

Houston Area Model United Nations Standard Committee

NATO



Co-Chairs | Brianna Burnside and Bobby Youstra
Topic B: Adopting a Unified Standard For
Enforcing Sanctions on Rogue Actors
Houston Area Model United Nations 50
February 6 & 7, 2025

Note to Delegates

Delegates,

Howdy! My name is Brianna and I'm a Junior Political Science major at Texas A&M.

I joined Model UN my junior year of highschool, so I was a little late to the game. I instantly fell in love with Model UN and became vice president of my school's chapter my senior year. Model UN pushed me towards my dream career of working in Law and was a prime factor in me choosing political science as my major at TAMU.

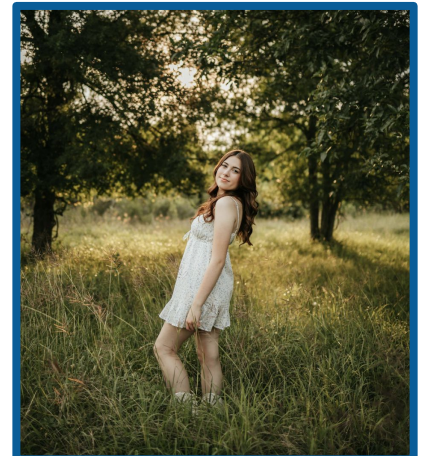
I wanted to chair NATO because NATO is an incredibly important committee globally and I wanted to learn more about the inner workings of it. I am very excited for our topic of AI, autonomous weaponry, and new warfare technology as it is a very relevant topic to the modern era.

A few last minute tips: Don't procrastinate! I know that is easier said than done but to truly succeed and push yourself at conference, it is imperative to start early; Research countries in the committee with similar views to your country, this is a great way to make allies and find people to work with; Lastly, have fun! HAMUN is a great way to meet new people and make lifelong friendships. Step out of your comfort zone a little!

Brianna Burnside

Chair of NATO

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Note to Delegates

Delegates,

My name is Bobby Youstra, and I'm very excited to be your NATO committee chair for HAMUN 50. I'm a senior studying computer science at UT Austin, although I'm originally from the San Francisco Bay Area. I first started doing MUN in my freshman year of high school and ever since then I've thoroughly enjoyed researching and debating all sorts of international issues, within crisis and general assembly settings, from the Venezuelan crisis to the sovereignty of outer space. I've also loved chairing committees at HAMUN, and previously have chaired LEGAL for HAMUN 49 and 48.

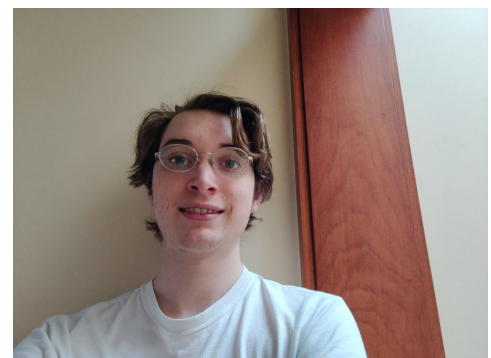
Over seven years of MUN experience from high school delegate to now chair, the best part of MUN has always been the same. The experience of learning a different country's position and perspective helped me to understand just a little bit more about our diverse world. In an increasingly globalized society, understanding different perspectives and looking through them with a critical lens is an incredibly valuable skill to have, and one that will pay dividends in the future. The issues we face in the world are numerous and real, but I believe that through cultivating our mutual understanding of the world we can take a small step in the right direction. I hope y'all believe this too.

To that end, I hope that y'all in NATO take this to heart. Our topics of sanctions enforcement and new warfare technology provoke new pressing questions. This includes: How do we balance the fundamental rights and freedoms core to NATO's philosophy with new innovations? How do we unite as a bloc on punishments for those who violate the post-WWII rules-based international order? I urge y'all to consider questions like these and many others like them during this committee and to learn different but important perspectives on these pressing problems.

Bobby Youstra

Chair of NATO

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Committee Introduction

NATO was formed in the year 1949 after a transatlantic treaty was signed by 12 founding members with the original goal of promoting allyship and protection from the Soviet Union. This was the first time that the United States had entered a peacetime military alliance with the Eastern Hemisphere. NATO is currently made up of 32 countries in total- 30 of which are in Europe and the other 2 being in North America. NATO's purpose has gradually evolved to a larger scale than just for defending against the Soviet Union. It now strives to protect the security and freedoms of its countries through diplomatic and military means. Politically, NATO promotes democratic beliefs and values and is committed to attempting to reconcile disputes peacefully before taking on more extreme matters of warfare.





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Background Information

Executive Summary

Faced with multifaceted challenges to the post World War II world order, many developed western democracies have increasingly relied on sanctions as troopless weapons: however, not all uses of them are ultimately successful in accomplishing their aims. With the rise of democracy, democratic institutions in theory provide yet another disincentive to waging traditional armed warfare in the unpopularity of pursuing costly or losing wars[1]. Both as a result of the economic strength of developed democracies worldwide and an increasingly connected global economy, economic sanctions have become more prevalent as a tool against rogue actors.

However, sanctions enforcement has typically been a fractured process, even within NATO. The United States is by far the most prolific enforcer in the world, with over 15 thousand sanctions enforced as of April 2024, with one of its largest group of sanctions targeted towards Russia for its unprovoked aggression in Ukraine[1]. Although most NATO members have followed the US' lead when it comes to comprehensive sanctions on Russia, a key exception has been Turkey, which has seen increased trade to Russia amid concerns over contravention of export controls on arms with US technology[3].

As such, it is imperative that this committee addresses this vital disconnect when it comes to sanctions enforcement. In the face of growing adversarial threats, NATO should deal with rogue actors like Russia, the DPRK, or other enablers/provokers of aggression in a unified manner to maximize the massive economic and geopolitical power of this bloc. This is especially imperative given the increased presence of espionage, technology theft, and cyber attacks.

Conceptualization of Topic

As the main tool between armed conflict and diplomacy, effective sanctions have the potential to compel an adversary or rogue actor to change their behavior, but they also have equal potential to hurt the general public and middle class, inflaming public anger against the sanctions enforcer. Sanctions themselves can take many forms, ranging from targeted sanctions on individuals to broad sanctions restricting global financial transactions through SWIFT (or the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) or entire airspace closures[5][6]. While the United States is by far the most prolific sanctions enforcer, other governments and even the United Nations security council have exercised sanctions in the past. Despite this, sanctions can easily become “baked in” to an aggressor's economy, with no tangible change in policy occurring despite years and sometimes even decades of comprehensive sanctions enforcement.

One of the most prominent examples of this is North Korea's nuclear weapon program. Since their first nuclear weapon test in 2006, the regime has been subject to a flurry of multilateral sanctions, originating from the US, Japan, the European Union, and even the UN security council, among others. Despite this, North Korea has not denuclearized or otherwise changed policies. One key issue limiting the effectiveness of these sanctions have been from China and Russia, who are wary of the prospect of regime change in the country and have been accused of allowing illicit trading routes of raw materials such as coal, iron, and petroleum [9].

In this regard, when considering the effectiveness of economic sanctions it is vital that NATO as a bloc consider sanctions not as a country to country decision, but as a unified decision made with the support of the bloc.



History

Sanctions have been used in many forms ever since the first recorded use in Ancient Greece during the Peloponnesian War, with a particularly notable early example in Napoleon's ultimately unsuccessful blockade of Great Britain for Continental Europe[9]. Another example came with the League of Nations, where despite voting to sanction Italy for invading Ethiopia, Italian imports of oil were unaffected. This was out of a concern from Britain and France feared that a total blockade would drive Mussolini into an alliance with Nazi Germany. Despite this, Italy continued their successful conquest in 1936 and ultimately allied with Nazi Germany later on anyways. [10]

Economic sanctions continued to develop further during World War II, when the United States froze Japanese assets in the US in July 1941, which provoked Japanese hardliners into conducting the eventual attack on Pearl Harbor. As World War II transitioned into the Cold War, the importance of sanctions, particularly when it came to military technology, increased. This was because of Soviet leadership increasingly turning to espionage to reduce the technological gap between NATO-allied countries, and Warsaw Pact-allied countries[11]. In addition, new decolonized nations in Africa and Asia joining the United Nations spoke out against Apartheid in South Africa, resulting in UNSC resolution 181 which called for a voluntary arms embargo in 1963[12]. While this did not immediately influence the behavior of South Africa, increasing sanctions on the country in the 80s from the United States and the United Kingdom eventually led the regime to democratize in 1994[10].



History

Today, modern economic sanctions have evolved into much more sophisticated originating from the September 11th attacks. Lengthy lists of “Specially Designated Nationals” saw increasing adoption from the US government. Americans were prevented from economic relationships with anyone on the list, but foreign firms also were hesitant to work with anyone on the list for fear of adding themselves to this list[10].

Despite the evolution of sanctions, their track record remains patchy at best. While successful examples like the end of Apartheid and the Iran Nuclear Deal do exist, Russia’s war in Ukraine and North Korea’s nuclear program show that these tactics aren’t a silver bullet and can just as easily backfire against the enforcers. They also prove that in order for sanctions to be the most effective, coordination among allied countries in blocs like NATO is essential.



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Case Examples

When Russia's war with Ukraine started, the United States and other NATO allies announced a sweeping set of sanctions designed to isolate the Russian economy from the rest of the world. These sanctions touched the Russian financial sector, including kicking Russian banks out of the global financial communications network SWIFT, freezing assets involved with oligarchs, cutting off Russian oil distribution, and many more areas not discussed here. However, despite this comprehensive set of sanctions from NATO-allied countries, these sanctions were far from unified, as Turkey has continued to maintain friendly ties with Russia despite being a NATO member. This can be seen through it continuing to buy Russian oil and gas, and maintaining open diplomatic cables to Moscow[13]. As a result, tension and anxiety between the US and Turkey over sanctions and military equipment has resulted in sanctions toward Turkish nationals and companies, emphasizing the importance of a unified sanctions standard under the bloc[14].

Another key example of the importance of unified sanctions enforcement comes from the Iran Nuclear deal, otherwise known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Initially enacted as a treaty between the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany, and Iran, it specified concrete limits on centrifuges, banned the production highly enriched plutonium or uranium used in nuclear weapons, and mandated international inspections by the UN's IAEA. Despite continuous support from other members of the treaty, the United States under the Trump administration pulled out of the treaty and resumed comprehensive sanctions. This caused European signatories to attempt to salvage the deal, ultimately mostly unsuccessfully. Even with renewed efforts by the Biden administration to reinstate a deal, factors like a newly elected conservative Iranian leader have rendered those efforts unsuccessful[15].



Questions to Consider

- How can sanctions enforcement within the NATO bloc be more unified while allowing for country to country discussion and consensus?
- When should we use targeted sanctions over more comprehensive ones against rogue actors?
- What constitutes a “rogue actor?”
- When do sanctions target the middle class instead of the governments and elites they are meant to sanction?
- How can NATO better craft sanctions in a more targeted manner to achieve their goals?

Appendix and Sources

[1]:Valentino, B. A., Huth, P. K., & Croco, S. E. (2010). Bear Any Burden? How Democracies Minimize the Costs of War. *The Journal of Politics*, 72(2), 528–544. doi:10.1017/s0022381609990831

[2]:<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/interactive/2024/us-sanction-countries-work/>

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[4]:<https://washingtondc.jhu.edu/news/do-sanctions-actually-work-experts-evaluate-the-efficacy-of-this-widely-used-foreign-policy-tool/>

[5]:<https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2023/04/11/1169072190/why-sanctions-dont-work-but-could-if-done-right>



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