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coercing, constraining and signalling

explaining un and eu sanctions
after the cold war

Francesco Giumelli



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Endorsements for the book

In his important contribution to the field of UN and EU targeted sanctions, Francesco Giumelli provides an excellent conceptual account of the challenges this strategic tool confronts in today's world. He does so by providing both an excellent theoretical as well as methodological analysis, especially with regard to strategies of coercing, constraining and signalling. What more is that Dr. Giumelli also provides scientific recommendations for how to move the field forward. In short then, this book should be a required reading for anyone interested in the state of the art of sanctions.

Dr Mikael Eriksson,
Researcher at the Swedish Defence Research Agency

“Francesco Giumelli’s analytical distinction between the different purposes of sanctions – to coerce, to constrain, to signal – introduces an innovative way to think about and to evaluate the effectiveness of sanctions.”

Prof. Thomas J. Biersteker,
The Graduate Institute, Geneva

“This is a thoughtful study of economic sanctions as instruments of statecraft together with other forms of statecraft in pursuit of a variety of foreign policy goals. To his credit, the author neither dismisses nor ignores signaling as a foreign policy device.”

Prof. David A. Baldwin,
Princeton University

chapter | a systemic approach to three | sanctions

This chapter aims at defining the conceptual bases for a systemic theoretical framework of sanctions. In order to reach this goal we must take a two-step procedure. First, we need to classify sanctions in categories that can be useful to highlight their different logics at work. Secondly, the ‘system’ of sanctions needs to be defined and limited as required by the characteristics of a middle range approach.

The DV will be the mechanic, or logic, of sanctions at play. Instead of classifying sanctions according to their objectives, I look at how sanctions influence targets. To this extent, sanctions can coerce, constrain and signal primary and secondary targets. This typology is operationalised with two dimensions that entail the feasibility of the demands attached to the sanctions and their direct material impact. The IV is the ‘system of sanctions’ and it is constituted by three elements: the level of threat to the sender represented by the targets or by the crisis, the salience of the crisis and its complexity. These three variables together account for the interests of senders (threat), the normative and social pressure on senders (salience) and the will/capability gap (complexity).

This theoretical framework allows us to formulate expectations on the constraints and opportunities created by the context on policy makers when they decide to impose sanctions. Thereby, in general terms, higher values of threat would most likely lead to coercive or constraining sanctions; higher values of salience would most likely lead to constraining sanctions, and higher values of complexity would lead to constraining or signalling sanctions. The IVs that characterise the context or the system of sanctions are dichotomous in this research; therefore, eight specific hypotheses are possible and will be described in this chapter.

Sanctions are used even if it is not clear why. This study focuses on the logic of sanctions through the development of a conceptual framework that could make the understanding of sanctions episodes easier and the explanation of their purpose possible.

The chapter is divided in three parts. The first part describes the DV and the three ways how sanctions can influence their targets. The second section presents the IV and introduces the three elements that constitute it – threat, salience and complexity. The third part summarises how the variables are expected to relate to each other; in other words, this part deals with the hypotheses of the research.

The theoretical framework: the dependent variable

Not all sanctions are created equal, so we need a functional typology that would guide us to understand their differences. The creation of a typology is possible only if sanctions are broadly defined and if the classification can be replicable and operationalisable. By ‘broadly defined’ it is meant that any classification of

sanctions must acknowledge that sanctioning is only one of four foreign policy methods and they are never imposed alone, which means that sanctions can always and only contribute to foreign policy goals (Baldwin 1971; Lawson 1983; van Bergeijk 1994; Nincic 2008). By ‘replicable and operationalisable’ it is meant that any typology of sanctions should be based on criteria that can be assessed and replicated across time and space so that comparisons become possible and knowledge can accumulate.

Placing sanctions in the foreign policy toolbox

Creating a definition of sanctions that would take the broader picture into consideration means that sanctions have to be placed in the foreign policy toolbox. Sanctioning is only one action of which foreign policy makers can avail themselves in their external relations. The other actions with third parties would be using violence, offering material gains and resorting to diplomacy. Their combined use can lead to the achievement of foreign policy objectives, while the individual contribution for each of the methods adopted can only increase, or decrease, the probability to achieve, fully or in part, a specific foreign policy goal. Table 3.1 introduces the overall argument of this study by attempting to answer this question.

This table has been created by integrating and developing the works of Baldwin, Art and Haas. In *Economic Statecraft*, Baldwin’s goal is to define how a state can use economic levers to achieve political goals (1985); in ‘To What Ends Military Power?’, Art describes the different ways in which force can be used (1980); finally, in *International Conflicts*, Haas presents how conflicts can be articulated (1974). Here, the goal is to describe what foreign policy options are at the disposal of international actors.

The different policy instruments, divided into domains such as propaganda, diplomacy, economic statecraft and military statecraft, are defined as ‘the area of policy instruments’ (Baldwin 1985: 10–16). Policy instruments – ‘tools’, ‘means’ and ‘levers’ could be used as synonyms – are ‘policy options available to decision makers in pursuing a given set of objectives’ (Baldwin 1985: 12). An actor can be persuaded peacefully, by rewarding or sanctioning certain behaviours, and by physically forcing him into doing something. These are defined as the method of influencing another actor, which is: ‘the way of influencing the target(s)’ (Rummel 1963; Rummel 1966; Tanter 1966; Haas 1974). This can also be defined as the ‘logic’ or the ‘mechanic’ of sanctions.

Power relations can be either cooperative or non-cooperative. In both cases, the purpose of any action is defined as ‘what a policy instrument is used for’ or ‘in what ways the target(s) is (are) influenced’ (Art 1980). If the relation is cooperative, actor A can signal agreement with B, support him in achieving his goal, or cooperate with him in the achievement of his goal. If the relation is non-cooperative, A can signal disagreements with B, constrain him in achieving his goal, or coerce him to do something that he would not do otherwise. An exercise of power is intended to achieve a goal – ‘aim’, ‘objective’ and ‘end’ will be used

Table 3.1: A synoptic table of statecraft in foreign policy

Domains (Baldwin 1985)	Methods, Mode, Techniques (Haas 1974; Art 1980)	Tools, means, instruments, levers	Purpose (Art 1980)		Ends, aims, objectives, goals	Targets (primary and secondary) (Baldwin 1999/2000)
			Scope (Lasswell and Kaplan 1950) Logic or mechanic	Non- cooperative		
Propaganda	Peaceful	Statements	Cooperative			
Diplomacy	Incentives	Diplomatic advantages Economic aids Etc.				
Economic statecraft	Sanctions	Financial Restrictions Travel Bans Arms Embargo Commodity Boycotts	To signal To support To cooperate	To signal To constrain To coerce	Milieu Possession Survival (Wolfer 1962)	Individuals Entities Domestic Audience States International organisations International Audiences
Military statecraft	Violence	Strategic bombing Invasion Etc.				

STATECRAFT

as synonyms¹ – and goals can be framed in different ways, for example by dividing them in the categories of survival, possession and milieu goals (Wolfer 1962). The target – ‘who is to be influenced’ – can vary. The primary target can be the actor that has been directly hit by sanctions, while the secondary target can be another actor that is supposed to change its costs/benefits calculation according to the imposition of sanctions upon the primary target, or also an audience, either domestic or international, that has to be signalled about something (Baldwin 1985; Baldwin 1999/2000).

To summarise, sanctions represent only one instrument in the foreign policy toolbox and they can achieve particular goals under specific circumstances. This research focuses on the purposes (logic or mechanic) of sanctions in non-cooperative relations, namely the use of restrictive measures to coerce, constrain or signal targets to create a classificatory typology of sanctions (Elman 2005: 297).

The three categories

Sanctioning is an exercise of power in foreign policy, and power has been described with three dimensions: winning conflicts, limiting alternatives and shaping normality (Berenskoetter and Williams 2007), which can be translated in coercing, constraining and signalling. There have been other attempts to formulate typologies on how sanctions influence targets, but these three aspects were not all present. For instance, dichotomous typologies were elaborated to maintain that sanctions can pursue substantive or symbolic goals (Doxey 1987: 10; Shambaugh 1999: 13) and expressive or instrumental motives (Galtung 1967: 412). Others have generated tripartite typologies of purposes, such as the one elaborated for air power to coerce, to deny or to punish, but adaptable to sanctions as well (Pape 1996: 1–12). However, these three forms of power, namely to coerce, constrain and signal are never included in one single typology.²

Sanctions are usually understood only through their coercive aspect, which implies that targets change their behaviour to avoid bearing the costs imposed by the sanctions, but this view presents three fundamental fallacies. First, it is taken for

1. In 1971, Doxey talks about ultimate and intermediate goals: ‘In the first place, the nature and circumstances of the crisis will determine specific final goals, while the tactical decision to use a certain form of coercion will establish intermediate goals. If, for instance, the final goals were the ending of hostilities between two states and the peaceful settlement of their dispute, and military measures were selected as appropriate means of coercion, then the intermediate goal would be to introduce an effective military presence into the area of hostilities, which would induce the delinquent state, or states, to abandon the use of force. On the other hand, if the ultimate goal of international enforcement were to prevent a threatened act of aggression, and economic weapons were selected as instruments of coercion, then the intermediate goal would be to deprive the would-be aggressor of the means of waging war, or to make it too costly for him to do so.’ (Doxey 1971: 92)
2. Albeit in different terms, the separation between coercing and constraining was already elaborated by George in 1971 (George 1971: xi) and later by others (Barber 1979; Pape 1992; Haass 1998), while the importance of signalling was clear to many (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1992: 7; Cortright and Lopez 2000: 16; Schwebach 2000: 203; Martin and Laurenti 1997: 19).

granted that targets are always capable of complying with the demands attached to sanctions. Secondly, sanctions are always expected to have a material impact. Thirdly, the final objective of a sanction is to change the behaviour of targets. In fact, these conditions are rarely present together when sanctions are imposed. Senders may formulate requests that cannot be met by targets and sanctions do not always have a direct material impact on targets, namely they do not always bite. These two criteria are labelled ‘request feasibility’ (defined as the acceptability of the senders demand by the target), and ‘direct material impact’ (defined as the economic burden or the tangible discomfort directly imposed on targets by sanctions), and are used to distinguish the different episodes of sanctions. Finally, the primary objective of sanctions may not be the behavioural change of their target. A more functional typology is necessary to leap forward in the sanctions debate.

The most common definition of ‘power’ refers to the capacity of senders to make targets do what they would not do otherwise, but power is also the ability to limit the alternatives of targets and to send signals to certain constituencies. These three types of power in this investigation suggest that sanctions can coerce, constrain and signal as summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Types of sanctions

Type	Logic	Possible positive outcome	Cases
Coercion	Impose a burden on targets to affect their cost/benefit calculation in order to do something	Behavioural change Creating a bargaining chip	UN on Libya EU on Belarus
Constraint	Impose a burden on targets to prevent the target from doing something	Stop targets Impose a burden on target	UN on Iraq EU on Zimbabwe
Signal	Signal the position of the sender without the imposition of a direct burden	Signal commitment Establish international standards Exercise diplomatic pressure Please audience Behavioural change under logics that different from cost imposed	UN on Rwanda EU on DRC

Coercion

This category of sanctions includes the cases of restrictive measures imposed in order to increase the probability of making a target behave in a way that it would not otherwise do. In other words, the sender intends to change the behaviour of the target and sanctions attach a cost on certain acts in order to affect the target's costs/benefits calculation. In this category, expected positive outcomes would be the actual behavioural change of the target, the greater probabilities for a behavioural change or the improvement of the bargaining position of the sender versus the target. Ideally, coercive sanctions aim at increasing the cost of all but one policy option available to targets.

The characteristics of a coercive sanction are high feasibility and high impact. First, working on the assumption that political actors enjoy total freedom of action until they endanger their own survival, the target should be able to acquiesce without encountering the risk of political suicide; otherwise it will always prefer to resist sanctions rather than to change behaviour. Consequently, senders have to make 'feasible' requests if they want to have them satisfied. Secondly, sanctions have to have a direct material impact on the target in order to affect its costs/benefits calculations. The impact has to be direct and there must be a material cost on the target if the mechanics of sanctions are to be coercive, which means that a target may change its behaviour in order to avoid the burden imposed by the measures taken by the sender.

Constraint

This category includes the cases of sanctions imposed in order to thwart a target in the pursuit of its policy. Whereas for a coercive sanction a target has to do something to meet the demand of the sender, for a constraint type of sanction the target is required not to do something. In this category, expected positive outcomes would be that of slowing down a target's implementation plans, increasing costs of actions or lowering the marginal utility that the target expects to gain from the achievement of a specific objective. Ideally, constraining sanctions impose a cost on one specific action that targets intend to undertake.

Similar to coercive sanctions, the measures under this category must have a direct impact on a target, but they usually make unfeasible requests. There must be a direct material impact in order to undermine what targets can or cannot do in. However, the voluntary behavioural change is not required on the side of targets when they cannot do what senders are demanding without endangering their existence. Targets cannot comply with the demands because compliance is incompatible with the political survival of the individuals or entities that have to make the decision or simply because there is no compatibility between the interest of senders and targets. This is not to say that senders do not know about this when they design sanctions, but it is to underline how reducing the list of possibilities from the target's menu of choice, which can include their capacity to survive at all, can be a legitimate objective in foreign policy that senders intend to pursue. To this extent,

designing a demand in an unfeasible way could also be a political move to impose regime change or to simply deny certain actors their freedom to manoeuvre.

When looking at the most recent developments from comprehensive to smart sanctions, constraining sanctions are often used to fight groups or entities that are not willing to cooperate with the established norms of the international society. In other words, since the new threats of a post-cold war scenario are fought also with law enforcement techniques, this concept could be simplified by saying that targeted sanctions are to the international systems what penal codes are to states. Within domestic environments, laws that forbid murders or frauds are not useless because murders and frauds are committed. In fact, penal and civil laws limit the number of deviant cases and complicate the life of those who are willing to challenge the rules, but they cannot prevent all of them from acting. Similarly, targeted sanctions are not useless because terrorist attacks still occur or civil wars do not end right after the imposition of constraints on the actors; they could be useful and effective if they limit the capabilities of the target to carry out its acts.

Signal

This category includes the cases of restrictive measures imposed with the objective of sending a ‘message’ to one or more targets. Sending a message may contribute to the achievement of different goals, which includes but are not limited to the behavioural change of a target. However, the mechanic, namely how this behavioural change is brought about, would be different from a mechanic where the target changes its behaviour to avoid a material cost imposed by sanctions. Here, a target would change its behaviour to avoid reputational costs, to enhance its future gains, or to enjoy the benefit of multilateral diplomacy. These mechanisms would no need a direct material impact of sanctions to be triggered. Furthermore, a signalling sanction may use the primary target as a means to convey a message either to a domestic or an international audience. For instance, senders may want to please a domestic lobby about a specific crisis, or test how other international actors create a certain expectation on what senders will do in similar cases in the future.

While the two dimensions of feasibility and impact are important to distinguish between coercive and constraining sanctions, signalling sanctions have the only requirement not to have a material impact on targets. Therefore, regardless from the feasibility of the demand, this type of sanction differs in nature from the other types and should be analysed accordingly.

Signalling sanctions may have indirect material impacts, such as causing the loss of foreign direct investment in targeted countries, but as this would go beyond the direct control of senders, it cannot be considered as part of the mechanic of sanctions. Regardless of the specificities of each sanctions episode, the imposition of sanctions is expected to contribute to shape normality in what it is allowed and what it is forbidden in the international system.

Concepts in action

Once these three different concepts have been defined, how do we know them when we see them? This typology represents a leap forward in the existing literature as it can be replicated in other instances of sanctions. The typology is operationalised around basic assumptions about two factors that have been selected inductively.

The first factor is feasibility. If a sanction is feasible, then the target knows what to do and it can do it because the request does not endanger its existence. On the other hand, if the request cannot be accepted by the target, then the goal of sanctions cannot be its behavioural change. In this last case, the imposition of a constraint type of sanction is more likely. The feasibility of the demand is constituted by two dimensions: preciseness and practicality. Preciseness refers to whether the request has been articulated enough so that a target knows what to do to satisfy the will of the sender, and practicality means that the request can be met by the target without compromising its existence.

The demand is classified as precise if a sender asks a target to do one or more specific actions (e.g. Libya had to hand in two alleged terrorists for trial). If UN Security Council Resolutions or the European Council common positions include general normative benchmarks requesting adherence to moral values, then the demand will be classified as vague (e.g. a vague request would be one to improve the situation of human rights) as no specific requirement is set. The demand is classified as practical if the target can comply with it without endangering its existence (e.g. Kim Yong Il is able to comply without danger for his regime). On the contrary, if compliance means demise for the target, the demand will have a low practicality (e.g. Al-Qaida members are asked to stop their acts). Table 3.3 presents a general list of indicators used to determine the degree of feasibility.

The evaluation of practicality is strongly linked to the type of target that is sanctioned since not all international actors behave according to the same principles (Schneider and Post 2003). The framework differentiates between rational, ideological and criminal actors.³ The first category encompasses actors that think and act strategically to increase their economic well-being (e.g. Uzbekistan, Libya); the second category regards those actors that reason in terms of costs/benefits, but they have built their legitimacy in opposition to the sender and deem it more important than the cost that they are shouldering for sanctions (e.g. Iran, Cuba); the third category involves actors that base their very existence in resisting sanctions: any costs that could be imposed upon them will not change their behaviour and compliance is not an option (e.g. Al-Qaida, National Union for the Total Independence of Angola – UNITA). This variable will be an important element to analyse the feasibility of the demands. Table 3.4 summarises the three categories.

Both preciseness and practicality are measured in a three point ordinal scale and are weighed as follows: low (1), medium (2), and high (3). Since the variable feasibility has two dimensions, high and low, the rates for the dimensions are mul-

3. A similar typology has been used for the analysis of different types of terrorism, see (Hacker 1976).

tiplied and the classification in either high or low feasibility is defined as follows: if the combined score is less than five, then the feasibility is low; if the combined score is more than five, then the feasibility is high. Table 3.5 summarises this point.

Table 3.3: Feasibility of demand

		Kinds of evidence (the list is not exhaustive)
Preciseness	1: vague, the target does not know what to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the demands stated in official documents – the coherence of states after the approval of the official documents
	2: medium, the target has a partial knowledge of what to do	
	3: precise, the target knows what to do	
Practicality	1: little, the request cannot be met by the target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – regime change – domestic situation of targeted groups – whether there are demands at all
	2: medium, meeting the request may comport high danger for the target	
	3: high, the request can be met by the target	

Table 3.4: Taxonomy of explicit targets

	Goal	Costs/benefits	Sensitivity to costs
Rational	Well-being	Yes	High
Ideological	Legitimacy from confrontation	Reputational	Reputational
Criminal	Free ride within the system	No	Low

Table 3.5: Degrees of feasibility

		Practicality		
		1	2	3
Preciseness	1	Low	Low	Low
	2	Low	Low	High
	3	Low	High	High

The second factor is ‘direct material impact’. It is important to note that the lack of material impact does not mean that senders lack the political will to effectively play a role in the crisis. For instance, light sanctions can be imposed with a concern linked to the impact on innocent civilians or to the intention to avoid the rally around the flag argument that can be used by the ruling elite likely to be targeted by sanctions. Instead, the implementation of sanctions may be made problematic by technical difficulties or lack of state capacity on the ground. These conditions would not reduce the importance of the role that sanctions can play in international affairs, but the quality of the contribution that sanctions can provide to each foreign policy crisis should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The two dimensions for direct material impact are constituted by the cost of sanctions and the dependence on the resource denied to targets. Cost refers to the material burden that sanctions alone impose on targets directly. Dependence refers to the relative importance of the resources denied by sanctions to targets in relation to target activities. The cost is classified as high when the measures are implemented and monitored, and when there is a significant correlation between the action of the sender and what happens in the target. For instance, the UN embargo on Iraq, which saw the complete isolation of the country and the interruption of all trade, means a high cost on the target. If the trade structure or the level of discomfort created is reduced to a minimum, as could be considered for a travel ban to Europe, then the cost will be low.

Dependence is classified as high when the target needs specific resources to carry out its policies, such as the case of banning a crucial resource to the economy of a state (e.g. oil for Iraq, diamonds for Liberia, or travelling for the leaders of an independent region). Conversely, if targets do not need the resource denied to

Table 3.6: Direct material impact

		Kinds of evidence (the list is not exhaustive)
Cost	1: low, no cost imposed by sanctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – degree of monitoring – degree of implementation – degree of international cooperation – sector’s share of the economy
	2: medium, partial cost imposed by sanctions	
	3: high, significant cost imposed by sanctions	
Dependence	1: low, no dependency on the resource denied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – relevance of the resource denied – commodity share in the economy – domestic structure of economic benefits – rate of interdependence on the resource denied – short, middle or long term consequences
	2: medium, some dependency on the resource denied	
	3: high, high dependency on the resource denied	

them, as in the case of an arms embargo imposed on a heavily armed group that has multiple suppliers, then dependence is low. Table 3.6 presents a general list of indicators used to determine the degree of direct impact.

The combination of cost and dependence brings about the following classification, illustrated in Table 3.7, for the impact of the measure.

Table 3.7: Degrees of direct material impact

		Dependence		
		1	2	3
Cost	1	Low	Low	Low
	2	Low	Low	High
	3	Low	High	High

To summarise, the two dimensions – feasibility and direct impact – form the determinants for the creation of a taxonomy of sanctions, and Figure 3.1 illustrates the classificatory typology.

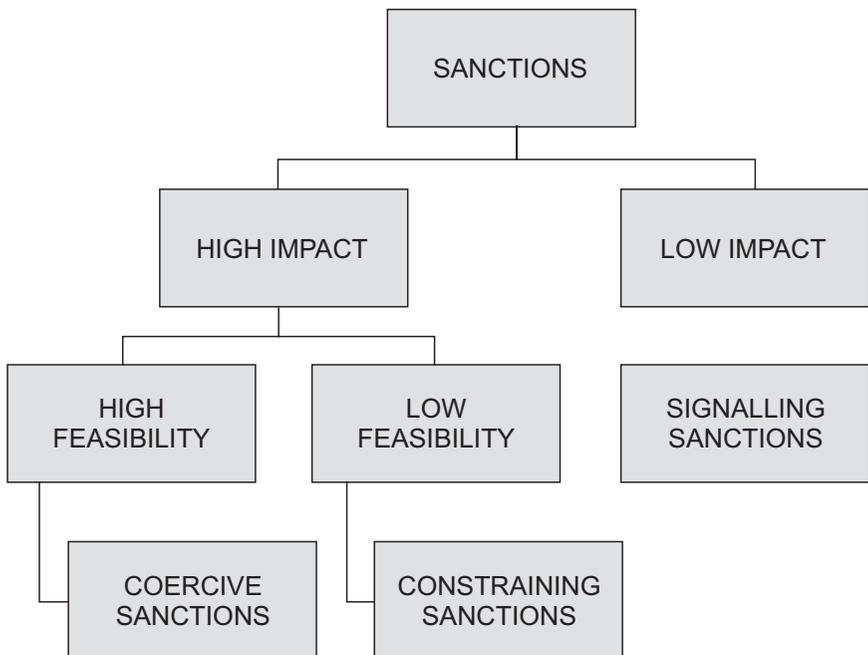


Figure 3.1: Taxonomy of sanctions

The environment: defining the independent variable

Sanctions are not imposed in a vacuum and the context in which they are adopted might influence the logic with which sanctions are expected to work. The ‘system’ of sanctions is defined as the attributes that distinguish one crisis from another and that can create the conditions for one logic to be dominant. The units are the international participants of the international system, which can play the role of senders, targets and audiences. Drawing from the main paradigms of international relations theories, the context of sanctions is characterised by the variables of threat, salience and complexity. These three variables encompass systemic elements of the context and represent an important component of the comprehensive framework.

Threat to sender

The variable ‘threat’ refers to the level of threat identified by the sender. In the anarchical international system, the realists hold that states pursue survival as their most important goal. Thereby, from a Clausewitzian point of view, if sanctions are the continuation of politics by other means, then the higher the level of threat against the sender, the higher will be the commitment of the sender to remove the threat by making sure that targets are no longer dangerous.

The threat to sender is a variable used in the International Crisis Behavior Project (ICB) at the Center for International Development and Conflict Management of the University of Maryland (International Crisis Behavior Project 2008). This variable has been adapted for the purposes of this study and differs slightly from the original definition. In the ICB project, this variable is called ‘gravity of value threat’ and has been defined as ‘the most salient object of threat identified by any of the actors in the crisis’. Here, the relevant actor of the crisis is the sender alone. Another difference lies in the codification of the value threat. The ICB project defines seven levels of threat: economic, limited military damage, political, territorial, influence, grave damage and threat to existence. For the nature of the work, the codification adopted here is dichotomic. Threat will be high when senders have a high interest at stake identified as threat to existence, threat of grave damage, political and economic threat. By low level of threat, it is meant that the sender has a low economic interest at stake and the dispute does not put its survival at risk.

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The indicators for this variable are ‘issue’, ‘extension’ and ‘geostrategy’. Issue refers to the matter that motivates the sender to act or the triggering cause for the imposition of sanctions. The indicator has four possible categorisations⁴: (1) mi-

4. Brecher and James had defined it in a six points scale as economic threat, limited military threat, political threat – threat of overthrow of regime, change of institutions, replacement of elite, intervention in domestic politics, subversion; territorial threat – threat of integration, annexation of part of a state’s territory, separatism; threat to influence in the international system or regional

lieu, (2) economic, (3) political and (4) security threat. A milieu threat is a menace to norms and principles that do not have direct externalities for a sender's possession goals. For instance, human rights or democratic promotion may be included within this category. An economic threat is a menace to the trade of certain commodities that have a special relevance to senders as, for instance, the denial of oil, copper or timber supply may be the threat under which the sender might incur. A political threat is a menace to important pillars of international law, such as violations of non-proliferation treaties, mass violations of human rights or conflicts that have a spill-over effect on other neighbouring countries. Finally, a security threat is a direct menace to the safety of individual and properties of senders like, as for example, the terrorist threat, violations of borders with military means, or large conflicts that endanger the stability of the international order. Not all threats, however, are equal in importance: a security threat is considered the most serious of all, a political threat is less critical than a security threat, but more severe than an economic one, and an economic threat is more serious than a milieu threat. It is important to stress that milieu threat refers to those acts that do not imply economic or political consequences.⁵

The second indicator is the extension of the threat. The higher is the number of subsystem affected by the crisis or involved in the dispute, the more extended is the threat. There are five points in the scale for this indicator: (5) relevant to the global system, (4) relevant to the dominant system and more than one subsystem, (3) relevant to the dominant system and one subsystem, (2) relevant to more than one subsystem, and (1) relevant to one subsystem (Brecher and James 1986: 36). A threat relevant to the global system may be a terrorist threat, while a threat to a subsystem may refer to the situation in Haiti in the early 1990s that was relevant to the American subsystem mostly.

Adapted from Brecher and James, the last indicator is labelled as the 'geostrategy' and it refers to the geopolitical relevance for the senders of the areas where targets operate. This indicator is presented in a four point scale: (4) strong relevance, (3) modest relevance, (2) little relevance and (1) no relevance. Proximity and geopolitical importance are directly related to 'threat' as the higher they are, the higher should the level of danger be for senders. Proximity is deemed more important, therefore a close and strategically-located crisis would be rated as strongly relevant; a close crisis without strategic relevance would be deemed as modestly relevant; a strategically relevant, but distant crisis would have little relevance; and a distant crisis located in no strategic location would be considered with no relevance.⁶

subsystem – threat of declining power in the global system and/or regional subsystem, diplomatic isolation, cessation of patron aid; threat of grave damage – threat of large casualties in war, mass bombings; and threat to existence – threat to survival of population, of genocide, threat to existence of entity, of total annexation, colonial rule, occupation.

5. A milieu threat is different from a possession threat, see (Wolfer 1962).
6. Buzan and Waever talk about 'adjacency is potential for security because many threats travel more easily over short distances than over longer ones. The impact of geographical proximity on security interaction is strongest and more obvious in the military, political, societal, and

The weight of the dimensions is assigned inductively according to a ranking of importance among the indicators. The issue at stake is the most important value because a direct threat to security has the effect of a multiplier of strength in combats,⁷ and it is followed by the geostrategic importance and extension of threat. In brief, the weights will be as following: issue = 3, geostrategy = 2 and extension = 1.

Salience

Salience is the second IV that attempts to depict ‘the degree of importance attached to that issue by the actors involved’ (Diehl 1992: 334). This concept has been widely adopted in the literature on conflicts and it is known as the ‘issues-based approach to world politics’ (Diehl 1992; O’Leary 1976; Mansbach and Vasquez 1981; Vasquez 1993; Hensel 2001). The salience of an issue can be correlated to the level of threat, but it refers to the importance of the crisis for reasons that are not directly linked to the survival of the sender. In other words, a salient crisis may not pose a threat to senders, and a threat may not be salient since salience is not measured in traditional security terms.

A salient crisis is characterised by a high level of media coverage and by the level of engagement of the sender in the crisis. This type of analysis is seldom carried out in the literature, but there is no question that this factor plays a role in influencing international events. As it is for threat and complexity, salience is a dichotomic variable. High salience is a crisis wherein the sender attaches a relevant value to it. Whereas this could coincide with a high threat to security, it can also imply that a crisis undermines or harms an important principle of the international system. For instance, the reaction to mass violations of human rights can raise salience and the expectations that the international community places on certain actors may contribute to it. On the other hand, the remoteness of certain conflicts may contribute to lower the attention and to blend the measures adopted to deal with crises.

Creating the index

The salience of a crisis is measured with two indicators: ‘attention’ and ‘engagement’. The first indicator represents the level of attention that has been devoted to the crisis and is represented by a three-point scale: (3) high attention, (2) moderate attention and (1) little attention. The evidence for the attribution of this indicator comes from the intensity of news coverage of the target of sanctions in the two years preceding the imposition of the sanctions. The coverage of UN episodes was calculated by counting relevant articles in the *Financial Times* and *The New York Times*, while the coverage for EU episodes was evaluated by looking at the

environmental sectors’ (Buzan and Waever 2003: 45).

7. See (O’Leary 1976; Keohane and Nye 1977; Mansbach and Vasquez 1981; Vasquez 1993; Diehl 1992; Brecher 1993).

Financial Times and the *The Economist*. In both cases, the mere presence of the key targets in articles was deemed as sufficient to identify the interest of the international community. Indeed, the mere discussion or inclusion of the actor would not include the attention given only to the crisis, but it would also account for other areas that were affected by events occurring in or caused by the targeted actors.

The second indicator relates to the sender's level of engagement in the dispute. The assumption is that the higher is the commitment, the more salient is the issue for the sender. This indicator has to be treated carefully given that it could happen that the level of engagement is low because of the complexity of the crisis or the lack of agreement among the actors (the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council in the case of the UN, the big states in the case of the EU). The indicator is measured on a three-point scale: (3) high engagement, (2) moderate engagement and (1) no engagement. The evidence for high engagement is military intervention and a large peacekeeping operation. The evidence for moderate engagement is small peacekeeping forces, other types of ground mission or an intense diplomatic activity by providing, for instance, good offices for negotiations. The lack of any above mentioned is classified as no engagement.

The weighted value of the indicators for salience considers the level of news coverage as the most important indicator and it is, therefore, more important to determine the final value of the salience of the issue. Thus, the weight will be attention = 2 and engagement = 1.

Complexity of the dispute

The final of the three variables that define context is the 'complexity of the dispute', which is an index that intends to picture the level of intractability of a crisis. The complexity of a dispute is a system variable that can have an explanatory power in foreign policy as interests can be incompatible; therefore, senders and targets enter into a zero-sum game, in which engagement is discouraged when the chances of winning are high and a tangible interest is at stake. Consequently, sanctions could be imposed to eliminate an enemy, to avoid the intervention in dangerous areas or to pursue some material advantage.

This variable draws from *Crises in World Politics* by Brecher and James, which has been used with adaptation several times in the literature (Brecher and James 1986; Brecher 1993; Colaresi and Thompson 2002; Ben-Yehuda and Mishali-Ram 2003). The original version was composed by six indicators: 'the number of actors, the extent of heterogeneity among them, the range of issues in dispute, its scope of geostrategic salience, the type of superpower/major power involvement, and the level of violence among the crisis adversaries' (Brecher and James 1986:32). This study reduced the indicators and adopted a dichotomic interpretation of this concept. High complexity refers to intractable conflicts characterised by the involvement of many parties, serious levels of violence and resistance to settlement; inversely, low complexity refers to crises with a limited number of actors, little or no violent clashes and marginal violations of international norms.

Creating the index

The indicators for ‘complexity’ have been specified as the ‘number of actors’ involved in the dispute, the ‘level of violence’, the ‘number of issues’ and the ‘target’s strength’.⁸ The number of actors is directly proportional to the complexity of a dispute and it may vary. This indicator will consider the number of relevant actors actively involved in the dispute. The scale goes from 1 to 5 actors (where 5 defined as ‘5 or more’).

The level of violence is an important indicator because of two reasons. First, a violent conflict is likely to occur if a history of conflict precedes it (Walter 2004; Wolfer 1962). Secondly, when a conflict escalates to open violence, the level of trust among the parties fades away and cooperation is more unlikely (Wallenstein 2007). Therefore, the higher the level of violence, the higher the complexity of the conflict. From Brecher (1986), ‘a four-point scale ascends from no violence (1), to limited violence (2), [...] serious clashes short of war (3), to full-scale war (4)’.

The number of issues of a dispute affects its complexity: the more matters are at stake for the actors, the harder it is to find a solution to the dispute. Brecher (1986) says that there are three levels of issue: case, cluster and area. ‘A case issue indicates the focus of a specific crisis, [...] a cluster issue refers to the common theme among related cases, [...] issue-area denotes generic substance, that is, a group of clusters of issues with a shared focus’ (Brecher and James 1986: 39). The cluster can be of a security, political, economic, or cultural type. A crisis over a security issue alone indicates a high level of severity, and a multiple issue conflict has to be treated likewise. Therefore, ‘five points on an issue scale have been generated: (5) three or more issues, (4) two issues, including [...] security, (3) a military-security issue alone, (2) two issues other than [...] security, and (1) one non-security issue’ (Brecher and James 1986: 39).

The last indicator is a target’s strength. The assumption is that the size of the target affects the complexity of the dispute. For instance, during the Cold War, the United States resorted several times to sanctions against the Soviet Union, but the strength of the target had an impact on the effectiveness of the measures. The kinds of evidence required are the economic strength (the GDP in case of states, qualitative analyses in case of individuals or entities) and the level of assistance that target enjoys. Target’s strength is a three-point scale indicator: (3) strong target, (2) moderately strong target, and (1) weak target.

The level of violence is the most important indicator for the complexity of the issue. The strength of targets is also important, given that the stronger is the target, the lower is the leverage that senders have on them. Issues and number of actors have a lower rate of importance, but still relevant because the matter at stake determines the cost tolerance of the parties, while a high number of actors reduces the margins for agreements that can satisfy every actor of the crisis. Hence, the weights are set as follows: issue = 2, number of actors = 1, violence = 4, and target strength = 3.

8. Four out of five indicators come from Brecher and James (1986).

To summarise, Table 3.8 presents the three IVs and the indicators that have been used to measure them.

The three IVs are operationalised through the creation of indexes, which allow for the consideration of weighted multiple factors, thus cross-case comparisons become possible. The indexes are expressed in standardised values from 0 to 1 and they are codified as ‘high’ for values equal to or higher than 0.5, while they are ‘low’ for values lower than 0.5. The indicators for the variables have been selected inductively and are by no means definitive, so that eventual integration or alternative elements can be added in future studies. However, the current indexes represent a good indication of the trends of the studied phenomena.

The hypotheses of the research: a general overview

The theoretical framework formulated here should allow us to reason about the most likely logic of sanctions in relations to their context. There are two types of hypotheses that can be elaborated. The first type is more general and links the expectations of one specific outcome to each IV. The second type of expected association is more detailed and relates particular combinations of IVs to a more likely outcome.

In general terms, the variable threat should lead senders to reduce the level of danger by convincing the target to change behaviour or, alternatively, to limit the policy options of the target towards less dangerous conducts. The idea is that a high threat would motivate senders to focus on their more immediate interests defined in conventional terms (i.e. security) and to aim at removing the threat by changing the behaviour of targets. Thus, if threat is high, then it is more likely that senders adopt either coercive or constraining measures; contrarily, if threat is low, then it is more likely that senders impose signalling sanctions.

The variable salience refers to a specific pressure on senders to act, but with a fuzzy understanding of what the target has to do. The pressure can be societal, in which case the requests would be formulated not on specific issues that constitute a threat to the sender, but it would rather be based on normative stands that are difficult to implement and often incompatible with real world events. Alternatively, the pressures can also lead senders to compromise between the realist principle of non-intervention in case of low probability of success, and the need to satisfy the demands that originate from the lobbies or audiences by acting with the ambition to reduce tensions or conflict thresholds. The hypothesis is that the salience of an issue affects the actions of senders in a different way than threat does. Thereby, if salience is high, then senders are more likely to attempt either to modify the behaviour of the target or to react to violations of international norms with either coercing or constraining sanctions. On the contrary, if salience is low, then senders are more likely to impose sanctions that do not imply high costs to bear, namely signalling measures.

This leads to the final general expected association as when a crisis is complicated, then it is more difficult to require specific actions from targets, which would be more interested in how they can secure their survival. Thus, it would be more

Table 3.8: Independent variables

Independent variables	Definition	Levels	Indicators	Values	Weights
Threat (THREAT)	This variable identifies the level of threat identified by the sender in the crisis	High	issue	$1 \geq x \geq 4$	3
		Low	extension	$1 \geq x \geq 5$	1
			geostrategy	$1 \geq x \geq 4$	2
Salience (SALIENCE)	The degree of importance that the sender attaches to a crisis	High	level of	$1 \geq x \geq 3$	2
		Low	attention level of engagement	$1 \geq x \geq 3$	1
Complexity of the dispute (COMPLEXITY)	This variable identifies the complexity of the dispute either between senders and targets or among third actors that the sender would like to interact with	High	number of	$1 \geq x \geq 5$	1
		Low	actors	$1 \geq x \geq 4$	4
			violence	$1 \geq x \geq 5$	2
			issue target strength	$1 \geq x \geq 3$	3

likely that senders attempt to stabilise the situations with general demands to all the parties to respect certain standards or, alternatively, to limit what specific actors of the crisis can do. Hence, if complexity is high, then senders are more likely to resort to constraining or signalling sanctions as they cannot modify the behaviour of targets (coercion) or they do not want to commit to a situation where they would have to pay a high cost (constrain). Contrarily, if complexity is low, then coercing or signalling sanctions become more likely. Thus, six hypotheses are formulated in Table 3.9.

The dichotomic operationalisation of the IVs determines eight different possible scenarios as presented in Table 3.10, but four specific hypotheses can be formulated as in Table 3.11. The first one is that when threat and complexity are high, then sanctions are more likely to be of a constraining type (rows 1 and 2 in Table 3.10). The reasoning is simple: senders would like to change the behaviour of targets, but they cannot. Therefore, they attempt to limit the alternatives available to them. The second expected association emerges consequentially, namely that when threat is high but complexity is low, then coercive sanctions become more likely (rows 3 and 7 in Table 3.10). The third reasoning is that when threat