

The Sanctions Dud

"Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work" by Robert A. Pape, in *International Security* (Fall 1997), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Economic sanctions, frequently regarded as the liberal alternative to war, have become an increasingly popular tool of U.S. foreign policy. Between 1993 and 1996, by one account, the United States imposed new sanctions on 35 different countries. But do such measures work? The conventional scholarly wisdom now says that, often, they do. Pape, a political scientist at Dartmouth College, throws considerable cold water on that optimistic view.

Until the mid-1980s, scholars generally agreed that economic sanctions were less effective than military force as a means of achieving major political goals, Pape notes. But then, in *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered: History and Current Policy* (1985; 2nd ed., 1990), Gary Clyde Hufbauer and Jeffrey J. Schott, assisted by Kimberly Ann Elliot, reported that sanctions worked in 40 of 115 instances between 1914 and 1990—or 34 percent of the time. That success rate was high enough to alter the conventional academic wisdom, Pape says. And in recent years, scholars have grown even more optimistic, in the belief that greater international cooperation in the post-Cold War era may make economic sanctions even more effective than in the past.

Unfortunately, the Hufbauer-Schott-Elliot study is "seriously flawed," Pape maintains. Of the authors' 40 success stories, he says, only five really deserve to be considered successes. Eighteen cases were actually settled by the direct or indirect use of force; sanctions failed in eight others, since the target state never made the demanded concessions; six cases were trade disputes, not instances of economic sanctions for political purposes; and three cases were too murky to determine whether the sanc-

tions worked or not. Hufbauer and his colleagues failed to apply their definitions rigorously enough, Pape charges, and, more seriously, they failed to take into account the role played by the threat of force.

Of the five instances in which sanctions clearly worked, Pape says, three "were over trivial issues." Canada, for example, in 1979 agreed not to move its embassy in Israel



Tough United Nations sanctions have not managed to dislodge Saddam Hussein but they have forced many ordinary Iraqis to rely on charity for food, as at this mosque in Baghdad.

from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The "most substantial" success involved India's sanctions against Nepal after Nepal purchased anti-aircraft guns from China in 1989. "King Birenda surrendered power to a pro-democratic government that agreed to consult India on defense matters," Pape notes. In the fifth successful case, the United States and Canada pressured South Korea to abandon its plans to purchase a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant from France.

Republicans in Uniform

The hazards of an increasingly politicized military are described in *The New Republic* (Dec. 8, 1997) by Andrew J. Bacevich, of the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, and Richard H. Kohn, a historian at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In recent years, Republicans have increasingly regarded the 1.4 million members of the all-volunteer military and their families as a political interest group—a part of the Republican coalition to be showered with benefits in the name of a strong national defense, just as Democrats have courted teachers' unions and environmental groups. And, according to a mounting body of political research, the professional officer corps that leads the armed forces is reciprocating. Heretofore a matter of temperament, military conservatism has become a matter of ideology. Today's officers scorn 'liberalism' and all its works, and consider Democrats presumptively anti-military and therefore untrustworthy. . . .

This reciprocal relationship is certainly good for the Republicans: nothing helps at the polls like the hearty endorsement of a decorated veteran. And it may be good for the armed forces, too, in the myopic sense of protecting the current level of military spending. But over the long haul, a politicized military, not to mention one whose officer corps is so closely identified with one party, is both bad for the services and bad for democracy. . . .

There are many possible causes for this trend. One may be the advent of the all-volunteer military in the mid-'70s that, along with the Vietnam trauma, had the effect of

Since economic sanctions have worked less than five percent of the time—not 34 percent—“the world would have to change considerably before sanctions could become a credible alternative to force,” Pape concludes. The hope that greater international cooperation will increase the effectiveness of sanctions is a mirage. “The key reason that sanctions fail” is that the target states are not fragile, according to Pape. Nationalism often

makes them “willing to endure considerable punishment rather than abandon their national interest.” External pressure against even the weakest of states is “more likely to enhance the nationalist legitimacy of rulers than undermine it.” After five years during which “the most extreme sanctions in history” shrank its economy by nearly 50 percent, for example, Saddam Hussein's rogue state of Iraq still has not buckled.

Will OPEC Rise Again?

“OPEC: An Obituary” by Fadhil J. Chalabi, in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1997–98), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1779 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

It is a very big dog that has not barked in a very long time. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has seen the oil revenues of its 11 member nations tumble from \$283 billion in 1980 to \$132 billion in 1995, notes Chalabi, who served as OPEC's acting secretary-general between 1983 and '88. A world that once trembled when the OPEC oil ministers convened now yawns.

Founded in 1960 by Venezuela and four Persian Gulf producers (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia) seeking to stabilize falling oil prices, OPEC stunned the world with its October 1973 decision to boost the “posted” price of oil by 70 percent, to \$5.11 per barrel. (By then, Algeria, Indonesia, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates had joined the cartel.) Then the Arab powers cut production to punish the