

**The Effectiveness of Sanctions: A Comparative Analysis of Sanction Cases  
Through the Interplay of International Cooperation and Domestic Regime  
Cohesion**

By

Dániel Iván

Submitted to Central European University

Department of International Relations

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

*Master of Arts in International Relations*

Supervisor: Prof. Dániel Izsák

Vienna, Austria

2025

## Copyright Notice

Copyright © Dániel Iván, 2025. The Effectiveness of Sanctions: A Comparative Analysis of Sanction Cases Through the Interplay of International Cooperation and Domestic Regime Cohesion - This work is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives \(CC BY-NC-ND\) 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) license.

For bibliographic and reference purposes this thesis/dissertation should be referred to as: Iván, Dániel. 2025. The Effectiveness of Sanctions: A Comparative Analysis of Sanction Cases Through the Interplay of International Cooperation and Domestic Regime Cohesion. MA thesis, Department of International Relations, Central European University, Vienna.

## **Abstract**

This thesis addresses a central question in international political economy: Why do international sanctions succeed in some cases but fail in others? While the existing literature has analyzed both the external and internal dynamics affecting the effectiveness of sanctions, it has largely treated them in isolation from one another. This thesis argues that integrating these dynamics creates a more comprehensive explanation of sanctions outcomes. Specifically, it investigates how the interaction between the level of international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion jointly shapes the success or failure of sanctions. To explore this interplay, the thesis presents an analytical matrix that outlines the four possible outcomes of these two factors. These outcomes are analyzed through a comparative case study design, which presents the cases of Iran (2006 – 2015), Russia (2014 – 2025), Myanmar (1990 – 2015), and Venezuela (2017 – 2025). The analysis is grounded in a dual theoretical framework of Cooperation Theory and Social Conflict Analysis, to illustrate the interconnectedness of the two factors. Although the thesis is limited to only four cases, the findings demonstrate the relevance of examining the interaction between international and domestic factors to capture a more comprehensive understanding of sanctions outcome. Within this framework the results indicate that sanctions are most likely to be successful when international cooperation is high and domestic regime cohesion is low.

## **Author's Declaration**

I, the undersigned, Dániel Iván, candidate for the MA degree in International Relations declare herewith that the present thesis titled “The Effectiveness of Sanctions: A Comparative Analysis of Sanction Cases Through the Interplay of International Cooperation and Domestic Regime Cohesion” is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright.

I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 22 May 2025

Dániel Iván

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Professor Dániel Izsák for his continued support and guidance throughout this project. I especially am grateful for his availability and quick responses whenever I had a question or needed direction. I would also like to extend a special thank you to Zsuzsanna Tóth for her helpful feedback and the discussions during our consultations over the past months.

I am deeply grateful to my family for their continuous support over the years. Without their support none of this would have been possible. Finally, I want to thank my friends, who made the past two years such a great fun – from going to the “Balkan bakery” to the unforgettable memories in New York and New Orleans.

## Table of Contents

<b>Copyright Notice</b> .....	i
<b>Abstract</b> .....	ii
<b>Author's Declaration</b> .....	iii
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	iv
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1: Literature Review</b> .....	4
<b>1.1. The History of Sanctions Literature</b> .....	4
<b>1.2. The Key Debate on the Effectiveness of Sanctions</b> .....	7
<b>1.3. The Existing Research Gap within the Literature</b> .....	8
<b>Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodology</b> .....	12
<b>2.1. Social Conflict Analysis and Cooperation Theory</b> .....	12
<b>2.2. Methodology and Case Selection</b> .....	14
<b>Chapter 3: Case Studies</b> .....	20
<b>3.1. High International Cooperation &amp; Low Regime Cohesion: Iran (2006 -2015)</b> .....	20
3.1.1. External Pressure: Multilateral Cooperation and Sanctions Design .....	20
3.1.2. Domestic Filtering: Regime Fragmentation and Elite Contestation .....	23
3.1.3. Case Evaluation .....	26
<b>3.2. High International Cooperation &amp; High Regime Cohesion: Russia (2014 – 2025)</b> ..	27
3.2.1. External Pressure: Multilateral Sanctions Without UN Backing .....	27
3.2.2. Domestic Filtering: Elite Cohesion and Repression of Social Dissent .....	29
3.2.3. Case Evaluation .....	30
<b>3.3. Low International Cooperation &amp; Low Regime Cohesion: Myanmar (1990 – 2015)</b> 31	
3.3.1. External Pressure: The Limits of Uncoordinated Cooperation .....	31
3.3.2. Domestic Filtering: Elite Adaptation and Oppositional Weakness .....	32
3.3.3. Case Evaluation .....	35
<b>3.4. Low International Cooperation &amp; High Regime Cohesion: Venezuela (2013 – 2025)</b> ..	35
3.4.1. External Pressure: Fragmented Multilateralism and Strategic Subversion .....	36
3.4.2. Domestic Filtering: Elite Cohesion and Strategic Adaptation .....	38
3.4.3. Case Evaluation .....	42
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	43
<b>Reference List</b> .....	45

## Introduction

Daniel Drezner, a leading scholar of international political economy and an expert of sanctions, opened his 2015 article with the following statement: “This is the golden age of economic statecraft – and the study of economic statecraft” (Drezner 2015, 755). This notion has gained great relevance in the past years. Following the 9/11 attacks, sanctions have become the primary tool to coerce target states into compliance with international norms or certain political demands (Hufbauer 2007; Jones 2015; Drezner 2015; Rosenberg et al. 2016; Peksen 2019b; Deák and Klauda 2022). Yet, despite the marked increase in their use, the effectiveness of sanctions is still fiercely debated among scholars and policymakers. The success rate of sanctions and their interpretation depends on numerous methodologies, varying perspectives, and differing interpretations (Peksen 2019b; Deák and Klauda 2022; Morgan, Syropoulos, and Yotov 2023).

Within the broader discourse on the efficacy of sanctions, two particularly contentious variables are the international cooperation behind a sanctions episode and the target state’s domestic regime cohesion. Scholars investigating the former focus on whether international cooperation, multilateral support, institutional backing, and consistent enforcement increase the likelihood of sanctions success (Martin 1992; Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1999; Drezner 2000; Hufbauer 2007; Peksen 2019b). Others have researched how the internal resilience of the target state, that is its ruling elites and institutions, can adapt to sanctions pressure (Escribà-Folch 2012; 2013; Jones 2015; Peksen 2019a). However, investigating the internal or external dynamics of sanctions in isolation fails to create a more comprehensive methodology to capture their outcome. This thesis addresses this relatively underexplored approach and examines how the integration of international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion can better account for the success or failure of sanctions. Therefore, the thesis argues that investigating the combination of these two

factors creates a more comprehensive method for evaluating sanctions outcomes than solely focusing on either international or domestic dimensions. The central research question guiding this thesis is: Why do international sanctions succeed in some cases but fail in others, and how can the interplay of international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion better account for divergent outcomes?

To investigate this question, the thesis introduces an analytical matrix that juxtaposes the two factors of international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion based on their respective levels. This aims to highlight the interplay between these factors in shaping sanctions outcomes. Subsequently, through a comparative case study all four possible combinations of the matrix are investigated. The cases are selected to best match the characteristics of each quadrant: the case of Iran (2006 – 2015) exhibits high international cooperation with low domestic regime cohesion; Russia (2014 – 2025) presents a case with high international cooperation and high domestic regime cohesion; Myanmar (1990 – 2015) demonstrates low international cooperation and low domestic regime cohesion; the case of Venezuela (2017 – 2025) represents low international cooperation and high domestic regime cohesion. The cases enable a systematic and focused examination of how the varied interplay between the two factors influences the effectiveness of sanctions.

The analysis of the four cases employs a dual theoretical framework by applying Cooperation Theory (Drezner 2000) and Social Conflict Analysis (Jones 2015) to assess both international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion and allow the juxtaposition and subsequent evaluation of these two factors. This is aided by a qualitative and historical-sociological methodology. Thus, the thesis aims to contribute to the more nuanced understanding of sanctions outcomes. It argues that examining the interconnectedness of these two factors is necessary to capture a more comprehensive understanding of sanctions outcomes, which is currently underexplored in the scholarship.

By combining the external and internal dynamics of sanctions, the thesis shows that sanctions are most likely to be successful in the case when international cooperation is high and domestic regime cohesion is low. The case of Iran (2006 – 2015) demonstrates this clearly, where internationally coordinated sanctions exploited elite fragmentation, leading to eventual compliance with sanctions pressure. Additionally, the cases of Russia and Venezuela demonstrate the solely investigating high domestic regime cohesion does provide a comprehensive explanation why sanctions failed in these cases. The case of Myanmar further illustrates that only by examining both factors can a more definite conclusion be drawn about the outcome of sanctions. While this thesis investigates four case studies, it does not claim to offer a universally generalizable framework for all sanctions cases. The Conclusion includes the detailed limitations and avenues for further research.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 presents the literature review on the history of sanctions followed by the academic debate on their effectiveness and ends with identifying the gap within the literature. Chapter 2 introduces the dual theoretical framework of the thesis followed by the proposed analytical tool and the justification for the case selection. Chapter 3 then puts forward the analysis of the case studies according to the previously proposed frameworks. Finally, the Conclusion reflects the findings and places the thesis back in the wider literature context.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

Sanctions have been employed as instruments of coercion since ancient Greece (Hufbauer 2007, 9). However, their effectiveness continues to be a subject of ongoing debate among scholars and policymakers, as assessing their true impact is an inherently difficult task. That is because analyzing the impact of sanctions requires a multidisciplinary approach, which involves the combination of different methodologies from various disciplines (Deák and Klauda 2022, 123). Consequently, the evolution of sanctioning theories is characterized by ongoing debates over different methodological frameworks and analytical emphases. A central theme that unifies this debate is the assessment of the efficacy of economic sanctions (ibid., 123).

The following literature review commences by examining the historical the utility of sanctions, followed by the methodological debate surrounding their effectiveness. It will then introduce the gap in the literature that this thesis strives to address. The aim of this literature review is to synthesize the key debates revolving around effectiveness of sanctions and show that international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion are treated in isolation.

### *1.1. The History of Sanctions Literature*

In 432 BC Pericles enacted the Magerian Decree, representing one of the earliest examples of sanctions (Hufbauer 2007, 9). While sanctions boast a rich history since ancient Greece through the twentieth century, their documentation and the literature addressing them is not well documented (ibid., 9). It was only after World War II that scholars began to evaluate the effectiveness of sanctions to determine their true utility.

In this regard, Johan Galtung is widely recognized to be the pioneer in systematically analyzing the effects of international sanctions. Galtung critiqued the then-prevailing assumptions of the

naïve theory, which assumed that the economic pain inflicted upon society would ignite a popular uprising against incumbent regimes, thereby compelling them to concede to the demands of the sender countries (Jones 2015, 14). However, based on the case of Rhodesia, Galtung argued that while sanctions do cause economic hardship for the general population, this does not necessarily translate into political change (Galtung 1967).

Academics shared a pessimistic outlook on the effectiveness of sanctions during the Cold War period, arguing that sanctions do not work (Jones 2015; Deák and Klauda 2022). In this period, scholars were primarily concerned by why or when sanctions do not work, instead of how sanctions could work (Jones 2015, 15; Peksen 2019b, 636). They argued that the targeted country's economy may adapt to the sanctions regime through the black market (Hewig et al. 2020, 38) or perhaps sanctions may induce a "rally-around-the-flag effect" (Galtung 1967, 388) or even a counterproductive or reverse effect (Peksen 2019b, 638) in the targeted country. Kirshner further posited that since "states are not unitary economic actors," therefore "sanctions affect groups in society differentially" (Kirshner 1997, 42), meaning sanctions will affect different societal groups differently in target country, leading to different levels of success. Consequently, the mobilization of entire populations of a target country against a given political regime or elite is rendered unfeasible (Jones 2015, 9), which contrasts the assumptions of the naïve theory. This pessimistic outlook on the effectiveness of sanctions persisted until the 1990s and was largely the result of the shocks of the dissolution of colonial empires and the changing global economic hegemony (Deák and Klauda 2022, 123).

The warless dissolution of the Soviet Union, the toppling of the apartheid regime in South Africa, and creation of the unipolar global system in the 1990s challenged the earlier pessimism of sanctions efficacy that dominated the scholarly literature in the 1960s and 1970s (Pape 1997; Jones 2015; Deák and Klauda 2022). The emergence of the unipolar world order led by the United States

and the increasing role of the United Nations meant that economic sanctions became the prevailing instrument of economic statecraft (Pape 1997; Baldwin and Pape 1998; Hufbauer 2007; Doxey 2009; Deák and Klauda 2022). Consequently, the growing relevance of sanctions necessitated more elaborate research on their effectiveness. In this regard, Hufbauer and his colleagues' seminal work on investigating more than a hundred sanctions episodes (Hufbauer 2007), still serves as one of the most comprehensive studies in this field. The findings of their research indicated that sanctions are successful in approximately one-third of cases examined (*ibid.*). This rate has since become the standard argument for referring to the effectiveness of sanctions (Deák and Klauda 2022, 124).

While Hufbauer and his colleagues provide a standardized mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of economic sanctions, the scoring method can be viewed as notably subjective (Pape 1997). Additionally, the variables they use to grade their cases fail to account for change overtime, which is a critical factor in the context of prolonged sanctions episodes (Deák and Klauda 2022, 124). Hufbauer defines a sanctions episode as an instance, where one or more countries impose or threaten to impose coercive measures against a target to achieve certain foreign policy goals, involving specific actors, instruments, and a defined timeframe (Hufbauer 2007). Consequently, evaluating the success or failure of a sanctions episode based solely on the pre-existing conditions may not capture the true picture. Moreover, the quantification of an inherently qualitative issue is problematic, as it might overlook important factors or nuances that might explain why a certain sanctions episode should be regarded as a success instead of a failure. While such complexities can be highlighted in qualitative research, quantitative methods are generally limited in their ability to capture them. This has particular relevance with the proposed case studies of this thesis, where prolonged sanctions episodes induced significant changes, necessitating a more in-depth qualitative approach to assess them.

## *1.2. The Key Debate on the Effectiveness of Sanctions*

The prevailing discourse on the efficacy of economic sanctions is mainly centered on the one-third success ratio, established by Hufbauer and his colleagues in 1985 and subsequently defended in their later editions (Deák and Klauda 2022, 124). A central challenge to this study is determining the legitimate cause-and-effect relationship within the episode (Pape 1998; Elliott 1998). This difficulty is further compounded by the frequent use of sanctions alongside other policy instruments, particularly in extended sanctioning periods, where the foreign policy and military contexts can drastically shift, resulting in more variables than equations (Deák and Klauda 2022, 124). Consequently, scholars have established various criteria to more accurately assess the effectiveness of sanctions.

In this regard, Pape proposes three criteria that sanctions should meet to be successful: the sender's demands are largely fulfilled by the target state; sanctions are threatened or imposed prior to the target altering its behavior; and no other justification exists for the target's behavioral change (Pape 1998, 70). Complementing this perspective, Gould-Davies highlights the following four: compellence, deterrence, regime change, and condemnation (Gould-Davies 2020, 8). However, as the context around sanctions can constantly change, not all sanctions cases may align with these categories, indicating that these frameworks may not be adequate to comprehensively assess the success certain sanctions cases.

In this regard, Deák and Klauda argue that every sanctions episode requires a unique investigation (Deák and Klauda 2022, 125). Relying solely on static datasets, such as those of Hufbauer and his colleagues', ignores the complexity of target-specific variables and time (Peksen 2019, 641). While scholars like Gould-Davies identified mechanisms through which sanctions may exert their pressure (Gould-Davies 2020), these factors do not entirely account for differing

outcomes across a variety of cases. Moreover, reliance on these mechanisms in isolation is inadequate, as they place sanctions, rather than societies, at the core of the analytical framework (Jones 2015). Therefore, the examination of whether a sanctions episode is successful or not should not focus solely on individual mechanisms but rather it should focus on complex interactions within the target's affected society and the wider political environment. To this end, the following sections introduce two contextual factors: international cooperation and domestic regime type. By introducing these dimensions, the thesis aims to illuminate the importance of accounting for both internal and external dynamics to most comprehensively analyze the outcome of sanctions.

### ***1.3. The Existing Research Gap within the Literature***

The prevailing approach on the analysis of sanctions differentiates between economic and political variables. Economic variables capture the disutility caused on the target through GDP impact, trade disruption, or financial losses (Hewig et al. 2020, 41). In contrast, political variables look at the degree to which sanctions achieve their political or behavioral objectives within the target country (ibid., 41). While both variables are important to examine to get the most comprehensive picture on the sanctions episode, the scope of this thesis necessitates a focused investigation. Due to the constraints of length, conducting an exhaustive study on both economic and political dimensions is unfeasible.

Therefore, the thesis prioritizes and investigates political variables. As Jones posits, the economic harm inflicted by sanctions only translates into desired behavioral change if it interacts with specific and adequate domestic political structures (Jones 2015, 44). The debunking of the naïve theory by Galtung evidenced that economic pressure and pain alone are not sufficient to coerce the target into political change. On the contrary, it is in fact political filtering that can

determine whether a target resists or concedes to sanctions pressure (ibid.). As such, focusing on political variables allows for a more nuanced explanation for why sanctions succeed in some cases but fail in others. This approach is especially valuable when analyzed through a framework that accounts for both internal and external dynamics of the sanctions episode.

One of the most widely discussed contextual political variables is international cooperation. Theoretically, international cooperation derives from the assumptions of Cooperation Theory, which suggests that if powerful enough states coordinate their sanctions pressure, they can punish norm-breaking entities and reduce the likelihood of evasion (Martin 1992; Drezner 2000). Empirical studies support this assumption as multilateral sanctions, especially when backed by international institutions, have an increased chance of success because of an incrementally higher legitimacy surrounding the sanctions episode (Bapat and Clifton Morgan 2009). Importantly, some warn against large coalitions because of the inherent challenge of continued enforcement, as third-party governments might weaken the cooperation (Peksen 2019b).

In this regard, Drezner argues that (international) cooperation in sanctions episodes is vulnerable to enforcement issues, arguing that statistically there is no correlation between cooperation and success as backsliding and free riding will damage the cooperation (Drezner 2000). While his enforcement-centered framework is important, it may not be sufficient to fully explain sanctions outcomes. Drezner's argument is based on a quantitative analysis, using data collected by Hufbauer and his colleagues (Hufbauer 2007), in which he accounts for the 'target regime's domestic stability' as a control variable, even though this fails to capture the real extent to which a target can withstand sanctions pressure. Additionally, focusing on the sender's cooperation overlooks which domestic actors are most affected by sanctions within the target, leading to the inability of the analysis to account for whether cooperation can be translated into external pressure. Domestic structures play a co-equal role in determining the success of not only sanctions outcome

but of cooperation as well. Therefore, only investigating the international cooperation variable might be misleading or insufficient in determining when a sanctions episode is successful. In this regard, Peksen argues, “target regimes will remain defiant against sanctions to the extent that they can withstand the possible economic and political burdens of the coercion” (Peksen 2019a, 255). This highlights the importance of investigating the domestic political dynamics of the target as these are responsible for filtering which coercive measure is amplified or neutralized.

Another widely debated contextual political variable is the domestic political dynamics of the target country. Scholars emphasize that democracies are more vulnerable to sanctions pressure than autocracies due to their political dependence on electoral legitimacy and broad-based societal support (Hufbauer 2007; Escribà-Folch 2012; Peksen 2019a). In contrast, authoritarian regimes can exploit tools that are not available for democracies, such as selective redistribution, repression of dissent, or economic nationalism (Peksen 2019a, 255). In this capacity, Peksen and Escribà-Folch categorize autocracies into three different groups: personalist, single-party, and military regimes. Personalist regimes are most vulnerable to external pressure because they possess weak state capacity and are heavily reliant on external rent. Single-party states showcase more effective redistribution capabilities thus elite cohesion, enabling more effective sanctions resistance. Military regimes tend to prioritize the unity of the military over maintaining political power, leading to stronger coercive capabilities which make the regime more defiant against external pressure (Escribà-Folch 2012, 684; Peksen 2019a, 254).

This categorization provides valuable insights into the capabilities different regimes possess to withstand sanctions pressure. However, on the one hand, it fails to account for the different outcomes in similar regimes – Iran, Venezuela, and Russia are all personalist type autocracies with differing sanctions outcomes – while on the other hand, it reveals similar limitations to that found in the international cooperation literature. Similarly to the literature on international cooperation,

academic research focused on domestic regime types frequently ignores the external context when assessing the effectiveness of sanctions episodes. This leads to an incomprehensive investigation of a given episode as sanctions may prove successful against a regime not only because of internal fragility but also because it is confronted by a cohesive and united international coalition. Conversely, there might be the possibility of a vulnerable regime withstanding external coercion if international cooperation is fragmented, as this limits the pressure exerted on the target.

Accordingly, this thesis proposes an analytical framework that combines the dimensions of international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion to create a more nuanced explanation for sanctions outcomes. By analyzing these two factors, the thesis seeks to provide an analytical tool through which individual sanctions cases can be examined. This perspective is in accordance with Deák and Klauda's assertion that investigation of a sanctions episode is unique and can thus rely on subjective decision-making (Deák and Klauda 2022, 125). Consequently, this thesis addresses the following research question: Why do international sanctions succeed in some cases but fail in others, and how can the interplay of international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion better account for divergent outcomes?

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This chapter outlines the theoretical and analytical frameworks, the case studies, and the research design that will be used to examine the divergent outcomes of sanctions cases. To comprehensively address the research question, the chapter first presents the Social Conflict Analysis (SCA) framework and its relevance to understanding domestic structures of the target countries, which is then complemented by Cooperation Theory. The second part of this chapter presents and justifies the analytical framework, case studies, and empirical approach to investigate the divergent outcomes of sanctions episodes.

### *2.1. Social Conflict Analysis and Cooperation Theory*

This thesis combines two theoretical frameworks, SCA and Cooperation Theory, to explain the divergent outcomes of sanctions episodes. The combination of these two frameworks allows for a comprehensive investigation that takes into consideration both the internal and external dynamics. Instead of treating these factors in isolation, the thesis proposes a method in which the interaction of international cooperation and domestic regime type is investigated, establishing a more comprehensive mode to investigate a sanctions episode's outcome.

Lee Jones, a renowned academic in the field of international political economy, developed the Social Conflict Analysis (SCA) framework to challenge the notion that economic pressure imposed by sanctions automatically translates into political compliance and behavioral change (Jones 2015). The SCA framework investigates how sanctions reshape the target's domestic power structures through a three-step process: Firstly, SCA identifies and maps out both the ruling and oppositional forces of the target state to establish the status quo, that sanctions will (potentially) disrupt. Secondly, it looks at the economic consequences of the imposed sanctions regime on the different

social groups. Lastly, it combines the results of the first two to see how the effect of sanctions influences the socio-political conflict within the targeted country (ibid., 42 - 47). This approach provides a nuanced understanding of how sanctions work by altering the domestic socio-political structures of the target regime. Additionally, it does not assume that economic pressure will automatically lead to political change.

While SCA is effective in analyzing the target's domestic dynamics during sanctions episodes, it does not explicitly integrate the external dimension into the investigation. However, as this thesis argues, international dynamics play a crucial factor in shaping the sanctions outcomes. Therefore, to account for the external dynamic, Cooperation Theory (CT) is introduced, thus allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of the efficacy of sanctions episodes.

Cooperation Theory (CT) addresses the external dimension of sanctions, that is, the cohesion, credibility, and enforcement of the coalition imposing them (Martin 1992; Drezner 2000). Its main assumption is that multilateral sanctions are indeed more effective than unilateral sanctions when institutionalized and backed by a wide coalition of states. This increases the costs of defection for potential free riders and increases legitimacy, credibility, and cohesion, while reducing the likelihood that the target state will find partners to circumvent the sanctions (Drezner 2000). Therefore, by combining SCA with Cooperation Theory, this thesis will examine not only the influence of the cohesion of domestic regimes on the success of sanctions but also on the role of international backing influencing the target state's response.

Many other theoretical frameworks were considered but eventually set aside due to their inability to comprehensively capture domestic and internal dynamics. Early versions of the liberal view, often referred to as the naïve theory (Galtung 1967), which assumed a linear link between economic pain to political gain, have long been debunked. While inverted liberalism attempted to address this shortcoming, it also failed to account for how state power is socially constructed (Jones

2015, 15). Public Choice Theory (PCT), while accurately identifying that states are not unitary actors (Kaempfer, Lowenberg, and Mertens 2004, 30), incorrectly assumes that states serve as neutral arenas for the competition of interest groups (Jones 2015, 26). This assumption is particularly problematic in authoritarian regimes where rulers actively try to shield themselves from the negative effects of sanctions. Institutional regime-type models mostly offer explanations to cases in which sanctions succeed but lack the explanatory power in how sanctions operate within broader mechanisms (ibid., 33). In contrast, the combination of SCA with Cooperation Theory allows for a comprehensive understanding on how the domestic regime cohesion of the target state interacts with the international dynamics, thereby influencing the overall outcome of the sanctions episode.

## ***2.2. Methodology and Case Selection***

The argument guiding this thesis is that investigating external and domestic dynamics in isolation is not sufficient to explain sanctions outcomes. Rather it is the interconnectedness of these two dynamics that is decisive and predominantly determines the success of sanctions episodes. To explore this mechanism, this thesis utilizes a qualitative, historical-sociological comparative case study design. This design offers an alternative to the large-scale quantitative studies within sanctions literature (Jones 2015, 45). Importantly, sanctions do not exert their effects uniformly, leading to the importance of examining the targeted state's capacity to resist or adapt to the coercive measures, and on the external dynamics of the sender countries' coalition. To best account for the changes throughout a sanctions episode a historical-sociological approach is utilized to construct narrative explanations of sanctions' impacts as it helps to identify causal social mechanisms (ibid., 45).

To operationalize the analysis, the study puts forth a two-by-two matrix as the core analytical tool. The visual representation of the matrix is shown in Table 1. The matrix is structured along two dimensions: the level of international cooperation is placed on the vertical axis, while the degree of domestic regime cohesion is shown horizontal axis. This configuration creates four possible outcomes, where each quadrant represents a unique case of the interaction of internal and external dynamics that may influence sanctions success.

International Cooperation (vertical axis) reflects the extent of the international backing behind a sanctions episode. This entails looking at whether the sanctions regime is multilaterally supported, and whether it has consistency of measures and sustained enforcement overtime. Cooperation Theory helps in analyzing this factor in understanding certain incentives and payoffs for the participating countries, how to manage free-riders, and how to foster cooperation (Drezner 2000).

- Low international support in this category means that the cooperation is fragmented and weakly coordinated. There is no international consensus signed creating opportunities for the targeted country to circumvent the sanctions pressure. Moreover, sanctions pressure is unequal with certain countries imposing harsher, while others imposing more permissive coercive measures. For instance, some of the sender countries may employ sectoral sanctions on the target country's economy, while others may only impose travel bans on selected individuals. This uneven application of sanctions may lead to insufficient leverage to compel the target to compliance, allowing it to possibly mitigate some of the negative effects of the sanctions regime.
- High international support means that there is a broad, multilaterally backed coalition behind the sanctions, further legitimizing the sanctions episode. The sanctions are also sustained over a long period of time with continued coordination and involve consistent

measures. These lead to less opportunities for the targeted regime to evade the effect of the coercive measures.

Domestic Regime Cohesion (horizontal axis) represents how internally sound and cohesive the regime of the target state is. This means looking at how unified the ruling elite is and how much the domestic opposition can create a viable alternative to this. The SCA framework offers valuable tools to investigate both the domestic ruling regime and the opposition and how sanctions change the socio-political landscape of the targeted country (Jones 2015).

- Low cohesion in this category entails that the ruling elite is internally fragmented with considerable elite division that leads to opposing narratives about issues such as governance or policy. There is considerable public dissent among core supporters and there are inconsistent or contradictory policy decisions. Furthermore, there might exist a lack of ideological unity. Such regimes can also exhibit lack of control over institutions or military factions by the ruling elite. Regimes with such characteristics are considerably vulnerable to external pressures.
- High cohesion represents cases where the ruling elite is in complete control of governance, exhibiting internal unity, solid political control and no internal elite fragmentation. Institutions are centralized and decision-making is coordinated. The regime successfully suppresses public dissent and controls society's opinion. The narrative and legitimacy of the regime remain intact, helped by ideological and nationalist legitimacy. These regimes are well equipped to absorb and resist external coercive measures. This creates an inherently difficult starting point for any sanctions episode.

Based on these two axes, the matrix in Table 1 shows the possible outcomes of the interaction of international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion on sanction episodes:

**Table 1:** *Sanctions Outcomes by International Cooperation and Domestic Regime Cohesion*

	<b>Low Domestic Regime Cohesion</b>	<b>High Domestic Regime Cohesion</b>
<b>High International Cooperation</b>	<p><b>Iran (2006 – 2015)</b></p> <p>Sanctions are most likely to be successful when international cooperation is high and domestic regime cohesion is low.</p> <p>This creates a domestic environment that sanctions can successfully exploit, making it difficult for the ruling elite not to comply.</p>	<p><b>Russia (2014 – 2025)</b></p> <p>Sanctions are likely to fail in cases where even though international cooperation is high, it is met with a highly cohesive domestic regime.</p> <p>Through strong repression and redistribution, the ruling regime can effectively manage domestic dissent and control society to absorb or resist external pressures.</p>
<b>Low International Cooperation</b>	<p><b>Myanmar (1990 – 2015)</b></p> <p>Success of sanctions is difficult to determine when domestic regime cohesion is low and is met with low international cooperation.</p> <p>The regime's internal vulnerabilities are not effectively exploited by the sender countries.</p>	<p><b>Venezuela (2017 – 2025)</b></p> <p>Sanctions are most likely to fail when low international cooperation is met with high domestic regime cohesion.</p> <p>This situation creates different avenues for the domestic regime to resist and absorb the negative effects of sanctions, which might even lead to further consolidation of power.</p>

Thus, Table 1 forms the analytical foundation of this thesis. The cases were selected based on the adequateness to the configurations of the analytical matrix and the similarity of their sanctions episodes. The case of Iran (2006 – 2015) exhibits high international cooperation with low domestic regime cohesion; Russia (2014 – 2025) presents a case with high international cooperation and high domestic regime cohesion; Myanmar (1990 – 2015) demonstrates low international cooperation and low domestic regime cohesion; the case of Venezuela (2017 – 2025) represents low international cooperation and high domestic regime cohesion. Additionally, each country has experienced a prolonged sanctions episode, is subject to an authoritarian regime, and has undergone economic or political disruption as a consequence. Additionally, three of these

countries are petrostates, largely dependent on the export of hydrocarbons, a factor that similarly shapes the negative effects and responses to sanctions pressure. However, the outcome of their respective sanctions regimes differs considerably: Iran eventually complied with sanction demands and signed the JCPOA in 2015, Russia remains defiant as one of the most sanctioned countries on the globe, Myanmar exhibits an ambiguous case with both internal and external fragmentation, and Venezuela resisted and consolidated power in the face of sanctions pressure. This variation in outcomes makes the cases well-suited for comparative analysis to investigate the interaction between international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion in shaping sanctions effectiveness.

The study acknowledges the inherent limitations and shortcomings of qualitative case studies, particularly the potential biases of secondary sources and the challenges in interpreting the domestic politics of foreign countries without bias. To mitigate these as best as possible, this thesis draws on widely accepted and referenced academic sources and reputable news outlets such as The New York Times, BBC, Guardian, CNN, Reuters, Deutsche Welle, The Guardian, Al Jazeera, or the Atlantic Council. Where available, the research relies on primary sources, including official government documents or international organization reports to minimize interpretive bias.

In sum, this thesis combines a comparative case study approach informed by a dual theoretical framework consisting of SCA and Cooperation Theory to best uncover the dynamics that explain sanctions success or failure. This combination enables the thesis to investigate how the interaction between international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion shapes to outcomes of sanctions episodes. The thesis applies this framework across the four selected cases of Iran, Russia, Myanmar, and Venezuela, to capture and investigate the variations across the quadrants

presented by the matrix in Table 1. This section thus sets the stage for the detailed cases analyses that follow.

## Chapter 3: Case Studies

In this chapter, the thesis analyzes all four quadrants of the analytical framework to examine how the interplay of international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion influences the outcome of the respective sanctions episode. By focusing on both the external and internal dynamics surrounding sanctions the analysis aims to uncover the specific mechanisms of their interplay that facilitated or hindered the outcome of that episode. This chapter will follow a non-sequential pattern examination of the two-by-two matrix: it first looks at Iran, then Russia, followed by Myanmar and concluded with Venezuela.

### *3.1. High International Cooperation & Low Regime Cohesion: Iran (2006 -2015)*

The sanctions episode introduced against Iran from 2006 to 2015 showcases a case with high international cooperation and low domestic regime cohesion. During this period Iran was subject to comprehensive and well-coordinated multilateral sanctions regime that caused serious problems for the considerably fragmented domestic regime. This ultimately culminated in the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015. The combined effect of the two factors created an environment in which Iran was conducive to the sanctions-induced compliance.

#### 3.1.1. External Pressure: Multilateral Cooperation and Sanctions Design

The sanctions episode against Iran unfolded in three distinct phases. The initial phase (2006 – 2009) established an international legal framework for a broad multilaterally supported and coordinated collective action. In line with Cooperation Theory, this framework created legitimacy for states to join the forming coalition of states in introducing sanctions against Iran. A significantly

important step towards further validity of the sanctions episode was that the UN Security Council's unanimous passage of Resolutions 1737, 1747, and 1803. These resolutions aimed to curb Iran's nuclear program advancement, restrict its arms trade, and freeze the financial assets of key government officials and private actors (CRS 2022, 37). Although these sanctions had a limited impact on Iran's nuclear program (Steenhard 2019), the alignment of the U.S., the EU and other countries, as well as the support of Russia and China, demonstrated a comprehensive global consensus and thus strong international cooperation in sanctioning Iran.

The second phase (2010 – 2012) introduced coordinated escalation of the sanctions regime. The UNSC passed Resolution 1929 with support from all five permanent members. The U.S. introduced legislative actions, such as the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), while the EU implemented Council Decision 2012/35/CFSP (European Union 2012; CRS 2022). These actions significantly expanded the scope of sanctions against Iran, as they restricted Iran's oil exports and its financial sector, introducing a complete oil embargo on exports to the EU and the suspension of Iranian banks from the SWIFT system, significantly increasing the pressure on the country (UNSC 2010; Seeberg 2016; CRS 2022). Importantly, other members of the international community, such as Japan, India, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore also significantly reduced their oil imports from Iran, further restricting the country's ability to export its oil (CRS 2022). Even more notable from an international cooperation perspective that neither China nor Russia defected from the enforcement of the sanctions regime (Juneau 2014), further strengthening the cooperation's legitimacy. These sanctions and their broad multilateral support and coordination demonstrated a sustained effort to coerce Iran into compliance, which captures the main tenet of Cooperation

Theory. The fact that even actors such as Russia and China did not defect further signifies the sustained high level of international cooperation in this case.

The final phase (2013 – 2015) involved a strategic diplomatic engagement, while Iran was still under multilateral sanctions. The signing of the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) in 2013 signaled that the coordinated and multilaterally backed sanctions episode did indeed induce Iran to consider compliance. From the perspective of Cooperation Theory, this period underscores that through sustained and coordinated enforcement of sanctions pressure defectors from the international norms can indeed be punished. The 2013 agreement provided Iran with conditional sanctions relief, including the unfreezing of significant amounts of Iranian financial assets and a limited oil export allowances exports to pre-approved partners (White House 2013; U.S. Department of the Treasury 2014). This limited sanctions relief was critical for two reasons: firstly, it signaled that sender countries are indeed willing to adjust pressure in turn for compliance, signaling to Iran that by complying with sanctions demand coercive measures will be reduced; secondly through oil waivers to pre-approved countries, such as India or Japan (CRS 2022), the sanctioning coalition rewarded those countries that had the highest incentives to defect the coalition. Consequently, this stage established the foundation for the adaptation of the more comprehensive JCPOA in 2015.

The sanctions episode in the case of Iran exhibits a well-coordinated, multilaterally supported and protractedly sustained international cooperation. From the establishment of an international framework to the implementation, strengthening and subsequent selective easing of the sanctions regime demonstrated a highly coordinated effort to induce Iran to compliance. This cohesion reduced the incentives for defection from the cooperation, thus significantly reducing Iran's possibility to evade sanctions through potential defectors. Crucially, however, while high international cooperation is undoubtedly an important factor in this case, it is insufficient to

comprehensively explain the outcome of the sanctions episode in Iran. Absent domestic openings and opportunities for pressure to be exploited, strong international cooperation does not guarantee the effectiveness of sanctions. Consequently, while robust international cooperation is imperative, it is insufficient in and of itself.

### 3.1.2. Domestic Filtering: Regime Fragmentation and Elite Contestation

Iran's political system is as an authoritarian Islamic theocracy (PBS, n.d.; Takeyh 2007), under the ultimate rule of the Supreme Leader and unelected bodies such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Importantly, however, there are also elected bodies within Iran, such as the Presidency and the Parliament (Majlis), which are periodically elected, thereby allowing a certain degree of responsiveness and representation for the public (Rakel 2009). The existence of the dual structure is important to emphasize Iran's classification within this period as a domestically fragmented regime, despite its overall authoritarian nature and the fact that the core of the regime continues to stay loyal to the Supreme Leader.

The first step of the SCA framework involves investigating the socio-political conflict immediately prior to the sanctions episode. In Iran, following the consolidation of power under Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, which was marked by the abolition of the position of the Prime Minister and the establishment of dispute-managing institutions such as the National Security Council (SNCS) and the Expediency Discernment Council (EDC), the country embarked on a path of power centralization. In this capacity, the IRGC was heavily favored by Khamenei leading to its political and economic influence significantly increasing (Rakel 2009; Bazoobandi et al. 2015; Batmanghelidj 2018). Importantly, the increased authoritarianism did not eliminate internal

divisions, rather it arguably increased them, which was driven in part by the increased influence of the IRGC.

These internal divisions, driven mostly by differing views on how to govern the country (Rakel 2009) were further exacerbated by the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005. His populist-authoritarian style, ultraconservative stance and marginalization of long-serving and experienced elites led to increased tensions within the ruling regime (Fathollah-Nejad 2014; Bazoobandi, Heibach, and Richter 2024). Increased centralization of decision-making, nepotism, and a marked empowerment of IRGC created further cracks in the ruling coalition. Furthermore, Ahmadinejad's confrontational tone in international diplomatic matters further damaged Iran's reputation globally, putting it into a precarious situation as it battled allegations of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that incriminated the country of developing nuclear weapons.

These developments led to a serious fragmentation within the ruling elite, that saw the hardliners (or conservatives) of the regime, which was led by Ahmadinejad, advocate for autarky, state oversight, and absolute support and alignment with the Supreme Leader, while pragmatists (or reformists), sought relatively more engagement and liberalization of both the economy and society (Rakel 2009). Therefore, the incoming sanctions episode found the ruling regime in an already fragmented position.

Consequently, following the introduction of the sanctions episode and its negative effects on the country's economy and its people, the fragmentation of the domestic regime increased. President Ahmadinejad and his allies viewed the sanctions as a test of ideological endurance and as an existential threat to Iran, while reformists feared that not responding to the demands of the senders might lead to an economic collapse of the country, thereby the fall of the theocratic regime (Dehghan 2011; Sadjadpour 2013). This divergence was not only rhetorical and translated into

policy incoherence, as Ahmadinejad's policies alienated the middle class, who had been enjoying relative prosperity since the end of the Iran-Iraq War (Salehi Isfahani 2021). Crucially, his confrontational stance in international diplomacy significantly reduced the chances of Iran achieving sanctions relief through negotiation, which led to discontent even with Supreme Leader Khamenei (Rakel 2009, 123; Bazoobandi et al. 2015, 1048). According to the SCA, identifying these uneven effects of the sanctions on different societal groups constitutes the second step of the framework. In Iran, despite their dependence on the state and the fear of violent repression, following the highly contested re-election of Ahmadinejad in 2009, the middle class participated in unprecedentedly massive demonstrations. Named as the Green Movement and spearheaded by reformist politicians such as Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, the demonstrations aimed to challenge the results of the presidential election and the consequences of economic isolation and sanctions (Dabashi 2013). This illustrates how sanctions do not only exert economic pressure but also serve as catalyst for political contestation and alter the socio-political landscape of the target. While the regime violently repressed the demonstrations, it did not eliminate the dissent and the message of the Green Movement, which exposed some of the regime's vulnerabilities (ibid.). It started an erosion of legitimacy of the state that continued even after the jailing and exile of numerous movement leaders and participants, who kept advocating for political reform in Iran (Dehghan 2011).

The final step of the SCA framework calls for an investigation of how the effects of sanctions contribute to the socio-political conflicts within the target country. Following the post-2010 intensification of the sanctions pressure on Iran, the country's economy further deteriorated leading to increased intra-regime tensions. Ahmadinejad's confrontational policies made Supreme Leader Khamenei also become increasingly disenchanted with the president and led to a needed

strategic recalibration of the Islamic state. This culminated in the 2013 election of reformist Hassan Rouhani as new president, who campaigned on the need for domestic and international change (Juneau 2014). Rouhani's acknowledgment of the mismanagement of the economy and dissolution of diplomatic ties by the previous president and his pledged renewal of diplomatic dialogue with the West all signaled a new strategic route of the Iranian regime. The Supreme Leader's approval of Rouhani as new president further signified the tactical adaptation of the regime to the changing socio-political environment of the country, which was largely induced by the external pressure on the country. Another significant evidence of this was that Rouhani promised to secure the release of some political detainees, notably even the leaders of the Green Movement (Juneau 2014), an act that clearly signifies the change in the regime's stance. Most significant was the regime's signing of JCPOA in 2015, in which the regime agreed to dismantle a significant portion of its nuclear program and allow for more extensive international inspections, in exchange for sanctions relief (Robinson 2023). This effectively meant that Iran eventually complied with the demands of the sanctioning countries, contributing to a successful sanctions outcome.

### 3.1.3. Case Evaluation

The case of Iran demonstrated that examining both the internal and external dynamics of the sanctions episode is crucial to gain a nuanced understanding of why sanctions (in this case) work. The country's fragmented domestic ruling elite was vulnerable to external pressure, which was exploited by a well-coordinated, multilaterally backed and sustained sanctions episode. Furthermore, the case illustrated the quadrant of the analytical matrix presented in Table 1, where sanctions are most likely to be successful.

### ***3.2. High International Cooperation & High Regime Cohesion: Russia (2014 – 2025)***

The case of Russia evidences the quadrant, where the domestic target regime is cohesive while the sanctions episode is characterized by high international cooperation. Russia's experience with sanctions, beginning in 2014 and particularly following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, offers a compelling illustration of the connection between robust elite cohesion and international support for sanctions. The combined effect of these two factors creates a situation in which sanctions have a high likelihood of failure because the highly cohesive regime is able to effectively repress dissent and by strong control over the institutions can absorb and resist the effect of coercive measures through numerous avenues of strategy.

#### **3.2.1. External Pressure: Multilateral Sanctions Without UN Backing**

The sanctions phase against Russia can be divided into two separate phases. The initial phase (2014 – 2022) included more trend setting measures for the international community to sanction Russia. The sanctions episode was led by a Western-led coalition, including the U.S., the EU, the G7 and other NATO allied partners (CRS 2024). The inclusion of the UN Security Council and its imposition of sanctions was not feasible because of Russia's veto power. Nevertheless, a broad coalition of states supported the coercive measures imposed on Russia to deter Russia from further escalation, creating a functionally cohesive and persistent alliance (Deák and Klauda 2022). From the perspective of Cooperation Theory, this phase represents a period where strategic coordination was established among the sender countries, however they were under structural constraints, as they lacked the UNSC's legitimation. This was exploited by Russia in their pivot to the Asian markets in an attempt to diversify its economy towards non-Western allied partners (Shagina 2020). Although Russia's ability to circumvent some of the sanctions caused problems

within the coalition in the long run, the initial phase demonstrated significant cooperation regarding goals and timing.

The second phase (2022 –) of the sanctions episode began with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In response, the sender countries shifted to a campaign of total sanctioning in an attempt to stop Russia's ability to continue the war in Ukraine (Deák and Klauda 2022, 129). These included oil and gas restrictions, removal of Russian banks from SWIFT, and export controls on selected technologies (CRS 2024). The new phase in the conflict had the effect of renewed concentration on coercive measures, which deepened cooperation among sender countries. This period represents an example of high international cooperation. Despite the absence of the UNSC's validation, strong alignment of threat perceptions, and a multilateral understanding within the international community of a complete breach of international law and norms, combined with high reputational and political stakes and risks, led to the creation of a legitimate cause for coordination and enforcement. This reinforced cohesion and reduced the possibility of countries defecting from the coalition.

Nonetheless, some fragmentation must be identified within the coalition, consistent with the limits highlighted by Cooperation Theory. Without a UNSC mandate Russia managed to better exploit countries not aligned with Western interests, such as China and India (A. Sullivan 2025). However, the coalition that was created still exhibited high levels of international cooperation. The fact that Russia had opportunities to circumvent some of the sanctions demonstrates the difficulty of forming a decentralized sanctions coalition targeting a global power. Similarly to Iran, Russia also faced a sanctions regime with high international cooperation. However, it did evidently not comply with the demands of the sender countries, as the war in Ukraine continues.

### 3.2.2. Domestic Filtering: Elite Cohesion and Repression of Social Dissent

In accordance with the first step of the SCA framework, Russia's socio-political landscape must be identified before the initial phase of the sanctions regime is imposed. Vladimir Putin's Russia exhibits a highly consolidated and cohesive regime, where the ruling elite maintains a highly centralized control and an effective repression of dissent (Kolesnikov 2024). Already before the imposition of the 2014 sanctions on the country, the Russian state has transformed into a neo-patrimonial mode of governance, that is centered on a new upcoming oligarchy known as the *siloviki* (Hoefer 2021; Kim 2022). This societal group is important to identify because they owed their political and economic survival completely to Putin's rule (Kim 2022). Additionally, Russia's state institutions were already heavily centralized before the beginning of the sanctions episode in 2014, to best neutralize domestic threats to the regime. Under Putin, the regime has long been engaged in perpetual preparation for a dual-front war, justifying the centralization of power and the repression of any internal threat that would jeopardize the regime (Omelicheva 2021). Consequently, most oppositional forces were already marginalized before the introduction of the sanctions regime.

Following the start of the initial phase of sanctions in 2014, demonstrations that were spurred up because of the increasing negative effects of the sanctions and their uneven distribution on societal groups, were met with increasing state violence, surveillance, repression, and the ultimate imprisonment and death of Alexei Navalny, the leading figure of the movements (Brezar and Dougall 2022). The increasingly violent crackdowns on dissent signaled the regime's strategy of no tolerance towards any type of opposition.

In line with the last step of the SCA framework, it is evident that the Russian regime proved impenetrable to even a highly coordinated sanctions episode, as evidenced by the type of strategic

response that sanctions induced from the domestic ruling regime. The sanctions targeting these oligarchic individuals with the aim of making them stand up against Putin were inherently wrong, as these people and their wealth and power depended solely on Putin, meaning that disavowing Putin would constitute harsh repercussions. Furthermore, sanctions essentially deepened elite loyalty within the regime, as sanctioned individuals had no other choice but to invest into the Russian economy, leading to the further enrichment of loyalists and the creation of group that directly benefited from the sanctioning episode (Tognini 2023; Fenton and Kolyandr 2025). The completely marginalized opposition had no chance of creating a viable alternative to the ruling regime, which could have been supported by society.

### 3.2.3. Case Evaluation

The Russian case highlights that investigating a single factor provides an incomplete picture of sanctions outcomes. The regime's high internal cohesion, characterized by restricted domestic channels for conflict, absence of elite fragmentation, and the elimination of the opposition, rendered sanctions ineffective in altering the socio-political landscape of the country. Despite the external dimension signaling comprehensive and well-coordinated international cooperation, the lack of domestic openings prevented sanctions from succeeding. Therefore, the Russian case further illustrates necessity of investigating both the external and internal dynamics of a sanctions episode to get a comprehensive understanding of its apparent failure.

### ***3.3. Low International Cooperation & Low Regime Cohesion: Myanmar (1990 – 2015)***

The sanctions episode of Myanmar represents the quadrant of the matrix that is characterized by weak international cooperation and low domestic elite cohesion. Following their takeover in 1990, the country's regime was sanctioned for disregarding the results of a democratic election and for violating human rights. However, the sanctions did not gain enough support on the global stage and were inconsistently enforced. Although the regime was fragmented, this was not exploited by the sanctions. By 2015 the regime showed signs of easing, but this cannot truly be attributed to the effect of sanctions.

#### **3.3.1. External Pressure: The Limits of Uncoordinated Cooperation**

In 1988, a violent military coup overthrew the Burmese Socialist Programme Party, which had controlled the country for years (Jones 2015, 93). While elections were held in 1990, the post-coup junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (first SLORC later SPDC), completely disregarded the results and imposed itself as the new ruling regime of the country (ibid., 93). Following the violent repression of the opposition and protests, among other countries, the U.S., the EU, Canada, and Australia imposed targeted sanctions against the country (Hufbauer et al. 2008). However, the sanctions were not coordinated and were unable to gather any type of support from regional actors, which created significant loopholes for the sanctions regime (Jones 2015), in line with assumption of Cooperation Theory.

The lack of a comprehensive enforcement mechanism created a situation in which numerous regional actors, including China and India, as well as most of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), not participating in the sanctions regime. Instead, they

contributed to the regime's consolidation of power to gain access to the country's natural resources (ibid, 98). This naturally created an asymmetric payoff for participating countries significantly reducing the benefits of joining a Western-led sanctions regime. This is a clear example of an assumption of Cooperation Theory according to which the likelihood of defection from a sanctions regime increases if there's an unequal distribution of cost and benefit, particularly in cases where there is a lack of enforcement and ability to penalize defectors or free riders (Drezner 2000).

This fragmentation of the external dimension led to a double standard international response. On the one hand, Western countries imposed sanctions, but these were haphazardly coordinated (Hufbauer et al. 2008). On the other hand, regional actors offered alternative trade routes and more importantly political recognition. This lack of consistent sanctions design, coordination, and enforcement led to non-aligned or compliant states facing no costs or reputational losses for undermining the sanctions regime, which Cooperation Theory emphasizes as crucial for sustaining legitimate pressure. These shortcomings of international cooperation led to a failure of exploiting the vulnerabilities of the domestic regime. However, focusing solely on this factor provides only a partial understanding of the sanctions outcome. Integrating the domestic factor through the SCA framework offers a more nuanced explanation of why the sanctions ultimately failed.

### 3.3.2. Domestic Filtering: Elite Adaptation and Oppositional Weakness

Investigating the pre-sanction socio-political landscape of Myanmar, it becomes evident that the junta controlling the country exhibits low cohesion and deep internal fragmentation, which in theory would make it vulnerable to external pressure. Following the country's independence from British rule, it remained deeply divided along ethnic, religious and social fault lines (Maizland 2022). The military that came to rule the country following its independence had a Bamar ethnic

majority that was in constant conflict with minority groups around the country, hindering the creation of legitimate rule of the country (Callahan 2007 in Jones 2015). The transfer of power to BSPP and their rule eliminated political parties, civil society, bureaucracy and independent labor organizations, leading to strong state involvement in the economy and the presence of many military-controlled firms (Jones 2015, 96). Following the collapse of the BSPP in 1988 and the SPDC facilitated a selective liberalization of its economy to attract foreign capital and to grant privileges to military-aligned elites and crucially to save it from collapse and while this uneven strategy resulted in the emergence of a new state-dependent wealth class, it failed to create country-wide legitimacy (ibid.).

The introduced sanctions had a perverse effect on the country and its population because it disproportionately affected small businesses and parts of the civilian population, while overwhelmingly not penalizing the ruling regime's core assets and revenue streams (ibid.). The identification of this is crucial because it shows that sanctions failed to exert pressure on the ruling elite. In contrast, it further worsened the situation of the population.

While after the introduction of the sanctions the SPDC was in a precarious situation as pragmatists like General Khin Nyunt advocated for more gradual liberalization and a degree of cooperation with western actors, while hardliners led by General Maung Aye exhibited a marked distrust of the West, prioritizing military cohesion and centralized authoritarian control (Aung-Thwin and Steinberg 2025). This internal divide culminated in the arrest and purge of Khin Nyunt in 2004, which led to the consolidation of the hardline faction within the ruling regime (ibid.). From the SCA perspective, the final step of the framework highlights a missed opportunity for sanctions as this highly fragmented ruling regime with a lack support from the population presented an exploitable situation for sanctions and the opposition.

Furthermore, the opposition, which was led by the opposition party the National League for Democracy (NLD) and Aung San Suu Kyi did not create a viable alternative for the population, as it itself was greatly fragmented and repressed while also interested more in international advocacy than domestic mobilization (Jones 2015). The party was unable to build relationships with ethnic minorities and failed to create a strategy on how to respond to the junta-controlled elections. All the while, the military adopted its “roadmap to democracy”, a strategy through which it hoped to consolidate its rule of Myanmar that included the drafting of a new constitution in 2008 (Center for Preventive Action 2024). The new constitution included granting the military 25 percent of the parliamentary seats, thereby allocating veto power to the military and creating a coup clause and ensured that the military retained control over all ministries (Barron 2017).

Following its roadmap, the junta held general elections in 2010 for the first time since 1990, which could be viewed as positive result of the sanctions episode. However, the junta structured the election in such a way that no other candidate but theirs could win by preventing Suu Kyi from running for president, which prompted the NLD to boycott the elections (Center for Preventive Action 2024). Nevertheless, the prospect of the general elections and some evidence of very fragile progressive reforms led to the sanctioning countries slowly rolling back their measures in order to aid this process (Bünter and Portela 2012, 2). Subsequently, following his election as president in 2010, Thein Sein allowed by-elections in 2012 that enabled a significant number of NLD members to get elected to parliament led by long-time opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi (ibid.). Although these measures can be viewed as concessions to the demands of the sender countries, there is no real evidence showing that sanctions were responsible for this change (Jones 2015, 129). This is further underscored by the fact that, while the period between 2011 and 2015 exhibited a relative

retreat of the military, perhaps influenced by the sanctions episode, this was all overturned by the junta's recapture of total power in 2021.

### 3.3.3. Case Evaluation

Myanmar's case shows that examining neither the internal nor the external dynamics in isolation does not fully capture the reasons for the sanctions episode apparent failure. the sanctions episode failed to reshape the socio-political map of Myanmar, not because the domestic regime was highly cohesive but because the un-coordinated and loosely enforced sanctions regime failed to exploit to openings presented by the regime itself. This supports the argument of the thesis that it is the combination of these two factors that need to be examined to get a more nuanced understanding of sanctions outcomes.

### ***3.4. Low International Cooperation & High Regime Cohesion: Venezuela (2013 – 2025)***

The Venezuelan case exemplifies the quadrant where international cooperation is partial and fragmented, while the domestic regime becomes cohesive, as sanctions begin to exert their pressure on the county. The case of Venezuela under the Maduro regime, especially from the beginning of the “maximum pressure” campaign by the U.S. in 2019 underscores how a sanctions episode with low international cooperation combined with elite cohesion, oppositional fragmentation, and strong institutional repression can entrench the target country's domestic regime.

### 3.4.1. External Pressure: Fragmented Multilateralism and Strategic Subversion

The principal sanctioning countries in the case of Venezuela included the EU, the UK, and the Lima Group, which is a regional alliance of Latin American states and Canada (CRS 2025) (CRS 2025). These actors imposed various coercive measures against Venezuela, including travel bans, asset freezes, and arms embargoes as well as some sectoral sanctions targeting Venezuela's state oil company, PdVSA (CRS 2025; Kneip and Ramsey 2025; European Council, n.d.). However, these measures were not well-coordinated, which is evidenced by the differing scopes of these sanctions. This inconsistency undermined the international perception of the need and utility of the sanctions episode against Venezuela.

In 2019, the U.S. introduced a "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign against the country mainly targeting PdVSA, the country's central bank, while also imposing secondary sanctions on firms that invested in its oil sector (Tobin 2025). This created immense pressure on the country's economy, while also signaled towards other sender countries that the U.S. is willing to step up pressure on Venezuela. In contrast, the EU and the Lima Group adopted more lenient measures against the country (CRS 2025), that considerably limited the pressure put on the country. Looking at this from the perspective of Cooperation Theory, it is evident that the heterogeneity of this coalition, induced by the differing scopes of the respective coercive measures, revealed an inability to coordinate a unified strategy and to solve collective actions problems. Consequently, these inconsistencies opened up avenues for the Maduro regime to circumvent some sanctions, which the regime successfully exploited.

The number and more importantly the economic might of the non-participating states further compounded the problem of the sender countries. Russia, and China became crucial partners for Venezuela to circumvent the negative effects of the sanctions episode. These countries

provided an explicit economic and political support for the Maduro regime, enabling it to withstand the effect of the U.S.'s "maximum pressure" campaign. The reason for this support was that China extended around \$50 billion in loans to Venezuela, while Russia lent approximately \$17 billion and held significant stakes in PdVSA (Ellyatt 2019; Oliveira 2024). Additionally, Venezuela received support from both Iran and Cuba, two other players that have opposed the sanctions episode. Iran supplied the Maduro regime with oil condensate and logistical expertise, while Cuba maintained an intelligence and energy-sharing relationship with the regime (M. P. Sullivan 2017; Knipp 2025; U.S. Department of the Treasury 2025). These countries have all denounced the sanctions introduced against Venezuela, thus undermining any possible collective action from the UNSC and eroding the legitimacy of the sender countries' coercive campaign.

As a result, the Maduro regime was able to exploit many different avenues for sanctions evasion and economic reorientation, enabling the survival of the regime. Venezuela managed to offset some of the loss of the U.S. market by substituting it with China, which became the country's main customer, while also considerably ramping up trade with Iran (Tobin 2025). Additionally, the lack of legitimization of the sanctions by the UNSC meant that Maduro was able to frame the sanctions as an act of U.S. "economic warfare" and neocolonial aggression, which resonated with the Non-Aligned Movement and some countries of the Global South (Dobson 2019; Reuters 2025a; 2025b). These moves further delegitimized the sanctions and provided the regime with a credible defensive response to the coercive measures.

In sum the case of Venezuela exemplifies low international cooperation as it failed to create a legitimate and well-coordinated group that would be able to sustain and enforce considerable pressure on the regime. Cooperation Theory underscores this by highlighting the lack of coordination mechanisms and inconsistent cost-sharing among the sender countries. This enabled the Maduro regime to find partners that are not aligned with the sender countries' objectives and

thus navigate the sanctions pressure. However, the ability of the Maduro regime to stay in power cannot only be attributed to an incohesive external pressure alone. To get a comprehensive picture of why sanctions failed to induce political change it is essential to examine the domestic political dynamics of the country: the extent of the cohesion of the Maduro regime and the structure of the opposition.

### 3.4.2. Domestic Filtering: Elite Cohesion and Strategic Adaptation

According the first step of the SCA framework the examination of the socio-political conflict prior to the sanctions episode is needed. Following the death of Hugo Chávez, who had ruled the country since the 1990s as an authoritarian leader, the political situation in the country was elusive for the new emerging autocrat, Nicolás Maduro (Araya 2024). The death of Chavez in 2013 translated into a significant loss of support for the ruling coalition, which was further exacerbated by the global turmoil of falling oil prices. This is important to identify, as Venezuela is a petrostate with 99 percent of its export revenue relying on oil (Berg 2021). While the regime attempted to blame the emerging economic crisis on the opposition and the U.S., this did not translate into domestic support for Maduro (Lind 2023).

The Venezuelan opposition had been significantly fragmented ever since Chavez's ascension to power in the 1990s, due to its diverse set of domestic forces. Eventually in 2010, the opposition managed to create a coalition, named the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), that included political ideologies from far-left to center-right parties, further demonstrating the coalition's diversity (ibid.). The newly formed coalition capitalized on the opportunity presented by the deteriorating economic and social situation of the country and the Maduro regime's initial disunity by achieving a major victory in the 2015 National Assembly elections (Araya 2024). This

signaled that the opposition could be in power to induce a democratic transformation for the country. However, this was only a temporary emergence of the opposition that served mainly as an exception rather than a long-term change in the political landscape of the country.

The second phase of SCA demands a look at the material impacts of the sanctions on different social groups. Determining the true effect of sanctions on Venezuela is difficult because they are largely coincided with a major drop in the global oil price, which devastated the country's economy (Roy and Cheatham 2024). The regime was no longer able to pay for the social services that were made a cornerstone policy of the ruling regime under Chavez, creating major discontent among the population. To combat the lost revenue the state decided to increase the money supply leading to hyperinflation and the economy contracting by 30 percent between 2013 and 2017 (Sutherland 2019). Because of these issues the country's economy was already in a disastrous state, which was further exacerbated by nearly eight million people emigrating from the country since 2014, leaving the majority of the population in absolute poverty (Roy and Cheatham 2024).

Subsequently, the sanctions were introduced to a country already on the brink of complete collapse. It is important to note that the coercive measures imposed by the U.S. and the EU in 2017 included only targeted sanctions aimed at the ruling elite's influential individuals and arms embargo to block the country's access to further weapons (European Council, n.d.). However, following the regime's violent repression of protests in 2017 and Maduro's non-compliance with the demands of the sanctions the U.S. introduced its "maximum pressure" campaign in 2019. This included financial and sectorial measures, cutting off the country from financial markets and specifically targeting PdVSA, which led to the company missing its loan repayments and Venezuela was declared in a selective default (Roy and Cheatham 2024). The U.S.'s oil embargo and its secondary sanctions led to numerous joint ventures and firms leaving the country

significantly reducing the state revenues, which led a decline of imported food, medicines, and other essential goods (Lind 2023). This in turn had two distinct effects: firstly, the population unevenly absorbed the costs of the coercive measures, leading to 65 percent of the population living in poverty in 2021 and secondly it created an opportunity for Chinese, Russian, and Iranian firms exploiting the vacuum left by American firms leaving (Roy and Cheatham 2024). This predestined the ability of Maduro to circumvent the sanctions' negative effects to some degree.

The final step of the SCA looks at how sanctions change the balance of the socio-political landscape of the country. The freshly incumbent Maduro regime was already in a precarious situation in the beginning of 2013. This was exacerbated by the oil crisis of the mid-2010s under which Venezuela significantly suffered both economically and socially. The regime's legitimacy was significantly eroded, which coincided with the opposition achieving marked gain among the population, that culminated in winning with a supermajority in the National Assembly elections in 2015 and the organization of country-wide protests in 2017 (Dwyer 2017; Trinkunas 2018). However, the regime managed to achieve a rally-around-the-flag effect following the introduction of sanctions because most of the population was against the sanctions regime, that was rhetorically framed as the U.S.'s "economic warfare" on the country. While this established a political frame to rally against the sanctions episode, this was not enough. Therefore, the regime needed to change its domestic strategy in order to remain in power. In this capacity, Maduro initiated the selective liberalization of the economy, that deregulated the certain sectors in a way that enabled continuous control and centralization of power, while also benefiting those who enabled the regime to hold onto its power, for instance the military (Lind 2023). The military's influence was furthered by the increased informalization of the country, through which it was granted numerous mining rights within the country (ibid.). In this capacity, Maduro ensured that the military would be in a strategic

alliance with the regime, thereby decreasing the possibility of the military joining the side of the opposition. Furthermore, Maduro managed to bypass the issue caused by the opposition's victory of the National Assembly elections by simply creating its own parallel legislature to overrule any decision made by the National Assembly (Deutsche Welle 2017). These strategies enable Maduro to repress elite fragmentation, keep the military a loyal ally and repress any popular dissent thus reinforcing the unity of a closed and militarized ruling elite.

The initial momentum of the opposition following the economic crisis and their supermajority victory in 2015 subsided in later years. The opposition became deeply polarized on the issue of whether to support international sanctions or not (Nugent 2020). Furthermore, Trinkunas argues that the opposition was divided and weakened with “little underlying comity, ideological affinity, or shared policy consensus to hold the member parties together” (Trinkunas 2018). This internal struggle led to major complications in fighting against the Maduro regime as unification was lost. As sanctions were naturally highly unfavored by the population and non-government aligned private businesses, supporting them simply delegitimized the hardliner part of the opposition led by Juan Guaidó, which was put into an even more precarious situation as the US had backed them offering Maduro a prime target rhetorically (Lind 2023). Additionally, the massive emigration caused by the deterioration of living conditions meant that a large amount of the voting base for the opposition left the country. The highly divided opposition thus became increasingly delegitimized for the population.

Amid a deeply divided opposition and an ever-deteriorating economic situation, an increasing share of the Venezuelan population struggled for day-to-day survival and simply could not afford to stand up to the regime. This led to the Maduro regime's further entrenchment in Venezuela. In 2023, a surprising preliminary agreement was reached between the moderate camp

of the opposition and the regime, under which Maduro agreed to lift bans on opposition candidates for the 2024 general elections in turn partial sanctions relief (Phillips 2023). However, this agreement ultimately collapsed when Maduro's Supreme Court upheld the ban of his biggest opponent, Maria Corina Machado, paving the way for his third presidential term presidency in 2025 (France 24 2024). In response, the U.S., the EU, and the UK revoked their previous partial sanctions reliefs (Cavanagh 2023).

### 3.4.3. Case Evaluation

The case of Venezuela demonstrates the need for investigating both internal and external dimensions in order to get a more nuanced understanding of sanctions outcomes. The domestic factor shows how despite years of sanctions pressure the Maduro regime managed to stay on power by constructing a political patronage system and a military that supports his regime, while also receiving international support from Cuba, Iran, China, and Russia. The external factor highlighted the fragmented international cooperation that created numerous openings for the regime to exploit. According to the SCA framework, sanctions did not change the internal power relations of Venezuela, demonstrating how the interplay of fractured international cooperation and cohesive domestic regime can undermine the effectiveness of sanctions.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to introduce an analytical matrix that serves as the framework for integrating international cooperation with domestic regime cohesion, thereby creating a more comprehensive method for explaining the varying outcomes of sanctions. The analysis is grounded in Cooperation Theory and Social Conflict Analysis to systematically examine how these two dimensions shape the effectiveness of sanctions. The four case studies of Iran, Russia, Myanmar, and Venezuela illustrate that examining either the external or internal dynamics in isolation does not adequately capture the varying outcomes of sanctions episodes. These cases demonstrate the relevance of the thesis' argument that it is the interaction between international cooperation and domestic regime cohesion that offers a more comprehensive explanation for why sanctions succeed in some contexts but fail in others.

The thesis acknowledges the limitations of its analysis. Only four cases were examined based on how adequately their configurations fit the quadrant created by the analytical matrix and not based on the success or failure of their respective sanctions episodes. Furthermore, the analytical matrix accounts for sanctions cases with international cooperation only, omitting the examination of unilateral sanctions episodes. As such, the thesis does not claim to offer a universally generalizable framework but rather to argue that the combination of these two factors ought to be investigated systematically to better understand divergent sanctions outcomes.

In sum, the thesis aims to warn against overreliance on a single explanatory factor when assessing the effectiveness of sanctions episodes. In this regard, the thesis seeks to contribute to the wider literature, more specifically to the work of Daniel Drezner and Dursun Peksen, who critique linear assumptions in sanctions research. Considering the limitations of this thesis, future

research should expand the scope of this thesis by applying this framework to additional cases, to further test its explanatory power.

## Reference List

- Araya, Ignacio Arana. 2024. “Chavismo in Venezuela.” In *Personalism and Personalist Regimes*, edited by Alex Baturo, Luca Anceschi, and Francesco Cavatorta, 1st ed., 130–53. Oxford University Press/Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192848567.003.0006>.
- Aung-Thwin, Michael Arthur, and David I. Steinberg. 2025. “Myanmar - Myanmar since 1988 | Britannica.” April 28, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Myanmar/Myanmar-since-1988#ref986264>.
- Baldwin, David A., and Robert A. Pape. 1998. “Evaluating Economic Sanctions.” *International Security* 23 (2): 189–98. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539384>.
- Bapat, Navin A., and T. Clifton Morgan. 2009. “Multilateral Versus Unilateral Sanctions Reconsidered: A Test Using New Data.” *International Studies Quarterly* 53 (4): 1075–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2009.00569.x>.
- Barron, Laignee. 2017. “Meet Min Aung Hlaing, Chief of Myanmar’s Notorious Army.” TIME. November 3, 2017. <https://time.com/5004822/myanmar-rohingya-min-aung-hlaing/>.
- Batmanghelidj, Esfandiyar. 2018. “Tougher U.S. Sanctions Will Enrich Iran’s Revolutionary Guards – Foreign Policy.” October 4, 2018. [https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/04/irans-revolutionary-guard-corps-wont-suffer-from-stronger-u-s-sanctions-theyll-benefit-irgc-trump-sanctions/#cookie\\_message\\_anchor](https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/04/irans-revolutionary-guard-corps-wont-suffer-from-stronger-u-s-sanctions-theyll-benefit-irgc-trump-sanctions/#cookie_message_anchor).
- Bazoobandi, Sara, Thomas Biersteker, Richard Connolly, Francesco Giumelli, Clara Portela, Stanislav Secrieru, Peter Seeberg, and Peter A.G. van Bergeijk. 2015. “Sanctions Against Iran: Winners and Losers.” On Target? European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep07074.10>.
- Bazoobandi, Sara, Jens Heibach, and Thomas Richter. 2024. “Iran’s Foreign Policy Making: Consensus Building or Power Struggle?” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 51 (5): 1044–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2023.2189572>.
- Berg, Ryan C. 2021. “The Role of the Oil Sector in Venezuela’s Environmental Degradation and Economic Rebuilding,” October. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/role-oil-sector-venezuelas-environmental-degradation-and-economic-rebuilding>.
- Brezar, Aleksandar, and David Mac Dougall. 2022. “Updated List of Oligarchs and Putin Critics Found Dead since War Began.” Euronews. September 22, 2022. <https://www.euronews.com/2022/09/22/accidental-defenestration-and-murder-suicides-too-common-among-russian-oligarchs-and-putin>.
- Bünthe, Marco, and Clara Portela. 2012. *Myanmar: The Beginning of Reforms and the End of Sanctions*. Vol. 3. GIGA Focus International Edition. Hamburg: GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies - Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien.
- Cavanagh, Cameron. 2023. “Venezuela Sanctions: The U.S. Needs to Change Its Goals.” Georgetown Security Studies Review. March 21, 2023. <https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2023/03/21/venezuela-sanctions-the-u-s-needs-to-change-its-goals/>.
- Center for Preventive Action. 2024. “Civil War in Myanmar.” Global Conflict Tracker. May 16, 2024. <https://cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/rohingya-crisis-myanmar>.
- CRS. 2022. “Iran Sanctions.” <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf>.
- . 2024. “U.S. Sanctions on Russia: Legal Authorities and Related Actions.” Legislation. April 26, 2024. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48052>.
- . 2025. “Venezuela: Overview of U.S. Sanctions Policy.” Legislation. March 18, 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10715>.

- Dabashi, Hamid. 2013. "Green Movement in Iran?" Al Jazeera. June 12, 2013.  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2013/6/12/what-happened-to-the-green-movement-in-iran>.
- Deák, András György, and Zsolt Klauza. 2022. "Nesszosz Vére – Az Orosz–Nyugati Szankciós Játssza És Következményei." *Nemzet És Biztonság* 15 (4): 121–52.  
<https://doi.org/10.32576/nb.2022.4.5>.
- Dehghan, Saeed Kamali. 2011. "Iran's Opposition Green Movement Calls for Renewed Street Protests." *The Guardian*, February 8, 2011, sec. World news.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/08/iran-opposition-green-movement-tehran-protest>.
- Deutsche Welle. 2017. "Venezuelan Constituent Assembly Seizes Power from Congress." Dw.Com. August 18, 2017. <https://www.dw.com/en/venezuelas-pro-government-assembly-seizes-congress-powers/a-40154532>.
- Dobson, Paul. 2019. "Non-Aligned Movement Condemns US Sanctions Against Venezuela." *Venezuelanalysis* (blog). July 23, 2019. <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/14596/>.
- Doxey, Margaret. 2009. "Reflections on the Sanctions Decade and Beyond." *International Journal* 64 (2): 539–49.
- Drezner, Daniel W. 2000. "Bargaining, Enforcement, and Multilateral Sanctions: When Is Cooperation Counterproductive?" *International Organization* 54 (1): 73–102.  
<https://doi.org/10.1162/002081800551127>.
- . 2015. "Targeted Sanctions in a World of Global Finance." *International Interactions* 41 (4): 755–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2015.1041297>.
- Dwyer, Colin. 2017. "Venezuela Erupts In 'Mother Of All Protests' As Anti-Maduro Sentiment Seethes." *NPR*, April 19, 2017, sec. International. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/04/19/524708302/venezuela-erupts-in-mother-of-all-protests-as-anti-maduro-sentiment-seethes>.
- Elliott, Kimberly Ann. 1998. "The Sanctions Glass: Half Full or Completely Empty?" *International Security* 23 (1): 50–65. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539262>.
- Ellyatt, Holly. 2019. "Russia and China Condemn New US Sanctions on Venezuela." *CNBC*. January 29, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/29/russia-and-china-condemn-new-us-sanctions-on-venezuela.html>.
- Escobar-Folch, Abel. 2012. "Authoritarian Responses to Foreign Pressure: Spending, Repression, and Sanctions." *Comparative Political Studies* 45 (6): 683–713.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414011427883>.
- . 2013. "Repression, Political Threats, and Survival under Autocracy." *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 34 (5): 543–60.
- European Council. n.d. "Timeline - Venezuela." Consilium. Accessed May 2, 2025.  
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/venezuela/timeline-venezuela/>.
- European Union. 2012. *Council Decision 2012/35/CFSP of 23 January 2012 Amending Decision 2010/413/CFSP Concerning Restrictive Measures against Iran*. OJ L. Vol. 019.  
[http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2012/35\(1\)/oj/eng](http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2012/35(1)/oj/eng).
- Fathollah-Nejad, Ali. 2014. "Why Sanctions against Iran Are Counterproductive: Conflict Resolution and State–Society Relations." *International Journal* 69 (1): 48–65.
- Fenton, Nicholas, and Alexander Kolyandr. 2025. "Down But Not Out: The Russian Economy Under Western Sanctions." April 11, 2025. [https://www.csis.org/analysis/down-not-out-russian-economy-under-western-sanctions?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com#h2-part-iv-the-](https://www.csis.org/analysis/down-not-out-russian-economy-under-western-sanctions?utm_source=chatgpt.com#h2-part-iv-the-)

- power-of-the-purse-or-how-the-kremlin-has-so-far-managed-to-strengthen-its-wartime-domestic-position.
- France 24. 2024. “US Reimposes Sanctions on Venezuela for Banning Maduro Opponents.” France 24. January 30, 2024. <https://www.france24.com/en/americas/20240130-us-begins-reimposing-sanctions-on-venezuela-over-ban-on-opposition>.
- Galtung, Johan. 1967. “On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions, With Examples from the Case of Rhodesia.” *World Politics* 19 (3): 378–416. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009785>.
- Gould-Davies, Nigel. 2020. “Russia, the West and Sanctions.” *Survival* 62 (1): 7–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2020.1715060>.
- Hewig, Niklas, Juha Jokela, Clara Portela, Ville Sinkkonen, and Pesu Matti. 2020. *Sharpening EU Sanctions Policy: Challenges and Responses in a Geopolitical Era*. Helsinki: FIIA, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs.
- Hoefer, Adrian. 2021. “Report: The Impact of Western Sanctions on Russia and How They Can Be Made Even More Effective.” *Atlantic Council* (blog). May 3, 2021. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/the-impact-of-western-sanctions-on-russia/>.
- Hufbauer, Gary Clyde, ed. 2007. *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*. 3rd ed., Expanded ed. Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- Hufbauer, Gary Clyde, Jeffrey J. Schott, Kimberly Ann Elliott, and Barbara Oegg. 2008. “Case: 88-1 | PIIE.” May 1, 2008. <https://www.piie.com/commentary/speeches-papers/case-88-1>.
- Jones, Lee. 2015. *Societies Under Siege: Exploring How International Economic Sanctions (Do Not) Work*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198749325.001.0001>.
- Juneau, Thomas. 2014. “Iran under Rouhani: Still Alone in the World.” *Middle East Policy* 21 (4): 92–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12098>.
- Kaempfer, William H., and Anton D. Lowenberg. 1999. “Unilateral Versus Multilateral International Sanctions: A Public Choice Perspective.” *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (1): 37–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00110>.
- Kaempfer, William H., Anton D. Lowenberg, and William Mertens. 2004. “International Economic Sanctions Against a Dictator.” *Economics & Politics* 16 (1): 29–51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0343.2004.00130.x>.
- Kim, Whizy. 2022. “Can Russian Oligarchs Influence Putin’s War?” *Vox*. March 10, 2022. <https://www.vox.com/recode/22971179/russian-oligarchs-influence-putin-ukraine-war-sanctions-limits>.
- Kirshner, Jonathan. 1997. “The Microfoundations of Economic Sanctions.” *Security Studies* 6 (3): 32–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636419708429314>.
- Kneip, Lucie, and Geoff Ramsey. 2025. “Venezuela Sanctions Tracker: Who Is the International Community Sanctioning in Venezuela?” *Atlantic Council* (blog). March 3, 2025. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/commentary/trackers-and-data-visualizations/who-is-the-international-community-sanctioning-in-venezuela/>.
- Knipp, Kersten. 2025. “Venezuela, Iran Forge Anti-Western Partnership of Necessity – DW – 02/24/2025.” February 24, 2025. <https://www.dw.com/en/venezuela-iran-forge-anti-western-partnership-of-necessity/a-71735747>.
- Kolesnikov, Andrei. 2024. “How the Putin Regime Subverted the Soviet Legacy.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. June 11, 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2024/05/putin-anti-soviet-russia?lang=en>.

- Lind, Ruben. 2023. "The Failure of the 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign : A Social Conflict Analysis of How U.S. Sanctions Transformed Coalitional Struggles in Venezuela 2017 – 2022." <http://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/record/9133341>.
- Maizland, Lindsay. 2022. "Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict | Council on Foreign Relations." January 31, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya>.
- Martin, Lisa L. 1992. *Coercive Cooperation: Explaining Multilateral Economic Sanctions*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1ddd0xf>.
- Morgan, T. Clifton, Constantinos Syropoulos, and Yoto V. Yotov. 2023. "Economic Sanctions: Evolution, Consequences, and Challenges." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 37 (1): 3–29. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.37.1.3>.
- Nugent, Ciara. 2020. "'Maduro's Grip on the System Is Now Total.' Venezuela's Opposition Faces Uncertain Future After Parliamentary Elections." TIME. December 7, 2020. <https://time.com/5918527/venezuela-parliamentary-elections-maduro/>.
- Oliveira, Nelza. 2024. "Russia, China Prop Up Maduro Regime." *Diálogo Américas* (blog). November 12, 2024. <https://dialogo-americas.com/articles/russia-china-prop-up-maduro-regime/>.
- Omelicheva, Mariya Y. 2021. "Repression Trap: The Mechanism of Escalating State Violence in Russia," July. [https://nwc.ndu.edu/Portals/71/Images/Publications/210730\\_Omelicheva\\_State\\_Violence.pdf?ver=tEq0hBTQ5JZiqZnYepAWqQ%3D%3D&utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://nwc.ndu.edu/Portals/71/Images/Publications/210730_Omelicheva_State_Violence.pdf?ver=tEq0hBTQ5JZiqZnYepAWqQ%3D%3D&utm_source=chatgpt.com).
- Pape, Robert A. 1997. "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work." *International Security* 22 (2): 90–136.
- . 1998. "Why Economic Sanctions Still Do Not Work." *International Security* 23 (1): 66–77. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539263>.
- PBS. n.d. "Inside Iran - The Structure Of Power In Iran | Terror And Tehran | FRONTLINE | PBS." Accessed April 21, 2025. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/tehran/inside/govt.html>.
- Peksen, Dursun. 2019a. "Autocracies and Economic Sanctions: The Divergent Impact of Authoritarian Regime Type on Sanctions Success." *Defence and Peace Economics* 30 (3): 253–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2017.1368258>.
- . 2019b. "When Do Imposed Economic Sanctions Work? A Critical Review of the Sanctions Effectiveness Literature." *Defence and Peace Economics* 30 (6): 635–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2019.1625250>.
- Phillips, Tom. 2023. "US and Venezuela Set to Agree Deal on Sanctions Relief and Open Elections." *The Guardian*, October 16, 2023, sec. World news. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/16/venezuela-us-sanctions-deal-elections>.
- Rakel, Eva Patricia. 2009. "The Political Elite in the Islamic Republic of Iran: From Khomeini to Ahmadinejad." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29 (1): 105–25.
- Reuters. 2025a. "EU Countries Broaden Sanctions against Venezuela." *Reuters*, January 10, 2025, sec. Europe. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-countries-broaden-sanctions-against-venezuela-2025-01-10/>.
- . 2025b. "US Files Complaint over Smuggled Aircraft It Says Benefited Venezuela's Maduro." *Reuters*, March 18, 2025, sec. Americas.

- <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/us-files-complaint-over-smuggled-aircraft-it-says-benefited-venezuelas-maduro-2025-03-18/>.
- Robinson, Kali. 2023. "What Is the Iran Nuclear Deal?" Council on Foreign Relations. October 27, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-iran-nuclear-deal>.
- Rosenberg, Elizabeth, Zachary K. Goldman, Daniel Drezner, and Julia Solomon-Strauss. 2016. *The New Tools of Economic Warfare: Effects and Effectiveness of Contemporary U.S. Financial Sanctions*. Center for a New American Security.
- Roy, Diana, and Amelia Cheatham. 2024. "Venezuela: The Rise and Fall of a Petrostate | Council on Foreign Relations." July 31, 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/venezuela-crisis>.
- Sadjadpour, Karim. 2013. "The Rise and Fall of Iran's Ahmadinejad." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. July 13, 2013. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2011/07/the-rise-and-fall-of-irans-ahmadinejad?lang=en>.
- Salehi Isfahani, Djavad. 2021. "Iran's Middle Class and the Nuclear Deal." Brookings. April 8, 2021. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/irans-middle-class-and-the-nuclear-deal/>.
- Seeberg, Peter. 2016. "The EU and the International Sanctions against Iran: European and Iranian Foreign and Security Policy Interests, and a Changing Middle East." *Palgrave Communications* 2 (1): 16080. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2016.80>.
- Shagina, Maria. 2020. "Drifting East: Russia's Import Substitution and Its Pivot to Asia," April.
- Steenhard, Rens. 2019. "The Effectiveness of Sanctions and Iran's Nuclear Program | Peace Palace Library." September 27, 2019. [https://peacepalacelibrary.nl/blog/2019/effectiveness-sanctions-and-irans-nuclear-program?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://peacepalacelibrary.nl/blog/2019/effectiveness-sanctions-and-irans-nuclear-program?utm_source=chatgpt.com).
- Sullivan, Arthur. 2025. "How Has Russia's Economy Dodged Western Sanctions? – DW – 02/22/2025." Dw.Com. February 22, 2025. <https://www.dw.com/en/sanctions-russian-economy-could-no-longer-survive-without-china-india-and-turkey/a-71606396>.
- Sullivan, Mark P. 2017. "Venezuela: Issues for Congress, 2013-2016." Legislation. January 23, 2017. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R43239>.
- Sutherland, Manuel. 2019. "Impact and Real Nature of Economic Sanctions Imposed on Venezuela." <https://provea.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SancionesEnglish.pdf>.
- Takeyh, Ray. 2007. "Understanding the Iran Crisis | Council on Foreign Relations." January 2007. <https://www.cfr.org/report/understanding-iran-crisis>.
- Tobin, William. 2025. "'Maximum Pressure' Sanctions on Venezuela Help US Adversaries, Hurt Venezuelans." *Atlantic Council* (blog). January 23, 2025. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/maximum-pressure-sanctions-on-venezuela-help-us-adversaries-hurt-venezuelans/>.
- Tognini, Giacomo. 2023. "Why Western Sanctions Failed To Truly Impact The Wealth Of Russia's Billionaire Oligarchs." Forbes. April 13, 2023. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/giacomotognini/2023/04/13/why-western-sanctions-failed-to-truly-impact-the-wealth-of-russias-billionaire-oligarchs/>.
- Trinkunas, Harold. 2018. "Why Venezuela's Opposition Has Been Unable to Effectively Challenge Maduro." Brookings. January 8, 2018. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-venezuelas-opposition-has-been-unable-to-effectively-challenge-maduro/>.
- UNSC. 2010. "Security Council Imposes Additional Sanctions on Iran, Voting 12 in Favour to 2 Against, with 1 Abstention | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." June 9, 2010. <https://press.un.org/en/2010/sc9948.doc.htm>.

- U.S. Department of the Treasury. 2014. "Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action From November 24, 2013 In Geneva Between the P5+1 and the Islamic Republic of Iran and Provision of Limited, Temporary, and Targeted Sanctions Relief." U.S. Department of the Treasury. January 20, 2014. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jl2260>.
- . 2025. "Treasury Further Targets Entities and Vessels Moving Venezuelan Oil to Cuba." U.S. Department of the Treasury. February 8, 2025. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm784>.
- White House. 2013. "Fact Sheet: First Step Understandings Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program." Whitehouse.Gov. November 23, 2013. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/23/fact-sheet-first-step-understandings-regarding-islamic-republic-iran-s-n>.