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THE POLITICS OF SANCTIONS COMPLIANCE.
Explaining sanctions effectiveness through the lens of domestic veto players.
Empirical evidence from the cases of Eritrea, Iran, and Sudan

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Abstract

Sanctions scholarship overwhelmingly expects that authoritarian states defy and resist the demands attached to sanctions imposed on them. In practice, however, authoritarian states do sometimes accommodate to sanctions-related demands and offer political concessions consistent with them. What explains their choice of compliance or defiance? When do they decide to offer political concessions aligned with sanctions-related demands, and why are those concessions sometimes short-lived and not robust, and why can they be more or less expedited? This research project argues the answer lies in the domestic configuration of institutional and political constraints, also called veto players, of the states under sanctions. As a contribution to the domestic-politics branch of the literature on international sanctions, which has become increasingly more relevant in light of the evolution of sanctions from comprehensive to targeted, this research project aims to investigate the under-researched application of a typically public-policy approach such as the veto player analysis to the literature on international sanctions and understand if and how domestic constraints such as veto players, who cut across regime type classifications that are frequently –but often inconclusively– used in the literature on sanctions, affect the effectiveness of sanctions in achieving the desired political concessions. Differently from previous studies, this project intends to examine this interaction along three different dimensions of the targeted state’s aggregate policy response to sanctions, that are the direction, robustness, and expedition of the policy change which together describe the overall effectiveness of sanctions. To test how three different elements of the configuration of the targeted state’s veto players such as the concentration of the agenda power, the congruence of policy preferences, and the internal cohesion, can affect those three outcome dimensions, the project adopts different methodological strategies. After performing some statistical analyses which expose some issues which remain largely unaddressed by the extant literature and probe alternative hypotheses, the project builds on those findings to develop a new theoretical framework and related spatial model which is applied to few selected comparative case studies to trace how veto power operates inside a state targeted by sanctions and test the hypotheses identified, one per dimension of the policy response to sanctions. This empirical part aims to verify the empirical support for the hypotheses and illustrate how the explanatory power of the veto player lens outperforms explanations that focus instead only on regime type classifications in decoding the politics of sanctions compliance.

Keywords: sanctions, veto players, policy change, foreign policy analysis, spatial models

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Introduction

When talking of external shocks, Mao once famously wrote that “[i]n a suitable temperature an egg changes into a chicken, but no temperature can change a stone into a chicken, because each has a different basis” (Mao, 1937: 314). Several decades on, Mao’s metaphor on eggs and stones still provides a clear insight into the role external pressure and internal processes can play in a broadly defined socio-political situation. Applied to the literature on sanctions, the “rustic metaphor”, as Kevan Harris first noted (2020), accurately emphasizes the need for scholars of international sanctions not to turn a blind eye to intermediate internal processes when attempting to relating sanctions’ external shocks to political outcomes. It is on this basis that this research project examines the intersection of sanctions and domestic politics to understand why targeted regimes choose certain policy responses to sanctions over other alternatives, even more favourable ones, arguing that one cannot truly comprehend the dynamic and outcome of a sanction episode without taking a glimpse into the domestic configuration of institutional and political constraints, also called veto players, in the states targeted by sanctions. External pressure and changes in the external environment become operative and work their effect only through internal causes and domestic configurations (Jervis, 2015). If the latter are not present in the form of appropriate policy preference congruence, cohesion, and agenda power concentration, then, this project argues, the desired policy response to sanctions is adversely affected, not only in terms of direction but also regarding how robust and expedite that response can be. The politics of the reaction to and compliance with sanctions can be understood, and made more effective on all these three fronts, only when the targeted state’s political and institutional constraints involved in the decision-making process are properly mapped and their motivations, modes of survival, and security thinking well understood.

In the “scholarly limbo” (Baldwin, 1999) that still is the literature on international sanctions, especially with regard to what makes them effective for the partial or complete satisfaction of the demands attached to them, scholars have used so many different analytical lenses and approaches. One of these took a distinctive “domestic turn” to examine how, and which, domestic characteristics of the states targeted by international sanctions mediate their intended effect on the targets’ policy calculations and behaviour, after assuming that an exercise of power in the international arena, such as the act through which sanctions are imposed and then defied or complied with, is not a two-actor, state-to-state only phenomenon driven by purely international systemic explanations, but rather something that develops for its most part inside the state’s “black box”, involving diverse domestic actors which interact with the shocks they receive from the external environment and influence the aggregate reaction to them. While the greatest attention within this domestic-politics branch has largely been on regime types and leaders’ traits, including their legitimation strategies, so far too little light has been shed beyond the sole leader on the political and institutional constraints, such as domestic veto players (Tsebelis, 2002), who are endowed with veto authority in the policy area affected by sanctions. In the broader discipline of international relations (IR) the use of the lens of the veto player analysis has largely remained underexplored, either because some still assume foreign policy-making lies uncontested in the hands of a single decision-maker ruling by whim or due to a general aversion among IR scholars to typically public-policy approaches. By theoretically and

methodologically engaging with a first, and so far unique, attempt to exploring the relation between international sanctions and domestic institutional constraints, that is an econometric study by sanctions scholars Dursun Peksen and Jim Mun Jeong (2017), this research project aims to show that the lens of domestic veto players can help explain why, how, and when targeted regimes defy or comply with sanctions-related demands better than systemic as well as other domestic-politics explanations previously examined in the literature.

International sanctions are argued to be one of today's most frequently used instruments of foreign policy. Empirical datasets confirm their ever more widespread use, both geographically and thematically, especially from the 1990s onwards. With their growing use, greater fine-grained research has been devoted to the topic. Especially concerning the effectiveness rate of this tool and the factors that made effectiveness more likely. But, to describe and assess effectiveness, it is first required to adequately define the object under investigation, and in this regard sanctions have often been controversial affairs. There is some broad consensus on the fact that, in the international anarchical environment, sanctions are conceived as one of the many foreign policy tools states can employ to influence another state or some of its selected entities and individuals¹ whom they do not generally have control on because outside the confines of their jurisdiction. But, besides this, scholars have often followed different paths and made different operational choices when approaching the study of sanctions – a “history of disagreement” that has, inevitably, spilled over onto their evaluation, especially about the rate and determinants of sanction effectiveness.

This research project does not aim to set right all the debates still raging in the literature, but more specifically join the discussion related to one of its most promising strands, that of the domestic politics of sanctions, through an original lens, largely overlooked in the literature, that of the political and institutional constraints (veto players) to compliance. The introduction of (yet another) determinant to the sanctions debate is deemed useful at least on two major fronts. By looking inside states, the veto player lens meets the ever-growing need for a sub-national level analysis in light of the now consolidated evolution in the kind of sanctions most frequently used, from more comprehensive to more targeted ones, and also offers a sensible workaround to conceptual and methodological issues related to the predominant regime-type approach of the domestic-politics branch of the literature on sanctions. A regime-type approach focuses on how an executive is constituted, how it is organised, and how it rules, but their categories do not capture the variation of strength of political and institutional constraints to the leadership which is what eventually affects the likelihood to comply with or defy sanctions demands. The added value of this lens therefore lies in its ability to offer a thorough discussion on targeted sanctions, which aim to place the cost of sanctions only on those considered responsible for the undesired conduct, by focusing inside the state and specifically on those who, by constitution or use, hold veto authority on the policy response to sanctions. The intra-state dimension remains an underdeveloped aspect of how sanctions work and, so far, the focus has been overwhelmingly placed on leaderships and government-insiders. Little is known about the role of political-institutional constraints to the leaderships and their capabilities, how they are affected by sanctions and create expectations on how targeted societies will respond to sanctions.

¹ The literature on sanctions often uses the terms “senders” and “targets” to refer to respectively the state or states which impose a sanction regime and the state or more specific entities/individuals who have been designated by the senders as those against which some activities should be restricted or modified. This research project also intends to adopt this terminology when describing those who sanction and those who are sanctioned.

All these elements can constitute different domestic configurations of actors and preferences that, this project argue, eventually provide a better and fuller understanding of sanctions compliance. This is even more so because this lens of veto players can shed light not only on the “direction” of the policy response to sanctions, but also on how much robust and expedite this policy response is, hence contributing also to the long-term aspects of policy concessions to the senders’ demands – something rarely done for long in sanctions literature, but which is becoming a matter of growing interest as of late. As a result, three guiding hypotheses steer the project. First, the direction of the policy response to sanctions, towards compliance or defiance, where the latter includes also counterproductive responses, is conditioned not on the preferences of the leadership alone but also of the political and institutional constraints to it. The costs of sanctions can indeed affect these key actors differently, including by further radicalising some of them, directly impacting the overall aggregate response. However, different kinds of costs need to be taken into consideration in this dynamic. As a result, the testing of this hypothesis also requires a distinction of sanctioning logics (Giumelli, 2011). The literature and the public debate on sanctions have been and still are overly focused on the material impact that sanctions can have, but reputation is also an essential resource for key actors, hence the need to include and observe the reputational damage, both domestic and international, of sanctions. Second, besides the direction of the policy response to sanctions, the project also hypothesizes that its implementation can be robust only if the institutions and political actors involved are internally cohesive. Internal polarization can indeed wear out the cohesion that is needed to avoid early reversals or defective implementations. Finally, the project also hypothesizes that the expedition of a policy proposal in reaction to sanctions is a function of the concentration of the agenda setting power. The more concentrated, the less contested the selection of the policy change proposal that has to be approved by all the players endowed with veto authority hence, other things being equal, the more expedited the response.

These hypotheses, the theoretical framework behind them, and the application of the latter to find empirical support to the hypotheses, are developed throughout six chapters, the last three of which are case studies. In Chapter 1 a non-exhaustive review of the literature on international sanctions aims to position this project in the literature by outlining the various strands it can be divided into, and by listing what elements the domestic politics branch has predominantly focused on. This overview is needed to understand which research spaces have remained underexplored and what anomalies, if any, previous research has left partly un-addressed. It emerges that in this domestic-politics strand, much has been written on the effect the democratic or autocratic status of a targeted regime may have on the effectiveness of sanctions in achieving the stated policy aims, overwhelmingly expecting that democracies comply with senders’ requests while most authoritarian regimes defy and resist the demands attached to sanctions. Yet, even by going one step beyond the democratic-autocratic divide and investigating within authoritarian regimes, this scholarly debate has not led to truly conclusive results, mostly due to the fact that some existing political regime categorizations typically used in these analyses are “often insufficiently nuanced” (Meng, 2020:118) specially to capture variation in institutional strength in those regimes which present hybrid features. Not only, while this branch has extensively focused on such regime types, their legitimation strategies, or their leaders’ characteristics, it emerges that so far little has been known about the role played by domestic political and institutional constraints such as veto players.

Against this background, Chapter 2 addresses this under-researched space of the domestic-politics branch and the potential of the lens of veto player analysis for understanding

how international sanctions against a targeted country translate into the latter's compliance or defiance. Moving from the regime level to a more micro-level, the lens of institutional constraints such as that of domestic veto players may well allow the investigator to find patterns that cut across regime types' traditional (sub)classifications and address a more comprehensive nature of sanction compliance. In the same way as being classified as a closed autocracy does not invariably imply a single leader at the helm ruling by whim, then simply having a legislature does not necessarily mean that the procedures governing those more democratic regimes are invariably more institutionalized, as the appearance of democratic-like institutions often obscures the actual lack of constraints on the executive leader. Additionally, especially within authoritarian regimes, as the structure and distribution of power often changes over time, the rules governing them hardly stick to mutually exclusive categorizations. As a result, not only would a veto players perspective not be an unnecessary duplication of extant regime type research, but it can also find insights the latter left unnoticed. This means not only asking why sanctions sometimes also work among authoritarian regimes, including single-party and militarist regimes previous research found to be on average more defiant, or why leaders cannot always do what is most beneficial to them to retain power when facing sanctions, but also why some reactions are more expedited than others and why sometimes concessions are more short-lived than others which are more robust instead. These questions are difficult to be answered by looking only at traditional domestic-politics arguments resting on accounts that overlook the relative capacity of veto players to drive or constrain the targeted country leadership's decision-making process in response to international sanctions, even in ways that are not advantageous for the leadership to retain power.

Further to this, Chapter 2 also discusses the contribution of this application to the theoretical-methodological debate on the promises and pitfalls of the dialogue between foreign policy research which this project largely belongs to and typically "domestic" public policy approaches, of which veto player analysis is generally considered being part of; as well as of conceptualization and measurement problems behind the use of the notion of veto players in non-conventional empirical applications which eventually affects research design and methodological choices. Precisely on this basis, the chapter exposes the strong and weak points of the major existing veto player datasets and replicates Jeong and Peksen's econometric study. This quantitative statistical examination is aimed at probing the space for further research on the combination of veto players and international sanctions. Their study had indeed the merit to break new ground in the search for higher understanding of the domestic politics of sanctions compliance. Yet, by making alternative conceptualization and measurement choices, this chapter finds alternative results characterized by an opposite coefficient than the original study, thus hinting at an opposite correlation regarding the direction of a policy response to sanctions: what if the larger the size of veto players, the higher the probability to have the continuation of the status quo policy disputed by the sender, precisely because of veto players' inability to agree on a policy change, eventually defying the sender's request of change rather than complying with it?

Although the quantitative test in Chapter 2 finds that a reverse hypothesis has a statistical significance, because of some limits in the dataset used this project argues that the replication's alternative findings should be reconsidered within a more comprehensive explanatory framework which, based on a policy area-specific identification of veto players and their preferences, not only reverses the causal mechanism hypothesised by Jeong and Peksen along the "directional" dimension of the policy change, but also explores other dimensions linked to the

robustness and expedition of the policy change that have so far been largely neglected in the literature of sanction, in order to offer a higher explanatory power.

In this regard, Chapter 3 presents the project's more elaborate theoretical framework, describing the three outcome variables (direction, expedition, and robustness of policy change) and the three explanatory variables (congruence, cohesion, and concentration of agenda setting power in a target country's veto player configuration) in detail, with the help of a simple spatial model drawn both on Tsebelis own spatial model and Morgan and Schwebach's bargaining model (1995) to operationalise the variables. Especially relevant to understand what informs veto players' conduct, the chapter argues that the key dimensions to map veto players' policy preferences and thus capture their calculus in the decision-making process are elites' economic and security views – that is the economic mode of survival that these players subscribe to, mostly a product of their material revenues and connection to interstate circuits beyond national borders, and their security thinking, namely the system of preferences and beliefs that shapes the domestic actors' views of national interest and related priorities. Both the survival mode and the security thinking are represented in the spatial formula which is used to estimate the degree of policy preference congruence through the variables *sanction salience* and *issue salience*, that is respectively the extent of the material or reputational costs caused by sanctions, net of possible positive inducements, and the salience attached to the issue placed under sanctions.

The description of the operationalisation of the main variables in Chapter 3 sheds light on the micro-foundational causal linkages inside the mechanism through which a targeted country reacts to sanctions. Each domestic player endowed with veto authority in the policy area under dispute has the power to facilitate or hinder the demanded policy change, a choice made on the basis of its own policy preferences in the policy dimensions affected by the issue at stake. When that issue falls under dispute and sanctions are imposed to influence it, the model expects that a player can update its preferences depending on the extent of the economic and political costs it may or may not incur, and which may include also positional considerations. The model also expects that sanctions-related costs, if present, can be distributed unevenly in the target country, so not all the veto players are necessarily affected overall and, if they are, not necessarily to the same extent. The novelty of this model's theoretical framework compared to previous ones, including Jeong and Peksen's, lies in the inclusion of the differentiation of sanctioning logics (Giumelli, 2011). Sanctions do not always impose material costs, as sanctions can instead be devised to leverage no material pain at all but the stigma of violating international standards, which is a form of reputational or political costs. While both material and reputational costs are operationalized under the same *sanction salience* variable, this project will explore whether they have different impacts on the micro-foundational causal linkages inside the mechanism through which a targeted country reacts to sanctions by differentiating two case-studies on the basis of the different predominant sanctioning logics that characterise them. Finally, the model presented in Chapter 3 also addresses the potential path dependent nature of sanctions compliance albeit placing not too much emphasis on that: the contingent configuration of the domestic actors is argued to be more crucial than previous experience of defiance or compliance. And although there is often some continuity in a country's security thinking, given that the historical memoir often informs a today issue's salience, this is not always the case. Previous compliance is no guarantee of future compliance, nor is the opposite if the inducements and issue salience change.

The second part of the project encompasses Chapter 4 to 6 and intends to test empirically the hypotheses identified in Chapter 3 for each outcome variable, one peer chapter, by means of a more qualitative data collection and examination which allows to trace back how single actors affect countries' aggregate reactions to sanctions. As already mentioned, the first hypothesis addresses the outcome dimension which has generally gained major attention by sanction scholars, namely the direction of sanction effectiveness, which can inform both on the very presence or absence of change and on its alignment or misalignment to the sender's demands. This hypothesis specifically investigates how different sanctions-related costs can induce veto players to update their policy preferences in such a way that they reduce their distances from the sender's new ideal status quo, even when sanctions do not leverage significant material pain. A second hypothesis looks at the effect the cohesion of collective veto players inside the target country has on the robustness of a policy change. Collective players who have been destabilized by a very uneven distribution of sanctions-related costs across their constituent units, or who are characterised by great internal differences in the salience attached to the issue under dispute, may be unable to implement robustly and in a unified way the decision taken as some spoiler constituent units largely unaffected by the costs or with higher levels of salience contest the implementation at the aggregate level. Finally, the third hypothesis tests the role of the concentration of the agenda power on the expedition of the decision-making process, examining whether a system with more than one agenda setter structurally protracts the duration of the policy decision and of the sanction episode itself.

These hypotheses are tested on a small set of comparative case studies –within-country diachronic sanction episodes, except for the dimension of expedition– in which, according to a most similar design, the only divergent explanatory factor is argued to account for the divergent outcome. All the cases are drawn (and further elaborated) from the TSC dataset (Biersteker et al, 2018), the one systematically mapping the different sanctioning logics per sanction episode, and further selecting authoritarian sanctioned regimes (no case in the TSC is democratic for the entire sanction implementation) which present some hybridism in either the democratic or in the kind of authoritarianism: in this way, the empirical part can also offer insights addressing two of the anomalies of the regime type literature, namely how to deal with hybrid cases which escape traditional regime-type categorizations of the literature on sanctions and how come some authoritarian military regimes which the existing literature expects to be more sanctions-resistant eventually accommodated to sanctions' demands. The framework does not apply only to authoritarian regimes, though. As the project will show, the concept of veto players is not regime-specific so there are no theoretical or methodological limits in applications to democracies. The need to complement the initial quantitative analysis in Chapter 2 with more discursive empirical scrutiny in the second part of the project derives, apart from the weaknesses of some major veto player quantitative datasets addressed in Chapter 2, from the fact that research on sanctions and, in general, on foreign policymaking, is just not “an exact science” (Giumelli, 2013), even more so in light of the lack of transparency of the security policies of many countries targeted by international sanctions. Clearly, from a methodological point of view, testing the new framework and model on a small set of cases prevents broad generalizations but, if properly done, these comparative tests are nonetheless adequate for a preliminary validation of it.

To test the first hypothesis on the impact of congruence on the direction of the policy change, Chapter 4 reconstructs the calculus of the domestic decision-makers that led to the direction of compliance in the case of Eritrea's transnational sponsorship of terrorism and of

Iran's nuclear proliferation. In this chapter only, two cases each consisting of two diachronic episodes but characterized by different sanctioning logics (with or without a predominant signalling logic) were examined precisely to explore if the presence or absence of material costs generates a different impact on the internal dynamic at play. Chapter 5, instead, shifts the investigation on how inside collective veto players the probability for a country to offer robust policy concessions *during* a sanction episode, but with implications also on their sustainability *after* sanctions removal, is conditioned on the internal cohesion of its constituent units, that is the degree of heterogeneity or polarization of their own policy preferences. The selected case for this chapter is the Sudan of 1990s and early 2000s, analysed comparatively on two diachronic episodes characterised by differences in the degree of cohesion inside the executive, that back then was a collective veto player consisting of two partisan blocs, the military and the Islamists. Finally, Chapter 6 offers a comparative analysis of the different mechanisms through which, in the country-cases analysed in the previous chapters, the agenda setters place their policy proposal on the agenda and see how these different institutional set-ups constrain the expedition of the decision-making. Focusing specifically on this agenda setting phase, the chapter argues that the degree of concentration of agenda power in few or more hands can further compound the duration of the decision-making process. By looking again into Eritrea, Iran, and Sudan, the chapter dissects the institutions used for agenda setting, their forms, and rules, in addition to the policy preferences of the veto player(s) entrusted with the agenda power to test their impact on the expedition of the policy decision across those few comparative cases.

In the conclusions, the added values and main implications of this research are summarised, with the aim to illustrate how throughout the project and especially its empirical part the explanatory power of the veto player lens outperformed previous studies' explanations that focused instead on regime-type classifications in decoding the politics of sanctions compliance.

1

International Sanctions: A Review of the Literature

“[Sanctions’] scholars are talking past one another because they ask different questions, use different concepts, and set the discussion in different analytical contexts. In short, they are talking about different things” (Baldwin, 1999).

Far from being a semantic debate with little or no consequences, the definition of a concept is one of the most consequential components of a research cycle, and that on sanctions is no exception to this (O’Sullivan, 2003). The way a concept is defined eventually enables or constrains one’s research, in some cases leading to far from negligible differences in related theoretical assumptions and empirical observations too. It is true that sanction is not a concept as “essentially contested” as that of power (Macdonald, 1976). Yet, being the imposition of sanctions an exercise of power itself, it nonetheless remains one of those which scholars have struggled to eventually reach a broad consensus on its definition and evaluation.

Because of their established and general use, most of the public opinion are reasonably thought to be somewhat familiar with what sanctions are. Yet, when it comes to discussing their constitutive elements, logics, or expectations, unfamiliarity and marked divergences in their understanding do emerge. Little does it change when shifting towards an academic audience. The scholarly debate on sanctions is extremely rich (SCOPUS, 2020), yet just not rich in consensus on many issues. Lack of consensus is not unexpected in a research space – that of sanctions – used by economists, jurists, and political scientists alike. Across each perspective, including in international relations and foreign policy space, namely one of the academic sub-fields of political studies which have devoted the greatest attention to the study of sanctions (Baldwin, 2015) and which this project aims to contribute to, differences in the way to approach the study of sanctions exist so that sanctions remain a story of disagreement. Over time, in this subfield, scholars have made several efforts to conceptualize this object of research, providing different operational definitions or parameters related to sanctions outcomes. While there is broad consensus in categorizing them as a tool (Baldwin and Pape, 1998; Hufbauer et al, 2007) of foreign policy making, much more contention still affects their other traits.

It is because of this contested context that was anticipated above and further explored below, that it becomes essential to clarify where this research project positions itself in relation to the literature, thus defining the boundaries of this specific research and of its core terms. In this research project, sanctions are defined as a set of international “politically motivated penalties” (Giumelli, 2013a) which, potentially leveraging all sorts of activities, economic and not (Nephew, 2018), are imposed by one or more senders against one or more targets to achieve a policy objective, which implies yet is not limited to, a change of conduct in a specific policy (Dreyer and Luengo-Cabrera, 2015). Such interference in the targets’ decision-making processes takes place in an anarchical environment, such as our international political system, without the immediate use of force (Hufbauer et al, 2007), but rather through different logics

varying in the way the sender intends to carry out such interference to influence the target(s)'s capabilities and calculations related to certain courses of action (Giumelli, 2013b).

1.1 Defining Concepts

Each part of the definition above touches controversial points that have been largely debated in the literature, related to the nature, extent, and kind of influence sanctions intend to achieve. Both in their practice and study, sanctions have predominantly been referred to as “negative” influence attempts, such as punishments (Baldwin, 2015) or penalties (Giumelli, 2013a). The analysis of “positive” influence attempts (so-called positive sanctions), namely actual or promised rewards, has instead been more neglected (Solingen, 2012; Baldwin, 2015). This project will make reference to positive sanctions as well², hence welcoming the growing calls for more scholarly attention on rewards and inducements too, while acknowledging that there are often empirical difficulties in distinguishing positive from negative sanctions – a distinction that in many actual cases seems more apparent than real – which question, with good reason, the utility of such a neat distinction (Hufbauer et al, 2007).

Regarding the kind of activity leveraged in a sanction policy, sanctions have been traditionally conceived as economic, trade-related, and comprehensive tools. However, over the past few decades sanctions have begun covering much broader activities while also getting more specific, with the aim to generate “smarter” and more targeted impacts. The nature and the size of the impact sanctions can generate are indeed various, but tend to be correlated with the kind and form of activity that is leveraged (Giumelli, 2013b), as shown below. Sanctions can work through the restriction or total prohibition of different kinds of activities – diplomatic, technological, military, and economic – among which the latter is the most common, yet not the sole. Traditionally, economic sanctions rhymed with trade sanctions because they generally implied the ban of imports and exports with the target country in order to restrain its ability to gather and use economic resources. Lately, however, more sophisticated financial sanctions exploiting global financial interconnections have emerged. Beyond the economic realm, diplomatically restrictive measures can instead affect the normal political activities of a targeted actor, including its participation in international fora and the extent of its diplomatic relations. In this case, the impact – or “pain” (Nephew, 2018) – is not strictly economic (although it may eventually become so) but rather reputational. Military sanctions, on the other hand, consist in the denial of soft (know-how) or hard (equipment) military cooperation, and, to a certain extent, can also overlap with technological restrictive measures which leverage the limitation of technical support across different fields in order to hamper the technological development of the target country. Overall, all these different kinds may have an economic dimension, be it in the form of a present damage (to punish a past misconduct) or a future loss of opportunity (to prevent it from happening in the future), but not necessarily. In this project, the focus is not on economic sanctions alone, but rather on all the different kinds, if included in a sanction regime.

In correlation to the activity, sanctions were already described to vary also in the intended size of their impact, as they can take the form of comprehensive embargoes (especially trade embargoes) or of more targeted measures, such as the interruption of diplomatic relations, asset freezes, travel bans, arms sales prohibition, commodity interdiction, financial and banking

² In this document, when used without an adjective, the term “sanctions” alone should be generally intended as “negative sanctions”, hence referring to penalties and punishments. On the contrary, “positive sanctions” will generally be mentioned together with the adjective, or through synonyms such as “inducement” or “reward”.

restrictions, just to mention the most common (Russell, 2018; cf. Biersteker et al, 2018 for a taxonomy of UN-related targeted sanctions). The size of sanctions can indeed vary, from the most comprehensive to the most targeted. In contrast with the former, targeted sanctions are either aimed at non-state actors such as individuals or entities, or at very specific sectors only, with the objective to minimize negative externalities on actors not responsible for the sanctioned wrongdoings, in order to prevent counterproductive effects including on the broader population such as those caused by the comprehensive UN sanctions regimes against Iraq and Haiti in the 1990 and which were tragically closer to the very other tool (war) they aimed to be an alternative of. Rarely do actual sanction measures plainly belong to one specific type only, as they rather cross boundaries of different categories partly because the intent of the sanctioners is to exploit the target's many and various vulnerabilities to achieve their desired goals (Nephew, 2018), partly because of undesired and (un)intended glitches in the implementation (i.e. targeted sanctions may end up having a comprehensive impact on the entire local population in case of overcompliance (Moret, 2021b) in their implementation due to derisking practices that financial institutions and private actors involved in the case follow to stay compliant). As a result, even formally targeted sanctions may still generate a much more indiscriminate and unintended (but not necessarily unexpected) impact on the broader population.

Over the past two decades, all the new sanction regimes imposed by major powers have consisted in (at least formally) targeted sanctions only. This, seen in a historical perspective, has been an aberration, given that until that point sanctions had been anything but targeted. The use of sanctions in international relations and foreign policy dates back to ancient times. The literature often cites Athens' Megarian Decree in 432 BC as the oldest major recorded episode of sanctions in history (Hufbauer et al, 2007; Carisch et al, 2017:111). Pericles (495-429 BC), Athens' first citizen and general during its so-called golden age, decided to impose an embargo, hence a comprehensive form of trade sanctions, on the coastal city-state of Megara as a reaction to its subversive and illicit behaviour. Such a move did not go unnoticed, as it is rather claimed by some scholars to have played a significant (yet, "precisely [how much] significant[t] is not indeed a matter of agreement" cf. Brunt, 1951) role in leading to the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta, which had sided with Megara. Sanctions have been used regularly ever since. Despite the lack of comprehensive documentation, historians have been able to track episodes in which, throughout all these centuries, ancient and modern powers alike used especially trade-related restrictions to *punish* their rivals (Drezner, 1999). Crucially, in most of these cases sanctions happened to be conceived as instruments prelude to the resort to war or as an extension of military action (Nephew, 2018). It would be no earlier than the 20th century that a paradigm shift would change the way sanctions were used, finally as an independent foreign policy tool, alternative to the use of military force. Key to granting them practical and conceptual independence from the use of force was the newly born League of Nations, as a response to World War I, and the person who more than anyone else contributed to its "regeneration", US President Woodrow Wilson. That is, both practical and moral needs did contribute to such a status upgrade, including the changing features of an ever more interdependent international system as well as the need to find an alternative to the increasingly more violent and all-embracing nature of warfare after World War I. The then US President thought the "economic, peaceful, silent deadly remedy" (Gordon, 1999) could be used to maintain law and order in the international society in place of wars. As economic dependency became an increasingly more important vulnerability to exploit, the tool evolved even more during that century. In the first half, sanctions were primarily viewed normatively, as tools to

enforce norms, overall still part of a broader war effort, and thus still pervaded by a “distinctly martial flavour” (Hufbauer et al, 2007). Because of the weak legal configuration of the League of Nations, the collective use of economic sanctions turned out to be just a limited means of deterring aggression. Only later in the century, after World War II, their use eventually broadened to gradually cover any influence attempt, including those unrelated to aggression and wars (Baldwin, 2015). With the advent of the Organization of the United Nations the domain of sanctions was further specified, albeit in general terms, by the Charter of the United Nations which conferred only to states, state-based organisations, and the Security Council the power to interrupt partially or totally the economic relations and communications of a targeted actor (art. 41, chapter VII)³.

It was then the end of the Cold War which gave definitive momentum to sanctions (Drezner, 1999), including to their turn towards more “targeted” specifications. The 1990s, the decade of globalization which was later renamed also the “sanctions decade” (Cortright and Lopez, 2000), contributed to increasing the relevance of economic statecraft in general, hence including also sanctions. The intensification of global interconnections has since endowed policymakers with an even greater source of leverage as it exposed actors to new benefits and risks alike, depending on one’s own position in the economic and financial global networks. Empirical data on the use of sanctions in international politics drawn from the HSEO, TIES, TSC, and GSDB datasets (respectively Hufbauer et al, 2007; Morgan et al, 2014; Biersteker et al, 2018; Felbermayr et al, 2021) confirm a marked increase in the past few decades. TIES data pointed to a 137% increase in 1990-2015 compared to 1945-1990 (on average 2.4 times more sanctions a year), similar to GSDB’s 174% increase on 1990-2019 on 1950-1990 (2.7 times higher), and HSEO’s 199% increase for 1990-2002 on 1914-1990 (3 times higher). Likewise, also the range of actors resorting to sanctions has increased (Baldwin, 1985; Drezner, 1999), with the main players primarily responsible for such an upward trend being the UN Security Council, the United States, and the European Union. It was first and foremost the very United Nations Security Council which, partly freed from the Cold War superpowers’ game of vetoes, started imposing many more sanctions than the only two⁴ mandated during the whole Cold War (Pape, 1997). UN aside, the United States also played a key role, turning out as the most prolific state in imposing economic sanctions. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was left with unprecedented economic power which, quite understandably from a strategic point of view, encouraged its policymakers to expand the use of economic sanctions, mostly unilaterally. Taking advantage of the US dollar primacy in global financial and trade interconnections, in the 1990s the US targeted 35 countries with unilateral sanctions, nearly doubling the 20 of the preceding decade (Hufbauer et al, 2007). Not only were these sanctions not the product of collective decisions (only a minority had been framed multilaterally through the UNSC), but some of them were even secondary, namely extra-territorial in scope. Differently from regular or primary sanctions, secondary sanctions prohibit from doing business with the sanctioned target not only individuals and entities of the sender state, but also

³ Deprived of further specific regulations, it has since become customary to treat sanctions as an ordinary tool of foreign policy that can be imposed by one or more states, a regional intergovernmental organization (i.e. the European Union) or an international one (previously the League of Nation, today the United Nations, specifically in the form of the UN Security Council) against one or more targets – in this case, either states or non-state individuals and entities – after those targets fail to observe international norms or perform alleged wrongdoings, as they are identified as such by one or more states of the international community.

⁴ Until the early 1980s, because of the US’ and the USSR’s abuse of vetoes, the UN Security Council could adopt sanctions only against Rhodesia (1965) and South Africa (1977). Only with the end of the Cold War it began adopting them more frequently.

those of any third state which are somehow engaged with the target identified by the sender⁵. The Clinton administration was given a foretaste of the possible blowbacks this aggressive unilateral use of sanctions could cause to US interests (the EU's blocking regulation as a response to 1996 ISA secondary sanctions affecting EU entities is a case in point⁶). Nonetheless, after the 9/11 attacks, the Bush and the Obama administrations became even more inclined to unilaterally assert their sanctioning authority in the world, including outside their own territorial scope, specifically to disrupt the economic flows of terrorist organizations and their sponsor states (Farrell and Newman, 2019). After the United States, the second-most active user of sanctions in the few past decades has been the European Union, accounting for the 36% of the world's non-UNSC sanctions in 1980-2014 (Russell, 2018). Although there is no specific law devoted to their definition and use, EU "restrictive measures" (as sanctions are usually called in the EU working language) are generally intended to serve similar purposes as the UN sanctions. They are indeed triggered by the decisions of the Council of the European Union, but also by the binding decisions coming from the UN Security Council (Portela, 2010; Russell, 2018; Giumelli et al, 2021). Until the 1980s, the latter used to be the only trigger of EU sanctions, as the then-European Community had not imposed any of its sanction regimes yet. European Community sanctions against the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan represented the starting point of community-wide sanctions policies independent of the UNSC. Later on, with the establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 1992, sanctions became an even more central tool and, as a result, the number of targeted countries increased resolutely from 6 in 1991 to today's 33 (Dreyer and Luengo-Cabrera, 2015). Of today's 42 active sanctions programmes, 24 are autonomous from UN and mostly consist of asset freezes, visa bans, and arms embargos (Russell, 2018). That is, none of them consists of comprehensive trade embargos. The emergence of targeted sanction regimes resulted in the proliferation of "blacklists" in the EU, as well as in the US (such as OFAC's US specially designated nationals and blocked persons list) and in the very UN, where single entities or individuals have been regularly added or removed ever since (EEAS, 2021; OFAC, 2021a; UNSC, 2021).

Today, policymakers keep resorting to sanctions regularly in their foreign policymaking – in 2021 the EU created a new horizontal sanction regime against human rights violations (a European version of the US Magnitsky Act cf. Russell, 2021), the US opened yet another sanction regime against an African country (Ethiopia cf. OFAC, 2021b), and even China expanded its own list of designated individuals in response to (mostly West-driven) sanctions (Friedlander et al, 2021) – and will likely continue resorting to them in the future when addressing security-related and other threats. At first sight, this may look like a paradoxical situation in light of the hesitant evaluations on sanctions effectiveness coming from the predominant part of the scholarly literature (more on this below). However, because of their flexibility (Giumelli, 2013b), which makes them employable in many different contexts and more politically palatable to policymakers, sanctions in most cases still prove to be the most cost-efficient alternative (or companion policy, given that they are hardly ever used in isolation)

⁵ It is worth clarifying that, in practice, the first targets of a sanctions policy are the individuals and entities belonging – by nationality or residence or any other direct link – to the sender state itself: that is, when senders impose primary sanctions to restrict relations with a target, those who are immediately penalised and can no longer conduct their normally permissible activities are not entities of the "target" itself, but first and foremost the entities/individuals of the sender state which are forbidden to interact with "sanctioned" targets. When senders impose secondary sanctions, then, the list of those affected includes also third-party individuals and entities unrelated to the sender state but involved to some extent in activities linked with the "target" under sanctions.

⁶ For references on the EU blocking regulation cf. EC, 2021.

with a higher relative expected utility and useful contribution in comparison with other foreign policy tools such as wars or talks.

1.2 Do Sanctions Work?

Success or “effectiveness”⁷ of sanctions is the topic which, more than anything else, has captured assiduous attention in sanctions literature and in policymaking alike (Drezner, 1999; Giumelli, 2013a). “Do sanctions work” is unquestionably the most frequently asked question in the field, despite the very meaning of this question being often difficult to grasp: do sanctions work *in doing what*? Because of this uncertainty on the meaning of this (questionable) question various approaches have been used in answering it over time and still remains object of lively discussion among scholars and policymakers. To some extent, the topic keeps receiving a high degree of investigation precisely because scholars have so far given conflicting evaluations on the issue (Van Bergeijk and Siddiquee, 2016).

Evaluating the effectiveness of sanctions is therefore a critical, yet complicated, undertaking. As of today, the sanctions literature is not able to provide a definitive and unequivocal conclusion on the success rate of sanctions. Despite much research devoted to the issue, assessing sanctions success remains a challenge mired in a “scholarly limbo” (Baldwin, 1999; but still valid today), so much that there are scholars who dispute the very utility of the question itself (Nephew, 2018), including by claiming that there is no such thing as successful or unsuccessful sanctions, but rather it would make much more sense to talk about more or less useful tools contributing to successful or unsuccessful strategies in light of the fact that sanctions are never used in isolation and their actual contribution is difficult to discern with certainty when other companion policies are concurrently at play. Yet, several scholars have attempted to calculate sanctions’ success rate. More often than not, they used to come to the conclusion sanctions are a statistically ineffective tool of foreign policy (Drezner, 1999; Hufbauer et al, 2007 – 1st ed in 1985). However, not only has more recent research openly contested such low rates, blaming earlier studies for inaccurate analytical frameworks or evaluation parameters (Pape, 1997; Drezner, 1999; Giumelli, 2013a; Van Bergeijk and Siddiquee, 2016), but also those very quantitative studies which did confirm relatively low rates (Doxey, 1996; Pape, 1997; Pape, 1998; Cortright and Lopez, 2000) eventually produced significantly different results from each other.

The reason behind such divergent results lies precisely in the above-mentioned lack of a common framework through which scholars can evaluate sanctions success, as well as in the consequent bias in data selection and operationalisation (Solingen, 2012; Dreyer and Luengo-Cabrera, 2015; Van Bergeijk and Siddiquee, 2016; Peksen, 2019a). Unsurprisingly, major existing dataset on sanctions, namely the HSEO dataset (HSE until its 2nd ed, HSEO from 3rd ed. cf. Hufbauer et al, 2007), the TIES dataset (Clifton Morgan et al, 2014), and the TSC dataset (Bierstaker et al, 2018) diverge on the senders which are mapped, on the predictors, on the observations themselves (few datasets include threatened-only sanction cases on the basis of Drezner, 1999’s suggestion the most effective cases are those which are only threatened), as well as on the conceptualization (and operationalization) of the success variable itself – mostly concerning whether to include or not considerations on sanction contribution in the strategy,

⁷ While some (Baldwin, 1985; 1999/2000; 2015) have stressed how effectiveness may be only one dimension of success (together with efficiency, utility, and usefulness), and thus should not be taken as synonyms, most of the literature overlooks the difference. Here they are taken as synonyms despite acknowledging contrary opinions about it.

the economic impact, the strategic interaction with the sender, or a counterfactual perspective examining the comparative utility of sanctions with regard to alternative policy options (Tsebelis, 1990; Ackoff, 1999; Giumelli, 2013a; Stępień et al, 2016).

While earlier research already laid out the foundations of the debate on the problems of evaluating sanctions effectiveness, some recent inputs to it broke new ground. One of the most original inputs concerned the use of a different perspective, that of the purposes or logics that sanctions may serve (Giumelli, 2011; 2013a), that is what they are used for and how they achieve it. Much of the academic literature and many policymakers alike (Pape, 1998; Hufbauer et al, 2007) had long intended sanctions as a tool primarily aiming at creating maximum pain in the target to coerce a change in its behaviour. This “pain-gain” approach was – naively, according to some (Galtung, 1967; Tsebelis, 1990; Giumelli, 2013a) – based on the faulty assumptions that sanctions are only used to achieve a target’s coercive behavioural change by imposing an economic burden on it. The fact that such a behaviouristic approach to sanctions had long dominated the literature did not imply that it was considered the most appropriate by the entire literature. The behaviouristic approach itself actually presented some internal divisions, mostly related to the nature (economic or also political) and the degree (dichotomous or scalable) of the behavioural change (Pape, 1998; Baldwin, 1999). The crux of the matter, in this case, was how to evaluate the economic burden generated by sanctions (if it occurs, as it is not a necessary outcome⁸) absent a subsequent political effect. If sanctions, differently from purely trade-related tariffs, are intended as a political act (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950), then their evaluation should eventually look both at the economic and political effects generated.

Beyond these debates within the behaviouristic approach, there have been discussions as to whether this is the only appropriate logic of sanctions. Literature may never reach consensus as to whether coercion is sanction’s central causal logic, but there has definitely been growing consensus with regard to the fact that it cannot be considered as the only one (Biersteker et al, 2018). Coercion can hardly be the sole logic in which power is exercised through sanctions. The complexity of real-world sanction cases which cannot be explained by the sole coercive logic of the behavioural change approach has prompted scholars to reflect about the existence of multiple logics. Although the origins of such a debate may date back to the 1970s (Baldwin, 1971), the creation of more nuanced, functional interpretative schemes has been only a recent phenomenon. In this regard, Giumelli (2011) proposed an original analytical framework based on a new narrative which looks at different purposes behind sanctions policies. Its starting point lies in observing that many times sanctions have been imposed even when it was expected they would be unlikely to coerce a target into the intended behavioural change or to obtain full compliance to one’s demands; as a result, senders must have deployed them to perform other functions than coercion. A new taxonomy of non-mutually exclusive logics⁹ of sanctions – coercion, constraint, signalling – has since been created and become reference in a significant part of the literature (cf. the “sanctions” entry of the Oxford Companion to International Relations as well as the Targeted Sanctions Consortium (TSC) dataset by Biersteker et al, 2018). According to this taxonomy, in addition to coercion, sanctions can also be imposed with the purposes of constraining and signalling. Constraint refers to a logic of containment, based on limiting the targeted entity’s ability to execute the objectionable policy. It differs from coercion insofar as the latter aims to compel some actions, whereas a

⁸ Ordering one’s own companies not to trade with a targeted actor does not automatically imply the effective suppression of such trade flows. Evasion or other coping strategies such as diversion of trade can be used to cancel or mitigate the impact.

⁹ Which are not synonyms of policy objectives (cf. Barber 1979, Lindsay 1986, Nossal 1989).

constraint aims to deter or limit actions by depriving one or more resources needed to perform them. This is the case when the sender is aware of the unlikelihood to coerce the target into full compliance, perhaps because of the latter's ideological opposition to what is being demanded to do. Besides coercion and constraint, there could also be a signalling logic which refrains from directly imposing material costs to the target but aims to signal to the target, a third party, or even the own senders' constituencies, the sender's political dissatisfaction with the target's objectionable actions.

1.3 Which Determinants?

The issue of sanctions effectiveness has been tackled not only in general terms, enquiring about whether sanctions are effective or not, but also in greater detail, focusing on the identification of the conditions and factors that facilitate or rather hinder sanction effectiveness (Baldwin, 1999). Even within this part of sanctions literature, scholarly findings have often shown a high degree of inconclusiveness. This section on the review of relevant academic research on the determinants of sanctions effectiveness is thus mostly intended to discuss the most-researched conditions that scholars have identified as the likely predictors of sanctions effectiveness. This review will prove useful to identify the theoretical and methodological shortcomings of some existing studies on this topic, as well as to detect uncharted research spaces worth exploring in this project. Being this review functional to the development of this project's new analytical framework about the role of domestic veto players in explaining sanctions effectiveness, it will hold the strand focusing on domestic-politics factors in higher regard.

Research on the determinants of sanctions effectiveness has obtained a lot of scholarly attention (Peksen, 2019a), yet the abundance of approaches surveying the possible explanatory variables – often even providing contradictory results with each other (Chan and Drury, 2000) – has hardly contributed to clearing out existing scepticism about the topic. The literature on the determinants of sanctions effectiveness is indeed fractured, with different strands and lines of enquiry being pursued, sometimes in isolation, other times interacting with each other (Parker, 2000).

A cursory taxonomy of the numerous approaches surveying the determinants of sanctions effectiveness can detect at least three main clusters. One cluster which could be defined "*political*" refers to research focusing on those determinants related to the political aspects of a sanctions episode, such as the strength of the political relationship between the sender and the target (alliance or antagonism), their political regime type, their institutional characteristics, or also the type of policy objectives and logics behind a sanction episode; another cluster which could be defined "*economic*" refers, instead, to those related to the economic (mostly trade-related) ties between the sender, the target, and third parties, but also to the economic costs caused by sanctions, their micro-dynamics and their translation into political effects; finally a cluster referring to the remaining group of "*conceptual*" determinants (Pawlak and Biersteker, 2019) can be used to describe those which escape the classic political-economic distinction, such as the time dimension, the credibility of the threat, the degree of international cooperation, and the scope of the sanctions.

Starting from the conceptual cluster, there are few studies in the literature of sanctions which have focused on the role of time. Common sense perception of its impact on sanctions effectiveness can lead to contradictory expectations. On the one hand, long-lasting sanctions

are expected to increase the total damage caused to the target economy (which is crucial only for a pain-gain logic which links the material impact to success) and may also be perceived as a powerful signal of the political resolve of the sanctioning states, for some deemed necessary to induce the target to comply (Daoudi and Dajani, 1983; but reflections on the process of economic adaptation over time were already present in Galtung, 1967). On the other hand, the actual passing of time may instead be expected to provide the target country with more chances to adapt and find alternatives to bypass the restrictions imposed by sanctions through evasion/coping strategies, thus softening if not cancelling the damage sanctions were expected to cause. In support of this latter regard, in fact, some major studies (including Dizaji and van Bergeijk, 2013; Hufbauer et al, 2007) found that duration is negatively correlated with effectiveness because of the target's economic adaptation to restrictions. In their study, which focused only on oil embargoes, Dizaji and van Bergeijk (2013) found that not only do sanctions succeed more in the first two years of implementation, but that, with the further passing of time, they are even more likely to lead to undesired effects. Crucial in this assessment are obviously the scope of policy objectives, as well as the identification of different phases of a sanction episode. Dizaji and Van Bergeijk focus only on oil embargoes and, similarly, other studies, especially from the economic field, which confirm such findings (Kaempfer and Lowenberg, 2007), adopt a perspective which associates the material impact (such as the reduction of oil revenues) to sanctions' political success. By looking at the evolution of the elasticity of the offer and the demand, Kaempfer and Lowenberg explain that, in the short term, sanctions "bite" more, either because of the difficulty of the targeted entities in adapting their demand to new substitutes of different quality, or because of the difficulty for them to find other countries to which immediately re-route the products they offer. In the longer term, instead, elasticity increases both for the demand and the offer, limiting the economic impact of sanctions for the targeted entities. While these studies show that, in the long run, adjustments of the target's economic structures help mitigate the economic impact of sanctions, thereby influencing also the political effect, they do not examine other kinds of sanctions and logics, beyond the sole oil embargoes and pain-gain dynamics. This limitation, as well as the lack of time-varying sanctions data in major datasets (Peksen, 2019a; only the TSC dataset codes episodes within cases, not TIES, HSEO, GSDB), has so far precluded further insights related to the role of time in sanctions effectiveness.

In relation with time also come studies analysing the role played by expectations and credibility about a future loss of opportunities (Giumelli, 2013b). Sanctions are claimed to work best not only when they are unexpected, but also when they are only threatened (Drezner, 1999; Dreyer and Luengo-Cabrera, 2015; Biersteker et al, 2018). With regard to the former, unexpectedness, just like short-term sanctions regimes mentioned above, can prevent the target from taking measures mitigating sanctions' forthcoming impact. With regard to the latter, Drezner (1999) found that those sanctions that generated the most significant concessions were those which ended at the threat stage, most likely because the sender's credibility or resolve was enough to elicit compliance with no need to actually apply sanctions. According to this line of thinking, the actual imposition takes place only when either the sender has not enough credibility or the target underestimates it. As described above, data compilations which include threats are not numerous also due to the difficulty in retrieving systematically information about threats.

Another factor which can be related to this cluster is the scope of sanctions, referring both to the degree of extraterritoriality and the comprehensiveness of those sanctioned. As for

the latter, senders may decide to devise sanctions policies that are either comprehensive, whose impact affects the target country's entire economy, or targeted, hence resorting to more limited and sectoral measures such as the above-mentioned asset freezes, financial restrictions, travel bans, and arms or hi-tech restrictions (Biersteker et al, 2018). In recent decades, an ever-growing number of sanctions has consisted of formally targeted measures, driven by the objective to reduce collateral damage on civilians or other undesired effects, and perhaps also by finally realising that the material impact is not always linked to effectiveness. In terms of political effectiveness, however, their success rate compared to comprehensive sanctions remains somehow contested (Cortright and Lopez, 2002; Drezner, 2011; Portela, 2014; Biersteker et al, 2016; 2018). Significant differences emerge once the different underlying logics of sanctions are taken into account, as constraining and signalling logics turn out to be more effective than coercive mechanics (Biersteker et al, 2018). Differences may lie in their details, so given that targeted sanctions can differ among themselves too with regard to the type, some studies focusing on type comparisons found that some (financial restrictions) are more effective than others (restrictions solely consisting of trade bans) (Hufbauer et al, 2007; Rosenberg et al, 2016). Moreover, research suggested that any type of sanctions used in isolation ends up being less effective than cases in which they are complemented by other types of sanctions (Dreyer and Luengo-Cabrera, 2015). Finally, while many studies have focused on this first aspect related to the scope of sanctions, much fewer have so far been devoted to their degree of extraterritoriality (Peksen, 2019a), at a time in which the use of extraterritorial (or secondary) sanctions which are applied also to third parties (not fully subject to the sender's jurisdiction but who interact with the sender's targeted entity) has actually increased – and with it calls for more research on it (IAI, 2021; Moret, 2021a).

A final factor related to this cluster which has attracted significant scholarly attention is multilateralism, namely the extent of international cooperation behind the imposition of sanctions. On the one hand, perhaps contrary to common sense, Hufbauer et al. (2007) found that international cooperation is rarely decisive: the existence of competing interests among the different parties of the sanctioning coalition risks giving rise to inconsistencies in the implementation. Unsurprisingly, multilateralism does bring about problems of collective action, by inducing both private and governmental opportunistic actors to cheat on sanctions if that is in their real interest. This possibility seems to be averted only if international institutions such as the United Nations are involved. In this case, some studies found instead that a specific kind of multilateralism, that is the one in which sanctions are backed by international organizations, is likely to be more effective (Drury, 1998; Drezner, 1999), precisely because of the creation of mechanisms to monitor the implementation of sanctions in a way that discourages free riding among senders. On the other hand, a multinational front can help reinforce the political signal and scope of economic damage of the coalition of senders, to their benefit. Yet, their effectiveness depends on the extent of international cooperation: short of universality, there is scope for the target entities to receive enough third-party assistance from non-sanctioning states and deflect their trade toward such new partners (Haidar, 2017). Multilateral sanctions may thus generate negative economic externalities such as illicit trade and sanctions rents that end up being captured by the very targeted entities, cushioning if not cancelling sanction-related economic costs (Kaempfer and Lowenberg, 1999).

All the other major determinants which have been researched in the literature of sanctions effectiveness can be recorded as either political or economic, even though the distinction between the two is not always sharp. Regarding the economic cluster, one of the major factors

concerns the role of trade linkages, pre-sanctions trade volumes, and the existence of commercial alternatives. Some studies have shown that sanctions are more effective when, looking at pre-sanctions trade volumes between the sender and the target, the latter is economically dependent on the former (Hufbauer et al, 2007). This is even more evident when, overall, the size of the target's economy is significantly smaller than the sender's. It is logically sound to expect that trade disruptions caused by sanctions to economically structurally weak targets are more likely to translate into their compliance to external demands. Yet, this logical expectation is mostly confuted by works (Dashti-Gibson, Davis, and Radcliff, 1997; Drury, 1998) that investigated cases in which targets succeeded in minimizing sanctions' economic impact by developing new trade ties with third parties or by resorting to above-mentioned alternative illicit channels and black markets (Lektzian and Biglaiser, 2013).

Looking more generally at the role played by economic costs brought by sanctions to the targets, as typically portrayed by a pain-gain dynamic, the literature is divided. On the one hand, there are scholars (Hufbauer et al, 2007; Drury 1998; Dizaji and Van Bergeijk, 2013) who found evidence of the so-called "naïve theory of sanctions" (Galtung, 1967) on the role of economic hardship in inducing the target to make political concessions. According to this theory, the higher the economic costs inflicted on the target economy, the higher the harm to the target's legitimacy and ability to operate, hence the likelier its compliance with demands. On the other hand, other works contest the existence of a direct "transmission mechanism" (Cortright and Lopez, 1999) between economic hardship and political gain, noting that it is not rare at all that, contrary to what stated above, the economic hardship caused by sanctions, especially when disproportionate if not indiscriminate, not only fails to translate into the sender's desired political outcomes, but paradoxically may also cause unintended counterproductive effects (Galtung, 1967; Pape, 1997; Peksen and Drury, 2009; Giumelli, 2013a). History itself abounds with cases which defy the traditional pain-gain logic (Drezner, 1999) and the recent growth in the use of targeted sanctions in place of comprehensive ones, as an effort to minimize indiscriminate economic hardship, was already mentioned as a sign of policymakers' acknowledgement that the extent of hardship is not always politically decisive. A strand of literature which further elaborated against the pain-gain approach was the one researching the micro-dynamics of sanctions costs (Kaempfer and Lowenberg, 1988; Kirshner, 1997; Solingen 2012) examining if sanctions can become more effective when they distribute economic damage to specific and limited interest groups close to key decision makers or directly involved in the objectionable course of action.

Moving onto the political cluster, research has focused on a broad set of determinants ranging from the degree of ambitiousness of the policy objectives sanctions pursue, the issue saliency, and the logic – finding that the more ambitious the goal for the sender (i.e. coercive regime change) or salient the issue for target (which generally rhymes with the ambitiousness of the goal and the logic the sender is forced to employ) the more likely the policy is ineffective (Ang and Peksen, 2007; Hufbauer et al, 2007) if not counterproductive, such as compounding the degree of political freedom in the target country (Peksen and Drury, 2009). From a logics-driven perspective, it was already mentioned that signalling mechanics have been found to be more effective than constraints and even much more than coercive measures (Biersteker et al, 2018). Inquiring further into the political determinants, another stream of research has investigated whether sanctions are more effective when imposed against political allies (Drezner, 1999; Nooruddin, 2002; Hufbauer et al, 2007). Because of the paradoxical effect of the expectation of future conflict with the sender, fewer concessions are expected from non-

allied targets which have nothing to lose and do not want to weaken their future bargaining position. On the contrary, an ally which has minimal conflict expectations is expected to concede more, in order to prevent costly deadlocks. While some studies supported these findings (Drezner, 1999; Hufbauer et al, 2007), other researchers who developed original selection-corrected models (Nooruddin, 2002) dismissed such results, further fuelling the debate on the issue of selection bias (Van Bergeijk and Siddiquee, 2016).

		SELECTED REFERENCES																								
		Lindsay (1986)	Kaempfer & Lowenberg (1988)	van Bergeijk (1994)	Dashti-Gibson et al. (1997)	Kirshner (1997)	Drury (1998)	Drezner (1999)	Drezner (2003)	Brooks (2002)	Cortright & Lopez (2002)	Nooruddin (2002)	Jing et al (2003)	Hufbauer et al. (1990/2007)	Allen (2008)	Bapat & Morgan (2009)	Escribà-Folch & Wright (2010)	Giumelli (2011)	Lektzian & Biglaiser (2013)	Dizaji & van Bergeijk (2013)	Grauvogel & Von Soest (2014)	Von Soest & Wahman (2014)	Biersteker et al. (2018)	Peksen (2019b)	Walentek et al. (2021)	
EXPLANATORY VARIABLES																										
ECONOMIC	Economic damage to target				+		+	+						+						+						
	Size of sender relative to target												-								+					
	Trade linkages			+																	+					
	Targeted scope / Micro-dynamics		+			+					-															
	Third-party assistance to target																		+							
	Kind of economic costs (trade vs financial)																									
CONCEPTUAL	Duration																									
	Threats																									
	Multilateral cooperation among senders																									
POLITICAL	Alliance / Cordial pre-sanction ties with target																									
	Ambition																									
	Policy Objective																									
	Logic (pain-gain)																									
	Political regime type (autocratic resistance)																									
Weakness of the target (either economic or political)																										

(+) its increase has a positive effect on compliance; (-) negative effect/sub-type variation

Table 1. Summary of the state of research on sanctions effectiveness and some of its major determinants: selected references and (often inconclusive) findings (when both + and - are present in the same row). The “domestic politics” branch of the political cluster is shaded.

Finally, there is a recent strand of literature which has focused on the political characteristics of the target (or the sender – Allen, 2008), mostly the political regime type and the degree of its stability (Galtung, 1967; Brooks, 2002; Nooruddin, 2002; Hufbauer et al, 2007; Kaempfer and Lowenberg, 2007; Escribà-Folch and Wright, 2010; and more). Studies found that politically unstable regimes are more likely to comply to external demands (Hufbauer et al, 2007), but even more so if they are democracies (Kaempfer and Lowenberg, 2007). While such findings are not supported by those (Galtung, 1967) who claim that democracies are more

sanctions-defiant than dictatorships thanks to their stronger legitimacy and ability to mobilize citizens “around the flag”, other scholars (Nooruddin, 2002) have instead argued that it is rather more likely that democracies concede sooner than later in order to end the economic hardship caused by sanctions on the electorate. On the contrary, having fewer electoral constraints, authoritarian leaders can be politically more defiant, divert increasingly scarcer economic resources to their supporters (fewer than in democracies), and even benefit from their monopoly (Brooks 2002; Peksen and Drury, 2009). However, among some authoritarian regimes, specifically personalist regimes and monarchies which do not have a strong military or party apparatus, sanctions seem to have a significant effect because they can target more easily the external sources of aid they depend on (Escribà-Folch and Wright, 2010; Peksen, 2019b). Finally, even in authoritarian targets at large, rather than only in democracies, sanctions can generate unintended rally-round-the-flag effects (Galtung, 1967), especially when the population is highly nationalistic or with a strong ideological motivation. Although the topic remains under-researched, it is claimed (Van Bergeijk, 2015) that when these autocracies’ political legitimation is based on strong nationalistic or ideological motivations, or also when the targeted leadership has a short horizon of survival, sanctions are extremely unlikely to bring a change of behaviour because the target, being more risk tolerant, is ready to gamble and thus defy coercion.

In conclusion, then, within this latter domestic-politics branch of the literature most of the attention has been devoted to differences in the kind of regime, in particular by focusing on their democratic or autocratic features. What has largely remained underexplored is the role of intra-regime domestic institutional constraints, such as veto players, which cut across regime types.

2

Constraining Compliance: Explaining Sanctions Effectiveness through the Lens of Veto Players Analysis

Chapter 1 described international sanctions as one of the most used instruments of foreign policy even in today's world. In an anarchical environment, states or supra-national state organisations resort to "politically motivated penalties" (Giumelli, 2011:15) against one or more targets in order to influence a conduct of theirs that violates international standards or more specific codes of behaviour identified as such by one or more senders. Their use has become more frequent especially since the 1990s when, for better or for worse (Cortright and Lopez, 2000), a series of factors including the end of the Cold War superpowers' vetoes, the growing interconnections of a more globalized world, and the progress of some processes of regional integration, contributed to a season of extensive use of sanctions, above all by the United Nations (Biersteker et al, 2018), the United States (O'Sullivan, 2003), and the European Union (Giumelli et al, 2021). International sanctions have since been imposed for a variety of objectives, ranging from democracy and human-rights promotion inside the targeted state (Portela and Von Soest, 2012; Von Soest and Wahman, 2014; 2015) to the limitation of foreign and security policies perpetrated by some entities of the targeted state with a more direct impact on the broader international arena, such as terrorism support, armed conflicts, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (Felbermayr et al, 2021). As a consequence of its rising use in foreign policymaking, also the scholarly interest in this instrument in the field of International Relations (IR, in addition to law and economics studies), has recently grown (Scopus, 2020), especially with regard to the examination of the factors which make sanctions effective for the partial or complete satisfaction of the demands attached by senders to them. The effectiveness of sanctions is a concept which can be defined and approached from many different perspectives, one of them being from the one of the sanctioned actor. This, at least, has become the preferred perspective of the so-called domestic politics branch of the literature on sanctions introduced in Chapter 1. Several sanction scholars have examined how, and which, domestic characteristics of the regimes targeted by sanctions mediate the effect of international sanctions on their policy calculations and behaviour (Morgan and Schwebach, 1995; Kirschner, 1997; Lektzian and Souva, 2007; Allen, 2008; and more cited in the following lines). Among the various political elements inside a targeted country which scholars have focused on to examine sanctions effectiveness, regime types (Brooks, 2002), domestic legitimization strategies (Grauvogel and Von Soest, 2014), and the characteristics of individual leaders (Marinov, 2005; Byman and Pollack, 2019) are among those which have received the closest attention. Yet other factors too, which have so far been largely disregarded, deserve better examination. In this regard, this research project argues that, more than the regime types per se, their legitimization strategies, or their leaders' characteristics alone, it is the configuration of all those actors in the targeted regime who hold a veto authority on the policy dimension affected by sanctions (the so-called veto players; Tsebelis, 2002) that cannot be ignored when explaining defiance or compliance in a sanction episode. That is to say that, if present, the impact of the economic or

political costs imposed by sanctions on a targeted regime for a controversial conduct of action translates into the latter's compliance only if the configuration of the targeted regime's veto players presents certain suitable patterns in terms of agenda power concentration, distribution of policy preferences, and degrees of internal cohesion. In the literature of international sanctions and in the broader one of international relations, so far little has been known about the role played by these domestic veto players in affecting the outcome of sanctions. Exceptional empirical applications of veto players in the latter include MacIntyre's (2001), Cunningham's (2006), Choi's (2010) studies among few others¹⁰, yet they did prove useful for explaining international political dynamics such as why some states go to war, make peace, and in general cope better than others during economic crises. More specifically, the combination of the literatures of international sanctions and of veto players had remained underexplored until a first, and so-far only, econometric attempt to explore the potential for such a combination was made by sanctions scholars Jim Mun Jeong and Dursun Peksen (2017). Against this background, the aim of this chapter is multi-fold. First, overall, it aims to discuss the under-researched explanatory power of veto player analysis in understanding sanctions compliance, showing to what extent the lens of veto players analysis can perform better than other domestic-politics determinants (i.e., regime types) in explaining why targeted regimes defy or comply with sanctions-related demands. Second, it focuses on existing limits along this under-explored research path, mostly amounting to conceptualisation and measurement issues related primarily to the identification of veto players in non-Western parliamentary democracies, which have been dominant in conventional empirical applications of veto player analysis in comparative politics research (Tsebelis, 2002; König et al, 2011), and of their policy preferences. If left unaddressed, these problems will continue hampering the advancement of this research agenda in other less conventional fields such as that of international studies. Third, by replicating the only major study on the role of veto players in sanctions compliance to date, that of Jeong and Peksen (2017), it examines some possible weaknesses in their findings and probes the feasibility of alternative hypotheses and approaches. On that basis, it eventually suggests an alternative way of studying this interaction, based on a new and more comprehensive theoretical framework, which will be explored in detail in the next chapter. The new framework will consist of a different conceptualisation and measurement of the notion of veto players, far more adherent to Tsebelis' original theorisation, and of a broader theoretical framework which, looking not only at veto players' degree of congruence but also at their internal cohesion and agenda setting powers, can exploit to a greater extent the richness and nuances of the veto players' theory, with the benefit of a more refined spatial model drawn from the literature on crisis bargaining (Morgan, 1984, 1990, 1994; Morgan and Schwebach, 1995).

2.1 International Sanctions: Still a Matter of Domestic Politics

The review of the literature on sanctions in Chapter 1 revealed the richness of the debate about the effectiveness of sanctions, but also its inconclusiveness. Scholars have long tried not only to quantify sanctions effectiveness, in terms of success rate hence asking *whether* sanctions (or, better, the broader strategies sanctions are generally part of) are working, but also to identify the factors that facilitate or hinder it, thus asking *how* they are working. Yet, many

¹⁰ EU compliance literature is not part of this literature, given that it concerns a non-anarchical environment such as intra-EU politics, cf. Treib 2014.

proposed answers have remained ambiguous, partly because of scholars' use of different analytical lenses (Giumelli, 2013), biased datasets (Nooruddin, 2002; Van Bergeijk and Siddiquee, 2016), or differences in research strategies (Allen, 2005:135). One of the most recent reviews of the debate on this issue (Peksen, 2019a) indeed reveals that the lack of consensus is not due to the absence of research on it but, quite the opposite, because of the richness and plurality of approaches that create disagreements even on which is the best way to address the topic, that is, on which aspects of the sanctioning machine to focus on.

Summarising some of the main points emerged from the review in Chapter 1, it was noted that many scholars have focused, either in isolation or in combination, on systemic structural factors when addressing sanctions effectiveness, including differences in economic or political capabilities between the sender and the target as well as the degree of international cooperation in support of either. Others have instead focused on conceptual aspects such as the duration of a sanction episode (Dizaji and van Bergeijk, 2013), its logic (Giumelli, 2011; Biersteker et al, 2018), its comprehensive or targeted scope (Cortright and Lopez, 2002). Finally, with some frequent points of contacts with previous ones (Kirschner, 1997), yet another cluster has eventually placed its major attention on domestic politics. Either by focusing on the politics inside the sender (Allen, 2008) or inside the target (Brooks, 2002; Morgan and Schwebach, 1995), this "domestic turn" in the sanction literature assumes that an exercise of power in the international arena, such as the act through which a sender imposes sanctions or the policy through which a target responds to it, is not a two-actor, state-to-state only phenomenon driven by either purely international systemic explanations or lying in the hands of a single decision-maker, but rather something that develops for its most part inside the state's "black box", involving diverse domestic actors which interact with the shocks they receive from the external environment and influence the aggregate reaction to them.

The IR literature, to which the study of international sanctions can largely subscribe to, already incorporates various arguments on the importance of looking into countries' domestic structures, thus contesting the utility of the unitary actor assumption (Rosenau, 1969; Allison, 1971; Keohane and Nye, 1977; Putnam, 1998; De Mesquita and Smith, 2012), either by addressing the international implications of domestic bureaucracy (Allison, 1969), state's internal strength (Gilpin, 1975; Katzenstein, 1976; Krasner, 1976), individual leaders (Jervis, 1976) and their personality characteristics (Hermann, 1980; Barber, 1992; Carati, 2021; Winter, 2021), domestic coalitions (Katzenstein, 1976; Gourevitch, 1978), or also domestic transnational actors (Keohane and Nye, 1977). Not only, seen from this perspective this investigation of sanctions compliance becomes a topic of peculiar research interest specifically to the IR subfield of foreign policy analysis (FPA, cf. Kaarbo, 2015; but also Waltz, 1959; Rose, 1998 for links with IR theories), which analyses the behaviour of states in the world by investigating the way a country's single individuals or collective groups make decisions leading to aggregate foreign policy actions (Hudson, 2005). Scholars of foreign policy analysis have indeed devoted a growing interest in examining the role of domestic factors such as bureaucracies, political parties, leaders, and institutional constraints, in driving a country's foreign policy decision-making. The act of imposing international sanctions is in itself an act of power in the international space hence a case in point for FPA studies but, in addition to that, also a targeted regime's reaction to sanctions can be. Especially in cases of sanction regimes targeting a course of action of the targeted country which impacts on its "outside", namely on the regional if not international arena, such as the support to transnational terrorism or arms proliferation, then the

target country's reaction to those sanctions is a matter of that country's foreign-policy decision making because an issue of its own foreign and security policy has come under dispute.

Among IR/FPA scholars' research interests, however, the theoretical and empirical potential of veto player analysis in particular has so far remained underexplored (Opperman and Brummer, 2017). Veto player approaches have generally been applied to public policy studies rather than foreign policy research. Between the two fields, methodological and conceptual differences do exist (Brummer et al, 2019). However, there are no valid theoretical reasons to invalidate *a priori* the transferability of the application of the logic of veto player analysis also to foreign policy works. While it is true that, differently from conventional public policy processes, foreign policy relies less on formal legislative acts and more on non-conventional, ad-hoc procedures, the same logic of veto player analysis can still be applied with regard to foreign policy once the possibly different policy-relevant players and procedures have been thoroughly identified. Foreign policy has in fact become less and less the exclusive domain of an executive branch insulated from domestic political contestation for the sake of the "national interest", so the lenses of veto player analysis can hold rather remarkable promise also in their application to foreign policy analysis, including to sanctions compliance. As a result, this chapter and the whole research project also aim to contribute to the ongoing theoretical-methodological debate on the promises and pitfalls of the dialogue between foreign policy research and typically "domestic" public policy approaches, of which veto player analysis is generally considered being part of (Brummer et al, 2019), precisely by uncovering the under-researched explanatory power of the veto player approach in the analysis of sanctions compliance.

2.2 Beyond Regime Types: The Under-Researched Perspective of Domestic Veto Players and its Advantages

In the sanction literature, the domestic-politics debate has, to date, largely dealt with regime types or their *leader's* politically salient constituencies in order to explain compliance ((Brooks, 2002; Allen, 2005; Allen, 2008; Blanchard and Ripsman 1999; Marinov 2005; Solingen 2012; Grauvogel and Von Soest 2014). In this regard, sanctions scholarship overwhelmingly expects that democracies comply with senders' requests while authoritarian regimes defy and resist the demands attached to sanctions. In practice, however, authoritarian states do sometimes accommodate to sanctions-related demands and offer political concessions consistent with them. To explain these choices of compliance or defiance, more recent studies moved beyond the democratic-autocratic divide and investigated *within* authoritarian regimes institutional or legitimation-related variations to understand whether different autocratic typologies (be they military, personalist, and dominant-party from Geddes et al's classification, 2014; or close, hegemonic electoral, and competitive electoral from Schaedler's classification, 2002; or yet again having different legitimation strategies ranging from ideology and personalism to procedural mechanisms and economic performance from Grauvogel and Von Soest, 2014) behave differently when under sanctions (Escribà-Folch and Wright, 2010; Biersteker and Van Bergeijk, 2015; Peksen, 2019b). Despite being often seen as an improvement on older approaches because of the disaggregation of data they could provide, these categorical distinctions still often remain unable to capture variation in institutional strength proper (including the actual strength of constraints to decision-making) within regime types because "often insufficiently nuanced" in that specific regard (Meng, 2020:118) and because they offer little help to examine regimes which are hybrid, either in the sense of presenting both democratic and

authoritarian practices or because they cannot be easily classified inside one single autocratic typology (was 1990s' al-Inqadh regime in Sudan a personalist or military autocracy? Sanction literature expects these two typologies to behave differently in face of sanctions, but country specialists Marchal, 2004; de Waal, 2015 and 2019; Moorcraft, 2015; Musso, 2016; Cockett, 2016; Berridge, 2017; Young, 2021 all describe al-Inqadh as totally hybrid in that regard, hence difficult to predict with those categorical lenses).

By leaving largely unassessed the role of those domestic players endowed with veto authority on policy decisions *beyond* the leader (veto players), they failed to capture the complexity of the decision-making process related to the existence of political and institutional constraints on the executive in the form of legislative but also non-legislative domestic players whose consensus is required to reach policy decisions, whichever the kind of regime. A major benefit that this new lens of veto players can provide to the literature on sanctions and to its attempt to explain sanctions effectiveness is precisely that. That is, it allows to challenge the misguided belief of the centrality of the government or leader alone, even in authoritarian regimes. Differently from most-used political classifications such as regime sub-types, a veto players' perspective takes into consideration more explicitly the behavioural component of different players along the decision-making process which can prevent political leaders from implementing their ideal policies as they wish. Regarding sanctions compliance, these are players who can hinder the policy changes proposed by the leader or whoever has the agenda setting power, thus imposing parameters on what policy outcome is possible to achieve in response to sanctions. Another added value that this project can provide lies in the even closer focus inside targeted states. This is in fact reasonably demanded by the evolution of sanctions from comprehensive to targeted, despite the obstacles in getting the relevant observational data in light of most targeted countries' lack of transparency and draw thorough causal inferences from that.

That of veto players is not such an old entry in the realm of political studies, especially for comparative politics research. As the first publications on the term 'veto player' date back as late as the 1990s (Tsebelis, 1995; 2002) – shortly after similar concepts had just been introduced such as 'veto points' (Immergut, 1990; Huber et al, 1993) – the concept of veto players has received growing scholarly attention only in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The most prominent approach to veto players is George Tsebelis', who first coined the term and developed a theory which systematically connects veto players to the potential for policy change and allows for comparisons of policy outcomes across different political systems. According to the parsimonious definition given by Tsebelis, "a veto player is an individual or collective actor whose agreement is required for policy decisions" (1995). Veto players can be distinguished as "institutional" when their role in changing or blocking the status quo is constitutionally required, while they are instead called "partisan" when their role is defined by the political system (i.e. political parties in government coalitions).

The veto players' theory can be applied to explore any political system, including authoritarian regimes, because the size of veto players is "not a fundamental difference between democratic and nondemocratic regimes" (Tsebelis, 2002: 136). The fundamental difference between them emerges mostly in the way these political systems select their veto players, and thus in their identity, but not in the presence or absence of them. Although, on average, democracies do feature more politico-institutional constraints than autocracies, especially with regard to *legislative* constraints (see **Figure 1**), not all autocracies are veto players-free, driven by one single unconstrained ruler. A wide range of autocracies do have political and institutional constraints, including legislative ones in the case of *electoral* autocracies. While these legislative constraints

can hardly check executives in *close* autocracies, other actors can, such as the military or religious authorities. The key is in “identifying which actors are in a position to block changes to the political status quo. This will vary across countries, across time, and potentially across policy areas” (Clark et al, 2013: 719). This view is supported by recent research on the growing institutionalization of autocratic regimes after 1990 (Meng, 2020), namely the growing size of institutional constraints that tie autocratic leaders’ hands especially at the cabinet level (executive constrains in the form of power-sharing with other elites, including military elites, within the ruling coalition; Magaloni, 2008; Arriola et al, 2021) if not in legislative chambers (when not used by executives to amplify their power).

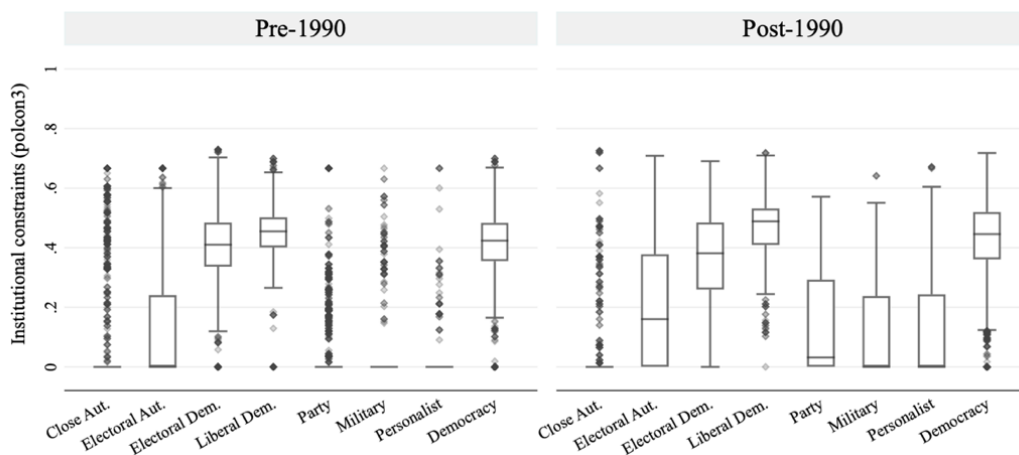


Figure 1. Institutional constraints and regime types

Notes. Veto players' values (Henisz's *polcon3* 2017 data on legislative veto players) per regime type (VDem and GWF classifications), distinguishing pre- and post-1990 regimes. The box plots identify for each GWF (Geddes et al, 2014) and VDem (Coppedge et al, 2021) regime category the variation of institutional constraints: more specifically, the boxes identify the interquartile range (50% middle distribution) of each category with a horizontal line for the median value, while the whiskers indicate the maximum and minimum values excluding the outliers.

The core argument behind Tsebelis' theory is that by knowing veto players' number, policy congruence (namely the distance between their policy preferences), and internal cohesion (in case of collective players), it is possible to predict the stability of a status quo policy because the probability of a policy change will be lower when the number and distance of veto players grow. Between the two, Tsebelis further clarified that the constraining capability of veto players depends not much by the absolute number of veto players per se, but more by the ideological distances between their policy preferences. Specifically relevant for sanctions compliance and policy responses to external shocks, a veto players lens can be argued to be more suited than regime types to illuminate on the inner workings of targeted countries' policy response to sanctions as it captures specifically the degree of stability or ease “with which the political status quo in a country [including the status quo conduct targeted by sanctions] can be changed” (Clark et al, 2013: 674). In this context, the veto players are those individuals or collective actors (such as a legislative chamber or a coalition government made up of different parties or factions) whose agreement is necessary to change the status quo policy targeted by sanctions.

2.3 Veto Players Who? Theory, Conceptualization, and Measurement Issues

The previous sections addressed the potential of the veto player analysis in decoding sanction effectiveness as part of the foreign policy analysis field of research. However, it was also mentioned that, while there are no theoretical reasons to invalidate the transposition of a typically public policy approach into the foreign policy realm, this action raises some conceptual and operational issues that need to be addressed before proceeding with an empirical application. First and foremost, there are major issues related to the identity question. Who are the players endowed with veto power in a given country targeted by sanctions? Traditional research based on veto player analysis, including Tsebelis himself (2002), has focused predominantly on Western democracies (König et al, 2011). That is, most of the analysis revolves around the checks and balances between the executive and the legislative branches or the role of constitutional courts (Santoni and Zucchini, 2004). Yet, it was already noted that the veto players' theory can be applied to explore any political system, including the authoritarian ones. Not all authoritarian regimes are necessarily veto players-free, driven by one single unconstrained ruler, nor all democracies have multiple veto-gates inhibiting decisive action. In authoritarian regimes, it is unlikely that parliaments play the same checks on the executive as in presidential democracies, yet other actors can.

The military, albeit not invariably, is one of the most likely of these other actors, with good reason. The monopoly of force it is generally entrusted with, despite all the coup-proofing measures the executives often introduce, makes it an actor difficult to marginalise from the actual decision-making, especially when no other non-violent channels to manifest discontent with the executive are admitted (this is especially the case in authoritarian regimes). The debate on the military as a potential yet often-overlooked veto player has been recently reopened in the wake of a wave of remilitarisation across the world (Basedau 2020; Scharpf 2020). Drawing on the data contained in the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) and focusing specifically on Africa, Basedau (2020) noted how the military is still a force to be reckoned with in politics by finding that, in 2020, in nearly half of all the sub-Saharan countries (20 out of 49) the armed forces still matter in politics. This mostly happens, he adds, through less visible forms of political intervention, being more visible forms such as coups d'état less frequent nowadays than before (Carbone and Pellegata, 2020), although on the rise again since 2020-21 (Powell and Thyne, 2011; Peyton et al, 2020;). **Table 1** below expands and amends¹¹ his efforts beyond the sole sub-Saharan Africa, with data compiled on all the countries assessed in the BTI namely the whole world except for OECD countries and states with fewer than 1 million residents. The table also adds information on the kind of the countries' regimes on the basis of V-Dem democracy indices (Coppedge et al, 2021). The table is time invariant, as it assesses only the year 2020, but the message which emerges still remains significant: in nearly half of the countries mapped in the dataset, the military remains a powerful actor in politics and, as a result, needs to be reckoned with as a potential veto player in future empirical applications. Moreover, this finding does not strictly depend on the regime type of the country; indeed, while the military is politically absent in liberal democracies, it is not invariably present in all the autocracies (46 out of 79) and can sometimes emerge also in electoral democracies (13 cases in Table 1), confirming that a veto players analysis can truly add original insights in respect to previous regime type research.

¹¹ I classify the countries in two categories (Yes/To some extent vs No/Lack of information) whereas Basedau used "Yes" vs "No or unclear", hence redistributing unclear countries that in Basedau were invariably added to the negative category across both categories depending on the qualitative information the BTI provides for each case.

Beyond the military, other challenges related to the identification of veto payers beyond the typical governmental branches concern the inclusion of international actors (Jahn, 2011) and the role of the civil society as potential veto players (Cassani, 2020). The former may well refer to the role of the United States and Soviet Union superpowers during the Cold War but also to great powers acting as developing countries' external patrons in more recent years. The latter may instead refer not only to the role of voters in elections and constitutional referenda, whose exercise is quite limited in authoritarian regimes where people are hardly free to voice their political preferences, but also to people's role in demonstrations although, in light of the broader boundaries within which an autocratic ruler can exercise his political authority, including through a more arbitrary use of force, they often end up being repressed. As a result, the deprivation of personal freedoms and political rights in these authoritarian regimes makes the potential veto power held by the civil society very limited, but still possible in some cases of electoral autocracies so that it needs to be evaluated on an individual basis.

Regime Type	Yes/To some extent							No/Lack of information						
Closed autocracy (23)	CUB	LAO	OMN	SDN*	SSD+	THA*	YEM*	ARE	CHN	KWT	QAT	SAU	SWZ	UZB
	ERI+	LBY*	PRK	SOM	SYR	VNM	(N:13)	BHR+	JOR	MAR				(N:10)
Electoral autocracy (56)	AFG	BLR	GAB+	KHM	MRT	RWA	UGA	ARM+	COG	IND	MDG+	PNG+	SRB	TKM
	AGO	CIV+	GIN+	LBN	NIC	TCD+	VEN+	BEN	COM	KAZ	MNE+	SGP	TJK	ZMB
	AZE	COD+	HND	MLI*	PAK	TGO	ZWE*	BOL	DJI	KEN	MYS			
	BDI	DZA*	IRN	MMR	PHL	TUR+		CAF	ETH	KGZ*				
	BGD+	EGY*	IRQ	MOZ	RUS	TZA	(N:33)	CMR	HTI					(N:23)
Electoral democracy (42)	ARG	IDN	PER					ALB	CHL	GEO	MKD	PAN	TTO	UKR*
	BFA*	LKA	SLE					BIH	COL	JAM	MNG	PRY	TUN*	ZAF
	GMB+	MEX	TLS					BRA	CPV	LBR	MWI	SEN		
	GNB*	NER*						BTN	DOM	LSO+	NAM	SLV		
	GTM	NGA+				(N:13)		BWA	ECU	MDA	NPL	SYC		(N:29)
Liberal democracy (4)								CRI	GHA	KOR	TWN			(N:4)

N (total number and regime type distribution)



(*) Military coup or (+) coup attempt/conspiracy during the past decade (2010-2020)

Table 1. The military as a potential veto actor, as of 2020. Author's own elaboration compiled on the basis of data retrieved from BTI (2020a), V-Dem regime type classification (Coppedge et al, 2021), and Coup d'état Project v2 (Peyton et al, 2020).

Even in case of an agreement on the identity issue in the direction of broadening the spectrum of potential veto players to include the military and other non-traditional actors, another major issue which remains unsettled in the veto players debate is that of the measurement of policy preferences. How should veto players' policy preferences be measured? The following paragraphs offer a review of the limits of the existing datasets' measurement strategies. It reveals how the same analytical concept has been measured in very different ways, causing serious consequences for causal analysis as it can lead to ambiguous results when testing the same theoretical hypotheses with alternative empirical indicators. But it also shows how more disaggregated data is needed to capture differences across policy areas, following the example and suggestions of Tsebelis (2002), Jahn (2011), and Clark et al (2013).

The core point around the preference measurement issue is about the specificity of policy areas. Table 1 above indirectly already addressed this issue: differently from Basedau's original table on sub-Saharan countries' classification (2020), in this chapter's table all the uncertain cases that in Basedau were left in the "negative" column were re-estimated and recoded as being potential veto players (here under "to some extent"). The Eritrean case provides the

clearest example why: with regard to the military as veto player, the BTI report on Eritrea says that “veto powers that undermine *democratic* procedures do not exist, as democratic procedures are alien to Eritrea’s policy-making process. [But] High-ranking military officers have maintained their influence. They might have the ability to prevent the government from making political decisions that could threaten the profits they make through contraband trade and the exploitation of national service conscripts” (BTI, 2020b:10). If economic or security issues which involve the potential limitation of the national service, the diaspora tax, or the contraband trade are at stake, then the BTI suggests that the military should be reckoned as a veto player. On the contrary, if the policy context is linked to other issues (i.e., environmental) the military is no more politically relevant. The context, that is the policy area at stake (the one under dispute in a sanction case), counts when it must be decided not only the identity of the veto player but also the measurement of their preferences. Which preferences should matter in this case? It seems inappropriate to opt for a general left-right scale, whatever that may mean in certain non-Western autocratic regimes, instead of mapping veto players’ preferences along the very policy areas relevant for the case under analysis (mostly foreign and defence policies in this project), which does not always correlate with the former, especially in cases of foreign policy issues, as addressed in the next paragraph.

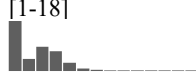
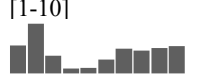


	DPI (2001, v4 2012)	BTI (2006, v8 2020)	Henisz (2000, v5 2012)	Tsebelis (2002, v1 2002)
<i>Conceptualization</i>				
• Identity of veto players	Government, Parliament	Government, Parliament, Judiciary, Military	Government, Parliament, Judiciary, sub-federal units	Government, Parliament
• Preferences	Hypothetical	Empirical (country expert judgements)	Hypothetical	Empirical (expert judgements)
<i>Measurement</i>				
• Level	Discrete	Discrete, fixed range	Continuous, fixed range (estimated ideological range between the two most opposing veto players)	Continuous (ideological distances of the two most opposing veto players)
• Kind of scale	Left-Right scale	Unclear, but presents qualitative policy-specific information	One-dimensional, likely L-R scale	Multi-dimensional, policy-specific
• Time unit	Annual	Biennial	Annual	Annual
• Time variant preferences of actors	Yes	Yes (but limited)	No (static estimation)	No (static survey)
<i>Dataset</i>				
• Variable name	<i>checks</i>	<i>Effective power to govern</i>	<i>polcon3</i>	Various (i.e. <i>LHI range</i>)
• Observations	6,764 (8,200 v7)	1,096	17,592 (17,948 v6)	1,000
• Geographical scope	World	World except for OECD and small countries	World	Advanced industrialized countries (21 “Western” parliamentary democracies)
• Time range	1975-2012 (v7 2020)	2006-2020	1800-2012 (v6 2016)	1945-2000
• Missing data	3%	7%	11%	22%
• Variable range and distribution	[1-18] 	[1-10] 	[0.00-1.00] 	[0.00-13.41] 

Table 2. Conceptualization and measurement of the notion of veto players across the major existing datasets

The operationalisation of veto players' ability to constraint policy changes varies across the major veto players datasets (see **Table 2** above for a summary). Ignoring veto points datasets, where the only concern consists in mapping the obstructive or supportive nature of veto points towards governments' policy reforms proposals (Schmidt, 1996; also called competitive vs consensual veto points cf. Birchfield and Crepaz, 1998), the first (and so far only) major datasets compiled on veto players which account for veto players' preferences are Henisz's (2000), Cruz et al's Database of Political Institutions (DPI) (2021), Tsebelis (2002), and to some extent the above mentioned BTI (2020a). Henisz's dataset collected information on the political constraints of a total of 234 countries (some no more existent) covering a period as wide as 1800-2016. His continuous variable, *polcon3*, captures the "extent to which a given political actor is constrained in his or her choice of future policies" (Henisz, 2000) and is calculated as a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 1 (1 indicating the highest level of constraint). The *polcon3* variable is computed by first calculating the number of constitutional veto points in a polity ("maintaining the strong and unrealistic assumption of uniformly distributed preferences" from Henisz, 2000). Then, information on alignments across government branches and their degrees of alignment is added as a proxy for preferences and cohesion. Homogeneously aligned branches are claimed to increase the likelihood of policy change, but no agenda setting rights are included in the dataset.

In the DPI, which is updated yearly to cover the entire world since 1975 until the present time, the variable devoted to capturing veto constraints is the ordinal variable *checks* focusing only on legislatures and executives, incrementing points in case of ideological opposition between governmental branches (along a left-right scale) or other specific situations (listed in Cruz et al, 2021:19). This approach is much more similar to the one behind the measurement of veto points (as opposed to veto players, cf. Immergut, 1990), which assumes that anyone outside the government is invariably in opposition to it on any issue (Jahn, 2011). The BTI described in the previous section similarly uses a discrete variable to operationalise the "effective power to govern" (ranging from 1 to 10), but it is less clear about the criteria behind those values. Nonetheless, it was already noted that the descriptive explanation provided in addition to the numerical data offers additional remarkable information about the different identities of veto players beyond the traditional ones (including the military), depending on the policy area under analysis. For this reason, it deserves to be taken into consideration for empirical applications, although the limited time range (since 2006) and biennial (instead of yearly) coverage are obstacles to such uses. Continuous variables are instead used by Henisz (2000) and Tsebelis (2002), as they operationalise the size of constraints as the distance between the two most opposite veto players. However, two major differences emerge between them. Henisz's preferences are "hypothetical" (Jahn, 2011:57) as no empirical measures are used but are rather argued to be estimated by the authors on a general left-right axis. Although Tsebelis once said that "Henisz's [measure] is conceptually very closely correlated with veto players, and covers an overwhelming number of countries" he also added that "however, the empirical correlation between political constraints and either the number or the distances among veto players is questionable" (Tsebelis, 2002:294). Jahn (2011) further added that "[a]nalyzes in which Henisz' indicator is applied and in which results are interpreted according to Tsebelis' theory are flawed" (p. 65). A statistical verification of the degree of correlation between the two veto players indices eventually confirms Jahn's claim (Jahn, 2011:64).

Tsebelis, on the contrary, built a dataset on an empirical measure of preferences drawn from expert judgements (Laver and Hunt, 1992) and calculated on different policy dimensions

other than the general left-right scale alone. The latter choice seems particularly appropriate especially in light of recent research in the literature of foreign policy analysis, particularly the one addressing the party politics of foreign and security policy (Thérien and Noel, 2000; Wagner et al, 2016). In that literature, recent scholarship has shown that foreign affairs too are subject to domestic political contestation, especially in democracies. Although the overall understanding of party preferences on foreign and security policy still remains limited, it was then noted that “it cannot be taken for granted that [they] can be straightforwardly deducted from their positions on either the left–right dimension or the sociocultural dimension” (Raunio and Wagner, 2020: 518) and that party preferences about security operations abroad can sometimes follow more curvilinear distributions along the left-right axis, meaning that extreme left and extreme right parties often share closer rather than opposite preferences, while more relevant splits emerge between moderate and extreme parties of the same ideological family (Coticchia and Vignoli, 2020; Haesebrouck and Mello, 2020; Curini and Vignoli, 2021). While most of these recent studies focus on Western European countries only, different patterns of disagreement (such as lower levels of polarisation, including along a non-ideological government-opposition dimensionality) in foreign affairs questions have emerged also elsewhere (Onderco and Joosen, 2021) and anecdotal evidence shows this can also hold true in more authoritarian countries, where the politics of different factions of a regime, rather than parties, reflects on foreign and security policies (Kazemzadeh, 2017).

The fact that Tsebelis’ dataset takes into consideration various policy dimensions different from the standard left-right dimension (including precisely a foreign policy dimension) makes it the only and most appropriate one to use when trying to understand the role of veto players in responding to sanctions addressing issues related to specific policy domains. However, Tsebelis’ dataset is not spare from criticism either. In Tsebelis too, preferences are not fully time variant because derived from the static (and old) expert judgments present in Laver and Hunt (LH)’s survey (1992: 234-239). Another problem related to the use of the LH data is the pre-defined selection of policy dimensions and scales by the authors, which do not necessarily correspond to the real-world politics of the countries under examination, and which are in some cases also based on questionable proxies (parties’ positions on the foreign policy dimension are drawn exclusively from their estimated alignment towards the Soviet Union). Additionally, the geographical limitation of its dataset to 21 Western parliamentary democracies further constrains the sample size and its empirical use.

2.4 Empirical Evidence: A Replication Analysis

In the previous sections it was illustrated how the literature of sanctions has so far largely overlooked the potential of veto players analysis in decoding sanctions effectiveness. The only exception to this trend was Jeong and Peksen’s quantitative analysis (2017) based on econometric models which, drawing the veto players’ data from Henisz’ dataset, argued that there is empirical evidence confirming the hypothesis that “the larger the size of veto players in target states, the more likely economic sanctions are to succeed” (p. 8). The two scholars opted for a two-step Heckman probit selection model (1979) which accounts for possible selection effects that some factors associated with the initial decision phase (in which a sender considers whether to impose sanctions or not) may have on the outcome stage (sanctions success). They also proceeded with a simpler probit model based on the outcome stage alone, that is focusing only on the factors that may drive sanction effectiveness once they have been

imposed. The dependent variable for the imposition stage in the Heckman model is *sanction imposition*, drawn from the TIES dataset (Morgan et al, 2014) and dichotomously coded as 1 if sanctions were eventually imposed, while the dependent variable of the Heckman outcome stage (or of the other simpler probit models) is *sanction success*, also taken from TIES and dichotomously coded as 1 if the target fully complied with the sender demands. An alternative, dependent variable is also tested, *successalt*, which also includes cases short of full compliance, in which the target agreed to negotiate a settlement with the sender. For this project's research purposes, the relevant analysis is that of the outcome stage only, where different determinants of sanctions success are tested. The major explanatory variable of interest in the outcome stage is the target's size of veto players, taken from Henisz (2000)'s *polcon3* (dataset version 2012) which the authors calculated as an average of values through the years which make up a sanction episode in the TIES dataset. The control variables included in their model are taken either from the same TIES sanction dataset (*institution* dichotomously referring to the presence of international institutions among the senders; *sanction costs* assessing the extent of the economic damage with a three-level categorical variable; *major issues* checking dichotomously whether the issue under dispute is politically salient for the sender; *threat* indicating the presence of a prior threat stage before imposition; *imposition year* accounting for time-specific factors related to the year sanctions were imposed and for possible temporal dependence) or from the World Bank (*trade dependence* calculated as the target's total trade with the sender as a percentage of the target's gross domestic product; *target GDP* referring to the target's economic strength in terms of GDP per capita). Additional dummy variables related to the kind of regime (Geddes et al, 2014) are also tested in a different model. Both with the full two-stage Heckman model and a simpler probit model based on the sole outcome stage of the former, the findings seem to confirm the authors' initial hypothesis that the predicted probability of sanctions success increases when the veto player variable moves from its minimum to its maximum value.

This chapter intends to replicate and further examine their study with the primary aim to show some theoretical and methodological shortcomings of existing empirical research on veto players and sanctions (Jeong and Peksen, 2017) and probe the use of alternative hypotheses and methods of inquiry. It intends to do so by exposing the problems of data quality and availability related to the dataset so far used by the literature to measure institutional constraints, thus showing how different conceptualisations of the notion of veto players can lead to conflicting results that not only do not confirm the findings of the existing study but also that, if not addressed, can hamper the advancement of the research agenda on the interaction between veto players and sanction compliance. The replication in fact focuses specifically on the "performance" of the veto variables and will show that if an alternative conceptualisation is used (by drawing the independent variable from alternative veto player datasets among those reviewed above) an opposite hypothesis is worth exploring (as suggested by the opposite sign of the veto variable's coefficient in the replication). Because the focus of this analysis is not on the decision stage (this stage would acquire special relevance if the focus were on veto players inside the *sender*, rather than the *target*), probit regressions built on the outcome stage only of the original Heckman two-stage probit model are used for the replication.

The replication shown in **Table 3** consists in comparing the impact of three different veto players variables identified in the review on veto datasets above, namely Henisz's *polcon3* (as in Jeong and Peksen's original probit regression), DPI's *checks*, and Tsebelis' Laver and Hunt area-specific ranges. The BTI variable cannot be used in the replication because its time range makes it unsuitable to be applied together with the TIES sanction dataset (used by the

author and necessarily used also in the replication because it is the only sanction dataset providing also the data for all the other sanction-related control variables used in the model). TIES in fact covers only sanction cases until 2005 while BTI starts from 2006. The dependent variable used in the replication is *successalt*, which Jeong and Peksen created as an alternative to *sanction success* and which codes as successful also cases in which the target agreed to negotiate a settlement with the sender (Jeong and Peksen, 2017:16). The choice in favour of the first operationalisation is due to theoretical considerations. Because *sanction success* only codes as successful those cases in which the target fully complies outright with the sender's requests, it codes as 'failure' not only the cases in which the executive –alone or constrained by institutional constraints– resisted the sender's requests, but also those cases in which the executive negotiated an agreement for compliance with the sender following the pressure of institutional actors at home, in a sort of two-level game (Putnam, 1988). In this case, "failure" fails to capture veto players' constraints on compliance, because it includes in its operationalisation also successful negotiations, thus creating confusion and a mismatch with reality. By operationalising sanction success with *successalt*, instead, this variable captures as successful also those cases in which the target and sender did not achieve compliance *outright* but negotiated it through a settlement. As for this latter conceptualisation, "failure" correctly captures cases of non-full compliance, in which the executive either whimsically decided not to comply (if he had no constraints) or was constrained from complying by veto players. For this, this replication argues that *successalt* is the more appropriate operationalisation to understand the role of veto players in sanctions compliance and is used in the replication models. The same control variables of the original regression's outcome stage are used in the replication in order to take into consideration factors which were framed as alternative explanations in previous research (Hufbauer et al, 2007).

To explore the advantage of policy-dimension-specific preferences, a replication based on Tsebelis' dataset (the only which is policy-area specific) is included despite the limited sample size (see Models 1 and 2). In these equations, the number of cases, already small in Tsebelis' dataset (which focuses only on 21 countries), is additionally restricted to sanction cases which are compatible with the policy-area-specific veto variable used. Because the veto variable selected is *LH2range* (which draws on Laver and Hunt's foreign policy scale, capturing a party's inclination towards friendly relations with the Soviet Union as a proxy for foreign policy preferences) the cases selected are those in which the political issue under sanctions belonged to the foreign and security domain *or* those sanction cases imposed before 1989 (irrespective of the policy domain if we assume the alignment to the Soviet Union *during* the Cold War captured preferences across any domain). To address this relatively small size of the sample together with the skewed distribution of the outcome (with much fewer cases of compliance than defiance), differently in Model 1 a logistic regression estimated using Firth's penalised maximum likelihood is used (Firth 1993; Williams 2019).

The results of the empirical analysis of veto player's effects on the probability for a country to comply with sanctions are presented in **Table 3**. The discussion of those results aims to focus specifically on the different veto variables and will primarily show that the coefficients and the significance their effect on sanctions success varies depending on the dataset used. The fact that Tsebelis-based empirical results confute previous studies is of substantive interest for sanctions scholars, as it overturns the predominant theoretical expectations held to date, and offers major policy implications to policymakers too.

Dependent variable: <i>successfcn</i>	Firth logit		Probit models (2-6)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Area-specific cases, related to 21 countries in Tsebelis' dataset (all democracies)		All cases	All cases	Same countries as 1-2	All cases
Veto players						
Tsebelis' area-specific <i>LH2range</i>	-0.401** (0.194)	-0.298** (-0.132)				
DPI's <i>checks</i>			0.038 (0.043)			
Henisz's <i>polcon3</i>				1.092*** (0.365)	2.118* (1.119)	3.982*** (1.471)
International institutions	1.610 (1.202)	1.115 (-0.829)	0.611*** (0.183)	0.573*** (0.153)	0.340 (0.430)	0.595*** (0.157)
Sanction costs	0.650 (0.978)	0.552 (-0.667)	0.128 (0.154)	0.157 (0.114)	0.381 (0.468)	0.158 (0.116)
Trade dependence	11.811** (5.607)	9.071** (4.144)	0.802 (0.935)	0.555 (0.874)	1.144 (1.722)	0.404 (0.890)
Target GDP per capita	-0.215** (0.099)	-0.140 (0.092)	-0.011 (0.007)	-0.018** (0.007)	-0.002 (0.042)	-0.015* (0.008)
Major political issue	0.205 (0.858)	0.224 (0.584)	-0.230 (0.188)	-0.163 (0.155)	-0.015 (0.427)	-0.123 (0.157)
Threat	-0.443 (0.687)	-0.250 (0.459)	-0.099 (0.162)	-0.137 (0.127)	-0.514* (0.292)	-0.015*** (0.004)
Imposition year	0.009 (0.014)	-0.000 (0.039)	-0.009 (0.009)	-0.012*** (0.004)	-0.021 (0.023)	-0.157 (0.128)
Electoral regimes						0.352* (0.211)
Veto x Electoral regimes						-3.405** (1.534)
Constant	-14.510 (28.106)	1.561 (73.357)	17.191 (18.410)	23.960*** (8.227)	39.718 (44.342)	28.253*** (8.574)
Total Observations	49	49	301	461	96	454

Table 3. Replication table. *Notes:* *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the success of sanctions as defined in Peksen and Jeong's *successalt* (dichotomously coded as 1).

First, do veto players significantly matter for sanctions success? And, if they do, do they facilitate or constrain the likelihood of compliance? The first question arises because in Model 3, in line with Choi (2010), the statistical insignificance of DPI's *checks* seems to indicate institutional constraints do not have explanatory power as far as international sanctions or conflicts are concerned. However, it was noted above that *checks*'s operationalization is more similar to that of veto points rather than veto players (Immergut 1990), given the ambiguity of whether count variables like this can truly capture differences in the size of the constraint. By counting veto players and adjusting the count for whether they are independent of each other, adding points in case they are not, the DPI assumes a linear relationship between the number of veto players and the degree of constraints on policy change in a way that contradicts the theoretical findings of Tsebelis, which on the contrary expects diminishing marginal returns to the addition of veto players. As a result, its insignificance should not be a concern, even more so the other two variables, Tsebelis' and Henisz's, are significant in their own Models.

Moving onto comparing them (Models 1-2 and 4-6 respectively), both veto variables are statistically significant at least to 5% under all model specifications (except for Model 5, where it is significant only to 10%) but with opposite effects. In Tsebelis' models, the higher the size of the constraints the lower the probability to reach compliance with sanctions. In Henisz's, instead, the higher it is, the higher the probability to comply too. It can be speculated that the opposite coefficient sign between Henisz-based and Tsebelis-based models, confirmed also through different model specifications, has to do with the different operationalization strategies those variables follow. Differently from DPI's *checks*, they both measure preferences distances, but in different ways as reviewed in the previous sections. Tsebelis' preferences are the only ones to be area-specific, thus when this specificity is taken into consideration (in this case, foreign policy and security) different behaviours emerge. This is, after all, in line with studies of foreign policy analysis arguing that classic left-right divides do not truly explain domestic actors' foreign policy positions and actions. Tsebelis-based findings related to the veto variable are confirmed both through a Probit model and a Firth-logit model.

It could also be speculated that the two veto variables' different effects have to do with the democratic credentials of the target regime, given that Tsebelis' dataset consists only of democracies, leaving autocratic countries unexplored. To understand if this is the case, and so if Henisz's *polcon3* variable also behaves differently in democratic countries only, in Model 5 I test its effect only on the same 21 democratic countries covered by Tsebelis dataset. The result is that Henisz's variable loses its significance (it becomes significant only to 10%) when applied to that subset. Does this variable then behave differently under different regime types? Jeong and Peksen (2017) already tested whether veto players in democracies have a different behaviour when subject to sanctions, with an interaction between a democracy dummy variable, coded from GWF data (Geddes et al, 2014), and the veto variable but found no significance in either, hence suggesting the effect veto players may generate in democratic countries is not statistically different from the one they may generate in autocracies.

In this paper, in Model 6 I try to test again this interaction using however an alternative 'democracy' dummy which distinguishes Close autocracies (0) from all the other regime types identified by V-Dem (electoral autocracies, electoral democracies, liberal democracies, all coded as 1) which have by definition some competitiveness of access to power and where legislative actors can exercise some oversight over the executive. A more nuanced picture emerges. The interaction is significant and its coefficient negative, suggesting not only that the veto variable has a statistically different effect in closed autocracies from electoral regimes, but also

that in the latter the effect of the *increasing* size of institutional constraints is a *decrease* in the probability of sanctions compliance. This negative effect is not as neat as the one found in Tsebelis-based model, given that overall the effect remains positive and the variable of electoral regimes is only significant to the 10% in Model 6 but it does challenge the explanatory power of Henisz's data in electoral regimes. With regard to close autocratic regimes, instead, the effect remains positive and significant. Does it mean that Henisz's variable explain only institutional constraints to sanctions compliance in close autocracies? Some caution is required even in this case. Henisz's *polcon3*, by conceptualisation, captures only the *legislative* constraints on the executive. In close autocracies, however, by definition there should be no *legislative* constraints at all. Military constraints on the executive are still possible, although they are not included in Henisz's data, but not legislative ones, given the non-existent political space for parliamentary opposition parties there, differently from *electoral* autocracies. Some robustness checks indeed show that this effect may be influenced by the impact of the outlier values above the 95th percentile of *polcon3* in close autocracies. By excluding them, the effect is no more significant even in close autocracies. As a result, against the results in **Table 3**, the explanatory power of Henisz's *polcon3* also in close autocracies is questionable. The empirical analysis does not provide conclusive evidence about the explanatory power of Tsebelis' data either, due to its limited coverage, but in (his) theory, there should be no regime-based exception to its applicability in autocracies.

Going back to Models 1-2, and looking closer into them, the negative effect generated by Tsebelis' area-specific preferences on the probability of sanctions compliance offers empirical support to an alternative hypothesis to the one of Jeong and Peksen (2017). The negative effect is further supported by the behaviour of the control variable of sanctions' economic costs. Indeed, regarding control variables in Models 1-2 three results stand out for some further considerations about the causal mechanisms of veto players' effect on sanctions compliance. First, *sanction costs* is statistically insignificant across all models, suggesting that material costs and considerations do not play a significant role in compliance. Second, *trade dependence* is significant and positively signed, suggesting that compliance is more likely when senders and targets are allied and less likely when there are no ties. Third, *target GDP per capita* is also significant in Model 1, suggesting the economic strength of the target may give its leader leeway to sway not-so-distant veto players in favour of his policy change proposal. More in detail, the insignificance of *sanction costs* throughout all the model specifications suggests that economic considerations should not be given primary relevance when hypothesising the behaviour of veto players under sanctions. The causal mechanism this replication aims to advance instead places primary attention to the salience of the policy issue under dispute across the players endowed with veto authority in that specific policy domain. It therefore suggests that it is crucial not to confine the research on veto players and their impact on sanction compliance only to a limited aspect of a targeted country's complex reaction to sanctions such as the adjustment of foreign economic policies (trade and investments) to mitigate the economic impact of sanctions, as Jeong and Peksen did.

The empirical evidence above suggests a target's behaviour in reaction to sanctions is more complex than this. Only at a later stage can trade and investment considerations become object of discussion among decision-makers, such as in budget reallocations if a major economic damage occurs, but the first element of discussion is about the very political conduct under dispute. Do they agree on changing this policy, or does it continue as usual? The status quo policy under dispute is funded by the budget agreed before sanctions, and if *sanction costs*

do not alter veto players' policy issue preferences (as that variable's insignificance in the models suggests) then the same budgetary support for it is taken for granted also after the imposition of sanctions. If sanctions succeed in shrinking the budget (i.e., by reducing exports revenues), the costs of the continuation of this conduct can be mitigated by reallocating domestic budget funds from less salient domains, as in the case of Iran for its support to regional military activities in 2012-2015. Or else, they can be mitigated by third actors which engage with the targeted regime in smuggling activities or overt sanctions busting (Jentleson, 2000) in order to profit from the latter's isolation economically and sometimes also politically, for opportunism, as in the case of Eritrea with ongoing foreign mining investments. These activities are not decided by the target country's own decision-makers (made up of leaders and veto players) as an aggregate country-level policy decision but left to private groups, 'smuggling entrepreneurs', instead (Andreas, 2005). In these cases, the target country's veto players do not have to find an agreement on new trade partners or alternative economic policies to bypass sanctions. Economic-loss mitigation is not even always necessarily discussed if target countries are ready to accept the loss for something more relevant to their political survival. While, in the past, sanctions research used to overwhelmingly support the existence of a positive association between the severity of material costs and sanction effectiveness (Hufbauer et al. 2007), this has lately been called into question (Biersteker et al. 2018), especially when there is a political if not ideological rivalry between the sender(s) and the target (this is confirmed by the significance of *trade dependence* –that can be considered as the reverse of this notion– for compliance in some models above). This is all the more true in those sanctions episodes in which there is no major material damage inflicted to the target at all, such as when the predominant logic of the imposition is not to coerce or constrain the target through a pain-gain dynamic but to signal to the target, a third party, or even the own senders' constituencies, the sender's political dissatisfaction with the target's objectionable actions through non-economic restrictive measures (Giumelli 2011).

2.5 The Way Forward

This project argues that the replication's alternative findings should be reconsidered within a more comprehensive explanatory framework based on a policy-specific identification of veto players and their preferences. In this regard, more elaborate formal spatial models can eventually offer a higher explanatory power than the statistical analyses seen above. Tsebelis' veto players theory itself is based on simple Euclidean models, although its operationalisation has generally consisted in mathematical simplifications that concentrated the research only around general considerations of policy stability related to the distance between the two most opposite players. The inclusion of assumptions taken from the veto players theory in more elaborated spatial models of crisis bargaining (Morgan, 1984, 1990, 1994; Morgan and Schwebach, 1995) can offer an insightful alternative research strategy because it allows to address even more dimensions (and hypotheses) of policy change. Developing a new explanatory framework means in fact not only to reverse the causal mechanism hypothesised by Jeong and Peksen along the "directional" dimension of the policy change, but also to explore other dimensions linked to the robustness and expedition of the policy change that have so far been largely neglected in the literature of sanctions. Research carried out in other subfields within the discipline of International Relations and which addressed these alternative dimensions (cf. Cunningham, 2006 on civil war duration and veto players; cf. Capano and Woo, 2017 on robustness and policy change) shows they may be worth exploring even in the sanctions literature. As shown more in

detail in the following chapter, this choice of exploring sanction compliance through multiple sub-dimensions is intended to capture more nuance of the functioning of veto players configuration in their reaction to international sanctions and get more insights about the nature of the chosen policy decision. Sanction compliance can therefore be conceived as a policy decision taken by a targeted state's veto players and which is made up of different components such as the direction (the traditional research focus, as shown in the previous sections) but also the robustness and the expedition of that decision. Each of these components can be affected by some different aspects of the veto players' configuration, as explained below.

Starting from the direction of the policy decision, which is the most similar concept to Jeong and Peksen's and the replication's dependent variable, it remains fundamental to explore whether the size (or congruence, in Tsebelis' words) of veto players influences defiance or compliance. Differently from the two scholars and building on the negative coefficient emerged from the replication analysis above, this project's suggested framework proposes the opposite hypothesis: if we reconsider the policy under sanctions as the status quo policy of the target, then when its veto players are unable to agree on a policy change because ideologically incongruent, it is more likely that the status quo policy continues being implemented, defying the sender's demands. Not only, spatial models on crisis bargaining introduce an additional but fundamental specification to the simple mechanism sketched above in the replication analysis. To know whether compliance or defiance is achieved, it is crucial to factor in also the distance from the sender's demanded/ideal policy position other than only the one between the two most opposite veto players in the target state. As a result, for compliance with senders' demands, it is necessary to have an ideologically congruent configuration with a limited distance between the two most extreme veto players of the targeted state, at least on the relevant policy dimension at stake, but which is also not spatially distant from the sender's demanded policy change. The former condition informs about the likelihood to agree on a policy change, but the direction of such a change (either towards compliance, that is the *sanction success* seen in the replication above, or defiance) also depends on how far their preferences are from the sender's more or less ambitious request. Additionally, drawing from spatial models of crisis bargaining¹², the ideological distance between the sender and the target's veto players can especially be influenced by economic or reputational sanction-related costs, if present, which can alter veto player's original positions. In this latter regard, differently from Jeong and Peksen's, it is then worth exploring different behaviour in the presence of different sanctioning logics as theorised by Giumelli (2011), distinguishing those with significant material impact (coercive and constraining logics) from the one without (signalling logic).

While the direction is, understandably, the major object of interests for sanction researchers and policymakers because it is the element that eventually tells whether the political concessions are aligned to sanctions' demands or not, with a more comprehensive use of veto players' theory it is also possible to draw insights about whether those political concessions are likely to be achieved quickly or not, hence related to the expedition of a policy decision, namely

¹² Building on Morgan and Schwebach's model (1995), the probability of accepting a sender's request can be seen as a function also of the actor's power, issue salience (resolve), and sanctions salience (costs) (1995:251-252). In mathematical form: Predicted Shift during Sanctions = Issue position - [Max{0, Sanctions Saliency - Issue Saliency} × (Issue Position - Sender Position)]. Predicted Position Post-sanctions = $\sum[(\text{Issue position} + \text{Predicted Shift}) \times (\text{Issue Saliency} \times \text{Power})] / \sum(\text{Issue Saliency} \times \text{Power})$ (p. 255). These formulas can be adapted to the research purposes of this project by recalibrating some variables which are not, in the original models of crisis bargaining, compatible with veto players' assumptions (the most incompatible being the variation in "power" across the domestic actors, considering instead that all the veto players are endowed with equal power to block a policy decision) and focused only on the two most opposite domestic actors. This project's spatial model accordingly recalibrated is presented in Chapter 3.

the duration of the status quo policy before agreeing on a change, or whether they are likely to last or not, hence related to the robustness of the decision once it has been taken. Veto players' theory can still be helpful in these by focusing respectively on the distribution of the agenda setting power and on the internal cohesion of collective veto players. With regard to the former, it can be expected that in more centralized power structures (Mattes and Rodríguez, 2014) where the control of the political initiative (agenda setting power) related to the policy decision all the veto players have to approve on the issue under dispute is held by a single actor then the decision-making is expected to be streamlined, all else being equal (including the heterogeneity of the other veto players' policy preferences). With regard to cohesion, instead, drawing also from the literature on conflict studies, it can be noted that while individual players are by definition highly internally cohesive, in collective players (such as legislative chambers or coalition governments made up of different parties or other factionalised ad-hoc executive institutions) internal cohesion can vary depending on the polarization between its constituent units and, similarly to spoiler actors or defectors in conflict negotiations and peace implementation (Newman and Richmond, 2006; Nussio and Ugarriza, 2021), can eventually affect the implementation of the policy change.

If lately cohesion has effectively drawn growing interest (Portela and Van Laer, 2022), the time dimension also deserves attention because of the numerous aspects left open to debate. The temporal dimension has certainly received much more attention in many other literatures than in that of sanctions, despite the fact that time can be a crucial variable in sanction compliance. On the one hand, related to the moment between a sanction threat (if any) and its actual (if any) imposition, time can be fundamental for targeted entities to find workarounds needed to cushion, if not avoid, sanction-related economic costs. On the other hand, for the sender a lengthy sanction episode can increase domestic audience costs. As shown in the literature review (Chapter 1), there are few studies investigating the connection between time and sanction effectiveness, although often with a limited focus (i.e., Dizaji and van Bergeijk, 2013 on oil embargoes only). **Table 4** and **Figure 2** below, based on the updated version (6.0, released in August 2020) of the TSC dataset¹³ (Biersteker et al, 2018), provide (a) an overview of sanction episodes duration in years as well as (b) a survival analysis estimating the time to compliance of these sanction episodes, grouped according to the presence or absence of veto players in target countries.

	Total	Coercive logic	Constraining logic	Signalling logic
Avg episode duration	2.67 years	2.27 years	2.62 years	2.67 years
(effective cases only)	2.43 years	3.04 years	3.03 years	2.18 years

Table 4. Sanction episodes duration in years (TSC dataset, thus related to UN sanctions)

Notes: Most episodes last less than 1000 days (average duration is 974 days (2.67 years – ongoing episodes are excluded from the calculation). 75% of the episodes which are effective in at least one of the sanctioning logics (coercive, constraining, or signalling) are distributed within the three-year mark, only less than 50% turn out to be effective in the first two years (Dizaji and van Bergeijk, 2013 found instead success of economic sanctions on oil embargoes *predominantly* occurs in the first two years, not beyond). Finally, the time to effectiveness varies if differences in logics are taken into account: signalling-logic episodes achieve effectiveness earlier than those with other predominant logics.

¹³ The choice of the TSC dataset instead of others (such as TIES) is due to the fact that it is one of the few datasets which allows to explore diachronic comparisons over time using within-case episodes as units of analysis and it also allows to explore variations related to different sanctioning purposes (coercive, constraint, signal – see Table 4).

Zooming in on factors which can influence these duration dynamics in a sanction episode, little scholarly attention has ever been turned to the role of domestic institutional factors, neither with large-n research nor with case studies. In this chapter, it was already argued that existing veto players datasets (Henisz', Tsebelis', ...) present significant limits, hence discouraging quantitative analysis on the topic, even more so on this dimension. An exploratory use of these data¹⁴ can nonetheless be helpful in a preliminary survival analysis useful to probe the possible role that the presence or absence of veto players in the target country can have on the time dimension of sanctions compliance¹⁵.

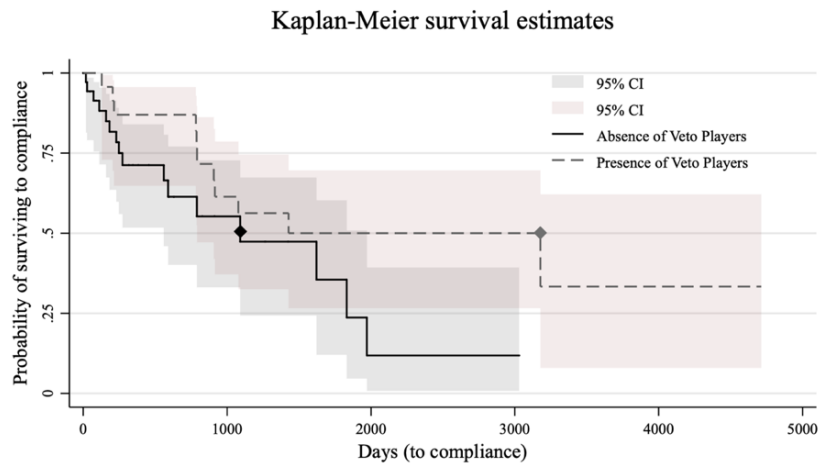


Figure 1b. Estimated survivor function (Kaplan-Meier estimates) of the survival analysis for sanctions compliance with 95% confidence intervals (1=sanction defiance). The two curves estimate the time to compliance in TSC sanctions episodes depending on the presence or absence of veto players in targeted regimes.

Using the data from the TSC dataset (version 6.0; Biersteker et al, 2018), the survival analysis represented in **Figure 2** (and in the appendix) estimates the time to compliance in sanctions episodes by distinguishing episodes in which the target country is characterised by the presence of veto players and those in which they are absent, keeping other explanatory variables under control¹⁶. The presence of veto players is calculated dichotomously creating a new variable which uses both the 2017 Polcon dataset (Henisz, 2000) and the 2020 BTI Index

¹⁴ Because Henisz's data is not deemed as appropriate as Tsebelis', but Tsebelis' data does not cover TSC countries, the solution adopted for this exploratory exercise is the following: creating a dichotomous veto variable (0=absence of veto players; 1=presence of veto players) sourced from both Henisz' Polcon and the BTI veto variables (in which the BTI values are used only for the few recent years which are covered by the BTI data), I aim to minimise some weaknesses related to the problematic operationalisation of veto constraints in Henisz's dataset (notably the absence of policy area specification). The dichotomisation of the variable can help reduce some measurement issues present in Henisz's data.

¹⁵ A survival analysis is a statistical technique employed to analyse the waiting time until the occurrence of a well-define event of interest (often called "failure", as the event of interest often refers to death or another negative experience). Observations are censored when the event of interest has not occurred yet by the time of the end of the study or because the subject withdraws from the study for some other reasons. The analysis is used to assess the effect that some predictors or explanatory variables may have on the waiting time (for the translation of these concepts in mathematical formulas, cf. Klembaum and Klein, 2012; Rodríguez, 2007; Sullivan, 2016). Survival-time data is present in many fields, especially health, economics, criminology. This kind of analysis can be applied also to research on sanctions in order to estimate the probability of the "death" of an existing sanction regime as the event of interest, in which "death" is intended as the end of a sanction regime for its compliance to the sender's demands, focusing on those episodes which are not censored because the event has not occurred yet by the time of the end of the analysis (that is August 2020 for this chapter's analysis using the TSC dataset). Also an episode which is closed by the time of the end of the analysis with an ineffective outcome is recorded as a case in which the event ("death" for compliance) did not manifest (as if, in a health-related study, a patient is suspended or withdraws from a treatment while being still alive).

¹⁶ In a first simple survivor function no controls were added while a more elaborate Cox proportional hazard model was used to include several controls (for a list, see the Appendix at the end of this chapter).

for the years that are covered by the BTI (BTI, 2020)¹⁷. The function automatically censors those episodes in which compliance (that is the “failure” or “death” of an observation) has not been reached when the analysis ended (that is August 2020, the last update of the TSC dataset) either because the episode is still ongoing or because it was closed as ineffective.

On the horizontal axis the figure indicates the number of days to compliance while on the vertical axis it indicates the probability of an existing sanction regime to survive to compliance (value 1 indicates that the survival probability of a sanction regime is 100%, namely it is in place and defies requests of compliance; when the value is 0 it means the existing sanction regime has “died” because of compliance; if a sanction regime is closed/withdrawn without having reached compliance, it is “censored” by the function, because it is not a case of “death for compliance”). The figure shows that episodes characterised by absence of veto players (full black line) have a lower median survival time (black diamond), that is they reach the 50% probability of compliance faster, than the grey dashed line representing episodes which target countries characterised by the presence of some institutional constraints (the grey diamond is further to the right, hence achieved later in time). It therefore suggests that countries with no institutional constraints can react and comply to sanctions faster than the others, respectively with a median survival time of 1091 days compared to 3178 days. Neither of the two curves falls to zero because both categories present some sanction episodes that eventually survive in time without complying (there are some “competing risks” for the event of interest – which is sanction compliance – that prevent the event from manifesting: targets can defy pressure).

The fact that the dashed line consistently lies above the black one also suggests that there is an effective difference between the two curves. A log-rank test used to check the equality of the basic survivor function (Klembaum and Klein, 2012) indeed shows the two curves are significantly different from each other to the 10% whereas the Cox proportional hazard model used to check the significance of the more complex function with controls increases the significance to the 5%; however, the shaded and partly overlapping confidence intervals of the two curves caution against taking these preliminary estimates too rigorously without further in-depth exploration. Due to the limited nature of the data, the estimated survivor function above remains characterised by much statistical uncertainty. Nonetheless, despite the uncertainty, the summary information provided by the two survivor functions above is deemed sufficient a) to show that the presence or absence of institutional constraints can make a statistically significant difference with regard to the time to compliance and b) to call for a more fine-grained theoretical framework and analysis focusing also on the time dimension, including the expedition of a policy decision from its placement on the agenda to its implementation.

The following chapter elaborates on these dimensions in further detail.

¹⁷ An episode is coded as having veto players if the average value of Polcon in the episode is different from zero and/or if, for recent episodes only (the BTI coverage is only post-2006), the BTI Index confirms the presence of the military as a veto player in that country. A robustness check was also performed by considering only the veto player value corresponding to the final year in a sanction episode. The results were identical.

Appendix to Chapter 2

Regression table of the two survivor functions explored in Chapter 2.

	Basic survivor function model	Cox proportional hazard model	
		<i>coefficients in unexponentiated form</i>	<i>coefficients in hazard ratio form</i>
Veto player presence	-0.677* (0.411)	-1.460** (0.622)	0.232** (0.144)
Use of force		0.230 (0.631)	1.258 (0.793)
Financial sanctions		0.993 (0.754)	2.700 (2.036)
UNSC P5 directly involved		-1.095 (0.700)	0.335 (0.234)
Regional organization involved		-1.994* (1.181)	0.136* (0.161)
Unilateral sanctions in place		1.314* (0.785)	3.722* (2.922)
Individual sanctions imposed		2.133** (0.839)	8.436** (7.080)
Secondary sanctions involved		0.165 (0.833)	1.180 (0.982)
Objective: Nuclear non-proliferation		-4.531*** (1.663)	0.011*** (0.018)
Objective: Counter-terrorism		-1.385* (0.806)	0.250* (0.202)
Objective: Democracy support		-0.232 (0.687)	0.793 (0.545)
<i>Observations</i>	58	51	51

Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: the dependent variable is the risk of complying. In the Cox model with coefficients in unexponentiated form, a negative coefficient means a smaller risk in case of veto player presence. In Hazard Ratio terms, instead, a hazard ratio greater than 1 suggests an increased risk in veto player presence, while a hazard ratio below one suggests a smaller risk (1 meaning lack of association). In this case, thus, it means a smaller risk of compliance in case of veto player presence compared to cases in which they are absent. The control variables refer to direct involvement of regional organizations and UNSC permanent members, the objectives articulated in the resolution (three dummies for nuclear non-proliferation, counterterrorism, democracy support), presence of additional unilateral and secondary sanctions, imposition of financial sanctions, targeted sanctions, and the use of a robust military force as companion policy instrument.

3

A New Theoretical Framework and Related Model

This project argues that the political effectiveness of sanctions is conditioned on the configuration of veto players in the target regime. In the previous chapter, a discussion on conceptualization and measurement issues related to the use of veto players' lens in investigating sanctions compliance, including through a quantitative analysis, showed that the existing research on the topic has reached some inconclusive results and left some puzzles unexplained. Testing Peksen and Jeong's only existing study on the topic (2017) on different veto player datasets questioned not only the statistical significance of their hypothesis but even hinted at a possible inverse, negative relation between the size of veto players' constraints and sanctions compliance than the one they proposed. For this reason, building on the shortcomings emerged from the quantitative approach shown in the previous chapter, this project aims to develop a new theoretical framework and a more detailed causal mechanism than the one developed in Jeong and Peksen (2017), represented also in the form of a simple spatial model and based on different and even diverse hypotheses addressing multiple dimensions of sanctions compliance. It aims to improve the understanding of target countries' reaction to sanctions by exploiting better some insights provided by the theory of veto players, as already done preliminarily but limitedly by Jeong and Peksen (2017), integrating them with the nuance deriving from the problematization of the existence of different logics of sanctions (Giumelli, 2011) and with the formal insights deriving from bargaining spatial models (Morgan, 1990), in order to set right some anomalies emerged from previous research. These anomalies do not include only Jeong and Peksen's theoretical hypotheses and over-simplifications of sanctions' causal mechanisms (2017) but also puzzles in regime type explanations with regard to authoritarian regimes' reactions to sanctions.

3.1. Preliminary Considerations

This chapter is devoted to the elaboration of the new, richer theoretical framework which precedes the empirical part in chapters 4-6. Because of the limits of existing datasets exposed in the previous chapter and the need for more fine-grained data, the new framework will not be tested on a large number of cases but rather on a more limited set of cases whose selection is explained at the end of this chapter. Each hypothesis of the new framework will be explored on most-similar comparative cases or diachronic episodes, depending on the hypothesis. The small number of cases is far from ideal for a systematic testing of the new theoretical framework, but it is still adequate for this project's aim to show the new framework's broader explanatory power in all the three dimensions of the policy decision outcome as well as its ability to set right some issues previous research left unaddressed. The comparative tests, in fact, are made up of cases where at least one of those anomalies the project intends to address is present, so that the capacity of the new framework and underlying mechanism to deal with

them can be evaluated. Finally, from a methodological point of view, the smaller case selection for the empirical part is a necessary choice in light of the more elaborate theoretical framework and mechanism described below and used in this project, as it requires a more demanding and time-consuming collection of data on veto players' policy-specific preferences which are not available in existing datasets, as seen in the previous chapter, and an accurate process tracing of the micro-level causal processes in each empirical case. Before addressing the selection of cases and the hypotheses behind them more in detail, the next section elaborates more on this framework's causal mechanism, starting first with some preliminary considerations which are necessary to clarify the applicability of the theory of veto players in the literature on sanctions, as it is conceived in this project. This project does intend to take advantage of the logic of the veto players' theory but it also needs to introduce some adaptations to it in order to make it more appropriate to the non-conventional field in which it is being applied.

First of all, sanctions have a potential transformative power that can give dynamism to the situation they are placed in. By attaching material or reputational costs to the policy under dispute, the external shock brought by sanctions can, at least in the intentions of the senders, alter the very preferences veto players have with regard to that policy and, by means of that, eventually shift also the position of the status quo policy as it was intended in Tsebelis (2002). In a sanction episode, the status quo, originally, represents the very policy under dispute which, *rebus sic stantibus*, veto players are assumed to have no incentive to change. By imposing sanctions-related costs, either material or not, senders aim to incentivise veto players to reconsider the conduct under dispute, among many other purposes which can target also other audiences (Giumelli, 2011). From the perspective of the veto player analysis, for the sender to succeed in its intent, this requires effectively shifting the status quo position towards the sender's ideal position. In practice, it is hardly the case that sanctions fully succeed in this ideal outcome. However, they may well be able to shift the original position of the status quo closer enough to the sender's ideal point, hence providing more gradual evaluations of effectiveness. The spatial distance of such a shift tells how much effective sanctions have been in aligning to the sender's demands.

Second, as already addressed in the previous chapter, non-conventional actors other than those who conventionally feature in traditional applications of the veto player analysis should also be taken into consideration as potential veto players in a sanction episode. This is due to the fact that, while veto players analysis has been often applied to public policy issues in Western democracies (Brummer et al, 2019), research carried out in a non-conventional field of application such as sanctions and foreign policy analysis especially in authoritarian non-Western countries may well reveal how the executive and/or the legislative are hardly the only players involved (Basedau, 2020). As a corollary of this observation, in the previous chapter it was noted how no major existing veto player dataset seems entirely appropriate for this kind of research as data is not policy-specific (except for Tsebelis', which covers only democratic countries though, and partially the BTI), meaning that it is not calibrated on the specific area dimensions the policy that is targeted by sanctions belongs to. Conventional public policy issues are generally involved in a decision-making process that is not the same as when security or foreign policy issues are at stake, especially in terms of the actors involved. Therefore, some amendments in the application of the theory compared to Jeong and Peksen's and others' more conventional Western-focused studies seem necessary, including a case-by-case identification of veto players and related preferences instead of relying exclusively on largely misguided existing datasets.

Finally, this project also explores the possibility to take into consideration veto players' "positional" considerations, as it seems appropriate for the purpose of this sanctions-related research. Positional considerations for votes, offices, and the like, are a departure from the original veto players theory, where veto players are described as purely policy-seeking actors (Tsebelis, 2002). While a player's initial ideal position may be driven exclusively by policy preferences, positional considerations can arise following the possible political costs of losing domestic support (if the player is elective) or legitimacy (even for non-elective) after sanctions hit the country, as well as of damaged international prestige. By claiming that political actors care not only about policy change but also about claiming responsibility for addressing a given issue, Ganghof and Brauning (2006) added a positional component to veto players' standard spatial model. These positional considerations are worth exploring in this project too but, as shown more in detail later in the operationalisation, they are taken into account only indirectly as a component of sanctions' costs and not as a different component of veto players' policy preferences per se.

With these considerations in mind about the applicability of the theory of veto players to sanctions, and the amendments or new assumptions that are required, this project then aims to develop a new, more elaborated framework to show how the components of a target country's configuration of domestic veto players can influence, in different ways, the country's aggregate reaction to sanctions. It does so by moving forward with respect to the only existing framework which tried to adopt the perspective of veto player analysis in the field of sanctions – Jeong and Peksen's (2017) –, as it presented some weaknesses. The new framework intends to address them by exploiting the potential of many more insights of the theory of veto players, including by not limiting the theoretical scope only to the direction of policy decision, with regard to which it presents the opposite hypothesis to that of Jeong and Peksen, but extending it also towards the expedition and robustness of such a policy decision. The latter choice helps increase the explanatory power of the new framework to the benefit of policymakers and scholars alike.

3.2. Variables

In this project's new framework, the dependent and independent variables are conceived as a universe of multiple variables. This choice is intended to capture more nuance of the functioning of a veto player configuration, get more insights about the nature of the policy decision, and overall give the framework a higher explanatory power than Jeong and Peksen's.

As mentioned before, Jeong and Peksen's approach presented some theoretical weaknesses, consisting also in the employment of the perspective of veto players with a narrow focus limited to the 'direction' of the policy decision either towards sanctions compliance or defiance. Contrary to theirs, this new framework wants to inform not only about the direction of a policy decision, like Jeong and Peksen's and most of the research on sanctions effectiveness generally has tried to do, but rather about the whole nature of the policy decision. While the direction is, understandably, the major object of interests for researchers and policymakers because it is the element that eventually tells whether the political concessions are aligned to sanctions' demands or not, much more can be inferred by looking at the theory of veto players in its entirety. It is indeed also possible to draw insights about other dimensions of the policy decision other than the direction such as the 'expedition' of a policy decision, that is the expected length of consultations (whether those political concessions are likely to be achieved expeditiously or not), and the 'robustness' of a policy decision, that is the expected sustainability of the policy

decision once it has been taken (whether concessions are likely to last or not after being agreed upon), as the decision to offer political concessions which meet sanctions' demands may sometimes be reversed at a later stage or implemented defectively by some domestic factions.

Clearly, such a broader, more detailed use of veto players' perspective affects also the methodological strategies for its empirical investigation. While Jeong and Peksen's parsimonious approach could rely exclusively on quantitative analysis, this framework in order to be applied in its full potential eventually requires also a more descriptive, qualitative analysis of a limited number of cases. Before discussing these choices of research design and case selection in the latter part of the chapter, the next section examines more in detail the main variables of the theoretical framework and the general theoretical propositions behind their functioning.

3.2.1. Independent Variables

To explain a target's reaction to sanctions, the explanatory element this project focuses on is the configuration of the target country's domestic veto players, which is here conceived as consisting of three dimensions which amount to the framework's specific independent variables: a) the diffusion of the agenda power; b) veto players' congruence, intended as the spatial distribution of their preferences in relation to each other and the sender's demands; and c) veto players' internal cohesion, a sort of internal congruence in collective veto players – that is players which are made up of different parties or factions – which captures the heterogeneity of the distribution of the preferences of their constituent units.

Before moving into the analysis of these variables, some clarifications about their identification and measurement which were partly already anticipated in chapter 2 are needed. First, before examining a target regime's reaction to sanctions it is necessary to clear out which is the very decision-making process triggered by sanctions, because that is where all the policy area-specific independent variables can be drawn from. Depending on the policy area and conduct which was targeted by sanctions, different decision-making processes may indeed take place in the targeted country, each with potentially different locations of the agenda-setting power and of the very veto players involved in the process. Second, and related to this, it is crucial to identify the relevant number and identity of the target regime's veto players, selecting only those who are endowed with veto authority with regard to the specific policy under dispute. In other words, it is necessary to acknowledge, as a premise, that veto players can be policy-variant, meaning that their identity and preferences may differ depending on the target's policy area sanctions aim to affect. Very frequently, international sanctions affect security-related issues of the target. In these cases, *ad hoc* security-related decision-making processes are generally set in motion, which may well go beyond the sole involvement of the executive and legislative, if any, as they may hardly exclude military institutions from the process. Constitutions generally define which institutions and which processes are activated in case of security-related exogenous shocks, although in some countries informal processes which are not defined in constitutional texts may instead be followed.

Finally, in line with the lower importance the veto player theory itself attributes to it (Tsebelis, 2002), it is worth clarifying that the number of veto players is not selected as an independent variable of this project's framework. Much of the literature (Tsebelis, 2002; Henisz, 2000; Jahn, 2011) agrees that the distances among the ideologically most extreme target country's veto players are much more influential than their mere number.

3.2.1.1. Agenda power

According to Tsebelis (2002), the agenda setters are special cases of veto players who control the agenda in a decision-making process and can choose which specific policy to propose to the others in order to replace the status quo policy. Having an agenda-setting power gives its holders an advantage in shaping (but not imposing) policies according to their preferences, because the agenda setters can select the proposal they prefer the most from the set of all the feasible alternative policy proposals which are acceptable to all the other veto players, but the consensus of all the others is required to approve them. Differently from the other independent variables related to preferences (congruence and cohesion), the control of the agenda power is a relatively stable feature of a configuration and is generally unlikely to change during a sanction episode as a result of the external shock. The degree of diffusion or concentration of the agenda power among the veto players is one of the variables of the configuration of veto players which is expected to influence specifically the expedition of the decision-making process. The more players control the agenda (agenda setters), the more constraints in selecting the policy among the set of policy proposals that are acceptable to all the veto players, thus the less expedite the decision-making process, *all else equal* (including the congruence across veto players). The identification of the collocation of the agenda power is not always an easy task: the degree of diffusion of agenda power can be, just like the number of veto players itself, specific to a given policy dimension. The identification is therefore not always straightforward, especially in non-Western autocracies. Whereas in Western democracies the institutions or actors involved in decision-making processes are generally the same few – the presidency, the parliament, the parties inside the coalition, among the major ones, with reversed roles in the control of agenda power depending on the kind of the institutional system, either parliamentary or presidential – in non-Western countries, especially when not democratic, the distribution of veto authority does not necessarily involve these ‘traditional’ institutions, or at least not only them. In many autocracies, for example, the parliament is constitutionally entitled to have a say on many issues, including foreign policy, yet in practice it is excluded from the actual decision-making process, let alone from holding the agenda power. That is also due to the fact that a change in the policy under dispute does not always entail a policy output in the form of a new piece of legislation (especially in cases where the policy under dispute is related to defence and foreign policy issues such as the support of transnational terrorist groups or nuclear enrichment and military proliferation in sanction episodes; cf. Opperman and Brummer, 2017), hence the minor role of the parliament, both as an agenda setter and as a veto player per se. So while constitutional texts, especially in democracies, generally clearly identify the relevant decision-making process and their veto players, in actual politics of especially non-democratic regimes, some institutions’ role may have been *de facto* minimised despite their textual inclusion there, or not have been included at all. Their identification both as veto players and as agenda setters should thus also be checked against their actual pattern of conduct in real-world politics. Overall, expectations are that in target regimes with diffuse ruling institutions, hence without a strong centralized system, the control of the agenda power is shared by many. However, more accurate, case-by-case analysis is required for a thorough process of identification.

3.2.1.2. Congruence

The variable of congruence refers to the distribution of veto players' policy preferences in the relevant policy space in relation to the ideal position representative of the sender's demands ('ideological distance' in Tsebelis, 2002). Policy preferences identify an actor's predilection for a policy over other alternatives and are a reflection of each player's own strategic considerations about a policy issue. The term therefore captures the set of values, norms, practices that give a particular pattern to the thinking and action of a specific actor in a specific policy field (Carisnaes et al, 2002). Preferences defined as such, however, provide little help with their specific measurement. It was already noted in the previous chapter that the measurement of veto players' policy preferences has long been a contested aspect of veto player analysis. The Henisz' policy-invariant dataset used by Jeong and Peksen (2017) identifies veto players who, allegedly, have veto authority on any policy decision whichever the dimension or area, from ordinary law production to budget approval and external security operations, thus reducing congruence to a function of general left-right positions only. But when some research is policy-specific, as sanctions are, then the identification of veto players and their preferences should not be done by ignoring which policy area is involved. And policy-specific preferences, especially if related to security issues, can hardly be captured by classic left-right scales, as veto players subscribing to the same ideological family may well develop different preferences with regard to a specific security-related policy dimension (or, vice versa, players subscribing to different ideological families may have similar security policy preferences instead).

In this project, veto players' preferences are not going to be intended as a mere translation of ideological positions on a standard left-right scale but rather as their positions along more policy-specific dimensions, mapped on the basis of data retrieved either from the analysis of relevant documents. Valid alternatives but only for more accessible and transparent countries than those selected as case studies in this project would have been the use of interviews and/or quantitative text analysis on a larger set of policy documents and speeches, in order to retrieve actors' policy preferences on specific policy-area dimensions (Ceron, 2011; Benoit et al, 2018).

Looking more closely into veto players' policy issue positions, this project adopts a bi-dimensional space where actors are located according to their ideal positions on two relevant macro-dimensions related to the issue under dispute. In this specific project, then, as the cases selected are all related to sanctions imposed on issues belonging to the security and foreign policy area, preferences are best captured by two dimensions which are more case- and thus area-sensitive than a general left-right scale, and which, taken together, provide the best indications about one's strategic considerations in that policy area. They are:

- the dimension of international economic vision, ranging from international integration to self-sufficiency, which captures whether an actor generally favours the establishment of foreign economic linkages or rather a resilient economic model. This dimension is deemed relevant as most, albeit not all, sanctions leverage (international) economic costs;
- the dimension of international security, ranging from multilateral to unilateral security engagement, which captures whether an actor generally prefers to protect its own interests through regional security state partnerships or a unilateral militaristic approach (possibly relying on affiliated non-state actors abroad, but not state partnerships). It is particularly insightful for understanding their strategic considerations in cases of sanctions imposing especially political-reputational rather than economic costs. So, while players with a similar security vision are not expected to necessarily behave homogeneously towards sanctions overall, it can be expected that they share similar political concerns (such as isolation

from security state partners, loss of legitimacy in international fora) because of sanctions' reputational costs.

Measuring preferences in this bidimensional way, instead of from a general left-right scale, can help explain why there may be significant variation in security- and economic-related policies among actors even when they belong to the same 'party' family or to the same regime apparatus.

How do these preferences change, though? In standard rational choice theory, preferences are generally defined as fixed and exogenously given. But by intending preferences as based on "motivationally salient properties" of alternative courses of action, then it should not be controversial to say that they can be rationally updated when new properties of the alternatives become more or less salient (Dietrich and List, 2012). In this specific project, then, as a result of the pressure exerted by sanctions, veto players are assumed to be able to change their initial policy issue positions, and, in turn, affect the probability to comply with sanctions' demands. Sanctions-related costs can therefore be considered as a mediating variable in the framework, because of their possible mitigation effect on veto players' preferences, potentially altering their positions on the relevant policy space. As shown more in detail in the operationalisation, this transformative power of sanctions is conceived in terms of a difference of saliences. In other words, the impact that sanctions can generate on the original policy issue position is represented not by an estimation of the actual monetary value of the costs incurred for each player but rather by the salience a player attaches to sanctions' impact, mitigated by a veto player' policy issue salience (namely, *sanctions salience – issue salience*). The latter, policy salience, refers to the degree of significance attached to that policy issue by each veto player. Not all veto players attach the same value to the issue under dispute: all else equal, it is more likely to obtain concessions from those veto players which do not consider the issue under dispute as salient and are thus not resolved to resist sanctions for it. With regard to the former (sanction salience), instead, it is used to refer to the perceived damage a player attaches to sanctions-related costs, if any.

Differently from previous spatial applications (Morgan and Schwebach, 1995), sanctions-related costs here include both economic (material) and political (reputational) costs, the former mostly referring to loss of trade and financial flows, whereas the latter to loss of domestic or international legitimacy and prestige, something that is related to the status of each player's relationship with the outside world, but also to one's own domestic time horizon (positional considerations mentioned above and addressed further below). The underlying functioning mechanism differs in the variables involved depending on whether both kinds of costs are present or not. As a result, in the empirical analysis it is worth distinguishing the cases which are characterised by a sanctioning logic based on the imposition of material pain (logic of coercion and logic of constraint) from those which are characterised by a logic which does not foresee major direct material damage (logic of signalling) to better appreciate the different mechanisms at play. In the literature on sanctions, the political or reputational costs for (non)-compliance have sometimes been overlooked because of the misplaced assumption that economic pain could be a sufficient factor to bring in political change. Yet, scholars advocating for their relevance have increasingly become more numerous (Blanchard and Ripsman, 1999; Giu-melli, 2011). Moreover, as anticipated earlier, by including the political costs of compliance, this causal mechanism and its related model indirectly also take into account the role of "positional" considerations in the political costs of compliance (Ganghof and Brauninger, 2006), which Tsebelis in its original theory did not (2002), as his veto players were described as purely policy-seeking actors. Yet, differently from them, this project's mechanism and related model

operationalise the costs – political and economic – through the above-mentioned concept of “sanctions salience”, not in additional variables. Expectations are that the higher the loss (economic or political, depending on the logic of sanctions) it is estimated they suffer from sanctions, the higher the sanctions salience for them and thus the higher the degree of resolve or ambition that a player is ready to sacrifice in order to comply (net of the value of the original policy issue salience). These two concepts of salience are relevant in the operationalisation of the causal mechanism because they help explain specifically why sometimes sanctions have not the same effect on all players. First, sanctions-related costs do not hit all the veto players evenly (variation in sanctions saliences). Second, even if they did, not all veto players are equally “resolved” to resist them (variation in issue saliences).

In conclusion, differently from standard models, this variant including also positional considerations implies that players who could benefit from a policy change may still veto the proposed change even in case of more preferable policy alternatives available, because of the shifting degree of salience attached to it due to the anticipation of positional losses. On the contrary, an originally highly heterogeneous configuration would be generally expected to lead to policy gridlock (according to the general theoretical propositions below), unless the players’ tolerance or elasticity in the bargaining process is broader thanks to a high degree of salience motivated by, among other things, also anticipated positional gains.

3.2.1.3. Cohesion

Finally, a veto player can be individual or collective depending on the variation of the degree of its internal cohesion. Individual veto players are institutions which are not internally ideologically polarised – meaning they are not made up of factions or parties characterised by divergent preferences – thus have a high degree of internal cohesion. Collective veto players are instead those institutions (most likely parliaments, but also coalition governments or ad-hoc executives built on different ideological platforms) which present more than one internal faction. In a collective veto player, its aggregate preferences are the result of an internal decision-making process which differs depending on the kind of decision rule adopted inside it by its constituent units (unanimity, simple majority, or qualified majority rule). Here, internal polarization is expected to have an effect on the overall trajectory of the collective veto player towards contestation or a robust implementation of a selected policy change, be it towards compliance or not, as shown more in detail below. The variable of cohesion is included in this project’s framework precisely to explore the possibility to have so-called spoilers or defectors in collective institutions that are targeted by sanctions and who can affect the correct implementation of the policy change. In target states characterised only by individual veto players, instead, robust implementation of the policy decision is granted, because highly cohesive players such as individual players are not expected to dispute their own decisions once they have been taken.

Just as in Tsebelis (2002), cohesion is used to refer to the similarity of policy positions of a collective veto player’s constituent units, namely the degree of heterogeneity of these units’ policy preferences. Individual veto players are by definition highly cohesive, being made up of a single individual unit (or as if they were), while in collective veto players the degree of polarization (here used to refer to the opposite of cohesion) can vary. To avoid unnecessary complication, no formalization of the various decision-making processes that can take place in a collective veto player to reach the aggregate policy position are going to be made in this project’s formal model. The decision rule in force within a collective veto player can in fact vary

from unanimity, to simple majority rule and qualified majority rule, each having its own formulas and procedures to assess the internal winset of the status quo (cf. the concepts of wincircle and yolk developed by the literature, also briefly described in the operationalisation section below – Tsebelis, 2002). But this project simplifies such complications as it limits itself to explore only cases of collective veto players who are internally characterised by unanimity rule (consensus). The justification for this is that, because this project’s empirical focus is eventually on authoritarian regimes, in these regime types the collective institutions endowed with veto power (be it the government or other ad-hoc executive bodies made up of distinct parties or factions, hence not single party regimes) most of the time take decisions by consensus (cf. Chapter 5). On the contrary, other collective institutions typically characterised by simple or qualified majority rule such as the legislative bodies are hardly ever endowed with actual veto authority in those authoritarian regimes, hence not under examination in this project. More in general, there are fewer truly collective institutions in authoritarian regimes than in democracies where parliaments play a more prominent role. Institutions such as the military, in fact, which can often be latent veto players in autocracies and few electoral democracies (cf. table 1 in chapter 2) are generally not collective but individual veto players because of the highly hierarchical structure. Similarly, when there is not a single military chain of command in the national security architecture, the other chains (i.e., paramilitary forces) should be treated as a different veto player rather than a faction of the former. As a result, all the complications of the procedures following simple and qualified majority rule are not taken in consideration in this project. The spatial model below only briefly resorts to the concept of wincircle to clarify the spatial difference between individual (cohesive) and collective (less cohesive) veto players on policy stability. What then suffices to say with regard to cohesion in a collective veto player is that the higher veto players’ internal cohesion, the higher is policy stability. For example, if veto players become more and more cohesive, so much to eventually become individual veto players, policy stability increases because the selected policy change is not expected to be contested by internal units. Drawing on Tsebelis’ general theoretical propositions, it can then be stated that this project expects that the degree of heterogeneity or polarization between collective veto players’ constituent units informs on the robustness of the policy decision, namely the sustainability of the implementation of the new policy which has to substitute the old status quo (the conduct under dispute). As explained more in detail in the model below, collective veto players have a larger wincircle (the collective veto player’s indifference curve which approximates the sum of the constituent units’ indifference curves) than an individual veto player centred in the collective veto player’s yolk (a point determined by the medians of the constituent units’ unanimity core). As a result, having a bigger set of policy alternatives that can defeat the status quo, a polarized collective veto player is more likely to destabilize the new chosen policy (be it compliant or defiant with the senders’ demands) than an individual veto player. As internal cohesion can vary, the higher it is (close to that of an individual veto player) the more robust the implementation of the chosen policy. On the contrary, when the internal polarization increases (such as in the Sudanese diarchy analysed in the empirical part of this project), the implementation is more likely to become more defective due to internal contestation. Indeed, when collective veto players are internally fragmented the chosen policy is more distant from each ideal point, creating spoiler actors who refrain from implementing robustly the aggregate new policy that was decided collectively. Finally, it is worth clarifying that the degree of cohesion and the subsequent presence of spoilers can be a native feature of the collective veto player’s configuration (preceding sanctions), due to differences in the salience attached to the issue under dispute

across its constituent units, or the product of an uneven distribution of sanctions-related costs across them (during sanctions).

3.2.2. Dependent Variables

This research project investigates the impact of the different variables of the configuration of veto players (congruence, cohesion, and agenda power) on the probability for the target to offer political concessions which are aligned to sanctions' demands, expedite, and robust. Offering or not political concessions is therefore a policy decision that can be unpacked into three dimensions, each referring to a characteristic of it, namely its direction, its expedition, and its robustness. As already addressed above, the inclusion of all these different aspects of the nature of the policy decision as dependent variables of the project ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the reaction to sanctions than a more traditional "direction-focused only" framework (such as Jeong and Peksen's, 2017). For each of the dependent variables, the following paragraphs also explore their expected theoretical functioning, namely how they are expected to be affected by specific elements of the target country's veto player configuration described above. Such general propositions provide a useful contextualization to the project's more specific hypotheses listed later.

3.2.2.1. Direction

The direction of the policy decision instructs precisely about whether it is likely to see concessions aligned to the senders' demands or not. It is indicated by the shift in the distribution of veto players' preferences after the imposition of sanctions from a place to another on the policy space, which can be considered to be of compliance or defiance depending on the increasing or decreasing distance from the senders' desired policy position. In his original theory, Tsebelis (2002) said little about the direction of change, focusing instead on the likelihood of change per se, which was closely related not to the mere number of veto players but to the distance between the two most distant of them. In the study of sanction compliance, what is relevant is not only the distance between the furthest veto players, but also their relative position with regard to the sender's ideal point. As a result, in this project the direction of a policy change is estimated on the basis of the collocation of veto players' policy preferences in the relevant policy space (König et al, 2011a) and their distances from the position of the desired final status quo (which in a sanction episode is the sender's ideal point). Depending on the latter's position, some of the areas of the policy space represent alternative policy preferences which are expected to be more compatible with the desired status quo (because spatially closer to them) in contrast with others which are conflicting (because more distant). Political concessions happen when sanctions succeed to shift veto player's policy preferences to the former, hence becoming more 'accommodating' or aligned to senders' demands, even if they do not coincide. If none of the veto players' preferences is positioned there, meaning that their policy preferences are still located in a region of the policy space distant from the sender's ideal point, thus indicating misalignment and incompatibility with regard to the sanctioner's objectives, then compliance has not been achieved. Sanctions-related costs were not "salient" enough for all the veto players to update their preferences.

3.2.2.2. Expedition

The variable of expedition, instead, informs about the pre-concessions duration that is how long it may take to obtain those policy concessions. It is equally relevant for scholars and policymakers as it improves our understanding of the expected duration of a sanction episode and all that derives from it in terms of costs, including domestic audience costs, for both the target and the sender.

Drawing on Tsebelis' general theoretical propositions, it can be expected that the higher the number of players in the target regime who share the agenda power, the longer the consultations to reach consensus on a policy decision, unless they are 'ideologically' congruent, namely share similar if not the same policy preferences. In other words, the domestic political system's agenda power diffusion is logically expected to add a primary constraint to a policy decision's expedition, all the rest being equal. A country with numerous centres endowed with the control of the agenda is structurally constrained from taking expedited policy decisions as the decision-making process, even in case of shared support to those decisions (which remains a necessary requirement to achieve a policy change, but not sufficient for it to be expedite), is made structurally longer because there is not one single agenda setter who can impose its own proposal among the set of plausible alternatives. However, in addition to that primary constraint, the duration of consultations can then also be expected to be further compounded by the heterogeneity of veto players' preferences because it influences the size of the winset of the status quo and of the unanimity core, hence the size of the set of possible alternatives among which the agenda setter can choose. Keeping heterogeneity under control, though, what can streamline the decision-making by minimising additional bargaining and waste of time is the number of actors holding the agenda. So, in the end, the most expedited policy decision, whichever the direction it may take (which is a matter of congruence, as shown above) would see the agenda power in the hand of a single entity. In this case, the sole agenda setter does not have to bargain to put its most preferred alternative (among all the possible policy changes) on the agenda.

3.2.2.3. Robustness

Finally, the dimension of robustness refers to the status of the implementation of a policy decision both during a sanction episode and after sanctions are removed. Although not typical of the sanction literature per se, robustness is an attractive concept to researchers seeking to understand policy change and stability because it yields insights for designing policies that persist over time (Capano and Woo, 2016). It indeed informs about whether policy concessions to senders' demands are likely to be implemented robustly for long by the target country (post-concessions sustainability) or are instead prone to defective implementation. Generally speaking, outright changes in the identity of veto players can determine the end of the implementation of a policy change. But apart from these extreme cases, it is most interesting to explore the effect that polarization inside incohesive veto players can have on a policy change. Drawing on the theoretical propositions of the theory of veto players, there can be a robust or faulty implementation depending on the cohesion of veto players' constituent units. If there is no more than one constituent unit, meaning the veto player can be considered as an individual because of the lack of internal factions or ideologically different parties, then the veto player is expected to implement the policy decision in a robust way, whichever its direction in relation to the sender's demands (which is, again, a matter of congruence). On the contrary, a collective veto player

who is made up of radically diverse constituent units is expected to implement its aggregate policy decision in a defective way if the internal polarisation is high. As already mentioned above, policy decisions taken on the basis of a polarised configuration can hardly ensure a robust implementation, if any, as they give way to contestation from some of the most recalcitrant units the collective veto player is made of. When the policy chosen as the new status quo is not a stable one for the reasons address under the cohesion variable, including an uneven distribution of sanctions-related costs, that policy is more likely to go through a process of contestation. This can also take the form of radical domestic changes including the removal of some recalcitrant units by force. The removal of one of the factions making up the collective veto player can lead to a shift in the internal configuration (in some extreme cases, transforming a collective into an individual veto player) and facilitate the reach of a more stable policy decision, which can be implemented robustly by all the units.

3.3. Simple Spatial Model

3.3.1. Operationalisation of the Causal Mechanism

This section describes the causal mechanisms which lie behind a target country's reaction to sanctions and the simple spatial models which are used to represent them. The causal mechanisms are intended to expose and operationalise the connections between the key variables of the theoretical framework which were presented above, with the support of simple spatial models built on insights from Tsebelis' own veto players' theory, itself based on simple Euclidean spatial models, combined with those from Clifton Morgan's model of crisis bargaining (Morgan, 1990; Morgan and Schwebach, 1995).

The use of spatial modelling in the explanation of the functioning of the causal mechanisms which are at the core of this project's theoretical framework is intended as a useful complement to the more minute process tracing of the causal processes that is going to be investigated in the empirical cases, as it helps visualize the distribution of veto players' policy preferences on the policy space and so facilitates considerations about the way they lead to a certain policy decision. While this is not the first time that spatial models are used by scholars in the literature on sanctions (precisely Morgan and Schwebach, 1995), it is indeed the first time it is used a spatial model which is informed by the veto player theory and which relies on its propositions to identify the relevant players and their behaviour.

Before going through the inner workings of the mechanisms and the operationalisation of the variables, some clarification about the assumptions behind the mechanisms and their related spatial models are needed. The main theoretical assumptions at the root of these mechanisms are that countries are not unitary entities (Rose, 1998) – and so the costs imposed by sanctions can be distributed unevenly within the target country – and that a target country's reaction to sanctions (and, more in general, also a country's foreign policy conduct overall) is the result of internal bargaining which can be represented by micro-level causal processes which involve within-country players. The outcomes at the aggregate level of the target country – the direction, expedition, and robustness of policy concessions to sender's demands, in this case – are therefore explained through the dynamics at the micro level. In addition to these assumptions there are also others related to the spatial models used to represent the mechanisms. First, any player has a most-preferred policy in a mono- or multi-dimensional policy space which includes all the possible policies on the agenda. The most-preferred policy is the one

closer to a player's single-peaked ideal point and any player wants the status quo to be as close as possible to its ideal point. The shift from status quo to policy change can happen when a set of alternative policies is closer to the ideal point than the status quo. In case of multiple players in the policy space, the shift can happen only when the players' sets of preferred alternative policies overlap, hence creating an area (winset of the status quo) which contains policies which for all the players are better than the status quo.

Having clarified the assumptions, the following paragraphs explain how the theoretical framework's variables interact in the causal mechanisms and how they are measured in the spatial models. Starting from the variables involved in the first of the expected interactions addressed in the sections above – the one linking agenda power to the expedition of the policy decision – the agenda power is operationalised by the number of the players who are the agenda setters in the decision-making process related to the policy under dispute. Looking at **Figure 1** below, if IP_{AS1} is the only player who has the agenda setting power and IP_{VP2} is the other existing veto player (who is not endowed with agenda power, though), then IP_{AS1} can choose X_1 (out of all the policies contained in the winset area that can defeat the old status quo) as the new policy where to place the new status quo. The advantage of having the agenda power decreases with more veto players, as they shrink the winset of the status quo (from the dotted one to the coloured one in Figure 1, left side). Yet, albeit more or less optimal depending on the size of the winset, IP_{AS1} 's choice is nonetheless expedited because it is unconstrained by other agenda setters. If the agenda power is shared by more than one players (right side of figure 1), the policy change is less expedited because the choice of the policy to be agreed on as an alternative to the status quo among several plausible alternatives (X_2 , $X_{2/3}$, or X_3 , to name a few) needs to go through the diverse agenda setters' bargaining. IP_{AS1} would propose X_2 , but IP_{AS2} would propose X_3 . More time-consuming bargaining is needed to choose the alternative to be put on the agenda and then have it approved by all the veto players. The result would be a compromise situation (for simplicity, here it is assumed it is going to be a policy halfway in between X_2 and X_3) which, irrespectively of its position, it would be a less expedite process than a process in the hands of a single agenda setter, such as in some (but not all) personalist regimes.

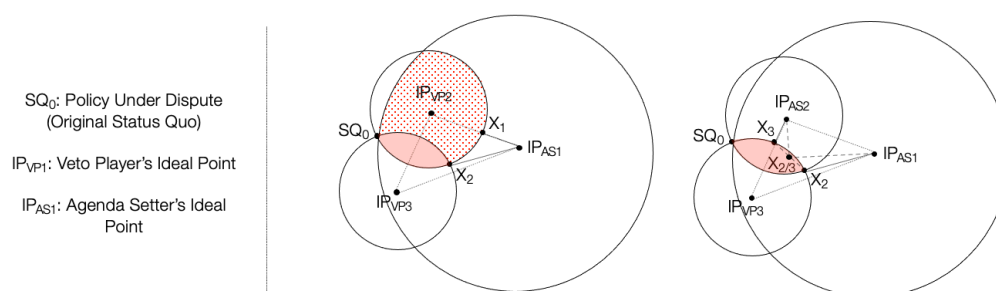


Figure 1. Agenda power (left: single agenda setter; right: two agenda setters)

The dependent variable of expedition, instead, is not operationalised as the duration of the whole sanction episode (Bierstaker et al., 2018), but rather as the time between the imposition of sanctions and the policy decision which is proposed in a given episode (not necessarily a positive concession) by the targeted country. In the case studies it will be checked whether the decision was taken in a shorter or longer amount of time compared to the average of the

episodes analysed. It is therefore estimated relative to the selected episodes, but it is still useful to show its relative impact on the expedition of the decision.

When looking instead at the second expected interaction, linking congruence to the direction of the policy decision, the major effort of the operationalisation consists in the measurement of the aggregate collocation of veto players' preferences and of their distance from the senders' ideal point. As mentioned in previous sections, veto players' preferences are indeed a central element of the configuration of veto players. Preferences are here operationalised as veto players' policy issue positions on a two-dimensional space, where each policy dimension (the economic vision and the security engagement) is represented on a scale (0.0-1.0, for explanatory purposes), where the lowest scores correspond respectively to a preferred globally integrated economic position and a preferred security approach based on multilateral security frameworks as opposed to a self-sufficient economy and unilateral militaristic vision. Although this is not the objective of this project's empirical part, where a more categorical qualitative assessment is done, if one wants to attribute specific values on each of the two dimensions for all the veto players, expert estimates have generally been the traditional way to do it (see Morgan and Schwebach, 1995; but also Tsebelis, 2002), combined with open sources data.

To understand better how preferences, intended as veto players' positions in the relevant policy space, can inform about the possibility of a policy change, it is necessary to explore further the concepts of winset of the status quo (WSQ) and its reverse, the unanimity core (Tsebelis, 2002). Both can be used to infer how likely a policy change is: in the former, it is necessary to know the exact position of the status quo while in the latter it is enough to know the locations of veto player's ideal points. Therefore, in describing this project's model, the unanimity core is preferred as a proxy for policy change as the identification of the status quo (such as the SQ_0 , namely the pre-shock status quo, that is the original policy under dispute) is generally difficult. As the following definitions clarify, the relation between the status quo and the unanimity core is an inverse one. While the winset of the status quo represents the set of alternative policies that by unanimity can beat the status quo, the unanimity core instead represents an empty unanimity winset, namely the set of points that cannot be beaten by a decision taken by unanimity (Tsebelis 2002). The latter is thus also called Pareto set because, should the policy be located inside, it represents a situation where no veto player can be better off by changing that policy without making at least one of them worse off. As a consequence of these definitions, it is then clear that the winset of the status quo does depend on the status quo location, while the unanimity core does not, as it depends only on veto players' preferences. Graphically (**Figure 2**), the unanimity core is the polygon with angles which coincide with the veto players' ideal points. When the status quo is inside the unanimity core, no policies are preferred to it by all the veto players, therefore no policy change is expected, and the situation is stable. In this case, the size of the unanimity core is irrelevant.

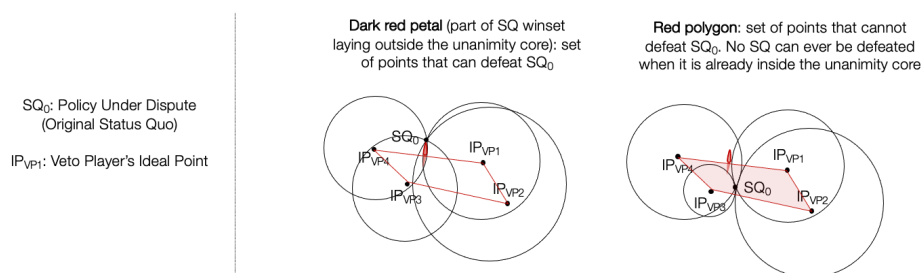


Figure 2. Visualising the winset of the status quo and the unanimity core

In a sanction episode, before sanctions are imposed, the original policy under dispute is assumed to fall precisely in the unanimity core. No veto player would change it, things thus standing. Sanctions, however, have a transformative power generated by the economic or political costs attached to them. The impact of sanctions-related costs may well compel a player to update its preferences. In this sense, preferences' positions are time variant as their 'salient' properties can be altered by sanctions' transformative power (Ringe, 2005). Therefore, what matters for the assessment of the effectiveness of sanctions in terms of their alignment to the sender's demands (direction) is the distribution of preferences in relation to the sender's ideal status quo after the external shock has transformed some of their positions, if any. The situation before the shock (**Figure 3, left**) is still worth describing for each case in order to contextualise the original status quo situation and the impact of sanctions.

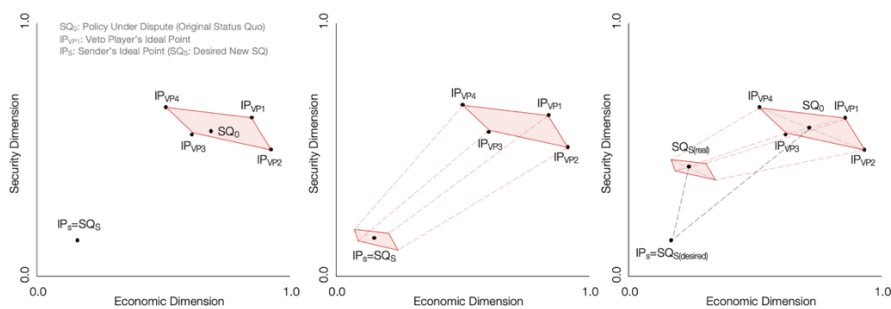


Figure 3. Situation before (left) and after sanctions (centre: senders' ideal situation; right: more realistic one)

By imposing sanctions-related costs, senders aim to end up in a situation (**Figure 3, centre**) where the veto players' unanimity core in the policy space shifts over the sender's own ideal position (namely, the new status quo the sender desires for the target country's conduct). For such a situation to happen, it would mean that sanctions have altered so much the preferences of veto players (whose positions constitute the angles of the unanimity core's polygon) that they agree to a new policy now centred around the senders' demands and, as such, do not intend to change it anymore because it is stable. Most likely, sanctions succeed in shifting preferences only to a smaller distance though (**Figure 3, right**), either because the sender's demands (ideal status quo) were too ambitious (too distant) or because the costs attached to sanctions were not "salient" enough to all the players. In these cases, it is assumed that the actual post-sanctions policy is located inside a new unanimity core somewhere in between the original location and the desired one. The bigger or smaller distance from the sender's desired new status quo and the new aggregate position of the veto players can then inform about the more or less successful alignment of the target state to sender's demands (direction).

More in detail, how does the shift in veto players' policy preferences (congruence) happen? Operationally, it depends on sanctions salience, the proxy variable which estimates the material and immaterial impact of sanctions on each veto player (measured on a 0.0-to-1.0 scale, for explanatory purposes), and on the original policy salience (same scale). As per the formula below, when the estimated loss from the economic or extrinsic political costs inflicted by sanctions on a veto player are the highest (sanctions salience being 1.0) or even just higher than the original issue salience an actor used to attach to the issue under dispute (an indication of a player's resolve), then sanctions can annul completely the actor's resolve for the issue, thus affecting their preferences and changing their position in the policy space, possibly making them more aligned to the sender's demands. The final bracket of the formula below (issue

position–sender position) is intended only to normalise the extent of sanctions’ impact on the range which is represented by the distance between the original issue position and the desired sender’s position.

$$\text{Issue Position} - [\text{Max}\{0, \text{Sanctions Saliency} \\ - \text{Issue Saliency}\} \times (\text{Issue Position} - \text{Sender Position})]$$

On the contrary, no impact is felt by a player if the result of the difference in saliences is negative. In this case, it does not mean that sanctions had no impact on the target country, but rather that they did not have a significant impact on a specific veto player because of the high significance they attach to the issue, that is the ‘resolve’ or the ‘leverage’ which that player is willing to exert for it. Eventually, the final value of the formula represents, for each veto player, its new location on the policy space resulting from the impact that sanctions-related costs eventually had on its original preferences.

This takes us to the operationalisation of the variable of direction, operationalised as the distance between the sender’s and the target’s final positions (the latter is the aggregate, namely the average, of all its veto players’ updated preferences). The reduced distance compared to the original situation is the proxy to assess the alignment towards concessions. If the updated distance is shorter than the original, meaning that the aggregate position of the target has shifted closer to the senders’ ideal position, it means there has been some degree of compliance, because the target has changed its policy under dispute in line with the sender’s demands. Graphically (**Figure 3**), the unanimity core of the players should move in such a way to encircle the sender’s ideal point (desired new status quo). As already mentioned, the unanimity core will most likely not overlap completely, yet a shorter distance compared to the original position is still an indication of a modest alignment.

In order to measure the target’s aggregate preference position, the averages of veto players’ positions on each of the two dimensions are calculated. In formal terms, the resulting two values are the spatial coordinates (x, y) for the aggregate two-dimensional point. So SQ_0 is calculated as the average of the veto players’ original ideal points, while $SQ_{S(\text{real})}$ as the average of the veto players’ updated ideal points and refers to the likely policy really implemented by the VPs after sanctions, instead of $SQ_{S(\text{desired})}$.

To summarise in a way that is especially useful for the empirical testing, there are four possible scenarios (**Figure 4**) on the impact of sanctions on veto players’ policy preferences in relation to their distance from the sender’s desired new status quo (that is, on the link between congruence and the direction of the policy decision). In Scenario 1, no veto player has been affected by any kind of sanctions-related costs, so they have no incentive to shift their policy preferences in any direction. The original status quo conduct, defiant to senders’ requests, remains in place. In Scenario 2, instead, some veto players have been affected by sanctions, but not others, or only to a small extent in such a way that their unanimity core is still encompassing the original status quo. As such, there still is no consensus to change the status quo because it still falls inside the veto players’ unanimity core and thus there is no other policy which, things thus standing, would make all the players better off. In Scenario 3, all the veto players have been affected in such a significant way that their policy preferences shift decisively towards the sender’s ideal point or desired new status quo, until the point to include it in their updated unanimity core. This is a case of full compliance in which the sender’s desired new status quo is now considered by the target country as its new, stable policy. Finally, Scenario 4 captures

the situation in which all the veto players have been affected by sanctions-related costs but not as significantly as in Scenario 3, so that their updated policy preferences do shift towards the direction of the sender's ideal point, but not until the point to encompass it. Hence, this is a case of partial compliance where the new status quo is closer to the sender's desired one but not coincident with it. The scenarios 1-4 assume that sanctions-related costs can have only a positive effect (from the point of view of the sender) in shifting veto players' policy preferences closer to them. However, unintended consequences are also possible (Galtung, 1967) whereby sanctions radicalise some or all the target's veto players and eventually increase the gap between veto players' preferences and senders' demands. As a result, a Scenario 5 devises a situation in which the status quo position does change, but in such a way that it moves further away from the sender.

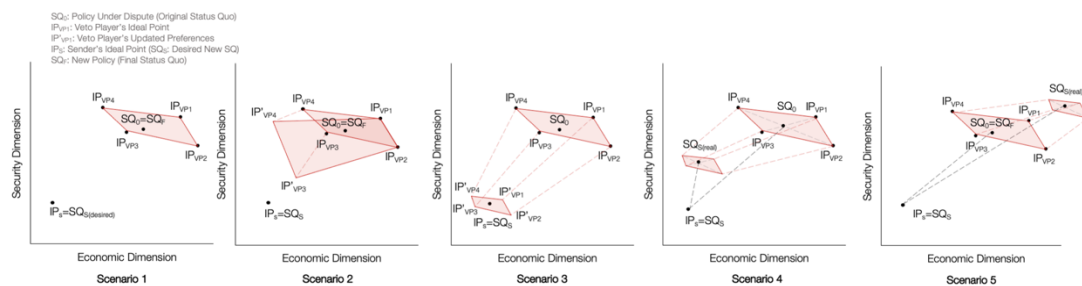


Figure 4. Scenarios

Finally, with regard to the last two variables of the framework – linking cohesion to the robustness of the decision taken – it is expected that the more polarized a collective veto player is, the more defective and contested (thus, less robust) the policy implementation will be. Namely, when a policy change is agreed collectively on the basis of its constituent units' policy preferences, the degree of cohesion of the units behind such decision is consequential because in case of high polarization it is likely that the desired policy change is implemented in a haphazard way. Cohesion is the heterogeneity or polarization of the distribution of the preferences of a collective veto player's constituent units on the relevant policy space (in an individual veto player made up of a single unit there is homogeneity hence the strongest degree of cohesion) and can be operationalised through the concept of wincircle, namely the approximate overall indifference curve of a collective veto player resulting from the sum of the constituent units' own curves. A fundamental property of the wincircle, whichever the collective veto player's internal decision rule, is that no points outside of it can beat the status quo policy, while certain points inside it can defeat it (depending on the kind of decision rule), but most importantly any point inside the wincircle can possibly be defeated by some other points inside the same circle (depending on the level of cohesion) because, differently from an individual's, the internal winset of the status quo of a collective player (which varies according to the decision rule) is never empty, hence generating instability and contestation. With regard to robustness, instead, it can be operationalised as a dichotomous variable which categorizes an episode according to whether during a sanction episode or just after the removal of sanctions there was a correct or faulty implementation of the policy change. More practically, a configuration is incohesive or polarized when there are extremely diverse preferences among competing blocs inside a collective veto player and thus the wincircle is larger than a hypothetical individual player's indifference curve centred on the yolk (that is the median of constituent units' ideal points). This, in formal terms, is due to the fact that the radius of a wincircle is $d+2r$, namely

the distance between the yolk and the status quo plus twice the yolk's own radius, while the radius of an individual indifference curve is simply d (**Figure 5** below).

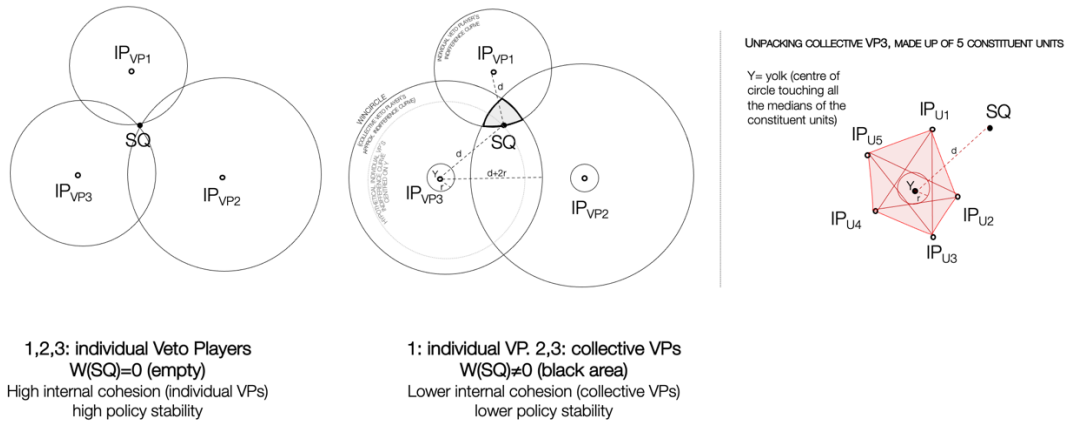


Figure 5. Visualising the differences in the indifference curves of individual and collective veto players, as well as the unanimity core and the radius of the yolk inside a collective veto player

When polarization is a feature *before* sanctions are imposed, it has no impact on the robustness of the current status quo policy because, by assumption, the original status quo policy falls inside the unanimity core and by definition this is a stable policy whichever the size and shape of the unanimity core. The focus of this project is then on the degree of cohesion *after* the imposition of sanctions. Sanctions can compound or even generate a very incohesive configuration when their reputational or economic impact affects the blocs inside the collective veto player in a very disproportionate way. This degree of incohesion can then be further compounded by the original different values of policy salience each bloc attaches to the policy issue under dispute. In cases where high differences in salience and cost distribution are both present, contestation is expected to be the highest and policy robustness the lowest (cf. bottom-left quadrant in **Table 1** below).

	MORE EVEN DISTRIBUTION OF SANCTION-RELATED COSTS		
HIGH DIFFERENCES OF ISSUE SALIENCE	Cohesion: medium Contestation: moderate Policy robustness: partial	Cohesion: high Contestation: low Policy robustness: high	LOW DIFFERENCES OF ISSUE SALIENCE
	Cohesion: low Contestation: high Policy robustness: low	Cohesion: medium Contestation: moderate Policy robustness: partial	
	MORE UNFAIR DISTRIBUTION OF SANCTION-RELATED COSTS		

Table 1. Dynamics of contestation inside a polarized collective veto player

In formal model terms, the collective player struggles in the implementation of a policy response to sanctions (any policy, be it compliant or defiant with the senders' demands) when the internal polarization increases (large wincircle) following an unfair distribution of sanctions-related costs and differences in issue salience. The larger, the more contested the implementation because players dissatisfied with it bargain for other alternatives included in the wincircle (which would be empty only if the player were individual, namely internally highly cohesive). Robustness in the implementation of the policy change is achieved when the collective veto player has or achieves its internal levels of cohesion closer to those of an individual

player (complete absorption of all units under the same policy position). If this is not the default configuration in the target country, this can happen by designing a more fair (not necessarily equal) distribution of sanctions-related costs (instead of targeting the whole group of actors, which instead can be used by those units most opposed to change to unite them all *against* the sender) or by means of indirect sanctions-induced domestic changes (removal of some recalcitrant factions by force, especially when they attach so much high levels of salience to the issue under dispute that makes them nearly sanction-proof). In the latter regard, the removal of one of the factions making up a collective institution (such as the government, which can be made up of several partisan blocs – parties in Western democracies or factions in authoritarian regimes) by absorption or actual removal can lead to a shift in the configuration, altering the size of the wincircle (making it smaller like in an individual player) and stabilising the implementation of the policy selected to replace the status quo.

Having clarified these dynamics internal to collective veto players, more in general what exactly ensures the sustainability of the policy decision after sanctions are eventually removed? The discussion above on the robustness of the implementation of the decision taken *during* a sanction episode leads us to a final and broader consideration about the sustainability of the policy outputs *after* sanctions are finally removed. The logic of this model, according to which a veto player can update its policy preferences if hit by sanctions-related economic or political costs, could lead us to think that once these economic or political costs are removed their preferences are updated again towards the older status quo, hence reverting to defiance. In the real world, many events alter the post-sanctions environment that it is difficult to say whether an update of preferences in the target country is actually due to the removal of sanctions or to other factors. It may well be the case that elections, dismissals or other events determine a change of the very identity of some veto players who were involved in that sanction regime, hence creating the possibility that the new veto players challenge the policies decided by their predecessors. But, absent such drastic changes which are not the focus of this research, there are at least two (interrelated) dynamics at play which can theoretically explain why, absent new external shocks or internal modifications, after the closure of a sanction regime the target country is incentivised to maintain the sanctions-induced policy preferences instead of returning to the original status quo. On the one hand, the target country anticipates the expected economic or reputational costs it would be resubjected to in case of returning to the original status quo. The fact that the sanction regime was already applied once – and could easily be applied again a second time - makes such expectations credible enough for those who have already experienced them. On the other hand, with the new status quo also comes sanctions relief, namely the enjoyment of the benefits (not only the resumption of trade and economic flows previously constrained, if any, but also the benefits of multilateral diplomacy) that sanctions removed, or of the new ones that the latent positive dimension of sanctions created. In formal model terms, this means that, in the calculation of a veto players' preference position, sanctions-related costs are eventually substituted by sanctions-relief benefits.

3.3.2. Preliminary Remarks

The review of the operationalisation of the main variables above has shed light on the micro-foundational causal linkages inside the mechanism through which a targeted country reacts to sanctions. Each domestic player endowed with veto power with regard to the issue under dispute has the power to facilitate or hinder the demanded policy change, a choice made on the

basis of its own policy preferences in the policy dimension(s) affected by the issue at stake. When that issue falls under dispute and sanctions are imposed to influence it, a player can update its preferences depending on the extent of the economic and political costs it may or may not incur, and which may include also positional considerations. Sanctions-related costs, if present, can be distributed unevenly in the target country, so not all the veto players are necessarily affected overall and, if they are, not necessarily to the same extent. Additionally, sanctions do not always impose material costs. In some cases which are captured especially by the mechanic of signalling, sanctions can instead be devised to leverage no material pain at all, but rather the stigma of violating international standards, which is here operationalised in terms of reputational or political costs.

The mechanism suggests that updates in ones' preference position are more likely when a player perceives the cost of non-compliance (sanctions salience) as sufficiently high to overcome the cost of compliance and the original significance (policy issue salience) attached to the issue under dispute. In that case the distribution of veto players' preferences on the policy space changes and is expected to become more aligned to the sender's demands. The causal mechanism and its related spatial model can show, also visually, how the presence or absence of favourable conditions in the configuration of veto players in the country targeted by sanctions (in terms of congruence of their preferences with the sender's own ones, in terms of the concentration of agenda power, and in terms of internal cohesion of preferences) can affect the nature of the policy decision, telling whether the policy under dispute is supposed to change and align to the sender's demands, whether the decision-making process is more likely to be expedited, and whether the decision taken is expected to be robust because the configuration was cohesive and thus stable.

Additionally, the veto player-centred mechanism described above presents several improvements compared to previous alternative explanatory mechanisms developed by the regime type cluster of sanctions literature. The first added value is that, by theory, it disaggregates the target country into domestic institutions and actors, accurately identified by the theory itself and not left to arbitrariness, in a way that has hardly been done by regime type classifications, including intra-authoritarian ones which presented much hybridism. Proceeding in this other manner explicitly focused on the preferences of those endowed with veto authority, it becomes clearer which are the relevant connections between the distribution of the costs and the outcome, thus systematising the causal relationship in a way the alternative explanations based on the often empirically blurry categories of authoritarian regimes did not do. The second added value lies instead in the inclusion of the differentiation of sanctioning logics (Giumelli, 2011). Differently from Morgan and Schwebach (1995) and Jeong and Peksen (2017), this project's model formally acknowledges that the economic damage is not always present. As a result, it introduces the concept of reputational costs to capture those situations in which the mechanic does not devise a direct material impact. Similarly to Morgan and Schwebach, instead, it does preserve the concept of salience in order to challenge the misplaced belief that the economic damage, when present, automatically ensures political effectiveness. It is neither sufficient – for sanctions based on logics leveraging economic damage, as it downplays the political salience which instead can mitigate if not annul it – nor necessary – for cases with no major economic damage at all.

Finally, the causal mechanisms described above ensure a good balance between the parsimony of simple spatial models and the complexity of this project's theoretical framework. Despite their simplicity, the mechanisms and their related spatial models can inform about all

the three dimensions of the outcome. When the model focuses on the distance between the aggregate position of the target's veto players and the sender's own desired position, it can inform about the likelihood for the target to accommodate or not to the senders' demands, as enquired by the framework's outcome dimension of 'direction'. When focusing instead on the concentration of the agenda power, the mechanism can shed light also on the structural autonomy of the decision-making process related to the issue under dispute, whether it is in the hands of the executive alone or not, and inform about the 'expedition' of the decision, namely the second dimension of the outcome identified by the theoretical framework. Even in autocracies, the executive leaders are not always institutionally or procedurally completely insulated, including in setting the agenda. Other institutional power centres or political parties often play a role in it, often slowing down the process. Finally, when it focuses on the internal cohesion of veto players, the model can also provide insights on robustness, the final outcome dimension of the framework, that is the likelihood of experiencing fragmentation in the implementation of policy concessions. Post-shock harmonization of domestic politics could either be facilitated or hindered by the heterogeneous distribution of the shock or also by the diverse strategic background of veto players, which influences their perception of the external challenge and thus the salience they attach to it and which can determine their higher resistance to change.

3.4. Hypotheses

Building on the causal mechanisms and theoretical expectations just described and in light of the research aims of this project, this section outlines the hypotheses which are going to be tested by different case studies in the empirical part. The testing of the hypotheses on the empirical cases will tell under which 'domestic' circumstances sanction effectiveness can occur, focusing not only on the traditional aspect of interest to sanction researchers, namely the direction of compliance or defiance, but also how robust and expedite the possible policy change can be. More in detail, the hypotheses are formulated as follows.

A first hypothesis addresses the outcome dimension which has generally gained major attention by sanction scholars, namely the direction of sanction effectiveness, which can inform both on the very presence or absence of change and on its alignment or misalignment to the sender's demands.

HYPOTHESIS 1. The probability for a country to accommodate to the sender's demands and offer concessions is conditioned on the mitigating effect that sanctions-related economic or reputational costs have on the distribution of veto players' preferences in terms of reducing their aggregate distance from the sender's new ideal status quo.

This hypothesis specifically investigates how sanctions-related costs can induce veto players to update their policy preferences in such a way that they reduce their distances from the sender's new ideal status quo. When this alignment happens, it means veto players have all agreed on a policy which complies with the demands the senders attached to the sanction regime. If instead there is no agreement, meaning that not all the veto players have been directly or indirectly affected by sanctions-related costs, those who still attach a high salience to the policy under dispute will not consent to (hence, "veto" or constrain) the proposed policy

change. Defiance to the sender's requests is thus the expected outcome, contrary to Jeong and Peksen's hypothesis (2017).

This hypothesis challenges and overcomes Jeong and Peksen's framework in two other ways. First, here the formulation of the hypothesis (which is the inverse of theirs) also takes into account the different logics of sanctions, distinguishing from those which devise material damage from those in which no economic damage is imposed on the target, but only an indirect immaterial impact is (called reputational costs in this project's model). Jeong and Peksen's research, instead, always takes for granted the mechanic of an economic damage, but, as addressed by part of the literature and empirical evidence too (Giumelli, 2011; Biersteker et al, 2018), not all sanctions do actually foresee it. Second, within those cases which do devise economic damage, the hypothesis intends to investigate whether it is really the case that the economic damage alone (or the inability to find an alternative trade partner, as Jeong and Peksen theorised) determines the effectiveness of sanctions, or whether it could instead be the case that such economic damage is counter-balanced by the political salience attached to the issue (Fearon, 1994; Ang and Peksen, 2007). In other words, it aims to show how limiting it is to theorise sanctions effectiveness only on the basis of the economic costs of noncompliance, overlooking those (mostly political and reputational) linked to compliance. Therefore, the main implications of this hypothesis are the differentiation of the diverse logics of sanctions and the re-operationalization of the concept of costs, in light of the fact that veto players' preferences are not conditioned only on economic costs but also on reputational-political considerations which can mitigate the impact of the former.

A second hypothesis looks at the cohesion of collective veto players inside the target country.

HYPOTHESIS 2. The probability for a target country's collective veto player to ensure a robust implementation of the new policy decision over time is conditioned on the high level of internal cohesion of its constituent units.

Individual veto players are by definition expected to be internally very cohesive and thus not presumed to contest internally the decision taken, be they towards compliance or defiance. The behaviour of collective veto players made up by more than one constituent unit, instead, may vary depending on the degree of cohesion of those units. Collective players with high pre-sanctions cohesion who are targeted by equally-distributed sanctions are expected to implement the policy response to them coherently, either by jointly opposing compliance or jointly aligning to it depending on policy preferences position, because the all-encompassing targeting is likely to maintain or even strengthen units cohesion. Collective players with high pre-sanctions cohesion who have been targeted by a very uneven distribution of sanctions-related costs across their constituent units, instead, may be unable to implement robustly and in a unified way the decision taken as relative differences emerge and some spoiler constituent units affected differently by the costs (either because largely unaffected or unjustly identified as the exclusive wrongdoers) contest the implementation at the aggregate level. The same is true for collective players characterised by pre-existing great internal differences in the salience attached to the issue under dispute and which are targeted by unequal distribution of sanctions-related costs across their constituent units which compound the different levels of salience they attach to the issue under dispute. In these latter cases, contestation is likely to continue until the feeling of relative deprivation is corrected and a less polarised internal configuration is

established. If confirmed by the empirical test, an expected major take-away from this hypothesis is that the distribution of sanctions-related costs across different constituent units is crucial to affect internal polarization and consequently have robust concessions. Overlooking internal cohesion, the risk is that hard-fought concessions are soon challenged in the implementation by internal dissent taking the form of spoilers.

HYPOTHESIS 3. A target regime with diffuse agenda power among policy-relevant players is more likely to protract the duration of the decision about whether to change the policy under dispute and, in turn, of the sanction episode itself, all else being equal.

This last hypothesis tests the role of the number of players endowed with agenda power on the expedition of the decision-making process. The degree of diffusion of the agenda power in a political system generally is sometimes thought to reflect the kind of domestic regime of the target country (personalist authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, parliamentary democracy, ...), but it is not always necessarily so. As anticipated in the theoretical propositions, expedition is a dimension of the outcome which is overall influenced both by the number of the actors holding the agenda power and the heterogeneity of their preferences, so that an ideologically homogenous system is theoretically expected to streamline decisions better than a heterogenous one, all else being equal. However, the variation in preferences' heterogeneity can only compound, but not cancel, the initial constraint derived from the number of actors who hold the agenda setting which this hypothesis focuses on (in practice by selecting episodes similar in the degree of preference homogeneity, which is thus held under control). Indeed, even in cases with narrow 'ideological distances' among veto players (hence, all inclined to the same policy change), the presence of multiple agenda setters makes the decision-making process about which new course of action to choose among the set of alternatives that can defeat the original status quo structurally longer than a single-handed or centralised decision-making system. In the latter, the selection of the policy which is proposed as the new alternative to the original status quo is more expedited. On the contrary, a system with more than one agenda setter is theoretically expected to structurally protract the duration of the policy decision (whichever its direction, towards compliance or not) and of the sanction episode itself. It takes more time to have different agenda setters agree on the new status quo policy out of a broad set of alternatives, for example, even if all are by themselves inclined to change the original one. If confirmed by the empirical test, an anticipated major take-away from this hypothesis is that senders who are concerned with their own domestic audience costs of public commitment (especially if democratic cf. Fearon, 1994), and wish to keep the sanction episode short in time, should keep in mind that countries with diffuse political systems where the agenda power is shared and thus contested by more than one player are likely to go through longer decision-making processes, extending the duration of the policy decision with all the implications this may have on their own audiences.

From the hypothesized mechanisms sketched in the previous section, the following null hypotheses can also be generated. With regard to expedition (H3), its null hypothesis would expect that the concentration of agenda power in the hands of one single power centre does not make the decision-making process structurally more expedite, all else (including preferences homogeneity) being equal. With regard to the robustness of the decision (H2), a null hypothesis would hypothesize that an unstable and highly polarized collective veto player which

underwent a substantially uneven shock across the different constituent units still manages to implement the decision in a robust and coherent way despite defective actions by spoilers. Finally, with regard to the first hypothesis (H1), for cases which do impose material damage, a null hypothesis would expect that veto players' incentives to offer concessions are conditioned only on the distribution of economic costs alone. That is to say that the higher the economic damage the more likely concessions, regardless of the level of political salience of the policy issue in dispute. Instead, for cases which do not foresee material damage, it is actually expected that such cases do not exist at all. Only a framework – and related hypothesis – which acknowledges the existence of different logics of sanctions can capture the latter. But, if this null hypothesis is false, it is then expected that there are indeed empirical cases of that kind – such as those with a predominant signalling logic examined in this project – in which the decision to offer concessions is conditioned on the distribution of reputational costs on the issue salience that veto players attach to the policy issue at stake. With regard to the former, instead, if the null hypothesis is falsified then policy preferences and subsequent decisions are shown not to be conditioned only on the present economic costs but also on the level of the policy issue's salience and the extent to which also reputational costs affect the latter. The higher the salience attached to an issue by a veto player, the higher its resolve (Kertzer, 2016) not to offer concessions despite sanctions-related costs. As such, two countries hit by similar external pressure may well end up experiencing different outcomes in terms of concessions.

3.5. Case selection and operationalisation

The empirical part of the project does not consist of a systematic exploration of the new theoretical framework and related new spatial models on the whole universe of sanction cases. Until an adequate veto players index exists, capturing the different policy-dimension specific preferences of veto players (on the example of Tsebelis himself), non-conventional veto players outside the three classic governmental branches, the cohesion¹⁸ of collective actors, and also the degree of concentration of agenda setting power, this cannot be done extensively. As a result, the empirical investigation of the project's new theoretical framework needs to follow a different methodological strategy, based on a more limited number of cases. The research will draw these cases from the TSC dataset (Biersteker et al 2018), in which TSC sanctions-related information on the cases are complemented with additional information based on other (mostly US) coexisting sanction regimes imposed on those cases for the same issue addressed also by the UNSC. TSC is chosen because it is the only one which provides within-case episode differentiations and systematic information on sanctioning logics and related outcomes. The concept of “episodes”, namely sub-units of a country-case which differ in the strength of the sanction regime, is in fact a recent innovation (Eriksson, 2011; Biersteker et al, 2018; Giu-melli et al, 2021) which was introduced to help enhance the understanding of a target's reaction to sanctions because, among other things, provides opportunities for diachronic comparisons but also more precise considerations about the role time plays in sanction compliance. Case-specific estimations of veto players' preferences¹⁹ cannot be drawn from any existing dataset

¹⁸ While Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project created a variable and an index (respectively Legislative party cohesion, *v2pscohesv*, and Party institutionalization index, *v2xps_party*) to reflect a party's internal organization and ideological cohesion (Coppedge et al, 2021), it was done only for political parties. There is no existing systematic data collection on (all the possible) veto players' internal cohesion.

¹⁹ The quantification deriving from these estimates cannot be “mathematical” as described in the formulas in the earlier parts of this chapter. In the empirical cases, this would rather consist of ordinal measures of the variables described above.

instead; while the BTI Index (2021) often offers good insights on domestic political and institutional constraints, this information is not systematic and needs to be collected *ad hoc* in most cases through a qualitative content analysis of official reports or reliable academic country-specific sources (for countries targeted by UN sanction regimes, reports of the United Nations Security Council's Monitoring Groups can be particularly helpful), which yields data not always comparable across countries, but it is still a more feasible alternative in authoritarian contexts than field interviews (Portela and Van Laer, 2022), elite surveys or opinion polls (Gerschewski, 2013). Many other approaches could have been used for this, including the use of text as data (Benoit et al, 2018) in order to measure time-variant and policy dimension-specific preferences (Jahn, 2011), as long as data is accessible. The analysis of parliamentary debates in democracies can definitely provide such information (Ceron, 2011; Bräuninger et al, 2013), at least with regard to parties, but when the identity of veto players comprises also the military or other institutions beyond the typical governmental branches, especially in non-transparent developing countries which are generally placed under sanctions, more obstacles emerge. Yet another alternative could have been the use of more updated expert judgements, the same approach used by Tsebelis (drawing from Laver and Hunt, albeit with time invariance), by the BTI (especially valid for the *identification* of veto players), as well as by other data compilers (Grauvogel and Von Soest, 2014). Despite its limits, mostly related to reliability, transparency, and validity issues, when affordable it remains an extremely appropriate means to fill in informational gaps (Schedler, 2012) and collect comparable data across multiple countries (Saiegh, 2009). The demanding task of retrieving *ex novo* such information on veto players' identity and preferences for each case was also a major obstacle which prevented this project from conducting a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to test the hypotheses on all the cases contained in the TSC dataset (20+), in place of a case-study approach on fewer cases.

So, the three hypotheses listed above are going to be tested on a small set of comparative sanction episodes (overall drawn from three country-cases), each referring to one specific dimension of the policy decision outcome as identified by the theoretical framework adopted in this project, namely the expedition, robustness, and direction of policy change. The latter is also further differentiated between two different comparative cases on the basis of the diverse sanctioning logics of sanction episodes (with or without a material impact) because is the dimension which, according to the mechanism described above, can best show the difference the presence or absence of the material costs can make to the configuration of veto players and, in turn, to the outcome. Because of the limited number of case studies, the generalisability of the findings cannot be conclusively assessed, yet the substantive objectives of this research should not be belittled either, as even applications to a small set of cases can eventually a) show empirically the functioning of the model in real-world situations; b) show if the model leads to fairly accurate explanations which provide a better and fuller understanding than previous ones; and c) possibly also what other directions need to be followed in further theoretical developments.

Except for the dimension of expedition, for the dimensions of direction and robustness each comparison is analysed on two diachronic episodes of the same country-case selected as two most-similar cases (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). As per the most similar method, the chosen pairs of episodes are similar on most of the domestic and international background conditions except for the primary explanatory variable of interest (as identified by the theoretical framework: either the degree of congruence or the degree of internal cohesion of veto players) which differs across the two episodes of each comparison, as well as for the outcome (either

the robustness or direction of the policy decision, depending on the hypothesis). In the case of expedition, three comparative episodes drawn from the country-cases already used to test the other hypotheses are instead selected on a different criterion: only the episodes which are characterised by a high degree of congruence are selected because it is required to test how, assuming congruence is held constant, varying degrees of distribution of agenda power impact policy expedition. If the logic of the most-similar cases is right (logic of difference), then the primary explanatory variable of interest is what is presumed to cause the change in the outcome.

Diachronic within-case sanctions episodes generally make the comparison more feasible because it is easier to keep constant most of the possible alternative explanations coming from the domestic or international environment and identified as such by the literature of sanctions (Drezner, 1999; Brooks, 2002; Hufbauer et al, 2007; Peksen, 2019a). It is the case of the kind of sanctions' policy objectives (all the selected cases are also sanction episodes which address security or foreign policy issues such as support for transnational terrorism, territorial conflict, arms proliferation, rather than democracy promotion); the characteristics of the sender, including the degree of international cooperation (UN, or non-UN support, US-led, etc); the nature of the political relationship between the sender and the target; the status of trade dependence; and the kind of political regime of the sanctioned country. By using these possible alternative explanations as control variables, this project also engages in a virtual dialogue with the existing literature and, specifically through the case studies, also parameterises all those aspects of the international environment that are not highlighted in the domestic-focused theoretical framework. The only hypothesis which is not going to be tested on diachronic cases is the one on expedition, because the role of the hypothesized explanatory variable, the diffusion of agenda powers across veto players, is generally time-invariant (not always though) and so it is best assessed by comparing different domestic political systems – some characterised by more diffuse power centres and decision-making, others more centralised – across diverse countries instead of across time (using those countries already selected for the testing of the other dimensions – Eritrea, Iran, Sudan – as they are quite diverse from each other in the agenda power concentration).

The population of cases from which this project's case-studies could be extracted are all the cases contained in the TSC dataset, paying attention to which predominant logic characterises each. In selecting cases from the TSC pool, an additional criterion was also followed: because one of the project's research aims is to also address some inconclusive findings emerged in previous research of the literature on sanctions based on regime types, all the cases are selected among authoritarian sanctioned regimes (TSC, which maps UNSC-only sanction regimes, does not include democracies as targets) which present some hybridism either in the 'democratic' credentials (electoral autocracies such as Iran according to V-Dem indices; Coppedge et al, 2021) or in the kind of authoritarianism (military, personalist, dominant-party, according to Geddes' classifications, 2014 such as the cases of Eritrea and Sudan). In this way, the empirical part can also address two of the anomalies of the regime type literature, first how to deal with hybrid cases which escape traditional regime-type categorizations (including autocratic subtypes) frequently used in the literature on sanctions and, second, how come some authoritarian kinds of regimes which the existing literature expects to be more sanctions-resistant (military and party) eventually accommodated to sanctions' demands. Finally, with regard to the case selection for the comparative cases used to test the hypothesis of cohesion (chapter 5), the choice is also made in favour of a case whose country's domestic political configuration is characterised by at least one collective veto player (coalition governments or

other multi-party institutions) to ensure that there is enough variation to test how internal cohesion or polarization in collective institutions affects the overall trajectory of the collective veto player towards contestation or a robust implementation of the selected policy change.

Finally, the operationalisation of the framework for each selected case consists of a quadripartite procedure which is intended to uncover the micro-level mechanisms detailed above, in order to test each case-relevant hypothesis. Public policy studies which have already resorted to veto player approaches (Brummer and Opperman, 2017) have generally operationalized their hypotheses by developing tripartite analytical procedures very similar to one another and which consist in identifying relevant veto players, making inferences about their preferences, and discussing about the ability and incentives to actually use their veto power. This project will develop a similar procedure, with variations depending on which dependent and independent variables are under examination. In all cases, this actually implies first to identify the relevant policy making process specific to the policy area of interest and the veto points along it (1st part), namely the stages where, from the agenda setting to the decision-making outcome, veto players have the opportunity to block a policy decision. In this case, an overview and understanding of the country's domestic political configuration is necessary. After mapping the policy-relevant actors endowed with veto power, the analysis of each sanction episode can proceed. At this stage, it is already possible to draw insights on the expedition of the policy decision as hypothesised above (H3) based on the diffusion of the agenda power (Chapter 6). To move to the other dimensions and hypotheses of the policy decision about sanctions compliance, it is then also necessary to make other steps and evaluate the heterogeneity of veto players' preferences (H1) related to the issue under dispute (2nd part). This also implies examining their internal cohesion, in case they are collective actors (H2) (Chapter 5). Once sanctions have been imposed, their transformative power can compel players to update their preferences or not (3rd part). Hence, the evaluation of the heterogeneity of preferences and their distance to the sender's demands needs to check whether sanctions-related costs did have a mitigating impact on the alignment of veto players' preferences towards the senders' demands and towards domestic harmonization. As already mentioned before, two distinct mechanisms need to be process-traced in the empirical cases related to the dimension of congruence, depending on the predominant logics of sanctions referring to the presence or absence of material pain (Chapter 4).

1 st part	identify the relevant policy making process and the veto points along it, namely the stages where, from the agenda setting to the outcome, veto players have the opportunity to block a policy decision
2 nd part	evaluate the heterogeneity of their preferences, namely the distance from each other, and, in case they are collective veto players, also their internal cohesion
3 rd part	dynamic game triggered by the transformative power of sanctions: possible update of preferences
4 th part	discuss veto players' ability to actually exert their veto authority in the process and how their configuration has led to that outcome

Table 2. Case operationalisation

4

Aligning towards Compliance. Evidence from Eritrea and Iran

This chapter focuses on the first hypothesis of the project, which investigates how the probability for a country to offer policy concessions in line with the senders' demands (direction of compliance) is conditioned on the congruence of veto players' preferences, that is their average distance to the sender's ideal new status quo, once the material or reputational impact of sanctions have affected their original positions. In order to do so, the chapter distinguishes between episodes which devised and imposed significant material costs on targets (coercive and constraining logics) and those in which no direct economic impact was triggered (that is the "distinguishing character" of the signalling logic – Giumelli, 2011: 63). By doing so, it intends to challenge and overcome Jeong and Peksen's more limited framework (2017) by investigating whether sanctions can be effective also when no significant material damage is devised (precisely by taking into account the differentiation of logics) and also whether economic pain is always conducive to compliance (addressed in this chapter's Iranian case).

As mentioned above the differentiation of logics still remains a quite rare exercise in the literature of sanctions, despite the convincing results and explanatory benefits derived from its related considerations (Giumelli, 2013; Bierstecker et al, 2018). The differentiation of sanctions' logics eventually proved to be insightful to understand the target's compliance with the senders' demands. It invites the researcher to pay attention to the different kinds of demands (and audiences) enshrined in a sanction regime and the mechanics devised to satisfy them, in particular by challenging the inflation of the pain-gain logic which misplaces the role of economic damage in the dynamics at play in many sanction episodes. In this project, this differentiation of the logics is going to be explored only in relation to the variable of direction (which captures precisely the compliance or defiance of a policy decision in relation to the sender's desired new status quo), because that is the variable for which sanctions and sanction logics were mostly researched in the existing literature. Expedition and robustness, namely the other two dependent variables that this project differently from existing research also intends to focus on, are instead going to be examined without differentiating the two logics. According to the model, the expected causal mechanisms behind those variables are not directly affected by the presence or absence of a material cost (that is the central point of the logics' differentiation). Hence, taking into account the diversification of logics is not central in the analysis of how expedited or robust the policy change is.

The selection of the cases is made consulting the TSC dataset, the major existing dataset on sanctions based on the differentiation of logics (Bierstecker et al, 2018). One case (Eritrea) is chosen for the signalling logic, the other (Iran) for the logics which trigger a direct material impact (logic of coercion and constraint). Each case is analysed comparatively on two diachronic episodes. As per the most similar method (Seawright and Gerring, 2008), the chosen pairs of episodes are similar on all the major domestic and international background conditions except for the primary explanatory variable of interest (as identified by the theoretical

framework, in this case the degree of congruence of veto players) which differs across the two episodes of each comparison, as well as for the outcome (in this case the direction of the policy decision). If the logic of the most-similar cases is right (logic of difference), then that specific explanatory variable of interest (a shift in congruence triggered by the interplay between sanctions costs and the salience of the issue under dispute for each veto player of the target country) is what is presumed to cause the change in the outcome (from defiance to compliance).

4A

The Case of Eritrea's Sponsorship of Transnational Terrorism

This chapter's first case study, made up by two diachronic episodes, examines the impact congruence can have on the direction of the policy decision, focusing specifically on the signalling logic which, by means of a mechanic which does not foresee major material pain on the target (Giumelli 2011: 35), intends not only to signal disapproval of Eritrean interference in the Horn of Africa but also contribute to a change of this behaviour itself (Biersteker et al, 2018). As per the model used in this project, it investigates whether and how the strong stigmatizing signal that senders and their (negative *and* positive) sanctions can send to the target country generates reputational, rather than material, costs in the primary target (but possibly also to secondary audiences) that, depending on the internal characteristics of the targeted regime, may eventually lead to the very policy change desired by the sender. The second case study examined in this chapter is instead going to explore two episodes of a different country-case which is more predominantly based on a mechanic of direct economic impact (Iran).

The country selection was made consulting (and updating²⁰) the UN sanctions dataset of the Targeted Sanctions Consortium (Biersteker et al, 2018), which describes the sanctions imposed on Eritrea by the international community in 2009 as characterized by a predominantly signalling logic. In that sanction regime also the logics of coercion and constraint were applied, but a primary role was given to the signalling mechanic because of the difficulty to impose direct material costs in light of the economic structure of the target country. The signalling logic had at least two clear objectives, namely to "signal disapproval of Eritrean support of al-Shabaab and wider interference in the region" (Biersteker et al, 2018) and, precisely by means of that strong stigmatizing signal, also to incentivise Eritrea to cease such interferences. The latter objective, quite coercive in its formulation, was still intended to be achieved primarily through diplomatic pressure. The mechanic of direct economic damage was in fact acknowledged to be quite unfeasible against a country which mastered informal transborder networks which were difficult to fully comprehend, let alone disrupt. The data on sustained trade, arms smuggling, and mining activities presented throughout the chapter confirms that the coercive and constraint logics, albeit present on paper, were hard to implement. Ultimately, senders hoped to incentivize a modification in Eritrea's regional conduct by leveraging explicit condemnation and diplomatic pressure especially among key regional players traditionally close to Asmara. Domestic criticism played a key role too, as shown below.

²⁰ The update is necessary because in the dataset the overall assessments of the effectiveness and contributions of each logic are done by paying little attention to the distinction between Eritrea and Somalia (which in the dataset are put together as a single case). Given that this chapter's focus is only on Eritrea, only Eritrea-specific evaluation is retained focusing only on the events related to its regime, not Somalia's.

The TSC dataset contains many other cases whose predominant logic is the signalling one. But for the purpose of this research, which also aims to address some anomalies which characterize previous studies on the relation between sanctions effectiveness and regime types, here the selection aimed to pick a hybrid authoritarian state which combines personalist traits and either military or single-party ones, in order to take the chance to examine also whether it is true that, as previous research claims, in military or single-party regimes sanctions have little effect on leadership stability (Escribà-Folch and Wright, 2010) and how they behave in hybrid cases. According to regime type datasets (Geddes et al, 2014), Eritrea is a hybrid single-party personalist regime and thus appropriate to investigate the internal dynamics of a both personalist and single-party regime under sanctions in addition to the very dynamics of sanctions when the predominant logic is not based on economic damage. The two Eritrean longitudinal comparative cases were also selected by making sure the international context remained largely constant over time. As the following sections will show, some important international variations actually happened across the two episodes, mostly the increase in pressure and inducement by the Gulf countries. While this is true, the chapter will also argue that these international variables external to the domestic configuration of the Eritrean veto players cannot *alone* explain the different outcome. That is, what gave political effectiveness to sanctions was the internal checks and balances between domestic veto players. External variables which can disturb or interfere with Eritrea's conduct have an important but not primary role: if we do not look at the domestic relation between the President and the army, the international dimension cannot on its own explain Eritrea's compliance in the second episode.

4.1 Background of the Eritrean Case

The two comparative episodes are taken from the Eritrean case which was opened in December 2009 by the UN Security Council resolution 1907 and was officially closed by the Security Council Resolution 2444 on 16 December 2018 after the peace agreement between Eritrea and the new Ethiopia led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The UN Security Council approved sanctions against Eritrea in December 2009 with the objective to signal disapproval of Asmara's support to transnational terrorism and regional insurgencies (including in Somalia, in Ethiopia, and in border disputes with Djibouti) and disincentivise such a behaviour. It intended to do so both by the constraining mechanic of an arms embargo – which yet, in practice (official SIPRI data aside), could hardly constrain the arms flows which instead continued to be smuggled across the border – and, most importantly for this case-study, by the signalling mechanic of the strong message of disapproval and diplomatic pressure from the international community. The unfeasibility of materially constraining Asmara's flows made the signalling logic the predominant one, hence the choice of this country case for analysing the dynamics of the signalling mechanic. According to the latter mechanic, secondary sanctions specifically aimed to signal to Eritrea itself as well as to other international audiences that Asmara was a “pariah”, namely a disruptor of regional stability, which deserved to be excluded from multilateral diplomacy for its problematic conduct. The case is analysed by comparing two diachronic episodes (December 2009-July 2011 vs December 2011-October 2016) characterised by largely similar conditions but different outcomes regarding the policy direction, namely the alignment of Eritrea's veto players preferences to the sender's desired new status quo policy, which was the cessation of Eritrean support to insurgencies in the Horn.

Eritrean support to anti-Ethiopian insurgents in Somalia had its origin in the 1998-2000 border conflict with Ethiopia, when Asmara began considering supporting Somali-based armed groups in order to open a second front against Addis Ababa (UNSC Report 433, 2011: 85; Maruf and Joseph, 2018: 36-37) and protect its territory and regime too (Vilmer, 2021: 6). It was the military asymmetry of their armies which compelled Asmara to opt for an indirect confrontation through regional “proxies”, a move endorsed also by the army which was in that way spared from additional losses. Its animosity with Ethiopia was not only a question of border demarcations (as it had been also the case with Djibouti, Yemen, and Sudan), rather it was also about economic issues (Eritrea’s monetary and market dependence on Ethiopia) and diverse ethno-national approaches to state-building (Ethiopia’s ethno-federalism was seen as a threatening model which could break down both the countries). For Eritrea, in other words, Ethiopia was a threat both to the territorial sovereignty and to the domestic legitimacy of the newly born Eritrean state, hence an extremely salient issue for its decision-makers (Pool, 2001: 193). As the border war, together with the war on terror, contributed to reordering the regional balance of power to the further advantage of Ethiopia (Woldemariam, 2019: 8), Eritrea had to devise new ways to challenge its rival. Regional support to armed groups was back then a cost-effective way to do it.

Already in 2005, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia, which since 1992 had been in charge with the examination of the respect of the arms embargo on the latter (UNSC Res 751, 1992), began finding some evidence about Eritrea’s violations in support of armed groups based in Somalia (UNSC Report, 2006, 229: 10). Originally, evidence was found only about its support to Ethiopian armed opposition movements in exile in Somalia such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). But from 2006-2007, the Monitoring Group began reporting that Asmara was also sending arms to local Somali Islamist movements such as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and its offshoot al-Shabaab (UNSC Report 913, 2006: 11-14). No multilateral sanctions were then imposed, despite Ethiopia’s pressure on the regional community and the US to proceed in that direction. Washington shortly pondered the idea to enlist Eritrea as a State Sponsor of Terrorism in 2007 (Woldemariam, 2019: 12), but eventually a UN multilateral sanctions regime was adopted against Asmara two years later. Following the pressure of Ethiopia-led IGAD (Charron, 2013), namely the political and economic regional community of the countries in the Horn of Africa, in December 2009 sanctions were imposed on Eritrea and the monitoring of their implementation was entrusted to the same UN Monitoring Group already working on Somalia, henceforth renamed the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea. The imposition of secondary sanctions on Eritrea, which amounted to an arms imports and exports embargo, as well as a travel ban and asset freeze on individuals yet to be designated, was enshrined in the UNSCR 1907 of December 23, 2009. On 5 December 2011, a new UNSCR 2023 added also a diaspora tax ban to the existing sanction regime, while maintaining the same objectives.

As shown in the following paragraphs, more than because of material constraints linked to the arms embargo or the ban of the diaspora tax collection, it was through the increasing reputational costs sanctions attached to Asmara’s conduct that, in the second episode, a positive outcome would be achieved. First some members of the military (a latent but powerful veto player in the Eritrean foreign policy decision-making) and later also some key neighbouring states eventually signalled explicit condemnation of Eritrean policies, the latter stepping up the diplomatic pressure while the former also threatening the use of force. The attempted coup described in the second episode is the most evident manifestation of the

impact sanctions had on a specific domestic actor who, dissatisfied by growing scrutiny and stigma attached to its role, transmitted his dissent onto the stability of the whole country and the president too. In this way, not only did sanctions effectively sent a strong stigmatizing signal, but also facilitated a behavioural change as well. The president, who is Eritrea's one and only agenda setter, eventually introduced new policies which included the shift from insurgencies (in the Horn) to counterinsurgency (in Yemen), de facto aligning to the sender's requests, and which allowed him to rebrand Eritrea's tarnished image in a way he could restore his army's support and the country's stability.

4.2 Veto Players in Eritrea's Foreign Policy Decision-Making

According to Geddes' authoritarian regimes dataset (Geddes et al, 2014), since its independence in 1991-1993 Eritrea has been a single-party regime ruled by the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ, called Eritrean People's Liberation Front until 1994) with some personalist traits due to the charisma and patronage networks linked to the person who has been president ever since, Isaias Afwerki. The party was founded in the 1970s on the model of Asian communist national fronts (Pool, 1998: 29). After independence, the EPLF/PFDJ transposed its organizational structure as well as its personnel onto the new Eritrean polity, replacing the previous administrators with its members (Pool, 1998: 35; Fisher, 2020: 103) while excluding all the other existing parties, hence creating a single-party regime in which the EPLF/PFDJ achieved the full control of the state and the society too. The latter move, which de facto banned political pluralism, was intended to prevent the newly born state from becoming a "playground of political organizations" (Plaut, 2019: 121). However, this did not prevent some internal opposition from emerging from time to time.

To understand more in detail who the players holding veto power in Eritrea's foreign policy decision-making are, it is necessary to look first at the constitutional texts and then also at the actual dynamics in which decisions are taken and implemented. Starting from the former, like in other authoritarian regimes, constitutional texts can be of little help. In the first post-independence years, Eritrea embarked on a state-building process which did entail the drafting of a Constitution – in 1991 the party created a special commission led by Bereket Habte Selassie with a two-year mandate to draw up a preliminary text intended to establish a democratic order (Plaut, 2019: 121) – but those democratic efforts and hopes faded soon. In reality, a constitutional draft was eventually prepared in 1995 and ratified by the National Assembly in May 1997. But it was never implemented. Concurrently, in 1997, another committee was tasked with framing the new electoral laws, but the 1998-2000 border war prevented any progress in both regards. As of today, the country has never held an election, nor has it generally respected the other civil and social rights enshrined in the 1997 constitutional text. In 2014 Isaias announced that a new constitution had to be drafted in light of the numerous challenges coming from "hostile external schemes" emerged during the nation-building process (ivi, p.122), admitting that the original text had never been taken into serious consideration by the state leadership. Despite those declarations, no new constitution has been drafted yet. Eritrea's single-party regime has evolved in fact into a "tightly-run, hierarchical organization controlled by a narrow clique" (ivi, p.116) led by the founder and chairman of the party, President Isaias Afwerki. As a result, although the president, who is the chief executive of the country, is constitutionally supposed to be held accountable to the National Assembly, he has essentially been answerable only to himself, considering that its members, who are also the members of

the party's central committee, have not been convened anymore in the past 20 years (Vilmer, 2021: 3).

Against this backdrop, the examination of alternative sources other than the Constitution is needed to fully comprehend the decision-making process which is relevant for this case study and to draw information about the identity of the relevant veto players. While the lack of transparency does not facilitate this effort, a good amount of information can still be retrieved from the reports of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea (this chapter's main source, also with regard to the assessment of the outcome of each sanction episode) and from the large body of scholarly studies on Eritrean politics. As Dan Connell, one of the leading scholars on Eritrea, put it, also Eritrea's foreign-policy decision-making, which is the relevant decision-making process in this chapter, is generally highly centralised in the hands of the president (Connell, 2019: 309). The decision to provide weapons, funds, or training to armed opposition groups abroad does not require any legislative passage. According to the UN Monitoring Group (UNSC Report 433, 2011: 70), Eritrea's external operations in support for armed groups are supervised by the President – who is advised by an inner circle of advisers and close associates who report directly to him – and conducted by a transnational network led by veteran fighters and generals (Fisher, 2020: 120) linked to the National Security Office and the President's inner circle itself.

His inner circle is generally described to be made up of Yemane Gebreab (PFDJ member and presidential adviser), Hagos Gebrehiwot Maesho “Kisha” (head of the PFDJ's economic affairs and CEO of the Hidri conglomerate), Yemane Gebremeskel (PFDJ member and minister of information since 2012, but Isaias' spokesperson since 1994), and Brigadier General Abraham Kassa, director of the intelligence services (the so called National Security Office, which reports directly to the President) since 2015, when he replaced Colonel Fitsum Yishak “Lenin”, responsible for managing Asmara's support for Somalia-based armed groups including al-Shabaab (Jeune Afrique, 2019; Plaut, 2019, BTI, 2020b). These transnational operations were reported to be funded through the informal economy, hence the difficulty in materially constraining such flows (UNSC Report 802, 2015). The latter largely revolves around the diaspora tax but also shady PFDJ-linked companies such as the Red Sea Trading Corporation (Plaut, 2019: 144), namely the biggest PFDJ-linked conglomerate which belongs to the Hidri Trust Fund run by the above-mentioned head of the PFDJ's economic affairs department, Hagos Gebrehiwot Maesho (UNSC Report 652, 2011), and which is Eritrea's primary procurement vehicle of commodities but also of military equipment (UNSC Report 727, 2014: 34). Dubai and Qatar have long offered these PFDJ companies a banking nexus to offshore finances, which were then redirected to Eritrean representatives in Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, and Sudan, before being sent to armed groups in Somalia or elsewhere in the Horn (Plaut, 2019: 146). These economic flows are not controlled only by the PFDJ's upper ranks such as Hagos, who is specifically in charge of arms supplies, but also by other members of the President's Office such as Tesfalidet Habteselassie, and, most significantly, by members of the military. Brig. Gen. Te'ame Goitom Kinfu (Wedi Meqelle) and Colonel Fitsum Yishak (Lenin) have long been the chief and deputy chief of external operations. The latter has also worked with Gen. Teklai Kifle (Manjus), who has been in charge specifically with the smuggling and human trafficking operations through the Sudanese border, with the help of paramilitaries from the Sudanese Rashaida tribes (ivi, pp. 80-83), as well as with the Commander of the Air Force, General Teklai Habteselassie. Finally, other prominent figures who make up the network established to train foreign armed groups are Colonel Tewelde Habte

Negash (“Musa”, linked to Kenya and Somalia), Colonel Gemachew Ayana (“Kercho”, linked to OLF), Colonel Hatsaynet (linked to Afar and Somalia), Admiral Humed Karekare (linked to Djibouti and Commander of the Naval Forces), and Chief of Staff in the Office of the President Tesfalidet Teklai Selassie (UNSC Report 433, 2011: 72).

This network cannot be challenged by any other domestic political group. Eritrea’s constitution committee aspired to follow “a strict [but] democratic centralism” as its core post-independence organizing principle (Pool, 1998: 28), under the leadership of Isaias Afwerki, thus leaving open to some degree of political pluralism. However, no other party apart from the PFDJ has ever been allowed to operate inside the country, so there is no parliamentary opposition which could exercise a legislative veto on Eritrea’s foreign conduct at the National Assembly. There are opposition movements only in exile among the diaspora, but they have never succeeded in creating a unified front which can pressure the PFDJ from the outside. The border war of 1998-2000 just further centralised the decision-making process in what soon became a “garrison state” (Tronvoll and Mekonnen, 2014). As already mentioned, after the war, the 75-member Central Council and 19-member Executive Council of the PFDJ (Plaut, 2019: 209) have no longer been involved in the participatory decision-making process the constitution suggested. The Chairman of both, namely Isaias Afwerki, has since overruled such regulations (Connell, 2019: 564). But the fact that domestic pluralism was not officially tolerated did not mean that, within the PFDJ spheres, there have never been cases of contestation to Isaias’ power. All of these cases eventually failed and were repressed, but one of them deserves a special mention. It was the so-called dissident Group of 15 (G15)’s letter of 2001. In May 2001, a group of high-ranking supporters of the president – including his effective deputy, Mahmoud Ahmed Sherifo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Haile Woldensae, and the former Chief of Staff of the Army Mesfin Hagos – published a letter to all the PFDJ members (ivi, p. 559) criticizing Isaias’ domestic and foreign policies. The latter, in particular those related to his antagonism with Ethiopia in the border war, which demanded extensive military engagement, were accused to be damaging the image of the country, until then glorified as a “beacon of hope” endowed with an “aura of invincibility” (Plaut, 2019: 123). The President had been imposing his orders leaving little room of manoeuvre to the party’s executive committee, the government’s cabinet (hand-picked by the president–BTI, 2020b: 10), and the military itself, eventually displeasing some of them, especially those who had not been promoted to positions of influence.

In light of this domestic environment, where political party contestation is not allowed or harshly repressed (like in the case of G15), the power of the military is reconsidered. As an exception to the above-mentioned presidential lack of accountability, especially regarding foreign policy, the security apparatus has long been the central character in the country’s foreign conduct (Fisher, 2020: 105) and, because of the resources it controls, can be considered the only institution other than the president’s office capable of influencing and blocking the decisions proposed by the president (Basedau, 2020; BTI, 2020a), including through the use of force. Aware and concerned about the extent of their power, the president and his office have consistently tried to embed the top generals of the army in his inner circle of loyal supporters. Not only administrative positions in the new Eritrean state, but also the commanding military posts have generally been offered to the veteran fighters who founded the party or joined it soon after the split from the ELF in the 1970s, in order to ensure “coherence and solidarity of the leadership” (Pool, 1998: 28), secure dominance on the military and the other security spheres (Fisher, 2020: 104 and 120), and maintain their veto power inoperative. For twenty years, the army chief of staff, de facto the second most powerful person in the country after the president

(Connell, 2019: 75), had been Maj.Gen. Gebregziabher Andemariam “Wuchu” (1994-2014), replaced after his death by Filipos Woldeyohannes. Apart from building a network of loyal contacts, reshuffles have also been frequent across the army’s units in order to prevent the emergence of commanders who could challenge the status quo. As a further coup-proofing measure, Isaias also created a Presidential Guard made up of three units of 2,000 troops each (Plaut, 2019: 199) – personally commanded by the President despite nominal inclusion under the Army Chief of Staff’s control – and a 70-strong presidential bodyguard detachment, commanded by the above-mentioned Colonel Tesfaldat Habteselassie.

This attention the Eritrean president kept for the military is further evidence of the concrete relevance of the latter in the decision-making process. The disregard for the military as a veto actor in the conventional veto players literature has been one of the latter’s greatest deficits so far. Existing datasets and scholarly research on the topic (Henisz, 2000; Jeong and Peksen, 2017) have failed to appreciate its ability to influence politics especially in authoritarian states, through diverse forms of interventions of which coups are only the most visible one (Basedau, 2020). It is difficult to evaluate the extent of such informal dynamics as they are not described in the constitutional texts. Yet, there are some indexes that do attempt to investigate these issues systematically, such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI, 2020a), which this project largely relies on. The BTI indicator “Effective power to govern” measures precisely to what extent non-elected actors such as military officials can veto government policies in a given country. Their decision to effectively do it or not, including by resorting to force, depends on the alternatives they are given. Drawing on that indicator, Basedau (2020) found that, as of 2020, the military is a powerful veto actor in almost 40% Sub-Saharan countries. Looking specifically into the Eritrean country, then, its related BTI country report (BTI, 2020b) declares that in Eritrea “veto powers that undermine *democratic* procedures do not exist, as democratic procedures are alien to Eritrea’s policy-making process” but “high-ranking military officers have maintained their influence. They might have the ability to prevent the government from making political decisions that could threaten the profits they make through contraband trade and the exploitation of national service conscripts” (ivi, p. 10). It then seems reasonable to claim that the military in Eritrea needs to be considered as a veto player, if not always in action at least potentially ready to do so when policies salient to them are under threat.

This review of Eritrea’s internal political configuration suggests that the veto power blocs involved in the foreign-policy decision-making are the following two: the President, Isaias Afwerki, who along with his inner circle is the agenda setter; and the military, the only institution which has the power and possibility to block his decisions. There is no alternative way to veto the president’s policy initiatives other than through that institution, as shown by the impossibility of party dissidents to challenge his conduct through the National Assembly or the Executive Committee. In this regard, these political institutions cannot even be considered as potential veto players because they no longer have any power, since they are not being convened at all. Before the border war, when a semblance of “democratic centralism” was still guaranteed, they could have been considered as such. In any case, by reappraising the underestimated role of the military in the veto player analysis and sanction literature, this case study challenges those theories which associate the authoritarian nature of a regime with a fixed configuration of veto players, generally that of a single ruler at the helm, unchallenged by any other. These two comparative episodes of the Eritrean case help address this issue, showing a more complex reality.

The following sections are going to evaluate the policy preferences of these two players across the two different episodes, focusing on how the costs attached to sanctions impacted on the distance both between them (cohesion) and from the senders' desired new status quo (congruence).

4.3 Episode I (Dec-2009 to Jul-2011)

The first episode analysed refers to the first two years of the UN sanction regime against Eritrea, starting from its imposition in December 2009 until July 2011, a period throughout which Asmara was persistently found by the UN monitoring group to be responsible for providing support to armed opposition groups in Somalia and being involved in the border conflict with Djibouti. As anticipated above, it was the growing evidence of Eritrea's support to Somali groups which triggered Ethiopia's military intervention in Somalia in December 2006 and the subsequent decision to create a regional intervention force which passed under the control of the African Union in February 2007 (AMISOM) (Woldemariam, 2018a: 248-9). But the intervention of the Ethiopian army in Somalia only further increased Eritrea's support to armed opposition there. These developments would increasingly convince the United States in particular that it was time to impose an arms embargo on Asmara. Following Washington's and Addis Ababa's pressure, on December 23, 2009 thirteen members of the UN Security Council adopted the UNSC Resolution 1907, the legal basis of the Eritrea sanctions regime (until the end of 2011, when a new resolution was introduced). As Michael Woldemariam noted (2019), with the exception of North Korea Eritrea was then the only sanctions regime approved by the Security Council which included a multilateral arms embargo against another UN member state. Most of the existing arms embargo had been imposed by coalitions of states, but not through UN resolutions. This fact on its own could be taken as an indicator of the immediate success of the first objective of the signalling mechanic of the Eritrea sanctions regime (Biersteker et al, 2018). As already mentioned, the sanctions regime's objectives amounted to signalling the commitment and the disapproval of the international community against Eritrea's foreign conduct in order to obtain, in turn, also a change of behaviour in its support to regional insurgencies. However, the fact that the UN Security Council adopted a resolution against Asmara did not imply that the commitment and disapproval of the latter was really widespread, strong, and credible. Always according to Woldemariam (2019: 5), the US and Ethiopia were "critical actors" in sponsoring the resolution and encouraging other states to formally support it. IGAD, the Horn of Africa's regional community which pressured the African Union to approve these efforts, was (and still is) a pawn in the hands of the Ethiopian government (Woldemariam, 2020b). Eventually, other than Washington, in 2009-2011 only Ethiopia and Djibouti publicly made their case in favour of the resolution (Woldemariam, 2019: 5). In other words, we were still far from a situation in which truly explicit condemnations and diplomatic pressure on Asmara were being made by a good number of states of the international community. Unsurprisingly, then, over the period 2009-2011 the Monitoring Group found continuous evidence of military, material, or financial support to groups in (or acting against) Djibouti (FRUD), Ethiopia (ONLF, OLF, and many others), Somalia (ARS, al-Shabaab), and Sudan (SPLA). These groups included also al-Shabaab in Somalia, which Eritrea claimed it had only humanitarian linkages with (UNSC Report 433, 2011: 69). In 2009, reports of military cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Ukraine suggested there found a way to provide arms and technical assistance despite the embargo, while other reports suggested

financial support also came from Qatar and Libya (ivi, p. 90). Such evidence clarified that Asmara did not change its regional conduct in any significant way as these reports were not enough at the time to generate strong signals of condemnation to Eritrea (and also to other neighbouring audiences, other than Ethiopia and Djibouti) which could convince it to end its support to those insurgencies.

4.3.1 Outcome and Model Scenario

Drawing on the theoretical model scenarios described in the previous chapters²¹, in this episode there was no evidence of major updates in the policy preferences of any relevant domestic player. In its official statements, the Eritrean government used to regularly reject the argument that it had been isolated by sanctions (Woldemariam, 2019). Because of his remarkable and largely unexpected liberation history – it was the first African state to successfully achieve unilateral secession, hence defying the African Union Organization’s principle in favour of the respect of post-colonial borders – Asmara always cared about its international recognition and its image of being a “power of example” (Shabait, 2012). The imposition of a UN sanctions regime could potentially be a fatal blow to all of this. But, as of mid 2011, it did not manage to alter meaningfully the salience Eritrean players attached to the issue under dispute and, as a result, the status quo situation, which remained quite stable instead.

More in detail, the two key Eritrean actors listed above – President and the military – used to have very similar policy preferences with regard to economic (not too relevant in this first episode because of the lack of a major direct economic impact) and security visions. Starting from the latter, neo-independent Eritrea aspired to have peaceful relations with all the regional states (Pool, 2001: 192) and was completely open to military or political alliances as long as these could protect its independence and boost its regional prestige (Fisher, 2020: 205 and 217). Yet, the border war with Ethiopia of 1998-2000 and the subsequent “betrayal” of the Algiers Agreement, which was supposed to settle the dispute, but which Ethiopia and the international community failed to implement, pushed Asmara to turn around this policy, towards defiance and self-reliance (Woldemariam, 2019: 6). Eritrea’s foreign policy activism displayed in Episode I is precisely the manifestation of a unilateral approach to security, which defied existing regional structures (indeed, Eritrea withdrew from Ethiopia-led IGAD in 2007-2011) to rely instead on a transnational network of non-state armed groups. Back then, the President’s office and the army fully shared this view: supporting armed opposition groups in the region was needed to preserve the territorial integrity of the country and the survival of its regime. Unsurprisingly, the same preference for self-reliance was displayed also on the economic dimension (Pool, 2001: 191). Since independence, Eritrea has received limited external support and has remained outside the major international economic circuits, relying instead on informal cross-border contraband trade and on an extensive organizational network of support (“organizational outreach”) made up of diplomatic missions and the diaspora abroad (Pool, 1998: 32-33). This also explains why the predominant mechanic of the sanction regime itself was not devised on a logic of economic constraint, given that this structure was known

²¹ Which places a special emphasis both on sanction salience/costs and issue salience to understand if and when a change in an actor’s policy preferences is to happen. In mathematical terms, this is to happen either if sanction costs increase because of the (not necessarily material, even just reputational) impact of external pressure on their survival strategy or if issue salience decreases/is low because of own views on the issue under dispute: $Issue\ Position - [Max\{0, Sanctions\ Saliency - Issue\ Saliency\} \times (Issue\ Position - Sender\ Position)]$

not to be easy to disrupt. Those few material constraints to trade and arms exports and imports devised in this first episode could then only do little to affect Asmara's preferences calculations. It is true that the lack of reliable data because of poor transparency (Eritrea's budget reports have never been published since independence) prevents any rigorous measurement of sanctions' economic impact on the formal economy, if any, and even more so on the informal one but, with regard to the former, UNCTAD data (2020) clearly show how Eritrean trade even increased after 2009 and, as for the latter, experts share the view that, in practice, sanctions did not alter significantly the flows of the contraband trade that army generals had long been benefitting from well before sanctions (Vilmer, 2021: 6).

Overall, then, the two key players maintained very close and coherent views in 2009-2011, in a way that it could perhaps also be appropriate to talk of absorption of the military's preferences into those of the president. This was not surprising, considering the habit of assigning to every unit of the army a party commissar (Connell, 2019: 74) who could oversee "political education" and act as a liaison with the decision-making structure of the party (which actually was quickly centralised in the hands of the President's office only), in order to prevent diversity of views and challenges to the president (Pool, 1998: 34). In this episode, no challenges were faced in this sense, also because no significant costs affected the preferences of the relevant players. Therefore, the lack of costs and the two power blocs' proximity of visions ensured the continuation of the foreign policy activities which sanctions instead aimed to stigmatise. Until 2011, both blocs supported convincingly the arming of anti-Ethiopian opposition groups in neighbouring countries. Sanctions' signalling logic in particular scored poor results if you acknowledge that while "the UNSCR [2009 text] was unusually explicit in its condemnation of Eritrea's role; [and] there was also diplomatic pressure on Eritrea from IGAD" (Biersteker et al, 2018), IGAD was back then purely a mouthpiece of Ethiopia's woes, and except for Washington, most of the states of the international community had not sent explicitly strong signals against Eritrea's conduct yet. In 2009-2011 even IGAD's Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan did not condemn in significant ways the Eritrean representatives present there and involved in such regional destabilising activities; quite the opposite, they even acquiesced to Eritrea's voluntary re-joining of IGAD in July 2011, at a time when information about the latter's role behind a failed plot to disrupt the January 2011 African Union summit had not been fully appraised yet (UNSC Report 433, 2011: 114). A shift would take place only from the end of 2011, leading to a different outcome in Episode II.

4.4 Episode II (Dec-2011 to Oct-2016)

The passage from Episode I to Episode II at the end of 2011 (Episode I ends with UNSCR 2002 of 29 July 2011 while Episode II begins with UNSCR 2023 of 5 December 2011²²) is determined by the expansion of the sanction regime through the approval of UNSC Resolution 2023. The new resolution introduced a formal modification of the existing UN sanction regime against Eritrea, adding also a ban on the coercive collection of the Eritrean diaspora tax because it was thought it could be used to fund the very regional insurgencies under dispute. This measure did not effectively alter the predominant logic of the Eritrean case and of

²² The UN Monitoring Group's Report 2020 of 22 November 2011 is not related in any substantive way to Eritrea but only to Somalia and so it is irrelevant for either episode here analysed. Differently from the TSC dataset (Biersteker et al, 2018), then, the starting date for the second episode here is December 2011, instead of February 2012, because that is when a new UN Resolution was approved, introducing the diaspora ban to the existing sanction regime.

this second episode in particular, which remained the signalling one. Overall, it did not make the sanction regime any more reliant on a mechanic of direct economic impact. On the one hand, this ban failed to be implemented, as the money collected through the diaspora tax kept flowing to Asmara through its transnational network. On the other hand, the emerging mining sector granted the Eritrean government new domestic economic funds to make up for any possible material damage related to the diaspora tax. In other words, the economic costs now officially attached to the sanction regime did not significantly increase the economic pain on Asmara, which instead after 2011 even managed to increase its domestic revenues and foreign trade (UNCTAD, 2020). In practice, then, the signalling logic remained the dominant one because the others (coercive and constraining) remained unfeasible. Therefore, also in Episode II, sanctions were primarily used to signal Asmara and also the other regional governments that the former's support to regional armed groups was not tolerated by the international community, who was ready to condemn and stigmatize who behaved otherwise. This, in the intentions of the senders, could then dissuade Eritrean actors, especially those involved in the diaspora tax collection such as the generals, from continuing that conduct. Differently from Episode I, Episode II's final outcome was eventually positive, as sanctions not only contributed to effectively have a larger group of critics stigmatize Eritrea's conduct under dispute, but also to have Asmara put an end to it, fulfilling all the sanctions' objectives.

Just like UNSC Resolution 1907 of 2009, also December 2011's UNSC Reesolution 2023 was passed by thirteen members of the UN Security Council (Russia and China abstained). Again, the measure was sponsored by Washington (Hirt, 2014), but this time it was followed up by more serious commitment from a growing number of states of the international community. The vague language of the new resolution implied that each individual state had to take its own initiative to define what measures that resolution concretely required (Woldemariam, 2019: 4), hence offering a tangible testbed to evaluate the actual extent of those committed to stigmatizing Asmara's conduct. The fact that a larger number of countries apart from those in the Security Council came out publicly to criticise Asmara's actions and mandate the end of the tax collection (Canada, Netherlands, Sweden being the most vocal, because of the large diaspora they hosted) showed that the front of the critics was finally growing and becoming more explicit, scoring a point in favour of the complete fulfilment of the first objective of the regime, in signalling commitment and disapproval. The next paragraphs, however, will show that it would take still a couple more years for some key neighbouring states and domestic players to come out and stigmatize Eritrea's conduct in a way that it eventually helped achieve behavioural change too.

Examining the several reports published in those years by the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, in 2011-2012 two events contributed to increasing the front of the critics. The first event was the disclosure, after July 2011 (UNSC Report 433, 2011), of the details about a failed terrorist attack masterminded by Eritrea against the seat of the African Union in Addis Ababa during the January 2011 Summit. In the following months, the news of the heinous offense that Asmara was willing to carry out convinced many regional governments which until then had largely remained permissive with regard to Asmara's intromission in regional affairs, that it was time to distance themselves from Eritrea's actions. The second event was the evolution of the most important armed group Asmara had been supporting until then, al-Shabaab, which in 2012, after many years of informal partnership, officially swore its allegiance to al-Qa'ida. 2011 had been a difficult year for the Somali terrorist group. In August, after a series of advances from the counterterrorist AMISOM troops, it was forced to abandon

Somalia's capital Mogadishu, while in October it also had to retreat from some southern areas after Kenya's Defence Forces joined the fight under the lead of Ahmed Madobe's militia (a former warlord who had a fluctuating relationship with al-Shabaab until 2009), who was interested in creating a buffer state under his leadership around Kismayo to ensure Kenya's security against the terrorist group (Woldemariam, 2018a: 276). At the end of 2011 al-Shabaab was far from defeated, but the growing difficulties on the ground caused in February 2012 a split between the moderates (Eritrea-backed Hassan Dahir Aweys, Mukhtar Robow, and others, who abandoned the group) and Ahmed Abdi Godane's more radical wing, who maintained the leadership of the movement (in his hands since 2007) and decided to formally affiliate the group to al-Qa'ida (ivi, p. 278). For Asmara, which had no voice in that decision, it was clear that Godane's move could increase the costs attached to its regional conduct too. One thing is to support local armed opposition groups, another is to fund an al-Qa'ida affiliate during the global war on terror. Not necessarily because of stricter constraints on its Somali activities, considering that the US and several multilateral organisations had long been present in Somalia but never succeeded to truly halt its support activities, as Asmara had always been able to find a way to fund its partners. Rather, it was because of the growing reluctance among some neighbouring states which were involved in those transnational activities (especially Uganda and Kenya), to maintain their business-as-usual relations with Asmara and risk sharing the same stigma associated to the latter. Asmara reportedly decided to scale back its direct support to the group: in 2012, the UN Monitoring group found that Eritrea in Somalia was no longer *directly* supporting al-Shabaab as well as the OLF (UNSC Report 1003, 2018: 11), although it was still training the Somalia-based ONLF, after the failure of the October 2012 talks between Ethiopia and the ONLF renewed the latter's partnership with Eritrea (UNSC Report 727, 2014: 7 and 23). In 2013 Asmara hosted a conference for the ONLF (ivi, p. 24) which had since redeployed from Somalia's peripheral regions to the capital Mogadishu, with support still being channelled by the Eritrean operatives via Cairo, Kampala, Nairobi, and sometimes via Yemen too. From Mogadishu, eventually the ONLF developed a logistical entente with al-Shabaab itself, which it previously opposed, on the basis of their common hostility to Ethiopia's policies. Eritrea's distancing from al-Shabaab was therefore not so neat. In 2014, Asmara was still harbouring Ethiopian armed opposition groups such as the Tigray People's Democratic Movement (TPDM) and Ginbot Sebat, while in Somalia apart from the ONLF it also maintained contacts with "warlords and spoilers", some of whom were linked with the Federal Government but also in contact with al-Shabaab (ivi, p. 23).

The effects of this chain of events for the outcome of this episode eventually materialised in 2013-2015, when dissent emerged also inside the country and signals of disapproval reached also some crucial neighbouring countries such as the Gulf powers. Starting from the former, despite all the measures adopted by the President's Office to prevent discontent and maintain the regime stable (Hirt, 2014), the growing dissatisfaction of a part of the military with his policies eventually manifested itself in the only possible way, given the impossibility to mount a non-violent political opposition, namely through an attempted coup d'état. The most notorious and relevant attempted coup ever recorder for Eritrea came in January 2013, when few hundreds of dissident soldiers briefly occupied the Ministry of Information ("Forto"), where they thought Isaias was meeting with regional administrators (Plaut, 2019: 200) and declared on state Eri-TV which is there hosted that the country had to return to the 1997 Constitution (whose implementation had been suspended since the border war) and had to release all the political prisoners (RSF, 2013). There is no full clarity about the

size of the group of mutineers and if the event was just a mutiny or a coup attempt. Most of the sources claim the attack was led by colonel Salih Osman, a veteran fighter of the border war who fought in defence of the port of Assab, together with other veterans of that war, including colonel Said Ali Hijay (Wedi Ali) and former chief of staff of the Eritrean army Major General Omer Hassen “Tewil” (Awate, 2014). Yet the group was poorly coordinated, especially among the units outside the capital; the latter were supposed to join the operation, but when some high-ranking generals including Sebhat Ephrem, then Minister of Defence, decided instead to remain loyal to the President, these additional supporters did not materialise and eventually betrayed the revolt (Plaut, 2019: 200). The soldiers were soon surrounded by other soldiers and the coup failed without firing shots. Many were arrested and those who managed to escape would die – killed or committing suicide – shortly after. Yet, it was the most serious domestic threat to Isaias’ power since the G15 in 2001, and the most visible manifestation of dissent among the army against the way Isaias was leading the country. Many diverse implications have been drawn from this event; for what concerns the evaluation of the sanction regime against Eritrea, it can be plausibly argued that ultimately this manifestation of discontent signalled a growing diversification of views also in the foreign conduct of the country among the major Eritrean domestic power blocs, as a result of the rising pressure the military had specifically been facing on its own authority and image after 2011, as examined in the next section. In Episode II, however, disapproval grew not only internally but also at the regional level, as the Gulf powers (closer partners of Asmara than Western powers) in 2015 finally stepped up their condemnation of Asmara’s support to insurgencies in the Horn. The combination of domestic and regional condemnation not only marked the definitive achievement of the signalling objective of the sanction regime, but eventually also had an impact on the very conduct of the country which was under dispute. As examined more in detail in the following section, the growing international diplomatic pressure (combined with domestic instability) incentivised the President to adopt in 2015-2016 new policies which could satisfy his domestic critics and which effectively amounted to a realignment of Eritrea’s regional conduct closer to sanctions’ behavioural objective related to the cessation of support to insurgencies in the Horn.

After 2015, the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea no longer found evidence of Asmara’s support to the ONLF (UNSC Report 1003, 2018: 10). Eritrea and its transnational network were no longer supporting any armed group based in Somalia. Apart from this, there were two additional measures taken by Eritrea that, in 2016, would convince the UN Monitoring Group to ask to dissociate the country from the existing sanctions regime (UNSC Report 920, 2016: 33), hence acknowledging that factual compliance with the senders’ demands had been achieved. First, in September 2015 the leader of the Eritrea-based armed group TPDM, Mola Asgedom, defected to Ethiopia together with 800 men, after Eritrea pushed for the creation of a unified front of all the Ethiopian armed opposition groups hosted on its territory, with a view to reducing Asmara’s total amount of effort devoted to this issue. The TPDM had been the Eritrea-based group which had received most funds and training from Asmara, as its fighters hailed from the same ethnic group as Isaias (UNSC Report 802, 2015: 19). When the Government of Eritrea decided to facilitate the unification of the disparate armed opposition groups it was supporting (ivi, pp. 18-20), disagreements between the TPDM and the other remaining groups increased and a feeling of betrayal convinced the former that it was better to find an agreement with Ethiopia and surrender. Secondly, in March 2016 Asmara decided to release to Djibouti all the remaining missing combatants it had held as prisoners of war since 2008 (ivi, pp. 28-29). Between the end of February and the beginning of March both

the presidents of Eritrea and Djibouti separately visited Qatar which was then mediating on their border dispute. In that occasion, Djibouti's president Ismail Omar Guelleh pinned the resolution of the dispute between the two countries down on the release of these soldiers, which was effectively granted by Isaias straight after.

4.4.1 Outcome and Model Scenario

The dynamics of this second episode differed from the first not in the direct economic impact of sanctions, which remained peripheral in both, but in the impact that the stigma, the so-called reputational costs of this project's model, which was attached to sanctions finally had on certain domestic as well as regional players. This, in turn, convinced the Eritrean agenda setter, who is the president, to propose and eventually adopt new policies that were not initially desired but which de facto accommodated the sender's major demands. As of the end of 2016, not only had Eritrea's support to regional insurgencies been widely condemned (the signalling objective of the sanctions regime), but the country had also modified the stigmatised conduct itself, fulfilling also the related behavioural objective. For the purposes of this project, the formal request advanced by the UN Monitoring Group in October 2016 to dissociate Eritrea from the UN sanctions regime (UNSC Report 920, 2016) determined the positive closure of the second episode (December 2011-October 2016) and the case itself, despite the fact that the actual dissociation and removal of sanctions would happen only in 2018²³.

Drawing on the theoretical scenarios of this project's model, what happened in this episode ultimately is a modification in the distribution of the two key Eritrean power blocs' preferences (congruence) in the direction of multilateral engagement that was implicitly requested by the sanction regime. This took place, first, with a shift in the military's own policy preferences away from the President's self-reliant security approach, later followed up by a similar shift in the President's position too, determined by the latter's attempt to maintain the regime stable (hence, by positional considerations). Since the liberation years, Isaias and its EPLF/PFDJ clique had been able to imprint their vision rooted in self-reliance (Pool, 2001: 195) on most party members and generals. Absent any major external cost to it, this similarity of views was indeed maintained during the first episode. However, after 2011, the biggest manifestation of internal dissent ever staged since 2001 vividly signalled a shift in the policy preferences of the army. The 2013 coup attempt was the empirical indicator of the military's position shifting away from the president's absorption. By employing force, the military (in fact, a part of it) tried to veto Isaias' unrestrained regional policymaking and alter the domestic reality so that it could suit more closely its own preferences, now turned to multilateral security engagement.

Throughout Episode I, Eritrea's support to anti-Ethiopia armed groups in the region was still considered appropriate to defend the country from Addis' threat (thus remaining high in *issue* salience, as per this project's model). Sanctions, which had been imposed to signal

²³ This discussion is not central for this chapter's research purposes, but in 2016-2018 (a sort of third episode of this case) sanctions remained in place because some actors of the international community (mostly the UK) conditioned their removal on a formal rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia (something that was not requested in the original demands – indeed, because of the informal change in the sender's demands, it would be more appropriate to consider 2016-2018 as the first episode of a new, different Eritrean case rather than the continuation of the previous one). In any case, after 2016 support for sanctions weakened significantly due to Eritrea's de facto major compliance with the original demands (Vilmer, 2021: 9). Eritrea preserved the new conduct (Gardner, 2017) and sanctions were removed when a peace agreement was reached in 2018 between Addis and Asmara, as a result of quite a radical change in the identity of the government of the former.

Eritrea that such behaviour would only challenge further its legitimacy, by voicing strong disapproval of Asmara's actions, did not have significant effects in the first years (thus remaining low in *sanction* salience). They failed to convince both neighbouring governments of the danger of Asmara's actions through those transnational networks that involved also their territories, and Eritrean domestic actors of the damage such conduct was inflicting to their image. However, after 2011, the army experienced growing threats to its authority in controlling the diaspora tax, not in terms of actual diminishing revenues (as they kept flowing after the ban largely failed to be implemented), but rather in terms of the stigma they became associated with after their activities became object of international scrutiny. The radicalization of certain groups they were supporting in the region was not earning them good reputation either for their "aura of invincibility" (Plaut, 2019: 123), threatened by bigger counterterrorism attention (Woldemariam, 2018a: 278). All in all, the image of the liberation days of being a "power of example" was in danger.

This pressure and the prospect of its intensification through the combination of sanctions with other companion policies eventually destabilised the country, by means of growing dissent inside one of the two key power blocs of the country, the army. Despite initial attempts to downplay the meaning of the failed coup attempt, Isaias eventually adopted a series of measures to appease the military. In the terminology of the model scenarios, Isaias was not trying to lure the military back to the initial preferences position but rather he himself moved his own policy preferences in the same direction of the army's shift. Despite the fact that the diaspora tax ban did not actually manage to materially reduce the tax flow, the President first ensured that the generals could take part in the blooming mining sector (until then forbidden for them) as an additional source of profit. Thanks to the mining sector, Eritrea even saw its revenues increase in that period. But most importantly, Isaias also adopted new security policies which could rehabilitate the image of the army and the whole country as pivot of regional dynamics. The stigma attached by a growing number of foreign actors to Asmara's regional conduct and the diaspora tax collection weakened especially the prestige of the actor primarily involved in that, namely the Eritrean army. While it is difficult to have knowledge of the exact motivations behind the coup attempt of January 2013, on the basis of their demands, which were very similar to the content of the G15 letter, it is plausible to think that the subversive soldiers were also demanding the return to the participatory decision-making process enshrined in the text but never implemented. In foreign policy, that entailed less arbitrary adventures in support of insurgencies that were not approved by the army and which would rather further tarnish its aura of invincibility. The President initially seemed to be unaffected by these dynamics; being less exposed to the stigma which the generals instead perceived, he was not inclined to sacrifice its ambitions yet. According to many observers, it is indeed quite hard to see the president modify his policies to appease other domestic actors. According to Fisher (2020: 199) and Hirt (2014), Isaias is an "arrogant" leader hardly inclined to subject his views to domestic critics, but at the same time his personalisation of policymaking (Plaut, 2019: 99) actually favours such changes once they are perceived as an opportunity to ensure the stability of the regime and the very rehabilitation of Eritrea's standing in the region (Fisher, 2020: 205; Dazi-Héni and Le Gouriellec, 2021: 17). This opportunity eventually came in 2015-2016, facilitated by the new round of diplomatic pressure exerted by the Gulf powers. In 2015, as they launched the military offensive against the Houthi insurgency in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) decided to step up their pressure on Asmara so that it could give up its support to Horn insurgencies and join instead their own Yemeni counterinsurgency. Gulf

powers asked Eritrea to join their Yemeni offensive after Djibouti turned down their request to let them use its territory for the war. In exchange for allowing the Saudi-led coalition to use Eritrea's territory and airspace, Asmara could rehabilitate itself as a pillar of regional stability rather than instability. Eritrea was not a first choice precisely because, differently from neighbouring Djibouti, it was under a UN arms embargo. When left with little alternatives to Djibouti, on April 29, 2015, Riyadh invited Isaias to discuss and conclude a military partnership agreement (UNSC Report 802, 2015: 13). For the President, it was the occasion to appease the military and restore the prestige of the country as a pillar of regional security. The international dimension created an opportunity for Eritrea's compliance that yet could be seized only because of the specific balance of power *inside* the Eritrean domestic political environment.

The strong signal Gulf powers sent against Asmara's regional insurgencies in that occasion was the definitive confirmation that the signalling objective of sanctions was finally obtained. But to what extent did this signalling mechanic also contribute to the achievement of sanctions' behavioural objective? The temporal succession of events suggests that it may well be plausible that, first, internal tensions with the army and, then, the growing condemnation on Asmara's Horn activities, coupled with the related inducements attached to their abandonment (namely the strategic centrality Asmara would instead regain by participating in the Yemeni counterinsurgency) likely affected Isaias' calculations and convinced him it was time to shift from a unilateral to a multilateral security approach, precisely to satisfy the army and to rehabilitate its tainted image, ultimately accommodating to sanctions' demands. Because of the opaque nature of the agreement, it is unknown whether Asmara also received monetary compensation for this new policy other than the restructuring of the base of Assab. But even if this mechanic of positive economic impact were present, it would not obliterate the concurrent existence of the other. Without sanctions-related reputational costs and inducements, it is implausible that Eritrea would have scaled down its other disputed activities in the Horn, as it could have rather maintained its support to anti-Ethiopian armed groups in Tigray and Djibouti thanks to mine sector revenues while also providing its bases to the Yemeni counterinsurgent campaign. After all, the latter would have made up for the former's tainted reputation. But sanctions, instead, increased the costs for the continuation of the former activities. Those activities were preventing Asmara from joining Riyadh and Abu Dhabi's campaign, because they would violate the conditions the latter clearly set out. Gulf powers knew that using Eritrea's territory and space would not have amounted to a violation of UN resolutions per se (UNSC Report 802, 2015: 15) but, absent any specific authorization from the security council (UNSC Report 920, 2016, p. 13), any further action that would involve the Eritrean military would definitely have constituted a violation of the arms embargo, a damage for Gulf power's own image which, back then, wanted to depict their military intervention in Yemen as the restoration of the legitimate Yemeni government after Houthi's insurgency in compliance with international law.

So, both the increase of diplomatic pressure stigmatizing Asmara's conduct (negative sanctions) and the prospects of regaining regional rehabilitation (positive sanctions) seemed to have ultimately offered Isaias a chance to change his "business model" at home, in the words used by de Waal (2015: 146), appeasing the generals who remained his major source of concern for his own survival. This, in turn, consisted in upgrading Eritrea's kind of engagement in the region (Plaut, 2019: 85), hence collaborating with regional countries as exemplified by Eritrea's scale-down of its "isolationist" insurgency-based policy (Hirt, 2014) in favour of its involvement in the multilateral counterinsurgency in Yemen.

4.5 Conclusions

The difference between the two episodes which determined the failure of the former and the success of the latter lies in a combination of factors, including the ability of the updated sanctions regime in creating a wide international front of governments condemning Asmara's actions which could affect the image of a powerful, albeit often latent, Eritrean veto player (the military). The critical juncture in which the discontent with the stigma associated to their activities eventually destabilised the country and led to a behavioural change was indeed in 2013-2015 when, first, the attempted coup clearly signalled the army's growing discontent with the president and, later, Gulf powers engaged in a more vocal campaign of disapproval of Asmara's regional security approach. Far from being driven by moral concerns, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi needed Asmara to pursue their own Yemeni-related security interests. Yet, the Eritrea (secondary) sanctions regime was an obstacle to this. In this sense, the contribution of sanctions to Eritrea's shift in regional conduct cannot be denied. Definitely the international context had changed with the breakout of the war in Yemen, triggered by reasons unrelated to Eritrea. Yet, that change of context would have not had any influence on Eritrea's sanctioned behaviour if it had not been for the presence of sanctions on it.

Support to insurgencies was Isaias' and the army's preferred policy as long as it served to preserve stability if not independence proper against the Ethiopian threat. In the moment this conduct began destabilising the domestic balance of power (the army's discontent, which was also the result of sanctions-induced stigma on the actors involved in the diaspora tax network, was a credible political threat to their own survival mode) then it could be sacrificed with a new policy more apt to ensure the regime's survival and even relaunch its image. Sanctions shifted Eritrea's closest threat from Ethiopia to the inside. As a result, in just a few years, Isaias was forced to propose new policies which could rehabilitate the reputation of the army. While the coercive and constraining logics were somewhat present in the sanction regime, the signalling mechanic was ultimately predominant in the whole game and successful with regard to both objectives. Also the diaspora tax ban, which is primarily based on a constraining material logic, actually obtained a major effect by signalling the growing disapproval that some international countries were developing towards the Eritrean actors involved in it, also thanks to information campaigns mounted by part of the very Eritrean diaspora which was subjected to the tax collection (Hirt, 2014). Little did it matter that the ban itself on the collection was actually poorly implemented, it was enough to send a strong stigmatizing signal to some members of the military. Gulf powers' pressure in 2015 did the rest. It confirmed the achievement of the signalling objective, but ultimately also convinced Asmara to change its conduct too, in the direction of sanctions' demands.

To conclude, among the numerous insights the comparison of these episodes of the Eritrean case can offer, one which is relevant for the hypothesis behind this chapter is that sanctions can indeed produce concessions even when the economic impact is negligible or unfeasible. In this regard, it shows how essential it is to know how power is distributed in the target country. Building on those sanctions theories which focus on the domestic politics of the target country, the Eritrean case's veto player perspective suggests that it is crucial not only to understand which are the vulnerabilities of the domestic players in terms of different survival strategies (i.e. based on the diaspora network, or else), but also which are the internal dynamics of political checks and balances. Sanctions did not manage neither to diminish Eritrea's capacity to support insurgencies nor to diminish its ability to raise the funds from the diaspora. Yet, the

widespread stigmatization of those conducts eventually affected the salience that some domestic actors endowed with veto power used to attach to the policy under dispute. In light of the evidence gathered above, it is plausible to think that policies in support of insurgencies began losing salience among some generals after the stigma associated with them through the sanctions on the diaspora tax had some of them think their authority and reputation (intended as invincibility) were in danger. Contrary to what Escribà-Folch and Wright claimed (2010: 336), this managed to destabilise also a single-party regime. Despite all the coup-proofing measures, internal dissent emerged and became a problem for the president too, who first introduced new economic policies to appease the army, later followed up by changes in security policies too, certainly facilitated by the presence of a positive dimension in the UN sanctions regime, consisting in the reputational benefits that the end of such policies could trigger. Indeed, in 2015 Gulf powers and Isaias alike realised sanctions were jeopardising the opportunity to respectively succeed in Yemen and rehabilitate Eritrea's reputation regionally (hence gratifying the army too). As a result, this Eritrean case shows that it is not necessary to materially curtail the external revenue of the diaspora remittances the regime depends on in order to make it vulnerable to sanctions. Attaching a stigma to those actions could well trigger indirect reputational costs that, if calibrated on actors endowed with veto power (like the army was), can shift the targets' overall preferences towards a policy change.

But this Eritrean case clearly also suggests a reappraisal of the role of positive sanctions (reputational inducements) too. Should the sanction regime have signalled more explicit inducements linked to the end of the conduct under dispute, it could have likely achieved a positive outcome already in the first episode. Finally, these considerations on the potential inducements related to a sanction regime are also a reminder of the importance the context has in the evaluation of sanctions effectiveness (Giumelli, 2013) not as an alternative explanatory factor but rather as something that can facilitate the actualisation of some mechanics included in the sanction regime. As Woldemariam put it, Eritrea's shifting international fortunes "had as much to do with changes in the international political environment as they did with the internal characteristics of its party-state" (Woldemariam, 2019). A new event in the international environment (such as the war in Yemen) interacted with some domestic players' preferences (in this case the army's prestige and, later, the president's positional considerations to preserve the stability of the country and of his office) precisely through the mechanic of the sanction regime in place, whose reputational costs first contributed to animate a domestic strife between Eritrean veto power blocs and then to a behavioural change too.

4B

The Case of Iran's Nuclear Enrichment

This chapter's second case study, also made up by two diachronic episodes, examines the impact congruence can have on the direction of the policy decision, focusing on another logic, this time a constraining one which, by means of a mechanic which does foresee a direct material pain on the target, intends not necessarily to require a voluntary behavioural change by the target (which is typical of the coercive logic) but to slow down its implementation plans and limiting the capabilities to continue the conduct under dispute (Giumelli 2011: 35). As per

the model used in this project, it investigates whether and how sanctions generate material economic costs on the primary target that, depending also on the internal characteristics of the country, may lead to policy concessions in the direction desired by the sender. As this project's model conceives external costs as necessary but not sufficient to policy concessions, if not complemented by a conducive internal political configuration, a policy shift is argued to depend not only on the salience of sanctions costs but also on the salience internal players attach to the issue under dispute.

This country selection too was made by consulting the TSC dataset on UN sanctions (Biersteker et al, 2018), which classifies the sanctions imposed on Iran's nuclear proliferation activities into six different episodes since 2006 (the last one being still ongoing as of early 2022). All the logics were present across the different episodes, the constraining one being the predominant one because of the difficulty to coerce Iran into the complete disbandment of its nuclear programme. The main objective was in fact to induce Iran to renounce nuclear proliferation making it costly, in terms of a near commercial and financial embargo and of political isolation. The data on the performance of Iran's economy in 2010-2016 confirms that the international sanction regime did result in actual material damage of the target country as a whole, also affecting the population at large. Despite some key institutional actors did find ways to cushion such impact, it was still felt. But this did not translate into political concessions until 2015. Ultimately, this chapter argues, internal changes in the Iranian political establishment which had long been in preparation but came to light only in 2013, proved crucial to translate sanctions pressure into a major policy shift in nuclear enrichment.

The TSC dataset contains many cases whose predominant logic is the constraining one. But for the purpose of this research, which also aims to address some anomalies which characterize previous studies on the relation between sanctions effectiveness and regime types, also the selection of this chapter's second case study focuses on a hybrid regime, in this case intended as characterised by authoritarian practices but also limited democratic dynamics in order to take the chance to examine how hybrid regimes behave in this regard (Escribà-Folch and Wright, 2010). According to datasets measuring the status of democracy (Coppedge et al, 2021; Freedom House, 2021), Iran is an electoral autocracy and thus appropriate to investigate the internal dynamics of a hybrid regime under sanctions, characterised by some institutional actors unaffected by the impact that economic costs may have on the society but also by other elective actors who do care about it instead. As in the case of Eritrea, the chapter discusses the decision-making process in the context of the target country's policy under dispute, in this case the Iranian nuclear program, analysing specifically the Iranian political establishment's behaviour in the nuclear security realm. This is necessary to understand how the target country's elites think about their own policy and eventually to assess the effectiveness of restrictive measures in moulding Iranian actors' views on the issue under dispute, if any. Despite the difficulty in capturing the inner workings of another poorly transparent political and security system, mapping out the way the Iranian political system translates into the nuclear decision-making is fundamental to understand which options of external pressure work and how. The recent release of declassified documents on close nuclear-related interactions Iran had with the US and other states in the past few years (Byrne and Byrne, 2021) offers unprecedented clues about these generally opaque dynamics.

4.6 Background of the Iranian nuclear case

Sanctions have long been foreign powers' preferred foreign policy tool to address the contentious behaviour of the Islamic Republic (Reynolds and Wan, 2012). Since 1979, with its highs and lows, the international community and especially its Western powers have imposed a great number of restrictive measures on Iran (Eineman, 2020), with various purposes (Katzman, 2021). One of them was to coerce Iran to forgo first, and then just constrain, its nuclear enrichment programme. After many failed attempts, this objective was achieved in July 2015 when Iran and six world powers on behalf of the international community signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, an agreement which successfully obtained the limitation of Iran's nuclear enrichment in exchange for nuclear sanctions relief (then UNSCR 2231 transposed that agreement reached by Iran and the five UN veto powers plus Germany into a UN binding resolution – cf. UNSC Res 2231, 2015; JCPOA, 2015).

This case study focuses on Iran's nuclear-related sanctions, specifically the post-2010 international sanction regime led by the United States and some European countries (coordinated by the High Representative of the European Union) and supported by the United Nations (UNSC Res 1737, 2006; UNSC Res 1803, 2008; UNSC Res 1929, 2010). Iran's interest in acquiring nuclear technology and skills dated back to the monarchical period, when in 1950s the Shah Reza Pahlavi became one of the recipients of the US-sponsored Atoms for Peace programme (NTI, 2019). It was the US and France, some of today's most sceptical actors about Iran's nuclear programme, that in the 1960s and 1970s supplied Tehran with nuclear facilities and the know-how required to diversify its energy resources and use nuclear energy for domestic electricity needs. While assisting Iran, the US also required it to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty though, which Iran has since been part of, to prevent the development of a military dimension, given the Shah's ambitious and not always transparent plans for his officially civilian nuclear programme (Kerr, 2021).

After the 1979 revolution the Islamic Republic decided to put the programme on hold. This decision was accelerated by the beginning of the war against Iraq in 1980 and the direct damages the conflict caused to some Iranian nuclear facilities, but was also driven by the changes which were emerging in the new establishment's priorities of the time: the settlement of the post-revolution instability and the successful realization of the socio-political revolutionary principles. It was Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons in north-west Iran that played a key role in eventually convincing Tehran to resume the programme and develop its own non-conventional military deterrent (in addition to conventional deterrents such as missiles) to match Iraq's non-conventional capabilities (Gaietta, 2015). Iran turned to Russia, China, Pakistan and its 'AQ Khan network' (led by the nuclear physicist Abdul Qadeer Khan who developed Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme) to seal new deals and expand its nuclear programme. As a consequence, the Western nuclear partnership came to an end, supplanted by Russian, Asian, and, for a limited time, also South African support (Cordesman, 2006). Europe, in addition to the US, became the toughest opponent of Iran's nuclear programme raising doubts about a possible military dimension and pondering the possibility of imposing nuclear-related sanctions (the US had already been imposing non-nuclear sanctions on Iran since the November 1979 hostage crisis; as noted above, forms of nuclear restriction were already present under the Shah, who indeed thought the US was disproportionately interfering with the exercise of Iran's national sovereignty rights regarding nuclear enrichment). While during the 1990s the reports and inspections of the UN-endorsed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) never detected irregularities, the international community's suspicions were confirmed in August 2002 when the National Council of

Resistance of Iran, an Iranian organisation opposed to the official regime, disclosed the presence of secret programmes in the underground nuclear facilities for heavy water production in Arak and for uranium enrichment in Natanz. Tehran's first denial and then partial acknowledgement of the real dimension of its programme definitively deprived of any credibility the regime's official narrative of peaceful nuclear purposes, even more after that the IAEA disclosed worrisome figures about uranium enrichment, clearly exceeding civilian research levels (IAEA, 2005). The concerns of the international community were justified, as it was later revealed that in 1997-2003 Iran was indeed working on the so-called Amad Plan, the nuclear programme's parallel military dimension, allegedly consisting of a structured project with feasibility studies meant to master different activities for the manufacturing of a nuclear device (IAEA, 2015).

International diplomatic attempts aiming at forcing Iran to abandon its programme of nuclear enrichment were launched from 2003 onwards, through the creation of a EU3/EU negotiating team first, and a P5+1 framework later, made up of the five veto powers of the UN Security Council plus Germany²⁴. Countries of the so-called Global South were also active on this front, too, especially those for whom nuclear politics carried a "special flavour" (Onderco, 2015). The first nuclear-related sanctions supported by the international community were imposed in 2006 and were removed only in 2015-16. Drawing on the classification done by the TSC dataset (Biersteker et al, 2018), six episodes can be detected: 2006-2007; 2007-2008; 2008-2010; 2010-2013; 2013-2016; and the post-2016 situation. The chapter will focus on a comparative analysis of the 2010-13 (outcome: non-compliance, across all the possible logics) and 2013-16 (outcome: compliance, across all the logics) episodes, aiming at detecting the domestic factors that contributed, together with external pressure, to the positive change in the outcome.

4.7 Veto Players in Iran's security and foreign policy decision-making

"[The Supreme Leader] Khamenei has the final word in Iran, but his words are not always final" (Burns, 2020). Jeffrey Burns is one of the scholars and diplomats with closest experience with the Islamic Republic of Iran who have most actively engaged in fighting the simplistic narrative that sees the Islamic Republic as a single-party regime singlehandedly run by an unrestrained ruler. Since 1979, but even more so since 1989 after the death of the founder of the Islamic Republic Ayatollah Khomeini, the domestic political situation of the country has actually been more complex than that.

The 1979 revolution produced a hybrid type of competitive authoritarian regime in Iran (Abdolmohammadi and Cama, 2015; Brumberg and Farhi, 2016), characterized by a set of institutions some being elective (Presidency, Parliament, the Assembly of Experts) other being nominated by the Supreme Leader (the Judiciary, the Armed forces, the Guardian Council). Most importantly, power and authority in this kind of regime is diffuse (Kazemzadeh, 2017; Harris, 2020), thus requiring a wider elite consensus for major shifts in foreign policy, securing consent across the whole political establishment beyond a narrow elite coalition through hard bargaining. Congruence across political elites but also the security apparatus is generally maintained, as in other revolutionary states as well (Levitsky and Way, 2015), mostly through commonality of views towards threats of external and internal origin deriving from a shared

²⁴ On the exclusion of Italy, which had warm ties with Iran dating as far back as the late 1950s, see Alcaro, 2018, pp.108-9.

revolutionary experience, which makes revolutionary states less likely to be disrupted by economic shocks which affect those elites' patronage systems, because of the generally lower saliency of economy compared to security perceptions ('issue salience', cf. Harris, 2020). This does not mean though that the domestic establishment is not characterised by a plurality of factions (Abdolmohammadi and Cama, 2020 for an overview) and diverse configurations changing over time in reaction to evolving security threats and critical junctures over the past forty decades (i.e., the radicalization of economic and security visions as exemplified by the recent empowerment of the securocrats today can be seen as a product of 2001-2003 regional instability and later external pressure), but that some core tenets are shared by all the members of the establishment of the Islamic Republic (*nezam* in Persian).

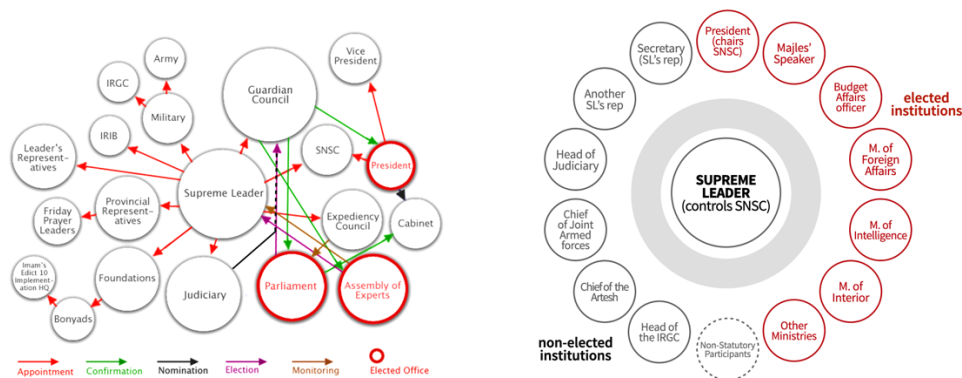


Figure 1. The Iranian power structure (left side) and institutional actors participating in the SNSC and nuclear policymaking (right side). Source: Iran Data Portal, 2021, with own edits.

The diffusion of institutional rule in the Islamic Republic of Iran is not, in itself, in contradiction with the other major pillar of this political system, namely the fact that this system is led by a Supreme Leader who holds the ultimate political authority. According to Article 110 of the Constitution, the figure of the Supreme Leader is tasked, among other things, with the final approval for decisions on strategic issues, such as foreign and security policies. How can a diffuse political system coexist with an ultimate decision-maker? “Rather than a pyramid, [the] Iranian decision-making resembles a pentagon”, with the ultimate decision-maker at the centre surrounded by a plethora of decision-shapers (Shabani and Rouhi, 2013; cf. **Figure 1**). In the Iranian political system, while the Supreme Leader is by Constitution the final decision-maker, a number of other political and institutional actors can constrain the foreign-policy decision-making *before* the leader takes his final position. These veto players can influence the very red lines that the Supreme Leader can introduce to limit the space within whose borders the decision-making takes place (they are in this case “decision-shapers”) and can constrain the very policy decision that has to be reached among them (veto player dimension proper) before being eventually submitted to the leader for validation. Once it is validated, no more “vetoes” can be cast, but *before* they certainly can.

Like elsewhere, decision-making in Iran is subject centric (Divsallar, 2021), thus depending on the policy area and its importance. Actors and institutions involved change accordingly. The nuclear policymaking belongs to the highest level of security and foreign policy where the final decision takes place by consensus across a large part of the security and foreign policy establishment, but there are other lower-priority areas which do not require the direct involvement of the highest-ranking institutions (i.e., Iran’s Africa development policies,

where presidents have more freedom of action – Corda, 2021). Focusing on the former, the Supreme Leader’s communication of red lines within which political actors can operate does not exhaust Iran’s nuclear decision-making process. On the contrary, a complex web of organizations across the political system are involved in a process that is organised through the so-called Supreme National Security Council (SNSC, cf. **Figure 1**). As a result, the players who can exert such influence in the foreign and security policy realm, and specifically with regard to nuclear policies this chapter focuses on, are those formally represented within the Supreme National Security Council which, according to Chapter XIII art. 176 of the updated constitution (1989), was constituted in 1989 to fulfil the following responsibilities:

- “1. Determining the defence and national security policies within the framework of general policies determined by the Leader.
2. Coordination of activities in the areas relating to politics, intelligence, social, cultural and economic fields in regard to general defence and security policies.
3. Exploitation of materialistic and intellectual resources of the country for facing the internal and external threats” (Constitute Project, 2021)

The components of the SNSC, which uses a consensus-based approach to deciding strategic issues and is presided over by the President (Kazemzadeh, 2017), are the heads of i) the executive (the President), ii) the Parliament (the Speaker, whom is selected by the Majles), and iii) the Judiciary (a clerical figure nominated by the Supreme Leader); the Chiefs of iv) the Joined Armed Forces, v) the Army (Artesh) and vi) the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC); the Ministers of vii) Foreign Affairs, viii) Interior, and ix) Intelligence as well as x) an additional one related to the subject under discussion, if different; xi-xii) two representatives of the Supreme Leader (who does not participate in any institutional meeting in person), xiii) the officer of budget affairs. They can be grouped in macro blocks, given that the President nominates all the cabinet ministers (thus 6/13 SNSC members are under the President’s direct supervision), and the Supreme Leader appoints his two representatives, the head of the Judiciary, and the chiefs of all the security forces (6/13 SNSC members are under the Supreme Leader’s direct supervision), so absorptions of these players’ preferences are very frequent. One of the two Supreme Leader’s representatives, who is chosen also following the suggestion of the President, generally serves as the SNSC secretary. The Leader’s representatives present the Leader’s redlines, which do not impose a decision but can limit its boundaries. Each decision taken by the SNSC “shall be effective after the confirmation by the Leader” (Constitute Project, 2021). This dispels any doubt, if any, about the ultimate veto power of the Supreme Leader, who remains the final decision-maker. But also reinforces how much Iran’s security policies are the “result of intricate bargaining games [...] in a feedback loop with the supreme leader’s office” (Tabatabai, 2020b). While the Supreme Leader’s Office creates some redlines which limit the debate, they are often disclosed after consulting the other power centres (Tabatabai, 2019) in a two-sided process (the concept of “decision-shapers” also anticipates the redlines). No single entity alone can impose decisions on major foreign policy or national security issues on its own but has to bargain to shift the overall consensus across all the other elites towards its own preferences. Therefore, before the decision arrives at the Supreme Leader’s office for his final approval or veto, the policy decision itself is debated by consensus among all the entities represented in the SNSC and is taken only if consensus has been built in the SNSC. SNSC entities are, in this sense, endowed with veto power over the debated policy issue because can prevent a given policy decision from being formulated, well before it is sent to the Supreme Leader.

While many taxonomies can be used to group the diverse domestic groups who exist in the Iranian political establishment (Buchta, 2000; Moslem, 2002; Kazemzadeh, 2008; Vaez, 2015; Geranmayeh, 2020), this project identifies at least five major groups which can operate there, but are not necessarily always present at any time: the Principlists, the securocrats, the traditional conservatives, the pragmatic conservatives, the reformists (the last two often merged together as “modernisers”). Although they share some overall objectives, determined by the fact that they are all part of the establishment, and thus have to endorse and abide by the “revolutionary” principles enshrined in the Constitution, these entities do subscribe to different security and economic worldviews, which are different in the means these entities prefer to use, if not entirely in the objectives which sometimes can be shared across more groups (all share the objective to protect the Islamic Republic; Abdolmohammadi and Cama, 2020, 155). As a result, with regard to nuclear policies, while no Iranian player would ever endorse zero nuclear enrichment in contradiction with the strategic objective of acquiring and maintaining sovereignty and knowledge (represented by possessing the domestic capabilities to develop a military nuclear option in case it becomes necessary, by virtue of the competence of the Iranian scientific community), different levels of salience and resolve exist across the domestic establishment, informed precisely by the different schools of thought they hail from. All these blocks try to give, through extensive bargaining, their policy preferences the support of the other elites and finally of the Supreme Leader.

Across these groups, there exist two major economic visions which inform, even if only to some extent, also the reaction to international economic restrictions. The block of reformists and pragmatic conservatives (also called “Modernisers” and symbolized by former presidents Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mohammad Khatami, and Hassan Rouhani) aim to develop the country by integrating it into the global economy, hence support a ‘modern industrialist’ approach characterized by the dominant features of the current global economy, namely privatization, foreign investment and technology, as well as neoliberal economic policies (Geranmayeh, 2020). Given that economic sanctions hinder this vision, this block is characterised by high sanction salience and thus more prone to policy concessions. Some traditional conservatives who belong to the traditional clerical establishment, share this vision too, likely more than the older reformists themselves who, back in the early post-revolutionary years, were not so much in favour of neoliberal policies or financial reforms that could help Iran re-join the international banking system (they had rather more leftist positions, which remain preserved in a smaller group today).

The front of the principlists and securocrats which represent the security forces and the most fundamentalist block of the political clergy, instead, is known for policies that focus on social welfare and on the so-called ‘resilient economy’ framework, which stresses economic self-reliance and resistance to external pressures by trying to limit the dependency on the external world and increase domestic production. As the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini, famously said the 1979 revolution was not about the price of watermelons but for Islam (Dabashi, 2006:408), meaning that more noble political objectives were supposed to drive the country instead of the economy, these more fundamentalist groups largely subscribe to this view still today. This does not mean they do not aim at economic profits and wellbeing, quite the opposite, but these are mostly detached from the formal global economic circuits. Being close to and directly accountable to the Supreme Leader, this block has access to the latter’s financial network in addition to their own businesses involved in construction and energy activities in the country (Wehrey et al, 2009), allegedly also used to partly fund activities

abroad (Ostovar, 2016). Internal divisions are present and amount mostly to different positions regarding economic relations to neighbouring countries which have fewer political commitments than Western countries, as an exception to economic resilience. Similar divisions are present in the other block as well, given that some traditional and pragmatic conservatives have lately begun to support some aspects of the economic resilience framework too (Geranmayeh, 2020).

With regard to the security thinking making up the second dimension of this model's spatial preferences, namely the domestic actors' views of national security priorities, there are certain foundational drivers behind Iran's security policies that are broadly shared by all the establishment entities (Tabatabai, 2020a: 21), primarily that of self-reliance in defence matters. All the domestic forces in fact distrust international institutions and rules, emphasize the opposition to US military presence in the region, and, as a result support a certain degree of self-reliance in military affairs (ivi, 10) – including also through the opposition to granting foreign powers the right to use its territory or resources (cf. the debate related to the Hamedan base and China's alleged acquisition of the Iranian Persian Gulf islands. Cf. Majidvar, 2017; Rubin, 2020). Nonetheless, there is some internal pluralism in this as well, as they do show some differences with regard to the tactics used to achieve these shared strategic aims and to the flexibility in accepting some limited engagement with multilateral fora or access to international markets for defence needs (see talks for access to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2021, or for a forum on the security of the Persian Gulf with other regional state actors. Cf. Koch, 2020). Differences on this security front largely reflect the patterns already seen on the economic front, thus representing the already-mentioned different schools of thought that see reformists and traditional and pragmatic conservatives closer to each other than the rest of the establishment. Traditional and pragmatic conservatives as well as reformists have recently all embraced a security worldview that seeks *also* multilateral approaches in foreign policy, softening the above-mentioned stances of self-reliance, while principlists and securocrats continue supporting unilateral military means, through the development of homegrown capabilities and support of regional non-state affiliates alone. Within the latter group, some radical factions oppose not only Western engagement but also the excessive subjugation to Asian powers such as Russia and China (Shargh, 2021), in defence of the foundational principles of the 1979 revolution and its motto 'neither west nor east'. Other factions, instead, have shifted towards more pragmatic positions which balance "confidence in capabilities and wariness of constraints" (Divsallar, 2021), compared to the early post-revolutionary years, but still remain rooted in a kind of offensive realism engagement, where power maximization is achieved mostly through military self-help. At a closer inspection, the entire establishment has actually become more pragmatic in this over time, at least since the beginning of the post-war reconstruction in early 1990s (Marschall, 2004; Redaelli, 2011).

In conclusion, when it comes to national security policies such as nuclear enrichment, domestic politics does matter. The Islamic Republic decides by consensus, thus with decision made with the buy-in from the whole establishment, which it was just portrayed as being not a monolith but rather an internally diverse complex system. The change in the identity of a single entity of the establishment is never enough, on its own, to fundamentally alter the regime's major strategic-level decisions given that broad consensus is needed for this. Yet, a change in the executive branch or in other institutions involved in the strategic decision-making processes can catalyse realignments of positions in the entire establishment through hard bargaining within the SNSC. Besides the SNSC, there are other types of institutions that play a role in

influencing the Iranian foreign policy establishment (Divsallar, 2021) but do not amount to formal veto players in the decision-making process. They include institutions such as the Guardian Council, which is endowed with an important approbatory role (it guarantees the protection of the principles enshrined in the Constitution and vets individuals running for elective positions – cf. Arjomand, 2012) but in nuclear policymaking it has no autonomous authority (if the Supreme Leader Office does not veto a SNSC decision then the Guardian Council is not expected to raise any complaint). Also the parliament (Majles) as an institution is not a veto player for national security policies, despite the fact that its speaker is in the SNSC. Because sometimes the Majles passes nuclear or defence bills (as recently as early 2021), it has been argued that the parliament can impose legal constraints on nuclear policies (Iranian Diplomacy, 2020). However, this argument overlooks the fact that the SNSC has historically decided to ignore some of the parliament's demands and implement others, clearly proving it does not invariably feel constrained by the Majles' policy requests, although it sometimes publicly refers to them mostly to build leverage internationally and deflect international pressure. As a result, it cannot be considered a veto player on its own. Its speaker is elected by its members but because of a party system which is very flexible and personalistic (Vaez, 2016), he feels largely unrestrained, meaning that the position he represents in the SNSC mirrors his own preferences rather than those of the political majority of the Majles. Finally, the Strategic Council for Foreign Relations²⁵ and other research centres related to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs do often play a role in facilitating decision-making processes thanks to their expertise in foreign and security policies (they are generally headed by former foreign ministers or deputies) but, although they can indirectly participate in the agenda setting by suggesting new approaches, they do not have power at all.

4.8 Episode I (Jun-2010 to Jun-2013)

As of early 2010, international negotiations aiming at putting an end to Iran's nuclear enrichment such as the E3+3 talks in Geneva (Alcaro, 2018) or at limiting the quantity of the enriched uranium stored in Iran such as those initiated by Brazil and Turkey (Tol, 2010; Onderco, 2015) had failed. This growing external pressure had rather backfired, as in February 2010 Iran even announced it would increase the nuclear activities up to the 20% of enrichment levels, a step closer to the levels needed to be able to produce a nuclear weapon (IAEA, 2005). On June 9, 2010 the UN Security Council adopted UNSCR 1929 which significantly intensified the enforcement of UN nuclear sanctions against Iran (such as UNSCR 1696 and 1737 of 2006 and UNSCR 1803 of 2008) by establishing a monitoring expert panel, allowing the inspection of suspicious cargo going to and from Iran, banning any foreign commercial activity in the Iranian nuclear field, banning specific arms sales, and expanding the list of targeted entities and individuals linked to Iranian nuclear proliferation (cf. the sources above). As a result of UNSCR 1929, many individual countries and regional organizations imposed additional bilateral restrictions on Iran's energy sector and finance (Katzman, 2012). Additionally, US restrictions were also extra-territorial or secondary, thus affecting not only US companies and individuals, but also third-country companies' investment decisions in Iran, when exemptions were not granted (voluntary smaller oil purchases were allowed to Asian countries – Nephew, 2018).

²⁵ It was created by the Supreme Leader in 2006 to find new foreign policy approaches. It is headed by former Foreign Minister Kharrazi and as of late 2021 its new secretary is former deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (Tehran Times, 2021).

After additional stricter measures on financial activities were introduced by the US and the EU in 2012 (in March SWIFT obeyed the order to cut off Iranian banks from the international electronic banking system), a comprehensive sanction regime was de facto imposed on the Iranian economy. Although domestic economic mismanagement by the Ahmadinejad administration was also argued to share part of the blame (Salehi-Isfahani, 2009), these international restrictions certainly contributed to a period of profound economic crisis characterised by decreasing oil revenues, rising inflation, currency collapse. This episode concludes before the Iranian presidential elections of June 2013, which saw a change in the Iranian domestic configuration. In early 2013, the US and Iran had opened a secret bilateral channel on nuclear enrichment in Oman (Parsi, 2017), but it remained largely inactive until the completion of the electoral process in June-August 2013.

4.8.1 Outcome and Model Scenario

The hypothesis under investigation in this chapter aims to analyse if and how veto players' congruence can affect the direction of a policy change. Being the former made up of issue positions and sanction salience, this implies investigating whether sanctions-related costs (sanction salience) eventually induced veto players to update their policy issue preferences in such a way that their distances from the sender's new ideal status quo is reduced. When this alignment happens, it means all the veto players of the episode have agreed on a policy which complies with the demands the senders attached to the sanction regime. When veto players' updated positions do not align together, meaning that not all the veto players have been directly or indirectly affected by sanctions-related costs, those who still attach a high salience to the policy under dispute are expected not to consent to (hence, "veto") the proposed policy change. External pressure which is able to affect only some domestic actors but not all those institutionally relevant to the policy under dispute, namely those endowed with policy issue-specific veto authority, is destined to fail. Most importantly, economic impact alone is not sufficient to alter their positions if their levels of issue salience are higher than sanction salience.

This episode belongs to this latter scenario, as the material costs attached to the sanction regime in 2010-2012 were not enough alone to obtain a "positive outcome". Earlier, in 2003-2005, when the domestic political establishment still had some reformist components (Mohamed Khatami was president until 2005), not only had Iran accepted discussing its nuclear enrichment but also offered some minimal concessions such as the Tehran Agreed Statement in October 2003, in which Iran *declared* it would suspend enrichment, and then the Paris Agreement in November 2004 between E3/EU and Iran, which building on the former statement eventually specified the activities Iran was expected to halt and the incentives the EU was offering (Alcaro, 2018). Negotiations stalled in spring 2005, with Iran approaching new elections. The imposition of UN multilateral sanctions in 2006, as well as the rise to power of securocrats and principlist factions represented by President Ahmadinejad radically changed the domestic configuration. In 2010-12, not only did Iran not offer any concession to the major demands of the international community (halting enrichment) after enduring such pain for many years, but it even further increased the number and the technological level of centrifuges used for the uranium enrichment. That is, sanctions even failed to constrain such activities. The domestic power blocks participating in the nuclear decision-making process in those years were characterised by high levels of resolve and issue salience. Both the elective and appointed institutions shared in fact similar economic and security visions of the group of principlists and

securocrats (Geranmayeh, 2020). Contrary to Jeong and Peksen's theoretical framework (2017), the decline in external trade – Iran succeeded in defecting non-oil exports (Haidar, 2017), but regarding oil only a smaller part continued to be traded in those year because of China's compliance with reduced quotas suggested by the US administration (Katzman, 2012:35) – was not enough for it to give up enrichment. For the domestic establishment of the time, the salience of sanctions, despite high, remained lower than the potential political-security costs of compliance with nuclear demands.

Exploring more in detail this domestic misalignment regarding the dimension of congruence, President Ahmadinejad and his government symbolised the rise to power of the second generation of post-revolutionaries, those linked to the security forces and to a “fundamentalist” interpretation of the principles of the revolution, thus publicly advocating for an economy of resistance, even at the cost of economic suffering. The Parliament, although powerless on this, was also aligned with it. As a result, the blocks of the principlists and the securocrats controlled the government, the legislature, the Guardian Council, powerful financial institutions, the state media networks, and most of the security apparatus (Geranmayeh, 2020). No modernisers, be they pragmatic conservatives or reformists, were present in the nuclear decision-making process with the exception of Ali Larijani, then Speaker of the Parliament (2008-2020) and former secretary of the SNSC (he was removed in 2007 by President Ahmadinejad precisely after clashes on the management of the nuclear negotiations, a portfolio he held as SNSC secretary, just to be replaced by Ahmadinejad's ally Saeed Jalili who remained secretary of SNSC and chief nuclear negotiator until September 2013 – Tait, 2007), who back then was still considered a traditional conservative who was gradually approaching the block of the pragmatic conservatives. The entire inner circle's policy positions were therefore quite homogeneously distributed around economic resilience and an offensive, unilateral approach in security affairs.

Regarding the economic impact, Iranian oil exports, a major but not only source of revenue in its economy, were significantly limited. While it is true that the increase of oil prices at the time helped partly cushion the loss of oil revenues (the fewer traded barrels were sold at higher price) and the deflection of non-oil exports to mostly Central and Eastern Asian destinations not imposing sanctions on Iran (Haidar, 2017) allowed for some share of revenues to continue, this occurred at higher transaction costs. The diversified structure of the Iranian economy, not largely reliant on foreign financing nor on oil revenues alone (albeit important), and the use of social and monetary policies together prevented the total collapse of the economy and social unrest in 2010-12 (Salehi-Isfahani, 2016), but at the cost of a severe fiscal contraction, inflation, and underinvestment (Harris, 2020).

With regard to sanction salience, then, all the domestic players were affected by their cost, with a partial exception for those who could benefit from illegal cross-border operations, mostly linked to IRGC operatives (Batmanghelidj, 2018). These restrictions in fact ended up further bolstering the economic holdings of the block of the IRGC, back then supportive of President Ahmadinejad, relative to other domestic actors as they supervised lucrative illicit trans-border activities involving oil, cash, narcotics, and consumer goods. Of note, the magnitude of that smuggling business was such that “it [could] not be done by donkeys or by passengers [but rather] through containers and via illegal and unofficial channels [such as] ‘invisible jetties’ supervised by strongmen and men of wealth” (ibidem). The IRGC's economic rise in the licit and illicit sectors of Iran's economy had been a decades-long process. During the reconstruction era following the Iran-Iraq war, the IRGC established various bonyads

(foundations) that quickly developed big companies and conglomerates in the sectors of agriculture, mining, transportation, and construction. Over the years, these companies sidelined the weak Iranian private sector (Lob, 2017) and with part of the hard-currency revenues from these and the smuggling activities eventually supported their security campaigns abroad. But the fact that the IRGC long benefitted from sanctions wouldn't necessarily imply that it would be damaged by their lifting, as IRGC's commercial activities are argued to be able to prosper also in a formal limited competitive environment (Tabatabai, 2015).

Overall, on the economic dimension, the presence of elites who predominantly shared theories of economic planning based on autarky meant that they were not clearly preoccupied by isolation per se (sanction salience), nor were they interested by the prospect of increasing trade with the world in case of sanction relief. Because these actors are not elective, as per this project's model they are not even largely concerned about positional considerations which instead can play a role in elective veto player's preferences by increasing, in the case of elective institutions, the costs attached to sanctions which have an impact on the population at large. However, in the case of Ahmadinejad's government, whose electorate hails from the principlist front, preserving self-reliance is important too. In other words, if economic and social hardships could not go unnoticed in the Iranian president's calculations of the time, they had only a limited role regarding the overall strategic decision: strategic considerations related to the survival of the Islamic Republic, its foundations, and the political groups at its helm, were the primary source of concern, which trumped the economic hardship faced by the population. What urged these blocks to oppose concession was in fact primarily the security dimension, given the salience of nuclear enrichment in its defence strategy and for its political survival. The large distance with the demands of the international community (zero enrichment) and the lack of a 'globalist' faction in the domestic configuration who could steer the internal debate in support of multilateral engagement eventually meant that sanction costs, however high they were, could not close the spatial gap with the Iranian establishment's dominant positions of the time.

4.9 Episode II (Aug-2013 to Jan-2016)

The second episode analysed in this chapter starts after the election of Hassan Rouhani as President of the Islamic Republic in the summer of 2013. His election reflected changing red lines in the security and foreign policy establishment of Iran (he would have been otherwise disqualified by the Guardian Council) and significantly transformed the political as well as economic dynamics of the sanction regime. As a representative of the group of modernisers made up of the pragmatic conservatives (he himself) and the reformists (who supported him at the 2013 elections and were, as a result, largely coopted in his cabinet), Rouhani, like all the members of the establishment, was committed to maintaining the nuclear programme active but also wanted to normalize Iran's international relations and restore Iran's position in regional and global economic circuits. As analysed below, concerning his economic preferences, he was a staunch supporter of global economic engagement, even with Europe and the US. Few days after his inauguration in August 2013, Rouhani announced the resumption of E3+3 negotiations (renamed P5+1 since 2013), entrusting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by Javad Zarif of discussing the parameters for negotiations at the UN General Assembly in September. A new, decisive round of negotiations led for Iran by the Ministry started soon after. For the first time, the chief nuclear negotiator was not the secretary of the SNSC but the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a measure which would also streamline the decision-making process (see chapter 6).

Negotiations first led to a Joint Plan of Action in November 2013, valid for six months since January 2014, whereby only some sanctions were suspended in exchange for the rollback of some nuclear activities and the pause of new developments. As the negotiations continued, the terms of the JPA were extended twice until 2015 when in April the parties agreed on the drafting of a final comprehensive agreement. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was eventually reached and signed on 14 July 2015 in Vienna, thanks to “a changed approach to the Iranian nuclear issue on both sides and established provisions for the monitoring and regulation of Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for the suspension or termination of all international sanctions targeting it” (Biersteker et al, 2018). In late July, UNSCR 2231 endorsed and incorporated the JCPOA, setting termination dates for the provisions included in the text (some with an indefinite period of validity – cf. JCPOA, 2015) and including a snap-back mechanism to re-impose sanctions in case of unsolvable disputes. The agreement entered into force on 18 October 2015 (JCPOA Adoption Day) and started being implemented on 16 January 2016 (Implementation Day), which closes the episode.

4.9.1 Outcome and Model Scenario

The sanction regime Rouhani inherited in the summer 2013 was the same, for intensity, objectives, and logics, as the one applied in 2010-2013 (Biersteker et al, 2018). The reduction of sanctions as agreed in the JPA, as well as the reformulation of demands (away from the maximalist position of zero enrichment), began only in January 2014 (Parsi, 2017). Which factors influenced a different outcome, in this case positive negotiations leading to compliance with the sender’s demands and a removal of sanctions as framed in the JCPOA signed in July 2015 and implemented in January 2016? While it cannot be understated the importance of the relaxation of the US demands (the Obama administration eventually agreed to allow minimal nuclear enrichment to continue, below 202 kg, instead of insisting on pre-2013 demands of zero enrichment), the “moderation” of Iran’s own position also played a fundamental role.

As examined more in detail in the following paragraphs, this was not the result of economic pressure alone (still high sanction salience) but primarily of developments in the Iranian political environment (decreasing issue salience), especially in the power blocks involved in the nuclear decision-making process (Tabatabai, 2018; Takeyh, 2020). The election of a pragmatic conservative such as Rouhani helped recalibrate the analysis of costs and benefits of compliance throughout all the SNSC relevant players, including security actors who had thus far benefitted from the black markets created by the international isolation. This different attitude and forthcoming policy change were made public by the Supreme Leader himself who, in September 2013, in a speech to IRGC commanders, announced “heroic flexibility” in multilateral engagement related to nuclear policies (Zimmt, 2021). The relevance of the domestic shift to diplomacy’s success is substantiated by recently published primary sources redacted by authorities who participated in the negotiations leading up to the JCPOA such as Wendy Sherman’s memoirs and Javad Zarif’s encyclopaedic account of them (Sherman, 2018; Mojani, 2021). Rouhani on his own, being just one piece of the domestic decision-making board, could have done little to tilt the country’s overall position in the negotiations alone. Because major decisions are made with the consensus of the whole political system, the modernisers had to convince the other elites to adopt a position of “heroic flexibility”. This major political realignment was anticipated by the alliance of the reformist-pragmatic front (“modernisers”) under the aegis of former president Hashemi Rafsanjani and by the

fractionalisation of the conservative-principlist front during Ahmadinejad's tenure, because of his individualistic decision-making style (Larijani's trajectory is a case in point. Cf. Tait, 2007), which created space for bargaining on political, economic, and technical dimensions (cf. Tabatabai, 2018:6 for examples). This reconfiguration in fact started already during the previous episodes, just after the beginning of Ahmadinejad's second mandate obtained at extremely contested and violent elections in 2009 (Harris, 2020). Many traditional conservatives such as Majles' longtime speaker Ali Larijani gradually started moving into the pragmatic front. Eventually, this "backstage politicking" (Harris, 2020) intensified in the lead-up to the 2013 elections and allowed an until-then not widely known Hassan Rouhani (he had been secretary of SNSC and thus nuclear chief negotiator, but was not widely "popular" at the time outside the establishment circles) to be admitted to the electoral competition (only 8 candidates were in the end allowed to run by the Guardian Council – cf. Iran Data Portal) and secure a large majority of votes which earned him the presidency at the first round defeating principlists such as Qalibaf, Jalili, and Rezaee. The very fact they ran separately at the 2013 elections was evidence of the growing internal fractionalisation in the principlist block after Ahmadinejad's tenure (who was not constitutionally allowed to run after two consecutive terms). Indeed, "The key to Rouhani's subsequent success [including in the policy shift in nuclear decision-making] was keeping conservatives divided while inviting old-guard segments into his own coalition" (Harris, 2020) with the promise of economic benefits deriving from the (re)entering into international markets and circuits.

Against this background, it becomes more evident how the restructuring of the domestic environment, consisting of widening Rouhani's support coalition across the system's power centres, allowed him to get the system's (meaning SNSC's, thus including also the Supreme Leader's) consensus to jump-start negotiations in autumn 2013. This realignment in the domestic environment was put in motion before sanctions intensified in 2010-2012, thus being independent of them, but it was certainly magnified and sped up by them in 2013. The fact that Rouhani was not constrained nor vetted (by the Guardian Council) in his diplomacy-first electoral campaign signalled the recalibration not only of the population but also of the elites of the domestic political system away from Ahmadinejad's status quo, for mostly domestic tensions about economic mismanagement (cf. the case of the Mehr housing project – Parsa, 2016:126). In 2013, Rouhani's presidency also recalibrated the balance of power within the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) (Takeyh, 2020). What tilted the Islamic Republic toward nuclear limited concessions (the international community relaxed some demands but still Iran had to concede major issues to them as well) was the subtle debate taking place within the establishment and reflected also within the organization, as exemplified by the stances of Ali Akbar Salehi and Fereydoon Abbasi, who both led the agency and had different ideas about the capabilities needed for Iran's nuclear "hedging" strategy, that is the latent capacity and knowledge to potentially make nuclear weapons. The former (who was AEOI's head in 2009-10 and 2013-21) supported the modernization of Iran's nuclear infrastructure and the development of a new generation of advanced and efficient centrifuges, instead of the increase in the output and enrichment levels. This position made him more inclined to accept limitations, because the opening to foreign investment was seen as an opportunity to acquire better nuclear technology, and the knowledge attained at the time was deemed sufficient and more important than the quantity produced.

As a result of a changing domestic configuration, for the first time since 1979, in September 2013 a US President held a direct conversation with an Iranian President – albeit

only by phone. The Obama Presidency well received the domestic changes in the Iranian establishment and offered a brief political opening by agreeing on a relaxation of enrichment demands. The guarantee of economic returns empowered the modernisers' position at home, given their support for a globalist economic vision. The anticipation of these returns through the temporary Joint Plan of Action (a limited preview of sanction removal throughout January 2014-July 2015) showed also principlists and securocrats the benefits that IRGC-linked oil and construction companies would get. To get their consensus, the relaxation of the international community's enrichment demands was also relevant. In situations of high external threat (such as 2010-12), hardline factions tend to thrive while moderate factions weaken, on the basis of the former's ability to extract resources against the imminent threat of a hostile foreign actor even without promises of shared material gain (losses and hardship is rather expected – Slater, 2010; 2011). The moderation of US demands in 2013 helped instead prevent the further empowerment of hardline factions to the detriment of moderate elites, be it through the latter's marginalization or "assimilation" into the former in a cohesive hardline front united against external shocks and economic crises just as it had happened in 2010-12 (Levitsky and Way, 2015: 100). In this sense, the relaxation of external demands, spatially represented by a shift in the position of the sender's ideal policy towards the target's aggregate position, helped Rouhani build a coalition around his JCPOA policy proposal.

As a result, the intersection of outside pressure and domestic configuration clearly manifested in the second episode: the breakup of the conservative faction (preceding 2010 sanctions) and the realignment emerging after the election of Rouhani (only in 2013), who proved able to leverage external pressure (including its relaxation) and build domestic national consensus for the negotiations (Parsi, 2017), paved the way for a major policy shift, inconceivable until 2012. External pressure alone, in the form of positive and negative sanctions (thus including their relaxation under the later Obama administration) was necessary but not sufficient to the positive outcome of 2015-16, as shown by its failure in 2010-12. As a counterfactual exercise, if it had been sufficient it would have worked already in 2010-12. Additionally, if the moderation of sanctions demands were sufficient, it would have worked also if there had been the same domestic configuration of 2010-12, lacking pragmatic "agents of change" who could build a coalition in favour of negotiations. But because also before 2013 some inducement (different from zero enrichment) had been offered, especially by the Europeans, it seems implausible it would have worked with them too. Hence, both outside pressure and domestic configuration had to align in 2013-15 for the episode to succeed.

4.10 Conclusions

The chapter discussed the Iranian decision-making process in the context of Iran's nuclear program and assessed the effectiveness of external pressure in molding Iranian views on nuclear issues. It emphasized that domestic politics matters, to the extent that changes in the domestic configuration of the political and institutional players involved in the nuclear decision-making process were crucial for the external pressure to eventually succeed in a policy shift towards compliance.

The analysis above also showed the limit of external economic pressures alone. Economic sanctions cannot structurally have a significant impact on Iran's fiscal space due to the structure of the diversified Iranian economy and its relevant revenue streams. For Iran's nuclear policy making and other security and foreign policies, the primary question is about

security priorities, that is the model's issue salience. Even by assuming that sanctions had a major impact on Iran's illicit budgets, Iranian security officials could easily continue insisting on those policies if the threat perception, captured by the issue salience in this project's model, continued making them a priority. Ending capitulation threats (zero enrichment equalled to capitulation – cf. Parsi, 2012) as well as economic inducements (bolstering the domestic players most involved in international economic engagement) turned out to be in 2013 a reliable means of influencing the establishment's priorities around nuclear policies. The explanation of the policy reversal between the two episodes, however, could not overlook the domestic developments in the political arena in Iran. That is, the moderation of external threats played a role, but Rouhani's election created an opportunity for a shift in Iran's positions with the Supreme Leader Khamenei's backing. Khamenei did and will always remain a staunch supporter of a resistance economy that focuses on reducing Iran's dependence on external factors, precisely to be less vulnerable to external pressure. Yet, despite these positions in principle, following the reconfiguration of the establishment positions around the time of Rouhani's election (especially the fragmentation of the conservative front) in 2013 Khamenei eventually gave the green light to the negotiations with the US and even agreed to concessions, which temporarily contained Iran's nuclear enrichment and kept it away from the military nuclear threshold.

In conclusion, the implications of this Iranian case for this project's congruence-direction hypothesis are many. First, Iran's nuclear decision-making is not made singlehandedly, but through internal bargaining across a complex web of political and institutional actors who decide by consensus. The existence of such a bargaining process, instead of a centralised power structure, provides external actors with some levers they can use to obtain some concessions, as shown in 2013 when the entry of modernisers in the SNSC circle eventually helped recalibrate the domestic preferences of the whole establishment in line with the demands of the JCPOA. The Iranian political system has long settled on the need for a nuclear programme with a certain level of research and development needed for nuclear "hedging", so it is unlikely that the country will ever accept zero enrichment. Yet, within these nuclear redlines, there is room for negotiations with an at-least blended domestic configuration.

Second, the external pressure did play a role, but any such pressure "work[ed] its effects through domestic configurations" (Jervis, 2015: 609). By opening up the black box of internal responses to the external shock (Harris, 2020) to examine the factors that shape domestic elites' preferences, it became evident how external pressure became truly operative only through internal conditions and processes such as the arrival of a moderate faction in the main decision-making body and the bargaining process it guided to shift the congruence of the whole establishment. Rouhani's election facilitated an internal recalibration around his policy proposal, in addition to vastly improving the working relationship between the negotiating teams on the international level which secured more relaxed demands from the international community.

5

Cohesion for a robust policy change. Evidence from Sudan

Under what conditions can sanctions lead to a robust policy change? This chapter focuses on the second hypothesis of the research project which, relaxing the assumption that all veto players are individual, investigates how inside collective veto players the probability for a country to offer robust policy concessions (namely, robustness of compliance) during a sanction episode, but with implications also on their sustainability after sanctions removal, is conditioned on the internal cohesion of its constituent units, that is the degree of heterogeneity or polarization of their own policy preferences. The model expectations outlined in Chapter 2 argued that a certain degree of internal cohesion inside veto players is needed to avoid contestation of policy changes. By testing the case of the 1990s' sanction regime against Sudan, back then led by an executive characterised by an uneasy and highly polarized power-sharing arrangement which was further compounded by the unequal distribution of sanctions-related costs, this chapter discusses precisely how the changing degree of cohesion inside the Sudanese executive over the decade influenced the ability of the government itself to ensure a robust alignment with sanctions' demands, exploring issues like institutional changes in the executive structure, Islamist-military relations, and intra-Islamist elite competition. What this chapter adds to conventional research typically focused on the mere presence or absence of compliance (the model's so-called direction of policy change, investigated in Chapter 4) is the shift from the sole investigation on whether compliance is achieved (fully or in part) to the process behind it, that is how that should be achieved or decided (looking at the degree of internal cohesion in collective veto players). Internal cohesion in collective domestic institutions is not an invariably inherent feature though, as most collective actors are generally internally polarized instead, and it is not an easy configuration to achieve through external pressure either. Indeed, contrary to certain expectations (Bafumi and Parent, 2012; Bak et al, 2020), external threats do not have an inherently unifying power on the target country's partisan differences (Myrick, 2021). This chapter aims to show that internal cohesion and consequently robustness in policy changes are not a given in target countries but rather reflect the domestic political environment, more specifically the organizational dynamics of target countries' collective veto players, that is their ability to cope with unfair distributions of sanction-related costs across their constituent units combined with their ability to control their members and prevent internal fragmentation.

5.1 Testing Internal Cohesion

As anticipated in the research design, this case study is not going to differentiate between the diverse logics of sanctions (like in Chapter 4) because, in this case, the research focus is going to be on the process triggered by the variation in the internal cohesion of a collective veto player, irrespective of which kind of costs contributed to such variation. The selected case for this chapter is the Sudan of 1990s and early 2000s, analysed comparatively on

two diachronic episodes characterised by differences in the degree of cohesion inside the executive, that was a collective veto player characterised by two partisan blocs, the military and the Islamists. The analysis of the two episodes will show how the shift in its internal cohesion, itself a product also of the diverse impact of sanctions across the different units and the inability of some of them to control their members (so-called spoilers), contributed to making the target country's overall compliance with the requests of the senders more robust compared to the earlier years of weak compliance, where the results of some accommodating steps were frequently reversed by opposite actions carried out by spoiler actors.

The objective of the chapter is therefore to examine the internal dynamics in Sudan's domestic politics during the period under sanctions, especially focusing on the political-economic strategies the executive's constituent units pursued to react to them. What is of interest for this project is the impact sanctions had on the configuration of the blocs inside the executive itself, transforming the original unstable balance of power among already dissimilar units into open internal contestation that eventually led to a more cohesive body after the more radical Islamists close to Turabi were gradually excluded. In the language of the model used in this project, the chapter is going to expose whether and how the costs attached to sanctions (be they reputational or economic, it is not a crucial distinction in this case study) affected the size of the wincircle of the collective veto player. The case study will show that when the impact is unbalanced like in Sudan's first episode, it can be very likely that the selected new status quo, apparently aligned to the sender's demands (at least to some extent, like in 1993-1997), is actually an unstable compromise implemented in a very haphazard way. Unsurprisingly, there was no sanction removal in 1997, as a more rigorous compliance was needed. But for a robust policy change is necessary to have a cohesive and less polarized configuration in favour of the policy change, the model argues. When this does not materialise, due to a weak organizational capacity which can ensure the capacity of a collective player to control its members both ideologically (with regard to levels of salience attached to the issue) and financially (with regard to their vulnerability to sanction-related costs), internal dissatisfaction can lead to contestation which can in some cases also result to the violent marginalisation of some actors. The case of Sudan precisely shows how the unfair distribution of sanctions-related costs widened the domestic polarization (low cohesion) both inside the Islamists and across the whole executive, by creating so-called spoilers or defectors²⁶ (Newman and Richmond, 2006; Nussio and Ugarriza, 2021) who did not obey the policy decisions agreed during the collective decision-making process because largely unaffected by sanction's direct impact, opposed to others who were excessively affected instead. Cohesion was then achieved after this situation triggered a domestic power struggle which first fragmented one of the entities making up the executive, the Islamists (with the emergence of Taha, dissatisfied with the performance of the country, as opposed to Turabi), and then led to the removal of the most polarising figure, Turabi.

Finally, also in this chapter the case selection aimed at picking an authoritarian state characterized by a hybrid regime, intended in this case as half military and half personalist, in order to take the chance to examine also how a regime that defies traditional classifications in the literature of sanctions (which largely overlooks hybridity in regime types and levels of

²⁶ "Spoilers" is a concept borrowed from peace studies, where it is used to refer to actors who actively seek to undermine conflict settlement (Newman and Richmond, 2006) while "defectors" is specifically common in research on insurgencies, where it refers to unauthorized exits from groups (Nussio and Ugarriza, 2021). Although they are not a frequently used concepts in the literature of sanctions, this project adopts them to describe those recalcitrant actors who undermine the robust implementation of a proposed policy change.

democracy) behaves under sanctions, considering that previous research expected divergent behaviour for militarist regimes (defiant) and for personalist ones (compliant) (Escribà-Folch and Wright, 2010). According to Geddes et al' regime type dataset (Geddes et al, 2014), post-1989 Sudan was coded as a personalist regime, but by describing the coup that led to its creation it added that “Col al-Bashir and an Islamist faction of the military ousted the elected government, imposed a state of emergency, dissolved parties and unions, banned demonstrations, and established the 15-member, all-military Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation to rule”, hence suggesting also the presence of militarist traits besides the personalist ones. Other sources confirm this double, hybrid nature of the regime too (Berridge, 2017; Cockett, 2016; de Waal, 2015 and 2019; Marchal 2004a; Moorcraft, 2015; Musso, 2016; Young, 2021): among them, Musso, by categorizing all the post-1950s Sudanese regimes by their kind (see Table 1 below), specifically highlights the novelty of the 1989 joint venture between the military and the Islamists, as they had never joined forces before. The entire decade following the coup saw the two blocs as a constant of the Sudanese government, although the denomination of the Islamist movement and the presence of Turabi next to Bashir as co-leaders of the executive changed over time.

Period	Kind of regime	Party/Person in power	Islamist movement(s)	Political role of the Islamists
1954-56	Colonial	Isma'il al-Azhari	Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood)	Secondary pressure group
1956-58	Parliamentary	Umma/NUP coalition	Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood)	
1958-64	Military	Ibrahim 'Abboud	Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood)	
1964-69	Parliamentary	Umma/NUP coalition	Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood)	Opposition party
1969-77	Military	Ja'far al-Nimeiry	Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood)	Covert opposition movement
1977-85				Partnership with the regime
1985-89	Parliamentary	Umma/DUP/NIF coalitions	National Islamic Front (NIF)	Opposition/Regime party
1989-99	Military-Islamist	Omar al-Bashir/Hassan al-Turabi	NIF (although officially dissolved in 1989), from 1998 National Congress Party (NCP)	Governing party in alliance with the army
1999-2019	Military-Islamist	Omar al-Bashir	NCP (Bashir) / Popular Congress Party (Turabi)	Regime party (NCP)/Opposition party (PCP)
2019-2021	Military-Civilian	Abdelfattah al-Burhan/Abdallah Hamdok	NCP banned	Secondary opposition parties

Table 1. Adapted and updated from Musso (2016), shading the periods addressed in this chapter

5.2 Background of the Sudanese Case

What emerged from the June 1989's coup d'état led by then Brigadier Omar al-Bashir was a regime characterised by a rather singular diarchy (Berridge, 2017: 112). The al-Inqadh regime – that was the official denomination it was given at the time, meaning ‘salvation’ in Arabic – was indeed a unique combination in the story of Sudan of an Islamist movement finally coming to power with full authority and the Sudanese armed forces (SAF), whose coercive power was “fatally” needed by the former (de Waal 2019: 8) to secure power. The two leading figures in this division of labour which would characterise the Sudanese government for nearly the entire 1990s were Omar al-Bashir, who became Sudan's formal head of the executive after the coup, and Hassan al-Turabi, the ambitious leader of the Islamist movement who plotted the

coup that the military then executed, but who formally did not take any official title in the new executive, preferring to lead from behind.

The two comparative episodes analysed in this chapter are taken from the sanction regime that was imposed in the 1990s on the Sudanese al-Inqadh regime primarily by the United States (with its own special legal basis/sanctions authorities) and, secondarily, by the international community for the al-Inqadh regime's sponsorship of international terrorism, thus complementing TSC data (Biersteker et al, 2018) with additional one from the US Department of State and Treasury. Especially the trade and financial sanctions that Washington imposed were later described by some observers as some of the most comprehensive in the world (The Kenya Times, 1996; Small Arms Survey, 2018), a leftover from the pre-1990s era of non-targeted sanctions imposed at a time in which the nature of sanctions was actually changing towards more narrowly defined targets (Cortright and Lopez, 2002: 1-22). Yet, their ability to generate actual material constraints or political pressure across the whole domestic power spectrum in Sudan and specifically in a fairly distributed way inside its government was not so straightforward, as they were rather unfairly distributed. Such unfairness prevented the Sudanese government from unifying in opposition against the US and other senders, but it also prevented it from bringing its foreign policy into a robust alignment with the sender's demands, as certain unaffected Islamist factions inside the government contested that implementation. Yet, the same unfairness later turned helpful in triggering frictions inside the executive, leading to the split that could ensure first the removal of the most recalcitrant block and subsequently higher cohesion and thus stronger compliance. The period encompassed in this chapter is between August 1993 and May 2004, divided into two episodes, one covering August 1993 - October 1997, the other November 1997 - May 2004, characterised by differences in the degree of internal cohesion across the executive's constituent units. The two comparative episodes could have been selected from different country-cases (so not only Sudan) each characterised by different original levels of internal cohesion. Yet, by selecting two diachronic episodes of the Sudanese case in which differences in cohesion across time were facilitated by sanctions themselves, this chapter also intends to shed light on the impact sanctions can have in institutional changes inside target countries and, in turn, on cohesion itself. In other words, the contribution of this chapter is not only about how pre-existing variations in internal cohesion can impact on the robustness of sanctions compliance, but also about the way sanctions can themselves help affect internal polarization to ensure a more robust policy change.

The first episode of Sudan's sanction regime begins with the addition of the country to the United States' list of States Sponsor of Terrorism (SST)²⁷ in August 1993 (Department of State, 1994). After some initial resistance and several warnings made by Washington to Khartoum, the World Trade Centre attack in February 1993 by operatives linked to the Sudanese embassy in New York convinced the US Secretary of State Warren Christopher of the first Clinton administration to formally designate Sudan as a country that had repeatedly provided support to groups engaged in acts of international terrorism (O'Sullivan, 2003: 236-ff.). Back then, six other countries had already joined that list: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, and Syria. The SST designation implied a series of restrictions on a) US non-humanitarian foreign assistance to Sudan (actually already frozen since 1988 because of debts and definitely blocked in 1990 because of the 1989 military coup – see Elliott, 2011); b) on bilateral defence exports

²⁷ SST designation is pursuant to three US laws: section 1754(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, section 40 of the Arms Export Control Act, and section 620A of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

and sales and dual use items; c) on financial loans which, because of US pre-eminence in the related global circuits, also constrained Sudan's possibility to fully participate in international financial institutions (Rennack, 2018). Multilateral UN sanctions were added three years later, in 1996, after the attempted assassination of the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak during a visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1995. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1044 (1996), Resolution 1054 (1996), and Resolution 1070 (1996), respectively to demand Sudan to extradite the suspects of the assassination attempt, to call on states to isolate diplomatically the Sudanese government (with visa bans), and to call on states to avoid flights to Sudan (with an air embargo). They were never fully implemented (Small Arms Surver, 2018), thus the burden of sanctioning Sudan for its radical Islamist agenda remained mostly on bilateral initiatives of the US and of some Arab states. In 1996, the US Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act expanded the ban of any financial transaction included in the SST listing, thus also concerning Sudan, although still granting some exemptions to the latter (Musso, 2016). As of early 1997, the demands presented to Sudan by the US and the international community remained largely unaddressed. Some actions intended to accommodate them were actually taken, but such instances of policy changes toward compliance remained very inconsistent and contradictory, amounting to a very weak overall compliance which predictably did not lead to any sanction removal.

The second episode began in November 1997 when, as a result of growing pressure from the Congress which in the summer had passed a bill to demand stricter financial restrictions on Sudan, President Clinton signed the Executive Order 13067 which imposed new, stricter restrictions to their existing SST sanctions regime on Sudan's trade, financial transactions, and assets inside the US. This intensification of US pressure, including in terms of signalling Washington's refusal to back down, suggests a formal passage to another episode. Yet, while the US were hardening their policy towards Sudan, European and Asian countries were instead still open to interactions with President Bashir (O'Sullivan, 2003: 244-245), hence characterising that period with a combination of external constraints and inducements. Regarding the closure of this episode, there is solid evidence pointing to 2004 as a year of factual compliance with US major demands. Signs of robust compliance were visible already at the very beginning of the 2000 so that, on the basis of that series of positive steps Sudan had taken with regard to cooperation against terrorism, on 28 September 2001 the UN Security Council, with the abstention of the US, decided to remove the 1996 multilateral restrictions. Later, on 18 May 2004, the US Department of State finally certified to the Congress that Sudan was fully cooperating with US antiterrorism efforts (Department of State, 2004). As a result, for the first time since 1993, Sudan was removed from the list of countries deemed non-cooperative on that front, a measure generally considered as preliminary to SST delisting considering that it met also all the criteria required for that delisting, namely a) a fundamental change in the leadership of the targeted country (Turabi's marginalisation in 1999); b) proof that the targeted country no longer supports acts of international terrorism (acknowledged in 2004); c) assurances that it will not support such acts in the future (United States Code, 2009). Although the country remained designated as SST, the May 2004 decision by the US Department of State is here considered as the proof of Sudan's effective and robust compliance with sanctions' original demands, as it was acknowledged as such by the major sender itself, and the conclusion of Sudan's second episode.

The broader Sudanese case, however, officially continued also after 2004 and was definitely closed only in October 2020, with Washington's official announcement of the

forthcoming removal of Khartoum from the SST list (effective in December of that year – Blanchard, 2020). Similarly to the Eritrean case analysed in Chapter 4, the US politicisation of the sanction process prevented Sudan's 2004 effective change of conduct from being awarded with the SST delisting. The main reason was arguably that approving SST delisting while human rights violations were being perpetrated in Darfur would have been politically too costly for the US administration in the face of its domestic audience (indeed, new economic restrictions not related to international terrorism were introduced by the US through the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act in 2006 precisely because of the human rights situation in Darfur – Elliott, 2011). The postponement of sanctions relief had serious and counterproductive implications for the Sudanese case. Not only did it create a general credibility problem for sanctions, but more concretely it cancelled out all the earlier assurances that contributed to aligning the Sudanese government to the US demands, eventually pushing Sudan into Iran's arms as in 2008 the two countries signed a full-fledged military agreement. It then took more than ten years for Sudan to realign and meet again the conditions for delisting, and it coincided with Bashir's distancing from Iran in favour of a realignment with Gulf powers. As a result, in 2017 all the major US sanctions were eased, short of formal SST delisting. The collapse of Bashir's regime in 2019 seemed to predict an imminent removal from the SST list. Indeed, its requirements were met again in 2019, yet the Trump administration used the SST delisting as a leverage for the normalisation of Sudan's ties with Israel, something entirely unrelated to the demands of the original designation. Only when this happened in October 2020 SST delisting took place too.

5.3 Veto Players in Sudan's Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Duopoly in the Executive

As a Sudan expert has recently put it, "The weak institutionalisation of decision-making is a bane of Sudanese politics" (Gallopín, 2020). Indeed, in Sudanese politics informal rather than constitutionally defined decision-making structures have long been the norm. The post-1989 al-Inqadh regime was the most representative case of this, due to its peculiar combination of formal and informal policy structures (Sharfi, 2017) where the latter, until 1999, were effectively in charge of the formulation and implementation of the country's foreign policy direction. This dual nature was reflected in the composition of the executive institutions, first represented by the so-called Committee of Forty and after 1999 by the President's office, namely the collective veto players which will be closely analysed throughout this chapter. Concerning the sources of investigation, constitutional texts are of little help to get a comprehensive understanding of the foreign policy decision-making process that is relevant for the Sudanese case. Luckily, the study of the peculiar hybrid Sudanese system attracted much attention over time, especially in the Arab world but also among European and US scholars, so there is no lack of academic sources offering some assistance in the analysis of Sudan's complex decision-making system.

As mentioned above, the Sudanese system of the 1990s was made up of formal (meaning enshrined in the constitution) and informal institutions. The following paragraphs offer a brief review of both of them in order to provide the necessary context from which it is then possible to identify the institutions endowed with actual veto power and the units inside them. Starting from Sudan's formal institutions, in 1989-1992 the coup plotters created the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), technically presented to the world as the state's supreme executive body (there was no Presidency yet) made up of 15 military officers and

headed by Bashir. Five of them were also linked to Turabi's National Islamic Front (NIF), thus ensuring the Islamists some form of control on this formal institution too (Moorcraft, 2015: 97). The RCC also had a political committee, headed by Brig. Othman Ahmed Hassan (another NIF cadre), which was tasked with overseeing the foreign policy decision-making (Sharfi, 2017: 460). While the RCC used to frequently meet with other institutions involved in the external dimension, it was actually prevented from taking real decisions in that field. In those years the primacy of informal bodies, addressed below, was so much clear even to the RCC members themselves that many of them eventually resigned from their positions in protest against their marginalisation. In October 1993, the RCC was disbanded to officially create the Presidency as the new constitutional executive institution of the country. Bashir, who until then had been the head of RCC, was therefore named President of the Republic (Burr and Collins, 2010: 131). Despite his resounding formal titles, however, in those years the President's office was considered by many (including Washington) powerless and secondary to Hassan al-Turabi and the informal institutions he controlled (Jane's Information Group, 1995). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared a common destiny in the early foreign policy decision-making too (Sharfi, 2017). It regained some centrality only after 1995 when then NIF deputy secretary general Ali Othman Taha was appointed Foreign Minister (1995-1998). As a key NIF cadre, he was also inside the informal institutions and, in Turabi's plan, this move was intended to keep the Foreign Ministry further under his control. However, the move ended up empowering Taha, who had since started to emerge as an alternative pole of attraction inside the executive's Islamist power bloc, followed by the conservative and wealthy Islamists of the capital who became increasingly discontent with Turabi's personalist ruling style. If internal rifts had until then been publicly downplayed, by 1997 the existence of two adversarial camps inside the regime, one represented by Turabi, the other by Bashir and Taha (who moved closer to Bashir after becoming Vice President in 1998), was no more a secret. As shown more in detail later in the chapter, eventually Taha's appointment was key in first fragmenting the Islamist bloc, in a way that led to the marginalisation of its former leader Turabi, and then in redefining the level of cohesion inside the executive.

Behind this façade of formal institutions, there was a series of powerful informal bodies, created by Turabi's Islamists (the Sudanese Islamist movement was then largely under the control of Turabi) as soon as they took power after the 1989 military coup, which practically side-lined state's formal institutions thus taking actual control of the decision-making process. The most important of the informal bodies was the "Council of the Defenders of the Revolution", also known as the Committee of Forty (*Majlis al-arba'in* in Arabic, but also called *al-tanzim*, simply "the organization", and which was actually made up of fewer than forty components – cf. Ahmed, 2007: 193-5; Sharfi, 2017), which until the constitutional reforms of 1998-1999 was the regime's real highest decisional body (Cockett, 2016: 101; Marchal, 1992: 68; Musso, 2016: 85). In the language of the veto players analysis, the Committee of Forty was clearly a collective institution, built on the model of the NIF's shura council, thus on consensus (unanimity rule), but it was larger, as it was controlled by Hassan al-Turabi and dominated by NIF civilians, yet it included also some affiliated officials of the military (but allegedly not Bashir – cf. Musso, 2016: 85). In other words, the constituent units which made up the Committee were the Islamist and the military bloc. To formulate the country's foreign conduct, the Committee had a unit specifically responsible for foreign policy, which was presided by Turabi himself, Ali Othman Taha (also chair of the Committee of Forty), Mahdi Ibrahim, and Ali Abdalrahman (Sharfi, 2017). Differently from the NIF's original shura, however, in the

Committee the members were not elected but appointed by Turabi. This attempt of centralization of power in his hands was the factor that eventually triggered discontent inside the Islamist movement. The decisions were indeed claimed to be taken by consensus but in fact, as he was the sole agenda setter at the time, they mostly ended up mirroring Turabi's own preferences (Cockett, 2016: 133; Sharfi, 2017: 467). Until the late 1990s, therefore, the agenda set by Turabi was taken as Sudan's official government policy by foreign powers. Donald Petterson, the US Ambassador in Sudan between 1992 and 1995, indeed noted that, while Turabi had no exclusive control on the government (indeed he was the agenda setter but not the only constituent unit, as executive power was also shared by Bashir's military), "major decisions would rarely if ever be at odds with [his] expressed beliefs" (Petterson, 2003: 84).

The implementation of the foreign policy conduct decided by the Committee was carried out not only by formal institutions such as the army, the intelligence service, and the diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also parallel informal structures that characterized the Sudanese security apparatus at the time. After the coup, the NIF created the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), paramilitaries inspired by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to complement the troops of the SAF, and the Amn al-Jabha, young Islamists used as an informal intelligence service (Moorcraft, 2015: 97). Yet another informal institution was then the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference (PAIC) that Turabi founded in Khartoum in 1991 as a venue where some Sudanese actors, often without the knowledge of their executive's partners (Sharfi, 2017: 471), discussed the country's foreign policy direction with other Islamist armed groups coming from all over the world. Visa passports were often issued to these groups without the foreign and interior ministries' knowledge too (Lesch, 1998). Finally, besides PAIC, to further support these Islamist movements and their conduct abroad, including by organizing arms shipments to them, the Council for International People's Friendship (CIPF, a Sudanese organisation which pre-existed the Islamist regime) was in those years turned into the "Siamese twin of the PAIC" (Burr and Collins, 2010: 140-141). As long as all these parallel structures were in place, frequent contradictions characterised Sudan's management of external relations and policy implementation, turning the regime's foreign policymaking into "ceaseless bickering" and "schizophrenic discourse", lacking "cohesion [and] coordination" (Sharfi, 2017: 459-ff.). The costs generated by sanctions and isolation further exposed the divergencies in policy preferences inside the hybrid regime, as the executive's domestic power blocs had different paths in mind as to how to react to sanctions. A more robust and sustainable policymaking was possible only by turning the domestic configuration into a more cohesive arrangement.

Against this background and with the help of the BTI index (BTI, 2020b), it is possible to identify the relevant veto players of the Sudanese foreign policy decision-making. Additionally, in light of the research purposes of this chapter, which aim to investigate how the internal cohesion of veto players affect the implementation of the policy change, it is necessary to also look at the composition inside those players who are collective. Until 1999, the entire foreign policymaking was in the hands of the institution of the Committee of Forty, clearly a collective veto player made up of two constituent units, the NIF Islamists and the military. The two blocs of this executive body were best represented respectively by Hassan al-Turabi and Omar al-Bashir, although the latter was not formally given a position insofar as he was already leading the powerless RCC (he did so indirectly, though, through the other generals present there). Turabi was the agenda setter in his capacity of both NIF secretary general and chair of the Committee's foreign policy unit. The chair of the whole Committee instead was given to

his fellow deputy Osman Taha. The dual nature of this institution was able to represent all the relevant power blocs of mid-1990s' Sudan, so that there were no other real veto players and the decisions that were taken there were final. Being already absorbed in the Committee as one of its constituent units, the military is therefore not treated as a separate veto player, like in the case of Eritrea. It could have been treated as such, however, should a rival chain of command have emerged and split from Bashir. This was not the case in those years, though. The military bloc, be it the specific generals inside the Committee or the whole institution more broadly, was strongly cohesive at the time. After the 1989 coup the army remained fully aligned to Bashir, its highest and most visible representative, rather than to the Islamists, who instead developed their own militias (here considered as part of the Islamist bloc, as they were created by the NIF and remained fully dependent on it). The SAF remained loyal to the President for the whole period under analysis, also after 1999, by virtue of a commonality of views and preferences (Bashir himself was a general) but also thanks to a series of coup-proofing measures that Bashir adopted soon after the coup, including the epuration of potential rival generals and the creation of a broad patronage network that, leveraging Sudan's ethnic fragmentation, ensured full control on the military (only one coup attempt was recorded in 1990 at the Shaqqara military base. Allen and Grewal, 2019). The cohesion inside the Islamist unit, instead, varied over time, as shown later in this chapter. Most importantly, the cohesion inside the Committee, namely the degree of polarization between the Islamist and military units also varied as a result.

Throughout this period, the Sudanese legislative institutions never held a real veto power. Officially inaugurated in 1996, replacing the Transitional National Assembly created in February 1992, the National Assembly (Sudan's legislative branch) never achieved real significance, especially in foreign policymaking (Berridge, 2017: 88). It was widely used by Turabi, who in 1996 was elected as its speaker (the only formal position he took up), to provide himself with some form of democratic legitimization especially to the eyes of the international community, but 125 out of 400 representatives were actually nominated by a 30-member Leadership Office controlled by the NIF-led executive, while the remaining 275 seats were chosen through elections strictly controlled by the government (Burr and Collins, 2010: 213). Similarly left outside of the Sudanese power formula and decision-making process were the traditional parties such as the Umma Party of Sadiq Mahdi (the Prime Minister ousted in 1989) and the exiled opposition umbrella National Democratic Alliance (NDA, composed on the Umma Party itself, the Democratic Unionist Party, the communists, and other Professional unions – cf. Ronen, 2014). They were outlawed and heavily repressed at the time, thus not able in any significant way to constrain the executive's policymaking.

What changed after 1999, during the second comparative episode, was not the number of veto players per se, but the cohesion across the units inside the executive collective player. Until the mid 1990s the Islamist movement was quite solidly cohesive under the leadership of Turabi. Tensions inside the Islamist bloc had long been simmering, but they clearly manifested themselves only after 1996, triggering a power struggle inside the movement that eventually led to the arrest of Turabi in 1999. In 1998-1999, indeed, the bloc of the Islamists officially split into two parts: the "pragmatic" ones (Cockett, 2016: 136), led by Turabi's second man, Ali Othman Taha, who wanted to end Sudan's diplomatic isolation, and the "radicals" who remained loyal to Turabi but were increasingly a minority. The latter was largely marginalized inside the NIF in 1998 and officially ejected from power in December 1999 (Sharfi, 2017: 168) when the former group took the side of Bashir and the SAF (which was deployed to surround the parliament) and approved the arrest of Turabi. Despite the attempts of Turabi's Islamists to

establish a new movement, the Popular Congress Party, in June 2000 they have since remained outside Sudan's executive. Another more cohesive configuration of power emerged, both inside the Islamists (now represented by the National Congress Party, created in 1998 on the remains of Turabi-free NIF) and between the two units inside the Committee, because of the similarity of views between the newly empowered NCP, who largely de-emphasized the NIF Islamist agenda, and the military bloc represented by Bashir and the SAF. After Turabi's arrest, the Committee itself and all the other "informal" structures were abolished (PAIC and PDF included). According to the new Constitution and actual practice itself, foreign policymaking shifted fully in the hands of the President's Office, made up by President Bashir and the NCP elites who included Taha, vice-president in 1998-2005. The "brutal pragmatism" of economic and security policies that was endorsed by Taha's Islamists (Moorcraft, 2015: 96; Sharfi, 2017: 475) had made their preferences very similar to those of the military, hence ensuring a higher degree of internal cohesion and consequently a more robust policy implementation.

Fatal in the late 1990s' split inside the Islamists were the security and economic implications caused by Turabi's vision, namely the decreasing financial resources and the worsening military performance in the South (Berridge, 2017: 78; Krame, 1996: 48). The 1995 assassination attempt of Mubarak and the so-called Memorandum of Ten were the crucial events which from 1996 onwards clearly exposed the different views inside the Islamists about the ways to react to the growing limitations resulted from Turabi's Islamist agenda. The first irked especially Bashir and the military as they were left in the dark before and after the event, while in the second case, Turabi's attempt of power decentralization irritated the more conservative Islamists of the capital (as opposed to the peripheries). The growing polarization inside the Islamists, which had remained relatively latent until then, was finally exposed. Turabi's ill-fated decision to authorize Taha to chair the Committee and take responsibility of the foreign ministry and part of the security apparatus in 1995²⁸ precipitated the frictions as Taha's "wide ranging involvement in the formal and informal bodies" (Sharfi, 2017: 470) gradually gave him influence over larger portions of the Islamist power bloc and, later on, over the country's foreign policy direction too. This would make him the key element in the power struggle between Turabi and Bashir which would see the former removed in 1999.

Some scholars may question this identification of veto players, claiming that 1990's Sudan was fully and exclusively in the hands of Turabi and thus contesting the analysis of the internal dynamics of the Committee seen as a collective veto player. By describing Turabi as "not dissimilar to Ayatollah Khomeini" (2013: 123), Harry Verhoeven was indeed interpreted by many as saying that there was only one individual veto player at the time, Turabi, pulling the strings of an executive which formally was in part also military but practically entirely Islamist. It is true that Turabi, who was the masterplan of the coup d'état (Ronen, 2014: 993), organised the infiltration of several NIF cadres into the army and security apparatus in order to secure the indirect control of this power bloc too. As it will be shown later, though, he never managed to infiltrate the higher rankings of the SAF and so the military leadership always remained in the hands of regular officers and, overall, of Bashir himself (Berridge, 2017: 84). The majority of the literature agrees, indeed, on the fact that even in the early 1990s, despite having some primacy (visible in his control of the agenda setting power) Turabi was still

²⁸ This division inside the security apparatus actually had already become visible in 1994, when Turabi and Taha equally divided the party's responsibilities between themselves, taking respectively the external and the internal responsibilities. (Berridge, 2017, p. 96). When the latter also got the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the relationship between the two became more tense.

somehow constrained by Bashir's and the military's authority (namely, he could not ignore their policy preferences when setting the agenda), so it seems difficult to accept claims that the executive was not, in practice, an actual collective institution. So if the assumption that all veto players are individual is relaxed, as in this chapter, the Committee which had the control of the foreign decision-making process cannot but be treated as a collective veto player. The opposite claim (an unrestrained Bashir) is also highly implausible, as at least until 1997 Bashir proved unable to fully control the powerless RCC, let alone the Committee. Indeed, he controlled the military there but had no sway on the Islamist bloc. So, for most of the 1990s the overall political leadership was clearly shared by the two blocs, in a sort of joint venture between the military (represented by Bashir and the SAF) and the Islamists, and none of them was able to establish a system which could fully absorb the other rival player inside its own bloc. After 1996-1999, also benefitting from the growing disenchantment of many Islamists with Turabi's own policies and style, considered as a threat to the economic and security stability of the country, President Bashir first began to increase his power in the security and military apparatus, by overhauling the intelligence services and putting in place loyal figures to him. In 1999, then, with the removal of Turabi the various domestic power blocs remained but were finally less polarized as well as more coordinated than before.

5.4 Episode I (1993-1997)

The first episode analysed in this chapter starts in August 1993, when Sudan was added to the US list of States Sponsor of Terrorism (SST). Sudan had been supporting and harbouring transnational Islamists groups for many years. Even before the new Islamist-military regime rose to power in 1989, in the 1980s agents from the NIF were already organizing Islamist movements in the region (Burr and Collins, 2010: 25), laying the foundations of a network that grew stronger once the NIF got access to the Sudanese structures of power. This access was obtained through the above mentioned 1989 coup, planned by the NIF leadership but executed by a high-ranking group of the military (Ronen, 2014: 993) so as to maintain the Islamist nature of the new regime initially secret. Turabi even agreed to be detained for some months after the coup in order not to create concerns in the neighbouring countries which were then quite averse to political Islam. This strategy worked, as Mubarak's Egypt, which had long been engaged in a local campaign against its own Islamists, was the first country to establish ties with the new Sudan. Yet, the predominant Islamist worldview of the new al-Inqadh regime, which was formally led by the RCC but in fact decisions were made by the above-mentioned Committee of Forty, soon became fairly evident in the foreign policy conduct of the country. Not only did Sudan strengthen ties with so-called revolutionary countries such as Libya, Iran, and Iraq, but it also began opening military training camps on its own territory, where Islamists from the Arab world and beyond began gathering in ever increasing numbers. These included fighters of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, the Abu Nidal Organization, the Egyptian Jamaat al-Islamiya, the Tunisian an-Nahda, Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front, not to mention many others, mostly trained by instructors of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the Lebanese Hezbollah (Department of State, 1994).

The public face of these growing revolutionary connections that the new Sudan was building in those years was the already mentioned Popular Arab and Islamic Congress (PAIC), first held in April 1991. It was a sort of "General Assembly", as the delegates used to call it (Burr and Collins, 2010: 56), namely a yearly event alternative to the more conservative

meetings of the Arab League and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which was attended in Khartoum by Islamists from all over the world thanks to a visa-free scheme Sudan granted to Arabs and Muslims (Elbushra, 2006). It was conceived by Turabi as a public platform to facilitate the coordination of their activities. He was the chair of its secretariat, while Bashir and the military had no official role in the conference, although they initially did not constrain its related activities. PAIC received little coverage in the local and international media at the request of Turabi, who wanted to keep PAIC behind closed doors to protect the participants, but the scant information that eventually leaked from the event related to the participation of armed groups was enough to create concerns among states of the international community. This became all the more clear when in its second year PAIC began hosting also high-level representatives of the Islamic Salvation Front, later better known as al-Qa'ida, that Osama bin Laden and other close associates of him had founded in 1988 (Burke, 2009: 31-36). Bin Laden and Turabi had developed closer ties since the 1980s. They first meet in Sudan in 1984, but other meetings soon followed in London and Afghanistan. By the end of the 1980s, in Sudan, Bin Laden had already bought properties and office spaces and even established an air charter and a holding company via the al-Shamal Islamic Bank, a Saudi institution founded by a close associate of Turabi which, together with the Faisal Bank and the Muslim Relief Agency, would become a major conduit for Bin Laden's transactions in his following Sudanese years (Pienaar, 2008: 63). He eventually agreed to move to Khartoum in July 1991, after fleeing first Saudi Arabia, which had confiscated his passport for his involvement in arms smuggling activities towards Yemen, and then Central Asia, where he did not feel safe from Pakistan's intelligence services (Kepel, 2002: 316). After his relocation to Khartoum, Sudan also became the new safe haven for his movement al-Qai'da, which participated actively in PAIC's meetings. Scholars have long debated the extent of activities Bin Laden and his group carried out in Sudan in the mid 1990s. While most Sudanese officials later tried to conveniently belittle his presence, claiming that he was only a businessman interested in investing in construction and farming (Cockett, 2016: 120), it was actually reported that in 1991 Turabi appointed Bin Laden as member and adviser to NIF, hence challenging such later accounts on his marginal political role (FBIS, 2011). Extensive evidence, after all, also showed that Bin Laden and his group frequently interacted with the foreign armed political groups present in the country, while their Sudanese liaison officers in close contact with him (Colonel Abd al-Basit Hamza and Salah Gosh, later head of the Sudanese intelligence services – Cockett, 2016: 119; Scheuer, 2011: 134) did little to limit such activities, allowing them to move freely in and out of Sudan until Bin Laden's departure in 1996.

The “disturbing relationship” Sudan was developing in the early 1990s with “international terrorist groups” (Department of State, 1994) was unsurprisingly a matter of concern especially for the US Department of State. Comparisons between Sudan and Lebanon abounded at the time (Salih, 1998: 111), as Washington was particularly preoccupied with Iran's role in these developments. Tehran turned out to be the main military supplier of Sudan for almost all the 1990s (see Makinda, 1993 as SIPRI official data does not capture most of these flows). Apart from arms sales, mostly rerouted from China and North Korea, Iran and Sudan also established cooperation between their intelligence services and agreed on the deployment of Iranian trainers in the Sudanese military training camps (Corda, 2021). One of the key figures in this partnership was Majid Kamal, who was previously involved in Lebanon with Hezbollah and after 1992 became diplomat and ambassador of Iran in Khartoum (Burr and Collins, 2010: 83). Sanctions could hardly limit such partnerships and arms flows, considering

that weapons and human transfers were generally provided by non-state actors such as relief agencies which, under the cover of medical and humanitarian interventions, could transfer large numbers of goods, weapons, and people across the border, through money transfers channelled via informal black market systems which were much easier to evade government controls because done without formal licenses or without actual money movement (Schneider and Caruso, 2011; Raza et al, 2017). Indeed, for most of the 1990s, Sudan was not only providing a safe haven to Islamists on its own territory but also support and weapons to Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Ugandan opposition armed groups abroad such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ), and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), as well as to Islamists and warlords in Somalia (Burr and Collins, 2010: 108-113; Marchal, 2004b: 125; Musso, 2016: 111).

In those years a good number of states in the international community were broadly condemning Sudan's human rights violations but not yet its support to terrorism, as disagreements about how to best interact with Islamists existed even inside the network of experts and diplomats of the US Department of State, with Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Herman Cohen who personally warned Bashir about US concerns and the possibility of sanctions (Burr and Collins, 2010: 118), in contrast with Ambassador Donald Petterson and former President Jimmy Carter (Petterson, 2003) who instead were initially firmly opposed to the imposition of sanctions against Sudan. The New York World Trade Center bombing on February 26, 1993, attributed to the Egyptian "Blind Sheikh" Omar Abd el-Rahman, spiritual leader of the group al-Jamaat al-Islamiya, but allegedly carried out with the involvement of Sudanese diplomats based in New York, eventually made sanctions supporters prevail (Pienaar, 2008: 63; Vidino, 2006: 8-9). In the months following those events, the US collected larger and larger evidence about the involvement of al-Qa'ida, which was expanding its political and economic network in Sudan precisely thanks to the duty- and visa- free special policy Khartoum was granting to Arabs and Muslims (Elbushra, 2006). Such evidence, coupled with the emergence of new, albeit fragmentary, documentation about a tripartite agreement between Turabi's NIF, al-Qa'ida's Bin Laden, and Iran (CIA, 1997), ultimately convinced the US State Department to list Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism in August 1993 (O'Sullivan, 2003: 236-ff.). The objective of these sanctions was to discourage the Sudanese regime from supporting international terrorism. The measures taken consisted in predominantly constraining and coercive mechanics. Aid, military, and financial flows were partially or totally banned with the aim to alter the regime's strategic calculations which, until then, had kept the Sudanese domestic power blocs jointly supportive of Turabi's Islamist agenda. Three years later, in 1996, also the international community followed the US example and imposed anti-terrorism sanctions on Sudan to punish the 1995 assassination attempt of Mubarak by some militants who travelled in and out Sudan, but whom Khartoum did not intend to extradite (UNSC Res 1044, 1054, and 1070).

The material impact of sanctions on Sudan is much debated, with different sources disagreeing on the extent to which the economic downturn Sudan went through in the 1990s was a product of external pressure or domestic mismanagement (O'Sullivan, 2003; Small Arms Survey, 2018). But besides this disagreement on the extent of sanctions' overall contribution, a certain degree of effectiveness, namely the extent to which they ultimately led to some concessions regarding the policy under dispute, can hardly be in question. After the imposition of US and international sanctions Sudan's foreign policy conduct did distinctly inch closer to compliance from 1994 onwards, albeit not in a robust way. On the one hand, in 1994-1997

Khartoum continued hosting and training Islamist coming from all over the world just as it did in 1991-1993. Yet, at the same time, the Sudanese regime did introduce some measures which amounted to distancing the country from those disputed activities. These measures included the expulsion of some prominent figures involved in international terrorism such as Ilich Ramírez Sánchez (better known as Carlos the Jackal) to France in August 1994 and Osama bin Laden to Afghanistan in 1996, as well as the decision in August 1995 to limit the visa-free scheme which facilitated the movement of Arab and Muslim militants across the country (Burr and Collins, 2010: 193). These measures were considered erratic because while they were actual acts of compliance with the US demands, they were not robust or implemented in a unified way, but rather spoiled by some actors' contradictory implementation.

The Carlos Affair was the first event hinting at this irregular behaviour of a non-robust compliance. The international terrorist Carlos the Jackal was given protection by the NIF in 1993 while being object of a French international arrest warrant. When just a year later France discovered his presence in Sudan thanks to a tip-off from other countries' intelligence services or, according to some sources, from Khartoum itself (Africa Confidential, 1994), the Sudanese regime decided to extradite him. The proposal of the extradition came from Turabi himself, then the regime's agenda setter, who could well sacrifice an expendable non-Islamist (Carlos, who was a Marxist, was quite incompatible with NIF worldview) in order to appease Bashir and the army, who wanted to preserve the solid military partnership they used to have with France (Cue, 1994), but also the international community, by projecting an image of himself as a successful international mediator (Burr and Collins, 2010: 162). The June 1995 assassination attempt of the Egyptian President Mubarak while attending an African Union summit in Addis Ababa confirmed that the policy change marked by the Carlos Affair was being implemented incoherently by the different Sudanese power blocs. The 1995 plot was reportedly arranged by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and al-Jamaat al-Islamiya with the participation of al-Qa'ida's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri and some Sudanese Islamists if not Turabi himself, who had just met them at the latest PAIC in Khartoum. The generals were left in the dark and reluctantly acknowledged that other power blocs were still fully executing a radical Islamist agenda, including its visa-free scheme to foreign militants. Precisely for having provided passports to the perpetrators of the attack, the Ethiopian government which investigated the issue formally accused the Sudanese NIF of its involvement (UNSC Press Release, 1996). As Khartoum rejected the accusations and did not hand in the suspects, it became subject to diplomatic and travel sanctions of the UN Security Council, namely Resolution 1044 (January 1996) and 1054 (April 1996). These sanctions were poorly enforced, but they sent a strong signal to the regime, at least to some factions of the executive. Bashir began to openly question the "cost of doing business with Bin Laden and his al-Qa'ida" (Burr and Collins, 2010: 195). Taking advantage of the growing cleavage inside the Islamists, at the end of the first episode Bashir was already trying to get the necessary approval from some pragmatic Islamists for some significant domestic reorganisation. However, he could hardly do it without institutional changes that would lift their rank inside the Islamist bloc and in the executive. As of mid 1997 Turabi was still controlling the agenda and, as a result, Sudan's foreign policy conduct continued being characterized by erratic behaviour, mixing attempts to comply with sanctions with others resisting instead such changes.

The extradition of Osama bin Laden in 1996 was the last manifestation of this incoherence in Sudan's foreign policy conduct. To appease Washington, Bashir had long wished to extradite him to the US, including by exploring the possibility to involve Saudi

Arabian intermediaries who could bypass Turabi (Burr and Collins, 2010: 216). The literature disagrees on whether this extradition offer really took place in the end: many accounts support these claims by quoting directly former US ambassadors and diplomats (Ijaz and Carney, 2001) but as Musso noticed (2016), the 9/11 Commission Report eventually dismissed the existence of solid evidence of this (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the US, 2004: 110). Whatever the case, Turabi, who was aware of the fact that Osama bin Laden was no more welcome in many Sudanese power circles, above all in his executive partners', decided to anticipate Bashir's moves. Some accounts also report that the relationship itself between Turabi and Bin Laden had soured, with each seeing the other as a rival (Wright, 2006: 166 and 479; or "a Machiavelli [who] doesn't care what methods he uses"). Personal relations aside, an extradition to the US would have damaged Turabi's image and his credibility in front of the global Islamist movement (Burr and Collins, 2010: 217), so he worked to arrange Bin Laden's return to Afghanistan through his contacts there. On May 18, 1996, he eventually left for Peshawar, in Pakistan, and then for Afghanistan. Officially, Turabi claimed he left Sudan because his business contract had come to an end. It was clear, from the choice of these words, that Turabi had no interest in damaging or, even worse, ending his Islamist agenda despite the departure of Bin Laden and that the policy changes glimpsed in the mid 1990s were policy compromises resulting from the uneasy power-sharing arrangement with the generals. When a month later, in June 1996, a truck bomb destroyed the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia and Bin Laden issued a fatwa calling for the jihad against the US occupation of the Arabian Peninsula, Bashir condemned the attack and distanced himself from Bin Laden, while Turabi praised the fatwa instead and reportedly briefly welcomed Bin Laden back to Sudan for a short stay in August 1997 (Burr and Collins, 2010: 223-4). Despite a series of apparent complying steps, then, Turabi's Islamist course in support of regional instability continued throughout 1995-1997 (Deutch, 1996). As of mid 1997, not only had Khartoum not complied yet with the UN resolutions to extradite those under investigation for the 1995 Mubarak attack, but it also continued to harbour Islamist groups such as Abu Nidal, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Egyptian al-Jamaat al-Islamiya (McCune, 1997).

5.4.1 Outcome and Model Scenario

In this first episode the Sudanese executive which controlled the foreign policy decision-making put in place measures aligned with sanctions' demands but they were everything but robust. Looking into the internal dynamics of that collective player, the model presented in Chapter 2 theorised that players with a weak pre-existing internal cohesion are more likely to fail to implement robust policy changes, whatever the direction of such changes (in this Sudanese case it was towards compliance). The analysis above, focused on the executive represented by the Committee of Forty, confirmed that.

In Sudan, low cohesion inside the executive was due both to original differences among its constituent units' salience and to the heterogeneous impact sanctions had on them, which further compounded the former. In 1993-1997, the impact of sanctions was indeed not received homogeneously by the diverse Sudanese power blocs. In the language of the model from Chapter 2, their policy preferences were already quite heterogeneously distributed on the security-economic policy space even before the imposition of sanctions. After all, the military-Islamists joint venture was a unique experiment in the history of the country, homogeneity between them was all but expected. Yet, albeit not equally salient for all (a global Islamist

agenda was clearly more salient for the Islamists rather than for the military), in the early pre-sanctions 1990s the status quo situation represented by Turabi's Islamist agenda was still convenient for all the Sudanese factions and so it remained unchallenged. Then, the imposition of sanctions from the US and the international community in 1993-1996 further increased the polarization of the executive, redefining the shape of its wincircle, namely the executive's indifference curve which approximates the sum of its constituent units' preferences, and increasing instability. This was due to the unequal material constraints the US trade and financial embargo caused across Sudan's formal and informal institutions, leaving some groups heavily targeted but others largely unaffected because involved in non-traditional global financial and military circuits which could more easily evade sanctions-related restrictions.

More in detail, the two power blocs which constituted the Committee, the actual decision maker in those years, had very divergent convictions about how to deal with the outside world (Sharfi, 2017: 462), both economically and politically, although for the early 1990s Bashir and the army conveniently consented to the implementation of Turabi's agenda. On the economic front, one of the two policy dimensions the model deems relevant to capture the real distribution of preferences among veto players, straight after the coup Hassan al-Turabi proposed that the regime took up self-consolidation, or *tamkeen* in Arabic, as the guiding principle of its economic policy (Young, 2021: 199). *Tamkeen* was a shift in Sudan's economic worldview compared to the pre-coup traditional vision, which was widely spread among the generals, as it implied a re-imagination of Sudan's place in the world state economy, more independent from its traditional circuits. Turabi thought it was possible to establish a global movement of Islamic solidarity, where businesses which supported an agenda of Islamic revival (Verhoeven, 2013: 122) could move inside these parallel global circuits and benefit from favourable duties and exchange rates. Islamic finance, wealthy businessmen's investments including those of Bin Laden, and revenues from militants travelling in huge numbers to Sudan thanks to convenient visa-free policies were conceived as the engines of this strategy. Sanctions contributed to compounding the economic problems the country had long been experiencing, but because of their diverse economic background, the country's institutions and more importantly the executive's factions were not affected all in the same way (Pienaar, 2008: 67). Those which were penalised the most were the formal institutions led by Bashir, such as the RCC and the Foreign Ministry, which used to rely on official state networks to procure weapons and funds, at least until non-Islamic banking was banned outright, hence pushing all the transactions through the system controlled by Islamist forces. But up to 1997, these economic policies proposed by Turabi continued to be adopted as Sudan's official policy. Although Bashir's and the military's economic vision was traditionally focused on a "much more proximate jihad", namely the instability in the south of the country (Moorcraft, 2015: 103), as long as Turabi's economic strategy allowed him to maintain satisfactory organizational dynamics, namely a solid economic foundation to support the regime's foreign policy conduct, including in the south, they did not veto his proposals despite having divergent preferences (Berridge, 2017: 103).

This economic vision actually reflected the bigger political project Turabi and the NIF aimed to, that of establishing an Islamic international order, opposed to the existing one represented by the OIC and Arab League, and independent from Egypt, the historical leader of that order, and from the US, then the world's superpower (Verhoeven, 2013: 122). For Turabi and the NIF the "delinking" from the Western-dominated world economy described above was a necessary precondition for the objective of cultural, political, and military emancipation from

the “imperial center” that was guiding their overall international relations agenda (Young, 2021: 213-221). With this objective in mind, they founded the alternative “General Assembly” or PAIC in 1991, waived visa requirements for Muslim and Arab “brothers” moving to Sudan (Cockett, 2016: 119), and developed a militia strategy which entailed the creation of parastatal Islamist forces such as the PDF. Precisely on the security front, however, came one of the major points of friction in Turabi’s and Bashir’s coexistence, namely the autonomy of the regular army in face of the empowerment of “irregular” Islamist militants (Berridge, 2017: 100). This was a threat to Bashir and the army’s monopoly of force and so, while they facilitated it at the beginning by not opposing the creation of the PDF, it soon became an object of contention and measures were taken to resubject most of the PDF regiments to the direct authority of Bashir’s men in the military (ivi, p. 101).

After the imposition of sanctions, the differences in the salience the domestic blocs attached to the Islamist agenda became more evident both in their declarations and in their actions, with Turabi’s bloc insisting on the global dimensions while the military and Bashir were ready to sacrifice them in the name of more proximate efforts, in the south, against the South Sudanese insurgents. Sanctions were becoming a major obstacle to sustaining and solving the war in the south, as they threatened oil revenues but also Khartoum’s military superiority. With the growing collaboration of many regional states, including the US, with the rebel SPLA in the south, the military balance between Khartoum and Juba (later South Sudan’s capital) became precarious. The weapons the executive could get through Iran (the intermediary) and China (the supplier) were still flowing despite the sanction regime but were limited. Iran even helped Khartoum develop a native military program, which became the third largest in Africa at that time (Small Arms Survey, 2014), but in terms of GDP percentage, Sudan’s military expenditure witnessed a significant decline in 1993-1997 (no systematic data have been collected on SPLA, only anecdotal evidence – cf. Human Rights Watch, 1998; SIPRI, 2021). On the contrary, the Islamists felt largely unaffected by the reputational costs and stigma the regional and international community attached to the Sudanese regime after the 1995 assassination attempt. Also with regard to material constraints, their regional activities (which were also in support of armed insurgencies but not as demanding as the army’s southern war) could largely continue.

This overview on the executive constituent units’ preferences gives insight into the difficulties in the decision-making process of those years. Turabi, who was then the agenda setter, was obliged by the institutional constraints of the domestic power-sharing arrangement in place to take into consideration the more pragmatic needs of the other constituent unit of the executive whom he still needed in order to preserve the al-Inqadh regime. This is the reason why in 1993-1997 he eventually proposed the above-mentioned series of measures indicative of a policy change cosying up to sanctions’ demands (compliance). Yet, being proposed in a highly polarized environment, best represented by the duality inside the Committee, they were supported only very half-heartedly by the NIF’s staunchest affiliates who did not want “to lose face in the Islamist community by officially condemning the effort on Mubarak’s life” or renegeing on the Islamist agenda (Berridge, 2017: 103-4). In the words of the model, because of original differences in salience and post-sanction variations in costs distribution, the executive’s comprehensive indifference curve (wincircle) that represents the alternatives that can defeat the policy being implemented (Turabi’s compromise measures of compliance) was not empty. This, in turn, generated instability in the implementation of the proposed policy change because the existence of alternatives gave way to contestation from spoiler actors who kept bargaining for

those closer to their own ideal point. Every proposal towards compliance, such as Carlos' and Bin Laden's expulsions, was matched by contrary actions made by Islamists reluctant to implement those decisions. Indeed, the expulsion of thousands of Arab-Afghans in addition to that of Bin Laden did not match the reality, as many in the end returned (also Bin Laden himself in 1997, according to some reports, although for a short stay). As long as Sudan's configuration of power remained so polarized, a robust policy change looked unattainable.

5.5 Episode II (1997-2004)

The second episode used in this case study's comparison is still taken from the anti-terrorism sanction regime against Sudan, but with regard to the later period that began with a US upgrade in the restrictive measures (1997-2004) and in which the veto player configuration was eventually characterised by a more cohesive arrangement.

On November 3, 1997, US President Bill Clinton issued the Executive Order 13067 increasing the restrictions on imports of Sudanese goods and services, with few exceptions (O'Sullivan, 2003; Musso, 2016). The objective, in accordance with a predominant logic of constrains and coercion, was to insist on depriving Sudan of the material benefits deriving from US trade and investments which could have allowed the regime to continue its support, financial or military, to destabilizing activities in the region. It also had a strong signalling component, insofar as it clearly conveyed Washington's intention to be ready to maintain the pressure high. Executive Order 13067 aside, however, in terms of external shocks this second episode was not characterised by sanctions alone but also by shocks of more violent nature: in August 1998 a cell linked to al-Qa'ida and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad but also with past activities in Sudan carried out two explosions against the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Washington's retaliation to them included a missile attack against the Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, which was suspected of manufacturing chemicals used for nerve gas. Later investigations disproved such claims (Barletta, 1998; Risen, 1999; El-Shifa Pharmaceutical vs US, 2009), but the event is relevant in the debate related to the role that military pressure may have played in the calculations of Sudanese players in those years and is therefore discussed in detail in the following section on the model scenarios.

During this second episode, the Sudanese economic situation continued to remain quite bleak, with the usual inequalities in the distribution of sanction-related costs but with the difference that the growing polarization they fuelled eventually facilitated a major domestic reshuffle which reshaped the domestic configuration of power. With the departure of Bin Laden, the regime lost a significant amount of financial support that he used to channel into the country and the regime itself. Turabi firmly believed that his agenda could continue even after the relocation of Bin Laden elsewhere outside the country, but he was proven wrong. Not only because the loss of funding forced him to postpone the 1997 PAIC General Assembly, which would never be reconvened again, but most importantly because he was no longer able to keep under control the growing internal dissatisfaction with his policies. Dissatisfaction alone could achieve little without major reshuffles inside key institutions that had been possible after Taha's appointment as Foreign Minister in 1995 and, most importantly, as Vice-President in 1998. Without Taha's rise and power consolidation inside the Islamist ranks first, and inside the executive institutions later, Bashir alone could do little to restore Sudan's standing in the region, including the end of support to regional terrorist movements, as shown in the previous episode (O'Sullivan, 2003: 244). From an economic point of view, Bashir saw in oil and in some

reforms requested by the International Monetary Fund the instruments that would reinforce his authority by freeing him and the country from the past dependence on Gulf businessmen's largesse and informal Islamist financial circuits. This view was largely shared by Taha and the most pragmatic Islamists. Taha was the key to the institutional reconfiguration needed to tip the domestic balance of power towards Bashir's bloc and consequently towards a more cohesive arrangement. In 1997-1999 Bashir and Taha joined forces to strip Turabi from his agenda power and to undertake a series of steps that would have definitely marginalised his group from power, turning Sudan's executive into a much more cohesive power bloc. Throughout 1998, first the Islamists led by the "group of ten" made up of former leading NIF cadres disappointed with Turabi (Africa Confidential, 2000) created a new party, the National Congress Party, purged of Turabi and his radical affiliates in order to deprive him of the agenda power that was conventionally attributed to the leader of the Islamist movement. With the replacement of the old NIF with the new Taha-led NCP, Turabi was no more at the helm of the movement. Then, with a comprehensive cabinet reshuffle in March 1998 (before the al-Shifa attack addressed below), Bashir appointed Taha as first vice-president (hence officially co-opted to Bashir's side) while other pragmatic former NIF cadres were also promoted in top ministerial positions in order to diminish Turabi's clout across the whole domestic political environment (Burr and Collins, 2010: 256). Aware of this attempt to marginalise him, Turabi tried to join forces with opposition parties (he also created a new party, the Popular Congress Party, in 2000) and armed groups of the periphery (Burr and Collins, 2010: 288). But most importantly, given that he still was its speaker, Turabi sought to use the National Assembly in a last attempt to limit the power of the presidency and the military, while restoring his own. Yet, these attempts were outmanoeuvred by Bashir who, in June 1998, introduced a new constitution (approved by a constitutional referendum in May – cf. Constitution of Sudan, 1998) which ultimately increased the powers of the president, restored as the regime's executive institution endowed with the agenda power (cf. articles 42-ff., 68-ff., ivi). Second, empowered by these new measures, on December 12, 1999 he declared the National Assembly dissolved and arrested Turabi. The latter move was precipitated by Turabi's latest attempt to abolish, with the complicity of the National Assembly who was still composed of many of his affiliates (AP, 1999), the very institutions that Bashir was using to exert power, namely the 30-member Leadership Office and the 110-member Leadership Council, which were used to ratify all the senior nominations (ministers, vice presidents) before being submitted for approval to the assembly (Ronen, 2014: 1000). In their place, he wanted to create a new 60-member Leadership Authority accountable to the presidency of the national *shura* commission, a national consultative body still loyal to Turabi, setting the stage for the creation of a system based on a prime minister answerable to the parliament (AFP, 1999) but, as shown above, his moves were anticipated by those of Bashir and Taha. In 1999, Sudan's executive was finally freed from Turabi's affiliates and turned into a more cohesive institution, so much that its subsequent conduct could well be described as that of a nearly-individual veto player.

Indeed, moving onto the foreign policy conduct, the period 1997-2004, in particular after 1999, saw a growing number of compliant events with no significant contradictions in their implementation. Taking part in the Arab League's Council of Arab Interior Ministers, Bashir declared that he did not intend to allow unrestricted activities of Islamist armed groups in Sudan anymore, except for those who were engaged against Israel (Burr and Collins, 2010: 259). As a first step, according to Moorcraft (2015: 111), Qutbi al-Mahdi, Sudan's external security chief, contacted the FBI in order to establish cooperation on the Bin Laden dossier

(Financial Times, 2001), complementing letters that Bashir sent to Clinton to personally offer him access to Sudanese intelligence files (Frontline, 2001). Soon after, the SAF disarmed the PDF while the President signed a series of UN conventions against terrorism. Equally importantly, on the ground Iranian military activities in Sudan had significantly declined, partly also because of the different agenda of the new Iranian president Mohammad Khatami (elected in 1997 and primarily interested in mending ties with the West), and the thousands of Afghan-Arab militants trained in Sudan were no longer allowed to remain in the country, with only the Hamas and Hezbollah offices allowed to remain open in Khartoum²⁹. This was facilitated by the fact that in 2000 Bashir definitely shut down the PAIC General Assembly (Burr and Collins, 2010, p. 272). In May 2001, the first meeting between the Sudanese government and the new Bush administration took place, in which Khartoum and Washington discussed some proposals for the normalization of their bilateral relations in exchange of the definitive end of the support to terrorism by Sudan (Cockett, 2016: 156-7). The 9/11 attacks in September 2001 further intensified their bilateral cooperation. Bashir took the chance of the 9/11 to show further goodwill and increased efforts to cooperate with the US in the war on terror, by sharing intelligence on al-Qa'ida with the CIA. As a result, at the end of September, Washington abstained in order to allow the UN Security Council to lift the multilateral sanctions imposed on Sudan in 1996 (effective as of October 1, 2001). Then, it decided to quietly put an end to pending legislation on capital restrictions (O'Sullivan, 2003: 246). Eventually, towards the end of 2001, the CIA also decided to reopen its office in Khartoum (Cockett, 2016: 164). In 2002, with the support of the US (the Sudan Peace Act was signed by Bush in October 2002), Sudan also accelerated the peace process with the SPLA, formally not a demand the US attached to sanctions in 1993 but still an issue the State Department wanted to solve before taking a decision on Sudan's SST delisting. The peace process on the southern issue was indeed crucial for the Sudanese government to prove that its change of conduct was finally robust. The 2003-2004 negotiations with the SPLA were facilitated by external actors, but their main driver remained internal to Sudan (Verhoeven, 2013: 119), precisely the "metamorphosis of a regime that has shed its openly revolutionary ambitions in an attempt to be recognised as a nationalist, developmentalist government" (ibidem). Finally, in May 2004, the Sudanese warring parties signed a series of protocols in Naivasha, Kenya, which in January 2005 became the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which marked the end of the twenty-year civil war. The protocols were the sign Washington looked for in order to ease sanctions: in May 2004 the Department of State immediately removed Sudan from the list of the states which were deemed non-cooperative on terrorism issues, a measure generally taken before the removal from the SST list. As Alex de Waal has recently put it (de Waal, 2020), in light of such reports Sudan did indeed deserve to be removed from the SST designation too. Yet, as already mentioned above, the then emerging civil war in Darfur (2004-2020), in which Bashir armed local Arab militias (the so-called Janjaweed) to quell local dissent (for this he would be indicted by the International Criminal Court in July 2008 – Dagne, 2011), restrained Washington's moves on SST delisting, as it would have created too much protest from the numerous human rights

²⁹ Sudan always treated the anti-Israel militant groups as something different from the broader Islamist galaxy. Bashir himself, who unquestionably wanted to distance the country from the latter, continued to protect the former for the rest of his regime. Khartoum was, after all, the city where in 1967 the Arab League issued the resolution affirming "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it". Khartoum remained for long one of the staunches foes of Israel and although in 2019 it closed the Hamas office as a premonition of the normalization of its ties with Israel in 2020, most of the Sudanese society and politicians remain recalcitrant to relations with Tel Aviv. More on this in Yotam, 2020.

groups at home. The SST delisting happened only in late 2020, yet the mid-2004 formal acknowledgement from the United States that the Sudanese regime was no longer supporting the terrorist groups that in 1993 triggered its SST listing is here considered as the evidence of a robust compliance on that front, marking the end of the second comparative episode.

5.5.1 Outcome and Model Scenario

In the second episode a robust compliance was finally achieved. Differently from the first comparative episode, the Sudanese veto player configuration was characterised by a more cohesive arrangement, thanks to the 1999 domestic power struggle inside the Islamist bloc that was precipitated by the very international restrictions imposed on the regime. After Turabi's ousting, Bashir publicly declared that the former "duopoly" was over (Middle East Times, 2000). Indeed, that year he was re-elected President, the position that was endowed with the agenda power in the new post-Turabi arrangement, while the parliamentary elections were won by the aligned NCP. Yet, this did not mean Bashir's power was now unrestrained. The military and Taha's Islamists remained actual constraints to his power, the former latently as fully absorbed under Bashir whereas the latter as a partner in the President's Office but so much closely aligned to the President that the degree of cohesion in the new executive resembled that of an individual player.

More in detail, in the language of the model from Chapter 3, in the second comparative episode with the removal of Turabi's "revolutionary" Islamists the Sudanese regime took up a less polarized configuration of power, visually represented as a shrinking indifference curve of the collective veto player, determined by the narrowing of the distance between its internal constituent units. First and foremost, cohesion was re-established inside the Islamist bloc itself, which had been quietly breaking apart since 1996 with the opposition between Turabi and Taha, then it was improved also across the whole executive. In the latter regard, the Islamists led by Taha who replaced Turabi and his affiliates represented the Sudanese religious business elites less interested in Islamic radicalism but rather in closer ties with Gulf powers, Asian investors, and possibly also Western countries. They were in fact closer to the conservative Islamic system of government typical of the Gulf monarchies (Musso, 2016: 137), namely an authoritarian form of government based on the Islamic law and a rentier economy, inclined to safeguard the regional status quo at least in the immediate neighbourhood. This vision was much closer to the one of the military than to Turabi's. Once achieved, such higher internal cohesion ensured that no major spoilers among the forces controlled by the executive would hamper the implementation of the new policy. As a result, Sudan could consistently maintain a more unified "conservative" foreign policy conduct, far off from the Islamist revivals of the 1990s, for the whole episode and beyond, as long as the surrounding conditions remained the same.

In this second comparative episode, the variable of internal cohesion was not an original condition of the target country's veto player configuration but was rather facilitated by sanctions themselves. So that, apart from investigating the effect cohesion can have on the robustness of compliance, the analysis above also offers insights on the effect sanctions can have on the degree of internal cohesion itself. In this regard, it showed how the unfair distributions of sanction-related costs had a destabilising impact on the executive's organizational dynamics, namely on its ability to prevent internal dissent between the units and most importantly to prevent the fragmentation of the Islamist bloc, who proved unable to control its own forces, first by allowing spoilers to contest the implementation of the chosen

compliant policies and then after 1996 by failing to stop the rise of Taha. More in detail, the unfair distribution of costs compounded the polarization between Bashir and Turabi. The former had always preferred to modernise the economy by integrating it into the global market, including that of oil. Turabi, instead, still preferred private Islamic sources of funding based on his policy ideal of *tamkeen* or economic consolidation, delinked from Western-dominated global cultural and economic networks (Young, 2021: 221). The growing economic and political restrictions due to Sudan's exclusion from the US-led global financial circuits however became an obstacle to any attempt to access the international financial system and, crucially, to allow Bashir and the military to cope adequately with the worsening civil war in the south of the country (O'Sullivan, 2003: 235; Ronen, 2014: 994). The economic impact of US trade sanctions per se was actually minimal, due to the limited volume of trade between the two countries and the increase of European and Asian trade (which in 1997-2001 made up for the losses of the former – UNCTAD, 2021). More significant were instead the financial restrictions to US investments, which had major consequences on the oil sector. In the latter case, the readiness of Chinese oil firms (Large, 2008: 95-97) to invest in Sudan and sell weapons did partly cushion that loss, considering all the limitations due to the state of war in the south, where most of the oilfield were located and targeted by the SPLA rebels (O'Sullivan, 2003: 247). However, Bashir and the SAF, as well as the group of moderate Islamists who were led by Taha and used to represent wealthy business groups of the country, were less and less inclined to accept such sub-optimal policy. There were indeed other policy alternatives in the executive's wincircle, in the language of the veto player theory, which would meet their policy preferences more efficiently. The political-military costs of US sanctions contributed significantly to this sub-optimality too. Not only were they a concrete obstacle to Bashir's quest for international and regional political rehabilitation, after all the backlash received for Turabi's Islamist agenda, but most importantly sanctions were an obstacle to the SAF's fight against the SPLA rebels, who were believed to be supported by Washington (O'Sullivan, 2003: 257). Far from triggering any rally-around-the-flag effect at home (which could have happened if sanctions had equally affected all the domestic components), sanctions further polarized the configuration of veto players. Compliance with sanctions' demands was therefore for Bashir a way to end also the insurgency in the south and restore the authority of the SAF, whose monopoly of force was being challenged by rebels and Islamist militias alike.

Besides this cross-executive growing polarization, the intra-Islamist dynamics were also crucial. After rising through the ranks of power, Taha and his pragmatic Islamists, similarly to Bashir and the army, decided to pin the al-Inqadh regime's legitimacy on economic growth and peace dividends in the South (Verhoeven, 2013: 120). That was, in their view, a better way to sustain their patronage networks and ensure the survival of the regime. The only way to achieve this was to change from revolutionaries to managers (ivi, p. 135), by de-ideologizing the regime's Islamist agenda, hence marginalising, if not removing, Turabi's policies of Islamic revival and political economy reform. When this happened in 1999 all the executive's constituent units – President Bashir with the SAF and Taha's Islamists – were characterised by a more cohesive distribution of preferences. Preference polarization between Bashir and Taha was in fact narrower than with Turabi, while the loyalty of the SAF for Bashir was never questioned: "During his ten years as ruler [...] Bashir had assiduously cultivated his popularity with the military that was the decisive factor in his conflict with Turabi. He never lost this base of his power, and he never forgot that he was a soldier first and a politician second. The decade-long effort by NIF to infiltrate the military and to ensure the promotion of dependable Islamists

had succeeded, but the senior officers never trusted Turabi and Taha, and they were determined not to permit the rabble of the PDF to supersede their authority in the SAF” (Burr and Collins, 2010: 271). As the empirical evidence above indicated, the result of this more cohesive configuration was a more robust implementation of the new foreign policy conduct in line with Washington’s demands. The military (the SAF and Bashir) and the Islamists finally implemented measures compliant with the US demands in a robust and unified way, including counter-terrorism cooperation (before and after the 9/11) and the definitive end of any connection with al-Qa’ida and the associated network of Afghan-Arab militants, not to mention the peace process with the Southern rebels. There were no more major PDF or Islamist spoilers to continue carrying out such connections behind the scenes like in the mid 1990s.

As a final note regarding sanctions contribution, it is worth asking to what extent this outcome was the result of sanctions and which role two military events, namely the 1998 Shifa attack and the post-9/11 war on terror, may have played in addition to them. In other words, was the rift inside the Islamists and the Sudanese executive which is argued to have led Sudan first to a more cohesive arrangement and then to a finally robust compliance a product of sanctions or rather the product of military pressure or, rather again, something unrelated to any kind of external pressure? To be clear, this does not invalidate the results of the examination of the impact of cohesion on robustness, but it is a reflection useful to better appraise the additional insights this chapter produced on the unifying power of sanctions. The impact of sanctions on Sudan’s internal configuration of power indeed coincided in part with the years in which the US also threatened (in 2001) or actually used (in August 1998) military force against Sudan. Yet, a closer look at the temporal succession of events after 1997 suggests a more moderate assessment of the role of the latter behind the changes in cohesion and, as a result, on robustness too. First of all, a latent external military threat had always been present since 1992, when the US intervened militarily in Somalia (Operation Restore Hope) and set a “dangerous precedent” making it clear that other countries in the region could also be targeted if conditions similar to those of Somalia, including the harbouring of international terrorist groups, emerged (Carpenter, 1992). This constant threat did not deter in any significant way Sudan’s regional conduct in the mid 1990s, which on the contrary further radicalised. Secondly, clear evidence of a growing polarization between Turabi and Bashir had emerged much before the 1998 Shifa attack, as early as 1996 (with more latent tensions predating that year, cf. Berridge, 2017) when the Mubarak assassination attempt triggered the first major reshuffles inside the cabinet and security apparatus, as well as the relocation of Bin Laden. Third, in the end the Shifa attack was actually deemed more counterproductive than useful in terms of credibility according to some accounts (Risen, 1999): if it was intended by Washington as a move to coerce Sudan into discarding its support to al-Qa’ida once and for all, in fact all the US immediately received was a lot of international backlash because of the lack of factual indications proving that illegal activities were really being carried out in that factory (Lobel, 1999). Indeed, years later, a deputy head of the Sudanese intelligence declared that, back then, Khartoum estimated that “the possibility of another US missile strike was low” (Moorcraft, 2015: 133) because of the criticism the Shifa strike had received. It thus seems implausible to claim that the internal dynamics that affected Sudan after 1998 were primarily a result of the Shifa attack. Being instead prior to that, it seems more plausible that sanctions-related pressure, which had been mounting for many years then, was already having an effect on some domestic players and their institutional arrangement, with no special need of extra, military-related, companion policies. It finally translated into concrete progress after Taha took control of the Islamist bloc and

aligned to Bashir. Similarly, the role of the 9/11 in 2001 should not be overestimated either, but rather interpreted as an opportunity Khartoum took to reinforce a policy change that had already started years before. Sudan had already taken measures that appreciably indicated a departure from international terrorism support before the events of September 2001 (O’Sullivan, 2003: 261). The 9/11 just “intensified the USA’s engagement with Sudan but did not fundamentally recast the relationship, as has sometimes been alleged. [...] The intelligence flow from Sudan to the USA had already begun” (Cockett, 2016: 162).

5.6 Conclusions

The analysis of the Sudanese case provides many insights into the politics of sanctions compliance, specifically related to the impact that the degree of internal cohesion in a target country’s collective veto players, magnified by the uneven distribution of sanctions-related costs, may have on the robustness of a policy change in the process towards compliance. Robustness is an attractive variable to researchers seeking to understand policy change and stability because it yields insights for designing policies that persist over time (Capano and Woo, 2016). In this project’s model, it is argued that a policy change taken in reaction to sanctions is hardly sustainable when it is taken in a highly polarized environment, namely in a domestic configuration with low levels of cohesion inside collective veto players. Low levels destabilize the robust execution of the policy change, which is implemented in a haphazard rather than unified way, especially by spoilers insisting on better policy alternatives. Although all the constituent units of a collective player need to agree in principle on a proposal for a new status quo, the more unequal the distribution of sanction-related costs is, the more it can prevent some of the forces under the control of the least affected power blocs from implementing such decisions in a robust way. In the language of the model in chapter 2, a robust policy change (whichever the direction of change) is more likely when the wincircle of a collective veto player is smaller, namely similar to that of an individual veto player. On the contrary as it becomes wider in a highly polarized internal configuration, it gives way to contestation in the implementation of the selected policy. Indeed, in the case of Sudan, the proposals that Turabi (the executive’s agenda setter until the 1997-99 domestic power struggle) advanced as new policies were not undefeatable, in the sense that there would still be better off alternatives according to the most radical Islamists that were part of the constituent unit he represented. Given that he was not in charge of the executive alone, Turabi had to propose policies that he knew would not be vetoed by the other executive constituent bloc, represented by Bashir and the SAF, who had quite distant policy preferences from his own, a distance yet further compounded by the unequal distribution of sanctions-related costs. As a result, in his capacity of agenda setter Turabi did propose measures which were partly in line with the other bloc’s preferences – they included the extradition of Carlos, the relocation of Bin Laden, and the reform of the visa-free scheme – but many Islamist forces (the PDF and informal intelligence services) eventually failed to implement them. The only way to ensure a robust policy change and therefore, in the Sudanese case, an effective and sustainable compliance which could eventually convince the sender to remove sanctions is by reducing domestic polarization, including by absorption (when a veto player updates his preferences up to embedding another inside his own policy preference’s indifference curve, namely very proximate to his own ideal position), by force or by election.

Considering that Sudan did not have a cohesive configuration as an original condition of its domestic politics, the executive's decision to distance itself from the policy of active support for international terrorism was indeed the result of a complex dynamic of political signals and material constraints bridging the external and domestic spheres. Sanctions translated into concrete progress on Washington's "counterterrorism demand" when the Islamist front fragmented first and then its new leader aligned to Bashir. Initially President Bashir, the SAF that he controlled, and the moderate Islamists he allied with, used to accept Turabi's agenda (by not exercising their veto power inside the Committee) as it had the potential to bring economic and military benefits to them (cf. the promising Iranian military interactions and the prospects of Islamic finance), but with the worsening economic and military situation Sudan's support to Islamist militants became an impediment to their deeper economic and political ambitions. "It was at this point that many Sudanese started to reconsider whether Turabi's revolution was worth the cost. By 1996, Sudan had become isolated diplomatically and financially. Sanctions compounded the woes of an economy in free fall" (Cockett, 2016: 125). In practical terms, the army had enough of monitoring all the foreign Islamist militants crossing the country upon Turabi's invitation while not having all the resources they wanted to quell the southern insurgency (Moorcraft, 2015: 146). This urged Bashir and the SAF to find ways which could minimise external assistance to the SPLA in order to tip the southern balance of power in their own favour. Considering that Washington was the major player behind it, compliance with the US demands became a priority for them. At the same time, also the more conservative Islamists were becoming more and more exhausted as Turabi's policies were alienating their traditional allies, most of all the Gulf powers. Their personal ambitions eventually prevailed over the Islamist cause and joined forces with Bashir to overthrow Turabi and reunify the Islamist bloc around their own vision (Marchal and Ahmed, 2010).

At the end of the 1999-2001 political transition which saw the replacement of Turabi's Islamists with Taha's more conservative affiliates, Sudan's power was finally shared by entities fully aligned with the president, the new agenda setter (the President's Office became both in practice and in the new Constitutional text the new executive veto player, replacing the Committee of Forty of the first comparative episode). Bashir succeeded in coalescing around him both the coercive institutions (namely the SAF only, as the PDF was disbanded along with Turabi's ousting) and the bulk of the Islamist movement. As a result, in line with the model's expectations the new executive could finally implement its policies of compliance in a robust way. As a final note, the analysis of the unifying power of sanctions towards the establishment of a more cohesive arrangement indicates, just like in the Eritrean case, also the importance of the positive dimension of sanctions besides threats and punishments: "it was only when the nature of US policy shifted [...] to one characterized by both pressure and engagement that progress was made" (O'Sullivan, 2003: 268) and "the signalling of the prospects of easing [restrictions] changed Khartoum's relations with the international community" (Small Arms Survey, 2018). After Washington made clear what the lifting could mean in terms of international rehabilitation and domestic pacification in the South, Bashir and the SAF as well as Taha's group doubled down on the domestic rebalancing and compliance with greater conviction, proving once again that a credible threat is hardly ever enough without a credible assurance.

6

Expediting the Agenda. Evidence from Eritrea, Iran, Sudan

This project's new research framework aims to inform about the broader nature of the policy decision, including not only the direction but also how robust (Chapter 5) and expedited (Chapter 6) it can be. While the direction is, understandably, the major object of interests for researchers and policymakers because it is the element that eventually tells whether the political concessions are aligned to sanctions' demands or not, useful empirical insights can be drawn also by looking at the theory of veto players in its entirety, including the dynamics of the agenda setting, to explore the temporal dimension of the policy decision. This dimension, that captures both the expected length of consultations before a new policy proposal, if any, is agreed upon (step 1), and the subsequent voting procedure on that proposal (step 2), has largely been neglected in the literature of sanctions (there are exceptions i.e., Dizaji and van Bergeijk, 2013, but with a limited focus – in their case, on oil embargos only). So has the agenda setting process in empirical applications of veto players analysis (König et al, 2011). Yet, other fields of the International Relations literature such as civil war studies have not (cf. Cunningham, 2006 investigating veto constraints on conflict duration), thus suggesting that a time-related hypothesis could be worth testing also in this research project. In an effort to corroborate the preliminary results emerging from the survival analysis in Chapter 2, this chapter aims to investigate more thoroughly the expedition of a policy proposal in reaction to sanctions, as a function of the concentration of the agenda setting power, while keeping under control the congruence of the other veto players' preferences. Because of the poor reliability of existing veto players datasets and the lack of information they contain about players holding agenda setting power, the analysis will process trace this information by reviewing the case studies already analysed in the project, comparing them against each other.

Using the same cases analysed in the previous chapters, the objective of this final brief chapter is therefore to offer a comparative analysis of the different mechanisms through which, in the three selected country-cases, the agenda setters place their sanctions policy response proposal and see how these different institutional set-ups constrain the expedition of the decision-making. The agenda-setting process is in fact affected by the number and congruence of the actors endowed with agenda power, that *often* reflects the character of the political systems (a multiparty democracy, an autocratic single-party system, a military junta, a personalist regime, etc.) but not systematically, as shown below. This is because the structure of the institutional decision-making in a political system, and in particular the concentration of the agenda power, imposes rules of collaboration and competition among those who are endowed with this power, affecting the dimension of time. The focus of the chapter will be specifically on the institutions used for agenda setting, their forms, and rules, in addition to the policy preferences of the institution(s) endowed with agenda power. Overall, the congruence of veto players' policy preferences remains the engine of political action, not only with regard to the dimension of direction and robustness (as seen in Chapters 4 and 5) but also concerning its expedition: the higher the

distance in preferences, the less expedite the action, if not unlikely at all. Yet, with similar levels of congruence (i.e., high congruence), this action can be further accelerated or slowed down by the institutional structure of the agenda setting process, which adds another constraint to the expedition of the decision as detailed below.

6.1 The impact of the agenda setting power on expedition

Political agenda-setting processes are the object of interest of several different theoretical approaches, not only of veto player analysis. In the field of policy research (Lasswell, 1956; 1971) focusing on models of policy-making processes, the agenda setting generally refers to the first stage of the process when a problem is identified as such and put up for debate to devise solutions (Howlett and Giest, 2012). In most of these policy-driven approaches, the research focus is generally placed on the notion of issue attention – that is, studying the list of issues that (mostly “Western” democracies’) political actors devote their attention to – as exemplified by the work related to the Comparative Agenda Project (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014). In this project, instead, the agenda-setting process is examined following the perspective of veto player analysis (Tsebelis, 2002). That is to say, the analysis focuses not on the variety of policy issues that are at the centre of political attention and the causes for such a variety (a *policy*-driven approach which investigates what issues are relevant in a given moment and why) but more on the politics of the agenda-setting process (thus a *politics*-driven approach), that is the examination of the impact that the institutional structure of the agenda-setting process imposes not on the distribution of issue attention but on the expedition of the policy output or outcome regarding a given policy issue. In other words, institutional configurations are scrutinised not to understand how they allow players to draw scarce attention to issues they deem relevant (the policy-driven approach) but, having already chosen to focus *ex ante* only on the specific policy issue area affected by sanctions (defence- or security-related issues are the focus of this project), to see how they shape the duration itself of the security decision-making processes, because the way the elites struggle to control the security agenda impacts the length of the negotiations to select a policy change proposal and, in turn, of the whole sanction episode.

Political institutions sequence veto players in specific ways to make policy decisions, first and foremost by identifying some who can choose which specific policy to propose to the others in order to replace the status quo: the agenda setters. According to Tsebelis (2002), the agenda setter is a special case of veto player who defines the agenda and elaborates the proposals which can modify a status quo policy. The agenda setter is therefore the institutional configuration where the definition of the policy response option takes place. Having an agenda-setting power gives its holder an advantage in shaping (but not imposing) policies according to their preferences. The agenda setter in fact selects the proposal it prefers the most among all the feasible ones contained in the winset of the status quo made up of the preferences of all the veto players. The advantage of having the agenda power decreases with the rise in the number of veto players, as they shrink the winset of the status quo and the number of possible feasible alternatives among which to choose. Yet, despite the smaller room of manoeuvre of the agenda setter, if the agenda setter does not share its agenda power with other players, then its action in selecting the policy change proposal is nonetheless expedited because it is unconstrained by other rival agenda setters. In the extreme case of an empty winset, that is when there is no feasible alternative to substitute the status quo, then the control of the agenda has no value at all given that the agenda setter cannot even table a proposal for policy change.

The control of the agenda power is a relatively stable feature of a configuration and is generally unlikely to change during a sanction episode as a result of the external shock. The degree of diffusion of the agenda power in a political system is sometimes thought to reflect the kind of domestic regime of the target country (personalist vs oligarchic or military vs single- or dominant-party authoritarian regimes, parliamentary democracies), but it is not always a helpful classification nor is it always straightforward given the possibility of hybrid real-case scenarios and the fact that the degree of diffusion of the agenda power can be, just like the congruence of veto players itself (see Chapter 2), specific to a given policy area dimension. Especially in cases where the policy under dispute is related to defence and foreign policy issues such as the support of transnational terrorist groups or nuclear enrichment and military proliferation in sanction episodes (Opperman and Brummer, 2017), *ad hoc* veto players (including *ad hoc* agenda setters) who are generally not involved in other domestic policy area issues can take part in the process more than other typical agenda setters such as legislative chambers or other scenarios characterised by the involvement of executives only.

How does the diffusion of the agenda power affect the expedition of the decision-making process and, in turn, the duration of the sanction episode itself? According to this project's framework, the degree of diffusion or concentration of the agenda power among the veto players is one of the variables of the configuration of veto players which is expected to influence specifically the expedition of the decision-making process. That is to say, the time it takes to table a policy change proposal is a function of the number of possible preferred choices. The more veto players control the agenda (agenda setters), the higher the number of different preferred choices, the more constraints in selecting one single policy among them, thus the less expedited the consultations needed to reach consensus on the policy to propose for the other veto players' approval, all else equal, including the congruence across veto players' preferences. More in detail, expedition can overall be influenced both by the number of the actors holding the agenda power (agenda setters) and by the congruence of all the veto players' preferences, in a two-step process. First, an initial constraint derives from the number of people who hold the agenda setting and have to decide which policy change, if any, to propose to the other veto players. That is, the domestic political system's agenda power diffusion is logically expected to add a primary constraint to the expedition of a policy decision, all the rest being equal, given that a country with numerous power centres endowed with the control of the agenda does not have one single agenda setter who can impose its own proposal among the set of plausible alternatives and thus is structurally constrained from taking expedited policy decisions, even in case of shared support among the other veto players to those decisions (see step 2, a necessary requirement to achieve a policy change, but not sufficient for it to be expedited). When the agenda setter is not a single player, setting the agenda is a balancing act in a process, rather than a single-point activity. The selection of the policy to be proposed to the other veto players is a matter of negotiation between the parties endowed with the agenda setting power. The emerging proposal will then be a policy equilibrium between the two or more agenda setters until new external information (sanctions' costs) or domestic changes (elections bringing in new players with different policy preferences) step in, triggering the beginning of a new sanction episode whereby a new proposal of policy response has to be agreed on.

Second, once the proposal is agreed upon, the duration of the decision-making process can be further lengthened by the variation in preferences' heterogeneity across the other veto players (congruence). An ideologically homogenous system is theoretically expected to streamline decisions better than a heterogenous one. However, a homogeneous system cannot cancel

the initial constraint derived from the number of agenda setters, which affects the first part of the decision-making process (step 1). Keeping congruence under control, what can streamline the decision-making by minimising additional bargaining and waste of time is then the number of people holding the agenda, as described in the previous paragraph. So, in the end, the most expedited policy decision, whichever the direction it may take (which is a matter of congruence, as shown in the previous chapters) would see the agenda power in the hand of a single agenda setter in a homogeneous system. In this case, the sole agenda setter does not have to bargain to put its most preferred alternative (among all the possible policy changes) on the agenda.

By selecting episodes similar in the second step (that is, in the degree of preference homogeneity across the veto players, which is thus held under control), this project's hypothesis focuses on the first step of this process. As already elaborated in Chapter 3, the hypothesis is that the presence of multiple agenda setters who have to choose a new policy proposal (among the set of alternatives that can defeat the original status quo) makes the decision-making process structurally longer than a centralised decision-making system characterised by a single agenda setter. The investigation of this hypothesis offers important insights for senders who are concerned with their own domestic audiences and wish to keep the sanction episode short in time, because countries with diffuse political systems where the agenda power is broadly shared and thus contested by more than one veto player are likely to go through longer decision-making processes, extending the duration of the policy decision with all the implications this may have on the sender's domestic audience.

6.2 Identifying the relevant institutional setting

Just like in the previous chapters, to investigate the distribution of the agenda setting power it is first required to identify the relevant institutional arena where the decision-making process takes place and examine its working rules to understand who are the actors endowed with the power to propose the policy change which then has to be agreed upon by all the veto players. Throughout the previous chapters' case-studies, it was already noted that the relevant foreign and security policy making institutions involved in Eritrea, Iran, and Sudan sanction regimes were respectively the President's Office, the Supreme National Security Council, and the Committee of Forty. Despite all the three cases being autocracies, they present differences in the diffusion of agenda power. Each institution – the President's Office in Eritrea, the Committee of Forty in Sudan, and the Supreme National Security Council in Iran – has its own rules of administrative preparation, formal calendars, and distribution of agenda power. Even in presidential autocracies, the executive leaders are not always institutionally or procedurally completely insulated, including in setting the agenda, given that other institutional power centres or political actors often play a role in it, slowing down the process. The size of these co-agenda setters influences the expedition of the selection of the policy response option.

With regard to parliamentary systems, many studies of legislative agenda-setting generally indicate the existence of a *de facto* institutional privilege for the executive (Heller, 2001; Döring and Hallerberg, 2004; Martin, 2004; Bräuninger and Debus, 2009; Rasch and Tsebelis, 2011 among others). The agenda setting is done by the government, although this power can shift across ministries depending on the kind of policies under discussion. In case of multi-party systems with coalition governments, this may entail diverse political parties with different preferences controlling, at different times, the agenda, thus requiring extensive bargaining to agree

on shared cross-area agenda points. In presidential systems, instead, the agenda setting is generally argued to be in the hands of the legislature (Tsebelis, 2002). However, especially in the foreign policy realm, the traditional model of agenda setting places the presidency rather than the parliament as the primary agenda setter (Peake, 2001). Authoritarian regimes mostly rely on presidential systems and thus are also generally associated to the president's political primacy in setting the foreign policy agenda but at closer inspection this is not always the case. Not because the Parliament is more involved in these non-democratic contexts, but because *ad-hoc* institutional processes involving also other institutional players than the president alone are often implicated, as shown in some case studies of this project below.

The need to search for a link between a regime's institutional settings and the flexibility of decision-making, something that eventually leads also to reflections on policy-making duration and expedition, partly already emerged from Geddes et al.'s study on the typologies of authoritarian regimes (2014) as well as from other research (Ezrow and Frantz, 2011; Mattes and Rodríguez, 2014). To further explore this topic, as already mentioned above, one needs to take into account the limits of the existing data. With regard to agenda setters in particular, there are no existing datasets which compile data on the concentration of the agenda setting power. Not even Tsebelis' own dataset on veto players (limited in the number of observations but notoriously detailed in variables/predictors) truly investigated empirically this dimension. As a result, not only do some scholars tend to overlook this dimension – the agenda setting – when discussing or applying the veto player analysis, but the very lack of a dataset prevents this dimension from being investigated systematically on a larger number of cases. Necessarily, then, at the moment this investigation can only be done by process-tracing the missing information on agenda setters from the three case-studies already analysed in the previous chapters.

6.3 Testing the hypothesis on the cases of Eritrea, Sudan, and Iran

This chapter intends to address the impact institutional constraints have on the expedition of the decision-making process by focusing on the three case-studies already examined in the previous chapters. For each case, the following paragraphs will process-trace the constraints deriving from the diffusion of agenda power on the duration of negotiations preceding the submission of an official proposal for policy change, by looking at the number of the players who are the agenda setters in the decision-making process related to the policy under dispute and the detailed timeline of the sanction episodes. Only those episodes with high congruence among veto players are selected for the comparison, precisely with the aim to hold under control this variable (in this cases, high levels of congruence happen in those episodes with a final positive outcome – cf. Chapters 4-5).

In Chapter 4, Eritrea was portrayed as a highly personalist and single-party system (in Geddes et al' dataset, it is coded as both), where the PFDJ structure has little practical room of manoeuvre so, in practice, decision-making is concentrated in the President's Office, with the exception of the potential involvement of the military who holds veto power in relation to those policy issues they are directly involved in. Regarding the agenda-setting power, however, it is entirely concentrated in the President's Office, rather than being shared with the generals or other political actors. Because Isaias can choose who to surround himself with in this circle, the inner circle is likely to be made up of officials unlikely to disagree with him. As a result, the high cohesion which characterizes the President's inner circle makes it equal to a single agenda setter who can engage in highly erratic policymaking (Ezrow and Frantz, 2011) as shown in

Chapter 4, when he proposed significant and sudden shifts in Eritrea's foreign policy to end its sanctioned confrontational course of support for terror groups abroad in order to improve relations with Gulf powers and answer the needs of the military. The military, indeed, remains the only check to the implementation of the Presidential Office's policy proposals, that is the reason why Isaias needs to take into account their preferences when formulating such proposals. Yet, it is a potential veto player who is not endowed with the agenda power to select the proposal itself that can modify the status quo, being the latter left only to the President's Office.

Looking into the second episode of the Eritrean case (2011-2016), the proposal to end Eritrea's support to terrorism was impressively streamlined. In a couple of months Isaias decided to discontinue its support to al-Shabaab and to the anti-EPRDF Ethiopian groups harboured in Eritrea. He did not have to negotiate his proposal with anyone, as no parliamentary or party procedures involving the PFDJ had been in place anymore since the early 2000s. With a system like that, with no rival agenda setters whom the President had to face when proposing a policy change, the definition of the agenda was not only the closest to the President's own preferences (because he could choose the alternative in the winset of the status quo he shared with the military which was the closest to his own ideal point, rather than the military's), but it was also expedited. The fact that it took two more years to close the sanction episode with the removal of sanctions was unrelated to Eritrea's own moves but rather due to the reticence of the US and some European powers to relax external pressure on a regime which continued to violate human rights at home (cf. Chapter 4).

The Sudan of 1990s addressed in Chapter 5 was instead described as a country in which foreign policymaking was in the hands of the institution of the Committee of Forty, a collective veto player made up of two constituent units, the NIF Islamists and the military, best represented by the duopoly of Hassan al-Turabi and Omar al-Bashir (officially not included there, as he was leading other institutions). The two blocks were at the time characterised by a certain degree of internal cohesion each, hence within each block preferences generally represented the ideal points of Turabi and Bashir respectively. In military juntas the decision-making process tends to be more collegial than dictatorial (Geddes, 1999; 2003), but because military institutions also have high degrees of organizational cohesion (see Chapter 5), they are also generally characterised by low levels of internal dissent. It was precisely the case of the ruling military council led by Bashir in the early 1990s., showing high levels of cohesion. The Islamist NIF were also highly cohesive internally, at least until the beginning of the second episode, when cracks inside the Islamist block began to emerge.

The degree of concentration of agenda power varied significantly throughout the Sudanese case and its two episodes. For the entire first episode (1993-1997), the two blocks constituting the Committee of Forty did not share the power to set the foreign policy agenda of the country, who was instead in the hands of the NIF alone (Cockett, 2016: 133; Sharfi, 2017: 467). The proposals for Bin Laden's and Carlos' expulsions were in fact proposed single-handedly by Turabi, indeed taking into account some concerns of the other block, who still had a veto power in the implementation of the policy change, but without consulting them while setting this agenda. Bashir's inability to participate in the agenda-setting prevented the selection (or even just the discussion) of other policy options which could appease better part of the international community he had ties with.

However, the fragmentation of the Islamist front after 1997 turned Sudan into a case which best exposed all the obstacles related to the presence of multiple agenda setters. The emergence of diverging blocks inside the NIF fragmented also the agenda setting power across

Turabi's and his rival Taha's Islamist factions. This created a sluggish process where policy response options had to be negotiated also with Taha's group (whose preferences were moving closer to Bashir's) before being tabled. Eventually, the two did not even manage to agree on proposals at all, as reflected by the post-1997 decline of the Islamist foreign policy agenda. Even more, as described in Chapter 5, in 1997-1999 Bashir and Taha openly joined forces to strip Turabi from his no more exclusive agenda power and to undertake a series of steps that would have definitely marginalised him from power, turning Sudan's executive into a much more cohesive power bloc aligned to Bashir. By the time of Turabi's arrest in 1999, the agenda setting power had fully recentralised in the hands of the new President's Office only. When in June 1998 Bashir introduced a new Constitution (Constitution of Sudan, 1998) he restored the President as the regime's executive institution endowed with the agenda power (cf. articles 42-ff., 68-ff., *ivi*). This move decisively expedited Sudan's post-Turabi decision-making, as shown by the rapid policy change proposals put together in 2000-2004 at the whim of President Bashir, especially concerning anti-terrorism cooperation with the United States.

Finally, as an extreme case in relation to the one of Eritrea, the Iranian case presented in the second part of Chapter 4 defies common but misguided interpretations frequently made on the country and presents instead a case of institutional repulsion for single-handed decision-making, including in the agenda setting phase. Indeed, Chapter 4 showed how in the Islamic Republic security and foreign policymaking tends to be more stable and incremental, with hardly sudden, single-handed shifts but rather time-consuming consultations. It was noted that, in general, as a primary constraint, the Iranian policymaking space is already limited by the need to adhere to the Islamic Republic's red lines, inhibiting major overnight shifts in foreign and security policy. Besides that, with regard to the agenda setting power in security and foreign policy, the identity of the agenda setters is not constitutionally defined as article 176 of the Constitution does not mention explicitly who holds the agenda inside the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC). The secretary of the SNSC, who is appointed by the President after consultations with the Supreme Leader (and as a result is one of the latter's two representatives in that body), is only the one who formally puts the policy proposal to the vote of all the other SNSC members before the final confirmation by the Supreme Leader. The historical practice has however revealed a cumbersome process even at the stage of agenda setting. Being the SNSC presided by the president, he is the one who has generally tabled policy proposals, but he does so only after consultations with the other power centres present in the SNSC. This happens at the level of sub-councils which are formed in the SNSC, and which are convened and "presided over by the President or a member of the Supreme Council for National Security appointed by the President" (Constitute Project, 2021). They discuss policy response options that are informally advanced also by other institutional actors outside of the SNSC but linked to it, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Centre for Strategic Studies, which help shape elite debates on foreign policy issues (Divsallar, 2021). Similar to multiparty systems that have designed institutional arenas for coalition governance (Döring and Hallerberg, 2004; Andeweg and Timmermans, 2008; Müller and Meyer, 2010; Rasch and Tsebelis, 2011) "wherein parties make [...] more or less formal arrangements to facilitate smooth processing and accommodate the preferences of the coalition partners" at the stage of establishing a common government agenda (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014:88-89), this creates a cumbersome system which entails lengthy negotiations on the policy change to propose, even before starting the real process of approving that policy proposal with all the veto players.

This system was sidelined in 2013-15, when the SNSC presided by Rouhani authorized Foreign Minister Javad Zarif to hold the portfolio of the nuclear negotiations – whereas, up to that point, the role of nuclear negotiator had always been covered by the secretary of the SNSC, hence reflecting the multi-agenda setting system described above (Kaussler, 2014). This move decisively streamlined the agenda setting in nuclear policymaking. As Zarif himself explained (Zimmt, 2021), the final decision on his policy proposals did indeed remain to be made by the entire SNSC, including with the final confirmation by the Supreme Leader who oversees it. But the agenda power, which includes the *crafting* of the policy proposal during the negotiations with the P5+1 (Germany and the five UNSC countries with veto power) to be later presented in Tehran for the SNSC voting, was endowed to the minister only. Ensuring that the conduction of the nuclear negotiations remained responsibility primarily of the foreign ministry, and not of the entire SNSC, at least concerning the agenda setting, centralised the agenda power in one single entity and expedited a process which, before 2013-15, required longer preliminary discussions within the SNSC. Not only did the “crucial decision in Tehran to move the nuclear file from the Supreme National Security Council to the Foreign Ministry [...] under Javad Zarif’s control” boost the US confidence that a deal could be reached, but it also picked up “the pace of diplomacy dramatically” (Parsi, 2017: chapter 12). Between August and November 2013, the United States and Iran held eight bilateral meetings, one in Muscat only days after Rouhani’s inauguration and the others in New York and Geneva. Some of them were held at the margins of P5+1 meetings held at the level of foreign ministers in which Zarif was free to negotiate a draft resolution to the nuclear standoff without continuously flying back and forth to Tehran. The result was, first, the JPA signed with the P5+1 in Geneva already in November 2013 (achieved in just two months) and, after the JPA expired in April 2015, the JCPOA in July 2015.

Finally, it is worth noting that the SNSC-based process introduced in the constitutional revision of 1989 was, according to some, already a way to “streamline decision making and resolve some of the conflicts while preserving the power bases of various powerful elites” (Kazemzadeh, 2017). After all, the 1989 reforms to remove the position of the Prime minister and to subsequently transfer its powers to the president were devised to centralise power in fewer centres. However, the removal of one single position did not improve this dynamic that much, given that power diffusion has since remained a key feature of the Iranian political system. What helped overcome, albeit for a while, the typically diffuse character of ruling institutions (Harris, 2020) that used to slow down the agenda setting process was Rouhani’s post-2013 changes which included the above-mentioned 2013-15 institutional amendments in the nuclear agenda setting.

Conclusions

This project aimed to research if and how domestic political and institutional constraints, also called veto players, inside regimes targeted by international sanctions shape the latter's effectiveness in achieving the desired political concessions senders aimed to obtain from them. By developing a new theoretical framework and related spatial model, the project has proposed a new lens that can help scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to more fully understand the complexities of the politics of sanction compliance and the key political dynamics taking place inside a regime targeted by sanctions, at a time restrictive measures have become ever more targeted and a sub-national level of analysis ever more important. Through this lens, it has argued that international sanctions work their effect through the domestic configuration of the target regime's veto players and their preferences. The concentration of agenda power, the congruence of policy preferences, and the cohesion across these political actors and institutions affects the direction, robustness, and expedition of the desired policy change – which together describe the comprehensive effectiveness of sanctions.

By looking inside states, the veto player lens adopts a sub-national level of analysis which the evolution of sanctions from comprehensive to targeted is arguably expected to benefit from. The so-called domestic-politics branch of the literature of sanctions has extensively focused on this level yet the different approaches that make up this field – the predominant one being the regime type – have largely overlooked the role of institutional and political constraints. Whether the focus was on the leadership, the ruling elites, or the winning coalition, and their traits and strategies, this scholarship has failed to capture the variation of strength of political and institutional constraints to the executive and their ability to affect the targeted country's likelihood to comply with or defy sanctions demands. The lens of veto players used in this research project aimed to offer a thorough discussion on this, thus placing the focus specifically on those actors who are endowed with veto authority on the policy response to sanctions. Additionally, the richness of the theory of veto players also allowed to hypothesise not only on the “direction” of the policy response to sanctions, but also on how robust and expedite this policy response can be, depending on the configurations of veto players' preferences. In this way, the project also contributed to shedding light on long-term aspects of sanctions effectiveness that are often given little attention in the literature.

The three hypotheses it aimed to test addressed each a different dimension of the policy response to sanctions: the direction, robustness, and expedition of it. With regard to the direction, it was tested whether the probability of compliance was conditioned not only on the preferences of the leadership but also its institutional and political constraints, and whether this probability was affected by the different sanctioning logics at play, that is related to the presence of economic or reputational costs. A second hypothesis focused instead on internal cohesion, to test how cohesion inside collective actors can ensure robust implementation of policy responses to sanctions. Sanctions themselves can actually affect cohesion levels depending on the extent of their reach across the constituent units. In this way, cohesion or its reverse (internal polarization) is expected to have an effect on the overall trajectory of the collective veto player towards a robust implementation of a selected policy change or contestation instead. Finally, the project also focused on the expedition of the policy response, focusing on a specific phase

of it, the one in which the proposed policy change is placed on the agenda. In this regard, it was tested how the agenda power diffusion can protract the duration of the decision about whether to change the policy under dispute or not, impacting also on the duration of the sanction episode itself, when other variables are held equal.

To test these hypotheses and to prove the validity of the new theoretical framework behind them, the project adopted different methodological strategies in face of some limits that exists to observe and collect data on these dynamics. In the first part, it employed statistical analysis on the basis of Jeong and Peksen's econometric one (2017) to probe the solidity of the existing hypotheses on the relation between veto constraints and sanctions compliance. The results found that a different conceptualisation and measurement of the veto variable, more adherent to Tsebelis' original theory, questions Jeong and Peksen's statistical findings and eventually support a reverse hypothesis according to which the higher the constraints, the more unlikely a path in the direction of sanction compliance. On the basis of these alternative findings, the project argued for the need of a more fined grained theoretical framework and model which could describe and test the behaviour of a sanctioned country more in depth, beyond the sole direction of policy change, through a more comprehensive use of the veto player analysis, including its robustness and expedition. A preliminary survival analysis probing the role that the presence or absence of veto players in the target country can have on the time dimension of sanctions compliance confirmed the merit of including this temporal focus in the new theoretical framework to explore it more extensively and in depth.

For this, a theoretically richer framework was formulated, touching upon three different dimensions of a target's reaction to sanction –the direction, robustness, and expedition of the response policy– with the help of spatial models. However, this richer framework and the need to collect new data due to the lack of updated datasets on veto players containing information on policy-area-specific preferences (Tsebelis' dataset, which does contain this kind of data, is outdated and geographically limited) as well as on their cohesion and agenda power distribution, eventually suggested the selection of a more limited number of case studies for the empirical part which tests the validity of the new theoretical framework and its related hypotheses. Each case traced the relevant information needed, mostly relying on UN documents and secondary sources including scholars' assessments. The poor transparency of the selected countries prevented the employment of other tools such as text analysis, which yet remains a valid alternative for future applications.

The theoretical framework and related model introduced in the project proved to be original in many ways. They tackled issues such as the robustness and expedition of the policy change that are often overlooked in the literature, but even with regard to the more popular 'direction' of the policy change, it proposed an original conceptualization of the inner workings of a target's calculus for compliance, which comprises the material and reputational costs attached to sanctions but also the salience attached to the policy issue at stake. Differently from Morgan and Schwebach (1995) and Jeong and Peksen (2017), by diversifying the costs, the spatial model of the project includes also a reflection on the differentiation of sanctioning logics (Giumelli, 2011). As the economic damage is not invariably present in all sanction episodes, the model introduces the concept of reputational costs (still under the variable *sanctions salience*) to capture those situations in which the mechanic at work in a sanction episode does not devise a direct material impact. Similarly to Morgan and Schwebach, instead, it does preserve the concept of *issue salience* in order to challenge the misplaced belief that the economic damage for noncompliance (that in their case is the reduction of trade and financial flows), when

large, automatically ensures political effectiveness. This is indeed neither sufficient – for sanctions based on logics leveraging economic damage, as it downplays the issue salience that is the reputational-political considerations of compliance which instead can mitigate if not completely annul the former – nor necessary – for cases with no major economic damage at all. Further to these added values, by disaggregating the target country into domestic institutions and actors, the veto player lens also introduces more granularity than the not-mutually exclusive existing categorical regime type classifications typically used in the literature, including intra-authoritarian ones, but which left many hybrid cases with inconclusive findings, including with regard to the three countries-cases explored in the empirical part of the project.

The empirical application to the cases studies eventually provided empirical support to the hypotheses listed above, confirming the explanatory power of the new theoretical framework. Regarding the impact of congruence on compliance, the case-studies of Eritrea and Iran indicated first and foremost that the reaction mechanism to sanctions is more complex than the one designed by Jeong and Peksen, also depending on the different sanctioning logics at play, involving many political considerations before purely economic ones, if any. The Iranian case clearly showed that there is not an immediate “transition belt” between sanctions’ economic pressure and the target’s behaviour, as a president cannot always directly respond to such a pressure without taking into consideration the constraints from the other elites. The Eritrean case further added that the economic impact can also be negligible, but that reputational (intended as non-material, such as positional) considerations can nonetheless increase *sanctions salience* even absent any significant material pain. In both case-studies, the military has turned out to be still a political constraint leaders have to reckon with, despite being generally overlooked in veto players datasets (the exception is the BTI, 2020a). And because it is generally an actor conceived as having a higher *issue salience* in defence and security issues, it is often thought to be a recalcitrant player in a sanction game, less inclined to political concessions than civil actors. While it remains empirically true most military actors perceive sanctions from ideologically adversarial countries as a sort of badge of honour, and are thus less inclined to comply with them, the case of Eritrea showed it is not always the case and if the military’s modes of survival rely on foreign sources or their strategic thinking relies on transnational partnerships, then they too may show a lower level of resolve. To the Eritrean military, in particular, the partnership across the Red Sea with some Gulf states was more crucial to their status than the status quo supportive of transnational terrorism. As the Eritrean president Isaias Afwerki’s survival strategy cannot do without the military support, he chased their support by accepting Saudi Arabia’s invitation to the war in Yemen. This international incentive was not an independent causal force of Eritrea’s dismissal of terrorism support in 2015-2018, but a permissive condition that gave Isaias more latitude in improving its domestic relations with the military after the 2013 attempted coup, despite his scepticism of long-term foreign partnerships and his own preference for bilateralism than multilateralism. The move paid political dividends for him, considering that he gratified the military by restoring its prestige on the battlefield. The revenues from the diaspora tax were in fact never truly undermined by the faulty implementation of the international sanction regime, but the regional status of the military was so. The military, to date, still remains a potentially dangerous constraint to the Eritrean President’s policymaking. Finally, through both the Iranian and Eritrean cases, positive sanctions –that is both the prospects of, and the maintenance of, inducements, be they economic or military– played a crucial role in the calculus of some veto players, thus endorsing the choice of a broader conceptualisation of sanctions, inclusive of both negative and positive measures.

Regarding the role of internal cohesion in ensuring a robust policy change, the case of Sudan aimed instead to show that internal cohesion and consequently robustness in policy changes are not a given in target countries, but rather reflect the domestic political environment, more specifically the organizational dynamics of target countries' collective veto players, that is their ability to cope with unfair distributions of sanction-related costs across their constituent units combined with their ability to control their members and prevent internal fragmentation. Once the Sudanese regime modified its internal cohesion, the policy response to sanctions as well as its entire foreign policy line became more robust and less haphazard. Overall, then, cohesion is a key element in the politics of compliance. On the one hand, when sanctions comprehensively target the whole target regime, they are expected to adversely end up strengthening the cohesion of different constituent units in opposition to the sender's demands. On the other hand, though, cohesion is equally needed to have a robust compliance too, to prevent faulty implementations of desired policy changes. A close inspection into intra-target differences across diverse constituent units is crucial to ensure the latter outcome.

Finally, the analysis of the role of the agenda power distribution on the expedition of a policy change confirmed some expectations deriving from the literature on regime types. As much as in personalist regimes policies can be changed on a whim, so veto players configurations characterised by a single agenda setter can streamline decision-making. In this regard, the Iranian case in 2013-2015, more than anything else, exposed the advantages of endowing a single player with the agenda power for the nuclear file, hence increasing the expedition of the typically protracted agenda setting process in the Iranian establishment.

Overall, the veto player lens employed in this project gave a competitive edge to the analysis of target regimes' politics of sanctions compliance compared to previous regime-type studies. It did so by expanding both the depth and breadth of the explanatory power, first by replacing the categorical lens of regime types with one which cuts across them, and then by introducing more dimensions of sanctions compliance which capture not only the direction of policy change but also its robustness and expedition. In its empirical application, albeit limited to a few cases, this lens best showed how players think about the policy under dispute and how the target's political ecosystem translates into the relevant policy (generally security-related) decision-making process, thus developing a more complete understanding of which options would work and how in the politics of sanctions compliance, based not on the preferences of the leadership alone but also on those of its political and institutional constraints.

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