

Stage 1 Registered Report

US Public and Economic Coercion: A Constrained Choice Experiment

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Abstract

US presidents increasingly frequently threaten and use economic coercion to target competitors and allies — reaching for tariffs, sanctions or aid suspension. While economic coercion is costly for the target state, it also creates tangible costs for the US economy and households. Yet, we know little about the opinion of the US public on economic coercion, how much are Americans willing to pay for this type of policy and to what extent the target's relation to the US affects these preferences. This registered report offers a novel constrained choice experiment to uncover preferences of US public for economic coercion in respect to China and Canada, while also tracing the potential role of an explicit discussion of domestic costs, experimentally positioning them either at the individual or aggregate-level. This work advances our knowledge of domestic roots of foreign policy and offers a contribution that links economic coercion to public preferences.

Introduction

Economic coercion is a salient and contested topic in media, academia and politics — with the snap imposition of vast tariffs on China by Trump’s second administration serving as a prime example. In fact, Trump’s policy fits a broader pattern as US presidents have increasingly used economic means to reach foreign policy goals (Hufbauer and Jung, 2020) and the US is the most frequent user of economic coercion globally (Attia, 2023).¹ Existing scholarship on economic coercion focuses predominantly on the effectiveness of the policy choices and the consequences for the target states (Hufbauer and Jung, 2020); however, the preferences of the public opinion of the sender state of economic coercion received relatively limited attention (Özdamar and Shahin, 2021). This forms a major limitation in our understanding of the formation of foreign policy in the area of economic coercion and the associated mechanisms, while political leaders appear responsive to the sentiments of the public in general (Cohen, 1997; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008; Wlezien, 2004) and in respect to economic coercion in particular (Whang, 2011; Attia, 2023). Interestingly, this relation did not escape the attention of the policy-makers in Beijing, with a set of reciprocal measures aimed at the US exports to China covering only 20 billion USD (compared to 450 billion USD of Chinese exports under Trump tariffs), yet designed to hurt groups highly supportive of Trump (e.g., tariffs on US agricultural machinery, produced predominantly in the American Rust Belt). What is more, Trump’s use of tariffs towards states like Canada or Mexico during his second term raises a number of new questions. Current scholarship nearly exclusively focuses on the competitors of the US in international relations — not accounting for the shift in the US policy to threaten or target allies with economic coercion and leaving the question of how the US public perceives such actions open (Morgan et al., 2023). Consequently, this registered report sets out to address the questions that have emerged after the recent advances in the use of economic coercion by the US and looks at the domestic component of American foreign policy, taking advantage of individual-level data. It investigates the preferences of the US public in respect to economic coercion using a novel constrained choice experiment and explicitly accounts for the scope of the policy, structure of the domestic audience cost and the target state’s relation to the US — allowing to inform both long-standing debates in international relations, while also accounting for urgent developments in trade and foreign policy, offering fine-grained data and theoretical depth.

To start, economic coercion, like any other foreign policy tool (Milner and Tingley, 2011), has domestic consequences for the sender state. On the one hand, it generates distributional effects — for example firms exposed to economic sanctions go bankrupt (Onderco and van der Veer, 2021) or limit trade with the targeted country, also in goods that are not explicitly sanctioned (Crozet et al.,

¹We define economic coercion as a foreign policy tool used to address challenges in international relations — for example by placing higher tariffs on exports or imports of particular goods — or by freezing assets or restricting access to the domestic market to firms or individuals from the target state. Thus economic coercion encompasses both trade restrictions, like higher tariffs, and economic sanctions, like bans on oil (Morgan et al., 2023; Meissner, 2023).

2021), and even aid suspension can generate concentrated domestic losses, as in the case of American farmers and cuts in USAID.² On the other hand, economic coercion appeals to the expectations of the domestic audience towards political leaders and offers an opportunity to achieve a number of objectives; namely — to signal discontent, constrain undesirable action or coerce the target to a policy change (Galtung, 1967; Whang, 2011; Giumelli, 2011). Yet, experimental research on US public opinion and economic coercion offers mixed findings in this respect, pointing to either a largely absent (McLean and Roblyer, 2017; Whang, 2011) or leading (Heinrich et al., 2017) instrumental (i.e., coercing or constraining) role of economic coercion in the public eye, and with limited insights on the moderating effect of variation in the domestic economic cost of the policy (Heinrich et al., 2017). Thus, we do not know to what extent the public supports different objectives of economic coercion — symbolic or instrumental — and what is the role of the trade off between the domestic economic cost and the ability to inflict economic cost on the target. **Research Question 1:** this register report asks whether the US public is concerned with the symbolic or the instrumental role of economic coercion, and whether domestic economic cost has a moderating role on the public preferences in respect to economic coercion?

Next, existing research shows that the US public appears concerned about the distributional consequences of policy choices in respect to international trade and economic aid, with legislative votes largely aligned with the ideological position and economic interest of the constituencies (Milner and Tingley, 2010, 2011). In addition, scholarship shows that security consideration weight-in on preferences related to trade agreements and the US public is willing to forgo economic benefits of trade liberalisation when it compromises national security (DiGiuseppe and Kleinberg, 2019). Economic coercion pertains to both economic and security considerations and leads to distributional consequences at the domestic level; thus, it can be thought of as a mirror tool of aid and trade liberalisation at the disposal of policy makers. By this token, one would expect the public to exhibit a comparable variation in preferences, where the objective is to curtail economic exchange — through for example tariffs or import bans — in order to achieve foreign policy goals. Yet, work on economic coercion and public opinion signals that domestic economic cost approximated with trade data does not affect support for policy choices (Onderco, 2017), while experimental research on economic sanctions shows that domestic economic cost approximated with jobs loss does matter but it is subject to specification of the statistical model and trumped by instrumental considerations — a prospect of changing the behaviour of the target state (Heinrich et al., 2017). One potential avenue addressing this inconsistency may be rooted in the precise nature of the concerns, with potential variation in sociotropic (i.e., aggregate-level) and egocentric (i.e., individual-level) domestic economic considerations.³ Current research on economic coercion focuses on sociotropic

²See: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/06/trump-usaid-money-american-farms/>

³Sociotropic and egocentric considerations may be seen as a spectrum on which all costs are egocentric to some degree — as all individuals are nested within societies (Maria Schaffer and Spilker, 2019). However, this does not disqualify the broader discussion on how individuals react to cues representing different levels of cost aggregation.

costs, while overlooking individual-level concerns. Given the meaningful variation in sociotropic and egocentric consideration in respect to trade liberalisation (Fordham and Kleinberg, 2012) — but also other policy areas like immigration (Dancygier and Donnelly, 2013) — we may ask whether this dynamic is present in respect to public opinion on economic coercion as well. **Research Question 2:** this registered reports puts forward the following question — whether sociotropic or egocentric consideration influence support for economic coercion among the US public?

What is more, economic coercion has been high on the agenda of US presidents over the last decade, it strongly featured during the 2024 presidential campaign and it targeted both US competitors and allies in international relations (Hufbauer and Jung, 2020; Morgan et al., 2023). In respect to US competitors, the objective is — for example — to reduce the risk of China gaining a technological edge over the US by cutting exports of advanced technology or reducing Russia’s ability to exercise power by diminishing its gas and oil revenues. In respect to US allies, the objectives appear predominantly focused on a change in the terms of trade — with a negative bilateral balance of trade for the US and tariffs proposed as a remedy to address it. At the same time, since the 2025 Trump presidency, we have observed security considerations increasingly present in regard to threats of economic coercion — centred around the issue of immigrations and drugs — and in this domain threats are made against allies and competitors alike. Yet, regardless of the target, economic coercion generates domestic economic cost — for example in the form of higher prices for consumer goods or energy. Interestingly, the US public, in a recent opinion poll by Pew Research, named China as a leading threats to the US — both in terms of security and economy — while also naming Canada among its top allies, and both states have been in the forefront of recent threats and use of economic coercion by the second Trump administration.⁴ What is more, both China and Canada, despite substantial differences in the size of their populations and economies, are continuously among the three largest trading partners of the US — typically capturing each around 14 per cent of US trade, what leads to relatively comparable estimations of consequences of economic coercion aimed at the two states in the area of one per cent of GDP of the US and between one and two percent of median US household income.⁵ While there is rich literature on China and on Canada in US foreign policy, we know surprisingly little on how the two states compare in the view of the US public in respect to economic coercion. Consequently, we do not know whether seeing Canada predominantly as an ally influences the extent to which the US public is willing to endure domestic economic costs of economic coercion targeting Canada to address, for example, the issue of drugs. By the same token, it is not clear whether the view of the US public of China as a leading security and economic threat to the US offers scope for aggressive economic measures aimed at China. We could attempt to draw inferences from the economic peace literature

⁴See: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/07/27/americans-name-china-as-the-country-posing-the-greatest-threat-to-the-us>

⁵See: <https://taxfoundation.org/research/all/federal/trump-tariffs-trade-war/>

and expect the US public not want to engage in economic coercion towards an ally (Wallace, 2013; Cox and Drury, 2006; Lektzian and Souva, 2003; Hafner-Burton and Montgomery, 2008); however, this work only *assumes* the preferences of the public and does not offer any individual-level data, while comparable experimental scholarship looks only at different policy areas, for example linking geopolitical tensions and preferred immigrant profiles (Wimmer et al., 2024). **Research Question 3:** here we put forward the last research question driving this registered report; namely — whether the US public willingness to accept domestic costs of economic coercion is subject to the US relation with the target state.

Based on a novel constrained preferences survey experiment (Hix et al., 2021), this study aims to address the three listed research questions and test for the level of public support for symbolic or instrumental use of economic coercion, explicitly addressing the trade off between the objective of the policy and its economic cost to the domestic audience. It does so by first asking respondents to select a desirable domestic cost for economic coercion, then it asks the question again but also indicates the corresponding effect on the target's economy. What is more, this study investigates potential variation in respondents' preferences for domestic economic cost subject to two specifications — either observed at the individual-level or the aggregate level. This is achieved by randomly assigning respondents to two experimental groups — egocentric and sociotropic — with the cost question either indicating loss in household income or loss to the US economy. What is more, the respondents are randomly assigned to questions manipulated for the target state, with half of the respondents observing Canada and the other half China as the target of US economic coercion. This allows to uncover how preferences of the US public are structured in respect to the use of economic means against allies and competitors of the US in international relations — further adding to the novelty of this registered report.

This work advances the field in a three-fold fashion. First, it offers an empirical contribution by furthering our understanding of public opinion in respect to economic coercion — offering individual-level data on the distributional preferences in respect to domestic economic cost of economic coercion (egocentric and sociotropic), analysing the symbolic and instrumental value of economic coercion in the public eye and uncovering the relative salience of economic coercion against leading allies and competitors in international relations. Second, it offers a methodological contribution, thanks to the constrained choice experiment, that can be widely applied to research where economic and foreign policy are intertwined in a constraining fashion, allowing for an experimental design that explicitly addresses the associated trade-off's. Third, it brings a multi-level theoretical contribution and advances the field by connecting micro and macro-level work on economic coercion. This, in turn, adds to the existing body of knowledge on the domestic components of foreign policy in general, while also connecting research on economic coercion with the current theories of distributional consequence of economic policy (e.g., trade or aid) and the research on the trade-security nexus.

Methods

Ethics information

The participants will have to actively consent to participate in the study. We will inform the participants about the authors, motivation, anonymity, and the approval of the ethical committee at the very start of the survey. We will also offer an additional page with detailed information about funding, data storage, ethical approval and to whom address potential complaints. For details of the consent form, please see the Appendix. Finally, the participants will have to click and mark (active consent) that they agree to participate in the survey and allow for the use of anonymised data for research purposes. The authors have received initial advice of the ethical committee of their institution on this project. Formal approval will only be available after the experimental design is final, allowing for potential changes resulting from the peer-review process.

Design

Stages: This experiment is composed of five stages where respondents are first (Stage 1: Information and active consent) informed about the research and asked for an active consent, then shown a brief text (Stage 2: Introduction) that introduces the topic of economic coercion. This is followed by a choice element (Stage 3: Unconstrained experiment), where respondents decide, using a slider, about the preferred cost of economic coercion either to their household (egocentric group) or the US economy (sociotropic group). The values on the slider are expressed as a range in USD between 0 and 1 per cent of either median US household income or US GDP. In the last element the respondents are offered the choice again (Stage 4: Constrained experiment), while also being presented with another slider that indicates the associated effect on the target's economy — ranging between 0 and 280 billion USD. The sliders in Stage 4 are linked and change of the position of one slider results in movement of the other slider. Consequently, a respondent cannot reduce the domestic economic cost without reducing the costs to the target state (and vice versa)—resulting in a constrained choice setting in Stage 4.

Costs of economic coercion are marked by a high level of uncertainty; however, based on the existing estimates, we set one percent of median US household income or US GDP as a high estimate for, respectively, the egocentric and sociotropic group. Consequently, respondents in the former group choose between 0 and 800 USD, while those in the latter group decide between 0 and 280 billion USD. By the same token, and given the reciprocal nature of economic coercion, we put the high estimate of costs for each target state at 280 billion USD. Respondents are informed about the relation between the USD values presented in the experiment and median US household income or US GDP. In our view, this increases transparency of the survey, reduces the cognitive load for the respondents and reflects the current format of reporting on economic coercion in media and by

politicians and researchers — typically using household income or GDP as a reference statistic.⁶ A visual example of the experimental stages of the survey is shown in the Appendix, in Figure A.1.

The last stage of the experiment is a questionnaire based on the General Social Survey (GSS). Using a GSS-based questionnaire offers two advantages. First, it allows to validate the collected data by comparing the results of the GSS-based questions used in this registered report to the most recent round of the GSS; if sampling is exercised correctly we should not observe any meaningful differences between the data collected for this experiment and the GSS results. Second, it allows to engage in exploratory work that theoretically aligns with previous scholarship—for example studying heterogeneity in the results following partisan preferences. For a detailed overview of the questionnaire items drawn from the GSS please see the Master English Questionnaire in the Appendix (Stage 5).⁷

Randomisation & sample size: We will recruit 1,000 US residents above the age of 18, to form four equal size (N=250) experimental groups. The sample will be quota-representative in respect to gender, age, education and region, with the objective to resemble US demographics. Assignment to the four experimental groups will be block-randomised in respect to the quota variables, assuring a well-distributed sample across the experimental arms. The demographic data will be collected with the use of General Social Survey questions, for details please see the Master English Questionnaire in the Appendix. In order to address any potential concerns about data peeking or dropping respondents, we will set a stopping rule at 1,000 valid responses and the validity will be assessed externally, by the data provider, with an algorithm that detects unreliable entries based on the time of completion of the survey and patterns of responses. We will neither have access to the data during the data collection process, nor will we be able to participate in the process of determining and excluding unreliable entries. The data provider will issue a certificate that assures that we have not accessed the data before all 1,000 valid responses were collected and that exclusion of the entries was conducted with the firms' standard selection algorithm. The certificate will be added to the Appendix of this registered report and the OSF page of the project.

Each experimental arm will have the following specification:

- Group A1 (N=250) — domestic economic cost: egocentric; target state: Canada
- Group A2 (N=250) — domestic economic cost: egocentric; target state: China
- Group B1 (N=250) — domestic economic cost: sociotropic; target state: Canada
- Group B2 (N=250) — domestic economic cost: sociotropic; target state: China

⁶For details see the following three resources: (1) <https://taxfoundation.org/research/all/federal/trump-tariffs-trade-war/> (2) <https://www.piie.com/research/piie-charts/2025/trumps-tariffs-canada-mexico-and-china-would-cost-typical-us-household> (3) <https://budgetlab.yale.edu/research/fiscal-economic-and-distributional-effects-20-tariffs-china-and-25-tariffs-canada-and-mexico>

⁷In the survey we are using the 2022 GSS Cross-Section Questionnaire, available at: https://gss.norc.umd.edu/content/dam/gss/get-documentation/pdf/quex/GSS2022_Ballot1_English.pdf, with the presidential vote questions adjusted for the 2024 election.

Consequently, respondents in Group A (N=500) observe information about egocentric (i.e., individual-level) domestic economic cost, while either being informed about Canada (Group A1) or China (Group A2) as a target of economic coercion, while respondents in Group B (N=500) observe information about sociotropic (i.e., aggregate-level) domestic economic cost, again with Canada (Group B1) or China (Group B2) as a target. By the same token, respondents in Group 1 (N=500) observe Canada as a target, with either egocentric (Group A1) or sociotropic costs (Group B1), and respondents in Group 2 (N=500) observe China as a target and, again, either egocentric (Group A2) or sociotropic domestic economic cost (Group B2).

I expect the two conditions (i.e., type of domestic cost and target state) to be orthogonal, and compare all in Group A with all in Group B, and all in Group 1 with all in Group 2 — while also comparing the unconstrained and constrained choice experiment results for all groups combined. In other words, we do not expect any meaningful interaction between the country and type of domestic economic cost, for example while China (or Canada) may be a more salient concern among the public, we expect this to hold for both individual and aggregate-level costs. It is important to highlight that the current design allows to identify a potential interaction between domestic economic cost and target state and separate independent effect of the cost or the target state by interacting the two experimental conditions in the regression analysis; we discuss this prospect in detail in the Simulation section of the Appendix and show how it is empirically addressed.

Analysis Plan

The experimental design of this study is a constrained choice experiment (Hix et al., 2021) and the analysis is conducted with Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression. For each of the research questions set out in the the motivation for this registered report, we develop a hypothesis and empirically test it, where the dependent variable is the domestic cost of US economic coercion and the independent variable is a dummy corresponding to each experimental manipulation conducted in the survey. First, we test whether respondents select a higher level of domestic economic cost in the constrained setting, relative to the unconstrained setting. Second, using the data from the constrained setting (and unconstrained setting for robustness), we investigate whether respondents in the sociotropic group choose a higher level of domestic economic cost, compared to respondents in the egocentric group. Third, again using the data from the constrained setting (and unconstrained setting for robustness), we test whether respondents observing China as a target state select a higher level of domestic economic cost, relative to respondents observing Canada as a target state. A simulation supporting the empirical strategy, number of experimental manipulations and the sample size is available in the Appendix.

Using OLS allows to directly interpret the coefficients of interest of the regression as the difference in the preferred domestic cost of economic coercion, for example “respondents observing sociotropic

costs are willing to bear a higher/lower domestic cost of economic coercion (β , p-value, Confidence interval (CI)), compared to respondents observing egocentric costs.” or “respondents asked about economic coercion against China prefer higher/lower domestic cost (β , p-value, CI), relative to respondents asked about Canada.” or “exposure to the the information about economic costs to the target state increases/reduces the preferred domestic economic cost (β , p-value, CI).” Based on the literature discussed in the motivation for this study, and the resultant research questions, we set out to address the following three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The first hypothesis proposes that respondents will increase the level of preferred domestic economic cost when observing information about the costs to the target state, relative to a setting with no information on the effect on the target state. To address this, we will test whether participants (across all groups) select a higher level of domestic economic cost in Stage 4 (constrained setting) relative to Stage 3 (unconstrained setting); in particular, we expect β_1 to be positive and statistically significant ($p < .5$), following Equation 1:

$$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Where Y is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 100 ($\Delta = 1$; transformed from a range 0 to 1 percent offered in the survey) observing the preferred economic cost per year to either US Gross Domestic Product (Group A) or household income (group B), X_1 is a binary variable that is equal to 1 when an observations is drawn from Stage 4 of the experiment and equal to 0 for Stage 3 of the experiment, and X_2 is a categorical variable accounting for the potential role of the four experimental conditions assigned at the block-randomisation stage.

Hypothesis 2: The second hypothesis states that respondents will report a higher level of preferred domestic economic cost when exposed to aggregate-level costs (sociotropic), relative to respondents observing individual-level costs (egocentric). To address this, we will test whether participants in Group B select a higher level of domestic economic cost compared to participant in Group A, using Stage 4 observations (Stage 3 for robustness); in particular, we expect β_1 to be positive and statistically significant ($p < .5$), following Equation 2:

$$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon \quad (2)$$

Where Y is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 100 ($\Delta = 1$; transformed from a range 0 to 1 percent offered in the survey) observing the preferred economic cost per year for either Canada (Group 1) or China (Group 2) as a target state, X_1 is a binary variable that is equal to 1 when a respondent belongs to Group B (sociotropic) and equal to 0 when a respondent belong to Group A (egocentric) and X_2 is a binary control variable that is equal to 1 when a respondent belong to Group 2 (China) and equal to 0 when a respondent belong to Group 1 (Canada).

Hypothesis 3: The third hypothesis sets out that respondents will report a higher level of preferred domestic economic cost when informed about China as a target state, relative to respondents observing Canada as a target state of US economic coercion. To address this, we will test whether participants in Group 2 select a higher level of domestic economic cost compared to participant in Group 1, using Stage 4 observations (Stage 3 for robustness); in particular, we expect β_1 to be positive and statistically significant ($p < .5$), following Equation 3:

$$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon \quad (3)$$

Where Y is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 100 ($\Delta = 1$; transformed from a range 0 to 1 percent offered in the survey) observing the preferred economic cost per year to either US Gross Domestic Product (Group A) or household income (Group B), X_1 is a binary variable that is equal to 1 when a respondent belong to Group 2 (China) and equal to 0 when a respondent belong to Group 1 (Canada), and X_2 is a binary control variable that is equal to 1 when a respondent belongs to Group B (sociotropic) and equal to 0 when a respondent belong to Group A (egocentric).

Exploratory analysis: Finally, we will engage in exploratory analysis using the questionnaire items listed in Stage 5 as moderators for the main findings—for example, we will look at partisan lines (Adida et al., 2018) and test whether respondents that voted for Donald Trump in the last election report a willingness to bear a higher cost of economic coercion, compared to respondents that voted for Joe Biden, and test whether this holds for China and Canada as a target state alike. It is important to highlight that no causal inferences will be drawn from the exploratory research in this registered report and the exploratory section will be separated and signalled to the reader. Only key exploratory findings will be reported in the main text (i.e., of highest theoretical relevance in relation to the current scholarship), while remaining results will be delegated to the Appendix.

Results

Discussion

Acknowledgements

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Competing interests

The are no competing interests to declare.

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Appendix

A.1 Master English Questionnaire

Stage 1: Information, active consent and demographics

General Information: This survey is conducted by researchers from X and the principal investigator is X (e-mail: X), with the purpose of understanding preferences of the public in the United States in respect to economic coercion.

Funding Authority: This study has been funded by X.

How data will be used? Data from this survey will be first anonymised by PANEL PROVIDER and only then shared with the investigators. Data will be processed only for scientific purposes and presented as summary statistics. The anonymised data will be publicly available on the project's page to adhere to open science principles, yet this will not compromise the privacy of the survey participants.

Has anyone revised and approved this research project? This study has been reviewed by X Ethical Committee and received approval on MM.DD.YYYY (approval number X).

Who should I contact if I wish to complain? If you want to raise any concern related to this survey you can direct it to X, where a staff member independent of the principal investigator will take this matter further (e-mail: X).

Consent: Please click here if you agree to participate in this survey. Please note that you may withdraw at any time while completing the survey.

[Active consent button]

[New page]

First, we need to collect demographic information in order to be sure that our sample is representative of the United States.

D1. Please tell us the year of your birth.

[drop down menu]

Don't know (98)

Prefer not to say (99)

D2. Do you describe yourself as a man, a woman, or in some other way?

Man (1)

Woman (2)

In some other way (3)

Prefer not to say (99)

D4. In what state do you live currently?

[Drop down menu following the General Social Survey]

Don't know (98)

Prefer not to say (99)

D5. Do you have any college degrees?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Don't know (98)

Prefer not to say (99)

[New page]

Stage 2: Introduction

Economic coercion is used by the United States (US) to address foreign policy concerns with economic means. Examples of economic coercion include sanctions on countries like Cuba or Russia, or tariffs on China, Mexico or Canada. Economic coercion can take many forms and range from tariffs on specific products, bans on exports or imports of goods and services or freezing of assets of targeted individuals or countries. When the US engages in economics coercion it often results in economic costs for the target states; however, it also leads to costs for [Group A 1&2] each household in America. [Group B 1&2] the American economy.

[All groups] We would like to know more about what Americans think of the domestic costs of US economic coercion against [Group 1 A&B] Canada [Group 2 A&B] China [All groups] and will ask you two short questions about it in the following part of the survey. Then we will follow with a brief questionnaire on general issues. Please read the questions carefully and remember that your answers will remain anonymous and will only be studied at the aggregate level.

The economic figures provided in this survey are based on recent research on the topic of US economic coercion by non-partisan organisations and serve as a best possible approximation; however, costs of economic coercion are challenging to calculate. High-end estimates used in this study for the US costs represent around one percent of [Group A 1&2] annual median US household income. [Group B 1&2] annual US Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Click here for a list of resources used to design this study. [Pop-up window in the 'here' word with associated hyperlinks]

[New page]

Stage 3: Unconstrained experiment

Recently the US has engaged in economic coercion against [Group 1 A&B] Canada. [Group 2 A&B] China. [All groups] Policymakers in Washington can design such measures with greater or smaller costs for the US economy, or potentially no costs at all.

Please indicate, with the use of the slider, [Group A 1&2] the preferred cost for your household [Group B 1&2] your preferred cost for the American economy [Group 1 A&B] resulting from US economic coercion against Canada. [Group 2 A&B] resulting from US economic coercion against China.

[Text above Slider 1 for Group A 1&2: part of your annual household income (USD):]

[Text above Slider 1 for Group B 1&2: part of the annual US Gross Domestic Product (billion USD):]

[Slider 2: [Group A 1&2] range 0-800, intervals of 80, [Group B 1&2] range 0-280, intervals 28; default set at 0]

[New page]

Stage 4: Constrained experiment

Greater economic cost to [Group A 1&2] the American households [Group B 1&2] the American economy [All groups] resulting from economic coercion also means more economic pressure on the target state — we depict this relation below by linking the two sliders.

Please indicate one more time, with the use of the slider, your preferred cost for [Group A 1&2] your household [Group B 1&2] the American economy [Group 1 A&B] resulting from US economic coercion against Canada. [Group 2 A&B] resulting from US economic coercion against China.

[Text above Slider 2 for Group A 1&2: part of your annual household income (USD):]

[Text above Slider 2 for Group B 1&2: part of the annual US Gross Domestic Product (billion USD):]

[Slider 2: [Group A 1&2] range 0-800, intervals of 80, [Group B 1&2] range 0-280, intervals 28; default set at 0]

[Slider 3: range 0-280, intervals of 28, default set at 0]

[Text above Slider 3 for Group 1 A&B: Annual economic cost to the Canadian economy (billion USD):]

[Text above Slider 3 for Group 2 A&B: Annual economic cost to the Chinese economy (billion USD):]

[Technical note: Sliders 1-3 offer a range of 101 possible choices and the chosen value is shown next to each slider; Slider 2 and 3 are shown on a single page above one another and operate in parallel as movement of one results in a (visible) change in the other.]

[New page]

Stage 5: Questionnaire

Now, we would like to ask you a few more questions.

Q.1 Last week were you working full time, part time, going to school, keeping house, or what? Please provide one response only. If you were doing more than one of these last week, select the one closest to the top of the list.

[Drop down menu following the General Social Survey]

Don't know (98)

Prefer not to say (99)

Q.2 Thinking about the next 12 months, how likely do you think it is that you will lose your job or be laid off—very likely, fairly likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

[Drop down menu following the General Social Survey]

Don't know (98)

Prefer not to say (99)

Q.3 We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. So far as you and your family are concerned, would you say that you are pretty well satisfied with your present financial situation, more or less satisfied, or not satisfied at all?

[Drop down menu following the General Social Survey]

Don't know (98)

Prefer not to say (99)

Q4. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?

Republican (1)

Democrat (2)

Independent (3)

Other (4)
No preference (5)
Don't know (98)
Prefer not to say (99)

Q5. In 2024, you remember that Joe Biden ran for President on the Democratic ticket against Donald Trump for the Republicans. Do you remember for sure whether or not you voted in that election?

Voted (1)
Did not vote (2)
Ineligible (3)
Prefer not to answer (4)
Don't know/Can't remember (98)
Prefer not to say (99)

[If in Q5 the answer is Voted (1) then ask Q6:]

Q6. Did you vote for Joe Biden or Donald Trump?

Joe Biden (1)
Donald Trump (2)
Other candidate (3)
Didn't vote for president (4)
Don't know/Can't remember (98)
Prefer not to say (99)

[If in Q5 the answer is Did not vote (2) or Ineligible (3) then ask Q7:]

Q7. Who would you have voted for, for President, if you had voted?

Joe Biden (1)
Donald Trump (2)
Other candidate (3)
Don't know (98)
Prefer not to say (99)

Q8. We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which from extremely liberal—point 1—to extremely conservative—point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

1 Extremely liberal (1)

2 Liberal (2)
3 Slightly liberal (3)
4 Moderate, middle of the road (4)
5 Slightly conservative (5)
6 Conservative (6)
7 Extremely conservative (7)
Don't know (98)
Prefer not to say (99)

Q9. How often do you read the newspaper—every day, a few times a week, once a week, less than once a week, or never?

Every day (1)
A few times a week (2)
Once a week (3)
Less than once a week (4)
Never (5)
Don't know (98)
Prefer not to say (99)

Q10. What is your religious preference?

[Drop down menu following the General Social Survey]

Don't know (98)
Prefer not to say (99)

Q11. Do you work for a for-profit company, a non-profit or not-for-profit organization, or for the government or a government agency? A for-profit company is a company owned by private persons OR by investors on a stock market. If you have two jobs, please answer "For-profit company" if you have a private sector job of any kind.

For-profit company (1)
Non-profit or not-for-profit organization (2)
Government or government agency (3)
Don't know (98)
Prefer not to say (99)

Q12. Do you own any shares of stock in the company where you now work, either directly or through some type of retirement or stock plan? Stock in the company would include stock in an Employee Stock Ownership Plan, in a 401k plan, in a profit sharing plan, in a stock bonus plan or other retirement plan or company sponsored plan, or stock that you bought directly in your company.

Yes (1)

No, I work for a company that does not have stock (2)

No, my company has stock but I do not own any of my company's stock (2)

No, I do not own stock and I do not know if my company has stock (3)

I do not know if I own stock in my company (4)

Don't know (98)

Prefer not to say (99)

[New page]

Thank you for your participation in the survey.

[End]

A.2 Simulation

For the simulation, we generate observations using the parameter values based on past research employing a constrained choice experiment in a political economy context (Hix et al., 2021). Consequently, we set the effect size between 0.1 and 0.2 and standard deviation at 2; we randomly decrease the effect size by half for a more conservative test of the proposed design. In the simulation, we follow the sample structure, research design and analysis plan of this registered report. The code to replicate the data generation process for the simulation and the analysis is available on the OSF page of the project at X.

To start, in Table A.1, we report the results of an analysis addressing Hypothesis 1, where we compare the unconstrained and constrained experiment and we account for a potential role of groups assigned to respondents during block-randomisation. In Model (1) the simulated data observes only an effect of the constraint shown to the respondents, but there is no effect of domestic audience cost type (i.e., egocentrics and sociotropic) or the target state (i.e., Canada and China) on the preferred domestic economic cost. In Model (2), apart from an effect of the constraint of the same magnitude as in Model (1), we also simulate an effect for the respondents assigned to one of the groups; namely — respondents that observe sociotropic costs and China as a target state. The design appears robust in identifying each of the two effects and separating them, as the coefficient in both Model (1) and (2) for the constrained choice are identical and observe the same level of statistical significance, while in Model (2) we can also identify the effect at the subgroup level. Thus, we expect that the intended experimental manipulations in respect to the type of domestic cost and the target state will not influence the ability to identify an independent effect of introducing the constraint in the second stage of the experiment. Consequently, the simulation yields support to the choice of the econometric strategy and sample size.

Table A.1: Analysis of simulated data. Comparison between the unconstrained and constrained stage. Robust standard errors are displayed in parentheses: *** indicates $p < 0.01$, ** indicates $p < 0.05$ and * indicate $p < 0.1$.

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Constrained choice	6.934*** (0.0913)	6.934*** (0.0913)
Egocentric/Canada	0.0880 (0.129)	0.0880 (0.129)
Sociotropic/China	-0.0380 (0.129)	6.962*** (0.129)
Sociotropic/Canada	0.0300 (0.129)	0.0300 (0.129)
Constant	43.01*** (0.101)	43.01*** (0.101)
Observations	2,000	2,000
R-squared	0.743	0.835
Effect constraint	YES	YES
Effect cost/target	NO	YES

Second, in Table A.2, we report the results of an analysis of the effect of domestic economic costs (Hypothesis 2, comparison of egocentric and sociotropic costs) and the target state (Hypothesis 3, comparison of China and Canada as a target). In Model (1) and (2), we depict a setting where we

simulate presence of a cost effect (i.e., a higher share of domestic cost chosen by respondents in the sociotropic group, evenly distributed among respondents observing Canada and China as a target state), but no target state effect. In Model (3) and (4), we offer the reverse, with a simulated effect of the target state (i.e., a higher share of domestic cost chosen by respondents observing China as a target state, evenly distributed among respondents observing sociotropic and egocentric costs) and absence of a cost effect. In Model (5) and (6), we simulate both effects being present at the same time — respondents observing sociotropic cost and respondents observing China as a target state chose a higher share of domestic costs. The design appears robust in identifying and separating the various potential effects, with the expected coefficient appearing statistically significant across all models — further validating the choice of the sample size, while also supporting the experimental design.

Table A.2: Analysis of simulated data. Comparison of the effects of costs and/or target state. Robust standard errors are displayed in parentheses: *** indicates $p < 0.01$, ** indicates $p < 0.05$ and * indicate $p < 0.1$.

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Sociotropic	3.686*** (0.202)	3.488*** (0.281)	-0.206 (0.205)	0.184 (0.186)	3.378*** (0.204)	3.488*** (0.281)	3.602*** (0.169)	0.184 (0.186)
China	0.302 (0.202)	0.104 (0.186)	3.466*** (0.205)	3.856*** (0.299)	3.746*** (0.204)	3.856*** (0.299)	3.522*** (0.169)	0.104 (0.186)
Sociotropic × China		0.396 (0.403)		-0.780* (0.410)		-0.220 (0.408)		6.836*** (0.259)
Constant	49.76*** (0.138)	49.86*** (0.133)	50.05*** (0.139)	49.86*** (0.133)	49.91*** (0.139)	49.86*** (0.133)	48.15*** (0.148)	49.86*** (0.133)
Observations	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
R-squared	0.252	0.253	0.223	0.225	0.380	0.381	0.471	0.689
Simulated effect cost	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Simulated effect target	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Interaction term	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES

In Model (7) and (8), we test for instances where only one subgroup observers a meaningful difference (in this simulation it is respondents in the Sociotropic/China group). Such result could potentially be problematic as it may look as if there is both an independent sociotropic effect and an independent effect of China as a target (consequently, Model (5) and (7) look nearly identical), while in fact it is only the combination of the two experimental conditions that yields a substantive difference. This can be addressed by looking at the interaction effect of the two group variables — it is only Model (8) where the interaction is statistically significant and its coefficient captures all of the effect size from Model (7). By comparison in Model (6), where both simulated effects are independent, the interaction is not statistically significant. Consequently, the econometric strategy put forward in this proposal allows to identify potential statistical artefacts. Please note that all the simulation results are also statistically significant after a Bonferroni correction, accounting for multiple hypotheses testing, with $p < 0.017$ set as a threshold value.

A.3. Visual example

General Information: This survey is conducted by researchers from X and the principal investigator is X (e-mail: X), with the purpose of understanding preferences of the public in the United States in respect to economic coercion.

Funding Authority: This study has been funded by X.

How data will be used? Data from this survey will be first anonymised by PANEL PROVIDER and only then shared with the investigators. Data will be processed only for scientific purposes and presented as summary statistics. The anonymised data will be publicly available on the project's page to adhere to open science principles, yet this will not compromise the privacy of the survey participants.

Has anyone revised and approved this research project? This study has been reviewed by X Ethical Committee and received approval on MM.DD.YYYY (approval number X).

Who should I contact if I wish to complain? If you want to raise any concern related to this survey you can direct it to X, where a staff member independent of the principal investigator will take this matter further (e-mail: X).

Consent: Please click here if you agree to participate in this survey. Please note that you may withdraw at any time while completing the survey.

Economic coercion is used by the United States (US) to address foreign policy concerns with economic means. Examples of economic coercion include sanctions on countries like Cuba or Russia, or tariffs on China, Mexico or Canada. Economic coercion can take many forms and range from tariffs on specific products, bans on exports or imports of goods and services or freezing of assets of targeted individuals or countries. When the US engages in economics coercion it often results in economic costs for the target states; however, it also leads to costs for each household in America.

We would like to know more about what Americans think of the domestic costs of US economic coercion against China and will ask you two short questions about it in the following part of the survey. Then we will follow with a brief questionnaire on general issues. Please read the questions carefully and remember that your answers will remain anonymous and will only be studied at the aggregate level.

The economic figures provided in this survey are based on recent research on the topic of US economic coercion by non-partisan organisations and serve as a best possible approximation; however, costs of economic coercion are challenging to calculate. High-end estimates used in this study for the US costs represent around one percent of annual median US household income. Click here for a list of resources used to design this study.

(a) Stage 1

Recently the US has engaged in economic coercion against China. Policymakers in Washington can design such measures with greater or smaller costs for the US economy, or potentially no costs at all.

Please indicate, with the use of the slider, the preferred cost for your household resulting from US economic coercion against China.

0 80 160 240 320 400 480 560 640 720 800

Part of your annual household income (USD)

0 28 56 84 112 140 168 196 224 252 280

Annual economic cost to the Chinese economy (billion USD)

Greater economic cost to the American households resulting from economic coercion also means more economic pressure on the target state – we depict this relation below by linking the two sliders.

Please indicate one more time, with the use of the slider, your preferred cost for your household resulting from US economic coercion against China.

0 80 160 240 320 400 480 560 640 720 800

Part of your annual household income (USD)

0 28 56 84 112 140 168 196 224 252 280

Annual economic cost to the Chinese economy (billion USD)

(b) Stage 2

(c) Stage 3

(d) Stage 4

Figure A.1: Visual example of the introduction and the experimental components for respondents assigned to Group A2: observing egocentric domestic economic cost and China as a target state. The example was created with Qualtrics and each panel represents a stage listed in this proposal: **Panel (a)** Stage 1: Information and active consent, **Panel (b)** Stage 2: Introduction, **Panel (c)** Stage 3: Unconstrained experiment, and **Panel (d)** Stage 4: Constrained experiment.