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SANCTIONS DEMYSTIFIED: UNDERSTANDING THE MECHANICS OF GLOBAL PUNITIVE MEASURES

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Abstract

Sanctions are a critical tool in international relations, used by states and global organizations to enforce compliance, deter violations, and maintain global order. Though they serve as alternatives to military action, their effectiveness varies depending on factors such as the resilience of the targeted state, the level of international support, sanctions duration, and strategic objectives. Sanctions take different forms, including economic restrictions, trade limitations, and diplomatic isolation, each with distinct impacts on the targeted entities. This study examines the mechanics of sanctions, exploring their meaning, origin, objectives, types, jurisdiction, and the factors that influence their success. Findings reveal that while sanctions can pressure governments and restrict harmful activities, they may also have unintended consequences, such as economic hardship for civilians and the reinforcement of authoritarian regimes. Given these complexities, the study recommends that sanctions be implemented strategically and in conjunction with diplomatic efforts to ensure they serve as effective tools for fostering meaningful change rather than exacerbating conflicts in the international system.

Introduction

The international society is made up of sovereign nations, each of which enjoys its autonomy from being under the control of another independent country. This position is reinforced by the Realist postulation that the international system is anarchical in nature (Usiemure & Gbigbidje, 2018). This implies that there is no overarching authority which superintends over the states in the global society. In other words, there is no hierarchically superior or coercive power that can resolve disputes, enforce law or order the system of international politics. This is the arena in which international interactions are conducted. However, in international relations, rules are

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made, policies are formulated and treaties are signed, all of which are agreed upon to regulate the conducts of states as they relate with each other in the international system. The rules, policies and treaties help to regulate a world system that would otherwise be nasty and brutish. More often than not, states in the international system comply with these regulations. But sometimes, some states prefer to ignore these regulatory provisions in favor of their personal agenda. The institution of sanctions in the international system is to forestall any sort of reckless behavior and steer erring states back on the right track (IE School of Global and Public Affairs, 2020). Sanctions are a part of diplomatic provisions that international organizations use to influence the behavior of target states by mounting sufficient pressure on the subject of the sanctions so as to make it succumb to the wishes of the influencing organization.

There is no single universally acceptable definition for international sanctions as scholars of international relations have offered different definitions for international sanctions. They are tools that states use to express their dissatisfaction of certain activities when they do not want to employ military tactics. According to Wilson & Yao, they are also explained as means that states employ to conjointly penalize the contravention of some important internationally accepted norms through the legitimate authority of international organizations. International sanctions are forceful tools of foreign policy measures employed to deal with entities, whether they are states, non-state actors or individuals that pose a danger to the maintenance of global peace and security. These threats may include nuclear weapons proliferation, international terrorist activities and gross severe breaches of human rights. International sanctions involve the limitation or suspension of economic, trade, or diplomatic connections, which are set in motion by one country, or a coalition of countries, or international organizations against another nation or nations. They are methods used by countries to restrict trade and official contact with a country that has transgressed international law. They have also been defined as deliberate steps taken by countries or multilateral bodies against other states driven by political motives. Wilson and Yao define them as "measures taken in extremis when lesser means have failed to bring about the desired result". Examples of sanctions measures are trade restrictions, financial restrictions, restrictions on admission reduction or withdrawal of assistance/aid and severance of diplomatic relations. In some instances, international sanctions can also be imposed on individuals (i.e. personal or individual sanctions) whose actions are perceived to be in violation of international norms.

Statement of the Problem

International sanctions are penalties which states impose on other states as a diplomatic alternative to military intervention. International sanctions are employed for a wide range of foreign policy purposes, all of which is usually aimed at regulating the behaviors and activities of state actors. They ought to be veritable tools to help regulate an international system that is anarchical; having no overarching authority above states. When sanctions are imposed on a state, the expected outcome is that the state being sanctioned would abandon the activity that has earned it the ire of the international community and comport itself in line with the acceptable norms which govern the international society. Compliance with international sanction will make the international society peaceful, secured and cooperative. In reality however, the international community has experienced an oscillation between sanctions effectiveness and sanctions

ineffectiveness. Many nations of the world have undermined international sanctions and gone ahead to pursue the course of actions for which they were sanctioned. This aberrance act has, in most cases generated tensions in the global arena and also encouraged other states to undermine the veritable process meant to correct errant and unacceptable behavior. The inherent inconsistency in sanctions outcomes therefore casts a shadow on the credibility of international sanctions as a diplomatic tool as sanction agencies are gradually becoming toothless bulldog that can bark but cannot bite. Without the assured efficacy of sanctions, the international community could descend into lawlessness and anarchy, making it impossible to regulate the activities of state actors. This research therefore seeks to investigate the viability of international sanctions as a diplomatic tool for curbing the excesses of state actors with the intention of unearthing the factors which determine compliance as well as non-compliance of sovereign states in a given sanctions regime.

Origin of International Sanctions

The use of international sanctions can be linked to the nineteenth century system of managing great powers known as the concert system. The Concert System, also known as the Concert of Europe, was a diplomatic arrangement that was introduced after the Napoleonic Wars of 1815. In this system, major European powers-Austria, Prussia, Russia and the United Kingdom (and later France), developed a structure for regular discussions and cooperation. The cardinal objective of this System was to maintain the balance of power and prevent the recurrence of widespread conflict. There are varying opinions regarding the character of this system, the duration of its existence and its historical substance. There is however no gainsaying the fact that it introduced to diplomacy certain ideas that ushered in the Covenant of the League of Nations and the United Nation's Charter. Some of these concepts as stated by Wilson and Yao include: "the negation of the right of any one Power; the assertion of the right of the Powers collectively to make decisions on matters affecting the peace of Europe; responsibility of the Powers collectively to enforce the decisions of Europe; … treating as an international question any matter that the Powers collectively deemed a threat to the peace of Europe, whether it was a matter that fell within the domestic jurisdiction of a sovereign nation or not" (Wilson & Yao, 2018).

Comprehensive privileges and obligations with respect to international sanctions were initially instituted within the League of Nations' Covenant. The reason for their institution was simple enough as they presented a safer and cheaper alternative to wars. It ceased to simply be one of the alternatives open to new and rising industrial and nationalistic states. More worrisome was the fact that the right of individual sovereign states to turn to armed conflict could not be withdrawn. A method of organizing the capabilities and influence of nations for the benefit of the international system therefore had to be sought. The hitherto decentralized system of enforcing international norms had to give way for a system with greater centralization that would unify the powers and interests of the international community. Hence, the League of Nations took actions to bring more order to international relations. The right to armed conflict was rescinded. Acts of violence were considered to be either a crime against the international community or borne out of upholding the ideals of the international community. Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant instructed member states to apply comprehensive economic measures against any member state that

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engaged in acts of violence in violation of the League's principles (Office of the Historian, 2023). As a result, the Covenant strengthened the authority and obligation to impose social and economic sanctions. However, when it came to military sanctions, it was primarily a responsibility to consider a recommendation from the Council regarding the military forces they might be willing to contribute to any possible joint enforcement action.

The League's failure to take resolute steps in response to acts of violence in Manchuria, Abyssinia and the Rhineland during the 1930s was caused in part by the flaws in its Covenant. The United Nation's Charter aimed to remedy this. It overruled the unanimous consent precondition (as outlined in Article 5) within the League's Council when making decisions on issues threatening international peace (Office of the Historian, 2023). It instituted in its place a required majority of nine (9) consenting votes out of the fifteen (15) UN Security Council (UNSC) members. A clause to this was that each of the permanent members would enjoy the power of veto (as stated in Article 27) (Office of the Historian, 2023). The reflexive social and economic sanctions gave way for a required collective decision by the UNSC on what measures short of war but inclusive of total or limited suspension of economic relations and diplomatic measures to be employed in response to a collective threat (Article 41) (Office of the Historian, 2023). Also, the option of military sanctions was strengthened by Article 42 if the means prescribed by Article 41 prove inadequate to sustain international peace.

Even though the ability of the League of Nations to enforce decision, including sanctions was limited, there are notable examples of sanctions imposed by the League of Nations. For example, when Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, the League of Nations criticized the aggression and demanded that Japanese forces withdraw from the region. They placed economic sanctions, such as an arms embargo, but these actions were not sufficient to halt Japan's expansion in the region (Wilson & Yao, 2018). Japan ultimately left the League in 1933. Similarly, in 1935, in response to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia), the League of Nations imposed economic sanctions on Italy. The sanctions included an arms embargo and a prohibition of specific imports (Fleming, 1935). Nevertheless, these measures were not adequately implemented, as major powers like Britain and France were reluctant to take decisive action against Italy.

Objectives of International Sanctions

The primary objective of sanctions is to impose consequences on a target country to force a reaction or compliance with existing international norms. Based on different interpretations of international sanctions, it can be concluded that they are tools in foreign policy designed to impact a state's decisions, particularly when those decisions pose a threat to global peace and stability. The rationale behind international sanctions is to discourage the violation of international norms and induce compliance. According to Wilson and Yao, international sanctions also serve "signaling and deterrent functions". They indicate to the international system what acceptable international conduct is and which norms hold the highest significance. Violation of these norms usually earn the most sweeping disapproval as states go to great lengths to uphold their instruments of disapproval. While in practice international sanctions hurt both the sanctioning and target states, that is not the intention. Sanctions are meant only to hurt the intended recipients and not senders or third-party states. Deterrence on the other hand is a function that sanctions serve by deterring

potential delinquents in addition to punishing current violators all to the end of inducing state compliance in the international system.

Biersteker draws our attention to the fact that it is not unusual for sanctions to be applied for multiple reasons at the same time. The primary objective he points out, is to coerce a change in state behavior. This has long been the primary objective of the application of UN sanctions. In some cases however, it is difficult to force a change in behavior because there are no negotiations underway with the potential targets on a desired course of sanction. This type of sanctions objective is particularly true of sanctions imposed on groups that are found to be involved in terrorist activities. Although sanctioning states/bodies may desire a change in behavior, such groups do not usually subject themselves to negotiations (sanctions imposed on Al-Qaida and ISIS are an example here). Sanctions imposed on such groups are therefore not expected to induce a change in behavior although it may be desired. They are instead meant to constrain/contain their activities. They are intended to raise the costs of operation, making it increasingly difficult for such groups to move their finances internationally.

Biersteker argues that there exists a signaling component in every sanction objective. Sometimes the signal is to condemn a behavior, stress an existing norm or warn other states by making an example of the target state. The fact that sanctions are publicly imposed is in itself some sort of normative signal and usually there is more than one norm being signaled with varying degrees of clarity. There are different rationales behind each sanctions objective as there are different expected outcomes. In coercive sanctions, they are public punishments meant to bankrupt the target and induce a change in behavior. In constraining sanctions, there is no expectation of a change in behavior, rather it is to gash sources of income and sustenance. With signaling sanctions, it is a rationale of a public and strategic communication aimed at signaling both the target and the entire international community.

Types of International Sanctions

International sanctions can be diplomatic, economic, sociocultural (environmental and sports sanctions), military or sanctions on individual

Diplomatic Sanctions

Diplomatic sanctions are political instruments that international actors use to indicate their condemnation of certain actions without resorting to harsh military or economic options. They include limiting or out rightly severing diplomatic ties by either banishing embassies, terminating top-tier government visits, dismissing/calling back diplomatic staff or redlining high-level government conferences (Biersteker, 2019). It can also involve the reduction/downgrade of diplomatic representation (e.g. reducing an embassy to a consulate), reduction of diplomatic contacts, refusal of diplomatic support, denial of visas of officials of a targeted country, imposition of travel restrictions, suspension of bilateral agreements or boycott of international events hosted by the target state. Sometimes diplomatic sanctions can also take the form of a public condemnation of a nation by issuing official statements, delivering speeches, or passing resolutions on platforms of international organizations.

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An example of the application of diplomatic sanctions on states in the international system is the diplomatic sanctions against Russia for its annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Old Dominion University, 2020). After Russia's annexation of Crimea, various Western countries, including the United States of America and members of the European Union, enforced diplomatic sanctions. These measures included the expulsion of Russian diplomats by countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and several EU member-states. These countries also limited their diplomatic interactions with Russia and imposed travel restrictions on its officials. In addition, Russia's G8 membership was suspended, and it was publicly condemned on international platforms such as the United Nations.

Economic Sanctions

Economic sanctions are commercial and financial penalties that essentially restrict routine trade and financial relations. These penalties include imposing tariffs on products exported to the target state, limiting the shipment of specific goods from the target state, and restricting the target state's ports. They can be comprehensive, restricting trade activities with an entire state, or targeted, restricting financial transactions by and with certain enterprises, groups or persons (Aslund, 2023). The objective of this sanction type is usually to inflict significant costs to the target country to force a policy change or achieve a set objective from the state in focus.

An example of this is presented in the Iranian sanctions regime. To curb Iran's nuclear program, the global community, led by the United States and the European Union, imposed economic sanctions (Masters, 2022). These measures were specifically aimed at limiting Iran's oil exports, targeting its financial institutions and restricting access to international financial markets. Although the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 resulted in the removal of certain sanctions, renewed tensions in the years that followed prompted the re-imposition of some measures. In another example, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the United Nations applied economic sanctions on the Iraqi regime (Council on Foreign Relations, 2015). These measures, spanning over a decade, focused on Iraq's oil exports and sought to pressure the country into adhering to disarmament resolutions. The sanctions also sought to limit Iraq's access to international financial markets.

Military Sanctions

Military sanctions involve the use of tactical methods to either impose embargoes on arms and ammunition or execute targeted military strikes. Military sanctions can also include the creation of no-fly zones over a targeted country. This is usually done with the goal of stopping the targeted nation from utilizing its air force. They may also involve blockades which are steps taken to limit the movement of goods, including military supplies, to and from a specific country. This sanction type is only employed in extreme situations. An example of the application of military sanctions on states is seen in the case of Iraq. In response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, a coalition led by the United States took military measures, which included setting up no-fly zones, with the aim of limiting Iraq's military abilities and operations in certain areas (Von Sponeck, 2005).

Sport Sanctions

Sport sanctions are used to wage psychological warfare and cause a demoralization effect. They are restrictions that inhibit a country's athletes from participation in international sporting events.

For example, following accusations of state-sponsored doping in Russia, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and various sports organizations imposed sanctions on Russian athletes and institutions (Von Sponeck, 2005). Russian athletes were disallowed from participating in the Olympic Games and Russia was restricted from hosting or bidding for significant international sporting events.

The motivation behind these sanction types is to call the international community's attention to the sanctioned country and dampen the spirit and confidence of the target state and its citizens. Countries that are sanctioned this way are usually prohibited from hosting sporting events or display their flag or state symbol. Sport sanctions are infrequent and are typically applied when there is a distinct connection between a state's conduct and the principles or regulations of the sports community.

Sanctions on the Environment

Sanctions involving the environment are relatively new to the international system. New concerns on matters relating to the environment have incited international environment protection efforts. Such environmental issues may relate to at-risk species, environmental laws and ozone-depleting chemicals (Reuters, 2020). For example, reacting to extensive illegal logging and deforestation in Indonesia, the European Union implemented measures in 2013 to address the importation of illegally harvested timber (Lexis Nexis, 2022). The EU Timber Regulation compels companies to verify the legal origin of the timber products they introduce to the market.

Sanctions on Individuals

These are sanctions that are imposed on strategic individuals in the bid to get them to pursue or abandon a certain course of action. Such individuals may include political leaders or business moguls. An example of personal sanctions imposition is seen in Myanmar. After the military coup in Myanmar in 2021, several nations, including the United States and the European Union, enforced sanctions against individuals connected to the military junta (Parker, 2013). The purpose of these sanctions was to ensure that those individuals were held responsible for human rights abuses.

There is a distinction between sanctions imposed on states and non-state actors. The main difference between sanctions placed on states and those on non-state actors, like groups or organizations, is found in the specific targets and goals of the sanctions. Although both types of sanctions aim to impact behavior, state sanctions are usually implemented on entire nations to tackle broader geopolitical issues such as human rights violations or nuclear weapons proliferation. In contrast, sanctions on non-state actors focus on specific groups or entities to address more localized or specific challenges, such as terrorism or insurgency. Sanctions imposed on non-state actors usually aim to interfere with their operations, reduce their abilities, or force them change their conduct.

Mechanics of International Sanctions

The primary rationale behind international sanctions usually involves coercion, signaling and constraints. These three are not mutually exclusive, they merely highlight the ways in which power is exerted using sanctions. This means that any of the three can be at work at the same time. For

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example, an asset freeze designed to compel an individual to cease financing acts of terrorism can also be employed to limit a group's ability to carry out those acts simultaneously (Blinken, 2022). Available evidence reveal that the coercive aspect is not usually the prevailing factor (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015). Each case of sanctions has its own unique dynamics, and the duration varies considerably. To capture the diverse characteristics of how sanctions evolve over time, the term "episode" is employed. All sanctions case can be divided into different "episodes", each aligning with a distinct phase of the case. A new episode commences when a significant aspect of the sanctions case undergoes a change, such as a shift in purpose or the utilization of alternative foreign policy instruments alongside sanctions.

Sanctions are generally set in motion as a response to actions or policies of a state that are considered unacceptable by the global community. It is crucial to emphasize that sanctions are seldom, if ever, applied independently or in isolation from other tools in foreign and security policy (Filipenko, A., et al. 2020). Active negotiations, peace mediation initiatives, threats of force, actual use of force, peacekeeping operations, and/or covert operations all operate alongside the implementation of sanctions. The procedure for imposing sanctions usually begins with diplomatic talks and the formulation and approval of resolutions within international organizations. For example, within the context of the United Nations, the Security Council plays a pivotal role as it is a platform for authorizing sanctions. The resolutions dictate the precise measures to be implemented, which may encompass economic, diplomatic or other forms of international sanctions. After receiving authorization, member states or regional organizations put the sanctions into action. This may entail enacting domestic laws and regulations to enforce the international measures. In certain instances, states may voluntarily commit to implementing sanctions prior to formal authorization.

The mechanism of international sanctions is intricate and contingent on the circumstances and goals. Considering that sanctions serve multiple objectives, their efficacy in accomplishing those goals should be assessed independently. If a sanction falls short of coercing a change in the target's behavior, it does not necessarily amount to a policy failure. They might prove successful in limiting a target, buying time for negotiated settlements, or signaling a firm stance on a norm with significant implications for the policy conduct of other parties (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015).

Jurisdiction of Sanctions

Jurisdiction, in the context of sanctions, deals with the legal authority or power that a state or international organization possesses to impose and enforce sanctions. Jurisdiction of sanctions also refers to the geographic range where a specific set of sanctions is valid and can be enforced (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015). It sets the boundaries for the areas or entities to which a particular set of sanctions are applicable. There are different levels of jurisdiction where the application of sanctions is concerned. Each state can apply sanctions based on their domestic laws and regulations (Meissner, & Mello, 2022). These sanctions can be directed at individuals, groups or entire nations and they can range from trade restrictions, asset freezes, travel restrictions and arms embargoes. Such sanctions imposed by an individual state are known as unilateral sanctions. Regional and universal international organizations (such as the EU and UN), also have the legal authority to collectively apply sanctions on member states and non-member states. This authority

is conferred on them by their member states. They can impose sanctions in reaction to actions perceived as threats to the preservation of global peace and security. This type of sanctions is known as multilateral sanctions. The jurisdiction of multilateral sanctions extends to the states or entities involved in the sanctions agreement. The UNSC exemplifies as a forum well-suited to authorize and implement multilateral sanctions. States can also draw up bilateral or multilateral agreements to collectively apply sanctions. These agreements usually stem from shared concerns about specific issues like terrorism, violations of human rights or nuclear weapons proliferation.

Even though multilateral sanctions are collectively applied, individual states within a bloc can decide to ignore or withdraw from such sanctions. Each country, by virtue of its autonomy and sovereignty, has the authority to refuse participation or discontinue participation in bloc sanctions. A country can make this decision based on several factors or considerations. Domestic considerations/political interests, economic interests, changing dynamics in the geopolitical landscape and diplomatic commitments/relationships are some of such considerations. The principle of sovereignty particularly makes it difficult to enforce or assure international cohesion in the application of sanctions. This means that no country can be compelled to participate in the imposition of sanctions on a target state. This therefore has serious implications for achieving international cohesion which in turn significantly determines the success of a sanctions regime.

In certain cases, where major economic powers are involved, sanctions can have an impact on the global economy because of the interconnection of world economies (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015). Also, the extraterritorial reach of sanctions can affect people and businesses globally. The United States is an example of a country whose application of economic sanctions can have extraterritorial consequences. The United States, has on occasion, imposed sanctions on states, groups or individuals, and because of the dominance of the U.S. dollar in the international market, these sanctions can have far-reaching consequences. For instance, if the U.S. imposes sanctions on a particular state, international businesses and financial institutions may be pressured to adopt and apply those sanctions in a bid to continue to appease the American government and maintain access to its financial system.

Factors that Influence the Effectiveness of International Sanctions

Sanctions effectiveness refers to the degree to which a set of sanctions achieve the intended objectives. Determining sanctions effectiveness involves evaluating the impact and outcomes of sanctions on the targeted country or entity to discover if they have successfully influenced the actions and policies of the target. Assessing sanctions effectiveness is a complex process which requires a consideration of a combination of intended and unintended outcomes, as well as the ability of the target to adjust to the sanctions. Sanctions effectiveness depends on factors such as the type of government, level of international cohesion, the type of sanctions, sanctions objectives, duration of sanctions imposed, the degree of tolerance of targets, humanitarian considerations and public opinion. Also, the effectiveness of sanctions is dependent on alternative policy instruments available to policy makers. It must be noted that there is no hierarchy to these factors, rather it is a combination of these factors that determine the degree of sanctions effectiveness.

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Type of Government

The effectiveness of sanctions on a state is influenced by the type of government it operates and its political system. Sanctions effectiveness is often shaped by the characteristics of the political system or political economy that is operative in the targeted state. For example, the more robust the autocratic institutions in comparison to democratic institutions, the less effective the sanctions/opposition will be. Consequently, sanctions are likely to result in a more robust and impactful opposition in democracies compared to autocracies (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015). The ability of an autocratic government to control the media and suppress dissent can limit the success of external pressures. Authoritarian regimes also possess the ability to distribute the losses (and gains) from sanctions in a manner that penalizes their adversaries and rewards their supporters. This often contributes to reinforcing authoritarian rule.

Even in authoritarian states, personalized/charismatic regimes (a form of government where the leader maintains a central and dominant role in decision-making. It is a type of government where there is a strong concentration of power around a single leader, who relies on personal loyalty rather than institutional structures) and monarchies tend to be more vulnerable to sanctions compared to military regimes and single-party states because they are known for their heavy reliance on external financial support (Caetano *et al*, 2023). In authoritarian systems of government, sanctions targets often mobilize public support by controlling and manipulating the media. They can frame the sanctions as directed against the entire nation, and not against the specific actions of the ruling regime.

The effectiveness of sanctions has also been known to be impacted by ideological motivations (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015). For instance, sanctions are challenging to apply effectively against targets deeply committed to a political-economic ideology, religious extremism, or those engaged in a struggle for survival and self-determination. Influencing a change in their behavior might undermine the rationale upon which they have built their political legitimacy and survival. They are therefore prepared and capable of enduring significant costs. Groups involved in carrying out acts of terrorism, particularly those resistant to coercion like the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, are more suitably addressed with sanctions aimed at constraining their activities rather than forcing a change in their behavior. The same principle applies to most targeted sanctions against non-state armed groups.

International Cohesion

The success of sanctions requires the collaborative efforts of member states/parties to the sanctions to enforce and adhere to the measures stipulated in the resolutions (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015). This is a crucial determining factor for ensuring the efficacy of sanctions. Mechanisms for enforcement can encompass penalties for non-compliance, monitoring processes, and reporting requirements. Most sanctions regimes are a product of collective decision-making within a multilateral institutional framework, rather than unilateral decisions made by individual states. As such, the mechanisms of decision-making, implementation, monitoring and determination are dictated by institutional factors.

The greater the multilateral nature of sanctions, the more limited the options for sanctions evasion. Furthermore, sanctions imposed by universal institutions such as the United Nations are

perceived to be more legitimate by the international community than those imposed by individual states. Similarly, sanctions imposed by regional organizations on member states enjoy greater legitimacy than those imposed on third-party states that are non-members of the regional institution.

Multilateral decision-making within the context of sanctions, is not always based on a collective, unitary or consistent strategic logic. Rather it is a product of negotiation, bargaining, separate bilateral agreements and side transactions carried out by international organizations. International sanctions resolutions often include what diplomats call 'constructive ambiguity' (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015). Constructive ambiguity in diplomacy refers to the deliberate use of vague or ambiguous language in agreements, statements or resolutions. Diplomats often use this strategy to facilitate negotiations by intentionally leaving certain terms open to interpretation. Even though this advantageous for negotiation, it can lead to diverse contradictory interpretations of the terms. When the ambiguity is apparent to target states, they are more likely to endure the sanctions patiently or devise counterstrategies to create dissent among the sender countries.

International cohesion is demonstrated through the unanimous support for sanctions resolutions, clear and precise texts, allocation of resources for the implementation of sanctions, active monitoring and enforcement efforts, and a visible willingness on the part of the sender states to bear the associated costs of the measures.

Type of Sanctions

The effects of sanctions can differ based on the type of sanctions imposed. Even though they affect a smaller number of individuals and have fewer humanitarian consequences, targeted sanctions seem notably more effective than comprehensive sanctions. The combined data on the effectiveness of 63 instances of UN targeted sanctions from the Targeted Sanctions Consortium (TSC) indicates an average of 22% success rate, in contrast to the Peterson Institute for International Economics data, which proposes a 33% success rate for all sanctions types (comprehensive and targeted) (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015). It is also important to note that implementing only one form of targeted sanction in isolation is usually ineffective. According to data collected by TSC for UN sanctions, implementing a single type of sanction in isolation, such as an arms embargo or a travel ban, is never effective (Biersteker & Van Bergeik, 2015). On average, the simultaneous application of at least three different types of targeted sanctions is required for effective coercion, constraint or signaling. The most common combination of targeted sanctions imposed by the UN typically includes an arms embargo, travel ban and an asset freeze. The addition of commodity sanctions, which is often the case in African conflict situations like Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Somalia, tends to enhance the effectiveness of these measures (Schmidt, 2022).

Sanctions Objectives

When the objectives of international sanctions are specific and narrowly defined, the targets of sanctions are more inclined to adhere to the specified conditions for the removal of those sanctions. Precise conditions such as organizing elections, surrendering suspects or allowing access to a disputed territory are more likely to gain compliance compared to those pursuing multiple, loosely defined, and general goals, such as enhancing the human rights situation in a

controlled territory. Sanctions are even more likely to be successful if their objectives are seen as achievable and realistic. Similarly, sanctions are more likely to succeed if they specifically target the behavior that prompted their imposition. If the objectives are unrelated or seen as unjust, compliance may be unlikely. Also, sanctions that aim to accomplish their objectives within a measurable timeframe are more likely to retain international support and prevent fatigue. It must also be noted that flexible sanctions objectives which give room for negotiation may prove to be more effective. Conversely, a rigid set of objectives can result in resistance and non-compliance.

Duration of Sanctions

Short-term sanctions can immediately exert pressure on the targeted entity, creating a sense of urgency and may therefore lead to a swift response or compliance. Long-term sanctions sustain the ability to maintain pressure for an extended period. Nevertheless, the effectiveness is dependent on the adaptability and resilience of the targeted entity to tolerate sustained economic or political pressure over a long period of time. Prolonged sanctions can accumulate economic and humanitarian consequences. While this may heighten the pressure on the targeted entity, it may also inadvertently cause harm to the general population. This may question the ethical basis for the sanctions. The sanction's target may respond by formulating strategies to adjust and mitigate the impact of the prolonged sanctions, which could, in turn, counteract their overall effectiveness over time. Long-term sanctions may also pose the challenge of maintaining international support. Some countries may be overwhelmed by the sanctions and advocate for alternative approaches. On the other hand, prolonged sanctions can provide windows of opportunity for diplomatic negotiations that enhance the effectiveness of the sanctions.

Adaptability of Sanctions Targets

Where there was minimal or no economic or diplomatic interaction between the state and the sanctioning parties prior to the imposition of sanctions, the effectiveness of the sanctions is bound to be diminished. This is because the imposition of sanctions would spell little or no consequences for the target state. It is also essential to consider the risk tolerance of the leadership facing sanctions. Leaderships are not indifferent to risk; at times, the targeted leadership may be cautious and risk averse. In other situations, the leadership may have a preference risk and be willing to stare down the sanctions even if the anticipated outcome is negative. Sanctions imposed on targets whose leadership faces a limited window of survival are less likely to make for a change in their behavior. A short time horizon is associated with riskier behavior, especially when government officials may be at risk of harm if they abide by the terms of the sanctions (Schmidt, 2022). When dealing with targets engaged in civil war, their actions under extreme economic pressure might seem irrational. If there are however no other viable options, the probability of sanctions success is low. Under these circumstances, sanctions aimed at constraining the target, such as travel bans and asset freezes on war criminals or perceived threats to keeping the peace, may prove more effective.

Humanitarian Considerations

Sanctions can bring about unintended outcomes, such as humanitarian challenges, economic hardships for the civilian population, or alterations in political dynamics (Schmidt, 2022). These

outcomes ought to be carefully examined and may necessitate modifications in the sanctions applied. Such modifications may include adjustments to targeted sanctions, special provisions for humanitarian purposes, an overall reevaluation of the effectiveness of the sanctions or an increase in diplomatic initiatives. Sanctions are also subject to adjustments or removal based on changes in the target state's behavior. The international community/sanctioning states may decide to heighten sanctions if the situation does not improve or, conversely, alleviate sanctions if positive changes are observed. Sanctions that take into consideration, humanitarian concerns, and adopt mechanisms to safe guard the wellness of civilian populations are better suited to gain international support and forestall possible unintended humanitarian consequences.

Public Opinion

Public opinion in the context of international sanctions involves the views, reactions and perceptions of the public with respect to the imposition of sanctions on a target state or entity. It accommodates how people perceive and evaluate the justification for employing sanctions as a foreign policy tool. Factors that influence public opinion are reasons for the imposition of sanctions, perceived effectiveness of the sanctions, humanitarian considerations, influence of the media and nationalist sentiments. The reasons for imposing sanctions often influence public opinion. If the public views the reasons as justifiable, there is likely to be support for the sanctions. However, if the reasons are questionable or considered insufficient, there may be opposition. Similarly, if the public believes that the sanctions are sufficient to achieve their intended objectives, those sanctions are more likely to garner public support. Humanitarian concerns on the influence of sanctions can also affect public opinion. If sanctions are perceived as causing unnecessary harm to civilian populations, it may question their ethical and moral justification. How the media projects the sanctions and the issue for which it is imposed can also help shape public opinion. In some cases, sanctions can trigger nationalist sentiments which can lead to a "rally around the flag" effect. "Rally around the flag" effect describes a situation in which the general population of a country becomes united in their support for their government or country in times of external threat or crisis.

Ending Sanctions Regimes

Over time, an evaluation is conducted to assess the impact of sanctions in terms of their effectiveness in achieving the intended objectives. This usually involves assessing whether the targeted state has altered its behavior, adhered to international standards, or if the sanctions have resulted in unintended consequences. Ending unsuccessful sanctions poses a challenge. These sanctions are imposed due to the target's behavior which is deemed unacceptable. If the sanctions fail to alter or restrain the target's conduct, there is no apparent rationale for their termination. Typically, ending such requires a change in government, often within the target country but sometimes also in the sanctioning state. A new leadership can establish new rules of engagement, providing an opportunity to reassess the utility of ongoing economic sanctions. Monitoring the impact of sanctions, particularly their unintended consequences, may provide grounds for reviewing the sanctions regime.

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Conversely, concluding successful sanctions may seem straightforward but it can be a complex process. Goals may be adjusted over time or only partially achieved. However, for sanctions to be effective, a clear commitment to lift them and transparency regarding the conditions for doing so are essential. Failure to suspend or lift sanctions presents two problems for those imposing the sanctions. On the one hand, it places an administrative burden on the states or institutions imposing the sanctions. In the 1990s, the UN had no more than six or seven simultaneous sanctions regimes; today, the number has increased significantly (Schmidt, 2022). On the other hand, failure to lift sanctions after the situation changes (a change in behavior) undermines the legitimacy of the institutions imposing them. This makes it more challenging for them to secure compliance from others in the future.

Conclusion

Sanctions remain a key tool in international relations, used to enforce compliance and deter violations without resorting to military action. While their effectiveness varies, factors such as the resilience of the targeted state, international support, and enforcement duration play crucial roles. Though sanctions can pressure governments and restrict harmful activities, they may also lead to unintended consequences, including economic hardship for civilians or the strengthening of authoritarian regimes. In some cases, prolonged sanctions push targeted states to develop alternative economic alliances, reducing their impact over time. To maximize their effectiveness, sanctions should not be applied in isolation but as part of a broader diplomatic and strategic framework. When combined with negotiations, targeted policies, and ongoing diplomatic engagement, they are more likely to achieve meaningful and lasting change without exacerbating global tensions.

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