

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Rethinking Sanctions

KOFI ANNAN and KISHORE MAHBUBANI

TODAY, the United Nations Security Council has more sanctions regimes in place than at any time in its history. During the 1990s, the maximum was eight; in the 2000s, the peak rose to 12; now it stands at 16. And these totals do not include sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States. Judging by this escalation, one might conclude that sanctions have proved a remarkably effective tool in promoting international peace and security. Unfortunately, that is far from being the case.

In fact, academic studies suggest that sanctions have had limited success. Thomas Biersteker of the Graduate Institute in Geneva estimates that sanctions are effective only about 20 percent of the time. According to Oxford University's Adam Roberts, "There are very few cases where you can definitely identify sanctions as having had a success, except sometimes in combination with other factors." For example, while US and EU sanctions on Myanmar may have contributed to the country's decision to open up its economy and engage in gradual political reform, fear of becoming overly reliant on China may have been a bigger consideration.

But the potential problems with sanctions regimes extend far beyond ineffectiveness. There is also evidence that sanctions can be counterproductive, such as when targeted regimes enrich themselves by controlling black markets in prohibited goods. In Haiti, to take just one example, the military regime facilitated the trade of black-market oil across its border with the Dominican Republic during the oil embargo on the country in 1993 and 1994.

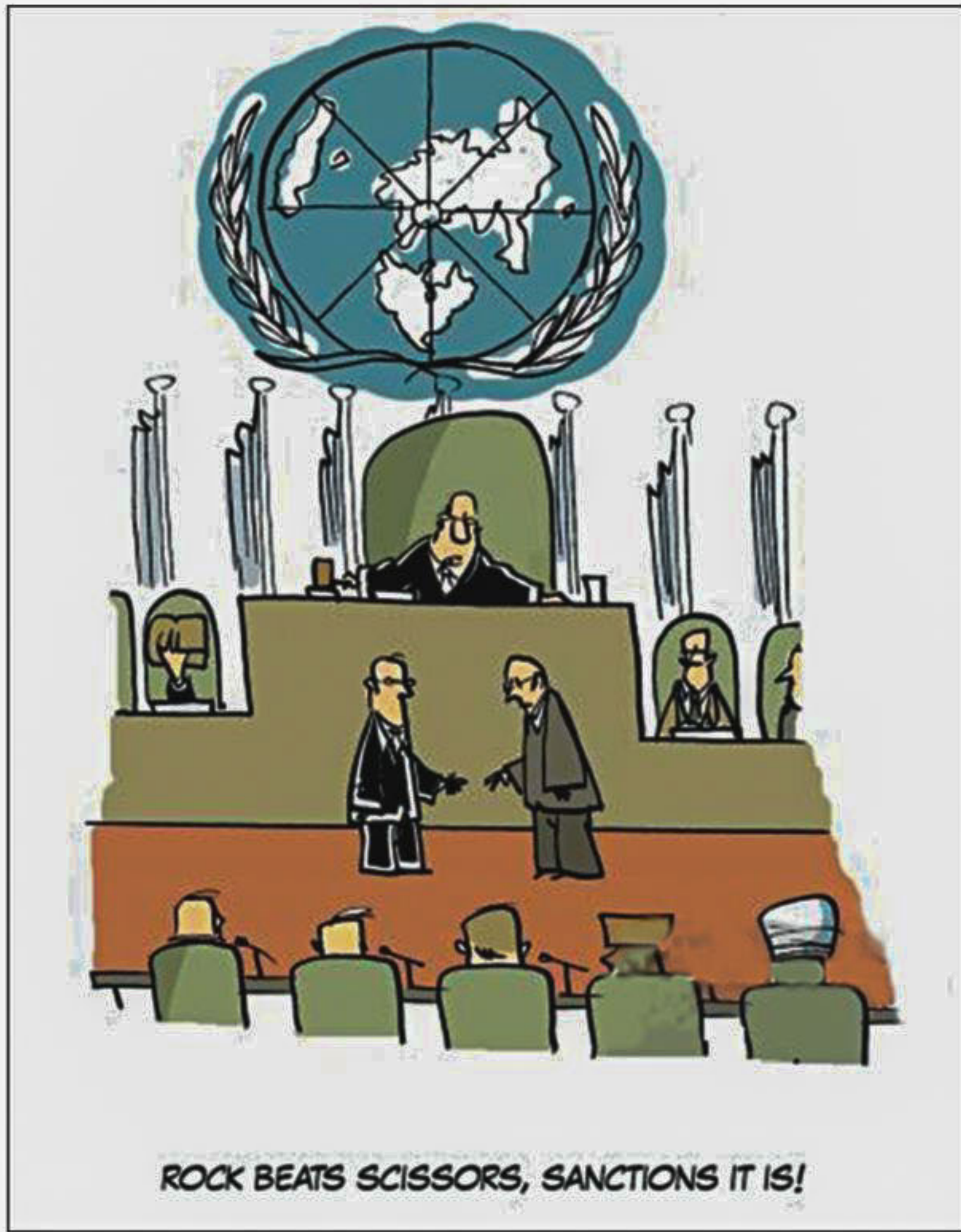
The risks intensify when the targeted

country is in a strong position to retaliate, because affected constituencies can turn against their leaders for imposing the sanctions. When the US and the EU imposed sanctions on Russia in response to its annexation of Crimea, Russia retaliated by banning food imports from Western Europe, spurring farmers in Brussels and elsewhere to protest against falling prices.

Even when sanctions are not having the intended impact, however, they often remain in place. One reason is that, once sanctions have been adopted, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council can "reverse veto" attempts to lift them. Thus, although sanctions regimes are subject to periodic review, this means little as long as at least one permanent member is committed to maintaining them.

This occurred with the US-backed sanctions imposed on Iraq in the 1990s. The sanctions had serious consequences not just for Saddam Hussein and his regime, against whom they were aimed, but also – and more important – for huge numbers of innocent people. Joy Gordon of Loyola University in Chicago has estimated that the sanctions led to 670,000-880,000 excess child deaths.

To be sure, the international community, recognising the suffering that sanctions caused in Iraq, has moved toward targeted or "smart" sanctions. But it remains unclear whether today's targeted sanctions are actually more effective than the comprehensive sanctions of the past. As Gordon has pointed out, black-market trade can still undermine arms and oil embargoes. Moreover, sanctions targeting specific industries can damage the wider economy in ways that hurt the livelihoods and wellbeing of ordinary citizens, though those consequences are often overlooked.



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Sanctions targeting specific individuals, such as asset freezes and travel bans, do better at avoiding such broad collateral damage. But innocent people can inadvertently appear on these lists, though the process of identifying targets has improved in response to litigation brought by those who have been affected.

Of course, sanctions do serve some

purpose. As Columbia University's Michael Doyle puts it, "Sanctions can be justified if the alternatives of inaction or armed force are worse, which they sometimes are. Inaction might involve tolerating a human-rights abuse or...engaging in purely verbal criticism ('cheap talk'). Armed force is both disproportionate to some abuses and often more costly in human and

material terms."

The problem arises when leaders depend excessively on sanctions. Harvard's John Ruggie frames the issue succinctly: "Sanctions are an instrument of coercive diplomacy – except that policymakers have forgotten about the diplomacy part." Indeed, it often seems that leaders, unwilling or unable to put in the time to pursue genuine political engagement, use sanctions as a kind of shortcut.

As Harvard's Kenneth Rogoff has noted, "The effects of sanctions are often fairly disappointing – so much so that many scholars have concluded that such measures often are imposed so that governments can appear to domestic audiences to be 'doing something.'" That was certainly the case with the severe sanctions imposed by the US on Cuba, which were both cheap and ineffective (in fact, they may have delayed reforms).

Unfortunately, getting sanctions right has generally been a less compelling goal than getting sanctions adopted. But, given the disputed impact of sanctions, a new approach is needed. After all, public policy should be guided by evidence, not intuition and emotion. And the evidence indicates that, in order to achieve success and avoid unintended consequences, carefully calibrated sanctions must be pursued in tandem with political engagement.

Imposing sanctions may feel good. But if they are actually to do good, we must refine how they are used.

The writers are chair of the Kofi Annan Foundation, which mobilises political will to address threats to peace, development, and human rights, and the Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore and the author of *The Great Convergence: Asia, the West, and the Logic of One World*, respectively.

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Effective parenting has to be learnt

LAILA KHONDKAR

NOW I understand that 'punishment' and 'discipline' are different. Our parents brought us up in certain ways, and that is how we raise our children. They used to beat us and made us believe that it was part of the disciplining process. Thus, it is a part of us. But from this training, we've learnt the difference between the two clearly; we have been punishing our children, not disciplining them. Sometimes they even run away from us due to punishment. We did not have the knowledge on any other discipline techniques. But our approach is going to change from now on."

This remark was made by a participant of Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting training in Liberia. I have heard similar comments in other countries including Bangladesh. Children face high level of violence from their parents, teachers, and caregivers in homes, schools, institutions etc. Research has shown that physical punishment leads to impaired parent-child relationship, poor child mental health, child aggression and child delinquency. When children face such violence

from the people they trust most (their parents), they also learn to be violent with loved ones. Many adults who punish their children have experienced punishment in their childhood. But this vicious cycle must be broken.

Generally, we observe two extremes in parenting. Some say "yes" to everything the children demand without even thinking whether that will be in the best interest of the children; some others try to impose their views on their children without considering their opinions. Adults usually think that we will "spoil" children if we show too much love and affection and thus have to be very "strict". These are assumptions and not founded on any scientific evidence. All of the findings of the hundreds of studies on parenting, conducted over the past 30 years, can be summarised to two main findings: children need to live in an atmosphere of love and warmth, and children need structure to help them learn. Children are most likely to thrive when their parents are knowledgeable about child development and recognise how behaviour is related to a child's developmental stage and how they are able to emotionally self-regulate.

The Positive Discipline Programme was developed in response to the question, "If I don't hit my child, what else can I do?" It was pioneered by Dr. Joan Durrant, a child-clinical psychologist and Professor of Family Social Sciences at the University of Manitoba, Canada, in partnership with Save the Children. The programme brings together learnings on optimising

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healthy development of children, findings on effective parenting (which is informed by research in neurobiology, cognitive psychology, and emotional regulation), and child rights principles to give parents and other caregivers a framework for responding constructively to conflicts with children.

Positive Discipline makes parents realise how children think and feel at

different ages. It is interesting to note that most parents have very limited understanding on child development, which contribute to their conflict with children. For example, a parent may shout at a three-year-old child for not wearing warm clothes while going out, but the child at that age does not even understand the consequences of getting exposed to cold. Positive Discipline raises parental awareness that providing "warmth" and "structure" is the best route to achieving "long-term goals" for children (what type of persons they want their children to become and the qualities required for that), instead of shouting or hitting, which many parents practice in order to ensure that children comply with the short-term objectives (in the above example, making the child wear warm clothes could be the example). Providing warmth is about establishing trust, respect and communication. Structure is about information, guidance and teaching, which is completely different from punishment, control and coercion – which constitute the traditional views of parenting in many countries. The techniques help parents understand the temperament of their children, as well as themselves, and

find the appropriate solutions in various situations. Positive Discipline gives them the knowledge and tools to perform parental responsibilities in an effective way.

Positive Discipline is based on two foundational pillars – the elimination of physical and emotional punishment of children, and the promotion of the rights of all children as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Some people have misconceptions about child rights and think that it means taking away parental authority. In fact, the UNCRC is very clear about the importance of parental guidance. Article 5 of the Convention mentions, "States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention." These days I hear many parents complaining about

their adolescent boys or girls spending too much time on the internet. It is the responsibility of the parents to provide the required "direction and guidance" on various aspects of their children's lives, which includes appropriate internet use.

Observations suggest that most of us are still unaware that parenting can be learnt and think that it comes naturally. The fact that one can become a parent biologically does not mean that the person will automatically have the capacity to be an effective parent. Parenting is joyous as well as challenging as an experience. To guide a human being toward adulthood, teaching them all they need to know to have a happy, successful life cannot be an easy task. There are times in all parents' lives when the challenges seem overwhelming. It would thus be rewarding if all parents recognised the need to learn about parenting, and there were resources and trainings to support them in the journey. Governments should consider offering universal parenting programmes to present and future parents.

The writer is Director of Child Protection, Save the Children.

BEEBLE BAILEY by Mort Walker
 BEETLE: GET AWAY FROM THOSE CONTROLS! DO YOU WANT TO KILL SOMEBODY?
 IF BEETLE DOESN'T MIND YOU, CAN I HAVE YOUR DOGS?
 BEETLE: NOT WALKER!

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott
 BLADDA MOCM MEGM!
 MAMA ANJAMA BE-BE PAAA!
 WOOBEE BLADDAHUI!
 DO YOU AND WHEN NEED SOMETHING?
 (SUBTILES)

QUOTABLE Quote

MILAN KUNDERA
 The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.

WALTON আমাদের পণ্য

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