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GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECURITY AND TRADE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UKRAINE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

Significant transformations in the system of international relations, driven by global geopolitical shifts, increasing security risks, and the growing interdependence between the economic and security dimensions of interstate cooperation, have intensified scholarly interest in bilateral relations. Against the backdrop of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the strategic partnership between Ukraine and the United Kingdom has acquired particular significance, with the United Kingdom emerging as one of Ukraine's principal political, military, and economic partners. This study substantiates the interdependence of trade and economic cooperation and security cooperation, demonstrating that they constitute complementary components of contemporary international relations.

The current state of foreign trade between Ukraine and the United Kingdom is analyzed. The findings indicate that Ukraine continues to demonstrate a resource-based export specialization within bilateral trade, whereas British exports remain predominantly technology-intensive. At the same time, the increasing share of high-technology products within selected commodity groups, together with the expansion of bilateral trade, reveals considerable potential for diversifying the trade structure, increasing the proportion of high-value-added products, and further strengthening Ukraine–United Kingdom economic cooperation.

The study identifies the principal geopolitical challenges shaping Ukraine–United Kingdom relations, including Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, threats to European and global security, the proliferation of hybrid threats, energy instability, the transformation of the international order, and the challenges of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction. Their impact on determining the priorities of bilateral cooperation in both the economic and security spheres is substantiated.

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The paper further identifies key prospects for the future development of Ukraine–United Kingdom cooperation, including the deepening of security and defence partnership, the expansion of trade and economic cooperation, the United Kingdom's participation in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, enhanced cooperation in the energy sector, and the strengthening of innovation- and technology-oriented partnership. Practical directions for implementing these priorities and the expected outcomes of their realization are also proposed.

Keywords: security, trade, international relations, cooperation, geopolitical challenges, geopolitics, development prospects.

Problem Statement. Geopolitical challenges have become a significant factor in strengthening interstate relations, particularly between countries connected by shared economic interests and common security concerns. Among the most pressing contemporary challenges are armed conflicts, the transformation of international institutions, shifts in the global political landscape, energy instability, and economic turbulence. The current international environment is characterized by a gradual redistribution of influence among major powers, accompanied by the transformation of the established international order.

As a result of these developments, states are compelled to adapt their foreign policies to emerging security and economic realities. This tendency is particularly evident in the case of the Ukraine–United Kingdom partnership, the evolution of which is increasingly influenced by contemporary geopolitical challenges. These challenges shape the priorities of bilateral cooperation and contribute to the further consolidation of the strategic partnership between Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

Literature Review. Relations between Ukraine and the United Kingdom have been widely examined by numerous scholars [1, 3, 4, 6, 8] and are reflected in a number of institutional and legal instruments that define the framework for bilateral cooperation. Among the most significant are the Political, Free Trade and Strategic Partnership Agreement between Ukraine and the United Kingdom (2020) [9], the Ukraine–United Kingdom Digital Trade Agreement (2024) [13], the Agreement on Security Cooperation [10], the One Hundred Year Partnership Agreement [12], and several other bilateral agreements. Nevertheless, the rapidly changing international environment, together with the risks and threats it generates, necessitates continuous monitoring and adjustment of the priorities governing cooperation and partnership between the two countries.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of contemporary geopolitical challenges on the development of the security and trade partnership between Ukraine and the United Kingdom through an analysis of bilateral trade dynamics, the transformation of security cooperation, and the identification of prospects for further deepening Ukraine–United Kingdom relations under conditions of global instability.

Main Discussion. In the context of the transformation of the international order, intensifying geopolitical competition, and the proliferation of hybrid threats, security cooperation among states has assumed increasing importance as an instrument for ensuring international stability, safeguarding state sovereignty, and coordinating collective responses to contemporary security challenges.

In the academic literature, security cooperation is generally understood as the process through which states, international organizations, and other actors in international relations coordinate their activities to prevent, deter, and neutralize threats to national, regional, and international security. Its primary objective is to combine national and collective efforts to maintain international stability, protect state sovereignty, and preserve international peace. Security cooperation operates across several interconnected levels. At the national level, it focuses on ensuring domestic stability, protecting national interests, and strengthening a state's defense capabilities. At the regional level, it is implemented through regional integration frameworks, regional organizations, and security

alliances. At the global level, security cooperation is carried out through international organizations and multilateral mechanisms dedicated to maintaining international peace and security. Accordingly, security cooperation represents a complex, multi-level system of coordinated interaction among states and other actors in international relations aimed at ensuring international stability, protecting national interests, and maintaining international peace. The increasingly complex nature of contemporary threats requires the application of an interdisciplinary analytical approach and the development of a comprehensive, multi-level response system.

Under current conditions, the security dimension of international trade cooperation has expanded considerably. Alongside traditional issues of foreign trade, increasing attention is devoted to energy, food, technological, environmental, and cybersecurity. This development reflects the emergence of a comprehensive approach to safeguarding national interests, whereby economic and security dimensions are viewed as mutually reinforcing components of a unified framework of international cooperation.

International trade cooperation and interstate security cooperation constitute closely interconnected components of the contemporary international system, continuously influencing and reinforcing one another (Fig. 1).

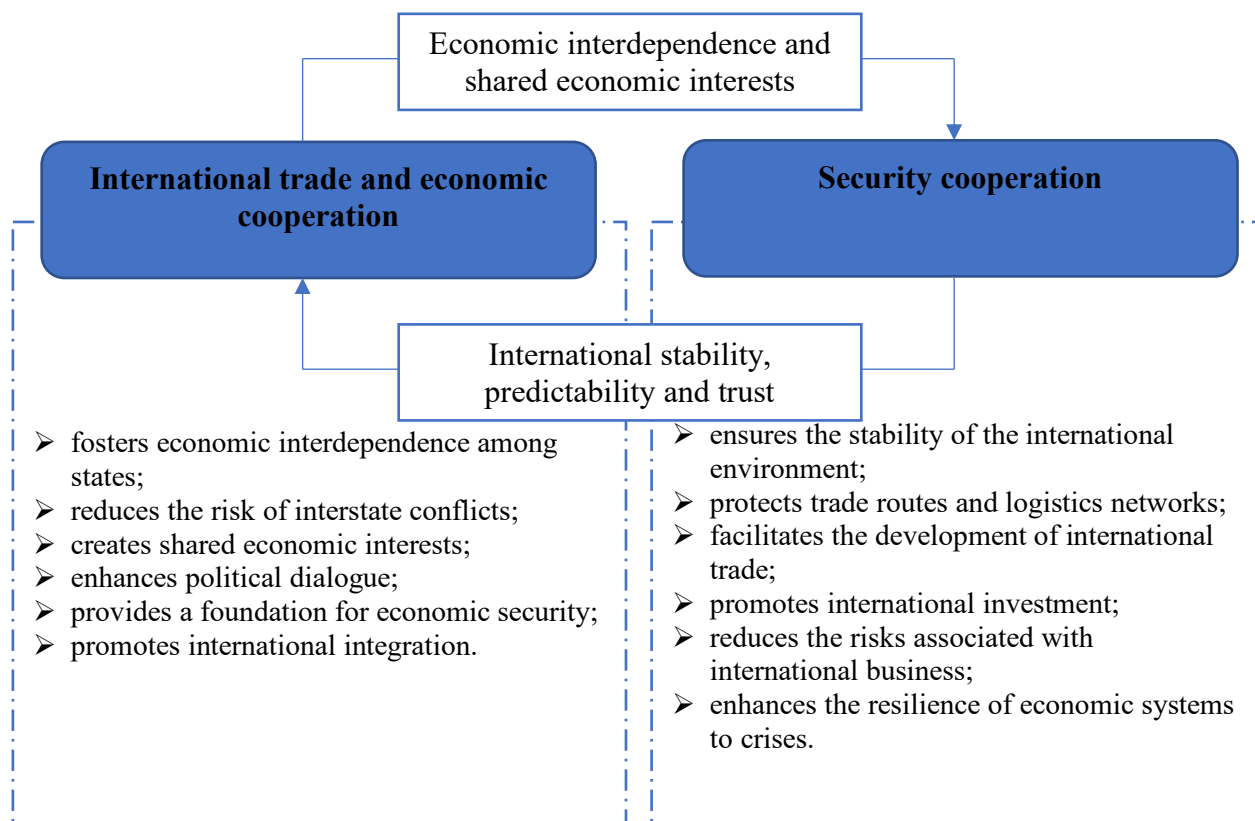


Fig. 1. Main areas of interaction between international trade, economic cooperation, and security cooperation

Source: Prepared by the authors

International trade cooperation provides the economic foundation for the development of security cooperation. The expansion of trade, investment, production, and technological linkages between states fosters a high degree of economic interdependence, thereby increasing the costs of potential conflicts for all parties involved. Consequently, states become more committed to

maintaining international stability, resolving disputes through peaceful means, and promoting multilateral cooperation.

The close relationship between economic cooperation and security is particularly evident in the activities of international organizations and regional integration frameworks. Most contemporary regional and global institutions integrate economic and security functions by coordinating state policies in such areas as trade, investment, energy, countering transnational threats, and crisis management. This integrated approach contributes to the development of a shared security environment while enhancing the economic resilience of participants in international relations.

Moreover, international trade cooperation serves as an important instrument for safeguarding states' economic security. The diversification of external economic relations, expansion into new export markets, attraction of foreign investment, and participation in global value chains increase the resilience of national economies to external shocks. Conversely, excessive dependence on individual markets, suppliers of strategic resources, or providers of critical technologies may create vulnerabilities and generate additional security risks.

Security cooperation and international trade are mutually reinforcing dimensions of contemporary international relations. While economic interdependence contributes to strengthening international security, effective security cooperation creates the conditions necessary for the expansion of international trade, investment, and sustainable economic growth. In today's international system, the achievement of sustainable development increasingly depends on states' ability to align their economic interests with the objectives of national, regional, and global security.

Against the backdrop of the transformation of the global economic environment, escalating geopolitical challenges, and the need to identify new opportunities for strengthening Ukraine–United Kingdom economic relations, analyzing the dynamics and structure of bilateral foreign trade has become particularly important.

An examination of Ukraine's merchandise trade by geographical distribution, with particular emphasis on trade with the United Kingdom (Table 1), reveals substantial changes resulting from the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the full-scale war, and the subsequent adaptation of the Ukrainian economy to new economic realities. In 2024, Ukraine's total merchandise exports amounted to USD 41,7 billion, representing a 15,16% decline compared with 2020 but an 11,04% increase relative to 2023. Meanwhile, merchandise imports followed a steady upward trend, reaching USD 70,8 billion in 2024, which was 30,25% higher than the level recorded in 2020.

Table 1. Ukraine's Merchandise Trade Volumes, 2020–2024 (USD million)

Merchandise trade	Years					Growth rate, %	
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2024/2020	2024/2023
Total exports (USD million)	49191,82	68072,33	44135,6	37584,29	41733,28	84,84	111,04
of which: exports to the UK	666,85	1083,24	438,3	416,4	611,21	91,66	146,79
Total imports (USD million)	54336,14	72843,13	55295,75	63763,48	70770,58	130,25	110,99
of which: imports from the UK	734,24	1115,22	762,87	1092,21	1270,06	172,98	116,28

Source: Compiled and calculated by the authors based on data from [2]

An analysis of the technological composition of Ukraine's merchandise exports to the United Kingdom in 2020 and 2024 reveals significant changes in the commodity specialization of bilateral trade (Fig. 2). The most notable trend was the substantial increase in the share of primary products in Ukraine's export structure, rising from 37,11% in 2020 to 52,66% in 2024, an increase of 15,55 percentage points. This trend indicates a growing resource-oriented specialization of Ukrainian exports and an increasing dependence on the supply of low-value-added products with a limited degree of processing.

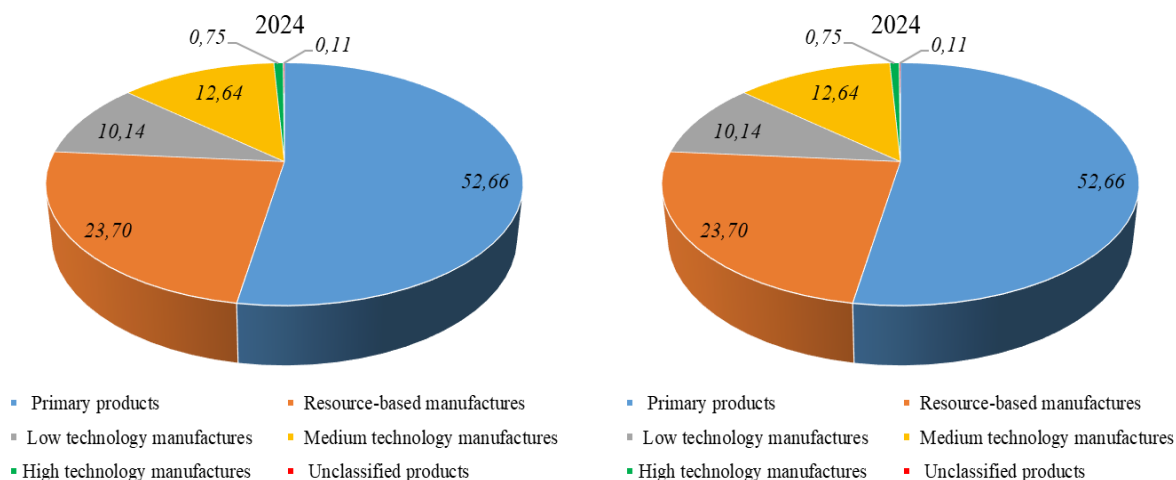


Fig. 2. Structure of Ukraine's Merchandise Exports to the United Kingdom by Technological Category, 2020 and 2024 (%)

Source: Prepared by the authors based on [11]

The share of resource-based manufactures remained relatively stable, increasing by only 0,71 percentage points, from 22,99% in 2020 to 23,70% in 2024. Low-technology manufacturers also slightly strengthened their position, with their share rising from 9,75% to 10,14%. Together, primary products and resource-based manufactures accounted for more than three-quarters of Ukraine's exports to the United Kingdom in 2024, indicating the predominance of products with relatively low value added.

In contrast, the most substantial decline occurred in the category of medium-technology manufactures, whose share decreased from 28,98% in 2020 to 12,64% in 2024. This trend reflects the weakening competitiveness of Ukrainian engineering and manufacturing products in the UK market, as well as the adverse impact of the war on the country's industrial capacity.

The share of high-technology manufactures remained extremely low, declining slightly from 0,81% to 0,75%, indicating the limited presence of Ukrainian high-technology products in exports to the United Kingdom. The share of other products also decreased, from 0,32% to 0,11%.

Overall, the structure of Ukraine's exports to the United Kingdom has shifted towards a greater concentration of primary products and resource-based manufactures, accompanied by a decline in the share of medium- and high-technology goods. This trend demonstrates an increasing resource orientation of Ukrainian exports and underscores the need to expand high-value-added production in order to enhance Ukraine's competitiveness in the UK market.

Significant changes also occurred in the technological composition of merchandise imports from the United Kingdom to Ukraine between 2020 and 2024, reflecting shifts in the commodity specialization of import flows (Fig. 3). Throughout the period under review, medium-technology manufactures accounted for the largest share of imports. Their share increased by 1,73 percentage

points in 2024 compared with 2020, indicating Ukraine's continued reliance on imports of machinery, transport equipment, and other medium-technology products.

At the same time, the share of primary products declined markedly by 11,36 percentage points, suggesting a reduced demand for imported raw materials and a gradual reorientation of the import structure towards products with a higher degree of processing. Meanwhile, the share of resource-based manufactures increased by 5,96 percentage points, while that of low-technology manufactures rose by 2,49 percentage points, reflecting the growing importance of selected categories of manufactured goods in bilateral trade.

A further positive trend is the increase in the share of high-technology manufactures by 1,13 percentage points, indicating the growing importance of imports of knowledge-intensive products, particularly pharmaceuticals, electronic equipment, and specialized machinery. The share of other products remained virtually unchanged, increasing only marginally from 2,71% to 2,77%.

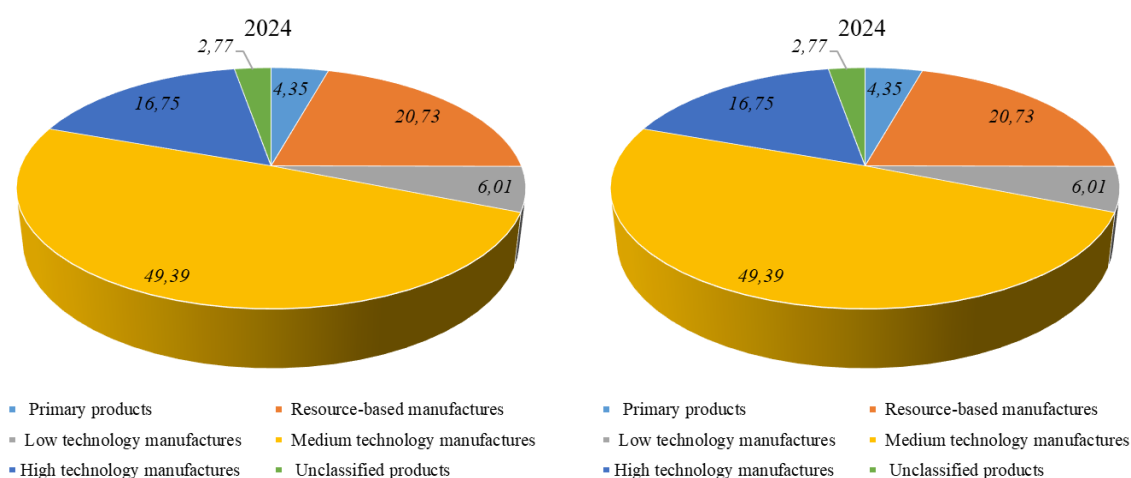


Fig. 3. Technological Structure of Ukraine's Merchandise Imports from the United Kingdom, 2020 and 2024 (%)

Source: Prepared by the authors based on [11]

Overall, the structure of imports from the United Kingdom is characterized by the predominance of medium- and high-technology manufactures, confirming the technology-intensive nature of British exports to Ukraine and the growing role of high-value-added products in bilateral trade.

An analysis of the dynamics of the United Kingdom's merchandise exports to Ukraine during 2020–2024 indicates an overall upward trend in bilateral trade despite a significant decline in export volumes in 2022, caused by the full-scale war and disruptions to logistics and supply chains (Fig. 4). By 2024, the value of the United Kingdom's merchandise exports to Ukraine had increased by 90,9% compared with 2020.

Throughout the period under review, medium-technology manufactures constituted the largest component of the United Kingdom's exports to Ukraine. Their export value increased by 88,4%, highlighting the significant role of machinery, chemical products, and other manufactured goods in Ukraine–United Kingdom trade. High-technology manufactures also accounted for a substantial share of British exports. Following a decline in 2022–2023, exports in this category almost returned to their 2020 level, reaching USD 138,5 million in 2024.

The highest growth rate was recorded in the category of other products, the export value of which increased by USD 162,5 million. This growth reflects changes in the composition of trade flows and an expansion in exports of certain specialized product groups. A notable increase was

also observed in low-technology manufactures, whose exports grew 2.4-fold, from USD 21,6 million to USD 52,5 million. Positive growth was likewise recorded for primary products and resource-based manufactures, with export values increasing by 75,5% and 48,0%, respectively.

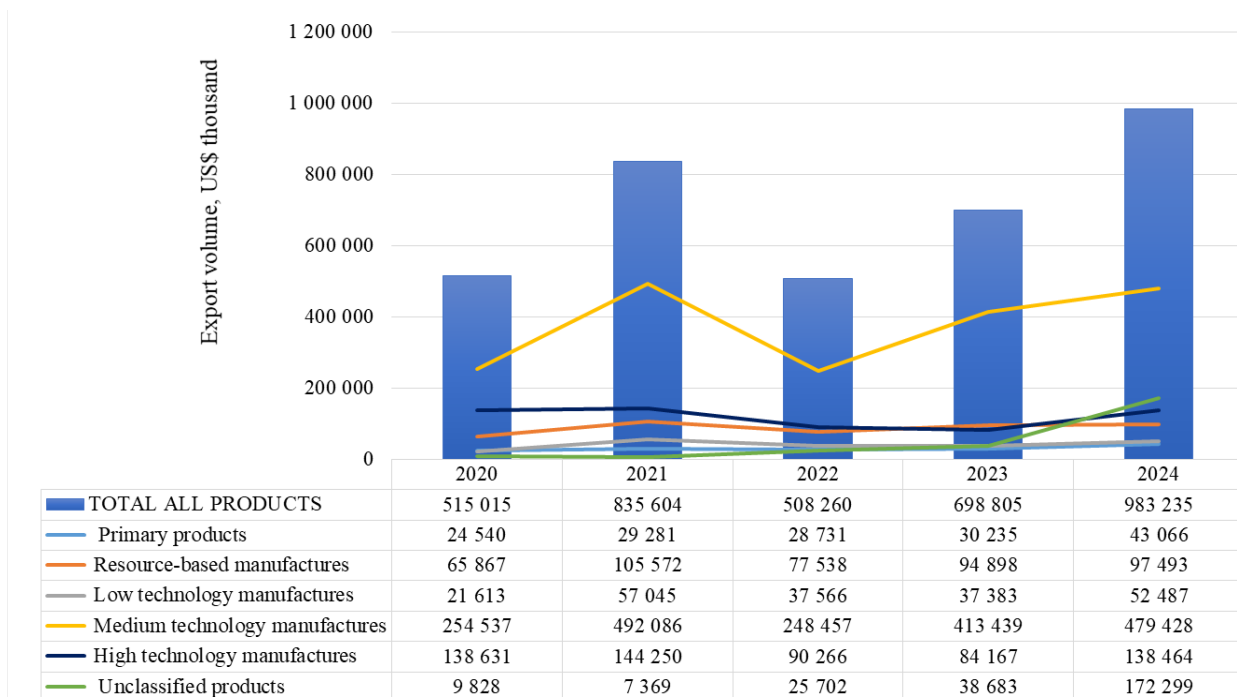


Fig. 4. Dynamics of the United Kingdom's Merchandise Exports to Ukraine, 2020–2024 (thousand USD)

Source: Prepared by the authors based on [11]

Overall, the United Kingdom's exports to Ukraine are characterized by the predominance of medium-technology manufactures and a gradual increase in the supply of high-value-added products. The recovery and substantial growth in export volumes during 2023–2024 indicate that bilateral trade relations have adapted to the new economic environment and reflect the strengthening of economic cooperation between Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

An analysis of the dynamics of the United Kingdom's merchandise imports from Ukraine during 2020–2024 reveals considerable fluctuations in bilateral trade volumes under the influence of economic and geopolitical factors (Fig. 5).

Following a significant increase in 2021, when the total value of imports from Ukraine reached USD 1,12 billion, import volumes declined in 2022–2023 as a consequence of the full-scale war and the associated disruptions to logistics and production. However, bilateral trade partially recovered in 2024, with total imports increasing to USD 930,7 million, representing a 33,2% increase compared with 2020.

Primary products constituted the largest component of Ukraine's exports to the United Kingdom throughout the period under review. Their export value increased by 43,3%, indicating the continued resource-oriented nature of Ukrainian exports. Resource-based manufactures also accounted for a substantial share of exports, with their value increasing by 32,3%.

Positive trends were also observed in low-technology and medium-technology manufactures, whose export values in 2024 exceeded their 2020 levels by 37,8% and 3,1%, respectively. The most rapid growth, however, was recorded in high-technology manufactures, with exports increasing from USD 6,1 million to USD 32,6 million, representing more than a fivefold increase. Although

high-technology products still account for a relatively small share of Ukraine's exports to the United Kingdom, this trend indicates a gradual expansion of Ukrainian high-value-added products in the British market.

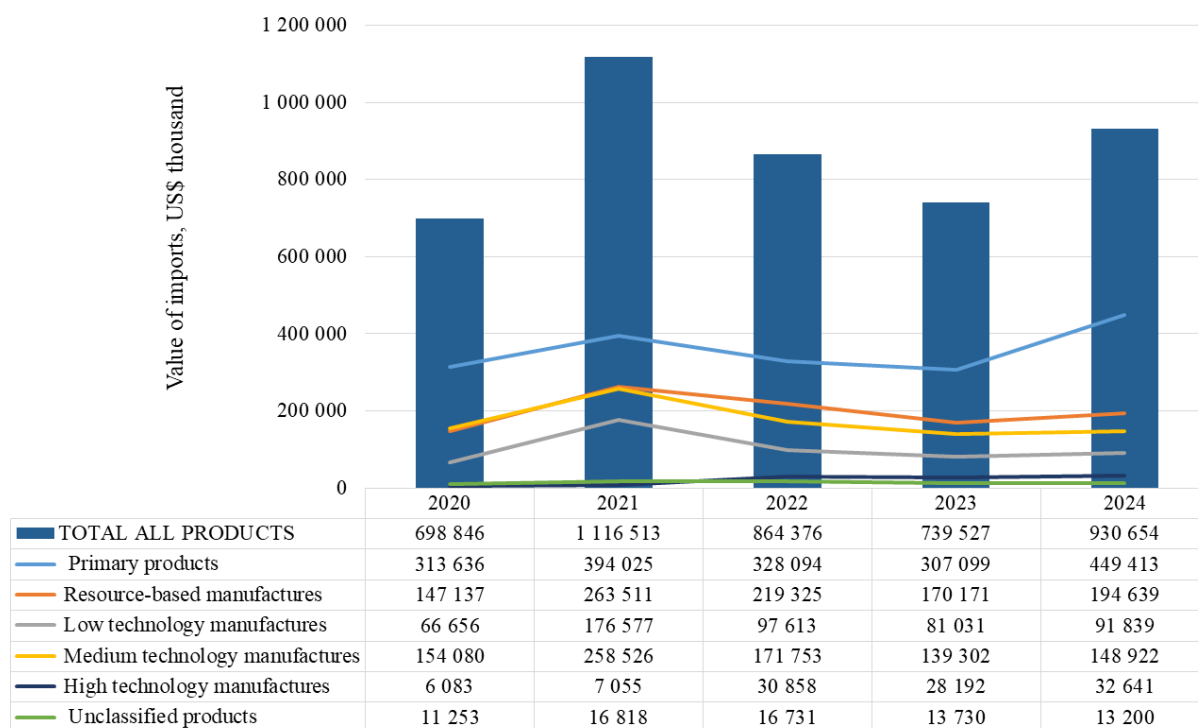


Fig. 5. Dynamics of the United Kingdom's Merchandise Imports from Ukraine, 2020–2024 (thousand USD)

Source: Prepared by the authors based on [11]

Overall, the United Kingdom's imports from Ukraine continue to be dominated by primary products and resource-based manufactures, confirming the resource-oriented specialization of Ukrainian exports. At the same time, the rapid growth in exports of high-technology products and the recovery of trade volumes in 2024 demonstrate the potential for further export diversification and the strengthening of bilateral trade relations.

Beyond trade cooperation, the United Kingdom occupies a distinctive position among Ukraine's international partners as one of the key actors in the contemporary geopolitical landscape. Its commitment to supporting Ukraine extends well beyond the framework of bilateral cooperation. British foreign policy is aimed at strengthening European security, deterring Russian aggression, and preserving the stability of the international order. Consequently, support for Ukraine is regarded by the United Kingdom as an essential component of safeguarding its own strategic interests and maintaining security across the European continent.

The Russia–Ukraine war has underscored the importance of collective security and reaffirmed the central role of NATO in deterring threats to peace in Europe. Accordingly, the British government has consistently supported the strengthening of Ukraine's defense capabilities, viewing such assistance not only as support for a strategic partner but also as a means of protecting its own national interests and contributing to the stability of the European security architecture [4].

For the United Kingdom, Ukraine effectively constitutes the first line of defense of the European security space. This has become one of the principal strategic factors shaping British security policy and reinforcing the country's role in the contemporary geopolitical environment. The United

Kingdom has consistently upheld the principle that the forcible acquisition of the territory of sovereign states is unacceptable, particularly when carried out by nuclear-armed states, as such actions pose a direct threat to the international security order.

At the present stage, the United Kingdom is one of Ukraine's leading military and political partners. By providing comprehensive support to Ukraine, the United Kingdom is simultaneously gaining valuable practical experience in the conduct of modern warfare and in countering one of the world's largest armed forces. The experience of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in employing advanced technologies, unmanned systems, and innovative approaches to military operations is of considerable interest to the British defense sector.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom has adopted one of the most consistent and principled positions among Ukraine's international partners. Unlike some states that seek to maintain a balanced approach in their relations with both Ukraine and Russia, the British government has unequivocally supported Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inherent right to self-defense. This position reflects both the United Kingdom's commitment to the principles of international law and its recognition of the strategic importance of deterring Russian aggression for European security.

Military assistance provided by the United Kingdom and other Western partners is of particular importance to Ukraine. The supply of modern military equipment, weapons, ammunition, and air defense systems plays a crucial role in sustaining Ukraine's defense capabilities and creating the conditions necessary for the liberation of temporarily occupied territories. Despite possessing its own defense-industrial capacity, Ukraine's ability to sustain its defense effort remains largely dependent on external assistance, particularly in the context of a prolonged confrontation with a state possessing substantially greater military and resource capabilities [8].

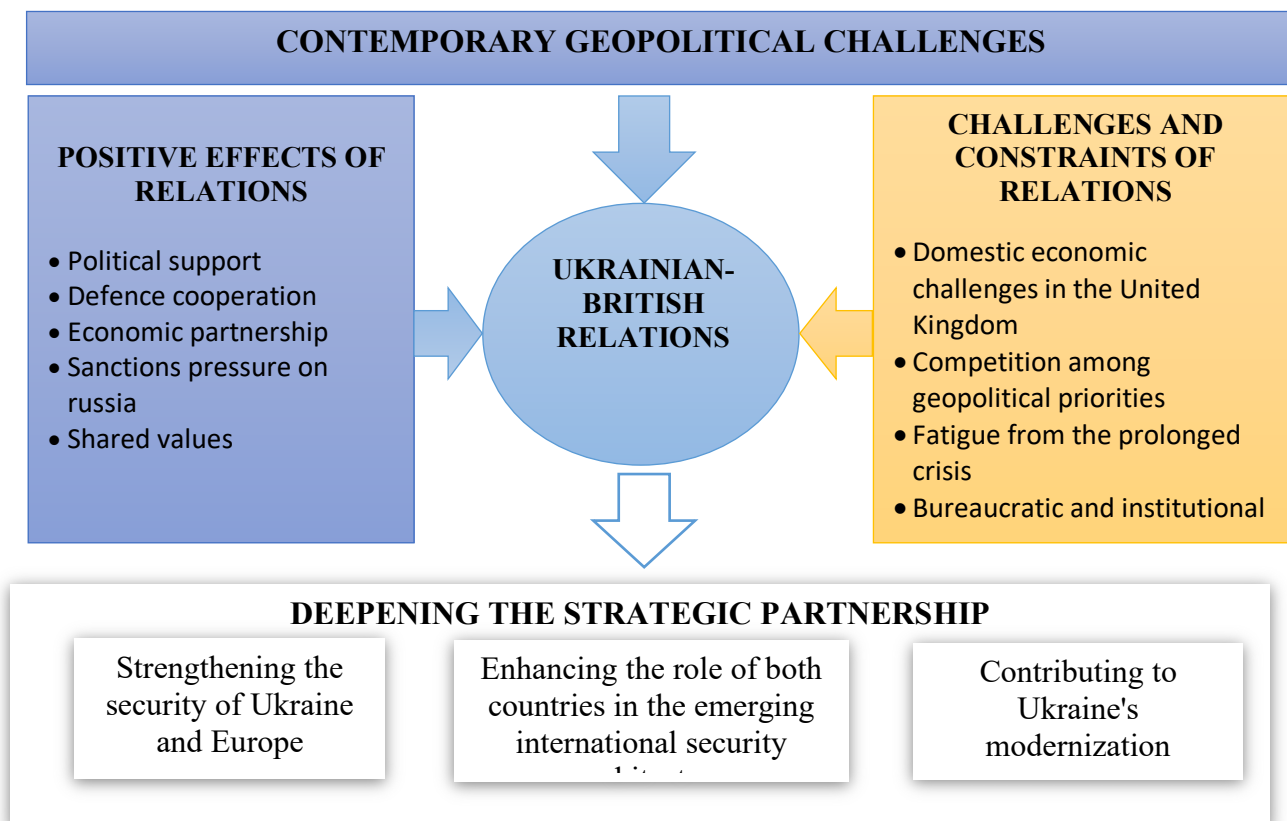


Fig. 6. The Impact of Geopolitical Challenges on Ukraine – United Kingdom Relations

Source: Prepared by the authors

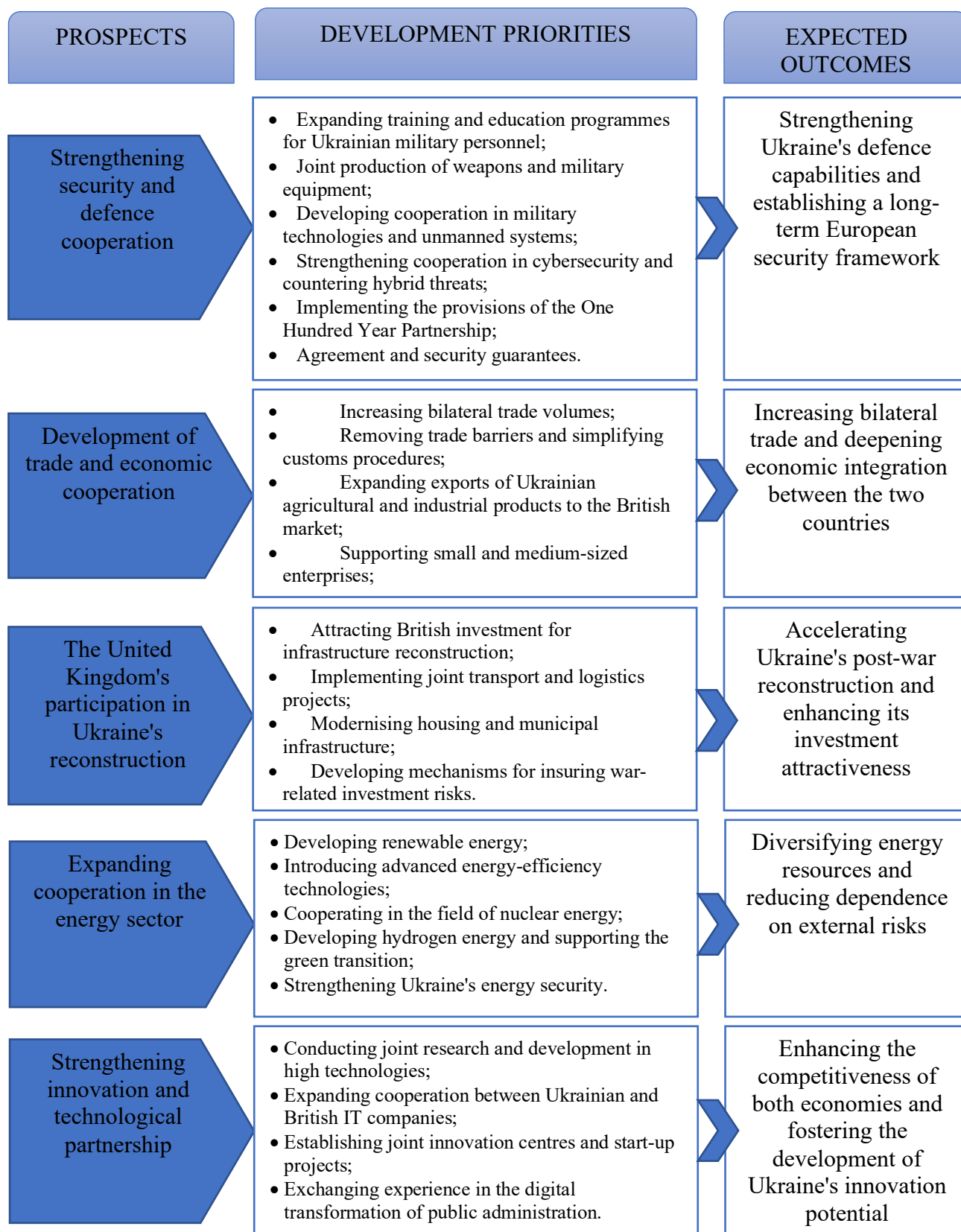


Fig. 7. Prospects for the development of trade partnership and security cooperation between Ukraine and the United Kingdom

Source: Prepared by the authors based on [1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8]

Contemporary geopolitical challenges have fundamentally reshaped the nature of Ukraine–United Kingdom relations. Bilateral cooperation has become more substantive, pragmatic, and increasingly oriented towards long-term security cooperation rather than diplomatic support alone. Whereas relations between Ukraine and the United Kingdom had previously developed primarily within the political, economic, and reform agendas, the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion transformed the partnership into one of strategic importance.

Russia's war against Ukraine has become the principal factor bringing the positions of the two countries into closer alignment. For the United Kingdom, Ukraine is no longer viewed solely through the prism of Eastern European policy but as a central element of the broader European security framework. British policymakers recognize that Ukraine's resilience directly affects Europe's capacity to deter further Russian aggression. Consequently, the United Kingdom's support for Ukraine should be understood not as a temporary political response but as a long-term strategic commitment.

Geopolitical developments have also significantly affected the economic dimension of Ukraine–United Kingdom cooperation. The war has heightened the importance of issues related to energy security, logistics, the restoration of critical infrastructure, and Ukraine's future reconstruction. As a result, British engagement has increasingly combined both security and economic objectives. By actively supporting Ukraine, the United Kingdom has also reinforced its international leadership role and strengthened its capacity to shape the future European security architecture.

In summary, contemporary geopolitical challenges have substantially deepened Ukraine–United Kingdom relations, transforming them into a strategic partnership of growing importance for both countries. For Ukraine, the partnership is centered on defense cooperation, diplomatic support, economic recovery, and post-war reconstruction. For the United Kingdom, cooperation with Ukraine represents an important instrument for deterring Russian aggression, strengthening European security, upholding the rules-based international order, and enhancing its own geopolitical influence.

At the present stage, the fundamental principles and priorities of Ukraine–United Kingdom cooperation are enshrined in the One Hundred Year Partnership Agreement, which establishes a comprehensive framework for bilateral cooperation across a wide range of areas. At the same time, considering the current priorities of both countries and the evolving international security environment, it is appropriate to identify the most promising directions for the further development of bilateral trade partnership and security cooperation, as presented in Fig. 7.

The comprehensive implementation of these priorities will contribute not only to strengthening Ukraine's economic resilience and defense capabilities but also to establishing a sustainable long-term model of strategic partnership between the two countries. Moreover, it will create the political, economic, and security conditions necessary to accelerate Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration and its integration into the European and transatlantic security architecture. Accordingly, the proposed priorities are fully aligned with the strategic interests of both states, the realities of the contemporary geopolitical environment, and the objectives set out in the One Hundred Year Partnership Agreement.

Conclusions. Contemporary geopolitical challenges have significantly influenced both the nature and the dynamics of the Ukraine–United Kingdom partnership, facilitating its transformation from predominantly trade-oriented cooperation into a comprehensive strategic partnership with a strong security dimension. Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has become the principal catalyst for deepening bilateral relations and strengthening the role of the United Kingdom as one of Ukraine's leading security partners.

Security cooperation constitutes an essential prerequisite for the sustainable functioning of international economic relations. The protection of international transport corridors, energy infrastructure, logistics and supply chains, financial systems, and digital networks is critical to ensuring the continuity of international trade and investment flows. The absence of an adequate

level of security increases economic risks, reduces the volume of international trade, and undermines the investment climate. Given the convergence of strategic interests and the high level of political commitment demonstrated by both countries, Ukraine–United Kingdom relations possess considerable potential for the development of a sustainable long-term model of strategic cooperation.

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ГЕОПОЛІТИЧНІ ВИКЛИКИ ТА ЇХ ВПЛИВ НА РОЗВИТОК БЕЗПЕКОВОГО І ТОРГОВЕЛЬНОГО ПАРТНЕРСТВА УКРАЇНИ ТА ВЕЛИКОЇ БРИТАНІЇ

Суттєві трансформації системи міжнародних відносин, що відбуваються під впливом глобальних геополітичних змін, зростання безпекових ризиків та посилення взаємозалежності між економічною і безпековою складовими міждержавного співробітництва актуалізують дослідження взаємовідносин між країнами. В умовах повномасштабної російської агресії проти

України особливого значення набуває розвиток стратегічного партнерства між Україною та Великою Британією, яка стала одним із ключових політичних, військових та економічних партнерів України.

Обґрунтовано взаємозв'язок між торговельно-економічним співробітництвом держав і їхньою безпековою взаємодією як взаємодоповнюючими складовими міжнародних відносин.

Проведено аналіз сучасного стану зовнішньої торгівлі між Україною та Великою Британією. Результати свідчать про збереження ресурсної спеціалізації України у двосторонній торгівлі та технологічну спрямованість британського експорту. Разом із тим зростання частки високотехнологічної продукції в окремих товарних групах і розширення торговельного співробітництва свідчать про наявність потенціалу для диверсифікації структури торгівлі, збільшення частки продукції з високою доданою вартістю та подальшого поглиблення українсько-британського економічного партнерства.

Визначено ключові геополітичні виклики, які впливають на українсько-британські відносини серед яких ключовими є російська військова агресія проти України, загроза європейській та міжнародній безпеці, поширення гібридних загроз, енергетична нестабільність, трансформація міжнародного порядку, виклики післявоєнного відновлення України. Обґрунтовано їхній вплив на формування пріоритетів співпраці в економічній і безпековій сферах.

Обґрунтовано перспективи подальшого розвитку взаємодії між Україною та Великою Британією, серед яких поглиблення безпекового та оборонного партнерства, розвиток торговельно-економічного співробітництва, участь Великої Британії у післявоєнній відбудові України, розширення співпраці в енергетичній сфері та поглиблення інноваційно-технологічного партнерства. Запропоновано напрями реалізації визначених перспектив та очікувані результати від їх впровадження.

***Ключові слова:** безпека, торгівля, міжнародні відносини, взаємодія, виклики, геополітика, перспективи розвитку.*

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