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Trade and Economic Cooperation Between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus: Historical Discourse (1991–2020)

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Abstract. The aim of the research is to study trade and economic cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus, the agreement and legal basis of bilateral cooperation, the dynamics of foreign trade turnover, tendencies and forms of production cooperation in the context of modern challenges. **The methodology of work** is a complex of scientific principles, general scientific and special historical methods, as well as interdisciplinary and comprehensive approaches to the historical discourse of modern Ukrainian-Belarusian trade and economic relations based on the integral use of sources on this issue. **The scientific novelty** is stipulated by insufficient research of trade and economic aspects of cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus in the Ukrainian historiography at the present stage, where, with few exceptions, there are almost no generalized papers on these issues. The author's view on the dynamics of cooperation between the two countries for the whole period of 1991–2020 is shown, the peculiarities of bilateral cooperation after the presidential elections on August 9, 2020 in Belarus, which led to deepening political crisis in the republic, have been clarified, the prospects of given research have been determined. **The conclusions.** It has been proven that almost thirty years of experience of cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus in the new geopolitical realities is the evidence of the importance of bilateral trade and economic cooperation based on pragmatism and mutual interest, broad contacts at the level of the heads of the states, governmental and non-governmental structures, diplomatic bodies as well agreement and legal basis. It has been shown that owing to the industrial cooperation of the two states, the growth of the dynamics of mutual trade turnover, the search for constructive solutions in interregional cooperation, the concerted work of all structures coordinating Ukrainian-Belarusian relations, the accumulated institutional and legal support, it became possible to preserve the accumulated potential in the interstate relations ensuring the vector of bilateral opportunities in the context of integration and globalization processes of the present time. At the same time, in connection with the ongoing political crisis in Belarus, the format of bilateral relations has changed. Although economic cooperation continues, the challenges affecting the mutual dialogue are inducing Kyiv to consider different options for the development of bilateral cooperation; in the economic dimension, the search for opportunities to diversify and replace the Belarusian products is taking place.

Keywords: Ukraine, Republic of Belarus, trade and economic cooperation, interstate cooperation, exports, imports.

Increasing globalization, international integration, growing competition between major geopolitical players, the problems of regional, European and global security encourage the broadening of interstate contacts on bilateral and multilateral bases, the search for effective platforms to establish and deepen the open dialogue. For Ukraine, the Republic of Belarus is the historical partner, as the countries are united by common milestones in history, as well as cultural and mental similarity, close cooperation, scientific and technological ties, interconnected transport and logistics systems, geographical closeness, as well as business, personal contacts and family relations. It is important for both states that the common border of more than 1000 km is a border of peace and cooperation.

Almost 30 years of interstate dialogue between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus in the new system of geopolitical coordinates demonstrate the dynamism in bilateral relations, in particular in the main of them – trade and economic cooperation. Despite the fact that the two countries are in different economic and security integration spaces, have their own approaches to the ways of social development and various foreign policy directions, pragmatic and mutually beneficial interest has been dominant for a long time of bilateral cooperation. T.Zosymenko rightly remarks: “Until recently, the mechanisms of macroeconomic and microeconomic diplomacy between Ukraine and Belarus served as an example of moderate bilateral relations within the framework of multidirectional integration tracks”¹. The relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus with the declaration of independence depended on the level of relations with Russia and the countries of the European Union and the USA. The differences that existed in bilateral political cooperation prompted the transfer of priorities to the economic sphere.

Under the current challenges stipulated by the transformation of the system of international relations, the global economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and especially the ongoing political crisis in Belarus, the Ukrainian-Belarusian relations are being tested for strength. The influence of these factors on the interstate dialogue leads to the change in the format of relations. Traditionally or by inertia, the established Ukrainian-Belarusian economic cooperation continues, but Ukraine’s non-recognition of the legitimacy of A.Lukashenka’s new presidential term, unresolved political crisis in Belarus, growing international isolation, the EU and the USA’s sector economic sanctions against a number of Belarusian industries and enterprises, the Russian pressure on Belarus on sensitive issues for Ukraine, such as Crimea or closer Russian-Belarusian military cooperation, as well as, last but not least, the evolution of the Ukrainian economy in the direction of integration into the European economic space, induce the official Kyiv to consider various options for the development of bilateral cooperation; in the economic dimension, it is the search for opportunities to diversify and replace Belarusian products. The revision of the Ukrainian-Belarusian economic cooperation is also possible in case of bringing together the Belarusian and Russian economies in the context of implementing the mechanism of deeper integration between the two states.

It is now evident that the largest internal political crisis in modern Belarus, which took place as a result of mass protest movements because of non-recognizing the presidential election results on August 9, 2020, at the same time became the largest crisis in the Ukrainian-Belarusian relations, “the lowest point of their political relations since 1991”², as it is mentioned by Ya.Preiherman and H.Maksak. The way out of this situation will be likely to depend on resolving the political crisis in Belarus. In this context, the President of Ukraine V.Zelenskyi signed the Decree, according to the decision of the National Security and

¹ Зосименко Т. Україна – Білорусь: Аналітичний документ Ради зовнішньої політики «Українська призма», січень 2021 [E-resource]: <http://prismua.org/ukraine-belarus/>

² Прейгерман Е., Максак Г. Белорусско-украинские отношения в контексте внутривосточного кризиса в Беларуси. – К., 2020. – С.14.

Defense Council of Ukraine dated September 14, 2020, “On the National Security Strategy of Ukraine”, in which the relations with the Republic of Belarus are defined as “pragmatic”³.

The historiographical and source base of the research problem are the works of mostly Ukrainian and Belarusian scientists, interstate agreements, interviews of statesmen, as well as materials of the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus in Minsk. Among the Ukrainian scholars we can single out investigations and analytical materials of L.Chekalenko, H.Maksak, O.Soskin, S.Vasylyshyn, T.Poliiovyi, Ye.Mahda, S.Slyshova, O.Valion⁴ and others, in which, among the various aspects of the Ukrainian-Belarusian relations, the relationship in the field of economic cooperation and foreign trade turnover has been reflected. At the same time, in historical science insufficient attention has been paid to cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus in the trade and economic dimension. In the monograph of the Belarusian historian D.Yurchak⁵, trade and economic contacts between Belarus and Ukraine in the post-Soviet period have been partially covered. The common work of this Belarusian scientist with the Ukrainian researcher H.Maksak⁶ is also of great interest; in it, the authors disclose separate aspects of the history of bilateral relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus in 1991–2013, analyze the factor of 2014 in upsetting the traditional approach, as well as related challenges and dangers in effective cooperation between the two countries. Among other joint analytical Ukrainian-Belarusian investigations, devoted to the current directions in bilateral relations, the papers of O.Betlii and Ya.Preigerman⁷ should be mentioned as well as of Ya.Preigerman and H.Maksak⁸. The authors consider economic cooperation between the two countries in the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war in Eastern Ukraine and the internal political crisis in Belarus in 2020. From the latest publications, dealing with the main principles and directions of the foreign economic policy of Belarus, the dynamics of Belarusian foreign trade including the trade with Ukraine, the third volume of the seven-volume edition on the history of Belarus “Republic of Belarus – 25 years of creation and accomplishments” should be singled out; it is dedicated to the economic development of the Republic of Belarus during the years of independence⁹. The researched subject-matter is also reflected in articles by D.Yurchak, A.Tikhomirov, D.Demichev, B.Zaleskii¹⁰, and others.

³ See: [E-resource]: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3922020-35037>

⁴ Чекаленко Л., Федуняк С. Зовнішня політика України (від давніх часів до наших днів): Підруч. для студ. вищ. навч. закл. – К., 2010. – 464 с.; Максак Г. Беларусь – Украина: новые акценты – открытые возможности [E-resource]: <https://nmnby.eu/yearbook/2010/maksak-ru.html>; Максак Г. Украина и Беларусь в новых реалиях: между безопасностью и экономикой: Аналітичний документ Ради зовнішньої політики «Українська призма», березень 2016 [E-resource]: <http://prismua.org/belarus-ua/>; Soskin O. Українсько-білоруські відносини: сучасний стан і сценарії розвитку [E-resource]: <http://soskin.info/ea/2006/9-10/20060911.html>; Василюшин С. Українсько-білоруські відносини (1991–2014 рр.): Дис. ... канд. іст. наук. – Тернопіль, 2019. – 298 с.; Польовий Т. Україна – Республіка Білорусь: особливості міждержавного діалогу на сучасному етапі // Вісник Дніпропетровського університету: Серія «Філософія. Соціологія. Політологія». – Вип.1. – Дніпропетровськ, 2015. – С.160–168; Магда Е. Україна буде передполагати гібридний аншлюс Білоруси со стороны Росии [E-resource]: <https://thinktanks.by/publication/2020/10/02/evgen-magda-ukraina-budet-predpolagat-gibridnyu-anshlyus-belarusi-so-storony-rossii.html>; Слишова С. Основні домінанти та особливості поглиблення економічних зв'язків між Україною і Республікою Білорусь: Автореф. дис. ... канд. екон. наук. – К., 2002. – 16 с.; Valion O. Дубровиччина – Рівненщина – Брестчина в контексті прикордонного співробітництва між Україною і Республікою Білорусь (2000-і рр.) // Україна – Європа – світ. – Вип.16. – Ч.1. – Тернопіль, 2015. – С.34–43; Valion O. Межрегиональное сотрудничество Украины и Беларуси в современной системе международных экономических отношений. Беларусь в современном мире = Беларусь у сучасным свеце: Мат. XVIII Междунар. науч. конф., посвящённой 98-летию образования Белорусского госуд. ун-та (Минск, 30 октября 2019 г.). – Минск, 2019. – С.221–225.

⁵ Юрчак Д.В. Беларусь – Украина: 20 лет межгосударственных отношений. – Витебск, 2012. – 280 с.

⁶ Максак Г., Юрчак Д. Сотрудничество Республики Беларусь и Украины в новых геополитических условиях. – Минск, 2014. – 40 с.

⁷ Бетлій О., Прейгерман Є. Аудит зовнішньої політики України: Україна – Білорусь: Дискусійна записка. – К., 2016. – 55 с.

⁸ Прейгерман Е., Максак Г. Белорусско-украинские отношения в контексте внутривиточитического кризиса в Беларуси. – К., 2020. – 22 с.

⁹ Республика Беларусь – 25 лет созидания и свершений: В 7 т. – Т.3: Экономическое развитие / Н.А.Абрамчук [и др.]. – Минск, 2020. – 795 с.

¹⁰ Юрчак Д. Белорусско-украинские отношения в 1991–2017 гг. // Постсоветские исследования. – Т.1. – 2018. – №1. – С.79–89; Тихомиров А. Белорусско-украинские отношения в 1991–2009 гг. // Труды факультета международных

The traditions of close economic cooperation between Ukraine and Belarus were formed during the Soviet time. The republics were part of the economic complex of the USSR, their economies were in close union cooperation, which contributed to signing one of the first interstate documents – the Treaty between the Ukrainian SSR and the Belarusian SSR of December 29, 1990, in which the states, recognizing mutual sovereignty, declared mutually beneficial cooperation of their peoples and countries, in particular, in the field of economy and trade¹¹. As O.Betlii and Ya.Preiherman rightly point out, “both states have tested the experience of bilateral cooperation, which is unique for the Soviet realities”¹². Somewhat earlier, on October 17, 1990, the republics signed the Agreement on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation, trying to maintain the former level of trade in terms of establishing direct economic relations, which expanded the prospects for improving the emerging market mechanisms¹³.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and breaking-off economic ties led to the temporary slowdown in the Ukrainian-Belarusian trade and economic relations. In the early 1990s, both countries suffered from structural economic crisis characterized by decreasing production, rising prices and inflation, lowering living standards, rising unemployment, declining mutual trade, and so on. As a result, during 1992–1994, bilateral foreign trade turnover decreased from 1127 million to 396 million US dollars, and Ukraine’s share in the trade turnover of Belarus decreased from 21,5% to 11,3%¹⁴. Thus, the destruction of economic ties that had been formed for decades, the problems of structural restructuring the economic systems of the two states towards creating market forms of management against the background of deep economic crisis led to the slowdown in bilateral trade activities.

However, mutual interest and in the dialogue and the establishment of interstate relations contributed to the resumption of the Ukrainian-Belarusian cooperation. According to D.Yurchak, Ukraine, being one of the largest countries in Europe with the population of almost 50 million, was a promising and long-established market for the Belarusian products¹⁵. Instead, the Ukrainian researcher S.Slyshova rightly points out: “In building the Ukrainian-Belarusian economic relations, each country interprets this process as the development of traditional partnership”¹⁶. The establishment of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus on December 27, 1991 became the impetus for the development of bilateral relations in the new geopolitical conditions.

The basis for the formation and deepening of bilateral cooperation between the states is the regulatory-legal framework, which now covers more than 200 documents, of which the largest share relates to trade and economic aspects. Among the basic documents regulating the bilateral dialogue between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus in the field of economy, determining its tendencies, directions and forms, the following should be mentioned: the Agreement between the Ukrainian and Belarusian Governments on Trade and Economic Cooperation¹⁷ (December 1993), the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbor Relations and Cooperation between Ukraine

отношений. – Вып.1. – 2010. – С.43–46; Демичев Д.М. Торгово-экономические отношения Республики Беларусь и Украины // Экономический журнал. – 2000. – №4. – С.75–83; Залесский Б. Беларусь – Украина: ответ на вызовы – медийное стратегическое партнерство // Международная журналистика – 2012: современное состояние и направления развития: Мат. Междунар. науч.-практ. конф. (17 февраля 2012 г., Минск) / Под общ. ред. Т.Н.Дасаевой. – Минск, 2012. – С.65–75.

¹¹ See: [E-resource]: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/112_011#Text

¹² Бетлій О., Прейгерман Є. Аудит зовнішньої політики України: Україна – Білорусь. – С.4.

¹³ Юрчак Д.В. Беларусь – Украина: 20 лет межгосударственных отношений. – С.169.

¹⁴ Чекаленко Л., Федуняк С. Зовнішня політика України (від давніх часів до наших днів). – С.215.

¹⁵ Юрчак Д.В. Беларусь – Украина: 20 лет межгосударственных отношений. – С.7.

¹⁶ Слишова С. Основні домінанти та особливості поглиблення економічних зв'язків між Україною і Республікою Білорусь. – С.13.

¹⁷ See: [E-resource]: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/112_002#Text

and Belarus (July 17, 1995)¹⁸, ratified on May 16, 1997, the Agreement on Economic Cooperation for 1999–2008¹⁹ (ratified on June 30, 1999). Since 2010, road maps have been signed between the states containing short-term and medium-term joint action plans for implementing the key aspects of economic cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus²⁰. It should be noted that trade cooperation between the states is carried out in accordance with the CIS Free Trade Agreement, which Ukraine ratified in 2012²¹.

Trade and economic relations between Ukraine and Belarus have been based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit, preservation of the existing contacts, and deepening new economic and cooperative links for the supply of products and goods, materials and components used in technologically related productions²². In particular, the Belarusian scholar D.Demichiev focused on the striving of the states for deepening the integration of the national economies on mutually beneficial terms, taking into account the corresponding technological interdependence and cooperation relations, which have justified themselves in practice²³. Instead, the Ukrainian researcher T.Poliiovyi stressed that “the parties viewed each other through the prism of their own utilitarian considerations, without excessive interest in each other”²⁴. At the same time, in bilateral economic relations between Ukraine and Belarus in the early 1990s, along with the desire to maintain economic cooperation, there were problems associated with the transformation of foreign economic activities in new conditions, which led to the danger of breaking off production chains.

A number of governmental and non-governmental structures contributed to the deepening of the bilateral dialogue and solving problems in the trade and economic sphere. First of all, these were the Embassies of each of the countries, which served as mediators in establishing the cooperation between the two states and peoples, were engaged in monitoring the increase in foreign trade turnover, supporting joint projects, and so on. In addition, since 1996 the Intergovernmental Joint Ukrainian-Belarusian Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation has been functioning, the main tasks of which are considering the results of foreign economic activities of both countries, analyzing the implementation of the main directions and principles of trade and economic cooperation²⁵. The Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCI) are non-governmental and non-commercial structures that assist in developing the two countries' economies, their integration into the world economic system. They provide practical assistance to enterprises and entrepreneurs in conducting operations in the foreign market and developing new forms of trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation, develop the export of goods and services²⁶. According to the Agreement “On Cooperation between the CCI of Ukraine and the CCI of Belarus” signed in 2002, the Ukrainian-Belarusian Business Council was created with the active participation of entrepreneurs from the two countries, which was to resolve the following acute problems on the agenda of trade and economic cooperation: customs registration of goods, elimination of anti-dumping sanctions, unification of provisions of the national legislations in the field of trade²⁷.

¹⁸ See: [E-resource]: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/112_692

¹⁹ See: [E-resource]: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/112_022#Text

²⁰ *Максак Г., Юрчак Д.* Сотрудничество Республики Беларусь и Украины в новых геополитических условиях. – С.5.

²¹ See: [E-resource]: <http://sfs.gov.ua/baneryi/mitne-oformlennya/subektam-zed/vilna-torgivlya/kraini-snd-azerbaydjan-kazahstan-bi/vilna-torgivlya/>

²² Національні архіви Республіки Беларусь (НАРБ). – Ф.31. – Воп.17. – Спр.163. – Л.16.

²³ *Демичев Д.М.* Торгово-экономические отношения Республики Беларусь и Украины. – С.75.

²⁴ *Поліовий Т.* Основні доміанти та особливості поглиблення економічних зв'язків. – С.161.

²⁵ See: [E-resource]: https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/112_056#Text

²⁶ НАРБ. – Ф.31. – Воп.17. – Спр.12. – Л.75–76.

²⁷ *Максак Г., Юрчак Д.* Сотрудничество Республики Беларусь и Украины в новых геополитических условиях. – С.5.

The mentioned structures are the main channels of communication between Ukraine and Belarus; they also regulate the arising contradictions and develop the mutual dialogue.

To deepen the cooperation in the economic sphere between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus, the necessary conditions were created, in particular, the legal framework for its implementation was developed, as well as new branch and regional relations were updated and established. In December 1998, in Minsk, the Presidents of the Republic of Belarus A.Lukashenka and the President of Ukraine L.Kuchma signed the Agreement on Cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and Ukraine on Economic Cooperation for 1999–2008. An integral part of this Agreement was the Interstate Program of Long-Term Economic Cooperation between the Countries for this period, which envisaged the list of measures aimed at expanding bilateral trade and economic cooperation²⁸. In this context, the Belarusian researcher O.Tikhomirov pointed out: “Despite different views of the leaders of Belarus and Ukraine on the vectors of their countries’ development (while the Belarusian leadership supported strengthening the links with Russia, the Ukrainian leaders preferred the rapprochement with the EU and NATO), on the whole, their political dialogue was carried out in a constructive spirit”²⁹. The communication at the high level contributed to the activation of economic aspects in the bilateral cooperation.

The increase in exports was an important area of work of the Republic of Belarus in the relations with Ukraine. This is quite logical, given the export-oriented nature of the Belarusian economy. It should be mentioned that since 1992, the share of goods and services exports in the GDP of Belarus has consistently exceeded 50%³⁰. Thus, since 1995, the tendency of growing commodity turnover has been observed between the two countries. By 1998, the volume of bilateral trade had been increasing, the highest turnover indicators were observed in the previous year, amounting to 1393 million US dollars.

However, in 1998–1999, the intensification of bilateral trade and economic activities decreased. According to the results of 1999, there was a decrease in trade between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus by 22,8%, compared to 1998 and by almost 2 times in comparison with the “pre-crisis” 1997, from 1274 million to 733 million US dollars³¹. Among the reasons for deteriorating the dynamics of foreign trade turnover are the following: the lack of coordination in VAT and indirect tax payments collection, the absence of money for mutual settlements by Ukrainian and Belarusian producers, instability of the financial system of the Republic of Belarus, the impact of the financial crisis in Russia. The decline in trade volumes in 1999 was affected by unsatisfactory implementation of the long-term economic cooperation program, unstable monetary and financial situation, multiple exchange rates, strict control over pricing and export-import operations in Belarus, requirements for businesses to export products only in foreign currency, restoration of the mechanism of VAT collection during the registration of customs documents³².

The analysis of the Belarusian documents on stimulating exports to Ukraine and creating conditions for its state support testifies to the significant work carried out in this direction³³. Among the important decisions taken in the framework of these measures were releasing certain economic entities from paying VAT and duties on imported raw materials, components used for products manufacturing – some these products were exported to Ukraine, in particular from “Homselmash” (Homel Farm Machinery Plant),

²⁸ НАРБ. – Ф.31. – Воп.17. – Спр.1968. – Л.47–48.

²⁹ Тихомиров А. Белорусско-украинские отношения в 1991–2009 гг. – С.43.

³⁰ Республика Беларусь – 25 лет созидания и свершений. – Т.3. – С.173.

³¹ НАРБ. – Ф.31. – Воп.1. – Спр.1968. – Л.94.

³² Василюшин С. Українсько-білоруські відносини (1991–2014 рр.). – С.190–191.

³³ НАРБ. – Ф.31. – Воп.17. – Спр.1968. – Л.54–58.

MTZ (Minsk Tractor Plant), MAZ (Minsk Automobile Plant), “Horizon”, “Integral”³⁴. The development of trade infrastructure contributed to the intensification of export operations between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus. An effective direction of export popularization was the development of exhibition and fair activities³⁵. In general, export problems are particularly sensitive for both countries, because the money from export operations is invested in the development of other branches of the social-economic sector, serves as a source of replenishing the state budget, gold and foreign currency reserves.

At the same time, bilateral trade and economic cooperation failed to avoid problems, in particular, Ukraine was concerned about the protectionist policy of Belarus, the introduction of various restrictive measures. In the document signed by the Prime Minister of Ukraine V.Yushchenko to A.Lukashenka dated May 15, 2000, it was stated that the Free Trade Agreement had been in force between the states since 1992. At the same time, a number of regulations were adopted in the Republic of Belarus that to some extent established barriers in the mutual trade. Therefore, the liberalization of foreign economic activities and the application of the free trade mode in full, i.e., without exceptions, would increase the volumes of mutual trade³⁶.

Such actions served to increase bilateral trade activities in 2000, which amounted to 900,3 million US dollars. However, the following year, a decrease in foreign trade turnover between the countries by 24,4% took place. In Belarus import, Ukraine moved to the third from the traditional second place, and its place was taken by Germany³⁷. In 2003–2008, the bilateral commodity turnover increased by more than 7 times (from 705,6 million to 4,905 million US dollars). In particular, in 2005 the trade turnover between the states amounted to 1,801.7 million US dollars and compared to 2004, it increased by 66,1%³⁸. Moreover, the decrease in the intensity of political dialogue after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine did not affect the nature of bilateral trade and economic cooperation³⁹.

In 2008, Ukraine ranked third among the countries with which Belarus traded (the last one according to this indicator was the seventh)⁴⁰. Naturally, in the crisis year of 2009 the trade turnover between the states decreased, in particular, it amounted to 2,982.5 million US dollars, but the following year the volumes of mutual trade made 4,439.9 million⁴¹. The record commodity turnover of 7,9 billion US dollars between the states was reached in 2012⁴². The balance in the mutual trade since 2008 has been positive for the Republic of Belarus. This is explained by the predominance of imports of petroleum products from Belarus to Ukraine. In the following years, both countries at different levels expressed the necessity to achieve these indicators, as the potential in bilateral trade and economic relations was not fully used.

The beginning of the 21 century became the time of active expanding and deepening the relations in trade and economic cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus, filling them with new content and forms. This was largely owing to the agreement and legal framework accumulated in previous years and slowly supplemented. As before, the dialogue

³⁴ Там же. – Л.54.

³⁵ Там же. – Л.54, 58.

³⁶ Там же. – Л.96–97.

³⁷ Слишова С. Основні домінанти та особливості поглиблення економічних зв'язків між Україною і Республікою Білорусь. – С.7.

³⁸ Soskin O. Українсько-білоруські відносини: сучасний стан і сценарій розвитку [E-resource]: <http://soskin.info/ea/2006/9-10/20060911.html>

³⁹ Тихомиров А. Белорусско-украинские отношения в 1991–2009 гг. – С.44.

⁴⁰ Дем'янчук Ю.А., Приходько Т.М. Розвиток взаємовідносин України з Республікою Білорусь за роки незалежності // Гуржівські історичні читання. – Вип.5. – Черкаси, 2012. – С.309.

⁴¹ Максак Г. Беларусь – Украина: новые акценты – открытые возможности [E-resource]: <https://nmnby.eu/yearbook/2010/maksak-ru.html>

⁴² Юрчак Д. Белорусско-украинские отношения в 1991–2017 гг. – С.85.

at the intergovernmental and interdepartmental levels became a favorable factor in bilateral cooperation; measures were taken to activate industrial cooperation, create joint ventures.

There are 324 enterprises with Ukrainian capital in Belarus, including 129 joint ventures and 195 foreign organizations. Industrial cooperation is one of the main directions of trade and economic cooperation. The opportunities of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Industrial, Scientific and Technical Cooperation of May 29, 2002 are actively used. Eleven assembly productions of Belarusian machinery (tractors and MAZ machinery, grain harvesters, lifting equipment, MAZ and Belcommunemash trolley-buses, flange systems, electricity meters) operate in Ukraine. In particular, in 2020, three assembly plants were opened – of trolleybuses (cities of Brovary and Vinnytsia) and municipal vehicles based on the MAZ chassis (city of Kremenchuk). Cooperation relations are traditionally maintained with many industrial companies of Ukraine⁴³. With active participation “Belavtodor” holding enterprises, a number of large infrastructural projects in road construction and operating repairs of the Ukrainian automobile roads network are being implemented. We can agree with the Belarusian scholar B.Zaleskii, who points out that the deepened industrial cooperation between the states contributed to the transition from the number of joint projects to their qualitative growth – the mutual planning of the most promising sectors’ development with access to the third countries’ markets⁴⁴.

In the history and the present time of bilateral trade and economic relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus, economic diversity is an important factor affecting their dynamics. Belarus is a member of regional economic associations, led by the Russian Federation, including the Customs Union (1995) and the Eurasian Economic Union (2015). Since 1999, the relations between Belarus and Russia have been built on the basis of the Union State Treaty. Instead, Ukraine is reorienting its economy towards integration into the European Economic Space. In particular, in 2008, our country joined the World Trade Organization, and on January 1, 2016, the Free Trade Agreement between Ukraine and the EU came into force. In this connection, the relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus depend on the level of relations with Russia, the EU countries and the USA. However, being in different economic associations does not prevent Ukraine and Belarus from building a constructive and pragmatic dialogue in the trade and economic sphere. Moreover, the two countries consider economic diversity as a “window of opportunities” to penetrate the controlled markets. We are talking about the entry of Ukrainian goods through Belarus into the market of the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as the creation of joint ventures with Ukraine in Belarus to gain access to the Eurasian market, and in Ukraine to trade with the EU⁴⁵.

At the same time, the factor of different economic integration tracks sometimes results in the deterioration of the Ukrainian-Belarusian economic relations, leading to “trade wars” between the states, accompanied by the protectionist policy, anti-dumping actions and other restrictive procedures in mutual trade. In addition, there is competition between Ukrainian and Belarusian manufacturers, because in many respects their products are the same, which leads to conflict situations between the parties. As a rule, it is possible to reach a compromise by resolving conflicts, including at the highest level. However, the issues of moving away from protectionism as a means of putting pressure on each other remain topical.

The dynamics of Ukrainian-Belarusian trade and economic relations in 2014–2019 was influenced by the Russian-Ukrainian war in the Eastern Ukraine, which led to rethinking of bilateral relations. Russia’s pressure on Belarus concerning the implementation of integration

⁴³ See: [E-resource]: http://ukraine.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/

⁴⁴ Залеский Б. Беларусь – Украина: ответ на вызовы – медийное стратегическое партнёрство. – С.70.

⁴⁵ Бетлій О., Прейсгерман Є. Аудит зовнішньої політики України: Україна – Білорусь. – С.28–29.

agreements in Ukraine has raised concerns about the probability of using the territory of the Republic of Belarus to continue Russia's aggression against our country. Such actions as the support of the Russian Federation in voting as to the resolving of important issues for Ukraine at the United Nations General Assembly, conducting joint military exercises with the Russian Federation near the state border with Ukraine, arrests of the citizens of Ukraine on Belarusian territory and their transfer to the Russian Federation became the grounds for such concern⁴⁶. At the same time, A.Lukashenka's personal assurances about preventing from the use of the territory of Belarus for acts of the Russian aggression, as well as the role of Minsk as a platform for international negotiations on regulating the Russian-Ukrainian conflict⁴⁷ testified to the relatively neutral position of the Republic of Belarus on the pressing issue for Ukraine. In this regard, the Ukrainian researcher M.Khylko points out: "Minsk understands the importance of Ukraine's defending its sovereignty in the conflict with Russia to preserve the independence of Belarus itself"⁴⁸. As a result, the Belarusian authorities positioned themselves as peacemakers, the donor of the regional security. Gradually, Belarus's relations with the West were gradually normalized within the framework of the multi-vector policy (2014 – early 2020). All this gave grounds for deepening the interstate dialogue between Kyiv and Minsk; new forms and trends of cooperation were observed in the economic sphere, interregional cooperation was intensified with the introduction of a new format of relations – regional forums, and others. Trade and economic cooperation at that difficult time, according to O.Betlii and Ya.Preiherman, was the "glue" that held Ukraine and Belarus together⁴⁹.

Concerning the traditional priority of economic factors in the Ukrainian-Belarusian relations, the Ukrainian experts point out the following: "Belarusian diplomatic presence in Ukraine is almost entirely focused on strengthening economic cooperation between the two states, creating additional markets for Belarusian industrial products"⁵⁰. A characteristic feature of intensifying bilateral cooperation between Kyiv and Minsk was the significant number of communications at the highest level, including trade and economic aspects.

Instead, in 2015 there was 40,8% reduction in bilateral trade. In particular, the annexation of the Crimea and the conflict in Donbas affected Belarus's two main trading partners among the regions of Ukraine: the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Donetsk region, which ranked second and third among the Ukrainian regional trading partners (their trade turnover with Belarus amounted to more than 1 billion US dollars)⁵¹. On the whole, in 2015, the commodity turnover decreased by almost 41% as compared with 2014, from 5,8 billion to 3,47 billion, respectively. The negative balance for Ukraine amounted to almost 1,5 billion US dollars⁵².

However, the states are gradually making efforts to increase trade and economic cooperation, which has affected the volumes of trade between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus. In 2016, the commodity turnover between the countries amounted to about 3,8 billion US dollars, in 2017 – 4,6 billion, in 2018 – 5,5 billion, in 2019 – 5,8 billion. As we can see, the positive tendency is the growth of bilateral commodity turnover for four years, starting from 2016.

⁴⁶ See: [E-resource]: <https://niss.gov.ua/doslidzhennya/ekonomika/zabezpechennya-nacionalnikh-ekonomichnikh-interesiv-ukraini-u-0>

⁴⁷ See: [E-resource]: https://www.civic-synergy.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Ukrayina-Bilorus_novi-vyklyky-ta-mozhlyvosti-dlya-dvostoronnih-vidnosyn-u-2020-2025-rokah.pdf

⁴⁸ Хилько М. Двосторонні відносини у регіоні: Білорусь: Сценарії розвитку відносин до 2025 р. [E-resource]: <http://prismua.org/ear-ua-by/>

⁴⁹ Бетлій О., Прейгерман Є. Аудит зовнішньої політики: Україна – Білорусь. – С.25.

⁵⁰ See: [E-resource]: https://www.civic-synergy.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Ukrayina-Bilorus_novi-vyklyky-ta-mozhlyvosti-dlya-dvostoronnih-vidnosyn-u-2020-2025-rokah.pdf

⁵¹ Бетлій О., Прейгерман Є. Аудит зовнішньої політики: Україна – Білорусь. – С.25–26.

⁵² Махсах Г. Беларусь – Украина: новые акценты – открытые возможности [E-resource]: <http://prismua.org/belarus-ua/>

As before, petroleum products are a significant part of imports from Belarus. In particular, in 2015 their share made over 70%⁵³. Besides, the main goods of Belarusian exports to Ukraine are mixed mineral fertilizers, coke and bitumen, potash fertilizers, trucks, fiberboard, tractors and prime movers, coal and nitrogen fertilizers. Ukraine supplies Belarus with soybeans, vegetable oil-derived waste, freight railway wagons, trams, vehicle parts, flat rolled metal from alloyed steel, corn, crude oil, including gas condensate, poultry meat and by-products, medicines etc.⁵⁴ The list of export-import products indicates the expansion of its range compared to the previous years, which has a positive effect on economic cooperation. Petroleum products, mineral fertilizers and bitumen are among the critically important goods currently imported from Belarus to Ukraine.

A characteristic trend in the Ukrainian-Belarusian trade and economic relations in recent years has been the fact that they have developed not only at the interstate but also at the regional levels. This has served as a practical mechanism for the implementation of new projects, initiatives, close and concrete links between regions, districts, cities of the two countries. Currently, more than 120 agreements have been signed in various spheres of the Ukrainian-Belarusian cooperation at the interregional level. Successful examples of communication between the regions of the two countries are demonstrated in many places. As an example, active cooperation in the trade and economic sector has been established between Brest and Volyn, Homel and Chernihiv, Minsk and Kyiv, as well as Brest and Rivne regions⁵⁵.

In order to represent the economic potential of the regions of Ukraine and Belarus, as well as the development of new initiatives and forms of economic, investment, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation at the interregional level, a new format of cooperation has been launched – conducting regional forums. In particular, the First Forum of Regions of Ukraine and Belarus took place on 25–26 October, 2018 in Gomel, and the Second – on 3–4 October, 2019 in Zhytomyr. The fact that the events were held with the participation of the Presidents of the two countries, the regional leaders and business representatives added the status and specific content to the Forums. During the First Forum (represented by 17 Ukrainian and all Belarusian regions) 12 agreements of different levels were signed – interstate, intergovernmental, interregional, as well as commercial agreements worth more than 100 million US dollars; according to the results of the Second Forum (attended by representatives from 23 regions of Ukraine and all Belarusian regions), 2 intergovernmental and 15 interregional cooperation agreements, and commercial agreements between entrepreneurs worth 543 million US dollars were signed⁵⁶. This format of cooperation had a positive effect on bilateral interaction, because, in addition to establishing direct horizontal links between the business circles of the two states, bilateral documents important for interregional dialogue were signed. The countries managed to remove anti-dumping restrictions and other obstacles to mutual trade, as well as to give the “green light” to the promising projects for mutual cooperation, in particular, the measures for the development of river navigation on the Dnipro and Prypiat rivers within the framework of E-40 international river route, and so on.

It should be mentioned that bilateral trade and economic cooperation in 2020 was affected by two factors. The first is connected with the global COVID-19 pandemic and the global economic recession, which resulted in a certain decline in the commodity turnover between Ukraine and Belarus, which amounted to 4,5 billion US dollars in 2020

⁵³ Там же.

⁵⁴ See: [E-resource]: http://ukraine.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/

⁵⁵ *Валион О.* Дубровиччина –Рівненщина –Брестчина в контексті прикордонного співробітництва між Україною і Республікою Білорусь (2000-і рр.). – С.37.

⁵⁶ *Валион О.* Межрегиональное сотрудничество Украины и Беларуси в современной системе международных экономических отношений. – С.224.

and decreased by 22,2% as compared with the previous year. In 2020, our country, took the second place among all trading partners of the Republic of Belarus in terms of commodity turnover and exports, and as to the imports Ukraine ranked fourth. Belarus became Ukraine's sixth trading partner after China, Poland, Russia, Germany, and Turkey⁵⁷. As we can see, both countries remain important trading partners for each other.

The events that took place in the summer and autumn of 2020 in Belarus became a serious challenge for the Ukrainian-Belarusian relations. Kyiv did not recognize A.Lukashenka as a legitimately elected President; it supported the position of the European Union and joined the sanctions against the official Minsk. In their turn, the Belarusian authorities responded negatively to Ukraine, including accusations of interfering in the internal affairs of Belarus. The exacerbation of relations between the countries resulted in the cessation of official interstate contacts. At the same time, bilateral trade and economic ties are being maintained (the commodity turnover between the countries in January – May 2021 amounted to 2,3 billion US dollars)⁵⁸. Traditionally, the Republic of Belarus has a positive balance in trade with Ukraine, while our country has a negative one. So, the exports of Ukrainian goods and services in the first half of 2021 reached 740,5 million US dollars and increased by 37,8 million or 5,4% in comparison with the corresponding period of 2020. The imports of goods and services from the Republic of Belarus to Ukraine amounted to 1,954.4 million US dollars and increased by 731,2 million or 59,8% as compared to the first half of 2020⁵⁹. This strengthens Minsk's interest in the trade and economic activities with Kyiv, at the same time stimulating the latter to search for more effective mechanisms to promote its products on the Belarusian market.

However, in the context of the political crisis in Belarus, Ukraine's economic activeness is met with discriminatory actions from the partner, connected with the creation of artificial barriers, in particular, to wheeled vehicles imported from Ukraine and unequal conditions of participation in state purchases, which complicate the access of Ukrainian products to the market of the neighboring state. In response to this policy, Ukraine has introduced a special duty of 35% on imports of Belarusian buses and trucks⁶⁰. However, the Ukrainian authorities have not yet applied it – the Kyiv District Administrative Court has temporarily suspended the decision of the Interdepartmental Commission of Ukraine on Foreign Trade until the end of the case on the claim of “MAZ-Ukraine Trading House”, the Ukrainian company with foreign investments. The additional factor of tension in the bilateral relations was the forced landing of the Ryanair plane by the Belarusian authorities in Minsk in order to detain the journalist and blogger R.Pratasyevich. Ukraine canceled flights to Belarus, and then banned the use of Ukrainian air space by Belarusian planes during flights to other countries. The Belarusian authorities responded by subjecting Ukrainian confectionery, chocolate, juices, beer, particleboard and fiberboard, wallpaper, toilet paper and packaging, bricks, glass ampoules, agricultural sowing machinery, washing machines and furniture to individual licensing⁶¹. The political crisis in Belarus, its international isolation against the background of close rapprochement with the Russian Federation, has aggravated not only the Ukrainian-Belarusian political relations, but also affected bilateral trade and economic ties, as the signs of “trade wars” are periodically observed. Probably, at present, in connection with value differences in the relations

⁵⁷ See: [E-resource]: https://ukraine.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/trade_economic/

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ See: [E-resource]: <https://belarus.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobitnictvo/ekonomichne-spivrobitnictvo>

⁶⁰ See: [E-resource]: https://zaxid.net/ukrayina_vvela_spetsmito_na_import_avtobusiv_i_vantazhivok_z_bilorusi_n1517840

⁶¹ Литвинова О. Американські гірки білорусько-української політики: Як погіршувались стосунки Мінська і Києва [E-resource]: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/bilorus-ukrajina-vidnosny-pohirshennia/31287342.html>

between Ukraine and Belarus, the system of traditional advantage of trade and economic relations over political differences is undergoing transformation.

Ukraine is assessing the possibility of additional geographical diversification of product groups, in the import of which Belarus occupies a leading position in order to promptly respond to failures or termination of their supplies. Thus, in 2020, the Ukrainian market received 35% of all oil products, 60% of bituminous mixtures, 34% of mineral fertilizers from Belarus⁶².

The freezing or indefinite postponement of a number of important projects, first of all, the Third Forum of the Regions of Ukraine and Belarus, which was to take place in Hrodna in October 2020 with the participation of V.Zelenskyi and A.Lukashenka, became a negative aspect of bilateral cooperation in the new reality.

We can agree with the Ambassador of Ukraine to the Republic of Belarus I.Kyzym, who pointed out that the Ukrainian-Belarusian relations in the near future would depend on how the political situation in Belarus would develop⁶³.

Thus, the thirty-year experience of partnership between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus as independent states demonstrates the importance and necessity of bilateral trade and economic cooperation based on pragmatism and mutual interest, based on broad contacts at the level of heads of the states, governmental and non-governmental structures, diplomatic bodies as well as significant agreement and legal basis. Despite the fact that periodically there were complications in political relations, the trade and economic component maintained a high level of activeness and developed in an upward trajectory. In particular, owing to the economic cooperation between Ukraine and Belarus, the growth of bilateral trade dynamics, the search for constructive solutions in the interregional cooperation, the joint work of structures coordinating the Ukrainian-Belarusian dialogue, it was possible to preserve the experience gained in interstate relations and fill it with a new content in accordance with today's challenges. However, in the context of the ongoing political crisis in Belarus, bilateral political relations have exacerbated, while trade and economic contacts continue to develop. We hope that valuable interstate relations will be restored and they will be preserved, and the problems existing today in the Ukrainian-Belarusian relations will be regulated. The continuation of investigating trade and economic cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus will help to disclose the whole potential of bilateral relations, in particular at the regional level. Besides, the research will demonstrate the opportunities of Ukrainian-Belarusian joint ventures to gain the access to the Eurasian market and the EU market, which will serve the further entry of both countries into the world economic space.

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⁶² Зосименко Т. Україна – Білорусь: Аналітичний документ Ради зовнішньої політики «Українська призма»...

⁶³ See: [E-resource]: <https://hromadske.ua/posts/vibori-v-bilorusi-vidnosini-kiyiv-minsk-ta-vagnerivci-intervyu-z-poslom-ukrayini-v-bilorusi-igorem-kizimom>

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Торговельно-економічне співробітництво між Україною та Республікою Білорусь: історичний дискурс (1991–2020)

Анотація. Мета дослідження полягає у вивченні торговельно-економічної співпраці між Україною та Республікою Білорусь, договірно-правової бази двосторонньої взаємодії, динаміки зовнішньоторговельного товарообігу, тенденцій і форм виробничої кооперації в контексті сучасних викликів. **Методологію праці** становить комплекс наукових принципів, загальнонаукових і спеціально-історичних методів, а також міждисциплінарний та комплексний підходи до історичного дискурсу сучасних українсько-білоруських торговельно-економічних відносин на основі цілісного використання джерел з означеної проблеми. **Наукова новизна** зумовлена недостатнім дослідженням в українській історіографії торговельно-економічних аспектів співпраці України та Республіки Білорусь на сучасному етапі, де, за невеликими винятками, майже відсутні узагальнюючі праці, присвячені вказаним питанням. Показано авторський погляд на динаміку співробітництва двох країн за період 1991–2020 рр., з'ясовано особливості двосторонньої співпраці після президентських виборів 9 серпня 2020 р. в Білорусі, які призвели до поглиблення політичної кризи у державі, визначено перспективи дослідження означеної проблематики. **Висновки.** Доведено, що майже тридцятирічний досвід співробітництва України й Республіки Білорусь у нових геополітичних реаліях засвідчує важливість двосторонньої торговельно-економічної співпраці, що базувалася на прагматизмі та взаємній зацікавленості, широких контактах на рівні глав держав, урядових і неурядових структур, дипломатичних органів, а також вагомій договірно-правовій базі. Показано, що завдяки виробничій кооперації двох країн, зростанню динаміки обопільного товарообігу, пошуку конструктивних рішень у міжрегіональній співпраці, злагодженій роботі всіх структур, які координують українсько-білоруські відносини, інституційно-правовому забезпеченню вдалося зберегти нагромаджений потенціал у міждержавних взаєминах, забезпечувати вектор двосторонніх можливостей у контексті інтеграційних та глобалізаційних процесів. Водночас, у зв'язку з політичною кризою в Білорусі, яка нині триває, відбулася зміна формату двосторонніх відносин. Хоча економічна співпраця продовжує зберігатися, проте виклики, що впливають на діалог, спонукають Київ розглядати різні варіанти розвитку двостороннього співробітництва. В економічному вимірі здійснюється пошук можливостей диверсифікації і заміщення білоруської продукції.

Ключові слова: Україна, Республіка Білорусь, торговельно-економічне співробітництво, міждержавна взаємодія, експорт, імпорт.