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DOI: https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-717-8-10

CURRENT STATE AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS OF UKRAINE'S INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Foreign trade is an important factor in ensuring the stability and functioning of the national economy, especially under conditions of global instability, geopolitical transformations, and armed conflicts. The full-scale war launched by Russia against Ukraine has led to a significant transformation of the state's foreign trade activities, which has been manifested in changes in the commodity structure of exports and imports, the geography of trade flows, and the composition of major trading partners. At the same time, military challenges have become a catalyst for the reorientation of Ukraine's foreign economic relations, primarily export relations, towards the markets of the European Union countries. Such a transformation has become an important element in the adaptation of the national economy to new operating conditions and the formation of more stable foreign trade relations.

The structure of Ukraine's imports has also undergone significant changes under the influence of military challenges, primarily due to the growing needs of the defense sector and the restoration and maintenance of energy infrastructure. At the same time, exports remain one of the key factors in maintaining economic activity and ensuring economic growth in Ukraine, especially under conditions of limited domestic demand. The expansion of the presence of Ukrainian producers in international markets creates additional opportunities for increasing export potential and accelerating economic recovery. In this context, the identification of

promising opportunities, priorities, and strategic directions for the development of Ukraine's foreign trade, taking into account the specifics of the current war and future post-war periods, becomes particularly relevant [1].

Table 1 presents the main indicators of Ukraine's international trade for the period from 2020 to 6 months of 2026, in million US dollars. They can be used to identify certain trends occurring in Ukrainian foreign trade during the analyzed period.

Table 1

Main indicators of international trade of Ukraine for the period 2020 – 6 months of 2026

Year	Export	Import	Trade Balance	Export-import coverage ratio
2020	49219,9	54 091, 3	-4 878,4	0,91
2021	68089,3	72816,8	-4 727,5	0,94
2022	44148,8	55 273,5	-11 124,7	0,80
2023	36186,2	63562,4	-27 376,2	0.57
2024	41733,1	70751,2	-29 018,1	0,59
2025	41580,0	84800,0	-43220,0	0,49
6 months of 2026	21020,0	49220,0	-28200,0	0,43

Source: calculated by the author based on data [2]

During the 12 months of 2025, the volume of Ukrainian exports decreased compared to 2024, both at the overall level of supplies and in terms of their commodity structure. In exports, the shares of grain crops (from 22,6% to 18,0%), rapeseed oil (2,2%), sunflower oil (from 8,1% to 5,9%), ores (from 6,9% to 5,9%), sugar (from 1,6% to 1,2%), as well as nuts (0,7%) decreased.

Instead, exports of soybean oil increased (from 13,8% to 15,8%), ferrous metals (from 7,4% to 8,3%), wood and wood products (from 3,4% to 4,2%), and electrical machinery (from 5,4% to 6,0%).

At the same time, imports of goods into Ukraine showed growth. According to the results of 2025, their volume reached 84,74 billion USD, which is 14,09 billion USD more than in the previous year (70,65 billion USD). In percentage terms, imports increased by 19,9% [3].

In the first half of 2026, the volume of Ukrainian exports of goods increased by 5,1%, but its dynamics were characterized by unevenness across individual commodity groups. The positive impact on export

indicators was provided by the growth in the volume of supplies of corn, vegetable oils, and rapeseed. At the same time, the reduction in exports of iron ore, soybeans, electrical and metallurgical products restrained the overall dynamics of exports.

Unlike exports, imports of goods showed significantly higher growth rates, which led to a further increase in the negative balance of foreign trade in goods. This trend indicates the persistence of imbalances in Ukraine's foreign trade operations and highlights the need to find ways to strengthen the country's export potential, expand the commodity structure of exports, and increase the competitiveness of Ukrainian products in international markets.

According to the results of the first half of 2026, the volume of exports of goods from Ukraine amounted to 21,02 billion USD, which is 5,1% more than in the same period in 2025, when its volume was 20.0 billion USD. At the same time, imports of goods showed significantly higher growth rates: in January-June 2026, their volume reached 49,22 billion USD compared to 38,27 billion USD in the first half of 2025, an increase of 28,6%. Thus, the outstripping growth of imports compared to exports contributed to the further expansion of the negative balance of foreign trade in goods of Ukraine.

Thus, the outpacing growth rate of imports compared to exports became a key factor in the deepening of Ukraine's negative foreign trade balance.

The negative dynamics of the foreign trade balance was also reflected in the change in the import-export coverage ratio. In particular, its value decreased from 0,52 in the first half of 2025 to 0,43 for the same period in 2026, which indicates an increase in the dependence of Ukraine's foreign trade on import supplies and insufficient coverage of imports by export revenues [4].

At the current stage, the prospects for Ukraine's international business are quite significant, but at the same time, they depend on the security situation, the pace of European integration, reforms, and the ability of businesses to adapt to global changes.

Therefore, the main prospects for Ukraine's international business may be as follows:

1. Deepening integration with the European market. Not only the export of goods, but also the integration of Ukrainian enterprises into European production chains, the development of cooperation, attracting investment, and the entry of Ukrainian companies into new market segments are promising.

2. Expanding export activities and diversifying markets. An important task is the gradual transition from the predominance of raw material exports to exports of products with higher added value (food industry, mechanical engineering, IT and digital services, pharmaceuticals, defense technologies, processing industry, and creative industries).

3. Participation of international business in the reconstruction of Ukraine. The reconstruction of Ukraine generates large-scale demand for goods, services, technologies, and capital. According to the RDNA5, Ukraine's needs for recovery and reconstruction for the next decade are estimated at almost 588 billion USD. The greatest needs fall on transport, energy, housing, trade and industry, and agriculture.

4. Attracting foreign investment and international private capital. In 2026, international financial organizations are strengthening mechanisms for guaranteeing and insuring military and political risks, which should contribute to the mobilization of private capital. In particular, the new mechanisms of the World Bank provide for the expansion of political insurance for investments in Ukraine.

5. Development of energy and "green" business. Renewable energy, decentralized generation, energy storage, energy efficiency, and modernization of energy infrastructure are particularly promising.

6. Development of digital and technological international business. Ukraine has the potential to strengthen its position in the global market for IT services, digital products, technological solutions, cybersecurity, fintech, and defense technologies.

Therefore, international business can become one of the key foundations of Ukraine's economic recovery and long-term growth. The strategic priority should be not only to increase the volume of foreign trade, but also to ensure the structural transformation of Ukraine's international economic activity based on innovation, digitalization, attracting investment, the production of products with high added value, and deeper integration into European and global economic processes.

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