

12-15-2000

Sanctimony on Sanctions: What the United States and Russia Have in Common

Editor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp>

 Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Comparative Politics Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), [Political Economy Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Editor (2000) "Sanctimony on Sanctions: What the United States and Russia Have in Common," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 20 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol9/iss20/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Bulletin of Political Psychology by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact commons@erau.edu.

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Sanctimony on Sanctions: What the United States and Russia Have in Common

Author: Editor

Volume: 9

Issue: 20

Date: 2000-12-15

Keywords: Political Sanctions, Russia, United States

Abstract. This article describes political psychological issues related to consequences stemming from political sanctions.

Recently, the United States (US) and Russia have asked the United Nations Security Council to strengthen sanctions against the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The term strengthen denotes taking actions that are presumed to either effect omission training or punishment against the Taliban government. As previously described in IBPP articles, the presumption of punishment and the identification of omission training are extremely problematic.

First, punishment can be experientially defined as in the eyes of the beholder and what is presumed to be punishment by the implementor may be anything but to the target. Second, punishment can be consequentially defined as an occurrence that is causally related to a decrease in probability that a behavior succeeding the occurrence will again occur. However, so many behaviors can occur after the occurrence and so many occurrences can occur before the behavior in question that establishing the causal relationship between occurrence and behavior is fraught with difficulty. In a related issue, punishment as experientially defined can lead to consequences that have no effect or even increase the probability of behavior. At times, punishment can concurrently increase, decrease, or have no effect on various behaviors--or even the same behavior at different points in time after punishment has occurred.

Omission training can be experientially defined as engaging in a behavior that is perceived as leading to a withdrawal of something that is perceived as positive or desired by the entity engaging in that behavior. Clearly, we still have the "eyes of the beholder" problem. Omission training can be consequentially defined in a manner similar to punishment with the proviso of an antecedent experienced as the withdrawal of something perceived as positive or desired which may or may not be perceived identically with punishment. Clearly, we still have the "so many behaviors, so many occurrences" problem. Clearly, we still have the "differential consequences for various and even the same behavior" problem.

As well, psychological research on the consequences of occurrences termed as sanctions brings little in the way of clarification, let alone optimism. For example, so-called weak sanctioning systems may result in less cooperation among targets than no sanctioning system at all (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 1999). Neither formal nor informal sanctions may modify delinquency involvement (Thomas & Bishop, 1984). The size of the sanction may have no impact on the behavior of a target country (Tsebelis, 1990). Or, how's this? Perceived certainty and severity of sanctions can combine to define a target's level of fear--this fear, in turn, affecting interpersonal or inter-entity network density or closure that, in turn, leads to some ultimate impact of the sanctions.

It would seem, then, that the US and Russian efforts to strengthen sanctions may be built on the very strong foundations of True Believers that, in turn, are situated on a very tenuous house of cards. Yet, Pakistan's United Nations representative, Shamshad Ahmad, may harbor a belief that is at least partially true. "As a matter of principle, sanctions are always unjust, unfair and counterproductive because they

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

never, never achieve the desired objectives. They only hurt innocent people." (See Crossette, B. (December 8, 2000). U.S. and Russia ask harsh sanctions on Afghanistan. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Ekland-Olson, S., & Lieb, J., & Zurcher, L. (1984). The paradoxical impact of criminal sanctions: Some microstructural findings. *Law and Society Review*, 18, 159-178; The United Nations review the psychology of sanctions. (April 21, 2000). *IBPP*, 8(14); Thomas, C.W., & Bishop, D.M. (1984). The effect of formal and informal sanctions on delinquency: A longitudinal comparison of labeling and deterrence theories. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 75, 1222-1245; Tenbrunsel, A.E., & Messick, D.M. (1999). Sanctioning systems, decision frames, and cooperation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44,, 684-707; Tsebelis, G. (1990). Are sanctions effective? A game-theoretic analysis. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 34, 3-28.) (Keywords: Sanctions, Taliban.) (Keywords: Political Sanctions, Russia, United States.)