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IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

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Kripkyi A. Yu. Impact of Digital Transformation on International Economic Relations

The relevance of the chosen research topic is due to the rapid development of digital technologies that transform international economic relations, change the structure of the world economy, mechanisms of international trade and global competition. Of particular importance, in the current period of intensification of the digital transformation of the world economy, is the issue of the impact of digitalization, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, platform economy and cyber risks on the competitiveness of countries and the formation of a new architecture of international economic relations. The aim of the article is to study the impact of digital transformations on international economic relations. The work uses methods of analysis and synthesis, comparative and statistical analysis, international statistical data on the dynamics of Internet users and income of leading digital platforms. The processes of digitalization of the world economy, the development of e-commerce, platform business models, the impact of automation and artificial intelligence on the international division of labor, as well as the relationship between the development of digital technologies and cyber risks were studied. According to the results of the study, it was found that the growth of the digital audience and the development of digital infrastructure have become one of the key drivers of the transformation of international economic relations. It was determined that control over data (in particular, the processes of cross-border data transfer), digital platforms, and artificial intelligence technologies are gradually replacing traditional factors of economic influence. It is proved that digitalization is forming a new model of global competition, within which economic security and international competitiveness increasingly depend on the development of digital infrastructure and cybersecurity. It is proposed to consider digital technologies as a strategic factor in the formation of a modern system of international economic relations.

Keywords: international economic relations; world economy; digitalization; digital platforms; e-commerce.

Fig. 4. Bibl.: 25.

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Кріпкий А. Ю. Вплив цифрової трансформації на міжнародні економічні відносини

Актуальність обраної теми дослідження зумовлена стрімким розвитком цифрових технологій, які трансформують міжнародні економічні відносини, змінюють структуру світової економіки, механізми міжнародної торгівлі та глобальної конкуренції. Особливого значення, в теперішній час інтенсифікації цифрової трансформації світової економіки, набуває питання впливу цифровізації, електронної комерції, штучного інтелекту, платформної економіки та кіберризиків на конкурентоспроможність держав і формування нової архітектури міжнародних економічних відносин. Мета статті полягає в дослідженні впливу цифрових трансформацій на міжнародні економічні відносини. У роботі використані методи аналізу та синтезу, порівняльний і статистичний аналіз, дані міжнародної статистики щодо динаміки користувачів мережі Інтернет і доходів провідних цифрових платформ. Досліджено процеси цифровізації світової економіки, розвиток електронної комерції, платформних бізнес-моделей, вплив автоматизації та штучного інтелекту на міжнародний поділ праці, а також зв'язок між розвитком цифрових технологій і кіберризиками. За результатами дослідження встановлено, що зростання цифрової аудиторії та розвиток цифрової інфраструктури стали одним із ключових драйверів трансформації міжнародних економічних відносин. Визначено, що контроль над даними (зокрема, процесами транскордонної передачі даних), цифровими платформами, технологіями штучного інтелекту поступово витісняє традиційні фактори економічного впливу.

Доведено, що цифровізація формує нову модель глобальної конкуренції, у межах якої економічна безпека та міжнародна конкурентоспроможність дедалі більше залежать від розвитку цифрової інфраструктури та кібербезпеки. Запропоновано розглядати цифрові технології як стратегічний чинник формування сучасної системи міжнародних економічних відносин.

Ключові слова: міжнародні економічні відносини; світова економіка; цифровізація; цифрові платформи; електронна комерція.

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A distinctive feature of the global economy is that national economies, as its main actors, are not isolated economic units, simply interconnected by trade processes, but interdependent entities, functioning in a holistic system that encompasses the entire planet. A feature of such a system is that decisions made in one part of the world invariably affect all other participants in international economic relations. Within the framework of the global economy, it is international economic relations that become an indicator of its state. In other words, when the complexity of economic relations between entities of different countries, mediated by institutions and rules – the architecture of international economic relations, changes, the logic of relations between all participants.

The classical or traditional, in the present day, architecture of the global economy was formed in 1944 within the framework of the Bretton Woods Conference, during which the foundations of the postwar economic order were laid on the basic principles of consensus decision-making and international cooperation in the field of trade and economic relations. As a result, three main supporting elements of the new system were established: the International Monetary Fund – as a global stabilizer of the monetary system; the World Bank – a global investor in development; GATT-WTO – as a set of rules for commercial relations between countries.

The above-described architecture of international economic relations became a catalyst for the unprecedented growth of world trade and the integration of new participants into the global economy during the twentieth century, based on the provision and support of the following rules: State sovereignty as the basic unit of the system; material flows as the main object of functioning; multilateral coordination of rules through international institutions.

Digitalization has rewritten the basic rules of the system and created a new sector of the global economy. The classical architecture of the global economy and the international economic relations that were built around it were built around physical resources and material production. The development of the digital economy is currently quite rapid: from 2010 to the

present, annual smartphone shipments have doubled, reaching 1.2 billion in 2023, and it is also predicted that by 2029 the number of Internet of Things devices will grow to 39 billion [1]. In addition, data is currently being transformed from a proto-resource into a strategic resource, but with a fundamentally different nature than classic physical resources such as oil or gold. Thus, digital data is not exhausted when used, has zero cost of replication and acquires value only at scale. This means that whoever controls data flows occupies a leading position in international economic relations.

Automation, robotics and artificial intelligence are redrawing the map of the international division of labor. The traditional advantages of developing countries in the cheap labor market are partially leveled, and instead human capital and technological infrastructure come to the fore. At the same time, cyberattacks on financial systems, critical infrastructure and supply chains are becoming an instrument of geopolitical pressure, requiring new formats of international security cooperation.

The *aim* of the article is to study the new logic of international economic relations, which is shaped by the changing architecture of the global economy.

Literature Review

Digital transformation is becoming a subject of research for many scientists because it changes the mechanisms of trade, communication and global competition. Moskalyk R. and co-authors highlight the development of digital platforms, the intensification of the development of artificial intelligence and changes in data value chains as the main trends of the digital transformation of the world economy, which change the structure of international markets and strengthen the role of technology companies [4].

Currently, electronic commerce is an important component of digitalization. In their work, Sak T. V. and co-authors emphasize that electronic commerce provides an expansion of enterprise access to international markets, reduces transaction costs and accelerates the exchange of goods and services [8]. The intensification of international Internet trade and the

consequences of this process are also studied by many scientists, especially considering that the development of electronic commerce stimulates the integration of national economies into the global digital space. Researchers note that international online trade contributes to the formation of a single digital economic space, in which the competitiveness of countries increasingly depends on the level of development of digital infrastructure and technological innovations [11]. Many researchers also emphasize the need to study and mitigate the risks arising from the intensification of digitalization, in particular the problems of legal regulation of electronic commerce, uneven access to digital infrastructure, risks of fraud and increased competition [9; 10]. Most authors focus their attention on the technical, marketing or domestic economic aspects of digitalization, while the transformation of international economic relations themselves from the transition to a digital economy remains insufficiently disclosed.

Aims/Research Methods

Digital transformation has become part of socio-economic development and has initiated new trends in the development of the global economy and international economic relations as they are formed around it.

The achievement of the aim set in this study was implemented through a structural review of the literature and the development of theoretical research. Also, as part of the work on this study, general scientific research methods were used, including analysis and synthesis, deduction and induction, and the search for cause-and-effect.

Results

In 2021, UNCTAD highlighted the importance of cross-border data transfers as a strategic asset of the new, digital economy [2; 3]. The information resource itself is becoming increasingly important, which underlines the dependence of the global economy on digital technologies and the Internet as an environment for its implementation.

According to *Fig. 1*, it can be seen that the number of the world's population that has systematic access and uses the Internet has been constantly increasing over the past 20 years. Thus, if in 2005 only 15.6% of the world's population were active Internet users, then in 2025 this percentage is already 73.6%. That is, the number of Internet users over 20 years has increased from 1 billion to 6 billion people. In fact, during this time the Internet has transformed from a technology for the minority into a basic global infrastructure that has almost become mandatory.

A particularly intense acceleration of the implementation of digitalization processes occurred after 2015. So, if in 2015 only about 40% of the population

were Internet users, then in 2020 its number increased and reached 60%. It was during this period of time that there was a sharp increase in the revenues of the largest e-commerce platforms, in particular Amazon, Alibaba, Shopify.

The above trends indicate several structural changes in the global economy.

First, the Internet is becoming the foundation for a global commercial infrastructure. The growth in the number of users automatically expands the audience for digital services, marketplaces, and online platforms. The more people gain access to the Internet, the larger the global digital market becomes.

Secondly, a platform model of the economy is gradually taking shape, in which large digital companies and technology giants concentrate a significant part of trade, logistics, advertising, and financial services.

Thirdly, digitalization lowers the barriers to entry into global markets. The success of leading platforms demonstrates that even small companies and entrepreneurs can reach an international audience through digital platforms without the need to create a physical trading infrastructure.

It is worth noting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred in 2020–2021. This time in retrospect is defined as the period of the sharpest jump in both the number of Internet users and companies' e-commerce revenues. This confirms the thesis that crisis periods accelerate digital transformation and changing consumer patterns.

At the same time, the above data also demonstrates new challenges. The concentration of economic activity around large platforms increases the dependence of businesses and consumers on a few global corporations. In addition, uneven access to the Internet across countries and regions of the world means that countries with a lower level of digital infrastructure risk being left out of the mainstream of the digital economy.

Such rapid user engagement could not but affect the global economy. Digital transformation has become a catalyst for intensive innovative development of economic systems at the macro and micro levels, which has led to the strengthening of e-commerce and provoked the development of artificial intelligence, big data, and innovative financial technologies.

It should also be noted that the classical architecture of international economic relations assumed two types of subjects – countries and enterprises. Digitalization has provoked the emergence of a third type of subject of international economic relations – the global platform. Digital trade encompasses all trade that is carried out digitally, which is fundamentally chang-

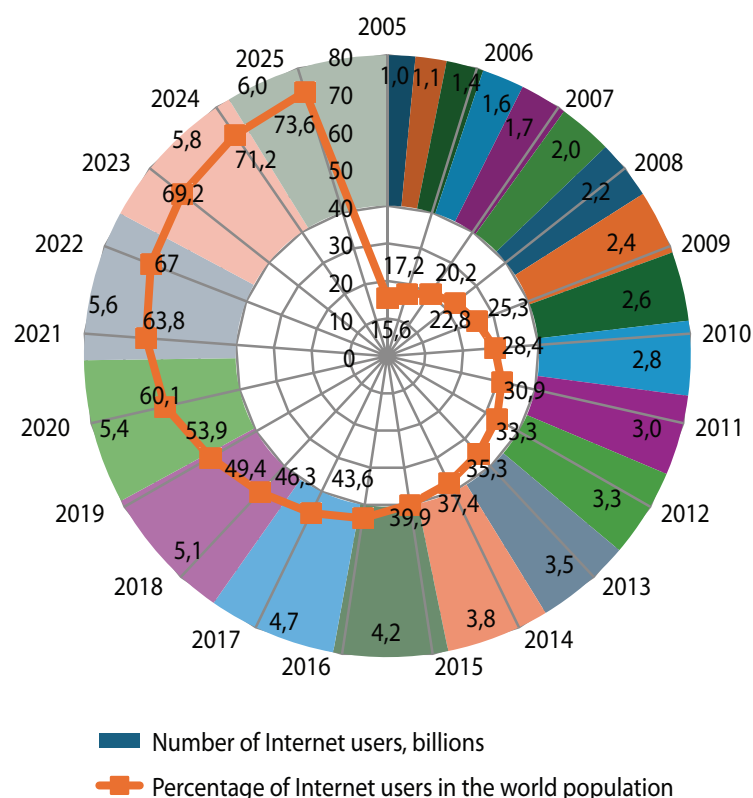


Fig. 1. Number of Internet users in the world [5]

ing the global economy [2]. The development of digital platforms that operate simultaneously in different countries and regions (Amazon, Google, Meta, and others) is a direct challenge to Westphalian logic, because it is the platforms that form the rules of interaction between participants, collect fees for use, are not subordinated to any single regulator, and their activities are not tied to the sovereign borders of countries.

Taken together, all this has changed the logic of international economic relations. The impact of digital transformation on international economic relations is schematically presented in Fig. 2.

The digital transformation of the global economy is conventionally divided into six main aspects: e-commerce, digital finance, data flows, digital platforms, automation and artificial intelligence, and cyber risks.

The conception of electronic commerce has several interpretations, both expanded and more concise. Summarizing some of the most widespread versions of the interpretation of this concept [6–11] we can say that e-commerce encompasses all processes related to and supporting the implementation of trade transactions (regarding goods and services) on the Internet, in particular the use of specialized technical, technological and software for the implementation of communications and data processing, ensuring the security of transactions, delivery, and accumulated information.

Currently, there is a significant growth of e-commerce platforms, which is primarily associated with the removal of barriers to entry into international markets within the digital economy. This is confirmed by the revenue volumes of such major platforms as Amazon, Alibaba Group, Shopify (Fig. 3). These platforms were chosen for illustration because each of them represents one of the digital commerce models.

Amazon is a vertically integrated retailer and marketplace with its own logistics and cloud infrastructure. Since its inception, the company has implemented the logic of full control over the value chain: from the warehouse to the buyer's door. The key feature of this model is the simultaneous functioning as a retailer, a platform for third-party sellers, a provider of logistics services (Fulfillment by Amazon), a cloud infrastructure [12]. This combination allows the company to finance unprofitable or low-margin retail areas through cloud infrastructure and at the same time optimize prices, logistics and assortment in real time using data from the entire set of transactions. In the context of international economic relations, this means that the company actually becomes a private trading infrastructure of a global scale – a kind of substitute for distributors and local retailers at the same time.

Alibaba Group, unlike Amazon, did not seek to function as a retailer in the traditional sense. The company has built an ecosystem of interconnected platforms: Taobao, Alibaba.com, Alipay, Tmall, Cainiao, Alibaba Cloud, Aliexpress, Trendyol and others [16].

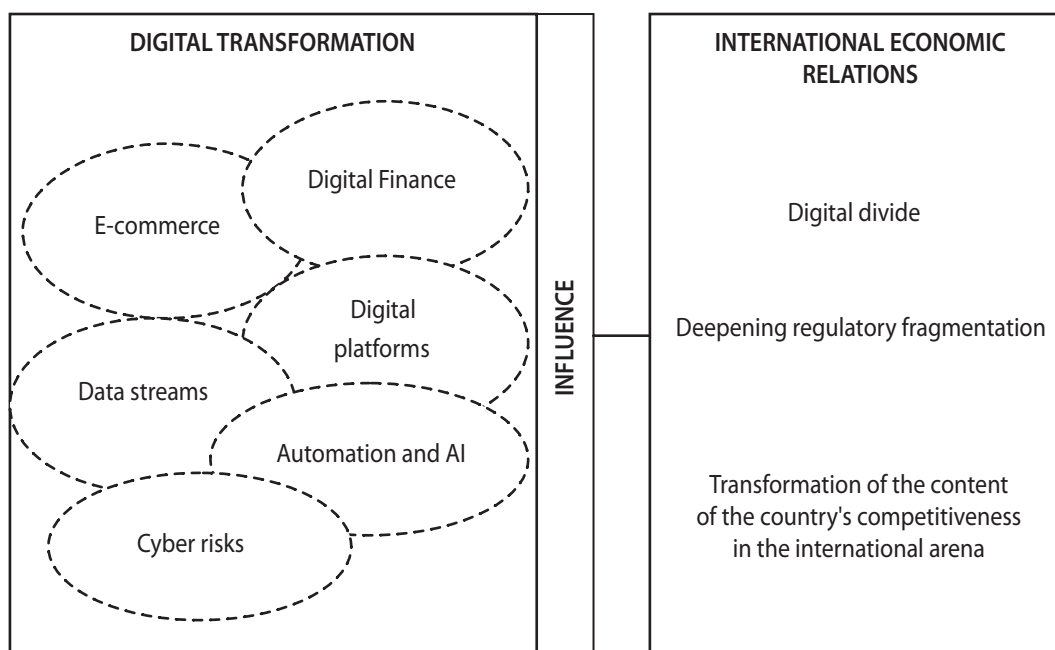


Fig. 2. The impact of digital transformation on international economic relations

Source: compiled by the author.

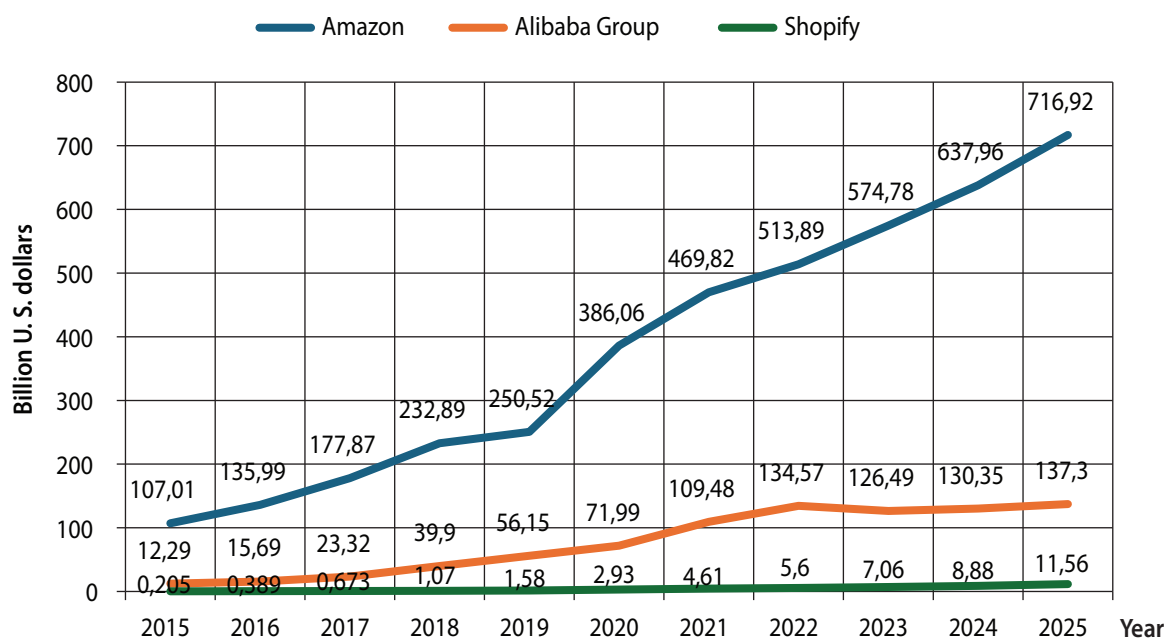


Fig. 3. Annual revenue of digital commerce platforms Amazon, Alibaba Group, Shopify for the period from 2015 to 2025

Source: compiled from [12–14].

It should be emphasized that the business model created by Alibaba Group, although it has a large number of elements/platforms in the field of C2C, B2C, B2B, international trade, logistics, however, there is no dominance of any one within the group. The fundamental difference of Alibaba Group is that they do not manage logistics directly, but connect sellers and buyers, taking a commission for advertising and transac-

tions. This makes this model extremely scalable but at the same time dependent on the quality of the partner network. Within the framework of international economic relations, the digital trade model implemented by Alibaba Group demonstrates the reformatting of global B2B trade, as millions of manufacturers from Asia have gained direct access to the world market, bypassing traditional intermediaries and trade agents.

Shopify represents a fundamentally different model of digital commerce. The company does not compete with sellers, but provides them with the necessary tools. We can say that the functioning of this company is an analogue of the business metaphor of “picks and shovels” that was formed during the “gold rush” – not only gold miners earn, but also those who sell them picks and shovels. The company provides small and medium-sized businesses with access to the same infrastructure that previously only large corporations could afford: a payment system, inventory management, analytics, international shipping, built-in marketing. Shopify’s income is formed by two streams – a financial subscription (expected income), and a percentage of the volume of transactions (growing along with the growth of the number of sellers [17]. In the context of international economic relations, this model of digital trade essentially democratizes access to global trade, when a small brand can sell goods in the markets of a large number of countries without its own logistics center and its own team of IT specialists.

According to Fig. 3, Amazon shows the largest revenue among Amazon, Alibaba Group, Shopify. However, this is due to the revenue accounting model. For example, Amazon takes into account gross revenue from direct sales in its reporting, while Alibaba Group, Shopify take into account only commissions and fees, since these companies do not act as direct sellers.

It should also be noted that the functioning of large digital platforms has similar features to the functioning of quasi-state-based entities, as they control markets, data, and the infrastructure of economic sectors in various countries, which creates new challenges for antitrust regulation at the international level.

The development of digital finance and its increased use are becoming a catalyst for rethinking the role of fiat currencies in international payments. The use of digital financial instruments not only accelerates cross-border payments but also reduces their cost. At the same time, within the framework of international economic relations, cryptocurrencies and digital currencies of central banks pose significant challenges to the International Monetary Fund and, in general, to the currently functioning Bretton Woods system.

It is advisable to pay special attention to the issue of cross-border data flows as part of the study of the impact of digitalization on international economic relations.

The classical architecture of international economic relations has been based on the unification of rules through the World Trade Organization and multilateral agreements. Digitalization has given rise to the opposite trend: barriers to cross-border data flows are spreading, making the current global legal architecture insufficient to govern the digital economy.

In the modern global economy, there are actually three different competing regulatory models – American (market minimalism), European (human rights and the Data Protection Regulation), Chinese (State sovereignty and social stability). We can say that the global economic space is being divided into incompatible zones.

Nowadays, data is not just an information resource, but a strategic resource whose importance for the development of the country’s economy can be compared with the importance of useful companies. The current state of the global economy and international economic relations provokes a situation in which control over data flows is turning into an instrument of geopolitical influence. The manifestation of this thesis can be seen in the contradictions between the United States of America, the European Union and the People’s Republic of China regarding the rules for processing and storing data (Fig. 4).

In 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation came into force in the European Union. As of 2025, European Union regulators had imposed fines totaling €5.65 billion, of which €4.68 billion were imposed on US companies. It should also be noted that the total fines imposed on US tech giants in 2024 alone amounted to almost 20% of the EU’s total customs revenue for that year [18; 19].

In 2017, the People’s Republic of China enacted the Cybersecurity Law, which was the first law to introduce data localization requirements: personal information and important data collected by operators of critical information infrastructure must be stored exclusively in the territory of the PRC. In 2021, these requirements were extended to all companies processing significant amounts of personal data through the enactment of the Data Security Law.

At the same time, the new rules apply outside the People’s Republic of China to companies providing services to Chinese consumers and analyzing their behavior. It should be noted separately that there is a fundamental difference between European values and the approaches of the PRC. Thus, the PRC Data Security Law classifies data depending on their importance for national security, while essential data includes everything related to State security, economic interests and the well-being of citizens. Also, the definition of important data remains vague and is left to the discretion of local regulators, which fundamentally contradicts the legal certainties of the General Data Protection Regulation in the EU [19;20].

The United States has now significantly tightened control over access to advanced technologies. Under the rules of the Bureau of Industry and Security, the People’s Republic of China and some other coun-

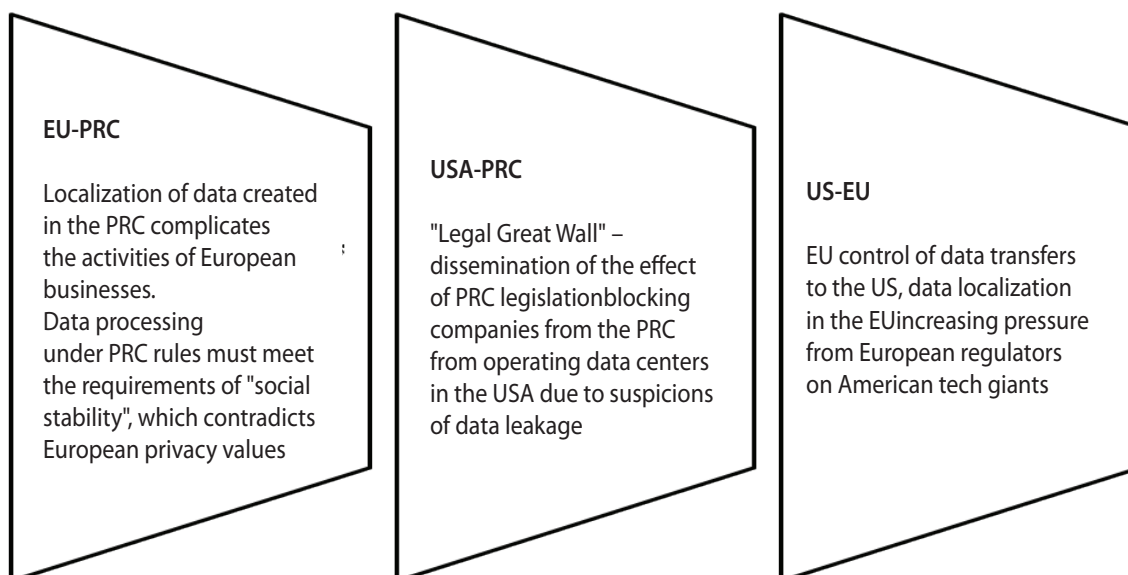


Fig. 4. The issue of control over cross-border data transfer as an aspect of tension in international economic relations using the example of the USA-EU-PRC

Source: compiled by [12–14; 18–21].

tries are effectively deprived of access to modern computing chips. The restrictions apply not only to direct supplies. Thus, the new rules exclude the possibility of using such chips through cloud services in third countries. In 2026, the United States of America consolidated this approach with a law that directly includes cloud computing in the export control regime, emphasizing that the development of artificial intelligence in the People's Republic of China relies to a large extent on access to American technology outside the country.

For its part, the People's Republic of China is also building barriers to foreign business. In the telecommunications and data center sectors, foreign companies are not allowed to acquire controlling stakes, and licensing remains complex and limited. This effectively creates a "closed" infrastructure, where key elements are controlled either by the State or local players.

In 2025–2026, the US further tightened restrictions: previous approaches were revised and an outright ban on the use of individual Huawei chips was introduced, even without the need to obtain special licenses.

The term "Legal Great Wall" describes the People's Republic of China's approach to protecting its interests through law. It is about creating a holistic legal system that allows the country to counteract external pressure, primarily sanctions and extraterritorial claims by other countries. It is part of a broader strategy where law is used not only for internal regulation, but also as a tool in foreign policy.

In essence, this is a metaphor for a legal "shield": the People's Republic of China forms its own rules so as not to be subject to norms it considers unfair or that violate its sovereignty. If earlier the emphasis was on compliance with international law, now it is on the active application of national legislation to protect its positions.

The framework is based on several key laws. In particular, the Law on Countering Foreign Sanctions allows the People's Republic of China to respond to restrictions against its companies and citizens. Other regulations allow Chinese businesses to ignore foreign sanctions or minimize their impact. At the same time, export control and national security laws expand the State's powers in strategic areas.

The main goal of this policy is to protect domestic companies and create a legal "umbrella" for them. But at the same time, it extends the scope of Chinese law beyond the country's borders: companies operating in the People's Republic of China or doing business there are forced to take these requirements into account regardless of where they are registered.

This creates a difficult situation for international businesses. Companies have to balance the demands of Western sanctions and Chinese law, which often conflict with each other. As a result, the global economy is becoming more fragmented and the legal landscape less coherent.

Traditional international economic relations have been built around the movement of goods across borders. According to data from 43 countries repre-

senting nearly three-quarters of global GDP, the volume of e-commerce sales between businesses will grow by almost 60% from 2016 to 2022, reaching \$27 trillion [1].

Digitalization has made services and digital content the dominant form of international exchange. This is fundamentally changing the logic of international economic relations, as traditional instruments such as customs tariffs, quotas, and rules for the passage of goods become irrelevant for a significant part of real economic relations.

It should also be noted that the classical logic of international economic relations assumed that relations between countries were formalized through agreements between governments. Digitalization added a new level, such that real economic relations between producers and consumers from different countries are mediated by platforms that set their own rules independent of intergovernmental agreements.

The above thesis is confirmed by the terms of the agreements that are proposed to be concluded when working with digital platforms. They state that in the event of disagreements between the parties, the provisions of the agreement shall prevail. In this case, it should be noted that no international agreement regulates the relationship between the digital platform and the seller. They regulate relations between countries regarding tariffs, subsidies, and market access. Therefore, when a digital platform changes an entrepreneur's account without warning and withholds his funds for any period, even a minimal one, no international institution has jurisdiction over this decision. The seller can appeal only within the internal mechanisms of the platform, that is, in fact, by contacting the same party that made the decision against him.

In the context of international economic relations, the emergence, development and integration of artificial intelligence into production, management and business processes is of particular importance. Accelerated automation and intensive development of artificial intelligence are gradually changing the logic of the international division of labor. Thus, if the low cost of labor, in the past, was one of the aspects of a country's competitiveness, then at present, given technological development, such a model is gradually losing its effectiveness.

According to estimates by the International Labor Organization, approximately one in four jobs in the world is potentially affected by generative artificial intelligence [22]. At the same time, we are not talking only about the complete replacement of people, but about the transformation of professions. In other words, a significant part of the processes will be automated, but the role of the person will still remain key.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, up to 27% of employment is in occupations at high risk of automation [23]. Under such conditions, a significant portion of the world's workforce is potentially subject to structural change.

In accordance with the above, we can say that automation based on artificial intelligence leads to a reduction in jobs even in highly skilled fields, where the unemployment rate has increased due to the replacement of routine functions by algorithms [25].

In the context of international economic relations, cyberspace is becoming increasingly important. According to a report by the EU Cybersecurity Agency, almost 4,900 cyber incidents were recorded in just one year. It is also noted that attacks are increasingly directed at critical infrastructure and government systems: energy, transport, finance and digital networks are becoming the main targets, since disruption of their continuity has a systemic effect at the national level. In other words, due to the interdependence of systems, a cyberattack on one link can paralyze entire supply chains. In addition, artificial intelligence is used to automate phishing and social engineering [24].

For international economic relations, this situation means that cyberspace is changing the very logic and nature of security. Nowadays, cyberattacks can destabilize financial systems, influence public opinion, disrupt the functioning of critical services, and create economic costs without direct physical intervention. In addition, the absence of classic physical borders of countries in cyberspace means that attacks can be carried out instantly and have a global spread.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the above, we can say that the above data confirm that the development of the Internet is one of the key drivers of global economic transformation. The growth of the digital audience directly stimulates the development of e-commerce, the platform economy and new business models, and the digital infrastructure is becoming a critically important factor in the competitiveness of the State and its role in international economic relations.

Classic international economic relations were built around control over physical resources – oil, ores, agricultural land. The new system is built around control over digital infrastructure: undersea cables, cloud platforms, artificial intelligence standards. That is why the conflict between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China over Huawei chips or the social network TikTok is not just a classic trade conflict, but a struggle for a leading role in the new architecture of international economic relations.

Automation and the emergence of artificial intelligence are gradually devaluing cheap labor. At the same time, the role of human capital is increasing, with an emphasis on skills in analytics, data management, and artificial intelligence development. This situation is widening the gap between highly skilled and low-skilled workers.

In addition, it should be noted that the results of the study suggest that there is a close connection or even an interrelationship between the development of artificial intelligence and the growth of cyber risks. Thus, artificial intelligence is both a driver of economic transformation and a tool for new threats. As a result, a new global reality of international economic relations is being formed in which economic competitiveness and security increasingly depend on the technological capabilities of countries and companies, rather than on traditional factors.

Thus, we can say that the discrepancy between the old architecture and the new reality transforms the logic of international economic relations. The objects of relations, their subjects, and instruments of regulation are changing. ■

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