

## Review of “When do States Say Uncle? Network Dependence and Sanction Compliance”

In this paper, the authors explore how sanction episodes could be thought of as network phenomena and then develop a theoretical and empirical method for assessing sanctions in terms of networks and reciprocity. The approach is appealing, and the empirical work is well-executed. My primary concerns about this paper are on the theoretical side. I believe if the authors could be more to develop their theoretical expectations this paper would make a solid contribution to the literature on sanctions and the effectiveness of these measures.

While reading the paper, I was struck several times with the thoughts “What exactly do they mean by this?” or “That’s an interesting idea. I’d like to know more about that.” In some ways, this is a good sign – I was engaged with the paper and wanted to know more. On the other hand, all of those thoughts arose during the first half of the paper leading me to the conclusions that there are several ways in which the theory is under-developed.

For example, at the top of p.5, the authors talk about the *evolution* (emphasis from the authors) of interaction between states. What exactly does this entail from a theoretical standpoint? The next few sentences tell us more about network analysis than they do about the way that changing relationships between states might influence the behavior of the parties in sanctions disputes.

I’d also like to see a bit more discussion about compliance. What exact do the authors mean with this term? Doing everything the sender asks? Altering policies to any degree? This comes up at the top of page 6, and ends with a sentence about the “endogenous evolution between states’ shared strategic environment and past reciprocal behavior.” Again, there’s some theoretical ambiguity here for me. Perhaps I’m just smart enough to get it, but if a journal believes I’m a reasonable reviewer for this paper, then this is problematic for the authors because it means that other likely readers may not get it either.

The authors might want to consider tapping the literature on learning. Both in the foreign policy literature and the political economy literature, there are authors writing about how learning shapes behavior. The authors suggest a learning process but do not cite any of this previous work.

Another area for greater theoretical refinement comes at the top of page 8 in the discussion of sanctions and information sharing. The authors cite Morgan & Miers, Lacy & Niou, and Marinov, but the informational power of the network is a distinct information process and could be described in fuller detail.

It's also unclear at times whether the history of cooperative behavior influences compliance reciprocity via learning or information sharing. Do we know?

The theoretical development is over for the most part by the middle of page 8, but the authors go into two distinct concepts of reciprocity on page 9 – compliance reciprocity and sanction reciprocity. I understand how the measures are built to assess these, but what should our theoretical expectations be? I wanted to know more about sanction reciprocity conceptually.

Overall, I think this paper has a lot of potential. The approach is innovative and interesting, but I feel like the authors could get a lot more bang for their buck with a little more careful attention on the theoretical side. Without more theoretical development, it feels a little like the authors had a favorite method that was applied to some data on sanctions that they happened to find. I think more is going on here, but to demonstrate that more theoretical development is needed.