

REGIME OF MEASURES AND SANCTIONS ADOPTED BY NATO AND EU DURING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

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Abstract

The application of sanctions against states that violate international norms and the adoption of legal measures are a priority in order to prevent acts of aggression, crimes against humanity, or those that violate the principle of self-determination of peoples. In these situations, the involvement of international organizations in the peaceful resolution of crises plays a decisive role, as they contribute to the development of rules on how to act internationally and play an important role in monitoring international relations. The cooperation of member states in the peaceful resolution of disputes is a manifestation of their sovereign will to exercise their right to participate on an equal footing in the process of promoting international peace and security.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CONFLICT. CAUSES.

One of the factors that triggered the conflict in Ukraine, which began in 2014 and ended with the annexation of Crimea, was Ukraine's intention to join NATO, as well as other states that were part of the Soviet Union, such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, but also a former ally such as Poland. To end the 2014 crisis, Ukrainian officials and pro-Russian separatists in the provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk signed two ceasefire agreements in Minsk, entitled "Minsk I" and "Minsk II," which set out the steps to be taken militarily and politically, but which remained unimplemented.

The period following the signing of the last ceasefire agreement was characterized by democratic reforms within the country, the strengthening of relations with NATO and the EU, but also by continued fighting with pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas region, who proclaimed the two republics independent through internal referendums, as well as by measures taken against Russia's continued hybrid actions in the area.

Due to Russia's occupation of Crimea and its invasion of Donbas, the Ukrainian parliament voted in 2014 to remove the neutrality clause from the Constitution and to apply for Ukraine's accession to NATO. In this context, Russian President Vladimir Putin challenged Ukraine's right to exist as an independent state and demanded that it be barred from joining NATO.

Thus, after the election of President Petro Poroshenko in May 2014, followed by that of President Volodimir Zelenski in April 2019, Ukraine's foreign policy shifted towards NATO and the EU, as follows: in 2017, the Ukrainian Parliament supported the reintroduction of NATO membership as a foreign policy objective¹. Also, in 2019, the Ukrainian Constitution was amended to introduce membership of the North Atlantic Alliance as a foreign and national security policy², and in 2020 Ukraine obtained the status of NATO's partner with extended opportunities³.

Another factor underlying the conflict is the military support Ukraine received between 2014 and 2021 from the following allied states: in 2015, the United Kingdom launched Operation Orbital to train and build the capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces in the areas of medicine, logistics, infantry, and intelligence; in 2016, at the NATO Summit in Warsaw, a package of assistance for the Ukrainian armed forces was approved⁴; and in 2017, President Trump approved the transition from selling non-lethal to lethal weapons to the Ukrainian army.

¹ *The Ukrainian Parliament has declared cooperation with NATO and accession to the Alliance as a key priority for the country*, text available at <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/28536019.html>, accessed on 07.10.2025.

² *Ukraine has enshrined in its Constitution the strategic objective of obtaining full membership of the EU and NATO*, text available at [https://romania.mfa.gov.ua/ro/news/70362-ucraina-a-nscris-n-constituie-obiectivul-stragic-de-a-obine-statutul-de-membru-cu-drepturi-depline-al-ue-i-nato](https://romania.mfa.gov.ua/ro/news/70362-ucraina-a-nscris-n-constituie-obiectivul-strategic-de-a-obine-statutul-de-membru-cu-drepturi-depline-al-ue-i-nato), accessed on 07.10.2025.

³ *Ukraine has obtained the status of NATO partner with expanded opportunities*, text available at <https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/30668883.html>, accessed on 07.10.2025.

⁴ *NATO leaders confirm strong support for Ukraine*, text available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_133806.htm?selectedLocale=en, accessed on 07.10.2025.

Subsequently, in 2021, Russia requested guarantees from the United States that Ukraine would never join NATO and would not receive any military aid, but this request was rejected, which led to the outbreak of the current conflict in the region.⁵

The foreign policies announced by Ukraine and Georgia to join the North Atlantic Alliance, along with the measures taken at NATO level to increase military presence on Europe's eastern border, were seen as a threat to Russia's interests, which led it to decide to attack Ukraine.

On the other hand, the US wants to expand its influence in Ukraine because of the natural resources that this country offers, such as iron ore, coal, oil, natural gas, uranium, titanium, and manganese.

The disagreements between Russia and the US began in 2008, triggered by the installation of American missile defense and radar surveillance systems in countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Turkey. In addition, discontent escalated following the invitation for Ukraine to join NATO at the 2008 Bucharest Summit.⁶

At the same time, in 2022, the US decided to send American troops to Europe to be used for any additional deployment to Eastern European allies, prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Although it violates the rights of self-determination and territorial integrity of a sovereign state, Russia wants to keep Ukraine within its sphere of influence, mainly to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO or deepening its relations with the EU.

NATO-EU COOPERATION IN THE CURRENT CONFLICT

The Alliance seeks to implement its security policies by ensuring a stable environment based on democracy and the peaceful resolution of disputes, as well as by cooperating with other international organizations and member states on the protection of human rights and fundamental values, including in the field of arms control and disarmament.

NATO's role is not limited to organizing military operations aimed at deterring and defending against threats on Alliance territory, but also includes the possibility of engaging in peacekeeping operations, so that it can provide support to states before, during, or after a conflict. NATO maintains that a conflict cannot be resolved by military means alone, and that a comprehensive political, civilian, and military approach is necessary for effective crisis management.⁷

To achieve security through cooperation, the Strategic Concept sets out three areas of action to ensure global security through: partnerships with other countries and international organizations, active contributions to arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament, and maintaining openness to NATO membership for all European democracies that meet Alliance standards⁸.

The Alliance has repeatedly highlighted in its strategic concepts and declarations the importance of the EU's role in maintaining security in the Euro-Atlantic area and has emphasized the need to develop the EU's security and defense dimension, as well as the importance of the two organizations supporting each other in maintaining international security.

In addition, the Strategic Concept adopted at the Madrid Summit in 2022 reaffirms the Alliance's three core objectives: deterrence and defense; crisis prevention and management; and security through cooperation, including with the EU, as demonstrated by the intention to develop strategic partnerships with states that are not members of the EU or NATO. This concept also highlights NATO's commitment to creating a nuclear-free security environment where sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights, and international law are respected.⁹

Among NATO's fundamental tasks, the defensive nature of the Alliance is emphasized, namely its role of defense and deterrence to deny any potential adversary any possible opportunities for aggression, as well as the

⁵ *Russia and Ukraine: Chronicle of an undeclared war*, text available at <https://www.dw.com/ro/rusia-%C5%9Fucraina-cronica-unui-r%C4%83zboi-nedeclarat/a-60523314>, accessed on 02.02.2023.

⁶ *Bucharest Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008*, point 23, text available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, accessed on 08.10.2025.

⁷ *NATO Crisis management*, text available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49192.htm, accessed on 08.10.2025.

⁸ *Active Engagement, Modern Defence, Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security*, point 4, text available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_68580.htm, accessed on 08.10.2025.

⁹ *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Madrid on June 29, 2022*, text available at https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf, pp. 1-2, accessed on 08.10.2025.

organization's concerns regarding combating new threats that have emerged in the international security environment, namely hybrid, energy, economic, or information tactics.¹⁰

EU-NATO cooperation has been and remains essential for strengthening Euro-Atlantic security. NATO is the foundation of collective defense for its members, but at the same time, a stronger and more capable European defense is essential to complement NATO. This has expanded significantly in recent years, building on three joint declarations adopted in 2023, 2018, and 2016, as well as NATO's Strategic Concept adopted in 2022.

The EU-NATO partnership aims to maintain security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area in the face of growing challenges and threats. This partnership is based on shared values, a determination to address common challenges, and an unequivocal commitment to promoting and protecting peace, freedom, and prosperity in the Euro-Atlantic area.¹¹

The third and most recent joint declaration on EU-NATO cooperation, adopted on January 10, 2023, outlines the current challenges and how they will be addressed. The declaration sets out a shared vision of how the EU and NATO will act together against common security threats. The EU and NATO are expanding and deepening their cooperation in areas such as: growing geostrategic competition, resilience and protection of critical infrastructure, emerging and disruptive technologies, space, the security implications of climate change, foreign information manipulation and foreign interference¹².

In its content, the EU and NATO declare that they are united in condemning Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and in supporting Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and right to self-defense¹³.

Through its military assistance to Ukraine, the EU aims to strengthen the capabilities and resilience of the Ukrainian armed forces and to protect the civilian population against Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression. At the same time, the EU is committed to continuing to provide Ukraine and the Ukrainian people with increased political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military, and diplomatic support¹⁴.

In addition, NATO has decided to provide Ukraine with political and practical support by implementing extensive humanitarian aid, including assistance in the transition from Soviet-type equipment to modern equipment, achieving interoperability with NATO forces, and reforming Ukrainian defense and security institutions.

In its efforts, NATO has encouraged member states to support Ukraine with modern military equipment that meets Alliance standards, sending military advisers to train the Ukrainian armed forces in the use of this equipment and to host refugees on their territory.

Through the European Peace Facility, the EU is financing the provision of lethal and non-lethal military equipment and supplies, such as personal protective equipment, first aid kits, fuel, ammunition, and missiles.

On November 15, 2022, the Council also launched the EU Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine), with an initial duration of two years, which it subsequently decided to extend by a further two years, until November 15, 2026. EUMAM Ukraine's main objectives are individual, collective, and specialized training for the Ukrainian armed forces, and the coordination and synchronization of the activities of the member states providing training.

In 2024, the EU and Ukraine signed joint security commitments that provide for predictable, long-term, and sustainable support for Ukraine's security and defense, including through missions under the common security and defense policy. These commitments will help Ukraine defend itself, resist destabilization efforts, and deter future acts of aggression.

Although cooperation between the two organizations has evolved significantly over the past three years, there are still certain difficulties in implementing their vision for resolving the conflict in Ukraine.

These difficulties are caused by the lack of a joint decision between NATO and the EU on the measures to be implemented to end the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, but also by the existence of a divergent vision among EU member states on the position to adopt towards Russia's attacks on Ukraine.

One of these states is Hungary, which considers that Ukraine is not a sovereign, independent state and which, since the beginning of the war, has criticized Ukraine's requests to the two organizations for assistance in

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, paras. 21 and 27.

¹¹ *EU-NATO cooperation*, text available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/eu-nato-cooperation/>, accessed on 08.10.2025.

¹² *Areas of EU-NATO cooperation*, text available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/eu-nato-cooperation/>, accessed on 08.10.2025.

¹³ *Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation, January 10, 2023*, point 3, text available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2023/01/10/eu-nato-joint-declaration-10-january-2023/>, accessed on 10.10.2025.

¹⁴ *EU military support to Ukraine*, text available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/military-support-ukraine/>, accessed on 10.10.2025.

ending the conflict, even expressing its opposition to sanctions against Russia within the European Union. Hungary has also repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the disruption to oil supplies caused by the conflict in Ukraine and has refused to give up energy imports from Russia, contrary to the requests of the United States, and has opposed the progress of negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU, as it believes that accession could draw the EU into a conflict with Russia¹⁵.

At the same time, the EU is concerned with acquiring a certain degree of strategic autonomy from NATO, in which context it seeks to consider pre-positioning as many allied forces as possible on Europe's eastern flank, thereby reducing the dependence of European NATO member states on the US, a situation that could lead to tense cooperation with the Alliance in the future.

Although there are various challenges and limitations in the cooperation between the two organisations, it has had a significant impact on Euro-Atlantic security by: strengthening Ukraine's defensive capabilities, stabilising NATO's eastern flank by increasing joint exercises, increasing political cohesion within both organisations, accelerating Ukraine's European integration and strengthening the transatlantic relationship. NATO-EU cooperation has redefined the structure of European security and generated a strategic adaptation to new geopolitical realities.

EFFECTIVENESS OF SANCTIONS IMPOSED ON RUSSIA BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Russia's military intervention in Ukraine has been described by most Western states as a flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations¹⁶.

Among the first measures adopted were restrictions on exports to Russia of dual-use goods and technologies, oil refining equipment, semiconductors, chemicals, and advanced technologies.

The European Union adopted an oil embargo on Russian crude oil delivered by sea, and the United States completely banned imports of oil, gas, and coal from Russia¹⁷.

During the first year of the war, the EU Council adopted ten packages of sanctions aimed at weakening Russia's economy, depriving it of technology and its most important markets, and significantly reducing its ability to wage war, including¹⁸:

- individual sanctions against Russian and Belarusian figures, presidents and former presidents, members of government, oligarchs, parliamentarians, local politicians, high-ranking military personnel, businesspeople, and key Russian propaganda figures, consisting of the freezing of private assets;
- restrictions on economic relations with the Donbas region;
- visa suspension for diplomats, officials, and businesspeople;
- closure of EU airspace and European ports;
- a ban on Russian and Belarusian land transport operators entering the EU;
- SWIFT ban for Russian and Belarusian banks, including all transactions to the National Central Bank of the Russian Federation – it is estimated that this sanction will freeze a large part of Russian bank reserves;
- suspension of broadcasting in Europe and of Russian stations' licenses;
- ban on imports and exports of European products - cutting-edge technology, transport machinery and equipment, aviation and maritime navigation products, dual-use products (drones and software for them, encryption tools), luxury goods, firearms and military equipment, construction materials, as well as some food products, tobacco and cosmetics, including energy products;
- banning the activities of certain private companies.

The sanctions have led to a significant deterioration of the Russian economy, with inflation rising and the ruble depreciating sharply.

¹⁵*New tensions between Hungary and Ukraine after accusations of Hungarian drone incursions*, text available at <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/noi-tensiuni-intre-ungaria-si-ucraina-after-accusations-of-hungarian-drone-incursions-viktor-orban-ukraine-is-not-a-sovereign-state-/33544012.html>, accessed on 10.10.2025.

¹⁶ *United Nations Charter*, Art. 2, text available at <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-1>, accessed on 10.10.2025.

¹⁷ *The White House, Proclamation on the Suspension of Import of Russian Oil, Liquefied Natural Gas, and Coal*, para. 3, text available at <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/02/24/a-proclamation-on-increasing-duties-on-certain-articles-from-the-russian-federation/>, accessed on 10.10.2025.

¹⁸ *EU sanctions against Russia explained*, text available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-russia-explained/#sanctions>, accessed on 10.10.2025.

The technology and military industries have also suffered substantial losses as a result of technological isolation, particularly due to the lack of access to microchips and high-precision equipment. However, Russia has turned to China to cover its chip losses so that it can continue its production of drones and missiles¹⁹.

Sanctions, particularly those targeting energy and agri-food exports, have contributed to rising global energy and food prices. Temporary blockages of Ukrainian grain exports have particularly affected developing countries in the Middle East and Africa.

In the energy sector, Russia benefits from domestic energy capacity based on natural gas, nuclear power, and hydropower, resources that have enabled it to avoid an acute domestic energy crisis despite sanctions and lack of access to Western technology.

To circumvent the sanctions imposed by the EU after the embargoes on maritime exports of oil and petroleum products, Russia has redirected significant quantities to Asian markets, particularly India and China.

Certain fuels that were previously exported to the EU were redirected to China, India, and areas in the Middle East, allowing Russia to maintain a large portion of its export revenues. Russia has developed a network of alternative exports using methods such as ship-to-ship (STS) transfers and the creation of a "shadow fleet" to circumvent maritime transport restrictions and mask the origin of the oil²⁰. At the same time, domestic refining capacity has been kept active, although partially affected by the loss of access to Western technology.

Thus, faced with Western isolation, Russia has intensified economic relations with China, India, Iran, and other states considered "neutral" or "friendly." However, these relations have not fully compensated for the losses generated by the contraction of European and American markets.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the severe sanctions imposed by the European Union and its partners, Russia has managed to avoid a major economic crisis by redirecting trade flows and through strategic state interventions. However, these measures came at a cost: efficiency losses, declining net export revenues, risks related to energy infrastructure, and limitations in access to modern technologies. In the medium and long term, maintaining this fragile balance will depend on Russia's ability to innovate technologically and find new trading partners outside the Western sphere.

The diplomatic and economic sanctions imposed by the EU are an essential tool in the strategy to end the conflict, but to be effective, they must be combined with a complex package of legal, military, and political measures.

Adopting a long-term solution to end the conflict in Ukraine requires the cooperation of all international organizations, namely the UN for peacekeeping in the region, the EU for reconstruction and economic reforms, and NATO for providing security guarantees to prevent the forced cession of certain territories. In addition, initiating the process of accession to the European Economic Area would provide a framework for the financial stability of the state.

At the same time, the involvement of the International Criminal Court and the European Union is necessary to investigate war crimes and prosecute the crime of aggression against Ukraine. In this context, the EU Commission has supported the establishment in The Hague of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA), integrated into the existing joint investigation team (JIT) supported by Eurojust.

As Russia is not a party to the Rome Statute of the ICC, the Court has no jurisdiction to try the crime of aggression, in which case the Commission and the EU High Representative proposed the establishment of a special tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

Therefore, in May 2025, an international coalition comprising the Commission, the High Representative, the Council of Europe, and Ukraine agreed to establish the special tribunal²¹, and in June 2025, Ukraine and the Council of Europe signed the Agreement establishing the special tribunal²².

¹⁹ Miller C., *The Impact of Semiconductor Sanctions on Russia*, text available at accessed on 10.10.2025.

²⁰ Le Monde, *Despite sanctions, Russia's "Shadow Fleet" Keeps Delivering Oil*, text available at https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/07/23/despite-sanctions-russia-s-shadow-fleet-keeps-delivering-oil_6743624_4.html, accessed on 10.10.2025.

²¹ *International coalition agrees on the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine*, text available at https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/international-coalition-agrees-establishment-special-tribunal-crime-aggression-against-ukraine-2025-05-09_en?prefLang=en, accessed on 10.10.2025.

²² *Ukraine and the Council of Europe sign Agreement on establishing a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine*, text available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/ukraine-and-the-council-of>

The sanctions regime imposed on Russia represents the most comprehensive package of coercive measures implemented against a major power in the modern era. Although the effectiveness of these sanctions may be debatable in the short term, they have had a significant impact on Russia's economic and technological capacity. At the same time, they send a clear signal about the international consequences of aggression and violations of international law. However, the measures adopted by the EU to date have not resulted in the cessation of aggression in Ukraine, their effectiveness being limited by Russia's refusal to accept the conditions imposed by Western states.

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