

Book Review

Rosas, Maria Cristina, (2003), **Sanciones, zanahorias y garrottes. La economía política de la seguridad internacional**. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México/Secretaría Permanente del Sistema Económico Latinoamericano (SELA), 316 pp.

Reviewed by Clara Portela, *European University Institute*

This book constitutes one of the very rare contributions to the sanctions debate coming from the developing world. Rosas, a Mexican scholar, sets herself the objective of elucidating the utility of sanctions and incentives, for the purpose of testing their applicability to Mexican foreign policy (p.53). In order to do so, she starts by locating sanctions in the wider framework of international political economy; then proceeds to put forward a classification of sanctions, and to discuss their legality. A chapter dealing with the evaluation of sanctions efficacy precedes two case studies – one case of sanctions failure, and a second of sanctions success. The final chapter addresses the largely undefined position of Mexico vis-à-vis the use of sanctions as a means of coercion in international politics.

The discussion suffers from some serious shortcomings. To begin with, the title of the book does not correspond to its contents. The analysis deals exclusively with sanctions (*sticks*), while incentives (*carrots*) are left out. It is striking that the author deals primarily with economic sanctions, which appears to be a somewhat outdated focus at a time where scholarly attention concentrates on *smart sanctions* (sanctions targeted at the leadership responsible for objectionable behaviour) and on *constructive engagement* (the combination of dialogue, sanctions, and incentives).

The most disappointing chapter is that on the methodology for the evaluation of sanctions efficacy. There is no in-depth discussion of the major methodological disagreements that arose in the debate provoked by the publication of the landmark study on sanctions efficacy, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered* (Hufbauer/Schott/Elliott, 1985). Instead, the chapter on efficacy is limited to a discussion of the arguments in favour and against the use of sanctions as a foreign policy tool.

The heavy concentration on US sanctions is probably unavoidable in view of the overwhelming importance of this country for Mexican external relations. Still, the book suffers from a repetitive, not-always-timely critique of American foreign policy, and from allusions to other debates that bear little relevance for the topic at hand. Finally, the analysis would have benefited from more thorough referencing to literature, and by the provision of some evidence to back up the case studies.

On the other hand, there are interesting aspects to this book. In the first place, it is very refreshing to find an analysis on sanctions from a Latin-American perspective, which incorporates a new viewpoint into a Western-dominated debate. One of the central contributions of the book is to present the use of sanctions as a North-South issue, shifting away from the cold, neutral tone with which the mainstream scholarship on sanctions efficacy looks at the subject. So far, the question as to how (apparently unaffected) third-world countries perceive the use of sanctions in their role as *third parties* has hardly been discussed. This is particularly relevant in the case of Mexico due to its condition as immediate neighbour of the main global sanctioning actor, the US, and to the risk of it being affected by secondary sanctions such as those foreseen in the *Helms-Burton Act* on Cuba.

Another interesting idea is contrasting an unsuccessful sanctions episode, the UN sanctions against Iraq, with the successful threat of the use of sanctions by the US against Brazil over the protection of its home software industry. This is not only innovative, but contributes to the illumination of a strand of sanctions practice that has remained regrettably unexplored by research: the achievement of objectives by the mere *threat* of sanctions.

Book Review of **Sanciones, zanhorias y garrottes. La economía política de la seguridad internacional**, *Peace, Conflict and Development: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 7, July 2005, available from <http://www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk>.

Finally, an original contribution of the book is its analysis of the economic impact that UN and US sanctions had on the trade balance between Mexico and the targets – its sometimes unexpected results will surprise the reader.