Nonviolent Sanctions
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South Africa Program Update

The South Africa Program, under the direction of Dr. Barbara Harmel, has grown by leaps and bounds over the past year. The Program now has a home base in South Africa at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. And all three of its research projects are up and running, with forty-six scholars, graduate students, and activists working with the Program in a variety of ways.

Laying the Foundations of Civil Society

The largest of the South Africa Program’s three research projects is an effort to study and strengthen the capacity of the township organizations or “civics” as an independent social force in the transformation of South Africa to a democratic society. By studying the experiences of the civics in the recent past, researchers hope to gain new insights that will be of enormous value to civics leaders in their current effort to build a civil society.

Earlier this year a research competition was held. From the forty proposals submitted, fifteen different studies were commissioned, involving nineteen researchers. They are an incredible mix of people, from well-established, internationally recognized scholars to graduate students to grassroots civics activists. Indeed, every major South African researcher working in the area of township organizations is involved with this project.

As one put it, “this is the most exciting research project going on in South Africa today.”

Research commissioned this year includes case studies of civics in Natal, Soweto, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and others as victims. Over time, sanctions may appear bullying and unfair. They can be continually improved and sharpened to increase effectiveness.

International Economic Sanctions: Eight Lessons from the Past

by Richard H. Stanley  
President, The Stanley Foundation

The following is an excerpt from Richard Stanley’s opening remarks to the Stanley Foundation’s twenty-fourth Conference on United Nations Issues entitled “Political Symbol or Policy Tool? Making Sanctions Work.”

Generally, sanctions are intended to change a country’s behavior by inflicting or threatening to inflict economic pain. The pain results from import and export barriers to goods and services and from restrictions on financial, communications, transportation, and other activities.

I like to think of sanctions as tools which can be used to influence policy decisions. Like any tool, sanctions must be used selectively for the proper purpose to be effective. A wood chisel will not work on metal. A hammer serves a different purpose than a saw. Similarly, tools can be altered and improved. A saw in a miter box will cut more precisely than a saw alone. The message here is that sanctions should be used only when they are the best available tool for the work at hand, and when there is reasonable likelihood that they will do the job. Further, they should be continually improved and sharpened to increase effectiveness.

In This Issue

This issue of Nonviolent Sanctions focuses on the growing use of economic sanctions in the international community. It also includes an update on the AEI South Africa Program and an article on how some corporations are responding to consumer boycotts.

(Continued on p. 2)
Cesar Chavez Dies at 66

Cesar Chavez, 66, leader of the United Farm Workers Union, died April 23 in his sleep of an apparent heart attack while in San Luis, Arizona, not far from his birthplace in Yuma. Chavez was one of the foremost advocates of nonviolent methods of social struggle.

A Mexican-American who grew up in poverty, his work as an organizer began in 1952 with the Community Service Organization headed by Saul Alinsky. In 1962 he founded the National Farm Workers Association, from which the union he later headed took root. Because so many farm workers lived a nomadic life, and because many were Mexicans illegally in the US, they had once been regarded as impossible to organize.

A series of consumer boycotts of lettuce, grapes, and wines brought the farm worker struggle to stores and tables across the US. After winning union recognition, Chavez went on to campaign for better working conditions and against pesticides endangering the health of people working in the fields.

“Nonviolence is difficult,” he said in an interview in 1973. “It can be especially hard in a situation in which you are dealing with new people who are just at a beginning point. You have to deal with them in such a way that you don’t impose nonviolence in them but they accept it…. Nonviolence is not a land of milk and honey. Nonviolence is tough. You don’t practice nonviolence by attending conferences, you practice it on picket lines, and that can be hard when you are faced with people who may be ready to attack you with rocks, baseball bats, knives, even guns. But when you have the spirit of sacrifice, nonviolence isn’t difficult.”

He took a long view of his work. “I’m a practical man. I don’t think any one event, or any one action or confrontation, wins or loses a battle. One of my problems with violence is that the violent person gambles everything in the roll of the dice.”

[Distributed by Peace Media Service]
Economic sanctions used for foreign policy purposes are economic penalties, such as prohibiting trade, stopping financial transactions, or barring economic and military assistance, used to achieve the goal of influencing the target nation. Sanctions can be imposed selectively, stopping only certain trade and financial transactions or aid programs, or comprehensively, halting all economic relations with the target nation. Sanctions often are imposed when domestic pressure for action exists, but diplomacy or propaganda would be too mild a response, yet the most severe responses, covert action or military action, would be too severe.

Sanctions can be imposed to serve multiple goals. The measures are more successful in achieving the less ambitious and often unarticulated goals of (1) upholding international norms by punishing the target nation for unacceptable behavior and (2) deterring future objectionable actions. However, they are usually less successful in achieving the most prominently stated goal of making the target country comply with the sanctioning nation’s stated wishes. Thus, excessive expectations are often formed about what sanctions can achieve.

Economic sanctions can raise the cost of trade and finance to the targeted nations, but in most cases have not ruined their economies. (Sanctions can also hurt the sanctioning nation by ending mutually beneficial commercial transactions.) The extent of actual economic damage to the target nation, however, does not often determine the success of sanctions; the threat of damage from further sanctions is often more powerful. Actual damage rarely compares with threatened pain because of the illicit evasion of sanctions and the legal redirection of the target’s trade and financial flows.

Economic sanctions are most effective when they are applied multilaterally or against otherwise friendly nations with economic and political ties to the sanctioning country. Cultural characteristics of the target nation and international publicity can either enhance or weaken the effect of the measures. If the target nation has a strong shame and honor code—that is, if “saving face” is important—or if sanctions receive substantial publicity, sanctions may create a backlash in the target nation, particularly if harsh, comprehensive measures are used from the onset of sanctions. If international publicity enhances the threat of further sanctions, however, then it may cause effective psychological pressure on the target.

**Economic Sanctions Can Achieve Realistic Goals**

The historical record suggests some common elements in successful sanctions, particularly if success is judged by more realistic goals rather than those often stated by analysts and policy makers. The prevailing belief in the academic and business communities that sanctions are generally “ineffective” has been reached by comparing the results of sanctions against their publicly revealed primary goal. This goal is often presented in terms of making the target nation comply with the policy goals of the sanctioning nation perceived primary purpose of U.S. sanctions in 1980 against the Soviet Union was to compel Soviet withdrawal from its invasion of Afghanistan. Yet, evidence indicates that President Jimmy Carter believed the more realistic and important objectives of sanctions were showing resolve and deterring Soviet incursions into Iran, Pakistan, or the Persian Gulf, which he considered strategically more important.

**Sanctions Raise the Cost of Commerce**

Sanctions can raise the cost of trade and finance for the target nation but usually do not ruin its economy. Over time, the target nation can develop new suppliers and markets, although at increased cost. For example, South Africa, the target of multilateral boycotts, replaced most lost exports in 2 years, but incurred losses from discounts on the prices of its products and the added transportation costs required to develop alternative markets. Sanctions can also raise costs for the sanctioning nation, including lost profits of forgone exports and financial transactions and additional expenses from purchasing more expensive imports from alternative suppliers.

When used together, the different economic effects of export, import, and financial sanctions frequently reinforce each other. Such measures, however, are blunt tools with limited ability to focus economic pressure against particular groups in the target society. For example, U.S. financial sanctions against Panama, designed to hurt the Panamanian government while sparing the economy, had substantial inadvertent adverse impact on the economy and nontargeted population groups.

(Continued on p. 6)
Political Symbol or Policy Tool? Making Sanctions Work

The following is an executive summary of the proceedings of the twenty-fourth United Nations Issues Conference, February 19-21, 1993, sponsored by the Stanley Foundation.

Sanctions are an option that the Security Council has chosen more frequently in recent years, and there is little reason to think that trend will be reversed. However, there is much room for improvement in the application of sanctions. Participants at this conference strongly supported the development of the United Nations’ ability to support effective application of sanctions, which includes enhancing UN operational capacity.

Ambivalence about the role that member states want the world body to play complicates developing more capacity. The sharp increase in the application of sanctions coincides with a period in which the council has also launched numerous peacekeeping operations. The United Nations was conceived as a house of diplomacy and deliberation, but increasingly it is involved in major operations. This is in response to public demand, but governments have not equipped the United Nations for the size and number of operations now being demanded.

Goals and Effectiveness

It is impossible to generalize about the effectiveness of sanctions because historically there has been lack of clarity on their goals. Usually, when the Security Council passes a sanctions resolution its explicit goals are to punish a state for its behavior and to bring it into compliance with the will of the international community. The legally stated goals—punishment and coercion—are quite clear.

However, the situation is complicated for several reasons. First, some states may have more extensive agendas. Second, ambivalence arises as vulnerable populations in a target state are hurt. Third, the interests of neighboring states and major trading parties come into play. Fourth, some member states are wary of the Security Council’s more assertive role.

Many participants saw more hope in the council’s desire to take more preventive actions and to use sanctions to that end. Goal-setting for more limited sanctions, applied before a dispute erupted, could be more precise. Participants gave strong support to improved planning and targeting.

Planning and Operations

There was consensus among conference participants that the sanctions capacity of the United Nations should be bolstered. Specific recommendations were made for improving UN capabilities in the areas of option assessment, intelligence, monitoring and enforcement, and mitigating third-party spillover effects.

First, the United Nations must have the staff and resources necessary to competently develop and assess sanctions policy options. An office in the Secretariat should be charged with developing “sanctions impact reports” aimed at putting the Security Council in a better position to weigh different options and to tailor sanctions to the goals and circumstances of the specific case. The reports should: identify vulnerabilities of the target country, analyze which citizens will be hurt most, anticipate enforcement problems, and assess the impact on neighboring countries.

Second, the United Nations should develop new, independent intelligence assessment capabilities if it is to use sanctions policies more effectively. Raw intelligence information is readily available, but the United Nations needs the capability to independently analyze and assess that information.

Third, the United Nations should strengthen its capacity in sanctions monitoring and enforcement. To this end, the Security Council should name a

Guidelines for the Use of International Economic Sanctions

The Working Group on International Economic Sanctions of the American Friends Service Committee developed these guidelines to assist them in considering when to support or oppose the use of sanctions.

1. Comprehensive economic sanctions against another country are warranted only in extreme cases of continued, blatant acts of injustice, repression, or military aggression.

2. Sanctions should not be instituted unless all reasonable diplomatic attempts to find a solution have been exhausted.

3. Even after sanctions have been instituted, the door to negotiations should be held open.

4. The objectives of the sanctions should be consistent with the U.N. Charter, the Geneva Conventions, international law, and widely accepted values and principles of conduct in international relations and national governance.

5. The objectives of the sanctions should be clearly and consistently stated so that the target government and the people know what leaders must do in order for the sanctions to be lifted.

6. Careful consideration should be given to what types of sanctions would be most effective, in light of the desired outcomes.

7. Nations or international organizations which have imposed sanctions have a responsibility to see to it that adequate food, medicines, and other goods needed for people’s very existence are available within the target nation.

8. The effects of sanctions should be systematically monitored both by those imposing them and by independent groups, with the results made available to the public. Such monitoring is needed in order to assess the resulting level of suffering. Monitoring, at present, is a largely uncharted field.

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Mo Siegel, chief executive of Celestial Seasonings Inc. in Boulder, Colo., feared the worst when New York City gay activists announced a “tea party” last [February] to dump the company’s herbal teas into the East River to protest a Colorado amendment banning local laws that protect homosexuals from discrimination.

New York City is Celestial Seasonings’ largest market, accounting for 10 percent of its sales, and a successful boycott could ruin the company. So Mr. Siegel flew in to meet with New York Boycott Colorado, a group that says it is boycotting all consumer products from the state.

What happened at that meeting is the subject of much dispute, but the outcome appears to have saved the day for the company. Mr. Siegel, who says he opposes the amendment but that his company’s policy is to shun political issues, maintains that the group demanded the company go on record as opposing the measure and donate $100,000 or else face a boycott.

“It was outright extortion,” Mr. Siegel said. “They told me that if I didn’t put up the money they would destroy me.” That’s exactly what Mr. Siegel told the press in a counterattack that has brought his company widespread public support.

As the number and power of consumer boycotts proliferate across the country, more and more companies are realizing they can no longer afford to take such protests lightly, and some are fighting back by attacking the image and credibility of the boycotters.

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There are at least 44 boycotts of major companies in this country, according to Co-op America, a consumer-activist group based in Washington.

A boycott “can only be effective if it has some money behind it, a lot of dedication and the ability to capture the media’s attention,” said Howard J. Rubinstein, president of Howard J. Rubinstein Associates, a public relations firm.

“Exactly how a company responds to the threat makes all the difference in the world.”

Boycotts have been largely used to force businesses to withdraw faulty products or change discriminatory practices. When successful, they can have a long-term impact on a company, hurting morale, making it difficult to recruit new employees and creating a lasting negative impression of the company’s products.

In the past, many companies brushed off protest threats, figuring they would quickly fizzle out. But today, most businesses facing a boycott arrange to meet with the boycotters as soon as possible to try to smooth things over. Depending on how organized and powerful the group is, some companies soon give in to their demands, especially if doing so costs little and promotes good will.

When anti-abortion campaigners threatened to boycott its prescription drug products, the French company that makes the abortion pill RU 486 refused to introduce it in the United States. Dr. André Ulmann, head of endocrinology in the research, development and marketing department of Roussel-Uclaf, said the decision was a simple one: “We were not going to put our $600 million in revenues from other products at risk.”

But the Upjohn Company of Kalamazoo, Mich., continues to sell two drugs that induce abortion, despite a 20-year boycott by the National Right to Life Committee, an anti-abortion group based in Washington. The group mailed mem-

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ers a list of alternatives to Upjohn products. Upjohn says sales of those drugs did not decline.

Members of New York Boycott Colorado say Mr. Siegel is not telling the truth and that they never made any demands at the meeting because their policy has been to boycott all consumer products from Colorado, regardless of whether the companies publicly oppose the amendment. As yet the group has singled out only Coors beer, Holly sugar, Manfot meats and Celestial Seasonings. It has also persuaded about 100 stores and restaurants in New York City not to carry these products.

“There was never a quid pro quo,” said Chip Duckett, a spokesman for the group. “We told Mo Siegel before he came to New York that there was nothing they could do to stop the boycott. But he came anyway, and now we see why.”

The boycott group said the tea company had taken political stands and cited the appearance last month of the company’s name in a newspaper advertisement calling for a boycott of products made by a company that used wood from Colorado’s old-growth forests. Celestial Seasonings said an employee’s small contribution had resulted in its name being included.

Similarly, the Nike Corporation succeeded in 1989 against a boycott by Operation PUSH, which accused it of exploiting American blacks. Nike enlisted the support of other civil rights groups, after convincing them that PUSH’s charges were not valid. According to the company, the sales of its sportswear did not decline during the boycott.

“If a corporation hasn’t done anything wrong, I believe they should fight and not give in to the pressure,” Mr. Rubinstein said. “But before they fight, some serious self-criticism must be done to determine if there is any validity to the claim.”

The Effectiveness of International Economic Sanctions as Tools of Foreign Policy

(Continued from p. 3)

Noneconomic Factors Often Determine the Outcome of Economic Sanctions

The effectiveness of sanctions is not primarily determined by the economic damage they inflict. Sanctions work best when there is strong internal political opposition to the target government, particularly internationally oriented commercial interests that want to retain business ties with the country imposing the sanctions. Where significant political opposition exists, imposing selected sanctions with the threat of more severe measures to follow often causes the opposition to pressure the target nation’s government to accede to the sanctioning nation’s wishes. The success of the sanctions thus is more closely related to the threatened damage of subsequent measures than it is to the economic damage of sanctions actually in place. In the case of multilateral sanctions against South Africa, for example, measures of moderate economic effect raised fears of future sanctions among more liberal white businessmen opposed to the policy of apartheid. Their lobbying for change helped create pressure for the reforms instituted in South Africa.

Even with significant internal political opposition (and even more so without it), imposing harsh, comprehensive sanctions immediately may be counterproductive. The target government may use the severe economic pain to rally its population in the face of an external enemy. In the early to mid-1960s, Fidel Castro used the harsh effects of the comprehensive U.S. embargo to win additional popular support in Cuba.

International cooperation enhances the possibility that sanctions will succeed. Multilateral sanctions have more political legitimacy and inflict greater isolation on the target nation than do unilateral measures. The effectiveness of multilateral sanctions can be counterproductive, however, when disagreements among sanctioning nations impair the appearance of resolve aimed at the target. For example, western unity broke down in an intra-alliance dispute about whether to embargo the export of equipment to the Soviet Union that could be used to construct a natural gas pipeline.

A friendly target nation seeking to preserve political and economic ties to the sanctioning state has incentives to accede to the sanctioning state. Sanctions can be counterproductive, however, if they are so severe and comprehensive that the target nation seeks greater ties to adversaries of the sanctioning nation.

Sanctions that ostracize the target nation can be effective when that nation’s culture is similar to the sanctioning nation’s; sanctions generally fail when cultural norms in the target nation demand resistance to “save face.” International publicity may exacerbate the backlash in the target nation if harsh, comprehensive measures are used; such publicity, however, can enhance the threat of future measures and is vital if deterring a nation from unacceptable behavior or showing support for its political opposition is the goal.

(Excerpted from a report to the chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, prepared by the U.S. General Accounting Office in February 1992. Single copies of the complete report are available for free from the U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20877, (202) 512-6000.)

Political Symbol or Policy Tool? Making Sanctions Work

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sanctions coordinator when a sanctions resolution is adopted; the United Nations should draft model laws that states can use for enforcement; the organization should develop direct-monitoring capabilities by posting UN monitors at critical points along the borders of target countries to assure that the sanctions are complied with; and more cooperation with regional organizations should be developed.

Spillover Effects

Participants said that third parties—i.e., neighbors and major trade partners—should be compensated in some way for their losses. However, few thought this issue could be addressed effectively. Nevertheless, a few ideas were put forward: certain states could be exempted from enforcing sanctions; a fund to pay compensation claims could be created, though there are few ideas on sources for the funds; or injured countries could be granted special assistance to mitigate damage from international financial institutions.

Conclusion

Participants said that for sanctions to be effective the United Nations must have increased operational capability. Governments must decide how much of that capability they are prepared to give the world body.

(Single copies of the complete report are available free from the Stanley Foundation, 216 Sycamore Street, Suite 500, Muscatine, IA 52761-3831, (319) 264-1500.)

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Insurrectionary Civic Strikes in Latin America: 1931–1961, by Patricia Parkman. Monograph No. 1. “From 1931 to 1961 eleven Latin American presidents left office in the wake of civic strikes,” writes Parkman. “In addition, at least four . . . faced unsuccessful attempts to force them out by the same means.” Dr. Parkman compares and contrasts these fifteen cases and includes a chronological summary of each case as well as extensive notes. 55 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-00-9) $3.00.

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Civil Resistance in the East European and Soviet Revolutions, by Adam Roberts. Monograph No. 4. Adam Roberts examines the dramatic role played by “people power” in the undermining of communist regimes in East Central Europe, the achievement of independence by the Baltic states, and the defeat of the August 1991 coup attempt in the Soviet Union. 43 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-04-1) $3.00.


Conference/Seminar Reports

Transforming Struggle: Strategy and the Global Experience of Nonviolent Direct Action, edited and published by the Program on Nonviolent Sanctions, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. A comprehensive collection of reports of nine years of Nonviolent Sanctions Seminars, with supporting essays elaborating the strategic approach, its implications and applications in struggles around the world. 141 pp. $10.00.

Nonviolent Sanctions Seminar Synopses, Fall 1992. Synopses of seminars sponsored by the Program on Nonviolent Sanctions at the Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. 58 pp. $5.00.


Nonviolent Sanctions Seminar Synopses, Fall 1991. 42 pp. $5.00.

Highlights from the National Conference on Nonviolent Sanctions in Conflict and Defense. A special double issue of Nonviolent Sanctions that includes excerpts of remarks by 45 speakers at the February 1990 conference held in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Featured are nonviolent struggles in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, South Africa, Burma, China, the U.S., and the USSR. 24 pp. $2.00.

Thinking About Nonviolent Struggle: Trends, Research, and Analysis. Proceedings from a conference held in Rockport, Massachusetts, in October 1987. An edited and abridged transcript of the Rockport Conference, at which twenty-three scholars and practitioners of nonviolent struggle from Chile, Italy, Mexico, Thailand, the Netherlands, and the United States discussed the current state of knowledge and practice of nonviolent action and suggested future directions for research and education in the field. 48 pp. $5.00.

Other Publications


Making the Abolition of War a Realistic Goal, by Gene Sharp. This popular essay, first published in 1980, provides a brief introduction to civilian-based defense, a policy in which civilians are prepared to use nonviolent resistance as a means of national defense. Cambridge, MA: The Albert Einstein Institution, 1980. Previously published by the World Policy Institute. 15 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-03-3) $2.00

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seriously distort the target country’s economy, shifting wealth to unprincipled profiteers.

6. Sanctions work best where there is continuing and substantial support from a segment within the targeted country and from business, media, and other nations—particularly adjacent ones.

7. The external side effects of sanctions must be considered and remedied or compensated. Article 50 of the UN Charter acknowledges this, yet it has not been used in any meaningful way.

8. The modalities and scope of sanctions should reflect their goals. The kinds of sanctions used to promote human rights or protect the environment should be different from those used to induce a country to withdraw its troops from another nation.

Clearly, sanctions are not a tool for all seasons. If they are intended to be only symbolic, perhaps some other form of censure would be more useful. If sanctions are to be effective in altering national behavior, the United Nations must, before imposing them, carefully plan, set goals, determine modalities, assess long-term support, consider side effects and circumstances, and be prepared to give them ample time to work.

Guidelines
(Continued from p. 4)
9. There should be significant support for the sanctions within the target country, among people with a record of support for human rights and democracy or by the victims of the injustice.

10. Any effort to impose a wide range of tough economic sanctions on another nation should have broad support within the global community, though this in itself is not a sufficient criterion.

11. Economic sanctions should be an alternative to more violent means of trying to change the violent policies or actions of the target government.

(Excerpted with permission from Dollars or Bombs: The Search for Justice through International Economic Sanctions, available for $2.00 from the AFSC, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102, (215) 241-7167.)