

“Economic Sanctions and Nationalist Solidarity in Iran: Broad Rally Effects with Social Heterogeneity”

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Over the past two decades, Iran has been the target of extensive international economic sanctions, most notably the U.S. “maximum pressure” campaign, aimed at imposing costs and generating public discontent. This study evaluates whether these conditions are associated with patterns consistent with a “rally-around-the-flag” (RAF) response using pooled cross-sectional data from the World Values Survey (2005 and 2020). During the period of intensified sanctions, the share of respondents prioritizing a strong defense force more than doubled, national pride increased substantially, and confidence in the armed forces rose sharply, while confidence in civilian institutions changed only modestly. OLS and probit estimates show that the sanction period is positively associated with these outcomes, controlling for a wide range of individual characteristics. Interaction analyses indicate that while the increase in national pride is broadly uniform, responses related to defence preferences and confidence in the armed forces exhibit systematic heterogeneity: effects are stronger among religious, older, and married respondents, and weaker among middle-class and economically exposed groups. These patterns suggest that sanctions activate both security and economic channels, with the balance varying across social groups.