

## The Brookings Institution and the U.S. Foreign Policy: The Case of Iran Sanctions

Maede Doust\*, & Mansour Barati\*\*

\*M.A. of North American Studies, Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran, Iran.

\*\*Ph.D. Candidate of Political Thought, Faculty of Political Science and Law, University of Tehran, Iran.

### ABSTRACT

*This study is aimed at investigating on Brookings' stance toward Iran sanctions. As Islamic Republic of Iran is dealing with issues of sanctions since previous two decades, so sanctions is deemed as an important issue to ponder about, also get right into the factors and the actors involved in the process. Katzman's theory regarding U.S. strategy to put pressure on Iran economy to bring Iran to negotiating table, is adopted, moreover qualitative content analysis of data, collected from Brookings such as opinions, papers, and blog spots, It is concluded that Brookings' stance is for implementation of sanctions before the negotiations, and now is in doubt towards sanction relief, about result of boosting Iran's economy and Iran's future commitments in this regards, but at the same time they do not want Iran become similar to North Korea's nuclear program, "an unrestrained nuclear program".*

This study is aimed at investigating on Brookings Institution role on imposing sanctions upon Iran, Brookings as one of fundamental and vital think tanks in U.S. is really necessary to study and focus on. U.S. sanction policy against Iran is dated back to past two decades; also it is U.S. statecraft to adopt this tool amongst U.S. toolkit strategy of foreign policy making on Iran, so it is really influential for our country, Iran to recognize this policy and know what are the actors and factors influential in this arena such as Israel lobby in U.S. and the actors within this structure.

Government efficiency movement of 19<sup>th</sup> century has resulted in establishment of such think tank that is considered as first one in U.S. so it dated back to 1916. It really was result of corrupted political system of the time such as more bipartisan like than scientific one. "Authority is the coin of the realm of think tanks", also it is ranked is the first based of foreign policy think tanks index, moreover it is considered as center or center left in its notions, but some believe it is leaning towards democratic party, but it is not, it is political independence (Juricek 2009).

Previous research has shown negative effect of sanctions on level of democracy, but as it is obvious most of sanctions are targeted to promote democracy in authoritarian countries, meaning that democratic sanctions influence on economic stress so lead to collapse of regime and finally liberalization is the outcome, but sanctions do not promote level of democracy, but there is a correlation between the two. As democratic sanction pave the way for instability, so there is higher probability of regime change in the country (Wahman 2014).

Imposing sanction is U.S. one of strategies to force target country to accept specific American policy (Lektzian 2014), Now the target country is Iran. Generally, if we look at U.S. and Iran historical relationships, there are some seeds of dishonesty that would resulted in this kind of

relationship. Following Islamic Revolution of Iran, U.S. tried to “isolate Iran diplomatically, military, and economically”, also just unilateral sanctions were imposed upon Iran, and the first sanction was based on “seizure of American embassy in Tehran”.

In order to know the foreign policy of U.S. toward Iran, it would be better to get right to definition of “sanctions”, it is kind of strategy of limitation, restrictions imposed by a national government upon international commerce, “These trading restrictions are the defined objectives of a government’s trade policy as distinct from the defined objectives of foreign policy, for which the United States increasingly employs economic sanctions”, moreover the meaning of “economic sanctions” is more vital than sanctions in this relations between U.S. and Iran, economic sanctions propose type of coercive measures taken (in economic issues) to put a country under the pressure to be led toward specific direction, they are used as behavior aimed to change “political behavior of target country”, also it is defined as “deliberate, government inspired withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, of customary trade or financial relations”(Alikhani 2000, Peksen 2010, Lektzian 2014), Based on the spectrum of foreign policy making, economic sanctions is in the middle where coercive measures like military engagement and so on are one end and in the other end is diplomatic actions like recall of an ambassador, etc. so based on these two countries relations, economic sanctions upon Iran would be nonmilitary actions by U.S.

Economic sanctions became a way through which put force on Iran to negotiate, but it is West’s views about Iran sanctions, as West is doubtful about Iran use of atomic bomb. Generally imposing sanctions is not good substitute for diplomacy. Through the last agreement between U.S. and Iran, lifting sanctions is another subject matter to negotiate, President has the right to suspend the sanctions against countries that are imposed by U.S; but not lifting them thoroughly. Iran nuclear program is aimed to develop electricity production, medical isotopes, not bombs, but 5+1 powers think otherwise(Sauer 2013).

Sanctions were imposed by American since eighteenth century, Stamp Act, Townshend Act, etc. So it is unbreakable part of American traditions, in 1807, President Thomas Jefferson in order to prevent war with Britain, France persuaded Congress to accept embargo act. 1918 up to now, imposing economic sanctions considered as a way instead of war, it was exactly after First World War, so Article XVI is one of the results,” this article provides for sanctions against any state which resorts to war before attempting to resolve its claims by peaceful means”. Between the two wars (WWI and WWII), there are some cases of economic sanctions that some of objectives were fulfilled during Second World War. In 1930s, the basis of international sanctions was international law enforcements, meaning League of Nations Sanctions.

It is after WWI, U.S. continued the strategy of sanctions to keep peace at the region, so Charter of United Nations was signed, in this Charter there is no word of “sanctions”, but the word “measure” is the same rationale to implement sanctions. It reflected in Article 41 of U.N charter. “For the first 45 years of its life, the Security Council adopted sanctions only twice. The first time was in December 1966 when financial, economic and diplomatic restrictions were imposed on the racist minority regime of Southern Rhodesia. This was followed by an arms embargo against South Africa in 1977. Both were to address denial of human rights and domestic abuse of power rather than to counter the traditional threat to international peace and security”.(Alikhani 2000, Entman 2007).

Strand of the sanction literature show the direct pain of civilian or public by disturbing economic and the other aspects of target country. Sanction may lead to the other unintended consequences that might not be considerable for the country that imposes the sanctions. As the name economic sanctions suggest it will worsen the pillars of a country's economy, but it is going to change the pillars of politics, or may lead to changing in political leadership. It is proposed that not only economy, politics will be in danger, but also civilian's right is targeted, it may result in freedom of press in target country (Peksen 2010). Generally economic sanctions is considered as coercive foreign policy tools, also one of the main reflections is on media, press of target country. Interestingly, multilateral sanctions damages media freedom more than unilateral sanctions, also on media openness.

Think tanks are pillars of formation of ideas and spread of them. Also he emphasizes "importance of agency in this struggle so it links think tanks to capitalism in a sense, moreover rise of think tanks are mostly in capitalists democratic countries (Gramsci 1971), Interestingly based on this theory, hegemony is created out of comprises and coalition, also every social group is created by economic means for production alongside political and social aims and objectives are followed, also capitalist entrepreneur aimed not only above mentioned goals, but also they intended to form a new industrial organization, forming new culture, new legal system as well (Pautz 2011), thus think tanks are "traditional intellectuals" who are concerned about policies and political arena in society. This study responds following questions: What is the Brookings Institution's stance toward Iran sanctions? What is historical background of Iran sanctions? What is historical background of Brookings Institution in U.S.?

This paper utilized Katzman's theory on Iran sanctions, it is U.S. strategy to impact on Iran's economy to put this country under the pressure to curb its nuclear program, in this situation many major foreign firms are hesitating to invest or not, also it is "hindering Iran's efforts to expand oil production beyond 4.1 million barrels per day. However, Iran continues to attract energy investment interest from firms primarily in Asia", moreover the official or formal U.S. act on this aspect begun with Iran Sanction Act (ISA) in 1996, also in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, there ratified actually two bills related to ISA that are H.R. 1400 and H.R. 7112, also there are many other bills, related to "selling refined gasoline to Iran, providing shipping insurance or other services to deliver gasoline to Iran, or supplying equipment to or performing the construction of oil refineries in Iran. H.R. 2192 and S. 908 also would expand the menu of available sanctions against violators" (Katzman 2015).

So this is U.S. Strategy and policy toward Iran since 1979, Islamic Revolution, besides bilateral sanctions started to impose in 2006 and it increased in 2010 in comparison to the previous ones. Also in 1980s and 1990s, the imposed sanctions were aimed to limit Iran's strategic power in Middle East, and its support of terrorism, also since the mid-2000s, the goal of sanctioning Iran referred to its nuclear program, from 2010, they related to cooperated act of U.N. and U.S., thus even currently sanctioning Iran has many goals and objectives (Katzman 2015).

U.S. government published in Federal Register, on November 13, 2012 that how the sanctions implemented and imposed to Iran as following means:

- 1- Blocked Iranian Property and Assets
- 2- Executive Order 13599 Impounding Iran-Owned Assets
- 3- Sanctions for Iran's Support for Terrorism and Destabilizing Regional Activities

- 
- 4-Sanctions Triggered by Terrorism List Designation: Ban on U.S. Aid, Arms Sales, Dual-Use Exports, and Certain Programs for Iran
  - 5-Executive Order 13224 Sanctioning Terrorism-Supporting Entities
  - 6-Executive Orders Sanctioning Iran's Involvement in Iraq and Syria
  - 7-Ban on U.S. Trade and Investment with Iran

“Qualitative research has a long and vibrant history in the social sciences, health sciences, and humanities”. It has different meaning throughout history and its history was influenced by many sub disciplines and ideas firstly the school of Chicago in America in the 1920s elaborated on this kind of research and research in social fields. It made other developments including “history, medicine, nursing, social work, and communications. Sub disciplines of social sciences, health sciences, and humanities, including cultural anthropology, symbolic interactions, Marxism, ethno methodology, phenomenology, feminism, cultural studies, and postmodernism, each with its own theoretical leanings, its own conception of reality, and its own methodological preferences, have played significant roles in the continued development of qualitative research” (Given 2008) .

“A hallmark of qualitative content analysis is coding raw data into conceptually congruent categories (Elo and Kyngas, 2008; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), As cited in(Finfgeld-Connett 2014), the systematic review of qualitative content analysis is study of other researcher's findings, these finding are the research raw data, by coding and clustering the data, the researcher write theme for them and draw conclusion from them.

This study is going to focus on the Brooking Institution policy paper, blog posts, opinions on Iran sanctions, also categorize some themes based on the content, and draw conclusion.

## **FINDINGS**

The Economics of Influencing Iran (Maloney 2010):

Brookings considered the most effective sanctions strategy to have following restrictions:

The imposed sanctions should result in intensifying the” political tensions and economic pressure”, moreover sanctions should be used as tool to deter Iranian nuclear ambitions so result in policy changing gradually, but not an immediate change, and also focusing the “measures that directed against repressive elements of Iranian system”, it also emphasizing on limiting and punishing countries which are in relations to Iran.

Sanctions and the state of Iran's opposition: the debate over this issue is “efficacy”, meaning influence of public opinion in altering Iran's policies, also as result of June election, and Iranian demonstrations in street, Iranian public opinion became vital for Washington, so economic pressure will result in other demonstrations probably, as there is some points to propose Green Movement also opposes sanctions, as the leaders of the movement have publicly declared it and opposed it.

Also the other prominent opposition supporters, who are especially out of Iran, expressed their eagerness toward directing the sanctions towards repressive elements of the regime such as economic assets, and Revolutionary Guard.

---

Finally it recommends for implementing multilateral sanctions particularly in regards to Iran nuclear program that enforce Iranian decision makers to change their behaviors in terms of further explorations.

Obama should notice some issues in regards to sanctioning Iran:

One, there should be no doubt for international community that Iran sanctions is “silver bullet” to solve and stop nuclear program of Iran, also at future there would be two ways by utilizing this silver bullet: one is negotiations and the second is “coercive measures”.

Second, policy makers should not consider sanctions as tool for regime change at all, but it can be helpful for opposition uprising.

Third, “Creative bargaining with international partners” like Russia and China both have relations with Iran, as China’s interests are on Iran sources of energy like petroleum and Russia-Iran relations have deeply rooted in history and mostly Russia’s interests focused on strategic interests and ambitions.

Fourth, Washington should be mindful of “the trap of extra-territoriality”, meaning Washington as “central global financial system” restricts Iran’s partners in terms of having business or trade so it will have “chilling effects” on the partners surely so it might harm the multinational coalition against Iran. It is the reason Clinton and Bush rejected to impose Iran and Libya Sanctions Act, but Obama should take into consideration and do this in favor of “broad international support”.

The blog spot on this issue suggests that even the harshest critique of Obama never suggest military option as way to curb Iran nuclear program, instead they discussed the better solution so called better bargain to be negotiated, “if the Obama administration had not “given away” the leverage awarded by comprehensive economic sanctions”, also it is considered as price of negotiation with Iran to impose sanctions, even P5+1 especially U.S. had paid price for limiting its trade with Iran since the revolution, “Critics of the current agreement implicitly endorse a simple model of sanctions effectiveness: economic sanctions create economic hardship for the Iranian population; the threat of discontent among the population then forces the Iranian regime to concede its nuclear program”, also Ruhani’s administration have accelerated the negotiation process, ending Iran’s isolative approach with the world, based on 2014 joint U.S.-Iranian Survey proposed that Iranian people have consent over the redlines backed and possession of nuclear program.” Although responsive to its public, the Iranian regime is authoritarian and repressive: over time, it can shift even more of the burden of sanctions away from core regime supporters and on to the population at large”.

In terms of tightening or removing Iran sanctions, it is matter of illusion, “At this point in time, given the current Iranian leadership, the state of Iranian public opinion, and Iranian economic conditions, relying on unilateral economic leverage to obtain a better deal is an illusion, as Iran will be following North Korea’s path of uncontrollable nuclear program, “an unrestrained nuclear program and an economically isolated, unreformed regime”(Kahler 2015).

According to another data from Brookings, so far the sanctions were the best way to bring Iran to negotiating table, both primary and secondary were hand in hand vital in this regards. Now

---

sanction relief may have some political and psychological challenges as result, as the secondary sanctions are to be lifted soon(Lohmann 2015).

Political challenges are directed toward U.S. political system that by sanctions relief what would Iran do in the larger and expended revenue, also skeptical about Iran's promise and commitment in pursuing the terms and obligations in JPOA in long term, "In addressing these worries, the U.S. administration committed to keeping the legal foundations of the sanction architecture intact to ensure that Iran could be punished through an immediate snap-back of sanctions in case of noncompliance", also the president had noted to stop implementation of nuclear-sanctions, even it results in challenges that which one is "related nuclear" sanctions, and which ones not?

Also besides them, "which relate to allegations about Iran's support for terrorism, human rights abuses, and money laundering? The results of this review and the subsequent decision about which secondary sanctions the president will lift under a final deal, either by rescinding those imposed by executive order or waiving those mandated by legislation, will inevitably face a wide range of critics in Congress and among pundits"(Lohmann 2015).

The psychological challenges are referred to development of economy of Iran due to sanction relief, also it is not just Iran case, but the other actors as investors or cooperators who are dealing and working with Iran, they would willing to have relations with Iran even in case of remaining secondary sanctions," In fact, U.S. secondary sanctions target not only Iranian actors but even more important, they are also directed at the dealings of private third party actors", but U.S. administration was successfully done the best to impose sanctions and enforce them in all over the world, and consequently the companies and involved actors obey the rules in order not violate the U.S. sanctions, so "many companies engage in an activity that is called de-risking" referring to refrain from business related activities and dealing in regards to Iran "including those that are entirely legal because of the prospects of punishments in case of noncompliance and the associated damage to their reputation"(Lohmann 2015).

Theme: the Brookings Institution's position in this regards is that U.S. has adopted this strategy rightly to influence politics and economics of Iran, also imposing political tensions and economic pressure in order for Iran to negotiate and the negotiation will result in Iran accepting to reduce their capabilities in this regard, also with emergence of Green movement, it was considered one tool to influence Iran regime change, but with disappearance of this hope, and Ruhani's administration they look forward for better negotiation that now resulted in JPOA which is going to be implemented in following days, also the factors and actors in the regards were really vital as U.S. has banned the other investors and actors on this sanctions.

Besides, there is no better way than negotiations with Iran, as military engagement is not possible for U.S. so also Netanyahu never suggested it to Obama, also in terms of sanctions relief, there is illusion and doubt for American decision makers that Iran would be committed to terms and obligations in long term or not and even what would be the result of sanctions relief for Iran's economy? These are amongst the fundamental factors in terms of political and psychological worries and challenges, also the quick and sure reimplementing of sanction in case of relief would be U.S. tool to bound Iran to the obligations, but really interesting thing was that they are afraid of Iran Nuclear program to be similar to North Korea, pursuing "an unrestrained nuclear program and an economically isolated, unreformed regime".

---

## CONCLUSION

It is concluded that role of think tanks are vital in U.S. foreign policy making, one of the vital ones is Brookings Institution. Based on the data and theoretical framework, Booking's stance toward Iran is harsh but not in a sense that turning Iran similar to North Korea's nuclear program, this institution is proposing the idea of sanctioning instead of military engagement which result in consequences, so sanctions should be directed to economy of Iran to put Iran under the pressure to negotiate that it gets better in Ruhani's administration, also they were hopeful for regime change with appearance of Green Movement and they had plan to support oppositions in this regards as they did in 1388.

Another point is the sanction relief, the Brookings' stance in this regards is doubtful that in long term Iran would obey and follow the terms or not, also economic growth of Iran will be resulted as consequence of it, also secondary sanctions should be relived, as Iran is now doing and acting based on the obligations, based on the Kerry's speech today (8th Jan.), the next following days would be JPOA in action and implemented, as PMD plan has been settled down and trusting Iran in this regards .

Generally, In my opinion they are searching a way to make an obstacle for sanction relief and at the same time military engagement is not their strategy in this sense, also Israel is intervening in this issue a lot and some of lobbies like AIPAC is forcing harsh sanctions against Iran, also this is vital sanction, so the theory of Katzman is accepted.

## REFERENCE:

- i. Alikhani, H. (2000). *Sanctioning Iran: Anatomy of a Faild Policy*, I.B.Tauris Publishers.
- ii. Entman, R. M. (2007). "Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*.
- iii. Finfgeld-Connett, D. (2014). "Use of content analysis to conduct knowledge-building and theory-generating qualitative systematic reviews."
- iv. Kahler, M. (2015). *Iran, sanctions, and the illusion of a better bargain* Brookings.
- v. Katzman, K. ( 2015). "Iran Sanctions."
- vi. Lektzian, G. B. a. D. (2014). "The effect of foreign direct investment on the use and success of US sanctions." *Conflict Management and Peace Science*.
- vii. Lohmann, S. (2015). *Political and psychological challenges to sanctions relief* Brookings.
- viii. Maloney, S. (2010). "The Economics of Influencing Iran."
- ix. Pautz, H. (2011). "Revisiting the think-tank phenomenon."
- x. Peksen, D. (2010). "Coercive Diplomacy and Press Freedom: An Empirical Assessment of the Impact of Economic Sanctions on Media Openness." *International Political Science Review*.

- xi. Sauer, N. H. a. T. (2013). "Easing sanctions on Iran might someday be necessary but it won't be easy." Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.
- xii. Wahman, Michael and Soest von, Christian.2013. "Are democratic sanctions really counterproductive?". Routledge. Institute of African Affairs,GIGA.

www.ijahms.com