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Russian CHP Imports Tracker | Q1 2026

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Introduction

Export controls are not a new tool of economic statecraft, but the complexity inherent in their enforcement has risen considerably in recent decades due to a world of global supply chains. Nonetheless, **a coalition[1] of countries—led by the EU, US, UK, and Japan—imposed a set of export controls on Russia in response to its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022** that targets critical components Russia imports to fuel its war machine. Sanctions were also imposed on goods that are deemed to be critical for Russia's economy as a whole. While export controls introduced after Russia illegally annexed Crimea in 2014 focused on hampering the long-term development of Russia's oil and gas industry above all, the 2022 wave sought a more immediate effect: **reducing Russia's ability to prosecute its war in Ukraine and its ability to reconstruct its military after the fact**. The 50 types of war-critical goods restricted by the 2022 export controls were categorized into six tiers in the Common High Priority (CHP) items list, which are described in Appendix Table 1.[2]

While the circumvention of export controls has a long and often spy-like history—from the Cold War's smuggling of Western technology into the Soviet Union to today's elaborate 'dummy' data center servers used to disguise American GPUs sent to China—reality is often more bland due to the need for scale. Acquiring the quantities of critical technology that Russia's war of aggression depends on requires a **network of suppliers and distributors willing to risk sanctions enforcement and, most importantly, jurisdictions that do not observe the export controls regime**. Many countries (wittingly or unwittingly) take part in the subversion of the export controls on Russia, however, **no country approaches the importance of China**.

While there have been significant challenges in enforcement,[3] we find that the imposition of export controls on critical materials has reduced Russia's imports considerably. Despite Russia's greater need for these items—they are, by design, critical to the military-industrial complex during a massive industrial expansion—its total imports have fallen by more than half in value terms for an extended period—and likely even more in volume. Nonetheless, CHP items do still make their way to Russia, albeit with new suppliers or new routes. **China now accounts for approximately 75% of reported CHP exports to Russia, whereas direct exports from sanctions coalition countries have practically disappeared.**

In the **first edition of KSE Institute's Russian CHP Imports Tracker**, we analyze the key results of the export controls against Russia. We also discuss methodological challenges in assessing the true impact of these measures, as well as future directions for research. **In subsequent editions, we will take a closer look at volumes and, thus, the prices that Russia has to pay** to continue acquiring critical technology through complex circumvention networks and from sellers that are acutely aware of their market power.

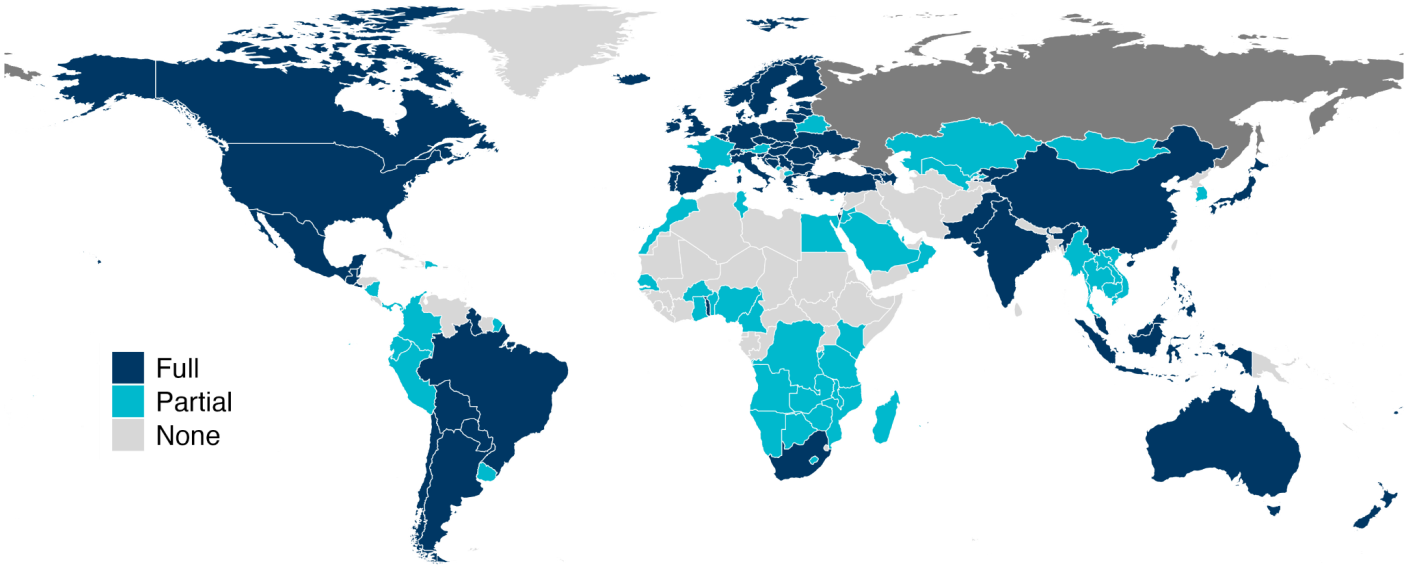
[1] The following jurisdictions have imposed export controls on Russia and are part of what we define as the "sanctions coalition" for the purpose of this analysis: Australia, Canada, European Union, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Switzerland, Singapore, Taiwan, United Kingdom, and United States. This group of countries is different from other sanctions areas, for example energy.
[2] Adapted from the US Bureau of Industry and Security and European Commission. The list is harmonized between the EU, US, UK, and Japan.
[3] See "Challenges of Export Control Enforcement," KSE Institute

Methodology

Tracking the efficacy of export controls against Russia is complicated by three factors. *First*, Russia has ceased publishing its aggregated customs data through official channels, and the availability of *comprehensive* (i.e., transaction-level) customs data through unofficial channels has declined after 2023, insofar as the records are not complete anymore and, thus, do not allow for a comprehensive mapping of trade flows. Therefore, we must rely solely on trading partners' reported data, in this instance their exports to Russia. This almost certainly leads to an undercount of trade flows. *Second*, thanks to the pressure that the sanctions coalition has applied to third countries to decrease their trade of sensitive goods with Russia, countries are incentivized to obscure their transactions with Russia. *Finally*, irrespective of any sanctions or geopolitical sensitivities, trade data is not always reported in a timely manner by all countries of interest.

In the absence of comprehensive Russian customs data beyond 2023, we rely on **trading partners' reported exports to Russia** in UN Comtrade. Figure 1 illustrates data availability, with countries identified as providing data if they report exports at a level of disaggregation (i.e., six-digit HS codes) that allows us to specifically identify flows of CHP list items. Because China plays a critical role in supplying Russia with CHP items, and China has not submitted its 2025 trade statistics to UN Comtrade at the time of publication, we include monthly data for 2025 from the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China ("Chinese customs") in our analysis.[4] The data availability map shows that coverage is quite extensive, although some countries that have previously been identified as playing an important role for Russian imports of export-controlled goods—e.g., the United Arab Emirates—are missing. Moreover, several countries relevant for export controls circumvention are identified as providing *partial* data due to significant time lags in reporting—e.g., Kazakhstan, Malaysia, and Thailand. Nonetheless, countries for which data is available—sometimes with a lag—represent a stable ~97–98% of total Russian imports since at least 2010.[5]

Figure 1: Data coverage of CHP exports



Source: KSE Institute

[4] Statistics from Chinese customs are very tightly aligned (discrepancies <<1% of volumes) with those that are eventually reported to UN Comtrade, which makes the inclusion methodologically sound. While data through December 2025 were published before the time of publication, we exclude November–December exports, as they appear to be incomplete.
[5] Verified by comparing UN Comtrade statistics with aggregate flows reported in the IMF's direction of trade statistics (DOTS).

Methodological challenges fall into two categories: data availability and supply chain visibility. **The primary methodological challenge concerning the approach of this analysis is data availability.** A number of countries that have been, according to previous research and investigative reporting, involved in export controls circumvention have spotty or nonexistent data. Most important in this group is the UAE, which does not report any product-level trade statistics to UN Comtrade or its official portal; a KSE Institute investigation previously found that approximately 5% of Russia's CHP imports came from the UAE in 2023.[6] Three other countries of interest lack recent data: Kazakhstan (last: February 2024), Thailand (last: February 2025, which was its highest month on record, at 32 million USD), and Vietnam (last: December 2023, though its CHP exports to Russia plummeted after February 2022). Additionally, Taiwan and the Maldives lack monthly data.

The more fundamental methodological challenge is the lack of visibility into the entire supply chain that takes CHP items from product origin to Russia, which can only be found in comprehensive, transaction-level Russian customs data. After all, the export controls regime seeks to block the sale of all relevant Western technology—not just goods that were manufactured in a coalition country, loaded onto a ship, and sent to Russia, but all *involvement* of Western companies. This is clearest in the case of the US, where export controls have global reach through the Foreign Direct Product Rule, but also true for other jurisdictions, where a nexus with, for instance, EU operators makes controls applicable. Unfortunately, disaggregating volumes of CHP exports to sanctions evasion hubs is rarely feasible.[7] Additionally, comparing UN Comtrade statistics to transaction-level customs data suggests that there is a meaningful underreporting of CHP exports to Russia, well beyond discrepancies attributable to FOB vs. CIF—i.e., origin prices without shipping costs and destination prices with such costs—reporting. Preliminary analysis suggests that China and Hong Kong are two important sources of variation. Thus, in the absence of comprehensive Russian customs data, this analysis **systematically undercounts the circumvention of CHP export controls**.

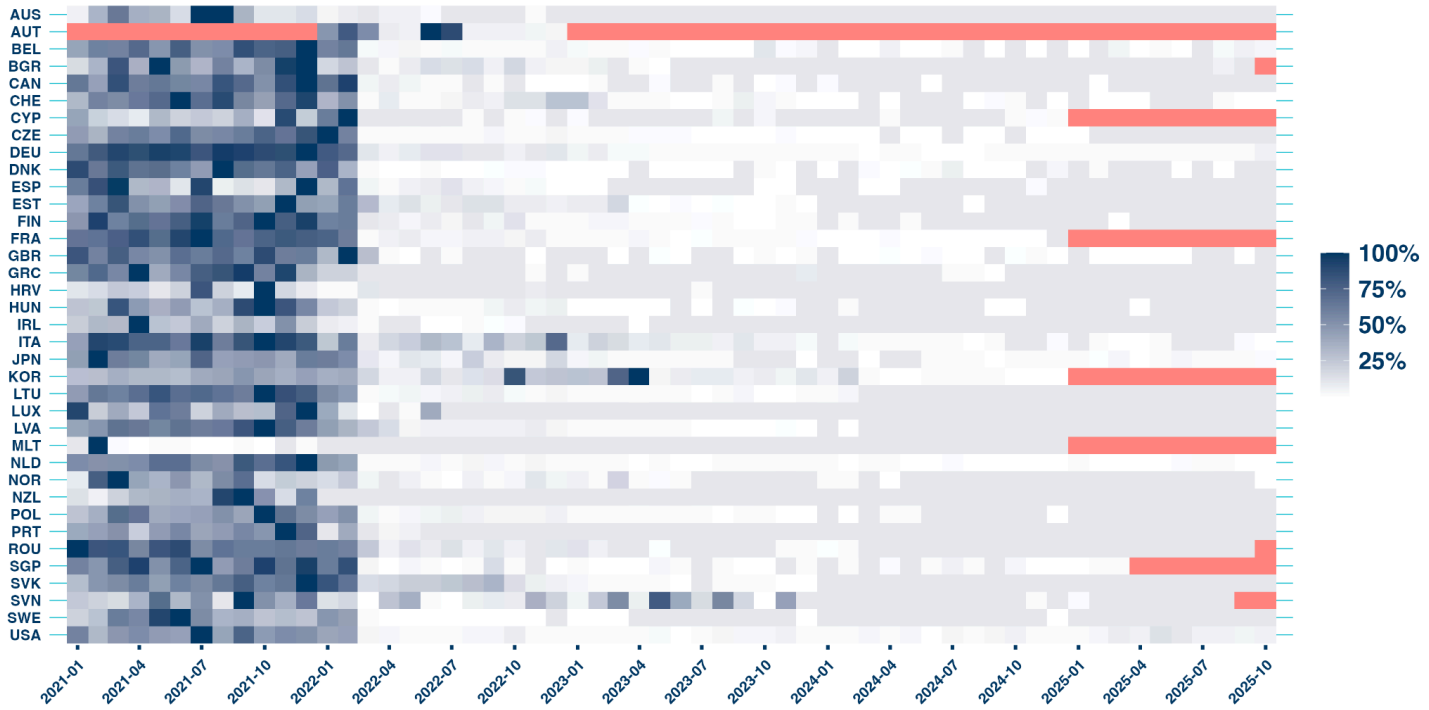
Trade Dynamics

Immediately following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022—and subsequent imposition of comprehensive export controls—its imports of CHP items plummeted to well under half of the pre-invasion average level. **By late 2022, a recovery in imports from China saved Russia from its isolation.** The sudden reversal in fortunes is most visible when compared to how rapidly Russia was cut off (at least in direct trade) from its previous suppliers (see Figure 2). Figure 3 presents the drastic strings that occurred in the early months of the full-scale war as Russian firms frantically tried to find new suppliers. Within months, Russia's reliance on Chinese CHP imports more than doubled, then continued climbing through 2023 to its wartime steady state, where around 75% of Russia's CHP imports come from China.

As Figure 4 shows, **Russia's reliance on China varies moderately across groups of CHP items, i.e., tiers**.[8] Two stand out in this regard: *Tier 1*, which are the highest enforcement priority goods on the list and include components for precision-guided weapons systems, and *Tier 3.B,* which includes mechanical and non-electronic components (e.g., bearings and optical components) used in weapons systems.

[6] See "Challenges of Export Control Enforcement," KSE Institute
[7] For example, exports of CHP goods from the sanctions coalition to Hong Kong, the UAE, and Türkiye happen in large enough volumes that separating out legitimate exports from re-exports to Russia is unrealistic.
[8] See Appendix Table 1.

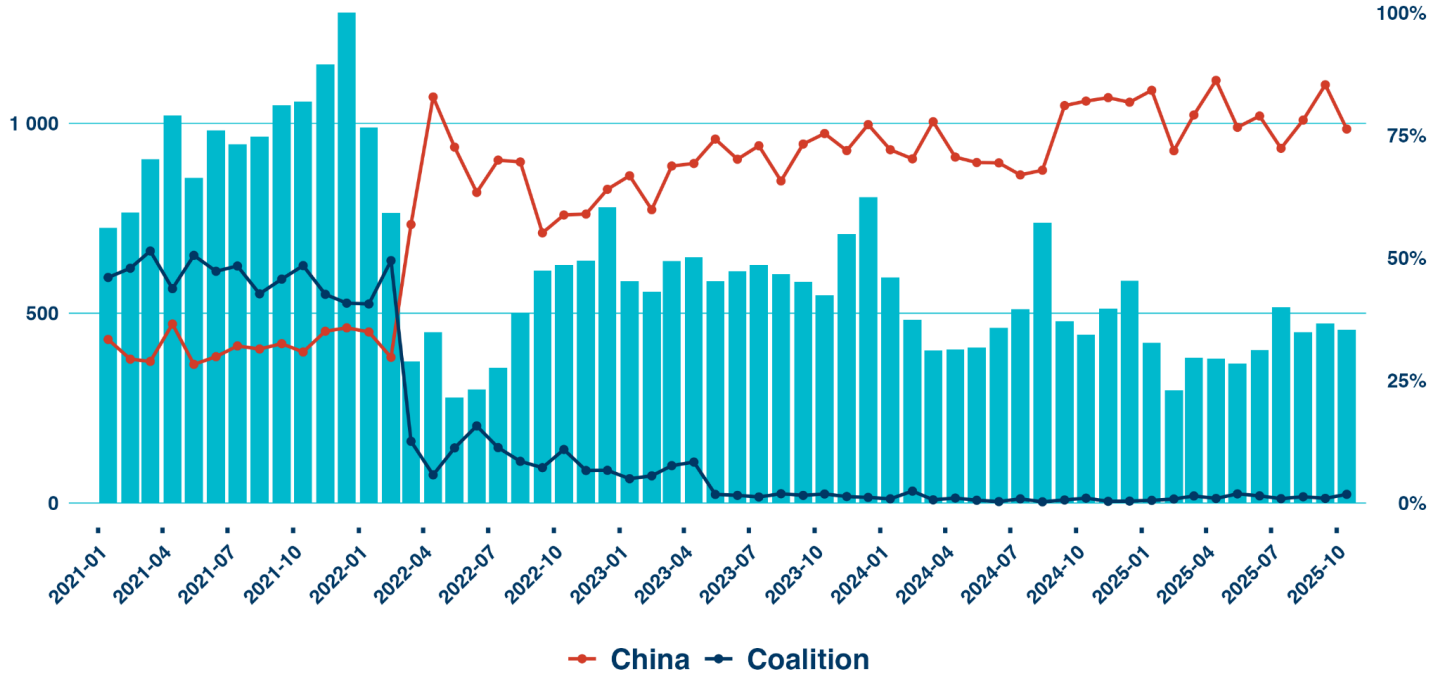
Figure 2: CHP exports to Russia reported by coalition countries, % of individual peak monthly value



Source: UN Comtrade, KSE Institute

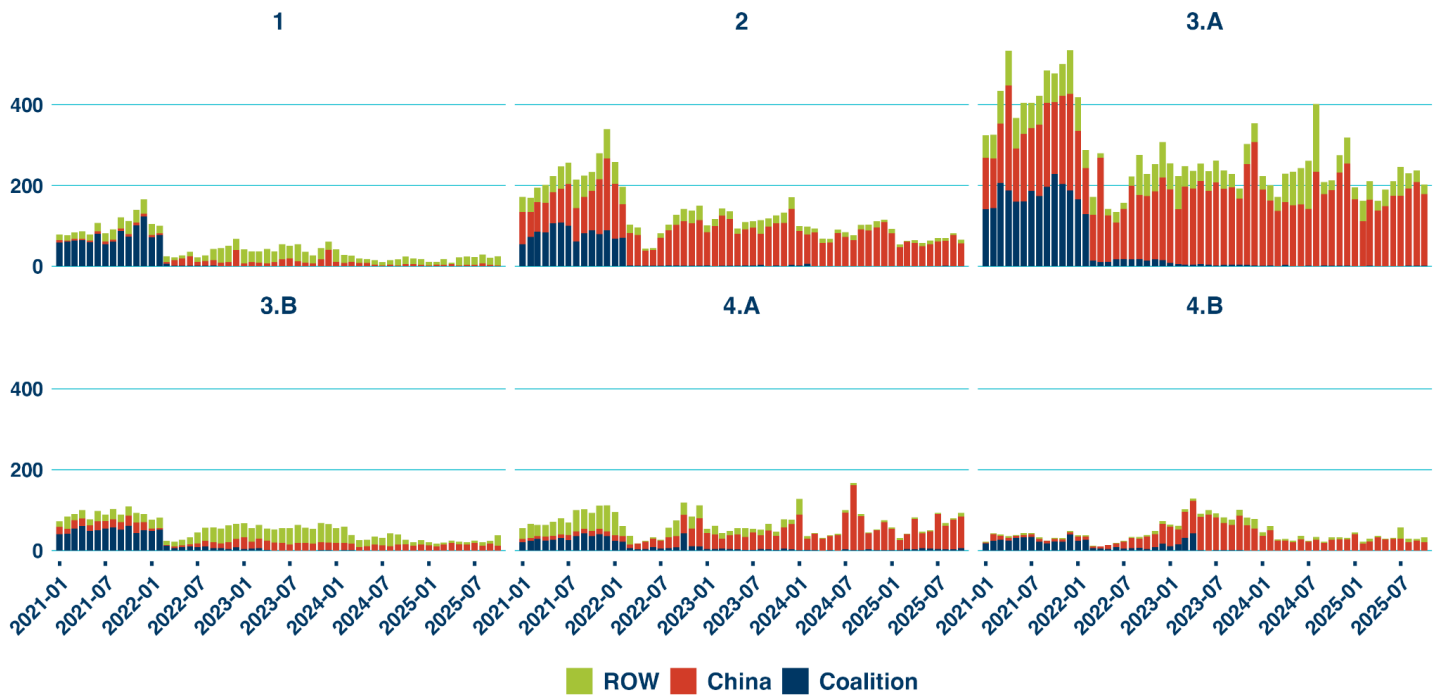
Note: Missing values are represented by red tiles; a value is only "missing" if the country does not report exports to any partner.

Figure 3: Reported CHP exports to Russia (lhs, in mln USD) and share from partners (rhs, in %)



Source: UN Comtrade, Chinese customs, KSE Institute

Figure 4: Source of Russian CHP imports by tier, in mln USD



Source: UN Comtrade, Chinese customs, KSE Institute

Before the full-scale war, Russia sourced Tier 1 CHP items predominantly from the Netherlands—and seemingly attempted to build a stockpile in the lead up to the invasion, with these imports from the Netherlands spiking from ~$20 mln per month in 2021 to $63 mln in December 2021. It also imported lesser quantities from Czechia, Hong Kong, Germany, South Korea, and China. **After the imposition of export controls, Russia has had continued difficulties replacing—or even reconstituting with intermediaries—its Western supply chains for these sensitive items.** Hong Kong—a global leader in electronic integrated circuits exports, largely thanks to its re-export[9] business—became the number one source for Russia's Tier 1 CHP items, though its monthly imports hardly replace previous flows from Dutch suppliers, alone. Moreover, it is likely that some of these imports from Hong Kong are merely Western products that have been re-exported with a markup. Thus, on the one hand, Russia was unable to replace its Western supplies with substitutes from China but on the other hand, it does still have (curtailed) access to Western goods.

Tier 3.B tells another story, with Russia fairly successfully diversifying supplies away from the West without a strong reliance upon China. While China was Russia's largest supplier before the full-scale war, Russia imported large quantities of Tier 3.B items from Western countries (particularly France, Germany, and the UK). Rather than replacing these flows with imports from China, Russia massively increased its imports from other countries, most notably Malaysia,[10] Kazakhstan, and Thailand. With Kazakhstan and Thailand not reporting recent exports—from March 2024 and February 2025, respectively—it is likely that Russia has seen little decline in Tier 3.B imports during the full-scale war.

[9] See "Electronics industry in Hong Kong," HKTDC Research
[10] Imports from Malaysia display a noteworthy dynamic, where they peak in August 2024 at $20 mln before collapsing to less than $1 mln per month in most of 2025.

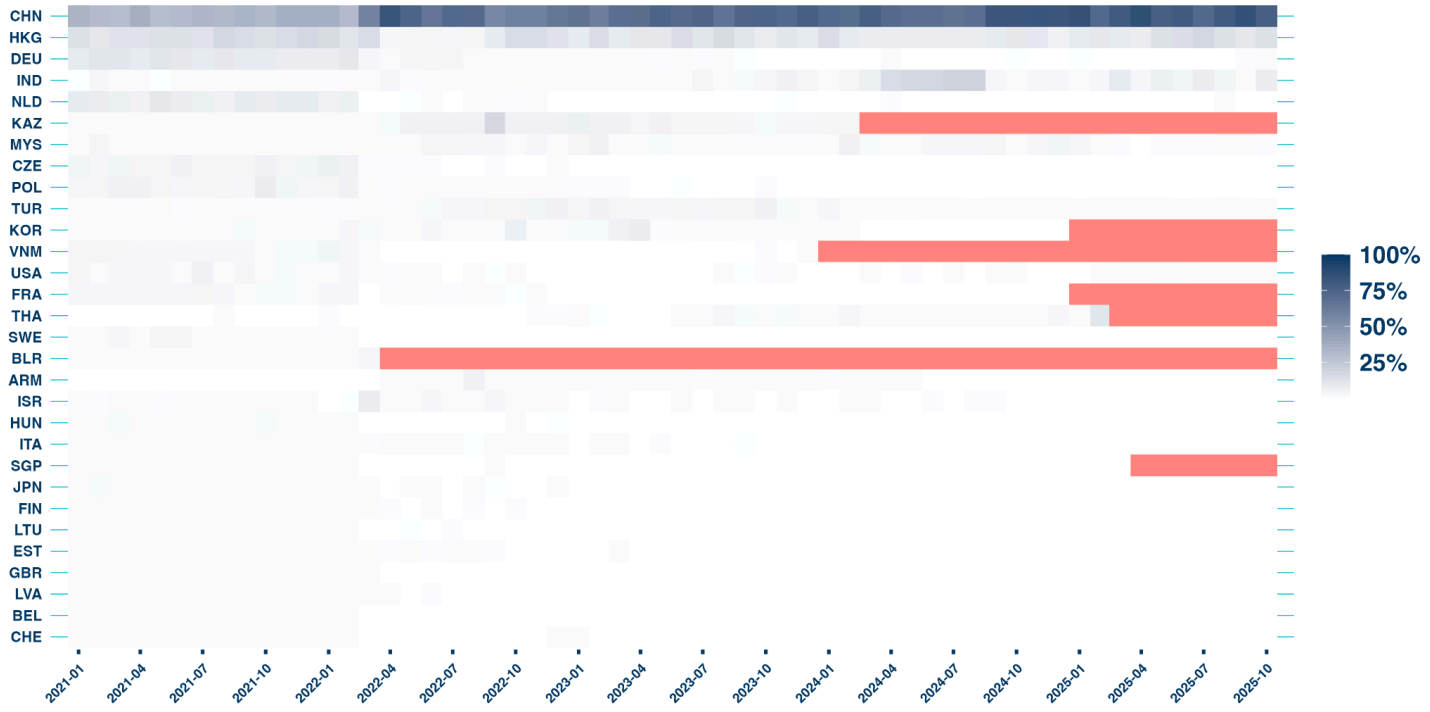
Figure 5 depicts Russia's relative reliance on partner countries for its CHP imports. In aggregate, **no country approaches the role that China plays in supplying Russia with sensitive, export-controlled goods.** Beyond this, a few other dynamics merit attention.

First, Hong Kong continues to play a key role in facilitating Russia's CHP imports—though its relative importance has not meaningfully increased during the full-scale war. While it is likely that Hong Kong continues to facilitate export control circumvention, as KSE Institute found it did through 2023, the data suggest that Russia has not been able to purchase Western products through the re-export hub with ease.

Second, Russia rapidly began importing large quantities of CHP items from India—specifically, Tier 3.A (e.g., discrete electronic components, navigation equipment, digital cameras) products—in early 2024. As a reference point, it imported ~$1–10 mln worth of Tier 3.A items from India during the average month in 2023. By June 2024, imports rose to $69 mln and, by August, reached $137 mln (second only to China). In response, the US' then-Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo allegedly sent a letter to the Indian Banks' Association in July 2024 with a thinly veiled threat against financial institutions facilitating transactions that sent sensitive goods to Russia.[11] By September, Tier 3.A transaction volumes fell back to $7 mln. Similar warnings (and changes in behavior) were issued to Central Asian states.[12] These sharp turns are illustrative of **the power of the US' secondary sanctions threat** (enabled by Executive Order 14114 in December 2023), and, to a lesser extent, Russian and Indian efforts to balance their freshly booming trade relationship.

Finally, it is worth noting how drastically the volumes of direct imports from key European states declined after the full-scale invasion. Germany, the Netherlands, Czechia, Poland, and France all played important roles in Russia's pre-2022 supply of CHP items. Beginning in March 2022, most of these flows dried up entirely.

Figure 5: Share of reported monthly Russian CHP imports by exporting country



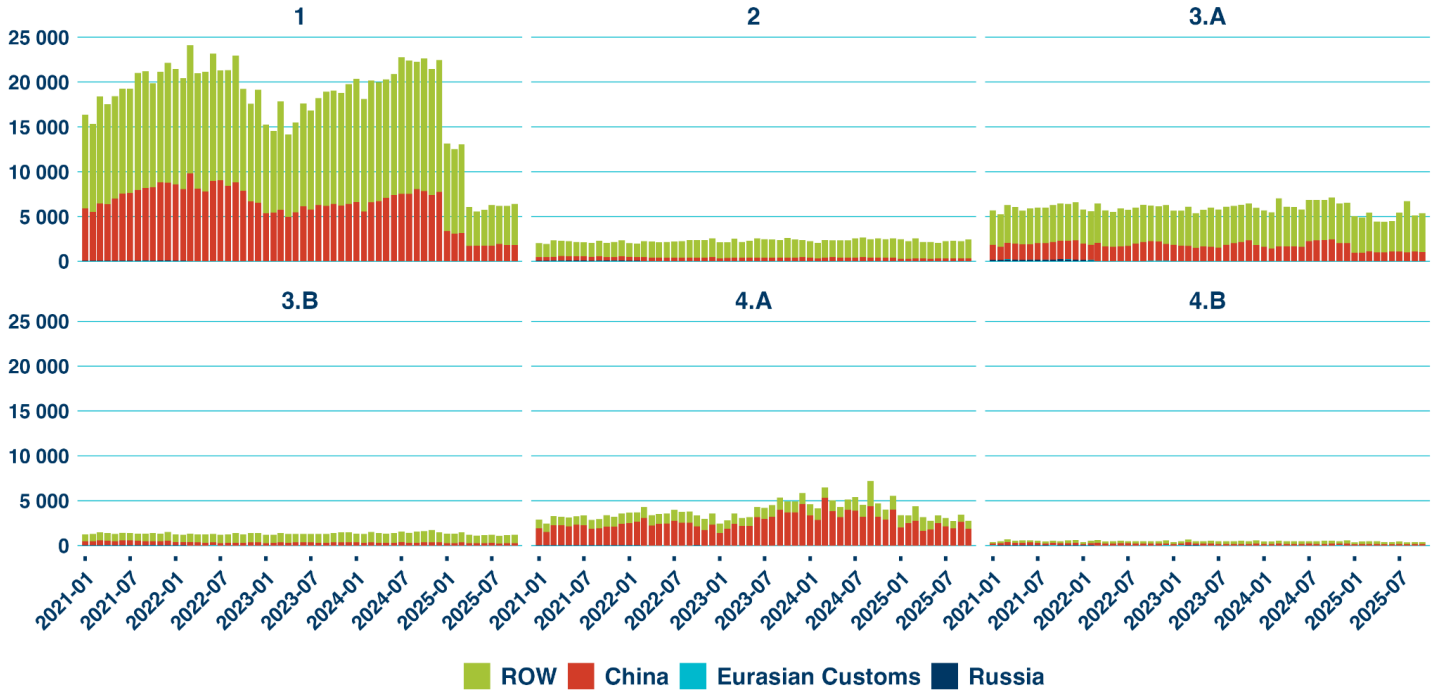
Source: UN Comtrade, Chinese customs, KSE Institute
Note: Missing values are represented by red tiles

[11] See "US Treasury warns India's banks about business with Russia," The Economic Times BFSI
[12] See "Kazakhstan spooked by U.S. warning of secondary sanctions," Eurasianet

The drastic and immediate decline in CHP exports from sanctions coalition countries to Russia begs two questions. First, how important were their exports to Russia before the full-scale war? And second, is it possible that these exports were merely rerouted through third countries, particularly the states in the Customs Union of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU Customs Union), before reaching Russia?

Figure 6 puts the first question in context. **In the aggregate, it is clear that Russia imported a nearly negligible share of the sanctions coalition's CHP exports *before or after* export controls were imposed**. The flip side of this coin, however, is that China imports such a large share of these products from the coalition that it would be impossible to detect re-exports to Russia at the aggregate level. One clarification is important: while exports to Russia are nearly invisible in Figure 6, it is not the case that losing Russia as a customer was necessarily painless for all firms, CHP-producing industries, or even national economies.

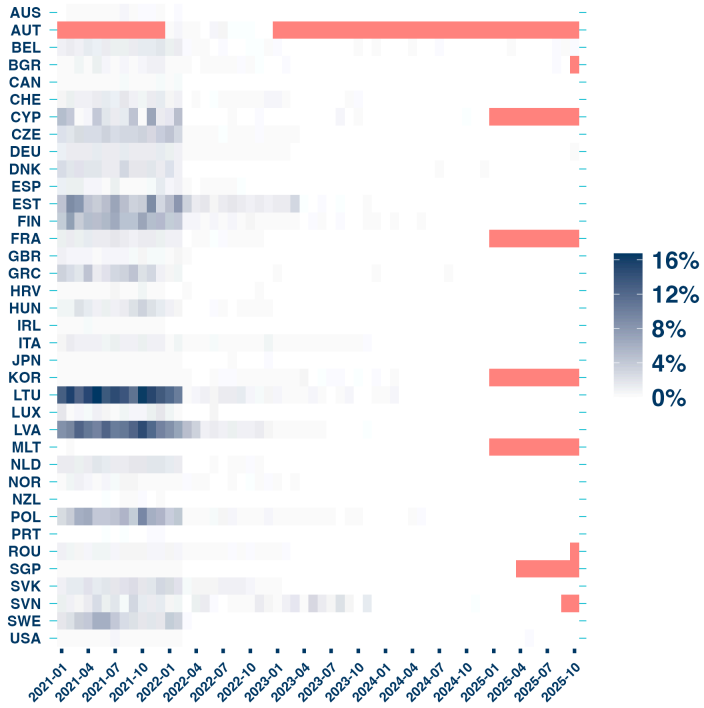
Figure 6: Destination of sanctions coalition CHP exports by tier, in mln USD



Source: UN Comtrade, KSE Institute

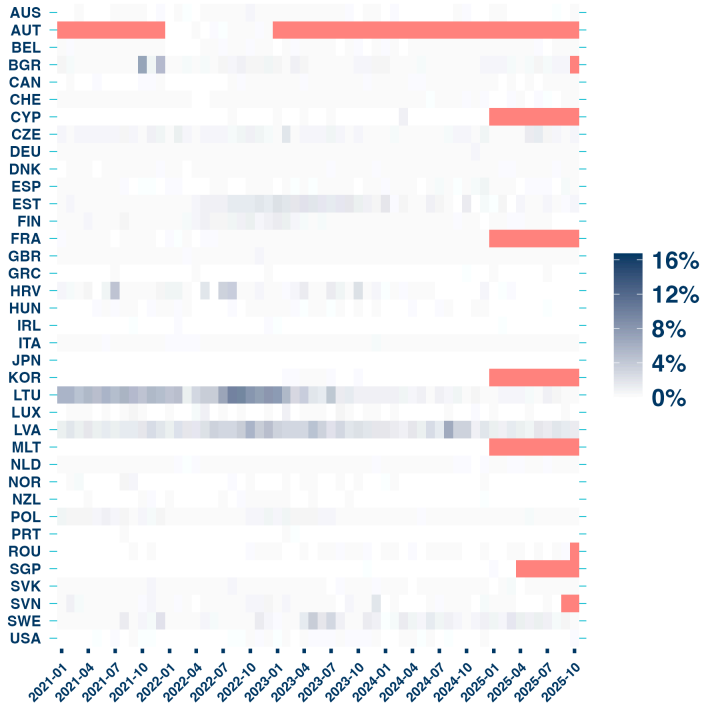
Figures 7 and 8 show that the second question has a less straightforward answer. It is immediately clear that **some countries—particularly smaller economies and those closest to Russia—were disproportionately reliant on exporting CHP items to Russia before the full-scale invasion**. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland, and Sweden stand out in this regard. These countries were generally also the least likely to immediately sever ties with the Russian market, and the most likely to reorient CHP exports to EAEU Customs Union members. While the latter should not necessarily serve as evidence of export control circumvention—the flows in question are not always large enough to clearly be destined for Russia, as Figure 9 shows—it nonetheless arouses suspicion.

Figure 7: Share of coalition CHP exports sent to Russia



Source: UN Comtrade, KSE Institute

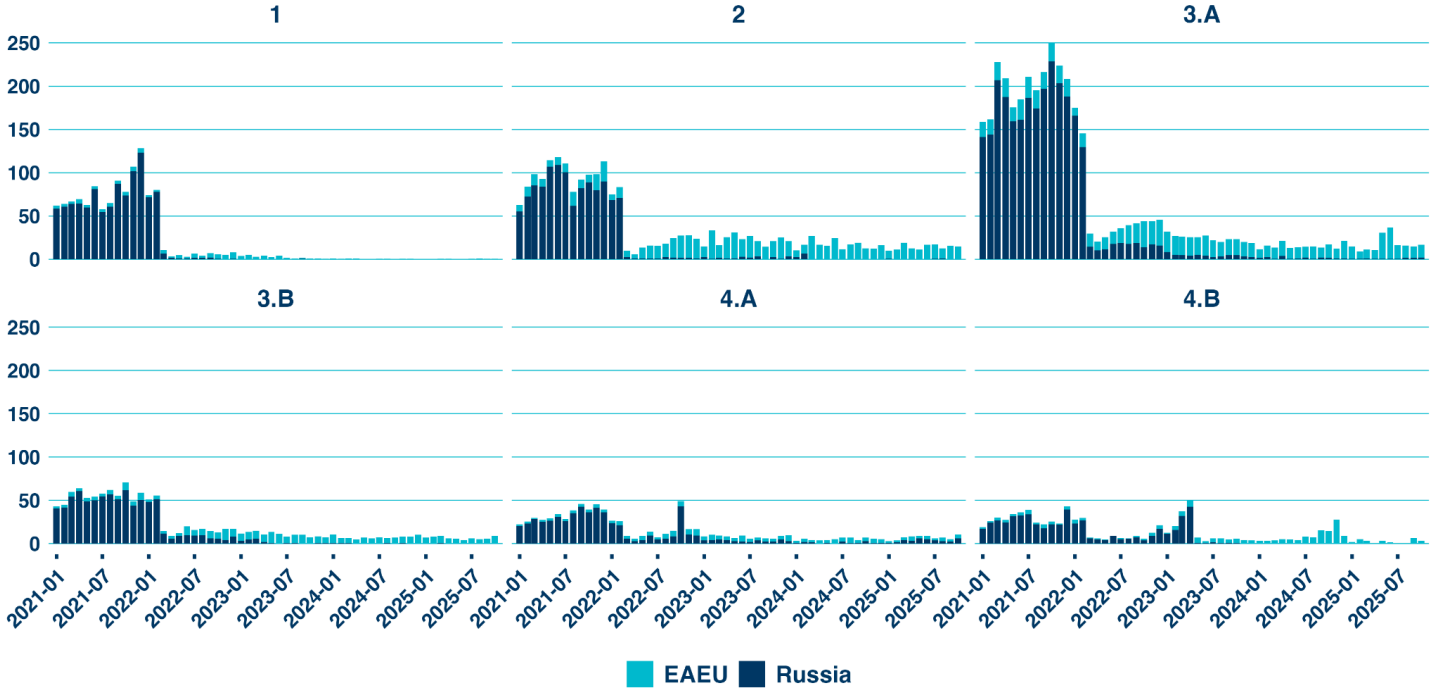
Figure 8: Share of coalition CHP exports sent to EAEU Customs Union members (excl. Russia)



Source: UN Comtrade, KSE Institute

Note: Missing values are represented by red tiles

Figure 9: CHP exports by tier from sanctions coalition to Russia and other EAEU states, in mln USD



Source: UN Comtrade, KSE Institute

Conclusions and Next Steps

In the direct sense, export controls seem like a resounding success: Russia's CHP imports coming directly from the sanctions coalition have plummeted, and it has not been able to replace lost volumes with new supply chains. However, as research from KSE Institute and other institutions has shown, **Russia still manages to acquire—and use—export controlled goods from the West at scale.**

Moving forward, KSE Institute plans to update its Russian CHP Imports Tracker on a quarterly basis. Each edition will incorporate newly available data, investigate how Russia circumvents export controls, and make recommendations to policymakers seeking to reduce the Russian military-industrial complex's access to Western technology. Importantly, **subsequent editions will take a closer look at trade volumes and the prices that Russia has had to pay to maintain access to critical imports.**

Appendix Table 1: Common high priority (CHP) items list

Tier	*Description*
1	Items of the highest concern—integrated circuits—due to their critical role in the production of advanced Russian precision-guided weapons systems, Russia's lack of domestic production, and limited global manufacturers.
2	Additional electronics items for which Russia may have some domestic production capability but a preference to source from the sanctions coalition. Includes items related to wireless communications, satellite-based radio-navigation, and passive electronic components.
3.A	Further electronic components used in Russian weapons systems, with a broader range of suppliers. Includes discrete electronic components, navigation equipment, and digital cameras.
3.B	Mechanical and other components utilized in Russian weapons systems, including bearings and optical components.
4.A	Manufacturing, production and quality testing equipment for electric components, circuit boards and modules.
4.B	Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) machine tools and components.