

US Sanctions and Foreign Lobbying of the US Government*

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April 10, 2022

Abstract

Previous research has explored how US sanctions affect subsequent behavior by sanctioned states as well as third parties, with particular attention to whether states change the policies that led to US sanctions. In this paper, we argue that US sanctions also affect lobbying of the US government. States experiencing imposition of US sanctions over security and political issues will lobby the US government less than other states because this scenario suggests that lobbying is unlikely to influence US policies. States experiencing the imposition of sanctions over economic issues, on the other hand, will lobby the US more as these targets would see a negotiated settlement as more feasible. We also maintain that third-party states that are similar to US sanction targets will lobby the US government more than dissimilar third parties, as lobbying in this scenario could be aimed at preempting future episodes of US sanctions—regardless of the issue that led to sanctions. We find support for our expectations in auto-regressive models spanning 1975-2005. Our findings suggest that sanctions in some cases lead states to find means other than policy concessions by which to satisfy US policy-makers.

*Accepted for publication at *Political Research Quarterly*. A complete replication archive is available from Timothy Peterson's personal website, <https://timothypeterson.org>

Introduction

Economic sanctions have become a popular policy tool by which the US and other major powers tackle a wide range of issues such as military aggression, nuclear proliferation, human rights abuse, democratic backsliding, terrorism, and trade disputes. Given the popularity of this foreign policy tool, a large literature examines the effectiveness of sanctions in eliciting target compliance (e.g., [Hufbauer et al. 2007](#); [Drury 1998](#); [Drezner 2003](#)). Recent studies extend this understanding by uncovering conditions in which sanctions also influence policy change among third-party states that witness these signals of sender (sanctioning state) interests and power ([Peterson 2013](#); [2014](#); [2021](#); [Miller 2014](#); [Clay 2018](#)). However, empirical research has long focused on whether targets (including prospective targets) comply with sender policy preferences—as indicated by their sanction-backed demands—as a key indicator of sanction outcomes. Sanctions by design are examples of issue linkage in foreign policy as the target's gains from commerce are contingent on compliance with the policy preferences of the coercing state ([Li 1993](#); [Lacy and Niou 2004](#)). Yet further issue linkage is possible if targets attempt to satisfy sender policy-makers via actions other than objective compliance with sender preferences on some sanction-provoking issue.

In this paper, we consider alternate means by which states might attempt to prevent or end sanctions, specifically connecting the study of US sanctions to the generally separate body of research on foreign lobbying of the US government. Consistent with the data used in our empirical analysis, foreign lobbying refers to hiring of US-based lobbyists by foreign governments to promote their interests with the executive and legislative branches of the US government as well as the US public in general. The act of lobbying often involves face-to-face contacts with government officials in order to influence legislation. The US government and other governments across the world regulate professional lobbying through laws to explicate what is considered legal paid advocacy by lobby groups. They do so to increase transparency and prevent political corruption.

We focus on sanctions by the United States because the US occupies a unique position in

the international economy, most notably enabled by the centrality of US dollars in international finance ([Drezner 2015](#); [Farrell and Newman 2019](#)). The US levies sanctions much more frequently than any other country in the world, accounting for over half of all the imposed sanctions since 1945 ([Hufbauer et al. 2007](#); [Morgan, Bapat and Kobayashi 2014](#)). Similarly, foreign lobbying of the US government is an important phenomenon on which to focus as foreign states have spent an average of 166 million dollars yearly between 2000 and 2012 to influence US behavior.¹ Given evidence that lobbying of the US government on behalf of foreign governments is intended to influence US foreign policy towards those governments' ends (e.g., [Lahiri and Raimondos-Møller 2000](#); [Drope and Hansen 2004](#); [Gawande, Krishna and Robbins 2006](#); [Ehrlich 2008](#); [Stoyanov 2009](#); [Kim 2017](#); [Montes-Rojas 2018](#); [2013](#); [Pevehouse and Vabulas 2019](#)), it stands to reason that leaders might use lobbying strategically in order to prevent or end sanctions, satisfying US policy-makers—and obtaining what we call subjective compliance—without actually changing the sanction-provoking behavior in question. The fungibility of lobbying dollars renders this tool broadly appealing to governments seeking favorable treatment on a variety of issues.

We theorize that imposed US sanctions inform target leaders regarding their prospects of obtaining subjective compliance via lobbying, and accordingly affect their expenditure on lobbying of the US government. The imposition of sanctions over major security and political issues suggests that the room for negotiation and bargaining to resolve such disputes is low—or was exhausted prior to sanctions imposition given strategic behavior during this period. Specifically, both sender and target states would be less willing to reach a negotiated settlement or offer concessions during salient political and security disputes. Whereas sender states would be less receptive to lobbying, target states would be less inclined to engage in lobbying for the removal or at least partial relaxation of the sanctions over security and political issues. They would instead consider that their money would be spent better for other purposes, particularly offsetting sanction costs. Accordingly, we expect that US sanction targets will engage in less lobbying of the US

¹This figure was calculated using data from [Pevehouse and Vabulas \(2019\)](#).

government relative to non-sanctioned states when sanctions are imposed over such issues. Trade and other economic disputes, on the other hand, generally are considered lesser threats to national security and thus are more open to bargaining and compromise even after sanctions have been imposed. Because economic disputes are considered politically less salient, sender states would be more open to engagement with target states to resolve the issue under dispute. Similarly, target states would be willing to seek engagement with senders over economic issues, compared to security and political disputes, given such disputes are unlikely to threaten national security and their own political survival. As such, we expect targets to lobby for the removal—or at least easing—of sanctions over economic disputes. For third-party states witnessing US coercion, we argue that states perceiving similarity to US sanction targets will lobby the US government more than third parties lacking this recognition ([Crescenzi 2018](#); [Peterson 2013](#)). We identify context similarity for third-party states in terms of geographic and politically proximity to US sanction targets.

To test our expectations, we estimate auto-regressive models to model an equilibrium relationship between the prevalence of (direct and third-party) US sanctions and a state's expenditure on lobbying the US government. Results of models spanning 1975 to 2005 provide consistent support that direct sanctions over security and political issues are associated with lower lobbying of the US government, while direct sanctions over economic issues are associated with higher lobbying. Results are more mixed regarding the lobbying behavior of third-party states that are geographically and politically proximate to US sanction targets.

This study contributes to a broader understanding of sanction consequences. Earlier research focuses on domestic political and economic strategies that targeted regimes pursue to survive foreign pressure. Studies suggest that target states might alter their public spending priorities ([Escribà-Folch 2012](#); [McLean and Whang 2019](#)) or pursue repressive policies against their citizens ([Wood 2008](#); [Peksen 2009](#); [Adam and Tsarsitalidou 2019](#)) to survive foreign pressure. Other research points out that some targeted leaders might also seek assistance from or develop stronger

economic ties with non-sanctioning entities to diminish the intended cost of the coercion and remain defiant against external sanctions ([Andreas 2005](#); [Early 2009](#)). Our analysis suggests that target states also consider influencing sender policies via direct lobbying of the sender government towards the removal (or avoidance) of sanctions. While previous work suggests that it is limiting to define sanctions “success” narrowly in terms of whether target states adopt policies the sender demands ([Galtung 1967](#); [Lindsay 1986](#)), we identify specific alternate means by which states might gain the approval of sender policy-makers in the attempt to end or prevent sanctions without objective policy compliance. We also add nuance to the literature on the third-party consequences of sanctions (e.g., [Early 2009](#); [Peterson 2013](#); [2014](#); [2021](#); [Miller 2014](#); [Clay 2018](#)) by identifying options beyond proactive policy change that third party witnesses to US economic coercion might attempt to reduce their prospects of future coercion.

US Sanctions and Lobbying by Sanctioned and Third-party States

States might seek ways to influence policy-making in the US capitol to avoid the imposition of sanctions or to seek the removal of existing ones without altering the underlying behavior that previously triggered punitive economic measures. Sanctions often lead to reduced income and growth ([Neuenkirch and Neumeier 2016](#)) and even financial crises ([Peksen and Son 2015](#); [Hatipoglu and Peksen 2018](#)). Foreign economic pressure might also pose a threat to the survival of leaders in office ([Escribà-Folch and Wright 2010](#)) and undermine political stability ([Allen 2008](#); [Grauvogel, Licht and von Soest 2017](#)) in some target states. Lobbying the US government might thus help target states achieve the easing or removal of the sanctions to mitigate the costs of coercion on themselves and their support base.

In line with the research on the logic of foreign lobbying ([Gawande, Krishna and Robbins 2006](#); [Stoyanov 2009](#); [Montes-Rojas 2013](#); [Pevehouse and Vabulas 2019](#)), we assert that lobbying

by domestic firms on behalf of target governments could be particularly beneficial in two major ways. First, lobbying would grant target states direct access to sender policy-makers to better convey their positions on issues that triggered the sanctions. This reflects arguably the most important purpose of hiring lobbyists by foreign governments: to offer information to the US government officials during their face-to-face contacts to affect how those officials view the issue or issues under dispute. It is important to recognize that the information offered by lobbyists might not always be new or unknown to government officials. It could rather be more detailed and presented in a way that better conveys the target state's position. This would in turn help reduce any misinformation between the target and sender governments and create another path for policymakers to negotiate issues under dispute. Second, lobbying might help highlight common strategic and economic interests to convince policy-makers that lifting sanctions is crucial for mutual interests and long-term relations. More specifically, lobbyists would not only serve the purpose of providing direct and consolidated information on issues under dispute, but also help target governments communicate with the sender government on their broader and mutually beneficial ties and interests. Lobbying of the sender government can thus be a major tool for the target government to influence sanctions policies.

However, the issue under dispute is likely to be a key factor in explaining whether and when targets might opt for monetized advocacy. The US and other major sanctioning actors levy economic sanctions to address a wide spectrum of economic and political issues spanning from military aggression to environmental concerns. Earlier research suggests that the type of issues under dispute as well as significance attached to those issues considerably affect target and sender behavior, and the subsequent interactions between the two parties (e.g., [Morgan and Schwebach 1997](#); [Hufbauer et al. 2007](#); [Ang and Peksen 2007](#); [Bapat et al. 2013](#)). Other research shows that sanction are most likely to be imposed on targets against which future conflict is expected, despite the fact that sanctions appear least effective against adversaries ([Drezner 1998](#)). These findings lead us to suspect that the effect of sanctions on subsequent foreign lobbying by targets

and third parties could be conditional on the underlying political relationships between the sender, target, and third-party witnesses. We explore these conditions below.

Sanctions and Lobbying by Target States

If sanctions are threatened or imposed over security and political issues—such as nuclear proliferation, military aggression, support for terrorism, and political regime change—existing research finds that both sender and target states would be determined to bear the costs necessary to end the dispute in their favor ([Morgan and Schwebach 1997](#); [Ang and Peksen 2007](#)). More specifically, one key factor that shapes the willingness of states to incur high costs during international crises is the significance of the issue under contention for them ([Diehl 1992](#); [Brecher 1993](#)). If the issue under dispute is deemed sufficiently salient, such as those that pose a threat to national security, territorial integrity, international status and major global norms like human rights and democracy, states—and particularly major democratic powers like the US—might become more accepting of higher costs to protect their national interests and uphold global norms. Some examples of sanctions over security and political disputes include US sanctions against India and Pakistan over nuclear proliferation, US sanctions against states with ongoing violent conflicts such as Nicaragua, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and US sanctions directed at state sponsors of terrorism such as Libya, Syria, and Sudan.

From senders' perspectives, most security and political disputes are considered vital for their own national interests and international standing. They would thus be more resolved to sustain the sanctions campaigns for such disputes until the target concedes to the pressure ([Dashti-Gibson, Davis and Radcliff 1997](#); [Lektzian and Sprecher 2007](#); [Ang and Peksen 2007](#); [Bapat et al. 2013](#)). In some cases involving political or security issues, the US government might be inclined to negotiate with the target and grant them concessions. However, the US government faces constraints in its ability to exercise this option given the likely domestic political costs of appeasing target states over major international disputes that attract considerable media and

public attention. This could include negative media attention, public criticism, and even decline in support for sender policy-makers ([Whang 2011](#); [Peksen, Peterson and Drury 2014](#)). For instance, in disputes involving genocides and other major humanitarian crises, senders would be inclined to levy and maintain sanctions until the target complies with the sender's demand for policy change, thereby signaling their disapproval of the target's egregious behavior to their domestic constituencies and the international audience.

Similarly, targets would also be more determined to withstand foreign pressure over security and political issues ([Morgan and Schwebach 1997](#); [Drury and Li 2006](#); [Ang and Peksen 2007](#)). Because such issues are often politically salient in domestic politics, acquiescence to the external pressure would undermine their authority and even political survival ([Peksen and Drury 2010](#)). Specifically, adjusting their policies in line with the sender's demands would weaken their credibility within the ruling coalition. Conciliatory moves towards the sender over security and political issues could also be perceived as a sign of weakness by the general public. It would result in more defections from their ruling base and more support among public for the opposition. This would in turn embolden the opposition against the state. Leaders would likely view these potential consequences as particularly detrimental when contrasted with the possibility of a rally around the flag associated with resistance.

The resolve that senders and targets display over major political and security disputes suggests that they are unlikely to reach a negotiated settlement or be willing to offer concessions ([Dashti-Gibson, Davis and Radcliff 1997](#); [Morgan and Schwebach 1997](#); [Ang and Peksen 2007](#)). Hence, even though foreign pressure might inflict major damage on their economies, targets might be less inclined to engage in lobbying for the removal or at least partial relaxation of the sanctions over security and political issues. On the contrary, growing tension with the US might lead targets to reduce their lobbying activity as they would consider that their money would be spent better for other purposes, particularly offsetting sanction costs. Specifically, to remain defiant against foreign pressure, some target states might choose to change their spending priorities ([Escribà-](#)

Folch 2012; McLean and Whang 2019), suppress the domestic opposition (Wood 2008; Peksen 2009), or seek third-party economic partners to make-up the economic losses caused by sanctions (Early 2009).

Strategically-minded targets would anticipate that the US government is less receptive to lobbying over salient security and political issues and deem it futile to invest in lobbying efforts to gain favorable treatment over these kinds of disputes. And even if targets were willing to lobby the US government following sanctions imposed over a security or political issue, they could face barriers to doing so. It might be more difficult for targets to find foreign agents willing to work on their behalf. Lobbyists could be banned from lobbying policy-makers over vital national security and strategic interests. For instance, the 2006 Global Terrorism Sanctions Regulations by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) under the US Treasury Department strictly restricts lobbying and other official dealings on behalf of sanctioned entities by law firms and other lobbyist groups.²

To further explain our argument, we briefly discuss the US sanctions against the Democratic Republic of Congo from 1993 to 1997 (Morgan, Bapat and Kobayashi 2014). In April 1993, the US cut economic assistance and imposed targeted sanctions against the Mobutu government in response to President Mobutu's repressive policies, including violence against anti-government groups (Human Rights Watch 1994). The purpose of the sanctions was to destabilize Mobutu's leadership and force a regime change in the country. The sanctions were successful in achieving their intended objective as President Mobutu stepped down in 1997 after ruling the country over three decades. In line with our argument, during the sanctions years, there was a significant drop in the amount of lobbying dollars spent by the Mobutu. Specifically, according to the lobbying data used in our analysis (Pevehouse and Vabulas 2019), the Mobutu government spent annually about \$1 million USD from between 1980 to 1992 while no lobbying dollars was spent during

²The full description of the Global Terrorism Sanctions Regulations is available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2006-title31-vol3/CFR-2006-title31-vol3-part594>.

the sanctions years from 1993 to 1997. Mobutu's decision to cut diplomatic ties and all lobbying efforts in Washington D.C. was partially because the imposed sanctions were a direct political threat to his own dictatorial rule. The sanctions specifically signaled that the US government intended his removal from power and hence would not be open to any lobbying by US-based lobbyists on behalf of the repressive Mobutu regime. Hence, political significance attached to the dispute by both parties resulted in a complete halt of monetized advocacy on behalf of the Mobutu rule following the imposition of the sanctions.

Based on the discussion above, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1 *The targets of US sanctions over security and political issues will lobby the US government less than other states*

Conversely, we expect sanctions over economic issues—largely trade disputes or demands for financial reform—to result in an increase in target governments' expenditure on lobbying of the US government. Examples include US sanctions against its major trade partners such as Canada, Japan, and European countries over trade disputes and environmental regulations. The US policy-makers are unlikely to perceive trade and other economic disputes in the same way as conflicts concerning national security and strategic interests. This is largely because they are regarded as being politically less salient ([Morgan and Schwebach 1997](#); [Ang and Peksen 2007](#)). Studies therefore show that the sender state is more likely to offer concessions or reach a negotiated settlement over these less salient issues ([Dashti-Gibson, Davis and Radcliff 1997](#); [Lektzian and Sprecher 2007](#); [Ang and Peksen 2007](#); [Bapat et al. 2013](#)). Similarly, target governments would be more willing to engage with the sender and seek a resolution to economic disputes. They would be inclined to find a common solution because economic disputes, compared to security or political ones, are unlikely to have significant domestic political ramifications. Most importantly, economic disputes that triggered sanctions are unlikely to pose a major threat to national security or leaders' own political survival.

Given the mutual openness of sender and target governments to engagement over economic

issues, we expect that targets would view lobbying of the sender government to be an attractive option. And we expect that US-based lobbying agents would help foreign officials to gain access to the US government. Foreign governments could use direct communications through lobbyists to convey their positions on the economic issues under dispute. For example, the target leadership could convey its inability to reduce trade protectionism of certain products given the resulting damage such liberalization would entail for their domestic industry, while simultaneously proposing a new trade deals in other industries. They would thus seek to gain more favorable terms during negotiations, ideally to see that the sanctions are either eased or fully removed. Even a modest chance of better treatment should incentivize lobbying given its relatively low cost.

To support our argument on the possible effect that sanctions over economic disputes have on lobbying, we briefly turn to the sanctions against Japan initiated during the Clinton administration ([Morgan, Bapat and Kobayashi 2014](#)). When President Clinton entered office in 1993, one of his administration's economic priorities was to address the trade deficit between Japan and the US. Following the initial failed trade negotiations seeking concessions from Japan over the auto industry and other sensitive US products, the Clinton administration imposed multiple restrictions on Japan-US trade flows during the early years of his administration ([Perry and Cornwell 1995](#)). Given the long history of close ties between the two countries, there was a significant increase in diplomacy in both Tokyo and Washington, D.C. along with a substantial increase in the amount of lobbying dollars spent by the Japanese government to resolve the ongoing trade disputes. Specifically, according to the data that we use in our analysis, there was no new lobbying dollars spent between 1988 and 1992 by the Japanese government. During the Clinton era, however, the Japanese government paid US-based lobbyists about \$2 million USD each year in 1993 and 1994, and even significantly more, about \$44.4 million USD, per year in 1995 and 1996. They continued to rely on the lobbyists' services spending annually about \$8 million USD from 1996 to 2000 ([Pevehouse and Vabulas 2019](#)). By the end of President Clinton's second term in 2000, most of the trade restrictions were lifted in part thanks to the lobbying efforts coupled with

diplomacy between the two countries. Both governments were open to negotiations and dialogue to resolve the trade dispute to make sure the tension does not hurt their security and other mutual strategic interests in the Pacific region ([French 2017](#)). The broader strategic considerations by both governments not only encouraged Japan to hire US-based lobbyists but also enabled those lobbyists to gain access to US officials to make a case on behalf of Japan over relatively less salient issue of trade imbalances.

Based on the discussion above, we postulate the following:

Hypothesis 2 *The targets of US sanctions over economic issues will lobby the US government more than other states*

Sanctions and Lobbying by Third-party States

Beyond their primary aim to coerce a change in target behavior, sanctions can inform the broader international community. Sanctions might serve as a strong signal to third-party states, communicating to non-sanctioned states that similar disputes could provoke similar treatment ([Barber 1979](#); [Baldwin 1985](#); [Lindsay 1986](#); [Giumelli 2011](#); [Peterson 2013](#); [2014](#); [2021](#); [Miller 2014](#); [Clay 2018](#)). International symbolism is considered a crucial aspect of economic statecraft. For instance, sanctions against regimes perpetrating major crimes against human rights or sponsoring transnational terrorism not only show the sender's disapproval the target regime behavior, but also symbolize the sender's determination to uphold major international norms. While all third-party states could learn from US sanctioning behavior, we expect third-party states that are geographically or politically closer to target states are particularly likely to perceive themselves as similar to the sanction target, and thus anticipate similar sanctions by the same sender. Even though previous research shows that some third-party states will change proscribed behavior when witnessing other states get punished with sanctions ([Miller 2014](#); [Peterson 2014](#)), we contend that lobbying the sender government is another viable strategy that third-party witnesses to sanctions would employ to avoid possible future punitive measures. Gaining access and enhancing their

relations with the sender government through lobbyists would be intended to influence possible future sanctions legislation and executive action against them. Some third-party states might be concerned that being more proactive through lobbying would increase the extent of attention to their own objectionable behavior and actions, as lobbying could draw attention to them and subsequently increase the possibility of them facing sanctions. However, we expect that the likely positive effects of lobbying through gaining more access and improving their ties with the sender officials should prevail over such concerns.

We posit that sanctions over security and political issues would especially incentivize similar third-party states to increase lobbying to avert sanctions. This added incentive follows from the argument above that once sanctions are imposed, diplomatic solutions would be less feasible. Strategic targets understand that it is crucial to act proactively to avoid sanctions over security and political issues because the sender would be less inclined to remove them once they are levied. Even though sanctions over economic issues might be less salient, third-party states similar to the sanction target nonetheless face an incentive to spend relatively little to persuade US policy-makers not to make demands, e.g., for liberalization. This investment would serve as insurance against potential economic damage associated with sanctions following from trade disputes and other economic disagreements.³

Based on the discussion above, we maintain that:

³It is important to note that we do not claim that lobbying always succeeds in precluding sanctions. Strategic leaders should increase lobbying expenditures when they perceive a higher likelihood that sanctions are possible because lobbying is a relatively low-cost tool aimed at prevention. As such, it might appear that sanctions imposition is more likely against states that expend more on lobbying of the US government even if lobbying actually decreases the probability of sanctions all else equal. Alternatively, we might expect leaders to reduce lobbying efforts when they perceive the impending onset of sanctions given that expectations for souring relations could reduce the anticipated benefit of lobbying. Because leaders engage in strategic behavior and could face countervailing pressures, it could be difficult to gauge the association between lobbying expenditure and the probability of sanctions onset. However, we do expect to find consistent patterns in the opposite direction of causation. The appendix presents models examining the association between lobbying and sanctions onset and termination, as well as sanction threat escalation to imposition.

Hypothesis 3 *Third-party states similar to the targets of US sanctions over security and political issues will lobby the US government more than third-party states dissimilar to the sanction targets*

Hypothesis 4 *Third-party states similar to the targets of US sanctions over economic issues will lobby the US government more than third-party states dissimilar to the sanction targets*

Research design

We test our hypotheses by combining indicators of US sanctions prevalence coded from the Threat and Imposition of Economic Sanctions (TIES) data ([Morgan, Bapat and Kobayashi 2014](#)) with data of foreign lobbying of the US government from [Pevehouse and Vabulas \(2019\)](#). Our unit of analysis is the state-year, excluding the United States. Our observations span 1975-2005, delimited to the left by the availability of lobbying data and to the right by the availability of sanctions data. In order to avoid possible bias from the inclusion that some states never lobby the United States, we also specify models excluding all states that never lobby the US government.⁴

⁴The appendix includes additional models that exclude specific states that face the most comprehensive, well-known US sanctions—Cuba, Iran, and North Korea.

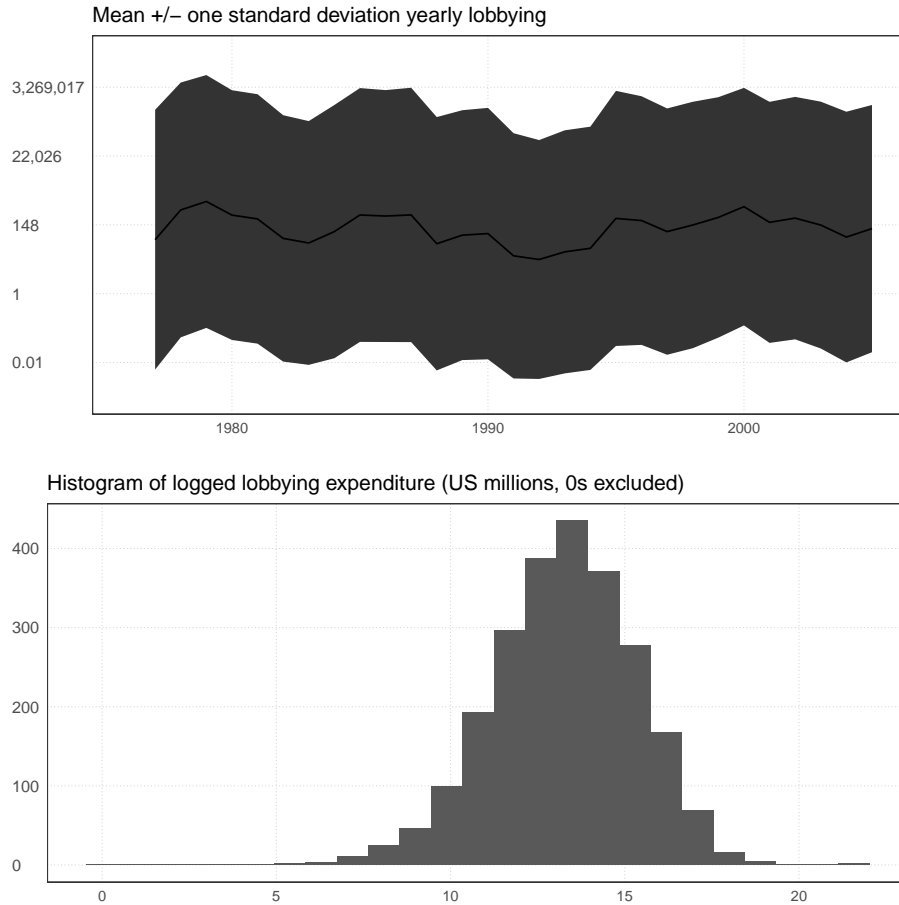


Figure 1: Lobbying in millions of 2005 US dollars.

Primary variables

[Pevehouse and Vabulas \(2019\)](#) code lobbying by foreign agents on behalf of foreign governments using Department of Justice reports.⁵ Following these authors, we use a logged indicator of

⁵The Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA) requires agents hired by foreign governments and other principals to register with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and disclose lobbying expenditures. While it is difficult to know how often foreign agents fail to disclose foreign advocacy, there have been notable recent cases of criminal charges filed for violation of FARA, for example against Paul Manafort and Rick Gates—Donald Trump’s Campaign Manager and Deputy Campaign Manager, respectively. Manafort was convicted after trial; Gates pled guilty. President Trump later pardoned Manafort but not Gates, the latter of whom cooperated with prosecutors.

lobbying expenditure in millions of (2005) US dollars.⁶ The top plot in Figure 1 displays the yearly mean lobbying value as well as a one standard deviation interval. Notably, this plot illustrates that, while mean lobbying value has fluctuated over time, there has been no immediately identifiable, systematic changes over time. The lower plot illustrates the distribution of lobbying aggregated over all years in our data, demonstrating an approximately normal distribution with a slight left skew.

Our primary explanatory variables are coded using the TIES data ([Morgan, Bapat and Kobayashi 2014](#)). We recode these case-level data to identify state-years in which 1) a state experiences a new onset of US-imposed sanctions, 2) a state experiences a continuation of US sanctions that were already in effect in year $t-1$, and 3) a state experiences the termination of US sanctions.⁷ Coding these three dummy variables identifies a reference category in which the state has not faced US sanctions in year t nor in year $t-1$. This coding decision allows us to compare the impact of a shock—newly-imposed sanctions—against a scenario where imposed sanctions are long-standing. Further considering the termination of sanctions allows us to determine whether lobbying returns to normal levels (whether up or down) after sanctions end.

In accordance with our theoretical distinction between security/political vs. economic issues, we code these dummy variables in two ways: 1) over security or political issues (contain political influence, contain military behavior, destabilize regime, release citizens, property, or material, solve territorial dispute, deny strategic materials, retaliate for alliance, human rights,⁸ weapons of mass destruction proliferation, terminate support for non-state actor, and other/non-specified), and

⁶We recognize that the lobbying data used in our analysis are unlikely to fully reflect the extent of monetized advocacy by foreign governments in Washington D.C. This is because of unreported and often unlawful lobbying by US-based lobbyists on behalf of foreign governments. Such unreported lobbying, however, is likely to be significantly less common than lawfully documented lobbying efforts.

⁷We exclude TIES cases where the target is an international organization.

⁸Although [Pevehouse and Vabulas \(2019\)](#) find that foreign lobbying can “nudge” better human rights rankings, the onset of sanctions suggests that any such attempts have failed. Results are consistent if we omit human rights as an issue.

2) over economic issues (deter or punish drug trafficking,⁹ improve environmental policies, trade practices, or implement economic reform), which we use in alternate models.¹⁰ We do not assume that all security and political disputes will be considered existential threats, while some economic disputes could theoretically threaten a target leader's tenure in office. Our argument is that, on average, economic disputes will be more open to negotiations leading to a mutually-preferable settlement than political disputes. Given that economic disputes often follow from accusations of dumping (i.e., selling below cost) whereas political disputes often include involvement in armed conflict or outright demand for regime change, by definition an existential threat to leaders, we think this classification of TIES issues is reasonable. However, the appendix presents models with an alternate coding of these issue categories.¹¹

With respect to third-party sanctions, we expect informational cues to operate particularly when states perceive relative similarity to the sanction target (Peterson 2013; Crescenzi 2018). We operationalize context similarity in two ways. First, we consider *political closeness*, coding third-party sanctions as present if an ally of a given state is facing US sanctions in a given year. We use the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) version 4.01 data to identify allies (Leeds 2018). Second, we combine this criterion with *geographic closeness*, coding third-party sanctions as present if a contiguous ally is facing US sanctions, using the Correlates of War Direct Contiguity version 3.2 data to identify contiguous states (Hensel 2017).¹²

⁹We categorize drug trafficking as an economic issue given that it involves regulation of black markets. However, there are few such observations and results are consistent if we either omit this issue or categorize it as a security issue.

¹⁰Results look consistent when we include security and economic variables together in a single model, as we present in the appendix.

¹¹Specifically, we code a variable capturing sanctions over security issues that removes the more “political” issues that might not provoke a security threat by the sender. Further, we code an alternate economic issues sanction variable that only includes cases where expected target costs are low, suggesting a relatively less salient underlying dispute.

¹²States are considered contiguous if they share a land border or are separated by no more than 400 miles of water. In the appendix, we specify models in which context is measured only in terms of contiguity. Further, the appendix presents models in which relative similarity is operationalized in terms of shared membership in

Figure 2 presents a series of histograms that illustrate the frequency with which we observe bilateral and third-party sanction initiation, continuation, and termination. Notably, the number of state-years with ongoing sanctions increases over time. Further, the number of state years experiencing the onset of sanctions over security and political issues increases sharply after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, while state years experiencing sanctions onset over economic issues are most common during the decade after the end of the Cold War. Termination of sanctions appears more steady over time. Finally, state-years experiencing third-party sanctions onset, continuation, and termination generally mirror the patterns for direct, bilateral sanctions, though overall counts are higher.

a preferential trade agreement. Results in models considering alternate context look at least as strong, if not stronger, than those presented here.

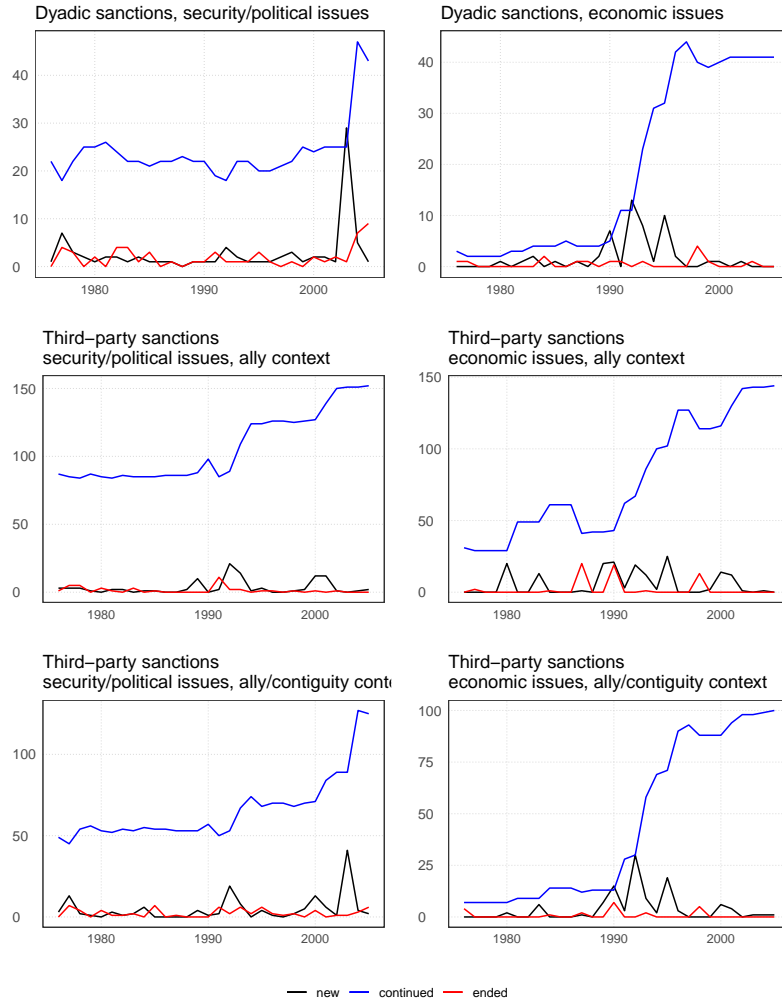


Figure 2: Sanction onset, continuation, and termination over time

Other explanatory variables

We also include a series of control variables to preclude spurious correlation, and to improve model fit. First, we use data on gross domestic product (GDP) per capita data from CEPII ([Mayer and Zignago 2011](#)) to identify low income states, which are coded as those falling below the World Bank's threshold (\$12,055 as of 2018, but adjusted yearly for inflation). All else equal, we would expect state with lower income to have fewer resources that can be allocated to lobbying. At the same time, US propensity to engage in various kinds of disputes might vary with the income of

its adversary. Second, we identify democracies as all states scoring greater than or equal to seven on the 21-point Polity combined revised score ([Marshall and Jaggers 2014](#)). Democracies might be less likely to face sanctions over security issues but more likely to see escalated trade disputes. And US lobbying firms might be more welcoming of more democratic foreign governments as clients. Third, we identify US allies using the ATOP data described above ([Leeds 2018](#)). US allies could face fewer sanctions generally and might perceive a greater return to expenditure on lobbying of the US government. We use CEPII data on the state's (logged) average distance from the United States given that states closer to the US might generally engage with it more.

Estimation

We estimate auto-regressive models with five lags of dependent variable—or AR(5) models—with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in order to gauge whether foreign lobbying of the US government varies with the onset, continuation, and termination of US sanctions against the lobbying state or a third party. Auto-regressive models enable us to assess immediate and long-run relationships in our data while also precluding bias due to serial correlation.¹³ We identify the optimal number of lagged dependent variables by adding lags of the dependent variable until we obtain residuals free from serial correlation.¹⁴ Though our dependent variable is coded as a level rather than a change, the inclusion of lagged dependent variables enables us to interpret coefficients for our explanatory variables on changes in lobbying.¹⁵ All models also include year

¹³We find that our dependent variable is stationary in panel unit root tests using the `purtest()` command through the `plm` package in R. However, panel unit root tests are finicky, requiring balanced panels and thus necessitating the omission of all observations for countries that have any missing values.

¹⁴We also examined whether adding lags of our primary explanatory variables, thereby specifying auto-regressive distributed lag (ADL) models, might be a better fit to our data. However, among the models with white noise residuals according to a Breusch-Godfrey test for serial correlation, the specification that minimized the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), suggesting the best model fit, did not include any lags of our explanatory variables.

¹⁵If we difference our DV, all coefficients except that for the first lagged DV remain identical to those presented.

fixed effects to account for time-specific heterogeneity.¹⁶

Analysis

Our statistical models demonstrate evidence that imposition of dyadic sanctions over security and political issues is associated with subsequently lower lobbying of the US government by the sanction target. Conversely, dyadic sanctions over economic issues, while not associated with lobbying in the year of imposition, are associated with higher target lobbying while sanctions continue. With respect to third-party sanctions, results are generally weaker. However, we do find some evidence that continuing US sanctions against third parties over security and political issues are associated with higher lobbying, and that the termination of US sanctions against a third party over economic issues is associated with lower lobbying.

Table 1 presents models examining the association between US sanctions over security issues and foreign lobbying of the US government. All four models include explanatory variables for direct (bilateral) sanctions as well as US sanctions against a third party. Models 1 and 3 examine all observations, while Models 2 and 4 restrict the sample only to states that at some point lobby the US government during the time frame of our study. Models 1 and 2 identify a similar context for third-party sanctions in terms of alliance: the third-party sanction variable equals one if the state's ally faces US sanctions. In Models 3 and 4, the third-party sanction variable equals one if a contiguous ally faces sanctions, considering both geographic and political "closeness."¹⁷

Notably, the coefficient for new imposition of direct sanctions is negative and significant at the 0.05 level in all four models, suggesting lower foreign lobbying of the US government in the

¹⁶The appendix presents models excluding year-FE, and instead including a dichotomous indicator for the Cold War period (prior to 1989), as the unique security context of the Cold War could affect the use of sanctions and lobbying. Primary results are consistent in these alternate models.

¹⁷The appendix models examining closeness only in terms of geography demonstrates results very similar to those examining contiguity in conjunction with alliance.

Table 1: Autoregressive model coefficients and 95 percent confidence intervals. US sanctions and foreign lobbying of the US government 1975-2005, security and political issues. All models include year fixed effects.

	DV = Lobbying dollars (log)			
	Ally context		Ally/contiguous context	
New direct sanctions	-2.00** (-3.66, -0.34)	-2.07** (-3.75, -0.39)	-1.86** (-3.57, -0.16)	-1.92** (-3.67, -0.18)
Continued direct sanctions	-0.14 (-0.71, 0.43)	-0.12 (-0.71, 0.46)	-0.12 (-0.69, 0.45)	-0.11 (-0.70, 0.48)
Ended direct sanctions	-0.41 (-2.12, 1.29)	-0.48 (-2.19, 1.23)	-0.50 (-2.21, 1.21)	-0.55 (-2.27, 1.16)
New third-party sanctions	0.95 (-0.45, 2.35)	1.09 (-0.46, 2.63)	-0.50 (-1.94, 0.94)	-0.57 (-2.07, 0.93)
Continued third-party sanctions	0.47* (-0.05, 0.99)	0.39 (-0.18, 0.95)	0.47** (0.04, 0.90)	0.36 (-0.08, 0.80)
Ended third-party sanctions	1.82** (0.11, 3.54)	2.18** (0.45, 3.91)	0.73 (-0.90, 2.36)	0.65 (-1.02, 2.31)
Low income	-0.94*** (-1.60, -0.28)	-0.92*** (-1.60, -0.24)	-0.86** (-1.54, -0.19)	-0.86** (-1.55, -0.16)
Democracy	0.38 (-0.11, 0.88)	0.47* (-0.05, 0.99)	0.33 (-0.17, 0.83)	0.42 (-0.10, 0.95)
Dyadic alliance	0.41 (-0.29, 1.10)	0.25 (-0.47, 0.97)	0.44 (-0.24, 1.13)	0.31 (-0.41, 1.03)
Distance (log)	-0.10 (-0.70, 0.49)	-0.28 (-0.90, 0.35)	-0.08 (-0.66, 0.50)	-0.22 (-0.84, 0.41)
Lag (1) lobbying dollars (log)	0.56*** (0.51, 0.60)	0.55*** (0.51, 0.60)	0.56*** (0.51, 0.60)	0.55*** (0.51, 0.60)
Lag (3) lobbying dollars (log)	0.09*** (0.05, 0.13)	0.09*** (0.04, 0.13)	0.09*** (0.05, 0.13)	0.09*** (0.04, 0.13)
Lag (3) lobbying dollars (log)	0.06*** (0.02, 0.10)	0.06*** (0.02, 0.10)	0.06*** (0.02, 0.10)	0.06*** (0.02, 0.10)
Lag (4) lobbying dollars (log)	0.02 (-0.03, 0.06)	0.02 (-0.03, 0.06)	0.02 (-0.03, 0.06)	0.01 (-0.03, 0.06)
Lag (5) lobbying dollars (log)	0.08*** (0.04, 0.12)	0.08*** (0.03, 0.12)	0.08*** (0.04, 0.12)	0.08*** (0.03, 0.12)
Constant	1.15 (-4.62, 6.93)	2.89 (-3.22, 9.00)	0.98 (-4.57, 6.53)	2.38 (-3.60, 8.35)
Observations	3,228	3,084	3,228	3,084
Restrictions	None	No all-0 DV	None	No all-0 DV
Adjusted R ²	0.59	0.57	0.59	0.57
F Statistic	122.03***	106.70***	122.08***	106.63***
BG order 1	0.32	0.26	0.19	0.19
BG order 2	0.98	0.6	1.04	0.64
BG order 3	2.86	2.82	2.55	2.41
BG order 4	5.09	4.34	4.43	3.62

* p less than 0.1, ** p less than 0.05, *** p less than 0.01

aftermath of sanctions imposition over a security issue. Notably, we see no consistent impact of continued or ended bilateral sanctions. Models 1 and 3 suggest that continuing third-party sanctions are associated with higher lobbying of the US government (at the 0.1 and 0.05 levels of significance, respectively). More intriguing is that the termination of third-party sanctions show a positive and significant association with lobbying in Models 1 and 2 (at the 0.05 level), possibly suggesting that third parties pay attention when sanctions against their allies are resolved. Though we did not expect to find this relationship, perhaps a low level of US backing down leads sanctions to end only if the target negotiates successfully or concedes. Looking at the TIES case-level data on sanctions over political and economic issues, we find that these outcome are more likely when the US is the primary sender than when it is not. Either outcome might lead similar third parties to increase their own level of engagement with the US government. However, future research is necessary to unpack the mechanisms underlying this finding.

Table 2: Autoregressive model coefficients and 95 percent confidence intervals. US sanctions and foreign lobbying of the US government 1975-2005, economic issues. All models include year fixed effects.

	DV = Lobbying dollars (log)			
	Ally context		Ally/contiguous context	
New direct sanctions	-1.31 (-3.15, 0.52)	-1.33 (-3.17, 0.51)	-1.22 (-3.07, 0.63)	-1.23 (-3.08, 0.62)
Continued direct sanctions	0.64* (-0.05, 1.34)	0.63* (-0.09, 1.34)	0.64* (-0.05, 1.33)	0.64* (-0.07, 1.36)
Ended direct sanctions	-0.52 (-4.61, 3.57)	-0.59 (-4.69, 3.50)	-0.50 (-4.62, 3.61)	-0.58 (-4.71, 3.55)
New third-party sanctions	0.51 (-0.61, 1.63)	0.49 (-0.68, 1.66)	-0.44 (-1.81, 0.92)	-0.53 (-1.93, 0.86)
Continued third-party sanctions	0.18 (-0.40, 0.75)	0.12 (-0.49, 0.74)	-0.02 (-0.54, 0.49)	-0.16 (-0.70, 0.38)
Ended third-party sanctions	-0.79 (-2.56, 0.99)	-0.91 (-2.69, 0.87)	-4.03** (-7.46, -0.60)	-4.14** (-7.56, -0.73)
Low income	-0.87** (-1.58, -0.16)	-0.85** (-1.58, -0.13)	-0.85** (-1.55, -0.15)	-0.82** (-1.54, -0.11)
Democracy	0.29 (-0.22, 0.79)	0.38 (-0.16, 0.92)	0.31 (-0.21, 0.82)	0.42 (-0.12, 0.97)
Dyadic alliance	0.34 (-0.38, 1.06)	0.19 (-0.56, 0.95)	0.35 (-0.38, 1.07)	0.21 (-0.56, 0.97)
Distance (log)	-0.15 (-0.73, 0.43)	-0.31 (-0.93, 0.31)	-0.18 (-0.75, 0.39)	-0.35 (-0.94, 0.24)
Lag (1) lobbying dollars (log)	0.56*** (0.51, 0.60)	0.55*** (0.51, 0.60)	0.56*** (0.51, 0.60)	0.55*** (0.51, 0.59)
Lag (3) lobbying dollars (log)	0.09*** (0.05, 0.13)	0.09*** (0.04, 0.13)	0.09*** (0.05, 0.13)	0.09*** (0.04, 0.13)
Lag (3) lobbying dollars (log)	0.06*** (0.02, 0.10)	0.06*** (0.02, 0.10)	0.06*** (0.02, 0.10)	0.06*** (0.02, 0.10)
Lag (4) lobbying dollars (log)	0.02 (-0.03, 0.06)	0.02 (-0.03, 0.06)	0.02 (-0.03, 0.06)	0.02 (-0.03, 0.06)
Lag (5) lobbying dollars (log)	0.08*** (0.04, 0.12)	0.08*** (0.03, 0.12)	0.08*** (0.04, 0.12)	0.08*** (0.04, 0.12)
Constant	1.76 (-3.87, 7.40)	3.32 (-2.63, 9.28)	2.08 (-3.40, 7.55)	3.68 (-2.01, 9.36)
Observations	3,228	3,084	3,228	3,084
Restrictions	None	No all-0 DV	None	No all-0 DV
Adjusted R ²	0.59	0.57	0.59	0.57
F Statistic	121.85***	106.51***	122.17***	106.84***
BG order 1	0.51	0.46	0.78	0.71
BG order 2	1.03	0.71	1.13	0.85
BG order 3	2.55	2.43	2.34	2.25
BG order 4	4.28	3.57	4.08	3.34

* p less than 0.1, ** p less than 0.05, *** p less than 0.01

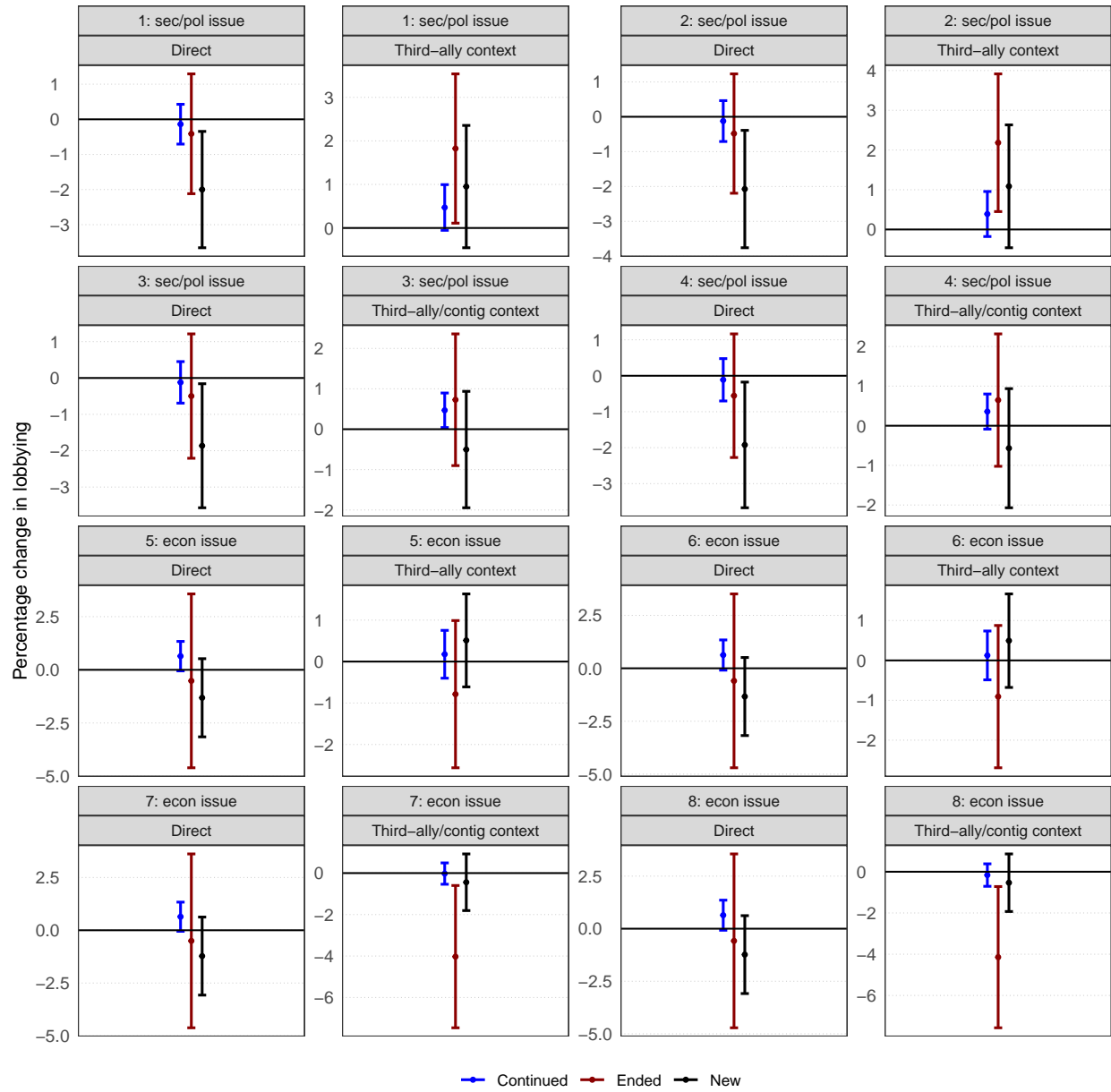


Figure 3: Immediate effect predictions from Tables 1 and 2 with 95% confidence intervals

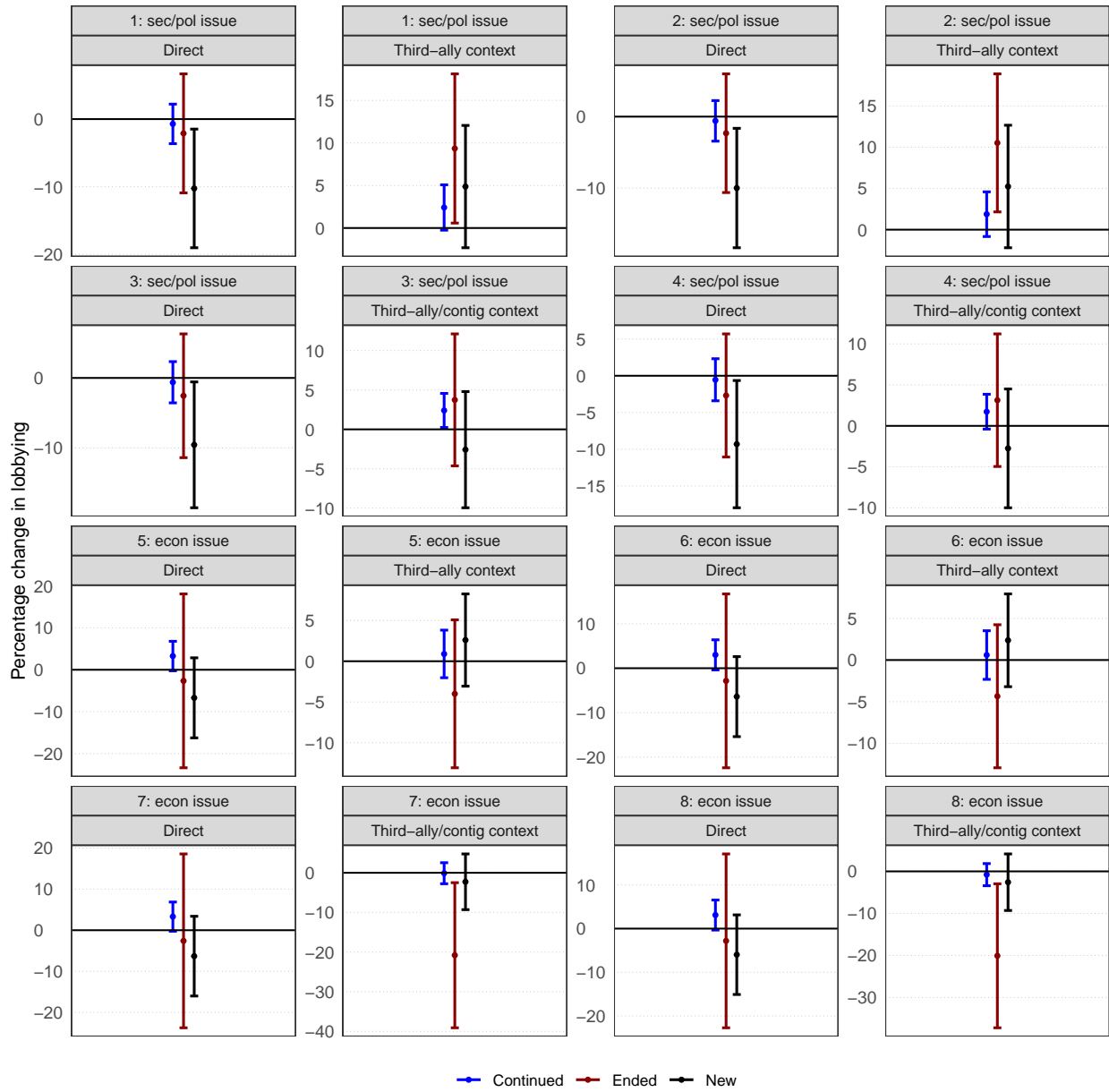


Figure 4: Long-run predictions from Tables 1 and 2 with 95% confidence intervals

Table 2 replicates Table 1 with respect to US sanctions over economic issues. Results from these models differ markedly from those examining security issues. Notably, the imposition of bilateral sanctions is not statistically significant in any of Models 5-8, but the continuation of bilateral sanctions has a positive and significant association with lobbying in all four models (at

the 0.1 level). Results for third-party sanctions over economic issues look quite different from those over security and political issues. Notably, in Models 7 and 8 (the contiguous ally context), we find that termination of third-party sanctions is associated with lower lobbying (significant at the 0.05 level). This finding mirrors what we initially predicted in our hypotheses—that ongoing third-party sanctions would spur higher lobbying. While we expected to see a relationship with new or continued sanctions, this finding does broadly fall in line with hypothesis 4. This result could imply that the resolution of third-party sanctions over economic issues leads states to infer that no further lobbying is necessary. Indeed, looking at the TIES case-level data on US sanctions over economic issues, we find that target acquiescence and negotiated settlements are far less likely when the US is the primary sender than when it is not. Perhaps failure to “win” or settle the cases leads similar third parties, on average, to see less utility in lobbying the US government. Again, however, more research is necessary to explore these mechanisms.

Figure 3 presents the immediate associations between US sanctions and foreign lobbying of the US government for all eight models across our two tables of results. Given the inclusion of five lagged dependent variables, we can also calculate the long-run multiplier (LRM).¹⁸ Figure 4 presents the long-run multipliers for these same variables across all models. In both figures, we plot the impact of newly imposed sanctions in black, continuing sanctions in blue, and sanctions termination in red.¹⁹ Estimates and confidence intervals are graphed on the y-axis, while each sub-plot indicates the relevant model and sanction types.

The results from each figure look consistent, varying only in the scale of the predicted effects.

¹⁸The LRM captures the long-run equilibrium or “steady state” of the relationship between US sanctions and foreign lobbying of the US government. To calculate it, we divide the x variable by the 1 minus the sum of all lagged y variables. To calculate the standard error and confidence intervals for the long run multiplier requires more complex calculations of the variance associated with a the nonlinear combination of coefficients. We use the car package DeltaMethod command in R to calculate the LRM and confidence intervals.

¹⁹Given that our dependent variable is logged, interpretation of substantive effects requires some transformation of coefficients and confidence intervals. We can calculate the predicted percentage deviation from baseline lobbying with the presence of recent penalties using the formula: $e^{\beta} - 1 \times 100$. However, we plot the figures using the log scale because our the varying range of estimates and confidence intervals otherwise obscure some results.

For example, from Model 1, we find that (converting the log scale coefficients into percentage changes in the DV) that the imposition of direct sanctions over security and political issues is associated with 86% lower lobbying immediately (as shown in Figure 3), with a long-run steady state at nearly 100% (over 99.99) lower lobbying (from Figure 4). From model 5, we find that the continuation of sanctions over economic issues is associated with 90% higher lobbying immediately, and a long-run steady state of over 2,500% higher lobbying. Continued third-party sanctions have considerably more modest effects. From Model 1, we find that the continuation of third-party sanctions is associated with 60% higher lobbying immediately, with a long-run steady state at over 1,000%. Intriguingly, we find that, from Model 7, the termination of third-party sanctions over an economic issue is associated with 98% lower lobbying immediately, and essentially 100% lower lobbying in the long run. Again, this finding could follow from a third party deeming lobbying no longer necessary once US sanctions have ended, though further research is necessary to scrutinize this finding.

We should note that our theory assumes that foreign governments seek out lobbyists to varying degrees depending on their perception of how effective lobbying might be to influence US policy away from sanctions against the state. We do not account for potential that lobbying firms proactively seek foreign governments as clients. We could find no information regarding how common this behavior might be. However, it might be worth considering for future research, as perhaps some of our unexpected findings could be explained by such behavior. For example, we find that, in the aftermath of termination of US sanctions over political and security issues, lobbying by similar third parties is higher than that by dissimilar third parties. Perhaps lobbying firms are alerting such states that the US has moved on from focus on the target and might be searching for new offenders.

Conclusion

In this manuscript, we examine the extent to which economic sanctions might incentivize target and third-party states to employ lobbying as an indirect tool to affect the sender state's policy decisions. We find robust evidence that US sanctions influence foreign lobbying of the US government. Specifically, while direct sanctions over security and political issues result in subsequently lower lobbying by targets, sanctions over economic issues are associated with higher target lobbying. Third-party response to US sanctions is more varied, leading to weaker evidence with respect to our third-party hypotheses.

Our analysis underscores the importance of untangling the complex and varied ways by which foreign governments and their agents could attempt to shape US economic statecraft. Rather than objective compliance with sanctions, we point to foreign lobbying as a key means by which target states might respond to US pressure in order to seek the easing or removal of sanctions, as well as when they see such actions as futile. Our results also provide further evidence that the consequences of sanctions transcend the states targeted directly. We find some evidence—supplemented by additional findings presented in the appendix—that third parties perceiving similarity to sanction targets in some cases could lobby the US government, possibly in an effort to avoid a similar coercion attempt in the future. Future research might be able to uncover stronger third-party lobbying impacts of US sanctions by better isolating similar contexts ([Crescenzi 2007](#)), possibly by identifying third parties engaging in specific behavior similar to that which led to US sanctions.

Our issue-based analysis of sanctions has significant policy implications regarding when economic coercion would incentivize target states to negotiate compliance with sender demands. Policy-makers should anticipate that sanctions over economic issues are unlikely to sever all lines of communication, as the target would still be inclined to engage with the sender in part through lobbying to resolve their differences. In the case of political and security disputes, however, policy-

makers should expect that the use of economic coercion might create less engagement, possibly intensifying the level of tension between target states and the sender.

Given the evidence that sanctions spur more foreign lobbying of the US government, future studies could expand on our analysis to gauge the effectiveness of this this lobbying expenditure. As our appendix models demonstrate, it is not clear that foreign lobbying reduces the likelihood that sanctions are imposed or removed. However, selection effects could bias these findings if anticipation of sanctions leads foreign governments to invest more in lobbying. Case analyses with attention to the timing of lobbying and US policy might provide stronger evidence that lobbying can be effective. Further research could also examine whether negotiated settlements—or even sender capitulation—become more likely than target concessions. It would also be useful to consider additional contexts that could spur perception of similarity to a third-party sanction target in order to understand the broader impact of US sanctions on behaviors of states throughout the international system. While it would be empirically challenging, it might be possible to identify third-party states that are engaging in behavior at least as bad as those that faced US sanctions, which might be most sensitive to the possibility of future US sanctions. Finally, research could also benefit from considering other US foreign policy actions that might affect foreign lobbying.

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