

Belarus' FOREIGN POLICY INDEX

№ 34 September–October 2016

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We are glad to present the thirty-fourth issue of Belarus Foreign Policy Index, in which we explore Belarus's foreign policy in five dimensions in the months of September and October 2016.

During the two months under review, Belarus's endeavor to fully ease tensions in its relationship with Russia did not prove to be completely successful, which is corroborated by the significant negative index of the mutual relations — minus 15, something that we have not seen in a very long time. The two countries identified and formalized the amount of Belarus's gas debt and seemed to have reached a compromise concerning natural gas and crude oil deliveries; however, they have not started implementing that compromise so far, let alone the fact that the compromise appeared to be much closer to the original position of the Russian side than that of Belarus.

The recovery of Belarusian export supplies to **Russia** predictably slowed, notably through a reduction in deliveries of food and tractors. The price environment remains unfavorable for Belarusian products in the Russian market.

Intense diplomatic efforts with the countries and institutions of the **European Union** resumed (32 points) following the summer vacations. In the wake of the parliamentary elections, Belarus's relationship with the West and, as part of it, with the EU was showing consistent positive dynamics. A new framework agreement with the EU is becoming Minsk's official objective in Belarus's relationship with the European Union.

In September and October, the **Belarus–China** relationship developed primarily in the context of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's visit to China and his talks with President of China Xi Jinping. However, the real outcomes of the visit turned out to be quite modest. At the same time, it looked like that beyond the framework of the visit, Belarus and China took a pause in building up their contacts.

Following the certain slack period in Belarus's relationships with "**developing countries**", contacts were markedly stepped up in September and October. Two possible reasons are attempts to make up for difficulties in other areas and, possibly, some of the achieved framework cooperation agreements, which were enough to give a new impetus to engagement. The situation around contacts with the DPRK shows Minsk's unwillingness to offer any extra reasons to escalate tensions with the West while reaping no benefits whatsoever. When it does pursue some contacts with the countries that are in opposition to the West and its allies, the Belarusian government takes care to limit them and not to show them off.

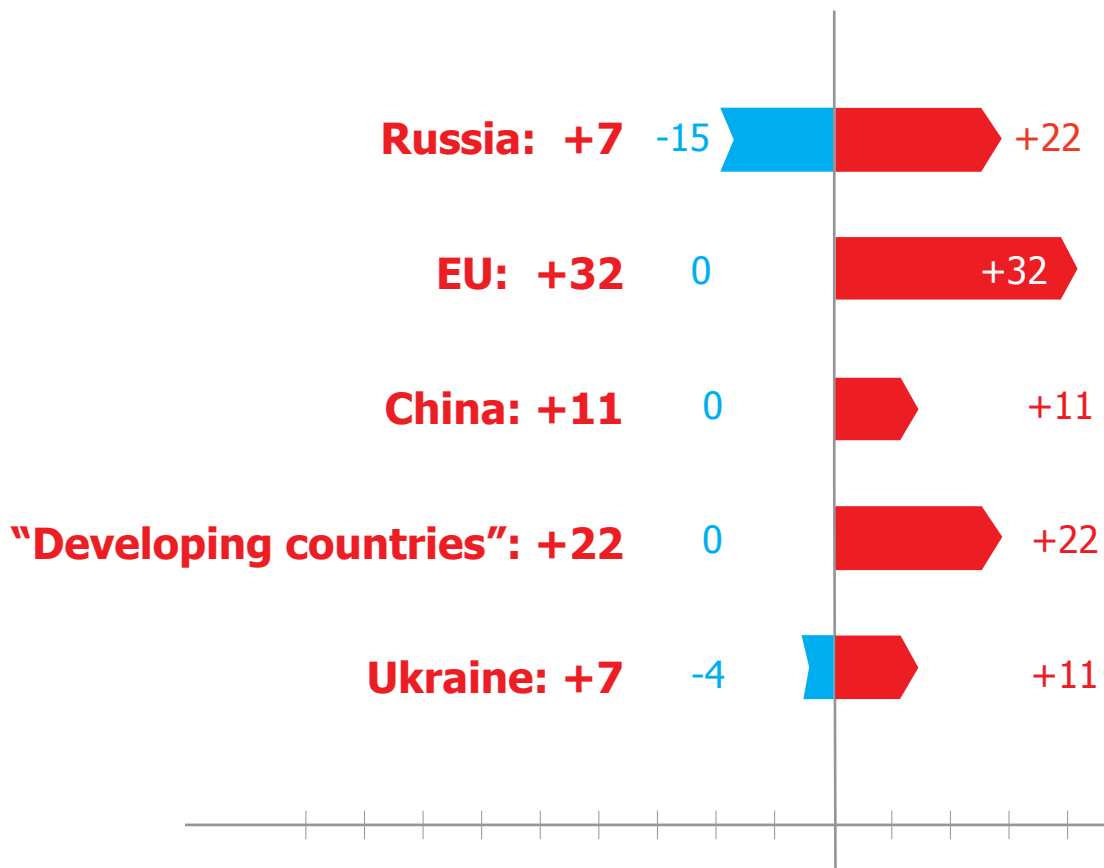
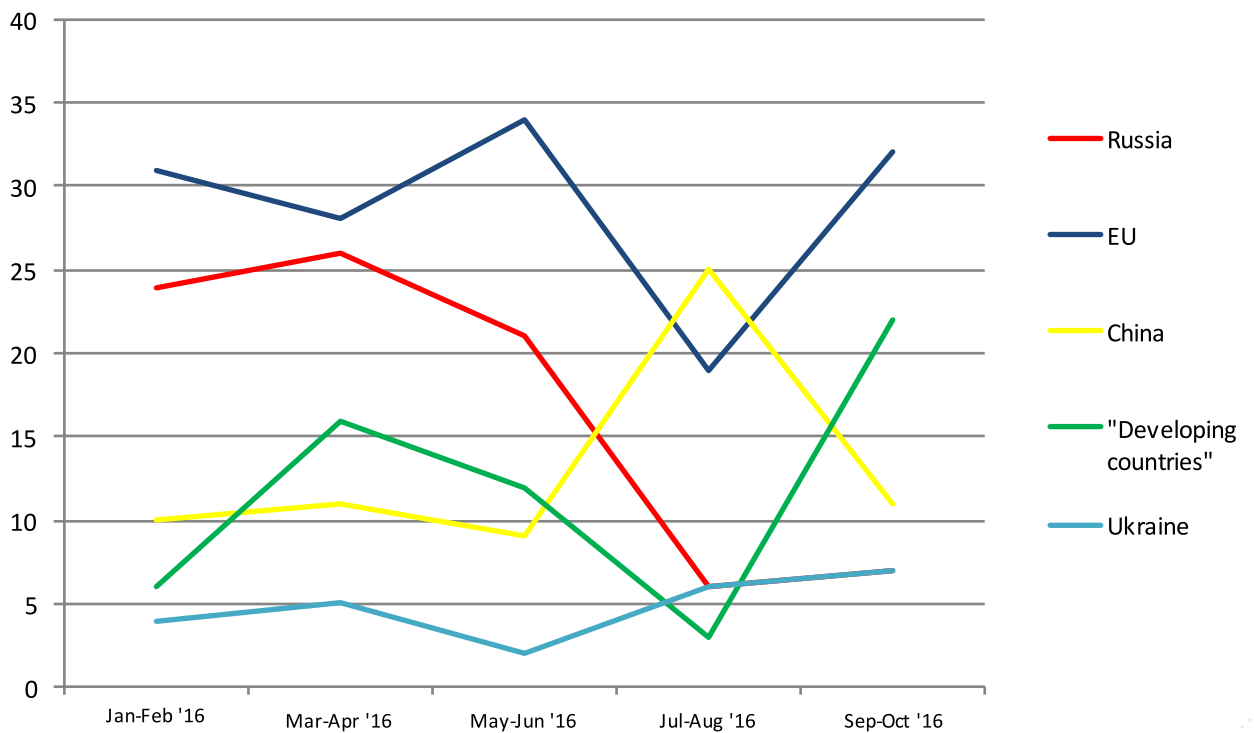
The relations with **Ukraine** were tarnished by the incident with the threat of the interception of a Belarusian civil aircraft, which resulted in a serious diplomatic scandal.

Dzianis Melyantsou

Editor

Belarus Foreign Policy Index

Relations development indices:



Development of the Belarus–Russia relationship

+22



-15

Summary index: +7

Total positive points: +22

Total negative points: -15

Main trends

The conclusion of the parliamentary elections in Belarus and Russia did not lead to a complete relaxation of tensions in the bilateral relationship. The two countries managed to identify and formalize Belarus's natural gas debt and seem to have reached a compromise when it comes to supplies of natural gas and crude oil; however, they have not started to implement that compromise yet. Moreover, the deal turned out to be much closer to the positions of Russian negotiators than that of those representing Belarus. As we had expected, crude oil supplies and arguments about the direction of refined oil transit indeed became a serious obstacle to the effective resolution of all of the challenges faced by the relationship between the two countries in this area.

The symbolic support by Belarusian Paralympians of their Russian counterparts in Rio failed to help relax tensions, and so did the summits of the EEU, the CIS, and the Union State, organized in Minsk on 27–28 October.

The recovery of Belarusian export supplies to Russia predictably slowed, notably through a reduction in deliveries of food and tractors. Nevertheless, export kept recovering faster than import — primarily due to short supplies of crude oil and certain success of the manufacturers of trucks and farm machines. The price environment remains unfavorable for Belarusian products in the Russian market.

Description of the key events

In September and October, the gas-and-oil conflict was not fully resolved: by the end of the period under analysis, the Belarusian side had not paid up its gas debt accumulated in the first half of the year due to the difference in the gas prices that the two countries had set independently; and Russia had not resumed crude oil deliveries in full volume.

In early October, Belarus made an attempt to accelerate talks over the issue, announcing that starting on 11 October it would raise transit rates for Russian oil by 50%. This seemed to have some effect. The Russian administration promised some "inter-budget compensation" pegged to the Russian gas price formula in order for the gas price to eventually decrease for Belarusian consumers by 25%–30%.

In response, the Belarusian side undertook to pay its gas debt and cancelled the upcoming hike in tariffs. However, the USD 300 million debt was never repaid. Belarus was not to blame, though, according to both countries. It turned out that for some reason the repayment of the debt (just as the restoration of the oil transit volume) was pegged to some unnamed accompanying crude oil agreements. In other words, our forecast that the gas spat looked more like a pretext to reduce for a short (or long) period the transit of crude and refined oil via Belarus proved to be completely accurate.

On the main day of the negotiations, 10 October, Russian Railways offered Belarusian suppliers of oil products a two-year 25% discount for the route to the Russian Baltic seaports, which also indicates the Russian government's particular interest in the St. Petersburg route to transport oil products.

We previously suggested that the stalled gas and oil agreement was due to Transneft's lobbying in favor of Russian traders and the Ust-Luga infrastructure. However, judging by the understatement and slips of officials and the completely illogical peg of the repayment of the gas debt to the terms of oil deliveries, the actual reason is even more substantial to Russian elites.

Furthermore, Gazprom is expecting serious decisions concerning natural gas supplies to the European Union, which must impact its relationship with Belarus as a transit country. Specifically, the fate of Nord Stream-2 remains undecided — it might be left with no western shareholders (in which case chances are slim it will be built at all). The prospects of Nord Stream-1 are unclear as well. On the one hand, the European Commission expanded Gazprom's access to Opal, which may serve as the land extension for Nord Stream-1, whereas on the other hand, the provisos about the conditions of this access coupled with the fact that the capacity of Opal is lower than the output capacity of Nord Stream (34 bcm vs. 55 bcm) do not leave much hope that supplies via this route will increase.

The "inter-budget compensation" for natural gas, which has not been specified by the sides, will likely be meant not for the Belarusian government or consumers, but for OAO Gazprom transgaz Belarus, Gazprom's subsidiary. For its part, as soon as it enjoys the compensation, the company will be able to set lower prices for Belarus, for example, by way of cutting its markup.

Another thing that remains vague is when the mechanism of "inter-budget compensation" will become operational — most probably starting in 2017. Interestingly, the original amount of debt accumulated by Belarusian consumers that was voiced by the Russian government — USD 300 million — has not grown since late spring or early summer, i.e. the moment the Russian government decided to reduce crude oil deliveries. This suggests that Belarus has been paying OAO Gazprom transgaz Belarus at the rate set by Gazprom (USD 130 per 1,000 cubic meters). Another possibility (which is not at all unlikely) is that Gazprom decided not to inform the Russian government about its troubles in Belarus. Throughout the conflict Gazprom CEO Alexey Miller notably emphasized that Gazprom was receiving payments from Belarus and making payments to the Russian budget without fail.

Also importantly, during the talks over the price of natural gas and terms of oil supplies Russian negotiators proved to be unusually uncompromising; whereas those representing Belarus turned out to be surprisingly indecisive. Belarus used force (more accurately, it threatened to do so, but never took action) only once. As a result of the odd haggling process Belarus (perhaps the only one of Gazprom's buyers) not only failed to have Gazprom reduce its gas prices for it, but also suffered substantial losses due to the shortfall in crude oil deliveries, which will last at least until December or even the start of 2017, i.e. half a year.

The lobbying of the inclusion of Belarusian-made products in the Russian state order did not have any palpable results in September and October; although Belarusian delegations were actively involved in Russian events, and Belarus hosted a series of trade promotion events for Russia. Belarusian companies of the military industrial sector and representatives of the Defense Ministry participated in the Russian Army-2016 Forum, where the Belarusian defense minister voiced the willingness of Belarusian companies to be involved in the Russian defense order. Belarus presented its products at the Moscow Agricultural Exhibition. The city of Sluck played host to a business cooperation forum; the Belarus-Lipetsk Region cooperation group held a meeting; Days of St. Petersburg were held; and a media tour was organized for Russian journalists around Minsk Region farms. The most significant result of this work is probably the agreement with the Mayor's Office of St. Petersburg on the purchase of 125 MAZ buses.

In January–August 2016, trade between the two countries amounted to USD 16.6 billion, down by 9.2% from the same period in 2015; export from Belarus amounted to USD 6.7 billion, down by 2.2%, and import from Russia reached USD 9.8 billion, down by 13.5%. The balance of Belarus's trade with Russia remained in the negative, at USD 3 billion;

however, the deficit shrank by USD 1 billion due to the short deliveries of crude oil (in July and August), reduction in the cost of natural gas supplies, and lower deliveries of motorcars and ferrous metals. Interestingly, supplies of tires from Russia rose by 50%, whereas tire export from Belarus to Russia fell by 10% year-on-year in the same period. In volume terms, tire flows became equal; however, Russian tires are cheaper, so Belarus has enjoyed a surplus in value terms. As for trade in oil products, import from Russia keeps growing fast and exceeds deliveries from Belarus 4.25 times in volume terms and 3.8 times in value terms.

Export of Belarusian trucks, farm machines (except for tractors), vehicle parts, elevators, refrigerators, footwear, medicines, hosiery goods, cheese and sausage exceeded last year's level both in value and volume terms, although all of the said goods are now sold cheaper in the Russian market. Trade in food — dairy, meat, butter, and fish — was not favorable for Belarus: figures remain below those reported last year in terms of either volume or value, or both in value and volume terms. This will hardly surprise anyone, given the repeated wars with the Rosselkhoznadzor watchdog. In September and October, Belarusian supervisory agencies, too, blocked supplies of Russian foods.

On 27–28 October, Minsk hosted a meeting of the Intergovernmental Council of the Eurasian Economic Union, a meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Government, and a summit of the Union State. The EEU council did not manage to adopt the draft treaty on the Customs Union — the member states did not reach a shared vision on the operation of free economic areas. The Union State summit had a fruitless discussion of a single visa and limitations in two-way trade. No progress was reached in gas and oil agreements. President Lukashenka expectedly slammed the effectiveness of the blocs in front of the heads of the governments of the post-Soviet countries.

Military cooperation developed quite extensively — Belarusian and Russian paratroopers held two joint tactical exercises to drill the effective protection of the Union State borders against illegal armed groups. Some 1,200 personnel and 100 units of defense equipment were involved. The exercise organized in the Brest Region triggered protests by the Ukrainian Defense Ministry, which claimed that Russian warplanes practiced to engage strategic targets in Ukraine.

On 17 October, the CSTO summit was held — with no tangible results, just as the rest of them. On 19 October, Baranavičy hosted a meeting of the intergovernmental commission for military and technical cooperation.

Forecast for the near term

Belarus and Russia might take the remaining portion of the year to fully resolve the gas and oil dispute, at least as far as the resumption of crude supplies is concerned. It is already obvious that the resolution will not be final. Dispute will be carried over to the year 2017 — concerning both the gas price because of new terms, and the conditions of oil supplies because of the St. Petersburg route for crude and refined oil.

In the last few months, new challenges may appear in two-way trade. Belarusian-made goods will have to compete with Russian products not only in the neighbor's market, but also "at home".

Against this challenging backdrop, the political relations between Belarus and Russia will hardly become warmer. Therefore, one may expect Russia to oppose the strengthening of Belarus's foreign policy and military neutrality, while cooperation in the military industrial sector and defense will continue.

Development of the Belarus–EU relationship

+32



0

Summary index: +32

Total positive points: +32

Total negative points: 0

Main trends

Intense diplomatic contacts in Belarus's relationships with the EU member states and institutions resumed following the summer vacations.

In the wake of another internal political campaign in Belarus (the parliamentary elections), progress is still observed in Minsk's relations with the West, specifically with the EU.

A new framework agreement with the EU is becoming Minsk's official objective in its relationship with the European Union.

Description of the key events

September and October 2016 turned out to be eventful for the relations between Belarus and the European Union and became a stark contrast with the slack months of July and August, the traditional period of summer vacations. The first months of autumn were marked by a substantial intensification of contacts at various diplomatic levels.

The main background event of the start of the period under review was the campaign to elect members of the lower chamber of the Belarusian parliament, the House of Representatives. The elections traditionally drew close attention of the states and institutions of the European Union. The main outcome of the election campaign for the relations between Minsk and Brussels is that it did not put any new obstacles on the way to building dialogue. It would even be safe to assume that after the presidential election of October 2015 and the recent parliamentary elections, the "vicious circle" of electoral cycles — when a deterioration of relations was observed after each election campaign, requiring a long rehabilitation period that often took a few years — was finally broken in the relationship between Belarus and the EU (and, on a broader scale, with the West). This time the elections did not become a new obstacle to dialogue. However, they did not provide any impetus to deepening the dialogue, either.

The first significant event of the period under monitoring was the participation of Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej in an informal meeting of the foreign ministers of the EU and Eastern Partnership states in Bratislava, which was organized within the framework of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Belarusian minister presented Minsk's position on the EaP's further development, as well as Belarus's relationship with Brussels. Specifically, he called for using the Eastern Partnership as a framework instrument to further the engagement of the EaP member states with the European Union with consideration for their national priorities and for the purpose of building up security, stability, and ensuring prosperity in the region. Makiej also voiced the need for intensifying project activities within the EaP's multilateral track and expressed his hope that the constructive dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the European Union will continue to expand, including the

commencement of negotiations of a framework agreement between Belarus and the European Union.¹

Also during the event in Bratislava, Makiej held bilateral meetings with the leadership of European institutions and foreign ministers of Hungary and France.

The most significant event of the entire period under review that caused wide-spread media coverage was the visit of the Belarusian foreign minister to Warsaw. It took place on 10 October and was organized to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration on Good-Neighborliness, Mutual Recognition and Cooperation. Makiej conducted talks with President of Poland Andrzej Duda, Secretary of State at the Chancellery of the President Krzysztof Szczerski, and Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski. Makiej's stay in Poland, which followed the visit of the Polish foreign minister to Minsk in March, became another link in the chain of normalization of relations with Warsaw. The officials addressed a broad range of issues, including challenges. Makiej brought to Warsaw some archive documents that, according to Waszczykowski, concerned the "fate of many Poles."

Following the negotiations the Belarusian minister said:

"I am positive that Belarus and Poland are currently going through a historical moment of their relations entering a new phase, where there will be no place for mistrust, confrontation, machination, outdated stereotypes, and any ideological superstitions."²

Makiej also gave an extensive interview to the newspaper Rzeczpospolita.³ In addition to numerous positive remarks about Poland and the European Union, the appeal of the Belarusian foreign minister to improve the visibility of the EU in Belarus via the implementation of mutually beneficial projects is noteworthy.

On the following day, 11 October, the focus moved back to Belarus, as Prince Michael of Kent, a member of the British Royal Family, was visiting Minsk. He was received by President Lukashenka, who said he hoped the visit would open a new page in the relationship between Belarus and the United Kingdom. An agreement was reached on the implementation of projects in transport and infrastructure following negotiations with the president of Belarus and the ministers of foreign affairs and transport.

Along with the outlined events that took place in September and October, Minsk's intensified contacts with Slovakia (which has assumed the presidency of the Council of the EU), Latvia, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Hungary stand out. Meetings between senior officials of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry and representatives of European political parties and foundations still look quite unusual. For instance, in early September, Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna conducted negotiations with President of the European People's Party Joseph Daul. In late September, she had a meeting with a delegation of social-democratic parties and foundations from the EU member states.

Trade dialogue between Minsk and Brussels notably started on 13 October, to supplement the ongoing dialogues on economics and finance, environment, and human rights.

Two-way trade between Belarus and the EU member states amounted to USD 8.381 billion in January–September 2016, down by 23.5% year-on-year. Belarusian export reached USD 4.477 billion, which represents a reduction by 32.9% from the first nine months of 2015, whereas import from the EU totaled USD 3.904 billion, down by 8.9% year-on-year. Belarus reported a USD 572.9 million surplus of the balance of its trade with the EU.

1. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Makei participates in the EU and EaP Informal Ministerial Meeting — https://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/b25e5816e614cd31.html

2. Minsk and Warsaw: new chance or same trap, Belsat — <http://belsat.eu/ru/news/minsk-i-varshava-novyishans-ili-staryye-grabli/> (In Russian)

3. Verbatim of the interview of Minister of Foreign Affairs U. Makiej to the Polish newspaper Rzeczpospolita (9 October 2016, Warsaw) - <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/b0e4aa770383c1d1.html> (In Russian)

Forecast for the near term

Active diplomatic contacts at various levels will continue contributing to the overall positive substance of the Belarus–EU relationship. No breakthrough should be expected in the foreseeable future; however, new thematic niches will emerge and evolve, thus promoting the consistent development and expansion of the relations.

Minsk will be coming up with stronger reasons to support the commencement of negotiations of a new framework agreement. Despite certain skepticism that is voiced in the European Parliament and by some representatives of the European Commission and the European External Action Service, it is quite likely that meeting points will be gradually sought out in this area as well.



Development of the Belarus–China relationship

Summary index: +11

Total positive points: +11

Total negative points: 0

+11

0

Main trends

In September and October, the relationship between Belarus and China evolved in the context of the visit of President Aliaksandr Lukashenka to China and his negotiations with President of China Xi Jinping.

Although the visit was taking place against the positive backdrop provided by the Chinese and Belarusian state media, the actual results of the negotiations proved to be quite modest, as many experts had forecast. Moreover, during the period under review, the relations between Belarus and China beyond the framework of the state visit seemed to take a pause in their development.

Description of the key events

Aliaksandr Lukashenka's state visit to China formed the substance of the bilateral relations between Belarus and China in September and October 2016. The Belarusian state leader met with President Xi Jinping, Premier of the State Council of China Li Keqiang, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhang Dejiang, and Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Yu Zhengsheng. Lukashenka also delivered a lecture to students of Peking University.

Apparently, the visit is an indication of the further political approximation of the two states. The year 2016 repeated the frequency of top-level meetings between Belarus and China — two meetings per year, this time including the large-scale visit of President Lukashenka to Beijing. Experts emphasize the similarity of last year's visit of the Belarusian leader. In this context, the results of the negotiations that took place in September 2015 should be recalled:

"These include the continuation of negotiations of possible preferential loans from China, restructuring of the existing loans, sale of certain Belarusian enterprises or stakes in those companies to Chinese investors, intensification of military and technical cooperation with China, and support by official Beijing in the international scene." Also in 2015, announcements were made that agreements had been reached on multi-billion dollar loans (approximately USD 7 billion) for Belarus, as well as on further intensification of Belarus's engagement in the implementation of the Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt project.⁴

Unfortunately, the analysis of the information about the implementation of the declared agreements and the virtually identical visit of the Belarusian president in 2016, compared to last year's visit, make it obvious that the relationship between Belarus and China

4. Belarus Foreign Policy Index N28 (September–October 2015) — http://belinstitute.eu/sites/biss.newmedia-host.info/files/attached-files/BISS_FPI28_2015en.pdf

evolves primarily within the declarative track. Of the announced amount of USD 7 billion, Belarus enjoyed a bit more than USD 300 million worth of loans, which is evidenced in the table below (millions of U.S. dollars):⁵

September–November 2015	December 2015	January–February 2016	March–April 2016	May 2016	June–July 2016	August 2016
+74,9	+39,2	+56,5	+54,6	+30,5	+37,9	+27,3

In the course of the recent visit, Belarus and China announced reaching a whole new level of bilateral relations — a comprehensive strategic partnership. Belarus's foreign policy does not make use of this concept; it reflects China's stance on its international partners. The problem is that independent research studies show that the content of these concepts in China's foreign policy remains underdeveloped and can vary from country to country.⁶ Specifically, China has announced the establishment of comprehensive strategic partnerships with Serbia, Indonesia, Australia, Russia, Vietnam, Mexico, Poland, Brazil, and some other countries.

In the course of the visit, more than 20 various agreements and memorandums were signed, encompassing diverse areas — technical and economic assistance for the China–Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP), promotion of science and education, including stepping up the activity of the Confucius Institute in Belarus, engagement to prevent emergency situations, standardization, trade, and promotion of tourism. Belarus and China will continue their sufficiently successful cooperation in the aerospace industry, development of the military industrial complex, as well as exchange of technologies to ensure computer and public security.

However, the key agreement for Belarus is obviously the one signed between Belarusbank and the China Development Bank on the commencement of the disbursement of credit facilities for the Slavkali project. Now that the Belarusian administration is in a compelling need for financial inflows, the credit line of USD 1.4 billion committed for the implementation of the project looks opportune.

The problem is that, as we mentioned previously in earlier Index issues, the broad public is unaware of the details of the agreement. Who is the ultimate beneficiary of the loan that is being extended against Belarusian state guarantees? What is the interest rate? What are the terms and conditions for the subsequent operation of the deposit, specifically, will the Chinese side enjoy lower fees for potash fertilizers? These are the questions that need to be answered.

As part of credit and investment cooperation with China, an agreement was signed on engagement with the purpose of establishing the China–Belarus Investment Fund between the Ministry of Finance of Belarus, Belarusbank, and CITIC Construction Co. Ltd. However, that company's track record in Belarus shows that CITIC operates based upon the standard (and unbeneficial for Belarus) scheme: attraction of tied Chinese loans, high share of Chinese materials, equipment, and workforce; poor construction quality and non-transparent procedures in the course of construction operations; and implementation of projects that are, as a rule, loss-making.

When commenting on the state visit, Belarusian officials and media focused on the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt project. The Chinese Foreign Ministry made

5. These data only pertain to the sovereign debt of the Republic of Belarus. However, even according to the most optimistic estimates, the combined corporate debt does not exceed USD 200 million.

6. China's strategic partnership diplomacy: engaging with a changing world - http://fride.org/download/WP8_China_strategic_partnership_diplomacy.pdf

it the highlight of its coverage of the negotiations between Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Xi Jinping while pegging the implementation of the initiative to the progress of Eurasian integration. Belarus remains one of the partners in the project; however, competition is growing stronger with the countries of the Black Sea basin, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey as an alternative route.

Forecast for the near term

Belarus will stage a major campaign to ensure detailed coverage of Lukashenka's visit to China. Even compared with the previous reporting period — May and June 2016 — the media have become increasingly active in covering the relationship between Belarus and China, meetings of various commissions, etc. However, there are no palpable results of this cooperation.

One should not expect Lukashenka's visit and meeting with Xi Jinping to cause any breakthrough, although some contracts will definitely be signed. The previous visit in September 2015 had limited success, despite the broad media coverage.³ It appears that China will emphasize the potash issue. It is highly likely that the loan amounting to USD 1.4 billion and the contract for supplies of potash fertilizers envisage some implicit additional conditionality, which in all appearances will make up the substance of the upcoming visit.

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

(Asia, Africa and Latin America)

+22



0

Summary index: +22

Total positive points: +22

Total negative points: 0

Main trends

Following a slack period, Belarusian contacts with countries of the developing world markedly intensified. This can be attributed to attempts to make up for challenges that the country encountered elsewhere, especially in the Russian dimension of its foreign policy, and, possibly, some of the previously achieved framework agreements on cooperation (primarily with the Arab monarchies), which gave a new impetus to the relationships.

There are reasons to believe that contacts with the conservative Arab regimes (Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and — a bit earlier — with Saudi Arabia) can be partially connected with Belarus's cooperation projects with Sudan, Pakistan, and some other developing and post-Soviet countries. The conservative Arab regimes are capable of financing supplies of goods and services to the latter group of countries. These supplies and services can be organized directly in the interests of the Arab monarchies (such as the ongoing Belarusian supplies of the Su-24 fighters to Sudan, which uses them in Yemen in favor of Saudi Arabia).

The situation around contacts with the DPRK shows Minsk's unwillingness to offer any extra reasons to escalate tensions with the West while reaping no benefits at all. When it does pursue contacts with the countries that are in opposition to the West and its allies, the Belarusian government takes good care to limit them and not to show them off.

Description of the key events

Middle East

UAE. On 3–6 October, Minsk hosted the 7th meeting of the Belarus–UAE committee on military and technical cooperation. The UAE delegation was led by Chief of Joint Logistics, the UAE Armed Forces General Headquarters Major General Ishaq Saleh Mohammed Al Balushi. On 11 October, Minsk played host to the 2nd round of political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and the United Arab Emirates.

On 31 October–5 November, President Aliaksandr Lukashenka paid a working visit to the United Arab Emirates. He conducted negotiations with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. They addressed cooperation in high technologies, specifically in the aerospace industry and IT; engagement in logistics, tourism, military and technical cooperation, science, R&D and manufacturing, etc. In 2017, the crown prince is expected to visit Belarus. On 1 November, Aliaksandr Lukashenka had a meeting with Vice President, Prime Minister and Defense Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Emir of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.⁷

Qatar. On 29–30 October, President Aliaksandr Lukashenka paid an official visit to Qatar. He conducted negotiations with Emir of the State of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Investments and trade with a focus on joint ventures were officially highlighted

7. Visit to United Arab Emirates — 1 November 2016 http://president.gov.by/en/news_en/view/visit-to-unit-ed-arab-emirates-14769/

as the key areas for cooperation. In the presence of the two state leaders, a package of documents was signed for the development of engagement in various areas, including finance, healthcare, and academic and scientific cooperation. A memorandum of understanding was also concluded between the Development Banks of Belarus and Qatar.⁸

Jordan. On 24–25 October, Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ visited Jordan. Consultations between the Foreign Ministries were held. Rybakoŭ met with Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply of Jordan Yarub Qudah, Chairman of Amman Chamber of Commerce Issa Murad, and representatives of the Jordanian business community.

Sudan. On 26–27 October, Deputy Foreign Minister Rybakoŭ visited Sudan. He held consultations between the Foreign Ministries, met with the minister of petroleum and gas of Sudan, co-chairman of the Belarus–Sudan joint commission for cooperation Bakri Hassan Saleh, representatives of the Ministries of Industry, Agriculture, Investment, Higher Education and Science, International Cooperation, Public Health and the Central Bank of Sudan.

Oman. On 17–21 September, a delegation of more than 40 major Omani businessmen led by Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) Said bin Saleh al-Kayoumi visited Belarus. On 20 September, the First Belarus–Oman Business Forum was held. Ahead of the forum, on 19 September, representatives of the Omani business community were received by President Lukashenka. Official contacts with Oman substantially increased over the past two years.

South and Southeast Asia

Pakistan. On 7–8 September, Minister for Commerce of Pakistan Khurram Dastgir Khan visited Belarus. He participated in the 3rd meeting of the Belarus–Pakistan Intergovernmental Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation.

On 5–6 October, President Lukashenka visited Pakistan. He conducted negotiations with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The parties signed documents concerning the development of interaction in various areas, including a memorandum of cooperation between the National Center of Marketing and Pricing of the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, agreement on air traffic, and agreement on mutual recognition of documents confirming education. Lukashenka said that he had reached an agreement with Sharif to boost two-way trade to USD 1 billion within four years.

According to an official report, “Belarus and Pakistan agreed to pursue close cooperation with third countries.” Minsk hopes to be able to participate in the construction of the Chinese-Pakistani economic corridor.⁹ As part of the visit, the Belarus–Pakistan center for the coordination of scientific, technological, and innovative cooperation was opened.

In Islamabad, Lukashenka also met with President of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain and Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Sadiq and took part in the opening ceremony of the 4th Belarus–Pakistan Business and Investment Forum.

Indonesia. On 16–19 October, Deputy Foreign Minister Rybakoŭ visited Indonesia and held the first round of political consultations between the Foreign Ministries, met with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia Abdurrahman Mohammad Fachir, Minister of Industry Airlangga Hartarto, and the top executives of Salim Group, Pupuk Indonesia, and Petrokimia Gresik.

Malaysia. On 19–21 October, a Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Rybakoŭ visited Malaysia. He conducted negotiations with Secretary-General for bilateral affairs of the Malaysian Foreign Ministry Muhammad Shahrul Ikram and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sri Reezal Merican. Rybakoŭ also met with Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture Seri Ismail Bakar, Deputy Speaker of the House Representatives of the Parliament of Malaysia Ronald Kiandee, and executives of the Malaysian company Agro-

8. Visit to State of Qatar — 30 October 2016 http://president.gov.by/en/news_en/view/visit-to-state-of-qatar-14768/

9. Official visit to Pakistan 5 October 2016 http://president.gov.by/en/news_en/view/official-visit-to-pakistan-14557/

mate Holding, as well as Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry of Malaysia for Trade Chua Tee Yong.

Vietnam. On 29–30 September, a delegation led by Deputy Minister of National Defence of Vietnam Colonel General Be Xuan Truong visited Belarus. He participated in the 15th meeting of the Joint Belarus–Vietnam Commission on Military and Technical Cooperation.¹⁰

On 24–27 October, Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Siamaška paid a working visit to Vietnam. He participated in the 13th meeting of the Belarus–Vietnam intergovernmental commission on trade, economic, scientific, and technical cooperation. The commission addressed the establishment of joint ventures, construction of a subway in Vietnam with the assistance of Belarusian specialists, ways to increase Belarusian export and supplies of Vietnamese agricultural products and rubber to Belarus. A package of bilateral agreements and contracts was signed. Siamaška conducted negotiations about the deliveries of Belarusian passenger vehicles and trucks to the Hai Phong municipality.¹¹

Thailand. On 6 October, the Council of the Republic approved the ratification of the intergovernmental agreement between Belarus and Thailand on military and technical cooperation. It became the 48th agreement of this kind signed by Belarus, mostly with developing countries.

Latin America

On 28 September, Belarusian–Chilean consultations on trade and economic issues between the Foreign Ministries were held. The Chilean delegation was headed by Director General of the Directorate General for International Economic Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile Andres Rebolledo.

On 23–24 October, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina Carlos Mario Foradori visited Belarus. Consultations were held between the Foreign Ministries, and an agreement on visa-free travel for citizens was signed.

Cuba. On 23–28 October, the 5th meeting of the Belarus–Cuba commission for military and technical cooperation was held at Belspetsvneshtekhnika. The Cuban delegation was led by the commander of the Cuban Revolutionary Air and Air Defence Force¹² — the name is not mentioned in official sources, but Major General Tomas Valdes Hernandez must be the one to whom they refer.

Africa

Namibia. On 22–25 October, a delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of Namibia Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah visited Belarus. That was the first visit of such a high-ranking official of Namibia to Belarus. She conducted negotiations with Foreign Minister Makiej and met with Prime Minister Andrej Kabiakoŭ. The delegation visited the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Industry, BelAZ, MTZ, and Belarusian Potash Company.

Kabiakoŭ suggested exploring possibilities for supplying to Namibia quarry and mining machinery, as well as measuring equipment for radiation control in uranium production.

Other

On 9 September, Belarus condemned the nuclear test conducted by North Korea.¹³ At the same time, North Korea announced that on 18–20 September, a delegation of the Foreign

10. Belarus, Vietnam Discuss Military-Technical Cooperation — 30 September 2016 <http://www.vpk.gov.by/en/news/5186/>

11. Vladimir Semashko makes a working visit to Vietnam <http://www.government.by/en/content/6774>

12. Belarus, Cuba Discuss Prospects for Military-Technical Cooperation 28 October 2016 <http://www.vpk.gov.by/en/news/5248/>

13. Statement by the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus in connection with another nuclear test conducted by North Korea on September 9, 2016 (September 9, 2016, Minsk) <https://mfa.gov.by/en/press/statements/c91b2ea8c8a8b1c7.html>

Ministry of the DPRK at the level of a department director visited Belarus, conducted negotiations and participated in the opening ceremony of the Korean Embassy.¹⁴ No information about the visit has been found in Belarusian official sources. Later the Belarusian Foreign Ministry reiterated that it condemned Pyongyang's actions and emphasized that the issue of the Embassy of the DPRK had been discussed before the current North Korea crisis, specifically in the course of the visit of the Foreign Minister of the DPRK in March 2015, after which three North Korean diplomats responsible for trade and economic relations were accredited by the Belarusian Foreign Ministry. Moreover, it was said that "there is no full-scale DPRK Embassy in Belarus. The Ambassador has no accreditation, there was no request for an agreement, and the decision on this matter will be taken separately."¹⁵

On 13–18 September, a delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Rybakou participated in the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Venezuela.

During his participation in a session of the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister Makiej had a series of bilateral meetings. Specifically, he met with Angolan Minister of Foreign Affairs Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti. An agreement was reached that the Angolan official would visit Belarus. Furthermore, Makiej had a meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al Muallem.

Forecast for the near term

Minsk will continue cooperating with the conservative Arab regimes (Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia), especially regarding joint projects in third countries. One can expect this sort of collaboration between Belarus and the conservative Arab regimes with respect to Pakistan and African economies (and, possibly, other regions), as well as support for specific groups in conflict zones in the Middle East (Syria, Libya, and Yemen). A logical consequence of the tense situation in the region is the presence of a conspicuous military component in Minsk's relationships with the Arab monarchies. The Belarusian government will continue maintaining minimal contacts with the countries that are in opposition to the West (the DPRK, Iran, and Syria), with a possible exception of some projects pursued in cooperation with such countries that promise extraordinary economic or political benefits (including the oil projects with Iran). One can be certain that Minsk is not interested in expanding the North Korean presence in the country and will stall the process. In its endeavor the DPRK might seek support from China, which has powerful levers to influence Minsk. In South and Southeast Asia, Minsk will be looking to expand the range of its partners and, possibly, continue its attempts to step up cooperation with Bangladesh, India, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. However, once again we can observe the trend that we saw in Belarus's foreign policy previously, when the country tries to find some key partner in a region that is supposed to help Minsk enter new markets (for example, Vietnam is becoming such a partner in promoting Belarusian-made products to the markets of the Philippines and Indochina).

The relations with Latin America and Africa will remain limited, except for Cuba. Belarus's contacts with its traditional Latin American partner Venezuela is in bad shape because of the internal political challenges in that country and are further aggravated by the problem of Venezuela's debt to Minsk. The relations with Ecuador were unable to make up for Belarus's loss of Venezuela, whereas connections with other countries of the region remain even more limited.

14. DPRK FM Department Director Visits Belarus, Korean Central News Agency, 21.09.2016, <http://www.kcna.kp/kcna.user.article.retrieveNewsViewInfoList.kcmsf>

15. Head of the Information Department and Spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Ministry Z. Mirončyk responds to the question of the Internet-portal TUT.BY (Belarus) 27-09-2016 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/e66ee43f3d47917e.html (In Russian)

Development of the Belarus–Ukraine relationship

+11



-4

Summary index: +7

Total positive points: +11

Total negative points: -4

Main trends

The relationship with Ukraine was somewhat tarnished by the incident with the threat to intercept a Belarusian civil aircraft, which caused a serious diplomatic scandal.

Otherwise the bilateral relations continued their constructive and consistent development.

Description of the key events

Politics

During the two months under review, the Ukrainian issue was mentioned only sporadically in the public rhetoric of the Belarusian administration. President Lukashenka made a single statement on Ukraine. On 7 October, in his address to the newly elected members of the House of Representatives, he said that Belarus would not interfere in military conflicts in Syria and Ukraine: "We will not enter Ukraine driving tanks, we will ride tractors there. They are our brothers, this is our Slavic unity that no one has the right to destroy."

On 26 October, former president of Ukraine and Ukraine's representative in the Trilateral Contact Group on the Donbas settlement Leonid Kuchma met with Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej. According to his press service, "the meeting addressed bilateral cooperation between Ukraine and Belarus."

Also during the two months under review, Minsk remained one of the key negotiating venues to settle the military conflict in Donbas.

Belavia plane incident

On 21 October, Ukraine's air traffic control forced a Belavia passenger plane, en route from Kiev to Minsk, to turn around and return to Kiev-based airport of Zhuliany, threatening to launch fighter jets to intercept it. Later, when accounting for the threat, the Ukrainian authorities said there was a foreign citizen onboard who could constitute a threat to Ukraine's security. The incident caused a serious diplomatic conflict. On 24 October, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry handed a note over to the charge d'affaires of Ukraine in Belarus with demands of apologies and monetary compensation from Ukraine. On 27 October, spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Ministry Zmicier Mirončyk said that Minsk was shocked at Kyiv's actions, because with respect to Ukraine "Belarus has always exercised a policy built on good neighborliness and friendliness." Ukraine never apologized, though. The Ukrainian security service, which must have ordered to get the plane back to Zhuliany, said that the threat to use fighters was the air traffic controller's personal initiative. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said that it "would be working with other Ukrainian competent authorities regarding the note issued by the Foreign Ministry of Belarus."

Energy

Back in summer, official Kyiv began making steps to resume oil transit via the Odessa–Brody pipeline in the direct mode having held respective negotiations with Azerbaijan and Iran.

On 12 September, as he instructed Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Siamaška before the talks in Moscow, Lukashenka said Belarus was interested in supplies of Iranian crude oil. The logistics of oil transportation to Mazyr via Odessa–Brody was tested back in 2011. However, as Ukrainian experts noted, unlike expensive Azeri oil, Iranian crude can compete even with Russian rates. On 27 September, Ukrainian state-owned Ukrtransnafta said it was involved in framework negotiations with Iran over the possibility of transiting Iranian crude via Odessa–Brody. Spokesman for the company Oleksandr Melezhik spoke about the technical possibility of supplying Iranian crude via Ukraine to both Europe and to Belarus-based oil refineries.

On 10 October, Lukashenka said that Belarus was “in talks with Iran, which is actively looking for buyers of its oil. It is ready to cut prices for us, all the way down to the scheme, where we offer them processing possibilities at the Mazyr or the other refinery: have your oil processed there and sell it where you wish. They are pondering over this offer.” On 19 October, a tanker with 84,700 tons of Azeri oil bound for Belarus arrived in Odessa.

Ukraine is also interested in massive oil transit via Belarus; however, it is concerned over long-term stability of such supplies, because official Minsk previously used the Ukrainian alternative more as an instrument to haggle with the Kremlin.

According to some reports, this year, Belarus slashed the transit of oil products via Ukrainian ports and redirected it towards Lithuania. Deputy CEO of Belarusian Oil Company (BOC) Siarhiej Hryb confirmed that amid the increase in BOC’s refined oil export by 12% year-on-year, transit via Ukraine dropped from more than 1 million tons in the first half of 2015 to 200,000 tons in the first half of 2016. At the same time, transit via Lithuanian seaports hiked by 120%.

Military sector

On 5–9 September, representatives of the Belarusian Armed Forces visited airbases of the Air Force and Army units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, where they familiarized themselves with new types of weapons and military hardware. The event was organized by the Ukrainian side for representatives of the OSCE member states in compliance with the Vienna Document (2011) on confidence and security-building measures.

On 11 October, the media and military experts of Ukraine said that the Russian Aerospace Forces had withdrawn the Su-27SM fighters from Belarus, which is evidenced by satellite images of the 61st aviation base in Baranavičy. According to their reports, since December 2013, four Russian Su-27SM fighters were standing in concealment on aprons while maintaining constant alert. Experts emphasize the absence of any information about the withdrawal of the fighters in the official media. They note, though, that by all appearances the fact that the planes left the airfield suggests that the Belarusian president still manages to oppose the idea to deploy a Russian airbase in Belarus. The news was welcomed by the Ukrainian political establishment and public opinion.

On 28 October, Vadym Skibitsky, spokesman for the Main Department of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, said that in the course of the joint exercises with Belarus, Russian aviation practiced strikes on Ukrainian targets in the Belarusian air space. In his words, “The leadership of the Russian Federation does not abandon its aggressive plans concerning Ukraine and continues to prepare for possible large-scale offensive actions against our country. On October 26, under the pretext of the commitments of the Republic of Belarus within the framework of the allied state and in the air space of Belarus, Russian military aircraft practiced provisional massive air strikes on strategic targets in Ukraine.”

The position of the Belarusian Defense Ministry was voiced by head of the information department Uladzimir Makaraŭ. He said the exercise of the joint air defense system that was held on 26 October involved air defense alert forces of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In his words, “the attempt to inadequately interpret respective information is obviously inappropriate. We would like to recommend our partners not to look for enemies where there are most certainly none.”

Diplomacy

On 6 September, the new Belarusian Ambassador to Ukraine, Ihar Sokal, presented copies of his credentials to Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine Vadym Prystayko. On 5 October, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko accepted the credentials. Ways to step up trade and economic relations were discussed. Specifically, Poroshenko and Sokal addressed the expansion of cooperation in mechanical engineering, agribusiness, transport, and energy. Special attention was paid to the organization of joint cultural events celebrating the 345th anniversary of the author of the first Constitution of Ukraine Hetman Pylyp Orlyk, who was born in the area that is now part of the Minsk Region.

However, the issue of the appointment of a new Ukrainian ambassador to Belarus remains undecided. Ukraine has had no ambassador to Minsk for two years now. The fate of the former ambassador Mykhailo Yezhel remains vague as well. In Ukraine, a criminal corruption case against him was investigated in his absence. Kyiv believes Yezhel is in hiding from Ukrainian punishment in Belarus, although the Belarusian authorities deny all allegations.

Trade and economy

On 2 September, the 4th meeting of the Belarus–Ukraine high level working group for mutual trade was held. The Belarusian delegation was led by First Deputy Foreign Minister Andrej Jeŭdačenka, and the Ukrainian side was headed by Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine Natalia Mykolskaya. The group addressed a broad range of issues, including the abolition by the Ukrainian side of special duties applied to some Belarusian goods, conditions of mutual access of farm produce and food, prospects of supplies of Belarusian oil products to the Ukrainian market, collaboration in industry and production cooperation, as well as other pressing issues. A Protocol was signed following the meeting to outline activities for the near future.

The negotiations enabled Belarus to simplify the export procedure for Ukraine on 16 September: the Belarusian Health Ministry extended the validity period for safety and health certificates for imported Ukrainian products to 36 months from 12 months. For its part, the Interdepartmental Commission of Ukraine for International Trade on 8 September cancelled the special duties applied to certain Belarusian exported products. The duty used to be as high as 39.2% and had applied to fish and dairy products, tractors, freezing chambers and refrigerator, vodka and beer, tiles and hosiery. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry noted that the move would contribute to the elimination of problems in the trade and economic relations between the two countries and promote two-way trade.

On 18 October, the subsidiary of Belarusian Potash Company — OOO Agrozozkvit — began its operation in Ukraine. Its objective is to ensure the broadest possible coverage of the Ukrainian market and bring the company closer to final consumers of potash fertilizers.

In September, seven-month trade statistics were reported. On January–July 2016, Ukraine was second-largest trade partner of Belarus — the second-largest importer of Belarusian products and the fifth-largest exporter of goods to Belarus (in the same period in 2015, it ranked 2nd, 3rd, and 5th, respectively). Belarus has enjoyed a surplus in two-way trade for a long time now — in the first seven months of the year, it amounted to USD 1.05 billion, which compares to USD 806.77 million in the same period of 2015. Export supplies from Belarus went up to USD 1.55 billion in the first seven months of 2016 from USD 1.34 billion in the same period of 2015, and import shrank to USD 501.15 million from USD 537.76 million.

Other areas of bilateral relations

On 30 October, First Deputy Chief of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine Vasyl Servatiuk and First Deputy Chief of the State Border Committee of Belarus Ihar Butkievič discussed the situation on the state border between Belarus and Ukraine and prospects of the interaction of border guards of the two countries. The official statement reads: “the sides agreed that owing to concerted efforts the situation on the common section of the state border remains stable and controlled.” It was also noted that the main threats remain unchanged: smuggling attempts and illegal migration. In the context of

the upcoming meeting of the chief border envoys of Ukraine and Belarus it is planned to prepare a series of documents, including the Cooperation Plan for 2017–2018 and proposals concerning joint special arrangements for the next year and organization of passes for citizens of Ukraine to harvest wild-growing herbs.

On 27 September, Belarusian Foreign Minister Makiej said in an interview to UN Radio that the number of refugees from Ukraine to Belarus had reached 160,000 people and was not growing anymore. According to him, "a presidential decree was signed to provide special preferences for these people, associated with employment, accommodation, access to education, etc. In fact, we have provided them with the same rights that Belarusian citizens have."

On 25 October, the State Border Committee of Belarus commented on the matter of Ukrainian ID passports (that is a sensitive one for Ukraine), which are not recognized by Belarusian border guards. A spokesman for the Committee said that for the time being, an ID card did not entitle its holder to cross the Belarusian state border. Previously, Spokesman for the Foreign Ministry Mirončyk said that the Ukrainian side was responsible for the situation, because it never initiated the procedure for the recognition of the data of new passports as valid documents for the crossing of the Belarusian border.

Forecast for the near term

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

Official Minsk focuses on the promotion of its relations with the United States, and the Ukrainian issue is among the key ones. On October, a meeting of representatives of the Belarusian Defense Ministry with their counterparts from the Department of Defense was held in Washington, where the Plan for bilateral military cooperation for 2017 was signed.

Annex

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development index

Development of the Belarus–Russia relationship

Date	Event	Point
6 September	President Lukashenka's interview to TASS. His statement about the importance of integration	+2
7 September	Business delegation of Smolensk visits Hrodna Region	+1
8 September	Belarusian delegation to the Paralympic Games with a Russian flag, comment by the Foreign Ministry of Russia, spokesman for the Russian president	+3
9 September	Lukashenka's statement during a meeting with Chief of Russian Investigative Committee Alexander Bastrykin about cooperation in investigations	+1
6-11 September	Belarus participates in the Army-2016 Forum (Kubinka, Moscow Region)	+1
11 September	Lukashenka's statement about the resolution of the gas issue and friendship with Russia	+1
12 September	Belavia's first flight to Zhukovsky	+1
20 September	Lukashenka's brusque statements about existing challenges at his meeting with State Secretary of the Union State Grigory Rapota	-3
21 September	Agreement on cooperation in subsoil management	+1
23 September	Kabiakoŭ reports on the drop in GDP due to short supplies of Russian crude oil	-2
28 September	Days of the Homiel Region in Moscow	+1
30 September	Meeting of the heads of the Central Banks of Russia and Belarus	+1
1 October	Belarus announces a 50% hike in oil transit rates starting on 11 October	-3
4 October	Delegation of Russia's Lipetsk Region visits Belarus	+1
6-7 October	Days of St. Petersburg in Minsk	+1
7-20 October	Joint exercise of paratroopers	+1
7 October	Lukashenka's address to the parliament, criticism of Russia	-3
10 October	Lukashenka says a compromise has been reached in the gas sector	+1
11 October	Belarus cancels increase in transit rates	+2
28 October	Summits of the EEU and CIS in Minsk, Lukashenka's speech	+3
September–October	Disputes with Rosselkhozadzor	-2
September–October	Bargaining of gas prices and terms of crude oil supplies	-2
Total		+7

Development of the Belarus–EU relationship

Date	Event	Point
1 September	Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna meets with President of the European People's Party Joseph Daul	+1
3 September	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej visits informal meeting of the foreign ministers of the EU and Eastern Partnership states in Bratislava	+2
6 September	Kupčyna meets with Ambassador of Slovakia Jozef Migas	+1
13 September	Makiej meets with Ambassador of France Dominique Gazuy	+1
13 September	V Belarus–Finland Economic Forum in Homiel	+1
14 September	Makiej meets with Foreign Minister of Luxembourg Jean Asselborn	+1
19 September	Kupčyna meets with a delegation of the European Commission led by Deputy Director General, Directorate General Energy Gerassimos Thomas	+1
20 September	2nd meeting of the Belarus–Austria Business Council in Vienna	+1
27 September	Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Economy Minister Zmicier Krutoj attends the Day of Belarusian Economy in Hamburg	+1
27 September	Belarus–Latvia consultations between the Foreign Ministries attended by Kupčyna and State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Latvia Andrejs Pildegovičs	+1
27 September	First Deputy Foreign Minister Andrej Jeŭdačenka meets with Pildegovičs	+1
27 September	Makiej and Kupčyna meet with Secretary of State to the German Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs Markus Ederer	+1
28 September	Jeŭdačenka and Kupčyna meet with State Secretary of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry László Szabó	+1
29 September	11th meeting of the Belarus–Poland intergovernmental coordinating commission for cross-border cooperation attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Jaŭhien Šestakoŭ and Deputy Minister of the Interior and Administration of Poland Jakub Skiba	+1
29 September	7th meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarus – Hungary commission for economic cooperation attended by Kupčyna and Szabó	+1
30 September	Kupčyna meets with a delegation of social-democratic parties and foundations from some EU member states	+1
3 October	Makiej meets with Latvian Minister of Transport Uldis Augulis	+1
3 October	Makiej meets with a delegation of the Germany–Belarus parliamentary group of the Bundestag	+1
10 October	Kupčyna meets with Political Director at the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria Alexander Marschik	+1
10 October	Makiej visits Poland, conducts negotiations with President Andrzej Duda and Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski	+2
11 October	Lukashenka and Makiej meet with member of the British Royal Family Prince Michael of Kent	+2
12-14 October	Kupčyna visits Slovakia, participates in consultations between the Foreign Ministries	+1
13 October	14th meeting of the Belarus–Germany working group for trade and investments	+1
13 October	First round of trade dialogue between the Foreign Ministry of Belarus and the Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission	+1

21 October	Opening of the Honorary Consulate of Belarus in Thessaloniki (Greece)	+1
21 October	Makiej meets with Ambassador of France to Belarus Didier Canesse	+1
25 October	Kupčyna meets with Poland's MFA Undersecretary of State Marek Ziółkowski	+1
26 October	Kupčyna visits Denmark, participates in consultations between the Foreign Ministries	+1
September–October	Positive materials in official media and statements by the country's leadership about the EU	+1
Total		+32

Development of the Belarus–China relationship

Date	Event	Point
14 September	Belarusian Ambassador to China Kiryl Rudy presents his credentials to the president of China	+1
29-30 September	President Lukashenka's state visit to China	+3
1 October	Lukashenka congratulates President of China Xi Jinping	+1
7 October	Positive statements about cooperation with China in Lukashenka's address to members of the House of Representatives of the fifth and sixth convocations	+1
19 October	Head of Department of Asia, Australia and Oceania of the Foreign Ministry Andrej Hrynkievič meets with Charge d'Affaires of China to Belarus Luo Zhanhui	+1
20 October	Hrynkievič meets with a delegation of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries under the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs	+1
28 October	Hrynkievič meets with Luo Zhanhui	+1
31 October	Belarusian Consul General in Shanghai Valier Macel participates in a roundtable meeting celebrating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belarus and China	+1
31 October	Starting on 1 November, China will grant Belarusian citizens right of visa-free stay during transit to third countries by international airlines	+1
Total		+11

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

Date	Event	Point
7-8 September	Minister for Commerce of Pakistan Khurram Dastgir Khan visits Belarus	+1
13-18 September	Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Rybakoŭ participates in the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Venezuela	+1
20 September	First Belarus–Oman Business Forum	+1
29-30 September	Delegation led by Deputy Minister of National Defence of Vietnam Be Xuan Truong visits Belarus	+1
5-6 October	President Lukashenka visits Pakistan	+3
16-19 October	Rybakoŭ visits Indonesia	+1
19-21 October	Belarusian delegation led by Rybakoŭ visits Malaysia	+1
23-24 October	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina Carlos Mario Foradori visits Belarus	+1
22-25 October	Official visit of Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of Namibia Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah to Belarus	+2
24-25 October	Rybakoŭ visits Jordan	+1
26-27 October	Rybakoŭ visits Sudan	+1
24-27 October	Deputy Prime Minister Siamaška visits Vietnam	+2
29-30 October	Lukashenka's official visit to Qatar	+3
31 October-5 November	Lukashenka's working visit to the United Arab Emirates	+3
Total		+22

Development of the Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Date	Event	Point
September	Settlement of current trade disputes at the 4th meeting of the Belarus–Ukraine high level working group for mutual trade	+2
October	Belarus resumes transit of Azeri crude oil via Ukraine.	+2
September–October	Belarus–Ukraine dialogue on prospects of transit of Iranian oil to Belarus	+1
September–October	Ukrainian ID passports are still not recognized in Belarus	-1
October	Russian combat aircraft are withdrawn from Belarus; positive response in Ukraine	+2
October	Joint military exercise with Russia (including close to the Ukrainian border), which received a negative response in Ukraine	-1
October	Belarusian Potash Company opens office in Ukraine	+1
October	Lukashenka’s statement that Belarus will not interfere in military conflicts in Syria and Ukraine	+1
26 October	Former president of Ukraine and Ukraine’s representative in the Trilateral Contact Group on the Donbas settlement Leonid Kuchma meets with Belarusian Foreign Minister Makiej	+1
31 October	Negotiations between First Deputy Chief of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine Vasyl Servatiuk and First Deputy Chief of the State Border Committee of Belarus Ihar Butkievič	+1
October	Diplomatic conflict caused by the incident with the Belavia civil airplane	-2
Total		+7

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**