

Belarus' FOREIGN POLICY INDEX

№ 19 March–April 2014

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Dear readers,

We proudly present the nineteenth edition of Belarus Foreign Policy Index, which analyzes Belarus's five foreign policy priorities in March and April 2014.

Official Minsk is striving to procure the most favorable environment within the **Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)**, primarily by way of tackling the issue of transfer of export duties on oil products back to the Russian budget. When it comes to the Ukrainian events, Belarus has been trying to back out of giving Russia its unconditional support, which might be regarded as an instrument to put Moscow under pressure during the talks over the establishment of the EAEU. In May, official Minsk is expected to issue strong public declarations calling for equal conditions within the Common Economic Space (CES) and claiming that the treaty to establish the EAEU will not be signed without its parties being given an equal status.

The **Belarus–EU** relationship saw continued active diplomatic contacts and consultations. However, there is no visible progress. The main problems in the relations between Belarus and the EU remain the same. The substantial agenda that started to be outlined in late 2013 is still in its embryo stage.

In March and April 2014, the **Belarus–China** relationship kept developing against the backdrop of increasing disappointment of the Belarusian administration with the prospects of this collaboration. The Chinese lobby and associated Chinese businesses began simulating a vigorous activity in order to show a breakthrough in the mutual relations. During the period under review, the trend towards the promotion of cooperation that is beneficial primarily for China continued.

Belarus seeks to restore its former relations with Iran and establish a closer collaboration with the **Middle East**. In its relationship with the developing countries, Minsk introduces new collaboration mechanisms without confining itself to efforts to boost trade. The Belarusian government will keep an eye on the international situation and its changes trying to leap at any opportunity to expand its external ties.

The relations with **Ukraine** have gained strategic importance for both countries, which is evidenced by the all-time high index. Belarus is interested in retaining one of the largest target markets for its products, whereas Kyiv wishes to ensure the security of its northern border and uninterrupted supplies of oil products. Lukashenka was quick to establish friendly relations with Ukraine's new pro-Western administration. Furthermore, the geopolitical developments in the region

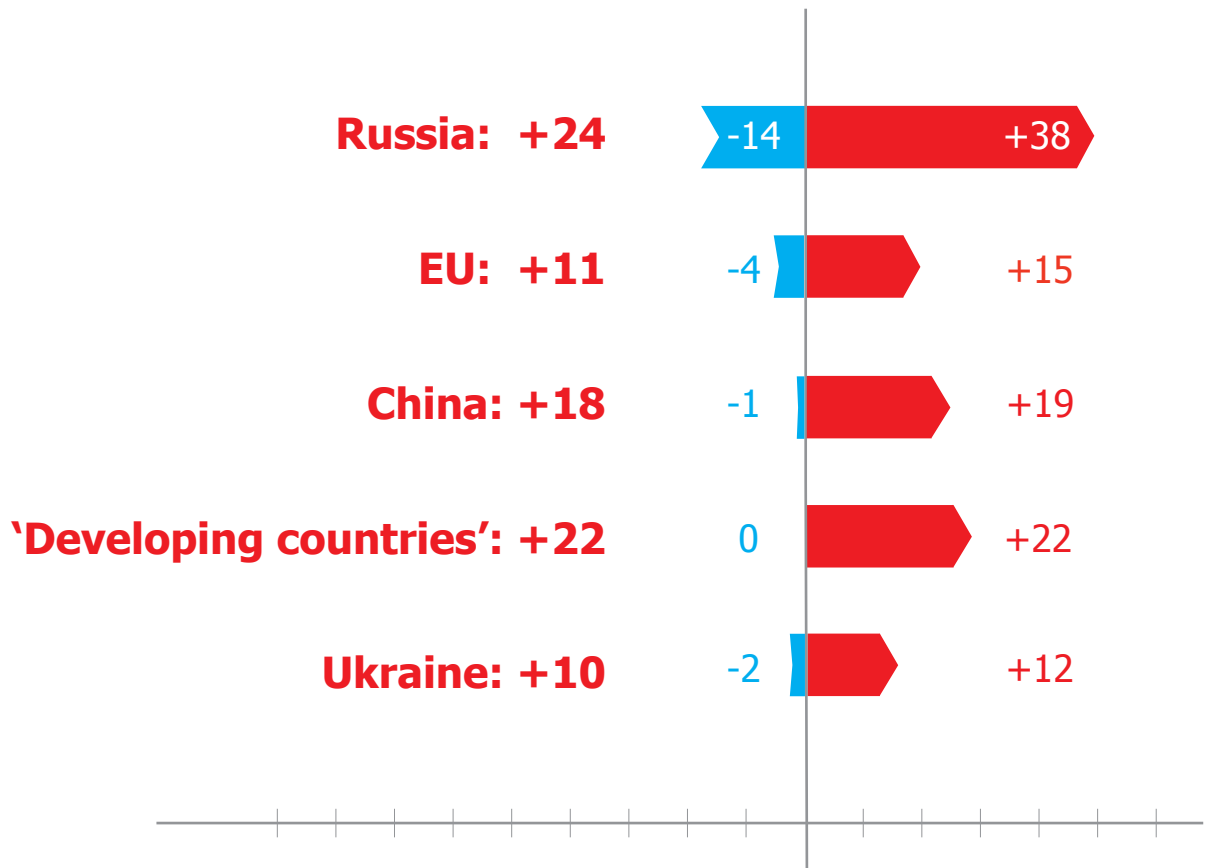
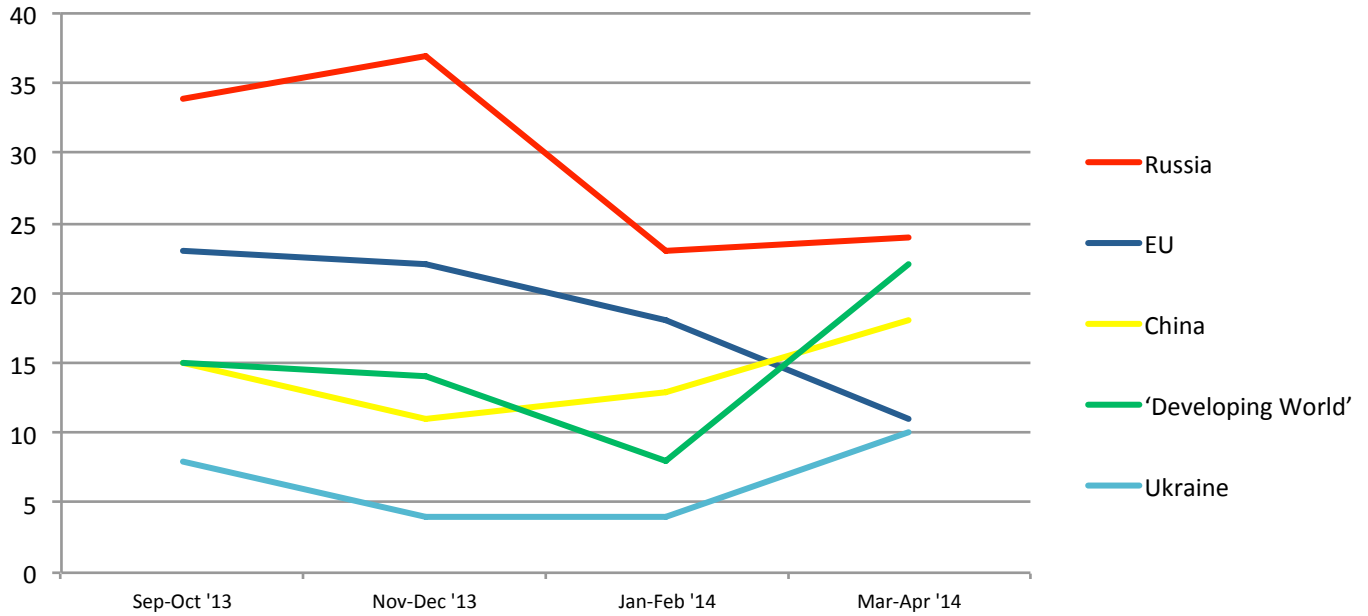
bring back hopes that the policy of maneuvering between Russia and the West might be given a new life.

We wish you a very pleasant reading and, as always, invite you to share your comments and opinions with us.

Dzianis Melyantsou

Belarus' Foreign Policy Index Editor

Relations development indices:



Developments in Belarus–Russia relations

+38



-14

Summary index: +24

Total positive points: +38

Total negative points: -14

Main trends

In March and April 2014, the fundamental events and processes that served as a framework for the two countries to build their relations included the meetings of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (on 3 March and 29 April 2014) and the developments in Ukraine.

The Belarusian side sought the most favorable environment in the new economic bloc when negotiating the treaty on the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), primarily through the resolution of the problem of transfers of export duties applied to sales of oil products back to the Russian budget and simultaneous efforts to shut Belarus's own market to Russian capital.

As for the events in Ukraine, official Minsk strives to refrain from offering Russia its complete support while trying to establish closer ties with the new Ukrainian administration.

Description of the key events

During the first two spring months, the two meetings of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council—on 3 March and 29 April—became the key developments in the relations between Belarus and Russia. The two meetings were supposed to become steps for the two countries to prepare for signing the treaty on the establishment of the EAEU. For Belarus, this agreement is essentially a chance to get Russia to meet its conditions, the main one being to abolish the transfers of export duties on oil products to the Russian budget. Therefore, the Belarusian administration sticks to a hard line in its talks with Russia. However, official Minsk is well aware that if the treaty should be frustrated because of Belarus, the situation in the country (especially against the weak economic backdrop) might develop according to a totally unpredictable scenario. The signing may hardly be frustrated by external factors, although some Belarusian analysts believe that there is such a possibility.

Two sets of tactical moves are traditionally used to put Russia under pressure. The first one incorporates emphatically allied rhetoric, which is designed to show that the meticulous discharge of allied duties inflicts certain losses on official Minsk, which must be made up for. During the two months under review, such statements were made, as a rule, in the context of the Ukrainian developments and the strengthening of Russia's military presence in Belarus. President Lukashenka was making repeated declarations that Russia was not putting any pressure on him, that Belarus scrupulously fulfilled all of its allied obligations to Moscow and that he would not take any actions that could affect Russia in any way without consultations with the Kremlin.

Official Minsk allowed Russia to enhance its military presence in Belarus and was quite eager to act as a mediator in the resolution of the issue concerning further collabora-

tion between the military-industrial sectors of Russia and Ukraine, which had been closely connected prior to the 2014 crisis.

The second set of tactical moves includes the creation of an image of an independent Belarusian policy that is sometimes implemented beyond the context of Russia's political interests. In March and April, Ukraine became a handy instrument to pursue this policy. Belarus has not yet officially recognized the annexation of Crimea by Russia, although Lukashenka said in a statement that the peninsula was de facto a part of Russia.

In an interview to the Shuster Live television show, the Belarusian leader gave the new Ukrainian authorities practical recommendations on how they should have resisted Russia and retained Crimea. Positive comments were repeatedly made about Oleksandr Turchynov, the acting Ukrainian president, while Viktor Yanukovich, the ex president, was severely criticized. Lukashenka vigorously opposed the idea of the federalization of Ukraine, although it appears that federalization is currently the main tactical objective of Russia's foreign policy. Naturally, such statements are partially meant for the West, partially for the internal audience (there will be no 'Maidan' in Belarus), but Russia is obviously the main target. The real message of the Belarusian leadership becomes absolutely clear in the context of permanent demands made by the president, prime minister, foreign minister and other high-ranking Belarusian officials, specifically, that all exceptions and exemptions should be cancelled in the framework of the Common Economic Space for the successful establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union. When making reports on Lukashenka's telephone conversations with Vladimir Putin, the press service of the Belarusian president always underlined that two issues were discussed—the preparation for the next meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council and the situation in Ukraine. One issue was essentially discussed in the context of the other one.

The demand that all exemptions be abolished should be considered in the context of Belarus's fundamental strategy on Russia as a source of external financing that secures the survival of the Belarusian economic model. The period under review saw official Minsk's need for money becoming even more acute. Belarus was missing the 6th and final installment of the EurAsEC Anti-Crisis Fund (ACF)'s loan and a second installment of the Russian state loan, which had been expected at USD 2 billion. Therefore, Belarus explored the possibility of having Russia provide new portions of the loan in the framework of the agreement on the financing of the country's first nuclear power plant sooner than originally scheduled (this time through the administration of Vnesheconombank). The situation with the export of potash fertilizers also remains vague. It turned out that the Chinese market alone was unable to make up for Belarus's losses caused by the breakaway from Uralkali; therefore, official Minsk is trying to make arrangements with the new owner of Uralkali, Dmitry Strezhnev), while Belaruskali is making efforts to work with Russian consumers of potash fertilizers as well.

What seemed to be a done deal to sell the state shareholding in OAO Mozyr Oil Refinery was eventually postponed. Belarus must have decided to either wait for Russia to abolish all of the exemptions, or, as a last resort, to raise the price of the asset). Official Minsk also managed to have Russian dairy producers give up their antidumping probes into the export of Belarusian-made dairy products.

Nevertheless, access to oil remains the key issue for the Belarusian economy.

Forecast for the near term

Throughout May, one should expect official Minsk to issue strong public declarations calling for equal terms and conditions within the Common Economic Space and claiming that it cannot sign the treaty to create the Eurasian Economic Union without all of its signatories being given an equal status. New steps are very likely to demonstrate that Belarus's foreign policy is independent, including of Russia; however, official Minsk will never cross the line, where the Kremlin could believe its ally to pursue an anti-Russian policy. The implementation of economic projects (especially those envisaging privatization) will be suspended until the EAEU treaty has been signed. Anyway, Minsk will have to sign a treaty to establish the EAEU sooner or later, unless the deal is frustrated by some other external circumstances. As soon as the document has been signed, the relationship between Belarus and Russia will show signs of improvement. This will apply to some of the previous projects as well, including those envisaging the privatization of state property and new loans.

Developments in Belarus–EU relations

+15



-4



Summary index: +11

Total positive points: +15

Total negative points: -4

Main trends

In March and April, the relations between Belarus and Europe were developing in a contradictory manner. On the one hand, quite active diplomatic contacts and consultations continued, including at the level of senior officials of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry. On the other hand, there was no visible progress (for instance, in modernization issues), although there were expectations of such progress during the previous period under review.

Moreover, it seemed Belarus even slipped back to the practices of the pre-crisis period of its relationship with the European Union. Official Minsk refused to take part in an informal meeting in Prague celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership, which runs counter to the general strategy towards promoting diplomatic contacts that was put in place back in the final quarter of 2012. Overall, the relations between Belarus and Europe were somewhat overshadowed by the developments in Ukraine.

Description of the key events

The period under review started with Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej's visit to Lithuania. During that visit, the minister addressed the entire range of pressing bilateral and multilateral issues. The construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant, coming into effect of the agreement on the facilitation of mutual travels of residents of border areas of the two countries and the general framework of the relationship between Belarus and the EU were the key issues addressed at Makiej's meeting with his Lithuanian counterpart Linas Linkevičius. The two ministers reiterated that further quality changes in the relationship between Belarus and the European Union would only be possible if the parties agree to meet each others' terms, namely, to release political prisoners and lift the EU's sanctions previously imposed on some Belarusian citizens and companies.

During his negotiations with Lithuanian Minister of Transport and Communications Rimantas Sinkevičius and Vice-Minister of Economy Kęstutis Trečiokas, Makiej focused on the collaboration in the transport and transit sectors (mainly, the transshipment of Belarusian freights via Lithuanian seaports) and prospects of increasing the traffic capacity of the Belarusian–Lithuanian state border. The Belarusian foreign minister also met with representatives of the Lithuanian business community.

On 2–3 April, notable events took place in the framework of the Belarus–Poland relationship. First, Minsk played host to a meeting of the Belarusian–Polish working group for trade and investments, which is part of the Joint Belarusian–Polish Commission for Economic Development. The delegations were led by Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ and Deputy Economy Minister of Poland Andrzej Dycha. The substantial Polish delegation was also received by Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Michail Rusy. Not only the level of the meeting, but also the very fact that it took place is remarkable—that was the first meeting of this kind since the mutual relations markedly

deteriorated following the brutal dispersal of a rally in Minsk on 19 December 2010.

The following day, on 3 April, the Belarusian–Polish Business Forum was held, timed to the opening of the Victoria-2 Hotel, which was built with the use of Polish capital. The Polish delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Katarzyna Kacperczyk. During the two days of intensive bilateral negotiations, Belarusian and Polish officials and businesses addressed a broad range of economic issues that had accumulated over the past few years, when mutual contacts were limited. According to Hurjanaŭ, also in 2014, a meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission at the level of deputy prime ministers of the two countries was expected to be held.

On 8 and 9 April, Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ led a Belarusian delegation to Finland, where the 4th Belarusian–Finnish Economic Forum was held along with a workshop for business groups focusing on opportunities for doing business in Belarus in the framework of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space. Incidentally, the Belarusian Embassy in Finland, which was opened last year, has been unconventionally active during the past few periods analyzed by the Index. Apparently, credit should be given to the efforts of Ambassador Aliaksandr Astroŭski, who was appointed on 10 September 2013.

Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Aliena Kupčyna paid several visits to the European Union in March and April 2014, namely to Spain, Slovenia, Germany, Slovakia and Hungary. In the first four countries, she met with senior officials of the local Foreign Ministries and participated in consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and the corresponding countries. In Hungary, she participated in a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group and EaP countries on 28–29 April.

The organizers of the meeting in Budapest had originally invited Minister Uladzimir Makiej; however, the spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Ministry said, citing the minister's schedule, that it was decided that Makiej's deputy Kupčyna would be sent to Hungary. It appears that the real reason why the level of Belarus's representation was brought down was different. A few days prior to the meeting in Budapest, Prague had hosted an informal meeting celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership initiative. The presidents of all of the EaP member-states were invited to the meeting, except for Belarus. The administration of the Czech president that was responsible for the organization of the meeting was faced with the traditional challenge: how could the Czech Republic invite official Minsk to a top-level meeting without sending a personal invitation to Lukashenka, who is still on the list of persons who are denied entry to the EU? Uladzimir Makiej told the Czech newspaper Lidovy Noviny "First, one representative of Belarus was invited, then another one, and then the entire Republic of Belarus was invited to that meeting".

However, an invitation formula (just as ahead of the Vilnius summit of 2013) that would satisfy both the EU and Belarus was never found. As a result, Belarus refused to be involved in that event. The fact that Kupčyna visited the Budapest meeting instead of Makiej became another reminder for Europe by the Belarusian Foreign Ministry that official Minsk finds it crucial that the principles of equality and non-discrimination be honored by the EU. The Belarusian official emphasized this point in Budapest, because the Belarusian authorities believe it to be the main reason why the Eastern Partnership fails.

During the Budapest meeting, Kupčyna also had several bilateral meetings: with EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle, First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic Petr Drulák, and State Secretary for Foreign Affairs and External Economic Relations of Hungary Peter Szijjarto and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Zsolt Nemet.

During the entire period under review the relationship between Belarus and the European Union was overshadowed by the developments in Ukraine. The most notable manifestation of that trend was the telephone conversation between Lukashenka and Prime Minister of Poland Donald Tusk, which was held on 17 April at the initiative of the Polish side. The press service of the Belarusian head of state said in a statement (which was later deleted from the official website of the president for some reason) that the

conversation centered on the international situation in the context of the Ukrainian developments. The very fact of the conversation looks promising and confirms the assumption that Minsk's stance on the situation in Ukraine may catalyze a more serious negotiation process between Belarus and the European Union.

It is noteworthy that, compared to previous two-month periods under review, the number of meetings between senior officials of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry and ambassadors of the EU member-states accredited in Minsk dropped. In March and April 2014, there were only two meetings of this kind, with the heads of the Lithuanian and German diplomatic missions.

Two-way trade between Belarus and the European Union amounted to USD 5.27 billion in the first three months of 2014, down by 4.8% year-on-year. Export from Belarus totaled USD 3.19 billion, down by 2%, and import from the EU fell by 8.8% from the level recorded in the first quarter of 2013 to USD 2.08 billion. Belarus registered a surplus in trade with the European Union amounting to USD 1.11 billion.

Forecast for the near term

Further development of the relationship between Belarus and the European Union will largely depend on the events in Ukraine. Belarus has a good chance of using the Ukrainian crisis for its own benefit.

First, the Ukrainian meltdown may help Belarus improve its working relations with the EU. Donald Tusk's telephone call to Lukashenka suggests that the Belarusian administration possesses certain competencies that Europe can benefit from in the context of the Ukrainian events, although the possibility of mediation that official Minsk had obviously suggested is now out of the question.

Second, Minsk can effectively promote its ideas and strategic approaches to the further evolution of the Eastern Partnership by encouraging the EU to either give up its "either with us or with Russia" framework or allow a differentiated approach (requirements) to various participants in the initiative. Anyway, no quick changes should be expected here.

Overall, the main problems of the relationship between Belarus and the EU remain the same. The substantial agenda that started to be outlined in late 2013 is still in its embryonic stage.

The upcoming 2014 IIHF World Championship in Minsk (9–25 May) may play an important role in improving Belarus's international image. Belarus would make enormous progress if it released political prisoners as part of the declared amnesty, which will coincide with the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from the Nazis. However it is a mystery whether the Belarusian authorities will make up their mind to make this happen.

Developments in Belarus-China relations

+19



-1

Summary index: +18

Total positive points: +19

Total negative points: -1

Main trends

In March and April 2014, Belarusian–Chinese relations were developing amid increasing disappointment of the Belarusian administration in the prospects of this cooperation that reached its peak during the devastating conference with the president on 14 February 2014, which addressed the development of the China–Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP). As we forecast in the previous Index issue, in March–April 2014, the Chinese lobby in the Belarusian administration and associated Chinese companies started a campaign to simulate vigorous activity in order to demonstrate a breakthrough in the mutual relations.

The cautious forecasts made in the previous issue of the monitoring about the likelihood of a new Chinese loan, even a modest one, proved to be too optimistic. The implementation of the Chinese approach to the cooperation with Belarus (these projects have excessive costs and are financed from tied Chinese loans; China's export to Belarus keeps growing; China is making careful steps to spread its culture in Belarus and is making abundant promises about future accomplishments) continued during the period under review.

Description of the key events

In the period 1 March through 30 April, many of the developments in the framework of the relationship between Belarus and China were shaped by the boisterous activity of the Council of Ministers, specifically Deputy Prime Minister Anatol Tozik, who had been given unambiguous instructions by President Lukashenka about the need to showcase specific results of Belarus's engagement with China as soon as possible.

Since Foreign Policy Index was launched, the two months under review saw a record-high number of contacts between Belarusian officials and representatives of Chinese companies. The list of the companies remains unchanged: ZTE, Huawei, CCOEC, Geely, and CAMCE. Some of them already have a history of supplying poor quality products in the framework of joint projects with Belarus. For instance, CCOEC is involved in the modernization of some Belarusian TETs co-generation plants. TETs-5, where a major accident occurred in December 2012, is one of them. Since then, there have been no reports giving rational reasons for the accident. However, according to unofficial sources, the main reason was the substandard Chinese-made equipment delivered by CCOEC. CAMCE is responsible for the modernization of OAO Svetlogorsk Cellulose and Cardboard Mill. During the first four months of 2014, two high-ranking Belarusian officials — Anatol Tozik and Michail Miasnikovič — had to draw the attention of the Chinese partner that it would not meet the project schedule. The project itself alarms environmentalists. The fact that the project will hardly meet the deadline means that Belarus will have to find additional funds to repay the loan that it took to finance the modernization (the country may have to take another Chinese loan). The original plan was to repay the loan (approximately

USD 800 million) from the increased revenues of the upgraded cellulose and cardboard-making facility.

ZTE is advertized by the Belarusian authorities as a key CBIP resident. However, the administration of the company is less categorical and prefers using some general statements with no strings attached (whatever Belarusian media make them sound later). At the same time, the corporation continues supplying telecommunication equipment to Belarus.

There has been much talking about a potential Chinese loan to Belarus, which may amount to USD 15–16 billion. The Index meticulously monitors the real amounts that Belarus receives, and the total has remained at a zero for many months now. During the first two spring months, no new loans were committed, but the Council of Ministers issued two decisions to provide governmental guarantees for the tied Chinese loans totaling about USD 100 million to finance projects implemented by Belarusian Railways and Minskenergo.

Chinese companies are making efforts to make their way into the strategic sectors of the Belarusian economy, primarily communication and telecoms, as well as power engineering. As we predicted in the previous Index issue, Chinese companies indeed became more active in the communication and telecoms sectors, which was facilitated by the complete reshuffle in the administration of the Belarusian Communication Ministry. In April 2014, media reports said that OAO Promsvyaz had offered China's Huawei to establish production cooperation. The official objective of the joint project is to increase the localization of Belarusian-made products in order to meet the requirements of Russian buyers. However, given the specific nature of OAO Promsvyaz's operations, it would be safe to assume that the former leadership of the ministry had refrained from active engagement with Chinese partners not in defiance of Russia's position. Back in 2011, ZTE and Huawei attempted to buy into OAO Promsvyaz, but the auction terms did not envisage the sale of a controlling stake or sharing of management rights with the new investor, and after China's terms and conditions were voiced, a tacit moratorium was placed on the cooperation with China in that sector.

Chinese capital contrived to get into such a sensitive project as the construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant. On 3 March 2014, the official groundbreaking ceremony was held at the site of the 330-kilowatt Maladziečna switching substation to celebrate the beginning of the implementation of the project to build up a power delivery and distribution system for the Belarusian nuclear power plant.

The recently appointed Chinese ambassador to Belarus, Cui Qiming, also proved very active during the two months in question. He held a series of meetings with high-ranking Belarusian officials and gave an interview to BelTA news service, in which he focused on some of the key issues of the engagement between the two countries. Commenting on the CBIP project, the diplomat said that the Park "calls for joint efforts, joint investments and joint construction. We are happy to see that the Belarusian part of the joint venture has become increasingly active recently in the construction of early-phase facilities". Essentially, that was the position slammed by President Lukashenka during the notorious meeting on 14 February 2014.

That being said, the overall image of Belarus's collaboration with China appears to be even more dismal than we drew it in the previous Index issue. Despite the failure of some joint projects and Lukashenka's criticism, the Chinese side redoubled efforts to make it look like the situation is getting better. However, even when simulating this vigorous activity, Deputy Prime Minister Tozik found himself under real pressure. Not a single company that was involved in consultations with the Belarusian side during the past two months undertook clear and specific commitments regarding their involvement in the CBIP project. The remaining projects should be viewed through the prism of tied loans provided on China's terms.

One of the key problems in the bilateral relations is the difference between the way Belarus perceives China and how China views Belarus. The Belarusian administration hopes that whoever comes from China to work with Belarus and on whatever terms, the contacts at the top state level will help rectify any problems that may arise, and the project will ultimately succeed. Meanwhile, the Chinese leadership makes its individual companies and regions responsible for the entire country's economic cooperation with Belarus. We showed in one of our previous issues, drawing on international experience, that this pattern (taken generally, rather than in Belarus alone) inevitably results in an increase in corruption-related risks and costs. Chinese Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming made it clear once again in his recent interview that 'strategic' cooperation with the provinces Guangdong and Heilongjiang were the 'ceiling' that official Minsk can hope to achieve in the promotion of its engagement with China.

Forecast for the near term

The period under review confirmed yet again that there would be no easy and fast money coming from China to Belarus. Moreover, even the growing pressure on the pro-Chinese lobby in the Belarusian establishment failed to become an impetus for China to even try and make the bilateral relations just a bit more beneficial for Belarus. Furthermore, this reaction probably means that China and Chinese business feel so confident in Belarus that despite any processes in the top echelons of power, they will never give up or adjust the habitual collaboration patterns that they routinely profit by.

That being said, the forecast for the near term remains unchanged, namely, the lack of substantial Chinese loans and investments, further increase in the ratio of China's export to import and simulation of energetic activity around some landmark projects, especially the CBIP, without any real implementation efforts.

Developments in Belarus's relations with the "developing countries"

(Asia, Africa, Latin America)

+22



0

Summary index: +22

Total positive points: +22

Total negative points: 0

Main trends

The first indications of improvements in Teheran's relations with the West prompted Belarus to seek to restore its former ties with Iran. Meanwhile, during the period under review, Belarus also contacted Israeli representatives, thus taking precautionary measures in order to avoid any accusations of implementing an excessively pro-Iranian policy.

Minsk is trying to revive its former relations with the Middle East, which has been torn apart by political instability for a few years now. These attempts remain very cautious due to Belarus's limited capacity. In the meantime, Belarus's partners from the Arab monarchies have been losing their interest in Minsk (which has always been inspired, at least partially, by the need to keep Belarus away from collaborating with the radical regimes in the Middle East) and are now busy following the situation around Syria and Iran.

Belarus seeks to expand its sales geography towards Africa, smaller countries of Indochina, and Latin America, and deepen and consolidate its relations with traditional partners (Vietnam) by employing new forms, areas and methods of collaboration, specifically production cooperation.

Belarus is on its way to introducing new formats of cooperation with the developing world without confining itself to efforts to boost sales. Minsk has successfully tested schemes to organize assembling productions in Venezuela and is now trying to apply them to other countries. Further, the Belarusian government is putting in place export promotion instruments and is ready to negotiate more advanced economic engagement patterns with developing countries, including those envisaging a balanced ratio of export to import. This is quite remarkable, because previously Belarus's efforts were aimed at promoting export of Belarusian products while curtailing import from any developing economy, even a major producer of a broad range of commodities, which could discourage Belarusian partners in those developing countries.

Description of the key events

Iran. On 16–17 March, Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej paid an official visit to Iran. Makiej met with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, speaker of the Iranian parliament, minister of foreign affairs, minister of industries and mines, co-chairman of the Belarusian–Iranian commission for economic cooperation and other officials and representatives of Iranian businesses. Prior to the visit, the Foreign Ministry noted that it was planned to "discuss the development of bilateral relations, including in the context of the commencement of the implementation of the Geneva agreements reached in January 2014".¹

According to official reports, during his meeting with Rouhani, Makiej addressed further development of political dialogue, trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation, whereas during bilateral talks "the parties confirmed their intention to provide mutual support

1. http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c3f25d1e80a0502c.html

in the international scene and acknowledge the coincidence of views on the fundamental issues of the international agenda"². This political approximation with Teheran became possible once Minsk considered that the Geneva negotiations concerning the Iranian nuclear program had diffused the situation enough for Belarus to safely work with the former partner.

On 15–16 April, Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran Ali Larijani—one of Iran's most influential politicians—visited Belarus. He met with President Lukashenka, who admitted that bilateral contact had narrowed. Although Foreign Minister Makiej said "Belarusian–Iranian relations are independent of changes in the political situation", Lukashenka made a more sincere statement. He noted that "because of external pressures, primarily on Iran (but it is not easy for us, either, you know), we saw a decrease in trade turnover. We started losing some strings of collaboration". Lukashenka called for a renewal of contacts and voiced his interest in having investment inflows from Iran. Previously, major Iranian investment projects were faced with serious difficulties in Belarus, which must have been a bitter disappointment for the Belarusian administration. Even the quite successful Iranian investment project—the Prilesye logistics complex—is already far behind the schedule. Therefore, Lukashenka asked Larijani to step up support for such projects on behalf of the Iranian government.

Overall, Minsk succeeds in finding common language with the new Iranian administration, which replaced the radical faction impersonated by the former president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. When talking to Lukashenka, Larijani said "Iran regards Belarus as its friend and partner" and pledged that the new government and parliament of Iran "will resolutely promote the relationship with Belarus in all areas".

Arab countries.

Minsk seeks to restore its former ties with the Maghreb countries, which were disrupted in the wake of the 'Arab Spring'. On 18–20 March, Belarusian Ambassador to Libya with concurrent accreditation in Tunisia Anatol Sciepus visited Tunisia. On 22–23 April, Minsk played host to consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Libya concerning contractual and legal issues.

In Iraq, Belarus is cautiously exploring the ground looking to revive the old ties that were broken by the war of 2003. On 14–18 April, Belarusian Ambassador to Turkey and Iraq Andrej Savinych paid a working visit to Baghdad. He presented his credentials to Vice President of Iraq Khodair al-Khozaei and met with Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari to discuss the current status of Belarusian–Iraqi collaboration and measures that can be taken to step it up, specifically the possibility for Belarusian companies to be involved in the restoration of Iraq. Savinych held meetings with the leaderships of the Ministry of Industry and Minerals, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Electricity, Ministry of Construction and Housing, and Ministry of Water Resources, the administrations of a number of state corporations and the Federation of Iraqi Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Asia

On 24–25 March, Foreign Minister of Belarus Uladzimir Makiej paid an official visit to Vietnam—the country that had remained a traditional partner of Belarus since the early 1990s. Makiej met with Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang, who said he was positive that the already active economic ties between the two countries could be further consolidated by way of signing a Free Trade Zone Agreement with the Customs Union member-states and implementing major joint projects. During the talks with his Vietnamese counterpart, Makiej focused on the trade and economic cooperation between the two countries and implementation of previous agreements (including the Program for Inter-

2. On the concluding day of the visit of Foreign Minister of Belarus U. Makiej to Iran 17-03-2014 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ee5715b5ce300f3a.html.

governmental Collaboration in the Economic Sector for 2013–2015), as well as the talks over the Free Trade Zone Agreement with the Customs Union member-states. The two foreign ministers also addressed potential joint projects, including in mechanical engineering and telecommunications (Makiej met with top officials of the relevant industry leading corporations). As a result of the talks, an agreement was signed on collaboration between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries, along with the action plan for the engagement between the two ministries for 2014–2015.³

In the presence of the two ministers, representatives of Belarusian Potash Company and its Vietnamese partners signed a contract for supplies of potash fertilizers to that country. BPC did not elaborate on the details of the contract, but some sources report that Belarus will deliver up to 100,000 tons of potash fertilizers to Vietnam⁴.

On 25–26 March, Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej paid a visit to Laos. Makiej held a meeting with Lao Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong. The parties expressed their appreciation for the intensification of bilateral collaboration and analyzed the progress of the implementation of the agreements reached following the visit of Lao President Choummaly Sayasone to Belarus in July 2013. Furthermore, talks were held with the foreign minister of Laos. Makiej pointed out to the fact that the current political relations should be reinforced by specific bilateral economic initiatives and suggested that the Lao side should consider a number of joint projects with Belarus⁵.

On 26–28 March, the first ever official visit of a Belarusian foreign minister to Cambodia took place. During his meeting with Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong, Makiej discussed the current status and prospects of the collaboration between Belarus and Cambodia, including the creation of assembling productions and implementation of joint projects. Cooperation in science and education, including the possibility for Cambodian students to be trained in Belarus, was discussed at Makiej's meeting with the Cambodian minister of education, youth and sport.

On 27 March, Uladzimir Makiej and the Cambodian industry minister attended a solemn ceremony to unveil the first assembly factory of Belarusian tractors in Southeast Asia. It is planned that the factory will have an annual capacity of 400 tractors of various modifications to be supplied to the local and neighboring markets.

On 28 March, Makiej met with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen. The Belarusian official noted the need to implement specific projects in industrial cooperation, trade, science and education. For his part, Hun Sen confirmed the intention of the Cambodian government to promote trade and economic relations with Belarus and commended the efforts to establish the joint tractor-assembling facility in Cambodia. Belarusian businesses signed contracts for the delivery of 400 tractors, tractor kits and a pilot lot of tires to Cambodia⁶.

On 23–25 April, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen paid an official visit to Belarus. He met with President Lukashenka, who said "We have what you want, what we can give you, and we are ready for it—whether it be joint productions to manufacture automotive equipment or military and technical collaboration and engagement in the mining industry". Lukashenko said he was proud that almost half of all tractors operating in Cambodia are those manufactured in Belarus and promised to buy Cambodian-made goods in order

3. On the visit of Foreign Minister of Belarus U. Makiej to Vietnam 25-03-2014 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c07091e99a7640ec.html.

4. Uralkali becomes the first world's major producer to sign an annual contract for potash delivery to India 1 April 2014, TUT.BY <http://news.tut.by/economics/393219.html>.

5. On the visit of Foreign Minister of Belarus U. Makiej to Laos 26-03-2014 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f3196bed5d29429c.html.

6. On the visit of Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus U. Makiej to Cambodia 28-03-2014 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f0746c2f608c2306.html.

to balance two-way trade⁷.

On 21–25 April, Chairwoman of the Lao National Assembly Pani Yathotou came to Minsk on an official visit. She met with President Lukashenko, who noted that trade and economic relations were fundamental to interstate cooperation and said "We have to admit that there is nothing to be proud of. Our relations have just begun developing". Lukashenko also spoke about his plans to visit Laos⁸. Last year, the president of Laos visited Belarus for the very first time in the history of the bilateral relations; however, two-way trade amounted to mere USD483,300 in 2013.

Other noteworthy events include India's handing over of 90 portable radios and 30 satellite navigation devices worth a total of USD45,000 to mine deactivating groups with the Belarusian Defense Ministry free of charge. According to Indian Ambassador to Belarus Manoj Kumar Bharti, India is interested in boosting collaboration with Minsk in the military sector, including as far as the modernization of Russian-made military equipment is concerned⁹.

Latin America. On 12–13 March, Belarusian Ambassador to Venezuela Alieh Pafioraŭ visited Ecuador to meet with the leaderships of the Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Strategic Sectors and Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador.

On 24–25 March, Deputy Foreign Minister of Nicaragua Valdrac Jaenscjtke visited Belarus. He had talks with Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ, visited MTZ tractor maker, held negotiations in the Ministry of Industry and Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus, and opened the Honorable Consulate of Nicaragua in Belarus.

On 24 April, Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej met with his Venezuelan counterpart José Jaua Milano, who had come to Belarus on an official visit.

On 23–25 April, La Paz played host to the 2nd meeting of the Belarusian–Bolivian commission for trade and economic cooperation. The Belarusian delegation was led by Chief of the Presidential Property Management Directorate Viktor Šejman and the Bolivian side was headed by Minister of Presidency Juan Ramon Quintana Taborga. Talks were held with a number of Bolivian ministries and agencies concerning cooperation in the mining industry, mechanical engineering, industrial production and trade, construction, agriculture, education, science and technologies¹⁰.

Africa

On March 6, Belarusian Ambassador to Ethiopia Zmicier Kupciel presented his credentials to Chairperson of the African Union Commission Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma¹¹. Belarus thus marked its intention to use the potential of the African Union institutions in the development of its relations with Africa.

On 24–25 April, Mozambican Foreign Minister Oldemiro Balói visited Minsk. That was the first visit of such a high level in the history of the bilateral relations. Mozambique is a promising partner, given its robust economy, access to sea (which cuts transportation costs) and the fact that Minsk can offer Mozambique a range of products that the African state might find exciting.

7. President of Belarus meets with Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia 23 April 2014 http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/prezident-belarusi-vstretilsja-premjer-ministrom-korolevstva-kambodzha-8573/.

8. President of Belarus meets with Chairwoman of the Lao National Assembly 23 April 2014 http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/prezident-belarusi-vstretilsja-s-predsedatelem-parlamenta-laosa-8571/.

9. India is interested in further promoting cooperation with Belarus in the defense industry 17 April 2014 http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/politics/Indija-zainteresovana-v-dalnejszem-razvitii-sotrudnichestva-s-Belarusju-v-oboronnoj-sfere_i_666428.html.

10. On the second meeting of the Joint Belarusian–Bolivian commission for trade and economic cooperation 25-04-2014 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c47b7d260d82f02d.html.

During his talks with Belarusian Foreign Minister Makiej, the Mozambican diplomat stressed the search for new forms of engagement. Specifically, they addressed the prospects of cooperation in industrial production, agriculture and education. Makiej and Balói discussed the prospects of Belarus's cooperation with the Southern African Development Community and the African Union, including as a Customs Union member, and the engagement between Belarus and Mozambique in international organizations. Following the meeting, the officials signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Foreign Ministries¹². In order to build up effective relations, the two countries need to elaborate a relevant regulatory framework; however, even without such a framework Belarus and Mozambique agreed to establish a Mixed Intergovernmental Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation—a standard unit in Belarus's relationships with developing countries¹³. Although there is no Belarusian representative office in Mozambique, joint limited liability company BelAfrica was registered in that country in October 2012, and in May 2013, a permanent trade fair of Belarusian machinery was opened in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique.

Oldemiro Balói also paid a visit to MTZ. First Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Uladzimir Siamaška proposed the Mozambican official to work using the "Venezuelan pattern", meaning the creation of assembling facilities. Siamaška said that in addition to supplying farm, road-building and municipal machines to Mozambique, Minsk could also establish an assembling factory there. So far, the relations with Mozambique have been limited, with two-way trade amounting to USD 9.1 million in 2013, up 240% year-on-year, which included USD 8.7 million worth of export from Belarus.¹⁴

Forecast for the near term

Minsk will try to continue entering new markets, and more active contacts should be expected in South and Southeast Asia, West and South Africa, and Latin America. The relations with the Arab countries will remain limited because of the tense situation in the region. The need of the Belarusian government to make up for the substantial foreign trade deficit by way of increasing export to developing countries remains an important factor to reckon with when making foreign policy decisions.

The Belarusian government will keep watching the international situation and its modifications trying to grab even the tiniest opportunity to expand its trade geography. In this context, and given the recent improvements in the relations between Iran and the West, Minsk will continue restoring its ties with Teheran, which still needs the Belarusian partner—despite the rectification of relations with the West, the isolation of Iran remains quite significant. Meanwhile, Minsk will obviously stay away from Syria, being well aware of the possible retaliation by the United States if it should find out about any instances of close cooperation with Damascus.

11. On the presentation of credentials by Belarusian Ambassador Zmicier Kupciel to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission 06-03-2014 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/e5bf0affad48deeb.html.

12. On the meeting of Foreign Minister of Belarus U. Makiej with Mozambican Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Oldemiro Balói 25-04-2014 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ec826f99218f1db9.html.

13. Materials of the media availability of Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus Uladzimir Makiej following his meeting with Mozambican Minister of Foreign Affairs Oldemiro Balói (25 April 2014, Minsk) http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b09e5c8363e4d00c.html.

14. Mozambican delegation is impressed by MTZ, while Siamaška offers the Africans the Venezuelan assembly pattern 25 April 2014, TUT.BY <http://news.tut.by/economics/396727.html>.

Developments in Belarus-Ukraine relations

+12



-2

Summary index: +10

Total positive points: +12

Total negative points: -2

Main trends

During the period under review, the bilateral relations became strategic for both countries, as Belarus is interested in keeping one of the largest sales outlets, while Kyiv is eager to ensure the maximum security of its northern border and uninterrupted deliveries of oil products.

As we predicted in our previous issue, President Lukashenka quickly managed to establish friendly and even confidential relations with the new pro-Western leadership of Ukraine. The Ukrainian government, for its part, managed to overcome the initial bias concerning the ambiguous personality of the Belarusian head of state.

Lukashenka is interested in curbing the Kremlin's geopolitical ambition no less than Kyiv is, because he feels that the threat to Belarus is real. Furthermore, the geopolitical developments in the region bring him back his hopes that he can revive the policy of maneuvering between Russia and the West. He also hopes that his stance on Ukraine will encourage the United States and Europe to soften their attitude towards him and, on the other hand, cause Vladimir Putin to make additional concessions when making fundamental decisions in the framework of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space.

Description of the key events

During the protests in Ukraine, which resulted in the fall of the Yanukovich regime, the bilateral relations at the official level were virtually frozen. However, in March, the situation changed dramatically, as Ukraine became a key issue in Lukashenka's public rhetoric. During the period under review, Lukashenka made eight detailed comments on the situation in Ukraine:

4 March—during a telephone conversation with former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma;

12 March—during a meeting of the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus;

17 March—during a telephone conversation with the leader of the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (UDAR) Vitali Klitschko;

23 March—at a meeting with journalists;

26 March—in an interview to the First National Channel of Ukraine;

8 April—during a meeting of the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus;

13 April—in an interview to Russia's NTV television channel;

22 April—in his annual address to the nation and the National Assembly.



The main points of Lukashenka's messages were:

1. Belarus calls for the territorial integrity of Ukraine;
2. Crimea is de facto a part of Russia, but "de jure it is not, because there are no international agreements, and no recognition". He criticized the decision not to offer armed resistance and called the annexation of Crimea to Russia "a dangerous precedent";
3. Ukraine "must remain a consolidated indivisible state", "federalization means further confrontation and war. We must not allow this";
4. Non-recognition of Viktor Yanukovich as Ukraine's legitimate president. Giving reasons behind Maidan, Lukashenka named "the collapse of the national economy, mad corruption, breakdown of authorities and distrust of people";
5. Recognition of the legitimacy of the new Ukrainian authorities. "If there is no president, under the Constitution, his duties must be carried out by the head of the Verkhovna Rada. I believe that they have had no president in their country since the final week of March, when Yanukovich left. Naturally, the Constitution has it that the country should have a president, and it makes it clear who should perform these duties. Therefore, Turchynov is legitimate and the Verkhovna Rada is legitimate, too";
6. The territory of Belarus will never be used to assault Ukraine;
7. Belarus recognizes the Ukrainian presidential election slated for 25 May to be legitimate;
8. Personal compliments are paid to Turchynov.

Although Lukashenka's messages did contradict the official stance of the Kremlin and he obviously sympathized with Ukraine, the Belarusian state leader never openly condemned Russia's aggression and the annexation of Crimea, which irritated official Kyiv throughout March. There were almost no official contacts between the administrations of the two countries before April.

In the first half of March, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry made a series of statements about the intention of official Minsk to act as a mediator in the resolution of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. However, the Ukrainian side ignored that initiative.

On 13 March, the Foreign Ministry of Ukraine expressed its concern over "Russia's attempts to include Belarus in its aggression against Ukraine". That was a response to reports that six Su-27 fighters and three military cargo planes of the Russian Air Force arrived in Belarus.

On 20 March, spokesman for the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry Yevhen Perebiynis criticized the statement made by the Belarusian Foreign Ministry on the situation in Ukraine on 19 March: "we have always had mutual understanding with the Belarusians. I did not see the support for Russia's actions in that statement. It is a positive signal coming from Belarus... However, it is not absolutely clear from the statement whether Belarus condemns the annexation of Crimea. This is what we would like to hear from our friends and partners in Belarus. The whole world is doing it... Therefore, we still hope that our friends will support us in this matter".

On 24 March, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry recalled Ambassador to Belarus Mykhailo Yezhel to Kyiv for consultations "in connection with the statements by Belarusian President Lukashenka made on 23 March". In that statement, Lukashenka said "Crimea is de facto a part of the territory of Russia". The Belarusian Foreign Ministry said in response that it would not recall its ambassador from Kyiv, because it was going to "pursue dialogue" and "hopes to continue friendly relations". However, as early as on 27 March, Belarus voted against the resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the UN General Assembly.

On 29 March, Acting President of Ukraine Oleksandr Turchynov paid a visit to Belarus. His talks with Lukashenka were held in the Liaskavičy residence (in the Homiel Region) and lasted more than three hours. The talks helped immediately relax tensions between the two governments. At the concluding news briefing, both were making positive remarks about each other and the dialogue that they had had. Turchynov commented on the results of the talks the following way: "There will never be any aggression towards Ukraine from the territory of Belarus".

Media analysts noted that during the period under review, Belarusian media reports about the developments in Ukraine were restrained and neutral, which contrasted very sharply with the aggressive rhetoric of the Russian channels.

On 2 April, when visiting OAO 558th Aircraft Repair Plant in Baranavičy, Lukashenka called for promoting cooperation with Ukrainian military and industrial enterprises. "Ukraine has virtually been ruined. But they have a good defense complex. Let us try to make arrangements with Ukraine and work together in order for them not to lose their brain centers, their intellectual, engineering and design centers and the entire production," Lukashenka said.

On 9 April, Minister of Agrarian Policy and Food of Ukraine Ihor Shvaika met with Belarusian Ambassador to Ukraine Valiancin Vialička to discuss prospects for further cooperation in agribusiness, as well as ways to resolve disputes concerning supplies of Belarusian meat and dairy products to Ukraine.

On April 10, Ukraine's Ambassador to Belarus Mykhailo Yezhel returned to Minsk after having consultations in Kyiv.

On 24 April, Lukashenka and Turchynov had an urgent telephone conversation in connection with the antiterrorist operation in the Donetsk Region.

Forecast for the near term

It is hard to make forecasts about further development of Belarusian–Ukrainian relations, because the situation in Ukraine remains very tense and vague. However, it is already clear that official Minsk will try to keep building up the potential of bilateral relations irrespective of the result (or cancellation) of the presidential election in Ukraine. As of today, the Belarusian president has established quite friendly and confidential relations with the key players of the Ukrainian political landscape.

Further, Belarus will be trying to use its position on Ukraine as a pretext to unfreeze its relations with the West and as an additional argument in its talks with Moscow over the terms and conditions of the treaty to establish the Eurasian Economic Union.

Annex

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development index.

Belarus–Russia relations

Date	Event	Point
5 March	A. Lukashenka attends a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council. He insists that the EAEU be based on the principle of equal conditions for all participants.	+3 -1
5 March	A second shift of Russian military personnel comes on joint air defense combat duty.	+1
6 March	A. Lukashenka hosts a conference on the development of the potash sector. Belarus will not set up a joint venture in Moscow to sell potash fertilizers.	-2
11 March	A telephone conversation between A. Lukashenka and V. Putin. The presidents discuss the economic environment and the situation in the money-market.	+2
13 March	A. Lukashenka meets with head of the Republic of Mordovia V. Volkov.	+2
18 March	A telephone conversation between A. Lukashenka and V. Putin. They discuss the situation in Ukraine and the agenda for a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council.	+2
23 March	A. Lukashenka's media availability. He says the federalization of Ukraine is inadmissible. He de facto admits the annexation of Crimea by Russia.	-1 +1
26 March	A. Lukashenka's interview to Shuster Live television program. "Practical" recommendations to the Ukrainian authorities as to how to put up resistance to Russia. He condemns V. Yanukovych and supports O. Turchynov.	-2
26 March	A working meeting of representatives of the Belarusian special-operations force command and the Russian airborne troops command.	+1
1 April	A. Lukashenka meets with Deputy Prime Minister of Russia D. Rogozin. He expresses complete union support for Russia.	+2
1 April	A telephone conversation between Belarusian Prime Minister M. Miasnikovič and Russian Prime Minister D. Medvedev.	+1
3 April	M. Miasnikovič meets with Vnesheconombank Chairman V. Dmitriev.	+2
4 April	A. Lukashenka meets with Kaluga Region Governor A. Artamonov. He makes a statement about the Kremlin's approval of all Belarus's actions concerning Russia.	+2
4 April	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej meets with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.	+2
10 April	A telephone conversation between A. Lukashenka and V. Putin. They discuss the agenda for a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council.	+2

№ 19 March–April 2014

Date	Event	Point
10 April	M. Miasnikovič meets with State Secretary of the Union State of Belarus and Russia G. Rapota.	+2
15 April	M. Miasnikovič visits Moscow. He meets with D. Medvedev.	+2
16 April	Prime Minister M. Miasnikovič presents a report to A. Lukashenka. A statement is made about the necessity to abolish all exceptions and exemptions within the EAEU.	-1
18 April	A. Lukashenka meets with Chairman of the Board of OAO Uralchem D. Mazepin. He makes a statement about the need to overcome the potash conflict.	+2
22 April	A. Lukashenka delivers his annual address to the Belarusian nation and the National Assembly.	+1
	Russian culture and the Russian languages are taken good care of in Belarus, he says.	+1
	Positive statements about the Eurasian integration are made.	-1
	A statement that Belarus needs to improve its relations with the United States is made.	-1
22-24 April	A delegation of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District led by Governor D. Kobylkin visits Belarus.	+2
24 April	A telephone conversation between U. Makiej and S. Lavrov.	+1
24 April	The Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange inks agreements on cooperation with Russia's largest unions of dairy producers and distributors (the National Dairy Producers Union and the Russian Union of Entrepreneurs in the Dairy Industry).	+1
26 April	Belarus must assert its interests during the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union, says Foreign Minister of Belarus Uladzimir Makiej.	-1
29 April	Siarhiej Rumas, the Belarusian representative in the Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission, reports to A. Lukashenka. The president reiterates that all exemptions must be cancelled.	-1
29 April	A meeting of the Eurasian Economic Commission. A. Lukashenka says there must be no limitations within the EAEU. The signing of the treaty to establish the EAEU is postponed.	+3 -1 -2
29 April	The issue of customs duties on oil products will be decided at the bilateral level. Common gas and oil markets will become operational before 2025, says Chairman of the Eurasian Economic Commission Board Viktor Khristenko.	-1
Total		+24

Belarus–EU relations

Date	Event	Point
1 March	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej visits Lithuania.	-+2
11 March	Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna visits Spain; consultations between the Foreign Ministries.	+1
13 March	Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ meets with Ambassador of Lithuania Evaldas Ignatavičius.	+1
20 March	Days of Belarusian culture open in France.	+1
21 March	Aliena Kupčyna meets with Ambassador of Germany Wolfram Maas.	+1
2 April	A meeting of the Belarusian–Polish working group on trade and investments.	+1
3 April	Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ meets with Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland Katarzyna Kacperczyk.	+1
4 April	Hrodna Region Governor Uladzimir Kraŭcoŭ meets with Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland Katarzyna Kacperczyk.	+1
8-9 April	Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ visits Finland; the 4th Belarusian–Finnish Economic Forum.	+1
9-10 April	Aliena Kupčyna visits Slovenia; consultations between the Foreign Ministries.	+1
15-16 April	Aliena Kupčyna visits Germany; consultations between the Foreign Ministries.	+1
21-23 April	Aliena Kupčyna visits Slovakia; consultations between the Foreign Ministries.	+1
24-25 April	Official Minsk refuses to participate in an informal meeting in Prague celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership.	-2
28-29 April	Aliena Kupčyna visits Hungary to take part in a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group member-states and the Eastern Partnership.	+1
March–April	Negative materials in official media and statements by the administration of the country in the context of the developments in Ukraine.	-2
March–April	Belarusian–Lithuanian consular consultations (21 March), 5th meeting of the Belarusian–Czech working group on cooperation in agriculture and food (30–31 March).	+1
Total		+11

Belarus–China relations

Date	Event	Point
3 March	Prime Minister M. Miasnikovič meets with a delegation of ZTE.	+1
3 March	Belarus and China have implemented more than USD1.5 billion worth of joint projects in the energy sector since 2008, Energy Minister Uladzimir Patupčyk said during the official groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the Maladziečna switching substation to celebrate the beginning of the implementation of the project to build up a power delivery and distribution system for the Belarusian nuclear power plant.	+1
4 March	M. Miasnikovič meets with representatives of Huawei.	+1
4 March	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej meets with Deputy Foreign Minister of China Cheng Guoping.	+2
11 March	The Belarusian government provides a guarantee for Exim Bank of China for the repayment of the USD52.7 million loan to Belarusian Railway.	+1
12 March	Anatol Tozik meets with the leadership of the China National Corporation for Overseas Economic Cooperation.	+1
12 March	Defense Minister of Belarus Jury Žadobin meets with military and air attaché at the Chinese Embassy in Belarus Sheng Yuezhong.	+1
24 March	Jury Žadobin meets with Chinese Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming.	+1
25 March	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus V. Rybakoŭ meets with Chinese Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming.	+1
27 March	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus V. Rybakoŭ meets with a delegation of the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS).	+1
28 March	Deputy Prime Minister Anatol Tozik meets with the leadership of Geely.	+1
2 April	Anatol Tozik meets with the leadership of CAMCE. They discuss the CBIP project and the modernization of OAO Svetlogorsk Cellulose and Cardboard Mill. The prime contract for the design of the China–Belarus Industrial Park is planned to be signed in the near future.	+1 -1
3 April	Anatol Tozik meets with the leadership of Bel Huawei Technologies.	+1
17 April	OAO Promsvyaz offers Huawei to create industrial cooperation (to increase localization).	+1
21 April	Anatol Tozik meets with a delegation of Xuzhou.	+1
22 April	A. Lukashenka's annual address to the nation and parliament. Positive remarks about the cooperation with China.	+1
26 April	The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) will receive guarantees of the Belarusian government for the repayment of the loan to Minskenergo, amounting to more than USD43.2 million.	+1
30 April	Chinese Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming gives an interview to BelTA.	+1
Total		+18

Belarus's relationships with the 'Developing countries'

Date	Event	Point
16–17 March	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej visits Iran.	+2
24–25 March	Deputy Foreign Minister of Nicaragua Valdrac Jaenscjtke visits Belarus.	+1
24–25 March	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej visits Vietnam.	+2
25–26 March	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej visits Laos.	+2
26–28 March	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej visits Cambodia.	+2
15–16 April	Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran Ali Larijani visits Belarus.	+2
21–25 April	Chairwoman of the Lao National Assembly Pani Yathotou visits Minsk.	+2
23–25 April	Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen visits Belarus.	+3
23–25 April	Chief of the Presidential Property Management Directorate of Belarus Viktor Šejman visits Bolivia.	+2
24 April	Venezuelan Foreign Minister José Jaua Milano pays a working visit to Belarus.	+2
24–25 April	Mozambican Foreign Minister Oldemiro Balói visits Belarus.	+2
Total		+22

Belarus–Ukraine relations

Date	Event	Point
March–April	A series of public statements by A. Lukashenka in support of the new leadership of Ukraine; peacemaking initiatives of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry.	+4
March–April	Neutral reports of Belarusian media concerning the developments in Ukraine.	+2
27 March	Belarus votes against the resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the United Nations.	-2
March	Belarus refrains from recalling its ambassador to Ukraine after Ukraine has recalled its ambassador.	+1
29 March	Acting president of Ukraine O. Turchynov visits Belarus.	+3
2 April	A. Lukashenka calls for the development of cooperation with Ukrainian military–industrial enterprises.	+1
24 April	A telephone conversation between A. Lukashenka and O. Turchynov concerning developments in Ukraine.	+1
Total		+10

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**