

The Effectiveness of Sanctions as a Tool for Resolving Armed Conflicts: An Analysis of Syria and Yemen

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Abstract

The use of sanctions as a tool for resolving armed conflicts has been a topic of debate for many years. This paper undertakes a critical retrospective analysis of the sanctions imposed on Syria and Yemen in resolving armed conflicts. The study examines the types of sanctions imposed on the two countries and the impact of these sanctions on the conflict resolution process. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for the use of sanctions as a tool for resolving armed conflicts in the future. The findings of the study suggest that sanctions can be effective in resolving armed conflicts, however, it is subject to various factors such as the nature of the conflict, the level of cooperation from the targeted country, and the level of international support. The study puts particular emphasis on the role of the United Nations Security Council, international cooperation among the states, and the timeliness as well as duration of sanctions as key determinants of the success of sanctions. This study seeks to contribute to the decision-making process behind imposing sanctions, both in ongoing and future conflicts by highlighting the best practices and strategies to improve the effectiveness of the sanctions.

Introduction

Understanding Sanctions in International Law

In international law, sanctions refer to systemic political, economic, or diplomatic decisions that are part of the external affairs of the governments of concerned countries or regional organisations imposed to protect national security interests,

public order, or to protect international relations.¹ Such decisions are measures of a coercive nature applicable against states, non-state entities, or individuals to defend against threats to international peace and security.² These measures are not considered to be conflicts or wars, but rather efforts to allow states to peacefully settle disputes, to rectify the behaviour of the involved state or entity, and as an alternative to the use of armed force.³ The nature of sanctions is fundamentally preventive and their extent should be proportionate to the gravity of the conflict as well as the severity of the measures taken for the sanction. Primarily, the modes of sanctions include diplomatic, economic, and military measures.⁴ Diplomatic sanctions are imposed against adverse behaviour or dissatisfaction concerning bilateral or multilateral relations among states which essentially seek to protect political and economic relations among them.⁵ Such sanctions are carried out by sending political messages to the concerned governments, or in severe cases, by cancelling or limiting diplomatic visits to the concerned states. Economic sanctions include commercial and financial prohibitions and limitations, such as trade bans, travel and visa restrictions, transaction restrictions, and tax regulations to eliminate or cease conflicts.⁶ Military sanctions, on the other hand, are imposed through military strikes, an arms embargo, or a military embargo (a restriction on the trade and transfer of military equipment to a country or group).⁷

Irrespective of the mode of imposition, sanctions under international law are required to be in line with international legal and human rights obligations to avoid adverse

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¹ Emmanuel Decaux, "The Definition of Traditional Sanctions: Their Scope and Characteristics", *International Review of the Red Cross*, 90, no. 870 (June 2008): 249–5.

² Bruno Simma et al., *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary*, (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2002). DOI: 10.1093/law/9780199639762.001.0001

³ Bruno Simma, *The Charter of the United Nations*; UN General Assembly, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights", A/HRC/42/46 (July 8, 2021). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4246-negative-impact-unilateral-coercive-measures-enjoyment-human>.

⁴ Tom Ruys, "Sanctions, Retorsions and Countermeasures: Concepts and International Legal Framework", *Social Science Research Network* (April 8, 2016) <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2760853>.

⁵ Decaux, "Definition of Traditional Sanctions," 261.

⁶ Masahiko Asada, "Economic Sanctions in International Law and Practice", *Routledge EBooks* (November 7, 2019) <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429052989>.

⁷ Asada "Economic Sanctions"; Surya P Subedi, *Unilateral Sanctions in International Law* (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

effects on third parties.⁸ Under the United Nations (UN) system, sanctions and other coercive measures are primarily regulated according to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations (the UN Charter).⁹ Besides the UN, other international or regional organisations such as the European Union (EU), and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also impose sanctions.¹⁰ Several countries including North Korea, Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Russia, Ukraine, Sudan and South Sudan, Myanmar, Yemen, and Zimbabwe have been subject to sanctions by various international entities at different times due to issues relating to human rights violations, nuclear proliferation, or for conflict with other countries.¹¹

The effectiveness of sanctions on the states involved in armed conflicts has been a subject of debate. This paper undertakes a critical retrospective analysis of the sanctions imposed on two regions of armed conflict, namely Syria and Yemen. The study examines the types of sanctions imposed on the two countries and the impact of these sanctions on the conflict resolution process. The findings of the study suggest that sanctions to resolve armed conflicts can be effective, however, the effectiveness is largely subject to circumstances such as the nature of the conflict, the level of cooperation from the targeted country, and the level of international support. The study puts particular emphasis on the role of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), international cooperation among the states, and the timeliness, as well as the duration, of sanctions as key determinants of the success of sanctions.

This paper discusses the implications of these findings for the use of sanctions as a tool for resolving armed conflicts in the future. The study aims to make a contribution to the current scholarship on the topic of imposing sanctions in armed conflicts.

⁸ Rebecca Barber, "A Survey of the General Assembly's Competence in Matters of International Peace and Security: In Law and Practice", *Journal on the Use of Force and International Law* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 115–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20531702.2020.1776505>; Detlev F. Vagts, "The Traditional Legal Concept of Neutrality in a Changing Environment", *American University International Law Review* 14, no. 1 (1998): 83–102.

⁹ United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1945, 1 UNTS XVI, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>.

¹⁰ Asada "Economic Sanctions"

¹¹ Lance Davis and Stanley Engerman, "History Lessons Sanctions: Neither War nor Peace", *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17, no. 2 (May 1, 2003): 187–97. <https://doi.org/10.1257/089533003765888502>; Emma O'Leary, "Politics and Principles: The Impact of Counterterrorism Measures and Sanctions on Principled Humanitarian Action", *International Review of the Red Cross* 103 no. 916-917 (October 5, 2021): 459–77. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383121000357>.

Specifically, it seeks to provide insights and analysis into the decision-making process behind imposing sanctions, both in ongoing and future conflicts.

The Role of Sanctions as a Means of Resolving Armed Conflicts

Over time, the effectiveness of sanctions in resolving armed conflicts between states has produced mixed results.¹² Some instances have demonstrated that sanctions can play an effective and positive role in resolving conflicts by exerting pressure on the target state to change its behaviour. An example of this would be bringing about a change in government policy or leadership for the resulting conflict.¹³

For instance, the international community imposed sanctions on South Africa to bring about an end to apartheid in the country. These sanctions ultimately helped effectuate positive outcomes in the transition to a democratic government in the early 1990s.¹⁴ Around the same time, sanctions imposed on the Libyan government to give up its weapons of mass destruction turned advantageous and resulted in significant improvement of human rights records of the region.¹⁵ During the 1990s, Serbia was subject to economic sanctions which helped bring about an end to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁶ Sanctions imposed on Iran in the 1990s and 2015 played a role in limiting the country's military capabilities and weakening its ability to pursue weapons of mass destruction, and bringing the country to the negotiating table in terms of nuclear deals, respectively.¹⁷

¹² Michael Brzoska, "International Sanctions: A Useful but Increasingly Misused Policy Instrument", *Vision of Humanity*, June 29, 2022. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/international-sanctions-a-useful-but-increasingly-misused-policy-instrument/>.

¹³ Brzoska, "International Sanctions".

¹⁴ Philip I. Levy, "Sanctions on South Africa: What Did They Do?", *The American Economic Review* 89, no. 2 (May 1, 1999): 415–20. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.89.2.415>.

¹⁵ Derek Lutterbeck, "Migrants, Weapons and Oil: Europe and Libya after the Sanctions", *The Journal of North African Studies* 14, no. 2 (June 2009): 169–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629380802343558>.

¹⁶ Juan Manuel Fabra, "United Nations Embargo against Serbia and Montenegro" (Former) Political Affairs Committee / Committee on General Affairs. UNO, July 1, 1993. <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/7216>.

¹⁷ Fatemeh Kokabisaghi, "Assessment of the Effects of Economic Sanctions on Iranians' Right to Health by Using Human Rights Impact Assessment Tool: A Systematic Review", *International Journal of Health Policy and Management* 7, no. 5 (January 20, 2018): 374–93. <https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2017.147>.

Nevertheless, there are plenty of other instances demonstrating the contrary, where sanctions had limited to no effectiveness. For instance, North Korea did not comply with the sanctions imposed on its nuclear weapons program.¹⁸ The Syrian government was not affected by the economic sanctions imposed on it to pressure Syria to end the conflict or improve human rights.¹⁹ Sanctions imposed on Venezuela have not effectively brought about a change in the government or resolved the ongoing political crisis in the country.²⁰ Cuba is another example of the failure of sanctions to resolve the political or economic issues in the country.²¹ Sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe were not effective in improving human rights or bringing about political change in the region.²²

Sanctions can be difficult to enforce and they often have unintended consequences, such as causing hardship to the civilian population, strengthening the target state's resolve, or promoting corruption and other illicit activities.²³ A determinant for the effectiveness of sanctions is timely imposition as many instances record that long-delayed imposition of sanctions severely affects its efficacy.²⁴ Irrespective of the limitations of imposing sanctions, however, the international community widely upholds that sanctions can still be an effective tool for resolving armed conflicts in certain circumstances by building international pressure and galvanising diplomatic efforts to find a solution.²⁵ It is further recommended by international legal scholars that sanctions can be used in combination with other measures, such as peace negotiations or military interventions, to increase their effectiveness.²⁶

¹⁸ Marcus Noland, "The (Non-) Impact of UN Sanctions on North Korea", *Asia Policy* 7, no. 1 (2009): 61–88. <https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2009.0047>.

¹⁹ HM Treasury, "Financial Sanctions, Syria", UK Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation, June 4, 2013. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-sanctions-syria>.

²⁰ Dany Bahar et al., "Impact of the 2017 Sanctions on Venezuela: Revisiting the Evidence", *Social Science Research Network*, (March 21, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3809344>.

²¹ Daniel W. Fisk, "Economic Sanctions: The Cuba Embargo Revisited", *Palgrave Macmillan UK EBooks*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000): 65–85. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230596979_4.

²² Heather Chingono, "Economic Sanctions: A Panacea to Democracy and Good Governance in Zimbabwe?", *Turkish Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 1 (February 16, 2010): 192–216. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/alternatives/issue/1696/21105>.

²³ Dame Rosalyn Higgins et al., *Oppenheim's International Law: United Nations* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

²⁴ Mohamed A. Daw, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on the Epidemiological Situation of COVID-19 in Libya, Syria and Yemen", *Frontiers in Public Health* 9 (June 11, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.667364>.

²⁵ Asada "Economic Sanctions".

²⁶ Asada "Economic Sanctions"; Tom, "Sanctions, Retortions and Countermeasures".

An Overview of the Sanction Situation in Syrian and Yemeni Conflicts

Both Syria and Yemen have been affected by ongoing armed conflicts, with international sanctions being used as a tool to pressure the respective governments to end the violence.²⁷ Additionally, both countries have seen devastating humanitarian consequences as a result of the conflict, including widespread famine and displacement of civilians.²⁸

Several countries, including the United States and Canada, as well as entities such as the UN, the EU, and the Arab League, have implemented sanctions against Syria as a response to the Syrian government's brutal crackdown on opposition forces and human rights abuses during the civil war in 2011.²⁹ The forms of those sanctions included economic sanctions (such as restrictions on trade and investment), financial sanctions (such as asset freezes and restrictions on access to financial services), and arms embargoes.³⁰ The purpose of the sanctions is to pressure the government to end the conflict and improve the human rights situation in the region.³¹

Yemen received international sanctions in 2015, as a response to the conflict in the country. Like Syria, the sanctions imposed on Yemen included arms embargoes, asset freezes and travel ban on officials directly concerned with the governmental offices.³² The UN also imposed sanctions targeting the Houthi rebels, who have been fighting

²⁷ Asada "Economic Sanctions".

²⁸ Farrokh Habibzadeh, "Economic Sanction: A Weapon of Mass Destruction", *The Lancet* 392, no. 10150 (September 8, 2018): 816–17. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(18\)31944-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(18)31944-5).

²⁹ Clara Portella "The EU Sanctions against Syria: Conflict Management By Other Means?" UNISCI Discussion Papers, (30), (2012): 151-158. https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/sooss_research/1177/

³⁰ John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, "Rehabilitating the Terrorists?: Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-Radicalization Programs", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 2 (March 9, 2010): 267–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546551003594748>; Clara, "The EU Sanctions against Syria," 154–55.

³¹ Erica Moret, "Humanitarian Impacts of Economic Sanctions on Iran and Syria", *European Security* 24, no. 1 (January 9, 2015): 120–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2014.893427>; UN General Assembly, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures" <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-unilateral-coercive-measures>.

³² "Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 2140 (2014) | United Nations Security Council," n.d. <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/2140>.

against the government and its allies.³³ The purpose of the sanctions is similar to those of the sanctions on Syria, namely, to initiate peace negotiations and improve the humanitarian situation in the region.³⁴

Scholarly Analyses of the Effects of Sanctions in Resolving the Syrian and Yemen Conflicts

The effectiveness of sanctions in resolving the Syrian conflict has been the subject of much debate and analysis by international law and policy scholars through the years, given the complexity of its nature and its relevance with multiple global and diplomatic factors.³⁵ Based on these discussions, the effectiveness of sanctions resolving the conflict appears to be influenced by several factors, including the level of support for the sanctions by the international community, the enforcement mechanisms in place, and the willingness of all parties to the conflict to engage in peace negotiations.³⁶ Proponents of sanctions in the international community argue that the sanctions placed on Syria contributed to putting pressure on the government and its allies to engage in peace negotiations and improve human rights in the regions. These proponents cite several outcomes, such as the sanctions that targeted key economic sectors, including the oil and financial sectors, reducing the government's ability to finance the conflict and its military operations.³⁷ On the other hand, critics of the sanctions on Syria argue that sanctions have had limited effectiveness in resolving the conflict, as the Syrian government has been able to find alternative sources of support, such as Iran and Russia, which have helped Syria withstand the impact of sanctions.³⁸

³³ Chris Downes, "'Targeted Killings' in an Age of Terror: The Legality of the Yemen Strike", *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 9, no. 2 (January 1, 2004): 277–94. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcsl/9.2.277>.

³⁴ David P Forsythe, "United Nations Intervention in Conflict Situations Revisited: A Framework for Analysis", *International Organization* 23, no. 1 (December 1, 1969): 115–39. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s002081830002556x>.

³⁵ Tom, "Sanctions, Retortions and Countermeasures"; US Department of The Treasury, "Syria Sanctions", January 23, 2023. <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/syria-sanctions>; Clara, "The EU Sanctions against Syria", 154-55; Erica, "Humanitarian Impacts", 125–30.

³⁶ Erica, "Humanitarian Impacts", 125–30.

³⁷ Hsu Mo et al., "The Sanctions of International Law", *Transactions of the Grotius Society* 35 (1949): 4–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/743110>; Erica, "Humanitarian Impacts", 125–30.

³⁸ Erica, "Humanitarian Impacts", 125–30

Furthermore, the sanctions have also had negative humanitarian consequences, such as exacerbating poverty and food insecurity in the country.³⁹

As with Syria, the effectiveness of sanctions imposed on Yemen has been a subject of debate among global scholars and policymakers.⁴⁰ One of the main arguments in favour of the effectiveness of sanctions on Yemen is that the sanctions were able to cause adequate economic pressure on the Houthi rebels, the main armed group in Yemen.⁴¹ Sanctions have targeted individuals and organisations connected to the rebels, which has made it difficult for them to access the resources they need to sustain their military activities.⁴² As a result, the sanctions have weakened the rebels and forced them to engage in negotiations with the government.⁴³ Another argument in favour of the effectiveness of sanctions is that they have brought international attention to the conflict in Yemen.⁴⁴ The imposition of sanctions has sent a message to the world that the conflict in Yemen is a serious issue that demands attention and resolution.⁴⁵ This has led to increased diplomatic efforts to find a solution to the conflict and has encouraged the international community to take a more active role in resolving the conflict.⁴⁶ However, despite these positive effects, some argue that the effectiveness of sanctions on Yemen has been limited.⁴⁷ One of the key reasons behind this argument is that sanctions have not had a significant impact on the rebel's military capabilities. This is because they have continued to receive support from other sources.⁴⁸ Additionally, the sanctions were ineffective to stop the flow of arms into

³⁹ Alexander Orakhelashvili, "The Impact of Unilateral EU Economic Sanctions on the UN Collective Security Framework: The Cases of Iran and Syria", *Economic Sanctions Under International Law* (2015): 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-051-0_1.

⁴⁰ Orakhelashvili "The Impact of Unilateral EU Economic Sanctions" 3–21.

⁴¹ David, "United Nations Intervention", 115–39.

⁴² David, "United Nations Intervention", 115–39.

⁴³ Martin D Fink, "Naval Blockade and the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen", *Netherlands International Law Review* 64, no. 2 (July 2017): 291–307. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40802-017-0092-3>.

⁴⁴ Fink "Naval Blockade" 291–307.

⁴⁵ Dina Esfandiary and Ariane M. Tabatabai, "Yemen: An Opportunity for Iran–Saudi Dialogue?", *Washington Quarterly*, 39(2), (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2016.1204415>.

⁴⁶ Emma, "Politics and Principles", 471–475.

⁴⁷ "Yemen and the Saudi-Iranian 'Cold War'", The Royal Institute of International Affairs, February 18, 2015.

https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20150218YemenIranSaudi.pdf; Richard K Russell, "Swords and Shields: Ballistic Missiles and Defenses in the Middle East and South Asia", *Orbis*, June 1, 2002. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0030-4387\(02\)00125-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0030-4387(02)00125-4).

⁴⁸ Russell, "Swords and Shields".

Yemen, as the rebels continue to obtain weapons from external sources.⁴⁹ Another factor limiting the effectiveness of sanctions on Yemen is that the sanctions have caused economic hardship for ordinary Yemenis, as they curtailed their regular access to basic necessities such as food, medicine, and fuel, negatively impacting a significant portion of the population.⁵⁰ This has resulted in a humanitarian crisis in Yemen and has made it difficult for the international community to support the sanctions.⁵¹

Determinants of the Effectiveness of Sanctions in Resolving Armed Conflicts and Their Application in Syria and Yemen Case

Considering the outcome of the sanctions imposed on Syria and Yemen over the years alongside scholarly reflections, it is imperative to focus on the determinants of the efficacy of an international sanction.

United Nations Security Council Resolutions

The success of international sanctions depends largely on UNSC resolutions, which provide crucial instructions and guidelines.⁵² In this regard, the UNSC has several roles to play. Firstly, the UNSC should make clear definitions and provide precise goals of the sanctions in the drafting of the resolutions, such as mentioning the target to promote regional peace, to convict and deter violations of human rights in any form, to make a clear prohibition on nuclear proliferation, or any other goal.⁵³ Secondly, the UNSC should make clear specifications as to the target groups, entities, or individuals on whom the sanction applies the most, stating their activities leading to the sanction in order to reduce the generality and breadth of the sanctions to avoid adverse effects

⁴⁹ Chris, "Targeted Killings", 279–89.

⁵⁰ Chris, "Targeted Killings", 279–89.

⁵¹ Jeannie Sowers and Erika Weinthal, "Humanitarian Challenges and the Targeting of Civilian Infrastructure in the Yemen War", *International Affairs* 97, no. 1 (January 2021): 157–77. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa166>; Pettersson, Therése, and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflicts, 1946–2014", *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 4 (July 1, 2015): 536–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343315595927>.

⁵² David, "United Nations Intervention", 115–39.

⁵³ Farrokh, "Economic Sanctions", 816–817.

on innocent civilians.⁵⁴ Thirdly, the UNSC should establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the sanctioned regions in order to directly and immediately assess the impact of the sanctions to adjust its approach over time and ensure that the sanctions are resulting in the intended effect.⁵⁵ Additionally, the UNSC should work in close proximity with regional organisations to develop measures tailored to regional contexts. This would also help the Council to seek additional resources to support the implementation of the sanctions, including funding for monitoring and evaluation, as well as technical support.⁵⁶ Hence, the clarity and enforceability of these resolutions are key factors in determining the effectiveness of sanctions, exerting pressure on Syria and Yemen to address conflicts, and human rights violations, and work towards peaceful resolutions.⁵⁷

International Cooperation

The efficacy of sanctions is highly dependent on the cooperation of international organisations and entities as they can play a vital role in pressuring the targeted entity to comply with the demands of the international community.⁵⁸ It is professed that when a group of countries or international organisations join together to impose sanctions on a state, it creates added pressure on the targeted state or entity making it difficult to resist the demands of the international community.⁵⁹ Moreover, it affects the costs of sanctions for individual states, making it feasible for the supporting states to sustain

⁵⁴ Farrokh, "Economic Sanctions", 816–817; UN General Assembly "Secondary Sanctions, Civil and Criminal Penalties for Circumvention of Sanctions Regimes and Overcompliance with Sanctions: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Negative Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures on the Enjoyment of Human Rights", A/HRC/51/33 (July 15, 2022). Accessed April 12, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5133-secondary-sanctions-civil-and-criminal-penalties-circumvention>.

⁵⁵ Tom, "Sanctions, Retortions and Countermeasures".

⁵⁶ Tom, "Sanctions, Retortions and Countermeasures".

⁵⁷ David, "United Nations Intervention", 115–39.

⁵⁸ Justine Walker, "The Public Policy of Sanctions Compliance: A Need for Collective and Coordinated International Action", *International Review of the Red Cross* 103 no. 916–917 (January 2021): 705–16. doi:10.1017/S181638312100093X.

⁵⁹ Tom Ruys, "Immunity, Inviolability and Countermeasures – A Closer Look at Non-UN Targeted Sanctions", in *The Cambridge Handbook of Immunities and International Law*, ed. Tom Ruys, Nicolas Angelet, and Luca Ferro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019): 670–710. doi:10.1017/9781108283632.034.

over time.⁶⁰ Furthermore, international cooperation plays a vital role in sharing intelligence to identify the vulnerabilities of the sanctions as well as to provide assistance in terms of humanitarian or diplomatic support to reduce the negative and unintended impact on civilians.⁶¹ Hence, enhancing international cooperation surrounding Syria and Yemen has the potential to significantly augment the effectiveness of the sanctions imposed on these countries, amplifying their impact in addressing conflicts, and human rights violations, and fostering peaceful resolutions.⁶²

Timing and Duration

Timing and duration of sanctions play another key role in the success of a sanction. In this regard, circumstances including the degree of vulnerability, economic status, political condition, and diplomatic behaviours are to be considered.⁶³ Additionally, the duration of the sanctions should be controlled considering their effect on civilians and their humanitarian implications.⁶⁴ Hence, by optimizing the timing and duration of sanctions, and implementing them in a manner that minimizes humanitarian suffering among the general population unrelated to the conflicts, the effectiveness of the imposed sanctions on Syria and Yemen could be greatly enhanced, achieving their intended goals more efficiently.⁶⁵

Conclusion

Through a critical analysis of the effects of sanctions imposed on Syria and Yemen, this paper concludes with three key determinants of the effectiveness of sanctions in

⁶⁰ Emma, "Politics and Principles", 475–477; David, "United Nations Intervention", 115–39; Francesco Giumelli, "The purposes of targeted sanctions", in *Targeted Sanctions: The Impacts and Effectiveness of United Nations Action*, Thomas J. Biersteker, Sue. E. Eckert and Marcos Tourinho, eds. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016): 40; and Richard Nephew, *The Art of Sanctions: A View from the Field* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2017): 9.

⁶¹ Justine, "The Public Policy of Sanctions Compliance", 712–13; Larry Minea et al., "Toward More Humane and Effective Sanctions Management: Enhancing the Capacity of the United Nations System", *Institute for International Studies*, no. 31 (January 1, 1998): https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/wps/wibu/0015213/f_0015213_12843.pdf.

⁶² Mohamed, "The Impact of Armed Conflict".

⁶³ Damrosch, Lori F, "The Legitimacy of Economic Sanctions as Countermeasures for Wrongful Acts", *Columbia Law School* 37 (2019): 249. https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/2927

⁶⁴ Mohamed, "The Impact of Armed Conflict".

⁶⁵ Mohamed, "The Impact of Armed Conflict".

resolving armed conflicts. In the case of Syria, sanctions were imposed by several countries and international organisations in response to the country's civil war and human rights abuses.⁶⁶ These sanctions targeted the Syrian government and its supporters, as well as individuals and entities involved in the conflict.⁶⁷ In Yemen, sanctions were imposed in response to the conflict between the government and Houthi rebels. Like Syria, these sanctions also targeted individuals and entities involved in the conflict, as well as the Yemeni government.⁶⁸ The effectiveness of these sanctions is a subject of debate, with some studies suggesting that the sanctions had limited impact on the conflict whereas others argue that they contributed to the pressure on the respective governments to engage in peace talks.⁶⁹

Hence, as a tool used by the international community to pressure countries to change their behaviour, the subject of sanctions requires further extensive research and case analysis. This is to consider that sanctions may play a pertinent role in resolving conflicts, but they cannot be considered a magic solution and their impact depends on multiple factors, including the nature of the conflict, the type of sanctions imposed, and the target country's willingness to change behaviour.⁷⁰ This paper particularly emphasises the role of the UNSC in issuing resolutions for the sanctions, the necessity of international cooperation among the states and the timeliness and duration of the sanctions. After all, the purpose of imposing sanctions under international law is not to inflict harm on the civilian population by impeding their access to essential goods or subjecting them to inhumane economic conditions, but rather to impose limitations and barriers on specific entities for violating their obligations under international law.

⁶⁶ Clara, "The EU Sanctions against Syria", 154–55.

⁶⁷ Clara, "The EU Sanctions against Syria", 156–57.

⁶⁸ Martin, "Naval Blockade and Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen", 297–306.

⁶⁹ David, "United Nations Intervention", 115–39; Erica, "Humanitarian Impacts", 125–30.

⁷⁰ UN General Assembly "Secondary Sanctions".

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