



Belarus' FOREIGN POLICY INDEX

№ 23 November–December 2014

Dear readers,

We are pleased to present a new, twenty-third, issue of Belarus Foreign Policy Index, in which we explore Belarus's foreign policy in the five key dimensions throughout November and December 2014. Further, building on the findings of our previous reports, we would like to give you a brief round-up of the year 2014.

Throughout the entire year 2014, the relationship between Belarus and **Russia** progressed in a contradictory and inconsistent manner. Formally, integration processes within the framework of the Customs Troika continued; however, commercial disagreements persisted, and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine further complicated the engagement. On a quantitative basis, the Russian dimension remained the most significant one during most of the year; however, it also comprised more negative points than any other foreign policy priority area.

In Belarus's relationship with the **European Union**, the trend that was first outlined back in 2013 — a gradual increase in the number of diplomatic contacts amid the elaboration of a substantive agenda for negotiations — remained throughout 2014. Four rounds of intergovernmental consultations on modernization and two rounds of consultations on visa facilitation were held. The Belarusian administration kept emphasizing the need for normalizing its relationship with the EU during the entire year of 2014.

As Belarus's cooperation partner **China** became the disappointment of the year. Minsk's originally inflated expectations made the discontent with the lack of any progress in the relationship with China especially bitter. However, despite the delays in the implementation of the project to create the China–Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP), Minsk and Beijing started discussing another megaproject — the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Belarus's relationships with **"developing countries"** showed excellent progress throughout the year 2014; however, it was during the second part of the year that they peaked. The chief reason for this is the country's search for new markets amid increasingly complicated relations with the West and deepening troubles in the Russian economy. In its policy on the developing world, Belarus mostly focused on the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

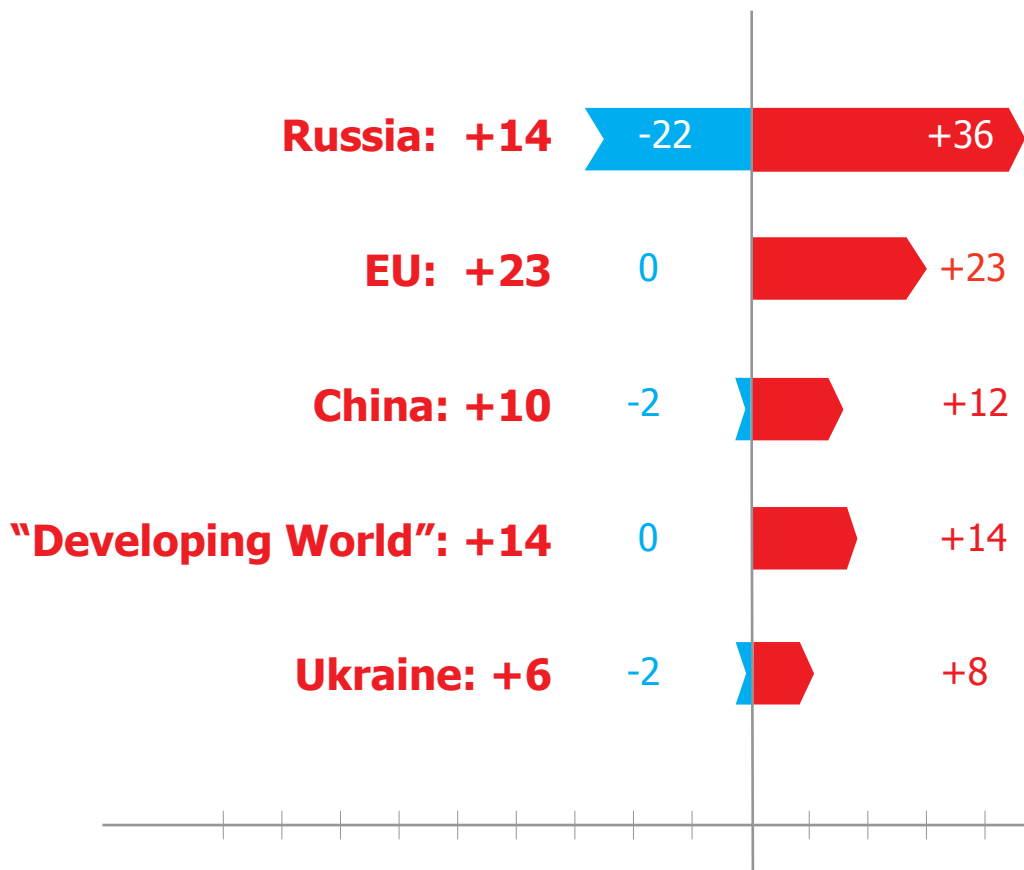
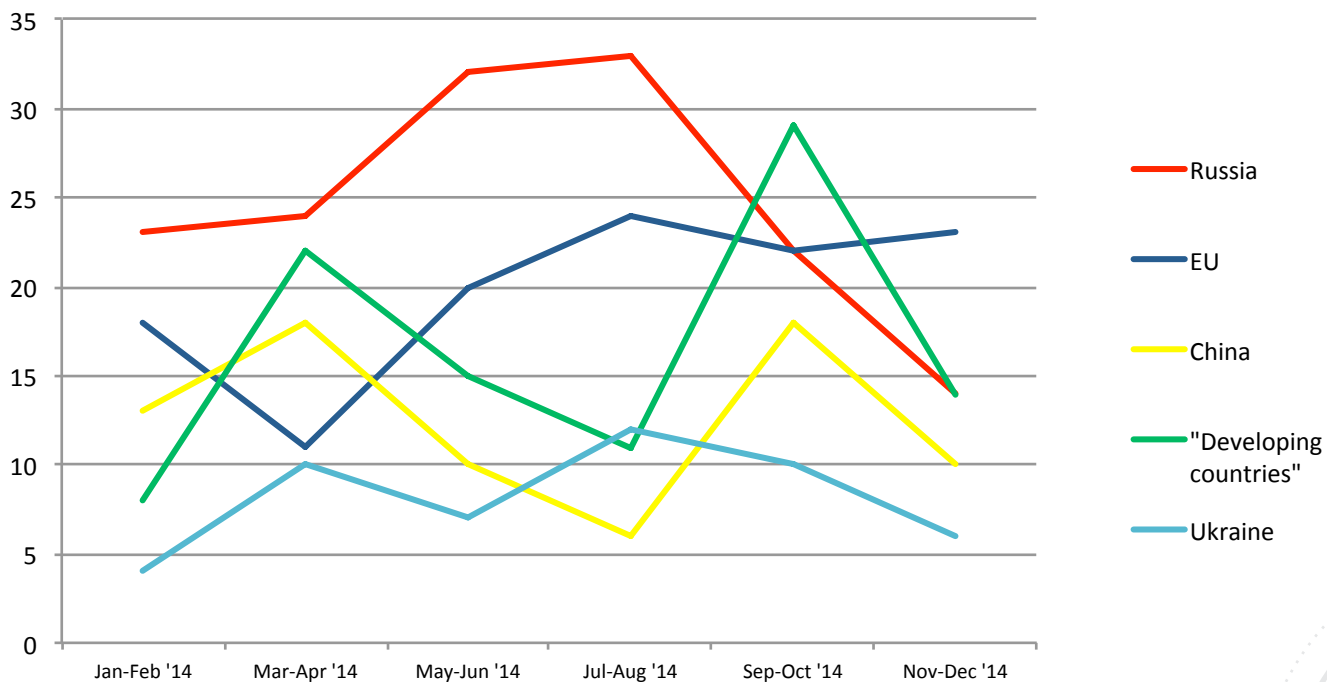
An important achievement of Belarus's foreign policy in 2014 was that the country managed to keep **Ukraine** a friendly nation and one of the main trade partners. Official Minsk's neutral position on the crisis in Ukraine and the peacemaking efforts of the Belarusian president in the resolution of the Donbass conflict not only further strengthened the relationship between Belarus and Ukraine, but also contributed to defusing tensions in Minsk's contacts with the West.

Wishing you all the season's best and an exciting and rewarding year 2015!

Dzianis Melyantsou
Editor
Belarus Foreign Policy Index

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Relations development indices in 2014:



Developments in Belarus–Russia relations

+36



-22

Summary index: +14

Total positive points: +36

Total negative points: -22

Main trends

Despite numerous contacts in both bilateral and multilateral formats, November and December 2014 saw progress in the Belarus–Russia relationship slow. The limitations on supplies of Belarusian products that were unilaterally imposed by Russia compromised the quality of the relationship and caused discontent of the Belarusian leadership. The situation was used to voice a fierce public criticism against the Kremlin's overall integration policy.

The economic stagnation in Russia, drops in oil process, and depreciation of the Russian ruble brought uncertainty to the trade relations between the two countries and escalation of tensions in the bilateral relationship, as we had forecast in the previous Index issue.

Description of the key events

A statistical report released in November showed that Belarus's export of farm products to Russia increased by 6–7% year-on-year in August–September 2014, which probably resulted from re-exports of Western-made products banned in Russia. Nevertheless, Belarusian exporters lost an estimated USD160 million because of the depreciation of the Russian ruble in August–October 2014, according to data reported by Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food of Belarus Vasil Siedzin. On 18 December 2014, President Lukashenka demanded that the government change all payments in trade with Russian contractors to more stable currencies, such as the U.S. dollar and the euro. However, such a change looks unrealistic, because Belarus has a deficit in trade with Russia, and insisting that Russian buyers should pay in hard currency would be unbeneficial.

Economic troubles heightened tensions in the bilateral relationship, which showed in numerous bans on Belarusian products and suspension of supplies (meat, meat products, fruit, and vegetables) by Russian state services, primarily Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Rosselkhoz nadzor. On 21 November, Rosselkhoz nadzor banned supplies from nine Belarusian meat-packing factories citing food safety claims. Afterwards more than 20 Belarusian companies suffered from bans of this kind.

Apparently there were some safety issues contributing to the dispute; however, a lot more probable reason for the conflict is the Kremlin's discontent with Belarus's intention to make a hand on re-exports of banned products from the European Union to Russia. The conflict was even made public, meaning that the contradictions were very intense. Lukashenka made a series of harsh comments criticizing Russia's policy. Specifically, he referred to Russia as a country "lagging half a century" behind Belarus when it came to the quality of food products.

Amid mutual criticism, Belarusian customs houses reportedly resumed on 8 December inspections of trucks on the Belarusian-Russian border, which produced a negative impact on the image of the Customs Union and the emerging Eurasian Economic Union. Moreover, according to media reports, the Belarusian customs service on 29 December prevented 29 trucks full of electronics and household appliances from the Kaliningrad

Region bound for Russia from crossing the state border between Lithuania and Belarus.

The situation saw no essential changes even after a meeting between the presidents of Belarus and Russia in Moscow on 23 December. Following the summit meetings of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), Lukashenka said he had discussed with his Russian counterpart the “entire package of problems associated with the Belarus–Russia relationship” and drew a conclusion that the decisions to impose limitations on supplies of Belarusian-made products had been made without the knowledge or consent of the Russian leadership. However, just four days later, on 28 December, Rosselkhoznadzor Chief Sergey Dankvert said that Belarus was not making efforts to prevent supplies of hazardous products to Russia. Tensions still remain, and at least eight Belarusian companies were unable to export their products to Russia due to Rosselkhoznadzor’s bans as of late December.

Amid the conflict that began to unwind in late November, the Belarusian president sought to make use of strong rhetoric to showcase his firm stance on the Russian administration and, possibly, bring down pro-Russian sentiment in Belarusian society. His efforts proved effective enough and did reshape public opinion — according to an opinion poll conducted by the IISEPS in December, 58.4% of the respondents would vote against a hypothetical merger with Russia, whereas in March 2014, only 47.7% of the respondents would mind a union with Russia¹.

Some examples of Lukashenka’s comments include his remarks on 27 November (“We are not puppies to be pulled by the scruff of our necks using the gas or oil pipes”), 16 December (“... the conduct of our eastern blood brother raises concerns”), 19 December (“The situation with limitations of supplies of Belarusian food to Russia is silly and stupid policy”), and 29 December (“Russia is making use of bandit methods”). At the same time, the head of state continued showing his loyalty and readiness to keep moving towards Eurasian integration. On 31 December, Lukashenka said: “There is no one in this world to fill Russia’s place for us” and “Belarus will never act to harm brotherly Russia.”

Despite tensions, Belarus and Russia continued building up regional and industrial contacts. In November, meetings were held between Belarusian Ambassador to Russia Ihar Pietryshenka and Vladimir Region Governor Svetlana Orlova and between Lukashenka and St. Petersburg Governor Georgy Poltavchenko. In December, Lukashenka met with Kaliningrad region Governor Nikolay Tsukanov and Belarus’s Deputy Prime Minister Anatol Kalinin met with Krasnodar Region Governor Alexander Tkachev. On 8 December, a decision was made to open an office of the Russian news service Russia Today in Belarus, and on 23 December, the Russian defense minister said that Russia was planning to increase the number of airplanes and helicopters deployed in Belarus in order to further strengthen the common air space.

Oil and natural gas deliveries — some of the traditional sources of tensions in the relationship between Belarus and Russia — did not bring about any serious conflicts during the period under review. On 12 December, a contract was signed with Gazprom for import and transit of Russian natural gas via Belarus in 2015–2017. On 10 November, the lower chamber of the Belarusian parliament, the House of Representatives, ratified an intergovernmental protocol with the Russian Federation comprising amendments to the agreement of 9 December 2010 on the procedure for the collection and distribution of oil duties. According to the protocol and the duty calculation formula, Belarus will be receiving USD 1.5 billion annually by 2025 provided oil prices remained above USD 75 per barrel. A drop in oil prices will cause a reduction in Belarusian budget incomes from export supplies of oil products. This agreement is considered to be one of the main sources of additional budget revenues for Belarus and an important instrument to curb its current account deficit. Further drops in oil prices — which are already taking place — may lead to additional tensions in the relationship between Belarus and Russia resulting from the need for the Belarusian government to have additional rounds of talks with Russia over alternative sources to maintain the country’s socioeconomic stability. The prime ministers

1. Dynamics of Belarusian public opinion on certain socioeconomic and political issues (based on IISEPS’s nationwide opinion polls, %), <http://www.iiseps.org/trends/11>

of Belarus and Russia had a telephone conversation to discuss possibilities for Russia to support the Belarusian economy amid the adverse external environment as early as 25 December.

Forecast for the near future

In January and February 2015, Eurasian integration will likely further develop, along with the Belarus–Russia relationship, against the tense backdrop of a situation with supplies of Belarusian-made products to the Russian market.

Another important factor is the socioeconomic situation in both Belarus and Russia. The economic instability and money market shocks in both countries in December 2014 showed the dependence of the Belarusian economy on the situation in Russia and indicated a likely curtailment of resources available for the support of such allies as Belarus. Under the circumstances, the provision of the sixth and final installment of the EurAsEC Anti-Crisis Fund (ACF)'s loan, amounting to USD 440 million, becomes more relevant than a few months ago, and talks over the final loan installment will likely intensify. Further decreases in oil prices may further aggravate the relationship between the two allies.

Now that the external environment is unfavorable, Belarus will probably put pressure on Russia seeking additional financial support and further concessions within the framework of integration processes, including by promoting closer relations with the EU, the United States, and Ukraine. Belarus's attempts to pursue active contacts with the West may heighten tensions in its relations with Russia, which is evidenced by the statement made by Alexey Pushkov, head of the committee on international affairs of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, who on 22 December warned the Belarusian president against accelerating the development of the country's relationship with the United States.

The future of the relationship between Belarus and Russia will also depend on the way the situation in Ukraine unfolds. Should tensions between Russia and Ukraine continue to escalate, official Minsk will find it increasingly harder to maintain its neutrality, whereas its intention to keep its trade relations with Ukraine may bring about a conflict with Russia.

Lukashenka is quite interested in having Russia support him at the upcoming presidential election, and he will have to find the happy mean between loyalty to Russia — to retain preferences, and his special stance on the crisis in Ukraine — to maintain trade ties with Ukraine and pursue further dialogue with the European Union and the United States.

Developments in Belarus–EU relations

+23



0

Summary index: +23

Total positive points: +23

Total negative points: 0

Main trends

The pivotal trend of the last two years towards a consistent increase in the number of diplomatic contacts still remains. The trend is manifested primarily on a bilateral basis. Routine insignificant contacts alternate with quite important ones.

Belarus and the EU keep probing for a conceptual agenda for the bilateral relationship. The fourth round of intergovernmental consultations on modernization and the second round of consultations on visa facilitation were held during the period under review.

In an unprecedented move, the Belarusian administration made the conflict with Russia a public instrument for the country to shape its relationship with the European Union.

Description of the key events

Belarus Investment Forum in London that was held on 14 November was the first significant event for the period under review. Economy Minister Mikalaj Snapkoŭ and Chairman of the Board of the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus Siarhieĭ Rumas became the newsmakers of the Belarusian delegation. The National Investment and Privatization Agency reported² that up to 150 participants attended the event.

It is hard to draw any conclusions about the impact of the event — no major investment agreements were reported to have been signed following the forum. There are hardly any reasons to expect that any serious breakthrough will be achieved as a result of such events, which, hard as the Belarusian authorities may try, have no potential to improve the real investment climate in the country. Therefore, the London forum should be regarded as an image-making happening that enables Belarusian functionaries to increase the number of their contacts with European businessmen and officials.

On 19 November, Minsk played host to the fourth round of consultations on modernization between Belarus and the European Union. The delegations were led by Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Aliena Kupčyna and Gunnar Wiegand, European External Action Service Director for Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional Cooperation and OSCE countries. This time the consultations centered on education, regional development and social policy in Belarus, as well as the EU's facilitation instruments in these areas. The mission of the consultations on modernization is to identify the future form of engagement between Minsk and Brussels; therefore, it is too early to comment on any specific outcomes.

On 23 and 24 November, Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej paid a working visit to Austria. The heavy agenda included, apart from the UN and CEI meetings, negotiations between Makiej and his Austrian counterpart Sebastian Kurz. They addressed topical issues of the bilateral agenda, status of the relationship between Belarus and the European

2. List of participants in the Belarus Investment Forum in London, the UK, 14.11.2014, <http://investinbelarus.by/invest/forumLondon/participants/>

Union, as well as regional issues. Concrete results of the meeting included the signing of the Protocol to the intergovernmental Agreement between Belarus and Austria on the avoidance of double taxation with regard to income and property.

When in Vienna, Makiej also met with president of Austrian Federal Economic Chamber Christoph Leitl to address trade, economic, and investment cooperation. During their meeting, Makiej and Leitl expressed their satisfaction with the level of collaboration in the economic sector. Two-way trade in commodities amounted to approximately USD 500 million in 2013, and Austria became one of the top five foreign investors in Belarus with USD 502 million in 2013.

On 24 and 25 November, Brussels played host to the second round of talks between Belarus and the European Union on the facilitation of visa procedures and readmission. Negotiations have so far been held behind closed doors and focused on purely technical matters, and participants have been making no specific public comments. The press service of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry keeps emphasizing that Minsk insists that the EU adopt the same approach to Belarus when negotiating visa issues as to the other partner states that have already concluded such talks. Minsk also suggests introducing a more flexible visa issuing practice enabling law-abiding citizens (that have not breached visa rules) to obtain longer visas.

Another noteworthy economic event — the Belarusian–Polish Investment Forum — was held in Warsaw on 1 December. Belarus was represented by a less substantial delegation compared to the London forum, although its level can be considered quite high. The delegation was led by Deputy Prime Minister Michail Rusy. Three cooperation agreements were signed at the forum — an agreement between the National Investment and Privatization Agency and the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency, an agreement between the National Institute of Professional Education and the Poznan Center for Continuing Education and Practice, and an agreement between the State Standardization Committee and the Polish Standardization Committee.

Also important is the meeting between the head of the Belarusian delegation Michail Rusy and Polish Agriculture Minister Marek Sawicki. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry reported that the two officials discussed further cooperation between Polish and Belarusian agrarian companies in food processing and creation of facilities for storing agricultural raw materials. They also signed a protocol of the working group for cooperation in agribusiness between the agrarian ministries of the two countries. This part of Rusy's agenda in Poland is of particular importance in the context of the sanctions that Russia had imposed on EU agricultural producers.

On 4-5 December, Swiss Basel hosted the 21st OSCE Ministerial Council. As part of the forum, Minister Uladzimir Makiej held a series of meetings with counterparts from the EU member states, including the foreign ministers of Hungary, Germany, Denmark, Slovakia, Finland, and Sweden, as well as the Secretary of State for European Affairs of France.

On 10 December, Uladzimir Makiej and then Aliena Kupčyna received a delegation of the political directors of the foreign ministries of the Visegrad Group participating countries (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic). That was the first visit of this format to Minsk, which is a natural consequence of the Ukrainian crisis bringing about a situation in Eastern Europe where the EU member states are looking to establish a constructive dialogue with Belarus.

The day of 11 December saw probably the most significant and totally expected event during the period under review. Heads of the EU diplomatic missions were invited to a meeting at the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, where Aliena Kupčyna informed the European diplomats about the current challenges to the relationship between Belarus and Russia and progress of integration processes. The press service of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry reported that "in this context, the importance of dialogue and cooperation between Belarus and the EU was noted." On the same day, Uladzimir Makiej had telephone conversations with foreign ministers of some of the EU member states. It appears that those conversations also centered on the problems that Belarus is facing in its relations with Russia, the regional situation and the relationship between Belarus and the European

Union.

We can only make guesses about the specific expectations of the Belarusian authorities; however, we feel we should note the following: that was probably the first time since 2010 that Minsk openly referred to the EU with regard to its bilateral relations with the Kremlin. This time the appeal to the West was triggered by the limitations on supplies of Belarusian-made dairy and meat products to Russia.

The day before New Year, Lukashenka drew a symbolic line under the main trend of Belarus–EU relations that prevailed throughout 2014. As he introduced Aliaksandr Kosiniec as new head of the Presidential Administration, the president said: “We border on the West and want no clashes — neither political nor diplomatic. Half of our trade is there. If the West offers us cooperation, we cannot miss the chance. We will strive to normalize relations with the West. If they are willing to cooperate with us on equal terms and give us a relevant signal, we will accept this signal. We have always said: let us come to the negotiating table and make arrangements.”³

Forecast for the near future

Belarus has entered the turbulent year of a presidential election. This time, the traditionally nervous presidential campaign will be coupled with increasingly unstable economic situation. The decreasing competitiveness of the Belarusian economic model and recession in Russia make the Belarusian economy especially vulnerable.

On the one hand, this means Minsk will be going to great lengths to normalize its relations with the EU to have at least some sort of an airbag if the economic situation deteriorates and problems with Russia persist.

On the other hand, the authorities made it clear yet again amid imminent panic in the money market at the end of December that they were ready to take tough non-liberal measures (specifically, by blocking non-governmental media portals). Such moves will inevitably lead to new tensions in Belarus’s relationship with the European Union.

3. President: If the West offers us cooperation, we cannot miss the chance, 30.12.2014, <http://news.tut.by/politics/429907.html>

Developments in Belarus–China relations

Summary index: +10

Total positive points: +12

Total negative points: -2

+12

-2

Main trends

The relationship between Belarus and China continues to disillusion official Minsk. During the reviewed period, no significant political events were reported in the bilateral framework. Economic collaboration was essentially replaced by discussions of plans to implement two landmark bilateral projects — the China–Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP) and the Silk Road Economic Belt, which was included in the agenda for Belarusian–Chinese relations as late as 2014.

During the last two months of the year, the chief lobbyists of Chinese interests in the top-echelon administration of Belarus were given a hard time. On 22 December, Mahilioŭ Region Governor P. Rudnik, who was responsible for the promotion of Chinese interests in Belarusian regions after B. Batura, was relieved of his duties, and on 27 December, Deputy Prime Minister A. Tozik, the main locomotive of the Belarus–China relationship, lost his post as a result of a staff turnover. There are no reports as to whether the decision to dismiss Tozik had been inspired by the lack of progress in the joint projects with China, but the fact that Tozik is no longer deputy premier can be regarded as a logical result of the continuing dissatisfaction of the Belarusian administration with the Chinese dimension of its foreign policy throughout the year 2014.

Description of the key events

In 2014, China remained the least beneficial trade partner of Belarus in terms of the export–import ratio. There were no significant changes in the situation with Chinese loans, either. In November 2014 (December data were not available at the time of writing), USD 65 million worth of Chinese loans were raised (and USD 18 million worth of loan payments were made). Although Chinese banks are formally the second largest lender for the Belarusian Ministry of Finance, they account for less than 10% of the total amount of funds borrowed by the country. Chinese banks are not in the same league with Russian lenders, and China's second place was only possible because Belarus remains an unappealing borrower in the global financial market.

The landmark CBIP project did not see any tangible progress, either. On 1 November, according to the schedule, the CBIP Administration identified the types of economic activities for its residents. The list of activities available for CBIP residents includes the production of pharmaceuticals, office equipment and computing hardware, medical equipment, measuring devices, optical equipment and devices, and chronometers. It is hard to assess the economic outlook for these projects; however, it seems these activities hardly have sufficient potential for raising the declared multi-billion investments and boosting export to USD 30–50 billion worth of products.

So far, two residents have been registered at the CBIP — LLC Bel Huawei Technologies and LLC Telecommunications Equipment Factory (ZTO). According to official reports, LLC Bel Huawei Technologies, which was established by Huawei, has no plans to build any major production facilities at the CBIP (the company intends to implement an investment project to create a Huawei research and development center). LLC ZTO, founded

by ZTE, plans to produce state-of-the-art telecommunications equipment for mobile and landline telephone operators, transportation system components, electric transport, and combined energy installations. Interestingly, even during the initial phase, the activities originally declared by ZTO fail to fully correspond to the types of activities approved for the Park in November 2014.

On 19 December, Deputy Prime Minister Anatol Tozik met with the leadership of China CAMC Engineering Co., Ltd. (CAMCE) led by Chairman of the Board Luo Yan. Following the meeting, a statement was made that the Chinese corporation would buy into the Joint Belarusian–Chinese Company for the Development of the China–Belarus Industrial Park, and the authorized fund of the company would significantly increase. Unfortunately, although CAMCE conscientiously posts all reports of its collaboration with Belarus on its official website, there were no accounts of the meeting with Tozik and plans to acquire a shareholding in the company that promotes the Park. Reports only appeared on Belarusian websites. The CBIP is not CAMCE's only project in Belarus — the company is also involved in the construction of a bleached sulfate pulp-making facility in Svietlahorsk, which has already proved to be one of the least successful joint projects with China.

On 23 December, a presentation of the CBIP and Belarus's investment opportunities for potential Chinese investors was held at CAMCE, attended by representatives of the CBIP administration and Economy Minister M. Snapkoŭ.

When it comes to the Silk Road Economic Belt project, the most significant event during the period under review was the meeting between Transport and Communications Minister of Belarus A. Sivak and Vice Minister of Transport of China Wang Xiaojuan. Sivak called on his colleague to promote investment in Belarusian transport and logistics; however, it is clear even from official media reports that the two countries are having serious problems in this area. There are many challenges facing road and railway transport, whereas talks over the possible launch of a direct Minsk–Beijing flight, which have been underway for years, have not made any visible progress. In this context, the near-term prospects of the Silk Road Economic Belt look extremely vague. The main challenge is not that those involved in the project will have to deal with transport regulations, but that even in China the Silk Road Economic Belt is perceived as a concept that still remains at its planning stage, rather than a real-life initiative. The commitment of the Belarusian authorities to mega-projects that are expected to bear fruit in the distant future means that all of such projects will be implemented over a prolonged period of time and often will have no significant benefits in store for Belarus, if any.

In the context of transport cooperation, we should also mention Tozik's meeting with a delegation of China Railway Engineering Corporation (CREC) led by Zhao Jinxiang, President, the Eurasian Region. The officials discussed opportunities for cooperation in the railway sector, including the construction of a railway line in the Paliessie region, infrastructure modernization for increasing the speed of railway transport, and the organization of a high-speed Beijing–Moscow–Minsk–Brest railway connection. The meeting must be a logical continuation of cooperation between Belarus and China in the railway transportation sector, which mostly comes down to supplies of Chinese-made equipment against the security of the Belarusian government.

Forecast for the near future

The dismissal of A. Tozik from his post has obviously produced a serious impact on the promotion of China's interests in Belarus. According to an official report by the press service of the president, Tozik has been relieved of his duties because of the planned transfer to another job; therefore, the future format of cooperation between Belarus and China will largely depend on the vacancy that this official will fill.

In the economic sector, neither Belarus nor China will be making any important active moves. Wrapping up the year 2014, we can draw a conclusion that starting 2015, the Belarus–China relationship is gradually entering a stagnation phase.

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

(Asia, Africa and Latin America)

Summary index: +14

Total positive points: +14

Total negative points: 0

+14

0

Main trends

The Middle East became the main focus for Belarus's foreign policy. The Foreign Ministry sought to restore the former ties with that region; however, military and political tensions proved too challenging. During the two months under review, all of the contacts with the countries of the region were low-level working visits that mostly aimed at promoting business contacts. The improvement of the political relationship with Turkey over the last few years encouraged economic collaboration. Most of Minsk's efforts have been to attract Turkish business, and Belarus has succeeded in making Turkey one of its key partners in the Middle East.

Attempts were also made to strengthen the relationship with Southeast Asia, specifically with Vietnam. That country is a traditional market for many Belarusian products and a channel to further supply those products to neighboring markets. In its relations with Vietnam Belarus managed to reach a level of stable collaboration.

Minsk has proved quite successful in its search for new markets in the military and technical sector, which is evidenced by ongoing contacts with Pakistan, Myanmar, and Angola.

Description of the key events

Middle East. On 4-5 November, a delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ made a working visit to Syria to hold ministerial consultations, including on trade and economic issues. The head of the Belarusian delegation met with the prime minister, ministers of foreign affairs, economy and foreign trade, defense, and industry of Syria⁴.

On 18-19 December, Belarusian Energy Minister Uladzimir Patupčyk visited Sudan to participate in the 2nd meeting of the Joint Commission for Cooperation. The Commission is co-chaired by Sudanese Oil Minister Makkawi Mohamed Awad. The Belarusian delegation comprised representatives of the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Taxes, State Committee on Science and Technologies, Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and major manufacturing companies. Interdepartmental agreements were signed in education and healthcare, and the intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in science and technology was initialed. The head of the delegation was received by President of Sudan Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, and meetings were held with the vice-speaker of the Sudanese parliament and leadership of the Sudanese Industry Ministry⁵.

Contacts with Turkey continued during the two months under review. In late November, Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Prakapovič met with a delegation of Turkish businessmen. He said he was certain that two-way trade would grow to at least USD 1 billion during the following two or three years. Members of the delegation were especially interested

4. On political consultations between Belarus and Syria, 06.11.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/a7f-d905ec8794013.html

5. On the second meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Sudanese Commission for Cooperation in Khartoum, 19.12.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c91bcb9f5cfde68c.html

in construction, oil and gas industry, and the automotive sector⁶. On 15–18 December, Deputy Industry Minister of Belarus Hiennadz Sviderski visited Turkey to participate in the 2nd meeting of the joint Belarusian–Turkish working group for industry and technology cooperation in Ankara. The Belarusian delegation included the directors of the free economic zones Mahilioŭ and Hrodnainvest, representatives of the State Committee on Science and Technologies, BATE, MTZ, BelAZ, MAZ, Gomselmash, and Polytechnic high-technology park⁷.

On 29–30 December, Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej paid a working visit to Istanbul. He held consultations with the leadership and owners of Turkish companies on the elaboration of a long-term cooperation strategy with Belarusian corporate exporters with a view to increasing export supplies of Belarusian-made products to Turkey and the Middle East, especially petrochemical, engineering, woodworking products and food⁸. Two-way trade between Belarus and Turkey increased to USD 580 million in 2013 from USD 266 million in 2009.

On 27–28 December, Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej made a working visit to Iran. He met with First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, and Minister of Industries, Mines and Trade Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh. The minister also held talks with Iranian businessmen and visited two maintenance centers servicing Belarusian-made vehicles⁹.

Asia. On 13-14 November, a Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ visited Pakistan to hold the first round of talks between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Rybakoŭ also held meetings in the Ministry for Finance, Revenue, Economic Affairs, Statistics, and Privatization, Ministry of Defense, and the lower house of the Pakistani parliament. The Belarusian Embassy in Islamabad was officially unveiled during the visit¹⁰.

Rybakoŭ also met with advisor on national security to the prime minister of Pakistan¹¹, chairman of the standing commission for international affairs of the lower house of the Pakistani parliament and minister of defense. According to official reports, opportunities for military and technical cooperation were addressed at the meeting¹².

The focus on cooperation in the defense sector is noteworthy. Belarusian and Pakistani officials discussed opportunities for collaboration in defense many times throughout 2014, and the Pakistani defense minister visited Minsk in summer. The Belarusian government must consider military and technical cooperation with Pakistan to be a priority of the bilateral relationship. When commenting on the prospects of cooperation with official Islamabad, the spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Ministry traditionally mentioned the export of industrial products, potash fertilizers, and added that Pakistan “has the sixth largest army in the world.”¹³

6. Piotr Prakapovič meets with representatives of Turkish business, 26.11.2014, <http://government.gov.by/ru/content/5766>

7. On the meeting of the joint Belarusian–Turkish working group for industry and technology cooperation, 15.12.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/e5aa3f5d19fedb04.html

8. On the working visit of Belarusian Foreign Minister U. Makiej to Istanbul, 29.12.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b44dad4c4ddea013.html

9. On the working visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs U. Makiej to Iran, 29.12.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b98b39279034fc05.html

10. On the visit of a Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Rybakoŭ to Pakistan, 13.11.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d8032896f15e4d84.html

11. On the meeting between Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Rybakoŭ and advisor on national security to the prime minister of Pakistan, 13.11.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/a8b35c9627171a39.html

12. On the meetings of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Rybakoŭ in Pakistan, 14.11.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/a3b3f117a92398c9.html

13. Q&A with head of the information department and spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Zmicier Mirončyk at a briefing on 13 November 2014, 13.11.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dcae-347a96d3236f.html

On 26-27 November, a Vietnamese delegation led by Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam Nguyen Phu Trong paid an official visit to Belarus. The delegation was received by President Lukashenka. The state leader said Belarus was ready to increase supplies of Belarusian machines to Vietnam, specifically industrial and manufacturing equipment, mine trucks, vehicles, farm machines and food-processing equipment. He also said that official Minsk was willing to use such instruments as leasing, export credit, and insurance, and called production cooperation drawing on the experience in the operation of a MAZ assembly facility in Vietnam an important and promising area for cooperation. Further, Lukashenka suggested that the two countries should set up a joint venture to produce buses. Minsk is also interested in engaging Vietnamese companies, specifically Viettel, in investment projects in Belarus.

The Belarusian president also said he hoped that "Vietnam will become a sort of a foothold to promote Belarus's economic interests in Southeast Asia," which means that Belarus wishes to use Vietnam to reach out to the markets of Indochina.

Lukashenka also suggested that Vietnam should send more students to study at Belarusian universities. He also called for intensifying the work of the joint center for development and application of instrument-making and mechanical engineering technologies. The president placed emphasis on the prospects of military and technical cooperation with Vietnam.

Nguyen Phu Trong held a meeting with Prime Minister Michail Miasnikovič, Speaker of the upper chamber of the Belarusian parliament, the Council of the Republic, Anatol Rubinaŭ, and visited MAZ. The Belarusian premier pledged that Belarus would very soon "seriously simplify" the issuance of visas for Vietnamese citizens. Minsk also supports the launch of a direct flight connection with Vietnam.

On 3-4 December, Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ visited Vietnam to participate in the 11th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation. Belarus and Vietnam agreed to develop a "roadmap" for economic engagement for 2016–2018¹⁴.

On 3–5 November, Commander in Chief of the Myanmar Army Min Aung Hlaing visited Belarus. He met with President Lukashenka, but there were no reports whether they addressed any specific projects. According to the Belarusian state leader, "our dialogue has a long-term outlook."¹⁵ Prime Minister M. Miasnikovič mentioned more specific issues: "... on the provision of export loans for specific Belarusian-made products, on supplies of civil machinery on lease terms or with respites of payment. [...]investment cooperation in your country. [...] We are also ready to transfer technologies and know-how." Belarus also offered Myanmar to train officers¹⁶.

Africa. On 11 November, Minsk played host to consultations on Sub-Saharan Africa and engagement between Belarus and Russia in Africa at the level of heads of regional departments of the Foreign Ministries of the two countries¹⁷.

On 12-14 November, Belarusian Ambassador to South Africa and Angola Andrej Maučan paid a visit to Angola. He met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Angola Georges Rebelo Chikoti, Minister of State and Head of President's Homeland Security Manuel Vieira, who is also responsible for economic development and defense. Manuel Vieira said Angola was

14. On the 11th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission and the national exposition of Belarus in Vietnam, 04.12.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f8685cc142747982.html

15. Dialogue between Belarus and Myanmar has a long-term outlook — Lukashenka, 04.11.2014, http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/president/Dialog-mezhdu-Belarusju-i-Mjanmoj-natselen-na-perspektivu--Lukashenko_i_685036.html

16. Michail Miasnikovič meets with Commander in Chief of the Myanmar Army, 03.11.2014, <http://government.gov.by/ru/content/5749>

17. On Belarus–Russia consultations on Sub-Saharan Africa, 11.11.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ccad-3a0b80b037c2.html

interested in promoting cooperation in supplies of Belarusian trucks and farm machines, involving Belarus in the implementation of major infrastructure projects, and deepening cooperation in the defense sector. Maučan also discussed policies to promote the trade and economic interests of Belarus and Russia in Angola at a meeting with Russian Ambassador to Angola Dmitry Lobach¹⁸.

Other. Following a drop in export supplies to the Customs Union, further diversification of sales markets was discussed in early December at the level of the Security Council. Other state authorities followed suit— the Council of Ministers explored opportunities for stepping up collaboration with Southeast Asia. At the same time, the government is aware that the challenge cannot be addressed without a consistent approach. Foreign Minister Makiej noted: “Not only the administration of the country and the Foreign Ministry are responsible for export diversification — every ministry and every enterprise shares this responsibility. We will not be able to achieve our goals without commitment of every agency.” He said work on these matters must be consistent, rather than only when the country is faced with a crisis¹⁹.

Forecast for the near future

Contacts with Asian markets will likely grow more active, especially with South Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan) and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Indochina), because these regions remained somewhat disregarded during the previous period. Furthermore, Belarus already has some plans and preliminary agreements that need to be implemented.

The Belarusian government will seek to make up for the reduction in export supplies to Russia by boosting deliveries to other markets, specifically to “developing countries.”

Minsk will cautiously try to reanimate or promote cooperation even in some of the riskier regions — with Sudan, Syria, Iran, and Myanmar. On the one hand, the Belarusian government must be thinking that cooperation with those countries is not as risky as it used to be; on the other hand, the export predicament encourages Belarus to take this risk. This policy may be implemented with Russia’s support, given the fact that Moscow is ready, yet again, to challenge the West.

The relationship with African nations will be a lower priority for Belarus’s foreign policy in the “developing world.” Belarus will have its embassies deal with the development of the African region, having markedly expanded their network in that continent. In contrast, official Minsk will try to give an impetus to its relationships with Latin America (Ecuador, Venezuela, and Bolivia). However, the current economic problems in Venezuela and Ecuador caused by the recent drops in oil prices will likely complicate Belarus’s projects in that region.

18. On the working visit of Belarusian Ambassador A. Maučan to Angola, 14.11.2014, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/e0452afefd6d15a9.html

19. Michail Miasnikovič presides at a meeting of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, 16.12.2014, <http://government.gov.by/ru/content/5788>

Developments in Belarus–Ukraine relations

Summary index: +6

Total positive points: +8

Total negative points: -2

+8

-2

Main trends

The bilateral relationship between Belarus and Ukraine remained active and constructive, despite certain fluctuations in the public assessment of the situation at Donbass by official Minsk. When in public, the presidents of Belarus and Ukraine were diligently showing mutual understanding and proximity of their stances.

Minsk continues to play the Ukrainian card seeking to improve its relationship with the West. This is especially noticeable in its relations with the United States. In December, Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland said that Washington was ready for improving its relationship with Minsk and that the Belarusian authorities had done more for their country in having the brand 'Minsk' be emblematic for a peace deal. Further, the Ukrainian factor is used as a tool for Minsk to put the Kremlin under pressure.

Description of the key events

In November and December the position of official Minsk on Ukraine and the Donbass conflict remained highly inconsistent.

In early November, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry adopted a vague position when commenting on the elections in the self-proclaimed breakaway republics. When asked a direct question about Belarus's stance on the elections, Spokesman for the Foreign Ministry Zmicier Mirončyk only said: "The Belarusian side believes the priority task is to continue and conclude the peace process as soon as possible." Chairwoman of the Central Election Commission of Belarus Lidzija Jarmošyna said when asked the same question: "I do not have any opinion about them. I was not there, and I did not observe those elections; therefore, I cannot tell you anything. However, as far as I can see from on-the-spot reports, the turnout was high. Based on the sovereign right of the nation, we can say that the elections can be acknowledged as have been held." Head of the parliamentary commission for international affairs Mikalaj Samasejka went even further — in his words, "we welcome any elections that serve the cause of peace and stabilization." Statements by Jarmošyna and Samasejka drew severe criticism from the Ukrainian media.

On 18 November, President Lukashenka met with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and suggested that a common position should be adopted with Russia on Ukraine for the two countries to "move within the same track." Moreover, in early December, he said Belarus supported Russia's intention to "push" the Ukrainian authorities to dialogue with the self-proclaimed Donbass republics. Such statements de facto ran counter to previous statements by official Minsk that supported Ukraine's territorial integrity.

On 21 December, amid a marked aggravation of trade and economic problems with Russia, Lukashenka made a blitz visit to Kyiv (almost simultaneously with the president of Kazakhstan). The following remark became the keynote of his talks with the Ukrainian counterpart: "I told you before: if you want something from Belarus, tell us, we will do whatever you ask of us within 24 hours. I say it publicly that we have always done

whatever the president of Ukraine has asked us to do. And we will continue doing so in the future... It is not a game for us. Not only due to trade considerations but because we are neighbors, we live close to you, we are not strangers."²⁰ Commenting on the visit, Petro Poroshenko referred to it as "timely, important, and symbolic." He noted that "neither Belarus and Aliaksandr Ryhoravič, nor Kazakhstan and Nursultan Nazarbayev has ever recognized Russia's sovereign power in Crimea or the fake elections in Donetsk and Luhansk on 2 November."²¹

When assessing the results of Lukashenka's visit to Kyiv, Ukrainian experts made various suggestions, and some even assumed that the Belarusian president had been on a secret intercessory mission on instructions from Putin. However, the visit was slammed by Moscow politicians. Member of the Russian State Duma M. Yemelyanov even called the Belarusian president "a traitor of Russia."²²

In late December, Lukashenka made an equivocal statement about the chances of sending Belarusian peacemakers to Donbass. First he noted that "no one will be sent anywhere" and he was made "the target of criticism" all for nothing. Then he said that Belarus should do its best to "alleviate the conflict" or even "end" it. He said that Belarusians "never ask for it, never try to interfere and have no history of interfering" in that conflict, but if "... they ask us, we will take action, if we can. If they do not ask us, it is up to them."

During Lukashenka's visit to Kyiv, the Belarusian and Ukrainian presidents also agreed that a Ukrainian television channel would be broadcast in Belarus. On 22 December, an agreement was reached during a telephone conversation between Ukraine's Information Minister Yu. Stets and his Belarusian counterpart L. Ananič that technical and engineering measures would be taken for Belarus to start broadcasting a Ukrainian television channel in January 2015. The decision can be regarded as both a concession to Ukraine and first step to create an alternative to Russian propaganda, a move that is beneficial for the Belarusian authorities.

Previously, on 18 December, the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine approved the decision to resume broadcasting the Belarus 24 channel. For its part, the channel removed Ya. Novikaŭ's "Human Rights — a Glance at the World", an obviously anti-Ukrainian program, from its schedule.

Belarus continues to pursue cooperation projects with the Ukrainian military-industrial complex. In early November, Zaporizhzhya hosted a meeting between a delegation of Motor Sich and representatives of the State Military–Industrial Committee of Belarus. The meeting was not advertised; however, it did result in some agreements. Specifically, representatives of Motor Sich and Belarusian defense committee officials explored the possibility of launching new production facilities at Orša Aircraft Repair Plant to make small-sized gas-turbine engines for cruise missiles starting 2016. Belarus will start making helicopter engines later, in 2020.

On 26 November, the Belarusian government approved an intergovernmental agreement with Ukraine on the provision on the demarcation of the state border between the two states. Previously, on 12 November, the document was approved by the Ukrainian Cabinet.

An inspection group of the Defense Ministry of Ukraine and an inspection group of the Defense Ministry of Belarus checked from 8 to 12 December and from 15 to 20 December, respectively, for major military activities in the areas adjacent to the border between

20. Lukashenka: Belarus is always ready to help Ukraine, 21.12.2014, http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/president/Lukashenko-Belarus-gotova-vsegda-okazyvat-pomosch-Ukraine_i_690070.html

21. President's key points. Poroshenko's year-end press conference, 31.12.2014, <http://www.mediaport.ua/tezisy-prezidenta-press-konferenciya-poroshenko-po-itogam-goda>

22. State Duma removes Lukashenka from friends, 22.12.2014, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2638726>

the two countries. The checks were conducted pursuant to the agreement between the Belarusian government and the Ukrainian Cabinet on additional measures to build up trust and security.

In late December, Ukrainian Energy Minister V. Demchishin said that Ukraine would soon start importing electricity from Belarus to stop rolling power cuts inside the country. Before the conflict in Ukraine, electricity was that country's main export to Belarus; however, its deliveries almost completely discontinued back in October. First Deputy Prime Minister U. Siamaška said that Belarus hoped import from Ukraine would resume in 2015, adding that Minsk was ready for Kyiv to refuse to export electricity altogether. According to him, such a decision would not be critical for Belarus. For his part, head of the energy efficiency department at the Ministry of Energy of Belarus M. Malašenka said that Belarus was planning to give up on electricity import for good starting 2018.

On 27 December, Belarusian Railway de facto joined the transport blockade of Crimea and cancelled its only train to the peninsula (Minsk–Simferopol). The railway operator explained that the move was made at the request of official Kyiv²³.

On 30 December, Minister of Agrarian Policy of Ukraine O. Pavlenko met with Belarusian Ambassador to Ukraine V. Vialička to discuss ways to step up the activity of the joint working group that is developing mechanisms for the two countries to increase mutual supplies of farm products. According to Pavlenko, it is necessary to "involve Ukrainian and Belarusian business in the creation of joint ventures to make meat and dairy products. We are interested in increasing meat and dairy exports, as well as supplies of vegetable oil, corn, etc."²⁴

Forecast for the near future

Kyiv and Minsk will continue making efforts to build up their relationship. Belarus manages to reap both political and tangible economic benefits. The political instability and aggravation of Ukraine's relationship with Russia have entirely removed the issue of supplies of Belarusian oil products from the table — previously, it was a pressing problem for the bilateral relationship.

As economic complications pile up, Belarus's role as a transit country will increase.

Belarus may also use Ukraine as a channel to communicate with the West. Petro Poroshenko has made a public statement that Ukraine may help Belarus improve its relationship with the European Union within the framework of the Eastern Partnership initiative.

23. Belarus cancels train to Crimea at the request of Ukrzaliznytsia, 27.12.2014, <http://www.aif.ua/money/company/1416592>

24. Ukraine seeks agrarian agreement with Belarus, <http://agriculture.by/news/apk-belarusi/ukraina-poagrar-nomu-dogovarivaetsja-s-belorusami>

Annex

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development index

Belarus–Russia relations

Date	Event	Point
6 November	Belarusian Ambassador to Russia Ihar Pietryšenka meets with Governor of Russia's Vladimir Region	+1
10 November	Lower house of parliament ratifies the intergovernmental protocol with Russia comprising amendments to the agreement of 9 December 2010 on the procedure for the payment and distribution of oil duties	+4
11 November	Rosselkhoznadzor Chief Sergey Dankvert meets with Director of the Department for Veterinary and Food Supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture Vasil Pivavar; an agreement is reached to increase monitoring of the quality of Belarusian-made products	+1
17-18 November	Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visits Minsk to participate in the 11th joint board meeting of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Russia	+2
21 November	Rosselkhoznadzor bans import of products made by nine Belarusian meat-packing factories citing safety complaints	-3
21 November	Belarusian premier participates in a meeting of the Council of CIS Prime Ministers in Ashgabat	+3
27 November	Lukashenka meets with St. Petersburg Region Governor Georgy Poltavchenko	+1
27 November	Lukashenka says "we are not puppies" and that unless trade between Belarus and Russia gets back to normal, Belarus will "have to retaliate"	-1
1 December	Lukashenka meets with Kaliningrad Region Governor Nikolay Tsukanov	+1
2 December	Lower house of parliament ratifies agreement with Russia on cooperation in international information security	+3
3 December	Lukashenka says that Belarus will not ban transit of food from the West to Russia	-1
3 December	Lukashenka says Russia "lags behind Belarus half a century" when it comes to the quality of foodstuffs	-1
4 December	Deputy Prime Minister Michail Rusy meets with Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Arkady Dvorkovich and Rosselkhoznadzor Chief Sergey Dankvert to discuss resumption of supplies of Belarusian food products	+1
5 December	Prime Minister Michail Miasnikovič accuses Russian producers of supplying 700 tons of products to Belarus without proper documents	-1
8 December	According to media reports, Belarus's Customs Service resumes the inspection of trucks on the Russian border	-3

Date	Event	Point
9-10 December	Member of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of Belarus Siarhiej Rumas and First Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Michnievič visit Moscow to participate in meetings of the high-level group of the Council of Ministers of the Union State and Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission	+1
11 December	Member of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of Belarus Siarhiej Rumas says that chiefs of Russian agencies overstepped their authority when they banned Belarusian-made products	-1
11 December	Lukashenka says the reason for the situation with food supplies is "somewhere there, in Moscow"	-1
12 December	A meeting of the CIS Economic Council exploring the possibility of resuming supplies from Belarusian enterprises to Russia at the level of vice-premiers	+1
12 December	Member of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers Siarhiej Rumas says that Russian agencies block the resumption of supplies of Belarusian products	-1
16 December	A three-year contract for natural gas supplies to Belarus is signed	+3
15 December	Chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technologies of Belarus Aliaksandr Šumilin says that the implementation of 17 joint Belarusian-Russian research projects may start in 2015	+1
15 December	Belarusian architecture and construction minister visits Kaliningrad Region of Russia; a preliminary agreement is reached for Belarus to participate in major construction projects in the region ahead of 2018 FIFA World Cup	+1
16 December	Lukashenka says "the conduct of our eastern blood brother raises concerns"	-1
18 December	Lukashenka demands that the government should change to the U.S. dollar and the euro from the Russian ruble in trade with Russian partners	-2
19 December	Lukashenka calls the situation with limitations of supplies of Belarusian-made food products to Russia "silly and stupid policy"	-1
22-23 December	Belarusian foreign minister and defense minister attend meetings of the CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers and CSTO Council of Defense Ministers in Moscow	+2
23 December	Lukashenka and Putin meet in Moscow	+3
23 December	Lukashenka says at an EEU summit that "Rosselkhoz nadzor has unilaterally banned transit of products from Belarus contrary to international rules"	-1
23 December	The Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission signs an agreement on common principles and rules for the circulation of pharmaceuticals, as well as common principles and rules for the circulation of medical products	+4
23 December	Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Anatol Kalinin meets with Kuban Governor Alexander Tkachev	+1
25 December	A telephone conversation between prime ministers of Belarus and Russia exploring possibilities of financial support for the Belarusian economy	+1
29 December	Lukashenka says that Russian contractors make use of "bandit methods" to do away with competitive Belarusian products	-1
29 December	According to media reports, a Belarusian customs house prevented 29 trucks full of electronics and household appliances from the Kaliningrad Region bound for Russia from crossing the state border between Lithuania and Belarus	-3

Date	Event	Point
31 December	Lukashenka says "There is no one in this world to fill Russia's place for us" and that Belarus will never act to harm "brotherly Russia"	+1
Total		+14

Belarus–EU relations

Date	Event	Point
5 November	A Belarusian delegation participates in the Eastern Partnership Conference on Integrated Border Management in Brussels	+1
14 November	Belarus Investment Forum in London	+2
19 November	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej meets with Gunnar Wiegand, European External Action Service Director for Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional Cooperation and OSCE	+1
19 November	Minsk hosts the fourth round of consultations on modernization between Belarus and the European Union	+2
19 November	Foreign Minister Makiej meets with Latvian Transport Minister Anrijs Matiss in Minsk	+1
23-24 November	Foreign Minister Makiej visits Austria and holds negotiations with Austria Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz	+2
24-25 November	Brussels hosts the second round of talks between Belarus and the EU on the visa facilitation and readmission agreement	+1
27 November	Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna meets with Ambassador of Germany Wolfram Maas	+1
28 November	Foreign Minister Makiej meets with British Ambassador to Belarus Bruce Bucknell	+1
1 December	The Belarusian-Polish Investment Forum in Warsaw; the Belarusian delegation is led by Deputy Prime Minister Michail Rusy	+2
4-5 December	Foreign Minister Makiej meets with EU foreign ministers as part of the 21st OSCE Ministerial Council	+2
8 December	Foreign Minister Makiej meets with Ambassador of Ireland to Belarus David Noonan	+1
10 December	Uladzimir Makiej and Aliena Kupčyna meet with a delegation of the political directors of the foreign ministries of the Visegrad Group participating countries	+1
10 December	Foreign Minister Makiej meets with Latvian Transport Minister Anrijs Matiss	+1
11 December	Deputy Foreign Minister Kupčyna meets with heads of the EU diplomatic missions headquartered in Minsk	+1

19 December	Uladzimir Makiej and Aliena Kupčyna meet with a delegation of the Slovenian Foreign Ministry led by Political Director Igor Jukič	+1
November-December	Positive materials in the official media and statements by the leadership of the country about the relationship with the EU	+1
November-December	Consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Estonia, consultations on consular issues (28 November, Minsk); third meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Polish Commission for Economic Cooperation (2 December, Warsaw); consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Austria on engagement within the United Nations (5 December, Vienna); tenth meeting of the Belarusian-Latvian intergovernmental commission for economic, scientific, and technical cooperation (10 December, Minsk); consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Romania on the inventory of the contractual basis for bilateral collaboration (15-16 December, Bucharest)	+1
Total		+23

Belarus–China relations

Date	Event	Point
4 November	Administration of the Great Stone China–Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP) identifies approximately 15 types of possible activities for its residents	+1
6 November	Chinese Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming says during his meeting with Mahilioŭ Region Governor P. Rudnik that China is interested in buying food products from Belarus and investing in farm processing	+1
19 November	Sinomach in November will become a CBIP shareholder, Deputy Prime Minister A. Tozik says following his meeting with the leadership of China CAMC Engineering Co., Ltd. (CAMCE)	+2
27 November	The city of Nanjing is interested in promoting cooperation with Mahilioŭ, Yan Zhuang, Deputy Director General, Nanjing Municipal Investment Promotion Commission, says during his meeting with First Deputy Chairman of Mahilioŭ City Administration A. Paciomkin	+1
2 December	Belarus calls for China to redouble its investment in transport and logistics, Transport and Communications Minister of Belarus A. Sivak said after his meeting with Vice Minister of Transport of China Wang Xiaojuan	+1
9 December	OAo Promagroleasing and SZAO BelGee develop a leasing program for Geely vehicles	+1
12 December	Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Anatol Tozik meets with a delegation of China Railway Engineering Corporation (CREC) led by Zhao Jinxiang, President, the Eurasian Region	+2
23 December	A delegation of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences visits the Informational and Analytical Center; discussions of the Silk Road Economic Belt project	+1
22-23 December	Working visit of Consul General of Belarus in Shanghai V. Mecel to Lianyungang, Jiangsu, to discuss the Silk Road Economic Belt and CBIP projects	+1
23 December	Presentation of the CBIP project at CAMCE. Economy Minister of Belarus M. Snapkoŭ visits China	+1
27 December	A. Tozik relieved of his duties as vice-premier of Belarus	-2
Total		+10

Belarus's relationships with the 'Developing World'

Date	Event	Point
3-5 November	Commander in Chief of the Myanmar Army Min Aung Hlaing visits Belarus	+3
4-5 November	Deputy Foreign Minister V. Rybakoŭ makes a working visit to Syria	+1
13-14 November	Deputy Foreign Minister V. Rybakoŭ visits Pakistan	+1
26-27 November	A Vietnamese delegation led by Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam Nguyen Phu Trong makes an official visit to Belarus	+3
3-4 December	Deputy Foreign Minister V. Rybakoŭ visits Vietnam	+1
18-19 December	Belarusian Energy Minister U. Patupčyk visits Sudan	+1
27-28 December	Foreign Minister U. Makiej pays a working visit to Iran	+2
29-30 December	Foreign Minister U. Makiej pays a working visit to Turkey	+2
Total		+14

Belarus–Ukraine relations

Date	Event	Point
November	A series of statements by some Belarusian officials with ambiguous assessments of the elections in self-proclaimed Donbass republics	-1
November	Lukashenka's statement about readiness to work out a joint stance with the Kremlin on the Donbass conflict	-1
November	Meeting between a delegation of Motor Sich and representatives of the State Military-Industrial Committee of Belarus, which gave an impetus to cooperation in the military-industrial complex	+1
November	The two governments approve agreement on the provision on the demarcation of the state border between the two states	+2
21 December	Lukashenka pays a blitz visit to Kyiv, makes a series of pro-Ukrainian statements	+3
December	Commencement of the project for a Ukrainian television channel to broadcast in Belarus	+1
December	Belarusian Railway de facto joins the transport blockade of Crimea	+1
Total		+6

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**