

Imposing Sanctions on Individuals

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Question

What lessons have been learned about sanctioning individuals or groups of individuals rather than countries? Please identify case studies and highlight reported success and failures of sanctioning individuals (including information about state and non-state actors where available).

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1. Summary

There is consensus in the literature that individual and targeted sanctions have little power to coerce targets to make significant policy changes, and that they are less successful in achieving their overall goals than conventional broad-based sanctions. There is some evidence suggesting that the more narrowly targeted sanctions are, the less impact they have. However, individual and targeted sanctions can help constrain their targets' access to resources and ability to carry out policies, particularly when sanctions are used in combination with other measures. There is some evidence that sanctions against non-state actors may be less effective than sanctions against state-connected actors, but it is difficult to measure these impacts because these groups operate clandestinely.

Individual sanctions (travel bans and asset freezes) do inconvenience their targets in their personal and professional lives, while impacts on targeted individuals' state of mind or personal behaviour are rare or weak. Individual sanctions generally do not affect their targets' political views or behaviours. Both individual sanctions and broader targeted sanctions are always used in combination with other policy instruments, such as dialogue, mediation, diplomatic pressure, peacekeeping, use of force, covert methods, and international legal tribunals.

Factors that contribute to increasing the effectiveness of individual sanctions include:

- selecting individuals to be targeted for sanctions requires careful analysis to identify people with relevant roles and power;
- striking a balance between including enough people to apply sufficient pressure, but not so many that the sanctions lose their focus and unite the targeted individuals in solidarity;
- support and enforcement from a broad range of powers, including neighbouring states and regional blocs; and
- framing sanctions to help shape the public narrative and contribute to undermining a regime or supporting opposition.

Challenges to making individual sanctions effective include:

- there is substantial evidence that travel bans are fairly easy for motivated actors to evade;
- enforcement of asset freezes requires substantial technical capacity and cooperation from the private sector;
- there may be opportunities to use sanctions more effectively to draw sanctioned individuals into dialogue and negotiation towards behaviour change;
- some individuals and companies seek to reduce their risks of being caught up in financial sanctions by exploring alternative financial platforms and currencies;
- when individuals are the targets of sanctions, the sanctioning process must be clear, consistent, and compatible with the rule of law; and
- it is particularly challenging to sanction non-state actors that control territory, such as rebel or terrorist groups.

Although the practice of imposing sanctions on individuals rather than countries was adopted to minimise harm to the population of countries, unintended consequences can still arise, including a risk of increased state oppression, indirect economic and governance impacts including risks of

increased corruption and criminality, and indirect negative consequences arising from the efforts of banks and other financial institutions to manage their own compliance risks.

The overall strength of the evidence on this issue is weak. There is limited evidence about the impacts and effectiveness of sanctions on individuals, and it is extremely difficult to disentangle the impacts of particular sanctions from other influences, eliminating alternative explanations and distinguishing the contributions of multiple sanctions, incentives, diplomatic pressures, and other interventions. Knowledge about the impacts of sanctions on non-state actors is particularly limited.

2. History of individual sanctions

Sanctions are generally intended to accomplish one or more of the following (Eckert, 2017, p. 58):

- (1) *coerce* targets into changing policies or behaviours;
- (2) *constrain* targets' access to resources needed to engage in proscribed activities; and/or
- (3) *signal* violation of an international norm and stigmatise targets for the violation of it.

Sanctions aim to dissuade their targets from a course of action, or to weaken their control, alienate supporters, and incentivise and empower opposition to challenge them.

When targeting state actors, sanctions punish their targets to cause them to reconsider policies or activities; when sanctions are targeted at non-state actors (such as terrorist or criminal organisations), they aim to deprive their targets of access to funds and prevent them targets from using the financial system to move and store money (Rosenberg et al., 2016, pp. 6, 29).

Targeted sanctions are also often intended to undermine support for their targets among the elites that constitute the power base of rulers, and to empower opposition movements and dissidents (Park & Choi, 2020, p. 3; Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 27) although they are difficult to use effectively against authoritarian regimes with tight control over potential opposition (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 224). Among state actors, democratic regimes appear to be more vulnerable to sanctions and autocracies less vulnerable, although personalist autocracies appear to be more vulnerable than other types of autocracies (Sejersen, 2021, p. 4). In cases where the targets of sanctions are state actors, there is often an expectation that sanctions will incentivise the targets to participate in diplomatic negotiations, but no such bargaining process is usually envisioned where non-state actors are concerned (Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 6).

Sanctions have been used to respond to an increasingly wide range of security threats.

The original purpose of sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council was to prevent or halt armed conflict in the form of cross-border aggression and civil wars, but they are now also used to respond to situations including terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal change of government, governance of natural resources, human rights violations, and protection of civilians (Eckert, 2017, pp. 52–53).

Before the 1990s, sanctions tended to be *comprehensive* economic and trade measures that applied to entire countries (Drezner, 2011, pp. 97–98; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 9).

Comprehensive sanctions were essentially abandoned as a policy tool by the UN in the mid-1990s after sanctions on Iraq created shortages of essential commodities that led to a humanitarian crisis of disease and hunger (Drezner, 2011, p. 97; Park & Choi, 2020, pp. 2–3; Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 27).

Since 1994, all UN sanctions have been *targeted sanctions* focusing on specified individuals, groups, entities, activities, commodities, or regions rather than countries as a whole, and are generally intended to inflict costs on the target regime and its supporters while minimising harm to the general population (Eckert et al., 2016, pp. 1–2; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 10; Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 207). Targeted sanctions may include travel bans and asset freezes, arms embargoes, restrictions on trade in specified commodities or luxury goods, or restrictions on economic sectors such as finance or transportation (Eckert, 2017, p. 53; Park & Choi, 2020, p. 2; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 10). The shift to targeted sanctions was driven by the expectation that they would be more successful as they put direct pressure on key target actors and their support coalitions, and that they would cause minimal humanitarian and other negative effects on civilians (Peksen, 2019, p. 639). Targeted sanctions were considered particularly appropriate in dealing with the threat of international terrorism, which was seen as action by small groups which were only appropriate to target directly (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 208).

The most narrowly targeted form of sanctions are sanctions on *individuals*, consisting of travel bans and asset freezes (Biersteker et al., 2016, pp. 25–27). The targeted individuals are typically chosen because they are known or suspected to have committed transgressive acts themselves, they hold positions of power or influence in a targeted regime or group, or they are elites within or supporters of a targeted regime or group (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 27).

This report focuses on individual sanctions where possible, but also includes some evidence from episodes of broader targeted sanctions, and considers sanctions on both state actors and non-state actors. There are many studies which do not distinguish clearly between sanctions on individuals (travel bans and asset freezes), and broader targeted (but not comprehensive) sanctions on larger groups, entities, activities, commodities, or regions. The majority of the evidence in the literature concerns sanctions on state actors, but this report also includes evidence related to non-state actors where available.

3. Strength of the evidence base

There is limited evidence about the impacts and effectiveness of sanctions on individuals, and it is difficult to disentangle the effects of particular sanctions from other influences. Many analyses do not systematically evaluate the effects of sanctions on their targets, often opting instead to analyse the impacts at the state level rather than on the elites targeted (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 28). While the economic impacts of sanctions can often be measured, it is more difficult to measure political impacts, and measuring the psychological impacts on targeted individuals is very difficult (Elliott, 2016, p. 178).

It is particularly challenging to attribute observed outcomes to particular sanctions, eliminating alternative explanations and distinguishing the contributions of different sanctions, incentives, diplomatic pressures, and other influences (Elliott, 2016, p. 178; Peksen, 2019, pp. 642–643; Welt et al., 2022, pp. 2–3). The impacts of sanctions are rarely immediate and clearly identifiable (Moret et al., 2016, p. 10).

Sanctions are rarely used in isolation, making it difficult to disaggregate their impact from the other policy measures and environmental factors in play (Eckert, 2017, p. 64; Elliott, 2016, p. 177). One study of individual and targeted UN sanctions reported that “there are no episodes where the UN imposed individual assets freezes alone, and in only one case study a travel ban

was used in isolation' (Elliott, 2016, p. 177). A related study drawing on the same dataset reported that targeted sanctions are accompanied by diplomatic and mediation efforts in 97% of cases, peacekeeping efforts in 62% of cases, and the threat or use of force in 62% of cases (Eckert, 2017, p. 64).

Most analyses do not take into account how sets of sanctions evolve over time (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 28), in part due to a lack of sufficiently detailed time-series data which makes it impossible to analyse how changes in the severity of sanctions over time, including changes in the number of countries participating in imposing sanctions, affects a target's behaviour (Peksen, 2019, p. 641)

Knowledge about the impacts of sanctions on non-state actors is particularly limited. They do not fit the dominant state-centric analytical models, the sanctioning parties do not typically seek to engage in negotiations about settlements or concessions, and we know little about the degree to which sanctions disrupt illicit and clandestine activities (Peksen, 2019, p. 642). As one group of authors put it, 'shadowy terrorist groups and narco-trafficking networks will never generate the kind of data that would demonstrate the impact that financial sanctions have on their operations' (Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 32).

4. Effectiveness in achieving policy aims

There is consensus in the literature that sanctions on individuals have little power to coerce targets into changing policies, but can have some impact in constraining their access to resources and ability to carry out policies. Early evaluations of travel bans described them as 'not much more than a nuisance for targeted elites' (Brzoska, 2001, cited in Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 28). One study of UN sanctions from 1991 to 2014 (including individual sanctions and broader targeted sanctions) concluded that 'UN targeted sanctions were effective in only five out of fifty instances in which the Security Council attempted to coerce a change in target behaviour' (10%), in Libya, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire (Biersteker et al., 2016, p. 233). The 'successful' cases involved asset freezes and/or travel bans, but all five also involved embargos on arms imports, and four of the five involved economic sanctions targeting key commodities: oil services equipment in the case of Libya; charcoal in Eritrea; oil and diamonds in Sierra Leone; and diamonds in Côte d'Ivoire (Biersteker et al., 2020). The same study found that UN targeted sanctions were more effective in constraining targets, assessing them as successful in 16 out of 59 episodes (27% of the time). A related study on the same dataset concluded that UN sanctions were effective in coercing behaviour in relation to countering terrorism and armed conflict 14% of the time, but were able to constrain targets' resources and capacities in 67% of episodes concerned with countering terrorism, 33% of episodes related to democracy support, and 22% of cases of armed conflict (Elliott, 2016, pp. 65–66). Another study covering 22 episodes of sanctions imposed by the US from 2001 to 2016 (including individual sanctions as well as broader targeted economic sanctions) considered nine of the 22 cases (41%) to be successful in achieving their aims (Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 16). Additional anecdotal evidence includes, for example, one individual sanctioned in Zimbabwe who claimed that travel bans contributed to constraining the regime, saying that if it were not for the travel bans, 'we could have exported the fight to the sub-regional level' (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 31).

The rates of success for individual and targeted sanctions estimated in the studies mentioned above are lower than rates of success estimated for conventional broad-based

sanctions, which have estimated to be in the range of 34% to 38% (Peksen, 2019, p. 639). A range of other studies agree that individual sanctions are less likely to lead to policy change than comprehensive sanctions, and that narrowly targeted sanctions (travel bans, asset freezes, and arms embargoes) typically produce less impact than broader sanctions (on important economic sectors or commodities), although broader sanctions also tend to produce more unintended consequences (Drezner, 2011, pp. 97–102; Elliott, 2016, p. 188; Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 28).

Individual sanctions and broader targeted sanctions are always used in combination with other policy instruments, such as dialogue, mediation, diplomatic pressure, peacekeeping, use of force, covert methods and international legal tribunals; sanctions are ‘rarely the most important driver in political outcomes’ (Moret et al., 2016, p. 10). Effective sanctions regimes combine at least three types of measures, typically an arms embargo, travel ban, and asset freeze (Eckert, 2017, p. 64). Commodity sanctions (employed primarily in situations of armed conflict) also tend to be associated with effective sanctions (Eckert, 2017, p. 64). For example, sanctions imposed on individuals in Côte d’Ivoire in 2010 along with other diplomatic efforts are thought to have contributed to the resolution of the civil war by weakening President Gbagbo’s regime, but it was UN and French military action that proved decisive (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 30). In Honduras in 2015, the United States sanctioned three members of the Rosenthal family who were powerful political figures for roles in narcotics trafficking and money laundering; this served as ‘a wakeup call to Honduran agencies’, created uncertainty within Honduras about whether further actions by the US could be expected, and galvanised Honduran authorities into taking action which led to criminal charges (Olson, 2017, pp. 49–51).

Individuals who are sanctioned routinely deny that they have the power to influence the policies that sanctions ultimately seek to affect. Sanctioned individuals in Côte d’Ivoire and Zimbabwe, for example, when interviewed, ‘invariably claimed that changes in policy remained beyond their control, despite the fact that they held positions of responsibility within government or the ruling party’ (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 32). Some interviewees claimed that sanctions were never discussed in their party, others claimed that the individuals who were targeted had little influence or that they personally lacked independent decision-making power; one commented that ‘as a minister, you cannot take decisions outside the government. You go by what the majority decides. You are member of a collective’ (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 32). It is uncertain, however, whether these findings are an accurate reflection of the true levels of power held by the interviewees, and the authors also acknowledge that selection bias might play a role, in that only individuals without significant responsibility for grave human rights abuses might agree to be interviewed (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 32).

There is some evidence that sanctions against non-state actors may be less effective than sanctions against state-connected actors, but it is extremely difficult to measure these impacts because these groups operate clandestinely. Non-state actor groups go to great efforts to hide the size, origins, and composition of their resources, making it very difficult to measure impacts of sanctions on them (Rosenberg et al., 2016, pp. 6, 28). However, some experts do credit efforts to disrupt financing of terrorism with ‘significantly hobbling terrorist groups by restricting access to legitimate financial channels’ (Council on Foreign Relations, 2013, cited in Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 32). Similarly, in examining efforts to combat illegal wildlife trafficking, studies agree that targeted financial sanctions have interrupted traffickers’ ability to move funds, but there is a lack of evidence about the degree to which this has more deeply disrupted traffickers’ overall operations (Haenlein, 2021). A survey of sanctions experts

found that 27 out of 30 (90%) agreed that sanctions against non-state actors were less effective than sanctions against states (Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 28).

5. Impacts on targeted individuals

Economic and professional impacts

Travel bans and asset freezes do inconvenience their targets in their personal and professional lives. For example, one study of individual sanctions in Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe concluded that individual sanctions 'had disruptive effects on the political and professional activity of the targets', with targeted individuals describing travel bans as 'a big political handicap' and complaining that asset freezes affected their ability to send their children to school, pay rent, and receive a salary; they also noted that the combination of travel ban and asset freeze was particularly restrictive (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 31). Another study, looking at targeted sanctions on Russia after 2014, found highly statistically robust evidence that sanctioned companies and companies associated with sanctioned individuals were harmed by sanctions, losing an estimated one-third of their operating revenue, over one-half of their asset value, and about one-third of their employees compared with non-sanctioned peers (Ahn & Ludema, 2017, p. 2). One individual sanctioned in Liberia estimated that his travel ban cost him approximately USD 1.5 million in lost earnings because of reputational damage (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 220). In Colombia, according to a former US Drug Enforcement Administration official, asset freezes imposed by the US on individuals in organised crime networks produce a 'pariah effect' that dissuades legitimate businesses from becoming enmeshed in illicit activity, shuts criminal organisations out of the financial system, and contributes substantially towards inducing targeted individuals to surrender to US authorities (Olson, 2017, p. 48; Semesky, 2017, pp. 10–11).

On the other hand, at least two cases show that the reverse impact, or a null impact, is also possible: in one episode of sanctions in Sudan, 'influential persons who were listed were instead promoted to more important positions, in clear defiance of the UN', and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo it was reported that 'one administrator was promoted to leader despite being on the sanctions list only a month after being listed in 2008' (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, pp. 224–225).

Personal and psychological impacts

It is difficult to clearly identify personal or psychological¹ impacts of individual sanctions, but such impacts appear to be rare or weak. Feelings of stigmatisation due to receiving an individual sanction may undermine support for a regime, but finding evidence of such psychological effects may only be possible through interviews which may be difficult under the circumstances (Elliott, 2016, p. 179). Across the 63 episodes of UN sanctions from 1991 to 2014 in the Targeted Sanctions Consortium database, psychological impacts are identified in just a handful of episodes, but 'it is not clear whether that is because these impacts really are rare or because they are extremely hard to observe... [or] because terrorists, coup leaders, and human rights abusers are difficult to embarrass' (Elliott, 2016, pp. 178, 188). This analysis found that regimes and non-state actors involved in terrorism, attacks on civilians, or coups were difficult to

¹ 'Psychological' here refers to stigmatising or isolating effects on the targeted parties (Targeted Sanctions Consortium, 2014, p. 18).

stigmatise compared with cases involving violent conflict, but that stigmatisation did often lead to the erosion of political support for the targets (Elliott, 2016, p. 181). A former US Drug Enforcement Administration official credits asset freezes imposed on the leaders of the Cali (Colombia) drug cartel in 2004 and 2005 with inducing them to voluntarily surrender 'for the sole purpose of removing their families from the OFAC [Office of Foreign Assets Control] designation list' (Semesky, 2017, pp. 5, 11).

Anecdotal evidence from interviews with sanctioned individuals suggests that they experience a range of impacts. Psychological impacts of travel bans vary widely and may depend in part on whether individuals feel 'singled out' for inclusion on the ban, or whether they see themselves as natural targets based on their official positions or group affiliations (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 226). Interviews with sanctioned individuals in Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe, for example, found mixed results, with most respondents claiming to be unaffected by the sanctions while a minority complained that they were 'shocked' or 'felt revolted and not understood', and described the experience as 'traumatic' and 'devastating' (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 31). One individual who received a travel ban in 2001 for his work with the Liberian government described his situation as distressing, embarrassing, and creating uncertainty even when he believed he was in compliance with the conditions of the travel ban (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 218).

Psychological impacts on their own are not associated with any degree of sanctions effectiveness. In the Targeted Sanctions Consortium database, the only cases where psychological impacts appear to have contributed to achieving the aim of the sanctions were those involving extensive packages of sanctions combining individually targeted measures with arms embargoes and broader sectoral, commodity, or financial sanctions, producing a combination of psychological, political, and economic impacts; psychological impacts alone were not associated with any successful outcomes (Elliott, 2016, pp. 187–188).

Political impacts

Individual sanctions generally do not affect their targets' political views or behaviours; indeed, Portela & Van Laer suggest that sanctions might not even be genuinely intended to modify their targets' political persuasion, but simply aim to induce them to behave strategically (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 28). One study of UN sanctions from 2000 to 2009, covering 446 individuals subject to travel bans or asset freezes across eight sets of sanctions in eight different countries, found sufficient evidence about 112 of the individuals to evaluate whether they had changed their political behaviour, and concluded that only 19 of the 112 individuals (17%) had changed their behaviour in response to sanctions (Wallenstein & Grusell, 2012, p. 225). Sixteen of the 19 individuals were targeted in a single sanctions regime in Liberia, which suggests that the Liberia case was unusually successful; 'there is no indication of change among any of the leaders in any of the other sanctions' examined in this study (Wallenstein & Grusell, 2012, p. 224). Another study of sanctioned individuals in Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe concluded that sanctions either 'failed to modify their political views' or hardened their positions; one respondent, for example, said that being sanctioned 'made me more hostile', while others blamed political adversaries for their situation (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, pp. 31–33). Sanctioned individuals generally argue that the sanctions and the grounds on which they were personally selected for targeting are illegitimate, biased, unjust, and show unwarranted interference by the international community (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 226; Portela & Van Laer, 2022, pp. 31–33).

6. Factors contributing to effectiveness

Targeting individuals by role and influence

Selecting individuals to be targeted for sanctions requires careful analysis to identify people with relevant roles and power. In theory, sanctions should be more effective when imposed on individuals with the greatest influence over policy. An analysis of UN sanctions between 2000 and 2009 examined the amount of power that sanctioned individuals held, and separated them into four groups (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 217):

- *leaders*, who are directly responsible for the actions that the international community objects to;
- *administrators*, who execute policy but have limited ability to formulate or change it;
- *supporters* of the regime including family members, associates, and minor officials, who leaders need to keep on side but have limited influence over the leaders; and
- *traders*, who occupy key roles in carrying out important transactions such as international finance or trade, who have little influence over policy but are critical to the functioning of the regime.

The authors of the study argue that top-level leaders have the greatest influence and should be targeted first, and that 'traders' are also important because they facilitate access to essential resources for the regime, but that sanctions on administrators and supporters accomplish little to change policy and may simply incentivise them to follow instructions even more diligently, to demonstrate loyalty to the existing regime (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, pp. 217–227). In practice, however, the majority of the individuals targeted in sanctions during the period studied were 'administrators'; the authors argue that 'there has been a reluctance to target leaders', possibly due to 'realpolitik', insufficient consensus, or a lack of political will (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, pp. 217–219). The authors argue this 'may make individually targeted sanctions less likely to achieve compliance' (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 220).

Selecting the number of individuals to be sanctioned

Targeting individuals requires striking a balance between including enough people to apply sufficient pressure, but not so many that the sanctions lose their focus and unite the targeted individuals in solidarity. Where too few people are targeted, sanctions may not pose a credible threat to the targeted regime. Using a 'short list' strategy appears to have backfired in Côte d'Ivoire, for example, when sanctions (consisting of both travel bans and asset freezes) were imposed on only three individuals who were seen as 'fairly peripheral in political power' and not 'actually responsible for the policies pursued', causing the sanctions to lose credibility (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 216). There is also evidence that narrowly targeting individual sanctions may increase the personal risk to individuals who are not sanctioned, by raising suspicions on the part of leaders in those countries that those individuals are disloyal or collaborating with the international community (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 227). On the other hand, targeting all of the members of a large group is likely to be counterproductive and unite them in solidarity, patriotism, and loyalty with the established course of action (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, pp. 211, 216). A study of individual sanctions in Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe, for example, found that 'sanctioning high-ranking officials tended to strengthen elite cohesion rather than promoting discussion of change' and that for some, sanctions were a symbol of their fight that they carried with pride, or generated sympathy and support among supporters (Portela & Van

Laer, 2022, p. 32). One Zimbabwean minister went so far as to say that if he had not been sanctioned, 'would have felt not recognised for my efforts in the liberation struggle' (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, pp. 32–33). There was also evidence in this study that long lists of sanctioned individuals (encompassing virtually the entire ruling political elite) 'fostered cohesion among members of the political elite, and even strengthened solidarity bonds with their entourage' and 'prevented the emergence of other groups in the ruling elite – themselves not under sanctions – who could have counterbalanced blacklisted hardliners' (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 33).

Coordination and enforcement

Sanctions on individuals have been more effective when they have been supported and enforced by a broad range of powers, including neighbouring states and regional blocs.

Regional actors are particularly important for supporting the enforcement of travel bans and arms embargoes (Wallenstein & Grusell, 2012, p. 226). For example, travel bans and asset freezes imposed on members of President Gbagbo's regime in Côte d'Ivoire in the 2010s operated successfully due to strong support and enforcement by the regional organisations as well as the UN, EU, and US, and sanctioned individuals reported experiencing significant hardship (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 31). (Despite the successful sanctions regime, however, it was control over transactions with the Central Bank and military successes that were decisive in ending the conflict (Biersteker et al., 2020).) Conversely, a study of travel bans imposed in Liberia beginning in 2001 noted that states in the region and beyond frequently failed to enforce the bans (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 215).

Shaping public opinion

Framing sanctions in appropriate ways can help shape the public narrative and can contribute to undermining a regime or supporting opposition (Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 30; Sejersen, 2021, p. 3). Individual and targeted sanctions are necessarily accompanied by announcements that describe the sanctions, explain the justification for them, require relevant actors such as financial institutions to comply with enforcing them, inform public debate and dialogue about them, and engage in the 'war of ideas' against the sanctioned parties (Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 30). For example, the US government has used the imposition of sanctions on Al Qaeda and Hezbollah operatives as opportunities to expose their activities and counter the narratives that the sanctioned individuals and their groups had promoted about themselves (Rosenberg et al., 2016, pp. 30–31). In another case, in Venezuela following the imposition of travel bans and asset freezes by the US on members of the Venezuelan government in 2017, an experiment using public opinion surveys to see how different ways of explaining the sanctions affected people's views found that people were more supportive of sanctions when they were framed as targeted being specifically at members of Maduro's government rather than at Venezuela as a whole, and more supportive when the sanctions were presented in human rights terms as aiming to stop violence against protesters rather than being imposed because the political situation in Venezuela posed a threat to the US (Sejersen, 2021, pp. 9–10, 15–16).

However, multiple studies also show that the effects of international signals are difficult to predict and can work contrary to intentions. If people in a targeted state see sanctions as illegitimate and the existing regime as legitimate, they may reject the international signal, and 'rally around the flag' in support of the incumbent regime (Sejersen, 2021, pp. 3–4). Targeted sanctions seek to minimise this risk by clearly distinguishing between the individuals targeted and the population as a whole and framing sanctions as targeted measures that minimise any

hardship that might be suffered by the general population to reduce fears among people that they will be personally affected by the sanctions (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 27; Sejersen, 2021, pp. 6–7).

Timing of sanctions

Evidence about the most appropriate timing for imposing sanctions is limited and mixed.

On one hand, there is some evidence that threats of sanctions have been more successful than the actual sanctions (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 33), which suggests that sanctions are best deployed, or at least discussed, early. There is also some evidence that sanctions are more effective when less time has passed since the action or behaviour that is being discouraged (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 211). On the other hand, another study suggests that sanctions are more effective in later stages of conflict such as peace maintenance and peace building (Eckert, 2017, p. 64).

7. Challenges for implementing sanctions

Travel bans

There is substantial evidence that it is fairly easy to evade travel bans. For example, the UN team monitoring sanctions imposed on members and associates of Al Qaeda under Security Council resolution 1267 found that ‘listed persons continue to travel, despite the mandatory language of the travel ban, whether via the use of stolen, lost or fraudulent travel documents or through the inattention/disregard of the sanction by Member States (Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, 2006, para. 83); the team reiterated concerns about lax enforcement of the travel bans in 2009 and 2012 (Ginsborg, 2017, p. 97). A study of travel bans imposed in Liberia beginning in 2001 noted that many sanctioned officials could travel under assumed names or on alternative passports where they held dual nationality, noting that ‘these types of violations are not unique to the Liberia case, but are an inherent challenge to the successful implementation of any travel ban’ (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 215). Another study of the same sanctions regime identified 16 sanctioned individuals as having evaded the travel ban more than once, including one with 29 reported evasions, and noted that ‘their travel is likely to have been fundamental for the service they could provide to the Charles Taylor regime’ (Wallenstein & Grusell, 2012, p. 222). A study of UN sanctions from 2000 to 2009 reports finding 73 instances of individuals evading travel bans and eight instances where a person attempted to evade a ban and was prevented from travelling (as well as 30 reports of individuals evading asset freezes); the authors make no attempt to estimate how many times individuals were able to evade sanctions without being detected (Wallenstein & Grusell, 2012, p. 223). A more general legal problem is that there is sometimes ‘lack of clarity about what Member States were required to do if they stopped a listed individual at a border, or if they found that a listed person had arrived within their territory (Ginsborg, 2017, p. 98).

Asset freezes

Enforcement of asset freezes requires substantial technical capacity and cooperation from the private sector. Implementing asset freezes in each country supporting the sanctions requires supporting domestic legislation, extensive cooperation from private sector financial institutions, and a high level of procedural formalisation and capacity ‘which is often lacking, especially in less developed financial systems’ (Ginsborg, 2017, pp. 97–101). Sanction lists also

often fail to provide sufficient information to unambiguously identify sanctioned individuals and entities (Ginsborg, 2017, p. 101).

Some individuals and companies seek to reduce their risks of being caught up in financial sanctions by exploring alternative financial platforms and currencies to diversify their assets and particularly to reduce exposure to the US financial system and regulatory jurisdiction (Rosenberg et al., 2016, pp. 34–35). Because of the widespread global use of the US dollar, many international transactions pass through the US financial system and are subject to its jurisdiction, which facilitates enforcement of sanctions; the proliferation of alternative payment systems and use of alternative currencies makes tracking transactions and enforcing sanctions more difficult (Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 38).

Notification and dialogue

Opportunities have been missed to use sanctions to draw sanctioned individuals into dialogue and negotiation towards behaviour change. Multiple studies report that sanctioned individuals consistently claim that they ‘did not know why they had been listed, what they could do about it, and how they could be delisted’ (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 31; Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 215). In early episodes of sanctions (2000-2009) this may have been due to systems and procedures not yet being well developed, but even though the sanctions process has become more systematic, particularly since 2009, evidence suggests that sanctions are still often not well communicated (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 33; Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 215). This is an unfortunate gap, because ‘threats of sanctions have often proved more successful than sanctions imposition’ (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 33). Clarity about the reasons for sanctions and criteria for removing them can be seen as a matter of the human rights of the listed individual and also as an issue for the effectiveness of the sanctions: ‘without knowing the reasons for the sanction, it is difficult for the listed individual to change his or her behavior’ (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 208). In practice, it appears that opportunities for dialogue and behaviour change are not pursued, sanctioned individuals perceive sanctions as punishment rather than as an incentive to change policies, and ‘the lack of communication... leaves us in the dark as to whether individual sanctions could have facilitated a negotiated resolution of the crises’ (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 33).

Legal issues

When individuals are the targets of sanctions, the sanctioning process must be clear, consistent, and compatible with the rule of law, particularly respect for due process and human rights (Eckert, 2017, p. 52). Over the past twenty years the UN Security Council’s growing role in international counter-terrorism led it to extend its remit and take on ‘quasi-judicial and legislative functions’ to sanction individuals and terrorist and criminal organisations, notably through resolutions targeting organisations such as Al Qaeda, Islamic State in Iraq, and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Ginsborg, 2017, pp. 73–83). The shift to targeting individuals rather than states has required the development of stricter and more formalised procedures and more legally oriented accountability models (Ginsborg, 2017, p. 81). Some of the sanctions imposed on the hundreds of individuals associated with Al Qaeda, for example, were contested in courts worldwide, resulting in challenges to the legitimacy and credibility of the sanctions (Eckert, 2017, p. 68). The Security Council’s powers and the structures for exercising them have developed incrementally through successive resolutions and legal challenges and have become increasingly formalised (Ginsborg, 2017, p. 81). Important changes that have helped systematise

and formalise the system have included increasing clarity about the reasons for listing (and delisting) individuals, procedures for notifying listed individuals, procedures for reviewing sanction lists, disseminating information about the reasons for sanctioning individuals, other protections for 'due process' rights, the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsperson, more rigorous definitions and guidelines, standardised humanitarian exemptions, and panels of experts to monitor compliance (Eckert, 2017, pp. 59, 68; Ginsborg, 2017, pp. 77–79). Sanctions regimes also rely increasingly on the private sector, particularly financial institutions, to help enforce compliance (Eckert, 2017, p. 52), requiring domestic legislation to empower and compel these organisations to enforce sanctions.

Some issues that still remain to be addressed regarding UN Security Council sanctions include (Eckert, 2017, pp. 68–69; Ginsborg, 2017, pp. 74–84):

- Security Council resolutions do not provide a clear definition of terrorism;
- resolutions may be open-ended, without a way of defining the end point of a threat, leading to asset freezes becoming effectively permanent;
- resolutions have gone beyond imposing sanctions on named individuals or clearly-identified groups, to include looser associations and networks, where a person's membership is not well defined;
- procedures for placing individuals and entities on sanctions lists and removing them remain vague and somewhat arbitrary;
- some of the procedural improvements that have been implemented are due to unofficial practices of the Ombudsperson, rather than being formally documented in Security Council resolutions;
- some scholars suggest that the Security Council may not be the most appropriate body to deal with sanctions on individuals, and suggest that an alternative subsidiary body would be better able to handle considerations about due process, targeting, and sensitive information that arise when dealing with individuals, and could be more accessible and accountable for its decisions; and
- some scholars argue that if the Security Council is to take on such quasi-judicial functions, it should adopt the same sorts of procedural standards used by courts and tribunals, such as due process and standards of evidence.

Sanctioning non-state actors that control territory

It is particularly challenging to sanction non-state actors that control territory, such as rebel or terrorist groups. Some experts argue that sanctions can play a role against territory-controlling groups by inhibiting financial transactions, but have limited (perhaps mostly symbolic) effect and 'it is not obvious that such sanctions have materially impacted the finances or operations of such groups' (Keatinge & Keen, 2020, pp. 29–30). Territory-controlling groups operate beyond the reach of any state's law enforcement, so it is not possible to use legal or judicial approaches to enforce sanctions, or to freeze or confiscate property, within their territory, and sanctioning powers will also have limited information about such groups' assets and transactions (Keatinge & Keen, 2020, p. 29). It may be possible to use sanctions to disrupt transactions with members or affiliated groups outside the territory, if they can be identified, but territory-controlling groups, functioning as a quasi-state, have their own internal sources of funding so are more resilient (Keatinge & Keen, 2020, pp. 29–30). Citing examples of operations

against Al-Shabaab and ISIL, Keatinge & Keen argue that 'military action appears indispensable for defeating a territory-controlling group' (2020, p. 30).

8. Unintended consequences

Impacts on civilians

Sanctions on targeted individuals in governments may indirectly incentivise increased state oppression. Studies of both conventional and targeted sanctions show that 'economic sanctions are likely to prompt more state repression in target countries' (Peksen, 2019, p. 641) and that human rights are 'more likely to worsen in a country under targeted sanctions compared to countries where sanctions are absent' (Carneiro & Apolinário Jr, 2016, cited in Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 28). Relatively broad targeted sanctions (including asset freezes and travel bans, but also other financial restrictions, embargos on luxury goods, sectoral sanctions such as arm embargoes and restrictions on dual-use technologies) have shown negative effects including increased political repression, deterioration of humanitarian conditions, increased government corruption, and poor governance (Peksen, 2019, p. 640; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 15). A statistical analysis across 56 episodes of sanctions including travel bans, asset freezes, and arms embargoes suggests that if sanctions are broad, either in the number of people or the types of activities targeted, they increase the likelihood of individual elites becoming targets themselves, which gives them an incentive to create or join an opposition movement, which in turn incentivises leaders to increase oppression to protect their positions. The study also finds that as sanctions become increasingly effective in cutting off access to resources, they limit leaders' power to carry out oppression, and that sanctions are more likely to have adverse impacts on human rights in non-democratic regimes with small winning coalitions than in democratic regimes (Park & Choi, 2020).

Targeted sanctions may also have broader economic and governance impacts on targeted countries. Although targeted sanctions (including individual and broader sectoral sanctions) do not cause countries to suffer significant lost economic growth or greater inflation, they do introduce heightened political risk which depresses investment in the target country's economy (Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 15). Across the 63 episodes of UN sanctions from 1991 to 2014 in the Targeted Sanctions Consortium database, an increase in corruption and criminality was found in 58% of cases and a strengthening of authoritarian rule in 35% (Biersteker et al., 2016, p. 27). A similar statistical analysis of targeted sanctions imposed by the US since 2001 shows that sanctions 'contribute to more autocratic forms of governance' with corruption increasing and political stability, voice and accountability, government effectiveness, and regulatory quality declining in targeted countries (Rosenberg et al., 2016, pp. 18–19).

Impacts on the global financial sector

Banks and other financial institutions risk inadvertently becoming involved with sanctions activities and need to manage these risks, but the steps taken to manage risk may themselves have unintended negative consequences. In some cases, an overly cautious approach to risk management can lead to 'over-compliance' (such as using low thresholds for investigating transactions and reporting suspicious activities), which can raise privacy and human rights concerns, generate excessive investigatory burdens, and bury illicit transactions under large numbers of false positive reports, which diminishes the effectiveness of and compliance with sanctions (Ginsborg, 2017, p. 103). In other cases, financial institutions try to avoid business

opportunities involving individuals and countries that they perceive as high risk (Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 34). This approach to 'de-risking' can cause negative consequences for legitimate customers: for example, in 2015, California Merchants Bank, which processed 60% to 80% of remittances from the US to Somalia, halted all money transfers to the country because of increasing compliance risk; also in 2015, major US banks closed branches in Nogales, Arizona, because of high risks of money laundering; and in 2010-2012, banks closed the accounts of Angola's diplomatic missions for fear of compliance risk, which unintentionally affected other countries as well (Rosenberg et al., 2016, pp. 35–36). De-risking can also drive illicit activity to less-regulated spaces, can make sanctions less effective if there are no financial relationships through which to create leverage, and can reduce opportunities to offer positive incentives for compliance if financial institutions are reluctant to re-engage when sanctions are lifted (Rosenberg et al., 2016, pp. 34–35).

9. Case study: Cote d'Ivoire, 2002-2016

A rebellion in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002 split the country into a rebel-controlled north and a government-controlled south, and a UN peacekeeping force reinforced by the former colonial power, France, was deployed to separate the parties (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 30). UN sanctions imposed in 2005 aimed to enforce the peace and constrain both the government and the rebels with an arms import embargo, asset freezes, and travel bans aimed at political elites who posed a threat to the peace process and engaged in serious human rights abuse (Park & Choi, 2020, p. 2).

However, although the sanctions 'initially seemed tough and dangerous', they were limited to just three people who were 'fairly peripheral in political power', rather than people who were actually responsible for the policies pursued, so the sanctions lost credibility and appear to have been 'marginal compared with other international measures' that brought the parties into negotiations (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, pp. 216, 224). There were some indications that the individuals who were sanctioned became more oriented towards peace and negotiation, but their impact on decision-making was limited (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 224). Other authors argue that the sanctions were largely ineffective in constraining the elites, and led instead to the consolidation of authoritarian rule and greater corruption in the state-controlled economy (Biersteker et al., 2016, cited in Park & Choi, 2020, p. 2).

In presidential elections in November 2010, Alassane Ouattara claimed victory over incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo; Ouattara's claim was supported by most international actors including ECOWAS and the AU, but Gbagbo refused to step down and violent conflict ensued (Biersteker et al., 2020; Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 30). The UN, the EU, the US, and regional organisations enacted a range of diplomatic sanctions, individual sanctions including travel bans and asset freezes, an arms embargo and an export ban on diamonds (Biersteker et al., 2020; Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 30). The situation escalated into military conflict as Ouattara formed an armed movement, which (backed by UN and French forces) arrested Gbagbo and installed Ouattara as president in 2011. Sanctions were gradually eased, and lifted completely in 2016 (Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 30).

Sanctions on individuals were strongly supported and enforced by the international community and regional powers, but they do not appear to have played a decisive role in resolving the conflict; the most important factors seem to have been military force and the West African

economic and Monetary Union cutting off Gbagbo's ability to access funds from the Central Bank of West African States (Biersteker et al., 2020; Portela & Van Laer, 2022, p. 30).

10. Case study: Liberia, 2001-2003

In 2001, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on the government of Liberia to pressure it to curtail its support for the rebel Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone (Boucher & Holt, 2009, p. 90; Cosgrove, 2005, pp. 212–213). The sanctions consisted of embargos on weapons, diamonds, and timber, and travel bans affecting 138 people, including senior government officials, their spouses and ex-spouses, international arms dealers, and foreign advisors to the regime (Boucher & Holt, 2009, p. 90; Cosgrove, 2005, pp. 213–214). Further sanctions were imposed in 2003 to try to reduce violence within Liberia (which was embroiled in civil war) and prevent government officials from misappropriating public funds (Boucher & Holt, 2009, p. 93); the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia reported that at least ten percent of the Liberian government's average annual income since 1999 had been diverted to foreign bank accounts under the control of members of President Taylor's government or their associates (Wallenstein & Grusell, 2012, p. 221). Travel bans and/or asset freezes were imposed on Taylor (although not until 2004), his immediate family, and other associates, and by 2008, 'more than two dozen individuals and roughly 30 companies' had been sanctioned (Boucher & Holt, 2009, p. 93; Wallenstein & Grusell, 2012, p. 224).

One UN official working on Liberia 'commented that sanctions and the travel ban in particular, as well as attacks on Liberian government forces by rebels there, together put pressure on Taylor's regime' and that members of the Liberian government 'were very uncomfortable with the travel ban list because it prevented them from attending meetings' (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 215). The president's wife, Jewel Taylor, argued publicly that it was unfair to place the whole family on the travel ban list, and claimed that that friends of Taylor and his family had deserted him because they were afraid of also being included (Wallenstein & Grusell, 2012, p. 224). However, in general the travel bans appear to have been weak, with 'widespread evasion of the ban and a pattern of extremely lax enforcement by states in the region and beyond' (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 214). In some cases, such as that of the president himself, evasion was blatant; some sanctioned individuals travelled under assumed names or on alternative passports where they held dual nationality (including the president's son, who was arrested in the US for passport fraud); and others simply travelled through countries which failed to enforce the ban (Boucher & Holt, 2009, p. 94; Cosgrove, 2005, p. 215). The failure to enforce the travel bans was also attributed to lack of capacity on the part of states in the region, 'porous borders' and unstaffed border crossing points, and failure to provide states with updated lists of people subject to the bans (Boucher & Holt, 2009, pp. 92–93).

While some countries froze assets identified by the Panel of Experts, Liberia itself did not, and the total amount frozen (as of 2008) was much less than the amount of illicit funds suspected to exist (Boucher & Holt, 2009, pp. 93–94). There were 'many observations [of] evasions'; for example, some sanctioned individuals transferred assets to non-sanctioned relatives or associates (Wallenstein & Grusell, 2012, p. 221), while others operated through 'dummy representatives on the boards of corporations with whom they work' (Boucher & Holt, 2009, p. 93).

The sanctions appear to have caused some degree of financial hardship to elites, including Charles Taylor and his close associates, and Wallenstein & Grusell (2012, p. 224) find evidence

that 16 sanctioned individuals showed some change in political behaviour. The sanctions might have contributed to Taylor's resignation in 2003, but it is notable that he was not personally sanctioned until 2004, and 'he may have been more affected by the inability to raise money for his forces' (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, p. 224). In many analyses of the ending of the war in 2003 'the sanctions are seldom cited even as a contributing factor' and that other factors such as the embargos on arms, diamonds, and timber, as well military failures, may have played more of a role than the individual sanctions (Wallensteen & Grusell, 2012, pp. 224–225).

Interviews conducted in 2003 with two individuals who were personally sanctioned provide interesting insights into how they claim that the sanctions affected them (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 216).

The first individual was Omrie Golley, a Sierra Leonean lawyer who worked as the legal representative and spokesperson of the RUF for a brief period and was involved in the negotiations for the peace process in Sierra Leone; he was included in the first travel ban issued in 2001 (Cosgrove, 2005, pp. 217–218). He claimed that he was not personally notified about the travel ban, the specific reasons for it, or how he might appeal his inclusion on the list (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 218). He believed that he was sanctioned for political and personal reasons and that the UK government was responsible for sanctioning him, and denied accusations of involvement in smuggling 'blood diamonds' from Sierra Leone to Liberia (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 218). He described the situation as distressing, embarrassing, and creating uncertainty even when he was permitted to travel with an official waiver from the Security Council (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 218). However, 'the travel ban appears to have impacted Mr Golley's travel patterns only slightly': he held dual British and Sierra Leonean citizenship which entitled him to travel into both countries under the conditions of the travel ban, the Sierra Leonean government appeared to view him favourably and thus did not hinder his movements, and he was granted waivers on humanitarian grounds to visit family members in Croatia (Cosgrove, 2005, pp. 218–219). He was removed from the travel ban list in 2002, but there is ongoing uncertainty about whether he might still face restrictions on travel to the US because the RUF was considered a terrorist organization (Cosgrove, 2005, pp. 219–220). Mr Golley estimated the financial impact of the travel ban at roughly USD 1.5 million in lost earnings, largely because of reputational damage (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 220). However, he denies that the sanctions had any effect on his political views and affiliations (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 220). The author of the study, who interviewed Mr Golley, sums up the impact of the ban as being no more than 'an inconvenience to Mr Golley, and one that he was able to tolerate fairly well' (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 220).

The second individual, Francis Carbah, was the Liberian Minister of Transport and Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors until 2002 when he left the country to seek asylum in Canada (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 220). He claimed that he learned about being sanctioned as a Cabinet member when the UN Security Council decision was officially communicated to the Liberian government via the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and notes that it was also published in a local newspaper (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 220). He believed that he was targeted for being a government minister, rather than for any specific personal actions, and claimed that he was not especially close to or influential with the president, either politically or personally (Cosgrove, 2005, pp. 220–221). In his official role, he had very little need to travel outside the country, and felt that the travel ban 'neither hampered his work nor personal travel schedule' (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 221). He reported that the travel ban did not 'did not pressure him to reconsider his support for the Taylor regime or to cease traveling' (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 221). He speculated that in the 'highly repressive and personally vindictive' regime in Liberia, being included on the travel ban list was

actually a benefit since 'anyone excluded from the list might be suspected of being disloyal to the regime or collaborating with the international community' (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 223). He also suggested that the government used the sanctions as an excuse for continuing their bad behaviour, such as failing to pay salaries of civil servants (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 224). Although he acknowledged that sanctions may create hope for victims of oppressive regimes because they signal the attention and involvement of the international community, create anxiety for those who do not know exactly what the impacts will be, and create fear for those who are beneficiaries of the system, he believed that in this case, the sanctions failed to impact the government or improve the lives of the government's victims (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 224). He argued that travel bans do not work, in part because it was easy for the government to issue travel documents with false names to individuals who wished to travel, and stated that those who President Taylor wanted to be allowed to travel certainly continued to do so despite the travel ban (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 224). He describes himself as an increasingly reluctant participant in the Liberian government, due to his concerns about illicit dealings and the government's role in supporting the RUF, and says that his eventual decision to leave Liberia was triggered by a report from the Sierra Leone Panel of Experts which publicly exposed the extent of government corruption in Liberia (Cosgrove, 2005, pp. 222–223, 225). The author of the study, who interviewed Mr Carbah, sums up the impact of the ban by saying that Mr Carbah's description of events 'reveals that he felt the ban was not intended to affect him personally and that, basically, it did not. The psychological impact of the ban on him was minimal to non-existent... he appears not to have suffered any anxiety or personal losses as a result' (Cosgrove, 2005, p. 225).

11. Case study: Russia, 2014-2016

In response to the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the US, the EU, and several other countries imposed a range of sanctions intended to signal disapproval by the international community, negotiate and enforce a peace agreement, maintain the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and deter Russia from further expansion in the region (Moret et al., 2016, pp. 7–8). The measures included individual sanctions (asset freezes and travel bans) on approximately 200 people and targeted sectoral sanctions (on the finance, defence and oil services sectors), alongside other efforts to resolve the crisis including diplomatic measures, military and other support to Ukraine from a range of multilateral organisations, banning US and EU individuals and entities from engaging in selected trade or financial transactions including trade in arms and energy-related equipment and technology (Ahn & Ludema, 2017, pp. 8–10; Ashford, 2016, p. 114; Moret et al., 2016, pp. 8–10, 35–36; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 23).

The sanctions did not have a significant impact on the Russian economy as a whole, but there is evidence that they did significantly affect targeted firms. Russian GDP declined by 45% from 2013 to 2016, from USD 2.3 trillion to 1.3 trillion (World Bank, 2022), but macroeconomic shocks including a fall in the price of oil are widely considered to be the main driver of Russia's economic downturn (Moret et al., 2016, p. 8; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 23; Welt et al., 2022, p. 2). In mid-2015, the IMF predicted that sanctions and counter-sanctions had removed between 1% and 1.5% from Russian GDP (Moret et al., 2016, p. 8). However, one study using firm-level data found strong evidence that targeted sanctions worked as intended, affecting targeted firms to a much greater degree than non-sanctioned firms: on average, a sanctioned or associated company lost 'an estimated one-third of its operating revenue, over one-half of its asset value and about one-third of its employees after being targeted compared to non-sanctioned companies or those not associated with sanctioned companies' (Ahn & Ludema, 2017, pp. 2, 18).

The sanctions appear to have had little impact on targeted individuals, although the evidence available is limited. Some wealthy and prominent individuals targeted by the sanctions were reported to have been forced to return to Russia from living abroad to regain access to financial assets, and others were said to have been inconvenienced by travel bans (Boghani, 2015; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 23). One targeted individual is reported to have dismissed the sanctions as 'harmless' (Ashford, 2016, p. 115).

Sanctions on individuals appear to have done little to constrain Russia's ability to act in Crimea, although broader sectoral sanctions appear to have made more of a contribution. Individual sanctions (travel bans and asset freezes) signalled Western readiness to support international norms, and imposed some economic costs on Russia which are believed to have restrained Russia to a small extent (Moret et al., 2016, pp. 10, 35). The addition of sectoral sanctions from mid-2014 is believed to have contributed more strongly to constraining Russia from expanding beyond ceasefire lines and to coercing Russia to provide access to the crash site of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17, remove some heavy weaponry, and agree to a second round of Minsk negotiations (Moret et al., 2016, pp. 10–11, 35–36; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 24). From 2015 to 2016, following the Minsk II process, continued sanctions linked to progress in implementing provisions of the Minsk II agreement are believed to have made a more significant contribution towards constraining the resumption of intensive fighting, constraining further advances into Ukrainian territory, and restraining Russia from recognising the break-away republics and proceeding with separatist elections (Moret et al., 2016, pp. 10–11, 35–36; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 24). It is difficult to clearly identify and separate the specific impacts of individual sanctions, broader sectoral sanctions, diplomatic initiatives, broader macroeconomic factors, and other factors (Moret et al., 2016, pp. 35–36; Rosenberg et al., 2016, p. 24), and some authors are more pessimistic, calling the sanctions 'an outright failure' (Ashford, 2016, p. 115).

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