

Relegation of economic sanctions to this political function would be an admission of failure, and would be rather precipitant. It would be wrong to dismiss the concept of economic sanctions without first questioning whether the assumptions upon which they are based could be usefully developed, and whether the *modus operandi* needs alteration. The history of economic warfare, not just in this century nor even in the last two, but over the span of modern times, suggests that there are old ideas which can be applied to the new context.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. The Intent of Economic Sanctions

The intent of the League of Nations and the United Nations has been to develop economic sanctions as a coercive instrument, capable of forcing target governments into altering policies which are offensive to the world community. The strategic mode is consistent with Sir James Cable's description of "purposeful force," a label which he coined for military action which "does not itself do anything: it induces someone else to take a decision which would not otherwise have been taken."<sup>4</sup> Typically, measures of "purposeful force" require much more sophisticated application of power than is the case where military action, if only it be strong enough, can directly achieve the goal. Indirect means are inevitably less efficient. To be effective as a coercive force, economic sanctions must create political pressure on an influential person or persons in the target government, and they must do so in a way which facilitates compliance.

To fulfil this purpose, economic sanctions have conformed to ideas of economic warfare which were largely developed subsequent to the wars of the French Revolution and Empire, but which have antecedents in the non-importation movement of the American Revolution and the American government's "Non-Importation Act" of 1807 prohibiting most British imports, the later "Embargo" act against all foreign trade, and the "Non-Intercourse" act of 1809 banning trade only with France and Britain.<sup>5</sup> The Confederate States employed the idea of embargoing cotton with the hope that Britain would be obliged to recognize their independence, out of fear that unemployed mill hands

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<sup>3</sup> This study grows out of my work on economic warfare, which was published as Attack on Maritime Trade, (Macmillan U.K. and the University of Toronto Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> James Cable, Gunboat Diplomacy, (London, 1971), p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> W. Alison Phillips and Arthur H. Reede, Neutrality, (New York, c. 1935), II, "The Napoleonic Period," pp. 91-125; Anna Cornelia Clauder, American Commerce as Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1793-1812, (Philadelphia, 1932), pp. 27-38; Robert Greenhalgh Albion with Jennie Barnes Pope, Sea Lanes in Wartime, (U.S.A., 1968), p. 75; and Robin Renwick, Economic Sanctions, Harvard Studies in International Affairs Number 45, Harvard (1981), pp. 4-8.