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# Sanctions and Nonproliferation Behavior: Missing on Missiles

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**Abstract.** This article describes political psychologies supporting United States (US) sanctions-related behavior towards the People's Republic of China's (PRC) exporting of missiles, missile components, and missile technology.

The recent history of US Government (USG) sanctions reactive to PRC exporting of missiles, missile components, and missile technology might appear puzzling at first blush. In 1991, sanctions were announced and implemented reactive to the PRC aiding Pakistan's missile program in the late 1980s. These sanctions were lifted in 1992. In 1993, sanctions were announced and implemented reactive to additional PRC aid for Pakistan's missile program. These sanctions also were lifted the following year reactive to PRC promises to comply with the main aspects of the Missile Technology Control Regime. Now in November 2000, the US is once again allowing US companies to apply for licenses to launch satellites on PRC rockets, because the PRC has promised to stop selling missile-related components and technology--at least what would be placed on a "banned for export" list. Is the above but a litany of the US rewarding the PRC for promises about nonproliferation instead of nonproliferation? Or is this not even the right question?

Part of the problem involves the intended consequences of sanctions. One might argue that sanctions are only to proximally punish a perpetrator for undesired behavior without any distal consequences regarding that perpetrator's undesired behavior. If this were the case, the USG may be appropriately punishing the PRC as to substance and severity and then appropriately removing the punishment. Instead, one might argue that sanctions are to rehabilitate transgressors through extinction of undesired behavior. If this were the case, the USG seems to be failing. However, the timing until "kicking in" of the intended rehabilitation may be much longer than expected. Moreover, the extinction of undesired behavior often is characterized by a period or periods of continued, sporadic, or even exacerbated undesired behavior. So the jury may still be out on success or failure. Of course a third possibility is that one might argue that sanctions are to deter potential transgressors. Observers ready to label USG sanctions as failures would then be accused of looking in the wrong place, if these observers cited continued PRC misbehavior as data supporting an opinion on the sanctions.

It is also quite possible that USG policymakers have concluded that little in the way of sanctions can affect PRC policymakers, decision makers, or their behavior. But given that policymakers and decision makers are supposed to, well, make policy and decisions, and that policy and decisions in the eyes of one's citizenry is most often perceived as "doing something about something," then something has to be done. Sanctions are then intended to be that something being done, even if that something will not do much of anything at all. In this, the USG may be quite successful indeed. (See Adams-Webber, J.R. (1969). Generalized expectancies concerning the locus of control of reinforcements and the perception of moral sanctions. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 8, 340-343; Allen, G.F. (1987). Where are we going in criminal justice? Some insights from the Chinese criminal justice system. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 31, 101-110; Caputo, G.A. (2000). The "voice of justice" vs. the "voice of care" in the assignment of criminal sanctions. *Current Psychology: Developmental, Learning, Personality, Social*, 19, 70-81; Tsebelis, G. (1990). Are sanctions effective? A

**International Bulletin of Political Psychology**

game-theoretic analysis. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 34, 3-28; Wesley, F. (1986). Why sanctions fail. *Organization Development Journal*, 4, 68-70.) (Keywords: People's Republic of China, Proliferation, Sanctions, Weapons of Mass Destruction.)