

2-9-2001

Trends. Psychology and Sanctions: Why Saddam Won

Editor

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



Part of the [International Relations Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Editor (2001) "Trends. Psychology and Sanctions: Why Saddam Won," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 5 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol10/iss5/5>

This Trends 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: Trends. Psychology and Sanctions: Why Saddam Won

Author: Editor

Volume: 10

Issue: 5

Date: 2001-02-09

Keywords: Iraq, Perception Management, Sanctions, Saddam Hussein

The usual arguments against sanctions are threefold. First, sanctions never "work" but merely vent frustration of the sanctioners or serve as symbol that at least something is being done about something that shouldn't be done but is being done. Second, sanctions may "work" in some situations but predicting such situations is not possible because of inadequate social science methodologies applied to "lessons learned." Third, sanctions may work, but they hurt often blameless masses of people far more than the guilty powers-that-be and, at times, may actually strengthen these powers.

Such arguments all may have some validity but share a crucial vulnerability based on an assumption of functionalism. That is, all three arguments assume that the mere implementation of the sanctions over some time interval at a certain degree of intensity will achieve some objective. However, how the sanctions and their consequences are perceived by their immediate, proximal, and distal targets, as well as by worldwide observers, significantly affect the sanctions' success. In other words, success can be significantly related to public diplomacy, perception management, psychological operations, and other information efforts related to the sanctions.

In this regard, Saddam Hussein has been very successful in reinforcing mass images of the Iraqi masses being killed through sanctions and of other nation-state violators of various international laws not experiencing sanctions. Supporters of sanctions against Iraq have been much less successful at reinforcing mass images that Iraqi suffering and sanctions are due to Iraqi misbehavior. In contrast, the converse applied concerning sanctions against the South African apartheid regime, and so did the consequences. Here the sanctioners were adept at information management, the sanctioned not so.

It may be too late to recreate significant support for sanctions against Iraq. It's not too late to comprehend and apply the psychological lessons learned to attenuate and reverse future examples of egregious misbehavior. (See Cottrell, L. S., Jr. (1960). Social research and psychological warfare. *Sociometry*, 23, 103-119; Friedman, T. (February 6, 2001). The war Saddam won. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Heckert, D. A., & Gondolf, E. W. (2000). The effect of perceptions of sanctions on batterer program outcomes. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 37, 369-391; Lewis, R., Dobash, R. P., Dobash, R. E., & Cavanagh, K. (2000). Protection, prevention, rehabilitation or justice? Women's use of the law to challenge domestic violence. *International Review of Victimology*, 7, 179-205; Psychological warfare. (1968). *Science*, 8, 12-15, 36; Richardson, D. R., & Green, L. R. (1999). Social sanction and threat explanations of gender effects on direct and indirect aggression. *Aggressive Behavior*, 25, 425-434.) (Keywords: Iraq, Perception Management, Sanctions, Saddam Hussein.)