

**Economic Sanctions and Public Opinion:
Survey Experiments from Russia**

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Abstract

Do economic sanctions turn the public against the government or cause it to rally around the flag? Do government supporters and skeptics respond differently to sanctions? Do sanctions shape attitudes toward the sanctioner? These questions have rarely been explored with survey data, and not in an autocracy. Survey experiments embedded in two national surveys in Russia find that, in contrast to the “orthodox” and the “rally around flag” theories, economic sanctions do not have a direct effect on support for the sanctioned government. However, in line with “scapegoating” arguments, sanctions weaken the impact of economic decline on support for the government. In addition, imposing economic sanctions reduces the favorability of the sanctioner, but the promise of weakening sanctions yields an increase in support for both the target country and the sanctioner. These results suggest the need to reevaluate core assumptions of theories of the impact of economic sanctions.

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Economic sanctions are an increasingly important foreign policy tool even as our understanding of whether and how they work remains a matter of intense dispute. The “orthodox” theory suggests that economic sanctions induce pain on key constituencies who in turn reduce their support for the government and compel it to change course. In contrast, the “rally around the flag” theory argues that economic sanctions allow rulers to use nationalist appeals against the sanctioning government to boost their support at home.

Other questions too remain unanswered. Which groups in the target country respond to sanctions? How do sanctions affect attitudes toward the sanctioner? Can “smart” sanctions that target elites rather than the mass public dampen a backlash? Are multilateral or unilateral sanctions more likely to rally the public against the sender?

Unfortunately, we have little data to answer these questions (but see Grossman et al. 2017). Scholars have examined the effectiveness of economic sanctions using case studies or cross-national analyses that do not provide precise estimates of public opinion (c. f., Baldwin 1988; Hufbauer et al. 1990; 2007; Pape 1997; Martin 1992; Nooruddin 2002). This is not surprising as sanctions are often levied against countries not known for high-quality public opinion polls.¹ Thus, many claims about the impact of economic sanctions on mass politics, particularly in non-democracies, are based on thin evidence.

Beyond a lack of data, scholars struggle to identify the impact of economic sanctions on political attitudes because sanctions are not randomly assigned. They are levied during periods of bad relations between countries, and these bad relations, rather than the

¹ For a survey from Iran along with the caveats about quality of data, see

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/152633/Iranians-Split-Nuclear-Military-Power.aspx>

sanctions, may drive political attitudes. The actions that lead to sanctions -- military actions, progress in developing nuclear weapons, or human rights violations -- may be far more important in shaping political attitudes than are sanctions, but it is difficult to tease out the relative importance of these factors.

Identifying the impact of economic sanctions on political attitudes is critical for improving theories of economic coercion in foreign policy, but it is also an important task for students of autocracy.² Modern autocrats often manipulate public opinion to bolster their personal popularity and to ward off challenges (Simpser 2013; Guriev and Treisman 2015). Russia is no exception. The Kremlin devotes vast resources to track and shape public opinion (Wilson 2005; Treisman 2011:2014; Sperling 2015).³ This is especially relevant as the Kremlin has used sanctions in a broader strategy to promote anti-western sentiment following the recent economic downturn. The Kremlin's efforts to use sanctions to rally the public around the flag should be of interest to scholars of international relations and comparative politics alike.

To examine how economic sanctions influence political attitudes under autocracy, I present novel data from experiments embedded in two national surveys in Russia in 2016

² Drezner (2011) calls for scholars of economic sanctions to "pay greater attention to the burgeoning work on politics under authoritarianism."

³ The Kremlin runs quarterly polls using representative samples in almost all its more than 80 subnational units and is the largest client for survey companies in Russia. The Kremlin's concern for public opinion is also evident in the publicity stunts featuring President Putin in hyper-masculine poses (Sperling 2015).

and 2017. Russia presents an excellent and rare case for studying how the public responds to economic sanctions. Russia has relatively high quality public opinion polling.⁴ In addition, the Kremlin responds (at times) to trends in public opinion.⁵ Moreover, respondents are willing to answer more potentially sensitive questions than those posed here despite Russia's authoritarian political system.⁶ To my knowledge, no other academic study has examined the individual-level impact of sanctions on political attitudes in a non-democracy. This is unfortunate as Kaempfer et al. (2004) find that in 2001, 85% of US unilateral sanctions targets were not democracies. Similarly, Allen (2008:269) finds that 78 percent of sanctions were levied against democracies in the three prior decades.

I present three sets of findings. First, in contrast to the orthodox and the rally around the flag theories, economic sanctions do not have a direct effect on support for the target government. Reminding respondents that the United States or the European Union imposed economic sanctions on Russia has little impact on public support for the Russian government in both surveys. Respondents who are more skeptical of Vladimir Putin reduce

⁴ Articles using public opinion polls from Russia have been published in many top journals including the *American Economic Review*, *the American Political Science Review*, and *the American Sociological Review*.

⁵ Treisman 2011; 2014; Sperling 2015.

⁶ For evidence that Putin's approval ratings are not due to respondent dissembling, see Frye et al. (2017). The survey questions analyzed in this paper are typical for Russia and are not politically sensitive.

their support for the government when reminded of sanctions, but the average respondent remains unmoved.

In contrast, reminding respondents of economic decline significantly reduces support for the Russian government, and this drop occurs among Putin supporters and skeptics alike. However, this decline is moderated when respondents are also reminded that sanctions have been imposed. Russians are more forgiving of the government when respondents are lead to believe that economic sanctions are associated with the decline in the economy, a finding in line with economic scapegoating arguments.

Second, and perhaps less surprising, the imposition of economic sanctions reduces support in the target country for the leadership of the sanctioner. Respondents in Russia who were reminded of economic sanctions had far less favorable views of the United States and the European Union. This outcome is largely driven by respondents who are strong supporters of President Putin. One interpretation of this finding is that multilateral and unilateral sanctions produce similar levels of antipathy toward the sender.

Third, the promise of weakening economic sanctions leads to greater support for both the target government and for the sanctioning government. The Russian public appears to view the weakening of economic sanctions as a victory for the Russian government and rewards it with increased support. Surprisingly, respondents also viewed the US in a much more favorable light with the prospect of weakened sanctions.

These results are most closely related to Grossman et al. (2017) who study the impact of economic sanctions in the democratic setting of Israel. Using survey experiments based on the European Union's decision to label goods produced in the West Bank and vignettes that vary the type and sender of the sanctions, they find strong evidence for a

rally around the flag effect. Economic sanctions increased support for the policies that generated the sanctions among supporters of pro-government and opposition parties alike, heightened antipathy toward the sanctioning countries, and promoted a greater sense of in-group solidarity among Israelis.

These results presented here emerge from a single case so caution about generalization is warranted, but the results have insights for broader debates on the effectiveness of sanctions, the use of smart sanctions, and differences between multilateral and unilateral sanctions. They also suggest that the common argument that sanctions have caused Russians to rally around the flag is incorrect. The Russian leadership is popular because of the reason that sanctions were put in place – the annexation of Crimea – rather than because of the sanctions. More generally, it is important to separate the impact of sanctions on public opinion from the broader political environment.

Theoretical Discussion

Scholars have long debated how economic sanctions shape foreign policy (c.f. Baldwin 1988; Pape 1997; Hufbauer et al. 1990; 2007; Drezner 1997), the prospects of regime change (Marinov 2005), and economic performance (c.f. Neuenkirch and Neumeier 2015). One common thread is that economic sanctions shape mass politics in the target country, although there is disagreement about the direction and magnitude of this effect.

The orthodox theory suggests that economic sanctions induce lower levels of support for the government than one would find in the absence of sanctions. The economic pain brought by sanctions compels the public to blame the government for choosing the policy that led to the sanctions in the first place (Galtung 1967). In one of the few empirical studies of the impact of economic sanctions on domestic political activity, Allen (2008)

uses cross-national data from the post-war era and provides some support for this view. She finds that sanctions are associated with a greater likelihood of anti-government protest, but only in democracies. In sum, the orthodox view suggests that sanctions should reduce support for the government in the target country, while lifting economic sanctions should increase it.

We might expect that members of groups targeted by the sanctions to be among those most likely to withdraw support from the government. This logic underpins “smart” sanctions that target elites with massive economic costs while sparing the mass public. In smart sanctions work as advertised, we should expect to find little change on average in public attitudes due to sanctions. However, we might also expect opponents of the regime to be emboldened by sanctions and therefore be more likely to change their views. Those who are lukewarm or opposed to the regime to begin with may be the first to abandon the government in the presence of sanctions.

In contrast, the rally around the flag theory also points to sanction-induced suffering as a driver of public attitudes, but leads to the opposite conclusion: economic sanctions increase support for the government in the target country. By shifting blame for economic hardship to the sanctioning country and by invoking the danger of external threats, leaders in the target country can rally the public around the government in a way that would be impossible without sanctions.⁷ Proponents cite Cuba, where decades of sanctions appear to

⁷ Studies of the rally around the flag effect typically examine the impact of security threats and rarely focus on economic sanctions. Much of this research focuses on democratic settings, (c.f. Mueller 1973, Baum 2002). Yudina (2015) uses a two-survey panel of

have given Fidel Castro a powerful tool to rally supporters, as an example (Losman 1979). Some argue that Russia is another example. Advisor to President Trump Anthony Scaramucci noted: "I think the sanctions had in some ways an opposite effect because of Russian culture. I think the Russians would eat snow if they had to survive. And so for me the sanctions probably galvanized the nation with the nation's President."⁸ The rally around the flag view argues that sanctions increase support for the target government, while removing them reduce it.

Non-democratic regimes may be particularly likely to experience rally around the flag effects given the government's control over the media. By shaping information about the economy and framing the intentions of the sanctioning country, rulers in autocratic countries may have advantages over their democratic counterparts in their attempts to rally the nation.

The broader literature on rally around the flag effects observes that those who are less supportive of the leadership are more likely to change their views (Mueller 1973; Baum 2002). Greene and Robertson (2015) find this to be the case in Russia. The surge in support for the government following the annexation of Crimea came largely from respondents who had soured on President Putin in recent years. We might expect skeptics of the regime to be most likely to rally around the flag in the wake of economic sanctions.

middle-class respondents in large cities in Russia in October 2013 and July 2014 to examine support for Putin.

⁸ See https://www.rbth.com/news/2017/01/17/trumps-advisor-says-us-sanctions-against-russia-had-opposite-effect_682543

A related argument suggests that sanctions have a conditional impact on political attitudes. Rather than having a direct impact on political attitudes as in the preceding two theories, the economic scapegoating argument suggests that sanctions moderate the impact of the economic pain by allowing the ruler to blame the foreign government for economic difficulties. This is slightly different from a rally around the flag effect because it implies that the sanctioned government can shift blame for economic problems, but is not able to dramatically increase its support above what it would have been in the absence of sanctions.

Many observers have theorized about how sanctions shape public opinion in sanctioned countries, but far less has been written about how sanctions affect attitudes toward the sanctioning country. Conventional wisdom suggest that economic sanctions reduce support for the country that imposes the sanctions among the citizens of the target country. Leaders in the target country rarely miss an opportunity to direct discontent toward the sanctioning country and Russia is no exception.

Regime supporters in the target country may be especially likely to increase their antipathy toward the sanctioning country as the sanctions are aimed most directly at a government that they support. In contrast, regime opponents may be less likely to rally against the sanctioning government as doing so would serve the interests of their own government.

We might expect sanctions to have a greater impact on views of the sanctioning country because respondents typically have far less information about the sanctioning country than about their own government. Respondents are likely to have more sophisticated views about their own government than about a foreign government with

whom they rarely interact and therefore may be more open to changing their views about the foreign government when reminded of sanctions.

Finally, different types of sanctions may have different effects on public opinion (Drezner 2011). Two distinctions are especially relevant. Scholars have debated the relative impact of unilateral sanctions employed by a single country versus multilateral sanctions employed many countries (Martin 1992). Cross-national studies have tended to find that multilateral sanctions are more effective in changing policies and sanctioning countries have increasingly coordinated their sanctioning efforts with countries who share their goals. Yet we have scant evidence of how these two types of sanctions shape political attitudes. Grossman et al. (2017) find that whether hypothetical sanctions are imposed by the US or by a quartet of major powers has little difference on respondents in Israel.

In one respect, the study here presents an especially good test of the difference between unilateral and multilateral sanctions as the EU and US sanctions are very similar, but impose far higher costs on the EU than on the US given the former's far greater trade with Russia. Some scholars argue that sanctions send a more credible signal of resolve when they impose higher costs on the sender (Fearon 1997; Schultz 1998, but see Whang and Kim 2015).⁹ If so, we might expect respondents to view the EU sanctions as much more credible than the US sanctions.

In addition, scholars have discussed the differential impacts of "traditional" sanctions designed to greatly restrict economic activity in the target country and "smart

⁹ The tests below focus on citizens rather than foreign policy elites. Most theories of signaling focus on elites rather than the masses.

sanctions” aimed at punishing political elites and key economic actors, but not the mass public (Drezner 2011; Grauvogel and Von Soerst 2012).¹⁰ Traditional sanctions in the case of Iraq sought to impose great economic pain across broad sectors of society. In contrast, smart sanctions in Libya targeted the oil sector, assets held abroad, and the arms trade, while largely sparing the masses (Elliott 2002: 171).

Smart sanctions may be specifically designed to mitigate rally around the flag effects in the target country, however, it is unclear whether smart sanctions can achieve this goal in practice. Smart sanctions may have negative spillovers on the mass public even as they target the elite. For example, the reputational costs of being sanctioned may deter investors and lenders from doing business in sanctioned countries and thereby slow economic growth for all groups, including those not targeted by sanctions. In addition, even if smart sanctions are well designed and bypass the mass public, they may still lead to a rally around the flag effect if political attitudes are driven by concerns about international rivalry and global status. If citizens in the sanctioned countries put great weight on these non-economic factors, then smart sanctions may be prone to the same dynamics as traditional economic sanctions.

One difficulty in identifying the impact of economic sanctions on public attitudes is that sanctions are only levied when relations are already bad. This makes it difficult to identify whether sanctions or the factors that caused the sanctions are driving political attitudes. Simply comparing levels of support for the government before and after the

¹⁰ https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/system/files/publications/wp235_grauvogel-soest.pdf

sanction fails to capture this possibility. For example, while many have noted that President Putin's popularity remains high even after the adoption of the sanctions, this may be due to factors other than the economic sanctions, such as the annexation of Crimea, the intervention in Syria, or other factors (Weir 2016; Moyle 2016).¹¹

Economic Sanctions on Russia

Beginning in March 2014, the United States and the European Union imposed economic sanctions on individuals and companies involved in the decision to annex Crimea or in the ongoing violence in eastern Ukraine.¹² Over the course of 2014 and 2015, President Obama issued four executive orders each of which listed of individuals and firms subject to various prohibitions.¹³ Key features of the economic sanctions include:

- Prohibitions on providing new debt or new equity of greater than thirty days' maturity to identified Russian corporate and banking entities
- Prohibitions on providing new debt greater than ninety days' maturity to identified entities and individuals operating in the Russian energy sector
- Prohibitions on the export of goods, services (except for financial services), and technology in support of exploration or production for deepwater, Arctic offshore, or shale projects that have the potential to produce oil in the Russian Federation.
- Blocking sanctions on designated entities and individuals operating in the Russian defense sector
- Asset bans and travel freezes on key individuals close to President Vladimir Putin or directly involved in Russian aggression against Ukraine

¹¹ <http://www.levada.ru/en/2016/09/05/sanctions-3/>, <http://yris.yira.org/essays/1623>

¹²

<http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/internationalgovernance/shared/Russian-Sanctions-Report.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/ukrainerussia/>

- A total ban on transactions and economic cooperation with Russian-occupied Crimea.¹⁴

The list of sanctioned entities grew to include some of the best connected individuals and largest firms in Russia, including Rosneft, Novatek, and Rosoboronexport.

These actions were closely coordinated with the European Union which pursued remarkably similar economic sanctions (Movchan 2017). Switzerland, Canada, Norway, Australia and other countries soon followed suit. The economic sanctions levied on Russia have remained in place longer than many observers expected. Despite predictions, both the United States and the European Union have regularly extended the sanctions and they remained in place at the time of the two surveys analyzed here.

The sanctions were novel in several respects. Russia's economy was far larger, globally integrated, and complex than most prior targets of economic sanctions. In addition, following a post-2001 trend, these sanctions were designed to target specific individuals and companies rather than to drastically reduce economic output. These smart sanctions aimed to limit collateral impacts on the public and to spare those not directly involved in making Russian foreign policy.¹⁵

¹⁴ For an excellent and balanced report on the US sanctions toward Russia, see Nephew and Weiss (2016). <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/07/11/role-of-sanctions-in-u.s.-russian-relations-pub-64056>

¹⁵ Robin Emmott, "Sanctions Impact on Russia to be Longer Term, U.S. Says," Reuters, January 12, 2016.

The economic impact of the sanctions on the Russian economy has been tangible, if far from regime-threatening.¹⁶ Almost all observers point to steep declines in oil prices as the main cause of Russia's drastic drop in output in 2014 and 2015 and slow recovery, but many also observe that the sanctions have played some role.¹⁷ The IMF estimates that the sanctions shrunk the Russian economy by around 1.5 percent during 2014-15 and expects these losses to grow substantially over time.¹⁸ Sources from Russia cite similar dynamics.¹⁹ Sanctions have generally made Russia less attractive for foreign investment and limited access to western financing – a key input in large capital intensive project in the important energy sector. This was expected; the economic sanctions were not designed to produce a turnover in government, but were aimed at imposing costs on specific individuals and firms, retaining flexibility for the US government to respond to changes in Russian behavior, avoiding disruptions in energy markets, and, ultimately causing a change in Russian foreign policy.

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28400218>

¹⁷ <http://www.sldinfo.com/the-russian-sanctions-debate-at-the-valdai-conference/>

¹⁸ See Movchan 2017, <http://carnegie.ru/2017/03/28/how-sanctions-are-helping-putin-pub-68442> Also <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43895.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://uawire.org/news/medvedev-admits-that-sanctions-have-affected-the-economy:>

See also

https://life.ru/t/%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8/922647/kudrin_sanktsii_nachnut_snizhat_libo_v_etom_ghodu_libo_v_nachalie_slieduiushchiegh

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In response, the Russian government levied a series of “countersanctions” against the European Union, the US, and other countries who imposed sanctions. Most importantly, the Kremlin banned the import into Russia of agricultural goods from the US and the EU, and these sanctions have had a considerable effect on certain economic sectors, particularly in Europe. They have also had a far more substantial impact on Russian consumers than have the US and EU sanctions. The Russian government has justified the countersanctions in part as a measure to protect domestic producers from foreign competition – a policy that has been surprisingly popular even as the countersanctions reduce access for customers to foreign goods, such as cheese, wine, and vegetables.²⁰ The ability of the Kremlin to convince the Russian public that countersanctions are the best way to repel the West have turned the “smart” sanctions into “traditional” sanctions that influence the entire economy (Yudina 2015: 38).

While the economic sanctions imposed were not targeted at Russian consumers, the mass public felt their impact. In a June 2015 poll about one-third of Russians noted that the economic sanctions had created serious (8%) or somewhat serious (25%) problems for them.²¹ By August 2016, 39 percent of Russian were seriously concerned (7%) concerned or somewhat concerned (32%) about economic sanctions.²² In addition, the mass public was aware that the sanctions had been imposed. Kazun (2016: 8) notes that more 92,000 articles on economic sanctions appeared in the Russian regional and central press in 2014.

²⁰ Sixty-five percent of Russians supported the countersanctions in an April 2017 survey. <http://www.levada.ru/2017/05/15/sanktsii-i-kontrsanctions-3/>

²¹ <http://www.levada.ru/en/2015/08/03/sanctions-and-countersanctions/>

²² <http://www.levada.ru/en/2016/09/05/sanctions-3/>

In addition, he observes that economic sanctions were commonly cited as one of the most memorable events in open-ended questions on monthly surveys conducted by the Levada Center in Russia. In a Pew Survey from the summer of 2015, the Russian public gave equal credit to the fall in oil prices and to sanctions as the primary reason behind Russia's economic slowdown.²³ Thus, despite efforts to target only the elite, many ordinary Russians believe that they have suffered from economic sanctions.²⁴

The Surveys

To assess the impact of economic sanctions on political attitudes, I added questions to national surveys conducted in Russia in November 2016 and January 2017.²⁵ Each survey was conducted face to face in the home of the respondent by interviewers from the Levada Center, the most well respected polling company in Russia.²⁶ In the 2016 survey, we randomly assigned each of our 2000 respondents into one of 6 groups. Each respondent

²³ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/10/nato-publics-blame-russia-for-ukrainian-crisis-but-reluctant-to-provide-military-aid/russia-ukraine-report-23/>

²⁴ Golikova et al. (2017) survey firms in Russia in late 2014 and early 2015 and find that many “untargeted firms” perceived a negative impact on their firm from sanctions.

²⁵ For details on the surveys, see Appendix I.

²⁶ In September 2016, the Levada Center was declared a “foreign agent” by the Russian government. Only 5 percent of respondents were aware of this event. See Appendix II for details. Adding a dummy variable for these respondents to regression analyses of political attitudes does not change the results. The coefficient on this dummy variable is also not statistically significant.

was asked: “On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive, to what extent do you approve of the leadership of Russia?” In questions that immediately followed, respondents were asked about their level of support for the leaderships of the United States and the European Union.

In the baseline group, respondents received only these questions with no additional information, but in each of the five treatment groups, I provided some information to the respondents before asking about support for the various sets of governments. In treatment 1, respondents were told: “Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia.” This formulation provides a direct test of the orthodox and rally around the flag theories.

In treatment 2, respondents were told: “Since 2014 there has been about a 6 percent decline in the Russian economy.” This prime is designed to capture the direct impact of the performance of the economy on the favorability of the government without mentioning the sanctions.

In treatment 3, respondents were told: “Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia and there has been about a 6 percent decline in the Russian economy.” This formulation explores the combined effect of telling respondents about economic performance and the imposition of sanctions. It also yields a comparison of the additional impact on popular attitudes of telling respondents about economic performance in the presence of economic sanctions. This is important because economic sanctions may shape popular attitudes through their economic effects or through other mechanisms, such as their impact on the respondent’s perceived stature of the country on the global stage.

In treatment 4, respondents were told: “Since 2014 the European Union has levied economic sanctions against Russia.” In treatment 5, respondents were told: “Since 2014 the European Union has levied economic sanctions against Russia and there has been about a 6 percent decline in the Russian economy.” By manipulating whether the sanctions were levied by the US or the EU, these questions explore the differential impact of the identity of the sanctioner and assess the impact of unilateral versus multilateral sanctions on political attitudes.

By comparing the average responses in each of these groups to the average response in the baseline condition, we can identify the impact of these different frames of information on political attitudes (Gaines et al. 2007). Because the treatments have been randomly assigned to the respondents, we can be confident that the changes in information provided by the treatments are associated with changes in political attitudes.²⁷

To explore the differential impact on regime supporters and skeptics, interviews also asked respondents the following question. “Some people approve of the activities of President Putin and some people disapprove. Do you approve or disapprove of the activities of President Putin in the period 2015-2016? Respondents were given a 5-point scale ranging from 1) completely disapprove 2) disapprove 3) approve some things, disapprove others 4) approve and 5) fully approve. I call the 43 percent of respondents who answered 3 or lower to this question “Putin skeptics” and the 57 of respondents who answered either approve or fully approve, “Putin supporters.”

²⁷ For information on balance between variables and possible confounders see Appendix III.

Note that the question asks about support for the *leadership* of Russia, the United States, and the European Union. In the original Russian, the term (*rukovodstvo*) is used to connote the political leaders of the country including the Presidency and the government in Russia's semi-presidential constitutional structure. This question captures attitudes not only toward President Putin, but also toward the government as whole. The results are not directly comparable to the approval ratings of President Putin that have been the attention of much previous research, but given Putin's outsized role in the political system, they are likely to be comparable. In addition, this formulation permits the use of the same term when asking respondents about support for Russia, the United States and the European Union despite their different governmental structures.

Table 1. Economic Sanctions and Popular Attitudes in Russia, 2016 Data

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive, to what extent do you approve of the leadership of ...	Russia		The United States		The European Union	
	1 Mean (Linearized Standard error) n	2 Difference from baseline p-value	3 Mean (Linearized Standard error) n	4 Difference from baseline p-value	5 Mean (Linearized Standard error) n	6 Difference. from baseline p-value
Baseline (no additional information)	3.52 (.05) 336		2.10 (.05) 336		2.23 (.06) 336	
T1. Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia.	3.40 (.07) 300	-.12 p = .16	1.92 (.06) 299	-.19* P = .01	2.04 (.07) 299	-.19* p = .02
T2. Since 2014 the Russian economy has fallen by about 6 percent.	3.21 (.08) 350	-.31* p = .00	2.03 (.06) 348	-.08 p = .23	2.23 (.07) 348	-.01 p = .98
T3. Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia and there has been about a 6 percent decline in the Russian economy.	3.39 (.06) 321	-.13 p = .10	1.98 (.06) 321	-.13 p = .08	2.12 (.06) 321	-.11 p = .15
T4. Since 2014 the European Union has levied economic sanctions against Russia.	3.46 (.07) 355	-.06 p = .43	1.96 (.05) 355	-.15 P = .03	2.10 (.06) 355	-.13 p = .07
T5. Since 2014 the European Union has levied economic sanctions against Russia and there has been about a 6 percent decline in the Russian economy.	3.37 (.06) 342	-.15* p = .04	2.05 (.06) 342	-.06 P = .37	2.16 (.05) 341	-.08 p = .27

*indicates statistical significance at the .05 level. n = number of observations

Results for the Russian Leadership

Columns 1 and 2 of Table 1 examine attitudes towards the Russian government. In the baseline condition where respondents receive no additional information, the average response is 3.52 indicating that the Russian political leadership is relatively popular. Comparing treatment 1 to the baseline condition finds that reminding respondents that the US levied sanctions against Russia has little impact on support for the Russian government (3.40 versus 3.52 $p = .16$). Simply reminding respondents that the US has levied economic sanctions against Russia has little impact on support for the Russian government.²⁸

As shown in Appendix IV, there is evidence that reminding respondents of sanctions makes Putin skeptics significantly more likely to withdraw support from the government, but has little impact on Putin supporters.²⁹ Among Putin skeptics, the mean response in treatment 1 is 25 percentage points lower than in the baseline (3.21 versus 2.90, $p = .00$).³⁰ Among Putin supporters, however, there is no difference between the baseline condition

²⁸ Respondents who report a declining economic position in the last two years react more forcefully to treatment 1. In this group, the difference between the average response in the baseline condition (3.46) and the average response in treatment 1 (3.15) with ($p = .04$).

²⁹ The reaction to the treatments from respondents whose economic conditions declined in the last two years are similar to those of Putin skeptics. This is not surprising as those whose economic conditions declined in the last two years exhibit lower levels of approval of President Putin in comparison to Putin supporters (3.49 versus 3.86, $t = 9.31$).

³⁰ Of course, attitudes toward Putin are not randomly assigned so causal inference in the analysis in this subgroup is weaker than in the unconditional analyses.

and treatment 1 (3.78 versus 3.73). Thus, among Putin skeptics there is support for the orthodox view of sanctions even as the attitude of the average respondent is unmoved by the presence of sanctions.

In contrast, treatment 2 finds that reminding people that the economy has fallen by around six percent since 2014 generates a large drop in support for the Russian government compared to the baseline (3.52 versus 3.21 $p = .00$). Economic performance is strongly related to support for the Russian government among both Putin supporters and Putin skeptics. This is consistent with prior research which suggests that there has been a strong link between economic performance and Presidential approval ratings in Russia even if this link has weakened since 2013 (Treisman 2011; 2014).

However, the impact of this economic decline is substantially reduced if respondents are also reminded that the US levied economic sanctions against Russia as in treatment 3 (3.21 versus 3.40). The difference between treatments 2 and 3 is on the borderline of statistical significance ($p = .06$). Russians are more forgiving of the government when respondents are lead to believe that sanctions are associated with economic decline. These results are almost entirely driven by Putin supporters as shown in Appendix IV.

At the same time, the average response to treatment 3 is somewhat lower (3.39) than the baseline condition (3.52), which suggests that respondents do not fully absolve the Russian government for the condition of the economy due to economic sanctions. The difference between the average response in the treatment 3 and the baseline condition falls a bit short of conventional measures of statistical significance ($p = .10$).

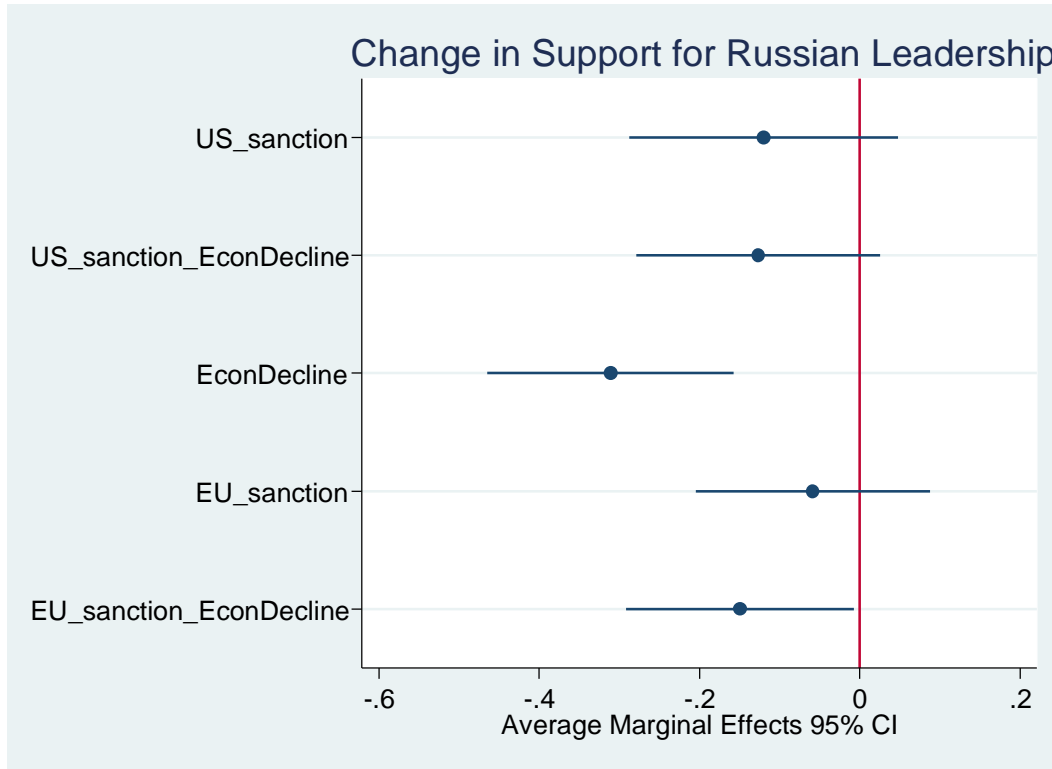
Comparing treatments 4 and 5 with the other responses finds that support for the Russian government does not depend on whether sanctions are levied by the US or the EU. In treatment 4 which reminds respondents that the EU has levied sanctions against Russia, average responses are not significantly different from the baseline (3.46 versus 3.52). Indeed, they are identical to treatment 2 which reminds respondents that the United States levied sanctions against Russia.

Treatment 5, which reminds respondents that the European Union levied sanctions against Russia and the economy had declined by about 6 percent yields further evidence for the economic scapegoating argument. In this case, the average response is 3.40, which is significantly different from the baseline (3.52 versus 3.37, $p = .04$). Perhaps more interesting, it is also different from treatment 2 which only includes information about the economic decline (3.37 versus 3.21, $p = .03$). Thus, when told that the economy had declined and the sanctions had been imposed by the European Union respondents were more supportive of the government than when only told that the economy had declined. These results are quite similar to those found in treatment 3, which included information about economic decline and the imposition of sanctions by the US. The similarity in these results suggests the impact of economic sanctions on political attitudes in Russia does not depend on whether they are imposed by the US or by the EU. They also provide some support for the economic scapegoating argument.

Figure 1 reports these results graphically based on output from an OLS regression with robust standard errors and clustering on primary sampling units using the responses to the question on support for the Russian leadership as the dependent variable and

including each treatment as a dummy variable and the baseline condition as the comparison group.³¹

Figure 1. Change in Support for Russian Leadership



This pattern of results indicates that, on average, reminding respondents of US and EU sanctions is associated with lower levels of support for the Russian government – a finding that is consistent with the orthodox theory of sanctions - but these effects are not precisely estimated. There is even less support for the rally around the flag argument as all marginal effects are negative.

³¹ Results reported in Tables 1 and 2 change little with inclusion of covariates for age, employment status, townsize, sex, and a self-reported categorical variable for income.

Results for the US and the EU

The next section explores how economic sanctions influence popular attitudes toward the sanctioner. Many observers point to rising anti-Western sentiment in Russia, but the role of sanctions in generating this sentiment is difficult to separate from other potential sources, such as the annexation of Crimea, the Russian role in Syria, or the changing fortunes of the US and the EU (Menon 2014; Weitz 2017). In Table 1, columns 3 and 4 report attitudes toward the US and Columns 5 and 6 report attitudes toward the EU. Results are similar for both countries, although not completely.

First, consider the US case. In the baseline condition where respondents receive no additional information, the average favorability score for the United States is 2.10. In treatment 1, when respondents are reminded that the US levied sanctions against Russia, this figure falls to 1.92, a significant reduction of 19 percentage points ($p = .00$). The imposition of sanctions has a direct impact on attitudes towards the sanctioner. These results are largely driven by Putin supporters. Among this group, the favorability of the US falls from 2.14 to 1.87 ($p = .01$) when respondents are reminded of the sanctions. Putin skeptics are largely unmoved by the mention of sanctions (2.04 versus 1.98, $p = .21$).

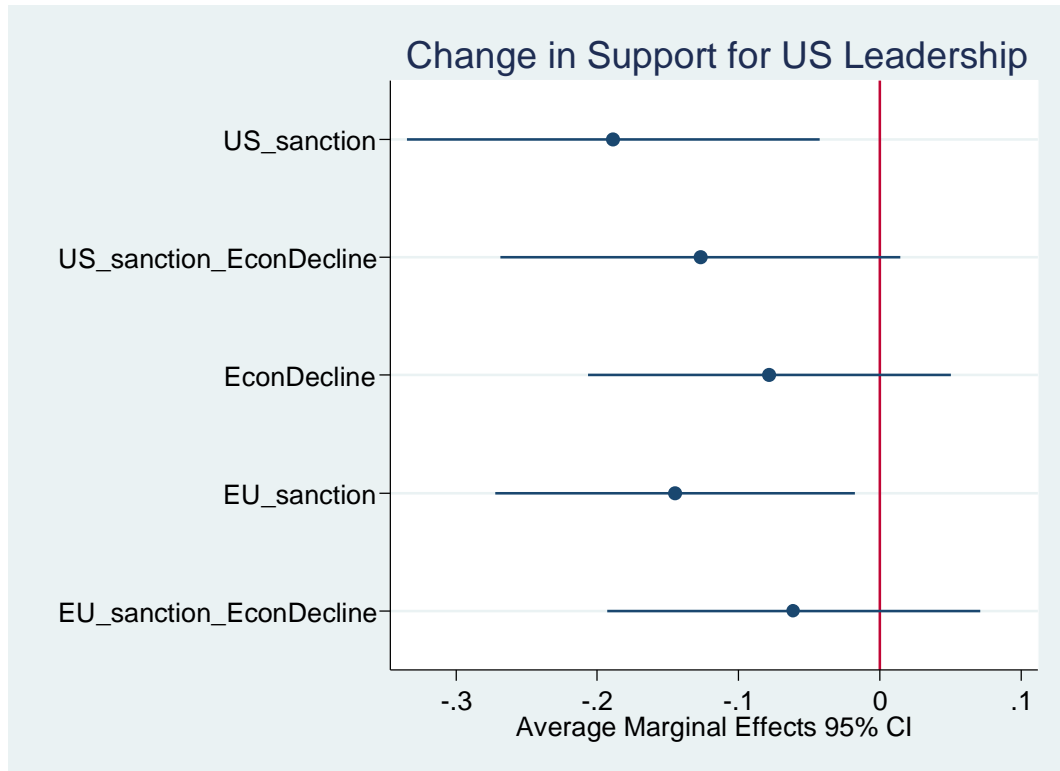
In treatment 2, where respondents are told that the economy has declined by 6 percentage points since 2014, attitudes toward the United States are lower than in the baseline condition by 8 percentage points, a decline that is not statistically significant. In this case, respondents appear to not attribute the economic slowdown in Russia to the actions of the US alone. If this were the case, we would see a much larger drop in the favorability rating of the United States.

Treatment 3 which reminds respondents of both US economic sanctions and the sharp drop in economic output in Russia since 2014, also produces a decline in favorability toward the US, but this 13 percentage point drop fall just shy of significance ($p = .08$).

It is interesting to compare the results of treatments 1 and 3. In both cases respondents are reminded that the US has levied economic sanctions, but in the latter they are also reminded of a large drop in economic growth. Providing additional information about the economy, however, produces little change in attitudes toward the US (1.92 versus 1.98). This suggests that impact of economic sanctions on attitudes toward the US are not working via changes in the overall economy induced by the economic sanctions.

Figure 2 displays these results using the same technique as in Figure 1, but with the responses about support for the US leadership as the dependent variable.

Figure 2. Change in Support for US Leadership



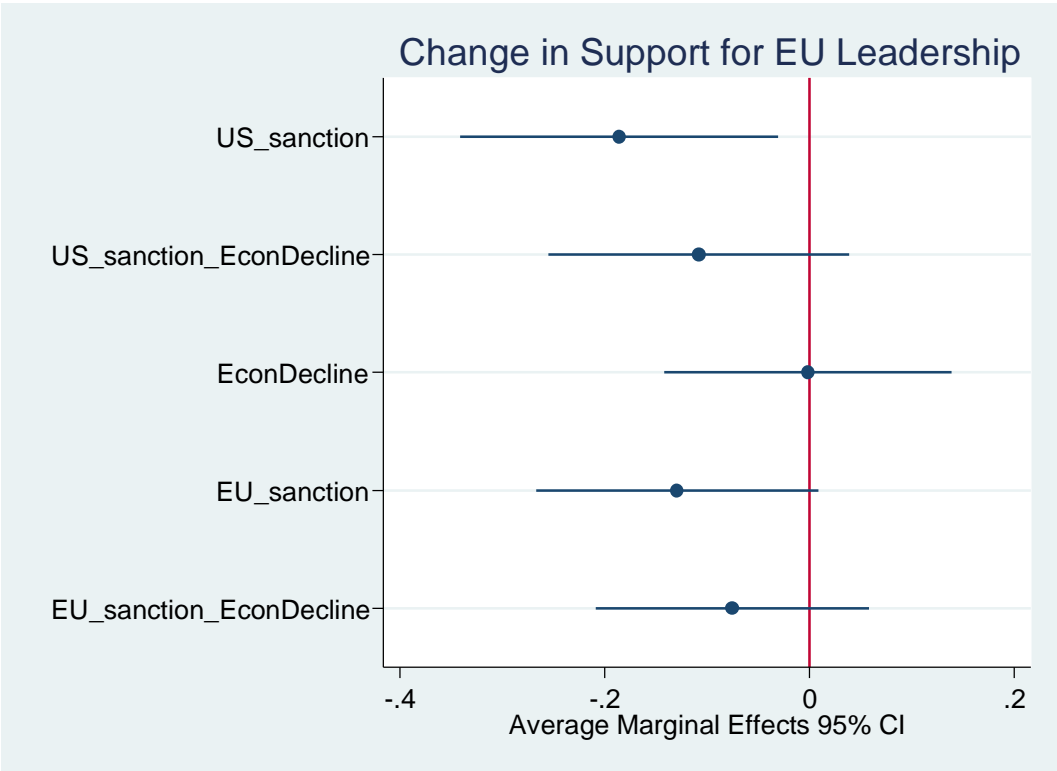
Assessing the impact of EU economic sanctions on attitudes towards the European Union produces similar but slightly weaker results.³² The average favorability rating in the baseline condition toward the European Union is 2.23, but declines by 13 percentage points in treatment 4 when respondents are reminded that the EU imposed economic sanctions on Russia. The p-value of .07 lies just outside standard levels of significance. As in the US case, adding information about the economic decline in Russia, produces no

³² It is interesting that reminding respondents that the US levied sanctions against Russia also leads to lower levels of support for the EU. One interpretation is that respondents do not draw sharp lines between the US and EU on this issue.

change in attitudes toward the EU (2.23 versus 2.23). Attitudes toward the EU are similar in treatments 4 and 5 (2.10 versus 2.16). Again, telling respondents about the performance of the economy in the presence of economic sanctions produces results quite similar to telling respondents only about the presence of economic sanction. As in the US case, respondents appear to base their evaluation of the sanctioner on dimensions other than the impact of sanctions on economic performance. If this were the case, we would find a significant difference between treatments 2 and 3 and between treatments 4 and 5, but the evidence is inconsistent with this view.

Figure 3 reports these results graphically using the same technique as in previous figures. As before the omitted category is the baseline condition.

Figure 3. Change in Support for EU Leadership



In sum, economic sanctions reduce public support for the US and the EU and these reductions come largely from Putin supporters rather than Putin skeptics. In addition, the Russian public responds similarly to multilateral and unilateral sanctions.

Data from 2017

In January 2017, we returned to the topic using a somewhat smaller sample of 1600 respondents. The survey was conducted face to face by the Levada Center as part of its regular monthly polls known as the “Courier.”³³ This analysis is designed to assess the robustness of the prior results by repeating the direct question about the impact of US sanctions on popular attitudes toward the Russian and US leaderships. In addition, the survey included a number of new treatments to further probe the impact of the economic sanctions on political attitudes.

³³ See Appendix I for details on the 2017 survey.

Table 2. Economic Sanctions and Popular Attitudes in Russia, 2017 Data

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive, to what extent do you approve of the leadership of ...?	Russia		The United States	
	1 Mean (Linearized Standard error) n	2 Difference from Baseline p-value	3 Mean (Linearized Standard error) n	4 Difference from Baseline p-value
Baseline (no additional information)	3.59 (.07) 250		2.40 (.06) 231	
T1. Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia.	3.71 (.07) 224	.12 p = .24	2.20 (.07) 213	-.20* p = .03
T2. Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia and Russia introduced countersanctions in response.	3.79 (.07) 255	.20* p = .05	2.24 (.06) 232	-.19 p = .09
T3. Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia in response to the incorporation of Crimea into Russia.	3.95 (.07) 238	.36* p = .00	2.31 (.08) 228	-.09 p = .35
T4. Many experts believe that relations between the US and Russia are at their lowest point in decades.	3.72 (.06) 272	.13 p = .17	2.26 (.07) 254	-.15* p = .12
T5. Many experts believe that Donald Trump will weaken economic sanctions against Russia once he takes office.	3.80 (.06) 263	.21* p = .03	2.71 (.07) 244	.31* p = .00

*indicates statistical significance at the .05 level. n = number of observations.

Economic Sanctions and Attitudes Toward the Russian Leadership

As in the preceding analysis, respondents were asked: “On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive, to what extent do you approve of the leadership of Russia?” Turning to Table 2, the average response in the baseline condition in which respondents receive no additional information is 3.59. Treatment 1 reminds respondents

that the US levied economic sanctions on Russia and the differences between the average response to the baseline question and the average response in treatment 1 is not statistically significant (3.59 and 3.71, $p = .24$). Thus, two separate surveys produce little evidence that reminding respondents that the United States levied economic sanctions has a direct impact on support for the Russian government. These results are inconsistent with both the orthodox view that sanctions undercut the target government and with the rally around the flag argument that sanctions increase support for the target government.

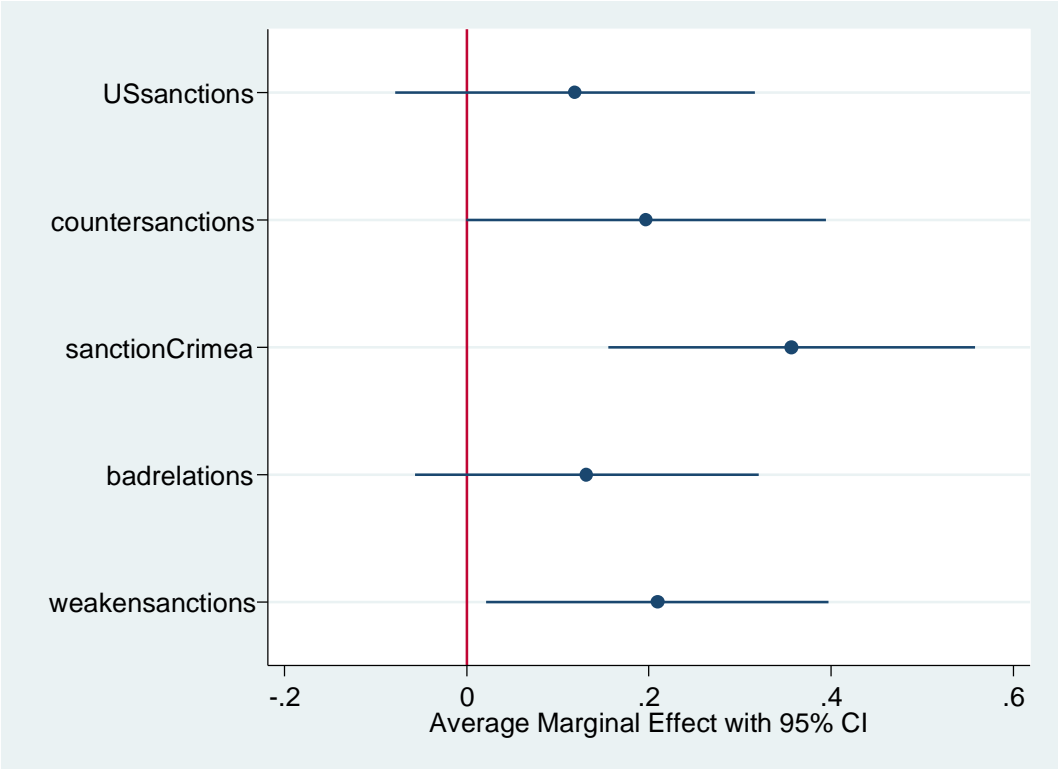
The remaining four treatments examine the relationship between economic sanctions and support for the Russian government in more detail. For example, one may argue that the impact of economic sanctions by the US has been offset by Russian countersanctions. Many note that the Russian countersanctions have had a more direct and a more negative impact on consumers than have the Western sanctions (Movchan 2017). In treatment 2 respondents were told: "Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia and Russia introduced countersanctions in response." The average response in this group is higher than in the baseline group (3.79 versus 3.59, $p = .05$). Despite the hardship imposed by the countersanctions, reminding respondents of their existence improves the standing of the leadership in Russia although this estimate is somewhat imprecisely estimated.

Treatment 3 explores the possibility that economic sanctions have not reduced support for the Russian government because citizens are willing to tradeoff the pain induced by economic sanctions for the gain of annexing Crimea. To test this argument, I reminded respondents that the US had levied economic sanctions in response to the annexation of Crimea. This reminder yielded a significant increase in support for the

Russian government from the baseline condition (3.95 versus 3.59, $p = .00$). This result is not surprising as the annexation of Crimea has been extremely popular in Russia. For the average respondent the increase in support from the government arises primarily from the annexation of Crimea rather than from the imposition of economic sanctions.

Treatment 4 examines relations between the US and Russia and support for the Russian government. Respondents may view economic sanctions as a breakdown in relations and hold the Russian government at least partially responsible. If true, then this framing would reduce support for the Russian government. However, the average response in treatment 4 is not significantly different from that in the baseline condition (3.72 versus 3.59, $p = .17$). Figure 4 reports the results graphically using the technique described for previous figures.

Figure 4. Change in Support for Russian Leadership



Economic Attitudes Toward the United States

Columns 3 and 4 in Table 2 report respondent's attitude toward the United States. While it is difficult to compare results across the two surveys because they are not panels, the results suggest an improvement in attitudes toward the US. This likely is due to a greater appreciation of the importance of the US presidential election and the potential for an improvement in US-Russia relations following the victory of Donald Trump. The November 2016 survey began shortly after the US election and the January 2017 survey may be capturing the full effect of President Trump's victory on Russian public opinion. In January, the Russian government, media, and public expressed favorable views about Donald Trump.³⁴

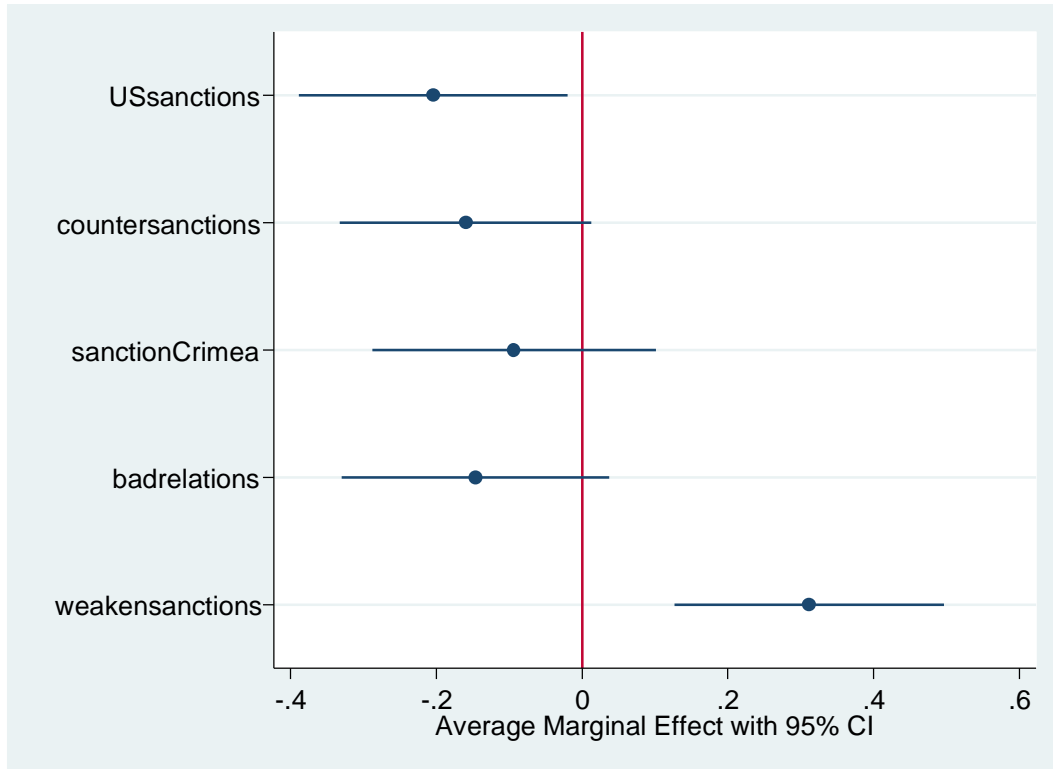
That said, reminding respondents that the US had levied economic sanctions on Russia depresses support for the US government. In the baseline condition the average favorability rating of the United States was 2.40, but this figure declines by 20 percentage points to 2.20 when respondents are told that the US had levied sanctions against Russia ($p = .03$). This result is in line with findings from the 2016 survey.

In addition, treatments 2-4 produce declines in the favorability rating of the US of somewhat similar magnitudes. When respondents are also told that Russia levied countersanctions, that US sanctions were linked to the annexation of Crimea, or that US-Russia relations were at historic lows, favorability ratings of the US were between 9 and 19 percentage points below the baseline condition when respondents received no information. Consistent with results from the 2016 survey, levying sanctions reduces

³⁴ Public opinion in Russia has cooled considerably toward President Trump.

favorability ratings of the leadership of the United States in Russia. Figure 5 presents the results in graphic form using the same formulation in previous figures.

Figure 5. Change in Support for US leadership



The Impact of Weakening Economic Sanctions

Finally, treatment 5 examines the impact of weakening economic sanctions on popular attitudes towards the leaderships of Russia and the United States. While there is much literature on the impact of the imposition of sanctions, far less thought has been given to the impact of lifting sanctions on political outcomes and none of this literature has explored how the easing of sanctions shapes political attitudes.

In this treatment, respondents were told: “Many experts believe that Donald Trump will weaken economic sanctions against Russia once he takes office” and then asked to rate

their support for the Russian and US governments. This frame is plausible as candidate Trump had been critical of economic sanctions and promised to review them upon coming to office. This treatment led to a significant increase in support for the Russian government compared to the baseline (3.80 versus 3.59, $p = .03$). Rather than blunting the rally around the flag effect, if anything, the prospect of weakening sanctions increases support for the Russian government. Respondents may view the weakening of economic sanctions as a victory for the Kremlin for which they should be rewarded with more popular support.

In addition, the prospect of weakening economic sanctions also produces a large and significant improvement in the favorability of the United States. From the baseline favorability rating of 2.40, we find an increase of 26 percentage points when respondents are told that many expect President Trump to weaken the economic sanctions on Russia (2.40 versus 2.71, $p = .00$). This suggests that levying economic sanctions need not cause long-term damage to the image of the sanctioning country and that public opinion could rebound to changes in the sanction regime in a relatively short period.

Limitations

It is difficult to discern how well these results can be generalized to other settings. The effects of sanctions on political attitudes may depend on the scope, scale, and timing of the sanctions. In some respects, the Russian case is a classic example of smart sanctions because they were not targeted at the mass public. At the same time, Russia's countersanctions imposed broad economic pain on consumers similar to traditional sanctions and Russians themselves believe that economic sanctions have had a negative

impact on the economy.³⁵ Thus, the results may speak to the impact of more comprehensive sanctions. More generally, understanding how the particular features of sanctions shape public opinion is a topic for future research.

Russia's prominence on the global stage makes it important to understand how sanctions work in this particular case. Given Russia's outsized role on the international stage, however, Russians may view the sanctions more through the lens of global politics than do citizens in other sanctioned countries. In this way, non-economic considerations, such as international status and perceptions of power, may be especially powerful for respondents in Russia.

Finally, Russia is an autocracy and the findings may be more relevant for less democratic settings. Scholars have noted that sanctions may be more effective at changing policies in democracies than non-democracies, although the effects of sanctions on public opinion in democracies and non-democracies has not been the subject of research (Nooruddin 2002). Grossman et al. (2017) find that economic sanctions in democratic Israel produce a backlash across the political spectrum and heighten support for hardline policies toward the sanctioner.

To the best of my knowledge scholars have not examined the individual-level determinants of economic sanctions on political attitudes in non-democracies. This is unfortunate as public opinion in many non-democracies, including Russia, is an essential component of politics and sanctions are especially likely to be levied against non-

³⁵ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/10/nato-publics-blame-russia-for-ukrainian-crisis-but-reluctant-to-provide-military-aid/russia-ukraine-report-23/>

democracies (Allen 2008). In addition, the lack of support for rally around the flag arguments in Russia is surprising in part because one might expect that non-democratic leaders would be especially well positioned to mobilize public opinion due to their great control over the media.³⁶

Finally, these results may be somewhat muted by the comparisons between the baselines and the treatments. To the extent that the responses in the baseline condition already contain the information included in the treatments, the results will understate the impact of the treatments. For example, if respondents in the baseline condition weight the role of economic sanctions heavily in their response, the treatment will understate the impact of sanctions on attitudes. This potential bias is perhaps less likely in shaping attitudes toward the leadership of Russia than toward the sanctioning countries. Respondents' assessments of the Russian government likely contain many more dimensions than do their assessments of the sanctioning countries. As such, the impact of any single piece of information on attitudes is likely to have a smaller impact when respondents assess their own government than the sanctioning government.

Conclusion

Despite the vast literature on the impacts of economic sanctions, there is very little empirical work on a critical mechanism in this body of work: the effect of economic sanctions on support for the target government. Indeed, we know very little about the impact of economic sanctions on political attitudes and behavior in the target country (but

³⁶ Escriba-Foch and Wright (2010) find that personalist autocracies such as Russia are more vulnerable to foreign pressure than are other types of autocracies.

see Allen 2008 and, especially Grossman et al. 2017). We also have little reliable and systematic evidence on how economic sanctions shape attitudes toward the sanctioner in the target country. The lack of evidence is less the fault of scholars than a reflection of the difficulty of conducting reliable public opinion polls in many countries under sanctions. Contemporary Russia provides a rare opportunity to study how economic sanctions shape popular attitudes in an autocratic setting.

Understanding the impact of economic sanctions is important for scholars as the main theories of how economic sanctions work (or are expected to work) rely in part on how they shape public opinion in the target country. This task is timely because economic sanctions have become an increasingly popular tool for the US and the EU (Drezner 2011). Moreover, the debate over the imposition of economic sanctions is typically fought more with passion than with data.

The results from two surveys in Russia find little direct support for the orthodox theory that economic sanctions reduce support for the target government or for the rally around the flag theory that economic sanctions increase support for the target government. There is, however, some evidence in support of an economic scapegoating argument. Economic decline produces a steep drop in the favorability of the Russian government, but this decline is reduced when respondents are reminded that the US or the EU imposed economic sanctions on Russia. This is consistent with the view that rulers can use sanctions to shift blame, but not to dramatically increase their support.

In addition, directly reminding respondents that the US or the EU had imposed economic sanctions on Russia reduces support for the sanctioner, although in the EU case this drop falls just shy of statistical significance. These results are largely driven by Putin

supporters. In addition, further results from 2017 indicate that the imposition of economic sanctions by the US reduced its favorability in the eyes of the Russian public.

Finally, the prospect of weakening of economic sanctions is associated with increases in favorability for both the target government and the sanctioner. In this respect, respondents appear to reward the leadership of both the sanctioned and the sanctioning countries for the reduction in tensions associated with a weakening of the sanctions.

While the results are from a single case they may provide some lessons for scholars and policymakers. First, economic sanctions may not lead to a rally around the flag effect because leaders may already be popular for the actions taken to invoke the sanctions in the first place. Indeed, the results suggest that popular support for the leadership in Russia is not driven by the imposition of economic sanctions.³⁷ This is surprising given the attention that the Kremlin and many western observers have paid to the impact of the economic sanctions on public opinion. Because Russia had already taken a nationalist turn prior to the introduction of sanctions, there may have been little room for an additional increase in nationalist support when economic sanctions were levied. Indeed, the evidence suggests that support for the Russian government increases when respondents are reminded that the economic sanctions were put in place because of the annexation of Crimea – a wildly

³⁷ As Menon 2014 notes: “For now, anyway, the standard rally-around-the-flag effect is what sanctions and ostracism have produced among Russians.”

<http://nationalinterest.org/print/feature/game-russian-roulette-the-west-s-dangerous-sanctions-play-11075>

popular policy in Russia. More generally, it suggests the importance of isolating the impact of sanctions on public opinion from other factors.

Second, the results suggest that the public perceives little difference between multilateral and unilateral sanctions at least as levied by the EU and the US. Scholars often argue that economic sanctions are a useful signal of commitment because they impose costs on the sender. In this case, the costs to the EU countries of imposing sanctions are much higher than for the US as the former has far more extensive trade ties with Russia. This would lead one to expect that respondents would view EU sanctions as far more credible and powerful than US sanctions. Yet, respondents do not appear to draw distinctions between the EU and the US despite these differences.³⁸ Multilateral sanctions may be more effective than unilateral sanctions as is commonly argued, but this effect does not appear to work via a differential impact on public opinion.³⁹

Third, the results in support of smart sanctions are mixed. On one hand, there is little evidence of a sanction-induced rally around the flag effect and this may be due to smart sanctions. On the other hand, even smart sanctions significantly heightened antipathy toward the US and respondents appear to perceive that foreign imposed economic sanctions have a larger impact on their pocketbook than they actually do.

³⁸ The EU sanctions may have sent a stronger signal to the elite than did the US sanctions, but it is difficult to know without access to the discussions of Russian foreign policy elites.

³⁹ Whang and Kim (2015) argue that sanctions rarely convey credible information because the costs to imposing them so cheap.

Fourth, regime supporters and skeptics respond somewhat differently to economic sanctions. When reminded that sanctions have been imposed on Russia, Putin skeptics are more likely to withdraw support from the Russian government and less likely to increase hostility toward the sanctioner. In contrast, Putin supporters do not reduce their approval of the Russian leadership and are quick to rally around the leadership against the US or the EU in the presence of economic sanctions. This suggests a partisan dimension in responses to the economic sanctions.

Finally, the results speak to debates on the effectiveness of economic sanctions and suggest one possible reason why economic sanctions may be less effective than many advocates suggest. In the face of a steep economic decline rulers can deflect blame by pointing to the impact of economic sanctions. However, the results also undercut the rally around the flag argument often put forward by critics of sanctions. In two successive surveys, reminding respondents that sanctions had been imposed did not increase support for the government above the baseline condition. Indeed, the average response in the treatment when sanctions modify the impact of economic decline on support for the target government remains no different from or significantly lower than the baseline case. In other words, this case suggests that opposition to sanctions because they generate rally around the flag effects is misplaced.

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Appendix I.

The 2016 Survey

Field work began November 8th, 2016 and ended December 4, 2016. The sample size was 2000 respondents over the age of 18. The survey was conducted in 48 regions. The sample is representative in terms of gender, age, education, region, and the size of the sampling unit. Individuals were chosen using a four stage sampling design beginning with regions and townsize chosen based on the principle of probability proportionate to the size of the population. 299 interviewers took part in field work. Interviewers received a three hour training prior to conducting field work along with detailed instructions on how to conduct the interview.

Fieldwork

	Full sample
Total number of visited addresses	10489
Non-residential buildings	161
No one at home	2646
Total number of contacts	7682
Immediate refusal	3564
Above quota	333
Do not know Russian	76
Not in condition to respond	162
Refusal of selected individual	1195
Interrupted interview	54
Completed interviews	2010
Rejected during controls by call backs	0
Included in data file	2010

The 2017 Survey

Fieldwork began January 13, 2017 and ended January 23, 2017. The sample size of the respondents was 1602. All respondents are age 18 and over. All cities with over 1 million population are inserted in the sample as self-representative units. In the rest strata with probability, proportional to size of a settlement, there are selected from 1 to 10 urban settlements (rural districts in rural area), so that 7-13 interviews are conducted in each of them. Number of interviews, falling onto one strata, is divided equally among selected settlements. Totally there are selected for the study 137 PSUs (99 urban settlements and 38 rural districts in 48 subjects of Russian Federation).

In each of the selected settlements 2 electoral districts (2 villages in rural district; in Moscow – 18, in St. Petersburg – 8 electoral districts) will be selected by method of random numbers out of total list of electoral districts (villages) of a previously selected urban settlement (rural district) – totally about 280 SSUs will be selected. Selection of households is completed by random route method with usage of route lists (each 7th household in blocks with many-floors buildings; each 3th household in blocks with individual houses). Selection of a respondent in a household is accomplished with control by gender, age and educational level. Each selected household\respondent is visited up to 3 times in different days of a week (in evenings on weekdays or on weekends). The survey was conducted in 137 settlements (44 regional centers, 55 towns and 38 rural regions), belonging to 49 subjects of the Russian Federation

FIELDWORK

The fieldwork supervisors of the regional offices worked out a route for each sampling point. After the route was worked out, the interviewers were given a route card with detailed description of his actions at finding the respondent. While following the route, some deviations from the route cards occurred. In most cases the deviation took place because the selected building was not a dwelling house or the numeration of the houses was changed because of a new house's construction. Deviations in selecting floors and apartments were also caused by the respondent's absence, refusals from an interview and search for necessary respondents pointed out in the control quotas.

The total number of visited addresses	8382
Non-dwelling buildings	69
Absence at home	2500
The total number of contacts	5813
Totally refusal	1792
Beyond the quota	1552
Don't know the Russian language	32
Unable to answer	72
Refusal of selected individual	745
Interrupted interviews	15
Completed interviews	1602
Rejected during control	3
Including into data file	1605

490 interviews have been controlled by the regional supervisors with call backs to ensure that the interviews were completed.

Appendix II.

To address concerns that the “foreign agent label” colored responses in the November 2016 survey, we concluded our questionnaire by asking respondents whether they had previously heard of the Levada Center. Only 16 percent said yes. We then told these 378 respondents that the Levada Center had been in the news recently and asked them to identify one of five reasons why. Only 30 percent (115 respondents) of this group gave the correct answer that the Levada Center had been named a foreign agent. Thus, only 115 respondents of our sample of 2318 respondent could conceivably have been influenced by this designation.

Appendix III.

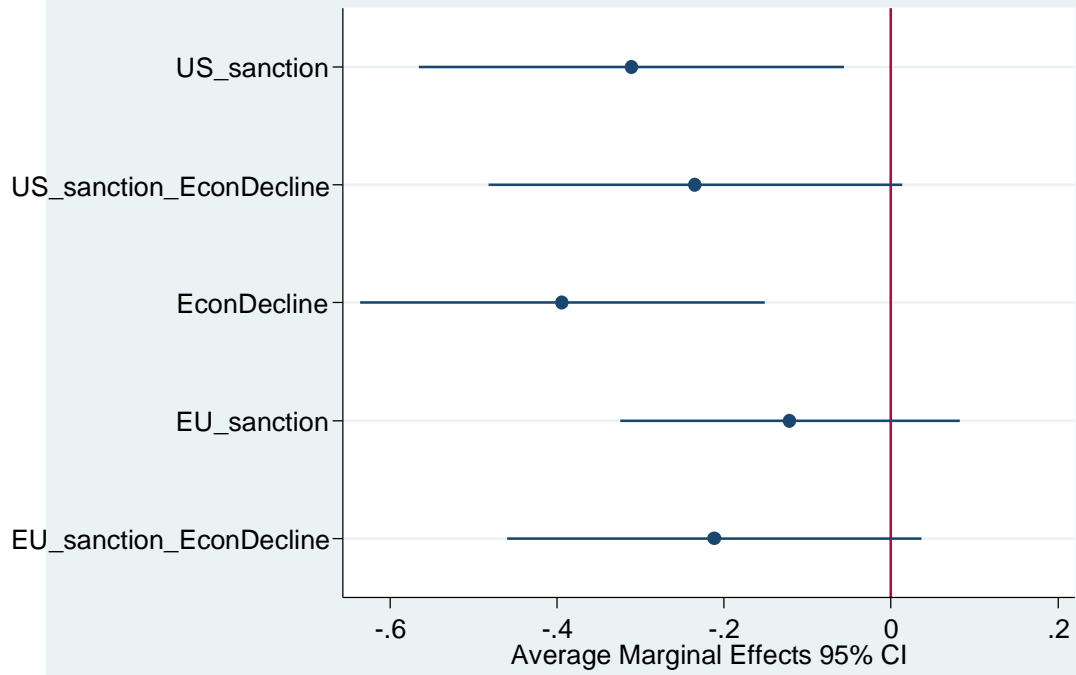
To test for balance across variables of interest in the 2016 survey, I regressed the treatment conditions on respondent’s age, education, sex, townsize, employment status, and support for Putin. Of the 30 resulting coefficients, none returned p values lower than .05 and only 3 were lower than .10. I followed the same procedure for the 2017 survey and regressed the treatment conditions on respondent’s age, education, sex, townsize, class, and self-reported income. Of the resulting 30 coefficients only 1 returned a p-value of less than .05 and two returned p-values less than .10.

Appendix IV. Putin Skeptics and Putin Supporters

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is very negative and 5 is very positive, to what extent do you approve of the leadership of ...	Russia		The United States		The European Union	
	1 Putin Supporters Mean (se) N	2 Putin Skeptics Mean (se) n	3 Putin Supporters Mean (se) n	4 Putin Skeptics Mean (se) n	5 Putin Supporters Mean (se) n	6 Putin Skeptics Mean (se) n
Baseline (no additional information)	3.78 (.06) 190	3.21 (.09) 142	2.14 (.08) 190	2.04 (.07) 142	2.25 (.08) 190	2.19 (.07) 142
T1. Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia.	3.73 (.08) 185	2.90* (.11) 112	1.87* (.09) 184	1.98 (.09) 112	2.01* (.09) 184	2.09 (.10) 112
T2. Since 2014 the Russian economy has fallen by about 6 percent.	3.52* (.08) 198	2.82* (.11) 143	1.97 (.07) 197	2.04 (.10) 142	2.20 (.07) 197	2.21 (.10) 142
T3. Since 2014 the United States has levied economic sanctions against Russia and there has been about a 6 percent decline in the Russian economy.	3.73 (.08) 185	2.98* (.10) 131	1.94* (.09) 185	2.03 (.09) 131	2.10* (.07) 185	2.15 (.09) 131
T4. Since 2014 the European Union has levied economic sanctions against Russia.	3.74 (.09) 202	3.09 (.08) 150	1.87* (.07) 202	2.07 (.07) 150	2.02* (.07) 202	2.19 (.07) 150
T5. Since 2014 the European Union has levied economic sanctions against Russia and there has been about a 6 percent decline in the Russian economy.	3.71 (.05) 183	3.00* (.10) 156	1.96* (.08) 183	2.10 (.07) 156	2.15* (.08) 183	2.15 (.07) 155

* difference with baseline in each column is significant at .05, n= number of observations.

Change in Support for Russia Leadership Putin Skeptics



Change in Support for Russian Leadership Putin Supporters

