

Effect of sanctions on feelings of trust & acceptance of diversity

Sanctions can reduce trust and acceptance of diversity.

Geographical Region: Middle East and North Africa, Global

Effect size: Harmful effect ($g=-0.111$)

Confidence in study findings: Medium (2 studies with 3 effect sizes)

Short summary

Sanctions measures aimed at influencing state behaviour through economic restrictions. Sanctions, whether comprehensive or targeted, can significantly worsen trust and acceptance of diversity, especially of minority groups. The effects are worse the more comprehensive the economic sanctions. In contrast, easing of travel restrictions, as seen in the Jenin First Initiative, can reduce negative attitudes and improve social cohesion.

Long summary

The intervention

Sanctions are coercive measures aimed at influencing state behaviour through restrictions in trade, financial resources, or other forms of international involvement. It could be comprehensive or targeted. Comprehensive sanctions can affect entire economies while targeted sanctions are focused on specific individuals, entities, or sectors. In reverse, there are also initiatives which ease restrictive measures or sanctions. An example is the Jenin First Initiative, which involved the relaxation of travel restrictions and removal of checkpoints in the West Bank.

How the intervention is expected to affect this outcome

Sanctions can undermine trust and acceptance of diversity by intensifying resource scarcity and competition, which may lead to increased societal bias and exclusion of minority groups. Comprehensive sanctions may be particularly damaging, as they create broader economic hardships and foster environments conducive to negative stereotyping and propaganda, further eroding intergroup trust and inclusivity. In contrast, lifting restrictions, can reduce barriers and foster conditions conducive to improved trust and acceptance

The evidence base

The cell includes two impact evaluations: one examines the effects of imposing sanctions, while the other explores the outcomes of lifting sanctions or easing restrictions.

One of the studies includes the analysis of the global dataset, while the other analyses the case for the West Bank.

Evidence findings

Sanctions are found to have an adverse effects on feelings of trust and acceptance of diversity. One of the studies demonstrate that economic sanctions significantly increase societal exclusion and discrimination of minority groups. Comprehensive sanctions worsen these effects. The other study shows that lifting of sanctions tend to lessen negative attitudes towards a particular group (so imposing them has the opposite effect). Lifting sanctions increases support for a two-state solution.

Included studies

Longo, Canetti, and Hite-Rubin (2014) examine the implications of checkpoints and the relaxation of travel restrictions in West Bank. This intervention was called the Jenin First Initiative, spearheaded by a Tony Blair-led Quartet, composed of the United States, the United Nations, the European Union, and Russia, and was implemented in 2009. The plan was to open economic corridors for Palestinian traffic and trade. The study used a natural experiment to analyze the effects of the 2009 Israel decision to ease travel restrictions in the West Bank on Palestinians, with a difference-in-difference estimation model to see the difference before and after the intervention, particularly in Za'atara (treatment) and Wadi Nar (control). Palestinians in the treatment group had less negative attitudes toward Israel but still showed ambiguous reactions for a two-state solution. (Note: it is the removal of sanctions which has a positive effect, so sign reversed for presence of sanctions).

Onder (2022) examines the effects of economic sanctions on vulnerable minority groups within sanctioned states, highlighting how these measures exacerbate resource inequities and ethnic tensions through case studies of Iraq, Yugoslavia, and Rhodesia. The study employs panel data from 1981 to 2000 and utilizes ordered logit regression models to assess three key dimensions of ethnic discrimination: economic, political, and social. Data sources include the Minorities at Risk Project for economic and political discrimination and the World Values Survey for social discrimination. Social discrimination emerged as the most severe and statistically significant consequence of economic sanctions. Minority groups experienced intensified societal exclusion and negative stereotyping, fueled by government propaganda and public bias—dynamics that were particularly acute under comprehensive sanctions.

Confidence assessment

Overall low: This cell is rated low as it has less than 4 impact evaluation studies.

Other outcomes in this study:

Human security / Economic security

Human security / Political security

Violence and atrocity prevention / Social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Social cohesion / Willingness to participate or help