Resolved: On balance, economic sanctions are reducing the threat Russia poses to Western interests.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scope of EU sanctions. ABH</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scope of American sanctions. ABH</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Analysis One</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Analysis Two</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Evidence</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions Weaken Russia’s Economy</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia’s economy is declining, and reform is likely necessary. ABH</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia’s economy is struggling based on various metrics. ABH</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions have had a negative economic impact, and the future is grim. ABH</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic downturn in Russia has historically led to political change. ABH</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions Are A Deterrent</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The threat of sanctions can contain Russian aggression. DAT</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions are an effective deterrent. DAT</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions prevented Russia from taking over more territory. ABH</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions have influenced Russian policy. ABH</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions Are Effective When Part of a Larger Initiative</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions work when in tandem with other coercive, nonviolent tools. DAT</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study: Why sanctions worked against Iran. DAT</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Economies Must Be Insulated From Russia</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia has weaponized globalization. It’s time to roll that back. DAT</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alternatives to Sanctions Are Suboptimal</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO can do little to advance Western interests in Ukraine militarily. DAT</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions Advance Western Political Interests</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions are customizable and advance Western soft power. DAT</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sanctions Increase Distrust of the West
Sanctions punish integration into the global economy. ABH
To assume sanctions will work is to fundamentally misunderstand Russia. DAT
Instead of regime change, sanctions fuel anti-Western sentiment. DAT
Sanctions have increased unity and sense of anti-Western patriotism in Russia. ABH

Attacking Russia’s Economy is Naive
No discernable positive externalities have come from crippling the Russian economy. DAT
Russia’s economy is difficult to target. DAT
Sanctions are effective, but not impactful. And that’s a massive problem. DAT
The Russian economy is structurally resilient. DAT
Slowing down Russia’s economy is a short-sighted ploy. DAT
Sanctions are not having that bad an effect on Russia’s economy. ABH

Sanctions and Russian Oil
Sanctions against Russian energy producers harms global economic interests. DAT
Small flutters in Russia create waves in the global energy market. DAT

Sanctions Are Easily Avoided
Russian companies and individuals can skirt sanctions. DAT
Case study: Sogaz and the evasion of sanctions thresholds. DAT

Aggressive Behavior Towards Russia Backfires
NATO Expansion triggered Russian Aggression. ABH

Western Interests Are Too Fragmented
America and Europe have difficulties coordinating on sanctions targets. DAT
Russia uses energy control as leverage against European states. DAT
Russia can use ethnic tensions to play Western countries against each other. DAT

Russia Can’t Be Coerced Economically
Sanctions are a weak slap on the wrist. DAT
To be effective, sanctions would need to revert 25 years of economic progress. DAT
The Russian economy is insulated from international pressure. DAT
Sanctions Will Hurt Western Economies ................................................................. 56
   The Russian market will close itself off from international competition. DAT ................. 56
   Russia will build closer economic ties with China. ABH.............................................. 57
   Russia is seeking new trade partners. ABH............................................................... 57
NATO and Sanctions Cannot Coexist ........................................................................... 58
   Russian aggression is a perpetual response to NATO expansion. DAT ......................... 58
   Sanctions are a weak attempt to skirt the inevitable Russian response to NATO. DAT ........ 59
Russian Influence in Ukraine Is Beneficial to the West .................................................. 60
   The Russian market keeps Ukraine financially afloat. DAT ........................................... 60
   Evicting Russia from Ukraine is an economic abyss. DAT............................................. 61
Sanctions Threaten Russian Cooperation ..................................................................... 62
   Russia is willing to cooperate in Syria if sanctions are lifted. ABH................................. 62
   Sanctions have increased Russian strategic cooperation with China. ABH....................... 63
Pro Counters .................................................................................................................. 64
   Russia Cannot Be Contained by Conventional Means .................................................. 65
      Classic non-financial containment strategies are no longer pragmatic. DAT ................. 65
Sanctions Don’t Hurt Western Economies .................................................................... 66
   Economic damage estimates make faulty assumptions about Western interests. DAT .......... 66
   The EU’s economy has been resilient. ABH................................................................. 67
Russia’s Economy is Highly Impacted by Sanctions ...................................................... 68
   Sanctions have proportionally massive impacts on the Russian economy and financial sector. DAT ... 68
   Russia cannot financially isolate itself from the West. DAT.......................................... 69
   Russia’s economic pivot to Asia has several barriers. ABH .......................................... 70
Cooperation in Syria Isn’t A Reason To End Sanctions .................................................. 71
   The West can’t abandon Ukraine to achieve goals in Syria. ABH .................................... 71
   Russian cooperation in Syria isn’t affected by sanctions. ABH ....................................... 72
Con Counters ................................................................................................................ 73
   Sanctions Won’t Weaken Russian Leadership ............................................................. 74
      Putin’s popularity increased after sanctions. ABH .................................................... 74
Voters care more about patriotism than the economy. ABH

Russians don’t associate their economic woes with Putin’s policy. ABH

Russians see sanctions as an extension of hostile Western policy. ABH

The authoritarian nature of Putin’s regime prevents sanctions from being effective. ABH

Using Sanctions As A Deterrent Undermines Diplomacy

The aggressive use of sanctions can encourage recalcitrance, not progress. DAT

“Deterrent” sanctions may have triggered the annexation of Crimea. DAT

Recognizing Russia’s security concerns is the best way forward for the U.S. ABH

Russia seeks compromise, and won’t be deterred by sanctions. ABH

Targeted Sanctions Are Imprecise and Ineffective

Targeted sanctions managed to accidentally tank Russia’s economy this year. DAT

Sanctions have not hurt Russia’s wealthy elite. ABH

Sanctions Won’t Deter Russian Aggression

Putin only understands force. ABH

Russian aggression will continue so long as NATO exists. DAT

Russia is still being aggressive in Ukraine. ABH

Russia has not changed its goals in Ukraine. ABH

Sanctions empirically fail, and Russia is no exception. ABH

Sanctions Are Not the Best of Bad Options

Coming to a stalemate over Ukraine is more pragmatic. DAT

Sanctions Are an Erratic Policy Option

Iran, the closest economic analog to Russia, does not offer historical precedent. DAT

Sanctions Hurt The American Economy

Sanctions put American industries at a disadvantage. ABH

American banks and energy companies are especially hurt by sanctions. ABH

Sanctions Hurt The European Economy

Europe’s economy will lose 100 billion Euros. ABH

China is replacing Russia’s European partners. ABH

Cases
Pro Case ........................................................................................................................................ 97

Introduction:.................................................................................................................................. 97

Contention One: Sanctions win the geographic battle .................................................................................. 97

Contention Two: Sanctions win the economic battle .................................................................................. 97

Contention Three: Sanctions win the political battle .................................................................................. 98

Con Case ............................................................................................................................................. 99

Introduction:....................................................................................................................................... 99

Contention One: Sanctions hinder political progress ................................................................................. 99

Contention Two: Sanctions are a counterproductive signal of aggression .................................................. 99

Contention Three: Sanctions’ ineffectiveness weakens Western diplomacy ............................................. 100
Definitions

*The scope of EU sanctions. ABH*


The EU sanctions announced on 12 September targeted Russia's state finances, energy and arms sectors. These are sectors managed by the powerful elite around President Vladimir Putin. Russian state banks are now excluded from raising long-term loans in the EU, exports of dual-use equipment for military use in Russia are banned, future EU-Russia arms deals are banned and the EU will not export a wide range of oil industry technology. Three major state oil firms are targeted: Rosneft, Transneft and Gazprom Neft, the oil unit of gas giant Gazprom. But the gas industry, space technology and nuclear energy are excluded from sanctions. **Dozens of senior Russian officials and separatist leaders are now subject to Western asset freezes and travel bans. The targets are those considered “materially or financially supporting actions undermining or threatening Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.”**

**EU Sanctions primarily target state controlled industries run by those close to Putin, that are directly or indirectly supporting those who seek to weaken Ukraine’s sovereignty.**
The scope of American sanctions. ABH


On March 20, 2014, the President issued a new Executive Order, "Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine" expanding the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13660 of March 6, 2014, and expanded by Executive Order 13661 of March 16, 2014, finding that the actions and policies of the Government of the Russian Federation, including its purported annexation of Crimea and its use of force in Ukraine, continue to undermine democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine; threaten its peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity; and contribute to the misappropriation of its assets, and thereby constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Utilizing these Executive Orders, the United States has steadily increased the diplomatic and financial costs of Russia's aggressive actions towards Ukraine. We have designated a number of Russian and Ukrainian entities, including 14 defense companies and individuals in Putin's inner circle, as well as imposed targeted sanctions limiting certain financing to six of Russia's largest banks and four energy companies. We have also suspended credit finance that encourages exports to Russia and financing for economic development projects in Russia, and are now prohibiting the provision, exportation, or reexportation of goods, services (not including financial services), or 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, or in maritime area claimed by the Russian Federation and extending from its territory, and that involve five major Russian energy companies.

Obama's executive orders have targeted American sanctions towards individuals and companies close to Putin in order to increase the cost of aggressive actions.
Topic Analysis One

Intro:

This month’s topic features the newest chapter in the classic series of the West vs. Russia. I think this is one of the more interesting PF topics in recent memory that has a good amount of ground for both sides, and plenty of room for some fascinating arguments.

While this is true for most topics, understanding the background information surrounding the resolution is especially important for this month. I believe that the most successful teams will be those that carefully research late 20th century Russian history, American-Soviet relations during the Cold War, American-Russian relations after the Cold War, and Russia’s relationship with the EU. Having a deep understanding of how Russian leadership views the West, and how the West views Russia will be essential for this topic, as it will help you add historical examples to back up your arguments, and will allow you to seriously impress some judges. Think from the judge’s perspective; it’s very hard to drop a team that displays a great deal of knowledge about such a complicated issue.

With that in mind, my biggest piece of advice for you is to read, and keep reading throughout the month. Find as much literature as you can that will give you an understanding of the topics mentioned above in a short amount of time. Some of you may be tempted to look at files from the most recent PF topic to address a similar issue. You would have to go back to the NSDA National Tournament topic in 2014, “Resolved: NATO should strengthen its relationship with Ukraine in order to deter further Russian aggression.” While a lot of the literature from that topic may not be directly relevant, you should definitely search for any information that will better your understanding of Russia’s relationship with the West. There are also a lot of articles coming out now about the topic, as European leaders debate extending the sanctions.

Additionally, for this topic, you do not need to evaluate Western interests or Russian culture. For the purpose of this debate, it is unnecessary to determine if Western interests are “good” or “bad”, only if they are being threatened or not. The PRO isn’t defending Western interests, and the CON does not need to attack them. Moreover, many cases will likely be critical of the Russian government, and that’s perfectly fine. However, it is important to distinguish between the government of Russia, and its people and culture. Back in the day, my teammates won a round, in part, because their opponents failed to make such a distinction when discussing Iran in front of a judge who was Iranian. As a debater, you want to avoid offending your judge, and you want to be able to win in front of judges who have different beliefs and come from diverse backgrounds. Obviously this can be difficult when discussing controversial issues, but double-check your augments to make sure that you are not making generalized claims about “Russians”, but rather focusing on the government in power. To win rounds, you want to be able to appeal to the largest audience possible!

Lastly, I don’t believe there is any major side bias. I think the PRO may be easier to explain to a lay judge, while more unique CON arguments may be better suited for judges with previous debate experience. Nonetheless, this topic has plenty of ground for both sides, so hopefully this will not be a problem. I would
probably say this for most topics, but I recommend flipping second, unless you have some particularly outstanding case for one side.

Background Information

I told you background information was critical for this topic, so it only seems fair that I give you some of it. Disclaimer: there are people who spend their entire lives studying the Cold War or US-Russian relations. I will try to provide most of the information relevant for this topic, but you will only benefit from reading more on this subject.

The logical place to begin the discussion of this topic is to ask the question: **What sanctions are in place against Russia, and why do they exist?**

First, let's look at the history behind the sanctions against Russia. The sanctions were put in place as a response to Russia’s intervention and annexation of Crimea (a peninsula that is internationally recognized as being a part of Ukraine) in early 2014. To better understand why Russia invaded Crimea, we have to take a farther look back at the region’s history.

During the Cold War, Europe was divided into two alliances: NATO (primarily the US, Canada, and Western Europe), and the Warsaw Pact (primarily the USSR and Eastern European countries). After the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia sought to maintain influence over countries formerly in the Warsaw pact, and former Soviet Republics. On the other hand, the United States and Western European countries were determined to integrate those countries into the global economy, and expose them to Western values. As a result, over the past two decades, both NATO and EU have been rapidly expanding eastward. While most in the West believe that the intentions of such expansion include economic prosperity or improving security, such expansion is viewed very differently in Russia. To put things in perspective, once the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia instantly lost an enormous amount of power. Then, to add insult to injury, NATO suddenly expanded into what Russia believes to be its sphere of influence. Russian leadership feels threatened by the expansion of NATO and the EU, and is determined to regain influence in the region.

With all that in mind, let's go back to Ukraine in 2013. For years there had been debate about strengthening ties with the EU, but the Ukrainian population was deeply divided. Many Ukrainians wanted increased relations with the West, but others (especially in Eastern Ukraine) still felt an allegiance to Russia. Finally, an agreement was crafted to increase economic cooperation between Ukraine and the EU. However, in late 2013, Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovych declined to proceed with the agreement, and chose to increase economic cooperation with Russia instead. Ukraine erupted. Protestors flooded the capital, and demonstrations turned violent. This incident sparked action by Ukrainians who also believed their government was corrupt and unfair. Over the next few months (into early 2014), they attempted to remove President Yanukovych from power as a revolution manifested in Ukraine. In the meantime, Russian troops crossed into Crimea and assisted pro-Russian separatists. By March 2014, they had seized Crimea, and Russia annexed the territory from Ukraine.
January 2016

after a questionable referendum indicating that the local population wanted to rejoin Russia. The international community largely viewed this as a breach of Ukraine’s sovereignty by Russia, and sanctions by the EU and US were put into place.

The sanctions against Russia are very targeted, and could be considered “smart sanctions” as they try to punish certain individuals instead of the whole population. Both sets of sanctions have been aimed at individuals in the Russian government close to Putin, defense companies, state run oil companies, and a variety of Russian banks. Specifically, the EU sanctions have claimed to target those who are "materially or financially supporting actions undermining or threatening Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.”

Framing the Round:

While the history surrounding this topic is quite vast, the topic itself is actually very narrow. The question we are trying to answer is if sanctions are decreasing the Russian threat to the West. The topic isn’t asking about the global impact of sanctions, their fairness, or if they’re justified. It is not even asking if sanctions help Western interests in general, but rather only in relation to Russia. It can be very easy to start talking about the greater impacts of supporting Western interests, or the impact sanctions on Russia will have in deterring (or not deterring) other countries. However, in my opinion, as far as this debate is concerned none of that appears to be fair game. Every argument in the round must impact back to Russia’s threat toward Western interests, and every impact must be clearly linked to the sanctions against Russia.

As far as framework is concerned I only see two major points of discussion in this resolution. The first is defining Western interests. This is extremely difficult. There is no universal definition of “The West”, let alone “Western interests”. It is absolutely critical to have a reasonable definition of Western interests, or else the round becomes a huge mess. It is definitely worthwhile to devote a chunk of the time you spend researching to this. Any framing of Western interests that you come up with needs to be very well warranted. Make sure to have carded evidence to back up your interpretation of Western interests, but also ensure that it is logically reasonable. It doesn’t matter what carded definition of Western interests you have, if it so outrageous that most reasonable judges won’t believe it. While there are many different ways to frame it, lets go over a few ideas.

One of the simplest definitions to defend would be arguing that Western interests are the interests of the U.S. and the EU. There are a few reasons why this definition makes sense. First, the US and EU are the ones enacting the sanctions against Russia, so its logical that the resolution would be asking us to evaluate how the sanctions have impacted their interests. Additionally, a lot of the literature surrounding Russia’s relations with “The West” is about Russia and Western Europe, or Russia and the United States. Lastly, the U.S. and EU have relatively similar goals when it comes to Russia, that are fairly easy to measure. It would be relatively straightforward to discuss what the EU and US would like to achieve with Russia in terms of economic and military cooperation.
Another way to define Western interests would be to focus on more abstract “Western ideals”. Again, it is absolutely critical to have cited sources to back up your framing of Western interests, but there are certain principles that most people would agree fall under Western values. These would include capitalism, democracy, and the promotion of human rights and freedom. This way of framing the round could allow both sides to discuss the impact of sanctions on Russia’s internal policies in detail, as opposed to only focusing on Russia’s foreign policy. Remember, that for the purpose of this debate you don’t have to analyze if Western interests such as spreading capitalism are good or bad.

The second thing to note about the framework is that is it set in the present tense. Usually, I get frustrated when debaters discuss the tense of the wording in resolutions, but this is a unique scenario. The resolution includes “…sanctions are reducing the threat…” which implies that the debaters should discuss whether sanctions are currently effective or not. There is definitely a reasonable argument to be made that contentions claiming that sanctions will be effective in the future are not topical, as the resolution is asking us to evaluate if sanctions are currently reducing the threat. However, I can see teams defending long-term focused contentions by saying that if sanctions will deter Russia in the future, then they are currently working to reduce the threat. Hopefully, this will not become a major issue in rounds, but it is definitely something to be aware of, and ready to address.

Overall, I do not suspect that framework will not take up too much time in the round. Compared to many PF topics, this one is asking a relatively straightforward question: are sanctions against Russia effective?

**PRO Strategies**

PRO can present this topic in a few different ways. PRO can focus on sanctions as a deterrent, and explain how this “punishment” will impact Putin’s future decision making. PRO can also focus on the economic impact sanctions have had on Russia, and the implications of such economic damage. These options aren’t mutually exclusive, and I think that a well-balanced PRO case would have a few stock arguments in favor of sanctions, with one or two more unique approaches mixed in. Here are some ideas for pro approaches:

1. Sanctions are hurting Russia’s Economy

This argument will be the link for many PRO contentions, and fortunately for the PRO, it should not be very difficult to prove. Sure, CON may try to assert that oil prices or other factors are to blame, but there is a hearty amount of evidence to show that sanctions are causing at least some damage to Russia’s economy (a lot of which is included in this brief). However, just by showing that sanctions are hurting Russia’s economy, PRO is not doing enough to win the round just yet. PRO must impact this argument back to Western interests, and there are several ways to do so.

   A. Economic downturn will weaken the Russian government
PRO can argue that the economic impact of sanctions will cause the Russian government to lose power for a variety of reasons. The first reason is that internally the Russian people will not tolerate a government that allows their economy to crumble. Anti-government and anti-Putin groups in Russia will gain power, as they pin the economic crisis in Russia on Putin’s aggressive foreign policy. When Russia’s limits on personal freedom are combined with a struggling economy, the stage is set for political upheaval. It would be difficult, but perhaps possible, for PRO to try to show that the economy is so bad there may be an all out revolution against Putin. A more moderate PRO contention could show that popular pressure to improve economic conditions will force Putin to decrease aggressive foreign policy decisions, and increase economic cooperation with the West. The idea that an economy bogged down by sanctions will hurt Putin’s government is fairly stock and straightforward. There are a few ways you can take this argument and make it stand out. First, demonstrate your near expert-level understanding of Russia’s political situation and history to the judge. Explain how economic decline has been critical in influencing political change in Russia throughout the 20th century, especially in the 1990’s. Then discuss how Putin is only able to limit personal freedom by promising a strong Russia. Putin only gets away with corrupt and authoritarian policies if he provides results to the people, and more importantly the elites around him. If PRO can show that sanctions are effectively hurting the bank accounts of the powerful men influencing Putin’s government, then PRO can make a strong argument that Putin’s current leadership is unsustainable.

Another impact of this argument can be that Putin would be forced into increasing freedom within Russia. With the economy declining, and Putin’s authoritarian leadership style under fire, he may resort to making Russian society more free and democratic. PRO would need to look into the impact of economic decline on liberalization in Russia, and then explain how a more democratic Russia aligns with Western interests.

B. Economic downturn will limit Russia’s military capabilities
This argument is extremely straightforward, but can be fairly difficult to prove. PRO would argue that Russia’s economic decline would limit its ability to take aggressive action because of financial constraints. The obvious impact is that Russia could not finance future aggressive campaigns in Eastern Europe. A more unique approach could be to look at Russia’s ability to finance regimes that pose a threat to the West, like Bashir al-Assad in Syria. If PRO can prove that sanctions are financially pressuring Russia to limit its support of Assad, then PRO can bring up the beneficial impacts to Western interests of Assad losing power. However, if you go down this path, you better be prepared to strongly defend why Assad losing power is beneficial to Western interests. CON can bring up several turns claiming that even if Assad is awful, a stable Assad regime is preferable to the instability that would follow its collapse. PRO could also expand this argument beyond Syria, and discuss how a weak economy would prevent Russia from counteracting Western interests throughout the world. Ever since the Cold War, the U.S. and Russia both have great influence in countries throughout the world, from Latin America, to East Asia, to Africa. PRO can find examples of Russia lacking funds to harm Western interests in any place across the globe.

2. Sanctions are the best option when put in context.
Another approach PRO can take is to position sanctions as the ideal foreign policy tool against Russia, by comparing them to the alternatives. It is relatively easy for CON to point out the flaws and harms of sanctions, but when compared to other policy options, PRO can make sanctions look a lot better. PRO can argue that broadly speaking (very broadly) there were three courses of action the West could have taken: inaction (condemning Russia without tangible consequences), economic sanctions, or military force.

To compare sanctions to inaction, PRO would want to show what would happen in the world where sanctions were not enacted. PRO could argue that Russia would have been more aggressive and taken over more Ukrainian territory, or encroached on other surrounding nations. Moreover, PRO can try to show that if Russia was not punished for its actions in Ukraine, it could have taken a more hardline position in other areas throughout the world. This point is a bit more difficult to prove, but the logic behind it is sound. If Russia can behave aggressively in Ukraine without punishment, it will likely try to achieve its other foreign policy goals in a similar manner. PRO can argue that Putin only understands force, and bring up historical examples of Putin completely ignoring international condemnation and public shaming. This is right about where CON will probably say, “if Putin only understands force, then sanctions will not work, and military force needs to be used”.

Now, PRO needs to compare to sanctions to military force, and there is plenty of evidence to show how disastrous military force can be. If European or American forces engaged with Russian troops in Crimea the risk for war would be disastrous. PRO wants to positions sanctions as a foreign policy tool that is forceful enough to coerce Putin, but not dangerous enough to ignite a major war.

PRO can’t force CON to advocate for a counterplan, but PRO can pressure CON to show that any of the negative impacts of sanctions are truly unique to sanctions. If CON says that Russia continued to take aggressive action in Ukraine despite sanctions, that doesn’t mean sanctions failed. PRO can show that Russia would have behaved in the same way in a world without sanctions.

Overall, PRO likely has to show the Russian government as being more aggressive and reckless. For most of these PRO arguments to hold water, PRO needs to prove that the Russian government does not want to support Western interests, and will only do so if forced to.

CON Strategies

In this debate, CON wants to paint a picture that the idea of sanctions is inherently misguided. In many rounds debaters make it a point to show that they are solving for the “root cause” of whatever issue is being discussed, and CON definitely has the opportunity to do that with this topic. CON should emphasize that sanctions completely ignore the real reason of why Russian leadership is behaving aggressively. CON wants to pain a picture of Russia as a country that feels weak, and is desperately trying to reclaim the lost glory of the Soviet Union. The Russian annexation of Crimea was just one of many moves Russia has taken in order to try to reclaim its sphere of influence. Punishing Russia instead of attempting to understand its fears and interests creates more problems that it solves. Based on that narrative, here are a few ideas for CON:
1. Sanctions increase Putin’s power

This argument is basically the opposite of the first PRO argument. CON should explain that sanctions won’t weaken Putin’s government, but they will actually give him more power. Putin can use Russia’s struggling economy to show “Western aggression” against Russia, and justify his own aggressive policies. He can actually use a declining economy to encourage Russians to rally around him against the “Western enemy”. CON should look into polling data that seems to indicate that Putin’s popularity has not faltered in the face of economic woes. CON could argue that Putin will feel more emboldened now that he has more popular support.

2. Isolating Russia is misguided.

This argument is all about how sanctions encourage aggressive behavior from Russia by isolating it. A lot of support for sanctions comes from those who claim that Putin’s actions are reckless, and that he is unjustifiably seeking more power for himself. However, when looking from Putin’s perspective, it becomes clearer that his actions are more about maintaining control over what he believes to be Russia’s sphere of influence. He likely views the expansion of NATO as a dangerous encroachment towards the Russian mainland. Sanctions don’t solve this problem, because they only increase Russia’s fear and distrust of the West. Cooperation, not punishment is the solution to “Russian aggression.” Con wants to advocate that Western nations should work together with Russia, and take Russia’s perceived security concerns more seriously. By imposing sanctions, Western countries send Putin the message that he is on his own to protect Russia. This idea ties in well with the first CON argument mentioned above, as isolating Russia increases popular distrust of the West and support for Putin. CON wants to explain that the more isolated Putin feels, the more aggressive he will be towards the West, and less likely he will be to obey the international order. Countries generally take military action as a last resort, when they feel that all other methods have failed. If Russia had more trust in the international community to solve its territorial and security problems, then Russia may refrain from taking coercive military action. CON needs to emphasize that the implementation of sanctions shows that the West fundamentally misunderstands Russia’s needs, and Putin’s thinking. In short, the best way to resolve Russian aggression is to increase cooperation, and the worst way to increase cooperation is to implement sanctions.

Using either of these arguments will give you a huge advantage, because you will have the ability to display a very deep knowledge of Russian politics to the judge. Remember, many judges don’t vote solely off the flow. Showing your critical thinking skills, preparedness, and knowledge of the topic during the course of a round will likely help you sway judges.

3. Decreased Russian cooperation on critical issues (Iran and Syria).

This strategy can have some really good impacts, but you have to have strong evidence for your links. The idea is that in response to sanctions, Putin is cooperating less with the West on other key issues such as Iran and
Syria. Western powers desperately need Russian cooperation to achieve their goals regarding Iran and Syria, and Putin absolutely understands this. The two scenarios are very different though. When discussing Iran, CON would have to speculate on future Russian behavior, and give reasons as to why Russia would assist Iran in ways that undermine Western interests. However, in Syria, Russia has already been defying the West by conducting its own aggressive airstrikes. There is also a good amount of evidence that Russia is using the idea of potentially cooperating in Syria as a bargaining chip to remove Western sanctions. By continuing to enact these sanctions, Western countries are losing Russia’s cooperation in Syria, which is hugely important when considering Russia’s support for the Assad regime. CON can definitely draw on some big impacts of Russian cooperation in Syria, and it would not be difficult to convince a judge why solving the situation in Syria is of the utmost importance as far as Western interests are concerned. Keep in mind that the impacts have to relate to Russian threats to Western interests, not threats stemming from others actors such as Assad or ISIS. However, if you can show that sanctions are causing Russia to take actions that support actors who put Western interests in danger, then it is clear that Russia’s actions are threatening Western interests.


Even though sanctions may be causing economic damage in Russia, they are also harming the countries that enacted them. The U.S. has not been impacted as severely as the EU, so I would recommend focusing on how the EU’s economy has reacted to sanctions. For many countries within the EU, Russia is a major trading partner, and the sanctions, among other economic factors, are causing severe economic downturn. This is especially true for smaller countries in the EU that have fewer trading partners, and rely more on Russia. CON could use this argument strategically if other arguments end up washing out. On its own, the economic backlash from sanctions is unlikely to outweigh PRO’s impacts of deterring Russian aggression. However, if both teams have good evidence about sanctions increasing/decreasing Putin’s power and aggressive foreign policy decisions, this argument can give CON the edge.

Another way to approach this idea would be to discuss how sanctions have caused Russia to create new trade partnerships. CON can demonstrate that Russia is seeking to expand trade with the Far East, especially China, in order to replace European trading partners. This can definitely threaten Western economic interests, as China will profit from Europe’s losses. Moreover, such a partnership would increase the relative strength of China and Russia, which can weaken the ability of Western countries to achieve other strategic policy goals.

Final Thoughts

Overall, this seems to be a fairly balanced and exciting topic. Again, I think the key to success on this topic is to have a really deep and profound understanding of the history behind Russia’s relationship with the West. Being able to confidently bring up historical examples, and provide insight into Putin’s view of the West will allow you to be very persuasive in rounds.

Have fun, and good luck!
- Alon Handler
Topic Analysis Two

In adeptly frameworking the resolution from a multitude of perspectives, Topic Analysis One managed to delve into a variety of impacts for both the Pro and Con to churn. This includes: Ukrainian sovereignty, the Syrian conflict, the staying power of nuclear armament negotiations with Iran, and the economic fortitude of globalized and/or Russian-energy-dependent EU states. That’s a fantastic scope of arguments to deal with.

Fortunately for debaters, the resolution paints with a wide brush, specifying only “Western interests” in its scope. This means teams can go any direction they would like in their preparation for round and likely find some impacts relevant to the resolution.

More importantly, this should be a boon to teams with a handle on nuance. In the previous Topic Analysis, the recommendation was to get a grip on Russian history and West-Russian relations throughout the 20th century. This is salient: the more teams understand the context of what they’re debating, the more grounded their arguments are, and the more ready they are in the heat of crossfire to handle both the predictable and the unexpected.

The case for understanding Russian history and relations is to better understand and predict the impacts of Western policy on Russia. This road, however, runs both ways. In order to understand what Western policy actions are truly doing, teams need to break “Western interests” down into its component pieces and attack this concept in a logical manner.

With that in mind, let’s take a look at some key Western interests for this resolution. This includes interests in Europe (specifically, the economy), Ukraine, Syria, and Iran.

**Europe**

One of the biggest levers Russia typically could pull was with respect to energy: with Europe dependent on Russian energy exports, the threat of a frozen (or simply expensive) winter was typically enough to thaw relations to manageable levels.

There are recent instances of such worries coming to fruition. Twice in the last decade—in 2006 and 2009—Russia cut Ukraine off from its gas supplies in response to various pricing squabbles. A pipe is like a river: dam it off, and the knock-on effects follow its path. In the case of Russia’s two spats with Ukraine, this affected Europe in a cascade from east to west.

Eastern Europe, a coalition largely consisting of former Soviet states, is economically overrepresented by inefficient heavy industry. The effects of a Russian cut in supply included both domestic impacts (people froze through the winter) and economic ones, as factories could in many cases no longer operate.
The impacts were also felt in Western Europe. Keep in mind the dam effect: by cutting off Ukraine, Russia also effectively severed half of its supply routes to Western Europe. On aggregate, this amounted to a 1/6 drop in supply to Western European nations: certainly enough to cause appreciable impacts.

The picture is different in 2015. Partially in response to the Russian shocks, the EU took a multipronged approach to ensuring robustness. To start, the gas trade was liberalized. This functionally preventing Russia from pulling the same kind of cutoff shenanigans as it did in Ukraine. The gas river was also turned into a multitude of streams, with infrastructure investments creating more interconnections between European states. This, in turn, allowed most EU states to diversify their gas supplies, creating relative immunity to shocks.

On the other side of the equation, energy prices have been depressed. For a relatively shallow economy like Russia’s (i.e. they overwhelmingly depend on energy), this means lower leverage. Functionally, this means energy as an economic tool has been taken off the table for Russia.

This is something the Pro should account for. One weakness of sanctions is that impacts flow both ways, especially if the target imposes countersanctions. However, the diversification and resilience of the European energy market ensures that Russia no longer has one of its biggest sticks. By understanding that Western energy interests are no longer jeopardized (to nearly the same extent) by threats of Russian retaliation, the Pro can advocate stronger sanctions regimes.

Ukraine

This, obviously, is really where the resolution begins and ends. Western sanctions were originally piled on as a consequence of Russian violations of Ukrainian sovereignty. In this case, it would seem simple: the West is interested in Ukrainian sovereignty. But let’s break that down a bit.

Contained within the question of Ukrainian sovereignty are two sub-goals for the United States and its allies: expansion of power (or, conversely, a containment of Russia) and a de-escalation of hostilities with Russia. The precedent set by American diplomatic maneuverings in the 1990s set the potentially unhealthy precedent that both could be accomplished at the same time—the most true fulfillment of United States interests.

This manifested itself in the expansion of what are now stalwarts of the international framework: the EU and NATO—economy and military. Russia did not acquiesce to this expansion: weakened following the Soviet Union’s collapse into its own death throes, Russia lacked the power (hard or soft) to put up any kind of real resistance to the expansion of Western power and unity in Europe.

Under this context, the resurgent Russia of Vladimir Putin should be no surprise. With an economy finally on its feet and a military capable of wielding the hard power he needs to back his rhetoric, it is no surprise that Putin has spent his years in power upending the Western status quo. This has generally come in the form of repeated challenges to NATO expansion and Western dominance (e.g. Georgia, 2008).

So now, the West cannot have its cake and eat it too. While the West an likely contain Russia, the brazenness of Putin’s attempts to claw back territory and power indicate that this cannot be done without employing the use of force. This would seem to counter half of the West’s interests.
On the other side of the coin, the West could leave force entirely off the table and still try to contain Russia. This is exactly what’s been happening for the last few years: the West sweeps the potential for heavy use of force under the table and relies on economic sanctions and diplomatic finagling to accomplish policy objectives.

For the Pro, the framework for Western interests probably looks like this: do we want half of the ideal, or none at all? Given the brashness of Putin’s actions (again, see the precedent set in Georgia, and the precedent currently being set in Crimea), it is unlikely that even the use of force would get the Russians to back down. It’s important to remember that Putin is viewed as the protector of Russia in the East—essentially the guardian against (perceived) Western aggression. To use force would simply escalate the conflict further, fulfilling none of the West’s policy objectives.

For the Con, a key will be to demonstrate how sanctions are not escalation-free. If the Con can equate the impacts of sanctions, from an escalation perspective, to that of using force, they can then go either way: advocate either a retraction of sanctions, or an escalation to force (or other “strong” diplomatic measures).

This is only a cursory overlook of the situation in Ukraine. While I realize that plenty of research has already been prescribed, I’d suggest also looking into all the U.S. policy options for Ukraine and their potential impacts there. The conflict has been going on for long enough that there should be no shortage of valuable analysis and data to get you grounded in preparation for debate. I think you’ll be surprised how many teams prepare for round while considering Western interests in Ukraine as some nebulous variation of “kick the Russians out.” Get more prepared than your opponents, and watch the wins roll in.

Iran

One of the major impacts mentioned in the previous Topic Analysis is the concept of Russian cooperation. Given that Western sanctions concern Russian action in Ukraine, it’s easy to get lost in the Ukrainian shuffle and fail to zoom out to the big picture.

The Iranian nuclear framework was agreed to in April 2015, with one of the negotiating parties of the P5+1 being Russia. Within a month of the agreement, Putin had lifted the ban on Russian missile defense sales to Iran.

Russia is a military power and a prominent arms designer and manufacturer to boot. Just like American defense contractors, the Russian government has customers all over the world. This is, however, a different clientele than the West’s, and a major customer is Iran.

This is complicated by the conditions of the nuclear agreement with Iran: the lifting of sanctions is supposed to occur in concert with Iran’s full compliance with the parameters of the agreement. Russia, of course, is hankering to sell arms to the Iranian, to the tune of up to $13 billion.

The West has a few big interests at play here. The first is to ensure that sanctions against Russia actually work. This means that the Russian economy needs to be cut off in a predictable fashion. This cannot occur if Russia keeps finding new outlets for expansion, especially through arms sales.
Equally worrying is the recipient, Iran. No Western vision for an ideal Middle East in the last 15 years has included Iran as the military hegemon. As it stands, Iran is a militarily weak state kept in check by powerful Middle Eastern states like Saudi Arabia. For this order to be upended, however, spells bad news for the West.

For Con teams, this is juicy. Con teams can argue this one in a couple ways. The first would be the isolation angle: trying to isolate Russia economically hinders Western interests. The Con can demonstrate that isolation is simply relative to Western powers: that is, Russia isolates itself from the West and simultaneously cozies up to allies in the Middle East. The Con could go a different direction and look at the frailty of the nuclear agreement with Iran as its own Western interest: the West shouldn’t be incentivizing its negotiating partner to actively undermine its efforts.

Syria

As far as analysis goes, Syria is a hot mess. The recent spat between Turkey and Russia over a long-standing set of disputes over airspace doesn’t help things either. In all three of the previous sections, I tried to show how nuanced understandings of the conflict could guide teams to a better understanding of the arguments. Here, there’s a problem: Syria is complicated enough to warrant its own topic. And teams will not have time to get nuanced with Syria, especially because the resolution is about Ukraine.

A quick summary: the United States has repeatedly stated that Bashar Assad must vacate power. Russia and Iran are Assad allies. And pretty much everyone—Russia, the West, Shia-ruled Iran—has the elimination of Islamic State (IS) as a top priority.

The presence of Bashar Assad is the major sticking point in Syria. The outcome has been that while the United States has tried to fund, arm, and train moderate Syrian rebels opposed to Assad, the Russians have been targeting them. Keep in mind this is all in the process of trying to achieve the main goal: toppling IS.

Western interests break down into a laundry list at this point. While the West is still trying to preserve its relations with Russia as it pursued other interests (see previous sections), it also has divergent aims in Syria with respect to Assad. This manifests itself into another fundamental interest: not engaging in a proxy war with Russia over Syria.

For the Con, this is where the diplomatic impacts of sanctions become an important piece of evidence. If the Con can show that sanctions create a political rift between Russia and the West, the Con can then prove that sanctions lessen the chance of negotiations between America and Russia over Syria, thus prolonging the Syrian conflict. That’s a big impact.

The Pro can take the opposite tack on this one. If the Pro can establish the premise that the West cannot stand idly by while Russia expands (through hard or soft means), they can show that sanctions are the best way to preserve diplomatic channels in Syria. The Pro can thus absorb the negative impacts of sanctions while still demonstrating them to be the best “compromise” between sets of impossible-to-fulfill-simultaneously interests in Ukraine and Syria.
Rounding off

If anything, hopefully the lesson here is that teams likely should not be treating Western interests as some ambiguous mass. If nothing else, an understanding of the breakdown of Western interests should allow teams to start both opening arguments and crossfires with an establishment of a major premise from which to carry on focused debates: these are the major (specific) western interests, and this is how we solve them.

The key, as it always is, happens to be more information. It’s no fun to get stumped mid-round, and it’s no fun to be debating topics while mired in the abyss of ambiguity. As a baseline for major premises in your logic, an understanding of Western interests is the foundation for controlling, and winning, debates.

As a new calendar year begins, I wish you the best of luck. Have a great 2016!

- Daniel Tsvankin
Sanctions Weaken Russia’s Economy

Russia’s economy is declining, and reform is likely necessary. ABH


Sanctions imposed on Russia because of its support for separatists in Ukraine could shrink the economy by as much as 9% over time. That's the view of the International Monetary Fund, which published a regular report on Russia this week. Collapsing oil prices and Western sanctions on big banks and energy companies tipped Russia into a financial crisis at the end of 2014. The ruble plunged and inflation soared. Russia jacked up interest rates in response, sold dollars and euros to defend its currency, pumped money into the banks and slashed government spending. The situation has stabilized this year, although the ruble has come under pressure again recently, but the economy is already deep in recession. The IMF expects Russian GDP to shrink by 3.4% this year, as falling real wages, the higher cost of borrowing and shattered confidence hit domestic demand. And western sanctions, and Russia's retaliatory ban on imports of food and agricultural products, could be responsible for nearly half that decline. But longer term, the impact could be even more significant, as the loss of access to foreign finance and technology hurts investment and makes Russia's economy even less efficient. "Prolonged sanctions could lead to a cumulative output loss over the medium term of up to 9% of GDP," the IMF said. Russians are feeling the pain. Unemployment has begun to creep up from very low levels, and millions more have fallen into poverty. Anemic growth could return in 2016, according to the IMF, but Russia will have to get serious about reform if it wants to avoid relative stagnation.

Sanctions have severely damaged Russia’s economy, and in order to avoid catastrophe Russia will have to adopt reforms that will most be likely be seen as favorable by the West.
Russia’s economy is struggling based on various metrics. ABH


The internal economic crisis in Russia, in turn, is calculated to generate two effects. First, it will prove too costly for the Kremlin to continue military involvement in Ukraine. Second, falling incomes and rising inflation will also weaken popular support for Putin and his rule and may bring about a change of policy (or leadership) in Moscow. A look at the state of Russia’s economy indicates that Western sanctions are having their desired effect. Since April 2014, the ruble has lost nearly half of its value; net capital flight out of the country has doubled, reaching $151 billion in 2014; economic growth has slowed down to 0.6 percent in late 2014—at its lowest since the global financial crisis of 2009. In January 2015, Russia's gross domestic product contracted by 1.4 percent, with forecasts predicting a significant contraction of GDP in 2015.

These are some good statistics for CON to use to show that sanctions are significantly hurting Russia’s economy, as measured by several different indicators.

Sanctions have had a negative economic impact, and the future is grim. ABH


Together with other factors the economic sanctions have impacted the Russian economy negatively. The geopolitical tension, threats of sanctions and the imposing of sanctions have produced a crisis of confidence that has hurt the willingness of both domestic and foreign actors to embark on business ventures in Russia and to invest. The financial sanctions have targeted Russia’s main state banks and key companies, which has contributed to a strained financial situation in the whole economy and led to difficulties in refinancing debt in the short run and in financing investment, which affects Russia’s economic development in the medium and long run. In addition, the EU and US export bans on specific products that are crucial for the energy and defence sectors will affect technological development in both these areas. The full effect of these sanctions is still to be seen.

The nature of sanctions has caused economic harm, and will continue to so in the future. The sanctions targeting technological development can be especially devastating, as over time Russia could fall behind in innovation when compared with other nations.
Economic downturn in Russia has historically led to political change. ABH


Equally (if not more) important is that sanctions shattered Putin’s ‘contract’ with the Russian people: namely, improving collective prosperity in exchange for accepting authoritarianism and the siphoning off of Russia's riches by elites. The restrictive measures, combined with the other factors now hitting the country’s economy, are forcing Putin to tentatively replace his model with nationalism and anti-Westernism. However, as Russian history suggests, patriotism might not last long in the absence of tangible economic prosperity.

The collapse of the Russian empire in 1917 occurred in the wake of the initial patriotic boost of the First World War. The USSR crumbled after its economy collapsed in the 1980s. And support for Yeltsin and liberal democracy in the 1990s plummeted after reforms failed to yield economic dividends.

Putin is able to get away with undemocratic behavior, as long as he keeps Russia prosperous. By hurting Russia’s economy, sanctions could turn the public against Putin. This would not unprecedented given the role of the economy in Russia’s past leadership changes.
Sanctions Are A Deterrent

*The threat of sanctions can contain Russian aggression. DAT*


Even if sanctions do not achieve their immediate goals, though, there are still two good reasons to impose them, according to Daniel Drezner of Tufts University in Massachusetts. First, they force aggressors to factor the growing costs of escalation into their decision-making. It is possible that Mr Putin would have acted even more aggressively, had sanctions not been imposed. Second, sanctions can be used as a bargaining chip to be conceded later, when the other side is coaxed into talks.

And further economic sanctions may still weaken Mr Putin’s regime even if they do not change his behaviour. So far the sanctions against his cronies have not touched on the interests of most Russians, while the Kremlin’s ban on food imports has not materially affected Mr Putin’s core voters. But that will change if economic pain increases. Business confidence is low, the rouble has lost 10% of its value since the start of the year and the economy is barely growing. Capital flight is rampant: an influx of Russian money has reportedly prompted Hong Kong’s monetary authority to intervene in currency markets so as to curb the rise of the Hong Kong dollar. If Russia’s economy continues to weaken, Mr Putin may yet find himself constrained. Or so the West hopes.

Action can be impactful even if it does not manifest in tangible results. In the case of sanctions, they can serve as a critical diplomatic tool in dealing with a difficult regime. The difference between sanctions and inaction can also mean the difference between aggression and negotiation with the Russians.
Sanctions are an effective deterrent. DAT


During the past few months, however, the Obama administration has announced its intention to employ sanctions to achieve a new, broader objective: to deter aggressive actions toward the United States and its interests. In the case of Russia, now former Treasury Department Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen noted late last year that while “these sanctions are intended to impede dangerous behavior and, above all, to influence Russian decision-making . . . we may never know what additional Russian aggression the sanctions, and the threat of additional sanctions, may have deterred.” This language is mirrored by the 2015 National Security Strategy, which states that “we are enforcing tough sanctions on Russia to impose costs and deter future aggression.” Although sanctions have been used for deterrence purposes in the past, the Obama administration’s rhetoric suggests that they will increasingly do so moving forward.

Governments can use sanctions as a deterrent in two ways: first, they can try to deter aggressive states from engaging in additional belligerent behavior; and second, they can try to signal to other countries that they too will face economic penalties for similar actions.

This is a tricky proposition to argue, given that the deterrence argument is based on preventing hypothetical outcomes. This line of reasoning best works when historical case studies are present to illustrate the feasibility of potential outcomes.
Sanctions prevented Russia from taking over more territory. ABH


The camp in favour has an equally compelling set of arguments. Advocates believe that sanctions have already had an impact in the short term and will continue to do so in the medium term. First, they made Russia seriously factor in possible Western responses to its actions in Ukraine, which seems not to have been the case prior to the annexation of Crimea. The sanctions, in other words, constrained Russia as they deterred Moscow from seizing even bigger chunks of territory. The separatist areas of the Donbas form only a tiny part of what is called by nationalist elements of the Russian public Novorossia. The coastal city of Mariupol was not seized by Russia, when it easily could have been. There has been no attempt by Russian forces to forge a corridor bridging mainland Russia to Crimea, let alone Odessa and Transnistria. In other words, a useful effect of the sanctions is that, even if they do not help the EU much in its policy on Crimea, they do minimise the risk that Russia will seek to openly destabilise other parts of Ukraine or, say, Moldova and Georgia. At a global level, finally, sanctions also signaled to other actors that unilateral military ventures will come at a cost.

PRO can use this to show that Russia could have taken more aggressive actions, but was deterred by sanctions. More importantly, this can send a message to other countries (and Russia in the future) that aggressive behavior will not go unpunished.
Sanctions have influenced Russian policy. ABH


It is too early to give a definitive answer to the question of whether sanctions affected Putin’s Ukraine strategy, but the preliminary record appears to be mixed. Russia does appear to have made tactical adjustments to its strategy at different points during the crisis to minimize the odds of sanctions being imposed. For example, faced with repeated threats by European and U.S. leaders that Russian efforts to undermine Ukraine’s democratic elections in May 2014 would trigger broad economic sanctions, Russia did generally allow the elections to go forward without interference, except in areas then under de facto control by pro-Russian separatists. Although the threat of sanctions did not deter Russia from pouring hundreds of tanks and other weapons into Ukraine in July and August 2014, the imposition of sanctions that September and the threat of sanctions escalation may have been one factor in convincing Russia to support elements of a ceasefire agreement among Ukraine, Russia, and the separatists on September 19, 2014. And after Russia again escalated the violence in eastern Ukraine in early 2015, the threat of broader sanctions may have helped deter Russia from moving forward and seizing the strategic city of Mariupol in February.

While sanctions are not perfect, they have certainly made Russia take actions that it otherwise would not have taken. These actions include deescalating the conflict in Ukraine and allowing for elections.
Sanctions Are Effective When Part of a Larger Initiative

Here, we present some options for a strong Pro advocacy. While it is certainly possible to argue for the benefits of sanctions in isolation, a more pragmatic debate strategy is to analyze how sanctions fit into the larger framework of Western foreign policy objectives. As far as case studies go, sanctions are generally ineffective, historically, when used as the sole, or main, coercive device for Western objectives. Rather than pea shoot at individual impacts, Pro teams can comprehensively demonstrate large impacts—the accomplishment of Western policy objectives—by fitting sanctions into a larger advocacy.

Sanctions work when in tandem with other coercive, nonviolent tools. DAT


The use of sanctions to deter states from aggressive actions is also more likely to yield success when it is one part of a broader coercive strategy. Employing sanctions alongside other coercive levers—such as limited military strikes or cyberattacks—can signal a state’s willingness to combat an action it deems impermissible. This tactic proved fruitful in Iraq throughout the 1990s when a combination of military force and economic sanctions against Saddam Hussein deterred him from restarting the nation’s chemical weapons program. Similarly, policymakers can consider the threat of more powerful economic punishments if initial sanctions fail, especially in cases where using military power is not feasible but high costs must still be levied against aggressive regimes.
Case study: Why sanctions worked against Iran. DAT

Feaver, Peter [Duke University political science professor] and Eric Lorber.

Even if policymakers decide that sanctions are the best tool, they should not rely on them in place of a strategy, but rather should incorporate them into a broader strategy for safeguarding U.S. strategic interests. Sanctions—even sophisticated ones—are rarely effective alone, and must be used in conjunction with other tools of diplomacy to have much chance of success. Part of the reason that the United States was able to bring Iran to the negotiating table and ultimately strike a deal with the Islamic Republic was that it combined the offer of extensive diplomacy with the threat of force, sanctions, and other forms of coercion over a multi-year period. To be sure, the mix was hardly optimal. The threat of force was stronger at the initial stages of the contest and essentially disappeared during the endgame, and sanctions, or at least the prospect of sustaining sanctions, began to wither in the final months as well. Critics have made a strong argument that a much better deal could have been achieved if the Obama administration had been able to match its negotiations intensity with a sustained credible threat of force and a sustained credible threat of additional sanctions in the absence of a deal. Regardless of where one comes down on whether the Iran deal is good enough, the basic point stands: whatever the economic sanctions were able to accomplish with Iran were accomplished only because they were integrated to a larger strategy, initially laid down by the Bush administration and later expanded by the Obama administration, that combined economic pressure with military, diplomatic, and other forms of pressure.

By contrast, from the outset of the recent conflict with Russia, the Obama administration relied almost exclusively on sanctions to convince Putin to cease his support of rebels in Eastern Ukraine and pull out of Crimea. This did not prove successful, and while the jury is still out, providing additional economic assistance to Ukraine and bolstering NATO’s ability to respond to Russian aggression throughout Eastern Europe may better convince Russia to cease threatening its neighbors and supporting separatist activity in its near abroad.
Western Economies Must Be Insulated From Russia

*Russia has weaponized globalization. It’s time to roll that back. DAT*

http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/russia-containment-putin-soviet/410968/

In a 2012 report for Chatham House, James Greene noted how Putin used “the corrupt transnational schemes that flowed seamlessly from Russia into the rest of the former Soviet space—and oozed beyond it” to extend his “shadow influence beyond Russia’s borders and develop a natural, ‘captured’ constituency.”

**Toward this end, Moscow has used everything from shady energy deals, to webs of shell companies, to hot money in the City of London, to the financing of extremist political parties in Europe. Its success in doing so raises the economic cost of conflict, reduces resolve to resist Moscow, and gives Russia a ready-made lobby in Western capitals. The Kremlin has effectively weaponized globalization.**

Rather than an Iron Curtain with armies facing off across the Fulda Gap, the main fault line of the current conflict is between a Western zone of transparency and a Moscow-dominated sphere of corruption. Any containment policy, therefore, needs first and foremost to limit Russia’s sphere of corruption and extend the Western zone of transparency.

“The front lines of containment are the non-Russian states in the potential path of Russian expansion. Seen in this light, a divided Ukraine occupies the same role in today’s containment strategy as a divided Germany did in yesterday’s,” Motyl wrote in Foreign Affairs. “Ukraine should therefore be the recipient of similar financial, political, and military assistance.”

Georgia and Moldova, likewise, fall into this category. **But any true containment of today’s Russia must go beyond this. It also needs to include a rollback of Russia’s ability to exploit and abuse the dynamism and transparency of Western economies.**

**The means of Russian malfeasance are generally economic. By judicious use of sanctions, aimed at cutting Russia’s economic influence off, the West can advance their interests without having them be consistently undermined in the shadows by Russian manipulation.**
The Alternatives to Sanctions Are Suboptimal

_NATO can do little to advance Western interests in Ukraine militarily. DAT_


But while Putin may ignore the changing reality of human rights and global media, NATO is ignoring him. Thus far, NATO and the West have done little in response to Russia’s actions in Ukraine. A few measly sanctions nibble away at Russia’s economy and speakers constantly berate Putin at the UN, but no real efforts to punish Russia have been made. Even the tragic loss of Flight MH17 only prompted renewed aid for the Ukrainian military and stronger economic sanctions—both of which Russia has endured with moderate success. _Although NATO has conducted more active military operations since the Soviet Union’s collapse than it did throughout the entire Cold War, its military readiness and will for major military action is at an all-time low._ The war in Afghanistan sapped the alliance’s political capital amongst its member states, and even successful missions like Operation Unified Protector in Libya displayed the alliance’s dearth of munitions, fuel, and personnel for long term engagements. _Ukraine is not a member of the military alliance, and thus is unable to call upon the mutual defense pact at the core of the NATO treaty, nor is it able to ask for consultation with NATO members. Without these two elements, Ukraine can only collaborate with NATO on humanitarian projects._ However, after a decade of war in the Middle East and a push for austerity measures across Europe, this too is unlikely.

NATO has instead attempted to thwart Russian ambitions in NATO member states, increasing air patrols, strengthening air defense systems, and stationing more soldiers in Eastern European bases. Despite such actions, NATO’s presence in Eastern Europe remains startlingly weak. An internal report from the UK Commons Defence Committee noted major weaknesses in NATO’s readiness to respond to a Russian attack on a member-state. The report noted that the conventional military conflicts NATO was founded to fight bear little resemblance to the current threat in Eastern Europe, and instead, the alliance must now consider the use of irregular militias and cyberattacks within the bounds of its mutual defense pact. From a strategy standpoint, this logic is perfectly sound. _Russia's takeover of Crimea relied heavily upon paramilitary units and a major cyberattack against Estonia in 2007 was traced to Russian hackers._ But altering the NATO treaty in such a way would likely place NATO soldiers in combat zones far more often than most member nations would like—making change unlikely.

_Taking Russia head-on is as unlikely as it is inadvisable. It would be unreasonable to advocate any kind of strategy involving the use of force; NATO, the best option for doing so, is in no shape to keep Russia at bay. With that in mind, Putin’s general recalcitrance also takes many diplomatic channels off the table. Economic means are one of few viable options left._
Sanctions Advance Western Political Interests

Sanctions are customizable and advance Western soft power. DAT


The architects of modern-day sanctions understand these issues very well and nowadays attempt a new approach: targeted sanctions against specific members of the elite. We are now seeing these “smart sanctions” in action against Russia. The growing discontent inside the Russian elite shows that this attempt is having some effect. There is more to this than the fact that some members of the Russian ruling class are being forced to schedule routine medical operations in Israel rather than in Germany, or the seizure of bank accounts and real estate assets that are fairly unimportant for their owners.

It would be naïve for the West to expect the rapid elimination of the root cause of the sanctions—a restoration of the Russian-Ukrainian border of mid-February 2014. Yet no one ever believed this was the real goal. The aim of the sanctions was to send a clear signal of the West’s political position and, more importantly, to try to prevent a further escalation of the conflict.

The sanctions are dynamic, not static. They can be strengthened or eased in order to restrain or stimulate certain actions. We do not know how far military activity in Ukraine would have gone otherwise, since the ceasefires and agreements negotiated in Minsk were largely the result of the sanctions. In the light of all this, it is no longer correct to say that the sanctions have had no effect.

The last paragraph is an especially important reminder for the Pro. To argue about whether or not sanctions have prevented even more aggression in Ukraine is to dive into an abyss of haggling over counterfactual conditionals. This is not a reliable road to victory. Instead, the Pro can look to non-military Western interest and categorically show how they are being met. By focusing here, the Pro can deal in sound theory and demonstrable evidence, rather than conjecture.
Con Evidence
Sanctions Increase Distrust of the West

Sanctions punish integration into the global economy. ABH


First, by employing commercial and financial sanctions on Russia for its actions in Ukraine, the United States — the architect and largest beneficiary of the globalized system of trade and finance — is exploiting post-Soviet Russia’s integration into that system. Years of mutually beneficial progress that brought 140 million Russians into the orbit of global economic governance are now in doubt. Even if sanctions succeed in changing the Kremlin’s behavior and are then lifted, the American objective of integrating Russia into the global economy has been fundamentally undermined. Second, the use of sanctions broadcasts to others the strategic hazard of integrating into the American-led global financial system. Whatever the outcome of Russia’s intervention in Ukraine and whatever Mr. Putin’s ultimate fate, other non-allies of the United States have now learned the lesson that hard-won institutional integration can be turned against those states that achieve it.

Sanctions against Russia have shown countries the potential danger of opening up their economies to greater global trade. This is especially significant in this debate, as increased global trade is arguably a Western interest.
To assume sanctions will work is to fundamentally misunderstand Russia. DAT


The U.S. did not have to travel down this road, but it did, and there appears to be no way to turn back—or no way leaders in the West or Russia are prepared to take. The newly precarious state of affairs derives, in great measure, from a failure on the part of Western, and mostly American, leaders to understand Russia, which they should have tried to do, given its strategic importance, nuclear arsenal, continental dimensions, natural resources, and potential as a troublemaker—or dealmaker—in many troubled parts of the world. It also stems from America’s refusal to recognize Russia’s concern about the eventual expansion of NATO, a military bloc inherently inimical to it, into more terrain along its western border—terrain that is closer to Moscow than the Baltics. How would the United States react to a Russian incursion in the Western hemisphere? This is no hypothetical question. In 1962, President Kennedy took the world to the brink of atomic war to force the Soviet Union to withdraw its nuclear missiles from Cuba.

A deal ended that confrontation, and one is needed now. But to strike one, Western leaders would have to reassess their view of, and policies toward, Russia. Russia, for reasons of history, culture, size, and geography, is what it is: not Western, not Eastern, but sui generis, its own world. Predicating policy on the hopes of a peaceful uprising and the triumph of democracy here—or, conversely, on predictions of the country’s collapse, with a new, West-friendly government emerging from the rubble—is futile. In the same vein, announcements of economic sanctions designed to make Russia “pay” for annexing Crimea or stirring up trouble in eastern Ukraine ring hollow to Russian ears.

Con teams need to make sure Pro teams are clear about the intended purpose of sanctions. From there, it’s straightforward to dismantle them using the context of East-West global relations and the results of ongoing sanctions against Russia.
Instead of regime change, sanctions fuel anti-Western sentiment. DAT


Russian television and popular culture has lately been presenting the West as some sort of collective bumbling despot. Assorted political talking heads contend that Western sanctions were a horrible mistake and have proved useless or even counterproductive as Russian citizens have only rallied around the ruling elite. This is the rationale of appeals to end or ease the sanctions, not only by members of the opposition but also by government officials and government-sponsored media.

It is far from obvious what effects the Ukraine-related sanctions are having on Russia. Recent history has few clear-cut sanctions success stories, even with international embargoes approved by the UN Security Council. In Yugoslavia, South Africa, North Korea or Cuba there is little evidence that sanctions had a strong effect. Yet the cases of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Libya, and perhaps also Iran, suggest that sanctions can be also quite effective. And this is before we mention that they are much better than the alternative of military action.

Yet the Western notion that sanctions will drive the population to overthrow a ruling regime and change course is unrealistic. History has shown that autocratic governments find it quite easy to blame foreign powers for the real and imagined hardships of the general population, which usually suffers the most from sanctions. This pressure allows regimes not only to consolidate their political base, but to earn a “mobilization bonus” such as the Kremlin’s current 85 percent level of support.

The West undermines its own political bargaining power with sanctions. By fueling the Russian media machine, Western countries indirectly goad the Russian government into a regimen of escalation and provocation.
Sanctions have increased unity and sense of anti-Western patriotism in Russia. ABH


The US- and EU-led sanctions against Russia have inspired strong patriotism and nationalism in Russians. Rather than shake the public’s support for the government, the sanctions have helped the government to mobilize its citizens. As phrased by Igor Yurgens, the President of the Russian think tank Institute for Contemporary Development, “Sanctions do not destabilize Russia's regime; on the contrary, they help Putin mobilize nationalism among the political elites” (Yurgens, 2014, October 9). With the development of the Ukraine crisis, the support rate for Russian President Vladimir Putin has soared and stabilized at a high level. The data released by the Levada Center, a Russian public opinion research institute, show that support for President Vladimir Putin among the Russian population in 2014 has generally continued on an upward trend, averaging at 81.5 %, which is 18.0 and 15.75 % higher than in 2013 (63.5 %) and 2012 (65.75 %), respectively. Since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March, the support rate for Vladimir Putin in Russia has soared and has been stable at 80 %, reaching its highest value at 88 % in October (Levada Center). At the same time, the unity of the Russian people has also steadily been increasing. Public opinion polling data released in November by the Russian polling research firm the Levada Center show that 68 % of Russians believe that their country is a superpower, while this percentage was only 14 % in the polls in March (Levada Center, 2014, December 11).

Sanctions have completely failed to sway the public’s opinion on Ukraine. In fact, the Russian public is more supportive of Putin, and Putin is more capable of utilizing anti-Western propaganda as a result of sanctions.
Attacking Russia’s Economy is Naive

*No discernable positive externalities have come from crippling the Russian economy.* DAT


Either way, the response has so far been in vain. Sanctions have hurt the Russian economy, but they have had no discernible effect on Mr Putin’s military strategy. Instead, Russia has imposed counter-sanctions of its own, halting food imports and closing local branches of McDonald’s, ostensibly on public-health grounds.

The European Union has been the weak link in the West’s response. It is a much more important trading partner for Russia than America is. *This gives it more potential leverage, but the higher level of trade means some members’ economies are very closely intertwined with Russia’s—making it hard to reach the unanimous decisions necessary for sanctions to be imposed.* The EU stance toughened after pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine shot down a Malaysian airliner in July. More individuals were targeted and new measures deprived Russian state-owned banks of their access to long-term financing in Europe’s capital markets. This has led some of those banks to tap central-bank reserves in order to plug funding gaps.

*Looking at the West as the United States and its European allies, sanctions effectively shoot their interests in the foot. While they may achieve the desired foreign policy results, it comes at economic cost to the West.*
Russia’s economy is difficult to target. DAT


Targeting Russia’s energy sector is another option. Oil and gas make up 70% of Russia’s $515 billion annual exports and over half of the federal budget. Hawks say this makes it look like Iran. In 2012 the EU banned imports of Iranian oil and made it difficult to insure ships carrying Iranian oil. Oil exports fell by 60% and in 2013 Iran came to the negotiating table.

But Europe did not depend on Iranian oil. By contrast, Russia supplies about a quarter of the EU’s gas: Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and Latvia are dependent on it. The EU thus has no interest in boycotting Russian energy supplies; they are seen as a weapon in Russia’s hands, not in Europe’s. Günther Oettinger, the EU’s energy commissioner, says he is no longer ruling out “worst-case scenarios” for energy security.

There are other ways to target Russia’s energy sector. Amrita Sen of Energy Aspects, a consultancy, points out that Russia is highly dependent on Western technology. Last month Washington imposed controls on items used for exploration or production of Russian oil and gas. The measures could, over the long term, damage Russia’s ability to exploit its reserves in the Arctic. But such moves are unlikely to change Mr Putin’s mind today.

The second biggest sector of the Russian economy, by exports, is arms. There the likely effect of sanctions is small. Although it is the second-biggest weapons exporter in the world, Russia has few European clients and sells almost no kit to America. The defence equipment it imports it could mostly produce at home. Among the exceptions are warships, two of which it has on order from France. On September 3rd the French put the sale on hold.

There is little scope for further action on the sanctions front. Any more targeting of the Russian economy would either be counterproductive or merely ineffective.
Sanctions are effective, but not impactful. And that’s a massive problem. DAT


As the Ukraine crisis continues, further rounds of sanctions on Russia are being discussed. But the question that still hasn’t been answered is, do sanctions work? For some, the question seems unnecessary. Clearly, sanctions work. Capital is flowing out of Russia, the ruble is losing value, Russian companies have less access to foreign credits, and the country’s GDP is falling.

The problem is that such facts — even if they could all be attributed to the sanctions — still don’t tell us whether sanctions are working. We need to distinguish between effectiveness and impact. Figures about economic negatives such as reduced trade, foreign investment, credit flows, technology transfer, GDP growth, incomes, and so on — these measure impact. They do not, however, tell us how likely the sanctions are to cause Russia to change its behavior — that is, how effective they will be.

To put it another way, impact tells us how much pain we can cause. Effectiveness depends also on how able and willing Russians are to endure the pain. To answer that question, we need to understand, first, the peculiarities of the Russian economy and past Russian experience with economic hardship, and second, Russians’ motivations for the behavior we want to change.

The last point is crucial. It is a fallacy to assume that Russia will respond to sanctions the same way that we would. We cannot simply project our own preferences onto Russians. (After all, if Russians had our preference structure, they would not have annexed Crimea in the first place.) Whether it is the idea that Vladimir Putin cares more about his personal wealth than Russia’s national security, or that ordinary Russians who see their living standards decline as a result of sanctions will mechanistically direct their anger against Putin rather than the West — many of the assumptions underlying the West’s sanctions policy are flawed, to say the least.

It is impossible to simply assume that economic harms to Russia equate with Western interests. Con teams must be careful in keeping the scope of debate centered on impacts, not effects. This can flip many Pro points (e.g. sanctions affect the Russian economy) to the Con.
The Russian economy is structurally resilient. DAT


That decline in rents — combined with the collapse of the heavily integrated market of the Soviet Union — was what caused Russia’s weakness. Rent flows today are far greater than in the 1990s. To reduce them to the 1990s level would require drastic reductions of either the world oil price or the quantities of oil and gas produced and exported by Russia, or both. (It would take, for example, a simultaneous drop in the world oil price to under $40 a barrel and an output cut of over 60 percent of both oil and gas — over a sustained period — to produce that effect.)

This is not the end of the story. It is not just the volume of rents that matter. It is how they are controlled. In the 1990s the relatively small amount of rent available in the economy was not under the control of the center. Rents were redistributed through a chaotic and bottom-up system that did, admittedly, ensure the survival of households. But it did not serve the interests of key strategic sectors, especially those vital for state power. The situation today is different. Putin has put in place a strong, centralized system of rent management that permits him to channel the rents to groups and sectors of the economy he deems most important. A top priority for him is defense industry and the security apparatus. In an environment of a Russia under siege, his control will be tighter than ever. That control extends especially to the oligarchs, who play a key role in distributing the rents.

One of the most important reasons why Russia today is different than the Russia of the 1990s is that during his period in power, Putin has used the rent to make sure Russia has no debt to foreign governments or supranational institutions. As the figure shows, in the 1990s the Russian government’s foreign debt was well over ten times greater than its foreign currency reserves. Today that ratio is reversed.

“Rents” is defined by Gaddy and Ickes as the value of Russia’s oil and gas resources—essentially the value of the Russian economy’s foundation.
Slowing down Russia’s economy is a short-sighted ploy. DAT


But we ought also to ask, what happens to Russia in the longer term? There are several points to note. First, the direct effects of sanctions on Russia may be severe. Economic growth is likely to turn negative. Notice, however, that economic growth was already slowing before this confrontation began. Sanctions will only provide an excuse for a worsening economy and slow the search for reform. This would be worse for economic performance, but probably good for Putin politically.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that Russia will rebound after the confrontation, as it always does after a crisis. In general we can expect fast post-conflict growth. Indeed, the deeper the drop, the faster the rebound growth. What level of income Russia attains in the short term is a different matter. Depending on how long the confrontation lasts, it will take longer for Russia to regain its current prosperity level once the conflict is over.

Russia also has the potential to rapidly bring back foreign investors who may have been frightened away or deterred from entering Russia during the conflict. The great magnet is, as always, its resource sector. Examples from recent and more remote Russian history tell us that Russia’s natural wealth will always attract foreign investors, almost irrespective of how they were treated in the past. We refer to this as the “Lena Goldfields” principle. Lena Goldfields was a British-owned mining company that was appropriated by the Bolsheviks after the 1917 revolution and then sold back in the mid-1920s to the very same investor group — who, despite their previous ill-treatment, could not resist the lure of a monopoly on the Russian gold sector — only to again be appropriated by Stalin a few years later.

The slightest signs of openness brought investment even to Bolshevik Russia. Investment will flow today because the potential upside in Russia is huge and comparable alternatives elsewhere in the world are few. Thanks to oil, Russia does not need costly reforms to attract capital. And thanks also to the oil, it has rich consumers. Once sanctions are lifted, the postponed consumer demand that might result from a sanction-induced recession will be unleashed and help accelerate the rebound. Both domestic retail and imports will benefit.

As other cards in this brief can attest, sanctions do not effect political changes short-term. This card demonstrates that the long-term outlook for the Russian economy—and thus Western interests—is virtually independent of sanctions. They could be considered, at best, non-impactful.
Sanctions are not having that bad an effect on Russia’s economy. ABH


While the economic situation in Moscow appears dire, it must be put into perspective. The current downturn seems less dramatic than the 2009 recession, though this one could be more long-lasting. The Russian government’s financial situation remains relatively favourable. At an expected 9.5%, inflation is still lower than in the run-up to the 2008 financial crisis, where it peaked at above 13%. Russia's budget is balanced and its public debt levels are low. And the CBR’s international reserves are still sizeable: back in 2008, Russia spent $200 billion between July and April to halt a depreciation of the rouble and bail out its state-owned companies. This year, the CBR’s international reserves have shrunk at a much slower pace than during the last crisis, from $486 billion last March to $418 billion in late November. In short, Russia has enough of a buffer to weather a 2-3 year financial storm, and Moscow appears to be betting that it will blow over relatively soon.

Even though the sanctions are causing economic problems in Russia, their impact is not severe enough to pose a major threat to Russia. CON can use this to mitigate the impact of PRO’s economic harms cards.
Sanctions and Russian Oil


The world was a different place in 1979 when President Carter enacted sanctions on Iran, freezing their assets, and again in 1995 when President Clinton expanded sanctions to include trade with Iran’s oil industry. Massive globalization hadn’t yet taken place. As such, the geo-economic impact of limiting a country’s ability to export oil once had limited reach. OPEC easily made up the 2 million barrels per day of displaced Iranian oil in 1979. This is in stark contrast with what is possible today when seventy-two percent more oil is traded worldwide than when the first sanctions were enacted.

This is also why the United States’ newly found oil riches wouldn’t shield the country from the price shock that is likely to result from serious oil sanctions against Russia. America remains wired into the global oil market, and this will translate into price spikes in NYMEX traded oil futures and for consumers at the pump. Russia, in turn, will not necessarily suffer in the way intended. While any oil price hikes will harm Russian citizens and business, they would stand to benefit the Kremlin’s state coffers, partially making up for the loss in market shares.

Sanctioning Russia’s oil remains on the table. But playing this card comes with serious economic risk for all. The burden is on Washington and Brussels to weigh this move carefully. Moscow, in turn, should be prepared for the West to sanction oil—not because it makes sense, but because the course of events might lead to actions whose outcomes are eventually undesirable.

Con teams should keep in mind that the interdependence of the Russian and Western economies ensures impacts go both ways. This is especially crucial with energy. Prices in the United States and Europe are pegged to the global market, so even small turbulence in Russia can make its way directly to the United States.
**Small flutters in Russia create waves in the global energy market. DAT**

http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/24175/dont_make_ukraine_about_energy.html

*Impact on Global Oil Prices*

For starters, proponents of energy sanctions should consider what it will mean for global oil prices if, say, just a third of Russia’s current 10 mmbd crude output is taken off the market. This would probably trigger a stock-draw from the OECD countries’ strategic oil reserves. **Short of that, sanctions targeting the Russian oil sector will likely lead to a price hike, hurting the world economy—but not necessarily the Russian budget.** This also holds for the U.S.: abundant resource production does not make the country less exposed to global price shocks. It is also worth considering the large financial interests that are at stake for U.S. private sector firms and European banks holding large Russian assets.

*Europeans Will Bear the Cost*

Second, the costs of energy sanctions will be unevenly distributed. To put it bluntly: Europeans will pay the price. The European gas market is not resilient enough to deal adequately with a potential Russian gas-cutoff, whether as a response to energy sanctions or their effect. Substantial investments are still required to better connect currently scattered markets. **Also, national regulatory regimes have not been harmonized, and most of the gas markets in Eastern Europe cannot absorb a supply shock.** What’s more, the often proposed exports of U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) will not be available in any conceivable near term time horizon. Even if they were available they would not come to Europe’s rescue but instead go to Asia because of higher prices there, a reason why Cheniere’s CEO Charif Souki called the idea “nonsense.”

This card should help Con teams assess the viability of Pro advocacies with respect to energy policy. Con teams can emphasize the reciprocity of the global economy: if Western economies are tied with Russia well enough to mount credible economic threats, an economy as big as Russia’s (and more particularly, Russia’s energy sector, which is an important global player) can also leverage its position against the West.
Sanctions Are Easily Avoided

Russian companies and individuals can skirt sanctions. DAT


In several cases, however, companies that would have been subject to sanctions because of their links to “designated” Russian oligarchs have managed to wriggle free of the restrictions with well-timed transactions. These have had the effect of reducing the stakes held by parties subject to sanctions below thresholds that would trigger penalties against their businesses. “The blatant manner in which [some Russian entities] have avoided sanctions raises questions about the effectiveness of the existing system and the willingness of the West to enforce its own rules,” concludes an unpublished report by a corporate-investigations firm that has been seen by The Economist. It was compiled for one of the many Western companies that fret about whom they can or cannot do business with under the sanctions regime.

Sanctions are often used as a silver bullet when nations are hesitant to use real force or give up too many concessions diplomatically. Unfortunately, the weak-kneed approach means that nations’ willingness to enforce their sanctions is always in doubt. With respect to Russian businesses, this means that sanctions are skirted with little regard to the (unlikely) consequences.
Case study: Sogaz and the evasion of sanctions thresholds. DAT


A striking example is Sogaz. Originally set up by Gazprom, an energy giant, the company provides insurance to Russian firms, including numerous ones on sanctions lists. The company reinsures its risks in Western markets. (It also sponsors Russia’s top football league.) Every member of the Sogaz board, including Alexey Miller, the boss of Gazprom, is affiliated with a sanctioned entity. Mr Putin’s nephew is a deputy chairman of Sogaz.

Until March 51% of Sogaz belonged to Bank Rossiya via a wholly owned subsidiary, called Abros. Rossiya is Russia’s 17th-largest bank, and its owners have links to Mr Putin. The remainder of the shares in Sogaz were divided between Gazprom, its subsidiaries and other figures close to the president. This included a stake held indirectly by Gennady Timchenko, a billionaire investor whom America assumes to be a member of Mr Putin’s inner circle (Mr Timchenko has denied this).

Rossiya was put on the sanctions list on March 20th 2014. Under the rules, Sogaz should have been too, as an entity that is 50%-or-more-owned by a sanctioned party. But Rossiya transferred a 2.5% stake to Sogaz Realty, a subsidiary of Sogaz, the week before the sanctions were imposed, according to the insurer (see diagram). Investigators who have seen the paperwork note that the transaction was not filed with the Russian authorities until March 24th, after sanctions took effect. With Rossiya’s stake below 50%, Sogaz was able to produce comfort letters showing Western counterparties that it was not subject to sanctions.

The goal of sanctions is generally to effect changes atop the political hierarchy. Instead, it has turned into a game of accounting hijinks. This is no way advances Western interests. And the opportunity costs of sanctions—they typically preclude diplomacy—are substantial.
Aggressive Behavior Towards Russia Backfires

NATO Expansion triggered Russian Aggression. ABH


President Obama has decided to get tough with Russia by imposing sanctions and increasing support for Ukraine’s new government. This is a big mistake. This response is based on the same faulty logic that helped precipitate the crisis. Instead of resolving the dispute, it will lead to more trouble. The White House view, widely shared by Beltway insiders, is that the United States bears no responsibility for causing the current crisis. In their eyes, it’s all President Vladimir V. Putin’s fault — and his motives are illegitimate. This is wrong. Washington played a key role in precipitating this dangerous situation, and Mr. Putin’s behavior is motivated by the same geopolitical considerations that influence all great powers, including the United States. The taproot of the current crisis is NATO expansion and Washington’s commitment to move Ukraine out of Moscow’s orbit and integrate it into the West. The Russians have intensely disliked but tolerated substantial NATO expansion, including the accession of Poland and the Baltic countries. But when NATO announced in 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine “will become members of NATO,” Russia drew a line in the sand. Georgia and Ukraine are not just states in Russia’s neighborhood; they are on its doorstep. Indeed, Russia’s forceful response in its August 2008 war with Georgia was driven in large part by Moscow’s desire to prevent Georgia from joining NATO and integrating into the West. Fast forward to last November, when it seemed that President Viktor F. Yanukovych would sign an agreement with the European Union that was designed to deepen Ukraine’s integration with the West and greatly reduce Moscow’s influence there. Mr. Putin offered Ukraine a better deal in response, which Mr. Yanukovych accepted. That decision led to protests in western Ukraine, where there is strong pro-Western sentiment and much hostility to Moscow. The Obama administration then made a fatal mistake by backing the protesters, which helped escalate the crisis and eventually led to the toppling of Mr. Yanukovych. A pro-Western government then took over in Kiev. The United States ambassador to Ukraine, who had been encouraging the protesters, proclaimed it “a day for the history books.” Mr. Putin, of course, didn’t see things that way. He viewed these developments as a direct threat to Russia’s core strategic interests.

Russia’s aggressive behavior in Georgia and Crimea is a very logical reaction to NATO expansion. Putin feels threatened, and he believes that he must show his force to deter harmful actions towards Russia. Enacting sanctions only makes Putin feel more threatened, and will likely push him to take more aggressive actions, as he has done before.
Western Interests Are Too Fragmented

Between the United States and Europe, there are too many interests to serve. This becomes a glaring problem when trying to implement sanctions. Because sanctions require a uniform economic “wall” to do their job, divisions among Western countries turn them into a sieve. The disarray with which Russian sanctions were generated also sends a message of weakness and results in ineffective policy.

_America and Europe have difficulties coordinating on sanctions targets. DAT_ 

http://www.economist.com/blogs/charlemagne/2014/03/eu-and-russia-sanctions

Mr Rogozin mocked the American measures in a message on his Twitter account (@DRogozin): “Comrade Obama, what should those who have neither accounts nor property abroad do? Or maybe you didn't think of that?”

President Barack Obama also signed a new executive order to extend sanctions to include three broad categories: Russian government officials, arms-sector figures and alleged Kremlin “cronies”, as one American official put it. Beyond freezing assets, Americans would be banned from doing business with those on the list.

The EU sanctions list was published in the Official Journal here. The American list is here.

One reason for the European reticence, said diplomats in Brussels, was the internal division among doves (among them Italy, Spain and Cyprus) and hawks (particularly Britain, Poland and the Baltic states). Another was the need to have a legally sound list that would stand up in court. A third, in Europe and America, was the desire for a list that leaves room for dialogue with Mr Putin’s officials as well as room to escalate by adding more names if necessary.

Between a lack of a united front, and the desire to leave sanctions underpowered to open space for dialog, results in a weak-kneed sanctions effort. Any impacts would thus not actually be the direct result of sanctions.
Russia uses energy control as leverage against European states. DAT


Mainland Europe relies heavily upon Russian natural gas—at least half of which is piped through Ukraine—for energy resources. The continent as a whole receives 24% of its natural gas from Russia, with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, all NATO allies, receiving 100% of it from their Eastern neighbor. While Western European countries have large gas stores and alternative means to receive gas supplies, relying solely upon these alternatives will be costly and is only viable in the short run. Current trends suggest an even starker outlook. European gas imports from Russia are expected to increase over the coming decade, reaching 413 billion cubic meters in 2020 from 327 billion cubic meters today.

Partially due to these gas dependencies, many European nations have been reluctant to employ broad sanctions or take strong military action to thwart Russian aggression. That reluctance may have started to waver for Western European economic giants like Germany, Great Britain, and France, but it will remain in place for more gas dependent Eastern Europe—at least for a while. European Union plans to reduce energy dependence on Russia, although they exist, rely upon nonexistent infrastructures. Proposals to construct new pipelines from North Africa, jumpstart European alternative energy sectors, or even to import coal from fracking operations in the United States abound, but all of these ideas require significant investments of both time and capital. With the right amount of political will and the proper economic policies, the EU can likely find the latter, but the former will always remain a finite resource. Thus, it will be difficult for the EU alter Putin’s course in the short term.

It isn’t pragmatic for European states to advocate sanctions to the point that counter-sanctions start making energy unaffordable or unattainable. The “West” thus becomes a coalition in name only, with not enough commitment to carry through on its interests and not enough homogeneity for sanctions to fulfill them.
Russia can use ethnic tensions to play Western countries against each other. DAT


Another potential, but overlooked form of subversion the Kremlin might use involves manipulating deeply rooted latent or actual ethnic grievances that exist in East Central Europe. In particular, there are two sets of ethnic grievances that the Kremlin could leverage to create conflict among East Central European security partners.

The first involves the status of the Polish minority population in Lithuania, who represent over 6 percent of the total population. These ethnic Poles comprise Lithuania’s largest minority group. According to the 2011 Lithuanian census, much of the ethnic Polish population lives in the city of Vilnius and its surrounding county. This population is what is left over from before the Second World War, when Vilnius was majority Polish and one of the largest cities of Poland.

During the Second World War, the Soviet annexation of Lithuania and eastern Poland led the way for Vilnius not only to be Lithuanized, but also to become the Lithuanian capital. The violence that characterized this change in the city’s status still haunts the present. Polish nationalists underscore the fact that Lithuanian partisans sided with Nazi Germany in cleansing the city of non-Lithuanian ethnic groups. Lithuanian nationalists argue that Polish partisans committed atrocities against ethnic Lithuanians. Both grievances are legitimate. These historical controversies form the backdrop of contemporary debates regarding the Polish minority in Lithuania. Upon regaining independence in 1990, the Lithuanian government granted citizenship to all minorities, including ethnic Poles.

This is, of course, unlikely to be cause for a Western coalition fragmenting. But it is a small piece of a puzzle showing all the tools Russia has at its disposable to pit allies in the West against each other. Without a unified set of interests, there is no way for sanctions, or any other measure, to adequately advance Western interests in an entirely meaningful way.
Russia Can’t Be Coerced Economically

Sanctions are a weak slap on the wrist. DAT


Russians have spent the last hundred years surviving various apocalypses, many of their own making—the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and civil war (which included foreign, and American, intervention); famine, both man-made and natural; the Nazi invasion and the loss of at least 25 million souls; almost three decades of Stalinist despotism, with perhaps 20 million Soviets dispatched to the gulag, to say nothing of mass executions, the deportation of entire peoples, and ecological disasters. Then came the collapse of the Soviet Union, sudden widespread impoverishment, two separatist wars, and an Islamist insurgency in the Caucasus that involves terrorist attacks in Russian cities to this day. Put simply, in Russia the worst has already happened.

This uniquely calamitous past has inured Russians in very real ways to suffering, and certainly to worrying about suffering as a result of the “isolation” President Obama wishes to impose or the “economic pain” of sanctions, which have only solidified support for Vladimir Putin and his stance against the West, and especially against the United States. In any case, Russia has set about decoupling from the West, concluding a major hydrocarbons deal with China, helping Iran weather the effects of Western sanctions, planning its own alternative to the interbank messaging service SWIFT, and establishing financial institutions to counter the World Bank and the IMF. It could at any moment derail the United States’ withdrawal from Afghanistan; the route home for American troops and materiel leads across Russia. Moscow cannot be bullied into changing course.

Western uses of sanctions assume equally Western reactions to them. Put simply, Russia has been surprisingly resilient in adapting. Con teams need to clarify the difference between ostensibly pursuing interests and actually achieving results. Sanctions accomplish the former.
To be effective, sanctions would need to revert 25 years of economic progress. DAT


History tells us that Russians can endure enormous hardship. Coping and survival are part of Russian history and the Russian national identity. We do not need to go back to dramatic events like the Siege of Leningrad in World War II to understand that Russians can survive difficult situations. Less than two decades ago, during the 1990s, Russia suffered one of the biggest negative economic shocks ever by a country in peacetime. National and household incomes dropped by at least 40 percent. That experience shows that Russia's households and enterprises can endure significant dislocation thanks to bottom-up, informal mechanisms of mutual help and self-survival.

This can be repeated. Russia still today is a more primitive economy than generally recognized. Yes, there is a veneer of modernity, a "new economy" that has emerged. And that part of the economy is fragile and vulnerable. But the core of the economy, the part inherited from the Soviet Union, is an economic structure that is highly robust to negative shocks. Much is made of the alleged weakness of today's Russian economy. This notion that the Russian economy is somehow fragile is the backbone of the sanctions argument. But inefficiency — which definitely does characterize Russia's economy — is not the same as fragility. The very features of the Russian economy that account for its inefficiency and lack of competitiveness in the global economy are also its strengths in terms of robustness to shocks. Were it not so likely to be considered disrespectful, we might describe Russia as the cockroach of economies — primitive and inelegant in many respects but possessing a remarkable ability to survive in the most adverse and varying conditions. Perhaps a more appropriate metaphor is Russia's own Kalashnikov automatic rifle — low-tech and cheap but almost indestructible.

For all this, we would not deny that sanctions and the pain they cause may result in some shifts in Russia's behavior with respect to Ukraine. But the changes will affect only tactics and timing, not Putin's overall strategic goals and resolve to achieve those goals. For that, sanctions would have to reduce Russia to its condition of the 1990s, when it was simply too weak and dependent on the West to oppose the international order created by the West after the Cold War. It is clear to us that no feasible actions by the West today can re-create the weak and compliant Russia of the 1990s.

On the Con, a large task is to concretely define the differences between Western economies and Russia's, using historical backing. This will help to dissipate the assumption that Russia would react to sanctions just as a Western state would.
The Russian economy is insulated from international pressure. DAT


The first step of Putin’s strategy was to reduce dependence on foreign creditors. In the beginning of 2000 Russia had only $8.5 billion in foreign currency reserves, while the government’s external debt was $133 billion. For Putin, paying off the debt was an imperative if he was to achieve his stated goal of restoring Russia’s status as a sovereign nation. This was the lesson from the end of the Soviet Union. For all the underlying weaknesses of the Soviet economy, the USSR did not collapse because it had been defeated militarily. It collapsed because it lost real political sovereignty as a result of losing all financial autonomy. Once it had become dependent on loans from first Western banks and then Western governments simply in order to import enough food to prevent starvation, it no longer could claim to control its own political destiny.

Putin changed that. By the end of 2007 he had reduced the government’s foreign debt to 37 billion dollars. But more important, he had along the way paid off Russia’s entire debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) three and a half years ahead of schedule, as well as its debt to the Western governments in the so-called Paris Club.

Russia then began using oil and gas revenues to create a sovereign wealth fund and build up the foreign exchange reserves. The currency reserves reached a total of nearly $600 billion in mid-2008, third-largest in the world. And with a substantial amount of those funds held in the form of U.S. government securities, Russia was a leading financier of the U.S. current account deficit. It was a dramatic reversal of fortune over the course of a decade.

Sanctions work as a function of economies’ international interdependencies. While sanctions have successfully ravaged Russia’s economy, there are fewer total possible avenues with which to expand them once their initial impacts fade away. Additionally, Russia has historically been relatively hearty in the face of economic attacks, as far as recovery goes. While this isn’t to say sanctions won’t be effective, the long-run prognosis is muddied by Russia’s increasing tendency to isolate itself from the West. Sanctions are thus likely to increase the rate at which Russia finds new trading partners (away from the West), which decreases future leverage.
Sanctions Will Hurt Western Economies

*The Russian market will close itself off from international competition. DAT*


Putin himself began the pullback from modernization in 2012 with his launching of political war on Russia’s creative class and his “mobilization economy” programs, which will shift resources to the most inefficient parts of the economy — defense industries and remote regions in the eastern part of the country. The Ukraine conflict — both Putin’s actions and the Western reaction to them — pushes Russia further along the political and economic trajectories that Putin had begun and therefore moves him — and Russia — further away from modernization.

The tendency towards import substitution was already underway before the Ukraine crisis. Heavy sanctions by the West will accelerate the movement in this direction. Even more important, the sanctions may cause an especially damaging qualitative shift in the nature of import substitution. Previously, import substitution was a policy limited to core manufacturing sectors, the “old economy.” Russia’s so-called new economy was to a large extent allowed to continue its integration into and dependence on the global marketplace. Now the process of important substitution will reach beyond the manufacturing sector to sectors that were previously integrated with the modern economy, such as banking. This is what will happen, for example, if Russia creates its own credit card payments system to replace the system previously developed by Visa and MasterCard, now banned by U.S. sanctions.

These tendencies to import substitution in the relatively modern sectors will be especially costly. When Russian dinosaur manufacturing plants take over market share from Ukrainian dinosaurs, the cost is minimal. (On this point, see our previous paper, “Ukraine: A Prize Neither Russia nor the West Can Afford to Win”) When modern foreign companies are ousted in favor of Russian ones, the loss is much bigger. Companies in Russia’s “new economy,” whether foreign-owned or Russian, were driven by the forces of international competition. Their replacements will be directly under Putin’s control. This is a general conclusion: more import substitution and more reliance on rent distribution to cover the excess cost of such activities mean that more of the economy will dominated by Putin’s rent management system.

The impacts are thus both economic and political. On the economic front, Western companies lose out on a still-large market. On the political front, meanwhile, sanctions incentivize a consolidation of political and regulatory power inside Russian borders, undermining Western levers of control.
Russia will build closer economic ties with China. ABH


Some Russians fret over their country's increased economic reliance on China -- a process encouraged by the Western sanctions -- but there was no sign of any such reservations at the Vladivostok forum. "Chinese counterparts ... are interested in investments, in organising joint companies - for them this region is of huge interest," Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov told the state Rossiya-24 news channel. And before his departure, CNPC's Yilin told reporters that developing ties with Russia was a priority for Beijing because of the desire to diversify its sources of energy. "China is importing crude oil from other countries, usually via sea, while here we can import oil by land. This is good protection for the security of our country's crude oil imports." The Russian government has been passing laws to try to attract investors to the area and has designated Vladivostok a free port, a move that eases its visa regime and is aimed at increasing trade and tourism.

China has already had interest in increasing economic ties with Russia, and sanctions are encouraging Russia to more aggressively pursue that partnership.

Russia is seeking new trade partners. ABH


While the Ukraine crisis has taken the U.S. government's attention away from its "pivot to Asia" strategy, it has had the opposite effect in Russia, forcing the government to seek new partnerships. The centerpiece is a 30-year, $400 billion gas deal with China signed in May, accompanied by various other deals with Asian and Middle Eastern nations. "There is a lot of evidence which confirms that Russian authorities started to look for other partners — in Egypt, in India, in Indonesia, in China and in Turkey," said Yuri Zaitsev, an analyst at the Gaidar Institute in Moscow. However, he warned that the new deals, such as a major energy deal with China, rarely fit the Russian government's stated goal of diversifying its economy away from oil and gas. "It is all about natural resources," Zaitsev said. "It is not the high-technology sector, unfortunately, it is not the financial sector ... because these sectors require extra funding, extra investments."

Russia seeking out new non-Western partners is very significant, as every economic partnership Russia creates with one of those countries is a lost opportunity for the West.
NATO and Sanctions Cannot Coexist

Russian aggression is a perpetual response to NATO expansion. DAT


When a particular bad outcome is unimaginable, there is little cost to selling insurance against this possibility. (Or, to use a different analogy, it is like selling a put option that is far out of the money — you claim the premium income, but nobody ever exercises the option.) In the minds of Russia's neighbors who feared a resurgent Russia, the need for insurance was real, and they were eager to purchase the insurance. (For them, there was no missing quadrant!)

For the U.S., which was convinced that Russia could only be either weak or good, it made sense to sell insurance. Promises of admission to NATO, even to Ukraine and Georgia, or to put missiles in Poland were perceived as low-cost since the insurance contracts — that is, the commitment to protect the new NATO members against a serious Russian attack — would never be exercised. After all, that scenario assumed a Russia that was strong and bad, and that was impossible.

Now suppose that you are Vladimir Putin and you see the U.S. selling this insurance to all your neighbors. You do not have to be a genius to see the implications. One important consequence of any insurance is moral hazard. The insured party takes greater risks because it has insurance to fall back on. This clearly makes the international system more fragile. The United States is issuing all of these contingent liabilities, and if you are Putin, you need to indicate to the U.S. the cost of this. When repeated verbal protests do not suffice, the message has to be delivered in stronger fashion. Hence, the Georgia conflict of August 2008. Regardless of who started it, the conflict demonstrated with utmost clarity the cost of those insurance policies that the U.S. had been selling. In the period between August 1998 and August 2008 the unimaginable occurred. Russia became strong, but “bad.” It became strong again without “becoming like us.”

This card argues essentially that Russian aggression is a result of generations-old institutions. This means that solving the Russia problem is a matter of institutional reform and diplomacy, with further antagonization (in the form of sanctions, potentially) being anathema to conflict resolution.
Sanctions are a weak attempt to skirt the inevitable Russian response to NATO. DAT


Anatoly Chubais, the leading liberal reformer in Moscow working with the U.S., stated publicly already in 1997 that NATO enlargement was undercutting all attempts to reform Russia and bring it close to the West. The policy might bring short-term gain for the U.S., but it was bound to create a political backlash inside the country. It was a “major mistake,” he said. The international order was thus analogous to a financial bubble. Chubais was simply warning that Western policy was creating a balloon payment that would come due in the future.

There was an attempt to rationalize what was going on to avoid recognition that Russia’s compliance was just Russian weakness. Proponents of NATO expansion were convinced that this policy was designed to stabilize democracy in the newly emerging countries, not as a military threat to Russia. Why then would Russia think any differently, regardless of what those in Poland or the Baltics thought? And the argument that Russia could only become strong economically by reforming its economy along the lines of the Washington consensus was widely accepted. These perceptions rationalized away the potential risks inherent in our strategy. One is reminded of the arguments by Federal Reserve head Alan Greenspan in the lead-up to the housing bubble burst that financial innovation would make the system safer and that no financial institutions would take excessive risk that would cause bankruptcy. Just like expectations that housing prices would continue to rise, or could not fall, such stories justify the bubble.

All such rationalizations are useless once the bubble bursts and the bill comes due. The problem is that the bill is now far overdue. The bigger the bill gets, the nastier the bill collector has to be. The unpleasant bill collector, of course, is Vladimir Putin. And he is not going to go away until we pay the bill. (Sanctions are our attempt to move on without really paying the bill. We hope that sanctions will deter Putin without recognizing that he is just collecting a bill long postponed.)

By assuming Russia was originally on board with NATO, Western countries continue to underestimate the role of NATO as a wedge in diplomatic relations. They are trying to use an economic Band-Aid to fix a military and political bullet hole.
Russian Influence in Ukraine Is Beneficial to the West

The main rationale for ongoing sanctions has been the (illegal) series of Russian geopolitical advances in Ukraine. Assumed in Western foreign policy, which may or may not include sanctions, is that Ukraine is an international relations battleground. However, Western action against Ukraine cannot be justified by stating that Russian soft power and economic influence is harmful to Ukraine. By presenting this argument with concrete evidence, rather than as a framework, Con teams can undermine the implicit basis of the Pro’s advocacy of the resolution.

_The Russian market keeps Ukraine financially afloat. DAT_


It is clear to most observers that the West would not be able to defend Ukraine economically from a hostile Russia. Perhaps less evident is that the West by itself could not guarantee Ukraine’s survival in the absence of Russia’s active opposition. Russia today supports the Ukrainian economy to the tune of at least $5 billion, perhaps as much as $10 billion each year.

It is not just gas that constitutes the subsidies Russia provides Ukraine, though this gets the most attention. The main subsidies are hidden, in the form of production orders to Ukrainian heavy manufacturing enterprises. This part of Ukrainian industry depends almost entirely on demand from Russia. The southern and eastern oblasts of Ukraine are dominated by Soviet-era dinosaur enterprises similar to Russia’s. They all had been built in Soviet times as part of a single, integrated energy-abundant economy. They could be sustained only thanks to the rents from Soviet (overwhelmingly Russian) oil and gas. Russian subsidies continue to maintain the structure in the post-Soviet era. Because most of these subsidies are informal, they do not appear in official statistics. (Even Putin does not refer to these subsidies, because the extent of rent sharing within even the Russian economy is a taboo subject.)

A good example of how Russian resource rent is shared with Ukraine is Ukraine’s railroad equipment manufacturing sector. The Ukrainian railroad locomotive and rolling stock producers have been an integral part of the Soviet/Russian rent-distribution chain since the Soviet era. They were built and sustained with Russian oil and gas rents.
Evicting Russia from Ukraine is an economic abyss. DAT


If the West were somehow able to wrest full control of Ukraine from Russia, it would be up to the United States, the other NATO nations, and the EU to assume Russia’s role here as well. The IMF, of course, would never countenance supporting these dinosaurs the way the Russians have. But if Russia does wash its hands — even with no cutoff of gas — then there is a huge cost to be borne by the economy of Eastern Ukraine. Presumably someone has to absorb that cost.13

The only known parallel for the amount of transfer needed is the case of German reunification. The transfer amounted to $2.76 trillion over twenty years. If Ukraine has per capita income equal to 1/10th of Germany’s, then a minimum estimate is $276 billion to buy off the east (if the population size of Eastern Ukraine was the same as East Germany; actually it is larger, so this is an underestimate). It is unthinkable that the West would pay this amount. We did not do it with Russia when it would have been much cheaper and could have significantly helped produce the good/strong Russia that was hoped for — that is why the dinosaurs survived.
Sanctions Threaten Russian Cooperation

Russia is willing to cooperate in Syria if sanctions are lifted. ABH


Russia wants to develop closer ties with the US but cannot do so while Washington backs sanctions against it, Moscow's foreign minister has said. Sergey Lavrov said the activities of senior figures in Barack Obama's administration were preventing closer cooperation. His comments came as Russia rejected Turkey's allegations that it is carrying out ethnic cleansing in Syria. Mr Lavrov told Italian newspaper La Repubblica: "As long as Obama's deputy Joe Biden goes around Europe recommending continued sanctions against us without taking into account how Kiev is behaving under Western pressure, we will not be able to reach any understanding." Mr Lavrov and Russian president Vladimir Putin are due to meet US Secretary of State John Kerry next week to hold talks on the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria. Russia, the US and United Nations will also meet in Geneva on Friday to discuss Syria's civil war and what can be done about Islamic State. The US and the European Union first imposed and then extended a series of economic sanctions against Russian officials over the crisis in Ukraine. They follow Western accusations that Russia armed separatist rebels and deployed troops in breakaway areas of its former Soviet republic neighbour. Russia began bombing rebel targets in Syria in late September in support of its ally President Bashar al Assad.

Russian leaders are using their cooperation in Syria as a bargaining chip to remove sanctions. Effectively, if sanctions remain in place, then Russia will not cooperate with the US and European forces in Syria, which definitely hurts Western interests in the Middle East.
Sanctions have increased Russian strategic cooperation with China. ABH


The impact of the sanctions has prompted Russia to shift its diplomatic strategy toward the East. Western countries continue to impose sanctions on Russia, forcing Russia to adjust its diplomatic strategy and turn to Asia, e.g., China, India, Vietnam and North Korea, to seek new cooperation with Asian countries to avoid the diplomatic isolation brought about by the US and Europe and to mitigate the negative impacts of the sanctions.

4.2.1 Russia and China.

China and Russia are both members of the United Nations, G20, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRIC countries, sharing many common strategic interests. Russia seeks cooperation with China, which matches China's interest in the “Silk Road Economic Belt” proposed and vigorously promoted by President Xi. Over the past year of 2014, high-level officials have visited frequently between China and Russia, which has strengthened the countries' cooperation in the fields of foreign affairs, energy, finance, the military, science and technology, etc. During May 20-21, Russian President Vladimir Putin was invited to China for a state visit and to attend the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) summit. In an interview prior to his visit, President Vladimir Putin said: “To expand cooperation with China is the prioritized direction of development for Russian diplomacy.” Thereafter, the two leaders met in Shanghai and signed and issued the “People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation Joint Declaration on a new stage of comprehensive strategic partnership” (Xinhua, 2014, May 20). In addition, the two sides reached a “Memorandum on China-Russia Natural Gas Cooperation Project at the East Line”, and the China National Petroleum Corporation and Gazprom signed the “Sino-Russian east gas purchase and sales contracts”, in which it was agreed that from 2018 onwards, Russia would begin to provide natural gas through the east gas pipeline and that the volume of the gas supply would increase over time, eventually to reach 38 billion cubic meters per year (People Daily, 2014, May 22). This agreement marked a major breakthrough in the cooperation between China and Russia in the energy sector. On October 13, the Prime Ministers of China and Russia met on their nineteenth regular meeting in Moscow and signed nearly 40 important cooperation documents involving trade, investment, energy, finance, technology, and humanitarian efforts, among others, including a currency swap agreement worth 150 billion yuan and the “Moscow-Kazan” high-speed railway development cooperation memorandum (People Daily, 2014, October 14). The VTB, Russia's State Development Bank and the Agricultural Bank of Russia signed framework agreements with the China Exim Bank on opening credit lines. In addition, China and Russia have also strengthened their cooperation in the military and in technology. During May 22-26, China and Russia held a “joint maritime-2014” military exercise in the East China Sea. In November, during the eleventh Air Show held in Zhuhai, China, the China North Industries Group and the Russia Glasgow Jonas Group agreed to plan to form a joint venture to forge a cooperation in the field of satellite navigation.

Western sanctions against Russia have prompted Putin to build closer strategic ties with China, as opposed to Western nations. The closer strategic, diplomatic, and possibly military relationship between Russia and China hurts the likelihood of Russia cooperating with the West.
Pro Counters
Russia Cannot Be Contained by Conventional Means

Classic non-financial containment strategies are no longer pragmatic. DAT

http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/russia-containment-putin-soviet/410968/

NATO’s moves at last year’s summit in Wales—setting up military facilities in the Baltic states, Poland, and Romania, rotating troops through countries on the alliance’s eastern flank, and establishing a new rapid-response force that could assist endangered members within two days—certainly seem like steps in that direction. In a speech this week, U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Washington “will take all necessary steps to deter Russia’s malign and destabilizing influence, coercion, and aggression.”

But 1947 this isn’t. And any serious attempt to contain Vladimir Putin’s Russia—which unlike the Soviet Union is deeply integrated into the global economy—will bear scant resemblance to its Cold War antecedent. This is because unlike the Cold War, when the world was divided into two hermetically sealed systems, today’s conflict between Moscow and the West comes at a time when Russia is very much embedded in the West and has proven adept at exploiting its transparency for nontransparent ends.

And unlike the Soviet Union, today’s Russia isn’t an ideological power seeking global hegemony through military expansion. It is essentially a crime syndicate masquerading as a state. Putin and the made men who make up his inner circle deploy corruption as a tool of statecraft in order to perpetuate their rule, expand their reach, and enrich themselves.

Russia’s expansionist interests are expanded via economic and ideological, rather than military, means. Sanctions—effectively cutting off economic modes of expansion—are a surprisingly modern strategy for dealing with Russian expansion.
Sanctions Don’t Hurt Western Economies

Economic damage estimates make faulty assumptions about Western interests. DAT


A new study published by the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO) estimates that the Ukraine-related sanctions and counter-sanctions could cost the economy of the European Union up to 100 billion euros and two million jobs. The authors do not disclose their research methodology, but their figures appear to be greatly inflated. First of all, all of Europe’s overall losses from the Russian economic crisis are being lumped into this figure, although many of them are unrelated to the sanctions. Mercedes sales, for example, are clearly falling for other reasons. Secondly, the luxurious repertoire of European food on offer in Moscow restaurants suggests that many of Russia’s counter-sanctions are not actually working and are therefore doing little harm to European agricultural producers.

Still, let’s consider the hypothetical possibility that Europe really will suffer 100 billion euros in losses. That would be very bad news indeed, but it would be especially bad news for Russia. That is because it seems that Western politicians have concluded that the considerable losses they suffer from sanctions are still lower than the moral and political advantage that the West derives from keeping the sanctions in place.

So, the higher the value that Russia attaches to Europeans’ economic losses, the greater the threat that the EU feels from Russia and the greater the importance it attributes to sanctions as a means of containing this threat. The most realistic path towards ending the sanctions will not come from the Foreign Ministry’s tactic of playing on supposed disagreements within the Western coalition. Instead of trying to exaggerate the losses that sanctions have brought to others, the Russian leadership should think about how to lessen the moral and political advantage that the West derives from keeping the sanctions in place.

For Pro teams, this turns into something of an LD debate: you likely won’t be frameworking around the same set of interests (values) as the Con. For this reason, it’ll be helpful to frame the various possible Con arguments (e.g. economic harms to Western countries) around Pro values, like long-term political interests.
The EU’s economy has been resilient. ABH


The EU also has a much larger economy than Russia. In 2013, Russia’s economy ($2.1 trillion) was roughly the size of Italy’s ($2.15 trillion), and considerably smaller than Germany’s ($3.73 trillion). After the devaluation (from 32 roubles per dollar in 2013 to 61 at the end of February 2015), Russia’s economy is just $1.1 trillion – somewhat larger than the economy of the Netherlands ($0.85 trillion) but smaller than that of Spain ($1.4 trillion). The perfect storm of sanctions, a falling oil price and a tumbling currency has now increased the economic pressure on Russia beyond what Western policy-makers could have imagined when imposing the sanctions. The EU economy, on the other hand, has proven resilient – it has not deteriorated but instead grown slowly. One reason is that European policy-makers have finally come around to supporting economic demand via looser monetary policy (‘quantitative easing’) and less onerous spending cuts, while the falling oil price acts as a further stimulus. The other reason is that Russia is not very important for the EU economy. In what follows, we analyse the economics and politics of sanctions both in Russia and the EU.

The EU has a larger and more diverse economy, and has not suffered from the same economic consequences as Russia.
Russia’s Economy is Highly Impacted by Sanctions

Sanctions have proportionally massive impacts on the Russian economy and financial sector.

**DAT**


Let us suppose again that the Austrian experts are correct and that sanctions with Russia could cost the economy of the European Union up to 100 billion euros. This enormous figure is still far below one percent of the EU’s GDP. Moreover, the EU is not the only actor to have imposed sanctions on Russia. **Russia’s economy accounts for a fraction of the combined economies of the coalition that it is up against. Assuming parity of losses, Russia is down no less than that same 100 billion euros, which is about eight percent of its GDP. Losses of this magnitude are not negligible.**

Trade is only part of the problem. The effect of technological and financial sanctions is much more severe. Despite all the hype around the supposed success of import substitution, Russia is acutely vulnerable to curbs on technology transfers in the energy and defense sectors.

Sanctions are also asymmetrical in the financial market. **Russia’s private sector is chronically dependent on foreign capital and suffers much more from the sanctions than do the purveyors of the capital, for whom Russia is only one of several medium-sized competing clients.** Major Russian banks and corporations have already learned from visits to Asian financial centers that there is basically no alternative to Western capital markets.

**While Russia has been actively engaging in import substitution and attempting to bolster its financial market against external shocks, the overall weight of the sanctions (and the economic leverage of the West) ensure that the endgame is inevitable regardless of Russian action.**
Russia cannot financially isolate itself from the West. DAT


In theory, if domestic producers don’t have to worry about competition in certain sectors, they can capture those sectors. This, in effect, is import substitution. However, there is a big gap between theory and practice. Creating new businesses in Russia from scratch requires investment, and therefore cheap sources of lending which are currently in short supply, in part due to sanctions. Even the most basic increase in production requires, in addition to working capital, surplus capacity, labor, and high-quality raw materials. There are few sectors of the economy which can provide these.

Furthermore, investment in import substitution only makes sense if there is a guarantee that vacant niches remain open for a long time and that there is no overall economic turbulence. That is not the case in Russia at the moment. The government has the reputation of changing its economic policy at short notice for political reasons—counter-sanctions could be repealed at a moment’s notice. Moreover, the economy is entering a recession, and domestic demand is falling. Businessmen are unlikely to view this as an auspicious time for import substitution.

There is also talk of the benefit of diversification resulting from a “pivot to the East”, a re-orientation of the Russian economy to Asian markets. However, the advantages of this are almost certainly exaggerated. Asia has its own business culture and challenges, and diversification can only work when there is free choice among multiple alternatives. When the options are already limited, it is not proper diversification.

Many arguments for Russia’s ability to look “internally” for economic resilience assume some other resource is still freely available. This card does a good job of showing how the “outs” for the Russian economy are comprehensively closed by sanctions regimes.
Russia’s economic pivot to Asia has several barriers. ABH


Currently, crude oil exports to the East are expected to rise; but slowing demand in China, the increasing price pressure on Russian crude grades and the uncertainty about Rosneft’s funding in the future cast doubt on the prospects for crude oil export. Rosneft’s ability to meet the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean pipeline target of 80 billion tonnes per annum by 2018 is particularly doubtful, as the oil major has already reduced investment in its East Siberian production capacity and the delivery of crude oil to Asian markets is increasingly dependent on Chinese investment. Furthermore, Chinese companies are no longer so willing to acquire interests in Russian oil-producing assets because of disagreements over project economics; they view the acquisition of an upstream equity interest as a prerequisite for financing infrastructure development. For their part, EU companies can no longer provide shareholder financing to new Chinese-Russian projects. Meanwhile, US export restrictions apply to any country using equipment built in the US or with US content exceeding 25 per cent. Thus, China would risk being in breach of the sanctions if it used such equipment in its Russian JVs. This means that CNPC may prefer to pursue other investments rather than face that risk.

Russia is attempting to replace its European trading partners with Chinese companies, but Russia faces several problems, especially lack of technological capability, which makes forming new trade partners very difficult.
Cooperation in Syria Isn’t A Reason To End Sanctions

*The West can’t abandon Ukraine to achieve goals in Syria. ABH*


Yes, sanctions should be extended. To ease sanctions in order to secure Russian cooperation on Syria would be to treat Ukraine as a bargaining chip for the West. This must not be allowed to happen. Syria and Ukraine are entirely separate issues whose only connection is Russian opportunism. Sanctions signal disapproval of Russia's actions and act as an important warning against similar actions by other states. Sanctions are in place for a reason. In addition to the illegal annexation of Crimea, the Russian-led separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine has resulted in the deaths of about 8,000 people. On top of that, 298 innocent passengers perished on jetliner MH-17 there, downed by a Russian-supplied missile. The war has led to the internal displacement of approximately 1.5 million Ukrainians and the loss of 20 percent in industrial output. Western sanctions rightly signal disapproval by the international community of Russia's actions and act as an important warning against similar actions by other states. While Kiev has a legal basis for allowing more self-governance to the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, the Kremlin has done nothing to demilitarize the region in return. Crimea is still occupied and the ceasefire in the Donbas is fragile, with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe regularly reporting about violations of the peace agreement — the terms of which are a precondition for easing sanctions. Sanctions impose costs on Russia for violating international law and changing borders by force. They may even be inadequate and perhaps increased until the current Kremlin leadership reverses its course. Sanctions are an expression of Western solidarity with an independent country in the middle of a proxy war between the second-largest army in the world and the West. Dropping sanctions would mean leaving Ukraine to continue its struggle alone — a signal that Russia’s aggression is permissible.

Even though sanctions might hinder Russian cooperation against ISIS, keeping them is critical to preventing future Russian aggression. On balance, sanctions achieve Western goals because they reinforce to Russia that violations of Ukraine’s sovereignty are unacceptable.
Russian cooperation in Syria isn’t affected by sanctions. ABH

http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/12/10/trade-an-end-to-sanctions-for-putins-help-against-isis/sanctions-against-russia-are-working-dont-give-them-up

The United States and the European Union must continue, and possibly even extend, the sanctions imposed on Russia in the summer of 2014 for its occupation of Crimea and support of the insurgency in eastern Ukraine. Russia should not be rewarded in any way for taking over the territory of another sovereign state. Unless it abandons its occupation of the Crimean peninsula, and withdraws its forces from eastern Ukraine, sanctions must remain. Putin will cast Assad aside as soon as he is no longer useful. There is good evidence that sanctions are working. The Russian economy is already suffering from low global prices for its No. 1 export – oil – and the E.U. and U.S. sanctions have further inhibited investment, as well as the availability of imported goods. The Russian economy is in recession, and its budget deficit in 2016 is predicted to be somewhere around 3 percent. Why would we want to hand the Russian government a lifeline now, or in any way reward bad international behavior? Beyond this, however, lifting sanctions would not make Russia reorient its bombing to focus exclusively on ISIS. Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, has repeatedly referred to Assad as the “legitimate” president of Syria. Any and all movements in opposition to his government therefore are logically “illegitimate” and should be targeted. Russia views ISIS as merely one of many insurgent forces opposed to President Assad. For now, Putin is willing to prop up the Assad government to maintain Russian influence in any Western brokered settlement with the Syrian opposition. The Syrian conflict has also given the Russian military the opportunity to trot out some new military hardware to show NATO the fruits of its military reform. But Putin will cast Assad aside as soon as he is no longer useful and a palatable replacement is identified. The Russian president's repeatedly stated goal is not only to defend Russia from all Islamic insurgency (and ISIS is but one group among many in Putin’s opinion), but to re-establish and maintain a foothold in the Middle East to counterbalance America’s influence there.

PRO can argue that sanctions aren’t causing Russia to refuse to cooperate in Syria, as Russia would likely support Assad regardless. It is doubtful that even the removal of sanctions would make Russia abandon its goal of having a foothold in the Middle East.
Con Counters
Sanctions Won’t Weaken Russian Leadership

Putin’s popularity increased after sanctions. ABH


The standoff between Russia and the West have damaged every nations' economy and alienated its people. Yet on the both sides of the divide the electorate continues to support politicians who produced what increasingly appears to be an irreversible geopolitical divide. One day, the citizens of the United States and Russia will wake up and come to their senses. Despite the partisan political leaders in both countries (often referring to the old days of the communist Soviet Union vs. democracies of the Western nations) reality will set in and take hold. The current economic crisis in Greece is the evidence. Both sides want to help Greece recover. But for now, the process of geopolitical ditch digging goes on to approving but very limited cheers to the political leadership.

The phenomenon of voters rewarding bad political decisions is universal, but the extent of Vladimir Putin's Teflon-like resilience is especially remarkable. Russia was hurt by the economic sanctions more than any other nation. Yet, several days after the sanctions were extended, The Levada Center, an independent Russian polling service, reported that Putin's approval rating reached an all-time high of 89%.

One purpose of sanctions is to try to weaken the Russian government, but in reality they have made Putin more popular.
Voters care more about patriotism than the economy. ABH


During the post-Soviet period (1991-2014), economics superceded politics in Russia. The ballot preferences of Russian voters were based upon an economic rational. People supported those leaders who delivered economic prosperity; and snubbed those who failed to do so. In the 1990s, for example, the Russian economy collapsed and the approval of the then President Boris Yeltsin fell into single digits. Yeltsin nearly lost his 1996 reelection bid to the Communist leader Zyuganov. When the Russian economy started to grow boosted by the devalued currency and a rising oil price in 2000, the approval for the second Russian president Putin remained strong. By 2004, Putin won his second election in a landslide. After Putin returned to a third term in 2012, the Russian economy struggled to grow, and Putin’s popularity predictably declined. By the end of 2013, The Levada Center estimated that Putin had lost a third of his supporters. In 2014, the Russian economy slowed, yet Putin’s ratings went up sharply. Why? After the Crimea "reunification" in March of 2014, Russian politics became disconnected from the performance of the Russian economy. Why also did this happen? The Levada Center experts explained this as a case of "negative mobilization" as the Russian people supported their commander-in-chief when the country was in danger. This process was similar to how Americans rallied around the then unpopular George W. Bush immediately after 9/11. The Victory Day parade on May 9, and the recent announcement that Russia is expanding its nuclear arsenal are all part of this patriotic narrative.

The economic impact of sanctions will not hurt Putin, because voters have rallied behind him with a sense of national pride. If anything, sanctions will likely backfire as the Russian people will support their leader when they feel in danger.
Russians don’t associate their economic woes with Putin’s policy. ABH


Indicatively, in December 2014 the Duma passed a law on personal bankruptcy to manage the growing number of bankruptcy cases. With recession already under way, most people will see their real incomes shrink further, especially if the government chooses to monetize its growing deficit in order to ease credit conditions.

At the same time, the political effect of the sanctions is more ambiguous. The social contract between the Russian population and the ruling elites seems to be resilient in the face of Western pressures and international isolation. President Putin remains hugely popular, and while more and more Russians feel the effect of the sanctions on their personal lives, they do not associate the economic problems with the governance system in the country or Russia’s foreign policy stance. This is vital for the Kremlin, and it is carefully nurtured.

Sanctions haven’t been effective in increasing public criticism of the Russian government, as Russians are not blaming Putin’s foreign policy for their poor economic situation.
Russians see sanctions as an extension of hostile Western policy. ABH


In the Russian narrative the sanctions are interpreted as but one component of a broader-based Western strategy seeking to weaken Russia. Ultimately, according to the propaganda, the goal would be to bring about regime change in Moscow and “the American and European sanctions originate from an aggressive, illegitimate and counterproductive policy where Russia finds itself in a purely defensive position” (Fisher 2015: 3). It is further claimed that the sanctions are the product of American unilateralism whereby Washington has forced the EU member states to pursue a policy that contradicts their interests (ibid.). Thus, the propaganda blames all economic hardship on the West and by claiming that the goal is to bring about regime change and not only policy change the nationalist “rallying around the flag” and anti-Western sentiments are fuelled. The West has so far not managed to counteract the misconceptions of the goals of the sanctions among the Russian population. The Russian narrative of the events in Ukraine has strengthened support for the regime at home on the basis of loyalty, nationalistic and anti-Western attitudes. It is not only the economic sanctions that are used to “prove” that the West is hostile. Individuals who have been publicly targeted by asset freezes and travel restrictions in the sanctions targeting individuals proudly declare their appearance on Western sanctions lists as a sign of their patriotic solidarity with the fatherland and the political leadership (ibid.: 4). In a Levada30 public opinion survey in December 2014 only 12 per cent of the population associated the West’s actions with the fact that Russia had annexed foreign territory and violated international law, while almost 70 per cent saw it as the result of the West’s hostile attitudes and wish to exert pressure on Russia (ibid.).

CON can use this to show that sanctions will not be effective in changing the political leadership of Russia, because of the strong anti-Western sentiment in the country that allows propaganda to succeed. When the Kremlin blames sanctions on Western aggression, instead of Russian use of force, the Russian people are likely to believe that explanation because of their distrust of the West.
The authoritarian nature of Putin’s regime prevents sanctions from being effective. ABH


The economic reason why authoritarian regimes are less sensitive to sanctions than democracies is that these regimes have relatively more control over resources and rents, which means that they can protect loyal elites from economic hardship and distribute resources as they decide in order to stay in power. In Russia, it is Putin’s rent management system that fulfils this function. Furthermore, politically authoritarian regimes are not accountable to the population for their actions and they can manipulate public opinion by controlling the media and the internet and suppress and eliminate any opposition. Russia has used its propaganda machine to effectively disseminate disinformation about the conflict in Ukraine both at home and abroad, as well as giving its own version of why sanctions have been imposed: America wants to see regime change in Russia and has manipulated its European allies to take part in this scheme. Perceptions in Russia are manipulated and the Russian population do not understand the real aims behind the sanctions: The West wants Russia to leave Ukraine and respect it as a sovereign state. The regime’s misinformation that is disseminated abroad mainly aims at creating uncertainty regarding what is false and what is true but is at the same time a tool for gaining understanding for the Russian position that Ukraine is part of Russia’s “sphere of interest” and that Russia is saving Russians abroad from “fascist aggression”. The authoritarian nature of the Russian regime is thus a factor that on the one hand supports the sanctions by leading to slower growth due to the suboptimal resource allocation favouring the rent-dependent sector, but on the other counteracts the sanctions by protecting loyal elites and unopposed blaming the West for all economic hardship and Russia’s isolation. The regime has shown strong state capacity in controlling public opinion, thus manipulating the perception.

It’s important to note that this card mentions that the authoritarian nature of the regime in Russia might worsen the economic harms of sanctions, but overall that is less important because the card also states that the Russian government is able to successfully protect the elites allegedly harmed by sanctions and control public opinion to oppose the west (regardless of the economic conditions).
Using Sanctions As A Deterrent Undermines Diplomacy


Yet while the use of sanctions to achieve these objectives is on the rise, there is good reason to believe that for the purposes of deterrence, they may be ineffective at best and self-defeating at worst. Sanctions can inadvertently signal that Washington does not care enough about its supposed interests to use military force, which could embolden unruly states to double down on their actions. Effective deterrence requires that the United States be willing to impose costs that outweigh the gains of noncompliance. And its willingness to impose costs must be credible: if a government does not believe that the United States cares deeply about the interests at stake, deterrence is unlikely to succeed. When it comes to deterrence through sanctions, there is little incentive for belligerents to heed the United States' warnings if they can afford the financial costs and if they assume that these are the only costs that the United States will impose.

This is applicable to Russia in two ways. The first is that, given the conflicting interests within the Western coalition, sanctions may be the greatest costs America is willing to impose. The second is that Russia is a large and stable state, with enough economic leverage in Europe and Asia. The potential impacts of sanctions are low.
“Deterrent” sanctions may have triggered the annexation of Crimea. DAT


U.S. and EU sanctions on Russia failed to deter Russian President Vladimir Putin from continuing—if not accelerating—his support for Crimean separatists. In fact, U.S. and EU sanctions against Russian oligarchs in late March 2014 after Russia’s annexation of Crimea were followed by increased activity from Moscow in eastern Ukraine, including the provision of troops and arms to bolster rebel forces. Indeed, throughout the spring of 2014, as the United States and the EU increasingly targeted Putin’s inner circle with economic penalties, Russia's support for separatists in eastern Ukraine increased. The same holds true for the sanctions against Russia following the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines MH17 by Russian-backed forces in eastern Ukraine. And even with additional U.S. and EU sanctions that September, Putin continued supporting rebel activities both during and after the Minsk I cease-fire.

If anything, sanctions might have goaded Putin into increasing his involvement in the Ukraine crisis. Financial punishment against Moscow and its oligarchs signaled the West's unwillingness to intervene militarily in the conflict and a lack of consensus on the pursuit of bolder military action.

Con teams should be ready to crush the argument that sanctions are better than inaction. Saying that sanctions act as a deterrent can be a lazy out for Pro teams, since the impacts are hard to show. Con teams should be ready to equate even mild “deterrent” measures with hard, negative impacts.
Recognizing Russia’s security concerns is the best way forward for the U.S. ABH


But even if the West could impose significant costs on Russia, Mr. Putin is unlikely to back down. When vital interests are at stake, countries are invariably willing to suffer great pain to ensure their security. There is no reason to think Russia, given its history, is an exception. Mr. Obama should adopt a new policy toward Russia and Ukraine — one that seeks to prevent war by recognizing Russia’s security interests and upholding Ukraine’s territorial integrity. To achieve those goals, the United States should emphasize that Georgia and Ukraine will not become NATO members. It should make clear that America will not interfere in future Ukrainian elections or be sympathetic to a virulently anti-Russian government in Kiev. And it should demand that future Ukrainian governments respect minority rights, especially regarding the status of Russian as an official language. In short, Ukraine should remain neutral between East and West. Some might say these policy prescriptions amount to a defeat for America. On the contrary, Washington has a deep-seated interest in ending this conflict and maintaining Ukraine as a sovereign buffer state between Russia and NATO. Furthermore, good relations with Russia are essential, because the United States needs Moscow’s help to deal with Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, and eventually to help counter China, the only genuine potential rival to the United States.

The U.S. should limit aggressive behavior towards Russia, and instead try to understand the security concerns that Putin fears. Reaching a diplomatic compromise in Eastern Europe is critical, so that the U.S. can work with Russia to solve more pressing issues concerning Iran and China.
Russia seeks compromise, and won’t be deterred by sanctions. ABH


The architect of U.S. Cold War policy, George Kennan, warned at the end of his life, in 1998, that President Clinton’s policy of advancing NATO east risked war. By winter 2014 Russia perceived Ukraine as NATO’s next entrant. An expansionist Russia could have handily taken Ukraine in response to the Maidan protests, but this would have meant a new Cold War, or worse. An unending string of U.S. policy experts predicted that annexation of Ukraine by Russia was fast forthcoming. But Putin never took Ukraine, or even the Donbass.

What happened? It’s clear Putin never intended to seize Ukraine, or even the Donbass — even though domestic pressures weighed heavily on him to act. Instead, Putin’s actions signaled that the status quo over NATO’s forward movement must change. The Donbass was his leverage. Putin is a tough nationalist, but rather than fueling the fire of Russian revanchism, Putin is actually the one carefully dousing those flames.

U.S. and E.U. sanctions on Russia have not brought Russia to heel in Ukraine. The sanctions’ effects have been muted. Sanctions only worked to turn Russia to China on trade while working toward a national import substitution-based economy at home. Both results are against U.S. and E.U. wishes. Putin wants partnership with the West, but is not willing to be its supplicant. Meanwhile, many in the U.S. and E.U. genuinely wish to support democracy in Ukraine.

The United States and Russia will not reconcile their worldviews soon. Yet they can pursue common objectives in the Syrian-ISIS crisis that over time could expedite resolution of that challenge. Ironically, a bruised Ukraine could emerge as the victor if the European Union, Russia and the United States re-establish a framework for greater cooperation. It’s time to reconsider the effectiveness of U.S.-E.U. sanctions on Russia and whether they harm, more than advance, the broader goals of the United States, the European Union, not to mention Ukraine.

Sanctions did not deter Putin from invading deeper into Ukraine, as he had no intention of doing so in the first place. Putin just wanted to send a message to the West that current NATO expansion is unacceptable. Enacting sanctions won’t make Putin accept the expansion of NATO, instead it would be in the interest of all actors to work out a compromise that protects Russia’s sense of security.
Targeted Sanctions Are Imprecise and Ineffective


In the case of Russia, U.S. and EU sanctions—combined with the drop in international oil prices and actions taken by Russian regulators—undercut the country’s economy to a far greater extent than expected or desired: By March 2015, inflation in Russia had risen to 16.9 percent. This followed on the footsteps of a near-run on the country’s currency, which was supposedly triggered by the Russian Central Bank promising to effectively print money to prop up certain companies owned by Putin’s cronies and hurt by Western sanctions. By the spring of 2015, Russia had spent approximately $130 billion of its precious currency reserves in an attempt to defend the value of the ruble and prevent it from sliding even further. In addition, by raising interest rates to 17 percent in an attempt to stabilize the ruble, the central bank has likely stymied consumer spending in the near term.

Although these economic effects are profound, U.S. policymakers did not anticipate them and did not intend to cause them. Collapsing Russia’s economy would cause many more problems in the region than it would solve, and if the Obama administration wanted to seriously undermine the Russian economy, it could have easily done so by designating a number of Russian banks and directly freezing them out of the U.S. and European financial sectors. This action would have been a far simpler and more direct way to cause Russia economic pain and bring it to the negotiating table over the Ukraine issue. These new, sophisticated sanctions were instead designed to hurt a specific subset of Russian companies, namely those that are owned or controlled by Putin’s inner circle or directly run by the Russian government.

Pro advocacies will likely make special mention of targeted, or smart, sanctions, as a means to conveniently do damage control while applying sanctions. This is no silver bullet. Western interests are undercut by instability, and this problem rears its head regardless of whether broad or targeted sanctions are employed.
Sanctions have not hurt Russia’s wealthy elite. ABH


The sanctions are also having the perverse effect of enabling Putin to further consolidate his power, because he has rewarded his closest cronies at the expense of other elites. According to data from Forbes’ list of billionaires, Russia’s 15 richest citizens lost an average of 20 percent of their wealth in 2014, before regaining 12 percent in the next six months as the market stabilized. These fluctuations track the broader Russian economy, but after one breaks down the data, some telling disparities emerge. On average, those billionaires who held stakes in sanctioned companies lost less than three percent of their wealth between January 2014 and June 2015, whereas those who did not lost nine percent. It requires no great leap of logic to see that the Kremlin has shielded those with connections to the ruling circle from the pain of the sanctions, thereby shifting the burden to those without such ties.

While it seems that the wealthy elite in Russia are suffering financially, those individuals who had stakes in companies targeted by sanctions have been less affected by economic downturn than others. Putin is successfully ensuring that the elites around him are protected.
Sanctions Won’t Deter Russian Aggression

*Putin only understands force. ABH*


The United States and its Western allies should not have been caught so off-guard [3] by Putin’s shrewd but destabilizing move. Since the Russia invasion and occupation of Eastern Ukraine [4], Putin has been poking and prodding the West, seeking ways in which a militarily and diplomatically resurgent Russia can subvert Western security interests and force Western capitals to deal with Russia again as a major world power with its own unique set of legitimate interests. But this was not just a sin of omission. It is also a sin of commission. By not confronting Putin and Russia sufficiently over its illegal invasion and occupation of Ukraine, the United States and its Western allies effectively gave Putin a green light to project force in other geostrategic hot spots. When Putin stared down the West and the West blinked, the West lost its credibility and, with it, its ability to deter further Russian bad behavior. Most Western security experts, focused on the conflict over Ukraine itself, ignored the wider strategic ramifications. Inside the beltway, pundits argued against arming Ukraine [5] because they believed that Putin would only up the ante. In fact, the United States should have upped the ante itself. More than likely, Putin would have backed down. After all, the use of force is about the only form of statecraft Putin respects. Russia effectively shrugs off anything short of it, or the credible threat of its use. Even the sanctions, which have cost the Russian economy dearly, have not deterred him.

Sanctions will not be effective in deterring Russian aggression because Putin will only be determined by force, or a legitimate threat of force. Sanctions do not carry the same weight as military force, which Putin has repeatedly used in the past.
Russian aggression will continue so long as NATO exists. DAT


With the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Warsaw Pact, the United States took the lead in establishing a new post-Cold War order in Europe. The rallying cry was “a Europe whole and free.” The Iron Curtain separating West and East would be torn down, and the former Soviet republics and satellite nations of Eastern Europe would be transformed into Western-style market democracies as quickly as possible. As such, they could be incorporated into the new international order under the United States. Providing incentives for these countries to undertake the painful reforms necessary to make this new order happen required a big carrot. The carrot was membership in the premier Western clubs, the European Union and NATO. The promise of NATO membership was the key. No matter how much lip service the eastern Europeans paid to the virtues of free markets, democracy, civil society, and so on, they took on the burdens of reform for one main reason: to earn a guarantee of protection against their age-old enemy, Russia. At the time, and for years after, this appeared to be a successful tactic for the United States. Had we not offered the incentive of NATO membership, it is likely that many, if not most, of the eastern European countries would not have made nearly enough of the sacrifices needed for successful reform. Only the shared perception of the Russia threat could create domestic peace long enough to reform.

But what was not recognized was that this was a tactic based on a false assumption in the United States, namely the assumption that this perceived “Russia threat” was not real and never would be. Russia, we assumed, would remain more or less as it emerged from the Cold War, a backward, weak economy that would try, but most likely not be able, to follow the course of its neighbors to the West and grow to become a strong market democracy. It would therefore slide further and further into weakness. A few optimists held to a fading hope that Russia might some day succeed in reform. No matter which way it went, Russia would not seriously threaten any country allied with the United States. It would either be “good” (if it reformed) or weak (if it didn’t). Neither of those Russians was a threat. The Russia that would be a threat — a strong, bad Russia — was unimaginable. This was precisely the “missing quadrant.”

The “strong, bad” Russia is a reality today. NATO can’t pressure Russia to reform; it simply antagonizes Putin. With this in mind, sanctions border on irrelevant; until NATO is no longer perceived as a threat by Putin, aggression will continue.
Russia is still being aggressive in Ukraine. ABH

Harrell, Peter. [Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Center for New American Security]

On the other hand, sanctions have yet to dissuade Russia from its strategic objective of steadily escalating its support for separatists and consolidating the territory under pro-Russian control in eastern Ukraine. In some respects Russia appears to be engaging in a cyclical strategy of escalating its intervention just below the point where it expects further sanctions to be imposed, or to a point where it expects any sanctions imposed will be manageable, and then tactically de-escalating the situation or launching a new peace negotiation to avoid sanctions actually being implemented. It remains to be seen whether the continued impact of sanctions on the Russian economy in 2015 will convince Russia to support a more durable de-escalation in eastern Ukraine.

Sanctions are not actually stopping Russia’s aggressive behavior. Russia simply limits its behavior when it fears sanctions will be imposed, but then continues once the threat of sanctions has passed over.
Russia has not changed its goals in Ukraine. ABH


Vladislav Inozemtsev, the director of the Russian think-tank the Post-Industrial Research Center, believes that the sanctions have not changed the status quo: Crimea is still under Russian control, while Russia’s actions in eastern Ukraine are mostly in response to internal factors in Ukraine rather than as a reaction to the behavior of the West (Inozemtsev, 2014, November 15). A senior administration official in the White House admitted that, despite economic indicators showing that the sanctions have crippled the Russian economy, they have not changed the situation in Ukraine and Crimea to date. At a meeting with high-ranking military leaders on December 19, Putin vowed that Russia would never abandon the patriots who supported the Crimean peninsula (Boxun, 2014, December 21). Some people have thought that Russia respected the election results in Ukraine by not responding to the request of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine for the reunification of Oblast to the Russian Federation that was proposed after the referendum, indicating that the US and European sanctions have played a certain deterrent role in Russia’s attitudes and behaviors towards Ukraine (Jian Jisong & Wang Hongxin, 2014). It is undoubtable that sanctions have had an impact to a certain extent. However, it should be noted that Russia might never intend to allow the pro-Russian cities in eastern Ukraine to duplicate the Crimean annexation and eventually join the Russian Federation. What Russia wanted probably was to maintain its influential power in the eastern region of Ukraine. The international sanctions led by the US and Europe have hindered the development of the Russian economy. However, Russia still maintains political stability domestically, and Putin’s support rate has been at all-time high levels; thus, Russia still adheres to its original positions on the Crimea and Ukraine issues.

The economic damage of sanctions has not been sufficient to change Russian policy. Putin is still popular, and his government is still stable, so there is not enough pressure for him to take different actions in Ukraine. Moreover, Russia’s goal in Ukraine is primarily to expand influence, so sanctions didn’t prevent Putin from attempting to push reunification, he probably had no intention to do so in the first place.
Sanctions empirically fail, and Russia is no exception. ABH


Indeed, after the initial round of sanctions, the Kremlin’s aggression only grew: Russia formally absorbed Crimea and upped its financial and military support for pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine (including those who most likely shot down the Malaysia Airlines flight). It is possible that the sanctions may have deterred Russia from even greater aggression in Ukraine, but it is equally possible that all Russia ever wanted to do there was create a slow-burning insurgency. And at any rate, the sanctions have failed to force Russia to withdraw from Crimea and stop meddling in eastern Ukraine. This should not be surprising: as the most comprehensive study of sanctions found, they fail to achieve their goals in 66 percent of cases, and they fail 79 percent of the time when designed to discourage military misadventurism. The Kremlin’s aggression has persisted in large part because the West's targeted sanctions have succumbed to the same problem that plagues traditional comprehensive sanctions: the targeted regime shelters its cronies, while the rest of the population suffers. It wasn’t supposed to be this way. Modern sanctions are designed to avoid replicating the flaws of the comprehensive embargo placed on Iraq during the 1990s, which served only to enrich Saddam Hussein’s regime and impoverish the Iraqi people. With Russia, the U.S. government made sure not to bar overall trade and instead imposed asset freezes and financing restrictions on individual politicians and companies. In theory, members of Putin’s inner circle would use their influence to convince the president to reconsider his bellicose Ukraine policy. Whatever punishment the sanctions have inflicted on Russia, it has not translated into coercion. In practice, however, the sanctions have had the unintended consequence of inflicting widespread punishment on the Russian economy and population. By restricting access to international financing during a recession, the sanctions have compounded the fall in oil prices, requiring Moscow to slash spending on health care, infrastructure, and government salaries, which has created economic hardship for ordinary Russians. The crash of the ruble, meanwhile, has not only destroyed savings but also increased the monthly payments of those who hold mortgages denominated in foreign currencies. The government, in turn, has pressured struggling Russian banks to convert such debt into rubles and absorb the losses, which has rescued homeowners from default but run down banks’ capital reserves.

Even though the logic behind smart sanctions seems strong, in practice it tends to fail. This is the case in Russia, as the government has managed to protect the powerful elites, and transfer the economic damage to the rest of the population. Moreover, Russian policy has not changed, as aggression has been increasing along with sanctions.
Sanctions Are Not the Best of Bad Options

Coming to a stalemate over Ukraine is more pragmatic. DAT


If one assumes that Putin seized Crimea and has fomented war in Ukraine’s east to keep NATO out, then an accommodation with Russia based on now-unfashionable principles of realpolitik offers the only chance of a (reasonably) stable peace. The U.S. and NATO could offer neutrality for Ukraine—that is, pledge in writing not to invite it to join the alliance, and prevail upon Ukraine’s leadership, which is now entirely dependent on Western largesse for its survival, to withdraw the bill Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk is ushering through parliament that would annul the country’s non-bloc status. If Western leaders did this now, they might be able to forestall the worst-case scenario: Putin seeking to replicate the seizure of Crimea elsewhere—say, in the Baltics—where Russian-speaking populations exist outside Russia’s borders. It’s still not clear that this is what he is set on doing. But if he believes he has nothing to gain by cooperating with the West, he may try to oppose it by expanding Russia’s control over former Soviet territory.

Western interests are far more than punitive. The U.S. and its allies also need to consider the extent to which they are not only provoking, but enabling, Russian action. This is a major criterion for Con teams analyzing the resolution.
Sanctions Are an Erratic Policy Option

*Iran, the closest economic analog to Russia, does not offer historical precedent. DAT*

Gaddy, Clifford G. [Senior Fellow] and Barry W. Ickes [Penn State economics professor].

To reduce Russia’s oil and gas rents to the 1990s levels would require sanctions that would end Russia’s status as an energy exporter. That is, the West would have to impose and enforce an Iran-style set of sanctions that would entail an embargo on oil and gas exports. Let us consider, however, how unrealistic such a move is. The precedent of sanctions against Iran is not relevant for the Russian case.

Russia exports much more than Iran did prior to heavy sanctions. Iran was exporting a bit more than 2.5 million barrels per day (mbd) before heavy sanctions were imposed. Russia’s net exports are over 7 mbd. When the Soviet Union collapsed and Russian oil production fell by 5 mbd, OPEC production expanded to offset the loss. Today, by contrast, there is no spare capacity to absorb such a shock. How would the world economy replace 7.2 mbd? Prices would have to rise significantly to balance supply and demand, perhaps by as much as $80 per barrel. And this calculation ignores any impact of a cutoff of Russian gas. Of course, such a shock would no doubt cause a severe global recession that would cut oil demand, thereby reducing the pressure on prices. But it is not much of an argument to say we can absorb the oil price shock that sanctions will impose by creating a world economic crisis to absorb the cut in supply.

In short, the only kind of sanctions that might have a deep enough impact to force Russia to abandon its strategic objectives are ones that we would never implement.
Sanctions Hurt The American Economy

Sanctions put American industries at a disadvantage. ABH

https://www.uschamber.com/above-the-fold/the-case-caution-unilateral-sanctions

U.S. unilateral sanctions will have no meaningful impact on Russian policy as trade with the United States accounts for less than 5% of Russia's international commerce. The Ukrainian people would see no benefit; the only effect of such sanctions would be to bar U.S. companies from the Russian market and cede business opportunities to firms from other countries. The result would be lost sales for U.S. firms and lost jobs for American workers.

We understand the impulse to act. However, actions that are certain to be ineffective—doing nothing to promote stability while nonetheless costing American jobs—should be rejected.

Moreover, while European companies have a significant footprint in Russia, the risk of backfill by firms based in other countries is equally significant. Companies from China, Japan, Korea, Turkey and elsewhere are major players in the Russian market.

American sanctions against Russia would not cause much harm to Russia, as they could replace the U.S. as their trading partner with a variety of potential countries (China, Japan, etc.). However, this would hurt American firms, as they would not be able to do business with Russia, while their international competitors could potentially be expand there.
American banks and energy companies are especially hurt by sanctions. ABH


In the United States, banks are taking much of the impact. U.S. financial institutions have been required by law to freeze and manage tens of millions of dollars in assets of sanctioned individuals. As a result, the banks have had to hire additional legal and technical staff to not only monitor their own accounts but also review any financing arrangements with Russian entities. Failure to comply with the sanctions can be extremely costly: just one error, such as processing a single payment from an interdicted individual, can carry a penalty of up to $250,000, and the penalties can quickly multiply. In 2010, the Dutch bank ABN AMRO was fined $500 million for violating U.S. sanctions against Cuba, Iran, Libya, and Sudan. U.S. energy companies, for their part, have had to abandon various joint ventures in Russia, losing access to billions of dollars of investments. Thanks to prohibitions on the provision of technology and services to Russian companies, Western firms have been kept out of unconventional drilling projects in the Arctic and elsewhere. ExxonMobil, for example, has been forced to withdraw from all ten of its joint ventures with Rosneft, including a $3.2 billion project in the Kara Sea. Because that project was in its early stages, the cancellation will not cost ExxonMobil in immediate profits. But it will cut access to upstream development projects inside Russia, putting the company’s future profits and stock valuation at risk and raising the possibility that the money already invested will be permanently lost.

American sanctions against Russia have caused a major headache for banks with frozen accounts that may likely incur fees, and energy companies that lost incredible investment opportunities in Russia. These kinds of impacts increase the pressure on the PRO to show that sanctions are extremely effective in order to be worth the cost.
Sanctions Hurt The European Economy

*Europe’s economy will lose 100 billion Euros. ABH*


Europe stands to lose a total of €100bn from its economy due to the trade sanctions it has placed on Russia, putting around two million jobs across member states at risk according to an independent Austrian study published by German daily newspaper Die Welt today. The EU and other international partners announced trade sanctions against Russia last year in response to Russia’s aggression in Ukraine. Despite apparent division between the EU member states strongly in favour of sanctions and those who feel sanctions are doing too much harm to European economies, EU foreign ministers are next week expected to formally agree to renew them until the end of the year. Now the independent Austrian Institute of Economic Research in Vienna (WIFO) has estimated that, as a result of the political fallout with Russia, both the sanctions and counter sanctions imposed by Russia are putting around €100bn in potential export revenue and economic development at risk. “The faltering exports which last autumn we hypothesised would happen have become a reality,” said Oliver Fritz, one of the authors of the study. The study itself uses the similar economic trends observed between January and March of 2015 in Europe and produces the estimates in the hypothetical scenario that those trends continue. According to the study, the loss of the Russian market could impact jobs in the EU and non-member Switzerland over the next few years. Reduced exports across Europe will be the main cause of redundancies, however reduced tourism from Russia could also impact employment levels. Germany would be one of the biggest losers in terms of jobs, as reduced trade with Russia could put 465,000 German jobs in jeopardy, while Poland would be second, with 335,000 jobs at risk. Italy is the third with 215,000 and though Spain and France are also in the top five, relative to their size their projected losses of 160,000 and 145,000 respectively are considerably lower. WIFO estimate that the UK could lose around 110,000 jobs. In terms of export revenue, Germany is the major European economy which would be most affected with a possible loss of 1.6% over the next few years, while Italy, Spain, France and the UK would each lose less than 1%. Smaller countries however are likely to be much worse affected, with Estonia feeling the greatest hit relative to its size. It’s projected to register an almost 16% drop in revenue from exports compared to 2013, before any sanctions were imposed.

CON can use this to show the economic damage to Europe that sanctions have done already, and will continue to do in the future. This card provides the statistics and logic (decreased exports and tourism) to show the economic harm to Europe.
China is replacing Russia’s European partners. ABH


In 2014 alone, bilateral trade between Russia and Germany shrank by €6.5 billion and in the first few months of 2015, there was another dramatic decline of 35 percent. Companies are putting their investments on ice and the labor market is losing jobs because of uncertainty over the future.

The economically weaker countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are suffering most. But specialized medium-sized companies in Germany are also in danger. According to a current Federation of German Industries (BDI) and Deutsche Bank survey of 400 major German family-run businesses, 57 percent fear continued negative consequences as a result of the Ukraine crisis. In the eyes of the Western world, Russia has committed a breach of international law by annexing Crimea. Will economic sanctions and cancelling established dialog formats really bring us closer to a solution to the conflict and render the Russian government more ready to compromise? Current experience shows there is no unambiguous answer. While EU exports to Russia are dropping disproportionately, countries such as China, South Korea, Taiwan and Switzerland have filled the gaps. Last summer, Russia and China finally shook hands on the comprehensive gas deal they had been unsuccessfully negotiating for the past ten years. In May of this year, it was announced that Chinese banks plan to support Russian companies cut off from the capital markets by the Western sanctions with loans of up to $25 billion. Siemens has been working for years to try and land the order for the Moscow-Kazan high-speed train, but Chinese companies are now realizing the project. These are only three striking examples of a trend that could lead to a long-term change in the economic – and therefore, political – architecture.

While the EU implements sanctions against Russia, other countries such as China are benefiting as Russia seeks new economic partners. CON can use this to show that Western economic interests are hurt by China profiting from Europe’s suffering.
Pro Case

Introduction:

Winning a war does not happen instantaneously, as one event. To win a war—to gain the upper hand—requires winning battles in series. It involves not ceding ground where possible, and eking out victories wherever the opportunity presents itself. Today, the West finds itself in a political war with Russia. In some cases, this has spilled into physical conflict—the lives and territory lost in Ukraine sing testament to that fact. For the United States and Russia, the biggest factor at stake is influence—political, economic, geographic. Every Russian encroachment in Ukraine and, more broadly, Eastern Europe, hampers the West in its pursuit of these factors. For every Russian annexation, land grab, and political victory. The main Western interest is thus to win those battles: to retain political, economic, and geographic influence in a vital region of the world. In many cases, force is off the table: an escalation of conflict would simply cost lives and money, and it is an option few Western countries consider seriously. The best credible option remaining, then, is sanctions. To that end, my partner and I affirm the resolution—Resolved: On balance, economic sanctions are reducing the threat Russia poses to Western interests.

Contention One: Sanctions win the geographic battle

Sovereign territory is most at stake in Ukraine. In this arena, Russia appears to have already been the clear leader, having annexed Crimea and encouraged Russian nationalism across Eastern Europe. At this point, however, sanctions are the only policy measure keeping the West in the game. Political economist Iana Dreyer explains further: “A useful effect of the sanctions is that, even if they do not help the EU much in its policy on Crimea, they do minimise the risk that Russia will seek to openly destabilise other parts of Ukraine or, say, Moldova and Georgia.” With respect to geographic control and influence, the West is already hampered by indecision and a hesitance to use force. The only tools left on the table, then are non-military. With that in mind, sanctions have shown themselves effective at holding a stalemate in preserving the geographic balance of Eastern Europe. As the best pragmatic policy option remaining, sanctions have advanced Western interests.

Contention Two: Sanctions win the economic battle

The West has been employing what are typically considered “smart” sanctions against Russia, targeting Putin’s inner circle, and businesses associated with him, rather than the economy as a whole. This has not stopped them from being impactful, as discussed by Anastasia Nesvetailova of the City Political Economy Research Center:

“Since April 2014, the ruble has lost nearly half of its value; net capital flight out of the country has doubled, reaching $151 billion in 2014; economic growth has slowed down to 0.6 percent in late 2014—at its lowest since the global financial crisis of 2009.”
So why is it actually important that heavy economic costs are imposed on Russia? In short, Russia has successfully used its economic might to advance anti-Western interests globally. By beating back the Russian economy, the West can advance both its economic and ideological interests. Brian Whitmore, writing in *The Atlantic*, explains further:

“Moscow has used everything from shady energy deals, to webs of shell companies, to hot money in the City of London, to the financing of extremist political parties in Europe. Its success in doing so raises the economic cost of conflict, reduces resolve to resist Moscow, and gives Russia a ready-made lobby in Western capitals. The Kremlin has effectively weaponized globalization.”

By imposing costs to the Russian economy substantial enough to force Russian policy and expansion inward, the West can effectively beat back the tendrils of Russian influence from its own soil. This, in turn, will impact Western economies and interests conversely, enabling the global expansion of Western business and ideology in vacuums left by the receding Russian economy.

**Contention Three: Sanctions win the political battle**

Thus far, we have considered physical, tangible matters: land, stability, economy. But when it comes to international relations, soft power is a crucial factor. For the United States and its allies in the West to successfully expand their influence, soft power is required: the ability to wield influence without the use of force or direct coercion. This is particularly crucial for beating back Russian interests in Eastern Europe, as Vladimir Putin’s regime is notoriously feisty. To that end, sanctions actively advance Western political interests. Oleg Buklemishev, Director of Moscow State University’s Economic Policy Research Center, elaborates:

“It would be naïve for the West to expect the rapid elimination of the root cause of the sanctions—a restoration of the Russian-Ukrainian border of mid-February 2014. “Yet no one ever believed this was the real goal. The aim of the sanctions was to send a clear signal of the West’s political position and, more importantly, to try to prevent a further escalation of the conflict.”

As we have iterated several times throughout this case, force has never been a successful consideration. But often, soft power is the product of having the teeth to back up interests. For the West, successfully wielding any kind of diplomatic and political influence in Eastern Europe relies on finding an approximation for the presence or use of force to signal resolve. If nothing else, sanctions are the most powerful means of doing so. We certainly are not trying to contend that sanctions will suddenly coerce Russia into obeying Western demands. But by signaling and affirming political resolve, sanctions ensure that the West, from a political standpoint, is taken seriously. When push comes to shove in diplomatically resolving the Ukrainian crisis, sanctions stand as the most impactful possible factor in favor of the West advancing its interests politically.
Con Case

Introduction:

Iraq. Afghanistan. Syria. None of these countries instantly strike one as ideal images of Western allies—and in Syria’s case, they’re not. The main variable here is stability. For the United States and its allies to have any hope of advancing their interests abroad, stability is required. While friendly regimes can be pulled out of the vacuum of violence, it is a far more straightforward process to deal with situations which do not require heavy interventions to sort out. It is for this reason that my partner and I negate today’s resolution: Resolved: On balance, economic sanctions are reducing the threat Russia poses to Western interests.

Western sanctions against Russia were borne of the Ukrainian conflict, with Russia foraying into Russian territory and eventually annexing Crimea. This, obviously, is unacceptable to Western interests. But to respond with sanctions is a counterproductive move. When stability is the most valuable asset on the international stage for the West, sanctions threaten to pour lighter fluid all over a smoldering fire.

Contention One: Sanctions hinder political progress

Let’s begin with the obvious: the ideal solution is for the West to negotiate its way to a favorable solution in Ukraine. But another way, the worst outcome is two-pronged: Russia makes further gains in Eastern Europe (which goes contrary to U.S. interests), or the gains are stopped by force, entailing unnecessary casualties. By extension, a superior solution is to utilize diplomatic and political means to a favorable conclusion. One method of doing so would be to effect regime change in Russia. This is a complete pipe dream, as explained by Wan Wang in the Journal of Politics and Law: “Sanctions do not destabilize Russia’s regime; on the contrary, they help Putin mobilize nationalism among the political elites” (Yurgens, 2014, October 9). With the development of the Ukraine crisis, the support rate for Russian President Vladimir Putin has soared and stabilized at a high level.” The most pragmatic alternative for the West, then, is to work with what they’ve got and influence Russian decision-making. If anything, however, sanctions work counter to this goal by provoking belligerence and recalcitrance.

Contention Two: Sanctions are a counterproductive signal of aggression

Sanctions are often “marketed” in the West as a commonsense approach to Russian aggression. The problem is, this narrative is flipped of the real story. In fact, sanctions have acted as a further perpetrator of Western geopolitical aggression, which is what has fundamentally destabilized Eastern Europe. John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago explains further:
The Russians have intensely disliked but tolerated substantial NATO expansion, including the accession of Poland and the Baltic countries. But when NATO announced in 2008 that Georgia and Ukraine “will become members of NATO,” Russia drew a line in the sand. Georgia and Ukraine are not just states in Russia’s neighborhood; they are on its doorstep.

Essentially, instead of looking at Russia’s actions in Ukraine as aggressive and expansionist, they ought to be framed as defensive. From a historical geopolitical perspective, this falls more in line with the truth. Conversely, then, the Western approach to Ukraine has been aggressive, not defensive: The West, in trying to muscle its way into Ukraine, is trying to “defend” territory it has no rights to. Under such a framework, then sanctions are not a defensive mechanism against Russian expansion, as they are often portrayed. Sanctions are just a little more fuel to the fire initially caused when NATO expanded a rate faster than the geopolitical circumstances could accommodate. To continue adding fuel is to keep actively destabilizing the situation further.

**Contention Three: Sanctions’ ineffectiveness weakens Western diplomacy**

Thus far, my partner and I have demonstrated that sanctions have gummed up the political process and, due to the dynamics of Russia’s relationship with NATO, escalate instability in Ukraine and Georgia. This is to treat sanctions as a diplomatic tool, which has been their use. But in terms of tangible, real-world impacts, sanctions have failed to advance Western interests. The issue lies in how easily the sanctions are skirted. According to The Economist, “‘The blatant manner in which [some Russian entities] have avoided sanctions raises questions about the effectiveness of the existing system and the willingness of the West to enforce its own rules,’ concludes an unpublished report by a corporate-investigations firm.” The issue is not that sanctions are economically non-impactful; given that my partner and I have already demonstrated several harms of sanctions, this would seem to be, perversely, an asset. The real problem lies in the back half of the assessment quoted by the economist: that ineffective sanctions jeopardize the credibility of Western resolve. This is crucial: fundamentally, the West needs non-military leverage to advance its interests in Eastern Europe. And not only do sanctions a) not provide any political means to that end, and b) significantly risk further destabilizing the situation by acting as a sign of aggression, but they also hurt the credibility of the West in asserting soft power.

The West has two main options to advance stability in Eastern Europe and, particularly, Ukraine: gain influence by beating back Russia, or work later to forge an alliance with Russia-friendly states. Sanctions actively work against both stable resolutions of the crisis. By antagonizing Russia and strengthening the Russian regime, sanctions increase the likelihood of Russia pursuing further control. And by defanging Western diplomacy, the West loses the potential leverage needed to bolster soft power in the region independent of who controls it. As sanctions pour fuel on the fire, the prospect of a West-friendly stable outcome goes up in flames.