978. It was the result of Rhodesia increasingly being perceived as an unsafe place to visit because of the war.⁵⁵

In the meantime, normal colonial administration had virtually ground to a halt in the countryside on account of guerrilla attacks on government installations, institutions and representatives. As evidence of the negative impact of the war on government institutions and infrastructure, the reports of the Secretary for African Education in the late 1970s noted that "terrorism" was resulting in the closure of some schools and "hot-seating" of pupils in the urban areas. In addition it was disrupting the examination process, in-service training programmes for teachers and the distribution of educational materials. The war was also reportedly preventing school inspectors from carrying out their duties

55. *Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics* (Central Statistical Office, Salisbury, 1972-1979).

while, in some areas, schoolchildren had to be transported in armed convoys due to the bad security situation.⁵⁶

Table 3: Impact of guerrilla war by 1979

Number of schools closed	1 000
Schoolchildren displaced from schools	483 000
Secondary school teachers unemployed due to school closures	2 000
Rural hospitals closed	155 (out of a national total of 450)
Cattle dips closed	6 500 (out of 8 000)
Total number of people killed since the beginning of the war	30 000
People maimed/crippled	10 000
Total number of people made homeless	80 000
Refugees in Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique	250 000
Total rural-urban migration as a result of war	500 000

Sources:

Compiled from *Annual Reports of the Secretary for African Education, 1977-79*; M. Bratton, *Beyond Community Development The Political Economy of Rural Administration in Zimbabwe* (Catholic Institute for International Relations, London, 1978), pp 34-35; A.R. Wilkinson, "The Impact of the War," in W.H. Morris Jones and D. Austin (eds), *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (Cass, London, 1980), pp 119-120; J.K. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* (Croom Helm, London, 1985), p 241.

As can be seen from Table 3, the nation's rural school system, veterinary programme and medical system had collapsed by 1979. According to one source, already by mid-1978, large areas of the country were no longer

... provided with veterinary services. As a result, the spread of tsetse fly was unchecked ... the rural bus services which transported about 95% of the country's black population between the main urban centres and the TTLs [Tribal Trust Lands] had virtually collapsed by the end of 1978. Malaria, Bilharzia and other endemic diseases, once under control, now became widespread.⁵⁷

In February 1979, the *Financial Mail* reported that administration in the TTLs around Mudzi and Mutoko in eastern Mashonaland, in the Fort Victoria region and in parts of Matebeleland had ceased. White farming populations were

56. See *Annual Reports of the Secretary for African Education, 1976-1979*. "Hot-seating" refers to the use of the same classrooms for two streams of students because of a shortage of classrooms or schools. Thus one group would attend classes in the morning, while another group, from the same class/grade, would attend classes in the afternoon.

57. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency*, pp 238-239.

diminishing in the Umtali region, in Cashel Valley, around Melsetter, Birchenough Bridge, Chipinge, Rusape, Headlands, Macheke, Centenary and Sipolilo.⁵⁸

In a desperate bid to arrest the deteriorating situation, the Rhodesian government withheld food supplies from certain areas that were considered to be a security risk and bundled thousands of peasants into militarised camps known as Protected Villages (PVs). By late-1977, there was a total of 203 PVs with a population of 580 832.⁵⁹ Collective punishments were meted out to whole villages for abetting “terrorists”, while villagers were sometimes relocated far away from their traditional home areas once they were suspected of being sympathetic to the guerrillas.⁶⁰ Increasingly, the Rhodesians launched raids on refugee camps in Mozambique and Zambia. Such measures only made the regime more unpopular among the African masses.

By 1979, the military balance had arguably tilted in favour of the guerrillas. That Rhodesian authorities were well aware of this fact, was revealed in an army briefing document which reported that:

There are at present 3,900 well trained troops ... deployed against 12,4000 Cts (Communist Terrorists); a ratio of 1:3,2. Adding of SFA (Security Force Auxiliaries) to troops, the ratio becomes 1:1,15. In classical COIN (Counter-insurgency) terms, this is a no-win or rather a sure-lose situation.⁶¹

Meanwhile, the Rhodesians increasingly lost control of the situation. In the words of Martin and Johnson:

The Rhodesians had [by 1979] ... lost control of large areas of the countryside, particularly the Takawira Sector stretching from the Mozambique frontier to just west of Salisbury and the Nehanda sector to the north which included Sinoia to the west and Norton to the south ... Advance groups had already infiltrated the cities on sabotage missions, such as the spectacular attack on oil storage depots in Salisbury ... In the central Manica Province the guerrillas had infiltrated to the west of Gwelo and Shabani ... In the southernmost Gaza Province, ZANLA guerrillas were south-east of Plumtree ... By the middle of 1979 ... the ZANLA forces inside the country numbered over 20,000.⁶²

58. *Financial Mail*, February 1979.

59. H. Ellert, *The Rhodesian Front War Counterinsurgency and Guerrilla War 1962-1980* (Mambo Press, Gweru, 1989), p 27.

60. *Africa Research Bulletin*, 1 April 1974 to 30 April 1974, p 3212, reports for instance that twohundred members of Madziwa Tribal Land were relocated all the way across the country to the Beit Bridge area “as punishment for assisting terrorists” in 1974.

61. Cited in Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency*, pp 239-240.

62. Martin and Johnson, *Struggle for Zimbabwe*, pp 308-309. Although the quoted passage refers only to ZANLA, it must be noted that ZIPRA guerrillas were also

The escalating guerrilla infiltration, the guerrillas' increasingly sophisticated weaponry and their growing operational experience, combined with the support they enjoyed from the masses and time were all clearly in favour of the insurgents. Moreover, international sanctions were, by this time, affecting the country's ability to continue to procure the necessary arms with which to wage war against the guerrillas, especially after South Africa changed its position on continuing to support Rhodesia. While by the mid-1970s Rhodesia had developed the capacity to manufacture aircraft bombs and small arms, it still relied heavily on imported weapons and ammunition, now increasingly difficult to procure because of shortages of foreign currency. Indeed:

Economic sanctions have deprived the Rhodesians of most of the paraphernalia associated with modern counter-insurgent campaigns. They are desperately short of helicopters, many of their aircraft are old and out-dated, and much of their equipment is locally made. The vast African heartland is patrolled almost entirely by men on foot, ... Lack of gadgetry has forced the Rhodesians to concentrate on basic infantry expertise, and to rely heavily on improvisation and initiative.⁶³

Being aware that both ZANU and ZAPU had large reserves of men, women and materials outside the country and were preparing for a final onslaught in the rainy season of 1979 to 1980, when conditions would be ideal for guerrilla activity, Rhodesian political leaders had to acknowledge that the future was bleak. Consequently, on the recommendation of both his intelligence advisers and Combined Operations (COMOPS) command, Smith went along with the British proposals to end the Rhodesian conflict.⁶⁴ He was later to write that, given the forces arrayed against Rhodesia, it had become "difficult to avoid the conclusion that we were in a no-win situation." He had realised that there was no alternative but to negotiate with the nationalist leaders. In his words, "... while I had previously resisted any thought of an all-party conference, ... I was reconciling myself to a change of thought and my colleagues in the Rhodesian Front agreed." He cited two reasons for this change of heart, namely the fact that guerrillas "were gaining support among the indigenous population", as well as the Western powers' unwillingness to antagonise African countries by recognising Rhodesia's independence.⁶⁵

It is clear, therefore, that escalating guerrilla pressure reinforced the growing negative impact of international sanctions to persuade the Rhodesian regime of

operating extensively in the northern, western and southwestern parts of the country.
63. N. Downie, "Rhodesia: A Study in Military Incompetence" at <http://www.rhodesiaforces.org>.

64. This interpretation is based on Ellert, *The Rhodesian Front*, p 53.

65. Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, p 313.

the need to negotiate a peaceful end to the conflict. Added to these pressures, was the changing geo-political situation, which left the Rhodesian regime in an increasingly precarious position.

To Lancaster House

On 6 August 1979, the Commonwealth Heads of State Summit, which was taking place in Lusaka, Zambia, and was deliberating the Zimbabwean imbroglio, unanimously adopted a document calling upon Britain to convene a constitutional conference to which all parties would be invited in order to adopt a democratic constitution, end hostilities and pave the way for ending international sanctions. While the warring parties in Rhodesia initially publicly resisted the call to negotiate, the realities of the situation were not lost to them. The costs of intransigence in the form of lost international goodwill and support would be high and disastrous for any side that was seen to be deliberately obstructive to international efforts to secure peace in the country.

Because of the regional and international interest in the Rhodesian question, as well as the international pressures brought to bear on both sides of the Rhodesian political divide, the Lancaster House Conference turned out to be more than just a round-table conference for the Rhodesian belligerents. A multiplicity of interest groups participated either directly or indirectly in the negotiations. While the British played the role of “honest broker”, the Front Line States of Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Botswana, South Africa, the United States of America, the Organisation of African Unity and other interested groups and countries advised, pressurised, influenced and otherwise “assisted” the negotiations, or followed the conference’s proceedings with keen interest.

As James Barber justly points out, participants at the Lancaster House Conference were more than those seated around the negotiating table:

Indeed, some of the delegates inside Lancaster House might have been excused had they sat with their heads half turned, straining to catch the advice, the admonitions or support of those outside. These “outsiders” ranged from the London-based officials of states and organisations to fleeting visitors like President Kaunda of Zambia or Mr Pik Botha of South Africa, and, in the case of the British Ministers, attention had to be given to the noises off [sic] from Washington and from their own party.⁶⁶

66. J. Barber, “Zimbabwe’s Southern African Setting”, in Morris Jones and Austin (eds), *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p 28.

Conclusion

As has been shown, international sanctions played an important role in persuading the Rhodesian authorities to agree to a negotiated settlement of the Rhodesian crisis at the Lancaster House Conference in 1979. While it is accepted that sanctions failed to bring the Rhodesian government to its knees within “a matter of weeks”, as Harold Wilson had predicted, it is not correct to conclude that these measures were a failure simply because their impact took long to become evident. While it is not possible to quantify the extent to which sanctions contributed to the change in the Rhodesian government’s policies, it is undeniable that they exerted pressure on the country’s economy, which, in turn, hampered the ability of Rhodesia to resist the growing guerrilla insurgency.

It can also be argued that the shortages of commodities associated with economic sanctions possibly had a psychological impact on some sections of the white population and may have fuelled the growing emigration. The latter, in turn, also impacted negatively on the country’s economy and its ability to withstand the guerrilla onslaught. It is the contention of this study that the deleterious effects of international economic sanctions, combined with the mounting guerrilla insurgency and the changing geo-political circumstances that saw Rhodesia coming under increasing regional and international pressure, made the 1979 Lancaster House Conference possible. Thus, despite several weaknesses, the economic sanctions imposed on Rhodesia by the international community, did succeed.

Abstract

This article re-examines the role of international economic sanctions in helping to resolve the Rhodesian political impasse. This situation was the result of the white minority Rhodesian government’s unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) from Britain in November 1965. The Rhodesian case is studied in the light of the debate on the efficacy or ineffectiveness of sanctions as a weapon of international diplomacy. It is argued that, while sanctions were neither the only nor the most important factor in bringing the Rhodesian government to a negotiated political settlement at Lancaster House in 1979, they were, nevertheless, a very significant factor that worked, in tandem with other factors such as the escalating guerrilla insurgency and mounting international pressure. As a result of this combination of factors, the Rhodesian crisis was brought to an end and Zimbabwe’s independence was ushered in in 1980.

During the initial period, sanctions appeared to be ineffective, as the Rhodesian economy appeared to enjoy prosperity in the period following their imposition.

This led some commentators to dismiss sanctions as having failed to achieve the objectives of those who imposed them. It is however argued here that sanctions eventually succeeded in hamstringing the Rhodesian economy and in impairing the country's ability to deal with the mounting guerrilla insurgency. Ultimately, it made it difficult for the Rhodesian government to continue ignoring world opinion, as well as the call for African majority rule. Thus, it is contended that sanctions did work in the Rhodesian case, even though they took much longer to bring the Rhodesian government down than had been anticipated.

Opsomming

Aanloop tot die 1979 Lancaster House Grondwetlike Konferensie oor Rhodesië: 'n Herbesinning oor die Rol van Internasionale Ekonomiese Sanksies

Hierdie artikel herevalueer die rol van internasionale ekonomiese sanksies in die ontknoping van die Rhodesiese politieke dooiepoint. Laasgenoemde het gevolg op die Rhodesiese wit minderheidsregering se eensydige onafhanklikheidsverklaring van Brittanje in November 1965. Die studie vind plaas in die lig van die debat oor die geslaagdheid, al dan nie, van sanksies as 'n wapen van internasionale diplomatie, veral in die geval van Rhodesië. Daar word geargumenteer dat, terwyl sanksies nie die enigste of selfs die belangrikste faktor was wat die Rhodesiese regering in 1979 tot 'n onderhandelde politieke skikking by Lancaster House gebring het nie, dit nogtans 'n uiters betekenisvolle faktor was wat in tandem met ander faktore gewerk het. Hierdie faktore sluit die groeiende guerrilla-insurgensie en stygende vlak van internasionale druk om die Rhodesiese krisis te beëindig, in en het Zimbabwe se onafhanklikheid in 1980 bewerkstellig.

Aanvanklik het dit voorgekom asof die sanksies oneffektief was, gesien teen die skynbare voorspoed wat die Rhodesiese ekonomie geniet het in die periode wat op die instelling daarvan gevolg het. Dit het sommige kommentators daartoe gelei om sanksies as 'n mislukking af te maak. Hier word egter geargumenteer dat sanksies uiteindelik wel daarin geslaag het om die Rhodesiese ekonomie te kniehalter en teenstand teen die toenemende guerrilla-insurgensie te bemoeilik. Hierdie faktore het dit uiteindelik vir die Rhodesiese regering moeilik gemaak om die wêreld se oproep om 'n Afrika meerderheidsregering langer te ignoreer. Daar word dus beweer dat sanksies wél in Rhodesië se geval gewerk het, selfs al het dit veel langer geneem om die Rhodesiese regering tot 'n val te bring, as wat aanvanklik voorsien is.

Key words

Guerrilla insurgency, import substitution industrialisation (ISI), Lancaster House, majority rule, Rhodesia, Rhodesia Front Party, sanctions, Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU).

Sleutelwoorde

Guerrilla-insurgensie, invoer substituu industrialisasie (ISI), Lancaster House, meerderheidsregering, Rhodesië, Rhodesia Front Party, sanksies; eensydige onafhanklikheidsverklaring (UDI), Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU).