

THE UTILITY OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS IN VIEW OF COERCIVE CHARACTERISTICS TOWARDS PROSPERITY AND SECURITY

Mark Raymond, ULMER

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, International Economics and Marketing, Kyiv, Ukraine, ulmerecon@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: Research involving the utility of economic sanctions introduces misrepresentations and if categorized would include: ignoring comparisons of economic sanctions with coercive alternatives, analyzing economic sanctions as a substitute to hard force exclusively, and redefining the uses of economic sanctions for political purposes.

We present a definition of economic sanctions and show the sequence of power as it may be imposed across a spectrum at various intensities relative to characteristics. We analyze how characteristics between power groups are diffuse and that conclusions involving utility are insignificant without analyzing variance within power strata. We've categorized characteristics into two groups that are inversely positioned and regressed on a power interval: characteristics of prosperity (target size, intervention, predictability, attractiveness, efficiency, and communication) and characteristics of security (clarity, rate, return, control, risk, costs, and violence). We illustrate that as prosperity increase or decrease the security characteristics decrease or increase respectively as inverse substitutes.

KEY WORDS: Coercion, utility, hard power, characteristics

JEL classification: F51, H11

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper we discuss behaviors in the research community that we perceive to be harmful in terms of evaluating the utility of economic sanctions. Our critique asserts that (1) economic sanctions must be considered in relation to other coercive instruments for purposes of evaluating their usefulness (2) that we should avoid comparisons of economic sanctions with the utility of hard force, and (3) we should avoid the misleading use of *smart* as an adjective preceding power and economic sanctions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Motivation:

In this paper we focus on three misrepresentations. (Problem 1) Economic sanctions are not the only alternative coercive instrument before imposing hard force. Research has so far neglected a comparison of other coercive instruments against economic sanctions and therefore we are unable to accurately account for their utility. (Problem 2) The efficacy of economic sanctions must be considered against other coercive instruments and must illustrate the sequential and inseparable relationship between coercive and hard power (as we note the bi-conditional purpose of hard force within the definition of economic sanctions). Economic sanctions are positioned on our spectrum between soft and hard force and as such are categorically different, sequential, and feature unique characteristics from other power spectra. (Problem 3) Forcing inaccurate vocabulary in order to promote the utility of economic sanctions or other political agendas only challenges economic and political science.

Our research therefore focuses on evaluating the definition of economic sanctions as a coercive instrument between soft and hard power. We draw on our previous definition of economic sanctions that emphasizes the need to discern economic sanctions as coercive instruments in order to make the case that economic sanctions are merely one of many alternative coercive strategies. We have previously defined an economic sanction as a "*commercially coercive foreign policy instrument used in order to compel a target to change its behavior or else to punish it with force*" (Starostina, Kravchenko, Ulmer, 2018). We

illustrate how economic sanctions are not isolated on a power interval relative to targeting the needs of a target state, and that soft, hard, and numerous alternatives of coercive activities may be used for purposes of influencing the economics or politics of a target. We therefore use our framework that details a balance of power, and we present this later in the article for your review (Ulmer, 2018). Crucial to the development of our framework we had analyzed criteria developed by David C. Gompert, and Hans Binnendijk (2016) that measures the characteristics of coercive instruments against soft and hard force. These aforementioned sources were most significant to us for developing the contents of this paper, but other insights were also important to us and we note them below.

2.2. Problem 1: Economic sanctions in isolation

When we focus on economic sanctions as an exclusive coercive alternative to force we invite three challenges. One, we divorce our attention from other various activities that could substitute or be used in concert with economic instruments for influencing change. Two, we ignore the benefits that economic sanctions (and other coercive instruments) offer in the direction of preparing for war (security). And three, we promote economic sanctions as a premium product where all insights and criticisms challenge their efficacy without a review of alternative strategies. In our review of literature, we perceive economic sanctions as the dominant coercive strategy of use, and therefore, this often determines how we define the coercive instrument relative to its ability to substitute for hard force. Alfred Drury, for instance, asserts that "If the connection between the use of military force and economic sanctions exists, then the vast literature focusing on the use of military force may inform us about the conditions under which economic sanctions are used" (Drury, 2000).

Economic sanctions are generally considered as an alternative to hard force and perhaps the only alternative for review of its utility. Robert Pape asserts that "the principal policy usefulness claimed for economic sanctions is an alternative to force" (Pape, 1997). As we will see later in our analysis when considering our framework and various alternative coercive instruments that can be positioned onto a spectrum of force, we note that economic

sanctions are not exclusive alternatives to hard force but rather one of an infinite sum of coercive measures. Those who isolate economic sanctions as the only coercive instrument in place of hard force are limiting imagination and opportunity.

According to Drury, "*Baldwin (1985) argued that economic sanctions are simply the middle option available to a decision maker. That is, a leader can use diplomacy, economic sanctions, or military force as tools of statecraft. These choices follow a rank ordering. That is, a dispute between two states typically involves diplomatic posturing in the beginning. As tensions escalate, one or both states will probably resort to a more costly level of coercion, typically economic sanctions (Baldwin 1985; Morgan 1990). If economic sanctions are ineffective and the dispute escalates to a crisis level, the use of military force is likely (Snyder and Diesing 1977; Leng 1993)*" (Drury, 2000).

This belief along with Pape's (1997) insights correctly identifies the purpose of economic sanctions to substitute for hard force, and it reveals that there is a sequence that is characteristic of our spectrum. Nevertheless, in contrast to Pape's (1997) argument, we must not exclusively measure the utility of economic sanctions against hard force in terms of influencing policy change without consideration given to the novel characteristics that economic sanctions afford in the direction of security (preparing for war). That is to say, if we determine that the usefulness of economic sanctions is minimal, then we must decide on which other coercive strategies would better support political strategy and defense. Otherwise, jumping from soft power to hard power without the discipline of communicating threats (or utilizing other characteristics of coercion) may not be a useful political tactic in terms of economic and political attractiveness. Secondly, we need to define more variables that could be used in order to test the efficacy for substitution. We therefore will look at factors like attractiveness, the level of communication between sovereign powers, etc. that offer us variables to test the utility between coercive instruments and against the utility of hard and soft power groups.

2.3. Problem 2: The utility of economic sanctions against hard power

Coercion and hard power are categorically different approaches with different goals, and to compare the two will challenge future research aims. We start here because we perceive that researchers would like the high return that hard force yields without increasing the degree of violence from coercive to hard power. (We will later see in our review that the level of return will be proportional to the degree to which the target is challenging the agent's needs). So in essence, while reviewing literature the tendency is to compare the returns of hard force with coercion for purposes of defining the utility of economic sanctions, but this is unfair. These comparisons lead us to discern economic sanctions as ineffective, at times immoral, targeting innocent victims, etc. The challenge we observe is that high returns in terms of policy change demand the need to target the needs of the adversary to the extent that their economic and political power is reduced to a point that they are increasingly uninterested in pursuing their initial foreign interests.

By isolating economic sanctions as characteristically the only alternative to hard force, literature therefore begins to engage the moral conditions of threats and impositions of economic coercion that challenge the needs of civilians. For instance, (Daoudi and Dajani, 1983) write, "economic sanctions have a moral power. They enjoy universal public support". On the other hand, other research will detail economic sanctions very differently using prose synonymous with evil, immoral, etc.

(Addis, 2003; Rogers, 1996; Damrosch 1993). Whether evil or righteous, moral or immoral, Kantian or not, this trend of research is distracting if it doesn't consider coercive alternatives within this lens of morality. We perceive that discussions involving morality would belong to research that compares other coercive alternatives to economic sanctions, and how they are positioned on a spectrum that involves needs, time, attractiveness, and the intensity of power in the direction of high return. Perhaps other coercive strategies are comparatively more violent yet yield higher returns on policy change – this is what we would need to test in order to discern which variables yield greater significance on changes in policy. We mustn't forget that if a state is challenging our basic needs, that we are not only morally responsible for how we treat the enemy, but also morally responsible in terms of how effective we are at protecting our citizens confronted by that adversary. And therefore our speed, strength, and methods must equally meet the enemy's interests and needs proportionally in the direction of security.

Several authors including Pape (1997) have compared economic sanctions for their utility in terms of influencing policy change in place of the imposition of hard force. In other words, the implicit argument is that if economic sanctions reveal greater utility, or equivalent utility with respect to policy changes (in comparison to hard force), then we would favor uses of economic sanctions as they avoid violent behavior. However, if the opposite were true, the general characterization perceived by the research community is that economic sanctions are, generally speaking, not useful. We partially agree with Pape's (1997) conclusion that economic sanctions do not have the same utility or results that hard force yields in terms of influencing policy change, but simultaneously we argue that this doesn't disqualify the usefulness of economic sanctions as a necessary instrument to be used in succession with hard force. In reflection of our model, the fact that the level of return afforded by economic sanctions is less than that of hard force is a point that we intend to illustrate – this is what our spectrum details (Ulmer, 2018). From soft to hard power the characteristics of power intensify in terms of the level of return and the clarity of results, which is synonymous with the utility for affecting policy change. But this comes with a caveat -- the degree of violence also characteristically increases along with the degree of control and other, perhaps, unattractive characteristics (Ulmer, 2018). So as returns increase, inevitably the attractiveness of economic or political force decreases. This illustrates the proverbial "you can't have it both ways." Economic coercion and hard force are not equivalent substitutes on account of both return and appeal. Coercive instruments seek returns, but if the target doesn't capitulate, hard force is a sequential step. Coercive instruments have the implicit utility of preparing for war. Therefore, we must look for specific features of economic sanctions that could be contrasted against other coercive activities in terms of their utility for security if we are to improve our political strategy. In our analysis we will note, in support of other research findings, that economic sanctions offer a signaling dimension that other instruments may lack in the direction of security (Whang, 2011; Hufbauer, Schott, Elliott, 1990).

Economic sanctions prepare us for violent action. Governments take sides and the citizens within each state also take sides while the probability of war engages those abreast of the political and economic climate. Adeno Addis writes "... that economic sanctions, just like other forms of sanctions, are also a process through which the sanctioning community (party) defines its identity through the act of dissociating itself from the target regime that it considers to be "the troublesome or the evil other" (Addis, 2003). In a positive sense this is comfortable for people

to be given the opportunity to decide where they stand and who they will defend. It also offers a context that is democratic as the international community will try to balance what is just. In other words the aim of economic sanctions involves “the achievement of some version of justice by restoring the moral equilibrium that is said to have been disturbed by the action of the target state” (Addis, 2003). Therefore the utility of economic sanctions mustn’t be discerned in comparison to physical force returns exclusively, but the utility should be evaluated in a context of evaluating the various benefits that other coercive instruments yield in the direction of security (hard force) – if it is signaling or other novel characteristics.

When considering our framework we note that force is moderated by our needs and wants, and simultaneously involves an interval from soft to hard power (Ulmer, 2018). Our framework is also available in this paper (please see Figure 1). Although some researchers prefer to limit definitions to specific cases and characteristics, we prefer to broaden our definition to address the general behavior and continuity of pursuing interests and needs through force. In observing our interests and needs we decide how to use our force and how to respond to threats. If our needs are being challenged, we are then more inclined to use more intensified force in continuation of our previous economic decisions (Ulmer, 2018). We respond most efficiently horizontally, using our framework. Therefore, if an enemy targets our safety needs with force, our most efficient response will horizontally challenge their safety while counterbalancing impositions of force (Ulmer, 2018). In terms of economic coercion, many researchers will refer to more intensified stages as economic warfare, but for our purposes of discussion, economic sanctions are merely a continuous action or counteraction relative to our needs and interests. In other words, we do not discriminate various stages of economic force but merely define them as economic sanctions. We may span a spectrum of competing in international markets, taxing imported goods, imposing embargos, positioning trade intercepts, to launching economic warfare. Choosing economic coercive instruments is therefore relative to the severity of challenges posed to one’s needs and total power, and reactions are fluid and continuous as they are predicated by behaviors of the past (Ulmer, 2018). Therefore, authors like Pape (1997) do us a nice service of classifying different degrees of economic sanctions – but we argue that they may be often mere stages in the direction of physical conflict and are collinear in the sense that they lead to physical force and are not isolated events should we note escalations. One stage, in other words, merely superseding previous moderating events that when built up begin to engage more aggressive interaction with a target and its needs (the target having underestimated the credibility, potency, and contingency of economic pressure) (Hovi, Huseby, Sprinz, 2005; Ulmer, 2018). So we’ve created a spectrum that juxtaposes the economic needs of a state with political force, and on this spectrum we would rank Pape’s classifications (definitions) on our fluid interval, albeit from “economic sanctions”, to “trade disputes”, and to “economic warfare” (Ulmer, 2018; Pape, 1997). If we want to further stratify different classifications of economic coercion, this is also possible. But our interest is to merely show that economic coercion, despite its various characteristics at different stages in its evolution, is nevertheless fluid, interrelated, and is positioned within the coercive interval. And we note that before economic sanctions are threatened or imposed, states (relative to history) likely have already begun to compete for influence in international markets in lieu of needs and interests -- determining what type of products to sell, at what price, where, when, what to promote and how, politically and economically friction will build as unbalanced power grows.

Some states will use predatory pricing, cheap labor, etc. that challenges the needs of the targeted state. So we discern influence as a continuum and not as isolated events in history.

2.4. Problem 3: Redefining economic sanctions for political purposes

Economic sanctions are not *smart*. Adding this adjective simply follows a trend. It mimics uses involving the promotion of products like smart phones, smart cars -- we have *smart power* now and *smart sanctions* (Nye, 2009; Bondi, et. al., 2002; Drezner, 2003, 2011; Brzoska, 2003; Lopez, Cortright, 1997; Wilson III, 2008). There is nothing smart about an economic sanction, it merely may target fewer people in contrast to a larger population – but we must discern such decisions as being relative to an agent’s goals and the degree to which the target challenges the needs of the agent. It may be perhaps more useful or *smarter* at times to sanction a larger population within a target state in order to encourage particular coercive characteristics, or to limit trade that involves products bridging civilian to combat uses (if such products can be easily adapted for military purposes) (Gompert, Binnendijk, 2016). Smart economic sanctions merely target a segment of a state’s population in order to be *softer* on our scale of power by virtue of affecting fewer people. Of course this will yield various results in relation to the characteristics of force, as well as variables we would want to test in terms of influencing policy change or other dependent variables of interest to policymakers. Simultaneously, when we hear smart power we perceive that researchers are merely trying to find ways of using soft power influences to help states that are challenged with physiological needs/safety needs. Meaning that on our framework we merely draw a diagonal line from the top left (soft power) of our agent’s power to the bottom right of our target’s needs (physiological needs) and we demonstrate this behavior, if we want to label it smart power (see Fig. 1 below) (Ulmer, 2018). Perhaps at times this is smart, but other times, such products and services have unforeseen harmful consequences (Lischer, 2015).

3. METHODOLOGY

Using our definition and framework to categorize economic sanctions as a coercive instrument, we will illustrate differences between power strata using characteristics that we define on our spectrum. We will show how these characteristics are inversely positioned and directed on an interval involving various intensities of power from soft to hard. We will group these characteristics relative to their regressive behaviors on this power interval into two types: characteristics of prosperity (those indicators that approach soft power), and characteristics of security (those indicators that approach hard power). Noting these characteristics, we will demonstrate that as prosperity indicators increase or decrease, security indicators inversely decrease or increase respectively. Using this method of analysis we illustrate that positions on a power interval will reflect particular characteristics in contrast to others – and therefore we can analyze definitions of utility that present economic sanctions as an inadequate substitute for hard force. Lastly, we will note novel characteristics of economic sanctions while recommending the need to consider how various coercive activities engage characteristics of prosperity at the cost of security and vice versa.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1. (Problem 1) Economic sanctions are a coercive instrument: Our definition and framework

We define an economic sanction as a “*commercially coercive foreign policy instrument used in order to compel a target to change its behavior or else to punish it with force*” (Starostina, Kravchenko, Ulmer, 2018). Our definition is an aggregate of computing repetition of words used in definitions of economic sanctions across literature. Coercion was our most common term used within definitions and within the contents of publications that authors had consciously or subconsciously included, and so, we focus particular attention on this as well as the second most repeated semantic elements “*change its behavior*” and “*punish with force*” (Starostina, Kravchenko, Ulmer, 2018).

When we define economic sanctions as a coercive instrument we do so in order to emphasize the need to consider their purpose respectively. Coercive instruments are always contingent on using hard force if the target does not capitulate. We’ve discussed previously how many researchers will challenge the utility of sanctions in place of their effectiveness for changing foreign policies of a target state, but with concern to our definition and the inclusion of “or else to punish it with force,” we might consider how coercive instruments may be used in service of preparing for war. We perceive that the utility of economic sanctions, among other coercive strategies, must concern interests involving *security*. This is, perhaps why economic sanctions are still popular and increasingly so despite negative press. They may improve *security* while

simultaneously offering the signaling effects characterized in literature. This is why we argue that it would be important to test coercive instruments against one another when determining the utility of coercive force, and later we will discuss various characteristics that involve steps in preparation to hard force. We list, later in our framework, various coercive instruments for your review as well as characteristics of force that may more accurately render utility in observance of prosperity versus *security* indicators. So in brief, we must consider in our review that an economic sanction is 1) a coercive strategy and must be evaluated in contrast to coercive alternatives 2) bi-conditionally leads to war if the target does not capitulate, and 3) has various characteristics that challenge definitions of utility on a spectrum from *prosperity* to *security*.

4.1.1. Characteristics of power

It would be appropriate to therefore consider characteristics we’ve defined in terms of power, and variance of power from soft to hard. We use our framework below in order to 1) distinguish differences between the three spectra of power, (we do this in order to illustrate challenges involving comparisons between coercive and hard power albeit involving various characteristics) and 2) reflect on how different stages of force may be imposed for purposes of influencing the total power of states as a summation of economic and political strength (again, for the purpose of distinguishing differences and defining characteristics relative to the needs of a target). So please consider Figure 1 below:

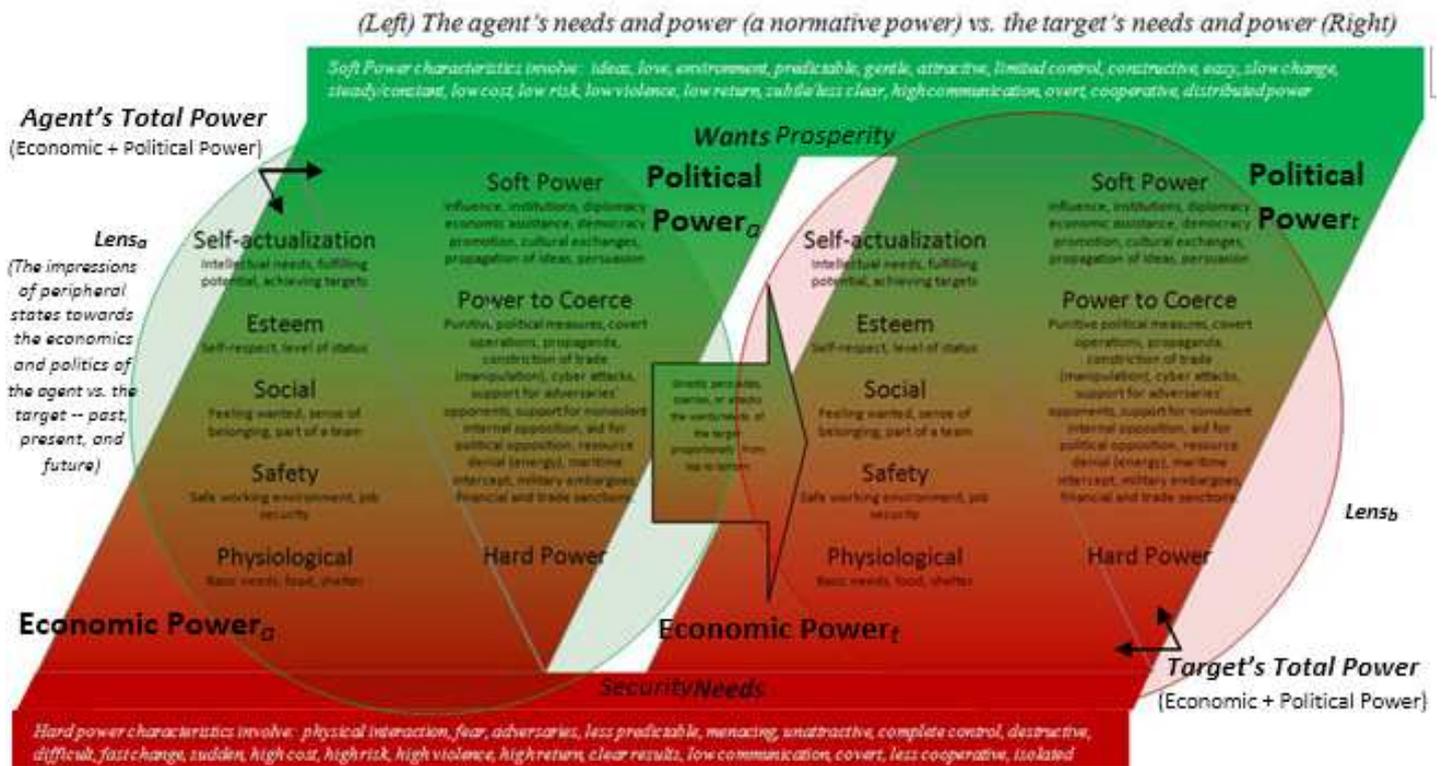


Figure 1. Total Power (Economic Power and Political Power) (Ulmer, 2018)

In our diagram we note that political power is expressed using three levels of influence: soft, coercive, and hard power. Part of this figure was initially introduced by David C. Gompert, and Hans Binnendijk (2016), and they had also noted characteristics of these power distinctions that we will discuss later. We note immediately various coercive strategies that the authors present in their analysis including punitive political measures, covert operations, propaganda, constriction or manipulation of trade, cyber attacks, support for adversaries’ opponents, support for

nonviolent internal opposition, aid for political opposition, resource denial, maritime intercepts, military embargoes, and financial and trade sanctions (Gompert, Binnendijk, 2016). As we noted in our review of literature, there are a number of other means for coercing a target and they have unique characteristics relative to a spectrum of power. Economic sanctions are not an exclusive coercive instrument, but rather, one of many advancing in the direction of *security*. Below is Gompert’s and Binnendijk’s framework (top diagram) for your review with

additions that we made while incorporating insights gleaned from the two authors (the bottom diagram) (Gompert, Binnendijk, 2016).

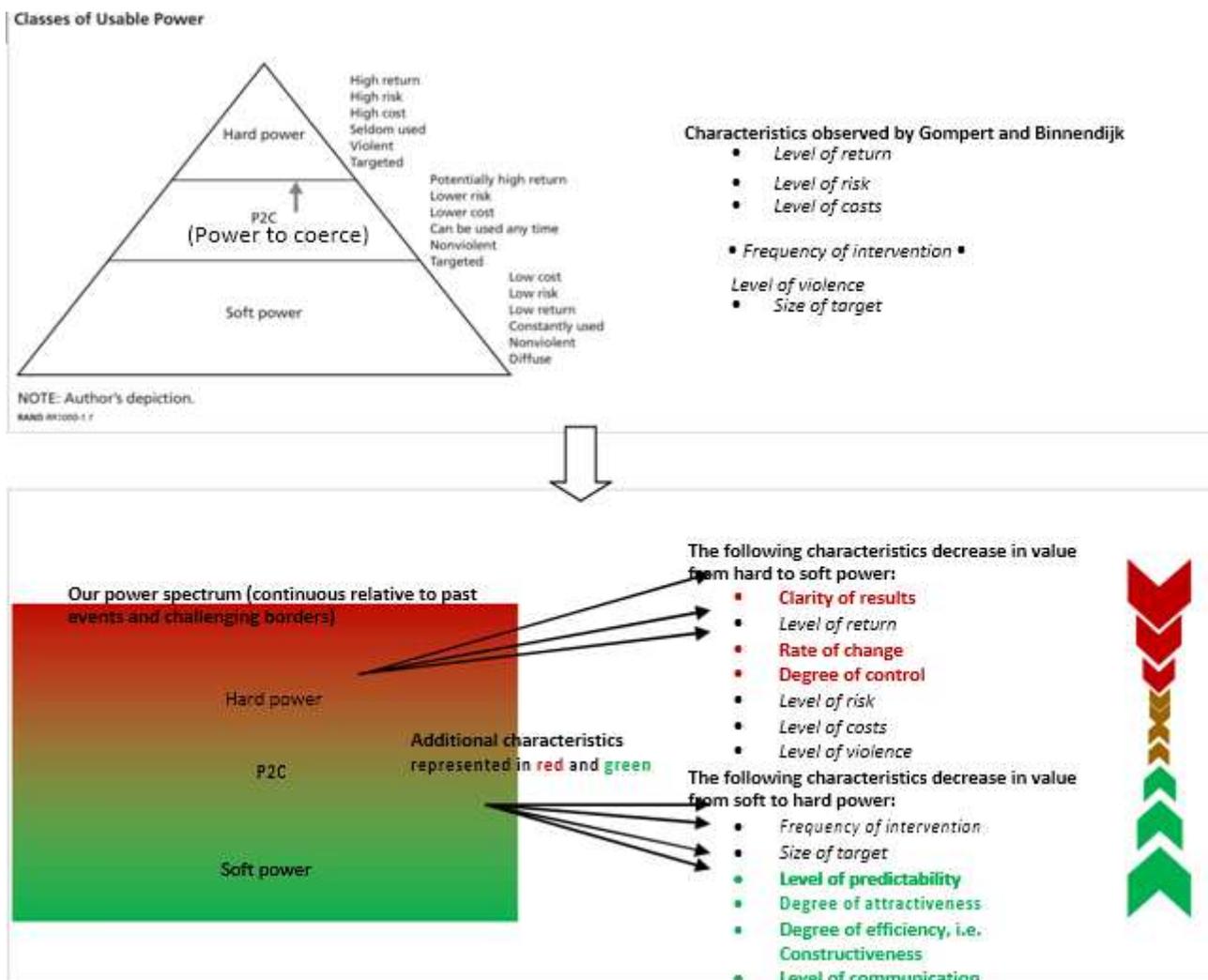


Figure 2. Modifying David C. Gompert's, and Hans Binnendijk's Classes of Usable Power (Gompert, Binnendijk, 2016)

We note the various distinctions between P2C (power to coerce) and soft and hard power involving levels of return, risk, cost, frequency, violence, and targeting. In Figure 1 and in Figure 2 we expand on these distinctions using Gompert and Binnendijk's analysis, and we indicate that power influences are fluid (continuous) relative to previous impositions of force and may have characteristics that transcend boundaries involving these stratified layers (coercive activities that are violent, for example, may transcend into hard force characteristics). As the hue of the layers within the diagram change from green to red, many variables change including the ability to discern results, the rate of change, the degree of control, the level of predictability, the degree of attractiveness, the degree of efficiency, and the level of communication that various power spectra yield. So we add to Gompert's and Binnendijk's characteristics in order to capture how numerous variables change relative to decisions made involving the use of power (Gompert, Binnendijk, 2016). Gompert's and Binnendijk's (2016) illustration is very useful for understanding the more

significant differences between the three power groups, and this helps us understand why it is difficult to compare exclusively coercive instruments with high levels of return summarized by the use of hard force. High levels of return are merely one variable within a continuum with various payoffs and characteristics.

Conceptually, noting the characteristics in both Figures 1 and 2 we see that as a target may challenge the "wants" of an agent, the agent may respond anticipating characteristics of soft power. Meaning, we may increase *the frequency of intervention* or at least *note* increases in intervention, *the size of the target increases*, *the level of predictability*, *attractiveness*, *efficiency and communication* also respectively increase in the direction of soft power. This is all relative to how the target seeks its interest in lieu of the interests of others. As we are only discerning the substitution of interests in terms of *wants*, there is still opportunity for cooperation as we haven't touched on situations that involve substituting *needs*. Consider the top diagram (Figure 3) below in review of our comments above:

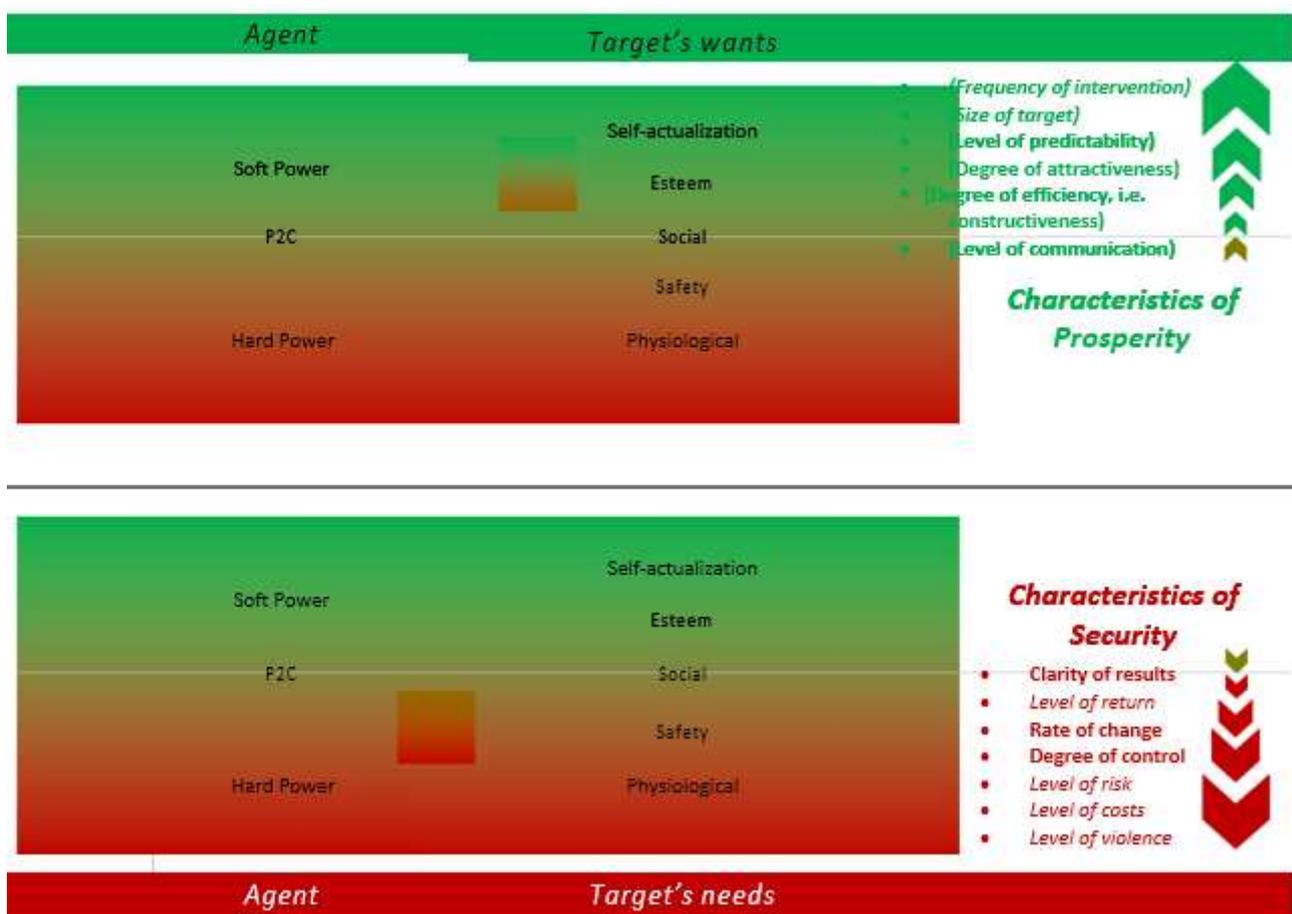


Figure 3. Characteristics of prosperity that regress towards soft power (top) vs. characteristics of security that regress towards hard power (bottom)

When the target challenges the basic needs of a state, now our characteristics change in the direction of preparing for *security*, or hard force, in place of mutual gains determined by economic and political well-being (prosperity). Again, we read our framework horizontally (Figure 1) as well as our diagram above (Figure 3) relative to threats and impositions of power that challenge our *wants* or *needs* – *prosperity* or *security* respectively. Therefore in this case we can anticipate increases in characteristics that include *the clarity of results, the level of return, the rate of change, the degree of control, the level of risk, the level of costs, and the level of violence* as our security needs are challenged (*represented in the bottom diagram of Figure 3*). Some of these characteristics may be obvious at particular stages. For instance, when the needs of an agent are challenged, the agent in response may immediately raise the national defense budget in order to prepare for hard force (*costs* are raised). Other characteristics may be intuitive to us as well, for instance, needing to change the policies of the target quickly (*the rate of change*), so that one secures his own wellbeing. It is important to not only discuss these characteristics and behaviors, but to also indicate where these characteristics intuitively lie within the interval. They may perhaps transcend into layers unexpectedly, but generally are executed relative to the degree in which wants or needs are challenged for purposes of balancing responses and total force. We can therefore evaluate the effectiveness and various combinations of these characteristics for influencing the economics and politics of a target. In other words, we might select some of the characteristics that more closely approach soft power for purposes of attractiveness, while simultaneously using coercive strategies that approach hard power (if they are covert) for purposes involving *security* relative to the degree in which the target challenges our needs.

4.1.2. Popular characteristics in literature

In brief, Figures 1 and 2 are different as we added a few more characteristics and erased the boundaries between power groups as such distinctions would be relative to chosen characteristics and their intensities that play a role in influencing the wellbeing of a targeted state. We note that the characteristics are very diffuse and balance each other similar to the way in which total power is balanced between states. We also note that the strongest indicator would involve violence, if we are to consider the vast amount of research detailing the efficacy of economic sanctions in place of hard force, (and subsequently the attractiveness of violence as we measure the utility of economic sanctions for influencing policy changes). Meaning, this is important to people, to researchers, to policy makers, as we've normatively defined them as significant indicators within our review. We emphasize these two characteristics only because they are increasingly more common in literature involving economic sanctions and their utility to substitute for hard force. Therefore, if we were to substitute soft, coercive, and hard power with three degrees of violence (zero, partial, and total violence as they moderate attractiveness inversely – attractive, partially attractive, and unattractive respectively) we would have modeled the current debate in research and criteria for defining utility. Researchers will take sides in terms of what they value more. Some economists may prefer the utility of attractiveness to violence, and vice versa, and therefore the debate for utility is ongoing. Utility is defined relative to the goals in which the author wishes to achieve, and where we position ourselves on a spectrum between interest for *prosperity* and needs for *security*. So when Robert Pape (1997) and others assert that economic sanctions do very little in terms of changing the policies of a target when excluding uses of physical force – this may be true, but we mustn't forget that the coercive instruments may have

moderated the effectiveness of hard force in the direction of strengthening one's *security* and challenging the needs of a target. These are our claims, and in this case, the utility of economic sanctions and other coercive instruments are therefore effective. Without coercive instruments, the agent may not have developed an economic or political environment for physical force. So we will need to discuss the role of *violence* in terms of how this defines each stage and *the level of return* with economic and political tradeoffs like *attractiveness*.

While effecting the wellbeing of a targeted state *violence* is a strong predictor of the *level of return* or, as we determined in our previous research, *changes in policy* or *changes in behavior* (semantics that are repeated in literature) (Starostina, Kravchenko, Ulmer, 2018). Therefore, we must consider that as the intensity of power increases in a direction of hard force while challenging the basic needs of target, this offers increased *returns* in terms of change. This makes sense because, on the other hand, if a state utilizes soft power influences on a target state, the rate of *return* is minimal and the need for hard force is irrelevant. The target state only partially needs to capitulate when it challenges the desires (*wants*) of the agent (in contrast to the needs of the agent) and *control* is respectively minimal. There are only minor changes handled between an agent state and a target when soft power strategy is imposed (it is slow in terms of *the rate of change* and incremental in terms of *the frequency of intervention*). When we use soft power influences, the target state is not challenging our needs and so there is no reason to want to *control* the policies of a soft target, but simply increase the *degree of communication* among other characteristics in order to distribute *control* horizontally. On the other hand, when a target challenges the needs of others, the *rate* in which one must react in order to *change* the target's policies is increasingly more important and therefore demands harder, more *violent*, force for purposes of securing one's welfare.

4.1.3. *Balancing violence with attractiveness*

As a result, if we are to desire a high level of *return*, we would be more inclined to exercise hard force if we were to desire the level of *return* exclusively. However, intuitively if we desire a reasonably high level of *return* with increased levels of *attractiveness*, we note that *attractiveness* inversely moderates the level of *return*, meaning, one must decide how *attractive* the coercive strategy should be in order to change the policy of the target state. What is more important to the agent, in other words, because there is an economic and political tradeoff? As the level of *return* increases, according to our model, the level of attractiveness decreases -- or using different words, as the potential to *control* the foreign policy of a target with force increases, the *attractiveness* of one's decision decreases respectively. Therefore, all of these characteristics must be given consideration when deciding what kind of policy to execute. Otherwise we will continue to debate whether economic sanctions effectively substitute for hard power -- it depends on how we define our dependent variable and whether we include the characteristics of coercive strategy that moderate soft or hard power. Other characteristics are also in play here, for instance *the frequency* of using hard force must also be considered if one decides to use violent political strategy. Our recommendation would involve being disciplined as researchers and economic/political strategists to focus on one's *needs* when favoring *security* characteristics, and when *wants* are challenged, to favor characteristics of *prosperity*. We can otherwise use our framework (Figure 1), to consider responses to threats and impositions of force horizontally as they offer the most efficient returns (Ulmer, 2018).

Therefore we find it difficult to compare the efficacy of economic sanctions relative to high returns. We can substitute either violence for attractiveness, or attractiveness for violence. Our framework illustrates that policy changes are far likely to result from targeting the basic needs of a target in lieu of attractiveness. To characterize economic sanctions as an ineffective strategy for inducing policy change without force is only partially accurate if we are defining our dependent variable as a complete policy change divorced of the utility of coercive strategy that contributes to the strengthening of hard power. We must also consider how coercive instruments may be used in concert with economic sanctions for affecting policy change (not just between coercive to hard force). And perhaps, we must evaluate the utility of attractiveness in terms of defining the efficacy of economic sanctions while considering where peripheral states stand economically and politically -- with us, or against us. In brief, we must be very careful how we define utility.

We've focused on the last semantic element in our definition that composes the bi-conditional behavior, *or else to punish with force*. Meaning, coercive instruments are contingent on the threat of force, and therefore, the imposition of force is crucial in terms of how we define the utility of sanctions relative to a continuous interval involving degrees of soft and hard power. What characteristics of coercive strategies define this element within the definition? When considering the probability of war, we can look to see how the coercive instruments evolve economic and political posture for *security* purposes.

4.2. (Problem 2) Comparing the utility of economic sanctions as a substitute to hard force

In brief, the significant differences and separations that involve the levels of these strata of usable power are illustrated by Gompert and Binnendijk (2016). If we note the characteristics labeled to the right of the diagram (Fig. 2), we understand why it is difficult for us to accept, for instance, a comparison between hard and coercive power as hard power offers the exclusivity of a high return dependent variable. In our diagram (Fig. 1) we indicate that our economics are determined by the needs of the state, and so violence challenges safety and physiological needs (the first two and most crucial strata of our economic power -- *Maslow recognized the importance of satisfying needs within one's hierarchal position before advancing into higher stages*). This is why the return is so high because policy makers understand the potency of force targeting the basic needs of citizens if not themselves directly. So when we measure for efficacy, researchers must be aware that hard force categorically will immediately yield greater returns as determined by the increase in violence which cripples the needs of an adversary and offers greater control to the agent for effecting policy. If we desire a higher level of return (synonymous with a change in foreign policy), we may need to select coercive instruments that challenge basic needs of the targeted state. Relative to the potency of the pay load wielded onto a target with regard to the target's needs, we will observe proportional returns. Research that details the efficacy or ethical challenges involving the imposition of economic sanctions would need to consider the revelation of these characteristics, at least, that coercion would be less violent but simultaneously weaker in terms of its yield, and vice versa if retold from the context of hard power. So when we say, economic sanctions do not work, what we mean to say is that when compared to hard force they offer insignificant results relative to a proportional avoidance of violence (and this is the economic/political tradeoff).

4.3. (Problem 3) Smart economic sanctions

In reflection of our analysis, it is not necessary to defend the efficacy of economic sanctions while using new vocabulary, if its *smart power* or *smart economic sanctions*. This was our last aim in terms of our research. Concerning our analysis, it is possible to challenge the borders of power with different strategies and characteristics in the direction of prosperity and security simultaneously. At times this may involve characteristics that minimize the size of the target – as “smart” economic sanctions intend to do in the direction of security. Such a strategy may be effective, but perhaps at times we underestimate the size of the target. Meaning, if we restrict the size of the target to oligarchs, or political politicians in the avoidance of blanketing a state with economic hardship, the economic and political needs of the target state may be only minimally challenged. When defining the target we must consider who is involved in contributing to the *economic and political development of the state that challenges your needs* (and what technologies may be used against you if escalations occur in the direction of war). Therefore, careful decisions must be given to defining the target’s size while not underestimating its recruitment of total power.

Furthermore, there are infinite strategies that could be used while exploring different degrees of these characteristics mentioned above, and various coercive instruments. What is smart now may not be smart tomorrow as strategies must change (especially if strategies involve security and covert force). We’ve asserted in this article not only the importance of considering the characteristics of force, but the alternatives as well within each power strata. We also believe that this terminology is deceiving because it implicitly regards previously imposed sanctions as not smart, or unintuitive. These previous impositions may have worked in various ways that we haven’t measured, and if we concern our diagrams we note that economic sanctions that are blanketed across a population, do in fact, challenge the needs of a target more attractively than hard force would otherwise.

We also see that risk, cost, frequency, and targeting vary between strata in Figure 2 (if we focus on these characteristics alone) in addition to the level of returns and violence. So when we focus merely on returns and violence we lose sight of the big picture. Many variables are changing and we must consider that if variables change significantly between coercive and hard power then it may be of interest for us to use methods of research that challenge the variance between similar instruments in place of measuring change across categorically different subjects. What is it that distinguishes economic sanctions from other coercive activities for instance, and how do various variables change in relation from one coercive strategy to the next? To measure this, we must perform variance tests between coercive instruments in place of instruments across a total power spectrum.

5. APPLICATIONS

We should try to isolate characteristics that are novel to coercive instruments against others, and we may look to see how coercive strategy seeks to coerce and simultaneously prepare for war. Previously we had claimed that economic sanctions offer a signaling role and that this helps distinguish political borders. While considering other coercive instruments within our diagram (Fig. 1), various instruments may intensify violence or perform in different ways so as to covertly build a strong defense against a target. Economic sanctions, in terms of preparing for

war, offer a perspective of how cooperating states will act if war were to erupt – and this helps us to know the enemy and ourselves (who’s friend or foe). We simply do not know where different sovereign powers stand (economically and politically) in other words, without the overt signaling and separating characteristics that are conveniently more attractive. Economic sanctions therefore serve the novel function of defining the battlefield as various states decide where to stand relative to their economic and political interests. It is a characteristic that distinguishes economic sanctions from other coercive instruments. Simultaneously we should also look for other benefits that various coercive instruments offer in contrast to their categorical equivalents. And we can also add to our list of characteristics for purposes of measuring utility with different variables, groups, regressions and variances in and between power strata.

6. CONCLUSION

If we consider the utility of economic sanctions relative to their returns (or the ability to change the foreign policy of a target) we must also consider the various alternative characteristics influencing utility as well as the other possible instruments within coercive strategy. It’s difficult for us to characterize economic sanctions as lacking general utility while substituting for hard force if characteristics offset one another and if we are to ignore instruments that could be substituted or used in concert with economic coercion. The characteristics of soft, coercive, and hard power are very different as are the goals involving these groups. So it would be important to perform tests within coercive strategy, and define those characteristics of interest to us economically and politically.

Having defined economic sanctions in terms of our framework, we don’t perceive there to be a need to justify political strategy that has previously been regarded as unethical. Our framework reveals the continuity of force that extends from soft to hard power. When an extractive state decides to exercise power at the costs of a target’s basic needs, the likeliness of a response that seeks minimal returns is low while the friction of power involves security. The agent must defend itself using strategies that, at times, approach violent countermeasures in order to balance total power and the interests or needs within and between states. So for purposes of clarity we should be honest about various uses of force and their rates of return relative to violence. If we feel the need to challenge violent strategies for ethical purposes then we should do so while considering an array of coercive substitutes rather than challenging economic sanctions exclusively to hard power. To imagine a spectrum divorced of any of the three levels of power is dangerous. A state that ignores coercive strategy while only engaging soft and hard power is minimally effective in terms of reaching prosperity or preparing security. Finally, with our definition and analysis of the uses of economic sanctions as a coercive instrument, we don’t perceive the need to politically redefine or recreate definitions in support of our economic or political interests.

We’ve shown in our theoretical analysis that our characteristics across the various levels of force are diffuse and engage a spectrum that is inversely balanced by characteristics. We’ve categorized these characteristics into two groups for future empirical tests – characteristics of *prosperity* (that involve the frequency of intervention, the size of the target, the level of predictability, the degree of attractiveness, the degree of efficiency, and the level of communication) and characteristics of *security* (clarity of results, level of return, rate of change, degree of control, level of risk, level of costs, and level of

violence). Therefore we challenge previous definitions of the utility of economic sanctions while considering the behavior of these groups to inversely counteract the regression of its counterpart. As one categorical group increases, their characteristics may be offset by characteristics of the latter group making it difficult to discern the level of general utility without carefully defining which characteristics are most important to us. If we select coercive instruments relative to how they perform characteristically we'll be in better shape in terms of deciding in which direction to engage on our power spectrum, albeit prosperity or security. Furthermore we anticipate that if we were to test these characteristics empirically, perhaps these tests would catalyze awareness of the novel characteristics that various coercive instruments reveal as well. And so when noting these characteristics we had intended to better define the research environment relating to the utility of economic sanctions and where misrepresentations may occur, but also to provide a review of what we may do in the future when defining economic and political strategy.

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