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**The Securitization of Sanctions against Russia Introduced by the USA after the
Ukraine Crisis: Insights from Russian Digital Media**

Abstract

The ‘war of sanctions’ between Russia and the West, which intensified after 2014, continues to define political agenda-setting in the international arena. The start of the special military operation of Russia in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, has triggered a series of harsh targeted sanctions against the Russian economy. In contrast to much research that deals with the economic and political impact of sanctions on the ‘target’ country, this research employs a communicative approach to sanctions and, instead, focuses on the *language of sanctions*. A comparative analysis of threat narratives articulated in popular Russian digital media in the period from February 2022 to the end of 2023 was performed to prove that media play an indispensable role in the process of securitization/de-securitization of the West and U.S. sanctions in particular. The study is informed by the theory of securitization of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies and the social constructionist theory of social problems. It is argued that mutual US-Russian economic sanctions established after February 2022 have become one of the main reasons why Russia and the USA securitize each other as a ‘threat’ to international order and peace.

Keywords: sanctions, securitization, threat narratives, Ukraine crisis, US-Russia conflict