

U.S. Presidents and the Use of Economic Sanctions

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What conditions lead the U.S. president to use and alter economic sanctions? Both relations with the target country and domestic politics are considered as conditions leading to the employment and later removal of economic sanctions. Using time-series cross-sectional data, the analysis shows that the president considers both the relations with the target country and U.S. domestic factors when deciding to impose economic sanctions, although the relations with the target have a much greater impact on the decision. Once the economic sanctions are in place and the president must decide to maintain or alter them, the domestic political influence disappears, and the president considers only the relations with the target when modifying sanction policy.

With the end of the cold war, states have begun using economic sanctions with much greater frequency. Increased economic ties leading to a greater ability to impose economic sanctions, the end of the Security Council gridlock, and the desire to rely less on military force make economic sanctions a preferred option for states wanting to influence or coerce others. Following this trend, studies of economic sanctions have also increased (Morgan and Schwebach 1997; Dashti-Gibson, Davis, and Radcliff 1997; Pape 1997; Drury 1998).

Since the late 1960s, a vast literature on economic sanctions has accumulated. The majority of the research considers sanction effectiveness and concludes that economic sanctions are largely ineffective (Galtung 1967; Wallensteen 1968; Doxey 1971; Renwick 1981; Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott 1990a; Morgan and Schwebach 1997; Dashti-Gibson, Davis, and Radcliff 1997; Pape 1997; Drury 1998). A similar list of scholars addressed the reasons economic sanctions may be used and the goals of those sanctions. Most (including those listed above) have asserted that economic sanctions are aimed at a policy change within the target country. Clearly, economic sanctions do have the overt intent of coercing the target to alter its policy or policies. However, others have suggested that additional goals exist. These include symbolic goals such as punishment or sending a message to international actors

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(Nossal 1989; Schwebach 2000); legal goals such as altering international norms and/or precedents (Barber 1979; Fisk 2000); and, of course, domestic goals such as placating public demands for action, satisfying economic demands, and appearing active to the public in the world arena (Barber 1979; Olson 1979; Lindsey 1986; Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1992; Simon 1996; Smith 1996).

The collective understanding of economic sanctions on the part of these scholars allows us to understand why sanctions are used, what the goals of those sanctions are, and how likely those sanctions are to be effective. While the literature has been unable to predict with any great accuracy when economic sanctions will work (Morgan and Schwebach 1996, 1997; Dashti-Gibson, Davis, and Radcliff 1997; Drury 1998), there is a general understanding that economic sanctions are ineffective in the aggregate.¹ Similarly, no one has explained exactly why each economic sanction is used, but an understanding of the different goals exists.

The conditions that lead to the use of economic sanctions have not been fully studied. Drezner (1998) put it well: "Most of the literature has focused on the *outcomes* of coercion attempts; there has been little research explaining when senders will *initiate* threats or acts of economic sanctions" (p. 710). Aside from Drezner's (1997, 1998) treatment of sanction initiation as being a function of expected future relations, no one has addressed when economic sanctions will be used. In this article, I attempt to uncover the conditions that lead a decision maker not only to initiate but also to alter a sanction policy. I concentrate only on U.S. economic sanctions for several reasons. First, the United States is responsible for the majority of the economic sanctions of this century, so understanding the conditions that lead to U.S. sanction policies has clear importance. Second, economic sanction and domestic political data are more available and far more accurate for the United States. Third, while many of the theories surrounding the use of force are not country specific, empirical studies tend to focus on the United States (largely because of data availability).

The question of what conditions lead decision makers to use economic sanctions has direct ties to our understanding of the decision to use military force. Baldwin (1985) argued that economic sanctions are simply the middle option available to a decision maker. That is, a leader can use diplomacy, economic sanctions, or military force as tools of statecraft. These choices follow a rank ordering. That is, a dispute between two states typically involves diplomatic posturing in the beginning. As tensions escalate, one or both states will probably resort to a more costly level of coercion, typically economic sanctions (Baldwin 1985; Morgan 1990). If economic sanctions are ineffective and the dispute escalates to a crisis level, the use of military force is likely (Snyder and Diesing 1977; Leng 1993). An example best illustrates this idea. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, the first reaction of the international community was to demand the withdrawal of Iraqi troops (best illustrated by President George Bush's comment, "This will not stand"). On the heels of this demand was a set of comprehensive economic sanctions. When Iraq would still not comply, tensions mounted, and Operation Desert Storm was initiated. Led by the United States, the international community used increasingly more severe forms of coercive diplomacy while trying to remove Iraq from Kuwait.

1. Recently, Pape (1997, 1998a, 1998b) argued that economic sanctions are even more ineffective than previously argued (Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott 1990a). While there is debate over the success rate, a general understanding or belief that economic sanctions are ineffective in most or many cases pervades the literature.

The connection between these levels of coercive diplomacy may go further than simply the rank ordering of their intensity; there may be similarities in the decision process that leads to their use. In the example above, it is important to realize that the decisions to increase the pressure on Iraq were essentially the same. While there were differences between the decisions (highlighted by the direct use of physical violence), each decision was based on the same goal, was against the same opponent, and involved the same issue. During the Iraqi invasion, Bush wanted to remove Hussein from Kuwait. The decisions to increase the pressure followed a very similar calculus. If the connection between the use of military force and economic sanctions exists, then the vast literature focusing on the use of military force may inform us about the conditions under which economic sanctions are used.

Below, I use different theories of coercive diplomacy to develop a model of U.S. economic sanction use and alteration. I argue that both the employment and removal of economic sanctions are affected by international and domestic conditions identified in this literature. Using time-series cross-sectional data from U.S. economic sanction efforts, I test several hypotheses, discuss the findings, and draw conclusions.

Coercive Diplomacy and Economic Sanctions

The conditions that lead to the use of force vary from the level of tension between the two disputing countries to a president's domestic strength and position in the electoral cycle.² Several scholars focus only on the international or dyadic causes of conflict. They characterize a conflict as evolving from an initial dispute between two nations over some issue. This dispute escalates when one nation takes some action or makes some policy change that offends the other nation. This action is referred to as the precipitant (Snyder and Deising 1977). The offended nation replies with a demand for the cessation of this action or policy. If the offender resists, the tension and hostility can escalate into a militarized conflict. The key determining factor of whether the dispute results in violence is the magnitude of tension and its rate of increase or escalation (Leng 1993); the greater the tension, the more likely the dispute will turn violent.

This characterization of a conflict fits hand in glove with the argument that nations will tend to use increasingly severe foreign policy measures to coerce the target (offending) country to acquiesce. As mentioned above, Baldwin's (1985) view of statecraft is that foreign policy tools (propaganda and diplomatic, economic, and military sanctions) are used in successive steps to attain the leader's goal. Similarly, Morgan (1990) argued that leaders will tend to increase the level of coercion the more their opponent resists. Economic sanctions are often used once demands are not met. The next option, obviously, would be military force, assuming the dispute were grave enough to warrant such action.

Another aspect of the dispute is the offended nation's (sender's) expectation that there will be future conflict with the offender (target). The greater the perceived likelihood that there will be conflict between the two nations, the more the sender will be concerned more "about relative gains and reputation" (Drezner 1998, 710). As such, the sender will be more

2. I realize that there are a plethora of other conflict explanations. However, covering each of these is well beyond the scope of this article. As such, I cover only those crucial to the argument at hand.

likely to engage in more forceful coercion. From these theories, a picture of conflict and the use of force (or any type of statecraft) takes shape. As two nations enter a dispute, each uses increasingly acute measures to get what it wants. The escalating tension and hostility lead to more severe measures, and the conflict may finally lead to the use of violence.

Each nation's desire to win the dispute is not, however, the only factor that leads to the use of force; domestic politics also plays a role. Specifically, the diversionary theory of war argues that leaders will be more likely to engage in adventurous foreign policy when they are facing problems at home. For example, President Bill Clinton bombed Afghanistan and the Sudan for allegedly supporting Osama bin Laden. However, the cruise missile attack came within one hour of Monica Lewinsky's second testimony before the independent council. Regardless of how one evaluates the timing of those events, the media immediately brought up the possibility of a link between them, referring to the 1998 film *Wag the Dog* in which the White House, facing a sex scandal, creates a fictitious war with Albania to divert public attention and exert damage control. Clearly, there is a belief that domestic politics affects the use of force. Some go as far as to see direct links between domestic difficulties and every war since 1800 (Levy 1989, 263-65).

These cases or anecdotes are supported by research on presidential job approval. Several scholars have found that following the use of force, the president gets a bump in approval as the public rallies around the flag (Mueller 1973; Brody 1991; cf. Lian and Oneal 1993). Not all of the empirical evidence supports the theory that leaders use conflict or foreign policy in general to divert public attention. Several analyses (Ostrom and Job 1986; James and Oneal 1991) have shown that U.S. presidents are more likely to use force when their approval is high, not low as the theory would predict.³ Morgan and Bickers (1992) provided a plausible solution to the discrepancy between the theory and empirical findings. They showed that the president does tend to use force when his partisan approval is low and general approval is high. The president is prompted to shore up support from his own party but prefers to do so when he has general approval to provide him with some political capital.

While this explanation does not end the debate about diversionary tactics (Gowa 1998), there is compelling evidence to suggest that domestic politics affects foreign policy decision making, at least with regard to coercive diplomacy. A more complete view of the use of force can be seen when domestic considerations are added to the picture. In addition to the international factors (the tension of the actual dispute and future expectations), leaders contemplate their domestic standing when deciding to act. Given a crisis situation, a president may be more likely to escalate to more acute coercive measures given certain conditions at home.

Economic Sanction Use

Applying both international and domestic conditions to the decision to use economic sanctions is not completely straightforward. It is clear that increasing tension between two nations over some issue can often lead to the use of economic sanctions. Leaders will use economic sanctions as their opponents resist their demands (Morgan 1990). Senders (the

3. James and Hristoulas (1994) found similar results in their study of the use of force and entrance into a crisis situation.

sanctioning countries) consider not only the current dispute with the target (the sanctioned country) but also future possible disputes. If they perceive the future as conflictual, they are more likely to use economic sanctions in the current dispute (Drezner 1998). The consideration of future and especially current relations with the target when deciding to impose economic sanctions is in line with the economic sanction literature, which emphasizes international reasons for economic sanction use (Doxey 1971; Barber 1979; Renwick 1981; Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott 1990a). As mentioned above, most studies of economic sanctions base the sanction goals or reasons for use on relations with the target. That is, most see economic sanctions as attempts to affect a policy or policies within the target. Thus, the goal or reason for use is based on the target's actions or policies. This vast economic sanction literature, therefore, is in line with the conflict explanation that the conditions leading to the use of economic sanctions can be found in the characteristics of the dispute, such as the level of tension and future conflict expectations.

Less straightforward is how domestic politics affects the conditions that lead to economic sanctions. Several researchers have posited that domestic considerations enter into decisions to use economic sanctions (Lindsey 1986; Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1992; Simon 1996; Smith 1996). These scholars have shown formally that political and economic factors will hinder or facilitate the use of economic sanctions depending on whether there are costs or benefits to the sender. While none of these studies operationalized domestic political factors for empirical testing, they do create a precedent for applying the domestic aspects of the use of force literature to the conditions leading to economic sanctions. The core focus is on the president's job approval rating and election cycle. Empirically, scholars have found that higher approval and close elections increase the probability that the president will use force.

The attempt to apply these factors to the conditions that lead to economic sanctions immediately raises the question, Does the public really pay attention to the use of economic sanctions? Probably not, and it certainly does not pay as close attention as when the military is deployed. Then why should the president's job approval and the electoral cycle affect his use of economic sanctions? At the most restricted level, portions of the public pay attention, namely those affected by the sanction policy. Economic losses by a whole industry resulting from economic sanctions can be blamed on an administration and affect a president's policy toward those sanctions. In the 1980 election, Ronald Reagan promised farmers hurt by the grain embargo against the Soviet Union that he would reverse President Jimmy Carter's policy and lift the embargo. Clearly, Reagan was not soft on communism, but he saw the importance of the farmers and their lobby in the upcoming election (Doxey 1987). Similarly in 1992, Clinton campaigned to the right of Bush in Florida, claiming that he would be harder on Fidel Castro than the previous administration (Fisk 2000). Clinton saw the importance of Florida's electoral votes and campaign money and did his best to secure them, although he failed to win Florida in 1992 (Vanderbush and Haney 1999, 394-95).

At a less restrictive level, the conditions leading to economic sanctions can still be affected by domestic sentiment even though the public may pay little attention to them. Instead of asserting a strong, direct link (e.g., the president will watch the polls and election calendar to determine when to sanction), I posit that the president is more likely to take action of any kind given certain domestic situations. Specifically, a president with high job approval will feel more comfortable taking action than one with a weak domestic standing.

Furthermore, proximate elections give the president an incentive to act so as to look more “presidential.” For example, six months before the 1996 election, a Clinton aide was quoted as saying the campaign committee wanted the president to issue a new order or policy every day leading up to November. This strategy would make Clinton look active. As well as the election cycle reference, this example applies generally to the idea that domestic politics will alter the president’s penchant for taking action.

In summary, the decision to use economic sanctions is influenced by a combination of international and domestic factors. Rising tension between two nations as well as the expectation of future conflict increases the probability that one (or both) countries will initiate economic sanctions. The sender will respond to the target’s intransigence on its demands by stepping up the pressure with economic sanctions. The leader’s domestic standing will also affect the decision to use economic sanctions. If strong at home and facing elections, a president will be more likely to take action given the opportunity to do so. Presidents with higher levels of domestic support have more political capital to expend and can, therefore, risk using economic sanctions that may anger some interest groups. With elections nearby, this incentive increases as the president looks to be active in the upcoming election.

Economic Sanction Alteration

After a president has employed economic sanctions, he has four choices. First, he can lift the sanctions completely. Second, he can decrease them. The third option is to simply maintain the level of sanctioning pressure on the target. Finally, the president can increase the pressure by adding more economic restrictions (i.e., sanctioning other products, freezing assets, etc.). These options are ordered by increasing severity from lifting to increasing. The international conditions that affect the president’s decision to alter a sanction policy follow the decision to use them. Heightened tension should increase the probability that the president will at least maintain the economic sanctions if not increase them. The president’s domestic situation should also affect the decision to alter sanctions. The stronger the president, the greater will be his ability to resist domestic pressures from lobby groups requesting an end to a given sanction policy. Similarly, the pressure of an upcoming election should make a president more likely to apply new economic sanctions so he can look more active as the election approaches.

Below, I use this discussion of the conditions leading to the use of economic sanctions to synthesize seven hypotheses and develop variables and measures to test them. For reasons of length and style, I do not repeat the hypotheses for the decision to alter economic sanctions once in place. Instead, I ask the reader to keep in mind that these hypotheses can be applied to the decision to alter (lift, decrease, maintain, or increase) the economic sanctions after they have been initiated.

Hypotheses for Economic Sanction Use and Alteration

The first conditions that lead to economic sanction use are international. That is, they pertain to the relations between the two countries. There are four aspects of the dispute

between the two countries that affect the use of economic sanctions. The first two are the tension level and rate of increase or escalation of that tension level, respectively. Leng (1993) referred to them as defining the magnitude of the dispute. As these two indicators rise, so will the likelihood that the leader will initiate economic sanctions. An increased level of tension indicates that the target is resisting the sender's demands, making the two sides more hostile toward each other. For the sender, this increased tension is a sign that more coercive measures, such as economic sanctions, must be used. The sender also looks to the future to gauge where the dispute is likely to go. If the rate of escalation is very high, the sender is likely to believe that a diplomatic solution is unlikely and, thereby, increase the sender's incentive to employ economic sanctions.

Hypothesis 1: The higher the absolute level of tension, the greater the likelihood that economic sanctions will be employed.

Hypothesis 2: The greater the rate of tension escalation, the higher the probability that the sender will apply economic sanctions.

Similar to the idea that escalation will increase the probability of economic sanction use, the sender will be sensitive to specific provocative statements or actions by the target. If the target takes a particularly belligerent stance or action, both the tension and escalation will rise, but the action in and of itself may cause the sender to initiate economic sanctions. For example, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to almost immediate employment of a grain embargo by President Carter. While the tension level and rate of escalation certainly were high, the invasion seemed to act as the provocation for the economic sanctions.

Hypothesis 3: Provocative statements or actions by the target will make the sender more likely to use economic sanctions.

The final aspect of the dispute that will lead to the use of economic sanctions is the expectation of future conflict with the target. Drezner (1998, 711-14) argued that when nations perceive future conflict with one another, they become more interested in relative gains and reputation. Once a dispute develops between the sender and the target, if the sender believes there will be frequent future disputes, it will be more likely to use economic sanctions. This increased propensity for action is a result of the sender's being concerned that its reputation for standing firm is not diminished.

Hypothesis 4: A belief that frequent future disputes with the target are likely makes the sender more likely to employ economic sanctions.

The second set of conditions applies to the domestic arena within the sanctioning country. There are three aspects of the domestic arena that affect the decision to use economic sanctions. The first is the president's job approval rating. Job approval is essentially a measure of a president's political capital. The greater that capital, the more leverage and leeway a president has. Given that economic sanctions can have costly domestic externalities, presidents with greater political capital (exemplified by high job approval) will be more willing to use economic sanctions. Essentially, a strong president will feel confident he can risk angering some groups that are adversely affected by the sanctions because he is strong enough.

Hypothesis 5: The president will be more likely to use economic sanctions when he has a high job approval rating.

Elections also influence the conditions that lead to economic sanction use. As elections draw closer, presidents have a reason to look more active. This desire to appear active to the public includes not only the domestic policy but also the foreign policy arena. As such, closer elections translate into an increased probability of economic sanction use. This effect should vary by the president's approval rating, however. A president with high approval and a proximate election should be more likely to use economic sanctions than a president with low approval at the same point in the election calendar. The strong president still needs to appear active and has the capital to take action such as employing economic sanctions. If these actions backfire, he has the resources to weather the effects. A weaker president does not necessarily have those resources and, as such, will be less likely to use economic sanctions for fear they will provoke the affected domestic industry to back his opponents.

Hypothesis 6: Election proximity will increase the likelihood that economic sanctions will be employed.

Hypothesis 7: The election proximity effect will interact with the job approval rating, making high approval and proximate elections conditions ripe for economic sanction use.

All of these hypotheses apply to not only the decision to employ economic sanctions but also the decision to alter them once they are in place. Thus, the president can lift, decrease, maintain, or increase the economic sanctions against the target after their introduction. Applying H1 and H2 to the question of altering the economic sanctions produces the following expectations: the higher the absolute level of tension and the higher the rate of escalation, the greater the likelihood that economic sanctions will be maintained or increased. Provocative actions (H3) should send a message to the White House that the target will continue to resist the economic sanctions, making their failure certain. Greater expectation of future conflict should increase the odds that the president will increase or at least maintain the economic sanctions (H4). Increased approval will allow the president more leeway for taking action, making increases more likely than decreases (H5). Elections and electoral proximity (H6 and H7) should also increase the likelihood that the president will increase the sanctioning effort instead of abandoning it, since elections provide an incentive for the president to be more active. Below, I describe the data used to test both sets of hypotheses. The testing is done in two stages, the first focusing on the employment of economic sanctions and the second on what the president does after they are put in place. I conclude with a discussion of the results and implications.

Data

Because I am interested in the conditions that lead to economic sanction use and removal, the data should extend across both time and space. A time series can show economic sanctions being both employed and lifted, whereas a cross section of target countries allows for greater generalization. As such, the data are compiled into a time series cross sec-

tion so that the unit of analysis is the country(target)-month. That is, each datum represents a specific country for one month. The first dependent variable is the use of economic sanctions by the United States in any given month.⁴ This variable requires data indicating whether economic sanctions were in place for each country(target)-month, where 1 indicates sanctions and 0 indicates no sanctions.

The second dependent variable is the change to the sanction policy once imposed. These data are ordinal and coded as follows: 1 = *lift sanctions*, 2 = *decrease sanctions*, 3 = *maintain sanctions*, and 4 = *increase sanctions*. The data for both of these variables were gathered from *Facts on File* and Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott (1990a, 1990b) for the 1948-78 period for forty-four countries. Twenty-two of these countries had economic sanctions levied against them by the United States at least once in the thirty-one-year period (see the appendix for a list and description of the sanctioned countries). The remaining twenty-two were randomly selected from the set of nations that were never sanctioned.⁵ These countries act as the control group.⁶ The end result is a data set with 16,368 data points.⁷

To measure the degree of tension between the United States and the target, I use the Conflict and Peace Data Bank's (COPDAB) conflict cooperation scale. The COPDAB scale measures the conflict and cooperation between two nations using a 15-point scale, where 15 is *total war* and 1 is *a peaceful merger of two nation states* (Azar 1980, 148).⁸ To create a proxy for dyadic tension, where high levels of conflictual behavior are synonymous with high levels of tension, I average the two scores (U.S. → target and target → U.S.) into one measure called MAGNITUDE. All these data are then aggregated into months. Although daily scores would be more detailed, a monthly aggregation allows for a greater degree of variance (Goldstein and Freeman 1991, 23).

To create a measure for urgency, I take the percentage change from one month's averaged COPDAB scale scores between U.S. and target actions to the next and name the variable ESCALATE.⁹ To measure provocation, I subtract the United States' COPDAB scale score directed at the target from the target's COPDAB scale score directed at the United

4. This coding of the dependent variable is not optimal because it measures when economic sanctions are in use and not just their initiation. I chose this coding because it offers information about the presidential use of economic sanctions. Thus, while not optimal for testing only initiation, it does reveal valuable and unstudied information about conditions under which the United States imposes sanctions on other countries. Furthermore, the coding used here provides a better distribution of the dependent variable as well as information about how sanctions are used. If only initiation were considered, the dependent variable would be extremely skewed, making the estimation biased. By using the months the president used economic sanctions against a given target, the estimation is not skewed and therefore not biased. My future research will focus specifically on the question of sanction initiation. Herein, the analysis centers on use and alteration.

5. The control group of U.S.-country dyads includes Australia, Canada, France (economic sanctions were threatened but never carried out during the Suez crisis), Gambia, Haiti, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Kuwait, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, New Zealand, Portugal, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

6. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman (1992, 282-83) and especially King and Zeng (1999) show that a sample of null countries (in this case, those not sanctioned) can be used in place of the population.

7. Each datum should be thought of as a country(target)-month: a specific target in a specific month.

8. The Conflict and Peace Data Bank's (COPDAB) conflict cooperation scale also measures sanction initiation. So that economic sanctions by the United States do not appear as both the dependent variable and as part of the independent variables derived from the COPDAB scale, I removed all uses of economic sanctions from the COPDAB tension measures.

9. That is, $(AT_{it} - AT_{it-1})/AT_{it-1}$, where AT equals the average COPDAB tension level for a given target month (it). ESCALATE is based on the monthly average between the United States and the country(target), not a minimum number of events.

States. Thus, a high positive score indicates provocative actions toward the United States. I am only interested in provocation by the target, since provocative actions by the United States would not make the president more likely to impose sanctions but would be a reaction to target resistance and belligerence. Therefore, I recode all negative scores (times when the United States was acting as the provocateur) as well as all of the missing values to zero. Therefore, the variable is zero for all observations when the United States was acting provocatively, or when there was no provocation either way. The end result is a variable (PROVOKE) that indicates only how provocative the target is toward the United States. Following Drezner (1998), I measure the expectation of future conflict with the Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott (1990a) data on prior relations between the sender and target. The variable, CONFLICT EXPECTATIONS, is coded as 1 when the prior relations were antagonistic and 0 when they were neutral or cordial (Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott 1990a, 47).

The measure of the presidential approval rating is the Gallup Poll question, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way [president's name] is handling his job as president?" Normally, these data are reported monthly, but when more than one survey was taken in a single month, an average was computed. During the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy presidencies, there were a few months in which surveys were not taken. In these cases, I used an average or moving average to supplement the data.¹⁰ I measure the president's electoral concerns by counting the number of months since the last presidential or midterm election.¹¹ This variable ranges in value from 0 to 23.

The approval and electoral concerns of the president interact with each other in such a way that the president is more concerned about his approval rating the closer the election.¹² For example, a president with high approval twenty months away from an election will have a proclivity for action, but that same president two months away from an election will be much more likely to use economic sanctions because the stakes are higher. To measure the president's compound concern with approval and elections, I create a multiplicative interaction term (ELECTORAL APPROVAL) between the APPROVAL and ELECTION PROXIMITY variables.

Testing the Model

Now that the hypotheses have been explicated and the data described, I turn to a brief discussion of the methods and then test the decisions to use and alter economic sanctions.

Economic Sanction Use

Recall that the data are arrayed in a time series cross section. The unit of analysis is the country(target)-month. That is, each datum represents a specific country for one month.

10. The moving averages were needed most during presidential election periods.

11. Dwight Eisenhower's and Lyndon Johnson's lame duck years are included because these presidents would have been concerned about the strength of their respective parties and presidential candidates Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey.

12. See *American Politics Quarterly's* special edition (1996, Vol. 24, No. 4) covering the link between presidential approval and electoral success.

Because these data are in a time series, they may have a lag process running through them. This possibility is further complicated by the fact that the first dependent variable, economic sanction use, is binary. Binary time-series data cannot be modeled the same way as interval time-series data because the dependent variable does not contain enough information to create a dynamic model (Beck, Katz, and Tucker 1998). That is, the “on” or “off” quality of the dependent variable does not provide trend information for the next time period. Given a dispute between the United States and some country in which economic sanctions are an option, the fact that sanctions were not in place against some target in January has an ambivalent affect on whether they will be in place in February.¹³ On the pro-sanction side, the president could be more likely to use economic sanctions because that form of coercive diplomacy has not yet been used. Conversely, the president may be less likely to use economic sanctions because once he does, he has escalated the dispute and committed the United States to another possibly costly sanctioning effort. Therefore, the fact that economic sanctions are not in place in the prior month does not tell us whether they are more or less likely in the present.

Beck, Katz, and Tucker (1998) have come up with a practical solution to this problem. Based on the idea that binary time-series cross-sectional and grouped duration data are identical, they show that a variable that counts the number of time periods (in this article, months) since the last event (month in which economic sanctions were in place) provides the information needed to model the temporal component of the data. This time variable will be jagged, however. To smooth the variable, Beck, Katz, and Tucker (1998, 1270-71) suggested a natural cubic spline.¹⁴ The inclusion of these time variables (a counter and splines) models the temporal dependence in the data, making the model unbiased.

One other aspect of the data must be noted prior to testing. Normally, binary time-series cross-sectional data are estimated with a fixed-effects model.¹⁵ However, when applied to these data, the nonsanctioned countries are automatically dropped because the dependent variable does not vary in these cases. If a partial fixed-effects model is used,¹⁶ there is no substantive difference in the findings appearing below. For this reason, the fixed-effects model is not used.

I used logistic regression to estimate the model (see Table 1).¹⁷ Overall, the model performs very well. It correctly predicts 97.8 percent of the cases (the naive model predicts eco-

13. This is not true for the control countries, since they were never sanctioned. A lack of sanctions in the past for these countries can predict no future economic sanctions. However, countries that were sanctioned cannot be predicted in such a manner. Because (1) the method used to control for the temporal dependence must be the same throughout the model and (2) the inclusion of the twenty-two control countries allows the hypotheses to be falsified across space as well as time, I used the Beck, Katz, and Tucker (1998) method described below. Furthermore, the Beck, Katz, and Tucker method accurately controls the temporal dependence in both the twenty-two sanctioned countries and the twenty-two control countries. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

14. I thank Neal Beck for his help with the concept and for applying it to the sanction data.

15. A fixed-effects model controls for the variance of the different countries in the data by putting a dummy variable for each of the countries in the equation.

16. A partial fixed-effects model controls for the variance of the sanctioned countries. Because the fixed-effects model cannot be used, the partial fixed-effects model can be used to test for cross-country heteroscedasticity.

17. Stata 6 (StataCorp 1997) was used in all of the analyses. The data are available from the author upon request. Two notes must be made with regard to the analysis. First, the data are binary, showing months in which economic sanctions were in place. When the data were arrayed as an event count (the number of sanctions counted up) and a Poisson regression was used, the findings were substantively the same. Thus, the analysis is robust to manipulations in the data type. Second, the sample is not representative of the number of countries the United

TABLE 1
Conditions Leading to Economic Sanctions

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Robust SE</i>	<i>p-Value</i> ^a
MAGNITUDE	0.489	0.056	.000
ESCALATE	-1.200	0.302	.000
PROVOKE	-0.193	0.063	.002
CONFLICT EXPECTATIONS	0.358	0.139	.010
APPROVAL	0.035	0.011	.001
ELECTION PROXIMITY	0.161	0.058	.006
ELECTORAL APPROVAL	-0.002	0.001	.062
TIMEPAST	-0.643	0.116	.000
Spline1	-0.0002	0.000	.000
Spline2	0.0001	0.000	.000
Spline3	-0.0001	0.000	.000
Constant	-3.540	0.690	.000

Note: Pseudo- $R^2 = .85$, percentage correct = 97.8. TIMEPAST and the three splines represent the temporal variables.

a. Two-tailed test.

conomic sanctions only 30.4 percent of the time), producing a pseudo- R^2 of .85. The model shows support for all but two of the hypotheses, but those two have a very interesting implication. First, the results support H1 (high tension levels lead to economic sanctions). The greater the tension between the United States and the target, the more likely the president will resort to using economic sanctions. This finding is not surprising and confirms what many have theorized.

Also supported is H4. The expectation of future conflict with the target increases the propensity for sanctioning. Given a dispute between the United States and some country in which the levels of tension are moderately conflictual,¹⁸ the president is unlikely (44 percent probability of economic sanctions) to impose economic sanctions on a country with which he expects little or no future conflict. If the conflict expectations are high, however, the president will impose economic sanctions at the same level of tension (61 percent probability of economic sanctions).¹⁹ In such a situation, the expectation of future conflict will lead to economic sanctions.

H2 and H3 (escalation and provocation, respectively, lead to economic sanctions) are not supported. The results reveal that both a highly escalatory dispute and a provocative target make the United States *less* likely to use economic sanctions. They seem initially rather counterintuitive. Why should the United States back down in the face of an escalating dispute or a belligerent country? Perhaps because the target is successfully deterring the United

States did not sanction. That is, the United States sanctioned fewer than 50 percent of the countries in the world. To compensate for the null countries being the same in number as the sanctioned countries, I used King and Zeng's (1999) method for rare events logistic regression. The results were not substantively different from the estimation using a standard logistic regression. I used the standard logistic regression in Table 1 because of the options available in Stata. Again, there was no substantive difference between the two regressions.

18. The COPDAB scale score was 9. All other variables were held constant.

19. These probabilities were generated with CLARIFY (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 1998; Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 1998). The CLARIFY software allows the researcher to input values for each variable and determine the probability of the outcome. The variable values can be manipulated to determine when the president will use sanctions under different conditions.

States, it is likely that the president sees the target's belligerence, manifested in provocative and escalating acts, as a sign of resolve to resist the threatened economic sanctions. According to Galtung (1967) and Eland (1995), economic sanctions can increase the domestic support for the target's leader. In turn, this support makes it easier for the target to resist the economic pressure. The president may realize that the target's leader is building support from the sanction threats and turns to a less intense approach to the crisis (George 1991, 77).²⁰ In cases where the dispute does not become too tense, belligerence on the part of the target will usually stop the president from using economic sanctions. However, once the dispute has become highly conflictual, the tensions are already elevated so their growth rate cannot be very high, and similarly there is little that the target can do to provoke the United States—it is ready to take action. Thus, for the target to successfully deter the president, it must be belligerent *before* the dispute becomes too heated, for once the dispute has flared, economic sanctions seem to be inevitable.

The analysis supports the three domestic hypotheses that suggest that the president's decision to use economic sanctions is conditioned by domestic factors including his job approval rating, election proximity, and a combination of the two.²¹ To understand these variables, it is best to consider them together because as either approval or election proximity changes, so does electoral approval. Selecting the extreme values for each yields a tale of two presidents.²²

The first example is a strong president with one month of the presidential election left to go and a 71 percent approval rating. If the United States becomes involved in a dispute with another country that is becoming increasingly hostile, the strong president will use economic sanctions when the tension rises to a score of 9 or above. Two months later, the same president, newly reelected, now with a whopping 75 percent approval rate, will use economic sanctions slightly sooner, not allowing the tension to exceed 8 before resorting to economic pressure. A strong president can use economic sanctions without the fear of a domestic backlash from some adversely affected industry. This confidence holds almost regardless of when the next election will be.²³

The same is not true for a weak (unpopular) president. In the October prior to a presidential election, a president with a low 42 percent approval rating will wait until the tension level reaches 11 before using economic sanctions in a dispute. Two months later, the same weak president will use economic sanctions at the same point the strong president will (tension score greater than 8). For unpopular presidents, economic sanctions are something to avoid when an election is near. In such circumstances, the possibility of angering a domestic industry could have more serious negative effects on the president's campaign (or that of his party in the case of midterm elections). For this reason, economic sanctions are not used until the dispute becomes very heated. With no election in the near future, even the weak

20. In situations when the target is provocative and escalatory, examination of the data shows that the president does not resort to more conflictual actions such as covert operations or military force.

21. Note that the interaction term (electoral approval) is only marginally significant ($p < .06$), and when the King and Zeng (1999) correction is applied, the p -value falls to .1. All other results are stable.

22. The following examples are derived from the model and are thus hypothetical. I selected the extreme values based on actual presidents (Eisenhower and Nixon) so that the examples would be more realistic than selecting the absolute high and low values (e.g., a 100 percent approval rating).

23. CLARIFY (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 1998; Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 1998) was used to determine these different values.

TABLE 2
Conditions Leading to Economic Sanction Alteration

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p-Value</i> ^a
TREND	0.115	0.010	.000
MAGNITUDE	0.398	0.127	.002
ESCALATE	-1.412	0.725	.052
PROVOKE	-0.512	0.143	.000
CONFLICT EXPECTATIONS	2.045	0.626	.001
APPROVAL	0.021	0.026	.431
ELECTION PROXIMITY	0.156	0.108	.150
ELECTORAL APPROVAL	-0.003	0.002	.187

Note: Pseudo- $R^2 = .45$.

a. Two-tailed test.

president can use economic coercion with little fear of a domestic backlash. It is probably in this situation that the president is trying to boost his image with all sorts of presidential actions, including a more assertive or aggressive foreign policy. Well before an election, he has the luxury of time to change the public's perception of him. Once the election is around the corner, he loses that luxury and becomes risk averse.

All of these domestic effects, however, are at the margin. While there are clearly differences between strong and weak presidents when an election is approaching, all presidents will use economic sanctions if the dispute becomes tense enough. Similarly, even with a horrible approval rating and no elections in sight, the president does not seem willing to pick a fight in order to boost his approval. Strength gives the president more leeway to act but not a reason to act. News of recent economic sanctions is not likely to boost the president's approval. Elections only seem to matter when they are very close because it is at that point in time when the president becomes the most risk averse. There is no time left to campaign over a mistake or an unpopular policy. Therefore, these domestic effects should be viewed as influences on the president's decision to impose sanctions only when the United States is involved in a dispute with another country.

Economic Sanction Alteration

I now turn to the decision of what to do once economic sanctions have been used against a target. The president can either lift, decrease, maintain, or increase the economic sanctions against the target country. The data are arrayed in a time series cross section but include only sanctioned countries, since the economic sanctions must be in place before they can be modified. For this reason, a fixed-effects model is used in the estimation below. Unlike in the first estimation, the dependent variable is ordinal. Thus, Beck, Katz, and Tucker's (1998) method of modeling the temporal dependence is not applicable here. Because time is still an issue with the data, I use the percentage change in the number of economic sanctions from the prior month. This variable estimates the prior trend in the data and thereby models the temporal process.

The results in Table 2 are an ordinal logit estimated using a fixed-effects model. The model performs well (pseudo- $R^2 = .45$), although not as well as the first model. The interna-

tional variables have the same signs and approximately the same substantive effects. High tension between the United States and the target is associated with continued or increased economic pressure. As the dispute continues and the tension remains high, the president has no reason to decrease the pressure. Essentially, he must give the economic sanctions time to work.

Belligerence by the target increases the possibility that the president will decrease or lift the economic sanctions. While high escalation and provocation cannot be considered a deterrent after the economic sanctions were actually put in place, they do show that the target is able to send a message that it is unwilling to bend under the United States' pressure. The target's belligerence indicates that it would rather suffer the economic pain than concede to the United States' demands. This message, in turn, leads the president to reassess the sanction policy and make a downward change to it.

Note that a target's power relative to the United States should not be a factor here because very weak targets have the same ability to resist the economic sanctions and act belligerently as strong targets. For example, Cuba has resisted U.S. sanctions for decades, just as China and the Soviet Union once did. Clearly, the power differences here are extreme: China and the Soviet Union were real military threats, whereas Cuba never has been (I consider the Cuban missile crisis a Soviet threat). Because almost all sanction episodes in the data do not involve an issue acute enough to involve military force, relative power is not an important consideration like it is in militarized disputes.²⁴

As expected, the more the president expects future conflict with the target, the more likely he is to maintain or increase the economic sanctions. As Drezner (1997, 1998) argued, the threat of future conflict increases the sender's concern for relative gains. Given this heightened concern for relative gains, it makes sense that the president would be more likely to hold out or increase the economic pressure on the target.

In contrast to the international conditions, there is a dramatic change in the domestic political conditions that lead the president to alter economic sanctions once he has already put them in place: none of the domestic variables is significant. The lack of significance among the domestic variables shows that the president only considers the public when first using economic sanctions. Once in place, fear of a backlash, and thus the need for political capital, is lower. While lobbies may be interested in the removal of the economic sanctions, the sanctions have become a policy, a sort of status quo. Thus, the onus is on the lobby group to pressure the president to remove the economic sanctions, not on the president to resist pressure to not create a new policy. Also, once a domestic firm suffers the initial cost of the economic sanctions, the sanctions begin to impose only an opportunity cost on the firm. While this opportunity cost can be great, it is not as tangible as the real economic loss initially caused by the economic sanctions.

Conclusions

While most of the literature concentrates on sanction effectiveness and some on sanction goals, the analysis above sheds some rather interesting light on the conditions that lead

24. I am thankful to an anonymous reviewer for raising this possibility.

to economic sanction use and alteration. The results show that the relation between the United States and the target is the most important condition leading to economic sanction use. The more heated the dispute, the more likely the president will resort to economic sanctions. This finding is in line with the theory that a state will react with more severe measures as a dispute increases in intensity. Unexpectedly, however, belligerent actions by the target in the form of provocation and a rapidly escalating crisis deter the United States from acting. On reflection, these findings suggest that the United States is less willing to use economic sanctions when it fears that the target's belligerence is a sign that the sanctions will cause a rally effect in the target (Galtung 1967; Eland 1995).

In addition to the characteristics of the dispute, the expectation of future conflict also affects the decision to use and alter economic sanctions. As found in prior research, the more conflict the United States expects with the target in the future, the more likely it will impose economic sanctions on the target (Drezner 1998) and then maintain or increase the sanction pressure on the target. Each of these international conditions affects when economic sanctions are used, but they are not the only conditions affecting sanction use.

Domestic politics plays a role in the use of economic sanctions. Concerns for job approval and elections influence the decision to use sanctions by either increasing or decreasing the United States' inclination to use economic sanctions. This effect is somewhat marginal because—given an intense dispute—the United States will react with economic sanctions almost every time. However, if the dispute is not too severe, weak presidents tend to avoid sanctions when elections are near, probably for fear that the policy could adversely affect an industry willing to fund and campaign for the president's opponent. A sanctioning effort could easily backfire and be potentially costly with an election approaching.

These domestic effects do not hold once the economic sanctions are in place. The only conditions that affect the president's choices to lift, decrease, maintain, or increase the economic pressure are the international dispute conditions, which have the same effect as they do on the initial decision to sanction. The president is more likely to increase the economic sanctions while the dispute rages on and while he continues to expect future conflict, unless the target is able to be provocative and escalatory—a difficult though not impossible task when the tension is already high. The domestic political conditions drop from the president's considerations because once a sanction policy is in place, the domestic groups that may want to end the economic sanctions have to reverse a current policy, not just keep a proposed policy from being enacted.

One problem with the analysis presented here is the time limit of the data, a limit that certainly constrains the model's application to the current time frame. Much has happened since December 31, 1978. However, much of the model's findings should still apply. While economic sanctions are more often used (even without the Soviet Bloc as a target), they are still largely a function of the dispute between the United States and the target (Drezner 1998, 2000). The effects described by Galtung (1967) and Eland (1995) are not contingent on attempts by the Soviet Union to derail a U.S. sanctioning effort. Instead, they are a function of the internal dynamics of the target—something that has not changed since 1978. Proof that political integration can still occur in the target can be found currently in Iraq (Eland 1995). Thus, the model's findings that target belligerency can act as a deterrent to the United States should still be true today.

The domestic political effects should not have weakened in the 1990s. Trade issues have become more important since the end of the cold war. Attention has turned from the communist threat to economic threats such as the recent Asian crisis, a free-trading European Union, and the crumbling Russian economy. While economic sanctions are foreign policy tools, they do affect the U.S. economy (Congressional Budget Office 1999). With greater attention on the economy, economic sanctions are more likely to become embroiled in domestic politics. Restricting sales to communist countries during the cold war is easier to justify than restricting sales to China for violating human rights. That is, exporters would be hard pressed to argue that their profits are more important than national security; profits over human rights policy is easier to argue.²⁵ The increased attention to the economy will likely increase congressional activism in sanction policy. Concern over domestic political costs to the economy as a whole and specific industries and interests in particular will draw more congressional attention to economic sanctions. While the president will have to concern himself more with Congress in the future, the results herein should remain applicable. Greater approval should give the president the power to act, even in the face of congressional opposition. Elections should still have the effect of making the president think twice, perhaps more so with the increased attention from Capitol Hill.

The conditions that lead to sanction modification as spelled out in the model should be quite applicable today as well. While some ongoing sanctions have made the news in the 1990s, they are more an exception than a rule. Cuba certainly gets periodic public attention, but few pay attention to the economic sanctions against Sudan, Libya, or Angola. It seems possible that when long-time sanctions are lifted, the government gives the event some fanfare and the public pays some attention (Drury 1996). With the end of the cold war and the many sanctions begun in the 1980s, we may find that domestic politics plays a greater role in the lifting of economic sanctions. In particular, elections may begin to have an influence. Presidents may want to highlight new optimistic relationships with old foes and, therefore, play up the ending of a sanctioning effort. Certainly, when relations with countries such as Iran and Cuba normalize (assuming they will someday), there will most likely be a good deal of attention paid to the announcement. The recent press surrounding U.S. relations with Vietnam supports this idea. While most of the news concentrated on Senator John McCain's visit and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, the coverage highlighted how these factors would affect the trade and aid negotiations between these two former enemies.

While the analysis above only assesses the conditions leading to economic sanction use and alteration, it still informs the literature on the importance of the dispute as well as the role domestic politics plays. Future analyses can incorporate this understanding when discussing the goals of economic sanctions, why economic sanctions are selected over other foreign policy instruments, and why economic sanctions seem to fail so often. Also, U.S. past cases constitute the single largest subset of sanction cases.

Finally, the analysis shows there is a close link between the theories explaining the use of force and the use of economic sanctions. It seems that the president has a relatively similar decision calculus for the different coercive tools available. Future research should not only

25. Clearly, the use of economic sanctions as a result of the Los Alamos espionage would be easier to justify, since they would invoke the national security argument.

update the data but also incorporate and order the different types of coercive diplomacy to determine whether we can better understand how they relate to each other and what conditions lead to their employment.

Appendix

Number of Months Target Was under U.S. Economic Sanctions

<i>Country</i>	<i>Cumulative Economic Sanctions</i>					
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
Argentina	7	13	4			
Brazil	56	10				
Ceylon	36					
Chile	9	9	21			
China	9	7	7	223		
Cuba	5	3	16	1	48	154
Dominican Republic	5	2	4	12		
Egypt	113	5				
Ethiopia	10	14				
India	86	20				
Indonesia	7	39				
Iran	5					
Kampuchea	89	44				
Laos	44	17				
Nicaragua	2	6	13			
North Korea	6	8	329			
North Vietnam	119	132	44			
Pakistan	56	3				
Peru	9	5	80	43		
South Africa	11	126	37	11		
Uganda	2	5	66	3		
Soviet Union	44	167	30	8	21	

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