ТАРИФНІ РЕЖИМИ У МІЖНАРОДНІЙ ТОРГІВЛІ: ГЕНЕЗИС І СТРУКТУРА

TARIFF REGIMES IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE: GENESIS AND STRUCTURE

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Abstract. Tariff regimes are a key instrument of international trade, influencing the economic development of countries, global supply chains, and geopolitical stability. This article analyzes the genesis of tariffs, starting from the mercantilist era of the 17th-18th centuries, with a focus on the Napoleonic Wars (the role of Britain and France through the Continental Blockade and Corn Laws) and the period leading up to World War I (French Méline tariffs, German Bismarck reforms), where protectionism is seen as a potential catalyst for conflict, reducing trade by 10-50% and intensifying economic nationalism. The structure of tariff regimes is classified by type (ad valorem, specific, combined), multi-level regimes (customs unions, preferential agreements) and institutions (the role of the WTO, GATT, regional blocs such as the EU or USMCA), using empirical data from the WTO and IMF for 2025, which indicate a 1.5-2% increase in rates due to trade wars.

Key words: tariff regimes, international trade, genesis of tariffs, Napoleonic Wars, Continental Blockade, Corn Laws, protectionism, World War I, Méline tariffs, Bismarck reforms, mercantilism, WTO, GATT, trade wars, US-China, Brexit, geopolitics, EU integration, Ukraine, artificial intelligence, cyclicality of protectionism.

Анотація. Тарифні режими є ключовим інструментом міжнародної торгівлі, що впливають на економічний розвиток країн, глобальні ланцюги постачань і геополітичну стабільність. У статті аналізується генезис тарифів, починаючи від меркантилістської епохи XVII-XVIII століть, з акцентом на Наполеонівські війни (роль Британії та Франції через Континентальну блокаду та Хлібні закони (Corn Laws) та період напередодні Першої світової війни (французькі тарифи Меліна (Méline tariffs), німецькі реформи Бісмарка), де протекціонізм розглядається як потенційний каталізатор конфліктів, що знижував торгівлю на 10-50% і посилював економічний націоналізм. Структура тарифних режимів класифікується за типами (адвалорні, специфічні, комбіновані), багаторівневими режимами

(митні союзи, преференційні угоди) та інституціями (роль COT, ΓATT , регіональних блоків як EC чи ECMKA (USMCA) з використанням емпіричних даних ECT та ECMKA (USMCA) з рік, які свідчать про зростання ставок на ECMKA (через торговельні війни.

Ключові слова: тарифні режими, міжнародна торгівля, генезис тарифів, Наполеонівські війни, Континентальна блокада, Хлібні закони (Corn Laws), протекціонізм, Перша світова війна, тарифи Меліна (Méline tariffs), реформи Бісмарка, меркантилізм, СОТ, ГАТТ, торговельні війни, США-Китай, брекзит (Brexit), геополітика, ЄС-інтеграція, Україна, штучний інтелект, циклічність протекціонізму.

Introduction. In today's globalized world, tariff regimes remain a key instrument of international trade policy, affecting not only global flows of goods and services, but also the geopolitical stability of states. The relevance of the topic is due to the rapid growth of protectionism in 2025, caused by the escalation of trade conflicts, such as the trade wars between the US and China, in which D. Trump announced base tariffs of 15-50%, which led to negotiations in Stockholm and a significant reduction in exports of rare earth metals from China. (Trade Compliance Resource Hub, 2025) According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), this will cause global trade growth to slow to 1.7% in 2025 compared to previous forecasts, and global GDP will decline to 2.8% due to new US tariffs, which are keeping uncertainty high. (IMF, 2025) In addition, the UK's exit from the EU (Brexit) continues to reinforce tariff barriers, affecting British firms. According to estimates by the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), 17% of companies expect prices to fall due to US tariff announcements, while UK GDP grew by only 0.7% in the first quarter of 2025, followed by a 0.1% contraction in May. (Authors' note, 2025) The World Trade Organization (WTO) in its World Trade Profiles 2025 notes an increase in average tariff rates of 1.5-2% in more than 170 countries, with an emphasis on agricultural and industrial products, highlighting the cyclical nature of protectionism, like historical patterns during the Napoleonic Wars or on the eve of World War I. (WTO, 2025)

Purpose of the article. The purpose of the article is to analyze the genesis and structure of the use of tariff regimes in international trade, examining their historical role as a potential catalyst for regional and global conflicts and their contemporary implications. In particular, the authors set out to examine historical aspects using the example of the Napoleonic Wars and the period leading up to World War I, from the perspective of the introduction of tariffs as a possible cause of the escalation of armed conflicts, to identify and describe the structure of tariff regimes, including classification, multilevel regimes and institutions, analyze contemporary challenges for the global economy, such as trade wars and geopolitical implications, and develop recommendations for Ukraine in the context of the country's integration into the European Union (EU).

Literature review. Research into the application of tariff regimes in international trade has deep roots in economic history, in which scholars analyze their genesis: from mercantilism to modern multilateral trade agreements, as well as their structure as an instrument of protectionism or liberalization. In his academic work "The Worldwide Economic Impact of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars," K. O'Rourke analyzes Napoleon's Continental Blockade in detail as a protectionist tariff regime that blocked British imports and, as a result, caused European trade to decline by 40-50%, leading to a deterioration in relations between Britain and France. (O'Rourke, 2006) Also, R. Finlay and K. O'Rourke, in their work on trade wars, "Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium," reveal the genesis of tariffs from mercantilism, emphasizing them as a geopolitical tool that combined trade with wars, particularly in the context of the British Corn Laws as a response to French blockades. (Findlay & O'Rourke, 2009) D. Irwin, in his academic work "The Aftermath of Hamilton's 'Report on Manufactures'" examines the policy of protectionism on the eve of World War I, focusing on the French Méline tariffs of 1892 and Bismarck's German reforms (1879), which raised rates by 15-20% and strengthened economic nationalism (Irwin, 2004). P. Bayroch and S. Burke, in the section "European Trade Policy, 1815-1914" of their fundamental work "The Cambridge Economic History of Europe," provide empirical data on the growth of tariffs in Europe after the Napoleonic Wars, where British tariffs remained lower (about 5-6%), while French and German tariffs reached 18-20%, contributing to pre-war tensions. (Bairoch,

1989) In his book The Pity of War, Neil Ferguson interprets tariffs as a factor of "economic imperialism" before World War I, where British protectionism in imperial preferences contrasted with continental protectionism, causing global alliances and conflicts. (Ferguson, 2000)

Regarding the structure of tariff regimes themselves, P. Krugman, M. Obstfeld, and M. Melitz in International Economics: Theory and Policy classify tariffs as ad valorem, specific, and combined, analyzing their impact on the trade balance and welfare. (Krugman, Obstfeld, & Melitz, 2022) J. Bhagwati, in Protectionism, views protectionist regimes as a "double-edged sword," where the structure includes the most-favored-nation principle and preferential agreements. (Bhagwati, 1989) B. Hochman and M. Kostetsky, in their study The Political Economy of the World Trading System, describe the institutional structure of the WTO, the evolution from GATT, and the role of regional blocs, such as the EU or NAFTA/USMCA, in the formation of multilevel regimes. (Hoekman & Kostecki, 2009)

Contemporary research on the regulation of trade regimes in international trade in the era of globalization draws certain parallels with historical examples of tariff application. For example, D. Rodrik in "The Globalization Paradox" analyzes the cyclical nature of protectionism, comparing tariffs of the Napoleonic era with modern trade wars between the US and China, where the structure of regimes evolves under the influence of geopolitics. (Rodrik, 2011) K. Blattman, M. Clemens, and J. Williamson in Who Protected and Why? Tariffs the World Around 1870-1938" empirically study global tariffs on the eve of World War I, showing how protectionism in 35 countries, including Britain, France, and Germany, increased due to political factors, compared to the corresponding statistical data on rates from the 1870s. (Blattman, Clemens, & Williamson, 2002) P. O'Brien, in The Contributions of Warfare with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, argues that the Napoleonic Wars stimulated the British Industrial Revolution through tariffs, redistributing resources. (O'Brien, 2011) In addition, O. Levkovich, in his dissertation "Liberals and Protectionism: Britain's International Trade Policy," analyzes the British free trade regime alongside French protectionism in the 19th century, focusing on the genesis of modern regimes. (Levkovych, 2022) S. Geshonke, in his work "How to solve the tariff-growth paradox?", studies German tariffs from 1880 to 1913, showing the paradox of growth through protectionism, with data on approximately 4 million observations. (Geschonke, 2024) Finally, A. Hirschman, in "National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade," considers tariffs as an instrument of power, with examples in the context of the beginning of World War I. (Hirschman, 1945)

Main results of research. The genesis of tariff regimes in international trade dates back to the mercantilism period of the 17th-18th centuries, when states used tariffs as a tool to accumulate gold, protect national markets, and strengthen economic power. Mercantilism, as an economic doctrine, envisaged active state intervention in trade through high import duties (often up to 40-50%) and export subsidies, which created the basis for protectionism. However, the role of tariffs as a potential catalyst for geopolitical conflicts became particularly noticeable in the 19th century, when economic barriers were combined with policies of imperialism and nationalism, turning them into instruments of economic warfare. As we mentioned earlier, scholars such as R. Finlay and K. O'Rourke point out that trade and war were intertwined, with tariffs acting as a "double-edged sword." (Findlay & O'Rourke, 2009)

The Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815), in our opinion, are a classic example of when tariff regimes became an instrument of economic blockade, leading to the aggravation of inter-state relations and even to full-scale armed conflicts. The Continental System, introduced by Napoleon through the Berlin Decree (1806) and the Milan Decree (1807), was essentially a protectionist tariff regime that prohibited trade between France and its allies and Britain on the territory of continental Europe. This system imposed high tariffs (up to 30-50%) on British goods such as textiles and grain in order to weaken the British economy and stimulate French industry. According to K. O'Rourke's estimates, the blockade led to a 40-50% decline in European trade, with particular damage to France, where imports fell by 60%, causing a shortage of resources and an increase in smuggling and the shadow economy. (O'Rourke, 2006) Scholars believe that this policy was not only a military strategy but also mercantilist protectionism aimed at developing French industry, but it provoked a response from Britain, thereby increasing geopolitical tensions. (Forrest & Hicks, 2022)

French tariffs, reinforced by the Trianon Decree (1810), added new duties on colonial goods such as sugar and coffee imported from Britain, with the aim of redirecting trade to French colonies. This, as statistics show, led to a 50-100% increase in prices in France and an economic crisis, but at the same time stimulated innovation in the textile industry. (O'Brien, 2011) Britain responded to French tariffs through the Orders in Council (Orders in Council, 1807), which blocked neutral trade with France, and the aforementioned "grain laws" of 1815, which imposed high tariffs on grain imports (up to 20-30%) to protect domestic farmers. J. Nye refutes the myth of Britain's "free trade," noting that its tariffs on wine and other alcoholic beverages, for example, were higher than France's for a century, reaching 30-40%, and served as a fiscal tool to finance the war. (Nye, 1991) Thus, it can be concluded that tariffs became a serious cause of wars, as Napoleon's economic nationalism (raising tariffs on British goods to 35%) led to a shortage of resources, rising inflation, and the formation of anti-French alliances, including the Sixth Coalition (1813-1814). (Todd, 2015) Ultimately, French tariffs not only protected the national economy, but also provoked conflicts in the geo-economic environment.

At the end of the 19th century, Europe experienced a "second wave of protectionism," where tariffs became a key factor in the economic tensions that contributed to World War I (1914-1918). After the Great Depression of 1873-1896, European states, including France, Germany, and Britain, raised tariffs to protect industry and agriculture. The French "Méline tariffs" of 1892, mentioned earlier, introduced rates of 18-20% on agricultural goods, protecting farmers from American and British imports but increasing tensions with neighbors. In addition, Bismarck's German tariffs of 1879 established a protectionist regime for industry with rates of 13-15% on grain and steel, which reduced global trade by 10-15% and stimulated "economic imperialism." (Blattman, Clemens, & Williamson, 2002) Britain, in turn, despite its free trade rhetoric after the repeal of the Corn Laws (1846), introduced imperial preferences, where duties on non-imperial goods reached 5-6%, contrasting with the continental 15-20%. (Pollard, 2001)

Scholars, including Ferguson, agree that tariffs could have caused an escalation in international relations, as protectionism strengthened alliances: the French and German regimes increased tensions with Britain, where trade fell by 20% due to barriers. (Eichengreen & Irwin, 2010) In his study, Gesonke demonstrates the "tariff-growth paradox" for Germany between 1880 and 1913, where protectionism stimulated GDP growth of 1-2% annually, but at the cost of international isolation, with an analysis of 4 million observations. (Geschonke, 2024) Hirschman, in turn, considers tariffs as an instrument of power before the start of World War I, where Germany used them to dominate Central Europe. (Hirschman, 1945)

The evolution of tariff regimes from mercantilism to the creation of GATT in 1947 and the WTO in 1995 demonstrates a transition from protectionism to liberalization, but with cyclical relapses. In the mercantilist era (16th-18th centuries), tariffs were fiscal instruments (rates of 30-50%) aimed at achieving a positive trade balance, as in France or Britain. After the Napoleonic Wars and the world wars, tariffs were significantly reduced: with the abolition of the Corn Laws, which had been in force for about four centuries, Britain ushered in an era of free trade, but protectionism returned in the 1930s. The GATT, signed by 23 countries in 1947, reduced tariffs from 40% to 5% through eight rounds of negotiations, later evolving into the creation of a separate, fully-fledged international organization, the WTO. (WTO, 2025)

The Uruguay Round of WTO negotiations (1986-1994) created a single dispute settlement system. However, the cycle continues: in 2025, tariffs rose by 1.5-2% due to trade wars, demonstrating the evolution of the tariff system from mercantilist instruments to global trade regulators while maintaining the potential for conflict.

Conclusions. The analysis of the genesis and structure of tariff regimes in international trade allows us to conclude that they are not only an economic instrument for regulating trade, but also a powerful geopolitical factor that cyclically affects global stability. The genesis of tariffs, beginning in the mercantilist era with high protectionist barriers, evolved through periods of intensive use, such as in the Napoleonic Wars and on the eve of World War I, where they served as a catalyst for conflict. Napoleon's Continental Blockade (1806-1814) and the corresponding British Corn Laws (1815) demonstrated how tariffs reduced trade by 40-60% and caused tension in inter-state relations, confirming the authors' view of their role as a "double-edged sword" – protecting national interests

and a source of wars. Similarly, the "second wave of protectionism" we described at the end of the 19th century, with the French Méline tariffs and the German Bismarck reforms, reinforced economic nationalism, contributing to alliances and World War I, where trade fell by 10-20%. The evolution of international trade through the signing of the GATT in 1947 and the creation of the WTO in 1995 marked liberalization, reducing rates to 5%, but the cyclical nature of protectionism persists: in 2025, a 1.5-2% increase in tariffs due to trade wars to some extent repeats historical patterns, slowing global trade growth to 1.7%, confirming the article's hypothesis about tariff regimes as a geopolitical tool that provokes conflicts, with parallels to contemporary challenges, including "technological protectionism" under the influence of artificial intelligence.

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