

Snap Poll: Will China, Iran, and Russia Cooperate with the United States?

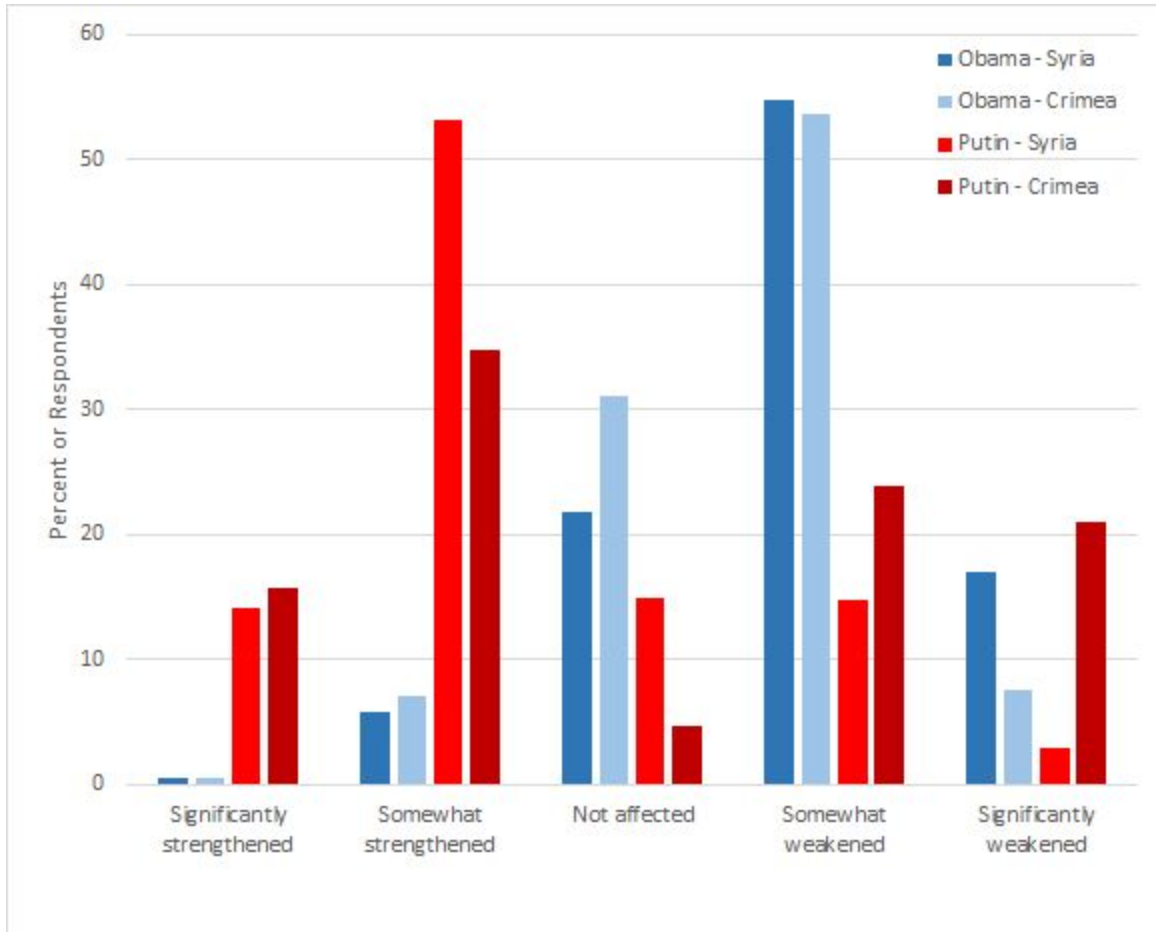
We asked IR scholars about China, Russia, the refugee crisis, the Iran deal, presidential reputations, and whether economic sanctions are effective.

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The visit to the United States by Chinese President Xi Jinping, the ongoing crisis caused by migrants fleeing civil war in Syria, and Presidents Obama and Putin's speeches to the United Nations dominated the news when the [Teaching, Research, and International Policy \(TRIP\)](#) project at the College of William & Mary launched its most recent Snap Poll of international relations (IR) scholars. This poll, conducted in collaboration with *Foreign Policy*, is the seventh in the series sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It was in the field September 28-30 and includes responses from 694 of the 4,086 IR scholars at colleges and universities throughout the United States. (Read the complete TRIP [Snap Poll results here](#).)

Russia: Friend or Foe?

Last week's UN General Assembly meeting saw Presidents Obama and Putin espousing drastically different views on a range of issues. Each leader's speech included veiled and explicit references to the other's policies and reputations. Both agreed, at least rhetorically, that the Islamic State is the main enemy in Syria, but the two leaders differed on the role that other rebels and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad should play in combatting ISIS. The Snap Poll asked scholars how recent events in Syria have affected the reputations of Putin and Obama.



(For Ed: Below are tables with the values for the above chart)

	Obama	Putin
	Syria	Syria
Significantly strengthened	1	14
Somewhat strengthened	6	53
Not affected	22	15
Somewhat weakened	55	15
Significantly weakened	17	3
	Crimea	Crimea
Significantly strengthened	1	16
Somewhat strengthened	7	35

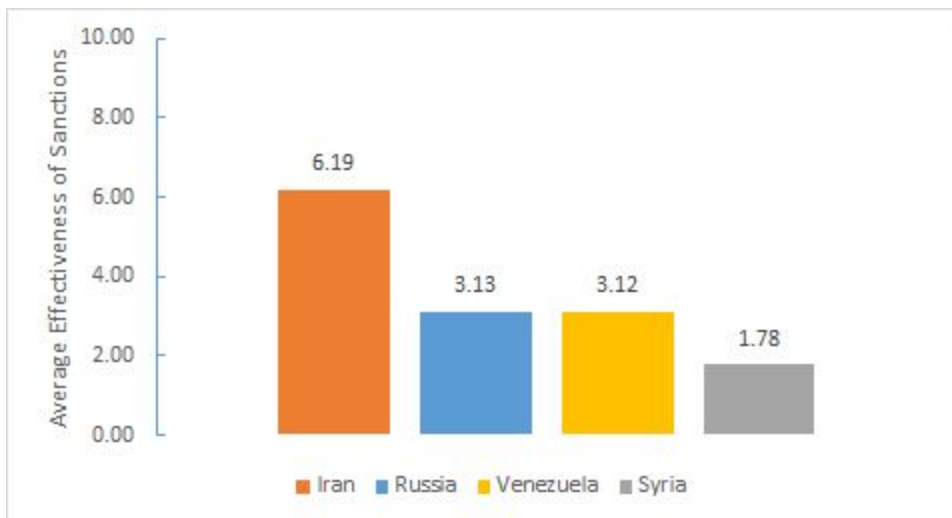
Not affected	31	5
Somewhat weakened	54	22
Significantly weakened	8	21

Scholars think that Obama’s handling of the Syrian crisis, on net, has had a negative impact on his reputation. IR experts may not agree with Russia’s assertive actions in Syria, but this approach appears to have strengthened Putin’s reputation. To be clear, these questions were asked before Russia’s three-day bombing of non-ISIS rebels. Time will tell how aiding Assad against ISIS and US-backed rebels will play out, but some already suggest this only will [exacerbate](#) the reputation gap.

Scholars seemed similarly negative in their assessment of the impact of events in Crimea on Obama’s reputation. They were more split, however, when evaluating the reputational effects for Putin. It is unsurprising, given scholars’ negative estimation of the consequences of events in Crimea for Obama’s reputation, that they [were skeptical about the impact of U.S.-led economic sanctions](#) designed to alter Russian behavior. These are the same sanctions that Obama touted from the podium at the UN General Assembly.

Iran Nuclear Agreement: Sanctions Mattered

Academics are much more positive about the effectiveness of sanctions against Iran than they are about those aimed at Russia. When asked how effective sanctions were in changing Iranian policy, scholars on average put them at about 6 on a zero-to-ten scale. As the chart below illustrates, sanctions targeting other states were judged to be far less effective.

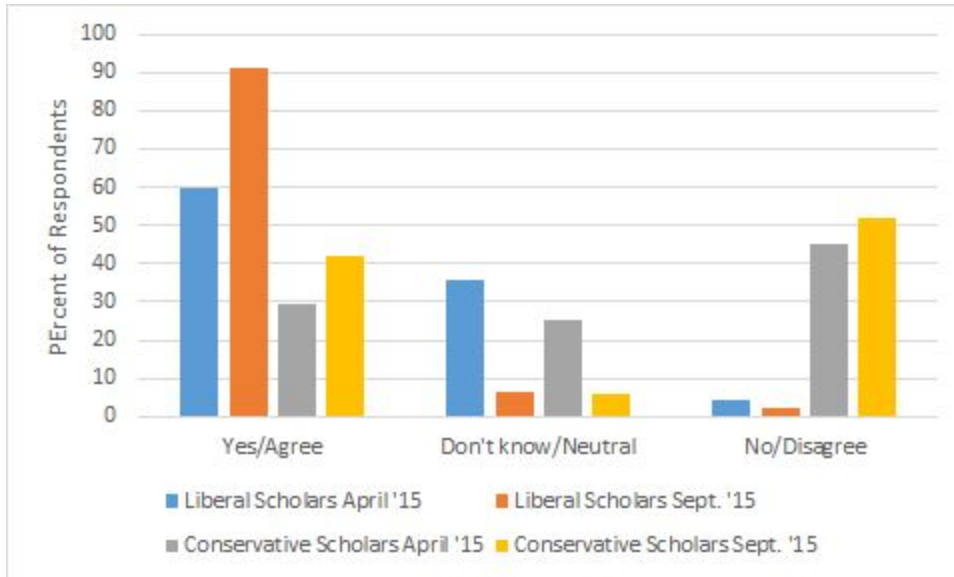


[Note to Ed: The numbers are provided to make it easier for you to create the graphic. Please do not include the values on the actual graphic.]

The same academic experts have strong (and growing) confidence in the effectiveness of the recently negotiated agreement between Iran and the international community, designed to ensure that Iran will not obtain a nuclear weapon. [Fifty-five percent agreed and another 24 percent strongly agreed](#) that the recent P5+1 deal with Iran provides international inspectors sufficient ability to monitor Iranian compliance.

As time goes by--and as details of the Iran deal have been publicly debated, endorsed by the UN Security Council, and overcome opposition in the U.S. Congress--IR scholars have grown more optimistic about the substance of the Iran nuclear deal. Between April 6 and September 30, the total proportion of IR scholars who believe that the verification protocols in the Iran deal will be effective increased from 57 to nearly 80 percent.

Large majorities of scholars who specialize in every issue area, paradigm, and research method judge the verification provisions to be sufficient. Each group has grown more confident in the effectiveness of these provisions since April. Nonetheless, scholars' political views affect their assessments of the Iran agreement. Those who describe themselves as conservative are far more likely than self-described liberals to doubt the efficacy of the Iran deal. [When we first asked IR scholars' views](#) on the Iran deal on April 6 of this year, 45 percent of conservative scholars did not believe that the Iran deal would sufficiently enable inspectors to monitor Iranian compliance. Today, the proportion of conservative scholars who remain skeptical of the deal's verification provisions is slightly higher (52 percent). In April, liberal scholars were slightly less wary of the agreement than were conservatives. But confidence among liberal scholars has increased dramatically from 60 percent in April to 91 percent today. Substantial portions of both liberal and conservative scholars answered "don't know/neutral" in April. As more details on the deal have emerged, however, *both* liberal and conservative scholars shifted from the middle category, as shown in the graph below.



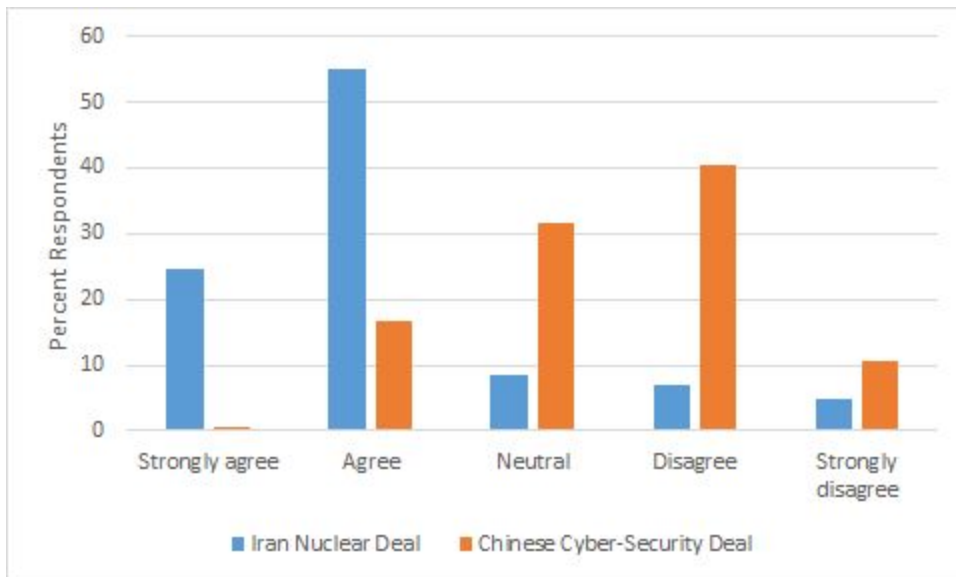
	Liberal Scholars		Conservative Scholars	
	April '15	Sept. '15	April '15	Sept. '15
Yes/Agree	60	91	30	42
Don't know/Neutral	36	6	26	6
No/Disagree	5	3	45	52

China: Friend or Foe?

Some recent commentators describe the construction of airstrips in the South China Sea as [3000 acre aircraft carriers](#) that will shift the balance of power, while others see them as “[sand castles](#)” with only limited staying power. IR scholars are not overly concerned that existing airstrips in the South China Sea will lead to conflict in the next five years, but they do worry about China building additional airstrips in the region. On a scale of 0 to 10 scholars rate the likelihood of violent confrontation in the South China Sea with the current number of airstrips at just under 4. Should China build a second airstrip on Subi Reef, [as some analysts claim it may be doing](#), IR scholars fear that the likelihood of confrontation climbs above 5. This survey was conducted less than one week before the U.S. government

indicated it was [likely to increase naval patrols](#) in the region as a direct response to the construction of this “Great Wall of Sand.”

Despite ongoing disagreement between the United States and China over territorial rights in the South China Sea, President’s Xi’s visit to the United States was marked by some conciliatory notes and an explicit agreement to cooperate. Following last year’s bilateral [agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions](#), Presidents Obama and Xi announced a new agreement in which their two countries agreed not to conduct cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property from each other. When asked whether the agreement will successfully reduce the instances of cyber-enabled thefts, IR scholars appear quite skeptical: more than 51 percent disagree or strongly disagree that the agreement will be effective, and only 17 percent agree. Fewer than one percent strongly agree. Those who specialize in the study of [international organizations are somewhat more sanguine](#): nearly 29 percent agree that the cyber-security agreement will be effective. As the chart below illustrates, IR scholars are neither inherently optimistic nor pessimistic about the efficacy of recent international agreements. They predict that some deals like the Iran agreement will be effective, while others like the cyber-security pact will not. Time will tell in both cases.



[Note to Ed: Here are the values for the above chart]

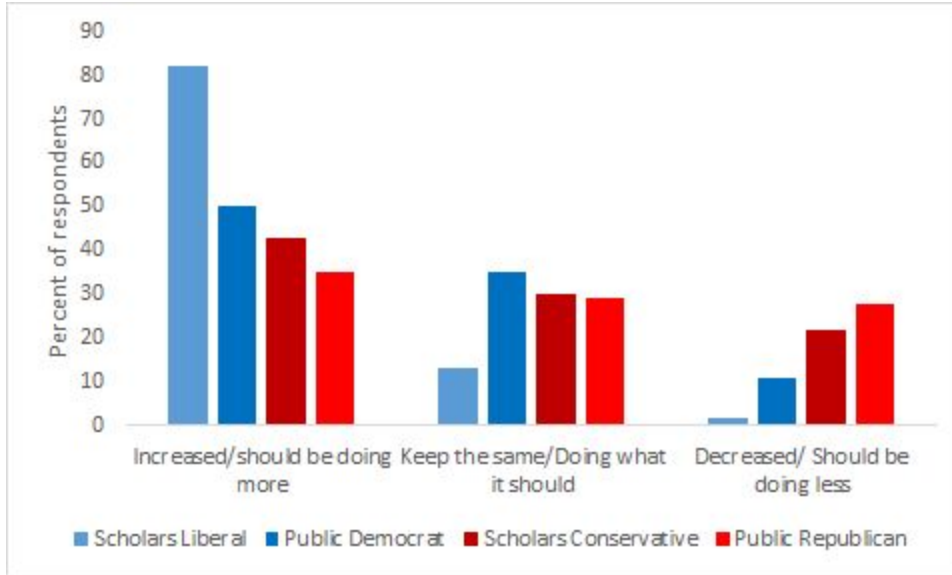
	Iran deal	China-cyber
Strongly agree	25	1

Agree	55	17
Neutral	9	32
Disagree	7	40
Strongly disagree	5	11

Immigration Policy: You are Welcome

The civil war raging in Syria has resulted in [over a quarter million](#) deaths and the displacement of [over half the population](#). Increasingly, this internal catastrophe has spilled over Syria's borders to exacerbate the refugee crisis in Europe and led to calls for the United States to accept more refugees. In September the U.S. State Department responded to the humanitarian crisis by increasing the number of refugees who will be granted asylum from 70,000 to 100,000. When we asked IR scholars about the new cap, just over 70 percent supported a further increase beyond 100,000, while just over 6 percent said the cap should be decreased.

The public discussion on accepting refugees has been loudest in Europe, but the issue also has made its way into the the 2016 U.S. Presidential race. Current Republican frontrunner, Donald Trump, illustrates the complexity of opinions on this issue in his shift from [support on humanitarian grounds](#) for accepting additional refugees to [opposition on security grounds](#). The chart below compares the [views of public partisans](#) to IR scholars on opposite sides of the ideological divide. Liberal scholars, who also make up the majority of the sample, overwhelmingly support increasing U.S. efforts in accommodating refugees, but conservative IR scholars are only slightly more supportive than Republicans in the public.

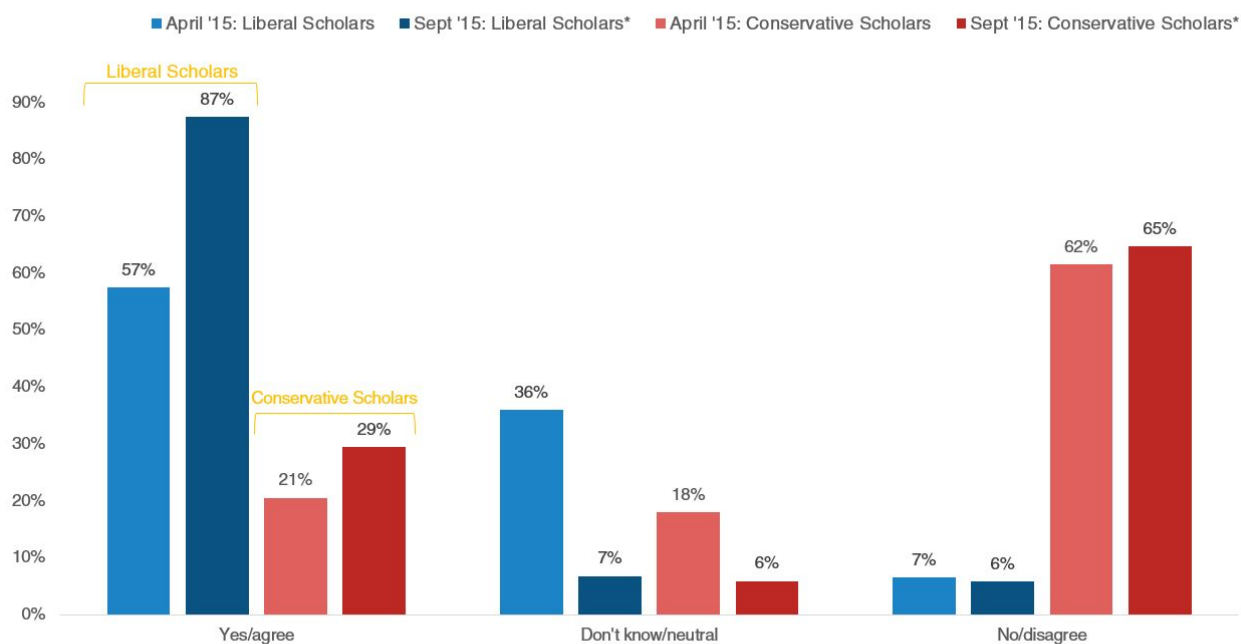


[Note for Ed: Below are the values to create the above chart. Feel free to change the order of the categories to “Liberal Scholars, Democrats in the Public, Conservative Scholars, etc.” if it is more clear.]

	Scholars		Public	
	Liberal	Conservative	Democrat	Republican
Increased/should be doing more	82	43	50	35
Keep the same/Doing what it should	13	30	35	29
Decreased/ Should be doing less	2	22	11	28

Does the Iranian nuclear agreement give international inspectors sufficient ability to monitor Iranian compliance?

*Different question asked to scholars in September: The recent agreement between Iran and the international community, designed to ensure that Iran will not obtain a nuclear weapon, gives international inspectors sufficient ability to monitor Iranian compliance with the agreement



Source: *Treaching, Research, and International Policy* (2014, 2015)

Draft:

IR Experts and Contemporary Policy Issues

The civil war raging inside Syria has resulted in [over a quarter million](#) deaths, [over \\$200 billion](#) in economic losses, displacement of [over half the population](#), and the destruction of priceless [cultural artifacts](#). Moreover, this internal catastrophe has increasingly spilled over Syria's borders to exacerbate the refugee crisis in Europe, destabilize Iraq, and catalyze the most far-reaching Russian military deployment in decades. In fact, the initial Russian airstrikes in this operation targeted U.S.-backed rebel groups rather than ISIS, which has [dramatically increased tension](#) between Russia and its former Cold War rival.