

Belarus' FOREIGN POLICY INDEX

№ 32 May–June 2016

Dear readers,

We are happy to present the thirty-second issue of Belarus Foreign Policy Index, which explores Belarus's foreign policy in the five key dimensions in the months of May and June 2016.

Belarus's relationship with **Russia** can be characterized as constructive; however, in the media sector, the spirit of confrontation prevailed. The gas spat lingered, while the work to grant Belarusian-made products the status of "national" goods in the Russian market stalled. Furthermore, increasing numbers of new, targeted limitations were reported during the period. Belarus appeared to be having more claims to Russia within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

Contacts between Belarus and the **European Union** showed a markedly higher level than before. Not only Foreign Ministry diplomats tend to represent the Belarusian side at bilateral meetings, which implies the gradual evolution of the relationship from the general political domain into more substantive sectoral formats.

The relations between Belarus and **China** were focused primarily on the potash issue. China made use of Belarus's critical need for foreign exchange and made a very shrewd move in the global market for potash fertilizers in order to enjoy the most comfortable conditions.

In the **"Developing World"**, Belarus's foreign policy efforts were distributed evenly between its main regions. This pattern, alongside the conspicuous level of contacts with "developing countries," should be attributed to the improvement of the situation in other dimensions of Belarus's foreign policy.

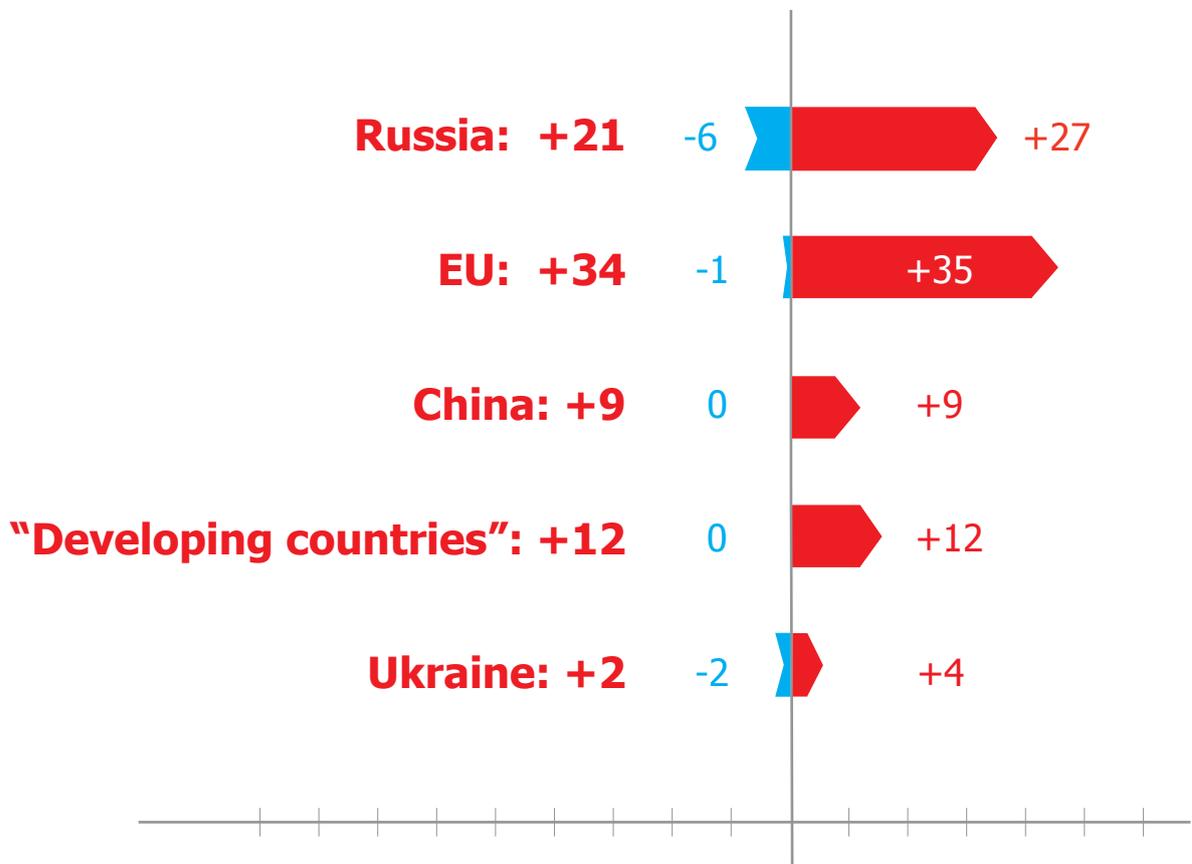
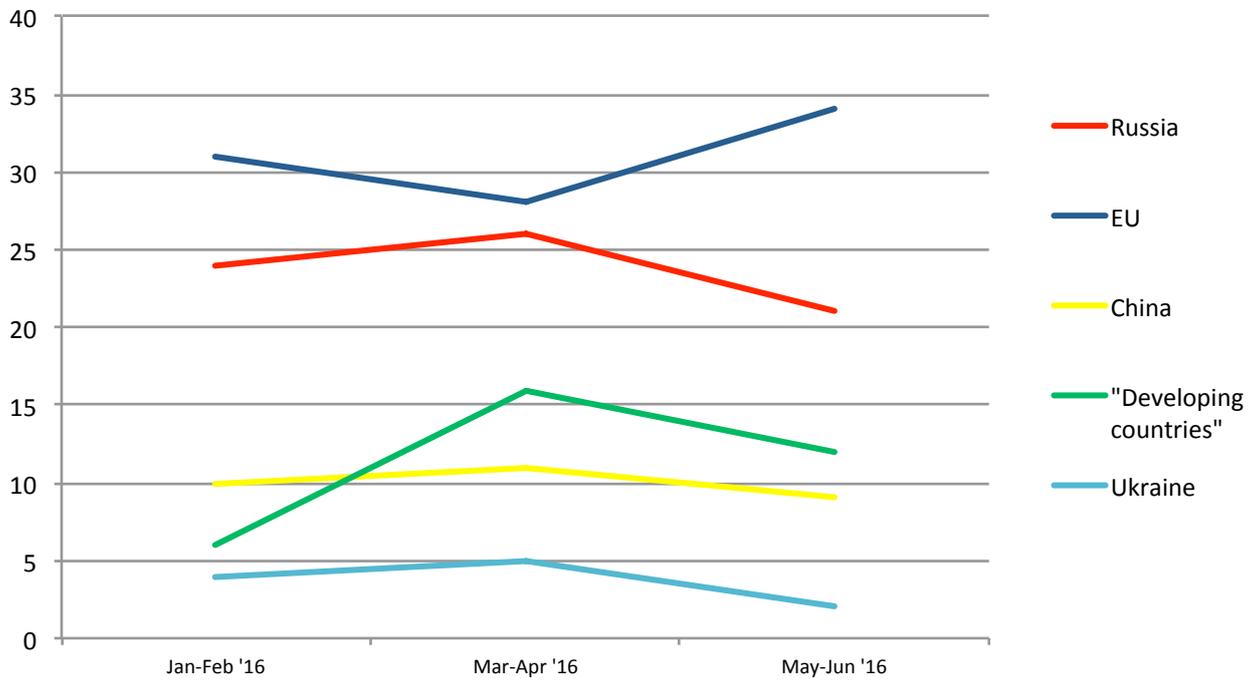
The Belarusian government is expanding the use of debt financing and other mechanisms to encourage export, and designated companies are promoting maintenance service networks for Belarusian machinery seeking to boost sales.

Although the Belarusian administration mentioned the **Ukrainian** issue only sporadically, the economic engagement between the two countries continued to develop quite extensively. Back at the start of the year, a new "trade war" came to an end, and new areas for economic collaboration were identified.

Dzianis Melyantsou
Editor
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Relations development indices:



Development of the Belarus–Russia relationship

+27



-6

Summary index: +21

Total positive points: +27

Total negative points: -6

Main trends

Overall, the cooperation between Belarus and Russia proved to be constructive, albeit against a confrontational media backdrop, where mutual threats and acts of provocation prevailed.

The gas dispute predictably lingered throughout the two months under review, as neither side has the decided advantage so far. There is still ambiguity concerning the access of Belarusian-made products to the Russian market: as a whole, it appears to have expanded; however, the work aimed to grant Belarusian products the status of “national” commodities in the Russian market has stalled. Furthermore, increasing numbers of targeted limitations were reported. Belarus became more active in making claims to Russia via EEU institutions.

Description of the key events

The two countries celebrated Victory Day separately; this time, however, no one raised the question whether Lukashenka would be ready to come to Moscow to attend the parade. Belarus and Russia exchanged delegations — a group of veteran seamen from Pinsk went to the Moscow Region, whereas a team of Russian politicians visited the Brest Fortress.

The workshop of the Parliamentary Assembly of Belarus and Russia, which took place in Minsk on 11–12 May, concluded in the signing of an action plan to establish the media space of the union, a move that has potential to further increase the dominance of Russian media products in the Belarusian media scene. Accidentally, State Secretary of the Union State Grigory Rapota said the day after the document was signed that the media space had already been unified by the two countries, and the level of convergence was sufficient. For his part, on 15 May, a deputy chief of the Administration of the President of Belarus noted that the prevalence of Russian content in Belarusian media caused certain concerns when it came to national culture and information security. That opinion became the focus of numerous articles and comments by Belarusian independent media and became a reason to challenge the effectiveness of the financing of the state-financed media, which have turned out to be incapable of producing sufficient national content. When commenting on the common content of the unified media space, Alexey Volin, Vice Minister of Telecom and Mass Communications of Russia, said that the new reality called for a change in approaches to the work of media: the old school practice of state financing was not good anymore, and new scenarios needed to be developed for the production of competitive media products.

On 12 May, the Council of Ministers of the Union State held a session in Mahilioŭ, where Belarusian Prime Minister Andrej Kabiakoŭ shared his concerns about the complications in the access of Belarusian products to the Russian market with his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev. Kabiakoŭ said: “people can be tempted to expand support for their domestic manufacturers making use of state subsidies, and ‘lock’ the market employing bureaucratic limitations and informal barriers, blow up national import-substitution, loan, and subsidy programs, thus shutting partners off the state procurement procedure.”

For his part, Medvedev pointed to the fact that in volume terms, two-way trade between Belarus and Russia had reached the level logged in 2015. However, last year was charac-

terized by a marked reduction in mutual trade; therefore, it would be wrong to use it as a benchmark for the desirable performance of the EEU. Following the meeting, Medvedev met with the Belarusian president in the agro-town of Aliexsandryja, where they addressed two-way trade.

On 7–8 June, Minsk played host to the Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, where, in addition to a wealth of positive remarks about the engagement between Belarus and Russia, contracts were signed for supplies of Belarusian products to Russia, and interstate agreements were concluded (more memorandums than proper agreements, though), specifically, in social protection, higher education, and collaboration between Belarus and Russian regions. President Vladimir Putin and Russian officials visited Minsk to attend the forum.

In two-way trade, export to Russia recovered faster in January–May 2016 than import from Russia did. Trade between the two countries amounted to USD 9.8 billion in the first five months of 2016, down by 11.1% from January–May 2015, export reached USD 3.8 billion, a decrease by 5.3%, while import dropped by 14.4% to USD 6 billion. Import of automobiles and farm machines in value terms exceeded last year's figures and the gap with deliveries in volume terms narrowed. The situation with export prices in the Russian market was also recovering; however, in value terms, few products reached last year's level, whereas in volume terms, they all exceeded the figures reported in the first five months of 2015. The balance of Belarus's trade with Russia remained negative, and the deficit keeps expanding every month.

The poor trade results encouraged the Belarusian government to voice its disappointment over the country's involvement in the EEU project. On 12 May, Kabiakoŭ spoke about Belarus's disillusionment at a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, and President Lukashenka repeated those accusations at the EEU summit in Astana and at the meeting of the State Council of the Union State in Minsk. Moscow cites external factors and offers no actual compensation, suggesting that Belarus should arm itself with patience and wait until the external situation changes for the better. The question is why be involved in the EEU at all if it is the external environment that is solely responsible for the situation inside the Union State; however, no one has raised this question yet.

Belarus's debt for natural gas is a separate issue. Belarusian consumers are supposed to have been paying Gazprom transgaz Belarus (a 100% subsidiary of Russia's Gazprom) USD 132 per 1,000 cubic meters since 1 January, the rate set for Belarusian consumers by the Russian natural gas monopoly; however, payments have been short since the start of the year. For its part, Gazprom transgaz Belarus pays for deliveries by the parent company in full volume and on a timely basis. Gazprom transgaz Belarus filed a claim with the Court of Arbitration at the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry against regional gas distribution organizations (oblgaz) of Belarus seeking to collect USD 250 million in debts that have accumulated as a result of the payment gap. In other words, the oblgaz organizations de facto set natural gas rates on their own hoping that the Energy Ministry of Belarus would successfully negotiate the fee with Gazprom transgaz Belarus later. In all appearances, those organizations began to not only index the gas fee making use of the U.S. dollar rate, but also set it directly based upon the Russian ruble rate (in Belarus, this practice is referred to as the "write-off of exchange rate differences"). According to various sources, Belarusian consumers owe Gazprom's subsidiary from USD 47.9 million (according to Gazprom CEO Alexey Miller, on 30 June) to USD 125 million (the claim filed with the court of arbitration by Gazprom transgaz Belarus in May 2016). The Russian government became involved in the dispute — its representative Arkady Dvorkovich said crude oil supplies to Belarus would be cut because of the short payment for natural gas (previously, Miller reiterated on many occasions that Gazprom was receiving payments in full, and the only entity that was underpaid was Gazprom transgaz Belarus) and short deliveries of oil products from Belarus to Russia. Indeed, on 1 July, crude oil supplies to Belarus dropped. Belneftekhim, Belarus's state-run petrochemical concern, issued a statement saying that the agreement on oil supplies to Belarus did not envisage any peg to natural gas issues and began negotiations with the Russian Energy Ministry. It turns out that Belarus is currently involved in two disputes, one pertaining to natural gas, and one to crude oil.

The issue of military security also contributed to the overall negative media backdrop. In the course of the visit of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to Belarus Russia's Kommersant daily published a comment by an unnamed source at the Ministry of Defense concerning the possible deployment of the Iskander mobile short-range ballistic missile system in Belarus in response to the deployment of components of the NATO missile defense system in Romania and Poland. Belarusian media made a series of alarmist comments while drawing a connection between the statement and Lavrov's visit. As a matter of fact, currently there are no negotiations regarding this matter, and it should be pointed out that the level of mutual trust is not enough for Russia to transfer weapons of this kind to Belarus or place its contingent to service the system. Anyway, Russia has its own territory to make ominous gestures (the enclave Kaliningrad Region).

It is Russia's maneuvers in its own territory that caused a new wave of alarmist materials in Polish and Belarusian media. In early June, a Russian motorized infantry brigade started to be deployed in the Russian town of Klinty in the vicinity of the Ukrainian and Belarusian borders, which was interpreted as a threat to Belarus and the EU. It looks like it was NATO's nervous reaction that became Russia's main objective, as a response to the expansion of the NATO infrastructure towards its borders.

In mid-June, a joint command and staff exercise of the Belarusian Air Force and Russian Aerospace Defence Forces was held, involving Russian Su-34 fighter bombers, which caused anxiety in Belarus's western neighbors. It should be emphasized that the very fact that the exercise was held is not reason enough to be concerned, especially given the fact that a large-scale NATO exercise was organized near the Belarusian border in June. However, for some reason the Belarusian side failed to inform about its plans to have the exercise beforehand, while Russia disclosed information about the upcoming exercise via a pseudo-leak from a Russian pilot in Baranavičy. Belarus had to confirm its plans to have the exercise in response to a repeated request.

Forecast for the near future

The relations between the two countries are growing increasingly complicated. On the one hand, Russia's leverage to influence Belarus is becoming weaker, whereas Belarus has fewer reasons to be satisfied with the level of its relations with its ally. On the other hand, Russia's confrontation with the western world encourages it to resort to sucker punch tactics, manifested in acts of provocation. In its relationship with Belarus, especially when it comes to military security, these acts of provocation are used to convince western partners that Belarus is unable to maintain neutrality in this confrontation. In this context, Belarus will find it increasingly hard to maneuver in both making announcements about upcoming exercises, and preventing or responding — effectively, timely, and accurately — to possible acts of provocation in the future. This will remain a very sensitive and complicated area until the confrontation between Moscow and NATO stabilizes, or normalization begins.

As far as the gas issue is concerned, compromise can be achieved somewhere close to the official position of the Russian side — the repayment of debt and, possibly, a slight reduction in prices for Belarus in the second half of the year. The Belarusian side has reasons to have the gas fee cut: first, the tariff applied to Belarus includes a U.S. dollar equivalent of rates to deliver natural gas from Yamal to Belarus via Russia, which are quite high; second, Gazprom has repeatedly reduced its gas fee for many consumers including in the EEU (Armenia). These points may not be enough for Russia to slash its prices retroactively; however, if rates are revised in the second half of the year, Belarusian consumers will be enabled to accumulate funds to pay up. The crude oil position of Belarus is a lot stronger, for what the Russian Energy Ministry did essentially ran counter to all agreements and looked as a blatant disciplinary punishment. Furthermore, while Belarus does not play a unique role as a transit country for Russian natural gas (given the fact that Russia owns the pipeline and the share of transit via Belarus is not critically important), it does enjoy the exclusive status of a transit country for Russian crude oil. In this matter, Moscow's pressure will be unlikely, as it would jeopardize Russia itself.

Development of the Belarus–EU relationship

+35



-1

Summary index: +34

Total positive points: +35

Total negative points: -1

Main trends

The trend outlined in the previous edition of the survey continued throughout the two months under review: after most of the EU restrictions against Belarus were lifted, the bilateral relations have evolved to reach an all new level that is characterized by a more systemic work within the framework of mutual interests. Two important peculiarities should be identified:

- The level of contacts between Belarus and the EU is becoming markedly higher: the habitual mass of working diplomatic contacts now includes an increased number of visits and events at the top and high political levels;
- Not only Foreign Ministry diplomats become involved in meetings with representatives of the EU member states and institutions, which implies that the relationship is gradually changing from the general political area towards more substantive sectoral formats.

Description of the key events

In his annual address to the Belarusian nation and the parliament in late April, President Aliaksandr Lukashenka warned against reducing the process of normalization with the West and the EU to mere talking and called for moving to positive specifics: *"we are having a new phase right now — I'd refer to it as an all-talk-no-action phase with the West."* The developments of May and June add positive specifics to this relationship, although not to the degree that official Minsk would like to see.

Amid the eventful backdrop, two developments clearly stand out: the president's visit to Italy and the Belarus–EU investment forum in Vienna. Both events are crucial primarily as symbols.

Lukashenka's visit to Rome on 20 May became a follow-up of his meeting with the Pope in Vatican, which had been thoroughly prepared and planned for quite a long time. That was the first visit of the Belarusian head of state to an EU member state since the entry ban was removed in February 2016. Incidentally, back in 2009, during the previous warm spell in the relationship between Minsk and Brussels, Rome and Vatican became a "gateway to Europe" for the Belarusian president. However, back then he was received by the premier of Italy (who later paid a return visit to Belarus). This time, Lukashenka's agenda was limited to a meeting with the president, who plays more of a ceremonial role in the Italian political hierarchy. This fact was in the focus of many observers, who emphasized the political narrowness of the trip to the Apennines.

Nevertheless, from the point of view of the evolution of the relationship between Belarus and the EU, Lukashenka's visit to Rome was naturally a giant leap. Just as lower level diplomatic contacts of the past few years, it helps create a critical mass of events required to achieve further normalization and diversification of the bilateral relations. Moreover, the economic issues that prevailed at the meeting between Lukashenka and his Italian counterpart Sergio Mattarella (specifically, the prospects of investment coop-

eration and creation of an Italian industrial park in Belarus) did not appear on impulse, but drew on the work that the Foreign Ministries of the two countries had been doing for years.

The EU-Belarus investment forum entitled *Vienna Forum: Promoting EU Investments in Belarus* was held on 24 May. The Belarusian delegation to Austria was led by First Deputy Prime Minister Vasil Maciušeŭski. The delegation also included First Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Michnievič, First Deputy Finance Minister Maksim Jermalovič, representatives of the National Bank of Belarus, Ministry of Construction and Architecture, National Agency of Investment and Privatization, and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The EU was represented by Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, and Alain Pilloux, Vice President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). According to the press service of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, more than 90 companies from the EU and more than 30 Belarusian companies were present at the forum. The main discussions and presentations focused on cooperation in the banking sector, media and communication, as well as sustainable building.

It is hard to summarize the specific results of the event in terms of agreements/investment negotiations that were signed/started at the forum. However, the very fact that such a forum was held — just as Lukashenka's visit to Italy — is important for further promotion of the relations between Belarus and the EU. The idea of the forum had been beyond the official "roadmap" for Minsk and Brussels for some time as a specific normalization landmark. Despite the expectedly low investment impact of the forum, the event created an additional platform for communication and serves as a foothold to embark on new items on the "roadmap."

Also during the two months under review, two Eastern Partnership events stood out. On 3–4 May, Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej visited Prague to attend the annual meeting of the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership member states. On 23 May, he participated in the seventh annual meeting of the foreign ministers of the EU and EaP member states in Brussels. In his speeches in Prague and Brussels Makiej welcomed the increased focus of the program on the differentiation of requirements and interests of the member states, as well as their stabilization and economic development. He also called for working on the integrity of the Eastern Partnership initiative in order to avoid new separating lines in the region.

Also noteworthy are the increasingly active references by the head of the Foreign Ministry to the problem of the absence of a framework agreement between Minsk and Brussels. This issue was also mentioned by President Lukashenka in his speech at the All-Belarusian People's Assembly. The portion of his keynote speech at the Assembly focusing on Belarus's foreign policy and relations with the European Union repeated many of the points of his address to the Belarusian nation and the parliament in April. Specifically, he said that in order to develop sustainably, *"Belarus needs normal relations with the European Union and the United States."* According to him, *"abandoning the policy of sanctions on Belarus opens up new possibilities in the development of our engagement. It would be a shame not to take advantage of them. We fundamentally need to make up for the losses and recover the level of relations that our EEU and CIS partners have with the EU and the United States."*

Lukashenka also emphasized that the European Union was the second most important market for Belarusian export.

At the bilateral level, late June saw the first visit of the foreign minister of the Czech Republic to Belarus in the last seven years. Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek met with his Belarusian counterpart Makiej and President Lukashenka. Zaorálek said he believed it was time to begin a new chapter in the relationship between Belarus and the Czech Republic. Makiej drew preliminary results of the normalization process with the EU in the course of his joint news conference with the Czech counterpart:

"Thank God we managed to find enough strength — all stakeholders — and step over certain psychological issues associated with certain perception of one another. We un-

derstood that Belarus, the European Union as a whole, and its member states share the same goals and seek to achieve the same objectives — in security, in trade and economic relations, and in the work to build the capacity of society and the state.¹

Arguably, the only negative development during the period under review was the ongoing dispute between Minsk and Vilnius over the construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant. The ambassador of Lithuania was invited to the Belarusian Foreign Ministry on 6 May following reports by Lithuanian media about incidents at the construction site of the nuclear power plant. The ambassador received official information about the absence of any incidents in the course of construction operations at the site. Makiej made sharp personal remarks about the media reports.

Two-way trade between Belarus and the EU member states amounted to USD 4.764 billion in January–May 2016, down by 23.8% year-on-year. Belarusian export reached USD 2.68 billion, which represents a reduction by 32.2% from the first five months of 2015, whereas import from the EU totaled USD 2.084 billion, down by 9.1% year-on-year. Belarus reported a USD 595.6 million surplus of the balance of its trade with the EU.

Forecast for the near future

Belarus has started a parliamentary election campaign, and this factor will be increasingly noticeable in its relations with the EU. The pragmatic agenda in Minsk's negotiations with European capital cities will grow stronger; however, the progress and outcomes of the parliamentary elections will inevitably create news topics and affect the general atmosphere of the relations.

The Belarusian authorities will do their utmost for the elections to be conducted tranquilly and contribute to further normalization of the country's relations with the European Union. Specifically, the recognition of the new composition of the lower house would facilitate further expansion of the bilateral agenda for Belarus and Europe, which is in line with Minsk's interests.

1. <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/d519f9aaa9c0fa94.html>

Development of the Belarus–China relationship

Summary index: +9

Total positive points: +9

Total negative points: 0

+9

0

Main trends

In May and June, the relations between Belarus and China were mostly focused on the issue of potash fertilizers, which has remained — for at least a couple of years — the main reason why official Beijing is interested in Belarus. China made use of Belarus's critical need for foreign exchange and made a very shrewd move in the global market for potash fertilizers in order to enjoy the most comfortable conditions.

In all the rest of the areas for bilateral cooperation (except security) stagnation continued, marked in previous Index issues.

Description of the key events

May and June 2016 will likely become a landmark for the relationship between Belarus and China. On 17 June, media reports appeared that Belarusbank and the China Development Bank (CDB) had signed a loan agreement worth USD 1.4 billion to finance the construction of a potash factory. The official press release notes that the document "defines the procedure for the financing of the project to construct a mining and processing complex Slavkaliy on the raw materials base of the Niežynskaje section of the Starobinskaje potash salt deposit (Liuban District of the Minsk Region). The combined capacity of the new factory is projected up to 2 million tons of potassium chloride annually. China will become the main consumer of potash fertilizers manufactured by Slavkaliy."² No other details of the agreement were reported.

Incidentally, global news agencies share no additional information about the agreement, but reproduce the above press release. This appears to be quite strange, given the state of uncertainty in the world market for potash fertilizers.³ There are virtually no doubts that the agreement contains special terms and conditions that the signatories would like to hide from broad public.

Representatives of the Belarusian side only said that the talks were very long and very hard. More specifically, the negotiations lasted for more than 12 months, at the very minimum since the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Belarus in May 2015. At least, it was back then that the first reports appeared about the prospective Chinese loan for the development of the potash industry.⁴ It was planned that Belarus would use the loan to supply at least 4 million tons of potash fertilizers to China annually during the next five

2. China extends a USD 1.4 billion loan to Belarusbank for the construction of a potash factory, <<http://news.tut.by/economics/501029.html>>

3. World fertilizer trends and outlook to 2018, <<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4324e.pdf>>; Potash Price Charts in Different Time Ranges, <<http://www.infomine.com/investment/metal-prices/potash>>

4. See. <http://zw.fpovr.com/detail/4lhte.html>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-belarus-china-loans-idUSKBN0NV00M20150510>

years worth a total of USD 1.3 billion, i.e. at a rate of approximately USD 325 per ton. At the end of 2015, the average price of potash fertilizers exported beyond the CIS amounted to USD 482.08 per ton.⁵ As a rule, Belarus sells potash fertilizers to China at reduced rates. The Index covering that period mentioned the potash issue among priority items on the agenda for the meeting between Lukashenka and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping; however, it was noted that no open information on the matter was available.⁶

However, in all appearances, the agreements were not implemented. In the period from June to December 2015, Belarus received some USD 300 million worth of loans from Chinese banks, according to a report by the Ministry of Finance of Belarus. The country's potash export totaled 5.553 million tons in 2015, down from 5.72 million tons in 2014; however, export to China rose, to reach USD 650 million. According to Bloomberg, Belarus was selling potash to China at USD 315 per ton in 2015, including transport costs. Belaruskali's competitors considered that price to be unacceptably low; however, the Belarusian authorities were guided by a) the need for the country to have more or less stable inflow of foreign exchange; b) expectations of a Chinese loan, since the considerable reduction in the price for Belarusian potash compared to the average world price must have been one of the key conditions of the agreement.

It appears that the Chinese side did not hurry to fulfill its obligations under the agreement. The Chinese administration had developed an effective strategy to protect its economic interests in the potash market. Experts at Bloomberg and VTB note that *"China has accumulated surplus inventories of more than 5 million tons; its domestic facilities were operating at their full capacity, and supplies from Russia by rail amount to 120,000 tons a month. Therefore, there is no need for China to hurry."* That was not the first time China resorted to the strategy of purchasing cheap potash fertilizers, accumulating surplus inventories, and encouraging further competition among suppliers to maintain the low level of prices. The same scenario was successfully used back in 2013.

The situation brought about a drop in Belarus's export to China in the first half of 2016. In January–March 2016, Belarus exported only USD 52.916 million worth of products to China, down by 64% year-on-year. Apparently, China was aiming to have the price knocked down to USD 200 per ton. The only question is how the sides have adjusted the terms and conditions of the agreement on potash supplies — and there is no doubt there is such an agreement. Interestingly, right after the agreement on the Chinese loan to Belarus was concluded, Belarus signed export contracts with Bangladesh (24 June) and India (27 June). Because the price for India was at USD 227 per ton, official Beijing must have succeeded in reducing the potash price for its consumers to USD 200 per ton, if not less. If this is what really happened, then the Chinese side had an "elegant" victory over its Belarusian partners managing to benefit from a considerable price adjustment in its favor in exchange for mere promises of a loan. The terms of the loan are unknown to the public, whereas its main beneficiary is the Russian businessman Mikhail Gutseryev, judging by media reports.

The second important area for the development of the relationship between Belarus and China is the construction of the China–Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP). We have repeatedly argued in previous Index issues that the CBIP would never become a center for the promotion of new production facilities, but a means for selected Chinese companies to enjoy ungrounded preferences.

When it comes to the rest of the areas for bilateral cooperation, the engagement between the two countries looks increasingly like declarations and vain wishes, which have no actual substance.

5. Commodity export from the Republic of Belarus in January–December 2015,
<http://www.belstat.gov.by/kscms/uploads/file/GU_torg/External/2015/itog/tt100e06.pdf>

6. Belarus Foreign Policy Index No. 26, BISS 2015,
<http://belinstitute.eu/sites/biss.newmediahost.info/files/attached-files/BISS_FPI26_2015en.pdf>

Forecast for the near future

As in the previous period, the trend towards the narrowing of the Belarusian–Chinese collaboration — which is being reduced to declarations — continues. Belarusian export supplies to China keep falling in value terms. In the near future, we should expect a report about the conclusion of a potash contract. It is possible that the reluctance to voice the terms of the new deal is caused by the extremely low price that Chinese consumers will be paying for Belarusian fertilizers.

Developments in Belarus's relations with the 'Developing countries'

(Asia, Africa and Latin America)

Summary index: +12

Total positive points: +12

Total negative points: 0

+12

0

Main trends

During the two months under review, Belarus's foreign policy efforts in the "Developing World" were distributed quite evenly between its main regions, which proved to be a rare pattern recently. This fact, alongside the perceptible level of contacts with developing countries, should be associated with the improvement of the situation in other dimensions of Belarus's foreign policy.

Minsk seeks to pursue a neutral policy when it comes to such essential regions as the Middle East (contacts with Iran and Syria, on the one hand, and conservative Arab regimes, on the other), and India–Pakistan. This way Belarus managed to do away with the bias that has been observed until quite recently.

The Belarusian government is looking to expand the use of mechanisms of credit financing and other measures to encourage export, and designated companies are working on the promotion of the system of maintenance service for Belarusian machinery in a bid to facilitate further increase in sales.

Having encountered complications in some regions of the developing world, Minsk — in quite an unprecedented move — stepped up its consultations with Moscow concerning relationships with respective regions (three rounds of consultations in May and June alone). Furthermore, the Belarusian side requested assistance from Russia in its search for new partners, primarily in Latin America.

Description of the key events

Middle East.

Iran and Syria. On 3–4 May, an Iranian delegation led by Industry, Mines and Trade Minister Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh paid a visit to Belarus. The Iranian official participated in the 13th meeting of the Belarusian–Iranian commission for economic cooperation. Trade between Belarus and Iran has been on the decrease in the last few years and reached approximately USD 70 million in 2015.

The visit of Deputy Minister of Industry of Syria Nidal Falluh, who met with Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ, might have been timed to coincide with the visit of Nematzadeh: Iran may undertake to finance projects of third countries, including Belarus, in Syria. The previous serious contract with Syria was signed in the course of the 6th meeting of the Joint Belarusian–Syrian Commission for Trade, Economic, and Technical Cooperation in April 2015.

Saudi Arabia and Arab states of the Persian Gulf. On 16–18 May, a substantial Saudi delegation led by Undersecretary of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yousuf Bin Tarrad Al Saadoun visited Minsk. The Saudi official had a meeting with Foreign Minister of Belarus Makiej and participated in the 2nd meeting of the Belarusian–Saudi

Joint Intergovernmental Committee, where the Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology was signed.

In addition to Saudi Arabia, Minsk pursued contacts with other conservative monarchies of the Persian Gulf. Consultations between the Foreign Ministries on consular issues were held with Bahrain (2 June, Manama) and the United Arab Emirates (1 June, Abu Dhabi). In April, Belarus introduced a visa-free regime for citizens of the United Arab Emirates.

On 4 May, President Aliaksandr Lukashenka met with DP World Chairman of the Board and CEO Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem, a prominent UAE businessman who is not only close to the ruling dynasty of Dubai, but also belongs to the global business elite.

South Asia

Pakistan and India. On 17–18 May, Minsk hosted the first meeting of the Joint Belarus–Pakistan Trade Committee, where the Pakistani side was represented by Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce Azmat Ali Ranjha.

For the first time in the past 18 months, Minsk complemented the intensification of its contacts with Pakistan with an increased number of contacts with India, which keeps a close eye on any moves that Pakistan makes. On 11–14 May, a Belarusian parliamentary delegation led by Chairman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly Michail Miasnikovič paid an official visit to India. Miasnikovič had meetings with the president of India and speaker of the upper house of the Indian parliament. Members of the Belarusian delegation participated in the Belarusian–Indian business forum and the opening ceremony of the first BelAZ maintenance shop in Nagpur.

On 24 June, President Lukashenka met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Tashkent, and on 27 June, Belarusian Potash Company (BPC) signed a contract with its long-standing strategic partner in India, IPL, for the supplies of 700,000 tons of potash fertilizers to the Indian market in the fiscal year of 2016–2017 at USD 227 per ton, which is a markedly lower price compared with the year 2015, when Indian consumers were charged USD 332 per ton. Previously, on 24 June, BPC signed a contract to supply 180,000 tons of potash to Bangladesh subject to a formula-based price.

Afghanistan. On 27 May, Secretary General of the National Security Council of Afghanistan Mohammad Hanif Atmar visited Belarus. He was received by Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej. On 14–15 June, Vice Speaker of the Senate of Afghanistan Farhad Ghulam Sakhi paid a working visit to Belarus. He held a series of meetings at the Belarusian parliament.

Africa

On 23–24 May, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique Nyeleti Mondlane paid a visit to Belarus. She was received by Makiej and participated in the inaugural meeting of the Belarusian–Mozambican Joint Commission on Cooperation and the second round of bilateral consultations between the Foreign Ministries.

On 1–4 June, a Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Minister of Industry Zmicier Korčyk visited Ethiopia. The Belarusian official took part in the first meeting of the working group for cooperation with the African Union Commission in industry and held negotiations with local companies over the organization of the assembly and maintenance of Belarusian machines.

On 24–27 June, a team of major bankers and oil traders of Cote d'Ivoire, the Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tanzania visited Belarus. The delegation included the businessman Lucien Ebata, the publisher of Forbes Afrique, and Afreximbank CEO Benedict Oramah. The African businessmen had meetings with the leadership of the National Bank of Belarus, Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus, Belarusian Potash Company, Belarusbank, and visited Naftan, BelAZ, MAZ, MTZ, and Hi-Tech Park Belarus. Head

of Belarus President Property Management Directorate Viktor Šejman is said to have been involved in the preparation and conduct of the visit.⁷

Latin America

On 22–23 May, First Vice President of the Council of State and Ministers of Cuba Miguel Mario Diaz-Canel Bermudez was on a visit to Belarus. He discussed bilateral cooperation issues with President Lukashenka and Prime Minister Andrej Kabiakoŭ while focusing on engagement in science and technology, IT, and pharmaceuticals, as well as the use of Belarus's experience in the promotion of agribusiness. Lukashenka spoke favorably about the improvement of the relationship between Cuba and the United States.⁸

Two-way trade between Belarus and Cuba rose by 72% year-on-year in 2015 to USD 67 million. Belarus exported USD 36 million worth of goods, while import from Cuba was as high as USD 31 million. In January, a contract was signed for supplies of repair kits for MTZ products, and in April, an agreement was reached on deliveries of MAZ machines. Foreign Minister Makiej visited Cuba in the summer of 2014, and in September 2015, Lukashenka and Castro met at a session of the UN General Assembly.

On 14 June, some "special representatives of Fidel Castro" visited Belarus, of whom only one was named — Guillermo Perez, and on 2–5 May, Deputy Foreign Minister Jaŭhien Šestakoŭ visited Cuba. He held consultations pertaining to political issues, as well as trade and economic cooperation. Furthermore, Šestakoŭ participated in the summit of the Association of Caribbean States in Havana (in which Belarus was granted the observer status in January 2016). As part of the summit, Šestakoŭ met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala Carlos Ramiro Martinez Alvarado and signed an agreement on the cancellation of visa requirements for holders of diplomatic and service passports.

Southeast Asia

Vietnam. On 26–27 June, Deputy Foreign Minister Rybakoŭ visited Vietnam. He had a meeting with Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade of Vietnam Hoang Quoc Vuong to explore possibilities for joint production of passenger and cargo machinery. The same issue was addressed in the course of his meeting with the administration of AuVietIndustry, the Vietnamese dealer of BelAZ, which currently implements a project to organize assembly and sales of MAZ trucks in Vietnam. Consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Vietnam were held.

Thailand. On 26–27 June, an official parliamentary delegation of Thailand led by Chairman of the National Legislative Assembly Pornpetch Wichitcholchai visited Belarus. The speaker met with President Lukashenka, who expressed his interest, among others, in the creation of joint ventures to produce mechanical engineering products in Thailand. Prime Minister Kabiakoŭ not only pointed to the readiness of Minsk to provide Thailand with the main Belarusian export — potash fertilizers, but also declared support for joint projects to supply natural rubber and traditional Thai farm products to Belarus, and said that the Belarusian side sought to "actively promote MTZ tractors assembled in Cambodia in the market of Thailand." In order to effectively promote Belarusian-made products, Minsk is ready to offer flexible financial mechanisms and terms of sale, including export credit and supplies on lease terms, Kabiakoŭ said.⁹

The regulatory framework for cooperation with Thailand remains weak, and there is no traditional intergovernmental commission for trade and economic cooperation between the two countries yet, although last year, two-way trade exceeded USD 100 million.

7. Will Šejman and owner of African Forbes find a common language? 27 June 2016, <<http://news.tut.by/economics/502080.html>>

8. Meeting with First Vice President of the Council of State and Ministers of Cuba Miguel Mario Diaz-Canel Bermudez, 23 May 2016, <http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-pervym-zamestitelem-predsedatelja-gossoveta-i-soveta-ministrov-kuby-migelem-mario-dias-kanelem-13687>

9. Andrej Kabiakoŭ meets with Chairman of the National Legislative Assembly of Thailand, 27.06.2016, <<http://www.government.by/ru/content/6531>>

Other

A series of consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Russia took place, focusing on Belarus's relations with the developing world, specifically, the Middle East and North Africa (24 May), Sub-Saharan Africa (6 June), and foreign policy analysis and planning (21 June). According to Minister Makiej, as part of the new, 11th Program for Coordinated Activities in Foreign Policy, Minsk and Moscow agreed that Russian foreign offices would support Belarus's efforts in establishing economic contacts with countries that have no Belarusian foreign diplomatic offices. According to Makiej, Belarusian specialists have already benefitted from Russia's assistance in Chile, and support will soon be provided to Belarusian in Mexico.¹⁰

Forecast for the near future

Some of the most recent areas for Belarus's foreign policy endeavor (Pakistan, Thailand) continue to develop quite consistently, and contacts will likely be intensified with some other partners that have been in the focus of Belarus's preparatory activities lately. These include primarily Chile, Mexico, Panama, Morocco, and Tanzania. According to available data, plans are especially big and thoroughly developed for Mexico, Chile, and Morocco.

Although in May and June, Belarus sought to restore a more neutral policy on the Middle East, certain bias for the region's regimes associated with the West, especially the Arab monarchies, still remains. This is evidenced by the fact that most of the recent contacts with the opposing camp — Syria, Iran, and the central government of Iraq — have been taking place at the initiative of those countries, rather than Minsk.

In Asia, Belarus will expand the circle of its partners in Southeast Asia, where there are still many opportunities to profit by. Among others, Minsk will look to integrate its policy on traditional partners in Indochina into its search for new partners and markets (for example by organizing joint projects with old partners in third countries or encouraging sales of licensed Belarusian products manufactured in third countries of the region).

In Latin America, Minsk seeks a radical shift in its priorities, and whereas the original plan was to substitute the narrowing collaboration in Venezuela amid serious challenges in that country with enhanced contacts with former allies of the Chavez regime (Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua), the mission has recently been revised towards the search for partners among countries with no Left forces in their administrations (Chile, Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia).

Belarus's relations with Africa will remain centered on the select group of countries, mostly in the East (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania), South-East (Mozambique and Angola), and West of Africa (Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, and Ghana), which have been in the focus of a fairly consistent strategy for building up relations.

10. Verbatim record of the interview of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Uladzimir Makiej to Kontury television programme, 22 May 2016, <<http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/c1de1a552b943e89.html>>

Development of the Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Summary index: +2

Total positive points: +4

Total negative points: -2

+4

-2

Main trends

Throughout the two months under review, the Ukrainian issue was mentioned in public speeches of the Belarusian leadership only sporadically, although the economic engagement between the two countries showed consistent progress. Back at the start of the year, a new “trade war” came to an end, and new areas for economic collaboration were identified. Both countries view the bilateral relations as strategically important.

For its part, official Kyiv is interested in ensuring the maximum security of its northern border, uninterrupted supplies of oil products, and neutralization of Russia’s attempts to impose trade restrictions within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Description of the key events

During the period under analysis, official Minsk continued showing its friendly attitude to Ukraine; however, there were only occasional references to the Ukrainian issue in the public rhetoric of the Belarusian administration. The use of the Ukrainian issue as a factor of internal propaganda demonstrating the significance of political stability was also minimized. In his speech at the All-Belarusian People’s Assembly, President Aliaksandr Lukashenka mentioned Ukraine only in passing.

In May and June, Lukashenka made two notable statements about Ukraine. On 19 May, the head of state met with the leaders of the delegation of the 40th meeting of the Council of Heads of Security Agencies and Special Services of the CIS Member States and called for more active measures to address the Donbas issue and ensure the return of both Ukraine and Georgia to the CIS. He said he was positive that “*Ukraine will come back to us, if not today, then tomorrow. Ukraine has many interests here, and I guess so does Georgia. We must see to it that they both return.*” However, according to him, specific moves must be made in this direction. Lukashenka also called for reinforcing the CIS, making it more appealing to the member states, and adapting it to the reality.

The Belarusian president also raised the Ukrainian issue in the course of his meeting with Pope Francis. He said that the Minsk agreements called for spiritual initiatives. In his opinion, the peace process would be promoted, among others, by a meeting between the Pope and the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church.

On 16 May, following the meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej spoke in favor of supporting the Minsk process to resolve the crisis in Donbas. On 26 May, the Foreign Ministry welcomed Russia’s decision to release the Ukrainian pilot and member of the Verkhovna Rada Nadiya Savchenko. On 8 June, Belarusian Ambassador to Ukraine Valiancin Vialička once again outlined Belarus’s position on Ukraine: “*There will never be aggression coming from our country; moreover, not a single third country will be allowed to exercise aggression.*”

The pro-Ukrainian approach was also applied to certain local issues that proved to be sensitive to the Ukrainian leadership and public opinion. In late May, the administration of Belarusian Railway decided against resuming, for the summer period, train service to Crimea following its annexation by Russia. In June, the Mahilioŭ authorities withdrew from local stores the globes, on which Crimea was marked as part of Russia. The incident was broadly covered by Ukrainian media.

During the period under review, Minsk remained one of the main negotiating platforms for the resolution of the military conflict in Donbas. In late May, the Belarusian authorities lifted the entry ban previously imposed on First Vice Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Iryna Gerashchenko, Ukraine's representative in the humanitarian subgroup of the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine. She had been originally blacklisted at the request of Russia's FSB. That situation had clearly challenged the status of Minsk as a negotiating platform that was convenient to all the parties involved.

However, some other issues pertaining to the right of entry for some other Ukrainian Rada members on the FSB's "blacklist", including Igor Guz (a representative of the ruling coalition), remained unsettled. Ukrainian members of parliament applied to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and Secretary General of the Council of Europe seeking resolution.

Also during the two months under review, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russia media issued numerous reports about the strengthening of the military cooperation between Belarus and Ukraine.

In June, Ukrainian journalists detected the transportation of Belarusian-made chassis designated for an air defense missile system by rail to Ukraine. According to media reports, the supplies were part of the joint Belarusian–Ukrainian Stilet short-range air defense missile system (ADMS) project.

In May, Oleh Lyashko, the leader of an opposition party in the Verkhovna Rada, slammed the leadership of Ukraine for the decision to give up on purchases of Ukrainian-made KrAZ army trucks in favor of Belarusian-made MAZ vehicles. Yuriy Biryukov, adviser to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, responded that the quality of military vehicles manufactured in Ukraine left a lot to be desired.

According to Ukrainian experts, since the start of military operations in Donbas two years ago, Minsk has been making significant efforts to help build up Ukraine's defensive capacity. According to Igor Tyshkevich, Belarus's assistance is worth an estimated USD 90-100 million and includes supplies of Belarusian goods and services exclusively of fuel deliveries. Minsk supplies to Kyiv engines and batteries, binoculars, thermal imaging devices, sights, and helps the Ukrainian army deal with uniform problems by supplying fabrics.

One unsettled issue for the bilateral relationship is that Ukraine has no plenipotentiary ambassador to Belarus. This matter caused representatives of the People's Front party, which is part of the government coalition, to voice their protest to the president of Ukraine in May. Traditionally Ukraine's ambassador to Minsk represents top ruling elites. In late May, rumors appeared in Ukrainian media that the position might be filled by Yuriy Sevruk, Ukraine's former deputy prosecutor general, who is close to Poroshenko's entourage.

On 6 June, an agreement was reached by Minister of Energy and Coal Industry of Ukraine Igor Nasalik, who was on a working visit to Minsk, and First Deputy Energy Minister of Belarus Leanid Šeniec that Kyiv would resume supplies of Ukrainian electricity to Belarus. Electricity used to be Ukraine's most important export to Belarus up until last autumn. According to Nasalik, this cooperation is beneficial for Ukraine, for it will allow increasing the utilization of the capacity of Ukrainian nuclear power units. Furthermore, the share of nuclear generation in the structure of output will grow, contributing to further reduction in electricity costs.

In January–March 2016, Ukraine was Belarus's second-largest trade partner, the second-largest importer of Belarusian products and fifth-largest supplier of products and services

to Belarus (in 2015, the ranks were 2, 3, and 5, respectively). Belarus's export increased to USD 582.5 million in the first quarter of 2016 from USD 489 million in the same period of 2015, whereas import from Ukraine dropped to USD 162 million from USD 182 million.

Oil products and liquefied natural gas account for most of Belarus's deliveries to Ukraine. Other significant export items include mineral and nitrogen fertilizers, tires, tractors, tractive units, and polished glass. The key imports from Ukraine include vegetable oil extraction waste products, metals, vegetable oil, confectionery products, and pharmaceuticals.

In two-way trade, the only decision that caused problems during the two months under analysis was Belarus's support, within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Commission, for the introduction of an antidumping duty on Ukrainian rolled metal products in early June.

Forecast for the near future

Due to objective factors, in the foreseeable future, Belarusian and Ukrainian authorities will seek to continue building up capacity for mutually beneficial bilateral relations in politics, economy, transit, and military sectors.

Despite the dependence on Russia, Lukashenka will continue activities within the framework of bilateral engagement that are deemed beneficial for Kyiv. This also appears to be significant in the context of the intensification of the Western dimension of Belarus's foreign policy.

Official Minsk will be paying special attention to the promotion of its relations with the United States, and the Ukrainian issue is an apparent priority here.

Annex

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development index

Development of the Belarus–Russia relationship

Date	Event	Point
11 May	Consultations between the Foreign Ministries in Moscow	+1
11-12 May	Workshop on the Union State media space	+1
12 May	President Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev meet in Aliieksandryja	+2
12 May	Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Union State of Belarus and Russia in Mahilioŭ	+2
15-16 May	Working visit of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to Minsk	+2
18-19 May	Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Uladzimir Siamaška visits Krasnodar	+1
27 May	Agriculture Minister of Belarus Leanid Zajac comments on companies closed because of sanctions by Rosselkhoznadzor	-1
31 May	Belarusian Seasons in Moscow	+1
31 May	Lukashenka at the Astana Summit	+3
1 June	EEU perceives Russia's ban on state procurement of software in the EEU member states as a trade barrier	+1
6-9 June	Russia–Belarus Youth Forum in Minsk	+1
7-8 June	Third Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia in Minsk	+3
7 June	Session of the Council of Chiefs of Financial Control of the CIS; Lukashenka's statement on confrontation with NATO	+1
8 June	Putin: relationship between Belarus and Russia is the most advanced in the former Soviet Union	+2
8 June	Senator Kosachev expresses gratitude for the provision of a platform for negotiations of the Trilateral Contact Group OSCE–Russia–Ukraine	+1
8 June	Lukashenka's speech at the Forum of Regions	+1
14 June	Board meeting of the Ministries of the Interior in Homiel	+1
21 June	Consultations between the Foreign Ministries	+1
May–June	Acts of media provocation in Russia pertaining to military security and response to those acts by the Belarusian side, as well as to the deployment of a base in Klinty	-2
May–June	Criticism of limitations in the Russian market by the Belarusian leadership	-1
May–June	Dispute over natural gas price and volume of crude oil supplies	-2
May–June	Book fairs of Belarus in Moscow, Days of Belarusian Culture in Russia, Belarusian stand at the St. Petersburg Forum, exhibition of Russian artists in Minsk and of Leo Tolstoy in Brest Fortress, etc.	+2
Total		+21

Development of the Belarus–EU relationship

Date	Event	Point
3-4 May	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej visits Prague to attend the annual meeting of the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group and the Eastern Partnership member states	+2
4 May	Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna meets with French Ambassador Dominique Gazuy	+1
6 May	Invitation of the Lithuanian ambassador to the Belarusian Foreign Ministry in connection with statements by the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry about an incident at the construction site of the Belarusian nuclear power plant	-1
11 May	Second meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarusian–Romanian commission for economic cooperation in Minsk, attended by Kupčyna and State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Business Environment of Romania Vlad Vasiliu	+1
16 May	Kupčyna meets with a delegation of the European People's Party Group of the European Parliament	+1
16 May	Kupčyna meets with Polish Ambassador Konrad Pawlik	+1
17 May	Makiej and Kupčyna meet with a delegation of political directors of the Foreign Ministries of the Benelux	+1
19 May	8th meeting of the Belarusian–Czech mixed commission for economic, industrial, scientific, and technical cooperation in Minsk attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Jaŭhien Šestakoŭ and Minister of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic Jan Mládek	+1
19 May	Makiej meets with Minister of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic Mládek	+1
20 May	Political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Latvia in Riga attended by Kupčyna and State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Latvia Andrejs Pildegovičs	+1
20 May	Lukashenka visits Italy	+2
23 May	Makiej attends the 7th annual meeting of the foreign ministers of the EU and EaP member states in Brussels	+2
23-27 May	Belarus–France business week in Paris	+1
26-27 May	Kupčyna visits France to attend the 2nd meeting of the joint Belarusian–French commission for economic cooperation	+1
30 May	Kupčyna meets with Austrian Ambassador to Belarus Bernd Alexander Bayerl	+1
31 May	Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ meets with Ambassador of Sweden to Belarus Martin Oberg	+1
1-2 June	Kupčyna visits Bulgaria to attend the 6th meeting of the Belarusian–Bulgarian Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation	+1
2-3 June	Second Belarus–Spain business forum in Madrid	+1
6 June	Makiej meets with Thomas Mayr-Harting, Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia of the European External Action Service	+1
7 June	New round of dialogue on human rights between Belarus and the EU in Minsk	+1
8 June	Meeting between First Deputy Minister of Economy Aliaksandr Zabarouški and First Deputy Finance Minister Maksim Jermalovič with a delegation of the European Commission as part of the sectoral dialogue on economic and financial issues	+1

13-14 June	Kupčyna visits Finland	+1
17 June	Kupčyna meets with Director of the Continental Europe Department of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Florence Mangin	+1
17 June	Makiej meets with Foreign and Security Policy Advisor to the German Federal Chancellor Christoph Heusgen	+1
21-22 June	Belarusian–Lithuanian consultations in Vilnius on technical and scientific issues of the construction of the nuclear power plant	+1
22-23 June	Kupčyna visits Slovenia to attend the 6th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation and the Belarus–Slovenia Business Forum	+1
24-25 June	Kupčyna visits Germany	+1
29-30 June	Kupčyna visits Hungary	+1
29 June	Makiej meets with Ambassador of Slovakia to Belarus Jozef Migas	+1
30 июня	Lukashenka and Makiej meet with Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic Lubomír Zaorálek	+2
May–June	Emphatically positive materials in official media and statements by the leadership of the country regarding the EU, including in the course of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly	+2
Total		+34

Development of the Belarus–China relationship

Date	Event	Point
5 May	Belarus can become a gateway to Europe for the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, said Wu Guangrong, Deputy Head of the Foreign Affairs Office of the XUAR government	+1
16 May	Promotion of relations with China has been and remains a priority for Belarus's foreign policy, said Prime Minister of Belarus Andrej Kabiakoŭ at a meeting with Deputy Minister of Commerce of China Zhong Shan. It is planned to hold a regional forum of the countries involved in the One Belt, One Road project in Belarus in 2016	+1
17 May	Chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus Aliaksandr Šumilin meets with Hu Zheng, member of the China Merchants Group Board of Directors and general representative of China Merchants Group's office in Central Asia and the Baltic States. Belarus and China are planning to establish a venture capital fund to commercialize scientific and technical developments	+1
17 June	Belarusbank and China Development Bank (CDB) sign a loan agreement worth USD 1.4 billion to build a potash factory	+1
24 June	Lukashenka meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping as part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Tashkent. The meeting focuses on the China–Belarus Industrial Park and credit cooperation	+2
28 June	Belarus is destined to become an important link of the Silk Road Economic Belt project, said Chinese Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming at the roundtable entitled "Advantages and prospects of Belarus in the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt"	+3
Total		+9

Developments in Belarus's relations with the 'Developing countries'

Date	Event	Point
3-4 May	Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade of Iran Mohammad Reza Nemat-zadeh visits Belarus	+2
4 May	DP World (United Arab Emirates) Chairman of the Board and CEO Sul-tan Ahmed Bin Sulayem visits Belarus	+1
11-14 May	Chairman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly Mi-chail Miasnikovič goes on an official visit to India	+1
16-18 May	Undersecretary of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Youssuf Bin Tarrad Al Saadoun visits Belarus	+1
22-23 May	First Vice President of the Council of State and Ministers of Cuba Miguel Mario Diaz-Canel Bermudez visits Belarus	+2
23-24 May	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique Nyeleti Mondlane pays a visit to Belarus	+1
27 May	Secretary General of the National Security Council of Afghanistan Mo-hammad Hanif Atmar visits Belarus	+1
2-5 June	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Jaŭhien Šestakoŭ visits Cuba	+1
26-27 June	Chairman of the National Legislative Assembly Pornpetch Wichitcholchai visits Belarus	+1
26-27 June	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ visits Vietnam	+1
Total		+12

Development of the Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Date	Event	Point
May–June	Series of pro-Ukrainian statements by Aliaksandr Lukashenka and other representatives of official Minsk	+1
May	Removal of the entry ban from First Vice Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Iryna Gerashchenko, Ukraine's representative in the humani-tarian subgroup of the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine	+1
May–June	Delays in decision-making on Belarus entry ban imposed on member of the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada blacklisted by the Russian frontier service	-1
May–June	Enhanced military cooperation between Belarus and Ukraine	+1
6 June	Working visit of Minister of Energy and Coal Industry of Ukraine Igor Nasalik to Minsk. Negotiations are held over the possible resumption of supplies of Ukrainian electricity to Belarus	+1
June	Belarus's support for the imposition of an antidumping duty on Ukrain-ian rolled metal products within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Commission	-1
Total		+2

Event ranking scale:

- Economic and political integration, creation of customs unions, common markets, supranational bodies (ratification and coming into effect of relevant treaties) – **5-7 points**
- Signing/ratification of a crucial agreement (on cooperation, trade, tariffs, visa-free travel, etc., signing of documents on integration) – **4 points**
- Top-level official visit (president and premier) and bilateral meetings – **3 points**
- Large-scale interstate contract, loan arrangement, provision of economic aid – **3 points**
- Official visit at the level of a minister (key ministers: foreign minister, interior minister, defense minister, economy minister, finance minister, trade minister) and head of the presidential administration; contract negotiations – **2 points**
- Official visit at the level of a deputy minister (and non-key ministers), a parliamentary delegation, exhibition, business forum, days of national culture, important diplomatic contacts and negotiations – **1 point**
- Positive statements by the president, Belarusian Foreign Ministry, parliamentary resolutions, positive materials in state or state-controlled media (monitored media include Sovetskaya Belorussia, BelTA, Zviazda, Belarusian Television – 1st National Channel, 2nd National Channel) – **1 point**
- Adverse statements by the president, Belarusian Foreign Ministry, media, adverse parliamentary resolutions, negative materials in the state media – **minus 1 point**
- Protraction of ratification of treaties, non-invitation to events, failure to provide support internationally – **minus 2 points**
- Infringement of treaties, default on mutual commitments (by the Belarusian side) – **minus 3 points**
- Trade wars, antidumping investigations – **minus 3 points**
- Commodity boycotts, embargoes, recall of diplomats, ambassadors – **minus 4 points**
- Severance of diplomatic relations, provocations, military operations – **minus 5-7 points**