

I. INTRODUCTION

There have been few studies of the economic sanctions imposed by Canada, or rather their impact on our economy and their effect on the target country.¹ Without claiming to be exhaustive, this paper aims to help fill the gap and attempts to offer an overview of the subject.

Since Parliament passed the Special Economic Measures Act (SEMA) in June 1992, sanctions have been a hot topic if only because of the controversy about their effectiveness in achieving political objectives in countries such as Yugoslavia, Haiti and Iraq. There also seems to be a greater likelihood that the United Nations will impose sanctions on countries deemed guilty of human rights violations, or that individual countries, including the United States, will introduce their own sanctions against other nations and seek the support of the international community.

The United Nations Act (UNA) is potentially the most powerful instrument available to the government, given Canada's undertaking to implement Security Council orders, but the addition of the SEMA to our legal arsenal will allow a more flexible Canadian government response to calls for sanctions from bodies other than the UN Security Council, or pending a binding Security Council decision. For example, the SEMA could be used to satisfy public pressure for Canada to take a leading role in defending certain basic international principles, notably democracy, the protection of human rights, the inviolability of borders, opposition to terrorism and perhaps, in the future, the protection of the environment.

Sanctions are liable to have economic consequences for Canada. It is therefore important to refine the existing criteria guiding our actions in this area so the government can make informed decisions. We believed it would be useful to present a brief survey of the field and to draw some conclusions for consideration before special measures are taken against a target country.

We will review the instruments available to the Canadian government; present an overview of specific cases of sanctions imposed by the international

¹ In their book *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered* (Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1990), G.C. Hufbauer, J.J. Schott and K.A. Elliott survey many instances of sanctions applied by a large number of countries, including Canada in a number of cases. However, they mention only 5 specific cases in which Canada was alone or almost alone as a sanctioning country, having acted either unilaterally or with the US. These sanctions imposed against a variety of countries, including India, Pakistan, South Korea, the European Community and Japan, all related to nuclear safeguards. They also mention the threat of Arab sanctions in 1979 over the question of the site for Canada's embassy in Israel.