



American and Russian Opinion at a Standoff on Crimea Sanctions

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This is the second of three reports based on coordinated surveys conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Center in Moscow on US-Russian public opinion about foreign policy issues, generously funded by the Carnegie Corporation.

Last August President Donald Trump reluctantly [signed a new sanctions bill](#) against Russia in response to Russian interference in the 2016 US elections, its annexation of Crimea, and its lethal aid to the Assad regime. These new sanctions build on Obama-era sanctions imposed in 2014 when Russia first intervened in Crimea and Ukraine.

While the new sanctions have yet to be implemented (the next deadline is January 29th),¹ the US public supports maintaining or increasing US sanctions against Russia and believes that Moscow tried to influence the 2016 US elections. At the same time, the Russian public seems relatively unconcerned about the sanctions placed on their country. While the sanctions were initially designed to change Russian behavior in the region, everyday Russians oppose making concessions toward lifting the sanctions, such as reversing the annexation of Crimea and withdrawing support for rebel forces in eastern Ukraine.

Americans Support Sanctions, but Russians Don't Feel the Squeeze

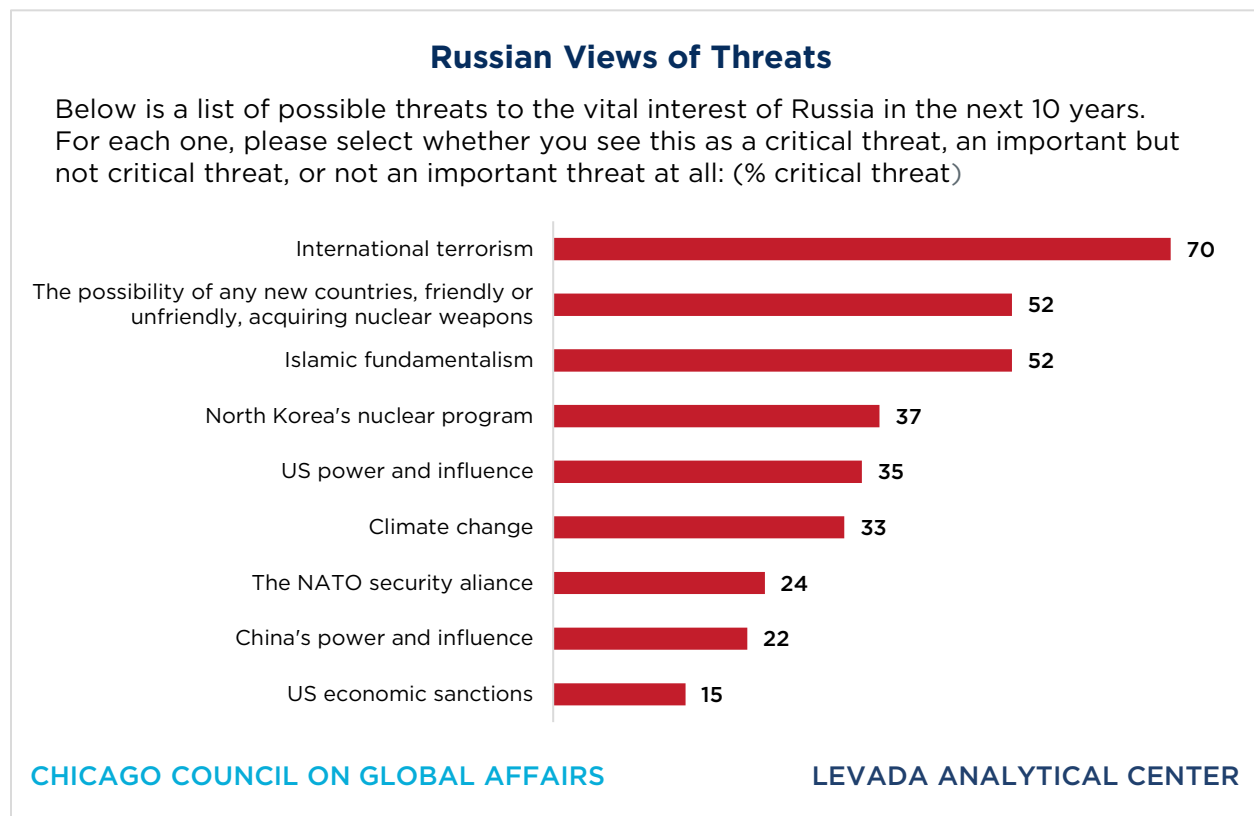
The December 2017 Chicago Council survey shows that a solid majority of Americans support maintaining (39%) or increasing (38%) US sanctions on Russia “in response to its actions in Ukraine and its interference in the 2016 presidential election.” Just two in ten say the sanctions should be decreased (8%) or stopped altogether (11%).

¹ At the end of the month, the Trump administration is due to provide a list of secondary entities that have continued to do business with Russian individuals or entities sanctioned under the bill.

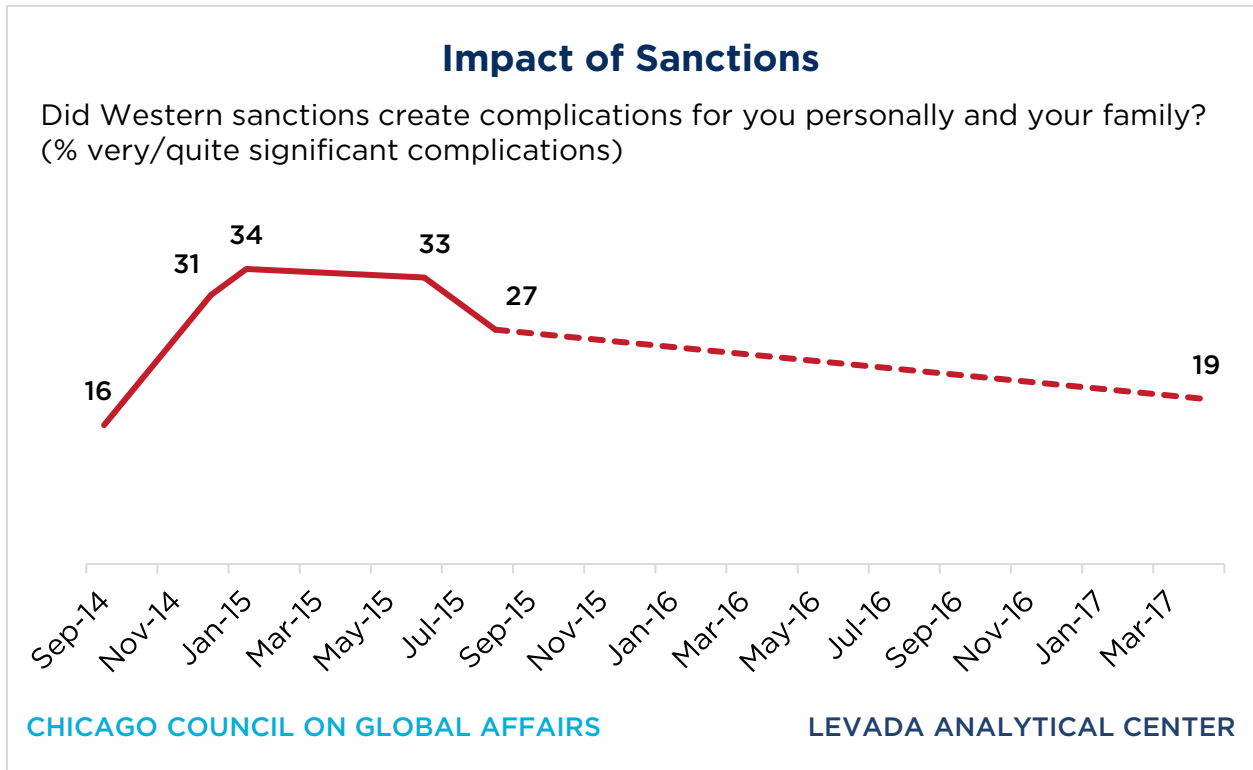
American support for sanctions is highest among those who believe that Russia is working against the United States on key foreign policy issues and those who think that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential elections. Majorities say that Russia is working in different directions than the United States on ending the conflict in Syria (56% different vs. 22% same) and improving cybersecurity worldwide (59% different vs. 19% same).

In total, six in ten Americans believe the Russian government tried to influence the outcome of last fall's US presidential election a great deal (35%) or a fair amount (26%). But there are some strong partisan differences. Only a third of Republicans (35%) think that Russia tried to influence the US presidential election compared to large majorities of Democrats (88%) and Independents (60%). And despite overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress for further sanctioning Moscow, far fewer Republicans (17%) than Democrats (58%)—and to a lesser extent Independents (39%)—favor increasing the Congressional sanctions placed on Russia earlier in the year.

In Russia, however, the public appears relatively undaunted by the sanctions. Only 15 percent of Russians think that US economic sanctions against their country are a critical threat to their country, the least critical rating of all potential threats presented in the survey and well below international terrorism (70%) and the possibility of any new countries becoming nuclear powers (52%) (see figure). In addition, about two-thirds of Russians say they are not very (40%) or absolutely not (28%) concerned about the political and economic sanctions imposed by Western countries (compared to 21% somewhat/7% very concerned).



At least back in April, few Russians felt a large impact from the sanctions on their households. In an April 2017 Levada Center survey, only 19 percent of Russians said that the Western sanctions have created significant complications for them and their families, far fewer than in surveys conducted in 2014 and 2015 (see figure).

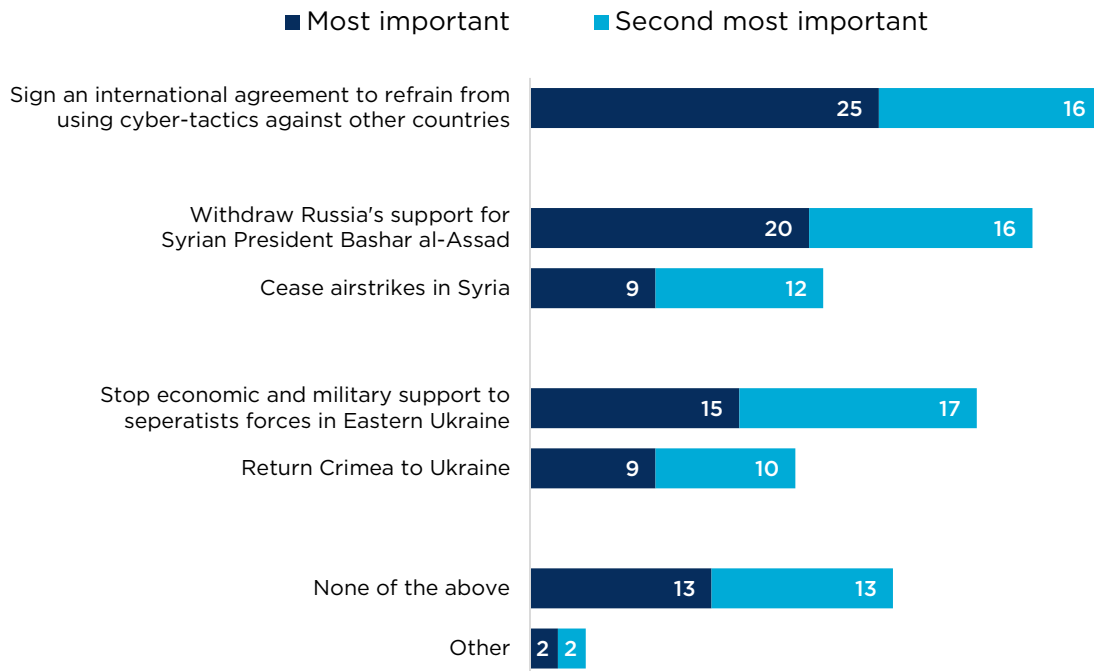


Americans Identify No Clear Concession for Lifting Sanctions

When asked which actions are the most important and second most important for Russia to take before the United States eases the sanctions, Americans express no clear consensus. Signing an international agreement on cyber-tactics (41% combined), withdrawing support for separatists in eastern Ukraine (32%), and withdrawing support for Syrian President Assad (36%) are most frequently mentioned. Fewer point to ceasing airstrikes in Syria (21%) or reversing the annexation of Crimea (19%) – despite the fact that annexing Crimea was the catalyst for initiating sanctions in the first place. Thirteen percent of Americans do not think any of the listed actions would merit lifting the sanctions (see figure).

American Priorities for Lifting Sanctions

Which one of the following actions is the most important for Russia to take before the US eases the sanctions against Russia? And which is the second most important?



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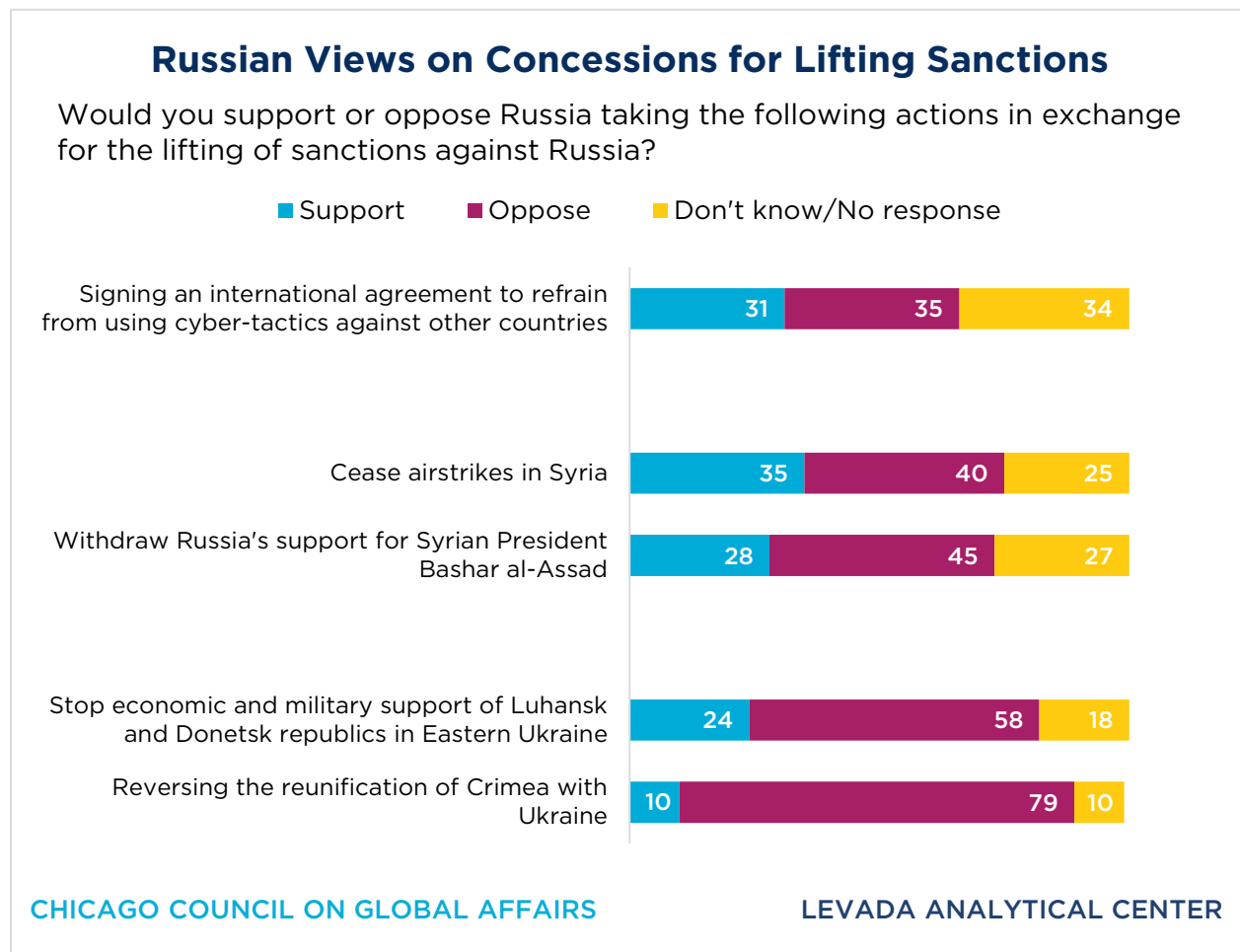
Most Russians Unwilling to Concede Crimea or Support in Eastern Ukraine

When asked about specific concessions Russia could make in exchange for the United States lifting the sanctions, solid majorities of Russians say they would oppose both reversing the reunification of Crimea with Russia (79%) and stopping economic and military support of rebel separatists in eastern Ukraine (58%; see figure, next page). Russians further think the annexation of Crimea has brought more good (60%) than harm (17%). And two in three Russians (66%) say they are not concerned about international isolation due to their country's official position on Ukraine.²

² Previous surveys show that this resistance is grounded in the belief that Crimea should be a part of Russia (87%) and opposition to the idea of returning Crimea to Ukraine (83%; [both results from a March 2016 Levada survey](#)). At the same time, however, Russians seem a bit hesitant to back their support with actual boots on the ground. The December survey found that in principle, a plurality of Russians favor using Russian troops to protect ethnic Russians in other former Soviet countries (48%). But they divide evenly on whether to send Russian troops to eastern Ukraine if fighting resumes between Ukrainian forces and the separatist fighters (40% support, 42% oppose).

While a clear plurality of Russians opposes withdrawing Russia’s support for Syrian President Assad in exchange for lifting the sanctions (45%), Russian opinion is much more divided on whether Russians would support ceasing airstrikes in Syria and signing an international agreement to refrain from using cyber tactics- and a quarter or more do not give a view on these items (see figure).

But in general, Russians appear to back their own government when it comes to sanctions. [Levada surveys](#) between September 2014 and May 2017 found that no more than a quarter of Russians said that their country should look for compromise and make concessions to get out from under the sanctions (19% when last asked in May 2017). Instead, a consistent seven in ten said their country should continue its own policies despite the sanctions (70% in May).



Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on data from the joint 2017 Chicago Council-Levada Analytical Center survey on Russian and American Attitudes conducted in December 2017. The 2017 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, conducted in the summer of 2017, is also cited.

The Chicago Council Survey on issues related to Russia was conducted by GfK Custom Research using their national online omnibus service, KnowledgePanel™, between December 1-3, 2017 among a weighted national sample of approximately 1,000 American adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of error is ± 3 percentage points.

The Levada Center survey was conducted between December 1-5, 2017, by the Levada-Center (Levada Analytical Center) with face-to-face interviews conducted among a representative sample of 1,605 Russians aged 18 years and older, living in eight federal districts of the Russian Federation (including Crimea). Inside each district the sample is distributed among five strata of settlements proportionally to the number of population living in them in age of 18+ years. The margin of error is ± 3.4 percentage points.

The 2017 Chicago Council-Levada Analytical Center Joint Survey on Russian and American Attitudes is made possible by the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Results are also cited from the 2017 Chicago Council Survey was conducted by GfK Custom Research using their large-scale, nationwide online research panel between June 27 and July 19, 2017 among a weighted national sample of 2,020 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of error is ± 2.4 percentage points.

The 2017 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Korea Foundation, and the personal support of Lester Crown and the Crown family.

About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan organization that provides insight – and influences the public discourse – on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices and conduct independent research to bring clarity and offer solutions to challenges and opportunities across the globe. Ranked [No. 1 Think Tank to Watch](#) worldwide, the Council on Global Affairs is committed to engaging the public and raising global awareness of issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business and governments engage the world. Learn more at thechicagocouncil.org and follow [@ChicagoCouncil](#).

About the Levada-Center

The Levada-Center is one of the leading research organizations in Russia that conducts public opinion surveys, expert and elite surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups and other survey methods. The Center brings together experts in the fields of sociology, political science, economics, psychology, market research, and public opinion polls. The Center's research and experts have been cited in national and international media such as *Kommersant*, *Vedomosti*, *RBC*, *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Reuters*, *BBC Radio*, *Radio Liberty*, and others. Learn more at levada.ru and follow [@levada_ru](https://twitter.com/levada_ru) or on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/levada.ru).

Appendix 1 - US Survey Questions

Q. Do you think that the US Congress's sanctions against Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine and its interference in the 2016 US presidential election should be:

Congressional sanctions on Russia

	Increased (%)	Decreased (%)	Kept about the same (%)	Stopped altogether (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>						
United States (2017)	38	8	39	11	5	100

Q. And do you currently think the United States and Russia are working in the same or different direction on each of the following issues?

Ending the conflict in Syria

	Same direction (%)	Different direction (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>				
United States (2017)	22	56	22	100
<i>2016</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>100</i>

Improving cyber-security worldwide

	Same direction (%)	Different direction (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>				
United States (2017)	19	59	21	100

Q. To what extent do you think the Russian government tried to influence the outcome of last fall's US presidential election?

Russian influence on US presidential election

Top 2 Box (Net)	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	Not at all	DK/NR	Total
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	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<u>Country</u>							
United States (2017)	61	35	26	22	13	4	100

Q. Which one of the following actions is the most important for Russia to take before the US eases the sanctions against Russia? And which is the second most important?

Sign an international agreement to refrain from using cyber tactics against other countries

Withdraw Russia's support for Syrian president Bashar al-Assad

Stop economic and military support to separatist forces in Eastern Ukraine

Cease airstrikes in Syria

Return Crimea to Ukraine

None of the above

Other

Easing Russian sanctions

	Most important (%)	Second most important (%)
United States (2017)		
International cyber agreement	25	16
Stop support of Assad	20	16
Stop supporting separatists in E. Ukraine	15	17
Cease airstrikes in Syria	9	12
Return Crimea	9	10
None of the above	13	13
Other	8	2

Appendix 2 - Russian Survey Questions

Q. Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of Russia in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all:

Threats - US economic sanctions against Russia

	Critical threat (%)	Important but not critical threat (%)	Not an important threat at all (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>					
Russia (2017)	15	47	38	0	100

Q. Are you concerned about political and economic Western sanctions?

Concern over sanctions

	Net Top 2 boxes (%)	Very concerned (%)	Somewhat concerned (%)	Not very concerned (%)	Absolutely not concerned (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>							
Russia (Dec. 2017)	28	7	21	40	28	5	100
Aug. 2016	39	7	32	38	21	2	100
Jul. 2015	41	10	31	37	19	4	100
Dec. 2014	51	16	35	33	13	3	100
Aug. 2014	32	7	25	39	27	3	100
Jul. 2014	36	10	26	43	18	4	100
May 2014	37	8	29	39	21	3	100
Apr. 2014	42	8	34	40	16	3	100
21-24 Mar. 2014	36	5	31	42	17	4	100
7-19 Mar. 2014	53	11	42	31	9	7	100

Q. Did Western sanctions create complications for you personally and your family?

Personal effect of sanctions

	Net Top 2 boxes (%)	Very significant complications (%)	Quite significant complications (%)	Some complications (%)	No complications at all (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>							
Russia (Apr. 2017)	19	3	16	43	32	7	100
Aug. 2015	27	5	22	53	14	6	100
Jun. 2015	33	8	25	49	13	5	100
Jan. 2015	34	7	27	45	12	9	100
Dec. 2014	31	8	23	47	13	10	100
Sept. 2014	16	2	14	44	35	5	100

Q. Would you support or oppose Russia taking the following actions in exchange for the lifting of sanctions against Russia?

Reversing the reunification of Crimea with Russia

	Support (%)	Oppose (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>				
Russia (2017)	10	79	10	100

Stop economic and military support of Luhansk and Donetsk republics in Eastern Ukraine

	Support (%)	Oppose (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>				
Russia (2017)	24	58	18	100

Signing an international agreement to refrain from using cyber tactics against other countries

	Support	Oppose	DK/NR	Total
<u>Country</u>				
Russia (2017)				

	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<u>Country</u>				
Russia (2017)	31	35	34	100

Withdraw Russia's support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad

	Support	Oppose	DK/NR	Total
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<u>Country</u>				
Russia (2017)	28	45	27	100

Cease airstrikes in Syria

	Support	Oppose	DK/NR	Total
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<u>Country</u>				
Russia (2017)	35	40	25	100

Q. In your opinion, has the annexation of Crimea brought Russia more good or more harm on the whole?

Good or harm - Annexation of Crimea

	More good	More harm	Neither good nor harm	DK/NR	Total
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<u>Country</u>					
Russia (Dec. 2017)	60	17	23	-	100
Sep. 2017	63	21	16	-	100
Apr. 2017	64	23	13	-	100
Nov. 2016	64	19	18	-	100
Feb. 2016	62	20	18	-	100
Jan. 2016	61	20	19	-	100
Nov. 2015	59	22	18	-	100
Aug. 2015	59	23	18	-	100
Mar. 2015	69	19	12	-	100

Q. Are you concerned about international isolation of Russia due to the official Russian position on Ukraine?

Russia's isolation

	Very concerned (%)	Somewhat concerned (%)	Not very concerned (%)	Absolutely not concerned (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>						
Russia (2017)	8	21	44	22	4	100

Q. There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using Russian troops. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would favor or oppose the use of Russian troops:

Use of troops - To protect ethnic Russians in other former Soviet countries

	Support (%)	Oppose (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>				
Russia (2017)	48	37	15	100

Use of troops- If fighting resumes between Ukrainian forces and the separatist fighters in Luhansk and Donetsk

	Support (%)	Oppose (%)	DK/NR (%)	Total (%)
<u>Country</u>				