# 1 Introduction

## A tale of two cases

On August 6, 1990, the United Nations Security Council voted to impose multilateral economic sanctions against Iraq in response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. By any conventional measure, these sanctions achieved the greatest degree of international cooperation in modern history. Iraq suffered damages equal to roughly half its pre-war gross national product, a cost far outweighing any other sanctions attempt in this century. Despite the severe economic dislocations suffered by the Iraqi regime, it refused to surrender any Kuwaiti territory. Ignoring claims that the sanctions would have worked with time, the US-led coalition decided to retake Kuwait through military force. On April 3, 1991, the Security Council voted to extend the sanctions regime until Iraq complied with additional demands to reveal its weapons of mass destruction program, recognize the border with Kuwait, and pay reparations. An unstated but desired demand was the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. Iraq has labored under the UN sanctions regime for eight years. As a result, infant mortality rates have increased sevenfold, annual inflation rose to over 4,000 percent, and per capita income has fallen to less than half pre-war levels. In the face of continued economic losses and bellicose US rhetoric, the Iraqi regime has only acquiesced to UN demands when additional military threats have been made. On every issue area, when the only pressure is economic sanctions, Iraq has not budged. Domestically, Saddam's regime shows no signs of falling; if anything, the sanctions regime has strengthened it. Despite the most potent sanctions in history, economic coercion has failed to produce any significant Iraqi concessions.<sup>1</sup>

In late August 1991, the United States was trying to cajole all the relevant players in the Middle East into a multilateral peace conference in Madrid. A blocking point was the Israeli construction of new housing in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli government of Yitzhak Shamir sought to acquire US-ensured financing to cover additional expenses. The Bush administration responded by delaying and then refusing to grant \$10 billion in loan guarantees until the Israelis froze the building of all new settlements in the territories. Shamir agreed to the delay before the Madrid peace conference, but refused to concede on the issue of new housing. US Secretary of State James Baker told the Israeli government that the loan guarantees were conditional on the freeze in housing construction in the occupied territories. With Shamir reluctant to yield, Washington used economic pressure to force a change in government. US and Israeli authorities agree that Shamir's refusal to concede cost him and his Likud party the June 1992 elections. In August of 1992, the new Labor government, led by Yitzhak Rabin, acquiesced to the US terms and agreed to freeze the building of all new settlements in return for the loan guarantees. Shamir's Defense Minister and campaign manager later described the episode as an unprecedented example of US interference in Israeli domestic politics.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the Israeli government acquiesced to US economic pressure, paving the way for the historic 1993 accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Although the Iraqi case has been the focus of more attention, both episodes are examples of economic coercion. I define economic coercion as the threat or act by a nation-state or coalition of nation-states, called the *sender*, to disrupt economic exchange with another nation-state, called the *target*, unless the targeted country acquiesces to an articulated political demand. The disrupted exchange could include

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott (1990a), pp. 283–98 on the pre-war UN sanctions. On the postwar sanctions regime and its effect on Iraq's population, see Reuther (1995) and the *Economist*, "Iraq: more medicine please," March 7, 1998. On how the sanctions have strengthened Hussein's grip on power, see "CIA says Saddam Hussein emerged stronger," *Boston Globe*, September 20, 1996, p. A2, and Robert Wright and John Daniszewski, "Hussein may be main beneficiary of UN aid effort," *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1998, p. A1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Arens (1995), pp. 1, 301. See Baker (1995), pp. 540-57, for the US take on the episode.

trade sanctions, boycotts, aid suspensions, freezing of financial assets, or the manipulation of tariff rates. $^3$ 

The two cases suggest several puzzles that need to be addressed. First, why did unilateral US pressure on Israel succeed where multilateral UN pressure on Iraq failed? The existing explanations about economic coercion are of little use. Experts predicted that the sanctions against Iraq would be successful. The case had all the attributes traditionally associated with successful sanctions: the target incurred significant economic damage; the sanctions effort was backed by an international institution; all major trading partners cooperated with the UN resolutions; and the threat of military force behind the sanctions effort was clearly signaled. Yet the coalition leaders believed that economic statecraft would not be enough to extract the desired concessions; sanctions failed to achieve their goals without the additional use of force. By contrast, the Israeli case involved unilateral sanctions that imposed smaller though still significant costs on the target and no threat of military force. Unlike the Iraqi case, Congress was reluctant to threaten economic coercion, and in taking action President Bush incurred the wrath of the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee, one of the most powerful foreign policy lobbies in the United States. Despite all this, coercion was still successful. What accounts for the extent of the target country's concessions?

A second, less obvious, question is what prompts the initial attempt at economic coercion? In both cases, the target governments had taken actions that conflicted with the policy preferences of the United States. While that is clearly part of the answer, it fails to explain why the United States chose to use economic coercion as its preferred policy option. It could have done nothing; it could have tried traditional diplomacy; it could have offered economic inducements; it could have responded with immediate military intervention. Indeed, in the Iraqi case, the United States eventually showed a preference to use force

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> I will use the terms economic coercion, economic statecraft, and economic sanctions interchangeably in the interest of style, but they are technically different. Economic statecraft includes the use of inducements as well as sanctions. In the public perception, economic sanctions are associated with trade-disrupting measures. The definition of economic coercion includes cases of economic sanctions such as those against Iraq, but it also includes episodes such as the Israeli one, which is not commonly thought of as a sanctions case.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Gary Hufbauer and Jeffrey Schott testified before Congress in December 1990 that sanctions would compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, although it could take more than a year. See Pape (1997), n. 3.

instead of relying on economic coercion. In the Israeli case, it could have offered a carrot, as it had done in the past. How do senders choose among their policy options in an international crisis? Under what conditions will a sender attempt economic coercion?

### The argument

This book is about the role of economic coercion in international relations. It creates a model to explain the behavior of senders and targets by taking into account their opportunity costs of deadlock and expectation of future conflict with each other. Coercion alters the allocation of benefits by imposing costs on both the sender and target countries. The short-run costs of sanctions imposition are important to the target and sender, but they are not the only factor. Conceding in the face of economic coercion implies a redistribution of political assets between the target and sender. Nation-states care about this redistribution if they think it will harm their bargaining position in future conflicts. This expectation of future conflict is translated into a short-run concern for relative gains and reputation that varies with the expectation of future threats or conflicts in the bilateral relationship between the sender and target.

The expectation of future conflict has a contradictory effect on economic coercion. On the one hand, it makes senders more willing to threaten economic sanctions. The greater the concern for relative gains and reputation, the more likely the sender will prefer a "stalemate" or "deadlock" outcome of disrupted economic exchange and attempt to coerce. *Ceteris paribus*, senders will be eager to coerce adversaries, and reluctant to coerce allies.

The sender's enthusiasm does not translate into greater concessions. The second effect of conflict expectations is paradoxical and surprising. While a robust anticipation of future disputes might make the sender prefer a coercive strategy, it also reduces its ability to obtain concessions. The target's conflict expectations determine the magnitude of concessions. Facing an adversarial sender, the target will be worried about the long-run implications of acquiescing. Because it expects frequent conflicts, the target will be concerned about any concessions in the present undercutting its bargaining position in future interactions. The sender might exploit the material or reputation effects from these concessions in later conflicts. When relative-gains concern is prominent, a concession represents a gain for the coercer

Table 1.1. The predicted	! pattern of	economic	coercion
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	Minimal conflict expectations	Heightened conflict expectations
Large gap in costs	Significant concessions	Moderate concessions
Small gap in costs	No coercion attempt	Minor concessions

and a loss for the coerced. When reputation is important, acquiescence bolsters the sender's credibility as a tough negotiator while weakening the target's reputation. With allies, this concern is less prominent, because the target anticipates fewer zero-sum conflicts. *Ceteris paribus*, targets will concede more to allies than adversaries. Ironically, a sender will obtain the most favorable distribution of payoffs when it cares the least about the relative distribution of gains.

Table 1.1 summarizes the predictions of a conflict expectations model. Between adversaries, senders will be more willing to sanction, even if a target's costs of deadlock are only slightly greater than the sender's own costs. Despite these preferences, it will not be able to extract significant concessions from the coercion attempt. Because the target is also concerned with the future implications of backing down, any concession is a double blow; not only does it lose in the short run, it grants the sender greater leverage in future disputes. While the presence of conflict expectations might make the sanctioner prefer deadlock, it also makes acquiescence less palatable to the sanctioned. Thus, between adversaries, I expect to see sanctions that are frequently costly to the sender and produce only marginal concessions.

Between allies, the sender will be unwilling to threaten economic coercion unless the gap in the costs of sanctions imposition is large. The target's costs of deadlock must be significant and the sender's own costs must be small for the sender to prefer a coercion attempt. Once this threshold is met, however, economic sanctions will be fruitful. Because the target does not anticipate many future conflicts, it will care less about the material and reputational implications of conceding, and more about the immediate costs and benefits. It will

concede more to avoid the costs of deadlock. Thus, between allies, I expect to see sanctions that are less costly to the sender, with more productive results.

A conflict expectations model can explain the dynamics of economic coercion with more accuracy and parsimony than any existing explanation. A problem with the existing literature is that it has focused too much on the most publicized cases of economic sanctions, which usually involve adversaries. Because of this sample bias, alternative explanations overlook less contentious but more successful coercion attempts between allies. In focusing on a limited subset of coercion cases, these writings have painted a distorted picture of economic sanctions. These arguments are not necessarily wrong, but their effects are much smaller than their proponents claim. In contrast to a conflict expectations model, they explain fewer cases, and less of the variation in outcomes.

## Why economic coercion matters

Why should anyone care about economic statecraft? Two reasons, one for the pragmatist and one for the theorist. The practical reason is that the incidence of economic sanctions has multiplied since the end of the cold war, without a similar increase in policy analysis. The esoteric reason is that an examination of economic statecraft can illuminate the nature of power in international relations.

The use of economic statecraft in international relations has a long pedigree. The Athenian boycott of Megara helped to trigger the Peloponnesian war. The trading empires of Venice, Portugal, and the Netherlands used economic warfare to limit the power of their rivals. Early Anglo-American relations were consumed with issues of economic diplomacy; a chief complaint in the Declaration of Independence is the "Cutting off our Trade with all Parts of the World." Woodrow Wilson believed that the "economic, peaceful, silent deadly remedy" of economic sanctions could be used by the League of Nations to police international society. Nazi Germany was particularly aggressive at cultivating economic dependency from its eastern European neighbors. The US embargo of Japan in the late 1930s contributed to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> On the Athenian boycott, see Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, p. 73; Ellings (1985), pp. 17–18, and HSE (1990a), pp. 4–5. On the uses of economic coercion

The end of the cold war has sparked a renaissance in the use of economic statecraft. The United States has been the most prominent and prolific actor to employ economic coercion. The National Association of Manufacturers asserts that between 1992 and 1996 the United States imposed or threatened economic sanctions sixty times against thirty-five different countries, affecting 42 percent of the world's population. These sanctions are estimated to exact an annual cost of close to \$20 billion in lost exports. Richard Haass, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, goes further, observing: "What is noteworthy... is not just the frequency with which sanctions are used but their centrality; economic sanctions are increasingly at the core of US foreign policy."

The United States is the most noticeable actor employing economic statecraft; it is hardly the only one. The United Nations Security Council implemented sanctions seven times in 1994 alone, as opposed to mandating sanctions only twice in its first forty-five years. The Russian Federation has employed economic coercion as a way of extracting political concessions from the Baltic republics and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Lesser powers such as Greece, Turkey, and Nigeria have used economic coercion as an element of their regional foreign policies. Even non-state actors are employing this tool. In December 1996, De Beers threatened to boycott all purchases of Russian diamonds unless the government acquiesced to granting the South African company monopoly control over its raw diamond exports.

There is every reason to believe that the prominence of economic coercion will increase in the future. Over the course of the past century, major powers have been increasingly reluctant to use or threaten force, while at the same time demonstrating a growing eagerness to employ economic coercion.<sup>11</sup> Bosnia, Chechnya, and Somalia have highlighted the costs of military intervention for the

between 1400 and 1800, see Ellings (1985), pp. 18–21 and Irwin (1991). On the Anglo-American economic warfare, see Renwick (1981), chapter 1. For Wilson's belief in the power of economic sanctions, see Daoudi and Dajani (1983), p. 26; for cases of League of Nations sanctions, see Doxey (1980), chapter 4. Hirschman (1945) provides the best account of Nazi economic statecraft in the 1930s. The US embargo of Japan is discussed in HSE (1990b), pp. 53–61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Schlesinger (1997), p. 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Hufbauer, Elliott, Cyrus, and Winston (1997).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Haass (1997), p. 74. <sup>9</sup> Pape (1997).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> OMRI Daily Digest, "De Beers issues ultimatum to Russia," December 19, 1996.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Pollins (1994).

great powers. Unless the use of force is quick and successful, militarized disputes sap a nation's resources and create a domestic political backlash against the sender government. As public resistance to military interventions increases, and as foreign aid budgets are slashed, policy-makers are turning more and more to economic coercion as an attractive substitute to advance the national interest.<sup>12</sup>

With the increased popularity of this policy tool comes the need for a better understanding of how it works. Analyzing foreign policy is like honing a knife. A sharper knife makes a cleaner cut; a well-understood policy option makes for well-executed policies. However, as the next section will show, the existing literature is of limited use to policy-makers. Most of the scholarly and policy discussions of economic sanctions consist of debates about high-profile cases. Policy-makers have a disturbing tendency to ignore explicit theory but to use analogies to celebrated cases as a poor substitute. A clear model of coercion can provide statesmen with a strategic knowledge that, combined with their knowledge of the specific dispute, allows them to bridge the gap between theory and policy.<sup>13</sup>

The second reason for studying economic coercion is to address the relationship between power and interdependence. Power is the currency of world politics. International relations theorists have always appreciated the power of the sword, but disagree about the importance, utility, and definition of economic power. Modern realism developed in reaction to the Wilsonian faith in economic power to regulate international politics. Not surprisingly, realists tend to denigrate the utility of economic statecraft. Neoliberal institutionalism developed in reaction to the realist paradigm; neoliberals believe that economic interdependence can affect the behavior of nation-states for the better.<sup>14</sup>

This debate is not trivial. If economic sanctions are a potent tool of diplomacy, then world politics can be much less violent than it was in the past. Neoliberals argue that increased interdependence in the modern world will cause states to act in a more cooperative fashion, because it increases the costs of defection. The prisoner's dilemma shows the importance of sanctions to neoliberals. In a world full of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Rogers (1996). <sup>13</sup> George (1993).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Keohane and Nye (1978).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> This is not meant to imply that economic coercion has no human costs. The UN sanctions imposed against Iraq have had a serious humanitarian impact on that nation's citizenry. See Lopez and Cortright (1997) and Buck, Gallant, and Nossal (1998).

prisoner's dilemmas, states will go it alone unless they expect to be punished for defecting. Increased levels of economic interdependence, it is argued, make punitive but peaceful strategies possible in a number of different arenas. Joseph Nye notes, "Interdependence does not mean harmony. Rather, it often means unevenly balanced mutual dependence. Just as the less enamored of the two lovers may manipulate the other, the less vulnerable of two states may use subtle threats to their relationship as a source of power." For cooperation to be a stable outcome, countries must believe that it is best to avoid being the target of sanctions.<sup>17</sup> Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane note: "When sanctioning problems are severe, cooperation is in danger of collapse ... To explain the incidence and severity of sanctioning problems, we need to focus on the conditions that determine whether defection can be prevented through decentralized retaliation."18 Axelrod and Keohane use the term "sanctions" to mean a variety of punitive measures, but economic coercion would certainly be a prominent example.

Neoliberals assume that potent economic sanctions provide an incentive for cooperation. That assumption cannot go unexamined. If neoliberals are correct, then it is possible for the power of the sword to be trumped by the power of gold. If they are not correct, then states may blunder into war because their faith in economic statecraft is misplaced, and the description of the world as a manageable prisoner's dilemma is inaccurate. The better we understand the dynamics of economic coercion, the better we can evaluate the effect of interdependence on international interactions.

#### The literature

In 1945, Albert Hirschman argued in *National Power and the Structure* of Foreign Trade that great powers could use economic coercion to extract concessions from weaker states. Hirschman's analysis capped two decades of writings that thought of economic coercion as a potent diplomatic tool.<sup>19</sup> That belief faded quickly with the onset of the cold

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Nye (1990), p. 158. See also Crawford (1994).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> See Oye (1986), Axelrod (1984), Rosecrance (1986), and Buzan (1984).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Axelrod and Keohane (1986), p. 236.

 $<sup>^{19}</sup>$  Hirschman (1945); Daoudi and Dajani (1983). See Wagner (1988) for a sophisticated evaluation of Hirschman's approach.

war. Since then, pundits and policy-makers have disparaged the use of sanctions in foreign policy:<sup>20</sup>

George Kennan: "There have been suggestions that we should with-hold m.f.n. treatment, and indeed discourage trade itself, as a means of extorting political concessions generally... This idea seems to me to be quite unsound; it is in any case impracticable."

Richard Nixon: "Some people think of economic leverage as the punitive use of economic sanctions, with highly publicized conditions set for their removal. This is highly ineffective, and sometimes counterproductive."

George Shultz: "As a general proposition, I think the use of trade sanctions as an instrument of diplomacy is a bad idea ... Our using it here, there and elsewhere to try to affect some other country's behavior... basically has not worked."

Milton Friedman: "All in all, economic sanctions are not an effective weapon of political warfare."

Time: "Economic sanctions have rarely been successful."

*US News and World Report*: "The problem with sanctions is that, more often than not, they fail to achieve results."

Far Eastern Economic Review: "Of the many arguments against economic sanctions, we have always found the most persuasive is the simplest: they don't work."<sup>21</sup>

This disdain mirrors the scholarly community's consensus about sanctions. David Baldwin, who provides the most authoritative survey of prior work, observes, "The two most salient characteristics of the literature on economic statecraft are scarcity and the nearly universal tendency to denigrate the utility of such tools of foreign policy." A first cut of this literature would seem to confirm this assessment. Consider the following statements:

Johan Galtung: "In this article the conclusion about the probable effectiveness of economic sanctions is, generally, negative."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Even Hollywood is derisive; in the 1997 movie Air Force One, Harrison Ford, playing the President, denounces a policy of applying economic sanctions to terrorist states as "cowardly."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Nixon, Shultz, Friedman, and *Time* quotations from Daoudi and Dajani (1983), pp. 47, 184–7; Kennan (1977), p. 220; *US News and World Report,* "Sanctions: the pluses and minuses," October 31, 1994, p. 58; *Far Eastern Economic Review,* "Sanctioning Burma," May 8, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Baldwin (1985), p. 51.

Peter Wallensteen: "[T]he general picture of the sanctions is that they are highly unsuccessful in bringing about the compliance desired."

Henry Bienen and Robert Gilpin: "With very few exceptions and under highly unusual sets of circumstances, economic sanctions have historically proven to be an ineffective means to achieve foreign policy objectives."

Margaret Doxey: "The record of international sanctions of a non-military kind, even when applied within an organizational framework, suggests that on their own they will not succeed in drastically altering the foreign or domestic policy of the target."

Makio Miyagawa: "Notwithstanding such serious impacts upon the target countries, economic sanctions have only rarely achieved the declared goals."

Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes: "When economic sanctions are used, they tend to be leaky. Results are slow and not particularly conducive to changing behavior."

Robert Pape: "[E]conomic sanctions have little independent usefulness for [the] pursuit of noneconomic goals."<sup>23</sup>

These are strong statements from a profession accustomed to hedging.

A second cut at the literature reveals two distinct strains of analysis of the sanctions issue. One set of explanations, the domestic politics approach, focuses on the politics within the sender and target countries. The decision to initiate sanctions is caused by the domestic pressure within the sender country. The outcome of a sanctions effort will most likely be failure because of the domestic politics within the target country. The second set of arguments, the signaling approach, focuses on systemic variables to explain why economic coercion is often imposed but rarely profitable.

According to the domestic politics approach, if the target country's behavior violates international norms, citizens in sender countries will feel compelled to "do something." Even if the foreign policy leader agrees with public opinion, the costs of effective military intervention may be too high. On the other hand, the domestic political costs of doing nothing are substantial, because it creates the image of a weak leader. The lack of options leaves the sender regime hamstrung.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Galtung (1967), p. 409; Wallensteen (1968), pp. 249–50; Bienen and Gilpin (1980), p. 89; Doxey (1987), p. 92; Miyagawa (1992), p. 206; Chayes and Chayes (1995), p. 2; Pape (1997), p. 93. For other pessimistic observations, see Knorr (1975), pp. 205–6; von Amerongen (1980), p. 165; Blessing (1981), p. 533; Willett and Jalalighajar (1983), p. 718; Lindsay (1986), p. 154; Hendrickson (1994), pp. 22–3; Barber (1995), p. 29.

Senders will turn to economic statecraft as an imperfect substitute for forceful action. Economic coercion can deflect domestic pressure and register the sender regime's disapproval of the target's actions without going to war. The sanctions themselves might be ineffective, but their implementation allows the foreign policy leader to avoid accusations of do-nothing leadership.

Many authors have proposed all or part of this rationale. James Barber observes: "The purpose of sanctions here is to demonstrate a willingness and capacity to act. Negatively, the purpose may simply be to anticipate or deflect criticism."<sup>24</sup> M. S. Daoudi and M. S. Dajani concur: "The imposition of sanctions absorbs the initial public reaction that something needs to be done."<sup>25</sup> Ivan Eland concludes:

Bluntly stated, most of the times a nation imposes sanctions on another country, it has few policy options. The target nation usually has committed an unacceptable act and intense domestic pressure, particularly in democratic states, to "do something" can persuade the government in the sanctioning nation to respond by imposing sanctions to meet goals other than target compliance."<sup>26</sup>

The literature is rife with assertions like these.<sup>27</sup> From a foreign policy perspective, rational calculation plays a limited role; from a domestic politics perspective, economic statecraft serves as a steam valve to relieve governments from the pressure of their populace. In this explanation, sanctions are symbols; their effectiveness is of secondary concern.

Domestic-level explanations provide three factors working against the utility of economic coercion. First, given the causes of sanctions imposition, their implementation will be erratic and haphazard. Thus, the target country may not be inconvenienced at all. Second, even if the sanctions are potent, target governments can use the specter of international coercion to create a "rally-round-the-flag" effect. Domestic groups line up behind the government in reaction to an external threat. To do otherwise would smack of disloyalty. There are psychological factors which reinforce this effect. Johan Galtung's study of Rhodesia noted that the mutual sacrifices created by the sanctions led

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Barber (1979), p. 380.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Daoudi and Dajani (1983), p. 161.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Eland (1995), p. 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> See Renwick (1981), p. 85; Schreiber (1973), p. 413; Hoffman (1967), p. 154; Daoudi and Dajani (1983), appendix II; Haass (1998).

to an  $\it esprit de \it corps$  among the citizenry and a closer identification with the government.  $^{28}$ 

The third reason is that target governments may, for domestic reasons, prefer to be sanctioned. In the long run, sanctions hurt the trade-oriented sectors of the economy by depriving them of income. At the same time, an embargo strengthens import-substitution sectors by giving them rent-seeking opportunities. Since export sectors will prefer the target government to acquiesce, a lengthy sanctions dispute can politically weaken the foreign policy leader's domestic opponents. This is particularly true if the target regime is authoritarian. Sanctions permit target regimes to strengthen state control over the economy, and readjust the impact of sanctions policies away from its most powerful supporters. For example, when the UK-led coalition imposed sanctions against Rhodesia, household incomes for black families fell, while white incomes rose. Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic used the United Nations embargo to reward crony enterprises with scarce goods, while punishing his political rivals. United Nations aid to Iraq has freed up funds for Saddam Hussein to reward his inner elite.<sup>29</sup>

For economic coercion to work, target elites must suffer as much as target populations. Case studies of Uganda have shown that the sanctions to remove Idi Amin became more effective when Great Britain halted the export of luxury goods. This hurt the Ugandan army elite, which relied on the "whiskey runs" for creature comforts. Accounts of the sanctions against Haiti after 1990 revealed that the Haitian military regime was willing to negotiate only after the Clinton administration prevented the Haitian armed forces from acquiring oil or weapons on the global market.<sup>30</sup>

The half-hearted motivations of sender governments, combined with backlash effects within the target country, make it extremely difficult for economic sanctions to generate concessions. A domestic politics approach produces several hypotheses, as seen in Table 1.2. Sanctions are more likely to be initiated when the sender is a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Galtung (1967).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> On Rhodesia, see Losman (1979), pp. 112–13, and Rowe (1993). On Serbia, see Woodward (1995), p. 148 and Licht (1995), p. 158. On Iraq, see Wright and Daniszewski, "Hussein may be main beneficiary of UN aid effort," p. A1, and more generally, Reuther (1995), pp. 125–7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> On Uganda, see Miller (1980), p. 124, and Ullman (1978), pp. 532–3; on Haiti, see Werleigh (1995), p. 168. More generally, see Morgan and Schwebach (1996).

Table 1.2. Existing approaches to economic coercion

	Domestic politics	Signaling	
Causes of coercion attempt	1. Domestic pressure on the sender regime	1. Desire to signal future actions	
	2. Lack of palatable alternatives		
Causes of coercion outcome	1. Ability of target regime to use sanctions to its own political advantage	1. Cost of the signal to the sender	
		2. Implicit threats of power projection or military force	
		3. Ability of the sender country to attract multilateral cooperation	
Coercion is more likely to be attempted if:	1. The potential sender is a democracy	1. No predicted pattern	
	2. The target is geographically distant from the sender		
Coercion is more likely to generate concessions if:	1. The target regime is domestically unstable	1. The sanctions are costly to the sender	
	2. Sanctions hurt the target elites as much as	2. Military force is also threatened or used	
	the general population	3. The sender attracts international cooperation	

democracy. Public opinion to do something should resonate more with foreign policy leaders facing electoral pressures. It is also argued that sanctions will be used primarily when the sender cannot use more persuasive means of statecraft. Therefore, states will use economic coercion when the costs of military intervention are too great. If the target is physically distant, power projection becomes a more difficult enterprise, and sanctions are therefore more likely.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> This hypothesis does not test domestic-level variables, but still comes from a domestic-level approach. An implicit assumption of this level of analysis is that international factors constrain the sender regime from acting more forcefully. Therefore, this hypothesis must be true for domestic factors to have an appreciable effect.

Two predictions can also be made about the likelihood of sanctions success. First, if the target government is domestically unstable, it may lack the means to convert a sanctions dispute into political support. Such a government would be more likely to acquiesce so as to hold on to power, or be removed in favor of those who prefer accommodation. Second, if target elites are made to suffer as much as target populations, there is no opportunity for rent-seeking, which puts elite pressure on the target government to concede.

The signaling approach to economic statecraft has little to say about the initiation of sanctions, but pays more attention to variables affecting the outcome. Two factors are frequently cited. The first is the background assumption that without a high degree of international cooperation, sanctions are useless. International trade theory suggests that for a homogeneous good with a high substitution elasticity, only a sender coalition responsible for more than half the supply of that good can influence the terms of trade.<sup>32</sup> Few individual sender countries have this capability, and when they do it is usually ephemeral. Therefore, for sanctions to have any influence, international cooperation is necessary. This explains the overwhelming focus in the literature on multilateral cases of economic coercion. Obtaining international cooperation is exceedingly difficult, however.<sup>33</sup> As more countries join in the coercion attempt, the sanctions coalition gets more unwieldy. There is a greater incentive for individual countries to free ride, permit illicit trade, and pocket increased profits.<sup>34</sup> Because of the difficulties in sustaining multilateral cooperation, the signaling approach is skeptical about the prospect of economic coercion succeeding on its own merits.

While sanctions rarely generate concessions, they can function as effective signals. This argument rests on the assumption that states conduct foreign policy in a world of imperfect information. If states are uninformed about other states' preferences, there is always an incentive to bluff in international crises. For example, if the United

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Gardner and Kimbrough (1990).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> See Bayard, Pelzman, and Perez-Lopez (1980), Doxey (1980, 1987), Martin (1992), Mastanduno (1992), Mansfield (1995), Kaempfer and Lowenberg (1997), and Drezner (1998) for more on cooperation and economic sanctions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Even if states nominally comply with multilateral sanctions, individual firms may be tempted. This was certainly the case with Yugoslavia's neighbors in the early 1990s. See Raymond Bonner, "How sanctions bit Serbia's neighbors," *New York Times*, November 19, 1995, section 4, p. 3.

States threatens to use force against a target country and the target acquiesces, it has won without having to carry out its threat. The possibility of a costless victory creates an incentive to make even empty threats. Unless the target country knows the extent of US willingness to use force, it will have difficulty distinguishing between a credible threat and cheap talk.

Because of imperfect information, states frequently engage in signaling techniques to demonstrate credibility. Some acts, such as the mobilization of troops, can signal that rhetoric will be translated into action if the sender's demands are not met. Economic sanctions can be thought of as another type of signal. The key to a successful signal is to take an action that will separate credible threats from cheap talk. For this reason, a costly signal is better than a cheap signal. If a signal is costly, a bluffing sender is less likely to use it because of its price.<sup>35</sup>

According to this argument, economic sanctions are ineffective as coercive tools, but may be useful as signals. Their value as a signal comes not from the damage inflicted on the target, but the cost to the sender. David Baldwin notes in *Economic Statecraft*: "Other things being equal, it is always desirable to minimize costs; but other things are not equal. The selection of a costly method of conveying a signal may add credibility to the signal. Thus, a statesman interested in demonstrating resolve may want to avoid the less expensive means of communication." In a world of cloudy signals, policies that prove costly to the sender can be an excellent means of conveying information.

Lisa Martin makes a similar argument about the relationship between the sender's costs and acquiring multilateral cooperation for sanctions. She observes that potential allies in the sanctioning effort need to be convinced of the sender's commitment. Costly sanctions by a great power can convince other states to join in the sanctioning effort; the high costs act as a signal of the great power's seriousness of intent.<sup>37</sup> Thus, a costly signal of sanctions helps to send a credible signal to other possible senders as well as the target.

Note the implicit argument that runs through this entire line of reasoning. According to this logic, unilateral economic sanctions cannot work on their own. They are only effective if they act as a signal that stronger measures, like multilateral embargoes or military

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Schelling (1960), Fearon (1994).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Baldwin (1985), p. 372. <sup>37</sup> Martin (1992), pp. 36–8.

intervention, will be taken in the future. The causal argument in this school of thought is that what appears to be a sanctions success is actually the product of an implicit military threat. Sanctions, therefore, are not a true cause of concessions, but merely an observable signal of military power.<sup>38</sup>

This logic is consistent with empirical claims that the few successes ascribed to economic coercion are really examples of successful military threats.<sup>39</sup> Recent examples also provide support. US sanctions against Haiti from 1990 to 1994 were successful in removing the military junta in power and reinstalling Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president. Through the fog of history, it would be easy for future scholars to argue that the sanctions caused the outcome. That would obviously overlook the crucial role of the US military threat. The Haitian leadership acquiesced when they were told by American negotiators that the US 82nd Airborne Division was on its way. Sanctions may have assisted in the return of Aristide, but the chief cause was the threat of force.

Table 1.2 shows the empirical tests that can be derived from a signaling explanations. There are clear hypotheses about the likelihood of sanctions success. First, if the sender incurs significant costs in its sanctions attempt, the credible signal is more likely to produce concessions. If the signal fails to work, then economic coercion will only work if it is associated with companion policies that genuinely produce concessions. Multilateral cooperation in the sanctions effort is expected to generate concessions. Also, if there are threats of military or quasi-military intervention in the dispute, the target is more likely to acquiesce for obvious reasons, even though economic coercion is not the cause.

Reviewing the literature, one can see a confluence of domestic and international factors leading to the same conclusion: economic state-craft rarely works. Sanctions are initiated because other options are not feasible, and the sender regime wishes to placate domestic pressures to take action. They have little chance of success. Domestic politics within the target country will lead to defiance. Unless sanctions attract significant multilateral cooperation, and hurt target elites as much as the population, they will not force acquiescence. Since these conditions are difficult to achieve, economic pressure will rarely

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Lenway (1988), and Morgan and Schwebach (1997) also make this observation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Knorr (1975), Schreiber (1973), and Pape (1997).

be the causal mechanism for target concessions. More likely, costly sanctions act as a signal of stronger measures and convince the target to back down.

#### Flaws in the literature

And that, it would appear, is that. It would be comforting to think that political scientists have successfully described at least one corner of the foreign policy arena. It would also be wrong.

Economic sanctions are more effective than the literature claims. Gary Hufbauer, Jeffrey Schott, and Kimberly Ann Elliott have created a database of 116 sanctions cases. They code the success of the episode, as traditionally defined, into one of four categories, ranging from outright failure to complete success. If the most stringent definition of success is used, more than 35 percent of the cases qualify as a success. Less than 30 percent of the cases listed fall into the category of complete failure. In many of these successes, there was no observed threat of military force, no multilateral cooperation, and nor were the sanctions particularly costly to the sender. This evidence hardly suggests that sanctions always work, but it calls into doubt the hypothesis that they always fail.

Why is there such a discrepancy? The first problem is one of definition. The question phrased in the literature is "do sanctions work?" This is too simplistic. M. S. Daoudi and M. S. Dajani comment: "Most studies have assumed that the objectives of economic sanctions were to return to the status quo that prevailed prior to the act of aggression which brought the sanctions about. In reality, the aims of sanctions have been consistently less ambitious."<sup>41</sup> Scholars compare the sanctions outcome with the status quo ante (i.e. before the action that prompted sanctions) to determine the success of a coercion event. This is the wrong counterfactual; the hypothetical alternative is the outcome if coercion was not attempted in the first place. If the targeted country does not change its policies at all, then the event should be judged a failure. If there is some compromise, however, and the value of the concession outweighs the sender's costs of coercion, then the episode counts as a partial success.

The degree of success also depends upon the type of demand.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> HSE (1990a, 1990b). Pape (1997) argues that many of these cases are miscoded.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Daoudi and Dajani (1983), p. 2.

Baldwin notes: "A moderate degree of success in accomplishing a difficult task may seem more impressive than a high degree of success in accomplishing an easy task. In assessing statecraft, as in judging diving contests, scores should be adjusted for the level of difficulty." These nuances are overlooked in the simple dichotomy of success/failure made in the literature.

The second problem is the tenuous link between international relations theory and the sanctions literature. Most of the recent contributions on economic statecraft consist of well-crafted theories that lack empirical support,43 or well-crafted case studies that produce generalizations of dubious quality.<sup>44</sup> The literature often overlooks theoretical developments that blunt the utility of their causal mechanisms. Consider the effect of domestic politics on both the sender and the target country. It is theoretically unclear whether the sender is more likely to succeed if there is domestic support for sanctions or if there is some political opposition. On the one hand, the two-level games approach argues that unanimous domestic support enhances the sender's bargaining position because it reduces the likelihood of the sender reversing its strategy.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, an incomplete information approach would make the opposite claim: domestic audience costs send an effective signal of resolve to the target country. Now consider the effect of domestic politics within the target country. The domestic politics approach argues that the more vulnerable target elites are to sanctions, the more likely that they will acquiesce. A rational choice perspective would suggest an alternative outcome, however. If sanctions narrow the ruling coalition within the target country, it could force the decision-maker into a more hardline bargaining position. A weakened leader who cannot afford to alienate a narrow coalition of hardliners will stand firm. A leader with a broader base of support, or one insulated from public opinion, has the luxury to concede without fearing the collapse of the target regime.

These contradictory effects within the target and sender countries suggest that the sanctions literature exaggerates the absolute effect of domestic politics on economic coercion. It is possible that both the two-level games approach and the audience cost approach are correct, but that in most situations, the effects cancel each other out. Similarly,

<sup>42</sup> Baldwin (1985), p. 372.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> See Tsebelis (1990), Eaton and Engers (1992), Smith (1996).

<sup>44</sup> Cortright and Lopez (1995), Klotz (1996).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Moravscik (1993), pp. 29-30.

the opposing effects of sanctions within the target country's ruling coalition could lead to the overall insignificance of domestic politics. Empirically, this would mean that although isolated cases would show the importance of domestic politics, the aggregate effect would be minor.

Finally, the sanctions literature is also guilty of numerous methodological sins. 46 First, almost all of the arguments use an inductive approach; theories about economic statecraft are developed only after an examination of case studies. Under Arend Lijphart's typology, most of these works are interpretive case studies.<sup>47</sup> The concern is not with theory, but with explaining the specific event. As such, few of the derived propositions have the necessary fecundity to be useful in other issue areas. The inductive approach causes researchers to ignore important variables or questions raised by broader approaches to international relations. Case selection exacerbates these problems. Most of these writings focus on the more celebrated cases of sanctions. Open a book on economic sanctions and most of its pages will be devoted to the following cases: the League of Nations sanctions on Italy; CoCom's strategic embargo of technology exports to the communist bloc; and UN sanctions against Rhodesia, South Africa, Iraq, and/or Serbia. Several theories of economic coercion have been developed almost exclusively from these cases.<sup>48</sup>

Certainly these sanctions cases are well known, but they do not necessarily represent the universe of observations. Their very celebrity suggests they are atypical; they are important because they stand out in some unusual way. In most of the cases, the primary sender had multilateral assistance and backing from an international organization. The demands made of the target country were non-negotiable. The primary sender and target were adversaries. The sanctions policy usually failed. By choosing cases that take on extreme values of both the dependent variable and several independent variables, the literature commits two errors. First, there is a tendency to underestimate the main causal effects on the universe of events. Second, these

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> In many ways the problems are similar to the extensive literature on deterrence theory. The criticisms presented here also have a parallel in that literature. See Achen and Snidal (1989).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Lijphart (1971).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> See Adler-Karlsson (1968), Losman (1979), Renwick (1981), Doxey (1987), Leyton-Brown (1987), Mastanduno (1992), Cortright and Lopez (1995), Haass (1998).

studies will overestimate effects that are unique to the extreme set of cases.<sup>49</sup>

The conflict expectations model predicts this sort of sample bias. Since disputes between adversaries are noisier than coercion attempts between allies, the best-known cases are more likely to look like failures. By developing arguments inductively from a biased set of observations, the existing theories can at best explain a subset of the data on economic coercion. Consider the two cases at the beginning of this chapter. There has been plenty of attention devoted to the United Nations sanctioning of Iraq. There has been much less scholarly literature on the US economic coercion of Israel.

These definitional and methodological problems do not mean that the existing explanations are incorrect. They do suggest that the empirical evidence marshaled for their arguments is insufficient. The ideal way to evaluate alternative theories is to tease out contrasting hypotheses, and then test the hypotheses against the appropriate sample to see which explanation has more validity. This book will test the conflict expectations model against alternative domestic and systemic approaches using a variety of different methodologies.

## The methodology

This book will use game theory to develop the conflict expectations model. Instead of words and sentences, symbols and equations are used to develop theoretical results. Game theory is valuable as a modeling tool, but it can also be off-putting. For many political scientists, it seems like an attempt at obfuscation rather than clarification. Game theorists talk in their own language, have their own unstated assumptions, and seem much more comfortable with algebraic manipulation than the rest of the political science community. This is a tragedy, because the goal of formal modeling is to clarify, not confuse.

There is a motive to the mathematics. It lays bare all of the assumptions made in the theory. It makes plain the causal mechanisms that drive the model. It is easier to critique and evaluate a model which is explicit in its assumptions than to deconstruct more opaque verbal treatments on the same subject. Game theory explicitly compares and contrasts equilibrium outcomes with counterfactual possi-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Collier and Mahoney (1996).

bilities. In writing this book, I have tried to keep the use of technical language to a minimum. The aim is for international relations theorists to understand intuitively the dynamics of the model without wading through pages of equations.

To test the conflict expectations model against alternative explanations, I will use a variety of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. As noted previously, one of the problems with earlier work on economic sanctions is the tendency to draw conclusions from one big case, even though there exists a sufficient number of recorded sanctions episodes to permit statistical testing.

There is an ongoing debate in international relations on the validity of statistical tests versus case studies. This debate overlooks the common-sense idea of "triangulation"; a robust explanatory model should find empirical support using different testing methodologies. Statistics, comparative analysis, and case studies all have their advantages in hypothesis testing. Statistics can demonstrate significant correlations across a large number of events. Usually, however, the data are far too coarse to permit any serious examination of the causal mechanisms. Charles Ragin's comparative method uses the logic of Boolean algebra to test for combinations of causes.<sup>50</sup> His approach has the benefit of allowing for a greater causal complexity, and can generate significant results with far fewer cases. On the other hand, this method is extremely vulnerable to measurement error and oversensitive to outliers. Structured, focused comparison and the processtracing of individual cases has the singular advantage of identifying causal mechanisms with a smaller chance of producing spurious results.<sup>51</sup> The small sample inherently limits the generalizability of the results. Each of these methodological approaches has flaws. Used in concert, however, they can offer compelling support to bolster or reject a hypothesis. Increasing the diversity of testing procedures show that large-N and small-N approaches can complement each other in the testing of international relations theory.

#### The rest of the book

Chapter 2 outlines the conflict expectations model of economic coercion and spells out the testable implications of that model. The key variables are the opportunity costs of imposing sanctions for the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> See Ragin (1987). 
<sup>51</sup> See George and McKeown (1985).

target and the sender, and the bilateral expectations of future conflict. The model predicts that as the sender's costs of deadlock increase, economic coercion is both less likely and less fruitful. As the target's costs increase, sanctions are more probable and more profitable. The model also shows that conflict expectations have a contradictory effect on the dynamics of economic coercion. On the one hand, an adversarial relationship will make the initiation of a coercion attempt more likely. On the other hand, it limits the usefulness of the attempt. Between adversaries, economic pressure should be common but of marginal use. Between allies, economic pressure should be less frequent, but also more successful.

These hypotheses will be tested in the later chapters by using a combination of statistical, comparative, and process-tracing methodologies. Chapter 3 is a plausibility probe. It reviews the results of earlier statistical studies to see whether existing explanations in the literature have any explanatory power relative to the conflict expectations model. Several well-known cases of economic coercion will also be looked at to see if they support the conventional wisdom or the model presented here. Chapter 4 proceeds with new statistical tests of the conditions under which a sender will threaten sanctions, and the eventual size of target's concessions. These results provide strong support for the conflict expectations model, and call into doubt the general applicability of the alternative arguments.

The rest of the book uses comparative case studies and process-tracing of individual cases to see whether the causal mechanisms of expected costs and the concern for relative gains are present. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 chronicle Russia's use of economic coercion against the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. The breakup of the Soviet Union provides a "natural" experiment to test models of economic coercion. Russia possessed several economic levers over the other post-Soviet states, and Russia's formal demands were constant across the newly independent states, yet the concessions varied by country. Chapter 5 looks at Russia's ability to coerce. Chapter 6 details the instances of economic coercion used across all fourteen of the newly independent states. Chapter 7 uses Boolean analysis to explore the variation in attempts and concessions across all fourteen of the newly independent states.

Chapter 8 compares the role of sanctions and inducements in economic statecraft. I argue that the expectation of future conflict limits the usefulness of both carrots and sticks in negotiating with adversaries. Only under a narrow set of conditions will the sender be willing to use economic inducements with adversaries. Therefore, senders are often forced to choose between belligerent threats of military conflict or economic statecraft that is limited in its productivity. This hypothesis is tested by process-tracing United States economic diplomacy in two instances: South Korea's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons in the mid-1970s, and North Korea's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons in the early 1990s. Both countries faced roughly equal costs of not acquiescing to US pressure. Because North Korea anticipated far more future disputes than South Korea, however, it was worried about the material and reputational implications of acquiescing. It would not concede without the carrot.

Chapter 9 summarizes the theoretical and empirical results. The robustness of the conflict expectations model provides some suggestions for both theory and policy. Theoretically, the results suggest that interdependence does not necessarily lead to enhanced economic power. Furthermore, economic power is not a universally applicable tool of diplomacy. These results also question the role that international organizations play in regulating economic exchange. Pragmatically, the results suggest that economic coercion has a place in the tools of statecraft, but that place is narrowly defined. In particular, it is of limited use against adversaries. The model developed here also sheds some light on three current policy debates in the United States: the engagement or containment of "rogue states," the madating of sanctions by the US Congress, and the use of extraterritorial sanctions to ensure multilateral cooperation.

# 9 Conclusions, implications, speculations

Theories can never be proven true, but they can amass support. This support is more robust if the evidence varies across time and place. The evidence has ranged in place from the corridors of power in Washington to the oil fields of the Caspian Sea to the demilitarized zone on the Korean peninsula. It has moved in time from the Peloponnesian war to the present day.

This chapter summarizes what has been learned about economic coercion in international relations. It first reviews the predictions and performance of the conflict expectations model, and summarizes additional insights gained from the empirical record. It then offers up a critique of the theories and methodologies developed in the previous chapters. These conclusions have ramifications for the study and practice of foreign policy. This chapter concludes by discussing the model's policy implications, and then considering the broader implications for international relations theory and future research.

#### A review

When states decide whether to threaten economic coercion, or how to respond to such a threat, they care about the immediate costs and benefits of sanctions implementation, but they also care about the likelihood of future political conflicts. Concessions made in the present can be translated into future leverage, or can blemish a reputation for tough bargaining. When states anticipate frequent conflicts in the future, they will care more about the relative gains implications of the immediate outcome.

The effect of conflict expectations on the incidence and outcome of economic sanctions is contradictory. If the sender and target are

adversaries, then the sender will be willing to impose sanctions under conditions that would be rejected if the two states were allies. However, the sender's eagerness does not translate into significant concessions. Heightened conflict expectations limit the number of concessions the target will make. The target will be more reluctant to acquiesce if it anticipates multiple disputes, because its concessions represent a transfer of political leverage to the sender country, magnifying the impact of the concession in the target's eves. With non-negotiable demands, sustained deadlock is a distinct possibility. If the target is an ally, then the sender will prefer to sanction only if the costs to itself are minimal and the costs to the target are significant. Although the sender is more reluctant to coerce, it reaps significant benefits when it threatens sanctions. Because the target does not anticipate frequent conflicts, it will care more about the immediate costs and benefits of a stalemate than the long-run implications of any transfer of leverage. Ironically, the sender will extract the greatest redistribution of political assets when it cares the least about such a distribution.

This theory of state behavior suggests that previous explanations of economic sanctions are incomplete because of selection bias. The most celebrated cases of economic coercion are frequently those where conflict expectations are the greatest. By selecting cases that take such extreme values of various independent variables for in-depth analysis, scholars have unwittingly reduced the variance of the dependent variable. As a result, they suppress the causal effects of conflict expectations and magnify the effects of less relevant variables.

The empirical record supports the theory's assertions. Chapter 3 reviewed the existing evidence on the causes of sanctions initiation and outcomes and showed that the alternative approaches did a poor job of explanation. The statistical evidence in chapter 4 buttressed these findings.

Part II of the book tested the model on recent Russian efforts to coerce the NIS of the former Soviet Union. The evidence from these cases confirmed the model's prediction. In dealing with its adversaries, Russia was willing to incur greater costs in using economic coercion, and it coerced its adversaries more often than its allies. In analyzing the outcomes, however, allies granted far more concessions than adversaries, even though Russia dwarfed all of the NIS in terms of aggregate power. Boolean analysis revealed that an absence of conflict expectations, combined with the absence of a military threat,

was a necessary and sufficient condition to generate significant concessions.

Chapter 8 compared the US response to South Korean and North Korean efforts to develop nuclear weapons. In the end, the United States chose to offer economic inducements to halt North Korean efforts, but economically coerced its ally, South Korea, when it attempted to develop weapons. The case histories reveal that the threatened sanctions would have been painful to both countries. Because South Korea did not perceive the United States as a threat, it was willing to make the concession. By contrast, North Korea's expectations of future conflict were so high that it was unwilling to accede to all of the US demands without significant compensation. The United States could not compromise its demands because of the importance attached to the NPT regime and the norm of nonproliferation. Although economic coercion was capable of producing limited concessions, the United States had to offer carrots to secure its demands.

The alternative explanations generate more marginal support. Statistically, the signaling explanation cannot explain the variation in the target's concessions. The case studies reveal that military statecraft is useful only when regular force is used; threats alone are insufficient. The domestic politics approach has a more mixed record. The statistical results show that it cannot explain when economic coercion is initiated. It fares somewhat better in explaining the outcome. The case study evidence reveals that while an unstable target regime can contribute to a successful sanctions episode, it is neither necessary nor sufficient. A weak target regime has a knife-edge property. It can lead to acquiescence, but it can also lead the regime to harden its position *vis-à-vis* the sender so as to bolster its domestic support. The conflict expectations model does a superior job of explaining both the initiation and the outcome of economic coercion.

# Additional insights

This book has also revealed additional insights about economic coercion that go beyond the model developed here. First, the coercion of adversaries is far more public than the coercion of allies. This was true of both senders and targets. The US pressure of South Korea was applied without public notification until after the fact. The South Korean regime, in response, refused to comment about the issue. By

contrast, the call for sanctions in dealing with North Korea involved high-profile public deliberations within the Clinton administration and the United Nations Security Council. North Korea issued constant press releases lambasting the United States for its coercive diplomacy. This phenomenon was also true in the instances of Russian coercion. Russian President Boris Yeltsin announced the use of economic pressure to coerce Ukraine on national television; there were similar public pronouncements about applying sanctions to the Baltic states. Each of these target regimes also publicized the events as acts of economic coercion. In contrast, the use of economic pressure against Belarus and the Central Asian states was less trumpeted by Moscow, even though it was far more effective. These target states generally refrained from publicly complaining about Russia's economic pressure.

This tendency for coercion episodes involving adversaries to be more public explains much of the conventional wisdom in the sanctions literature. I suggested in the first chapter that many of the best known episodes of economic sanctions were atypical. This is borne out by the evidence. Previous studies of sanctions have usually analyzed high-profile cases involving adversaries and extensive multilateral cooperation. The model and the empirical evidence suggest that these cases are the most likely to involve two adversaries, and produce minimal concessions at best. By focusing only on these cases, these studies came to the conclusion that sanctions were ineffective. This book has demonstrated that the universe of cases is more diverse than was previously suspected.

Second, the evidence reveals that target states adopt several strategies to avoid acquiescing under economic pressure. Realignment certainly reduces the number of concessions a target state will be expected to make, but it also increases the risk of constant coercion attempts. States can also attempt to bandwagon. By allying themselves closely to the sender country, the target can reduce the sender's incentive to use sanctions. However, the large-N data show few cases of balancing and virtually no cases of bandwagoning. Indeed, the case evidence from the former Soviet Union reveals a third strategy: the use of international institutions as a way to bind the sender's hands. Several of the NIS pushed for strong international institutions that would lead to greater integration with Russia, but also prevent Russia from using its foreign economic policies in a coercive manner. Somewhat surprisingly, states preferred to use international institutions

rather than balance-of-power strategies to ward off economic coercion.

## A critique

Although the explanation for economic coercion developed here appears promising, it is far from complete. Despite its strength, there are theoretical and methodological limits to this book. This section is not intended to be a *mea culpa* as much as an honest inventory of the hurdles that still nead to be cleared.

Theoretically, I usually chose tractability over complexity in presenting the conflict expectations model. This choice carries a price. For example, I assumed that conflict expectations were exogenous to the statecraft game. It is possible, however, that conflict expectations are endogenous to sanctions disputes. Such a possibility would require a more complex game that incorporates wider time horizons. Another criticism can be found in the notion of conflict expectations itself. I have generally argued that alignment can act as a real-world proxy for conflict expectations, and with formal allies or enduring rivals, such an approach is satisfactory. Dyads that do not fall into either category are more nebulous. There is a danger that such ambiguous dyads might be vulnerable to *post hoc* data fitting. More stringent codings might be needed.

Another theoretical criticism is that the conflict expectations model largely avoids the relationship between economic and military coercion. The evidence presented here suggests that economic coercion is a viable alternative to the use of force in political disputes, and does not act merely as a signal for military statecraft. That does not exhaust the set of possible relationships between the two forms of statecraft, however. As David Baldwin has pointed out, economic statecraft needs to be judged in relation to other means of influence. While this book has avoided linking the causes of economic coercion with the causes of war, later work will need to pay attention to this dynamic.

Empirically, the book is also open to criticism. The statistical sections rely on sanctions data that have been the subject of numerous criticisms. The bulk of the observations occurred during the cold war. It is possible that bipolarity profoundly affected the statistical results in ways that will be impossible to tell until a sufficient number of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Baldwin (1985).

post-cold war observations are coded. I tried to address this problem in the later parts of the book, but they are also not free of criticism. The recent nature of the post-Soviet cases of economic coercion make the outcomes of Russian attempts at economic coercion provisional. Finally, the cases of nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula are necessarily incomplete. The classified nature of US decision-making, combined with the xenophobic mentality of the North Korean regime, makes it impossible at the present time to ascertain the mindset of the American and Korean decision-makers.

The theory and evidence are incomplete. The model does not describe every iteration of the bargaining process. It does not explain all the variation in the occurrence or outcomes of sanctions episodes. The alternative explanations play some role in the adjudication of coercion disputes. Nevertheless, this project is a significant step forward in explaining the dynamics of economic coercion. It presents a unified theory that explains both the likelihood of observing economic diplomacy as well as the likelihood of its success. It presents empirical evidence using multiple methodologies that strongly support the model's hypotheses. It leads to new interpretations of old cases, and generates new facts about more recent coercion episodes. The model developed here represents an improvement over existing explanations.

## **Policy implications**

It is a wonderful cliché in foreign affairs that academics make grandiose and unrealistic generalizations, inviting the scorn of policy-makers for overlooking the complexity and the politics of the situation. With regard to sanctions, however, the cliché has been reversed. Prominent policy-makers are fond of dismissing economic statecraft as a useless and counterproductive option. Academics recognize that the situation is not that simple.

What is the optimal way to utilize economic coercion? The theory and evidence from this book offer several suggestions on the use of economic coercion in the conduct of US foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> Threaten to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> A word of caution is in order. It is somewhat awkward for a social scientist to make observations about policy that are actually useful. Social science theories simplify the world in order to explain it; policy-makers want as much information about a particular crisis or interaction as possible. These two goals can conflict. Hans Morgenthau observed in *Politics Among Nations*: "The first lesson the student of international politics

impose the most damaging sanctions as soon as possible. Delay on this issue gives the target country the chance to defray the long-run opportunity costs. Be wary of devoting resources to securing multilateral cooperation in implementing sanctions. The statistical evidence suggests that cooperation is far from a prerequisite of successful sanctions. Most important, calibrate the demand to the expectations of future conflict. All else being equal, China, North Korea, or Cuba will not make the same concessions to the United States as Japan, South Korea, or El Salvador. The first group of countries view the United States as a threat, and are reluctant to make concessions that they believe will be exploited in the future. Diplomacy and rhetoric can alter these perceptions only at the margins.

Over the longer run, the model developed here shows that the engagement versus containment debate is sterile and unproductive. An ongoing argument in policy circles is whether it is better to compel other states to change their policies through increased trade and exchange or through a long-term trade boycott.<sup>3</sup> In theory, the engagement option works in two ways. First, by increasing interdependence, engagement makes it costly for the target regime to adopt policies that conflict with the sender. Second, increased trade fosters a powerful domestic bloc within the target country that undercuts the regime's grip on power. In theory, the containment option works by punishing the target so that it has the incentive to change its existing policies.

In the United States, this debate has lasted for at least thirty years; only the target countries have changed. In the 1970s, the argument was about the Soviet Union. In the 1980s, the debate was about Cuba and South Africa. In the 1990s, controversy has surrounded US foreign economic policies towards China and the group of rogue states: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Cuba, and North Korea.

What all of these states have in common is that they anticipate frequent conflicts with the United States over a broad array of policies. The theory and evidence presented in this book suggest that neither strategy will be particularly successful in the long run. The containment option will generate few concessions from adversaries, even if the target's opportunity costs of containment are high. None of the

must learn and never forget is that the complexities of international affairs make simple solutions and trustworthy prophecies impossible. Here the scholar and the charlatan part company." The reader is thus forewarned. Morgenthau quoted in Newsom (1996), p. 59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Lavin (1996) for a recent discussion.

outlaw states has made any concessions to the United States because of economic pressure.

The engagement option would seem to be more attractive. Increased trade would increase the target's costs of any coercion attempt. There is the additional argument that increased trade undercuts the target regime's domestic base by creating a new interest group that prefers acquiescing to the sender. Furthermore, the North Korean case discussed in chapter 8 shows that economic inducements can lead to acquiescence in the present and enhanced leverage for the future.

A closer look at these arguments suggests that the engagement option is only marginally superior to the containment option. First, the benefits of engagement appear only when the sender is willing to threaten the disruption of economic exchange. Adversaries anticipate the probability of future conflicts and will act to minimize their trade vulnerabilities.<sup>4</sup> Unless conflict expectations change, this threat will not produce many more concessions. Even if trade levels were to rise, the model developed here has shown that increasing an adversarial target's costs of coercion increases the concession size by only a marginal amount.

Second, the evidence presented here shows that the domestic politics standpoint cuts both ways: an engagement strategy can lead to a less responsive target. Assume that increased trade generates a faction in the target's ruling coalition that prefers accommodating the sender. The regime could react in several ways. It could indeed shift its policies in line with the sender's preferences, reflecting the shift in the median preferences of the ruling coalition. However, a second possibility would be to increase cleavages within the old ruling coalition, leading to the formation of a new, narrower coalition by removing the accommodationist faction. A new coalition would include previously excluded harder-line elements, leading to a more aggressive stance towards the sender. An engagement strategy has just as much potential to backfire as a containment strategy.

The case study of the US-DPRK conflict highlights the success of the carrot option, but it also reveals that the United States chose the carrot because its nonproliferation policy was non-negotiable and the cost of the carrot was cheap. The Clinton administration considered economic and military coercion before reluctantly agreeing to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See Holsti (1982) and Gowa (1994) on how states try to protect themselves against the prospect of economic coercion.

carrot. One policy analyst commented during the crisis, "all policy options stink." In a nutshell, that describes the problem of the engagement/containment dilemma. This debate inevitably deals with adversaries. Due to heightened conflict expectations, no policy option will produce significant concessions and therefore all of them will be frustrating. In dealing with adversaries, neither option will reap what its supporters claim.

Finally, as noted in chapter 1, the end of the cold war has led to several innovations in the use of economic coercion from the United States.<sup>5</sup> These innovations include congressionally mandated sanctions, extraterritorial sanctions, and sanctions imposed by states and localities. These developments merit some discussion.

Single-issue lobbies for the war on drugs, terrorism, religious freedom, human rights, fair trade, and nonproliferation have tried to influence policy through the application of mandatory economic sanctions. These categorical mandates, established by Congress, have been responsible for the lion's share of threatened or applied sanctions since 1990. Activists argue that congressional mandates create an automatic trigger within the United States government that cannot be deactivated. Targeted countries, including close allies, will recognize that the executive branch has little discretionary power. This makes the US threat of sanctions more credible and therefore induces these countries to alter their policies. As in a game of chicken between two cars, the driver who throws the steering wheel out of the window should win every time.

The problem with this logic is that even with congressional mandates, the executive branch still controls the steering wheel. All of these laws include at least two ways for the executive branch to circumvent sanctions. First, most of these laws rely on an executive agency to determine if the relevant countries are complying with American standards. This gives the president the bureaucratic muscle to avert sanctions by refusing to follow the spirit of the laws. For example, as noted in chapter 3, the Carter administration, although concerned with human rights, refused to brand any country as a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> In the past five years, several US states and localities have also attempted to employ economic coercion against other countries. These will not be discussed in depth for two reasons. Practically, they are useless. For example, it is doubtful that Myanmar will acquiesce due to the economic costs imposed by Santa Cruz, California. Legally, these kinds of sanctions rest on dubious constitutional grounds (Schmahmann and Finch 1997).

"gross violator" of human rights because it did not want to trigger automatic sanctions. More recently, the Clinton administration certified Mexico as a responsible partner on drug prevention while denying the same status to Colombia, despite the marked similarities between the two countries on the drug issue. In explaining the effect of mandated sanctions on US foreign policy, Clinton was remarkably candid in his appraisal:

What always happens if you have automatic sanctions legislation is it puts enormous pressure on whoever is in the executive branch to fudge an evaluation of the facts of what is going on. And that's not what you want. What you want is to leave the President some flexibility, including the ability to impose sanctions, some flexibility with a range of appropriate reactions.<sup>6</sup>

Second, even if executive agencies are completely candid in their reports to Congress, almost every piece of legislation regarding sanctions has a "national interest" waiver attached to it. This gives the president the authority to waive any sanctions where other foreign policy considerations indicate. Congress, for example, would have been willing to accept drug certification of Mexico had the Clinton administration invoked the national interest waiver. Obviously, the national interest argument can be used to exempt US allies from sanctions. The result is the same pattern predicted by the conflict expectations model; sanctions are targeted against adversaries and few concessions are granted. Far from being an example of throwing out the steering wheel, congressional mandates are about as effective as honking the horn.

Another type of economic pressure that has recently captured attention is the use of extraterritorial, or secondary, sanctions. In these situations, the United States threatens to sanction firms or countries that trade or invest in a country that it has already sanctioned. The pipeline sanctions discussed in chapter 3 fall under this category. So do attempts by the Carter administration to widen the freeze on Iranian financial assets in European branches of US banks. More recently, any sanctions generated by laws punish corporations and executives that do business with Cuba, Iran, and Libya fall under this category.

It would be easy to label this kind of economic pressure as political

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Elaine Sciolino, "On sanctions, Clinton details threat to truth," *New York Times*, April 28, 1998, pp. A1, A7.

showboating. The truth is a little more complex. Extraterritorial sanctions force firms to choose between the US market or the target country's market, which is usually less important to the corporation. In addition, even the threat of extraterritorial sanctions introduces uncertainty into the business climate, reducing the value of continued trade with the target state. US sanctions against foreign firms have often succeeded in getting firms to acquiesce. In the Iranian case, the foreign subsidiaries cooperated with the United States in freezing the Iranian assets. In the pipeline case, most of the foreign firms valued their business with the United States more than with the Soviet Union. Even the Helms–Burton Act slowed the pace of foreign investment in Cuba.<sup>7</sup>

The problem, of course, is that sanctions against foreign firms are usually transformed into sanctions against the countries that host these firms. The host countries inevitably see extraterritorial sanctions as a violation of their sovereignty. They stiffen the backbone of corporations, and turn the situation into an interstate dispute. This is where the conflict expectations model predicts that extraterritorial sanctions will fail. When host countries turn these sanctions into a potential trade war, the sender faces the prospect of incurring significant costs. Because these host countries are usually allies (i.e. Canada and Western Europe for the United States), the coercion condition is rarely satisfied. The sender country will prefer to back down. Host countries have an incentive to up the stakes because it forces the United States to back down. This dynamic appears to explain the reluctance of the United States to implement extraterritorial sanctions in the 1980s,8 and the Clinton administration's deal with the European Union not to implement Helms-Burton and other extraterritorial sanctions.

## Questions for future research

The model's validity in explaining the occurrence and outcome of economic coercion attempts has broader implications for theories of international relations. One conclusion is that because of conflict expectations, the concern for relative gains matters, and it matters in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See Alerassool (1993) on the Iranian case, Martin (1992), chapter 8, on the pipeline sanctions, and the *Economist*, "Saying boo to Helms–Burton," October 19, 1996, p. 49, on Cuba. More generally, see Shambaugh (1999).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Rodman (1995).

unexpected ways. The model shows that senders will be more eager to sanction when they care about relative performance. What is surprising is that the sender's eagerness does not translate into larger concessions. Instead, senders can expect fewer concessions, because the target will wish to minimize the disutility of transferring political advantages to the sender. Therefore, the concern for relative gains makes the use of economic sanctions more frequent and more futile.

This result is distinct from either the neoliberal or neorealist paradigms. Neoliberals are incorrect in downplaying the effect of conflict expectations on the pattern of trade and economic exchange. Nation-states must consider the prospect of economic manipulation when they engage in trade and exchange. Neorealists must also deal with significant anomalies. Realists argue that states are concerned with the distribution of power, and that compels them to act as if they care about relative gains. The evidence presented here contradicts that story, however. All of the evidence confirms that conflict expectations affects the behavior of small target countries even when dealing with great powers. This should not happen in a neorealist world, since the differences in power are already so great. Furthermore, the presence of relative gains concern reduces rather than enhances the capabilities of great powers. Power is exercised through the ability to impose significant opportunity costs on the target country, but it is also mitigated by the target's conflict expectations. The preferences of small states, and their choice of alliance partners, matter more than neorealists would care to admit. These anomalies suggest that a synthesis of these two paradigms would prove more useful than continued attempts to declare one better than the other.

A good research project should start with a set of clearly defined research puzzles, answer them, and develop new questions from the answers. The results from this book provoke at least four research questions.

What is the effect of domestic politics on coercion attempts? This book has shown that there is no theory of domestic politics in international relations that can explain the initiation and outcome of economic coercion. One could argue that this says more about the state of second-image theories in international relations theory than it does about economic statecraft. The two-level games literature has focused on the effect of domestic political forces on international cooperation. Less attention has been given to the role domestic groups and institutions play in coercive bargaining. There have been some

recent attempts to flesh out domestic or two-level approaches on this issue, but further work is needed. One possibility, touched on only briefly here, is that domestic groups and institutions act as intervening variables between the expectations of future conflict and the outcome. For example, it is possible that between adversaries, domestic groups in both the target and sender will have a greater incentive to adopt belligerent positions in an attempt to enhance their respective standing. Between allies, such an approach would not be as fruitful. If this is true, then the effect of domestic politics would be to reinforce the effect of the conflict expectations model.

How do sender countries choose among their influence policies? This book has touched on the issue of choosing between economic sanctions and economic inducements, but has largely skipped the choice between sanctions, war, or a combination of policies. The relationship between the two forms of statecraft is more complicated than one of pure substitutes or pure compliments. Although the hypothesis that economic sanctions act as signals for the use of force has found little empirical support in this book, there are other possibilities. For example, economic coercion may be a substitute for force in conflicts between democracies, but not between other dyads. Another possibility is that the implementation of economic coercion accidentally or purposefully increases the chances of war. Is economic coercion prone to "mission creep" or is it part of a conscious strategy that leads to war?

What is the role international institutions play in constraining the possibility of economic coercion? In theory, regimes such as the World Trade Organization, the European Union, and the CIS limit the ability of nation-states to coerce other members. Weaker states have an obvious motivation for encouraging such institutions; they reduce the probability of great power coercion. A more intriguing question is why great powers are willing to go along. One possibility is that international institutions allow great powers to engage in displays of credible commitment. The catch, of course, is that great powers frequently violate or manipulate institutional norms. The CIS has failed to prevent the Russian Federation from using economic coercion as an instrument of foreign policy. The United States has used tools of economic statecraft that violate the General Agreements on Tariffs and

 $<sup>^9</sup>$  Kirshner (1997) provides a particularly promising approach to analyzing the domestic politics of the target country.

Trade. Great powers try to use international organizations as instruments of economic coercion. There is an underlying tension between needing institutions to ensure the long-run stability of the global political economy and violating institutional constraints to secure the national interest. How do great powers manage this tradeoff?

How do states trade with each other, given the prospect of economic coercion? This book has focused on the immediacy of the coercion event. It has shown that economic coercion is a constant possibility in the international system. Countries must cope with the Faustian bargain of enhancing their welfare through increased trade and exchange while increasing their vulnerability to potential economic coercion. This fact has larger implications for the study of international political economy. First, how does the possibility of coercion force potential targets to alter their trade patterns? What other strategies can weak powers pursue in order to avoid this possibility? Stephen D. Krasner and Peter Katzenstein have investigated how states use external and internal resources to protect their sovereignty from the vagaries of the international marketplace. Less work has been done on how states act to protect themselves against great power manipulation of these markets.

Senders face different tradeoffs in choosing to threaten economic coercion. Target states can reduce the number of equilibrium concessions if they engage in balancing behavior. A glance at the data suggests that states rarely realign themselves in response to sender's attempt at economic coercion, but it exists as a possibility. Senders must be concerned about the quality of their long-term relationship with the target following a coercion attempt. Senders that frequently coerce can create the reputation of being unreliable partners. As seen in chapter 6, Russia alienated many of its erstwhile allies by exploiting its economic leverage as well as disregarding institutional norms when they impeded its quest for short-term gains. How do senders balance the long-run damage to their credibility with the short-run

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See Krasner (1985) on the use of international organizations to regulate the market, and Katzenstein (1985) on the use of domestic arrangements to do the same.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> For example, when President Carter decided to impose a grain embargo on the Soviet Union, he exempted the first 8 million tons because he did not want to break an existing contract (Paarlberg, 1980). Similarly, after the success in freezing Iranian assets in the United States during the hostage crisis, commentators were worried about the long-run implications for property rights in financial markets (Miyagawa 1992).

gains of coercion? This is a constraint of economic coercion that needs to be explored further.

This book demonstrates that the range and utility of economic coercion is more varied than previously thought. Sanctions do not always fail; sometimes they reap notable successes. There is an explanation for the bias in the conventional wisdom. Economic coercion between adversaries is likely to be more public, more costly to the sanctioner, and less successful at forcing concessions. This is because adversaries anticipate frequent conflicts with each other and will care more about relative gains and reputation, making sanctions more likely but less profitable. Economic coercion between allies, although rarer, is considerably more effective. States will be understandably reluctant to coerce allies. Once they do, however, the absence of conflict expectations will make the sanctioned country more willing to concede. Therefore, in observing the entire range of coercion episodes, one sees a majority of noisy sanctions disputes between adversaries with limited success, and a minority of quiet sanctions disputes between allies, with greater success. The standard explanation of sanctions fails to see the entire picture. If nothing else, this book broadens the canvas.

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