

INSTITUTIONAL PATHWAYS FOR IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ADAPTIVE IMPORT-SUBSTITUTION POLICY

CAMINHOS INSTITUCIONAIS PARA A IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DO DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL POR MEIO DE POLÍTICAS ADAPTATIVAS DE SUBSTITUIÇÃO DE IMPORTAÇÕES

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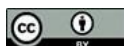
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Abstract

In the context of a dynamically transforming geoeconomic agenda driven by multiple factors—including the growing use of external restrictions as instruments for pursuing political or geoeconomic objectives by a number of states—there is a need to design adaptive mechanisms that facilitate the implementation of sustainable development. One such mechanism is the implementation of an import-substitution policy. Structural shifts in the economy under intensifying external constraints disrupt transnational supply chains for technological and consumer goods. This, in turn, results in serious negative consequences in the social sphere, creating significant risks of disrupting the processes involved in implementing sustainable development. In this situation, developing new—and further evolving established—theoretical approaches to import-substitution policy amid systemic transformations becomes an urgent task. In particular, it is necessary to adapt perspectives and approaches to studying import dependence with regard to the regional component, as well as in the context of ongoing systemic transformations that upend traditional

Resumo

No contexto de uma agenda geoeconômica em constante transformação, impulsionada por múltiplos fatores — incluindo o crescente uso de restrições externas como instrumentos para a busca de objetivos políticos ou geoeconômicos por diversos Estados — há uma necessidade de conceber mecanismos adaptativos que facilitem a implementação do desenvolvimento sustentável. Um desses mecanismos é a implementação de uma política de substituição de importações. Mudanças estruturais na economia, sob o efeito de restrições externas cada vez mais intensas, interrompem as cadeias de suprimentos transnacionais de bens tecnológicos e de consumo. Isso, por sua vez, resulta em sérias consequências negativas na esfera social, criando riscos significativos de interrupção dos processos envolvidos na implementação do desenvolvimento sustentável. Nessa situação, desenvolver novas abordagens teóricas — e aprimorar as já existentes — para a política de substituição de importações em meio a transformações sistêmicas torna-se uma tarefa urgente. Em particular, é necessário adaptar perspectivas e abordagens para o



models and theoretical approaches. Taking these aspects into account, the aim of the study is to substantiate and develop adaptive directions for advancing the theory of the economics of forced import substitution as a doctrine for determining courses of implementing sustainable development under conditions of systemic transformation. The subject of the study is the development of adaptive measures and directions for advancing theoretical and practical approaches to shaping a policy of forced import substitution amid institutional and conjunctural transformations, as a key instrument for ensuring sustainable development. The outcome of the study is a set of substantiating arguments that underscore the need to implement sustainable development within the paradigm of developing the theory of the economics of import substitution, oriented toward seeking optimal configurations for designing import-substitution trajectories in the context of their implementation at the macro- and meso-levels.

Keywords: Sustainable Development. Systemic Transformations. International Supply Chains. Sanctions Pressure. Regional Aspects of Import Substitution. Macro- and Meso-Level Drivers.

estudo da dependência de importações considerando o componente regional, bem como no contexto das transformações sistêmicas em curso que subvertem os modelos e abordagens teóricas tradicionais. Considerando esses aspectos, o objetivo deste estudo é fundamentar e desenvolver diretrizes adaptativas para o avanço da teoria da economia da substituição forçada de importações como doutrina para determinar rumos na implementação do desenvolvimento sustentável em condições de transformação sistêmica. O tema central do estudo é o desenvolvimento de medidas e diretrizes adaptativas para o avanço de abordagens teóricas e práticas na formulação de uma política de substituição forçada de importações em meio a transformações institucionais e conjunturais, como instrumento fundamental para assegurar o desenvolvimento sustentável. O resultado do estudo é um conjunto de argumentos que fundamentam a necessidade de implementar o desenvolvimento sustentável dentro do paradigma do desenvolvimento da teoria da economia da substituição de importações, orientada para a busca de configurações ótimas para o desenho de trajetórias de substituição de importações no contexto de sua implementação nos níveis macro e meso.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Transformações Sistêmicas. Cadeias de Suprimentos Internacionais. Pressão de Sanções. Aspectos Regionais da Substituição de Importações. Fatores Determinantes nos Níveis Macro e Meso.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of rapidly unfolding globalization processes, trends have become increasingly evident that are expressed in the intensification of “trade wars,” which restrict the development potential of certain jurisdictions. This leads to the erosion of the competitive advantages of those countries that are facing growing discrimination against their national and geoeconomic interests. Consequently, on a global scale, spatial inequality intensifies, followed by a decline in the quality of life in states subjected to external restrictions. This geoeconomic model creates significant risks for undermining the concept of sustainable development, which presupposes a combination of “economic growth with the need to eradicate poverty and social inequality, and to improve

environmental well-being, including within the framework of ensuring socio-economic and ecological welfare for future generations” (Burganov et al., 2022, p. 904). In other words, sustainable development of countries and regions presumes the implementation of state governance measures that place equal emphasis on two fundamental aspects: stimulating economic growth and creating conditions to secure social and environmental standards, which form the foundation for improving quality of life.

Meanwhile, under the conditions of intensifying “trade wars,” the first component of the sustainable development concept—linked to the intensification of economic growth—becomes increasingly vulnerable for affected countries. This, in turn, creates threats of social tension against the backdrop of slowing GDP growth and structural transformations in the economy. Thus, the new geoeconomic agenda generates a need for adaptive measures that promote economic sustainability and, in turn, enhance the quality of life.

Guided by this paradigm, a crucial aspect of ensuring sustainable development under systemic transformations is the search for mechanisms that adapt economic development to external turbulence. This, in turn, forms the basis for securing social and environmental well-being.

From this standpoint, the most important vector of state policy under these conditions is the development of adaptive measures that mitigate external macroeconomic threats—primarily those expressed in the transformation of export-import flows. The Keynesian model of stimulating import substitution programs and supporting domestic producers becomes a priority in shaping and implementing the concept of sustainable development under systemic transformations. This is because the restriction of integration into global supply chains not only brings about negative macroeconomic consequences but also creates risks of declining quality of life due to limited access to high-tech goods and consumer products.

Under these circumstances, one of the unconditional priorities of state economic policy is the development and subsequent implementation of adaptive programs of forced import substitution, aimed at finding new solutions for overcoming emerging crises. This issue becomes particularly relevant at the level of regional economic systems, which differ in their degree of vulnerability to external restrictions due to their varied integration into international supply chains. In this regard, there is a need to refine the existing theoretical approaches to studying the principles of forced import substitution policy, to

conduct substantive analysis of its implementation in the context of dynamically unfolding systemic transformations worldwide, and to develop methodological tools for assessing the impact of critical imports on the sustainability of regional economic development. Taking this approach into account, clarifying the directions for developing the theory of the economics of forced import substitution appears to be an urgent task—particularly in the context of intensifying sanctions confrontation on the geoeconomic agenda, which transforms traditional models of economic development at the macro- and meso-levels, as well as models of sustainable development.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Before focusing on the stated research task, an important scientific element lies in the review, systematization, and critical analysis of existing approaches in economic theory to the phenomenon under consideration—*import dependence* and its significance in shaping the processes of regional economic development. It should be noted that this field of economic thought, connected with studying the role of imports in ensuring macroeconomic trajectories, is relatively well elaborated. In a systematized form, three key approaches to the study of “import substitution” can be distinguished. According to the first, import substitution serves as a mechanism for ensuring global competitiveness and narrowing the developmental gap between developing and developed countries (Blaug, 2008; Lavrikova, 2010; Maitra, 1967; Myrdal, 1956, 1957; Prebisch, 1992; Safiullin et al., 2023; Toye, 2006). The second approach views import substitution as a mechanism for stimulating the growth of local industries and increasing the efficiency of structural economic development (Bussell, 2025; Chenery & Carter, 1972; Chenery & Straut, 1966; Fei & Ranis, 1967; Ogujiuba et al., 2011). Finally, within the third concept, import substitution is considered a forced measure of the state under conditions of external sanctions pressure (Abalkin, 2000; Aspromourgos, 1988; Bukhvald & Ivanov, 2017; Connolly & Hanson, 2016; Dong et al., 2019; Hufbauer et al., 2007; Ullrich, 2017).

If we focus on methodological aspects applied to the assessment of import dependence in economic systems and methods for examining its impact on the sustainability of economic dynamics, we also find a broad body of work in this field. In a concentrated form, the essence of these theoretical and practical approaches is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Theoretical and methodological approaches to assessing the impact of import dependence on the sustainability of economic dynamics

No.	Author	Content of approach	Critical analysis
1	E.L. Andreeva, A.V. Ratner (2022)	Using statistical analysis methods, the studied phenomenon is assessed based on calculating several indicators reflecting the share of imports in total consumption and production of similar products in the country.	Does not distinguish critical imports when analyzing import dependence. No linkage to imports from unfriendly countries, the restriction of which due to geopolitical reasons generates risks for sustainable economic development. Lacks an approach assessing the degree of import dependence influence on development prospects.
2	N.I. Marakova, S.V. Dodonova (2022)	Import dependence of an enterprise is evaluated by the ratio of “number of goods purchased from foreign firms (units)” to the number of similar goods produced domestically.	A simplified approach, which does not allow identification of imported product groups by country of origin (friendly/unfriendly). Lacks functionality for assessing the effect of imports on economic dynamics and enterprise sustainability.
3	A.V. Belousova (2020)	Based on balance-sheet accounting methods and national accounts methodology, a financial flows matrix is developed, capturing the impact of changes in imports on the reconfiguration of production factors, institutional units, and capital sectors.	Does not separately calculate multipliers indicating redistribution of income and expenditure due to managing import flows by country of origin (friendly/unfriendly). Does not identify critical imports in the study of dependence.
4	N.V. Krivenko, D.S. Epaneshnikova (2020)	Proposes an original toolkit for assessing effective import substitution and its impact on sustainability of economic dynamics using a dynamic import-substitution coefficient, defined as the product of partial indicators characterizing the efficiency of policy implementation at macro-, meso-, and micro-levels (e.g., investment activity in import-substituting production; productivity in the economy; export-import ratio changes).	While noting the role of sanctions pressure in shaping import substitution, the country of origin of imports is not considered, reducing potential for identifying critical imports. Lacks methodological solutions for evaluating the effect of import dependence on long-term development prospects.
5	D. Linden, K.L. Kraemer, J. Dedrick (2009)	Provides high-level scaling and decomposition of supply chains and their contribution to value added in specific imported goods.	Difficult to apply at national, regional, or sectoral levels, as extrapolation of data across numerous imported product categories and countries involved in value-chain creation is highly challenging in practice.
6	B. Casella, R. Bolwijn, D. Moran, K. Kanemoto (2019)	The core of this approach is time-series analysis of export-import flows in the global economy, using indicators such as foreign value added (FVA), domestic value added (DVA), and indirect value added (DVX). Input-output tables show value creation in one country and the import of that value added by others.	Despite identifying the origin of value added creation, this method has serious drawbacks: (a) statistical data collection delays (global trade statistics lag ~5 years); (b) numerous methodological assumptions; (c) absence of a unified global statistical base, leading to risks of divergence and limiting applicability in practice

Source: systematized by the author

The approaches considered for interpreting the essence of import substitution policy make it possible to view the content of this category in a systematized form. This, in turn, forms the basis for developing a substantive analysis of the concept and outlining conceptual approaches to advancing the theory of the economics of import substitution under conditions of systemic transformations.

Drawing on the presented body of scholarly perspectives, and relying on conceptual approaches to the role and significance of import substitution policy, it can be stated that the essence and content of this category largely depend on the conceptual orientation and focus of research attention. This applies to the potential goals of import-substitution policy implementation and the conditions shaped by the formation of international competition and the geoeconomic agenda.

Equally important from the perspective of research methodology are the mechanisms for implementing import substitution policy. Their configuration depends largely on the scale of economic systems (macro-, meso-, micro-levels). Their interactions, subordination, and interdependence determine the effectiveness of policy implementation both nationally and regionally. This raises the issue of the optimal configuration of interconnections between these levels. In other words, the question arises: how can import substitution policy be implemented most effectively? Which should be the priority—strategic guidelines of the federal center or strategic tasks of the regions, in terms of localizing risks of import dependence, given the high differentiation of their integration into global supply chains? The answer to this, to some extent rhetorical, question constitutes the key objective of this study.

It is important to emphasize that in the field of scientific research, this formulation is quite rare and mostly appears indirectly in discussions related to the study of the economics of import substitution.

3 METHODOLOGY

Taking into account the framing of the issue—justifying a strategic approach to implementing an import-substitution policy under systemic transformations through the lens of defining the dominant roles of regional and national economic systems in this process—it appears crucial to emphasize the need to strengthen the study of import dependence at the meso-level. Unfortunately, it must be noted that this aspect is not often

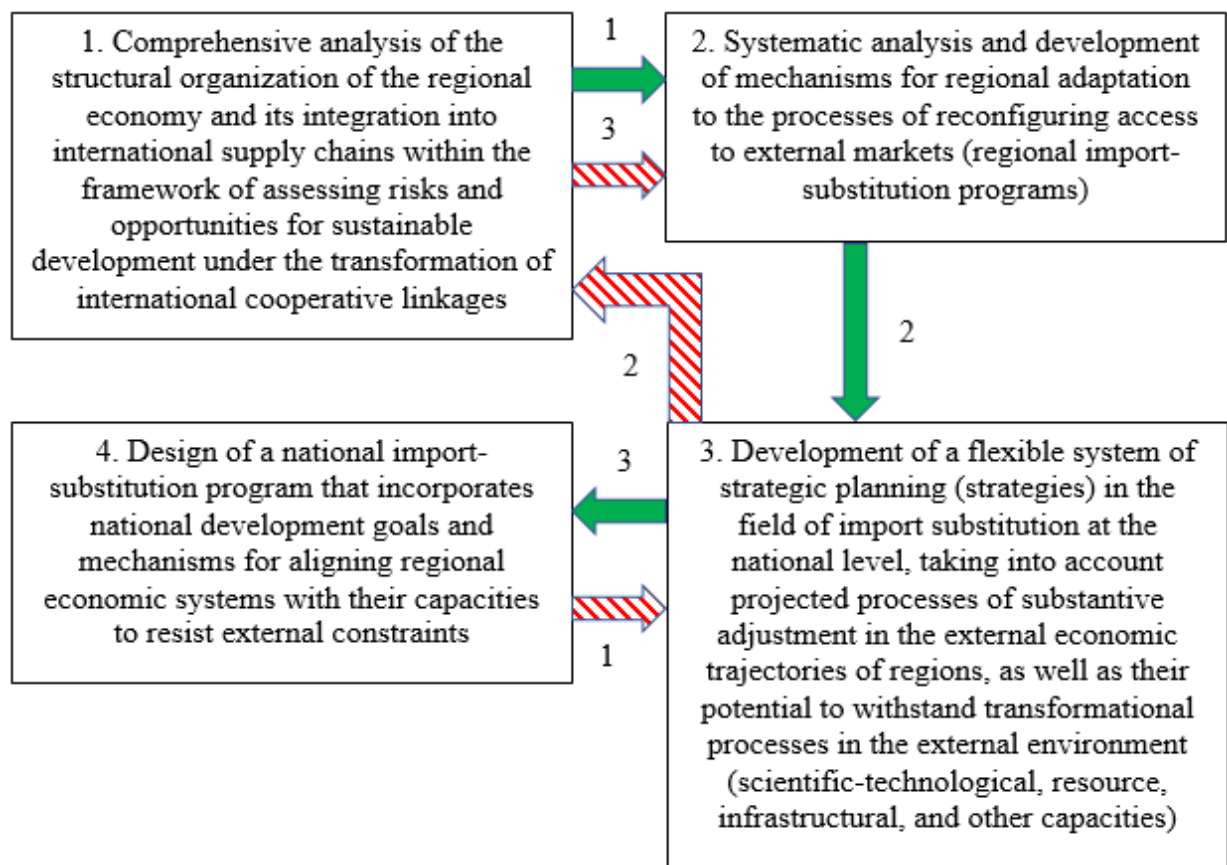
addressed in scholarly works devoted to the directions and mechanisms of import substitution. On the one hand, the dominance of the macro-level in such studies can be explained by the fact that regulating foreign economic activity is the prerogative of the federal center, which determines the directions, frameworks, and mechanisms of export-import operations and foreign trade as a whole. On the other hand, under conditions of forced import substitution, it becomes extremely important to take into account the regional characteristics of structural development at the meso-level in order to develop adaptive models of import substitution for each entity. This is due to the fact that regions possess unique characteristics regarding their integration into international supply chains. In this regard, developing universal mechanisms of import substitution at the national level without considering regional specifics may distort the real “picture.” This, in turn, generates risks of designing adaptive mechanisms that may not correspond to the real needs, capacities, and prospects for sustainable development of both individual regions and the national economy as a whole, especially under conditions of restructuring and transformation of foreign economic cooperation ties.

Given the above, from a methodological perspective, it is critically important to define and justify a system of priorities that will shape optimal strategies for the import-substitution economy of the nation in connection with regional economic systems. Under significant external pressure that transforms foreign trade relations, the most optimal models for implementing import-substitution policy are those in which regional strategies act as the dominant element in forming a unified national strategy. This is because regional economic systems, having highly differentiated forms of integration into international supply chains, generate unique trajectories of development within the localization of transnational linkages. In this situation, a universal import-substitution policy imposed by the federal center carries increased risks of distorting reality and leads to ineffective implementation strategies. Thus, it can be stated that under conditions of strong sanctions pressure and disruptions in foreign trade relations, an essential task is to understand the risks and opportunities for development at the regional level, followed by their aggregation and systematization at the national level. This approach will best align with the principles of optimality and rationality and, most importantly, will promote the creation of the most adaptive strategies of import substitution under systemic transformations.


In accordance with the presented assumptions and arguments, the development of a unified concept of import-substitution policy at the macro-level should be built on a bottom-up principle (region → federal center). This configuration would make it possible to aggregate the needs and capabilities of each region into a unified, coherent framework and to shape a consolidated national import-substitution agenda. Conversely, the top-down extrapolation of national import-substitution policy (federal center → regions) carries the risk of distorting reality at the regional level, which, in turn, creates threats of implementing non-adaptive strategies in this area. A graphical interpretation of this approach is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Concept of implementing an adaptive forced import-substitution policy in the interrelation between the region and the federal center



 - optimal model of implementing forced import-substitution policy in the paradigm of interaction between the regional and national levels

 - Model of implementing forced import-substitution policy that does not correspond to the principles of optimality and adaptive resistance to systemic transformations

Source: developed by the author

4 DISCUSSION

The approaches proposed by Russian and foreign researchers to interpreting the concept of *import substitution* make it possible to examine the essence of this category in a systematized form. Its study is structured through the prism of three key approaches, each of which defines a distinct research focus and framework. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that a significant gap in the theory of the economics of import substitution lies in identifying and substantiating optimal mechanisms of policy implementation—adapted to changing conditions—at the state level, with attention to the priorities of both regional and national levels.

Focusing on the subject of this study, which is associated with the need to examine import substitution under conditions of external restrictions and a transforming geoeconomic agenda, there arises a necessity to direct attention toward the development of existing methodology, taking into account ongoing systemic transformations. Among the most important directions, in the context of the theory of the economics of forced import substitution, is the substantiation of a paradigm for designing and implementing import-substitution policy through the interplay of regional and national dominants. In the current environment of heightened geoeconomic tensions and intensifying external restrictions, national import-substitution policy should be shaped in alignment with regional components. Such an approach makes it possible to account for the transformation of international supply chains at the meso-level, to identify threats and opportunities unique to each region, and to consolidate them into a single pool that predetermines optimal strategies for developing a nationally adapted import-substitution policy.

It should be noted that this approach—though not explicitly formalized in terms of strategies for implementing forced import substitution—does appear in the works of Russian and foreign scholars (Andreeva & Ratner, 2022; Ullrich, 2017). Nevertheless, a critically important task is the fundamental structuring of the research methodology for developing import-substitution programs under crisis conditions, including from the perspective of implementing the concept of sustainable development amid turbulence in the geoeconomic agenda. An attempt at a partial solution to this problem, based on the strict formalization of a methodological approach, has been undertaken in the present study.

5 CONCLUSION

In 2015, the international community, at the UN summit (United Nations General Assembly, 2015), proclaimed a new development agenda based on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which combine economic growth with improvements in quality of life. The implementation of these goals presupposes a balanced alignment of these two fundamental components. However, under conditions of escalating “trade wars,” unfolding sanctions confrontations, and turbulence in both the geoeconomic and geopolitical agendas, significant risks to economic growth are emerging in countries facing external restrictions. This, in turn, undermines the realization of sustainable development in these jurisdictions. Mitigating such risks requires the development of adaptive macroeconomic programs that establish a foundation for structural economic development within the framework of transforming international supply chains. One of the mechanisms for localizing such risks is the implementation of special programs of forced import substitution. Yet, their effective implementation requires a conceptual perspective framed by the priorities of their realization.

The proposed conceptual perspective on the existing debates and directions of economic theory in the field of forced import-substitution policy forms the basis for developing a methodological apparatus that establishes doctrinal foundations for policy implementation through the interplay of regional and national levels. Following this line of reasoning, a crucial element in designing and developing import-substitution strategies under intensifying external restrictions is the analysis of critical import vulnerability at the regional level, followed by the aggregation of this data and its incorporation into a unified national agenda for foreign economic policy implementation. This approach will allow for maximum adaptation to turbulence in external markets and strengthen the trajectory of state policy aimed at implementing the concept of sustainable development under conditions of systemic transformations in the geoeconomic and geopolitical agendas.

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Authors’ Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study’s findings are fully available within the article.

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