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Trade Sanctions as Policy Instruments: A Re-examination

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Most studies of trade sanctions examine the success of sanctions at forcing the target country to change its policies. This article analyzes the success of sanctions in terms of a broader set of goals: compliance, subversion, deterrence, international symbolism, and domestic symbolism. I examine 19 sanctions cases using different evaluatory criteria for each goal. Three results emerge from the analysis. First, sanctions generally fail when the goal is compliance, subversion, or deterrence, but they have a great appeal as international and domestic symbols. Second, sanctions often reinforce the target's behavior and forfeit the initiator's future economic leverage over the target. Third, the goals of international and domestic symbolism usually undermine the goals of compliance and subversion.

Introduction

Most observers conclude that trade sanctions are not successful policy instruments. This assessment has held regardless of the number of countries applying sanctions, the degree of economic damage inflicted on the target country, or the target country's level of economic development (Doxey, 1971; Losman, 1972, 1979; Knorr, 1975, 1977; Renwick, 1981). Yet if trade sanctions do not work, why do states continue to impose them?

The answer lies less in the ignorance of government officials than in the naiveté of the research on trade sanctions. Virtually all studies examine the capacity of sanctions to change the target country's behavior.[1] Compliance is not, however, the only objective states seek when imposing sanctions (Barber, 1979; Weintraub, 1982; Nincic and Wallensteen, 1983). Thus research that shows trade sanctions rarely force compliance does not refute their overall utility. They may achieve other goals.

This paper argues that states have one or more of five aims when imposing trade sanctions: compliance, subversion, deterrence, international symbolism, or domestic

[1] Many authors have noted that there are other motives for imposing trade sanctions. Yet no study has attempted to determine whether sanctions succeed in achieving goals other than compliance.

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symbolism. To establish the success of sanctions with respect to each of these objectives, I present the goals pursued in 19 sanctions cases. I elaborate evaluatory criteria and then examine the cases to determine in terms of which goals, and under what conditions, sanctions are successful.

Three results emerge from this analysis. First, trade sanctions rarely force compliance or subvert the target government and have a limited deterrent value. Yet they often succeed as international and domestic symbols. Their success in achieving these two goals explains why states continue to employ sanctions. Second, sanctions pose costs to the country applying them. They often reinforce the target state's behavior and forfeit the initiator's future economic leverage over the target. Third, the goals of international and domestic symbolism undercut the goals of compliance and subversion.

The Concept of Trade Sanctions

Trade sanctions can be defined as measures in which one country (the initiator) *publicly* suspends a major portion of its trade with another country (the target) to attain *political* objectives. The public nature of trade sanctions distinguishes them from covert economic pressure (Olson, 1979). In all the cases studied here, the initiator announced its formal objectives in coercing the target.[2] At the same time, the pursuit of political objectives distinguishes sanctions from curbs on trade designed to secure economic ends.[3] Finally, this study examines cases where the parties to the dispute were independent states.[4]

This paper does not analyze related types of economic coercion. First, it does not examine coercive uses of government aid. Aid denials tend to generate lower levels of publicity than do sanctions, and Olson (1979: 477) and Weintraub (1982: 23) have argued that this makes coercive uses of aid more likely to succeed. Thus it is reasonable to subject trade sanctions and aid manipulations to separate analyses.

Second, this study does not address cases of economic warfare,[5] cases where military operations (covert or overt) were used in tandem with trade sanctions,[6] or cases where sanctions served as a prelude to military action.[7] In these cases, trade sanctions are subordinate to force in achieving political ends. The examination of cases where force is absent or not intended initially permits an assessment of the independent impact of sanctions. This test is desirable since trade sanctions have long been advocated as an alternative to the use of force. For similar reasons, this study excludes cases of strategic export controls.[8] As Wallensteen (1968: 250) argues, strategic export controls have been

[2] This criterion excludes cases such as the Finnish 'Nightfrost Crisis' of 1958–1959 where the Soviet Union never admitted publicly that it was attempting to coerce Finland (see Forster, 1960; Vloyantes, 1975).

[3] This criterion excludes cases such as the US attempt in 1975 to limit food price inflation by curbing grain sales to the Soviet Union (Paarlberg, 1978).

[4] This criterion excludes cases such as the Indian sanctions on Hyderabad and Goa. Rhodesia, however, is treated as an independent state.

[5] Economic warfare can be defined as measures taken in the midst of military action that are designed to weaken the target's capacity to wage war. It includes military attacks against an enemy's industrial installations, blockades, and strictly economic actions such as embargoes (Knorr, 1975; Nincic and Wallensteen, 1983).

[6] This criterion excludes cases such as Indonesia's 'Crush Malaysia' campaign from 1963–1967, and the trade embargo the US imposed on Nicaragua in 1985.

[7] This criterion excludes cases such as Britain's sanctions against Argentina before the Falklands War.

[8] Strategic export controls can be defined as broad-based restrictions on exports designed to impair an adversary's military capability, and indirectly, its foreign policy options. See Adler-Karlsson (1968), Knorr (1975), Stent (1980), and Hufbauer and Schott (1983, 1985).

subservient to military operations and diplomatic activities in influencing the target.

Fourth, this study does not examine trade curbs that affect only a minor portion of the trade between two countries.[9] These measures have been used more frequently than trade sanctions, but their lack of comprehensiveness makes them qualitatively different from the cases discussed here. Finally, the paper does not examine cases where trade sanctions were announced but never implemented.[10]

Thus this paper analyzes major cases of public suspensions of trade relations. It concentrates on these cases because of the puzzle noted at the beginning of the paper. The consensus in the literature is that trade sanctions generally fail to modify the target's behavior. If this traditional wisdom is valid, why then have countries repeatedly resorted to sanctions? This analysis hopes to shed some light on the continued appeal of trade sanctions.[11]

The Objectives of Trade Sanctions

A review of sanctions cases and previous scholarly studies suggests that the objectives of sanctions fall into five categories.[12] First, the initiator may be seeking *compliance*—to force the target to alter its behavior to conform with the initiator's preferences. Thus Britain imposed sanctions on Italy in 1935 to compel Mussolini to withdraw from Abyssinia. This use of sanctions rests on the belief that the resulting economic costs will exceed the benefits the target leadership derives from the disputed policy.

Second, the initiator's objective may be *subversion*—to remove the target's leaders (leaving the political system intact) or overthrow the entire regime. Soviet sanctions against Yugoslavia illustrate the first variant of subversion: Stalin sought to replace Tito with a pro-Soviet leader (Dedijer, 1970: 35; Freedman, 1970: 18–19; Clissold, 1975: 50). When the US embargoed Cuba, however, it hoped to replace Castro's regime with a non-communist one (Doxey, 1971: 41). The use of sanctions to subvert assumes that economic denial and political disintegration are positively related: greater levels of economic damage produce greater levels of political unrest.

Third, the initiator's objective may be *deterrence*—to dissuade the target from repeating the disputed action in the future. In announcing the Soviet grain embargo, President Carter declared, 'We will deter aggression' (*The New York Times, 1980*). The initiator also may use sanctions to deter nations other than the target. In pushing for sanctions against Italy, British officials praised their value as a deterrent to German aggression (Baer, 1973: 166; Barber, 1979: 369, 372). Sanctions function as deterrents by demonstrating the initiator's willingness to act and its ability to inflict economic pain, which presumably it can reapply in the future.

Fourth, the initiator's goal may be *international symbolism*—to send 'messages' to other members of the world community. The initiator may seek simply to express its

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9 This criterion excludes cases such as Canada's restrictions on trade in nuclear technology with Japan in 1977–1978.

10 This criterion excludes cases such as the aborted attempt by Arab states to impose an oil embargo in 1967.

11 Hereafter, trade sanctions are referred to simply as 'sanctions'. The reader should be aware that the author uses this term in a more restricted sense than do Hufbauer and Schott (1983, 1985), who use sanctions as a synonym for economic coercion.

12 These goals, with the addition of international symbolism, are identical to those in Nincic and Wallensteen (1983). Others have offered different typologies (Barber, 1979; Weintraub, 1982; Daoudi and Dajani, 1983; Hufbauer and Schott, 1983, 1985). The virtue of the typology used here is its relative simplicity while still encompassing the major insights of other authors.

disapproval of a regime. The Reagan administration embargoed Libyan oil to condemn Qaddafi's support for international terrorism (Weisman, 1982). The initiator also may use sanctions to signal its resolve or to protect its prestige. Jimmy Carter, for example, hoped that the Soviet grain embargo would demonstrate American resolve. In these cases, the costs that sanctions inflict on the target are irrelevant. The act itself generates the symbolism.

Finally, the initiator's objective may be *domestic symbolism*—to increase its domestic support or thwart internal criticism of its foreign policies by acting decisively. The Eisenhower administration embargoed Cuba two weeks before the presidential election, partly to improve Nixon's electoral chances (Schreiber, 1973: 393). Similarly, Britain imposed sanctions on Italy in 1935 to appease domestic outrage at the invasion of Abyssinia (Baer, 1973: 167–168; Barber, 1979: 371).

The relative importance that government officials assign to these five goals varies.[13] Although the initiator often claims publicly that it seeks changes in the target's behavior, this does not establish that compliance is the most desired objective. The stated goal in the Iran (1979) case was the release of the hostages, but US officials believed the ban on imports of Iranian oil would have a negligible economic effect on Iran. In private, they expressed much greater interest in the embargo's domestic symbolic values (Smith, 1979). In the Japanese case, however, Roosevelt sought to use sanctions to halt Japanese expansionism and not to satisfy anti-Japanese sentiment in the US (Prange, 1981: 168–169).

Finally, some authors have argued that punishment should be treated as a separate objective (Galtung, 1967: 379–381; Weintraub, 1982: 10). Yet a review of the cases suggests that punishment is a means to one of the five objectives just discussed. For example, Jimmy Carter sought to punish the Soviets for invading Afghanistan to deter future aggression. Although punishment may become an end in itself if the original goals are not achieved, this analysis focuses on the initiator's initial objectives.

The Cases

Nineteen cases meet the definition of sanctions presented earlier (Table 1).[14] The goals assigned to each case are those held by the government officials in the country initiating the sanctions. When more than one country applied the sanctions, the country that led the sanctions effort is designated as the initiator. Where there was no single initiator, only the goals shared by all the countries that applied sanctions are listed. Finally, these are the goals that leaders held *when* they imposed sanctions. Although the objectives may change over time (Barber, 1979: 372), the main concern of this article is with whether sanctions enable governments to achieve their initial goals.

Two strategies were used to determine the objectives in each case. First, the initiator's publicly stated goals were taken as objectives. Where the official announcements were vague, studies were consulted of the decision to make the goal specific. Second, newspaper accounts of the time were examined, along with case studies, and the memoirs of the participants in several cases. To the extent possible, only the goals that

[13] Barber's (1979) discussion of primary, secondary and tertiary goals implies that objectives can be ranked.

[14] This list is drawn from the compilations of sanctions cases in Wallensteen (1968, 1983), and Hufbauer and Schott (1983, 1985). The sanctions the US imposed on South Africa in September 1985 have not been included because sufficient time had not elapsed to evaluate their impact.

officials consciously articulated as objectives were taken, though where information about the decision was scarce, these goals were imputed.

The Arab oil embargo, the most complex case, illustrates the strategies used to

TABLE 1. Cases of trade sanctions since 1932.

		Objectives				
Year	*Initiator/ target*	*Compliance*	*Subversion*	*Deterrence*	*Int'l symbolism*	*Domestic symbolism*
1933	UK vs. USSR	Release UK citizens	No	No	No	No
1935–1936	UK vs. Italy	Withdraw from Abyssinia	No	German aggression	Yes	Yes
1940–1941	US vs. Japan	Withdraw from China	No	Japanese aggression	No	No
1945–	Arab vs. Israel League	Prevent Jewish state	No	No	No	No
1951–1953	UK vs. Iran	Reverse expropriation	No	No	No	No
1948–1955	USSR vs. Yugoslavia	No	Topple Tito	Deviation in Soviet bloc	No	No
1960–	OAU vs. South Africa	Abolish apartheid	No	No	Yes	No
1960–	US vs. Cuba	No	Remove Castro regime	Expropriations	Yes	Yes
1961–1962	US vs. Dominican Republic	No	Remove Trujillo regime	No	No	No
1961–1982	USSR vs. Albania	No	Topple Hoxha	Deviation in Soviet bloc	No	No
1963–1975	OAU vs. Portugal	Decolonization	No	No	Yes	No
1965–1979	UK vs. Rhodesia	No	Remove Smith regime	No	Yes	No
1973–1974	Saudi Arabia vs. US	End support of Israel	No	No	Yes	Yes
1978–1983	Arab League vs. Egypt	Renounce treaty with Israel	No	No	No	No
1978–1979	US vs. Uganda	No	Topple Amin	No	Yes	No
1979–1981	US vs. Iran	Release of US citizens	No	No	Yes	Yes
1980–1981	US vs. USSR	No	No	Soviet aggression	Yes	Yes
1981–1982	US vs. Poland and USSR	End martial law	No	Soviet invasion	Yes	Yes
1982–	US vs. Libya	End support of terrorism	No	No	Yes	No

assign goals. Although the embargo was officially a joint action by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, Saudi Arabia was the initiator. 'It not only supported but also spearheaded the use of oil as a weapon' (Allen, 1979: 10). The Saudis' announced objective was to pressure the US to force Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories (Paust and Blaustein, 1977: 42–45).[15]

The Saudis also imposed the embargo for its international symbolism. Saudi Arabia was politically isolated during most of the 1960s. After the 1967 War, however, it used its wealth to buy off radical Arab states and it began to threaten an embargo. The October War enabled the Saudis to wield the oil weapon and to assert themselves in the region (Rustow, 1982: 156–158). The Saudis also intended the embargo to increase international support for the Palestinians. The Saudis formally linked the resumption of oil production to a show of world sympathy for the Arab cause (Paust and Blaustein, 1977: 42–45; Daoudi and Dajani, 1983: 105).

Finally, Saudi Arabia imposed the embargo for its domestic effects. Since the monarchy's founding, its domestic popularity has been linked to its prestige in Arab politics. During the political isolation of the 1960s, popular discontent was high. This dissatisfaction lessened as Saudi Arabia gained prominence in the Arab World after 1967 (Hudson, 1977: 174–175). It is likely that King Faisal remembered this lesson.

The Success of Trade Sanctions Aimed at Compliance

To consider sanctions aimed at compliance a success, they must meet two criteria. First, the target must alter its behavior to conform with the initiator's preferences. Second, the target must change its policies because of the sanctions. In seven of the twelve cases—the sanctions against Italy, Japan, Israel, South Africa, the US, Egypt, and Libya—the target did not modify its behavior. These sanctions clearly failed. In four other cases—the sanctions against Portugal, Iran (1951 and 1979), and Poland and the Soviet Union—the target modified its behavior, but not because of the sanctions. Sanctions appear to have compelled the target to change its conduct only in the Soviet (1933) case.

Britain's sanctions against Iran were not responsible for the denationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC); while in effect, the British embargo devastated Iran's oil industry—oil production dropped from roughly 240 million barrels in 1950 to only 10 million barrels in 1952 (Saikal, 1980: 41; Daoudi and Dajani, 1983: 96). This caused serious economic hardship and polarized the Iranian public (Graham, 1980: 66; Saikal, 1980: 43). Despite this, British demands on the AIOC were met only partially, and, even then, only after a CIA-managed coup deposed Mossadeq.

When Portugal granted independence to Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique, even the OAU did not 'claim that its sanctions had, to a significant degree, contributed to this' (Wallensteen, 1983: 94). The sanctions had a negligible impact on the Portuguese economy: Africa accounted for only 3.5 percent of Portugal's trade before 1963 and Western nations never imposed sanctions (Wallensteen, 1968: 255). Decolonization came only after the army, disillusioned by years of guerrilla warfare in the colonies, overthrew the Caetano government.

US sanctions against Iran also had a limited impact on the Iranian economy (Renwick, 1981: 69). Iran continued to sell its oil and it bought embargoed goods through middlemen. The revolution was the primary cause of the economic turmoil

[15] The US is treated as the target because it was the first state embargoed. The embargo was extended subsequently to the Netherlands, Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa.

Iran experienced while the sanctions were in place. The decision to release the hostages[16] apparently came because they no longer served to rally domestic support and impeded Iran's efforts to gain international support for its war with Iraq.[17]

US sanctions against Poland and the Soviet Union also failed. The Reagan administration rescinded the sanctions against the Soviet Union at the insistence of other Western governments and before there was improvement of human rights in Poland. The US lifted some of the sanctions against Poland after the formal end of martial law, but American officials admitted that they were still 'waiting for the Polish Government to take definitive action to restore the human rights of the Polish people' (*The New York Times*, 1983: A3).

Sanctions forced compliance only in the Soviet (1933) case. Britain embargoed all trade with the Soviet Union in 1933 after the Soviets arrested several British merchants for spying. After three months and a near total halt in UK–USSR trade, the Soviets released the merchants. Since there are no apparent domestic political events that explain this policy reversal, the sanctions can be considered successful (Wallensteen, 1968: 251).

Of the 12 cases examined, sanctions forced compliance only once. This record improves slightly when the standard for judging a 'success' is relaxed to require only that sanctions contribute to a policy reversal. Under this standard, both sanctions efforts against Iran shift from the failure to the success column. In the 1951 case, the sanctions created 'a propitious climate' for the CIA-managed coup (Graham, 1980: 66). The 1979 case is more arguable because Iran presumably would have returned the hostages at some point. Still, the assets freeze probably gave Iran an incentive to change its policy (Carswell, 1981–1982: 259; Moyer and Mabry, 1983: 26–27). In the other 10 cases, however, either the target did not change its behavior or the sanctions were a negligible factor in the policy change.

Sanctions fail to force compliance primarily because they rarely inflict serious economic pain on the target. With the exception of the Soviet (1933), Italian, Japanese, and Iranian (1951) cases, the targets suffered few economic costs. Sanctions generally do not inflict economic damage for one or more of four reasons: the countries applying the sanctions do not control a large portion of the target's external economic relations, the embargoed imports are not critical to the target economy, enforcement is lax, or the target finds domestic substitutes for the lost imports (Doxey, 1971; Losman, 1972, 1979; Brown-John, 1975; Knorr, 1975, 1977; Green, 1983).

Although the ability to inflict economic pain is necessary to force compliance (Losman, 1972, 1979), it is not sufficient. The second crucial factor is the value the target leadership places on the disputed behavior relative to the economic costs that sanctions produce. In the Italian case, for example, Mussolini coveted Abyssinia. He hoped not only to establish Italy as a great power, but to avenge the defeat at Adowa in

[16] One may argue that American officials imposed sanctions partly to preempt an Iranian embargo on oil exports to the US and to prevent the withdrawal of Iranian funds from American banks. To the extent that these goals concerned American officials, the sanctions succeeded. Despite this, the author has refrained from judging the Iran (1979) case a success because (a) the hostages' release was the more important American objective, and (b) sanctions intended to preempt an adversary's embargo will succeed almost by definition. Still, this is an additional reason to consider the Iranian (1979) sanctions as partially successful (see below).

[17] Carswell (1981–1982) and Moyer and Mabry (1983), all officials in the Carter administration, acknowledge the limited impact of the trade embargo on Iran but argue that the assets freeze succeeded because it gave the US leverage in negotiations with Iran. They offer no evidence, however, that the assets freeze was as important as the factors mentioned in the text in prompting the release of the hostages.

1896. In contrast, the sanctions 'had very little effect on the living standards of the Italian population' (Renwick, 1981: 22).

Finally, even if sanctions hurt the target, it has strong incentives not to comply. Since sanctions are public measures, compliance may damage the target leadership's world prestige or diminish its domestic support. Japan rebuffed Roosevelt's demands because compliance would have dashed its claims to great power status. Mossadeq refused to denationalize the AIOC because doing so would have ruined his nationalist credentials. Even if the target decides to comply, it wants to avoid appearing to capitulate to the initiator. After Britain embargoed trade, the Soviet leadership spent much of the next three months devising a face-saving way out of the situation (Wallensteen, 1983: 96).

The Success of Trade Sanctions Aimed at Subversion

Sanctions failed in all six cases where they were aimed at subverting the target. In the Yugoslavian, Albanian and Cuban cases, the target's leaders remained in power despite sanctions. In the other cases—the sanctions against the Dominican Republic, Rhodesia and Uganda—the regimes under attack collapsed, but not as the result of sanctions.

In the Dominican case, the US achieved its goal of removing Trujillo when he was assassinated in May 1961. However, sanctions do not seem to have motivated his killers (Schreiber, 1973: 410; Brown-John, 1975: 169). The US attained its second goal in January 1962 when a new government took office and pledged to hold elections within a year. This owed more, though, to threats of American military intervention—the US sent warships to Dominican waters in November 1961—than to sanctions.[18]

Rhodesia survived sanctions for 14 years. Although sanctions damaged the Rhodesian economy during the first year (Table 2), Rhodesia's GNP grew at a real average annual rate of 8.9 percent through 1973. This growth halted in 1974, initially because of the oil shock, and both GNP and GNP per capita decreased steadily for the rest of the decade. The sanctions hindered Rhodesia's economy in the late 1970s, but 'it was the war, not sanctions, which was exerting the real pressure on the economy' (Renwick, 1981: 52; see also Ullman, 1979: 1112). Since force was the key to subverting minority rule, the sanctions cannot be considered successful.

Idi Amin's regime collapsed five months after the US banned trade with Uganda. Nevertheless, Tanzania's invasion and not the sanctions led to Amin's demise. Observers agree that the ban on coffee, which accounted for 93 percent of Uganda's exports, had no effect (Miller, 1980: 119; Avirgan and Honey, 1982: 15; Nurnberger, 1982: 61). Moreover, Kenya allowed goods, including fuel, to pass to Uganda (*Africa Research Bulletin*, 1979: 5220). Given this, it is safe to conclude (at the least) 'that the embargo simply was not in effect long enough to affect the Ugandan economy and government' (Nurnberger, 1982: 61).[19]

The success of subversion attempts improves if the standard for judging a success is lowered. If sanctions are required only to enhance the initiator's other policy measures, then both the Dominican and Rhodesian cases were successes. Sanctions placed strong economic and moral pressure on the Dominican government (Brown-John, 1975: 251). They also made threats of US intervention more credible (Daoudi and Dajani, 1983:

[18] Wallensteen (1968, 1983) argues that these sanctions succeeded, but he presents no evidence that they influenced the Dominican elite and he understates the role that force played.

[19] Miller (1980) argues that the embargo created shortages of fuel and spare parts for American-made machinery. Because the US banned only direct trade with the Amin regime, however, Uganda still could obtain American goods via third countries.

TABLE 2. Economic impact of sanctions in subversion cases, selected indicators.

Target	Change in trade (%)[a]	Change in GNP (%)[a]	Change in GNP per capita (%)[a]
Yugoslavia	−13	n.a.	n.a.
Cuba	−5	n.a.	n.a.
Dominican Republic	−21	−5.5	−8.5
Albania	−7	n.a.	n.a.
Rhodesia	−34	−2.7	−5.7
Uganda	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

[a] Change during the first year sanctions were in effect, calculated as a percentage of the figure for last full year prior to sanctions.

Source: Renwick (1981: 99); *Statistical Yearbook of Latin America* (1973: 586); Wallensteen (1968: 255): and, *Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics* (1967: 173).

169). The Rhodesian case is more arguable because of the length of time sanctions were in place and because of the success of the guerrilla war. Still, Mozambique's and Zambia's decisions in 1975 to close their borders left Rhodesian dependent on South Africa. Pretoria, convinced by guerrilla successes that Rhodesia's fall was inevitable, apparently manipulated this dependence to force Smith to negotiate (Cross, 1981: 25–26; Renwick, 1981: 53).

With the exception of Uganda, all the sanctions aimed at subversion inflicted extensive damage on the target (Table 2).[20] There are two major reasons why these sanctions produced economic disruption, whereas the sanctions aimed at compliance often did not. First, in all six subversion cases the initiator suspended virtually all economic relations with the target while in many compliance cases the initiator embargoed a more limited range of goods. Second, the initiators in the subversion cases controlled a much greater portion of the target's external economic relations than did those in the compliance cases. The initiator's average share of the target's total trade in the year before sanctions were imposed was 42 percent in subversion cases, compared with 8 percent in compliance cases (*Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook*; Wallensteen, 1968: 255).[21]

Paradoxically, in four cases sanctions actually strengthened the target government. Soviet coercion provided both Tito and Hoxha with the pretext to purge pro-Soviet members of the political elite (Freedman, 1970: 25–27, 78). In the Cuban case, sanctions stirred anti-American sentiment that Castro used to consolidate his hold on power (Schreiber, 1973: 405). And in Rhodesia, sanctions 'welded together the . . . conservative element in support of the survival of the regime' (Kapungu, 1973: 128).[22] Thus not only is the assumption that economic denial leads to political collapse wrong, economic denial may produce political integration in the target political community.

[20] Although other factors aided economic turmoil in each case, they were important only in the Cuban and Ugandan cases (Schreiber, 1973; Seers et al., 1979).

[21] The figure for compliance cases excludes Japan and Israel.

[22] This is not to say that blacks in Rhodesia rallied in support of the Smith government; they did not. Yet blacks were not part of Rhodesia's political community (which, of course, is why the sanctions were imposed). In comparison, the white community was the political community in Rhodesia, and by most accounts whites rallied around the Smith regime.

Sanctions did not strengthen the Dominican or Ugandan leaders, but here, unlike the other four cases, the countries were politically polarized before sanctions were imposed. Trujillo and Amin both relied on terror to retain power and both had escaped several assassination attempts. In comparison, the leaders in the other four cases enjoyed much greater political support before sanctions were imposed. This suggests that there is a threshold of political cohesion, above which external coercion strengthens the target government. If the regime lacks legitimacy, sanctions will not produce political integration, but neither will they necessarily lead to political disintegration.

This finding concurs with a clear convergence in the literature that external conflict tends to increase a country's internal cohesion (Stein, 1976). Galtung (1976: 389) offers three reasons why sanctions can produce political integration:

1. The attack from the outside is seen as an attack on the group as a whole, not on only a fraction of it;
2. There is very weak identification with the attacker, preferably even negative identification; and
3. There is belief in the value of one's own goals in the sense that no alternative is seen as better.

The indiscriminate impact of sanctions reinforces these reactions. Since the initiator often cannot (or does not) manipulate sanctions to punish only the regime's domestic supporters, they need not disrupt the target's political base of support (Sylvan, 1983). For example, to the extent that sanctions hurt Iran, they hit primarily industrialists, factory workers and professionals. None of these groups were part of Khomeini's core of supporters. Moreover, sanctions may have the perverse political effect of undermining the power of those in the target most integrated with the international economy and thus most likely to pressure the government. In Cuba, sanctions further delegitimated the upper classes that opposed Castro.

The Success of Trade Sanctions Aimed at Deterrence

The same problems that hamper studies of deterrence in general plague the analysis of sanctions as deterrents. The absence of repetitions of the disputed behavior does not prove that the sanctions succeeded because there is no way to know whether the target would have acted differently without them. Moreover, when sanctions are to deter a group of nations, objectionable behavior by one (or more) state does not establish that they failed as a deterrent. Other states may have complied with the initiator's preferences because they were deterred.

Despite these difficulties, the deterrent value of sanctions can be estimated. First, sanctions clearly have failed when they aim to deter a specific state but that state still pursues the disputed policy. Second, in all other cases, the economic damage the target suffers helps to indicate whether sanctions were a deterrent. Since this use of sanctions posits that economic costs deter, the deterrent value of sanctions probably is minimal if the target suffers little damage.

In the Italian and Japanese case the target of the deterrent threat engaged in the disputed behavior. In March 1936, while the Italian sanctions were still in place, Germany moved troops into the demilitarized areas of the Rhineland and repudiated the Versailles Treaty. Hitler defied the world community because the League of Nations applied the sanctions irresolutely and because he believed sanctions were not a formidable weapon (Speer, 1970: 72; Baer, 1973: 177–178; Hildebrand, 1973: 35).

The embargo against Japan not only failed as a deterrent, it probably helped to trigger the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (Russett, 1972: 45; Prange, 1981: 171; Renwick, 1981: 62–63).[23] Although the sanctions had not crippled the economy by December 1941, the Japanese government believed they would eventually. In September 1941 it estimated 'its Navy would be disabled in two years, and important industries paralyzed in less than half that time' (Prange, 1981: 169). Faced with economic strangulation and unwilling to meet US demands, Japan chose war.

The sanctions against the Soviet Union in 1980 and 1981 are the only other cases where the aim was to deter a specific country. The sanctions failed both times. The Soviet Union has not undertaken a large-scale aggression since the invasion of Afghanistan, but this owes little to the grain embargo. The embargo never inflicted significant costs on the Soviet economy.[24] The Soviet Union increased its grain purchases from other countries and grain imports fell only 7 percent below the plan target. The Soviets compensated for this by drawing on reserve stocks (Paarlberg, 1980: 151–157; Daoudi and Dajani, 1983: 140–141; Saunders, 1983: 120–122).

The Soviet decision not to intervene directly in Poland appears to owe more to Jaruzelski's success in neutralizing Solidarity and to the likely adverse effect on public opinion in Western Europe than to American sanctions. The sanctions covered primarily high-technology exports, which posed minuscule costs to the Soviet economy (Neal, 1983: 144–145). Moreover, the grain embargo had reduced American–Soviet economic contacts and thus diminished the likely effectiveness of increased American economic pressure.

In the remaining cases—the sanctions against Yugoslavia, Albania, and Cuba—the aim was to deter many nations. Since sanctions hurt the target economy in each case, states considering the disputed behavior (potential targets) knew that the act could provoke costly economic retaliation. Still, these sanctions did not deter all states. Albania maintained its ties with China after the Sino–Soviet split despite the memory of Soviet sanctions against Yugoslavia. Nor did US sanctions against Cuba stop all states from expropriating American-owned property. For example, in 1968, Peru nationalized the American-owned International Petroleum Company (IPC) despite repeated threats of US sanctions.

Four factors limit the deterrent value of sanctions. First, the potential target must perceive that the initiator will impose sanctions. The restrained US responses to the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Hungary probably led Soviet leaders to discount the possibility of US retaliation for the Afghanistan invasion. Even if the potential target knows that a particular action has triggered sanctions before, it may believe the initiator no longer objects to the behavior. Hungary's leaders in 1956 may have thought that de-Stalinization meant that Moscow would tolerate deviation in Eastern Europe.

Second, the potential target must perceive that sanctions will pose sizable costs. Given Italy's experience, Hitler judged that the costs of any sanctions effort would be

[23] Although the authors cited in the text agree that the American embargo helped to precipitate the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, they differ over the degree to which sanctions influenced the Japanese decision to go to war. Prange (1981: 171) and Renwick (1981: 62–63) suggest that war was virtually inevitable and the sanctions simply were the last straw. Russett (1972: 45) argues, however, that war might have been avoided in the absence of US sanctions.

[24] One may argue that the deterrent threat that Carter intended to convey via the grain embargo was military and not economic; that is, he wanted to demonstrate that he was willing to resort to force to counter Soviet aggression. Yet given the nature of the US–Soviet nuclear stalemate, it is difficult to imagine how the decision to halt grain sales could signal Carter's willingness to use force against the Soviet Union.

tolerable. Likewise, the Soviets discovered in 1980 and 1981 that they could accommodate American sanctions. Third, a potential target may be able to counter the threat of sanctions with its own threats. Since American investment in Peru was extensive, the Peruvian government could threaten to expropriate *more* American holdings if the US imposed sanctions. This threat apparently convinced the Nixon administration not to impose sanctions (Olson, 1975: 408–410; Daoudi and Dajani, 1983: 130).

Fourth, since previous targets have survived sanctions, some states may believe that the benefits of defying the initiator outweigh the costs. Hoxha knew that the Soviet sanctions had given Tito a freer hand in domestic and foreign affairs. Similarly, 'the Peruvian military had to expropriate the IPC if it wished to attain and keep legitimacy as a nationalist and uncorrupt regime—despite whatever penalties the United States threatened in retaliation' (Olson, 1975: 413).

The preceding discussion suggests that sanctions will succeed as deterrents only if four conditions are met. One, it must be clear the initiator objects to the behavior and will try to change it. Two, the potential target must perceive that the initiator can inflict economic pain. Three, the initiator must not perceive that the potential target can resort to adequate counterpressures. Four, the potential target must not place a higher value on the disputed behavior than on the costs expected to be incurred. Given the stringency of these conditions, it is likely that sanctions have a limited deterrent value.

The Success of Trade Sanctions Aimed at International Symbolism

It is difficult to determine the success of sanctions as international symbols. Since this goal entails intangibles like 'image', 'reputation', and 'status', there are no ready-made empirical indicators. Moreover, sanctions are not applied in a vacuum. Diplomacy and displays of military force (short of actual use) often accompany sanctions and may be critical in conveying the initiator's message. Finally, the content of the message and its audience vary among the cases, preventing the elaboration of a uniform criterion of success.

Although these difficulties must temper any conclusions, the success of sanctions as international symbols can be estimated by examining the reactions of the states at which the symbols are directed. Should the initiator try but fail to recruit supporters from its intended audience, one may infer that its message failed. If this criterion is met, it is then necessary to determine whether there is evidence that the initiator communicated its message.

In four cases—the sanctions against Israel, Portugal, Cuba and Poland and the Soviet Union (1981)—the initiator failed in its attempts to recruit supporters. The Arab League imposed sanctions on Israel to demonstrate opposition to partition and further Jewish settlements, but most countries ignored the boycott. The OAU failed to convince the West to pressure Portugal to decolonize. Western states refused to impose even token sanctions and the issue made no headway at the UN. The US embargoed Cuba to dispel images of American weakness and to convince Latin American countries that their future lay with the West (Schreiber, 1973: 392–393). Yet for four years the OAS refused to impose sanctions or condemn Castro.[25] Moreover, major American allies maintained their trade relations with Cuba.

[25] In 1964 the OAS voted to sever trade and diplomatic relations with Cuba after the discovery in Venezuela of a weapons shipment, presumably of Cuban origin, to Latin guerrillas.

The US failed dismally in its attempts to convince other countries to impose sanctions on Poland and the Soviet Union in 1981. Europe, the main object of the recruitment effort, derided the sanctions. This tension peaked in June 1982 when the US barred foreign subsidiaries of American companies and foreign companies operating under American licenses from participating in the Soviet pipeline project. Britain and France announced they would defy the restrictions. Faced with rebellion by its allies, the US lifted the sanctions in exchange for a European 'review' of East–West trade policy. Although Reagan called this a 'victory for the alliance', the sanctions were better termed 'the flop of the year' (quoted in Joffe, 1983: 575).

The initiator successfully recruited supporters in six other cases. In the Italian and Soviet (1980) cases, however, the sanctions still failed as international symbols. Nearly 50 countries supported the sanctions against Italy. Still, irresolute British leadership and the refusal of several major non-League members to observe the embargo destroyed the symbolic purpose of the sanctions: to demonstrate the capacity of the League of Nations for collective security (Baer, 1973: 178). Indeed, Britain's vacillation in imposing sanctions and the eventual outcome of the episode demonstrates clearly the inability of economic sanctions to convey resolve that does not exist.

The Carter administration hoped that the Soviet grain embargo would demonstrate American leadership (Carter, 1982: 472; Daoudi and Dajani, 1983: 135). Initially, US allies supported the sanctions. Australia, Canada, and the European Community (EC) pledged not to increase their grain sales to the Soviets. Still, these three suppliers more than doubled their grain exports to the Soviet Union (Paarlberg, 1980: 152–154; Saunders, 1983: 120–121). Moreover, many Europeans believed that the US reaction to Afghanistan endangered détente. The EC steadfastly refused to limit high technology exports (Daoudi and Dajani, 1983: 150; Moyer and Mabry, 1983: 46).

In the other four cases where the initiator recruited supporters—the sanctions against South Africa, Rhodesia, the US, and Iran (1979)—the initiator successfully communicated its message. African nations had some success in recruiting supporters for sanctions against South Africa. They were able to place the sanctions issue on the UN agenda, and the Security Council put a voluntary arms embargo on Pretoria in 1963. Although not dramatic, this success is notable when compared with the outcome of the sanctions effort against Portugal.

Britain imposed sanctions against Rhodesia in part to protect its world prestige and its commitment to democratic traditions (Hoffmann, 1967: 149; Strack, 1978: 25–27). Virtually every member of the international community gave at least token support to the embargo and Britain's principal allies consistently supported its position. Although the sanctions did not preclude all African criticism of Britain, they mitigated the bitterness of those attacks (Barber, 1979: 381).

All the Arab oil-producing states supported Saudi Arabia's push for an oil embargo, but this solidarity was almost axiomatic. More important, the oil embargo catapulted the Saudis into the leadership of the Arab world. 'Earlier, their aloofness had exposed them to contempt and criticism from pan-Arabs and Third World radicals; now they were everyone's hero' (Rustow, 1982: 159). At the same time, the oil embargo prompted Western Europe and Japan to moderate their support for Israel (Licklider, 1982: 369–370; Daoudi and Dajani, 1983: 108).

The US imposed sanctions on Iran to condemn 'the holding of hostages' and to reaffirm American resolve (*The New York Times*, 1979: A10). All US allies and many Third World nations hailed the oil embargo as a just response to a breach of international law. Moreover, despite their traditional reticence, European countries imposed limited sanctions (Moyer and Mabry, 1983: 17–20). The success of sanctions as a symbol of American 'toughness' is arguable, since Iran held the hostages despite heavy US pressure. Still, Carter's willingness to embargo a major oil exporter while petroleum prices skyrocketed may have countered the image of impotence to some degree.

Finally, in the two remaining cases—the embargoes of Uganda and Libya—the initiator made little or no effort to recruit supporters. Thus the criteria used up to now to ascribe success do not apply. In both cases, however, other evidence suggests that these sanctions succeeded as international symbols.

In the Ugandan case, the US sought to demonstrate its moral opposition to Amin's regime. This message succeeded in a way that American officials did not anticipate. Less than two weeks after the embargo went into effect, Ugandan troops invaded Tanzania. The timing of the invasion suggests that Amin undertook the operation to divert domestic attention from the American action. The sanctions also appear to have convinced Tanzania to launch the counter-invasion that unseated Amin (Miller, 1980: 125; Nurnberger, 1982: 61).

The US embargoed Libyan oil to condemn Qaddafi's support for international terrorism and to reassure American allies in the Middle East that the US opposed Libya's attempts to subvert neighboring countries (Weisman, 1982). The Reagan administration made no effort, however, to convince American allies to do likewise. Since American aims were limited and consistent with the Reagan administration's confrontationalist stance toward Libya, the embargo can be considered a successful international symbol. The sanctions themselves signalled American opposition to Qaddafi.

In sum, sanctions succeeded as international symbols in half the cases. It is difficult to determine the conditions under which sanctions will succeed as international symbols because the intended audiences and messages differ from case to case. Yet on the question of the initiator's ability to recruit supporters, success hinges on two perceptions by other states: that the target has violated international norms; and that imposing sanctions will not pose significant economic or political costs. In the Iran (1979) case, for example, many European countries imposed limited sanctions because Iran had blatantly violated international law and the affected level of trade was not great. In the Soviet (1981) case, however, European countries refused to impose sanctions because the Soviet Union had no overt role in the suppression of Solidarity, and because they saw the cost of disrupting economic and political relations with Moscow as too high.

The analysis thus far has centered on the capacity of sanctions to generate positive symbols in the international community. Yet the greatest value of sanctions as international symbols may be that they enable the initiator to avoid creating negative images of itself (Galtung, 1967: 411–412; Barber, 1979: 381). Had Britain not placed sanctions on Rhodesia, most countries would have seen it as a sign of British approval of the Smith regime. Similarly, had the Saudis continued trade relations with the US during the October War, they would have suffered the obloquy of radical Arab states. Although it is impossible to measure the success of this defensive use of sanctions, government officials probably find sanctions appealing 'when military action is impossible . . . and . . . doing nothing is seen as tantamount to complicity' (Galtung, 1967: 411).

The Success of Trade Sanctions Aimed at Domestic Symbolism

One aim of sanctions as domestic symbols is to increase domestic support for the initiating government. Thus sanctions can be judged successful domestic symbols if they increase popular support. In practice, it is difficult to make this judgment. Survey data do not exist for the British sanctions against Italy or the Arab oil embargo. In most of the other cases, questions on foreign policy were not asked just before and just after sanctions were imposed. Overall public approval ratings are a crude substitute because many factors influence them. Still, there is sufficient fragmentary evidence with which to evaluate the impact of sanctions on domestic opinion.

Sanctions did not increase domestic support in the Cuban and Soviet (1981) cases. The US embargo of Cuba did not secure Nixon's election. Nor did the sanctions affect Eisenhower's public approval rating (*The Gallup Opinion Index*, 1980: 29). The sanctions against Poland and the Soviet Union also did not increase Ronald Reagan's popularity and may have hurt him. Reagan's overall approval rating did not change after he announced the sanctions, but approval of his handling of relations with the Soviet Union dropped six points (*The Gallup Report*, 1982: 18, 25).

Sanctions appear to have generated increased domestic support in the other four cases —the sanctions against Italy, the US, Iran (1979), and the Soviet Union (1980). With the public clamoring for an embargo, British officials led the sanctions drive at the League of Nations. The National Government called new elections and, running on a pro-sanctions platform, won additional seats in Parliament. As former Prime Minister Lloyd George remarked wryly at the time: 'Sanctions came too late to save Abyssinia, but they are just in time to save the Government' (quoted in Barber, 1979: 380).

The oil embargo succeeded spectacularly as a domestic symbol for the Saudi monarchy. Saudis applauded the concrete demonstration of the regime's commitment to the Palestinians. In the estimate of one scholar of Arab politics, the embargo 'infused the Saudi system with more legitimacy at home . . . than it had ever enjoyed' (Hudson, 1977: 178).

Sanctions also benefited Jimmy Carter during the Iran crisis. The week the hostages were seized, 32 percent approved and 55 percent disapproved of his handling of the Presidency. One month later, 61 percent approved and only 30 percent disapproved (*The Gallup Opinion Index*, 1980: 13). This dramatic reversal partly reflects the tendency of the American public to rally behind the President during a crisis (Mueller, 1970), but it also reflects approval of the sanctions. When asked in early December 'what do you think the US should do about the Iranian situation?', 70 percent responded 'use all diplomatic means', 51 percent replied 'discontinue all trade with Iran', and only 11 percent said 'take military action' (*The Gallup Poll*, 1980: 286).

The Soviet grain embargo, which came less than two months after the Iranian sanctions, was a less dramatic success. Carter's approval rating rose 4 points (remaining below his peak rating in early December), but this increase may be due to sampling error (*The Gallup Opinion Index*, 1980: 13). Still, Carter's stunning 2 to 1 victory over Edward Kennedy in the Iowa Democratic caucuses two weeks later suggests that the embargo succeeded as a domestic symbol.

In sum, sanctions increased the initiator's domestic support in four out of six cases. The important variables here appear to be the nature and visibility of the disputed issue. In the Iranian (1979) case, Iran threatened the US with one decisive and highly public action. In the other successful cases, the target openly challenged the initiator's core values. American support for Israel during the October War was a sharp rebuke to Arab nationalism, and both the Italian and Soviet (1980) cases involved acts of aggression by strong states against weak ones. By comparison, in the two cases of failed domestic symbols, neither target clearly threatened the initiator or its core values. Eisenhower embargoed Cuba only after a long and hostile exchange of accusations. Similarly, the Soviet Union had no overt role in the suppression of Solidarity.

Sanctions appear to have had a long-term effect on domestic support only in the case of the Arab oil embargo. Carter's public approval rating returned to its pre-hostage crisis level within seven months and to its pre-Afghanistan level within one month (*The Gallup Opinion Index*, 1980: 13). This erosion is not surprising. As time passes, other issues gain salience and the prominence of the disputed issue fades. Still, public support may decay if the disputed issue remains salient and the sanctions do not achieve their formal objective. In the Iran (1979) case, the failure of the sanctions to force the quick release of the hostages probably fueled a backlash against Carter.

Thus far the discussion has centered on increases in domestic support. Yet, as with international symbolism, government officials may be more interested in the less ambitious goal of blunting criticism. For example, Hamilton Jordan, Carter's White House Chief of Staff, writes that he worried about what the hostage crisis was 'going to do to the President's image and his prospects for re-election' (Jordan, 1982: 36). Thus government officials may use sanctions to mute charges that they are doing nothing in response to the target's behavior.

If deflecting criticism becomes the criterion for success, then the focus on increases in overall public support underestimates the success of sanctions as domestic symbols. For example, under this criterion, the sanctions against Poland and the Soviet Union succeeded as domestic symbols for the Reagan administration. The sanctions prevented the alienation of two key political constituencies, organized labor and Polish Americans, both of which had publicly demanded sanctions.[26]

The Costs of Trade Sanctions

Trade sanctions inflict several costs on the initiator. On the international side, sanctions often stimulate political cohesion in the target country. This 'rally-round-the-flag' reaction was noted in the subversion cases, but it also occurs when the initiator imposes sanctions to force compliance. Mussolini used the sanctions 'to consolidate [his] personal rule' (Baer, 1973: 178). In the Egyptian case, the sanctions fueled popular resentment of other Arab countries and increased Sadat's popularity (Ajami, 1981: 105—107).

Second, sanctions prompt the target to strengthen its ties with the initiator's adversaries. Italy increased its economic and political relations with Germany after Britain imposed sanctions, and in October 1936 Hitler and Mussolini signed the Rome—Berlin Pact. Yugoslav—American relations were hostile before 1948, but in 1950 the US provided Tito with economic and military aid (Freedman, 1970: 23, 37). In the Cuban case, sanctions forced Castro to increase his reliance on the Soviet Union (Schreiber, 1973: 401—402; Theriot, 1982: 42).

Third, sanctions may provoke target aggression. There is no single reason why sanctions would trigger this response. In the Italian case, Hitler interpreted British and French irresoluteness as one sign (among others) that they would not risk war to oppose German expansion. In contrast, the US applied sanctions against Japan resolutely, and the Japanese probably interpreted this as a sign that war had become inevitable. And in

[26] It is interesting to note also that President Reagan's decision in September 1985 to impose symbolic sanctions against South Africa deflated the anti-apartheid movement in Congress, which had been seeking to impose more comprehensive economic sanctions (Conrad, 1985).

the Ugandan case, Amin apparently hoped to create an external threat to divert attention from internal problems.

Fourth, sanctions diminish the initiator's future economic leverage over the target. Targets normally respond to sanctions by diversifying their trading partners and by increasing their self-sufficiency. Italy increased its imports from Austria, Germany, and the US after the League imposed sanctions (Renwick, 1981: 95). In the Yugoslavian, Albanian, Cuban, and Rhodesian cases, the initiator's economic relations with the target became negligible. Moreover, the imposition of sanctions may stimulate alternative sources of productions (Moyer and Mabry, 1983: 152–153). This would tend to reduce the initiator's economic leverage over both targets and *potential* targets.

Finally, sanctions may irritate the initiator's allies. This cost has been peculiar to US sanctions in the 1980s. American allies often view US sanctions solely as domestic symbols. They particularly resent unilateral US impositions of sanctions. The divisive impact of sanctions may be the greatest cost to the US. It damages American leadership and complicates other relations with Europe and Japan.

The initiator faces four possible domestic costs. First, sanctions inflict a direct financial loss on firms that trade with the target. British exports to Italy fell $19 million while the sanctions were in place (Renwick, 1981: 95) and the Soviet grain embargo nullified the sale of $2.6 billion worth of farm products (Paarlberg, 1980: 146). These losses may be offset by sales to other countries, but they probably remain high in the short term. If the initiator tries to defray the losses of private firms (though this is uncommon), the cost can be high. The US spent $5 billion to stem the collapse of farm prices during the grain embargo (Von Amerongen, 1980: 163).

Second, sanctions may incur costs to the economy as a whole. This cost is especially high when the country imposing sanctions is both economically weak and borders the target. Sanctions against Israel have caused Jordan 'considerable economic harm, both in terms of . . . projects which have been foregone and in terms of a rerouting of its trade' (Losman, 1972: 666–667). The cost to the economy is also significant if the sanctions force a shift from a (sanctioned) lower-cost supplier to higher-cost suppliers. The Rhodesian sanctions compelled Britain (and the US) to switch to more expensive sources of chrome (Strack, 1978: 158–159).

Third, sanctions may diminish future trade, as countries deem the initiator an unreliable supplier. Although it is impossible to measure this loss, the diversification strategies that targets pursue and the growth of alternative sources of production suggest that it exists (Moyer and Mabry, 1983: 152–155; Neal, 1983: 147; Saunders, 1983: 120–122). The US probably has felt this cost more than any other initiator because of its frequent resort to sanctions.

Fourth, sanctions may generate a political backlash against the initiator's leadership when they fail to modify the target's behavior. This happened in both cases of US sanctions against the Soviet Union. The American Farm Bureau withdrew its support for the grain embargo in April 1980, citing the failure to protect farmers from the embargo's adverse effects. This appears to have been a factor in Carter's re-election defeat. Similarly, the pipeline sanctions irritated the American business community, which faced a $2.2 billion loss in trade with the Soviet Union. As a result, Republicans in Congress pressured the Reagan administration to lift the sanctions (Gwertzman, 1982).

Conclusions

Trade sanctions generally fail when aimed at the goals of compliance and subversion, though the record improves somewhat if they are required only to enhance companion policies. Sanctions certainly have not proven to be substitutes for the use of force. Too often they fail to inflict economic pain on the target. Even when they do, these costs usually do not exceed the benefits the target leadership derives from the disputed policy. This problem is at its worst in attempts at subversion—governments will bear extremely high costs to stay in power. Given this, it is unlikely that sanctions, in and of themselves, will subvert the current South African regime (Gordon, 1983).

Nor do trade sanctions have a substantial value as deterrents. The threat of sanctions may deter the faint-hearted by raising anticipated costs, but it is doubtful that these costs are high enough to forestall leaders dedicated to the disputed behavior. Moreover, unlike military force, sanctions usually are not reusable policy instruments. A sanction substantial enough to inflict substantial costs on the target may exhaust *future* threats against the target. The steep decline in American trade with the Soviet Union since the late 1970s has left the US with little economic leverage over Moscow (Moyer and Mabry, 1983: 155–156).

Government officials, particularly in the recent US uses of sanctions, probably have known that sanctions were unlikely to force compliance or subversion. The resort to sanctions more likely was made for their symbolic effects: simply put, 'crises erupt and governments have to react' (Mayall, 1984: 632). When military options are not feasible or desirable and the initiator wants to respond forcefully to the target's behavior, sanctions provide a means of 'doing something'. To take but one example, US officials during the hostage crisis knew that 'the American people [would not] be satisfied for long with meetings at the White House' (Jordan, 1982: 37).

Yet the publicity needed to make sanctions successful international and domestic symbols undercuts their success in attaining the goals of compliance and subversion. Since sanctions are highly visible external threats, they tend to increase political cohesion in the target and to restrict the target leadership's ability and willingness to modify its policies. Moreover, because sanctions are public measures with a clearly defined agent, they often discredit the initiator's allies within the target.

Given the nullifying impact of publicity, the goals of compliance and subversion appear to be better served by covert economic pressure. One major reason for the success of Soviet economic pressure on Finland in the 'Nightfrost Crisis' of 1958–1959 was that the Soviets never acknowledged their coercion or their objectives (Forster, 1960: 149; Vloyantes, 1975: 96). Still, in most Western countries trade bans usually are not compatible with covert pressure because trade suspensions require non-typical interventions in the market that generate publicity.

Recent evidence also suggests that coercive uses of aid are more successful than trade sanctions in achieving the goals of compliance and subversion (Olson, 1979: 493; Weintraub, 1982: 23, 60; Hufbauer and Schott, 1983: 57; 1985: 59). The greater success of coercive uses of aid stems from several factors. First, aid suspensions are difficult to circumvent because alternative sources of aid are scarce. Second, halts in aid often complicate relations with private financiers who prefer predictable long term investments. Third, aid by its nature implies that the recipient is economically weak and thus vulnerable to economic pressure. In contrast, trade sanctions often involve initiators and targets of roughly equal power. Finally, aid denials are relatively less publicized and, thus, tend not to provoke the political reactions within the target that hamper trade sanctions (Olson, 1979: 483; Weintraub, 1982: 23, 60; see also Knorr, 1977: 108–109).

This finding raises the question of why initiators impose trade sanctions rather than manipulate aid. In part this is because initiators may have no aid weapon to use. The US faced this problem not only with the Soviet Union but also with Uganda. At the same time, the visibility of the disputed issue shapes the choice of instruments. Sanctions have been imposed mainly in response to 'high' policy actions by the target when the use of force was ruled out. Why some of these situations trigger sanctions and others do not hinges on a number of factors, including the personalities of the leaders involved, the strength of their domestic support, and perceptions abroad of the initiator's strength.

What remains is that there are, and probably will continue to be, situations where governments believe that domestic or international audiences expect them to react strongly to the target's behavior. Trade sanctions provide the means of making this demonstration without incurring the dangers that attend the use of force. Critics may deride the symbolic uses of trade sanctions as empty gestures, but symbols are important in politics. This is especially so when inaction can signal weakness and silence can mark complicity.

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