Why Being Sanctioned Changes How You Think

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Abstract

Why do targets react negatively to being sanctioned? For materialist accounts of the effects of sanctions, the answer is obvious—sanctions inflict economic harm. But what happens when the sanctions do not inflict any economic harm? In this thesis, I design a theoretical framework for understanding why sanctions that inflict no material harm on the target (sometimes referred to as symbolic sanctions) still result in a negative reaction by the target. I argue that sanctions communicate that the sender and the target are in a state of enmity by demonstrating the sender's intention to use economic harm to achieve its objectives. The communication of enmity thus affects both the target's perception of its relationship with the sender and the target's rhetoric about the sender. I apply this framework to Chinese symbolic sanctions against Western lawmakers between July 2020 and March 2021. Using Twitter data, Large Language Model-based sentiment analysis, and a regression discontinuity design, I find that the imposition of symbolic sanctions results in significant increases in the level of negative emotions in tweets by targeted lawmakers that refer to China. I support my quantitative findings with a process-tracing analysis of the causal chain linking the imposition of sanctions with changes in perceptions. This thesis offers several theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions to the literature on sanctions. It provides a novel framework for understanding how targets react to the non-material effects of sanctions, an individual-based text-analysis methodology for measuring sanctions outcomes, and an investigation of the effects of a rare case of sanctions being used against the West.

Keywords: Economic sanctions; Perceptions; Enmity; Computational methods; X (formerly Twitter); Sentiment analysis; Machine learning; Process tracing; China

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1 Introduction

Nobody likes being slapped with sanctions. After being targeted by a comprehensive UN embargo on August 6th 1990, Saddam Hussein referred to the United States, the West, and the United Nations more broadly as "evildoers [who] shall regret for their action[1]." UN sanctions on Iraq were amongst the most severe in history, causing several hundred thousand deaths by starvation and depriving Iraq of hundreds of billions, if not trillions of dollars in GDP between 1990 and 2003. On the other end of the spectrum, when Senator Ted Cruz was targeted by Chinese sanctions, he experienced no economic repercussions. All of his assets were held in the United States, and he stated that he had no plans to travel to China in the near future[2]. Yet even though the Chinese sanctions had no material economic impact on Senator Cruz, upon learning that he had been sanctioned, he called China the "single greatest geopolitical threat to the United States[3]." What explains the remarkable similarity in the negativity expressed by Hussein and Cruz despite the vast differences in the economic effects of the sanctions? Regardless of the example one chooses, individuals who are targeted by sanctions consistently express negative views about the state, or states, who impose sanctions on them, even when controlling for existing levels of hostility. Clearly, the extent of the economic harm caused by sanctions is not the determinant of how one's perception of the sender[4] state changes. This defies much of the basic logic within the literature on sanctions. The standard model of sanctions effectiveness predicts that greater economic harm translates to more significant outcomes[5], yet when it comes to changes in perception, negativity exists

[1]Saddam Hussein. "Saddam Hussein speech about the Gulf War and his attack on Kuwait in 1990". *Wilson Center Digital Archive, Conflict Records Research Center, National Defense University, SH-PDWN-D-000-457. Contributed by Steve Coll.* (1990).

[2]Ted Cruz. Tweet, 13 July. 2020.

[3]Ted Cruz. Tweet, July 22. 2020.

[4]I will always refer to the state which imposes the sanctions as the sender and the individual, entity, or state which experiences the direct economic effects of the sanctions as the target. It is standard practice to use these categories to describe the sanctioner and the sanctioned. For an overview of how these categories were established, see Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Jeffrey J. Schott, and Kimberly Ann Elliott. *Economic sanctions reconsidered*. 2nd. Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1990, pp. 43–44.

[5]See Johan Galtung. "On the effects of international economic sanctions, with examples from the case of Rhodesia". *World politics* 19.3 (1967), pp. 378–416, p. 388; Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott, *Economic*

regardless of the intensity of the harm. If economic harm is not the determinant of the negativity of the statements by targeted individuals, then what quality of sanctions as a tool of economic statecraft causes them to elicit negative reactions? My research question is deeply interconnected with, and motivated by, this puzzle. I ask *how does the use of sanctions affect the target's perception of its relationship with the sender, even when the sanctions inflict no economic harm?*

Understanding how perceptions are shaped by sanctions is critical to research on the effectiveness of sanctions as a tool of foreign policy. Given that sanctions cannot physically coerce targets into compliance (at least not directly), targets must choose consciously to comply with the demands of the sender in order for the sanctions to be successful. Ultimately, this choice is the product of the resignation of the target's will to resist and an expression of the target's willingness to cooperate with the sender to achieve the sender's political objectives. However, it is worth noting that not all sanctions seek to coerce policy outcomes. Capacity degradation and signaling are other common goals of sanctions policy, and oftentimes, sanctions programs seek to achieve a combination of these goals[6]. When it comes to capacity degradation, perceptions are less important, yet for signaling, perceptions are critical. I will explore why this is the case in greater depth later in this thesis. Nevertheless, studies on the effectiveness of sanctions inherently seek to investigate what motivates the target's desire to abandon its own objectives and accept those of the target. I argue that perceptions play a significant role in this process.

I design a theoretical framework to explain why the use of sanctions results in negative changes in the target's perception of its relationship with the sender. I argue that one of the many signals which sanctions communicate to the sender is that the sender and the target are in a state of enmity. I identify a typology for understanding how sanctions communicate enmity: *harm*-based and *intention*-based enmity. The signal of enmity prompts the target

sanctions reconsidered, p. 168; or Milton Friedman. "Economic Sanctions". *Newsweek* (1980), pp. 76–77 for several examples.

[6]Lee Jones and Clara Portela. "Evaluating the "success" of international economic sanctions: Multiple goals, interpretive methods and critique". *Singapore Management University* (2014).

to update its assumptions about its relationship with the sender and thus its perception of the sender. Enmity causes the target to perceive its relationship as more adversarial, and thus the target expresses greater animosity toward the sender. Crucially, because enmity is communicated via both *harm* and the *intention* to do harm, I argue that the communication of enmity, and the resulting changes in perception take place regardless of the severity of the economic harm inflicted by the sanctions. Even sanctions that inflict no economic harm communicate enmity and thus affect the target's perception of its relationship with the sender. This explains why both Senator Cruz and Saddam Hussein use adversarial rhetoric toward the states that imposed sanctions on them. The communication of enmity, and the resulting changes in perception, also affect sanctions outcomes by decreasing the willingness of the target to cooperate with the sender to achieve the sender's objectives. This theoretical framework is highly portable and can be used to explain several phenomena in the sanctions literature, such as why sanctions so rarely result in a desirable change in the target's behavior and the underlying mechanisms that make symbolic sanctions a convenient tool for sender states.

This theoretical framework explicitly challenges two assumptions that are central to the literature on economic sanctions and symbolic sanctions in particular. First, I argue against the notion that sanctions outcomes are dependent on the extent to which the sender inflicts economic harm on the target. Substantial scholarship has been dedicated to determining how to maximize economic pressure through economic and political tools with the expectation that harm is correlated with sanctions outcomes[7]. My theoretical framework suggests that the mere use of sanctions, regardless of how much harm is inflicted, affects both targets and outcomes. Second, I argue against the notion that symbolic sanctions only affect domestic and international audiences[8]. Rather, I argue that symbolic sanctions com-

[7]See Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott, *Economic sanctions reconsidered*, Daniel W. Drezner. "Bargaining, Enforcement, and Multilateral Sanctions: When Is Cooperation Counterproductive?" *Int Org* 54.1 (2000), pp. 73–102, or (David A Baldwin. *Economic statecraft: New edition*. Princeton University Press, 2020)

[8]See Taehee Whang. "Playing to the home crowd? Symbolic use of economic sanctions in the United States". *International Studies Quarterly* 55.3 (2011), pp. 787–801, Kim Richard Nossal. "The symbolic purposes of sanctions: Australian and Canadian reactions to Afghanistan". *Australian Journal of Political*

municate a variety of signals to the target, one of which is enmity. I support each of these claims with quantitative and qualitative evidence.

From a research design standpoint, my theoretical framework presents several challenges. How is it possible to accurately and empirically measure changes in perception? How can one distinguish between the effect of sanctions on perceptions when perceptions are simultaneously correlated with enmity and the propensity of the target to comply with the sanctions? In this thesis, I present a novel methodology for measuring sanctions outcomes. I deviate from the literature's focus on existing large-n sanctions databases that measure outcomes at the state level; instead, I measure the effect of sanctions on an individual level via changes in perceptions. Using Large Language Model (LLM)-based sentiment analysis methods, I quantitatively measure the levels of several emotions present in tweets[9] posted by targets that refer to the sender. Thus changes in perceptions are operationalized through changes in the emotions present in tweets about the sender. To address the problem of parallel causal chains created by the *harm*-based and *intention*-based signals of enmity, I control for the effect of economic harm on perceptions by selecting a case where the sanctions exerted no economic harm on the targets: Chinese sanctions on Western lawmakers. Extant research has yet to rigorously interrogate the question of what political and psychological effects China's sanctions may have had on their targets, largely because the sanctions have been branded as symbolic given their lack of material effects on targets[10]. I estimate the treatment effect of the Chinese sanctions on the sentiment of the lawmakers' tweets using a Regression Discontinuity (RD) in time design. My quantitative empirical analysis shows that China's symbolic sanctions led to a statistically-significant increase in negative emotions and a corresponding decrease in positive emotions. I test the robustness of my findings against several LLMs and the effects of policy uptake lag. I support and contextualize my quantitative

Science 26.1 (1991), pp. 29–50, or Katniss Xuejiao Li. "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm". *Harv. Nat'l Sec. J.* 15 (2023), p. 327

[9]Twitter was rebranded as X.com in July of 2023. However, since the case used in my empirical analysis occurred before the rebranding, throughout this thesis I will refer to X as Twitter

[10]Li, "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm", p. 350.

findings with a qualitative case study in which I trace the process from the imposition of sanctions to changes in rhetoric about China.

This methodology is more representative of the way in which policymakers assess the effectiveness of their sanctions. Rather than assessing outcomes at the country level, the Office of Global Targeting at the U.S. Treasury adds and removes targets from the U.S. Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list based on their compliance with individual-level sanctions demands[11]. This policy approach assumes that by personalizing sanctions objectives, states can take a piecemeal strategy to country-level outcomes. Therefore, this thesis seeks to instigate methodological change in the literature on economic sanctions by designing a methodology that is more closely related to policy, and thus more representative of the true way in which sanctions outcomes are interpreted by policymakers.

This thesis is divided into seven sections. In the next section, I review the literature on economic sanctions, including the two predominant schools of thought: the Expressive and Instrumental-Use schools. In the third section, I develop my theoretical framework. The fourth section introduces the case I will use to test my framework and outlines the research design. The fifth section contains a quantitative empirical study on the effects of sanctions on the sentiment of targets' statements that refer to China. The sixth section is a second empirical chapter that uses process-tracing to provide an account of the causal chain linking sanctions and changes in perception. The seventh section concludes, offering several insights for existing sanctions regimes across the globe and recommendations for future research.

2 Literature Review

Economic sanctions are a relatively modern form of statecraft. While the origins of their use can be traced back to the Peloponnesian Wars, economic sanctions as we know them today

[11] Anna Yukhananov and Warren Strobel. "After success on Iran, U.S. Treasury's sanctions team faces new challenges". *Reuters* (2014).

are a product of the blockades used in the first world war[12]. The League of Nations first codified the use of sanctions as a penalty for violations of international norms, and sanctions were imposed on Italy for its invasion of Abyssinia. Over the last 75 years, sanctions have evolved from comprehensive embargoes to a selective instrument which is capable of applying economic coercion against specific individuals, entities, financial assets, or industries[13].

This thesis draws on two major schools of thought from the literature on economic sanctions: the Instrumental-Use school, and the Expressive sanctions school. It challenges two basic assumptions that underpin these schools of thought: namely that sanctions outcomes are directly linked to the amount of economic harm they inflict, and that symbolic sanctions only communicate signals to domestic and international audiences, rather than the target. This chapter proceeds as follows. It begins by introducing the Instrumental-Use school, exploring the assumptions that underpin its conceptualization of sanctions, and outlining some of the contributions of the school to the literature on sanctions. It then introduces the counter to the Instrumental-Use school—the literature on Expressive sanctions—and argues that the effect of expressive sanctions on their targets has been underexplored.

2.1 Instrumental-Use

The standard model of sanctions effectiveness is based on the notion that sanctions are an economic means to a political end[14]. The purpose of sanctions is to coerce the target into complying with the policy demands of the sender by severing its access to the global economic and financial system. This approach is deeply rooted in a Dahlian[15] conception of power, which when applied to sanctions suggests that power is the product of the sender's ability to use economic means to compel a change in the target's behavior[16]. This basic logic

[12]Nicholas Mulder. *The economic weapon: The rise of sanctions as a tool of modern war*. Yale University Press, 2022, p. 56.

[13]Daniel W. Drezner. *How smart are smart sanctions?* 2003, p. 107.

[14]Robert A. Pape. "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work". *International Security* 22.2 (1997), pp. 90–136, pp. 90–91.

[15]Robert A. Dahl. "The concept of power". *Behavioral Science* 2.3 (1957), pp. 201–215, pp. 203–204.

[16]*Effectiveness* is the term of art used by the literature to describe successful applications of sanctions to change a target's behavior

is so pervasive in the literature on sanctions that the body of studies that use it has been categorized as the 'Instrumental-Use' school of thought[17].

The Instrumental-Use school is characterized by the assumption that states are unitary rational actors[18] and the belief that sanctions outcomes are determined by weighing the material costs of the sanctions against the material and political benefits of non-compliance[19]. One of the first models of economic sanctions posits that 'value-deprivation' is the means through which sanctions achieve their desired political ends[20]. The model suggests that in order to maximize the likelihood of that the target will change its behavior, the sender should maximize "damage [to] the economic system of the receiving nation[21]" while minimizing damage to its own economy[22]. In this regard, the Instrumental-Use school very closely mirrors Realist conceptions of security. For Realists, security is the product of relative power[23], whereas for the Instrumental-Use school, relative dependence is linked with the capacity to use effectively wield sanctions as a tool of foreign policy[24]. To maximize the likelihood that the sanctions achieve their desired ends, the Instrumental-Use school recommends that the sender seek to ensure that the costs of non-compliance are greater than the benefits of defying the sender's demands.

The turn of the century also brought a range of rational bargaining-based models to the literature on sanctions. Morgan and Schwebach develop a model based on expected utility calculations for the sender and target. They argue that across a single-dimensional issue, both the sender and the target share differing levels of utility based on the outcome. The outcome of the sanctions episode is thus defined by the intersection of the cost and

[17]Whang, "Playing to the home crowd? Symbolic use of economic sanctions in the United States".

[18]Daniel W. Drezner. *The Sanctions Paradox : Economic Statecraft and International Relations*. eng. Cambridge Studies in International Relations ; 65. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 28.

[19]Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott, *Economic sanctions reconsidered*, pp. 51–52.

[20]Galtung, "On the effects of international economic sanctions, with examples from the case of Rhodesia", p. 388.

[21]Ibid., p. 385.

[22]Friedman, "Economic Sanctions", pp. 76–77.

[23]For a cursory introduction, see Kenneth N. Waltz. *Theory of international politics*. Chapters 4 and 8 Recommended 990101307850107026. Reading, Mass, London: Addison-Wesley, 1979

[24]Ultimately, Realists would argue that relative economic dependence is just a facet of a state's broader powers, such as military and demographic

utility functions for the target[25]. If the target expects to experience greater utility from defying the sanctions than the amount of harm caused by the sanctions, then the target will choose to defy the sanctions, leading to an unsuccessful episode. Like the previous model, this model posits that the way for senders to make their sanctions more effective is by increasing the amount of economic harm inflicted on the target to raise the costs of defying the sender's demands. Bapat and Kwon develop a similar model for understanding sanctions implementation and enforcement. The model posits that there are opportunities for negotiation before and during the sanctions episode. Given that both the sender and the target are aware of these opportunities and the consequences of the sanctions, most sanctions cases are resolved at the threat stage[26]. They argue that it is only when there is no possibility of negotiation that sanctions are imposed, leading a poor success rate for sanctions.

It is as a result of the preeminence of the Instrumental-Use school that sanctions are typically classified as ineffective[27]. Because the Instrumental-Use school derives its fundamental causal logic from Dahl's concept of power, sanctions are compared against their ability to force the target to change its behavior. Accordingly, Charles Kindleberger states that "most sanctions are not effective" given that sanctions rarely result in the sender's desired change in behavior[28]. This sentiment figured prominently in works on economic sanctions in the latter half of the twentieth century[29]. In an effort to refute the claim that sanctions are not an effective tool of foreign policy, substantial scholarship in the Instrumental-Use school has been devoted to investigating how sanctions can be designed to maximize economic coercion. Factors such as the extent of multilateral enforcement of the sanctions, the regime type of the targeted state, the threat or use of force, and the extent to which the sanctions are

[25]T Clifton Morgan and Valerie L Schwebach. "Fools suffer gladly: The use of economic sanctions in international crises". *International Studies Quarterly* 41.1 (1997), pp. 27–50, p. 251.

[26]Navin A Bapat and Bo Ram Kwon. "When are sanctions effective? A bargaining and enforcement framework". *International Organization* 69.1 (2015), pp. 131–162, pp. 135–136.

[27]For a comprehensive overview of the argument against sanctions, see M. S. Daoudi and M. S. Dajani. *Economic sanctions: Ideals and experience*. eng. ILE. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983

[28]Charles Poor Kindleberger. *Power and money*. Springer, 1970, p. 70.

[29]For some examples, see ibid., Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work", or Donald G. Boudreau. "Economic sanctions and military force in the twenty-first century". eng. *European security (London, England)* 6.2 (1997), pp. 28–46

targeted have been identified as ways in which the economic harm caused by sanctions can be amplified to maximize the likelihood of the target complying with the sender's demands.

When sanctions are imposed on a multilateral basis, the restrictions on access to foreign economies are compounded. When senders impose sanctions as part of a coalition, targets face fewer alternative trading partners who could be substituted for the lost trade with the senders[30]. However, Daniel Drezner challenges the conventional wisdom that more senders is better by suggesting that when designing a multilateral sanctions program, the sender must contend with competing interests and defections by other members of the coalition[31]. Drezner's solution to commitment problems in multilateral sanctions regimes is to have a multinational organization oversee the sanctions, such as the United Nations, OSCE, or G7[32]. A contemporary example of this dynamic can be found in Western sanctions policy against Russia post-2022. While the European Union wanted to place a comprehensive embargo on Russian oil imports, the United States lobbied for an oil price cap which allowed for some oil imports from Russia, provided that they were below a set price[33]. Miers and Morgan set out to test empirically whether multilateral enforcement improves outcomes. Using a large-n analysis, they find that sanctions are more effective when imposed unilaterally[34]. However, when attempting to maximize enforcement, multilateral sanctions regimes are preferable given that they offer fewer alternative markets for targets to turn to[35]. Multilateral sanctions increase the economic harm inflicted by sanctions by limiting the ability of the target to find adequate substitutes for foreign goods and services.

[30]William H Kaempfer and Anton D Lowenberg. "Unilateral versus multilateral international sanctions: A public choice perspective". *International Studies Quarterly* 43.1 (1999), pp. 37–58, p. 38.

[31]Drezner, "Bargaining, Enforcement, and Multilateral Sanctions: When Is Cooperation Counterproductive?", p. 74.

[32]Drezner, *How smart are smart sanctions?*, p. 75.

[33]Lutz Kilian, David Rapson, and Burkhard C Schipper. "The Impact of the 2022 Oil Embargo and Price Cap on Russian Oil Prices" (2024), p. 1.

[34]Anne Miers and T Morgan. "Multilateral sanctions and foreign policy success: Can too many cooks spoil the broth?" *International Interactions* 28.2 (2002), pp. 117–136, p. 118.

[35]Bryan R Early. "Unmasking the black knights: Sanctions busters and their effects on the success of economic sanctions". *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7.4 (2011), pp. 381–402, p. 382.

Military force also contributes to the effectiveness of sanctions. While sanctions were initially conceptualized as an economic alternative to military compulsion[36], sanctions are frequently used alongside military measures. The combination of military force and economic coercion extenuates the costs of non-compliance with the demands of the sender. Force also contributes to the enforcement capacity of the sender state, which can make use of military measures such as blockades to ensure that the flow of goods and services to the target is restricted[37]. However, Robert Pape argues that sanctions should be an explicit substitute for military force and that the success of sanctions should be determined independently of armed conflict[38]. Kindleberger[39] and Donald Boudreau[40] concur, suggesting that if one assumes that sanctions are supposed to extract a change in behavior by the target, then their utility as a tool of foreign policy should be identified in the absence of military force. Yet military force can contribute to the target's likelihood of capitulation to the sender's demands. David Baldwin argues that sanctions should be used in concert with other tools of foreign policy, such as diplomacy and military force, to maximize the chance of the target acquiescing to the sender's demands[41]. He suggests that sanctions and military force are not substitutes, but rather sound complements when used in the correct context. By using military force and sanctions in concert, the sender can achieve a broader range of levers to apply economic pressure on the target to extract a change in behavior.

Likewise, the regime type of the target also contributes to the ways in which economic harm is experienced. The conventional wisdom is that democracies are more vulnerable to sanctions given that the costs of sanctions are more easily aggregated through democratic institutions into political preferences[42]. However, some scholarship has argued that democ-

[36]Mulder, *The economic weapon: The rise of sanctions as a tool of modern war*, p. 83.

[37]Daniel McCormack and Henry Pascoe. "Sanctions and Preventive War". *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61.8 (2017), pp. 1711–1739, p. 1725.

[38]Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work", p. 98.

[39]Kindleberger, *Power and money*, p. 70.

[40]Donald G Boudreau. "UN sanctions burden sharing: Article 50 of the UN charter and assistance to third states". *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 9.1 (1998), pp. 24–52, pp. 26, 39.

[41]Baldwin, *Economic statecraft: New edition*, p. xviii.

[42]David Lektzian and Mark Souva. "An institutional theory of sanctions onset and success". *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51.6 (2007), pp. 848–871, p. 849.

racies are better at resisting sanctions given that democratic leaders have a greater mandate to oppose the demands of the sender and larger capacity to generate rally-around-the-flag effects[43]. In contrast, authoritarian regimes are perceived to be less susceptible to economic sanctions given that authoritarian leaders have a greater capacity to redistribute national wealth to compensate for the losses from sanctions[44]. Thus authoritarian leaders can use sanctions to increase the regime's grip on power by prioritizing loyal supporters during the redistribution process[45]. Therefore, authoritarian leaders can manipulate the imposition of sanctions to justify extraordinary measures to redistribute wealth and mitigate the economic harm caused by sanctions.

It was the failure of broad, embargo-style sanctions that sought to maximize economic damage which gave rise to targeted sanctions. Hailed as the "precision guided munitions" of economic statecraft, targeted sanctions apply economic pressure on a select few individuals who have the capacity to influence policy[46]. By selectively applying economic pressure, targeted sanctions eliminate targets' ability to justify extraordinary redistribution policies, and limit civilian suffering. However, substantial scholarship has argued against targeted sanctions suggesting that they are no more or less effective than traditional trade sanctions[47], compliance is difficult to enforce[48], and they still cause humanitarian harm for innocent populations[49]. Despite these difficulties, targeted sanctions are the most common type of sanctions given their ease of use as a measure of first resort for senders[50].

[43]Risa A. Brooks. "Sanctions and Regime Type: What Works, and When?" *Security studies* 11.4 (2002), pp. 1–50, pp. 16–17.

[44]Richard Connolly. *Russia's Response to Sanctions: How Western Economic Statecraft is Reshaping Political Economy in Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

[45]William H Kaempfer, Anton D Lowenberg, and William Mertens. "International economic sanctions against a dictator". *Economics & Politics* 16.1 (2004), pp. 29–51, p. 48.

[46]Drezner, *How smart are smart sanctions?*, p. 107.

[47]Joy Gordon. "Smart Sanctions Revisited". *Ethics & international affairs* 25.3 (2011), pp. 315–335, p. 331.

[48]Peter Fitzgerald. "Smarter 'Smart' Sanctions" (2008), p. 38.

[49]George Lopez. "In Defense of Smart Sanctions: A Response to Joy Gordon". *Ethics & International Affairs* 26 (2012).

[50]David Mortlock and Alex Zerden. "Sanctions have become a tool of first resort. But enforcement needs upgraded and updated resources." *The Atlantic Council* (2024).

Finally, targets are capable of strategic maneuver to counteract the coercive effects of sanctions. Johan Galtung acknowledges that while value-deprivation is the mechanism through which sanctions are effective, the target's reactions are equally important to determining the outcome of a sanctions case. He argues that it is "naïve" to predict sanctions outcomes purely based on the sender's ability to maximize value-deprivation. Instead, he also suggests that the target has the capacity to "adapt," react, and interfere with the outcome of the sanctions[51]. Likewise, Drezner argues that targeted sanctions have a significant capacity to be an effective tool of foreign policy provided that the target does not take "countermeasures[52]." Therefore, even when the sender uses measures intended to inflict extensive economic harm, the target may not experience the harm. Scholarship from the Instrumental-Use school would suggest that in such cases, sanctions do not exert an effect on the target.

2.2 Expressive Sanctions

However, the Instrumental-Use school has faced substantial criticism. The primary objection to the Instrumental-Use school comes from the literature on Expressive sanctions. This school of thought was pioneered by Peter Wallensteen, who argues that the act of imposing sanctions features many expressive components, including an initial declaration of sanctions and a public list of demands that the target must satisfy in order for the sanctions to be lifted[53]. He suggests that because rhetoric is such an important component of the use of sanctions, senders can use sanctions to communicate policy preferences, norms, and political "sentiments[54]". The logic employed by the literature on Expressive sanctions closely mirrors that of Constructivist International Relations theory, even though it predates Constructivism

[51]Galtung, "On the effects of international economic sanctions, with examples from the case of Rhodesia", p. 388.

[52]Daniel W. Drezner. "Sanctions sometimes smart: Targeted sanctions in theory and practice". *International studies review* 13.1 (2011), pp. 96–108, p. 105.

[53]Peter Wallensteen. "Characteristics of economic sanctions". *Journal of peace research* 5.3 (1968), pp. 248–267, p. 122.

[54]Ibid., p. 122.

by over twenty years[55]. Constructivist thinking posits that states attach meaning to objects of foreign policy[56]—in this case sanctions—and that meaning is used to support the state's identification of friends, enemies, and logics of appropriateness[57]. Just as Constructivism challenges the materialist foundations of Realism, research on Expressive sanctions challenges the Instrumental-Use school's emphasis on material explanations for sanctions outcomes.

However, Wallensteen's formulation of expressive sanctions does not address who the expressions made by the sender are aimed. Tahee Whang sets out to solve this problem by developing what he considers to be a "systematic account of the symbolic function of sanctions" by considering domestic audiences and international audiences separately as the groups the sender seeks to influence with the rhetorical component of sanctions[58]. He illustrates his point by showing that U.S. Presidents have historically benefited from a bump in approval ratings after the imposition of sanctions[59]. Because sanctions are a relatively 'cheap' and public tool of foreign policy when compared to military force or diplomatic negotiations, they are an easy way for Presidents to demonstrate that they are doing 'something' about a foreign policy concern of the general public[60]. Additionally, evidence suggests that domestic audiences, especially in democratic countries, prefer that foreign policy issues are resolved using measures which minimize violence and maximize "respect for human life[61]."

However, U.S. Presidents are not the only sender to use sanctions in a way that generates greater domestic support. Both Chinese and Russian policymakers have used symbolic sanctions and rhetoric that "appeals to nationalist sentiments" to generate support[62]. In response to Western criticism of China's treatment of human rights in Hong Kong and

[55]Wallensteen introduced the idea of Expressive sanctions in 1968 while Alexander Wendt first published on Constructivism as a paradigm in 1992

[56]Alexander Wendt. "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics". *International Organization* 46.2 (1992). Essential, pp. 391–425, pp. 396–397.

[57]Jutta Weldes. "Constructing National Interests". eng. *European journal of international relations* 2.3 (1996), pp. 275–318, p. 282.

[58]Whang, "Playing to the home crowd? Symbolic use of economic sanctions in the United States", p. 788.

[59]Ibid., p. 798.

[60]Ibid., p. 792.

[61]Elena V. McLean and Dwight A. Roblyer. "Public Support for Economic Sanctions: An Experimental Analysis". eng. *Foreign policy analysis* 13.1 (2017), pp. 233–254, pp. 234–236.

[62]Li, "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm", p. 327.

Xinjiang, China imposed sanctions on a select few Western lawmakers[63]. Likewise, Russia announced sanctions on a range of policymakers, academics, and journalists over Western support for Ukraine[64]. Symbolic sanctions of this sort have a "performative character" in that they are imposed with the knowledge that they will have no instrumental effect because of either a lack of appetite for enforcement or limited capacity to inflict economic harm. However, performative sanctions have utility for the sender in that they can be used to appeal to domestic demand for action on foreign policy issues such as allegations of human rights abuses and support for Ukraine[65].

Symbolic sanctions need not only communicate signals to domestic audiences. Senders can use symbolic sanctions to send signals to international audiences as well. Several signals have been identified by the literature: allegiance, condemnation, and support for international norms. States with minimal economic leverage over a target can still extract benefits by imposing sanctions alongside a coalition of senders. By imposing sanctions, regardless of the extent to which the sanctions harm the target, the sender can demonstrate its alignment with, and allegiance to, the coalition of senders[66]. By imposing sanctions on Russia after the invasion of Crimea in 2014, Iceland demonstrated its commitment to its NATO allies[67]. In this context, the use of sanction served as an 'in-group' signal to the international coalition that Iceland stood in solidarity with NATO. This strategy is most frequently used by fringe members of international coalitions as a way to demonstrate allegiance to the values that unite members.

The imposition of sanctions can also be used as an expression of condemnation. While Galtung prioritizes 'value-deprivation' as the means by which sanctions achieve their ends, he notes that sanctions are frequently used to "punish the receiver" of the sanctions for violating

[63]Li, "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm", p. 352.
[64]Ibid., p. 355.
[65]Ibid., p. 365.
[66]Connolly, *Russia's Response to Sanctions: How Western Economic Statecraft is Reshaping Political Economy in Russia*, p. 58.
[67]Ibid., p. 58.

international norms[68]. This is because the act of imposing sanctions against a specific policy explicitly offers a normative argument about the legitimacy of that policy. Biersteker and Friman suggest that because of this, the act of imposing sanctions is similar to "naming-and-shaming" the target, especially in the context of the UN multilateral sanctions regime[69]. The use of sanctions is thus a rhetorical tool that is used to shape the international community's perception of "the target's elite decision makers" and delegitimize certain policies[70]. However, the use of sanctions for punishment need not explicitly seek to achieve an outcome such as a change in behavior or the deterrence of future behavior, but rather sanctions can serve as an act of retribution for a violation of international norms. By this metric, the success of a sanctions program is merely a matter of whether the harm inflicted is 'fit for the crime' that the target committed[71].

The primary prediction from models of symbolic sanctions is that the use of sanctions by a sender against a target can elicit a change in behavior by the domestic or international audience of the sanctions. However, by focusing on the effects of the sanctions on these audiences, theory on symbolic sanctions misses crucial ways in which sanctions inevitably affect targets as a type of audience. Some literature has engaged with how sanctions can communicate signals. For instance, Lekztian and Sprecher argue that the sender can use sanctions to credibly demonstrate its resolve on a specific issue by either tying its hands and generating sinking costs[72]. However, this model assumes that sanctions are part of a larger rational bargaining game where audience costs decide outcomes. Yet, bargaining-based

[68]Galtung, "On the effects of international economic sanctions, with examples from the case of Rhodesia", p. 379.

[69]Thomas Biersteker and H. Richard Friman. "UN Targeted Sanctions as Signals: Naming and Shaming or Naming and Stigmatizing?" *The Politics of Leverage in International Relations*. Palgrave Studies in International Relations Series. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015, pp. 165–184, p. 165.

[70]Neta. Crawford and Audie Klotz. *How sanctions work: lessons from South Africa*. eng. International political economy series. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999, pp. 27–28.

[71]Kim Richard Nossal. "International sanctions as international punishment". *International Organization* 43.2 (1989), pp. 301–322, p. 314.

[72]David Lektzian and Christopher Sprecher. "Sanctions, Signals, and Militarized Conflict". *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (Apr. 2007), pp. 415 –431, p. 416.

accounts do not interrogate how targets interpret and react to a broader range of symbolism associated with sanctions.

David Baldwin presents a synthesis of the Instrumental-Expressive use debate by suggesting that sanctions can simultaneously have an instrumental purpose, such as to coerce a target into abandoning its ambitions to illegally occupy territory while simultaneously serving an expressive purpose, such as condemning illegal occupations and deterring future illegal occupations[73]. Cortright et al concur with this argument, suggesting that President Carter's sanctions on the Soviet Union in the wake of the invasion of Afghanistan did not necessarily fail, even though the Soviet Union did not withdraw its forces, but rather they demonstrated America's resolve to counter the Soviet Union and stand up for the states who were victims of the USSR's aggressive foreign policies[74]. Ultimately, sanctions carry with them both expressive and instrumental purposes. Instrumental purposes, and the ways in which they are achieved, have been the primary focus of the literature on economic sanctions, largely because of the policy applications of such research, and the greater ease with which the researcher can empirically test hypotheses. Yet the expressive nature of sanctions has been systematically underexplored. Not only is the expressive component of a sanctions regime rarely considered as a coercive effect of the sanctions, but the literature has yet to consider the ways in which expressive sanctions can affect their targets.

3 The Theory

My theoretical framework begins by arguing that sanctions can communicate enmity to targets. I then introduce a typology for understanding the two ways in which enmity is communicated by the sanctions. I argue that the communication of a state of enmity affects the way the target perceives its relationship with the sender, and I explore the resulting down-

[73]Baldwin, *Economic statecraft: New edition*, p. 101.

[74]David Cortright, Ronald V. Dellums, and George A. Lopez. *Economic Sanctions : Panacea Or Peacebuilding In A Post-cold War World?* First edition. Economic Sanctions : Panacea Or Peacebuilding In A Post-cold War World? Includes bibliographical references and index. London: Taylor and Francis, 2018.

stream effects of changes in perception on effectiveness. I also explore several implications of my theoretical framework for the broader literature on sanctions and symbolic sanctions in particular.

3.1 Sanctions and Enmity

Extant literature has established that sanctions can express norms and signals to domestic and international audiences. However, I argue that sanctions can communicate signals to the target as well. Targets, as a type of audience, are receptive to the demonstrative components of sanctions (such as the announcement of sanctions, the public listing of names, etc) in the same way as domestic or international audiences. In fact, one could argue that the target may be *most* receptive to the imposition of sanctions given that it is the target who is being publicly 'named and shamed.'

While there must be a plethora of signals that are communicated by being sanctioned, such as punishment, condemnation, disappointment, and others, I wish to focus on enmity. Carl Schmitt defines the political as the relationship between a body of individuals who share a common foe, and that foe[75]. A body of individuals identifies itself, and is defined by, its foe—a second body of individuals whose objectives are directly and diametrically opposed to those of the first. Political activity is thus the antagonism of the foe through competition and manipulation with the goal of achieving an objective in spite of the foe's efforts to prevent the accomplishment of that objective. Schmitt suggests a relationship characterized by antagonism, competition, and ultimately harm is a state of enmity[76].

Economic sanctions can be mapped onto this relationship. The sender and the target are political bodies whose relationship is defined by the sender's desire to achieve an objective to which the target is directly opposed. For instance, in 2024, the United States imposed severe sanctions on Venezuela over Nicolas Maduro's interference with the national election.

[75]Carl Schmitt et al. *The concept of the political*. Expanded. The concept of the political. Includes bibliographical references and index. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp. 26–28.

[76]Ibid., p. 28.

On July 28, 2024, Venezuelans went to the polls to elect their next President. However, after the votes were tallied and opposition candidate González was found to have won with about eighty percent of the vote, the National Electoral Commission declared Maduro the winner, and Maduro remained in office[77]. The objectives of the United States and Venezuela were diametrically opposed. The United States wanted fair elections, the recognition of the true election results, and a peaceful transfer of power; Nicolas Maduro wanted to retain power. The incongruity of these objectives created a state of enmity that shattered the existing framework for cooperation established a year earlier after an agreement was reached to host free elections in exchange for sanctions relief[78]. The state of enmity was acted upon by the reimposition of sanctions, an antagonistic attempt to realize, through economic means, the United States' objective. The use of sanctions directly communicated to Maduro's regime that the United States' objective was opposed to the status quo in Venezuela. In this way, economic sanctions serve as an expression of the state of enmity that exists between the sender and the target. The sanctions simultaneously signal to the target that enmity is present and that the sender is taking aggressive action to realize its objective.

This framework is flexible and can be applied to the many different types and use-cases for sanctions. Broadly, James Lindsay defines the goals of sanctions as "compliance, subversion, and deterrence[79]." When sanctions are used to coerce compliance with a policy, the sender takes steps to inflict material harm on the target in pursuit of a policy objective which the sender and the target contest. In doing so, the sender communicates to the target that their relationship is characterized by enmity and that the sender is willing to use economic means to harm the target as a way to realize its objective. When sanctions are used for subversion, a similar logic applies—the harm is designed to intervene in the target's attempts to realize its objective, thus communicating enmity. This logic also applies

[77] Javier Corrales and Dorothy Kronick. "How Maduro Stole Venezuela's Vote". *Journal of Democracy* 36.1 (2025), pp. 36–49, p. 36.

[78] "The United States Provides and Then Rescinds Sanctions Relief for Venezuela". *American Journal of International Law* 118.2 (2024), pp. 344–349, p. 344.

[79] James M. Lindsay. "Trade Sanctions As Policy Instruments: A Re-Examination". *International Studies Quarterly* 30.2 (1986), pp. 153–173, p. 153.

to deterrence; however, the economic harm is applied prior to the target taking steps toward realizing its objective with the goal of disincentivizing and preventing the target from being able to take steps toward realizing its objective. Across all three types of sanctions, enmity results from the use of sanctions to achieve the contested objectives of the sender and the target.

However, enmity is not necessarily communicated until the sender takes action—in this case the imposition of sanctions—to interfere with the target's attempts to realize its objective. The imposition of sanctions is necessary for the communication of enmity. The threat of sanctions communicates a desire for the sender to realize a particular objective and envisions a hypothetical future state of enmity between the sender and the target should the target not comply. The threat merely communicates that should the target oppose the sender's demands, the two bodies *will* be in a state of enmity. The act of threatening the target is in itself not a signal of a state of enmity, but rather a signal of a potential future state of enmity if the target does not cooperate to realize the sender's objective[80]. Therefore, in order for the use of sanctions to communicate enmity, the sanctions must be imposed.

Additionally, it may already be the case that the sender and the target are in a state of enmity, thus making redundant the communication of enmity via sanctions. For instance, it was not until after the outbreak of the First World War that the British Navy imposed a blockade on the Central Powers[81]. In cases of this sort, the communication of enmity via sanctions still takes place, however, it merely reinforces and accentuates the existing communications of enmity via other channels, such as a formal declaration of war. Thus the communication of enmity comes in addition to latent enmity.

3.2 How Enmity is Communicated

Here I introduce a typology for understanding exactly how sanctions communicate enmity to the sender and the target. I argue that enmity is communicated through two mechanisms:

[80]Baldwin, *Economic statecraft: New edition*, p. 64.
[81]Mulder, *The economic weapon: The rise of sanctions as a tool of modern war*.

economic harm and the demonstration of the sender's intention to inflict harm. This typology can be represented algebraically:

$$E = \underbrace{\beta \cdot H}_{\text{harm}} + \underbrace{I}_{\text{intention}}$$

Where E is the total enmity communicated by the imposition of sanctions, H is the extent of the economic harm inflicted by the sanctions, β is the slope of the economic harm, and I is the enmity communicated by the intention to do harm. Thus the total enmity communicated by the sanctions is the sum of the enmity communicated by the economic harm inflicted by the sanctions and the enmity from the indication that the sender intends to use economic means to harm the target.

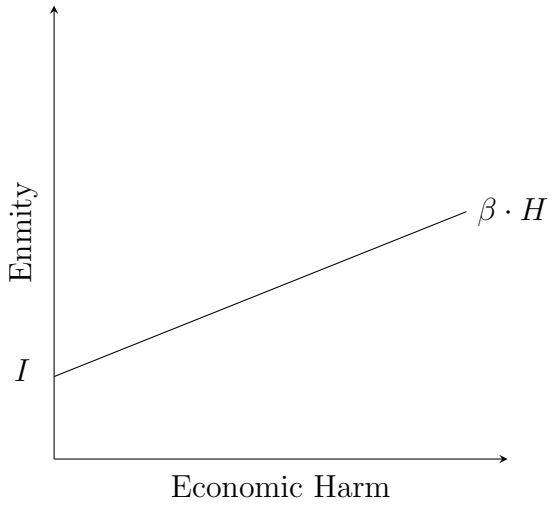
Harm communicates enmity because it is a concrete manifestation of the sender's hostility toward the target. While Carl Schmitt defines the relationship between political actors as an explicit binary—either friendship or enmity[82]—I argue that the intensity of the signal of enmity scales with the intensity of the economic harm inflicted by the sender. The greater the competing interests between the sender and the target, the greater the harm the sender will be willing to inflict to accomplish its objectives, and the greater the enmity that the sanctions will communicate. Wallensteen's findings corroborate this point by demonstrating that when the sanctions are over an issue of low fundamental disagreement between the sender and the target, the intensity of the economic measures tends to be less[83]. By sanctioning the target, the sender uses economic means to antagonize, manipulate, and coerce the target into abandoning its objective so that the sender can achieve its own objective. It is because the intensity of enmity scales with the amount of economic harm that the *harm* component of the typology is made up of $\beta \cdot H$.

However, enmity is also communicated by the intention to inflict harm: I. The use of sanctions demonstrates that the sender is willing to harm the target in order to achieve its

[82]Schmitt et al., *The concept of the political*, pp. 26–28.
[83]Wallensteen, "Characteristics of economic sanctions", p. 132.

foreign policy goals. The use of sanctions goes beyond purely political rhetoric by serving as tangible evidence that the sender has decided that the use of harm is a valid means of achieving its goals: the sender has an actionable plan for how to harm the target, and the sender has taken steps to inflict that harm. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the use of sanctions, harm, and enmity:

Figure 1: Harm and Enmity



The intercept I corresponds to the *intention* mechanism and suggests that enmity is always communicated by sanctions, regardless of the extent of the harm inflicted by the sanctions. This is because the use of sanctions always demonstrates that sender is willing to use economic harm to accomplish its goals. Crucially, the *intention* mechanism operates even when the sanctions inflict no economic harm $(0, I)$, given that the sender has demonstrated its will to harm the target to achieve its objective. Thus even sanctions that do not have a material impact on the target still communicate enmity to the target.

3.3 Perceptions and Effectiveness

How does enmity interact with the outcome of sanctions? To answer this question, we must first ask how are sanctions outcomes constructed? While scholars such as Kindleberger[84],

[84]Kindleberger, *Power and money*, p. 70.

Pape[85], and others emphasize that sanctions are an alternative to military force, the causal pathways through which sanctions and military force achieve their objectives are very different. While military force uses death, destruction, and the physical annihilation of the target to enable the 'sender' to achieve its objective, economic sanctions require that the target abandon its aspirations and cooperate with the sender to achieve the sender's objective. Returning to the example from before, while military force could physically subdue Maduro by capturing him, destroying the facets of his power, or annihilating him (through assassination), the only way in which economic sanctions could be successful is for Maduro to voluntarily choose to abdicate power and pursue a set of policies that would instate González as President[86]. Unlike with military force, success is not a function of the unilateral physical domination of the target's will, but rather a co-constitutive process wherein the target must decide to abandon its ambitions to realize a set objective and instead take steps to realize the objective of the sender. In essence, for sanctions to succeed, the target must choose to cooperate with the sender and betray its initial policy position.

The rational target would cooperate with the sender when the cost of the sanction exceeds the payoff from resisting[87]. However, extant literature has shown that even when faced with costs that dramatically exceed the payoffs from resistance, targets have preferred to resist rather than acquiesce to the demands of the sender[88]. Clearly, the rational actor assumption is not a suitable framework for understanding target behavior. Targets are motivated by a range of factors, including rational cost-benefit analysis, but also policy coherence, stubbornness, loyalty, ideology, and others. Here I seek to insert myself in the literature by suggesting that cooperation with the sender is effectively a betrayal of the target's objective.

[85]Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work", p. 97.

[86]In reality, the sanctions program against Maduro's regime targets a complex composition of elite interests. U.S. lawmakers also seek to use sanctions to shape the decision-making of elites who support Maduro to convince them to force him step down. However, this nuance is beyond the point as the pathway to success is still contingent on cooperation from the targets, be they Maduro or his cronies, as I address later in the framework

[87]See Drezner, *The Sanctions Paradox : Economic Statecraft and International Relations*, p. 28 or Galtung, "On the effects of international economic sanctions, with examples from the case of Rhodesia", p. 385

[88]John Mueller and Karl Mueller. "Sanctions of Mass Destruction". *Foreign Affairs* 78.3 (1999), pp. 43–53.

When that objective is motivated in the target's own principles, ideology, or loyalty, then the target rarely has incentive to engage in a betrayal, even despite the harm inflicted by sanctions.

Thus it is quite rare for the target to decide to cooperate with the sender. Why would one choose to betray one's principles, ideology, or even state? This conundrum can be used to explain why economic sanctions have such a poor empirical record of success[89]. Ultimately, because the target must choose to betray its initial policy position, rather than be physically forced to, stubbornness, loyalty, and the potential consequences of betrayal make targets unwilling to acquiesce to the costs of sanctions, even when they are exorbitantly high. There is a variety of strategies that can be used to make it so that the costs of sanctions experienced by the targets are lower than those which are imposed, however, I argue that even when controlling for the actual costs experienced by the target, it is the lack of a physical mechanism to induce compliance that prevents sanctions from succeeding. Compliance is the product of an internal cognitive process, where stubbornness, loyalty, and a fear of the consequences of betrayal can sway decision making. Each of these cognitive mechanisms can serve to interrupt a target's rational cost-benefit analysis of the merits of compliance. Therefore, because the decision to cooperate is subject to internal cognitive factors, the material costs of sanctions are not enough to guarantee that sanctions achieve their stated outcomes.

It is worth mentioning that the literature has identified a secondary pathway through which sanctions can be successful: regime change[90]. However, I argue that this pathway also requires cooperation in order to take place. Whereas the former pathway required that the direct target cooperate with the sender to realize the objectives of the sender, this latter pathway does not require that the target comply. Rather, the target is overthrown (violently or otherwise) by its constituents who decided to cooperate with the sender. In

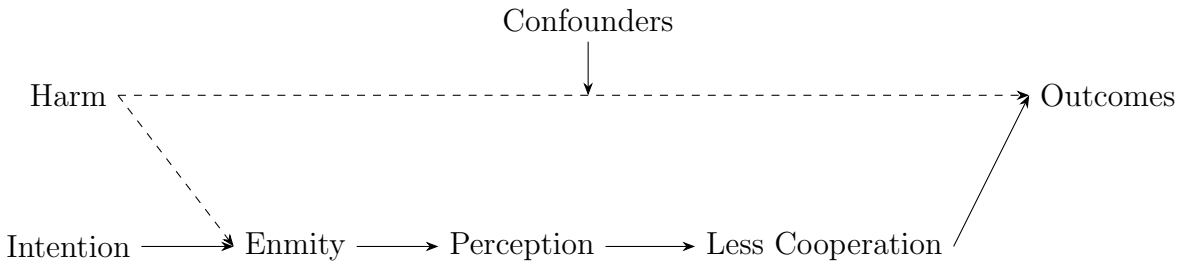
[89]Daniel W. Drezner. "Global economic sanctions". *Annual Review of Political Science* 27 (2024), p. 14.

[90]Abel Escribà-Folch and Joseph Wright. "Dealing with tyranny: International sanctions and the survival of authoritarian rulers". *International studies quarterly* 54.2 (2010), pp. 335–359, p. 354.

essence, growing enmity between the target and his constituents as a result of the costs of sanctions—for which they blame the target—creates an 'enemy of my enemy is my friend' relationship that encourages the target's constituents to align their interests with that of the sender by deposing the target. Therefore, in this secondary pathway of effectiveness, cooperation is still necessary for successful sanctions outcomes.

If cooperation is necessary for sanctions to succeed, then enmity interrupts this process by creating negative perceptions. Negative perceptions and cooperation are fundamentally opposed. The propensity of the target to cooperate with the sender is inversely related to the intensity of the negative perception of the sender by the target. Negative perceptions of the sender encourage the target to engage in competitive, antagonistic behavior and foment a desire to interfere in the intentions of the sender. Therefore, the harm inflicted by sanctions both contributes to and interferes with the effectiveness of the sanctions. In the former case, economic harm is coercive and incentivizes compliance, meanwhile in the latter, harm communicates enmity, which disincentivizes cooperation with the sender. Figure 2 demonstrates how harm applies countervailing forces on effectiveness.

Figure 2: How Intention and Harm Affect Outcomes



Economic harm, moderated by the aforementioned confounding factors, creates the incentive for the target to comply. However, the use of sanctions also communicates enmity, which results in negative perceptions of the sender. Negative perceptions are linked with a lower desire for the target to cooperate with the sender, and thus less effectiveness. Thus these two causal pathways exert countervailing forces on the outcome of the sanctions episode. Crucially, even when Harm = 0 (as denoted by the dashed lines in Figure 2), there is still

an effect on the outcome of the sanctions episode. Returning to the algebraic expression of the typology of ways in which enmity is communicated, the dashed line corresponds to $\beta \cdot H$ meanwhile the dark line corresponds to I. Even when there is no harm, the intention to inflict harm still communicates enmity, which changes the target's perception of its relationship with the sender, resulting in a reduction in the propensity of the target to cooperate with the sender to achieve the target's demands.

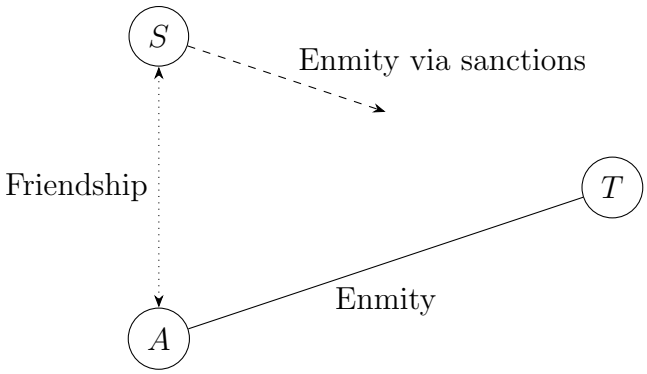
3.4 Why Symbolic Sanctions Work

This framework is portable and can be used to explain how the relationship between the sender and the target can be manipulated with symbolic sanctions to influence the relationship between the sender and an audience. It is worth acknowledging that the true 'target' of symbolic sanctions is the audience given that the sender seeks a change in behavior in the audience, not the body experiencing the sanctions. However, for continuity's sake, I will continue to refer to the body experiencing the sanctions as the target while calling the third-party the audience. By imposing sanctions on the target, the sender signals to the audience that it and the target are in a state of enmity. Should the audience also perceive itself to be in a state of enmity relative to the target, then by nature of sharing a state of enmity with the target, the sender and the audience are inherently aligned. Schmitt suggests that when bodies share a common foe, their relationship is one of friendship[91]. Hence the old adage: "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Therefore, by imposing sanctions, a sender can create a state of friendship between it and the audience. Figure 3 demonstrates how a sender S can achieve this outcome. By capitalizing on an existing state of enmity between an audience A and a future target T, the sender can communicate that its objectives are aligned with those of the audience, signaling a state of friendship.

Crucially, within this relationship, only the sender must be a state. The target and audience can take many forms: an individual, a non-state actor, or another state. For in-

[91] Schmitt et al., *The concept of the political*.

Figure 3: Why Symbolic Sanctions Work



stance, Japan's symbolic sanctions on Russia in 2014 demonstrated a state of friendship between states. Namely, Japan demonstrated to the United States, United Kingdom, and other members of the international coalition that its relationship with Russia was antagonistic[92]. Likewise, China's symbolic sanctions in 2020 and 2021 communicated a state of enmity between the Chinese government and a select group of lawmakers who were vocal about China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang[93]. This state of enmity aligned with that of China's domestic population, who believed the allegations to be false and attempts to interfere with China's domestic affairs. Therefore, the Government's state of enmity aligned with the domestic population's, signaling a state of friendship and prompting increases in the approval of the Government.

4 Research Design

I use a *nested analysis* approach to test my theoretical framework in the context of the case of Chinese symbolic sanctions on Western lawmakers. Nested analysis leverages the advantages of both large-n and small-n analysis to make causal inferences. Nested analysis starts with a large-n analysis to estimate the causal effect of the treatment while controlling

[92]Connolly, *Russia's Response to Sanctions: How Western Economic Statecraft is Reshaping Political Economy in Russia*, p. 56.

[93]Li, "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm".

for confounding variables and selection effects[94]. Qualitative small-n or single-n case studies are then used to refine and test the causal mechanisms that translate the imposition of the treatment into the outcome[95]. Nested analysis presents several advantages over research designs that prioritize only large-n or small-n designs. First, it enables the researcher to open the 'black box' presented by large-n studies which seek purely correlational evidence of causality. Second, nested analysis simultaneously remedies the limits on generalization imposed by small-n studies[96].

While nested analysis designs use outlier results from the large-n model, idiosyncratic cases, or cases where theoretical flaws exist to inform case selection, I select my case based on methodological fit. Namely, I use considerations such as data availability and a lack of confounding factors as selection criteria for my case study. Chinese symbolic sanctions on Western policymakers offer a unique opportunity to test whether the intention mechanism causes a change in the target's perception of its relationship with the sender. First, because the Chinese sanctions did not inflict any economic harm on the targeted individuals, any changes in perception cannot have been the result of the economic harm mechanism. Second, because the targets are Western lawmakers, there is greater access to a wider range of high-fidelity text outputs. Economic sanctions are overwhelmingly used by Western countries against non-western adversaries. Of all the cases in the Global Sanctions Database (GSDB), about 93% of them are against countries outside of North America and Western Europe and about 82% are against authoritarian regimes. This presents significant challenges in terms of access to available data on perceptions, particularly because authoritarian regimes tend to punish free speech. Given that the Chinese sanctions targeted lawmakers in countries with robust free speech rights, I can assume that the sentiments expressed in text outputs are more reflective of the actual cognitive processes of the sanctioned lawmakers. Therefore, Chinese sanctions on Western lawmakers present an ideal opportunity to measure the unmoderated

[94]Evan S. Liberman. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research". *American Political Science Review* 99.3 (2005), 435–452, p. 438.
[95]Ibid., p. 440.
[96]Ibid., p. 450.

impact of the communication of enmity on the target's perception of its relationship with the sender.

4.1 Introduction to the Case

China's Xinjiang province sits on its western border and features a large ethnic Turkic Muslim population: the Uyghur people. Unrest between the ethnic Uyghur population and colonial Han Chinese populations has persisted since the 1700s. There have been numerous incidents of inter-ethnic violence in the region throughout subsequent centuries. However, between the turn of the 20th century and 2014, relations between the Uyghur people and Han Chinese were largely non-violent[97]. In 2014, a terrorist attack on Han Chinese in Xinjiang led Xi Jinping to begin a crackdown on Uyghur populations. Since 2014, over 1.8 million Uyghurs have been detained in forced "re-education" facilities where they have endured "Sinicization," murder, rape, forced sterilization, and slave labor[98]. State forces have split up Uyghur communities and offered generous subsidies for Han Chinese citizens to settle in the Xinjiang region[99]. In 2020, amid rising tensions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the United States became increasingly alarmed by the intensity and scale of genocide taking place in Xinjiang. On June 8th, the Senate passed the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, which authorized the U.S. President to impose sanctions on any individuals or entities which it believed to be participating in human and religious rights violations against the Uyghur people in the Xinjiang province of China[100]. President Trump signed the bill into law on June 17th, 2020. Less than a month later, on July 9th, The U.S. Treasury announced sanctions on four individuals and one entity related to human rights abuses in the Xinjiang province.

[97] Joanne Smith Finley. "Why scholars and activists increasingly fear a Uyghur genocide in Xinjiang". *Journal of Genocide Research* 23.3 (2021), pp. 348–370, pp. 350–351.

[98] Mel Gurtov. "US-China Relations and Human Rights: The Xinjiang Case". *Asian Perspective* 45.1 (2021), pp. 83–90, p. 85.

[99] Smith Finley, "Why scholars and activists increasingly fear a Uyghur genocide in Xinjiang", p. 352.

[100] *Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020.* Bill. 2020.

Simultaneously, human rights concerns over the treatment of protesters in Hong Kong were another flash point in Sino-American relations. From 2019 to 2020, over two million Hong Kong citizens took to the streets in protest of a bill that would have enabled the extradition of criminal suspects to China[101]. The protests morphed into a political movement against the growing influence of China and the Communist Party in Hong Kong—a blurring of the division once delineated by the 'one country, two systems' policy[102]. The Hong Kong police force used brutal force to put down the protests, including tactics such as mass arrests, tear gas, and strict penalties for violations of mask laws[103]. On June 30th, 2020, Beijing passed the National Security Law, which included a set of measures that enabled the Hong Kong Government to arrest and detain individuals suspected of involvement in one of four crimes: succession, subversion, terrorist activities, and collusion with foreign forces[104]. The punishments for these crimes included three years to life imprisonment. In the weeks after the passing of the National Security Law, over 50 individuals were arrested in relation to these crimes, and over 2,500 underwent prosecution for existing crimes related to the protests[105]. On July 2nd, the United States Senate passed the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, authorizing sanctions against "persons involved in the erosion of certain obligations of China with respect to Hong Kong[106]." It took two weeks until the bill was signed into law by then-President Donald Trump on July 14th. On August 7th, the United States imposed sanctions on eleven individuals for "undermining Hong Kong's autonomy" including Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR[107].

On July 13th, China imposed sanctions on Senators Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and Representative Chris Smith. The press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs justified the

[101] Milan Ismangil and Maggy Lee. "Protests in Hong Kong during the Covid-19 pandemic". *Crime, Media, Culture* 17.1 (2020). doi: 10.1177/1741659020946229, pp. 17–20, p. 17.

[102] Michael C. Davis. "Hong Kong: How Beijing Perfected Repression". *Journal of democracy* 33.1 (2022), pp. 100–115, p. 100.

[103] Ironically, in October 2019 the Hong Kong government instituted an anti-mask law to improve policing, but after the onset of the pandemic the law was reversed, requiring the use of masks.

[104] Davis, "Hong Kong: How Beijing Perfected Repression", p. 102.

[105] Ibid., p. 102.

[106] *The Hong Kong Autonomy Act*. Bill. 2020.

[107] "Treasury Sanctions Individuals for Undermining Hong Kong's Autonomy". *U.S. Treasury* (2020).

sanctions as a response to America's "external interference in Xinjiang affairs and China's internal affairs[108]." On August 10th 2020, China struck back at U.S. sanctions on Carrie Lam with sanctions on eleven Americans, including Senators Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Representative Chris Smith (each for the second time in less than a month) and Senators Josh Hawley, Pat Toomey, and Tom Cotton. Five more Americans were targeted—all leaders of think tanks. China justified the use of sanctions as a way to punish and deter the "egregious behaviors [of the targets] on Hong Kong-related issues[109]." Sanctions were imposed for a third time on 20 January, 2021. Outgoing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and "28 persons [from the Trump Administration] who have seriously violated China's sovereignty." The Chinese government spokesperson claimed that the targets, of which only ten were named in the press release, held "selfish political interests and prejudice and hatred against China." None of the targets were members of the legislature. In his final days in office, Secretary Pompeo had vocally criticized human rights abuses in China, calling the treatment of the Uyghurs a "genocide[110]".

On March 22, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and European Union imposed joint sanctions on China for human rights abuses. Four Chinese officials were targeted by the measures, which were the first instance in over thirty years that the the UK or EU had taken measures to punish China for human rights abuses[111]. The four senders immediately froze the assets of the targeted individuals and blocked all transactions cleared through payments services involving the targets. The individuals were also subjected to a travel ban[112].

[108]Hua Chunying. *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on July 13, 2020*. Press Release. 2020.

[109]Zhao Lijian's. *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian's Regular Press Conference on August 10, 2020*. Press Release. 2020.

[110]Reuters Beijing. "China announces sanctions against 'lying and cheating' outgoing Trump officials". *The Guardian* (2021).

[111]Patrick Wintour. "US and Canada follow EU and UK in sanctioning Chinese officials over Xinjiang". *The Guardian* (2021).

[112]Dominic Raab. *UK sanctions perpetrators of gross human rights violations in Xinjiang, alongside EU, Canada and US*. Press Release. 2021.

China struck back on the same day, announcing sanctions on ten individuals and five entities in Europe. Among the targets were five Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), two sub-committees, several members of national parliaments, two scholars, and a think tank[113]. The Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the sanctions were imposed on the targets as a result of "lies and disinformation" that "disregard and distorts facts, [and] grossly interfere in China's internal affairs[114]."

However, it was not until three days later that sanctions were announced against targets from one of the three other senders. On 25 March 2021, China announced sanctions on nine individuals and four entities in the United Kingdom, including current and former Members of Parliament (MPs) Tom Tugendhat, Iain Duncan Smith, Neil O'Brien, Tim Loughton, Nusrat Ghani, Lord David Alton and Baroness Helena Kennedy. The two remaining individuals included a barrister and an academic[115]. China claimed that the targets were taking action to "maliciously spread lies and disinformation" about "so-called human rights issues in Xinjiang[116]." However, unlike with the previous announcements, this press release included details of the measures which the targets would be subject to, stating that "their property in China will be frozen, and Chinese citizens and institutions will be prohibited from doing business with them. China reserves the right to take further measures[117]."

Two days later, China announced the last of its sanctions against Western targets. It imposed a set of sanctions against two Americans and one Canadian along with the Canadian Parliamentary Subcommittee on International Human Rights. Only one of the targeted individuals was a lawmaker—Michael Chong, representative of Wellington, Ontario. The American targets were the leaders of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. As with the previous sanctions episodes, this set of sanctions was imposed

[113] "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Announces Sanctions on Relevant EU Entities and Personnel". *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China* (2021).

[114] Ibid.

[115] The targeted academic was Joanne Smith Finley, whose work was cited above.

[116] *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Announces Sanctions on Relevant UK Individuals and Entities*. Press Release. 2021.

[117] Ibid.

to stop the spread of "rumors and disinformation." However, unlike in previous announcements, the spokesperson urged the targeted individuals to "clearly understand the situation and redress their mistakes[118]." Additionally, the spokesperson stated that "In the meantime, China's previous sanctions on US individuals who have seriously undermined China's sovereignty and interests on Xinjiang-related issues remain effective," suggesting that the ambiguity of the measures from previous announcements of sanctions against the United States may have meant that there was legal uncertainty as to whether subsequent sanctions replaced existing sanctions. This would explain why Representative Smith and Senators Cruz and Rubio had sanctions imposed on them twice.

Table 1: Timeline of sanctions

Date	Description
July 13, 2020	China sanctions three Congress Members for interfering in Xinjiang's and Chinese internal affairs
August 10, 2020	China sanctions additional Congress Members and several presidents of think tanks for meddling in Hong Kong Affairs
January 20, 2021	China sanctions Secretary Pompeo and 28 individuals associated with the Trump Administration[†]
March 22, 2021	China sanctions EU Members of Parliament, scholars, and think tanks for maliciously spreading lies and misinformation about human rights abuses in Xinjiang
March 25, 2021	China sanctions UK Members of Parliament, scholars, barristers, and think tanks for maliciously spreading lies and misinformation about human rights abuses in Xinjiang
March 27, 2021	China sanctions Canadian and American individuals and entities for undermining China's sovereignty and interests in Xinjiang

Note: [†]the press release only contained 10 names, despite claiming to sanction 28 individuals[119]

China's sanctions differ in character from the sanctions that we are accustomed to seeing used by Western countries. For one, China does not maintain a centralized list of targets. The United Nations, United States, most Western countries maintains the Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list, a public ledger of the names and identifying details for all individuals targeted by sanctions. Lists like the SDN list are important for the implementation

[118] "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Announces Sanctions on Relevant US and Canadian Individuals and Entity". *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China* (2021).

of sanctions policy as they enable domestic actors to quickly and easily access information about the individuals and entities with which they should not transact[120]. Additionally, the United States codifies in detail the measures employed against targets in domestic legislation and executive orders. It was not until after sanctions were imposed on American lawmakers that China created legislation to make it clear what measures would be applied to sanctioned individuals. China passed two laws between September and December of 2020—the Provisions of the Unreliable Entity List, and the Rules on Blocking Unjustified Extraterritorial Applications of Foreign Legislation and Measures—designed to codify and standardize the measures that apply to the targets of Chinese sanctions[121]. However, four years later, the Unreliable Entity List itself has still yet to be centralized or made publicly available.

The unstructured nature of China's sanctions has prompted scholars and lawmakers alike to argue that the sanctions are most likely symbolic. After being targeted by China, Senator Ted Cruz stated that he "no plans to travel to the authoritarian regime that covered up the coronavirus pandemic and endangered millions of lives worldwide[122]." Likewise, Senator Marco Rubio stated that he had no assets abroad, and thus he suggested that the sanctions were "in vain[123]." Katniss Li argues that China's sanctions policy contains a "performative dimension" aimed at creating the appearance of action to demonstrate determination to domestic audiences[124]. She argues that China uses strategic language designed to evoke emotional responses from domestic audiences in order to maximize public sentiment benefits. This argument aligns with existing literature on symbolic sanctions, which suggests that credibly demonstrating action is more important to the sender than the economic harm that is actually inflicted on the target[125].

[120]Martin Chorzempa, Mary E Lovely, and Yuting Christine Wan. "The rise of US economic sanctions on China: Analysis of a new PIIE dataset". *Peterson Institute for International Economics Policy Brief* (2024), pp. 24–14, p. 7.

[121]Li, "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm", p. 343.

[122]Ted Cruz. "Senator Cruz on China's Announced Sanctions: The Chinese Communist Party is 'Terrified and Lashing Out'". *Ted Cruz: Senator for Texas* (2020).

[123]Lily Kuo. "China places sanctions on 11 US citizens including Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz". *The Guardian* (2020).

[124]Li, "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm", p. 362.

[125]Whang, "Playing to the home crowd? Symbolic use of economic sanctions in the United States".

This case is ideal to test my theoretical framework. Given that the Chinese sanctions had no material effect on the targeted Western lawmakers, it is possible to isolate the effect of the intention to inflict harm from the effects of harm itself. If the sanctions had inflicted economic harm, then it would be impossible to distinguish the treatment effect of being sanctioned from the effects of economic harm.

4.2 Quantitative Identification Strategy

The process outlined in my theoretical framework is deeply personal, shaped by an individual's personal cognitive structures. While it is impossible to observe and quantify the exact cognitive mechanisms that contribute to the target's perception of the target, it is possible to indirectly measure the effect of these mechanisms using both large-n and small-n methods. Here I outline a quantitative approach to measuring changes in the way a target perceives the sender in the wake of being targeted by sanctions using quantitative and qualitative methods.

This approach aims to measure a deeply personal process—changes in perception—and as such it necessitates analysis on a per-target level. However, the primary datasets on economic sanctions are not equipped for per-target analysis. HSE, TIES, TSC, and the GSDB all aggregate sanctions outcomes to the state level[126]. While this approach presents several analytical benefits for studies on macro-level trends in sanctions effectiveness, it also prevents micro-analyses of individual, per-target effects[127]. This is a core limitation of sanctions research. The literature is neither conditioned to, nor capable of, per-target analysis. While recent research has begun to emphasize the need for an individual-based research agenda,

[126]See Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott, *Economic sanctions reconsidered*, p. 49; T Clifton Morgan, Navin Bapat, and Yoshiharu Kobayashi. "Threat and imposition of economic sanctions 1945–2005: Updating the TIES dataset". *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 31.5 (2014), pp. 541–558, p. 542; Thomas J Biersteker et al. "UN targeted sanctions datasets (1991–2013)". *Journal of peace research* 55.3 (2018), pp. 404–412, Constantinos Syropoulos et al. "The global sanctions data base–Release 3: COVID-19, Russia, and multilateral sanctions". *Review of international economics* 32.1 (2024), pp. 12–48, p. 16

[127]Clara Portela and Andrea Charron. "The Evolution of Databases in the Age of Targeted Sanctions". *International Studies Review* 25.1 (2022), p. 10.

data availability has interfered with all but the most basic analyses of per-target effects[128]. No concerted effort has been made to systematically estimate the effects of a sanctions program on its individual targets.

I argue that per-target analysis is possible through the use of text data generated by the target. While it may not be possible for dataset builders to ask their coders to investigate each and every individual or entity targeted by sanctions, it is possible to programmatically acquire text data generated by many (or all) of the targets of a sanctions episode, and then use it to infer outcomes. In the context of this study, Twitter provides a window into the way in which targets refer to the sender in public statements, thus allowing us to investigate how the communication of enmity affects the perception of the sender by the target. Twitter data is especially useful in this regard because it is less filtered than other sources of text data, such as press releases, which typically undergo extensive editing and revisions by teams of advisors[129]. While some tweets are drafted and reviewed by lawmakers' staff, it is often the case that tweets are made off-the-cuff by politicians in an effort to appear more natural and approachable while able to react quickly to online developments. Rolfe Peterson argues that "Twitter offers an opportunity to tap the [Member of Congress]'s sentiment directly" enabling direct access to the "personal thoughts and opinions" of lawmakers[130]. Additionally, tweets are a high-frequency data type, with tens or hundreds of tweets per day, depending on the user. Provided that the researcher has enough users within their universe of cases, Twitter can be used for high-frequency time-series studies, with even hourly levels of precision[131].

To measure causally the effect of the sanctions on perceptions, I use a RD in time model. RD designs take advantage of exogenous assignment rules to measure discontinuous changes in outcomes around an exogenous cutoff. They measure the change in the outcome

[128]Ibid., p. 17.

[129]James N. Druckman, Martin J. Kifer, and Michael Parkin. "The Technological Development of Congressional Candidate Web Sites: How and Why Candidates Use Web Innovations". *Social science computer review* 25.4 (2007), pp. 425–442, p. 432.

[130]Rolfe Daus Peterson. "To tweet or not to tweet: Exploring the determinants of early adoption of Twitter by House members in the 111th Congress". *The Social science journal (Fort Collins)* 49.4 (2012), pp. 430–438, p. 432.

[131]Mike Thelwall. "Sentiment analysis and time series with Twitter". *Twitter and society* 1 (2014), p. 84.

relative to an existing level of the outcome variable. Thus in this study, the treatment effect takes into account potential latent levels of enmity between the sender and target. RD designs estimate the treatment effect τ as the discontinuous jump in the outcome variable at the point of treatment:

$$\tau_c = \mathbb{E}[Y_1 - Y_0 \mid X = c]$$

Where:

$$\begin{aligned} \tau_c &= \text{the treatment effect at the cutoff} \\ Y &= \text{the outcome variable (1 if treated, and 0 if not)} \\ X &= \text{the running variable, time } (x \in X) \\ c &= \text{the cutoff} \end{aligned}$$

However, because it is impossible to measure both an outcome and its counterfactual simultaneously, the treatment effect is assumed to be the difference in expected outcomes when X tends to the cutoff. Thus the observable treatment effect calculated by RD models is the *Local Average Treatment Effect*[132] (τ_{LATE}):

$$\tau_{\text{LATE}} = \lim_{x \downarrow c} \mathbb{E}[Y \mid X = x] - \lim_{x \uparrow c} \mathbb{E}[Y \mid X = x]$$

In the context of this study, the LATE is the causal effect of the sanctions on the sanctioned lawmakers as time tends to the moment when the sanctions were imposed. Likewise, the outcome variable is the sentiment scores of statements by targeted lawmakers about China. Because the assignment rule is based on time as a running variable, the RD design used in this study is thus a regression discontinuity in time. While a typical RD design uses material or conceptual cutoffs, such as borders or test-score thresholds[133], an RD in time uses the

[132] Joshua D Angrist and Guido W Imbens. *Identification and Estimation of Local Average Treatment Effects*. Working Paper 118. National Bureau of Economic Research, 1995.

[133] For an example, see Donald L Thistlethwaite and Donald T Campbell. "Regression-discontinuity analysis: An alternative to the ex post facto experiment". *Journal of Educational psychology* 51.6 (1960), p. 309

date of an event as the treatment assignment rule, enabling the use of RD designs for event studies[134].

RD in time designs require that two main assumptions be satisfied for causal identification. Firstly, the evolution of expected outcomes must be continuous around the cutoff[135]. In the context of this study, an RD in time would suggest that the sentiment of tweets about China around the date of the imposition of sanctions are distributed as-if randomly. If the sanctions had not been imposed by China, then the sentiment of the tweets would have been roughly the same before and after the date of imposition. Therefore, it is possible to assume that the only factor affecting changes in sentiment around the date of the imposition is the sanctions themselves. Secondly, the event must be truly exogenous and unrelated to any other simultaneous event which may create a discontinuous effect on the outcome variable[136]. This assumption is required so that one can assume that the LATE represents the effect of the treatment in question and not the effect of other treatments. Each of these two assumptions has several implications: if the evolution of expected outcomes is continuous, then so too must be the distribution, or density, of the observations. Thus there should not be a discontinuity in the density of observations around the cutoff. Finally, because the treatment assignment is exogenous, units should not be able to strategically place their outcomes on either side of the cutoff. Therefore, the targeted lawmakers should not have prior knowledge that sanctions would be imposed, nor should they act on such information to change the perception of their tweets before the imposition of sanctions.

RD in time designs present several advantages over alternative identification strategies for this study. While it may seem intuitive to use non-sanctioned Congress members and Members of Parliament as control units, the volume of tweets that refer to China is not sufficient to generate a time-series dataset with a frequency greater than one month while maintaining individual fixed effects. Only one Congress Member who was not sanctioned

[134]Catherine Hausman and David S Rapson. "Regression discontinuity in time: Considerations for empirical applications". *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 10.1 (2018), pp. 533–552.
[135]Scott Cunningham. *Causal Inference*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021, p. 245.
[136]Ibid., p. 245.

tweeted about China at least one time during each month between May 2020 and October 2020. Intuitively, this is because the lawmakers who referred to China most were the ones who were most likely to be targeted and tweet about being targeted. The lack of a suitable pool of control units precludes me from using a difference-in-differences identification strategy. Monthly observations would also provide an obstacle to causal identification, given that the effect I seek to observe takes place within a far shorter time span (several days to a couple of weeks), and the political volatility in the United States during the months leading up to the election would make it difficult to assume covariate balance. Finally, RD in time designs do not explicitly need control units, and lend themselves nicely to high-frequency data. The control group is assumed to be the treated group prior to the discontinuous jump caused by the exogenous cutoff. In the data analysis section of this thesis, I specify a regression discontinuity model that uses the date of the imposition of sanctions as the treatment and the sentiment of lawmakers' tweets as the outcome variable.

4.3 Qualitative Case Study

However, quantitative findings are only capable of investigating the effect of sanctions on perceptions. The intermediate mechanism identified by my theoretical framework, enmity, is neither measured nor tested. Here is where nested analysis offers several benefits for testing my theoretical framework. By supporting the large-n quantitative study with process tracing, it is possible to uncover, interrogate, and test the communication of enmity as a mechanism in the process that translates the use of sanctions into changes in perception. Thus the supporting case study investigates a simple causal chain linking the treatment and outcome with three nodes and two edges, using the empirical testing strategies developed by Andrew Bennett[137].

Qualitative case study also offers the opportunity to engage in a deeper analysis of the content of the lawmakers' tweets and a contextualization of the sentiment scores output

[137]Henry E. Brady and David. Collier. *Rethinking social inquiry : diverse tools, shared standards*. eng. 2nd ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010, pp. 209–211.

by the RD model. Additionally, because qualitative case study methods are not restricted by the same data access and data format constraints facing the quantitative analysis, it is possible to include text data by the targeted lawmakers in media beyond Twitter, such as press releases, interviews, and statements to the media. This additional text data improves the contextualization of the content of the tweets while offering additional robustness to the findings of the RD model.

However, the case study does not use interviews as a data collection method. While interviews would offer an additional window into the internal cognitive processes used by targeted lawmakers to interpret being targeted by sanctions, interviewing targets is rarely an option in countries such as North Korea, Iran, Russia, and other frequent subjects of sanctions programs. My use of text data as a source of information about targeted lawmakers' perceptions is designed to offer researchers an alternative to interviews that can be used for future studies on the effects of sanctions against lawmakers in countries where access for researchers is severely limited.

4.4 Hypotheses

The key prediction of my theoretical framework is that China's sanctions communicated a state of enmity to the targeted lawmakers, and that the effects of that signal are apparent in the contents of the targeted lawmakers' tweets. This prediction generates several empirical implications that can be tested quantitatively using the following hypotheses:

H_0 : *Sanctions have no effect on the sentiment of tweets about China*
H_1 : *Sanctions decrease positive sentiment in tweets about China*
H_2 : *Sanctions increase negative sentiment in tweets about China*

H_0 comes from the literature and assumes that because the Chinese sanctions inflicted no costs for the targets, there is no mechanism to encourage the targets to change their behavior. H_1 suggests that the sanctions communicated enmity between China and the targeted

lawmakers, changing the target's perception of China to be less positive. Likewise, H_2 also implies that the sanctions communicated enmity, however rather than causing the lawmaker to tweet less positively about China, the target's tweets became more negative.

I augment the quantitative hypotheses with several qualitative hypotheses. Each of these hypotheses addresses a theorized mechanism connecting either: 1) sanctions and the communication of enmity, or 2) the communication of enmity and changes in rhetoric. Because these hypotheses are mechanismic, they are denoted as $H_{M^*,\ 1}$. I also include the null hypothesis and two alternative hypotheses $H_{M^*,\ 2}$ which I assess using the qualitative tests designed by Andrew Bennett[138]:

$H_{M,\ 0}$: *Observed events are not causally linked*

$H_{M1,\ 1}$: *Intention communicated enmity*

$H_{M1,\ 2}$: *Harm communicated enmity*

$H_{M2,\ 1}$: *Rhetoric changed because of updated perceptions*

$H_{M2,\ 2}$: *Rhetoric changed because of expected political gains*

5 Data Analysis

While tweets offer a window into the consciences of the targeted lawmakers, there is a number of drawbacks to using Twitter data. First and foremost is data availability. When Elon Musk purchased Twitter in 2023 and rebranded it as *X.com*, he restructured the API (the interface used for downloading tweets). Whereas traditionally, researchers had enjoyed unimpeded access to bulk downloads of tweets, the new API removed free access for accredited researchers. At present, the minimum monthly subscription for access to tweets more than one week old is $5,000[139]. This cost is prohibitively high. Thus I am forced to use publicly-available datasets containing tweets by the lawmakers of interest.

[138] Brady and Collier, *Rethinking social inquiry : diverse tools, shared standards*, pp. 208–209.
[139] *Introduction to the X API*. X.com. 2025.

Two such datasets exist for the United States Congress and UK Parliament. The tweets of Congress Dataset[140] is a public GitHub repository that contains every tweet posted by Member of Congress or a Congressional body between June 2017 until April 2023. Crucially, this dataset contains tweets from Congress Members' professional and personal accounts. tweets posted by British MPs from before April 2023 are hosted on Parallel Parliament's website. Parallel Parliament is a service which aims to increase the transparency of the British Parliament[141] by hosting data accessed by the Hansard API and other data services (including Twitter, until 2023).

Using the tweets of Congress dataset and Parallel Parliament's public MP tweet database, I collected tweets and metadata from the eleven Congress Members and Parliamentarians who were targeted by Chinese sanctions before April 2023. This data contains the content of the tweet and additional metadata, including the date and time when the tweet was posted, the name of the account that posted the tweet, and the name of the person associated with the tweet (though for the tweets of Congress dataset, the latter metadata was only accessible through merging the dataset with a dataset of U.S. Congress Members names). Crucially, this dataset is merely a sample of all of the individuals targeted by Chinese sanctions in August 2020 and September 2021. Of all the Americans targeted in July and August of 2020, only six were members of Congress. None of the Americans targeted in January or March of 2021 were Members of Congress. Some data on UK MPs is missing as well. Tom Tugendhat was not a member of Parliament at the time of the sanctions, and Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws did not have a public Twitter presence. The March 2021 sanctions against British lawmakers were coupled with sanctions against several Canadian MPs, European Parliamentarians, and associated institutions, such as the Mercator Institute for China Studies[142]. However, there are no public datasets with the content of Canadian MP or MEP tweets covering the period when the sanctions were imposed, thus precluding

[140] Alex Litel. *Tweets of Congress*. Dataset. 2023.

[141] Parallel Parliament. "Parallel Parliament: Parliamentary Tweets Database" (2025).

[142] Patrick Wintour. "China imposes sanctions on UK MPs, lawyers and academic in Xinjiang row". *The Guardian* (2021).

my analysis from including tweets by all of the lawmakers who were targeted by Chinese sanctions. Therefore, the dataset that I have assembled represents only a portion of the total number of tweets posted by all of the targets of China's sanctions. This lack of data availability informed my decision to use a RD in time identification strategy. Provided that the identifying assumptions are satisfied, an RD in time design can make causal inferences even over non-random samples.

5.1 Identifying Tweets about China

China was not the only topic which the lawmakers tweeted about. Their tweets referred to a wide variety of topics, including the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, Covid-19, and others. To disentangle tweets that refer to China from those about separate topics, I employed a zero-shot sentence classifier algorithm. I selected the Deberta v3 Base Zeroshot v2.0 model because of its performance across large datasets and ethical data sourcing[143]. This model is based on Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) created by Google and trained on the extensive Google Books dataset and Wikipedia[144]. Zero-shot classification takes advantage of the ability for LLMs to predict word association based on training data[145]. After processing the tokenized content of each tweet, the model outputs the likelihood that a string of terms was associated with the label "China." The model's output is scaled between 0 and 1. I selected only those tweets with scores above 0.01. Because of the scaling applied to the output of Deberta v3 Base Zeroshot, the logits output by the model tend to zero when the sentence does not reference the label, hence 0.01 as the exclusion criterion. I then removed all tweets that were not posted within five[146] days of the imposition of sanctions. Table 2 presents summary statistics on the data from before and after filtering for tweets

[143]Moritz Laurer. "Deberta V3 Base Zeroshot v2.0". *Hugging Face* (2024).

[144]Jacob Devlin et al. *BERT: Pre-training of Deep Bidirectional Transformers for Language Understanding.* Electronic Article. 2018.

[145]Youngjin Chae and Thomas Davidson. "Large language models for text classification: From zero-shot learning to fine-tuning". *Open Science Foundation* (2023).

[146]See my discussion on bandwidths for an in-depth explanation and justification of my selection of a five-day bandwidth

related to China. Note that Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz, and Chris Smith were sanctioned twice, on July 13th and subsequently on the 10th of August[147]. For the purposes of this analysis, I will use the date when they were first sanctioned.

Table 2: Tweets within 5 days of being sanctioned

				tweets about China	
Name	Date Targeted	Country	Total tweets	tweets	Pct of Total
Ted Cruz†	July 13, 2020	USA	215	28	13.0%
Tom Cotton	Aug 10, 2020	USA	93	24	25.8%
Josh Hawley	Aug 10, 2020	USA	71	17	23.9%
Marco Rubio†	July 13, 2020	USA	113	14	12.3%
Tom Tugendhat	Mar 25, 2021	UK	68	7	10.3%
Neil O'Brien	Mar 25, 2021	UK	36	7	19.4%
Nusrat Ghani	Mar 25, 2021	UK	23	5	21.7%
Pat Toomey	Mar 25, 2021	USA	5	2	40.0%
Chris Smith†	July 13, 2020	USA	1	1	100%
Total	–	9	520	105	–
Mean	–	–	65	11.6	20.8%

Note: †Denotes that the lawmaker was sanctioned twice.

Figure 4 depicts the distribution of tweets within a 5-day window before and after the sanctions were imposed. Each bar represents the number of tweets posted per six hours. On average, targets dedicated about twenty percent of their tweets to discussions of China, however two targets, Pat Toomey and Chris Smith, tweeted about China fewer than three times during the ten-day period, respectively. Interestingly, there is a cyclicality to the distribution of tweets. This is visible in Figure 4 with the regular spikes. Figure 5 provides an explanation for this cyclicality: the targeted lawmakers preferred to tweet on Sundays and during the work week. This could suggest that at least a portion of the tweets were drafted by members of the target's staff, rather than the target itself, or that the lawmaker preferred to tweet while 'in the office[148]'.

[147]Li, "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm", p. 353.
[148]Note that during the pandemic, many lawmakers worked from home

Figure 4: Tweets in the 5 Day Window

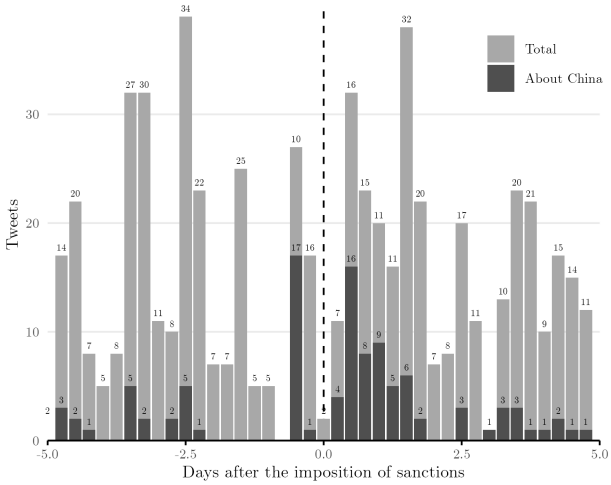
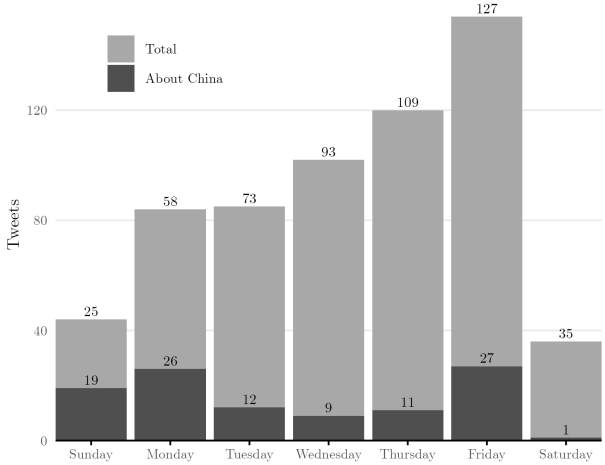


Figure 5: Distribution by Weekday



5.2 Measuring Sentiment

The utility of LLMs for research using text data extends beyond zero-shot classification. LLMs can also be used for sentiment analysis. LLM-based sentiment analysis is superior to alternative methods. The predominant method for measuring sentiment prior to the introduction of public LLMs was dictionary-based. This method relied on a dictionary of words whose sentiment was hand-coded. The distribution of sentiments within a sentence or larger corpus would then be used to assess its overall sentiment. LLMs are far superior in that they assess sentiment based on the content of the sentence relative to the content of their training data. Thus, LLMs are capable of accounting for subtleties such as irony and sarcasm while measuring sentiment. To measure the sentiment of tweets by the targets of sanctions, I chose Roberta Base GoEmotions, an LLM derived from the BERT architecture and downstream trained on the GoEmotions dataset, a collection of 58,000 reddit posts which were hand-coded with 28 separate emotions[149]. Roberta Base GoEmotions outputs raw unscaled logits for each emotion. In order to convert the raw logits into interpretable scores, I use max-min normalization function per emotion. This approach scales all of the emotion scores such that their range is between 0 and 1, with the maximum value for each emotion serving as 1 and

[149]Dorottya Demszky et al. "GoEmotions: A dataset of fine-grained emotions". *arXiv preprint arXiv:2005.00547* (2020).

the minimum value as 0. This allows for easy interpretation of results as the coefficients of the RD model will correspond to percentage increases (or decreases) in each emotion.

5.3 Model Specification

The Roberta Base GoEmotions LLM provided the outcome variables for the RD in time model. To derive a corresponding running variable for the model, I subtracted the time at which the Chinese press conference announcing the sanctions took place from the time when each tweet was posted. This process required that the time of the press conference be converted to Eastern Standard Time and British Standard Time for the American and British lawmakers, respectively. The difference in time h is measured on an hourly basis and calculated as follows:

$$h = t - t_i \quad \text{for } i \in 1, 2, 3.$$

Where t is the time when the tweet was posted and t_1, t_2, and t_3 correspond to 04:00 on 13 July 2020 and 10 August 2020, and 09:00 on 25 March 2021, respectively.

I use a five-day (120 hour) bandwidth for the RD model. By default, the rdrobust package[150] uses a bandwidth selector that optimizes for the mean squared error (MSE) of the model[151]. When using this method, the model suggests a bandwidth of 29 days (696 hours) for my regression discontinuity model. While this bandwidth optimizes the MSE of the model, it is suboptimal from a research design perspective. This is because a bandwidth that approaches one month may capture effects beyond those created by the Chinese sanctions. This is especially relevant for the sanctions against the U.S. Congress Members given that they were imposed about three months before the 2020 presidential election. China was a major campaign topic during the election, especially because of the Covid-19 pandemic. For this reason, I have limited the bandwidth to five days. A five-day bandwidth allows for the model to capture the majority of the media cycle that preceded and followed the

[150]The package used to implement RD designs in R

[151]Sebastian Calonico et al. "rdrobust: Robust Data-Driven Statistical Inference in Regression-Discontinuity Designs". *CRAN* (2023).

Chinese sanctions while not including additional, time-varying confounders. Crucially, while the Chinese sanctions came in response to Western measures, a five-day bandwidth minimizes discussions of the Western measures. The primary drawback of using a small bandwidth is inflated standard errors and reduced statistical power, given that there are fewer observations around the cutoff[152].

However, RD models also weight the values of X within the bandwidth via a kernel. While there exist a variety of ways to weight the running variable within the bandwidth, studies tend to use either *uniform*, *triangular*, or *Epanechnikov* weighting. The first two types of weighting are fairly self-explanatory: for uniform kernels, all values are given the same weight and for triangular kernels, values closer to the cutoff are weighted higher than those further from the cutoff in a linear fashion.

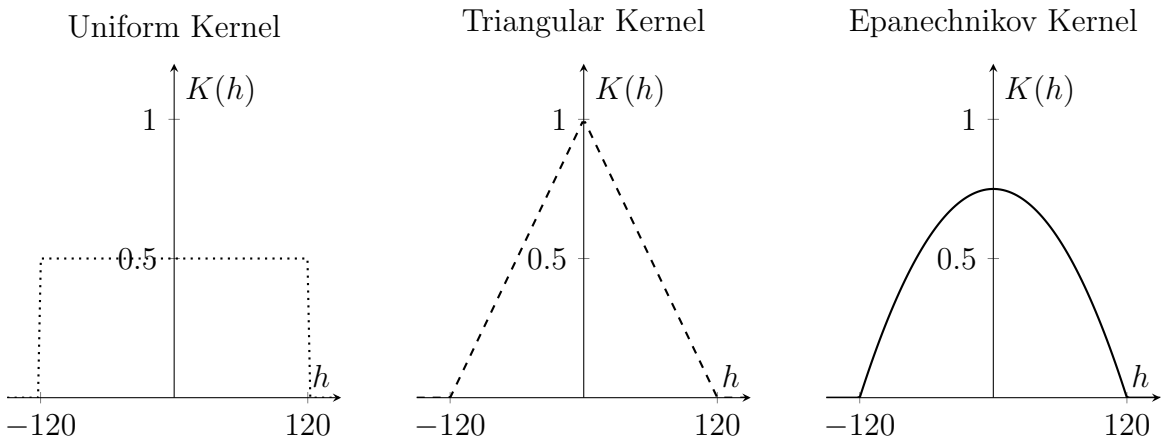


Figure 6: Kernel Selection

Figure 6 shows the density functions created by each kernel. The Epanechnikov kernel presents several advantages over its uniform and triangular counterparts. Firstly, unlike the uniform kernel, the Epanechnikov kernel weights observations closer to the cutoff higher, which fits the LATE's need for the effect to be measured when $x \to c$. While triangular kernels also prioritize observations closer to the cutoff, the excessive prioritization of values directly next to the cutoff leads to losses in the mean-squared error of the RD model.

[152]Sebastian Calonico, Matias D Cattaneo, and Rocio Titiunik. "Robust nonparametric confidence intervals for regression-discontinuity designs". *Econometrica* 82.6 (2014), pp. 2295–2326, p. 2301.

The Epanechnikov kernel is optimized for mean-squared error, and thus it is best suited to identifying robust standard errors. Therefore, for this study I use an Epanechnikov kernel. However, as Lee and Lemieux note, the choice of kernel has little effect on the actual output of the model[153].

While RD models rarely include, and do not require, unit fixed effects for causal identification, in the context of this study, target fixed effects capture any variation that may arise from differences in the lawmakers' country of origin, gender, party affiliation, and distinct cognitive processes. To ensure that the inclusion of target fixed effects does not exert a bias on the confidence intervals of the treatment effect, the standard errors were clustered by lawmaker. However, with only ten lawmakers in the dataset, the small number of clusters may induce a downward bias on standard errors making the model overly likely to reject the null hypothesis.

The researcher also has control over the number of polynomials in the RD model. Higher order polynomials present several benefits when attempting to model non-linear relationships and when using highly structured data. However, for the purposes of my RD in time model, a local linear RD model is best suited to identifying the local average treatment effect. Linear RD designs are superior to higher-order polynomial RD designs in the context of this study given that the data is not structured in a way where there are obvious non-linear relationships between h and the level of an emotion expressed by a tweet[154]. When RD models use higher-order polynomials without clear evidence of a non-linear relationship between the running variable and the outcome variable, they have a greater tendency to overfit the data and produce artificially low standard errors[155]. Therefore, I estimate the following local

[153]David S Lee and Thomas Lemieux. *Regression Discontinuity Designs in Economics*. Working Paper 14723. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2009, p. 41.

[154]Jianqing Fan and Irene Gijbels. "Variable bandwidth and local linear regression smoothers". *The Annals of Statistics* (1992), pp. 2008–2036.

[155]Guido Imbens and Karthik Kalyanaraman. "Optimal bandwidth choice for the regression discontinuity estimator". *The Review of economic studies* 79.3 (2012), pp. 933–959, p. 2.

linear regression discontinuity in time model with target fixed effects.

$$Y_{ie} = \tau \mathbf{1}(h_i \geq 0) + \beta_1 h_i + \beta_2 h_i \cdot \mathbf{1}(h_i \geq 0) + \gamma_i + \epsilon_i$$

Where:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{i,e} &= \text{the estimated score for emotion } e \text{ and target } i \\ \tau &= \text{the Local Average Treatment Effect (LATE)} \\ h &= \text{the number of hours before or after the imposition of sanctions} \\ \gamma_i &= \text{a vector of target fixed effects} \end{aligned}$$

5.4 Results

Figure 7: Base coefficient plot

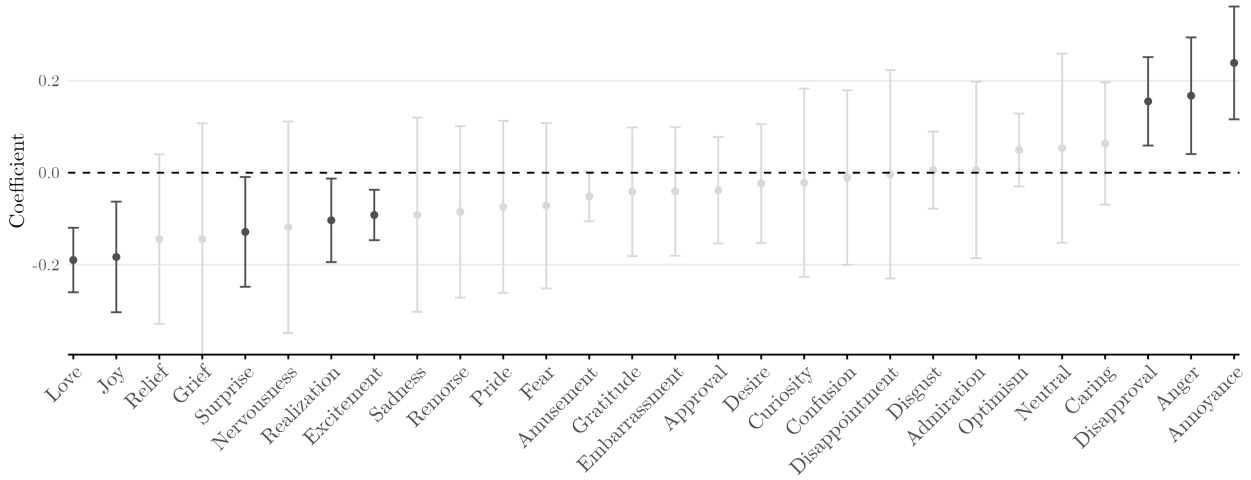


Figure 7 shows the results of the RD designs for each emotion. Each RD in time model features the exact same model specification, with the only difference being the emotion used as the outcome variable. Error bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals on the LATE. Note that the RD model dropped some unit fixed effects due to multicollinearity, likely Pat Toomey and Chris Smith. The results demonstrate a negative and statistically significant effect of the sanctions on expressions of Love, Joy, Surprise, Realization, Amusement, and

Excitement in statements that refer to China. With p-values less than 0.05 we can reject the null hypothesis H_0 that sanctions had no effect on the targeted lawmakers' perceptions of China. Therefore, the model finds evidence that supports the prediction made by H_1 that sanctions cause a decrease in the positivity of statements that refer to China. Likewise, the model also finds evidence to support H_2: Disapproval, Annoyance and Anger share p-values below 0.05 enabling us to reject the null hypothesis once again and infer that the imposition of sanctions caused increases the negative perception of China by targeted lawmakers.

Figure 8: Binned Scatter Plot

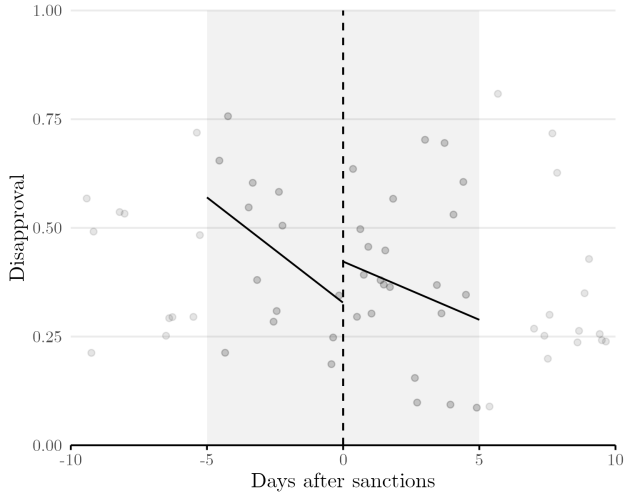


Figure 8 depicts the binned scatter plot for one of the RD models: Disapproval. Note that each point is a bin representing the average Disapproval expressed in tweets during a period of twelve hours. Only the observations within the grey-shaded region (representing the bandwidth) were included in the final RD model outputs. While visually the distribution of the points seems not to correlate with the regression line, Lee and Lemieux suggest that graphical representations of RD models can tend to under-represent the true nature of the treatment effect because of non-visible parameters[156]. Parameters such as target fixed effects, error clustering, and the Epanechnikov kernel are not visible in Figure 8. However, the Local Average Treatment Effect τ_{LATE} is visible in Figure 8 as the difference between the between the post-treatment regression line and the pre-treatment regression line at the point of treatment.

[156]Lee and Lemieux, *Regression Discontinuity Designs in Economics*, pp. 3–4.

5.5 Identifying assumptions

As was outlined in the methodology section, RD in time designs require two primary assumptions in order to credibly identify causality. The primary identifying assumption for RD designs is the continuity assumption. In order for an RD model to credibly identify causality, one must assume that the distribution of expected outcomes evolves continuously, with no artificial discontinuities other than the discontinuity of interest[157].

I use a McCrary[158] test to assess whether there exists a discontinuity in the density of observations around the cutoff. If such a discontinuity exists, it would suggest that time-varying confounders may have affected the decision for tweets to be posted at specific times. The McCrary p-value is 3.2×10^{-6}, substantially less than the 0.05 threshold used to identify a discontinuity. However, this is expected and consistent with the causal effect under investigation; the Chinese sanctions are likely to have triggered an increase in the density of tweets that referred to China directly after the cutoff. Thus, the discontinuity in density reflects an effect of the treatment, rather than strategic maneuvering on the part of the units. Hausman and Rapson support this point by suggesting that the McCrary test is less effective for RD in time designs given that density can be correlated with the treatment and that discontinuities in the density of observations can be one method of identifying causal effects[159].

The continuity assumption is complemented by the assumption that the assignment rule is independent. This assumption requires that the lawmakers did not have prior knowledge that the sanctions would be imposed. In traditional RD designs, the McCrary test can be used to test this assumption as well. However, given that the McCrary test failed in this study, it is necessary to provide additional support for the assumption that the sanctions were exogenous. Evidence suggests that China has a tendency to threaten sanctions in closed-door meetings, and only act when those threats are unsuccessful. Additionally, Repre-

[157] Cunningham, *Causal Inference*, pp. 244–245.

[158] Justin McCrary. "Manipulation of the running variable in the regression discontinuity design: A density test". *Journal of Econometrics* 142.2 (2008), pp. 698–714, p. 704.

[159] Hausman and Rapson, "Regression discontinuity in time: Considerations for empirical applications", p. 535.

sentative Chris Smith stated in a press-release that "The sanctions against U.S. officials were expected[160]." In May, the Global Times—a Chinese newspaper owned by the Communist Party—reported that the government was "mulling punitive countermeasures against U.S. individuals and entities[161]." Finally, as was outlined in the introduction to the case section above, the sanctions were announced in six batches. One could assume that as additional batches of sanctions were announced, lawmakers who would be targeted in the future could become more certain that they would be sanctioned. These pieces of evidence provide strong challenges to the assumption that the imposition of sanctions was exogenous and that the targeted lawmakers were unaware that they would be sanctioned.

However, even if the targeted lawmakers knew that they could be sanctioned by China, it is unlikely that they knew exactly *when* they would be sanctioned. There is some evidence that this was the case: in an interview, Senator Cruz stated that he was "surprised" to wake up one morning and discover that he had been sanctioned by China[162]. Moreover, Lee and Lemieux note that even if individuals know where (or in this case when) the cutoff is, and have some control over what side of the cutoff they end up on, the exogeneity assumption can still be satisfied given that the individuals are not able to *precisely* control which side of the cutoff they end up on[163]. Therefore, even if the targeted lawmakers knew that they would be sanctioned, it is unlikely that they would have been able to control the sentiment of their tweets to artificially create the treatment effect which was observed. It is the uncertainty over the timing of the sanctions, and uncertainty over which individuals would be targeted by the sanctions that enables the exogeneity assumption to hold for this study.

[160]Chris Smith. "'What bullies do': Rep. Smith is sanctioned by the Chinese for highlighting human rights abuses". *Chris Smith Congressional Newsroom* (2020).
[161]Staff Writers. "China readies biggest counterattack against US". *Global Times* (2020).
[162]Ted Cruz. *Free Speech Warriors: An Interview w/ Senator Ted Cruz and Michael Knowles*. 2020.
[163]Lee and Lemieux, *Regression Discontinuity Designs in Economics*, p. 3.

5.6 Policy Uptake Lag

RD designs are intended to measure discontinuous changes in the expected outcome of the dependent variable near to the cutoff. For studies such as Thistlethwaite and Campbell's, where the running variable is test scores and the cutoff is an arbitrary threshold, the assignment takes effect instantly—observations are either above or below the test score threshold[164]—however, when using RD in time, there is the potential for policy uptake delays to influence the presence of a discontinuous change in the outcome variable at the cutoff. In the context of this study, policy uptake delays could refer to the amount of time between when the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the sanctions and when targeted Western lawmakers learned that they had been sanctioned. Additionally, even if the lawmaker was aware that they have been sanctioned, it may have taken some time between when the sanctions were announced and when the lawmaker had sufficiently updated their perception of the sender. Alternatively, policy uptake delays may have affected the results should the targeted lawmaker have chosen to delay tweeting about China until after their team had designed a coherent media strategy relating to the sanctions.

Figure 9: Uptake Lag of 1 Day

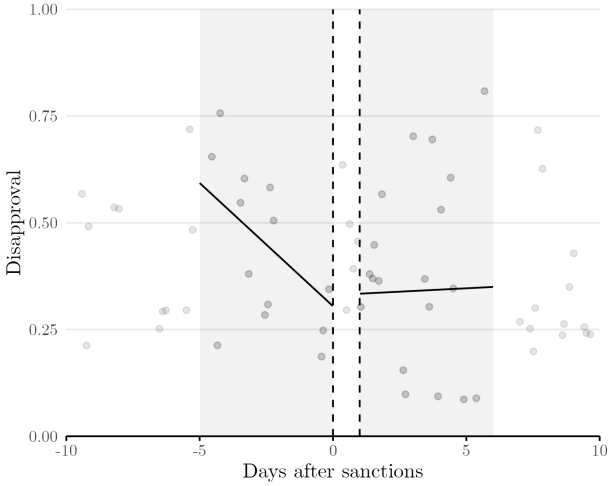
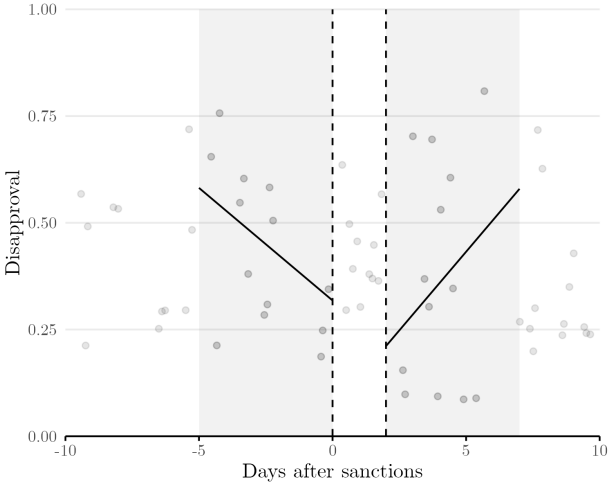


Figure 10: Uptake lag of 2 Days

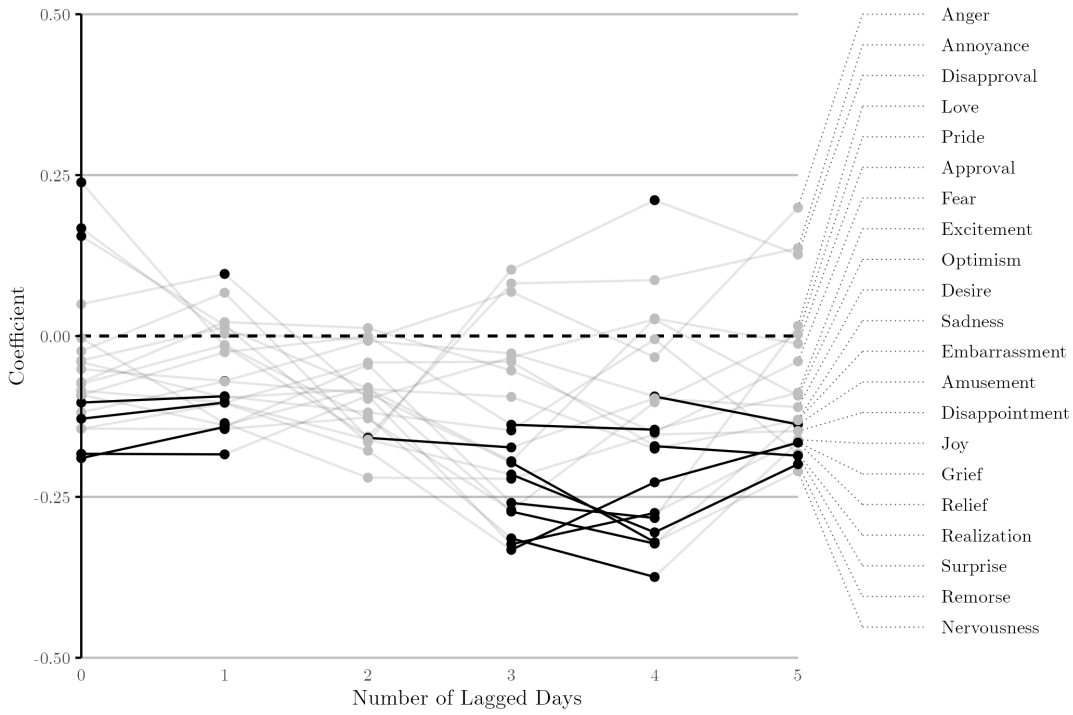


[164]Thistlethwaite and Campbell, "Regression-discontinuity analysis: An alternative to the ex post facto experiment".

I test whether policy uptake delays affected the results of the RD model by progressively removing days after when the sanctions were imposed and rerunning the RD model. For instance, to test whether policy uptake took two days, I remove the first and second day after the cutoff and shift all the dates down by two places. Thus, I artificially create a model wherein day 3 is actually day 1. Figure 10 visualizes this exercise. For each day of lag I start the post-treatment band one day later. I repeated this exercise for every day up to five days after the date of imposition. The bandwidth is kept the same for each policy-uptake lag test: up to five days before the sanctions were imposed, and five days after the new "zero day." For Disapproval, this process shows that when accounting for policy uptake lag, the LATE steadily decreases when introducing uptake lags. This is counterintuitive, because if policy uptake lag had been affecting the results, then one would expect for the coefficient to increase, rather than decrease. This would suggest that at least when it comes to Disapproval, the treatment may have affected the target for only a short amount of time before subsiding. I tested whether policy uptake lag affected the results for all 28 emotions, and reported the coefficients of the treatment effect for all those emotions where at least one model was significant in figure 11. Each point corresponds to a coefficient, with dark points indicating the that the coefficient was statistically significant. Only emotions where at least one point was significant were included in the Figure.

Policy–uptake delays do seem to have affected this model. Between days three and five there is a clear expansion of the distribution of coefficients, and a greater number of significant coefficients. The expansion of the distribution indicates that coefficients for positive emotions became larger meanwhile coefficients for negative emotions became smaller. The increase in the number of significant coefficients suggests that not only did the magnitude of the effect increase, but so did the model's confidence in the effect. The decrease in positive sentiments when accounting for a five-day lag would suggest that the targeted lawmakers took several days to interpret, internalize, and change their behavior. This provides additional evidence to support H_1.

Figure 11: Policy Uptake Lag



5.7 Robustness Checks

LLMs are like a black box. Unlike regression models, LLMs feature millions or billions of separate parameters that contribute to each inference. This enables the model to create complex interpretive structures and identify subtle relationships. However, this poses a barrier to researchers who are interested in understanding the robustness of an LLM's inferences[165]. Likewise, the training set used for each LLM can introduce some bias into the model's inferences. The Roberta-base GoEmotions model was trained on Reddit comments. Extant research has demonstrated that there are differences in the way in which users communicate on separate social media platforms[166]. Demszky et al, the authors of the GoEmotions dataset, acknowledge as much in their introductory paper by suggesting that"Reddit is known for

[165]Marco Tulio Ribeiro, Sameer Singh, and Carlos Guestrin. *"Why Should I Trust You?": Explaining the Predictions of Any Classifier*. Conference Paper. 2016.

[166]Marco Arazzi et al. "The importance of the language for the evolution of online communities: An analysis based on Twitter and Reddit". *Expert Systems with Applications* 222 (2023), p. 119847.

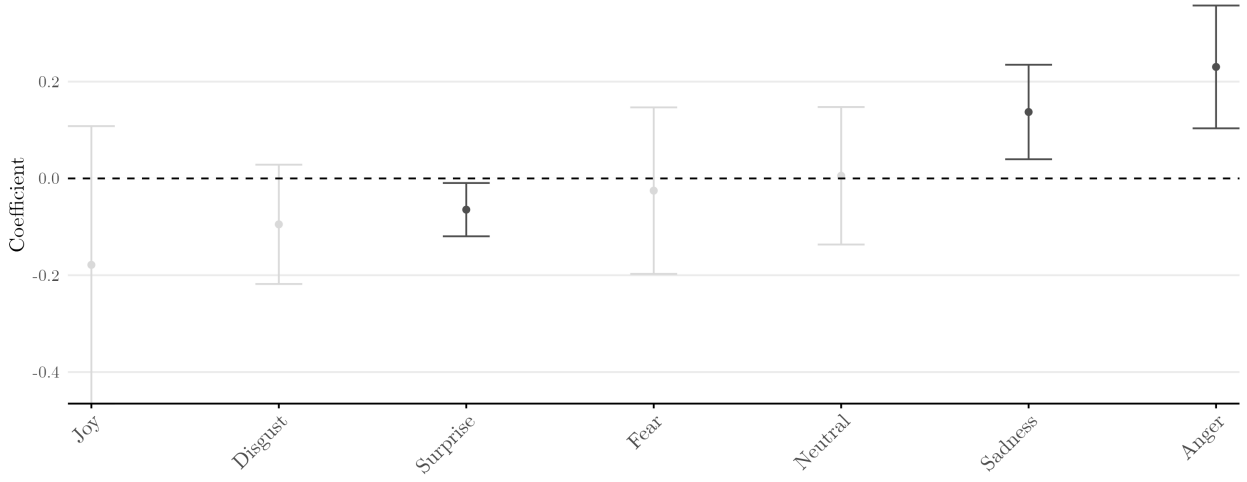
a demographic bias leaning towards young male users[167]." Additionally, Reddit content is skewed towards the use of profanity and offensive language[168]. Thus one could argue that the underlying dataset which the Roberta base GoEmotions model was trained one is not representative of the content the targeted lawmakers' tweets. One piece of evidence in favor of this argument is the fact that not a single tweet in the dataset I compiled contained any profanity. While the authors of the GoEmotions dataset take several measures to exclude profanity from their dataset, they still include toxic and vulgar comments to measure negative sentiments[169]. Thus it is possible that the results of the RD model were affected by semantic differences in the content of the dataset used to train the sentiment analysis LLM and the content of the targeted lawmakers' tweets.

5.7.1 Distilroberta-base

For this reason, it is standard practice to verify the outputs of an LLM using alternative LLMs. Accordingly, I have re-run the study using the Emotion-English-Distilroberta-base model[170]. In contrast to the Roberta-base GoEmotions model, this model measures the sentiment of a statement across six categories: Joy, Neutral, Surprise, Disgust, Fear, Sadness, and Anger. This model was trained on the Multimodal EmotionLines Dataset (MELD), which is composed of over 15,000 dialogues and utterances from the Friends televisiton series which were hand-coded using the Ekman emotion framework. Figure 12 displays the results of this exercise. Like with the previous model, this model detected a statistically significant increase in negativity amongst tweets referring to China. Yet only Surprise decreased in a statistically significant manner. Accordingly, these findings provide support for H_2 and allow us to reject the null hypothesis, yet H_1 is not supported.

[167]Demszky et al., "GoEmotions: A dataset of fine-grained emotions", p. 3.
[168]Shruthi Mohan et al. "The impact of toxic language on the health of reddit communities". *Advances in Artificial Intelligence: 30th Canadian Conference on Artificial Intelligence, Canadian AI 2017, Edmonton, AB, Canada, May 16-19, 2017, Proceedings 30*. Springer. 2017, pp. 51–56.
[169]Demszky et al., "GoEmotions: A dataset of fine-grained emotions", p. 3.
[170]Jochen Hartmann. "Emotion English DistilRoBERTa-base". *Hugging Face* (2022).

Figure 12: Distilroberta-base



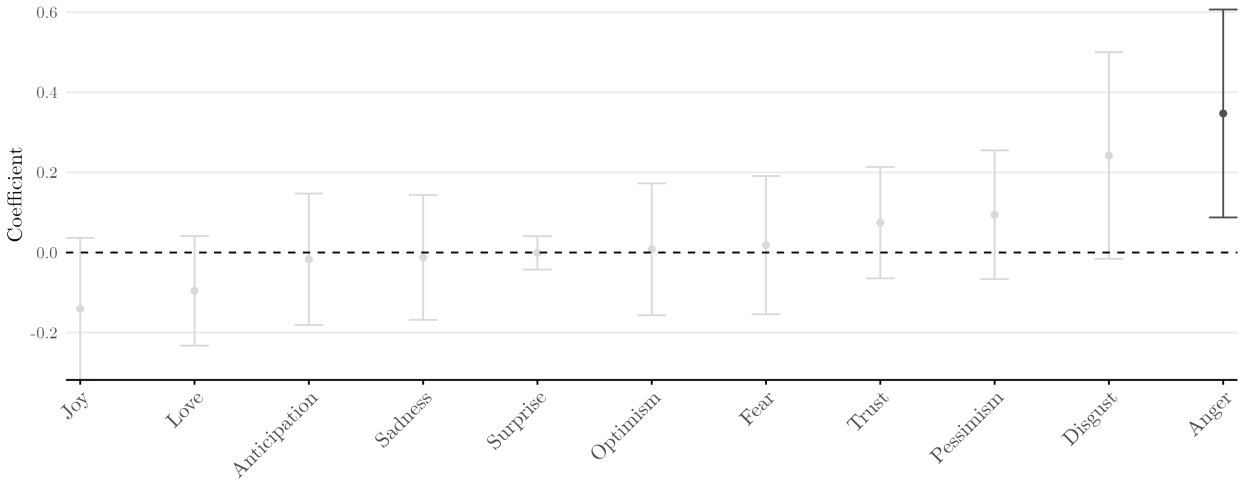
5.7.2 Twitter Roberta-base

For additional robustness, I re-ran the study using CardiffNLP's Twitter Roberta-base model. This model was trained on a dataset with over 120 million tweets. However, unlike the previous two datasets, this dataset was created by hand-coding a subset of tweets which was then used to train an LLM to measure the sentiment of the remaining millions of tweets that were used to train the Roberta-base model[171]. Nonetheless, as it was trained on tweets, this model is very well suited to make inferences on the data I collected, however this model only features eleven emotions. For this reason, it captures a less nuanced range of emotions than Roberta-base GoEmotions. Figure 13 shows the results of this exercise:

Unlike the previous two models, this model does not present any statistically significant effects of sanctions on positive emotions. However, it finds the treatment effect of sanctions on Anger to be positive and significant. Thus, this robustness check fails to reject the null hypothesis that sanctions had no effect on the positive perception of China by targeted lawmakers. However, the significance of Anger enables us to reject the null hypothesis that the imposition of sanctions had no effect on negative emotions, thus providing support

[171] Jose Camacho-Collados et al. "TweetNLP: Cutting-Edge Natural Language Processing for Social Media". *Proceedings of the 2022 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing: System Demonstrations*. Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.: Association for Computational Linguistics, Nov. 2022.

Figure 13: Twitter Roberta-base



for H_2. Therefore, we can infer from this robustness check that the targeted lawmakers' perceptions of China were negatively affected by being targeted with sanctions.

5.8 Debates

Twitter is a performative platform. Lawmakers use Twitter to communicate their policy positions and generate public support, however Congress Members and Members of Parliament primarily interface with policy through debates in Congress and Parliament, respectively[172]. For this reason, it is worth investigating whether the reaction to the Chinese sanctions was merely a publicity stunt on Twitter, or whether it translates to tangible changes in the way that the targeted lawmakers referred to China in formal debates.

I collected the speeches of the targeted U.S. Congress Members and UK Parliamentarians from the Congressional Record and Hansard using a web-scraper. I split the contents of each target's speeches into sentences and then used the same zero-shot classifier from above to identify which sentences referred to China. However, the sanctions against the American lawmakers were imposed in the second week of August 2020, when Congress was in recess, severely limiting the density of speeches made in Congress directly before and after the cut-

[172]Peterson, "To tweet or not to tweet: Exploring the determinants of early adoption of Twitter by House members in the 111th Congress", p. 432.

off. Additionally, I only have the date when the debate took place, rather than the time. Thus, my running variable has been constructed as the number of days between the date of the debate and the date of the imposition of sanctions, rather than the number of hours. Accordingly, I increased the bandwidth of the RD model to capture additional observations. Unlike Twitter posts, the contents of speeches before Congress and Parliament are less influenced by the news cycle, and thus increasing the bandwidth is less likely to introduce bias than in the analysis of Twitter posts. Therefore, this RD model uses a two-week bandwidth.

An added benefit of this approach is that not all lawmakers maintain active Twitter accounts. For instance, while Representative Chris Smith only tweeted once during the five-day window, he spoke over 100 times about China to Congress during a three-month period before and after the sanctions were imposed. Likewise, Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws does not maintain an active Twitter account, however the Baroness mentioned China in her speeches to the House of Lords fifteen times during the same window.

Figure 14: Speeches

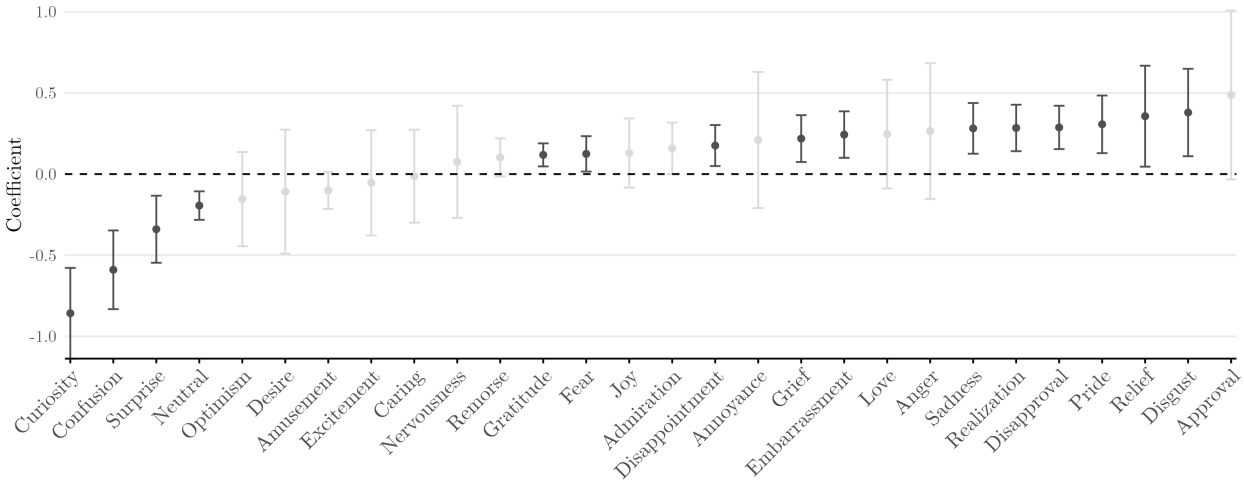


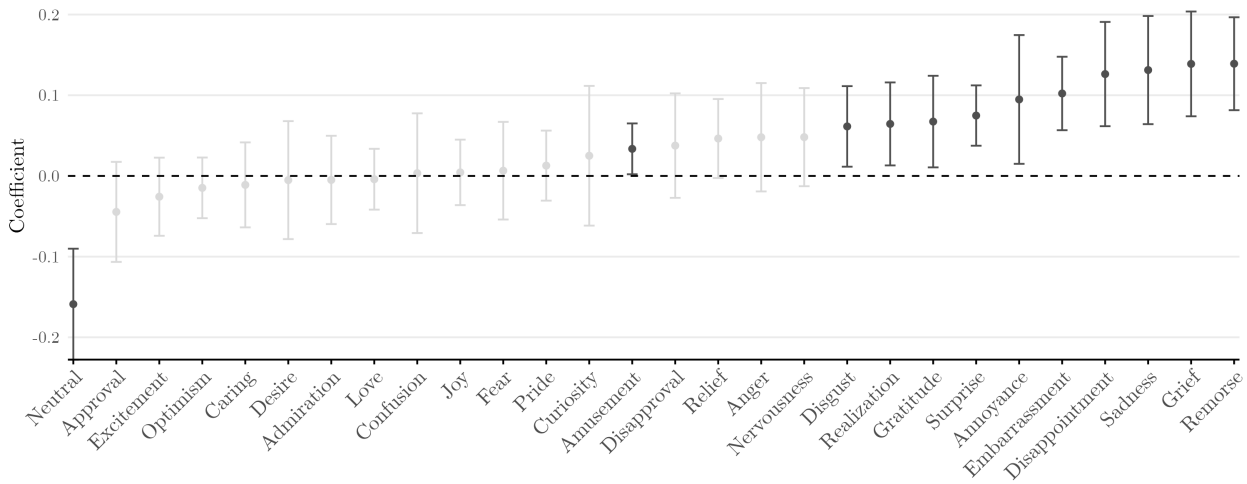
Figure 14 shows the results of the RD model when using sentences from speeches made before Congress and Parliament that refer to China. As is consistent with the previous models, negative emotions such as Disapproval and Disappointment feature statistically significant increases. However, the effect of the sanctions on positive emotions such as joy and opti-

mism is statistically insignificant. Rather, Curiosity, Confusion, Surprise, and Neutral are both negative and statistically significant. This indicates that the targeted lawmakers may have increased their resolve against China in light of the sanctions. Curiously, the treatment effect of the sanctions on Gratitude is both positive and statistically significant. Without investigating the content of the speeches in more depth, I hypothesize that this may be the case because the targeted lawmakers received significant support from their fellow unsanctioned lawmakers, and thus they may have been acknowledging this support, generating an effect captured by the model.

5.9 Non-Sanctioned Lawmakers

The question remains if only the sanctioned lawmakers were affected by the use of sanctions. Were there spillover effects of the sanctions for their fellow lawmakers? Figure 15 shows the results of an RD in time model that only used tweets by non-sanctioned U.S. Congress Members[173].

Figure 15: Unsanctioned Policymakers

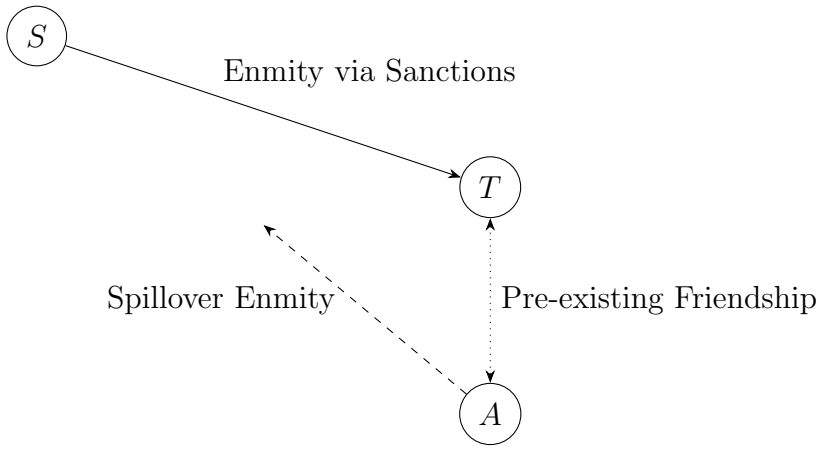


[173]U.S. Congress Members were used given that the tweets of Congress dataset contains tweets by all Congress Members, whereas the web-scraping exercise only accessed tweets by sanctioned MPs. Note that this means that the individual LATEs are thus constrained to U.S. lawmakers

Figure 15 shows that there were substantial spillover effects of the sanctions for non-sanctioned lawmakers. Non-sanctioned Congress Members expressed greater Grief, Disappointment, Remorse, and Sadness in their Twitter references to China. Across the board, Congress Members were more emotive after the imposition of sanctions, with Neutral decreasing significantly. This evidence suggests that not only the targets of sanctions are receptive to the signal of enmity that is communicated by the sanctions.

However, I argue that a more intricate process is the cause of this spillover effect. In my theoretical framework, I outlined how a sender can leverage an existing state of enmity to create friendship with a third party. However, the reverse is also possible: when the target is in an existing state of friendship with another body (in this case fellow Congress Members), the communication of enmity to the target also places the friends of that target in a state of enmity with the sender. Figure 16 models this relationship.

Figure 16: Enmity with Audiences



As was the case in figure 3, S refers to the sender, T refers to the target, and A is the third-party audience. By imposing sanctions on T, S demonstrates to T *and* A that it is in a state of enmity with T. However, because T and A are in an existing state of friendship—because if for instance they are both lawmakers in the same Congress—then by nature of being in a friendship with T, A is thrown into a state of enmity with S as well. This

process explains why the use of sanctions on just a select few Congress Members resulted in significant increases in the negativity of not just the sanctioned Members' perceptions of their relationship with China, but also the non-sanctioned Members' perceptions.

While the data used in Figure 15 is taken solely from tweets by non-sanctioned U.S. Congress Members, there is evidence to suggest that this effect is widespread. After the sanctions were announced against British MPs, Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated that he stands "shoulder to shoulder" with those who were targeted[174]. In Europe, the imposition of sanctions was met with strong messages of solidarity from the President of the European Parliament, Parliamentary subcommittees, and fellow lawmakers from across Europe[175].

The evidence of this spillover effect also provides support for one of the main assumptions in the sanctions literature: sanctions outcomes can be aggregated from the individual level to the state level[176]. Given that the imposition of sanctions resulted in substantial spillover effects for non-sanctioned lawmakers in the United States, one may be able assume that the effect of the sanctions on a national level may approximate the effect of the sanctions on the individuals who were sanctioned. Yet in no way does this finding provide conclusive evidence that the assumption that sanctions effects and outcomes can be aggregated to the national level, rather it merely supports the existing assumption and its use as a way to simplify research on economic sanctions.

6 Case Study

In this chapter I further interrogate the robustness of my findings using process tracing. Process tracing presents several advantages over the quantitative approach I used in the previous chapter. It allows for a qualitative investigation of the direct content of the tweets used in the RD in time model and a validation of the sentiments which were identified

[174]Christopher Hope. "PM salutes warriors after china ban". *GB News* (2021).
[175]Roberta Metsola. Tweet, March 22 2021.
[176]Christina Davis and Ruofan Ma. *Sanction Spillover and Trade Diversification.* eng. Working Paper, p. 2.

by the LLM. It also provides a framework for interrogating the causal mechanisms linking the treatment with the outcome. Key questions that remain after the quantitative analysis include: what was the discourse about China in the days preceding the sanctions, and how did the sanctions affect that discourse?; what terms did the targeted lawmakers use to refer to China, and how did terminology associated with China change as a result of the sanctions?

While the RD in time model produced a treatment effect which satisfies the relevant assumptions to infer causality, the logic used to derive that treatment effect is based on the Humean concept of Constant Conjunction[177]. While Constant Conjunction addresses the concerns associated with inductive skepticism, namely that just because X and Y are observed to be associated does not mean that X causes Y, it fails to identify what it is about X that brings about Y. The Mechanismic approach to causation used by process-tracing enables a deeper understanding of the ways in which X brings about Y. In contrast to the Humean Constant Conjunction approach to causality, Mechanismic approaches seek to understand in what ways a cause results in an outcome. Mechanismic approaches are implemented in empirical research through causal chains, which link the treatment to the outcome[178]. Causal chains formalize the tangible and intangible elements of the process which results in the outcome of interest. This approach to causal identification is highly relevant for this study in that it enables us to interrogate the theorized mechanisms linking the imposition of sanctions and changes in perception.

Process tracing is optimized for the small-n tradition. It is used to explain unique and outlier cases. The seminal work on process tracing Process Tracing by Bennett and Checkel uses the end of the Cold War as an ideal use case for process-tracing given that it was an exceptional outcome—there was only one Cold War in the 20th century. Furthermore, explanations for the end of the Cold War are characterized by a multitude of theories that

[177]Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel. *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Strategies for Social Inquiry. Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 10.

[178]See Charles Tilly. "Historical Analysis of Political Processes". *Handbook of Sociological Theory*. Ed. by Jonathan H. Turner. Boston, MA: Springer US, 2001, pp. 567–588, p. 567 or Brady and Collier, *Rethinking social inquiry : diverse tools, shared standards*, pp. 208–209

rely on separate causal chains which can be independently tested and adjudicated between[179]. However, one could argue that the outcome I seek to explain with this chapter is neither unique nor exceptional. Nevertheless, I argue that process tracing, and the small-n tradition are well suited to this chapter. While the outcome of interest may not be exceptional, the case itself is. It is rare that economic sanctions have no material impact on their target. Economic sanctions, by definition, are designed to exert economic pressure on targets to coerce political change, with very few instances where sanctions fail to do so. Several studies have treated a lack of economic pressure as an exceptional outcome on its own[180]. The case selection for this study explicitly sought to identify one such instance to enable the empirical analysis sections to control for the effect of economic harm on perceptions. Because a failure to inflict economic harm on targets only occurs in a small subset of rare sanctions cases, the case of Chinese sanctions on Western policymakers does lend itself to the small-n tradition. To be clear, it is not because perceptions changed in a way which is unique, but rather that the case itself uniquely features a lack of harm.

Additionally, qualitative case studies do not face the same data access limitations as the quantitative methods section. This is because tweets posted by lawmakers not included in the two datasets I used in the previous section are publicly accessible via the X.com website[181]. Thus I will be able to access tweets by targets such as Iain Duncan Smith and Reinhard Bütikofer, which were not included in the datasets I used in the previous chapter. Moreover, Twitter was not the only medium through which the lawmakers publicly reacted to China's imposition of sanctions. Many of Ted Cruz's tweets after the imposition of sanctions were links to clips of him speaking on podcasts about China and his experience of being sanctioned. The transcripts of those conversations were not directly included within the

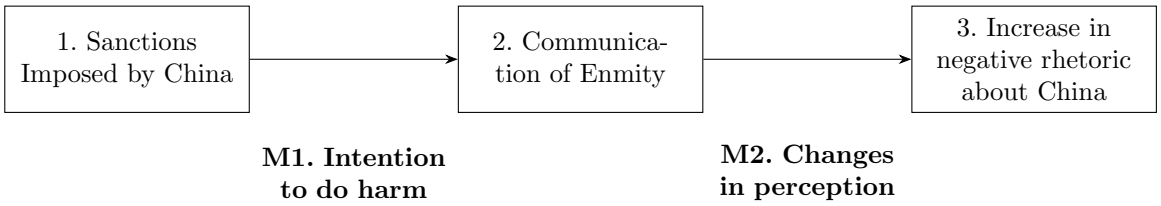
[179]Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*.

[180]For instance, see discussions of Russian and Chinese sanctions in Li, "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm"

[181]Individual users can publicly access tweets via X.com, but doing so programmatically for large scale tweet analysis is a violation of X's terms and conditions.

content of the tweets, however, they also present expressions of Senator Cruz's changing perception of China as a result of being sanctioned.

Figure 17: The Process, Traced



The process I seek to trace, as depicted in Figure 17, is quite simple. This process is derived from my theoretical framework and suggests that the use of sanctions by China communicated enmity via the demonstration of the intention to do harm to the targeted lawmakers. Targeted lawmakers interpreted the imposition of sanctions as an antagonistic attempt to coerce and ultimately a signal of enmity. This signal led to changes in the targeted lawmakers' internal perception of their relationship with China. While some lawmakers may have perceived their relationship to feature varying levels of initial enmity, the imposition of the sanctions increased the extent to which the targeted lawmakers perceived themselves to be in a state of enmity with China. This internal process is not directly observable, however the effects of this process are. Because the targeted lawmakers perceived their relationship with China to be characterized by increased levels of enmity, they subconsciously (or consciously) updated their rhetoric about China to be more negative, accusatory, and antagonistic.

For each stage in this process I create empirical tests to adjudicate between rivalrous explanations for the observed outcomes. I base my empirical tests on Bennett's four tests for causation. He defines four types of tests—*hoop* tests, *smoking gun* tests, *straw in the wind* tests, and *doubly-decisive* tests—by which the researcher can adjudicate between rival explanations and falsify claims. While *hoop* tests and *straw in the wind* tests are not sufficient to infer causation, they provide evidence to discredit or eliminate rival hypotheses[182]. Likewise,

[182]Brady and Collier, *Rethinking social inquiry : diverse tools, shared standards*, p. 210.

smoking-gun and *doubly-decisive* tests are sufficient to establish causation, however, smoking gun tests are not capable of eliminating all rival hypotheses.

The explanations I will seek to adjudicate between were outlined in the methodology. Namely, I will seek to determine whether: 1) enmity was communicated by the intention to inflict economic harm ($H_{M1,\ 1}$), rather than by any actual economic harm that was inflicted ($H_{M1,\ 2}$), and 2) rhetoric about China changed as a result of lawmakers' interpretation of enmity as a result of the sanctions ($H_{M2,\ 1}$), rather than attempts to use the sanctions as a way to gain political capital ($H_{M2,\ 2}$). I will simultaneously seek to reject the null hypothesis ($H_{M*,\ 0}$) that the nodes in the causal change (the imposition of sanctions, communication of enmity, and changes in rhetoric) are not causally linked.

This chapter proceeds in six sections, each corresponding to a stage or mechanism in the causal process outlined in Figure 17. In the first section, I briefly outline the measures which were announced against the Western lawmakers and test whether the targets were made aware of the sanctions. In the second section, I use a *hoop* test to adjudicate between rival explanations for why enmity was communicated and a *smoking gun* test to establish that the intention to do harm was the mechanism. In the third section, I present evidence that supports the argument that enmity was communicated by the Chinese sanctions. In the fourth section, I use a *hoop test* and a *smoking gun* test to adjudicate between rival explanations for why the communication of enmity resulted in an increase in the negativity of statements that referred to China. In the fifth section, I outline how the increased negativity manifested itself in the discourse about China. In the sixth and final section, I discuss how the communication of enmity affected the outcome of the sanctions.

6.1 Imposition of Sanctions

The causal chain begins with the imposition of sanctions. While in the quantitative chapter, the imposition of sanctions formed a clear treatment effect, when tracing the process outlined in Figure 17, the distinction between treatment and outcome is muddied by the need for joint

sufficiency to explain the outcome of interest. Bennett and Checkel prescribe beginning a causal process with the first crucial process element which is necessary to bring about the outcome of study[183]. Likewise, each of the nodes in the causal diagram must independently be true in order for the causal argument to also hold true. If not all components of the mechanism are present, then the process as it is theorized cannot be inferred to have exerted a causal effect on the outcome[184]. Therefore, as a precondition for the remainder of the causal chain, we must first establish if the sanctions were imposed by China, and whether the targeted lawmakers were made aware of the fact that they were targeted.

We can use a *doubly-decisive* test to determine whether sanctions were imposed by China. This test is very straightforward as the two empirical claims we seek to test are mutually exclusive: either the sanctions were imposed or not. Therefore, to adjudicate between the two hypotheses, we must solely identify if the sanctions were imposed. We can find strong evidence to support the hypothesis that the sanctions were imposed in the remarks made by the spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On July 13th, August 10th, January 20th, March 22nd, March 25th, and March 27th, the spokesperson announced that the "Chinese government has decided to impose sanctions," subsequently listing the names of the individuals (and entities) who would be sanctioned[185]. Thus we can use this *doubly-decisive* test to reject the claim that the sanctions were not imposed, with extreme confidence.

This finding should be caveated with two pieces of evidence. Firstly, no measures were included in the announcement of the first set of sanctions on July 13, 2020. The press release solely stated that "the Chinese government has decided to impose corresponding sanctions[186]." Secondly, due to the lack of clarity behind the exact nature of the sanctions

[183]Bennett and Checkel, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, p. 107.

[184]See Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. "Selecting Appropriate Cases When Tracing Causal Mechanisms". eng. *Sociological methods & research* 47.4 (2018), pp. 837–871, p. 843 or Stephen Van Evera. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016, p. 35

[185]For an example, see *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Announces Sanctions on Relevant UK Individuals and Entities*

[186]Chunying, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on July 13, 2020*.

measures, some of the targeted lawmakers in the United States believed that the sanctions were composed of a travel ban alone. Representative Chris Smith suggested that the sanctions were nothing new, stating that he had been "sanctioned before with visa denial[187]." Representative Smith was denied access to China for eight years starting in 2008 after criticizing China's human rights record during the Summer Olympics in Beijing. Therefore, the question remains as to whether Representative Smith fully interpreted and understood the nature of the sanctions China targeted him with. However, statements by Senators Rubio and Cruz suggest that they understood that the sanctions had a financial component. When Senator Rubio was sanctioned for the second time on August 10th 2020, he stated that he had no assets held in China[188]. Moreover, by the time that the March 2021 sanctions were imposed, China had established the Unreliable Entity List and Rules on Blocking Unjustified Extraterritorial Applications of Foreign Legislation and Measures, codifying the financial and travel components of the sanctions.

6.2 The Intention to do Harm

My theoretical framework hypothesizes that enmity is communicated by sanctions via two mechanisms. In the first mechanism, $H_{M1,\ 2}$, the economic harm inflicted by the sanctions is a clear indicator that signals enmity between the sender and the target. In the second mechanism, $H_{M1,\ 2}$, the intention to do harm is enough to communicate enmity as well. By design, this case only features the second mechanism. To validate this assumption, we can design a *hoop* test to assess whether the sanctions inflicted economic harm on the targets. A *hoop* test is useful for testing an assumption of this sort in that it enables us to adjudicate between rival hypotheses: 1) that economic harm caused enmity to be communicated or 2) that it was the intention to inflict harm that caused enmity to be communicated. This hoop test is quite straightforward. All one must do is assess whether the sanctions created any

[187]Chris Smith. "China Announces Sanctions Against U.S. Lawmakers Including Rep. Smith". *National Public Radio* (2020).

[188]Kuo, "China places sanctions on 11 US citizens including Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz".

material costs for the targeted individuals. Defining material, for the purposes of this test, not straightforward however, as it is not possible to draw conclusions about the counterfactual investment strategies or travel plans the targeted individuals may have pursued if the sanctions had not been imposed. Rather, I seek to identify which existing ties were severed as a result of the sanctions.

We can find some evidence that the sanctions had no economic impact in statements made by the targeted lawmakers. As was mentioned before, Senator Rubio stated that he held no assets in China nor did he have any plans to travel to China[189]. Senator Cruz sarcastically stated that he was disappointed that he would not be able to take his family to Beijing, after a stop in Tehran[190]. In a subsequent tweet, Senator Cruz stated that he did not "have plans to travel to the authoritarian regime that covered up the coronavirus pandemic and endangered millions of lives worldwide[191]." Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws stated that she has "no assets to freeze, no investments and no secret property" in China that would be affected by the sanctions[192]. However, Senator Cotton stated that the sanctions "will not affect [him] much," seemingly implying that the sanctions did exert some material effect, yet later on he called the sanctions "toothless," referencing their failure to inflict any harm[193]. These pieces of evidence would suggest that the targeted lawmakers did not experience economic harm as a result of the Chinese sanctions. Thus we can eliminate the hypothesis that economic harm caused enmity to be communicated.

However, *hoop* tests are only capable of removing rival explanations. They cannot provide direct supportive evidence for a hypothesis that passes the *hoop* test[194]. Therefore, just because the Chinese sanctions did not inflict economic harm on the targeted lawmakers

[189]Kuo, "China places sanctions on 11 US citizens including Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz".
[190]Ted Cruz. Tweet, 13 July. 2020.
[191]Ted Cruz. "Senator Cruz on China's announced sanctions: the Chinese Communist Party is 'terrified and lashing out'". *Ted Cruz Congressional Newsroom* (2020).
[192]Baroness (Helena) Kennedy. "Baroness Helena Kennedy QC says "I've been sanctioned by China – but that won't stop me speaking out over Xinjiang"". *The Guardian* (2021).
[193]Tom Cotton. "Sen. Tom Cotton: China's sanctions won't affect me much. But we'll never stop fighting for CCP's victims". *Fox News* (2020).
[194]Brady and Collier, *Rethinking social inquiry : diverse tools, shared standards*, p. 201.

does not mean that the communication of enmity was due to the demonstration of China's intention to inflict harm. Other rival hypotheses still exist. For instance, the communication of enmity may just be due to some unobserved confounding variable, or an extremely unlikely bout of random chance ($H_{M1,\ 0}$. To adjudicate between these rival hypotheses, and provide evidence to support the primary hypothesis that enmity was communicated via the intention to do harm, it is necessary to conduct a *smoking gun* test. Unlike with a *hoop* test, passing a *smoking gun* test confirms the hypothesis, but failing does not disprove it. In the context of this mechanism, a *smoking gun* test would be to see if any of the targeted lawmakers directly referenced China's intention to do harm as a way to achieve its foreign policy goals.

I find that on multiple occasions, the targeted lawmakers referred to China's use of sanctions as 'intimidation' and a 'threat' designed to 'distract' from domestic issues and 'censor' the discourse on human rights abuses. On March 26, 2021, Nusrat Ghani MP posted on Twitter that she "won't be intimidated or silenced and neither must [the] Government[195]." Several days later Neil O'Brien, MP and co-chair of the Conservative Party's Policy Board, stated in an interview with *ConvervativeHome* that the sanctions represented "a communist superpower declar[ing] war on you personally" and suggested that their purpose was "to silence ... protests" against human rights abuses and intimidate[196]. While interpreting the sanctions as a "declaration of war" is quite extreme, the fact that O'Brien would use such harsh terminology is evidence that he perceived the use of sanctions as an aggressive attempt to do harm. Fellow MP Iain Duncan Smith called the sanctions an "act of hostility[197]." In a joint statement by all of the targeted British lawmakers, the Chinese sanctions were called "an attack on us as individuals[198]". In the European Union, the sentiments were shared. Reinhard Bütikofer MEP stated that he was "attacked by a totalitarian power[199]"

[195]Nusrat Ghani. Tweet, 26 March. 2021.

[196]Neil O'Brien. *Neil O'Brien: I can laugh off China sanctioning me, but we can't shrug off the threat it poses*. 2021.

[197]Iain Duncan Smith. "I won't be silenced by Beijing sanctions We cannot allow China's intimidatory tactics to prevent the truth about its many abuses being told". *Conservatives* (2021).

[198]Lord (David) Alton et al. *Statement from members of Houses of Parliament on receiving sanctions from the Chinese Government*. 2021.

[199]Reinhard Bütikofer. Tweet, March 22 2021.

and called the sanctions an "aggressive escalation of the conflict over atrocious human rights violations in Xinjiang[200]." Moreover, Senator Tom Cotton referred to the use of sanctions as "scare tactics" that were "doomed to fail" and suggested that the CCP's goal behind the sanctions was to "crush its competitors and extend a high-tech tyranny[201]." Senator Ted Cruz suggested that the sanctions were imposed because China was "terrified and lashing out[202]." Representative Smith stated that "China won't just strike back symbolically but will impose countermeasures that will make [the targeted lawmakers] feel the pain[203]" These statements suggest that the targeted lawmakers in the United States also interpreted the use of sanctions by China as an attempt to do harm. If Senator Cotton interpreted the sanctions as an attempt to scare him into self-censorship on topics such as Xinjiang and Hong Kong, it is not inconceivable that the catalyst for that fear was the demonstration of China's intention to do harm. Likewise, the term 'lashing out' bears connotations of physical violence and attempts to do harm. Finally, Representative Smith's claim that China's use of sanctions was not symbolic but rather an attempt to inflict pain directly suggests that it was China's intention to impose the sanctions as a way to do harm. This evidence from the United States is our *smoking gun*, and it supports the hypothesis that the use of sanctions was interpreted as an attempt to harm the targeted lawmakers.

6.3 The Communication of Enmity

As was the case with the imposition of sanctions, the communication of enmity must also be true in order for the causal process to hold true. Because of the boolean nature of the necessity of this stage, it is possible to use a *smoking gun* test to ascertain whether enmity was actually communicated. Thus we seek to adjudicate between the claim that enmity was

[200]Reinhard Bütikofer. Tweet, March 22. 2021.

[201]Cotton, "Sen. Tom Cotton: China's sanctions won't affect me much. But we'll never stop fighting for CCP's victims".

[202]Cruz, "Senator Cruz on China's announced sanctions: the Chinese Communist Party is 'terrified and lashing out"'.

[203]Chris Smith. "The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) today sanctions Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) for his work on human rights". *Chris Smith Congressional Newsroom* (2020).

not communicated, and its inverse. Note that there may exist other claims outside of this dichotomy, such as the claims that the sanctions communicated the signal of punishment, as established by Nossal[204]. However, given that this component of the causal chain is a node rather than an edge, we are willing to concede that other effects resulted from the demonstration of China's intention to do harm via sanctions. However, we are only interested in enmity as an effect given its relevance to the causal chain under investigation. It is commonplace for causal chains to be interwoven with other causal processes, however it is the researcher's responsibility to isolate only the relevant components of the causal chain for process-tracing[205].

To implement the *smoking gun* test for enmity, we can evaluate whether the targeted lawmakers explicitly expressed that they found themselves to be the enemies of China as a result of the sanctions. In an interview with Young America's Foundation, Ted Cruz stated that "You're known by the enemies that you make" when referring to the "badge of honor" that the Chinese sanctions represented[206]. This statement is a clear announcement by Cruz that he perceives China to be his enemy, and thus that he is in a state of enmity with China as a result of the sanctions.

Neil O'Brien's claim that China "declared war" on him personally provides strong support for this claim as well[207]. If the sanctions are a declaration of war on O'Brien, then by nature of being the recipient of that declaration, O'Brien is in a state of enmity with China. Likewise, O'Brien's exaggeration of the situation—conflating sanctions with war—is direct evidence that he sees sanctions as a policy used by China against its enemies, implying that he perceives the sanctions to have communicated that he is an enemy of China, and thus that he is in a state of enmity with China.

Both statements by Senator Cruz and Mr. O'Brien MP provide strong support for the hypothesis that enmity was communicated by the use of sanctions. With this evidence, we

[204]Nossal, "International sanctions as international punishment", p. 304.
[205]Brady and Collier, *Rethinking social inquiry : diverse tools, shared standards*, pp. 209–210.
[206]Cruz, *Free Speech Warriors: An Interview w/ Senator Ted Cruz and Michael Knowles*.
[207]O'Brien, *Neil O'Brien: I can laugh off China sanctioning me, but we can't shrug off the threat it poses*.

can infer that this hypothesis passes this *smoking gun* test. Note that just because not every targeted lawmaker stated that the sanctions made them interpret their relationship with China to be one characterized by enmity does not mean that enmity was not communicated through the use of sanctions. Bennett argues that *smoking gun* tests provide evidence to suggest that the hypothesis is *sufficient* to bring about the outcome, but not evidence to suggest that it is *necessary*[208]. Therefore, while the remaining lawmakers' statements may fail to provide support for this *smoking gun* test, the hypothesis itself does not fail. Thus we can infer from this *smoking gun* test that the imposition of sanctions caused enmity to be communicated via the demonstration of China's willingness to use economic harm as a means to achieve its desired ends.

6.4 Changes in Perception

I test two rival hypotheses for why negative rhetoric about China increased in the wake of the sanctions. The first hypothesis, $H_{M2,\ 1}$, draws from my theoretical framework and suggests that the communication of enmity caused the targeted lawmakers to update their cognitive structures and perception of their relationship with China. The second hypothesis, $H_{M2,\ 2}$, is derived from the theory that Twitter is a performative political platform[209]. When applied to this case, the theory posits that the targeted lawmakers changed their rhetoric because they expected to receive increased political capital as a result of their ability to credibly signal that they were opposed to China.

To adjudicate between these two hypotheses, we can make use of a *hoop* test. Timing is the critical variable across which we can assess these hypotheses. If the targeted lawmaker was seeking to gain political, electoral, or other benefits from speaking out about being sanctioned, then one would expect them to maximize the duration of the media cycle about the sanctions. The longer that the targeted lawmaker can reference the sanctions as a way

[208] Brady and Collier, *Rethinking social inquiry : diverse tools, shared standards*, p. 201.

[209] Angelos Kissas. "Performative and ideological populism: The case of charismatic leaders on Twitter". *Discourse & Society* 31.3 (2020), pp. 268–284, p. 268.

to demonstrate credibility, the greater the political capital the lawmaker can generate via the sanctions. Thus we can test the duration between the time of the imposition of sanctions and the last mention of the sanctions on Twitter.

Senator Cruz was the last to tweet about the Chinese sanctions imposed on July 13th. On July 20th, he tweeted that the CCP has "horrific and inhumane policies, and I will continue to speak out against them[210]." Senator Hawley was the last to tweet about the Chinese sanctions imposed on August 10th, retweeting a link to an interview where he discussed the sanctions. His tweet was on August 13th, just three days after the sanctions were imposed. In the United Kingdom, Tom Tugendhat MP was the last to tweet about being sanctioned: "I'm on BBC today shortly talking about defending democracy as MPs are sanctioned by China for speaking out[211]." This tweet was posted nineteen days after the sanctions were imposed. The previous time when the sanctions were mentioned by a targeted lawmaker in the United Kingdom was nine days earlier on the 5th of April. The post was also by Tom Tugendhat MP, and it quoted an interview by Neil O'Brien MP[212].

These pieces of evidence suggest that within about ten days of the sanctions being imposed, the targeted lawmakers had stopped referencing the fact that they had been sanctioned in tweets about China. This evidence does not support the hypothesis that the targeted lawmakers took advantage of the communication of enmity as a precondition to gain political benefits from changing their rhetoric about China. Thus we can reject this hypothesis with some confidence.

However, *hoop* tests are only able to exclude some hypotheses, rather than provide support for a hypothesis of interest. Thus it is necessary to design a *smoking gun* test to establish if the resulting change in rhetoric is the result of a change in perception or another unidentified mechanism. For this smoking gun test, we will seek to identify tweets or other statements that suggest the targeted lawmakers changed their perception of China as a result

[210]Ted Cruz. Tweet, July 20. 2020.
[211]Tom Tugendhat. Tweet, April 13. 2021.
[212]Tom Tugendhat. Tweet, 5 April. 2021.

of the sanctions. Representative Smith provides some of the strongest evidence to support this test. He stated in an interview with Fox News that sanctions "expose the cruelty of this dictatorship[213]" Representative Smith also stated "I'm not scared. I'm angry. This is what bullies do[214]." A Tweet by Senator Cruz also provides some evidence to support the idea that he changed his perception as a result of the communication of enmity. He stated that he would be delivering remarks on "how we [should] treat the Chinese Communist Party like the threat they are[215]." These statements demonstrate a lack of continuity in the way that the targeted lawmakers think about China. For Representative Smith, the communication of enmity via the sanctions made him change his rhetoric because it "exposed" just how cruel China can be, making him "angry." These two statements demonstrate that Smith's perception changed as a result of the sanctions. Likewise, for Senator Cruz, because the sanctions demonstrated that China is a 'threat,' he changed his thinking on how to treat China. While not exhaustive, this evidence provides strong support for the hypothesis that the communication of enmity resulted in changes in rhetoric because it caused the targeted lawmakers to change the way they perceive China and their relationship with China. Thus this hypothesis passes the *smoking gun* test. With simultaneous support from the previous *hoop* test and this *smoking gun* test, we can infer that the causal mechanism linking the communication of enmity and changes in rhetoric is a change in perception.

6.5 An Increase in Negative Rhetoric

Did the causal process identified in Figure 17 lead to an increase in negative rhetoric about China? The quantitative findings from the previous chapter seem to suggest so, however, in this section I provide qualitative evidence based on the discourse used by the targeted lawmakers before and after the sanctions were imposed to demonstrate a lack of continuity

[213]Chris Smith. "China bans, sanctions lawmakers in retaliation for criticizing government's treatment of minorities and people of faith". *Fox News* (2020).

[214]Smith, "'What bullies do': Rep. Smith is sanctioned by the Chinese for highlighting human rights abuses".

[215]Ted Cruz. Tweet, July 22. 2020.

in the way that the policymakers referred to China. I begin by analyzing the discourse about China in the days preceding the sanctions to establish a baseline for comparison. I then offer a range of evidence to demonstrate that the use of sanctions resulted in changes in the discourse about China.

The Twitter discourse on China prior to the use of sanctions was measured and policy-oriented. Tweets featured accusatory language about Chinese policies and were generally descriptive. Criticism of China focused on specific policies and events, including the treatment of democratic processes in Hong Kong, human rights violations in Xinjiang, and economic dependence on China. Examples of tweets from the weeks leading up to the imposition of China's sanctions include, "#Beijing continues to undermine HK's autonomy, in violation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration[216]," "New research shows horrific abuses by Chinese govt to suppress #Uyghur birthrates in #Xinjiang through forced birth control and sterilization. On top of mass detention and forced labor, there is clear evidence of crimes against humanity being committed[217]," and "TikTok is owned by a Chinese company that includes Chinese Communist Party members on its board, and it is required by law to share user data with Beijing[218]." The emphasis on descriptive presentations as a strategy to criticize China was matched by normative calls for action. Senator Toomey stated that, "the CCP has been systematically eroding the basic freedoms they promised to the people of #HongKong. Those responsible must be held accountable[219]," and Nusrat Ghani MP tweeted: "please join us and stand with Uyghur Women[220]." Therefore, even when discussing serious human rights abuses, the targeted lawmakers maintained a measured, descriptive, and normative diplomatic tone in their tweets about China.

However, there is a notable shift in the tone used in tweets about China after the imposition of sanctions. The discourse became more combative, emotional, and morally charged.

[216]Marco Rubio. Tweet, June 24. 2020.
[217]Marco Rubio. Tweet, June 29. 2020.
[218]Josh Hawley. Tweet, August 9. 2020.
[219]Pat Toomey. Tweet, August 8. 2020.
[220]Nusrat Ghani. Tweet, March 8. 2021.

The lawmakers framed China as an existential threat using inflammatory and accusative language. For instance, Senator Cruz called the Chinese Communist Party "corrupt [and] murderous," referring to the human rights violations as "egregious" and calling the internment camps in Xinjiang "sweat camps[221]." Other lawmakers such as Senator Hawley referred to the Xinjiang internment camps as "concentration camps" used to perpetuate "genocide" in Xinjiang—language which draws links between the human rights abuses in Xinjiang and the Holocaust[222]. The accusatory tone of the tweets by the targeted lawmakers after the sanctions were imposed marks a stark contrast to the descriptive and normative tone taken beforehand.

The accusatory tone adopted by Senator Cruz after the imposition of the sanctions is striking. While Senator Cruz was a self-proclaimed 'outspoken critic' of China even before the sanctions were imposed, his critiques of China's policies followed the same tone as his fellow lawmakers: descriptive and policy-based. On June 23rd, he called for the UN Human Rights Council to "turn its focus to the serious human rights violations happening in China[223]" and on July 3rd, he stated that "America stands with the people of Hong Kong fighting for democracy[224]." However, after the sanctions were imposed, On July 20th, Senator Cruz stated that China engages "in murders, forced sterilizations, and a coverup that fueled the #CoronavirusPandemic. They have horrific and inhumane policies[225]." He proceeded to call China the "single greatest geopolitical threat facing the United States now and the foreseeable future[226]" on July 22nd. The shift from descriptive statements to accusations that China is the 'greatest geopolitical threat' facing the United States demonstrates the extent to which the use of sanctions shaped Senator Cruz's conceptualization of his relationship with China. Whereas China was presented as a repressive actor before the sanctions, afterwards China was presented as an existential opponent after.

[221]Ted Cruz. Tweet, August 1. 2020.
[222]Josh Hawley. Tweet, August 13. 2020.
[223]Ted Cruz. Tweet, July 3. 2020.
[224]Ted Cruz. Tweet, July 3. 2020.
[225]Ted Cruz. Tweet, July 20. 2020.
[226]Ted Cruz. Tweet, July 22. 2020.

Senator Cruz's statements are reflective of the shift away from a focus on policy and towards a rhetoric where criticism of China was treated as a moral duty and element of personal integrity. The targeted lawmakers frequently referred to the sanction as a "badge of hono(u)r." It was Senator Cruz who first stated that he was "proud to speak up for the millions who have been silenced[227]." One week later, he stated that being sanctioned is a "badge of honor" because it demonstrated that he was applying pressure on sensitive human rights issues[228]. Several other lawmakers stated that the sanctions are a badge of honor. Senator Rubio, Senator Cotton[229], Nusrat Ghani MP, and Tim Loughton[230] called the sanctions a badge of honor. Reinhard Bütikofer MEP called the list of targeted lawmakers the "*Honor Roll*[231]." By calling the sanctions a "badge of honor," the targeted lawmakers personalized the sanctions and justified their opposition on moral grounds. Thus disapproval of China became the norm amongst targeted lawmakers, rather than the exception.

The targeted lawmakers applied inflammatory value judgments to descriptive statements about Chinese policies, marking higher levels of disapproval, anger, and annoyance about China after the imposition of sanctions. These qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative findings from the previous chapter and further support H_1, while enabling us to reject H_0 with even greater confidence.

6.6 Outcomes

Were China's sanctions effective? If the purpose of the sanctions was purely symbolic, with the intention to create policy and rhetoric that resonate with sentiments shared by domestic audiences, this thesis cannot provide an account of their successfulness[232]. However, when measuring the behavior of the targets against the stated objectives of the sanctions, to quell

[227] Ted Cruz. Tweet, July 14. 2020.
[228] Ted Cruz. Tweet, July 20. 2020.
[229] Frank E. Lockwood. "China slaps sanctions on Cotton". *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette* (2020).
[230] *Chinese Government Sanctions on UK Citizens Volume 692: debated on Tuesday 13 April 2021*. Debate held on 13 April. 2021.
[231] Reinhard Bütikofer. Tweet, March 22. 2021.
[232] Li, "Performative Economic Sanctions: How Sanctions Work Without Economic Harm", p. 366.

the spread of "lies and misinformation" and stop foreign governments from "meddling" in "China's internal affairs," the sanctions seem to have backfired[233]. Along with the increase in negative rhetoric about China, the sanctions resulted in an increased resolve to expose, discuss, and resist Chinese human rights violations. Nusrat Ghani MP tweeted that "sanctioning MPs in democracies wouldn't silence us but create a global movement to expose gross human rights abuses against Uyghurs[234]," Senator Cotton tweeted that he will "never stop fighting for the CCP's victims[235]," and Senator Hawley stated despite of the sanctions, he will never "back down[236]." Therefore, rather than causing the targeted lawmakers to stop speaking about human rights abuses in China, the sanctions pushed the lawmakers to be more vocal and express greater resolve to continue the actions for which they were sanctioned.

The change in rhetoric that resulted from the communication of enmity via the sanctions was also coupled with an intensification of antagonistic policies. Not only did the targeted lawmakers express hardened resolve to speak out against Chinese human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, but they also used the sanctions as a political tool to generate support for bills such as the Tibetan Policy And Support Act Of 2019, Senator Rubio's South China Sea and East China Sea Sanctions Act[237], the SCRIPT Act[238], and the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, amongst others. These formal pieces of legislation were coupled with informal calls for business and industry to pursue anti-China policies. For instance, Reinhard Bütikofer MEP applauded H&M's decision to become 'Xinjiang free' and called for other companies such as Volkswagon to do the same[239]. As a result of the sanctions, the European Union formally paused the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China.

[233]Chunying, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on July 13, 2020*.
[234]Nusrat Ghani. Tweet, April 14. 2021.
[235]Tom Cotton. Tweet, August 10. 2020.
[236]Josh Hawley. Tweet, August 10. 2020.
[237]Marco Rubio. Tweet, July 14. 2020.
[238]A bill introduced to limit financial and technical assistance to movie studios that censor content to align with Chinese censorship laws
[239]Reinhard Bütikofer. Tweet, March 24. 2021.

Likewise, in a debate held by the Houses of Parliament on the Chinese sanctions, Tim Loughton MP, one of the targeted lawmakers, asked the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if the he would "assure the House that the Government will not be proceeding with any new agreements with the Chinese Government while these sanctions remain in place?[240]." Iain Duncan Smith MP stated that it was "time for the Government to lead our allies in Europe and the United States in saying to China that there can be no preferential trade, economic or commercial deals[241]." While the Secretary was hesitant to commit to pausing negotiations with China until the sanctions had been lifted, he stated that the Government stood in solidarity with the targeted MPs and that the Prime Minister had taken steps to build a multinational coalition against the sanctions[242].

Regardless of whether the true purpose of the sanctions was to quell the spread of "lies and misinformation" about China, the imposition of sanctions hardened the resolve of the targeted lawmakers to "speak out" about China's human rights abuses and increased efforts to implement antagonistic foreign policies against China. Therefore, the price of symbolically imposing sanctions to demonstrate that the Chinese government was taking action to prevent Western statements about Chinese human rights abuses was increased discussion of China's human rights record and further efforts to punish China.

7 Conclusion

"Where do we go with our relationship with China?"

Iain Duncan Smith[243]

[240] House of Commons, *Chinese Government Sanctions on UK Citizens Volume 692: debated on Tuesday 13 April 2021*.

[241] Ibid.

[242] Ibid.

[243] *Chinese Government Sanctions on UK Citizens Volume 692: debated on Tuesday 13 April 2021.* Debate held on 13 April. 2021.

How do sanctions affect the relationship between the target and the sender? A materialist perspective would argue that unless sanctions inflict economic harm on their target, the target should be unaffected. However, this thesis has found that materialist explanations how sanctions affect targets are inadequate. Even sanctions that do not inflict economic harm on the target communicate signals to the target. In this thesis, I developed a theoretical framework to explain how enmity is communicated to the target via economic harm and the intention to do harm. I argue even when sanctions do not inflict harm, as is the case with many symbolic sanctions, enmity is still communicated, and it has a demonstrable impact on the behavior of the targets and the outcome of the sanctions.

I find, using Twitter data, that the imposition of sanctions has a statistically significant and positive effect on negative emotions in tweets that refer to the sender, mirrored by a significant and negative effect on positive emotions. As a net effect, the targeted lawmakers perceived their relationship with China to have deteriorated. Table 3 contains the main predictions from the theoretical framework and the results of the nested analysis-based empirical strategy used in this thesis.

Table 3: Hypotheses

Quantitative		
H_0	Sanctions do not affect perceptions	*Rejected*
H_1	Sanctions decrease positive sentiment in tweets about China	*Supported*
H_2	Sanctions increase negative sentiment in tweets about China	*Supported*
Process-Tracing		
$H_{M,\ 0}$	Observed events are not causally linked	*Rejected*
$H_{M1,\ 1}$	Intention communicated enmity	*Supported*
$H_{M1,\ 2}$	Harm communicated enmity	*Rejected*
$H_{M2,\ 1}$	Rhetoric changed because of updated perceptions	*Supported*
$H_{M2,\ 2}$	Rhetoric changed because of expected political gains	*Rejected*

The results of the empirical strategy provide support for the predictions made by the theoretical framework. The null hypothesis was overwhelmingly rejected by both the quantitative and qualitative components of the research design, suggesting that the effects observed are not the result of random chance, but rather due to causal linkages. The re-

sults from the quantitative section suggest that sanctions negatively affected the targeted lawmakers' perceptions of China while the results from the qualitative section dismissed rival hypotheses for why negative perceptions resulted from the imposition of sanctions and supported the hypotheses that the intention to inflict harm communicates enmity and enmity affects perceptions. The nested-analysis methodology validated the causal chain linking sanctions and changes in perceptions, offering strong evidence in support of the theory that sanctions communicate enmity to targets, and enmity causes changes in perception.

Ultimately, the use of symbolic sanctions by China can be summarized as an attempt to gain domestic favor at the expense of foreign disapproval. Yet the costs of the sanctions may be greater than China anticipated. One of the targeted lawmakers—Senator Rubio—is now the current 72nd Secretary of State. His perception of China, and his thinking about how to engage with China will be shaped by his experience as a target of Chinese sanctions. Because the sanctions communicated enmity, Secretary Rubio is less likely to be cooperative, *ceteris paribus*, and more likely to perceive China as a foe of the United States. The sanctions pose an additional problem for China, given that the provisions under which Rubio was sanctioned prohibit him from entering China, transacting with Chinese companies, and interacting with Chinese citizens. Chinese policymakers must now decide whether to lift sanctions or face self-imposed barriers to negotiation[244]. On 30 April, 2025, China decided to drop the sanctions against the targeted European lawmakers. This decision was taken in light of ongoing attempts to improve talks between China and the European Union[245]. Ultimately, even the targeted lawmakers in Europe never stopped speaking out about the human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

The findings of this thesis present one of the first counterarguments against the use of symbolic sanctions. While symbolic sanctions have been praised for their ability to communicate signals to domestic and international audiences without incuring extensive economic

[244]Antara Ghosal Singh. "China's Rubio dilemma". *Observer Research Foundation* (2025).

[245]Delphine Colard and Jüri Laas. "China lifts sanctions against MEPs". *European Parliament Press Service* (2025).

costs, the political cost of their use was thus far unclear. However, this thesis finds that by using symbolic sanctions, senders risk attenuating the state of enmity between the sender and the target. Therefore, while symbolic sanctions do not always inflict economic costs on the sender, they risk fomenting and widening political divisions on the international stage. Is the cost of greater enmity between the sender and the target less than the benefits gained via the demonstration or communication of a signal to an audience? This is a calculation which senders must make.

This thesis offers many implications for the literature on sanctions, methodological approaches to sanctions research, scholarship on Chinese sanctions against the West, and sanctions policy. From a theoretical standpoint, this paper provides a framework for understanding why targets react to being targeted by sanctions in the first place. This framework also contributes to explanations for why the empirical record so rarely favors economic sanctions by suggesting that the mechanism through which success is achieved—cooperation—is diametrically opposed to the signal of enmity that is communicated by the use of sanctions. Because targets must overcome stubbornness, loyalty, and a fear of the consequences of betrayal, they are less likely to comply, even when compliance makes material and rational sense. Additionally, extant literature has argued that sanctions are much more effective between allies[246], and when the target is a democracy[247]. However, it is worth revisiting these findings with the consideration that sanctions communicate enmity. Do sanctions worsen the relationship between the sender and the target when they are allies? How has the communication of enmity affected the frequency of inter-alliance sanctions? However, by demonstrating that sanctions can affect targets even without the use of economic harm, this thesis provides the groundwork for an inflated conception of what a sanction is. If economic harm is not necessary to elicit an outcome, then what is it about sanctions that distinguish them from purely political statements? Future research should engage with these questions to develop

[246]Daniel W. Drezner. "The trouble with carrots: Transaction costs, conflict expectations, and economic inducements". *Security studies* 9.1-2 (1999), pp. 188–218, p. 191.

[247]Lektzian and Souva, "An institutional theory of sanctions onset and success", p. 847.

a more robust understanding of what distinguishes sanctions from other types of symbolic foreign policy.

From a methodological standpoint, this thesis provides a novel sentiment-analysis based approach for measuring individual per-target effects of sanctions. This approach has significant implications for quantitative empirical research on economic sanctions, which thus far has been confined to analyses of country-year datasets[248]. This methodology allows the researcher to conduct per-target analyses of smart sanctions, thus unlocking the potential for studies on the heterogeneous effects of sanctions on different types of targeted individuals and entities. Additionally, this methodology takes advantage of the relative availability of text data generated by targets and advanced machine learning techniques to measure effectiveness through sentiment analysis. This methodological approach is very portable and could be used in conjunction with archives to re-evaluate previous metrics for effectiveness. Future research should take advantage of different LLMs to measure changes in policy preferences or support for specific individuals as a result of sanctions.

From a substantive point of view, this thesis provides novel findings related to Chinese sanctions on Western lawmakers. While the Chinese sanctions were initially thought to have had no effect as a result of their symbolic nature, this thesis offers evidence to suggest that the sanctions directly shaped the targeted lawmakers' perception of their, and hence the West's, relationship with China.

And finally, from a policy standpoint, this thesis suggests that sanctions have the capacity to escalate negative rhetoric and encourage targets to further resist the demands of the sender. It also counsels policymakers to consider the tradeoff between the value of symbolic sanctions and the cost of greater enmity with the target.

[248]Portela and Charron, "The Evolution of Databases in the Age of Targeted Sanctions", p. 10.

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