

claimed. We can do this by organising demonstrations for Ukraine, making donations, talking about the war, etc. She reminded us that many Russians refuse to allow people to be killed in their name and that we must not forget them. She also pointed out that in the last presidential election, France almost elected a candidate who, until recently, officially supported Putin's government: Marine Le Pen.

Many Russians refuse to allow people to be killed in their name and that we must not forget them

Olga Prokopenko

Natalia Pouzyreff, French MP for the Renaissance group and chair of the France-Russia group stated that *'it is absolutely essential to support the emergence of a democratic proposal for Russia'*. She added that MEPs are working together to reach out to Russian opponents, so that they can determine which type of opposition should be set up in their country. *'Over there, young people want their country to evolve democratically. We need to come together to create a common strategy.'* The MP explained that the opposition had been asked to work on a post-Putin project; they would need political support to implement it.

The debate continued with a question on the possibilities for action for Western democracies. *'How can they support the Russian opposition and help Ukraine?'* asked the moderator. Evgenia Kara-Murza believes that the most important thing is to continue sending messages of support, because Vladimir Putin and his regime are doing everything they can to demoralise the country's citizens, who see so much



Natalia Pouzyreff

repression that they could become discouraged and stop trying to oppose it. The activist also explained that evidence of Russia's war crimes must be gathered, so that the international tribunal can do its work. This requires the support of journalists, activists and NGOs, who are doing this work despite the repression.

Antoine Arjakovsky then asked the speakers about the need for French President Emmanuel Macron to meet opposition members of Russian civil society. Natalia Pouzyreff felt that this would be a good thing and pointed out that members of parliament were already reaching out to these opposition figures. However, she expressed her regret that diplomatic relations with Russia have become virtually non-existent. Support for exiled Russian journalists, to secure their status, is essential if they are to continue their work. *'We have to give them the means to work, and the French media must also help them to produce content for the Russian-speaking public here and everywhere. It's one of the only ways of getting information across and it's one of our only links.'* The ball seems to be in the court of the democratic opposition, which must do everything it can to get organised. This is the starting point for the international community to help the Russians regain their freedom.



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ARE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS EFFECTIVE?

Thursday 28 September, 4:30 p.m. - 6 p.m., Auditorium



Lionel Fontagné, Pascal Boniface and Angelos Delivorias

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Sanctioning without being sanctioned

With the focus of the debate coming back to the war in Ukraine, should the question of the effectiveness of economic sanctions be understood *'as a substitute for war, a graduated response or worse, a step towards war?'* asked Lionel Fontagné in his introduction to the debate. The economist highlighted the difference *'between the economic approach and*

MODERATOR:

Lionel Fontagné, economist and member of the Cercle des Économistes

SPEAKERS:

Pascal Boniface, director of IRIS

Angelos Delivorias, analyst at the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS)

the political approach, which assess the damage to the economy on the one hand, and the more complex consequences on the other.' The Global Sanctions Database, which lists all sanctions from 1950 to 2022, shows *'a change in the nature of sanctions, initially fairly broad at country level, then more surgical after 11 September 2001, targeting individuals, companies and transactions instead, known as smart sanctions.'* The economist pointed out that *'sanctions are often accompanied by countersanctions from the targeted countries'* and that we need to *'look beyond the economic cost.'* In the case of the sanctions imposed on Russia after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Lionel Fontagné explained that *'through the oligarchs, 600,000 compa-*



Angelos Delivorias

nies were affected, but the Russian authorities compensated their losses with public money, which makes the sanctions seem ineffective, but this economic distortion has a cost.'

The dollar's international role is potentially being called into question

Pascal Boniface

Pascal Boniface started by detailing the reasons behind the sanctions, saying that *'the first reason is to satisfy public opinion.'* The geopolitical scientist went on to explain that *'sanctions are always imposed by the West on other countries; the countries of the South don't impose them.'* The United States, for example, *'imposes a staggering number of sanctions, thousands of them on nearly 70 countries'*, mainly because it *'has an extraterritorial approach to sanctions and doesn't hesitate to punish players who fail to comply with US law but are not active on its territory.'* For Washington, *'sanctions are a relatively effective political weapon because companies need access to the US market.'* Pascal Boniface then examined the case of the

European sanctions against Russia, which *'have hit the EU economies hard.'* What is more, *'the sanctioned countries have reached such a point of fatigue that coalitions of pariah countries such as Iran and Russia are forming to circumvent them.'* According to the geopolitical scientist, *'since the sanctions policy is Western and not global, the countries of the South are feeling the pinch of this unspoken economic imperialism.'* Since these sanctions are *'an important element in the perception of the gap between the West and the rest'*, even the United States is *'starting to reconsider because the dollar's international role is potentially being called into question.'*

Lionel Fontagné pointed out that it is *'difficult to withdraw sanctions'* with the example of the Trump administration's decisions to punish Chinese technology theft, which is still in force. The economist then went on to look at the evolution of European sanctions against Russia, *'from simple condemnation during the war in Georgia in 2008, to light sanctions in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea and today's immediate heavy sanctions in connection with the invasion of Ukraine.'*

Angelos Delivorias, who refuted any *'European weakness'* in the progression of the sanctions against Russia, explained that relations with the EU were *'positive until 2008 under the 1994 cooperation agreement.'* The analyst argued that *'European leaders were taken by surprise in 2008, just after the rather liberal Medvedev came to power, and in the midst of the subprime crisis'*, while in *'2014, the EU was facing a sovereign debt crisis that would have been aggravated by economic sanctions.'* However, *'by 2022, the EU had decided to follow the Americans and send a strong signal to other countries, notably China with Taiwan.'*

While Lionel Fontagné reminded us that *'the Franco-German couple has long believed that trade softens morals'*, Pascal Boniface added that *'geopolitics often*

Geopolitics often takes precedence over economics

Pascal Boniface

takes precedence over economics, and this attitude bears witness to European hubris, which postulates that the whole world will become westernised.' When asked to define the types of sanctions, the geopolitical scientist explained that it was *'almost impossible since there are so many'*, differentiating between *'Western and non-Western sanctions, for example, the sanctions imposed by the Gulf States on Israel, which have not prevented its development.'* He went on to say that we have *'a limitless imagination when it comes to sanctions; the Americans have hundreds of people working on this.'* In fact, it is *'a modus operandi that has developed in the 21st century with the general trend towards prohibiting war, in addition to the rejection of war by public opinion.'*

'Apart from extraterritoriality, European sanctions are quite similar to American sanctions', continued the European analyst. However, as decisions must be taken unanimously by the Member States, *'the process can easily be delayed, as was the case with Cyprus in 2020 during the sanctions against Belarus or Hungary today.'* But once in place, *'the EU sanctions system is more flexible because sanctions have to be re-examined periodically.'*

As for the issue of Russian and Belarusian athletes boycotting the Paris Olympics, *'the question arises because the Sochi Games in 2014 were an opportunity to demonstrate Russian soft power.'* *On the other hand,*



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this question is only asked by the West and not the South, which was the case during the World Cup in Qatar', he continues. Today, the President of the IOC has made a decision: *'No national teams but athletes under a neutral banner, in addition to excluding athletes enlisted in the army or publicly in favour of war.'*

Returning to the question of the effectiveness of sanctions, Angelos Delivorias stated his belief that *'until the 1990s, they were not effective'*, adding that it is essential to define the criteria for effectiveness. Indeed, *'just because Russia hasn't stopped the war or imploded doesn't mean that sanctions have no effect.'* On the other hand, it is always worth ask-



Pascal Boniface

ing *'what is the cost to the sanctioned country and to the sanctioning country?'* and *'how can sanctions be imposed in a globalised world?'*

Finally, the geopolitical scientist pointed out that *'sanctions are imposed quickly, so we don't always have time to assess their effects.'* Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that *'in dictatorships, it's not the leaders who suffer first but the population.'* In conclusion, the analyst stressed that *'we don't know how the Russian economy will change, but it's currently a war economy, to the detriment of other sectors, and this will inevitably have long-term effects.'*