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Caught in the Crossfire: The Impact of International Sanctions on the Human Security of Syrian Women

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Master in International Studies

Supervisor:

PhD, João David Malagueta Terrenas, Invited Assistant Professor,
ISCTE - University Institute of Lisbon

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SOCIOLOGY
AND PUBLIC POLICY

Department of History

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Dedicated to all the brave people fighting for freedom in Syria, whose resilience, strength, and hope in the face of adversity have been a source of inspiration for this dissertation.

Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.

— Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

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Thank you all.

Resumo

Esta dissertação analisa o impacto das sanções internacionais no estado socioeconómico e de saúde das mulheres sírias. As sanções são uma parte integrante da atual diplomacia internacional e um instrumento para forçar os governos visados a mudar o seu comportamento. Embora se destinem a ser uma alternativa não violenta à intervenção armada, têm frequentemente consequências negativas. De acordo com a maior parte da literatura sobre o tema, os líderes políticos são largamente poupados às dificuldades económicas e humanitárias provocadas pelas sanções, enquanto a população tende a suportar estes encargos de forma desproporcionada, sendo os segmentos sociais mais marginalizados, vulneráveis e em posições mais suscetíveis, os mais afetados, incluindo as mulheres. Através do prisma da segurança humana e com base no “Handbook for Assessing the Humanitarian Implications of Sanctions” do IASC e na análise bibliográfica e documental, esta dissertação investiga as implicações das sanções, na segurança, no bem-estar e nos meios de subsistência das mulheres sírias. Argumenta que, embora as sanções não sejam os motores da destruição nem a principal causa da crise humanitária, agravaram as consequências causadas pelo conflito, pelas alterações climáticas e pela cultura patriarcal. As sanções económicas impostas aos sectores petrolífero e agrícola afetaram negativamente a economia e agravaram a capacidade das mulheres para satisfazerem as suas necessidades básicas e responderem a preocupações humanitárias urgentes.

Palavras-Chave: Mulheres sírias, sanções, género, segurança humana, Síria

Abstract

This dissertation examines the impact of international sanctions on Syrian women's socioeconomic and health status. Sanctions are an integral part of today's international diplomacy and a tool to force target governments to change their behaviour. Although intended to be a non-violent alternative to armed intervention, they frequently have negative consequences. According to most literature on the topic, political leaders are largely spared from the economic and humanitarian difficulties brought on by sanctions, while the population tend to endure these burdens disproportionately, with the most marginalised, vulnerable social segments and in more susceptible positions, being the most impacted, including women. Through the prism of human security and based upon IASC's "Handbook for Assessing the Humanitarian Implications of Sanctions", bibliographic and documental analysis, this dissertation investigates the gendered implications of sanctions upon Syrian women's security, well-being, and livelihood. It argues that although sanctions are not the drivers of destruction nor the main driver of the humanitarian crisis, they have worsened the consequences caused by the conflict, climate change and the patriarchal culture. Economic sanctions on the oil and agricultural sectors have negatively affected the economy and aggravated the women's capacity to fulfil basic needs and meet urgent humanitarian concerns.

Keywords: Syrian women, sanctions, gender, human security, Syria

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

AFR	Adolescent Fertility Rate
EU	European Union
FLFP	Female Labour Force Participation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDR	Human Development Report
HSE/HSEO	Hufbauer, Schott and Elliot/Oegg Database
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IR	International Relations
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MoH	Syrian Minister of Health
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SYP	Syrian Pound
TIES	Threat and Imposition of Economic Sanctions Database
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCHS	United Nations Commission on Human Security
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WW	World War

Introduction

On January 26, 2011, in the streets of the small town of al-Hasakah, in the northeastern corner of Syria, Hasan Ali Akleh, 37 years old, found himself in between despair and determination. Tired of the poor living situation, corruption, widespread unemployment, police brutality, and the lack of job opportunities, in an act of defiance against the government, Hasan Ali Akleh marched onto the main street of al-Hasakeh carrying a petrol can and lit himself on fire (Sarihan, 2012). His ultimate act was comparable to Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia that six weeks prior ignited the flames of a revolution that spread through several countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with the chanting "The People Want the Fall of the Regime" echoing through the region's streets and squares. It set in motion a series of pro-democracy uprisings and protests, known as the Arab Spring, that led to significant political, social, and economic changes that would alter the region and the world forever.

Even though Akleh's act went largely unremarked and did not become prominent in the narratives that dominated the Arab revolutions, he was one of the first acts of defiance in 2011 Syria before the country's insurrection (Al-Saadi, 2022). Nevertheless, it would be in the southern city of Deraa that the Syrian revolution would begin. On March 6, fifteen schoolboys, all under the age of 15, were arrested and tortured for graffitiing walls in support of the Arab Spring (Yassin-Kassab & Al-Shami, 2018). In response, thousands of people peacefully protested and occupied the Omari Mosque, demanding the children's release. Bashar al-Assad replied with violence, killing the first four individuals of the uprising. The protests would continue, and so did the deaths, the abductions, and the tortures. Outraged by the regime's violent repression, the protests grew rapidly in numbers and all over Syria. In a constant cycle, demonstrations were met with gunfire resulting in funerals, leading to larger protests, followed by more gunfire and so on, escalating into a complex and multifaceted civil war. In response to the violent repression and human rights violations of Bashaar al-Assad's government, various countries, including the United States (US) and the European Union (EU), imposed what has been described by some scholars and researchers as "the most complicated and far-reaching sanctions regimes ever imposed" (Walker, 2016, p.6), the "strictest and most complex collective regimes in recent history" (Daher, 2020, p.15) and an "unprecedented" sanctions regime (Portela, 2012, p.152). Notwithstanding, although sanctions have been used and discussed before World War (WW) I, their applications, effectiveness, and consequences remain in a long-heated debate among scholars and politicians. Considering this, the objective of this thesis is to critically examine the impact of international sanctions on Syrian women's

social, economic, and health status between 2011 and 2019. Through this analysis, the study aims to contribute to the specific outcomes and implications of sanction policies on the targeted population, particularly vulnerable groups.

Relevance and Research Objectives

Being an important tool in today's global politics, there are currently 14 ongoing sanctions regimes imposed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (UNSC, 2023), 38 from the US (US Department of the Treasury, 2023) and 40 from the EU (EU Sanctions Map, 2023), making this trio the biggest sanctions imposers (Weber & Schneider, 2020). Sanctions are a political, diplomatic, and economic tool to force target¹ governments to change their behaviour according to the will of the sender², without the use of military power and can be defined simply as "(...) the temporary abrogation of (...) relations to pressure target states into changing specified policies or modifying behaviour in suggested directions." (Ostension & Bull, 2002, p. 374),

Early research on sanctions effectiveness, especially before the 1990s, argued that this type of economic statecraft was ineffective (see Galtung, 1967; Doxey, 1980; Lindsay, 1986;). They focused on specific cases like Cuba, Iraq, Haiti, South Africa, and Rhodesia to explain whether sanctions were successful or unsuccessful in persuading target governments to comply with foreign pressures. Galtung (1967), for instance, showed that Rhodesia's political power had become stronger because of sanctions. More recently, a second class of studies on the effectiveness of sanctions took a more "optimistic" view, showing that sanctions were "somewhat" effective (see Baldwin, 1985; Hufbauer et al., 1990; Cortright & Lopez, 2000). For instance, Hufbauer et al. (1990) found that overall, the success rate of sanctions was 34 per cent. Nevertheless, Pape (1997, 1998) has been very critical of the optimistic view and the study of Hufbauer et al. (1990), claiming that sanctions were ineffective and arguing that sanctions episodes were incorrectly recognised as successful, either because of mislabelled the targets' compromises or because they resulted from factors unrelated to the sanctions. Nonetheless, most scholars accepted that sanctions could be effective, but shifted their focus to understanding the specific conditions under which they were successful (see Drezner, 1999; Ang & Peksen, 2007; Peksen & Cooper Drury, 2010; Jeong & Peksen, 2019).

¹ The term "target" (or "sanctioned") refers to the state or non-state actor that is the object of the sanction.

² The term "sender" (or "sanctioner") refers to the sovereign actor that threatens or enforces international sanctions.

Although nations impose sanctions to create constraints on target countries, forcing state leaders to change their behaviour, they are not intended to harm innocent civilians. Nevertheless, these occur frequently (Perry, 2021), with the most vulnerable social segments of the target country, including women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, suffering the most from the unintended consequences (Onder, 2022). According to Peksen (2016), understanding how sanctions affect marginalized groups in target countries is relevant since, although the target society undoubtedly experiences some substantial repercussions because of international sanctions, it is improbable that all societal segments would be equally affected. The cost of external economic shocks may be little or non-existent for groups with access to political and economic capital since they can use the limited resources unevenly to their advantage. On the other hand, because of their disadvantage in society, vulnerable people may suffer greatly from any substantial political and economic upheavals.

In the specific case of the gendered impact of sanctions, some studies demonstrate this concern (see Al-Ali, 2005; Al-Jawaheri, 2008; Toprak, 2020; Mir, 2020; Perry, 2021; Wei & Hunter, 2021), with most focusing on Iraq and Iran as studies cases or using general datasets. For instance, Toprak's (2020) master thesis explored how Iranian women were affected by the international sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, by assessing Iranian women's economic, political, and social status. Al-Ali (2005), showed how Iraqi economic sanctions relegated women even farther to their homes, suffering both in terms of deteriorating humanitarian conditions and a persistent lack of security on the streets. In addition, human fundamental rights like security, access to water, energy, healthcare, and food were not sufficiently met, and this worsened the under-representation of women in the different political parties and newly forming political constituencies.

In the case of Syria, it is one of the countries that have the most sanctions imposed, only surpassed by Russia and Iran (Statista, 2022). Sanctions were imposed by the EU, the US, and other countries, primarily because of the persecution of civilians by the country's government in the Syrian civil war from 2011 onwards (Moret, 2015). These sanctions impositions have proved broad detrimental effects on the health and well-being of Syrian civilians (Moret, 2015). However, due to the vulnerable position of women in Syrian society, these effects can be far worse for them. While there are studies on the impact of sanctions on the Syrian population (see Portela, 2012; Sen et al., 2013; Moret, 2015; Andronik, 2018), with some mentions of women, there are no studies specifically focused on the gendered impact of sanctions on Syrian women. In addition, there is more international attention on Syrians refugees in comparison with Syrians living in the country.

In this sense, after conducting literature research and problematizing the issue, the main objective of this dissertation was to analyse the consequences of economic sanctions on Syrian women. The question that guided the research was:

1. How did the imposition of international sanctions impact Syrian women's social, economic, and health status between 2011 and 2019?

To operationalize this research question, a set of sub-research questions have been developed that encompass the specific objectives of the dissertation:

1. How do international sanctions have unintended implications on the livelihood of civilians in the target country?
2. What international sanctions regimes have been applied to Syria and how did they impact the country?
3. How did international sanctions affect the human security of Syrian women, including their social, economic and health conditions?

Methodology

This research was guided by the human security paradigm. According to Tadjbakhsh (2014), instead of just focusing on the security of the state, the idea of human security also considers the well-being and dignity of individuals. The concept of safety expands to include freedom from fear and freedom from want. Threats to human security can include objective, observable factors, such as insufficient money, long-term unemployment, and poor access to healthcare and education, as well as subjective views like feeling powerless over one's life, humiliation, fear of crime, and violence. By placing people at the centre of analysis, security is broadened to include issues that may limit people's ability to survive (e.g., violence, persecution, or death), live (e.g., unemployment, food insecurity) and maintain their dignity (e.g., human rights violations, inequality, discrimination). Sanctions often have negative consequences for the civilians of the targeted state, who may face increased poverty, violence, discrimination, and health risks. In this sense, the human security framework can be useful to assess the impact of sanctions on civilians and, the direct and indirect ways in which they can alter their livelihoods.

To fulfil the proposed objectives, this study adopted a qualitative methodological approach, supported by statistical data, including employment and health indicators in Syria. Thus, the proposal is to conduct a qualitative study case on the consequences of sanctions on Syrian women's social, economic, and health well-being between 2011 and 2019. The data was collected from secondary sources, including academic paper and books, official documents, reports, and grey literature. More specifically, data was collected from governmental and non-

governmental organizations, the World Bank, UN agencies, including UNICEF, WHO, and WFP. The bibliographical research involved analysing literature on the subject, while the documentary research focused on examining official documents available on the internet.

To analyse the secondary data, I used the guidelines set by the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in the “Handbook for Assessing the Humanitarian Implications of Sanctions” (Bessler et al., 2004). I used these specific set of human indicators:

1. Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP)³
2. Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)⁴
3. Adolescent Fertility Rate (AFR)⁵

It is also important to emphasize that when several historical, political, and socio-cultural factors are at play, evaluating the negative unintended consequences and effects of sanctions on society can be challenging, since it can be difficult to separate the effects of sanctions from other factors.

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is organized into four chapters. After the Introduction where I presented and contextualised the topic and the research objectives, as well as a summary of the methodological options, three chapters follow. In Chapter 1, I review the literature on sanctions, their history, concept, and their unintended negative consequences. Afterwards, Chapter 2 explains the human security framework, that will be utilized to understand and assess the gendered impact of international sanctions on Syrian women. Chapter 3 explains and justifies in detail the methodological options used in this research. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the history and consequences of sanctions in Syria, the imposing countries, and the analysis of their impact on Syrian women’s social, economic, and health conditions. This is followed by the Conclusion with my final considerations and future lines of research, the Bibliographical References that support the research, the Appendices with supplementary resources, and the Annexes with support materials.

³ The number of both employed and unemployed, as percentage of female population aged 15 or older (ILO, 2023)

⁴ The number of female deaths from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes) during pregnancy and childbirth or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy (WHO, 2023).

⁵ The number of births to women aged 15-19 years per 1,000 (WHO, 2023).

Chapter 1 - Literature Review: Sanctions as a Tool of Foreign Policy

This dissertation sets out to assess the impact of sanctions on Syrian women's social, economic, and health conditions. To explore the growing research on this topic, map its major tendencies, and identify some insufficiencies, this chapter will briefly review the academic literature on the topic of international sanctions. Divided into three parts, the chapter will start by addressing the sanctions' history, concept and academic literature of their success, unintended consequences, and impact on vulnerable groups within the target society. It will be demonstrated that, albeit mostly targeted at the elites and aiming to provoke domestic and international policy shifts, often sanctions end up contributing to increasing social and economic inequalities in the target country, with the most vulnerable segments of society, especially women and children, being the most affected. Although various empirical and theoretical studies analyse the conditions and effects of sanctions, there is not a consensus on the mechanisms and variables that influence the success or failure of sanctions. This makes it difficult to understand the political and economic dynamics surrounding the relations between the sender and target countries, as well as the consequences of sanctions for human rights, democracy, and international security. This dissertation aims to join the conversation regarding the impact of sanctions on vulnerable groups, in addition to their efficiency, by analysing the impact of sanctions on women through the Syrian case study, that has not yet been sufficiently explored.

1.1. From Athens to Iraq: A Brief History of Sanctions as a Tool of International Statecraft

Although sanctions are now widespread as a tool of international penalties, their use goes back centuries. They have been used by governments as an instrument of economic statecraft to achieve political objectives since, at least, ancient Greece. In the book "History of the Peloponnesian War", Thucydides reports how in 432 B.C., the city-state of Megara, a Spartan ally, was subject to a trade embargo by Athens, ordered by the Athenian statesman Pericles and known as the "Megarian Decree", that barred its entry in the Athenian empire and access to its harbours and markets. In this case, the embargo was put forward as a response to the kidnapping of three women attendants of Pericles' partner, Aspasia. Crucially, though, this event is now considered by International Relations (IR) scholars as the first episode of economic sanctions in history (Hufbauer et al., 2007; Mulder, 2023).

Nonetheless, the first modern-day sanction was imposed on the British Empire in 1806 by Napoleon Bonaparte, then Emperor of France, through the “Berlin Decree” in what later became known as the “Continental Blockade” (Demarais, 2022). Lasting until 1814, this blockade consisted of an embargo against British trade, forbidding British ships to disembark into any harbour controlled by France or its allies and, consequently, stopping all relations between continental Europe and Britain. However, the blockade soon proved ineffective as the British started to establish alternative smuggling routes in Europe and replaced trade with the American continent. According to Demarais (2022), between 1805 and 1810, the value of British exports increased by more than 20 per cent and the French economy during the blockade plummeted. Albeit early, this example also showed the capacity of sanctioned countries to adjust to such restrictions to avoid their negative consequences or, at the very least, diminish their most pressing effects. Moreover, it also demonstrated that sanctions could end up having unintended consequences as well as financial implications for the sender countries, something that remains evident even today.

While sanctions continued to be used throughout history, it was only in the post-WWI period that they gained new traction in international affairs (Cortright & Lopez, 1995). With the creation of the League of Nations, later the UN, sponsored by US President Woodrow Wilson, this tool was regarded as an important weapon of international statecraft, one that could be employed to the detriment of military engagements as a stand-alone policy that could be used to maintain peace, especially within Europe, being nonetheless, mostly used to hinder military initiatives or to support a larger war effort (Hufbauer et al., 2007). In 1919, in Indianapolis, Indiana, President Wilson declared that international sanctions aimed to provoke:

(...) an absolute isolation (...) that brings a nation to its senses just as suffocation removes from the individual all inclinations to fight (...) Apply this economic, peaceful, silent, deadly remedy and there will be no need for force. It is a terrible remedy. It does not cost a life outside of the nation boycotted, but it brings a pressure upon that nation which, in my judgment, no modern nation could resist (Wilson in Mulder, 2023, p.1-2)

During WWI, the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires were the targets of an extraordinary economic war waged by the Allied and Associated Powers (Mulder, 2023). They established national blockade ministries and international committees to manage and obstruct the flow of supplies, energy, food, and information to their adversaries. The catastrophic impact on Central Europe and the Middle East, where countless of people perished from starvation and illness and the civilian society was disrupted, demonstrated the power of the blockade as a weapon.

The use of sanctions at this time reflected the idealist/liberal view of international politics that guided the period between WWI and WWII. This approach was centred on cooperation, multilateralism, and the pursuit of collective peace and security (Nau, 2017). It prioritized diplomacy and aimed to reduce the use of force by emphasizing disarmament and only using force as a last option when negotiations fail and only with multilateral consent. The liberal internationalist foreign policy tradition was established by President Woodrow Wilson, who was also a strong advocate of a world order based on cooperation, respect for national sovereignty, and the right of peoples to self-determination. He was in favour of using international organizations to consolidate international society.

His “14 Points for Peace” speech called for the opening of diplomatic channels, unfettered shipping, disarmament, and other measures to prevent further conflicts and ensure global stability and for the establishment of a worldwide League of States, that would eventually become the League of Nations (Nau, 2017). Rather than relying on national security and the balance of power, the League of Nations represented a new approach to international security that focused on collective security and the pooling of force. All nations would act to prevent threats, first by imposing collective economic sanctions and subsequently, if required, by combining their military power. Sanctions were seen as a benign and acceptable tool of pressure on countries that violated international law, and an alternative to military confrontation.

Nonetheless, this approach wasn’t always effective or entirely accepted and was met with several challenges and limitations, especially considering the emergence of authoritarian and aggressive regimes that posed a threat to the post-WWI order, since it depended on the political will and economic interests of the participating countries. In sanctioned countries, the rise of authoritarian governments and the start of WWII were influenced by rising discontent, nationalism, and economic instability. For example, the sanctions imposed on Italy after it invaded Ethiopia in 1935 fell short of putting a stop to fascist expansionism and eventually hurt the League of Nations’ reputation (Mulder, 2023).

Nevertheless, sanctions have only recently become a prominent and important tool of coercive statecraft, particularly in post-WWII. According to Cilizoglu & Early (2021) between 1945 and 1989, the Cold War dynamics put sanctions at the heart of foreign policy, with many of these efforts being undertaken largely for symbolic reasons. In fact, this period registered the imposition of over six hundred sanctions, with the US being responsible for almost half of these (Morgan et al., 2014).

There were, however, few hopes that they would be successful due to their unilateral and partial characteristics. During the Cold War, sanctions caused rich or powerful allies of the

target country to assume the role of “black knights”, helping to replace the lost trade and aid of the target states with their own (Rogers, 1996). Consequently, they could largely counterbalance any deprivation caused by the sanctions themselves. Offsetting compensation has occurred, most notably in occasions where big powers were caught up in ideological confrontation over the actions of a smaller nation, and it was usual that the Soviet Union (SU) and the US periodically undercut each other’s sanctions attempts. For instance, the SU countered US sanctions against Cuba in 1960 and Nicaragua in 1980 by providing essential goods like oil and offering compensatory aid. Comparable, in 1948, the US responded to Soviet sanctions against Yugoslavia by supplying compensatory aid. The Arab League campaign against the state of Israel, since 1948, is another instance of offset support. This effort has contributed to ensuring that Israel continues to receive public and private support from the US and Western Europe (Hufbauer et al., 2007).

Nonetheless, the end of the Cold War and the reconfiguration of international politics that ensued in the 1990s, often characterized by the emergence of intra-state conflicts and widespread violation of human rights would lead to a new increase in the number of episodes (see Figure 1), and thus cemented sanctions as a major instrument in both national and international diplomacy (Cortright & Lopez, 1995; Cilizoglu & Early, 2021). This sudden increase in sanctions led Cortright and Lopez (2000) to define the 1990s as the “sanctions decade”. According to Morgan et al. (2014) during this period alone, nearly five hundred and fifty new sanctions were imposed.

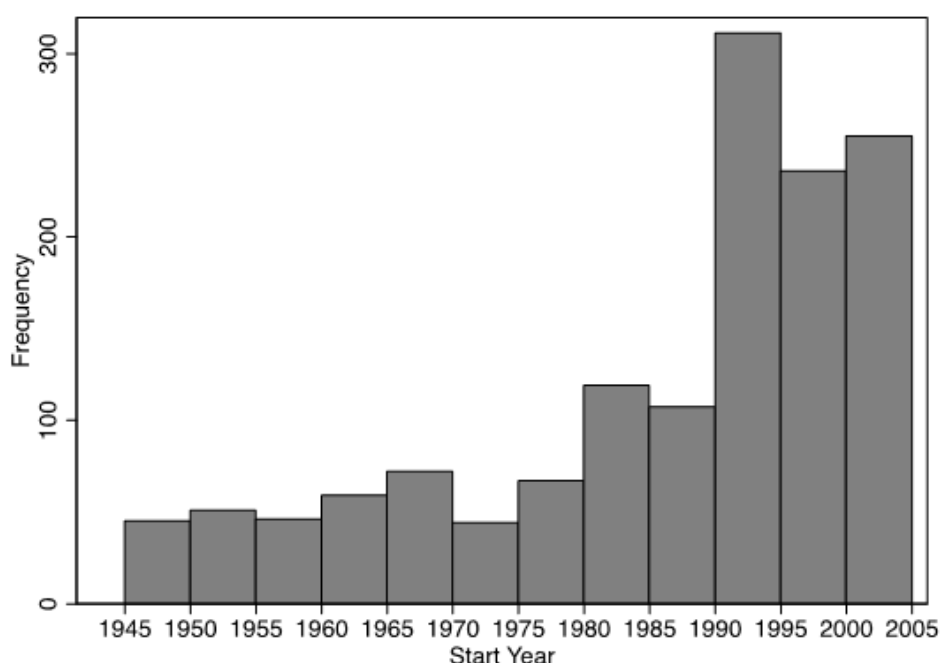
Apart from provoking an upsurge in the number of sanctions applied, the end of the Cold War also brought changes in the type of sanctions imposed, and the growing number of sanctions that were imposed through international institutions, specifically, the UN (Morgan et al., 2014). According to Biersteker & Hudáková (2021), whereas the UN has had the power to impose sanctions since 1945, the rivalry between the US and the SU that characterized the Cold War rendered this policy instrument largely unusable. The renewed harmony among UNSC members during the 1990s was thus essential to enable the substantial rise in the number of new UN sanctions regimes (Doxey, 2009).

Before 1989, only Southern Rhodesia and South Africa had been subjected to UN sanctions, because both white minority governments violated the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by denying social, political, and economic rights to their majority black population (Biersteker & Hudáková, 2021). In contrast, during the 1990s the UNSC imposed sanctions against countries such as Iraq, former Yugoslavia, Libya,

Liberia, Somalia, Cambodia, Haiti, Angola, Rwanda, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan, among others.

In summary, the year 1990 was by marked the end of the Cold War, the imposition of international sanctions against the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, and the substantive acceleration of globalization. According to van Bergeijk (1994, 1995, 2021), these three phenomena in addition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are key to explain the increase in the use of sanctions in the following years.

Figure 1: *Initiation of Sanctions Cases, 1945-2005*



Source: Morgan et al., 2014, p.7

1.2. Sanctions: Unpacking the Meaning, Mapping the Practice, Assessing the Law

1.2.1. Concept

The previous section has briefly acknowledged how sanctions evolved through history, but it is important to understand their nature and unpack its meaning. According to Giumelli (2011), it has been challenging to develop a precise definition of sanctions because they cover a wide range of actions, ranging from embargoes to the freezing of private citizens' financial assets, making it difficult to achieve a balance between their scope and intensity. Furthermore, there has been an association in the literature between “economic sanctions” and “sanctions”. One such relationship is that offered and extensively used definition by Hufbauer et al., (2007). This, however, can be confusing because sanctions aren't only economic. They can also be cultural, diplomatic, or even military in nature (Giumelli, 2011). Consequently, the study of international

sanctions can be constrained, and the significance of any empirical research findings diminished if the definition is limited to economic measurements.

In this sense, I will use the definition provided by Guimelli (2011, p.16) where international sanctions are defined as “(...) politically motivated penalties imposed as a declared consequence of the target’s failure to observe international standards or international obligations by one or more international actors against one or more others”. In this definition, sanctions can encompass a wide range of actions, from oral condemnation to armed measures, nonetheless, they are frequently promoted as non-violent alternatives to military intervention (Tostensen & Bull, 2002). This definition isn’t strictly economic, it doesn’t refer to the nature of the sanctions as punitive or coercive, since that depends on the specific sanction case, and it is not limited to sanctions between states since, as has been seen in the last few years, sanctions can also target a wide array of actors, including individuals, firms, and other non-state actors like terrorist organizations.

1.2.2. Typology

There are different types of sanctions, each of which focuses on a different aspect of the relations between the actors involved, including economic sanctions, the most widely used practice, but also arms embargoes, goods and service restrictions, visa and travel bans, financial transactions, freezing assets and cultural or diplomatic restrictions, that are employed depending on the goal of the imposing country (Hufbauer et al., 2007; Moret, 2015; Schmitt, 2017).

According to Biersteker et al. (2018), sanctions have different functions that can be arranged in three groups: *coercing*, that is, forcing the target to change its behaviour and policies by imposing a cost; *constraining* the ability to engage in prohibited activity, by limiting access to specific resources and commodities; and *signalling* the discontent with the target’s behaviour/policy or a violation of an international norm, through the act of stigmatizing those responsible for the transgression. These three purposes are not mutually exclusive, and they are often pursued simultaneously. There are multiple reasons why governments and international organizations choose to impose sanctions. Sanctions can be driven by various factors, including geopolitical factors, national security issues, human rights abuses, internal political dynamics, and economic interests (Yang et al., 2004). Nonetheless, the underlying reasons and objectives vary depending on the country and the case. Additionally, it is important to stress that sanctions are seldom used in isolation from other instruments of foreign and security policy (Biersteker & van Bergeijk, 2015). All forms of conflict resolution coexist alongside the imposition of

sanctions, including peace negotiations, peacekeeping operations, undercover operations, and threat/use of force. As a result, sanctions should be understood as part of a wider strategy for promoting global peace, security, and human rights that also considers these other actions and the effects of their interaction.

Furthermore, sanctions can also be multilateral or unilateral, the latter of which is also known as autonomous. Multilateral sanctions represent coordinated institutional decisions made by international organisations, such as those ordered by the UNSC, or a group of countries (Jessen, 2021). In the instances of UNSC, all UN Member States are obligated to execute them under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Unilateral sanctions are those applied by a state or entity, without the support or authorization of an international organization or coalition. They are usually enforced to supplement already existing multilateral sanctions or on occasions in which they have not been imposed due to disagreement among the permanent members of the UNSC (Moret, 2021).

Lastly, sanctions regimes can be comprehensive or targeted. Comprehensive sanctions are characterised by being wide-ranging and focused on the state and society as a whole (Moret, 2015). They are considered as a “blunt instrument” since their economic effects frequently harm the civilians and sometimes even neighbouring nations, with regime leaders and their devoted followers, in rare instances, however, practically getting away unharmed (see for example the case of Manuel Noriega and Slobodan Milosevic, from Panama and Serbia, respectively) (Hufbauer et al., 2007). The comprehensive sanctions imposed on Iraq in the 1990s, due to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, caused tremendous hardship for Iraqis, including devastating levels of unemployment, poverty, and famine (Perry, 2021). In the initial five-year period of the Iraqi sanctions’ regime, the cost of a month’s food supply for a household soared. The humanitarian repercussions of the sanctions imposed on Iraq were so drastic that the international community compelled the UNSC to modify its decision-making procedure regarding the sanctions imposed. The comprehensive sanctions regime imposed on Iraq after the Gulf War, ignited a strong wave of criticism due to the human rights violations, prompting policymakers to improve the design of sanctions to prevent future humanitarian disasters (Schmitt, 2017). Thus, since the 1990s, senders have favoured targeted sanctions over comprehensive sanctions (Biersteker et al., 2005).

Targeted sanctions, also known as smart sanctions, differ in that they are directed at specific elites, government officials, terrorist groups, all parties of a conflict, non-governmental entities, or proscribed activities without harming the entire economy and putting the general population through extraordinary hardship (Hufbauer et al., 2007). Nonetheless, the “no harm” argument

is often contested by scholars (Early & Schulzke, 2019). Among others, targeted sanctions can include asset freezes, travel bans, arms embargoes, and luxury commodities. The theory is that by sanctioning material incentives for important activities and/or the elite supporters of the target, they will eventually put enough pressure on the target to force them to make concessions and change their behaviour (Drezner, 2011).

1.2.3. Regulation

The implementation of sanctions is regulated by law and is subject to the general principles of international law (Schmitt, 2017). For instance, for UN sanctions to be enforced, the legal conditions of UN Charter Article 39, must typically be met. This article plays a significant role in providing a legal basis for the imposition of sanctions by the international community. Sanctions imposed under the authority of the UNSC are considered binding on all UN member states. Nonetheless, while the UN Charter provides a legal framework for sanctions, individual countries may also impose sanctions independently based on their own national laws and policies (Schmitt, 2017). Additionally, sanctions must also respect human rights and refrain from worsening any humanitarian situations by having humanitarian exemptions. For instance, they should not target commodities vital to the population's livelihood and well-being (EU, 2020). It is also worth noting that despite country or international organizations imposing sanctions regimes, the private sector also plays a large role since its effectiveness depends on whether and how this actor implements it (Schmitt, 2017). Thus, for this reason, efficient engagement with the private sector—including effective and timely communication, the issuance of implementation advice, and monitoring—is considered essential for sanctions to be successful.

1.3. Scholarly Literature on Sanctions: Effectiveness, Impact and Unintended Consequences

Having explained the concept of sanctions, this section will now focus on mapping the academic literature on sanctions effectiveness and unintended consequences to identify and critically evaluate the existing knowledge in ways that this work can build on and contribute to this knowledge. While the use of sanctions was discussed before WWI, scholarly literature on sanctions established itself in the 1990s, due to the overall increase of sanctions as an economic statecraft. The sections demonstrates that the debate on sanctions effectiveness remains contested among scholars since it depends on specific sanctions mechanisms and types and on

what scholars interpret as “success”. Furthermore, while studies acknowledge that sanctions can have negative consequences on the target country’s society, especially on the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women, most of those studies are cross-panel analyses that don’t approach the specific nuances of how they affect these groups.

1.3.1. The Imposition of Sanctions and their Effectiveness

The academic literature on sanctions focuses predominantly on two topics: (1) what factors that countries and organizations to impose sanctions; and (2) what and under what conditions sanctions are effective in changing the behaviour of the sanctioned target.

Regarding the first topic, and more specifically the aim of sanctions, early scholarship acknowledged that the imposition of sanctions by sender countries is a complex process based on several policy objectives (Peksen, 2019). For instance, Barber (1979) argues that there are three major types of policy goals: first, primary objectives that relate to targets’ actions and policies; secondary objectives that relate to the international prestige of the sender; and, finally, tertiary objectives that relate to the design and functioning of the global system. Lindsay (1986) and Doxey (1996), broadened the policy goals of sanctions to also include compliance, subversion, signalling, solidarity, punishment, destabilization, deterrence, limitation of conflict, and domestic and international symbolism.

Concerning the second topic, the literature on effectiveness can be divided between two waves of sanction research. The first emerged before the 1990s and includes scholars who tend to have a more “pessimistic” view of sanctions. Using specific case studies such as Cuba, South Africa, and Rhodesia, most of this scholarship concurs that sanctions are largely ineffective (see Galtung, 1967; Baer, 1973; Lindsey, 1986; Nossal, 1989; Pape, 1997, 1998; Nurnberger, 2003). The second wave emerged in the 1990s and includes scholars who have a more “optimistic” view of sanctions, arguing that sanctions are “somewhat” effective in achieving their goals (see Hufbauer et al., 1985, 2007; Baldwin, 1985; Cortright & Lopez, 2000; Morgan, et., 2014). By and large, these academics have criticized the empirical generalizations conclusions of the case studies, noting that most of these cases suffered from selection bias since they were chosen specifically because the sanctions had failed to produce the desired change.

Furthermore, the scholars from the “optimistic” wave of research also differ from the “pessimistic” in that they adopt a quantitative rather than qualitative approach to study this topic, using large databases on economic sanctions to systematically test the empirical validity of different theories regarding the effectiveness of international sanctions (Peksen, 2019).

Among others, this scholarship has relied substantially on databases such as the Hufbauer, Schott and Elliot (HSE/HSEO) (Hufbauer et al., 1985, 1990, 2007), the GIGA Sanctions (Portela & von Soest, 2012), the Threat and Imposition of Economic Sanctions (TIES) (Morgan et al. 2014), the Targeted Sanctions Consortium (Biersteker et al., 2018), the EUSANCT (Weber & Schneider, 2022) and the Global Sanctions (Kirikakha et al., 2021) databases.

One of the earliest and most important research that started sanctions effectiveness sub-field was conducted by Galtung (1967). In this work, Galtung investigated the UNSC sanctions regime effectiveness imposed against Rhodesia and demonstrated that, instead of inflicting economic pressure on target countries or forcing leaders to make concessions, leaders of the target country often instrumentalized the economic burden of the sanction to rally citizens of the targeting country around their cause and support their regime. Sanctions could thus prompt nationalist sentiments and political unity against the sanctioning state, or as he called it, the “rally-around-the-flag effect” (Galtung, 1967, p. 393). Galtung criticised the flawed logic behind sanctions, which he dubbed the “Naïve theory”. This theory argues that sanctions are expected by senders to create economic hardships for the target country, leading its population to pressure the ruling elite to conform to the senders' stipulations. However, Galtung’s research contradicted these expectations since leaders adapted to the hardships or took advantage of opportunities to circumvent sanctions and used the hardships to unite the nation “around the flag”.

The “optimist” current was later initiated with the work of Hufbauer et al. (1985). In contrast to the previous scholarship, these academics created an extensive database of sanctions implemented between 1914 and 1985 and analysed a sample of 103 sanctions episodes. Building upon that, they concluded that 36 per cent of the sanctions achieved their objective, thus bringing into question the mainstream opinion that sanctions never work. In a revision of the study, (Hufbauer et al., 2007) analysed more than two hundred sanctions episodes that took place between 1914 and 2000, concluding that sanctions were successful in 34 per cent of the cases, confirming their previous study.

However, Pape (1997, p. 8; 1998) criticized their work by arguing that most of the cases that they deemed successfully “were settled by either direct or indirect use of force” and that there wasn’t “evidence that the target state made the demanded concessions”, claiming that sanctions were effective only in 6 per cent of the time. From his perspective, for sanctions to be considered successful, the target state must comply with most of the sender’s demands. Nonetheless, Hufbauer et al. (2007) maintain that sanctions can still be considered successful even if there is a partial concession of the targets. There is no need for a major or total

concession of the target. This shows how what is considered “effective” depends, first and foremost, on how each author defines effectiveness.

However, the progress in theoretical and methodological approaches resulted in a more detailed analysis of sanctions, where academics tried to understand the specific factors and processes that contribute to making sanctions successful. For instance, some scholars looked at whether sanctions were more effective when imposed unilaterally or multilaterally. By analysing the HSE database, Hufbauer et al. (2007) found that despite multilateral sanctions being more successful in preventing military action and objectives, and/or other major policy reforms, overall, there was no difference in the success rates of unilateral and multilateral sanctions. Additionally, they demonstrated that, under specific circumstances, multilateral sanctions success can be worse than unilateral sanctions, supporting previous studies showing that multilateral sanctions have minimal impact on the possibility of success and can even be detrimental (see Kaempfer & Lowenberg, 1999; Miers & Morgan, 2002).

In contrast, by analysing the TIES database, Bapat & Morgan (2009) demonstrated that multilateral sanctions increase the likelihood of sanctions success when compared with unilateral sanctions. According to these authors, while imposing multilateral sanctions can be challenging, once sanctions are implemented, targets have a reduced capacity for manipulating the members of the coalition, increasing the likelihood that the target will take threats seriously and make concessions.

Some studies contend that targeting close economic partners and allies increases the likelihood of sanctions being successful (see Drezner, 1998, 1999; Hufbauer et al., 2007; McLean & Whang, 2010). McLean & Whang (2010) have shown sanctions are more likely to succeed in obtaining concessions from the target when the target's major trading partners endorse the penalties, impose punitive measures, and decrease trade interactions with the target. Similarly, Drezner (1999) found that although economic coercion against allies is uncommon, it is seen to be more successful than against rivals. According to him, sanctions against adversaries are more expensive, public, and less effective because adversaries anticipate conflicts and are more concerned with relative gains and reputation. Allies, on the other hand, have smaller expectations of future conflict and will be less worried with the material and reputational implications of capitulation.

Other studies have focused on understanding if sanctions have been more efficient against democratic or dictatorial governments (see Cortright & Lopez, 2000; Allen, 2005; Lektzian & Souva, 2007; Major, 2012; Peksen, 2017). Most of these scholars contend that sanctions against democratic governments are more likely to result in policy change than sanctions against

autocratic governments. This is because autocratic rulers have more control over their political systems and can use their power to shield themselves and their supporters from the negative effects of sanctions. By acting in the market to manage the flow of commodities and services impacted by sanctions and redistributing money away from their opponents and citizens, they may be able to avoid economic pressure. Dictatorships are thus more likely to resist sanctions because they have stronger institutional and coercive resource control that can be utilized to reduce the financial and political costs. Due to the presence of domestic opposition and a system that allows it to be voiced, and potentially directed against the government, democracies are more susceptible to being coerced by sanctions.

In addition to that, various scholars also demonstrated that there is no evidence that targeted sanctions are more successful at causing concessions than comprehensive sanctions (see Tostensen & Bull, 2002; Drezner, 2011; Eriksson, 2016; Biersteker et al., 2016). Biersteker et al., (2016) showed that UN target sanctions were only successful in 22 per cent of the cases. Tostensen & Bull (2002) argued that targeted sanctions were often unable to accomplish their goals and, in some cases, ended up leading to further violations of economic and social rights. Similarly, after analysing the EU and UN target sanctions on Zimbabwe's leadership and Angola's UNITA, Eriksson (2016) concluded that they both failed to change the behaviour of the targets and therefore resolve the crisis in those countries. In contrast, studies conducted by Cortright & Lopez (2002) and Hufbauer et al. (1990), showed that comprehensive sanctions were more effective than targeted sanctions.

Nonetheless, sanctions success literature remains contested and has yet to delineate a common ground, as the success rate of sanctions tends to vary considerably depending on what scholars interpret as "success" and the specificity of the sanctions case (Peksen, 2019). Additionally, just because most sanctions fail does not always mean that sanctions *in toto* are ineffective (Biersteker & van Bergeijk, 2015). First, policymakers' access to other policy tools determines how effective penalties will be, and second, sanctions can be anticipated to fail if they do not meet the essential criteria for success or if the agreed-upon measures are not put into action. For instance, if there was slight or absent commercial or diplomatic contact before sanctions implementation, their influence will unavoidably be lessened. As a result, sanctions should be assessed from the perspective of an integrated strategy for promoting global peace and security that takes these other actions into account and considers how they interact.

1.3.2. The Unintended Consequences of International Sanctions

Unlike the literature on the effectiveness of sanctions, the political and humanitarian consequences of sanctions on target states' knowledge are well-studied and understood. In other words, the literature tends to share a similar view regarding the unintended implications of international sanctions. During the 1990s, due to the widespread media of the suffering provoked by the sanctions targeting Iraq, scholars started to refocus the academic debate on the negative and unintended economic, political, and humanitarian consequences of sanctions on the population of target countries. While sanctions are mostly inter-state measures, they have significant effects on enterprises and individuals in both the sender and the target countries, especially when they prohibit economic transactions, prompting some critics to claim that sanctions might be an unethical weapon of foreign policy that unfairly and indiscriminately attacks the poorer and innocent segments of the society (Allen et al., 2020).

This may result in several unintended consequences. Jentleson (2000) has divided them as *backfiring* (strengthening the will of the target to resist), *misfiring* (subjecting the civilian population to a humanitarian crisis), *cross-firing* (putting a strain on ties with important allies) and *shooting in the foot* (costs that are self-inflicted to the imposer). Nonetheless, this dissertation conceptualizes unintended consequences in line with Meissner & Mello (2022). These scholars assert that although unintended consequences are not always negative and can even result in positive outcomes, restricting the conceptualization to negative consequences has the advantage of allowing for the separation of unintended effects in the target state and the intended positive effects of the sanctions. Thus, unintended consequences are conceived as "(...) negative externalities of sanctions in the domestic politics of a target state" (Meissner & Mello, 2022, p. 246).

According to Drury & Peksen (2014), it is crucial to research the effects of sanctions because a lack of knowledge in this area has prevented IR researchers from producing a comprehensive evaluation of how successful sanctions are in international politics. To comprehend the impact of shifts in internal politics on a country's foreign policy, it is essential to examine the effect of global events on the domestic affairs of the state in question. As a result, a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness and utility of international sanctions is critical to examine the trade-off between the political benefits of sanctions and their unintentional consequences for the target countries.

Although sanctions are intended to be a nonviolent alternative to armed intervention, they frequently have negative consequences on the of human rights in the target state and often contribute to producing a humanitarian crisis (Perry, 2021). Nations impose sanctions to create

constraints on target countries and force them to change their behaviour, and thus sanctions are not intended to harm innocent civilians. Nevertheless, this type of unintended consequence occurs frequently. In this sense, the literature on sanctions expanded the focus towards the negative unintended consequences of sanctions on target countries' populations.

According to most scholars in this field, political leaders are largely spared from the economic and humanitarian difficulties brought on by sanctions, while ordinary citizens tend to endure these burdens disproportionately (Weiss, 1999; Peksen, 2021). By further redirecting public resources and wealth away from regular citizens towards themselves and their governing coalitions, political leaders frequently avoid the negative burden of sanctions. The expense of exterior economic constraints thus disproportionately affects innocent citizens, who are typically the main victims. For instance, Biersteker et al.'s (2013) analysis of UN-targeted sanctions regimes between 1990 and 2013 found that there were negative humanitarian consequences in 39 per cent of the episodes studied.

Studies have shown that the imposition of sanctions can negatively increase political repression and violence by the targeted government and further deteriorate the respect for human rights (see Wood, 2008; Peksen, 2009, 2010; Peksen & Drury, 2009, 2010; Carneiro & Apolinário, 2016; Adam & Tsarsitalidou, 2019; Gutmann et al., 2020), reduce public health, wellbeing and life expectancy (see Peksen, 2011; Allen & Lektzian, 2013; Kokabisaghi, 2018, Aloosh & Aloosh, 2019), contribute to increasing income inequality, poverty and employment (see Bünte & Portela, 2012; Afesorgbor & Mahadevan, 2016; Neuenkirch & Neumeier, 2016; Kelishomi & Nisticò, 2022; Ghomi 2022), compromise food and water security (see Buck et al., 1998; Smith, 2020; Aita, 2020) and reduce the level of educational attainment (Santisteban, 2005).

This literature, however, tends to fail to address the level of suffering among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of the target state, including ethnic minorities, refugee and internally displaced persons, children and elderly, people with disabilities, and women (Onder, 2022). Nonetheless, this literature agrees that sanctions create different types of damage within target states and points out that social segments in more vulnerable positions are the most impacted, including women and children (Petrescu, 2016; Rustamovich, 2019).

For instance, Peksen (2016) analysed the degree to which sanctions, both targeted and comprehensive, raise the possibility of ethnic group discrimination in the target country's government actions, using a time-series cross-section data for the 1950–2003 period, showing that sanctions make it more likely that ethnic groups outside the government's support base experience systematic economic discrimination. The author demonstrated that economic

sanctions unintentionally contribute to the unfair treatment of ethnic groups by weakening the economy and providing the target government incentives to implement discriminatory policies based on ethnicity. Additionally, it indicates that comprehensive sanctions have a more detrimental impact on the target economy than moderate or limited impact sanctions. This study thus provided compelling evidence in favour of the claim that sanctions fuel the growth of officially sanctioned discrimination against racial and ethnic groups that do not share the government's backing. In the same line, Lv & Xu (2017) used a panel data analysis approach and a sample of 46 target states over the period 1984-2008 and found that international sanctions increase the probability of ethnic violence orchestrated by target states and that there is a U-shaped relationship between income and ethnic violence.

Onder (2022) explored the effects of sanctions on vulnerable ethnic groups within target states, focusing on the economic, political, and social discrimination of minority groups. His article analysed how economic sanctions negatively affected minority groups, using panel data, from 1981 to 2000, and logit regression models, with economic ethnic discrimination, political ethnic discrimination, and social ethnic discrimination as dependent variables and economic sanctions, comprehensive sanctions, and targeted sanctions as independent variables. The results supported earlier research on the topic by showing that both comprehensive and targeted sanctions increased the marginalization of minority groups, with comprehensive sanctions having a more negative impact. To intensify the effect of the "rally around the flag", Onder (2022, p.221) argues that the implementation of economic penalties increases the level of discriminatory violence that is perpetrated by dominant elites against members of minority groups in the form of scapegoating. Additionally, minority groups that were seen as the states' opponents were often subjected to methods of economic exclusion and social division by target state governments.

Additionally, Peksen (2011) and Gutmann et al. (2021) also found that economic sanctions increase under-five mortality, while Kim's study (2019) reveals that sanctions increase HIV infection and AIDS-related death rates in children. Choonara (2013) found that under sanctions, children are at a substantial risk of food shortages, and that as a result, malnutrition and anemia are serious problems among children in Cuba and Gaza, appearing to be direct outcomes of the sanctions imposed on each country.

In brief, the literature underscores a consensus on the unintended consequences of sanctions, particularly the negative humanitarian and political impacts on target states, which tend to disproportionately affect vulnerable groups. Albeit sanctions were intended as a nonviolent alternative to armed intervention, they often lead to human rights violations, a

humanitarian crisis, and an increase in political repression and violence by targeted governments. These studies highlight the need for a comprehensive evaluation of sanctions' effectiveness, balancing their political benefits against their unintended consequences.

1.3.3. The Gendered Impact of International Sanctions upon Women

An emerging strain of the literature on sanctions has been focused on the impact of sanctions on women, exploring a small number of case studies such as the Former Yugoslavia (Devin & Dashti- Gibson, 1997), Haiti (Gibbons & Garfield, 1999), Iraq (Buck et al., 1998; Al-Ali, 2005; Al-Jawaheri, 2008), and, more recently, Iran (Fathollah-Nejad, 2014; Tropak, 2020; Demir & Tabrizy, 2022). Nonetheless, there are other studies who use databases to assess the gendered impacts (Drury & Peksen, 2014; Wei & Hunter, 2021). Within this literature, the widespread consensus is that the negative impacts of sanctions are worse for women than for men, due to their position as the caretaker in the household, therefore showing that sanctions often end up contributing to deepening gendered inequalities.

On this subject, Drury & Peksen (2014) utilize a time-series, cross-national data analysis to evaluate the impacts of economic sanctions on women between 1971 and 2005. According to the authors' findings, economic sanctions have harmed women's welfare in the target countries. They discovered that sanctions can be linked to higher rates of female mortality, less access to healthcare and education, and lower female labour force participation; the impact, they suggest, is higher on poorer sanctioned nations. In similar lines, Gutmann et al.'s (2021) panel analysis revealed that there was significant gender difference in the effect of economic sanctions on life expectancy at birth, with the reduction for women being larger than for men, however, they do not explain why exactly this occurs.

According to Perry (2021), sanctions lead to government cuts in social spending, particularly in public education, which disproportionately affects women, who often rely more heavily on those programmes, and are thus more negatively impacted by such practices. According to the author, sanctions' detrimental effects on women can be lessened in the post-sanctions period by boosting investment in basic education. The author also discovered that, in opposition to the expectations of policymakers, targeted sanctions do not result in a lesser effect on women's human rights in the target state compared to comprehensive sanctions. Moreover, both targeted and human rights sanction types have a more detrimental effect on women's gender equality indicators when compared to comprehensive sanctions, as they often result in the decrease of targeted government's social spending.

Devin & Dashti-Gibson (1997), who cited a non-governmental organization's household survey conducted during the sanctions period in the Former Yugoslavia, showed that those most impacted by the sanctions were women, families with children, the elderly, unemployed, refugees, and internally displaced people. They also claim that the burden of the much lower living standards and the difficulty of covering basic requirements fell disproportionately on women. Shrinking household budgets meant more work for them. Women had to use more time-consuming or outdated, but less expensive, ways of cleaning, cooking, mending, and budgeting, which added to their workload. To make ends meet, women started cultivating their own vegetables or working additional jobs in the informal sector. In addition, women were also more likely than men to be or become unemployed. They note that during the economic crisis brought on by the sanctions, women held generally lower-paying positions and experienced arbitrary layoffs or firings at a greater rate than males. They further stress that the sectors and jobs most heavily impacted by sanctions were those in which women were engaged, such as trade, catering, and tourism. Additionally, women suffered from medical issues whose treatment was heavily impacted by sanctions.

In a similar line, Buck et al. (1998) demonstrated that international sanctions consequences in Iraq were gendered, having a higher impact on women's. Al-Ali (2005) also supported this conclusion. Her paper focuses on how war, a thorough economic sanctions regime, and early developmental-modernist state discourses have affected women and gender relations. Her article's overall argument is that the sanctions system severely harmed the well-being and livelihoods of Iraqi women. The author also discusses multiple strategies employed by Iraqi women to fight against oppression and promote their rights. Al-Ali asserts that the extensive sanctions placed on Iraq in the 1990s had a terrible effect on women's lives. Living standards significantly dropped because of the sanctions, particularly for women and children. Moreover, the lack of access to essential commodities including food, water, and healthcare disproportionately harmed women. This added to the fact that sanctions significantly increased the incidence of unemployment and poverty among women. The sanctions regime also had a severe effect on women's access to health and education services. Al-Ali (2005) demonstrated how the economic sanctions on Iraq further isolated women from society, causing both worsening humanitarian conditions and a persistent lack of security on the streets. The lack of adequate fulfilment of fundamental human rights, such as safety, access to water, energy, healthcare, and food was also observed and the underrepresentation of women in the various political parties and newly emerging political constituencies was worsened.

In their study, Wei & Hunter (2021) investigate how economic sanctions affect women's rights in low- and middle-income nations. In addition to legal rights, the study examines the impacts of penalties on women's rights, such as their right to security, integration, and health. The results imply that, in line with other studies, sanctions hurt women's legal rights as well as their rights to safety and health. According to the paper, women's legal rights, as well as their rights to security and health, are adversely affected by economic sanctions. The deterioration in women's legal rights, particularly their access to justice and political involvement, is specifically linked to the prevalence of sanctions. The right of women to security is also harshly impacted by sanctions. Women are more likely to endure violence and insecurity in countries that are under sanctions. The study also discovered that sanctions had a detrimental effect on maternal health outcomes and women's access to healthcare services.

According to Fathollah-Nejad (2014), due to the decline in family income induced by sanctions, Iranian women were more likely to carry the weight of coping with their unemployed spouses and male family members within the house. According to the author, this led to an increase in domestic violence and family conflicts, as well as drove women to seek new sources of money, potentially leading to dangerous survival strategies such as child labour and sex work.

In the case of Syria, there is a lack of comprehensive academic literature on the impact of sanctions on Syrian women. While some studies touch on this topic, they are mostly related to health issues (see Sen et al. 2012; Friberg Lyne, 2012; Moret, 2015). For example, Friberg Lyne (2012) concludes that sanctions in Syria have contributed to a general decline in socio-economic well-being by increasing the price of necessities, cutting micro-credit schemes that previously supported thousands of women, making it difficult to import medicines and food, and leading to increased rates of mental health issues, including depression, suicide, and a rise in domestic violence. Other studies, acknowledge the impact of sanctions on the country's civilians (see Andronik, 2018; Selimian et al., 2022), but they do not specifically address the impact on Syrian women.

Chapter 2 – Thinking about Security Beyond the State: The Human Security Framework

Having reviewed the academic literature on sanctions, this chapter sets out to explain the theoretical framework that will be used to understand and assess the impact of international sanctions on Syrian women: the human security framework. In contrast to the traditional focus on territorial integrity and economic stability of the state, this framework shifts the analysis focus towards the well-being and dignity of individuals. It does so by broadening the concept of security to encompass both freedom from fear and freedom from want. This opens the analytical scope to include issues that can range from access to basic needs and rights, such as education, food, water, or health security, to the protection of individuals from systematic forms of violence and harm. As shown in the literature review, sanctions often have negative consequences for the civilians of the targeted state, especially for some of the most vulnerable groups, including women, who may face increased poverty, violence, discrimination, and health risks. In that sense, the human security framework provides us with a privileged entry point to assess the impact of sanctions on civilians and, more specifically, the direct and indirect ways in which they can contribute to worsen or improve their livelihoods. This chapter is divided into four sections. After debating the history and the concept of human security, it explores the challenges and opportunities raised by this concept. Following that, it explores the dialogues and intersections between human security and feminist security research. The chapter concludes by explaining why and how this framework can be useful in evaluating sanctions' impact on civilians, thus setting the ground for its methodological operationalization in the following chapter.

2.1. Human Security: The Evolving Concept of Human Security

According to the United Nations Commission on Human Security (UNCHS), human security can be defined as:

(...) means protecting fundamental freedoms— freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity. (UNCHS, 2003, p. 4)

Although the concept of human security was only incorporated into the global agenda after the Cold War, the roots of this idea can be traced back to the 1940s. The two core dimensions of this concept were first mentioned in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's January 6, 1941 speech to the US Congress, in which he campaigned for four freedoms: freedom of speech and

expression; freedom for everyone to worship God in his or her own manner; freedom from want and freedom from fear (Obete, 2021). It did not take that long for many of these ideas to be incorporated into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). After WWII, there was an effort to consolidate and “positivise” human rights, however, the very context of the Cold War, ideological and geopolitical rivalry would end up dictating the preponderance of strategic and military issues over development in the UN agenda. This relegated human rights out of the sphere of high politics, making the vision of national security the dominant vision.

Support for a more proactive human rights campaign rose as decolonization established dozens of new countries, particularly in Africa, who became advocates of the UDHR (Snyder, 2008). Nonetheless, the implementation of the UDHR was inconsistent as the subject of human rights became increasingly politicised. In fact, politicians’ focus shifted from human rights declarations and institutions to the Cold War.

As a result, until the end of the Cold War, the idea of security was perceived in the terms of military and elitist vision of state security within an anarchic international system ruled by superpowers and the idea of state sovereignty (Gjørsv, 2017). According to these conventional beliefs, the state monopolised the rights and means to protect its citizens, and the authority of the state and its security were founded and increased to guarantee order and peace. This perspective thus emphasised the state as playing both the role of the referent to be protected and the security provider. This traditional view of security as pertaining to the stability and survival of states, however, started to be increasingly questioned in the last three decades.

Following the end of the Cold War and the subsequent rise of ethnic conflicts, intra-state violence and humanitarian disasters that came with it, traditional approaches to security have proven to be largely insufficient, if not entirely inadequate, to help us understand and address the multiple types of insecurity that most people experienced on a day-to-day basis (Hudson et al., 2013). One of the consequences of the Cold War’s conclusion was an apparent economic weakening of countries in the Global South, combined with a reduction in their ability to provide public goods to their citizens and an increase in violence, and crime, often grounded upon identity politics. (Christie, 2010). The post-Cold War would open space for the development of new international security and development agendas (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012).

In that context, the 1990s witnessed a growing recognition that the individual needed to be prioritized as the subject of security, confronting the state status as the primary security referent object (Hudson et al., 2013). While the traditional focus on defining security solely through the lens of the threat and use of military force, the idea of human security aimed to expand the

concept of security by encompassing an array of non-military dimensions, including economic, health, and environmental factors, which were systematically neglected by policymakers (Ewan, 2007). The concept of human security thus emerged in large part as a reaction to the traditional approaches to security's failure to respect the individual experiences of security. Additionally, it had become increasingly evident that the state could no longer be regarded as the sole actor and source of security, especially in a situation where weak or failed states were proliferating and where civilians frequently had to rely on alternative security sources, to manage their day-to-day existences (Gjørsv, 2017).

Still, this concept only became widely accepted as a central concern for the international community after the publication of the Human Development Report (HDR) by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in 1994. Instead of the traditional emphasis on state security, the paper stressed the need to recalibrate this concept by adopting a people-centred approach to security. In it, it was stated that:

The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people (...) Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives (UNDP, 1994, p.22).

This reflected a mounting concern among the international community with the death toll caused by the persistence of underdevelopment, as well as the daily insecurity systematically experienced by millions of impoverished people throughout the world (Breslin & Christou, 2015). This not only mirrored a desire to rethink the statist foundations of security but also, and perhaps equally important, to redefine the meaning of development itself, moving away from simplistic definitions focused on economic growth and international stability. A crucial aspect of human security was acknowledging that individuals can face significant threats to their security from governments, as well as governments weakness and failure, thus emphasising the violence and harm often resulting from relying exclusively on the state as the primary provider of individual security (Newman, 2010).

According to the 1994 HDR (UNDP, 1994), the threats to human security may be classified into seven categories that can be anthropogenic or natural in origin: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.

Moreover, the concept of human security has been defined to encompass two distinct but interlinked dimensions: freedom from fear and freedom from want (Hanlon & Christie, 2016). Freedom from fear is related to survival and physical integrity. It depicts human security in a

narrow sense and is concerned exclusively with protecting people from violence while also emphasising that these dangers are closely related to poverty, a lack of governmental capacity, and other types of injustices. Threats to this freedom include armed conflicts, terrorism, political repression, and organized crime, which are anthropogenic in origin (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012).

In contrast, freedom from want is related to how individual security should also include hunger, disease, unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation, and natural disasters, since these threats are crucial in addressing the root of human insecurity, shifting the focus away from violence against individuals and towards human socio-economic development as the best way to protect individuals (Hanlon & Christie, 2016).

Following the 2002 Millennium Summit, the UN Commission on Human Security was established. This summit highlighted the importance of both freedom from fear and freedom from want and the opportunities for ensuring these freedoms but recognised a new wave of crises and threats to human security related to terrorism, ethnic violence, epidemics, poverty, weakening multilateralism, forced migration, access to essential health care, illiteracy, and educational deprivation entering the new millennium (UNCHS, 2003). Considering these increased challenges, The Commission issued a report in the following year entitled Human Security Now. In it, a third dimension was added to this concept: freedom from indignity. It refers to the advancement of a better standard of living and the improvement of human well-being that allows people to make decisions and look for opportunities that empower them, which is an important component of human security (UNCHS, 2003).

These three dimensions of human security have led to the development of distinct visions of what human security is and what should be the priorities of its agenda. These visions can be characterised into two groups, narrow and broad. Those who take a narrower view see human security only as freedom from fear and focus on threats of violence, particularly organized political violence (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012). Advocates of this perspective often contend that liberal solutions, including interventions, financial aid, human rights sanctions, and democratization, can and should be used to address the issues in poorer countries (Tadjbakhsh, 2009). In contrast, the broader dimension is concerned with human vulnerability in general, and hence includes all types of threats from all sources (Fukuda-Parr & Messineo, 2012). This perspective considers people's experiences of insecurity and argues for the universal application of human security. Threats such urban violence and job insecurity, common in wealthier countries are just as much a source of human insecurities as the extreme famine, war, poverty that characterise poorer countries (Tadjbakhsh, 2009).

2.2. Limits and Possibilities of Human Security

The clash between these two visions of human security was one of the factors limiting human security as well as the instrumentalization of the concept. These contrasting views raised questions in the literature regarding the legitimacy of utilising human security as a policy framework and a research category, especially when political practises have resulted in the production of vast lists of what defines human security (Hudson et al., 2013). Despite everything, human security has been included and promoted on the agenda not only of the UN but also in the foreign policy of liberal countries, including Japan, Norway, and Canada, which tend to defend global interventionism to reduce poverty and resolve conflicts (Hudson et al., 2013). These countries focused on promoting a vision of human security that concentrates on removing the use and threat of violence from people's daily lives.

Chandler (2008), criticized human security, considering it as “the dog that didn't bark” (p. 428). He argues that human security approaches are now part of mainstream security agendas because they overstate post-Cold War security threats, place them in developing countries, and make it easier to make short-term decisions in the lack of clear strategic foreign policy ideas. Chandler (2008) also raises the possibility that this integration could be more of a verbal or symbolic gesture than a genuine change in security policy. According to him, human security approaches enable governments and officials to opt out of being held responsible for foreign policy, encouraging a change from long-term strategic thinking to superficial and unplanned planning that supports short-term involvement. As a result, the inclusion of human security methods may lead to a lack of accountability and consistency in the development of security policy as well as provide nations with a means of advancing their neocolonial or imperial objectives (Chandler, 2008b).

However, Owen (2008) challenges Chandler's (2008) argument, contending that they are inaccurate and based on misconceptions. He argues that rather than requiring military action, human security is a useful paradigm for understanding, advancing, and addressing problems relating to international security and individual well-being. Some measures will have a long-term effect, such as sending peacekeeping forces or addressing the core causes of gender-based violence, while others will have a short-term effect, such as delivering emergency famine help. Furthermore, Owen (2008) contends that the human security framework provides a useful standard for evaluating the activities of non-state actors, including NGOs, grassroots groups, for-profit businesses, and private citizens, in addition to the state.

Still, according to Newman (2010), this approach has not been immune to its own problems and contradictions. Despite the normative shift entailed by the idea of human security, this

approach was typically seen as a problem-solving approach and thus critical security debates often failed to engage with the epistemological, ontological, or methodological dimensions of human security. This has led them to view human security as uncritical and unsophisticated. According to Newman (2010), there are three main reasons why this occurs.

First, critical approaches to security place a larger emphasis on theoretical and conceptual analysis whereas human security arguments are frequently perceived as being more problem-solving and policy-oriented. This divides the two areas and prevents them from engaging with one another. Second, because critical security studies' theoretical perspectives already address issues related to state-centric approaches and the identification of non-military threats, these scholars believe that human security is redundant or not necessary to be studied separately. Thirdly, critical security scholars are apprehensive of human security as a normative discourse appropriated by the state due to its policy orientation and acceptance as a framework by some governments. They could be reluctant to interact with an idea that they believe has been appropriated by influential figures and exploited to support policy agendas (Newman, 2010).

Despite these distinctions, Newman (2010) asserts that there is room for cooperation between human security and non-traditional security studies since both share a critical perspective on traditional security studies and aim to expand the definition of security to include non-military threats.

Christie (2010) also defends the human security approach, arguing that it can include a wide range of issues in security debates while also allowing us to focus on issues that have been neglected by earlier state-centric security practices. The author suggests the human security approach has the potential to operate as an emancipatory initiative. With the emphasis now on people rather than the state, there is a greater opportunity for discussion about what security means to different people around the world, how free people are to express their views on what security is, and the obligation that these places on the international community to provide for people's security needs. It entails an effort to provide a voice to people who have traditionally been marginalised. Booth (1997, p. 110) has argued that emancipation refers to the "freeing people, as individuals and groups, from the social, physical, economic, political, and other constraints that stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do". By letting the subaltern partake in security issues, demands for real change in the conduct of international politics may be met. Nevertheless, critical academics are divided on whether this goal of empowering the subaltern can be realised due to the way the international system is built, and power is allocated. Thus, a fundamental shift in how power is distributed, understood, and used is required for emancipation (Christie, 2010).

2.3. Gender and Human Security: Towards an Integrated Approach

Women's security and dignity of a life worth living derive from the concept of human security (Wei & Hunter, 2021). Similar to the way human security theorists have expanded our perception of security to encompass more than just warfare, feminists have also contributed to a wider view of security by incorporating issues such as interpersonal violence, rape, poverty, and environment (Tripp, 2013). However, feminist security scholars have gone well beyond the human security framework offering critiques on the gendered aspects of state violence, war, peace, peacekeeping, militarization, and the role of soldiers. More broadly, they have questioned the oversimplified connection frequently made between women and peace, without fully acknowledging women's involvement in advocating for and taking part in conflicts.

Feminist scholars, more than any other type of critical theorist, appear to be the most determined to adopt the language of human security (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006; Christie, 2010). The relationship between human security and gender is a prominent theme in feminist security literature and there are some critical areas of resonance between human security and feminist theories, including the ways that war and conflict impact individuals depending on their level of power and societal positions (Christie, 2010). Feminist approaches to human security place a strong emphasis on the need to comprehend security in a broader sense than only the traditional state-centric and military threat-focused perspectives (Wibben, 2011). Feminist literature has questioned and challenged the concept of security as a field of discourse and practise, pointing out the detrimental political-material impacts of (neo)realist interpretations of national security. These effects ironically endanger and discriminate against particular groups of individuals and perpetuate gendered forms of violence that are often overlooked in conventional security studies, including sex work, the use of rape as a weapon of war, and intimate partner violence. (Christie, 2010; Marhia, 2013).

Feminist and human security perspectives by taking marginalized groups, such as women or gender non-conforming individuals, as their central focus for research and integrating notions of identity, and experiences of individuals, including race, class, sexuality, and disability, into security analysis, have the potential to change both the theory and practise of IR (Christie, 2010). Feminist approaches may be utilised beyond a focus on women, to develop human security theory, lending legitimacy and depth to a broader security notion (Hoogensen & Stuvøy 2006).

It is important to notice, however, that within this literature the gender marker does not refer exclusively to women (Christie, 2010). They argue that attempts to include gender without sufficient sensitivity to the social construction of gender and the gendering of security itself run

the risk of essentializing the various stereotypical social norms for men and women. As a result, such attempts may yield outcomes that strengthen the disparities between these distinct groups. For example, Hansen (2000) uses the example of rapes in Bosnia by Serbian forces to demonstrate how feminist approaches to security conceive rape as a security problem in various ways, which can result in different solutions. The article notes, that viewing rape as a problem of individual pathology or deviance can lead to solutions that focus on punishing individual perpetrators, whereas viewing rape as a systemic problem rooted in gender inequality can lead to solutions that focus on addressing the underlying social and political structures that enable rape to occur.

Nonetheless, feminists have often criticized human security since it requests inclusion without challenging or deconstructing social power (Chenoy, 2009). They argue that some human security policies – which are meant to benefit all individuals – favour men more than women. For example, democracy guarantees everyone the right to participate in administrative and government positions, but in practice, barriers exist that prevent women from holding positions of leadership. Even though everyone has the right to basic education, more girls than boys are not in school, and families still choose to keep girls home to work as household help, while boys go to school. Furthermore, while promoting the empowerment of all people, including women, human security also acknowledges the unique requirements of safeguarding, rehabilitating, and assisting women in times of threat. Feminists have also challenged the special protection for women, particularly in times of extreme insecurity, such as conflict, and hunger, because historically, the protection of women has reduced women's legitimacy, limited their rights, and highlighted their lack of agency (Chenoy, 2009).

According to Hansen (2014), it is important to look at how feminists working in IR have adapted ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies since these impact how research agendas are created, what is seen to be relevant to investigate, and how studies are done. The author states that there are three approaches to gender: *rationalist/positivist feminism*, *viewpoint feminism*, and *post-structuralist feminism*. The first upholds that the distinction between men and women is a straightforward unproblematic biological reality. It posits that the state is the primary actor defining IR both as an empirical practice and a field of study and treats the state as a utilitarian actor concerned with its own survival. This approach follows a more positivist-causal analysis to examine the relationship between state actions and gender. There are two main rationalist feminist research approaches.

First, there are quantitative feminists that focus on the causes of war and the impact of gender on state behaviour, using quantitative analysis methods to assess the explanatory power

of gender compared to other factors such as wealth, ethnicity, education, and political participation. Nonetheless, a contextual analysis, rather than absolute quantitative measurements, better encapsulates the full significance attributed to a life worth living. The second research agenda shifts from quantitative methodologies to comparative case study approaches in examining the influence of gendered norms on foreign policies (Hansen, 2014).

Standpoint feminism views the state as a series of patriarchal practices that both promote and suppress the structural disadvantages that women encounter. This critical analysis of the state, both domestically and in global affairs, shows a shift in gender ontology from rationalist feminism's biological sex ontology. Standpoint feminism preserves women as a distinct subject characterised by physical bodies but recognises that the importance of these bodies is shaped by societal perceptions of femininity and masculinity. The concepts of masculinity and femininity are utilized to establish and maintain the appropriate ways for individuals to embody their gender roles, both in the broad sense of being the fair protectors of women and children (and thus the nation) and in the specific case of male peacekeepers' constructions of masculinity and femininity. However, this does not mean that the concepts of femininity and masculinity are consistent and unchanging throughout time and space or that women are fundamentally peaceful while males are violent. Standpoint feminism emphasizes the importance of understanding the historical division of public and private spheres in critiquing the patriarchal state, where women have traditionally been relegated to the private sphere while males have been in control of both the public sphere and the patriarchal home. According to this approach, to highlight the consequences of the patriarchal state, one needs to move the research from abstract states to how real women are influenced by economic and security structures both within and beyond borders. Scholars and policymakers should pay special attention to marginalised women, who are disproportionately disadvantaged and are systematically disregarded. Due to this approach positionality of women at the centre of security construction, bringing attention to the types of knowledge that women have by uncovering and researching their experiences gives an understanding of how global politics is experienced and created by actual living embodied humans. This approach is concerned with how individuals portray their own experiences in their own words, thus there is a preference for an ethnographic interpretation of individually focused storytelling. However, due to the concern about the structural inequalities that women experience, studies frequently contain quantitative data as well as secondary sources including court transcripts, news articles, legislative debates, and even fiction.

Finally, *poststructuralist feminism* concurs with the viewpoint that the public/private distinction has played a major role in women's marginalization in politics, the economy, and culture. Due to their weak, emotional, shortsighted, daily oriented, and illogical character, women were to dwell in private space, whereas men were firm, reasonable, responsible, and long-term planners. It destroys subject systems that are dependent on the state, having repercussions for both domestic and global politics. The public-private split was made legitimate by these constructions of femininity and masculinity, but they were also reinforced and reproduced by discourses and behaviours that upheld these perceptions. Gender, according to poststructuralist feminism, is always performative, but not by a pre-existing subject, meaning there is no intrinsic biological gender separate from the social construction of femininity and masculinity. The discursive ontology and epistemology of poststructuralism entail methodology that deconstructs texts to demonstrate the intricate relational constructions of identity that dominate global politics. The focus of poststructuralist feminist analysis is on how discourses, shape subjects, how they define or validate certain courses of actions, and how they mute particular subject positions.

Despite the importance of poststructuralist feminism in making us question the construction of gender, when it comes to analysing the impact of security practices on women's daily lives, it is the standpoint of feminists that is closer to interpreting human security. It critically addresses the power structures that sustain the structural disadvantages that women face and highlights how traditional gender norms and patriarchal practices are linked to security. Challenging these norms and practices and including the voices of these groups in security policymaking, emphasises the importance of addressing the roots of structural disadvantages that women face, thus contributing to an approach to human security that promotes gender equality, peace, and well-being for all. In short, the focus should not be whether human security is preferable to gender rights or vice versa, but instead on a collaboration between the two, to achieve a properly gendered human security that fully respects women's rights.

2.4. The Human Dimension: Integrating Human Security in the Sanctions Practice

Concerns about human security have influenced how sanctions are understood and applied in recent years. The implications from the original definition of freedom from fear and want, which translates into political and economic rights, combined with the need to adopt a bottom-up approach appear to be relevant areas for the analysis of sanctions and human security (Giumelli, 2018). If we examine sanctions from the perspective of human security, priorities shift, and could improve the efficiency of this type of foreign policy tool and since the impact

that sanctions have on people should be considered. According to Giumelli (2018), there are two reasons why analysing sanctions from a human security perspective can be useful.

The first reason is that it draws attention to how sanctions affect entire economies and how they may affect human rights. As shown in the previous chapter, while sanctions have evolved from comprehensive to target to reduce the negative effects of sanctions on innocent civilians while increasing the burden on those who are responsible, targeted sanctions are still sanctions, nevertheless. In other words, sanctioning resources to specific individuals and sectors as opposed to the entire state may have less drastic effects, but it still has consequences. Sanctions can harm a person's security by negatively affecting their well-being in several ways. For example, a targeted society's economy may be impacted, prices may rise, there may be a lack of resources or basic products, and the delivery of public utilities may suffer (Giumelli, 2018).

The second reason is the bottom-up approach. A crucial component of a human security strategy for sanctions is including local actors in the decision-making process. Local actors are routinely consulted before targeted penalties are implemented, even if this is not always possible due to the instrument's design, it is still important to take this into account. While sanctions are employed by states and international organizations, local actors are starting to perceive sanctions as a tool that can be used for their purposes. This implies that sanctions, which were always thought of as a tool of the powerful against the weak, can now also be requested by opposition groups against their rulers. Today's sanctions frequently revolve around granting demands from actors within the sanctioned country, whether they are opposition or government forces (Giumelli, 2018).

Some studies have explored the impact of sanctions on the human security of civilians in the target country. Toprak's (2020) master thesis analysed the impact of unilateral and multilateral sanctions on Iranian women, focusing on economic, political, and social dimensions, using a literature assessment of secondary resources, including reports, working papers, articles, media, and books. She found that the women's movement was hampered. Sanctions increased female unemployment and those who did not lose their jobs, saw their wages decrease. As a consequence, the number of women working in the informal sector rose, many with inadequate social and health conditions. Furthermore, unemployment led to women spending more time at home, increasing the gender-based violence and stigmatization suffered by women. Other findings revealed the number of temporary and child marriages rose for women to get economic support.

Perry (2021), using a quantitative research methodology based on statistical analysis and regression analysis, found that sanctions led target states to reduce education spending,

decreasing women's expectations for education, since they rely more than men on public education. Consequently, the percentage of women literacy and women in the labour force declined. Target countries can relieve the impact of sanctions on women's education by increasing government funding for public education. Koc et al. (2007) research on the effect of sanctions on Iraq's food security between 1990 and 2006 showed that sanctions had a detrimental influence on food security and contributed to a decrease in the nutritional and health condition of the Iraqi population. The sanctions were meant to isolate the Iraqi regime and erode its political support, but instead, they reinforced Iraqis' reliance on the state and prolonged their suffering. Unemployment and poverty rose due to the comprehensive sanction regimes, leading households to be unable to afford food. In managing food insecurity, families reduced food consumption, sold assets, borrowed money, bought cheaper foods, or engaged in illegal activities or looting. In addition to interviews, the author based their research on two International Study Teams, local and international organizations, and UN agency reports.

However, most of these studies look at the impact of sanctions through specific dimensions of human security, in a separate manner, and therefore there is a lack of studies that analyse this impact through an interconnected and interdimensional way. My dissertation aims to join this literature by using a holistic approach to human security, where the various dimensions that make up the concept are analysed as a whole. In summary, the human security framework can be very useful to the analysis of sanctions' effects on the civilian population, because of its people-centred approach, which strives to protect and empower all persons from diverse risks. Feminist scholars have gone beyond this framework to critique how situations of violence, war, peace, and militarization are gendered. They argue that it is important to understand security in a broader, examining the experiences of marginalized groups and consider factors like race, class, and sexuality in security analysis, highlighting these efforts should also avoid reinforcing divisions between different groups. Furthermore, despite critics of human security legitimacy and effectiveness, this framework has influenced policymaking and allowed for discussions about power distribution as well as individual empowerment in the context of global security. Additionally, feminist academics argue that it has the potential to address gender inequalities and empower marginalized individuals in security contexts. To conclude, the collaboration between human security and women's movements is crucial to achieving a gendered human security framework that respects and promotes human rights, gender equality, peace, and well-being for all individuals.

Chapter 3 - Methodological Options

As stated in the previous chapter, my research was guided by the human security framework. The proposal was to conduct a qualitative case study on the negative unintended consequences of international sanctions on Syrian women between 2011 and 2019, particularly in terms of their social, economic, and health status. To fulfil the objectives proposed, this study was based on a qualitative methodological approach, supported by statistical data. Although I employ various quantitative measurements, the rationale behind these is that they support the qualitative data, since I place more emphasis on context rather than quantification when gathering and analysing data. In other words, the main objective of this dissertation, besides determining the impact of sanctions on women, is to understand how they impact them.

The qualitative method involves forms of subjective, interpretive, or symbolic expressions, with a specific emphasis on the surrounding context that influences individuals' experiences and circumstances (Bryman, 2012). Often places more emphasis on words than quantification while gathering and analysing data. However, according to Bryman (2012), this approach has some limitations due to its difficulty in replicating and generalise the study and lack of transparency, since it is frequently unclear how the analysis is carried out, or more specifically, what the researcher was doing when the data were analysed, and thus, how the study's results were reached.

According to Gerring (2004, p.342), a case study entails "...an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units" of a geographically constrained phenomenon, such as a nation-state, political party, or individual, that is seen at a certain moment in time or over a set amount of time. This type of research design can be helpful, since it is an extensive study of a particular case, nonetheless, the case study is limited by its difficulty to generalise findings (Bryman, 2012). There are three reasons for using Syria as a case study. First, while there are various studies on the gendered impacts of sanctions, in the case of Syria there is little literature when compared with cases like Iraq and Iran. Second, being Syria among the top three sanctioned countries allows us to explore a wide range of impacts on women, including economic, social, and health. Third, sanctions have been imposed since 2011, making it a relevant case for studying the long-term effects.

I proposed to analyse the time frame between 2011 and 2019 because, before 2011, sanctions on Syria were mild and superficial. It was only after the civil war that economic sanctions started to become more numerous and intensified. I have chosen 2019 as my timeframe limit because, after that year, various events occurred that would constrain the

analysis. The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak began in 2020, making it more difficult to separate the effects of the sanction regime from those of pandemic-related restrictive measures. Additionally, events such as the Turkish economic crisis, the Lebanese liquidity crisis, the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the implementation of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act in 2020 had a profound impact on Syria and, consequently, on the population. Due to resource limitations, specifically time and the length of the dissertation, it would not be feasible for a master's dissertation to address a longer time frame and all these complexities, since it would be more difficult and time-consuming to disentangle what was caused by sanctions and what was caused by these events.

Data was collected from existing sources, namely, secondary data sources, such as books, scientific articles, government documents, newspaper articles, working papers, dissertations, reports, and websites. More specifically, data was collected from reliable organizations, including the World Bank, human rights organizations and civil society monitoring agencies including Human Rights Watch and SIPRI and UN agencies, including UNICEF, the WHO, and the WFP. However, it is important to note the flaws of data sources since they typically exhibit bias, are unreliable, or do not accurately represent the full population (Bessler et al., 2004). The bibliographical research focused on the analysis of literature on the subject and the documentary research focused on the analysis of official documents, most of which are available on the Internet. To analyse the secondary data, I used the guidelines set by the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in the "Handbook for Assessing the Humanitarian Implications of Sanctions" (Bessler et al., 2004). According to the handbook:

(...) good assessments are needed to evaluate humanitarian conditions, to identify whether and how sanctions cause harm, to improve the quality of people's lives by anticipating potential negative consequences, and to get maximum humanitarian benefit from available resources (Bessler et al., 2004, p. 6)

According to Bessler et al. (2004), a baseline against which changes in humanitarian situations may be compared must be created to evaluate the humanitarian effects of sanctions. In this sense, I chose the baseline between 2006 and 2011, since it represents an interval where no significant sanctions were imposed. This "baseline" assessment offers a point of comparison for the socioeconomic and humanitarian situations before and at the start of the sanction's regime. Concerning vulnerable groups, establishing an adequate baseline, and tracking the potential effects on these groups over time need an accurate assessment of the population groups' susceptibility to changes in humanitarian situations because of sanctions (Bessler et al., 2004). Human vulnerability depends on the kinds of measures implemented as well as the

characteristics of the individual (e.g., gender, education level, economic standing) and environment (e.g., political, economic) (Bessler et al., 2004). To assess the impact on women, I used a specific set of indicators based on the concept of human security:

1. Female Labour Force Participation
2. Maternal Mortality Rate
3. Adolescent Fertility Rate

These indicators are “outcome” indicators, which means that they are “...considered the most desirable metrics for monitoring the status of humanitarian conditions” (Bessler et al., 2004, p. 81), particularly, on women. It is also important to recognize that there exist other factors besides sanctions present in Syria that have an influence and impact on Syrian women’s well-being. When several historical, politico and socio-cultural factors are at play, evaluating the negative unintended consequences effects of sanctions on society can be challenging since it can be difficult to distinguish between natural occurrences and sanctions-related events. It is significant to emphasize that, regardless of the approach employed, it can be challenging to separate the effects of penalties from other factors. This research is significant and interesting since it aims to make an extensive study of the impact of sanctions on Syrian women, something that has been undeveloped in the literature on sanctions. Furthermore, in addition to the relevance and topicality of the issue, I would also like to highlight my interest in learning how sanctions are used by governments as a coercive instrument and how this affects society and the most vulnerable people of the targeted country.

This dissertation could be useful for foreign policy analysts, IR scholars and policymakers, mainly those who focus on sanctions, since it could highlight the gendered impact of sanctions, as well as join the academic debate on the negative unintended consequences of sanctions and help formulate sanctions that are more target and less detrimental. I would like to stress, however, that while I refer to women as vulnerable in this dissertation, I don’t pretend to generalize their experiences. Vulnerability is a complex concept that manifests differently across individuals and situations. It is not an inherent trait of women but rather a result of social, cultural, economic, and political factors that can impact anyone, regardless of gender. Additionally, while I acknowledge vulnerability, I do not pretend to overshadow women’s agency, strength, resilience, and skills. Women, like men, can navigate and overcome challenges, contribute significantly to society, and excel in various domains. Perceiving women as inherently vulnerable reinforces traditional gender roles and inequalities, limiting women’s opportunities and decision-making. Furthermore, since the EU and the US impose the biggest and most important sanctions regimes, I will focus on them.

Chapter 4 – The Impact of Sanctions on Women: The Case of Syria

Having established the theoretical framework and methodological options that guided and were used to conduct the research, this section presents and analyses the impact of sanctions on Syrian women. The chapter begins with a brief history of sanctions imposed on Syria, particularly by the US and the EU, followed by an analysis of the social and economic impact on Syrian women and their health impact. It will be demonstrated that sanctions on Syria date back to 1979, although it was only after the onset of the civil war that sanctions began to be more numerous, stricter, and impactful. Although the main cause of the dire situation in the country is caused by the war, sanctions had an impact by targeting Syria's primary economic sectors have led to a decline in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), inflation, unemployment, wage cuts, and a decrease in purchasing power, exacerbating poverty, and affecting access to basic and health needs. The situation has also profoundly impacted gender dynamics, with women being more vulnerable due to their social position and marginalization within Syrian society. The destruction of Syria's economy has pushed women to the front lines of economic activity, leading to increased risks of violence and exploitation.

4.1. A Gordian Knot? The History of Sanctions Regimes on Syria

As a historically and culturally rich area, Syria is nowadays known to the world for all the wrong reasons due to the advent of civil war that brought death, destruction, refugee migration and widespread suffering. Officially named the Syrian Arab Republic, Syria is situated in Western Asia, in a region known as the Levant. Albeit the modern state of Syria only gained its independence in 1945, from France, it has an ancient history of being home to two of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world – Damascus, Syria's capital, and Aleppo – and two of the most historically important rivers – Tigris, and Euphrates (Phillips, 2020).

Relations between Syria and Western countries have been tumultuous and complex throughout history, with only two very brief periods in recent history where there was collaboration, at the beginning of the Lebanon civil war, in 1975, and during the Second Gulf War, in 1991 (Alalwani & Shaar, 2021). However, this history of intermittent cooperation has been juxtaposed with a different facet of Syria's relations with the West – the imposition of sanctions. Until 2011, sanctions against Syria remained relatively mild and very specific, targeting certain individuals and organizations, the majority of which for its relations with terrorist groups, with the US and the EU being the biggest imposers. Since December 1979, Syria has been listed as an official state sponsor of terrorism by the US (US Department of

State, 2023). In the early 2000s, the US imposed a series of targeted sanctions against individuals and organizations involving Syria, including those that were directly linked to al-Qaeda or the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Alalwani & Shaar, 2021). In 2004, sanctions were imposed on the export of specific goods to Syria, particularly those with over 10 per cent US-manufactured components, with the aim of stopping the Syrian government's support for terrorism, its presence in Lebanon, and its illicit importation of Iraqi oil. This marked a pivotal moment in the relationship between Syria and the US, since it expanded the scope of sanctions from being solely list-based to encompassing sector-based ones.

Another turning point in the two countries relations occurred in 2005–2006 when the US started to target state-owned organizations, including the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre for being a part of a global network of supporters and proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and the Commercial Bank of Syria, the largest bank in the nation, for money laundering (Alalwani & Shaar, 2021).

In the case of EU sanctions on Syria, they started in 1986, after the conviction of Nezar Hindawi for attempting to bomb Israeli El Al Flight 016, from London to Tel Aviv, as well as his close contacts with the Syrian embassy in London (Hufbauer et al., 2008). These sanctions included new arms sales and diplomatic sanctions, although they were viewed as symbolic since they didn't prohibit the delivery of weapons under existing contracts, and additionally, Syria obtained most of its arms from the Soviet Union.

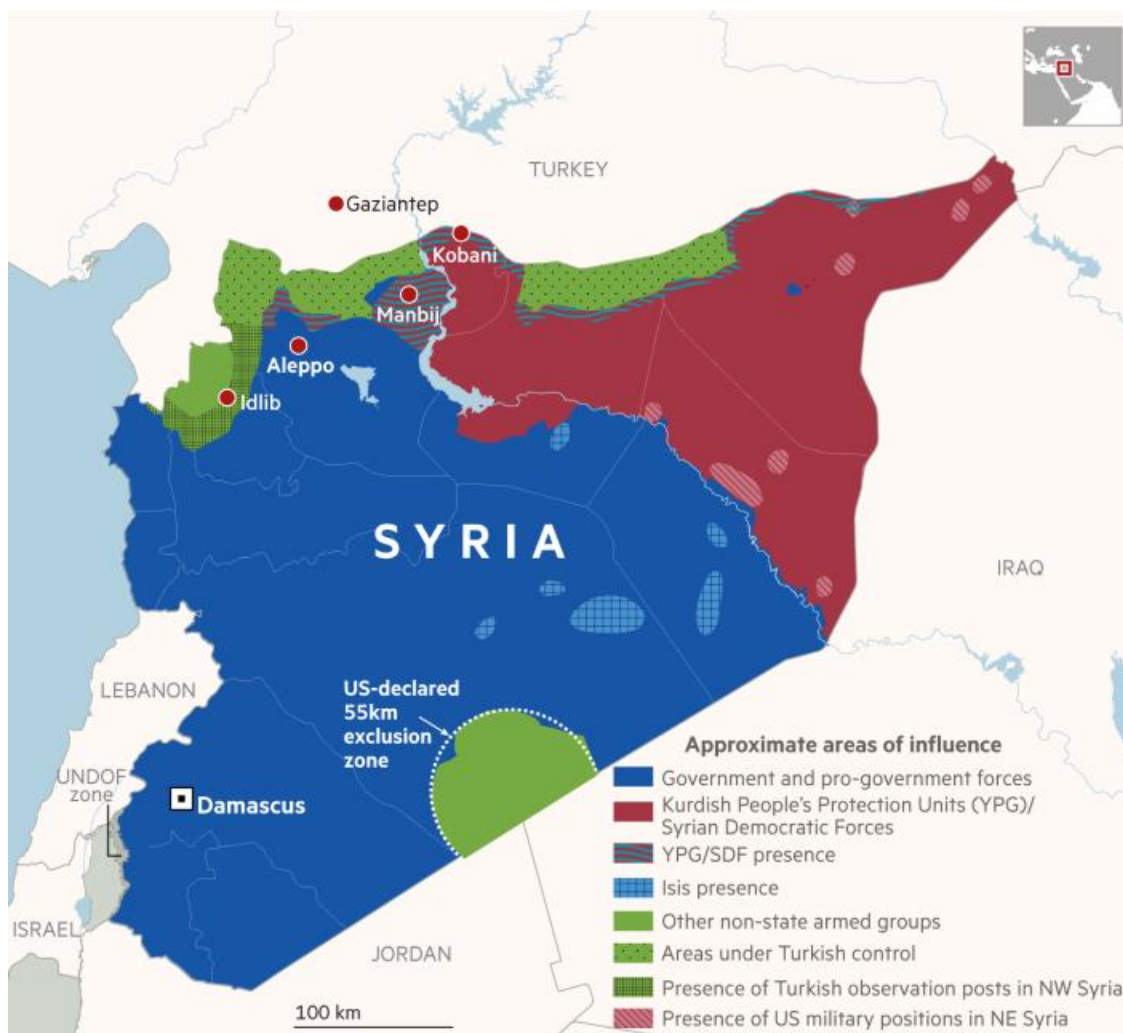
In 2005, the EU, the US and the UN imposed sanctions on all individuals, including Lebanese and Syrian officials, suspected of involvement in the preparation, supporting, or executing the February 14, 2005, terrorist bombing in Beirut, Lebanon, that killed 23 people, including former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and injured hundreds of people (UNSC, 2005; Alalwani & Shaar, 2021).

Despite these episodes, sanctions against Syria gained new momentum and amplitude in 2011, with the eruption of the Syrian civil war. In March 2011, peaceful anti-government protests started in the southern town of Deraa, influenced by significant upheavals that began throughout the MENA region. These protests would be known as the “Arab Spring” (Phillips, 2020). Yet, unlike previous Arab uprisings, Syria would descend into a prolonged and complex civil and proxy conflict (Tan & Perudin, 2019). At first, the protesters demanded reform over regime change. However, the initially peaceful rallies quickly became violent, and when President Bashar al-Assad's government responded by using force and murdering many protesters, the unrest spread to other cities and was met with similar regime repression (Phillips, 2020). When confronted with such cruelty and violence, some of the opposition, which had

developed as a localized, essentially leaderless movement, retaliated. Local militias were initially established to guard protests, but when hundreds of soldiers left Assad's army, these organizations grew and started directly opposing the regime. By the end of the summer of 2011, clashes between the rebels and the state had become routine, and a civil war had begun.

The Syrian civil war is complex and multifaceted, being simultaneously an internal conflict and an international proxy war. al-Assad and the protesters' original binary conflict grew into a multi-front, multi-actor conflict, with an intense sectarian dispute between Shiite forces led by Iran and the Sunni supported by Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Qatar, the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS, also known by its Arabic acronym Daesh), the

Figure 2: Syrian Arab Republic Areas of Political Influence as of February 2023



Source: Financial Times (2023)

participation of Kurdish forces and Western military intervention, including Russia and the US (Tan & Perudin, 2019). All these internal and external actors support both the rebel side and

the government with various types of resources, ending up tearing Syria into various zones of influence, controlled by the different actors, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The Syrian civil war has had a catastrophic humanitarian impact on civilians and is considered “the greatest human disaster of the twenty-first century” (Phillips, 2020, p.1). With an average of 6.8 million people receiving assistance every month in 2021, it is one of the largest humanitarian responses in the world, despite receiving only 46 per cent of the required funds for the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan, although 13.4 million people (6.1 million children) need assistance (UN News, 2023). It is one of the most food-insecure countries in the world, with an astounding 12 million people considered to be food insecure and more than 14 million people lacking access to clean drinking water, whereas half are in acute need (Jazairy, 2018). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), circa 306,887 civilians were killed in the first decade of the civil war, 26,727 of which were female and 27,126 children, representing an average of 83 civilians killed every day during the decade (OHCHR, 2022). More than half of all Syrians have been forced to leave their homes, with over 6 million having fled the country and 6.7 million being internally displaced, including 3.1 million children, with almost half of the refugees within the region being female (UN news, 2023).

The international community’s response to the outbreak of the Syrian civil war ranged from backing Bashar al-Assad’s government to calling for its dissolution. International organizations, including the Arab League, the UN and the EU, and countries including the US and Saudi Arabia condemned the Syrian government’s response against the protesters. On the other hand, countries like Russia and Iran expressed their support (Phillips, 2020).

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, declared that “The use of lethal force against peaceful demonstrators and their arbitrary arrests are unacceptable” and urged Syrian authorities to cease all acts of violence and respect international agreements relating to human rights (Al Jazeera, 2011, par. 2).

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission at the time, stated that the Union “strongly condemn the continuing violence and deaths in Syria in the context of protests calling for freedom and democracy” (2011, par. 2).

The Obama administration, affirmed, in April 2011, that “The United States stands for a set of universal rights, including the freedom of expression and assembly, and believes that governments, including the Syrian government, must address the legitimate aspirations of their people” (Brower, 2011). Nonetheless, only in August did European leaders and President

Obama call Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to resign, with the US head of state stating “The future of Syria must be determined by its people, but President Bashar al-Assad is standing in their way... For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside” (Wilson & Warrick, 2011, par. 2).

The Arab League expressed “growing concern and strong distress over the deteriorating security conditions in Syria due to escalating violence and military operations” (Reuters, 2011, par. 3) and in November suspended Syria from the organisation⁶. As the protests escalated into a civil war, foreign governments, including the EU, the US, the Arab League, Türkiye, Canada, and Australia, started imposing or expanding sanctions against Syria as the level of violence and casualties rose (Phillips, 2020).

Due to Russia and China’s vetoes in the Security Council, the UN does not impose sanctions specifically targeting Syria as a country or the Syrian government (Moret, 2015). However, two UN sanctions provisions have an impact on Syria: The prohibition of the trade in antiquities and sanctions against Daesh (Carter Center, 2020). Figure 3 shows a partial overview of sanctions imposed by the US and EU against Syria in 2011.

Figure 3: *Partial overview of sanctions imposed, in 2011, by the US and the EU*

Sender	Sanctions
US	• Limit the economic relationship between the US and Syria and curtail Syria's access to the US financial infrastructure. • The assets of President Bashar al-Assad and numerous high-ranking officials were frozen, and US individuals were barred from participating in transactions with them. • Prohibit the import of petroleum products originating from Syria into the United States, and forbid US individuals from partaking in transactions with the Syrian energy industry.
EU	• Restrictions on official government - Limitations on formal government support for Syria • Prohibition on the exportation and importation of weaponry • Prohibition on items that could potentially be used for domestic repression • Restrictions on allowing entry to the EU for specific individuals and entities implicated in the violent suppression of civilians in Syria, including the freezing of their funds and economic assets • Ban on the export of certain goods to Syria, including luxury items, jet fuel, precious metals, oil and gas industry equipment, and currency • Ban on the import of specified Syrian products such as oil, petroleum products, precious metals, and cultural property • Financial and investment limitations • Targeting government officials, entrepreneurs, companies, and government supporters

Overall, EU sanctions are more targeted in scope than US sanctions. Apart from food, medicine, and other humanitarian goods, trade between Syria and the US is essentially restricted

⁶ Syria was readmitted in May 2023

by US sanctions to certain types of imports, but EU restrictions only apply to certain types of products, such as oil and precious metals (Carter Center, 2020). Along the same line, EU financial sanctions only restrict specific types of financial transactions between European banks and Syria and specific Syrian organizations, whereas US financial sanctions place an extensive ban on all financial transactions with Syria. Furthermore, since June 2020, the US has applied a larger range of secondary sanctions intended to discourage specific types of commerce with Syria between third-country entities, known as the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act.

These sanctions align with the strategic goals of the EU on Syria, which are to prevent Syria's use of chemical weapons and exert pressure on the Syrian government over human rights violations (Carter Center, 2020). US sanctions against Syria aim curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, penalizing Syria for backing terrorist groups and acts of terrorism, exerting pressure due to human rights abuses, formulating strategies to counter Syria's political interference in Lebanon and Iraq, and putting pressure on Syria's relationship with Iran, which was of particular concern to the Trump administration.

Although the US, the EU, and others have imposed numerous sanctions on the Syrian government, government officials, and related entities in response to the government's widespread war crimes and other serious human rights violations, numerous human rights organisations and the UN Human Rights Council have warned for the economic repercussions of sanctions on the country, that consequently, could have a disproportionately negative impact on human rights or create unnecessary suffering for the civilians, especially to those who are most vulnerable and marginalized (Mehchy, 2020; Human Rights Council, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2023).

4.2. The Impact of Sanctions on Women's Livelihood

Syrian culture is characterized by conservatism and patriarchy, where family is considered "essential" and "natural" (ul Shafi, 2019). Despite their pivotal role in post-independence "modern" Syria, women often faced tough decisions to preserve their status within predominantly patriarchal nationalist movements. This frequently involved prioritizing state-building efforts over the promotion of women's rights, which restricted their involvement in civil, political, and public spheres. (Alsaba & Kapilashrami, 2016). Additionally, while Syria agreed to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 2003, the government expressed objections to numerous provisions pertaining to rights such as nationality, movement, divorce, inheritance, reproduction, and safeguards against child marriages. Prior to the conflict, the public domain was controlled by a state bourgeoisie,

religious orthodox elites, emerging corporate entities, and militarized institutions, that exhibited hostility and violence towards women.

Consequently, when the conflict erupted, Syria ranked 124 out of 135 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report, trailing its neighbouring Arab countries. Changes in the social and economic scenario, restricted women's engagement in public life and access to economic opportunities, leading to greater reliance on male family members. Given that women's roles were determined by their familial relations, their negotiating power within households diminished, rendering them more vulnerable in conflict situations (Alsaba & Kapilashrami, 2016).

4.2.1. Bearing the Burden: Sanctions' Economic and Social Toll on Women in Syria

Syria is considered a middle-income agrarian country with a relatively diversified economy, focused on energy, agriculture, industry, and tourism. Syria's energy and mining sector, particularly phosphates, natural gas, and, most importantly, crude oil, serve as its primary sources of economic revenue. Since the mid-1980s, the oil industry has been a pillar of the Syrian economy, contributing 9.5 per cent of Syria's total GDP of 59.1 billion US Dollars (USD) in 2010, with oil exports remaining the country's primary source of foreign exchange earnings (Friberg Lyme, 2012). Additionally, Syria's mechanised agriculture industry thrived from 2006 to 2011, contributing 18 per cent to its GDP, 23 per cent of Syria's exports, and employing 17 per cent of the country's total workforce (Costantino et al., 2016), accounting for one-fifth of GDP (Gobat & Kostial, 2016). It was the only country in the Middle East to have self-sufficient food production (Jazairy, 2018). The Syrian government controlled the food production market, food costs were reasonable, and the daily caloric intake was comparable to many Western countries.

Given that the oil industry was a key sector of the Syrian economy, especially for EU countries, which represented 27.4 per cent of all Syrian exports in 2010, the embargo on oil and petroleum products from Syria has been the most impactful measure (Portela, 2012). The rationale behind this approach is that targeting one of the country's primary economic sectors would exert significant pressure on the al-Assad government to address the detrimental effects of sanctions and put an end to the regime's atrocities. These sanctions, along with banking restrictions, were reportedly achieving their goal of depriving the regime of key revenue, with Syria's GDP falling by 3.4 per cent in 2011 (Portela, 2012) and the USD exchange rate value of the Syrian Pound (SYP) plummeting (Sen et al., 2013). Accordingly, the Syrian economy experienced inflation, which, in turn, led to unemployment, wage cuts, and a decrease in

purchasing power. Consequently, this situation exacerbated poverty, encouraged unhealthy coping strategies, and restricted access to basic needs for families, particularly affecting those with children, pregnant women, and elderly individuals. The rise in the cost of living, driven by the war and sanctions, had profound impacts on gender dynamics, particularly affecting women, who are more vulnerable due to their social position and marginalization within Syrian society.

According to Solati (2017), the primary cause of women's marginalisation in society is their financial dependency on men. Women who work – especially in the formal sector – have greater negotiating power at home and are thus more likely to be in charge of making decisions for their families, taking part in community initiatives and being represented in politics. Thus, working outside the home can benefit women to attain social, political, and financial freedom. Financial autonomy is the first and most crucial step in raising women's status and well-being, even though it does not always empower all women. Hence, FLFP is the most important variable to take into consideration when analysing women's economic involvement in every community (Solati, 2017). The MENA, alongside South Asia, remains the region with the lowest FLFP, with only a quarter or less of all women participating in the labour market (World Bank, 2022). While factors such as education, instruction, and the number of children a woman has have been identified as contributors to the low FLFP, Solati (2017) argues that the primary reason behind the low rate in MENA is the patriarchal culture.

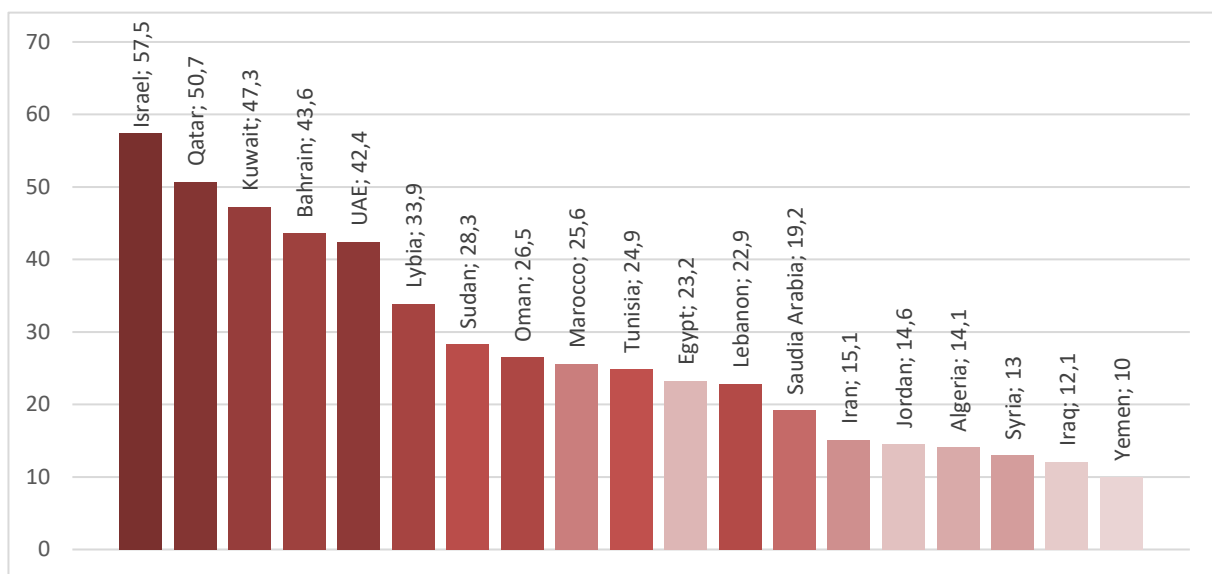
Syria has one of the lowest percentages of women working in the country's economy, falling behind other countries in the region when it comes to FLFP (see Figure 4). In 2008, 75 per cent of women were neither unemployed nor in school (ILO, 2010). In this regard, the existing literature suggests that social and political circumstances may be responsible for the low rate of FLFP (Kelly & Breslin, 2010). For example, more than 40 per cent of participants in an ILO study were against women working (ILO, 2010), while according to a 2017 survey involving 1,006 Syrian women over the age of 18, 81 per cent of respondents stated that “the social norms in Syria truly impede women's success” (Bareeq, 2017, p.16).

For instance, despite the Syrian constitution promoting equality among all citizens, women are required to seek their husband's permission to work outside the home, as the penal code allows them to prohibit their wives from doing so, and even if they are allowed, women are restricted from working at night or in professions deemed harmful to their health or morals, such as heavy industry, with exceptions for jobs in medicine, entertainment, and travel (Kelly & Breslin, 2010). Additionally, social norms dictate that Syrian men are responsible for providing for their families, which confines women to household duties and limits their access

to the public sphere. This restriction prevents them from pursuing various employment opportunities or even the possibility of working at all (Williamson, 2016).

With the beginning of the civil war, these social and political elements took on a new dimension, exacerbating women's vulnerability and further influencing FLFP. The conflict not only devastated the Syrian economy but also reshaped the socioeconomic conditions and income sources of millions of people, disrupting traditional gender roles in a conservative society and modifying its social structure (ul Shafi, 2019). While both men and women have been killed, detained, forcibly disappeared, injured or unable to find fixed employment due to the civil war, most of those are men, resulting in thousands of families without their patriarchs.

Figure 4: *FLFP (%) in the MENA region, 2010*



Source: World Bank (2023)

Consequently, the number of female-headed households in Syria has increased (UNOHCHR, 2023). According to the World Bank (2020), female-headed households have grown from 4.4 per cent in 2009 to 12–17 per cent in 2015, and in nearly one-third of Syrian homes, women are the decision-makers and primary earners (Hilton, 2017).

Thus, these families not only lost their loved ones but also their primary (sometimes sole) source of income, leaving women as the only adults responsible for providing for their children and elderly family members (ul Shafi, 2019). Women had to seek employment or find jobs to support their families, despite facing cultural and social barriers that often push them into low-paid, low-skilled positions, self-employment in the informal sector, or even prevent them from working altogether. According to the UNOCHA (2022), female-headed households are half as likely to meet basic needs in comparison with male-headed households.

Indeed, these unique internal factors, especially the civil war, have had a profound impact on Syrian women. However, gender plays a crucial role in the international political sphere as well. By examining the gendered spaces, processes, and impacts that were previously invisible or overlooked by traditional IR approaches, it becomes evident that gender is a significant factor in security contexts (Sjoberg & Thies, 2023). This perspective reveals the multifaceted ways in which gender influences security and the intricate dynamics of gender in international security. Although sanctions might be perceived as gender-neutral, they frequently have a higher toll on women (Seyfi et al., 2022), with various studies showing that these penalties influence women's economic rights and labour force participation (see al-Jawaheri, 2008; Taheri & Guven-Lisaniler, 2018; Gutmann et al., 2020). Therefore, alongside the internal factors, women are "...much more vulnerable to any economic change, particularly if the change is as shocking as sanctions" (al-Jawaheri, 2008, p. 30).

In theory, sanctions were imposed to weaken President al-Assad's government in response to its human rights violations. However, even though they have affected al-Assad significantly, the Syrian regime and sanctioned businesspersons have managed to evade sanctions. They do so by relying on complex company structures to disguise the original ownership of a business, offshore companies, business fronts⁷, middlemen or intermediaries who are not sanctioned, corruption, cryptocurrency, financial or material support from Iran, Russia and Hezbollah, smuggling, cash transactions, "Golden visa schemes," and "investment passports", and even UN agencies funds hijacking (Syrian Legal Development Programme, 2022). Due to these and other flaws that undermine the effectiveness of sanctions, citizens and small to midsize businesses are left to bear the weight of it (Alalwanai & Shaar, 2021), with the most vulnerable and marginalized suffering the greatest. Particularly, sanctions on oil and agricultural sectors, have directly and indirectly increased the socioeconomic costs of the conflict, causing a disproportionate strain on women.

With the start of the conflict, resources, including natural resources, infrastructures, equipment, and livestock, have been destroyed. In addition, the severe drought, inadequate management of water resources, postponed completion of essential projects (such as modern irrigation) and implementation of neoliberal policies in the pricing of fertiliser and electricity (Kanfash, 2022) led the number of agricultural workers to fall about half between 2010 and 2018 (Jazairy, 2018). Furthermore, as the agricultural industry depends on resources like

⁷ Individuals or entities working temporarily or permanently on behalf of a sanctioned individual or entity.

energy, fertiliser, and seeds, the scarcity of these materials and the rising prices have also contributed to the decline in food production, availability, and export (Ismail et al., 2019). This caused a rise in the price of basic commodities, leaving hundreds of thousands of households across the country without access to food (Jazairy, 2018).

However, in addition to the war, drought, and bad policies, sanctions have played a role in intensifying the situation. The prohibition on the export of machinery and equipment to Syria as well as import restrictions on goods with “dual use⁸”, such as fertiliser, pesticides, and herbicides, which are crucial elements of large-scale agriculture, have a particularly negative effect, undermining productivity, increasing prices, and limit the rebuilding of the agriculture industry (Kanfash, 2022). Furthermore, the water supply and sanitation infrastructure, including treatment plants, pumping stations, water towers, sewage treatment plants, and wells have been either destroyed or damaged (Aita, 2020). The availability of clean water is closely tied to the functioning of the electric grid, fuel availability, and generators, as water pumping relies on these resources. Fuel shortages and a lack of pumps, replacement parts, and tools for repairs, because of sanctions, have further hindered tap water production. According to UNOCHA (2015), sanctions alone led to a decrease in water operations efficiency higher than 40 per cent, in comparison with pre-crisis level, leading to a cost of the price of water. Additionally, despite all sanctions regimes that are imposed on Syria having exceptions for the import of food, over-compliance with the economic sanctions and the restrictions on the shipping and banking sector have made the process challenging and expensive and resulted in delays or cancellation of imported food (Kanfash, 2022).

Because agriculture is the primary source of income for a significant portion of the Syrian population – up to 40 per cent of livelihoods in Syria are associated in some way with agriculture – its effects on the sector are particularly important (Carnegie Endowment, 2015). Moreover, compared to the rest of the population, its impact on women is significantly severe. Worldwide, women make up 43 per cent of the workforce in agriculture and contribute to 50 per cent of food production (Wei et al., 2021). In Syria, these figures are even greater, given that women account for up to 70 per cent of the agricultural activity (Soubh, 2006) and approximately half of women in the Syrian labour market worked in agriculture in 2004 (Kelly & Breslin, 2010). Due to conventional gender roles, women are more likely to be the ones managing and using natural resources (Nelson et al., 2010) and “...bear a disproportionate responsibility for securing food, water, and fuel” (UN Women, 2022, par. 5), making them

⁸ Goods, technologies, or materials that can have both peaceful and military purposes.

more susceptible to the effect of sanctions on these resources. In this sense, the impact of the war and sanctions on the agricultural sector affects women disproportionately because of gender norms when compared to men.

As families struggle to come up with ways to make ends meet, the destruction of Syria's economy and male labour force has had a transformational side-effect, pushing women to the front lines of economic activity, taking on additional roles and responsibilities (Synaps Network, 2019). Thus, along with the burden of women's housework, which was boosted due to the scarcity of essential foodstuffs and non-food products (Buecher & Aniyamuzaala, 2016), they now must work outside their homes. To cope with the rise in the cost of living caused by war and sanctions, Syrian women migrate or resort to undesirable coping mechanisms, including child labour and marriage (ul Shafi, 2019).

Women from rural areas migrated to urban areas in search of better jobs but were placed in an entirely new context where their skills are insufficient to become employed. Early and forced marriage and child labour have reportedly increased in Syria because of the conflict's widespread displacement and economic hardship, with evidence showing that girls who are married are less likely to attend school (UNOCHA, 2022). As a result, 96 per cent of children reside in areas where child labour is reported and 84 per cent of children reside in areas where females between the ages of 15 and 17 are at risk of child marriage. These marriages are frequently used as a coping mechanism to lessen the financial hardship, to protect daughters in overcrowded housing conditions brought on by home destruction and displacement and to mitigate reputational risks for family honour in the face of increased risks of sexual violence. Sanctions aggravated a scenery that was already averse to women and intensified patriarchal practices and attitudes. In 2019, it was projected that 41% of Syrian households led by women were food insecure, compared to 32 per cent of families led by men. (WFP, 2020). In female-headed families, and notably those led by widows and divorcees, poverty and unemployment can result in increased vulnerability.

Due to the growing number of women working outside their homes, contributing to the family's income, alongside the resulting change in family dynamics, men are no longer playing their conventional role as the only household providers and decision-makers (Buecher & Aniyamuzaala, 2016). This situation combined with male unemployment, societal norms that tolerate gender-based violence, and years of living in stressful situations, raised the likelihood of domestic violence since men perceive this social change as "a threat to the traditional balance of power" (UNFPA, 2019, p. 35). Furthermore, young girls, widows, and divorced women are more at risk because they are extra likely to be sexually exploited while they travel in public

since they aren't accompanied by their husbands or brothers, as well as because they are more likely to need money and commodities and be compelled to adopt potentially harmful coping mechanisms like prostitution or survival sex.

Although statistics on Syrian women's economic involvement may suggest that they make little economic contribution, plenty of them are employed in informal fields. In reality, the informal sector contributed significantly to the Syrian economy even before 2011 (ILO, 2010). The informal sector was almost as fruitful as the formal sector since the estimates point out that it accounted for around 30 per cent of employment and 30-40 per cent of the country's GDP. Approximately 57 per cent of men and 67 per cent of women informal worker between 2003 and 2004 were employed in the formal economy. Studies have shown that there is a direct causality between sanctions imposition and the increase in the targets' informal economies (Farzanegan, 2013; Petrescu, 2016b; Early & Peksen, 2019)

Unfortunately, I couldn't find reliable data on the impact of sanctions on the Syrian informal economy. Nonetheless, there are accounts that sanctions brought to the growth of informal or black markets, which government officials benefit, and women's participation in this kind of economic activity increased (Early & Peksen, 2019; Beilouny, 2022).

Illegal underground trade was reinitiated at the onset of the Syrian crisis and grew steadily as official economic organizations started feeling the impact of foreign sanctions (Beilouny, 2022). Consequently, their ability to ensure an ample supply of goods and products to meet local market demands was compromised (Early & Peksen, 2019). For women and girls in Syria, this implies having to turn to dangerous methods to secure their economic livelihood. The increase in the number of women engaged in the informal economy compels them to undertake greater risks to provide for themselves and their families, potentially leading to transactional sex, a surge in human trafficking, and forced prostitution.

4.2.2. The Unseen Wounds: Sanctions and the Health Struggles of Syrian Women

As demonstrated above, sanctions already had indirect health-related consequences on women and girls, exacerbating the humanitarian impact of the conflict. The repercussions of the civil war and economic sanctions have resulted in higher prices and income losses that have had a devastating impact on women, particularly female-headed households, who are incapable of accessing medical treatment and buying nutritious food. This disproportionately affects women's health as they prioritize the well-being of their families over their own health needs. Furthermore, sanctions contributed to the rise in the number of women working outside their

homes, increasing risks of violence and gender-based violence, child marriage and sexual exploitation.

For a lower middle-income country, Syria had a relatively advanced healthcare system. According to data provided by the Syrian Ministry of Health (MoH), several health indicators showed constant improvement in Syria over the previous 30 years before the start of the civil war (Kherallah et al., 2012). Public hospitals offered free primary health care between 2000 and 2010, while most of the private sector provided advanced care services and facilities (Taleb et al., 2015). The MoH was Syria's primary hospital operator, managing 90 facilities with 13,907 beds, or 50 per cent of all public hospital beds, while the private sector operated 376 hospitals with 8962 beds, representing 32 per cent of the total number of beds in the country (Audi et al., 2022). Nevertheless, since 2000, efforts to liberalize the healthcare system gave the private sector more authority and widened access disparities to health and raised the financial burden on those who could least afford it (Kherallah et al., 2012).

According to Gobat & Kostial (2016), the proportion of doctors available to the general population in 2014 was 1:661, around 30,000. Life expectancy at birth rose from 56 years in 1970 to 73.1 years in 2009, infant mortality decreased from 132 per 1000 live births in 1970 to 17.9 per 1000 in 2009, under-five mortality substantially lowered from 164 to 21.4 per 1000 live births, and maternal mortality decreased from 482 per 100 000 live births in 1970 to 52 in 2009 (Kherallah et al., 2012). Additionally, since early 2000, nearly 90 per cent of the country's medicine demands have been met by the Syrian pharmaceutical sector, creating work for 17,000 Syrians, 85 per cent of whom were women, being regarded as one of the fastest expanding and most successful sectors during the two decades preceding the crisis (Ghisn, 2020). Furthermore, it sold medicines to about 52 Arab countries, exporting medications worth 150 million USD annually (Kutaini & Davila, 2010).

The conflict, however, would drastically damage the healthcare system and living conditions, bringing widespread suffering to the population, in addition to the hundreds of thousands that were injured or perished, during the war or fleeing from it. Attacks frequently target medical facilities and personnel, and while rebel forces and ISIS were responsible for several of those attacks, it is estimated that the Syrian government and their allies were responsible for most of the attacks (PHR, 2023). Accordingly, in 2019, 57 of Syria's 113 public hospitals were operational, with the remaining either partially operational (28), or completely damaged (28) (WHO, 2019). Between 2011 and 2019, there were significantly fewer doctors working in Syria since more than 900 healthcare professionals were killed and as much as 70

per cent fled the country due to the insecurity of health workforce conditions (Bou-Karroum et al., 2019; PHR, 2023).

When a country is subject to sanctions during the conflict, this scenario gets accentuated since the sanctioned countries may be heavily dependent on imports and humanitarian aid, as is the situation with Syria (Walker, 2016). Although sanctions frequently include exceptions for the supply of healthcare-related products, they frequently disturb trade flows, leading to a noticeably decreased importation of medical equipment, medicine, and essential foodstuffs. For instance, sanctions imposed by the US prohibited the shipment of products to Syria that had at least 10 per cent of US components (Alalwani & Shaar, 2021). Similar restrictions were also imposed on several “dual use” items by the EU. In fact, in 2016, thousands of urgent medical-related items identified by WHO and MoH were subject to some level of control or embargo (Walker, 2016).

Furthermore, the situation is aggravated by the sanctions' stipulated licensing requirements, which have been reported by various aid organizations (Walker, 2016). To bypass this rule and legally dispatch goods to Syria, aid organizations were forced to navigate a lengthy government bureaucracy to gain approval that required an appliance for special licences and often took months to complete, limiting aid organizations to help. In addition, the legal costs associated with securing an export license often surpassed the value of the item being sent, reaching three times the cost of the actual medical supplies. All these barriers led to a significant decrease in the quantity of humanitarian goods especially fundamental medications, and pharmaceutical products, sent by aid organizations, due to overcompliance (Walker, 2016). In addition, in 2016, the Syrian government prohibited the import of any drugs that could be procured domestically, leading to poor quality management of medicines by United Nations organizations (Abbara et al., 2018).

However, the effects of trade bans go beyond issues with the availability of aid supplies. Health and healthcare services are dependent on working infrastructure for providing access to water and sanitation, energy, and equipment like ambulances, X-ray facilities, and refrigerators for storing vaccinations (Garfield, 1999). Syrian sanctions affected financial transactions and money transfers, resulting in many companies that provide production materials and supplies, including spare parts, machinery, and laboratory materials, refusing to collaborate with national companies (Ghisn, 2020). Like all other economic and service sectors in the country, the once-thriving pharmaceutical industry experienced varied degrees of damage to its infrastructure, equipment, and manufacturing lines, reducing its productivity. The economic restrictions further impacted the sector through medicine manufacture, the purchase of raw materials, and

price, forcing Syria to rely on imports, which resulted in drug shortages, especially those for the treatment of chronic illnesses, including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and other ailments. (Sen et al., 2013; Walker, 2016; Ghisn, 2020).

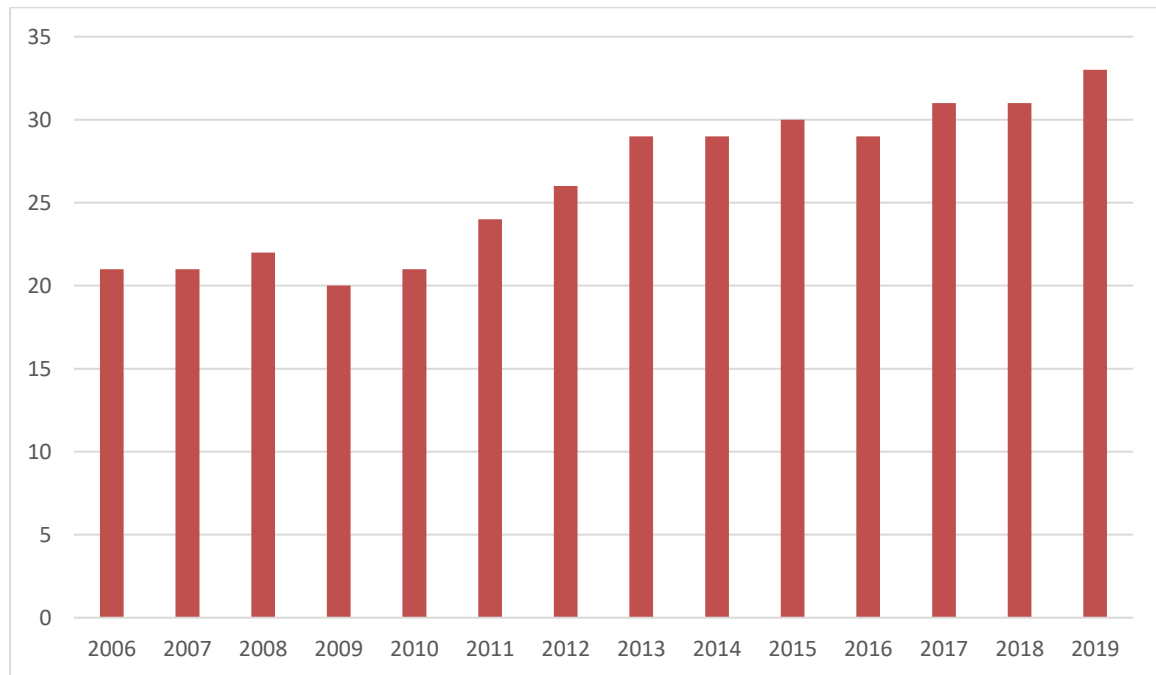
The suffering of patients who depend on imported pharmaceuticals is further exacerbated by decreases in government health spending brought on by the astronomical expenses of the ongoing conflict and a dramatic devaluation of the Syrian pound, indirectly affected by sanctions (Nehme, 2017). Naturally, as the conflict continued, the number of people needing healthcare continued to increase with 13.2 million Syrian needing healthcare, in 2019 (Abu-Ismael et al., 2020). Consequently, restricting the availability of medical supplies, equipment and medications in Syria, it can make more difficult for healthcare workers to provide adequate care, including maternal and reproductive health services, which are crucial for women (Bashour et al., 2021). According to Alhaffar et al. (2022), even though there is a growing body of literature on health and the Syrian conflict and sanctions, the perspectives of healthcare workers and service recipients, if even considered, predominantly represent the male viewpoint.

Since women are one of the most vulnerable and most negatively impacted by conflict, women's health is a crucial part of public health (Alhaffar & Janos, 2021). To assess the changes in the health conditions of women between 2011 and 2019, I will use MMR and AFR. According to Wei & Hunter (2021), these indicators can be useful to assess women's health rights. Although being a woman does not necessarily equate to being a mother, the MMR effectively represents women's access to healthcare. Similarly, the AFR serves as a reliable indicator for assessing girl's ability to access healthcare infrastructures, education, contraceptives, and services related to the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. Directly, economic hardship and a lack of financial resources can create barriers to accessing these essential resources. Indirectly, sanctions can lead to the shutdown of clinics and schools. This occurs when international aid funding diminishes, or targeted governments redirect their budgets towards national security and other priorities.

Before the conflict, 96 per cent of Syrian women received assistance from a skilled birth attendant during delivery, and 88 per cent had undergone at least one prenatal care visit (Bashour et al., 2021). Nevertheless, Syrian women encountered challenges that extended beyond merely accessing healthcare services. These issues included the inability to consider women's preferences during childbirth and excessive reliance on medical interventions, such as caesarean sections, with haemorrhages being the primary cause of MMR. The Syrian government estimated that the MMR stood at 52 per 100,000 live births in 2009 (DeJong, et al., 2017), while the World Bank reported that the MMR was estimated at 20 (World Bank,

2023). However, from the beginning of the war, those numbers increased, reaching 63 per 100,000 live births in 2015 (DeJong, et al., 2017), and 30 according to World Bank. In comparison to pre-conflict times, “Syrian women now have higher rates of poor pregnancy outcomes, including increased fetal mortality, low birth weights, premature labour, antenatal complications, and an increase in puerperal infections...” (Aburas et al., 2018, p. 3).

Figure 5: MMR (%) in Syria, 2006-2019



Source: World Bank (2023)

Furthermore, in 2009, the WHO reported that Syria’s ABR was 54 per 1000 among adolescent girls (DeJong et al., 2017). Yet, research by Terkawi et al. (2019) highlighted that just in the North-western part of Syria, out of 4936 women who gave birth in 2017, 1169 (or 24 per cent) were adolescents. Notably, 22 of these were merely 14 years old. This signifies an increase in ABR following the outbreak of the war. A likely reason for this surge is the growth in child marriages, which can be largely attributed to the financial collapse, partially due to sanctions. It’s worth noting that adolescents face roughly a third higher risk of pregnancy-related mortality compared to women aged 20 to 24. Moreover, adolescent mothers seem more prone to complications like obstructed labour, fistulas, and premature births, and their babies are more likely to have low birth weight compared to those of older women.

Although the war is the main cause of the decline of MMR in Syria, due to the lack of healthcare professionals and access to health facilities, sanctions also had a direct and indirect role in aggravating women’s health. Although the figures might seem relatively low, they could be significantly higher, given the concerning levels of food and water scarcity that can

negatively impact pregnant women, increasing the likelihood of an increase in MMR (Butt et al., 2022).

As previously mentioned, sanctions have posed challenges to accessing clean water in Syria. These sanctions have targeted “dual use” items, including chlorine gas used for water purification and water pipelines (Jazairy, 2018). The absence of clean water has facilitated the spread of infectious diseases such as polio, hepatitis A, scabies, and diarrheal diseases (Abbara et al., 2021). According to UNICEF, the scarcity of safe water has worsened, particularly affecting displaced communities (UN News, 2015). Syria has reported 105,886 cases of acute diarrhoea since the start of 2015, and there has been a notable increase in cases of hepatitis A (UN News, 2015). Women’s and girl’s reproductive health is disproportionately affected by the scarcity of safe water, posing a significant threat to MMR (Daher, 2022). Insanitary conditions, limited access to clean water and functioning sewage systems contribute to this surge (Jazairy, 2018).

Women in Syria face several obstacles that keep them from getting prenatal, delivery and postpartum care and supervision (Save the Children, 2014). These obstacles include a lack of ambulances, the absence of female hospital employees, and several checkpoints and barriers on routes to medical facilities. These issues have led to an increase in unattended deliveries and a rise in the number of women who choose planned caesarean procedures. Despite the unsanitary environment, they opt for this procedure out of fear of giving birth at home, alone or in dangerous and hostile situations. In 2011, 19 per cent of all deliveries were caesarean births. This figure rose to 45 per cent by 2013. In a city under siege, one hospital reported that caesarean deliveries accounted for 75 per cent of births. Women are often choosing to give birth by caesarean so they can time the delivery of their baby, instead of risking being in labour in an insecure context, without access to an ambulance, and especially, taking a harrowing night-time journey. When Syrian women were aware of hospital deficiencies in terms of medicines, cleanliness due to supply shortages, and lack of adequate long-term pregnancy and postpartum care, because of the war and sanctions, many of them chose to deliver outside the formal healthcare system or in more unconventional ways (Garfield, 1999). Some obstetric emergencies even frequently happen without being officially and fully documented. As a result, all these factors combined may result in a rise in MMR and ABR.

To sum up, while sanctions were not the cause of the humanitarian situation in Syria, they had direct and indirect consequences, especially on women who supported the heavy toll. They added a new layer of consequences caused by the conflict that impacted women’s social, economic and health status. By targeting Syria’s primary economic sectors, especially oil, the

Syrian economy experienced inflation, leading to unemployment, wage cuts, and decreased purchasing power. Poverty increased, impacting women have been particularly affected. The conflict and sanctions have reshaped gender roles and increased the number of female-headed households. Sanctions have also impacted the agricultural sector, which is crucial for a significant portion of the Syrian population and have disproportionately affected women who make up a large portion of the agricultural workforce. The conflict, drought, bad policies, and sanctions have damaged resources, infrastructure, and the economy, pushing more women into the informal sector and risky coping mechanisms, including child labour and early marriage, preventing women's empowerment. Furthermore, economic challenges caused by the conflict and sanctions have hindered women's access to medical treatment and nutritious food, particularly affecting female-headed households. Additionally, the sanctions have caused significant damage to Syria's healthcare system, disrupting the importation of medical supplies, and contributing to a decrease in healthcare personnel. Women are also facing increased risks of violence, exploitation, and infectious diseases due to the scarcity of safe water and other basic infrastructure. Women are often forced to give birth by caesarean section in unsanitary conditions due to fears of insecurity.

These findings are in line with other studies on the impact of sanctions on women. As mentioned, the economic crisis caused by the sanctions has led to an increase in women's labour participation. This situation was also observed in the studies by Sabarwal et al. (2011), Gutmann et al. (2020) and Wei & Hunter (2021). Sanctions humanitarian exemptions have failed, and child marriages rose, in Iran, (Kokabisaghi, 2018) and the health of women deteriorated was also observed in studies of Swindells (1996), Al-Ali (2005), Drury & Peksen (2014) and Wei & Hunter (2021).

While there is no bright side to the impact of war and sanctions, they have nonetheless opened new opportunities for women for Syrian women's empowerment. By challenging gender norms, they open new opportunities for women's participation in public life. Additionally, the challenges of war and sanctions can foster resilience and resourcefulness among women, leading to increased self-confidence and agency. There are various examples of how in post-conflict societies women's rights increase such as in Rwanda (Berry, 2015) and Liberia (Fuest, 2008).

Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to understand the impact of international sanctions on Syrian women's social, economic and health status between 2011 and 2019. To operationalize this objective, a set of sub-research questions have been developed: How do international sanctions have unintended implications on the livelihood of civilians in the target country?; What international sanctions regimes have been applied to Syria and how did they impact the country?; How did international sanctions affect the human security of Syrian women, including their social, economic and health conditions? Using the human security framework and the IASC "Handbook for Assessing the Humanitarian Implications of Sanctions," it was demonstrated that although sanctions were not the primary reason for the humanitarian emergency in Syria, they added another complex and damaging layer to the crisis. Between 2011 and 2019, sanctions impacted women's social, health, and economic conditions. By assessing female labour participation, maternal mortality rate, and adolescent birth rate, this research showed that these indicators were directly and indirectly impacted by sanctions.

Regarding the first question, international sanctions can have several unintended consequences on the target country's society, particularly on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women. While sanctions are intended as a "nonviolent" alternative to armed intervention, they often lead to human rights violations and an increase in political repression and violence by targeted governments. The literature shows that political leaders from target countries are largely spared from the economic and humanitarian difficulties brought on by sanctions, while regular citizens tend to bear these repercussions disproportionately. In addition, the literature highlights that those social segments that find themselves in more vulnerable positions, including ethnic minorities, internally displaced persons, children, and women, are the most impacted by economic sanctions. Studies also demonstrate that the imposition of sanctions can negatively reduce public health, well-being, and life expectancy, contribute to increasing income inequality, poverty, and unemployment, compromise food and water security, and reduce the level of educational attainment. Moreover, some studies show that sanctions can lead to an increase in the marginalization and discrimination of minority groups within the target state. In terms of gender, women bear a heavier burden from the negative impacts of sanctions, due to their role as household caretakers.

Concerning the second question, sanctioning Syria's oil and agricultural sectors had a towering impact on the Syrian economy, which was already damaged by war, and deprived al-Assad's government of key revenue, decreasing the country's GDP and the Syrian pound's

value. This, in turn, led to a rise in inflation, unemployment, and a decrease in purchasing power. The war and sanctions also had a significant impact on Syria's agricultural sector, which was the primary source of income for many families. The destruction of resources, severe drought, poor water management, and restrictive policies led to a decline in food production and export. Sanctions exacerbated the situation by hindering the import of essential agricultural inputs and disrupting water supply and sanitation infrastructure. Sanctions have disrupted trade flows, making it difficult to import medical equipment, medicines, and essential foodstuffs, despite humanitarian exemptions. Furthermore, the sanctions have impacted the country's pharmaceutical industry and infrastructure, leading to drug shortages and increasing the population's financial hardships.

Regarding the third question, Syrian women, already marginalized due to patriarchal societal norms and their financial dependency on men, were further affected by the war and sanctions. Despite the constitutional promotion of equality, women face legal restrictions and societal expectations that limit their employment opportunities and financial independence. The civil war, which led to the loss of male breadwinners and a shift in gender roles, also increased female-headed households. Women were forced to seek employment or create income sources, due to the economic shock, often facing cultural and social barriers that pushed them into low-paid, low-skilled positions or prevented them from working altogether. Moreover, the embargo and other measures disrupted traditional gender roles and dynamics, putting more pressure on women. Due to gender norms that place greater responsibility on women to secure food, water, and fuel, they faced additional challenges in finding employment in urban areas and even had to resort to harmful and unsafe coping mechanisms such as child labour and forced marriages to make a living and simply get by.

The devastating impact of the Syrian civil war and economic sanctions has resulted in a significant deterioration of women's health. Sanctions have led to indirect health-related issues, particularly for female-headed households, who face challenges affording and getting medical treatment and nutritious food, and often end up prioritizing their families' well-being over their health. Additionally, the economic turmoil has forced many women to work outside their homes, increasing their exposure to violence, child marriage, and sexual exploitation. Syria's healthcare system has become severely impoverished due to the ongoing war and imposed sanctions. Many medical facilities and personnel have been targeted, with the government and its allies being responsible for most of these attacks. As a result, access to healthcare has been severely limited, with fewer doctors working in Syria and many healthcare professionals fleeing the country due to fear of insecurity. The repercussions of the war and sanctions on women's

health are alarming. Maternal and adolescent fertility rates have increased, with many women facing challenges accessing prenatal, delivery, and postpartum care. Sanitary conditions have deteriorated, leading to the spread of infectious diseases, and negatively impacting women's reproductive health. Many women opt for planned caesarean procedures out of fear of giving birth in insecure environments and conditions, and some even choose to deliver outside the formal healthcare system. All these factors combined may result in a rise in maternal and adolescent fertility rates.

In terms of limitations of this dissertation, in conflict settings, data can be difficult to obtain and/or challenged for political reasons. The data collected in and/or regarding Syria may be incomplete or not fully transparent, even if that information comes from respectable sources such as UN agencies. Nevertheless, there is a substantial amount of data available that allowed cross-reference and offers credibility. Additionally, I acknowledge my linguistic bias in this dissertation, as I can only understand Portuguese and English, which means that any knowledge produced in other languages, especially Arabic, has been overlooked.

Future research should continue to focus on the impact that sanctions have on marginalized groups. Although research in this area is increasing, it remains underdeveloped, particularly considering how sanctions impact ethnic groups, people with chronic illnesses, and elderly people, by collecting and analysis of qualitative primary data these studies could explore the specific effects that sanctions have on these groups. Additionally, future research could investigate the impact that sanctions have on Syrian migrants, particularly the ones staying in neighbouring countries. Since 2011, millions of Syrians have fled the country to Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, and Europe. Since sanctions affect trade flows, it would be interesting to see if and how remittances or other forms of diaspora support to Syria are affected.

More than a decade later, it is evident that the sanctions that have been imposed on Syria have failed to achieve their political goals. They have not succeeded in removing al-Assad's regime or making it concede, largely due to Russia's support and assistance, and have failed to advance human rights in the country. To this extent, the situation remains dire, particularly for women who have been disproportionately affected by the ongoing violence and economic hardship. Many women have been forced to take on new roles and responsibilities in the absence of male family members, and the lack of resources has made it difficult for them to provide for their families. In the face of these challenges, one of the conclusions that is corroborated by this thesis is that the international community should modify its sanctions on Syria so that they are more effective against the regime and less harmful to the population.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Partial Overview of US and EU Sanctions on Syria, 1979-2019

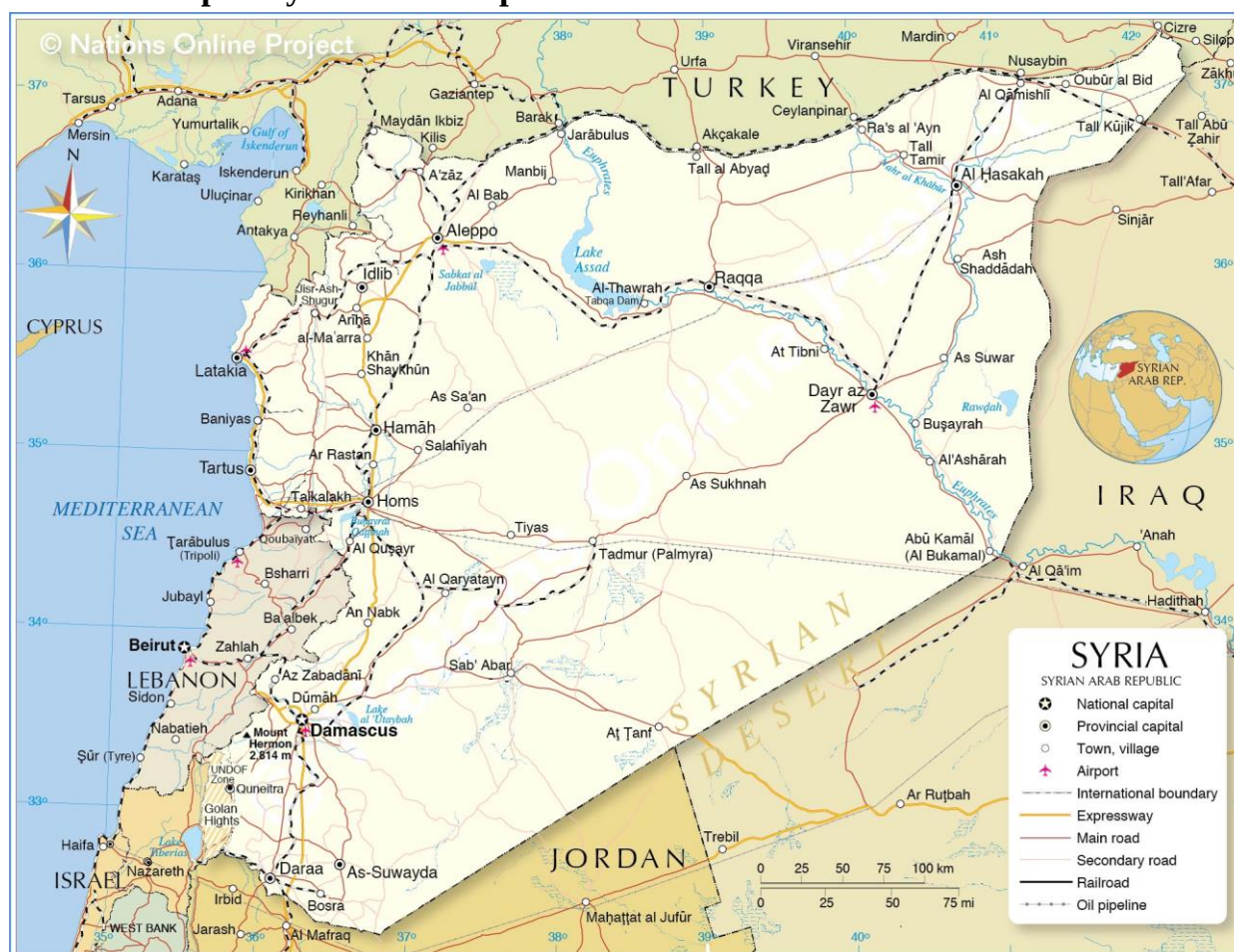
Sender	Year	Sanction	Motive	Legal Paper
US	1979	• Restrictions of US arms, good or technology sales to Syria destined to military end	Supporting International Terrorism	• Export Administration Act of 1979 • International Emergency Economic Powers Act
US	1986	• Prohibits the exportation of eight chemicals to Syria that could potentially be utilized in the production of chemical weapons • Implements regulations on the exportation of helicopters to Syria • Disallows the exportation of items and technology to Syria that necessitate an authorized license • Prohibits the Export-Import Bank from providing financial assistance to Syria • Terminates the air transportation agreement between the US and Syria • Restricts the sale of tickets for flights on Syrian Arab Airlines within the US • Minimizes the personnel at the US embassy in Syria • Urges American oil companies to cease their operations in Syria	Developing chemical weapons in cooperation with Iran	Export Administration Act
EU (except Greece)	1986 - 1994	• Limited sanctions • Partial trade sanctions • Prohibition on future weapons sales, while permitting the fulfillment of current contracts • Diplomatic penalties, encompassing the prohibition of high-ranking visits and evaluation of embassy and consular staff • Rigorous safety protocols concerning Syrian Arab Airlines	Involvement in the planning of placing a bomb in the luggage of an Israeli El Al Flight 016 from London	EC Declaration

US	2001	Freezes assets and interests within the US of specified persons and entities	Individuals and organizations facilitating terrorist activities, including several complicit in the 9/11 attacks	Executive Order 13224
US	2004	- Ban of Syrian aircraft from US airspaces - Ban on exporting specific items to Syria, particularly those with over 10% components made in the US, apart from food and medicine. - Asset freeze targeting specific Syrian individuals and governmental bodies that support policies adverse to the US. - Prohibition against US firms making investments in Syria. - Halting all dealings involving Syrian property. - Limiting the mobility of Syrian diplomats. - Minimizing diplomatic interactions.	- The actions of the Syrian government, including supporting terrorism, pose a risk to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. - Syria maintains its presence in Lebanon. - It is involved in developing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, which hinder US and global attempts to stabilize and rebuild Iraq. - It is engaged in the unlawful importation of oil from Iraq.	- Executive Order 13338 - Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003
US	2011	- Limit the economic relationship between the US and Syria and curtail Syria's access to the US financial infrastructure. - The assets of President Bashar al-Assad and numerous high-ranking officials were frozen, and US individuals were barred from participating in transactions with them. - Prohibit the import of petroleum products originating from Syria into the United States, and forbid US individuals from partaking in transactions with the Syrian energy industry.	The Syrian government's violations of human rights against its own citizens, in addition to constituting a peculiar and significant threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the US	- Executive Order 13572 - Executive Order 13573 - Executive Order 13582
EU	2011	Restrictions on official government - Limitations on formal government support for Syria	Brutal suppression of non-violent demonstrations in different regions of Syria, which involved the use of live bullets and led to the killing of numerous	- Council Decision 2011/273/CFSP - Council Regulation (EU) No 442/2011

		• Prohibition on the exportation and importation of weaponry • Prohibition on items that could potentially be used for domestic repression • Restrictions on allowing entry to the EU for specific individuals and entities implicated in the violent suppression of civilians in Syria, including the freezing of their funds and economic assets • Ban on the export of certain goods to Syria, including luxury items, jet fuel, precious metals, oil and gas industry equipment, and currency • Ban on the import of specified Syrian products such as oil, petroleum products, precious metals, and cultural property • Financial and investment limitations • Targeting government officials, entrepreneurs, companies, and government supporters	protestors, injuries, and random arrests. The statement urges the Syrian security forces to practice self-control rather than oppressive measures.	
US	2019	• Impose additional sanctions on non-US individuals and organizations that engage with entities and individuals already under primary sanctions related to Syria, especially those offering "substantial" goods or services that support the Syrian government's military use of aircraft or domestic oil and gas production benefits. • Prevent financial resources from reaching Syria for reconstruction purposes by imposing sanctions on non-US entities offering the regime "substantial" construction or engineering services.	Promote accountability for the Syrian government's human rights abuses and to pressure the government to end the conflict and engage in a political settlement.	Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019

Annexes

Annex 1: Map of Syrian Arab Republic



Source: Nations Online Project (2023)

Annex 2: Female/Male Labour Force Participation Rate in Syria, 2006-2019

Year	Female	Male
2006	16,1	78,24
2007	14,9	76,02
2008	14,4	75,52
2009	13,9	74,99
2010	13,6	74,78
2011	15,7	74,24
2012	16	74,46
2013	16,3	75,36
2014	16,7	75,36
2015	17,1	76,72
2016	17,3	76,9
2017	17,5	76
2018	17,6	76,03
2019	17,7	76,96

Source: World Bank (2023)

Annex 3: Female/Male Life Expectancy at Birth in Syria, 2006-2019

Year	Female	Male
2006	76	71
2007	76,5	71,2
2008	76,3	71,1
2009	76,7	71,3
2010	76,7	71,4
2011	76,4	70,5
2012	71,8	62,4
2013	69,8	58,8
2014	68,9	58,2
2015	70,4	60,6
2016	71	61,6
2017	74,9	63
2018	75,2	65,6
2019	75,6	68,2

Source: World Bank (2023)