

# IRAQ AND SANCTIONS

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This lesson plan offers students the opportunity to explore one of the enduring questions in international relations over the past decade: the United Nation's use of economic sanctions against Iraq. The lesson plan consists of an outline of the history and effects of the sanctions in Iraq, questions to explore in classroom discussion and a group role-playing scenario to explore the terms of the international debate regarding the use of sanctions in Iraq. This lesson plan has been designed to facilitate learning in multiple classroom contexts. Its use is recommended in the following settings:

**American History:** Coverage of the Gulf War.

**World History:** As a major issue in Middle Eastern international and domestic politics.

**Cultural Geography:** A subunit in a section on the Middle East, perhaps drawing on oil as a resource.

**Government:** As an exploration of the foreign policy of the United States.

**Any social studies class:** When a case study is needed to explore the ethical ramifications of cost-benefit analysis used in policy making for cases in which costs can include mass suffering and death.

## I. LESSON OBJECTIVES

At the end of this section, the student should be able to:

- ? Define economic sanctions as a concept
- ? Identify factors which cause vulnerability to sanctions
- ? Understand the historical circumstances which led to the U.N. Security Council's decision to apply sanctions in Iraq.
- ? Assess the impact of economic sanctions on Iraq
- ? Explain recent changes in global perceptions on sanctions.
- ? Evaluate the ethical ramifications of the use of economic sanctions in Iraq

## II. ACTIVITIES

**Low-intensity activities:** The briefing on sanctions may be used a number of ways. First it may be used as an instructor's resource to assist in classroom preparation. It may further be assigned as a critical reading piece. The text is followed by questions that may be used either to stimulate classroom discussion or as a take-home writing assignment.

**High-intensity activities:** Interactive classroom learning may be facilitated by organizing the class into a **Mini-Mock United Nations**. If possible, students should be separated into five delegations, representing the United States, France, Kuwait, Jordan and Iraq. Each delegation should send a delegate to serve on each of three committees: the Security Council, the Iraq Sanctions Committee and the General Assembly. Bear in mind that under the current sanctions, Iraq is not allowed to serve on the Security Council because it is not able to pay its dues (although the United States remains in arrears on its dues for the greater part of a decade). Further, because Iraq is not a member of the Security Council, it has never been allowed to serve on the Iraq Sanctions Committee. Hence, Iraq can *lobby* members of the other bodies, but may serve only on the General Assembly. The project should have three phases:

**Phase I:** Research for country positions. This can be as intensive as you might have the time, from simply briefing students on the positions below to assigning the writing of position papers for a grade. The following should be the general policy positions of the states in the simulation:

**Iraq:** Iraq seeks the unilateral rescinding of the sanctions regime, is absolutely unwilling to allow further arms inspections and will flatly deny that they are rebuilding their weapons programs. They will consistently point out the death and suffering of the children of Iraq. If blamed for that suffering, they find a way of rhetorically dodging it and pinning complete blame on the United States. Assign this role to a student who enjoys playing the radical and who will try anything.

**United States:** The U.S. should be diametrically opposite Iraq in almost every argument, taking a position that it is safeguarding the "community of nations" of which Iraq cannot be taken as a serious member by virtue of its actions. The U.S. has fought a hard battle against the rescinding of sanctions and now seeks "smart sanctions" against Iraq, with the resumption of weapons inspections. Assign this role to students who enjoy playing the hard-liner.

**Jordan:** Jordan is "caught between Iraq and a hard place," as it has fashioned itself a stalwart U.S. ally, but is utterly dependent on Iraq for trade, particularly for oil. It seeks the lifting of sanctions, but is anxious to avoid alienating the United States.

The U.S. is likely to be softer to Jordan than might otherwise be the case because of Jordan's support for the Arab-Israeli Peace Process. This is the hardest role: assign it to students who can walk softly and convince others that they're carrying a big stick.

**Kuwait:** Kuwait is the only Arab country that is an emphatic supporter of sanctions. It remembers the invasion all too well and will say that the regime of Saddam Hussein can never be trusted. Students with a finely-honed sense of being indignant will do well here.

**France:** The only other member of the Security Council with a veto, France has the big stick that Jordan lacks. France is the member of the Security Council that is most able to be critical of the United States. European public opinion is critical of sanctions as a whole. Further, France is also one of Iraq's primary trading partners and has been losing money on sanctions. While France is not anxious to cause a breach in its relationship with the United States, it will not concede to the United States on demand. France should be played by students who can show a sense of independence and eminent practicality.

**Phase II:** Policy formation and bargaining. Allow students a period for their country teams to meet in isolation to formulate a team strategy. Then allow the teams to approach one another and lobby for their proposed policies, building alliances for phase III.

**Phase III:** Finally allow each U.N. body to meet formally and debate out proposals. Remember that in there is no veto in the General Assembly and resolutions pass by majority vote; all resolutions of the Iraq Sanctions committee must be passed *unanimously*; and while France and the United States have a veto on the Security Council, all resolutions must pass with a *majority*.

**The Security Council:** legislation should focus on the future of sanctions, smart sanctions, etc.

**The Iraq Sanctions Committee:** Should be tasked with approving imports to Iraq (the instructor may wish to prepare a list of items for the committee's perusal). It should be recalled that all sorts of items can have dual use: even cloth (army uniforms), paper and pens for school children (can be used to write military reports), etc. Kuwait may wish to seek further reparations, etc.

**The General Assembly:** This is where Iraq can shine. It might seek to gain full admission to the U.N., or seek to force the U.S. to pay its back dues.

# BRIEFING ON SANCTIONS IN IRAQ

This briefing covers: (1) the definition and origins of economic sanctions, (2) a brief synopsis of the events that led to the application of economic sanctions on Iraq, (3) the efficacy of sanctions on Iraq, (4) the failure of sanctions to produce policy change in Iraq, (5) the changing global policy interests with respect to the continuation of sanctions.

## The Definition and Origin of Economic Sanctions

Economic sanctions are an alternative means to war for international governing bodies, such as the United Nations, to coerce individual members into upholding their international legal commitments. We can trace this concept to Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States and chief architect of the League of Nations, who saw sanctions as a new device that would be capable of deterring future warfare and even substituting for it.

Wilson's optimism proved unfounded. Sanctions did not emerge as a successful substitute for war. Indeed, scholars use two concepts to evaluate "how well sanctions work." The first term is *efficacy* or the extent to which sanctions succeed in imposing an actual economic cost on the target country. Four factors contribute to the efficacy of sanctions. These are: (1) speed of implementation, (2) ability of sanctioning countries to maintain sanctions, (3) trade dependency and vulnerability, and (4) ability of a sanctioned country to retaliate. Wilson's intuition led him to believe that trade dependency/vulnerability was the most important factor. This sort of dependence could be measured by three indices: (1) concentration of commodities within a country's exports, (2) concentration of the countries in which a country has its exports and (3) total trade as a percentage of gross national product.

The second concept used to evaluate economic sanctions is *success* or the extent to which the costs of the imposed sanctions force the target country to comply with the international organization's demands. There has never been unqualified case of sanctions success. Until sanctions were imposed on Iraq, it was possible to argue that this was because there had never been a case in which sanctions were imposed with high efficacy. Sanctions had often been imposed at an agonizingly slow pace, the imposing countries often lacked the political will to enforce the sanctions over the long haul, and often the countries on which sanctions were imposed are not particularly dependent on trade. Iraq has proven to be a textbook case to prove Wilson's theory. Sanctions have been imposed with high efficacy and have failed. We will explore the reasons why below.

## Security Council Resolution 670 and the Imposition of Economic Sanctions on Iraq

On August 2, 1990, the Republic of Iraq invaded the State of Kuwait. The Security Council of the United Nations responded quickly, issuing Resolution 670, condemning Iraq's invasion and imposing sanctions on Iraq. The resolution stated that all states shall prevent: (1) the import of all commodities and products originating in Iraq, (2) any activities by their nationals or in their territories which would promote or are calculated to promote the export or trans-shipment of any commodities or products from Iraq, including in particular any transfer of funds to Iraq and (3) the sale or supply by their nationals or from their territories or using their flag vessels of any commodities or products, including weapons or any other military equipment, whether or not originating in their territories but not including supplies intended strictly for medical purposes, and, in humanitarian circumstances, foodstuffs, to any person or body in Iraq. Sanctions were immediate and stringent. Moreover, Resolution 670 tightened the sanctions further by establishing an air and sea embargo of Iraq and Kuwait and freezing all Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets.

After Iraq's defeat, sanctions were no longer seen in the context of liberating Kuwait, but as a method of recreating an Iraq which suited the needs of the dominant powers on the Security Council. This was embodied in Resolution 687, which required Iraq to:

1. Accept the border between it and Kuwait as set on October 4, 1963;
2. Destroy its weapons of mass destruction (chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometers, in addition to all research and support facilities needed for their maintenance);
3. Release all prisoners of war and incarcerated third parties;
4. Return all artifacts, documents and funds stolen from Kuwait.

While exports and imports rest entirely on compliance with the above, the arms embargo is subject to less precise conditions, such as Iraq's general progress toward the control of armaments.

## Sanctions Efficacy

The efficacy of the economic sanctions against Iraq is unparalleled in diplomatic history. Sanctions have been enforced rigorously, with only Jordan seen as a significant violator. During the first several years of the sanctions regime, this leak was minor, as the Gulf of Aqaba was effectively patrolled to seal off Iraq.

In addition to the efficacy of enforcement, Iraq is extremely vulnerable to sanctions. 95% of Iraq's foreign exchange has been earned from oil exports. Moreover, at the time sanctions were applied, Iraq's foreign exchange reserves were small: \$9.5 billion, including \$1 billion in gold and \$2 billion in hard currency looted during the

occupation of Kuwait. Oil consists of 61.3% of GDP, while agriculture accounts for only 5.1% of GDP. Finally, Iraq is a net importer of food. Hence, Iraq is strongly dependent on concentrated exports and imports and has been faced with near unanimity in the application of sanctions.

The economic and human costs of sanctions in Iraq have been devastating. From 1989 to 1993, real per capita income declined from US\$1470 to \$485 and real GDP declined from US\$26.9 billion to \$10 billion. Facing dramatic budget shortfalls, the government resorted to printing dinars to pay budget shortfalls and increasing the prices of services and state-supplied fuel. Prior to 1990, inflation in Iraq averaged approximately 45%. Within a year of the embargo, inflation exceeded 2000% while wages remained fixed. By 1993, real monthly earnings in Iraq measured 5-7% of their 1990 level and were lower than the benchmark used to identify "destitute households" eligible for government support in 1990. In 1989, 0.33 Iraqi dinars equaled US\$1. The average government bureaucrat's salary seems to have been pegged to the dollar since 1996, valued at a constant US\$2.

The sanctions regime has impeded Iraq's ability to recover from the marked deterioration of its physical and human infrastructure following the first and second Gulf Wars. Potable drinking water has remained a persistent problem. Immediately following the second Gulf War, 60% of all households had no running water, moreover, two-thirds of those households with running water were contaminated, causing epidemics of cholera. Water-borne diseases such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery remain prevalent in Iraq.

Ironically, energy supply has become a problem in a country that used to be one of the world's leading exporters of oil. In February 1998, the Secretary General, Kofi Anan, reported to the Security Council that maximum power-generation capacity is approximately 40% of original installed capacity. Approximately 1000 transformers fail per month in northern Iraq. "Under present conditions, the rate of deterioration will continue to increase and, with it, the threat of a complete breakdown of the network. The humanitarian consequences of such a development could potentially dwarf all other difficulties endured by the Iraqi people."

Agricultural output, never able to support Iraq's food needs even prior to the start of sanctions prior to 1991, is currently falling. U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) World Food Program (WFP) forecasts a drop in Iraqi production to 13% below the 1995 level and 26% beneath the 1996 level.

Sanctions hit the bottom 85% of Iraqi households the hardest. The regime's top cadres are hardly affected. The government rationing system only meets 55% of daily

calorie requirements. The mortality rate for children under five has increased from 29.5 per 1000 births to 92.7 per 1000 births in 1994 and 117 per 1000 births in 1998. As of 1996, 750,000 people had died from malnutrition and lack of medicines since August 1990 at which time the death rate for this category was 10,000 per month, 4,500 of which were children under five. A FAO/WFP survey conducted during June and July 1997 in Baghdad and Kerbala indicates that approximately 960,000 children under the age of five, or 32% of Iraqi children are chronically malnourished. Of 1,278 adults tested, 25% of men and 16% of women were considered chronically energy deficient.

Iraq's medical situation is equally grim. Iraq's drug supply was depleted in 1994. People die of curable illnesses and it is difficult for hospitals to maintain sterile isolation wards. 5,750 children die each month from acute respiratory infection, malnutrition or diarrhea. The rate of children born underweight has increased from 9.2% in August 1991 to 22.8%.

### **Sanctions Failure**

While the sanctions have been overwhelmingly efficacious, they have been largely unsuccessful in their overt goals. The expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait was achieved by military force. The use of the oil-for-food mechanism does ensure that payments of reparations must occur if Iraq is to sell oil for food. That, perhaps is the limit of the success of sanctions in Iraq.

The elimination of Iraq's supply of weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles and support programs (long considered the clause in the resolutions which must be fulfilled for sanctions to be rescinded) has proven to be elusive. Despite sanctions and weapons inspections, Iraq has avoided giving a full, detailed disclosure of its weapons and capabilities. Moreover, it has become clear that Iraqi regime has simply become more adroit at hiding their technology and learned a great deal about resisting international oversight.

While the administration of the elder George Bush denied that implementation of Security Council resolutions required the removal of the current Iraqi regime, the Clinton Administration that even should Iraq comply with the provisions of U.N. resolutions that require its disarmament, economic sanctions on Iraq should not be rescinded. The U.S. government argues that economic sanctions against Iraq should only be lifted in the event that Iraq proves its peaceful intentions to the world. As the administration has argued that Saddam Hussein's intentions will never be peaceful, it is logical to deduce that end of sanctions requires no less than a change of state in Iraq.

The efficacy of sanctions in Iraq has been high and Iraq has witnessed signs of increased social frustration; the product of economic crisis, the loss of two consecutive

wars that have drained the nation and ethnic strife. Even in these circumstances, the regime has received widespread public support. Iraqis blame the United States for their woes while praising Saddam's defiance are hardly surprising. Criticism of the regime is not tolerated, while criticism of the United States is encouraged. Nonetheless, the government of the United States has done little to endear itself to the people of Iraq, who need a vent for their frustration. The notion that the Iraqi populace should affix all blame for their plight to Saddam seem unlikely.

On the other hand, the spate of attempts to assassinate Saddam suggests that dissent exists. However, the assassination attempts in Iraq are just that: attempts. All attempts on the life of Saddam have failed. The failure of these attempts underscores Iraq's stability despite mass suffering. Their failure does not suggest that Saddam's regime is unraveling.

Finally, the continuation of sanctions in Iraq has not furthered the Clinton Administration's foreign policy of "dual containment" toward Iraq and Iran. This policy option hoped to isolate both Iraq and Iran in the global community. While the weakness of Iraq's economy has effectively prevented Iraq from taking up new military adventures, over the course of a decade it has simply brought "radical" states together. Iraq has seen dramatically improved relations with its "rogue" neighbors, Syria and Iran, as it has sought relief from its global isolation. United States foreign policy seems to be driving the states it seeks to isolate into alliance.

### **Global Views on Sanctions**

After a decade, the global consensus on sanctions has unraveled, with only the United States and Great Britain still actively supporting this policy on the Security Council. Both the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement denounced the sanctions in the course of the '90s. In 1998, Saddam Hussein expelled United Nations weapons inspectors from Iraq. The Security Council lacked the resolve to cancel the oil for food deal. Decisive action came on September 22, 2000, when a plane containing 115 European politicians, clergymen and members of non-governmental organizations flew from Paris to Baghdad from Paris, testing U.N. sanctions against Iraq. France's decision to permit the flight showed that a member of the United Nations was willing to test the resolve of the United States and Britain. Immediately following a number of countries, including Russia, Spain, Ireland, Russia, South Africa, Jordan, Syria and Egypt dispatched planes on similar humanitarian flights. Baghdad is once more connected by commercial airline service to Amman and Damascus. It further smuggles oil through Syria and Turkey. Turkey, a member of NATO, has opened further border gates with Iraq and has spoken in favor of easing sanctions. In July, 2001

American and British efforts to impose "smart sanctions" on Iraq, by lifting the embargo on civilian goods while clamping down on smuggled oil and Iraq's attempts to re-arm itself were scuttled when Russia threatened to veto the measure. It is unclear if the United States and Great Britain will be able to pressure Russia to alter its opinions. After more than a decade, the sanctions regime appears to be collapsing.

### **III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Questions for recall:

1. What are economic sanctions? Why do international governing organizations impose them? Are there alternatives to sanctions?
2. What is the difference between efficacy and success when analyzing sanctions?
3. What factors contribute to trade efficacy?
4. What factors contribute to trade dependency?
5. Why is Iraq a unique case in the history of economic sanctions?
6. When and in which piece of legislation were sanctions imposed on Iraq? What were the provisions of that legislation?
7. What were the goals of sanctions in Iraq? Did they achieve high efficacy? Did they achieve high success?

Questions for debate:

1. Economic sanctions are often imposed in place of going to war. Are sanctions a useful substitute?
2. How would you evaluate the United States' support of sanctions as a foreign policy tool? What are its costs and benefits?
3. Would you support the continuation of sanctions? Why or why not? If not, what alternatives would you recommend?
4. Given the endurance of the current regime in Iraq, can sanctions be lifted at all? Is a unilateral end of sanctions with the Iraqi regime intact an acceptable policy outcome? Is the devastation in Iraq an acceptable price to contain Iraq?
5. If the sanctions program continues to be thwarted by other U.N. members, should the United States continue to support sanctions? Are sanctions having an impact on global perceptions of the United States?