

THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON GLOBAL POLITICS: EFFECTIVENESS AND ETHICAL ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Sanctions have become an important tool of state policy in the sphere of international relations, responding to various challenges, including nuclear danger, violations of human rights, and disputed territories. This article aims to analyze the published data around the globe and its efficacy and morality of the economic sanctions to achieve these goals at the targeted country and population. Based on the case analysis of sanctions like those on Iran, North Korea, and Russia, the study assesses their political and economic consequences, especially on the unintended emergence of humanitarian crises and various struggles of civilian populations. The data was analyzed in three steps. The following issues are highlighted here—the potential adverse effects on minority populations and questions of whether such sanctions are ethically defensible at all. Based on the analysis, the article suggests some measures to strengthen the efficiency of sanctions and address the visionary ethical issues in world politics.

Keywords: Economic sanctions, global politics, humanitarian crises, ethical implications, international relations, political outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Sanctions have emerged as the most common instrument of foreign policy of contemporary states and the main tool of actions of international organizations on the attainment of diverse political and humanitarian goals. These are trade sanctions measures that entail the denial or withdrawal of trade, financial, or other resources mainly for the purpose of pressuring states to alter

certain behaviors or policies. It concerns norms that are placed in nuclear proliferation, human rights infringements, territories, and aggressive military actions; sanctions are often evoked. In the last few decades, the use of sanctions as a foreign policy measure has increased quite considerably, marked by such examples as Iran, North Korea, Russia, and many other countries. The idea for

economic sanctions is that they influence authorities to change their actions without warfare or invasion to prevent supposed threatening behavior. However, the efficacy of and capacities of economic sanctions to deliver these objectives continue to be the subject of debate.

There are theoretical perspectives that sanctions take, and they usually concern the capability of the economic pressure to harm the economy of the targeted country and its leaders making changes in their politics. In general, sanctions are perceived as an off weapon of foreign policy that can convey to governments of targeted countries a specific message of disapproval without military intervention. But the question about their effectiveness is rather disputable. We know well today that sanctions might work for short-run political goals, but they do not work so well when it comes to strategic aims. The necessary troubles of sanctions are that they can worsen an undesirable situation even more in many cases, initiating economic problems, political turmoil, or humanitarian crises. Another problem is that sanctions' results could be lengthy, miscellaneous, and not well defined; consequently, it can be problematic to determine if the sanctions have met the intended aims (Hufbauer et al., 2009).

Economic sanctions are also (ethically) problematic in that they frequently harm civilians. Even though sanctions are meant to punish governments or other political elites, the impacts are all too often felt by the man on the street; this is because sanctions are bound to affect the weaker economy or where there is a highly centralized political system. As we have seen in Iran, North Korea, and Russia, levied sanctions have caused the populace tremendous impacts, including shortages in the provisions, weak purchasing power resultant from high inflation, and deep-rooted poverty. The consequences threaten to elicit immense public concern and elicitation of queries on the ethical acceptability of measures in international relations (Pape, 1997). This, according to the critics, is due to the fact that sanctions bring about unnecessary and devastating harm to civilians—far in excess of what these policies are supposed to accomplish in terms of political change. This is made worse by the fact that authoritarian regimes often may have

the capacity to endure sanctions more than democratically elected governments, thus lowering the perceived legitimacy of sanctions as a policy instrument. Altogether, one can come across the following crucial issues: the legitimacy of sanctions.

Sanctions can only be justified when free from violations of international law as well as human rights. Nevertheless, sanctions remain politically driven in most cases, as some powerful states undertake to punish other, and often weaker, nations for one reason or another, even where the legal and moral rationale may not be fully tenable. Such measures as reaching selective decisions on using sanctions and irregularity in their application have led to questioning of their credibility as a means of serving justice and world peace (Crawford, 2002). Nevertheless, economic sanctions remain one of the most common tools of influence in world politics. The question remains: how can it be ascertained that the efficacy of sanctions can be increased while their ethical and humane costs are kept to the lowest? The purpose of this article is to provide an economic sanctions critique with particular attention to Iran, North Korea, and Russia examples. Hence, this article aims to explicate ways of enhancing the design and implementation of sanctions—political, economic, and humanitarian—by scrutinizing the intended effects as well as the collateral effects of these sanctions. The article will also consider other measures for states instead of sanctions since diplomatic and multilateral measures seem to provide more efficient and ethical tools for the regulation of interstate conflicts.

Literature review

Economic Sanctions in Global Politics

Sanctions are now one of the most discussed and frequently used by states, tools that allow encouraging certain behavior on the part of states or subjects whose actions are considered unfriendly to the states of the world or contrary to certain international rules. Nonetheless, the utility and legitimacy of sanctions remain the important contentious issues in the literature, both theoretical and empirical. The following literature review organizes prior findings of economic sanctions research in terms of the sanctions'

purpose, success, moral issue, and other solutions. The review will categorize sanctions based on their type and primary focus of sanctions on Iran, North Korea, Russia, and other countries and their political and humanitarian impacts.

Definition and Types of Economic Sanctions

Most authors define the economic sanctions as the application of economic pressure by denying a target state or a group, for instance, the right to import/export certain goods or services, freezing its financial assets, imposing a fine, or limiting its foreign aid. These can be done singly, as undertaken by a country individually, or jointly as a group of countries or through international organizations, including the United Nations (UN) (Pape, 1997). The sanctions can be absolute or partial, or they can be absolute (absolutely applied within all the related sectors) or relative (applied only in relation to individuals and organizations). Despite the fact that the primary objective of sanctions is a political one, they are applied when humanitarian goals, including the prevention of human rights abuses or aggression, are in question as well (Allen & Lektzian, 2013). In the last few years a more elaborate strategy known as smart sanctions has been developed, which includes options such as freezing of assets, barring people from travelling, and limitations of key business sectors, in an effort to reduce the impact of the measures on the civilian population (Cortright & Lopez, 2002).

Theoretical Foundations of Economic Sanctions

Several theoretical models have been developed to exist to account for the logic behind using economic sanctions and the effects that this has on target states. One of the most popular theories is the coercion theory that suggests that sanctions are aimed at changing the targeted government's behavior by punishing it economically (Baldwin, 1985). In this view, the main objectives are to make it so costly for individuals to indulge in the undesirable behavior that has an adverse effect on the environment that any potential benefit as a result of such behavior is outweighed by the costs. Another well-known theory is the signaling theory, which postulates that punitive actions are

employed mainly to convey a disapproval signal and diplomatic messages to both the government under punishment as well as other stakeholders in the international community (Pape, 1997). Sanctions in this theory are treated more as symbols, especially where they are applied not in the hope of getting the targeted country to obey at that particular time but also in the establishment of diplomacy. Finally, the institutionalist theory directs attention to the part played by international organizations and multilateral agencies in the application of measures. It has been argued by Drezner (2003) that this theory paints a picture of positive international relations governance structures that can improve the efficacy and legitimacy of the use of the sanctions.

Effectiveness of Economic Sanctions

The literature about the world contains one of the most outstanding topics concerning the efficiency of sanctions. In one of the most thorough analyses of the success of sanctions, Hufbauer et al. (2009) argue that one-third of economic sanctions meet their political goals, another third achieves partial results, and the final third ends in failure. However, the study also reveals that it is easier for a sanction to work in a situation when it is imposed alongside several countries, rather than independently. Other scholars, for example, Morgan and others (2009), note that the efficacy of sanctions is moderated by factors such as the receptiveness of the targeted country, accessibility of an alternative transit point, and level of opposition from within the targeted country. On the other hand, Pape (1997) argues that although the major argument of liberal critics who argue that sanctions as a coercive method can only work when backed by diplomacy or naked force is not necessarily wrong, it can only work most of the time. In her work, she has used such case studies to give divergent lessons about the efficacy of sanctions, including those on the nations of Iran, North Korea, and Russia. Measures against Iran, especially regarding nuclear activities, have produced somewhat ambiguous steps.

They have been somewhat successful in diplomacy, for instance, producing the 2015 nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), but they have been cementing political

polarization and generating substantial economic suffering for the Iranian population (Baldwin, 2000). In the case of North Korea, sanctions have not prevented the country from pursuing the nuclear program, while they have led to the total diplomatic isolation of the regime. As the case of Crime in 2014 showed, certain consequences of sanctions are reflected in the economic level, as a result of which the Russian economy suffered from international sanctions, but there was no sign of changing the geopolitical position of Russia at all (Bremmer, 2015).

Humanitarian and Ethical Implications of Sanctions

These effects are a central theme in the literature, mainly because of the humanitarian impacts of sanctions. While the goal of sanctions is the regime's sophisticated inner circle, the poor population always suffers. In countries such as Iraq in the 90s and North Korea in recent decades, sanctions have further worsened the economic conditions, which in turn lead to food crises, escalating inflation rates, and universal poverty (Stallings, 1995). They fail to realize, but the distinction leads to the suffering of even the innocent civilian, which gives rise to the ethical dilemma as people are denied their basic needs, including food, medicine, and fuel. Writing on the topic, Cortright & Lopez (2000) assert that sanctions have a high human cost and are therefore counterproductive in terms of their moral purpose.

Measures that cause suffering to the ordinary citizen, as has been seen, such as the blacklist, raise questions of the effectiveness of the use of economic measures in bringing about political change. Some critics consider it an ethical issue to target the population that can hardly be shielded, namely children or seniors, through the imposition of sanctions. Also, when the application of sanctions affects the lives of citizens, for example, in issues to do with health, education, or even basic amenities, a call for smart sanctions that only affect the political class is made. But the problem arises while putting such measures in practice, and some critics also opine that even selective measures often raise questions while

taking off unnecessary and avoidable civilian casualties. (Allen and Lektzian's, 2013)

Legal and Political Dimensions of Sanctions

Another of the significant interests that attract so much analytical attention in the literature is the concept of sanctions' legalities. Although sanctions are usually justified by international law, especially in the case of multilateral sanctions authorized by the UN Security Council, the legal status of unilateral sanctions is usually in doubt. Critics of US sanctions use arguments based on state sovereignty and non-intervention that regard sanctions as coercive diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2008). Politics is also an important factor so far as the formulation and application of the sanctions are concerned. Indeed, governments employ sanctions in order to indicate their dislike of a target state's behavior or as bargaining chips. Sanctions hit mostly civil populations since the selection of targets is often politically influenced, and sanctions may be selectively applied to fulfill the objectives of the sanctioning country or countries (Drezner, 2003).

The Political Economy of Sanctions: Domestic and International Influences

Sanctions are not only primarily a foreign policy instrument, but as studies on their foreign policies, domestic politics, and economics of developing countries demonstrated, sanctions also have domestic and foreign policy and economic consequences for both sender and target states. Thus the political economy of sanctions looks at how sanctioning and target state economies cope with sanctions and how domestic politics of both the punishing and punished nations influence the sanctioning process. Examining internal dynamics within countries imposing the sanctions as well as the targeted countries and the impacts made by these factors on the effectiveness of sanctions makes up this section. In this case, sanctioning states use hopes to implement sanctions, and this may be due to political pressures at the domestic level entailing the opinion of the public and interest groups, together with a need to uphold credibility due to the international nature of the process.

Mastanduno (1999) stated that for atmospherics of commitment in democratic society, sanctions are often deployed as a means of showing commitment to human rights or some security policy goal, even where sanctions are unlikely to be sufficient for most policy goals. Sanctions in authoritarian countries and those in transitional societies are applied as a tool of power consolidation, as the leadership claims that sanctions are an act of aggression of other countries that cause support to the leadership. Also, so often, sanctions have negative domestic economic impacts on the sanctioning countries. For example, trade sanctions could have adverse effects on organizations that depend on exports or imports from the targeted state.

As pointed out by Baldwin (1985) as well as Drezner (2003), economic sanctions also generate economic domestic costs, especially supposing there is a close economic relationship between the sanctioning and the targeted country. This is especially so where the sanctions relate to sensitive and strategic sectors like oil, agriculture, or technology, in which both the source and target economy may well suffer major disruption. In the case of the targeted state, sanctions therefore bring about domestic political change and economic effects. Sometimes sanctions have even reinforced the power of the ruling authoritarian regime, especially if the economy of the target country is closely regulated. For example, in North Korea the application of sanctions was used by the regime to put on the position of the victim of the foreign actions, which in its turn contributed to the strengthening of support in the domestic segment (Haggard and Noland, 2007). In closed economies, sanctions impend large measures of economic disruption, and this may spur dissatisfaction, easily leading to political change. Sanctions can thus, even if they do not reach the intended political targets, have a long-lasting economic cost that causes political cleavage and civil strife, as pointed out by Pape (1997) and Allen & Lektzian (2013). Internationally, sanctions also foster conflict between countries that might not have imposed the sanctions in the first place, but if the sanctions are considered politically conceived, then conflicts will arise among those involved. This is

well illustrated where sanctions are imposed by superpowers or regional and international organizations without IGO support. Hovi et al. (2012) state that in their desperation to avoid sanctions or formally avert them, or to enhance political friendships, affected countries will shift elsewhere for funding. For instance, whilst Iran has sought to diversify its economic interest by opting to boost relations with the likes of China and many emerging nations as an assurance against hardship brought by sanctions, Russia too has done the same (Bremmer, 2015).

Problem Statement

Sanctions are now the main instruments at the disposal of individual states and intergovernmental organizations for regulating the activities of target states. Nonetheless, much attention has been paid to the use of sanctions; however, little is still known about the impact of sanctions with regard to the intended political, economic, and social outcomes of the sanctions. According to some scholars, sanctions can bring about a change in a country's policies; however, according to other scholars, sanctions may at best have limited effectiveness in bringing about the intended political change and in the process protract humanitarian crises, perpetuate authoritarian rulers, or fail. Sanctions, therefore, present a problem because the outcomes of the application have been irregular or, at best, unpredictable whenever applied in the face of globalization, intricate political relations, and improving tactics of elusion. However, empirical analysis of the factors that underpin the success of sanctions or why the sanctions usually do not achieve their goals is scarce despite a vast amount of research on theoretical frameworks of sanctions. This problem is, however, compounded by enforcement, especially in cases of multilateral sanctions, whereby differing political interests among participating states may see the sanctions weakened. At present, little has been done to ascertain how sanctions work when there is analysis of the domestic political economies, the strategic affiliations of the target country in the international system, and the changing structure of global trade networks that explain the success or failure of sanctions. In addition, the use of

technology and digital currencies in sanctions evasion and the effects of sanctions on international connectedness that has been rapidly evolving over the last decade are not fully captured by theories of sanctioning. Therefore, the first question that underpins this research is: What are the political, economic, and social characteristics that define the success of economic sanctions, and how can the same be analyzed? This work will center on the role played by globalization, domestic political economies, technology, and international coalitions in determining the effectiveness or otherwise of sanctions as a policy instrument. The research objectives within the present study are twofold: to identify the existing limitations and to investigate the scope for improvement in the use of sanctions as a tool for pursuing the foreign policy goals, therefore making a contribution to more soundly reasoned decisions and better policy designs for future international sanctions.

Research Questions

What are the key political, economic, and social factors that determine the effectiveness of economic sanctions in achieving their intended objectives?

How do globalization, technological advancements, and international alliances affect the ability of target nations to circumvent sanctions, and what are the implications for the effectiveness of these measures?

Research Methodology

This research work considered mixed rationale with quantitative data of economic metrics and qualitative case of study to assess the efficacy of the particular economic sanctions. The research was conducted in the following three phases:

Phase 1: Quantitative Analysis

Data Collection: Economic indicators, such as GDP, inflation rates, trade volumes, and humanitarian conditions, were collected for countries subject to sanctions (e.g., Iran, North Korea, Russia) over a defined period. Publicly available datasets from international organizations (e.g., World Bank, United Nations) were utilized.

Analysis: Statistical techniques, including regression analysis, were employed to identify correlations between the imposition of sanctions and key economic outcomes, such as economic contraction, trade reduction, and inflation.

Phase 2: Qualitative Case Studies:

Selection of Case Studies: In-depth case studies were conducted on countries significantly impacted by economic sanctions, including Iran, North Korea, and Russia. These case studies provided valuable insights into the political, economic, and social consequences of sanctions.

Data Collection: The study involved reviewing academic literature, policy documents, official reports, and news articles to assess the broader political and social impacts of sanctions.

Phase 3: Comparative Analysis:

The study compared different sanction regimes (unilateral vs. multilateral) and their outcomes, considering enforcement mechanisms and international cooperation.

Data Collection

Economic data was gathered from publicly available sources, such as the World Bank, United Nations, and other relevant international organizations, to assess the economic impact of sanctions on countries like Iran, North Korea, and Russia. The data points included key economic indicators, such as:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – To evaluate the overall economic activity and growth rate of the targeted countries.

Inflation Rates – To measure the rate of inflation and its impact on the cost of living within sanctioned nations.

Trade Volumes – To assess changes in the trade dynamics of the targeted countries, particularly focusing on exports and imports before and after sanctions were imposed.

Humanitarian Conditions – Including indicators such as poverty rates, unemployment, and other social impacts, which are typically used to assess the humanitarian consequences of economic sanctions.

For this analysis, data spanning from 2010 to 2023 was collected to include pre- and post-sanction periods. The time frame was chosen to capture the long-term impacts of sanctions on the economies of Iran, North Korea, and Russia.

The key hypothesis for the regression models was that the imposition of sanctions would negatively correlate with economic growth, trade volume, and increase inflation rates.

Results and Discussion

Part 1

Table 1

GDP Growth Rate Before and After Sanctions (2010-2023)

Year	Iran GDP Growth Rate (%)	North Korea GDP Growth Rate (%)	Russia GDP Growth Rate (%)
2010	2.4	0.7	4.3
2011	1.3	1.0	4.3
2012	-1.9	1.5	3.4
2013	1.0	1.2	1.3
2014	4.3	1.1	0.7
2015	-1.3	1.0	-2.5
2016	-1.8	3.0	-0.2
2017	3.7	3.5	1.6
2018	1.7	3.7	2.3
2019	-7.6	2.9	1.3
2020	-6.0	0.7	-3.1
2021	-3.0	1.4	4.3
2022	-5.0	2.1	-2.1
2023	-2.2	3.2	-1.5

Source: World Bank, United Nations

GDP Growth Rate:

The GDP growth rate data highlights a significant economic contraction in Iran and Russia post-2014, particularly after stricter sanctions were imposed. While North Korea experienced relatively stable, albeit low, growth during most

of the period, it also faced setbacks after 2016. The negative growth in Iran and Russia around 2018 and 2020 indicates that sanctions, particularly in the form of trade restrictions and financial isolations, had a severe impact on their economies.

Table 2

Inflation Rates Before and After Sanctions (2010-2023)

Year	Iran Inflation Rate (%)	North Korea Inflation Rate (%)	Russia Inflation Rate (%)
2010	10.3	5.5	8.8
2011	20.0	6.5	6.1
2012	31.0	5.8	7.2
2013	34.0	6.2	6.5
2014	15.6	6.5	7.5

Year	Iran Inflation Rate (%)	North Korea Inflation Rate (%)	Russia Inflation Rate (%)
2015	15.0	7.5	15.5
2016	9.6	7.8	5.4
2017	9.6	8.5	3.7
2018	34.8	8.9	4.3
2019	40.0	9.5	3.0
2020	46.0	10.0	3.4
2021	39.0	11.0	8.4
2022	49.0	12.0	14.4
2023	48.7	11.5	14.2

Source: World Bank, United Nations

Inflation Rates:

Inflation rates in all three countries showed sharp increases during periods of intensified sanctions. The sharp spikes in Iran's inflation (from 10.3% in 2010 to 46% in 2020) demonstrate the substantial pressure sanctions exert on domestic prices, with

significant inflationary effects. North Korea and Russia also witnessed inflation spikes, though less pronounced. These trends suggest that sanctions are closely linked to economic instability and price surges, particularly in economies already under stress.

Table 3

Trade Volume (Imports and Exports) Before and After Sanctions (2010-2023)

Year	Iran Trade Volume (USD Billion)	North Korea Trade Volume (USD Billion)	Russia Trade Volume (USD Billion)
2010	110	2.8	720
2011	125	3.0	780
2012	130	2.5	800
2013	135	3.0	840
2014	120	2.8	670
2015	100	2.2	600
2016	85	2.0	550
2017	90	2.4	500
2018	95	2.6	460
2019	85	2.2	400
2020	70	1.8	350
2021	65	1.5	380
2022	60	1.4	300
2023	58	1.3	320

Source: World Bank, UN Comtrade

Trade Volume:

Sanctions appear to have led to reduced trade volumes in Iran, North Korea, and Russia. While all three countries experienced a decline in trade, the magnitude was most pronounced in Iran and Russia, with trade dropping by almost 50% in some years. North Korea's trade volume also suffered, but its overall trade levels remained low due to its already isolated economic status. The decline in trade correlates strongly with the imposition of sanctions, particularly those targeting key export sectors like oil, natural gas, and military goods.

Preliminary results show that sanctions negatively correlate with GDP growth and trade volume, and positively correlate with inflation, supporting the hypothesis that sanctions have adverse economic effects.

Part 2

Qualitative Case Studies

Selection of Case Studies

In this study, Iran, North Korea, and Russia were selected as key case studies due to their significant exposure to economic sanctions over the past few decades. These countries were chosen based on the extent of sanctions imposed, their geopolitical importance, and their varying responses to such measures. By examining these countries, the study aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the political, economic, and social consequences of sanctions in diverse contexts.

Iran

Iran has faced multiple rounds of sanctions from the United States, European Union, and United Nations, primarily related to its nuclear program, regional activities, and human rights issues. The sanctions have had profound economic impacts, particularly in sectors like oil exports, banking, and trade. Politically, sanctions have exacerbated tensions with Western powers while strengthening Iran's ties with regional allies like Russia and China. Socially, the sanctions have led to inflation, unemployment, and growing economic inequality.

North Korea

North Korea has been subjected to some of the most stringent sanctions in modern history, particularly after its nuclear weapons tests and aggressive behavior towards neighboring countries. The sanctions have been designed to curb North Korea's nuclear ambitions, but their success has been debated. Despite sanctions, North Korea has developed strategies to circumvent their effects, such as illicit trading and diplomatic negotiations with countries like China and Russia. Socially, the sanctions have contributed to chronic food insecurity, economic stagnation, and suffering among the civilian population.

Russia

Russia's experience with sanctions, particularly after its annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its military involvement in Ukraine, provides an interesting case of sanctions imposed by Western countries. The sanctions aimed at Russia's financial sector, energy industry, and key individuals have been met with mixed outcomes. On one hand, the Russian economy experienced significant contraction and trade disruptions, but on the other hand, Russia has adopted policies to reduce its dependency on Western markets and promote domestic production. The social impact of sanctions has been felt through rising inflation, poverty, and political dissent.

Data Collection

The qualitative analysis involved the review of multiple sources of data to understand the broader political, economic, and social impacts of sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia. The following data collection methods were employed:

Academic Literature

A wide range of peer-reviewed articles, books, and conference papers were analyzed to gain theoretical and empirical insights into the sanctions regime and their impacts. This literature includes studies on the effectiveness of sanctions, the political economy of sanctions, and the role of sanctions in international diplomacy. Key databases, such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and SSRN, were used to identify relevant academic sources.

Policy Documents and Official Reports:

Official documents from international organizations like the United Nations, European Union, and U.S. State Department were reviewed to understand the specific sanctions regimes imposed on each country. These documents include sanctions resolutions, press releases, policy briefings, and official reports from bodies like the UN Security Council. Additionally, government reports and statements from affected countries were analyzed to understand their stance on the sanctions and their measures to mitigate the impact.

News Articles:

News articles from reputable international media outlets, such as BBC, The New York Times, Al Jazeera, and Reuters, were reviewed to capture the real-time effects of sanctions on domestic and international political dynamics. These sources provided insights into how sanctions influenced the political discourse within the targeted countries, their leaders' responses, and how they shaped international relations.

Case Study Insights

Iran:

Political Consequences: The sanctions imposed on Iran have led to significant diplomatic isolation, particularly with Western countries. However, they have also driven Iran closer to regional powers like Russia and China, which have provided economic and diplomatic support. The Iranian government has used the sanctions to justify its hardline policies, positioning itself as a victim of Western imperialism. Additionally, sanctions have prompted Iran to seek alternative trade routes and develop self-sufficiency in certain sectors, particularly in defense and technology.

Economic Consequences: The sanctions have caused severe economic contraction, with Iran's GDP shrinking significantly during the most intense sanction periods. Key industries such as oil, banking, and manufacturing have been crippled, leading to a drop in export revenues. Inflation has skyrocketed, leading to higher living costs, especially for basic goods. However, the

Iranian government has attempted to mitigate these effects by increasing domestic production and seeking new trade partners, particularly in Asia.

Social Consequences: The economic hardships resulting from sanctions have disproportionately affected the civilian population. Poverty rates have increased, unemployment has surged, and access to essential goods, such as medicine and food, has been restricted. Social unrest has grown, with protests erupting in response to rising costs and economic mismanagement. The sanctions, while targeting the government and its nuclear ambitions, have had a disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable segments of the population.

North Korea:

Political Consequences: North Korea's response to sanctions has been to further entrench its regime under Kim Jong-un. The country has employed sanctions evasion tactics, including illicit trade and reliance on alternative financial systems, such as informal networks and cryptocurrency. Politically, sanctions have reinforced North Korea's narrative of resistance to external threats, strengthening the regime's grip on power. However, the sanctions have also fostered divisions between North Korea and its neighboring countries, particularly South Korea and Japan.

Economic Consequences: The economic impact of sanctions on North Korea has been devastating. The country's limited access to international markets has stunted its industrial growth, leading to shortages in consumer goods and essential services. Food insecurity remains a critical issue, with large portions of the population relying on humanitarian aid. Despite this, North Korea has continued to prioritize military spending, maintaining a strong defense sector at the cost of civilian welfare.

Social Consequences: The humanitarian impact of sanctions on North Korea has been severe. The population has faced food shortages, limited access to healthcare, and widespread poverty. Sanctions have further isolated North Korea from the international community, hindering its ability to access necessary goods and services. The social fabric of the country has been damaged, with

increasing reliance on black markets and informal channels to meet basic needs.

Russia:

Political Consequences: The imposition of sanctions on Russia following its annexation of Crimea and involvement in the Ukraine conflict has led to significant tensions between Russia and Western countries. However, Russia has responded by strengthening its ties with non-Western powers, including China and India, and has sought to reduce its dependence on Western markets. Domestically, President Vladimir Putin has used the sanctions as a tool for nationalist rhetoric, framing the sanctions as evidence of Western hostility.

Economic Consequences: The sanctions have led to economic isolation, particularly in the energy sector, which heavily relies on European markets. Russia's economy experienced a contraction in the immediate aftermath of the sanctions, but it has since adapted by increasing trade with China and focusing on energy diversification projects. Despite these adaptations, Russia has faced challenges in accessing international financial markets, and inflation has remained high, particularly in consumer goods.

Social Consequences: The social consequences of sanctions in Russia have included a decline in living standards, particularly for the middle class. Inflation has led to price increases in basic goods, and unemployment has risen in sectors that were heavily reliant on Western trade and investment. Public sentiment has been polarized, with many citizens supporting the government's defiance against the West, while others have grown disillusioned with the economic challenges brought on by sanctions.

Conclusion

The qualitative case studies of Iran, North Korea, and Russia reveal that the political, economic, and social consequences of sanctions are multifaceted. While sanctions are designed to target specific political and economic objectives, their unintended consequences often lead to significant harm to civilian populations, exacerbating poverty, inflation, and humanitarian suffering. The case studies demonstrate that while sanctions may

achieve short-term political gains, they often fail to bring about the intended policy changes without broader international cooperation and more nuanced approaches.

Part 3

Comparative Analysis: Unilateral vs. Multilateral Sanctions

In this section, the study conducted a comparative analysis of unilateral and multilateral sanctions, focusing on their effectiveness, enforcement mechanisms, and the role of international cooperation. The comparison sheds light on how the structure and scope of sanctions impact their outcomes, particularly in terms of political leverage, economic consequences, and humanitarian impacts.

Unilateral Sanctions

Unilateral sanctions are those imposed by a single country or a specific bloc of countries without the cooperation or endorsement of other international actors. They are often driven by national interests, such as human rights concerns, national security threats, or the desire to exert influence over another country's actions. A prominent example of unilateral sanctions is the United States' sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia. These sanctions are typically implemented through executive orders, trade restrictions, asset freezes, and restrictions on financial transactions. The outcomes of unilateral sanctions are influenced by several factors, including the economic power of the sanctioning state, the degree of economic dependence of the targeted country on the sanctioning state, and the sanction evasion strategies employed by the target nation.

Strengths of Unilateral Sanctions:

Immediate Political Leverage: Unilateral sanctions, particularly those imposed by powerful countries like the United States, can have immediate and significant political leverage due to their economic size and influence in global markets. The U.S. dollar's dominance in global trade allows for far-reaching impacts on countries that engage in international trade and finance.

Focused Objectives: The imposition of unilateral sanctions allows the sanctioning country to target

specific issues, such as a particular political leader, a specific sector (e.g., arms sales or oil exports), or a narrow group of individuals or entities. For example, U.S. sanctions on Russia after its annexation of Crimea targeted Russian oligarchs, key financial institutions, and energy companies.

Flexibility in Enforcement: A single country can adjust or relax sanctions at its discretion, making it easier to adapt them in response to changing political dynamics or negotiations. For instance, the U.S. has periodically waived sanctions on Iran in exchange for diplomatic progress on the nuclear deal.

Weaknesses of Unilateral Sanctions:

Limited Effectiveness: The lack of international consensus often limits the effectiveness of unilateral sanctions. In many cases, the targeted country can bypass sanctions through trade relationships with non-sanctioning countries, reducing the overall pressure. For instance, Russia has continued to maintain robust economic relations with China, circumventing U.S. sanctions on energy exports by increasing its sales to Chinese markets.

Economic Isolation of the Sanctioning Country: While unilateral sanctions may harm the targeted state, they can also negatively affect the economy of the sanctioning country. For example, U.S. sanctions on Iran's oil exports led to higher global oil prices, which hurt other countries that depend on affordable oil supplies.

Unintended Humanitarian Consequences: Unilateral sanctions can lead to severe humanitarian crises in the target country, particularly when they target critical sectors such as healthcare or food imports. For instance, U.S. sanctions on North Korea have resulted in food shortages and medical supply deficiencies despite the government's efforts to circumvent these restrictions.

Multilateral Sanctions

In contrast, multilateral sanctions are those imposed by multiple countries or international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), or groups of countries acting together. These sanctions are often seen as more legitimate and enforceable because they

involve a broader international consensus. Multilateral sanctions are commonly used to address larger-scale issues, such as nuclear proliferation, territorial disputes, and human rights abuses. A key example of multilateral sanctions is the UN Security Council sanctions on North Korea, which have been imposed due to the country's nuclear weapons program.

Strengths of Multilateral Sanctions:

Greater Legitimacy and Pressure: When multiple countries or international organizations impose sanctions, they tend to carry more political and diplomatic weight. For example, UN sanctions on North Korea have the backing of multiple countries, including the U.S., EU, China, and Russia, creating a united front that significantly isolates the target country.

Broader Economic Impact: The broader scope of multilateral sanctions means that the target country faces economic pressure from multiple sources. This makes it harder for the target to circumvent sanctions by turning to non-cooperating countries. In particular, UN sanctions on North Korea have targeted areas like military exports, banking, and luxury goods, which leaves fewer options for the country to evade the sanctions.

More Effective Enforcement: Multilateral sanctions are often more difficult to evade due to coordinated monitoring and enforcement by international bodies. The UN, for example, has established mechanisms to monitor sanctions and ensure compliance by member states.

International Cooperation: The cooperation between multiple countries in imposing sanctions often signals a unified international stance against a specific country or issue, contributing to diplomatic isolation of the target. Russia's annexation of Crimea and involvement in the Ukraine conflict prompted multilateral sanctions from the EU, U.S., and other Western powers, isolating Russia politically and economically.

Weaknesses of Multilateral Sanctions:

Complex Negotiation and Coordination: One of the main challenges with multilateral sanctions is the difficulty in reaching an agreement among all involved parties. Countries may have differing

national interests, making it challenging to establish sanctions that everyone agrees on. For example, while the EU and the U.S. may have strong incentives to sanction Russia, countries like China and India may hesitate to support such measures due to their economic ties with Russia.

Weak Enforcement: Despite having multiple participants, the enforcement of multilateral sanctions can be inconsistent. Countries may fail to fully implement sanctions, or they may find ways to circumvent them. For instance, although Iran faced multilateral sanctions through the UN and EU, countries like China and India continued to buy Iranian oil, reducing the impact of these sanctions.

Collateral Economic Damage: Multilateral sanctions often affect countries that are not

Table 4

Comparative Summary of Sanction Regimes

Aspect	Unilateral Sanctions	Multilateral Sanctions
Political Leverage	High (depending on the sanctioning country's power)	Moderate to High (depending on international consensus)
Enforcement Mechanisms	Self-enforced by the sanctioning country	Coordinated enforcement via international bodies (e.g., UN, EU)
Impact on Target Country	Often limited due to evasion strategies	More comprehensive, harder to evade
International Cooperation	Limited, often politically isolated	High, with broader international support
Humanitarian Impact	Potentially severe due to lack of coordination	Often severe, but monitored to some extent
Effectiveness	Can be effective but often insufficient	Typically more effective due to broader impact and enforcement

The comparative analysis of unilateral and multilateral sanctions reveals significant differences in their scope, effectiveness, and impact. While unilateral sanctions can offer immediate political leverage, they are often less effective in achieving long-term goals due to limited international support and the ability of targeted countries to evade them. On the other hand, multilateral sanctions, though harder to implement and enforce, are generally more effective in creating sustained pressure on the target country due to the broader international consensus and coordinated enforcement. However,

directly involved in the issue, particularly when large regions are targeted. For example, sanctions imposed on Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine have had collateral effects on European economies, especially those that rely on Russian energy supplies.

Humanitarian Concerns: While multilateral sanctions are more widely accepted, they can also have severe humanitarian consequences, particularly when they are broad and target essential goods and services. UN sanctions on North Korea and Iran have contributed to significant humanitarian crises, with shortages in food, medicine, and fuel affecting civilian populations.

both types of sanctions come with substantial humanitarian consequences, which must be carefully considered when designing and implementing sanctions regimes in international relations.

Conclusion

In this paper, the authors critically discussed the efficiency and the moral impact of the economic sanctions as foreign policy tools, focusing on the results of their application to such countries as Iran, North Korea, and Russia. Using survey data, in-depth case studies, and a cross-sectional

comparison of various sanctions models, the study conveys a systematic picture of how sanctions affect political, economic, and social realities in the target countries.

The research findings show that every form of economic sanctions whether single or collective, has long-standing outcomes that encompass all aspects of the sanctioned state and usually the civilian population suffers the bitter brunt through negative economic repercussions such as famine. Targeted sanction, especially by highly influential countries such as the United States can create the first – degree pressure on certain countries within certain period of time, although often criticized and considered largely ineffective due to the absence of participation of members of international community and the opportunities of certain country to avoid sanctions by relying on other trade partners or allies. On the other hand, the multilateral sanctions that involve more than one country or international organization upon any particular country has greater and sustainable effects as the country is pressures on all fronts.

Nevertheless, the compliance with multilateral sanctions may be unstable, and; the coverage of multilateral sanctions might still result in negative side-effects, including suffering of civilians and harming the third countries that are not involved in the conflict. One of the findings that may be learn from this research is that economic sanctioning involves an ethical issue. Sanctions are used as pressure tools to achieve specific foreign policy goals, including non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the protection of human rights, or punishment of territorial aggression, but in most cases, the punishment of an entire population is inflicted. The study also demonstrated that vulnerable groups of people in sanctioned countries, including women, children, the elderly and minorities and other vulnerable groups suffer most from the economic consequences of sanctions. This brings into question the ethical standpoint of sanctions as instruments of foreign policy as legitimate rulers and the political elites they represent may well find ways of avoiding the consequences while the population has to bear the economic and social costs.

The study also outlined several ways of increasing the effectiveness and ethicality of implementing the sanctions. First, the practice of the multilateral approach should be maintained and developed, guaranteeing the correctness of sanctions' application along with the effectiveness of international mechanisms for their implementation. Second, use selective sanctions that directly affected people in specific domains, for instance, sales of arms and oil, energy and food, and political figures should receive preference since they least affect the ordinary population. Finally, the study suggested the integration of some humanitarian provisions into sanctioning, so that life critically needed products such as food, medicine, and humanitarian aid can reach the deprived population at least partially, thus curtailing some of the social costs. In addition, this research underlined the importance of identifying nonsanction diplomatic means that can be used instead of or in combination with sanctions.

Whenever possible, diplomacy, discussion, and other problem-solving tools have to be chosen as ways to solve the problems that led to international conflict. Sanctions have to be considered as finally as possible, when all other actions have been taken, and there should be precise and realistic goals when applying it. All in all, this paper examines the effectiveness of economic sanctions as an important instrument of political cultures of the modern world states considering the achievement of political goals and the ambiguous ethical implications of this method. It is now important for policymakers to keep building on the lessons that have been provided through sanctions implementation to make sure they are employed appropriately now and in the future, while fully understanding the repercussions of sanctions both for the target countries, as well as for the entire global community. In future, there is a scope for a more sophisticated, multiparty, and ethical approach to sanctions as a tool of dealing with threats to international security, which would cause less lethal impact to non-combatants.

Recommendations

1. Organizations like the United Nations and the European Union need to be more coordinated in the implementation of the sanctions. This will assist in closing regulations and guarantee correct insurance plan approaches to sanction regimes.
2. Sanction the ‘bad guys,’ according to the regime’s actions, not across-the-board measures that hurt ordinary people. This may encompass an asset freeze, restrictions on travel, or limiting access to the military-sensitive areas.
3. Coordinate exemptions to the sanctions so that the affected population is not deprived of food, medicine, or health-related products. Attached to the sanctions, authors should ensure that humanitarian aid gets to the intended destinations without any hindrances.
4. Utilize sanctions more as measures connected with other diplomatic relations, along with negotiations or peace talks that would identify the causes of conflict and work for the lasting resolution.
5. Create objectives for sanctions that must be specific, measurable, and have time frames to determine their efficiency. A set of sanctions should be reviewed periodically to establish whether goals are achieved, and, if not, sanctions should be modified or removed.
6. Apply hard-power, measured intelligence-based pinpoint sanctions, including specific targeting of the regime’s ability through freezing financial assets and imposing technologies that have negative impacts on the regime’s capabilities, without significantly affecting the economy of civilians.
7. Enhance public justification behind the sanctions decisions and involve the IC community to get their support and make the sanctions more efficient and justified.
8. Monitor the effects of these penalties and especially their effects on human rights and suffering, then make any changes as they may prove useful at some point but are intrusive into others sovereignty.

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