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Topic: Assessing the effectiveness of Sanctions

Quote: All who think cannot but see there is a sanction like that of religion which binds us in partnership in the serious work of the world.

Sanctions are economic and political measures that aim to influence the behavior of a state, a group or individuals. For example, sanctions can be introduced in an attempt to change the policies of a state that threatens international peace and security, or to induce a state to cease systematic violations of human rights. Canada’s [*United Nations Act*](http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/U-2/index.html)(UNA) enables the Canadian government to give effect to decisions passed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). If the UNSC determines that an act of aggression or a breach of peace has occurred, it may decide what measures member states shall take to restore or maintain international peace and security. These measures are generally economic and trade sanctions. Such a decision imposes a legal obligation on Canada as a UN member to introduce the required measures into domestic law. This is done by enacting regulations under the [*United Nations Act*](http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/U-2/index.html).

Canada imposes UN-mandated sanctions through the United Nations Act, and autonomous sanctions through the Special Economic Measures Act and the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act) Regulations made under these Acts create a series of restrictions, prohibitions and obligations applicable to firms and people in Canada & to Canadians overseas in relation to foreign states, individuals and entities. In order to maximize the effectiveness of a sanction regime, Canadian policy seeks to ensure whenever possible, that sanctions are applied multilaterally. By imposing these restrictive measures, Canada, the United States and the European Union have stated that their intention is to fight corruption and gross human rights violation and strengthen security, human rights & democracy. That is not to say that Canada’s measures are never adjusted. The sanctions against Myanmar’s military provide an example. They were first imposed under the SEMA in 2007 in response to the deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation in the country, but were then eased in 2012 following improvements in democratic governance.

Coordination between allies and Canada should enhance the impact of sanctions. We are in the age of autonomous sanctions exemplified by the SEMA and JVCFOA which means that multiple allies need to coordinate lists, measures, and metrics of effectiveness. The challenges that are involved in assessing efficacy are evident in the case of the sanctions Canada and its partners have imposed on Russia in response to its aggression against Ukraine. Some witnesses and briefs suggested that Canada could be using its sanctions regime more systematically.

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