

Poll Shows Germans Lack Enthusiasm for Russia Sanctions

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The German public has little appetite for imposing economic sanctions on Russia for its incursion into Ukraine but supports the new government in Kiev and has very little confidence in Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to a new poll.

In the survey by Infratest Dimap for broadcaster ARD and the newspaper Die Welt, only 38 percent of those polled said they favored economic sanctions against Russia, while 72 percent supported financial aid for the Ukrainian government.

Only 15 percent of those polled thought Moscow a reliable partner and three quarters were of the view that Putin himself was not trustworthy; 81 percent saw him as a leader who would use any means at his disposal to promote Russian interests.

The survey suggests public support for Chancellor Angela Merkel's stance. She has been cautious about imposing anything but symbolic sanctions on Russia as she tries to convince

Putin to agree to a "contact group" that would reopen communications between Moscow and Kiev.

The poll showed Merkel's approval rating rising two points to 71 percent but she has been overtaken by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, her Social Democrat, or SPD, foreign minister, whose approval rating rose 4 points to 74 percent. He has been at the forefront of the shuttle diplomacy between Kiev and Moscow, while Merkel has worked the phones with Putin.

Meanwhile, China's Foreign Ministry said on Friday that sanctions are not the best way to resolve the crisis in Ukraine.

China and Russia, both permanent members of the United Nations' Security Council, have close ties and see eye-to-eye on many global diplomatic issues, such as the crisis in Syria.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said it was important to find a political solution.

"China has consistently opposed the easy use of sanctions in international relations, or using sanctions as a threat," he told a daily news briefing.

"In the present situation, we hope that all sides can take steps which avoid a further worsening in tensions and work hard to find a way for a political solution to the crisis. This is the fundamental way out."

Asked if China also believed the referendum in Crimea would be a breach of international law, Qin did not answer directly.

"We call on all sides in Ukraine to peacefully resolve the relevant issue within a legal, orderly framework via dialogue and negotiations and earnestly safeguard the interests of all the people in Ukraine and bring order back as soon as possible and maintain peace and stability in this region."

He did not elaborate.

China has so far shown little public interest in participating in any financial aid for Ukraine, or getting involved diplomatically, in line with its low-key approach to many international crises.

The Foreign Ministry has said it would not interfere in what it considers an internal affair and it respects the Ukrainian people's decisions, adding that it would like to continue to develop "friendly cooperation" with Ukraine.

It has also said that China respected Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich visited China in December in the hope of winning much-needed financial aid, but China did not say it would provide any loans.

Yanukovich, who was overthrown last month after three months of street protests, said at the time that deals signed with China might bring Ukraine about \$8 billion in investment.

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