



TRIP Snap Poll I: Nine Questions on Current Global Issues for International Relations Scholars

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Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) Project
Institute for the Theory and Practice of International Relations (ITPIR)
The College of William & Mary

<http://www.wm.edu/offices/itpir/>

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Methodology: We contacted all International Relations scholars in the U.S. We define IR scholars as individuals who are employed at a university in a political science department or public policy school and who teach or conduct research on issues that cross international borders.

The poll was open February 24-27, 2014. Of the 2,805 scholars across the U.S. that we contacted, 908 responded. The resulting response rate is approximately 30 percent, and the margin of error for the poll is +/-2.7 percent. In terms of gender, tenure status, and university ranking, our respondents are statistically indistinguishable from the general population of IR scholars in the U.S.

Introduction

By Daniel Maliniak, Susan Peterson, Ryan Powers, and Michael J. Tierney

We are pleased to share results from the first Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) Snap Poll. In this brief survey, we capture the views of international relations (IR) scholars on contemporary global affairs. With generous support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, we will field these Snap Polls several times a year to provide real-time data on emerging public debates on foreign policy issues, in the wake of significant policy proposals, or during international crises. In our first poll, we asked scholars their views on a number of issues, including the conflict in Syria, the crisis in Ukraine, and proposed cuts to the U.S. defense budget. A shorter version of the topline results are published on ForeignPolicy.com.

How TRIP Snap Polls work

TRIP Snap Polls survey all IR scholars in the United States. To be included in our sample, individuals must be employed at a U.S. university in a political science department or policy school and teach or conduct research on issues that cross international borders. To date we have identified 2,805 individuals who fit these criteria. The first Snap Poll was open for 75 hours from 9:00pm Monday, February 24 to 11:59pm Thursday, February 27. In this first survey, 908 scholars responded to our nine questions, a response rate of more than 30 percent. The limited demographic information that we have on our respondents suggests that they are broadly representative of the discipline as a whole. At the end of this essay we provide statistics demonstrating that our sample matched the broader population of the IR sub-field.

What can policy makers and the public learn from the academy?

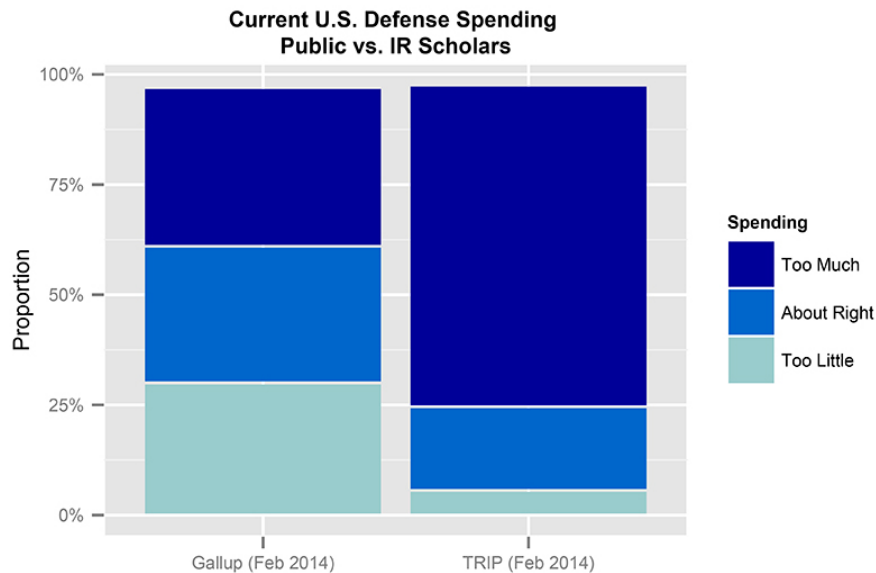
We hope the results of our snap polls will contribute to the public discussion of international events and policy issues among government officials, journalists, foundation staff, researchers, and the public. In contrast to the role that experts from other disciplines play in the policy process, IR scholars are [often not well-represented](#) in the public discourse on foreign policy issues. The views of economists on macroeconomic issues are [often highlighted in the press](#) and [policy circles](#). Similarly, the [views of climate scientists](#), if not as influential as they once were, inform a significant part of public and political discussions.

As Nicholas Kristof's [recent op-ed](#) suggests, many commentators lament the “irrelevance” of political scientists and IR scholars to public and policy debates. Despite the [trenchant criticism](#) of [Kristof's claims](#), many IR scholars agree that they have less influence in the policy process than their colleagues in other disciplines. In our [2008 TRIP survey](#) of IR scholars, respondents described their disciplines as less influential than economics, climatology, medicine, law, and science in general.

By providing real-time, systematic estimates of expert academic opinion on contemporary global policy and politics, TRIP Snap Polls can contribute to recent efforts by IR bloggers (see [Monkey Cage](#), [Duck of Minerva](#), [Political Violence at a Glance](#), etc...) and others to communicate scholars' views to policy makers and the public. We do not expect that a consensus among IR scholars on some issue will lead directly to policy proposals, but such results may provide a focal point for follow-up questions and analysis. For example, the overwhelming consensus among IR scholars that the [2003 invasion of Iraq was a bad idea](#) and would ultimately [reduce U.S. national security](#) was not part of the debate about whether the U.S. should use military force in Iraq. TRIP Snap Polls are one example of recent initiatives to encourage IR scholars to [bridge the gap](#) between the ivory tower and the beltway.

Over time, TRIP Snap Polls will include at least five different types of questions. First, we ask scholars about their policy preferences. In this first survey, for instance, we query respondents about the conditions, if any, under which they would support U.S. military intervention in Syria.

Second, to explore differences and similarities between scholarly and public opinion, we ask IR scholars questions that have been asked of the general public. Building upon a question that is similar to a long-asked Gallup question, for example, we ask IR scholars about their views on the current level of defense spending. The contrast between scholarly and public opinion on this issue is stark. Just five percent of IR scholars believe that the United States is spending “too little” on defense, whereas this [figure stands at 28 percent](#) among the U.S. public.



Third, we ask IR scholars to evaluate policy proposals. In this first poll we ask our respondents about the effect of recently proposed defense budget cuts on the national security of the United States.

Fourth, we ask IR scholars to predict outcomes. In this first survey, we ask IR scholars to forecast the behavior of the Syrian regime, the outcome on the ground six months from now in Ukraine, and whether Russia would intervene militarily in Ukraine. On this last question, we didn’t have to wait for the survey to close to find out whether our earliest respondents were correct. Along with much of the world, the IR scholarly community was surprised by the Russian intervention in Ukraine. Only a small minority (14%) correctly predicted Russian actions, while a majority (56%) of respondents said that Russia would not intervene militarily.

In fairness, the consensus within the IR scholarly community mirrored that within the U.S. intelligence community. On Wednesday, two U.S. officials [told CNN](#) that U.S. military intelligence “sees no immediate indication the Russians are preparing for any offensive military action in Ukraine.” On Thursday a “senior U.S. intelligence” [told The Daily Beast](#), “From an intelligence perspective we don’t have any reason to think [Russian actions are] more than military exercises.” On Friday, as it became more clear that Russia was intervening, a Senate aide [told The Daily Beast](#): “Nobody thought Putin was going to invade last night. He has the G8 summit in Sochi coming up, no one really saw this kind of thing coming.” It is likely that, in some situations, IR scholars with particular regional or substantive expertise will be better at forecasting events in their areas of expertise. In the case of Russian military intervention in Ukraine,

however, we observed very little variation in the ability of experts to make accurate predictions across sub-fields of study.

Table 1: Responses to question 7, “Will Russian military forces intervene in response to the political crisis in Ukraine?” Overall responses followed by responses from scholars who study international security and Eastern Europe and Russia.

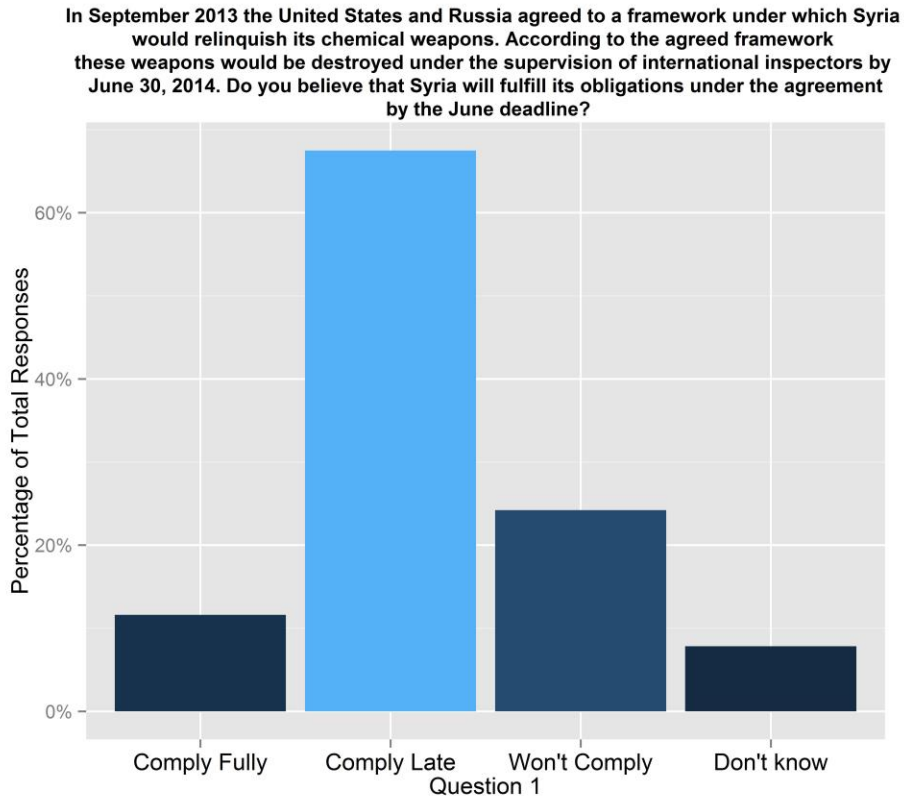
Response	All Respondents (N=908)	International Security Scholars Only (N=147)	Eastern Europe and Russia Scholars Only (N=27)
Yes	13.92%	15.6%	12.6%
No	57.5%	61.2%	58.3%
Don't know	28.6%	23.1%	29.1%

Finally, in future Snap Polls we hope to ask IR scholars to explain why particular actions have been taken or certain outcomes occurred within international affairs. Arguably, this is what scholars do best -- use systematic logic and evidence to explain why things happen the way they do. Since such explanations shape the way that citizens and policymakers are likely to approach the next crisis or decision, it makes sense to understand what scholars believe about cause and effect, especially if there is an epistemic consensus among the experts. These are precisely the conditions where economists, epidemiologists, and climatologists have the greatest impact on public policy -- when they agree on cause and effect. If John Maynard Keynes is correct that “Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy [from some academic scribbler of a few years back](#),” then it makes sense to record in real time what these academics think long before their scribbles find their way into print.

Survey Results

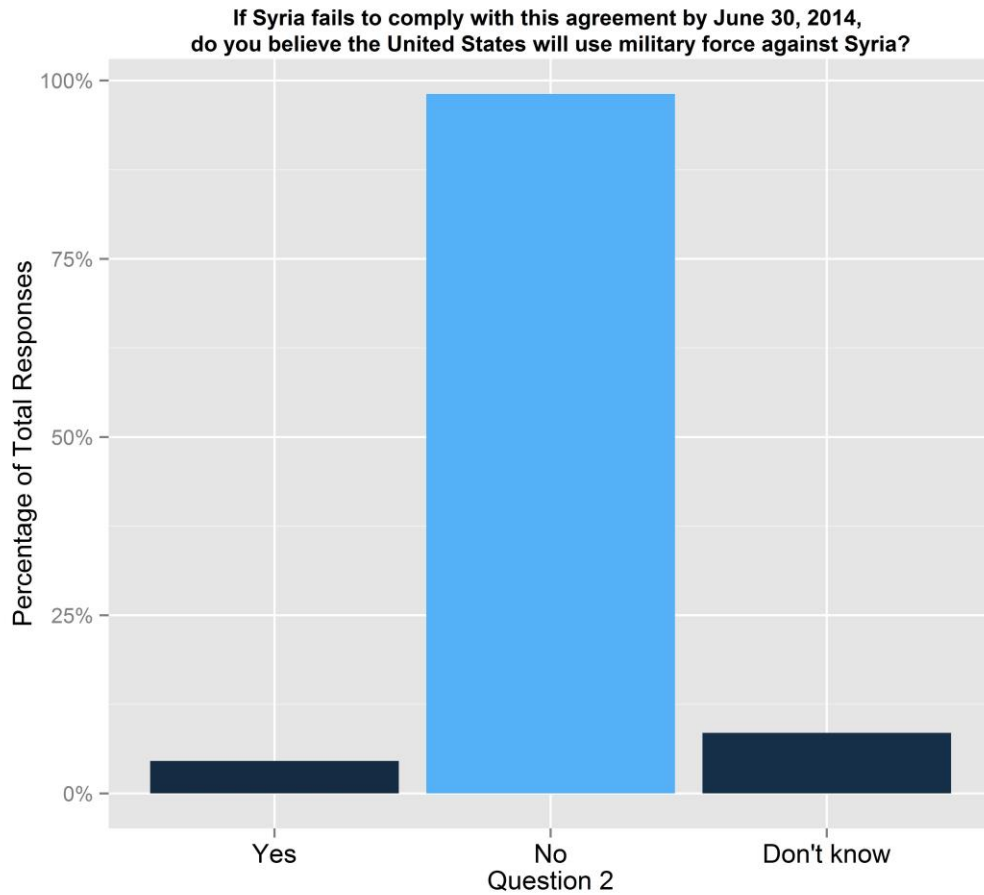
Question 1: In September 2013 the United States and Russia agreed to a framework under which Syria would relinquish its chemical weapons. According to the agreed framework these weapons would be destroyed under the supervision of international inspectors by June 30, 2014. Do you believe that Syria will fulfill its obligations under the agreement by the June deadline?

Response Option	Count	Percent
Syria will comply by June 30, 2014	95	10.45%
Syria will not comply by June 30, 2014, but it ultimately will comply with the agreement	552	60.73%
Syria will not comply with the agreement	198	21.78%
Don't know	64	7.04%



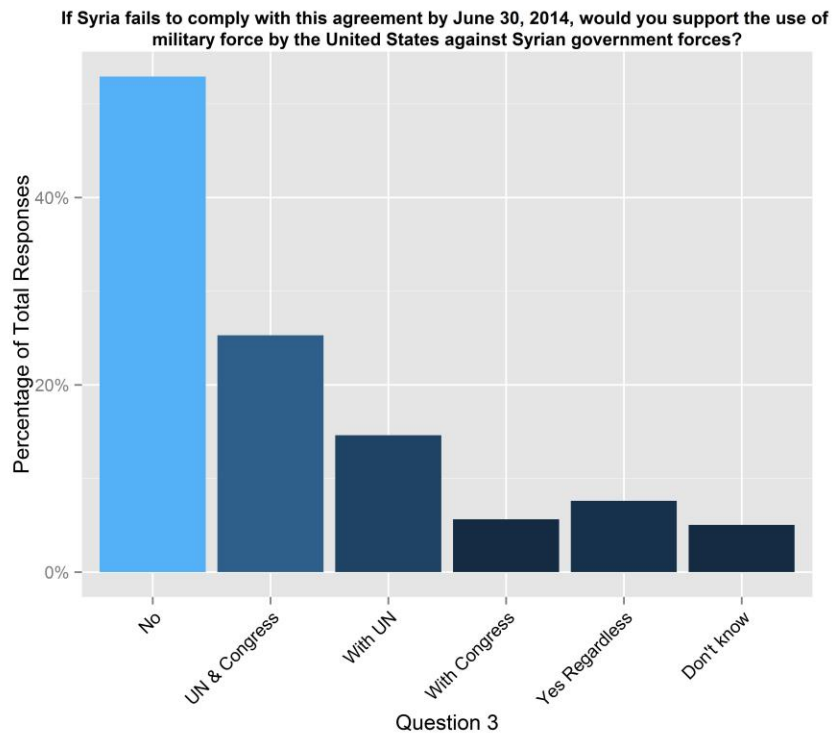
Question 2: If Syria fails to comply with this agreement by June 30, 2014, do you believe the United States will use military force against Syria?

Response Option	Count	Percent
Yes	37	4.09%
No	799	88.29%
Don't know	69	7.62%



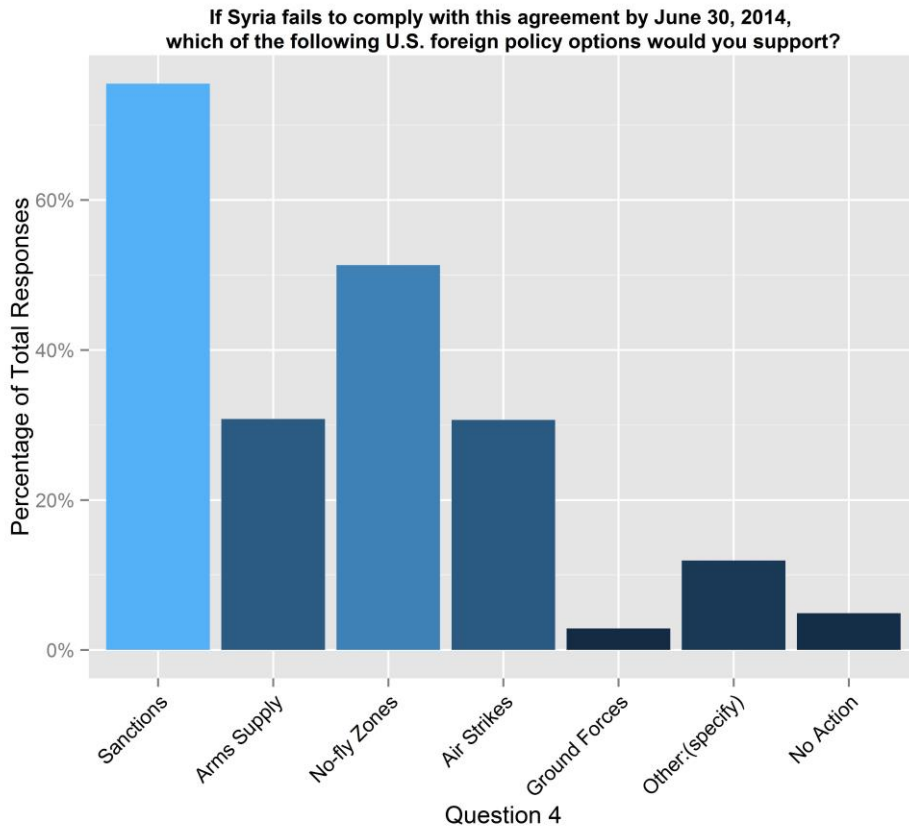
Question 3: If Syria fails to comply with this agreement by June 30, 2014, would you support the use of military force by the United States against Syrian government forces?

Response Option	Count	Percent
No	431	47.62%
Yes, with UN authorization and congressional approval	206	22.76%
Yes, with UN authorization	119	13.15%
Yes, with congressional approval	46	5.08%
Yes, regardless of UN or congressional approval	62	6.85%
Don't know	41	4.53%



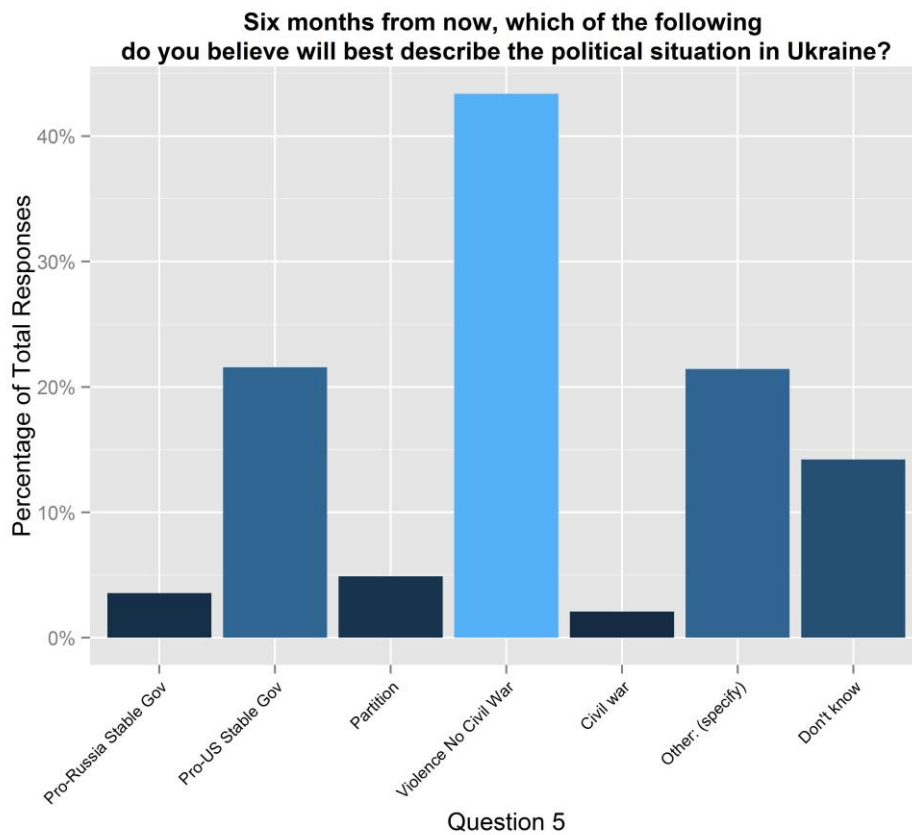
Question 4: If Syria fails to comply with this agreement by June 30, 2014, which of the following U.S. foreign policy options would you support? (Check all that apply.)

Response Option	Count	Percent
Further economic sanctions against the Syrian government	684	75.50%
Supplying additional arms to opposition forces in Syria	279	30.79%
Establishment of no-fly zones	465	51.32%
Air strikes against Syrian government forces	278	30.68%
Intervention with ground forces	26	2.87%
Other: (specify)	108	11.92%
No further action is needed	44	4.86%



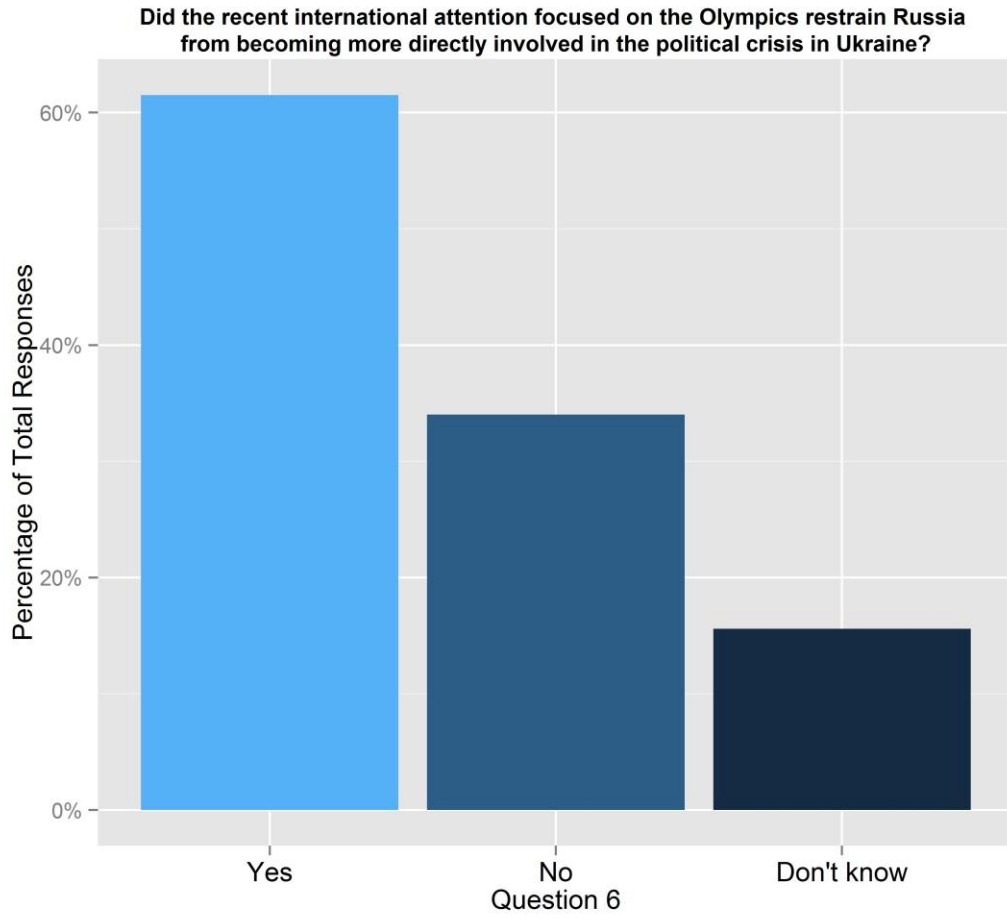
Question 5: Six months from now, which of the following do you believe will best describe the political situation in Ukraine?

Response Option	Count	Percent
Stable government representing pro-Russian groups (unified Ukraine)	29	3.20%
Stable government representing pro-Western groups (unified Ukraine)	176	19.40%
Partition into two states	40	4.41%
Violent conflict and/or protests short of civil war	354	39.03%
Civil war	17	1.87%
Other: (specify)	175	19.29%
Don't know	116	12.79%



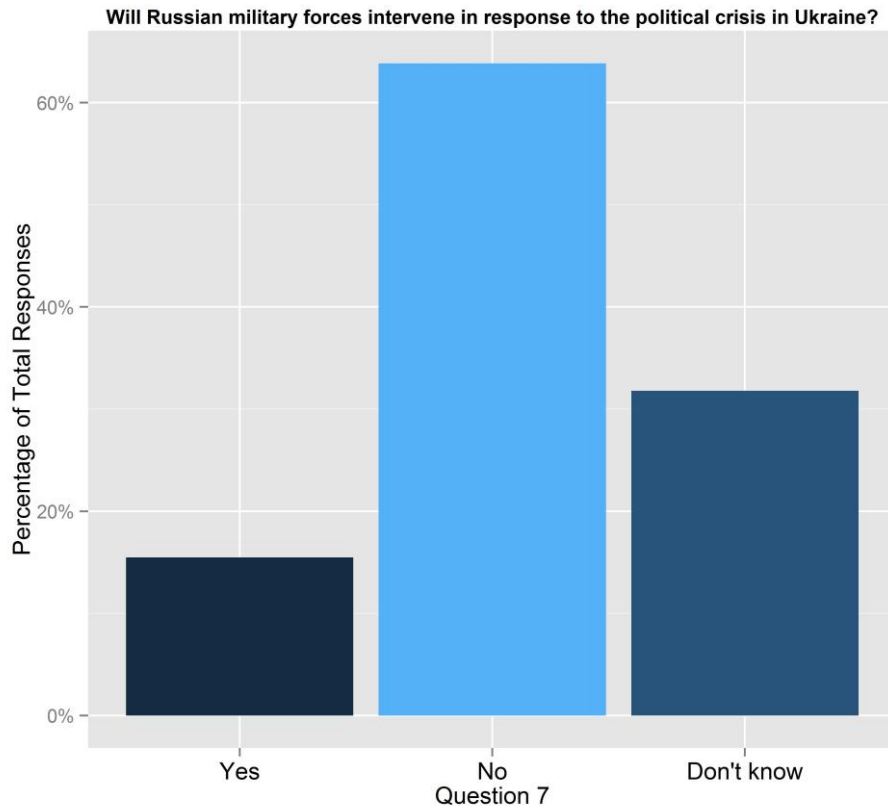
Question 6: Did the recent international attention focused on the Olympics restrain Russia from becoming more directly involved in the political crisis in Ukraine?

Response Option	Count	Percent
Yes	501	55.36%
No	277	30.61%
Don't know	127	14.03%



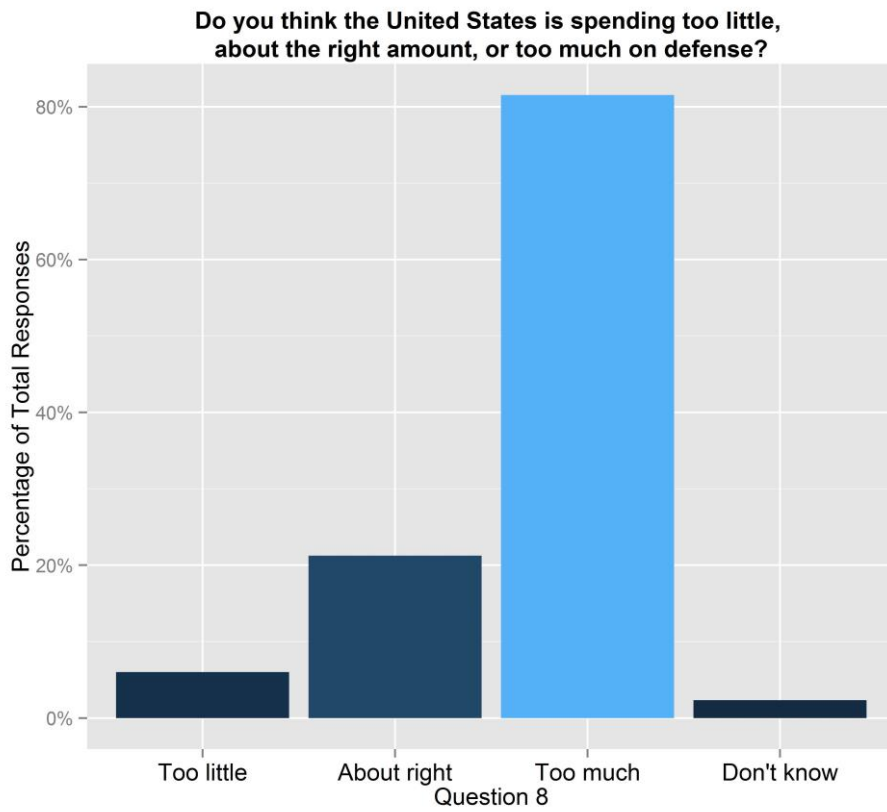
Question 7: Will Russian military forces intervene in response to the political crisis in Ukraine?

Response Option	Count	Percent
Yes	126	13.92%
No	520	57.46%
Don't know	259	28.62%



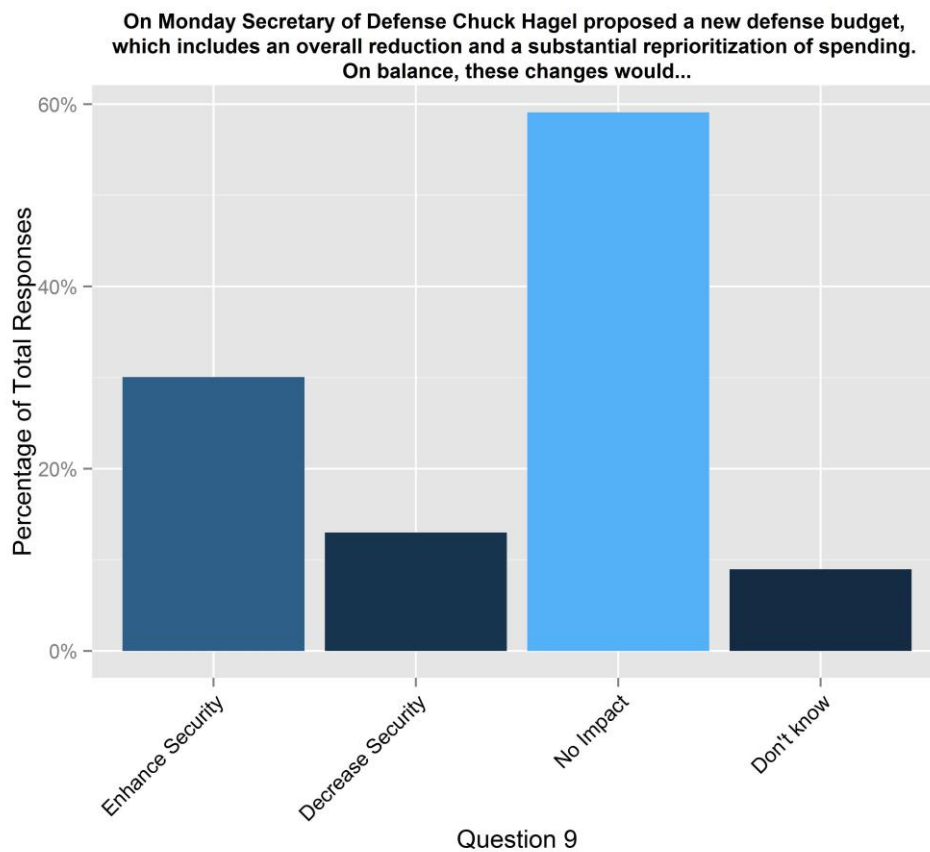
Question 8: Do you think the United States is spending too little, about the right amount, or too much on defense?

Response Option	Count	Percent
Too little	49	5.41%
About the right amount	173	19.12%
Too much	664	73.37%
Don't know	19	2.10%



Question 9: On Monday Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel proposed a new defense budget, which includes an overall reduction and a substantial reprioritization of spending. On balance, these changes would...

Response Option	Count	Percent
Enhance the national security of the United States	245	27.04%
Decrease the national security of the United States	106	11.70%
Have no impact on the national security of the United States	482	53.20%
Don't know	73	8.06%



Comparison of Population and Respondent Characteristics

Gender

		Population		Respondents	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Gender	Male	1926	72.73	653	75.40
	Female	722	27.27	213	24.60
	Total	2648		866	
Chi-square (two-tailed) with Yates correction p=0.1338					

Academic Rank

		Population		Respondents	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Academic Rank	Adjunct Professor	64	2.60	19	2.28
	Assistant Professor	430	17.44	167	20.00
	Associate Professor	785	31.83	263	31.50
	Emeritus	134	5.43	42	5.03
	Full Professor	899	36.46	299	35.81
	Instructor/Lecturer	104	4.22	29	3.47
	Visiting Assistant Professor	50	2.03	16	1.92
Total		2466		835	
Chi-square (two-tailed) p=0.9964					

University Ranking (U.S. News and World Report)

		Population	Respondents
USNWR	Mean	60.85	59.98
	SD	53.77	53.26
	N	1338	488.00
T-test (two-tailed) p=0.7541			

University Classification (U.S. News and World Report)

		Population		Respondents	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Institution Type	National Liberal Arts College	384	16.11	122	15.29
	National Research University	1338	56.12	488	61.15
	Regional Liberal Arts College	69	2.89	20	2.51
	Regional Research University	593	24.87	168	21.05
Total		2384		798	
Chi-square (two-tailed) p=0.7695					