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The Power of Oil: The Arab Oil Weapon and the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, and the United States

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An extensive literature argues that economic sanctions by themselves do not usually force governments to alter important policies, but the literature does not make it clear why this is true. According to its initiators, the purpose of the 1973–74 Arab oil weapon was to force changes in the policies of states toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. This article examines the responses of the Netherlands, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, and the United States to this attempted coercion. The analysis shows that these countries did not significantly alter their policies, apparently because the sanctions were unable to coerce top-level decision-makers and did not create much political pressure on them, a problem shared by most attempts at limited external coercion.

Perhaps the most important theoretical issue of international politics is how one state can influence another. The notion of power underlies most foreign policy acts and has been central to the academic study of international relations ever since the rise of realism during and after World War II. Nonetheless, we still know remarkably little about the circumstances under which one state can alter the behavior of another.

The impressive literature on economic sanctions can readily be traced back at least fifty years and includes contributions by individuals from different nations with different political ideologies using different research methods (for example, see Guichard, 1930; Clark, 1932; Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1938; Galtung, 1967; Adler-Karlsson, 1968; Doxey, 1971 and 1980; Losman, 1979; Renwick, 1981; Weintraub *et al.* 1982; Nincic and Wallenstein, 1983; Daoudi and Dajani, 1983 and 1985; Baldwin, 1985; Hufbauer and Schott, 1985; Paarlberg, 1985; and Leyton-Brown, 1987). For our purposes, however, this literature shares two failings. First, it focuses almost entirely on the *actor's* decisions; thus, as in David Baldwin's major new study (1985), it typically asks the actor's major question: are sanctions the most appropriate policy instrument available? Almost none of this work focuses on the *target's* chief question: how do sanctions alter my alternatives and my policy decisions, even though this is the central theoretical question for anyone interested in the exercise of power. Second, as a result, even when conflicting goals within the actor government are noted, the literature still assumes that target governments behave like unified rational actors whose primary values are economic. This assumption often turns the analysis of the impact of sanctions into a quasi-economic exercise, ignoring the fact that the response to such external sanctions is a supremely *political* decision by the target state's leadership. The Arab oil weapon of 1973–74

presents an unusual opportunity to move beyond these limitations and to suggest some generalizations about the process by which the acts of some states influence the foreign policies of others.

Problem and Research Design

The fourth Arab-Israeli War broke out in October 1973. The war triggered the oil crisis, comprised of a number of separate but related events. (1) The Arab oil producers (loosely organized as the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OAPEC, as opposed to OPEC) embargoed oil shipments to the United States and the Netherlands. Oil exports to other countries were supposedly based on their support for the Arab position in the Arab-Israeli conflict. (2) Most members of OAPEC reduced their total oil exports so that embargoed countries could not simply purchase oil from other importers. These cutbacks were to be escalated 5 percent per month until the Arab demands were met. (3) These events produced an apparent oil shortage worldwide which helped OPEC (composed of the Arab oil producers and others such as Nigeria, Iran, and Venezuela) to escalate earlier price raises, increasing the price of oil fourfold in a short time.

The embargo and the production cutbacks differed from the price raises in two important ways: they were done only by Arab states, and they were done for explicit, political motives, i.e., to alter Israeli policy to return territories captured in the 1967 war, to grant the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinians, and to alter the status of Jerusalem (for the texts of various Arab communiqués, see *Oil and Security*, 1974: 118–23). These two acts (the embargo and cutbacks) are called the *oil weapon*, although the distinction remains unclear in common discussion. There was no "OPEC embargo," for example, since only Arab states embargoed oil shipments; indeed the diversion of non-Arab OPEC oil fundamentally undercut the oil weapon. The focus of the Arab oil weapon was on oil supply; the issue of price was a broader concern of OPEC in general.

The three central political questions of the oil weapon can be simply stated:

1. Did the target states alter their policies toward the Arab-Israeli dispute as the Arab governments apparently wished because of the oil weapon?
2. Why did the target states change (or not change) their policies?
3. What do these experiences tell us about the conditions under which one group of states is likely to be able to influence others?

A good deal of important information about this particular relationship is not publicly available, including what demands were made, what responses were made, and how such responses were determined within the target governments. It was therefore necessary to do a series of focused case studies of several target countries (George, 1979).

Case selection was clearly critical. The Arab governments stated that they wanted the governments of the world to put pressure on Israel. The United States, the only country which could possibly influence Israel on such an important issue, had to be included in the study. From the remaining governments of the world, industrial states were selected because they seemed much more capable of influencing the United States and Israel, if they chose to do so, than any others; indeed both Sheik Yamani and Colonel Qaddafi stated separately (Bouchuiguir, 1979: 163–64) that Europe and Japan were pressured not only to alter their policies, but also to influence the United States. In order to get as much variance as possible, cases were selected from the extremes of two criteria: the importance of Middle Eastern oil to their economies and Arab behavior toward them during the crisis. Therefore, Canada and Japan, the OECD countries least and most dependent on Middle

Eastern oil, were included, along with the Netherlands, which was embargoed by the Arabs, and Britain, which was classified as friendly.

A fairly detailed history of each country's policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1967 to 1982 was then prepared, based on an analysis of available materials in English supplemented by interviews with academics, journalists, and present and former government officials. Within each case, the historical analysis was followed by a systematic discussion of alternate explanations for this policy development, to try to determine how significant the oil weapon was. The alternate explanations were organized by James Rosenau's (1980: 115–69) comparative foreign policy variable clusters: external, societal (public opinion, mass media, and interest groups), governmental (legislature, political parties, and bureaucracies), and individual qualities of decision-makers (Licklider [1988] has a more extensive treatment of this material). This information was then used to respond to the three research questions listed above.

Should the Oil Weapon Have Been Expected to Alter the Targets' Policies?

Two major sources of predictions about the likely outcome were the theories and cases from the literature on economic sanctions and coercive bargaining, based on general patterns of other cases, and judgments by well-informed and sophisticated observers at the time which stressed the unique aspects of the Arab oil weapon. As expected, neither group was unanimous, but each had a fairly clear central tendency; the theories tended to predict little or no success, while observers at the time felt that the oil weapon would have considerable impact on the foreign policies especially of Western Europe and Japan.

Unlike earlier literature in this area (Daoudi and Dajani, 1983: 18–55, 174–88), modern scholars agree that one government is almost never able to persuade another to alter its foreign policy significantly by the use of economic sanctions alone. For most people this is counterintuitive; economic sanctions seem to make sense as a foreign policy instrument. The general acceptance of the contrary view, that they are essentially empty gestures, seems to have grown from careful analysis of a number of case studies. The number of sanctions by individual states and alliances is quite large; Hufbauer and Schott (1985: 13–20) list 103 cases from 1914 to 1984. Moreover, this has become one of the few conclusions of applied social science which seems to have become part of the belief systems of foreign-policy makers. (The fact that, despite this knowledge, sanctions are still applied suggests that they are used for reasons other than altering the behavior of the targets.)

This analysis rests on a (largely implicit) set of assumptions about how sanctions are expected to work, which may be called the “supply theory” of sanctions. The actor state cuts off or threatens to cut off supplies of one or more products. The target state in turn makes a set of rational utility calculations about the costs and benefits of proceeding on its original course or altering its policy. Like much theory in international politics and economics, this approach assumes that the target states are unified, rational actors.

The central theoretical question of realist scholarship on economic sanctions is: Why do sanctions not work? Hakan Wiberg (1969: 14) argues that sanctions can be “successful” at three separate levels in the face of presumed resistance by the target. First, an “effective” sanction denies significant amounts of the selected product(s) to the target; the target can counter by stockpiling, developing alternate sources, or paying a higher price. Second, an “efficient” sanction causes the desired economic impact on the target state, presumably by denying it the product(s); the target may reduce this impact by finding substitutes, altering its production processes, or making more fundamental changes in its economy. And third, a “successful”

sanction is defined in political rather than economic terms, by the target altering its policy as desired by the actor; the target can presumably resist even "efficient" sanctions by appealing to nationalism to increase the willingness of its populace to pay high economic costs, shifting the costs within its society to groups with little political power, or changing the terms of the dispute by escalation to military force. The realist analysis notes that each of these three steps is difficult by itself and that therefore sanctions which accomplish all three are unlikely to occur in practice, particularly when the targets are wealthy states or superpowers.

This position is generally reinforced by the more recent and less extensive literature on coercive bargaining (Schelling, 1966; Young, 1968; George *et al.*, 1971; May, 1973: 125–42; Luttwak, 1974 and 1976; Mack, 1975; Blechman and Kaplan, 1978; Lauren, 1979; Thies, 1980; Kaplan, 1981). This literature concludes that it is very difficult for one country to influence another, particularly on a policy which the target believes is important. External pressures often transform the issue from the substantive question (here the Arab-Israeli dispute) to the independence of the target state, producing internal unity and increasing the political risks of capitulation.

Moreover, coercion is a bargaining process, so the target retains the ability to gain some concessions, forcing the actor to clarify its own goals and bargain for a solution acceptable to the target. To put it differently, a state cannot be coerced unless it agrees to be, since it always retains the ability to escalate the conflict. The actor's task is to produce a solution which is more attractive to the target than further escalation; simply applying punishment is unlikely to succeed.

Thus, in general, analysts studying the ability of states to influence other states' policies using both economic sanctions and limited military force have independently concluded that such influence is unlikely to be successful. However, this conclusion is based on previous cases. A number of sophisticated observers believe that the Arabs were successful, particularly *vis-à-vis* Western Europe and Japan. Klaus Knorr (1984: 187, 198) lists this set of events as one of four examples of successful economic coercion, although he is sceptical of the particular impact of the embargo. He is not alone in his position.

Western Europe was shown to be at the mercy of international forces over which it had little or no control. Arab oil-producing states exercised unprecedented political influence over Western Europe and Japan. The "oil weapon" was used by producer states to insure that consumer countries adopted policies supportive of the Arab position on Middle East issues. The specter of "Finlandization," to which reference is often made in discussions of Soviet–West European relations, confronted Western Europe. But this was a new form of Finlandization brought about by Arab oil-producing states—against whose pressures West European governments appeared powerless (Pfaltzgraff, 1978: 159).

[W]hen in 1973 the Arab oil-producing states decided to cut production and stop supplies to certain countries altogether, their decision had an enormous impact on West European policy and it affected America's course of action to a much greater extent than ever before Whoever ruled the oil fields potentially ruled Europe and Japan (Laqueur, 1974: 223, 248).

Indeed the oil embargo may have been the most decisive part of [the 1973 Arab-Israeli] war—the part that led to an unfavorable diplomatic outcome for Israel, and that continues to have the most far-reaching consequences (Friedman, Seabury and Wildavsky, 1975: 155).

There is indeed a reasonable argument that the oil weapon was so different from other examples of economic sanctions that it *should* have been successful. Oil is a uniquely potent commodity for sanctions; it is crucial for industrial economies, cannot be quickly substituted for, and is consumed in such quantities that it is

difficult to stockpile. As the price of Middle Eastern oil dropped during the 1950s and 1960s, Western Europe and Japan shifted from coal to imported oil as their major energy source (Darmstadter and Landsberg, 1976: 21).

This potential vulnerability was increased because Middle Eastern oil production was concentrated in a small number of states, many of which could endure the economic costs of temporarily shutting down oil exports. Moreover, the trigger for the embargo was a war between Israel and the Arabs, the one political issue with the potential to produce political unity among very disparate Arab governments. There was also enormous uncertainty in the West as to the real economic impact of the oil weapon. Reasonable people predicted that the industrial economies simply could not survive unless supply was increased and prices were reduced. A considerable literature on crisis argues that policy change is much more likely under such a threat than under normal circumstances (Hermann, 1969; Snyder and Diesing, 1977; Lebow, 1981).

Lastly, the Arab governments had made only limited demands on the targets, asking for rhetorical concessions in an area of their foreign policies which was quite unimportant for Western Europe and Japan. This combination of relatively small demands with a very large threat (increased by uncertainty) made it reasonable to argue that the Arabs really would be able to extract major political concessions, at least from the Western Europeans and the Japanese, despite the experience of earlier cases. Indeed, as noted above, the impression lingers that they were able to do so.

Five Cases

The Netherlands: Moral Fervor and Power Politics

The Netherlands has usually been regarded as a firm ally of Israel in the Middle Eastern conflict; indeed this reputation probably was one reason it was embargoed in 1973 (Lenczowski, 1976a: 15). While this reputation was not entirely deserved (Soetendorp, 1984), Dutch support was at its height during the 1967 war. Like most industrial governments, the Netherlands based its formal policy on UN Security Council Resolution 242, which called for a negotiated settlement returning most of Israel's 1967 territorial gains in exchange for peace and which implied that the Palestinian problem concerned the individual rights of refugees rather than the collective rights of a national group.

Dutch support declined somewhat after 1967 for several reasons. In 1969 the European Community, which the Netherlands has traditionally supported (Baehr, 1980: 247–51), established a foreign policy coordination process known as European Political Cooperation (EPC) (Allen and Pijpers, 1984). The Middle East was one of the first issues, and over time some consensus was reached (Steinbach, 1979: 41–42); this process pressured the Dutch to be somewhat less pro-Israeli. Moreover, the 1967 war left Israel the dominant power of the area rather than a small, beleaguered state; ironically Israeli success seems to have reduced its moral status somewhat. Thus in 1972 the Netherlands voted in favor of the annual Palestinian General Assembly resolution which “reaffirmed” support for the 1970 version which the Dutch had voted against (Djonovich, 1978: 74, 242–43; Soetendorp, 1984: 40). However, this shift was not popular domestically and was therefore played down in the government's rhetoric. Not surprisingly there was a good deal of confusion about Dutch Middle Eastern policy.

When the 1973 war broke out, the Dutch government strongly supported Israel, condemning the attack on October 9 and calling for a return to the prewar boundaries and negotiations based on 242 (Voorhoeve, 1979: 238). No other

European Community country made such a statement. The prime minister and other cabinet officials attended public rallies supporting Israel. Public support for this posture was strong. Both the government and public were surprised when the Arabs embargoed them. While the Dutch were less dependent on Middle Eastern oil than countries such as France (Pearson, 1979: 131), the government felt that the oil weapon posed a serious potential threat to its economic security, at least for a time. The embargo produced a very high level of uncertainty; initially it was not even clear if the Netherlands had been embargoed (Pearson, 1979: 120). No one knew how much oil would be available; no one really could predict with confidence the impact of the loss of a certain amount of oil on the Dutch economy; and the other EC countries refused to share oil through either the EEC or OECD institutions.

An EPC meeting was called on November 6 in Brussels to consider the Dutch request for oil sharing. Instead, it produced a new policy statement on the Middle East. The declaration was elegantly crafted. It called for Israel to end "the territorial occupation" resulting from the 1967 war; this formulation avoided the problem of whether to withdraw from all the territory or only some of it, the central ambiguity of Resolution 242. It also asserted that the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinians should be taken into account in any peace settlement in the Middle East but did not specify those rights. The Dutch government signed the agreement, although the Dutch, and reportedly other governments as well, promptly expressed contradictory private interpretations of the declaration (Everts, 1985: 165; personal interview with a senior Dutch government official, July 1984).

It was hard to tell how much Dutch policy had changed, in part because of the ambiguities of the previous policy. The Dutch foreign minister, who had just come to office, had recommended almost precisely this policy change in 1972, and it was very similar to the UN resolution which the Dutch had supported the previous year (De la Serre, 1974: 81). However, to both the U.S. government (Lieber, 1976: 13; Rustow, 1977: 513) and the Dutch public (Everts, 1985: 165–66), it looked as though a significant change in Dutch policy had been coerced by the oil weapon. This change might have come about in any event, but the oil embargo certainly made it look like the result of successful coercion.

Dutch acquiescence to the November 6 statement didn't help them much. The Arabs lifted the 5 percent production cutback scheduled for December for the other European countries, but retained the Dutch embargo, thus leaving the Dutch in a comparatively worse position, and their European allies still refused to share oil. Although it appears that the Dutch government was worried about oil supplies at least into December, there is no evidence of any new initiative toward the Arabs when the November 6 statement failed to end the embargo. This suggests that there were very severe limits on the concessions the Dutch government was prepared to make.

Toward the end of November, the oil supply situation began to ease. Informal oil sharing by the oil companies meant that the Dutch lost no more of their oil supply than their neighbors; Henry Kissinger said the United States would help the Netherlands if necessary; and the Netherlands' European partners finally responded, in part because of a threat by the Dutch to stop exporting their natural gas (Heldring, 1975: 4; Lieber, 1976: 15; Pearson, 1979: 132, 143).

At about the same time, Arab demands began to change. The Arab summit conference in Algiers on November 26–28 reportedly reached a secret agreement to ask Western Europe to end military and economic assistance to Israel and lift their embargoes on military assistance to the Arabs; Asian countries (presumably Japan) would be asked to sever all political, economic, and cultural relations with Israel. In retrospect, this was the high point of Arab militancy. On December 9 in Vienna, the oil ministers decided to accept, instead of full withdrawal of Israel from the occupied

territories, a timetable for such withdrawal guaranteed by the United States (Lenczowski, 1976a; 19–21; Schwadran, 1977: 73).

Since 1974, the Dutch government has pursued its Middle Eastern policy strictly within the framework of European Political Cooperation. This marks a major change from its earlier policy. Within the confidential discussions of the EPC process, the Netherlands reportedly remains more likely to support Israel than most other members. However, in public statements, United Nations votes, and similar activities, the Dutch government stands by the decisions reached by the Community. It will differ publicly from its allies only if at least one other country does so as well; it is not prepared to be isolated on a Middle Eastern issue (Soetendorp, 1984: 41).

Thus the Dutch were involved in an EPC decision to initiate the Euro-Arab dialogue between the EC and the Arab League in 1974, which, despite concern especially in the United States, never amounted to much (Al-Mani, 1983). In a series of public declarations, the EC countries, including the Netherlands, demonstrated a measured but quite clear policy shift in favor of the Palestinians, reportedly slowed by concern for “American sensitivity” (Kohler, 1982: 89). In 1974 the Palestinian right to a national identity was affirmed. In 1976 it was agreed that the Palestinian people should have a territorial base (Sicherman, 1980: 847–48). In June 1977 the right of the Palestinians to a homeland was added (Ramazani, 1978: 52). In 1979 the foreign ministers asserted that Palestinians must be involved in the negotiations (Al-Mani, 1983: 113–14). Finally, in June 1980 the Venice Declaration advocated that the Palestinian people be allowed to exercise self-determination and that the PLO be “associated” with the negotiations. The next logical step would seem to be recognition of the PLO, but this in fact has not yet happened.

The EPC declarations on the Middle East potentially conflicted with American foreign policy, a particular dilemma for the Dutch, who traditionally have close ties with the United States. The Dutch government has responded to this problem by supporting the rhetoric of the EC while opposing any European actions which would interfere with substantive American policy such as the Camp David process. Moreover, the Dutch situation was simplified greatly because the EC did not follow the Venice Declaration with a statement recognizing the PLO; in fact the final declaration was watered down in response to American concerns (Allen and Smith, 1984: 45).

Aside from EC declarations and UN votes, the Dutch were also forced to act publicly on some other issues. Alone among the European powers, the Dutch embassy had been located in Jerusalem rather than Tel Aviv; this was a problem because Israel claims Jerusalem as its capital, while the Arabs contend that Israel is in the city only because of armed aggression. After considerable discussion and a Security Council resolution, the Dutch agreed to move their embassy. In Parliament the foreign minister “acknowledged the fact that Arab pressure weighed very heavily in this matter” (Soetendorp, 1984: 45; see also Everts, 1985: 170–72). At about the same time it was disclosed that many Dutch corporations had acceded to Arab economic boycott demands concerning the origins of products as well as the ethnic backgrounds of employees, while the Dutch government had done nothing about these activities. Despite considerable furor, in the end no laws were passed on the subject (Phillips, 1979: 23–28, 64–73).

Great Britain: “Friendly” with Reservations

Of the targets examined here, Britain has the longest history of serious involvement in the Middle East, initially to secure routes to India, later to protect oil supplies, and most recently (since Britain itself has become an oil exporter) to preserve a major international market and support for the pound sterling (Edwards, 1984). All of

these motives have involved keeping on good terms with Arab states; Israel has never been able to help with any of them and has therefore been seen as a diversion from Britain's real interests in the area. This long-term involvement has produced a group of "Arabists" in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with an impressive reputation for expertise both in Britain and abroad.

One by-product of the 1967 war was that the Suez Canal was closed, costing Britain about fifty-six million pounds a month according to Harold Wilson (*New York Times*, October 22, 1967). A short-lived Arab oil embargo also occurred. One result was the devaluation of the pound five months later, which in turn was largely responsible for Britain's decision to withdraw from "east of Suez." If the criterion for success is changing a target's policy, the Arab oil weapon may have had more impact on Britain in 1967 than in 1973. Between 1967 and 1973, Britain was deeply involved in crafting UN Resolution 242. Britain also addressed the Palestinian problem (which 242 essentially ignores) in fairly vague terms. When the Arab oil producers decided to employ the oil weapon, they classified Britain as a "friendly" country, thus in theory allowing it to have all the Arab oil it wanted; quite reasonably the British saw this as a vindication of their policy.

Despite this success, Britain had to make several decisions during the oil crisis. It immediately declared an arms embargo on both sides. This was not merely a symbolic gesture; about half of Israel's tanks were British (Insight Team, 1974: 238), as were a substantial proportion of Jordan's. A similar embargo in 1967 had lasted only twenty-four hours (Brecher, 1980: 273); this one lasted until the January 1974 Israeli-Egyptian disengagement agreement. The second decision was to refuse to allow the United States to use British bases, both in the U.K. and in Cyprus, for its airlift to resupply Israel; all other EC members did the same thing. The third decision was more difficult (Watt, 1973)—the British decided not to give oil to the Netherlands, which was embargoed by the Arabs (Kelly, 1980: 402–3). The Heath government was engaged in a major domestic confrontation with the coal miners' union which resulted in a strike and curtailments in home heating; thus, threats to cut off oil were very potent. Diplomatically the British refused to send oil to Holland, regardless of source, and refused to allow either the EEC or the OECD to implement oil sharing (Turner, 1974: 410–11). They also opposed the efforts of the oil companies to spread the production cuts evenly by shipping non-Arab oil to embargoed countries (Turner, 1974; Lieber, 1976: 17).

In 1973 Britain became a member of the European Community. It joined the European Political Cooperation process, and since then its diplomacy on the Middle East has been imbedded in the collective declarations of Europe, where it has reportedly played a major role. The U.K. maintains contact "at an official, but not Cabinet, level" with the PLO (Hollis, 1987: 203–5).

In voting at the UN, Britain has been at the center of the EC group. When the Community does not vote as a bloc, France, Italy, and Greece are likely to be on the pro-Arab side, Britain less so (Stein, 1982: 57–58). It is difficult to determine whether this agreement represents a kind of EPC pressure restraining British pro-Arab tendencies, or the ability of Britain to get most of its partners to support its preferred position (Edwards, 1984).

After the arms embargo in 1973–74, Britain resumed arms sales to the region. From 1966 on, roughly half of all British arms exports have gone to the Middle East. However, the British have not simply sold arms to anyone with the money; in 1975 they refused to sell fighters, tanks, and submarines to Libya, and a sale of aircraft to Saudi Arabia fell through in the absence of assurances that they would not be used against Israel (Pajak, 1979: 149–51). This policy attempts essentially to meet Arab demands as much as possible while continuing support for the integrity of Israel and not alienating the United States (Edwards, 1984). It is therefore a continuation of the

preembargo policy, and most observers argue that the oil weapon had no significant effect upon British policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict except perhaps to accelerate its pro-Arab direction (Tapsell, 1975: 1; personal interview with former senior British government officials, June 1983).

Canada: Low Dependence and High Responsiveness

Canadian interest in the Middle East stemmed from its concern with the United Nations, where it took a leading role in the partition of Palestine and later in various peacekeeping forces. However, when Pierre Trudeau came to office in 1968, he drastically reduced the importance of the Arab-Israeli issue for Canadian foreign policy. Generally Canada voted with the United States in the United Nations, supporting the American interpretation of Resolution 242, for example.

Canada did import some oil from the Middle East, primarily as a convenience for French-speaking Canada. When the 1973 war broke out, several Arab governments expressed displeasure with Canada's Middle Eastern position (a shock to the Canadian government, which thought it was neutral). The government of Canada was unable to determine for at least a month whether or not it was on the embargo list (Taras, 1983: 18). Initially Canada was indeed embargoed, but in December it was classified "neutral," subject only to the production and export cutbacks (Byers, 1974: 257; Ismael, 1976: 263–64; Lenczowski, 1976b: 65; Canada, 1985: 51; personal interviews with former senior British government officials, June 1983).

Paul Noble (1985: 113–16) argues that despite this rather relaxed public attitude, the embargo produced some diplomatic movements on the Palestinian issue almost immediately in order to demonstrate Canadian neutrality: a shift in rhetoric about the Palestinians and abstention on the annual UN Palestinian resolution, which was essentially identical to the one Canada had opposed the year before. By abstaining, Canada acknowledged for the first time that Palestinians had collective rights as Palestinians as well as individual rights as refugees, a clear departure from Resolution 242. This was in fact the major policy shift of the Canadian government during the decade (Dewitt and Kirton, 1983: 12–15). Because of the touchy issue of Quebec separatism, the term "self-determination" has been avoided by Canadian officials, but rhetoric has moved from "political self-expression within a limited type of political arrangement" in 1976 to "homeland within a clearly defined territory and by that I mean the West Bank and the Gaza Strip" in 1981 (Canada, 1985: 51–52; Noble, 1985: 116–49).

Canadian UN voting has also shifted, although the best analysis, by Janice Gross Stein (1982: 57–69), suggests that differences among the industrial countries are more apparent than real and have been deliberately exaggerated by the Europeans to distance themselves from the United States. Rather than a U.S.-European split, Stein's analysis shows shifting coalitions within which Canada usually occupies a middle position. This analysis is basically supported by more detailed historical analyses (Noble, 1985: 115–16, 122–27, 134–41; Stanislawski, 1981: 67).

The Arab economic boycott became a political issue in Canada in the 1970s. After considerable dispute, the federal government did not introduce an antiboycott law; however, the province of Ontario passed one, not a trivial gesture since Toronto, the nation's major commercial center, is included within its jurisdiction (Stanislawski, 1981).

Canada clearly occupies an intermediate position among the industrial countries. It has supported the step-by-step ("Camp David") initiatives of the United States rather than the comprehensive ("Geneva") solution preferred by the Europeans (Stein, 1982: 69–70), and it was cool to the Venice Declaration, perhaps because of the phrase "self-determination" for the Palestinians, which suggests the question of Quebec to many Canadians. On the other hand, after the embargo the Canadian

government moved very quickly indeed toward the Arab position, despite its low dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

Japan: The "Perfect Target"

Japan has essentially no historical connection with the Middle East. However, it is heavily dependent on the area for oil; imported oil made up 37 percent of its total energy needs in 1960, 71 percent in 1970, and 66 percent in 1980 (Yorke, 1983: 10–11). Japanese policy before 1973 centered on support for two United Nations resolutions: Resolution 242 and the less well known General Assembly Resolution 2628 of 1970 which spoke of "respect for the rights of the Palestinians" (Yoshitsu, 1984: 1). Japan voted in favor of the latter resolution along with only France, Greece, and Spain among the industrial countries (Djonovich, 1976: 221, 52). Japan was thus one of the most pro-Arab industrial states before the oil weapon was used (Yorke, 1983: 37–38n), particularly striking for a government which supposedly refused to take the lead in foreign policy. However, Japan was so quiet about its position that it seems to have reaped no rewards from it in the Arab world (Yoshitsu, 1984: 1).

Because of this position and its general policy of noninvolvement, Japan was surprised to be a target of the oil weapon. Initially the Japanese government reiterated its previous position, but it became clear that this was not sufficient. On November 6, the government issued a statement remarkably similar to the EC Brussels statement of the same day. However, this was also unsuccessful; the next day the Saudi and Kuwaiti governments declared Japan a "nonfriendly" country, and on November 18 the EC countries were exempted from the 5 percent December cuts while the Japanese pointedly were not, causing something of a panic in the Japanese government (Baker, 1978: 31; Juster, 1976: 55).

Japan was apparently asked (1) to break diplomatic relations with Israel, (2) to sever all economic ties with Israel, (3) to provide military assistance to the Arabs (Lenczowski, 1976a: 21; Kelly, 1980: 409), and (4) to pressure the United States to alter its policy toward the Arab-Israeli dispute (Nau, 1980: 16). On November 22 Japan responded with a new statement, asserting that Israel should withdraw from all of the 1967 territories (thus going beyond both 242 and the November 6 EEC statement), advocating Palestinian self-determination, and threatening to reconsider its policy toward Israel if Israel refused to accept these preconditions (Wu, 1977: 3–4; cf. Kissinger, 1982: 881). Japan also announced the first of several visits to the Arab Middle East by high-ranking government officials in which large sums of foreign aid were promised, estimated at up to \$3.3 billion (Wu, 1977: 5; Caldwell, 1981a: 228; Yorke, 1983: 14), although in fact many of these promises do not seem to have been kept (Juster, 1976: 81).

However, Japan did not meet any of the four Arab demands. It did not break diplomatic relations with Israel and consistently refused to clarify its rather vague language about when this might be done (Caldwell, 1981a: 215–16). Economic ties with Israel were not severed. Its constitution prevented Japan from supplying sophisticated weapons to the Arabs, and Henry Kissinger (1982: 717, 741–42) does not seem to have found Japanese pressure significant. Nonetheless, on December 25 Japan was formally classified a "friendly" state (Hirasawa, 1976: 141; Baker, 1978: 32n).

Since the crisis, Japan has moved in a pro-Arab direction, but its policy has been longer on rhetoric than substance. In her analysis of UN voting patterns on the Arab-Israeli dispute, Janice Gross Stein (1982: 57–59) notes that Japan was the most pro-Arab industrial country. On the other hand, Japan clearly remains within the consensus of industrial countries on the Middle East, albeit at the pro-Arab end; for example, Japan abstained on the 1974 General Assembly Palestinian resolutions

because they did not reaffirm Resolution 242 and did not explicitly affirm Israel's right to exist (Yoshitsu, 1984: 13–14). The PLO was invited to open an office in Tokyo in 1976, and in 1981 Japan became the first industrial country to have talks with the PLO at the prime ministerial level. However, Japan has refused to grant the PLO diplomatic recognition (Caldwell, 1981b: 75–78; Kuroda, 1983: 29; Yorke, 1983: 23–26, 33, 41; Yoshitsu, 1984: 24–37, 74–75).

Deliberate investment in countries like Iran and Iraq and willingness by major Japanese companies to accede to the Arab economic boycott of Israel are somewhat offset by continuing trade with Israel by other Japanese companies (Yoshitsu, 1984: 85; Shillony, 1985/86; personal interview with Henry Nau, June 1984). In 1979, after the Iranian Revolution, the Japanese foreign minister declared that a Middle Eastern settlement must be comprehensive, include self-determination for the Palestinians, and involve PLO participation in the peace talks. It thus laid out the essentials of the Venice Declaration which the EC would adopt nine months later. It is not clear whether Japan is leading the industrial countries or being pushed by them, but it has maintained its position of being just a little bit in front on the Arab-Israeli issue.

The United States: Direct and Indirect Target

The literature on American Middle Eastern policy is massive. This summary narrative draws primarily on Szyliowicz and O'Neill (1975), Lenczowski (1976a), Sheehan (1976), Vernon (1976), Quandt (1977, 1986), Reich (1977), Safran (1978), Bouchuiguir (1979), Roehm (1980), Kassis (1981), Shadid (1981), Carter (1982), Kissinger (1982), Pollock (1982), Rustow (1982), Brzezinski (1983), Garfinkle (1983), Sorley (1983), Vance (1983), Atherton (1984), Bundy (1984), Dowty (1984), and Spiegel (1985).

The 1967 war caused several significant changes in American Middle Eastern policy. The Arab-Israeli issue became the central issue in the area rather than one of several. Massive arms shipments to Israel began, and the United States adopted a policy of trading the 1967 Israeli territorial gains for a comprehensive peace agreement. After 1970 the Middle East stabilized from an American point of view. Nasser was dead, and the Egyptian-Israeli truce held. The United States believed that time was on the side of the Israelis and that the military balance was more important than Arab political discontent. While it remained committed to Arab-Israeli negotiations, it did not pressure Israel to make concessions, even after the Vietnam War was "settled" in January 1973 and Kissinger turned to the Middle East. The American policy of "standstill diplomacy" did not change until the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.

The 1973 war caught the American government by surprise. Despite concern for a possible oil embargo, the United States decided to rearm Israel, in response to what it saw as a Soviet attempt to change the power balance of the region by arming the Arabs. When the question of an aid bill to pay for the arms was raised, Kissinger and Nixon argued for a large amount, both to gain as much credit with the Israelis as possible in preparation for U.S. pressure during peace negotiations and because the Arabs were already upset and would not be affected by an aid bill. In fact, however, news of the aid bill seems to have been the last straw for the Saudis.

The United States was already working on a cease-fire when the oil weapon was declared (Kissinger learned of the embargo on the United States while flying to Moscow). Once the cease-fire was in place, the Americans established their policy for the ensuing negotiations: the United States should be actively involved, should focus on creating a negotiating process rather than setting forth terms for a final settlement, should not abandon its special relationship with Israel, should pressure Israel to make concessions, should try to exclude the Soviet Union and the radical Arab

states including the Palestinians, and should focus on “step-by-step” diplomacy, a series of limited agreements through bilateral channels which would build confidence on which further agreement could be based. Perhaps most significant was the judgment that this issue was so important that Henry Kissinger would devote much of his remaining time in office to dealing with it.

The result was a series of marathon negotiations which produced the Sinai disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel in January 1974 and a Syrian-Israeli agreement in May. The oil embargo was effectively ended in the midst of this process, in March. Further negotiations led to the Sinai II agreements of 1975, the capstone of Henry Kissinger’s Middle Eastern policy. In order to persuade Israel to accept the agreement, the United States agreed to increase arms shipments to Israel, to guarantee Israeli oil supplies, to commit civilian observers to Sinai, and to not negotiate with the PLO until it agreed to UN Resolutions 242 and 338.

Jimmy Carter came to office convinced that the Arab-Israeli issue had to be resolved in order to prevent an energy crisis and that this could best be done through a comprehensive peace agreement including the Soviet Union and radical Arab states rather than through Kissinger’s approach of a series of bilateral agreements. However, Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem in 1977 forced the Americans to revert to the piecemeal strategy, since an agreement between Egypt and Israel now seemed possible, even though the other Arab states refused to participate. Another complex series of negotiations led to the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979, which was Jimmy Carter’s major foreign policy accomplishment and the ultimate triumph of both the “step-by-step” and “shuttle diplomacy” processes which Henry Kissinger had initiated. During the same time period, the Arab economic boycott became a political issue, resulting in the 1977 Export Administration Act, probably the strongest antiboycott legislation in the world, written by an unusual combination of Jewish and corporate pressure groups.

The Reagan administration initially focused on possible Soviet aggression in the Gulf and ignored the Arab-Israeli issue, regarding Israel as its major ally in the region. A series of problems, culminating in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, forced some change in this attitude, but the Reagan administration has never given the question the same priority that Kissinger and Carter did, and as a result there has been little change in American policy.

Did the Oil Weapon Alter the Targets’ Policies?

In the short term, several decisions seem to have been shaped by the oil weapon: (1) the Dutch agreed to the November 6 EC statement, (2) the Japanese threatened to “reconsider policy” toward Israel, and (3) European countries refused to allow the United States to use their bases for Israel’s rearmament. Canada’s shift from opposition to abstention on the November 1973 UN Palestinian resolution may also have been caused by the oil weapon, but its speed and low profile suggest that it had already been decided. The bases issue is the only policy shift that was potentially more than rhetoric. (The British decision to refuse to assist the Netherlands in getting more oil, while not strictly related to the Arab-Israeli dispute, was another result of the oil weapon.)

However, the November 6 statement did not represent much of a shift in Dutch policy, and in fact the change almost certainly would have been made in any case. Similarly, the Japanese statement of November 22 was essentially a restatement of previous policies except for the vague threat to “reconsider” relations, which was never executed. The British did not alter their Middle East policy at all, and the Canadian shift was very subtle.

While some observers argue that U.S. Middle East policy changed because of the oil weapon (Itayim, 1974: 4; Friedman, et al., 1975: 155; Al-Sowayyeh, 1980: 222–

23), on balance this seems incorrect for several reasons. First, the substance of the policy, a negotiated settlement based on some kind of equality between both parties, excluding the Soviets and radical Arab governments, had been established long before 1973. Second, Kissinger and those around him worried about Soviet involvement in the Middle East and a possible superpower confrontation rather than the oil weapon. And third, interest groups and government agencies which might have been more concerned with oil supplies found themselves frozen out of Arab-Israeli policymaking because of Kissinger's total dominance of the process. U.S. policy would probably not have been significantly different if the oil embargo had not occurred. On balance, then, the short-term impact of the oil weapon on the foreign policies of the target countries toward the Arab-Israel dispute was small or negligible.

After the embargo ended, all five countries altered their rhetorical policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly on the Palestinian issue. However, it is not at all clear that the shift was due to the oil weapon. When asked to explain the policy shifts, practically no Dutch, Canadian, or American respondents mentioned the threat of future oil cutoffs as being important. The change in Arab-Israeli policy seems to have come about for different reasons. One result of the oil crisis was that the Arab states became enormously wealthy; in a very short period of time they became major customers for every major exporting country. No one wants to give unnecessary trouble to major customers. Arab wealth also greatly increased personal contacts between Europeans and Arabs so that more Europeans learned about the Arab point of view on Middle Eastern issues. Israel's moral position suffered as concern for the plight of the Palestinians increased, reinforced by the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

In the United Kingdom and Japan, on the other hand, oil supply was an issue, although not usually the overriding one. The British stake in the Middle East has shifted from oil supply to export markets and support for the pound sterling. Japan does continue to worry about oil supply; it is simultaneously more dependent on Middle Eastern oil and less dependent on Middle Eastern markets than the other states. However, it is not clear that its government worries about oil supply more because of the oil weapon. The Japanese were worried about their vulnerability to oil supply cutoffs well before the embargo. In the long run not much changed; Japan continued to see its interests as being served by taking a position on the Arab-Israeli dispute which was more pro-Arab than any other industrial state while not breaking with the United States.

Thus the contribution of the oil weapon to Middle East policy change was at best indirect. Because of the oil weapon, the OPEC countries were able to greatly increase the price of oil. Policy shifts seem to have been caused by the increase in wealth rather than concern for future oil supplies. Thus the apparent success of the oil weapon in changing the targets' foreign policies seems due to the quite unusual fact that the sanctions were enriching, suggesting that this is a precedent unlikely to be repeated.

But even if all of these changes were the result of the oil weapon, how important were they? What, after all, is a "significant" policy change in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and how do we recognize one when we see it? Clearly this is a subjective decision, and actors will differ about the relative importance of various acts. The key concept is salience: how important the act appears to the government carrying it out. We can suggest a rough typology of ascending order of importance of acts by one state directed at another. The "target" (here the industrial countries) is the government being pressured by the "actor" (the Arab governments) to alter its behavior toward the "object" (Israel).

At the first, lowest level is *verbal disagreement*. The second stage is *improved relations with the enemy*, when the target improves its relationship with the object's enemy (who

may be the actor). The third level, *symbolic alienation*, involves altering behavior toward the object in areas other than those of the specific dispute in symbolic ways because of the disagreement. Fourth, *economic coercion* includes nonsymbolic actions which alter the object's capabilities. This may take the form of reducing economic flows between the target and object, increasing economic flows (possibly including weapons) to the object's enemy, or some combination. The fifth level, *military coercion*, is the use of the target's military force against the object government.

Using this scale, the Arabs' formal demands were at the fourth and fifth levels, since they demanded that the international community force Israel to alter important policies toward the occupied territories, the Palestinians, and Jerusalem. The Europeans and Japanese certainly were not prepared to send troops to oppose Israel. There was active discussion of reducing economic flows to Israel, but nothing came of it. The major demand at the third level, denial of recognition to Israel, was rejected by all target states, although some concessions were made in this area. The major limitations on the Arabs' power seem to have been tacitly recognized by both sides; this is a very odd sort of Finlandization indeed.

Why Did the Targets Not Change Their Policies?

The second major political question concerning the Arab oil weapon is why the Arab oil producers were unable to use their influence on the world economy to alter the policies of the target states toward Israel. As noted earlier, the Arabs seemed to have the ability to cause a great deal of damage to industrial economies at relatively little cost to themselves, while they asked for only fairly unimportant concessions.

The lack of results is so striking that some scholars have argued that perhaps the Arabs did not really *want* to influence the policies of the target states. Certainly in the past, actors have often had many goals in imposing sanctions other than influencing foreign targets: to influence domestic public opinion, to disarm domestic political critics, to send signals or threats about subsequent foreign policy acts, or to avoid the necessity of applying further leverage. There are a variety of plausible explanations why the oil weapon might have been used for reasons other than to alter the foreign policies of the industrial states toward Israel (Knorr, 1976: 230; Rustow, 1982: 156–57; Daoudi and Dajani, 1983: 108). Perhaps if the Arabs had really wanted to influence the targets, they could have done so.

However, from the target's point of view, the question was whether or not the Arab governments *seemed* to be trying to influence them. All of the target governments seem to have believed that the Arabs were trying to alter their policies by threatening to cut off exports of Arab oil, and that if they did alter their policies, the Arabs would respond by allowing them to purchase more oil. Since the initial production reductions were actually carried out and the monthly cuts were also started, for at least two months the target governments believed they were the targets of an influence attempt and had to decide how to respond to it. The degree of commitment by the Arab governments would have been important for the targets in predicting future acts, of course. In general, the officials of the target states were rather uncertain about the particular demands being made, but it is not clear that they would have behaved differently if the Arabs had demonstrated that they were determined to apply the sanctions.

If the target governments believed that they were under threat for six weeks to two months in late 1973, why did they not respond to the potential economic calamity by changing their policies? In general, we can distinguish three immediate alternate domestic sources of change: (1) the leaders in office may decide to change their policies; (2) if the leaders decide not to change, political elites in the country may either replace them with new leaders committed to a policy change or use this threat

to force the old leaders to change their positions; and (3) if the leaders and the elites remain firm, the politically relevant public (in democracies, presumably the electorate) may either replace the current elites and leaders with new ones committed to a policy change or use this threat to force the old leaders and elites to change their positions.

For the political leaders, the Arab-Israeli dispute was not a new policy issue. While some leaders were interested in changing current policy somewhat (the Dutch foreign minister wanted to acknowledge that the Palestinian problem involved politics as well as human rights, and Trudeau wanted to decrease Canadian involvement in the Middle East), they had all been involved in setting the existing policy and probably felt some commitment to it as a result. This may explain why, during the crisis itself, and indeed afterward, *no prominent individual politician in any of the five countries seems to have changed his or her position on the subject.*

Elites were a more likely source of a shift. In a parliamentary system, such elites are likely to be found primarily in the legislature and in influential interest groups. Foreign policy change is more likely if the top political leadership is replaced (see Burgess's [1968] analysis of alliance policies of Norway and Sweden and May's [1973: 125–42] discussion of the utility of strategic bombing, as well as Schelling [1966: 85–86] and Losman [1979: 128]), but the oil weapon did not bring about such personnel changes. Unlike military invasion, as in Burgess's case, economic sanctions cannot directly replace the target's leadership. Their political impact is largely due to their ability to bring about such changes indirectly, as in the cases of strategic bombing examined by May, or at least to threaten to do so. The oil crisis was a major political issue in all five target countries, but *no significant political party or leader attacked the government for failure to cope with this difficult problem.* For example, the Netherlands, which was embargoed by the Arabs, has between seven and fourteen parties represented in its legislature. However, no party argued either that the government had been too pro-Israeli and had thus brought the Arab oil embargo on the Netherlands, or that the Netherlands could not afford to allow itself to be coerced by oil pressure into signing the November 6 statement.

In all five countries influential interest groups, especially those connected with business, did push for a more pro-Arab stance because of concern for the economic consequences of the oil weapon. However, none had much impact on policy, even in Japan where they seemed to have a strong position (Nau, 1980: 12; Caldwell, 1981a: 209, 214–15, 269). The oil weapon could change the policies only if it either brought significant new actors into the policy arena or gave existing actors so much new ammunition that the power balance would shift. This did not happen in the five countries in the short run.

Similarly, while public concern over the issue was high, my analysis of Canadian, British, and American polls indicates that in general there was little change in attitudes toward Israel. This analysis is confirmed by more fragmentary data from the Netherlands. Unfortunately, we have the least data for Japan, perhaps the most interesting case. There seem to be no Japanese public opinion polls which measure attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict over time (Kuroda, 1984: 4; 1985: 31). However, a good deal of anecdotal evidence indicates that the Japanese public came very close to panic during the crisis (Nau, 1980: 13; Caldwell, 1981a: 196; Murakami, 1982: 139).

Japanese public opinion affected foreign policy, however, not by advocating specific policy positions, but by forcing a change in the decision process. Before the oil crisis, Arab-Israeli policy was made in a largely bureaucratic process, like most Japanese policy decisions. Haruhiro Fukui (1975: 2–6, 41) argues that in time of crisis, bureaucrats are temporarily replaced by politicians and actors outside of government; Kenneth Juster (1976, 1977) persuasively applies this model to the oil crisis.

Thus the normal impact of bureaucrats in the Foreign Ministry and MITI, who were deeply concerned with maintaining positive relations with the United States, was greatly diminished. Instead there was a cabinet-level debate, resulting in a slight but significant change in rhetoric, followed by a series of promises of Japanese aid to the Arab states which eventually amounted to about \$3.3 billion (Wu, 1977: 5; cf. Caldwell, 1981a: 228; and Yorke, 1983: 14). Ironically the very success of the new policy meant that the bureaucracies regained control of policy. Juster (1976: 81) suggests that many of the Japanese promises of aid were not kept because of concern by the Finance Ministry about their impact on the Japanese economy. In all five countries, the public could not replace the leadership or threaten the elites; elections were not imminent, and revolution was never seen as a real possibility.

Lessons of the Oil Weapon: Why Economic Sanctions (Usually) Do Not Coerce

1. The beginning of wisdom on this topic is to remember that no foreign policy instrument, including the limited use of force, is very effective in forcing a target government to alter its policy on a topic which the target feels is important.

2. Of course, this just moves the question back to what makes an issue an "important" one for the target state. To some extent the public use of economic sanctions by itself makes the issue important by transforming the debate from the substantive question (here Arab-Israeli policy) to whether or not the target state will allow itself to be coerced by an outside power. Presumably the result is that the leadership, elites, and/or publics will become so outraged at the influence attempt that they will make it politically impossible for the leadership to accede to outside demands, regardless of the economic consequences.

However, this argument's logical conclusion is that economic sanctions *never* force the target to alter its position, that they are by nature self-defeating. Empirically this does not seem to be true (Weintraub *et al.*, 1982; Hufbauer and Schott, 1985: 80). Clearly, sanctions do indeed work sometimes, and the nature of the issue does seem important.

It may be useful to think of issues in terms of importance not to the state as a whole, but to individual or corporate members of the central decision-making unit of the government. If one or more members of this unit think the issue is important, and if they cannot be removed from the decision-making unit at least on this issue, it will be very difficult to alter the policy by external pressure. This means that a fairly detailed political study of the target government should be undertaken before sanctions are imposed, focusing on the political interests of major actors in the policy issue involved. "(C)oercion . . . must not be based on the hope that officials in another government would willingly commit political suicide" (Thies, 1980: 419; for an intriguing attempt to do this kind of analysis retrospectively for the North Vietnamese government during the early stages of the Vietnam War, see Thies, 1980: 222–83).

3. This suggests a more fundamental problem with modern power analysis. One approach describes power relationships in terms of four dimensions: domain, scope, range, and weight (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950; Dahl, 1963; Deutsch, 1968; Baldwin, 1985). The implication is that these dimensions of the power relationship are the same for all actors. While this may be a useful assumption for most of these dimensions, it is clearly misleading in the case of the scope, that is, the issues involved. The scope of the power relationship was fundamentally different for the actors and for each of the separate target governments. Indeed further disaggregation will reveal that the scope was actually different for each of the separate individuals and organizations within the target governments, as suggested above. Future theoretical and

policy analysis should specify the scope involved for the actors and targets separately by focusing on the importance of issues for particular actors.

4. Our microstudy of the Arab oil weapon reveals that the targets experienced a very high level of uncertainty about which governments were applying sanctions, what the sanctions were supposed to be, how much the sanctions would affect the flow of oil, and what the economic impact of various levels of restrictions would be. Much of the theorizing about economic sanctions seems to assume perfect information, so the oil weapon may be unusual.

However, much of this uncertainty may be inherent in the use of economic sanctions as a foreign policy tool. Adapting Hakan Wiberg's typology (1969: 14) somewhat, there are three levels in the range of sanctions in such cases: the denial of a particular commodity to the target economy, the decline in the macroeconomic performance of the target, and the political costs to decision-makers as a result of this decline. Each is more problematical than its predecessor. Historical experience shows that it is very difficult to cut off the supply of a particular commodity to a target country; the rise in price makes it profitable for individuals and groups to supply it by hook or by crook. Secondly, we know that modern economies have considerable flexibility. Lastly, even if the economy does suffer as a result of the sanctions, the leadership may be able to appeal to nationalism and avoid paying any serious political costs. While uncertainty may temporarily increase the impact of sanctions (as it did in the case of the oil weapon), these examples suggest that elites and leaders will use this uncertainty to avoid the painful process of changing their personal positions or taking politically costly stands, seriously reducing the political impact of such sanctions.

5. Probably the best way to alter the foreign policies of a government is to replace the people who hold high office. However, the oil weapon did not cause such changes in personnel. This is a major limitation on the impact of economic sanctions, albeit one shared by most other kinds of limited pressures.

6. A world-systems interpretation would argue that states on the periphery of the international system will have more difficulty successfully using sanctions against strong core states than the reverse. This argument cannot be falsified from this study, but the lack of successful cases of sanctions by core states against peripheral ones suggests that the problems may have more to do with the intrinsic weaknesses of the technique than with the political and economic strengths and weaknesses of the particular actors and targets.

On balance, then, the experience of the oil weapon confirms the generally accepted position that economic sanctions by themselves cannot usually force a change in an important policy of the target government. However, it also suggests that the explanation for these outcomes must be sought by focusing less on the technique itself and more on its impact on the government and society of the target state.

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