

The EU Sanctions Architecture against Russia

Effectiveness, Limits, and Strategic Options for 2026–2030

A comprehensive assessment of the political, economic, social, legal, hybrid, and compliance dimensions of the EU sanctions regime



EUROPEAN INSTITUTE FOR INNOVATION DEVELOPMENT



The EU Sanctions Architecture against Russia: Effectiveness, Limits, and Strategic Options for 2026–2030

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Abstract

Intended Audience of the Analytical Document

This analytical report is clearly designed for a high-level European policy readership rather than for a purely academic audience, because it consistently treats sanctions as a field of governance, legal engineering, coalition management, and forward policy design. It is directly relevant to members of the European Commission because it analyses implementation quality, guidance, compliance, legal precision, and the administrative operability of the sanctions regime, all of which fall within the Commission's practical policy universe. It is equally relevant to members of the Council of Europe and of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe because the report repeatedly connects sanctions with questions of legality, proportionality, rights-sensitive design, democratic conditionality, institutional accountability, and the longer-term political transformation of Russia. It is suitable for members of PACE and for representatives of the Russian opposition platform linked to PACE because it does not reduce sanctions to punishment alone, but examines the conditions under which sanctions may alter elite incentives, institutional routines, and post-war political trajectories inside Russia. It is highly relevant to the foreign ministries of EU Member States because it links sanctions to coalition coherence, diplomatic signalling, non-normalisation policy, escalation management, and conditional easing logic. It is designed for heads of analytical centres across the EU because it offers an integrated model that connects politics, economics, law, hybrid measures, and compliance into one strategic framework. It is also well suited to researchers in global and regional politics, economics, security studies, and sanctions policy because it provides a multidimensional methodological approach rather than a polemical or purely descriptive one. Finally, it is useful for parliamentary advisers, national competent authorities, legal services, compliance strategists, and transatlantic policy interlocutors, because the report is explicitly framed as a diagnostic and forward-governance instrument for institutional use rather than as a commentary piece.

Relevance of the Topic

The topic is highly relevant because the report argues that, by 2026, sanctions against Russia have ceased to be an episodic response and have become a durable domain of European governance. The report insists that the central question is no longer whether sanctions merely exist, but how the accumulated regime functions across policy domains, where it generates real pressure, where it encounters limits, and under what conditions it can remain effective through 2030. This relevance is heightened by the fact that the sanctions regime is analysed against a background of prolonged war, Russian adaptation, coalition fatigue risks, and the need for legally sustainable long-term pressure rather than one-off symbolic action. The report also shows that the issue is not only external pressure on Russia, but the internal governability of the sanctions system inside the EU and among aligned partners. It further argues that the temporal structure of sanctions matters: some effects are immediate, but many of the most important effects are medium-term and long-term, especially in technology, logistics, finance, compliance, and institutional resilience. The topic is therefore relevant not merely for current crisis management, but for strategic statecraft, post-war conditionality, and the defence of the European security order. Its relevance also lies in the report's rejection of simplistic public formulas about sanctions "working" or "not working", replacing them with a more disciplined assessment of degradational, deterrent, coordinative, legal, and legitimising effects. In that sense, the document addresses one of the core policy problems of contemporary Europe: how to maintain credible, proportionate, and operationally effective coercive pressure against a large adaptive authoritarian state over a long horizon.

The Problematic Nature of EU, UK, and US Sanctions Policy towards Russia

The report presents sanctions policy as inherently problematic not because it is misguided, but because it must operate within a field of structural tensions.

The first problem is analytical: sanctions are often judged by an unrealistic standard of rapid direct coercion, whereas the report shows that their strongest effects lie elsewhere—in capability degradation, coalition coordination, legal durability, hybrid disruption, and compliance-based transmission.

The second problem is operational: Russia has adapted through rerouting, third-country facilitation, shadow logistics, proxy entities, and substitute infrastructures, which means that sanctions must increasingly target the viability of adaptation rather than only the original prohibited transaction.

The third problem lies on the sender side: unanimity requirements, administrative unevenness, transposition gaps, over-compliance, private-sector burden, and interpretative complexity limit what the EU and the wider coalition can do quickly and uniformly.

The fourth problem is political and legal: the EU must remain proportionate, reviewable, rights-conscious, and governable, which excludes some crude forms of maximalist coercion and makes sanctions simultaneously durable and constrained.

The fifth problem is strategic: once the most visible and easiest measures have already been adopted, additional sanctions may produce diminishing marginal returns unless they improve enforcement, closure, and prioritisation rather than merely adding volume.

The report also implies a transatlantic problem shared with the UK and US: the regime is most effective when measures are coalition-compatible and embedded in wider banking, shipping, insurance, export-control, and compliance practices beyond EU law alone. Accordingly, the sanctions question is not simply whether Europe, Britain, and the United States should keep sanctioning Russia, but how they should continue doing so in a way that remains sharper, clearer, harder to evade, and more politically governable over time.

Novelty of the Analytical Document

The novelty of the document lies in the fact that it does not treat sanctions as a list of packages or as a sequence of political reactions, but as an integrated architecture composed of political, economic, social, legal, hybrid, and compliance dimensions. It is innovative in methodological terms because it combines political economy, institutional-legal analysis, comparative-historical reasoning, and public policy effectiveness analysis into a single framework. It is also novel because it makes compliance and hybrid measures central rather than secondary, treating them as decisive conditions of real-world effectiveness. Another important innovation is its refusal of binary judgement: the report repeatedly argues that sanctions must be evaluated through differentiated functions and time horizons, not through a single headline test. The document is further distinguished by its emphasis on legal quality, guidance, update capacity, review discipline, and enforcement convergence as determinants of strategic durability. Its treatment of social sanctions is also unusual in that it evaluates them through proportionality, legitimacy, reversibility, and protected channels rather than through crude pain-maximisation logic. The report is especially original in its forward-looking design, because it does not merely describe the 2022–2025 record but systematically asks how the accumulated regime should evolve through 2026–2030 under conditions of continued Russian adaptation. In short, the novelty of the study lies in transforming the sanctions debate from declaratory controversy into a governance-based, evidence-sensitive, multi-domain assessment of strategic effect.

Brief Description and Conclusions for Each Part

Part One “*Introduction*” establishes the conceptual and methodological foundation of the whole study. It argues that sanctions against Russia must be analysed as a cumulative architecture of pressure rather than as disconnected packages or isolated acts. The Part shows that sanctions work through interactions between law, markets, institutions, compliance systems, and adaptive behaviour, and that Russian adaptation must be analysed as part of the same field rather than as evidence that pressure has disappeared. It insists that the most serious public misunderstanding is the binary formula according to which sanctions either “worked” or “did not work”. Instead, the report proposes a differentiated assessment across political, economic, social, legal, and enforcement dimensions. It also explains why

coordination with aligned partners matters, why data triangulation is essential, and why long-term legal-operational quality determines whether the regime remains usable and defensible. The Introduction therefore frames the document as both a diagnostic and a forward-governance instrument. Its main conclusion is that any serious assessment of sanctions against Russia must be multidimensional, mechanism-based, and future-oriented.

Part Two “*Sanctions in the Political Sphere and Their Effectiveness*” examines listings, visa and diplomatic restrictions, and restrictions on Russian information influence and media. It argues that political sanctions are strategically important not because they produced immediate Russian policy reversal, but because they narrowed Russia’s diplomatic room for manoeuvre, personalised responsibility, and institutionalised a durable regime of non-normalisation. The section treats listings as especially flexible tools because they combine signalling, legal restriction, coalition coordination, and partial disruption of facilitation networks. It also stresses that visa and diplomatic restrictions matter because they constrain status mobility, reduce the possibilities for routine political normalisation, and maintain the boundary between aggression and acceptable international conduct. At the same time, Part Two recognises structural limits, especially the risk of repetitive expansion without sufficient strategic precision. For 2026–2030, it argues that the future value of political sanctions will depend on network-oriented targeting, update tempo, evidentiary robustness, and anti-circumvention linkage rather than on sheer growth in the number of names or restrictions. The Part therefore concludes that political sanctions are indispensable as a governance track of delegitimation and coalition discipline, even though they are not an autonomous instrument of strategic capitulation.

Part Three “*Sanctions in the Economic Sphere and Their Effectiveness*” identifies the economic track as the strongest source of directly observable structural pressure on Russia. It analyses financial sanctions, energy restrictions, trade-industrial controls, technology denial, and transport-logistics constraints, arguing that the EU materially compressed one of the most important external interfaces of the Russian economy. The report does not claim that these measures caused systemic collapse or total isolation. Instead, it concludes that they worsened the conditions under which Russia can finance, insure, ship, import, service, and technologically reproduce a war economy. Part Three further argues that the most meaningful economic effects are cumulative and degradational rather than spectacular and immediate. It also emphasises that macro-level resilience does not invalidate structural deterioration, because an economy may preserve activity while shifting towards lower-quality, maintenance-heavy, and more costly forms of reproduction. For 2026–2030, the section recommends more sophisticated forms of pressure, especially secondary sanctions logic, carefully designed extraterritorial tools, and stronger linkage between sanctions and energy-decarbonisation governance. Its conclusion is that the future effectiveness of economic pressure will depend less on adding abstract bans and more on conditioning access to markets, services, and infrastructures that are difficult to replace.

Part Four “*Social Sanctions and Their Effectiveness*” treats social sanctions as the most normatively delicate and politically constrained domain of the entire architecture. It studies visa mobility, consumer restrictions, everyday financial frictions, social costs, humanitarian thresholds, over-compliance, and the limits of sanction acceptability. The Part explicitly rejects the idea that social sanctions should be judged by the degree of pain they inflict on the population. Instead, it argues that their strategic utility lies in raising the cost of social normalisation, constraining status mobility, complicating elite-society interfaces linked to the Russian system, and creating selective friction in cross-border routines. At the same time, the report insists that this domain is legitimate only when it remains proportionate, precise, reversible, and bounded by protected humanitarian, educational, family, and civil-society channels. It warns strongly against over-compliance, discrimination, and collective exclusion. For the period to 2030, the Part supports continuation only in the form of carefully governed and ethically disciplined measures. Its conclusion is that social sanctions can remain useful, but only as calibrated instruments of constrained normality rather than as a diffuse politics of hostility towards Russian society as a whole.

Part Five “*Sanctions in the Legal Sphere and Their Effectiveness*” argues that sanctions remain effective only when they are legally intelligible, updateable, defensible under review, and capable of consistent implementation. It studies the normative architecture of asset freezes, non-recognition and non-enforcement mechanisms, service restrictions, intellectual-property constraints, litigation pressure, derogations, private-law frictions, and the long-term legal resilience of the regime. The central idea of this Part is that legal sanctions matter because they make the broader regime governable: they reduce arbitrariness, sustain legitimacy, preserve proportionality, and protect the system against erosion through fragmented interpretation or judicial weakness. At the same time, the report warns that legal sophistication can become a vulnerability if complexity outpaces usability and creates burdens that the regime cannot absorb. The discussion of resilience stresses three key pillars: clarity, precision, and update capacity. For 2026–2030, the Part advocates better drafting discipline, stronger enforcement coordination, controlled derogations, and more systematic monitoring and legal-quality feedback loops. Its conclusion is that the EU’s legal sanctions regime has become durable and strategically valuable, but that its future strength will depend on continued legal craftsmanship rather than on accumulation alone.

Part Six “*Hybrid Sanctions Measures*” shows that hybrid sanctions have become central to the mature phase of the Russia regime because Russia’s adaptation has increasingly relied on intermediary jurisdictions, shadow logistics, service fragmentation, opaque ownership structures, and proxy infrastructures. The report defines hybrid sanctions as cross-domain restrictive architectures in which law, market behaviour, reputational risk, logistics, service denial, compliance, and anti-circumvention all interact. This Part therefore moves beyond conventional categories such as purely political or purely economic sanctions and argues that contemporary restrictive policy works through the systems that keep prohibited activity feasible. It also demonstrates that hybridisation often depends on market withdrawal and de-risking, not only on formal legal prohibition. At the same time, the section is not triumphalist: it emphasises that hybrid measures are management-intensive, evidence-dependent, and highly sensitive to partner alignment and administrative capacity. Their long-term value is therefore conditional on maintenance quality. The main conclusion is that hybrid sanctions are among the most promising tools through 2030, provided they are continuously updated, integrated with anti-circumvention intelligence, and supported by strong compliance conversion rather than treated as a static body of prohibitions.

Part Seven “*Sanctions Compliance Architecture*” treats compliance not as a technical appendix to sanctions law, but as the operational transmission mechanism of the entire regime. It analyses screening, beneficial-ownership checks, trade-control due diligence, payment and insurance controls, licensing, audit trails, over-compliance risks, public-private interaction, and the limits of detection capacity. The report argues that sanctions law becomes real only when it is translated into documented, auditable, risk-based decisions by banks, exporters, insurers, carriers, service providers, and supervisory authorities. This Part therefore places compliance at the centre of sanctions effectiveness. It also shows that weak compliance can render even a strict legal regime porous, while high-quality compliance can multiply deterrent and disruptive effects across other domains. At the same time, it warns that excessive burden, fragmentation, and unclear guidance can make the system defensive, overcautious, or strategically blunt. For 2026–2030, the section expects a denser, more data-dependent, more networked, and more continuously supervised compliance architecture. Its core conclusion is that the long-term effectiveness of sanctions will depend less on the abstract existence of obligations and more on whether the cost of lawful compliance remains lower than the expected gains from evasion.

Part Eight “*Analytical Conclusions*” integrates the six substantive dimensions and offers the report’s mature overall judgement. It argues that the EU sanctions regime against Russia has been strategically consequential, but that its strongest effects lie in capability degradation, coalition coordination, legitimising consolidation, and institutional maturation rather than in rapid direct coercion. The section ranks the six tracks comparatively and concludes that economic pressure, hybrid disruption, legal resilience, and compliance conversion have been stronger in operational terms than social pressure or

expectations of immediate political reversal. It also stresses that sanctions-based coercion against a large adaptive authoritarian state faces deep structural limit. Russia's adaptation, however, is analysed not as neutralisation, but as a more costly, riskier, and more opaque form of survival under pressure. Part Eight is especially important because it clarifies that sanctions may contribute to political transformation inside Russia only indirectly and through mediated channels such as fiscal constraint, technological degradation, institutional mutation, and altered elite calculations. It therefore rejects both fatalism and triumphalism. Its conclusion is that sanctions remain strategically meaningful when judged by cumulative degradation and strategic narrowing, but they should not be evaluated by the implausible standard of instant capitulation.

Main Findings of the Analytical Document

The document's main finding is that EU sanctions against Russia should be understood as a durable, increasingly sophisticated, and institutionally dense regime of European governance rather than as a temporary punitive episode. Its second major finding is that the sanctions regime is strategically significant precisely because it has moved beyond declaratory politics into repeatable institutional practice. The strongest effects identified across the report are degradational, coordinative, legal, and compliance-related rather than directly coercive in the narrow sense. The report repeatedly confirms that political sanctions sustain coalition discipline and non-normalisation, economic sanctions impose the strongest material pressure, legal sanctions preserve governability and legitimacy, hybrid sanctions target the enabling systems of adaptation, and compliance makes formal law operationally real. A further major finding is that Russia's adaptation has been real but not neutralising, because workarounds have generally become costlier, riskier, and more dependent on fragile substitute infrastructures. Another core conclusion is that the limits of sanctions lie not only in Russia's resilience, but also in the EU's own legal, political, and administrative constraints. The report therefore rejects maximalist assumptions of frictionless escalation and instead treats governability inside the sender coalition as a decisive condition of credible pressure. Overall, the central analytical outcome is clear: the sanctions regime has not delivered instant coercive breakthrough, but it has produced sustained strategic narrowing of Russia's room for manoeuvre and has built a mature architecture of long-duration pressure worth preserving and refining.

Main Proposals for the Development of Sanctions Policy

The document's proposals are not based on rhetorical escalation, but on sharper and more technically disciplined strategy. In the political domain, it recommends preserving the regime of non-normalisation while deepening personalisation, network mapping, and function-based targeting. In the economic sphere, it supports more selective and infrastructure-oriented pressure, including carefully calibrated secondary sanctions, practical extraterritorial leverage, and stronger embedding of sanctions logic in decarbonisation and market-access governance. In the hybrid field, it recommends a continuously managed system of adaptive constraint rather than a static accumulation of prohibitions. In the legal and compliance domains, it argues for governable precision: better drafting, clearer guidance, stronger enforcement convergence, better prioritisation of high-value nodes, and more usable compliance architecture for operators beyond the largest institutions. In the social domain, it proposes caution, selectivity, and ethical discipline, preserving visible but normatively bounded restrictions while protecting humanitarian, educational, family, and civil-society channels. One of the most important recommendations concerns a possible future peace agreement: the report explicitly supports conditional easing without automatic restoration, arguing that many sanctions directions should remain in force until there is reliable evidence of non-recurrence, verified compliance, reduced war-enabling capacity, and dismantled circumvention infrastructures. Taken together, these proposals amount to a single strategic line: fewer maximalist gestures, more calibrated pressure, better closure, stronger enforceability, and a sanctions regime that remains effective because it is governable.

Prospects for Using the Materials of this Analytical Document

The materials of this report have clear practical value for future European policy work. They can be used as a strategic briefing document for EU institutions, Member State foreign ministries, parliamentary bodies, and sanctions-working groups because they provide an integrated framework for assessing effect, limitation, and future policy choice. They can also support legal and administrative calibration by showing where drafting precision, derogation design, guidance quality, and enforcement convergence determine whether the regime remains durable. For compliance authorities, regulators, and major operators, the report offers a structured understanding of how risk-based control, anti-circumvention logic, and practical implementation interact. For think tanks and academic institutions, it provides a methodological model for moving beyond simplistic debates and for comparing sanctions across multiple domains and time horizons. For parliamentary and diplomatic actors, it offers language and reasoning for sustaining non-normalisation while avoiding analytically weak maximalism. The document also has value for scenario planning, because it treats 2026–2030 not as a passive continuation of existing packages, but as a period of managed refinement under conditions of adaptation and possible partial de-escalation. It can therefore serve as a reference text for the design of conditional easing models, peace-related sanctions conditionality, and long-term Russia policy inside Europe. In the broadest sense, the report’s prospective usefulness lies in the fact that it is explicitly built for institutional use: it is intended to support calibration, governability, and disciplined strategic judgement rather than transient public argument.

General Introduction

This report examines the sanctions architecture of the European Union and aligned partner jurisdictions against the Russian Federation as a structured regime of restrictive measures, regulatory controls, and implementation practices rather than as a simple sequence of political decisions. It proceeds from the view that, by 2026, sanctions policy has become a durable field of European governance in its own right, with established legal instruments, administrative routines, enforcement expectations, and strategic review requirements. In that context, the central analytical task is not limited to describing measures already adopted. It is to assess how the overall regime functions across policy domains, where it generates effective pressure, where it encounters operational limits, and under what conditions its longer-term leverage may either consolidate or erode. The report therefore treats sanctions as an integrated architecture composed of political signalling, trade and financial restrictions, service prohibitions, legal controls, anti-circumvention mechanisms, and compliance systems. Such an approach is necessary because the real effect of restrictive measures is produced cumulatively, through interaction between instruments, institutions, markets, and adaptive behaviour. Measures that appear modest in isolation may become materially significant when combined with parallel controls, guidance, reputational risk, and transaction-cost escalation. Conversely, measures that are robust at the level of legal drafting may deliver weaker results if monitoring, implementation, or international coordination remain uneven. The purpose of this Introduction is to set out the conceptual logic, analytical scope, and policy relevance of the assessment that follows.

From a Brussels policy perspective, the effectiveness of sanctions cannot be reduced to a single indicator or a binary judgement. Restrictive measures are adopted for multiple purposes and operate through different channels over different time horizons. Some are intended primarily to signal political resolve, clarify the Union's normative position, and sustain external coalition coherence. Others are designed to constrain Russia's access to capital, technology, advanced services, logistics, markets, or legally usable assets. Still others seek to raise the cost of circumvention, reduce the efficiency of re-routing, or narrow the availability of enabling infrastructures outside the Union. A credible assessment must therefore distinguish between coercive effect, degradational effect, deterrent effect, coordinative effect, and legitimising effect. It must also recognise that these functions are not mutually exclusive and may reinforce one another in practice. For that reason, the present report does not ask whether sanctions "work" in the abstract. It asks how different categories of restrictive measures perform within a wider policy architecture and how that performance should be interpreted in light of strategic objectives, implementation capacity, and adaptive responses.

The report also starts from a proposition that is often insufficiently acknowledged in public discussion: sanctions against Russia can be assessed properly only in connection with the internal structure and adjustment mechanisms of the Russian state, economy, and society. Restrictive measures do not operate in an institutional vacuum. They affect a polity already marked by wartime fiscal priorities, state-led redistribution, administrative centralisation, sectoral asymmetries, external reorientation, and differentiated forms of social adaptation. Their practical impact depends not only on formal legal scope, but on the way, costs are absorbed, deferred, concealed, socialised, or shifted across sectors and institutions. For this reason, the report treats the domestic condition of the Russian Federation not as background context but as an explanatory component of sanctions analysis itself. Budgetary pressures, technological substitution, trade redirection, labour-market strain, deterioration in service quality, and changes in elite incentives all matter for judging whether external pressure is material or merely symbolic. Equally, visible adaptation cannot automatically be interpreted as evidence of neutralised pressure. Adaptation may reflect resilience, but it may also reflect costly adjustment, declining quality of substitution, or growing dependence on narrower channels of support. A serious policy assessment must therefore examine both pressure and adaptation as elements of the same analytical field.

A further reason for adopting a multidimensional approach lies in the temporal structure of sanctions policy. Some measures are designed to communicate immediate political resolve and to alter expectations rapidly. Others are intended to impair capabilities gradually by constraining investment cycles, technological renewal, legal-operational capacity, and access to complex international services over a longer period. In the Russian case, short-term stabilisation in selected macroeconomic indicators may coexist with medium-term deterioration in productivity, technological quality, institutional efficiency, or sectoral flexibility. The absence of immediate systemic collapse does not, in itself, demonstrate the absence of meaningful pressure. Nor does the existence of adaptive channels invalidate the cumulative effects of long-duration restrictions. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between immediate shock absorption, medium-term restructuring, and longer-term capability erosion. This temporal differentiation is essential for any forward-looking assessment covering the period 2026–2030. The report accordingly evaluates sanctions not only in terms of observable outcomes to date, but also in terms of delayed effect, institutional durability, and future policy leverage.

The Union's restrictive measures must moreover be examined in the wider context of coordination with partner countries and jurisdictions. The practical force of many sanctions depends on the extent to which they are synchronised with parallel controls in finance, trade, insurance, transport, energy-related services, export controls, and enforcement practice beyond the EU legal order strictly understood. Even where the Union acts through its own autonomous legal instruments, the effect of those instruments is conditioned by the degree of external alignment, information exchange, and mutual reinforcement with aligned partners. Gaps in coordination may create exploitable asymmetries, while stronger convergence may transform otherwise limited measures into more consequential constraints. The sanctions regime is therefore both European and transnational in its operational reality. A narrow reading of EU acts alone may obscure the environment in which private actors assess risk, counterparties re-route transactions, and intermediaries test the boundaries of permissible conduct. For that reason, the report takes the EU framework as its core reference point while situating it within the broader architecture of aligned pressure. This is necessary to understand not only the scope of the regime, but also its actual strategic weight.

The legal dimension of the sanctions' regime is central to the present assessment. Restrictive measures adopted by the Union do not derive their effect solely from political intent or declaratory value. They depend on a complex normative and institutional structure involving Council acts, implementing measures, interpretative guidance, derogations, licensing arrangements, national enforcement frameworks, administrative practice, and judicial review. In operational terms, the meaning of a measure is shaped by the precision of its definitions, the coherence of related provisions, the manageability of compliance expectations, and the defensibility of enforcement decisions. The quality of legal drafting is therefore not a secondary technical matter. It is one of the principal determinants of whether a sanctions regime remains enforceable, scalable, and resilient under pressure. Measures that are too vague may generate uncertainty and uneven application. Measures that are too rigid, without calibrated derogations or protected pathways, may produce avoidable friction, over-compliance, or litigation risk. The report therefore gives sustained attention to the relationship between normative ambition and legal-operational quality across the sanctions' architecture.

Closely linked to the legal sphere is the question of implementation through compliance. In practice, restrictive measures shape behaviour not when they are merely published, but when they are translated into screening protocols, licensing decisions, due-diligence procedures, beneficial-ownership checks, contractual restrictions, shipping controls, banking alerts, and internal risk judgements. Compliance is thus not a peripheral adjunct to sanctions policy. It is one of the principal transmission mechanisms through which law is converted into economic and institutional effect. The behaviour of banks, insurers, exporters, freight operators, advisers, service providers, and corporate compliance teams significantly conditions the strength of the regime. At the same time, compliance systems can generate side effects, including fragmentation, legal uncertainty, defensive de-risking, excessive caution, and uneven burdens across Member States and sectors. A mature policy assessment must therefore examine both the

disciplining function and the frictional consequences of compliance practice. This is especially important in the context of anti-circumvention policy, where effectiveness often depends less on headline prohibitions than on the quality of risk detection, information sharing, and operational follow-through. For a Brussels readership, this is not a technical afterthought but a core governance issue.

The hybrid dimension is equally important because sanctions no longer operate exclusively through easily separable legal and economic channels. In the current environment, restrictive measures interact with transport networks, logistics hubs, intermediary jurisdictions, shell and proxy structures, service fragmentation, information asymmetries, and adaptive commercial practices that cut across conventional policy categories. Hybrid enabling structures can undermine the effect of formally robust measures by dispersing transactions across jurisdictions, actors, and legal forms that complicate attribution and enforcement. They can also create grey zones in which the distinction between lawful avoidance, regulatory arbitrage, and prohibited circumvention becomes more difficult to police. This requires policymakers to analyse sanctions not only as static rules, but as part of a dynamic environment of evasion, substitution, re-routing, and institutional learning. The report therefore includes a specific hybrid section not as a conceptual embellishment but as a necessary response to the changing operational landscape. Where conventional classifications become less adequate, policy analysis must become more integrated rather than less precise. Hybrid pressure and hybrid circumvention are now part of the ordinary reality of sanctions governance. Any forward-looking assessment that ignores this would be incomplete.

The evidential basis for sanctions analysis also requires careful handling. Policy discussion in this area is often affected by partial data availability, uneven reporting standards, selective disclosure, delayed statistical releases, and the politicisation of interpretation. In the Russian case, these difficulties are intensified by opacity in certain official datasets, reclassification of sensitive indicators, and the uneven comparability of domestic and international sources. Under such conditions, analytical discipline becomes especially important. No credible report can rely on a single statistical narrative or treat contested figures as self-sufficient proof of either success or failure. Instead, it is necessary to triangulate across European, Russian, international, sectoral, legal, and market-based sources wherever possible, and to read discrepancies as analytically meaningful rather than merely inconvenient. The aim of this report is therefore not to produce declarative certainty where the evidence does not permit it. It is to offer a structured and policy-useful interpretation of available evidence, while remaining attentive to data limitations, methodological caution, and the difference between short-term visibility and longer-term structural significance.

A further premise of the report is that sanctions policy must be judged not only by the pressure it imposes on the target state, but also by the extent to which it remains legally sustainable, administratively manageable, and politically maintainable within the Union and across the wider coalition. Restrictive measures that are poorly calibrated may create excessive burdens for legitimate operators, encourage divergent national practice, or weaken confidence in enforcement consistency. Equally, a regime that becomes too complex to interpret or too fragmented to administer may lose effectiveness even while appearing stringent on paper. From that perspective, the policy challenge for 2026–2030 is not simply one of expansion. It is also one of maintenance, refinement, legal resilience, and governance quality. Protected derogations, humanitarian carve-outs, clearly defined exemptions, and structured review clauses should not automatically be regarded as signs of dilution. In many cases, they are necessary elements of proportionality, legitimacy, and long-term operability. The report therefore treats sanctions policy as a dual exercise in external pressure and internal institutional stewardship. This duality is essential for understanding how the regime can remain both credible and governable over time.

The structure of the report reflects this broader understanding of sanctions as a multi-domain policy architecture. The political sections address signalling, diplomatic restriction, external coalition management, and the narrowing of Russia's room for international manoeuvre. The economic sections examine sectoral disruption, trade restrictions, financial constraints, technological deprivation, and the changing character of macroeconomic and industrial resilience. The social sections consider mediated

effects on labour conditions, household welfare, service access, mobility, and the differentiated social costs of prolonged external constraint. The legal sections focus on the normative architecture of restrictive measures, including asset freezes, service restrictions, derogations, judicial scrutiny, and the long-term defensibility of the legal framework. The hybrid sections analyse cross-domain instruments and enabling structures that complicate straightforward policy categorisation. The compliance sections examine implementation capacity, private-sector transmission, anti-circumvention vulnerabilities, and enforcement-related governance challenges. The concluding section then brings these strands together into an overall assessment of effectiveness, structural limits, and policy options for the period ahead. The intention is to provide a differentiated but coherent analytical framework suitable for institutional use.

Particular emphasis is placed on the legal, hybrid, and compliance dimensions because these are increasingly decisive for the maturity and resilience of the sanctions' regime. Political intent and legislative breadth remain important, but they are no longer sufficient benchmarks of policy quality. A sanctions architecture may be ambitious in design yet underperform in practice if definitional precision is weak, guidance remains uneven, evidential thresholds are unclear, or circumvention patterns evolve faster than enforcement methods. By contrast, a more narrowly framed measure may produce significant effects if it is clearly drafted, well communicated, consistently monitored, and effectively embedded in compliance practice across relevant sectors. The same logic applies to the interaction between hybrid adaptation and regulatory response. When intermediary jurisdictions, proxy actors, and layered service arrangements expand, sanctions governance must become more anticipatory, more coordinated, and more evidence-driven. The report therefore treats these domains not as specialist annexes, but as central to the future operability of the regime. They are the areas in which policy sophistication is most likely to determine whether the Union preserves or loses effective leverage.

The prospective horizon of 2026–2030 is especially important in that regard. By this stage, the issue is no longer merely the adoption of additional packages, but the quality of the accumulated regime and its capacity to remain strategically relevant under conditions of continued Russian adaptation. Some measures are likely to retain substantial force because they constrain access to complex technologies, capital-intensive renewal, specialist services, and legally usable economic resources that are not easily replaced. Other measures may face diminishing returns if re-routing routes stabilise, third-country facilitation becomes more entrenched, or private compliance burdens begin to outpace the practical gains of further formal expansion. New vulnerabilities may also emerge in areas that were previously regarded as secondary. At the same time, political sustainability within the Union cannot be assumed automatically and requires a regime that remains proportionate, intelligible, and administratively workable. The present report is therefore designed as both a diagnostic and a forward-governance instrument. Its concern is not simply with what sanctions have done, but with how the current architecture is likely to perform under changing strategic conditions and what adjustment triggers should inform policy recalibration over the medium term.

This orientation has direct implications for the type of recommendations the report is intended to support. The purpose is not to endorse maximalism for its own sake, nor to dilute restrictive policy through excessive caution. Rather, the report seeks to identify where additional pressure is likely to be effective, where legal and operational refinement is more valuable than formal proliferation, and where the current regime may be generating avoidable frictions without corresponding strategic benefit. Recommendations in this field must be evidence-led, legally disciplined, and operationally realistic. They should take account of proportionality, clarity, enforceability, coalition durability, and the need to reduce opportunities for circumvention without undermining protected pathways or legitimate activity. In practice, this means that effective policy development may involve not only new measures, but also better drafting, more coherent guidance, improved monitoring, stronger coordination, and more regular review mechanisms. The report is therefore structured to support calibration rather than rhetorical escalation. Such an approach is consistent with the needs of a Brussels policy audience concerned with governability as much as with political intent.

Against that background, the present document should be read as an analytical report on sanctions as an evolving field of European governance under conditions of prolonged geopolitical confrontation. It does not assume uniform effects across all domains, nor does it treat visible Russian adaptation as proof of sanctions irrelevance. Instead, it proceeds from the premise that serious policy analysis must identify variation in mechanism, timing, scope, resilience, and institutional quality. The report therefore evaluates sanctions against Russia through six interconnected dimensions: political, economic, social, legal, hybrid, and compliance. It examines the extent to which these dimensions reinforce one another, the points at which they diverge, and the structural constraints that limit the coercive capacity of sanctions-based policy. It also considers the conditions under which restrictive measures may still contribute to longer-term political and institutional transformation within the Russian Federation, even where immediate policy reversal is not observable. In that sense, the report is intended to assist expert readers in moving beyond declaratory controversy towards a more disciplined assessment of strategic effect. The Introduction establishes the basis for that task and frames the chapters that follow as components of a single integrated examination of the EU sanctions architecture against Russia.

PART ONE

Introduction

1.1. Objectives and Tasks of the Analytical Study

1.1.1. Rationale for the Need for a Comprehensive Analysis of the EU and Partners' Sanctions Architecture

The contemporary sanctions regime against the Russian Federation is not a set of fragmented restrictive measures but a complex, multi-level, and dynamically evolving architecture of foreign-policy, legal, and economic pressure. Its analysis requires not a piecemeal description of individual sanctions packages, but a systemic examination of the entire body of legal acts, political decisions, enforcement mechanisms, compliance instruments, and actual consequences for the state subject to sanctions pressure. In the context of Russia's prolonged war against Ukraine, the sanctions policy of the EU, together with that of aligned partners, has ceased to be an exclusively reactive instrument and has acquired the character of a strategically structured regime with features of institutional durability. This means that the study must take into account not only the substance of the restrictions but also their internal logic, the sequence of their expansion, the interrelationship between packages, and the degree of coherence across different jurisdictions. Without such an approach, there is an inevitable risk of superficial conclusions in which the number of adopted packages is mistakenly substituted for an assessment of the quality of sanctions design and the effectiveness of specific pressure mechanisms. For a special analytical issue aimed at a serious assessment of the social, economic and political condition of Russia, it is particularly important to move from a descriptive model to a structural analysis of the sanctions system as a factor in the transformation of the Russian state's external and internal contours. A comprehensive analysis is also necessary because sanctions do not operate linearly, but through a network of mediated effects: institutional, market, financial, demographic, behavioural, and managerial. Accordingly, the study must be structured so as to capture both direct and delayed consequences of sanctions pressure, including mechanisms of adaptation, circumvention, and compensatory restructuring. This constitutes the initial methodological foundation of the present analytical document.

The need for a comprehensive analysis is also determined by the fact that the sanctions policy of the EU and its partners in 2022–2025 developed in a mode of continuous escalation, refinement, and technological complication. Initial measures, oriented towards political signalling and rapid restrictive effect, were subsequently supplemented by sectoral sanctions, anti-circumvention measures, service bans, transport and logistics restrictions, strengthened mechanisms for monitoring compliance with the sanctions' regime, and instruments targeting third countries and intermediaries. Such evolution requires an analytical framework capable of distinguishing the objectives of the "first wave" of sanctions from the tasks of later packages, including the adjustment of previously introduced norms, the closure of loopholes, and the enhancement of enforceability. If sanctions are analysed only chronologically, without distinguishing functional blocks, it becomes difficult to understand which measures are intended as symbolic and political pressure, which are aimed at the structural weakening of the resource base, and which are designed to increase the cost of sanctions circumvention for Russian and external actors. Moreover, in legal terms, the EU sanctions' packages themselves are implemented through a series of amendments to the basic regulations and decisions, which creates a specific cumulative legal structure. This means that the researcher must consider not only the moment when a particular measure was introduced, but also its place within the chain of legal amendments and institutional

coordination. For a sound analysis of sanctions effectiveness, it is essential to trace how priorities shifted: from the rapid restriction of access to finance and technology to targeted pressure on energy revenues, logistics, the shadow fleet, payment infrastructure, and re-export schemes. Otherwise, critical analysis is replaced by a mere listing of measures without understanding their strategic interconnection. Consequently, a comprehensive approach is not merely desirable but an obligatory condition for the scholarly and analytical robustness of the document.

A separate rationale for a comprehensive analysis lies in the problem of assessing sanctions effectiveness, which in public discourse is often reduced to simplified binary formulas: “sanctions work” or “sanctions do not work”. Such framing is methodologically insufficient, since sanctions effectiveness is a multidimensional category. In reality, sanctions may be partially effective in some areas (e.g., restricting technological imports, complicating financial operations, and increasing transaction costs), while being considerably less effective in others (e.g., rapidly coercing a change in foreign-policy course). In addition, the effects of sanctions may materialise with a substantial time lag, including through the degradation of the investment cycle, technological ageing, declining quality of infrastructure reproduction, changes in the budget structure, and increasing dependence on a limited circle of external partners. For this reason, the present document proceeds from the need to analytically distinguish at least four levels of assessment: normative-political effectiveness, economic effectiveness, social effectiveness, and enforcement/compliance effectiveness. This approach makes it possible to avoid both propagandistic exaggeration of sanctions effects and their unfounded denial. It also creates conditions for a more precise assessment of which elements of the sanctions architecture possess long-term transformative potential and which operate primarily as instruments of foreign-policy signalling and international coordination. For a special issue devoted to the condition of Russia, this is particularly important, since the study must not merely record the existence of sanctions, but explain how they alter the parameters of the functioning of the state, economy, and society. Comprehensive analysis therefore serves as an instrument for moving from declarative assessments to evidence-based analytics.

A substantial reason for the need for a comprehensive examination of the sanctions’ architecture is that the EU does not act in isolation; rather, the sanctions regime is formed in coordination with partners, above all the G7 countries and a number of other states that have joined restrictive measures in whole or in part. This creates a multilayered sanctions environment in which measures adopted in different jurisdictions may reinforce one another, duplicate one another, come into technical tension, or leave zones of regulatory gaps. For a proper analysis, it is impossible to confine oneself solely to the texts of EU legal acts: it is necessary to take account of the institutional logic of coordination, the mechanisms of synchronisation in sensitive sectors (finance, energy, export control), and differences in enforcement practices. For this reason, the present study treats the sanctions architecture as a system that includes not only European regulations and decisions but also external contours of compatibility, which affect the actual strength of the measures. For example, the same sanctions measure may display high formal stringency in the legal text, yet be reduced in practical effectiveness because of uneven control, differences in national enforcement, or the existence of alternative routes through third countries. Conversely, even a relatively narrow measure may produce a significant effect if embedded in a coordinated international mechanism of control and monitoring. Accordingly, an objective assessment of EU sanctions policy requires analysis not only of its internal legal structure but also of the international context of implementation. Such an approach corresponds to the practice of European policy analysis, in which sanctions effectiveness is considered through the prism of coherence, enforceability, and cumulative impact. In the context of this document, this avoids the error of reading European measures in isolation and enables a more realistic assessment of their role in the international pressure regime directed at Russia.

Another key reason for the need for a comprehensive analysis is the necessity of critically assessing not only the content of sanctions but also the quality of the data on which conclusions about their effectiveness are based. In relation to Russia, this acquires particular significance in view of repeatedly observed problems of statistical transparency, changes in data publication practices, reduced

openness of certain indicators, and discrepancies between Russian official series and international estimates. If an analytical document is to claim a high evidential standard, it cannot rely exclusively on statistics from Russian pro-government institutions without comparison with European, American, and international sources. Therefore, the comprehensive analysis of sanctions architecture in this project inherently includes data triangulation and source-reliability assessment as part of the research procedure. This means that the empirical basis of the study will be formed on the principles of comparability, verification, and the identification of discrepancies, and that discrepancies themselves will be treated not as a technical nuisance but as an analytically significant sign of data quality and the degree of transparency of the institutional environment. This approach is especially important for assessing the economic and social effects of sanctions, where methodological differences, revisions, and selective publication practices may significantly influence final interpretations. The comprehensive character of the study is thus manifested not only in the breadth of thematic blocks but also in the rigorous handling of the evidential base. This makes it possible to formulate conclusions that are robust in both academic and policy contexts. Within the framework of a special issue, this standard is fundamentally necessary because the subject matter belongs to politically sensitive and information-contested domains. Consequently, methodological discipline in working with data becomes part of the rationale for the very need for a comprehensive analysis.

Finally, the need for a comprehensive analysis of the EU and partners' sanctions architecture is determined by the practical task of formulating substantive conclusions and recommendations for the period 2026–2030. If the document is confined to a retrospective review of measures already introduced, it will remain descriptive and will fail to perform its strategic function. Meanwhile, sanctions policy towards Russia continues to evolve, and its future effectiveness will depend on the ability of European institutions and partners to adapt pressure instruments to changing conditions: Russia's institutional adaptation, the reorientation of external trade, the development of circumvention routes, the transformation of financial channels, and shifts in the international conjuncture. In order to assess the prospects for continuing sanctions and to formulate proposals for strengthening them, it is necessary to understand which elements of the existing architecture have already demonstrated effectiveness, which require further calibration, and which generate disproportionate costs with limited results. This requires analysing sanctions not merely as a set of coercive acts, but as a system of governance over risks, transaction flows, and international coordination. In this sense, the present document must perform diagnostic, explanatory, and prognostic functions simultaneously. Comprehensiveness here is a condition of the prognostic utility of the analysis: without it, one cannot speak in a substantiated way about the probability of achieving the objectives of sanctions policy in the medium term. It is for this reason that 1.1.1 establishes comprehensive analysis of the sanctions' architecture as the guiding principle of the entire study and as a mandatory requirement for the subsequent sections devoted to the political, economic, social, legal, hybrid, and compliance dimensions of the sanctions' regime. This formulation of the task sets the framework for further work on the document and ensures its internal logical coherence.

1.1.2. The Relationship Between Sanctions Policy and the Analysis of the Social, Economic and Political Condition of the Russian Federation

The relationship between sanctions policy and the analysis of the social, economic and political condition of the Russian Federation is not external but internally structural in nature, since under contemporary conditions sanctions function not only as an instrument of international pressure but also as a factor in the restructuring of the basic contours of state functioning. In research practice, it is erroneous to consider sanctions as a standalone object isolated from the internal dynamics of the state subject to the sanctions' regime. In reality, sanctions become part of the environment within which the parameters of budgetary policy, foreign trade, financial intermediation, investment behaviour, corporate governance, the labour market, social policy, and politico-administrative mobilisation are altered. This means that an analysis of Russia's condition in the period 2022–2025 and in the perspective of 2026–

2030 cannot be methodologically complete without incorporating the sanctions factor into the explanatory model. At the same time, sanctions should be understood not as the sole cause of change, but as one of the system-forming drivers interacting with domestic institutions, military expenditure, political decisions, the resource structure of the economy, and the reorientation of external economic relations. Such framing makes it possible to avoid both the reduction of all problems to sanctions and the opposite error of treating sanctions as “external noise” with no influence on internal processes. For the present analytical document, it is essential to demonstrate that sanctions policy and the condition of the Russian Federation are in a relationship of continuous mutual influence: sanctions alter the internal environment, while Russia’s internal adaptation, in turn, affects the actual effectiveness of sanctions. Accordingly, the sections devoted to political, economic, social, and legal effects should be constructed not as parallel descriptions, but as interconnected levels of analysis of a single transformational dynamic. It is for this reason that, already at the level of setting the study’s objectives, it is necessary to establish the integral relationship between sanctions policy and the assessment of the condition of the Russian state and society.

In the economic dimension, the relationship between sanctions policy and the analysis of the condition of the Russian Federation is manifested primarily in the fact that sanctions affect not only individual indicators but also the very structure of economic reproduction. The most obvious level concerns direct restrictions on trade, finance, technology, transport, and services. However, for an analytical document it is insufficient merely to record formal prohibitions and restrictions. The key task is to identify how sanctions alter the configuration of economic flows: by redirecting exports and imports, increasing transaction costs, lengthening logistics chains, stimulating intermediary schemes, and affecting the cost of capital and the quality of technological renewal. In this sense, the analysis of Russia’s macroeconomic and sectoral indicators must be embedded in the sanctions context and accompanied by a distinction between direct, indirect, and delayed effects. For example, short-term stabilisation of certain macro-parameters cannot in itself be interpreted as a refutation of sanctions effectiveness if, at the same time, there is evidence of deterioration in the investment quality of growth, increased dependence on a limited circle of external partners, reduced access to critical technologies, or degradation of infrastructure maintenance. Similarly, individual negative indicators should not automatically be attributed to sanctions without an analysis of domestic policy, military expenditure, budgetary priorities, and institutional decisions. Thus, economic analysis within this study will be constructed as a causally linked assessment in which sanctions are treated as a factor altering the structure and quality of economic resilience, rather than merely as a source of short-term shocks. This is particularly important for assessing the prospects of sanctions in the period 2026–2030, since long-term effects are determined not by immediate declines in individual aggregates but by the accumulation of constraints on modernisation, productivity, and financial flexibility. Consequently, sanctions policy functions not as an appendix to economic analysis but as one of its central explanatory coordinates.

In the social dimension, the relationship with sanctions policy is more complex and mediated, which requires a particularly careful analytical lens. The social consequences of sanctions rarely appear as a mechanical result of one specific package; more often, they are formed through cascading effects passing through the labour market, inflation, the availability of goods and services, regional budgets, the healthcare system, education, migration processes, and the structure of household expenditure. For this reason, analysis of the social condition of Russia during the sanctions period cannot be limited to general indicators of income or unemployment, especially where such indicators are published under conditions of limited statistical transparency and require comparison with alternative sources. The present document proceeds from the position that sanctions policy affects the social sphere not only through the level of consumption, but also through changes in the quality of the living environment, access to technologies and services, labour mobility, professional trajectories, and the distribution of public resources between civilian and military priorities. Analytically, this means that social indicators must be linked to budgetary, industrial, and foreign-trade dynamics, rather than considered in isolation. In addition, an important element will be the distinction between effects caused directly by sanctions and effects arising from domestic politico-administrative decisions, including expenditure reallocation,

regulatory restrictions, and mobilisation practices. Such an approach is fundamental to a sound analysis, as it makes it possible to avoid politically convenient but methodologically weak interpretations. Within the special issue, the social block must demonstrate not only the presence or absence of deterioration in individual parameters, but also changes in the mechanisms of social resilience and the population's adaptation to a prolonged regime of economic and institutional restrictions. Accordingly, sanctions policy here serves as a crucial context for analysing social dynamics, but its influence is assessed strictly through evidential links and comparable data.

The political dimension of the relationship between sanctions policy and the condition of the Russian Federation is central to understanding the logic of sanctions pressure itself, since the final objectives of a significant share of sanctions are formulated precisely in terms of changing the political behaviour of the state. However, in analytical practice it is necessary to distinguish clearly between the immediate political objectives of sanctions and the actual domestic political effects, which may be asymmetric, time-lagged, or manifested in forms that do not coincide with the original expectations of the actors designing sanctions policy. Sanctions may intensify international isolation, narrow the space for foreign-policy manoeuvre, restrict elites' access to assets and jurisdictions, increase the cost of external operations, and complicate the diplomatic and financial infrastructure of the state. At the same time, within the country they may be accompanied both by increased administrative centralisation and mobilisation rhetoric, and by a redistribution of resources among elite groups, strengthened control over economic and information flows, and changes in the mechanisms of loyalty and political coordination. Accordingly, analysis of Russia's political condition under sanctions cannot be reduced to the question of whether sanctions have led to an immediate change in foreign policy course. A more productive framework is one in which changes in political resilience, the configuration of elite interests, administrative adaptation, legitimising practices, and the institutional capacity of the state to redistribute the costs of the sanctions' regime are examined. Such an approach makes it possible to assess the political effectiveness of sanctions in more realistic and verifiable categories than binary expectations of "rapid coercion". This is particularly important for the present document, as it is aimed at critical analysis rather than the reproduction of normative declarations. Therefore, the relationship between sanctions policy and the political condition of the Russian Federation will be considered as a relationship between external pressure and internal regimes of adaptation, rather than as a simple scheme of "stimulus—immediate political reaction".

Of particular importance for the present study is the fact that the social, economic and political condition of the Russian Federation during the sanctions period is shaped by several simultaneously operating factors, including sanctions, military expenditure, mobilisation mechanisms, institutional centralisation, changing external markets, and domestic regulatory policy. In this connection, the sanctions factor must be embedded in a broader multifactor model of analysis; otherwise, there is a risk of both overestimating and underestimating its actual influence. Methodologically, this means that in each substantive section of the document it will be necessary to distinguish between correlation and probable causal linkage, and to identify cases in which sanctions intensify pre-existing trends but are not their original cause. For example, deterioration in the quality of the competitive environment, the expansion of the state's role in resource allocation, or the strengthening of administrative control may be accelerated by the sanctions' regime while at the same time relying on previously established institutional trajectories. Conversely, certain shifts in foreign trade, logistics, or payment infrastructure may be directly linked precisely to sanctions restrictions and anti-circumvention measures. For a critical analytical document, it is essential not to conflate these levels of explanation. Accordingly, the relationship between sanctions policy and the analysis of Russia's condition will be described through a system of analytical filters: temporal sequence, sectoral specificity, comparison with alternative data, verification of the presence of internal non-sanctions drivers, and assessment of the durability of the effect over time. Such an approach enhances the scholarly integrity of the study and simultaneously makes it more useful for a policy audience, since it allows one to distinguish where sanctions recalibration may be effective and where other instruments of international pressure and political

strategy are required. Consequently, integrating sanctions analysis into the assessment of Russia's condition is both a substantive and a methodological necessity.

The relationship between sanctions policy and the analysis of the condition of the Russian Federation also has practical significance for the development of prognostic conclusions and recommendations in the present document. The aim of the study is not only to describe changes that have already occurred, but also to assess the prospects for continuing, modifying, and strengthening sanctions measures in 2026–2030. Such an assessment is impossible without understanding which elements of Russia's social, economic and political order have demonstrated the greatest sensitivity to sanctions, which have shown the greatest adaptability, and which have shown a capacity for compensatory recovery through domestic and external mechanisms. In practical terms, this means that analysis of the condition of the Russian Federation becomes simultaneously an instrument for diagnosing vulnerabilities and an instrument for testing hypotheses about the future effectiveness of sanctions policy. If the study records only the fact that measures were introduced, without analysing Russia's internal dynamics, recommendations will inevitably remain general and declaratory in nature. Conversely, if sanctions policy is considered in close connection with budgetary structure, technological dependence, social adaptation mechanisms, political-administrative centralisation, and external economic reorientation, conclusions will be able to rest on a real picture of constraints and opportunities. This is especially important in the context of preparing proposals for new sanctions, since the effectiveness of future measures depends on a precise understanding of which channels of pressure are already overloaded, which retain potential, and which require international coordination and strengthened enforcement. Thus, 1.1.2 establishes the transition from the general framing of the problem to the operational logic of the entire study: sanctions are analysed not in themselves, but through their relationship to the transformation of the Russian state, economy, and society. This framework ensures the substantive coherence of the subsequent sections and makes the document suitable both for academic discussion and for practical policy use.

1.2. Methodological Framework of the Study

1.2.1. Political Economy Analysis

Political economy analysis serves as the core methodological framework of the present study, making it possible to examine sanctions policy not as an isolated legal or diplomatic instrument, but as a mechanism affecting the system of interrelations between the state, the market, institutions of resource allocation, and political centres of decision-making. For a critical analysis of sanctions packages against the Russian Federation, this approach is fundamentally necessary, since under contemporary conditions sanctions operate simultaneously across several dimensions: normative, financial, productive, foreign-trade, social, and institutional. A purely legal description of sanctions acts does not make it possible to identify how restrictions are translated into actual changes in the political-economic structure of the target state. Conversely, a purely macroeconomic analysis detached from political mechanisms of decision-making and the redistribution of costs is unable to explain resilience, adaptation, or the selective compensation of sanctions pressure. It is precisely for this reason that political economy analysis is used in this document as an integrative approach linking the legal architecture of sanctions to the internal mechanisms of functioning of the Russian state and economy. It makes it possible to examine not only the immediate effects of sanctions, but also the ways in which state and quasi-state actors redistribute the resulting costs across sectors, regions, social groups, and channels of external economic interaction. For the purposes of the present document, this is particularly important, since the task is not to record isolated negative or stabilising indicators, but to explain structural dynamics under a prolonged sanctions regime. Consequently, political economy analysis

establishes the principal explanatory lens through which data on the political, economic, social, and legal dimensions of sanctions effectiveness will be interpreted.

Within this methodological framework, the state is treated not as a neutral regulator, but as a central actor possessing the capacity to redistribute resources, alter the rules of access to markets, set budgetary policy priorities, and institutionally shape the regime of adaptation to external pressure. This approach makes it possible to avoid the simplified representation of sanctions as an external shock automatically and linearly transmitted to the economy and society. In reality, the effect of sanctions depends to a significant extent on how political authority organises responses to restrictions: through fiscal support for particular sectors, regulatory exemptions, administrative coercion, changes in currency and trade controls, the reallocation of export flows, an increased role for state corporations, or the mobilisation of budgetary reserves. Accordingly, political economy analysis in the study proceeds from the premise that sanctions effectiveness should be assessed not only by the strength of external pressure, but also by the parameters of the internal institutional processing of that pressure. This is particularly important for the analysis of the Russian Federation, where the state retains a significant role in the financial sector, the resource-based economy, the defence-industrial complex, infrastructure projects, and mechanisms of administrative coordination. Under such conditions, sanctions rarely act directly upon “the market as such”; more often, they interact with a hierarchical system of politico-administrative governance capable both of mitigating immediate effects and of amplifying long-term structural costs. Moreover, it is precisely through a political economy approach that analysis of the distinction between short-term stabilisation and long-term resilience becomes possible, since the state may temporarily compensate for losses while simultaneously increasing future constraints on growth and modernisation. Consequently, the central place of the state in this methodological framework does not imply a rejection of market analysis; on the contrary, it allows a more precise explanation of why formally similar sanctions produce different outcomes in different institutional contexts. For the present document, this provides the basis for a more realistic assessment of both the current condition of the Russian Federation and the prospects of sanctions impact in the medium term.

An important element of political economy analysis is the treatment of sanctions as a mechanism that alters not only the volume of economic activity, but also the structure of incentives, constraints, and behavioural strategies of key actors. In research terms, this means shifting attention from the question “has a given indicator fallen?” to the question “which types of behaviour have become more costly, riskier, or, conversely, more advantageous under the sanctions regime?” Such a shift in analytical perspective makes it possible to understand more deeply the processes of adaptation, circumvention, intermediation, and institutional substitution, which often conceal or temporarily mask the immediate consequences of sanctions in aggregated statistical indicators. For example, the preservation of export revenues over certain periods does not negate the fact that supply routes change, discounts increase, insurance costs rise, settlement infrastructure becomes more complex, and dependence on a limited number of intermediaries and jurisdictions grows. Similarly, statistical stability of employment does not necessarily indicate preservation of the quality of employment, labour productivity, or the long-term investment capacity of enterprises. Political economy analysis makes it possible to incorporate precisely these hidden and semi-formal mechanisms of transformation into the study, and these mechanisms are of key importance for assessing the real, rather than declarative, resilience of the system. In the context of sanctions against the Russian Federation, this is particularly important, since a significant part of adaptation processes passes through hybrid channels—from parallel imports and trade reorientation to changes in corporate ownership schemes, logistics chains, and financial intermediation. Consequently, within the framework of this document, political economy analysis will be used to identify changes in the architecture of incentives and institutional strategies, rather than merely to describe the movement of macroeconomic aggregates. This increases the explanatory power of the study and allows a more accurate assessment of the prospects of further sanctions measures.

Methodologically, political economy analysis in the present document is based on a combination of institutional, structural, and comparative approaches. The institutional component is necessary for

analysing the legal and administrative mechanisms through which sanctions pressure is transformed into internal decisions by the state, businesses, and financial intermediaries. The structural component makes it possible to assess changes in the composition of revenues, expenditures, trade flows, technological dependencies, and mechanisms of reproduction, that is, to move from a description of events to an analysis of the configuration of the system. The comparative component is required both for intertemporal analysis (before sanctions escalation, during the period of package expansion, and in the adaptation phase) and for comparing Russian data with international sources, which is a mandatory condition of evidential integrity in the present study. This combination of approaches makes it possible to overcome the limitations of narrowly sectoral or narrowly disciplinary analysis, in which political decisions are considered separately from economic effects, and legal mechanisms separately from the practice of circumvention and enforcement. For the purposes of the present document, this methodological combination is especially important because the sanctions regime of the EU and its partners is cumulative in nature and is implemented through a sequence of legal, financial, and managerial measures, the effects of which may manifest at different speeds and across different sectors. Political economy analysis within such a framework provides the capacity to link normative changes in sanctions architecture with observable shifts in the behaviour of actors and in the parameters of functioning of the Russian system. It is important to emphasise that the aim is not to identify a single causal scheme, but to construct a substantiated model of probabilistic and multifactor linkages in which sanctions are treated as one of the keys, but not the only, drivers. This makes it possible to preserve analytical rigour and to avoid both over-explaining developments through sanctions and underestimating them. Consequently, political economy analysis here functions not merely as a thematic angle, but as a full methodological platform for the entire subsequent study.

Particular attention within the political economy approach must be given to the issue of the internal distribution of the costs of the sanctions' regime within the target state. Sanctions very rarely affect the state and society evenly; on the contrary, they create an asymmetric map of losses, gains, compensations, and redistributions. For the Russian Federation, this means the need to analyse how sanctions-related costs are distributed between the federal budget and regions, between export-oriented and domestic sectors, between large corporations and small/medium-sized businesses, and between different social groups and forms of employment. Political economy analysis makes it possible to examine not only the costs themselves, but also the mechanisms of their political processing: who receives priority access to support, which sectors are recognised as systemically important, which types of losses are concealed through administrative reporting, and which are shifted onto end consumers and households. Such an approach is especially important for a critical assessment of sanctions effectiveness, since formal macroeconomic stability may coexist with deepening internal imbalances, rising hidden costs, and declining quality of development. Moreover, it is precisely through the analysis of cost distribution that it becomes possible to connect the economic and political blocks of the study: the redistribution of losses and compensations is almost always linked to a redistribution of influence, access to resources, and institutional privileges. Under conditions of prolonged sanctions pressure, this forms new contours of loyalty, dependency, and administrative resilience that are not visible in aggregate indicators. For the present document, inclusion of this aspect in the methodological framework is mandatory, since without it, it is impossible to assess correctly either the social consequences of sanctions, or the political adaptation of the regime, or the long-term prospects of pressure. Consequently, political economy analysis must capture not only the scale of sanctions effects, but also their internal configuration of distribution.

Finally, political economy analysis in the present study performs not only a diagnostic function, but also a prognostic and applied one, which is particularly important given the task of preparing proposals for future sanctions policy in the period 2026–2030. Its value lies in enabling a transition from retrospective description of measures already adopted to an assessment of the probable effectiveness of future decisions depending on the structure of vulnerabilities, adaptation mechanisms, and institutional constraints of the Russian Federation. Within such an approach, sanctions are assessed not only by the fact of their adoption or their political symbolism, but also by their capacity to alter the behavioural

parameters of key political-economic actors, increase the cost of circumvention, reduce the resilience of critical channels of reproduction, and limit opportunities for long-term compensation. This is particularly important for developing realistic recommendations, since further intensification of sanctions pressure requires more precise selection of targets, instruments, and enforcement mechanisms, as well as consideration of possible side effects for international markets, partner states, and compliance regimes. Political economy analysis makes it possible to assess such decisions through the logic of proportionality, enforceability, and cumulative effect, which corresponds to the practices of European policy analysis and institutional planning. For the present document, this means that the methodology is not confined to explaining the past, but is used as an instrument for designing analytically grounded scenarios and proposals. As a result, 1.2.1 establishes the working framework within which the subsequent parts of the study will connect sanctions architecture, data on the condition of the Russian Federation, and the assessment of effectiveness into a single logical system. Such a formulation ensures the document's internal consistency, strengthens the evidential basis of its conclusions, and makes the text suitable for professional discussion in an environment oriented towards normative precision and practical applicability.

1.2.2. Institutional and Legal Analysis

Institutional and legal analysis is a necessary methodological component of the present study, since the sanctions policy of the European Union and its partners is implemented primarily through formalised legal acts, decision-making procedures, enforcement mechanisms, and a system of inter-institutional coordination. Without incorporating this approach, the sanctions regime would inevitably be perceived either as a set of political declarations or as an aggregate of economic restrictions, whereas its actual effectiveness is to a significant extent determined by the quality of its legal construction and institutional enforceability. For the purposes of the present document, this is especially important because the object of analysis is not only the content of sanctions, but also the logic of their production, accumulation, adjustment, expansion, and enforcement within a multi-level system of governance. An institutional-legal lens makes it possible to treat sanctions as a regime embedded in specific EU procedures: decision-making under the CFSP framework, subsequent normative implementation through regulations, updates to listings, interpretative clarifications, monitoring mechanisms, and national enforcement in Member States. This approach is essential to critical analysis, because it is precisely at this level that both the strengths of the sanctions architecture (legal certainty, cumulative character, and high formalisation) and its limitations (the speed of coordination, uneven enforcement, legal loopholes, and differences in interpretation) become visible. In addition, institutional and legal analysis provides the basis for a proper distinction between the political intention of a sanction and its legally operationalised form, which is a mandatory condition for assessing effectiveness. In the context of the present study, this makes it possible to avoid substituting analysis of sanctions mechanisms with analysis of the political rhetoric surrounding sanctions. Consequently, 1.2.2 establishes institutional and legal analysis as an autonomous and mandatory part of the overall methodological framework, without which subsequent conclusions on effectiveness would be incomplete.

In its institutional dimension, sanctions policy is treated in the present document as the result of interaction between multiple levels of governance and competences, rather than as the action of a single decision-making centre. Even within the European Union, the sanctions regime constitutes a coordination-based structure involving the European Council, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, national authorities of the Member States, as well as enforcement and control frameworks at the level of financial, customs, export, and corporate regulation. Such multi-layeredness is not a secondary characteristic, but one that directly affects the speed, completeness, and quality of implementation of sanctions measures. On the one hand, institutional distribution makes it possible to ensure the political legitimacy and durability of sanctions policy through coordination procedures, legal formalisation, and the inclusion of Member States in the implementation process. On the other hand, it is precisely this feature that creates space for differences

in enforcement practice, uneven intensity of control, and unequal administrative capacity to detect and prevent sanctions circumvention. For an analytical document, this means that an assessment of sanctions effectiveness must take into account not only the norm as text, but also the norm as an institutionally implemented practice. Otherwise, there is a risk of overestimating the strength of formally stringent measures that, in practice, may encounter operational constraints, legal uncertainty, or insufficient coordination between authorities and jurisdictions. In this connection, institutional analysis in the present study will be used to identify bottlenecks in the sanctions' architecture: where delays arise between political decision and legal implementation, where mismatches are observed between design and enforcement mechanism, and where stronger coordination with partners is required. Consequently, the institutional component not only describes the governance structure of sanctions, but also performs a diagnostic function in assessing their practical effectiveness.

Legal analysis in the present study proceeds from an understanding of the sanctions regime as a cumulative normative system in which new packages of measures do not exist separately, but are embedded in already operative basic acts and modify them through a sequence of amendments, clarifications, exceptions, and additions. This is of fundamental importance for sound analytics, because the legal reality of sanctions policy is formed not only by the moment at which a new package is adopted, but also by the aggregate configuration of the currently applicable version of the basic regulations and decisions. In practical terms, this means that the study must consider both the "package" logic of political communication and the "cumulative" logic of normative regulation. It is for this reason that the present document will use a unified register of official EU acts (basic regulations, CFSP decisions, amending regulations, implementing regulations, and related acts), making it possible to analyse sanctions in their legal sequence and institutional interrelationship. Such an approach is especially important for identifying the legal mechanisms through which the sanctions regime is strengthened: expansion of material scope, further specification of prohibitions, introduction of exceptions and derogations, refinement of definitional blocks, incorporation of anti-circumvention provisions, and strengthening of requirements imposed on market participants. At the same time, legal analysis also makes it possible to identify structural weaknesses of the regime, including excessive complexity of certain norms, potentially ambiguous formulations, burdens on compliance practice, and the risk of fragmented interpretation across jurisdictions. For a critical analytical document, it is essential not to stop at noting that a new measure has been "introduced", but to assess whether it is legally clear, enforceable, verifiable, and properly integrated into the existing regulatory corpus. Consequently, legal analysis in this study will be directed not only at describing norms, but also at assessing the quality of sanctions rule-making as a factor of effectiveness.

An important element of the institutional-legal approach is the analysis of the relationship between the normative stringency of a sanction and its practical enforceability. In sanctions policy, situations frequently arise in which a legally broad and politically ambitious norm formally expands the volume of restrictions, but its practical effect is reduced because of difficulties in identifying controlled entities, opacity of ownership chains, the cross-border nature of transactions, data deficits, or uneven enforcement practice. For the present study, this means that it is necessary systematically to distinguish three levels: politico-normative intention, legal construction of the measure, and the factual level of enforcement. Such differentiation is particularly important when analysing measures related to export controls, financial intermediaries, logistics, services, shadow transportation schemes, and the use of intermediary jurisdictions. Institutional and legal analysis makes it possible, on the one hand, to assess the extent to which the legal form of a sanction corresponds to its stated objective and, on the other hand, to identify which institutional conditions are required in order to achieve results: data exchange, coordination between authorities, common standards of interpretation, adequate resourcing of controls, and international cooperation with partners. Thus, the methodology of the present document proceeds from the premise that sanctions effectiveness is determined not only by the severity of the prohibition, but also by the architecture of its supporting framework. This is a critically important position for analytical work, because it makes it possible to avoid the mistaken conclusion that a "sanction does not work" where the problem in fact lies in an enforcement defect rather than in the illegitimacy of the

objective or the general logic of the measure. At the same time, such an approach makes it possible to identify cases in which the legal construction itself creates excessive uncertainty from the outset and thereby reduces the likelihood of effective application. Consequently, institutional and legal analysis in the present study will be used as an instrument for distinguishing the design quality of a sanction from the quality of its implementation.

Particular attention should be given to the analysis of legal exceptions, derogations, transitional periods, and other mechanisms of normative flexibility, which are not in themselves a sign of weakness of the sanctions' regime, but rather a functional characteristic of it in the context of a complex international economy. In public discourse, the existence of exceptions is often interpreted as a "loophole" or as evidence of inconsistency in sanctions policy; however, professional analysis requires a more precise approach. Exceptions and transitional regimes may perform different functions: preventing disproportionate harm to Member States and partners, ensuring legal certainty for bona fide market participants, allowing the technical completion of previously initiated operations, reducing the risk of systemic disruptions in critical infrastructure, or creating a manageable adaptation horizon for new requirements. At the same time, it is precisely through such mechanisms that zones of heightened circumvention risk may emerge, especially where the normative wording of exceptions is insufficiently specific, control is weak, and intermediary chains are opaque. For this reason, within the present study legal exceptions will be analysed not in a binary logic of "strictness/leniency", but through the criteria of functional justification, legal clarity, temporal limitation, controllability, and risk of abuse. Such an approach is consistent with the institutional logic of European policy analysis, in which the quality of a measure is assessed also by its enforceability and proportionality. For the present document, this is of particular importance because a critical analysis must record not only the facts of introducing restrictions, but also the normative parameters that strengthen or weaken their practical effect. Consequently, the analysis of derogations and exceptions becomes not a secondary legal commentary, but an important part of the assessment of the real architecture of the sanctions' regime.

Institutional and legal analysis in the present study also includes mandatory consideration of compliance frameworks as an intermediate link between official rule-making and actual economic behaviour. Sanctions begin to affect financial flows, trade operations, corporate decisions, and logistics chains in real terms not at the moment of publication of an act, but at the moment when the relevant actors—banks, exporters, carriers, insurers, brokers, payment intermediaries, auditors, and other market participants—integrate the new requirements into their procedures for checks, risk assessment, and decision-making. This means that, in order to assess the effectiveness of sanctions policy, it is necessary to analyse not only the "upper" level of law, but also the "middle" level of institutional translation of the norm into compliance and risk-management practice. In the present document, compliance is treated not as a technical appendix to law, but as one of the key channels of sanctions impact through which the day-to-day enforceability of the regime is formed. It is precisely here that such parameters as terminological certainty, availability of clarifications, quality of guidance, coherence of requirements across jurisdictions, and predictability of enforcement lines become visible. At the same time, compliance frameworks are both a zone for strengthening sanctions effectiveness and a zone of potential fragmentation, where market participants encounter ambiguous norms, high verification costs, or divergent signals from regulatory authorities. For a critical analytical document, inclusion of this aspect in the methodological framework is mandatory, because many visible economic effects of sanctions arise not only from direct prohibitions, but also from the preventive behaviour of market participants (de-risking, over-compliance, withdrawal from operations in grey areas of risk). Consequently, institutional and legal analysis in the present study will be systematically linked to the subsequent section on compliance instruments and will ensure methodological continuity between the legal and economic parts of the study.

Finally, institutional and legal analysis in the present study performs not only a descriptive and diagnostic function, but also a design-oriented evaluative function necessary for formulating recommendations on the further development of sanctions policy in 2026–2030. In order to prepare

substantive proposals, it is not sufficient merely to record the list of measures already in force; it is necessary to assess which elements of the sanctions' architecture demonstrate high legal durability and institutional reproducibility, which require recalibration, and which generate disproportionate enforcement costs for limited political-economic effect. Such analysis is especially important for the development of new measures aimed at reducing opportunities for sanctions circumvention, strengthening coordination with partners, and improving the quality of enforcement without undermining the legitimacy of the regime and legal certainty for bona fide actors. In this connection, 1.2.2 establishes a framework in which sanctions policy is treated as an evolving institutional-legal system requiring regular calibration on the basis of implementation experience, vulnerability analysis, and assessment of cumulative effect. Such an approach corresponds to the practice of European institutional planning, where the durability of a measure is determined not only by political support, but also by the quality of legal construction, operational enforceability, and the capacity to adapt to new circumvention schemes. For the present document, this means that institutional and legal analysis will become one of the central instruments for moving from retrospective review to practically applicable conclusions and proposals. As a result, this paragraph provides the methodological foundation for all subsequent sections in which sanctions effectiveness will be assessed across different dimensions, and it strengthens the overall professional robustness of the analytical report.

1.2.3. Comparative-Historical Approach

The comparative-historical approach is used in the present study as a necessary methodological instrument for the sound interpretation of sanctions policy against the Russian Federation within the broader context of international restrictive-measures practice in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For an analytical document aimed at a professional assessment of sanctions effectiveness, it is essential to avoid both presenting the current sanctions regime against Russia as an entirely unprecedented phenomenon and mechanically transferring conclusions from other historical cases without regard to differences in institutional, economic, and geopolitical environments. The comparative-historical approach makes it possible to adopt an intermediate and methodologically more rigorous position: to treat sanctions against the Russian Federation as a specific case within a wider series of sanctions regimes, one that displays both general regularities and substantial distinguishing features. This is particularly important for the present document, because it enables an assessment not only of the set of specific measures, but also of the logic of sanctions design, the evolution of pressure instruments, the dynamics of international coordination, and the character of adaptation strategies of the target state. In practical terms, this means that comparison is used not to construct historical analogies as rhetorical devices, but to refine analytical categories: effectiveness, enforceability, cumulative effect, circumvention, institutional durability, political sensitivity, and temporal lag of impact. In this way, the comparative-historical approach strengthens the evidential component of the study and reduces the risk of simplified conclusions based exclusively on current political conjuncture. This is of particular importance for the present document, since its task is critical analysis rather than the reproduction of normative or journalistic interpretations of sanctions policy. Consequently, 1.2.3 establishes the comparative-historical approach as an autonomous methodological support, enabling greater depth, precision, and explanatory robustness in the subsequent analysis.

Within this approach, sanctions against the Russian Federation are considered in comparison not with a single "benchmark" case, but with several types of historical and contemporary sanctions regimes differing in objectives, scale, international coalition, legal basis, and mechanisms of impact. Methodologically, this is important because different sanctions cases make it possible to identify different aspects of the current regime: some illuminate the specificities of sectoral restrictions and export controls, others the characteristics of personal sanctions and listing mechanisms, and still others the limits of sanctions effectiveness in relation to large states with a resource base, a substantial internal market, and a developed capacity for institutional adaptation. Such an approach makes it possible to move beyond false universalisation, in which sanctions policy is assessed according to a

single model of success or failure. For the purposes of the present document, comparison will be used primarily as an analytical means of identifying parameters of comparability: the nature of the political objective (deterrence, coercion, signalling, degradation of capacity), the type of economic structure of the target state, the degree of integration into world markets, the breadth of international support for the sanctions' regime, the quality of enforcement, and the duration of sanctions pressure. Comparison along these parameters makes it possible to interpret more accurately the dynamics of sanctions against the Russian Federation and to avoid superficial assertions that sanctions "should have" produced rapid results by analogy with other situations. In analytical terms, this is especially important for assessing medium-term effectiveness, since sanctions effects have manifested at different speeds and through different mechanisms across historical cases. In addition, the comparative-historical approach makes it possible to include in the analysis not only cases of relative sanctions success, but also cases of limited effectiveness, incomplete implementation, or adaptive neutralisation, which is essential for a critical document. Consequently, comparison in the present study will be structured not around the search for a convenient analogy, but around the identification of relevant conditions and constraints of sanctions policy.

A significant advantage of the comparative-historical approach lies in its capacity to distinguish short-term, medium-term, and long-term effects of sanctions, which has direct relevance for the analysis of the sanctions' architecture of the EU and its partners in relation to Russia. In public and politicised discussions, sanctions are often assessed by the criterion of immediate result, whereas historical experience shows that many of the most significant effects emerge gradually—through changes in investment trajectories, technological degradation, reduced resilience of complex production and logistics systems, transformation of external linkages, and redistribution of internal resources. A comparative-historical perspective makes it possible to demonstrate that the absence of an immediate political break is not equivalent to the absence of sanctions impact as such. At the same time, this approach also helps to avoid the opposite error—the uncritical attribution to sanctions of all long-term negative developments without accounting for other factors, including domestic policy, military decisions, structural features of the economy, and the international conjuncture. This is particularly important for the present document, since one of its central tasks is to assess the prospects for maintaining and strengthening sanctions measures in 2026–2030. Such an assessment requires an understanding of how, in the history of sanctions regimes, the temporal horizon, the type of measures, and the character of observed consequences have related to one another. In methodological terms, the comparative-historical approach makes it possible to construct a more realistic model of expectations from sanctions policy: which effects may be achieved in a short cycle, which require cumulative impact, and which should not in principle be treated as realistic objectives for a given type of measure. Consequently, historical comparison in the present study performs not an illustrative but a calibrating function in relation to the assessment of effectiveness.

Particular attention should be paid to the use of the comparative-historical approach for analysing the evolution of sanctions instruments themselves and of the institutions through which they are applied. Sanctions policy over recent decades has undergone substantial transformation: from relatively limited trade-embargo regimes and diplomatic restrictions to complex systems of sectoral measures, financial prohibitions, export controls, listing mechanisms, service restrictions, anti-circumvention provisions, and compliance-oriented regulation. This means that, when analysing the current sanctions packages against the Russian Federation, it is necessary to consider not only their immediate content, but also the fact that they represent a product of the accumulated institutional experience of Western jurisdictions in the field of sanctions rule-making and enforcement. The comparative-historical approach makes it possible to trace how understandings of a "working" sanction have changed, which elements were strengthened as international financial and trading systems became more complex, and why contemporary sanctions regimes depend to a greater degree on the quality of coordination, data, compliance practices, and control over intermediary chains. This is particularly important for the present document in connection with the task of critically analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the 19 EU sanctions packages: assessment of their effectiveness must take into account that part of the

measures represent not merely a reaction to current events, but a stage in the institutional learning and adaptation of the sanctions' regime itself. In analytical terms, this makes it possible to distinguish between measures that expand the formal volume of restrictions and measures that improve the quality of enforceability of the existing architecture. In this way, the comparative-historical approach helps to avoid a superficial quantitative assessment of sanctions by the number of packages or the number of prohibitions and shifts the analysis to the plane of institutional maturity and functional effectiveness. Consequently, this approach is necessary for assessing sanctions policy as an evolving system rather than as a static set of acts.

The comparative-historical approach is also of key importance for the sound assessment of strategies of adaptation and sanctions circumvention, since it is precisely comparison with other cases that makes it possible to distinguish unique and typical mechanisms of response by the target state and associated actors. Certain patterns recur in the history of sanctions regimes: reorientation of trade flows, development of intermediary jurisdictions, restructuring of corporate forms, use of indirect financial channels, increased state involvement in compensating losses, and political mobilisation of the domestic agenda around external pressure. At the same time, the concrete configuration of these mechanisms depends on the scale of the economy, the resource base, technological dependence, the institutional capacity of the state, and the degree of support for the sanctions' regime among key trade and financial centres. For the present study, this means that Russia's adaptation should be analysed not as proof of the "exceptionality" or "invulnerability" of the sanctioned state, but as a political-economic process comparable in type, yet specific in scale and conditions of implementation. Such an approach allows a more sober assessment of the limits and possibilities of sanctions pressure: which circumvention practices are expected and require an institutional response, which indicate design defects in sanctions, and which reflect the objective limits of any sanctions policy in a globalised economy. In addition, the comparative-historical perspective makes it possible to distinguish adaptation as short-term stabilisation from adaptation as sustainable long-term substitution, which is essential for conclusions concerning the 2026–2030 horizon. For a critical analytical document, this is particularly important, since it makes it possible to avoid both alarmist and complacent interpretations of observed adaptation. Consequently, the comparative-historical approach functions here as an instrument for normalising and differentiating the assessment of adaptation processes under sanctions pressure.

Finally, the comparative-historical approach in the present study performs a prognostic and evaluative function necessary for preparing substantiated conclusions and recommendations regarding the further development of EU and partners' sanctions policy. Comparison with previous and parallel sanctions regimes makes it possible not only to interpret current dynamics more effectively, but also to refine the range of realistic expectations for future measures, including the timeframes within which effects may emerge, probable channels of circumvention, risks of enforcement fragmentation, and typical institutional weaknesses. This has direct practical significance for the present document, since proposals for strengthening pressure on the Russian Federation must be based not only on political expediency, but also on due regard for historically observed regularities of sanctions design and implementation. At the same time, the comparative-historical approach is not used in the logic of mechanically copying others' solutions; on the contrary, its task is to identify the conditions of applicability and the limits of analogy. Such an approach corresponds to the practice of mature policy analysis, in which historical experience is treated as a resource for calibrating decisions rather than as a ready-made template. Within the methodological structure of the present study, this means that 1.2.3 links the analysis of current sanctions against the Russian Federation to the broader field of international experience and thereby strengthens the quality of both the diagnostic and the design-oriented parts of the document. As a result, the comparative-historical approach provides additional interpretative depth, increases the resilience of conclusions to political conjuncture, and contributes to the formulation of more realistic recommendations for the period 2026–2030.

1.2.4. Public Policy Effectiveness Analysis

Public policy effectiveness analysis is used in the present study as a necessary methodological instrument for assessing sanctions policy not only by the fact of the adoption of restrictive measures, but also by the degree of attainment of stated objectives, the quality of implementation, the durability of results, and the relationship between targeted impact and the side effects that arise. For a critical analytical document, this is of fundamental importance, because sanctions, as an instrument of foreign-policy and legal pressure, simultaneously constitute a form of public policy: they are designed, institutionally formalised, implemented through a system of bodies and procedures, and require monitoring, recalibration, and evaluation of effectiveness. If the analysis is limited to describing the content of sanctions packages or recording selected economic and political consequences, the study will be unable to answer the key question—to what extent the sanctions architecture of the EU and its partners functions as a governable and adaptable policy system. It is precisely for this reason that, in the present document, sanctions policy is treated not only as an aggregate of prohibitions, but also as a policy with objectives, instruments, indicators, implementation constraints, review cycles, and mechanisms of institutional learning. This approach is particularly important in the context of 19 implemented sanctions packages, since the cumulative character of the regime requires an assessment not only of individual measures, but also of the quality of the entire trajectory of policy design and policy adjustment. In analytical terms, this makes it possible to move from the question “were sanctions introduced?” to more substantive questions: how targeted the measures were, how enforceable they were, how coherent they were, how timely their recalibration was, and how responsive they were to identified channels of circumvention. Consequently, public policy effectiveness analysis in the present study serves as a framework for the systemic assessment of the sanctions regime in categories of effectiveness, enforceability, adaptability, and strategic robustness. This makes this approach a mandatory component of the methodological architecture of the document as a whole.

Within public policy effectiveness analysis, sanctions effectiveness is treated as a multidimensional category that cannot be reduced to a single indicator or to the binary formula “worked / did not work”. Methodologically, this means that it is necessary to distinguish at least several levels of assessment: goal attainment, instrument performance, institutional performance (implementation and enforcement capacity), behavioural performance (changes in actor behaviour), and systemic performance (cumulative and strategic effects). Such an approach makes it possible to account properly for situations in which sanctions may demonstrate limited immediate political effect while nonetheless being significant in terms of long-term constraints on the target state’s resource, technological, and financial base. At the same time, it makes it possible to identify cases where a formally stringent measure proves less effective because of low enforceability, fragmented enforcement, or the existence of durable circumvention mechanisms. This is particularly important for the present document, since the object of analysis includes political, economic, social, legal, and hybrid aspects of sanctions policy, each of which requires its effectiveness criteria while preserving an overall analytical logic. In this connection, the methodology of the study will proceed from the principle of “differentiated effectiveness”: the same sanctions measure may have different effectiveness across different objectives and across different time horizons. Such an approach reduces the risk of politicised and methodologically weak judgements based on inflated expectations of immediate effect or, conversely, on disregard for cumulative impact. In addition, a multidimensional assessment model makes it possible to connect legal and institutional analysis to empirical data without substituting rhetorical interpretation for effectiveness evaluation. Consequently, in the present study public policy effectiveness analysis will be used as an instrument of rigorous operationalisation of the question of sanctions effectiveness.

An important element of this approach is the distinction between design effectiveness and implementation effectiveness, that is, between the quality of the design of a sanctions measure and the quality of its practical implementation. For sanctions policy, this distinction is of fundamental importance, because failure to achieve the expected effect may be linked either to design defects

(incorrect target selection, weak targeting precision, insufficient legal certainty, underestimation of circumvention channels) or to implementation defects (uneven control, limited enforcement resources, delays in coordination, divergent interpretation of norms). If these levels are not analytically distinguished, there is a risk of erroneous conclusions regarding the “ineffectiveness of sanctions as a whole” where the problem is, in fact, more specific and potentially remediable. In the present document, this distinction will be applied systematically in the analysis of individual sanctions blocks and packages, making it possible to assess more precisely which elements of the architecture require political-legal recalibration and which require institutional strengthening of control and compliance practices. Such an approach corresponds to policy evaluation standards in which effectiveness is treated not only as an outcome, but also as a function of policy design quality, governance arrangements, and the implementation chain. For the purposes of the present study, this is especially important because the sanctions architecture of the EU and its partners is cumulative and iterative in nature: subsequent packages often perform not only the function of expanding pressure, but also that of correcting identified defects in earlier measures. Consequently, the methodology of effectiveness analysis must be capable of capturing not only the “output result”, but also the quality of the process of adaptive governance of the sanctions regime. This increases the precision of critical analysis and makes the conclusions more useful for practical policy planning. In this way, public policy effectiveness analysis establishes a framework in which sanctions are assessed as an evolving system of governance decisions rather than as a static set of prohibitions.

A separate matter of significance within public policy effectiveness analysis is the assessment of proportionality, targeting precision, and the management of side effects. Sanctions policy as an instrument of pressure is almost always associated with the risk of indirect consequences for third countries, international markets, bona fide economic actors, and even the sanctioning states themselves. For this reason, professional analysis cannot be limited to assessing the intensity of pressure on the target state alone; it must also consider the extent to which measures are designed in such a way that the intended effect is not accompanied by disproportionate costs that undermine the political durability of the sanctions’ regime or its international support. This is especially important for the present document in the EU context, where the legitimacy and durability of sanctions policy depend not only on foreign-policy will, but also on the capacity of institutions and Member States to manage the distribution of costs, ensure legal certainty, and provide adaptation mechanisms for sensitive sectors. Public policy effectiveness analysis makes it possible to incorporate these parameters into the overall assessment of sanctions without reducing them to an argument “for” or “against” the strictness of measures. In analytical terms, this means that high formal stringency of a sanction will not automatically be interpreted as high policy effectiveness if it is accompanied by low enforceability, significant collateral distortions, or reduced coalition durability. At the same time, a measure moderate in its formulation may be assessed as highly effective if it has high targeting precision, good verifiability, and is embedded in an effective control system. Consequently, the analysis of proportionality and side effects in the present study will not be a secondary commentary, but a mandatory part of the methodology for evaluating sanctions policy as public policy.

A key component of this approach is the analysis of policy feedback and institutional learning, that is, how the sanctions regime changes under the influence of its implementation results, identified vulnerabilities, and the behaviour of sanctions addressees. This is of particular importance for sanctions policy against the Russian Federation, since the sequence of packages demonstrates not only the expansion of restrictions, but also the continuous recalibration of mechanisms: refinement of norms, closure of loopholes, development of anti-circumvention measures, strengthening of coordination and enforcement, expansion of guidance, and increased attention to intermediary jurisdictions and sectors of risk. From a methodological standpoint, this means that effectiveness assessment cannot be static: it must take into account the capacity of the sanctions’ architecture for self-correction and adaptation. Within the present document, this aspect will be analysed as an indicator of the institutional maturity of sanctions policy of the EU and its partners. If the system is capable of rapidly drawing lessons from implementation practice and recalibrating design and implementation, this increases its medium-term

effectiveness even under conditions of incomplete attainment of initial objectives in the early stages. Conversely, the absence of policy feedback mechanisms, slow response to circumvention practices, or insufficient inter-institutional coordination reduces cumulative effectiveness even where a broad formal set of measures exists. Such an approach is especially important for formulating recommendations for 2026–2030, because it makes it possible to assess not only “what has already been done”, but also the quality of the sanctions regime’s very capacity for further adaptation. Consequently, policy feedback analysis in the present study serves as a key bridge between retrospective assessment and the design-prognostic part of the document. This strengthens the practical value of the study and makes its methodology more consistent with the standards of contemporary public policy evaluation.

Public policy effectiveness analysis in the present study also presupposes the use of operational criteria and indicator frameworks that make it possible to compare different types of sanctions without artificially reducing them to a single metric scale. Since political, economic, social, legal, and hybrid measures differ in nature and in mechanism of action, their evaluation requires a set of coordinated but non-identical indicators and assessment criteria. In practical terms, this means that for each sanctions block the following will be defined: the stated objective of the measure, the expected mechanism of impact, the time horizon of effect manifestation, key observable indicators, typical channels of circumvention, enforcement conditions, and parameters by which the actual dynamics of effectiveness may be assessed. Such an approach makes it possible to preserve analytical comparability across sections of the document without eroding the substantive specificity of each type of sanction. This is particularly important for the study, since the final conclusions must be suitable both for the substantive analysis of individual categories of measures and for the integrated assessment of the sanctions’ architecture as a whole. At the same time, the indicator framework will be integrated into the previously established principle of data triangulation and comparative verification of Russian sources against European, American, and international databases, thereby improving the quality of the evidential base and reducing the risk of interpretative error. In methodological terms, this means that public policy effectiveness analysis will rely not on isolated illustrative indicators, but on a system of verifiable and comparable signs. Consequently, this approach ensures a transition from general evaluative judgements to a structured and reproducible procedure of analytical assessment of the sanctions’ regime. This is fundamentally important for a professional document intended for expert and institutional use.

Finally, public policy effectiveness analysis in the present study performs an integrative and design-oriented function: it combines the results of political economy, institutional-legal, and comparative-historical approaches into a single assessment framework suitable for the preparation of practical conclusions and recommendations. For a special analytical issue, high descriptive accuracy alone is insufficient; it is necessary to ensure a structure of analysis that will allow decisions on the continuation, recalibration, or strengthening of sanctions measures to be justified on the basis of a systemic assessment of their effectiveness, constraints, and risks. It is for this reason that, in the present document, public policy effectiveness analysis will be used as the central mechanism of synthesis: it will make it possible to relate sanctions objectives to observed outcomes, legal construction to implementation quality, short-term effects to long-term dynamics, and political expediency to institutional enforceability and coalition durability. Such an approach corresponds to the logic of European policy analysis, in which mature evaluation of a measure presupposes not only the recording of effect, but also analysis of the conditions of its attainment, the cost of implementation, and the possibilities of adaptive recalibration. For the present document, this means that 1.2.4 establishes the methodological transition from description of research approaches to the subsequent practice of their application in the thematic sections of sanctions analysis. As a result, this paragraph strengthens the internal coherence of the methodological framework as a whole, improves the manageability of the analytical process, and creates a basis for preparing evidence-based and practically applicable recommendations for the period 2026–2030.

1.3. Sanctions as an Instrument of Foreign-Policy Coercion

1.3.1. The Concept of Sanctions in International Practice

The concept of sanctions in international practice is among the foundational yet methodologically ambiguous categories, since different legal, diplomatic, and analytical traditions understand sanctions as forms of restrictive action that do not fully coincide. In the broadest sense, sanctions are measures of a coercive, restrictive, or deterrent nature applied by states, international organisations, or coalitions of states against another state, legal and natural persons, and associated entities, with the aim of changing behaviour, limiting capabilities, increasing the cost of certain actions, or signalling an international legal and political position. In contemporary practice, sanctions function not only as an instrument of response to violations of international law or threats to international security, but also as a mechanism of strategic pressure directed at altering the foreign-policy, military-political, financial, technological, and institutional parameters of the target state's conduct. At the same time, professional analysis requires a distinction between sanctions as a politico-diplomatic category and sanctions as a legally formalised regime of restrictive measures, because it is the legal form that determines enforceability, verifiability, and the limits of application of the relevant measures. In European practice, it is particularly important to distinguish between the broad political use of the term "sanctions" and the more precise concept of "restrictive measures", which reflects the normative nature of the instrument and its embeddedness in public authority procedures. This distinction is not merely terminological, because it affects the quality of analysis: it makes it possible to separate symbolic political signals from legally operationalised prohibitions and obligations. For the purposes of the present document, this is of fundamental importance, since what is analysed is precisely sanctions architecture as a combination of legal, institutional, and policy instruments, rather than only the political rhetoric surrounding them. Consequently, the working definition of sanctions in international practice must be sufficiently broad to capture the diversity of forms of pressure, and at the same time sufficiently precise to preserve analytical distinctions between political declaration, legal norm, and enforcement mechanism. It is within this framework that sanctions are further treated as an instrument of foreign-policy coercion rather than as an abstract category of international relations.

In international practice, sanctions are generally situated in an intermediate zone between diplomatic influence and the use of military force, and this defines their specific place in the repertoire of foreign-policy instruments. On the one hand, sanctions differ from diplomatic démarches, condemnations, and political statements in that they involve the introduction of concrete restrictions that create measurable costs for the addressee or associated actors. On the other hand, they differ in principle from military coercion because they are based on legal, financial, trade, technological, transport, and institutional mechanisms of pressure rather than the direct physical use of force. It is precisely this intermediate character that has made sanctions a particularly sought-after instrument in international practice over recent decades, when states and international groupings have sought to intensify pressure without crossing the threshold of direct military confrontation. In analytical terms, this means that sanctions cannot properly be described either as "soft" diplomacy or as the equivalent of military action; they constitute an autonomous class of coercive measures with their logic of design, implementation, and effectiveness assessment. For the purposes of the present document, this understanding is important because it helps to avoid two common errors: underestimating sanctions as a purely symbolic instrument and overestimating sanctions as a mechanism capable of automatically delivering rapid political results. International practice shows that sanctions operate through changing the environment of decision-making, redistributing costs, restricting channels of access to resources, and increasing risks for state and private actors. Such impact may be substantial, but it is generally mediated institutionally and stretched over time. Consequently, the concept of sanctions in international practice must include an understanding of them as a form of non-military foreign-policy coercion aimed at

altering the parameters of the addressee's behaviour and capabilities through a managed system of restrictions.

An important characteristic of sanctions in international practice is their multi-level and multi-component nature. In contemporary understanding, sanctions rarely amount to a single type of restriction; rather, they usually constitute combined regimes including political, personal, financial, trade, technological, transport, visa, service, institutional, and other measures. This composite nature of sanctions is linked to the fact that the objectives of foreign-policy coercion are themselves multilayered: from political signalling and the international delegitimation of certain actions to the effective restriction of the target state's resource, technological, and organisational capacity to continue the relevant policy. For analytical purposes, this means that the concept of sanctions cannot be reduced to classical trade embargoes or solely to personal listings; a broader construction is required, taking account of the architectural character of modern restrictive-measures regimes. This is especially important in relation to EU and partners' sanctions packages, where the sequence of measures forms a cumulative system of impact in which new instruments do not replace earlier ones, but strengthen, refine, or complement them. International practice in recent years demonstrates that sanctions effectiveness increasingly depends not on the stringency of any single measure, but on the quality of the combination of measures, their coherence, legal certainty, and capacity to close channels of circumvention. For this reason, within the present document the concept of sanctions will be used in a systemic sense—as a set of interrelated restrictive instruments united by a common political objective and implemented through an institutionally formalised regime. Such an approach makes it possible to analyse sanctions consistently by category (political, economic, social, legal, hybrid, and compliance-oriented) without losing the overall logic of foreign-policy coercion. Consequently, international practice requires sanctions to be understood not as isolated acts of pressure, but as multi-level policy regimes with different mechanisms of impact and different temporal dynamics.

No less important for defining sanctions in international practice is the question of the subjects of sanctions rule-making and application. In the contemporary system of international relations, sanctions may be introduced at different levels: universal (for example, within international organisations), regional (e.g., within integration groupings), coalition-based (by a group of states coordinating their measures), and national (through domestic legal acts with extraterritorially significant consequences). For professional analysis, this is of fundamental importance, because the legal nature, degree of binding force, enforcement mechanism, and international legitimacy of sanctions depend significantly on who introduces them and in what normative format they are framed. In one case, sanctions may have a high degree of international legal universality but a more complex coordination process and a more limited speed of adaptation to new circumvention schemes. In another, by contrast, they may be introduced more rapidly and be more technologically detailed, but require stronger international coordination in order to achieve a comparable effect. This is especially important for the purposes of the present document, since the sanctions regime against the Russian Federation is formed in a space of intersection between European, national, and coalition-coordinated measures, which affects both its strength and its internal heterogeneity. Consequently, the concept of sanctions in international practice must include not only the content of restrictions, but also the institutional nature of the sanctions-policy actor, because this largely determines the possibilities of enforcement, monitoring, recalibration, and international synchronisation. Such an approach makes it possible to assess sanctions more precisely as an instrument of coercion embedded in real systems of public authority and inter-state interaction, rather than as an abstract "will of the international community". In practical terms, this also establishes the basis for further analysis of the differences between political coordination of sanctions and legal comparability of specific regimes.

A separate methodological clarification is required regarding the relationship between the concepts of "sanctions", "countermeasures", "restrictive measures", "embargo", "export control", and "economic coercive measures", which are often conflated in public discourse but differ in scope and function in analytical and legal terms. In international practice, terminology often depends on institutional tradition

and politico-legal context: the same set of measures may be described as sanctions in political rhetoric, as restrictive measures in regulatory practice, as export controls in the trade-technological sphere, or as financial restrictions in the banking and compliance environment. For the present document, it is essential not to erase these distinctions artificially, but to use them as an analytical advantage. This makes it possible to describe more precisely the mechanism of action of a measure, the legal basis for its introduction, and the expected channel of impact on the addressee. For example, export control may form part of a sanctions' regime, but does not exhaust it; an embargo is one form of restrictive measure, but does not encompass personal sanctions, financial prohibitions, or service restrictions; visa measures may have a strong political-signalling effect, but a different profile of economic effectiveness compared with sectoral financial restrictions. Consequently, within the present document the concept of sanctions in international practice will be used as an umbrella category within which narrower concepts are distinguished by legal form, institutional channel of implementation, and type of targeted impact. Such an approach is consistent with the requirements of professional policy analysis and legal analysis, in which terminological precision is a condition of sound effectiveness assessment. In what follows, this distinction will help to avoid methodological errors when classifying sanctions into political, economic, social, legal, and hybrid categories, as well as when analysing compliance instruments and anti-circumvention measures. In this way, a working definition of sanctions is established that is suitable for systematic and reproducible analysis.

Finally, in international practice sanctions should be understood not only as an instrument of punishment or expression of condemnation, but also as an instrument of strategic management of behaviour, risks, and access to critical resources. This interpretation is especially important for contemporary sanctions regimes, where objectives are often formulated not in terms of immediate political capitulation, but in terms of deterrence, degradation of capacity, restriction of room for manoeuvre, increases in transaction costs, and changes in the environment of decision-making. For an analytical document, this is of fundamental importance because it allows sanctions to be assessed not by an inherently inflated criterion of immediate change in political course, but by more realistic and verifiable parameters of foreign-policy coercion. International practice shows that sanctions may simultaneously perform several functions: signalling an international position and legal assessment of the addressee's conduct, restricting its material and institutional capabilities, raising the cost of continuing a given policy, and creating conditions for a subsequent diplomatic or negotiating configuration. It is precisely this multifunctionality of sanctions that explains why their assessment requires a multidimensional methodology and why, in the present document, sanctions policy is examined through a combination of political economy, institutional-legal, comparative-historical, and policy-analytical approaches. In practical terms, this means that the subsequent analysis of sanctions against the Russian Federation will be conducted with due regard to the distinction between the symbolic, restrictive, degradational, deterrent, and compliance-mediated functions of the sanctions' regime. Consequently, the concept of sanctions in international practice is fixed here as a concept of a complex instrument of non-military foreign-policy coercion, implemented through legal and institutional mechanisms and aimed at changing the addressee's behaviour, capabilities, and strategic calculations. Such a formulation provides the necessary conceptual basis for the subsequent analysis of sanctions categories and the assessment of their effectiveness in relation to the Russian Federation.

1.3.2. The Evolution of Sanctions from “Targeted” Measures to Systemic and Hybrid Regimes

The evolution of sanctions in international practice from “targeted” (targeted, smart sanctions) to systemic and hybrid regimes constitutes one of the key processes in the transformation of foreign-policy coercive instruments from the late twentieth century to the first quarter of the twenty-first century. At an earlier stage, the turn towards targeted sanctions was largely associated with criticism of broad trade and economic embargoes, which often produced significant humanitarian consequences for civilian populations while offering limited precision in political impact on centres of decision-making. In

response, international and European practice increasingly placed emphasis on personalised and functionally targeted measures: asset freezes, visa restrictions, bans on the provision of specific services, and restrictions on particular legal entities and structures associated with undesirable conduct by states or non-state actors. In contemporary EU rhetoric and practice, the basic principle of targeting remains in place: restrictive measures should be directed at those whose behaviour is intended to be changed, rather than at the population as a whole. This principle is consistently reflected in official explanations of the nature of EU sanctions as a CFSP instrument and in the institutional communication of the Council of the EU. At the same time, the development of international financial, technological, and logistics systems has shown that, under conditions of high market interdependence, personal and narrowly targeted measures alone are often insufficient to achieve objectives of deterrence, degradation of capacity, or restriction of the strategic room for manoeuvre of the target state. As a result, sanctions practice began to move towards more complex architectures in which targeted measures do not disappear, but are embedded within broader sectoral, infrastructural, and anti-circumvention regimes. Consequently, it is more accurate to speak not of the replacement of one type of sanctions by another, but of a transition to a combined model in which targeting is retained as a principle but is implemented within a systemic and multilayered construction of restrictions.

For professional analysis, it is important to emphasise that the concept of “systemic sanctions” does not imply an automatic abandonment of targeting; on the contrary, it indicates a change in the level of impact—from individual subjects to entire functional contours of economic, financial, technological, and logistics infrastructure. Whereas first-generation targeted sanctions were concentrated primarily on specific persons, organisations, and point channels of financing, later regimes came to encompass sectoral restrictions, export controls on critical technologies, service bans, transport restrictions, limitations on access to capital markets, and measures affecting production chains and external economic intermediation. This logic is particularly visible in the contemporary EU sanctions architecture, where sanctions against Russia have developed towards increasingly complex packages combining personal, sectoral, trade, financial, and anti-circumvention components. Research literature on the transformation and design of EU restrictive measures directly notes that sanctions against Russia have become the most comprehensive in the history of the EU, which in itself indicates a qualitative shift from the classical model of “point pressure” to a regime of managed systemic restriction. In analytical terms, this means that effectiveness assessment cannot be based solely on counting the number of listed persons or organisations; it is necessary to analyse how measures actually close channels of access to capital, technology, logistics, services, and intermediary infrastructure. Consequently, the evolution towards systemicity is, above all, an evolution in the level of policy design, in which the object of impact becomes not only “who”, but also “how” the target political-economic system functions.

The next stage of transformation is associated with the transition from merely systemic sanctions regimes to hybrid ones, in which direct legal prohibitions are combined with instruments of indirect regulation, compliance pressure, anti-circumvention mechanisms, and international coordination across supply chains and financial operations. In such regimes, a substantial share of the effect arises not only from the formal norm published in an official act, but also from how that norm is interpreted and applied by banks, insurers, exporters, carriers, brokers, payment intermediaries, and other market participants. It is precisely for this reason that contemporary sanctions are becoming increasingly “hybrid” in an institutional sense: they operate at the intersection of law, risk regulation, corporate compliance, technical control, and cross-border data exchange. This shift is especially important for the EU, since the official architecture of restrictive measures is becoming ever more closely linked to guidance, interpretative clarifications, compliance practices, and heightened attention to circumvention schemes. European Commission resources and related instruments (including sanctions registers, consolidated lists, helpdesk mechanisms, and infrastructure for access to legal acts) reflect precisely this logic—sanctions as a regime requiring continuous institutional support and translation of norms into due diligence and enforcement practice. In analytical terms, this means that a contemporary sanctions regime cannot be described merely as an aggregate of prohibitions; it constitutes an ecosystem of legal and managerial mechanisms in which compliance and anti-

circumvention become not auxiliary but central elements of effectiveness. Consequently, the transition to hybridity is a transition from the model of “prohibition as event” to the model of “sanctions regime as a continuously supported system of risk and behaviour management”.

Particular attention should be given to the evolution of sanctions in the direction of anti-circumvention logic, which has in practice become one of the key features of mature contemporary regimes. Historically, many sanctions constructions encountered a predictable problem: as restrictions accumulated, addressees and associated actors reconfigured trade routes, created intermediary chains, altered corporate forms and jurisdictions, and increased the complexity of ownership and settlement structures. At earlier stages of sanctions policy, these processes were often treated as side effects; in contemporary regimes, however, countering circumvention has become a distinct direction of policy design. In relation to Russia, this is especially visible in the evolution of EU packages, where over time the focus increased on intermediary jurisdictions, shadow logistics schemes, service restrictions, and mechanisms of control over supplies of sensitive goods and technologies. European expert analytical materials likewise emphasise the strengthening of the anti-circumvention component as a structural, rather than secondary, element of EU sanctions policy. For the purposes of the present document, this is of fundamental importance because it shows that the development of sanctions occurs not only through expansion of the list of prohibitions, but also through improvement in the quality of the regime’s “closure”, i.e., its capacity to block channels of adaptation and intermediation. Consequently, analysis of the evolution of sanctions must take into account not only horizontal expansion of measures (more objects, more sectors), but also vertical complication of the enforcement mechanism (better control, more data, stronger coordination, greater sensitivity to circumvention schemes).

From a comparative-historical perspective, the transition from targeted to systemic and hybrid regimes also reflects the broader transformation of the international environment, in which economic interdependence, the digitalisation of financial flows, and the globalisation of supply chains have simultaneously expanded and complicated the possibilities of sanctions pressure. In conditions where critical components, software, financial services, insurance, maritime logistics, payment infrastructure, and technological platforms are distributed across multiple jurisdictions and private actors, effective coercion requires not only formal prohibition but also deep integration of legal, technical, and institutional instruments. This is precisely why the contemporary sanctions regime increasingly relies on a combination of “hard” prohibitions and “soft” mechanisms of managed risk: enhanced due diligence, de-risking, counterparty verification requirements, strengthened export controls, and coordination between regulators and compliance units. For analytical purposes, this means that the concept of hybridity should be used not only in a politico-military sense, but also in a regulatory-institutional one: sanctions become hybrid because their effectiveness is distributed between state rule-making and private enforcement in the broad sense. This interpretation is especially productive for the subsequent analysis of sanctions against the Russian Federation, because it makes it possible to explain why certain effects emerge through the preventive behaviour of markets and intermediaries even where direct prohibition covers only part of operations. Consequently, the evolution of sanctions towards hybrid regimes is not a temporary feature of one case, but a durable trend in contemporary international restrictive-measures practice.

It is also important to note that the transition to systemic and hybrid regimes does not negate the normative and political significance of the principles of proportionality, targeting precision, and minimisation of unintended consequences. On the contrary, as sanctions architecture becomes more complex, the importance of design precision increases: the broader the potential scope of restrictions, the higher the risk of collateral effects, legal uncertainty, and fragmented enforcement. This is why EU practice continues to emphasise that restrictive measures should be directed at those whose behaviour is intended to be changed, while at the same time seeking to minimise undesirable consequences. Under conditions of systemic and hybrid sanctions, this principle is implemented no longer only through personal listings, but also through more refined calibration of exceptions, derogations, transitional

periods, definitional clarity, guidance, and anti-circumvention design. For an analytical document, this is especially important because it helps to avoid a false dichotomy between “targeted” and “systemic” sanctions as if they were mutually exclusive models. In reality, contemporary sanctions policy represents an attempt to combine systemic depth of impact with manageable targeting and legal enforceability. Consequently, the evolution of sanctions should be assessed not as a movement from “precision” to “scale”, but as a more complex process of institutional search for balance between depth of pressure, quality of enforcement, international coordination, and the political durability of the regime.

Finally, for the subsequent analysis of sanctions policy against the Russian Federation, it is essential to establish that contemporary sanctions architecture constitutes not a static set of measures, but a dynamic regime passing through continuous cycles of expansion, refinement, adaptation, and institutional learning. It is in this context that the transition from targeted to systemic and hybrid regimes acquires not only historical, but also practical significance: it sets the framework within which the effectiveness of already introduced measures and the prospects for their further calibration should be assessed. The key issue becomes not only the stringency of restrictions, but also the quality of their combination, the capacity to close channels of circumvention, the coherence between legal and compliance frameworks, and the proportionality of side effects. In this perspective, sanctions appear as an evolving policy regime of foreign-policy coercion in which effectiveness is determined by the combination of design quality, implementation capacity, enforcement coherence, and adaptability. It is precisely this logic that will be used in the subsequent examination of specific sanctions categories and in assessing their effectiveness across political, economic, social, legal, and hybrid dimensions. In this way, the concept of sanctions evolution acquires applied significance here: it becomes an instrument for a more precise interpretation of the current sanctions’ regime and for the development of realistic recommendations for its further evolution in the medium term.

1.3.3. Specific Features of the Sanctions’ Regime against the Russian Federation (2022–2025)

The specific features of the sanctions regime against the Russian Federation in the period 2022–2025 lie, above all, in its scale, multilayered character, and accelerated package-by-package evolution, unprecedented in EU practice. According to the official position of the Council of the EU, by the end of 2025 nineteen sanctions packages had been adopted against Russia, and the regime itself is described as “massive and unprecedented”, with the stated objective of maximising pressure on Russia and reducing its ability to continue the war against Ukraine. The Council of the EU also explicitly refers to the temporary, calibratable, and proportionate nature of the measures, which is important for understanding sanctions not as a one-off political act, but as a managed regime of continuous adjustment.

A key feature of the 2022–2025 regime is its cumulative architecture: as a rule, new packages do not replace earlier ones, but supplement, refine, and “densify” restrictions already in force. This is particularly visible in the official timeline logic of the Council of the EU, where sanctions packages are presented as a sequence of escalation and adaptation of instruments—from the early political-financial and personal measures of February 2022 to more complex sectoral, technological, service-related, and anti-circumvention decisions in 2024–2025. Such a format produces not only an effect of expanding scope, but also one of institutional learning: the sanctions regime develops through cycles of identifying vulnerabilities, closing loopholes, and improving enforceability.

A second distinctive feature is the simultaneous combination of several contours of sanctions pressure within a single EU political line. This concerns not only sanctions “in connection with the war against Ukraine”, but also parallel regimes related to human rights violations in Russia, the undermining of democracy and the rule of law, and hybrid activity against the EU and Member States. On the official Council of the EU page, this is specifically highlighted as a separate block of “other sanctions against Russia”, demonstrating that the sanctions regime against the Russian Federation in 2022–2025 acquired

the character of a multi-regime construction in which military, human-rights, and hybrid tracks mutually reinforce political pressure.

A third specific feature is the high degree of integration of economic, financial, technological, and compliance-oriented measures. In its official overview, the European Commission emphasises that after 24 February 2022 the EU “massively expanded” sanctions, including unprecedented measures aimed at weakening Russia’s economic base, depriving it of critical technologies and markets, and substantially limiting its ability to wage war. At the same time, the Commission separately underlines that the relevant regulations create legal obligations for all persons and entities under EU jurisdiction, meaning that the sanctions regime was designed from the outset as an enforcement system rather than merely as a diplomatic signal.

A fourth specific feature is the gradual transition to a pronounced anti-circumvention logic as a structural element of the regime. In practice, this means that by 2024–2025 an important objective became not only the introduction of new prohibitions, but also the restriction of intermediary schemes, shadow logistics, service channels, and financial circumvention routes. Official communication by the Council of the EU and the Commission in relation to later packages (including the nineteenth) directly demonstrates such a shift: emphasis is moved towards the “shadow fleet”, third-country banks and operators, crypto infrastructure, and measures that strengthen implementation control and make circumvention of existing restrictions more difficult.

A fifth important element of the regime’s specificity is the extension of sanctions pressure to the infrastructure of military financing and the external economic support system of Russia beyond the territory of the Russian Federation as such. In the nineteenth package (23 October 2025), the Council of the EU set out measures concerning energy, finance, and the military-industrial complex, including additional listings, prohibitions on transactions with additional banks (including those in third countries), measures against crypto providers, expansion of sanctions against the “shadow fleet”, and further restrictions in the energy sphere (including measures relating to LNG and operations involving major Russian oil companies). This shows that by the end of the period under review the EU sanctions regime was already clearly oriented not only towards Russia’s “internal” assets, but also towards external nodes supporting its war economy.

A sixth specific feature is the combination of sanctions with mechanisms for managing frozen/immobilised Russian assets, above all the assets of the Central Bank of Russia. According to Council of the EU Q&A materials, following the prohibition on transactions related to the management of reserves and assets of the Central Bank of Russia under the third package, assets and reserves of the Central Bank of Russia were immobilised in the EU, with the volume of such assets in the EU estimated at approximately €210 billion. The legal framework was subsequently adapted to enable the use of extraordinary revenues arising from their immobilisation to support Ukraine (reconstruction, self-defence, and related EU/G7 financial mechanisms). This is an important distinction of the 2022–2025 regime from earlier EU sanctions practice: here sanctions partially evolve from a model of “blocking access” to a model of “managing the consequences of blocking in support of the victim of aggression”.

A seventh distinguishing feature is the significant role of the institutional infrastructure supporting sanctions implementation. The contemporary regime against the Russian Federation relies not only on Council decisions and regulations, but also on public EU information and compliance resources: sanctions registers, the EU Sanctions Map, interpretative clarifications, FAQs, and helpdesk mechanisms. The European Commission explicitly positions these instruments as part of the sanctions’ implementation ecosystem. This is especially important for assessing effectiveness: in the context of complex supply chains and financial operations, the practical force of sanctions increasingly depends on the quality with which legal norms are translated into the day-to-day activities of banks, exporters, carriers, insurers, and other operators.

An eighth specific feature is the institutional dependence of the pace of sanctions escalation on political coordination within the EU, while at the same time preserving a high capacity of the regime for further

expansion. Official materials of the Council of the EU record the sequential adoption of packages in 2025 (the seventeenth on 20 May, the eighteenth on 18 July, and the nineteenth on 23 October), indicating continued adaptation of the regime even at a late stage of the sanctions cycle. At the same time, the very practice of packaging demonstrates that the EU sanctions regime against the Russian Federation remains politically sensitive to questions of consensus, distribution of costs, and the national priorities of Member States—i.e., its effectiveness is determined not only by legal design, but also by the durability of coalition will.

A ninth specific feature is that the sanctions regime against the Russian Federation in 2022–2025 cannot be adequately assessed by a single criterion of whether it “did/did not immediately change political behaviour”. According to the EU’s stated objectives, the regime is directed towards a broader set of tasks: increasing pressure, reducing Russia’s capacity to wage war, restricting access to technologies and markets, and progressively narrowing channels of circumvention. Consequently, analytical assessment must proceed from a multidimensional logic: political effect, resource-economic constraint, technological degradation, quality of enforcement, durability of circumvention schemes, and the cumulative effect of packages should be considered separately. This feature follows directly from the way in which the EU institutions themselves describe the objectives, temporary character, and calibratability of sanctions.

Finally, in practical terms, the specificity of the 2022–2025 regime lies in the fact that it became not merely a set of restrictive measures against a particular state, but a model of an advanced European sanctions governance regime under conditions of a prolonged high-intensity war on the continent. For this reason, in the subsequent critical analysis it is essential to treat sanctions against the Russian Federation as a dynamic system: with intersecting legal bases, multi-level enforcement, compliance-mediated impact, anti-circumvention evolution, and a high degree of dependence on political coordination between the EU and partners. In this perspective, effectiveness assessment should be based not only on the formal volume of prohibitions, but also on the quality of their combination, enforceability, and capacity to adapt to changing behaviour by the addressee and intermediaries.

1.3.4. Objectives of the Sanctions Regime against the Russian Federation

The objectives of the sanctions’ regime against the Russian Federation in 2022–2025 are not reducible to a single linear task and cannot be properly described by the formula of “immediately changing a political decision”. The contemporary sanctions architecture of the EU and its partners is designed as a multi-purpose regime of foreign-policy coercion, within which several types of objectives are pursued simultaneously, each with a different time horizon, a different operational logic, and different criteria of effectiveness. For this reason, in professional analysis it is essential to distinguish between the objectives of coercion, deterrence, degradation of capacity, signalling, and institutional constraint, even where in practical policy they are implemented through the same packages of measures. Such differentiation makes it possible to interpret more precisely why individual sanctions measures may demonstrate limited effect in one direction while remaining significant in another. In relation to the Russian Federation, this is especially important in view of the scale of the economy, the resource base, the duration of the war, and the state’s capacity for adaptation through internal mobilisation and external intermediary channels. Consequently, a sound assessment of the objectives of the sanctions’ regime must proceed from a multidimensional logic in which sanctions are treated as an instrument for changing the environment of decision-making, rather than solely as a mechanism of direct coercion towards a one-off political reversal. Within this framework, the sanctions regime appears not as a set of fragmented restrictions, but as a system of coordinated pressures on behaviour, capabilities, calculations, and the institutional configuration of the addressee. It is precisely this formulation that makes it possible to analyse effectiveness further across each objective dimension separately and in their cumulative interaction.

The first and most politically sensitive objective is coercion in the narrow sense, that is, creating such a level of costs, risks, and constraints as should induce the addressee to change specific behaviour. In the context of sanctions against the Russian Federation, this objective is linked primarily to ending or limiting the ability to continue the war against Ukraine, as well as to changing foreign-policy decisions that sustain escalation and prolonged warfare. However, in contemporary sanctions practice coercion is rarely realised as an immediate and linear mechanism; more often, it operates through the accumulation of pressure on public finances, export revenues, access to technology, logistics capabilities, the servicing of external economic operations, and the resilience of associated elite and corporate structures. For analytical purposes, this means that the objective of coercion should not be measured only by a single indicator of whether an immediate political reversal “did / did not occur”. It is far more appropriate to treat coercion as a function of the gradual alteration of the balance of benefits and costs for the political leadership and key institutional actors. At the same time, it must be recognised that in authoritarian and mobilisation-based regimes the political conversion of economic losses into policy change may be substantially delayed. Consequently, in relation to the Russian Federation the objective of coercion retains strategic significance, but its realisation is probabilistic, cumulative, and politically mediated. This requires particularly careful assessment in what follows, without inflated expectations of short-term effects and without premature conclusions regarding the “uselessness” of sanctions.

The second objective is deterrence, that is, reducing the probability of further escalation, expansion of aggressive actions, or opening of additional lines of pressure by increasing the expected cost of such actions. Unlike coercion, deterrence does not necessarily presuppose an immediate change in policy already being pursued; its task is to influence subsequent decisions, the expansion of operations, the tempo of military build-up, and the choice of instruments for continuing the conflict. For the sanctions’ regime against the Russian Federation, this means that part of the measures should be assessed by the extent to which they impede the expansion of the technological, industrial, financial, and logistics base for new phases of the war, and by the extent to which they strengthen the signal that the EU and its partners are prepared to intensify sanctions pressure in response to further actions. Deterrence here has both a material and a politico-institutional character: on the one hand, resources and instruments are constrained; on the other, a predictable sanctions response by the coalition is formed, increasing uncertainty for the addressee and its counterparties. In analytical terms, this is especially important because deterrence is often difficult to observe directly: its result is reflected in actions not taken, decisions deferred, and changes in routes, tempo, and forms of activity. Consequently, assessment of the deterrent function of sanctions against the Russian Federation requires indirect indicators and comparative analysis of behavioural dynamics, rather than merely recording formally adopted prohibitions. In the practical perspective of 2026–2030, deterrence remains one of the key objectives of the sanctions’ regime, since it is linked not only to the current conflict but also to the broader task of reducing the potential for further destabilisation of European security. In this way, sanctions perform not only a reactive but also a preventive function of constraining strategic manoeuvre.

The third objective is degradation of capacity, which is arguably the most operationally measurable and at the same time one of the most underestimated dimensions of the sanctions’ regime. In this case, the issue is not immediate political effect, but the systematic reduction of the target state’s ability to sustain and reproduce critically important elements of its military, technological, industrial, financial, and logistics system. In the regime against the Russian Federation, this objective is pursued through the combination of export controls, restrictions on the supply of dual-use technologies and sensitive components, financial prohibitions, service restrictions, transport measures, and pressure on external channels of support. From a methodological point of view, degradation of capacity is particularly important because it is more amenable to structural analysis: one can assess the narrowing of access to equipment and components, increases in transaction costs, lengthening of supply chains, deterioration in the quality of technological substitution, increases in financing costs, and growing dependence on a limited circle of intermediaries. At the same time, it must be recognised that degradation of capacity rarely means the “complete stoppage” of a system; more often, it manifests

itself as reduced efficiency, rising costs, declining quality, longer time lags, and reduced strategic flexibility. Consequently, in relation to the Russian Federation, the objective of degradation of capacity is central to the assessment of the medium-term and long-term effectiveness of sanctions, especially in combination with anti-circumvention measures. It is through this dimension that the sanctions regime is capable of generating a durable cumulative effect even where a certain degree of adaptation is preserved. In the subsequent sections, this type of objective should be analysed on the basis of comparative statistical data, sectoral indicators, and comparison between Russian and external sources.

The fourth objective is signalling, that is, the formation of a clear political-legal signal regarding the international assessment of the addressee's actions, the boundaries of acceptable conduct, and the existence of coalition will to maintain pressure. In public debate, the signalling function of sanctions is often underestimated as merely "symbolic"; in practice, however, it performs a structural role in maintaining the legitimacy of the regime, international coordination, and the predictability of market participants' behaviour. In relation to the sanctions' regime against the Russian Federation, signalling operates on several levels: external (towards Russia), intra-EU (towards Member States and their societies), coalition-level (towards G7 partners and other states), and market-level (towards banks, insurers, investors, carriers, and technology suppliers). Through the sequential adoption of packages, expansion of listings, updating of regimes, and public communication, EU institutions form not only a set of prohibitions, but also a durable expectation that violations of international law and the continuation of aggression will be met by further tightening of sanctions. In analytical terms, this matters because signalling affects behaviour even before the formal application of specific measures: it strengthens de-risking, increases sensitivity to compliance risks, and reduces the willingness of private actors to operate in grey zones. Consequently, the signalling function of sanctions against the Russian Federation should be treated as an autonomous objective rather than as a secondary communicative effect. It does not replace coercion or degradation of capacity, but substantially increases their practicability through support for coalition discipline and private enforcement in the broad sense. In this way, sanctions function not only as an instrument of restriction, but also as an instrument of normative and behavioural structuring of the international environment.

The fifth objective is institutional constraint, that is, the deliberate narrowing of the target state's room for action through changes in the rules of access to markets, services, technologies, financial infrastructure, international settlement channels, and intermediary mechanisms. Unlike degradation of capacity, which may be described primarily in terms of resources and efficiency, institutional constraint places emphasis on rules, access regimes, and the architecture of external opportunities. For the Russian Federation in 2022–2025, this is especially important because a substantial part of the sanctions effect is linked not only to direct economic losses, but also to the fact that state and private actors are compelled to operate within a narrower, less predictable, and more costly institutional environment. This is reflected in the complication of financial intermediation, restrictions on access to certain markets and services, increased dependence on a limited number of jurisdictions and operators, greater vulnerability to subsequent sanctions packages, and stronger anti-circumvention controls. In analytical terms, this objective is fundamental because it helps to explain why, even where partial adaptation and continued trade flows exist, the sanctions regime may gradually worsen the quality of the addressee's strategic position. Institutional constraint reduces freedom of manoeuvre, increases the cost of choosing alternatives, and deepens dependence on unstable circumvention solutions. Consequently, this objective is an autonomous and critically important dimension of sanctions policy against the Russian Federation, especially on the medium-term horizon, where decisive importance attaches not only to the volume of current resources, but also to the breadth of institutionally available options. It is precisely here that legal design, compliance instruments, and international enforcement coordination intersect.

It is essential to emphasise that the objectives listed above are not mutually exclusive and are not arranged in a simple linear sequence. In actual sanctions policy against the Russian Federation, the

same measure may simultaneously perform several functions: for example, an export prohibition may contribute to degradation of capacity, have a deterrent effect in relation to further build-up, signal readiness to tighten the regime, and institutionally constrain access to a critical market segment. Similarly, measures against intermediary banks and service operators may not only complicate current operations, but also strengthen the anti-circumvention component, thereby increasing the overall effectiveness of restrictions already in force. For analytical purposes, this means the need for a matrix-based rather than one-dimensional approach to sanctions objectives: assessment must take into account overlapping functions, different time horizons, and unequal sensitivity of indicators. Such an approach is especially important in order to avoid the simplified conclusion that sanctions “failed to achieve their objective” where in each case the objective is implicitly reduced to a maximalist version of coercion. Consequently, in relation to the Russian Federation, it is more accurate to speak of a profile structure of sanctions-regime objectives, in which different types of measures have different primary and secondary functions. This makes it possible to build a more precise and professional framework for the subsequent assessment of effectiveness across political, economic, social, legal, and hybrid dimensions. In this way, the link is established between the conceptual description of sanctions and the practical evaluation of their operation.

Of particular importance for the subsequent analysis is the distinction between short-term, medium-term, and long-term objectives of the sanctions’ regime against the Russian Federation. Short-term objectives relate to a greater extent to signalling, the immediate increase of transaction costs, and partial deterrence of specific decisions; medium-term objectives relate to institutional constraint, the strengthening of anti-circumvention architecture, and the accumulation of effects of degradation of capacity; long-term objectives relate to sustained reduction of strategic flexibility, narrowing of possibilities for technological reproduction, and alteration of foreign-policy calculations through long-term redistribution of costs. Such temporal differentiation is necessary for sound analysis, because without it there is a high risk of conflating different expectation horizons and drawing methodologically weak conclusions on effectiveness. In relation to the Russian Federation, this is especially relevant given the regime’s high capacity for short-term stabilisation through redistribution of internal resources, administrative control, and the use of alternative external channels. Consequently, the absence of an immediate political break cannot automatically be interpreted as the absence of effect in respect of medium-term and long-term objectives. At the same time, the existence of certain signs of adaptation should not automatically be treated as neutralisation of the sanctions’ regime as a whole. In practical terms, this means that subsequent sections of the analysis will need to evaluate each group of sanctions through the relevant time horizon and set of indicators. It is precisely this calibration of objectives that makes it possible to move from politicised assessments to reproducible policy analysis.

In the context of the EU and its partners, an important feature is also that the objectives of the sanctions regime against the Russian Federation are formulated and implemented under conditions requiring the preservation of coalition durability, legal enforceability, and political legitimacy of the regime within democratic systems. This imposes an additional constraint on sanctions design: measures must be not only sufficiently stringent in relation to the addressee, but also sufficiently manageable in terms of collateral effects, compliance burden, judicial robustness, and institutional implementability. For this reason, the objectives of coercion, deterrence, and degradation of capacity in EU practice are inevitably correlated with the objective of preserving the operability of the sanctions’ architecture itself. In analytical terms, this is not a “weakening” of sanctions policy, but its institutional reality: the effectiveness of the regime is determined by its ability simultaneously to sustain pressure on the Russian Federation and to preserve the reproducibility of enforcement within the coalition. Consequently, assessment of sanctions objectives must also take account of a meta-level objective—maintaining sanctions as a durable instrument of public policy over a prolonged period. This aspect is particularly important for the 2026–2030 horizon, where the key issue becomes not only the introduction of new measures, but also the preservation of manageability of the already accumulated normative corpus. In this way, the objectives of sanctions against the Russian Federation should be treated in a dual logic: as objectives of impact on the addressee and as objectives of maintaining the institutional viability of the

pressure regime itself. Such a formulation creates a more realistic basis for subsequent analytical conclusions and recommendations.

Finally, from an applied perspective, the sanctions regime against the Russian Federation should be treated as a multifunctional system of foreign-policy coercion in which coercion, deterrence, degradation of capacity, signalling, and institutional constraint form an interconnected objective architecture. This means that subsequent effectiveness assessment should not be oriented towards identifying a single “main” effect, but towards determining which functions are operating more strongly, which weaker, where a gap exists between design and implementation, and which elements require recalibration in order to strengthen cumulative pressure. In this perspective, sanctions against the Russian Federation appear not as a static reaction, but as a calibratable regime capable of combining political signalling, economic-technological constraint, compliance-mediated impact, and anti-circumvention adaptation. It is precisely this framework that is the most productive for the transition to the subsequent parts of the document, where a critical analysis will be undertaken of individual categories of sanctions, their actual effectiveness, limitations, and prospects for development in 2026–2030.

1.4. Conclusion

Part One establishes that the EU and partners’ sanctions regime against the Russian Federation should be treated as a *single, cumulative architecture* rather than as a sequence of disconnected “packages”, because the later measures increasingly function as refinements that close loopholes and raise the cost of circumvention, rather than as mere additions to a list of prohibitions. The core analytical implication is that a purely chronological reading risks confusing quantity (number of packages) with *design quality* and enforceability, whereas the actual trajectory shows a shift in priorities from early financial and technology restrictions towards energy revenues, logistics constraints, the shadow fleet, and re-export controls. Part One therefore frames sanctions as a dynamic system whose effects are mediated through institutions, markets, and compliance infrastructures, and whose consequences include both immediate disruptions and delayed structural costs (investment-cycle degradation, technological ageing, and infrastructure reproduction problems). A major conclusion is that the report rejects binary public-discourse claims (“sanctions work / do not work”) as methodologically inadequate, because sanctions effectiveness is inherently multidimensional and time-lagged. This framing is critical to the report’s internal logic, since it positions later sections to evaluate effectiveness by *channels and time horizons*, rather than by a single headline political outcome.

Part One further concludes that sanctions effectiveness must be assessed through a structured, multi-criteria model that distinguishes at least normative-political, economic, social, and enforcement/compliance effectiveness, thereby preventing both exaggeration and denial of sanctions impact. A second key conclusion is that the EU does not operate in isolation; practical effectiveness depends on the degree of coordination with partners (notably the G7) and on whether measures across jurisdictions reinforce, duplicate, or leave exploitable gaps. This implies that “formal stringency” in legal text can underperform in practice when enforcement is uneven or third-country routes remain viable, while narrower measures can overperform if embedded in coordinated monitoring and control systems. Part One also places strong emphasis on the evidential base: credible evaluation requires triangulation, comparability, and explicit attention to data-quality constraints, because measurement problems and selective publication can materially distort conclusions in contested information environments. As a result, the report’s Part One functions as a methodological “gatekeeper”: it defines what counts as robust inference about sanctions impact and what should be treated as weak or non-comparable evidence.

Methodologically, Part One’s overall conclusion is that sanctions analysis must integrate political economy and institutional-legal reasoning with comparative-historical and policy-effectiveness evaluation, because sanctions operate through both state decisions and private compliance behaviours within complex cross-border systems. The report’s conceptual position is that sanctions should be understood not merely as punishment, but as strategic management of behaviour, risk, and access to critical resources, with realistic objectives often focused on deterrence, capacity degradation, restricted room for manoeuvre, and transaction-cost inflation rather than immediate political capitulation. In this sense, Part One anchors later analysis in a “mechanisms-first” approach: it prioritises how restrictions translate into constrained capabilities (finance, technology, logistics, services) and how the target state adapts via substitution, circumvention, and compensatory restructuring. It also formalises the idea that contemporary sanctions regimes have evolved from targeted measures to systemic and hybrid regimes where enforcement depends heavily on compliance ecosystems and coalition governance. The key implication is that the report is designed to measure *institutional durability and enforceability* as much as raw economic shock, because hybrid sanctions often work through risk aversion, de-risking, and preventive market behaviour.

Substantively, Part One concludes that the Russia-focused regime in 2022–2025 is best characterised as unprecedented in scale and increasingly “governance-like” in its evolution: packages densify the regime, strengthen anti-circumvention measures, and extend pressure to external nodes (logistics, intermediaries, and enabling services), making the system highly adaptive rather than static. A central conclusion is that this regime cannot be evaluated by whether it has “immediately changed political behaviour”, because the EU’s stated objectives encompass broader tasks: reducing Russia’s war capacity, restricting technology and market access, and progressively narrowing circumvention channels. Therefore, Part One establishes an analytical necessity to treat sanctions as a *dynamic system* with multi-level enforcement and compliance-mediated impact, where effectiveness hinges on the quality of measure combinations and the ability to adapt to behavioural changes by Russia and intermediaries. This also implies that “success” must be decomposed into measurable sub-outcomes (e.g., technology denial, logistics friction, financial isolation, and enforcement reach), rather than inferred from aggregate macro-stability or isolated indicators. In short, Part One prepares the evaluative logic for later sections by defining sanctions as cumulative pressure regimes whose impact is realised through multiple interacting channels.

Finally, Part One concludes that the most policy-relevant way to structure the report’s subsequent analysis is to treat EU sanctions as a multi-purpose coercive architecture whose objectives should be explicitly separated into coercion, deterrence, degradation of capacity, signalling, and institutional constraint, each with different mechanisms and time horizons. This objective differentiation is positioned as the remedy to common analytical errors—especially the reduction of effectiveness to a single political test—because a measure may underperform in coercion while remaining significant in degrading capacity or tightening institutional constraints. As a result, Part One’s overarching conclusion is that a robust assessment of the EU sanctions regime against Russia requires (1) multi-dimensional metrics, (2) coalition-context evaluation, and (3) evidence discipline through triangulation, all within an explicitly mechanism-based framework. This creates a coherent foundation for Parts Two and Three: they should not merely catalogue restrictions, but test how the sanctions system reshapes the operating environment of the Russian state and economy through enforceable, adaptive, and internationally coordinated pressure.