

Cooperation or Non-cooperation? An Attempt to Conceptualize Economic Sanctions in Global Political Conflicts.

Dr. Ksenia Maksimovtsova

International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (Giessen)

Contact: Ksenia.Maksimovtsova@gcsc.uni-giessen.de

Abstract:

The book *Coercive Economic Sanctions and International Conflicts: A Sociological Theory* by Mark Daniel Jaeger examines the social conditions within sanctions conflicts that lead either to cooperation or non-cooperation. The main assumption of the work is that coercive economic sanctions should be understood as relational, socially constructed facts and that conflicts over sanctions, as discursive conflicts, result from incompatibilities of interest (*issue conflicts*) or identity (*identity conflicts*). Based on the premises of Luhmann's social systems theory and securitization theory, the author creates a theoretical model that seeks to explore the conflicts' (de-)escalation from a sociological perspective. The study is based on case studies of sanctions conflicts between Mainland China and Taiwan as well as between the US and Iran over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program. The research has demonstrated that depending on the combination of different sanctions regimes (positive or negative) and particular sanctions policies of an initiator and the response of an addressee, the conflict may result in further securitization or de-securitization.

How to cite:

Maksimovtsova, Ksenia: "Cooperation or Non-cooperation? An Attempt to Conceptualize Economic Sanctions in Global Political Conflicts [Review of: Jaeger, Mark Daniel: *Coercive Sanctions and International Conflicts: A Sociological Theory*. London & New York: Routledge, 2018.]." In: KULT_online 57 (2019).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22029/ko.2019.240>



Cooperation or Non-cooperation? An Attempt to Conceptualize Economic Sanctions in Global Political Conflicts.

Dr. Ksenia Maksimovtsova
International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (Giessen)

Jaeger, Mark Daniel: *Coercive Sanctions and International Conflicts. A Sociological Theory* London/ New York: Routledge, 2018. 254 pages, 121 EUR. ISBN: 978-1-138-69717-1.

Abstract:

The book *Coercive Economic Sanctions and International Conflicts: A Sociological Theory* by Mark Daniel Jaeger examines the social conditions within sanctions conflicts that lead either to cooperation or non-cooperation. The main assumption of the work is that coercive economic sanctions should be understood as relational, socially constructed facts and that conflicts over sanctions, as discursive conflicts, result from incompatibilities of interest (*issue conflicts*) or identity (*identity conflicts*). Based on the premises of Luhmann's social systems theory and securitization theory, the author creates a theoretical model that seeks to explore the conflicts' (de-)escalation from a sociological perspective. The study is based on case studies of sanctions conflicts between Mainland China and Taiwan as well as between the US and Iran over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program. The research has demonstrated that depending on the combination of different sanctions regimes (positive or negative) and particular sanctions policies of an initiator and the response of an addressee, the conflict may result in further securitization or de-securitization.

Coercive economic sanctions, which are the focus of Mark Daniel Jaeger's newest book, have been increasingly applied in international conflicts. For instance, the US-Iranian relationship has a long history of mutual sanctions that began in the 1950s. Another example of economic sanctions is a sharp reaction of Western political elites to Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the Crimean annexation in 2014. The two above-mentioned examples of sanctions demonstrate that the imposition of economic measures serves as the essential tool of international politics nowadays. In this sense, Jaeger's book makes a significant contribution to the investigation of different sanctions regimes, which may consist of positive or negative sanctions or the combination of both, using two examples of the conflicts between China and Taiwan and between the United States and Iran over the Islamic

Republic's nuclear programme. In contrast to many books that seek to understand whether sanctions succeed or fail, Jaeger takes a slightly different approach and views coercive sanctions as a *discursively constructed conflict*. Thus, a particular strength of his research is that he analyzes social conditions that lead to either cooperation or non-cooperation rather than focusing on the impact of sanctions on the economies of an initiator and an addressee.

Jaeger's book consists of eight chapters. The first four chapters are a methodological and theoretical reflection on how international coercive sanctions acquire their meaning in conflict communication and how (de-)securitization of sanctions leads to either cooperation or non-cooperation between *initiators* and *addressees*. The fifth, the sixth, and the seventh chapters are devoted to the case studies of two sanctions regimes mentioned above. The last chapter consists of critical reflections and implications for further research on sanctions.

In the introductory part of his book, Jaeger defines coercive economic sanctions as "measures short of military violence which are socially conceived as being instigated by an initiator to induce the cooperation of an addressee with articulated demands in a mutual political conflict" (p. 1). Realized in the economic dimension, restrictive measures aim to reach political goals. Along with the definition of sanctions, Jaeger insists on the importance of looking at sanctions as a conflict of interests or of incompatible identities and interprets it "as a relational process of communication, with both opponents communicating, instead of merely reacting to external stimuli" (p. 100).

An important aspect of Jaeger's contribution is his development of a sociological theory that conceptualizes how sanctions and international conflicts are interrelated. This theory "takes sanctions and the conflicts of which they are a part as discursively constructed, synthetic facts" (p. 5). Furthermore, he develops the analytical model of sanctions regimes and argues whether different sanctions regimes lead to conflict (de-)escalation. Jaeger's main point is that sanctions conflicts arise from the two main rationales — a *utility* and *power* rationale. He argues that "on the one hand, sanctions raise costs or offer benefits linked to a particular political position, reflecting a *utility rationale*. On the other hand, sanctions aim to impose their initiator's decision regarding the conflict on an addressee, reflecting a *power rationale*" (p. 5). Then he categorizes conflicts over sanctions as *issue* or *identity* conflicts. In the first case, the conflict is connected to incompatible rationalities articulated by *initiators* and *addressees*. In the second case, as Jaeger argues, "[a]gents question each other's position and legitimacy and securitize the Other as a threat" (ibid.). Moreover, he claims that in case of negative sanctions and identity conflict, de-securitization is unlikely to happen, as is well illustrated by the ever-increasing sanctions regime between Russia and the US.

The innovative potential of Jaeger's sociological approach to sanctions not only lies in his idea of sanctions regimes as a *discursive, dynamically developing conflict*, but also in a rich variety of theoretical and methodological approaches that were used to conceptualize sanctions. Jaeger's ideas rely on the systems theory elaborated by Niklas Luhmann, the theory of securitization that was first elucidated by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, the representatives of the "Copenhagen school" of security studies, and a comprehensive theory of social agency developed by Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische. Jaeger's approach is based on the two promising methods of framing analysis and process tracing, both used to organize and interpret different meanings within the analyzed discursive fields.

In chapters 5 and 6 Jaeger thoroughly analyzes two empirical cases of different sanctions regimes. Firstly, he deconstructs the main points of controversy between the People's Republic of China (Mainland China, PRC) and the Republic of China (Taiwan, ROC) since the 1990s, when the first round of sanctions was established. As Jaeger argues, the sanctions regime between the two parties clearly belongs to the realm of identity conflicts: whereas the political elites in Mainland China insisted on Taiwan being an inalienable part of PRC and challenged the idea of China's unification, the opposite side of the conflict was strongly opposed to the notion 'One China, Two Systems'. In case of the conflict between the US and Iran, Jaeger accurately describes the historical events preceding the conflict and the 'threat narratives' articulated by both sides of the conflict. Jaeger states that from the Iranian point of view, "the nuclear program represents a proud achievement of technological progress that re-establishes Iran as an advanced, independent country" (p. 188). However, the American side insisted that the advancement of Iran's nuclear program was a blatant violation of international norms and a serious 'threat' to international security and stability. After a careful investigation of the main arguments of both sides of the discursive conflict, Jaeger creates a model that seeks to formulate scenarios for further conflict development. Based on six case studies (both China-Taiwan and US-Iran cases were subdivided into three periods of sanctions), he builds up a coherent theory that may predict whether a sanctions conflict and particular policies implemented by initiators and addressees will lead to either escalation (securitization) or de-escalation (de-securitization) of the conflict.

Without doubt, the work of Jaeger represents one of the most thorough and accurate studies of coercive economic sanctions, where the meaning and social conditions under which sanctions arise play a more important role than materialist accounts and the 'economic aspect' of conflict relations. I would also contend that the theoretical model elaborated by Jaeger has important conceptual and practical implications and can be fruitfully applied for studies of other sanctions regimes.

German Abstract:

Kooperation oder Nicht-Kooperation? Ein Versuch der Konzeptualisierung von Wirtschaftssanktionen in globalen politischen Konflikten

Das Buch *Coercive Sanctions and International Conflicts. A Sociological Theory* von Mark Daniel Jaeger untersucht die sozialen Bedingungen in Sanktionskonflikten, die entweder zu Kooperation oder Nichtkooperation führen. Die Hauptannahme der Arbeit ist, dass man Wirtschaftssanktionen als relationale, sozial konstruierte Tatsachen verstehen kann, sowie Sanktionsdebatten als diskursive Konflikte, aus denen entweder *Interessenkonflikte* oder *Identitätskonflikte* resultieren. Basierend auf der Systemtheorie von Niklas Luhmann und der Theorie der *Securitization*, entwickelt der Autor ein theoretisches Modell, dass die weitere Eskalation oder Deeskalation globaler Konflikte untersucht. Das Buch basiert auf Fallstudien der Sanktionskonflikte zwischen der Volksrepublik China und Taiwan sowie den USA und Iran. Die Studie zeigt auf, dass abhängig von der Kombination verschiedener Sanktionsregime (positive oder negative Sanktionen) und Umsetzung der Politik eines Initiators und der Reaktion eines Adressaten, die Konflikte entweder zu *securitization* oder *de-securitization* führen.

Dr. Ksenia Maksimovtsova
International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (Giessen)

Contact: Ksenia.Maksimovtsova@gcsc.uni-giessen.de

How to cite:

Maksimovtsova, Ksenia: "Cooperation or Non-cooperation? An Attempt to Conceptualize Economic Sanctions in Global Political Conflicts [Review of: Jaeger, Mark Daniel: *Coercive Sanctions and International Conflicts: A Sociological Theory*. London & New York: Routledge, 2018.]." In: KULT_online 57 (2019).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22029/ko.2019.240>