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The unintended consequences of UN sanctions: A qualitative comparative analysis

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ABSTRACT

Sanctions are widely used foreign policy tools in reaction to crises in world politics. Accordingly, literature on sanction effectiveness—their intended consequences—is abundant. Yet, fewer studies address the unintended consequences of restrictive measures. This is remarkable given that negative externalities are well documented. Our article explores this phenomenon by asking under which conditions sanctions yield negative externalities. We develop a theoretical conceptualization and explanatory framework for studying the unintended consequences of UN sanctions. Empirically, we draw on data from the rich, but scarcely used Targeted Sanctions Consortium and apply qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to examine negative externalities of UN sanctions, complemented by illustrations from the cases Haiti and North Korea. The results document the existence of multiple pathways toward unintended consequences, highlighting the negative impact of comprehensive and long-lasting sanctions, as well as the ability of autocratic targets with economic means to persist unscathed from sanctions.

KEYWORDS Negative externalities; sanctions; United Nations; unintended consequences; QCA

Sanctions are among the most widely used foreign policy tools of governments and international organizations in reaction to crises in world politics. Since the 1990s, the number of sanctions imposed by state actors or international organizations like the United Nations (UN) has significantly increased (Felbermayr et al., 2020). A majority of these sanctions are targeted at individuals or entities, but, recently, comprehensive restrictions have also grown in number (Meissner, 2022). The measures adopted against Russia in February 2022 in response to Russia's war against Ukraine are one example for the imposition of tough, comprehensive sanctions.

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Despite their omnipresence, restrictive measures, especially the comprehensive ones, frequently bring about unintended consequences for the civilian population of the targeted country. Sanctions on Haiti (1993–1994), for example, triggered severe health problems due to malnutrition and epidemics (Farmer et al., 2003; Swindells, 1996). During the period of the sanctions' imposition unemployment increased, poverty spread, exports of agricultural products dropped, and prices for imports exploded (Gibbons & Garfield, 1999; Swindells, 1996). The populations in Iraq (2003–) and Iran (2006–), too, suffered from sanctions due to a lack of drinking water, food, and medicine which led to diseases and increased mortality (Özdamar & Shahin, 2021). Moreover, restrictive measures imposed on a target may incentivize domestic production as in the case of Iran (Özdamar & Shahin, 2021) or the deepening of trade relations with non-sanctioning states, as happened between North Korea (2006–) and China (Park, 2014). Furthermore, scholars show that, for instance, in Syria (2011–2016) the humanitarian situation worsened due to the sanctions imposed on the country (Andronik, 2018). Within the population, women's rights often suffer the most from sanctions, as was reported, for example, in the case of Iraq (Drury & Peksen, 2014; Özdamar & Shahin, 2021).

Still, the prevalent focus of the scholarly literature on sanctions does not pay the same degree of attention to their unintended consequences as compared to their effectiveness. In a review of the sanctions effectiveness literature, Peksen (2019, p. 9) highlights that studies have tended to disregard “negative externalities” as a possible impact of targeted and conventional sanctions. Eriksson (2016) further points out that unintended consequences of (UN) sanctions can be negative as well as positive but that a systematic assessment is yet missing (see also Alexseev & Hale, 2020; Eriksson, 2010, p. 161). In a recent essay, Allen et al. (2020) call especially for an exploration into the theoretical drivers of sanctions' unintended consequences. In fact, Biersteker et al. (2016, p. 27) find indications of unintended, negative effects in 94 percent of UN sanctions. These include unintended consequences such as weakening local institutional capacities, strengthening authoritarian rule, or even escalating human rights violations. Such negative externalities have been recognized in the literature. The externalities reported include the rally-round-the-flag effect (Galtung, 1967; Stein, 2003), a worsening of the human rights situations (Allendoerfer et al., 2020; Lopez & Cortright, 1997; Peksen, 2009, 2011), and the strengthening of authoritarian regimes (Grauvogel & von Soest, 2014; Peksen & Drury, 2010). Nonetheless, the literature lacks a systematic and comprehensive assessment of the conditions and their constellations under which such unintended consequences arise from sanctions.

We make a threefold contribution. First, we ask under which conditions sanctions yield unintended consequences. The contribution of our article

therefore is an explicit focus on and systematic analysis of the conditions under which sanctions' unintended consequences arise. While earlier studies tend to investigate specific occurrences of negative externalities often in isolation from each other, our aim is to provide a comprehensive and integrated perspective on sanctions' unintended consequences. Second, we explore the so far scarcely used Targeted Sanctions Consortium (TSC) data on UN sanctions. The TSC data (Biersteker et al., 2018) includes unique information on UN sanctions' unintended consequences which is why our article focuses on UN sanctions only. Third, we depart from the conventional large-N research design and apply set-theoretic methods to study the unintended consequences of UN sanctions. We assume that unintended consequences do not arise from a single cause but that these are influenced by a variety of conditions that work in combination, thus underscoring causal complexity. Likewise, the heterogeneity among the targets of sanctions suggests multiple pathways towards the emergence of unintended consequences. Therefore, we apply the set-theoretic method of qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and develop an integrative framework that takes into account multiple paths and combinations of conditions (Ragin, 2008). Our theoretical account draws on previous conceptualizations of unintended consequences in the context of sanctions research (Daase & Friesendorf, 2010; Eriksson, 2010).

On this basis, and drawing on scholarly advances in sanctions research, we develop an explanatory framework that utilizes five conditions that we expect to have an impact on sanctions' negative externalities: an authoritarian regime; the involvement of international actors like the permanent members of the UN Security Council; the target's integration into the world economy; the scope of a sanction regime; and the duration of sanctioning episode. These conditions are derived from earlier studies on the specific occurrences of sanctions' negative externalities. Our framework includes conditions that reflect the domestic nature of the targeted regime (authoritarian regime), the international context (involvement of international actors), the sender-target relations (integration in world economy), and the type of the sanctions (scope and duration). We complement the QCA with a pair of case illustrations on the sanctions regimes against Haiti and North Korea. We find three empirically important pathways toward sanctions' unintended consequences: (1) comprehensive sanctions with the involvement of a permanent member of the UN Security Council; (2) sanctions that have been in place for a long time; and (3) sanctions regimes against autocratic targets that are not economically isolated.

We proceed by, first, reviewing existing literature on the negative externalities of sanctions. Second, we develop our conceptualization of sanctions' unintended consequences and our theoretical framework to explain their occurrence. In the third section, we introduce our method and data, and

the case selection rationale. Fourth, we explore empirically the combinations of conditions under which sanctions trigger unintended consequences. This is followed by our two case illustrations. In the conclusion, we summarize our findings and reflect on avenues for further research.

Explaining the negative externalities of sanctions

In exploring the conditions under which sanctions trigger negative externalities, we draw on sociological conceptualizations of unintended consequences (Baert, 1991; Merton, 1936) and work on unintended consequences in international relations (Daase & Friesendorf, 2010), which we relate to the literature on targeted sanctions (e.g., Biersteker et al., 2016).

Sanctions as purposive action with (un)intended consequences

We adopt a conceptualization of sanctions as purposeful organized actions by states or international organizations intended to provoke change in a target's behavior in a particular direction (Tostensen & Bull, 2002, p. 374). Like other third-party interferences, sanctions are expected to trigger changes or modifications in political systems (Aoi et al., 2007, p. 6).¹ Yet, next to intended modifications, policy instruments often also incur *unintended consequences*. Hence, among the changes arising from a policy, an unintended consequence is an effect of purposeful action, "which is different from what was wanted at the moment of carrying out the act" (Baert, 1991, p. 201). In other words, unintended consequences refer to gaps or differences between the intended outcomes and the actual outcome (Daase & Friesendorf, 2010, p. 9). However, an unintended consequence does not equate with failure in achieving the intended consequence (Aoi et al., 2007; Daase & Friesendorf, 2010). Rather, we conceive of an unintended consequence as a *side-effect* of an action or policy compared to its actual intention.

Scholars identify both positive and negative unintended consequences (Daase & Friesendorf, 2010, p. 6). While unintended consequences are not necessarily undesirable and can also trigger positive externalities, we restrict our conceptualization to *negative side-effects*. Limiting our focus exclusively to negative side-effects offers the advantage of distinguishing unintended consequences in the target state from the intended positive impacts of sanctions. Hence, we conceive of unintended consequences as negative externalities of sanctions in the domestic politics of a target state.

Sanctions are a likely instrument to trigger unintended consequences. This is because sanctions are directed towards targets of whose domestic institutions senders have only a limited understanding (Daase & Friesendorf,

2010, p. 8). Consequently, unintended consequences are temporally and spatially complex (Daase & Friesendorf, 2010, p. 9). They may arise temporally during a sanction episode as well as beyond; and negative externalities occur for the sender as well as the target and third states. In an attempt to reduce this complexity, we focus on negative unintended consequences that (a) occur temporally within the sanction episode and (b) that affect the target itself. Therefore, we do not consider negative side-effects experienced by the UN, sending or implementing states, or those that are neighbors to the targeted country.

The negative unintended consequences that we explore in this article entail: increases in human rights violations committed by the regime and other negative humanitarian consequences, intensified corruption and criminality in the target country, and a decrease of local institutional capacities and strengthened authoritarian rule (Biersteker et al., 2013). In selecting these dimensions of unintended consequences, we are bound to their availability in the TSC data. We discuss the measurement of these dimensions in our method section below.

Sanctions can yield (un)intended consequences under specific conditions. As Merton (1936, p. 895) theorized, (un)intended consequences result from the interplay between purposive, organized action, on the one hand, and the specific environment in which this action takes place, on the other hand. In other words, we need to investigate the conditions of a particular situation under which actions trigger externalities. The literature on sanctions provides us with a useful starting point to think of the conditions under which sanctions give rise to negative effects (Galtung, 1967; Grauvogel & von Soest, 2014; Peksen & Drury, 2010; Stein, 2003; Wood, 2008).

Conditions for sanctions' unintended consequences

Unintended, negative consequences do not equal the absence of intended consequences (Baert, 1991; Merton, 1936). They can therefore not simply be understood and analyzed as unsuccessful episodes of sanctions, as in the absence of effectiveness. Hence, while the literature on sanctions' effectiveness identified conditions for the successful achievement of *intended* consequences (e.g., Hufbauer et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2014), we would be ill-advised to infer conditions for the unintended, negative effects from this research. In other words, the unintended, negative externalities of sanctions need to be investigated conceptually and empirically in their own right next to the body of research on sanctions' effectiveness (Eriksson, 2010; Peksen, 2019). In developing a theoretical framework for the study of unintended consequences, we draw on scholarly advances in the area of sanctions research.

Empirical studies consistently show that sanctions can incur negative consequences in the form of a rally-round-the-flag effect or strengthened authoritarianism when the target's political system is a relatively stable autocratic regime (Allen, 2008; Galtung, 1967; Kaempfer et al., 2004; Stein, 2003; von Soest & Wahman, 2015; Wood, 2008). Accordingly, sanctions on an autocratic regime often lead to intensified repression by the regime against its own population (Kaempfer et al., 2004; Wood, 2008). Prior studies have identified two mechanisms by which sanctions against autocratic regimes may fortify repression. The first mechanism relates to sanctions' effects on trade: Kaempfer et al. (2004) find that sanctions create hindrances to trade flows. In such situations, autocratic regimes are able to redirect trade flows to their advantage and thereby get privileged access to repressive instruments that they can use against the regime's opponents (see also Escribà-Folch & Wright, 2010; Peksen & Drury, 2010). Similarly, Eriksson (2010) points out that trade restrictions and arms embargoes may privilege specific societal groups over others as recipients of commodities and weaponry.

The second mechanism with regards to autocratic regimes considers the target's population: Scholars theorize and show that when an autocratic regime commands broad public backing or when leaders control the media, sanctions may lead to increased public support for the political system and thus result in more repression of opposition groups (Stein, 2003; Wood, 2008). This can create the adverse rally-round-the-flag effect of strengthening an autocratic regime through sanctions (Galtung, 1967). Some scholars suggest a reverse mechanism (Allen, 2008; Peksen & Drury, 2010) whereby sanctions encourage opposition groups and inflict domestic protests which in turn trigger intensified repression by the target regime. For each of these mechanisms, autocratic regimes create a context conducive to negative externalities arising from sanctions.

It has been suggested that sanctions on autocratic regimes can result in unintended consequences especially when the reason for restrictive measures resides with international crises rather than domestic crises (Stein, 2003). Scholarship shows that autocratic regimes are, under certain circumstances, successful in shifting blame to third-party interventions and their respective consequences to the sender states (Grauvogel & von Soest, 2014; Stein, 2003). As Stein (2003) argues, targeted regimes cannot as easily steer public opinion to their benefit when sanctions by third actors are a response to domestic crises. However, when restrictive measures follow international crises this gives regimes some leeway to shift blame to third parties. As Alexseev and Hale (2020) argue, sanctions give autocratic regimes the chance to blame "a hostile country to cause ... harm" (p. 347). This resonates with Stein's (2003) finding whereby an involvement of the United States in a conflict is a predictor for negative externalities in the target country. An involvement

of international actors like the United States or other permanent members of the UN Security Council can therefore be considered a condition for the emergence of unintended, negative consequences of sanctions.

The combination of the conditions above, thus, suggests that unintended consequences of sanctions arise when autocratic regimes can shift blame to international actors like the United States or other permanent members of the UN Security Council. The underlying assumption is that when targeted by sanctions, autocratic regimes attempt to steer public opinion through blame-shifting and thereby increase repression on opposition groups (Stein, 2003; Wood, 2008). However, unstable autocratic regimes might struggle to effectively manipulate public opinion. Furthermore, in the absence of an international conflict, as in a situation of domestic crisis, a political system cannot as easily shift blame to external actors. Hence, we expect to observe unintended consequences of sanctions where we have the combination of an autocratic regime and the involvement of international actors like the United States.

Two further conditions can foster the occurrence of negative effects following sanctions against autocratic regimes: When ties between the sender of sanctions and the target are weak or when a country is little integrated into the world economy (Grauvogel & von Soest, 2014); and when senders adopt comprehensive embargoes rather than targeted sanctions (Brooks, 2002; Stein, 2003; Wood, 2008). Grauvogel and von Soest (2014) find stronger persistence of authoritarian regimes when these regimes have weak societal and trade ties with the sender of sanctions. When only weak relations between the sender and target exist, the public must rely nearly exclusively on the autocratic regime's narrative related to sanctions. These regimes often portray the sender "as enemies and their sanctions as an unjust imperialist infringement of the country's sovereignty" (Grauvogel & von Soest, 2014, p. 647) resulting in a rally-round-the-flag effect. The stronger the sender-target ties, by contrast, the more channels a third party has at its disposal to communicate an alternative narrative of the sanctions' objectives and thereby ease the rally-round-the-flag effect. Similarly, one may expect that a country's weak integration into the world economy and its isolation is conducive to unintended consequences due to the regime's ability to shape the sanctions narrative. A target's isolation and weak integration into the world economy therefore creates a condition for unintended, negative consequences of sanctions.

Targets are assumed to be able to shift blame to the sender states of sanctions when these adopt comprehensive types of sanctions rather than targeted ones (Stein, 2003; Wood, 2008). Based on this assumption, scholarship expects that targeted sanctions lead to less intensive negative externalities in the target state compared to comprehensive measures (Brooks, 2002; Grossman et al., 2018; Peksen, 2009)—even though recent

findings suggest that economic sanctions can lead to a backlash against the senders as well as to opposition to the targeted regime (Seitz & Zazzaro, 2020). While targeted sanctions are designed in such a way that members of the regime suffer from the restrictions, comprehensive measures are costlier and “spill over” to the general public. This in turn may create a “siege mentality” (Grauvogel & von Soest, 2014, p. 637) and thereby result in negative externalities. At the same time, costly economic sanctions affect the entire public—not only the elites—which in turn may enable the regime to shield its supporting, domestic groups better than opponents and thereby reinforce its powerbase in society (Peksen & Drury, 2010). Similarly, Frye (2019, p. 972) argues that sanctions may allow the targeted regime to shift blame for the public’s economic pain to the sender states. Moreover, Brooks (2002) shows that comprehensive sanctions, when applied to an authoritarian regime, are largely counterproductive because regime leaders redistribute remaining revenues in favor of their supporters. In addition, comprehensive sanctions are likely to have an economic effect on the population at large, thereby resulting in negative externalities in the economic and health sectors (e.g., Allen & Lektzian 2013; Parker et al., 2016). Comprehensive rather than targeted sanction regimes can thus be considered a factor that tends to be associated with unintended consequences. Hence, we take into account the type of sanction as a possible factor for unintended consequences.

At the same time, comprehensive embargoes are costly for the society of the target state. Commercial or financial bans deprive the public from certain goods and likely deteriorate domestic welfare. Hence, we might also expect that the public turns against the political regime and undermines its rule. For this reason, we assume that comprehensive embargoes unfold their explanatory power towards the emergence of unintended consequences only in combination with other conditions. A likely condition under which comprehensive bans trigger unintended consequences in the form of increased repression is the absence of societal links to the sender states and third actors. As argued by Grauvogel and von Soest (2014), the public has to rely on the regime’s narrative of why sanctions occurred when societal links to the sender state(s) are absent or weak. Based on this finding, we expect this condition to trigger unintended consequences especially when the costs of sanctions are high for the targeted state’s public, as when the target is affected by comprehensive restrictions.

Finally, the occurrence of unintended consequences may also be influenced by the duration of the sanctions regime. The effect of a sanction’s duration can be theorized in two directions: some scholars argue that negative externalities arise primarily at the beginning of a sanctions episode (Eriksson, 2016, p. 207; Wood, 2008, p. 496). Wood (2008), for instance,

expects that the public turns against the incumbent when sanctions last long and result in an economic decline. However, in a situation of economic downturn or even an impoverishment following the imposition of sanctions, one may also expect the public to turn against the sender state, rather than the incumbent, which in turn is favorable to the rally-round-the-flag effect or even a strengthened authoritarian regime. Peksen (2009, p. 60), too, finds that the longer sanctions episodes last, the larger their negative externalities are on the population and their human rights situation. This is corroborated by the study of Dizaji and van Bergeijk (2013) who find that the effects of sanctions turn negative over time. Afesorgbor and Mahadevan (2016), too, provide evidence for a severe impact of sanctions on income inequality among the target population especially when restrictions last long (see also Jeong, 2020). Hence, when sanctions have been in place for a sustained period of time, as in many years, or even more than a decade, then this may result in unintended consequences as the impact of sanctions is felt across the target's economy.

In summary, we expect unintended, negative consequences to arise from restrictive measures when actors sanction (a) autocratic regimes, (b) in a situation where a permanent member of the UN Security Council is involved, (c) with comprehensive rather than targeted types of sanctions, (d) where the target is hardly integrated into the world economy, and (e) the sanctions regimes have been in place for a long time.

While all of these factors are conditions under which unintended consequences of sanctions may emerge, we expect such negative externalities primarily in situations where *combinations* of these conditions exist. More specifically, we theorize three possible pathways towards sanctions' unintended consequences. The first pathway rests on the assumption of a target's blame-shifting of the crisis to international actors like the United States. We expect that such as blame-shifting occurs and is successful when an authoritarian regime faces sanctions in a situation of an international crisis where the United States or other permanent members of the UN Security Council are involved. A second possible pathway rests on the assumption that targeted regimes have the authority over the sanctions' costs narrative. The costs of restrictive measures are particularly high when sender states employ comprehensive sanctions. Under the condition of weak, societal target-sender ties, the punished political regime can effectively steer the public narrative in such a way that it will not be blamed by its people for the sanctions' costs. A third plausible pathway concentrates on the duration of a sanctions episode. When episodes of imposed sanctions by outside actors last long and therefore incur an economic downturn in the country or an impoverishment of the people, this may lead to a target society, which turns its back on the sender states. Hence, long-lasting sanctions episodes might themselves give rise to unintended

consequences in the target state. In the subsequent section, we will elaborate on our research strategy in testing these pathways and how we calibrate the respective conditions.

Method and data

Our article applies the method of fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (QCA, Ragin, 2008). Prior research indicates that sanctions are sensitive to context and that there is a complex interplay between various factors in triggering unintended consequences (see also Daase & Friesendorf, 2010, p. 11). This suggests that, rather than separately analyzing the impact of individual factors, it is more fruitful to examine *configurations* of conditions that generate the phenomenon of unintended consequences. QCA is a method that aims at the identification of such “causal complexity” (Ragin, 2008; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012), which entails the notions of *equifinality* and *conjunctural causation*, understood as the existence of multiple paths towards an outcome and the combination of factors to bring about such an outcome. Hence, the method of QCA is ideally suited for our research aim.² While QCA has been established as a systematic comparative approach in the social sciences (Gerring, 2012; Mahoney, 2021; Mello, 2021; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009), it has undergone an evolution of technical sophistication, due to the development of the R software packages “QCA” (Duşa, 2019) and “Set-Methods” (Oana & Schneider, 2018), which allow for the transparent documentation of the results and a recently introduced “robustness test protocol” that we apply in this article (Oana & Schneider, 2021).

We use the fuzzy-set variant of QCA, which enables us to make distinctions in *kind* and *degree*. Accordingly, fuzzy sets can assume any value from 0 to 1. Their calibration, the transformation of raw data into fuzzy sets, requires the specification of three empirical anchors by the researcher. A fuzzy score of 1 reflects full membership in the respective set, whereas a fuzzy score of 0.5 means that a case is at the cross-over between set membership and non-membership. Finally, a fuzzy score of 0 indicates full non-

Table 1. Fuzzy-set calibration of outcome and conditions

Condition	Code	Data	Fully Out	Cross-Over	Fully In
Unintended Consequences (Outcome)	UC	TSC, index (v263, v264, v267, v276, v279)	0.50	0.75	1.25
Autocratic Regime	AR	Polity IV democracy-autocracy scale	5	–1	–6
Economic Isolation	EI	World Bank, trade as % GDP	80	50	40
Large Scope	LS	TSC, index (v122, v132*2, v144*2)	1	2	2.5
Long Duration	LD	TSC (v31)	48	96	144
Permanent Five Involvement	P5	TSC (v2)	0.3	0.4	0.7

membership in the respective set.³ Based on these anchors, the direct method of calibration (Ragin, 2008) uses a logistic function for the transformation of the raw data into fuzzy-set values. Below we elaborate on how we set the anchors and calibrate our conditions. Table 1 summarizes the fuzzy-set calibration criteria for the outcome and the conditions. The appendix further contains descriptive statistics and additional documentation on our conditions and data (Figure A1, Figure A2, Table A5), as well as a summary of various QCA robustness tests that we conducted (Table A1).⁴

Outcome: Unintended consequences

Our conceptualization of *unintended consequences* concentrates on the negative externalities of sanctions. As mentioned above, we focus on five dimensions of negative externalities: (1) increases in corruption and/or criminality, (2) strengthened authoritarian rule, (3) increases in human rights violations, (4) humanitarian consequences, and (5) erosion of local institutional capacities. These five dimensions relate to the variables v263, v264, v267, v276, and v279 of the TSC dataset (Biersteker et al., 2018). The unintended consequences reflect those negative externalities that appear in the respective episode(s) of a sanctions regime (Biersteker et al., 2018).⁵

Across all UN sanctions episodes included in the TSC data, unintended consequences are a significant phenomenon. In total, 94 percent of the sanctions episodes entail unintended consequences of one form or another (Biersteker et al., 2016, p. 27). These cover the full range of unintended side-effects. By contrast, our measure of unintended consequences only entails those dimensions that can be considered *major negative externalities*. Of the five dimensions of unintended consequences that are entailed in our index score, the most common are increases in corruption and criminality (58 percent) and humanitarian consequences (44 percent), followed by strengthened authoritarian rule (35 percent), increases in human rights violations (26 percent), and an erosion of local institutional capacities (8 percent). Table A5 displays the correlation matrix of the five indicators that inform our measure. Covering different dimensions of negative externalities, the indicators are all positively correlated.

To calculate membership in the outcome *unintended consequences*, we aggregate the raw data across the five dimensions and take the average across the respective episodes for each sanctions regime. The calibration uses the following anchors: raw data values equal to or below 0.5 are considered fully outside the set, 0.75 is the cross-over, and values at and above 1.25 are treated as being fully inside the outcome unintended consequences. This means that, in order to be considered inside the outcome set, a sanctions regime must on average show at least one dimension of unintended consequences in more than three quarters of the sanctions episodes. For instance,

the sanctions regime against the Democratic Republic of Congo incurred an average of 1.25 unintended consequences across four sanctions episodes. Given our calibration criteria, this yields a fuzzy-set membership value of 0.95 in the outcome.⁶ Likewise, the three sanctions episodes against North Korea led to an average of unintended consequences in one dimension, resulting in a calibrated score of 0.81 (reflecting a verbal label of being “almost fully in” the outcome set).⁷

Explanatory conditions

The set-theoretic analysis entails five explanatory conditions: *autocratic regime* reflects the nature of the political regime of the target state, using the substantive criteria established in Polity IV’s democracy-autocracy scale (Marshall et al., 2019). Accordingly, values equal to or lower than -6 are considered fully inside the set autocratic regime, whereas -1 is the cross-over, and 5 is considered the threshold for full non-membership. For example, during the four observed sanctions episodes, Angola held an average regime score of -2.64 on the combined polity scale, yielding a fuzzy-set value of 0.72 (which would correspond to being “more in than out” of the target set autocratic regime).

The condition *large scope* indicates the comprehensiveness of a sanctions regime, taking into account the type of sanctions implemented. Drawing on the TSC dataset (Biersteker et al., 2018), we calculate an index score based on sectoral sanctions (v122), commodity sanctions such as petroleum, charcoal or timber (v132), and financial sector sanctions (v144). The latter two types are generally considered the most sweeping kinds of sanctions (Biersteker et al., 2013; Eriksson, 2016), hence we assign them twice as much weight as sectoral sanctions in our aggregated index score. As Figure A1 shows, the empirical data roughly falls into two groups, with a score of 2 as the dividing line. Accordingly, we consider values of 1 and less as fully outside the set large scope, 2 as the cross-over, and 2.5 as being fully inside the set. This means that a case like Liberia, with an average sanctions scope of 2.6 across five sanctions episodes, receives a fuzzy-set membership value of 0.97 in the set large scope (“fully inside” the set).

P5 involvement refers to the involvement of a permanent member of the UN Security Council, either through shared borders with the target state, colonial history, military alliances, patronage, or societal bonds, as measured in the TSC data (v2). For most of the sanctions regimes, this remains stable across the included episodes. Ten out of 18 cases feature P5 involvement throughout the sanctions regime. Based on the empirical distribution of the data (see Figure A1), we use the calibration anchors of 0.3 (fully out), 0.4 (cross-over), and 0.7 (fully in). Hence, the sanctions regime against Libya (2011–2014), with two thirds of the sanctions episodes

seeing P5 involvement (average of 0.67), receives a fuzzy-set value of 0.93 in the target set.

Economic isolation relates to the isolation of the target state from the world economy, as measured by trade as share of the country's overall GDP, drawing on World Bank data from 2019.⁸ This condition serves as a proxy for the absence or presence of ties between the sender of sanctions and the targeted society. For our purposes, the dividing line is 50%, which reflects the global average in trade as share of GDP according to the World Bank data (2019). Hence, our calibration thresholds are 50% for the cross-over, 40% and less for being fully in the set economic isolation, and 80% and higher for being fully outside the set. For example, during the sanctions regime against Sudan (1996–2001), the country's trade as share of GDP was 23.37%, which yields a fuzzy-set membership of 1 in the set economic isolation (reflecting full set membership).

Finally, *long duration* takes into account the length of the respective sanctions regime across all entailed episodes, as indicated in the TSC data (v31). Because the TSC data ends in January 2014, we take this date as the end point of all ongoing sanctions episodes for the calculation of the duration of sanctions regimes. The calibration thresholds are four years (48 months, fully out), eight years (96 months, cross-over), and 12 years (144 months, fully in), which captures the empirical distribution of our data (see Figure A1, Figure A2). This means that a sanctions regime like Haiti (1993–1994), with a duration of merely 10 months, receives a fuzzy-set value of 0.01 in the set long duration (“fully out” of the set).

Case selection

Our case selection includes 18 sanctions regimes, which comprise 55 sanctions episodes from the Targeted Sanctions Consortium (TSC) database (Biersteker et al., 2018). We focus on UN sanctions rather than restrictive measures of the European Union or U.S. sanctions programs due to the systematic account of unintended consequences in the TSC data (Biersteker et al., 2018). While our focus on UN sanctions is primarily due to reasons of data availability, we believe that UN sanctions to some degree constitute a least likely case for negative externalities to arise. This is because the imposition of UN sanctions relies on a consensus of the international community and the UN is relatively attentive to the humanitarian consequences of sanctions (Heupel, 2013). For reasons of incomplete data, we excluded the regimes against Al-Qaida, Ethiopia-Eritrea, Iraq, and the Taliban. These five regimes amount to eight sanctions episodes in the TSC dataset. Finally, rather than analyzing separate episodes as if these were independent cases, we decided to examine each sanctions regime as a whole, aggregating the data from the episode level. The data includes sanctions regimes between

Table 2. Sanctions regimes and calibrated fuzzy-set values

Case/Sanctions Regime	Autocratic Regime	Economic Isolation	Large Scope	Long Duration	UNSC P5 Involv.	Unintended Consequences (<i>Outcome</i>)
Angola, 1993–2002	0.72	0.00	1.00	0.70	1.00	1.00
Central African Rep., 2013–2014	0.38	0.97	0.05	0.00	1.00	0.00
Côte d'Ivoire, 2004–2014	0.25	0.02	0.76	0.69	1.00	0.99
Dem. Rep. of Congo, 2003–14	0.08	0.15	0.05	0.86	0.00	0.95
Form. Rep. of Yugoslavia, 1991–92	0.68	0.03	0.05	0.00	0.73	1.00
Guinea-Bissau, 2012–2014	0.27	0.93	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
Haiti, 1993–1994	0.90	0.77	1.00	0.01	1.00	1.00
Iran, 2006–2014	0.96	0.66	0.19	0.32	1.00	0.05
Lebanon, 2005–2014	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.53	1.00	0.00
Liberia, 1992–2014	0.17	0.00	0.97	1.00	0.00	1.00
Libya 1, 1992–2003	0.97	0.38	0.05	0.93	1.00	1.00
Libya 2, 2011–2014	0.38	0.01	1.00	0.02	0.93	1.00
North Korea, 2006–2014	1.00	0.27	1.00	0.35	1.00	0.81
Rwanda, 1994–2008	0.92	0.91	0.05	0.99	1.00	0.05
Sierra Leone, 1997–2010	0.22	0.95	0.76	0.97	0.00	1.00
Somalia, 1992–2014	0.24	0.00	0.76	1.00	1.00	0.93
Sudan 1, 1996–2001	0.97	1.00	0.01	0.13	0.00	0.00
Sudan 2, 2004–2014	0.87	0.98	0.05	0.74	0.00	0.00

1991 and 2014. [Table 2](#) summarizes the cases and calibrated fuzzy-set data. The table provides an overview of the sanctions' regimes set membership scores in the conditions under scrutiny and the outcome of our study: those with set-theoretic membership scores above 0.50 are considered "rather inside" the respective fuzzy set; those with scores below 0.50 are considered "rather outside"; whereas 1 indicates full set membership and 0 refers to full set non-membership (see Ragin, 2008).

Of the included cases, 11 show negative externalities in our observed dimensions, indicated by fuzzy-set values higher than 0.5 in the outcome. These are Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Former Yugoslavia, Haiti, Liberia, Libya 1 (1992–2004) and Libya 2 (2011–2014), North Korea, Sierra Leone, and Somalia. The remaining cases either show few unintended consequences (Iran and Rwanda) or they show none across the observed episodes (Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Lebanon, Sudan 1 and Sudan 2).

Table 3. Analysis of necessary conditions (outcome unintended consequences)

Condition	Presence of Condition			Absence of Condition		
	Consistency	Coverage	Relevance	Consistency	Coverage	Relevance
Autocratic Regime	0.512	0.551	0.640	0.508	0.686	0.800
Large Scope	0.678	0.943	0.959	0.343	0.361	0.542
P5 Involvement	0.695	0.642	0.603	0.305	0.519	0.793
Economic Isolation	0.249	0.333	0.649	0.784	0.849	0.843
Long Duration	0.609	0.709	0.765	0.420	0.518	0.687

Set-theoretic analysis

The first step in the set-theoretic analysis is the analysis of *necessary conditions*. The results are shown in Table 3. As can be seen from the table, none of the entailed conditions (in its presence or absence) passes the standard benchmark of 0.90 consistency to be considered a necessary condition for the occurrence of unintended consequences (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 143).⁹ From the perspective of the reviewed literature and our theoretical framework, it is plausible that none of the conditions we tested identifies as a necessary condition. This is because prior research and our theorizing suggests unintended consequences to arise under various circumstances and not to require the occurrence of what could be perceived as a specific enabling condition.

The next step in the set-theoretic analysis entails the construction of the truth table and its minimization through Boolean algebra.¹⁰ Table 4 shows the truth table for the outcome *unintended consequences* and the five

Table 4. Truth table for the outcome unintended consequences

Condition					Outcome		Consistency	PRI	Cases
AR	LS	P5	EI	LD	UC	N			
0	1	1	0	1	1	2	1.000	1.000	Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia
0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0.980	0.979	Libya 2
0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0.979	0.978	Liberia
0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0.969	0.967	Democratic Republic of Congo
0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0.932	0.928	Sierra Leone
1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0.925	0.906	Angola
1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0.921	0.910	North Korea
1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0.864	0.833	Haiti
1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0.779	0.750	Libya 1
1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0.750	0.737	Former Republic of Yugoslavia
0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0.517	0.434	Lebanon
1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0.303	0.253	Rwanda
1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0.254	0.221	Sudan 2
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.183	0.144	Guinea-Bissau
0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0.169	0.099	Central African Republic
1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0.151	0.098	Iran
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.091	0.060	Sudan 1

Note: AR = Autocratic Regime, LS = Large Scope, P5 = UNSC Permanent Five Involvement, EI = Economic Isolation, LD = Long Duration, UC = Unintended Consequences, bold cases hold membership >0.50 in the outcome, logical remainder rows are omitted for presentational purposes.

explanatory conditions *autocratic regime*, *large scope*, *P5 involvement*, *economic isolation*, and *long duration*. With five conditions, the truth table entails $2^5 = 32$ rows. Our table displays the 17 rows that are filled with empirical cases, omitting *logical remainders* (rows without cases that hold membership above 0.50 in the respective configuration; these are shown in the appendix). Logical remainders can be used for counterfactual analyses when incorporated into the minimization (for a discussion of this procedure, see Mello, 2021, p. 143). While the parsimonious solution is created by the minimization algorithm, the intermediate solution rests on researcher input, aiming to include only those logical remainder rows as counterfactuals, which “are consistent with theoretical and substantive knowledge” (Ragin, 2009, p. 118).

The “consistency” column reflects the degree to which a row is formally sufficient for the outcome (1 indicating perfect consistency). This metric is complemented by “PRI” (which stands for “proportional reduction in inconsistency”), a measure that can highlight ambiguous subset relations when the parameter is substantially below the consistency value (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Cases are listed on the right-hand side of Table 4. Bold print indicates sanctions regimes that are rather inside the outcome (set membership above 0.5). Our analysis applies the standard consistency threshold of 0.75, which effectively includes the top ten rows in the Boolean minimization, starting with the configuration in Row 1, which is shared by Côte d’Ivoire and Somalia, down to Former Yugoslavia in Row 10. Cases printed in bold are those that hold membership in the outcome unintended consequences. As can be seen from the table, all these “positive cases” are located in the top ten rows and there is no “deviant case” that shares a configuration with the positive cases, but which does not show the outcome.

The final step in the analysis entails the minimization of the truth table, which is done via the R package “QCA” (Duşa, 2019). Table 5 shows the *intermediate solution* for the outcome unintended consequences. To guard against unwarranted assumptions, we decided to exclude all logical remainders that contained no more than a single condition directed towards the outcome. In other words, we decided to treat all logical remainder rows that contain *at least two* conditions that are directed towards the outcome as “plausible counterfactuals” (Mello, 2021, p. 136). Effectively, this means that, in contrast to the parsimonious solution, the intermediate solution excludes four out of 15 logical remainder rows from the minimization. Table A2 in the appendix indicates both the excluded logical remainders and those that were used as simplifying assumptions and thus treated as plausible counterfactuals.

The solution comprises three alternative paths towards unintended consequences. Our notation follows standard practice, in that black circles reflect the presence of a condition and crossed-out circles indicate the

Table 5. Solution for the outcome unintended consequences

	Intermediate Solution Term		
	Path 1	Path 2	Path 3
Autocratic Regime		⊗	●
Large Scope	●		
P5 Involvement	●	⊗	●
Economic Isolation			⊗
Long Duration		●	
Consistency	0.94	0.94	0.91
PRI	0.93	0.94	0.90
Raw Coverage	0.51	0.23	0.37
Unique Coverage	0.25	0.23	0.11
Covered Cases /Uniquely Covered Cases (Bold)	Libya 2 Côte d'Ivoire Somalia North Korea Angola Haiti	DR Congo Liberia Sierra Leone	Former Yugoslavia Libya 1 North Korea Angola
Solution Consistency	0.92		
Solution PRI	0.92		
Solution Coverage	0.85		
Model (Total)	M1 (1)		

Note: Black circles indicate the presence of a condition, crossed-out circles its absence.

absence of the respective condition. We can thus see that there are three distinct configurations in the solution, with some empirical overlap between Path 1 and Path 3. The bottom of the table lists case membership in the respective paths, with uniquely covered cases printed in bold. The intermediate solution has an overall consistency of 0.92 and a coverage of 0.85. This means that the described paths provide for a highly consistent account and they cover nearly the entire set-membership values for the outcome. Moreover, all the cases that show unintended consequences are accounted for with this solution. We further performed the recently introduced “robustness test protocol” for QCA (Oana & Schneider, 2021), using several test models with varying calibrations and consistency thresholds (see Table A1). These tests confirm that our results are robust, from both case-oriented and fit-oriented perspectives.

Path 1 entails the combination of *large scope* and *P5 involvement*. In other words, this relates to sanctions regimes that are rather comprehensive—entailing combinations of sectoral sanctions, commodity sanctions, and/or financial sector sanctions—plus the involvement of one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council. The cases that are uniquely covered by this configuration are Libya 2 (2011–2014), Côte d’Ivoire, Somalia, and Haiti. Below, we address the case of Haiti in more detail. To take another example, in Libya, sectoral and financial sanctions became effective in March 2011, amidst the Gaddafi regime’s violent backlash against large-scale demonstrations. Six months later, these were amplified with

commodity sanctions. During these sanction episodes, all five dimensions of unintended consequences were recorded (Biersteker et al., 2016).

Path 2 contains the absence of both an *autocratic regime* and *P5 involvement*, combined with a *long duration* of the respective sanctions regime—exceeding two years in length. This applies uniquely to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. These countries witnessed some of the longest-lasting UN sanctions with durations of ten years and more. For instance, the sanctions against Sierra Leone were lifted in 2014, after 13 years of sectoral sanctions and, partially, commodity sanctions, which coincided with three dimensions of unintended consequences, namely increases in corruption and criminality, human rights violations, and negative humanitarian consequences (Biersteker et al., 2016).

Finally, Path 3 combines an *autocratic regime*, *P5 involvement*, and the absence of *economic isolation*. This configuration is found uniquely in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia and Libya 1 (1992–2003). As we can see from the table, Path 1 and Path 3 are not mutually exclusive, as North Korea and Angola hold membership in both, while Path 2 comprises a distinct configuration with three uniquely covered cases. In our case illustration below, we provide a discussion of the North Korean case.

Four findings can be derived from the set-theoretic analysis. First, as expected from the discussion in our theory section, large scope sanctions and P5 involvement are both part of combinations of conditions that lead towards the outcome (Path 1 and Path 3)—even though Path 2 shows that unintended consequences can also occur in the absence of P5 involvement. However, we expected large scope sanctions to lead to unintended consequences in combination with a target's economic isolation (the second theorized pathway). Empirically though, we observe the joint occurrence of comprehensive sanctions and P5 involvement as triggering negative externalities, among others in the UN sanctions episodes on Libya 2 (2011–2014), Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia, and Haiti (Table 5, Path 1). This suggests that unintended consequences emerge in the target state when sanctions are particularly costly for the economy and when, at the same time, the sanctions arise out of an international rather than a domestic crisis. Indeed, in his research on the impact of sanctions on human rights, Peksen (2009) finds a corresponding effect whereby comprehensive, economic sanctions in combination with a multilateral coalition of sender states have the greatest repercussions on citizens' physical integrity. Hence, our empirical finding corresponds to effects found in earlier studies.

Second, and as expected in our theoretical section, autocratic regimes and long duration are both also part of combinations that are associated with the outcome (Path 2 and Path 3). Path 2 rests on the long duration of a sanctions regime and it therefore resonates with our third theorized pathway. Yet, long-lasting sanctions regimes trigger negative externalities only when

these are not aimed at autocratic targets and when there is no P5 involvement. Hence, as already pointed out above, the configuration in Path 2 shows that unintended consequences can occur also in the absence of an autocratic regime and in the absence of an international crisis (measured by P5 involvement). The empirical Path 3 reinforces our theoretically expected constellation of an autocratic regime and P5 involvement, which leads to unintended consequences (theorized first pathway). Notably, this combination of conditions only triggers negative externalities of sanctions when the target country is not economically isolated.

Finally, particularly regarding economic isolation we should underscore that the condition does not appear in any of the solution paths, but only its absence is part of Path 3. This contrasts with our theoretical expectation that a disconnection from the world economy is linked to unintended consequences. Theoretically, we would have expected that a weak integration into the world economy is conducive to a narrative of the sanctions favorable to the targeted regime, thereby leading to negative externalities (Grauvogel & von Soest, 2014). One reason for the absence of economic isolation to result in unintended consequences might be that the sanctions in place do not impose crucial costs on the regime (Allen, 2005) and that targeted leaders can therefore redirect trade channels to their advantage (Brooks, 2002). This also resonates with the finding that sanctions tend to be more effective the stronger the trade linkage is between sender and target (Hufbauer et al., 2009, p. 90).

Case illustrations

In this section, we seek to exemplify two empirical paths towards unintended consequences. Based on our analytical results (Table 5), we selected the cases of *Haiti* (1993–1994) and *North Korea* (2006–2014) to illustrate two distinctive forms of unintended consequences. Besides illustrating configurations found in Path 1 and Path 3 of our QCA analysis, we chose these two sanctions cases also for reasons of data availability. The two cases are well documented by public commentary and scholarly research and the availability of detailed information on the respective sanctions and their impact allows us to trace the sanctions' respective unintended consequences. Given scope restrictions, our focus rests on characterizing the linkage between the explanatory conditions and unintended consequences, rather than providing full accounts of these distinct cases.

Path 1 rests on comprehensive UN sanctions in combination with P5 involvement, which triggers negative externalities in the target state. One of the uniquely covered cases is Haiti, which experienced sectoral and commodity restrictions—comprehensive sanctions according to our understanding in this article—imposed by an international coalition of states, including

the UN Security Council, in 1993 and 1994 (UN Resolution 841 1993). The sanctions were a response to the military coup in 1991 ousting the previously elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide (Gibbons & Garfield, 1999, UN Resolution 84 1993). The imposed sanctions affected Haiti as the poorest country in the “Western hemisphere” (Swindells, 1996, p. 1907). It was in this context that the comprehensive sanctions by the UN and the international community hit the country particularly hard. As a result of the measures, unintended humanitarian consequences and negative externalities were widely observed by scholars and practitioners (Farmer et al., 2003; Gibbons & Garfield, 1999; Swindells, 1996).

Negative externalities in the form of humanitarian consequences and repercussions on the Haitian population were indeed severe (Swindells, 1996). On average, and based on the TSC data (Biersteker et al., 2018), Haiti experienced more than three dimensions of unintended consequences across the sanctions episodes. Consequently, in our study, Haiti is clearly among the cases characterized by unintended consequences. These were largely felt among the Haitian population, which suffered from negative externalities in respect to the humanitarian situation, health, education, employment, and the environment (Farmer et al., 2003; Gibbons & Garfield, 1999; Swindells, 1996; von Einsiedel & Malone, 2006). On a humanitarian and health level, the population’s life expectancy decreased to age 49 after the sanctions had been imposed (Farmer et al., 2003). Due to the sanctions, malnutrition and epidemics spread across the country mostly because the restrictions led to a lack of seeds and portable water as well as to decreased capacities to refrigerate vaccination serums (Swindells, 1996). The sanctions also had negative effects on the economy and employment as Haiti’s exports of agricultural products dropped; unemployment increased, and at the same time prices for imports rose dramatically (Gibbons & Garfield, 1999; Swindells, 1996). Even the environment suffered from the sanctions as the population resorted to logging wood to substitute the lack of fuel due to the hard restrictions on petroleum exports to Haiti (Swindells, 1996). The severe consequences of the sanctions, hence, confirm the observation of previous studies that comprehensive restrictions result in humanitarian suffering (Peksen, 2009).

Our QCA analysis suggests the comprehensive scope of UN sanctions in combination with the involvement of international actors like a P5 member to trigger unintended consequences. When tracing the negative externalities of the UN sanctions under Resolution 841 on Haiti scholars, in fact, point to the comprehensive restrictions, which were even tightened over the course of the sanctions episode, and the international coalition of sanctions senders, which resulted in severe repercussions for the Haitian population.

First, the UN sanctions represented as Swindells (1996) denotes a “culmination of ... foreign policy calculations on the part of the United Nations, the

US, and the international donor community at large” (p. 1880). UN activities were preceded and accompanied by sanctions adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS) and its members, including the United States, as a P5 member. Immediately after the military coup in 1991, the Foreign Ministers of the OAS members condemned the ousting of President Aristide and recommended the suspension of economic, financial, and commercial ties with Haiti as well as aid and technical cooperation (OAS MRE/RES. 1/91 1991). The UN, in turn, urged its member states to consider the measures as recommended by the OAS in Resolution MRE/RES. 1/91 (1991) (Berenson, 1996, p. 14). In Resolution MRE/Res. 3/92 (1992), the OAS moved on to request a tightened trade embargo and further measures. In its endeavors, the OAS was assisted by the United States as one of its member states, and it acknowledged the support of the European Economic Community such as France or the United Kingdom—all of which are P5 members of the UN Security Council. The UN and the OAS worked in unison when they called for and imposed sanctions: the OAS requested help from the UN, and the UN, in turn, asked its member states to comply with the measures (Berenson, 1996, p. 17), so that the OAS was an active partner when the UN imposed sanctions in 1993. In addition, the UN had the backing and was even urged to impose tougher sanctions by the United States and France, two P5 members (Berenson, 1996, p. 19). Particularly the United States put strong pressure on the UN, and, upon this American request, the UN expanded and strengthened the sanctions in 1994 in Resolution 917 (Berenson, 1996, p. 23; von Einsiedel & Malone, 2006). We therefore observe a strong involvement of international actors and of the United States and France as P5 members in the conflict in Haiti.

Second, the restrictions imposed by the UN were comprehensive in type with an expanding scope over the years (Berenson, 1996; Swindells, 1996) and they were accompanied by further activities. From 1991 to 1994, Haiti faced sanctions by the UN, the OAS, diplomatic measures, monitoring activities, and even a military intervention (Berenson, 1996; Swindells, 1996). While the UN in its initial Resolution 841 (1993) limited the restrictions to an asset freeze and an export ban on petroleum products, military equipment and related materials, it expanded and tightened the sanctions in 1994. In particular, the UN Security Council widened the embargo to an export and import ban on any products (with few exceptions such as medical goods); a prohibition of air transport to and from Haiti; travel bans on regime-related persons; asset freezes; and a comprehensive traffic ban in and out of the country (Resolution 917 1994). In setting up such a comprehensive sanctions regime, the UN acted upon the recommendation and earlier requests by the OAS as well as pressure exerted by the US (Berenson, 1996; von Einsiedel & Malone, 2006). The United States, in particular, emerged as a strict partner in implementing the sanctions with a rigid

interpretation of what the exemption of humanitarian assistance in Resolution 917 (1994) would have allowed for (Swindells, 1996). It was this combination of a comprehensive regime and the application by the entire international community (except for the Dominican Republic), which turned the sanctions into severe restrictions with broad unintended consequences for Haiti. This empirical finding suggests a mechanism according to which the target country is cut off from trade and humanitarian assistance due to a large scope of sanctions and the involvement of a broad range of international actors.

While Path 1 yields unintended consequences through the combination of comprehensive sanctions and P5 involvement, Path 3 comprises an autocratic regime that is not economically isolated, in combination with P5 involvement in the conflict or the sanctions. One case that fits this pattern and in which we observe negative, unintended consequences is *North Korea* (2006–2014). Even though the country is not uniquely covered by Path 3, empirical evidence suggests that the combination of the regime's autocratic structures, the involvement of international actors like the United States, and the existence of North Korea's trade ties with China fortify negative externalities of the UN's restrictions.

Sanctions on North Korea are manifold and have been adopted through several resolutions since 2006: Resolution 1718 (2006) was the first to specify measures and these were further expanded until 2017. The UN sanctions regime constitutes a reaction to North Korean missile tests and its nuclear weapons program (Frank, 2018; Noland, 2009; Weissman & Hagström, 2016). In its Resolution 1718 (2006), the UN Security Council unanimously condemned North Korea's nuclear weapon test and imposed sanctions in an endeavour to coerce the regime into multilateral talks over and a stop to its nuclear proliferation. The sanctions were tightened gradually over several years due to North Korea's uncompliant behaviour (Frank, 2018): Resolution 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087, 2094 (2013), 2270, 2321 (2016), 2371, 2375, and 2397 (2017). In a series of statements and resolutions, the UN Security Council, thus, continuously condemned North Korea's nuclear armament and called for its compliance with the adopted resolutions. The sanctions that the UN imposed include an embargo on arms and related materials, an export and network ban on proliferation equipment, an inspection of transportation to and from the country, an asset freeze, a travel ban, financial restrictions, a ban on North Korean workers abroad, and several further sectoral or services restrictions. The sanctions against North Korea are the most extensive ones among UN sanctions programs (Biersteker & Hudáková, 2021). North Korea rejected the sanctions outright and called the UN Security Council and its actions "gangster-like" (Resolution 1718, 2006).

One particular unintended consequence of the far-reaching sanctions against North Korea is what is perceived as a strengthening of its autocratic regime (Park, 2014; Park & Walsh, 2016). Scholarship further documents unintended consequences in the form of corruption, a strengthened procurement network, and intensified trade relations with China (Noland, 2009; Park, 2014; Park & Walsh, 2016). According to the TSC data (Biersteker et al., 2018), the country experienced on average unintended consequences in one dimension across the three sanctions episodes. Compared to Haiti, however, scholars are primarily concerned with unintended consequences in the form of a strengthened regime and economy rather than with the humanitarian situation. Frank (2018, p. 10) even has the impression that there is no obvious scarcity of goods observable for the population in North Korea. To the contrary, studies point out how North Korea's trade ties with China and its nuclear program continue to grow despite the UN sanctions (Noland, 2009; Park, 2014). Noland (2009), for example, provides evidence for continuing trade flows between China and North Korea in spite of the UN restrictions. Park (2014) and Park and Walsh (2016) in their investigations show how this intensified China-North Korea trade arises out of strengthened procurement networks between the two countries that are a direct, unintended consequence of the UN sanctions. Because North Korea's economic ties to the international community are cut off, the regime and its state-related trade companies concentrate on China. In this context, the regime managed to professionalize its procurement network and enhance its capabilities (Park & Walsh, 2016). Hence, North Korean state trading companies emerged strengthened from the UN sanctions (Park, 2014; Park & Walsh, 2016). In addition, North Korea improved its revenue sources through sending workers to China, established illicit networks with organizations in Syria and Russia, and the UN sanctions fostered corruption (Park & Walsh, 2016). Observers argue that through foreign trade channels with China and an economy redirected to domestic consumption North Korea managed to become independent and invulnerable to the sanctions' impact (Barannikova, 2019).

The negative, unintended consequences we observe in the North Korean case reflect the theorized combination of a stable autocratic regime together with P5 involvement, which triggers a strengthened authoritarian state through an active management of trade flows. As the literature on sanctions has shown (e.g., Kaempfer et al., 2004), stable autocratic regimes are able to redirect and manage trade flows to their benefit in situations of sanctions by the international community. This is exactly what we observe in the case of North Korea where the regime expanded its economic and procurement capabilities by redirecting its trade flows to its primary partner China (Noland, 2009; Park, 2014; Park & Walsh, 2016). As expected theoretically and as our QCA analysis suggests, this favourable management of North

Korean trade flows happened in a context of an autocratic regime and an active involvement of international actors and P5 members like the United States through the adoption of additional, unilateral sanctions (Frank, 2018). At the same time, the international community arguably cut off ties to North Korea through the UN sanctions, but the country was and is not fully isolated through its trade ties with China (Noland, 2009).

As some scholars and observers argue, UN sanctions imposed on North Korea are ineffective and, on top, North Korea emerged economically and politically strengthened out of the sanctions (e.g., Barannikova, 2019; Park & Walsh, 2016). Indeed, as documented above, North Korea managed to improve its trade relations with China and it developed nuclear power (Barannikova, 2019). UN sanctions were, thus, overall unsuccessful to coerce North Korea into compliance with its resolutions and they led to unintended consequences in the form of a strengthened political and economic regime. Still, as Biersteker and Hudáková (2021) argue, the UN sanctions were and are important in order to signal the international norm of non-proliferation. In its various resolutions, the UN Security Council made it clear that North Korea's nuclear armament is unacceptable to the international community (Biersteker & Hudáková, 2021).

Conclusion

UN sanctions are a potentially powerful instrument to tackle challenges to international peace and security, also because they constitute an alternative to the use of military force. While most existing work focuses on questions of whether and when restrictions are effective, our article departs from these research aims by looking explicitly and systematically at the unintended consequences of UN sanctions and especially the conditions under which they arise. Picking up on recent contributions' calls to investigate the negative externalities of sanctions (Allen et al., 2020; Peksen, 2019), and drawing on scholarly advances in sanctions research, we develop an explanatory framework to account for the conditions under which unintended consequences occur.

Our results show that there are multiple pathways towards unintended consequences, documenting a complex interplay of conditions. Of these, the empirically most important pathways consist of (1) comprehensive sanctions with the involvement of a permanent member of the UN Security Council, (2) sanctions that have been in place for a long time (eight years and more), without P5 involvement, and not directed against autocratic regimes, and (3) sanctions regimes against autocratic targets that are not economically isolated, with P5 involvement. These results thus resonate with the expectations formulated in our theory. This applies foremost to the negative impact of comprehensive sanctions and those of long duration,

as well as the involvement of P5 members, which are often instrumentalized by target states to shift blame and attention from the domestic regime. The latter applies chiefly to autocratic regimes that are not economically isolated. In this respect, our findings confirm earlier studies discussing the role of sanctions' types, the involvement of international actors, and the target's regime type as driving forces of unintended consequences. Our study delivers a unique and new insight into how these conditions play together in producing adverse effects of sanctions.

We complemented our QCA analysis with a closer examination of unintended consequences as a result of the sanctions regimes against Haiti (1993–1994) and North Korea (2006–2014). These cases illustrate how comprehensive, namely sectoral and commodity sanctions combined with a broad involvement of international actors can impair the humanitarian and economic situation (Haiti) and how sanctions against stable autocratic targets, together with P5 involvement, can lead to an unintended strengthening of authoritarian regimes (North Korea).

We see our study as a starting point for systematically investigating the drivers of sanctions' unintended consequences and observe a twofold need for further research. First, as evident from the variation on the outcome of unintended consequences and our case illustrations, a nuanced understanding of sanctions' negative externalities is crucial to future empirical analyses. We provided a fine-grained measure of unintended consequences through an index that we constructed, and more research should be done to investigate the different nuances of sanctions' negative side-effects, albeit in a systematic fashion. Second, as theoretically expected, multiple pathways exist in explaining the occurrence of sanctions' unintended consequences. Our empirics document three such pathways and a promising avenue for future research would be to assess the external validity of our findings by investigating the extent to which these paths hold in the context of other sanction senders, including the European Union and the United States.

Notes

1. Our conceptualization assumes that sanctions seek to constrain a target's behavior or coerce it in an endeavor to impose a certain kind of behavior. Broader definitions of sanctions further include signalling as a purpose distinct from coercion and constraint (Giumelli, 2011). Yet, even for sanctions that are limited to signalling, we cannot assume the disappearance of unintended consequences.
2. The affinity between sanctions research and QCA shows in a growing number of studies that apply this method (e.g. Boogaerts, 2018; Boogaerts & Drieskens, 2020; Giumelli, 2011; Grauvogel & von Soest, 2014; Portela, 2010). For a comprehensive survey of empirical QCA applications in international relations, see Ide and Mello (2022).

3. For a technical account of the calibration procedure, see Ragin (2008, Ch. 5).
4. Table A1 summarizes our robustness test results, based on the protocol by Oana and Schneider (2021). The overall fit-oriented and case-oriented robustness parameters indicate that our results are not sensitive to changes in the calibration. This is also reflected in the broad sensitivity ranges for most of the individual conditions and the outcome. For the condition Economic Isolation, the ranges are more circumscribed towards the full inclusion and cross-over anchors. Given the substantive meaning of the underlying concept and the empirical distribution of our data (see Figure A1 and Figure A2), we deem the position of our anchors sensible to distinguish between countries that are rather economically isolated and those that are not.
5. As specified in the TSC terms of reference (Biersteker et al., 2018).
6. Since the mathematical transformation rests on a logistic function, full set-membership equals 0.95 (see Ragin, 2008, Ch. 5). Values of 1 are the result of rounding to two digits.
7. To measure the robustness of our results, we also tested a more restrictive calibration of the outcome, considering cases fully inside the set only when two or more dimensions were present across sanctions episodes. As summarized in Table A1, the results remained robust irrespective of such changes in the calibration.
8. The World Bank data can be accessed at: <https://data.worldbank.org/> (February 4, 2022).
9. The measures of coverage and relevance of necessity are only meaningful once consistency passes the 0.90 threshold.
10. Our analysis focuses on the outcome (the occurrence of unintended consequences). In line with good QCA research practice (Mello, 2021, p. 71), Table A4 also documents the results for the analysis of the non-outcome.

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