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Economic Sanctions as Instruments of Geopolitical Power and Their Humanitarian Consequences in Contemporary Armed Conflicts

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Abstract

Economic sanctions have emerged as prominent instruments of geopolitical power in contemporary armed conflicts, increasingly operating alongside diplomatic, military and technological measures. This article critically examines the transformation of sanctions from collective security mechanisms into instruments of economic coercion and strategic competition, with particular attention to their compatibility with international law and their humanitarian consequences. Adopting a doctrinal and comparative methodology, the study analyses the United Nations Charter, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law, principles of sovereignty, jurisdiction, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination, alongside selected contemporary sanctions regimes. The analysis demonstrates that the proliferation of unilateral, plurilateral and secondary sanctions has generated significant challenges concerning jurisdictional legitimacy, institutional accountability and the fragmentation of collective security. It further establishes that restrictive economic measures may produce disproportionate consequences for civilian populations through disruptions to food security, healthcare, energy supplies, financial access and humanitarian assistance, particularly in conflict affected and economically vulnerable societies. The study argues that humanitarian exemptions frequently remain inadequate because regulatory uncertainty and financial over compliance impede their practical operation. From a Global South perspective, sanctions also reveal structural inequalities within the international economic order, as states possessing greater control over financial and technological infrastructure exercise disproportionate coercive influence. The article concludes that the legitimacy of sanctions requires stronger multilateral oversight, transparent decision making, effective humanitarian safeguards, periodic proportionality assessments and accessible accountability mechanisms. A reformed sanctions architecture grounded in legality, necessity, proportionality, sovereign equality and human rights protection is essential for reconciling geopolitical objectives with the foundational principles of international law and global governance.

Introduction

Economic sanctions have become one of the most consequential instruments of contemporary international relations, particularly in situations involving armed conflict, territorial aggression, threats to international peace and security, and violations of international legal obligations. Traditionally understood as restrictive economic measures intended to induce compliance without resorting to direct military force, sanctions encompass a wide range of measures including asset freezes, trade restrictions, financial prohibitions, investment controls, export restrictions, travel bans, restrictions on strategic commodities, and limitations on access to international financial systems. Their increasing deployment reflects the changing character of international coercion, where economic interdependence itself has become an arena of strategic contestation. In contemporary armed conflicts, sanctions are frequently imposed alongside diplomatic isolation, military assistance, intelligence cooperation and other coercive measures, thereby forming part of broader strategies directed towards altering the conduct or capabilities of targeted states and non-state actors.

The legal and institutional origins of sanctions are closely associated with the collective security architecture established by the Charter of the United Nations. Article 41 of the Charter expressly contemplates measures not involving the use of armed force, including the interruption of economic relations and communications, as mechanisms through which the Security Council may respond to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace or acts of aggression. Within this framework, sanctions were conceptually connected to the maintenance of international peace and security and were expected to operate through an institutionalised system of collective decision making. Their normative justification rested principally upon the authority of the Security Council and the collective responsibility of states to address conduct threatening the international order.

The contemporary sanctions landscape, however, has undergone a profound transformation. The paralysis of collective security institutions, particularly the political divisions within the Security Council, has encouraged states and regional organisations to increasingly resort to unilateral, plurilateral and coordinated restrictive measures. Consequently, sanctions are no longer confined to traditional collective security responses authorised through multilateral institutions. Major powers increasingly employ economic restrictions as instruments of statecraft to constrain strategic competitors, weaken military capabilities, influence diplomatic calculations and reshape geopolitical behaviour. This development has transformed sanctions from exceptional measures associated primarily with the restoration of international peace into persistent instruments of economic coercion embedded within broader geopolitical strategies. The evolution is particularly evident in contemporary conflicts where sanctions operate beyond the immediate objective of compelling cessation of unlawful conduct. They may seek to restrict access to capital, technology, energy markets, defence industries and critical supply chains, thereby diminishing the long term strategic capacity of the targeted state. The growing use of secondary sanctions further extends this coercive architecture by placing economic pressure upon third states and private actors that maintain commercial relations with sanctioned entities. Such practices raise complex questions concerning sovereignty, jurisdiction, non-intervention and the legitimacy of extraterritorial regulatory authority under international law.

This transformation has generated a significant normative tension between geopolitical effectiveness and legal accountability. Although sanctions may constitute a comparatively non kinetic means of exerting international pressure, their consequences can extend beyond governmental decision makers and directly affect civilian populations. Disruptions to trade, financial transactions, energy supplies, medical procurement and essential commodities may produce consequences that engage obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The principle of distinction, the protection of civilians, proportionality and the requirement to avoid unnecessary humanitarian suffering therefore acquire particular relevance where economic restrictions operate within conditions of armed conflict.

The central concern is consequently not merely whether sanctions are effective instruments of coercion, but whether their increasing instrumentalisation as mechanisms of geopolitical power remains compatible with the normative foundations of the international legal order. The contemporary

proliferation of sanctions reveals a growing tension between strategic autonomy, sovereign equality, collective security and humanitarian protection. Examining this transformation is essential to determining whether sanctions continue to function as legitimate mechanisms for preserving international peace or have increasingly become manifestations of asymmetric economic power within an evolving and increasingly multipolar international system.

The study addresses the normative tension between geopolitical reliance on economic sanctions and their humanitarian consequences during armed conflicts. Existing scholarship insufficiently integrates international humanitarian law, human rights law, geopolitical coercion and Global South concerns. It examines whether contemporary sanctions satisfy legality, necessity and proportionality, evaluates their humanitarian implications, and assesses accountability mechanisms. Adopting a doctrinal and comparative methodology, the study analyses legal instruments, jurisprudence, scholarly literature and selected conflicts to develop a rights based sanctions framework.

Economic Sanctions as Instruments of Geopolitical Power in Contemporary Armed Conflicts

Economic sanctions have progressively evolved from narrowly conceived restrictive measures into sophisticated instruments of geo-economic power capable of influencing the strategic behavior of states, non-state actors and private economic entities. In their conventional formulation, sanctions constitute coercive measures designed to impose economic or political costs upon a target in response to conduct considered contrary to international peace, security or legal obligations. Their contemporary manifestation, however, extends beyond traditional trade embargoes and asset freezes to encompass restrictions on financial transactions, investment, technology transfers, energy markets, banking systems, supply chains and access to strategic commodities. This expansion demonstrates the increasing convergence between economic policy and national security strategy, whereby economic interdependence is transformed into a source of leverage within geopolitical competition. Geo-economic power consequently operates through the strategic deployment of economic instruments to advance political and security objectives without necessarily resorting to direct military confrontation.

The distinction between unilateral and multilateral sanctions is particularly significant in determining their legal authority, institutional legitimacy and political effectiveness. Multilateral sanctions adopted by the United Nations Security Council derive their principal legal foundation from Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, particularly Article 41, where the Security Council may determine measures not involving the use of armed force in response to threats to international peace and security. Such measures possess an institutional character and are generally associated with the collective security system. Unilateral sanctions, by contrast, are imposed independently by individual states, while plurilateral sanctions may arise through coordinated action among groups of states or regional organisations. The proliferation of unilateral restrictive measures has generated contentious questions concerning jurisdiction, sovereignty, non intervention and the compatibility of economic coercion with general principles of international law. Their legitimacy becomes particularly contested when sanctions

are imposed without collective authorisation and are directed towards conduct occurring outside the territorial jurisdiction of the imposing state.

Within contemporary armed conflicts, sanctions increasingly perform multiple strategic functions. They may seek to coerce a state into terminating unlawful conduct, deter future violations, degrade military capabilities, restrict access to strategic technologies or impose reputational and economic costs upon political elites. Their function is therefore not confined to immediate behavioural modification. Sanctions can also constitute instruments of long term strategic competition by limiting the economic resilience and technological capacity of a rival state. This creates an important distinction between sanctions designed principally for deterrence and those intended to produce structural economic pressure. In circumstances where diplomatic negotiations and conventional collective security mechanisms prove ineffective, sanctions may be presented as an alternative to the direct use of force. Nevertheless, their effectiveness remains contingent upon the economic vulnerability of the target, the degree of international coordination, the availability of alternative markets and the capacity of the sanctioned state to circumvent restrictions.

The emergence of secondary sanctions has further transformed the legal and geopolitical character of economic coercion. Primary sanctions generally regulate the conduct of persons, corporations and institutions subject to the jurisdiction of the sanctioning state, whereas secondary sanctions seek to discourage third country actors from maintaining economic relations with designated targets. Such measures may impose restrictions upon foreign financial institutions, corporations or governments that continue specified transactions with sanctioned entities. The resulting extraterritorial effect raises difficult questions concerning the permissible limits of jurisdiction under international law. Secondary sanctions may effectively compel third states to conform to the foreign policy preferences of a dominant economic power despite the absence of an independent legal obligation to adopt equivalent restrictions. The ability to regulate access to financial infrastructure, reserve currencies and international payment systems consequently creates asymmetric forms of economic authority extending beyond conventional territorial jurisdiction.

The increasing deployment of sanctions has also contributed to the emergence of competing geopolitical and economic blocs. States subjected to extensive restrictions have increasingly sought alternative financial arrangements, trading partners, payment mechanisms, energy markets and supply chains in order to reduce dependence upon sanctioning powers. This process has encouraged economic diversification and the development of parallel institutional arrangements while simultaneously contributing to fragmentation within the global economy. Sanctions can therefore produce effects extending beyond their immediate targets by encouraging the restructuring of international commerce along geopolitical lines. The resulting fragmentation challenges the assumption that economic interdependence necessarily promotes cooperation and instead demonstrates how interconnected markets may become instruments of strategic rivalry.

This development is particularly significant within an increasingly multipolar international order. The capacity to control financial infrastructure, critical technologies, energy supplies and international markets constitutes an important dimension of contemporary geopolitical influence. Economic sanctions may therefore reinforce existing power asymmetries between economically dominant states and less powerful jurisdictions. From the perspective of the Global South, this raises concerns regarding distributive justice, sovereign equality and the unequal allocation of economic risks generated by geopolitical disputes. States that are not directly involved in an armed conflict may nevertheless experience disruptions to food security, energy supplies, investment, trade and development as a consequence of sanctions and countermeasures.

The International Legal Framework Governing Economic Sanctions

The international legal framework governing economic sanctions is characterized by a complex interaction between the United Nations Charter, customary international law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law and principles regulating jurisdiction and state responsibility. Sanctions occupy an uncertain normative position because their legality depends substantially upon their source, objective, method of implementation and consequences. Measures adopted through collective institutional mechanisms possess a different legal character from unilateral restrictions imposed by individual states. The increasing reliance upon autonomous sanctions has consequently generated significant debates concerning sovereignty, jurisdiction, proportionality, humanitarian protection and accountability within the contemporary international legal order.

The United Nations Charter provides the principal institutional framework for collective economic sanctions. Under Chapter VII, the Security Council may determine the existence of a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression and adopt measures considered necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Article 41 specifically contemplates measures not involving the use of armed force, including the interruption of economic relations and communications. Security Council sanctions therefore derive their authority from the collective security mandate of the Charter and create obligations for United Nations Member States under Article 25. Nevertheless, the exercise of this authority remains subject to the institutional and political structure of the Security Council, including the veto power of its permanent members. The resulting selectivity has raised questions concerning consistency, representativeness and the legitimacy of collective coercive measures, particularly where comparable situations of armed conflict receive substantially different institutional responses.

Unilateral sanctions present a more complicated legal question. States may adopt certain restrictions pursuant to their domestic jurisdiction, particularly concerning persons, entities or transactions sufficiently connected with their territory or nationals. However, unilateral coercive measures may become legally controversial when they purport to regulate conduct occurring predominantly outside the territorial jurisdiction of the imposing state. The principle of sovereign equality under Article 2(1) of the Charter and the principle of non-intervention impose important normative constraints upon the exercise

of state power. Although economic pressure does not automatically constitute an unlawful intervention, sanctions designed to compel another sovereign state to alter matters falling within its domain may raise serious questions under international law. The legality of unilateral sanctions must therefore be distinguished from their political justification and assessed according to applicable jurisdictional rules, treaty obligations and customary international law.

The application of sanctions during armed conflicts also engages international humanitarian law. Although sanctions are not themselves equivalent to methods or means of warfare, their implementation may produce consequences relevant to the protection of civilians and persons hors de combat. Where economic restrictions interfere with access to food, medicines, medical equipment, electricity or other essential goods, the humanitarian consequences become legally significant. International humanitarian law imposes obligations concerning humanitarian relief, civilian protection and the prohibition of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. Accordingly, sanctions regimes operating in conflict environments require carefully designed humanitarian exceptions and licensing mechanisms to ensure that economic pressure does not undermine fundamental protections afforded by the law of armed conflict.

International human rights law further complicates the legal assessment of sanctions. Economic restrictions may indirectly affect rights relating to life, health, food, livelihood, property and an adequate standard of living. The extraterritorial application of human rights obligations remains contested in certain circumstances, particularly where the sanctioning state exercises limited factual control over affected persons outside its territory. Nevertheless, states cannot disregard foreseeable humanitarian consequences merely because restrictive measures are characterised as foreign policy instruments. The legal assessment must therefore consider whether sanctions have disproportionate effects upon civilian populations and whether adequate safeguards exist to protect fundamental rights.

The expansion of extraterritorial and secondary sanctions has intensified concerns regarding jurisdictional legitimacy. Secondary sanctions may condition access to a sanctioning state's financial markets upon compliance by foreign actors with restrictions imposed against a third state. Such measures can exert substantial coercive pressure upon corporations, banks and governments that have no direct territorial connection with the sanctioning state. Their operation raises questions concerning the territorial and nationality principles of jurisdiction, comity and sovereign equality. Where economic dominance enables one state to compel third-country actors to adopt its foreign policy preferences, sanctions may generate a form of regulatory influence extending beyond traditional jurisdictional boundaries.

The principles of necessity, proportionality and non discrimination provide important normative standards for evaluating sanctions. A legitimate objective does not necessarily render every restrictive measure lawful or justified. The intensity and scope of economic restrictions should bear a rational relationship to the objective pursued, while excessive measures producing foreseeable and disproportionate civilian suffering require critical scrutiny. Proportionality is particularly significant where

sanctions are imposed during armed conflict because the interests of strategic coercion must be reconciled with humanitarian protection. Similarly, arbitrary differentiation between similarly situated states or individuals may raise concerns regarding equality and non discrimination, especially where sanctions regimes are selectively applied according to geopolitical interests.

A significant weakness within the contemporary sanctions architecture is the accountability gap surrounding their adoption, administration and review. Security Council sanctions are subject to political bargaining, while unilateral regimes are frequently determined through executive or legislative processes within domestic legal systems. Affected individuals and entities may encounter substantial difficulties in challenging designations, obtaining delisting, accessing evidence or securing effective judicial remedies. Humanitarian exemptions may also remain ineffective where financial institutions adopt excessive compliance measures to avoid regulatory exposure. Consequently, formal exemptions do not necessarily guarantee substantive humanitarian access.

Humanitarian Consequences and the Crisis of Legitimacy of Sanctions

Economic sanctions imposed in the context of armed conflicts generate consequences extending substantially beyond the governmental institutions and political elites against whom they are formally directed. Although sanctions are ordinarily justified as non-military instruments intended to alter unlawful state conduct, their economic effects may permeate civilian markets, financial institutions, public services and humanitarian supply chains. The resulting separation between the intended target and the persons actually bearing the consequences creates a fundamental legitimacy problem. Civilian populations may experience diminished access to employment, financial services, medicines, energy and essential commodities even where they exercise no influence over governmental decision making. From the perspective of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, such consequences require scrutiny because the legality of a coercive measure cannot be determined exclusively by reference to its political objective while disregarding reasonably foreseeable effects upon protected persons.

Civilian vulnerability becomes particularly acute where sanctions are imposed upon economies already weakened by armed conflict, displacement, destruction of infrastructure and institutional instability. Conflict affected populations frequently depend upon imported food, medical supplies, fuel and humanitarian assistance, while domestic production and distribution networks remain severely disrupted. Financial restrictions may additionally impede humanitarian organisations from transferring funds, purchasing supplies or remunerating local personnel. The cumulative effect can therefore create indirect humanitarian harm without any formal prohibition on humanitarian assistance. Such consequences raise questions concerning the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution and require sanctioning authorities to consider whether available measures can achieve the intended objective through less harmful means.

Food security and public health constitute especially sensitive dimensions of sanctions regimes. Restrictions affecting agricultural inputs, fuel, transportation, banking facilities and international trade may increase the cost and reduce the availability of essential commodities. Health systems operating during armed conflicts are particularly vulnerable because hospitals depend upon continuous access to medicines, medical equipment, electricity, fuel and specialised technologies. Even where humanitarian goods are formally exempted, financial institutions may refuse transactions associated with sanctioned jurisdictions because of compliance risks, resulting in what is commonly described as over compliance. Consequently, the practical availability of humanitarian exemptions may be considerably narrower than their formal legal scope. The resulting deprivation may engage rights protected under international human rights instruments, including rights associated with life, health, food and an adequate standard of living.

The economic burden generated by sanctions is rarely distributed equally. Political elites and state institutions may possess greater capacity to preserve assets, access alternative financial channels and relocate commercial operations, whereas ordinary citizens often lack comparable mechanisms of adaptation. Small enterprises, workers, displaced persons, children and economically marginalised communities may therefore bear a disproportionate share of the resulting costs. This distributive dimension is particularly significant from a rule of law perspective because sanctions may unintentionally reproduce socioeconomic inequalities within the targeted state. Where restrictions undermine employment, currency stability and access to essential services, their effects may persist long after the immediate political objective has ceased to be relevant. The assessment of proportionality should consequently encompass not merely the intended economic pressure but also its distributional and intergenerational consequences.

Humanitarian exemptions are intended to mitigate these risks, yet their implementation presents substantial institutional difficulties. Exemptions relating to food, medicine, medical equipment and humanitarian assistance may coexist with complex licensing procedures, banking restrictions and uncertainty regarding permissible transactions. Humanitarian organisations may consequently encounter difficulties obtaining financial services or securing commercial partners willing to operate within sanctioned environments. The effectiveness of an exemption therefore depends not simply upon its legal formulation but upon its accessibility, clarity and practical enforceability. A sanctions regime lacking efficient licensing, monitoring and review mechanisms risks transforming a formally humanitarian safeguard into an inadequate legal guarantee.

Sanctions may also encourage evasion and circumvention, particularly where restrictions remain extensive and prolonged. Targeted states and private actors may develop alternative trading arrangements, informal financial networks, intermediary jurisdictions and illicit supply channels to preserve access to restricted goods and capital. Such practices can weaken the transparency of international commerce and create opportunities for corruption, smuggling and organised economic crime. The emergence of informal economies may further undermine legitimate businesses and public revenue systems while making humanitarian monitoring more difficult. Consequently, sanctions may

generate secondary governance problems that complicate both enforcement and humanitarian protection.

Contemporary armed conflicts illustrate these tensions in different ways. The sanctions regime imposed following Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine demonstrates the extensive use of financial, trade, energy and technological restrictions as instruments of geopolitical coercion. Measures directed against Russian banks, state enterprises, strategic industries and individuals have sought to constrain the capacity to sustain military operations, while their wider effects have generated debates concerning energy markets, global food supply chains and the distribution of economic costs. The sanctions architecture surrounding Syria similarly illustrates the difficulties of maintaining restrictive measures while addressing humanitarian needs within a prolonged conflict environment. The experience of Iran demonstrates another dimension, where extensive financial and economic restrictions have intersected with questions concerning humanitarian trade, access to medicines and the extraterritorial effects of sanctions. These cases demonstrate that the humanitarian implications of sanctions depend substantially upon the structure of the targeted economy, the availability of exemptions and the degree of dependence upon international financial and trading systems.

The Global South occupies a particularly important position within this debate because states that are neither principal parties to a conflict nor architects of sanctions may nevertheless absorb significant economic consequences. Developing economies can face increased commodity prices, disrupted supply chains, reduced investment and financial volatility resulting from geopolitical sanctions regimes. Such consequences raise concerns regarding sovereign equality and distributive justice within international governance. The capacity of powerful economies to utilize control over international financial infrastructure as a mechanism of coercion reflects significant structural asymmetries within the international economic order. From a Global South perspective, the legitimacy of sanctions must therefore be evaluated not only through the relationship between the sanctioning and targeted states but also through their wider systemic consequences.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that economic sanctions have undergone a substantial normative and strategic transformation within contemporary international relations. Once principally associated with collective security measures adopted through the institutional framework of the United Nations, sanctions have increasingly become instruments of geopolitical influence, strategic coercion and economic statecraft. Their contemporary deployment reflects the growing capacity of powerful states to convert control over financial systems, international markets, technological networks and strategic commodities into forms of coercive authority. Although sanctions may constitute an alternative to military force, their increasing use during armed conflicts raises profound questions concerning legality, legitimacy, proportionality and humanitarian protection.

The principal finding is that the effectiveness of sanctions cannot be assessed exclusively through their capacity to impose economic costs upon targeted governments. Their legitimacy must also be measured against their consequences for civilian populations and their compatibility with international legal obligations. Where restrictions substantially impair access to food, medicines, energy, financial services and essential infrastructure, the distinction between coercing governmental authorities and burdening civilian populations becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. The principle of proportionality therefore assumes particular significance, requiring sanctioning authorities to evaluate foreseeable humanitarian consequences and adopt measures capable of minimising unnecessary suffering.

Reconciling geopolitical objectives with humanitarian protection requires a fundamental reorientation of sanctions policy. Sanctions should be specifically targeted towards political decision makers, military institutions, strategic assets and entities directly contributing to unlawful conduct rather than imposing indiscriminate economic pressure upon entire populations. Humanitarian considerations should form an integral component of sanctions design rather than operate as subsequent exceptions. Continuous impact assessments, conflict sensitive implementation and periodic review should be incorporated into sanctions regimes to determine whether their objectives remain proportionate to their humanitarian and economic costs.

The legality and legitimacy of sanctions must consequently be examined through a broader framework encompassing the United Nations Charter, customary international law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law and principles governing jurisdiction and state responsibility. Security Council authorisation provides an important institutional basis for collective measures, but it cannot eliminate the necessity for humanitarian safeguards. Unilateral and secondary sanctions require even greater scrutiny because their jurisdictional reach and coercive effects may extend beyond the territorial authority of the imposing state. Transparency, procedural fairness, judicial review and accessible mechanisms for challenging designations are therefore essential to preventing sanctions from becoming instruments of unaccountable geopolitical power.

Humanitarian exemptions also require substantive reform. Formal exemptions are inadequate where financial institutions, humanitarian organisations and commercial actors remain uncertain about permissible transactions. Clear licensing procedures, protected humanitarian channels, reliable banking mechanisms and independent monitoring should accompany sanctions regimes. International organisations should be empowered to assess humanitarian effects and recommend timely modification or suspension of measures producing excessive civilian harm. Such mechanisms would transform humanitarian protection from a declaratory principle into an operational legal safeguard.

A more equitable sanctions framework should prioritise multilateralism, institutional accountability and sovereign equality. The increasing fragmentation between unilateral, plurilateral and multilateral sanctions demonstrates the limitations of an international order in which economic coercion is disproportionately determined by states possessing structural control over global financial and technological infrastructure. Strengthening collective decision making and developing common

international standards for autonomous sanctions could reduce arbitrariness and enhance predictability. Greater participation of Global South states is equally necessary to address the distributive consequences of sanctions and prevent humanitarian and economic burdens from being externalised onto states with limited influence over their adoption.

The implications extend beyond sanctions policy to the future of international law and global governance. Persistent reliance upon unilateral economic coercion risks weakening the authority of multilateral institutions and encouraging the emergence of competing economic and financial blocs. Such fragmentation may further undermine universal legal standards and reinforce existing asymmetries in international relations. Conversely, a rules based sanctions architecture grounded in legality, proportionality, accountability and humanitarian protection could strengthen the credibility of international responses to armed conflicts.

Ultimately, economic sanctions should not be treated as inherently lawful merely because they represent an alternative to armed force, nor as inherently unlawful solely because they impose economic hardship. Their legitimacy depends upon legal authority, legitimate objectives, jurisdictional propriety, necessity, proportionality, non discrimination and effective protection of civilian populations. In an increasingly multipolar world, the future of sanctions must therefore move from unilateral economic coercion towards accountable and genuinely multilateral governance. The central challenge for international law is to ensure that the pursuit of geopolitical security does not become a justification for disproportionate civilian suffering, and that economic power remains subject to the fundamental principles of legality, human dignity and international justice.

Declarations

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The author declare competing interests. The author is an Editorial Board Member of the journal and Guest Editor of this Special Issue. The author had no involvement in the editorial handling or peer-review of this manuscript.

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Both authors conceptualized the study, conducted the research and analysis, reviewed the relevant literature, and drafted and critically revised the manuscript. Both authors approved the final version of the manuscript and accepts responsibility for its content.

Data Availability

All data generated or analysed during this study are included in this published article.

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