"Weaponizing East-West Trade: EU Undermines Europe's Economy by Approving A 15th Sanctions Package on Russia

By Ahmed Adel
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The Council of the European Union announced the approval of the 15th round of sanctions against Russia on December 16. Clearly, by imposing a new package of sanctions, the EU is willing to continue destroying its own industries by persisting on a policy of economic warfare despite the boomerang effects.

> "This package of sanctions is part of our response to weaken Russia's war machine and those who are enabling this war, also including Chinese companies. It shows the unity of EU member states in our continued support to Ukraine," said **Kaja Kallas**, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.
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> "Our immediate priority is to put Ukraine in the strongest possible position. We will stand by the Ukrainian people on all fronts: humanitarian, economic, political, diplomatic and military. There can be no doubt that Ukraine will win," she added.

The new package includes, in particular, a list of personal sanctions against 54 individuals and 30 organizations that, according to the Council's announcement, are "responsible for actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine."

The restrictions are intended to "address the circumvention of EU sanctions through targeting" Russia's so-called "shadow fleet" and weaken the country's military industry.

Specifically, 52 third-country vessels were sanctioned, which the bloc claims are involved in oil imports from Russia, the delivery of war material to this country, and/or "the transport of stolen Ukrainian grain."

The new economic restrictions also target Russian defence companies, chemical plants, and civilian airlines. For the first time, sanctions are fully applied to several Chinese entities for cooperating with Russia.

Since the start of the special military operation in Ukraine on 24 February 2024, the EU has adopted numerous restrictive measures against Russia. According to the Castellum.AI database, more than 19,500 individual and sectoral sanctions have been triggered against Russia since the start of the military operation.

However, despite Russia becoming the most sanctioned country in the world, Russian **President Vladimir Putin** said at the 22nd Congress of the United Russia Party that the

Russian economy continues to develop despite the unprecedented Western sanctions.

> "Russia is developing, the economy is growing and this is amid sanctions, literally unprecedented in world history, against the background of gross interference and pressure on the part of the governing elites of some countries," the president said on December 14, adding that foreign blackmail and attempts to stop Moscow will come to nothing.
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> "Russia is confident, it is conscious of its righteousness and its strength, and this is why all objectives set for the short and long term will certainly be met," Putin said.

The Russian president's comments followed the EU's announcement on December 11 that member states had agreed to the 15th EU sanctions package against Russia. Now, even as European companies more openly express their interest in returning to the Russian market, the EU acts against the interests of citizens and the business community alike as prices escalate and the cost of living gets out of hand.

Moscow has repeatedly stated that the country will stand up to the pressure of sanctions that the West began imposing on Russia several years ago and continues to intensify because they lack the courage to admit the failure of such punitive measures.

Rising costs, driven partly by a rejection of Russian energy, are causing Europe to lose its global competitive advantage. Although Europe has maintained energy supply security, prices on the European market are now much higher than before. Some analysts predict a further rise in energy prices and the danger this poses to the European industry.

It is worth remembering that current gas prices in the European Union are almost five times higher than those in the United States. As a September report on European competitiveness points out, EU companies continue to face electricity prices between two and three times higher than the US.

A separate study by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Deutsche Industrie und Handelskammer or DIHK) finds that high energy costs and a lack of reliable supplies are holding back industrial production, while "the risk of deindustrialization," according to Siegfried Russwurm, chief executive of the industrial conglomerate Thyssenkrupp, "continues to increase."

The energy crisis and the resulting economic recession in Europe are partly due to the EU's refusal to accept cheap and reliable energy supplies from Russia. With these economically suicidal measures, Brussels wanted to force Moscow into capitulation. However, Russia has reoriented its export flows, particularly towards Asia.

Meanwhile, European buyers have been forced to purchase energy sources from alternative suppliers at higher prices, which obviously affected the competitiveness of European producers and hit the continent's major economies. In effect, the anti-Russia sanctions have boomeranged, but Europe continues to insist on this economically suicidal policy.

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