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# Sanction Consequences and Citizen Support: A Survey Experiment\*

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## Abstract

Recent research disputes the conventional wisdom that “sanctions do not work,” demonstrating that sanctions may be intended for purposes beyond an immediate change in the behavior of targeted states. This contention is supported by the argument that democratic leaders often impose sanctions because their domestic constituency supports them. However, the specific consequences of proposed sanctions that citizens support or oppose are not well understood. Utilizing the insights of prior studies on the use and consequences of sanctions, we assemble theoretical expectations regarding favored and disfavored aspects of sanctions. We design and conduct a survey experiment to explore degrees of support for proposed sanctions following from variation in several specific expected consequences thereof. Our results provide insight into why this seemingly ineffective policy tool is so common: on average, citizens support proposed sanctions that are expected to have a *long-run* impact on target behavior.

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\*Note: author names are listed in alphabetical order. We are grateful for comments from participants at the Kobe Sakura Meeting 2015 (Kobe University, Japan), in particular from Mwita Chacha, Graeme Davis, Rob Johns, and Jason Reifler. We also wish to thank Max Hilbig for help executing the survey experiment.

# Introduction

According to the United States Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), a government entity that oversees economic sanctions, the United States maintains 28 distinct sanctions programs restricting commerce with over 50 countries as of September 2015.<sup>1</sup> The imposition of sanctions against Russia in 2014 over its intervention in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, along with the spirited public debate this policy precipitated in the United States, bring into focus the continued relevance of this commonly-used foreign policy tool. Indeed, this attention is warranted because sanctions often appear, at least at first glance, to be counter-productive, rarely extracting concessions from sanctioned (target) states (e.g., Pape 1997; Hufbauer et al. 2007), and yet causing suffering among the most vulnerable affected citizens (e.g., Weiss 1999; Allen and Lektzian 2013).

Notably, recent research disputes the scholarly conventional wisdom that sanctions “do not work,” suggesting that scholars have focused too narrowly on short-run policy concessions as the sole determinant of effectiveness (Baldwin 1999). Indeed, one simple explanation for the pervasiveness of sanctions is that foreign policy-makers, who are responsive to public opinion (e.g., Holsti 1992, 2004; Baum and Potter 2008), use economic coercion to satisfy public demand for action amid an international crisis (Whang 2011). However, the specific consequences of proposed sanctions that citizens support or oppose are not well understood.

In this paper, we synthesize previous studies that examine the decision to use sanctions and the consequences thereof, isolating potential outcomes of sanctions that citizens could like or dislike. Building from this prior research, we design and conduct a novel survey experiment that allows us to vary the characteristics of proposed sanctions in order to determine how a variety of sanction consequences affect citizen support. Survey participants from the

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<sup>1</sup>In some instances, states are targeted solely due to the residence of sanctioned individuals or organizations on the Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list.

United States, recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk), read vignettes describing hypothetical cases of armed aggression and human rights crackdowns that occur abroad, and then rate their support for the proposed U.S. response. By comparing support for combinations of proposed sanction consequences, we identify whether and how much features of such an episode affect citizens’ satisfaction with the policy. Our most notable finding is that the perception of a greater long-run effect deterring the target from repeating a proscribed action leads to substantially higher support for sanctions.

This paper has important implications for theory and policy. Our findings shed light on possible reasons why citizens could support sanctions despite that the policy fails generally to extract immediate concessions from targets. Our study is, to our knowledge, the first to gauge public opinion on sanctions using a survey experiment. Simple polls of public opinion are limited by the complex policy environment, wherein the particularities of each case are bound to obscure generalized causal relationships. Our survey experiment is designed to overcome this limitation. Our findings are particularly relevant for policy-makers from democratic countries, who often face pressure to act following major events and crises around the world, despite the fact that their interests appear affected only marginally, if at all. Our findings also raise a number of questions to motivate future researchers, who can expand upon our research design to isolate additional contextual factors that influence citizen support for sanctions, and who can examine the determinants of support for sanctions relative to other foreign policy tools.

## **Beyond the Conventional Wisdom that Sanctions “Do Not Work”**

Academic study has long demonstrated that sanctions are not effective at extracting policy concessions from targeted states (e.g., Pape 1997), and yet their use has increased over time

(Morgan et al. 2014:546-547). One possible explanation for the frequent use of a seemingly impotent foreign policy tool is that sanctions could be more effective than the scholarly conventional wisdom dictates, potentially because targets willing to acquiesce tend to do so before sanctions are imposed (e.g., Drezner 2003).<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, political leaders could be motivated to use sanctions for reasons beyond desire to change target policy. For example, decision-makers could value the costs that sanctions impose on targets (e.g., Marinov 2005; Escribà-Folch and Wright 2010; Peterson and Drury 2011), and the associated signal they could send to third parties considering similar behavior (e.g., Galtung 1967; Lindsay 1986; Peterson 2013, 2014).<sup>3</sup>

A simple but powerful explanation of sanction use, particularly by democracies, is that this foreign policy tool satisfies public demand that leaders “do something” amid an international crisis (Whang 2011). Indeed, previous research on public opinion and foreign policy holds critical implications that could explain why citizen preferences could drive the use of sanctions. First, there has been movement away from the Almond-Lippmann consensus that public opinion is inconsistent and largely irrelevant for foreign policy (Almond 1950; Lippmann 1955). More recent studies demonstrate that leaders are responsive to citizen preferences on foreign policy (Holsti 1992, 2004; Baum and Potter 2008; Canes-Wrone 2015), and that citizen attitudes are actually more consistent than thought previously (Verba et al. 1967; Mueller 1973). Indeed, research finds that public opinion on foreign policy tends to be “pretty prudent” (Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998), favoring action to promote the so-called national interest, but hesitating to risk lives with interventionist policy absent

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<sup>2</sup>Research also finds that the circumstances of a given case produce great variation in sanction success (see Bapat et al. 2013).

<sup>3</sup>Indeed, research suggests that scholars have adopted a definition of “success” that is too strict, ignoring gradations in sanctions effectiveness that could appeal to policy-makers (Elliott 1998: see also Baldwin 1999).

an imminent security threat (see also Mueller 1973). Furthermore, people (in the United States) tend to develop foreign policy preferences around moral guidelines, favoring action to foster democracy and human rights, while discouraging repression and conflict; yet this morality is tempered by practical concern for the policy's feasibility and costliness (Steel 1999).

Public opinion is likely to play a role in sanctions policy, and yet we know little regarding how the public views the features and consequences of sanctions.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the common view of sanctions as counterproductive could follow from focus on consequences of sanctions other than those that matter to policy makers or the public to which they are responsive. As previous studies show, sanctions have a variety of effects, some of which citizens might support, some of which could evoke indifference, and some of which could provoke opposition to the policy. However, the potential sensitivity of public opinion to specific sanction characteristics remains only speculation, as the reasons why citizens support sanctions have not been studied in detail.

Our goal in this paper is to uncover the specific consequences of sanctions that affect citizen support for the policy. We begin with the assumption that democratic leaders craft foreign policy to satisfy public opinion. Leaders and citizens alike face tradeoffs over the use of sanctions. Leaders desire the appearance of efficacy to maintain their office, most likely achieved in a democratic state via the provision of public goods (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2004). Sanctions could provide public goods in the form of policy concessions from the target and/or the perception by citizens that their state has successfully transmitted a

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<sup>4</sup>If sanctions are used to satisfy public demand for action, then it follows that sanctions are more likely to occur when the public becomes aware of bad behavior by a foreign state. Indeed, research finds that greater attention to human rights abuse by the media encourages the use of sanctions against abusive governments (Nielsen 2013; Peksen et al. 2014).

message that it is resolved to punish misbehavior.<sup>5</sup> However, given that political leaders face many diverse demands and hold limited resources, they also value cost-effectiveness. Because the achievement of costly foreign policy goals would likely entail distributing costs to the public, democratic leaders should be wary of engaging in these actions unless they perceive that the public is willing to bear the costs.

In light of findings by previous research on sanctions, we contend that there are (at least) four positive consequences of sanctions that citizens might support. First, and most intuitively, citizens should be more likely to support sanctions that convince or compel the target to reverse the policy that prompted international disapproval. The seeming inability of sanctions to achieve *short-run policy concessions* has received the most scholarly attention (e.g., Galtung 1967; Morgan and Schwebach 1997; Hufbauer et al. 2007). Second, despite this scholarly focus on policy concessions, previous research also considers other sanction goals and consequences. Indeed, Galtung (1967:379), acknowledging the moral determinants of foreign policy preferences, suggests that punishment of the target is a primary goal of sanctions, typically as important as obtained policy concessions. Although it is reasonable to assume that the harm inflicted by sanctions is a means towards the end of achieving policy concessions, it is also possible that citizens approve of punishment for its own sake. Accordingly, following from previous research evaluating the extent to which sanctions could harm target economies and leaders (e.g., Morgan and Schwebach 1997; Marinov 2005; Escribà-Folch and Wright 2010; Peterson and Drury 2011; Whang et al. 2013), we focus on *target costs* as a potential consequence of sanctions that citizens might support.

Furthermore, we study the consequences of sanctions beyond their direct, immediate

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<sup>5</sup>Not all sanctions are best viewed as policy of public goods provision. For example, many sanction cases arise over the issue of trade, such that victory would provide tangible, exclusive benefits to some company or industry. However, the potential consequences of sanctions in the scenarios we develop do have a public goods character.

effects. For example, despite the fact that tough sanctions enacted against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea are unlikely to force Russia to retreat from Crimea, the costs incurred could convince Russian leaders to be less aggressive (or at least less openly so) in similar future disputes (Drezner 2014). Accordingly, the third consequence of sanctions on which we focus is *long-run policy concessions*. Similarly, classic research suggests the possibility that sanctions could have reputation effects, convincing third parties that the sender is willing to punish misbehavior (Galtung 1967; Baldwin 1985; Lindsay 1986). Recent research provides evidence that states do incorporate the information conveyed by sanctions against a third party, rendering them more likely to acquiesce to an explicit sanction threat (Peterson 2013), and, in some cases, quicker to change proscribed policy proactively, before being targeted with sanctions (Peterson 2014). As such, the fourth positive sanction characteristic we examine is *third-party deterrence*.

There are (at least) two additional considerations that could inform citizen support for the policy. Sanctions are by design costly to the sender as well as the target. We expect that citizens consider each of the four positive sanction effects discussed above along with the costs such action would entail for the domestic economy. Thus, we focus on an individual's response to variation in *lost jobs*, arguably the most salient manifestation of these costs, to gauge the magnitude of dissatisfaction with a sanction following from its domestic cost. Finally, we consider the possibility that a citizen's support for sanctions depends on whether she perceives that the target is an international threat. Therefore, we vary the *issue*, specifically examining the difference in support for sanctions in the aftermath of internal vs. external aggression. Internal aggression, such as a human rights crackdown, could promote international anger, but is unlikely to invoke the perception of a security threat among citizens outside the state experiencing a crisis. Conversely, we contend that citizens are more likely to perceive a security threat (albeit not a direct threat) when witnessing aggression by a potential sanction target against a neighboring state.

To summarize the discussion above, we expect citizen support to sanctions to follow as a function of positive and negative consequences thereof, as well as the issue at hand. Our six expectations follow below:

1. *A higher probability of short-run policy concessions leads to higher support for proposed sanctions.*
2. *Higher target costs lead to higher support for sanctions.*
3. *A higher probability of long-run policy concessions leads to higher support for proposed sanctions.*
4. *The presence of third-party deterrent effects leads to higher support for proposed sanctions.*
5. *Greater job losses lead to lower support for proposed sanctions*
6. *The issue of foreign aggression leads to higher support for proposed sanctions than does the issue of human rights abuse.*

One might conclude that we can understand citizen views on proposed sanctions, and thus understand why sanctions are used, by leveraging public opinion polls. Although many such polls have assessed support for the use of sanctions (along with a wide variety of other foreign policy tools), the nature of polls renders this seemingly abundant source of knowledge critically limited in its ability to identify *why* citizens support or oppose a given policy option. For example, the Roper Center Public Opinion Archives contain numerous records dating back to 1977 of polls by various organizations regarding the question of whether to lift the United States' embargo against Cuba. Although inconsistencies in question wording over time obscure the identification of a trend, the general pattern shows increasing support over time for ending these sanctions.<sup>6</sup> Assuming this trend existed, it would nonetheless be difficult to isolate the factors that are responsible. One intriguing possibility is that Cuba's

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<sup>6</sup>Although question wording varies somewhat over time and across polling organizations,

continued defiance over time betrays the ineffectiveness of the policy, leading practically-minded citizens to prefer ending it. However, it is possible instead that this trend follows from the emergence of a new generation of voting-age citizens who were not yet born during the mass panic of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and thus do not perceive Cuba's communist regime as a major threat.

Similarly, survey responses fail to capture context following from variation over time and space in the public's frame of reference when considering a particular foreign policy option. For example, during the public debate leading up to U.S. sanctions against Russia over its intervention in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, a number of polling organizations gauged support for sanctions in isolation (see, e.g., Pew Research Center for the People & the Press 2015), failing to account for the fact that some respondents might see the alternative as doing nothing, while others might see sanctions as a means to avoid committing to costly military action. Other polls asked citizens also to indicate support for military intervention, aid to Ukraine's government, and for "staying out of it altogether" (Reason Foundation 2014).<sup>7</sup> However, even these polls are limited given that the policies could be, but are not necessarily, considered mutually exclusive by respondents. Perhaps more importantly, survey questions tend to reflect the currently salient policy debate, possibly capturing the particularity of a given event or crisis, thereby limiting comparability across cases, over time. While surveys can be useful to determine whether divisions in public opinion exist with respect to party identification, state of residence, gender, etc., they are not able to identify the causes of the survey question typically follows the pattern illustrated by this question asked by the Associated Press on January 29, 2015: "Do you think the United States should remove its embargo against trade with Cuba, or keep that embargo in place?" (Associated Press 2015).

<sup>7</sup>The Reason Foundation is a partisan (libertarian) source, but the poll referenced here was scientific.

support in specific cases with multiple features and consequences. A survey experiment is necessary to preclude potential bias.

## Research Design

To gauge whether empirical evidence supports our expectations, we design, carry out, and analyze a survey experiment. Survey experiments have been used increasingly often to investigate key questions in international relations, overcoming the limitations of traditional survey methods.<sup>8</sup> To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first such survey experiment to study citizen preferences on economic sanctions. We rely on a conjoint design which allows us to construct hypothetical scenarios that hold contextual factors constant while varying the characteristics (e.g., issue) and expected consequences (e.g., sanction costs, short-run policy concessions, etc.) of proposed sanctions. This design allows us simultaneously to test multiple hypotheses, isolating and comparing the causal effects of various expected sanction consequences on citizens' support for the proposed policy, thereby attaining a more comprehensive understanding of citizens' attitudes towards sanctions (Hainmueller et al. 2014).<sup>9</sup> Below, we provide details on our survey design, variable codings, sample recruitment, and statistical analysis.

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<sup>8</sup>For examples, Tomz (2007) and Chaudoin (2014) investigate the micro-foundation of audience costs theories; Tomz and Weeks (2013) examine the causes of the democratic-peace. An entire issue of *International Interactions* was devoted to this topic (Jensen et al. 2014).

For an overview, see Hyde (2015).

<sup>9</sup>Hainmueller et al. (2014:10) call this the average marginal component effect. Specifically, it is “the marginal effect of attribute  $l$  averaged over the joint distribution of the remaining attributes” where attributes correspond to the dimensions of sanction policy profiles (e.g., long-run effects).

## *Experimental Design*

### **What happened**

A country cracks down harshly on a religious and ethnic minority. The United States has longstanding political and economic ties to the region, but no direct security partnership.

### **Proposed U.S. policy**

The U.S. government imposes extensive economic sanctions on the human rights-abusing country. Credible estimates predict that the sanctions will lead immediately to 15,000 jobs lost in the United States.

### **Policy's immediate effects**

Experts agree on predictions that sanctions will make some progress towards coercing the country to stop the human rights abuses. Experts also predict that, until the country abandons its aggressive policy, the sanctions will cause severe economic harm to the human rights-abusing country.

### **Policy's long-term effects**

U.S. government officials predict that the proposed sanctions will certainly deter the country from further human rights abuses in the future.

**Please tell whether you oppose or support the proposed policy.**



Figure 1: An example screen of the survey experiment

After viewing a brief instruction for the exercise,<sup>10</sup> respondents, who were recruited within the United States, are shown a screen as displayed in Figure 1. On each such screen, we provide information about the target country, the issue at hand, the proposed policy by the United States government, and its short- and long-run consequences. We randomly

<sup>10</sup>The instruction is as follows: “[i]n the following three screens, you will find a short description of a political scenario and a hypothetical policy that the United States government is proposing. Please read each very carefully and then evaluate the proposed policy.”

vary sanction policy profiles on seven dimensions, including *Issue*, *Target Costs*, *Lost Jobs*, *Short-run Policy Concessions*, *Long-run Policy Concessions*, and *Third-party Deterrence*.

The first dimension we vary is the issue in dispute. In particular, we focus on two issues: human rights abuse against a minority group inside the target country, or a target invasion into a neighboring country. These two issues allow us to capture differences in response to internal versus external aggression. As noted above, this difference could provoke differing perceptions of security threat, thus allowing us to examine whether citizens support sanctions more or less when they seek to mitigate (indirect) threats from abroad. When the underlying issue is about human rights, respondents are told:

A country cracks down harshly on a religious and ethnic minority.

The United States has longstanding political and economic ties to the region, but no direct security partnership.

This issue summary emphasizes the violent nature of the country's actions, but also highlights that the United States faces no threat to its security from the action. For the issue of invasion, respondents are told:

A country invades the border region of one of its neighboring countries, claiming that the neighbor country opposes a minority to which the invader has close ties. It is widely expected that this country plans on carrying out similar incursions against at least two additional neighbors. The United States has longstanding political and economic ties to the region, but no direct security partnership.

In this case, we portray the country as an aggressor not against its people, but rather to a

neighboring country, further suggesting that it is potentially threatening to additional states. We are careful not to imply that the state is threatening conflict against the United States directly, merely that it could be an *international* security threat. This design choice is motivated by the reality that the United States (like many common users of sanctions) faces primarily indirect security threats from destabilizing international conflict.

After describing the issue at hand, we inform respondents about the proposed policy response by the U.S. government and its consequences for the U.S. economy, the target, and (possibly) third-party states. First, to identify the sensitivity of opinions to sanction costs, we randomly vary the extent of the sanctions' potential harm to the U.S. economy as expressed in the expected number of lost jobs. The values for the costs to the U.S. economy closely mirror the figures found in academic and policy debates.<sup>11</sup> More specifically, respondents are told:

The U.S. government imposes [*Extent*] economic sanctions on the human rights-abusing country. Credible estimates predict that the sanctions will lead immediately to [*Lost Jobs*] jobs lost in the United States.

where  $\text{Extent} \in \{\text{very minor, mild, moderate, extensive, comprehensive}\}$  and  $\text{Lost Jobs} \in \{100, 300, 500, 700, 900, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000, 6000, 7000, 8000, 9000, 10000, 15000, 25000, 35000, 45000, 55000\}$ . Adjectives describing the extent of sanctions are drawn corresponding to the number of lost jobs.

To examine the willingness to punish target misbehavior, we also vary the expected harm

<sup>11</sup>For example, Hufbauer et al. (1997) estimates that a total of 26 U.S. unilateral sanctions caused 200,000 to 260,000 lost jobs within the United States in 1995, which they regard as “a relatively high cost” to the U.S. economy. Following this, we treat 10,000 lost jobs per sanction as a moderately high cost.

to the target's economy. Informed by the scholarly literature on sanction effectiveness, we use one of three randomly chosen adjectives. In particular, we tell respondents:

Experts also predict that, until the country abandons its aggressive policy, the sanctions will cause [*Target Costs*] economic harm to the human rights-abusing country

where  $\text{Target Costs} \in \{\text{imperceptible, moderate, severe}\}$ . This set of adjectives allows us to examine the desire to see the target punished and hurt, perhaps irrespective of the effect of sanctions on the target's behavior.

Scholarly and policy debates focus considerable attention to how sanctions affect target behavior. However, we know little about whether people actually care about these direct effects of sanctions on the target. Accordingly, we consider both short-run and long-run potential policy concessions by the target. For the short-run effects of proposed sanctions, respondents are told:

Experts agree on predictions that sanctions will make [*Short-run Effect*] progress towards coercing the country to stop the human rights abuses

where  $\text{Short-run Effect} \in \{\text{imperceptible, little, some, meaningful}\}$ .

We also randomize how likely the proposed sanctions are to change the behavior of the target in the long run. Further, we vary the source of predictions for the long-term effect, given that people might not trust estimates made by the U.S. government, which faces incentives to inflate prospects for long-term success.<sup>12</sup> We suspect that if the estimates are

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<sup>12</sup>The U.S. government has been shown to influence informational sources; see Qian and

shared and supported by other sources, such as foreign governments and non-partisan think tanks, respondents could show greater support (Chapman 2009).<sup>13</sup> We tell respondents:

[*Source*] predict that the proposed sanctions will [*Long-run Effect*]  
deter the country from further human rights abuses in the future

where *Source*  $\in \{\text{U.S. government officials, U.S. government officials and non-partisan think tank experts}\}$  and *Long-run Effect*  $\in \{\text{not likely, possibly, probably, certainly}\}$ .<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, we investigate whether potential reputation effects influence respondents' support for sanctions. Specifically, we randomly insert the following extra sentence after the description of long-run consequences:

Additionally, they expect that the imposition of sanctions could con-

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<sup>13</sup>Yanagizawa (2009) and Dreher et al. (2008).

<sup>14</sup>Figure A.5 in the Web Appendix presents the results of tests examining whether information source conditions the impact of our primary treatments. Essentially, the results are substantively unchanged.

We are aware of the fact that, because we do not use identical adjectives to determine support for short-run and long-run effectiveness, we cannot easily compare their relative effects on respondent support for sanctions. We make this design choice purposefully, given that the short-run impact of sanctions is well understood to be modest at best; thus, it is not particularly interesting to examine support for some idealized case where sanctions lead immediately to acquiescence. We contend that it is relatively more important to use realistic terms when describing sanction characteristics.

vince other potential aggressors not to initiate crackdowns of their own.

After reading about the background information and proposed sanction policy, survey-takers are asked to report “whether [they] oppose or support the proposed policy” using a 9-point scale as illustrated in Figure 1.

### *Subject Recruitment*

Respondents were hired via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online platform to recruit and pay subjects to undertake tasks. In recent years, MTurk has become a popular tool for social scientists to conduct survey experiments. The biggest advantage of using MTurk is its relatively low cost. In addition, the self-selection of participants could actually reduce measurement error and increase the quality of data relative to a nationally representative sample for a given survey task (Kertzer et al. 2014).<sup>15</sup>

Although one might suspect MTurk samples to suffer from limited external validity stemming from a lack of representativeness, previous research suggests that this concern generally is unwarranted. For example, Berinsky et al. (2012) show that MTurk samples are *more* representative than convenience samples typically used in experiments in political science. Furthermore, the authors replicate existing studies using MTurk, finding results consistent with those produced by other sampling methods. In the case of our experiment, there is no clear *a priori* expectation that some feature(s) of our MTurk sample might condition our treatment effects (Druckman and Kam 2011). Nonetheless, we use a variety of techniques to

<sup>15</sup>Recent evidence suggests that, counter to their reputation for inattentiveness, MTurk workers are more attentive than undergraduate students and have become more so over time (Hauser and Schwarz 2015:6-7). Nonetheless, we also check respondents’ attentiveness by including a screener and requiring respondents to demonstrate that they are paying attention to the instructions (Berinsky et al. 2014) (see the Web Appendix).

address concerns for representativeness. First, as discussed below, we use sample weights to match our demographic variables to those of the general population (Hainmueller 2012). In the Web Appendix, we present models using a more complex weighting scheme.<sup>16</sup> Second, in Web Appendix, we replicate our main analysis on subsamples stratified by education and ideology; all results are substantively similar.

We recruited survey respondents in January 2015. All respondents were self-reported U.S. residents and were paid between \$0.75 and \$ 1.00. After accepting the task on MTurk, participants were directed to an author's website to take the survey.<sup>17</sup> Each subject evaluated three hypothetical cases.<sup>18</sup> A total of 1,738 subjects participated in the survey experiment;

<sup>16</sup>Beyond concern for unrepresentativeness with respect to broad demographic categories, one might question whether members of a given group on MTurk are qualitatively distinct from the broader group within the general population. For example, perhaps self-identified U.S. conservatives on MTurk might not look like conservatives in the broader U.S. population. However, previous research finds no evidence of this problem; specifically, Grimmer et al. (2012) find that liberals and conservatives on MTurk respond to common survey questions similarly to liberals and conservatives, respectively, on the American National Election Survey.

<sup>17</sup>Respondents participated in two more experiments embedded in the same survey. Because this experiment was included before the other two, we are not concerned about possible effects that treatments in the other experiments might have on the respondents' opinions in this experiment.

<sup>18</sup>As we pool respondents' ratings across the three cases, one concern is that treatments given to a respondent in one case might affect the rating in other cases. We check for these possible *carryover effects* (Hainmueller et al. 2014:22-25), in section D of the Web Appendix. We find little evidence that our pooling generates significant distortions due to carryover effects.

accordingly, we obtained  $1,738 \times 3 = 5,214$  observations.<sup>19</sup>

### *Statistical Analysis*

To estimate the causal effects of each component (i.e. sanction consequences), we regress each respondents' support ratings on the logarithm of lost jobs and dummy variables for the values of target costs, short- and long-run policy concessions, the underlying issue, information sources, and the potential for a third-party deterrence effect (using the lowest value as the omitted category for each).<sup>20</sup> Further, we account for intra-subject correlation by using cluster-bootstrapped standard errors (Harden 2011). Finally, while randomization guarantees internally valid treatment effects, these may not be representative of effects in the population if treatment effect heterogeneity exists and if our MTurk sample is different from the population. We are confident that our sample does not reflect the population (Berinsky et al. 2012; Huff and Tingley 2014), but treatment effect heterogeneity is uncertain. To address this issue, we include in the survey several questions regarding demographics (age, gender, and a 7-point self-evaluation on the Republican-Democratic ideological spectrum),

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<sup>19</sup>We drop a small number of observations because they failed our screener more than twice or took excessively much (more than 1,000 seconds for three evaluations) or little (below 50 seconds) time to answer the questions. These corrections result in a loss of 2.6% of the observations, such that we retain 5,076 observations from 1,692 respondents.

<sup>20</sup>Importantly, this modeling approach makes the assumption that a citizen's overall support is an additive function of each treatment's effect, and is linear in the logarithm of job loss. We think that this assumption is justified for an initial analysis such as this one. However, many of the robustness check models presented in the appendix present the results of models subset in various ways, allowing us to address some potential for multiplicative conditionality. We find little substantive evidence for concerns stemming from this possibility.

which we took from the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) (Vavreck and Rivers 2008). By re-weighting our MTurk sample, we match these demographic variables to the population moments of the CCES (Hainmueller 2012), thereby improving our confidence that our estimates correspond to effects in the population (Hainmueller et al. 2015).<sup>21</sup>

## Results

The coefficients from our main model, which are the average component effects, are reported in Table 1 in the Web Appendix. To understand substantive effects, we simulate effects via the parametric bootstrap (King et al. 2000). Figure 2 presents the estimated effect of each sanctions aspect on public support. The dots represent the median estimated marginal or incremental effect of each sanction dimension on the support rating; the horizontal lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. The dots without horizontal lines represent the reference categories for a given dimension, to which each effect should be compared.

Our results show that public preferences on economic sanctions are complex; people care about several consequences of sanctions, some of which are surprising. Figure 2 identifies two consequences of economic sanctions as main concerns for the respondents: the costs of sanctions to the U.S. economy (in terms of lost jobs), and long-term policy concessions by the target. Three other consequences are of modest importance: target costs, short-run policy concessions, and third-party deterrent effects. First, we estimate that an increase in the number of potential lost jobs from the minimum (100) to a “moderate high” (10,000) decreases public support by about 0.9 on a 9-point scale, roughly 40 percent of the standard

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<sup>21</sup>Furthermore, in section C of the Web Appendix, we present additional models that examine whether our main findings are conditional on possibly relevant demographic factors. Notably, we find very little evidence of conditional relationships.

## Effect on Support for Economic Sanctions

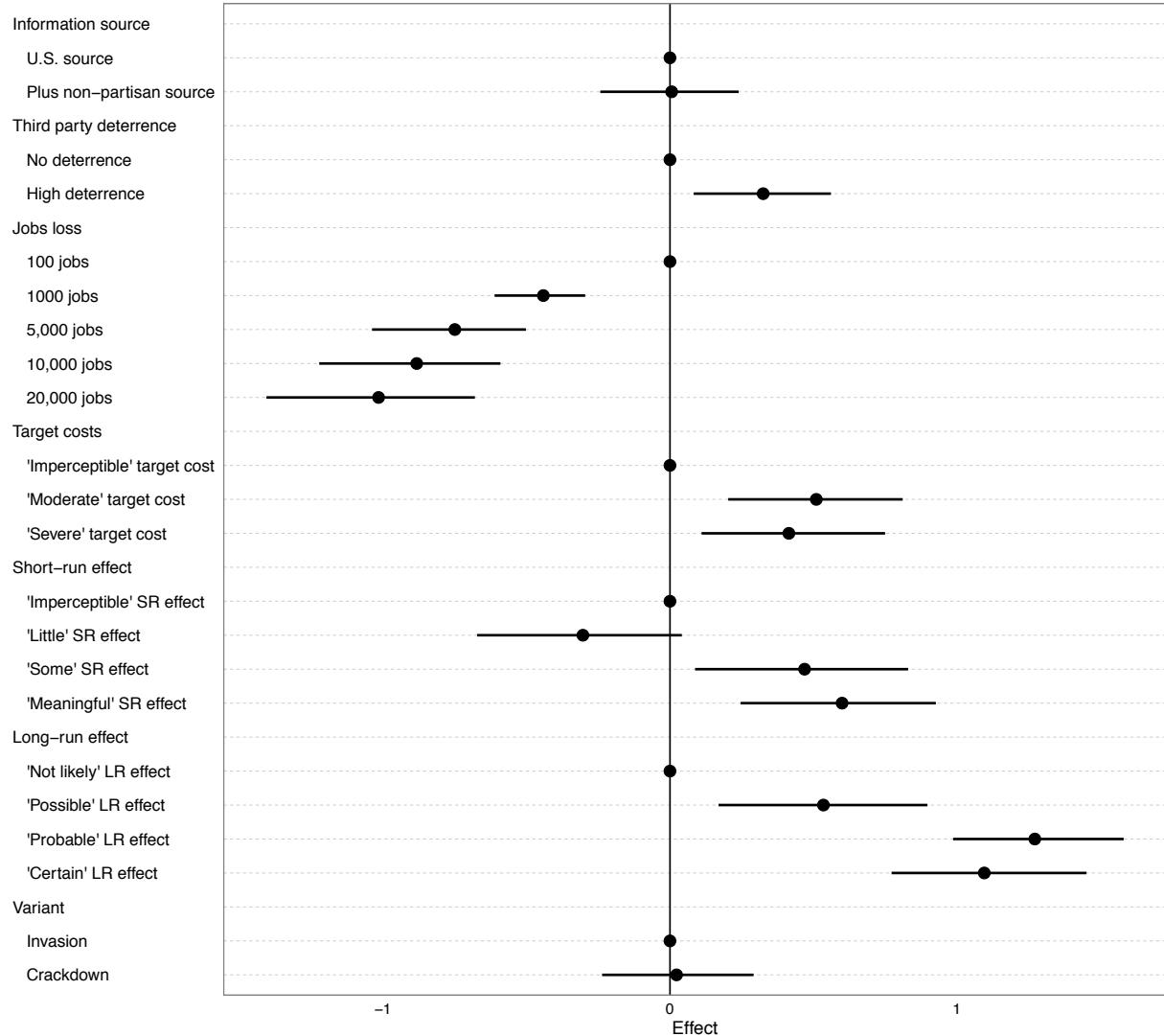


Figure 2: **Consequences of Sanctions and Public Support.** Dots signify median estimates, and bars denote 95% confidence intervals. Dots without bars represent the reference category for a given attribute.

deviation of the support variable. This strong sensitivity to potential lost jobs is consistent with the argument that costs are salient to citizens.

Public support also depends crucially on the potential long-run effect of sanctions; respondents care about the implications of sanction efforts for the future behavior of the target.

Increasing the likelihood of deterring repeated bad behavior by the target from “not likely” to “probable” or “certain” leads to an increase in respondent support of about 1.2 on a 9-point scale, an increase corresponding to 50 percent of the standard deviation for support. Although directly comparing this result to that of other sanctions consequences should be done cautiously, it is noteworthy that this long-run effect appears to fare well relative to other sanction consequences. Perhaps more remarkable is that this finding is robust across different models and subsets of the sample while the effects of other consequences can sometimes be less pronounced (see the Web Appendix for details).

We find some support for the expectation that short-run policy concessions increase support for sanctions. When the extent of progress made by the sanction toward changing the target’s misbehavior alters from “imperceptible” to “meaningful,” public support increases by about 0.6, roughly 20 percent of the standard deviation of the support variable. This finding is not surprising given that most academic debates over sanctions focus on their short-run effects—i.e., whether they cause immediate change in the target’s offensive behavior. Indeed, one would expect, *a priori*, that immediate concessions should be the primary drivers of support for sanctions. The lack of a stronger finding for this treatment could stem from respondents’ preexisting beliefs that sanctions are ineffective in the short run. Alternately, this modest finding could follow because we do not use an adjective stronger than “meaningful.” However, given the conventional wisdom that sanctions “do not work,” we reiterate that the use of a stronger adjective such as “complete” or “total” would result in unrealistic and thus uninteresting variants of our scenarios.

The results also indicate that public support is sensitive to target costs and third-party deterrence, but these effects are relatively small in magnitude, similar to that for short-run policy concessions. First, an increase from low to high target costs leads to an increase in support by at most 0.5. Similarly, the suggestion that sanctions could deter a third party from engaging in similar bad behavior leads to a small, yet statistically significant increase in

support equal to approximately 0.33. Finally, contrary to our expectations, public support does not appear to depend much on the issue, at least independently. In the Web Appendix, we condition the impact of other treatments on the issue at stake, finding few differences.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This paper offers the first analysis of citizens' preferences on economic sanctions in a way that overcomes the limitations of public opinion polls. The findings from our survey experiment show that people are particularly concerned about sanctions' *long-run* impacts on target behavior. Their support for a sanction becomes particularly strong when it is expected to compel the target state not to engage in aggressive behavior in the future. Their support depends less on how much sanctions are expected generate *immediate* target policy concessions. These findings provide a powerful explanation for the old puzzle of why states continue to use sanctions despite their limited effectiveness. Our findings suggests that we may observe many "ineffective" sanctions because leaders do not use them to change an offending behavior, but rather to deter repetition of such behavior in the future. However, our results demonstrate only that citizens would *like* this outcome. It would be quite difficult to isolate whether, and under what conditions, this long-run impact of sanctions occurs in reality. Yet future research would benefit from the attempt, given that future restraint by sanctioned states could prevent considerable suffering among citizens subject to internal and international aggression.

Although it is useful as a first step to examine levels of support for sanctions in isolation, we hope future research can build from our findings to explore the factors that determine preferences among multiple foreign policy options. One fruitful line of inquiry would examine the factors that make the public prefer carrots to sticks, or prefer more costly (in terms of lives as well as dollars) military action as an alternative to economic coercion. While we find

that preferences for long-run effectiveness are especially influential with respect to support for sanctions, desire for short-run results might drive preference for militarized foreign policies.

Additionally, future research can improve our understanding of the contextual factors influencing support for sanctions. For example, people could be less supportive of coercion against allies, or against target states viewed favorably (see Tomz and Weeks 2013: for a similar argument regarding support of military strikes). Finally, future research can relax our assumption that support is a function of an additive process regarding expected positive and negative aspects of sanctions. For example, support associated with long-term policy concessions or third-party deterrence effects could be entirely conditional on the domestic costs of sanctions being low.

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