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## Russia-Ukraine war and the EU'S sanctions against Russia

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### Abstract

Sanctions are an important tool for international organizations and individual countries to maintain international peace and global norms. Sanctions have often been and are used against countries that threaten global peace, such as the European Union's use of sanctions against Russia in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This research paper focuses on the study of sanctions imposed against Russia, especially by the European Union, as a strategic tool of foreign policy. Apart from this, this paper also sheds light on the causes of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the historical aspect of the sanctions imposed against Russia by the European Union. Qualitative research methodology has been used to write this paper by using primary sources.

**Keywords:** Sanctions, European Union, Russia-Ukraine conflict, foreign policy, international peace, global norms, qualitative research, diplomatic measures, geopolitical conflict, economic pressure

### Introduction

Sanctions serve as an effective instrument that countries and international organizations use to influence others, encourage adherence to global norms, dissuade unwanted conduct, and respond to risks to peace and security. Over the years, they have emerged as both an effective and widely utilized mechanism, employed by various states and international organizations for a range of political, economic, and security-related reasons. With the increasing interconnectedness of the global economy, the tools available to states and institutions to influence or alter the behavior of other nations have undergone substantial transformation. Among these, sanctions continue to stand out as a prominent and adaptable means of exerting pressure and advancing policy objectives <sup>[1]</sup>.

Although sanctions have been institutionalized within the framework of the United Nations, regional organizations such as the European Union have also developed independent mechanisms for employing sanctions as strategic instruments of foreign policy. The EU's autonomous sanctions regime serves not only to reinforce its diplomatic priorities but also to influence the behavior and strategic decisions of states, territories, governing authorities, institutions, and individuals. These measures are primarily designed as deterrent tools rather than punitive actions, enabling the European Union to address pressing political challenges, uphold international norms, and foster global stability and development <sup>[2]</sup>.

### Causes of Russia-Ukraine Conflict

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is rooted in post-Cold War geopolitical dynamics, marked by the West's strategic push to integrate former Soviet republics into liberal democracies aligned with NATO and the EU. This transition, championed by the United States, was perceived by Russia as a threat to its traditional sphere of influence, particularly through frameworks like the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Democratic movements in countries such as Georgia and Ukraine most notably the Rose and Orange Revolutions further deepened Russia's anxieties. In response, Russia employed coercive measures to retain regional dominance, aiming to counter perceived Western encroachment. This led to its increasing political and economic isolation, driving a shift toward authoritarian governance and external aggression. The divergence in strategic visions between Russia and the West resulted in confrontation rather than cooperation, with Russia abandoning the collaborative path once envisioned and instead asserting its influence through destabilization and hegemonic ambitions in the post-Soviet space <sup>[3]</sup>.

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Russia's growing militarization, juxtaposed with Europe's gradual demilitarization, has intensified regional security dilemmas, especially in the EU's eastern periphery. Despite internal weaknesses and economic overreliance on natural resources, Russia projects assertiveness, challenging EU influence, particularly through the European Neighbourhood Policy. This tension escalated with Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, justified by Moscow as protecting Russian minorities—a move that violated the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and Ukraine's sovereignty. The EU and U.S. condemned the incursion and the referendum that followed, held under military occupation and lacking a legal basis under both Ukrainian and international law. The referendum excluded the option to remain within Ukraine and failed to meet democratic or constitutional standards. International bodies, including the EU Council and the Obama administration, denounced the act as illegitimate. Russia's actions not only breached international treaties but also revealed a deeper divergence in geopolitical values and legal norms, further deteriorating EU–Russia relations <sup>[4]</sup>.

### Russia-Ukraine Conflict

The Ukrainian crisis began in 2013 under the pro-Russian leadership of President Viktor Yanukovich, who reversed plans for closer integration with the European Union in favor of deeper ties with Russia, including a \$15 billion aid package. This decision sparked mass protests from pro-European groups, culminating in violent clashes in February 2014 that left dozens dead and hundreds injured. Demonstrators, frustrated by Yanukovich's rejection of constitutional reforms to limit presidential power, escalated their actions, eventually forcing him to flee to Russia. In the aftermath, elections were held, and Petro Poroshenko who favored EU alignment was elected president. This political shift provoked a hostile response from Russia, which deployed military forces to Ukraine's border and, in March 2014, annexed Crimea. Russia justified its intervention as a protective measure for ethnic Russians, while Ukraine and much of the international community condemned it as a violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and international law <sup>[5]</sup>.

In 2014, Russian-backed separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk launched an armed revolt, seeking independence and closer ties with Russia. Russia was accused of providing military support, contributing to an eight-year conflict that claimed over 14,000 lives. Ukraine's NATO aspirations intensified tensions, which Russia viewed as a direct threat. In 2022, Russia annexed Donetsk and Luhansk under the guise of a military operation, triggering international condemnation, humanitarian crises, and sweeping sanctions aimed at curbing Russian aggression <sup>[6]</sup>.

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine is rooted in conflicting historical narratives and strategic perceptions. From Ukraine's perspective, the conflict began in 2014 and reflects centuries of Russian repression, including cultural erasure and misinformation. Backed by the West, Ukraine defends its sovereignty and democratic aspirations. In contrast, Russia claims it acted to protect Russian-speaking populations in separatist regions, prevent NATO expansion, and respond to Ukraine's alleged violations of the Minsk Agreements. Russia portrays Ukraine as a Western proxy threatening its national security. Meanwhile, Western perspectives view the invasion as Russia's attempt to block Ukraine's pro-democracy and Euro-Atlantic alignment <sup>[7]</sup>. Russia's involvement in former Soviet states stems from its

perception that these regions lie within its historical sphere of influence. The expansion of U.S. and EU interests into these areas is viewed by Russia as a threat to its authority. Ukraine, in particular, holds symbolic and strategic importance due to shared Slavic roots, its vast population, natural resources, and access to the Black Sea. Control over Ukraine is seen as vital for reviving Russia's former imperial strength. The U.S., while opposing Russia's ambitions, failed to establish a cooperative regional security framework that could have eased post-Soviet tensions. This oversight, combined with NATO's eastward expansion, has intensified Russia's security concerns. Moscow's military response in Ukraine was a signal to the West that any perceived encroachment on its strategic interests would provoke direct and forceful retaliation, exacerbating the security dilemma across Europe <sup>[8]</sup>.

### Background of Sanctions

Ukraine holds intense cultural, economic, and political significance for Russia, and it also plays a crucial role in defining Russia's identity. The ties between Russia and Ukraine have had a deep-rooted familial connection for centuries. For an extended period, Russia stood as Ukraine's foremost trading partner, but this connection has significantly weakened in recent times. For decades, Moscow has depended on Ukrainian pipelines to transport its gas to customers in Central and Eastern Europe, resulting in annual payments of billions of dollars in transit fees to Kyiv. Russia was trying to maintain its political dominance in Ukraine and across the ex-Soviet states <sup>[9]</sup>.

In 2013-14, tensions between Russia and Ukraine reached a peak due to Ukraine's association with the European Union. As the situation in Ukraine grew more critical in early 2014, the EU placed blame on Russia for contributing to the destabilization of the country. Russia gained an advantage from the conflict by annexing Crimea through a referendum considered unlawful that was not acknowledged by the EU and other Western nations. Importantly, the annexation process occurred without the use of force or coercion <sup>[10]</sup>. Various forms of sanctions were implemented by the EU, including diplomatic actions, individual restrictive measures, limitations on economic ties with Crimea and Sevastopol, economic sanctions, and constraints on economic cooperation <sup>[11]</sup>.

In March 2014, the European Union chose to employ sector-specific targeted sanctions as a means to place pressure on the Russian Federation to address the conflict <sup>[12]</sup>. Following this, the EU implemented three sets of sanctions targeting Russia, namely personal sanctions, sectoral sanctions, and the Crimean sanctions sets <sup>[13]</sup>. On March 18, 2014, the European Union implemented the first sanctions regime, which included travel bans and asset freezes, targeting Russian and Ukrainian officials and individuals who are implicated in human rights abuses and corrupt practices within Ukraine. Subsequently, these sanctions were expanded to include Russian officials, as well as individuals and organizations that do business with the separatist groups in eastern Ukraine. These also included the two self-declared People's Republics of Luhansk and Donetsk. The sanction's original expiration date was March 15, 2015, but it was expanded to September 15, 2015. By March 2015, a total of 132 individuals (including Russian and Ukrainian) and 29 legal entities had been included on the sanctions list <sup>[14]</sup>. Discussions between the EU and Russia regarding visa-

related issues and the New Agreement have been put on hold. Russia reacted by implementing countermeasures against senior officials from both the European Union and its member nations <sup>[15]</sup>.

Second, on June 23rd, 2014, the EU implemented a regulation prohibiting the import of products originating from Crimea and Sevastopol, as well as restrictions on technical and financial support and insurance related to such imports. On July 30, 2014, these sanctions were expanded to include sector-specific restrictions on investments and exports. This indicates that the export of equipment and technology in the fields of transportation, telecommunication, and energy to Crimea and Sevastopol is prohibited. These sanctions remained in effect until June 23, 2015. On December 18, 2014, they were further strengthened to establish a comprehensive investment ban, which included additional limitations on tourism services <sup>[16]</sup>.

Third, the European Union chose to broaden sanctions against Russia in response to the increased military activities in eastern Ukraine and the terrible shoot down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH-17 on July 17, 2014, in an area controlled by separatists. To enhance the economic impact of sanctions, the EU declared targeted economic measures against Russia's military industry, as well as its financial and energy sectors, on July 30, 2014. These measures aim to limit the capacity of Russian banks to raise capital in European capital markets and restrict trade in specific sectors <sup>[17]</sup>. This rule prohibits investment or trading in Russian state securities that have a state share of more than 50 percent and a duration period of more than 90 days.

Sanctions have been imposed on five Russian state-owned banks, namely Sberbank, VTB, VEB, Vnesheconombank, and Rosselkhozbank, as well as financial institutions and their affiliated companies. Furthermore, the EU has implemented a ban on both the export and import of arms, as well as related services, from Russia. This embargo covers dual-use items and high technologies utilized in the oil sector. These measures primarily affect the advanced technologies required for Arctic shelf exploration, as well as impacting Russia's chances for future oil revenues. It's important to note that the ban on arms and other trade restrictions applies only to newly established agreements.

On September 8, the economic sanctions were strengthened and expanded to include the same sectors outlined in the EU Council regulation 833/2014. As per the mentioned regulation, the maximum period for credits was reduced to 30 days for listed state-owned banks. This limitation was broadened to encompass three government-owned defense corporations: Oboronprom, United Aircraft Corporation, and Uralvagonzavod, as well as three state energy agencies-Rosneft, Transneft, and Gazpromneft. The limitations indicate that companies listed are not eligible for new loans with a period of more than 30 days. Nevertheless, trade credits are permissible, but export restrictions on equipment essential for oil exploration required for the Arctic Shelf also cover services related to trade in restricted regions.

Sanctions related to the export of dual-use goods to Russian military entities have been expanded to nine firms engaged in both military and civilian manufacturing. These sanctions were initially in place until July 15, 2015, and were subsequently extended on December 18, 2015. The European Council held a deliberation on the Ukraine situation on March 19, 2015 <sup>[18]</sup>. In March 2015, during the

EU summit, it was determined that these restrictions on Russia would persist until the Minsk agreements were fully executed. Subsequently, the European Council decided on June 22, 2015, to extend all sanctions until January 31, 2016. Sanctions have been increased from time to time by the EU <sup>[19]</sup>.

In reaction, Putin implemented measures to restrict the import of items like apples and dairy products from Western nations. Additionally, the government undertook substantial efforts to restructure the economy, aiming to decrease reliance on foreign goods. Putin advocated tax reforms and strengthened the nation's sovereign wealth fund, transforming it into one of the world's largest. This move was intended to facilitate the growth of domestic production, particularly in sectors like food production <sup>[20]</sup>.

In certain instances, it may be observable that sanctions can yield advantages for the country instead of causing harm. The nation began domestic production of previously imported goods before the imposition of sanctions and enabling it to attain the capability to counteract such measures instantly. However, not every sector experienced the same level of success in this regard <sup>[21]</sup>. The EU faced a challenging decision-making process regarding the imposition of sanctions, as certain member states argued that their economies would be significantly affected due to the importance of their exports of goods to Russia <sup>[22]</sup>.

### **EU sanctions against Russia after the invasion of Ukraine (2022)**

In the wake of Russia's aggressive military intervention in Ukraine, which commenced on February 21, 2022, and its unlawful annexation of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions, the European Union has implemented extensive and unparalleled sanctions against Russia. Over the past 18 months, the EU has implemented eleven sets of sanctions or restrictive measures to undermine Russia's capacity to fund the conflict in Ukraine, imposing expenses on Russia's influential figures, and weakening Russia's economic foundation. Consensus among the EU members is necessary for the imposition of sanctions. The EU has applied sanctions on various sectors in Russia, encompassing its government as well as financial, business, defense, technology, and media domains. Thus, sanctions can generally be classified into four primary categories-trade restrictions, financial pressure, energy, and individual sanctions. Each set of sanctions has progressively expanded and modified the scope of sanctions regimes initially established in 2014 <sup>[23]</sup>.

On February 23, 2022, the European Union enforced sanctions against 351 members of the Russian state Duma who supported the declaration of independence in Donbas. These measures included a prohibition on their entry into EU territory and the freezing of their assets. Furthermore, 27 individuals and legal entities, including financial institutions and organizations supporting Russia's activities in Donbas, have been added to the blacklist. The European Union has further constrained entry to its capital and financial markets by prohibiting European companies from engaging in transactions with Luhansk and Donetsk, and by implementing restrictions on Russia's public debt <sup>[24]</sup>.

Following the commencement of the Ukraine war on February 25, 2022, the EU adopted a second set of sanctions. This package targeted 78 individuals, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister



Sergei Lavrov. Although they are allowed to enter the EU, their assets can be subject to freezing if they are held in EU banks. Furthermore, the sanctions list includes Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, state Duma deputies who have expressed support for the conflict in Ukraine, as well as members of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. Until April 12, 2022, the European Union imposed a ban on trade with Russia and state funding for investments in the Russian Federation.

In addition, 64 significant entities within Russia are now subject to financial and technological sectoral restrictions. Furthermore, the EU has taken steps to restrict the Russian government, the Central Bank of Russia, as well as Alfa-Bank, Otkritie, Rossiya Bank, and Promsvyaz Bank's access to the European capital market. The sanctions include a ban on the products and technologies related to oil refining. Additionally, they have had an impact on visa policies. On February 26, 2022, further restrictions were implemented, including a ban on new aircraft deliveries, maintenance, and insurance, along with a directive to return leased aircraft <sup>[25]</sup>. The third round of sanctions, which went into effect on February 28, 2022, resulted in the freezing of assets owned by the Central Bank of the Russian Federation. This action targeted 26 individuals, which included well-known officials such as Dmitri Peskov (the press secretary of the Russian President), CEO Igor Sechin, Chairman of Transneft Nikolai Tokarev, and individuals associated with entities like Sogaz Insurance Company. The EU dropped VTB, Rossiya, Otkritie, Novikombank, Promsvyazbank, Sovcombank, and VEB from the SWIFT global interbank payment network on March 2, 2022. The decision was finalized on March 12, 2022. Simultaneously, on that day, the EU imposed restrictions that included prohibiting the sale, provision, or export of euro-denominated banknotes to Russia, as well as disallowing investments in projects jointly funded by the Russian Direct Investment Fund.

Additionally, implemented a ban on broadcasting Sputnik and RT/Russia today within the EU. The new declaration issued on March 9, 2022, contains 14 entrepreneurs along with their families, as well as 146 members of parliament, were also included in the list who supported the ratification of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance between the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. The EU has enforced limitations on the shipment of navigation and maritime radio communication technologies to the Russian Federation <sup>[26]</sup>.

The European Union initiated the enforcement of its fourth package of restrictive measures on March 15, 2022. This package of sanctions was broadened to encompass 15 individuals and 9 legal entities, which notably includes figures like Roman Abramovich (the proprietor of Chelsea Football Club), and Konstantin Ernst, who serves as the director of channel one. Additionally, organizations like Rosneft Aero and Rosoboroneexport were included in the list of sanctioned entities. The EU has imposed sanctions on 12 Russian companies with over 50% state ownership, including entities like "Oboronprom", Rostech, "Gazpromneft", and "Kamaz."

However, these measures did not cover essential rigid actions related to the acquisition, importation, or transportation of fossil fuels, specifically coal, oil, and natural gas. Additionally, certain minerals such as titanium, aluminum, copper, nickel, palladium, and iron are also purchased or transported from Russia to the European

Union without restrictions. Simultaneously, the EU has introduced limitations on the trade of iron and steel products with Russia. They have also implemented a prohibition on the delivery of high-end items such as luxury perfumes, alcohol, household appliances, and clothing items priced at over 300 euros each to Russia. This decision effectively prohibits the importation of approximately \$3.6 billion worth of Russian steel products and restricts investments in the Russian energy sector. Notably, the exchange of luxury items like caviar and wine was not included in the list of sanctioned items <sup>[27]</sup>.

The European Council gave its approval for the fifth round of sanctions against Russia on April 8, 2022. These measures include a ban on importing coal and other solid fossil fuels from Russia, the exclusion of Russian Federation companies from participating in EU public procurement processes, and the restriction of transactions with select prominent Russian banks. The European Union has instituted a ban on exporting semiconductors, machinery, and transport equipment to the Russian Federation. Additionally, Russian ships are not permitted to enter EU ports, and the operations of shipping companies within the EU are also restricted. Furthermore, certain individuals have also been subjected to restrictions. This prohibition impacts a quarter of Russia's total coal exports, equivalent to approximately 8 billion euros in value. Ursula Von Der Leyen, the head of the European Commission, declared on April 5, 2022, that the European Union would prohibit the importation of coal from Russia, either reducing the quantity by half or amounting to 4 billion euros annually <sup>[28]</sup>.

The EU's sixth package, ratified on June 3, 2022, entails a six-month embargo on oil and an eight-month embargo on sea-based imports of Russian oil products. However, temporary exceptions to the embargo apply to EU member states that are heavily reliant on Russia and they have a lack of alternative sources. These states include Hungary and Slovakia, along with Bulgaria and Croatia. These exceptions allow them to continue receiving imports through pipelines. Russian firms are barred from receiving services in the oil sector. Furthermore, starting from June 14, 2022, Sberbank, Rosselkhozbank, and Moscow Credit Bank were cut off from SWIFT. Additionally, broadcasting Russian state TV channels Rossiya-24, RTR-Planeta, and TV-Center has been banned. The European Union has expanded its sanctions list to include 65 individuals from Russia and Ukraine, as well as 18 legal entities <sup>[29]</sup>. The deliberations among EU member states regarding the sixth package of sanctions extended for nearly a month. Throughout the discussions, the initially suggested oil embargo by the European Commission underwent substantial modifications. Exemptions were made for oil shipments via pipelines, specific countries were granted certain advantages for maritime deliveries, and the prohibition on Russian oil transportation through tankers under EU flags was ultimately discarded.

The European Council endorsed the seventh set of sanctions targeting Russia. These measures encompass a prohibition on both direct and indirect imports, acquisitions and transfers of goods originating in or dispatched from the Russian Federation <sup>[30]</sup>. Simultaneously, the EU has removed specific restrictions on the export of certain commodities to Russia, such as food, fertilizers, and aviation services. A total of 54 individuals and 10 legal entities have been placed on the blacklist, which includes entities like Rossotrudnichestvo, Russian World Foundation,

Gorchakov Foundation for the Promotion of Public Diplomacy (limitations for the first time on organizations engaged in cultural and public diplomacy), as well as Sberbank, First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Andrey Belousov, and Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin.

The newly imposed sanctions not only involve an expansion of the EU blacklist but also encompass a prohibition on gold from Russia. As of 2021, Russia held the second position among the largest global gold producers and China holds a 9% share of the overall global production level. 90% of the gold extracted in Russia was exported to international markets. In 2021, Russia exported 23.3 tons of gold valued at \$1.2 billion to countries including Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, India, Turkey, China (Hong Kong), UAE, and Armenia. However, in 2022, Switzerland, Germany, and Poland decided not to purchase Russian gold, amounting to 12.8 tons worth \$0.7 billion. Additionally, Great Britain also abstained from acquiring Russian gold, which amounted to a substantial 266.1 tons with a total value of \$15.4 billion<sup>[31]</sup>.

On October 5, 2022, member states of the European Union collectively endorsed the eighth round of sanctions targeting the Russian Federation in the light of its annexation of the DPR, LPR, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions. These measures include various actions, such as imposing price limits on Russian oil exports to non-EU nations, implementing trade barriers, and curtailing the provision of information technology and legal services to Russian entities. Additionally, a prohibition on crypto currency wallets for Russian individuals was instituted, and many were subjected to sanctions. The European Union has implemented a regulation within its legislative framework to set concrete minimum prices for Russian oil and oil products in transactions with third-party nations. This restriction entails a broad prohibition on European companies and entities from offering services related to sea transportation, as well as technical support, intermediary services, funding, or insurance (including reinsurance) for the acquisition of Russian oil by third-party nations.

In June, a clause was added to the sixth package of sanctions, specifying that it would take effect from December 2022 for oil and February 2023 for oil products. However, there is now a revision to this clause and an exception granted: permitting these services when oil or oil products are acquired at a price similar to or lower the marginal cost. There were numerous queries among experts and market participants regarding this mechanism, as the industry lacks a definitive comprehension of its functioning. There is a prevailing concern that the capped price might paradoxically result in a rise in global oil prices.

The European Union has further expanded its embargo on Russian imports, including additional categories such as steel products, wood pulp, cigarettes, paper, plastics, cosmetics, and various jewelry items (this covers specific precious stones and metals, with the exclusion of gold because gold's import was previously banned). As per the European Commission's estimates based on 2021 data, these new restrictions will impact Russian imports valued at 7 billion euros in total. The European Union initially imposed restrictions on Russian ferrous metals and related products, resulting in an estimated annual loss of around 3.3 billion euros. Subsequently, the embargo extended to finished steel goods, leaving semi-finished products like slabs and steel billets unaffected. However, these semi-

products will now also face sanctions, with a three-month transition period permitting continued supply to European customers.

As of July 2022, the export of iron and steel from Russia to the EU decreased to \$243 million, a significant decline from the \$522 million recorded in June and the \$770-790 million monthly averages observed in the previous spring. In 2021, European Union member states imported wood pulp from Russia valued at \$158 million, and paper and cardboard worth \$645 million. The EU acquired plastic goods and related items from Russia with a total value exceeding \$1.5 billion in 2021. These imports were still being brought into the EU in 2022 but in reduced quantities. European imports of plastics from Russia in July 2022 totalled around \$57 million<sup>[32]</sup>.

The European Union released its ninth set of sanctions targeting Russia on December 16, 2022. These measures entail restrictions on fresh investments in the mining sector and the provision of military-use equipment, including drones, to Russia. Additionally, sanctions were imposed on three Russian banks: Moscow Credit Bank, All-Russian Regional Development Bank, and Far East Bank [33]. European citizens are restricted from occupying high-ranked roles within Russian state-controlled companies, and they are also prohibited from investing in Russia's energy and mining industries, except for activities associated with critical raw materials<sup>[34]</sup>.

On February 25, 2023, the European Union Council declared its tenth set of sanctions against Russia. These limitations will impact the banking sector, advanced technologies, industrial products, dual-use goods, and the private military firm known as "Wagner" as well as "RIA FAN" (component of Patriot Media Group). The RIA FAN news organization is active in spreading false information about Russia's aggression towards Ukraine as well as campaigning in the favour of the government. The Wagner Group was founded in 2014 and is an unorganized private military firm based in Russia. It is under the leadership of Dimitriy Utkin and given financial support by Yevgeniy Prigozhin. Wagner group is playing an active role in the Russian aggression against Ukraine and is involved in leading the offensive on the Ukrainian towns of Soledar and Bakhmut.

Additionally, limitations have been placed on the importation of commodities that produce substantial profits for Russia, including items, asphalt and synthetic rubber. The council implemented a ban on offering gas storage capacity (excluding LNG facilities) to individuals of Russian nationality. The sanctions aim to target those individuals and entities deemed to help sustain the ongoing conflict and characterize them as key contributors to this brutal war<sup>[35]</sup>.

On June 23, 2023, after six weeks of discussions, the EU member states ratified their 11th set of sanctions. This latest set of sanctions places a strong emphasis on enforcement and measures to counter circumvention. There are significant components contained in it.

The European Union has implemented a robust set of sanctions aimed at curbing Russia's military capabilities and economic resilience amid its aggression toward Ukraine. A newly introduced anti-circumvention mechanism targets the trade and transfer of sensitive dual-use items and military-relevant technologies. Additional restrictions ban the export of aviation, space, and fuel-related goods to Russia, even

through third countries. The EU has also sanctioned 87 entities aiding Russia's military, including firms from China, Syria, and the UAE. Furthermore, five pro-Russian media outlets have had their broadcasting rights revoked for disseminating disinformation. Transport sanctions prohibit Russian trucks and certain vessels involved in oil embargo violations from accessing EU territories. Symbolic yet significant sanctions affect the Druzhba oil pipeline, particularly its northern segment to Germany and Poland. Finally, over 100 individuals and entities including military officials, propagandists, and IT firms face asset freezes and travel bans for roles in aggression, child deportation, and cultural plundering.

Additionally, the council determined on July 28, 2023, to expand sanctions to include seven more persons and five additional entities. These individuals and entities were identified as being involved in engaging in the distortion of digital information in support of the Russian Federation. Their schemes included creating unauthentic web pages in the names of legitimate national media channels and government websites, as well as utilizing fake social media accounts. On September 8, 2023, the council decided to implement sanctions against six individuals who are accountable for severe human rights abuses within the Russian Federation and in the non-permanently seized regions of Ukraine.

These measures are also primarily directed against prosecutors and judges who have been involved in court cases driven by political motives. Earlier, nine Russian persons were included in the list of sanctioned individuals by the council on June 5, 2023, as a result of their involvement in severe human rights violations. Among those sanctioned were Oleg Sviridenko (Russian deputy justice minister), four judges from Russia, a well-known prison warden, and three other executives. Vladimir Kara-Murza, a well-known opposition leader and supporter of democracy, received a 25-year prison sentence that was imposed for political reasons by these people, and they were also held accountable for his torture<sup>[36]</sup>.

## Conclusion

Consequently, sanctions have become a pivotal element of the reaction of the EU against the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. These actions were intended to put pressure on the Russian government while causing the least amount of unintended harm to the economies of Europe, given the substantial economic interdependence between the EU and Russia. The sanctions covered multiple sectors such as energy, finance, and trade, thereby effectively limiting Russian firms' approach to the markets and financial institutions of the EU. Targeted limitations on vital Russian sectors like energy and defense made it more difficult for them to continue the military operations in Ukraine and limited the capacity of Russia to project economic influence throughout the region. Furthermore, the EU has imposed measures aimed at restricting the approach to essential commodities and modern technologies, which added to the constraints on the strategic capacities of Russia. This also signifies a transition towards increased economic self-sufficiency within the EU. The EU also aimed at people and organizations directly associated with the aggressive activities of Russia against Ukraine. Implementing asset freezes and travel restrictions on top Russian officials, rich business leaders, and military commanders conveyed a

strong message that those who were involved in destabilizing global peace and security would suffer the consequences.

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