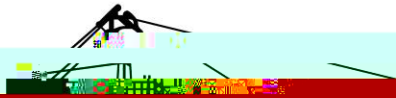




An Inhumane Response The Humanitarian Consequences of Sanctions: A Case Study of Syria

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1.1. Research Question

The central question that this thesis seeks to address is: *To what extent have sanctions impacted the humanitarian crisis in Syria?* To examine the extent to which sanctions impact humanitarian conditions and the mechanisms through which they do so, I study the case of sanctions against Syria from 2011 to 2016. I will trace the process through which sanctions have affected humanitarian conditions. The process in which sanctions impact humanitarian conditions occurs through a series of causal mechanisms. By identifying pathways from *actions* (sanctions) to *outcomes*

1.4. Structure

This thesis is organized as follows. Section 2 covers the theoretical framework concerning sanctions and the impact on humanitarian conditions. Section 3 explains the methodology for assessing the humanitarian consequences of sanctions, and discusses the selection and the limitations of the applied method and data. Section 4 presents the case of Syria and identifies pathways from *actions* (sanctions) to *outcomes* (change in humanitarian conditions). Section 5 concludes by summarizing the findings, and discusses potential policy recommendations.

2. Literature Review

The aim of this literature review is to provide an overview of prior scholarship that has been conducted on sanctions, and to help guide the formulation of a theoretical argument. In this section, I review relevant literature on the use of sanctions as a foreign policy tool, examine the humanitarian implications of sanctions, and identify areas of controversy and questions that require further research.

2.1. Defining Sanctions

The use of military force was once thought of to be the only effective way for governments to achieve demanding foreign policy objectives such as changing a state's behavior, altering a state's regime or internal political structure, and defending territory (Pape, 1997). However, since the post-Cold War period, the use of sanctions has become a popular coercive tool in international relations for governments and multinational organizations to gain foreign policy objectives, without applying military force (Peksen, 2009). Many scholars argue that the use of sanctions has become more frequent, as they are a less destructive method of invoking change in domestic or foreign policy (Hufbauer et al., 2007). Furthermore, while sanctions can negatively impact sectors domestically, they are relatively cheap in relation to the financial cost associated with using military force (Pape, 1997). While the reluctance to use military force to obtain a certain objective is a key motivation for why the use of sanctions has risen, their use also serves as a form of symbolic diplomacy. Sanctions can be a visible diplomatic initiative that serves to signal "official displeasure" of a certain behavior (Haass, 1998). In addition, "they serve the purpose of reinforcing a commitment to a behavioral norm, such as respect for human rights or opposition to proliferation" (Haass, 1998). The traditional narrative amongst the international community is that applying sanctions does not have the

same negative influence on the reputation of the sender country, as the use of military intervention does.

Conceptually, sanctions are grounded in coercive diplomacy and are considered a form of hard power. This form of political power is often imposed by one or many states upon another of “lesser and/ or equal economic power” (Peksen, 2009). Sanctions have been

2.2. The Paradox of Sanctions

Are sanctions a useful tool for changing state behavior? Since the inception of the use of sanctions as a foreign policy tool, there has been a variety of studies conducted by political scientists and other academics regarding their effectiveness (Drezner, 1999). There is much debate amongst scholars regarding the success that sanctions have in achieving their desired results, and the impact they have on the targeted states. In a large amount of empirical research on sanctions, there is little evidence that they are ever effective. In a quantitative research study conducted by Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot that examined the effectiveness of sanctions, the authors reviewed 115 cases where sanctions had been used from the period of 1900 to 1990. The study found that the use of economic sanctions as a foreign policy tool had very limited success, and only a 24% chance at reaching their stated goals (Hufbauer et al., 2007). In a similar study, Pape found that sanctions are only effective 5% of the time (Pape, 1997). The review of the literature on sanctions as a foreign policy tool shows that scholarship is divided between studies that support sanctions, and studies that oppose them. Some scholarship suggests that in some cases sanctions may end up having a paradoxical effect on the target state (Cortright and Lopez, 2000). For example, sanctions may be imposed upon a state for reasons such as human rights abuse, however, because of the imposed sanctions, human rights conditions in the target state may get worse. In literature those that advocate the use of sanctions state that they can be effective in altering the target states' policies without military intervention. Scholars that are proponents of sanctions argue that the success of a given sanction is more likely when sanctions incur severe economic damage to the target state (Baldwin, 1985). Additionally, a sanction can be more successful when the target state is economically dependent on the state that implements the sanction (Hufbauer et al. 2007). Other scholars argue that sanctions are more likely to succeed when they are aimed at the political elites of the target countries (Garfield, 1999).

Those that oppose sanctions argue that they cause human suffering, and are blunt instruments that often produce unintended and undesirable consequences on the targeted state and the civilian population (Baldwin, 1985). In addition, opponents of sanctions state that sanctions rarely achieve their intended goals, and the terms that define a successful sanction are too ambiguous (Pape, 1997). Perksen argues, "economic coercion is still a detrimental and counterproductive policy tool, even when sanctions are imposed with the specific goal of promoting human rights conditions" (Perksen, 2009). The paradox surrounding the implementation of sanctions is that they are employed to condone a certain behavior such as human rights abuses, however, their severe humanitarian impact can further hurt the population that they intended to protect (Seiden, 1999). Studies conducted on sanctions that were placed against Iraq during the Gulf War (1990- 1991) found that sanctions caused more

damage to the civilian population in the country, than it did to the Saddam Hussein regime (Halliday, 1999). In the case of Iraq, scholars state that sanctions and trade embargos that restricted food and aid supply into the country had a direct impact on the civilian population causing malnutrition, famine, and death (Buck et al., 1998). While there is much disagreement surrounding the effectiveness of sanctions, they remain a popular international policy tool even if they are

2.4. Measuring the Efficacy of Sanctions

boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009). A single case study analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method for a few reasons. First, there is not a suitable country to compare the Syria case with. Comparing multiple cases where sanctions have been placed against countries for different reasons and different circumstances will provide conflicting evidence and less accuracy. Secondly, focusing on Syria as a single case study will present a deeper and more detailed investigation into the relationship between sanctions and humanitarian consequences. Case studies can give high levels of conceptual validity, as they allow the researcher to identify indicators (units of analysis) that best represent the theoretical concepts of the study (Gerring, 2004). A case study approach allows researchers to explore how variation in the independent variable impacts

Since the civil war erupted, the Syrian government has become tremendously unstable and weak, as much of its support base has significantly diminished in size, and its military has suffered heavily due to defections (Olanrewaju and Segun, 2015). In an effort to remain in

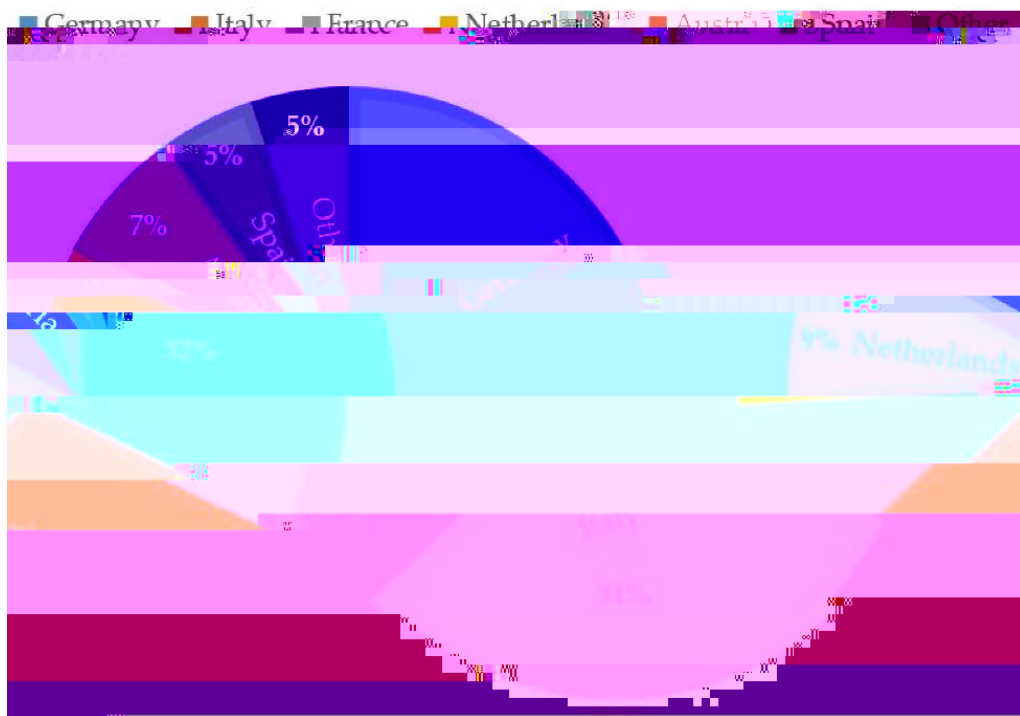
Table 1: Partial List of Sanctions against Syria, 2011-2016

Country/Organization	Type of Sanction
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in August 2011, which placed a variety of sanctions on Syria (UNCRS, 2017). The U.S. sanctions on Syria prohibited: investment in Syria, direct and indirect exportation, re-exportation, sale and supply of any services to the U.S., imports of petroleum or petroleum products from Syria, and financial transactions (OFAC, 2017). In May 2011, the EU imposed sanctions on Syria under Council Regulation 878/2011, including asset freezes, embargoes, and financial restrictions (Gobat and Kostial, 2016). There were various different kinds of sanctions imposed against Syria from 2011 to 2016, however targeted trade sanctions on crude oil had the most significant impact on economic growth (World Bank, 2017). In 2011, the U.S. and the EU both placed targeted trade sanctions and embargoes against Syria on the import of crude oil (UNCRS, 2017). Targeted trade sanctions can have both direct and indirect impacts on economic growth, and create a snowball effect where the decline in the

The U.S. and the EU imposed targeted trade sanctions specifically on the import of crude oil because the oil industry was one of the largest sectors of the Syrian economy, and Syria exported oil primarily to countries in Europe (Gobat and Kostial, 2016). The rationale behind targeting the oil industry was that it would have the most devastating impact on the Syrian economy, and the Assad regime would be more responsive to sanctions that had damaging effects. Prior to the ban on crude oil, Syria produced about 400,000 barrels of crude oil a day, and exported around 150,000 barrels per day, mainly to states in the EU including: Germany, Italy, France, Spain, and the Netherlands (World Bank, 2017). Syria exported very little crude oil to the U.S. from 2006 to 2011 compared to the amount that was exported to the EU, and in this regard the EU oil ban had much more of an impact on Syria's oil industry. Figure 6 displays Syrian crude oil exports by destination in 2010, one year prior to being sanctioned.

Figure 6: Syrian Crude Oil Exports by Destination in 2010



Source: Almohamad, H. and Dittmann, A. (2016). Oil in Syria between Terrorism and Dictatorship. *Soc. Sci.*, 5 (2), 20.

The production of crude oil significantly declined after the EU and U.S. placed sanctions on oil imports, as Syria had difficulties in finding other states to export to. Per the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), “[s]ince the onset of the conflict, crude oil production in government controlled areas has fallen sharply (97 percent decline), from 386,000 bpd in 2010 to 10,000 bpd in 2015 and 2016” (World Bank,

2017). Figure 7 shows that oil production rose between 2006 and 2010, and dropped significantly after being sanctioned. As Figure 7 illustrates, while oil production declined between 2010 and 2015, consumption remained relatively stable. When Syria produced most of its own oil from 2006 to 2010, petrol was readily available and the price of petrol per liter was around 50 Syrian pounds (SYP) (0.10 USD) (Almohamad and Dittmann, 2016). The price of petrol began to skyrocket in 2011 as oil production dwindled down because of the oil ban. The price of petrol increased by 450 percent between 2011 and 2016, and at the end of 2016,

production of oil began to drop heavily after being sanctioned, and the unemployment rate significantly increased at a similar rate. Prior to sanctions and the civil war, from 2006 to 2010, the unemployment rate averaged at 8.9%. The unemployment rate spiked from 8.4% in 2010 to 14.9% in 2011, and remained above 14% from 2011 to 2016 (see Figure 8) (World Bank, 2017).

Figure 8: Unemployment Rate in Syria, 2006-2016

Source: Trading Economics (2016). Syrian unemployment rate 2006-2016 | Data | Chart | Calendar | Forecast. Online.

4.3. Health and Drugs

The Syrian Civil War has caused the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II.

as more than 700 healthcare workers were killed or injured, and about half of the physicians in the state left (Kherallah et al., 2012). The ratio of doctors to the overall population was 1:661 in 2010 and changed to 1:4000 in 2014 (Gobat and Kostial, 2016). The decline in the number of doctors increased regional disparities in the availability of access to healthcare between urban and rural areas, and a large number of people in rural areas were forced to travel hundreds of miles to receive health care (Van Berlaer et al., 2017).

To assess changes in health conditions in Syria from 2011 to 2016, I will use life expectancy at birth (LEB) as an indicator. I have chosen this indicator as it summarizes the mortality pattern across all age groups including children, teens, adults, and the elderly (Regmi and Gee, 2016). LEB refers to “the average number of years that a newborn is expected to live if current mortality rates continue to apply” (Regmi and Gee, 2016). Various factors influence LEB including: access to healthcare, nutrition, water resources, medicine, economic status, education, environment, and family history (Regmi and Gee, 2016). Prior to the civil war and sanctions, Syria had a thriving medical infrastructure in place which included multiple medical schools, a National Health and Medication Plan, and many specialized medical clinics (Kherallah et al., 2012). Health indicators in Syria between 1990 and 2010 improved significantly per data from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Syrian Ministry of Health, and UNICEF (WHO, 2016). Syria had a relatively low infant mortality rate (IMR) that steadily declined from 34.86 deaths per 1,000 Syrians in 2000, to 16.14 in 2010 (Kherallah et al., 2012). This was due to a variety of factors, including: modern health care facilities, immunization programs, access to affordable prescription medicine, access to clean water and sanitation, and government sponsored public health initiatives (WHO, 2016). In comparison to other countries in the Middle East, the IMR was relatively low. For example, in 2015 the IMR in Afghanistan was 66.3 deaths per 1,000 live births, and in 2015 the IMR in Iraq was 38.4 death per 1,000 live births (UNOCHA, 2016). Per data from the WHO, since the collapse in public health in Syria, beginning in 2011, the life expectancy of men dropped by 10 years, and the life expectancy of women dropped by 5 years (WHO, 2016). Between 2000 and 2010, the life expectancy averaged at 70 for men and 75 for women. In 2016, the WHO reported that the life expectancy for men was 59.9 and 69.9 for women (WHO, 2016). A variety of factors contributed to the decline in the LEB from 2011 to 2016, including: war-related conflict, reduction in health care facilities, lack of medication, and interruptions in humanitarian assistance (UNOCHA, 2016).

In the past two decades, most sanctionsberion)

especially when a state is sanctioned during a violent conflict, as states may heavily rely on imports and humanitarian assistance. In the case of Syria, the collapse of the public health sector caused the state to become dependent on humanitarian assistance (UNICEF, 2015). However, unilateral sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the EU presented many challenges for aid organizations to provide humanitarian assistance. Although “delivering humanitarian aid [was] both encouraged and permitted” under the U.S. and EU sanction regimes, many humanitarian organizations had difficulties in providing aid and sending medical supplies due to specific licensing requirements outlined in the sanctions (Walker, 2016). U.S. trade restrictions prohibited the export of items to Syria that contained 10% or more of U.S. content, including medical devices, medication, and health related supplies (USCRS, 2017). The EU had similar trade sanctions and export controls on a wide range of “dual use” items (goods that can be used for both peaceful and military aims) (UNOCHA, 2016). To bypass this rule, organizations and aid groups were required to apply for special licenses that involved costly fees and legal support. To legitimately send goods to Syria, aid organizations had to go through a lengthy government process to gain approval that often took months to complete (Walker, 2016). The trade sanctions imposed on Syria by the U.S. and the EU did not allow for the export of medical devices without a license. The licensing requirements in the trade sanctions limited the ability of aid organizations to provide assistance, and delayed the delivery of aid-related goods. One of the main challenges that aid organizations faced was that the legal costs associated with obtaining a license to export a good often outweighed the value of the good (Walker, 2016). For example, receiving government approval for sending medical equipment to Syria could cost as much as triple the cost of the actual medical equipment. The costs associated with gaining approval to ship certain goods to Syria and the complex requirements to obtain a license, resulted in an overall decline in the number of humanitarian related goods sent by aid organizations (UNOCHA, 2016).

Aid organizations working in Syria reported that the licensing requirements in the sanctions and restrictions inhibited them from effectively procuring necessary medicine and pharmaceutical products. Prior to the conflict, Syria produced 90% of medicine that it needed, and had around 63 pharmaceutical factories that employed about 17,000 people (Kutaini, 2010)

many aid organizations reluctant to ship medicine supplies out of fear of breaching the sanctions (Walker, 2016). Kherallah et al. state that “the quality of health care has been further

Figure 9: National Immunization Coverage, 2006-2016

Source: World Health Organization (WHO) (2016). *Syrian Arab Republic Annual Report 2016*. Geneva: WHO.

4.4. Food Security

To assess changes in food security, I will use food inflation as an indicator, and examine factors that contributed to changes in food security. According to a survey that was conducted by the UNFAO, there is a strong correlation between sanctions, increases in malnutrition rates, child mortality, and food inflation (Palaniappa, 2013). The World Food Program (WFP) states, “

The decline in purchasing power significantly began in 2011, and eroded access to food across the country (Friberg Lyme, 2012). The inflation rate in Syria from 2000 to 2009

2014 (World Bank, 2017). Those affected the most by the drastic increase in the price of staple goods were children under five years of age, pregnant women, and people with chronic diseases (UNOCHA, 2016). In 2015, UNICEF stated, “decreased purchasing power coupled with rising food prices is undermining the nutritional health of affected communities with children being particularly vulnerable” (UNICEF, 2015). Prior to the conflict, it was estimated that around 1 million people in Syria struggled to meet their daily food needs (Friberg Lyme, 2012). At the end of 2016, over 9 million people in Syria were in need of food assistance, 2 million people were at risk of food insecurity, and 7 million people were food insecure. Food security in Syria drastically declined from 2011 to 2016 due to a variety of factors such as war-related conflict, trade sanctions, hyperinflation, and reductions in domestic food production (Gobat and Kostial, 2016). The number of children under five that were diagnosed with acute malnutrition skyrocketed between 2011 and 2016. Approximately 555,000 children under five years of age were screened for acute malnutrition a TJET 4316.63 531.918024dto7nia[(o)1u6[(l)-4(n)-35u2

state. The collapse in the economy contributed to the unravelling of the Syrian society. Sanctions imposed on Syria had the most significant effect on the most vulnerable people that had no control over government policy.

I chose five indications including: gross domestic product (GDP), unemployment, life expectancy at birth (LEB), vaccination coverage, and food inflation because they provide great insight into the current condition of an individual's welfare. Due to the methodological approach that was adopted in this study, this thesis is somewhat restricted in drawing generalized conclusions. However, from 2011 to 2016, all five indicators were in one way or another affected by sanctions to a degree. The findings in this thesis suggest that changes in the indicators occurred through a series of causal mechanisms. This thesis does not argue that sanctions were the sole cause of changes in the indicators, rather they were a contributing factor. The U.S. and EU sanctions had a devastating effect on the Syrian oil industry, and the targeted oil ban prevented Syria to export oil to its main trading partners. Syria heavily relied on exporting oil to the EU, and after the oil ban was placed exports drastically declined, as did production, employment, and household income. The decline in the economy had a profound impact on the Syrian society, and led to high levels of unemployment and poverty. The health care system in Syria collapsed due to targeted attacks on medical facilities, and most of those affected by the humanitarian crisis were not able to get adequate care. Syria relied on humanitarian assistance to provide health care due to a lack of resources within the state. Aid organizations had a difficult time in exporting items that Syria desperately needed, and this was due to strict licensing requirement. Thus, Syria received less goods such as medical supplies, and this caused several medical facilities to close due to a lack of necessary supplies.

Trade restrictions imposed by the U.S. and EU prohibited the export of over a thousand medicines, and this caused less people to receive medication for treatable diseases. Syria relied on pharmaceutical imports from 2011 to 2016, and shortages in medicine and supplies led to less children receiving vaccinations, and the immunization rate drastically declined. When vaccination coverage declined, diseases that had long disappeared started to reappear in children such as poliomyelitis, typhoid, and measles. The life expectancy for men and women both declined between 2011 and 2016. Food security in Syria sharply dropped as production of foodstuffs decreased and Syria began to heavily rely on imports. Targeted sanctions destroyed the economy in Syria which led to high levels of inflation. Food inflation in Syria became the third highest in the world, and over 9 million people were unable to afford basic food products. Syria became dependent on humanitarian assistance for foodstuffs, and foodstuffs and related supplies accounted for one third of the humanitarian assistance items that Syria received between 2011 and 2016.

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