

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.15116486

EUROPEAN UNION, INTERNATIONAL ACTOR ECONOMIC SANCTIONS TRAINS: RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND RUSSIA AFTER THE INVASION OF UKRAINE IN 2022

Matei DUMITRESCU, PhD Student

University of Bucharest, Romania; Co-tutoring at the Free University of
Brussels, Belgium, mateidumi7@gmail.com

Catalin DUMITRESCU, Assoc. Prof. Habil. PhD, M.Sc., B.Sc

Athenaeum University, Bucharest, Romania
catalindumi@yahoo.com

Abstract: *Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, had profound implications for regional stability and international relations. In response to Russia's aggressive actions, the European Union (EU) quickly implemented a series of economic sanctions against Russia. This paper sets out to explore the context, objectives, effectiveness and implications of the economic sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia in the context of the invasion.*

Keywords: *EU, Ukraine, Russia, invasion, regional stability*

JEL Classification: *C23, C26, C38, C55, C81, C87*

1. Introduction

The year 2022 brought to the fore a relatively new term - permacrisis. This notion is defined by Collins Dictionary as “a prolonged period of instability and uncertainty, especially one resulting from a series of catastrophic events” (Harper Collins Publishers, 2023), and permacrisis includes the main international events of 2022, the war in Ukraine, the economic crisis and climate change.

The war in Ukraine is one of the international events that require the use of the term permacrisis, generating and being contemporary with other crises that have accentuated the perception of insecurity at a global level.

The construction of this humanist identity was not an easy task. It was the result of gestation by a long and vast historical process with the intervention of a rich and varied multiplicity of factors, rhythms and circumstances that, in a desire for synthesis, can be reduced to four foundations that have given shape and meaning to the concept of Europe: Greek culture, Roman culture, jurisprudence, Christianity and the political heritage of the Germanic peoples. The foundations are closely linked to the question of inclusion and exclusion is that of the way in which the constituent elements of Europe must be integrated into the European entity. *Prima facie*, the dominant assumption, from proposals for a “United States of Europe” to the mechanisms for EU enlargement to “candidate countries”, has been that a consolidated Europe would take the form of a partnership between European nation-states, agreed through intergovernmental agreements. But the Europeanist ideological family also includes many other models, ranging from conceptions of Europe as a union of alternative spatial or demographic units - “peoples”, nations, regions, even workers’ councils - to those of an undifferentiated community or even administrative subunits subsumed within a monolithic nation-empire. But these conceptions have been much changed by the strong national sentiment developed since the First World War and the effects are seen even today. “Europeanness” is understood as “social and cultural civilisation” and is opposed to “distant countries”. It is also important to note that, speaking about the “similarity” of Ukrainian refugees to Europeans, none of the journalists mention a specific country or a country of the European Union, which makes “Europeanness” an object of knowledge and commands it. At the same time, in the given quote’s refugees from distant and poor countries (most often Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria) act as a collective “Other”, without causing indignation or sympathy of the authors of the quotes. Often, the names of these “other” countries are given as examples. Thus, the effect of “standardization” of the image of the refugee as coming from poor, underdeveloped countries is created, a typical representative of the indigenous ethnic groups of these countries. We will argue that the injunction to “return to Europe” by Europeanization is enabled and conditioned by the mythologies of Western civilization, and that Europeanization both marks (promulgates) and demarcates (naturalizes) racial whiteness. In other words, we view Europeanness as a deeply—if contingently—racialized process, where racial whiteness is trivialized as a “natural” contiguity of the West.

2. The context of sanctions

Since 2014 and the start of the war in Ukraine, the European Union has subjected Russia to sanctions. But with the military invasion launched by Moscow on February 24, 2022, the Twenty-Seven toughened their tone and

took very heavy retaliatory measures for the Russian economy (Tobelem, 2025). The premises which led to the set of sanctions imposed by the EU are linked to non-compliance with international law. Moscow recognizes the independence of two pro-Russian secessionist territories, the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, born in reaction to the Ukrainian and pro-European Euromaidan movement in 2014 (Tobelem, 2024). The policy pursued by Russia since 2014 shows that, to stop this process, the Kremlin does not plan to engage in a policy of conciliation and recognition of the sovereignty of Ukraine, by backing down in Donbass and Crimea (Tinguy, 2022). It is therefore not surprising that any attempt by Ukrainians to promote their distinct culture, language and identity was harshly suppressed by the empire as the beginning of dangerous separatism (Riabchuk, 2022). Thus, we see with the invasion in 2022 that Russian head of state Vladimir Putin has reinitiated and intensified an old war rather than a new battle. By 2022, the situation appears all the more threatening as a new potential front of some thousand kilometers has opened up on the northern border: the militarization of Belarus has been strengthened, aided by Russia, in support of President Lukashenko whose legitimacy is contested by the population (Tinguy, 2022).

2.1. The objectives of EU sanctions

The EU sanctions against Russia in 2022 were motivated by several objectives. First, they were intended to express unequivocal condemnation of Russia's violation of international law and Ukraine's sovereignty. The EU is looking at its commitment to respecting international standards and emphasizing the importance of territorial integrity and respect for national borders. Second, the sanctions were intended to deter further Russian aggression and put pressure on the Russian government to seek a peaceful solution. The EU's objective is to use economic and diplomatic leverage to encourage a de-escalation of the conflict. Instead of affecting the military, the economic pressure is transported to the rear of the front, it targets civil society, and it aims to weigh as much on the support of decision-making elites as on the capacity of the economy to support the effort. of war (Dufy, 2022).

Compared to a classic military conflict situation, the sanctions taken by the EU have multiple shifts which move the place of confrontation from the battlefield into the economic sphere and onto the political terrain.

2.2. The scope and impact of economic sanctions implemented by the EU

This section examines the scope and impact of EU sanctions imposed on Russia in 2022. It examines specific measures taken by the EU, including asset freezes,

travel bans and restrictions on trade and investment. The essay also analyses the economic ramifications of these sanctions for Russia and EU member states, considering trade interdependencies and potential spillover effects on global markets. Additionally, it assesses the effectiveness of sanctions in achieving their intended objectives, including the extent to which they have impacted Russia's behavior and decision-making. The sanctions immediately led to a drop in trade between Russia and the EU. This decrease was estimated, in October 2022 compared to October 2021, at –4.5 billion USD (Sapir 2023).

Furthermore, we could see that the sanctions had mainly led to a reorientation of Russian foreign trade, to the benefit of China and India, but also of Turkey, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Indeed, the reduction in the presence of Western firms does not mean their disappearance. Furthermore, it is accompanied by the reorientation of Russian commercial, financial and economic flows towards Asian and emerging countries, both for the supply and for the outlets of Russian products (Dufy, 2022). Because in the wake of this green light given to Nord Stream 2, Gazprom signed a contract with Hungary and Belarus. Thus, an energetic link is completed connecting the “illiberal” powers whether they are inside the European Union or outside (Tinguy, 2022)

Vladimir Putin's policy for the modernization of Russian infrastructure and transport networks (Prokofeva, and Adamov, 2012). which began at the end of the 1990s, focused on making Russia completely independent for its exports. A similar policy was applied on the southern flank towards Ukraine with the development of new terminals in Russian ports on the Black Sea (Novorossiisk, which has become the first Russian port in terms of tonnage, Gelendjik, Kavkaz) and the construction of several tubes to Turkey (Bluestream completed in 2022 then Turkishstream which was inaugurated in January 2020). It aims to bypass European projects like Nabucco, now abandoned, and to avoid, if the crisis deepens, any transit through Ukraine (Radvany, 2020).

2.3. Challenges and limitations

Although EU economic sanctions represent a forceful response to the invasion of Ukraine, they are characterized by several challenges and limitations. Among the potential obstacles the EU faces in implementing and maintaining sanctions are the potential for divisions between member states and concerns over energy security.

The first impact was rising energy prices, which forced EU countries and Britain to spend 785 billion euros, as explained in a note from the think tank Bruegel, to support households and businesses. The sum is considerable, more than what was spent to fight Covid-19. Germany thus spent nearly 7% of its GDP to protect energy consumers. France, which was much less exposed to

energy flows from Russia, had to devote nearly 3.25% of its GDP to various “energy shields” (Sapir, 2023).

We must also take into account that Russia is employing countermeasures as a counter-response to EU sanctions. Thus, Russia announced that it would ban European leaders from entering its territory in response to the punitive measures taken by the EU since the invasion of Ukraine (Euronews 2022). Moscow expelled 18 diplomats from the European Union delegation in Russia in retaliation for Brussels’ expulsion of 19 Russians in early April 2022 (Reuter, 2022). Russia also said it had significantly increased the number of European Union officials, lawmakers, public figures and journalists banned from entry into Russia, citing their responsibility for sanctions and anti-Russian sentiment (Europe 1, 2022).

3. Conclusion

Wider implications and futures prospects

EU economic sanctions against Russia in the context of Ukraine in 2022 have broader implications for European security and international relations. This section deals with the geopolitical consequences of sanctions and the elements to consider for the long term on the level of diplomatic negotiations.

I take up the idea of Jacques Sapir, Director of Studies at the School of Hautes Études an Sciences Social’s in Paris to underline the possibility of Russia which could well escape from the situation imposed by the economic sanctions while the EU may have to pay a prohibitive price for supporting Ukraine.

There will probably be no clear and indisputable winner in this confrontation between the countries of the European Union and Russia. But there will be an indisputable loser: European strategic autonomy. With the latter, undoubtedly, it is the very idea of the EU which will have to die in the years to come, because it was based on the idea of strategic autonomy of European countries.

Russia’s decision to exert new pressure on Ukraine and to request a review of the foundations of the European security architecture put in place following the end of the Cold War aims to return to the balance of power which would support the great power status to which it claims. It is likely to give new impetus to the disintegration of Eurasia. The current danger is represented by the war in Ukraine which, although addressed by the EU with solidarity and support together with economic adaptation mechanisms to this situation, may bring new major risks that may open the way to a nuclear incident. Overall, a high level of perceived insecurity is observed correlated with the ongoing

war, but also with other crises whose occurrence is older. This shows that even European societies not directly affected by the war have added a new factor, involvement in the war, an element that accentuates the economic insecurity perceived so far, prolonging the feeling of insecurity, thus being affected by the permacrisis.

References

- Dufy, C. (2022). La Guerre Économique ou l'Économie Politique des Sanctions à L'heure de la Mondialisation. Le cas de la Russie Contemporaine. [The Economic War or the Political Economy of Sanctions in the Age of Globalization. The Case of Contemporary Russia]. *SciencesPo*. <https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/fr/content/dossiersduceri/la-guerre-economique-ou-l-economie-politique-des-sanctions-l-heure-de-la-mondialisation-le-cbf7d.html?d19>.
- Europe 1. (2022). La Russie sanctionne les dirigeants de l'UE et la plupart des députés européens [Russia sanctions EU leaders and most Members of the European Parliament]. <https://www.europe1.fr/international/la-russie-sanctionne-les-dirigeants-de-lue-et-la-plupart-des-deputes-europeens-4103023>.
- HarperCollins Publishers. (2023). Permacrisis [Definition]. In *Collins English Dictionary*.
- Par Euronews avec AFP. (2022). Sanctions: la réponse de Moscou à l'Union européenne [Sanctions: Moscow's response to the European Union]. *Fr.euronews*. <https://fr.euronews.com/2022/03/31/sanctions-la-reponse-de-moscou-a-l-union-europeenne>.
- Prokofeva, T. A. and Adamov, N. A. (2012). Strateguia razvitiia loguistitcheskoï infrastruktury v transportnom komplekse Rossii [The Strategy for the Development of Logistics Infrastructure in the Russian Transport Complex]. Moscow, *Ekonomitcheskaia Gazeta Pub*, ITKOR.
- Radvanyi, J. (2020). L'Eurasie post soviétique, une space ouvert en recomposition. *Les Études du CERI*, 247-248, pp.40-45. hal-03455887 <https://hal-sciencespo.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03455887/document>.
- Reuters. (2022). La Russie expulse 18 membres de la représentation de l'UE à Moscou [Russia expels 18 members of the EU representation in Moscow]. <https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crise-ue-russie-idFRKCN2M70RP>.
- Riabchuk, M. (2022). A Long Ongoing War. Putin's Imaginary Ukrainians and a Mythic Russian Identity. *SciencesPo*. <https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/fr/content/dossiersduceri/long-ongoing-war-putin-s-imaginary-ukrainians-and-mythic-russian-identitybf7d.html?d19>.
- Sapir, J. (2023). Will EU Sanctions Produce a Winner and a Loser? *Russia in Global Affairs*. <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/eu-sanctions-win-or-lose/>
- Tinguy, A. (2022). *Les Études du CERI*, numéro 261-262. Regards sur l'Eurasie sous la direction d'Anne de Tinguy; https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr.ceri/files/Etude%20261_262.pdf.

- Tobelem, B. (2024). La guerre en Ukraine et l'Union européenne : 10 dates à retenir depuis février 2022 [The war in Ukraine and the European Union: 10 dates to remember since February 2022]. *Toute l'Europe*. <https://www.touteleurope.eu/l-ue-dans-le-monde/la-guerre-en-ukraine-et-l-union-europeenne-10-dates-a-retenir-depuis-fevrier-2022/>.
- Tobelem, B. (2025). Guerre en Ukraine : quelles sanctions de l'UE contre la Russie [War in Ukraine: What sanctions will the European Union impose against Russia?] Boran Tobelem, mis à jour par Juliette Verdes. *Toute l'Europe*. <https://www.touteleurope.eu/l-ue-dans-le-monde/guerre-en-ukraine-queelles-sanctions-de-l-ue-contre-la-russie/>.