



**Maynooth
University**
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Managing United States Sanctions: The emergence of a “resistance model” in Iran and Venezuela?

A thesis submitted by Ali Asghar Ghareh Daghi for the degree of
Philosophiae Doctor Degree (PhD).

Maynooth University, Ireland

Department of Sociology

Date of Submission October 2025

Head of Department: Prof. Seán Ó Riain

Primary Supervisor: Dr. Barry Cannon

Secondary Supervisor: Prof. G. Honor Fagan

This thesis has been prepared in accordance with the PhD regulations of Maynooth University and is subject to copyright. For more information see PhD Regulations (December 2022).



Funded by:

John and Pat Hume Doctoral Scholarships (2021-2023)

Irish Research Council Scholarship (2023-2025)

Acknowledgments:

To my supervisor, Barry, I offer my heartfelt gratitude for your remarkable guidance, dedication, and unwavering support throughout these four years. Your supervision has been transformative—you helped me find my own voice, something that changed not only the course of my research but also the course of my life. To Honor Fagan, our friendly chats in the department always lifted my energy, and your thoughtful review of my first draft made my thesis far stronger and more refined. To Francisco R. Rodríguez, thank you for generously sharing your network in Venezuela and helping make my fieldwork so much smoother and richer. I am also thankful to my Iranian and non-Iranian friends in Ireland, whose companionship gave me strength and energy through the difficult moments. To Yibiskay, whose warm and comfortable apartment in Caracas became my home away from home—thank you for making fieldwork feel so much more enjoyable. To Mercedes, a truly kind and caring soul who treated me like a son during my stay in Caracas—thank you for your generosity, affection, and your delicious food. To Seán O’Riain, thank you for your help during the thesis submission process, and to the administrative team, Trish, Aine, and Darien, who were so helpful for me from the first day of my stay in department. My gratitude also goes to Maynooth University for the John & Pat Hume Doctoral Award, which gave me the opportunity to start my studies at Maynooth University, and to the Irish Research Council, whose generous funding covered my living expenses and fieldwork. Without your support, this journey would have been difficult. To everyone in the Research and Development Office (RDO), thank you for your patience and for always helping me navigate the financial paperwork. To the amazing people I met in Iran and Venezuela—our conversations inspired many of the ideas in this thesis. Your voices, insights, and courage are woven throughout these pages. I am deeply proud of you all.

Finally, to my family members—I cannot find words that do justice to my gratitude. Though you were far away physically, you were always close in my heart and mind. Your love and support were beyond imagination. I dedicate this thesis to you—with all my love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Index of tables and figures.....	viii
Glossaries.....	ix
Summary.....	x
Chapter 1: Sanctions malaise: How we get here and what lies ahead.	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Defining the term “Sanctions”	4
1.2.1 Primary Sanctions	5
1.2.2 Secondary Sanctions	6
1.3 The Theories on Sanctions	7
1.3.1 Classical Liberalism	7
1.3.2 Inverted Liberalism	8
1.3.3 Realist View of Sanctions	9
1.3.4 Public Choice Theory (PCT)	11
1.3.5 Institutional Approach.....	12
1.4 Sanctions Malaise.....	14
1.4.1 The Interplay of Sanctions Theories in Iraq’s Sanctions Regime	14
1.4.2 The Interplay of Sanctions Theories in Cuba’s Sanctions Regime	17
1.5 Towards a Target-Centred Standpoint.....	18
Chapter 2: Target-Centred Lens: New Approach Towards Sanctions Framework.....	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 From Problem-Solving to Critical Theory	24
2.2.1 Weber’s Approach on Social and Economic Organisation	26
2.2.2 Mann’s Theory of Social Power	31
2.2.3 Cox’s Configuration of Structure.....	34
2.3 Towards a Target-centred Lens	36
2.3.1 Applying the Framework To Iran and Venezuela	38
2.3.2 The Lagrangian Function	39
2.4 How the Lagrangian Function Operates	41
2.5 Conclusion.....	43
Chapter 3: Methodology	45
3.1 Introduction	45
3.2 Case Selection	46
3.3 Research design: QCA under GT approach	48
3.3.1 Ethnography as the main research method.....	51

3.4 Fieldwork Methods Employed to Collect Data.....	59
3.4.1 Interviewing.....	59
3.4.2 Observation	60
3.4.3 Diaries.....	62
3.5 Itemising Data Under Variables.....	62
3.5.1 Production	63
3.5.2 Solidarity.....	63
3.5.3 Institution.....	64
3.6 Thematic Analysis	64
3.7 Content Analysis.....	66
3.8 Limitations of Data	66
3.9 Conclusion.....	69
Chapter 4: From Pahlavi to Islamic Republic: Power Dynamics in a Shifting Sociopolitical Iranian Context.....	70
4.1 Introduction	70
4.2 Rationale for employing the IEMP	71
4.3 Pahlavi Monarchy and Power Dynamics (1925-1979).....	72
4.3.1 Nationalism: Ideological Foundation of the Pahlavi Regime	73
4.3.2 Infrastructure Expansion vs. Limited Industrial Diversification	74
4.3.3 Weapons for Oil: US Control of Pahlavi's Military Forces.....	76
4.3.4 Patrimonial Power and the Rise of Totalitarian Pahlavi.....	77
4.4 Post-Revolutionary Iran and Power Dynamics	79
4.4.1 Ideological Transformation: From Secularisation to Islamisation.....	79
4.4.2 Islamisation of Iran's Economy	81
4.4.3 The Evolution of Iran's Military Strategy	87
4.4.4 Hybrid Theocratic-Republican Political Power	92
4.5 From Pahlavi to Islamic Republic: Despotism or Infrastructural Power Shift?	94
4.5.1 Accountability and Its Limits under the Pahlavis.....	94
4.5.2 Sanctions, Media Wars, and Limits of Accountability in Islamic Republic.....	95
4.5.3 Education and Healthcare under the Pahlavis	97
4.5.4 Education and Healthcare under the Islamic Republic	98
4.6 Conclusion.....	100
Chapter 5: Impact of Sanctions on Iran and Measures of Mitigation	103
5.1 Introduction	103
5.2 Sanctions Objectives: From Policy Shifts to Regime Change.....	104
5.2.1 The Economic Impact of US-Led Sanctions	106

5.2.2 The Social Impact of US-Led Sanctions	110
5.3 Efficiency or Inefficiency of Sanctions.....	111
5.4 Production: A Top-Down Approach.....	113
5.4.1 State Corporatism: Macro-level Resistive Strategy	114
5.4.2 Class Solidarity and Political Mediation in Sanctioned Iran.....	119
5.5 Socio-political Synergies: Micro-level Interaction to Resist Sanctions.....	130
5.5.1 Emergence of Civil Society in Iran	131
5.5.2 Hybrid State-Society Corporatism to Resist Sanctions.....	135
5.6 Conclusion.....	143
Chapter 6: From Punto Fijo to chavismo: Power Dynamics in a Shifting Sociopolitical Venezuelan Context.....	145
6.1 Introduction	145
6.2 Pre-Revolutionary Venezuela and Power Dynamics (1952-1998).....	147
6.2.1 Punto Fijo and Cold War Liberalism.....	147
6.2.2 Oil and Fragile Economy in Punto Fijo.....	148
6.2.3 Civic-Military Dynamics and Repression.....	151
6.2.4 The Two-Party System in Punto Fijo.....	152
6.3 Post-Revolutionary Venezuela and Power Dynamics	154
6.3.1 Chavismo: From Domestic Reform to Global Defiance	154
6.3.2 From Oil Prosperity to Crisis	156
6.3.3 Military Power in Chavismo.....	160
6.3.4 Political Power in Chavismo	164
6.4 From Punto Fijo to Chavismo: Despotism or Infrastructural Power Shift?.....	165
6.4.1 The Limits of Punto Fijo Accountability.....	166
6.4.2 Chavismo and the Struggle for Accountability	166
6.4.3 Punto Fijo and Uneven Social Promises.....	167
6.4.4 Chavismo Ambitious Social Policies, Uneven Implementation.....	168
6.5 Conclusion.....	169
Chapter 7: Impact of Sanctions on Venezuela and Measures of Mitigation	171
7.1 Introduction	171
7.2 Sanctions objectives: From Geostrategic Dominance to Ideological Containment.....	172
7.2.1 The Economic Impact of US-Led Sanctions	174
7.2.2 The Social Impact of US Sanctions	179
7.2.3 Efficiency or Inefficiency of Sanctions	182
7.3 Accumulative Rentier State: Macro-level Resistive Strategy.....	183
7.3.1 Extraction to Distribution: Venezuela's Sanctioned Economy.....	184

7.4 Social Foundation of Power in Venezuela	189
7.5 Political Party Structure in Venezuela	190
7.6 Contested Elections, Enduring Regime: Venezuela 2018–2019 in Crisis and Continuity	192
7.7 Resistive Shrinking Base: Military-Political Hegemony Amid Crisis	195
7.8 State-society Synergies in a militarised context: Micro-level Interaction to Resist Sanctions	199
7.8.1 Reconfigurations of Civil Society to Communes	200
7.8.2 Hybrid State-Society Corporatism	201
7.8.3 Between Co-optation and Resistance: The Ambiguous Autonomy of Civil Society	202
7.8.4 Selective Collaboration: State-Civil Society Interaction under Sanctions	205
7.9 Conclusion	208
Chapter 8: Comparing Iran and Venezuela: Sustainability of Overlapping State-Society Complex	211
8.1 Introduction	211
8.2 A Refresher on the Lagrangian Approach	212
8.3 Sanctions Impact on Production (P)	213
8.4 Sanctions Impact on Solidarity (S)	215
8.5 Sanctions Impact on Institutions (I)	216
8.6 Venezuela’s Production Struggles Under Sanctions	217
8.7 From Patronage to Diminishing Returns: Socio-Political Trade-Offs of Chavismo	220
8.7.1 From Participation to Patronage: Communal Councils, NGOs, and the Logic of Chavismo’s Maintenance	222
8.8 Diversifying under Pressure: Iran’s Economic Strategies amid Sanctions	223
8.9 Socio-political Solidarity under Iran’s Corporatist System	226
8.9.1 From Participation to Patronage: SAMANs and the Logic of Islamic Republic’s Maintenance	229
8.10 From Low to Moderate Resistance Model	232
8.11 Lessons and toward Strong Resistance Model	235
8.12 Conclusion	237
Chapter 9: A new research agenda: An Endogenous Turn in Sanctions Research	239
Bibliography	250
Appendix 1: Table	292
Appendix 2: Ethics	302
Appendix 3: Interviewees	315
Word Count: 93,941	

List of Tables, Figures and Photos:

Figure 2.1: The components of a target-centred lens.

Figure 5.1: Different components of Iranian expected behavioural change.

Figure 5.2: Iran's crude oil exports.

Figure 5.3: Oil production in Iran.

Figure 5.4: Number of knowledge-based companies by technology sector.

Figure 5.5: Total oil products refined in Iran.

Figure 5.6: Iran's middle class as a percentage of total population.

Figure 5.7: Change of price indices for different items (2017-2022).

Figure 7.1: Crude oil export of Venezuela (2015-2024).

Figure 7.2: Venezuela's inflation rate (2014-2021).

Figure 7.3: Deposits in commercial, universal, and development banks in Venezuela by currency 2000-2020 (%GDP).

Figure 8.1: Qualitative iso-curves of resistance models.

Table 5.1: SAMANs classification and key focus areas.

Table 7.1: Key milestones in secondary sanctions, focusing on Venezuelan financial sector.

Table 8.1: Comparative capacity for resistance: Venezuela vs. Iran across P, S, and I.

Photo 3.1: Electoral participation under sanctions: voting scenes from Tehran and Caracas (2024).

Photo 3.2: Collective mourning and political mobilisation: public gatherings in Tehran and Caracas (2024).

Photo 4.1: Literacy and ideology after the revolution: the 1981 LMO Persian textbook and Ruhollah Khomeini's message to the illiterate.

Photo 5.1: The two sides of a Coca-Cola can, produced by the Iranian company "Khosgozar".

Photo 5.2: The home where I was born.

Photo 5.3: Women's handicraft production under SANAM: a weekly cycle of material support and income generation.

Photo 7.1: Everyday survival in Caracas: from a rare restaurant visit to daily street empanadas.

Photo 7.2: The housing built by Hugo Chávez's administration in a densely populated neighbourhood of Caracas.

Photo 7.3: The mobilisation of Nicolás Maduro's supporters in Caracas.

Photo 7.4: The entrances of two electoral centres in Caracas.

Photo 7.5: Protests in Caracas.

Glossaries:

AD (Democratic Action)
ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America)
APOC (Anglo-Persian Oil Company)
BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa)
CCA (Combatant Clergy Association)
CISADA (Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act)
CLAP (Local Committees for Supply and Production)
CNE (National Electoral Council)
CMC (Let's Change – Citizen's Movement)
COPEI (Committee for Independent Political and Electoral Organisation)
ENCOVI (National Survey on Living Conditions)
EPS (Social Production Companies)
FANB (Bolivarian National Armed Force)
FDI (Foreign Direct Investment)
FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas)
GDP (Gross Domestic Product)
MVR (Fifth Republic Movement)
MVAF (Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation)
NDAA (National Defence Authorisation Act)
NGO (Non-governmental organisation)
NHN (National Health Network)
NIOC (National Iranian Oil Company)
NITC (National Iranian Tanker Company)
NOAS (Relief International, and the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers)
OEIR (Organisation of Endeavours of the Islamic Revolution)
OFAC (US Office of Foreign Asset Control)
OPEC (Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries)
PCT (Public Choice Theory)
PCV (Communist Party of Venezuela)
PEP (Poverty Eradication Programme)
PJ (Justice First)
POVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.)
PPT (Fatherland for All)
PROVEA (Venezuelan Education-Action Programme on Human Rights)
PSUV (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela)
PUD (Democratic Unitary Platform)
SAVAK (Organisation for State Intelligence and Security)
SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation)
SDN (US Treasury's Specially Designated Nationals)
SFIR (Stability Front of the Islamic Revolution)
SWIFT (Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication)
TA (Thematic Analysis)
TAFT (Technical Assistance Field Team)
UCV (Universidad Central de Venezuela)
UMS&HS (Universities of Medical Sciences and Health Services)
UN (United Nations)

HFA (Health for All)
IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)
ICCIMA (Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines & Agriculture)
ICP (Islamic Coalition Party)
IEMP (Ideological, Economic, Military, and Political)
IKRF (Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation)
IOIG (Imperial Organisation of Iranian Gendarmerie)
IOM (United Nations Migration Agency)
IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)
ISI (Import Substitution Industrialisation)
ITSR (Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations)
JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)
LMO (Literacy Movement Organisation)
MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group)
MDP (Moderation and Development Party)
MDSD (Most Different Systems Design)
MIR (Movement of Revolutionary Left)
MSDD (Most Different Systems Design)

UNASUR (Union of South American Nations)
UNGA (United Nations General Assembly)
UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights)
URD (Democratic Republican Union)
USAID (US Agency for International Development)
VP (Popular Will)
WLF (Woman, Life, Freedom)

Summary:

This thesis challenges the dominance of the sender-centred perspective in sanctions scholarship, which has long focused on the motivations, mechanisms, and outcomes of sanctions imposed by powerful states—particularly the United States (US). Rooted in Euro- and Atlantic-centric assumptions, this framework treats sanctions as coercive tools intended to reshape target states' behaviour through economic disruption, political isolation, and institutional destabilisation (Mayall 1984; Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1988; Cortright and Lopez 2000; and Lektzian and Souva 2007). It prioritises how to maximise sanctions' effectiveness. As advanced by Mohammadi and Weaver (2025), Kalb (2024), Batmanghelidj (2021), and Guter-Sandu and Kuznetsova (2020), I propose a target-centred perspective grounded in endogenous processes of adaptation and resistance within sanctioned countries, but with unique emphasis on state-society complex highlighting the internal political, social, and economic dynamics shaping a state's ability to endure or adapt to sanctions. Central to this reorientation is the concept of resistance governance—a form of endogenous statecraft through which sanctioned states reorganise governance to preserve functionality through production, solidarity, and institutions. Resistance governance results from the interplay between top-down state strategies and bottom-up societal adaptations, generating varying levels of resistance. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Iran and Venezuela, two comparative cases illustrate this framework. Iran's Moderate Resistance Model is sustained by a diversified economy, institutional pluralism, and a hybrid theocratic-republican system that allows moderate adaptive flexibility. Despite clerical dominance and securitisation, Iran's institutional adaptability and socio-political cohesion have prevented systemic collapse. In contrast, Venezuela's Weak Resistance Model stems from oil dependency, centralised authority, and institutional fragility. While the Bolivarian project initially promoted inclusion, excessive centralisation and economic deterioration eroded its resistance. By comparing these cases, the thesis advances the concept of endogenous resistance governance, arguing that resistance under sanctions depends less on the severity of external pressure than on internal governance architecture.

Chapter 1: SANCTIONS MALAISE: HOW WE GET HERE AND WHAT LIES AHEAD.

1.1 Introduction

“A nation that is boycotted is a nation that is in sight of surrender. 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 the nation boycotted but it brings a pressure upon the nation which, in my judgment, no modern nation could resist,” said US president Woodrow Wilson (1919).

Sanctions have a long history, dating back at least to Athens’ Megarian Decree in 435 B.C. They were later used by Napoleon in the Continental System beginning in 1806, by US President Thomas Jefferson (1801–1809) through the Embargo Act of 1807, and by the League of Nations against Italy in 1935. While these early instances predate modern imperial formations, they foreshadow the increasing application of economic coercion as a tool of geopolitical dominance. In the contemporary period, there is a growing consensus in Washington and other Western capitals that economic measures constitute powerful tools for addressing major foreign policy challenges. Among contemporary studies, the most comprehensive compilation of sanctions episodes is offered by Hufbauer et al. (1990), which documents 116 cases since 1914.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the use of sanctions intensified, reflecting their imposition both by international organisations, in particular United Nations (UN) and by the United States (US), the world’s remaining hegemon. Since 1966, the UN Security Council has recognised 31 sanctions regimes against 24 countries¹, of which 14 are still in effect today (United Nations N.d.). On the other hand, the US Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) has imposed sanctions unilaterally on 25 countries². This expansion coincides with the consolidation of a liberal international order formed by Western powers, raising important questions about how sanctions intersect with broader structures of imperialism and postcolonial hierarchy in the global system (McGowan 2018).

¹ Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, the Former Yugoslavia, Haiti, Angola, Liberia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire, Iran, Somalia, Iraq, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Lebanon, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Libya, Guinea-Bissau, Central African Republic, Yemen, South Sudan, and Mali.

² Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia, certain regions of Ukraine (Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, and others under Russian occupation), China, Afghanistan, Belarus, Burma (Myanmar), the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Nicaragua, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan (including Darfur), Syria, Venezuela, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

With the broadening of policy debates and growing public scrutiny, research on economic statecraft has expanded significantly. Early works such as those by Fredrik Hoffmann (1967) and James Barber (1979) conceptualise sanctions as diplomatic tools situated between persuasion and force, used to achieve foreign policy objectives without resorting to military intervention. Building on this tradition, Margaret P. Doxey (1987) developed one of the first systematic typologies of sanctions, distinguishing between deterrent, punitive, and signalling functions. Later studies assessed how domestic political pressures, alliance dynamics, and reputational concerns shape the imposition or removal of sanctions (Lindsay 1986; Bapat and Morgan 2009).

From this perspective, sanctions are typically evaluated in terms of their efficiency in achieving the sender's stated goals, such as compelling compliance or signalling moral disapproval (Hufbauer et al. 1990; McLean and Whang 2014). More recent contributions extend this sender-centred framework by exploring how financial sanctions strengthen US structural power and hegemonic influence within the international system (McDowell 2023; Early and Schulzke 2020). Nevertheless, when viewed through a postcolonial lens, this framework reflects deeper asymmetries of power rooted in imperial histories. Sanctions can thus be interpreted not simply as neutral policy tools, but as mechanisms through which dominant states reproduce global hierarchies, discipline peripheral economies, and sustain forms of economic dependency reminiscent of colonial relations. In this sense, sanctions may function as a form of “neocolonial tools”, constraining development trajectories in the global south (Mullin 2021, p. 380).

The sender-centred approach can be summarised through three guiding questions: what motivates states to impose sanctions (Hoffmann 1967; Barber 1979; Lindsay 1986; Becko 2024), how sanctions function (Giumelli 2013; Vries et al. 2014; McDowell 2023; Bajoghli et al. 2024), and whether they are efficient (Doxey 1987; Shagabutdinova and Berejikian 2007; Vines 2012; Bapat et al. 2013; Smeets 2018). These “what”, “how”, and “whether” questions form the foundation of the dominant analytical tradition. Yet this paradigm is profoundly embedded in Euro-Atlantic epistemologies and often reflects an implicit alignment with imperialism, privileging the perspectives and interests of sanctioning powers. Within this framework, sanctions are frequently described as legitimate tools to discipline or reform states—often in the global south—that deviate from the norms of the liberal international order.

At the same time, the sender-centred tradition tends to prioritise the strategic rationality of powerful states while undervaluing the agency, adaptability, and resilience of targeted countries. Empirically, sanctions exhibit highly variable outcomes. They are typically considered efficient when they achieve full compliance or partial policy change aligned with sender objectives (Peksen 2019). Hufbauer et al. (1990)

report a success rate of 34 percent, leaving a substantial proportion of cases unexplained. This raises the critical question of why the majority of sanctions fail.

This puzzle was forcefully articulated by Robert A. Pape in “Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work” (1997), where he reasoned that sanctions are generally ineffective at achieving ambitious objectives such as major policy reversals or regime change. However, Pape does not fully explain why sanctions sometimes produce partial success, leaving open the broader question of how and why outcomes vary across cases.

Addressing this question involves shifting toward a target-centred perspective that foregrounds the experiences and strategies of sanctioned states. From a postcolonial perspective, such a shift is essential for decentring Western epistemological dominance and recognising the agency of actors in the global south. Johan Galtung (1967) observed that sanctions often generate increased political cohesion within target states, a phenomenon known as the “rally-around-the-flag” effect. Similarly, James Mayall (1984, p. 631) argues that coercive economic measures can produce counterproductive outcomes, fostering a siege mentality that strengthens national unity and resistance.

In such contexts, sanctions may inadvertently strengthen target’s legitimacy. Zachary A. Selden (1999) notes that sanctions frequently stimulate domestic industrial development, a process Nicholas Mulder (2022) describes as “autarky”. Daniel W. Drezner (1999), in *The Sanctions Paradox*, emphasises that domestic political and economic structures—such as regime type, elite cohesion, and public opinion—play a decisive role in shaping outcomes. Target states respond through a range of strategies, including diversifying trade partnerships, reinforcing internal economic resilience, engaging in political manoeuvring to maintain elite support, and circumventing restrictions through informal or illicit channels. Similarly, Escribà-Folch and Wright (2010) show that authoritarian regimes can resist sanctions by repressing opposition, reallocating resources, and leveraging external alliances.

These adaptive responses can be conceptualised as forms of “resistance”. The concept remains contested and varies across disciplines. In political theory, resistance often denotes opposition to domination, including imperial or external control. In sociology and anthropology, it includes both overt and everyday forms of defiance (Vinhagen and Johansson 2013). In economics, it can imply resilience or adaptability in response to external shocks, such as sanctions (Briguglio et al. 2005; Simmie and Martin 2010; Martin and Sunley 2015). I, however, intentionally avoid the term “resilience”, as framing the phenomenon as “resistance against sanctions” captures not only economic responses but also political and social dimensions. From a postcolonial standpoint, resistance is central to understanding how formerly

colonised or structurally subordinated societies contest external coercion and reclaim agency within an unequal global order.

By exploring how target states resist sanctions, this study seeks to move beyond the sender-centred paradigm that has long dominated the literature. Rather than focusing exclusively on what sanctions are, how they function, and whether they succeed, it examines how target-centred approaches can generate a more comprehensive understanding of sanctions as contested instruments embedded in global power relations shaped by imperialism and postcolonial legacies.

Before developing a resistance model, it is necessary to first conceptualise sanctions and situate them within existing sanctions theoretical frameworks. Accordingly, this chapter begins by conceptualising and characterising sanctions. It then reviews four dominant theoretical approaches—liberalism, realism, Public Choice Theory (PCT), and institutionalism—examining their strengths and limitations. These frameworks are consequently applied to cases in the Middle East and Latin America, regions whose historical experiences with imperialism and external intervention provide critical insights into the dynamics of sanctions. The chapter concludes by introducing a resistance model and advocating for a shift beyond Euro- and Atlantic-centric viewpoints toward a target-centred approach that foregrounds resistance and agency in the study of sanctions.

1.2 Defining the term “Sanctions”

The term “sanction” originates from the Latin verb *sancire*, meaning to ratify or formally approve. In contemporary usage, Nicholas Mulder (2022) defines sanctions as acts of “enforcement”. They can take several different forms. The first is the blockade, which involves ceasing all commercial exchanges with the sanctioned state. The second is the embargo, a legal instrument through which enemy goods, cargo, investments, and property located within member states are confiscated. A third form confines the sanctioned state’s access to necessary raw materials required for its economic survival. Finally, sanctions may also restrict financial flows by cutting off the state’s capability to secure external funding, chiefly public loans (Mulder 2022). In this research, I use all four forms under the category of “sanctions” because they represent the foundational modalities through which economic coercion has historically been implemented. Grouping them together consents for an all-inclusive analytical framework that captures both the material and financial scopes of sanctions, while also stressing the importance of the ways in which enforcement measures function not as isolated mechanisms but as reciprocally supporting instruments of economic warfare. As such, sanctions typically involve sender(s) seeking to force target(s) to enact political changes by confining their economic connections with other states, including trade,

investment, and finance (Jones 2015). According to other scholars (Askari et al. 2003; Biersteker et al. 2015), the sender imposes punitive measures on the target to pressure its government, with the ultimate goal of affecting or altering its “behaviour”.

Sanctions could be mandatory, imposed by UN Security Council, or voluntary, leaving their implementation to senders. They also could be employed unilaterally, by one sender against target(s), or multilaterally, by a number of states against another. This research devotes itself to US sanctions based on two reasons. First, the US has relied deeply on sanctions as an instrument to achieve foreign policy objectives. According to the US Treasury, US sanctions augmented from 912 in 2000 to 9,421 in 2021 which shows a growth of 933% over the last two decades (US Department of the Treasury 2021). Second, the US dollar’s dominance is used as a leverage to eliminate foreign actors from the financial system (Ghareh Daghi 2024). Such a leverage gives the US the power to target not only states but also individuals, companies, and sectors universally. This financial and economic leverage magnifies the reach of US sanctions, as compliance often becomes unavoidable for international actors who rely on access to the dollar-based global financial system. As such, US sanctions extend far beyond its borders, shaping global economic relations and influencing the behaviour of both target and non-target states. Within this framework, an important conceptual distinction can be drawn between primary and secondary US sanctions.

1.2.1 Primary Sanctions

Jeffrey Meyer (2009) elucidates primary sanctions as restrictions imposed by the sender to limit its own companies and citizens (or others living in the sender’s territory) from doing transactions or business with a sanctioned country. Therefore, no individual from the sender country can be involved in business and legal planning and decision-making; approvals, ordering and transporting goods; or delivering financial or insurance support in connection with any sanctioned country’s business. Primary sanctions are divided into two main categories: comprehensive and smart or targeted.

Comprehensive sanctions, known as general trade embargoes, broadly target countries and generally forbid almost all sender’s links with the target (Global Legal Group 2019). Sanctions are more effective when they are executed collectively for a long time as they will lead to grassroots political pressure on the state’s leaders to alter their behaviour —often referred to as the “pain-gain” formula (the greater the pain imposed on the sanctioned state, the more substantial and rapid the benefits accomplished by the sender) (Weiss 1997). Nevertheless, the most detrimental charge against this type of sanctions is that they impose

extensive suffering on ordinary citizens, while leaving the target(s) they target not only relatively unscathed but also sometimes reinforced (Mack and Khan 2000).

Smart sanctions are an alternative to comprehensive ones in order to lessen the humanitarian costs³. Such sanctions target and castigate elites and their followers espousing policies and committing actions considered “unacceptable” by sanctioners (Drenzer 2012). In this respect, Robert Eyler (2007) notes that smart sanctions would have a better chance of success without hurting the target country’s mass population by relieving specified commodities (such as food and medical supplies) and leaving largely untouched the target population’s assets and income by the sender’s sanctions policies. However, when considering humanitarian exemptions, as Arne Tostensen and Beate Bull (2002) argue, it seems that one cannot overlook that they function as a form of sanctions “leakage,” which consequently deteriorates the effectiveness of the sanctions regime. Thus, introducing a humanitarian problem within a sanctions context presents a central paradox.

Smart sanctions includes three categories of targeting instruments: arms embargoes, financial sanctions, and travel restrictions (Tostensen and Bull 2002). Smart sanctions could be imposed through a total ban, restrictions on manufacture and supply, and/or quarantines of arms and/or arms-related material or activities, such as hardware, and military instruction (Kanji 2016). Moreover, such sanctions encompass financial restrictions which have been popular with successive US governments, in particular, after the terrorist attacks on the US on September 11, 2001. In this respect, Washington freezes assets and transactions of target individuals, their followers and facilitators, such as financial foundations, banning any type of financial interactions between sanctioned parties and individuals living in the US (US Department of Treasury 2001). Finally, travel sanctions restrict or ban visiting the US by specific decisionmakers. They are considered as a “psychological tool for isolating and denying legitimacy to targeted individuals and groups” (Cortright and Lopez 2000, p. 244).

1.2.2 Secondary Sanctions

Secondary sanctions introduce additional economic limitations aimed at banning economic activities of agents who are not subject to US territorial and personal jurisdiction, from engaging in transactions with a target of primary sanctions (Meyer 2009). In this context, secondary sanctions do not just target sanctioned states, but third states are also under US punitive pressures in order to maximise their efficiency. Primary sanctions could be weakened when the sender bans its economic operators from

³ United Nations, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 8 (E/C.12/1997/8), The Relationship between Economic Sanctions and Respect for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, December 12, 1997.

doing business with sanctioned states, but allows third states to have economic relations with them. This would impact the effectiveness of sanctions because the third states could compensate for the absence of the target states and its economic operators (a process known as ‘backfilling’) (Rathbone et al. 2012). However, secondary sanctions have been highly debated because they are widely regarded as “extraterritorial” in both purpose and effect, raising questions about their legality. These coercive measures are able to strain relations with major US trading partners and risk weakening Washington’s ability to secure consensus for broader multilateral sanctions (Meyer 2009).

Sanctions are also supported by theories that have different perspectives on the imposition of sanctions. Four dominant theories are found in the sanctions scholarship. Initially, two schools of thought dominated this debate: liberalism and realism; however, PCT, and institutionalism developed subsequently to respond to defects in two main approaches.

1.3 The Theories on Sanctions

Sanctions and liberalism are closely interrelated. James Mayall (1984, p. 634) remarks that, according to liberal view, the perspective that war is fundamentally “irrational” leads to the conclusion that a “rational” alternative should be sought within the commercial world. Liberalism highlights that free markets can make the world a better place by de-escalating tensions. For instance, the liberal theorist, Adam Smith (1776) argues that free trade among states can diminish the causes of war, while the denial of benefits of free commerce to any state which threatened the peace would quickly compel it to comply with “peaceful conduct”. From this liberal emphasis on free trade, two main contrasting approaches sanctions emerged: classical and inverted.

1.3.1 Classical Liberalism

The classical notion of liberalism, which supports comprehensive sanctions, assumes that sanctions achieve the desired political outcomes fairly automatically (Mayall 1984). This approach is based on two major assumptions. First, sanctions are more effective when they are imposed collectively for a long time (Daoudi 1983). Senders make decisions according to economic cost-benefit analysis and, as a result, collective economic coercion would force them to give up “bad” behaviours due to being excluded from free trade in global markets (Drury 1998). Second, classical liberals are notably optimistic about causing political changes in sanctioned states through inspiring the population to pressure the government to capitulate. This expectation has a close relation with Johan Galtung’s (1967) “naïve theory” of sanctions. According to this theory, the economic hardships caused by sanctions leads to political pressure, which is then channeled to the ruling elite through the activation of public discomfort (Galtung 1967).

Yet, the expectation that populations will canalise their grievances into pressure on ruling elites ignores the possibility that hardships may instead strengthen nationalism, regime solidarity, or the scapegoating of external actors. This outcome not only shields ruling elites from accountability but can also deepen authoritarian control, as governments justify repression in the name of “national survival” (Peksen and Drury 2010). Furthermore, the humanitarian costs of comprehensive sanctions—manifested in restricted access to medicine, food, and basic services—fall disproportionately on ordinary citizens rather than decision-making elites, raising serious ethical concerns about their legitimacy (Garfield et al. 1995). As the detrimental side effects of comprehensive sanctions became evident in the 1990s, scholars (Cortright and Lopez 2000; Staibano and Wallenstein 2005; Drezner 2011) began advocating for the implementation of smart sanctions to minimise the humanitarian effects of punitive economic coercion.

1.3.2 Inverted Liberalism

The second strand of liberal sanctions scholarship, referred to as inverted liberalism or smart sanctions, challenges classical assumptions, particularly the notion that citizens have political agency in target states. Inverted liberalism views whole populations as largely passive and incapable of influencing political changes, so it prioritises sanctions on decision-makers who are accountable for targets’ policies (Cortright and Lopez 2000). As such, sanction regimes now concentrate on identifying a few dozen or a few hundred influential elites to seize their and their relatives assets, impose travel bans or other limitations upon them to, as Francesco Giumelli (2016) states, to stigmatise or isolate them.

Inverted sanctions seek to avoid harming ordinary citizens by targeting the actual “wrongdoers” more directly. Conventionally, most sanctions have been imposed quickly during crises, with little attention paid to their humanitarian significance, as senders prioritised instant action (Tostensen and Bull 2002). In contrast, inverted liberals emphasise humanitarian exemptions, arguing that sanctions must concentrate narrowly on a small group of elites who wield power over the wider population. By curbing the privileges and resources of a few dozen or a hundred individuals, proponents believe it is possible to generate significant policy shifts or even regime change.

However, inverted liberalism is not exempt from drawbacks, which pose substantial challenges. Arne Tostensen and Beate Bull (2002) attribute some of the problems to lack of development of the sender’s administrative systems, and the expansive scope of smart sanctions. Certain measures face administrative logistical problems during the implementation process, and even when smart sanctions are implemented, they may exert limited impact on the target state. Moreover, empirical studies also indicate that asset freezes and travel bans are more symbolic than coercive, since many sanctioned individuals have little

exposure to international financial systems or opportunities to travel to the Western countries (Giumelli 2011).

Economic sanctions are often framed as a “nonviolent” policy option, providing states with a means to respond to international crises without resorting to the use of costly military action (Helms 1999). Yet, liberal sanctions theory largely neglects the role of military force. An important question regarding the use of sanctions is whether they can serve as an alternative to military force or not. Realist sanctions theory, in particular, engages directly with this issue.

1.3.3 Realist View of Sanctions

For decades, a major part of US-based scholarship in International Relations (IR) was dominated by realist thought (Aron et al. 1973; Morgenthau et al. 1985; Carr 2016; Waltz 2018). According to Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik (1999), realism has two central assumptions around the nature of actors, and the primacy of material capabilities.

First, realist sanctions theory begins with the nature of actors. It views the world in terms of unitary states (not individuals and private groups) that pursue distinctive aims within an existing anarchic international system (Morgenthau et al. 1985). States are considered the principal actors because they claim the monopoly of legitimate use of force within their territories (Weber 1978, pp. 904-905). Furthermore, the realist perspective considers national security as the core concern within the hierarchy of IR issues. As Richard N. Lebow (1994, p. 2) puts it, “anarchy compels states to make security their paramount concern and to seek to increase power as against other values”.

Second, realism highlights the primacy of material capabilities. Legro and Moravcsik (1999, p. 17) note that “interstate bargaining outcomes reflect the relative cost of threats and inducements, which is directly proportional to the distribution of material resources”. Realism emphasises the ability of states to force or bribe their counterparts in the absence of a central international sovereign. Accordingly, threatening punishment or offering side payments are the main means of redistributing resources. “The ability of states to do this successfully,” as Legro and Moravcsik (Legro and Moravcsik 1999, p. 17) state, “is proportional to its underlying power, which is defined in terms of its access to exogenously varying material resources”. The primacy of material capabilities is considered as the core of realism. Within this framework, realism focuses on military coercion, as a material capability, than other forms of power, such as economic or organisational, because, as John Mearsheimer (Mearsheimer 1994) specifies, states in anarchy remain preoccupied with security.

By critiquing the irrationality of war declared by liberals, realism questions the liberal assumptions that sanctions can achieve significant foreign policy goals. According to realism, sanctions are unlikely to alter target behaviour as the political and strategic objectives of sanctioned states outweigh economic ones (Pape 1997b). Realists also state that economic statecraft is of only minimal utility, and far less useful than military force (Galtung 1967; Giumelli 2011; Whang 2011).

However, realism's dogmatic emphasis on war as the primary means of statecraft over sanctions is problematic, given that economic coercion has occasionally caused some political concessions. For instance, sanctions appear to have played at least some role in Iranian nuclear concession in 2015. According to Ali Khamenei, Iranian Supreme Leader (Khamenei 2015), the reason why Iran "entered into negotiations and made some concessions was to lift sanctions". From a liberal viewpoint, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (2012) assume that the dynamic situation of international affairs shows that there is a changing hierarchy of issues. In some contexts, military questions might matter, while in others, economic issues take precedence. Survival is the overarching goal of all states, and in the most adverse situations military power is essential for survival; however, when there is no security threat that challenges the state, other goals become dominant and "there is no guarantee that military force will be an appropriate tool for achieving these goals (Keohane and Nye 2012, p. 158) ".

While the rationale of sanctions is to present an alternative to war, aiming to prevent extensive suffering and lessen the negative consequences associated with armed conflict, the reality, as Stuart Davis and Immanuel Ness (2021) argue, is that both sanctions and military options are a mode of war and instruments of coercion, usually applied in pursuit of advancing US objectives. Sanctions are affected by the factors that are closely related to the decision to use military coercion (Drury 2000). Consequently, sanctions could be considered a feasible tool to employ before military coercion is considered (Mintz 2003). Hence, the differences between using military force and sanctions mainly depends on whether one of them is a more acceptable option to achieve US objectives (Lektzian and Souva 2007, p. 335).

To conclude, the central pillar of the theoretical divide between liberalism and realism is the choice of employing sanctions or military force as a strategy. While realists see states as the key actors in international politics, liberals prioritise individuals and institutions (Haas 2024). Both sanctions and military force are methods in the hands of different types of actors. Sanction approaches, nevertheless, are not limited to just liberal and realist views. Two additional perspectives emerged to respond to flaws in these two main approaches: Public Choice Theory (PCT) and institutionalism.

1.3.4 Public Choice Theory (PCT)

PCT rejects smart sanctions theory which assesses elite preferences as equated to government policy, presuming thus that imposing sanctions on the former will be enough to achieve sender's objectives. Instead, to ameliorate sanctions effectiveness, Kaempfer and Lowenberg (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1988), known as the pioneers of PCT, argue that economic coercion will be more efficient if they deteriorate the power of domestic groups that support the target's policy. The basis of PCT is that human beings are egoistic, rational utility maximisers (Mueller 1979, p. 1) and policies are the "artefacts of collective choice processes driven by individual rational [utility-] maximising behaviour," rather than decisions of anthropomorphised countries (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1992, p. 6).

Therefore, identifying interest groups within the sanctioned society is important because individual's interests are supposed to be related to monetary issues and they are assumed to form 'rent-seeking' groups according to their economic position (Morgan 1995). As consumers interact in a marketplace, rent-seeking groups operate in the "political market," engaging in political process to affect policies and the decision-making process. These two groups are affected by any policy because it affects their utility, prompting them to advocate for or against any given policy. If the groups demanding a policy experience a "large negative income effect," this will bring about a large downward shift of their demands, which results in a lower "supply" of the policy (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1988, p. 792). On the other hand, by reducing opposition groups' incentive to free-ride in the collective production of political pressure, sanctions may improve the opposition groups' political leverage. This shifts their demands for alternative policies upwards, generating a situation in which lower levels of the offending policy are "supplied" (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1988, pp. 791-792). Thus, the main thrust of PCT enquiries is about how sanctions impact domestic politics, in particular the "political market" (Rowe 2001).

PCT offers a noteworthy advantage over liberal theories on sanctions, particularly smart sanctions. Targeted sanctions do not precisely clarify the most effective domestic groups to sanction (Major and McGann 2005). Any policies based on the "all good things go together" logic generate outcomes that could harm the very populations that the target wishes to help (Major and McGann 2005, p. 353). In contrast, PCT highlights in detail the significance of the target's internal dynamics to improve the efficiency of sanctions, an aspect that liberalism has tended to overlook. PCT seeks to clarify the formation of interest groups and their varying capabilities to generate political pressure within the sanctioned country.

However, PCT's key limitation is its pluralistic view of the state. For public choice theorists, the state is a neutral arena that interest groups can lobby (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1992). The PCT conceptualisation of the state is similar to the liberal emphasis on state neutrality which elicited strong critical reactions from realism. A major problem with this position is that the states inherently privilege some groups over others (Balint 2015). For instance, in some cases, uneven patterns of economic control can bring about inequalities among citizens which affect their capacities to participate in governance (Dahl 1985). Additionally, PCT rejects state-centered interest groups such as bureaucracies and militaries, and their interactions with other social forces (Udehn 2002, pp. 24-25).

1.3.5 Institutional Approach

The institutional approach assesses sanctions' outcomes according to target regime type. Concisely, a "regime" refers to a form of government or a number of institutions ruling a country (Onder 2019, p. 2). The theory argues the effect of sanctions is conditional on a regime's ruling coalition, the size and composition of which depend on the state's political institutions (Lektzian and Souva 2007). Leaders aim to be in power, so they respond to the demands of these coalitions (De Mesquita et al. 1999). Every regime is supported by a different type of ruling coalition which could generate different types of behaviour in the face of sanctions. Democracy and autocracy are the two main regime types in the institutional approach. In autocracies, the leader, who is not constrained by any institutions, is typically supported by a small group of elites (Wurster 2014), and, "as long as this core group of constituents remains satiated with private goods, autocratic leaders face few difficulties in holding office" (Lektzian and Souva 2007, p. 852). In contrast, democracies seem to involve broader coalitions (Allen 2005), are "more accountable to their publics than leaders in nondemocracies and are rewarded or punished based on the expected short-term outcome of their policies" (Lektzian and Souva 2007, p. 852).

Institutionalism improves inverted liberalism on sanctions as it recognises that even non-democratic regimes answer to some domestic constituents. The institutional approach addresses a key flaw in PCT, which underestimates the significance of the state, by highlighting the importance of regime type in enhancing the effectiveness of coercive economic measures. However, it is in its dichotomous autocratic–democratic regime types, that institutionalism is problematic. Although there are many studies about the important role of regime type for examining the sanctions impact (Hart. 2000; Brooks 2002; McGillivray and Stam 2004), relying on a strict binary framework between democracy and autocracy overlooks the complex relationship between masses and elites in subtypes of these governing models that deviate from the general definitions of democracy and autocracy in IR. For instance, Larry Diamond (Diamond 2002, p. 25) notes an "unprecedented growth in the number of regimes that are neither clearly

democratic nor conventionally autocratic”. For institutionalists, this illustrates a need to unpack the category of “hybrid” regimes —combining supposedly different regime subtypes— and clarify more precisely the variances between democracy and autocracy (McFaul 2002).

Some of the more recent democratic subtypes include “delegative democracy,” referring to a democratic regime in a plebiscitarian sense with a lack of horizontal accountability but not particularly liberal or representative features (Conaghan 2016), and “illiberal democracy,” denoting an electoral democracy in which civil liberties are curtailed (Zakaria 1997). Autocracies are similarly diverse, with subtypes such as “semi-authoritarianism,” “competitive authoritarianism,” and “liberalised autocracy” (Brumberg 2002; Ottaway 2013). Additionally, recent empirical studies on sanctions recommend that their success varies according to the target regime type (Nooruddin 2002; Marinov 2005; Lektzian and Souva 2007). Contrary to the institutionalist hypothesis that sanctions are more effective on non-democratic regimes, findings in these studies note the opposite: sanctions are likely to be more effective on democracies than autocracies. Accordingly, institutionalists’ inability to correlate regime subtypes with sanction outcomes depicts a fundamental flaw in this approach.

In conclusion, the study of sanctions is largely informed by four dominant theoretical frameworks: liberalism, realism, PCT, and institutionalism. Liberal thought divides into two strands to define what sanctions are: its classical form, which supports broad, comprehensive sanctions, and its inverted form, which underpins the logic of smart sanctions. Despite their differences, both share a core assumption—that war is “irrational” and that sanctions provide a more “rational” means of force through commercial restrictions. By restraining access to international trade and financial benefits, sanctions are expected to coerce compliance, a notion that gained momentum in the liberal world order⁴ after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. From this standpoint, the central question becomes not whether sanctions work, but how they can be designed to operate efficiently, either comprehensively or in targeted form.

Realism, by contrast, casts doubt on whether sanctions can ever function as an efficient foreign policy tool. It views military power as far more decisive than sanctions, questioning liberal claims about sanctions’ utility. From a realist position, economic measures are unlikely to shift state behaviour because political and security imperatives generally overshadow economic costs.

PCT offers a third perspective, aiming to move beyond the liberal–realist dichotomy. It argues that sanctions are most effective when they weaken domestic groups that support a government’s policies.

⁴ The liberal order, often referred to as the liberal international order, is a global framework of political, economic, and institutional structures that developed mainly after World War II under the leadership of the US and its Western allies.

By mapping the influence of competing interest groups within a target, PCT focuses on how pressure can be channelled internally to achieve policy change. Yet, because this approach tends to understate the role of the state, institutionalist accounts emerged to highlight the significance of political regimes. Institutionalism examines how regime type shapes sanctions' efficiency, offering another way to address how sanctions operate and whether they succeed.

1.4 Sanctions Malaise

Taken together, the above-mentioned four approaches reflect a sender-centred orientation through highlighting what, whether, and how puzzles, seeking to maximise sanctions effects on their targets. To show how these approaches are operationalised in practice, the following section turns to the US' long-standing sanctions regimes in the Middle East and Latin America by focusing on Iraq and Cuba. The former exemplifies the escalation of multilateral coercive measures in the post-Cold War era, where sweeping UN-mandated restrictions in the 1990s were enforced largely under US leadership. The latter, illustrates the longest-running unilateral sanctions regime in modern history, beginning in the early 1960s and evolving through successive layers of economic, commercial, and financial restrictions. It emphasises how sanctions can become institutionalised as a punitive tool of foreign policy, persisting across administrations despite limited success in accomplishing stated objectives. Assessing these two examples reveals not only how Washington implemented sanctions in line with sender-centred theories of sanctions and control, but also how these measures created profound humanitarian, political, and diplomatic malaises, ultimately challenging the effectiveness and legitimacy of sanctions as instruments of international order.

1.4.1 The Interplay of Sanctions Theories in Iraq's Sanctions Regime

Sanctions on Iraq, known as blockade (Sklaire 1990; Walsh 1995; Abunimah 2002), imposed between 1990 and 2003 arguably represent one of the gravest humanitarian crises ever undertaken in the name of promoting democracy in the country. The trajectory of the sanctions can be understood across three key phases: first, the measures introduced by the UN Security Council in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait; second, the six-week Gulf War of 1991; and third, the continuation of sanctions under the agenda of the Oil-for-Food Programme.

In August 1990, Saddam Hussein, Iraqi leader invaded Kuwait. As the Soviet Union was in decline, the UN Security Council was no longer hindered by the mutual vetoes of its permanent members—the United States, USSR, Britain, France, and China—and entered a phase of increased “activism,” during which measures of unprecedented scope and severity became feasible. The first of these was Resolution

661, which was adopted on August 6, 1990, imposing sweeping sanctions on Iraq. These included a ban on all imports and exports, the freezing of Iraqi government assets held abroad, an arms embargo, the suspension of international flights, and restrictions on financial transactions. Classified as comprehensive, these sanctions reflected the classical liberal conception that broader and more comprehensive sanctions increase the likelihood of inducing regime change.

In testimony before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on 5 December 1990, it was reported that the embargo had cut off 90% of Iraq's imports and 97% of its exports, triggering severe economic disruption and widespread hardship among the population (Hufbauer et al. 2008). Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh (1993, pp. 191-193) contend that the UN Security Council efficiently deployed famine and starvation as tools to pressure Iraq into compliance. Since Iraq relied on imports for 70–80% of its caloric intake, sanctions rapidly undermined food availability. As a result, food prices soared by 200% to 1800% between August and November (Provost 1992, pp. 584-586). A UN Secretary-General envoy described the situation in Iraq as “near-apocalyptic,” depicting the country as having been reduced to a “pre-industrial age” (Ahtisaari 1991).

On 16 January 1991, less than a year after sanctions were imposed, they were strengthened by a six-week US-led coalition military campaign, terminating in the complete withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait by late February. The bombing targeted not only military sites but also vital civilian infrastructure, encompassing power plants, transport and communication networks, industrial and fertilizer facilities, oil installations, bridges, schools, and hospitals (Nordhaus 2002). Even facilities that escaped direct hits were largely inoperable due to the destruction of electricity-generating capacity.

Many of the targeted sites were intentionally selected to deepen the economic and psychological effects of the sanctions on society in Iraq (Gellman 1991). This strategy illustrates a convergence of liberal and realist values in IR. Liberalism highlights the use of sanctions as a means to accomplish political goals without resorting to military power. Nevertheless, the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure indicates a realist approach, where the use of military coercion is legitimised as a means to achieve strategic objectives, even at the cost of civilian suffering. This blending of liberal and realist tactics highlights the multifaceted and often contradictory nature of sanctions and military strategy. At the same time, sanctions can complement military campaign by weakening an adversary's economic base and morale, in that way reducing the need for extensive military engagement. This perspective advocates that sanctions, when strategically applied, can operate as a force multiplier, accelerating the efficiency of military operations and potentially shortening the duration of conflicts (Mulder 2022).

The distribution of aid was meaningfully blocked, primarily due to US actions, which were accountable for 90–95 percent of the holds (Gordon 2020). The famine and hardships in Iraq led the US to introduce the Oil-for-Food Programme in 1995, permitting Baghdad to sell oil and spend the revenue to buy humanitarian goods. The evidence demonstrates that while the programme offered some relief, it did not address the fundamental issues underlying Iraq's worsening economy. By canalising all transactions through the government, the programme inadvertently consolidated state control over the population (United Nations 1999).

Estimates of the Iraqi deaths due to sanctions range up to 1.5 million, including over 500,000 children (Alnasrawi 2001). By 2001, facing mounting international criticism for its policies, Washington sought to reframe its policy by imposing smart sanctions and tightening the comprehensive sanctions on the Middle Eastern country. Even when implementing unilaterally, sanctions can efficiently cut a target country off from much of the global banking system. The consequences of US blacklisting—whether of individuals, companies, government officials, and so forth—often goes beyond the immediate targets. By banning the target's access to fuel, major banks, insurers, or shipping services, or otherwise hindering its imports and exports, US sanctions can inflict severe economic pain. These measures frequently combine all of these restrictive strategies.

The Iraqi case between 1990 and 2003 illustrates the complex interplay of the dominant theoretical perspectives on sanctions. The imposition of comprehensive coercive measures in 1990 reflects the classical liberal logic, which assumes that extensive economic pressure can force regime compliance without resorting to military attack. The subsequent introduction of smart sanctions and the Oil-for-Food Programme in the mid-1990s shows the liberal shift toward more targeted measures designed to mitigate humanitarian harm while preserving economic leverage. Simultaneously, the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure during the 1991 Gulf War determines the realist assertion that economic tools alone may be inadequate to achieve strategic aims, emphasising the interplay between military force and economic pressure. From a PCT viewpoint, sanctions partially functioned by weakening Iraq's economic base and confining domestic constituencies loyal to Saddam Hussein, although this was lessened by state control over relief programmes. Institutionalism further underscores how Iraq's authoritarian structure shaped both the efficiency and limitations of sanctions, strengthening state power even as humanitarian conditions worsened. Taken together, Iraq's experience shows the tensions and complementarities among liberal, realist, PCT, and institutionalist logics, while also exposing the humanitarian costs that sender-centred approaches frequently overlook.

1.4.2 The Interplay of Sanctions Theories in Cuba's Sanctions Regime

Sanctions against Cuba began soon after the 1959 Cuban revolution, following the nationalisation of American-owned properties and Cuba's alignment with the Soviet Union. As LeoGrande (2015) indicates the US embargo on Cuba is the longest-running and most comprehensive sanctions regime the US has ever imposed on a country. It includes a multifaceted network of laws and presidential orders developed over more than six decades.

Over the past three decades, US sanctions on Cuba has oscillated, with each presidential administration either tightening or easing limitations. In 1992, President Bill Clinton enacted the Torricelli Act, banning ships that had docked in Cuban ports from entering US territory for 180 days, restricted remittances to Cuba to \$300 per quarter, and barred US subsidiaries overseas from selling goods to Cuba (US Congress 1992). The ban on trade by subsidiaries in third countries has been critiqued for its extraterritorial reach, labelled as secondary sanctions —that is, the embargo extended beyond the activities of US persons and companies but rather imposed exclusions and penalties against third country nationals doing business with Cuba.

In 1996, the Helms-Burton Act was approved, reinforcing the embargo and stripping the executive branch of its authority to autonomously shape US foreign policy toward Havana. The law stipulated that the embargo would remain until Cuba satisfied eight specific conditions such as the full transition to a democratic government and a market-based economy. Moreover, the Act permitted US citizens to sue foreign businesses that operate with property nationalised or expropriated by the Cuban government. The Helms-Burton Act constitutes the greatest barrier to Cuba's participation in international financial institutions, requiring US representatives at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to oppose Cuba's membership and directing Washington to withhold from its contributions to any international financial institution an amount equivalent to any assistance provided to Cuba (Vidal 2025).

Barack Obama administration (2009-2017) made substantial changes to financial regulations touching Cuba, relaxing numerous bans after Cuba was taken off the "state sponsors of terrorism" list, where it had been since 1982. This modification allowed the use of the US dollar for authorised transactions between Washington and Havana, covering areas such as agricultural exports, telecommunications, software, and so forth. In addition, US intermediary banks were permitted to process 'U-turn' transactions between Cuban and third-country banks.

Yet, in 2021, under first Donald Trump administration (2017-2021), Havana was once again designated as a state sponsor of terrorism. The US State Department also compiled a list of Cuban companies and

agencies controlled by the military, intelligence, and security services, barring US entities from carrying out any financial transactions with them.

While there are some perspectives that back US sanctions against Cuba, academic literature overwhelmingly highlights the inefficiency of this policy (López-Levy 2011; Alzugaray 2017; Kaplowitz 2023). Critiques approach this from different angles, including the US and Cuban domestic political dynamics, geopolitical implications, and discussions over the sanctions' legitimacy and efficiency in promoting human rights (Leogrande and Thomas 2002). Economically, sanctions have been effective in isolating Cuba, while the restrictive measures mainly damage Cuban families without accomplishing regime change or proceeding democracy on the island (Lamrani 2013).

However, the economic and humanitarian sanctions impacts on Cuba are evident. After the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, Havana lost 75–80% of its trade, sending the economy into a severe downturn. Between 1990 and 1994, Cuba's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell by one third (Ritter 2010, p. 2). Official figures show that in 2012, the embargo cost Cuba \$1.9 billion in lost trade (United Nations Secretary-General 1997). Additionally, Cuba's annual report to the UN indicates that tighter banking restrictions have increased the cost of food imports. In 2012, the national food import company, Alimport, reported a \$45 million loss as it could not conduct direct transactions with US banks (Gordon 2016).

The evolution of US sanctions against Cuba shows the restrictions and contradictions embedded within sanctions theories. From the liberal viewpoint, the embargo was designed to force Havana's compliance by banning its access to international trade and finance, showing the classical strand's dependence on comprehensive measures. However, despite being the longest-running embargo in modern history, the policy has been unsuccessful to change the Cuban regime, strengthening realist critiques that sanctions rarely change a target's behaviour. While PCT may predict that sanctions weaken domestic groups associated with the government, the Cuban case proves how external pressure often consolidates regime's legitimacy by framing sanctions as a strategy of subjugation. Accordingly, Cuba represents how sender-centred sanctions theories, preoccupied with efficiency from the perspective of the US, ineffectively account for the broader humanitarian, political, and geopolitical costs experienced by the target country.

1.5 Towards a Target-Centred Standpoint

US sanctions on Iraq and Cuba illustrate a sender-centred strategy, in which policymakers highlight maximising coercive pressure—addressing the questions of what, whether, and how—without necessarily seeking to compel regime compliance or political transformation. The interplay of these

questions are applicable to other sanctioned cases as they emphasise the universal logic underpinning sender-centred sanctions: policymakers chiefly design actions to inflict economic, political, or social costs, rather than to engineer precise policy changes within the target(s) (Mohseni-Cheraghloou 2015). In other words, the focus lies on the efficiency of sanctions themselves—the type of sanctions applied (what), if they are effective (whether), and the manner in which they are imposed (how). This framework is observable across a range of sanctioned cases, from Iran (Ghasseminejad and Jahan-Parvar 2021; Ghomi 2022) and North Korea (Zani 2022; Korgun and Toloraya 2022) to Venezuela (Rodríguez 2022; Palestini 2023) and Russia (Mahlstein et al. 2022; Gaur, Settles, and Väättänen 2023) where sanctions are often designed to maximise pressure, regardless of whether they succeed in achieving the intended behavioural or political outcomes.

To counter the sender's attempt to maximise coercive power, targeted countries adopt a range of evasion and adaptation strategies. Emma K. Macfarlane (2020) offers a legal and policy examination of how shell companies, cryptocurrency networks, and weak multilateral enforcement mechanisms facilitate sanctions evasion. These tools enable target states to obscure financial trails and maintain access to international markets. Shell companies—business entities that exist only on paper with no considerable operations or assets—are often used to hide the identity of the real owners and to channel transactions through seemingly legitimate intermediaries. These entities create legal veils that conceal the true ownership of assets and disguise the purpose of transactions (Institute for Financial Integrity 2024). Alongside such formal methods, informal cross-border trade, black markets, and smuggling networks also play an important role in maintaining economic activity under sanctions (Haggard and Noland 2017).

Given that the US dollar remains the cornerstone of the global financial system, the US wields substantial coercive power through financial sanctions. However, as Daniel McDowell (2023) argues in *Bucking the Buck*, the overuse of dollar-based sanctions generates political and financial risks for other states, prompting them to pursue de-dollarisation or alternative payment systems to diminish dependence on the US-dominated financial order. In parallel, some sanctioned countries have turned inward by adopting Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) strategies—policies aimed at reducing reliance on foreign imports and fostering domestic production capacity (Thorp 1992). Scholars such as Salitskii, Zhao, and Yurtaev (2017), Terenina et al. (2019), and Safiullin and Elshin (2023) emphasise how ISI policies can mitigate the impact of sanctions by strengthening local industries and enhancing national economic resilience.

While much of this pioneering target-centred scholarship provides a much needed redirection of the gaze of the literature from a sender to a target perspective, it is most successful from the economic dimensions

of resistance, assessing how states sustain trade, production, and financial networks under sanctions pressure. This literature often conceptualises resistance in terms of macroeconomic adjustment, diversification of trade partners, and the development of alternative financial infrastructures. Nevertheless, this thesis seeks to build on but go beyond this literature, arguing that such approaches offer only a partial understanding of how targets endure and adapt. There is a need to go beyond the economic realm, demonstrating how the social and political spheres play a significant role in shaping a nation's capacity to resist external pressure. Social resilience manifests in the mobilisation of communities, the reconfiguration of welfare systems, and the emergence of new moral economies that sustain everyday life amid scarcity (Hassan, Mahmoud, and Ellingwood 2023; Huang 2024). Politically, sanctions can generate both fragmentation and cohesion, affecting state-society relations, legitimacy narratives, and governance strategies (Fumarola 2021; Peksen 2021). By amalgamating these social and political dimensions, this research aims to develop a more holistic understanding of resistance—one that captures not only economic adaptation and productive continuity, but also the wider socio-political transformations, grounded in solidarity and institutional reconfiguration, that enable sanctioned nations to navigate and redefine external constraints.

By adopting a target-centred standpoint, this study does not merely aim to fill a conceptual or empirical gap in the literature; rather, it seeks to challenge the politics underlying how knowledge about sanctions is created and circulated. The dominance of sender-centred analyses signals the power asymmetry between sanctioning and sanctioned states, reproducing Western-centric assumptions about rationality, governance, and compliance. By repositioning the target state as the analytical focal point, this thesis seeks to decentre these hierarchies of knowledge and foreground the agency, resilience, and adaptive strategies of societies under sanctions. The goal, thus, is not only to improve academic understanding but also to contribute to a more plural and decolonial account of international politics (Sen 2023)—one that speaks to and for those whose lived realities are most directly shaped by sanctions. Accordingly, the target-centred standpoint tackles the overlooked question of why sanctions succeed or fail by systematically assessing economic, social, and political mechanisms of resistance used by target(s). This approach underscores the existence of agency and strategic capacity of sanctioned states, challenging the notion that they are merely passive victims of sanctions. Considering these dynamics allows target countries to anticipate the devastating impacts of sanctions, develop measures to mitigate economic, political, and social pressures, and potentially improve the extent of their resistance against unilateral coercive actions.

If this thesis is to develop a resistance model, as an alternative to a sender-centred model, a flexible and adaptable theoretical framework is essential. Therefore, in the next Chapter a theoretical framework is designed that explains how the relative economic power, socio-political base, and the institutions in sanctioned countries may affect the direction and outcomes of a resistant process. Looking forward, Chapter 3 specifies the methodological issues of the study regarding case-selection, variables and indicators, and data-collection and analytical methods. In Chapter 4, a rich historical account of the transition from Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) to Islamic Republic (1979-present) is presented, indicating how the relative balance of power between the Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic in terms of ideological, economic, military, and political powers, tied with international factors, particularly US influence, shaped the process. The following Chapter offers an in-depth examination of the sanctions impact on Iran and the measures implemented by Iran to mitigate the impacts in the context of state-society complex. In Chapter 6, the emphasis turns to the Venezuelan case. The power framework is applied to guide a historical analysis of transition from Punto Fijo era (1958–1998) to the chavismo period (1999–present). Chapter 7 then suggests a breakdown of the sanctions impacts on Venezuela and the strategies the state and civil society use to resist sanctions, evading regime change. In Chapter 8, the outcomes and experiences of the Iranian and Venezuelan experiments to go beyond the sender-centred viewpoint are compared and contrasted.

In brief, through comparative fieldwork in Iran and Venezuela and grounded qualitative analysis, the research develops a target-centred theoretical framework—or what is termed a resistance model—to explain how sanctioned states adapt and sustain themselves under external pressure. First, countries that depend excessively on oil or a single source of revenue are more vulnerable, while those that pursue economic diversification, foster local production, and promote self-sufficiency are better equipped to resist sanctions. Second, socio-political cohesion is more durable when state policies connect both lower and middle/upper classes, rather than relying solely on populist mobilisation of the poor. Third, robust institutions—such as political parties, cooperatives, and civil society organisations—enable citizen participation in decision-making and generate more enduring forms of resistance, while weak or exclusionary institutions confine responses to temporary survival strategies. These three dimensions are deeply interdependent: strength in one cannot be sustained without the others. The study’s model-building approach demonstrates that only when economic diversification, socio-political cohesion, and institutional participation reinforce one another does a resistance model emerge—permitting the target state not merely to survive sanctions, but to reconstitute legitimacy, reorganise power, and construct an alternative socio-economic order.

However, the resistance model developed in this thesis is not designed to strengthen the sender's capacity to target sanctions more efficiently, but rather to examine and explain how sanctioned states adapt and endure under coercive pressure. Its goal is diagnostic and interpretive, not prescriptive. By identifying the internal mechanisms that enable resistance—such as participatory governance and endogenous adaptation—the model seeks to uncover how sanctioned societies sustain legitimacy and cohesion despite external isolation. While it is true that insights from this framework might theoretically inform sender strategies, the model's orientation is explicitly target-centred and decolonial: it privileges the agency, knowledge, and lived experiences of sanctioned societies rather than reproducing the logic of coercion. Indeed, the model shows a fundamental contradiction in sanctions policy itself—namely, that the very processes that could reinforce democratic accountability and social participation within target states are systematically weakened by the external imposition of sanctions. In this sense, the resistance model contributes to critical scholarship by revealing the counterproductive nature of coercive measures and by conceptualising an alternative pathway—endogenous resistance governance—through which sanctioned states may pursue reform, inclusion, and legitimacy on their own terms, independent of the sender's strategic objectives.

Chapter 2: TARGET-CENTRED LENS: NEW APPROACH TOWARDS SANCTIONS FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Having conceptualised and characterised sanctions, as well as assessed different theories in the previous Chapter, it becomes essential to move beyond Euro- and Atlantic-centric discourses in IR. The emphasis should shift from questioning how sanctions can be made more efficient to interrogating why they succeed or fail. Addressing the “why” requires altering the perspective from the sender to the target, since the outcome of coercive economic measures largely depends on how the sanctioned country responds and develops countermeasures —commonly referred to as resistant strategies. Adopting this target-centred lens allows for a deeper assessment of the internal dynamics of Iran and Venezuela as targets. To pursue this, the study unfolds across four phases.

First, this Chapter situates liberalism, realism, the PCT, and institutionalism within a problem-solving framework to rationalise adopting a target-centred lens, drawing on critical theories such as Max Weber’s Theory of Social and Economic Organisation, Michael Mann’s IEMP model—which highlights ideological, economic, military, and political sources of power—, and Robert Cox’s theory of Historical Structures. Second, these three critical theories are filtered by extracting their most valuable elements while discarding aspects less relevant to the research’s objectives, thereby conceptualising and characterising production, solidarity, and institutions as the core variables. Third, rather than treating these variables as independent, this Chapter explores how they are applied as interrelated dimensions within Iranian and Venezuelan contexts. Finally, to examine how production, solidarity, and institutions operate independently and in relation to one another in shaping a target-centred perspective, I draw on the Lagrangian function, adapted to show the balance between competing forces—such as structure and agency, or constraint and adaptation (Lagrange 1788)—thus enabling the modelling of equilibrium within complex socio-political contexts.

2.2 From Problem-Solving to Critical Theory

The problem-solving theory's strength lies in defining limitations and narrowing down specific problems by precisely assessing a limited set of variables. It draws heavily from methodologies of natural sciences, assuming positivism as the genuine foundation of knowledge. Positivism, regarded as the “gold standard” by Steve Smith (Smith et al. 1996, p. 13), encompasses separating facts and standards, believing in the possibility of separating subject and object, adopted dominantly in the US and Europe (Linklater and Suganami 2006). Notably, positivism focuses on the analytical centrality of the state in reviewing world politics (Pourmokhtari 2013).

Beyond this static world, critical theory introduces a fresh theoretical lens, one that goes beyond the problem-solving, Euro- and Atlantic-centric discourses in IR. During the 20th century, critical theory became closely associated with the Frankfurt School, affected by Marxist thought⁵ (Kellner 1975). Key thinkers, including Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Leo Lowenthal, and more recently Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, sought to resist the “exclusion” of society. The term “critical theory” thus emerged as a philosophy aimed at understanding the main features of contemporary society through an examination of historical and social evolution (Lacher 2003). This includes identifying contradictions in IR that might create opportunities to surpass existing social structures, including inherent forms of domination (Landmann 2011).

Robert Cox (1981, p. 128) indicates that problem-solving theory “takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action.” Realism exemplifies this approach by working within the prevailing dynamics and power structures of IR. In doing so, realism creates a stabilising effect, aiming to maintain the current global configuration of social and political relations. Its primary objective, as underlined by Robert O. Keohane (1984, p. 63), is to “facilitate the smooth operation of decentralised international political systems.”

Positioned between the state centrality and free market, liberal institutionalism mainly seeks to ensure that realism and liberalism function smoothly in their coexistence (Nye 1977). From a problem-solving standpoint, the aim is to maintain the compatibility and stability of realism and liberalism by addressing and diffusing any conflicts, tensions, or crises that may arise between them (Cox 1992, p. 173).

⁵ You can explore Marxism further in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' work, *The Communist Manifesto and Its Relevance Today* (1948).

Cox's central argument regarding problem-solving theory is its failure to critically assess the existing frameworks, which reinforces the prevailing ideological priorities.(Cox 1992). In contrast, critical theory interrogates how Euro- and Atlantic-centric discourses emerged, rather than taking institutions, social structures, and power relations as given. It assesses their origins and investigates how they may be shifting. While oriented towards the socio-political complex as a unified whole, critical theory maintains an analytical rigor that avoids the partiality sometimes found in problem-solving approaches (Cox 1981).

Critical theory fundamentally critiques the dogmatism rooted in traditional modes of theorising. It reveals unexamined assumptions that underlie conventional thought and emphasises the complicity of such perspectives in sustaining prevailing socio-political conditions. This is achieved by constructing a holistic picture of socio-political dynamics and continually refining concepts to align with evolving phenomena (Cox 1981).

In spite of their strategic application in policy circles, realism and liberalism—the two dominant problem-solving approaches to sanctions—remain restricted, as their primary focus is on improving the efficiency of sanctions through a state-centred lens. PCT and institutionalism, which arose in response to the shortcomings of realism and liberalism, are likewise shaped by problem-solving orientations. Although they differ in substance, they finally address the same question posed by realism and liberalism: how to reinforce sanctions effectiveness. In doing so, they privilege the state while marginalising society, thus overlooking the deeper social dimensions of sanctions.

To move beyond a strictly state-centred perspective, Peter Evans (1997) emphasises the importance of “synergies” between the state and societal groups as a key element in comprehending the multifaceted dynamics of state–society complex. As Vivien A. Schmidt (1999) contends, effective interaction cannot be reduced to privileging either the state or a society operating separately. Instead, it emerges through networks of mechanisms within both spheres that together mobilise authority and allow resistance to sanctions in practice.

To operationalise the concept of a state–society complex in sanctions research, this research adopts a critical theory viewpoint that amalgamates top-down and bottom-up approaches to develop a target-centred framework. The former approach focuses on how state institutions, ruling elites, and formal structures of governance shape the response to sanctions, while the latter emphasises the role of social networks and community-based forms of organisation in mediating the lived effects of sanctions. The shift redirects the analytical lens from the sender (sanctioner country) to the target (sanctioned country), examining state and society as an integrated whole in the sanctioned countries in order to address the

long-neglected question of why sanctions work or fail. Yet, the “whyness” of sanctions may remain elusive. To clarify this, the study draws on three theoretical frameworks: Max Weber’s Theory of Social and Economic Organisation; Michael Mann’s IEMP model, representing ideological, economic, military, and political sources of power; and Robert Cox’s theory of Historical Structures.

This thesis takes a critical approach, while substantiating a target-centred approach by delineating features from these three theoretical concepts, looking at what is useful and less beneficial in these theories, and finally replacing the less useful components. I employ this principle to generate a detailed, a powerful version of target-centred scheme. However, before clarifying this new critical standpoint, it is essential to conceptualise and characterise Weber, Mann and Cox’ theories to scrutinise their strengths and weaknesses.

2.2.1 Weber’s Approach on Social and Economic Organisation

In his book *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* Weber (1920) notes that the state and society are characterised by the amalgamation of three fundamental principles of solidarity, market, and authority. Once established, these principles generate outcomes that affect subsequent alternatives of state-society interaction. Weber’s conceptualisation and characterisation of these three principles offers valuable insights for understanding the dynamics of interactions and their subsequent outcomes within each society.

2.2.1.1 Solidary Social Relationships: Communal and Associative

Weber refrained to interpret social structures in the context of complete entities, mainly within the realm of sociological inquiry. Sociology, in Weber’s opinion, is focused on understanding the behaviour of individuals within society (Bendix 1998, p. 269). To understand the social basis of individual’s behaviour, he assessed the impact of religion upon the conduct of humans with the aim of defining and characterising solidarity (Weber 1904).

Solidarity denotes to the shared sense of community, collective identity, and common values that bind individuals together. It includes the social cohesion and collective action that can arise in response to perceived injustices or oppressive conditions (Weber 1920). Solidarity in the context of social relations is categorised into two main types: communal and associative.

A social relationship is communal when it is guided by a subjective sentiment shared by the involved parties. This sentiment is either emotional or traditional, meaning a shared sense of belonging. For

example, it could be founded on a religious brotherhood, an intimate or romantic relationship, a relation of personal loyalty, or a national community.

An associative social relationship is influenced by alignment of interests or agreements on absolute values like human rights. It manifests in three primary cases: first, a free market exchange which signifies a concession between conflicting yet mutually dependent interests; second, a pure voluntary association focusing on long-term goals for its members' interests; and finally, individuals willingly united based on commitment to universal values. Such associations do not encourage emotional interests, seeking to serve a common "cause" (Weber 1904). In most social relationships, communal aspects coexist with associative factors to reinforce collective solidarity in a society.

Social relationships, whether communal or associative, can be categorised as "open" or "closed". The former welcomes anyone willing to participate in accordance with the established rules, while the latter highlights exclusion, limitations, or conditional participation based on obligatory regulations (Weber 1904, p. 139).

Individuals tend to favour an open relationship when they expect that admitting others would boost their situation in terms of quality, security, or satisfaction. On the other hand, a closed relationship is preferred when their expectations involve advancing interests through monopolistic tactics. In a closed relationship, monopolised benefits are maintained through competitions limited to the members within a group, such as a political party (Weber 1904, p. 140).

2.2.1.2 Market

The market constitutes the economic realm and the mechanisms through which goods and services are exchanged, founded on economic provision and regulation. The former emphasises the importance of the status of money and appropriation. The control, over money funds, both in terms of administration and remuneration, represents the most suitable economic mode of provisioning within an economic system as it serves as a means of payment which is also a means of exchange. On the other hand, rights acquired by individuals through inheritance or hereditary groups, whether they are communal or associative, will be referred to as the "property" of the individual or the respective groups. When the property is appropriated to a specific group, it is called "appropriation". Appropriation can be carried out by an organised group, by a category of individuals distinguished by specific characteristics, or by individuals on a hereditary basis (Weber 1904).

Market regulation refers to a situation where there is a substantive constraint applied by an order regarding the marketability of specific potential items for trade or on the market freedom of specific

participants. Market regulation is influenced by (1) tradition, based on religion, as actors become accustomed to accepted restrictions on exchange; (2) convention, through choosing certain objects as eligible for trade or permitting certain items to be subject to free competition and free price determination; (3) law, through legal limitations on the exchange and competitive freedom; (4) voluntary approach shaped by the interplay of individual's interests. In this context, substantial market regulation is in place despite the market's formal freedom remaining intact. This type of regulation typically arises when certain market participants, due to their complete or nearly exclusive control over the possession or access to certain utilities, can manipulate the market conditions to the extent that they remove the market freedom of other participants (Dorfleitner et al. 2017).

The market, according to Weber (1904), is a "constellation of interests" in which religious ideas should be emphasised for the understanding of economic behaviour. For example, Weber assesses the impact of Protestant ethics on economic activities through some "rationalisations" such as the careful calculation of costs and benefits and the reinvestment of profits to accomplish economic growth. From his viewpoint, this rationalised economic approach contributed to the development of capitalism⁶, which is strongly associated with the class formation in a society (Somers 1996).

Weber's sociology of religion underscores the important role of social classes in understanding how religious ideas frame society. Examining the formation of classes and their material interests offers insight into the influence of religious concepts. Weber conceptualises "class" as any group with similar chances for a supply of goods for the sake of income in a given economic order (Weber 1904, pp. 181-182). As such, the fundamental core of class is grounded on the power of avoiding unequal distribution of opportunities. The power here is linked to the system of social action of corporate groups as "the realisation of most societal goals, even in situations in which the actor's commitment and knowledge are considerable, requires the application of power" (Etzioni 1968, p. 314).

Weber (1920) concludes that the market is the economic foundation of individual action motivated by power of control and disposal of utilities. The term "utility" refers to tangible benefits and resources for present or future use, becoming the specific focus of provision by one or more individuals involved in economic activities, which are guided by the importance of utilities as means to achieve economic objectives, including goods and services. However, goods and services do not cover all economically oriented utilities.

⁶ Robert G. Gilpin (2000) conceptualise capitalism as an economic system that relies on the private ownership of the means of production, with the primary objective of operating these means to maximise profit.

However, gaining any control over utilities often requires a certain level of authority on the part of individuals (Sikor and Lund 2009). To assess the connections between market and authority, Weber examines under what special conditions (such as the approval of gods or priests or the consent of electors), members of the corporate group implement authority. Therefore, he characterised three types of authority known as rational, traditional, and charismatic ones, in which he delves into examining the dynamics of authority among rulers and their followers in accordance to the degree of legitimacy.

2.2.1.3 Authority

Rational authority is founded on bureaucratic administration and formal procedures, requiring individuals to comply impersonal rules ratified by officials. Its efficiency is dependent on three interrelated ideas: (1) mutual consent in establishing legal rules, extending authority to individuals; (2) the typical individual in authority occupies an “office”; (3) obedience to the “law” within various organisations (Weber 1920).

Traditional authority, grounded in the sanctity of tradition, varies from rational authority, which gains legitimacy through established procedures. Its legitimacy is driven from a ruler’s adherence to traditional norms. This authority is categorised into two subtypes based on the presence of an “administrative framework” in corporate groups. The first subset includes gerontocracy, where elders hold authority, and patriarchy, where an individual governs within a kinship-based group. The second subset encompasses patrimonial authority, with dominance grounded in tradition, and sultanism, where discretion plays a central role, detached from tradition (Weber 1920).

In the case of gerontocracy and patriarchy, the means of administration are typically controlled by the corporate group or by the individual responsible for carrying out the governing functions. In this context, the administrative functions are executed on behalf of the entire group. On the contrary, appropriation by the leader is a feature of patriarchy, which may vary widely in degree, ranging from claiming complete ownership of the land to constraining administrative members’ rights (Weber 1920, p. 349).

Lastly, charismatic authority rests on belief in an exceptional individual with extraordinary qualities, often known as the “father”. This leader’s authority transcends established rules, relying on continuous displays of charismatic characteristics like magical powers, heroism or other extraordinary talents. Charismatic activity is obvious in religious proselytising and the use of force, which both offer the means for administration and the remuneration of the followers, namely free gifts and “booty”. As such, the nature of corporate group subjected to charismatic authority is grounded in an emotional form of communal relationships because charisma, in Weber’s term, “is a typical anti-economic force” (Weber 1920, p. 362).

Furthermore, the administrative staff of a charismatic leader does not include “officials,” and its members typically lack technical training. The members are not chosen based on social privileges, but in accordance to the possession of charismatic qualities (Bendix 1998).

Charismatic authority abruptly contrasts with both legal and traditional authorities, regardless of patriarchal, patrimonial, or any other forms. Legal and traditional authorities are characterised by the control over actions and obedience to rules, while charismatic authority is foreign to all rules. Traditional authority relies on the past customs and rules, while charismatic authority rejects the past and in this sense embodies a revolutionary force. It does not recognise the gaining of power based on property ownership, either on the part of a chief or of socially privileged groups. The only source of legitimacy for charismatic authority is personal charisma, as long as it is demonstrated through recognition and is able to please its followers or disciples (Bendix 1998, pp. 361-2).

In a nutshell, Weber assessed the effect of solidarity on the market and how the pursuit of material interests and social status can, in turn, frame the evolution of solidarity and authority. These lines of investigation have indicated that individuals in society interact with each other based on their material and religious interests, and they stand in relation of authority and compliance on the basis of legitimacy. Through this examination, a comprehensive view of society could be obtained.

Nevertheless, Talcott Parsons (1964) assumes that Weber failed to offer a systematic functional analysis as he exaggerates certain features of reality whose choice is religiously determined, having a “utopian” character. “Scientific conceptualisation is in the nature of the case abstract and never fully exhausts or reflects concrete reality,” Parsons added. It seems that Weber, while formulating his ideal types of society, grapples with various ideas that may not be inherently interconnected. These comprise the abstract nature of thought, the differentiation between rational and irrational behaviour, and the normative orientation of action. Even though he is abstract in relation to reality, this abstractness does not need a sole emphasis on ideologically preferred value elements. Ideal types, while abstract, may have the capacity to include all the “relevant” characteristics of a genuine social phenomenon (Parsons 1964).

Weber also examines the market in the context of actor’s monopolistic control over utilities which are affected by religious ideas, conventions, and laws. This thesis uses the market features of Weber’s theory by assessing the market in the context of organisation of production. It moves beyond Weber’s emphasis on the distribution of utilities and also delves into the extraction, transformation, and consumption of natural resources, offering a more comprehensive analysis of the market.

Moreover, Weber's emphasis on social class may be less relevant in certain contexts, principally in parts of the global South where class boundaries are often fluid or difficult to define. In these regions, class distinctions do not necessarily constitute the main forces shaping political and economic struggles. Instead, other forms of social division—such as race, ethnicity, religion, sect, language, or gender—can carry equal or even greater importance. These identities frequently intersect with class, creating complex social structures and multiple sources of political tension. Accordingly, while political and economic dynamics remain driven by conflicts among social forces, the identities and interests of these forces often extend beyond class-based distinctions.

Finally, this thesis also adopts Weber's notion of solidarity as it is the basis of any social relationship and necessary for collective action that can emerge in response to various situations in a society. Although market and solidarity in Weber's theory influence each other mutually based on power dynamics, the actions are normatively oriented rather than driven by power sources. Weber also does not offer any amalgamation of different power sources, blurring national networks of interactions. To overcome this obstacle, I employ Mann's theory of social power to offer a multiple overlapping and intersecting networks of power in which the action is embedded and exercised.

2.2.2 Mann's Theory of Social Power

The most established form of power breakdown, defined as “distributive power,” is based on this notion that every increase of the power of actor A necessarily diminishes the power of actor B, and *vice versa* (Mills 2001; Dahl 2007). Mark Haugaard (2002) contends that power is a “family resemblance concept,” meaning it cannot be reduced to a singular dimension, power should be conceptualised in a contextualised manner. Mann presents the idea of “collective power,” emphasising situations where A and B, acting together, would be able to boost their joint power over third parties (Schroeder 2016). However, Mann's examination also encompasses other four forms of power: extensive *vs.* intensive and authoritative *vs.* diffused power.

Extensive power organises people across broad distributed territories, whereas the intensive one tries to mobilise a high level of participants' commitment. The combination of these types of power improves collective cooperation (Mann 1986). Authoritative power relies on commands for obedience, while diffuse power is not directly commanded and is exercised in a decentred way. According to Mann, the power could be exercised effectively if we amalgamate collective and distributive, extensive and intensive, authoritative and diffuse power.

Mann's IEMP model offers a comprehensive framework for understanding dynamics amongst groups within or between societies and states, offering a greater insight into comprehending how countries came to be what they are today. According to Mann, "societies are constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting networks of social power" (Mann 1986, p. 1). The four power sources create organisational networks that shape the actions of states. These networks serve as "containers" for the power sources (Hall and Schroeder 2006), defining the origins of societal dynamics. The question that emerges here is what clarifies briefly the genesis of power sources.

Ideology, as Mann (1993, p. 7) states, revolves around human fundamental needs for ultimate meaning, shared norms, and ritual practices. It stems from the human desire to understand the world and engage within a community that shares these understandings. Mann categorises ideology into transcendent (autonomous, collective, extensive), immanent (distributive, intensive), and institutionalised forms. Transcendent ideology, the most ambitious one, generate new influential networks cutting across economic, military, and political spheres—examples comprise new religions or environmental movements. Immanent ideological power, distributive and intensive in nature, strengthen existing power networks, like the working class finding identity through socialist ideals. Institutionalised ideology, predominant in stable societies, is often hidden inside institutions, seeking to preserve societal status quo through conservative values (Mann 2012).

Economic power derives "from the need to extract, transform, distribute and consume resources of nature" (Mann 1993, p. 7). Therefore, the economic network is a set of institutions and organisations concerned with satisfying material needs through this process. Economic power is not an authoritative form of power, but it is diffused. The scope of some economic organisations does not control a particular territory, they regulate a specific function and try to expand the scope transnationally. Yet, some economic organisations are authoritative and territorial which have been subject to state control (Mann 1984, p. 199). Economic relations are considered a dominant source of power as they combine the intensive mobilisation of labour with extensive networks of exchange.

Military power, as Mann (1986, p. 15) defines, is a "social organisation of concentrated lethal violence," rooted in the need for organised defense and its potential for aggression. Mann (2012, pp. 415-416) distinguishes military power's unique developmental logic, characterised by sudden, occasional, and lethal exercise, in contrast to the territorial and institutionalised nature of political power. Military power operates with fewer rule constraints, manifesting in stable regimes or enduring through destructive procedures. While militaries can function independently, an overlap with political power exists. For

example, in despotic systems, rulers wary of military autonomy might organise their security battalions and guards to counter potential threats (Mann 2012).

Mann describes political power as “centralised and territorial regulation of social life. The basic function of government is the provision of order over this realm” (Mann 2012, p. 3). It means “state power. It is essentially authoritative, commanded and willed from a centre” (Mann 1986, p. 25). Unlike Weber, Mann (2012) confines the term “political” to the state, emphasising territorial regulation in political power networks. Political power is featured in two forms: despotic and infrastructural. Despotic power permits state elites to act without consulting civil society groups, while infrastructural power is the state’s capacity to penetrate civil society and implement political decisions throughout the realm (Mann 1984). Consequently, states can exert their strength through despotic power, exercising authoritative control, or through infrastructural power, reinforcing cooperation across their territories (Mann 2012).

Mann’s IEMP has been influential and persuasive as it signifies a valuable step forward in comprehensively elucidating the power dynamics at a macro level (Domhoff 1993). However, this framework suffers from two weaknesses: one structural and the other conceptual. The fundamental aspect of Mann’s theoretical framework, serving as the basis for the categorisation of the four power sources, known as networks, rooted in his conception of that these sources are the ways through which actors pursue their goals. Yet, the weakness of Mann’s theory, as Joseph Whitmeyer (1997) observes, is a tendency to primarily recognise “predominant” actors —such as armies, bureaucracies, and churches— as power holders in Mann’s theory. In essence, this leans toward classifying power based on describing an experience from the first-person-perspective rather than adopting an analytical approach grounded in the examination of process. While Mann does, to a certain extent, derive his classification from process, his approach is inconsistent, possibly due to not clarifying this analytical foundation (Whitmeyer 1997).

The conceptual defect relates to the ideological aspect of Mann’s theory. Mann makes two claims about the importance of ideological power. One of his most extended arguments is the emphasis on the role of ideology in shaping historical trajectories, particularly the rise of the West (Mann 1986, pp. 300-380). Mann argues that the extensive power of the Western church and its correlation with immanent morale of the landed nobility created a fertile soil for the emergence of capitalism through stabilising property relations which lead to the growing of commerce (Hall and Schroeder 2006). However, the second claim downplays the significance of ideological implications in the modern era. The influence of church networks lost its importance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as economic and military dominated the first and economic and political the second (Mann 1986, p. 472). Accordingly, ideological networks lost much of their intensive power in the West, but what about the rest? What Mann

undermines is the persistence of ideology into the modern era. Hall and Schroeder (2006) proposes that Mann downplays the prominence of ideological implications as he does not distinguish between different types of regimes' ideologies. Yet, the ideological feature of Mann's theory remains valuable as it is not solely reducible to religion, a reduction that Weber made in his framework.

Moreover, I employ Mann's ideological, economic, military, and political networks to develop the target-centred lens through defining spheres of state-society activity within the context of power. I use economic power because it offers a more comprehensive view than Weber's conceptualisation of the market. This emphasis extends beyond the mere distribution of material capabilities to encompass their extraction, transformation, and distribution under the variable of production. Military power is also a useful aspect. Despite being regarded as a distinct organisational entity in some cases, there exists an overlap between military, political and economic powers (McKinlay and Cohan 1975). Finally, political power, in accordance with Weber's typology of authority, is also used to examine whether target states are infrastructural, despotic in nature, or a combination of both.

As discussed, Mann's theory suffers from not being analytically grounded in the examination of a process. To overcome this obstacle, I employ Cox's theory regarding the historical configuration of structures which adopts an analytical approach to explore the process through its concern surrounding the relationship between the state and society.

2.2.3 Cox's Configuration of Structure

Robert Cox is widely regarded as the founding figure of critical theory in IR. For him, the historical structure is based on a particular interactive configuration of forces: material capabilities, ideas and institutions. This configuration does not mechanically dictate actions in any direct or mechanical manner; rather, it imposes pressures and restraints. Individuals and groups might respond to these pressures by resisting and opposing them, but they cannot entirely reject them. When they successfully resist an existing historical structure, it is often accompanied by the establishment of an alternative emerged from a configuration of forces (Cox 1981, p. 135).

For him (1981, p. 136), material capabilities embrace technological and organisational capabilities, natural resources, stocks of equipment (e.g. industries and armaments) and the wealth which can command and influence these resources. Ideas, in contrast, are based on intersubjective meanings cutting across social division, whereas people are organised and governed by the states, which hold authority over defined territories. Ideas also derive from rival collective images of social order, rooted in religion (Cox 1981). There is both a divergence and convergence between these two forms of ideas. Both sets of ideas relate

to the material conditions of the group in question. Intersubjective meanings are broadly used in a common way throughout a particular historical structure and create common ground of social discourse; however, collective images might be several and opposed. The clashes between rival collective images paves the way of an alternative structure based on the possible material and institutional capabilities (Cox 1981, p. 136). Lastly, institution seeks to stabilise and make a particular historical arrangement more sustainable. Institutions seek to reflect their power dynamics, tending to foster collective images consistent with such power dynamics. Accordingly, institutions either could be an arena in which opposing tendencies battle or as a stimulus for the foundation of opposing institution which reflect divergent tendencies based on power dynamics (Cox 1981). Institutions includes particular amalgamation of ideas and material power, which, subsequently, influence the evolution of ideas and material capabilities (Cox 1981, pp. 136-137).

Material power, ideals and institutions interact reciprocally across three spheres of activity: the organisation of production that engenders social forces, forms of state, and historical structure. Each sphere offers insight on how alternative forms of a structure may emerge. In this dynamic paradigm, social forces, which are known as the main collective actors generated by the social relations of production, operate within all levels of activity. Thus, the rise of contending social forces, linked to changes in the organisation of production, provokes transformations in the structure of states which subsequently causes a modification in existing order (Cox 1981, pp. 135-138). Yet, the relationship among the three levels is not exclusively linear and can alter based on state-society dynamics.

The introduction of Cox's theory played a vital role in revitalising the critical scholarship within IR through facilitating the unpacking of the structure of historical orders, allowing analytical consideration of the components creating any particular configuration. Cox establishes an intricate connection between material capabilities, institutional forces, and ideas. This relationship subsequently contributes to the growth of both "modes of social relations of production" and various "forms of state." By adopting this standpoint, it becomes possible to construct a comprehensive understanding of the state-society complex from the bottom up (Gill 1987).

But, Cox's theory is not without its limitations. Forces are conceived broadly and inclusively as they are socially driven. But what if they are politically driven, either entirely or partially? In Cox's words, "power" and "production" take precedence over "authority" as the central concepts. Yet, in certain cases like the case of Iran in 1979, ideological and authoritative foundations were key factors underlying the development of new socio-political movements and revolutionary forces (Parsa 1989). To address this limitation, an appropriate approach is to suggest that Cox's categories are not exhaustive, but rather open

to redefinition and adaptation for diverse issues. Then, a question arises: how can we go beyond Cox's theory to develop a more comprehensive and coherent framework, explaining a broader range of the dynamics of emerging structures, particularly in a sanctioned context?

2.3 Towards a Target-centred Lens

This section develops a target-centred analytical model that draws on conceptual elements extracted from Weber, Mann, and Cox to examine how states under sanctions resist external pressure. Each theorist offers a distinctive yet complementary lens for understanding how power, structure, and agency interact within states when their sovereignty and autonomy are constrained. The model does not seek to synthesise their theories into a single paradigm but to eclectically incorporate selected dimensions of their work to form an analytical tool for examining sanctions from the perspective of the targeted state and its internal dynamics of resistance.

Together, these elements form the theoretical backbone of the target-centred model of resistance (Figure 2.1), which conceptualises how states respond to and endure sanctions through three interrelated domains: production, solidarity, and institutions. Each of these domains connects directly to the processes through which sanctioned states sustain functionality and legitimacy under external constraint. Production draws chiefly from Mann's economic power, referring to the state's capability to sustain economic extraction, transformation, and distribution despite restrictions imposed by sanctions. Solidarity builds on Weber's notion of legitimacy and Mann's societal networks, highlighting how collective identities, ideologies, and social cohesion generate resistance and public support in the face of economic hardship. Finally, institutions combine Weberian bureaucracy and Coxian institutional structures to explain how formal and informal governance mechanisms mediate between state and civil society, enabling adaptive responses and policy improvisation that mitigate the effects of sanctions.

In this way, the model transforms the abstract theoretical contributions of Weber, Mann, and Cox into a context-sensitive framework for examining how targeted states negotiate power internally and externally. It links the conceptual dimensions of production, solidarity, and institutions directly to the mechanisms of resistance that permit target states to endure, adapt, and reconstitute authority under sustained sanctions pressure.

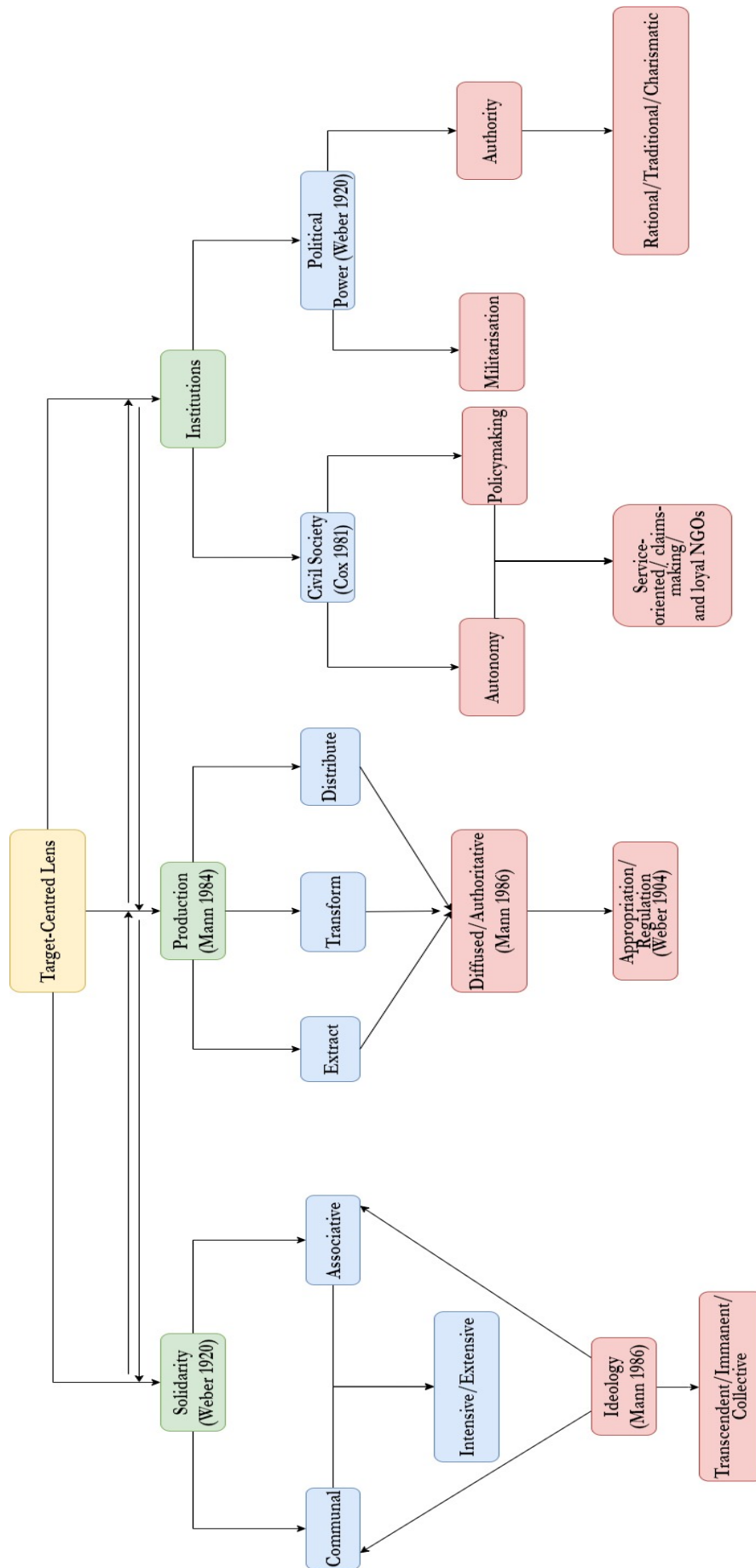


Figure 2.1: The diagram shows the components of a target-centred lens.

2.3.1 Applying the Framework To Iran and Venezuela

By amalgamating three theories, production is defined as a constellation of interests in which it is affected by extraction, transformation, and distribution policies. This layered framework highlights not only the mechanisms through which resources are mobilised and allocated, but also the competing socio-political forces that shape such policies. For example, extraction raises issues of ownership and access to natural resources, transformation reflects the state's capacity to industrialise and generate added value, whereas distribution concerns how benefits are circulated across different classes and sectors. Together, these dynamics can either strengthen dependence on narrow resource bases or foster economic diversification, thereby affecting the target's capacity to sustain resistance against sanctions. By examining such an objective, the section elucidates whether the production realm operates as a diffused form of power—characterised by open, negotiated, and pluralistic relations—or an authoritative form of power, marked by centralised control, exclusivity, and coercive enforcement.

Production extends beyond the economic sphere to impact political parties, social classes, and the dynamics of their interaction, a process referred to as socio-political solidarity. This form of solidarity can generate either monopolistic or pluralistic forms, each shaping the capacity of a society to resist sanctions in distinct ways. In monopolistic contexts, where political and economic elites consolidate power, resistance typically relies on centralised decision-making and restricted space for dissent. Such arrangements often reinforce authoritarian tendencies and produce intensive forms of power rooted in communal or associative ties that privilege a particular social class. In contrast, pluralistic solidarity allows diverse groups and classes to participate in resistance, generating broader strategies grounded in grassroots mobilisation and civic organisations. In this setting, communal and associative relationships combine to create more extensive forms of power that cut across different social classes. In both cases, the nature of solidarity specifies how sanctions are perceived, contested, and transformed into collective action, eventually shaping whether a sanctioned society becomes more resistant or more susceptible.

In analysing the institutions, the research assesses the degree of the institutionalisations of political parties and civil society in Iran and Venezuela. The institutionalisation of political parties is essential because it determines the extent to which they can structure political competition, aggregate societal interests, and offer channels for political participation beyond clientelistic or personalistic ties (Levitsky et al. 2016). Likewise, the institutionalisation of civil society organisations is critical for reinforcing accountability, social mobilisation, and democratic competition, particularly in contexts where authoritarian tendencies and external pressures—such as sanctions—undermine participatory governance (Diamond 1999). Without such institutionalisation, both political parties and civil society risk fragmentation, weakening

their capacity to mediate between state and society, and reducing their influence on shaping inclusive policymaking (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). However, in both Iran and Venezuela, the institutionalisation of political parties is shaped by authority—whether grounded in rational, traditional, or charismatic forms—as a means of legitimising political order, and by militarisation, which further obscures institutional development since the armed forces play a key role in safeguarding sanctioned states and structuring elite competition.

Concentrating solely on the state implies a top-down approach that neglects the societal role. The persistence of some sanctioned state demonstrates that society could have an opposite function when it comes across sanctions in terms of bolstering the target's resistance against sanctions instead of toppling it. Such a perspective proves the existence of agency in the population, or at least among those groups who support the target state. To integrate society into the analysis, the institutionalisation of civil society is shaped by how non-governmental organisations (NGOs) assert their autonomy and participate in policymaking, thereby translating bottom-up impact into practice. The capacity of NGOs to act autonomously is critical, as autonomy not only allows them to advocate for marginalised groups but also safeguards against co-optation by state or elite interests (Edwards and Hulme 1996). Without autonomy, NGOs risk becoming extensions of the state, thereby undermining their ability to offer alternative perspectives and genuine policy input. Additionally, policymaking engagement by civil society actors is essential for creating inclusive governance frameworks, where diverse voices contribute to the design and evaluation of social and economic policies.

By stipulating the interconnections between production, solidarity, and institutions, this study seeks to go beyond exclusive top-down or bottom-up viewpoints. Instead, it suggests an overlapping state–society complex in which power is simultaneously exercised from above and below to resist sanctions in Iran and Venezuela. The efficiency of resistance depends on the dynamic interplay of these three dimensions, which together shape the emergence of weak, moderate, or strong resistance models against sanctions across the two cases. This interplay is further operationalised through the Lagrangian function.

2.3.2 The Lagrangian Function

Recognising the functionality of interactions among production, solidarity, and institutions is necessary for examining resistance models against sanctions. The analytical foundation for this discussion draws upon the Lagrangian function, originally developed by Joseph-Louis Lagrange (1788) in the 18th century as a mathematical optimisation method to examine systems subject to constraints. In contemporary social science, this framework has been adapted to capture the balance between competing forces—such as

structure and agency, or constraint and adaptation—allowing the modelling of equilibrium in complex socio-political environments. Scholars (Cowan and Foray 2002; Epstein 2006; Abghari 2007; Loucks 2022) have employed qualitative extensions of the Lagrangian function to conceptualise interactions among interdependent variables under restrictive conditions, mainly where numerical precision is constrained but relational dynamics remain analytically important.

Building on this foundation, a resistance production function, grounded in the state–society nexus, can be built to conceptualise the relationship between production, solidarity, and institutions as input factors, with resistance emerging as the resulting output. The Lagrangian function presents a structurally flexible framework to synthesise findings from empirical data, such as those presented in Chapters 5 and 7, and measure Iran and Venezuela as weak, moderate, or strong resistance models against sanctions.

The qualitative application of the Lagrangian function offers several benefits. First, it permits researchers to model the dynamic and often nonlinear relationships among production, solidarity, and institutions in target states, capturing the interaction between individual agency, structural limitations, and state–society interactions. Second, the function offers a nuanced understanding of tensions between competing dynamics (Loucks 2022), including resistance and compliance, state authority and grassroots mobilisation, or socio-political unity versus fragmentation. By conceptualising resistance as an “objective function” limited by sanctions and structural constraints in Iran and Venezuela, the model shows how actors strategically navigate complex environments.

Nevertheless, the qualitative Lagrangian approach also entails certain drawbacks. Unlike quantitative applications, it does not design precise numerical predictions or numerically specific optimisation results (Abghari 2007), which can weaken its generalisability. Likewise, interpreting the interactions among multiple variables needs careful contextual knowledge and could be influenced by the researcher’s subjective judgement. Despite these challenges, the model remains beneficial for sanctions and resistance research, serving as a theoretical lens for examining equilibrium, negotiation, and adaptive strategies.

By harking back to the lacunae in both sender-centred and earlier target-centred literatures, this research underscores how its approach fills key conceptual and empirical gaps. While sender-centred examines privilege the motivations, strategic rationality, and policy outcomes of sanctioning states, earlier target-focused research has remained largely confined to economic dimensions of adaptation. This thesis addresses these shortcomings by providing a more comprehensive, target-centred framework that integrates the economic, social, and political dynamics of resistance—revealing how solidarity, production, and institutions processes interact to sustain sanctioned societies. In doing so, it proceeds

the literature beyond existing models, presenting a decolonial and multidimensional account of how targets endure and transform under external pressure.

2.4 How the Lagrangian Function Operates

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, in sanctioned countries, economies revolve around the organisation of material capabilities, political systems operate on rational, traditional, or charismatic foundations, and socio-political dynamics emerge from the interaction between social classes, civil society organisations and political parties. Together, these processes form a target-centred lens that categorises resistance models.

A resistance production function, grounded in the state–society complex, can be formulated to capture the relationship between production, solidarity, and institutions as input factors, with resistance the resulting output. Although the interrelationships among these three variables are complex, the following R function equation is designed to show possible ways these inputs interact in generating R to sanctions within target countries.

1. $R = f(P, S, I)$, where R stands for resistance, P represents production, S stands for solidarity, and I is institutions.

$$R_P > 0, R_S > 0, R_I > 0, R_{PSI} > 0, R_{PP} < 0, R_{SS} < 0$$

$R_P > 0$, $R_S > 0$, and $R_I > 0$ represent the marginal products of production, solidarity, and institutions as input factors. Their positive values indicate that increasing any of these inputs contributes positively to the generation of R. $R_{PSI} > 0$ similarly indicates that the interaction among P, S, and I has a positive effect on R. This means that not only do individual factors matter, but their combined presence amplifies the capacity for R, creating a synergistic effect whereby the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

By contrast, $R_{PP} < 0$, $R_{SS} < 0$ denote the marginal products of successive use of P and S factors alone, which are negative. This reflects the law of diminishing returns: relying solely on either P or S eventually yields progressively smaller gains in R.

The R is shaped by the degree of state-society complex, constrained by sanctions and structural constraints (SSC). It can be written as:

$$2. R^{SSC} = f(ED^{ETD}, PP^{AtM}, CS^{AuPM})$$

Here, ED denotes economic diversification, representing the P, PP represents political parties, and CS refers to civil society. Therefore, R depends on the interactions among these three main dimensions

which represent the economic, social, and political spheres in the context of SSC. Improved ED minimises the economic pressure derived from sanctions. However, it is dependent on how ETD—extraction, transformation, and distribution—functions. If sanctioned countries could perform well in those three aspects, the state-society complex could benefit from greater economic resistance and enhance its bargaining capacity toward sanctions. Yet, the R cannot be achieved solely through ED; it requires the active engagement of PP, affected by authority (At) and militarisation (M), in aggregating the level of solidarity of different social classes and coordinating policy responses through political structures. CS aims to mobilise resources and maintain and/or improve bottom-up institutionalisation. However, CS is also affected by the degree of its autonomy (Au) and its ability to impact policymaking (PM). Where ED, CS, and PP operate synergistically, R is strengthened, enabling the state to convert limited resources into more sustainable forms of R. Conversely, fragmentation—whether in weak PP, co-opted CS, or uneven ETD—reduces the capacity of sanctioned countries to withstand external pressure, leaving R weak and uneven.

Given the R, states targeted by sanctions would select combinations of ED, PP, and CS in order to maximise R within the SSC. The Lagrangian function for maximising the state-society resistance production function (equation 1), subject to R's components expressed by equation (2), can then be written as equation (3) below:

$$3. \text{ Max } R = f(P, S, I) + \lambda [R^{\text{SSC}} - f(ED^{\text{ETD}}, PP^{\text{AtM}}, CS^{\text{AuPM}})]$$

Maximising the R, as expressed in Equation (3), involves applying the method of Lagrange multipliers, to include constraints directly in the optimisation. Specifically, this requires taking the partial derivatives of the Lagrangian function with respect to each independent variable—P, S, and I—and also with respect to the Lagrange multiplier (λ). This finds the points where the slope of R “matches” the slope of the SSC—these are the points where R could be maximised under SSC. Solving the resulting system of equations yields the optimal combination of inputs that maximises R within the SSC. Formally, these conditions can be expressed as:

$$4. \frac{R_P}{R_S} = \frac{\partial P}{\partial S}, \frac{R_P}{R_I} = \frac{\partial P}{\partial I}, \frac{R_S}{R_I} = \frac{\partial S}{\partial I}$$

Equation (4) situates the problem within a standard optimisation framework, where countries like Venezuela and Iran aim to maximise R under the binding effects of SSC. Within this setting, the state is limited to adjusting P, S, and I only insofar as these adjustments remain consistent with the SSC. The optimum is achieved at the point where the marginal gains from increasing P, S, or I correspond exactly

to the restrictions imposed by SSC. This is the role of the Lagrange multiplier: it ensures that the gradient of the resistance function is proportional to the gradient of the SSC constraint.

The iso-resistance curve illustrates all possible combinations of P, S, and I that generate the same level of R. Along this curve, the state can substitute one input for another while maintaining the same degree of R. Such substitutions reflect both trade-offs and complementarities: additional increases in one input may produce smaller returns if another is already saturated (diminishing returns), while certain combinations of inputs are more effective together than individually (synergies).

The ratios illustrate the trade-offs the state is willing to make among different inputs in generating R. $\frac{R_P}{R_S}$ reflects the extent to which production can be substituted for solidarity, $\frac{R_P}{R_I}$ captures the willingness to replace institutions with production, and $\frac{R_S}{R_I}$ indicates the willingness to substitute institutions with solidarity. $\frac{\partial P}{\partial S}$, $\frac{\partial P}{\partial I}$, and $\frac{\partial S}{\partial I}$ represent the actual trade-offs imposed by sanctions in the state–society complex (i.e., how much one input must change if another falls, to keep institutional power stable). At the sanctioned state’s resistance strategy, the trade-offs between P, S, and I inside the resistance production function must match the trade-offs imposed by constraints (R^{SSC}).

In Chapter 8, I operationalise the Lagrangian function to comparatively analyse the extent of resistance in Iran and Venezuela against sanctions. By employing this framework, I model how production, solidarity, and institutions interact as input variables within each country’s state–society complex to generate resistance as an output. This approach enables a systematic evaluation of how each country balances structural constraints and adaptive strategies under sanctions, identifying whether Iran and Venezuela exhibit weak, moderate, or strong resistance models.

2.5 Conclusion

Shifting from a problem-solving to a critical theory standpoint allows this research to transcend the limitations of state-centric frameworks and reorient sanctions research around a target-centred approach. While problem-solving theories stabilise existing structures by privileging the state and marginalising society, critical theory interrogates the historical and social foundations of power relations, exposing contradictions that problem-solving theories overlook. By amalgamating top-down and bottom-up dynamics through the concept of the state–society synergy (Evans 1997), this alternative framework seeks to capture the synergies that shape resistance to sanctions. To refine this perspective, this research draws

on the fusion of Weber, Mann, and Cox's theories. This process lays the groundwork for articulating a more comprehensive, critical, and target-centred analytical scheme for understanding sanctions.

Weber's framework offers a useful starting point for understanding the dynamics of state–society interaction, emphasising how collective identities, economic exchanges, and forms of legitimacy condition social behaviour and political order. However, as the discussion illustrates, Weber's approach remains abstract and at times imperfect, particularly in its treatment of overlapping power networks and the multiplicity of social divisions beyond class. This gap necessitates the incorporation of complementary perspectives, such as Mann's IEMP model and Cox's historical structures, which permit a more nuanced and process-oriented examination. By selectively incorporating critical theories, this Chapter frames a multidimensional context that captures the interplay of production, solidarity, and institutions within target societies. This synthesis not only deepens the theoretical understanding of state–society dynamics but also offers a foundation for reorienting the analysis of sanctions toward the target, providing a richer explanation of why resistance varies across different contexts.

By framing production as the interaction of extraction, transformation, and distribution processes, this research underlines the importance of economic diversification, which gives rise to either diffused or authoritative forms of power, framing a target's capacity to sustain resistance against sanctions. Additionally, solidarity—whether monopolistic or pluralistic—impacts social resistance, defining whether resistance emerges through intensive control or extensive mobilisation. The degree of institutionalisation within political parties and civil society concurrently influences the avenues through which power is exercised and contested, highlighting the pivotal roles of authority, militarisation, and civic autonomy in shaping policymaking and mediating state–society relations. Integrating this dimensions through a qualitative Lagrangian framework illuminates dynamic, nonlinear, and context-specific mechanisms that generate weak, moderate, or strong resistance models against sanctions, which offers a structured yet flexible approach for examining sanctioned societies in Iran and Venezuela. This approach ultimately transcends simplistic top-down or bottom-up understandings, capturing the intersecting and reciprocally reinforcing processes that enable sanctioned states not only to endure sanctions but to strategically adapt, negotiate, and, in some instances, transform the limitations imposed upon them.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Given the limited efficiency of sanctions in producing regime change in certain target countries (Pape 1997), this study seeks to understand how resistance to sanctions emerges and develops within the state–society complex through the interactions of production, solidarity, and institutions. To realise this, the research draws on fieldwork in two case study countries, which explores instances of resistance in practice. The empirical findings from these case studies are then employed in the following chapters to inform and operationalise a conceptual model of resistance, moving beyond abstract theorisation to a grounded understanding of how societies respond to sanctions.

This Chapter is structured in four stages. It starts by describing the process of case selection and the application of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) within a Grounded Theory (GT) framework as the research design for examining Iran and Venezuela. The second stage presents ethnography as the principal research method, evaluating both its feasibility and restraints in sanctioned contexts. These include: (1) the obstacles in obtaining access and travelling to these countries; (2) the politically sensitive nature of the settings; and (3) the researcher’s shifting positionality as both insider and outsider. The third stage identifies and clarifies different types of primary and secondary data used in relation to the study’s variables—production, solidarity, and institutions—detailing how interviews, observations, and diaries were triangulated with books, journal articles, and organisational or media publications. Ultimately, the fourth stage details the analytical approach, viewing how thematic analysis (TA) is applied to primary data and content analysis (CA) to secondary sources.

Iran and Venezuela provide valuable cases for understanding resistance to sanctions at both the state and societal levels, while avoiding the Euro- and Atlantic-centric paradox of treating state and society as disaggregated entities. As Vivien A. Schmidt (1999) confirms, effective state–society interaction cannot be limited to a liberal conception of autonomous states and societies, rather; it emerges from interwoven networks within both spheres that mobilise authority to confront sanctions. However, a target-centred perspective may still seem ambiguous and in need of more clarification. To address this, I divide the approach into two dimensions—theory and practice—in order to tackle why sanctions work or fail. The theoretical dimension draws on three critical frameworks: Weber, Mann, and Cox’s theories.⁷ These

⁷ You can find more about them in Chapter 2.

standpoints are amalgamated for their critical orientation and their shared commitment to examining the state–society complex as an integrated whole rather than as distinct parts.

3.2 Case Selection

Given the complex nature of sanctions and resistance, a small-N type study is employed because it is more suitable for following and establishing causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. Focusing on a small number of cases signifies a distinctive departure from quantitative norms that typically favour large-N type studies. This approach could yield valuable insights and lessons for the broader set of contexts (Steinberg 2007).

The next concern revolves around the selection criteria for cases in the comparison process. John Stuart Mills' (1843) method, focusing on convergence and divergence, offers valuable guidance. The method is based on the 'Most Similar Systems Design' (MSSD) and the 'Most Different Systems Design' (MDSD). These two methods are used to assess the impact of variables on a particular phenomenon by comparing cases. MSSD includes comparing distinctive characteristics among similar cases while controlling for the dependent variable (Lijphart 1971). This perspective is particularly beneficial when comparing countries within a particular geographical region that share common features, such as history, language, religion, culture, and so forth.

Despite its theoretical robustness, it is impossible to avoid the criticism that MSSD is susceptible to the challenge of “many variables, small number of cases” (Lijphart 1971, p. 685). Moreover, “imprisonment” within a geographical area would not allow greater generalisations and conclusions to be drawn beyond the cases involved (Lijphart 1971, p. 687). To overcome these pitfalls, MDSD is introduced. It entails comparing dissimilar cases that lack shared features, except for the dependent variable being explained (Landman 2008). What distinguishes MDSD is its emphasis on variables below the system level. Consequently, the researcher's task is to test and confirm a specific finding across a diverse range of systems. Such a systemic setting delivers insights into the generalisability and robustness of outcomes across diverse contexts (Anckar 2008). Yet, Sidney Tarrow (2010) argues that both MSSD and MDSD lack inherent dominance, and the choice of method depends on the specific issue under assessment.

Considering sanctions fail to change the behaviour of target countries in two-third of cases (Hufbauer et al. 1990), this study focuses on comparing two heavily sanctioned countries in the Middle East and Latin America which have experienced comprehensive and smart US sanctions. Democratic regimes were generally limited to situations in the Middle East and Latin America where they were likely to protect capital, serve US corporate class, and contribute to US political control over the regions (Chomsky 1991).

However, some countries in the Middle East have changed the dynamics of politics or the relationship between the state and society to varying degrees by rejecting liberal policies (Guazzone and Pioppi 2022). Latin America also has been considered as a site of some of “the most serious resistance to liberalism and global corporate rule” (Cumbers 2012). As such, it is necessary to identify and justify which cases present the most suitable context for analysis.

This study focuses on Iran and Venezuela as comparative cases because both are among the most heavily smart and comprehensive target countries in the contemporary geopolitical landscape. Despite sanctions, both have managed to exhibit a degree of resistance, successfully avoiding the collapse of their governments (Cardozo and Niño 2023). These cases also exemplify hybrid political systems in which authority is shared among leaders, political parties, and military institutions in a sanctioned context. However, the relative impact of each actor differs between the two countries, generating distinct political configurations.

Iran and Venezuela are both rich in natural resources, particularly in the energy sector, yet they differ significantly in how these resources are used. Iran boasts some of the world’s largest reserves of oil and natural gas, ranking second globally in natural gas reserves and fourth in crude oil reserves (OPEC N.d.). Venezuela, by contrast, possesses the world’s most substantial confirmed oil reserves, estimated to be around 304 billion b/d as the end of 2022 (British Petroleum 2023).

Both openly criticise and condemn US policies in the Middle East, Latin America, and other regions, and are members of regional alliances, seeking to offer alternatives to US dominated organisations. For example, Iran is a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the BRICS club (comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Venezuela is a leading member of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América-ALBA) and the Union of South American Nations (Unión de Naciones Suramericanas–UNASUR). Both have also faced criticism for their “authoritarian” inclinations, which are used to project regional influence in the Middle East and Latin America respectively (McCaughan 2011).

Following a MDSD, there are significant differences between the two cases. Iran and Venezuela are situated in distinct regions, and their leadership is characterised by ideologies rooted in the Islamic Revolution (1979) and the Bolivarian Revolution (1999), respectively. The Iranian political arena has become a battleground for the clash of two divergent political ideologies—one supporting liberal policies and the other opposing them. Reformists represent the former, while conservatives embody the latter (Bakhshandeh 2012). Since 1979, power has alternated between reformists and conservatives. In contrast,

the political landscape in post-revolutionary Venezuela has not showed the same dynamism concerning the presence of different discourses. The Bolivarian Revolution was spearheaded by Colonel Hugo Chávez Frías, the founder of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela—PSUV), with Nicolás Maduro —his long-serving foreign minister—as his successor.

The cases also differ in the realm of production. Iran has a diverse range of industries, including oil, gas, agriculture, manufacturing, steel and metal, petrochemicals, mining, pharmaceuticals, and services. Despite this, Iran is still an oil-dependent country. When sanctions were intensified in early 2000s, the Iranian economy relied heavily on oil exports. The prolonged restriction on oil exports has generated substantial structural changes in the Iranian economy, resulting in growth in non-oil exports, particularly in petrochemicals, light manufacturing products, and agricultural goods. By contrast, Venezuela's petroleum sector remains a vital component of the economy. Unlike the Iranian non-oil sector, the majority of Venezuelan non-oil industries are significantly influenced by the country's oil revenues with their business cycles directly linked to the fluctuations of the oil sector (Agnani and Iza 2011).

Iran and Venezuela also differ in their bottom-up approaches, which emphasises alterations from the grassroots by prioritising the engagement and empowerment of local communities and civil society organisations in decision-making processes (Edwards 2014). Namazi and Arjomandnia (2000, p. 13) note, “Iran's history, culture, and religions are rich with the tradition of organised community in social actions and volunteer working,” and the continuation of this tradition through Iran's fragile non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is gaining acknowledgment from both policy-makers and the international community. Despite these positive trends, Iran encounters significant challenges to operationalise democratic participation for all citizens, as well as the empowerment of grassroots organisations. In Venezuela, on the other hand, civil society is more intended to exacerbate political conflict rather than mediate it. It has been central in instigating violent clashes between pro-Bolivarian and anti-Bolivarian groups, highlighting its active involvement in the ongoing conflict with the state (Garcia-Guadilla et al. 2004). This internal segregation leads to ideological and political polarisation, reinforcing divisions in social classes.

3.3 Research design: QCA under GT approach

Quantitative methodology offers several strengths, particularly its ability to create measurable, generalisable data and setting up statistical relationships between variables. Its structured approach permits replicability and the identification of patterns across large populations, providing reliability and validity (Creswell and Creswell 2017). Reliability refers to whether independent researchers would identify

similar phenomena in accordance to the same or similar procedures as the original research, while the validity relates to the extent to which other researchers can align previously generated constructs with new data to achieve consistent interpretation (LeCompte and Goetz 1982). The major weakness of quantitative methodology lies in its tendency to simplify complex social realities, diminishing human experiences into numerical categories that might fail to capture underlying meanings, emotions, or contextual nuances (Bryman 2016). Moreover, quantitative research often assumes objectivity, but the design of surveys and statistical models can still be formed by researcher biases on political, economic, and cultural assumptions (Punch 2013).

Qualitative methodology, in contrast, is especially valuable for exploring social phenomena in depth, providing insights into meanings, experiences, and processes that cannot be fully understood through numbers alone. By employing interviews, observations, ethnography, or diaries, qualitative research captures the richness of context, amplifies participants' voices, and uncovers hidden or marginalised perspectives (Denzin 2009). Advocates of qualitative approaches argue that its interpretive nature permits for a more nuanced understanding of social life, acknowledging the complexity and fluidity of human behaviour (Mason 2002). While sometimes criticised for limited generalisability, qualitative research highlights depth over breadth, generating knowledge that is contextually rooted and theoretically insightful (Tracy 2010). This set of strengths is occasionally overlooked in light of criticism assuming that the qualitative method is applied unsystematically, leading to the improbability of research outcomes (Daniel 2019). Moreover, those supporting the quantitative approach observe qualitative research design as solely useful in preliminary studies and pilot tests —basically, as pre-studies carried out before the commencement of the quantitative 'real' studies (Hallberg 2006).

In qualitative research designs attention to context—including political, economic, and social conditions shaping any conceptual phenomenon—is critical for understanding complex interactions (Mason 2002). This is particularly significant when assessing a potential resistance model that integrates economic dimensions, such as production, with socio-political factors like solidarity and institutional dynamics to analyse causal interactions.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is a research method that systematically compares cases to identify causal viewpoints (Schneider and Eggert 2014). A distinguished strength of QCA revolves around its capacity to examine multiple outcomes across limited case studies, based on three assumptions: first, a combination of conditions generates an outcome; second, several different fusions of conditions could produce the same outcome; finally, a condition may be sufficient but not necessary for an outcome to occur (Jordan et al. 2011).

Although QCA allows for the analysis of small sample sizes and complex relationships, it requires an extensive gathering of case data to gain a comprehensive understanding of relevant factors. As such, identifying meaningful patterns among cases and replicability of data can be challenging. Yet, QCA responds to this criticism by explicitly clarifying conditions and outcomes under scrutiny, along with the assignment of values to these conditions and outcomes during the examination. As such, researchers can more easily assess and potentially replicate the study, allowing for more expansion of the findings.

By taking a quantitative stance, Jason Seawright (Seawright 2005a, p. 41) contends that “scholars using QCA are reasonably close to employing a regression framework,” though he argues it offers no improvement over regression analysis (Seawright 2005b, p. 24). Qualitative scholars (Ragin and Rihoux 2004; Thiem et al. 2016) assert that QCA and regression analysis rest on different assumptions, and there are distinguished disparities, such as dichotomous small-N and large-N analysis, in the mathematical and conceptual foundations of these methods.

Moreover, working with QCA data poses some challenges, particularly when researchers confront a problem marked by lack of theoretical certainty (Goertz and Mazur 2008). As such, there is a lack of consensus regarding the apt foundations for identifying and expressing empirically grounded concepts. To overcome this pitfall, Nikolaus Jopke and Lasse Gerrits (2019) suggest to include ideas from Grounded Theory (GT) in QCA to improve coding, categorisation, and interpretation, thus bolstering theoretical certainty. Both QCA and GT are inherently case-based, wherein cases serve as conceptual units engendered throughout the research process, shaping its structure.

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), through their collaborative research approach, known as “Grounded Theory,” were at the forefront of a “qualitative revolution,” (Polkinghorne 2006) whereby a theory is derived from examining the data. GT approach defied the perspective that quantitative research was the sole viable epistemological approach to inquiry. It also emphasised that qualitative approach is not limited to being valuable solely in preliminary studies and pilot tests; instead, it includes a systematic abstraction and conceptualisation of empirical data in a theory-generating process (Charmaz 2000). Therefore, GT has become the “paradigm of choice” (Scott et al. 2006, p. 538) for qualitative researchers in social sciences.

Before itemising the types of data this thesis would require to analyse methods that could validate production, solidarity, and institution. As such, it is necessary to conceptualise and characterise the methodological approaches to be used in this thesis.

3.3.1 Ethnography as the main research method

Ethnography is a qualitative approach in which researchers observe and/or engage with participants in a real-life environment. Its central aim is to provide comprehensive and detailed insights into people's viewpoints and behaviour, as well as the features of the environment they inhabit. This is accomplished through the meticulous collection of data through observations and interviews in naturally occurring situation (Scott et al. 2008). In this way, observing and interviewing of subjects occurs within a descriptive context of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that happen in groups, teams, organisations, and communities. Ethnography contrasts with abstracting reality through the use of tests, surveys, or questionnaire (Tuckman and Harper 2012).

Ethnographic observation is divided into participant and non-participant observations. In the former, the researcher actively engages with individual's daily activities, recording field notes either during the interactions or promptly thereafter. Researchers may also use tools such as tape and video recorders as supplementary instruments during observation. The central advantage of participant observation is to draw conclusions about how societies functions through entering the experience of others (Woods 1986). Yet, participant observation is subjective rather than objective. Ethnographic researchers, as Howard Zinn (Zinn 1990) argues, convey their perspectives and experiences about the world through their own subjective lens when observing a phenomenon. Accordingly, without maintaining objectivity the researcher may develop a strong identification with the group members, potentially leading to a bias in understanding of a situation. To mitigate this challenge, I amalgamated subjectivity with a measure of objectivity by using "fly on the wall" technique (Hirsch 1995) through minimising, or at least concealing, personal biases and stances and covering "all sides of the story" regardless of personal views.

In non-participant observation, researchers observe and document events without dynamically participating in them, remaining as external observers. This method permits them to gather data by observing and recording what happens by cameras or recorders without influencing or being affected by the participants. Non-participant observation offers advantages as it demands less energy and time from the observer. It also tends to be more objective, given that the researcher's interaction with the subjects is limited through the use of video or tape recorders. Yet, non-participant observation is restricted in its ability to fully capture the core dynamics of a group since it involves maintaining distance and not actively interacting with participants (Woods 1986).

Carrying out interviews serves as an additional approach for data collection. Interviewing refers to structured and semi-structured forms of interviews. The former consists of a series of consecutive, close-

ended questions, where all interviewees respond to the same set of questions with identical response options. The options for responding may be presented in the form of multiple-choice or a yes/no format. Semi-structured interviews present a contrasting approach, as the interviewer tends to request spontaneous questions related to the research topic. This format tends to be more conversational and could “allow researcher and interviewee(s) to develop unexpected themes” (Mason 2002, p. 62).

Proponents of interviews (Mason 2002; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Jonathan 2013) state that the core value of ethnography is the lies in capturing the participants’ perspectives or giving a voice to those being studied. Moreover, there is a strong emphasis on the significance of interpreting individuals’ opinions within the context of their unique life experiences, which can possibly only be accessed through interviews (Hammersley 2006). Nevertheless, interview as a data resource is criticised as it contributes to a inconsistency between the ethnographic narrative and participants’ viewpoints. The researcher’s interpretation, as say Anderson and Lee (2013, pp. 298–299), derived from an unexamined adoption of descriptive narratives from field members, could potentially clash with the primary perspectives of certain participants, lacking a convincing rationale for asserting its supposed dominance. But, interviewer’s interpretation could be validated and cross-checked by participant observation, ethnographic note-taking, and collection of documents, generating an unbiased assessment of field members’ perspectives (De Fina 2019, p. 156).

Diaries are also increasingly recognised as an appreciated tool in qualitative research, offering rich, first-person insights into participants’ lived experiences over time. They allow researchers to capture temporal and contextual nuances that might be overlooked in one-off interviews or surveys, providing an intimate view of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in naturalistic settings (Alaszewski 2006). Diary is especially beneficial for examining processes, routines, and changes in participants’ lives, supporting longitudinal analysis and improving data validity through repeated self-reports (Pillow 2003). However, researchers should be attentive to potential biases, such as selective reporting or social desirability impacts, and should combine diaries with other qualitative methods to triangulate findings (Corti and Thompson 2004).

3.3.1.1 Feasibility and limitations of ethnographic research in sanctioned context

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Iran between March and June 2024, followed by research in Colombia and Venezuela from July to August 2024. The field research illustrates that the feasibility of conducting ethnography in sanctioned contexts remains highly challenging. There were three major obstacles in this fieldwork: (1) the difficulties in securing access and travelling to these countries, (2) the

politically sensitive nature of these environments and the inherent challenges of investigating sensitive topics, and (3) the dynamic positionality of being insider and outsider.

3.3.1.1.1 Difficulties Researchers Encounter in Sanctioned Countries

With the outbreak of the revolutionary movement in 1978–1979, Iran became a restrictive and challenging site for ethnographic research. This difficulty has only deepened with the imposition of sanctions, particularly after 2009, which have made access to the country increasingly restricted. As a result, many scholars studying Iran who are not based in the country have followed alternative research sites. For example, William Beeman has carried out work in Japan, Germany, and Tajikistan; Michael Fischer pursued numerous projects in cultural and postmodern studies; and Grace Goodell shifted her focus toward the Philippines and East Asia’s “four little dragons” (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea), in addition to consulting on development projects and contributing to the reconceptualisation of development anthropology. Similarly, Shahla Haeri carried out research in Pakistan, Homa Hoodfar and Nilufar Haeri in Egypt, and Nancy Lindisfarne (Tapper) in Afghanistan, Turkey, and Syria (Hegland 2009).

The primary focus of many researchers has been on Iranian diaspora, which offered an accessible research population for those incapable of carrying out fieldwork in Iran (Hoffman 1989; Ghorashi 2003; Mobasher 2006). Yet, examining the diaspora has its own challenges. Members of diaspora communities often express biased discourses on Iranian state’s conduct and may lack deep familiarity with the internal dynamics of the country, particularly given the continually fluctuating dynamics of power within it.

My native status as an Iranian citizen proved highly advantageous, as it allowed me to carry out research in Iran without requiring special permits. His physical presence in the country coincided with a particularly eventful period in Iran’s recent history. In March, parliamentary elections were held; in April, Israel and Iran engaged in direct pinpoint attacks for the first time; and in May, President Ebrahim Raisi died in a helicopter crash. This unique, situated presence provided the potential to generate fresh insights into a sanctioned country undergoing profound and rapidly shifting political developments.

However, I chose to use funds from his Irish Research Council (IRC) scholarship to travel to Latin America for the first time and gain fieldwork experience, entering Colombia in July. Subsequently, I decided to visit Venezuela to observe the contested presidential elections held on 28 July. I arrived on 22 July and remained until 2 August, carrying out interviews and observations. Unlike Iran, access to Venezuela is comparatively easier for many foreigners, as visas are generally not required (Embassies N.d.). Iranians similarly do not need a visa to go to Venezuela for two weeks.

3.3.1.1.2 Politically Sensitive Nature

Carrying out ethnography in authoritarian contexts presents unique challenges that require methodological adaptations. Researchers often encounter limited access to state institutions and officials, which can hinder traditional data collection methods such as interviews and participatory observation (Hou 2022). To overcome these obstacles, scholars (Hegland 2004; Saluk 2024) have developed innovative strategies to navigate these limitations. For example, some have used “patchwork ethnography,” which involves conducting fieldwork in short, consecutive cycles or relocating to diaspora communities to sustain research continuity.

In authoritarian settings, certain topics are politically sensitive or taboo. The Marlies and et al. (2018) discuss the concept of ‘red lines’—issues that, if addressed, could lead to severe repercussions. They emphasise the necessity for researchers to identify and respect these boundaries while striving to collect data. A key challenge in such contexts is to present oneself as both respectable and non-threatening. Additionally, significant disruption can suddenly appear through events outside of the research scope, such as political turmoil. Even conducting interviews could suddenly become disruptive as the deviation derived from an initial plan is large enough to change the plan significantly.

On his first day in Iran in March, I began considering the possibility of political turmoil during the parliamentary elections. Aileen McKeown (2012) defines political turmoil as “a state of confusion or disturbance within the context of the politics of a country, geographical area, or cultural group of people”. Such periods can evoke mixed emotions, including fear, anxiety, or psychological pressure. These concerns are grounded in the legacy of the 2009 Green Movement, when mass protests erupted across major cities—Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz—after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s controversial presidential election victory. Demonstrators, supporting opposition candidates Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, alleged vote manipulation, delivering a profound shock to the state apparatus that remains significant. While Iran had experienced protests in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, the scale of 2009 marked a major political watershed.

My ambivalent feelings—particularly fear and concern about imprisonment—intensified after the Woman, Life, Freedom (WLF) movement. In September 2022, 22-year-old Iranian Mahsa died in the custody of the ‘Morality Police.’ Images of her lifeless body rapidly circulated online, igniting widespread protests that began in her hometown of Saqqez in Kurdistan and quickly spread to Tehran and across the country.

The sensitive topic of sanctions and resistance also posed significant challenges in Iran, regardless of whether the researcher's stance is critical or supportive toward sanctions. On 1 April, a major event heightened these concerns: Israel carried out an illegal airstrike on the Iranian embassy complex in Damascus, Syria, destroying the building that housed its consular section and killing seven officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). This assault happened amid escalating tensions between Israel and Iran, in the settings of the Israel– Hamas war and the Israel– Hezbollah conflict. My experienced considerable anxiety and uncertainty, asking: “Are we going to war? Will the tension affect my fieldwork? If so, how? Will interviewees still be willing to discuss sanctions and resistance?” These questions echoed both fear of being caught in a potential conflict and concern over the impact of such instability on his ability to conduct effective.

Upon arriving in Caracas, capital of Venezuela, on 22 July 2024, I also considered the potential for political turmoil. Like Iran, Venezuela has experienced protests in recent years. The 2017 protests were driven by dissatisfaction with president Maduro's government amid deepening economic, political, and humanitarian crises. The unrest intensified when the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, aligned with Maduro, attempted to dissolve the opposition-controlled National Assembly, prompting mass mobilisations nationwide. In another event, in 2019, right-wing opposition leader Juan Guaidó declared himself interim president and called for nationwide protests against Maduro. These demonstrations escalated into violent clashes with security forces, resulting in an estimated 26 to 50 deaths (HRW 2019).

Unlike Iran, where no major protests occurred during my stay, Venezuela experienced demonstrations following the contested 2024 presidential elections. These protests erupted after Maduro was declared the winner with 51.2% of the vote, while opposition candidate Edmundo González received 44.2%. The National Electoral Council (CNE) did not release data on voter abstention. The tense and hostile environment in Venezuela reminded me the sensitivity of topics of sanctions and resistance.

3.3.1.1.3 Dynamic Positionality: Insider or Outsider?

The researcher status position –whether insider or outsider– is crucial to be identified to improve the reliability of research findings. In some ways, no ethnographer is able to replicate the findings of another because the flow of information is dependent on the researcher's positionality in fieldwork (Roberts 2009). As an Iranian student in a European country, who is examining sanctions and resistance which are two politically sensitive topics in sanctioned settings, I may fail to understand the realities of local experiences because of any potential ambiguity in my fieldwork positionality. Ethnographic conclusions of this study qualified by my insider and outsider roles within the research sites. Before going to field, I

classified myself as an “insider” in Iran as I share the same racial, language, and ethnicity as the interviewees, allowing the formation of a relationship based on “trust” between me and the respondents. This relationship was more strengthened through the use of gatekeepers and their networks, though I remained mindful of the unpredictability inherent in carrying out research within a sanctioned context.

Losing the gatekeeper in Iran was the first unpredictability I found. I messaged my gatekeeper to confirm my arrival in Iran and readiness for interviews. I received a text clarifying he was too busy to help, and voicing regret. Reading this, I panicked. Losing my gatekeeper could mean having limited access to key resources, data, and interviewees, jeopardising my fieldwork. I felt guilty about wasted time and feared returning to Ireland with unfinished tasks I could not easily resume. His absence also raised ethical anxieties, as I no longer knew how to clarify my referral to potential participants. Furthermore, as a state-affiliated academic, he had provided a sense of security in a polarised environment, and without him I felt exposed.

A second layer of unpredictability stemmed from the difficulty of positioning myself stringently as either an insider or an outsider. On 7 March 2024, I was on my way to the Faculty of Economics at the University of Tehran. Despite emailing six academics on March 5th, I had not received any answers. Upon arriving on campus, I came across four students—two girls and two boys. “Hi, are you all students here?” I asked. “Yes, we are,” they said. I introduced myself and briefly explained my thesis before questioning whether they knew of any academics who may be willing to have an interview with me. Amir, one of the boys, suggested, “Mr... might be a good option. He’s also open to helping foreign researchers with their theses”. His words gave me a wave of hope after a week of uncertainty in Iran.

Knock, knock, knock. “Yes, please come in,” Mr... responded.

As I entered his office, I instantly recognised him. He was a former minister, lean, with grey hair, wearing a brown suit, and carrying a serious expression. “Hello, may I take a moment of your time?” I said gently. “Yes, but I’m quite busy—make it quick,” he answered. I began: “I’m a PhD student studying in Ireland, currently carrying out fieldwork. My thesis assesses the emergence of a ‘resistance model’ in Iran and Venezuela under sanctions”. Before I could continue, he interrupted me: “Are you seeking interviews?” I confirmed, but he declined: “I’m sorry, I cannot”.

Confused by this third rejection during a day, I questioned, “May I ask why? Is there a specific concern you’d like to share?” He said, “I must be cautious when engaging in interviews with foreign researchers”.

Leaving his office, I kept turning over the words “cautious” and “foreign researcher”. I consider myself Iranian, not a foreigner. Why did he categorise me that way? Perhaps he meant I was studying abroad.

Still, the question lingered: am I an insider or an outsider? This thought consumed me, pushing me to reflect on why potential respondents may adopt such a pessimistic view of me. Although ethnography is vital for generating knowledge, its historical association with anthropology often casts it in the shadow of colonialism and imperialism (Sherif 2001, pp. 436).

Traditionally, ethnographers have been chiefly situated in peripheral villages rather than in metropolitan centres. Their professional inclination has been to explore frontiers, hinterlands, and colonies instead of capitals. Yet, this focus on marginal cultures did not prevent them from viewing identity, culture, self, and other as discrete concepts. Upon finding a new culture, ethnographers confidently interpreted it as distinct. In doing so, they inadvertently placed the peripheral cultures at the centre, rather than de-centring the “metropolitan typifications” which they carried in their minds (Rosaldo 1993, pp. 207).

On the other hand, others draw a link between ethnography and imperialism. Anthropologists should pursue the development of an anthropology focused on Western imperial hegemony with the aim of describing and theorising “the radically altered form and terrain of conflict inaugurated by [Western imperial power] – the new political languages, new power, new social groups, new desires and fears, new subjectivities” (Gledhill 1994). Renato Rosaldo (1993) also articulates his pessimism through describing ethnographic observation as “the eye of ethnography”, linking it to the “I of imperialism”.

The act of delivering three brief and decisive refusals may indicate power imbalances between me and my interviewees. In my interactions with three academics, the relationships displayed a power imbalance that was more asymmetrical than mutual. I had anticipated it to be reciprocal because of my fixed insider positionality. During my conversations with those three academics, I felt as though I was talking to high-ranking officials, given their avoidance of direct eye contact and making pauses while explaining my thesis with them. Being unable to cultivate mutually helpful working relationships with them left me feeling subordinate to their authority and power. This obstacle seemed undefeatable, particularly given the absence of a gatekeeper in the field, potentially worsening the existing power imbalance.

The rejections, though painful, prove to be instructive. They provide me valuable lessons regarding positionality. Being an insider, sharing the same racial, linguistic, and ethnic background as potential interviewees, no longer guarantees trust and rapport among me and them in the field without preconditions. This insight compels me to reassess its ethnographic approach. I redirected his efforts towards displaying sensitivity to the interlocuters’ concerns and maintaining transparency about my intentions, as well as assuring the confidentiality of interviewees. This approach aims to alleviate any hesitations they might have. Accordingly, I need to reassess my strategy when approaching potential

interviewees. I changed the order of opening sentences, based on the ideologies of the respondents, whether they are reformists who are critical to the state, or conservatives who support the state.

On 7 March 2024, I knocked on another office door. “Yes!,” the academic says cautiously. He appeared to be around 40 years old, with black hair, wearing a brown shirt and black trousers. He seemed slightly overweight. As I enter, I begin framing my introductory sentences. “Hi, I’m a PhD student ... Hmm...seeking academics to interview for my thesis. I assure you, I’m not seeking any sensitive data. Well, I...Ah...I’ll only pose a couple of general questions. Your identity will be anonymised ... no name, no address, and no personal detail required. I will remove identifying features from written materials; and, aiming to alleviate potential concerns about the misrepresentation of your opinion by offering you transcripts of your interview. If you want, the interview will not be recorded... and...” As I was speaking patiently, unexpectedly, he interrupted me, asking, “Ethics matter to you, huh?” I didn’t know why, but I wondered if it may be better to answer the question in a funny way. “It matters to you too!,” I replied, with a faint smile, but politely without any rude gesture. Fortunately, it worked, and the academic had a big laugh, and enthusiastically said: “ well ethics boy, keep going!”

Feeling confident to provide some additional details. “I’m pursuing my PhD at Maynooth University in Ireland, focusing on the topic of ‘managing US sanctions: the emergence of a resistance model in Iran and Venezuela?’ It’s a critical examination of sanctions theories”. The good environment motivates me to posed the main question: “Would you be interested in participating in my research?” He replied, “Yeah, ... I am”. Reflecting on three previous rejections, I realised they provided me with valuable lessons in constructing my introductory approach. I adjusted my opening phrases to align more with what the potential interviewee would like to hear, rather than solely focusing on what I like to say.

Before traveling to Venezuela, I was primarily perceived as an outsider due to my different ethnicity. My experience demonstrated that insider and outsider statuses are not solely determined by racial factors; rather, they are formed by the ideological stances of both the ethnographer and participants, particularly in authoritarian settings. Similar to Iran, where interviewees’ ideologies were categorised as reformist or conservative, in Venezuela participants were classified as chavista, supporting the state, or non-chavista, critical of it. As such, as an Iranian, I was generally welcomed by chavistas, while non-chavistas sometimes treated me with distance or even disrespect. This polarised environment in both Iran and Venezuela prompted me to adopt a flexible approach during ethnography, in line with Scott et al. (2006 p. 38), who emphasise that fieldwork requires a “negotiated, adaptive, and flexible approach”. Although the notion of flexible positionalities in navigating fieldwork challenges is not new (see Thompson 2014), my ethnographic experiences illuminated how such dynamics operate under sanctioned contexts, where

political sensitivities heighten the risks of misinterpretation and distrust. In these settings, being an insider does not automatically guarantee access or trust, nor does being an outsider always imply exclusion. Instead, positionality becomes fluid and contingent, shaped by participants' perceptions, ideological affiliations, and the broader socio-political context. Recognising this fluidity allowed me to adopt adaptive strategies—modifying introductions, emphasising ethical safeguards, and tailoring interactions to individual participants—which ultimately enhanced the credibility, depth, and ethical grounding of the research findings. In sanctioned contexts, ethnographers should therefore remain acutely aware of their shifting positionality, viewing it not as a fixed status but as an ongoing negotiation central to both access and understanding.

3.4 Fieldwork Methods Employed to Collect Data

To generate empirical insights into how sanctions are understood and contested in Iran and Venezuela, I employed an amalgamation of qualitative methods. Central to this strategy were semi-structured interviews, systematic observations of political events, and reflexive diaries. These approaches allowed me to capture not only the institutional, political, and economic dimensions of sanctions but also their social and emotional consequences. Together, they provided a multi-layered account of production, solidarity, and institutional dynamics across both contexts.

3.4.1 Interviewing

It is necessary to address four questions here: Who were the interviewees? How were they identified and recorded? Where did the interviews take place? And, How were they analysed?

Given that sanctions and resistance are contested concepts, and in line with my aim to apply a target-centred lens, semi-structured interviews enabling respondents to elaborate on their experiences were necessary. Each interview was guided by questions related to the variables of production, solidarity, and institutions. A total of thirty semi-structured interviews, each lasting 60–90 minutes, were conducted with academics, political party elites, and civil society leaders (15 per country).

The interviews were structured across three levels. First, discussions with academics from political, economic, and social disciplines focused on the production variable, assessing the objectives and impacts of sanctions, as well as the level of economic diversification in Iran and Venezuela to clarify how far each country has moved away from dependence on oil.

After losing my gatekeeper in Iran, interviewees were identified through snowball sampling approach—a non-probability technique commonly employed in qualitative research, particularly when studying hard-

to-reach or specialised populations. In this method, the researcher starts with a small number of initial participants who meet the study criteria. These participants then recommend other potential interviewees from their networks, generating a “snowball” effect (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981).

I directly approached academics at University of Tehran by visiting their offices, and they subsequently introduced me to other academics and, in some cases, political party elites. To recruit participants from civil society organisations, I compiled an online list of NGOs, contacted them individually by phone, and asked if they were willing to have interviews.

The interviews were carried out across three locations: Iran, Colombia, and Venezuela. In Iran, 15 interviews were carried out in person at respondents’ offices in Tehran, the country’s capital. In Venezuela, 13 interviews were conducted in person at participants’ offices between 23 July and 2 August 2024 in Caracas, while an additional two interviews were held remotely from Colombia with respondents who were based outside Venezuela. Unlike the fieldwork in Iran, access in Venezuela was facilitated by a productive collaboration with the gatekeeper, Dr. Francisco R. Rodríguez, Professor of the Practice of International and Public Affairs at University of Denver, who assisted establish initial connections with potential participants. However, the snowball sampling technique was use in certain cases to broaden the pool of participants.

All 30 interviewees were anonymised using coded identifiers. The 15 participants from Iran are labelled I1 to I15 (with “I” representing Iran), while the 15 participants from Venezuela were labelled V1 to V15 (with “V” representing Venezuela). Interviews were recorded on a smart phone and then uploaded into a password-protected laptop without passing through the cloud.

3.4.2 Observation

I observed the parliamentary elections in Iran on 1 March 2024. I also observed the presidential elections on 28 June 2024. In Venezuela, I also attended the highly contested presidential elections on 28 October 2024. I recorded fieldnotes either on site or shortly afterwards, which were later used in Chapters 5 and 7 to assess production, socio-political solidarity, and institutions in both countries. My observations amalgamated both non-participant and participant approaches, using a “fly on the wall” technique that balanced subjectivity and objectivity. This involved, on the one hand, actively engaging with voters in a neutral manner while documenting their perspectives, and on the other hand, abstaining from direct participation and simply recording the unfolding events through fieldnotes.



Photo 3.1: Author's photographs showing an electoral centre in Tehran, Iran's capital, during the presidential elections on 28 June 2024 (right), and an electoral centre in Caracas, Venezuela, during the presidential elections on 28 October 2024 (left).

In other events, I observed the funeral of Iranian former President Raisi in May, and in Venezuela, I witnessed the mobilisation of chavistas in October. These observations aimed to support my analysis of the social foundations of power in both countries, which is particularly relevant for discussions of socio-political solidarity in Chapters 5 and 7.



Photo 3.2: Author's photographs depicting a public gathering in Tehran, Iran's capital, on 22 May 2024 to mourn the death of former President Ebrahim Raisi (right), and the mobilisation of Nicolás Maduro's supporters in Caracas, Venezuela, on 25 July 2024 (left).

3.4.3 Diaries

Using diaries in highly polarised and contested sanctioned contexts proved particularly valuable. While diaries permit researchers to capture temporal and contextual nuances that might be overlooked in one-off interviews in Iran and Venezuela, their use was especially valuable for me in another way: writing diaries enabled me to bridge the gap between what I observed in reality and my personal emotions, helping me maintain a careful balance between objective field notes and subjective experience. To achieve this, I regularly separated descriptive accounts of events from my personal reflections, noting both what happened and how I felt about it. For example, I would first detail the setting, interactions, and observable behaviours. Then a separate section where I critically reflected on my own reactions, doubts, and emotions triggered by those encounters. This method allowed me not only to document events but also to trace how his positionality, mood, or sense of vulnerability might have shaped his interpretations. In total, I wrote approximately 80 pages of diary entries in both countries, consciously recording my emotions and the broader atmospheres surrounding the events I witnessed. Over time, the diaries became more than a record-keeping tool; they served as a reflexive space that helped me navigate the tensions of fieldwork, manage the psychological weight of working in sensitive political contexts, and later enrich the analytical depth of his thesis.

3.5 Itemising Data Under Variables

In this thesis, the primary data is further supported by triangulation with secondary data sources. Triangulation improves the credibility and validity of research findings by allowing cross-verification from multiple sources (Patton 2002; Denzin 2009). By comparing insights from primary fieldwork with established secondary data, the study lessens potential biases inherent in individual data sources and ensures a more nuanced and robust understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Flick 2018). This integrative approach allows for a detailed assessment of trends, patterns, and anomalies, improving the reliability of the conclusions drawn.

Based on the variables of production, solidarity, and institutions, I categorise the data through a triangulation of primary sources—including semi-structured interviews, participant and non-participant observation, and diaries—together with secondary sources, such as books, journal articles, and media and organisational publications.

3.5.1 Production

Discussions with academics from political, economic, and social disciplines focused on the production variable, assessing the objectives and effects of sanctions, as well as the level of economic diversification through examining extraction, transformation, and distribution policies in Iran and Venezuela. These interviews are triangulated with data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the central banks of both countries. Key indicators—such as GDP growth rates, inflation, and oil export levels—were employed to create an objective baseline against which interviewee accounts could be assessed. This mixed approach allowed me to test whether the narratives of the interviewees corresponded with, or diverged from, international and national statistical records, thereby strengthening validity and minimising bias.

3.5.2 Solidarity

Where economic hardship disproportionately burdens different social strata, socio-political solidarity arises as a mechanism of collective adaptation and as a pillar of state survival. While traditional notions of solidarity—such as Marx’s focus on religion—remain relevant, this study broadens the scope by considering wider ideological dimensions. By combining communal and associative forms of solidarity with immanent and transcendent orientations, the study outlines the potential for constructing distinctive socio-political networks, expressed through both intensive and extensive forms of power. To measure the degree of socio-political solidarity, this research assesses how the sanctioned states mediate class solidarity through aligning upper, middle, and lower working classes with the political parties in Iran and Venezuela. The study employs national elections as an indicator, since they provide a key gauge of civic engagement and political participation (Barrett and Zani 2014). As such, the analysis focuses on Iran’s 2017 and 2021 presidential elections—marked by contrasting political discourses—and Venezuela’s 2018 and 2024 elections, which consolidated chavismo’s dominance. To measure this indicator, the study systematically examines the ideological foundations of political parties through in-depth interviews with party founders and senior members—reformists and conservatives in Iran, and chavistas and opposition actors in Venezuela. These insights are cross-referenced with the official manifestos of Iranian parties—Islamic Coalition Party (ICP), Combatant Clergy Association (CCA), Organisation of Endeavours of the Islamic Revolution (OEIR), and Stability Front of the Islamic Revolution (SFIR)—as well as Venezuela’s PSUV and Justice First. This methodological triangulation strengthens the validity of the findings by not only identifying the explicit values articulated in party documents but also capturing how party members interpret, internalise, and enact those values in practice to align different social classes. In doing so, the

study provides a nuanced account of how solidarity shapes political affiliations and class dynamics in contemporary Iran and Venezuela, extending the analysis beyond the realm of production.

3.5.3 Institution

To integrate society into the analysis, the thesis seeks to evaluate the degree of institutionalisation of a bottom-up approach through examining the intersection of state and civil society in target states. This is pursued by exploring insights from leaders of civil society organisations in Iran and Venezuela on how non-governmental organisations (NGOs) assert their autonomy and participate in policymaking, thereby translating bottom-up influence into practice. The interviews are triangulated by inspecting the constitutional and legislative amendments to the legal frameworks governing associations, labour unions, and community organisations in both countries, alongside policy documents that outline the state's formal stance toward civil society participation. This comparative lens helps to clarify whether institutional reforms have created meaningful spaces for autonomous civic engagement or, conversely, have intensified mechanisms of state control under the guise of participatory governance.

3.6 Thematic Analysis

I use thematic analysis (TA) to examine the primary data. TA is a broadly used qualitative method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Vaismoradi et al. 2013). It permits researchers to organise and describe large datasets in rich detail while remaining flexible to explore nuanced meanings in participants' experiences (Guest et al. 2012). One of the main advantages of TA is its flexibility, as it can be applied across various theoretical frameworks and research questions, making it suitable for both exploratory and theory-driven studies (Braun and Clarke 2006). Moreover, TA offers a clear and systematic approach for coding data and creating themes, which improves transparency and replicability (Nowell et al. 2017). Yet, TA might oversimplify complex data if themes are forced to fit preconceived categories rather than emerging naturally from the data (Cassell and Symon 2004).

To operationalise TA, I use MAXQDA software widely used in the social sciences. It helps researchers organise, code, analyse, and visualise qualitative data. Codification, categorisation, and thematisation of data are based on the core category of GT which is Constant Comparative Analysis (CCA). Accordingly, every part of data, i.e. emerging codes, categories, and themes are “constantly compared with all other parts of the data to explore variations, similarities and differences” (Hallberg 2006, p. 143). CCA is based on following four interrelated stages.

- **Comparing relevant incidents associated with each category**

The analysis begins by coding each incident in as many categories of analysis as possible. It is based on an explicit rule where, during the coding of an incident to generate a category, the researcher should compare it with previous incidents that have already been coded under the same category before more coding. The objective is to ensure consistency and accuracy in the coding process which leads to the emergence of theoretical qualities/properties of the category (Glaser 1965).

- **Integrating categories and properties**

As the coding process advances, CCA units repetition from comparing incident to incident to comparing incidents with the properties of the category resulting from the initial comparison of incidents. In this context, diverse characteristics of categories start to become integrated. Accordingly, the theory evolves as various categories and their properties progressively are integrated through ongoing comparisons, compelling the analyst to derive some related theoretical sense of each comparison (Glaser 1965).

- **Defining the boundaries of the theory**

This feature happens at two levels. First, as the theory is being solidified, major modifications become less frequent when one compares the next incidents of a category to properties of it. Yet, subsequent modifications primarily revolve around improving logical clarity, removing irrelevant properties, and integrating elaborative details of properties into the major framework of interrelated categories. Second, defining the boundaries of the theory leads to narrowing down the initial list of suggested categories for coding. Consequently, the examination and coding of incidents become more specific and concentrated. This allows the researcher to dedicate additional time to continually compare incidents which are relevant to a more restricted set of categories (Glaser 1965).

- **Writing theory**

Coding the data results in the generation of categories through discussions around memos that subsequently contribute to the development of the theory's major themes. Starting the process of crafting one's theory involves consolidating the memos corresponding to each category. This task is facilitated by the organised arrangement and assessment of memos based on categories. The coded data also serves as a valuable resource to validate a proposed point, identify gaps in the theory, and offer illustrations (Glaser 1965).

These four stages improve the possibility of generating a complex theory that closely aligns with the themes generated through categories. This is due to the ongoing comparisons that requires thoughtful consideration of the diverse elements which are present in the data. Incidents are compared either to

each other reciprocally or to properties of categories, reflecting a more sophisticated and in-depth analysis. This is in contrast to an exclusive focus on crude coding for basic evidence, which concentrates solely on establishing a few fixed properties of the category.

3.7 Content Analysis

To examine the secondary data, I used content analysis (CA), which allows systematic assessment of texts and quantitative/statistical reports to identify recurring themes, patterns, and relationships (Krippendorff 2018; Neuendorf 2017). I employ data from IMF, World Bank, and OPEC to examine macroeconomic indicators such as GDP growth, inflation rates, trade balances, and oil production capacity. These datasets are further cross-referenced with national statistics provided by the central banks of Iran and Venezuela to ensure accuracy and reliability. By triangulating international and domestic sources, the study not only mitigates the risk of bias but also reinforces the robustness of the findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of how sanctions frame economic performance and policy responses in both countries.

At the same time, I carried out a qualitative CA of political texts, including manifestos. Rather than applying formal coding procedures, I emphasise the meaning and context of the texts, carefully evaluating key themes related to production, solidarity, and institution. This interpretive approach allowed me to explore the discursive strategies of parties in relation to the statements of elites and civil society actors, highlighting both congruences and contradictions between official platforms and individual narratives. By situating interview data within these broader political discourses, I was able to generate nuanced insights into party ideologies and rhetorical practices.

Ultimately, academic books, journal articles, and media publications in English, Spanish, and Persian were also examined through CA to contextualise interviewees' accounts within global and regional scholarly debates. This multi-layered use of content analysis—applied to statistics, manifestos, and secondary literature—allowed to cross-check primary data, reduce subjectivity, and embed individual perspectives within verified socio-economic and political structures.

3.8 Limitations of Data

Two notable limitations emerged during my ethnographic fieldwork period that warrant transparent acknowledgment. The first concerned an uneven depth of engagement between the Iranian and Venezuelan field sites, and the second involved restricted access to official documents and institutional records in both cases.

Regarding the first limitation, I spent substantially more time conducting fieldwork in Iran than in Venezuela, a disparity that inevitably produced asymmetries across several dimensions of ethnographic quality. These include the depth of ethnographic immersion, familiarity with local sociopolitical and cultural contexts, and the degree of trust cultivated with research participants over time. Extended presence in a field site is widely recognised in ethnographic methodology as foundational to building rapport, observing patterns across different temporal rhythms, and gaining access to the informal and often more revealing layers of social life (Gold 1997). By that standard, the Iranian case benefited from a comparatively richer and denser body of ethnographic material, shaped by longer exposure, deeper cultural familiarity, and a more sustained relationship with the research environment.

That said, it would be methodologically misleading to treat this temporal asymmetry as a straightforward weakness without accounting for the ways in which my Iranian fieldwork actively informed and compensated for the shorter duration in Venezuela. Rather than approaching the two field sites as entirely independent and parallel experiences, I carried the accumulated knowledge, refined sensibilities, and hard-won lessons from Iran directly into my Venezuelan fieldwork. In this sense, the sequencing of the two cases was not incidental but methodologically consequential.

The first month in Iran, in particular, proved to be a formative period of reflexive learning. It was during this time that I was compelled to confront and work through fundamental questions of positionality — how I was situated as a researcher within a sanctioned, politically sensitive, and socially dynamic context, and how that positioning shaped what I could observe, who would speak with me, and how my presence was interpreted. Navigating this in real time, without prior fieldwork experience in comparable environments, demanded considerable effort and extended engagement. By the time I arrived in Venezuela, however, this reflexive groundwork had already been laid. I entered that field site with a well-developed and operational sense of my own positionality, which meant I did not require an equivalent period of adjustment and could engage productively with participants and settings from a much earlier stage of the fieldwork.

A further structural difference between the two cases also helps explain the time disparity. When I first arrived in Iran, I had not yet secured a list of potential interviewees and lacked the kind of pre-established access networks that typically anchor fieldwork from the outset. This challenge was compounded significantly when I lost my = gatekeeper — a development that left me without an institutional or social intermediary to facilitate introductions and vouch for my research. Rebuilding access under those conditions required patience, improvisation, and time. By contrast, my preparation for Venezuela was considerably more systematic: I had arranged my interviewees, confirmed access to key informants, and

established my observation plans before departing. This advance preparation meant that time constraints in Venezuela were far less consequential, as the logistical and relational scaffolding that typically consumes the early weeks of fieldwork had already been secured.

The second limitation concerns my restricted access to official documents and institutional records, a constraint that proved particularly consequential given the sensitive and politically charged nature of the subject matter under investigation. Sanctions and economic resistance are not merely technical or bureaucratic phenomena; they are deeply political topics that touch on questions of state legitimacy, national sovereignty, security calculations, and the often opaque mechanisms through which governments and economic actors navigate international pressure. As such, the documentary landscape surrounding these issues is rarely transparent, and access to formal records is frequently guarded, selectively disclosed, or altogether withheld from outside researchers.

In both Iran and Venezuela, the political environments presented significant structural barriers to documentary access. Government-held records, institutional reports, internal policy deliberations, and inter-agency communications — the kinds of primary documents that would ordinarily allow a researcher to triangulate ethnographic observations against formal institutional accounts — were either classified, inaccessible to foreign or independent researchers, or simply not publicly available in any systematic form. In contexts where the state itself is a central actor in managing and responding to sanctions, the documentation of those responses is often treated as a matter of national security rather than public record. This is not incidental but reflects a deliberate logic of information control that shapes what can be officially known and by whom.

Beyond outright restriction, I also encountered more subtle forms of documentary limitation. Some documents existed in principle but were practically inaccessible due to bureaucratic opacity, the absence of functioning archival infrastructure, or the reluctance of institutional contacts to facilitate access even to nominally public materials. In other instances, documents had been selectively preserved or curated in ways that reflected official narratives, rendering them useful as artifacts of state discourse but limited as independent sources of verification. The broader climate of surveillance and institutional caution in both countries also meant that individuals who might otherwise have shared internal materials were understandably reluctant to do so, for fear of professional or personal repercussions.

This limitation inevitably shaped the epistemological foundations of the research. Rather than being able to ground analytical claims in a robust archive of official documentation, I relied more heavily on ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, and the careful triangulation of multiple testimonial

accounts to construct as complete and reliable a picture as possible. While these methods are well-established and methodologically legitimate in their own right, the absence of complementary documentary evidence means that certain institutional dynamics and decision-making processes remain partially opaque. Where documentary sources were available — including publicly accessible policy statements, official economic reports, legal texts, and journalistic investigations — I incorporated them fully.

3.9 Conclusion

The amalgamation of MSSD and MDSD offers a balanced framework for case selection by identifying and clarifying both shared features—such as energy wealth, hybrid regimes, and opposition to US hegemony—and differences in ideology, production, and civil society. Applying this to Iran and Venezuela illustrates how similar pressures like US sanctions yield different outcomes across distinct contexts. To capture these dynamics, the study uses QCA to trace multiple causal pathways and uses GT to inductively derive theory from empirical realities.

The ethnographic approach in this study is crucial for understanding resistance models in sanctioned Iran and Venezuela, capturing nuanced social interactions and perceptions inaccessible to other methods. Carrying out fieldwork in politically sensitive contexts posed challenges, including restricted access, risks around sensitive topics, and negotiating insider–outsider positionality, which proved fluid and context-dependent. By using adaptive strategies—such as flexible introductions, ethical assurances, and triangulating interviews with observations— I navigated these challenges while maintaining rigor. This study underscores that ethnography in sanctioned settings requires balancing engagement and observation, subjectivity and objectivity, and ethical sensitivity with analytical depth.

The combination of interviews, observations, diaries, and triangulated secondary data provided a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of resistance in sanctioned contexts. Each method complemented the others: interviews captured subjective experiences of elites, academics, and civil society actors; observations documented socio-political behaviour and mobilisation; diaries facilitated reflexive engagement with fieldwork; thematic analysis enabled systematic identification of patterns; and secondary data offered an external benchmark to examine and contextualise findings. This integrated methodological approach not only strengthens the credibility and depth of the analysis but also lays the groundwork for examining broader socio-political structures in Chapters 5, 7, and 8. Yet, before delving into these empirical Chapters, Chapter 4 situates resistance within Iran’s historical power dynamics,

exploring how shifts under the Pahlavi monarchy (1925–1979) and the Islamic Republic (1979–present) shaped the country’s capacity for both elite control and popular mobilisation.

Chapter 4: FROM PAHLAVI TO ISLAMIC REPUBLIC: POWER DYNAMICS IN A SHIFTING SOCIOPOLITICAL IRANIAN CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter defines and critically evaluates the organisation of Iran’s socio-political order, tracing the distribution and exercise of power under both the Pahlavi monarchy (1925–1979) and the Islamic Republic (1979–present). This analysis supports the thesis’s broader aim of developing a target-centred lens⁸ through examining resistance against sanctions. By situating Iran–US relations within a historical trajectory of internal and external dynamics, it shows how the 1979 revolution not only emerged from but also disrupted these dynamics, transforming Iran from a US “strategic ally” into a challenger and prompting sanctions alongside a politics of resistance⁹.

To this end, the Chapter employs Michael Mann’s IEMP model—encompassing ideological, economic, military, and political sources of power—as its conceptual framework¹⁰. When these sources extend beyond national boundaries, Mann terms them transnational power. The model serves as an analytical

⁸ Target-sender lens framework is discussed in Chapter 2.

⁹ The resistive strategies are discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁰ Mann’s IEMP model is discussed in Chapter 2.

lens to evaluate how shifts in these sources explain transformations in Iran's political paradigm in two eras. By exploring their interrelations, the Chapter includes levels of despotic and infrastructural power before and after the revolution. Here, despotic power denotes elite decision-making without consultation, whereas infrastructural power refers to the state's capacity to implement decisions and organise social life through institutional apparatus.

The Chapter is divided into three interlinked sections. First, it applies the IEMP framework to the Pahlavi era, identifying both the strengths and weaknesses of the monarchy and examining the role of US transnational power in framing its politics. Second, it traces the emergence of the Islamic Republic in 1979 and uses the IEMP model to analyse how power structures evolved under its rule, with particular focus on the presidencies of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005–2013), Hasan Rouhani (2013–2021), and Ebrahim Raisi (2021–2024), when US sanctions intensified. Finally, the Chapter evaluates how both regimes align with Mann's models of despotic and infrastructural power, determining the extent to which each exhibits low, moderate, or high levels resistance against sanctions.

The analysis traces the shifts in state power, underscoring the contrasting political periods and their implications for Iran's future. Under the Pahlavis, despotic power was high—centred on the monarchy and US influence—while infrastructural power stayed low-to-moderate, favouring urban areas over rural regions. In contrast, the Islamic Republic shows moderate-to-high despotic power, exacerbated by candidate vetting and legal controls, particularly under US sanctions, alongside moderate-to-high infrastructural power through broad social programmes in education and healthcare. Before delving into the comparative analysis, the rationale for using IEMP model is briefly outlined below.

4.2 Rationale for employing the IEMP

Mann's IEMP model—ideological, economic, military, and political—provides a framework for exploring how societies and states evolve. He perceives societies as overlapping networks of power (Mann 1993, p. 1). These networks act as “containers” for power sources (Hall and Schroeder 2006), helping explain the foundations of social dynamics. Mann's IEMP has been influential and persuasive as it embodies a valuable step forward in broadly elucidating the power dynamics at a macro level (Domhoff, 1993). However, some scholars argue that Mann ignored the idea that power domains are interconnected, instead treating them as separate entities. For example, Perry Anderson (1992) and Robert Brenner (2006) critique Mann's notion of political power as autonomous, arguing that these domains are more intertwined than Mann permits. According to Derya Gocer (2009), Mann assigns a central role to military power when addressing the international realm, seeing it as the dominant force shaping interstate

relations, conflict, and state sovereignty. This illustrates a neorealist viewpoint that emphasises hard power, such as military capacity and coercion, as the main currency in global politics.

The IEMP model's categorisation is a heuristic tool designed to elucidate and examine power's multifaceted nature, not to oversimplify it. By distinguishing ideological, economic, military, and political power, it offers a structured lens that helps scholars systematically dissect how different power forms operate autonomously and in interaction. This clarity enables deeper empirical investigation rather than obscuring complexity.

Moreover, IEMP framework intentionally delineates domains analytically for clarity but recognises their interconnection in practice. Mann (1986) highlighted that while the domains are conceptually distinct, real-world power is often exercised through complex interactions among them. The model is flexible and is used to scrutinize both the independence and interdependence of power domains, permitting researchers to study how, for example, military power frames political authority or how economic power affects infrastructural capacity. Accordingly, states can exert their strength through despotic power, exercising authoritative control, or through infrastructural power, fostering cooperation across their territories (Mann 1993). Applying Mann's framework to Iran allows us to trace how these interdependent power sources shaped the formation and evolution of Pahlavi and Islamic Republic.

4.3 Pahlavi Monarchy and Power Dynamics (1925-1979)

By 1921, following centuries of misrule and the devastation wrought by World War I (1914–1918), Iran was near collapse. Ahmad Shah, the young Qajar ruler, proved inept, his cabinet corrupt, and foreign powers—particularly Britain and the Soviet Union—conquered the country. In this context, Reza Shah Pahlavi, commander of the Persian Cossack Brigade, staged a coup that ended the Qajar dynasty. Archival evidence illustrates senior British officials were aware of and tacitly approved the move. General Edmund Ironside met Reza Shah beforehand and promoted him to command the Cossack Brigade shortly before the coup (Wright 1977; Ansari 2007)

In academic discourse, Reza Shah's rule (1925–1941) and that of his son Mohammad Reza (1941–1979) have been described as “an autocratic state” (Abrahamian 2018), “modernising despotism” (Cronin 2007), and “non-democratic” (Milani 2022). Yet, most studies on the Pahlavi era draw on modernisation theory (Popp 2008; Shannon 2015; Steele 2019), state-building frameworks (Homayonpour 1978; Tajbakhsh 2022), or authoritarianism studies (Ansari 2007; Boroujerdi 2012), typically treating power as a singular entity, even as they offer valuable insights into the regime's features. Applying the IEMP allows

a more systematic disaggregation, revealing how ideological projects, economic resources, military structures, and foreign backing reinforced coercion and institutional control.

4.3.1 Nationalism: Ideological Foundation of the Pahlavi Regime

To comprehend ideology in the Pahlavi era, one should first outline its framework. Reza Shah relied on nationalism (Ansari 1998) to reshape Iran through cultural and social reforms rooted in ancient traditions, creating a distinct ideological construct (Jamshidi Bigdeli and Rafiei 2024). Nationalism, grounded in shared heritage, language, and ancestry (Kohn 2017), derived legitimacy from the pre-Islamic monarchy and projected transcendental ideological power capable of engendering significant networks that span economic, military, and political spheres, counterbalancing to the Islamic narrative.

During the Achaemenid era (c. 550–330 BCE), Iranians laid the foundations of a great civilisation whose spirit endured across centuries. Although Alexander’s conquest and the rise of Greek civilisation sought to erode Iranian culture, the Parthians (247 BC - 224 AD), and later the Sasanians (224-651 AD) revived Achaemenid traditions, preserving Iran’s place among the world’s great civilisations. The Arab invasion ended Sassanian sovereignty, yet Iranians embraced Islam while retaining their ancient heritage (Jamshidi, Bigdeli and Rafiei 2024). Drawing on this legacy, Reza Shah endorsed nationalism as a unifying force, invoking Iran’s pre-Islamic roots to consolidate a modern state amid post-Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911)¹¹ and World War I chaos.

During and after World War I, Iran lost independence as British and Soviet forces occupied much of the country, violating its neutrality. In this power vacuum, regional movements in Gilan, Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and Khorasan declared autonomy, while society, weary from the fratricidal skirmishes of the Constitutional Revolution, war, and uprisings, longed for stability. Across classes—aristocrats, clergy, merchants, and workers—many welcomed the emergence of a strong, “charismatic” leader (Ghods 1991).

Reza Khan’s reputation as a strong leader rested on his ability to restore stability, quelling uprisings in Khorasan and Azerbaijan and crushing Simko Shikak’s 1922 revolt in Kurdistan (Ghods 1991). Alongside military campaigns, he promoted Aryan identity, shared linguistic roots, patriotic sentiment, and a common historical destiny to foster nationalism among ethnic minorities (Rasouli 2019).

After consolidating his power, Reza Shah shaped nationalism as a “legitimate” alternative to the Islamic narrative of Iranian history, depicting as a time of decline and regression (Jamshidi et al. 2024). As such,

¹¹ It was a political and social movement that aimed to limit the absolute powers of the monarchy and establish a modern legal and political system.

his agenda extended beyond merely establishing order and security, significantly marginalising the clergy class, which was one of the most influential social groups in Iran (Zarrinnal 2024).

Nationalism under the Pahlavis was thoroughly tied to modernisation (Ansari 1998, p. 66), which included technological, social, political, and economic change (Huntington 2006). Reza Shah and his son Mohammad Reza pursued a vision of modernity that legitimised the state and reinforced unity, while dividing society into ‘progressive’ or ‘reactionary’ and ‘backward’ groups—primarily targeting the clergy (Ansari 1998, p. 66). Economic and military development were central to this modernisation project (Cronin 2007).

4.3.2 Infrastructure Expansion vs. Limited Industrial Diversification

Reza Shah’s economic modernisation focused on infrastructure, comprising the 1,394-km Trans-Iranian Railway, funded largely through excise taxes on tea and sugar (Issawi 1971, p. 131). Oil revenue, nevertheless, remained the main financial backbone for Pahlavi projects and shaped Iran’s foreign relations throughout much of the era (Chehabi 1998; Najmabadi 1987).

Reza Shah was short of direct control over oil revenues, as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) retained firm control of operations. Under the 1933 concession, APOC increased payments, with royalties growing from £0.23 per ton in 1931 to £0.44 in 1939, boosting Iran’s income. Yet, oil contributed less than 15% of government revenue between 1910 and 1950, with most of the budget drawn from other sources. Still, oil dominated exports, accounting for over 60% in most years. Between 1928 and 1937, public spending—funded largely by oil—rose from 392 to 977 million rials (constant 1928 prices), an average annual growth of 11% (Karshenas 1990, p. 71). Most was invested in transportation and communications infrastructure, laying the groundwork for modernisation. Limited oil revenues constrained wider industrialisation, leaving the economy dependent on oil with only modest growth in other sectors (Brew 2022).

In 1928–29, Iran’s imports exceeded exports, triggering its first Pahlavi-era foreign exchange crisis and a 53.5% devaluation of the silver *qerān* against the pound sterling in 1930, heightening market volatility (Bharier 1971). The government responded with exchange controls and the Foreign Trade Monopoly Law, granting the state exclusive control over foreign trade and marking a departure from earlier *laissez-faire* policies (Karshenas 1990). Intended to support Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI), the law proved impractical and was entirely abandoned within two years (Gholami 2014).

Reza Shah’s 1941 abdication and the stationing of foreign troops under Mohammad Reza Shah ushered in political turmoil, food shortages, and soaring prices—rising 96% in 1942 and 111% in 1943

(Abrahamian 1982). Economic grievances over the 1933 oil concession, which fixed royalties at four shillings per ton, fueled dissatisfaction as oil prices surged from 1939 to 1948 (Issawi and Yeganeh 1962, pp. 132-134). Britain's rejection to renegotiate led Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq to nationalise the oil industry in 1951, prompting British sanctions encompassing account freezes, export embargoes, and blocked oil sales.

Oil production fell from 32.5 million tons in 1950 to just over 1 million tons by 1952, straining Iran's economy. Fearing Soviet influence, the Dwight D. Eisenhower government (1953-1961) supported the 1953 CIA-MI6 coup that ousted Mosaddeq, reestablished Mohammad Reza, and turned Iran into a US client state (Popp 2008). Production resumed in 1954 under foreign control, with the US and Britain each taking a 40% share, diminishing Britain's long-standing dominance (Behestani and Hedayati Shahidani 2015).

Crude oil production increased from 73.6 million tons in 1963 to 301.2 million tons in 1974 (Mitchell, 1995, pp. 346-362), driving industrialisation under Mohammad Reza. Industrial growth averaged 11% per annum in the early 1960s, rising to 14% by decade's end. Infrastructure and services expanded moderately: roads grew from 3,569 to 4,525 km, merchant vessels from 29 to 219, motor vehicles increased sharply, and civil aviation, postal, telecommunication, radios, and televisions all saw significant growth (Paukert, Skolka and Maton 1981, p. 30).

Persistent trade deficits shattered Iran's foreign exchange reserves, with import payments falling from \$611 million in 1959 to \$528 million in 1962 (Central Bank of Iran N.d.), slowing economic activity and triggering a deep recession that hit employment and agriculture. By 1973, agriculture's share of Gross GDP increased from nearly 25% to 16% (Carey and Carey 1976). The so-called 1963 White Revolution, a six-point socio-economic reform plan, accelerated rural-to-urban migration, with around one million farm workers relocating to cities between 1966 and 1976, increasing agricultural wages, attracting foreign labour, and urban unemployment as city populations rose 5% annually versus 1.6% in rural areas (Sabahi 2002).

Although real incomes increased, they were unevenly distributed, deteriorating inequality. From 1959/60 to the late 1960s, the middle 60% of the population saw their share of private consumption fall from 46.7% to 26.5%, while the top 20% jumped from 44% to 64% (Amini 2002). By 1974, the economy was experiencing hyperinflation. In a national television address, Mohammad Reza (1974) publicised that between 1972 and 1974, the prices of essential goods had soared—wheat by 320%, sugar by 308%, vegetable oil by 200%, and plastic materials by up to 400%.

4.3.3 Weapons for Oil: US Control of Pahlavi's Military Forces

From the beginning of his rule, Reza Shah emphasised military power, stating that a strong army was vital to rescue the country from chaos. His approach aligns with Mann's concept of "concentrated lethal violence" (2013, pp. 415-416). After suppressing local revolts, garrisons were deployed nationwide, with particularly harsh military rule in regions like Kurdistan, including widespread property confiscations (Makki 1983).

Like his father, Mohammad Reza prioritised military links with foreign powers, especially the US, which viewed Iran as a "bridge of victory" in World War II (Majd 2016) and a Cold War bulwark against communism (Popp 2008). These ties involved US military training missions, advisory deployments, and arms sales.

In 1942, the US and Iran agreed to send American advisors¹² to counter Nazi influence in the Middle East. In 1942, Wallace Murray, then Chief of Near Eastern Affairs and later US Ambassador to Iran, described their role as "running" Iran by guiding administration and policies (McGhee 1963). While the Pahlavis sought broad technical support in agriculture, engineering, finance, and education, the US prioritised military backing over these civilian requests.

The mission's main goal was to advise the Ministry of Interior in reorganising the Imperial Organisation of Iranian Gendarmerie (IOIG). Under the agreement, American officers, led by General Clarence S. Ridley, as head of IOIG, held superiority over Iranian officers of equal rank and could recommend appointments, promotions, demotions, or dismissals without interference (McGhee 1963).

In 1947, the US established US Army Mission, known as ARMISH, which became the official military mission to the Iranian Army, sought to improve effectiveness through collaboration with the Ministry of War. American officers, approved by both governments, served in the Ministry's Advisory Department, kept their US ranks with superiority over Iranian officers of equal rank, and advised on organisational and administrative matters (US Department of State 1947).

In 1950, the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) became the most important US military mission in Iran, improving command structures and training programmes in the Army and Gendarmerie. Unlike earlier missions, it offered extensive military and financial support, established new command

¹² United States, National Archives, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, Number 61233 "Police, Gendarmerie, and Army," February 1944, fol. 1 and Number 76263 "The Army and the Gendarmerie," 16 May 1944, fol. 1.

structures, and engaged in arms sales, influencing all branches of Iran's military and police as well as much of the economy from 1953 to 1979.

In 1950, the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement signed between Iran and the US, obliging Washington to supply Tehran with military equipment, while Iran eased the transfer of raw and semi-processed materials, establishing a strategic military–economic partnership (McGhee 1963). This was reinforced by the 1973 Technical Assistance Field Team (TAFT) agreement, under which 552 US personnel provided in-country training on American equipment and technology at a cost of \$16.6 million (US House of Representatives 1977). While MAAG reinforced the monarchy, played a role in toppling Mossadegh, and helped establish the brutal SAVAK—the Organisation for State Intelligence and Security—in 1957 (Amnesty International), TAFT secured US industrial and financial interests by guaranteeing markets and profits through oil exports, imports of capital goods, and arms sales.

4.3.4 Patrimonial Power and the Rise of Totalitarian Pahlavi

The political system was highly centralised, with authority focused in “charismatic” Reza Shah (Zirinsky 1992). Guenther Roth (1968) warned against overusing “charisma” in studies of political change, remarking that scholars often shaped development in a binary contrast between charismatic leadership and rational-legal bureaucracy, rooted in rules, laws, and formal institutions. Because of this narrow focus, Max Weber's broader authority framework—the patrimonial domination—was often ignored. Patrimonial systems concentrate power through kinship, patron–client ties, and personal loyalty, with minimal formal rules. In such cases, obedience centres on the ruler's personal authority (Weber 1920, p. 341).

Guenther Roth (1968) distinguished two types of patrimonialism: one rooted in traditional legitimacy and the more common form of personal rulership, which depends less on belief in the leader and more on material incentives that embed clientage throughout the political system (Legg and Lemarchand 1978). Personal rulership dominates much of the developing world (Bill and Leiden 1974), exemplified by Reza Shah's monarchy, where bureaucracy and modernity were leveraged to advance state-building and modernisation projects, such as railroads (Charrad and Adams 2011).

However, Riordan Roett (1999) argues that patrimonialism and modernisation hardly coexist, as rulers rely on distributing “fiefs and benefices” to secure support. Since 1925, Reza Shah used patron–client ties, particularly in the military, to suppress opposition—especially tribal forces—ensuring the survival of his patrimonial system. As such, his modernisation was top-down and selective, improving some infrastructures without broad inclusivity.

The familial core of patrimonialism is linked to family and male authority, reflecting Weber's "father-rule" (1978) or any personalised power system. Mohammad Reza assumed power in 1941, ushering in a period of political openness in the 1940s–early 1950s, which saw political organisations like the Tudeh Party (1941), the Democrat Party (1946–1948), the Iran Party (1941–1953), the National Front (1949–1953), and the People's Party (1957–1975) emerge. Two parties dissolved in 1953 and another in 1975, due to the 1953 coup and the establishment of a single-party system in 1979.

After the 1953 coup, the regime, backed by SAVAK, swiftly crushed opposition: the Iran Party and National Front were banned, leaders were detained, exiled, or executed, and the Tudeh Party was weakened. Economic decline persisted from 1962 to 1975, beginning with the Shah's White Revolution referendum—a staged display of democracy in which citizens were pressured to vote, dissenting ballots were scarce, and voting tents were guarded by secret police. The Shah reportedly secured over 99.9% approval (Amini 2002).

Following the referendum, Mohammad Reza's regime launched a brutal campaign of terror. SAVAK carried out extreme acts of violence: Karimpour Shirazi, a journalist close to Mossadeq, was burned alive, Hossein Fatemi, brother of former Foreign Minister Hossein Fatemi, was tortured and executed despite assurances of safety, and the nearly blind former Minister of Justice Lotffī was viciously attacked with knives and batons—gouging out one of his eyes and shattering his ribs, skull, and shoulders—before leaving him unconscious to die suffering severe injuries. Perpetrators were widely known but never prosecuted (Rahnema 2014).

In 1963, military commandos aggressively attacked students at Faizieh School in Qom and Talebieh School in Tabriz, killing, injuring, and arresting many (Agheli 1991, p. 156). That year, security forces also incited riots in Tehran and other cities to justify Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's¹³ arrest and exile. Officers disguised in civilian clothes orchestrated the unrest, while unsuspecting unemployed workers were drawn into the turmoil, believing it to be a genuine protest. Meanwhile, other military and security units, unaware of the plan, opened fire on the crowds, escalating the violence. By the next day, students and merchants joined, turning the plan into a widespread uprising with hundreds of casualties. Tanks patrolled Tehran, and martial law was imposed (Amini 2002).

Repression was largely confined to the Shah's inner circle. For instance, Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda was imprisoned for openly critiquing the Shah's "tyranny" (Radji 1983). These unexpected developments alarmed the Shah and reinforced his belief that a single-party system was essential to quell

¹³ The pioneer of Islamic Revolution in 1979.

opposition and suppress demonstrations. Consequently, the consolidation of a totalitarian state culminated in the creation of the Rastakhiz Party in 1975, efficiently stifling any democratic aspirations.

In conclusion, despite its modernisation and consolidation goals, the Pahlavi regime was limited by structural weaknesses, many formed by US influence. Its nationalist ideology failed to resonate with religious communities, creating a moral vacuum. Heavy reliance on oil revenues reinforced uneven development and inequality, while dependence on US transnational military aid limited autonomous defense and fueled perceptions of clientelism. Politically, patrimonial centralisation and violent repression, backed by Washington, alienated opposition and weakened institutions. These factors combined to create fertile ground for the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which capitalised on popular grievances across ideological, economic, military, and political domains.

4.4 Post-Revolutionary Iran and Power Dynamics

Building on the preceding analysis of the conditions that precipitated the Islamic Revolution, this section also applies the IEMP framework to chart the reconfiguration of power relations under Islamic governance. Particular attention is given to the period 2005–2024, when Iran experienced a profound restructuring of authority and resource mobilisation within the restraints of an intensifying sanctions regime, shaped above all by US transnational power. Through an examination of the Islamic Republic’s emblematic strategies—ranging from the export of revolutionary ideals to Muslim societies, the consolidation of a regional “axis of resistance,” and the expansion of drone, missile, and nuclear capabilities, to the reengineering of political institutions in favour of an empowered executive—this discussion emphasises a critical departure from Pahlavi-era modes of rule. Through the IEMP lens, the Islamic Revolution emerges as a project that not only sought to manage internal contestations but also articulated a counter-hegemonic vision that re-situated Iran within regional and global political–economic structures.

4.4.1 Ideological Transformation: From Secularisation to Islamisation

The rise of late-20th-century religious revivalist movements challenged the secularisation theory, which originally argued that modernisation and scientific progress would reduce religion’s role in public and private life (Berger 2011). This revival questioned the theory’s historical validity and its European-centric bias (Sherkat and Ellison 1999). Such a bias is evident, highlighting Western contexts while largely overlooking religious developments elsewhere, reflecting the 20th-century modernisation perspective (Casanova 1994). The 1979 revolution exemplifies such developments and has remained central to debates on religion’s contemporary role for over four decades as Iran’s ideology shifted from Pahlavi-era

nationalism to an Islam-based framework. The revolution, driven by broad popular participation¹⁴, emerged after over fifty years of efforts to modernise the economy and secularise society.

Some scholars (Chehabi 1991; Fairbanks 1998; Kazemipur and Rezaei 2003) describe the Islamic Revolution as the establishment of a theocracy. In its strictest sense, “God is regarded as the direct ruler, with His laws serving as the community’s legal code, interpreted and enforced by religious leaders acting as His representatives” (Bogdanor, 1987, p. 6). This immanent ideology sought to restructure society and politics around a collective Islamic vision that challenged global power structures. The post-revolutionary “Islamisation” project brought sweeping alterations in cultural life and foreign policy, marking a decisive shift from secularisation to de-secularisation by reconnecting Iran with its Islamic roots after decades of domination by “foreign worshipers” (Paul 1999, p. 191).

Iran–US confrontation reflects a broader Third World view of the Western-led global order as a continuation of imperialism rooted in 19th-century military dominance. As Samuel P. Huntington (1996, p. 51) states, Western power relied on organised violence rather than superior values—a reality non-Western nations remember. For Iran, resistance to imperialism is both ideological and identity-defining, challenging US dominance and its ability to project power (Freedman 2013, p. 226). This ideological clash shapes Iran–US relations across economic, military, and political spheres.

The Islamic Revolution reshaped social norms, education, media, and public life in line with Islamic values, a form of what Joseph S. Nye (2004) terms “soft power” (*qodrat-e narm*). However, Iranian security elites frame Western soft power as a “cultural assault” (*hojum-e farhangi*) or “cultural NATO” (*nato-ye farhangi*), viewing Western media and cultural tools as part of a soft war against the Republic (Ja’afari 2013, pp. 208-209).

In this security-conscious climate, education shifted to religious teachings, Islamic history, and moral instruction, substituting many Pahlavi-era secular subjects. Media and the arts promoted Islamic values, with censorship targeting Western-style music, cinema, and literature. Public life was reshaped through enforced dress codes and visible religious rituals, creating a cultural Islamisation project that sought to reconstruct Iran’s identity around Islamic heritage and undo decades of secular influence.

Iran’s post-revolutionary foreign policy could be understood through the interplay of ideology and political practice. The slogan “neither East nor West” (Bird 2002) articulated in the early days of the revolution symbolised the Islamisation of foreign policy. At a time when global politics was defined by

¹⁴ Around 98 percent of participants voted in favour of establishing an Islamic Republic in the 1979 referendum (Abrahamian 2018, p. 174).

two dominant blocs—the East, led by the Soviet Union and communism, and the West, signified by the US and its liberal allies—Iran’s call of neither East nor West signaled its negation to affiliate with either superpower, somehow verbally.

In a such a setting, the Iranian Constitution embeds the political and strategic implications of ideology: Article 3/16 mandates Islamic principles, Article 11 promotes Muslim solidarity, and Articles 152–154 forbid foreign military alliances while endorsing support for the “oppressed” (*mostaz‘afin*) and global revolutionary movements. The Revolution aimed for the Muslim world unity (Montazeri 2000, p. 187), though the US interprets this as support for “terrorism” and regional interference.

4.4.2 Islamisation of Iran’s Economy

The 1979 constitution also marked a pivotal step toward the Islamisation of Iran’s economy. Unlike Iran’s 1906 constitution and those of other contemporary states, its distinguishing feature lies in its conception of life’s ultimate purpose. The economy, it asserts, is not an “end in itself” but rather a “means” to move closer to God (Amuzegar 1992, p. 416). Though, the Islamic Republic did not plainly articulate how this economic model was to be operationalised and its trajectory was profoundly shaped by two major developments: the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88) and sanctions.

4.4.2.1 Iran’s Economy, 1979–2005: State Dominance and Market Struggles

The Islamic Revolution radically reformed Iran’s economy, shifting wealth from the private sector to the state. Nationalisation and asset confiscation curtailed private enterprise while expanding public control over key industries. Articles 44 and 45 of the Constitution codified this, granting the state ownership of public wealth—such as mines, forests, and pastures—and mandating the transfer of major industries, infrastructure, and services to state control, often without compensation to their previous owners.

The Iran–Iraq War reinforced state control, directing oil revenues mainly to military expenditure and public rationing. The conflict severely disrupted oil production, which fell from 5.6 million b/d in 1976 to 1.46 million b/d in 1980/82, cutting the oil sector’s GDP share from 30–40% to 9–17%. Despite this, oil still generated about 90% of foreign exchange, though only a small fraction of post-revolution revenues was invested in fixed capital ¹⁵. Overall, Iran’s GDP at constant prices declined by an average 1.5% per year between 1977/78 and 1988/89, leaving it in 1988/89 roughly at the same level as fifteen years earlier (Amuzegar 1992).

¹⁵ See Majlis debates on the 1992/93 national budget, Kayhan Havai, January 22, 1992, p. 24.

From 1979 to 1989, Iran's private sector was limited to non-state areas, chiefly trade, agriculture, small enterprises, and urban construction. Compared to vast public holdings and state-controlled oil revenues, it was small, accounting for only 12–15% of the economy, making Iran a state-dominated mixed capitalist-socialist system (Karbassian 2000).

During Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidency (1989–1997), which reinforced the private sector, he encouraged greater private participation in trade and production and sought to restrict the wartime-expanded public sector. He announced an IMF-style “structural adjustment programme” with measures such as exchange rate unification, fiscal discipline, trade deregulation, subsidy cuts, foreign investment promotion, oversight of parastatals, and privatisation of loss-making enterprises. These reforms, nevertheless, led to inflation rising to 50% by 1996 (Karbassian 2000).

During Mohammad Khatami's presidency (1997–2005), the economy continued heavily reliant on oil, with no considerable manufacturing base. Enduring structural problems continued: an inefficient public sector burdened with poorly paid employees, and a state bureaucracy—vastly expanded after the revolution—that remained unreformed. Inflation and unemployment continued at high levels, while improvements in the current account balance stemmed not from meaningful reforms but from increasing oil prices.

However, US sanctions have profoundly shaped Iran's sociopolitical landscape across the presidencies of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005–2013), Hassan Rouhani (2013–2021), and Ebrahim Raisi (2021–2024). In Mann's terms, sanctions represent transnational power exercised through economic networks rather than territorial control, limiting Iran, shaping elite behaviour, and influencing domestic debates on how to respond.

4.4.2.1.1 From Nuclear Defiance to Expansion of Sanctions

At the start of his first term, Ahmadinejad removed international seals on key nuclear facilities, resuming enrichment and nuclear research, provoking strong objections from Washington. The US, China, and Russia became involved in Iran's nuclear dossier, leading to the transfer of it to the UN Security Council and the imposition of six sanctions resolutions between 2006 and 2010 (Davenport 2023). Resolution 1696 (2006) demanded Iran suspend enrichment activities and limited transfers aiding its nuclear and missile programmes. Resolution 1737 (2006) imposed sanctions, stalling nuclear-related goods and financial support. Resolution 1747 (2007) discouraged military supplies and concessional loans, except for humanitarian purposes. Resolution 1803 (2008) tightened sanctions, targeting financial institutions and recommending cargo inspections. Resolution 1835 (2008) reaffirmed prior measures and the UNSC's

commitment to a negotiated resolution (UN Security Council N.d.). Sanctions weakened inflation, unemployment, and access to essential goods, fueling public frustration and contributing to the Green Movement protests, which called for accountability and better governance.

4.4.2.1.2 The Green Movement and Sanctions Intensification

Ahmadinejad's 2009 re-election with 63% of the vote sparked the Green Movement demonstrations over alleged fraud, led by opposition figures Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, marking the largest challenge since 1979 (Bajoghli et al. 2023). The movement was suppressed within a year, with leaders under house arrest and 4,000 arrests and 70–80 deaths reported (Jamshidi 2009; Jeffrey Sachs and Weisbrot 2019), though some claim higher casualties (Tait 2009). Following these events, UNSC Resolution 1929 (2010) targeted Iran's nuclear programme, banned foreign investment in nuclear and missile technology, imposed a full arms embargo, and restricted military sales (Davenport 2023).

Despite inflation, social unrest, and sanctions, Iran benefited from high oil prices in the early 2010s, averaging over \$80 in 2010 and exceeding \$110 in 2011–2012 (Bajoghli et al. 2023). Ahmadinejad expanded imports and welfare programmes, allocating \$4 billion to schools, raising wages, and subsidising industries to “bring oil money to people's dinner table” (Davis and Robinson 2006, p. 186). Nevertheless, heavy reliance on the Oil Stabilisation Fund, meant for long-term projects, fueled unsustainable subsidies, inflation, and economic inefficiencies, hindering diversification. His confrontational foreign policy and controversial nuclear programme also led to the imposition of severe sanctions regime through imposing two statutes the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) in 2010 and the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) in 2012.

- **CISADA**

Banning Iranian banks and institutions from the international financial system has become a key pillar of US sanctions against the country. While US-based banks and institutions are prohibited from engaging in financial transactions with Iran, then President Barack Obama signed the CISADA into law, which extended this prohibition to extraterritorial foreign financial institutions (US Treasury Department 2010). Foreign institutions involved in transactions with Iranian entities risked losing access to the US financial system, making CISADA a tool for implementing secondary sanctions. These sanctions target foreign agents not under US jurisdiction, preventing them from engaging with entities subject to US sanctions. CISADA addressed perceived limitations of the 1996 Iran Sanctions Act (ISA), which primarily focused on foreign investments in Iran's energy sector, by expanding sanctions to Iran's broader financial sector (Meyer 2008). By imposing secondary sanctions, CISADA significantly broadened US sanctions,

increasing the cost of doing business with Iranian banks and forcing many foreign institutions to sever ties with Iran. This had a profound economic impact, limiting Iran's ability to engage in international trade and repatriate revenue, thus enhancing pressure on Iran to comply with US and international demands regarding its nuclear programme and other issues.

- **NDAA**

In 2012, the US Congress passed a comprehensive NDAA tightening sanctions on Iran's financial sector. Iran was designated a primary money-laundering risk, and its banking sector, including the Central Bank, was flagged for potential "terrorist and proliferation financing". The Act froze Iranian financial assets and restricted petroleum transactions. The US Energy Information Administration, with the Treasury and State Departments, reports every 60 days on non-Iranian petroleum supply and prices, while the President assesses every 180 days whether global supply allows significant reductions in Iranian imports (US Treasury Department 2012).

Sanctions hit the Ahmadinejad administration hard, cutting oil exports from 2.5 to 1.1 million b/d between 2011 and 2013 and limiting access to hard currency. By 2013, Iran's economy was shrinking 5% annually, with inflation at 42% and unemployment at 18% (Newton-Small 2012). Ahmadinejad's nuclear approach fueled sanctions and intensified domestic debate over whether to pursue the programme or accommodate the West, with the latter approach adopted under Rouhani.

4.4.2.1.3 JCPOA and Maximum Pressure

Rouhani's flexible approach to the nuclear issue, endorsed by Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, as *heroic flexibility*, revived talks with the P5+1 (the US, China, France, Russia, the UK, and Germany), leading to an interim agreement in 2013 that froze Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for \$6-7 billion in limited, reversible sanctions suspension. This set the stage for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was finalised in 2015, ending the nuclear impasse. The agreement sparked nationwide celebrations, with citizens expressing relief and hope for an end to economic isolation.

Under the JCPOA, restrictive economic measures on Iran's energy, financial, shipping, and automotive sectors were suspended in January 2016 after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed Iranian compliance, though US secondary sanctions remained. The Rouhani administration faced criticism for its nuclear concessions, pressured by economic concerns and an unprecedented nuclear inspection regime by the IAEA (Korte 2016).

After the JCPOA, US secondary sanctions kept major banks cautious about trading with Iran. Measures like fund seizures, restrictive visas, and new Congressional sanctions deepened distrust (Hurley 2016), while the US maintained sanctions on human rights, terrorism, and regional conflicts. In 2016, the US Senate extended the Iran Sanctions Act for 10 years (Korte 2016), which Iran condemned as violating the JCPOA.

Trump labelled the JCPOA as “one of the worst deals” ever and withdrew the US from it in 2018. The Trump administration launched its “maximum pressure” campaign, which included an unprecedented range of primary and secondary sanctions, prompting Khamenei (2019) to publicly declare that the deal demonstrated the futility of negotiating with Washington.

After the US withdrawal, it continued covert operations, cyberattacks, and targeted strikes. In 2019, the Trump administration assassinated the Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and the Iraqi militia leader Mahdi al-Mohandes, sparking mourning in Iran and anger in Iraq. Iran retaliated with a missile strike on Ain al-Asad in 2020, causing dozens of traumatic brain injuries though no immediate fatalities (Kube 2023).

4.4.2.1.4 Stalled Iran-US Negotiations

Raisi’s administration pushed to revive the JCPOA, demanding full sanctions relief, a US commitment to a new deal, and clarity on trade normalisation, while excluding regional and missile issues (Sadeghi, 2021). The Biden administration, however, upheld Trump-era demands, focusing on these issues and indirectly pressuring for regime change (Gordon 2018), disappointing Iranians hoping for economic relief and increasing pressure on Raisi administration.

In Raisi’s first year, the dollar’s value rose from 274,000 rials in August 2021 to 323,000 rials by August 2022, causing inflation and rising import prices (Tgju 2022). The Central Bank injected cash to prevent bankruptcies, but wages could not keep up, leading to falling real incomes and economic hardship. Corruption and mismanagement worsened the crisis, fueling frustration among the middle class and poor. This situation further deepened public discontent culminating in several high-profile protests, most notably the Woman, Life, Freedom (WLF) movement.

4.4.2.1.5 Woman, Life, Freedom: Unveiling Resistance

The WLF uprising was sparked by the death of 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman Mahsa Amini in the custody of the Morality Police in 2022. Her lifeless body on the bed of a hospital, widely shared on social

media, ignited protests that began in her hometown of Saqqez (a city in central Iran) quickly spreading across the country.

Feminist scholarship views “femininity” as central to Iran’s WLF movement. Since 1979, the Constitution bars women from key positions, including president (art. 115), Head of the Judiciary (art. 157), and Supreme Leader, while enforcing travel restrictions and discriminatory inheritance laws. These limitations, alongside the veiling-unveiling issue, sparked widespread protests demanding revolutionary changes, reflected in slogans such as “Don’t call it a protest; it’s called a revolution”. Between September 16 and November 11, 2022, women led 1,158 of 1,265 protests (Wintour 2022), which faced violent repression, resulting in over 200 deaths reported by the interior ministry (Motamedi 2022) and over 300 estimated by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) (Farge 2022).

A target-centred lens requires caution when examining the WLF, avoiding simplistic readings that disregard historical and socio-political setting. For decades, Iranian girls’ and women’s bodies have been central to political and nationalist agendas. This stems from a long history of state-enforced veiling and unveiling, both pre- and post-revolution. For example, Reza Shah’s 1936 Unveiling Act mandated public unveiling under threat of arrest; many women who veiled stayed home to avoid police confrontations (Hoodfar 1993). Alike, both the 1936 Unveiling Act and the 1983 Veiling Act curtailed women’s agency, allowing the state to control women’s clothing and bodily autonomy. These laws shaped attire ideologically, alternately portraying women as symbols of a secular, Westernised Iran or an Islamic, anti-imperialist state (Moallem 2005; Naghibi 2007).

The Islamic Revolution granted women the right to vote and participate politically as lawmakers, yet the state enforces the hijab as a key marker of Islamic identity. The WLF movement challenges this, alarming conservatives who see unveiled women as symbols of Western influence and threats to the revolution’s ideology. Opposition figures like Masih Alinejad (2022) reinforce this view, comparing the hijab to the “Berlin Wall” and indicating that its removal could destabilise the Islamic Republic. While the state has not abandoned the hijab, enforcement has lessened; in late 2024, the National Security Council suspended the stricter “Hijab and Chastity Law,” which would have introduced broad criminal, social, and digital penalties for improper dress. During my visit to Tehran (March–June 2024), I observed acts of civil disobedience, including women loosening or fully removing their headscarves in public.

Adherence to the hijab in Iran varies widely, formed by cultural norms, minority status, personal identity, and socio-economic conditions (Daneshpour and Firooz 2022). Practices differ by region and class: in southern Tehran, middle- and low-income women often follow hijab rules due to social expectations,

while in affluent northern areas like Fereshteh, few women wear hijabs and the Morality Police is mainly absent. Smaller cities and rural areas show stronger ties to traditional dress codes, with women wearing the hijab either under social pressure or by choice. Women's experiences are thus diverse, making it inaccurate to label all women as "haters of hijab". However, the hijab has become a powerful symbol within the broader women's freedom movement in Iran, precisely because of its dual role as both a state-imposed mandate and a deeply personal practice. Its visibility in daily life made it a focal point for resistance, permitting women to challenge not only clothing styles but also the wider limitations placed on their rights.

Amid the WLF protests, the US imposed two rounds of sanctions between September 22–29, targeting the Morality Police, military officials, and Iran's petroleum sector (US Department of Treasury 2022). These measures, combined with the state crackdown, stalled negotiations with the West, raised the cost of goods, and disproportionately affected low-income households, worsening financial strain and inequality. The economic crisis deepened social disparities, leaving vulnerable populations struggling to meet basic needs under Raisi's presidency.

4.4.3 The Evolution of Iran's Military Strategy

The post-9/11 era reinforced a neo-Orientalist view of the Middle East as needing Western-led transformation. Despite Iran's cooperation in Afghanistan and Iraq, President George W. Bush (2001–2009) labelled Tehran part of the "axis of evil" in 2002, ending forecasts for rapprochement. This framing, tied to the so-called American-Israeli New Middle East project, marginalising Iran and casting it as a so-called global "threat," while the US extended its military presence with at least eight permanent military bases around Iran (Newsd 2025). With 160,000 troops in Iraq in 2007 and 100,000 in Afghanistan in 2011 (Merrow 2025), Tehran assesses this as a direct security threat, prompting reliance on coercion and military power to deter aggression (Art and Greenhill 2015).

Consequently, Iran's military strategy has progressively emphasised self-reliance and deterrence in response to US and Israeli pressures (Golkarian and Işksal 2024), situating its defense policies within an anti-imperialist framework. Its military build-up reflects not only ideology but also a pragmatic, historically informed pursuit of security and regional influence—what Vali Nasr (2025) terms a "grand strategy of resistance". This pragmatism is evident in the institutional bifurcation of Iran's security apparatus, amalgamating the ideologically driven the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) with the conventional army. Key features include developments in missile and drone technologies, a firm anti-

American and anti-Israeli stance within the “front of resistance,” and a nuclear programme, all of which position Iran as a significant challenge to US dominance in the Middle East.

4.4.3.1 Missile and Drone Programmes

Saddam Hussein’s missile strikes during the Iran-Iraq War exposed Iran’s limited deterrence, prompting Tehran to develop its own capabilities (Rezaei 2016). Deterrence—using threats to avoid aggression—became central to Iran’s military strategy (Collins 1973). Yet, under a US arms embargo since 1984 and facing extensive Gulf-state military aid, Iran remains at a strategic disadvantage (Cordesman 2019).

In 2010, the US and Saudi Arabia signed a \$60 billion, 20-year arms deal, one of the largest in US history. From 2015 to 2021, Washington supplied Riyadh with at least \$54.6 billion in military support, including equipment, missiles, helicopters, and training (US Government Accountability 2022). Similarly, in June 2017, Qatar signed a \$12 billion contract with the US to buy 36 F-15QA strike aircraft, improving its air defense capabilities (Browne 2017).

To offset its smaller conventional arsenal compared to regional rivals, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Iranian Army have heavily invested in indigenous ballistic missile and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) programmes (Rezaei 2016). Beginning in the 1980s–1990s with reverse-engineered designs, Iran advanced the *Shahab-1* (based on the Scud-B) and *Shahab-2* (an improved variant), both short-range ballistic missiles with limited accuracy. By the 2000s, Tehran shifted toward modernisation, extending ranges from 300 km to over 2,000 km and improving guidance systems, thus building short-, medium-, and long-range capabilities (Cordesman 2019). These developments permit Iran to target Israel and US forces without maintaining a comparable conventional army.

Iran’s UAV programme began in the 1980s with limited, surveillance-focused models based on reverse-engineered foreign drones. The *Mohajer-1* (1985) and *Ababil-1* (1986) were deployed to monitor Iraqi troop movements along trench warfare-style front lines (Mashregh News 2011). In the 2000s–2010s, Quds Aviation Industries (QAI) expanded the programme, producing longer-range and more cutting-edge armed drones such as the *Shahed-123*, *Shahed-129* (Fars News Agency 2016), and the missile-capable *Karrar* (Shane 2011). Since the 2010s, Iran has achieved technological maturity, fielding long-range UAVs and loitering munitions like the *Shahed-136*, which has been used in the Russia–Ukraine war since 2022. Since 2018, Tehran has also transferred drone technology to allies in Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, extending UAV access across its regional network (Azad News Agency 2015).

4.4.3.2 Anti-American and Anti-Israeli Front of Resistance

After 9/11, Arabs and Muslims were represented as the “new barbarians” threatening liberal-secular Westphalian society (Al-Kassimi 2021). This view aimed to transform the “lawless” Middle East, seen as vulnerable to terror, into a so-called “New Middle East,” a vision whose territorial outline was presented by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu before the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2023.

Under the New Middle East policy, the US labels Iran-allied groups like Hezbollah and Hamas as “enemies” and sanctions them for perceived threats to US and Israeli interests. Strindberg and Warn (Strindberg and Wäärn 2005) argue this reflects neo-Orientalist stereotypes, portraying a “global Arab–Islamic terrorist network” through Samuel P. Huntington’s “clash of civilisations” lens (1996), which contrasts a rational, tolerant West with an emotional, violent, and traditionalist non-West. This framing cast Iran’s allies, along with al-Qa’ida and the Taliban, as enemies of the “civilised world”. Such a rhetoric underpins the US-led “war on terror,” while covering ongoing economic exploitation and increasing political control over the region¹⁶.

Iran’s drive to export the Islamic Revolution, enshrined in Article 11 of its Constitution, challenges the US-Israeli New Middle East project. Following political, economic, and cultural unity in the Islamic world, Iran has adopted asymmetric warfare¹⁷, supporting ideologically and militarily its allies such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Asa’ib Ahl al-Haqq, Kata’ib Hezbollah, Badr Organisation, Harakat al-Nujaba in Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen.

Iran’s influence across four states was known as the axis of resistance, a transnational ideological and military network of armies, militias, parties, and individuals allied with Tehran. This network underpinned Iran’s strategy of asymmetrical tactics to offset its conventional military weaknesses, avoiding direct confrontations with stronger foes like the US. Anticipating potential US invasions after Afghanistan and Iraq, Iran focused on cultivating military allies, particularly against US forces and regional allies like Israel, which conducts sabotage and cyberattacks in Iran (Bob and Evyatar 2023). Iran maintains strong ties with its regional allies, offering political, economic, and military support, though its influence varies by local leadership, regional dynamics, religion, and historical ties (Khamenei 2024).

¹⁶ See, for instance, George W. Bush’s speech at the National Defense University, 8 March 2005.

¹⁷ Asymmetric warfare is a style of warfare adopted by the militarily inferior side. It is based on the use of tactics that exploit the adversary’s weaknesses while avoiding its strengths. On asymmetric warfare, see Arreguín-Toft (2012); Thornton (2007).

Hezbollah is a Shiite Muslim political and military group in Lebanon, founded during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). Aligned with Iran, it rose to prominence after ending Israel's 18-year occupation of Southern Lebanon in 2000. Designated a "terrorist organisation" by the US in 1997, Hezbollah contests Israeli occupation and US interventions in the region. Holding 13 of 128 parliamentary seats in 2022, it wields influence and provides social services (Roche and Robbins 2024), though critics (Jahanbani and Harmouch 2024; Ul Haq 2024) claim it prioritises Iranian interests.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Sunni organisations, align with Iran in opposing Israel and the US. Operating mainly in Gaza, they receive financial, military, and political support from Tehran. Iran denies involvement in Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel. The former US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (2023), along with Netanyahu, also acknowledged the lack of direct evidence linking Iran to the attack. In response to Hamas's attack, the Israeli devastating retaliation killed around 68,000 Palestinians (Irish Independent)¹⁸ and was widely condemned as an act of genocide and ethnic cleansing, significantly damaging Israel's international standing.

Iraq has been central to Iran's strategy, with Shiism originating there and holy cities like Najaf and Karbala serving as key pilgrimage and learning centres. After Saddam's 2003 overthrow, Iran extended its influence, supporting groups like Badr, Dawa, and the Sadrists to form politics while backing multiple factions to maintain leverage. During the US invasion of Iraq, the IRGC trained Asa'ib Ahl al Haqq, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Badr, and Harakat al-Nujaba (Eisenstadt 2015), which targeted US forces, urging the withdrawal of US forces.

In December 2024, Iran lost a key ally when Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was overthrown by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a US-designated terrorist group. Iran had backed Assad militarily and financially since 2011. His fall, coupled with Israeli occupation of some parts in Syria, cut Iran's land route to Lebanon, weakening support for Hezbollah and fracturing the "axis," now a more fragmented "front" including Yemen, Iraq, the Palestinian territories, and Lebanon.

Less than six months after the fall of Al-Assad, coupled with the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, and heavy blows to Hamas, led Israel to launch a military attack on Iran – code-named 'Operation Rising Lion' – in 2025, while the US and Iran were pursuing diplomatic negotiations to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. The Wall Street Journal (2025) reported that the negotiations may have served as a cover for Israel's assault.

¹⁸ The casualty figures reflect estimates available at the time of writing of the thesis and may change with new data.

The Israeli attack started with strikes on Iranian radar systems, senior officials, scientists, and civilian infrastructure – including state TV and power plants – followed by US airstrikes on nuclear sites, killing 1062 people, including 38 children and 132 women (Hammihan 2025). Iran retaliated with over 1,000 drones and 550 ballistic missiles, including precision-guided and hypersonic types, killing 28 Israelis. Israeli defences were overwhelmed, key targets were hit and strikes on sites like the Haifa power plant brought the economy to a near standstill (Alqarout 2025).

4.4.3.3 Nuclear Programme

US concerns over Iran's potential nuclear weapons led to IAEA scrutiny from 2002. By 2007–08, most issues were resolved, but worries about the programme's "possible military dimensions" persisted (Abdul-Hussain 2009). In 2011, the IAEA reported limited cooperation since 2008¹⁹ and cited possible weapons-related activities, including design work, dual-use material procurement, and undeclared research.

Between 2012 and 2013, the IAEA held ten meetings with Iran, culminating in the 2013 "Framework for Cooperation" to verify the programme's peaceful nature. By mid-2014, most issues were addressed, though concerns over explosives and neutron research persisted²⁰. In 2015, after Iran followed the IAEA roadmap, the agency closed outstanding cases and began monitoring compliance with the nuclear deal under UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which mandated quarterly reports (Haupt 2016).

The IAEA confirmed Iran's compliance (Arms Control Association N.d.), but the US claims Tehran can still develop nuclear weapons, though it lacks some necessary technologies (US Department of State 2011). Iran, a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signatory, denies this, stressing its civilian programme, like the need for alternative energy sources (Khamenei 2023). While delaying some nuclear activity reports, Iran signed the "additional protocol" in 2004, allowing more inspections.

Iran's nuclear programme embodies a delicate balance between national security priorities and constant international oversight. Prior to the Israeli–US strikes, Tehran had made significant progress in addressing IAEA concerns and adhering to various agreements. However, deep scepticism endured, largely driven by geopolitical rivalries. In June 2025, the Iranian parliament unanimously (221–0) approved legislation suspending all cooperation with the IAEA, contingent on assurances regarding the protection of its

¹⁹ Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran, GOV/2011/65, November 8, 2011.

²⁰ Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report by the Director General, GOV/2015/34, May 29, 2015.

nuclear facilities and scientists. The Supreme Leader-affiliated newspaper, Kayhan (2025), argued that the IAEA had engaged in espionage activities that endangered the lives of Iranian nuclear scientists, portraying the agency as an “instrument of the Mossad and the CIA”.

After the US–Israeli strikes, Trump claimed Iran’s nuclear facilities were “completely obliterated,” though doubts remain about any hidden sites. Iran’s 408kg stockpile of 60% enriched uranium—near weapons grade—remains central. Senior adviser Ali Shamkhani warned that “even if nuclear sites are destroyed, the game isn’t over,” while adviser Kamal Kharrazi (2024) suggested an “existential threat” could push Iran to reconsider its nuclear doctrine. The strikes have fueled calls from commentators and state media for a nuclear bomb as deterrence. Even Khamenei’s website (2025) acknowledged rising public demands for a “deterrent weapon,” highlighting the conditional, evolving nature of Iran’s strategic calculations in response to evolving geopolitical realities.

4.4.4 Hybrid Theocratic-Republican Political Power

Iran is an ideologically driven political system (Haghighy 1993), resembling a theocracy due to Islam’s central role in its Constitution. Scholars (Chehabi 1991b; Bale 2009; Misagh 2020) have framed this as totalitarian or dictatorial—an interpretation shaped by a dichotomous, sender-centric perspective grounded in liberal-democratic assumptions (Boroumand 2020). Such a strict orthodox democratic–totalitarian/authoritarian division oversimplifies Iran’s politics. The heterodox nature of its theocratic ideology, combined with sanctions, is crucial, as targeted states often restructure domestic institutions to preserve regime survival (Marinov 2005).

As with any political regime, ensuring the survival of the Islamic Republic is a central priority for the state. Its significance is underscored by Khomeini’s (1983) statement that “Maintaining the Islamic Republic takes precedence over safeguarding the life of the Twelfth Imam.”²¹ This represents the principle of *maslahat-e neẓam*, or the ‘expediency of the system,’ indicates that ideological purity is subordinated to the survival of the state. This approach is neither unique nor unprecedented; other ideologies have likewise set aside ideological purity once in power (Schweitzer 1962). Such dynamism signals that the Islamic Republic can reinterpret religious and ideological principles when necessary to protect the political order. This shows flexibility rather than rigid adherence to doctrine²². The system combines elements of a modern nation-state (focused on survival, governance, and political strategy) with

²¹ In Twelver Shia Islam, the largest Shia branch, the Twelfth Imam—Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi (born 869 CE)—holds a central role. He is believed to be in occultation: initially communicating indirectly through deputies (874–941 CE, Minor Occultation) and, since 941 CE, no longer communicating directly with the community (Major Occultation).

²² Such flexibility is evident even in nuclear negotiation with the West and the contentious hijab debate mentioned previously.

theocratic structures (religiously legitimised authority). This hybrid nature requires constant negotiation and adaptation, further signaling dynamism.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution established a hybrid political system, merging republican institutions with a theocratic core. This hybrid theocratic-republican regime is anchored by five main institutions: the Supreme Leader and the IRGC forming the theocratic core, alongside the executive, judiciary, and legislature constituting the republican core. The theocratic core, in particular the Supreme Leader, remains exempt from electoral competition, whereas the republican institutions are primarily formed through elections, the judiciary is an exception, as its head is appointed directly by the Supreme Leader.

Between 1980 and 2024, the Islamic Republic held 25 national elections—13 presidential and 12 parliamentary—with particularly high disqualification rates in 2020, 2021, and 2024 (Motamedi 2024). Despite formal elections, power remains concentrated in the hands of theocratic core²³, a hallmark of defective democracies that preserve institutions without ensuring fair competition or freedom of expression. Such post-transition regimes exhibit softened authoritarianism, adapting governance through a pragmatic blend of coercion, religion, and survivalist strategies shaped by internal and external pressures, including sanctions. Such structures are common in post-transition regimes, moving from totalitarian rule toward weakly democratic forms. Finally, they remain softened authoritarian states shaped by internal strategies and external pressures, including devastating sanctions (Bogaards 2009). This results in adaptive governance marked by pragmatic, dynamic synthesis of coercion, religion, and survivalist tactics, rather than fitting neatly into standard regime typologies.

To conclude, post-revolutionary Iran illustrates how power can be fundamentally reconfigured when ideology, institutions, and external pressures converge. The Islamic Republic replaced the Pahlavi monarchy's secular nationalism with a theocratic-republican framework that sought to Islamise politics, society, and the economy, while simultaneously embedding resistance to Western hegemony at the heart of its foreign policy. Yet this ideological project unfolded under the persistent shadow of US transnational power, which reshaped Iran's domestic debates and constrained its economic choices through sanctions. By mobilising religion, expanding state control over resources, the Islamic Republic invested strategically in missiles, drones, asymmetric regional alliances, and nuclear capabilities, illustrating a deliberate effort to assert autonomy, deter potential threats, and resist external coercion. Viewed through the IEMP framework, Iran's post-1979 trajectory emerges as a case of both resistance and fragility: a state that has

²³ Constitution, Article 57.

projected a counter-hegemonic vision onto the regional and global stage while grappling with the profound economic, social, and political strains generated mainly by its confrontation with the US.

4.5 From Pahlavi to Islamic Republic: Despotic or Infrastructural Power Shift?

Mann distinguishes between two forms of state power, known as despotic and infrastructural. While despotic power relates to elite control over political decision-making, infrastructural power concerns administrative reach and service delivery. This section evaluates whether Pahlavi and Islamic Republic establishments exercised these forms of power by assessing two indicators. First, it looks at the concentration of authority and weakening of accountability mechanisms to examine the extent of unchecked elite power. Second, it analyses the state's capacity to deliver services and implement policies in rural and marginalised areas, revealing the depth of its functional presence and legitimacy. The aim is to determine whether each regime exhibited low, moderate, or high levels of despotic and infrastructural power.

4.5.1 Accountability and Its Limits under the Pahlavis

The Pahlavi monarchy imposed strict limits on political accountability. Reza Shah's highly centralised state curtailed checks on royal power, subordinating parliament and tightly controlling elections to block independent opposition. This undermined the principle of representative governance and limited mechanisms through which the Shah could be held accountable to the public (Abrahamian 1982). By monopolising decision-making, the monarchy efficiently hollowed out constitutional institutions that were originally designed to constrain executive power.

During Mohammad Reza's reign, particularly after the 1953 coup, accountability eroded further. The Shah expanded monarchical power at parliament and judiciary's expense, banning or repressing political parties and establishing the single-party Rastakhiz system (Milani 2011). By eliminating political pluralism, he curtailed criticism and weakened mechanisms for the state responsiveness, prioritising stability and control over transparency.

The regime's control of the press also limited accountability. At the beginning of the Pahlavi monarchy, censorship was largely overseen by the police department under the direct command of the Shah, reflecting the extrajudicial nature of press control during this era²⁴. Although premiers such as Mohammad-Ali Foroughi and Mohammad Vali Foroughi Mostofi had some limited influence in press

²⁴ You can find it in Iran's national library and archives, the document No. 36049-297, pages 205-310.

affairs, the ultimate authority rested with the police, who acted as the king's enforcement arm. During this transitional period, after the 1921 coup, censorship was less rigid than in later years, allowing for some space for critical expression. Newspapers like *Toofan* and writers such as Ali Dashti (1909–1982) Mohammad Farrokhi Yazdi (1892–1939) openly criticised government officials, while Mohammad Massoud (1905-1948) used literary translations, such as the French novel *Nightlife*, to highlight social critiques. Nonetheless, these openings quickly narrowed by 1928, when Reza Shah consolidated his power. Critical writings, particularly those addressing parliamentary elections and journalism practices, led to the confinement of opposition papers such as *Toofan* and forced figures like Farrokhi, who supported communism, into exile and being assassinated there (Documents Centre 2022). The intensification of censorship brought about intrusive practices, where police officers with little intellectual capacity scrutinised press content, often censoring ambiguous or even non-political texts out of fear of punishment by their superiors (Rahimi 2021).

Under Mohammad Reza Shah, press freedom peaked before the 1953 coup. A relatively open political climate allowed investigative reporting, with over hundred newspapers and magazines—party-affiliated and state-sponsored—circulating. Many outlets openly criticised the occupation of Iranian territory during World War II, posing a significant challenge to the authorities (Centre for Historical Documents Studies of the Ministry of Intelligence 2000, p. 6).

The press during this period 1953–1979 had two main characteristics. First, annual licenses were granted at the discretion of the regime. Second, the number of regime-owned publications emerging from the affluent and dependent classes increased, to the extent that by the end of 1977, out of a total of 772 new publications, 436 belonged to the government or its affiliated institutions. With few exceptions, most of them lost their political character and became merely social and news outlets. In the 1970s it also closed around seventy publications in an unprecedented manner. Censorship of the press after the coup 1953 was, for nearly ten years, exclusively under the SAVAK (Tolouei 1994, pp. 791-792).

4.5.2 Sanctions, Media Wars, and Limits of Accountability in Islamic Republic

Since the 2000s, accountability has been linked to modern governance—the capacity of a government to enforce rules and provide services, regardless of its democratic nature. From this perspective, institutions are central, as their nature, dynamics, and interactions shape the extent to which governments can achieve their objectives (Fukuyama 2013). In a theocratic-republican system under sanctions, evaluating

governance quality is better focused on leaders' decision-making rather than attributing outcomes solely to authoritarianism.

Modern political systems comprise institutions that either concentrate and exercise power or constrain it through mechanisms of accountability (Fukuyama 2017). From a target-centred lens, the former corresponds to the theocratic core, while the latter is represented by the republican core. The interaction among these two cores determines the capacity of the Islamic Republic, contributing some degree of effectiveness to the governance through holding elections.

However, such an effectiveness in Iran is limited, as procedural accountability—formal rules and mechanisms like elections—does not guarantee substantive accountability. Substantive accountability assesses actual outcomes, measuring whether officials fulfil promises, respect citizens' rights, and act in the public interest (Azadi 2019). A government may follow legal processes yet still fail substantively if its policies harm citizens or ignore social justice. In the absence of genuine multiparty competition in the country²⁵, Iran's theocratic-republican state uses elections to legitimise authority under domestic and foreign pressures, including sanctions. Without real competition, elections cannot challenge entrenched officials, and losing candidates often retain influence. For example, after the 2024 presidential elections, Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf remained powerful as Speaker of Parliament.

The orthodox view also links accountability to a free, independent media (Islam 2002), which monitors power and exposes corruption. However, states perceived as “threats” to the West, like the Islamic Republic, often view independent media as a challenge to authority and a tool of foreign influence. Open information is seen as risking regime destabilisation, loss of legitimacy, or inciting internal opposition.

This concerns with media was clearly noticeable among some of my interviewees in Iran. For instance, the interviewee I15, the founder of a conservative party, highlighted that the “party does nothing that foreign media could exploit”. Similarly, interviewee I3, an academic, underlined the importance of social media, explaining that “sanctions had pushed Iranians to engage more actively on these platforms”. He described how “an intense media war has been launched against Iran,” which, in his view, had contributed to widespread public discouragement.

The struggle over narrative and the affective domain has been a key component of the US maximum pressure campaign regime. Narratives of state failure became part of the sanctioners' arsenal. The Trump administration, for instance, authorised a large-scale Pentagon operation involving sabotage, propaganda,

²⁵ The author discusses the Iranian party system in Chapter 5.

and psychological and information warfare. Spearheaded by the military's Special Operations forces, the campaign aimed to erode public trust in the Iranian government while undermining the regime's image of competence and stability. As one US former senior defense official explained, the goal was to create conditions that would make Iranians question their leaders' control over the country and their capacity to wage war (Bajoghli et al. 2024).

Over two dozen satellite channels broadcast into Iran daily despite state restrictions. Established outlets like *BBC Persian* coexist with newer stations such as UK-based *Manoto*, which promotes a pro-monarchy view, and *Iran International*, launched in 2017 and sometimes featuring interviews with Netanyahu (2025). These networks offer professional news and entertainment, often presenting narratives that contrast sharply with the discourse of Iranian state.

In response to foreign media campaigns, the state has tightened control over domestic outlets through legal and coercive measures. Journalists have been arrested for “collaboration with hostile networks” (Al Jazeera 2024), and new laws criminalise cooperation with channels like *Iran International* (Forouhi 2025).

4.5.3 Education and Healthcare under the Pahlavis

The Pahlavi monarchy prioritised expanding education and healthcare as pillars of modernisation. Viewing education as essential for economic growth and social transformation (Sabahi 2002). To this end, Reza Shah dispatched Iranian students to European, and later American, universities with the aim of cultivating a new generation of professionals, bureaucrats, engineers, doctors, and military officers trained in Western sciences and methods who could return and contribute to the country's modernisation.

Mohammad Reza continued this focus on education, most notably through the 1963 Literacy Corps, part of the White Revolution influenced by Western advisers (Hamdhaidari 2008). Female students and teachers were required to wear Western-style clothing, while many urban secondary and higher education courses, especially in Tehran, were taught by foreign instructors. The Literacy Corps, however, deployed young conscripts to rural areas as teachers in lieu of military service.

Although the Literacy Corps expanded education in rural areas and raised enrolment (Sabahi 2002), its impact was uneven, with urban centres benefiting most. As Samuel Jordan, President of the American College for Boys, noted in 1935, elite families—royal relatives, ministers' children, and other influential groups—were the primary patrons of American schools in Iran (Rostam-Kolayi 2002).

Rural communities continued to face high dropout rates due to the slow pace of educational expansion (Szyliowicz 1973), and by 1979, more than half of the population remained illiterate (Nafisi 1992). Moreover, since the norms and values promoted in schools reflected those of the elite (Farsoun and Mashayekhi 1992), the Pahlavi regime viewed education as a means to cultivate loyal citizens. By weakening traditional power structures, such as local landlords and clergy, the state sought to disseminate its ideology and consolidate authority.

Regarding the Pahlavi's healthcare system, Homa Katouzian (1981) notes that while Reza Shah prioritised building secular state institutions like roads, the army, and universities, he paid little attention to public health. Hospitals built in the 1930s were largely symbolic; Tehran had only one major state hospital and no national health programme. Healthcare was state-dominated but limited in scope, with a small private sector in Tehran serving those who could pay—though even elites sometimes struggled with high medical costs.

In the later Pahlavi period, medical services expanded (Ahmadi 2023), but structural weaknesses persisted. Economic growth under Mohammad Reza was not matched by social investment, and inequality remained. Hospitals and medical schools grew in Tehran and Shiraz, yet planning was centralised and uneven. Reforms such as clinic construction and vaccination drives were sporadic, with public hospitals concentrated in major cities while rural areas were neglected. Many villagers relied on foreign doctors, and poor populations in over 65,000 villages had very limited access to healthcare (Marandi 2016).

Another critical problem was the acute shortage of medical personnel. To compensate, the government set a target to import 20,000 foreign doctors, highlighting Iran's limited supply of both medical and paramedical staff (Shadpour 2000). The severity of the crisis is illustrated by Robert Graham's observation (1945) that the largest hospital in Abadan city (southwest) was forced to shut down its laboratory in February 1976 due to a lack of qualified staff.

4.5.4 Education and Healthcare under the Islamic Republic

After the 1979 revolution, the Islamic Republic ran a national campaign, known as the Literacy Movement Organisation (LMO) with the goal of teaching reading and writing to adults and those who had missed out on formal schooling. The main target groups were housewives, villagers, and workers, who had limited or no access to formal education.

I recall my years in elementary school, between the ages of 7 and 9 (1997–1999), when my father—then in his 50s from a working class—was enrolled in courses offered by LMO. I can still picture him at home,

opening his books and reading aloud in a cheerful voice. Two of my aunts, also in their 50s, pursued their education through the same programme and advanced as far as high school. Unlike regular schooling, their classes did not take place in traditional schools but were instead held in special centres dedicated to LMO, often in community spaces such as mosques within each neighbourhood.



Photo 4.1: The photo on the left shows the first-grade Persian (Farsi) textbook used by the LMO in 1981 to teach reading and writing. The photo on the right displays the text on the back of the book quoting Khomeini: “Rural people and other illiterate groups should understand that this is a service they must wholeheartedly accept (...)”.

World Bank data (2024) show Iran’s literacy rate rose from 37% in 1976 to 89% in 2022, with major gains for women. Female literacy grew from 24% in 1976 to 81% in 2016. Women’s share in primary education rose from 35% in 1971 to 50% in 2017, with completion rates increasing from 71% in 1987 to 98% in 2010. At the tertiary level, female participation surged from 3% in 1978 to 57% in 2020 (US Institute of Peace 2022).

Similar to the Pahlavi era, the Islamic Republic regards education as a tool for fostering loyal citizens, with religion and patriotism serving as central themes in school textbooks. For example, primary school use two textbooks: *Teaching the Quran*, which covers religious and Quranic teachings, and *Gifts of Heaven*, a religious studies lesson designed to introduce the principles of religion and ethics. The textbooks continue in secondary school as *Teaching the Quran* and *Teachings of Divine Religions and Ethics*. The school textbooks also often feature sections on national and historical heroes. These range from ancient and legendary figures, such as Rostam and Sohrab from Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* and other characters from

Persian mythology, to more modern individuals who played significant roles in events like the Iran-Iraq War. Such textbooks are compatible with the Islamic ideology of the state.

Regarding the health issue, the Islamic Republic has pursued numerous policies and initiatives over the past four decades to address the population's health needs and advance the goal of universal health coverage, known as Health for All (HFA). Central to these efforts was the creation of the National Health Network (NHN), designed to deliver essential health services through an organised system of health care delivery points serving defined populations.

The Islamic Republic implemented two major health reforms under the NHN within a decade. In 1985, Parliament transferred all health education institutions to the new Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MOH&ME), establishing medical universities in each province. By 1994, provincial health bodies were merged into Universities of Medical Sciences and Health Services (UMS&HS), whose chancellors oversaw education, research, and provincial healthcare (Malekafzali 2009). As part of this reform, university faculty members were engaged in community field visits, where they gathered diverse health-related data from rural populations to support the improvement of the NHN. This reform led to substantial improvements in population health indicators and markedly reduced disparities, especially in rural areas (Heshmati and Joulaei 2016).

The country has achieved self-sufficiency in producing qualified health personnel. Its health network now includes 3,800 rural health centres, 17,443 village health houses, 1,955 health posts in urban slums, 3,230 urban health centres, and 440 district health centres (Marandi 2016). Today, nearly the entire population has access to health services. Life expectancy at birth has increased significantly, rising by about 25 years—from 50.9 in 1970 to 77.8 in 2024 (World Population Review 2024). In terms of maternal health, skilled birth attendance improved from 69% in 1990 to 99% in 2015, while the maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) dropped sharply from 255 in 1974 to 11 in 2023 (World Bank 2023).

However, the Iranian healthcare system continues to face several challenges, particularly within family physician and rural insurance programmes. These include inadequate provider payment mechanisms, limited facilities in underserved areas, insufficient training, an incomplete referral system, and a fragmented health information system (Sajadi and Majdzadeh 2019, p. 266).

4.6 Conclusion

This Chapter critically examines the evolution of state power in Iran, focusing on the Pahlavi period (1925–1979) and the Islamic Republic, particularly between 2005 and 2024 when US sanctions intensified. The analysis is grounded in Mann's IEMP model. Both periods reveal significant shifts in Iran's

governance, illustrating how domestic dynamics and international forces—ranging from US influence over economic, military, and political spheres during the Pahlavi era to its comprehensive primary and secondary sanctions under the Islamic Republic—have shaped the country’s political landscape.

The Pahlavi regime’s trajectory illustrates the intricate interplay between nationalist ideology, economic dependency, military reliance on the US, and patrimonial governance. While Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza pursued ambitious programmes of modernisation and national consolidation, their efforts were undermined by structural vulnerabilities, social inequalities, and US influence. Nationalism served as an ideological tool to unify the nation and marginalise Islamic authority, yet it failed to secure deep legitimacy across diverse social groups. Economic growth was largely oil-driven, unevenly distributed, and accompanied by insufficient industrial diversification. Militarily, the regime’s dependence on US training, arms, and advisory missions constrained sovereignty and reinforced perceptions of clientelism, igniting the clergy class. Politically, patrimonial centralisation and brutal repression suppressed dissent but ultimately alienated the populace.

Unlike the Pahlavi monarchy, post-1979 Iran under the Islamic Republic exhibits a distinct configuration of state power shaped by ideology, domestic mobilisation, and US-driven sanctions. The revolution replaced the secular monarchy with a theocratic-republican system, embedding religious principles in governance and reshaping society. External challenges, including Iraq and Afghanistan invasions and sanctions, spurred military, nuclear, and regional strategies to enhance resilience. Simultaneously, domestic movements like the Green Movement and WLF reveal tensions between Islamic governance and social freedoms. These dynamics show how the Islamic Republic has combined ideology, pragmatism, and resistance to foreign coercion to forge a political model sharply different from the Pahlavi era.

Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah concentrated authority in the monarchy, weakening parliament, judiciary, political parties, and the press, limiting accountability and suppressing opposition. Control was reinforced through censorship, surveillance, and coercive institutions like SAVAK. Infrastructural power advanced via education and healthcare initiatives, such as the Literacy Corps and expanded hospitals and schools, but benefits were uneven—urban areas, especially Tehran, received most investment, while rural regions were neglected. Overall, the Pahlavis exhibited strong centralised control (high despotic) but only a partially developed, urban-focused infrastructural capacity (low-moderate infrastructural).

However, the hybrid theocratic-republican system displays moderate to high despotic power, reinforced by authority concentrated in the theocratic core, candidate disqualifications, media censorship, and legal

restrictions on independent reporting—especially under intensified US sanctions and information warfare against Iran. Procedural accountability through elections exists, but substantive accountability is limited, as elites retain influence regardless of outcomes. The state also demonstrates moderate to high infrastructural power, evident in education and healthcare initiatives like the Literacy Movement, expanded female education, the National Health Network, and provincial medical universities. Despite sanctions, the state sustains large-scale social programmes, combining coercive authority with institutional governance.

Unlike the earlier discussion, which assessed infrastructural power primarily as a measure of state capacity, it is important to recognise that infrastructural power is not solely outward-facing. It also encompasses the ways in which civil society—through political parties, pressure groups, and social movements—can influence, negotiate with, or resist the state’s authority. As Mann (1993, p. 59) notes, “infrastructural power is a two-way street: it also enables civil society parties to control the state”. Building on this insight, the subsequent Chapter examines the interplay between the Iranian state and civil society under the pressures of sanctions. It explores a continuum of infrastructural power, from absence—where civil society has little influence—to semi- and full infrastructural power, where social actors increasingly shape state policies and strategies. Understanding this spectrum is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of sanctions resistance, as the content, depth, and strength of infrastructural power determine the potential for civil society to participate in, or counteract, state-led initiatives.

Chapter 5: IMPACT OF SANCTIONS ON IRAN AND MEASURES OF MITIGATION

5.1 Introduction

Building on the analysis of despotism and infrastructural power in the pre- and post-revolutionary periods in the previous Chapter, the primary aim of this Chapter is to explore the target-centred perspective. It focuses on identifying and clarifying the degree of interaction within the state-society complex in the context of sanctions, with an emphasis on resistance to US-led sanctions.

To achieve this, the Chapter employs a conceptual framework derived from the amalgamation of Max Weber's theory of social and economic organisation and Robert Cox's theory of historical structures. As discussed in Chapter 2, Weber outlines three key components of a state's socio-economic behaviour. First, he underscores the role of religion in shaping human conduct, which in turn influences forms of communal and associative solidarity. Second, he focuses on the provision and regulation of economic resources. Lastly, he emphasises the dynamics of authority by exploring the relationship between power and action. In addition, Cox discusses the constitution of historical configurations through substantiating a bottom-up process. This Chapter uses the amalgamation of these concepts as a theoretical frame, as it avoids the state-centric view of orthodox sanctions literature, instead viewing the social and political complex in a sanctioned context as a whole rather than as separate parts. As such, we can shift the focus from a sender-centred viewpoint to a target-centred lens providing insights to the previously overlooked question of "why" sanctions succeed or fail.

To address the "why," this Chapter examines three key variables—production, solidarity, and institution—derived from the aforementioned theories. These variables are used to conceptualise and define a potential "resistance model" against sanctions in Iran by analysing the interaction between the state and society.

There are three interwoven stages to operationalise the target-centred lens. First, the Chapter explores the Iranian state's ability to manage production by examining the processes of extraction, transformation, and distribution. This analysis clarifies the influence of production dynamics on the resistance campaign against sanctions from a top-down perspective. Second, I aim to expand the concept of solidarity beyond religious frameworks to include class and political dimensions. In a sanctioned context, where economic hardship disproportionately affects different social classes, solidarity can manifest as a means of collective adaptation and survival of the state. By examining how political parties mediate class solidarity, the study assesses how different groups align to navigate economic restrictions imposed by sanctions. Finally, it analyses the intersection between the state and civil society to clarify the extent of the institutionalisation of a bottom-up approach in Iran. These three stages demonstrate that, although sanctions have led to significant economic challenges, they have also bolstered, to different extents, state-controlled production, socio-political unity, and interactions between state and society. This is achieved through a combination of top-down and bottom-up efforts, which ultimately strengthen the resistance of the sanctioned state in dealing with sanctions.

Before delving into the analysis of these three stages, it is necessary to provide the reader with some background on sanctions in Iran through focusing on the objectives and the impacts of US-led sanctions. By examining these two issues, it becomes evident why a target-centred lens is critical. This perspective allows for a nuanced understanding of how sanctions directly affect not only the state apparatus but also the lives of the people, highlighting the unintended consequences and resistance strategies employed by both state and society.

5.2 Sanctions Objectives: From Policy Shifts to Regime Change

Some scholars (Askari et al. 2003; Biersteker et al. 2015) argue that sanctions impose economic costs on the targets to pressure their governments into changing their "behaviour". This term includes actions, decisions, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, emotions, and predispositions (Baldwin and Kapstein 2020). This broad definition suggests sanctions target both tangible actions and intangible aspects like ideological shifts. Other scholars, such as Hufbauer et al. (2007), focus on regime change as the desired behaviour, aiming not only at weakening the state but also fostering structural changes, like adopting "democracy". This view suggests sanctions seek political shifts and leadership changes aligned with international norms, a view shared by the some interviewees in Iran.

Interviewee I1, a prominent former Iranian diplomat and current academic, told me that Americans aim to exert intense pressure on the people through sanctions so that "they will be compelled to either rise

up against the state, overthrow it, or force it to change its policies”. Likewise, I3, an academic at a leading Iranian university, highlighted that “some American officials (...) believe the Iranian state should change its behaviour and adhere to accepted norms”. In a similar vein, I8, a researcher at a Tehran-based research centre, argued that the overarching goal the Americans are pursuing through sanctions is to change Iran’s behaviour. They explained that this was a crucial objective for the US, since “changing behaviour means having Iran act in a way that aligns with American interests”.

The perspectives shared by these interviewees reinforce the idea that the central objective of American sanctions is to dismantle the existing Iranian political structure. While some interviewees argue that sanctions explicitly aim for regime change, others suggest that they seek to coerce Iran into policy reforms that ultimately serve American strategic interests. As explored in Chapter 4, these measures are deeply intertwined with longstanding efforts to counter the legacy of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, summarised in Figure 5.1. as below military, regional and nuclear powers.

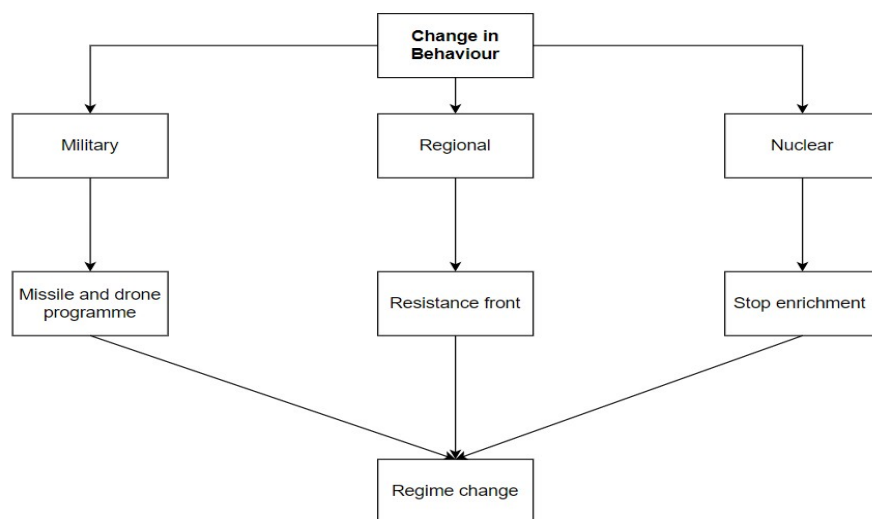


Figure 5.1: Components of Iranian expected behavioural change.

The Trump administration’s 2025 “maximum pressure” campaign imposed the toughest sanctions on Iran to force policy changes in those three key areas. Beyond nuclear concessions, it sought to curb Iran’s regional influence and military capabilities, in order to reduce Iran’s so-called threats to US interests and allies (Trump 2025). To implement regime change by weakening Iran’s military, regional influence, and nuclear capabilities, US sanctions encompass nearly all macroeconomic aspects—such as economic growth, inflation, and trade—as well as microeconomic factors, including production, supply and demand, labour market, and so forth.

Iran, subjected to some of the world's strictest US-led sanctions, has faced both comprehensive and targeted restrictions tied to its nuclear programme, missile and drone development, regional policies, and alleged human rights violations. In the following section, I examine these effects in detail in economic and social areas before assessing the extent to which the US has achieved its objectives. To offer a more thorough answer regarding the extent of sanctions' impact, it systematically categorises findings based on insights from interviews, field observations capturing societal experiences under sanctions, and secondary data, including governmental statistics, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Federal Reserve Economic data.

5.2.1 The Economic Impact of US-Led Sanctions

US-led sanctions primarily impact Iran's economy, straining both macroeconomic and microeconomic indicators. Oil exports drop due to energy trade restrictions, cutting revenue (Haidar 2017). Exchange rates fluctuate as access to financial markets shrinks, devaluing the currency (Dizaji 2021; Kandil and Mirzaie 2021). Inflation rises amid reduced reserves and market instability (Majidi and Zarouni 2016; Ghorbani Dastgerdi et al. 2018). Output growth declines as key industries face import constraints (Farzanegan 2014; Heydarian et al. 2021). Trade and finance suffer from limited foreign transactions and capital (Shirazi, Azarbaiejani and Sameti 2016; Haidar 2017; Torbat 2005). Production struggles with input shortages and high costs (Ezzati and Mehrabadi 2017). On a micro level, employment declines, especially in trade-related sectors (Demir and Tabrizy 2022; Kelishomi and Nisticò 2022), while wages fall as inflation erodes purchasing power (Bajoghli et al. 2024).

In addition to the areas discussed in the literature, interviews with Iranian individuals, including academics, political party elites, and civil society leaders, offer valuable insights into the broader impact of sanctions. These insights align with existing literature while also contributing new perspectives that emphasise the impacts most strongly felt by Iranians. The interviewees highlight sectors that are significantly affected by sanctions but often overlooked by academic studies. The findings on the economic impact of sanctions are classified into two primary categories which were highlighted by the interviewees: industrial stagnation (including energy and transportation), and financial isolation.

5.2.1.1 Oil Revenue Loss, Investment Restrictions, and Sectoral Decline

Iran is a petrostate, meaning that a significant portion of its economy and government revenue is derived from oil exports. The country possesses some of the world's largest proven crude oil and natural gas reserves, ranking among the top five globally in both categories (EIA 2018). The oil and gas sector has historically accounted for a substantial share of Iran's GDP, often exceeding 30%, and provides the

majority of government income—ranging from 40% to 60% of the national budget, depending on prices and production levels. As such, curtailing Iranian oil and gas revenues has been one of the principal objectives of US administrations to step up pressures on Iran (Badawi 2015). In this regard, the academic I1, noted that reductions in Iran’s foreign currency earnings severely constrain its capacity to import even basic raw materials needed for other industries.

Sanctions on Iran’s oil and gas sectors began in 1996 with the ILSA, later renamed the ISA in 2006²⁶. The law penalised non-US companies investing over \$20 million annually in Iran’s energy sector. By restricting foreign investment, the US aimed to weaken Iran economically and pressure it to alter its domestic, foreign, and military policies (Bajoghli et al. 2024). The ISA was a key topic among interviewees. The researcher I8 noted that while Iran relies on oil revenue, “the US did not directly block its oil sales but restricted investment in its oil industry”. The respondent explained that these sanctions have long-term effects, evident today as Iran struggles to develop its oil and gas fields. According to this, the goal was to gradually isolate Iran from global trade, especially in the energy sector.

ISA blocked foreign investment in Iran’s energy sector, severely impacting drilling, exploration, refineries, technical operations, and oil and gas transportation (Razm-Ahang and Torabi-Fard 2023). However, US pressure did not stop there. Sanctions initially targeted energy investments but later expanded to banking, insurance, and shipping, costing Iran \$100 billion in oil revenue (Owji 2021). Figure 5.2 shows oil exports dropping to around 1 million barrels per day (2012–2015) due to US sanctions, particularly CISADA (2010), which restricted foreign banks, and the NDAA (2012),²⁷ which sanctioned Iran’s Central Bank. Exports rebounded (2016–2018) after the JCPOA, nearing 2 million barrels per day. A sharp decline occurred after Trump’s withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 and the implementation of the maximum pressure campaign. Sanctions were imposed on the Iranian Ministry of Petroleum, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), and the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), causing exports to fall to nearly 500 thousand barrels per day by 2020.

²⁶ Chapter 4 includes more details.

²⁷ Chapter 4 includes more details on CISADA and NDAA.

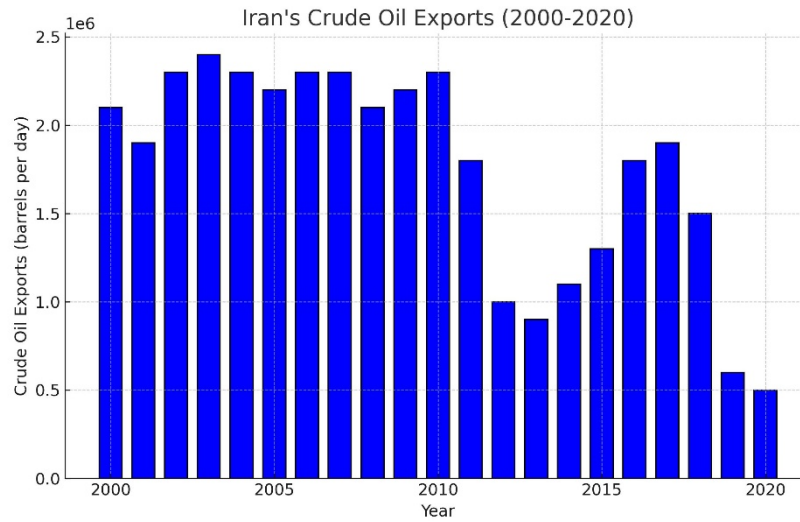


Figure 5.2: Author's own based on IMF and Federal Reserve economic data.

5.2.1.1.1 Automotive and Aviation Sectors: Production Decline and Quality Challenges

Iran's automotive and aviation sectors have been severely impacted by sanctions. In 2017, when sanctions relief was still in place, Iranian automakers produced around 1.5 million vehicles. By 2023, production dropped to 1.2 million vehicles (Batmanghelidj 2024a). Sanctions on car parts hindered manufacturers, causing delays and limiting innovation and quality improvements. During my field visits to Iran, I noticed the poor quality of vehicles, with many taxi drivers avoiding air conditioning. Despite the summer heat (around 40°C), they often explained that the air conditioning was malfunctioning due to the low quality of the cars.

The US also imposed sanctions on Iran's aviation industry, particularly targeting Iranian airlines and the Iranian government's ability to purchase or lease aircraft. These sanctions have included two major components. US sanctions prevent companies from supplying Iran with aircraft, parts, and maintenance services. This is particularly impactful because the majority of Iran's commercial airliners are based on Western technology, such as Boeing and Airbus models. Moreover, due to sanctions, Iran has been unable to purchase new aircraft. This has left Iranian airlines with an aging fleet, which increases maintenance costs and affects flight safety. Some reports (Al Jazeera 2024b) suggest that sanctions may have significantly contributed to the deteriorating condition of the Bell 212 helicopter that crashed in 2024, resulting in the deaths of former President Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

5.2.1.2 Financially Isolated from Global Markets

On February 29, 2024, I was the last passenger at the final checkpoint before boarding my Turkish Airlines flight from Turkey to Tehran. I delayed boarding to count the number of passengers and observe in-flight purchases. The Airbus 320 carried around 130-150 passengers. At 1:00 AM, two trolleys began service, one from the front and one from the rear. Flight attendants politely asked, “would you like to order something?” Only four passengers used Visa or MasterCard, suggesting they were Iranians living in other countries. In 15 minutes, the trolleys were removed. At 2:40 AM, the cabin lights came on, waking some passengers, and a single trolley, accompanied by two female flight attendants, moved from the back to the front without making a sale. The process lasted two minutes. Passengers did not buy food or drinks—they wished to, but Iranians in Iran have no access to international transactions. US sanctions have isolated Iranian banks from Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), a global financial system, blocking access to foreign capital, trade agreements, and international transactions. As interviewee I8 explained, “Losing access to SWIFT is the most significant problem facing Iran,” adding that even ordinary citizens are unable to maintain normal financial interactions with foreign institutions.

In 2010, President Obama signed the CISADA into law, expanding secondary sanctions against foreign banks and companies doing business with Iran, particularly in the financial and energy sectors. This was supported by the 2008 prohibition of “U-turn payments”, that is when transactions are routed through a third country to avoid sanctions. The U-turn exemption, introduced in 1996 under the Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations (ITSR), enabled Iranian transactions to pass through US banks as long as both parties were non-US institutions. The exemption was revoked in November 2008 under the G.W. Bush administration.

The academic I3, with a disappointed expression, stated, “even if Iran seeks to collaborate with international partners, these partners refuse due to fears of secondary sanctions”. Similarly, interviewee I6, an academic at a leading Iranian university, explained that many companies, enterprises, and international actors are unwilling to risk cooperating with Iran. Instead, they tend to align their behaviour with US policies and sanction requirements in order to avoid potential penalties. This highlights how the US uses the dollar as a tool of foreign policy to influence Iran. By restricting access to the dollar-based financial system, sanctions isolate Iran from global trade. The dollar’s role as the world’s primary reserve currency gives the US significant leverage, enabling it to impose financial pressure on adversaries and shape global economic policies (McDowell 2023).

Iran's lack of access to international financial networks limits its ability to export commodities like oil and gas, import advanced machinery and raw materials, and attract foreign investment, especially in the oil and gas sectors crucial for industrial growth. Financial isolation also hinders integration into global supply chains and access to cutting-edge technologies, slowing industrial development. Combined with government mismanagement, these US-led restrictions have led to significant exchange rate fluctuations. Between 2005 and 2025, the Iranian rial's exchange rate against the US dollar surged by about 926%, from 8,964 rials to 92,000 rials per USD. This drastic fluctuation contributes to inflation, affecting consumer goods, fuel, and services, and eroding purchasing power.

5.2.2 The Social Impact of US-Led Sanctions

Although the US maintains that sanctions include exemptions for social issues, like food and humanitarian goods, the primary and secondary findings suggest that there are two main social impacts of sanctions (medicine and medical equipment imports, and vulnerable groups), which fall under one major category: health.

5.2.2.1 Shortage of Medicine and Medical Equipment

Sanctions have severely impacted Iran's healthcare system, causing critical shortages of essential drugs and medical supplies. International institutions, including pharmaceutical companies and banks, have been cautious about trading with Iran, disrupting the medical supply chain. One study found a shortage of 73 drugs, with 44% classified as essential medicines (Setayesh and Mackey 2016). Life-saving drugs have disappeared from the market, creating health crises. For instance, the availability of lyophilised coagulation factor VIII for haemophiliac patients dropped from 96% to just 3% in 2012, leading to severe joint bleeding, disability, and fatalities in around 100 patients (Karimi and Haghpanah 2015; Heidari et al. 2017). Such a situation was described as "disastrous" by interviewee I3, which leads to "psychological problems" for Iranians, highlighting that "if a family member is ill and there is no medicine available, the absence of treatment not only affects the sick individual but also undermines the psychological security of the other family members".

Interviewee I14, a former Ministry of Health official now working with cancer patients, described the severe impact of sanctions on medical supplies like cancer diagnosis kits, pressure mattresses, and oxygen generators, which have become scarce or too expensive, noting sadly that as a result "many patients have passed away". This aligns with the growing financial burden of Iran's healthcare system, which relies heavily on out-of-pocket expenses, which in itself faces challenges due to inflation (35% in 2024) and

currency depreciation. Nearly 50% of healthcare financing comes from these expenditures, making access to essential care increasingly difficult.

5.2.2.1.1 Death of Vulnerable Groups

Sanctions has had a particularly severe impact on vulnerable populations in Iran. A recent study found that medication shortages during sanctions critically affected patients with chronic conditions like multiple sclerosis, cancer, haemophilia, epidermolysis bullosa, and asthma (Kheirandish et al. 2018). For some interviewees, severe impact equates to “death”. The respondent I1 noted that several patients with epidermolysis bullosa died due to a lack of access to essential medication, as Iran cannot import specialised bandages from Sweden. “Swedish companies face US pressure, risking sanctions, despite this being a humanitarian issue,” this interviewee explained.

Iran also faced restrictions on obtaining essential medical equipment for COVID-19 diagnosis, treatment, and prevention (Abdoli 2020). The outbreak coincided with the peak of maximum pressure sanctions, hindering all aspects of the response (Ryan 2020). Shortages of medical, pharmaceutical, and laboratory supplies, such as protective gowns and essential medications, worsened the crisis. Despite efforts by international humanitarian organisations, sanctions reduced access to life-saving medicines and equipment (Cheraghali 2013). Interviewee I1 noted that Iran struggled to purchase vaccines, stating, “banks had trouble verifying if funds were for vaccines or sanctioned items, causing delays, with one transfer taking over six months”.

In Iran, patients must cover part of their treatment costs—around 10% for inpatient and 30% for outpatient care—placing a heavy financial burden, especially on those with chronic illnesses. These out-of-pocket expenses are even more overwhelming in tough economic times, with the government’s limited social and medical support and declining household incomes. As a result, millions of low-income Iranians are vulnerable to the negative effects of sanctions. However, this burden is not equally shared. Interviewee I14 noted that health issues disproportionately affect the general population, while authorities remain insulated, with access to treatment abroad.

5.3 Efficiency or Inefficiency of Sanctions

Sanctions have significantly impacted Iran’s economy, affecting sectors like energy, manufacturing, transportation, and technology. These effects include declining oil exports, industrial stagnation, inflation, exchange rate fluctuations, and an overall economic downturn. Financial sanctions have also isolated Iran

from the global banking system, hindering international transactions and limiting access to essential goods and services.

The success of sanctions depends on the criteria used to define US objectives. If the goal is to weaken Iran's economy and limit its access to financial markets, the sanctions have been effective. However, if success is measured by whether sanctions have forced Iran to alter its military, regional, and nuclear behaviours, this remains a subject of debate.

As noted by I8, the researcher at a Tehran-based research base: "Iran is actively progressing its military programmes, and the fundamental change in behaviour that the US sought has not been accomplished". Iran has focused on military self-sufficiency, particularly in missile, drone, and anti-aircraft systems (Rezaei 2019). In February 2025, the IRGC unveiled a drone carrier ship capable of launching and recovering wheeled drones, setting it apart from aircraft carriers. Additionally, Iran revealed a ballistic missile with a 1,056-mile range. These developments suggest that Iran is maintaining its military trajectory without any major changes.

Between 1995 and 2022, five US administrations—Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden—imposed sanctions on 11 Iranian-aligned groups in five countries and 89 leaders from 13 groups backed by Tehran (US Department of State 2020). The US also restricted Iran's access to oil revenues and international financial institutions, which fund its armed allies. Despite these measures, Iran's regional behaviour remained unchanged. Estimates of Iran's support for regional allies range from \$20 billion to \$80 billion (Fadavi 2020). In 2020, Iran provided the Lebanese-based armed group, Hezbollah with \$700 million annually and a further \$100 million per year to Palestinian groups, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad (Hook 2019). These efforts show the limits of economic coercion in altering Tehran's strategic priorities.

Sanctions pressure led Iran to sign the JCPOA in 2015, which limited its uranium enrichment to 3.67% for 15 years. However, after Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018 and reimposed sanctions, Iran increased its enrichment. The IAEA reported that Iran is now enriching uranium to 60%, nearing the level needed for a nuclear weapon (Landale 2024). This escalation, coupled with geopolitical challenges—including setbacks in 2024 such as successful Israeli attacks on Hamas and Hezbollah and losing strategic access to Lebanon after the fall of the Assad regime in Syrian—prompted Iranian officials like Kamal Kharrazi (2024) to discuss reconsidering Iran's nuclear strategy, possibly aiming for a nuclear bomb. These developments highlight the limitations of sanctions in curbing Iran's nuclear programme. Despite regional setbacks, Iran's nuclear ambitions persist, suggesting sanctions alone are insufficient to stop them.

Consequently, while US sanctions have undoubtedly inflicted economic hardship on Iran, their effectiveness in altering Tehran's strategic and military behaviour remains debatable to say the least. Iran has demonstrated resistance by advancing its military capabilities, maintaining regional alliances, and expanding its nuclear programme despite the severity of the US sanctions' regime. This suggests that while sanctions can impose costs, they have not fundamentally changed Iran's core policies, highlighting the limits of economic pressure as a tool for coercive diplomacy. As such, the question of whether sanctions are "successful" depends on the criteria used to evaluate them. Sanctions have certainly had a profound impact, however, if the goal is to achieve long-term policy change, the evidence suggests that sanctions, in fact, entrenches "resistance" rather than compliance.

In the Iranian context, resistance to US sanctions is closely tied to the country's mode of production (Ghomi 2022). The production process in Iran plays a crucial role in determining the level of its economic resilience and its capacity to adapt to external pressures. As such, conceptualising and characterising the mode of production in Iran is important to clarify its dynamics, particularly in relation to how production structures shape responses to sanctions.

5.4 Production: A Top-Down Approach

Since 1999, Iran's Supreme Leader has annually announced a "slogan of the year" to draw attention to a specific issue that needs to be addressed. Between 2011 and 2024, a period that coincided with the intensification of the sanctions' regime, the slogans have predominantly focused on economic issues, particularly production. During this period, the term "production" has been emphasised eight times in slogans such as "Economic Resistance: Production and Employment", "Production Prosperity", and "Production, Support, and Removal of Barriers". As such, production emerges as a key variable, conceptualised through the integration of Weber, Cox, and Mann's theories as a constellation of interests where ideologies, social classes, and the market intersect to shape socio-political behaviour, particularly in the context of sanctions. To fully grasp how and to what extent top-down production dynamics influence the sanctions resilience campaign, this section aims to examine the ability of Iranian state to steer production through analysing extraction, transformation, and distribution processes (Mann 1984). By analysing such an objective, the section clarifies whether the production realm embodies the characteristics of a diffused or an authoritative form of power. The analysis relies on unique archival sources, including journal articles, legislative reforms, media reports, and statistical data from reputable institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, and the Statistical Centre of Iran. This data offers a macroeconomic perspective, tracing trends in production.

5.4.1 State Corporatism: Macro-level Resistive Strategy

Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj (2024b) argues Iran's resistance stems from diversifying international relations, replacing European inputs with Chinese ones and bypassing sanctions through re-exports from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Turkey (Batmanghelidj 2021). Zep Kalb (2024), using Developmental State Theory, highlights the state's role in fostering economic growth and resistance through top-down intervention and cooperation between capital and labour.

Iran's production model incorporates elements of state corporatism, where the government plays a dominant role in organising and regulating production (Shiller 2013) through two main mechanisms: state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and hybrid public-private entities. The first mechanism, SOEs, encompasses large segments of Iran's economy, particularly in the oil, gas, and heavy industries. These sectors are controlled by the state or state-affiliated entities such as IRGC-affiliated businesses. This corporatist structure limits private sector competition and consolidates state power over production. These entities integrate military, religious, and political elites into the economic sphere, functioning as corporatist institutions. Based on the second mechanism, some industries operate within a state-controlled corporatist framework but allow limited semi-private investment, particularly from politically connected individuals. This structure restricts open competition, fostering a form of authoritarian corporatism in which economic actors must align with state policies to participate.

These mechanisms have enhanced the government's ability to shape industrial relations and direct production toward the "resistant economy", a concept introduced by the Supreme Leader in 2012 (Khamenei 2014). This corporatist rhetoric, formulated at the highest levels, was spread by lower-level religious leaders, public servants, and politicians. Friday prayer leaders, appointed by the Supreme Leader's Office, included the concept in their sermons. Mohammad Qassem Leivani (2017), the Friday prayer leader in Gorgan, a northern city, described the resistance economy as key to reducing foreign reliance and boosting domestic industries. Ignoring it has been seen as "betrayal" against the state (Mir Emadi 2016).

The corporatist nature of Iran's production processes —encompassing extraction, transformation, and distribution— are influenced by domestic regulations and international sanctions, which both support and hinder economic growth. The ISI approach, central to addressing sanctions, aligns with the state's top-down production model, focusing on domestic resources when foreign exchange is limited (Abdikeev 2022). Despite sanctions affecting nearly all sectors, there is limited evidence that US punitive measures succeeded in weakening Iran's overall production (Majidpour 2013; Salehi Esfahani 2020). In

fact, between 2011–12 and 2021–22, industrial employment rose by 27%, real output grew by 70%, real value added increased by 91%, and labour productivity improved by 34% (Kalb 2024). This growth reflects the state’s focus on domestic production and resistance amid external pressures.

Since 1995, Iran has implemented seven major legislative reforms, called the “Development Plans”, to restructure its economy, enhance efficiency, and promote growth. These reforms focus on extraction, transformation, and distribution, key areas for economic development. Iran’s natural resources, particularly oil, gas, and minerals, drive its extraction processes, essential for both domestic use and export. Oil extraction remains central to the economy, meeting energy demands and generating export revenues. The Seventh Development Plan (2024–2028) aims for a 12% growth in oil exports (Parliament 2024), while the Sixth Plan (2017–2023) targeted 4.7 million barrels per day but fell short due to sanctions (see Figure 5.3). However, oil production began recovering after 2020, increasing by 915,000 b/d as global demand and China’s imports of discounted Iranian oil rebounded.

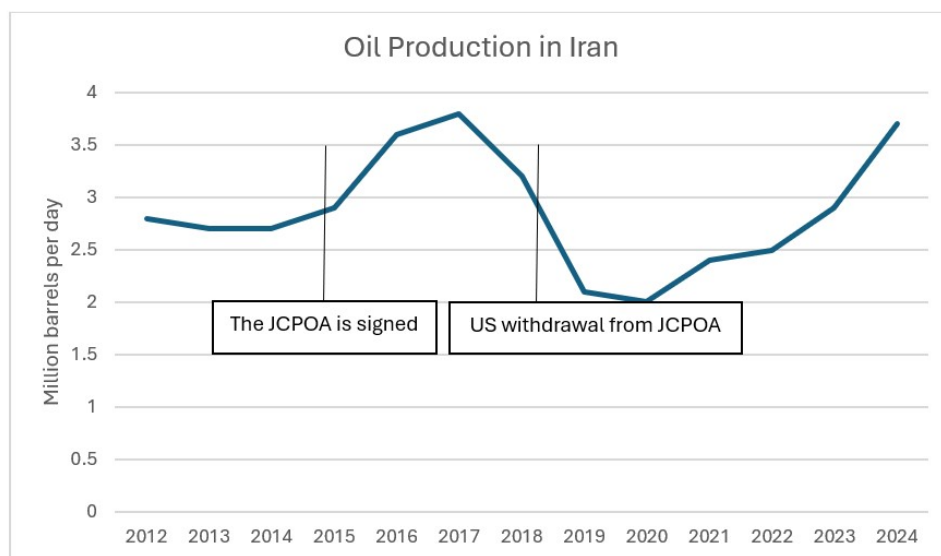


Figure 5.3. Author’s own based on US Energy Information Administration and IMF economic data.

Iran seeks to sustain production at fields with high decline rates by drilling new wells and redeveloping existing ones. However, the lack of foreign investment, worsened by sanctions and economic challenges, along with financial and technological limitations, has made it harder to maintain or increase production. As a result, projects awarded since 2019 have faced significant delays²⁸. To address this, Iran has relied on SEOs like Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company, Dehloran Petrochemicals, and Petropars to lead oil and gas projects. These SEOs have invested over \$90 billion, with an additional \$110–120

²⁸ Facts Global Energy, Iran’s Oil and Gas Annual Report 2023, (December 2023), pages 35–36.

billion projected between 2024 and 2028 to enhance production capacity (Parliament 2024). These investments are crucial for modernising infrastructure, improving efficiency, and maintaining Iran’s position in the oil market, despite the lack of foreign partners. While the successful completion of these projects depends on overcoming technological gaps and sanctions, SEOs have played a key role in increasing crude oil production in recent years.

During the sanctions period, Iran’s production sector shifted significantly. The state also employed a hybrid public-private model, supported by knowledge-based companies. These companies, operating in a state-controlled corporatist framework with limited private investment through tax breaks and subsidies, focus on high-tech industries, research and development (R&D), and scientific advancements. Interviewee I13, CEO of a knowledge-based firm, stated, “knowledge-based start-ups, backed by the government, have been operating in Iran for nearly 20 years, achieving impressive results”. By the sanctions’ peak, the number of such companies exceeded 10,000, spanning sectors from chemicals to food, as shown in Figure 5.4.

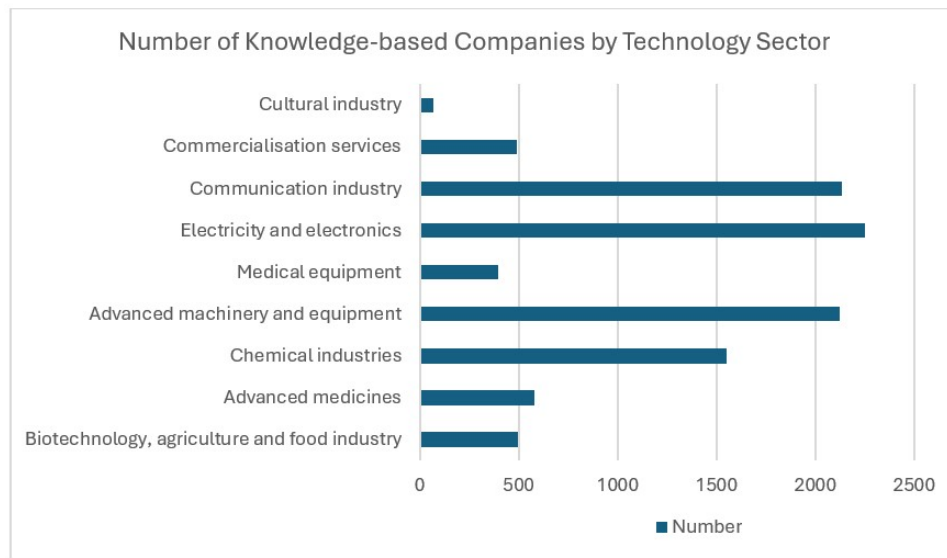


Figure 5.4: Based on data in Vice Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy of the Presidential Office.

Once raw materials are extracted, the SEOs, supported by the knowledge-based companies, enters the transformation stage—where crude oil is refined into usable products in the ISI context. Refineries in Iran process oil through chemical processes to produce a variety of petroleum products, including gasoline, diesel, kerosene, and heavy fuels like mazut (Worrell and Galitsky 2005). Iran’s refining capacity, with nine refineries, plays a crucial role in meeting domestic demand and supporting exports. The economy experienced substantial growth in non-oil production. According to Figure 5.5, in 2000, Iran

refined 3,266,608 TJ, and by 2022, this increased to 4,455,492 TJ, reflecting a 36.4% increase over 22 years. A notable increase is observed from 2018 onward, peaking in 2022, indicating that Tehran elevated its oil refinement levels following the onset of maximum pressure. Consequently, rather than exporting crude oil, Iran prioritised domestic refining, boosting the production of gasoline and other petroleum products.

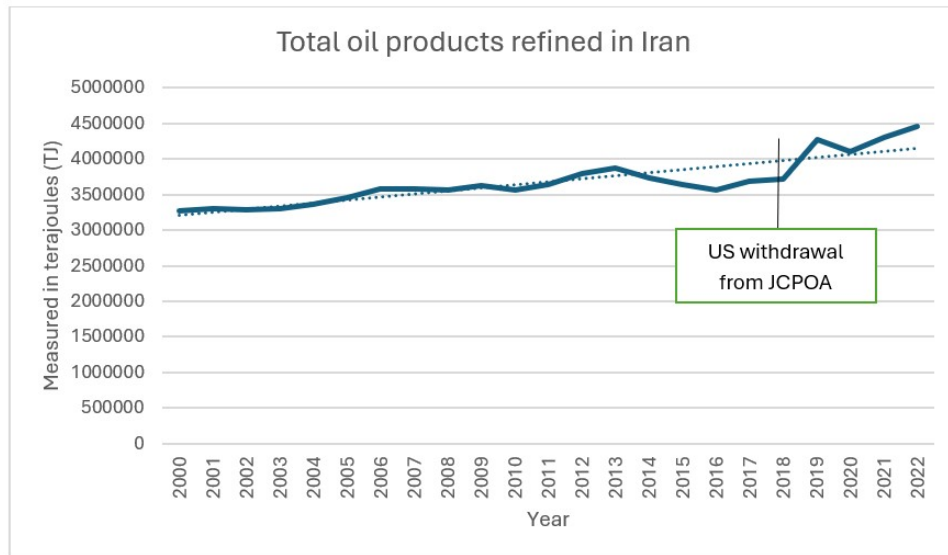


Figure 5.5: Based on International Energy Agency (IEA) data.

Transformation began in 2002–10 and intensified between 2011 and 2021. Machinery and car production declined, while the chemical and food sectors grew. Steel and minerals industries, which expanded in the late 2000s and early 2010s, slowed by the mid-2010s. By 2018, the food industry became the third-largest manufacturing sector, driven partly by sanctions. Import substitution helped the food and drink sectors as foreign products became more expensive (Kalb 2024). I clearly observed this during my stay in Iran in 2024. When I went to supermarkets for shopping, I noticed a wide variety of Iranian products, including different kinds of sauces, drinks, tuna, crisps, spaghetti, chocolate, rice, beans, and so forth. It seemed that almost anything a typical Iranian family would want in its refrigerator or home was available.



Photo 5.1: The two sides of a Coca-Cola can, produced by the Iranian company “Khosgovar,” 24th of April 2024 in Tehran, Iran (Photo: Author).

The researcher I8 explained that Iran has sought to counter sanctions by expanding domestic production through subsidies, tax incentives, and support for knowledge-based companies. According to I8, Iran now produces many goods previously affected by sanctions, including pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and telecommunications equipment. “More than 95 percent of the medicines required by the country are produced inside Iran,” I8 noted. The interviewee also stated that Western firms have largely withdrawn from Iran’s telecommunications sector, leaving cooperation mainly with Chinese Huawei.

The quality of Iranian products may be lower compared to foreign-made ones, but they have played a significant role in countering the impact of sanctions. The academic I2 noted that despite their lower quality, a new production network has been developed, with Iran even becoming an exporter of domestically produced goods in some areas. Interviewee I8 also added that, while the quality of these goods may not be ideal, “they help mitigate the effects of sanctions, which were designed not to provide low-quality products to the people, but to eliminate them from the Iranian market altogether”.

Despite sanctions on oil and petrochemical exports, Iran generated US\$49 billion from non-oil exports in 2023, a 40% increase compared to 2020’s US\$35 billion (Rezvani-Far 2024). Although non-oil exports have grown since the mid-1990s, their growth accelerated under sanctions as Iran encouraged trade with Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan. This provided foreign exchange earnings, sustaining the economy despite reduced oil exports. While regional markets shield Iran from extraterritorial sanctions, its export sectors

remain dependent on external inputs. Interviewee I8 termed this the “diversification of trading partners”.

In conclusion, Iran’s economic resistance amidst sanctions is grounded in a hybrid public-private model, relying heavily on state-owned enterprises and knowledge-based companies. Despite challenges like limited foreign investment and technological gaps, Iran has expanded its industrial base through strategic investments in oil and gas, as well as ISI. While foreign access and advanced technology remain barriers, state-led initiatives, domestic production, and market diversification have helped Iran weather external pressures. However, the economy’s full potential is hindered by outdated infrastructure and the inability to refine high-value products, complicating efforts for long-term stability.

The Iranian state’s resistance goes beyond the mere production sphere, closely tied to an institutional framework shaped by a combination of competitive authoritarianism and corporatism. Competitive, or hybrid authoritarianism—characterised by controlled electoral competition, restricted political pluralism, and deeply entrenched factional conflicts within the ruling elite (Bogaards 2009b)—has played a crucial role in shaping state-led economic initiatives. Therefore, corporatism extends beyond economic production and highlights not only how it structures political parties but also political alliances. Political parties, in the Iranian context, often act as intermediaries between the state and different social classes, trying to foster solidarity within specific political parties.

5.4.2 Class Solidarity and Political Mediation in Sanctioned Iran

This study builds on Weber’s (1920) view that solidarity is not limited to religion, expanding the concept to include ideological, associative, and communal aspects shaped by rules, traditions, and shared histories. In Iran, where social and political structures are influenced by both history and ideology, it is crucial to move beyond religious solidarity and consider how class and political affiliations shape collective identity and action. In a sanctioned environment, solidarity can emerge as a strategy for adaptation and state survival, with different social classes aligning with the values of political parties.

Accordingly, the research undertakes a detailed classification of different social classes before analysing their political orientation in national elections. National elections serve as a critical measure of civic engagement in politics, reflecting the population’s participation and interest (Barrett and Zani 2014). The thesis examines two national elections—those of 2017, 2021—as two distinct political discourses played a significant role in these elections. By analysing election results, the study assesses how political orientations and class-based affiliations manifest in practice, offering insights into how political parties mediate class solidarity to navigate the economic constraints imposed by sanctions.

The choice of the 2017 and 2021 elections highlights shifts in political discourse and their impact on class dynamics and state corporatist resistance. To measure this indicator, the study systematically explores the ideological underpinnings of political parties by cross-referencing their official manifestos with qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews conducted with party founders and senior members. This methodological triangulation enhances the validity of the findings by not only identifying the explicit values articulated in party manifests but also capturing the perspectives and interpretations of party members, thus clarifying on how these values are understood, internalised, and enacted in practice. Through this approach, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the role of solidarity in shaping political affiliations and class interactions in contemporary Iran, beyond the production.

Class struggles have played a crucial role in shaping the country's power structures and social dynamics. Accordingly, understanding the role of social class in the Iranian power system is essential to comprehending how the country's social dynamics function and evolve in a sanctioned context.

5.4.2.1 Social Foundation of Power in Iran

Anthony Giddens and Cora Stephan (1979) proposed that class power stems from three main sources: property ownership, educational qualifications, and physical labour capabilities. These elements contribute to a three-tiered class structure, consisting of an upper class rooted in property ownership and business, a middle class defined by educational credentials, and a lower working class characterised by physical labour. Such classification is also used by many scholars analysing the Iranian social classes (Bill 1963; Jalali 2005; Behdad and Nomani 2009; Elahi and Karim 2011; Harris 2017). According to this approach, I apply it to the Iranian context, categorising the country's social classes into three main groups²⁹.

Iran's class structure can be largely divided into upper, middle, and lower working classes, each characterised by distinct economic, social, and political features. The upper class wields substantial economic and political power, formed by wealth, ideology, and proximity to the state. It includes mainly of *bazuaris*—traditional merchants tied to the clerical establishment through the enduring “mosque–bazaar alliance” (Ashraf 1988)—and an industrial aristocracy of business elites controlling key sectors like oil, steel, and manufacturing (Piketty 2014; Harris 2017). Both groups preserve production relations that sustain their dominance, aligning with Weber's notion of shared life chances rooted in economic and social opportunity (Glassman 1997). The middle class, though diverse and fluid, includes salaried employees, academics, professionals, and civil servants (Salehi-Isfahani 2009). Surveys indicate that over

²⁹ Appendix 1 (tables 1, 2, and 3) offers a comparative overview of social forces across four dimensions: descriptive traits, key social groups, economic indicators, and socio-political dynamics.

half of urban Iranians identify as middle class (Hezar Jaribi and Safari 2010), yet their stability is undermined by inflation, unemployment, and sanctions. Their social position depends on education, employment security, and urban residence, making them both aspirational and vulnerable in an uncertain economy. The lower working class, rooted in Khomeini's concept of the *Mostazafin* (the oppressed), forms the marginalised backbone of Iranian society. Engaged largely in precarious, low-wage, and informal work (Harris 2017; ILO 2022), they depend on subsidies and community networks for survival, with limited political influence despite being valorised as the revolutionary force against the *Mostakberin* (Behdad and Nomani 2009; Salehi-Isfahani 2009). Together, these three strata reveal a deeply stratified society where economic inequality intertwines with ideological and political hierarchies.

5.4.2.2 Political Party Structure in Iran

Political parties are formalised institutions that structure political activity by organising electoral competition, aggregating diverse interests, and stabilising governance through institutional frameworks (Sartori 1979). They establish rules for political participation, regulate candidate selection, and provide continuity in policy direction, ensuring that democratic systems or other political regimes function with a degree of predictability and order.

Political parties fall into two broad groups: left-wing and right-wing. Left-wing parties promote social equality, wealth redistribution, and state intervention (Heywood 2021), supporting labour rights, environmental protection, and welfare programmes (Lijphart 2012). They emphasise cultural traditions, collective solidarity, and historical struggles (Giddens 1999). Right-wing parties advocate free-market policies, individual responsibility, and limited government (Noël and Thérien 2008), favouring lower taxes, privatisation, and deregulation (Schmidt 2006) while aligning with conservative values on national identity, family, and traditions.

The hybrid theocratic-republican political structure in Iran is the arena of competition between Islamic and liberal factions led to two main forces: conservatism and reformism.³⁰ Conservatism prioritises Islam above all else, focusing on loyalty to the Supreme Leader and supporting a strong Islamic state that integrates religious authority with governance (ICP N.d.). Politically, conservatives uphold the Guardian Council's vetting of candidates, oppose electoral reforms, and resist challenges to theocratic rule, while internationally, they adopt a confrontational stance toward the US, framing it as the "Great Satan" and

³⁰ Appendix 1 (tables 4, 5, and 6) provides an overview of political, economic, social, and military values of conservatism and reformism. The overview is informed by interviews and the manifestos of the Islamic Coalition Party (ICP), the Combatant Clergy Association (CCA), the Organisation of Endeavours of the Islamic Revolution (OEIR), and the Stability Front of the Islamic Revolution (SFIR).

supporting sanctions resistance alongside military expansion (Stone 2014; Ahmadian 2022). Economically, conservatives favour state control over key industries, protectionist policies, welfare programmes, and alliances with non-Western powers, rejecting foreign economic influence and institutions like the IMF and World Bank (Keshavarzian 2007). Socially, they uphold traditional gender roles, enforce hijab, and maintain media censorship, while confronting civil society activism to preserve national security (SFIR N.d.). Reformism, by contrast, seeks gradual change within the Islamic Republic, advocating for reduced religious oversight in governance, institutional accountability, and freer elections (Iran-Emrooz 2013). Reformists favour engagement with the US and Europe, support nuclear agreements like the JCPOA, and pursue sanctions relief. Economically, they advocate for privatisation, foreign investment, market liberalisation, and reduced subsidies, aligning with neoliberal principles to integrate Iran into global markets (Peet 2009). Socially, reformists champion press freedom and judicial fairness, seeking to balance Islamic principles with modern governance and social reforms. Together, these value systems exemplify a fundamental tension in Iran between preserving religious authority and pursuing deep political, economic, and social reform.

5.4.2.3 Political Parties as Vehicles of Solidarity

Most corporatism research emphasises structural factors—size, cohesion, and scope of interest organisations—while often ignoring party politics (Lijphart and Crepaz 1991). Some argue corporatism is “neutral” to government party makeup. Rather than viewing corporatism as an industrial relations system, Anthonsen and Lindval (2009) redefine corporatism as a policymaking approach where the state includes interest organisations in key decisions, a perspective particularly relevant in Iran, where party structures are weak.

In Iran, political negotiations rely on both formal parties and informal patronage networks, where elites distribute state resources for loyalty or votes (Stokes et al. 2013). Factions dominate the landscape, transcending party lines and fostering a fluid policymaking environment. Corporatism expects parties to seek compromise, aligning with Katzenstein’s “ideology of social partnership” (2012). In Iran, this balance is upheld through factional bargaining, where rival groups prioritise state interests and social cohesion via personal alliances rather than public disputes.

Interviewee I4, a senior official of a reformist party, indicated that if a party is considered to be in the “bad” group, its license will be revoked, forcing it to comply with whatever the state dictates. They added that this pressure leads the parties into an unwelcome silence and pushes them to lean towards the state by splitting the work they have accomplished. “Ignore the parties’ slogans”, they remarked, since their ultimate choice remains the state and the foundation of all parties lies within it. Similarly, respondent I7,

a prominent reformist party official, stated that all the parties in the country are strongly dependent on the state, and noted that when governments are unable to respond, these parties still defend the state in order to preserve themselves. “Their survival ultimately relies on aligning with the state,” they remarked. Likewise, I11, a director of a now-dissolved moderate party, contended that Iranian political parties lack a genuine party-based political culture. According to I11, parties tend to become active mainly during election periods, while their financial dependence on political elites or private interests reduces them to mere “ladders” for individuals seeking parliamentary positions.

These statements present Iran’s political system as corporatist, with state-integrated but non-autonomous parties. Their survival depends on aligning with the state, shaping policymaking and competition. Conservatism and reformism use elections to foster solidarity and loyalty. The 2017 and 2021 presidential elections strengthened networks mediating political interests, enabling candidates to rally diverse social support. This interplay between communal and associative relationships in these elections reflects socio-political realities, reinforcing or challenging power structures.

In Iran, communal relationships, rooted in shared emotions and traditions (Weber 1920), shape the lower and working classes, including the *Mostazafin*, who build solidarity through collective struggles, religious ties, and mutual support during difficult economic situations. These bonds connect them to religious leaders and charity networks, reinforcing loyalty to conservative factions like the ICP and CCA, which use religious discourse to rally support. Similarly, *Bazaaaris*, despite their upper-middle-class status, maintain communal ties through their Shia identity, strengthening their allegiance to the Islamic Republic. In contrast, associative relationships, driven by pragmatism and self-interest (Weber 1920), dominate the middle and upper classes, where economic mobility depends on professional and business networks. Industrialists leverage ties with the state to navigate sanctions and maintain influence, while reformist factions, representing the middle class, use associative networks to push for political reforms, economic liberalisation, and international engagement.

Associative ties among the upper-middle and elite classes contrast with the communal bonds of the lower classes. While the lower classes depend on religious identity and community support, the upper and middle classes rely on business alliances, professional networks, and political negotiations to maintain their status. The 2017 and 2021 elections showed how reformists and conservatives, despite ideological differences, helped sustain social cohesion by mediating between the state and society through both associative and communal relationships.

5.4.2.3.1 Role of Reformism, Sanctions, and Patronage in the 2017 Elections

Recent research on Iran explores electoral politics through various lenses, including social activism (Rivetti 2019), voter preferences (Daghagheleh 2018), natural resources (Mahdavi 2015), and electoral geography (Raisi 2021). This section clarifies how corporatist structures shape reformists' role in mediating class solidarity during presidential elections. The 2017 election was a key moment in post-revolutionary Iran, reflecting its dynamic political landscape. With a 73% voter turnout, it highlighted strong public engagement. The election saw intense competition between incumbent President Rouhani, representing the reformist Moderation and Development Party (MDP), and Raisi, the conservative cleric from the CCA.

Reformists often acted as a pressure valve, channelling social discontent into institutional mechanisms like elections. After signing the JCPOA in 2015, Rouhani, supported by reformist figures like Rafsanjani and Khatami, mobilised large segments of the population, particularly the top and middle classes, during his second campaign. Despite rising public dissatisfaction, he presented himself as a catalyst for gradual change. Rouhani secured 57% of the vote, totaling 24 million.

Rouhani's 2017 re-election relied on clientelism, forming alliances with influential networks like the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines & Agriculture (ICCIMA). Representing major business owners, ICCIMA coordinated with the government to protect economic interests. Rouhani's banking reforms and global re-engagement also appealed to business elites, who mobilised urban support. These groups helped strengthen his campaign by representing the business community's interests, solidifying their own power within the state. Rouhani's economic plan also focused on supporting private enterprises, including creating financial backing for businesses and reducing state intervention to encourage private ownership and investment, aiming to transfer control of key economic sectors to the private sector for long-term growth (Rouhani 2017).

A significant portion of Rouhani's votes came from the middle class, a historically key group critical to the Islamic Republic due to its size (Bajoghli et al. 2024). While the upper class endured the crisis and the lower class received subsidies, the middle class suffered most under sanctions. In 2012, the reformist newspaper *Ebtekar*³¹ warned the economic crisis was "the last nail in the coffin" for them. Since maximum pressure, over eight million have fallen to the lower middle class, and poverty has increased by over four

³¹ Ebtekar, October 2, 2012.

million (Salehi-Isfahani 2023). Figure 5.6 tracks the middle class's growth from 1996 to 2019, showing expansion in the 1990s followed by decline under sanctions.

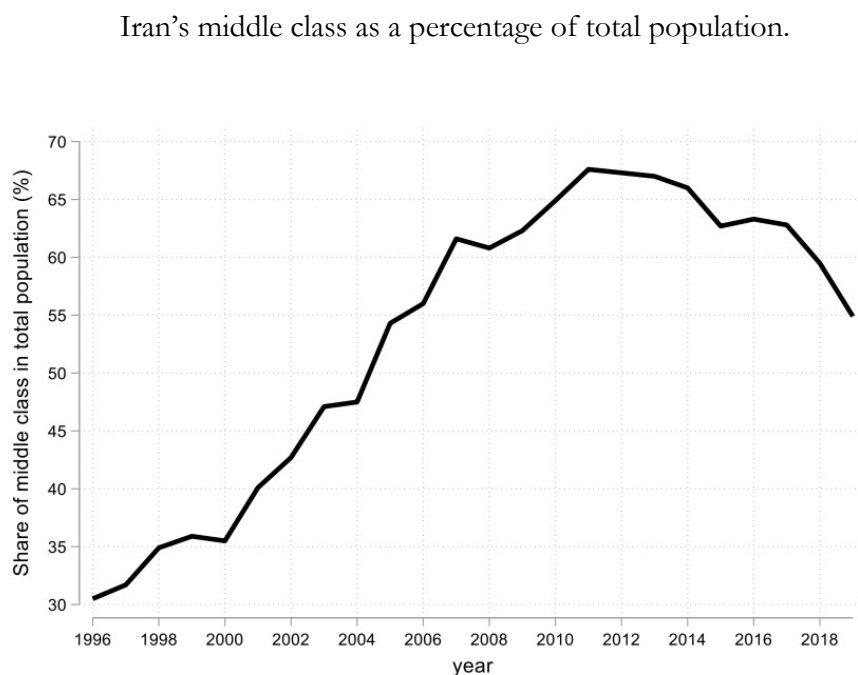


Figure 5.6: Note: Middle-class variables estimate the number of people living in households earning or spending between \$11 and \$110 per person per day (2011 \$ purchasing power parity (PPP) prices) and are taken from Kharas (2017).

Sanctions impact the middle class in two ways. First, macro-level sanctions lower GDP and per capita income, pushing many below the \$11 per day threshold, while few upper-class households move up (Cantó and Ruiz 2015). Second, sanctions weaken the labour market by causing job losses in import-dependent sectors (Moghaddasi Kelishomi and Nisticò 2022) and reducing real wages for fixed-salary

employees and retirees (Salehi-Isfahani 2023). These effects result from reduced government oil revenues, large budget deficits, and high inflation, with public sector wages lagging behind inflation since 2012. Many retirees' pensions have lost value, pushing more out of the middle class (Barardehi et al. 2024)

As the middle class's lifestyle increasingly mirrored the upper class, they used it to distinguish themselves from the lower class. With status tied to visible consumption, their declining economic power aligned them with the lower class (Barardehi et al. 2024). This downward mobility fuelled frustration, leading them to support Rouhani, whose economic liberalisation, international engagement, and growth-oriented policies promised upward mobility.

The reshaping of the middle class during sanctions plays a crucial role in sustaining a competitive authoritarianism in Iran, as it helped bolster the state's legitimacy during presidential elections. With economic hardship driving the middle class into a more precarious position, figures like Rouhani, supported by prestigious reformists, become key instruments in channelling popular discontent and dissatisfaction into a semblance of support for the state. The high voter turnout in the 2017 presidential election was framed as an "epic celebration" by the Supreme Leader (Khamenei 2017).

5.4.2.3.2 Role of Conservatism, Sanctions, and Patronage in the 2021 Elections

After remaining stable in 2016 and 2017, costs for food, rent, utilities, clothing, healthcare, and education surged in summer 2018. By February 2020, transportation had risen by 70%, food by 60%, clothing by 40%, rent and utilities by 30%, and healthcare and education by 20%. These increases were concerning, as food and housing make up large portions of household budgets. In rural areas, food expenses can account for 43%, while in urban areas, food costs represent 35%, with housing adding another 30% (Lumsden 2021).

Rouhani's reformist administration failed to meet its economic promises, causing rural voters and parts of the middle class to shift support. Raisi entered the 2021 presidential race with the slogan "Strong Iran, Production Boom", advocating for economic justice and resistance to sanctions, backed by clerical patronage. Facing no prominent reformist challengers due to the disqualification of key figures like Rouhani's vice president, Eshaq Jahangiri, voter apathy grew. This led to a record low turnout of under 49%, reflecting a decline in public confidence.

Like Rouhani's 2017 re-election campaign, Raisi used patronage to secure power and maintain state stability. He relied on communal bonds within religious groups, particularly among the working-class and

lower-middle-class, who face economic hardships and find political significance in shared religious and nationalist sentiments, along with loyalty to the Supreme Leader.

Post-revolution governments thrived by implementing policies benefiting the poor, especially in rural areas, and establishing a broad social protection system. However, this system has been strained as sanctions deplete government resources. In Iran, the poor receive income transfers and are considered natural allies of the Iranian state.

In March 2024, I travelled to Borazjan, a southern city in the Bushehr province. I was born in this city and after 25 years I went to this small city to both reminisce and see how this area has changed since then. In Borazjan, there are neighbourhoods where people are both well-off and there are parts where the residents are not in a good financial situation. One of these parts where there was a lot of poverty was the Hossein Abad neighbourhood where I was born.



Photo 5.2: My family and I were living in the house with the green door until I was 9 years old, Hossein Abad, Borazjan, Bushehr, 25 March, 2024 (Photo: author).

I entered the neighbourhood, a 300-meter alley with houses on either side. One house held many memories for me due to our close relationship with the family. The family consists of Medina (70 years-

old mother), her children Najmeh (40 years-old), Fatemeh (31 years-old), Reza (37 years-old), and Ahmad (33 years-old). Ali, the father, passed away in 2022. As a child, we considered this family poor, and I still expected the same, especially with the impact of sanctions. However, when I arrived at the house, it was better-looking and more modern than before. Medina greeted me warmly at the door, and the inside had also changed. The 20x20-meter courtyard now had a large, clean toilet and cemented flooring. Najmeh and Fatemeh, my childhood friends, greeted me inside. Both were unemployed, ill, and fasting for Ramadan. The house was simple, with plastered walls, old carpets, and a new TV. Despite this, it felt clean and cheerful. In one room, I noticed a photo of the Supreme Leader on the door, and walls adorned with images of military commanders, including general Qassem Soleimani, assassinated by the US in 2020.

Although the family struggled financially, they strongly supported Raisi due to their religious attachment, particularly to the Supreme Leader. They also benefited from cash subsidies and welfare programmes for low-income families. Under the Targeted Subsidies Scheme (UCT)³², launched in 2010 during Ahmadinejad's administration, the "bread subsidy" was replaced with a direct cash payment of 400,000 rials per person per month (about US\$50, based on exchange rate in his presidency). The Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation (IKRF), a charity founded in 1979, also provides assistance to low-income families, including cash payments (15,000,000 to 20,000,000 rials per family), medical coverage, housing support, and more. In 2024, IKRF aided over 5 million people, 56% of whom were women (EcoIran 2024). Additionally, all those below the poverty line, like Medina's family, receive free health insurance.

During Raisi's presidency, economic conditions worsened for poorer Iranians. Inflation reduced the purchasing power of cash transfers, while a sharp currency devaluation and declining oil revenues after 2012, due to intensified US sanctions, worsened the situation. The government did not adjust cash transfers for inflation, leading to a real value decline to US\$13 in 2015 and just US\$6 by May 2024. This aligns with rising prices for essential goods (Figure 5.7).

³² Calling the "cash transfer" model a "subsidy" can be misleading, but it's common in Iran. Terms like "cash subsidy," "bread subsidy," and "targeted cash subsidy" all refer to cash transfers. These are also linked to presidents, leading to names like "Ahmadinejad subsidy," "Rouhani subsidy," and "Raisi subsidy".



Figure 5.7: Author's own based on data from Statistical Centre of Iran.

Raisi's support base included institutions linked to the state's patronage and corporatist structures, which helped consolidate his power. As a former judiciary chief, he had strong ties to the judicial system, intelligence agencies, and security forces, all of which gained influence and resources under his presidency. His governance model kept these entities central to stability and ideological conformity. Semi-state entities like Astan Quds Razavi, which he led before becoming president, were key to his patronage network. Astan Quds Razavi, one of Iran's wealthiest religious endowments, manages vast assets and generates revenue through business ventures, enjoying tax exemptions and privileged access to state contracts. It shapes economic policies and strengthens the broader patronage network supporting the Islamic Republic.

In conclusion, parties within the state mobilise support and negotiate their positions within this corporatist framework, illustrating the complexity of Iranian political life in the face of continued sanctions. Both Rouhani's and Raisi's presidencies demonstrate how Iran's corporatist structures have influenced political dynamics in response to economic sanctions and class interests. Rouhani used corporatist organisations to build alliances with the business elite and middle class, turning economic challenges into political unity. In contrast, Raisi's administration highlights the tension between ideological loyalty and the economic struggles of the working class. These presidencies show how sanctions not only impact the economy but also reshape the political landscape by affecting solidarity and resistance among different social groups in Iran despite increasing social dissatisfaction. While state welfare and patronage networks maintain loyalty among lower-income and religious groups, rising financial pressures threaten the long-term sustainability of this system.

This shifting political landscape reflects a broader trend in Iran's sanctioned state, where society, rather than seeking to overthrow the state, appears to be enhancing its resistance. Corporatism, in this context,

extends beyond economic production and voter apathy, revealing the ways in which civil society functions under sanctions through mechanisms in a corporatist structure. As such, the following section aims to analyse the dynamics of civil society shaped by sanctions, exploring how various social organisations contribute to maintaining social cohesion while adapting to political and economic constraints.

5.5 Socio-political Synergies: Micro-level Interaction to Resist Sanctions

Following Peter Evans's notion of state-society synergy (1997), post-revolutionary Iran has seen the rise of numerous civil society organisations (known as *Jame'h Madani*), attracting Western scholarly attention. Western studies on Iran's state–society relations often use two frameworks: civil society and corporatism. Civil society emphasises autonomy and separation of organised social activities from the state (Wakeman 1993). Instead of treating civil society as fundamentally separate from the state and solely a site of resistance to political dominance, the following section presents a more intricate and nuanced perspective on the state–civil society relationship in a sanctioned context. It highlights how non-governmental organisations and the state are deeply intertwined within a complex, multilayered network of material exchanges, personal ties, institutional connections, and some degree of autonomy. Corporatism is not seen as the opposite of civil society but as an institutional framework that links the organised interests of civil society with the state's decision-making structures (Schmitter 1974). This notion suggests that corporatism and social organisations, which are essential components of civil society, can coexist. In this context, civil society and corporatism are not necessarily opposite concepts. They may, in fact, overlap in the form of “societal corporatism”, which refers to a way of governing that involves various voluntary organisations as key participants in public decision-making processes (Østerud 2007, p. 77). This model also ensures that grassroots demands are recognised and considered to some extent (Unger and Chan 1995, p. 40).

Therefore, this section explores how state corporatism in Iran overlaps with civil society. By analysing state-civil society interactions, it examines how such interactions strengthen the resistance of the sanctioned state and enhance its capacity to manage sanctions. To incorporate society into this analysis, I assess civil society's level of autonomy from the state and their involvement in governmental policymaking. To assess this objective, I analyse recent constitutional and legislative amendments to determine the degree of civil society institutionalisation and clarify whether a bottom-up dynamic exists in the Iranian sanctioned setting. While secondary data cannot definitively prove the practicality of government promises, it might suggest that the state is working to improve the above-mentioned

indicators. Yet, for example, it cannot identify the quality of state-civil society interaction. Therefore, it is necessary to triangulate secondary data with primary data from interviews with members of grassroots organisations and political parties to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the success and failures of these experiments.

5.5.1 Emergence of Civil Society in Iran

In recent decades, civil society has been linked to democracy and development (Cornwall and Brock 2005) and seen as an alternative to state inefficiencies. However, critiques since the late 1990s argue that authoritarian states can co-opt it. Applying the concept to non-Western cultures is challenging. Scholars differ on the coexistence of non-governmental associations and authoritarian states, with some pointing to country-specific circumstances, and others citing the state's weakness or limited reach (Mann 2012, p. 189). While some (Lang 2018; Astapova et al. 2022) assume authoritarian states regulate civil society, evidence shows it often fails to counterbalance authoritarianism, especially in sanctioned contexts. To move beyond this binary, this study traces the historical evolution of civil society in Iran and categorises its role within the sanctioned context through examining the level of bottom-up institutionalisation.

The concept of civil society in Iran gained traction after Khatami's 1997 election, central to his campaign for political reform and economic liberalisation. A diverse group of political intellectuals supported this vision but differed on defining civil society and its state relationship (Ziba-Kalam 1998). In post-Khatami era, scholars examined civil society's political role and ties to Islam. Mehran Kamrava (2001) identifies three key aspects: its "indigenisation" by conservatives to fit Iran's social and political realities, the emphasis on "rule of law" in curbing state repression, and the all encompassing influence of Islam, which even secular theorists cannot completely escape due to its dominant role in Iranian culture and society. These debates have influenced how civil society institutions, in particular NGOs, operate within the constraints of state regulation and religious influence. In practical terms, the legal classification of these organisations determine their ability to function, revealing the state's approach to managing civil society actors.

In Iran, NGOs are classified as non-commercial organisations³³ and must register with authorities to be recognised.³⁴ They can be called associations, clubs, or institutions but cannot use state-related titles.³⁵

³³ Commercial organisations are defined as entities established to engage in activities like trade, industry, and profit distribution among members. See Commercial Act of Iran, Article 2.

³⁴ Article 584 of the Commercial Act of Iran states: "Concerns and establishments created for non-commercial purposes acquire juridical personality upon registration in a special register established by the Ministry of Justice".

³⁵ The Regulations on the Registration of Non-Commercial Organisations and Concerns, enacted on May 3, 1958, further define non-commercial organisations. Article 1 states: "Non-commercial organisations and concerns, as outlined in Article

Non-commercial organisations are either profit-generating or non-profit,³⁶ including charities and those distributing profits among members.

NGOs are classified into two groups: public interest organisations (grassroots movements) and professional organisations. Public interest NGOs focus on public benefit, such as charities and non-profits, while professional organisations serve their members' interests, including guilds, professional associations, and Islamic organisations. Both are regulated by the Law Concerning the Activities of Associations, Guilds, and Islamic Associations, enacted on August 29, 1981, defining various NGO types.

Guild associations refer to organisations formed by individuals within a specific trade, profession, or occupation. According to the law, their objectives, plans, and actions must aim to benefit the respective trade, profession, or occupation³⁷. On the other hand, Islamic associations are organisations made up of volunteers with the primary goal of supporting the objectives of the Islamic revolution. These associations are allowed to carry out a variety of activities as long as they align with the aforementioned purposes, including administrative, educational, guild, industrial, or agricultural activities³⁸.

NGOs cannot engage in profit-generating or political activities, while guilds are also barred from political participation or party alignment³⁹. NGOs may engage in political activities only as permitted by the Political Party Act⁴⁰. The Constitution prohibits NGOs from actions against independence, freedom, national unity, Islamic values, or the Republic's foundation⁴¹. Laws reinforce this, banning activities that threaten the Islamic foundation of Iran or cause division⁴². NGO activities should align with the Constitution⁴³ and are largely limited to charitable work, with minimal political engagement.

In November 2003, the Ministry of Interior and Iranian NGOs collaborated to draft a new law on NGO establishment and activities. Representatives from NGOs, civil society groups, and government officials

584 of the Commercial Act, refer to entities formed for non-commercial purposes such as scientific, literary, or charitable activities, regardless of whether their founders intend to generate profits”.

³⁶ Amended Regulations for the Registration of Non-Commercial Organisations and Entities, enacted in 1337 (March 21, 1958 - March 20, 1959), Article 2.

³⁷ See Law Concerning the Activities of Political Parties, Article 2, Executive Regulations Concerning Guild Units, Article 1, enacted on April 3, 1989.

³⁸ See Law Concerning the Activities of Political Parties, Article 3.

³⁹ See Executive Regulations, Article 1, and Guild Regulations, Article 5.

⁴⁰ See Executive Regulations, Article 1.

⁴¹ See Constitution Article 26.

⁴² See Political Parties Law, Article 16.

⁴³ See Executive Regulations, Article 8.

aimed to clarify and support NGO operations. The law allows NGOs to take legal action to advance their objectives and protect the public interest⁴⁴, potentially reshaping their role in Iran.

In early 2006, shortly after Ahmadinejad took office, “NGOs” were renamed *sazmanha-ye mardom nahad* (SAMANs), meaning “community-based organisations” or “people’s organisations”.⁴⁵ This shift tries to localise the concept, aligning it with Iranian society while distancing it from foreign connotations. However, Iranian civil society saw this renaming as a move toward economic-focused activism. As participant I13, the CEO of a SEMAN focused on promoting an Islamic lifestyle and a strong advocate of Islamic ideology, stated, “our goal is to reduce Iran’s reliance on oil and develop an alternative economic model to circumvent sanctions”. At the same time, other actors emphasised the continued development of civil society since the 1990s. I5, the CEO of a SANAM dedicated to campaigning against corruption, argued that Iranian NGOs have grown significantly in both number and quality, with greater professional capacity and deeper social engagement. According to them, “while NGOs in the 1990s mainly focused on basic needs such as livelihood support, many current organizations now work on more fundamental and structural forms of empowerment”.

SAMANs operate across various sectors, including health, women’s rights, environmental protection, child welfare, and education. They can be categorised by expertise on information dissemination, education, consulting, small-scale projects, support services, production, and training. Figure 5.8 illustrates their diverse activities in Iran. While no recent official data exist, estimates suggest their number ranged between 14,000 and 18,000 in 2024 (Interior Ministry 2024). The last official report, based on 2004 census data, recorded 6,914 active SAMANs, with 3,692 officially registered (Bromideh 2011), mostly charitable institutions. Some are branches of national organisations, while others have a long-standing presence.

SAMANs Classification and Key Focus Areas

Category	Key Focus Areas
Community Health Promotion and Education	- Contraception and Intimacy Education - General Hygiene - Waste Disposal

⁴⁴ See Executive Regulations, Article 16.

⁴⁵ See the ‘disposals for the establishment and activities of SAMAN’ redacted by the Ministry of Interior, Islamic Republic of Iran.

	- Water Usage - Vaccinations - Youth Counselling Services
Emerging Health Crises	- HIV/AIDS education and support - Hepatitis B education - Drug Addiction recovery
Community Social Problems	- Juvenile crimes - Runaway girls - Street Children - Prostitution
Environmental	- Sustainable water and energy consumption education - Keeping mountains and forests clean
Economic	- Microenterprises and Micro-loans - Skill training (Computers, technician training, Catering services, clothing and textile, etc.) - Product promotion and distribution (Bazaars, etc.) - Cooperative creation - Financial consulting

Table 5.1: Data collected by Ali Mostashari (2005).

Iran's civil society has evolved with the rise of SAMANs, focusing on local, community-based organisations. SAMANs, divided into public interest and professional categories, face strict regulations limiting profit-making and political involvement. Recent reforms have expanded their role in advancing public interests, with state oversight aligning their activities with broader goals. The shift from "NGOs" to "SAMANs" localised activism, particularly addressing economic challenges and sanctions. This evolving relationship has fostered cooperation, crucial for understanding Iran's strategies for economic

resilience and political survival. The next section explores how hybrid state-society corporatism underpins Iran's resistance to sanctions.

5.5.2 Hybrid State-Society Corporatism to Resist Sanctions

Paola Rivetti and Francesco Cavatorta (2013) conceptualise Iranian civil society as a contested space where “NGOs” and grassroots organisations operate. Rather than viewing it as a singular actor capable of resistance or collaboration, civil society should be seen as an arena where political dynamics unfold, shaped by struggles between different levels of government, leading to structural fragmentation (Lieberthal 2004). This is evident in the inclusion/exclusion divide, where governments strategically recognise or marginalise certain groups, and social actors adopt the civil society label based on their elite relationships.

However, a purely top-down analysis overlooks societal corporatism's role in sanctioned Iran. Despite state divisions between reformists and conservatives, Yijiang Ding (1998) argues that while the state promotes corporatism to replace direct control, emerging societal forces attempt to gain autonomy. Their limited success often stems from the state's withdrawal from certain social domains, compounded by institutional complexities and internal government tensions that weaken control and leave room for modest NGO influence. Thus, Iranian civil society is not a fixed concept but an evolving construct shaped by negotiation in Iran's sanctioned context. This analysis examines state-civil society relations under sanctions, assessing how bottom-up approaches contribute to responses.

Leon Gordenker (1995) identifies three types of NGO-government relationships: (1) government-organised NGOs, common in developing countries to manage aid flows; (2) quasi-governmental organisations, funded primarily by the public treasury in industrialised nations; and (3) NGOs organised by international donors. These relationships shape government-organised SAMANs in Iran, varying in their interaction with the state, based on their patronage relationship with the government. Iranian SAMANs navigate these dynamics based on their level of autonomy and participation in policymaking (Cox 1981).

5.5.2.1 Controlled Autonomy of Civil Society in Iran

Article 26 of Executive Regulations limits SAMANs' rights, allowing them to operate only if they do not violate independence, freedom, national unity, Islamic standards, or the Islamic Republic's foundation. SAMANs must register with the government, and a supervisory board made up of government officials and SAMAN representatives oversees operations. These provisions create formal corporatist relations, establishing state control through supervisory bodies.

Each SAMAN must submit an annual report detailing activities and financial operations to the supervisory board. SAMANs may also be required to provide periodic reports upon request. They must grant the supervisory board access to their records for inspection. While the law mandates reports to include operational and financial details, it does not specify further requirements or clarify if the reports become public records. SAMANs can access public organisation records unless classified. Failure to submit annual or periodic reports can result in severe consequences. The supervisory board has the authority to revoke a SAMAN's permit or request its dissolution through judicial authorities.⁴⁶ These penalties are strictly enforced.

The degree of control a supervisory organisation has over a SAMAN varies, depending on factors like institutional mandates, political dynamics, and the SAMAN's activities. This relationship can be analysed using two variables: the personnel overlap between the two entities, and the SAMAN's funding source. When overlap is high, the SAMAN operates almost as an extension of the supervisory body, with limited autonomy in decision-making.

Evidence suggests that segments of civil society may align with authoritarian states based on religious or nationalist values, fostering an "uncivil society" (Muro-Ruiz and Kaldor 2003). Leaders of professional SAMANs, particularly Islamic organisations, are appointed by the supervisory board and state-paid, often with government or religious backgrounds. This ensures their ideological and operational alignment with state policies. Their funding relies entirely on government allocations and subsidies, making their financial sustainability dependent on the state rather than independent revenue or member contributions.

Interviewee I13, the CEO of an Islamic SAMAN with multiple roles across ministries, confirmed this by stating that the "government allocates millions of rials" to their SAMAN. This highlights the financial reliance of these organisations on state support, reinforcing their deep integration within the broader governmental framework. This dependency raises questions about the extent of genuine grassroots engagement in these SAMANs, as their leadership and financial structures are often controlled by external state institutions rather than internal democratic processes.

On the other hand, non-Islamic SANAMs operate independently in terms of funding but remain under the influence of their supervisory bodies. They also receive partial funding from international organisations, such as the United Nations Migration Agency (IOM), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Relief International, and the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS). However,

⁴⁶ See Executive Regulations 2005, Articles 5, 9, 12, 26, and 28.

receiving funds from international organisations is limited by state-imposed restrictions designed to cut foreign support. A SAMAN must notify the supervisory board before accepting foreign funding, and the board must report this to government ministries for evaluation.⁴⁷ Respondent I9, the CEO of a SAMAN dedicated to supporting vulnerable children, interprets these strict regulations as a “lack of autonomy”.

The lack of autonomy stems from deep scepticism within the Iranian elite toward traditional civil society, with some, like interviewee I5, whose SANAM focuses on countering sanctions, even calling it a “spy agency”. Even, party officials question its legitimacy, dismissing it as a “Western mentality”. Participant I15, a well-known Islamic respondent linked civil society to imperialism, claiming Western powers use it to undermine the Islamic revolution. This view is increasingly shared across the Global South, including Nicaragua (Cannon and Hume 2013) and Iraq (Torrente 2004), where many NGOs receive Western funding to influence governments.

While these critiques may be valid with regard to civil society more generally, they must be considered within the conflictual politics of Iran in the context of sanctions. With the intensification of US sanctions against Iran, the Iranian state started accusing a number of international foundations, including *Thomson Reuters*, of supporting “spies” to do networking and collecting data. One of the more famous ones was Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, an Iranian-British dual citizen who was detained in Iran from 2016 to 2022. After such detentions, feminist organisations in particular were targeted for government criticism. In her article based on the fieldwork conducted in Iran in 2008, 2009 and 2015, Tara Povey (Povey 2016) examines how sanctions have influenced women’s activism in Iran. She argues that sanctions strengthen conservative forces within the country, thereby hindering grassroots women’s organisations. It strengthened militarised masculinities and reinforced patriarchal political forces in Iran, which, according to Valentine M. Moghadam (2024), later became the focus of the WLF protests. Drawing on feminist perspectives that link domestic and international dynamics, I explore how sanctions contribute to “the continuum of violence”.

What stands out is that the autonomy of SAMANs—or lack thereof—is not a defining feature of corporatism, given the existence of societal variants. Cooperation does not necessarily negate independence. The key difference between state and societal corporatism lies in whether it results from state control or societal competition. State influence over leadership selection may come from direct imposition or a negotiated process, as seen after 2003 when SANAM representatives joined supervisory boards. On the other hand, although state subsidies are typically indicative of dependence, receiving

⁴⁷ See Executive Regulations 2005, Article 10.

funding from international organisations could be interpreted as independence to some degree. Phillippe C. Schmitter (1974) saw societal corporatism as a post-liberal development driven by many organisations, but Iran's case suggests it can also emerge from state corporatism.

As the state promotes state corporatism to partially replace direct control, some societal forces strive for autonomy. These efforts see limited success, shaped by the state's selective withdrawal from social domains, the complexity of the state system, and institutional tensions. These factors weaken state authority, enabling some societal groups to organise with minimal interference.

Religious foundations, or Bonyads, are key players in corporatist structures, funded by charities and private donations to sustain *bassiji* (mobilisation) efforts. Their membership is broad, with organisations like the Imam Reza Foundation aiming to “alleviate deprivation, create employment, and train personnel”. In April 2024, I participated in one of its social service activities, known as a “volunteer service camp,” for a week in a deprived area of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province in southwestern Iran. Our group consisted of 80 individuals, including men and women with various areas of expertise. The activities included providing free medical assistance, educating children, and renovating the school, such as painting and planting trees in the schoolyard. Participants in this activity did not receive any salary. Such foundations are community-based activities to deal with existent poverty in deprived zones, mainly in rural areas. Many Bonyads explicitly support government functions; for example, the Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation (MVAFA) (2018) established a headquarters to mitigate sanctions, while the Mostazafan Foundation (2018) aims to expand economic ties, especially in the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific.

In many contemporary authoritarian states, non-state organisations operate with internal decision-making but remain within a limited corporatist framework, providing services the state cannot or will not offer. While they offer limited representation for marginalised groups, Marion Young (2002) argues that true civil society requires both self-organisation and participation in the public sphere. The other key aspect of civil society lies in its role within the public sphere, which Young primarily interprets through the later definitions of Jürgen Habermas (1996, p. 360) as “a network for communicating information and points of view”. Young extends this concept, emphasising civil society as an institutional link between private life and public discourse. Thus, civil society consists of associations that organise discussions to address public concerns within organised public spheres (Habermas 1996, p. 367). As such, religious foundations represent a state-created form of social organisation aimed at managing society by linking public concerns within structured public spheres. While granted limited freedom under a shift from direct command to indirect control, their activities align closely with state objectives. Acting as intermediaries, they extend

government influence into rural and impoverished areas without direct intervention. By addressing local needs, these foundations co-opt potential opposition, integrate disenfranchised communities, and reinforce the ruling authorities' legitimacy (Gerschewski 2013a), fostering both loyalty and dependency among the population.

5.5.2.2 Limited Agency: The Role of SAMANs in Policymaking Landscape

Field research suggests that both Islamic and non-Islamic SAMANs align with the state due to shared political, economic, and social patterns. As David Lewis (2013) notes, these organisations reflect the authoritarian state's structures and behaviours, often reinforcing its legitimacy and resistance discourse against sanctions rather than challenging it. However, this alignment comes at a cost, as the Iranian state imposes strict limitations, wary of their growing influence. The state's discriminatory view of SAMANs, particularly those with independent initiatives, limits their role in policymaking. Despite their contributions to social issues, SAMANs are not granted the autonomy to fully shape policy, as their activities must align with state ideological constraints. This creates a tension between their supportive role and the state's reluctance to allow them political leverage.

SANAM CEO I14 and SEMAN CEO I13, both of whom maintain personal and institutional connections with the state, acknowledged that their organisations operate in line with state ideology, irrespective of whether reformists or conservatives hold power. They suggested that their influence goes beyond alignment, as they have some power to shape policymaking. However, the Iranian state sees these organisations as tools of state control rather than independent policy actors, limiting their agency in the policymaking process. While they may contribute to policy discourse, their ability to truly influence decision-making is constrained by the state's tight control over political and social spaces.

Respondent I5, the CEO of An anti-corruption SANAM, highlighted their organisation's ability to influence policy by creating a sense of urgency that prompts government action. They explained that their SAMAN engages with social issues such as addiction, homelessness, and runaway girls, publishing reports that bring these concerns to the government's attention. Once shared, these reports often lead to shifts in focus. For example, after publishing findings on runaway girls, other institutions took notice, newspapers covered the issue, and the government began paying closer attention. The interviewee also pointed to addiction-related initiatives, noting that "many programmes in addiction care and empowerment originated from civil society activities in Iran". While these efforts have yielded positive results, they remain within the state's framework, and significant policy changes still require state approval, which is not always granted.

The I14, whose SAMAN provides free treatment to over 35,000 cancer patients, highlighted the organisation's critical role in addressing medical equipment shortages caused by sanctions, such as oxygen concentrators, air mattresses, and cancer diagnostic kits. They explained that the SAMAN operates without creating conflict with the government, strategically utilising the government's strengths. The CEO confirmed meetings with health ministries across different administrations and pointed out that cancer patients were historically not considered "difficult-to-treat cases" in Iran. In 2023, the SAMAN successfully advocated for cancer patients to be classified as such, leading to insurance coverage of up to 500,000,000 rials (about US\$500). Despite this success, the SAMAN's role in influencing medical policy remains constrained, as the Iranian state often uses these initiatives to bolster its legitimacy without allowing these organisations to redefine state priorities.

These two SAMANs show that civic associations can survive and thrive under authoritarian states because they perform functions aligned with the state's objectives, particularly in addressing the challenges posed by sanctions. Both the state and the SAMANs engage in a mutually beneficial collaboration based on shared goals and complementary activities. In interviews, both CEOs emphasised that their SAMANs aimed not to undermine or replace the state, but to support and reinforce the state's ability to serve its citizens. However, it is clear that while SAMANs can support the state, their roles in policymaking are limited. The Iranian state carefully curates their involvement, ensuring they do not challenge the established order or push for reforms that could disrupt the existing power structures.

Even when SAMANs, which may adopt some liberal ideals, integrate authoritarian elements of the state (Spires 2011), they are often tolerated because they provide social services that both the public desires and the state finds beneficial. These groups carry out functions that align with the goals of state agencies, offering "political capital" for local officials. However, as pointed out by participant I9, who openly identifies as having a liberal mentality, there is a constant struggle to effect genuine policy changes. The CEO, whose SANAM is supporting vulnerable children, criticised the state's reluctance to grant SAMANs more influence, noting the limitations placed on their initiatives. Despite successfully addressing issues like vulnerable children's education and establishing self-governing schools in Tehran, the CEO highlighted the bureaucratic hurdles that delayed such initiatives. These limitations underscore the state's reluctance to allow SAMANs to gain too much influence, ensuring they remain subordinate to the state's overarching authority.

Against this backdrop, the Iranian state has sought to mitigate the impact of sanctions on women through various measures. One such initiative is SAMAN's employment of breadwinner women, seeking to provide economic relief to those most affected by sanctions. However, the number of beneficiaries

remains very small compared to the overall population of Iranian women. By integrating these women into the workforce, the state not only addresses some of the economic hardships imposed by sanctions but also legitimises its response to international pressures, positioning such efforts as a means of alleviating gendered vulnerabilities exacerbated by economic restrictions.



Photo 5.3: The knitted items are produced by these women. The SANAM provides all the necessary materials, and the women carry out the production. At the end of each week, the SANAM buys the finished products from them (photo: author).

Peksen and Drury (2010) found that sanctions often limit political rights and civil liberties, undermining democratic freedoms. Gutmann, Neuenkirch, and Neumeier (2021) report a decline in life expectancy with gendered effects. UN Rapporteur Alena Douhan (Douhan 2021) highlights the harmful impact of unilateral sanctions, violating international norms and harming ordinary Iranian citizens, especially women. Even Iran-based feminist activists, including 2023 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nargess Mohammadi, have criticised US sanctions (Moghadam 2024).

The state utilises societal corporatism to manage public expectations and political mobilisation, carefully curating the involvement of SAMANs in policymaking. This allows the state to project an image of responsiveness to citizens' needs without relinquishing control. Even when SAMANs succeed in

addressing pressing social concerns, these successes are framed within the context of the state's broader goals, ensuring that the state remains the ultimate arbiter of any substantive policy change. Thus, societal corporatism in Iran serves to reinforce the state's dominance while allowing for limited engagement with civil society.

Fieldwork in Iran reveals that limited civil society engagement in policymaking stems from two main issues: parties' inability to channel popular demands to the state and ideological barriers to civil society involvement. To support the first, reformist and conservative party members claimed they aim to empower civil society. However, one interviewee stated, "public opinion in Iran remains unstructured and imprecise because people's demands have not yet been solidified within political parties and have mostly turned into aspirations; it is the role of political parties to cultivate and articulate them". The respondent added that the state does not believe public opinion can influence policy.

This perspective highlights a shrinking civic space, where the state seeks to suppress the political voice of independent organisations through legal constraints, such as the lack of mechanism in which parties could mobilise civil society. This highlights a significant fragmentation between public opinion and political parties, as parties are largely co-opted by the state.

Ideological obstacles also hinder civil engagement in policymaking. Interviewees divide popular demands into "right" and "wrong" in the Iranian political system, where ruling elites differentiate between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" demands. The state and its intellectuals decide which grievances align with the system's ideology and which are seen as subversive (Gramsci 1971). Both conservative and reformist parties strongly adhere to this dichotomy. Interviewee I12, the founder of a conservative party, stated, "as long as public demands are legitimate, we support them. But if they are not based on Islam, we don't care". The I7, a prominent reformist party member "downplayed civil demands", suggesting it would be more effective to empower civil society rather than "shouting against the state", though they did not explain how to achieve this.

The legitimate and illegitimate discrepancy is evident in the case of the hijab. The I12 considered the demand to not wear the hijab "illegitimate", stating, "some people demand not to wear the hijab, but Islam mandates it". However, such interpretations are not universally accepted in Iran. Some individuals choose to wear the hijab based on personal religious beliefs. While the state supports the hijab as a "command of God", opponents often lack a representative body like SAMAN to advocate for their demands. Instead, they use social media campaigns, removing their scarves and gaining strong support from the Iranian opposition abroad. This group of women, dubbed "unbelievers to hijab", seeks to break

free from state control. Their efforts occasionally achieve success, influenced by the state's partial withdrawal from this domain. For example, the Hijab and Chastity law, passed in November 2024 to enforce the hijab, has not been implemented due to Masoud Pezeshkian's reformist administration halting its enforcement to help prevent more social cleavages.

Respondent I9, whose SANAM is supporting vulnerable children, categorises this type of withdrawal as the result of "people's bargaining power" influencing policymaking, emphasising that civil society is evolving on a larger scale. While, according to them, this does not mean civil society has achieved all its demands, it indicates that its bargaining power has improved over previous years. "The changing nature of civil society's demands, driven by the people's will, is evident. These changes will affect all aspects of society, forcing politicians to respond to the demands of civil society," added the CEO.

In sum, the Iranian case illustrates how civil society operates within a corporatist framework that combines state control with limited societal autonomy. While SAMANs and Bonyads remain heavily regulated—through supervisory boards, funding dependencies, and ideological restrictions—they nonetheless carve out modest spaces to influence policy on issues such as addiction, cancer treatment, and women's employment. These interventions rarely challenge the state directly but instead complement its functions, allowing the regime to project responsiveness under sanctions while retaining authority. From the perspective of resistance, this hybrid corporatism reflects an adaptive strategy: by co-opting civic organisations and selectively withdrawing from certain social domains, the state blunts external pressures while fostering controlled spaces of participation. In this way, sanctions do not simply weaken civil society; rather, they reshape it into a negotiated terrain where limited agency is possible, but always within boundaries that reinforce the broader architecture of authoritarian resistance.

5.6 Conclusion

US-led sanctions have profoundly shaped Iran's economy, politics, and society. Targeting key sectors like oil, finance, and trade, they have caused inflation, currency fluctuations, and industrial stagnation. Sanctions have also disrupted healthcare, creating shortages of essential medicines. Rather than forcing policy shifts, they have strengthened Iran's resolve, fostering a "resistance model" based on domestic adaptation and alternative economic structures.

Through a corporatist top-down approach, Iran has emphasised production as economic resistance, maintaining industrial output despite trade and investment restrictions. The resistant economy promotes ISI, knowledge-based industries, and non-Western trade partnerships. The oil and gas sector survives through domestic investment and intermediaries, while manufacturing shifts to local production to offset

supply disruptions. Though economic adaptation helps counter sanctions, technological stagnation and financial isolation remain major challenges.

Beyond economic adaptation, social and political solidarity have bolstered Iran's resistance, in particular through a patronage system. The corporatist state structure helps manage public discontent and sustain electoral participation. In the 2017 and 2021 elections, reformists appealed to the middle class with economic liberalisation, while conservatives relied on religious networks and welfare programmes to mobilise lower-income groups. Rather than causing mass opposition, sanctions have reinforced factional alliances and mediated class struggles.

Additionally, the bottom-up interactions under sanctions can be understood through SAMANs, which balance control and cooperation to maintain cohesion. Rather than acting autonomously, civil society aligns with state structures in a corporatist model to manage economic hardship. This integration enables limited bottom-up approach through policy participation, ensuring stability despite external pressures. These networks demonstrate Iran's political adaptability, absorbing sanctions' impact without regime change.

The findings of this Chapter challenge conventional assumptions about the effectiveness of sanctions as a tool for political transformation. While Iran has suffered serious economic setbacks, it has simultaneously reinforced state-controlled production, maintained political cohesion through managed solidarity, and semi-institutionalised state-society interactions under a corporatist framework. Sanctions, rather than weakening the Iranian state, have contributed to the entrenchment of a system that prioritises economic self-sufficiency, strategic defiance, and internal adaptability. However, the long-term viability of this model remains uncertain, as ongoing financial isolation and technological limitations, combined with a grassroots approach and an increasingly stringent top-down strategy, may challenge the boundaries of Iran's resistance.

Chapter 6: FROM PUNTO FIJO TO CHAVISMO: POWER DYNAMICS IN A SHIFTING SOCIOPOLITICAL VENEZUELAN CONTEXT

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter defines and critically assesses how the Punto Fijo era (1958–1998) and the chavismo period (1999–present) correspond with models of despotic and/or infrastructural power. Situating Venezuela within this framework allows the Chapter to go beyond descriptive accounts of political change and instead evaluate the state’s capacity to govern. It advances the thesis’s broader goal of developing a target-centred framework for exploring resistance to sanctions by situating Venezuela–US relations within a longer trajectory of domestic and international dynamics. The analysis illustrates how the Bolivarian Revolution both emerged from and disrupted these dynamics, recasting Venezuela from a US “strategic ally” into one of the principal challengers and triggering sanctions alongside a politics of resistance.

The Chapter examines how these two distinct political periods reflect broader transformations in the nature of state power, charting shifts from despotic governance toward a more infrastructural model—or vice versa, or even a hybrid of the two. The discussion also delves into the socio-political and economic factors that have shaped these shifts, with a special emphasis on how these changes have affected the Venezuelan state’s capacity to navigate both internal challenges—such as socio-economic inequality, political fragmentation, and civil unrest—and external challenges, particularly those arising from US transnational power and its impact on Venezuela’s international relations.

To guide this analysis, the Chapter draws on a conceptual framework derived from Mann’s IEMP model⁴⁸ to explore how alterations in the distribution and articulation of these power sources clarify the transformation of Venezuela’s state-society fusion, considering transnational power as well. This approach allows us to trace the continuities and ruptures between the two periods referred to in the title

⁴⁸ Find more about IEMP in Chapter 2.

of this Chapter, revealing how chavismo emerged both in opposition to and as a product of the previous political order.

The Chapter is organised into three interwoven sections. First, it applies the IEMP framework to the Punto Fijo era, evaluating how the Venezuelan state operated across the ideological, economic, military, and political spheres. This section highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of the Punto Fijo system, particularly its reliance on neoliberal policies, elite consensus, and oil-based economic prosperity. An essential part of this analysis is the examination of the role of US transnational power in shaping Venezuelan politics during this period as a source of influence.

Second, after detecting the reasons behind the emergence of chavismo, the Chapter uses the IEMP model to assess how power structures evolved under the chavista government. The analysis primarily focuses on the presidency of Hugo Chávez (1999-2013), who is regarded as the architect of the Bolivarian Revolution and the central figure in reshaping Venezuela's political landscape. The Chapter investigates how Chávez's policies, including the nationalisation of key industries and social welfare initiatives, marked a shift towards a new type of governance. Nicolás Maduro's presidency (2013-present) is largely excluded from this discussion, as it is covered in Chapter 7, where a more detailed examination of Venezuela's resistance to US sanctions, particularly from a target-centred perspective, is carried out.

Finally, this Chapter critically examines the extent to which both the Punto Fijo and chavista periods align with the models of despotic or infrastructural power. By drawing on the previous discussions regarding the four sources of power, the Chapter assesses whether each regime exhibited low, moderate, or high levels of despotic and infrastructural power.

The analysis shows that the evolution of state power in Venezuela is less a linear move from one form to another than a complex and uneven interplay between despotic and infrastructural dimensions. During the Punto Fijo era, for example, governance relied heavily on elite bargains and informal networks, suggesting a relatively low reliance on overt coercion. Yet this period also showed moments of despotic assertion, particularly in response to social unrest, while infrastructural power remained limited by weak bureaucratic reach and the exclusion of marginalised groups. Likewise, chavismo did not follow a straightforward trajectory. Although it initially expanded infrastructural power through welfare programmes and grassroots mobilisation, this coexisted with persistent elements of despotic authority. Over time, as internal dissent and external sanctions exacerbated, the balance tilted further towards coercion, with executive decrees, repression, and military control becoming more noticeable, even as certain infrastructural mechanisms of welfare provision and mobilisation persisted.

6.2 Pre-Revolutionary Venezuela and Power Dynamics (1952-1998)

Following the breakdown of the military dictatorship in 1958, the top figures of Venezuela's main political parties —Rómulo Betancourt of Democratic Action (Acción Democrática—AD), Rafael Caldera of Committee for Independent Political and Electoral Organisation (Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente—COPEI), and other leaders from non-communist parties — met at Caldera's residence, the "Punto Fijo" villa in Caracas, where they forged a power-sharing pact that, according to some (Karl 1987; Smilde 2011), laid the foundation for a "representative democracy," while others (Duffy 2015; Atehortúa and Rojas Rivera 2005) viewed it as an "exclusive regime" that limited freedoms and weakened collective well-being due to widespread inequality and social exclusion.

Viewing the Punto Fijo era merely as a two-party system dominated by AD and COPEI oversimplifies the complex political, social, and economic dynamics of the country between 1958 and 1998. This binary framing neglects the shifting power relations, US impact, class changes, and ideological struggles formed by internal tensions and global forces like oil market shifts and Cold War geopolitics. To better understand this period, the assessment draws on Mann's theory, providing a multi-dimensional framework to explore how power was distributed, institutionalised, and contested. This approach goes beyond reductive narratives to highlight the forces that sustained, strained, and ultimately destabilised the Punto Fijo system.

6.2.1 Punto Fijo and Cold War Liberalism

The Punto Fijo Pact aimed to safeguard democracy and prevent authoritarianism—a form of "pacted democracy" (Karl 1990). It established a power-sharing system mainly between AD and COPEI, who alternated in government and competed for impact in unions, professional associations, business groups, and student organisations (Hellinger 2012, p. 140). Viewed through Mann's theory of ideological power, the pact institutionalised an ideology to improve collective agency improving democratic consolidation through collaboration and competition. This ideology served as a unifying discourse rooted in consensus and national unity (Mann 1993).

However, ideology cannot be detached from the regime's structural capacity to shape socio-political values. As Mann (1986) contends, ideological power relies on the regime's ability to define and spread dominant norms. In Venezuela, the Punto Fijo Pact's ideology drew legitimacy from both domestic dynamics and the broader Cold War context, which formed its content. Its core values—democracy, anti-authoritarianism, and freedoms of speech, religion, and belief—were not abstract ideals but ideological tools tied to a specific historical moment.

The Pact was shaped by Cold War liberalism, labelled by US-Soviet rivalry and a strong opposition to communism and Soviet governance (O'Brien 1972). Under Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) and John F. Kennedy (1961-1963), democracy was affirmed as the only genuine alternative to communism in Latin America (Alexander 1965; Amerson 1995). As a result, Venezuela's post-1958 settlement was not just a domestic political agreement but also associated with US efforts to ideologically unite Latin American states in its global campaign.

This ideological convergence directly shaped Venezuela's foreign policy. Though President Rómulo Betancourt had been doubtful of US policy in Latin America, the Punto Fijo consensus needed alignment with US interests amid perceived threats—especially Fidel Castro's revolution in Cuba (McCoy and Myers 2006). Influenced by US position on communism, the Pact's ideology framed Castroism as a direct threat to Venezuela's domestic order. This led to Venezuela's 1961 break with Cuba and support for the US embargo in 1963, marking a deeper ideological alignment with Washington.

While Cold War liberalism has been rightly critiqued for elitism, reliance on Westernised intellectuals, and ignoring local difficulties (Sackley 2012), its ideology helped embed a rights-based discourse in Venezuela, impacting both law and civil society. Rooted in Western values—particularly the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which emphasised freedoms of speech, religion, and belief (Glendon 2002)—the 1961 Constitution institutionalised liberal protections like habeas corpus and free speech, key features of the immanent ideology (Mann 1986) aimed at safeguarding individual dignity and limiting state violence (McCoy and Myers 2006, p. 19).

Aligned with these immanent ideals, public universities—especially the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV)—became vital spaces for free intellectual and political debate, often operating with minimal state interference. Even in the turbulent 1960s, when the government cracked down on leftist movements, parts of civil society—and even some within the state—pushed back against rights violations. This environment helped pave the way for human rights groups like Venezuelan Education-Action Programme on Human Rights (PROVEA), founded in 1988, which emerged in a civic space that reinforced transparency and accountability despite weak state institutions (PROVEA 1989). Despite its contradictions, Cold War liberalism in Venezuela contributed to building legal and civic frameworks to defend individual rights.

6.2.2 Oil and Fragile Economy in Punto Fijo

The 1914 discovery of oil was a turning point in Venezuela's history, reframing its economy, politics, and global role. Oil became central to the Punto Fijo system. The 1970s boom brought massive revenues,

allowing state-led modernisation and responses to key social demands. This wealth had major political effects, widening the gap between public and private sectors and transforming institutions, budgets, and public discourse (Rivera 2005). The Pact advanced ambitious objectives—full employment, mass housing for low-income groups, and major reforms in health, education, and social security. Highlighting that “work is the fundamental element of economic progress,” the state also guaranteed trade-union rights and freedom of association (Cervantes 1961). Yet, critical weaknesses within the economic sphere meaningfully hindered the operationalisation of such promises. These weaknesses can be categorised into two main areas: an overreliance on distributive policies and a neglect of regulatory capabilities.

Between 1959 and 1975, distributive policymaking—while not free from corruption—was more transparent than under Pérez Jiménez’s dictatorship (1952–1958). The first post-1958 governments improved bureaucratic professionalism and accountability, backed by steady economic growth into the 1970s (McCoy and Myers 2006). But these developments were short-lived. As AD and COPEI came under pressure to reward loyalists, they increasingly controlled public sector appointments. Over time, patronage replaced merit, weakening bureaucratic professionalism.

This dynamic intensified after 1975, when a sudden surge in oil revenues significantly increased state income. AD and COPEI increasingly used the public sector to distribute goods and benefits to their political bases, making regime legitimacy heavily reliant on sustained distributive output—a key vulnerability during economic recessions. At the same time, the state’s regulatory capacity, already weak under Pérez Jiménez’s, was consistently ignored. Political elites from the 1957–59 transition avoided regulatory reform, fearing it might destabilise the fragile democratic settlement.

This caution shows Theodore Lowi’s argument (Lowi 1964) that regulatory policymaking, unlike distributive policies, relies on coercive enforcement and can trigger resistance, threatening public support and political cohesion. To evade such risks, ruling elites—including AD, COPEI, the private sector, and the Catholic Church—prioritised distributive strategies to sustain governance. These policies placed minimal strain on elite unity and were seen as less politically disruptive. The assumption was that steady oil revenues would be enough to meet institutional demands and co-opt potential challengers (McCoy and Myers 2006).

This model led to a government which was controlled by AD and COPEI. These parties built hierarchical national organisations, relying heavily on oil revenues to satisfy their constituencies. While state subsidies enabled widespread wealth distribution, income inequality remained deep. Over time, AD and COPEI

extended their impact by taking control of most civil society organisations, further solidifying their supremacy (McCoy 1999, p. 64-65).

Relying on oil revenue without restructuring distributive and regulatory policies negatively influenced Venezuela's ISI. Oil-mediated integration into the global market funded an expansion of import capacity, but petrodollars delayed domestic industrialisation. A key consequence was the bolivar's consistent appreciation against the dollar, generating an incentive for imports over domestic production (Córdova 1963; Aranda 1977).

The political elites used the massive revenues to expand the rentier model, delaying any substantial economic adjustment. Nevertheless, by the 1980s, collapsing oil revenues and a mounting foreign debt crisis starkly uncovered Venezuela's deep reliance on petroleum exports and revealed the fragility of the development model and the restrictions of the Punto Fijo system (Hidalgo Trenado 2007).

In 1989, President Carlos Andrés Pérez launched El Gran Viraje (The Great Turn-Around), a structural adjustment programme aimed at restoring economic stability, often called a "neoliberal package" (López Maya 2009). The government, declaring the country broke, implemented austerity measures, including currency devaluation, reduced public spending, tightened credit, wage cuts, and higher prices for necessary goods. These measures were a condition for a \$4.5 billion IMF loan to integrate Venezuela into global markets (Serbin 2010, p. 187). Gasoline prices rose by about 100%, increasing the cost of consumer goods and public transport.

The price surge severely impacted living conditions, with per capita income by the end of the 1980s returning to early 1960s levels (Kelly 1995, pp. 288-289). By 1990, over half of Caracas' residents lived in poverty, with 7 percent categorised as very poor. Similar trends were perceived in other urban centres, where over 70 percent were poor, and 12 percent extremely poor (Grusón 1993), aggravating income inequality and wealth concentration as well (Naim 2013, p. 24).

López Maya (2003) argues that Venezuela's institutional weaknesses deteriorated the economic crisis. The government failed to manage rapid alterations or support those affected, eroding public trust and weakening the state's response. Combined with neoliberal policies, this led to the decline of the Punto Fijo system's legitimacy.

The severe crisis of the late 1980s culminated in the 1989 Caracas riots, known as *El Caracazo*. Prompted by IMF-backed reforms—fuel price hikes and subsidy cuts—the unrest led to widespread looting, violent clashes, and a brutal state crackdown. Death toll evaluations range from several hundred to possibly thousands (López Maya 2009).

6.2.3 Civic-Military Dynamics and Repression

At the outset of the Punto Fijo period, the military was primarily sceptical but gradually associated with the new government as President Betancourt prioritised the armed forces in the national budget, modernised equipment, and elevated their role. Civilian leaders extended their mandate to include defending constitutional democracy and national sovereignty, solidifying the military–political elite alliance (Ewell 1996, p. 216-217). However, the military remained divided, with blocs within each branch supporting either AD or COPEI, while some officers resented civilian interference in promotions and the reduction of their role in public policy.

This ambivalent posture was intensified by broader socio-political tensions. While the assets of Pérez Jiménez's close associates were confiscated, many businessmen and professionals who had prospered under his dictatorship retained their wealth and influence, resisting the new bipartisan order. Loyalty to Jiménez, discontent from leftist factions within AD, and opposition from parties like the Communist Party of Venezuela (Partido Comunista de Venezuela - PCV), and Democratic Republican Union (Unión Republicana Democrática - URD) combined with military dissatisfaction to challenge efforts at elite settlement.

Some factions resorted to armed rebellion. In 1962, Fabricio Ojeda, linked to the Cuban Revolution, led a brief guerrilla movement supported by URD figures like Luis Miquelena and José Vicente Rangel (Alexander 1964, pp. 101-102). These actors banned the Punto Fijo regime, observing it as a betrayal of popular aspirations. The revolutionary spirit spread to AD's youth, and in alliance with the PCV, dissidents like Américo Martín and Domingo Alberto Rangel formed the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), which gained support among students and sought to disrupt the 1963 elections (Martz 2016, pp. 174-183). Yet, by the early 1970s, military repression and strategic patronage from AD and COPEI marginalised these insurgent movements.

The state's reliance on coercion and militarisation became evident after the 1989 Caracazo, which was met with cruel military repression, supporting Mann's view that military power often involves sudden, lethal interventions. This repression led to Chávez's 1992 coup attempt with the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement-200 (MBR-200), driven by military dissatisfaction over low salaries and disillusionment with the political system (Hetland 2014, p. 376). While the Caracazo did not produce a new political alternative, it exposed the weakening power of traditional elites and reinforced support for military-led reform and a critique of the Punto Fijo pact (Silva 2009; Antillano 2010; Smilde 2011). Chávez and the MBR-200 officers were imprisoned after a failed coup.

The distinction between military and political power is crucial in understanding why Chávez's coup failed. While some scholars (Agüero 1993; Burggraaff 1995) argue that the military-political relationship debilitated in the 1980s and 1990s, Harold Trinkunas (2002) highlights the institutional legacies of the Punto Fijo era, which shaped mechanisms of civilian control over the military to fragment the officer corps and prevent unified action. These safeguards—intended to manage the autonomy Mann sees as central to military power—played a key role in preventing regime collapse in 1992 and allowing President Caldera to restore civilian control during his term (1994–1999), despite the deepening economic crisis.

The civic-military nature of Venezuela's armed forces does not fully explain the severe repression during the Caracazo. To understand the military's response, it should be viewed within the broader Cold War context, where the US aimed to suppress leftist movements in Latin America by backing allied governments. During the Punto Fijo era, Venezuela received substantial US military aid and training, particularly through bilateral agreements targeting communism. A key element was the US-sponsored School of the Americas, where many Venezuelan officers were trained in counterinsurgency (Gill 2004). The alliance also involved intelligence sharing, joint exercises, and military doctrine alignment to combat internal dissent. These networks offered the military the tools and ideological framing for repression, reinforcing Mann's argument that military power, while embedded in political projects, has its own organisational and operational logic that shapes its relationship with the state and society.

6.2.4 The Two-Party System in Punto Fijo

Based on traditional form of authority (Weber 1920), Punto Fijo's political structure was formed by a stable two-party system, with an agreement among major political forces to share power, respect election results, and shield democracy after the military dictatorship. Primarily signed by AD, COPEI, and URD, the pact saw AD and COPEI emerge as the dominant forces, while URD lost effect and withdrew. Political power was concentrated in AD and COPEI, which gained support from the church. As Mann's theory proposes, political power was firmly held by centralised elites, controlling the course of governance.

AD was the leading political force during the Punto Fijo era, mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, with leaders like Betancourt, Raúl Leoni, and Carlos Andrés Pérez driving social reform and economic growth fueled by oil revenues. The party built strong ties with labour unions and a vast patronage network, securing broad support across Venezuelan society. In contrast, COPEI, led by Caldera, served as the main opposition and achieved a historic milestone in 1968 with Caldera's presidency, marking Venezuela's first peaceful transfer of power between rival parties. Though smaller than AD, COPEI remained an

influential force, strengthening the two-party system that defined the political landscape during this period.

Over time, the stability of the Punto Fijo arrangement eroded due to two main factors: the centralised political system and the exclusion of the urban poor and middle classes from political participation. While the Punto Fijo Pact primarily mirrored interelite civility and introduced power-sharing mechanisms, it changed into a two-party system. AD and COPEI regarded each other as “loyal” opponents, with their leaders collaborating to consolidate and monopolise political power (Navarro 1995).

Jennifer McCoy (1985) and Kevin Neuhouser (1992) argue that stability stemmed from a class compromise, though the more broadly accepted view attributes it to the 1957–59 agreement among national elites. John Peeler (1992) was the first to note that this elite pact was half-finished, with many key groups remaining hostile or disengaged from its core principles for over a decade. During this time, the government launched initiatives to advance conditions for the urban poor through institutions like the Ministry of Public Works and the Central Office of Coordination and Planning (CORDIPLAN) (Gilbert 1981; Fossi 1984). However, despite these efforts, the lack of broad political inclusion for the urban poor and the centralisation of decision-making emphasised the restrictions of the Punto Fijo system, avoiding the state from fully reaching marginalised segments of society.

AD and COPEI excluded the PCV from the 1957–59 settlement despite its role in resisting Jiménez’s dictatorship, seeing it as more loyal to international communism than to Venezuela and doubting its commitment to democracy. They also feared that comprising the PCV would jeopardise crucial US support for consolidating a stable democracy (Cannon 2013).

A second major issue was the exclusion of key groups, especially the urban poor, from policymaking. Despite promises of greater participation and regional empowerment, power remained centralised in Caracas under AD and COPEI control (Ray 2022, p.158). This sidelined the urban poor—divided between the two parties and lacking alternatives—leaving them politically uneven, frustrated, and unable to address their concerns effectively.

The decline of Venezuela’s two-party system and the 1983 economic crisis had severe impacts on the urban poor. Though already susceptible before Black Friday, their situation worsened meaningfully, with rising poverty and declining living standards. Falling wages pushed many from the lower middle class into poverty, while the poor faced extreme deprivation (Levine 1998). As clientelist policies of AD and COPEI faded, the urban poor lost political representation and were forced to find new roles in a changing political landscape.

In sum, the Punto Fijo system was a complex governance model formed by internal dynamics and Cold War-era US effect. It institutionalised democracy as an anti-communist project, supported by domestic agreements and US support. Through Cold War liberalism, the US aligned Venezuela with anti-socialist regimes. Elites relied on oil wealth for patronage, evading reforms, but the system's dependence on oil and foreign support made it fragile. By the late 1980s, economic crises degraded inequality and hastened the system's collapse. The military upheld the two-party status quo, with US backing reinforcing state repression. Over time, exclusion and militarisation bred discontent, paving the way for Chávez's movement aimed at empowering the marginalised, particularly darker-skinned popular sectors (Smilde 2011; Cannon 2013a).

6.3 Post-Revolutionary Venezuela and Power Dynamics

Following an exploration of the conditions that gave rise to chavismo, this section also turns to the IEMP framework to trace the reconfiguration of power dynamics under the Chavista administration. The discussion is anchored in the period of Chávez's leadership, during which Venezuela experienced a profound transformation in the distribution and exercise of power. Through an analysis of Chávez's flagship policies—such as the promotion of *Bolivarianism* as a uniting ideological project, the nationalisation of significant industries and expansion of social welfare programmes (notably the *Misiones*), the restructuring of the armed forces through the formation of the Bolivarian Militia—a paramilitary force that operates beside, but somewhat independently from, the country's armed forces—and their politicisation, and the overhaul of political institutions to concentrate authority in the executive—this section shows how his governance signaled a decisive break from the Punto Fijo pact. Chávez's administration sought to dismantle the Punto Fijo order by reasserting state control, deepening participatory mechanisms for popular sectors, and challenging both domestic oligarchic interests and US hegemony. The IEMP lens therefore discloses how Chávez simultaneously consolidated internal authoritarian control and projected a counter-hegemonic vision that redefined Venezuela's position in the regional and global political economy.

6.3.1 Chavismo: From Domestic Reform to Global Defiance

Chávez won the 1998 presidential election with around 56% of the vote, ushering in the era of chavismo or the Bolivarian Revolution. He further consolidated power after winning the 2004 recall referendum with 58.3%. Rising oil prices boosted his political capital and state revenue, allowing substantial social spending. A weakened opposition largely boycotted the 2004 local elections, allowing pro-Chávez candidates to win 21 of 23 governorships and about 90% of municipalities. In 2005, the opposition

boycotted legislative elections, handing full control of the National Assembly to Chávez's coalition. In 2006, despite opposition backing Manuel Rosales of Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNT), Chávez won re-election with a personal best of 62.8% (Cannon 2013).

What kind of transformation did Chávez envision as he consolidated power? His Bolivarian ideology—resembling what Mann calls an immanent form of ideology—seek to reshape Venezuela's socio-economic and political structures while redefining its foreign policy. Understanding this vision necessitates assessing the core values of the Bolivarian Revolution, which can be largely divided into two key dimensions: internal and external.

As Mann (2012, p. 173) argues, for an ideology to reshape society, it should first delegitimise the existing order and offer a credible alternative that addresses people's instant needs. In this context, chavismo's internal values centred on domestic transformation through wealth redistribution, participatory democracy, social justice, and the empowerment of marginalised groups—chiefly via communal councils and broad state welfare programmes (Cannon 2013). These reforms sought to dismantle elite dominance and reduce inequality (Wilpert 2020), reflecting an immanent ideological project rooted in material conditions rather than abstract principles.

Chávez's external values reflected a strategic use of ideology to challenge US global dominance, consistent with Mann's view of ideology as a force that shapes international relations. Encouraged by the Cuban Revolution in 1953, the Bolivarian Revolution's defiance in the US's geopolitical “backyard” posed a direct challenge to Washington (Livingstone 2009). Chávez aimed to reclaim national sovereignty by rejecting foreign intervention and neoliberalism. Regionally, Venezuela spearheaded the creation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América—ALBA), a coalition of leftist governments—including Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador—focused on economic cooperation, social development, and political solidarity (Kaltwasser 2012). ALBA served as an ideological counter to US-led initiatives like the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), promoting solidarity, barter trade, and anti-imperialism (Muhr 2010).

Beyond Latin America, Venezuela under Chávez—and later Nicolás Maduro (2013–present)—forged strategic alliances with countries opposed to US foreign policy, including Russia, China, and Iran. These partnerships involved military cooperation, energy investments, arms deals, and diplomatic coordination in forums like the UN (Goforth 2011; Carvalho 2019). By aligning with these powers, the Bolivarian Revolution extended its ideological challenge to US dominance globally. This strategy reinforced the revolution's counter-hegemonic identity.

Caracas's counter-hegemonic posture reflects the ideological roots of Chávez's 21st-century socialism, centred on values like collectivity, equality, solidarity, freedom, and sovereignty (Burbach and Piñeiro 2007; Azzellini 2013, p. 26). This vision went beyond domestic reform to a broader geopolitical project challenging the neoliberal global order and US unipolar supremacy. Over time, the Bolivarian Revolution moved from moderate reformism to explicit anti-imperialism (Azzellini 2013). This stance was grounded in a fusion with "historical" Bolivarian nationalism, as Chávez drew on Simón Bolívar's legacy of anti-colonial struggle and ideas of sovereignty (Petras 2010), framing the revolution as both a national and transnational resistance movement.

6.3.2 From Oil Prosperity to Crisis

Venezuela's economy under Chávez was formed by political turmoil, oil prices, and state-led policies. Chávez used state control over oil to challenge elite interests and fund his agenda. After the 2000 election, the National Assembly granted him decree powers for a year (Roberts 2014, p. 260), which he used in 2001 to issue 49 decrees aimed at democratising ownership and production (Lander 2017). These included appropriating idle farmland, sponsoring cooperatives, and reasserting control over both the state oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA)*, and financial institutions (Hellinger 2012; Lander 2017). In line with Mann's theory of economic power, Chávez used resources to fortify the state and redistribute wealth. Yet, this provoked backlash from business elites, who saw the reforms as an attack on private property and a move toward communism (Lander 2017).

The Venezuelan government's efforts to transform social and economic structures alarmed the national elite (Smilde 201, p. 9). Although Chávez won repeated elections, elite factions retained impact in economic, political, military, and ideological domains. Business elites, particularly resisted his policies through control over key resources, reflecting Mann's view that economic elites actively defend their interests. This resistance coalesced in the Democratic Coordinator, a coalition of parties, NGOs, business groups, unions, and media outlets. In December 2001, unions launched a general strike, and in April 2002, elite-backed military and opposition actors—amplified by private media—led a coup attempt. Pedro Carmona briefly took power, with US support coming through public endorsement and covert funding via US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) (Cannon 2013). Yet popular resistance overturned the coup within 48 hours, reinstating Chávez. However, the episode highlighted the enduring economic power of elite groups.

In the wake of the failed coup, opposition elites—most notably through the NED-funded *Súmate*—pursued a recall referendum (Cannon 2013). Yet continued gridlock led them to instead deploy their

economic power via a nationwide work stoppage in December 2002. These elites retained influence over unions from the old Punto Fijo system and the upper management of PDVSA (Smilde 2011). However, their strategy collapsed, revealing the limits of economic power when faced with political legitimacy and mass mobilisation. Chávez's government, supported by popular support and international allies, mobilised loyal oil workers and dismissed nearly 15,000 PDVSA employees (Smilde 2011). This decisive move consolidated state control over oil, weakening the opposition's economic leverage. The episode demonstrates Mann's point: while economic elites wield substantial power, it can be neutralised by a state capable of institutional control and broad-based mobilisation.

The political upheaval between 1999 and 2003 generated a climate of acute uncertainty, severely disrupting Venezuela's economy through stagnation, capital flight, and widespread strikes. These dynamics culminated in a 14.2% GDP contraction in 2002 and a further 8.7% decline in 2003. The erosion of economic confidence—driven by elite resistance and the destabilising effects of political conflict—highlighted the intricate interplay between economic power, political contestation, and macroeconomic outcomes. However, following the collapse of the oil strike in February 2003 and a negotiated agreement with the government in May, the opposition mostly abandoned economic pressure in favour of electoral strategies. This strategic pivot shows the limits of economic power when faced with a state possessing strong institutional capacity and sustained political legitimacy (Weisbrot and Sandoval 2007).

Following the 2002–2003 oil strike and a severe recession that saw GDP decrease by 24%, Venezuela entered a phase of political and economic stabilisation. From mid-2003 onward, real GDP grew by 76%, driven by expansionary fiscal and monetary policies, exchange controls, and increased public spending—rising from 21.4% of GDP in 1998 to 30% in 2006. Social spending, particularly in health, education, and subsidised food, surged, reaching 20.9% of GDP by 2006, over 314% higher per capita than in 1998. Poverty reduced from 55.1% in 2003 to 30.4% in 2006, and unemployment fell from 18.4% in 2003 to 8.3% in 2007, the lowest rate in over a decade. These gains, alongside expanded access to healthcare and education, meaningfully enhanced the living conditions of the country's poor (Weisbrot and Sandoval 2007).

Despite short-term growth and poverty decrease, Venezuela's economy remains reliant on oil revenue, a pattern similar to the Punto Fijo era, when oil price surges temporarily boosted the economy. Francisco Rodríguez (2008) argued that improvements in poverty, unemployment, and social indicators were chiefly due to tripled oil prices, which led to a nearly 50% rise in per capita GDP. He emphasised that poverty reduction was not due to effective policies but to the correlation between growth and poverty reduction

during high oil revenues. This aligns with Mann's view that economic power through strategic control of important industries provides short-term improvements but leaves the economy susceptible to external shocks, particularly when diversification is abandoned.

Although Chávez's administration secured short-term economic gains, these proved unsustainable following the drop in oil prices during the 2008 global financial crisis and the subsequent major decline in 2014. The government missed the opportunity to translate the oil boom into long-term economic stability. Its poor fiscal management and excessive reliance on oil revenues left Venezuela vulnerable to economic shocks, showing the dangers of populist economic strategies that disregard conventional economic constraints.

Although Venezuela continued to export oil to the US throughout Chávez's presidency, with the US remaining its main oil customer, the situation altered after his death in 2013. Under Maduro, Venezuela confronted comprehensive and targeted US sanctions, framed as a response to his growing authoritarianism. These sanctions highlight the US's increasing transnational power, employing economic leverage to pressure the chavista government. Chávez's government had already faced restricted smart sanctions since 2005, targeting specific individuals and entities accused of so-called criminal or antidemocratic practices, but these were less extensive than those under Maduro.

6.3.2.1 Role of US Sanctions and State Dependency on Oil

US sanctions on Venezuela can be categorised into two types: legislative measures by Congress and executive orders by US presidents. Congressional sanctions are codified into law, making them harder to reverse and reflecting bipartisan consensus on targeting the Venezuelan government. Executive orders, on the other hand, provide greater flexibility and are often used to respond quickly to political developments like human rights abuses or corruption. The US's transnational power plays a key role, using these sanctions to shape Venezuela's economic fate and undermine the Maduro government and its economic pillars.

6.3.2.1.1 Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014

The law was enacted by the US in response to the Venezuelan government's crackdown on anti-government protests that began in February 2014. These protests were driven by public frustration over soaring crime rates, rampant inflation, food shortages, and overall economic mismanagement under Maduro (Menendez 2014). Over 40 people were killed, hundreds injured, and thousands detained during the unrest (Amnesty International 2014). The 2014 act authorises targeted sanctions—such as asset freezes and visa denials—against individuals accused of committing acts of violence against

demonstrators. Additionally, the legislation allocates \$15 million to support human rights defenders, independent media, and civil society groups in Venezuela to impose pressure on Venezuelan establishment (Menendez 2014).

6.3.2.1.2 Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Extension Act of 2016

The Act extended the provisions of the original 2014 law, authorising the US President to impose sanctions on individuals responsible for human rights violations or violence against protesters in Venezuela (Rubio 2016). Signed into law on July 15, 2016, this act, alongside the 2014 Act, serves as an instance of the transnational power exerted by the US, directly linking economic sanctions to human rights issues, further isolating Maduro's government from the international community.

6.3.2.1.3 Executive Orders

Sanctions against Venezuela began in 2015 when President Obama (2015) declared the country a “national security threat,” citing human rights violations, persecution of political opponents, and corruption. The sanctions' transnational reach extended beyond Venezuela, framing it as a global stability threat. Between 1999 and 2013, the US imposed targeted sanctions. Under President Trump, the sanctions expanded into a broader regime, including secondary sanctions on third parties doing business with Venezuela, marking a shift in US policy to exert pressure on both the Venezuelan government and foreign actors supporting Maduro.

In August 2017, Trump barred the Venezuelan government and PDVSA from accessing US financial markets. In March 2018, transactions involving Venezuelan-issued digital currencies were banned. By May 2018, restrictions expanded to cover Venezuelan debt, including accounts receivable and collateral assets. On November 1, 2018, a new order allowed asset freezes and transaction bans against individuals linked to key sectors or corrupt dealings with Maduro. In total, 26 individuals and various entities aiding Maduro and PDVSA in avoiding sanctions were targeted (Seelke 2020). These measures show how the US used financial power to isolate Venezuela globally.

The most consequential sanctions came in 2019 when the US Treasury designated PDVSA as part of Venezuela's oil sector, subjecting the company to US sanctions (US Department of the Treasury 2025). As a result, all PDVSA assets under US jurisdiction were frozen, and US entities were forbidden from transacting with the company. This showcased the US's transnational power, mainly in the energy sector, crucial to Venezuela's economy.

Following the 2019 sanctions on Venezuela's oil sector, the US increasingly relied on secondary sanctions to block Maduro's efforts to evade limitations. The Treasury sanctioned a Moscow-based bank aiding PDVSA and targeted Venezuela's state-owned gold company, Minerven, for its operations supporting Maduro. The US had imposed financial sanctions on 113 Venezuelan individuals and at least eight entities, including Maduro's family, senior officials, and key financial and political figures (US Department of the Treasury 2019). These measures highlight the US's transnational power, isolating not just Venezuela's leadership but also its core financial and political infrastructure.

Between 2013 and 2017, Venezuela's GDP shrank by 60%, with an additional 10% decline in 2020 (IMF 2020a). Economic mismanagement, lack of investment, and sanctions led to a nearly fourfold drop in oil production, and no efforts were made to diversify the economy under the Bolivarian government (Garzón et al. 2019). Venezuela became the global leader in hyperinflation, which peaked at 121.7% in 2015 and reached 2,360% in 2020 (IMF 2020b).

Compared to the Punto Fijo era, which was marked by a rentier economy and elite-controlled state-led development, the Chávez and Maduro periods both continued and intensified Venezuela's petro-dependent model, though with different political strategies and outcomes. Despite persistent inequality and corruption, Punto Fijo saw a political pact among traditional parties that maintained elite dominance. This arrangement preserved short-term stability but failed to address the structural weaknesses of the rentier economy or expand political participation.

Chávez, while challenging the old elite and redistributing oil wealth through social programmes, ultimately replicated many of the same economic limitations, particularly the failure to diversify beyond oil. His populist policies temporarily decreased poverty during the oil boom but deepened state dependency on volatile oil revenues. Under Maduro, these vulnerabilities deteriorated with falling oil prices, increasing internal mismanagement, and escalating US sanctions, leading to a shift from a populist, state-led redistributive model to a sanctions-constrained petro-state in crisis.

6.3.3 Military Power in Chavismo

The military question in Venezuela is a long-standing issue. Across the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, the military has maintained direct or indirect control over politics. Even after the 1958 Punto Fijo Pact and the onset of democratic rule, military influence continued. The fall of Punto Fijo and rise of chavismo do not mark the end of military repression or the full arrival of democracy.

The contemporary role of the Bolivarian National Armed Force (Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana - FANB) continues Venezuela's historical military tradition. Its deep presence in public life reflects both a

long institutional legacy and the civilian crises of the 1980s and 1990s. Under Chávez, military influence grew stronger (Fonseca et al. 2016). Chavismo, however, brought about important changes, especially in the military's internal structure, its central role in political, economic, and social matters, and its pivotal involvement in Venezuela's foreign policy strategy.

6.3.3.1 The Military Structure

Influenced by Cuba's experience with insurgencies and external threats, chavismo adopted a military doctrine based on a prolonged people's war, seeking to mobilise the entire population against the "enemies". This led to a major restructuring of Venezuela's armed forces. On January 29, 2020, the National Constituent Assembly formally integrated the Bolivarian Militia and National Guard into the FANB⁴⁹. The Militia, mainly composed of pro-government civilian volunteers, supports regular forces, defends territory, and maintains internal security. In Mann's terms, this represents a militarised social organisation beyond the traditional army, strengthening grassroots mobilisation and strengthening the "civil-military union" central to chavista thought.

Alongside structural reforms, the FANB's mission expanded beyond defending sovereignty to actively building Bolivarian socialism. The military became not just a defense force but also an ideological tool of the revolution (PSUV 2010). This change reflects Mann's view that militaries often exert power through intense interventions during revolutionary change.

The FANB is estimated to have 95,000 to 150,000 active personnel, with about 235,000 including militias (Global Security 2019). Exact numbers for the Bolivarian Militia are unclear. Maduro claims it has 4.5 million members and plans to expand it, though most lack formal training and focus on non-combat roles like food distribution (Maduro 2025). One analysis (DW 2020) estimates only 20,000 are militarily capable. Still, the 2020 "Bolivarian Shield" exercises reportedly mobilised 2.3 million participants.

Chávez redefined the military's role to include defending the poor, the marginalised, and social justice. This ideological change became clearer with the 2008 adoption of the slogan "¡Patria, socialismo o muerte! ¡Venceremos!" (Fatherland, socialism, or death. We will prevail!) and the renaming of the institution to FANB. Even, using the singular "force" instead of "forces" signified ideological unity under the Bolivarian Revolution (Garay Vera 2016).

⁴⁹ Constitutional Law of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces of 2020. 2020. *Official Gazette*, No. 6508, 30 January.

6.3.3.2 Military's Central Role in Chavismo

From the start of the Bolivarian Revolution, Venezuela's armed forces became central to both national defense and internal governance. Operating with autonomy, the military followed what Mann calls the developmental logic of power, becoming entrenched during political upheaval. Chávez's background as a coup leader, his praise for the 1992 coup attempt, and his appointment of loyal officers to top roles deepened military involvement in politics. By 2001, over 176 active-duty officers held senior administrative posts, a trend continued under Maduro (Trinkunas 2002). Politicised promotions ensured loyalty to chavismo, weakening civilian oversight and solidifying the military's role in regime stability.

Under Maduro, the militarisation of governance has expanded into the economy, with senior military figures overseeing key sectors. General Manuel Quevedo's leadership of both the Petroleum Ministry and PDVSA (2017–2020) reflects this shift. The military controls strategic industries—electricity, steel, ports, customs, agriculture, and mining, including gold. Defence Minister Padrino López, a key Maduro ally, heads the economic cabinet, highlighting the military's central role (2014-present). Chavismo sustains internal unity by granting trusted officers economic power, making the military a core political and financial pillar of the regime's survival (Iwanowski 2021).

The military also plays a key role in Venezuela's social fabric, with the "civic-military union" promoted by Chávez and strengthened under Maduro. The FANB has become an ideological vanguard for chavismo, described as Bolivarian, anti-imperialist, and patriotic, and its influence extends beyond security. It engages in public administration, infrastructure, social services, and media. One example is *Plan Bolívar 2000*, a \$114 million programme deploying troops for public works, health care, education, and food distribution (Trinkunas 2002). As Mann argues, military power can embed itself within society, gaining legitimacy through service delivery rather than through electoral accountability.

While Plan Bolívar 2000 improved infrastructure and services, it also shifted political and economic power toward the military. Military garrisons took charge of development projects, sidelining civilian institutions. Opposition leaders were denied resources as the government withheld funds designated for regional authorities, redirecting oil profits into discretionary military spending instead of improving the economy. A retired general remarked that the plan taught officers that real power lies not in commanding troops but in controlling money (Trinkunas 2002). This redistribution of power fostered a military identity aligned with chavismo, weakened democratic norms, and blurred the lines between civilian and military authority. This shift in power dynamics laid the groundwork for chavismo's militarised response to US power, as the military became not only a key instrument of internal control but also a central player in Venezuela's foreign policy strategy.

6.3.3.3 Chavismo's Militarised Response to US Power

Venezuela's militarisation is heavily influenced by the transnational power of the US. Although no direct invasion occurred, Trump's statements (2019), including the consideration of "a military option" against Venezuela, heightened fears within the Maduro government, justifying further militarisation. The memory of past US military operations in Latin America, such as in Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989) (McPherson 2016), remains fresh in the region's collective consciousness, shaping Venezuela's defensive stance.

Since 2006, Washington has targeted Venezuela's military with arms embargoes, citing its alliances with Cuba and Iran and alleged support for terrorist groups. This reflects Mann's concept of transnational military power—where states like the US influence foreign militaries through regional dominance, coercion, and alliances. In response, Venezuela has strengthened military ties with non-Western powers like Russia and China. Cooperation with Russia, including joint exercises, serves both strategic needs and as a political defiance against US hegemony. For chavismo, the perceived existential threat has driven a militarisation of governance, increasingly justifying authoritarian methods in the name of national sovereignty.

The intensification of US sanctions and support for opposition forces has reinforced the securitised logic within chavismo. Alongside crippling economic restrictions, the US has closely aligned with Colombia to counter the Maduro government (Smilde 2013). Diplomatic tensions and border closures have created a volatile regional environment where external aggression remains a looming threat. While Washington officially denied involvement in the 2002 coup, its documented contacts with dissident military factions and later appeals to the armed forces highlight a continued interventionist stance (Office of Inspector General 2002).

The US has occasionally called for a military uprising in Venezuela, particularly after the 2024 presidential elections, signaling the Biden administration's preference for regime change through transnational networks rather than direct military intervention. In response to this external pressure, the Maduro government has further entrenched the military in civilian governance, placing the armed forces at the centre of state power. As Abel Escribà-Folch (2012) observes, authoritarian regimes often react to sanctions and military threats by increasing spending on goods and services, including military hardware and personnel salaries, to secure military loyalty and maintain stability. During my ethnographic fieldwork in Venezuela from July 22 to August 2, 2024, I experienced the country's highly militarised atmosphere, marked by the visible presence of the militia and FANB. I came to understand Abel Escribà-Folch's description of repressive states under external pressure.

6.3.4 Political Power in Chavismo

In a mid-2006 speech, Chávez declared⁵⁰: “We have taken on the responsibility of guiding the Bolivarian Revolution toward socialism—toward a new kind of socialism, a socialism of the 21st century, grounded in solidarity, fraternity, love, justice, freedom, and equality”. He emphasised that this socialism was not a pre-determined model. Instead, he argued, “we must transform the logic of capital and advance toward socialism—a new socialism that must be built day by day”.⁵¹ Unlike the Soviet or Eastern European models, Chávez advocated a pluralistic and less state-centred approach. His conception of socialism drew on values of solidarity, equality, fraternity, justice, and liberty, inspired by the Bolivarian tradition, Christian thought, and strands of utopian socialism (Wilpert 2007).

Jeffery R. Webber (2010) contends that, despite Chávez’s rhetoric and certain redistributive policies, Venezuela did not undergo a socialist revolution during this period, as the transformations were partial, uneven, and subject to ongoing contestation. Similarly, Manuel Hidalgo (2009) is skeptical about how fully Chávez’s model was realised, noting that reliance on oil revenues made social programmes vulnerable and that centralising moves—limiting opposition, reducing decentralisation, and extending term limits—undermined democratic norms. However, Chávez’s presidency transformed Venezuela by leveraging a surge in oil prices to fund social programmes in health, education, and housing, significantly reducing poverty and inequality (Weisbrot et al. 2009). By 2012, the UN (2012) named Venezuela the most equitable country in Latin America.

Chavismo’s political power can be analysed through key institutional and ideological developments that solidified its dominance in Venezuela. Two significant moments in this consolidation are the ratification of the 1999 Constitution, which aligned the country’s political framework with Chávez’s Bolivarian vision, and the creation of the PSUV, which centralised pro-Chávez movements under a single banner, representing the traditional and charismatic forms of authority (Weber 1920). These milestones not only marked turning points in Venezuela’s political history but also laid the groundwork for chavismo’s enduring influence in state institutions.

The 1999 Constitution of Venezuela aims to democratise both the state and society, ensuring that democracy permeates all aspects of social life (Smilde and Hellinger 2011, p. 58). It defines Venezuela as a “Democratic and Social State of Law and Justice,” based on values like equality, solidarity, democracy, and human rights (Constituent Assembly 1999). In this framework, social inequality is viewed as

⁵⁰ Chavez (2006), “Linking Alternatives II Conference,” Vienna, May 13, 2006 (www.gobiernoenlinea.gob.ve).

⁵¹ Chavez (2006), “Linking Alternatives II Conference,” Vienna, May 13, 2006 (www.gobiernoenlinea.gob.ve).

exclusion, with inclusion as the goal of public policy (Smilde and Hellinger 2011, p. 63). Unlike previous top-down models, the Constitution positions both the state and organised communities as agents of transformation, empowering citizens to make decisions and oversee public functions (Smilde and Hellinger 2011, p. 64). Articles 62, 70, 184, and 326 (Constituent Assembly 1999) stress citizen participation and co-responsibility in governance through elections, referendums, consultations, and decentralised service delivery (McCarthy 2012, p. 130). However the 1999 Constitution, born out of a political crisis, led to significant centralisation of power through PSUV, sidelining opposition. The Constituent Assembly that drafted the Constitution was largely composed of Chávez loyalists, allowing for the dismantling of checks on executive power. As a result, the Constitution did not fully support the necessary democratic reforms, particularly the empowerment of local governments (Brewer-Carias 2004). Such a shift raises concerns about a drift toward authoritarianism within Venezuela's 21st-century socialism.

Some analysts, like Javier Corrales (2020, 2023), classify it as a “full-blown dictatorship,” emphasising its authoritarian traits. Others, such as López Maya (2018), describe it as a form of “neopatrimonial rule,” arguing that it cannot be reduced to a mere populist regime. According to her, Maduro rose to power not primarily through popular support but through the consolidation of Chávez's inner circle, who rallied behind him. This support allowed him to govern through informal alliances involving his family, and trusted confidants. However, these competing labels often reflect a sender-centric view rooted in liberal-democratic assumptions. Scholars (Weyland 2013; Kenny et al. 2016) commonly call Maduro's government authoritarian because it challenges liberal norms. While it has used authoritarian tactics—like weakening institutions and centralising power (Oner 2021)—a strict democratic-authoritarian divide oversimplifies Venezuela's political reality and further erode democratic norms (Peksen and Drury 2010). The system is hybrid, shaped by both internal strategies and external pressures, such as US transnational influence. This results in adaptive governance marked by coercion, informal networks, and survivalist tactics, rather than fitting neatly into standard regime typologies.

6.4 From Punto Fijo to Chavismo: Despotic or Infrastructural Power Shift?

Following the approach outlined in Chapter 4, this section assesses the exercise of state power under the Punto Fijo and chavista establishments. Using the framework presented earlier, it examines two dimensions: the concentration of authority and erosion of accountability mechanisms to gauge elite dominance, and the capacity to implement policies and deliver services in rural and marginalised areas to evaluate the state's functional reach. The analysis also considers the influence of institutional legacies

from the Punto Fijo period on chavismo, aiming to classify each regime's levels of despotic and infrastructural power as low, moderate, or high.

6.4.1 The Limits of Punto Fijo Accountability

During the Punto Fijo era, Venezuela functioned as a limited polyarchy marked by elite-driven governance with minimal accountability. Political power was concentrated traditionally among top party leaders, union executives, and business elites, sidelining civil society and alternative voices (Oropeza 1983; Kornblith and Maingón 1985). This “tutelary pluralism” —a system in which political pluralism exists but is supervised and governed by a small elite —prioritised elite cooperation over broad representation, with decision-making largely insulated from public input. As a result, political recruitment and agenda-setting were tightly controlled, reducing institutional responsiveness and weakening democratic representation (Molina 1998).

Despite signs of democratic consolidation between 1973 and 1988, the Punto Fijo regime failed to establish a fully accountable institutional framework. Its exclusionary nature and dependence on oil-funded patronage prevented the development of autonomous institutions or meaningful public participation. The judiciary lacked independence, and widespread clientelism weakened transparency and oversight (Carothers 2002). This rigidity became evident after the 1989 Caracazo riots, which exposed the system's inability to respond to rising demands for inclusion and reform. Post-riot efforts to modernise the regime and enhance accountability had limited success (McCoy and Myers, 2006).

Ultimately, the erosion of the Punto Fijo regime resulted from the combined effects of distributive dependency and representational exclusion. As oil revenues declined in the 1980s, the regime's weak regulatory capacity and rigid, oligarchic party structures proved inadequate in addressing escalating governance challenges and systemic corruption. Once a source of stability, the power-sharing pact became an obstacle to political renewal, stifling the rise of new leadership and suppressing demands from marginalised groups, particularly the urban poor and civil society (Hillman 1994; Kulisheck 1998). The lack of strong institutional checks allowed elites to prioritise short-term political deals over long-term accountability, accelerating the regime's collapse and paving the way for alternative political models like chavismo, which promised deeper inclusion and responsiveness.

6.4.2 Chavismo and the Struggle for Accountability

Chavismo initially appeared to represent a critical juncture capable of breaking with the path-dependent legacy of Punto Fijo's exclusionary governance. The 1999 Constitution introduced notable institutional innovations aimed at enhancing state accountability and expanding citizen participation. Among the most

symbolic was the establishment of the *Citizen's Power* and *Electoral Power* branches—departures from the traditional tripartite model—intended to combat corruption and reinforce democratic oversight (Trinkunas 2002). Additionally, mechanisms such as referenda, recall votes, and constitutional amendments suggested a move toward direct democracy and away from elite-dominated decision-making. In contrast to the institutional stagnation of the late Punto Fijo period, early chavismo was marked by a spirit of experimentation and political openness (Carothers 2002).

These institutional reforms quickly became subject to path-dependent dynamics. Instead of charting a new course, chavismo repurposed and re-centralised mechanisms of elite control. As Chávez consolidated power, the separation of powers eroded, with the executive dominating the National Assembly and judiciary (Carothers 2002, p. 12). This consolidation was reinforced by patronage networks, especially the Bolivarian Circles, echoing past clientelism. In effect, new institutions were co-opted into a feedback loop favouring executive centralisation and political loyalty over checks and balances.

Nonetheless, the early years of chavismo allowed for more dynamic engagement between the state and marginalised groups. NGOs, labour unions, and some independent media participated in forms of accountability absent under Punto Fijo. Civil society, though increasingly constrained, initially had more channels for political expression. This indicates that the break from the past was partial and contested: chavismo reproduced exclusionary patterns while activating new forms of mobilisation and representation. However, as oil revenues rose in the 2000s, the government reverted to rentier logics, using wealth to consolidate support through military patronage and clientelism (Hawkins 2010a). Thus, chavismo became trapped in its own path dependency, combining centralised authority with selective inclusion, replicating rather than overcoming its predecessor's failures.

6.4.3 Punto Fijo and Uneven Social Promises

The Punto Fijo aimed to provide equitable social services and infrastructure across Venezuela through a redistributive model funded by oil revenues. This model, driven by a pact between political parties and labour unions, promised universal access to healthcare and education while modernising the country through state-led development (Lewis and Abel 2002; Riesco 2007). However, the system was stratified, with access to social insurance largely based on occupational status, excluding much of the rural and informal workforce (D'Elia 2006, p. 195). This created disparities in state service reach, reinforcing an urban bias and deepening regional inequalities.

In the 1980s, facing economic pressures like rising debt and declining oil revenues, Venezuela shifted from universalist policies to targeted, neoliberal-inspired interventions. The Gran Viraje dismantled the

redistributive functions of the Punto Fijo model, replacing them with compensatory mechanisms like Poverty Eradication Programme (Programa de Erradicación de la Pobreza - PEP), which included cash transfers and limited infrastructure investment (Navarro 1997; Chacín 2003). These decentralised, NGO-driven approaches aimed to improve efficiency and participation but often bypassed formal state structures and failed to reach remote areas. As a result, social assistance programmes became fragmented, lacking coordination and scale, and deepening geographic and class-based disparities.

The failure to implement policies effectively across Venezuela became evident through widespread protests and social unrest, especially from the late 1980s onward. The Caracazo uprising marked a turning point, with violent collective action becoming common, particularly in Caracas and secondary cities (Hillman 1994 p. 95-114). As economic austerity eroded public services and wages, traditional actors like student unions and civil servant guilds were joined by informal groups such as street vendors, reflecting the exclusion of growing segments from state support. Between 1989 and 2000, Venezuela recorded over 8,355 protests—averaging two per day—demonstrating a crisis in state legitimacy and capacity (López Maya 2002). These protests highlighted not only economic hardship but also the systemic failure of the Punto Fijo regime to deliver on its social contract, especially in rural and marginalised areas, contributing to the erosion of democratic stability.

6.4.4 Chavismo Ambitious Social Policies, Uneven Implementation

After Chávez's rise to power in 1998, the government adopted a targeted social welfare model focused on community empowerment and positive discrimination for the poor, representing the communal notion of solidarity (Uharte Pozas 2005, p. 105). This approach led to the launch of the *Missions* between 2002 and 2003, aimed at providing basic services like education, health, and nutrition to the most vulnerable. Many Missions were concentrated in urban areas with dense ranchos⁵² limiting their impact in sparsely populated rural zones. While national in scope and based on multi-dimensional poverty indicators (Barrientos and Santibáñez 2009, p. 12), their implementation often bypassed existing institutions, relying on ad hoc presidential decrees and oil revenues. This hindered long-term planning and exacerbated regional disparities, resulting in uneven service delivery across the country.

Despite these shortcomings, Chávez's administration significantly expanded the Missions, reaching around 30 programmes by 2008 (Blank 2007). Programmes like *Barrio Adentro* and *Mercal*, initially piloted in Caracas, spread nationwide, bringing Cuban doctors to underserved urban areas and subsidised food

⁵² In this context, “ranchos” refers to informal, often makeshift settlements or shantytowns, typically characterised by poor housing, limited infrastructure, and precarious living conditions. In Venezuela, ranchos are usually found on the outskirts of cities and are inhabited by low-income populations.

through state-run cooperatives. However, the universalist goals of the 1999 Constitution were only partially realised. While the rhetoric emphasised social justice and the right to life and work (Buxton 2003, p. 127), the government's failure to reform the broader social security system meant access remained selective. The Missions, despite their discursive shifts, largely mirrored past social policy models and struggled to overcome institutional constraints or achieve full territorial equity in service provision (Daguerre 2011).

One of chavismo's most illustrative failures was *Mission Vuelvan Caras*, a labour market programme aimed at local development. Initially praised for its innovative approach, it struggled due to weak institutional support and poor integration into national networks (Piñeiro 2009; D'Elia 2006). Despite creating over 6,800 cooperatives and 130 development units, many were unsustainable, with participants more motivated by stipends than long-term engagement. This failure highlighted the limits of chavismo's strategy: while bold in vision, it relied on oil-funded, military-led programmes that could not overcome systemic weaknesses or ensure equitable development. Path dependency ultimately undermined the effectiveness and durability of Chavez's policy delivery.

6.5 Conclusion

This Chapter has critically examined the evolution of state power in Venezuela, focusing on the periods of the Punto Fijo era and chavismo, particularly under Chávez, through Mann's IEMP model. Both periods illustrate significant shifts in Venezuela's governance, highlighting how domestic dynamics and international forces have shaped the country's political landscape. During the Punto Fijo era, the regime was marked by elite consensus and heavy dependence on external economic and political forces, notably the US. The system's infrastructural power was coupled with limited citizen participation and minimal state presence, relying instead on clientelism and elite pacts. These structural deficiencies, exacerbated by rising inequality and mismanagement, eventually precipitated the regime's collapse.

On the other hand, chavismo, under Chávez, marked a departure toward a more infrastructural state, focusing on national sovereignty and wealth redistribution. However, this shift also entailed a centralisation of power. Early chavismo exhibited moderate despotic power, accompanied by increased infrastructural power through some participatory mechanisms such as mobilising marginalised sectors through grassroots initiatives. Over time, though, these participatory mechanisms were co-opted by executive control, with rentier patronage taking precedence, which gradually led to an increase in centralisation of power. While chavismo aimed to address the vulnerabilities of the Punto Fijo system, it

too encountered its own set of challenges, particularly in managing internal divisions and responding to external pressures, notably from the US.

Chavismo's militarised response to external threats further complicated Venezuela's political trajectory. The intensification of US sanctions and interventionist rhetoric under Maduro has resulted in a more authoritarian state, which increasingly relies on state-military alliance and domestic repression to preserve power. Despite the promises of greater inclusivity and decentralisation embedded in the 1999 Constitution, power became increasingly consolidated in the executive, undermining the democratic ideals it sought to uphold. The legacy of the Punto Fijo era, characterised by exclusionary governance and elite control, continues to shape chavismo's political model, which blends centralisation with selective inclusivity.

Ultimately, the interplay between despotic and infrastructural power in Venezuela underscores the complexities of its political evolution. Both the Punto Fijo system and chavismo reveal how the concentration of power and exclusion of broad participation have shaped the country's governance. While chavismo succeeded in expanding the state's reach, it too became entrenched in authoritarian practices and vulnerabilities, particularly in response to US sanctions and geopolitical opposition.

This analysis not only offers valuable insights into the mechanisms of state power in Venezuela, but also provides a framework for understanding the country's ongoing political challenges. It provides a foundation for the subsequent Chapter, focusing on the state-society relationship. Like the Iranian case, rather than assessing infrastructural power solely in terms of state capacity, this following Chapter examines how civil society interacts and negotiates with the state's authority in the context of sanctions. Following Mann's observation that infrastructural power operates in both directions, the Chapter explores a spectrum in which social actors—from marginal to fully empowered—can help the state to resist sanctions. This approach allows for a detailed assessment of how the Iranian state and civil society respond under the pressures of economic sanctions, highlighting the role of infrastructural power in mediating participation, influence, and resistance.

Chapter 7: IMPACT OF SANCTIONS ON VENEZUELA AND MEASURES OF MITIGATION

7.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous Chapter, Venezuelan state formations in both the Punto Fijo era and the chavista period—particularly under Maduro—show a persistent tendency toward despotic rather than infrastructural power, a pattern shaped by path dependency in which early institutional arrangements constrained the state’s ability to build lasting infrastructural capacity. Building on that earlier assessment of pre- and post-revolutionary dynamics, this Chapter turns to the state-society complex under sanctions from a target-centred perspective, asking the often-overlooked question of why sanctions succeed or fail. Like the Iranian case, it draws on an amalgamation of Weber, Mann, and Cox’s theories to examine three key variables—production, solidarity, and institutions—shifting the analysis away from the sender to the target. Through this lens, the Chapter develops a framework for conceptualising a potential “resistance model” against sanctions in Venezuela by analysing the dynamics of state-society interaction.

Like Chapter 5 on Iran, this Chapter also employs three interwoven stages to operationalise the target-centred lens in the Venezuelan case. It first considers how the state manages production, particularly in relation to oil extraction and the transformation of resource rents into distributive mechanisms, in order to understand to what extent economic diversification has been shaped. Second, it examines solidarity not only in ideological terms, as articulated through chavismo, but also in relation to class and political cleavages, assessing how these have been mobilised—or fragmented—under sanctions. Finally, the analysis turns to the intersection of state and society to evaluate the degree to which bottom-up forms of organisation have been institutionalised in Venezuela. Through these stages, the Chapter highlights how sanctions have simultaneously deepened economic vulnerabilities and, in certain respects, reinforced state–society mechanisms of resistance. These three stages show that while sanctions have produced major economic consequences, they have also reinforced state-controlled production without fostering substantial economic diversification. At the same time, a degree of limited socio-political cohesion and state-society interaction has emerged, shaped by a blend of top-down initiatives and bottom-up responses. Together, these dynamics influence the sanctioned state’s capacity to resist external pressure.

Before engaging in the in-depth analysis of the three stages outlined above, it is important to first provide background on the US-led sanctions imposed on Venezuela, with particular attention to their stated objectives and actual impacts. Exploring these two dimensions helps to clarify the rationale for shifting from a sender-centred to a target-centred analytical lens, which is central to the aim of this Chapter.

Adopting this perspective enables a more nuanced understanding of how sanctions affect not only the state apparatus but also the everyday lives of Venezuelans, revealing both their unintended consequences and the diverse resistance strategies developed by state and society alike.

7.2 Sanctions objectives: From Geostrategic Dominance to Ideological Containment

The sanctions regime imposed on Venezuela consists of a network of laws, regulations, and executive actions that limit the ability of US and third-party individuals and companies to engage with the Venezuelan state. These measures are generally grounded in the US authority to curb interactions with entities considered threats to national security (Rodríguez 2022a). The objectives of the US's transnational power, employing economic leverage against Venezuela, have evolved over time, shaped by a complex interplay of economic domination, ideological containment of chavismo, and wider geopolitical rivalries.

The US has long pursued economic dominance, with control over oil and energy resources seen as essential to its power (Yergin 2020). These resources often drive international conflicts and US interventions. Scholars (Maxwell and Reuveny 2000; Klare 2008; Homer-Dixon 2010) argue that wars over resources are common, a pattern reflected in US-Venezuela relations. As Chávez nationalised key industries, most notably oil, Washington began to perceive Venezuela as a threat to regional stability and US economic hegemony in the Western Hemisphere (Monaldi 2018). This viewpoint was underscored by interviewee V1, a prominent Venezuelan former official, who stated that the primary goal of US sanctions is oil—specifically, “to gain access to Venezuelan reserves, and, of course, at a discounted price as they have traditionally done”. Likewise, Interviewee V5, a prominent journalist, similarly argued that “They (the US) want to come and take our oil; they want to force us to surrender”.

The US drive to control Venezuelan oil illustrates how sanctions can function as instruments of economic imperialism (McGowan 2018), enabling selective access for American firms. As noted by interviewee V4, a writer focused on Venezuelan political economy, the US pressures the government into concessions—such as allowing Chevron to operate while excluding other companies. This was evident in the 2024 license permitting Chevron's joint ventures with PDVSA, which expired in April 2025 following US claims that Venezuela violated the Barbados electoral agreements (US Department of State 2024).

Yet oil alone cannot fully explain the persistence and intensity of US sanctions. The US is itself now a major oil producer (Kelly 2025), which reduces the urgency of securing Venezuelan reserves for domestic supply. Instead, Venezuelan defiance of US dominance—through its counter-hegemonic alliances and the ideological project of chavismo—has posed a broader challenge. Washington has sought to prevent

Venezuela from becoming a model for alternative political and economic arrangements in Latin America and beyond. As interviewee V7, an author known for his in-depth coverage and analysis of Venezuelan politics, noted, sanctions are designed to prove “there is no alternative” to the existing global order. In other words, the respondent added that “if the government follows the traditional policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, this involves the privatization of the country’s natural resources”. In this sense, oil remains important, but it operates alongside geopolitical considerations such as containing Russian and Chinese influence in the hemisphere and deterring other states from emulating Venezuela’s path. Similarly, V4, a writer specialising in Venezuelan political economy, stated that Venezuela’s strategic significance to the US stems primarily from its vast oil wealth. According to them, Venezuelan oil “was a major lever” in reshaping the geopolitical landscape, with the country becoming a strategic entry point for both China and Russia into the region. These actions reflect a modern interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, in which the US asserts its strategic and ideological dominance in the Western Hemisphere, seeking to limit external powers’ influence while maintaining a regional order aligned with its interests through promoting democracy (Pires and Nascimento 2020).

As Noam Chomsky (1992) observes, US democracy promotion often masks imperial interests, using democratic rhetoric to advance geopolitical and economic goals. Support tends to favour regimes aligned with US interests, even if undemocratic—seen during Venezuela’s Punto Fijo era (1958-1998), when opposition to communism outweighed concern for inequality or exclusion. In this context, democratisation becomes a tool to justify sanctions. The US actions in Venezuela reflect a structural defense of neoliberalism, involving support for coups, opposition media and NGOs, and sustained diplomatic pressure (Cannon 2013; Brown 2018).

Economic dominance and the aim of containing chavismo serve as legitimising narratives for broader efforts to induce behavioural change. As the journalist V5 noted, “sanctions function more as incentives than punishment, pressuring governments to abandon anti-US policies”—ultimately pushing for regime change, as seen in Iran. Venezuela’s crisis becomes a catalyst in this strategy (Bermeo 1990; Bull and Rosales 2020). V2, another journalist, added that US policymakers hoped shortages and unrest would trigger a social implosion or civil war to oust chavismo. This reflects the classical liberal and “naïve” theories of sanctions (1967), which assume economic hardship leads to public pressure and elite concessions.

Like Iran, Venezuela has been subjected to both comprehensive and targeted sanctions, officially citing human rights, repression, and corruption. This section examines their economic and social impacts and evaluates the extent to which US policy goals have been met. Using a triangulated method—interviews,

ethnographic fieldwork, and secondary data from OPEC, IMF, and the Venezuelan Central Bank—this study offers a nuanced analysis of the sanctions’ intended and unintended consequences on Venezuelan society.

7.2.1 The Economic Impact of US-Led Sanctions

For over two decades, the US has sanctioned the Venezuelan government and key individuals, initially citing inadequate efforts to fight drug trafficking and terrorism. Under Obama, sanctions expanded to target alleged human rights abuses, corruption, and undemocratic practices. The first Trump Administration (2017-2021) intensified these measures through its “maximum pressure” campaign, citing Maduro’s authoritarianism and targeting major institutions like PDVSA and the Central Bank (Seelke 2020).

Oil sanctions have severely reduced Venezuela’s oil revenues, triggering a sharp decline in imports and a deep socio-economic crisis (Sachs and Weisbrot, 2019). The country has experienced Latin America’s worst economic collapse, with GDP shrinking by 72% over the past nine years. Although the IMF (2025) estimates a nominal GDP recovery to \$108.5 billion by 2025—up from \$42 billion in 2020—this still represents nearly a 80% decline from 2012 levels, placing Venezuela between 120th and 130th globally out of nearly 190 states in terms of GDP decline. This reflects a dramatic fall from 2012, followed by prolonged stagnation and weak recovery. Beyond GDP, sanctions have also negatively affected inflation (Rodríguez 2022), unemployment (Halawani 2023), poverty (Rodríguez 2024a), the exchange rate (Wang *et al.* 2019), foreign direct investment (FDI) (Lloyds Bank 2025), and access to international financial systems (Department of the Treasury 2020).

Interviews with Venezuelan academics and journalists offer insights on overlooked consequences of sanctions, highlighting everyday hardships and vulnerable sectors often ignored in scholarship. Their accounts, while confirming existing findings, offer new perspectives, especially on two key impacts of the maximum pressure campaign: industrial stagnation from collapsing oil production and financial isolation driven by a severe currency crisis.

7.2.1.1 Oil-Centric Economic Disruption

In 2019, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on PDVSA purportedly to compel Maduro to step down. The company was added to the US Treasury’s Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list, leading to the freezing of all its assets within US jurisdiction and prohibiting nearly all transactions between US entities and PDVSA. At the time, oil was Venezuela’s most vital sector—making up 95% of exports and 12% of GDP (Rodríguez 2022).

Sanctions have severely impacted Venezuela’s oil industry, described by the journalist V2 as the “final blow to Venezuela’s economic lifeline”. The writer V4, similarly, highlighted that the sanctions affect Venezuela significantly, especially because its oil cannot be traded internationally. According to the interviewee, the US has “persecuted other companies” by threatening sanctions against those that do business with Venezuela. In the same vein, V8, a politician associated with a centre-left political party, explained that because Venezuelan oil was not being sold on the international market, the government could not pay teachers or public employees, nor guarantee minimum living conditions for the population. V13, the spokesperson of the centrist political party, also explained that, on top of everything else, the sanctions also came and “ended up destroying our oil industry”.

Figure 1 shows a sharp decline in crude oil exports—from nearly 2 million barrels per day in 2015 to just 438,000 in 2022, with the steepest drops between 2017 and 2020 during intensified sanctions. Exports slightly recovered to 656,000 barrels per day by 2024, likely due to partial sanctions relief and new buyers like China. Still, this remains only a third of 2015 levels, highlighting the sector’s continued decline.

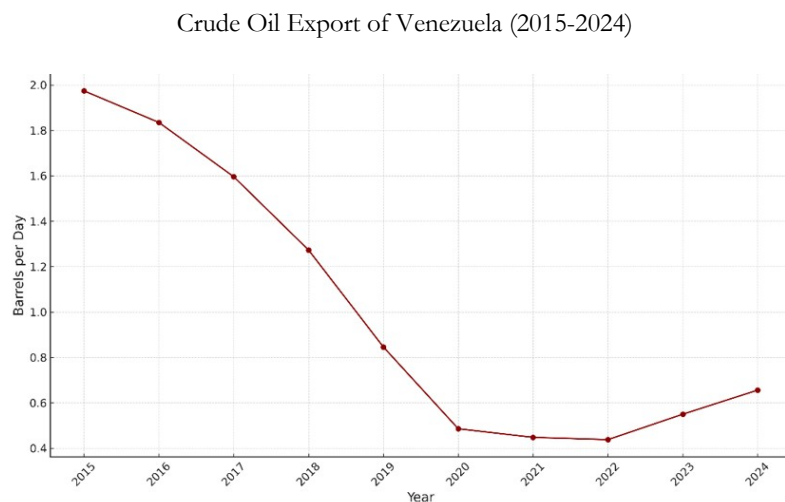


Figure 7.1: Author’s own elaboration based on OPEC Annual Statistical Bulletins.

The steep decline in oil exports is directly tied to a catastrophic loss of revenue for the Venezuelan petrostate. This sharp contraction in state earnings triggered a collapse in imports, severely undermining the country’s ability to meet basic domestic needs. As interviewee V2 explained, “In a country where 99% of income comes from oil—used to purchase medicine, food, and to fund the construction of schools, roads, and hospitals—sanctions amounted to a form of economic suffocation”. The abrupt interruption of this revenue stream not only crippled the government’s fiscal capacity but also disrupted entire supply chains, affecting nearly all sectors.

7.2.1.2 Financial Isolation

Sanctions on traded goods are direct, blocking or allowing specific products like Venezuelan oil. Financial sanctions are more complex, restricting money flows through global banking networks and limiting access to services such as “custodial services”,⁵³ investment advice, and wealth management. These measures increasingly target global payment systems (Cipriani et al. 2023). In Venezuela, financial sanctions—mostly secondary—intensified from 2017 to 2020, based on US President Obama’s 2015 Executive Order 13692 declaring Venezuela a “national security threat”.

Key milestones in secondary sanctions, focusing on Venezuelan financial sector.

Year	Event	Details
2017	EO 13808	Targeted Venezuelan government financing; hinted at risks for foreign financial institutions.
2018	EO 13827	Banned transactions related to the Venezuelan government’s creation or issuance of any digital currency, coin, or token.
2018	EO 13835	Barred transactions involving the purchase of Venezuelan debt—such as accounts receivable—or any debt obligations to Venezuela used as collateral.
2019	EO 13850	Marked a major shift: Central Bank of Venezuela was sanctioned. All Venezuelan government assets in the US were frozen, and non-US entities were warned that “material support” to the Maduro could result in secondary sanctions (US Department of the Treasury, 2025).
2019-2020	Enforcement Actions	The US sanctioned non-US companies (e.g., Rosneft Trading, COSA, CNPC) for trading Venezuelan oil, thus applying secondary sanctions principles.

Table 7.1: Author’s own based on data of Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

⁵³ Such a restriction involves holding or managing the financial assets of the sanctioned party.

Executive orders can disrupt cross-border financial activity, including foreign exchange and trade financing, by limiting access to SWIFT, the primary global payment messaging network. These sanctions are reported to have immobilised approximately \$7–30 billion in Venezuelan government assets (Mnuchin 2019; Vaz 2021). Although SWIFT itself is not subject to sanctions, interviewee V3, a former minister, observed that restrictions imposed on the Central Bank “hinders its use of SWIFT from within the country”. As a member-owned cooperative, SWIFT provides services to its global participants and typically avoids making exclusion decisions directly, while complying with Belgian and EU legal frameworks that enforce sanctions (SWIFT N.d.).

However, it remains unclear how services such as MoneyGram Payment Systems—operating in Venezuela—continue to use SWIFT for certain international transfers despite broader financial restrictions, raising questions about the mechanisms enabling continued operation. V3 further noted that private firms began to experience significant difficulties following the introduction of financial sanctions, including the unilateral closure of their international bank accounts. Similarly, V6, president of a Venezuelan economic association, described the situation as “a cross-cutting problem affecting all sectors”, emphasising its widespread impact beyond commerce alone. They explained that the core issue is financial in nature, stating that “any sector faces obstacles in opening bank accounts in the US and experiences restrictions on the mobility of financial operations”.

According to V3, the objective of the financial restrictions was “to leave the government without resources to cover social investment” and to foster conditions for social unrest. The interviewee further suggested that such pressures were intended to trigger protests and social conflict, which could ultimately contribute to the government’s overthrow.

Assuming SWIFT restrictions do not apply to Venezuela—since their website offers no clear statement to the contrary—I arrived at Simón Bolívar International Airport in Caracas on July 22, 2024, to begin my fieldwork. I had no cash, only two Irish-issued debit cards (MasterCard and Visa). At the airport currency exchange, I was told that foreign cards were not accepted and I needed a Venezuelan bank card. With no cash, I approached a taxi driver and asked if he accepted cards—he said “no”. When I asked about using my card at an ATM, he offered to take me to a shop that might accept international cards. We tried two shops, but in both cases, my cards were repeatedly declined. Feeling confused and frustrated, I found myself in Caracas without any cash, accompanied by the taxi driver. I experienced firsthand the effects of US financial sanctions, much like in Iran, and came to realise that, here as well, the situation is vastly different from most other places—echoing interviewee V5’s remark with a disappointed expression that “we are a financially isolated country”.

Such isolation, coupled with a steep drop in oil revenues—from \$50 billion to just \$700 million, sparked hyperinflation and widespread product shortages, as reduced foreign demand for Venezuelan currency, the bolívar, led to its depreciation, significantly increasing the cost of imports (Carmody 2019). Traditionally, hyperinflation has been examined from a macroeconomic perspective, emphasising its origins, the progression of price surges, and the methods by which inflationary cycles are ultimately resolved. However, the most widely used benchmark among mainstream economists comes from Philip Cagan (Cagan 1956), who defined hyperinflation as occurring when monthly inflation exceeds 50 percent.

Figure 3 illustrates the dramatic escalation of inflation in Venezuela between 2014 and 2019, highlighting a transition from high inflation to full-scale hyperinflation. Starting at approximately 69% in 2014, inflation more than doubled to 181% in 2015 and then surged to 800% in 2016, marking the onset of hyperinflation. The situation deteriorated swiftly, as inflation skyrocketed to 4,000% in 2017 following the onset of oil and financial sanctions, and surged to an unprecedented 130,000% in 2018 amid the escalation of financial sanctions, signaling a total breakdown of monetary stability and purchasing power. Although inflation declined to around 10,000 in 2019, it remained at levels that continued to devastate the economy and daily life.

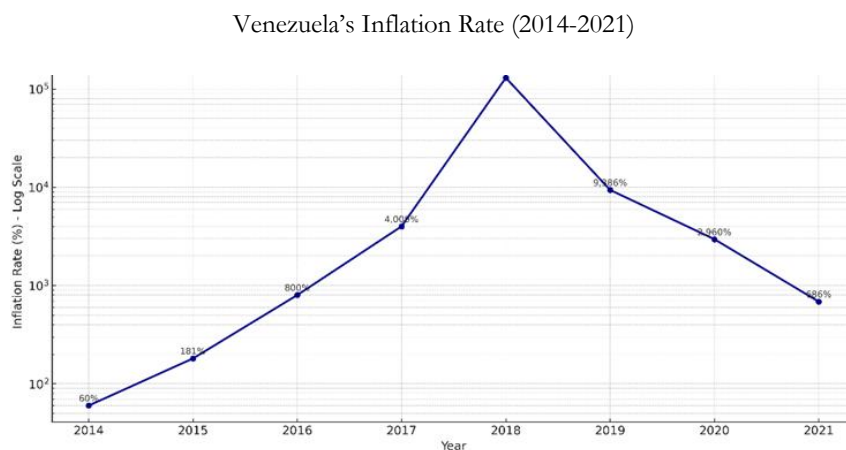


Figure 7.2: Author's own based on IMF and Venezuelan Central Bank data.

Venezuela's hyperinflation began with rapid money supply growth from 2012, explained by two main views: the fiscal and balance of payments perspectives. The fiscal view links hyperinflation to persistent deficits funded by money creation, driving prices up and currency depreciation (Sargent and Wallace 1968). In contrast, the balance of payments view links inflation to an exchange rate crisis driven by current account imbalances (Krugman 1979), self-fulfilling expectations (Obstfeld 1986), or sudden stops in capital inflows (Calvo 2012). Here, depreciation leads to higher prices, prompting money growth (Montiel

1989). Both factors occurred in Venezuela, where money supply grew 60% annually until 2013 and stayed high. While money printing temporarily eased shocks, it worsened inflation as sanctions and investor flight devalued the bolívar, creating a self-reinforcing hyperinflation cycle.

At extreme inflation, people stop using the national currency for pricing, instead turning to foreign currencies—mainly the US dollar. Domestic prices then follow the exchange rate needed to match dollar values, making the local currency ineffective as a unit of account (Huertas 2019). This creates a black market exchange rate driven by unofficial supply and demand. Despite these pressures, Caracas kept a fixed official rate by increasing external debt from \$40 billion to \$132 billion by 2012. Chávez and Maduro rejected IMF aid, viewing it as “imperialist,” and devalued the official rate in 2013 from 4.30 to 6.30 VEF/ USD⁵⁴—still far below the black market rate of 27. This worsened inflation and shortages: imports dropped 24.8%, inflation rose from 20% to 56%, and scarcity of basic goods increased significantly between 2012 and 2014 (Iyer 2021).

7.2.2 The Social Impact of US Sanctions

The sharp drop in Venezuela’s export revenues caused by sanctions has significantly undermined its capacity to fund social programmes and imports. At the same time, growing financial isolation has intensified the crisis, extending into the social realm and triggering severe disruptions in three key sectors: healthcare, food, and migration.

7.2.2.1 The Human Cost of Sanctions: Venezuela’s Healthcare and Food Crisis

Sanctions have cost Venezuela billions in foreign exchange for essential imports and blocked access to vital goods like medicine, even when funds were available. The journalists V5 and V2 emphasised that sanctions primarily harm “ordinary people” and “attack the whole population”. Sanctions, according to the prominent former Venezuelan official V1, have disrupted the quality of life of Venezuelans. The National Survey on Living Conditions (ENCOVI) reported a 31% rise in general mortality between 2017 and 2018—over 40,000 additional deaths (Sachs and Weisbrot 2019)—while the population declined from 30.5 to 29.2 million (Word Bank 2023).

In 2018, the Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation (United Nations 2019) reported that 85% of essential medicines were unavailable due to shortages. Over 300,000 people faced serious risks, including 80,000 HIV patients without antiretroviral therapy, 16,000 needing dialysis, 16,000 with cancer, and around 4 million with diabetes or hypertension lacking access to vital medications (Rodríguez 2022). Similarly,

⁵⁴ VEF referring to the Bolívar Fuerte, the country’s currency at the time.

some interviewees, such as V7, the author known for his in-depth coverage and analysis of Venezuelan politics, were directly affected by the medicine shortage. With a look of disappointment, he recalled several individuals — including his wife’s relatives — “who had to undergo surgeries but faced great difficulty in securing the necessary medications”. V7 continues that the most obvious impact has often been on medicines, because Venezuela does not have a large pharmaceutical industry. The interviewee explains that it was very, very difficult—especially during the worst years of the sanctions, around 2020–2021—to import medicines. According to them, “this made things extremely hard for both the country and its people”.

The COVID-19 pandemic also exposed Venezuela’s fragile healthcare system. By April 2020, fewer than 6,000 PCR tests had been done (UNOCHA 2020), and by mid-2021, official reports showed over 263,000 cases and nearly 3,000 deaths. Venezuela began vaccinating in February 2021 with Sputnik V and Sinopharm, aiming for 70% coverage, but by September only 10% were fully vaccinated (Shumaker 2021). Interviewee V8, the politician associated with a centre-left political party, highlighted that “Venezuelans weren’t even allowed to obtain vaccines through the UN”.

Attempts to force regime change through economic pressure, risking starvation and denial of basic rights, are never seen as legitimate in international relations (ACNUDH 2019). Food imports fell 78% from 2013 to 2018 (Sachs and Weisbrot, 2019), and by 2019, nearly 90% of Venezuelans lived in poverty (Van Roekel and De Theije 2020), with a minimum wage of only US\$6 per month (Amnesty International 2019). I felt Venezuelan people are starving during my observations in Caracas, when on 30 July 2024, two days after the disputed presidential elections, I went outside for a walk in the centre of Caracas, fully alert. As I was walking, I passed one of the many beggars in the city, a man around 40 years old, wearing worn-out clothes and limping slightly. Suddenly, he looked at me and said, “Hey have you 5 bolívars to give me?” I didn’t respond and kept walking. I noticed he changed direction and started following me, cursing at me. He shouted, “I’m talking to you, motherf**ker!” I was overwhelmed with fear, picked up my pace, and tried to get as far away from him as I could. Even I experienced hunger during my two-week stay in Caracas, losing around four kilograms. I resorted to eating *empanadas* daily, as they were the most affordable option—other meals were surprisingly expensive, even for someone like me on a scholarship. I only ate at a restaurant once, where a single beef steak cost me 25 US dollars.



Photo 7.1: The photo on the left is from the only time I went to a restaurant in Caracas, while the photo on the right shows an empanada I bought every day just to avoid going hungry.

7.2.2.2 Migration Crisis and Travel Restrictions

While Dany Bahar and Ricardo Hausmann (Bahar and Hausmann 2025) suggest that migration flows tend to decline when Venezuela's oil revenues fall, Francisco Rodríguez (2024a) notes a sharp rise in irregular immigration to the US in recent years, with 909,000 Venezuelans among 11.6 million apprehended. Based on data from 2010 to 2024, Rodríguez links emigration to falling per capita GDP, highlighting sanctions as a key factor. Since 2014, nearly eight million Venezuelans have fled, mainly to neighbouring countries—marking the largest exodus in recent Latin American history (Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes 2025).

Venezuela's mass emigration includes a large number of skilled professionals—professors, doctors, and technicians—whose departure has severely weakened the country's human capital. The Venezuelan Medical Federation estimates that around 22,000 doctors, one-third of the total, have left. Between 2012 and 2017, about 1,600 professors resigned from top public universities due to unlivable salaries, some as low as US\$30 per month (Taipei Times 2015). As a result, universities have lost 30–50% of their staff, straining those who remain and worsening the quality of education.

Many Venezuelan migrants make the arduous journey on foot through Colombia, heading toward countries like Ecuador, Peru, and Chile. Prior to the imposition of visa restrictions and flight bans, wealthier individuals typically travelled abroad by air. However, sanctions and the withdrawal of major airlines have severely curtailed these options. I witnessed this firsthand in Caracas—walking through the nearly deserted corridors of Simón Bolívar International Airport, the silence was haunting. It echoed the

sombre atmosphere of Iran's Imam Khomeini Airport, capturing Venezuela's deepening isolation and the erosion of its citizens' freedom of movement. As interviewee V5 put it, this has created a "feeling of confinement" that "has been very impactful".

7.2.3 Efficiency or Inefficiency of Sanctions

The severe impact of sanctions on Venezuela is undeniable. In "The Art of Sanctions", Richard Nephew (Nephew 2018) argues that effective sanctions must inflict "real pain" by targeting key economic and social vulnerabilities to pressure both elites and the public. In Venezuela's case, sanctions on the vital oil and financial sectors have been particularly painful in undermining its economic foundation. Financial isolation has drastically limited revenue access, blocking recovery efforts and accelerating the erosion of human capital.

Sanctions' economic pain has deepened confusion and mistrust in Venezuelan society, fragmenting the population and shifting their focus to survival. The journalist V2 captures this uncertainty: "How do we know if the poor suffer because of Maduro or the sanctions?" This ambiguity is exacerbated by the media and opposition diaspora, who frequently attribute the country's hardships solely to the Venezuelan government while largely ignoring the role and impact of sanctions. According to the interviewee, this persistent blaming, combined with the complex reality on the ground, blurs the line between internal government failures and external pressures—like the merging waters of a river—making it nearly impossible to distinguish one from the other.

To correlate interviewees' views with everyday experiences, I spoke to people on Caracas's streets. On July 26, 2024, I met a 30-year-old man scavenging through trash who said, "The economic situation is very difficult". When I asked if sanctions were to blame, he replied, "No, the government lies; the real problem is corruption". Another time, while returning to my flat, a Maduro-supporting neighbour and his politically engaged friends discussed how the US had "devastated Libya, Syria, and Afghanistan". The husband noted that Venezuela's opposition calls for harsher sanctions, yet their own children avoid protests as they are living abroad. This widespread confusion among Venezuelans reflects interviewee V2's observation that government failures and sanctions effects have merged like a "mixed river".

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of sanctions in the aforementioned areas does not equate to their overall success, since their primary goal—regime change in Venezuela—remains unfulfilled. While sanctions have contributed to social confusion, this has not escalated into a system collapse, exposing the naïve expectation that such measures would trigger widespread unrest and force political transformation. As respondent V3, a former minister, put it, "sanctions have failed in their purpose, as Maduro remains in

power”. Instead of weakening Maduro’s government, escalating sanctions and interventionist rhetoric have coincided with a more authoritarian state, strengthened by alliances with US rivals like Russia, China, and Iran, and increased domestic repression. Thus, sanctions have not shifted Maduro’s course but unintentionally reinforced state centralisation, making “resistance” the regime’s main strategy.

But how does Venezuela resist sanctions? This is the central question explored in the following section. The analysis focuses on Venezuela’s mode of production, which plays a pivotal role in shaping the country’s economic resistance and its ability to adapt under sanctions. Understanding and defining this mode of production is therefore essential to grasp the underlying dynamics—particularly how production structures influence responses to sanctions and determine the extent of their effectiveness or failure to generate economic diversification, drawing on diverse primary and secondary sources from institutions like IMF and Venezuelan Central Bank.

7.3 Accumulative Rentier State: Macro-level Resistive Strategy

In 2005, Chávez launched Social Production Companies (Empresas de Producción Social – EPS) to build a socialist alternative to both capitalist and traditional state enterprises, aiming to challenge neoliberal dominance (Purcell 2013). Like in Iran, production plays a key role in resistance under sanctions. This section examines how state-backed production affects Venezuela’s ability to withstand sanctions by overseeing extraction, transformation, and distribution.

Venezuela has frequently been described as a rentier economy (Mommer and Araque 2002; Hellinger 2017). Reflecting this body of scholarship, Buxton (2021, p. 4) depicted the country as a “landlord” reliant on rents generated by foreign-led trade of a single commodity, rather than on domestic production chains. Chávez’s 21st-century socialism sought to transform this model through the promotion of EPS. Legally defined as enterprises that prioritise social objectives over profit, EPS aimed to produce goods and services while fostering collective ownership—often by workers or communities—and contributing to local development. However, EPSs were not primarily shaped by individual decisions or institutions but emerged as structural products of Venezuela’s rent-based accumulation model, grounded in oil revenues as the primary source of wealth and power (Nakatani and Herrera 2008). Interviewee V6, the president of an economic association, described this process as “expropriation” by chavismo, a critique that echoes Fernando Coronil’s (1997) concept of the “magical state”—a state that transforms nature’s resources, especially oil, into social benefits and national progress. Yet this model remained heavily dependent on high oil prices—around \$100 per barrel—which, as interviewee V7, the author known for his in-depth coverage and analysis of Venezuelan politics, noted, left Chávez’s government increasingly vulnerable to

the effects of Dutch disease, a situation in which reliance on resource exports drives currency appreciation, undermines other sectors like manufacturing, and creates economic imbalances that complicate long-term development (Torvik 2001).

Rent transfers have occurred via market protection, an overvalued currency, low international taxes, and cheap foreign exchange—benefiting elites who import goods cheaply and sell them at high prices. As Iñigo Carrera (Iñigo 2014) argues, this reinforces a rentier bourgeoisie, limits industrial development, and deepens oil dependence, harming ISI.

By 2007, the \$8.9 million given to 321 social production companies was too little to rival private firms or support national planning (Nakatani and Herrera 2008, p. 298). Chávez’s structural reforms failed to anticipate sanctions, and key missteps—especially flawed currency controls—crippled PDVSA’s operations and increased debt dependence. Mounting deficits and imbalances made external financing harder, with debt becoming toxic (Rodríguez 2018). The 2013 recession, driven by fuel subsidies and a broken exchange system, predated the oil crash. Financial sanctions in 2017 worsened the crisis, hastening the fall in oil production. Consequently, funding social programmes through EPS has become increasingly difficult under Maduro due to declining oil revenues, forcing changes in extraction, transformation, and distribution of the production.

7.3.1 Extraction to Distribution: Venezuela’s Sanctioned Economy

The Chávez era’s intense emphasis on social programmes came at the expense of investing in key industries, while a sharp decline in oil production and exports—exacerbated by secondary sanctions—further hindered efforts toward economic diversification (Cheatham 2024). When asked about the extent of diversification, five interviewees confirmed that it has largely failed to materialise. The journalist V2, for example, stated, “we do nothing other than producing oil,” highlighting the continued dependence on the petroleum sector. Similarly, V5, another journalist, observed that “Venezuela was never a country that dedicated much time and effort to industries beyond oil”.

As falling oil prices hindered infrastructure renewal and economic diversification, sanctions prompted policy shifts under Maduro, who adopted a mix of protectionism—mainly via regulatory barriers—and selective liberalisation. This hybrid model, shaped by sanctions and domestic regulation, combines communal councils, de facto dollarisation, loosened price controls, and increased private sector involvement.

Under Venezuela’s National Plans for Economic and Social Development (2001–2025) (Government of Venezuela N.d.), which prioritise expanding extraction, transformation, and distribution—especially

commodities—communal councils have become key actors in building local alternatives to the formal economy. As the formal extractive sector weakens due to sanctions, these councils serve as complementary mechanisms of extraction. While traditional extraction relied on state oil revenues, sanctions pushed the government to encourage localised value creation. Instead of mining or drilling, communal councils mobilise local labour, land, and social networks to produce essential goods and services (Participedia N.d.).

With sanctions disrupting imports and foreign currency flows, state strategies for transformation and distribution have increasingly turned inward. In this setting, communal councils support transformation by organising small-scale production chains that turn local resources into goods like food and clothing (Azzellini 2013). They also participate in localised distribution networks, working alongside state programmes such as Local Committees for Supply and Production (Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción—CLAP)⁵⁵ to provide basic goods across 335 municipalities, reaching six million households (Douhan 2021). By generating value outside formal capitalist systems, communal councils supplement state infrastructure to counter sanctions to a certain extent.

However, the distribution of CLAP goods and fuel to rural areas has often been delayed due to secondary sanctions since 2017, which caused banks, shippers, and insurers to over-comply—even affecting humanitarian aid (Douhan 2021). Internal issues also persist. Interviewee V9, the CEO of a NGO offering social services, recognised the food bag-s⁵⁶ impact but noted recipients often “feel pressured not to complain”, highlighting the programme’s clientelist use to secure political loyalty. Similarly, respondent V12, the CEO of a NGO providing supports for the women acknowledged that CLAP is a political structure, which is more closely associated with the government.

7.3.1.1 Sanctions-Era Shift Toward Dollarisation

Dollarisation is when a country’s population begins using US dollar alongside or instead of its own. “Under sanctions, the Venezuelan government adjusted its policies and allowed de facto dollarisation”, noted the journalist V5. During my fieldwork, I paid for everything in dollars. Supermarkets displayed prices in both currencies, but salespeople preferred dollars due to the bolívar’s low value and the hassle

⁵⁵ CLAP are community-based food distribution networks.

⁵⁶ The food bag refers to a pre-packaged set of basic food and household items distributed to citizens—often as part of Venezuela’s CLAP programme. These bags typically contain staples like rice, beans, oil, pasta, and flour, intended to provide subsidised or emergency food support. Beyond addressing scarcity, the distribution is often used politically to encourage loyalty to the government.

of handling large cash amounts. Before analysing this shift, it is crucial to define the types of dollarisation to identify which best fits Venezuela.

Dollarisation can be classified as unofficial, semi-official, or official, depending on its extent and state involvement (Schuler 2000). In unofficial dollarisation, individuals shift assets to foreign currencies—typically to safeguard against inflation or expropriation—without those currencies being legal tender. This process involves asset substitution and currency substitution, often reflecting public distrust in the domestic currency. In semi-official dollarisation, foreign currencies have legal status, but the national currency remains dominant for wages, taxes, and daily use. These systems retain central banks and limited monetary policy, though artificial demand for weak domestic currencies can hinder growth. In official dollarisation, the foreign currency—usually the US dollar—becomes full legal tender, replacing the national currency in contracts, government payments, and daily transactions. This eliminates independent monetary policy and ties the country’s economy directly to that of the issuing nation (Schuler 2000).

Venezuela is undergoing unofficial and semi-official dollarisation, driven mainly by the easing of price controls under sanctions. Until May 2019, using US dollars without state approval was illegal, but Maduro lifted currency controls, allowing the dollar to circulate freely alongside the bolívar (Vyas 2019). As a result, individuals, businesses, and institutions shifted their funds to dollar-denominated accounts, and by 2023, over 60% of transactions in major cities were in dollars (Latam Press 2025). Nonetheless, the bolívar remains dominant for wages and taxes.

Deposits in commercial, universal, and development banks in Venezuela by currency 2000-2020 (%GDP)

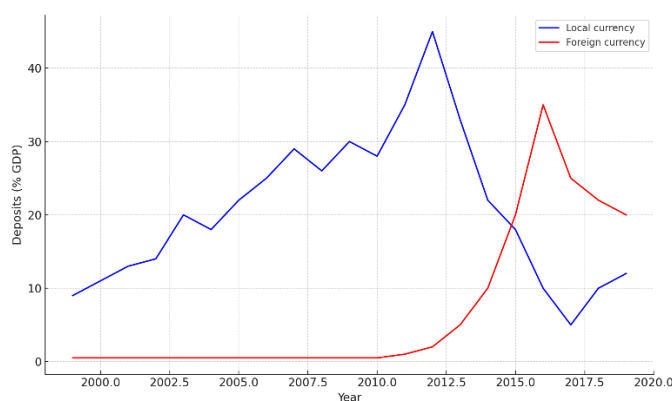


Figure 7.3: Author’s own based on deposits data and official exchange rate according to Venezuelan Central Bank.

Venezuela’s unofficial–semi-official dollarisation brought short-term stability but exposed deeper structural problems. Inflation, which peaked from 2017 to 2019, was curbed by reduced public spending and currency interventions, falling from 400% in 2023 to 85% in 2024 (Agenzia Nova 2025). The price

stability in dollars also boosted consumer confidence and transparency in major cities. Businesses benefited from trading in dollars and accessing imports, improving availability. Interviewee V3 noted that after price controls were lifted, “private firms began importing and distributing food, medicine, and appliances”. The journalist V5 says that the elimination of exchange controls was very important and, above all, that removing price controls played a crucial role. According to V5, one of the factors that destroyed industry in Venezuela during Chávez’s government and later during Maduro’s first administration was the system of price controls. V5 explains, “there was a very long list of government-controlled prices that did not keep up with inflation”. As a result, the companies producing those goods were operating at a loss, and many were forced either to shut down completely or to close certain production lines. Consequently, V5 states that “the installed capacity of local industry was reduced”.

Paradoxically, informal and semi-official dollarisation has deepened inequality in Venezuela, unfolding without institutional reform. Access to dollars remains uneven—urban elites and families receiving remittances benefit, while the poor and rural populations rely on the bolívar. Wages are still paid in bolívares, yet essential goods are priced in dollars, widening economic exclusion. By 2025, the monthly minimum wage was just 115 bolívares (Amnesty International 2019) (around \$6 USD), while basic items like chicken (\$14–15) and eggs (\$9.60) were priced in dollars.⁵⁷ This mismatch between income and cost of living has created new forms of exclusion, disproportionately affecting those without access to remittances or dollar-based income streams.

Institutional failure in Venezuela, marked by fiscal weaknesses, worsened the crisis (Vera 2018). The highly centralised, deficit-prone tax system concentrates control over key revenues—like income, trade, and oil royalties—in the hands of the central government, creating inefficiencies and disincentives. Municipalities also lack fiscal autonomy and rely on delayed, diluted transfers—a process known as “downloading”—which leads to misallocation and fund leakage (Acevedo et al. 2020). This undermines local accountability, as taxes are not directly tied to services, eroding public trust. The system’s dependence on volatile oil revenues increases vulnerability to shocks. These issues echo Rothbard’s claim (1981) that “taxation is theft,” as citizens receive poor services in return, deepening dissatisfaction and weakening the social contract, especially alongside Central Bank’s money printing, which fuels inflation and erodes citizens’ purchasing power (Vera 2018).

⁵⁷ You can check the prices of chicken, eggs, and other items on the Venezuelan online marketplace *Casa Mercado*: https://www.casamercado.store/anzoategui/?s=huevos&post_type=product and https://www.casamercado.store/anzoategui/?s=pollo&post_type=product

7.3.1.2 Private Sector under Chavismo: A Fragile Coexistence

The relationship between the Bolivarian governments and the private sector was tense from the start of chavismo, deteriorating after the 2002 coup attempt led by Federation of Chambers and Associations of Commerce and Production of Venezuela (Fedecámaras) (Gombata and Cameron 2022) and again during the late-2000s expropriations. Paradoxically, the private sector—especially the rentier bourgeoisie—benefited most from oil wealth through unproductive, import-based activities. By 2010, it still controlled 71% of GDP (Sutherland 2011). With PDVSA generating 96% of foreign exchange earnings, much of this was sold to private actors who used it to import over 75% of national consumption, turning currency access into a key rentier accumulation tool (Sutherland 2011, p. 3).

After years of tension, the private sector re-emerged as a pragmatic partner to the government under sanctions pressure. To raise dollar revenues, the Maduro administration pursued deregulation and widespread privatisation. Dollarisation was coupled with trade liberalisation, letting private firms import goods without taxes or restrictions to ease shortages. Interviewee V3, a former minister, noted that the private sector “now has more flexibility than state-owned firms, especially in international lobbying efforts”. Such a growing state–private sector cooperation was described by V1, a prominent Venezuelan former official, as “survival adaptation” rather than a sign of ideological alignment with chavismo.

In October 2020, the Maduro-controlled Constituent Assembly passed the “anti-blockade law” to counter sanctions, granting broad powers to privatise state assets—especially in oil—without parliamentary oversight. The law included confidentiality clauses, hiding details of transactions and beneficiaries. As Vasileva (2018) notes, this secrecy underscores the state’s discretionary control over privatisation. V6, the president of an economic association in Venezuela, observed that despite relying more on private enterprise, the government remains distrustful of market forces and operates in an opaque, selective manner. As a result, the private sector exists in a tolerated—but not fully accepted—space.

In conclusion, Venezuela’s evolving production model under chavismo reflects a hybrid and often contradictory form of economic resistance shaped by protectionism and selective liberalisation. Survival strategies have unfolded across three domains: a rentier model that channelled oil revenues through clientelist networks but became unsustainable amid falling oil prices; grassroots communal councils that partially filled gaps in extraction and distribution but faced political and logistical constraints; and the private sector’s revival under de facto dollarisation and loosening price control, which enabled limited recovery while deepening inequality and opacity. Instead of a coherent model of economic diversification under sanctions—one encompassing extraction, transformation, and distribution—Venezuela’s

economic resistance has been defined by ongoing compromises between ideological commitments and structural vulnerabilities.

Venezuela's resistance model goes beyond economics, as authoritarian rentierism combined with hybrid economic structures also shapes political parties and social alliances. These dynamics create or revive solidarities between parties and social classes that sustain the state. The next section examines how class and political ties influence collective identity and mobilisation. Under sanctions, solidarity often serves as a pragmatic survival strategy, with social classes aligning with party agendas through (1) market-based exchanges reflecting associational solidarity and (2) loyal communal interactions pursuing shared goals—seen in communal councils. The study begins by classifying Venezuela's social classes by key economic, political, and social factors, then analyses their political orientations in the 2018 and 2024 elections, based on values of political parties. By exploring voting patterns, it shows how class interests shape political preferences and how parties mobilise or manipulate class solidarity amid sanctions. This reveals how Maduro's hybrid authoritarian rentier regime adapts to maintain legitimacy and socio-economic control under ongoing external pressure.

7.4 Social Foundation of Power in Venezuela

Venezuelan social classes are commonly classified into upper, middle, and lower working classes,⁵⁸ a widely used framework⁵⁹. This multidimensional approach, derived from interviews and academic sources, reflects Venezuela's changing class structure amid economic crises, currency devaluation, liberalisation, and shifting state-society relations. The upper class is a small elite benefiting from concentrated capital, state ties, and access to foreign currency, mainly located in Caracas and other major cities. It includes wealthy business owners, old oligarchic families, state elites, and the chavista-aligned *boliburguesía* (Cannon 2008; Rosales & Jiménez 2021; Bull and Rosales 2020). Their economic advantages include dollars, foreign investments, real estate, and state contracts, though hyperinflation has eroded some assets (UCAB 2024; Germán Faría, N.d.; Pittaluga et al. 2021). Politically, the class is split: traditional elites often oppose chavismo, while the *boliburguesía* supports it. Socially, they are highly segregated, educated abroad, and enjoy privileges such as elite schooling and conspicuous consumption (Hawkins 2010, p.17; Germán Faría, N.d.).

⁵⁸ Their classification is discussed in Chapter 6.

⁵⁹ Appendix 1 (tables 7, 8, and 9) offer a comparative overview of social forces across four dimensions: descriptive traits, key social groups, economic indicators, and socio-political dynamics.

The middle class, once substantial, has been eroded by economic crisis and includes professionals, academics, small business owners, and public sector workers, many relying on remittances or informal work. Despite income losses, they invest in homes, rental properties, and dollar accounts abroad (Oswaldo & Hernández 2021; Leslie 2022; Pittaluga et al. 2021). Politically, they are fragmented between opposition and chavismo supporters. Socially, they emphasise education, seek modest inheritances for their children, and increasingly distrust the state (Oswaldo & Hernández 2021; Leslie 2022; Maya 2005). The lower working class, or “popular classes,” is the largest and most vulnerable, including informal workers, rural populations, barrio residents, and pensioners living in densely populated areas with limited services (Cannon 2008; UCAB 2024). Economically, they face unemployment and rely on programmes like CLAP, with agriculture and services as main employment sectors. Politically, they tend to support chavismo due to state reliance, while socially, they remain marginalised with limited educational and mobility opportunities (Germán Faría N.d.).

7.5 Political Party Structure in Venezuela

As indicated in Chapter 6, the Venezuelan political system is hybrid, shaped by both internal strategies and external pressures, such as US transnational influence, in particular sanctions. Nikolay Marinov (2005) argues that leaders of sanctioned countries often reshape domestic institutions to ensure their survival. Political party system is an area that is reshaped by chavismo through which the PSUV became Venezuela’s largest political force, embodying a civic-military fusion and anchoring a new hegemonic system (Hetland 2017a).

In Antonio Gramsci’s framework (1971), hegemony extends beyond mere class domination through force; it encompasses the cultural, ideological, and institutional leadership that enables a ruling class to gain the consent of subordinate groups. Hegemony operates through a combination of coercion—embodied in the “political society,” such as the state, police, and military—and consent—manifested in the “civil society,” including media, schools, unions, and political parties—to create a social and political order that seems both natural and legitimate. Political parties play a central role in this process by articulating class interests, shaping political ideology, organising popular consent, and mediating conflicts among social groups. In Venezuela, the concept of hegemony provides a lens to understand the organisational structures and strategic approaches of both chavismo and opposition parties.

The Fifth Republic Movement (Movimiento V República – MVR), founded by Chávez, was dissolved in 2007 and merged into the PSUV. Alongside this, other parties have played key roles in Venezuela’s shifting political landscape post-Bolivarian revolution. On the left, parties like Fatherland for All (Patria

Para Todos-PPT) and Tupamaro have allied with the Bolivarian project but also experienced tensions with the PSUV. The Communist Party of Venezuela (Partido Comunista de Venezuela–CPV), once a loyal ally of Chávez, has become increasingly critical of Maduro’s government, accusing it of authoritarianism and betraying socialist principles. On the centre-right to right-wing, parties like A New Era (Un Nuevo Tiempo-UNT), Democratic Unitary Platform (Plataforma Unitaria Democrática-PUD), and Popular Will (Voluntad Popular-VP), have emerged as significant forces, while Democratic Action (Acción Democrática-AD) has sought to reassert itself despite internal divisions and state interventions. Similarly, Independent Political Electoral Organisation Committee (Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente-COPEI) has struggled to maintain relevance but still plays a role in national politics. The proliferation of political parties during chavismo, however, does not mean the decentralisation of political sphere.

Under Maduro the civic-military alliance, shaped during Chávez presidency (1999-2013), evolved into a political-military complex. This shift politicises the military by placing loyalist officers in key roles and militarises policymaking, involving the armed forces in economic management, public services, and internal security. This structure is reinforced by political parties and the military’s active role during elections. However, this shift raises key questions: Does this new alliance still underpin chavista hegemony? And how is it perceived across different social classes, particularly in terms of communal and associative ties?

To explore these questions, the 2018 and 2024 presidential elections should be examined within the broader context of sanctions and internal realignment. These elections offer key insights into whether chavista hegemony—now under economic siege and social fragmentation—retains genuine support or persists through coercion, patronage, and military backing. They also clarify how different social classes, especially the lower working class, now view the state, particularly regarding communal councils, social missions, and survival strategies. Moreover, these electoral cycles reveal the military’s evolving role as both enforcer and political mediator, and test the opposition’s ability to offer a viable, mass-based alternative. Together, these elections serve as crucial cases for assessing the durability, transformation, or decline of chavista hegemony in times of crisis.

Before examining the elections, it is important to outline the core political, economic, and social values of Venezuelan parties, including their stance on the military.⁶⁰ This overview draws on party documents and interviews with elites from the right-wing Justice First (Primero Justicia-PJ) and AD, and the left-

⁶⁰ Appendix 1 (tables 10, 11, and 12) provide a comparative overview of the values of political parties across three dimensions: political, economic, and social dynamics.

wing PSUV. PSUV (2010) emphasises political sovereignty, rejects US intervention, and consolidates power through close ties with the military. Economically, it maintains oil dependency, opposes neoliberalism (Parker 2005), and implements redistribution programmes like CLAP. Socially, it advocates for universal education and healthcare, gender equality, and empowers marginalised communities. On the other hand, PJ and AD emphasise participatory democracy through referenda, protests, and elections, and advocate decentralisation and local civic engagement. Economically, they support privatisation and diversification beyond oil, focusing on productivity, wages, and equal opportunities (Cannon 2014). Socially, they stress human rights and promote youth and gender inclusion, linking social justice to strong institutions rather than state-led redistribution (Justice First N.d.).

7.6 Contested Elections, Enduring Regime: Venezuela 2018–2019 in Crisis and Continuity

The 2018 presidential elections took place amid a deepening economic and political crisis. Between 2017 and 2018, three US executive orders (EO 13808, 13827, and 13835) imposed secondary sanctions that restricted Venezuela's access to international credit and blocked debt restructuring, laying the groundwork for the 2019 PDVSA sanctions. These measures severely limited the state's revenue generation and financial engagement. That year, inflation soared to 130,000%, decimating purchasing power and sparking a humanitarian crisis. At the same time, oil exports—the country's main income source—fell to 1.2 million barrels per day, down sharply from over two million in earlier years.

Between 2014 and 2020, Venezuela's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita dropped over 74%, an economic collapse unmatched in Latin America outside wartime. This plunged much of the middle class into poverty or the informal sector, hollowing out the group. Many middle-class professionals turned to gig work, street vending, or emigrated to survive (Maldonado and Olivo 2022). Consumption habits shifted as they struggled to afford education, healthcare, and housing. The journalist V5 captured this decline, noting that in affluent areas, “people who once bought apartments are now struggling to survive,” adding that many “can't afford food, condominium fees, or even basic repairs like fixing a broken pipe”. Hyperinflation wiped out wealth—especially for bondholders—pushing the shrinking middle class closer to the business elite and formal opposition (Maya 2005; Pittaluga *et al.* 2021). Key opposition parties like Popular Will, Justice First, and Democratic Action boycotted the 2018 elections over fairness and legitimacy concerns. Despite the opposition's boycott, the post-elections period was a tense time.

In 2019, in a public appearance in Caracas, the right-wing Juan Guaidó, proclaimed himself as Venezuela's interim president, claiming that “we are in a dictatorship and we must act against this difficult truth”

(Guaidó 2019a). He opposed chavismo on two key fronts. First, he pushed for harsher US sanctions and international legal action to oust Maduro, leading to crippling sanctions on Venezuela's oil sector. Guaidó (Guaidó 2019b) went further by urging US military intervention to "save" the country from dictatorship. Second, in January 2019, Guaidó called for nationwide protests against Maduro, largely backed by the middle and upper classes suffering from economic collapse, hyperinflation, and shortages. The protests escalated into violent clashes with security forces, resulting in an estimated 26 to 50 deaths (HRW 2019).

The US-backed opposition's regime change effort failed mainly because the lower working class did not join the mass protests against Maduro. While some middle- and upper-class groups mobilised—especially in Caracas—the lack of popular-sector support weakened the movement's grassroots legitimacy and durability. This highlights a broader debate on the working class's role in revolutions. Theda Skocpol (1979) argues revolutions stem from state collapse amid elite splits and external pressure, not just class struggle, while Leon Trotsky (2008) contends even a small working class can lead a revolution if allied with other marginalised groups. Chávez's 1998 rise, strongly supported by the lower classes, shows how their organised political engagement can drive lasting transformation.

One reason the lower working class did not join the 2019 protests may lie in their complex relationship with the PSUV, built on both communal bonds—shared emotions, histories, and local traditions—and material ties rooted in associative interests. Over time, the PSUV deepened this connection through extensive social programmes like CLAP and the Great Housing Mission (GMVV), which provided subsidised housing to low-income families. By 2017, 1.5 million homes had been delivered (Koerner 2017), fostering loyalty and dependence that likely deterred open dissent. The homes constructed on the hilltops in and around Caracas, which I saw as I was leaving the city in August 2024, are densely packed, built closely on top of each other.



Photo 7.2: Author's own photo of the housing built by Chávez's administration in a densely populated neighbourhood of Caracas. 2 August 2024.

Another key reason the 2019 protests failed was Maduro's unwavering support from the high military command (Briceño-Ruiz 2019). While the FANB shares values common to militaries worldwide, Chávez infused it with socialist ideals. Still, the military remains pragmatic, prioritising unity and avoiding actions that could split its ranks. In past crises—like the 1958 and 2002 coups and the *1989 Caracazo*—the officer corps consistently upheld institutional identity and constitutional order. Military education also reinforces this stability by emphasising patriotism, loyalty, discipline, and obedience (Fonseca et al. 2006).

Maduro not only promoted socialist values but also shifted the military from traditional political neutrality, aligning it closely with the Bolivarian Revolution. This was formalised in the *Plan de la Patria 2019–2025*, framing the military as a defender of sovereignty and internal order through “asymmetric warfare”. After the 2018 elections, Maduro expanded the Bolivarian Militia—a paramilitary force made up of civilian volunteers and Revolution supporters—placing it under his command and making it the FANB's fifth branch with legal status as a grassroots revolutionary force. Military personnel were increasingly expected to support or join the PSUV, with many senior officers taking political roles, further blurring the line between party and military and marking a clear break from traditional non-partisanship.

7.7 Resistive Shrinking Base: Military-Political Hegemony Amid Crisis

Between 2018 and 2024, chavista hegemony weakened but persisted as a political- military complex. Although hyperinflation eased, the economy remained in crisis—especially in oil, manufacturing, and public services. The state increasingly relied on informal dollarisation, remittances, and rent-seeking networks. Oil production fell sharply from 2 million barrels per day in 2017 to just 329,000 by January 2020. By 2021, over 90% of the population lived in poverty (ENCOVI 2021). Despite loosening price controls and partial dollarisation, core problems like collapsing oil output, failing infrastructure, and deep corruption remained unresolved.

After the failed 2019 uprising, the Venezuelan opposition shifted toward towards fragmentation, negotiation, and recalibration. They boycotted the 2020 parliamentary elections, letting the PSUV regain the National Assembly, deepening divides between Guaidó-led radicals and moderates favouring dialogue, as Gamboa (2017) notes. From 2021 to 2022, opposition figures joined Norway-mediated talks with Maduro’s government in Mexico. In the 2021 regional elections—their first since 2017—the PSUV kept most positions, though the opposition won key states like Zulia, leading to Guaidó’s interim government dissolving in 2022. Under US pressure, 2023 talks (the Barbados Agreement) called for opposition primaries and more competitive elections, with temporary sanctions relief if disqualified candidates were reinstated (United States Department of State 2023). The process faltered after primary winner María Corina Machado was barred, prompting her to endorse Edmundo González Urrutia as the unified candidate. Despite stalled talks, the government agreed to hold a presidential election on 28 July 2024, in line with the Barbados Accord.

Before analysing the 2024 election results and protests, social class dynamics are crucial. González’s campaign promoted market-driven reforms to stabilise the economy, cut state intervention, and attract private investment—policies appealing mainly to upper-middle-class professionals, entrepreneurs, diaspora families, and the private sector (Luis 2024). On the other hand, to understand the position of the lower working class in the 2024 elections, it is helpful to examine an observation I made in Caracas on the eve of the vote. On July 25, 2024, I visited Plaza Venezuela in Caracas, where a modest crowd of Maduro supporters—mostly from lower-income backgrounds—were scattered around in red and white shirts, receiving food and drinks. I estimated 5,000–7,000 attendees, far fewer than expected, and not densely packed. Nearby, I spoke with a young journalist. When I asked if Maduro still had popular support, he replied, “Not like Chávez. Fewer poor people support Maduro now”. He avoided revealing his vote but said Venezuela’s top issues were healthcare, education, and the economy. “Medicine is scarce. I earn \$200 a month working every day and have a four-year-old son. It’s not enough”. He also mentioned

corruption and police bribery. When asked about a possible peaceful transition if Maduro loses, he expressed concern about polarisation and potential unrest.



Photo 7.3: Author's own photo of the mobilisation of Maduro's supporters in Caracas. 25 July, 2024.

I asked V4, a writer focuses on political economy of Venezuela, if Maduro's social base is shrinking, and they confirmed the decline, saying, "chavismo no longer possesses the same capacity for mobilisation". When posed the same question, the journalist V2 noted that street rallies have decreased on both sides, with the opposition also struggling to organise. For example, "María Corina held a rally yesterday in Las Mercedes, an upper-class area, yet Maduro still managed to mobilise more people".

On election day, I visited four polling stations in Caracas—two in the city centre and two in affluent districts. Turnout was low, with only 5 to 80 voters observed at each site, suggesting widespread apathy or disengagement. Official results from the National Electoral Council (CNE) declared Maduro the winner with 51.2% of the vote—down from nearly 68% in 2018—while opposition candidate González received 44.2%. The CNE did not release the abstention rate. This 12% drop in support highlights not only Maduro's weakened base from 2018 but also growing disillusionment among the lower working class, once the core of chavista electoral strength.



Photo 7.4: Author's own photo of the entrances of two electoral centres in Caracas. The centre on the left appeared almost deserted, while the one on the right was noticeably active. The left photo may indicate low mobilisation, voter apathy, or opposition-leaning areas boycotting the vote, whereas the busy centre could signal strong mobilisation efforts, higher civic participation, or strong support for a candidate or party in that area. 28 July 2024.

On the night the CNE announced Maduro's victory, protests erupted almost immediately. In the building where I was staying, residents began chanting: "Freedom... freedom... Maduro will fall". In July 29, the sound of *cacerolazos*—pots and pans clanging in protest—echoed across my neighbourhood. People leaned out of their windows, banging metal and waving Venezuelan flags. The tension was palpable. Around 1 p.m., I went out to find food. Every shop was closed. Caracas had lost the vibrant rhythm it had just days earlier. The streets were eerily empty, shutters down across storefronts. On one corner, a small group of around ten people banged pots and waved a large national flag. The metro was not operating. I found a coffee shop that was open and unusually crowded. People were stocking up on bread and other essentials. Outside, a few young men lingered, absorbed in their phones—some gripping baseball bats. The atmosphere remained heavy. I drank my coffee quickly and left. While walking home along Libertador Avenue, I suddenly saw flames and thick smoke rising from the overpasses. Protesters had blocked the road by setting trash bins on fire. The air was heavy with smoke; Caracas felt on the verge of erupting. Some protesters wore masks to conceal their identities. Others carried bats. It was a volatile scene. Many were listening to Machado's live speech—her first after the election, which began at 6 p.m. They were clearly her supporters. I saw people tearing down and ripping up posters of Maduro.



Photo7.5: Author's own photo of protest in Libertador Avenue, Caracas. 29 July 2024.

Amid rising tensions, exchanges between the government and elite became increasingly hostile. Maduro called the unrest a “coup d’état” by “fascist and counter-revolutionary” forces, while opposition candidate González claimed a “categorically and mathematically irreversible victory” (Unidad Venezuela 2024). Interviewee V11, an activist, described the PSUV-opposition relationship as “increasingly antagonistic,” and V14, a senior opposition member, said the government avoided dialogue “because they know they’ve lost”. Despite hopes for talks, María Corina Machado and other opposition leaders urged the US and allies to tighten sanctions (Kinosian 2025) and military pressure. Interviewee V10, another senior opposition figure, acknowledged they have welcomed some form of military intervention, believing voting alone could not resolve the crisis.

Human Rights Watch reported 25 deaths during the protests—24 demonstrators or bystanders and one National Guard member—mostly on July 29-30, 2024. Most victims were under 40 and from low-income neighbourhoods (Ragozzino 2025). Jorge, one of my neighbours in Caracas, noted that these protests differed from the earlier protests, which had mainly taken place in affluent areas. This time, he observed, the unrest had reached poorer communities as well—perhaps signaling a further erosion of Maduro’s grassroots base, as some long-time supporters appeared to have turned away from the ideals and promises of chavismo, further undermining the hegemonic party system, which had already been weakened following the 2018 presidential elections. Yet, it would be misleading to interpret this as a wholesale abandonment of chavismo by the lower classes. Many still rely on state welfare networks and remain

ideologically aligned with the government due to historical loyalty or a lack of viable alternatives. Therefore, while the protests of 2024 reflect emerging cracks within chavismo's social foundations, they do not signify a complete rupture.

As Maduro's popular support declined, the PSUV did not broaden its civilian base but strengthened its military alliance to prevent regime change. After the 2024 elections, Defense Minister Padrino López (Padrino-Lopez 2024) confirmed the armed forces' "absolute loyalty" to Maduro. Maduro reinforced this by heavily funding the military—once exceeding Brazil's defense budget—and giving it control over profitable businesses (Corrales and Kronick 2025). This military role is central to Venezuela's *Plan de la Patria 2025–2031*. This political-military fusion shows "authoritarian resilience," where regimes adapt to crises and foreign pressure, like sanctions, through elite co-optation, repression, and selective reforms to maintain power (Nathan 2003; Hetland 2017b).

The 2018 and 2024 elections reveal chavismo's ability to endure crisis by adapting rather than collapsing. Despite a decline in grassroots support due to deepening economic hardship, this has not led to a full regime breakdown. Instead, chavismo has responded by tightening military alliances and reshaping social programmes, evolving into a more exclusive and militarised form of governance. It now relies on smaller but loyal communal networks that maintain symbolic ties to the state, often through communal support for Maduro. In this sense, the regime's survival hinges less on broad-based mass mobilisation than on the strategic cohesion of a narrowed base of supporters and the consolidation of its political-military alliance.

However, reducing chavista resistance to a mere consolidated political-military alliance overlooks the continued, though weakened but influential, role of civil society. NGOs and grassroots organisations still acting as intermediaries, enabling selective redistribution and limited participatory discourse. While chavismo's social base has shrunk, its authoritarian resistance endures—driven not only by coercion and elite unity but also by a reconfigured hegemonic strategy that incorporates bottom-up perspective to counter sanctions aimed at regime change.

7.8 State-society Synergies in a militarised context: Micro-level

Interaction to Resist Sanctions

Venezuela's *Plan de la Patria 2025–2031* envisions a decentralised mixed system uniting communal, private, and state sectors (PREAL 2025, p. 112), rejecting the liberal divide between public and private spheres. Instead, it draws on Marxist views that see civil and political society as intertwined. At its core is the idea of a "communal state", shaped by "organised society" and the "state-in-revolution"—a

participatory effort to transform state structures and social relations (Cannon and Kirby 2012). Unlike liberal models, the Bolivarian approach promotes mass organisation and collective power in the barrios and informal sectors (Botía 2005), grounded in countering individualist and capitalist principles.

Sanctions are crucial in this context because they reshape the conditions under which the Venezuelan state and organised society interact. If the state is understood as being “in revolution”—transforming alongside grassroots forces—then sanctions act as a structural pressure shaping both state strategies and societal responses. Yet, much of the existing literature (Hanks 2011; Pospieszna and Weber 2020) adopts a sender-centric lens, however here the lens changes.

From a target-centred perspective, this section examines how the political-military complex, labelled as the state, engages with civil society under sanctions, focusing on whether these interactions enhance resistance and aid sanctions management. Drawing on Chapter 5’s indicators—civil society’s autonomy and policymaking role—I assess Venezuela through recent legal reforms, considering their impact on institutionalisation and bottom-up dynamics. While secondary data offers limited insight into implementation, it signals state intent. A fuller understanding requires combining these sources with interviews from grassroots and party actors to evaluate the quality of state–civil society relations in a militarised context.

7.8.1 Reconfigurations of Civil Society to Communes

Recent research on civil society in non-Western contexts has increasingly challenged the universality and explanatory strength of liberal civil society models. At the same time, it has opened up space for examining “real civil societies” (Alexander 1998) that operate outside the framework of liberalism or democratisation. This shift has brought renewed focus to the role of civil society actors in actively contributing to regime legitimacy and stability through diverse mechanisms (Giersdorf and Croissant 2011; Lewis 2013).

From a target-centred lens, Gordon White (1996) views civil society as a space between the state and basic social units like individuals and firms, composed of independent, voluntary associations protecting citizens’ interests. Within this framework, two models are often contrasted: state corporatism, where the state controls associations top-down, and societal corporatism, where associations have more autonomy and negotiate with the state to improve bottom-up influence. However, this rigid division does not fully capture the complexity in sanction-affected contexts, where state–society relations are more fluid and adaptive to changing power dynamics.

Since the early 2000s, the concept of civil society in Venezuela has become increasingly contested and polarised. The PSUV government promotes a bottom-up, participatory model as an “alternative to capitalism,” emphasising grassroots institutions like communal councils and communes (Calcaño 2022, p. 56). Communal councils, legally recognised in 2006, operate at the neighbourhood level, while communes, formalised in 2010, cover broader territories by integrating multiple councils. Such actors reflect a reimagining of civil society as a collaborative space between the state and grassroots actors within a socialist framework (National Assembly 2009). While chavismo has largely replaced the term “civil society” with “the people” or “Popular Power,” it has not entirely discarded the concept. Chávez (2007) described Popular Power as the new face of civil society, subordinating the state to grassroots mandates. This shift is evident in the *Plan de la Patria 2025–2031*, where “civil society” is mentioned only once (PREAL 2025, p. 398).

In 2022, the Ministry of People’s Power for Economy, Finance and Foreign Trade (2022) reported 3,640 registered communes and 49,178 communal councils in Venezuela, with 40,640 productively organised—about double the number of communes since 2017 (Azzellini 2018). While precise data on other active civil society organisations is lacking, most work in human rights, legal support, humanitarian aid, education, and research. A 2021 survey by Latin American think tank Equilibrium CenDE (Fernández and Medina 2021) found that among 243 organisations surveyed in Venezuela, most focused on education and research, with 94% still active.

The 1999 Venezuelan Constitution strongly emphasises citizen participation, with over 100 articles revised—many linked to the *Organic Law of People’s Power*—to protect these rights (ICNL 2020). In November 2024, Venezuela enacted the *Law on the Control, Operation, and Financing of Non-Governmental and Non-Profit Social Organisations*, regulating all NGOs and non-profits. Under this law, individuals or legal entities seeking to establish such organisations must register with the Public Registry Office, which is supervised by SAREN (the Autonomous Service of Registries and Notaries) (Baker McKenzie 2025).

However, the evolving dynamics between the state and civil society reveal that chavismo’s endurance cannot be attributed solely to authoritarian coercion or military backing. Rather, its militarised form of authoritarian resistance should be seen as part of a broader adaptive strategy, in which a reconfigured civil society—embedded within chavista institutions—plays a residual yet vital role in resisting sanctions.

7.8.2 Hybrid State-Society Corporatism

Sanctions increase external pressure and threaten regime stability, forcing the state to adjust its governance by shifting between coercive top-down control and co-optive bottom-up inclusion.

Sometimes, the state tightens centralised control over civil society to suppress dissent, reflecting state corporatism. Other times, to boost legitimacy or bypass sanctions, it engages local associations in participatory arrangements typical of societal corporatism, granting select interest groups privileged access to influence policy or be co-opted into governance (Dekker 2016).

To analytically distinguish these actors, we adopt NGOs as an umbrella term, following Stefan Toepler *et al.* (2020), and classify them into three categories. First, *Loyal NGOs* are apolitical organisations supported by the state. Second, *claims-making NGOs* refer to politically active advocacy and human rights groups, often targeted in restricted civic spaces; this category also includes elite-led business associations like Fedecámaras, which, while distinct from grassroots groups, act as claims-making actors. Third, we use nonprofits to describe *service-oriented grassroots organisations*—such as communal councils and communes—that are politicised and closely aligned with the state (Toepler *et al.* 2020).

7.8.3 Between Co-optation and Resistance: The Ambiguous Autonomy of Civil Society

Article 5 of the *Organic Law of People's Power* (National Assembly 2010a) frames popular participation within Bolívar's doctrine and socialist values like solidarity and sovereignty. These principles create a binary between the “legitimate Bolivarian people” and those seen as foreign, oppositional, or subversive. This allows the state to delegitimise liberal or foreign-funded claims-making NGOs and business associations as “threats” to sovereignty, portraying communes as “authentic revolutionary” actors, raising questions about the autonomy of both communes and civil society.

Fieldwork in Venezuela shows that the autonomy of communes and civil society is closely tied to levels of trust and economic development. The state controls the formation and recognition of communes and can revoke them at will (Calcaño 2022). According to Article 7 of the *Organic Law of People's Power*, communes must align with the state's *Economic and Social Development Plan* (National Assembly 2010a). As such, the autonomy issue is not a big deal for communes as they are regulated by the state and operationalised by the army through CLAP.

Claims-making NGOs often act as value guardians, advocating for social change and promoting liberal, rights-based agendas. As such, they frequently face legal restrictions, bureaucratic hurdles, and repression—hallmarks of a shrinking civic space. While many NGOs operate autonomously and criticise state interference, Larry Diamond (Diamond 1994) argues that civil society must balance autonomy with engagement through remaining vigilant without fully disconnecting from the state. The idea of a morally

pure, ever-watchful civil society entirely separate from state structures is, he suggests, a “romanticised ideal”.

The 2014 *Law on Registration and Enlistment for the Integral Defense of the Nation* requires all legally recognised associations to register with local military bodies and operate under military oversight. They are expected to support national defense and security (ICNL 2020). Additionally, the *Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination* (National Assembly 2010b) allows authorities to label activities like receiving foreign funding or hosting critical foreigners as “destabilising and insurrectionary acts”. The *Law on the Control, Operation, and Financing of NGOs* (GOV 2024) requires organisations to report all funding to authorities, while the *Organic Law against Organised Crime* uses vague terms that can restrict advocacy and deter foreign aid. Since most NGOs depend on external funding (Fernández and Medina 2021), these measures increase pressure. Even internal changes, like leadership appointments, must be registered. Legal breaches can lead to fines from 100 to 1,000 times the official exchange rate, and up to 10,000 times for repeat offenses (Baker McKenzie 2025).

Grassroots leaders view the state’s restrictions on NGO access to funding as one of the most significant challenges claims-making organisations face. As V12, the director of an NGO focused on advancing women’s rights, explained to me, securing resources remains a major obstacle for all civil society organisations. This interviewee added that “government suspicions around foreign funding, especially from US sources, have led to accusations of NGOs as tools of imperialism, triggering increased persecution and legal barriers”. In this respect, V2, who was working on a project to build bridges between the government and NGOs, explained that “in Venezuela many NGOs had been used as fronts to receive funds and act against the government”. Reflecting the broader climate of suspicion, V9, the founder of a NGO focused on health, observed that “NGOs are often perceived as spies”.

Rejecting foreign funding often forces claims-making NGOs in Venezuela to lower their public profile, resulting in de facto depoliticisation. Turning to domestic funding brings challenges: private resources are scarce, public support is weak, and local funders may be state-influenced (Toepler et al. 2020). The government’s mistrust of NGO funding stems partly from the sharp rise in the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) support—from \$8 million in 2014 to \$211 million in 2024—for Venezuela-based NGOs making Venezuela the sixth-largest recipient of USAID funding in the Americas. This funding targeted grassroots groups, unions, independent media, and rights-focused NGOs (FA.gov 2024).

Additionally, in weak institutional contexts, highly mobilised claims-making NGOs can contribute to instability and unrest. When activated during political breakdowns, they may help pave the way for a “civil society coup”—a term describing extraconstitutional, undemocratic interventions by actors like business groups, unions, religious or nationalist organisations, and the media. This increasingly common trend in Latin America was vividly exemplified in Venezuela (Encarnacion 2002).

In 2002, civic groups, unions, professional associations, and especially Fedecámaras played a central role in the failed coup against Chávez, organising strikes and protests to oppose his Bolivarian Revolution (Castillo 2003). After a popular uprising and military support, Chávez returned to power within 48 hours. This event highlighted how claims-making NGOs can be seen as security threats, challenging state authority and legitimacy (Dupuy et al. 2016). Consequently, many restrictions on NGOs under chavismo have been justified on “national security grounds” (Sidel 2019).

While critiques of limited civil society autonomy in Venezuela may be valid, they must be viewed within the broader context of sanctions. In authoritarian states, NGOs often lack independent funding, institutional support, and professionalised human capital (White 1996). Such set of challenges reduces Venezuelan NGOs capacity to operate autonomously from the state. As a result, there is a growing risk that Venezuela’s corporatist arrangements—where the state formally integrates or controls civil society actors—will undermine rather than promote pluralism. Such a system allows only select NGOs or associations to engage in activism against sanctions (Álvarez 2008), effectively silencing broader civil society participation.

According to Edmund Phelps (Phelps 2013), corporatism stifles innovation, economic growth, and inclusive opportunities by favouring politically connected firms over newcomers and prioritising collective goals over individual freedom. However, corporatism can be positive to some extents when the state successfully channels the demands of powerful groups, like business associations, toward serving the public interest rather than self-serving or predatory behaviour (Dekker 2016).

Following the escalation of US sanctions, NGOs—especially business associations like Fedecámaras—were given a dual role: protective and developmental. The protective role involved guiding a controlled shift toward a market-oriented economy to shield key sectors from sanctions. The developmental role aimed to promote industrial stability by reducing labour unrest and improving productivity. These organisations thus served as intermediaries between the state and private sector, balancing economic adaptation with social cohesion.

Fieldwork indicates that sanctions accelerated a shift toward a protective-developmental role in Venezuela. V1, a prominent former official in Venezuela, highlighted that since the 2002 coup, parts of the business sector, recognising the damage caused by sanctions, “aligned with the state’s recovery efforts”. V6, president of a major business association, condemned sanctions, noting “they now severely impact our financial transactions”. While acknowledging some alignment with the state, the interviewee stressed the “federation’s autonomy”, citing trips to the US and Colombia to argue against sanctions—clarifying that “this opposition applied to financial sanctions, not those targeting government officials”.

The interviewee’s emphasis on autonomy highlights that business federations hold autonomous power, operating beyond the state. Far from being mere lobby groups, they are influential actors the state often depends on. However, this cooperation does not imply support for chavismo. In their 2020 *Bipartisan Manifesto for Decent and Productive Work and Social Justice*, (2020) co-signed with trade unions, Fedecámaras (2020) advocated for urgent reforms to improve living conditions, employment, and civil rights.

In conclusion, the Bolivarian state promotes communes as revolutionary actors but delegitimises claims-making NGOs and business groups, especially if foreign-funded, as “threats” to sovereignty. Legal controls, surveillance, and militarised oversight restrict civil society’s autonomy, while economic and institutional weaknesses limit NGOs’ independence. Still, some actors, mainly business federations, have gained limited autonomy, balancing engagement and resistance to the state. This reflects the complex corporatist dynamics under sanctions, where pluralism is both suppressed and selectively enabled. The next section explores how various actors interact with, resist, or are co-opted by the state in policymaking under sanctions.

7.8.4 Selective Collaboration: State-Civil Society Interaction under Sanctions

The concepts of state and societal corporatism in the sanctions context reflect a key academic debate between structure- and agency-oriented approaches. The sender-centred view aligns with the structure perspective, seeing state power mainly as a restrictive force limiting civil society’s autonomy. In contrast, agency-oriented scholars argue that state–society relations are more complex, with the state often engaging in dynamic, multifaceted interactions with civil society rather than merely suppressing it (Ho 2001).

Rather than emphasising a rigid division between the state and civil society, agency-oriented scholars highlight notions of interdependence (Carolyn 2010) and collaboration (Teets 2013). They explore state–civil society relations through concepts such as embeddedness (Yang and Alpermann 2014), negotiation (Gåsemeyr 2017), and dependent autonomy (Yiyi 2008). While these frameworks maintain a focus on the

interaction between state and civil society, they also recognise the agency of civil society organisations, allowing for analysis of how such organisations navigate and operate policy-making within a sanctioned context.

In an authoritarian context, civil society's influence on policy depends heavily on formal or informal ties with the state (Jonathan and Hasmath 2015), highlighting the politicised nature of the environment. As interviewee 12, the CEO of a NGO providing supports for women, noted, "many civil society organisations pursue political goals, not just social ones". This was clear when the interviewee's NGO was turned into an electoral centre for a presidential candidate in 2024, with the candidate's images displayed prominently—indicating the NGO's connection, formal or informal, to a political party.

State–society relations in Venezuela are highly politicised, but authoritarian governments also cooperate with apolitical nonprofits to improve public services like health, education, and welfare—sectors heavily impacted by sanctions. This mix of politicisation and depoliticised cooperation creates a contradiction that complicates assessing civil society's policy influence. Ethnographic fieldwork reveals an uneven dynamic: groups aligned with or seen as non-threatening to the state gain access and influence, while the wider popular sector's policy impact remains limited.

V15, who serves as the executive director of a feminist human rights NGO commonly regarded as an apolitical claims-making NGO, explained that they maintain a positive relationship with Maduro's government. This person noted that their organisation has no intention of replacing the state or pursuing electoral ambitions. "If we're present," they clarified, "it's to complement what the state does, to make it more resistant". NGOs aligned with the government also receive preferential funding and some policy influence (Fröhlich and Skokova 2020). V15, funded by multilateral and UN agencies, reported "significant impact," including lobbying for women's labour rights in the *2012 Organic Law*, promoting gender equality in popular power laws, preventing violence against women through community councils, helping create gender-based violence police units in 2021, and successfully pushing to equalise the minimum marriage age for girls and boys at 16.

V9, founder of a major humanitarian NGO, confirmed that funding does not require political party ties—NGOs can get support from embassies like Canada or the UK. Despite government connections due to Venezuela's crisis, V9 noted that "influencing policy is difficult", especially at higher levels controlled by the ruling party. Unlike V15's apolitical view, V9 stressed that political proximity affects access to influence. Many civil society leaders engage with the state as a "survival strategy" to avoid persecution and secure resources, a point also noted by V1, a prominent former official.

Interviewee V9's view aligns with V12's experience, whose NGO became a campaign hub for a political candidate. V12, the CEO of a NGO providing supports for women and former secretary-general of the regional party Let's Change – Citizen's Movement (Cambiemos Movimiento Ciudadano-CMC) and 2020 National Assembly candidate, founded an NGO after losing the election. Though nonprofit, V12 indicated, "the NGO has close state ties and influence in the Assembly, participating in technical committees for laws like the Care Law for Life, Autism Law, and gender equality reforms". They distributed legislative materials, led about 15 public forums before recent elections, and helped grassroots groups hesitant to approach the Assembly by translating proposals into formal drafts.

The mix of politicisation and attempts at depoliticised cooperation has created a complex dynamic under sanctions. While the state limits the autonomy of claims-making NGOs due to their political nature, this does not entirely exclude them from influencing policy as the state needs them to counter sanctions impacts. Some political space remains, especially for NGOs aligned with the government's anti-sanctions stance—an example being interviewee V6, the president of an economic association, who openly rejects the sanctions regime.

In sanctioned contexts, claims-making NGOs are vulnerable to co-optation, especially when foreign funding dries up. The Venezuelan government offers support or includes them in consultative bodies where their input is limited (Flikke 2016). While the state collaborates with these NGOs to address social and economic issues, this does not mean full alignment with chavismo. Interviewees V6, president of an economic association; V9, CEO of an NGO providing social services; and V15, executive director of a feminist human rights NGO, all openly criticised chavismo's use of repression and co-optation—key authoritarian resilience tactics alongside legitimization, as Gerschewski notes (Gerschewski 2013b).

The chavista hegemonic system has evolved into a political-military form of authoritarian resistance, relying heavily on the institutional loyalty of its lower working-class base organised through communal councils and communes—viewed as loyal service providers rather than claims-making NGOs needing co-optation. These groups complement the state's efforts by delivering basic services amid harsh sanctions, strengthening the regime's legitimacy through visible results that consolidate chavista dominance. While liberal views often overlook power dynamics in civil society, Gramsci (1971) highlighted how dominant actors use grassroots organisations to serve their interests. He saw the boundaries between state bureaucracy and civil society as fluid, enabling political and bureaucratic forces to shape grassroots groups in support of ruling elites' ideological control—making civil society a key space for sustaining PSUV and military dominance.

In Venezuela, where economic production is controlled by the ruling elite and military, grassroots organisations positioned between the state and market play a key role in reinforcing chavista hegemony. Following Gramsci's analysis (Gramsci 1971), this dominance is maintained by shaping public discourse through specific ideas, norms, and accepted knowledge. Hegemonic efforts favour grassroots groups aligned with chavista ideology, promoting state-led narratives that justify the regime's resistance to external pressures—especially sanctions—even as their social support base gradually shrinks.

This politicised perception of communes—described by interviewee V15 as a “horizontal structure”—stands in tension with chavismo's stated objective of depolarisation. Such a dynamism illustrates that bottom-up approach is selectively respected and institutionalised in the agency-oriented context. Moreover, the established mechanism of conveying popular demands to the state through political parties fails to enhance this bottom-up dynamic.

Although most political party members interviewed claim to support a bottom-up approach, this is contradicted in practice. V12, the CEO of a NGO offering supports for the women, described the relationship as “love-hate,” with civil society and politicians mutually distrustful. This disconnect was further exemplified by interviewee V14, a senior member of an opposition party, who, when asked about the influence of civil society on their party's interactions with the government, responded firmly: “the decisions of my party are the decisions of my party—they have nothing to do with civil society”. V8, a politician associated with a centre-left political party, emphasised the need to channel social demands through state institutions, but such mechanisms are weak or absent in Venezuela's party system. This issue spans the political spectrum, as parties often prioritise their own interests over civil society; as V13 from a centrist party put it, “our policy stands above public opinion concerns”.

In the context of sanctions, Venezuela's hybrid state-society corporatism reflects strategic adaptation rather than strict control. The state selectively includes or represses civil society actors based on their alignment with chavista ideology and usefulness in managing the crisis. Loyal grassroots groups like communal councils reinforce regime legitimacy and promote a bottom-up narrative, while political claims-making NGOs face restrictions limiting their autonomy.

7.9 Conclusion

The US sanctions on Venezuela are not neutral or purely humanitarian but serve as a complex tool of coercive statecraft rooted in economic domination and ideological goals. This Chapter showed how these sanctions evolved from controlling oil reserves into an ideological strategy aimed at delegitimising and dismantling the Bolivarian project. Framed as promoting democracy, the sanctions pursue imperial

ambitions by triggering economic collapse and political unrest. Using primary and secondary sanctions, the US has weaponised financial systems, worsened hyperinflation, deepened humanitarian crises, and hindered Venezuela's recovery. As a result, Caracas faces a stark choice between capitulation and resistance—and has chosen resistance.

The target-centred lens on resistance reveals the interaction of macro- and micro-level strategies. At the macro level, production and solidarity are key variables under sanctions. Venezuela's highly centralised, oil-dependent economy has been deeply disrupted, with social programmes during Chávez's era overshadowing industrial development and economic diversification. This challenge worsened post-Chávez due to declining oil output and sanctions deterring foreign investment. Maduro's hybrid approach—mixing protectionist communal initiatives with selective market liberalisation like a mix of unofficial and semi-official dollarisation—has had limited effect. Rather than building a diversified economy, these efforts resulted in a fragmented resistant economic system focused on short-term rent circulation over sustainable production growth.

The fusion of authoritarian rentierism with hybrid economic structures in Venezuela's fragile economic diversification context has reshaped political parties and their social solidarities. These parties either create new ties between the state and social classes or reinforce existing ones to sustain the regime. Analysis of the 2018 and 2024 elections shows chavismo's shift towards a militarised survival-focused regime consolidating power through coercion. While sanctions accelerated this shift, it also highlights the state's adaptive capacity. The Bolivarian project's earlier legitimacy, rooted in lower working-class support, has weakened. Yet, instead of collapsing, the PSUV has consolidated its base toward military loyalty, patronage networks, and a smaller but enduring communal segment. This blend of coercion and selective consent has allowed chavismo to endure despite losing wider hegemonic appeal.

Additionally, this Chapter highlights that the target-centred lens also includes micro-level strategies shaped by a hybrid state–society corporatism heavily influenced by laws influenced under militarisation. Rather than rigid control, the state strategically engages or represses civil society actors based on their alignment with chavista ideology and usefulness mainly in service-delivering issues. Loyal NGOs like communal councils strengthen state legitimacy and promote a bottom-up narrative, while critical or foreign-funded NGOs face legal and political limits that restrict autonomy. These constraints reshape rather than end resistance: some claims-making NGOs adopt depoliticised or developmental roles to survive, while others, such as business federations, adjust agendas to cooperate with the state on shared economic goals.

A target-centred lens shows that Venezuela's resistance to sanctions is not purely top-down but involves negotiated, adaptive interactions across society, enabling limited bottom-up participation. Instead of collapsing, the state has built survival mechanisms by combining statecraft with societal engagement—mobilising grassroots institutions for legitimacy, selectively integrating private actors to maintain imports, and leveraging claims-making NGOs for limited policy influence. This creates a resistance model in which the state absorbs societal functions and selectively delegates power to aligned actors. Resistance emerges not only through bottom-up institutionalisation in sender-centred perspective but also through everyday adaptive practices, making sanctions' impacts unpredictable. Alongside Chapter 5, this Chapter prepares the ground for a comparative analysis with Iran, identifying three outcomes—weak, moderate, or strong resistance models—that shape the state's capacity to withstand external pressures.

Chapter 8: COMPARING IRAN AND VENEZUELA: SUSTAINABILITY OF OVERLAPPING STATE-SOCIETY COMPLEX

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this comparative Chapter is to assess in practice the extent to which Venezuela and Iran are able to resist sanctions. This assessment is based on three variables—production, solidarity, and institutions. Each of these factors can strengthen resistance either individually or through their interaction; however, when these elements are weak, fragmented, or poorly coordinated, they may also undermine resistance.

To guide this analysis, the Chapter employs the Lagrangian function as a framework for explaining the equilibrium of forces in Venezuela and Iran. Social life is shaped by multiple, and at times contradictory, dynamics—such as individual agency versus structural constraints, resistance versus compliance, state power versus grassroots mobilisation, or solidarity versus fragmentation. Although originally a mathematical tool, the Lagrangian function offers a useful conceptual structure for capturing these tensions (Loucks 2022). At its core, the Lagrangian function balances an objective function with its constraints. Applied qualitatively, it enables researchers to examine how social actors pursue goals (the “objective function”) while simultaneously navigating the limitations imposed by institutions or external pressures (the “constraints”). In this sense, it serves not as a mathematical model but as a theoretical lens to conceptualise equilibrium, negotiation, and adaptation within sanctioned contexts.

The Chapter is organised into three interconnected sections. First, it provides a concise summary of the Lagrangian model introduced in Chapter 2 to refresh readers’ understanding. As such, it examines how production, solidarity, and institutions function both independently and interactively in shaping a target-centred perspective—one that conceptualises and measures resistance to sanctions through the internal dynamics of sanctioned states.

Second, the Chapter applies the Lagrangian function first to Venezuela and then to Iran in order to classify each case as exhibiting a weak, moderate, or strong resistance model. Before proceeding with this classification, however, it is important to summarise the effects of sanctions—conceptualised as constraints within the Lagrangian function. This comparative summary serves both to refresh readers’ understanding and to establish a clear analytical basis for examining how these constraints interact with production, solidarity, and institutions in each country.

Finally, the study analyses the insights gleaned from the Venezuelan and Iranian resistance models by closely examining their inherent limitations. Understanding these constraints not only clarifies why certain strategies succeeded or failed but also provides a valuable blueprint for other sanctioned countries. By assessing the strengths and weaknesses in key dimensions—namely production, solidarity, and institutions—sanctioned states can design more effective and context-specific resistance models against sanctions, tailored to mitigate vulnerabilities while reinforcing resistance against external pressures. However, it must also be acknowledged that sender powers continuously refine their measures to prevent targets from establishing successful resistance models.

The analysis determines the mechanisms through which Venezuela and Iran resist sanctions. Venezuela is classified as a Weak Resistance Model, reflecting the limited effectiveness of its production systems, socio-political solidarity, and institutional structures. In contrast, Iran demonstrates a Moderate Resistance Model, with its economic, socio-political, and institutional capacities operating at an intermediate level, allowing for a more coordinated and resistant response to external pressures.

8.2 A Refresher on the Lagrangian Approach

In sanctioned countries, economic activity is structured around the management of material capabilities, political systems are grounded in rational, traditional, or charismatic authority, and socio-political dynamics arise from the interactions of social classes, civil society organisations, and political parties. Together, these processes constitute a target-centred framework for exploring and categorising models of resistance.

A resistance production function can be formulated to capture the relationship between production (P), solidarity (S), and institutions (I) as input factors, with resistance (R) as the resulting output. While the interrelationships among these variables are complicated, the following function illustrates how they combine to generate R:

$$1. \quad R = f(P, S, I), R_P > 0, R_S > 0, R_I > 0, R_{PSI} > 0, R_{PP} < 0, R_{SS} < 0$$

Here, $R_P > 0$, $R_S > 0$, and $R_I > 0$ indicate that increases in production, solidarity, or institutions positively contribute to R. The interaction term $R_{PSI} > 0$ reflects a synergistic effect: the combined presence of all three inputs amplifies resistance beyond the sum of individual contributions. Conversely, $R_{PP} < 0$ and $R_{SS} < 0$ show diminishing returns when relying solely on production or solidarity.

Resistance (R) is shaped by the state–society complex under sanctions and structural constraints (SSC), expressed as:

$$2. R^{SSC} = f(ED^{ETD}, PP^{AtM}, CS^{AuPM})$$

where ED is economic diversification, PP denotes political parties, and CS represents civil society. Resistance depends on interactions across economic, social, and political spheres. Strong economic performance (ED) mitigates sanction pressures but relies on effective extraction (E), transformation (T), and distribution (D). Political parties (PP), influenced by authority (At) and militarisation (M), aggregate solidarity and coordinate policy, while civil society (CS), formed by autonomy (Au) and policymaking influence (PM), mobilises resources and reinforces bottom-up institutions. Synergies among ED, PP, and CS improve resistance, while fragmentation weakens it⁶¹.

To identify optimal strategies, the Lagrangian function is applied:

$$3. \text{Max } R = f(P, S, I) + \lambda [R^{SSC} - f(ED^{ETD}, PP^{AtM}, CS^{AuPM})]$$

Maximising resistance (R) with Lagrange multipliers incorporates the sanctions and structural constraints (SSC) directly, requiring partial derivatives with respect to production (P), solidarity (S), and institutions (I), and the multiplier λ . The solution identifies input combinations that maximise R within SSC:

$$4. \frac{R_P}{R_S} = \frac{\partial P}{\partial S}, \frac{R_P}{R_I} = \frac{\partial P}{\partial I}, \frac{R_S}{R_I} = \frac{\partial S}{\partial I}$$

These ratios show trade-offs and complementarities among inputs. Iso-resistance curves depict combinations of P, S, and I producing the same R, highlighting substitutions, diminishing returns, and synergies. Optimal resistance occurs when trade-offs in the production function match the SSC.

Before classifying Iran and Venezuela as resistant states to sanctions, it is necessary to first define what P, S, and I signify in each context and to analyse how sanctions shape these dimensions differently across the two countries in a comparative examination. This approach avoids premature categorisation and equips the reader with a solid analytical foundation.

8.3 Sanctions Impact on Production (P)

From a target-centred perspective, P is conceptualised as a ‘constellation of interests,’ where actors organise it according to their monopolistic control over utilities shaped by religious ideas, conventions, and laws (Weber 1904). This approach, however, extends beyond Weber’s focus on the distribution of utilities to encompass the extraction (E), transformation (T), and distribution (D), offering a more comprehensive analysis of P processes.

⁶¹ See Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2.

These three layers align with Mann's (1993) typology of economic power, rooted in the extraction, transformation, distribution, and consumption of resources. Economic networks—institutions and organisations meeting material needs—can be extensive, intensive, authoritative, or diffused. Their power lies in combining intensive mobilisation with wide networks of exchange, producing either monopolistic authority or more open, accessible forms.

The P process in Iran and Venezuela is highly vulnerable to economic restrictions. Since World War I, great powers have used sanctions to curb access to raw materials. Nicholas Mulder (2022) cites the Anglo-French blockade, which cut off Germany's manganese imports—about half a million tons from Russia and British India in 1912—crippling its steel production and war effort.

In the 21st century, restricting access to raw materials—and thereby limiting the revenues derived from them—has remained a central focus of sanctioning powers. US-led sanctions have profoundly affected Iran's economy, targeting both macroeconomic and microeconomic sectors. Sanctions on oil exports and foreign investment in the energy sector have sharply reduced state revenue, while banking and financial sanctions have isolated Iran from global markets, limiting access to capital and international transactions. Inflation has surged, currency values have plummeted, and industrial output in sectors such as automotive, aviation, and transportation has declined due to input shortages and restricted access to technology. On a social level, sanctions have disproportionately harmed vulnerable populations, leading to critical shortages of medicines and medical equipment, increased healthcare costs, and psychological stress for families dependent on essential treatments. Interviews with Iranians for this study emphasise long-term industrial stagnation and financial isolation as the two primary effects, reflecting both the immediate economic shocks and the enduring structural constraints caused by sanctions.

Sanctions against Venezuela, particularly those targeting PDVSA (the state oil company) and the Central Bank, have triggered the country's worst economic collapse in decades, leading to a dramatic reduction in oil revenues and crippling fiscal capacity. Hyperinflation reached unprecedented levels, peaking at over 130,000% in 2018, eroding purchasing power and fueling shortages of food, medicine, and essential goods. Financial sanctions have restricted Venezuela's access to international banking systems, compounding the currency crisis and limiting imports. The social consequences are severe: widespread poverty, malnutrition, a healthcare crisis, and mass emigration of over eight million citizens, including skilled professionals such as doctors and professors, which has eroded human capital and institutional capacity.

While both Iran and Venezuela experience industrial stagnation and financial isolation due to sanctions, the nature and intensity of the impacts differ. Iran's sanctions have primarily targeted energy investment, banking, and trade, gradually isolating the country while allowing some adaptation, particularly through non-US partners. Venezuela, by contrast, faces an acute economic collapse caused by the simultaneous targeting of oil exports, government assets, and financial systems, leading to extreme hyperinflation, widespread poverty, and mass emigration. As such, Iranian sanctions produce long-term structural and sectoral constraints, whereas Venezuelan sanctions have triggered an immediate, systemic socio-economic crisis that affects nearly every dimension of daily life.

8.4 Sanctions Impact on Solidarity (S)

S is the shared sense of community, identity, and values that unites individuals, fostering socio-political cohesion and collective action in response to injustice. It can be divided into communal and associative forms. Communal S arises from shared emotions or traditions, such as religious ties, loyalty, or national identity. Associative S, by contrast, is based on agreements or common values, including market exchanges, voluntary associations, or commitment to universal principles like human rights. In practice, most social relationships combine communal and associative elements, reinforcing collective S (Weber 1920).

In Iran, sanctions have reshaped socio-political S along class and political lines, reinforcing communal networks while weakening the middle class. Lower and working classes, including rural populations, depend on religious and traditional bonds, strengthened by welfare programmes and charities like the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation—ties that bolster conservative factions such as the Islamic Coalition Party. By contrast, the middle and upper classes rely on associative relationships driven by professional and business networks, leveraging state connections to navigate sanctions and maintain influence. National elections, particularly in 2017 and 2021, illustrate how political parties mediate these forms of S: reformists channel discontent among the middle class through institutional engagement, while conservatives consolidate support among lower-income and religious groups.

In Venezuela, sanctions have eroded socio-political S by undermining middle-class cohesion and altering state–working-class relations. President Hugo Chávez's (1999–2013) social programmes, such as CLAP, the community-based food distribution networks, and the GMVV housing programme, once reinforced communal ties, but under President Nicolas Maduro (2013–present) these have weakened amid economic collapse, hyperinflation, and failing services. Middle-class groups have been hit hardest, turning to emigration or informal work. The 2018 and 2024 elections show Maduro's reliance on diminished yet

persistent communal networks, illustrating how sanctions heighten vulnerability while militarising socio-political engagement.

Sanctions intensify hardship and reshape alliances in both Iran and Venezuela, but patterns of solidarity (S) diverge. In Iran, corporatist structures and a more flexible party system engage all classes through communal and associative networks, reinforcing loyalty via institutional channels. In Venezuela, chavismo built strong communal bonds with lower classes, yet sanctions have eroded these ties, weakening mass support. The result is a contrast: Iran adapts by sustaining corporatist mediation, while Venezuela increasingly depends on militarised alliances and a narrowed social base.

8.5 Sanctions Impact on Institutions (I)

The final variable, I, captures the state–civil society nexus and the extent of the bottom-up institutionalisation. In Iran, sanctions have strengthened authoritarian tendencies and reinforced state corporatism. Since 1979, the hybrid theocratic-republican system has combined formal elections with concentrated power, producing a “flexible” authoritarian order responsive to internal dissent and external pressures, which hardened under sanctions. Economic hardship has constrained civil society organisations, limiting their ability to operate institutionally and advocate for democratic reforms (Fathollah-Nejad 2014; Niknami 2020). Sanctions have also worsened healthcare outcomes, raising medicine costs and eroding societal trust (Mohamadi et al. 2024). As interviewee I9, CEO of a SANAM, labelled as NGO in Iran, working with vulnerable children, noted, “people have no trust in SANAMs”.

While sanctions on Venezuela are officially intended to target government officials and limit their capacity for authoritarian practices, the unintended consequences for civil society (CS) have been significant. Financial over-compliance, limited access to international banking, delays or blockages of humanitarian donations, and increasing isolation have constrained the operational capacity of NGOs and local organisations. As a result, CS groups face growing challenges in providing essential services, advocating for human rights, and engaging with international partners. This dynamic highlights the complex trade-offs of sanctions: although designed to pressure the state, they often inadvertently weaken the very societal actors that can support democratic engagement and social welfare (Jiménez 2020).

Chavista governments framed sanctions as imperialist attacks, justifying executive centralisation and weaker checks and balances. Sanctions curtailed foreign funding for NGOs, unions, and rights groups, prompting stricter state controls that limited CS’s autonomy (Au). Independent advocacy and protest were often criminalised as “treason” or “foreign interference,” fostering self-censorship and co-optation of social initiatives into state-approved channels (Lusverti 2025).

Comparatively, both Iran and Venezuela interpret civil society (CS) through the lens of external threat, a perception directly tied to US sanctions and Washington's support for NGOs abroad to carry out interventions. In both contexts, the fear that CS could serve as a conduit for foreign interference or regime change has led governments to equate activism with espionage. While the institutional frameworks differ—Iran's theocratic-republican hybrid and Venezuela's political-military experiment—sanctions have reinforced a similar logic of securitisation.

In the following section, I examine how production (P), solidarity (S), and institutions (I) interact in sanctioned contexts rather than in isolation. While their individual effects on R are assessed, their combination can either boost or limit resistance (R). The analysis shows that states like Iran and Venezuela aim to maximise R but remain constrained by sanctions and structural constraints (SSC), making resource allocation and trade-offs crucial.

8.6 Venezuela's Production Struggles Under Sanctions

Sanctioned countries reliant on mineral resources often struggle to diversify into industries that produce advanced goods and higher wages. Oil, for example, lies far from dense product clusters and offers little transferable knowledge without technical capabilities for manufacturing capital equipment (Iix et al. 2010). As such, sanctioned countries could have dynamic industrial policy, pursuing market-compatible strategies designed to avoid disruption of supply chain through adopting “horizontal” policies—those that stress macroeconomy, openness, and a sector-neutral role for the state—and “vertical” policies that target specific sectors or firms, highlighting microeconomy.

In a sanctioned context, the effect of production (P) on resistance (R) is positive, meaning that strengthening the former directly reinforces the latter. Yet, when economic diversification (ED) is examined through the three processes of extraction (E), transformation (T), and distribution (D), the relationship becomes more dynamic, since the amplification of ED—and of P more broadly—relies on a systematic interplay among E, T, and D.

Venezuela's P has been largely oil-based since commercial extraction began in 1914. Output peaked at 3.37 million barrels per day (bpd) in 1973 during the Punto Fijo era (1958–1998) but fell to 2.3 million bpd by 2000 and 1.9 million bpd by 2013, the end of Chávez's presidency (The Global Economy 2023). Oil revenues remained chavismo's main source of capital, enabling state welfare spending. Chávez also benefited from an oil boom, with prices rising from \$28 per barrel in 2003 to over \$140 in mid-2008 and averaging \$70–\$100 per barrel between 2009 and 2013 (EIA 2025).

The surge of oil revenue under chavismo's corporatist political economy was channelled into intensive social welfare initiatives, known as "Bolivarian Missions," which targeted education, healthcare, housing, and food security. Chávez also introduced Social Production Companies (Empresas de Producción Social – EPS) as an alternative to both capitalist enterprises and traditional state firms, intended to counter neoliberal dominance (Purcell 2013). However, by 2007, the \$8.9 million allocated to 321 such companies proved insufficient to compete with private firms or to sustain national planning (Nakatani and Herrera 2008, p. 298).

However, Chavez faced criticism for contributing to economic instability as heavy reliance on oil revenues, coupled with a poor fiscal management, made the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. Additionally, the government's pro-cyclical spending during periods of high oil prices, coupled with inefficiencies and corruption, led to fiscal deficits and economic challenges (Cassidy 2013).

As discussed in Chapter 7, while the mass housing project, GMVV aimed to construct housing for low-income families, and the community-based food distribution networks CLAP, aimed at securing poorer citizens' basic nutritional needs, were successful to some degree, other projects like Ciudad Caribia, a planned "utopian city" intended to showcase socialist ideals, were not. While some buildings were constructed, the project faced delays, and criticisms regarding its feasibility and execution (Caselli 2014).

Oil revenues were largely redirected to social welfare, prioritising lower classes over the middle and upper classes or the private sector (Lander 2017). However, this came at the expense of other sectors and economic diversification (ED), which the Chávez administration did not prioritise due to limited sanction pressure and abundant oil income.

A new economic phase began in 2015 when Obama declared Venezuela a national security threat, escalating sanctions from targeted measures to broad primary and secondary restrictions. Under Trump, sanctions intensified: in 2017, the government and PDVSA were barred from US financial markets (Clifford Chance 2017), and in 2018, restrictions extended to Venezuelan debt, collateral, and individuals linked to Maduro. The harshest measures came in 2019, when PDVSA was sanctioned, freezing US assets and banning transactions with US and third-party entities (OFAC 2019), highlighting Washington's transnational power over Venezuela's oil-dependent economy.

These sanctions, applied over less than five years, have reshaped how Maduro manages the economy, forcing corporatist policies. The energy sector faces declining production and refining challenges: oil output fell from 3.3 million bpd in the 1970s to 800,000–900,000 bpd by 2024 due to sanctions, mismanagement, underinvestment, and deteriorating infrastructure. US secondary sanctions deter

investment from most international firms, though China, Russia, and Iran continue operations, often via opaque deals like Iran's 2020 oil-for-gold arrangement (Vyas and Faucon 2020). Disinvestment has further degraded pipelines, rigs, and storage, causing frequent spills in Lake Maracaibo, which highlights the collapsing infrastructure (Otis 2023). Additionally, refining and upgrading—the core of energy transformation—face severe constraints. In 2023, refineries such as Amuay, Cardón, and the Paraguana Centre operated at only 10% capacity (Guanipa 2023), causing national supply challenges despite abundant reserves, as seen in the 2020 gasoline shortages. Much of Venezuela's oil is extra-heavy and needs special upgrading or dilution before export, but without imported diluents from the US or India, it often fails to meet international quality standards.

With sanctions severely reducing oil revenues and infrastructural renewal failing, Venezuela's fragile economy under Maduro shifted toward a hybrid model, turning inward the transformation (T) and distribution (D). His approach combined protectionism—primarily through regulatory barriers—with selective liberalisation, embracing market-oriented adaptation.

Initially the government used communal councils, known as grassroots governance bodies, to mobilise resources as sanctions weakened the formal extractive sector. Instead of relying on oil revenues, councils promoted local value creation by harnessing labour, land, and social networks to produce essential goods. They also supported D through state programmes like CLAP, reaching six million households across 335 municipalities (Douhan, 2021).

In 2019, Maduro introduced a blend of unofficial and semi-official dollarisation, relaxed price controls, and trade liberalisation, enabling greater private sector participation and tax-free imports to ease shortages. However, measures like the 2020 Anti-Blockade Law increased state control over privatization, allowing the government to centralise decision-making. Maduro also expanded Chávez's practice of appropriating businesses, especially in food, agriculture, and manufacturing, and redirected private supply chains into state-managed networks through programmes like CLAP.

Venezuela's mix of protectionism and partial liberalisation brought short-term stability but long-term fragility. Inflation dropped from 400% in 2023 to 85% in 2024 (Agenzia Nova, 2025), and dollar pricing improved transparency and consumer confidence. However, benefits were uneven: elites and remittance-receiving families gained, while rural and poor populations remained in an economy dominated by the national currency, the bolívar. Weak, centralised fiscal institutions and inefficient municipal transfers further eroded trust and perpetuated inequality (Acevedo, Cirocco, and Lorca-Susino 2020; Vera 2018a).

The collapse of economic diversification (ED), combined with protectionist policies oscillating between regulation and deregulation, has entrenched an authoritative form of economic power, fostering corporatism. Following Mann’s framework, this power rests on commands of obedience and prioritises intensive over extensive mobilisation, focusing only on the lower classes of society. These dynamics foster monopolistic relations sustained by corporatist patronage networks, extending beyond the economy to shape PP and CS, as well as the ways in which they interact, which is known as “societal corporatism”.

8.7 From Patronage to Diminishing Returns: Socio-Political Trade-Offs of Chavismo

The collapse of ED compelled Maduro to substitute declining output with heightened socio-political S and I to maximise R, shown as $\frac{R_P}{R_{SI}} > 0$. Within the resistance production model, this reflects the unavoidable trade-offs among P, S, and I: as sanctions eroded material capacity, the regime compensated by mobilising social bases and reshaping I, albeit under diminishing returns.

Chapters 6 and 7 show how chavismo’s political sphere reflects authority (At) dynamics. Following Weber’s distinction of rational, traditional, and charismatic authority (At), Maduro relies heavily on charismatic legitimacy, rooted in his symbolic association with Chávez, revolutionary discourse, and personalised mobilisation. These resources compensate for weakened P by converting loyalty and populist symbolism into resilience. Formal institutions exist but are often bypassed, as I is retooled to preserve R through personal At rather than legal-rational norms.

Charismatic At was strengthened after the 1999 Constitution, which aligned Venezuela’s political system with Chávez’s Bolivarian vision, and the creation of the PSUV, unifying pro-Chávez movements. These developments cemented chavismo’s influence in state institutions, centralising power through patronage networks like the Bolivarian Circles, echoing Punto Fijo-era clientelism. Charisma became embedded in institutions, blurring S and I, while the militarisation (M) of policy further illustrates substitution: S is partially converted into coercive support, allowing the regime to sustain R even as P faltered.

Under Maduro, opposition parties have multiplied but lack institutional weight, while the PSUV controls resources and decision-making. Patronage and oil-based corporatism entrench the ruling party, linking I and S. Charismatic At has also been fused with M: loyalist officers control strategic industries, policymaking, and internal security. General Manuel Quevedo’s dual role at PDVSA and the Petroleum Ministry (2017–2020), alongside Defence Minister Padrino López’s leadership of the economic cabinet,

demonstrates how military command has been substituted for declining P, reinforcing regime survival through coercive I–S interaction. The Bolivarian Militia’s expansion after the 2018 and 2024 elections exemplifies this substitution. Though framed as a grassroots force, it is subordinated to Maduro, blurring party–military lines. By embedding officers in the PSUV and political posts, the regime militarised S, converting it into coercive support and offsetting lost revenues.

Sanctions reduced oil revenues, historically sustaining chavismo’s socio-political S via rent-seeking networks. Between 2018 and 2021, sanctions and corruption drove over 90% of the population into poverty (ENCOVI 2021) and collapsed the middle class. Within the resistance production model, this reflects the limits of substitution: S alone cannot revive P or ED, since popular support does not directly restore output. Diminishing returns arise from chavismo’s failure to balance communal and associative solidarities, excluding middle and upper classes. This trade-off is captured by the ratio $\frac{R_P}{R_S} < 0$, which highlights the regime’s declining capacity to exchange P for S. Moreover, the collapse of ED, combined with protectionist policies oscillating between regulation and deregulation, entrenches corporatism. As corporatist P became the main driver, the ratio $\frac{R_{PP}}{R_S} < 0$ signalled that further reliance on selective distributive mechanisms could not be offset by broader solidarity. Chavismo’s dependence on corporatist P thus undermined complementarities with S, producing diminishing R gains and exposing the strategy’s limits.

Although the Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) did not release abstention figures for the 2024 election, the 12% decline in support signals erosion of Maduro’s base and growing disillusionment among the lower working classes, formerly chavismo’s backbone. Rather than broadening its civilian base, the PSUV reinforced its military alliance, as reflected in the Plan de la Patria 2025–2031. Nonetheless, many lower-class voters still remain tied to the government through welfare programmes, historical loyalty, or lack of alternatives.

By prioritising the PSUV, militarisation (M), and communal S, Maduro’s government has blocked fair competition among political parties (PPs). Opposition groups boycotted the 2018 election, and in 2024, María Corina Machado’s disqualification led her to endorse Edmundo González Urrutia. As such, chavismo reduced the institutional scope of PPs. This institutional contraction (I) paradoxically increased the state’s reliance on communal S and military control as substitute factors, sustaining R at the cost of broader societal participation, represented as $\frac{R_S}{R_I}$ which shows if R capacity remain constant, the ratio shows chavismo is not willing to give up S in exchange for more institutionalisation of PP.

8.7.1 From Participation to Patronage: Communal Councils, NGOs, and the Logic of Chavismo's Maintenance

Reducing resistance R to a purely consolidated political–military alliance risks overlooking the enduring—though weakened yet still influential—role of civil society (CS). Even in a constrained form, CS functions as part of the institutional (I) pillar, providing an intermediary layer that sustains R capacity. In model terms, $R_{CS} > 0$: civil society organisations generate R not only through coercion and elite loyalty but also through selective incorporation of it into the state framework to tackle sanctions and structural constraints (SSC).

While production (P) is rooted in top-down corporatism, CS operates through a hybrid top-down and bottom-up logic. State institutions limit CS's autonomy (Au), but agency matters: NGOs interact with the state via cooperation, service delivery, and negotiation. Chavismo embeds CS within institutions, distinguishing service-oriented, claims-making, and loyal NGOs. When P and S weaken, I increasingly relies on CS to sustain R , as sanctions enhance its mobilisation capacity (Kokabisaghi 2018).

The degree of bottom-up institutionalisation (I) depends on the extent to which NGOs enjoy autonomy (Au) and influence policymaking (PM). Under sanctions, both Au and PM are sharply constrained. Au is undermined by trust deficits and funding shortages, while policy influence depends on formal and informal ties with ministries or PSUV-aligned bodies. The more these features are curtailed, the more CS's role becomes residual rather than transformative, but still essential to R ($CS_{AuMP} > 0$).

Communal councils and communes, framed as participatory grassroots organisations, perform institutional roles of extraction and mobilisation. Under sanctions, they support local value creation, as in the CLAP programme. Their Au is minimal—funding, leadership, and decisions remain centralised to PSUV and/or military aligned authorities—so they implement rather than set policy. They reinforce R_I through top-down channels while maintaining the appearance of participation.

Claims-making NGOs, advocating rights and liberal values, are treated as “untrusted” actors. Legal barriers and scarce funding—foreign aid risks being deemed “destabilising”—limit their Au . Many reject foreign funds to avoid surveillance, leading to de facto depoliticisation. Co-opted into state frameworks, they lose oppositional potential but still contribute marginally to R_I .

From a target-centred perspective, these constraints should be seen as integral to the optimisation process: the state restricts NGO's Au not only to neutralise threats but also to recalibrate their functions toward sustaining R . Fedecámaras, the peak business association, for example, was assigned a protective-developmental role to ease Venezuela's controlled transition to marketisation while avoiding labour

unrest. Loyal NGOs, meanwhile, fill service gaps in health, education, and welfare, but their influence depends on proximity to institutional power rather than grassroots legitimacy.

This mix of politicisation and depoliticised cooperation illustrates the model's trade-offs. Institutional power boosts R not through pluralism, but by mobilising trusted organisations and neutralising untrusted ones. State-aligned groups gain access, while broader sectors remain marginal. Neither loyal nor claims-making NGOs achieve real autonomy (Au); both are embedded in institutional dynamics that sustain the Venezuelan state.

However, the state's portrayal of communal councils and communes as "horizontal structures" masks a contradiction. Officially meant to depolarise, their institutional embedding limits bottom-up potential. Traditional parties fail to support them, leaving civil society (CS) caught between co-optation and marginalisation. Ethnographically, this is a "love-hate" relationship: civil society is vital to R but tightly constrained by institutional power.

In conclusion, maintaining R in Venezuela reflects a complex interplay of P, S, and I. Under Chávez, high oil revenues (P) supported distributive policies that strengthened S, with I playing a secondary role, maximising R. Post-2015 sanctions and structural constraints (SSC) disrupted extractive capacity, forcing Maduro to substitute S via welfare and charisma, and I via M, PSUV centralisation, and co-opted CS. These substitutions faced diminishing returns: S eroded as poverty rose, while institutional militarisation preserved regime survival at the expense of pluralism. Venezuela's constrained optimisation shows that declining P, fragmented S, and patronage-based I produce insufficient inputs and pronounced diminishing returns, with institutional dominance compensating for economic and social weaknesses but lowering overall efficiency in sustaining R.

8.8 Diversifying under Pressure: Iran's Economic Strategies amid Sanctions

Similar to the previous case study, the effect of production (P) on resistance (R) in Iran remains positive ($R_P > 0$). Yet, evaluating economic diversification (ED) through the interactions of extraction (E), transformation (T), and distribution (D) in sanctioned countries may yield divergent results—either reinforcing R $ED_{ETD} > 0$ or producing diminishing returns $ED_{ETD} < 0$.

After the 1979 revolution, Iran's P was shaped by the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88) and sanctions. Between 1979 and 2005, the state struggled to develop a coherent economic model, divided between conservatives

favouring a dominant public sector and reformists advocating private-sector expansion—a reflection of the global contest between socialism and capitalism.

The presidency of Ali Khamenei (1981–1989) coincided with the war, which strained resources and compelled the state to prioritise wartime mobilisation and post-war reconstruction. Protectionist policies were adopted to expand state control over strategic industries, particularly oil. Production in this sector declined sharply, falling from 5.6 mb/d in 1976 to around 1.46 mb/d in 1980–82 (Alam 2001). Oil revenues were redirected to finance the war effort and safeguard a basic level of economic stability.

The private sector remained weak, largely limited to trade and agriculture, as the Islamic Republic remained wary of capitalist enterprise. Reformist calls for market-oriented policies gained little traction in the 1980s. Between 1989 and 2005, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami promoted liberalisation through IMF-inspired reforms—exchange rate unification, fiscal discipline, trade deregulation, subsidy cuts, foreign investment promotion, parastatal oversight, and privatisation—yet the economy remained heavily oil-dependent.

Between 2005 and 2024, Iran’s state-dominated, mixed capitalist–socialist system (Karbassian 2000) was further shaped by intensified sanctions affecting both macro- and microeconomics. From 2006 to 2010, six UN resolutions, US statutes like CISADA and the NDAA, and multiple executive orders targeted the economy. In response, Iran emphasised P as a macro-level resistive strategy, designating it eight times as the national “slogan of the year” between 2011 and 2024.

Iran’s oil production rose steadily from 2 mb/d in 2020 to 3.26 mb/d in 2024 (OPEC 2025a). Oil export revenues followed, climbing from \$7.9 billion in 2020 to \$46.8 billion in 2024, nearly six times the initial level, demonstrating Iran’s ability to expand E and exports despite ongoing sanctions (OPEC 2025b).

Economic E in Iran has been closely tied to a T of P, with the government directing activity through the IRGC, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and mixed public–private entities. Article 147 of the Constitution is often cited to justify the IRGC’s economic role, originally focused on using military resources for relief, education, production, and reconstruction. Under Rafsanjani’s presidency (1989–1997), the IRGC expanded into civilian sectors, leveraging privatisation to establish companies across energy, construction, telecommunications, automobile manufacturing, banking, and finance. Central to this growth is the Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, founded in 1990, which manages subsidiaries spanning multiple industries and oversees major national projects. During Ahmadinejad’s presidency (2005–2013), the IRGC obtained hundreds of no-bid contracts and billions in loans for construction, infrastructure, and energy ventures (Rizvi 2012).

The second mechanism, SOEs, dominates Iran's oil, gas, and heavy industries, often controlled by the state or IRGC-affiliated entities. This corporatist structure limits private competition and consolidates state power, integrating military, religious, and political elites into the economy as patronage networks. Some sectors permit limited semi-private investment by politically connected individuals, but overall, economic actors must align with state policies, reinforcing authoritarian corporatism.

Amid sanctions, limited foreign investment, and technological barriers, Iran has leaned on state-owned enterprises such as Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries, Dehloran, and Petropars, investing over \$90 billion with another \$110–120 billion planned for 2024–2028. Knowledge-based firms foster R&D under a corporatist framework, while refining capacity rose from 3.27 million TJ in 2000 to 4.46 million TJ in 2022. Despite sanctions, non-oil exports hit \$49 billion in 2023, up 40% since 2020, largely through trade with Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan. Industrial production also shifted toward chemicals, food, and steel, with food emerging as a top sector by 2018 (Parliament 2024).

Alongside E and T policies, Iran has pursued distributive measures to allocate resources across social groups. The Constitution mandates poverty reduction in food, housing, labour, and health, leading to institutions like the *Bonyad-e mostaz'afan* (Foundation of the Downtrodden) and *Komiteh-ye emdad-e Imam Khomeini* (Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation). Still, poverty and inequality persist, and debates over sharing oil and gas rents continue, from political figures like Mehdi Karroubi's 2005 proposal of monthly cash payments to Ahmadinejad's pledge to put "petroleum income on people's dinner tables" (Ahmadinejad 2024).

During Ahmadinejad's presidency, several policies were introduced to redistribute oil rents. In 2007, the Imam Reza Charity Fund⁶² was established to help youth with jobs, marriage, and housing, financed mainly by oil revenues and state credits (Farzanegan and Alaedini 2016). Under Rouhani, it was rebranded as the Hope Entrepreneurship Fund to support small businesses⁶³. Ahmadinejad also launched *Justice Shares*, distributing subsidized shares of state firms to low-income groups, and *Compassion Housing*, offering cheap-housing finance and tax exemptions on public land projects for the poor.

Subsidies were central to redistribution, averaging 31.5% of public spending from 1999–2009 (World Bank N.d.). In 2010, the Targeted Subsidies Scheme (UCT)⁶⁴ replaced them with universal monthly cash

⁶² The bylaw of the Fund is available in Persian: <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/135176> (Retrieved 2 February 2017).

⁶³ <http://www.karafarinomid.ir> (Retrieved 2 February 2017).

⁶⁴ Calling the "cash transfer" model a "subsidy" can be misleading, but it's common in Iran. Terms like "cash subsidy," "bread subsidy," and "targeted cash subsidy" all refer to cash transfers. These are also linked to presidents, leading to names like "Ahmadinejad subsidy," "Rouhani subsidy," and "Raisi subsidy".

transfers of about \$45 per person. Prices of fuel, electricity, and staples rose, while households received compensation and firms subsidised loans. A planned second phase in 2012 was postponed due to sanctions and crisis, but the first phase cut poverty and inequality, lowering the Gini index from 0.41 to 0.37 (Farzanegan and Habibpour 2017).

Subsidy policies persisted under Rouhani's administration (2013–2021). In 2019, the government abruptly tripled gasoline prices and introduced a new rationing system to ease the fiscal burden of energy subsidies and curb fuel consumption. The move triggered nationwide protests, as rising economic pressures were already severe—the exchange rate had soared by about 777%, from 13,000 rials per dollar in 2010 to 114,000 in 2019. Under Raisi presidency (2021–2024), the subsidy reform policy continued but with major changes. The most significant step was the removal of the preferential exchange rate (the 42,000-rial), which had been in place since 2018 for importing essential goods. In 2022, Raisi's government abolished the subsidy system and expanded direct cash transfers to households. However, these measures, combined with sanctions that restricted Iran's access to oil revenues, coincided with a steep currency depreciation: the dollar climbed from 277,000 rials in 2021 to 611,000 in 2024—a 120% increase. This surge drove up the cost of essential goods such as bread, oil, dairy, and chicken, placing severe inflationary pressure on middle- and lower-income groups and further widening inequality in Iran.

The UCT began with universal cash subsidies but, under fiscal pressure, shifted to targeting low-income households, reducing or eliminating payments for middle- and high-income groups—a trend reinforced under Rouhani and Raisi.

The Iranian case demonstrates the complex interplay between extraction (E), transformation (T), and distribution (D) strategies in sanctioned economies, highlighting both the resistance and the limitations of state-led economic intervention. However, the impact of such dynamics goes beyond the economy, affecting the interactions between solidarity (S) and institutions (I) in terms of how political parties (PPs) mediate class S and how different groups align to navigate economic restrictions caused by sanctions and structural constraints (SSC).

8.9 Socio-political Solidarity under Iran's Corporatist System

Unlike Venezuela, where production (P) did not translate into economic diversification (ED), Iran's stronger performance in ED enabled Tehran to enhance resistance (R). However, this should not be understood as Iran fully offsetting or neutralising the constraints of sanctions. The country continued to grapple with inflation, inequality, and structural distortions. Rather, it highlights that the state was comparatively more successful in channelling P into some degree of cohesive socio-political structures

that mitigated to some extent—though never eliminated—the external pressures imposed by sanctions. This illustrates that $\frac{R_P}{R_I} > 0$ and $\frac{R_P}{R_S} > 0$: increased P contributed positively to R, partly through improved I and S, but these effects were constrained by structural limits generated through the patronage networks. In other words, the marginal effect of P on I and S is positive but dampened relative to its potential under a fully open or non-patronage-based system.

A central mechanism is Iran’s structuring of authority (At) and militarisation (M). The theocratic–republican system blends rational At in bureaucratic institutions, traditional At rooted in Islamic norms, and charismatic At embodied by leaders like Khomeini and Khamenei. These forms are institutionalised through two cores: the theocratic core, led by the Supreme Leader and IRGC, and the republican core, comprising elected executive, legislative, and judiciary bodies.

The state employs national elections to counterbalance conservatives and reformists in the government. This internal political chess game plays a crucial role in the regime’s efforts to improve and/or maintain the same level of its legitimacy. This strategy has favoured different social classes in Iran as they align themselves with political parties (PPs) during elections, fostering S. However, the 2024 presidential election led to a record low turnout of under 49%, reflecting a decline in solidarity (S). This dynamic illustrates the trade-off ratio $\frac{R_I}{R_S} < 0$: even as institutional structures remained relatively moderate, the ability to maintain high S was constrained, limiting the overall growth of R.

Iranian politics operates through formal parties and informal patronage networks, with elites using state resources to secure loyalty. Factions, often crossing party lines, dominate policymaking, maintaining compromise via factional bargaining, reflecting an “ideology of social partnership” (Katzenstein 2012). This fusion stems from authoritative economic power, which relies on commands of obedience rather than a decentralised, diffused approach.

Between 1985 and 2024, Iran held 11 presidential elections, with conservatives winning four and reformists six. The 2017 election shows how corporatist structures shaped politics under sanctions: Rouhani leveraged clientelism to build associative alliances with the business elite and middle class. Through ICCIMA coordination, banking reforms, and global engagement, he promoted private enterprise, reduced state intervention, and mobilised votes, while the middle class sought upward mobility, the upper class remained resilient, and the lower class depended on subsidies.

By 2021, rising costs—transportation (+70%), food (+60%), clothing (+40%), rent/utilities (+30%), and healthcare/education (+20%)—shifted rural and middle-class voters from reformists. The conservative

Raisi won on “Strong Iran, Production Boom,” relying on state-linked institutions, patronage networks, and semi-state entities like the wealthy religious institution Astan Quds Razavi. He gained communal support from working- and lower-middle-class groups, while inflation and currency devaluation cut cash transfers from \$13 in 2015 to \$6 in 2024, worsening the burden on poorer Iranians.

Iran’s elections face significant limitations, including candidate disqualifications and restricted political pluralism. The Guardian Council vets all presidential, parliamentary, and Assembly of Experts candidates, often excluding critics of the state, narrowing voter choice. The conservative–reformist divide further constrains policy debates and marginalises independent voices (OHCHR 2013). These limitations reflect $\frac{R_S}{R_I} < 0$: the capacity of S to produce R is reduced when I constraints restrict meaningful political participation.

While sanctions are often intended as nonviolent tools of foreign policy, their use can inadvertently lead to increased M and conflict (Lektzian and Sprecher 2007), depending on how they are perceived and the context in which they are applied. Sanctions, rather than weakening Iran’s military capabilities, have inadvertently bolstered the IRGC’s position within the country’s political and economic spheres (McKnight 2012).

The IRGC’s militarisation of Iran’s socio-political sphere is evident. Under reformist Rafsanjani, returning Guards were integrated into post-war reconstruction, while reformist Khatami (1997-2005) expanded their political influence (Johnny 2007). Conservative Ahmadinejad’s 2005 cabinet included many IRGC officers, and by 2011, figures like Rostam Qasemi, as the oil minister, furthered their role in politics and the economy (Coville 2017). These developments highlight the trade-offs between production (P) and militarisation (M) $R_{PM} > 0$, showing that the integration of P with M can generate synergistic gains in R. However, this observed synergy does not imply an open, associative system; rather, it centralised communal power and produces trade-off ratios of $\frac{R_{PM}}{R_S} < 0$ and $\frac{R_{PM}}{R_I} < 0$, indicating diminishing returns in S and I. The first ratio suggests that further reliance on political–military mechanisms can no longer be effectively offset by broad-based solidarity through mobilising people beyond their existing affiliations. The second ratio indicates that prioritising the political–military fusion cannot be effectively substituted by a more diffuse institutionalisation to benefit R through different political party (PP).

8.9.1 From Participation to Patronage: SAMANs and the Logic of Islamic Republic's Maintenance

At the micro level, Iran's response to sanctions highlights the critical role of NGOs, locally referred to as SAMANs—often translated as “community-based organisations” or “people's organisations”. SAMANs are not fixed entities; rather, they represent a dynamic social construct continuously negotiated within the sanctioned environment. Operating under a system of societal corporatism, these organisations are embedded within institutional structures (I), which allows them—albeit in a constrained manner—to contribute to the state's capacity to resist sanctions through bottom-up mechanisms. In the resistance production framework, this effect can be expressed as $R_{CS} > 0$, reflecting the positive impact of civil society engagement on the state–society complex.

Fieldwork in Iran shows that SAMANs operate across sectors like health, education, environment, economy, women's rights, and child welfare, with 3,692 officially registered (Bromideh, 2011). SAMANs fall into three types: service-oriented SAMANs, such as charities, non-profits, and religious volunteer camps; claims-making SAMANs, including professional associations and guilds advocating members' interests; and loyal SAMANs, Islamic volunteer organisations supporting the Islamic revolution.

The “bargaining power” of SAMANs has increased in recent years; however, this does not exempt them from sanctions or the structural constraints imposed by the state. Like the Venezuelan case, the extent of a SAMAN's institutionalisation (I) can be assessed through its autonomy (Au) and capacity to influence policymaking (PM), which together allow it to act as a counterbalance to state power.

Legal and regulatory frameworks heavily constrain the Au of claims-making SAMANs, especially non-Islamic professional organisations. SAMANs must submit annual activity and financial reports to the supervisory board and may face inspections or additional reporting requests. Non-compliance can result in permit revocation or judicially mandated dissolution. SAMANs are barred from profit-making and political activities, and guilds cannot align with parties. All activities must comply with the Constitution and Islamic values, effectively limiting NGOs to charitable work. The regulatory framework creates a negative trade-off between Au and institutional compliance $\frac{R_{Au}}{R_I} < 0$. Non-compliance risks permit revocation or forced dissolution, reflecting the diminishing returns of attempting to expand policy influence under strict oversight $\frac{R_{PM}}{R_I} < 0$.

Non-Islamic SAMANs have financial Au but remain under supervisory oversight. They may receive partial funding from international organisations like IOM, UNICEF, UNHCR, Relief International, and

NOAS, though such funds are tightly regulated. Any foreign funding must be reported to the supervisory board and relevant ministries. Fieldwork shows the state often views non-Islamic SAMANs with suspicion, sometimes branding them as “spy agencies” linked to “imperialism” and aiming to subvert the Islamic revolution—a perspective increasingly reflected across the Global South regarding Western-funded NGOs.

Societal corporatism favours service-oriented and loyal Islamic SAMANs, which operate within legal frameworks and pose no threat to the Islamic revolution. These organisations perform extraction and mobilisation functions, and under sanctions, their activities have shifted toward localised value creation in areas like health, education, employment, gaming, and start-ups. While providing services, they remain tied to state corporatism, extending state At, cultivating loyalty, and integrating marginalised communities. Their Au is limited, relying on state or charitable funding, and they reinforce institutional power through top-down channels aligned with state policies.

SAMANs are not afforded full authority (Au) in policymaking (PM), as their activities must conform to state-imposed ideological boundaries. This produces a tension between their supportive functions and the state’s unwillingness to grant them political leverage. The extent of their policy influence depends largely on whether they maintain informal (personal) or formal (institutional) ties with political and military bodies.

Fieldwork in Iran revealed that service-oriented and loyal SAMANs—such as public interest organisations, charities, and religious foundations—enjoy communal privileged access to political institutions and military bodies. For example, the Emam Reza Foundation is closely aligned with Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, the current speaker of the Iranian Parliament. Similarly, the CEO of a prominent charity providing free treatment to more than 35,000 cancer patients explained to me that the organisation maintains regular contact with Health Ministry officials. Through these interactions, they succeeded in securing the classification of cancer patients as “difficult-to-treat cases,” which in turn extended insurance coverage of up to 500,000,000 rials (around \$500). Such institutional connections allow service-oriented and loyal SAMANs to influence policy in areas such as welfare, healthcare, and education. These interactions enabled the classification of certain patients as “difficult-to-treat,” expanding insurance coverage and demonstrating a positive trade-off between institutional ties and policy influence $\frac{R_I}{R_{PM}} > 0$.

In contrast, claim-making and non-Islamic SAMANs face stricter restrictions. Although they highlight social issues and push for reforms, bureaucratic barriers and state suspicion limit their policy influence.

They can, however, achieve some impact by providing public services that enhance state legitimacy and support those affected by sanctions. The CEO of a non-Islamic SAMAN noted that, despite low interaction with the state, the organisation improved education for vulnerable children, established self-governing schools in Tehran, and empowered 400 women through employment. The CEO emphasised that, regardless of whether the government is conservative or reformist, authorities do not seek input or proposals from their SAMAN on any policy matters. These outcomes reflect negative trade-offs between S and policy influence but illustrates that authority (Au) alone cannot substitute for institutional connections. Consequently, the ratio $\frac{R_{PM}}{R_I} < 0$ accurately captures how limited party institutionalisation restricts the ability of SAMANs to translate Au into meaningful policy leverage.

SAMANs' ability to channel popular demands is limited by the low institutionalisation of political parties (PPI). While CS can bridge gaps when parties fail to represent public interests (Rasmussen and Reher 2019), Iran's weak PPI (Chaney 2016) creates a structural bottleneck: claims-making and non-Islamic SAMANs cannot substitute for party weakness $\frac{R_{MP}}{R_I} < 0$. Popular demands are filtered according to ideological criteria, with ruling elites classifying grievances as "legitimate" or "illegitimate," reflecting a Gramscian framework (2020) of hegemony. Conservative and reformist parties alike maintain this binary, restricting autonomous civil society CS influence and ensuring that Rs alone cannot compensate for low R_I .

Iran's trajectory under sanctions demonstrates that P, S, and I interact, sustaining R in specific levels. P remains constrained by structural dependence on hydrocarbons, with diversification into petrochemicals, food, and regional trade largely channelled through corporatist enterprises and IRGC-linked firms, thereby limiting private-sector growth. S, while periodically mobilised through elections, subsidies, and populist redistribution, is undermined by inflation, currency instability, and declining electoral participation, producing only episodic cohesion. Institutionally, the hybrid theocratic–republican core provides some coordination capacity, but its reliance on patronage and elite bargains renders legitimacy fragile and inflexible. M temporarily strengthens P and bolsters R, but at the cost of eroding S and I, creating a trade-off ratio where P gains diminish socio-political cohesion and institutional adaptability. At the micro-level, Islamic service-oriented SAMANs strengthen I through privileged access to political and military institutions, while non-Islamic SAMANs remain sidelined, curbing broader associative participation. Selective synergies emerge—such as coping with sanctions in terms of alleviating women unemployment, healthcare, education, and so forth—but structural bottlenecks, corporatist closure, suspicion of CSs, and weak party institutionalisation flatten the institutional curve, preventing high R

outcomes. The historical cases reflect this equilibrium: during the Ahmadinejad oil boom (2005–2011), P rose through oil rents but low S and weak I capped R; under the JCPOA relief (2015–2018), moderate P combined with somewhat stronger S lifted R slightly, though still constrained institutionally; under Maximum Pressure (2018–2024), sanctions suppressed P and eroded S, leaving R fragile despite partial institutional endurance.

8.10 From Low to Moderate Resistance Model

Considering positive contributions, diminishing returns, and the trade-offs among P, S, and I, the following chart compares Venezuela and Iran across weak, moderate, and strong variations of these variables, highlighting their differing capacities for resistance.

Table 8.1: Comparative Capacity for Resistance: Venezuela vs. Iran Across P, S, and I

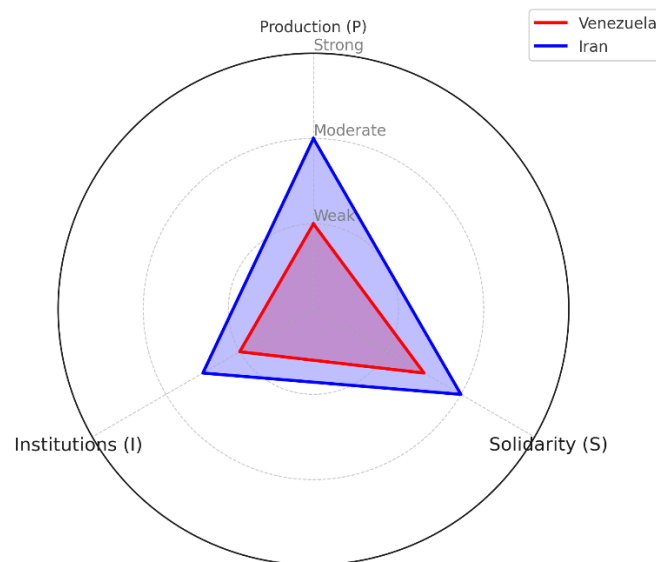
Variables	Venezuela	Iran
Production (P)	- E : Highly dependent on oil; PDVSA dominates. No-to-little diversification; production collapsed post-2015.- T : Weak. Heavy reliance on foreign tech/diluents; infrastructure decay.- D : Welfare redistribution (GMVV, CLAP, Missions) intensive but politicised, functioning as patronage.→ Overall : Weak P (undiversified, fragile, reactive, reliant on rent).	- E : Oil-based but diversified moderately; exports rose sharply 2020–2024.- T : Invested in refining, petrochemicals, ISI in food/manufacturing; knowledge-based firms under corporatist SOEs/IRGC.- D : Subsidies, cash transfers, semi-state foundations; shifted from extensive to targeted.→ Overall : Moderate P (adaptive, corporatist, moderately resistance).
Solidarity (S)	- Reliant on charismatic leadership (Chávez/Maduro), militarisation, and PSUV monopolisation.-	- Factional bargaining + patronage networks involving IRGC/semi-state actors.- Cross-class links (working,

	Mobilisation: Lower-class welfare + militia; declining middle/upper-class participation, but still influential in elections- Opposition excluded; fragmented communal/associative solidarity→ Overall: Low-to-moderate S (personalist, militarised, fragile cross-class cohesion).	middle, and upper social classes with reformist and conservative parties) through communal/ associative structures.- Not purely personalist; mediated by institutions.→ Overall: Moderate S (partially institutionalised solidarity, limited by theocratic-republican closure).
Institution (I)	- Communal councils, communes, NGOs largely patronage-based and PSUV- and military-controlled.- Autonomy symbolic; CS residual not transformative.- Opposition NGOs restricted.- I functions by co-opting loyal groups; PP highly centralised.→ Overall: Weak I (top-down, co-optive, fragile).	- SAMANs (service-oriented, loyal, claims-making) operate under theocratic–republican hybrid.- Loyal/service-oriented groups enjoy conditional autonomy + policy influence (welfare, education).- Non-Islamic/claims-making groups restricted.- Limited pluralism in terms of dichotomous reformist/conservative PPs; corporatist closure.→ Overall: Low-to-moderate I (restricted but more durable than Venezuela’s).

Based on the above comparison, the radar chart (Figure 8.2) shows the orientations of P, S, and I along weak, moderate, and strong curves, thereby delineating the relative capacities for R in each country. Iran’s

configuration—moderate P, moderate S, and low-to-moderate I—corresponds to a Moderate Resistance Model, where the state’s ability to sustain P, uphold socio-political S, and channel civil society (CS) engagement enables a measured yet resistant response to SSC. P is underpinned by moderate ED, which partially helps mitigate shortages by steering the economy toward ISI. S is reinforced through formal political parties (PPs), patronage networks, and state institutions such as the IRGC, fostering cross-class linkages that align societal interests with state objectives. While I remains constrained by corporatist structures, loyal service-oriented organisations—primarily Islamic—still exert influence, producing tangible policy outcomes. Thus, I cannot be considered entirely weak, since PP in Iran channel S across social classes in a more effective and influential manner than in Venezuela.

Figure 8.1: Qualitative Iso-Curves of Resistance Models



By contrast, Venezuela’s weak P and I, combined with low-to-moderate S, typify a Weak Resistance Model, where P is undermined by an undiversified oil-based economy, infrastructural decay, and limited technological upgrading, while S is fragmented, militarised, and narrowly concentrated among lower-income groups, offering only partial engagement in resistance efforts through creating an intensive socio-political cohesion, which is more extensive in the case of Iran. Institutional structures—particularly those designed for bottom-up participation such as communal councils and claims-making NGOs—are co-opted and tightly controlled by the PSUV, restricting Au and precluding transformative societal mobilisation. This arrangement, combined with a fragile, centralised party system and the absence of fair electoral competition, produces a highly personalised and precarious form of R. Survival thus depends on cultivating selective loyalty rather than fostering sustainable institutional development or broader socio-political integration supported by ED.

8.11 Lessons and toward Strong Resistance Model

I identify four key lessons about resistance against sanctions from the comparison of Iran and Venezuela, highlighting how P, S, I interact to shape R. First, economic structure significantly influences R. Second, socio-political S depends on institutionalised cross-class connections. Third, a bottom-up institutional approach strengthens R. Finally, R emerges from the interdependence of P, S, and I.

The first lesson draws on Rentier State Theory (RST) and Resource Dependence Theory (RDT). RST holds that resource-rent states, like oil exporters, are less likely to democratise since welfare and subsidies reduce demands for accountability (Walker 2023). RDT stresses that reliance on external resources increases vulnerability to shocks and foreign influence, undermining stability and development (Hillman *et al.* 2009). Studies support these insights: Zhuoyuan Miao (2025) shows oil dependence hinders structural reforms; Nader Naifar (2025) links it to higher credit risk from price volatility; and Pilatowska and Geise (2025) find oil-dependent economies highly sensitive to geopolitical events, facing recessions, inflation, and rising costs.

This study finds that revenue diversification and ISI policies can mitigate external shocks, especially sanctions. Even partial economic diversification (ED) strengthens state resilience by reducing rentier dependence and enabling adaptive responses. In Iran, moderate ED has eased temporary shortages, though it does not fully meet citizen needs or ensure high-quality production. ISI products often lack quality but have partly offset sanctions by keeping goods available, making Iran less vulnerable than Venezuela.

The second lesson highlights that S is most effective when it bridges social classes. Under sanctions, however, weak S relies on charismatic leadership favouring the communal lower classes through social programmes, while sidelining the associative middle and upper classes. This fragmentation prevents these groups from channelling demands through political parties (PPs), as chavismo dominates the political arena. Fieldwork also showed that opposition parties neglect such demands, with some even advocating harsher sanctions or hinting at foreign invasion.

Weak S can shift to moderate S when communal and associative ties are mediated through a PP framework, even without a strong institutionalisation. In Iran, elites use state resources to secure loyalty across factions, with reformists and conservatives dominating policymaking (PM) through bargaining. This broad societal engagement and institutional mediation reinforce socio-political S and support state's R.

The third lesson highlights that institutionalisation (I) matters not only in relation to PPs but also in determining the extent to which civil society (CS) can foster bottom-up participation under sanctions. The effectiveness of this bottom-up approach depends on both autonomy (Au) and influence over policymaking (PM)—levels that are broadly similar in Iran and Venezuela.

In weak or low-to-moderate I, NGOs operate under conditional Au, are often co-opted, and achieve only limited policy impact. For I to meaningfully contribute to R, CS must be able to coordinate socio-political functions through stronger institutional links with PPs. Strong I enables CS to transcend isolated or conditional roles by integrating NGOs, associations, and parties into networks that transform scattered initiatives into structured political influence.

NGOs provide services but exert little influence on state strategies. Strong I, however, creates channels—like councils, party-CS alliances, and legal frameworks—through which CS shapes policy. Under sanctions, weak I limits CS to temporary relief, while strong I enables institutionalised responses, cross-class trust, and reinforced political structures (Sampson et al. 2005). This strengthens resilience and legitimacy through oversight and accountability. Without such integration, states rely on top-down measures that erode socio-political cohesion.

Finally, strategies to enhance R are closely intertwined with efforts to strengthen P, S, and I both individually and collectively. Each of these dimensions contributes to the state's overall R, but they are not autonomous: weaknesses in any one area can create a cascading effect, producing diminishing returns that undermine progress in the others. For instance, a strong P—measured in terms of ED—may not be sufficient to sustain R if socio-political S and/or I are weak to moderate, as internal divisions can undermine public trust, spark protests, and invite consecutive sanctions, all of which constrain R with more S shrinking in a polarised environment.

This dynamic appears in both Iran and Venezuela. In Iran, the 2009 Green Movement and the 2022 Woman, Life, Freedom protests—driven by alleged electoral fraud and Mahsa Amini's death—were amplified by Western media and new sanctions, eroding S and weakening R, creating what some scholars (Zimmt 2022; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2023) describe as irreparable cracks in the Islamic Republic that negatively impacted overall R. Similarly, in Venezuela, economic crisis, weak ED, and disputed 2024 elections spurred protests, with Western media and sanctions further reducing chavismo's support and undermining state's R.

A Strong Resistance Model arises when P, S, and I reinforce one another. Economically, it requires revenue diversification and ISI to reduce dependence on oil rents and external shocks. Socio-politically,

it depends on cross-class cohesion, integrating communal and associative groups into policymaking to avoid fragmentation and reliance on charismatic leaders. Institutionally, CS must be embedded in formal structures—NGOs, parties, and consultative bodies—so participation shapes policy as well as services. R emerges from this interdependence: weaknesses in one dimension undermine the rest, while strong adaptation, inclusive structures, and institutionalisation together create a resistance system able to absorb shocks, maintain legitimacy, and resist external pressure.

8.12 Conclusion

This Chapter analysed how Venezuela and Iran resist US-led sanctions through production (P), solidarity (S), and institutions (I), showing that each can strengthen or weaken resistance (R) individually and through interaction. It justified using the Lagrangian function to conceptualise equilibrium, negotiation, and adaptation within sanctioned contexts. By formalising a resistance production function and applying optimisation, the analysis captured both the individual and interactive effects of P, S, and I, including trade-offs and diminishing returns. The model demonstrates that effective R depends on balancing these inputs, leveraging complementarities, and reducing fragmentation in the state–society complex. It thus explains why R varies from weak to strong and how sanctioned states can optimise internal resources to maximise R.

Applying the Lagrangian function to Venezuela shows that reliance on a mono-commodity oil economy limited economic diversification (ED) and exposed structural vulnerabilities, especially when sanctions disrupted extraction (E), transformation (T), and distribution (D) processes. As P declined, the regime substituted with S—through welfare, communal mobilisation, and charismatic leadership—and I—via militarisation (M), PSUV centralisation, and co-opted civil society (CS). These substitutions had diminishing returns: S weakened as poverty rose and abstention increased, while centralised I preserved survival at the cost of pluralism. Venezuela thus exhibits a Weak Resistance Model, with fragmented P, divided socio-political S, and fragile, patronage-based I limiting long-term R.

Iran's experience under prolonged sanctions shows a nuanced and contingent model of R, where P, socio-political S, and I interact complexly. State-led P—via oil, IRGC-linked enterprises, and corporatist structures—supports R by generating revenue and selective growth, reinforced by ED and ISI policies, diminishing the possibility of long-term material shortages. However, the benefits of ED are tempered by structural dependence on hydrocarbons, limited private-sector dynamism, and the militarisation of political–economic power, which produce trade-offs that weaken broad-based S and constrain the flexibility of institution (I) due to lack of political party (PP) and civil society (CS) institutionalisations.

This interplay produces a R profile that is positive but inherently moderate: Iran maintains its ability to withstand sanctions without systemic collapse, yet its capacity to translate ED gains into enduring socio-political (S) and robust institutional frameworks (I) is limited.

Comparing Venezuela and Iran shows that resistance to sanctions arises from interdependent dynamics across P, S, and I. ED and ISI reduce vulnerability but require cross-class cohesion and institutional depth to be effective. Integrating NGOs and CS into formal frameworks allows relief efforts to influence policy and bolster legitimacy. A Strong Resistance Model thus depends on the mutually reinforcing combination of economic adaptation, inclusive socio-political networks, and institutionalised parties and civil society, enabling sustained resilience and adaptive capacity under sanctions. However, the bottom-up approach offered in this Chapter may discursively converge with the sanctions' own rhetoric of staging democratisation within target states. This raises an important question: how feasible is it to apply the lessons of this Chapter within the sender's constrained realities of a sanctioned context?

Chapter 9: A NEW RESEARCH AGENDA: AN ENDOGENOUS TURN IN SANCTIONS RESEARCH

This thesis opened with a broad discussion of the sender-centred perspective on sanctions, a framework that has dominated much of the scholarship on sanctions. This view principally seeks to answer three central questions: what motivates states to impose sanctions, how these sanctions operate in practice, and whether they achieve their intended policy objectives. Normally, the sender-centred approach assumes that the state applying sanctions—most often the US—possesses both the capability and the legitimacy to leverage economic, financial, and political pressure to shape the behaviour of target states. Under this framework, sanctions are assessed as tools of foreign policy with functional purposes: they are designed to interrupt specific economic sectors, induce policy changes, or weaken the ruling elite's capacity to govern. The sender-centred approach prioritises the study of mechanisms such as trade limitations, financial blockades, and travel bans, while exploring their efficiency through empirical outcomes like shifts in policy, regime stability, or compliance with international norms. Scholars operating within this lens typically highlight optimisation: how sanctions can be calibrated to maximise impact while reducing unintended consequences, how multilateral coordination increases enforcement, and how loopholes can be closed to prevent circumvention.

However, despite its analytical rigour, the sender-centred perspective overlooks a crucial dimension: the internal responses and capacities of the target state. By focusing on the intentions and instruments of the sender, this approach primarily limits the explanatory power of sanctions studies. It assumes, often implicitly, that the sanctioned state is a relatively passive recipient of coercion and that coercive measures function in a linear cause-and-effect manner. This assumption obscures a critical question: why do sanctions succeed in some cases and fail in others? In practice, the variability in outcomes cannot be appropriately explained solely by the design, severity, or enforcement of sanctions. Cases such as Iran and Venezuela demonstrate this complexity: both have faced extensive economic sanctions, yet their responses and capacities for resistance have diverged meaningfully, revealing the inadequacy of a sender-centred analysis to account for endogenous dynamics.

To address this conceptual gap, the study reoriented the analytical lens from the sender to the target, emphasising the internal political, social, and economic structures of sanctioned states. By shifting attention to domestic dynamics, the thesis assessed the interplay between production, solidarity, and institutions, assessing how these interdependent dimensions collectively shape a state's capacity to resist or collapse under external pressure. This target-centred perspective highlights that resistance or

vulnerability is not simply a function of external coercion; rather, it is rooted in the political economy, institutional architecture, historical experience, and socio-political cohesion of the state itself. In doing so, the thesis contributes to the broader literature on sanctions by indicating that coercive outcomes cannot be understood without accounting for the agency of sanctioned societies and the adaptive capacities embedded within their domestic structures. The research thus challenges the dominant assumption in sanctions studies that power flows unidirectionally from sender to target, instead conceptualising sanctions as a relational process shaped by interaction, adaptation, and resistance.

Central to this framework is the concept of the Resistance Model, which posits that targets are better able to withstand external pressures when there exists a state-society synergistic relationship. This fusion is operationalised through both top-down and bottom-up mechanisms: the state mobilises resources, coordinates policy responses, and ensures administrative functionality, while societal actors—including communities, NGOs, local networks, and informal associations—participate in adaptive and distributive processes that reinforce collective resistance. In this configuration, state action is not uniquely coercive or hierarchical but is coupled with mechanisms that empower civil society, founding a system of mutual reinforcement. This integration improves resistance by permitting society to compensate for economic or institutional deficiencies, while the state offers direction, coordination, and legitimacy. Employing this framework, the study found that Iran's moderately diversified economy, structured socio-political networks, and hybrid institutional framework enable it to maintain a Moderate Resistance Model, while Venezuela's oil-dependent economy, personalised political structures, and centralised institutions give rise to a Weak Resistance Model.

The comparative dimension of this research is especially significant because it shows that resistance cannot be reduced to ideology, regime type, or sanctions intensity alone. Although both Iran and Venezuela have been subjected to extensive US-led sanctions and have adopted anti-hegemonic political discourses, the two states display markedly different trajectories of adaptation and resilience. Iran's resistance capacity emerges from institutional depth, historical continuity, and diversified economic adjustment, while Venezuela's model has remained more dependent on charismatic leadership, oil rents, and centralised political authority. The comparison thus uncovers that sanctions outcomes are mediated through historically specific configurations of state formation, social organisation, and economic structure. By placing these two cases in dialogue, the thesis moves beyond single-case explanations and develops a broader comparative framework capable of explaining variation across sanctioned states. This comparative contribution is important because much of the sanctions literature either focuses barely on

individual cases or generalises from sender behaviour without sufficiently theorising why targets respond differently under comparable external pressures.

Geography also emerges as a more substantial factor in the operation of resistance than is often acknowledged in sanctions studies. Iran's geographical position within the Middle East, bordering multiple regional actors and connected to Asian markets through overland and maritime routes, has enabled it to sustain trade networks, informal exchanges, and geopolitical partnerships despite sanctions. Its strategic location along major energy corridors and proximity to powers such as China and Russia have reinforced its ability to circumvent economic isolation. Venezuela, by contrast, although geographically proximate to the US and endowed with substantial natural resources, occupies a different geopolitical environment. Its dependence on maritime oil exports and its historical integration into US-centred energy markets have rendered it more susceptible to financial restrictions and fluctuations in global commodity demand. Geography thus shapes not only economic possibilities but also geopolitical leverage, patterns of alliance formation, and the practical capacity of states to sustain resistance under conditions of external pressure. The thesis thus demonstrates that resistance is not merely institutional or ideological; it is also spatial, conditioned by regional networks, trade routes, resource distribution, and geopolitical location.

However, the Resistance Model is not without conceptual tensions. The findings of the thesis recommend that for Iran and Venezuela to transition toward a Strong Resistance Model—one capable of enduring prolonged external pressure without succumbing to coercion or internal fragmentation—they would need to foster greater democratisation and participatory governance. Chapter 8 highlights that societal inclusion, institutional accountability, and the broadening of citizen participation enhance collective resistance. Paradoxically, nevertheless, these very mechanisms—democratic empowerment, transparency, and civil engagement—overlap with the normative objectives often cited by sanctioning powers, which justify sanctions as instruments to promote regime change and “democratisation” in sanctioned countries. This exposes a fundamental irony: the endogenous processes that could strengthen resistance to sanctions become unintentionally associated with the externally imposed goals of those same sanctions, revealing a structural contradiction in the logic of coercive measures.

Democratisation, in this context, refers to the expansion of political participation, accountability, and institutional responsiveness, enabling broader segments of society to affect governance outcomes (Diamond 1994; Tilly 2007). However, promoting democratisation through the imposition of sanctions is essentially paradoxical. Sanctions regularly weaken the very conditions necessary for political participation, transparency, and civic trust, which are necessary for organic democratisation. Empirical

analysis in Chapter 8 shows that sanctions often weaken civil society, degrade public institutions, and erode social capital, thus constraining citizens' capacity to hold ruling elites accountable. Rather than facilitating political liberalisation, sanctions tend to consolidate ruling coalitions, reinforce centralised control over economic and informational flows, and marginalise independent societal actors. As such, sanctions weaken endogenous pathways to democratisation, highlighting a structural defect in the conventional rationale of external coercion: efforts to impose regime change inadvertently suppress the internal mechanisms that would otherwise produce accountable governance.

Importantly, democratisation is neither a linear nor a universally defined process; it is context-dependent, shaped by local histories, colonial legacies, power relations, and societal structures (Carothers 2002). In sanctioned states, democratisation is often less about externally dictated regime change and more about the internal reconfiguration of state-society relations. This internal, adaptive process—termed endogenous democratisation—emerges from the state's need to maintain legitimacy, ensure social cohesion, and manage economic or political stress under sanctions. Through such processes, states improve institutional capacity, strengthen collective legitimacy, and advance resistance, successfully resisting external domination without aligning with exogenous agendas. Endogenous democratisation is thus dialectical rather than contradictory: while external actors aim to impose democracy from above, sanctioned societies cultivate governance from within, conditioned by the imperatives of survival, social inclusion, and ideological balance.

Building on these insights, the thesis offers a conceptual model termed “endogenous resistance governance”. This framework is secular but not liberal, highlighting internal mechanisms through which sanctioned states reconfigure governance to resist external pressures while maintaining ideological diversity. Endogenous resistance governance challenges the conventional conflation of secularism with liberalism (Hashemi 2009; Güllalp 2023). As Jaclyn L. Neo (2017) argues, secularism can function as a mechanism for social regulation, balancing ideological or religious pluralism rather than promoting liberal individualism. In this framework, the state does not withdraw from ideological engagement but dynamically manages ideological plurality to retain social cohesion, alleviate internal domination, and resist external coercion. This approach is predominantly relevant in sanctioned settings, where sovereignty and internal cohesion are existential priorities, and where the survival of the state often depends on the capacity to integrate diverse ideological and religious voices into a cohesive governance framework.

At a broader theoretical level, the thesis makes a noteworthy contribution to postcolonial and decolonial debates concerning sovereignty, resistance, and global power hierarchies — debates that have gained

renewed urgency as coercive economic instruments become increasingly central to contemporary international relations. Sanctions are regularly justified through liberal narratives of human rights protection, democracy promotion, or the maintenance of a rules-based international order, yet these discourses are far from neutral. Rather than representing universal values impartially applied, they can function ideologically to reproduce and entrench asymmetrical power relations between the global north and the global south, cloaking geopolitical interests in the language of cosmopolitan principle. The legitimising frameworks through which sanctions are imposed frequently obscure the extent to which such measures reflect the preferences and strategic calculations of powerful Western states, rather than any genuinely multilateral consensus.

By foregrounding the agency of sanctioned societies, this research directly challenges the implicit hierarchy embedded within mainstream sanctions literature, where target states are too often portrayed as passive recipients of Western coercive power — objects of policy rather than subjects of history. This framing is not merely an analytical oversight; it echoes deeper epistemological assumptions that marginalise non-Western political experience and render invisible the complex ways in which targeted societies negotiate, contest, and adapt to external pressure. Drawing on postcolonial insights, the thesis instead conceptualises resistance as a form of meaningful political agency embedded in historical experiences of imperialism, colonial intervention, and uneven capitalist development. Resistance, in this sense, is not reducible to mere authoritarian self-preservation; it is rooted in longer histories of struggle against external domination and reflects accumulated institutional knowledge about how to survive and govern under conditions of sustained coercive pressure.

This postcolonial framing proves particularly illuminating in the cases of Iran and Venezuela, where anti-imperial discourse functions not merely as rhetorical flourish or elite propaganda but as a substantive legitimising framework through which states mobilise international solidarity, construct cohesive national identities, and justify adaptive governance strategies to domestic audiences. In both cases, the experience of sanctions is interpreted and narrated through the lens of historical grievance — whether Iran's memory of the 1953 coup and decades of Western interference, or Venezuela's reference to a long history of US interventionism in Latin America — transforming contemporary economic coercion into a chapter within a broader, ongoing story of resistance to imperial domination. These historical narratives are not simply mobilised cynically by governing elites; they resonate with genuinely felt experiences and shape the terrain on which political legitimacy is contested.

Incorporating postcolonial theoretical knowledge thus substantially reinforces the theorisation of the Resistance Model developed in this thesis, by situating sanctions within wider historical structures of domination, contestation, and asymmetrical global power, rather than treating them merely as neutral, technical instruments of foreign policy deployed in a historical vacuum. It demands that we ask not only whether sanctions achieve their stated objectives, but whose understanding of legitimate international order they encode, whose histories they ignore, and what forms of agency and knowledge they systematically render invisible. In doing so, the thesis positions itself at the intersection of International Relations, postcolonial studies, and comparative politics, contributing to an emerging body of scholarship committed to decentring Western assumptions in the study of global governance and coercive statecraft.

Endogenous resistance governance is rooted in two key principles. First, it rejects political domination by any single ideological or religious group, acknowledging that concentration of power undermines collective resistance. Second, it protects citizenship rights irrespective of ideological or religious affiliation, framing equality in terms of shared involvement in resistance rather than abstract individualism. While these principles echo liberal pluralism in form, their logic is greatly non-liberal. Rather than state neutrality rooted in individual autonomy, the state dynamically intervenes to prevent hegemonic monopolisation of power. Neo (2017) terms this “regulated secularism”: a form of governance in which the state manages ideological diversity to preserve public order and social cohesion, rather than as a vehicle for liberal freedoms. Similarly, citizenship equality is framed not in terms of abstract rights but through collective belonging and participation in the shared project of resistance, aligning with postcolonial frameworks that link justice to solidarity and anti-imperial struggle (Chakrabarty 2000). This collectivist interpretation situates equality within the context of shared resistance, reinforcing both internal cohesion and the capacity to resist external pressures.

Historical experiences under the Pahlavi monarchy (1925–1979) in Iran and the Punto Fijo era (1958–1998) in Venezuela show the structural restraints on these principles. In Iran, political life under the Shah was overshadowed by state-promoted nationalism rooted in pre-Islamic heritage, which consolidated authority and marginalised alternative political and religious actors, remarkably clerics. The state employed patrimonial structures, military enforcement, bureaucratic hierarchies, and secret policing to ensure loyalty, thereby conditioning political participation and citizenship rights on ideological conformity. Likewise, in Venezuela, the Punto Fijo system concentrated political impact within two dominant parties—AD and COPEI—which monopolised governance under a liberal-democratic framework aligned with Cold War anti-communism. Political representation and access to rights were contingent on adherence to the dominant ideological and party framework, marginalising the poor, leftist

parties, and informal workers. Both cases show regimes in which ideological monopolisation constrained pluralism, limiting the potential for endogenous resistance governance.

Within the Islamic Republic of Iran, however, endogenous mechanisms exist that could be reinterpreted to facilitate pluralistic inclusion without undermining the ideological foundations of the state. The hybrid system of theocratic-republican governance contains instruments such as the principle of *maslahat-e nezam* (expediency of the system), which legitimises pragmatic adaptation of religious doctrine to guarantee state integrity. This flexibility allows for partial accommodation of social and political demands, such as the more relaxed enforcement of the hijab in recent years, particularly after the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, indicating adaptive responsiveness to societal pressures. Procedural institutions like elections offer further opportunities to operationalise regulated pluralism, transforming ideological neutrality into principled interventionism aimed at balancing competing interests rather than withdrawing from ideological engagement. Historical accomplishments in education, literacy, and healthcare demonstrate that state-led mobilisation can transcend sectarian and ideological divisions when framed as collective resistance and social welfare, providing further avenues to institutionalise equality through civic programmes rooted in Islamic egalitarianism. Moreover, Iran's external discourse of resistance, grounded in anti-imperial identity, can be redirected internally to advance justice, equality, and inclusive governance, aligning the authority of *velayat-e faqih*⁶⁵ with broader civic objectives.

Nonetheless, the realisation of endogenous resistance governance in Iran is limited by structural asymmetries and external pressures. The dual sovereignty system, in which unelected clerical bodies such as the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council hold ultimate authority over elected institutions, perpetuates an imbalance that prioritises ideological legitimacy over popular representation. While *maslahat-e nezam* offers some flexibility, its historical application has consolidated regime preservation rather than pluralistic inclusion. The absence of independent political parties, free media, and autonomous civil society institutions further restrains ideological contestation. The securitised framing of dissent conflates internal opposition with external subversion, declining citizenship equality. Patronage networks linking religious authority, economic power, and security institutions entrench monopolisation, limiting decentralisation and pluralist innovation. Despite endogenous capacities to manage diversity, these structural and ideological limitations, deepened by sanctions, contain Iran's potential to fully implement resistance governance.

⁶⁵ Literally means "Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist" and is a foundational principle of Iran's political system, formulated by Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution. The theory holds that in the absence of an infallible leader (such as the Prophet or Imam), a qualified Islamic jurist (faqih) can assume leadership over the Islamic community, guiding its political, judicial, and social affairs.

Venezuela's experience under the Bolivarian Revolution shows some limited alignment with the principles of endogenous resistance governance. Chavismo fostered non-liberal ideological pluralism, leveraging oil revenues to expand social welfare programmes, participatory councils, and communal organisations. These initiatives widened citizen engagement, advanced social solidarity, and expanded access to rights for previously marginalised populations. The 1999 Constitution institutionalised participatory mechanisms, positioning both state and communities as agents of transformation, theoretically reflecting the collectivist interpretation of citizenship rights central to resistance governance. Regionally, Venezuela operationalised resistance governance through anti-hegemonic alliances and leadership within ALBA, linking domestic pluralism with broader geopolitical strategies.

Yet, practical implementation was hampered by structural, political, and economic factors. Chávez's consolidation of power through the PSUV, the exclusion of opposition forces, and the centralisation of authority limited political pluralism. Social programmes, while expansive, often required alignment with Bolivarian ideology, compromising the non-liberal ideal of equal citizenship rights irrespective of political affiliation. Dependence on oil rents rendered social programmes vulnerable to economic shocks, exposing the fragility of a rent-based resistance model. Institutions such as communal councils and NGOs functioned under centralised control, limiting their autonomy and durability. Accordingly, while the Bolivarian state displayed elements of resistance governance, its operationalisation remained contingent on charismatic leadership, ideological cohesion, and external economic conditions.

The divergence between Venezuela and Iran in implementing resistance models is formed by structural, historical, geographical, ideological, and economic variables. Venezuela's oil-dependent, undiversified economy depends heavily on rent extraction, with weak domestic transformation capacity. Distribution of resources, while extensive, is politicised and functions as patronage, producing fragile economic foundations for sustained resistance. Iran, by contrast, maintains a more diversified approach within its oil-based economy, with investments in refining, petrochemicals, and import-substitution industries, strengthened by semi-autonomous knowledge-based firms. Its distribution system, progressively targeted rather than universal, improves adaptability under sanctions. Socially, Venezuela depends on charismatic leadership and militarised party structures, with solidarity focused on lower-class welfare recipients and militia networks. Middle- and upper-class participation is limited, making cross-class cohesion fragile. Iran, by contrast, shows partially institutionalised, cross-class solidarity through patronage networks involving the IRGC and semi-state actors, permitting more durable resistance to both internal factionalism and external pressure. Geography strengthens these differences: Iran's regional connectivity

and strategic location facilitate alternative trade and political partnerships, whereas Venezuela's export dependence and relative geopolitical isolation constrain its room for manoeuvre under sanctions.

Institutionally, Venezuela's communal councils and NGOs operate under PSUV and military oversight, with symbolic autonomy but limited durability. Iran's theocratic-republic hybrid presents conditional autonomy to loyal service-oriented groups, facilitating more flexible policy implementation and institutional resistance under pressure. Historically and ideologically, Venezuela's populist model responds to socio-economic inequality and historical political failures, emphasising charismatic leadership and direct welfare mobilisation. Iran's model, shaped by the Islamic Revolution, combines ideological legitimacy with republican mechanisms, creating a deeper institutional and ideological framework for resistance. Venezuela's dependence on personalist leadership and oil rents renders its model more vulnerable to economic shocks and leadership crises, while Iran's diversified institutions, socio-political cohesion, and hybrid governance afford a more robust capacity for endogenous resistance governance.

In sum, the comparative analysis shows that the success or failure of resistance under sanctions is contingent not solely on the intensity or design of external coercion, but on the internal political, economic, social, and geographical architecture of the targeted state. Iran's Moderate Resistance Model emerges from institutionalised cross-class solidarity, diversified economic production, strategic geography, and flexible ideological management. Venezuela's Weak Resistance Model reflects a combination of centralised leadership, economic vulnerability, limited institutional autonomy, and dependence on externally exposed oil structures. By integrating a target-centred perspective, the thesis clarifies how endogenous mechanisms of resistance—mediated through production, solidarity, institutions, and spatial positioning—shape the capacity of states to withstand external pressure. In doing so, the research contributes to sanctions studies by demonstrating that coercion must be analysed relationally rather than unidirectionally, and that resistance is fundamentally conditioned by the historical and structural capacities of sanctioned societies themselves.

The arguments developed throughout this thesis open several avenues for future research in the study of sanctions and resistance. By going beyond the sender-centred framework and establishing a target-centred, endogenous model of resistance, the thesis challenges conventional theories of coercion and highlights the complex interaction between internal structures and external pressures. Future studies can build upon this framework in various ways—empirically, theoretically, comparatively, and geographically—to further advance critical sanctions studies.

First, future empirical research can deepen comprehension of how endogenous resistance governance operates in diverse contexts. While the thesis focused primarily on Iran and Venezuela as archetypal cases of sanctioned states with distinct ideological and institutional configurations, the analytical model can be applied to other countries facing sanctions. Comparative studies could, for example, examine Cuba, North Korea, or Russia, examining how varying degrees of economic diversification, institutional flexibility, geographical positioning, and ideological cohesion influence their respective capacities to resist external sanctions. Such work would help determine whether the Resistance Model possesses broader explanatory power across different regions and historical settings.

Second, future studies can explore the temporal and evolutionary dimensions of resistance. The concept of endogenous resistance governance suggests dynamism: it evolves in response to shifts in international power structures, domestic legitimacy, and societal expectations. Longitudinal studies tracing how targets adapt their governance mechanisms over time would offer valuable insights into the durability and transformation of resistance models. For example, in Iran, the gradual institutionalisation of the Revolutionary Guards' economic activities and the state's pragmatic flexibility in religious and political interpretation reflect an evolving balance between ideology and adaptation. In Venezuela, by contrast, the erosion of state capacity under sustained economic decline shows the temporal fragility of rent-based resistance. Understanding these trajectories can explain how resistance models rise, transform, or collapse in response to internal and external variables.

Third, theoretical developments should further interrogate the normative implications of resistance governance. While the study conceptualised endogenous resistance governance as a non-liberal but secular model that resists external domination while sustaining internal pluralism, future research could examine its broader philosophical foundations. Scholars may, for instance, explore how postcolonial theory, decolonial epistemologies, dependency theory, and critical state theory intersect with resistance governance to generate alternative understandings of sovereignty and legitimacy. This theoretical expansion could also address the moral and ethical paradoxes of resistance—how states justify coercive or illiberal practices under the pretext of anti-imperial struggle, and how societies negotiate the tension between collective survival and individual freedoms. Engaging more deeply with postcolonial knowledge would reinforce the theorisation of the Resistance Model by embedding sanctions within wider histories of empire, uneven development, and epistemic hierarchy, thereby moving beyond Eurocentric assumptions that continue to shape much of the sanctions literature.

Fourth, there is substantial potential for interdisciplinary research linking political science, sociology, anthropology, geography, and economics to assess the lived experiences of sanctions and resistance.

While much of the sanctions literature operates within macroeconomic or strategic frameworks, ethnographic studies can clarify the micro-level mechanisms of adaptation, social solidarity, and moral economy that underpin resistance governance. Examining how ordinary citizens, informal networks, and local institutions respond to scarcity, inflation, or political control under sanctions can provide a grounded understanding of how resistance is experienced, constructed, and contested in everyday life. Attention to geography and spatial inequality would further enrich this examination by revealing how border regions, urban-rural divides, and access to trade corridors shape differential experiences of sanctions within targeted societies. This human-centred perspective would complement and refine the theoretical claims of the current study by showing how macro-political processes are mediated through social relations, local contexts, and cultural practices.

Finally, future research could evaluate the gendered and generational dimensions of resistance governance. Sanctions and external coercion reshape social hierarchies and redistribute both vulnerabilities and responsibilities within households and communities. Women often play critical roles in informal economies, care work, and community mobilisation during crises, yet their contributions remain under-theorised in sanctions research. Likewise, youth movements—such as Iran’s Woman, Life, Freedom protests—demonstrate how generational dynamics influence the moral and political legitimacy of resistance narratives. Incorporating gendered, generational, and postcolonial perspectives would offer a more holistic understanding of how resistance is reproduced, negotiated, or challenged across different segments of society and across different historical experiences of domination and exclusion.

Bibliography:

- Abdikeev, N.M. (2022) 'Import substitution in high-tech industries under external sanctions', *Management sciences*, 12(3), pp. 53–69.
- Abdoli, A. (2020) 'Iran, sanctions, and the COVID-19 crisis', *Journal of Medical Economics*, 23(12), pp. 1461–1465.
- Abdul-Hussain, H. (2009) 'Hezbollah: A State within a State', *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, 8, 68–83.
- Abghari, S. (2007) 'Political Economy of Political Power of the Islamic Regime in Iran', *Journal of Third World Studies*, 24(1), pp. 247–266.
- Abrahamian, E. (1982) *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Abrahamian, E. (2018) *A History of Modern Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Abunimah, A. (2002) *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Acevedo, R., Cirocco, L., and Lorca-Susino, M. (2020) 'Desocialization of taxes: A taxation system proposal for Venezuela', *Estudios Libertarios*, 3, pp. 1–30.
- ACNUDH (2019) 'US Sanctions Violate Human Rights and International Code of Conduct [online]', *ACNUDH*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/05/us-sanctions-violate-human-rights-and-international-code-conduct-un-expert> [Accessed 15 June 2024].
- Agenzia Nova (2025) 'Venezuela Closes 2024 with Inflation Rising to 85 Percent on Year', *Agenzia Nova*. Available at: https://www.agenzianova.com/en/news/Venezuela-closes-2024-with-inflation-up-85-percent-year-on-year/?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- Agheli, B. (1991) *Chronology of Iranian History from the Constitutional Revolution to the Islamic Revolution*. Tehran: Nashr Gofar.
- Agnani, B. and Iza, A. (2011) 'Growth in an oil abundant economy: The case of Venezuela', *Journal of Applied Economics*, 14(1), pp. 61–79.
- Agüero, F. (1993) 'Las fuerzas armadas y el debilitamiento de la democracia en Venezuela', *Revista Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad*, 8(2).
- Ahmadi, S. (2023) 'Uncertain Cures: The Medical Marketplace in Pahlavi Iran', *Iranian Studies*, 56(2), pp. 345–363.
- Ahmadian, H. (2022) *The Battle of the Ayatollahs in Iran: The United States, Foreign Policy, and Political Rivalry since 1979*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Ahmadinejad, M. (2024) 'Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's oil slogan — "Oil for the People" — meant "justice in the distribution of oil revenues"', *Khabar Online*. Available at: <https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1992699/-شعار-نفتی-محمود-احمدی-نژاد-نفت-برای-مردم-یعنی-عدالت-در-توزیع> [Accessed 14 Sep 2025].
- Ahtisaari, M. (1991) *Report to the Secretary-General on Humanitarian Needs in Kuwait and Iraq in the Immediate Post-Crisis Environment*, United Nations, Martti Ahtisaari. Available at: <https://www.un.org/Depts/oip/background/reports/s22366.pdf> [Accessed 25 Sep 2025].
- Al Jazeera (2024a) 'Iran Jails Journalist Reza Valizadeh for 'Hostile' US Collaboration', *Al Jazeera*. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/14/leading-activist-arrested-in-iran-daughter-lawyer> [Accessed 21 Aug 2025].
- Al Jazeera (2024b) 'Helicopter Crash Kills Raisi: Are Sanctions behind Iran's Aviation Crisis?'. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/20/helicopter-crash-kills-raisi-are-sanctions-behind-irans-aviation-crisis> [Accessed 20 Feb 2025].
- Alam, S. (2001) 'Iran's hydrocarbon profile: Production, trade and trend', *Strategic Analysis*, 25(1), pp. 119–134.
- Alaszewski, A. (2006) *Using Diaries for Social Research*. London: Sage.

- Alena Douhan (2021) 'UN Special Rapporteur's Report on Impact of US Blockade Against Venezuela', *Venezuelanalysis*. Available at: <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/15126/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Alexander, J.C. (1998) *Real Civil Societies: Dilemmas of Institutionalisation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Alexander, R.J. (1964) *The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Alinejad, M. (2022) 'Protests present Iran with "Berlin Wall" moment, says activist targeted by regime', *The Times of Israel*, 8 Oct. Available at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/protests-present-iran-with-berlin-wall-moment-says-activist-targeted-by-regime/> [Accessed 5 Oct 2025].
- Al-Kassimi, K. (2021) 'A "New Middle East" Following 9/11 and the "Arab Spring" of 2011?—(Neo)-Orientalist Imaginaries Rejuvenate the (Temporal) Inclusive Exclusion Character of Jus Gentium', *Laws*, 10(2), p. 29.
- Allen, S.H. (2005) 'The Determinants of Economic Sanctions Success and Failure', *International Interactions*, 31(2), pp. 117–138.
- Alnasrawi, A. (2001) 'Iraq: economic sanctions and consequences, 1990–2000', *Third World Quarterly*, 22(2), pp. 205–218.
- Alqarout, A. (2025) 'Israel's Economy Can't Survive a Long War with Iran - and Trump Knows It', *Middle East Eye*. Available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/iran-dismantles-israels-war-economy-trump-cashes-in> [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- Álvarez, Á.E. (2008) 'Venezuela: ¿la revolución pierde su encanto?', *Revista de ciencia política (Santiago)*, 28(1), pp. 405–432.
- Alzugaray, C. (2017) 'La política exterior de Cuba en la era Trump', *Pensamiento Propio*, 45, pp. 205–219.
- Amerson, R. (1995) *How Democracy Triumphed over Dictatorship: Public Diplomacy in Venezuela*. Washington, DC: The American University Press.
- Amini, P. (2002) 'A Single Party State in Iran, 1975–78: The Rastakhiz Party - the Final Attempt by the Shah to Consolidate his Political Base', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 38(1), pp. 131–168.
- Amnesty International (1975) 'Amnesty International Annual Report 1974–1975, 1974–1975'. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/001/1975/en/> [Accessed 10 Aug 2024].
- Amnesty International (2014) 'Venezuela: Human Rights at Risk amid Protests', *Amnesty International*, London. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/amr530092014en.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].
- Amnesty International (2019) 'Q&A on the Human Rights Crisis in Venezuela', *Amnesty International*. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/AMR5398092019ENGLISH.pdf> [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- Amuzegar, J. (1992) 'The Iranian Economy before and after the Revolution', *Middle East Journal*, 46(3), pp. 413–425.
- Anckar, C. (2008) 'On the Applicability of the Most Similar Systems Design and the Most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(5), pp. 389–401. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401552>.
- Anderson, I.G. and Lee, J.R.E. (2013) 'Taking Professor Gluckman seriously: the case of participant observation', *Ethnographic Studies*, 13, pp. 282–304. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5449/IDSLU-001091507>.
- Anderson, P. (1992) 'Michael Mann's Sociology of Power', in *A Zone of Engagement*. London: Verso, pp. 73–74.
- Ansari, A.M. (1998) *Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the Myth of Imperial Authority*, Ph.D Thesis [School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). University of London].
- Ansari, A.M. (2007) *Modern Iran: The Pahlavis and After*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

- Anthonsen, M. and Lindvall, J. (2009) 'Party Competition and the Resilience of Corporatism', *Government and Opposition*, 44(2), pp. 167–187. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2009.01281.x>.
- Antillano, A. (2010) 'Algunas notas sobre poder popular y socialismo en el proceso bolivariano', in *Democracia, Participación y Socialismo. Bolivia– Ecuador–Venezuela*, Quito: Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo.
- Aranda, S. (1977) *Economía venezolana*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI.
- Arms Control Association (N.d.) 'IAEA Report Confirms Iran's Compliance with the JCPOA'. Available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2018-06-08/iaea-report-confirms-irans-compliance-jcpoa>. [Accessed 10 Nov 2024].
- Aron, R., Howard, R., and Fox, A.B. (1973) *International Relations: A Theory of Peace and War*. Translated by Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox. New Jersey: Doubleday.
- Arreguín-Toft, I. (2012) 'Contemporary asymmetric conflict theory in historical perspective', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24(4), pp. 635–657.
- Art, R.J. and Greenhill, K.M. (2015) *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*. Lanham, MD: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Ashraf, A. (1988) 'Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 1(4), pp. 538–567.
- Askari, H.G., Forrer, J., Teegen, H., and Yang, J. (2003) *Economic Sanctions: Examining Their Philosophy and Efficacy*. Washington, DC: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Astapova, A., Navumau, V., Nizhnikau, R., and Polishchuk, L. (2022) 'Authoritarian Cooptation of Civil Society: The Case of Belarus', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 74(1), pp. 1–30. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2021.2009773>.
- Azad News Agency (2015) 'Iran She Pehpad Shenasi Beh Komiteh-Haye Mardami Iraq Tahvil Dad [Iran Provided Iraq with Three Surveillance Drones]'. Available at: <http://www.ana.ir/news/37518>. [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- Azadi, P. (2019) *Governance and Development in Iran*, Stanford University-Stanford Iran 2040. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- Azzellini, D. (2018) 'The Commune in Venezuela: A Utopian Prefiguration', in *In Utopias in Latin America Past and Present*, Sussex Academic Press, pp. 235–261.
- Badawi, T. (2015) 'Iran's Political Economy since the Revolution', *Siyasat Arabiya*. Available at: https://siyasatarabiya.dohainstitute.org/ar/issue017/Pages/Siyassat17-2015_Badaoui.pdf [Accessed 21 Mar 2025].
- Bahar, D. and Hausmann, R. (2025) 'Sanctions on Venezuela Are Not Driving Migration to the US Southwest Border: An Empirical Assessment', *CGD Note* 382.
- Bajoghli, N., Nasr, V., Salehi-Isfahani, D., and Vaez, A. (2024) *How Sanctions Work: Iran and the Impact of Economic Warfare*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Baker, M. (2025) 'Venezuela - Entró en vigencia la Ley sobre Organizaciones no Gubernamentales y Sociales Sin Fines de Lucro', *Baker McKenzie*. Available at: https://insightplus.bakermckenzie.com/bm/attachment_dw.action?attkey=zUd%2Bwm4a2Oq6zko4Y1yddO8s0XoXMdZjyCDeSzbw10jsKGtZhTY%2B9IToxmjyJEoiUMu9Hlr7rQmbovUvN8MBDbPc6R9SGVE%3D&nav=q48r6vwiLBb9Sg9VNRbiEsXBMs4MQIFznci4%2FjoVny536BPfdUhH8GNJ78vgQuJ8kfY5Pdd%2F6aM%3D&attdocparam=0BfT1J77wds47%2BN0nrd7edELgVUGtJZNtcsE7GOryuc0re7C1SJa87aopmu8tYF82HptjbyA%2FzCeqA%3D%3D&fromContentView=1 [Accessed 13 Nov 2024].
- Bakhshandeh, E. (2012) *Politics of Iran–West Relations within the Context of Iranian Occidentalism: Image of the West in the Iranian Press during Reformism (1997–2001) and Conservatism (2005–2009)*, Ph.D Thesis, [School of Media, Arts and Design. University of Westminster]
- Baldwin, D.A. and Kapstein, E.B. (2020) *Economic Statecraft*, New edition. ed, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Bale, J.M. (2009) 'Islamism and Totalitarianism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 10(2), pp. 73–96. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14690760903371313>.
- Balint, P. (2015) 'Identity Claims: Why Liberal Neutrality is the Solution, Not the Problem', *Political Studies*, 63(2), pp. 495–509. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12086>.
- Bapat, N.A. and Morgan, T.C. (2009) 'Multilateral versus unilateral sanctions reconsidered: A test using new data' *International Studies Quarterly*, 53(4), pp. 1075–1094.
- Bapat, N.A., Heinrich, T., Kobayashi, Y., and Morgan, T.C. (2013) 'Determinants of Sanctions Effectiveness: Sensitivity Analysis Using New Data', *International Interactions*, 39(1), pp. 79–98. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2013.751298>.
- Barardehi, I.H., Milani, M.A., and Soltani, S. (2024a) 'Economic Sanctions and the Material Well-being of Iranian Older Adults: Do Pensions Make a Difference?', *Social Policy and Society*, pp. 1–17. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746423000404>.
- Barber, J. (1979) 'Economic Sanctions as a Policy Instrument', *International Affairs*, 55(3), pp. 367–384. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2615145>.
- Barrett, M. and Zani, B. (eds.), 2014. *Political and Civic Engagement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Barrientos, A. and Santibáñez, C. (2009) 'New Forms of Social Assistance and the Evolution of Social Protection in Latin America', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 41(1), pp. 1–26. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X08005099>.
- Batmanghelidj, E. (2021) 'The Ins and Outs of Iranian Industrial Resilience under Sanctions', *The Muslim World*, 111(1), pp. 96–112. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12374>.
- Batmanghelidj, E. (2024a) 'Adaptation in the Sanctioned Economy | Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj & Barzin Jafartash', *Phenomenal World*. Available at: <https://www.phenomenalworld.org/analysis/sanctions-and-manufacturing/> [Accessed 21 Mar 2025].
- Batmanghelidj, E. (2024b) 'Resistance is simple, resilience is complex: sanctions and the composition of Iranian trade', *Middle East Development Journal*, 16(2), pp. 220–238. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17938120.2024.2417624>.
- Becko, J.S. (2024) 'A theory of economic sanctions as terms-of-trade manipulation', *Journal of International Economics*, 150. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinteco.2024.103898>.
- Behdad, S. and Nomani, F. (2009) 'What a revolution! Thirty years of social class reshuffling in Iran', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 29(1), pp. 84–104.
- Behestani, M. and Hedayati Shahidani, M. (2015) 'Twin pillars policy: Engagement of US-Iran foreign affairs during the last two decades of pahlavi dynasty.', *Asian Social Science*, 11(2), pp. 20–31.
- Bendix, R. (1998) *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*. London and New York: Psychology Press.
- Berger, P.L. (2011) *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Open Road Media.
- Bermeo, N. (1990) 'Rethinking Regime Change', *Comparative Politics*, 22(3), pp. 359–377. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/421966>.
- Bharier, J. (1971) *Economic Development in Iran, 1900-1970*. London. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Biernacki, P. and Waldorf, D. (1981) 'Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling', *Sociological Methods & Research*, 10(2), pp. 141–163. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/004912418101000205>.
- Biersteker, T., van Bergeijk, P.A.G., Bazoobandi, S., Connolly, R., Giumelli, F., Portela, C., Secrieru, S., and Seeberg, P. (2015) *How and When Do Sanctions Work?: The Evidence*, On target?, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).
- Bill, J.A. (1963) 'The social and economic foundations of power in contemporary Iran', *Middle East Journal*, 17(4). pp. 400–418.

- Bird, C. (2002) *Neither East Nor West: One Woman's Journey Through the Islamic Republic of Iran*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Blank, C.A. (2007) 'Evaluación de impacto y misiones sociales: una aproximación general', *Revista Venezolana de Sociología y Antropología*, 17(48), pp. 58–95.
- Blinken, A. (2023) 'Blinken Says No Direct Evidence That Iran Was Involved in the Hamas Attack on Israel', *NBC News*. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/blinken-says-no-direct-evidence-iran-was-involved-hamas-attack-israel-rcna120110> [Accessed 5 Nov 2024].
- Bob, Y.J. and Evyatar, I. (2023) *Target Tebran: How Israel Is Using Sabotage, Cyberwarfare, Assassination—and Secret Diplomacy—to Stop a Nuclear Iran and Create a New Middle East*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Bogaards, M. (2009a) 'How to classify hybrid regimes? Defective democracy and electoral authoritarianism', *Democratization*, 16(2), pp. 399–423. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340902777800>.
- Bogaards, M. (2009b) 'How to classify hybrid regimes? Defective democracy and electoral authoritarianism', *Democratization*, 16(2), pp. 399–423. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340902777800>.
- Bogdanor, V. (1987) *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Institutions*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Boroujerdi, M. (2012) 'Triumphs and travails of authoritarian modernisation in Iran.', in *The Making of Modern Iran*, pp. 146–154.
- Boroumand, L. (2020) 'Iranians Turn Away from the Islamic Republic', *Journal of Democracy*, 31.(1), pp. 169–181.
- Botía, A. (2005) 'Círculos Bolivarianos Parecen Burbujas En El Limbo', *Últimas Noticias*. Available at: <https://en.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/> [Accessed 5 Dec 2024].
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77–101. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.
- Brenner, R. (2006) 'From Theory to History: "The European Dynamic" or feudalism to capitalism?', in *An Anatomy of Power: The Social Theory of Michael Mann*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.189–232.
- Brew, G. (2022) *Petroleum and Progress in Iran: Oil, Development, and the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brewer-Carias, A.R. (2004) 'Centralized Federalism in Venezuela', *Duquesne Law Review*, 43(4), pp. 629–644.
- Briceño-Ruiz, J. (2019) 'The Crisis in Venezuela: A New Chapter, or the Final Chapter?', *Latin American Policy*, 10(1), pp. 180–189. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/lamp.12165>.
- Briguglio, L., Cordina, G., Farrugia, N., and Vella, S. (2005) 'Conceptualising and measuring economic resilience', in Chand, S., ed., *Pacific Islands Regional Integration and Governance*, ANU Press. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.22459/PIRIG.11.2005.03>.
- British Petroleum (2023) 'Energy Economics', *bp global*. Available at: <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/energy-economics.html> [Accessed 18 Sep 2025].
- Bromideh, A.A. (2011) 'The widespread challenges of NGOs in developing countries: Case studies from Iran', *International NGO Journal*, 6(9), pp. 197–202.
- Brooks, R.A. (2002) 'Sanctions and Regime Type: What Works, and When?', *Security Studies*, 11(4), pp. 1–50. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/714005349>.
- Brown, J. (2018) *Democratization and the Radical-Left in Latin America: Toward a Post-Neoliberal Citizenship Regime? Lessons from Bolivia and Venezuela*, Ph.D Thesis, [Maynooth University].
- Browne, R. (2017) 'Pentagon Agrees \$12 Billion Jet Deal with Qatar'. CNN Politics. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/14/politics/qatar-f35-trump-pentagon> [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- Brumberg, D. (2002) 'Democratization in the Arab world? The trap of liberalized autocracy', *Journal of democracy*, 13(4), pp. 56–68.

- Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bull, B. and Rosales, A. (2020) 'The crisis in Venezuela: Drivers, transitions, and pathways', *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, (109), pp. 1–20.
- Burbach, R. and Piñeiro, C. (2007) 'Venezuela's Participatory Socialism', *Socialism and Democracy*, 21(3), pp. 181–200. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300701599916>.
- Burggraaff, W. (1995) 'More than failed coups: The crisis in Venezuelan civil-military relations', *Lessons of the Venezuelan experience*, pp. 54–78.
- Buxton, J. (2003) 'Economic policy and the rise of Hugo Chávez', *Venezuelan politics in the Chávez Era: Class, polarization, and conflict*, pp. 113–30.
- Buxton, J. (2021) 'Continuity and change in Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution', in *Revolutions*, Routledge.
- Cagan, P. (1956) 'Monetary Regimes and Inflation', in *Studies in the Quantity Theory of Money*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Calcaño, L.G. (2022) 'La autocratización de Venezuela y su impacto en la sociedad civil', *Desacatos: Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, pp. 48–63.
- Calvo, G.A. (2012) *The Price Theory of Money, Prospero's Liquidity Trap, and Sudden Stop: Back to Basics and Back*. NBER Working Paper No. 18285. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Cannon, B. (2008) 'Class/Race Polarisation in Venezuela and the Electoral Success of Hugo Chavez: A Break with the past or the Song Remains the Same?', *Third World Quarterly*, 29(4), pp. 731–748.
- Cannon, B. (2013) *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution: Populism and Democracy in a Globalised Age*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cannon, B. (2014) 'As Clear as MUD: Characteristics, Objectives, and Strategies of the Opposition in Bolivarian Venezuela', *Latin American Politics and Society*, 56(4), pp. 49–70.
- Cannon, B. and Kirby, P. (2012) *Civil Society and the State in Left-Led Latin America: Challenges and Limitations to Democratization*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Cannon, Barry. and Hume, M. (2013) 'Civil society-state relations in left-led Central America: the cases of El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua', in *Civil Society and the State in Left-Led Latin America: Challenges and Limitations to Democratization*. London: Zed Books.
- Cantó, O. and Ruiz, D.O. (2015) 'The Contribution of Income Mobility to Economic Insecurity in the US and Spain during the Great Recession', in Garner, T.I. and Short, K.S., eds., *Research on Economic Inequality*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 109–152. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1049-258520150000023004>.
- Cardozo, A. and Niño, C. (2023) 'Iran and Venezuela: From peripheral realism to resilient diplomacy (1999-2023)', *Revista Relaciones Internacionales*, 96(1), pp. 165–190. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.15359/ri.96.1.6>.
- Carey, J.P.C. and Carey, A.G. (1976) 'Iranian Agriculture and Its Development: 1952–1973', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 7(3), pp. 359–382. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074380002571X>.
- Carmody, M. (2019) 'What Caused Hyperinflation in Venezuela: A Rare Blend of Public Ineptitude and Private Enterprise', *The Conversation*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/what-caused-hyperinflation-in-venezuela-a-rare-blend-of-public-ineptitude-and-private-enterprise-102483> [Accessed 11 June 2025].
- Carolyn, H. (2010) 'Beyond Civil Society: An Organizational Perspective on State–NGO Relations in the People's Republic of China', *Journal of Civil Society*, 6(3), pp. 259–277.
- Carothers, T. (2002) 'The end of the transition paradigm', *Journal of democracy*, 13(1), pp. 5–21.
- Carr, E.H. (2016) *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: Reissued with a New Preface from Michael Cox*. London: Springer.

- Carvalho, R. (2019) 'China in Latin America: partner or predator?', *South China Morning Post*, 25 May. Available at: <https://multimedia.scmp.com/week-asia/article/3011618/beijing-conquest-latin-america/index.html> [Accessed 4 Nov 2025].
- Casanova, J. (1994) *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Caselli, I. (2014) 'A visit to Hugo Chavez's socialist city in Venezuela', *BBC News*, 10 Jun. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-27712230> [Accessed 2 Sep 2025].
- Cassell, C. and Symon, G. (Eds.) (2004) 'Using templates in the thematic analysis of text', in *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*, London; Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, pp. 256–270.
- Cassidy, J. (2013) 'Venezuela's "Resource Curse" Will Outlive Hugo Chávez', *The New Yorker*, 6 Mar. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/john-cassidy/venezuelas-resource-curse-will-outlive-hugo-chvez> [Accessed 2 Sep 2025].
- Castillo, A. (2003) 'Breaking Democracy: Venezuela's Media Coup', *Media International Australia*, 108(1), pp. 145–156. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X0310800114>.
- Center for Historical Documents Studies of the Ministry of Intelligence (2000) 'Press of the Pahlavi Era'. *Center for Historical Documents Studies*, p. 6.
- Central Bank of Iran (various years) 'Annual Report and Balance Sheet', *Central Bank of Iran*, Tehran.
- Cervantes, B.V.M. de (2025) 'Constitución de la República de Venezuela', 23 enero 1961, *Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes*. Available at: <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/constitucion-de-la-republica-de-venezuela-23-enero-1961/html/> [Accessed 13 May 2025].
- Chacín, N.A. (2003) 'Pobreza y asistencialismo en Venezuela.', *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 9(3), pp. 431–458.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000) *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Chaney, P. (2016) 'How does single party dominance influence civil society organisations' engagement strategies? Exploratory analysis of participative mainstreaming in a "regional" European polity', *Public Policy and Administration*, 31(2), pp. 122–14. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076715581876>.
- Charmaz, K. (2000) 'Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods.', in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. California: SAGE Publications.
- Charrad, M.M. and Adams, J. (2011) 'Introduction: Patrimonialism, Past and Present', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 636(1), pp. 6–15. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716211402286>.
- Chávez, H. (2007) 'Aló Presidente', *Todochavez*. Available at: <http://www.todochavez.gob.ve/todochavez/4269-alo-presidente-n-290> [Accessed 06 Dec 2024].
- Cheatham, D.R., Amelia (2024) 'Venezuela: The Rise and Fall of a Petrostate', *Council on Foreign Relations*. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/background/venezuela-crisis> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Chehabi, H.E. (1991a) 'Religion and Politics in Iran: How Theocratic Is the Islamic Republic?', *Daedalus*, 120(3), pp. 69–91.
- Chehabi, H.E. (1991b) 'Religion and Politics in Iran: How Theocratic Is the Islamic Republic?', *Daedalus*, 120(3), pp. 69–91.
- Chehabi, H.E. (1998) 'The Pahlavi Period', *Iranian Studies*, 31(3/4), pp. 495–502.
- Cheraghali, A.M. (2013) 'Impacts of international sanctions on Iranian pharmaceutical market', *DARU Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 21(1), pp. 64. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/2008-2231-21-64>.
- Chomsky, N. (1991) *Deterring Democracy*, London: Vintage.
- Chomsky, N. (1992) *Deterring Democracy*, New York: Hill and Wang.

- Cipriani, M., Goldberg, L.S., and La Spada, G. (2023) 'Financial Sanctions, SWIFT, and the Architecture of the International Payment System', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 37(1), pp. 31–52. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.37.1.31>.
- Collins, J.M. (1973) *Principles and Practices; Grand Strategy*. London: Naval Institute Press.
- Conaghan, C.M. (2016) 'Delegative Democracy Revisited: Ecuador Under Correa', *Journal of Democracy*, 27(3), pp. 109–118.
- Constituent Assembly (1999) 'Constitución de la república bolivariana de venezuela 1999'. Available at: <https://sapi.gob.ve/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CONSTITUCION.pdf> [Accessed 23 Feb 2024].
- Cordesman, A.H., 2019. *The Iranian Missile Challenge*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
- Córdova, A. (1963) 'La estructura económica tradicional y el impacto petrolero en Venezuela', *Economía y Ciencias Sociales: Revista Trimestral de la Facultad de Economía de la Universidad Central de Venezuela*, 5(1), pp. 7–28.
- Cornwall, A. and Brock, K. (2005) 'Beyond Buzzwords: "Poverty Reduction", "Participation" and "Empowerment" in Development Policy', *Development Studies Bulletin*, 26(6), pp. 1043–1056.
- Coronil, F. (1997) *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*. University of Chicago Press.
- Corrales, J. (2020a) 'Authoritarian Survival: Why Maduro Hasn't Fallen', *Journal of Democracy*, 31(3), pp. 39–53.
- Corrales, J. (2020b) 'Democratic backsliding through electoral irregularities: The case of Venezuela', *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, (109), pp. 41–65.
- Corrales, J. (2023) *Autocracy Rising: How Venezuela Transitioned to Authoritarianism*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- Corrales, J. and Kronick, D. (2025) 'How Maduro Stole Venezuela's Vote', *Journal of Democracy*, 36(1), pp. 36–49.
- Corti, L. and Thompson, P. (2004) 'The Secondary Analysis of Archived Qualitative Data', in *Qualitative Research Practice*, London: Sage, pp. 327–343.
- Cortright, D. and Lopez, G.A. (2000) *The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781685858490>.
- Coville, T. (2017) 'The Economic Activities of the Pasdaran', *Revue internationale des études du développement*, (229), pp. 91–111.
- Cowan, R. and Foray, D. (2002) 'Evolutionary economics and the counterfactual threat: on the nature and role of counterfactual history as an empirical tool in economics', *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, 12(5), pp. 539–562.
- Cox, R.W. (1981) 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium*, 10(2), pp. 126–155. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298810100020501>.
- Cox, R.W. (1992) 'Multilateralism and world order', *Review of International Studies*, 18(2), pp. 161–180. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210500118832>.
- Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D. (2017) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cronin, S. (2007) *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910–1926*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Cumbers, A. (2012) *Reclaiming Public Ownership*, London: Zed Books.
- Daghagheleh, A. (2018) 'Ambivalent Voting Behavior: Ideology, Efficacy, and the Socioeconomic Dynamic of Voter Turnout in Iran, 1997–2005', *Sociological Forum*, 33(4), pp. 1023–1044. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12459>.
- Daguerre, A. (2011) 'Antipoverty Programmes in Venezuela', *Journal of Social Policy*, 40(4), pp. 835–852. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279411000018>.

- Dahl, R. (1985) *A Preface to Economic Democracy* - Robert A. Dahl - Google Books. Cambridge: Cambridge: Polity.
- Dahl, R.A. (2007) 'The concept of power', *Behavioral Science*, 2(3), pp. 201–215. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830020303>.
- Daneshpour, M. and Firooz, S.H. (2022) 'Women, Life, Freedom: The New Unveiling of Feminism', *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 34(3), pp. 390–394.
- Daniel, B.K. (2019) 'What constitutes a good qualitative research study? Fundamental dimensions and indicators of rigour in qualitative research: The TACT framework', in *In Proceedings of the European Conference of Research Methods for Business & Management Studies*, pp. 101–108.
- Daoudi, M.S. (1983) *Economic Sanctions, Ideals and Experience, Economic sanctions, ideals and experience*. London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Davenport, K. (2023) 'UN Security Council Resolutions on Iran,' Arms Control Association'. Available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/un-security-council-resolutions-iran>. [Accessed 6 Nov 2024].
- Davis, N.J. and Robinson, R.V. (2006) 'The Egalitarian Face of Islamic Orthodoxy: Support for Islamic Law and Economic Justice in Seven Muslim-Majority Nations', *American Sociological Review*, 71(2), pp. 167–190. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240607100201>.
- Davis, S. and Ness, I. (2021) *Sanctions as War: Anti-Imperialist Perspectives on American Geo-Economic Strategy*. Boston: BRILL.
- De Fina, A. (2019) 'The ethnographic interview', in *In the Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Ethnography*., London: Routledge.
- De Mesquita, B.B., Morrow, J.D., Siverson, R.M., and Smith, A. (1999) 'An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace', *American Political Science Review*, 93(4), pp. 791–807. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2586113>.
- Dekker, E. (2016) 'Corporatism and civil society. Available at SSRN 2832328.', *Mercatus Center at Department of Economics*. Available at: <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm?abstractid=2832328>.
- D'Elia, Y. (N.d.) 'Los modelos de política social en Venezuela: universalidad vs. asistencialismo: ILDIS (2006).', *Thais Maingón (coordinadora), Balance y perspectivas de la política social en Venezuela*.
- Demir, F. and Tabrizy, S.S. (2022) 'Gendered effects of sanctions on manufacturing employment: Evidence from Iran', *Review of Development Economics*, 26(4), pp. 2040–2069. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/rode.12917>.
- Denzin, N.K. (2009) 'The elephant in the living room: or extending the conversation about the politics of evidence', *Qualitative Research*, 9(2), pp. 139–160. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794108098034>.
- Department of State (1947) 'Treaties and Other International Acts, Series 1650–1699' [Accessed 26 Jul 2025].
- Department of the Treasury (2020) 'Venezuela Sanctions Regulations 31 C.F.R. Part 591'. Available at: <https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/33126/download?inline> [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- Diamond, L. (1994) 'Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation', *Journal of Democracy*, 5(3), pp. 4–17.
- Diamond, L. (1999) *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Diamond, L. (2002) 'Elections without democracy: Thinking about hybrid regimes', *Journal of democracy*, 13(2), pp. 21–35.
- Ding, Y. (1998) 'Corporatism and Civil Society in China: An Overview of the Debate in Recent Years', *China Information*, 12(4), pp. 44–67. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X9801200403>.
- Dizaji, S.F. (2021) 'The impact of sanctions on the banking system: new evidence from Iran', in *Research Handbook on Economic Sanctions*, Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 330–350. Available at:

<https://www.elgaronline.com/abstract/edcoll/9781839102714/9781839102714.00027.xml>
[Accessed 21 Mar 2025].

- Domhoff, G.W. (1993) 'The American Power Structure', in *Power In Modern Societies*. Boulder: Routledge.
- Dorfleitner, G., Hornuf, L., Schmitt, M., and Weber, M. (2017) *The Fintech Market in Germany*. London: Springer International Publishing.
- Douhan, A. (2021) 'Unilateral Sanctions Hurt All, Especially Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups – UN Human Rights Expert'. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/12/unilateralsanctions-hurt-all-especially-women-children-and-other-vulnerable> [Accessed 14 Mar 2025].
- Doxey, M.P. (1987) *International Sanctions in Contemporary Perspective*. New York: Springer.
- Drezner, D.W. (1999) *The sanctions paradox: Economic statecraft and international relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Drezner, D.W. (2011) 'Sanctions Sometimes Smart: Targeted Sanctions in Theory and Practice: Sanctions Sometimes Smart', *International Studies Review*, 13(1), pp. 96–108. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2010.01001.x>.
- Drury, A.C. (1998) 'Revisiting Economic Sanctions Reconsidered', *Journal of Peace Research*, 35(4), pp. 497–509. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343398035004006>.
- Drury, A.C. (200) 'How and whom the US president sanctions: A time-series cross-section analysis of us sanction decisions and characteristics'. In *Sanctions as Economic Statecraft: Theory and Practice*, pp. 17–36. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Duffy, M. (2015) '(Re)conceptualising democracy: the limitations of benchmarks based on neoliberal democracy and the need for alternatives', *Third World Quarterly*, 36(8), pp. 1472–1492. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1026320>.
- Dupuy, K., Ron, J., and Prakash, A. (2016) 'Hands Off My Regime! Governments' Restrictions on Foreign Aid to Non-Governmental Organizations in Poor and Middle-Income Countries', *World Development*, 84, pp. 299–311. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2016.02.001>.
- Early, B.R. and Schulzke, M. (2020) 'Outsourcing moral responsibility: The politics of private sanctions', *International Studies Quarterly*, 64(4), pp. 857–869.
- EcoIran (2024) 'More than 5 Million Iranians Are Beneficiaries of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee'. Available at: <https://ecoiran.com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-%DA%AF%D8%B0%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF-117/55915-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%BA-%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%AF%D8%AC%D9%88%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%AA%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF> [Accessed 3 Dec 2024].
- Edwards, M. (2014) *Civil Society*, 4th Edition. ed, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Edwards, M. and Hulme, D. (1996) *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*. London: Kumarian Press.
- EIA (2025) 'U.S. Crude Oil First Purchase Price (Dollars per Barrel)', *US Energy Information Administration*. Available at: https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?f=m&n=p&s=f000000__3&utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 2 Sep 2025].
- Eisenstadt, M. (2015) 'Iran and Iraq', *The Washington Institute's for Near East Policy*. Available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org> [Accessed 26 Oct 2024].

- Elahi, B. and Karim, P.M. (2011) 'Introduction: Iranian Diaspora', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 31(2), pp. 381–387.
- Embassies (N/d) 'Venezuela Visa Exemption: Countries That Do Not Require a Visa to Enter Venezuela'. Available at: https://embassies.net/venezuela-visa-exemption?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 15 Sep 2025].
- Encarnacion, O.G. (2002) 'Venezuela's "Civil Society Coup"', *World Policy Journal*, 19(2), pp. 38–48.
- ENCOVI (2021) 'Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida 2021'. Available at: <https://www.proyectoencovi.com/>.
- Epstein, J.M., 2006. *Generative social science: Studies in agent-based computational modeling*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Escribà-Folch, A. and Wright, J. (2010) 'Dealing with tyranny: International sanctions and the survival of authoritarian rulers', *International studies quarterly*, 54(2), pp. 335–359.
- Escribà-Folch, A. (2012) 'Authoritarian Responses to Foreign Pressure: Spending, Repression, and Sanctions', *Comparative Political Studies*, 45(6), pp. 683–713. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414011427883>.
- Etzioni, A. (1968) *The Active Society*, London: Collier-Macmillan.
- Evans, P. (1997) *State-Society Synergy: Government and Social Capital in Development*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Ewell, J. (1996) *Venezuela and the United States: From Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Eyler, R. (2007) *Economic Sanctions: International Policy and Political Economy at Work*. London: Springer.
- Ezzati, M. and Mehrabadi, A.K. (2017) 'The effect of economic sanctions from the banking channels (Monetary) on the industrial production of Iran', *Journal of Economic & Management Perspectives*, 11(3), pp. 801–809.
- Fadavi, A. (2020) 'The Cost of Presence in the Region Is under \$20 Billion; Ayatollah Khamenei's Aide: We Will Reclaim the Funds', *BBC*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-54315967> [Accessed 16 Mar 2025].
- FA.gov (2024) 'U.S. Foreign Assistance By Country', *FA.gov*. Available at: <https://foreignassistance.gov/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Fairbanks, S.C. (1998) 'Theocracy versus Democracy: Iran Considers Political Parties', *Middle East Journal*, 52(1), pp. 17–31.
- Farge, E. (2022) 'Iran Situation critical with More than 300 Killed -UN Rights Chief', *Reuters*. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-situation-critical-with-more-than-300-killed-un-rights-chief-2022-11-22/> [Accessed 4 Oct 2025].
- Fars News Agency (2016) 'IRGC UAV Model Is Equipped with Satellite Connection System'. Available at: www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13941219001306. [Accessed 13 Aug 2025].
- Farsoun, S.K. and Mashayekhi, M. (1992) *Introduction: Iran's Political Culture*. In *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*. London: Routledge.
- Farzanegan, M.R. (2014) 'Military Spending and Economic Growth: The Case of Iran', *Defence and Peace Economics*, 25(3), pp. 247–269. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2012.723160>.
- Farzanegan, M.R. and Alaedini, P. (2016) *Economic Welfare and Inequality in Iran*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Farzanegan, M.R. and Habibpour, M.M. (2017) 'Resource rents distribution, income inequality and poverty in Iran', *Energy Economics*, 66, pp. 35–42. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eneco.2017.05.029>.
- Fathollah-Nejad, A. (2014) 'Why sanctions against Iran are counterproductive: Conflict resolution and state–society relations', *International Journal*, 69(1), pp. 48–65.

- Fedecámaras (2020) 'Manifiesto bipartito por el trabajo decente y productivo y la justicia social'. Available at: <https://www.fedecamaras.org.ve/manifiesto-bipartito-por-el-trabajo-decente-y-productivo-y-la-justicia-social/> [Accessed 17 Jan 2025].
- Fernández, F.M. and Medina, V.I. (2021) 'Mapeo de las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil en Venezuela'. Available at: <https://equilibriumcende.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Mapeo-de-las-Organizaciones-de-la-Sociedad-Civil-en-Venezuela-Una-caracterizacion-del-tercer-sector-venezolano.-Sectro-piloto-Educacion-e-investigacion.pdf> [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- Flick, U. (2018) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Flikke, G. (2016) 'Resurgent authoritarianism: the case of Russia's new NGO legislation', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 32(2), pp. 103-131.
- Fonseca, B., Polga-Hecimovich, J., and Trinkunas, H.A. (2006) 'Venezuelan Military Culture', *Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy*. Available at: https://www.johnpolga.com/uploads/1/8/1/0/18107767/venezuelan_military_culture.pdf [Accessed 14 Feb 2024].
- Forouhi, M.H. (2025) 'Criminal Liability of Individuals Who Send Content to Iran International: Examining the Legal Basis, Ambiguities, and Gaps'. Available at: <https://civilica.com/note/13420/> [Accessed 21 Aug 2025].
- Fossi, V. (1984) 'Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda: La Desordenada Evolución Hacia un País de Metropolis', in *El Caso Venezuela: Una Ilusión de Armonía*, Caracas: Ediciones IESA.
- Freedman, L. and Karsh, E. (1993) *The Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fröhlich, C. and Skokova, Y. (2020) 'Two for One: Public Welfare and Regime Legitimacy Through State Funding for CSOs in Russia', *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 31(4), pp. 698-709.
- Fukuyama, F. (2013) 'What Is Governance?', *Governance*, 26(3), pp. 347-368. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12035>.
- Fukuyama, F. (2017) *State Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*. London: Profile Books.
- Fumarola, A., 2021. 'The sanction-policy linkage from the perspective of citizens and the role of the party system'. *Acta Politica*, 56(1), pp. 181-204.
- Galtung, J. (1967) 'On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions, With Examples from the Case of Rhodesia', *World Politics*, 19(3), pp. 378-416. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009785>.
- Gamboa, L. (2017) 'Opposition at the Margins: Strategies against the Erosion of Democracy in Colombia and Venezuela', *Comparative Politics*, 49(4), pp. 457-477. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041517821273044>.
- Garay Vera, C. (N.d.) 'The civil-military relations and the bolivarian ideological project in venezuela (1999-2014)', *Revista de relaciones internacionales, estrategia y seguridad*, 11(1), pp. 263-286.
- Garcia-Guadilla, M.P., Mallen, A., and Guillén, M. (2004) 'The Multiple Faces of Venezuelan Civil Society: Politization and its Impact on Democratization', in *XXV LASA (Latin American Studies Association) International Congress*, Las Vegas.
- Garfield, R., Devin, J., and Fausey, J. (1995) 'The health impact of economic sanctions.', *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 72(2), pp. 454-469.
- Garzón, O.S., Sallerin, M., and Uribe-Carreño, E. (2019) *Venezuela, la révolution bolivarienne, 20 ans après. Recherches Amériques latines*, Paris: l'Harmattan.
- Gåsemyr, H.J. (2017) 'Navigation, Circumvention and Brokerage: The Tricks of the Trade of Developing NGOs in China', *The China Quarterly*, 229, pp. 86-106. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741016001557>.
- Gaur, A., Settles, A. and Väättänen, J. (2023) 'Do economic sanctions work? Evidence from the Russia-Ukraine conflict', *Journal of Management Studies*, 60(6), pp. 1391-1414.

- Gellman, B. (1991) 'Allied air war struck broadly in Iraq', *The Washington Post*, 23 Jun. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1991/06/23/allied-air-war-struck-broadly-in-iraq/e469877b-b1c1-44a9-bfe7-084da4e38e41/> [Accessed 25 Sep 2025].
- Germán Faría, J. (2025) 'Capitalism and Social Classes in Venezuela: The Historic Mission of the Working Class', *Links Organisation*. Available at: <https://links.org.au/node/599> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Gerschewski, J. (2013a) 'The three pillars of stability: legitimization, repression, and co-optation in autocratic regimes', *Democratization*, 20(1), pp. 13–38. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.738860>.
- Gerschewski, J. (2013b) 'The three pillars of stability: legitimization, repression, and co-optation in autocratic regimes', *Democratization*, 20(1), pp. 13–38. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.738860>.
- Gharch Daghi, A.A. (2024) 'Rethinking sanctions: Exploring resistance and internal dynamics through a target-centred lens [Book review of How Sanctions Work: Iran and the Impact of Economic Warfare, by N. Bajoghli, V. Nasr, D. Salehi-Isfahani and A. Vaez, and Bucking the Buck: US Financial Sanctions and the International Backlash Against the Dollar, by D. McDowell]', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 76(3), pp. 690–698.
- Ghasseminejad, S. and Jahan-Parvar, M.R. (2021) 'The impact of financial sanctions: The case of Iran', *Journal of Policy Modeling*, 43(3), pp. 601–621.
- Ghods, M.R. (1991) 'Iranian Nationalism and Reza Shah', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 27(1), 35–45.
- Gholami, S. (2014) 'Word Economic System and Industrialization Replace to Imports in the Reza Shah period: Aims and Consequents', *Historical Sciences Studies*, 6(1), pp. 85–104. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jhss.2015.52745>.
- Ghomi, M. (2022) 'Who is afraid of sanctions? The macroeconomic and distributional effects of the sanctions against Iran', *Economics & Politics*, 34(3), pp. 395–428. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecpo.12203>.
- Ghorashi, H. (2003) *Ways to Survive, Battles to Win*. New York: Nova Publishers.
- Ghorbani Dastgerdi, H., Yusof, Z.B., and Shahbaz, M. (2018) 'Nexus between economic sanctions and inflation: a case study in Iran', *Applied Economics*, 50(49), pp. 5316–5334. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2018.1486988>.
- Giddens, A. (1999) *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Malden, Mass: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. and Stephan, C. (1979) *Die Klassenstruktur Fortgeschrittener Gesellschaften.*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Giersdorf, S. and Croissant, A. (2011) 'Civil Society and Competitive Authoritarianism in Malaysia', *Journal of Civil Society*, 7(1), pp. 1–21.
- Gilbert, A. (1981) 'Pirates and invaders: Land acquisition in urban Colombia and Venezuela', *World Development*, 9(7), pp. 657–678. Doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(81\)90069-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(81)90069-3).
- Gill, L. (2004) *The School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Gill, S. (1987) 'Two concepts of international political economy', *Review of International Studies*, 16(4), pp. 369–381.
- Gilpin, R.G. (2000) *The Challenge of Global Capitalism: The World Economy in the 21st Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Giumelli, F. (2011) *Coercing, Constraining and Signalling: Explaining UN and EU Sanctions After the Cold War*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Giumelli, F. (2013) 'How EU sanctions work :a new narrative'. Available at: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2815/32791> [Accessed 24 Sep 2025].
- Giumelli, F. (2016) *The Success of Sanctions: Lessons Learned from the EU Experience*, London: Routledge.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967) *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.

- Glaser, B.G. (1965) 'The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis', *Social Problems*, 12(4), pp. 436–445. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/798843>.
- Glassman, R. (1997) *The New Middle Class and Democracy in Global Perspective*. Basingstoke: Springer.
- Gledhill, J. (1994) *Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics*. London: Pluto Press.
- Glendon, M.A. (2002) *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York: Random House Publishing Group.
- Global Legal Group (2019) 'Sanctions 2020: A Practical Cross-Border Insight into Sanctions Law', *ICLG / Global Legal Group*. Available at: https://www.acc.com/sites/default/files/resources/upload/SAN20_E-edition.pdf [Accessed 26 Sep 2025].
- Global Security. (2019) 'Venezuela Military Personnel', *Global Security*. Available at: https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/venezuela/personnel.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].
- Gocer, D. (2009) Interaction between the International and the Domestic: The Case of the 1908 Constitutional Revolution in the Ottoman Empire. Ph.D. Thesis. [London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom].
- Goertz, G. and Mazur, A. (2008) *Politics, Gender, and Concepts: Theory and Methodology*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Goforth, S. (2011) *Axis of Unity: Venezuela, Iran & the Threat to America*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc.
- Gold, R.L. (1997) The ethnographic method in sociology. *Qualitative inquiry*, 3(4), pp. 388-402.
- Golkarian, G. and İşıksal, H. (2024) 'Is Iran's approach to missile technology a deterrent mechanism or a severe threat to regional and supra-regional security?', *Geopolitics Quarterly*, 20(2), pp. 1-19.
- Gombata, M. and Cameron, M.A. (2022) *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 47(1), pp. 140–159.
- Gordenker, L. (1995) 'Pluralising global governance: Analytical approaches and dimensions', *Third World Quarterly*, 16(3), pp. 423–442. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599550035951>.
- Gordon, J. (2016) 'Economic Sanctions as "Negative Development": The Case of Cuba', *Journal of International Development*, 28(4), pp. 473–484. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3061>.
- Gordon, J. (2020) *The Enduring Lessons of the Iraq Sanctions*. Chicago, IL: Loyola University Chicago.
- Gordon, M.R. (2018) 'U.S. Lays Out Demands for New Iran Deal'. *The Washington Post*. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/mike-pompeo-lays-out-next-steps-on-iran-1526909126> [Accessed 13 Nov 2024].
- Gordon, M.R. (2025) 'In Twist, U.S. Diplomacy Served as Cover for Israel's Surprise Attack on Iran', *WSJ*. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/in-twist-u-s-diplomacy-served-as-cover-for-israeli-surprise-attack-c79b2206> [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- GOV (2024) 'Ley de Fiscalización, Regularización, Actuación y Financiamiento de las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales y Organizaciones Sociales sin Fines de Lucro', *Gaceta Oficial de Venezuela*. Available at: <https://tugacetaoficial.com/leyes/texto-ley-de-fiscalizacion-regularizacion-actuacion-y-financiamiento-de-las-organizaciones-no-gubernamentales-y-organizaciones-sociales-sin-fines-de-lucro/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Government of Venezuela. (2025) 'Plan de La Patria 2019-2025', *Scribd*. Available at: <https://es.scribd.com/document/498871887/Plan-de-La-Patria-2019-2025> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Graham, R. (1945) *Iran The Illusion Of Power*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Gramsci, A. (1971) *Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.
- Grusón, A. (1993) 'Las disparidades en las condiciones de vida de la población de Venezuela: Un acercamiento sintético a partir de un procesamiento directo de la Encuesta de Hogares 1990', *Revista del Centro de Investigación Social*, 1, pp. 25–61.

- Guaidó, J. (2019a) 'Lo Que Hará La Asamblea Nacional Frente a La Usurpación Del 10 de Enero', *Tal Cual*. Available at: <https://talcualdigital.com/lo-que-hara-la-asamblea-nacional-frente-a-la-usurpacion-del-10-de-enero/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Guaidó, J. (2019b) 'Venezuela crisis: Guaidó "considering asking US for military intervention"', *BBC*, 5 May. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48172520> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Guanipa, M. (2023) 'Venezuela's main refining complex running at 10% of capacity after 2 CDUs shut', *Reuters*, 30 Oct. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/venezuelas-main-refining-complex-running-10-capacity-after-2-cdus-shut-2023-10-30/> [Accessed 2 Sep 2025].
- Guazzone, L. and Pioppi, D. (2022) *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization: The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle East*. London: Garnet Publishing Ltd.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K., and Namey, E. (2012) *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Oaks California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Gülalp, H. (2023) 'Debating secularism: A liberal cosmopolitan perspective', *Frontiers in Sociology*. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2023.1113208>.
- Guter-Sandu, A. & Kuznetsova, E. (2020) 'Theorising resilience: Russia's reaction to US and EU sanctions', *East European Politics*, 36 (4), pp. 603-621.
- Gutmann, J., Neuenkirch, M., and Neumeier, F. (2021) 'Sanctioned to Death? The Impact of Economic Sanctions on Life Expectancy and its Gender Gap', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 57(1), pp. 139–162. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2020.1746277>.
- Haas, E.B. (2024) *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization*. West Yorkshire: ECPR Press.
- Habermas, J. (1996) *Between Facts and Norms*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Haggard, S. & Noland, M. (2017) *Hard Target: Sanctions, Inducements, and the Case of North Korea*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Haghighyeghi, M. (1993) 'Politics and Ideology in the Islamic Republic of Iran', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29(1), pp. 36–52.
- Haidar, J.I. (2017) 'Sanctions and export deflection: evidence from Iran', *Economic Policy*, 32(90), pp. 319–355.
- Halawani, F.A. (2023) 'The Impacts of Unilateral Economic Sanctions', *Access to Justice in Eastern Europe*. pp. 130.
- Hall, J.A. and Schroeder, R. (2006) *An Anatomy of Power: The Social Theory of Michael Mann*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hallberg, L.R.-M. (2006) 'The "core category" of grounded theory: Making constant comparisons', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 1(3), pp. 141–148. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620600858399>.
- Hamdheidari, S. (2008) 'Education during the reign of the Pahlavi Dynasty in Iran (1941–1979)', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13(1), pp. 17–28. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510701792245>.
- Hammersley, M. (2006) 'Ethnography: problems and prospects', *Ethnography and Education*, 1(1). pp. 3–14. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457820500512697>.
- Hammihan (2025) 'The latest number of Iranian martyrs and wounded in the Iran–Israel war has been announced', *Hammihan*. Available at: <https://hammihanonline.ir/بخش-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87-23/43053-%D8%A2%D8%AE%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AC%D9%86%DA%AF-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%DB%8C%D9%84->

%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B4%D8%AF [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].

- Hanks, M.F. (2011) *Aid, Sanctions and Civil Society: An Analysis of the Impacts of Targeted Sanctions on Fiji's Non-Government Organisations*, thesis. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.16992994>.
- Harris, K. (2010) *The Bazaar*. In: R. Maloney, ed. *The Iran Primer*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.
- Harris, K. (2017) *A Social Revolution: Politics and the Welfare State in Iran*. California: University of California Press.
- Hart., R.A. (2000) 'Democracy and the Successful Use of Economic Sanctions', *Political Research Quarterly*, 53(2), pp. 267–284. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290005300203>.
- Hashemi, N. (2009) *Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies*. New York: OUP USA.
- Hassan, E.M., Mahmoud, H. & Ellingwood, B. (2023) 'The role of social institutions in community resilience following extreme natural hazard events', *Open Access Journal of Environmental Policy*, 1, pp. 1–15.
- Haugaard, M. (2002) *Power: A Reader*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Haupt, D.R. (2016) 'Legal Aspects of the Nuclear Accord with Iran and Its Implementation: International Law Analysis of Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015)', in Black-Branch, J.L. and Fleck, D., eds., *Nuclear Non-Proliferation in International Law - Volume III*, The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press, pp.403–469. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-138-8_13.
- Hawkins, K.A. (2010a) *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hawkins, K.A. (2010b) *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hegland, M.E. (2004) 'Zip in and Zip out Fieldwork', *Iranian Studies*, 37(4), pp. 575–583.
- Hegland, M.E. (2009) 'Iranian anthropology—crossing boundaries: influences of modernization, social transformation and globalization', in *Conceptualizing Iranian Anthropology: Past and Present Perspectives*, Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, pp. 43–72.
- Heidari, R., Akbariqomi, M., and Tavoosidana, G. (2017) 'Medical legacy of sanctions in Iran', *Nature*, 552(7683), pp. 175–176.
- Hellinger, D. (2012) 'Venezuela: movements for rent?', in *Social Movements and Leftist Governments in Latin America: Confrontation or Co-Option?*. London: Zed Books.
- Hellinger, D. (2017) 'Oil and the Chávez Legacy', *Latin American Perspectives*. pp. 44(1), 54–77.
- Helms, J. (1999) 'What Sanctions Epidemic? U.S. Business' Curious Crusade', *Foreign Affairs*, 78(1), pp. 2–8. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/20020234>.
- Heshmati, B. and Joulaei, H. (2016) 'Iran's health-care system in transition', *The Lancet*, 387(10013), pp. 29–30. Doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)01297-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01297-0).
- Hetland, G. (2017a) 'From System Collapse to Chavista Hegemony: The Party Question in Bolivarian Venezuela', *Latin American Perspectives*, 44(1), pp. 17–36. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X16666018>.
- Hetland, G. (2017b) 'From System Collapse to Chavista Hegemony', *Latin American Perspectives*, 44(1), pp. 17–36.
- Heydarian, S., Pahlavani, M., and Mirjalili, S.H. (2021) 'Financial sanctions and economic growth: an intervention time-series approach', *International Economics Studies*, 51(1), pp. 1–14.
- Heywood, A. (2021) *Politics*, Fifth edition, reprinted. ed, London New York New Delh Sydney: Bloomsbery Academic.
- Hezar Jaribi, J. and Safari, R. (2010) 'A Theoretical Study in Recognizing the Middle Class with Emphasis on the New Middle Class of Iran', *Social Sciences Quarterly*, 50, pp. 63-90.
- Hidalgo, M. (2009) 'Hugo Chavez's Petro-Socialism', *Journal of Democracy*, 20(2), pp. 78-92.

- Hidalgo Trenado, M. (2007) 'Venezuela: de la crisis del modelo de Punto Fijo al régimen Chavista', *Nuestra América*, (4), pp. 13–35.
- Higley, J. and Gunther, R. (1992) *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hillman, A.J., Withers, M.C., and Collins, B.J. (2009) 'Resource Dependence Theory: A Review', *Journal of Management*, 35(6), pp. 1404–1427. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309343469>.
- Hillman, R.S. (1994) *Democracy for the Privileged Crisis and Transition in Venezuela*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Hirsch, P.M. (1995) 'Qualitative Sociology And Good Journalism As Demystifiers', in Glassner, B. and Hertz, R., eds., *Qualitative Sociology as Everyday Life*. Michigan: SAGE Publications.
- Ho, P. (2001) 'Greening Without Conflict? Environmentalism, NGOs and Civil Society in China', *Development and Change*, 32(5), pp. 893–921. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00231>.
- Hoffmann, F. (1967) 'The functions of economic sanctions', *Journal of Peace Research*, 4(2), pp. 140–160.
- Hoffman, D.M. (1989) 'Language and Culture Acquisition among Iranians in the United States', *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 20(2), pp. 118–132. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1989.20.2.05x0843k>.
- Hoffmann, F. (1967) 'The Functions of Economic Sanctions: a Comparative Analysis', *Journal of Peace Research*, 4(2), pp. 140–159. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336700400204>.
- Homayonpour, M. (1978) *The Process of Modernization in Iran and Turkey: The Era of State-Building*. Ph.D. Thesis [University Microfilms International].
- Homer-Dixon, T.F. (2010) *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hoodfar, H. (1993) 'The veil in their minds and on our heads: Veiling practices and Muslim women', in *The Politics of Cultures in the Shadows of Capital*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hook, B. (2019) 'Special Representative Brian Hook Remarks at Asia Society', *United States Department of State*. Available at: <https://2017-2021.state.gov/special-representative-brian-hook-remarks-at-asia-society/> [Accessed 27 Sep 2025].
- Hou, R. (2022) 'Ethnography's Kitchen Beyond Big Brother: How to Study Tech-Driven Authoritarianism With Restricted Access to State Institutions', *Ethnography*, 25(3), pp. 394–413.
- HRW (2019) 'Venezuela: Arrests, Killings in Anti-Government Protests', *Human Rights Watch*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/25/venezuela-arrests-killings-anti-government-protests> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Huang, Y. C. (2024) 'The moral economy of severe scarcity: How allocating scarce goods or services is a moral question that bears on fairness', *Journal of Political Economy*, 12(3), pp. 45–67.
- Huertas, G. (2019) *Hyperinflation in Venezuela: A Stabilization Handbook*. Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- Hufbauer, G.C. (Ed.) (2007) *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, 3rd ed., Expanded ed. ed, Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- Hufbauer, G.C., Schott, J.J., Elliott, K.A., and Economics (U.S.) (1990). *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered: History and Current Policy*. Washington, D.C: Peterson Institute.
- Hufbauer, G.C., Schott, J.J., Elliott, K.A., and Oegg, B. (2008) US and UN v. Iraq (1990–: Invasion of Kuwait, Impairment of Military Capability, Destabilisation). Available at: <https://www.piie.com/case-90-1> [Accessed 25 Sep 2025].
- Huntington, S.P. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations: And the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Huntington, S.P. (2006) *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hurley, L. (2016) 'U.S. Top Court Rules Iran Bank Must Pay 1983 Bomb Victims', *Reuters*. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-court-iran-idUSKCN0XH1R6/> [Accessed 4 Oct 2025].
- ICNL (2020) 'Venezuela', *ICNL*. Available at: <https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/venezuela> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].

ICP (N.d.) 'Manifesto of Islamic Coalition Party', *ICP*. Available at: http://164.138.16.34/?pPAGE=view_MARAMNAME.asp&lang=FA [Accessed 28 Feb 2025].

ILO (2022) 'Islamic Republic of Iran: The Employment - Environment - Climate Nexus: Employment and Environmental Sustainability Factsheet'. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/islamic-republic-iran-employment-environment-climate-nexus-employment-and> [Accessed 14 Feb 2025].

IMF (2020a) 'World Economic Outlook (April 2025) - Real GDP Growth'. Available at: https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].

IMF (2020b) 'World Economic Outlook (April 2025) - Inflation Rate, Average Consumer Prices'. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PCPIPCH@WEO> [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].

IMF (2025) 'World Economic Outlook- GDP, Current Prices, *GDP, current prices*'. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPD@WEO> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].

Iñigo, L. (2014) 'La Formación Económica de La Sociedad Argentina. Volumen 1: Renta Agraria, Ganancia Industrial y Deuda Externa. 1882-2004. EBSCOhost'. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12038>.

Institute for Financial Integrity (2024) 'The Sanctions Evasion Threat: Six Common Typologies All Compliance Officers Should Know', 26 November. Available at: https://finintegrity.org/the-sanctions-evasion-threat/?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 24 Oct 2025].

Interior Ministry (2024) '18 Thousands Active Civil Society Organisations in the Country Have Joined the National Social Participation Movement'. Available at: <https://www.moi.ir/news/234006/%DB%B1%DB%B8%D9%87%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B4%DA%A9%D9%84-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85-%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%81%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84-%DA%A9%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%86%D9%87%D8%B6%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%84%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%A9%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D9%BE%DB%8C%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF> [Accessed 10 Feb 2025].

Iran-Emrooz (2013) 'The Largest Disqualification in the History of the Islamic Republic Took Place'. Available: <https://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php/news2/45634/> [Accessed 9 Feb 2025].

Irish Independent (2025) 'Gaza death toll passes 68,000 as newly recovered bodies found among debris and rubble of destroyed city'. Available at: <https://www.independent.ie/world-news/middle-east/gaza-death-toll-passes-68000-as-newly-recovered-bodie-s-found-among-debris-and-rubble-of-destroyed-city/a556374684.html> [Accessed 21 Oct 2025].

Islam, R. (2002) *The Right to Tell: The Role of Mass Media in Economic Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Islamic Revolution Documents Centre (2022) 'Farrokhi Yazdi's Critique of Freedom during the Reza Shah Era'. Available at: <https://irdc.ir/fa/news/8109/-عهد-رضاخان-آزادی-به-فرخی-یزدی> [Accessed 21 Aug 2025].

ISNA (2021) 'Estimation of the Number of Workers Covered by the Labor Law in the Past 12 Years.' March 25, *ISNA*. Available at: <https://www.isna.ir/news/140010501542/%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A2%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%85%D9%88%D9%84-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1>

%D8%AF%D8%B1-%DB%B1%DB%B2-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84-
 %DA%AF%D8%B0%D8%B4%D8%AA%D9%87 [Accessed 14 Feb 2025].

- Issawi, C. and Yeganeh, M. (1962) *The Economics of Middle Eastern Oil*. New York: Praeger.
- Issawi, C.P. (1971) *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914*. ed, University of Chicago Press.
- Iwanowski, Z. (2021) 'Venezuela: systemic crisis and civil-military relations', *IBEROAMERICA*, (3), pp. 147–168. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.37656/s20768400-2021-3-07>.
- Iyer, L. (2021) *Hyperinflation in Venezuela*, University of Notre Dame. Available at: https://curate.nd.edu/articles/report/Hyperinflation_in_Venezuela/24816639/1/files/43653474.pdf [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- Ja'afari, A. (2013) *NATO in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf: Interests and National Security of Iran*. Tehran: Abrar Moaser Tehran Institute for Cultural Studies and International Research.
- Jahanbani, N. and Harmouch, S. (2024) 'How Much Influence Does Iran Have over Its Proxy 'Axis of Resistance' – Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis?', *The Conversation*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.64628/AAI.aarvwxcq9>.
- Jalali, B. (2005) 'Iranian families', *Ethnicity and family therapy*, 3, pp. 451–467.
- James A. Bill and Carl Leiden (1974) 'The Middle East: Politics and Power'. Available at: <http://archive.org/details/middleeastpoliti0000jame> [Accessed 15 Aug 2025].
- Jamshidi, A.R. (2009) Jamshidi, A. R. (2009) 'Iran Admits 4,000 June Detentions', *BBC News*. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8195586.stm [Accessed 10 Nov 2024].
- Jamshidi, F., Bigdeli, A., and Rafiei, A.T. (2024) 'Archaism in Iranian nationalism during the period of Reza Shah Pahlavi', *Journal of Archaeology and Archaeometry*, 2(4), pp. 55-65.
- Jeffrey Sachs and Weisbrot, M. (2019) 'Economic sanctions as collective punishment: The case of Venezuela'. Available at: <https://cepr.net/report/economic-sanctions-as-collective-punishment-the-case-of-venezuela> [Accessed 26 Jul 2025].
- Jiménez, M. (2020) 'The Weakening Civil Society in Venezuela', *Programa Cuba* Available at: <https://www.programacuba.com/the-weakening-civil-society-in-vene> [Accessed 12 Sep 2025].
- Jiménez, M. (2023) 'Contesting Autocracy: Repression and Opposition Coordination in Venezuela', *Political Studies*, 71(1), pp. 47–68. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321721999975>.
- Johny, S. (2007) 'Iranian political system and the IRGC', *Air Power Journal*, 2(3), pp. 112–118.
- Jonathan, S. (2013) *The Interview: An Ethnographic Approach*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Jonathan, T. and Hasmath, R. (2015) 'Navigating Uncertainty: The Survival Strategies of Religious NGOs in China', *Journal of Civil Society*, 11(3), pp. 283-299.
- Jones, L. (2015) *Societies Under Siege: Exploring How International Economic Sanctions (Do Not) Work*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jopke, N. and Gerrits, L. (2019) 'Constructing cases and conditions in QCA – lessons from grounded theory', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 22(6), pp. 599–610. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2019.1625236>.
- Jordan, E., Gross, M.E., Javernick-Will, A.N., and Garvin, M.J. (2011) 'Use and misuse of qualitative comparative analysis', *Construction Management and Economics*, 29(11), pp. 1159–1173. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01446193.2011.640339>.
- Jr, P.B.T. (1965) 'The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution: A Profile of the Regime of Rómulo Betancourt. By Robert J. Alexander. (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964. Pp. xiii, 345. Maps. Illus. \$9.00.)', *The Americas*, 22(1), pp. 107–108. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/979432>.
- Justice First (N.d.) 'Estatutos'. Available at: http://www.primerojusticia.org.ve/cms/index.php?view=item&cid=81:uncategorised&id=12551:estatutos&pop=1&tmpl=component&print=1&option=com_flexicontent&Itemid=528 [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].

- Kaempfer, W.H. and Lowenberg, A.D. (1988) 'The Theory of International Economic Sanctions: A Public Choice Approach', *The American Economic Review*, 78(4), pp. 786–793.
- Kaempfer, W.H. and Lowenberg, A.D. (1992) *International Economic Sanctions: A Public Choice Approach*. Oxford: Westview Press.
- Kalb, Z. (2024) 'Mobilized Resilience and Development under Sanctions in Iran', *Development and Change*, 55(5), pp. 933–964. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12859>.
- Kaltwasser, C.R. (2012) 'The ambivalence of populism: threat and corrective for democracy', *Democratization*, 19(2), pp. 184–208. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.572619>.
- Kamrava, M. (2001) 'The Civil Society Discourse in Iran', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530190120083068>.
- Kandil, M. and Mirzaie, I.A. (2021) 'Macroeconomic policies and the Iranian economy in the era of sanctions', *Middle East Development Journal*, 13(1), pp. 78–98. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17938120.2021.1898190>.
- Kanji, L. (2016) 'Moving Targets: The Evolution and Future of Smart Sanctions', *Harvard International Review*, 37(4), pp. 39–42.
- Kaplowitz, D.R. (2023) *Anatomy of a Failed Embargo: U.S. Sanctions Against Cuba*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Karbassian, A. (2000) 'Islamic Revolution and the Management of the Iranian Economy', *Social Research*, 67(2), pp. 621–640.
- Karimi, M. and Haghpanah, S. (2015) 'The effects of economic sanctions on disease specific clinical outcomes of patients with thalassemia and hemophilia in Iran', *Health Policy*, 119(2), pp. 239–243.
- Karl, T.L. (1987) 'Petroleum and Political Pacts: The Transition to Democracy in Venezuela', *Latin American Research Review*, 22(1), pp. 63–94.
- Karl, T.L. (1990) 'Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America', *Comparative Politics*, 23(1), pp. 1–21. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/422302>.
- Karshenas, M. (1990) *Oil, State and Industrialization in Iran*. Cambridge: CUP Archive.
- Katouzian, H. (1981) *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926–1979*, London: Macmillan.
- Katzenstein, P.J. (2012) '6 Small States in World Markets Industrial Policy in Europe', in Ingebritsen, C., Neumann, I. and Gstöhl, S., eds., *Small States in International Relations*, University of Washington Press, pp.193–217. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780295802107-007>.
- kayhan.ir (2025) 'Blind the eyes of Mossad and the CIA'. Available at: <https://kayhan.ir/fa/news/315484/چشمان-موساد-و-سیا-را-کور-کنید-یادداشت-روز> [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- Kazemipur, A. and Rezaei, A. (2003) 'Religious Life Under Theocracy: The Case of Iran', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(3), pp. 347–361. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5906.00187>.
- Kelishomi, A.M. and Nisticò, R. (2022) 'Employment effects of economic sanctions in Iran', *World Development*, p. 151.
- Kellner, D. (1975) 'The Frankfurt School Revisited: A Critique of Martin Jay's The Dialectical Imagination', *New German Critique*, (4), pp. 131–152. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/487822>.
- Kelly, J. (1995) 'The question of inefficiency and inequality: Social policy in Venezuela', in *Lessons of the Venezuelan Experience*. London: Macmillan, pp. 283–310.
- Kelly, S. (2025) 'US Crude Production to Hit Record 13.41 Million Bpd in 2025 before Falling, EIA Says', *Reuters*. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/us-crude-production-hit-record-1341-million-bpd-2025-before-falling-eia-says-2025-07-08/?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 29 Sep 2025].
- Kenny, P., Hawkins, K.A., and Ruth-Lovell, S.P. (2016) 'Populist leaders undermine democracy in these 4 ways. Would a President Trump?' Available at: <https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/handle/2066/238581> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].

- Keohane, R.O. (1984) *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Keohane, R.O. and Nye, J.S. (2012) *Power and Interdependence*, 4. ed. ed, Longman Classics in Political Science, Glenview, IL: Pearson.
- Keshavarzian, A. (2007) *Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tebran Marketplace*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Khamenei, A. (2014) 'Notification of the General Policies of Resistant Economy', *Khamenei.ir*. Available at: <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/news-content?id=25370> [Accessed 4 Mar 2025].
- Khamenei, A. (2015) 'Supreme Leader's Speech in Meeting with Chairman and Members of Assembly of Experts' Available at: *Khamenei.ir* [Accessed 234 Feb 2025].
- Khamenei, A. (2017) 'The Winners of the Election Are the People of Iran and the Islamic Republic System'. Available at: <https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/18275/%D9%BE%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%BE%DB%8C-%D8%AD%D8%B6%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D9%88-%D9%BE%D8%B1-%D8%B4%DA%A9%D9%88%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA> [Accessed 13 Feb 2025].
- Khamenei, A. (2023) 'The Development of Nuclear Power Plants Is an Essential and Unavoidable Need', *Khamenei.ir*. Available at: <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-dialog?id=57116> [Accessed 29 Nov 2024].
- Khamenei, A. (2024) 'Imam Khamenei's Important Speech about Recent Developments in Syria and Region', *Khamenei.ir*. Available at: <https://english.khamenei.ir/news/11318/Imam-Khamenei-s-important-speech-about-recent-developments-in> [Accessed 1 Jan 2025].
- Khamenei.ir (2025) 'The Birth of a New Generation of Iran'. Available at: <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-report?id=60843> [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- Kharas, H. (2017) 'The Unprecedented Expansion of the Global Middle Class.' *The Brookings Global Working Paper Series*. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/theunprecedented-expansion-of-the-global-middle-class-2/> [Accessed 5 Mar 2025].
- Kharrazi, K. (2024) 'Iran Warns It Will Change Nuclear Doctrine If 'existence Threatened'', *Al Jazeera*. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/9/iran-warns-it-will-change-nuclear-doctrine-if-existence-threatened> [Accessed 27 Sep 2025].
- Kheirandish, M., Varmaghani, M., Kebriaeezadeh, A., and Cheraghali, A.M. (2018) 'Impact of economic sanctions on access to noncommunicable diseases medicines in the Islamic Republic of Iran', *Value in Health*, 21, pp. 64–S6.
- Khomeini, R. (1983) 'Why Did the Imam Say, Preserving the Islamic Republic Is More Important than Preserving Life of the Twelfth Imam?'. Available at: <https://www.aparat.com/v/f01v218> [Accessed 20 Aug 2025].
- Kinosian, S. (2025) 'Venezuela's Machado calls for more US action against Maduro', *Reuters*, 18 Jun. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuelas-machado-calls-more-us-action-against-maduro-2025-06-18/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Klare, M.T. (2008) *Rising Powers Shrinking Planet*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Koerner, L. (2017) 'Venezuelan Housing Mission Reaches 1.5 Million Homes', *Venezuelanalysis*. Available at: <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/12946/> [Accessed 8 Aug 2025].
- Kohn, H. (2017) *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background*. New York: Routledge.
- Kokabisaghi, F. (2018) 'Assessment of the Effects of Economic Sanctions on Iranians' Right to Health by Using Human Rights Impact Assessment Tool: A Systematic Review', *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 7(5), pp. 374–393. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2017.147>.

- Korgun, I. and Toloraya, G. (2022) 'On the question of effectiveness of sanctions against DPRK', *Polis. Political Studies*, 32(3), pp. 80-95.
- Kornblith, M. and Maingón, T. (1985) 'Estado y Gasto Público En Venezuela, 1936-1980, Colección Ciencias económicas y sociales', *Universidad Central de Venezuela, Ediciones de la Biblioteca*. Available at: <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130282273370636800> [Accessed 14 May 2025].
- Korte, G. (2016) 'Obama Uses Rare Constitutional Maneuver on Iran Sanctions Bill', *USA Today*. Available at: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2016/12/15/obama-uses-rare-constitutional-maneuver-iran-sanctions-bill/95476842/> [Accessed 4 Oct 2025].
- Krippendorff, K. (2018) *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 4th ed. ed, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Krugman, P. (1979) 'A Model of Balance-of-Payments Crises', *Journal of Money, Credit and Banking*, 11(3), pp. 311–325. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1991793>.
- Kube, C. (2023) 'At Least 45 U.S. Service Members May Have Been Injured in Iran-Linked Attacks', Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/40-us-service-members-may-brain-injuries-iran-linked-attacks-rcna123591> [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- Kulisheck, M.R. (1998) *Reinventing Legitimacy: Democracy and Political Change in Venezuela*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2009) *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: SAGE.
- Lacher, H. (2003) 'Putting the state in its place: the critique of state-centrism and its limits', *Review of International Studies*, 29(4), pp. 521–541. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210503005217>.
- Lagrange, J.L. (1788) *Mécanique Analytique*. Paris: Veuve Desaint.
- Lamrani, S. (2013) *The Economic War Against Cuba: A Historical and Legal Perspective on the U.S. Blockade*. New York: NYU Press.
- Landale, J. (2024) 'Iran's Uranium Enrichment Worrisome - Nuclear Watchdog', *BBC*. Available: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c20ee6qylwgo> [Accessed 2 Mar 2025].
- Lander, E. (2017) 'Venezuela: La Experiencia Bolivariana En La Lucha Por Trascender al Capitalismo'. Available at: <https://www.aporrea.org/ideologia/a251063.html> [Accessed 29 Apr 2025].
- Landman, T. (2008) *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. ed, London: Routledge.
- Landmann, M. (2011) *The Frankfurt School: The Critical Theories of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno*. New York: Transaction Publishers.
- Lang, B. (2018) 'Authoritarian Learning in China's Civil Society Regulations: Towards a Multi-Level Framework', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 47(3), pp. 147–186. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261804700306>.
- Latam Press (2025) 'What the Dollarization of Venezuela Really Means for Its People and Economy'. Available at: <https://www.ltampress.com/2025/06/what-dollarization-of-venezuela-really.html> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Lawrence, F. (2013) *Freedman, Lawrence, 2013. Strategy: A History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lebow, R.N. (1994) 'The long peace, the end of the cold war, and the failure of realism', *International Organization*, 48(2), pp. 249–277. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300028186>.
- LeCompte, M.D. and Goetz, J.P. (1982) 'Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research', *Review of Educational Research*, 52(1), pp. 31–60. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543052001031>.
- Legro, J.W. and Moravcsik, A. (1999) 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?', *International Security*, 24(2), pp. 5–55. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228899560130>.
- Leivani, M.Q. (2017) 'The Resistant Economy Is a Strategy for Boosting and Strengthening Domestic Industries', *IRNA*. Available at: <https://www.irna.ir/news/82478716/%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9>

%86-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87-
 %D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF-
 %D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%8A-
 %D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B1-
 %D8%B1%D9%88%D9%86%D9%82-%D9%88-
 %D8%AA%D9%82%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%AA-
 %D8%B5%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%B9-
 %D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA [Accessed
 6 Mar 2025].

- Lektzian, D. and Souva, M. (2007) 'An Institutional Theory of Sanctions Onset and Success', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 51(6), pp. 848–871. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002707306811>.
- Lektzian, D.J. and Sprecher, C.M. (2007) 'Sanctions, Signals, and Militarized Conflict', *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(2), pp. 415–431. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00259.x>.
- Lemarchand, R. and Legg, K. (1978) 'Political Clientelism And Development: A Preliminary Analysis', in *Analyzing the Third World*. London: Routledge.
- LeoGrande, W.M. (2015) 'A policy long past its expiration date: US economic sanctions against Cuba.', *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 82(4), pp. 939–966.
- Leogrande, W.M. and Thomas, J.M. (2002) 'Cuba's Quest for Economic Independence', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 34(2), pp. 325–363. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X02006399>.
- Leslie, C.A. (2022) 'Hope Amid Crisis: Normative Ambiguity, the Middle Class, and Investment Fraud in 2000s Venezuela', *Latin American Politics and Society*, 64(4), pp. 70–93. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/lap.2022.28>.
- Levine, D. (1998) 'Beyond the exhaustion of the model: survival and transformation of democracy in Venezuela.', *Reinventing Legitimacy: democracy and political change in Venezuela*, pp. 187–214.
- Levitsky, S., Loxton, J., Van Dyck, B., and Domínguez, J.I. (2016) *Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America*. , 2016. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, C.M. and Abel, C. (2002) 'Exclusion and engagement: a diagnosis of social policy in Latin America in the long run', in Lewis, C.M. and Abel, C. (eds) *Exclusion and Engagement: Social Policy in Latin America in the Long Run*. London: Institute of Latin American Studies, pp. 3–53.
- Lewis, D. (2013) 'Civil Society and the Authoritarian State: Cooperation, Contestation and Discourse', , *Journal of Civil Society*, 9(3), pp. 325–340.
- Lieberthal, K.G. (2004) *Governing China: From Revolution through Reform*, 2. ed. ed, New York, NY: Norton.
- Lijphart, A. (1971) 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method', *The American Political Science Review*, 65(3), pp. 682–693. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1955513>.
- Lijphart, A. (2012) *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, 2nd ed. ed, New Haven: Yale university press.
- Lijphart, A. and Crepaz, M.M.L. (1991) 'Corporatism and Consensus Democracy in Eighteen Countries: Conceptual and Empirical Linkages', *British Journal of Political Science*, 21(2), pp. 235–246. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400006128>.
- Lindsay, J.M. (1986) 'Trade Sanctions as Policy Instruments: A Re-examination', *International Studies Quarterly*, 30(2), pp. 153–173. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600674>.
- Linklater, A. and Suganami, H. (2006) *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Livingstone, G. (2009) *America's Backyard: The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- lix, J.R.L. pez-C., Walkenhorst, P., and Diop, N. (2010) *Trade Competitiveness of the Middle East and North Africa: Policies for Export Diversification*. Washington. DC: World Bank Publications.

- Lloyds bank (2025) 'Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Venezuela', *Lloyds bank*. Available at: <https://www.lloydsbanktrade.com/en/market-potential/venezuela/investment> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- López Maya, M. (2009) 'Venezuela: el gobierno de Hugo Chávez y sus fuerzas bolivarianas', *Instituto Federal Electoral*, Mexico City.
- López Maya, M. (2013) 'Venezuela: The Political Crisis of Post-Chavismo', *Social Justice*, 40(1–2 [134]), pp. 68–87.
- López-Levy, A. (2011) 'Chaos and Instability': Human Rights and U.S. Policy Goals in Cuba', *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 44(5), pp. 16–18.
- López-Maya, M. (2002) 'Venezuela after the Caracazo: Forms of Protest in a Deinstitutionalized context', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 21(2), pp. 199–218. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1470-9856.00040>.
- Loucks, D.P. (2022) 'Lagrangian Models', in Loucks, D.P., ed., *Public Systems Modeling: Methods for Identifying and Evaluating Alternative Plans and Policies*, Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 135–141. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93986-1_11.
- Lowi, T.J. (1964) *At the Pleasure of the Mayor: Patronage and Power in New York City*. London: Collier-Macmillan.
- Luis, B.-M. (2024) 'Elecciones presidenciales de 2024', *Otras Voces en Educación*. Available at: https://otrasvoceseneducacion.org/archivos/tag/elecciones-presidenciales-de-2024?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Lumsden, A. (2021) 'Media Guide: Inflation in Iran.' *American Iranian Council*. Available at: <https://www.us-iran.org/resources/2019/1/20/media-guide-inflation-379ya> [Accessed 6 Mar 2025].
- Lusverti, C. (2025) 'Civil Society Organizations in Venezuela On the edge', DPLF. Available at: <https://dplf.org/en/2025/08/06/civil-society-organizations-in-venezuela-on-the-edge/> [Accessed 12 Sep 2025].
- Mack, A. and Khan, A. (2000) 'The Efficacy of UN Sanctions', *Security Dialogue*, 31(3), pp. 279–292. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010600031003003>.
- Macfarlane, E.K. (2020) 'Strengthening sanctions: solutions to curtail the evasion of international economic sanctions through the use of cryptocurrency', *Mich. J. Int'l L.*, 42, p. 199.
- Maduro, N. (2022) 'Más de 13 millones de personas se encuentran vinculadas a Ciudades Comunes', *Ministerio del Poder Popular de Economía y Finanzas*. Available at: <https://www.mppef.gob.ve/mas-de-13-millones-de-personas-se-encuentran-vinculadas-a-ciudades-comunes/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Maduro, N. (2025) 'Maduro anuncia 4,5 millones de milicianos ante amenazas', *DW*. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/es/maduro-anuncia-45-millones-de-milicianos-ante-amenazas/a-73686668> [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].
- Mahdavi, P. (2015) 'Explaining the Oil Advantage: Effects of Natural Resource Wealth on Incumbent Reelection in Iran', *World Politics*, 67(2), pp. 226–267. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887114000392>.
- Mahlstein, K., McDaniel, C., Schropp, S. and Tsigas, M. (2022) 'Estimating the economic effects of sanctions on Russia: an allied trade embargo', *The World Economy*, 45(11), pp. 3344–3383.
- Majd, M.G. (2016) *Iran Under Allied Occupation In World War II: The Bridge to Victory & A Land of Famine*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- Majidi, A.F. and Zarouni, Z. (2016) 'The impact of sanctions on the economy of Iran', *International Journal of Resistive Economics*, 4(1), pp. 84–99.
- Majidpour, M. (2013) 'The unintended consequences of US-led sanctions on Iranian industries', *Iranian Studies*, 46(1), pp. 1–15.

[illegible]

- New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, pp. 123–147. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137270580_6.
- McCaughan, M. (2011) *The Battle of Venezuela*. London: Seven Stories Press.
- McCoy, J.L. (1985) *Democratic Dependent Development and State-Labor Relations in Venezuela*. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International.
- McCoy, J.L. (1999) ‘Chavez and the End of “Partyarchy” in Venezuela Latin America’s Imperiled Progress’, *Journal of Democracy*, 10(3), pp. 64–77.
- McCoy, J.L. and Myers, D.J. (2006) *The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- McDowell, D. (2023) *Bucking the Buck: US Financial Sanctions and the International Backlash against the Dollar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McFaul, M. (2002) ‘The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World’, *World Politics*, 54(2), pp. 212–244. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2002.0004>.
- McGhee, G.C. (1963) ‘Department of State Bulletin’. Available at: <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/dsbul48&div=24&id=&page=> [Accessed 13 Aug 2025].
- McGillivray, F. and Stam, A.C. (2004) ‘Political Institutions, Coercive Diplomacy, and the Duration of Economic Sanctions’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48(2), pp. 154–172. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002703262858>.
- McGowan, S. (2018) *Economic Sanctions as Tools of Economic Imperialism*. (M.A. dissertation, Oklahoma. University of Central Oklahoma). Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2050305967/abstract/6F6D18A40B454BBFPQ/1> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- McKeown, A. (2012) ‘Exploring Discourse on Personal Identity and Space’. Available at: <https://blogs.ubc.ca/lw1503webpageproject/2012/05/11/welcome/> [Accessed 15 Sep 2025].
- McKinlay, R.D. and Cohan, A.S. (1975) ‘A Comparative Analysis of the Political and Economic Performance of Military and Civilian Regimes: A Cross-National Aggregate Study’, *Comparative Politics*, 8(1), pp. 1–30. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/421451>.
- McKnight, R.L. (2012) *Sanctioning Success? Assessing the Role of Sanctions in the Militarization of Iran*. PhD Thesis. [Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School].
- McLean, E.V. and Whang, T., 2014. ‘Designing foreign policy: Voters, special interest groups, and economic sanctions’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(5), pp. 589–602.
- McPherson, A. (2016) *A Short History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Mearsheimer, J.J. (1994) ‘The false promise of international institutions’, *International security*, 19(3), pp. 5–49.
- Morrow, M.F., Diana Roy, Jonathan Masters, Will (2025) ‘U.S. Forces in the Middle East: Mapping the Military Presence’, *Council on Foreign Relations*. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/article/us-forces-middle-east-mapping-military-presence> [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- Meyer, J. (2009) ‘Second Thoughts on Secondary Sanctions’, *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, 30(3), p. 905.
- Meyer, J.A. (2008) ‘Second thoughts on secondary sanctions’, *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, 30, pp. 905–952.
- Miao, Z. (2025) ‘Oil dependency and democratic outcomes in the Middle East: a comparative analysis of resource-rich and resource-scarce states’, *International Politics*, pp. 1–22.
- Milani, A. (2011) *The Shah*. New York: Macmillan.
- Milani, A. (2022) *Eminent Persians: The Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941-1979, Volumes One and Two*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

- Mills, C.W. (2001) 'The Power Elite', in *Social Stratification, Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective, Second Edition*. London: Routledge.
- Mills, J.S. (1843) *A System of Logic*. London: John W. Parker.
- Mintz, A. (2003) 'Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Poliheuristic Perspective'. Available at: <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3511929> [Accessed 26 Sep 2025].
- Mir Emadi, A. (2016) 'Neglecting the Resilient Economy Is a Form of Betrayal to the Country', *DefaPress*. Available at: <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/99816/%D8%A8%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%87%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D9%87-%DA%A9%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1> [Accessed 3 Feb 2025].
- Mitchell, B.R. (1995) *International Historical Statistics: Africa, Asia & Oceania 1750–1988*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Mnuchin, S. (2019) 'Trump Steps up Maduro Pressure with Sanctions on Venezuelan Oil Company Venezuela', *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/28/trump-venezuela-sanctions-oil-pdvsa-maduro-guaido?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Moallem, M. (2005) *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mobasher, M. (2006) 'Cultural Trauma and Ethnic Identity Formation Among Iranian Immigrants in the United States', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50(1), pp. 100–117. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764206289656>.
- Moghadam, V.M. (2024) 'The gendered politics of Iran-U.S. relations: sanctions, the JCPOA and women's security', *Third World Quarterly*.
- Moghaddasi Kelishomi, A. and Nisticò, R. (2022) 'Employment effects of economic sanctions in Iran', *World Development*, p. 151. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105760>.
- Mohamadi, E., Kraemer, A., Majdzadeh, R., Mohamadzade, M., Mohammadshahi, M., Kiani, M.M., Ebrahimi, F., Mostafavi, H., Olyaeemanesh, A., and Takian, A. (2024) 'Impacts of economic sanctions on population health and health system: a study at national and sub-national levels from 2000 to 2020 in Iran', *Globalization and Health*, 20(1), p. 81. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-024-01084-2>.
- Mohammadi, S. S. & Weaver, C. (2025). 'Resistance Economies: An Analysis of Resilience against US Sanctions on Iran and Cuba', *Middle East Critique*, pp. 1-21.
- Mohseni-Cheraghlo, E. (2015) *When Coercion Backfires: The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy in Iran*, (Doctoral thesis, Maryland. School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland). Available at: https://cissm.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2019-07/When%20Coercion%20Backfires%20-%20Mohseni%20Dissertation.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 26 Sep 2025].
- Molina, J. (1998) 'Molina, José. Electoral systems and democratic legitimacy in Venezuela', *Reinventing Legitimacy: Democracy and Political Change in Venezuela*, pp. 51–62.
- Mommer, B. and Araque, A.R. (2002) *Global Oil and the Nation State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies.
- Monaldi, F. (2018) 'The collapse of the Venezuelan oil industry and its global consequences'. Available at: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/AC_VENEZUELAOIL_Interactive.pdf [Accessed 13 Nov 2024].
- Montazeri, H.-A. (2000) *Jurisprudential Foundations of Islamic Government*, Tehran: Sara'i.

- Montiel, P.J. (1989) 'Empirical Analysis of High-Inflation Episodes in Argentina, Brazil, and Israel', *Staff Papers (International Monetary Fund)*, 36(3), pp. 527–549. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3867046>.
- Morgan, C. (1995) 'Clinton chinese puzzle—domestic politics and the effectiveness of economic sanctions', *Issues & Studies*, 31(8), pp. 19–45.
- Morgenthau, H., Kenneth, T., and Clinton, D. (1985) *Politics Among Nations*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Mostashari, A. (2005) 'An introduction to non-governmental organizations (NGO) management', *Iranian studies group MIT 2*.
- Mostazafan Foundation (2018) 'The Mostazafan Foundation Has a Special Role in Countering Sanctions.' *Mehrnews*, 01 December. Available at: <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/4472966/%D8%A8%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B6%D8%B9%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AC%D8%A7%DB%8C%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87-%D9%88%DB%8C%DA%98%D9%87-%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%85-%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF> [Accessed 14 Mar 2025].
- Motamedi, M. (2022) 'Iran Says More than 200 Killed in Country's Continuing Unrest', *Al Jazeera*. Available: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/3/iran-says-over-200-killed-in-countrys-ongoing-unrest> [Accessed 4 Oct 2025].
- Motamedi, M. (2024) 'Iran's Ex-President Ahmadinejad, Disqualified Larijani Sign up for Election', *Al Jazeera*. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/2/irans-ex-president-ahmadinejad-disqualified-larijani-sign-up-for-election> [Accessed 20 Aug 2025].
- Muhr, T. (2010) 'Tina go home! alba and re-theorizing resistance to global capitalism', *EBSCOhost*. Available at: <https://openurl.ebsco.com/contentitem/gcd:62800397?sid=ebsco:plink:crawler&id=ebsco:gcd:62800397> [Accessed 14 May 2025].
- Mulder, N. (2022) *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Mullin, C. (2021) "Settler Colonialism, Imperialism and Sanctions from Below: Palestine and the BDS Movement." In *Sanctions as War: Anti-Imperialist Perspectives on American Geo-Economic Strategy*, edited by S. Davis, and I. Ness, 360-78. Leiden & Boston: Brill.
- MVAF (2018) 'Formation of a Sanctions Counteraction Headquarters in the Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation,' *Dolat*. Available at: <https://dolat.ir/detail/313208> [Accessed 1 Feb 2025].
- Nafisi, R. (1992) 'Education and the culture of politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran', in *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*. London: Routledge.
- Naghibi, N. (2007) *Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Western Feminism and Iran* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Naifar, N. (2025) 'Decomposed and partial connectedness between oil shocks and sovereign credit risk in emerging economies: Insights from the Russia-Ukraine war', *Journal of Commodity Markets*, 39, 100492. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcomm.2025.100492>.
- Naim, M. (2013) *Paper Tigers and Minotaurs: The Politics of Venezuela's Economic Reforms*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Najafi, N. and Esfahanian, H. (2021) 'Formal versus Informal Labor Market Segmentation in Iran', *Iranian Economic Review*, 25(4), pp. 829–848.
- Nakatani, P. and Herrera, R. (2008) 'Structural Changes and Planning of the Economy in Revolutionary Venezuela', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 40(3), pp. 292–299. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613408320019>.
- Namaz, M.B. and Arjomandnia, A. (2000) *Non-governmental organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran: a situation analysis*. Tehran: United Nations Development Programme.

- Nasr, V. (2025) *Iran's Grand Strategy: A Political History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Nathan, A.J. (2003) 'China's Changing of the Guard: Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy*, 14(1), pp. 6–17.
- National Assembly (2009) 'Ley Organica de Consejo Comunales'. Available at: <https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ve/storage/documentos/leyes/ley-organi-20220125131044.pdf> [Accessed 17 Sep 2024].
- National Assembly (2010a) 'Ley Orgánica del Poder Popular - Venezuela, ' *studylib.es*. Available at: <https://studylib.es/doc/9153604/ley-orgánica-del-poder-popular> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- National Assembly (2010b) 'Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination'. Available at: https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Venezuela_Leysober.pdf.
- Navarro, J.C. (1997) 'Implementing social reform: lessons from the Venezuelan experience.', *W. Savedof et al*, pp. 30–66.
- Navarro, J.C. (N.d.) 'Venezuela's New Political Actors', in *Lessons of the Venezuelan Experience*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.
- Neo, J.L. (2017) 'Secularism without Liberalism: Religious Freedom and Secularism in a Non-Liberal State', *Michigan State Law Review*, p. 333.
- Nephew, R. (2018) *The Art of Sanctions: A View from the Field*, Center on Global Energy Policy series. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Netanyahu, B. (2025) 'Netanyahu Says Israeli Attacks Pave Way for Iran Regime Change'. Available at: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202506163799> [Accessed 21 Aug 2025].
- Neuhouser, K. (1992) 'Democratic Stability in Venezuela: Elite Consensus or Class Compromise?', *American Sociological Review*, 57(1), pp. 117–135. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096148>.
- Newsd (2025) 'US-Iran Conflict: Where Does the US Military Operate in the Middle East? ', *Newsd*, Available at: <https://newsd.in/us-iran-conflict-where-dose-the-us-military-operates-in-the-middle-east/> [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- Newton-Small, J. (2012) 'US Sanctions Take a Toll on Iran's Currency', *Time*. Available at: <https://swampland.time.com/2012/10/02/u-s-sanctions-take-a-toll-on-irans-currency/>. [Accessed 3 Nov 2024].
- Niknami, R. (2020) 'EU Economic & Financial Sanctions against Iran and their Human Rights Implications', *Journal of World Sociopolitical Studies*, 4(3), pp. 471–504. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.22059/wsps.2020.303333.1151>.
- Noël, A. and Thérien, J.-P. (2008) *Left and Right in Global Politics*. Cambridge New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nomani, F. and Behdad, S. (2006) *Class and Labor in Iran: Did the Revolution Matter?* Syracuse: University Press.
- Nooruddin, I. (2002) 'Modeling Selection Bias in Studies of Sanctions Efficacy', *International Interactions*, 28(1), pp. 59–75. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050620210394>.
- Nordhaus, W.D. (2002) 'The Economic Consequences of a War in Iraq'. Available at: https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w9361/w9361.pdf [Accessed 25 Sep 2025].
- Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E., and Moules, N.J. (2017) 'Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1609406917733847. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>.
- Nye, J.S. (1977) *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Nye, J.S. (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs.
- Obama, B. (2015) 'Fact Sheet: Venezuela Executive Order', *Whitehouse*. Available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/09/fact-sheet-venezuela-executive-order> [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].

- O'Brien, D.C. (1972) 'Modernization, order, and the erosion of a democratic ideal: American political science 1960–70', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 8(4), pp. 351–378, Available: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220387208421420>.
- Obstfeld, M. (1986) 'Rational and self-fulfilling balance of payments crisis', *American Economic Review*, 76(1), pp. 72–81.
- O'Donnell, G. and Schmitter, P.C. (1986) *Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Verlag Nicht Ermittellbar. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- OHCHR (2013) 'Iran: UN Experts Concerned at barring of Women Presidential Candidates and Freedom Restrictions', OHCHR. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2013/05/iran-un-experts-concerned-barring-women-presidential-candidates-and-freedom> [Accessed 8 Sep 2025].
- Onder, M. (2019) 'Regime Type, Issue Type and Economic Sanctions: The Role of Domestic Players', *Economies*, 8(1), p. 2.
- Oner, I. (2021) 'Nicolas Maduro: A Populist without Popularity', *European Center for Populism Studies (ECPs)*. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.55271/lp0005>.
- OPEC (2025a) 'OPEC Digital Publications - Annual Statistical Bulletin'. Available at: <https://publications.opec.org/asb/Chapter/show/139/2524/2526> [Accessed 6 Sep 2025].
- OPEC (2025b) 'OPEC Digital Publications - Annual Statistical Bulletin'. Available at: <https://publications.opec.org/asb/Chapter/show/139/2515/2522> [Accessed 6 Sep 2025].
- OPEC (N.d.) 'Iran, Facts and Figures', *Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries*. Available at: <https://www.opec.org/iran.html> [Accessed 17 Sep 2025].
- Oropeza, L. (1983) 'Tutelary Pluralism: A Critical Approach to Venezuelan Democracy.', *Center for International Affairs Harvard University*, p. 46.
- Østerud, Ø. (2007) *Statsvitenskap: Innføring i Politisk Analyse*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Zambrano, O. & Hernández, H., (2021) *La clase media en Venezuela: definición, caracterización y evolución reciente*. Washington, DC: BID-Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo.
- Otis, J. (2023) 'Oil spills increase in Venezuela as it revs up output after the U.S. lifted sanctions', *NPR*, 29 Nov. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2023/11/29/1215547427/venezuela-oil-spill-maracaibo> [Accessed 2 Sep 2025].
- Ottaway, M. (2013) *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, Democracy challenged: The rise of semi-authoritarianism. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment.
- Owji, J. (2021) 'Sanctions Deprived Iran of \$100 Billion in Oil Revenues,' *PressTV*. 02 September. Available at: <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2021/09/02/665674/Iran-oil-revenues-US-sanctions-OPEC-exports-> [Accessed 10 Mar 2025].
- Padrino-Lopez, V. (2024) 'Venezuelan Armed Forces Unconditionally Support President Maduro', *teleSUR English*. Available at: <https://www.telesurenglish.net/venezuelan-armed-forces-unconditionally-support-president-maduro/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Pahlavi, M. (1974) 'Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's speech on inflation'. Available at: <https://www.aparat.com/v/g3851m8> [Accessed 14 Aug 2025].
- Palestini, S. (2023) 'The politics of legitimization in combined sanction regimes: the case of Venezuela', *International Affairs*, 99(3), pp. 1087–1107.
- Pape, R. (1997) 'Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work', *International security*, 22(2), pp. 90–136.
- Parker, D. (2005) 'Chávez and the Search for an Alternative to Neoliberalism', *Latin American Perspectives*, 32(2), pp. 39–50. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X04273866>.
- Parliament (2024) 'The Seventh Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran'. Available at: <https://shenasname.ir/barname7/7298-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%D9%87%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%85->

- %D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%87#%D9%81%D8%B5%D9%84_%DB%B9%E2%80%93%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B1%DA%98%DB%8C [Accessed 23 Feb 2025].
- Parsa, M. (1989) *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*, Studies in political economy. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Parsons, T. (1964) *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*. New York: Free Press.
- Participedia (N.d.) ‘Venezuelan Communal Councils – Participedia’, *Participedia*. Available at: <https://participedia.net/method/venezuelan-communal-councils> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Paukert, F., Skolka, J., and Maton, J. (1981) *Income Distribution, Structure of Economy and Employment. The Philippines, Iran, the Republic of Korea and Malaysia*. London: Croom Helm.
- Paul, L. (1999) “Iranian Nation” and Iranian-Islamic Revolutionary Ideology’, *Die Welt des Islams*, 39(2), pp. 183–217.
- Peet, R. (2009) *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank and WTO*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Peksen, D. (2019) ‘When Do Imposed Economic Sanctions Work? A Critical Review of the Sanctions Effectiveness Literature’, *Defence and Peace Economics*, 30(6), pp. 635–647. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2019.1625250>.
- Peksen, D. and Drury, A.C. (2010) ‘Coercive or Corrosive: The Negative Impact of Economic Sanctions on Democracy’, *International Interactions*, 36(3), pp. 240–264. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2010.502436>.
- Peksen, D. (2021) ‘Economic sanctions and political stability and violence in target countries’, in Drezner, D.W. (ed.) *Research Handbook on Economic Sanctions*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 187–201.
- Petras, J. (2010) ‘Latin America’s Twenty-First Century Socialism in Historical Perspective’, *James Petras website*. Available at: <http://www.jamespetras.org> [Accessed 03 Jun 2025].
- Phelps, E.S. (2013) *Mass Flourishing: How Grassroots Innovation Created Jobs, Challenge, and Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Piketty, T. (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Translated by A. Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pilatowska, M. and Geise, A. (2025) ‘Macroeconomic Effects of Oil Price Shocks in the Context of Geopolitical Events: Evidence from Selected European Countries’, *Energies*, 18(15), pp. 41–65. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/en18154165>.
- Pillow, W. (2003) ‘Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research’, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), pp. 175–196. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000060635>.
- Piñeiro, C. (2009) ‘Main Challenges for Cooperatives in Venezuela’, *Critical Sociology*, 35(6), pp. 841–862. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920509343075>.
- Pires, M. and Nascimento, L.G. (2020) ‘The Monroe Doctrine 2.0 and U.S.-China-Latin America Trilateral Relations’, *International Organisations Research Journal*, 15(3), pp. 202–222. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.17323/1996-7845-2020-03-08>.
- Pittaluga, G.B., Seghezza, E., and Morelli, P. (2021a) ‘The political economy of hyperinflation in Venezuela’, *Public Choice*, 186(3/4), pp. 337–350.
- Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes (2025) ‘Personas Refugiadas y Migrantes Venezolanas’, *Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes (R4V)*. Available at: <https://www.r4v.info/es/population-update-june2025-esp> [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- Polkinghorne, D.E. (2006) ‘An agenda for the second generation of qualitative studies’, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 1(2), pp. 68–77. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620500539248>.

- Popp, R. (2008) 'An application of modernization theory during the Cold War? The case of Pahlavi Iran', *The International History Review*, 30(1), pp. 76–98. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2008.10414911>.
- Pospieszna, P. and Weber, P.M. (2020) 'Amplifying and nullifying the impact of democratic sanctions through aid to civil society', *International Interactions*, 46(5), pp. 724–748.
- Pourmokhtari, N. (2013) 'A Postcolonial Critique of State Sovereignty in ir: the contradictory legacy of a "West-centric" discipline', *Third World Quarterly*, 34(10), pp. 1767–1793. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.851888>.
- Povey, T. (2016) 'The Impact of Sanctions and Neo-Liberalism on Women's Organising in Iran', *Social Sciences*, 5(3), p. 26. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci5030026>.
- PREAL (2025) 'Plan de la Patria 2025'. Available at: <https://residuoselectronicosal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Plan-Patria-2019-2025.pdf> [Accessed 19 Jan 2025].
- PROVEA (1989) 'Situación de los derechos humanos en venezuela'. Available at: https://provea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/001_presentacion.pdf [Accessed 13 May 2025].
- Provost, R. (1992) 'Starvation as a weapon: legal implications of the United Nations food blockade against Iraq and Kuwait', *Columbia Journal of Transactional Law*, 30(3), pp. 577–639.
- PSUV (2010) 'Declaración de principios'. Available at: http://www.psuv.org.ve/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Declaracion_principios.pdf [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- Punch, K.F. (2013) *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, London: Sage.
- Purcell, T.F. (2013) 'The Political Economy of Social Production Companies in Venezuela', *Latin American Perspectives*, 40(3), pp. 146–168. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X13476007>.
- Radji, P.C. (1983) *In the Service of the Peacock Throne: The Diaries of the Shah's Last Ambassador to London*. London: Hamilton.
- Ragin, C. and Rihoux, B. (2004) 'Replies To Commentators: Reassurances And Rebuttals', *Qualitative Methods*, 2(2), pp. 22–24. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.998226>.
- Ragozzino, M.R. (2025) 'Punished for Seeking Change', *Human Rights Watch*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/04/30/punished-seeking-change/killings-enforced-disappearances-and-arbitrary-detention> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Rahimi, A.S. (2021) 'An Excerpt from Ayatollah Khalessi Zadeh's Memoirs: The Process of the Collapse of Reza Khan's Republic'. Available at: <https://psri.ir/?id=lq0wnrw6> [Accessed 21 Aug 2025].
- Rahnema, A. (Ed.) (2014) 'Attacking ministries and pro-Mosaddeq buildings', in *Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran: Thugs, Turncoats, Soldiers, and Spooks*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 193–203. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139875974.015>.
- Raisi, A. (2021) 'Electoral Participation in Iran's Parliamentary Politics: Between Two Competing Explanations', *Political Behavior*, 43(4), pp. 1581–1609. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09605-6>.
- Rasmussen, A. and Reher, S. (2019) 'Civil Society Engagement and Policy Representation in Europe', Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0010414019830724?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 9 Sep 2025].
- Rasouli, H. (2019) 'Nationalist Historiography in Reza Shah Era and Its Emphasis on Ethnic Affinity between Kurds and Iranians', *Historical Perspective & Historiography*, 28(22), pp. 39–59. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.22051/hph.2019.24475.1324>.
- Rathbone, M., Jeydel, P., and Lentz, A. (2012) 'Sanctions, Sanctions Everywhere: Forging a Path through Complex Transnational Sanctions Laws Symposium Article', *Georgetown Journal of International Law*, 44(3), pp. 1055–1126.
- Ray, T.F. (2022) *The Politics of the Barrios of Venezuela*. California: University of California Press.

- Razm-Ahang, M. and Torabi-Fard, M. (2023) *Iran in the Second Wave of Maximum Sanctions*. Tehran: Iran Majlis Research Centre.
- Rezaei, F. (2016) 'Iran's Ballistic Missile Program: A New Case for Engaging Iran?', *Insight Turkey*, 18(4), pp. 181–208.
- Rezaei, F. (2019) 'Iran's Military Capability', *Insight Turkey*, 21(4), pp. 183–216.
- Rezvani-Far, A. (2024) 'Iran's Non-Oil Foreign Trade Surges by 57% in Three Years', *Iran's Ministry of Economic Affairs*. Available at: <https://www.mefa.ir/en-US/english.mefa/13978/news/view/27848/262231/Staging#:~:text=Rezvani%2DFar%20furt her%20explained%20that,compared%20to%202020's%20%2435%20billion> [Accessed 25 Feb 2025].
- Riesco, M. (2007) *Latin America: A New Developmental Welfare State in the Making?* Berlin: Springer.
- Ritter, A.R.M. (2010) *Cuba's Economy during the Special Period, 1990-2010. Economics and International Affairs*. Ottawa: Carleton University.
- Rivera, D.M.R. (2005) 'Venezuela antes de Chávez: auge y derrumbe del sistema de punto fijo', *Anuario colombiano de historia social y de la cultura*, 32, pp. 255–274.
- Rivetti, P. (2019) 'Islam and factional politics in Iran', in Haynes, J., ed., *The Routledge Handbook to Religion and Political Parties*, Title: The Routledge handbook to religion and political parties / edited by Jeffrey Haynes. Other titles: Handbook to religion and political parties Description: Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2020.: Routledge, pp. 346–357. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351012478-29>.
- Rivetti, P. & Cavatorta, F., 2013. "The importance of being civil society": Student politics and the reformist movement in Khatami's Iran', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49(3), pp. 408–424.
- Rizvi, M.M.A. (2012) 'Evaluating the Political and Economic Role of the IRGC', *Strategic Analysis*, 36(4), pp. 584–596. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2012.689528>.
- Roberts, K.M. (2014) *Changing Course in Latin America: Party Systems in the Neoliberal Era*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, T. (2009) 'Understanding ethnography', *British Journal of Midwifery*, 17(5), pp. 291–294. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.12968/bjom.2009.17.5.42220>.
- Roche, M. and Robbins, M. (2024) 'What the Lebanese People Really Think of Hezbollah', *Foreign Affairs*. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/lebanon/what-lebanese-people-really-think-hezbollah>. [Accessed 14 Nov 2024].
- Rodriguez, F. (2008) 'An Empty Revolution - The Unfulfilled Promises of Hugo Chavez Essay', *Foreign Affairs*, 87(2), 49–62.
- Rodríguez, F. (2022) 'Sanctions, economic statecraft, and Venezuela's crisis: Case stu', *Fourth Freedom Forum*. Available at: https://sanctionsandsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/January-2022-Venezuela-Case_Rodriguez.pdf [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- Rodríguez, F. (2022) 'Sanctions and Oil Production: Evidence from Venezuela's Orinoco Basin', *Latin American Economic Review*, 31, pp. 31–31. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.60758/laer.v31.33>.
- Rodríguez, F. (2024a) 'The human consequences of economic sanctions', *Journal of Economic Studies*, 51(4), pp. 942–963. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JES-06-2023-0299>.
- Rodríguez, F. (2024b) 'Sanctions and Venezuelan Migration'. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2412.19301>.
- Rodríguez, R. (2018) 'Elecciones en Venezuela: ¿qué puede hacer la oposición?', *Razón Pública*. Available at: <https://razonpublica.com/elecciones-en-venezuela-que-puede-hacer-la-oposicion/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Roett, R. (1999) *Brazil: Politics in a Patrimonial Society*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Rosaldo, R. (1993) *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, 2nd edn. ed, Boston: Beacon Press.

- Rosales, A. and Jiménez, M. (2021) 'Venezuela: Autocratic Consolidation and Splintered Economic Liberalization', *Revista de ciencia política (Santiago)*. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-090X2021005000113>.
- Rostam-Kolayi, J. (2002) 'Foreign education, the women's press, and the discourse of scientific domesticity in early twentieth-century Iran', in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interaction in Culture and Cultural Politics*. London: University of Washington Press.
- Roth, G. (1968) 'Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States', *World Politics*, 20(2), pp. 194–206. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009795>.
- Rothbard, M. (1981) 'The myth of neutral taxation', *The Cato Journal*, pp. 519–564.
- Rouhani, H. (2017) 'This Government Has Been Committed to the Genuine Transfer of the Economy to the Private Sector'. Available at: <https://president.ir/fa/99531> [Accessed 18 Feb 2025].
- Rowe, D. (2001) *Manipulating the Market: Understanding Economic Sanctions, Institutional Change, and the Political Unity of White Rhodesia*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Ryan, M. (2020) 'Q&A: WHO's Mike Ryan on How Countries in Crisis Can Prepare for a Coronavirus Epidemic', *The New Humanitarian*. Available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/interview/2020/03/12/qa-who-michael-ryan-coronavirus-countries-crisis-conflict> [Accessed 5 Feb 2025].
- Sabahi, F. (2002) *The Literacy Corps in Pahlavi Iran (1963-1979): Political, Social and the Literary Implications*. PhD Thesis [School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) University of London].
- Sackley, N. (2012) 'Cosmopolitanism and the uses of tradition: Robert Redfield and alternative visions of modernization during the Cold War', *Modern Intellectual History*, 9(3), pp. 565–595. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244312000200>.
- Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, E. (2023) 'Iran's uprisings for "Women, Life, Freedom": Over-determination, crisis, and the lineages of revolt', *Politics*, 43(3), pp. 404–438.
- Safiullin, M.R. and Elshin, L.A. (2023) 'Sanctions pressure on the Russian economy: ways to overcome the costs and benefits of confrontation within the framework of import substitution', *Finance: theory and practice*, 27(1), pp. 150–161.
- Sajadi, H.S. and Majdzadeh, R. (2019) 'From Primary Health Care to Universal Health Coverage in the Islamic Republic of Iran: A Journey of Four Decades', *Archives of Iranian medicine*, 22(5), pp. 262–268.
- Salehi Isfahani, D., 2020. *Iran Under the Sanctions*. Washington: SAIS Johns Hopkins University.
- Salehi-Isfahani, D. (2009) 'Poverty, inequality, and populist politics in Iran', *The Journal of Economic Inequality*, 7(1), pp. 5–28. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10888-007-9071-y>.
- Salehi-Isfahani, D. (2023) 'The impact of sanctions on household welfare and employment in Iran', *Middle East Development Journal*. Doi: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17938120.2023.2248697>.
- Salitskii, A.I., Zhao, X. and Yurtaev, V.I. (2017) 'Sanctions and import substitution as exemplified by the experience of Iran and China', *Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, 87(2), pp. 205–212.
- Saluk, S. (2024) 'Ethnography under Authoritarianism: Notes from Medical Anthropological Fieldwork', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 56(1), pp. 134–138. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743824000217>.
- Sampson, R.J., McAdam, D., MacIndoe, H., and Weffer-Elizondo, S. (2005) 'Civil Society Reconsidered: The Durable Nature and Community Structure of Collective Civic Action', *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(3), pp. 673–714. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/497351>.
- Sargent, T.J. and Wallace, N. (1968) 'Some unpleasant monetarist arithmetic', *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Quarterly Review*, 22(3), pp. 1–17.
- Sartori, G. (1979) *Parties and party systems: a framework for analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Schmidt, V.A. (1999b) 'The changing dynamics of state-society relations in the Fifth Republic', *West European Politics*, 22(4), pp. 141–165.
- Schmidt, V.A. (2006) *Democracy in Europe: The EU and National Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schmitter, P.C. (1974) 'Still the Century of Corporatism?', *The Review of Politics*, 36(1), pp. 85–131. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670500022178>.
- Schneider, M.R. and Eggert, A. (2014) 'Embracing complex causality with the QCA method: An invitation', *jbm-Journal of Business Market Management*, 7(1), pp. 312–328.
- Schroeder, R. (2016) *Global Powers: Michael Mann's Anatomy of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Schuler, K. (2000) 'Basics of Dollarization', *Global Policy Forum*. Available at: <https://archive.globalpolicy.org/pmscs/30435.html> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Schweitzer, A. (1962) 'Ideological Strategy', *Western Political Quarterly*, 15(1), pp. 46–66. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591296201500104>.
- Scott, R., Kuper, A., and Brian, D.H. (2008) 'Qualitative research methodologies: ethnography', *British Medical Journal*, pp. 512–514.
- Scott, S., Miller, F., and Lloyd, K. (2006) 'Doing Fieldwork in Development Geography: Research Culture and Research Spaces in Vietnam', *Geographical Research*, 44(1), pp. 28–40. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-5871.2006.00358.x>.
- Seawright, J. (2005) 'Assumptions, Causal Inference, and the Goals of QCA', *Comparative and International Development*, 40(1), pp. 39–42.
- Seelke, C.R. (2020) 'Venezuela: Overview of U.S. Sanctions', *Current Politics and Economics of South and Central America*, 13(1), pp. 21–27.
- Selden, Z.A. (1999) *Economic Sanctions as Instruments of American Foreign Policy*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Sen, S. (2023) 'Decolonising to reimagine international relations: an introduction'. *Review of International Studies*, 49(3), pp. 339–345.
- Sen. Menendez, R. 'Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014'. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/2142> [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].
- Sen. Rubio, M. [R-F. (2016) 'Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Extension Act of 2016'. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/2845/text> [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].
- Serbin, A. (2010) *Chávez, Venezuela y La Reconfiguración Política de América Latina y El Caribe*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.
- Setayesh, S. and Mackey, T.K. (2016) 'Addressing the impact of economic sanctions on Iranian drug shortages in the joint comprehensive plan of action: promoting access to medicines and health diplomacy', *Globalization and Health*, 12(1), p. 31. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-016-0168-6>.
- SFIR (N.d.) 'Manifesto of Stability Front of the Islamic Revolution'. Available at: <https://jebhepaydari.ir/%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87/> [Accessed 4 Feb 2025].
- Shadpour, K. (2000) 'Primary health care networks in the Islamic Republic of Iran.', *Eastern Mediterranean health journal*, 6, pp. 822–825.
- Shagabutdinova, E. and Berejikian, J. (2007) 'Deploying Sanctions while Protecting Human Rights: Are Humanitarian "Smart" Sanctions Effective?', *Journal of Human Rights*, 6(1), pp. 59–74. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754830601098386>.
- Shane, S. (2011) 'Coming Soon: The Drone Arms Race', *New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.co/2011/10/09/sunday-review/coming-soon-the-drone-arms-race.html>. [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].

- Shannon, M.K. (2015) 'American–Iranian Alliances: International Education, Modernization, and Human Rights during the Pahlavi Era', *Diplomatic History*, 39(4), pp. 661–688. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhu019>.
- Sherif, B. (2001) 'The Ambiguity of Boundaries in the Fieldwork Experience: Establishing Rapport and Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(4), pp. 436–447. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040100700403>.
- Sherkat, D.E. and Ellison, C.G. (1999) 'Recent Developments and Current Controversies in the Sociology of Religion', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25, pp. 363–394.
- Shiller, R.S. (2013) 'Why Innovation Is Still Capitalism's Star', *New York Times*, 25 February. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/26/business/why-innovation-is-still-capitalisms-star.html> [Accessed: 09 Jan 2024].
- Shirazi, H., Azarbaejani, K., and Sameti, M. (2016) 'The effect of economic sanctions on Iran's exports', *Iranian Economic Review*, 20(1). Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2717632 [Accessed 21 Mar 2025].
- Shumaker, L. (2021) 'Venezuela has fully vaccinated around 10% of its population, doctors group says', *Reuters*, 2 Sep. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuela-has-fully-vaccinated-around-10-its-population-doctors-group-says-2021-09-02/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Sidel, M. (2019) 'Managing the Foreign: The Drive to Securitize Foreign Nonprofit and Foundation Management in China', *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30(4), pp. 664–677.
- Sikor, T. and Lund, C. (2009) 'Access and Property: A Question of Power and Authority', *Development and Change*, 40(1), pp. 1–22. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2009.01503.x>.
- Silva, E. (2009) *Challenging Neoliberalism in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simmie, J. and Martin, R. (2010) 'The economic resilience of regions: towards an evolutionary approach', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 3(1), pp. 27–43. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsp029>.
- Sklaire, M.R. (1990) 'The Security Council Blockade of Iraq: Conflicting Obligations under the United Nations Charter and the Fourth Geneva Convention Notes & Comments', *American University Journal of International Law and Policy*, 6(4), pp. 609–636.
- Skocpol, T. (1979) *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smeets, M. (2018) *Can Economic Sanctions Be Effective?*, WTO Working Papers 2018/03, WTO Working Papers, Libniz Information Centre for Economies. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.30875/0b967ac6-en>.
- Smilde, D. (2011) *Venezuela's Bolivarian Democracy: Participation, Politics, and Culture under Chávez*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Smilde, D. (2013) 'Strategic posture review: Venezuela', *World Politics Review*, 15 March. Available at: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12927/strategic-posture-review-venezuela> [Accessed 28 Mar 2025].
- Smith, A. (1776) *The Wealth of Nations*. London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell.
- Smith, S., Booth, K., and Zalewski, M. (1996) *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Somers, M.R. (1996) 'Class Formation and Capitalism. a Second Look at a Classic', *European Journal of Sociology*, 37(1), pp. 180–202.
- Spires, A.J. (2011) 'Contingent Symbiosis and Civil Society in an Authoritarian State: Understanding the Survival of China's Grassroots NGOs', *American Journal of Sociology*, 117(1), pp. 1–45. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/660741>.
- Staibano, C. and Wallenstein, P. (Eds.) (2005) *International Sanctions: Between Wars and Words*. London: Routledge.

- Steele, R. (2019) 'The Pahlavi National Library Project: Education and Modernization in Late Pahlavi Iran', *Iranian Studies*, 52(1–2), pp. 85–110. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2018.1557512>.
- Steinberg, P.F. (2007) 'Causal Assessment in Small-N Policy Studies', *Policy Studies Journal*, 35(2), pp. 181–204. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2007.00215.x>.
- Stokes, S.C., Dunning, T., Nazareno, M., and Brusco, V. (2013) *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics*, 1st ed, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stone, L. (2014) *Iranian Identity and Cosmopolitanism*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Strindberg, A. and Wäärn, M. (2005) 'Realities of Resistance: Hizballah, the Palestinian Rejectionists, and al-Qa'ida Compared', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 34(3), pp. 23–41. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2005.34.3.23>.
- Sutherland, M. (2011) 'La Economía Venezolana o Cómo La Burguesía Hurta La Renta Petrolera y Es Dueña Del 71% Del PIB', *Argenpress*. Available at: <http://www.argenpress.info/2011/09/la-economia-venezolana-o-como-la.html> [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- SWIFT (2025) 'Information about Compliance', *Swift*. Available at: <https://www.swift.com/about-us/legal/compliance> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Szyliowicz, J.S. (1973) *Education and Modernisation in the Middle East*. London: Cornell University Press.
- Taipei Times (2015) 'Professors Desert Higher Education in Venezuela', *Taipei Times*. Available at: <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/world/archives/2015/06/12/2003620543> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Tait, R. (2009) 'Hundreds may have died in Iranian clashes after poll, say human rights campaigners', *The Guardian*, 16 Jul. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/16/hundreds-feared-dead-iran-clashes> [Accessed 4 Oct 2025].
- Tajbakhsh, K. (2022) *Creating Local Democracy in Iran: State Building and the Politics of Decentralization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tarrow, S. (2010) 'The Strategy of Paired Comparison: Toward a Theory of Practice', *Comparative Political Studies*, 43(2), pp. 230–259. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009350044>.
- Teets, J.C. (2013) 'Let Many Civil Societies Bloom: The Rise of Consultative Authoritarianism in China', *The China Quarterly*, 213, pp. 19–38. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741012001269>.
- Terenina, I.V., Kostoglodov, D.D., Kiyanova, L.D. and Usatkina, O.I. (2019) 'Tools to improve the efficiency of import substitution in the agro-industrial complex under economic sanctions', *International Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, 7(2), pp. 290–301.
- Tgju (2022) 'Dollar Price, Tgju Org'. Available at: https://www.tgju.org/profile/price_dollar_rl/technical [Accessed 25 Oct 2024].
- Thaiss, G.E. (1973) *Religious symbolism and social change: The drama of Husain*. St. Louis: Washington University in St. Louis.
- The Global Economy (2023) 'Venezuela Oil Production - Data, Chart', *The Global Economy*. Available at: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Venezuela/oil_production/ [Accessed 2 Sep 2025].
- Thiem, A., Baumgartner, M., and Bol, D. (2016) 'Still Lost in Translation! A Correction of Three Misunderstandings Between Configurational Comparativists and Regression Analysts', *Comparative Political Studies*, 49(6), pp. 742–774. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414014565892>.
- Thompson, J.A. (2014) 'On Writing Notes in the Field: Interrogating positionality, emotion, participation and ethics', *McGill Journal of Education*, 49(1), pp. 247–254. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1025781ar>.
- Thornton, R. (2007) *Asymmetric Warfare: Threat and Response in the 21st Century*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Thorp, R. (1992) 'A Reappraisal of the Origins of Import-Substituting Industrialisation 1930–1950', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 24(S1), pp. 181–195. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X0002383X>.

- Tilly, C. (2007) *Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Toepler, S., Zimmer, A., Fröhlich, C., and Obuch, K. (2020) 'The Changing Space for NGOs: Civil Society in Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes', *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 31(4), pp. 649–662.
- Tolouei, M. (1994) *Actors of the Pahlavi Era*. Tehran: Nashr-e Elm.
- de Torrente, N. (2004) 'Humanitarian Action under Attack: Reflections on the Iraq War U.S. Foreign Policy and Human Rights', *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 17, pp. 1–30.
- Torvik, R. (2001) 'Learning by doing and the Dutch disease', *European Economic Review*, 45(2), pp. 285–306. Doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0014-2921\(99\)00071-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0014-2921(99)00071-9).
- Tostensen, A. and Bull, B. (2002) 'Are Smart Sanctions Feasible?', *World Politics*, 54(3), pp. 373–403. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2002.0010>.
- Tracy, S.J. (2010) 'Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), pp. 837–851. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury (2019) 'Treasury Sanctions Central Bank of Venezuela and Director of the Central Bank of Venezuela', *U.S. Department of the Treasury*. Available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm661> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Trinkunas, H.A. (2002) 'The Crisis in Venezuelan Civil-Military Relations: From Punto Fijo to the Fifth Republic', *Latin American Research Review*, 37(1), pp. 41–76.
- Trotsky, L. (2008) *History of the Russian Revolution*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Trump, D. (2019) 'Trump says U.S. military intervention in Venezuela "an option;" Russia objects', *Reuters*, 4 Feb. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/trump-says-us-military-intervention-in-venezuela-an-option-russia-objects-idUSKCN1PS0DP/> [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].
- Trump, D. (2025) 'National Security Presidential Memorandum', *White House*. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/national-security-presidential-memorandum-nspm-2/> [Accessed 10 Jan 2025].
- Tuckman, B.W. and Harper, B.E. (2012) *Conducting Educational Research*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- UCAB (2024) 'Encuesta Nacional Sobre Condiciones de Vida 2024', *Andrés Bello Catholic University*. Available at: https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5d14c6a5c4ad42a4e794d0f7/6803aecd2dfc5c19a4ac96cd_ENCOVI%202024_presentacio%CC%81n_integrada.pdf [Accessed 19 Mar 2025].
- Udehn, L. (2002) *The Limits of Public Choice: A Sociological Critique of the Economic Theory of Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Uharte Pozas, L.M. (2005) 'Política social y democracia: un "nuevo" paradigma', *Revista Venezolana de Economía y Ciencias Sociales*, 11(3), pp. 93–114.
- Ul Haq, I. (2024) 'Iran and Hezbollah: Proxy Power Play', *Institute for Security and Development Policy*. Available at: <https://www.isdp.eu/iran-and-hezbollah-proxy-power-play/> [Accessed 28 Oct 2024].
- UN Security Council (N.d.) 'UN Documents for Iran: Security Council Resolutions', *Security Council Report*. Available at: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-resolutions/?ctype=Iran&cbtype=iran.
- Unger, J. and Chan, A. (1995) 'China, Corporatism, and the East Asian Model', *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, (33), pp. 29–53. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2950087>.
- Unidad Venezuela (2024) 'Tenemos en nuestras manos las actas que demuestran nuestro triunfo categórico y matemáticamente irreversible', *Twitter*. Available at: <https://x.com/unidadvenezuela/status/1818059217372135431> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- United Nations (1999) 'Report of the Second Panel Established Pursuant to the Note by the President of the Security Council of 30 January 1999 (S/1999/100), Concerning the Current Humanitarian Situation in Iraq, Annex II of S/1999/356-30', United Nations, New York. Available at:

- https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Disarm%20S1999356.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
- United Nations (2012) 'State of Latin American and Caribbean Cities 2012 towards a New Urban Transition, UN-Habitat', *New York*. Available at: <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/State%20of%20Latin%20American%20and%20Caribbean%20cities.pdf>.
- United Nations (2019) 'Venezuela: Overview of Priority Humanitarian Needs'. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2019/345,%20accessed%20July%201,%202020>. [Accessed 8 Jul 2025].
- United Nations (N.d.) 'Sanctions'. Available at: https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/information?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 23 Sep 2025].
- United Nations Secretary-General (1997) 'Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. A/52/342'. Available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/244182/files/A_52_342-EN.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 12 Feb 2025].
- United States Department of State (2023) 'Signing of electoral roadmap between the Unitary Platform and representatives of Maduro'. Available at: <https://ve.usembassy.gov/signing-of-electoral-roadmap-between-the-unitary-platform-and-representatives-of-maduro/> [Accessed 02 Feb 2025].
- UNOCHA (2020) 'Venezuela: Situation Report, September 2020', *OCHA*. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/venezuela-situation-report-september-2020> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- US Congress (1992) 'Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (Torricelli Act), Public Law'. Available at: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-110/pdf/STATUTE-110-Pg785.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 25 Sep 2025].
- US Department of State (2024) 'Venezuela sanctions relief: Expiration of General License 44'. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/venezuela-sanctions-relief-expiration-of-general-license-44/> [Accessed 29 Jun 2025].
- U.S. Department of State, Office of Inspector General. (2002) 'A Review of U.S. Policy Toward Venezuela, 02-OIG-003', *U.S. Department of State, Office of Inspector General*. Available at: <https://venezuelanalysis.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/13682.pdf> [Accessed 15 Jun 2024].
- U.S. Department of the Treasury (2019) 'Treasury Sanctions Venezuela's State Gold Mining Company and Its President for Propping Up Illegitimate Maduro Regime', *U.S. Department of the Treasury*. Available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm631> [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].
- U.S. Department of the Treasury (2021) 'The Treasury 2021 Sanctions Review'. Available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Treasury-2021-sanctions-review.pdf> [Accessed 01 Aug 2025].
- U.S. Department of the Treasury (2025) 'Treasury Sanctions Venezuela's State-Owned Oil Company Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A.', *U.S. Department of the Treasury*. Available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm594> [Accessed 28 Sep 2025].
- U.S. Department of Treasury (2001) 'Executive Order 13224, Office of Foreign Assets Control'. Available at: <http://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/programs/terror/terror.pdf> [Accessed 23 Mar 2022].
- US Department of Treasury (2022) 'Treasury Sanctions Iran's Morality Police and Senior Security Officials for Violence Against Protesters and the Death of Mahsa Amini', Available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0969> [Accessed 17 Oct 2024].

- US Energy Information Administration (EIA) (2018) 'Country Analysis Brief: Iran'. Available at: https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/Iran/iran.pdf [Accessed 5 Feb 2025].
- US Government Accountability (2022) 'U.S. Government Accountability Office (U.S. GAO)'. Available at: <https://www.gao.gov/> [Accessed 19 Aug 2025].
- US House of Representatives (1977) *United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas: Past, Present, and Future. Report of a Staff Survey Mission to Ethiopia, Iran and the Arabian Peninsula*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- US Institute of Peace (2022) 'Protest Context: Statistics on Iran's Women, The Iran Primer'. Available at: <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2022/oct/07/statistics-women-iran> [Accessed 22 Aug 2025].
- US Treasury Department (2010) 'CISADA, the New US Sanctions on Iran'. Available at: <https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/7871/download?inline> [Accessed 29 May 2023].
- US Treasury Department (2012) 'National Defense Authorisation Act'. Available at: <https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/5761/download?inline>. [Accessed 8 Nov 2024].
- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., and Bondas, T. (2013) 'Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study', *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 15(3), pp. 398–405. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12048>.
- Van Roekel, E. and De Theije, M. (2020) 'Hunger in the land of plenty: The complex humanitarian crisis in Venezuela', *Anthropology Today*, 36(2), pp. 8–12. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12561>.
- Vasileva, A. (2018) 'Trapped in Informality: The Big Role of Small Firms in Russia's Statist-patrimonial Capitalism', *New Political Economy*, 23(3), pp. 314–330. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2017.1349090>.
- Vaz, R. (2021) 'Venezuela: Maduro Blasts Sanctions, Sets Sights on Economic Recovery', *Venezuelanalysis*. Available at: <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/15094/> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Vera, L. (2018) '¿Cómo explicar la catástrofe económica venezolana?', *Nueva Sociedad*, p. 274.
- Vidal, P. (2025) 'Impact of Sanctions Policy Shifts: A Case Study of the United States and Cuba, 1994–2020', *Journal of International Development*, 37(2), pp. 540–553. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3973>.
- Vines, A. (2012) 'The effectiveness of UN and EU sanctions: lessons for the twenty-first century', *International Affairs*, 88(4), pp. 867–877. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2012.01106.x>.
- Vinthagen, S. and Johansson, A. (2013) "'Everyday Resistance": Exploration of a', *Resistance studies magazine*, 1(1), pp. 1–46.
- Vries, A.W.D., Portela, C., and Guijarro-Usobiaga, B. (2014) 'Improving the effectiveness of sanctions: A checklist for the EU', *Singapore Management University*, pp. 1–17.
- Vyas, K. (2019) 'Venezuela Quietly Loosens Grip on Market, Tempering Economic Crisis', *Wall Street Journal*, 17 Sep. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/venezuela-quietly-loosens-grip-on-market-tempering-economic-crisis-11568718002> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- Vyas, K. and Faucon, B. (2020) 'Second Fuel Tanker From Iran Arrives in Venezuela', *Wall Street Journal*, 25 May. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/second-fuel-tanker-from-iran-arrives-in-venezuela-11590447706> [Accessed 2 Sep 2025].
- WakemanJR, F. (1993) 'The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate: Western Reflections on Chinese Political Culture', *Modern China*, 19(2), pp. 108–138. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/009770049301900202>.
- Walker, S. (2023) 'Rentier State Theory 50 years on: new developments', *Frontiers in Political Science*, 5. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2023.1120439>.
- Walsh, B. (1995) 'The Iraqi Economic Blockade: A Moral and Legal Analysis', *Peace Research*, 27(1), pp. 47–67.

- Waltz, K. (2018) *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. Columbia University Press. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wang, Y., Wang, K., and Chang, C.-P. (2019) 'The impacts of economic sanctions on exchange rate volatility', *Economic Modelling*, 82, pp. 58–65. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2019.07.004>.
- Webber, J.R. (2010) 'Venezuela under Chávez: the prospects and limitations of twenty-first century socialism, 1999–2009', *Socialist Studies/Études Socialistes*, 6(1), pp. 75–99.
- Weber, M. (1978) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. California: University of California Press.
- Weber, M. (1920) *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Translated by A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, M. (1904) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by T. Parsons. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Weisbrot, M., Ray, R. and Sandoval, L. (2009) *The Chávez Administration at 10 Years: The Economy and Social Indicators*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).
- Weisbrot, M. and Sandoval, L. (n.d.) *The Venezuelan Economy in the Chávez Years*. Washington, D.C.: Centre for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).
- Weiss, T.G. (1997) *Political Gain and Civilian Pain: Humanitarian Impacts of Economic Sanctions*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Weyland, K. (2013) 'Latin America's Authoritarian Drift: The Threat from the Populist Left', *Journal of Democracy*, 24(3).
- Whang, T. (2011) 'Playing to the Home Crowd? Symbolic Use of Economic Sanctions in the United States: Playing to the Home Crowd?', *International Studies Quarterly*, 55(3), pp. 787–801. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2011.00668.x>.
- White, G. (1996) 'Chinese Trade Unions in the Transition from Socialism: Towards Corporatism or Civil Society?', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 34(3), pp. 433–457. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.1996.tb00483.x>.
- Whitmeyer, J.M. (1997) 'Mann's Theory of Power - A (Sympathetic) Critique', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 48(2), pp. 210–225. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/591749>.
- Wilpert, G. (2007) 'Chavez's Venezuela and 21st century socialism', in *Transitions in Latin America and in Poland and Syria*, Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, pp. 3–42.
- Wilpert, G. (2020) *Changing Venezuela by Taking Power: The History and Policies of the Chavez Government*. London: Verso Books.
- Wilson, W. (1919) 'Address at the Coliseum at the State Fair Grounds in Indianapolis, Indiana', *The American Presidency Project*. Available at: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-coliseum-the-state-fair-grounds-indianapolis-indiana?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 23 Sep 2025].
- Wintour, P. (2022) 'Iran protests: family of boy, 9, killed in night of violence blame attack on security forces', *The Guardian*, 17 Nov. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/17/iran-protests-young-boy-among-deaths-night-of-turmoil-mahsa-amini> [Accessed 4 Oct 2025].
- Woods, P. (1986) *Inside School: Ethnography in Educational Research*. London: Routledge.
- World Bank (2023) 'World Bank Open Data', *World Bank Open Data*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.CDRT.IN?view=chart&locations=VE> [Accessed 7 Aug 2025].
- World Bank (2023) 'World Bank Open Data', *World Bank Open Data*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN?locations=RU-IR> [Accessed 22 Aug 2025].

- World Bank (2024) 'Literacy Rate, Adult Total (% of People Ages 15 and Above)', *World Bank Open Data*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS> [Accessed 22 Aug 2025].
- World Bank (N.d.) 'World Bank Open Data', *World Bank Open Data*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org> [Accessed 6 Sep 2025].
- World Population Review (2024) 'Life Expectancy by Country 2025', *World Population Review*. Available at: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/life-expectancy-by-country> [Accessed 22 Aug 2025].
- Worrell, E. and Galitsky, C. (2005) 'Energy efficiency improvement and cost saving opportunities for petroleum refineries'. Available at: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/96m8d8gm> [Accessed 21 Mar 2025].
- Wright, D. (1977) 'The English amongst the Persians : During the Qajar Period, 1787-1921', *Heinemann*. Available at: <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1971993809688570644> [Accessed 10 Aug 2025].
- Wurster, S. (2014) 'Comparing ecological sustainability in autocracies and democracies', in *Comparing Autocracies in the Early Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge, pp. 141–158.
- Yang, K.M. and Alpermann, B. (2014) 'Children and youth NGOs in China: Social activism between embeddedness and marginalization', *China Information*, 28(3), pp. 311–337. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X14554350>.
- Yergin, D. (2020) *The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Yiyi, L. (2008) *Non-Governmental Organisations in China*. London: Routledge.
- Young, I.M. (2002) *Inclusion and Democracy*, First published in paperback. ed, Oxford political theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zakaria, F. (1997) 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracy Essay', *Foreign Affairs*, 76(6), pp. 22–43.
- Zani, S. (2022) 'Sanctions against North Korea: A Descriptive Analysis of their Economic Impact (2000–2020)', *Peace Economics, Peace Science, and Public Policy*, 28(4).
- Zarrinnal, N. (2024) 'From The Creators of Knowledge to the Specialists of Spirit: Anti-Clericalism in Iran's Modernist Intellectual Discourse (1925–1941)', *Harvard Theological Review*, 117(4), pp. 820–836. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S001781602400035X>.
- Ziba-Kalam, S. (1998) 'Party system and economic structure of Iran: interview with A. Nakhai', *Middle East Policy*, 6(2), pp. 122–134.
- Zimmt, R. (2022) "'Woman, Life, Freedom": From Protest to Revolution?", *INSS*. Available at: https://www.inss.org.il/strategic_assessment/woman-life-freedom/ [Accessed 14 Sep 2025].
- Zinn, H. (1990) *The Politics of History: With a New Introduction*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Zirinsky, M.P. (1992) 'Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and the Rise of Reza Shah, 1921–1926', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24(4), pp. 639–663. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800022388>.

Appendix 1: Tables

Tables 1, 2, and 3 are about social class classification in Iran.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 are about values associated with political parties in Iran.

Tables 7, 8, and 9 are about social class classification in Venezuela.

Tables 10, 11, and 12 are about values associated with political values in Venezuela.

Table 1

Class	Description	Key Groups	Economic Factors	Social & Political Factors
Upper Class	-The Iranian upper classes control significant power. -Their class distinction is shaped not only by economics but also political affiliations. -They preserves production relations that serve their interests, aligning with Weber's idea of class as individuals sharing common life chances through economic and social opportunities.	Bazaaris and industrial aristocracy	- Control economic resources, including trade and industry. - Invest heavily in real estate for stability.	- Maintain political influence through business and political connections. - Align with state ideology, especially religiously.
Bazaaris	The commercial class in Iran, particularly influential in Tehran's Grand Bazaar.	Traditional merchants in urban centres.	- Business-focused, with profits often reinvested in real estate for stability (Harris 2017). - Adapt to sanctions by shifting trade.	- Strong religious affiliations (Thaiss 1973). - Align with political factions due to ideological ties. - Key part of the "mosque-bazaar alliance" (Ashraf 1988).

Industrial Aristocracy	-Wealthy class controlling large industries, including oil and steel. -Refers to as “hybrid business elites” (Piketty 2014), which emerges through developing managerial expertise.	Industrialists.	- Manage major industrial operations, particularly after nationalisation of strategic industries such as oil and steel. - Have access to state resources and protection.	- Hold significant political power through state connections. - Expertise in cultivating ‘Byzantic’ political skills (Glassman 1997) , which involve manoeuvring through complex networks of patronage, ideological loyalty, and informal negotiations.
-------------------------------	--	-----------------	---	--

Table 2

Class	Description	Key Groups	Economic Factors	Social & Political Factors
Middle Class	- A diverse class difficult to define due to informal economy, economic volatility, and lack of reliable data.	- Salaried employees, academics, professionals, and government workers (Salehi-Isfahani 2009). A 2000-2003 survey in ten cities found over 50% of respondents considered themselves middle class (Hezar Jaribi and Safari 2010). Others estimate it to 32 million salaried employees, or 46% of the workforce to 60%, acknowledging the difficulty in measuring its size. due to its diversity (Salehi-Isfahani 2009).	- Income-based estimates vary (Giddens 2013); many are employed in salaried positions. - Economic vulnerability due to inflation and sanctions.	- Social status tied to employment and education. - Dependent on family wealth, location, and subsidies.

Table 3

Class	Description	Key Groups	Economic Factors	Social & Political Factors
-------	-------------	------------	------------------	----------------------------

Lower Working Class	-The marginalised class, often with precarious employment. Linked to the revolutionary ideology of Khomeini's "Mostazafin" (the oppressed). -Khomeini framed them as the revolutionary force in contrast to the "Mostakberin" (the oppressors), such as wealthy elites and corrupt rulers.	- In 2021, Iran's labour force was estimated at 26,410,385 (ILO 2022), including both formal and informal sectors. The formal sector comprises government employees, state-owned enterprises, and private companies, while the informal sector includes unregistered workers, such as street vendors and domestic workers (Harris 2017). In 2019, Iran had 10 million formal workers (ISNA 2021), but the informal sector, with its unregulated nature, is significant, employing a large portion of the workforce. A precise figures for the informal workforce are challenging to obtain (Najafi and Esfahanian 2021).	- Economic instability and reliance on state subsidies (Nomani and Behdad 2006). - Vulnerable to job loss and exploitation (Salehi-Isfahani 2009).	- Minimal political power but framed as the oppressed class in revolutionary rhetoric. - Reliant on community and government support.
---------------------	--	---	--	---

Table 4

Category	Conservatism	Reformism
View on Supreme Leader & Governance	-Prioritisation of Islam above all else. -Believes in a strong Islamic state. -Absolute loyalty to the Supreme Leader's authority (ICP N.d.).	-Seeks change within Iran's theocratic system, integrating Islamic principles with modern governance and social reforms while preserving the state's Islamic character—a vision that aligns with "liberalism". - Advocates for a reduced role of religion in governance. -Seeks government accountability and institutional reforms. Some

		factions challenge Supreme Leader's power.
Elections & Political Reform	-Supports Guardian Council's vetting of candidates to ensure Islamic values. -Opposes electoral changes.	Advocates for free and fair elections. Criticizes disqualification of reformist candidates (Iran-Emrooz 2013).
Foreign Policy & Relations with the U.S.	-Strongly opposes the US, viewing it as an imperial power that has interfered in Iran's sovereignty. -Calls the US the "Great Satan" for undermining Iran's self-determination (Stone 2014). -Sees sanctions as economic warfare. Believes that sanctions have ultimately benefited Iran. -Supports military expansion and regional influence.	-Advocates diplomatic engagement with the US and Europe. -Supports nuclear agreements (e.g., JCPOA) and seeks possible sanctions relief.
Role of the IRGC	Supports IRGC's dominant role in politics, economy, and security. Views it as essential for national security (Ahmadian 2022).	Seeks to limit IRGC's political and economic role to strengthen civilian governance.

Table 5

Category	Conservatism	Reformism
Economic Policy	-Supports a state-controlled economy, emphasising self-sufficiency and resistance economy. -Opposes foreign economic influence.	-Favors privatisation, foreign direct investment (FDI), aligning with neoliberal principles to integrate Iran into the global market.

Role of Government in Economy	-Strong government intervention in key industries (oil, banking, infrastructure). -Supports welfare policies and subsidies.	-Promotes market liberalisation, foreign investment, and private sector growth. Seeks to reduce subsidies.
Relations with International Financial Institutions	-Opposes the IMF and World Bank, viewing them as tools of Western economic control (Keshavarzian 2007). -Supports barter trade and regional alliances (China, Russia, Venezuela).	-Embraced structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) under Rafsanjani (1989–1997), marking a neoliberal shift. These IMF- and World Bank-backed policies promoted privatisation, deregulation, and foreign investment (Peet 2009).
View on Sanctions	-Views sanctions as imperialistic pressure and supports economic resistance strategies. -Encourages domestic production.	-Seeks sanctions relief through diplomacy. -Supports economic normalisation with Europe and the US.

Table 6

Category	Conservatism	Reformism
Women's Rights & Gender Roles	-Supports traditional gender roles (SFIR N.d.). -Enforces hijab and opposes feminist movements.	-Advocates greater women's rights: easing hijab laws, promoting women's political participation, and improving legal rights.
Media & Freedom of Expression	-Strict state control over media, censorship on press and social media.	-Supports greater press freedom, reduced censorship, and freedom of expression within limits of the Islamic Republic.
Judiciary & Rule of Law	-Supports a Sharia-based legal system with strict punishments.	-Advocates for judicial reform, greater fairness in legal

		proceedings, and reducing political bias.
Civil Society & Protests	-Suppresses protests that oppose Islamic and revolutionary principles. -Views opposition as a threat to national security.	-Advocates for greater freedoms, particularly in women's rights and freedom of expression. -Opposes hijab enforcement, with some supporting voluntary hijab, arguing that coercion weakens the Islamic Republic's legitimacy. -Pushes for increased female political participation within the system. -Calls for a more open media landscape, seeking fewer restrictions on social media and press freedom to enhance public discourse.

Table 7

Class	Description	Key Groups	Economic Factors	Social & Political Factors
Upper	A small elite benefiting from capital, state ties, and access to foreign currency. Concentrated in Caracas and key urban centres. They are known as “privileged classes” (Cannon 2008).	Wealthy business owners, old oligarchic families, state elites, and <i>boliburguesía</i>. Maduro's liberalisation policy led to the rise of a new economic elite, fostered and safeguarded by the government (Rosales and Jiménez 2021), known as “bodegones” (Bull and Rosales 2020).	Access to dollars, investments abroad, real estate, privileged imports. Some benefit from corruption and state contracts. Average incomes in dollars grew by more than 80% for upper class in 2024 (UCAB 2024). They control the means of production and claim the largest share of the income it generates (Germán Faría, N.d.). They squander vast sums purely for the sake of consumption (Germán Faría, N.d.). The hyperinflation destroyed their wealth, primarily the owners of bonds and other unlinked financial assets (Pittaluga, Seghezza and Morelli 2021).	Politically divided: some anti-Chavista (traditional elites); others are Chavista-aligned (<i>boliburguesía</i>). They supported the coup d’état in 2002-2004 by the neoliberal opposition. They are accused of corruption by the Chavista government (Hawkins 2010, p. 17). They have access to high-quality education (Germán Faría N.d.). Socially segregated, educated abroad, live in gated communities.

Table 8

Class	Description	Key Groups	Economic Factors	Social & Political Factors
-------	-------------	------------	------------------	----------------------------

Middle	Formerly large, now significantly eroded due to economic crisis.	Public sector employees, teachers, engineers, lawyers, small entrepreneurs.	The middle class has sharply declined in recent years due to inflation and currency devaluations (Oswaldo and Hernández 2021).	Politically fragmented. Some support opposition, others support chavismo out of necessity or ideology.
	Includes professionals, academics, small business owners.	They constitute the main group of immigrants to other countries.	A Venezuelan family in this income range saw their monthly income drop from about US\$830 in 2012 to US\$195 in 2020, a roughly 77% decline in per capita household income (Oswaldo and Hernández 2021). Many rely on remittances or informal work. They have positive effects on the investment rate and economic growth (Oswaldo and Hernández 2021). They prioritise helping their children buy first homes or leave them modest inheritances (Leslie 2022). Most opened dollar-based bank accounts in Venezuela or the US, some invested in dollar securities, and a few bought properties abroad. Most invested their savings in domestic assets like homes, rental properties, small businesses, or cars (Leslie 2022). Hyperinflation wiped out wealth, especially for holders of bonds and non-indexed assets (Pittaluga <i>et al.</i> 2021b)	They are a factor of political stability by favouring more moderate and inclusive programmes (Oswaldo and Hernández 2021). They are viewed by chavistas as enemies of the state. They began to perceive the state as criminal—at times subtly so, and at other times blatantly (Leslie 2022). They align themselves with business elites and the formal political opposition in opposition to Chavismo (Maya 2005). They prioritise the education (Leslie 2022).

Table 9

Class	Description	Key Groups	Economic Factors	Social & Political Factors
-------	-------------	------------	------------------	----------------------------

Lower Working Class	The largest and most affected class, living in precarious conditions.	Informal workers, rural populations, barrio residents, and pensioners.	High levels of unemployment, dependence on food programmes (CLAP).	Generally pro-Chavista due to reliance on state support.
	They are known as “popular classes”.	These are inhabitants of mainly densely populated, often self-built neighbourhoods on hillsides or city peripheries, especially in Caracas, Maracaibo, and Barquisimeto. Barrios are typically underserved by public services like water, electricity, and healthcare.	Are at serious risk of falling into poverty (UCAB 2024).	High participation in communal councils.
	They are poor and dark-skinned (Cannon 2008).		Agriculture (67%) and services (64%) are the sectors with the highest concentration of poor households.	They were marginalised and ignored by the ruling elites for an extended period.
	Often dependent on government aid and informal economy.		8 out of 10 poor households receive bonuses worth \$43.10 per month (UCAB 2024).	Their access to education remains restricted (Germán Faria, N.d.).
	They are regarded as a vulnerable segment of Venezuelan society (UCAB 2024).			

Table 10

Political Values	Left-Wing (PSUV)	Right-Wing (Justice First, Conservative AD)
Sovereignty and Imperialism	Rejection of US imperialism, foreign military bases, and neoliberalism (PSUV 2010).	Frames intervention as necessary; supports sanctions to restore democracy.
State Power and Military Role	Repressive state–military fusion (PSUV 2010).	Rejection of civil–military fusion (V14).
Transformation of the State / Local Power	Use of communal councils and local power under state control and exclude middle and upper social classes.	Builds own community networks (Interviewee V12); Boycotts chavista institutions; electoral abstention due to undemocratic electoral processes (Corrales 2020b).

Democratic Engagement	Electoral engagement limited under centralised state; ideological hegemony.	Referenda, protests, vote campaigns (V11); Advocating for participatory democracy (Justice First N.d.).
Legitimacy and Resistance Framing	Frames opposition as “complicit with imperialism”.	Frames chavismo as “authoritarian and illegitimate”.

Table 11

Economic Values	Left-Wing (PSUV)	Right-Wing (Justice First, Conservative AD)
Oil Dependency	Oil–rentier continuation: maintains hydrocarbon dependence.	Diversified economy beyond oil (industry, tourism, etc.).
Position on Neoliberalism	Rhetoric against capitalism and neoliberalism (but not in practice).	Privatisation advocacy; opposes PSUV economic centralism (Cannon 2014).
Redistribution and Welfare	Chavista-centred redistribution: CLAP, public welfare.	Combat poverty through productivity and equal opportunity (Justice First N.d.).
Economic Sovereignty	Regional economic sovereignty: ALBA, PetroCaribe, against IMF/World Bank.	Resource nationalism legacy: still supports public control but under a democratic government.
Role of the State in Production	Party-controlled production: PSUV cadres in local production committees (Interviewee V9).	Private property and free enterprise (Cannon 2014).
Economic Blame Framing	Blames sanctions and foreign powers for economic crisis.	Blames chavismo for economic collapse (López Maya 2013).
Productivity and Labour	Top-down economic organisation; little on economic diversification.	Focus on productivity and wages; campaigns for pensions and salaries (V11).
Communal vs. Centralised Economy	Undermines communal autonomy; centralises decisions.	Advocates decentralisation and local entrepreneurship.

Table 12

Social Values	Left-Wing (PSUV)	Right-Wing (Justice First, Conservative AD)
Social Justice and Poverty	Eradication of poverty, hunger, and illiteracy.	Social justice and solidarity (Justice First N.d.); strong institutions and opportunity.
Gender Equality	Empower women, reject sexism (PSUV 2010).	Youth and gender inclusion (V11); mobilisation for inclusion.
Education and Health	Universal access to education, health, housing, and water.	Education and health as integral rights (Justice First N.d.).
Democratic Inclusion	Marginalised inclusion (PSUV 2010): rhetoric of empowering the poor.	Civic participation and formation (Justice First N.d.); mobilisation efforts.
Human Rights	Claims justice through revolution; vague on rights protections.	Core of opposition campaigns (Jiménez 2023).
Cultural and Moral Values	Populist discourse of morality and national pride.	Equality of access to moral, cultural, and material goods (Justice First N.d.).
Youth and Protest Identity	Youth included through revolutionary identity	Protest identity (V11): especially post-2017 mobilisations.

Appendix 2: Ethics

Ethical Approval Application Form



Maynooth University
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Social Research Ethics Sub-Committee

Protocol for Tier 2-3 Ethical Review of a Research Project Involving Participation of Humans

(This form must be submitted via the online [Ethics Module in RIS](#)).

1. Applicant.

Name:	MU Address/Department
ALI ASGHAR GHAREH DAGHI	Ali.GharehDaghi.2022@mumail.ie

2. Title. Brief title of the research project:

Managing United States Sanctions: The emergence of a “resistance model” in Iran and Venezuela?
--

3. Research Objectives. Please summarize briefly the objective(s) of the research, including relevant details such as purpose, research question, hypothesis, etc. (maximum 100 words).

<i>Use plain English</i> The research explores how a model that integrates both the state and society simultaneously can emerge and evolve in sanctioned countries to counter US-led sanctions. The focus is on identifying and evaluating outcomes of state/society interactions, aiming to understand the emergence of a “resistance model”. The study explores commonalities and differences in these outcomes, through examining three variables: solidarity, production, and institutions. To address such a concern, the study employs a comparative approach, examining resistance in Iran and Venezuela under revolutionary governments.

4. Methodology.

4a. Where will the research be carried out?

Location(s)	<i>Please describe the locations where the research will be carried out. If research will be carried out abroad, illustrate how you have given due consideration to the ethical norms and data protection requirements for the country/ culture etc. Note that when working with institutions abroad you might also require ethical approval from that institution/ organisation.</i> Research will be conducted in Caracas and Tehran, the respective capitals of Venezuela and Iran. I will be in Tehran between April-July 2024 and in Caracas from August until September 2024. I will be primarily using elite interviews and participant observation, and interviews will take place in private in office locations chosen by participants. Participant observation will be at publicly held meetings. According to the Data Guidance website (www.dataguidance.com)
-------------	---

	there are no general data protection laws in either Venezuela or Iran. In this case therefore EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) norms will apply. <i>If research is to be carried out online, please clearly state that a MU approved platform or the Microsoft Office suite will be used. Please note that use of Zoom is not permitted.</i>
--	---

4b. Briefly describe the overall research design of the project.

Use plain English (maximum 350 words)

Depending on the methods/ techniques to be used, elaborate upon the research context(s), potential questions / issues to be explored, tasks/ tests/ measures, frequency/ duration of sessions, process of analysis to be used, as appropriate

Relevant details regarding the procedures for data collection, storage and retention should be reflected in the content of the Information Sheet. You should attach (as relevant) interview guides or survey questions as an appendix to the submission.

Please note you must use software packages licenced to Maynooth University (i.e., Microsoft Office suite and Onlinesurveys.ac.uk).

To get access to Onlinesurveys.ac.uk, please contact laura.mcelwain@mu.ie

Please note the use of this platform is subject to Maynooth University [OnlineSurveys User Policy](#)

Twenty-four semi-structured interviews of 60-90 minutes duration with political party elites, grassroots organisations leaders, and academics carried out in their respective offices in Iran and Venezuela (12 interviews per country). The interviews will be conducted at three distinct levels. Initially, discussions with political party elites aim to identify values considered crucial for political parties. This involves delving into the nuances of their ideologies, political goals, and the factors shaping their decision-making. Subsequently, interviews with leaders of grassroots organisations will focus on determining concerns and sentiments that give rise to new social forces arising from production changes caused by sanctions. I will also assess the level of institutionalisation of social forces by conducting interviews with grassroots' leaders. The viewpoints of academics across different disciplines, such as political, economic, and social perspectives, also play a crucial role in cross-validating and ensuring the robustness and accuracy of the findings.

Interviews will be recorded on a smart phone, directly onto the device from where they then be uploaded onto a password-protected computer without passing through the cloud. Then, the interviews will be transcribed and subjected to analysis involving coding, categorising, and thematising.

Combining interviews with documentation in my fieldwork can provide a comprehensive and multi-faceted understanding of my research topic. I will ask grassroots organisations for two documents. I will request strategic plans to explore their short-term and long-term strategies and how they plan to achieve their mission. Subsequently, I will inquire about policy documents to comprehend their stance on various issues and the policies they advocate. However, handling such sensitive documentations is a delicate matter and put participants in a compromising position. To overcome this challenge, I will maintain transparency with the organisation about the purpose of collecting such data in the information sheet. Additionally, I will maintain confidentiality by anonymising the organisation's name to which the documents belong and the identity of the person providing me with the documents. There are more than 10,000 appropriate NGOs available in Iran (Namazi, 2005) so it will not be obvious which ones I have actually accessed, helping protect anonymity of participant organisations and individuals.

See Information Sheet and Informed Consent form attached.

5. Participants.

5a. Who will the participants be?

The leaders of six prominent civil society organisations in Venezuela and Iran are identified (three in each country). The organisations are chosen as they are affected to some extent by US-led Sanctions. In Venezuela, they include Asociación Civil Fuerza, Unión, Justicia, Solidaridad y Paz (FUNPAZ); Asociación Civil Generación Activa Venezuela; and Grupo Social CESAP. In Iran, they include the Society for Protecting the Rights of Consumers; the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS); and the Barakat Foundation.

Another group of participants comprises politicians -officials and public representatives- from Moderation and Development party, and Combatant Clergy Association (Iran); the United Democratic Platform (PUD), and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). These parties are selected as they represent two contrasting political ideologies in Iran and Venezuela respectively.

Finally, academics having expertise across different disciplines, such as political, economic, and social perspectives will be interviewed. I have contacts in both the University of Tehran, in Iran and the Central University of Venezuela, in Caracas, both the most prestigious academic institutions in their respective countries. However, I will also seek interviews with relevant academics in other universities or research centres if that is appropriate.

5b. Outline the recruitment process, considering any criteria for inclusion/exclusion.

Where gatekeepers are involved in the process of participant recruitment, please clearly outline procedures relating to their involvement. Please include a letter/email of support from named gatekeepers or external parties involved in the research.

I have a principal gatekeeper for both countries. In Iran, I have been in contact with Maryam Haghroosta, an associate professor at the University of Tehran, since June 2023. She expressed her willingness to assist me in identifying potential interviewees. Additionally, I reached out to Francisco Rodriguez, a Venezuelan professor at University of Denver, who is prepared to act in a similar capacity for the Venezuelan part of my research. Recruitment will follow a four step recruitment procedure:

1. My gatekeepers and I will compile a mutually agreed list of potential interviewees.
2. Both gatekeepers will then contact potential participants on my behalf by email, copying me into that email. The purposes, nature and extent of their participation will be outlined in that email.
3. If necessary I personally will send a further email in the event that no response has been received within one week. This email will contain the same information as the previous one.

Once participants respond positively to my email, I will forward them electronic versions of the Information and Consent sheet for their information. They can return this to me online, or in person when we meet.

5c. What will research participants be asked to do for the purposes of this research study?

NB: This information should be reflected in the content of the Information Sheet and Consent Form.

All participants will be asked to engage in an interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. They may also be asked to provide any relevant documentation that might provide further insight into the issues discussed during the interview (see 4b above for types of documentation). However, this will be entirely voluntary. Content of the interviews will vary with the different types of interviewees (political party members, civil society organisations and academics) as per 4b above.

5d. Conflict of Interest.

☐ Yes ☒ No

Please consider the basis of any potential conflict of interest and describe the steps you will take to address this should it arise? [Access the Conflict of Interest Policy here](#)

N/A

5e. All research involves power dynamics (e.g., student/employee/employer/colleague etc.).

Please outline the basis of the potential power dynamics in this research and describe the steps you will take to address these.

Note that power relationships may exist in situations other than supervisor-student relationships and or adult/child relationships.

My fieldwork happens in politically dynamic contexts. As such, there are four levels of power to reflect on: power of gatekeepers over my choice of participants; my power over those participants; their power over me; and the power of the state over all of us, but particularly my participants.

- Power of gatekeepers over me and participants:

The gatekeepers will identify possible participants for the research, meaning that they will control who I will speak to effectively, risking a selection bias in participants interviewed. While it is not entirely within my power to control this, mutual agreement over the list of potential interviewees mitigates against this risk somewhat. Moreover, I will employ a snowballing approach to finding new interviewees from those I have already interviewed. Gatekeepers may also have some power over participants as they are the main point of contact. Nonetheless, participants have the final say over whether they wish to participate or not, mitigating this power dynamic to some extent.

- Power between researcher and participants:

Conducting field research through interviews entails establishing working relationships with interlocutors in the field, enabling us to understand underlying principles of our study and mitigate researchers' power over interlocutors (Fujji, 2017). The working relationships could offer the essential space for the dignity and respect between me and participants to generate the trust. These relationships have a certain power relationship that could be reciprocal in Iran and asymmetrical in Venezuela based on the positionality that I adopt.

In the case of Iran, being an insider, who shares the same racial, language, and ethnicity as the interviewees, enables the formation of a relationship based on reciprocal dignity and respect between me and the respondents which could mitigate the power imbalances between us. Such a relationship will be improved by using my gatekeeper as a network. However, Iranians' mistrust of researchers studying abroad, especially in Europe, could pose challenges for me. To address this challenge, I intend to highlight anonymisation procedures; encourage interviewees to choose an environment of their choice for interviews, where they will feel safe; allowing them the choice of my not recording interviews when requested; ensuring security of their data through anonymisation processes for recorded material; removing identifying features from written material; and, aiming to alleviate potential concerns about the misrepresentation of their opinions by providing them with transcripts of their interviews.

Conversely, given that I will act as an outsider in Venezuela, the relationships appear to be asymmetrical. In this scenario, I may fail to obtain usable data if I cannot establish reciprocal working relationships with interlocutors. This power relationship will be mitigated to some extent due to the role of the gatekeeper in selecting them in the first place, as gatekeepers have relationships of confidence with the participants. I also intend to conduct the interview in Spanish, if that is the choice of the participant, and in general will seek to create conditions of mutual respect and collaboration during the interview.

Participants also possess control over their own narratives in terms of what to share, the extent of details they divulge, and how they interpret their experiences. This power can extend to influence my comfort level during the interviews. By considering that fieldwork is a dynamic process in which power is continually negotiated and renegotiated (Sultana, 2007), I try to be friendly and attentive to my interviewees through listening actively, avoiding any interruption or judgment, and following up with pertinent or clarifying questions as needed.

- Power of the state over all of us:

The state's power of surveillance should be considered during a fieldwork in an authoritarian context (Belcher and Martin, 2013; Molnar, 2017). Surveillance can disrupt the relationships of trust and rapport which are vital for doing fieldwork in such contexts, including Iran and Venezuela. Apart from traditional techniques such as tapping phone

lines or enlisting informants to spy on foreign researchers authoritarian states can now monitor online activities and trace mobile phone signals. These interferences might impact reciprocal relationships with participants which could lead to an atmosphere of fear. I will adopt four measures to minimise potential effects of state power on me, gatekeepers, and particularly interlocutors. First, I will use secure messaging apps like WhatsApp for some correspondence. Second, when carrying out interviews in person, I will choose neutral locations, like offices, which are less likely to attract attention or surveillance. Third, I will ensure the anonymity of participants in any published material which can protect them from potential reprisals by the state. I will respect the participant's right to withdraw up to September 30, 2024 when material will be anonymised. Finally, I will seek guidance and support from Human Rights Organisations in Iran and Venezuela if any participant is affected by the state surveillance during the fieldwork. I will contact Defenders of Human Rights Center (DHRC) in Iran and Venezuelan Penal Forum, which have experience in dealing with surveillance issue in authoritarian contexts.

5f. Will the participants be remunerated, and if so, in what form?

Please refer specifically to the guidelines outlined in the [MU Research ethics policy section 3.4.1](#).

The participants will not be remunerated.

6. Risk/Benefit Analysis

6a. Potential Risks: Please identify and describe any potential risks arising from the research techniques, procedures or outputs (such as physical stress/reactions, psychological emotional distress, or reactions) **and** for each one, explain how you will address or minimise them.

All potential interviewees are active participants in political and grassroots organisations. Therefore, they will be accustomed to engaging in discussions identified for interviews. By being aware of potential legal implications, as publishing potentially defamatory information could lead to legal consequences, I will refrain from publishing quotes that involve direct accusations regarding any abuse of power by government or state officials. Instead, I will recommend the participant to seek legal counsel from the above mentioned human rights organisations, DHRC and Venezuelan Penal Forum in Iran and Venezuela respectively.

6b. Potential Benefits: Provide a list of potential benefits for this Research.

Please detail any potential benefits of the study which may be relevant to the participants/ your discipline / and/ or the wider society.

This project aims to contribute to the discussions around the implementation of US applied sanctions in general and in both cases in particular. The study seeks to incorporate native voices that have long been marginalised in Western dominated public and scholarly discourse, and hence has significant potential to offer valuable insights that can contribute meaningfully to one of the most crucial debates in contemporary geopolitics. As such, the outcome of field research in Iran and Venezuela can benefit a wide range of individuals, academia, and the broader society. The beneficiaries of the findings can include:

Movement organisers and party officials:

I will empower participants by giving them a voice in data collection and outputs. Such participation involves an active engagement in research, fostering a sense of ownership and pride. The noticeable absence of interaction with grassroots members, especially in academic research in the United States and Europe, is noteworthy. This study, however, seeks to amplify the voices of local actors, and the resulting research outputs may help to convey their concerns to broader audience, including academia. As such, it will encourage the development of connections and shared learning across different domains, including cross-party, cross-grassroot, grassroots-party, academia-party, and academia-movement linkages.

Academia:

The south-south focus of my research will enrich academic debates on sanctions which is dominated by hegemonic northern voices and perspectives. The resulting outputs from this research project will help redress this imbalance in academic forums such as journals, conferences etc.

6c. Risk/Benefit Analysis: Taking into account your answer in section 6 (a) & (b) above, please provide a short justification for proceeding with the research as outlined in this project.

Bearing in mind that the benefits should out-weigh the risks

Following on from discussion in 6a and 6b above, the benefits of proceeding with the research project, including the evaluation of outcomes of state/society interactions in sanctioned countries, its potential contributions to a academia, policymaking, and marginalised communities, along with an in-depth ethnographic analysis, outweigh the potential risks associated with state involvement and legal implications which are minimised through some specific measures mentioned in 6a.

7. Informed Consent and Assent

Template consent form available from the website

7a. Confirm you are seeking and recording informed consent from participants



- Who will be responsible for seeking and recording consent?
Daghi, PhD student]

[Ali Asghar Ghareh

When and where is consent obtained (e.g., do participants get an information sheet and sign a consent form, keeping a copy for their records or is consent secured by another means)?

- *Consent **must** be recorded in an appropriate format.*
- *If your research involves children or other vulnerable people, explain how you will obtain their assent.*
- *For projects in which participants will be involved over the long term, you must include details of how you will ensure ongoing consent.*

Limits to confidentiality Statement:

Ensure all consent forms clearly include the limits to confidentiality as outlined in section 3.3 of the ethics policy

The following or similar text should be used in consent/information sheet.

'It must be recognized that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'

In accordance with the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act, I am obliged to protect the confidentiality of participants in my research. As such, before conducting interviews, I will send a translated information sheet and a consent form in Spanish or Persian to the interviewees beforehand, ensuring they understand the nature of the process. Then I will bring paper copies when I go to interview them. Following this phase, I will ensure that participants understand their anonymity and confidentiality throughout all stages of the research, starting from data collection to dissemination. I will do this through reviewing information sheet and a consent form to make sure that participants are fully informed of the nature of the study. I will not use data-gathering devices if an interviewee requests that, and I will make it clear that the participant has the right to withdraw at any point, without facing any negative consequence. Although I will avoid giving unrealistic guarantees of confidentiality, respondents will be informed about the boundaries of confidentiality as follows:

'It must be recognized that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent.'

7b. If applicable, please also justify deceiving or withholding information from participants (*see section 4.9 MU Ethics Policy*).

n/a

8. **Follow-up.** As appropriate, please explain what strategies you have in place to debrief or follow up with participants – especially in cases where information is withheld or deception is involved or where research has been carried out on sensitive topics, and/or with vulnerable persons.

There will be full transparency, and no details or data will be kept secret or intentionally kept from the individuals participating in the study. Deceptive practices will be also avoided during the research.

9. Data Management, Storage

Please complete 9a if personally identifiable data is being collected. If no personally identifiable data is being collected please move to 9b.

9a. Anonymity

Page 2 of the *Maynooth University's Research Integrity Policy* states 'where ever possible personally identifiable data should be rendered anonymous in order to provide the best protection for participants'.

- Will personally identifiable data be protected through the use of pseudonyms and/or codes?
Yes ☒ No ☐
- If yes, please confirm that the key to pseudonyms and/or codes will be held in a separate location to the raw data?
☒
- Will personally identifiable data collected be irreversibly anonymised (All identifiers including keys to link pseudonyms or codes back to individual participants are destroyed)?
Yes ☒ No ☐
- Who will be responsible for rendering the data anonymous?
[Ali Asghar Ghareh Daghi]

If you answered No to above and are keeping personally identifiable data please explain your decision & rationale for not adhering to the policy.

9b. Data Access and Security:

Data must be stored in a safe, secure and accessible form, must be held for an appropriate length of time, to allow (if necessary) for future reassessment or verification of the data from primary sources, as outlined in the *Maynooth University's Research Integrity Policy*.

Please tick the box to confirm;

- Only researchers assigned to this project will have access to the personal information and data collected from participants ☒

- Electronic Information sheets/consent forms and data collected will be encrypted and stored on a PC or secure server at Maynooth University ☒

- Hard copy Information sheets/consent forms and data collected will be held securely in locked cabinets, locked rooms or rooms with limited access on campus or scanned and uploaded to the MU server.

☒

- Please justify any exceptions to the information stated above

- Do you plan to share or transfer data outside of or into the European Economic Area?

Yes ☒ No ☐

- If yes, please confirm you are doing so in accordance with Section 6 of the Maynooth University Data Protection Policy

Yes ☒

See Data Commissioners website for a list of approved countries and exceptions

9c. Data Storage:

- Are you planning to collect data on a mobile device (SB keys, smart phones; video recorders; audio recorders and/or laptops)?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, to be compliant with Data protection Law, please confirm:

- Data collected on a mobile device will be protected with a strong password at a minimum, and/or encrypted if the device supports encryption and will be removed from the mobile device as soon as is practicable ☒

- Data will be removed to a desktop PC or server in a secure location at Maynooth University ☒

9d. Secondary Use and Processing:

- Are you planning for any secondary use of the data?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, please confirm you will obtain **explicit consent** in the consent form for;

- Re-use and/or sharing of anonymous or identifiable data for any purpose other than the current research project ☒
- Depositing in an Archive such as the Irish Qualitative Data Archive or the Irish Social Science Data Archive ?

☐

- If yes, please give name and contact details for the proposed archive

9e. Data Disposal: Data should be destroyed in a manner appropriate to the sensitivity of that data. Please confirm:

- Paper based data will be destroyed by confidentially shredding or incineration ☒
- Electronic files will be deleted by overwriting ☒
- Who will be responsible for destroying personally identifiable data? [Ali Asghar Ghareh Daghi]

10. Professional Codes of Ethics. Please append an appropriate code of ethics governing research in your area to this protocol, and/or provide a link to the website where the code may be found.

<https://sociology.ie/ethical-guidelines/>

Submission Check List

- Completed application form ☒
- Letter from supervisor if applicant is a student ☒

if applicable – copies of:

- Prior ethical approval ☐
- Ethical approval from other partner institutions ☐
- Letter/email of support from named gatekeepers or external parties involved in the research ☒
- Proposed information sheet and consent form ☒
 - Samples of surveys/questionnaires, indicative focus group/interview questions etc. ☒
- Documentary evidence for the use of existing data records, sourced from third party organisations, that consent was originally sought for data to be used for research purposes ☐

Please upload your full application to [RIS](#) as one **single pdf file**.

Indicative interview questions with party members:

1. Who are you; membership in party? A very brief history of the party – values, purpose.
2. What are the primary factors you consider when making decisions within the party?
3. How do external factors such as public opinion affect your decision-making within the party?
4. Can you discuss any instances where party has had to adapt its decision-making approach based on changing circumstances?

5. How does your party engage with dissenting voices or opposition groups?
6. How do you perceive civil society within the framework of your party's ideology?
7. How does civil society influence your party's interactions with the government, or vice-versa?
8. Any further comments you would like to add regarding party-civil society interaction I have not addressed?

Indicative interview questions with academics:

1. What are the main objectives of US-led sanctions against Iran/Venezuela?
2. To what extent has the US achieved those objectives through sanctions?
3. Do sanctions affect the economy of Iran/Venezuela? If yes, what are the main industries affected by sanctions?
4. To what extent Iranian/Venezuelan government has been successful in diversifying the economy?
5. What implications does this diversification have on mitigating the effects of sanctions?
6. In what ways do sanctions impact the daily lives of ordinary citizens in Iran/Venezuela, beyond just the economy?
7. Have you identified any sector or community within Iran/Venezuela that demonstrate levels of solidarity in response to sanctions? If so, what factors contribute to this solidarity?
8. How do perceptions of solidarity vary among government officials, civil society organisations, and ordinary citizens, in the context of sanctions?
9. Any further comments you would like to add regarding sanctions and solidarity I have not addressed?

Indicative interview questions with civil society organisations:

1. Who are you; membership in party or organisation? A very brief history of the organisation – values, purpose.
2. Over the past 10 years, what progress and challenges has your organisations experienced?
3. How do you describe the relationship between the organisation and the government at the local or national levels?
4. Can you describe the changes in popular involvement and inclusivity in the political decision-making process since the election of party/president X? How did it compare to the situation during the opposition-led government?
5. How does the popular base interact with the party in office?
6. In what ways does the popular base typically influence policy?
7. To what extent do you believe popular base has been successful in influencing government policies?

8. In what ways do you anticipate the continued evolution of popular base and its interaction with party in office, or vice-versa?
9. Any further comments you would like to add regarding the process of interaction I have not addressed?

Appendix B: Information Sheet and Consent Form

Purpose of the Study. I am Ali Asghar Ghareh Daghi, a doctoral student, in the Department of Sociology, Maynooth University.

As part of the requirements for PhD degree, I am undertaking a research study under the supervision of Dr. Barry Cannon.

The study is concerned with identifying and evaluating outcomes of the state/society interactions in Iran, aiming to understand the emergence of a “sanctions resistant” model.

Who has approved this study? This study has been reviewed and received ethical approval from Maynooth University Research Ethics Committee. You may have a copy of this approval if you request it.

What will participating in the study involve? The study will involve conducting interviews with officials and public representatives of political parties. Respondents will be interviewed once for 60-90 minutes. Respondents are also free to provide any relevant documentation which they believe will support the study.

What information will be collected? I will be asking you questions about ideologies, political goals, and the factors shaping their decision-making in political parties in Iran.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked because your experiences as a member of the organization provide a distinctive perspective on the dynamic relationship between the state and its society in Iran.

Do you have to take part?

No, you are under no obligation whatsoever to take part in this research. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to sign a consent form and be given a copy of this and the information sheet for your own records. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw from the study prior to anonymisation which will occur on or after September 30, 2024.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes, all information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept confidential. No names will be identified at any time unless you give explicit consent to allow this. All hard copy information will be held in a locked cabinet at the researchers' place of work, electronic information will be encrypted and held securely on MU PC or servers and will be accessed only by Ali Asghar Ghareh Daghi, PhD student.

No information will be distributed to any other unauthorised individual or third party. If you so wish, the data that you provide can also be made available to you at your own discretion.

“It must be recognised that, in some circumstances, confidentiality of research data and records may be overridden by courts in the event of litigation or in the course of investigation by lawful authority. In such circumstances the University will take all reasonable steps within law to ensure that confidentiality is maintained to the greatest possible extent”.

What will happen to the information which you give? All the information you provide will be kept at Maynooth University in such a way that it will not be possible to identify you. On completion of the research, the data will be retained on the MU server. At the end of the study, by end 2034 all data will be destroyed by the PI (Ali Asghar Ghareh Daghi). Manual data will be shredded confidentially and electronic data will be reformatted or overwritten by the PI in Maynooth University.

What will happen to the results? The research will be written up and presented as a PhD thesis and will be used as the basis for two research articles to be published in leading academic journals such as the Journal of Middle Eastern Studies and Latin American Perspectives. A copy of the research findings will be made available to you upon request.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? I don't envisage any serious negative consequences for you in taking part. Nevertheless, please refer to the following section if you face any disadvantage.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you experience any distress following the interview you may contact Defenders of Human Rights Center (DHRC) in Iran via email at dhrc.ir@gmail.com or by phone at +98 21 7302 0688.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me: Ali Asghar Ghareh Daghi, Ali.GharehDaghi@mu.ie. You can also contact my PhD supervisor, Dr. Barry Cannon (barry.cannon@mu.ie). You can contact the Sociology Department at Maynooth University via phone at +353 1 708 3659 or email at sociology.department@mu.ie. Additionally, If you have any inquiries regarding the ethical conduct of the research, feel free to reach out to the Chair of the Ethics Committee at Maynooth University (research.ethics@mu.ie).

If you agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form overleaf.

Thank you for taking the time to read this

Consent Form

I.....agree to participate in Ali Asghar Ghareh Daghi's research study titled Managing United States Sanctions: The emergence of a "resistance model" in Iran and Venezuela?

Please tick each statement below:

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me verbally & in writing. I've been able to ask questions, which were answered satisfactorily. ☐

I am participating voluntarily. ☐

I give permission for my interview with Ali Asghar Ghareh Daghi to be audio recorded. ☐

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether that is before it starts or while I am participating. ☐

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data before September 30, 2024. ☐

It has been explained to me how my data will be managed and that I may access them on request. ☐

I understand the limits of confidentiality as described in the information sheet. ☐

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview. ☐

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview. ☐

I agree for my data to be used for further research projects. ☐

I do not agree for my data to be used for further research projects. ☐

Signed.....

Date.....

Participant Name in block capitals

I the undersigned have taken the time to fully explain to the above participant the nature and purpose of this study in a manner that they could understand. I have explained the risks involved as well as the possible benefits. I have invited them to ask questions on any aspect of the study that concerned them.

Signed.....

Date.....

Researcher Name in block capitals

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the Maynooth University Ethics Committee at research.ethics@mu.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

For your information the Data Controller for this research project is Maynooth University, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. The Data Protection office is located in Room 27, Rye Building, North Campus, Maynooth University, which can be contacted at dataprotection@mu.ie. Maynooth University Data Privacy policies can be found at <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/data-protection>.

Two copies to be made: 1 for participant, 1 for PI

Appendix 3: Interviewees

Table of Venezuelan interviewees:

Name	Organisation/Affiliation	Gender	Place of Interview	Date
V1	Central Bank	Male	Caracas	9 August 2024
V2	Journalist	Female	Bogota (Colombia)	7 August 2024
V3	Former minister	Male	Caracas	1 August 2024
V4	Academia	Male	Caracas	24 July 2024
V5	Journalist	Female	Caracas	26 July 2024
V6	Business federation	Male	Caracas	23 July 2024
V7	Academia	Male	Medellin (Colombia)	27 July 2024
V8	Political party	Male	Caracas	29 July 2024
V9	ONG	Female	Caracas	23 July 2024
V10	Political party	Male	Valencia (Virtual)	2 August 2024
V11	Activist	Female	Caracas	1 August 2024
V12	ONG	Female	Caracas	24 July 2024
V13	Political party	Male	Caracas	23 July 2024
V14	Political party	Male	Caracas	9 August 2024
V15	ONG	Female	Caracas	25 July 2024

Table of Iranian interviewees:

Name	Organisation/Affiliation	Gender	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
I1	Academia	Male	Tehran	11 March 2024
I2	Academia	Male	Tehran	9 March 2024
I3	Academia	Male	Tehran	13 March 2024
I4	Political Party	Male	Tehran	06 April 2024
I5	ONG	Male	Tehran	06 April 2024
I6	Academia	Female	Tehran	09 April 2024
I7	Political party	Male	Tehran	13 April 2024
I8	Research centre	Male	Tehran	13 April 2024
I9	ONG	Male	Tehran	14 April 2024
I10	Political party	Male	Tehran	15 April 2024
I11	Political party	Male	Tehran	18 April 2024
I12	Political party	Male	Tehran	18 April 2024
I13	ONG	Female	Tehran	20 April 2024
I14	ONG	Male	Tehran	27 April 2024
I15	Political party	Male	Tehran	28 April 2024