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Economic interdependence and economic sanctions: a case study of European Union sanctions on Russia

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Abstract *Economic sanctions impose costs on sender as well as target states, and those costs increase with the degree of interdependence between the states in question. We test the hypothesis that EU member states that are more economically interdependent with Russia would be the most opposed to the imposition of sanctions on Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine in 2013–2014. However, an analysis of the debate over the imposition of sanctions shows the opposite: a modest positive correlation between economic interdependence and support for the sanctions among EU member states. This finding further calls into question the fundamental linkage between economic self-interest and conflict avoidance among interdependent states.*

Introduction

The idea that economic interdependence reduces the prevalence of violent conflict between states features prominently in liberal international relations theory as drawn from its roots in liberal political and economic theory (Kant 2016; Smith 2003; Angell 1913). As economic ties between states develop and deepen, domestic constituencies are created that have a vested interest in maintaining the peace that enables commerce and investment to flourish (Doyle 1986). States that are highly dependent on trade are more likely to avoid trade-disrupting conflict with their trade partners than states that are less interdependent (Polachek 1980). By the same logic of economic self-interest, however, states could be expected to avoid imposing economic sanctions on states with whom they are economically interdependent. Because actions that reduce trade and investment will affect domestic constituencies in the state imposing the sanctions, those affected groups should logically transmit their concerns to elected representatives. This should be reflected in the policy decision to impose sanctions, or at least in the political discourse around the imposition of economic sanctions. In other words, the logic of interdependence and the logic of economic sanctions are both fundamentally based on economic self-interest.

As the sanctions negatively affect domestic constituencies in the targeted state, those groups pressure the government of the targeted state to address the concerns of those imposing sanctions to secure their removal and the return of a normal commercial relationship (Kirshner 1997; Kaempher and Lowenberg 1992, 1998; Hufbauer et al 2009). Many studies question the effectiveness of sanctions in practice, noting that authoritarian regimes (often the target) can shift the burden of sanctions onto the general population and those regimes are at times strengthened by the 'rally around the flag' effect produced by the imposition of sanctions (Selden 1999; Brooks 2002; Allen 2008; Escriba-Folch 2011). Yet, the presumption of a link between economic loss and policy change in the targeted state remains, and it is a driving force behind the use of so-called 'smart sanctions' aimed at specific individuals in the political leadership of the targeted state (Cortright and Lopez 2002). Economic self-interest is expected to push them toward policy changes that will bring relief from the negative effects of the sanctions.

This study examines the decision of the European Union to impose economic sanctions on Russia over its actions in Ukraine and tests the hypothesis that economic interdependence is negatively correlated with an EU member state's willingness to impose economic sanctions on Russia. The wide variance in the level of individual EU member states' economic interdependence with Russia makes it a useful test of the proposition that more interdependent states will be more opposed to sanctions on Russia than those states which have low levels of interdependence. It uses content analysis of European Parliament debates on the issue to construct a scale of support and opposition to sanctions on Russia and finds that economic interdependence is not a predictor of an EU member state's support for, or opposition to, the use of sanctions. To the contrary, states most opposed to the imposition of sanctions are those that are least economically interdependent, while some of the most interdependent states are most in favour of sanctions. In fact, there is a slight positive correlation between economic interdependence and favourable attitudes toward the imposition of sanctions.

A better understanding of this dynamic has some potentially significant implications. From a theoretical perspective, it adds to a body of literature that questions a core assumption of liberal thought in international relations: that economic interdependence reduces conflict between states that would harm the mutually beneficial commerce they enjoy (Copeland 1996; Barbieri 1996; Mansfield and Pollins 2003). Economic sanctions are not violent conflict, but they do have the same potential effect in terms of economic costs to domestic constituencies resulting from lost trade. If the core principle is that economic interdependence should reduce conflict between states because of the economic self-interest of domestic constituencies, then the same logic should apply to the imposition of sanctions as well as violent conflict between states.

This article begins with a brief review of the logic of economic interdependence as it relates to the use of economic sanctions. It then examines the debates in the European Parliament regarding the imposition of sanctions on Russia in 2013–2014 and codes individual speeches on a five-point scale from very positive to very negative on the issue of imposing sanctions on Russia. Finally, it examines some potential explanations for the lack of correlation between economic interdependence and opposition to imposing sanctions on Russia as well as the potential implications of this finding.

Economic interdependence and conflict

The premise that economic interdependence minimizes conflict between states features prominently in liberal international relations theory and can be traced to its roots in in the writings of Kant, Smith, Montesquieu and other enlightenment era scholars. Kant argued that the 'spirit of commerce' unleashed by free trade would draw states toward peaceful relations out of basic self-interest (Kant 2016). Adam Smith postulated that free trade between states would reduce the causes of international conflict (Smith 2003). Montesquieu stressed that commerce induces states to behave in a more peaceful manner toward their commercial partners (Hirschman 1997). Through all of this there is a common theme that economic interchange between states reduces the propensity to resolve disputes through conflicts that would deprive them of the benefits of commercial trade.

Norman Angell brought these ideas into the 20th Century arguing that war was essentially obsolete because of interdependence (Angell 1913). *The Great Illusion* is premised on the idea that economic interdependence between the states of Europe would be the basic guarantor of good behaviour out of economic self-interest. But Angell also pointed to the interdependence of global finance and the economic damage that would result from invasion or attempted annexation of a global financial hub such as London (Angell 1913). Economic interdependence rendered the very idea of violent conflict between the states of Europe as fundamentally irrational.

Liberals generally employ economic opportunity-cost logic to the relationship between economic interdependence and conflict. Most of the research conducted on the relationship between economic interdependence has focussed on interstate military disputes (MIDs) (Mansfield and Pollins 2003). In his seminal empirical analysis, Polachek's model argues that the greater the societal benefits from trade, the greater the costs of war, and consequently a reduced rationale for conflict (Polachek 1980). While controlling for institutional constraints, non-violent norms, alliance, contiguity, and military capability ratio, Oneal et al. find that trade is a significant factor in lowering the probability of conflicts but has a stronger influence among democratic states (Oneal et al 1996). The logic of interdependence as a constraint on violent conflict assumes a state-society relationship in which state leaders prioritise remaining in office and maintaining political support through policies that generally encourage economic growth (Gelpi and Grieco 2003). Inter-state conflict, especially between economically interdependent states, would harm the economy in general and potentially harm the political prospects of the elected leaders. Once again, regardless of whether it is violent conflict or economic sanctions, the result will be a loss of trade that should have the same political effect. Thus, states involved in a dispute, particularly if one or more is democratic, should be less likely to engage in trade-disrupting conflict of any kind with states with which they are economically interdependent.

An important qualification to this point is that often sanctions are explicitly designed to avoid armed conflict and sanctions may be the less economically disruptive policy option depending on the range of possible futures. If, for example, the alternative to sanctions is war that would completely disrupt trade, then sanctions, which the sender state can tailor, would involve far less economic dislocation to it. Daniel Drezner argues that a driving factor in the imposition of sanctions is the expectation of future conflicts between the sender and target state (Drezner 2011). We find that most of EU member states that are particularly exposed to Russian aggressive actions, such as the Baltic states, are highly in favour of imposing sanctions despite the fact they stand to lose more than most EU members in terms of trade. This cuts against the logic of interdependence, but it offers some empirical confirmation of Drezner's argument. But in the case of EU sanctions on Russia, the alternative is not war with Russia; no member state of the EU or NATO has suggested such drastic action, and the fear of provoking Russia has even hindered any discussion of more robust military support to Ukraine. Instead, the alternative to sanctions is inaction. Therefore, the choice in this case is to impose sanctions, or do nothing that would disturb the existing economic relationship.

In addition to attempting to force a policy change in the target state through economic loss, however, sanctions can also be used to constrain a target state and weaken its ability to pursue the objectionable policy in question (Giumelli 2011). It is clear, for example, that sanctions on Russia have not forced its withdrawal from Ukraine, despite contributing to the overall weakness of the Russian economy (Connoly 2015). Yet, as Edward Christie argues, the damaging effects of the sanctions and the credible threat that new sanctions could be imposed limited Russia's actions in Ukraine (Christie 2016). In fact, by some estimates, the 'second wave of sectoral sanctions in September 2014 "stopped Russia's offensive against almost defenceless Mariupol' (Secrieru 2015, 40). Sanctions can also be used to signal a target state that further action, including harsher sanctions, could be on the agenda in the absence of some change in behaviour on the part of the target state. The threat of new sanctions, for example, is credited with preventing Russia's recognition of the separatist political structures in Donbass (Ibid.).

Regardless of whether the purpose is to coerce, constrain, or signal a target state, economic sanctions often involve some cost to the state imposing them. If sanctions are viewed as part of a signalling game between states, then the credibility of the signal depends to some extent on the cost to the sender state (Martin 1993). In general, we should expect that the cost to the sender of imposing trade sanctions would increase directly with the level of interdependence. Those costs may affect a narrow set of domestic constituencies, or they may have a broad impact on the entire economy if the sanctioned commodities include a basic commodity such as energy imports. In the case of EU sanctions on Russia, Guimelli finds that the EU member states experience a wide variation in sharing the burden of imposing sanctions. More importantly, at a sectoral level some member states experienced gains in exports following the imposition of sanctions (Giumelli 2017). It would be impossible to know a priori what sectors are likely to gain or lose the most because while the decision makers imposing the sanctions know the specific areas of trade they will block, they cannot know the full nature of the counter-sanctions likely to be imposed by Russia. They can, however, assume that counter-sanctions will be strategically applied and Masha Hedberg argues that Russian counter-sanctions were specifically designed to spare the member states that Russia sees as the main strategic actors in the EU, namely France, Germany, Italy and the UK (Hedburg 2018). Thus, sanctions will negatively affect domestic constituencies but those imposing the sanctions cannot know with any certainty the full impact or what specific sectors of the economy will lose or potentially gain from sanctions and counter-sanctions. Following from the logic of interdependence and the model of state-society interaction that predominates across liberal international relations theory, we should expect that economic interdependence in general should reduce the willingness of states to impose economic sanctions on their trading partners.

Realists, however, argue against this conception of the state-society relationship and the motivations behind state actions. Rather than a check on conflict, economic interdependence can create vulnerabilities that lead states to conflict (Copeland 2015). States that are economically interdependent will not be equally so, and some may be at a strategic disadvantage if they are dependent on their trade partners for imports of critical items such as energy (Gowa and Mansfield 1993; Mearsheimer 2014). From a realist perspective, therefore, there is little reason to believe that economic interdependence reduces conflict- it may in fact have the opposite effect depending on how that trade affects the balance of power and if the trade is unbalanced in terms of the potential impact on national security of the goods imported or exported (Waltz 1983). In this interpretation, economic interdependence is simply another tool of state power to be exploited in the national interest.

Some empirical assessments of the impact of interdependence on conflict support the realist interpretation. Barbieri finds that when the salience of the trade and its symmetry are taken into account, extensive economic linkages between states are an impediment to peaceful relations (Barbieri 1996, 2003). Grieco and Gelpi find that interdependence is only a factor in reducing conflict when both parties are democratic states (Grieco and Gelpi 2003). Dale Copeland finds that the expectations of future trade are a significant factor in constraining inter-state violence in that, 'a dependent actor's expectations of the future trade and investment environment' will determine if interdependence leads to war or peace (Copeland 2015). Keshk, Pollins and Reuveny note that trade in and of itself does not reduce the risk of interstate disputes (Keshk et al 2004). Despite these critiques of liberal conceptions of the effects of interdependence, the central idea remains influential in determining how the European Union and its member states attempt to extend their power and influence in the wider European neighbourhood.

The Ukrainian conflict and the EU-Russia relationship

The EU-Russia relationship has experienced various periods of tension, but the current sanctions revolve around Russian actions against Ukraine, Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for Ukrainian separatists. After Ukrainian President Yanukovich refused to sign an Association Agreement with the EU on November 21, 2013, opposition protests arose in Independence Square. The protests triggered a violent response by the Yanukovitch government that ultimately led to pitched street battles and the collapse of the government (Menon and Rumer 2015, 79–81). President Yanukovich fled to Russia and the speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament was appointed President. New protests against this government, however, arose in regions of eastern Ukraine dominated by ethnic Russians. On the pretext of aiding oppressed ethnic Russians in Ukraine, Russian President Putin moved troops into Crimea on March 2, 2014. Russia supervised and coordinated a referendum to annexe Crimea that was labelled illegitimate and invalid by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 2014a, 2014b). In early March, the EU also signalled its disapproval of Russia's annexation of Crimea through imposing diplomatic sanctions. The G-8 was supposed to be held in Sochi in June of 2014, but the EU relocated the meeting to Brussels. The EU cancelled the EU-Russia summit and reduced diplomatic discourse through cancelling additional future bilateral summits.

In mid-March, the EU responded to Russia's failure to de-escalate the situation in Eastern and Southern Ukraine by imposing some elements of smart sanctions-travel bans and asset freezes- against individuals enmeshed in the annexation of Crimea and the support of pro-Russian separatists in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. Twenty-one Russian officials along with associated persons and entities were sanctioned (Foreign Affairs Council 2014). By July, the European Council's Committee of Permanent Representatives had broadened the economic sanctions to include financial sanctions, an embargo on arms and dual use goods, and a limitation on the export of certain energy-related equipment and technology. In the same press release the EU announced there would be a ban on new investment in Crimea and Sevastopol in the following sectors: infrastructure projects in the transport, telecommunications and energy sectors and in relation to the exploitation of oil, gas and minerals. Eighty-seven persons and 20 entities were subject to asset freezes in the EU, and the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development were notified by the European Council to suspend financing of new projects in Russia (Council of the European Union 2014).

In August, Ukrainian President Poroshenko informed European leaders of intelligence reports indicated that the presence and actions of Russian armed forces in Ukraine. By November, after the September cease-fire attempts had failed, the Council froze the assets of five entities and placed travel bans on 13 individual persons (European Council, President 2014). Because of cease-fire negotiations, the EU did not implement any new sanctions until Minsk I agreement was signed in February. Minsk II, signed in February of 2015, created temporary self-autonomy to the breakaway regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, while stipulating that all foreign troops exit Ukraine and that all illegal armed groups be disarmed (Minsk Agreement 2015). In March of 2015, the European Council linked the duration of the sanctions to the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. The European Council extended the economic sanctions on Russia, Crimea, and Sevastapol 27 times and added numerous individuals to the sanctions list as of the time of this study.

It is important to note that the sanctions are imposed by the EU and that the EU is becoming an increasingly active player in international affairs in its own right. But this is a contested area between the supranational and intergovernmental impulses of the EU, and 'one of the most vexed questions about the international role of the Union … is the scope of its competence and the assessment of which sets of rules laid down in primary law should apply in different cases of international action' (Koutrakos 2010, 481). On the one hand, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) promotes policy centralization and fosters systematic foreign policy cooperation (Stefanova 2005). This is part of a long process of evolution from the Maastricht Treaty through the Lisbon Treaty which gave the EU a distinct legal personality under which it could conduct external affairs (Eeckhout 2011). The 2009 Lisbon Treaty created the European External Action Service (EEAS) headed by a High Representative to provide administrative support for the policy-making process, and some scholars argue that the member states' diplomats based in Brussels are becoming the core actors in the foreign and security policy process (Chelotti 2017). In the specific case of sanctions on Russia, this has led to a more assertive role for the EU as an actor in international affairs because it has been '…imposing measures with economic implications and wielding them on a powerful neighbour (that) would have seemed unthinkable just a few years ago (Portela 2019, 2). Yet, on the other hand, the Lisbon Treaty actually limits the powers of the European Commission in the decision-making and budgetary process suggesting that member states still guard their power to set their own foreign and security policy agendas (Gegout 2010). Economic sanctions in particular fall into the, "no man's land between the front lines of the supranational and the intergovernmental' (Eeckhout 2011, 502). The EU has a role to play, but the direction of its foreign policy, including imposing economic sanctions, is determined by the agreement of the member states through an intergovernmental process.

The EU sanctions focus on specific individuals and entities and are not designed to broadly disrupt trade. There is a ban on imports into the EU from the Crimea as well as specific trade sanctions that block the sale of items critical to the Russian oil industry and arms sales to Russia. A significant part of the sanctions package, however, revolves around financial sanctions and not trade-disrupting sanctions. In addition to freezing the assets of named individuals in the Russian government, the EU directed the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to suspend the financing of any new projects in Russia. At the national level, however, private firms in EU member states are not blocked from investing in Russia by the sanctions under discussion. Thus, the financial level sanctions largely affected targeted Russian individuals close to Putin along with the suspension of EU-level investment in Russia. These targeted financial sanctions do not necessarily significantly affect the level of national economic interdependence and thus member states' calculus on whether to support the sanctions.

At first glance, therefore, the sanctions have only a minimal effect on trade and could not be expected to have a significant effect on the willingness of a member state of the EU to impose sanctions on Russia if that state is concerned about economic losses as a result of diminished trade. Yet, this misses an important point: the debate over the imposition of sanctions is necessarily influenced by the shadow of the future and the expected Russian reaction to the imposition of sanctions, namely the Russian government's retaliation in kind. In fact, Russia did impose sanctions on the EU in 2014, effectively blocking the import of food and agricultural supplies from the EU and other western countries (BBC 2014). In addition, despite the largely financial nature of the EU sanctions regime on Russia, overall trade has declined significantly vis-à-vis 2013 by over EUR 100 billion, while EU exports to Russia have decreased by EUR 45 billion (Giumelli 2017). Giumelli acknowledges that the decline in overall trade has not solely been caused by the sanctions, however he notes that 'trade may have been reduced by overcompliance in implementing the sanctions' (Giumelli 2017, 1067). Overcompliance suggests that the EU sanctions regime has had a dampening effect on trade even beyond the sectors affected (Johnston 2015).

Thus, even if the discussion over the use of sanctions by the EU against Russia was not expected to have a significant negative impact on the ability of EU producers to export to Russia, the shadow of the future and the anticipated Russian response could be expected to influence the debate over sanctions in the European Parliament. In fact, several MEPs raised this point in their speeches regarding EU sanctions against Russia, particularly those EU member states that tended to export agricultural products to Russia (see for example, Kelly 2014). In addition to blocking imports from the EU, Russia could also have been expected to retaliate by reducing the flow of natural gas to specific EU member states that are heavily dependent on Russian energy exports. Russia used this form of pressure in the mid-2000s and, although much of Europe adapted to this and reduced its dependence on Russian energy supplies, several member states of the EU remain fairly dependent on Russian natural gas (Wigell and Vihma 2016).

Classification of bilateral economic interdependence: EU member-states and Russia

There are a variety of methods for measuring economic interdependence and the particular method employed can significantly affect the apparent relationship between trade and conflict (Hirsch 1986; Gartzke and Li 2003). Some focus on the weight of bilateral trade relative to GDP, the gross volume of bilateral trade, or the proportion of bilateral trade relative to a state's total trade (Oneal et al 1996; Polachek 1980; Barbieri 1996). Other focus on the strategic value of goods traded, arguing that some items such as energy commodities are far more important than other goods (Blanchard and Ripsman 1999). Dale Copeland, however, argues that such quantitative methods of measuring economic interdependence ignore the importance of future expectations of trade, and that economic interdependence can only bring peace when 'states expect that trade levels will be high into the foreseeable future' (Copeland 1996).

We adopt Oneal et al.'s dyadic economic interdependence formula for this study and measure the bilateral trade as a proportion of GDP (Oneal et al 1996). This allows us to establish a consistent measurement across EU member states of the relative level of interdependence between the individual states and Russia. As we are concerned with the impact of sanctions on the entire economy of the member state and the possible effects this may have on MEPs attitudes regarding the sanctions, it is logical to measure trade with Russia relative to the GDP of the state in question rather than only as a proportion of total trade. Country I's imports from and exports to country J are represented by (Xij) and (Mij) respectively and country I's GDP is represented by (GDPi). It is a simple calculation of economic interdependence that indicates the percentage of country I's GDP that is made up of trade with country J.

$$\mathrm{DEPENDij} = (\mathrm{Xij}, + \mathrm{Mij},)/\mathrm{GDPi},$$

Because the EU economic sanctions were imposed in 2014, we use the 2013 IMF bilateral trade statistics to establish the degree of economic interdependence before sanctions were imposed. 2013 GDP data for the EU member states

Table 1. EU member-state economic interdependence with Russia.

EU Member-State	Value of exports (Billions $)	Value of imports (Billions $)	GDP (Billions $)	Economic interdependence
Austria	1.27954	3.84597	417.9	.0123
Belgium	7.72644	4.034	507.518	.0232
Bulgaria	2.21674	.7022	53.698	.0543
Croatia	1.3387	.39252	58.601	.0295
Cyprus	1.92327	.04267	21.778	.0903
Czech Republic	5.9833	5.31772	198.63	.0569
Denmark	1.48025	2.17837	324.293	.0113
Estonia	4.02531	.78801	24.284	.1982
Finland	13.30819	5.39574	259.627	.072042
France	9.34273	13.02148	2738.676	.0082
Germany	37.0275	37.91668	3593.238	.0209
Greece	6.2446	.6113	243.33	.0282
Hungary	6.35231	3.00713	130.563	.0717
Ireland	.32881	1.37226	220.893	.0077
Italy	39.32285	14.563	2068.366	.0261
Latvia	10.422	.80277	30.38	.3695
Lithuania	6.12714	1.11842	46.714	.1551
Malta	4.0845	.0518	9.315	.444
Luxembourg	.01365	.20405	60.538	.0036
Netherlands	70.12609	5.83716	800.535	.0949
Poland	19.58179	8.3256	513.934	.0543
Portugal	.65035	.69144	219.289	.0061
Romania	1.61554	2.04659	183.785	.0199
Slovakia	5.86013	3.53369	96.963	.0969
Slovenia	.23321	1.42741	46.819	.0355
Spain	6.02706	4.91463	1355.66	.0081
Sweden	8.79249	3.91661	552.042	.0230
United Kingdom	16.44921	8.10643	2489.674	.0099

Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2013) 'External Trade' http://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61013712, accessed 7 July 2017.

was also compiled from the IMF database (Table 1). In 2013, Latvia's trade relationship with Russia was the second largest relative economic relationship behind only Malta, whose trading relationship with Russia comprised 44% of its GDP. On the other end of the spectrum, Luxembourg possessed the lowest level of economic interdependence with Russia with only .3% of its GDP coming from its trading relationship with Russia.

As would be expected, economic interdependence between Russia and EU member states is generally correlated with geographic proximity. The larger western EU members such as France and the United Kingdom only derived .8% and .9% of their respective GDP's from trade with Russia. Germany (2% of GDP) and Italy (2.6% of GDP) are somewhat more economically interdependent with Russia. Eastern European member states are the most interdependent with Russia by a considerable margin. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania all derived at least 15% of their GDP from trade with Russia. Out of the Baltic countries, Latvia derived the largest percentage of its GDP from its trading relationship with Russia −36.9%.

Determining EU member-states' support for sanctions

The decision to impose EU-wide economic sanctions on Russia was made by the European Council, but those deliberations over the imposition of economic sanctions are not public.[1] Consequently, we examine the speeches of Members of the European Parliament (MEP) as a proxy to gauge the overall willingness of each member state to impose sanctions on Russia. This is an admittedly problematic proxy as the party membership of MEPs often does not mirror the distribution of seats in the national legislatures. The 2014 EP elections, for example, ushered in a number of fringe political parties that are sceptical of the entire European project, that collectively won nearly 30 percent of the seats in the EP (Hobolt 2015). Voters may elect MEPs from such parties as a protest against the coalition in power in the member state in a manner similar to the way American voters tend to punish the party in power during midterm elections (Hix and Marsh 2007). It may also be a reflection of the limited power of the European Parliament and the perception of many voters that they can afford to vote for more extreme parties in EP elections because the actual effects will be relatively limited (van der Ejik and Franklin 1996). To mitigate the problematic nature of this proxy, we only examine speeches made by MEPs who belonged to political parties that were part of their respective member state's coalition governments within the 2008–2014 timeframe.[2] Using this timeframe not only allows us to incorporate the 2014 governing parties' stances on the imposition of sanctions, but also facilitates the inclusion of the chief opposition parties' stances on the economic sanctions as well. Given that these parties were represented in recent governing coalitions and thus have an expectation of being part of future coalitions, speeches by this subset of MEPs can be taken as a reasonable proxy of current and potential future national positions. It is difficult to know if these statements by MEPs are representative of the current national governments but, given the relatively strong party system in most EU member states, the MEPs who spoke are likely to represent an opinion on sanctions that is prevalent, if not dominant, in the governing coalition of the member state. In addition, the issue is of sufficient political salience to drive the MEP to speak on record about the sanctions. If the opinion voiced is not the position of the national government, then it is presumably one held by a significant political constituency in the member state that drives that MEP as a member of a party in a current or recent governing coalition to take a public stance on the issue. If sanctions, or the threat of their imposition, would impose significant costs on a political constituency, we would expect those affected constituents to voice their concerns at the EP level as well as the national level and that this would be reflected in the EP debates.

We examine the record of EP debates across three periods of particular salience. The first critical period of debate is immediately before and after the Russian annexation of Crimea. The second critical period examines the debate

[1] There are some limited video recordings of Council meetings from this period, but the only available recordings from this period are press conferences that discuss the result of the meeting, not the deliberations or the stances of the member states on the sanctions.

[2] Governing coalition membership for 2008-2011 drawn from the dataset compiled by Amie Kreppel for the article, 'Legislative implications of the Lisbon Treaty: the (potential) role of ideology' *West European Politics*, Vol. 36, No.6, 2013. We thank the author for allowing the use of the data for this project.

Table 2. EU member-states' support for sanctions and economic interdependence.

EU member states	Economic interdependence	Average coding value on sanctions (1–5)
Austria	.012	4.29
Belgium	.023	4.20
Bulgaria	.054	4.50
Croatia	.030	4.09
Cyprus	.090	3.00
Czech Republic	.057	4.00
Estonia	.198	4.44
Finland	.072	3.56
France	.008	4.06
Germany	.021	4.44
Greece	.028	3.50
Hungary	.072	3.58
Ireland	.008	2.00
Italy	.026	3.78
Latvia	.370	4.00
Lithuania	.155	4.67
Malta	.004	4.00
Netherlands	.095	4.40
Poland	.054	4.17
Portugal	.006	4.00
Romania	.020	4.05
Slovakia	.097	4.00
Slovenia	.036	2.00
Spain	.008	4.33
Sweden	.023	4.50
United Kingdom	.010	3.73

Source: Economic interdependence based on IMF data in Table 1. Coding values for sanctions are based on content analysis of debates in the European Parliament.

surrounding the imposition of broad financial and sectoral sanctions on Russia by the EU. Lastly, the third critical period is that which immediately follows the imposition of Russian counter sanctions on the EU to determine if Russia's import prohibition of sensitive EU export industries-such as the agricultural sector-affect the debate regarding sanctions.

A search of these periods yields approximately 300 MEP speeches regarding the imposition of Russian sanctions (Table 2). Each speech was coded on a five-point scale based on its support or opposition for sanctions. The speeches most supportive of the economic sanctions on Russia were coded as a five, while the speeches most opposed to the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia were coded as a one. Speeches coded as two were somewhat opposed but lacked the more intense language found in speeches coded as ones. Those speeches that were indeterminate, or took a neutral stance on the issue were coded as threes.[3] For example, the following speech was classified as a five because it clearly demonstrates the speaker's strong support and very positive stance on EU's sanctions and overall response against Russia through invoking

[3] To control for coder bias and ensure internal validity, approximately 10% of the speeches were coded by an individual not involved in the project. The codes closely matched and the small variance was in the judgement of intensity.

the UN Charter and by noting the EU's 'special responsibility' to help defend Ukraine's sovereignty.

Madam President, in reaction to what the Commissioner has said, I would say that we should give Ukraine a chance. The situation in Ukraine is escalating, but it is being escalated by Russia, which is increasing the presence of its military forces and its equipment. Contrary to misleading signals from Russia, Russia did not give up its preferred scenario of creating a frozen conflict there in order to block Ukraine's path to modernity and to Europe. We owe Ukraine – our associated partner – our assistance and our full political and economic support: support for the peace plan of President Poroshenko and also support for Ukraine's right of self-defence, based on Article 51 of the UN Charter, to regain control over its territory and its borders. Our mediation is not enough. We are on the side of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The EU has special responsibility for safeguarding respect for our values of democracy and rejects the challenging of borders by force through Russian action. Consequently, we need action towards Russia. If Russia does not de-escalate or fulfil the requirements which we put on the table, the Council decision on further third-stage sanctions should be put into motion in sectors like defence, banking and energy. As a sign of our support and solidarity towards Ukraine, Parliament should quickly and swiftly proceed with the ratification of the Association Agreement (Saryusz-Wolski 2014).

All of the speeches were grouped by nationality as a proxy measurement the member states' stances on the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia (Table 3).

The four states with the highest levels of economic interdependence—Malta, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania whose trading relationships with Russia comprised 44%, 36.95%, 19.82%, and 15.51% of their respective economies—were supportive of the economic sanctions on Russia (Figures 1 and 2). The member states that were most opposed to the imposition of sanctions on Russia were states that had low or moderate levels of economic interdependence with Russia. The four EU member states least supportive of the imposition of sanctions on Russia were Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, and Slovenia, which derived .77%, 2.82%, 9.03%, and 3.55% of their GDP's from trade with Russia respectively. In fact, a regression analysis demonstrates a weak positive correlation between the level of economic interdependence and support for economic sanctions on Russia, instead of showing a predicted negative correlation between the two variables (Figure 3). The limited number of speeches available from several countries in the study is admittedly problematic for this analysis. The numbers of MEPs speaking on this issue from any single member state are limited and do not represent a statistically valid sample. In some cases, we are forced to rely on a single member's comments because that individual was the only one from a particular member state who spoke on the issue of sanctions. However, running the regression without those specific member states (Malta, Slovenia, Ireland and Sweden) only slightly changed the slope of the line but not its direction (see appendix) (Figures 4 and 5). In short, we do not claim to find a robust statistical relationship, but rather the absence of a clear negative relationship between interdependence and willingness to impose economic sanctions. The results suggest that at a minimum there is no clear relationship between economic interdependence and support for sanctions.

Table 3. MEP speeches on the EU's economic sanctions regime toward Russia.

Member state	MEP	EP political grouping	National party affiliation	Support for economic sanctions (1–5)
Austria	Hannes Swoboda	S&D	SPO	4,5,5
Austria	Heinz K. Becker	PPE	OVP	4
Austria	Elisabeth Köstinger	PPE	OVP	3
Austria	Claudia Schmidt	PPE	OVP	5
Austria	Othmar Karas	PPE	OVP	4
Belgium	Guy Verhofstadt	ALDE	VLD	4,4,4
Belgium	Louis Michel	ALDE	MR	4,4
Belgium	Frédérique Ries	ALDE	MR	5
Belgium	Marc Tarabella	S&D	SP	4,5,3
Belgium	Claude Rolin	PPE	CDH	5
Bulgaria	Andrey Kovatchev	PPE	GERB	5
Bulgaria	Mariya Gabriel	PPE	GERB	4
Croatia	Tonino Picula	S&D	SDP	3,4,4,4,4,4,2,4
Croatia	Andrej Plenković	PPE	HDZ	4,5,5,5
Croatia	Dubravka Šuica	PPE	HSZ	4,4,5
Croatia	Davor Ivo Stier	PPE	SDP	4,5,4,4
Croatia	Zdravka Bušić	PPE	SDP	4,4
Croatia	Ivan Jakovčić	ALDE	IDS	4
Cyprus	Takis Hadjigeorgiou	GUE/NGL	AKEL	2
Cyprus	Eleni Theocharous	PPE	DISY	4
Czech Republic	Dita Charanz	ALDE	TOP 09	3
Czech Republic	Jaromír Štětina	PPE	TOP 09	5
Denmark	No data			
Estonia	Tunne Kelam	PPE	IRL	5,5,5
Estonia	Siiri Oviir	ALDE	EK	4
Estonia	Ivari Padar	S&D	SDE	4,4
Estonia	Marju Lauristin	S&D	SDE	4
Estonia	Andrus Ansip	ALDE	RE	4,5
Finland	Tarja Cronberg	Verts/ALE	VIHR	3,2,3
Finland	Eija-Riitta Korhola	PPE	KD	4,4
Finland	Sirpa Pietikäinen	PPE	KOK	4,4
Finland	Heidi Hautala	Verts/ALE	VIHR	4,4
France	Franck Proust	PPE	UMP	4,4
France	Sophie Auconie	PPE	UMP	4,4
France	Philippe Juvin	PPE	UMP	4,4
France	Tokia Saïfi	PPE	UMP	4
France	Philippe Boulland	PPE	UMP	4
France	Brice Hortefeux	PPE	UMP	4
France	Constance Le Grip	PPE	UMP	4
France	Véronique Mathieu Houillon	PPE	UMP	5
France	Arnaud Danjean	PPE	UMP	4
France	Arnaud Danjean	PPE	UMP	4
France	Alain Cadec	PPE	UMP	4
France	Rachida Dati	PPE	UMP	4
France	Françoise Grossetête	PPE	UMP	4
France	Marc Joulaud	PPE	UMP	4
France	Nadine Morano	PPE	UMP	4
Germany	Elmar Brok	PPE	CDU	4,4,3,5,5,5
Germany	Knut Fleckenstein	S&D	SPD	4,4,5,4
Germany	Bernd Posselt	PPE	CDU	5,4

(*Continued*)

Member state	MEP	EP political grouping	National party affiliation	Support for economic sanctions (1–5)
Germany	Michael Gahler	PPE	CDU	5,5
Germany	Albert Deß	PPE	CDU	4
Germany	Daniel Caspary	PPE	CDU	4
Germany	Michael Gahler	PPE	CDU	5
Germany	David McAllister	PPE	CDU	5
Greece	Maria-Eleni Koppa	S&D	PASOK	4
Greece	Eva Kaili	S&D	PASOK	3
Hungary	György Schöpflin	PPE	Fidesz	4,4,4
Hungary	László Tőkés	PPE	Fidesz	5
Hungary	Kinga Gál	PPE	Fidesz	3,3
Hungary	Ágnes Hankiss	PPE	Fidesz	2
Hungary	Csaba Sándor Tabajdi	S&D	MSZP	2
Hungary	Andrea Bocskor	PPE	Fidesz	4
Hungary	Tibor Szanyi	S&D	MSZP	4
Hungary	Norbert Erdős	PPE	Fidesz	3
Hungary	Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz	PPE	Fidesz	5
Ireland	Seán Kelly	PPE	Fianna Fail	2,2
Italy	Fabrizio Bertot	PPE	FI	3
Italy	Giovanni La Via	PPE	FI	5
Italy	Claudio Morganti	EFD	LN	3,2
Italy	Crescenzio Rivellini	PPE	FI	4
Italy	Licia Ronzulli	PPE	FI	4
Italy	Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris	PPE	FI	5,4
Italy	Lara Comi	PPE	FI	4
Italy	Alberto Cirio	PPE	FI	4
Italy	Elisabetta Gardini	PPE	FI	2
Latvia	Inese Vaidere	PPE	VI	4
Latvia	Sandra Kalniete	PPE	VI	4,5,3,4
Latvia	Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė	PPE	VI	4
Lithuania	Vytautas Landsbergis	PPE	HU-LChD	5
Lithuania	Laima Liucija Andrikienė	PPE	HU-LChD	5
Lithuania	Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė	PPE	HU-LChD	4,4
Lithuania	Algirdas Saudargas	PPE	HU-LChD	5
Lithuania	Gabriel Landsbergis	PPE	HU-LChD	5
Malta	Roberta Metsola	PPE	Nationalist	4
Netherlands	Johannes Cornelis van Baalen	ALDE	VVD	5,5,4,5,5
Netherlands	Emine Bozkurt	S&D	PvdA	3
Netherlands	Ria Oomen-Ruijten	PPE	CDA	4
Netherlands	Kati Piri	S&D	PvdA	4
Netherlands	Annie Schreijer-Pierik	PPE	CDA	4
Netherlands	Esther de Lange	PPE	CDA	5
Poland	Ryszard Antoni Legutko	ECR	PiS	5,5
Poland	Zbigniew Ziobro	EFD	PiS	3,3
Poland	Jacek Protasiewicz	PPE	PO	5,4
Poland	Krzysztof Lisek	PPE	PO	4,4,5
Poland	Jan Kozłowski	PPE	PO	4,4

(*Continued*)

Member state	MEP	EP political grouping	National party affiliation	Support for economic sanctions (1–5)
Poland	Filip Kaczmarek	PPE	PO	3,5
Poland	Bogusław Sonik	PPE	PO	4
Poland	Tadeusz Cymański	EFD	PiS	4
Poland	Jacek Włosowicz	EFD	PiS	3
Poland	Ryszard Czarnecki	ECR	PiS	4,4
Poland	Jacek Olgierd Kurski	EFD	PiS	5
Poland	Mirosław Piotrowski	ECR	Independent	4
Poland	Pawel Zalewski	PPE	PO	4
Poland	Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska	PPE	PO	4
Poland	Anna Elzbieta Fotyga	ECR	PiS	5,5
Poland	Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa	PPE	PO	5
Poland	Janusz Wojciechowski	ECR	PiS	5,5
Poland	Beata Barbara Gosiewska	ECR	PiS	2
Poland	Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuźmiuk	ECR	PiS	3
Poland	Zdzisław Krasnodębski	ECR	Indp.	5
Portugal	Ana Gomes	S&D	PS	4,5,5,4
Portugal	Luís Paulo Alves	S&D	PS	4,4
Portugal	Maria Da Graça Carvalho	PPE	PSD	5
Portugal	Edite Estrela	S&D	PS	4
Portugal	Maria do Céu Patrão Neves	PPE	PSD	4,4
Portugal	Vital Moreira	S&D	PS	2
Portugal	Nuno Teixeira	PPE	PSD	5
Portugal	Ricardo Serrão Santos	S&D	PS	3
Portugal	Francisco Assis	S&D	PS	3
Romania	Marian-Jean Marinescu	PPE	PD-L	5
Romania	Daniel Buda	PPE	PD-L	4
Romania	Ioan Mircea Paşcu	S&D	PSD	4,4,4,5,4
Romania	Csaba Sógor	PPE	UDMR	3,3,3
Romania	Elena Băsescu	PPE	PD = L	4,4
Romania	Ioan Enciu	S&D	PSD	4
Romania	Silvia-Adriana Ţicău	S&D	PSD	5,4
Romania	Corina Creţu	S & D	PSD	4,4
Romania	Eduard-Raul Hellvig	ALDE	PD-L	4,4
Romania	Victor Boştinaru	S&D	PSD	4
Romania	Cristian-Silviu Buşoi	PPE	PD-L	4
Romania	Andi-Lucian Cristea	S&D	PSD	5
Slovakia	Boris Zala	S&D	Smer	5,4,4,4,5
Slovakia	Katarina Neved'alová	S&D	Smer	4
Slovakia	Richard Sulík	ALDE	SaS	
Slovakia	Monika Flašíková Beňová	S&D	Smer	3,2
Slovakia	Anna Záborská	PPE	KDH	4
Slovakia	Vladimir Maňka	S&D	Smer	4
Slovakia	Ivan Štefanec	PPE	KDH	5
Slovenia	Ivo VAJGL	ALDE	DeSUS	2,2
Spain	Antonio Masip Hidalgo	S&D	PSOE	5
Spain	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García	S&D	PSOE	3
Spain	José Blanco López	S&D	PSOE	5

(*Continued*)

Member state	MEP	EP political grouping	National party affiliation	Support for economic sanctions (1–5)
Sweden	Gunnar Hökmark	PPE	M	4,5
United Kingdom	Charles Tannock	ECR	Conservatives	3,4,4,4,5
United Kingdom	Daniel Hannan	ECR	Conservatives	1
United Kingdom	Richard Howitt	S&D	Labor	4,4,4,5
United Kingdom	Kay Swinburne	ECR	Conservatives	4
United Kingdom	Derek Vaughan	S&D	Labor	4
United Kingdom	Graham Watson	ALDE	Liberal Dems	4
United Kingdom	David Martin	S&D	Labor	4
United Kingdom	Julie Girling	ECR	Conservatives	2

Source: MEP speeches on the EU's economic sanctions regime toward Russia from the European Parliament website accessed 7 July 2017. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2014-09-15-ITM-018_EN.html?redirect

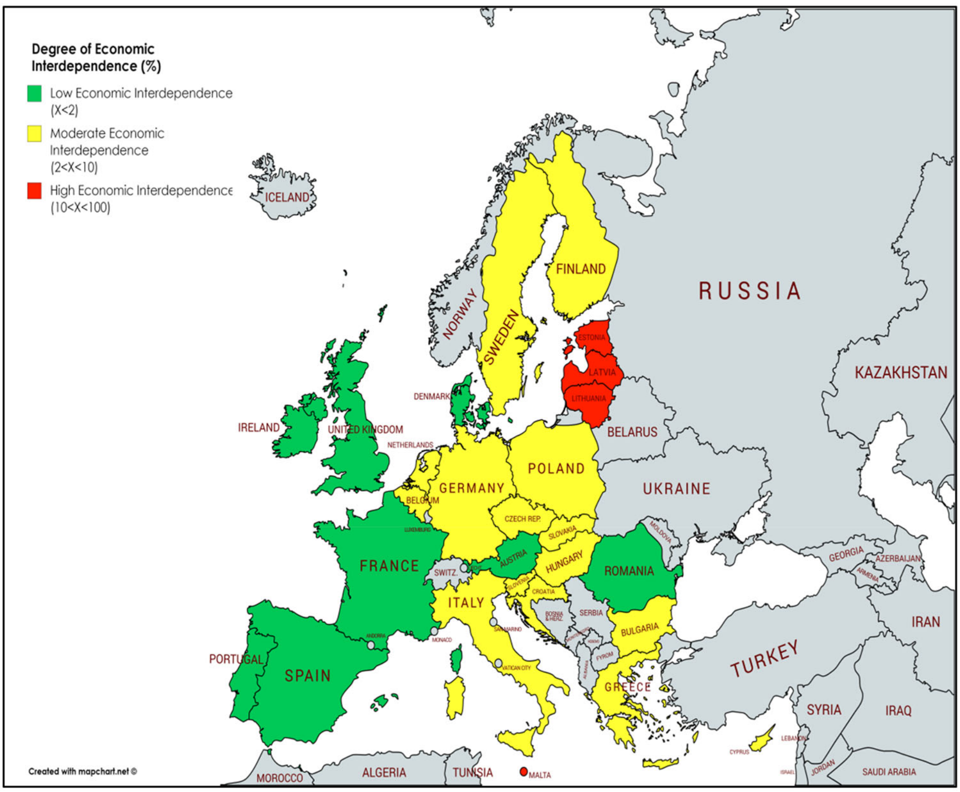

Figure 1. EU member-states economic interdependence with Russia. Source: Economic interdependence data calculated from IMF (2013) 'External Trade' <http://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61013712>, accessed 7 July 2017.

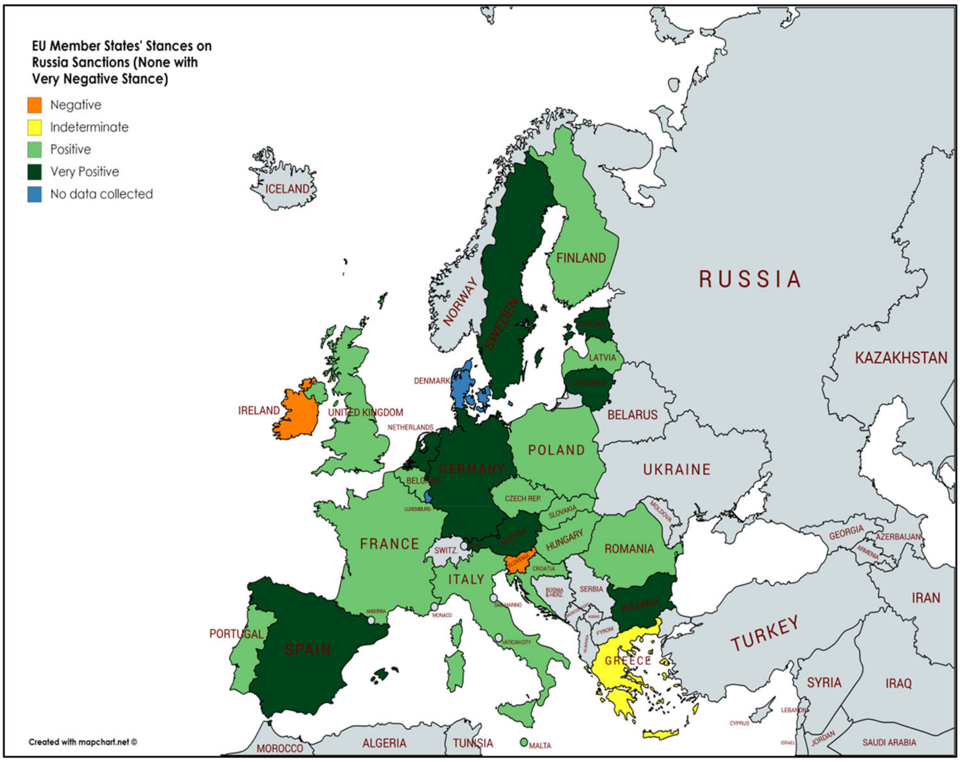

Figure 2. EU member states' stances on Russia sanctions. Source: EU Member States' Stances on Russia are based on the authors' content analysis of MEP debates.

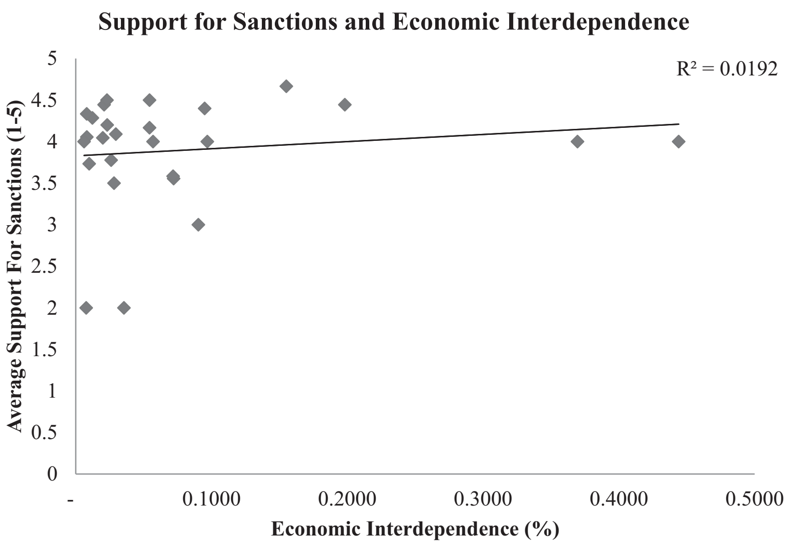

Figure 3. Regression model of economic interdependence and support for sanctions. Source: Regression models in Figures 3–5 are calculated from IMF data and authors' measurement of support for sanctions based on content analysis of MEP debates.

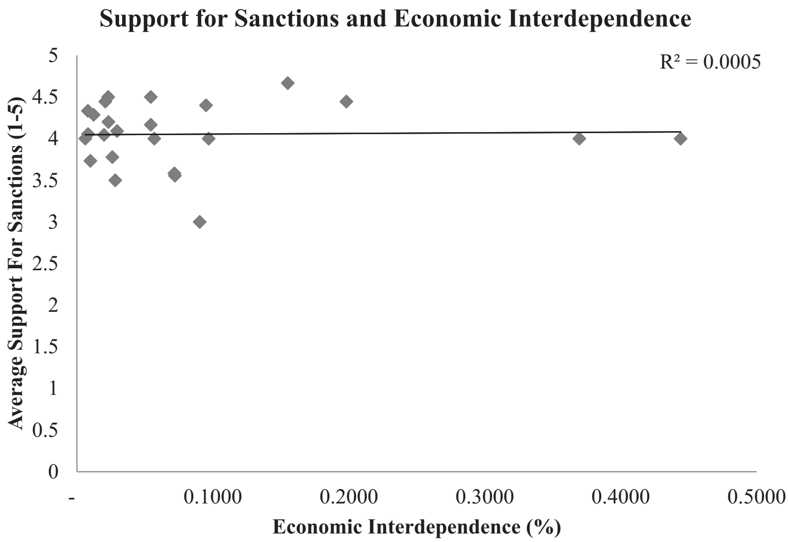

Figure 4. Regression model of economic interdependence and support for sanctions (excluding Slovenia and Ireland outliers).

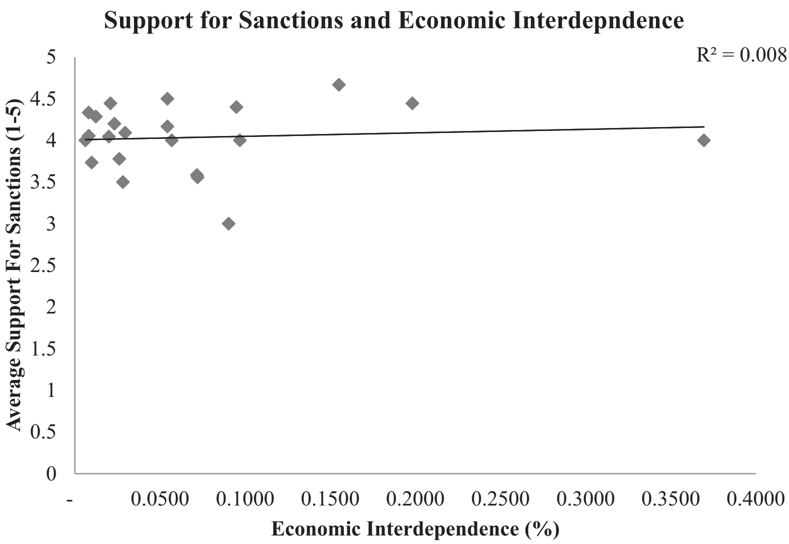

Figure 5. Regression model of economic interdependence and support for sanctions (excluding Malta, Sweden, Ireland, and Slovenia).

Security and EU member-states' support for sanctions

Economic self-interest does not appear to predict an EU member state's stance on imposing economic sanctions on Russia. If that were true, we would expect to find that the most interdependent states with the most to lose from the sanctions would oppose them, or at least not be among the most ardent supporters of sanctions. This raises the question of what is the motivating factor or factors that would predict a member state's position on the use of sanctions. The most likely explanation is that security concerns regarding Russia have an obvious degree of importance for the states bordering Russia which were dominated for decades by Soviet Union, and that they are willing to risk economic losses to insulate themselves against possible future Russian actions. Geographic proximity correlates with economic interdependence, but it is also an obvious source of security concerns, particularly for smaller states bordering on more powerful neighbours.

Some of the most ardent supporters of sanctions in the EP were from Sweden, Poland, Romania, Estonia and Lithuania. As a non-NATO state that has experienced intense Russian testing of its airspace, Sweden has an obvious security interest in promoting a strong EU response (Grygiel and Mitchell 2016; Dearden 2014). While Estonia, Latvia and Poland are NATO members and protected by Article V's collective defence clause, their national executives have clearly expressed the sentiment typified by a Lithuanian MEP that, 'Russia is a threat not only to Lithuania but to the whole region and to all of Europe' (Grybauskaitė 2017). The hybrid warfare on display in Crimea and eastern Ukraine could be seen as a testing of western resolve and the boundaries of acceptable action. Unless a significant cost was imposed on Russia for its actions in Ukraine, it is possible that it would attempt a similar sort of action based on the pretence of aiding oppressed ethnic Russian minorities in the Baltic states. This concern was a significant factor in the decision of NATO to establish new military formations in all three Baltic states to discourage such adventures. Estonia and Lithuania, despite possessing extremely high levels of economic interdependence with Russia, have been the strongest proponents of economic sanctions because these states perceive Russia's actions in Ukraine to be a national security threat. Sanctions in and of themselves do not constitute a deterrent to military action, but they send a signal of resolve that is heighted by the cost to the sender state (Martin 1993). Following Drezner, states are willing to sacrifice economic gains from trade to mitigate threats to the future security interests (2011). By forcefully advocating sanctions these states are leveraging the power of membership in the EU to harness the collective power of the EU in their national security interest. There does not have to be an expectation of direct link between sanctions and changes in Russian policy toward Ukraine for sanctions to be highly beneficial to the most exposed EU member states. If, as Giumelli (2017) and Christie (2016) both argue, the sanctions constrain future Russian actions or signal that the EU may take further action, then they can be a relatively inexpensive means by which smaller and exposed members of the EU can improve their future security.

Conclusion

In sum, the level of economic interdependence between Russia and the member states of the EU did not appear to have a significant impact on the support for sanctions among MEPs from the various member states. Thus, the logic of economic interdependence that underlies the liberal principle that more interdependent states should generally avoid conflict out of economic self-interest than states which are less interdependent is brought into some doubt in this case. Economic sanctions are clearly not on the same level as violent conflict, but we would nonetheless expect that economic self-interest would impact on the decision to impose them. In this case, MEPs from many of the more interdependent member states of the EU were the most forceful proponents of imposing sanctions on Russia, despite the possibility that they would suffer disproportionate economic losses as a result. The same logic should apply, but in keeping with Drezner's argument, broader security concerns about the future appear to dominate over immediate economic self-interest.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix

Guidelines for coding MEP speeches support of EU sanctions

Very Negative: Strongly criticizes the EU's response and involvement in the Ukraine crisis.

Negative: Using less glaringly critical adjectives, criticizes the EU's response and involvement in the Ukraine crisis.

Neutral/Indeterminate: Argues for the EU's non-involvement in the Ukraine crisis and is not critical of the EU or Russia. Or, offers contradictory opinions on the EU's involvement and response in the Ukraine crisis.

Positive: Condemns Russia's actions in Ukraine and praises the EU's involvement and response in the Ukraine crisis.

Very Positive: Strongly condemns Russia's actions and Ukraine while strongly praising the EU's involvement and response in the Ukraine crisis.