



Belarus' FOREIGN POLICY INDEX

№ 25 March–April 2015

Dear readers,

We are pleased to present the twenty-fifth issue of Belarus Foreign Policy Index, in which we explore the country's foreign policy in the five key dimensions in March and April 2015.

Belarus's relationship with **Russia** remains contradictory. The progress of military and political contacts was shaded by tensions in supplies of agricultural products and refined oil to the Russian market, as well as lack of headway in industrial integration projects. Amid decreasing export supplies to the Russian Federation, Belarus has intensified contacts in the remaining foreign policy areas seeking alternatives to the Russian market.

Active high-level visits to Belarus by representatives of **European Union** member states and institutions continued. Talks over visa facilitation and the "interim phase" are nearing completion. Despite apparent improvements in the bilateral relationship, further progress is impeded by the problem of political prisoners in Belarus.

Belarus's relationship with **China** reached its three-year peak, mostly due to the preparation for the official visit by President of China Xi Jinping to Belarus in May. Minsk relies on China's support in the difficult economic environment. The Chinese authorities, for their part, are aware that their policy on Belarus requires adjustments.

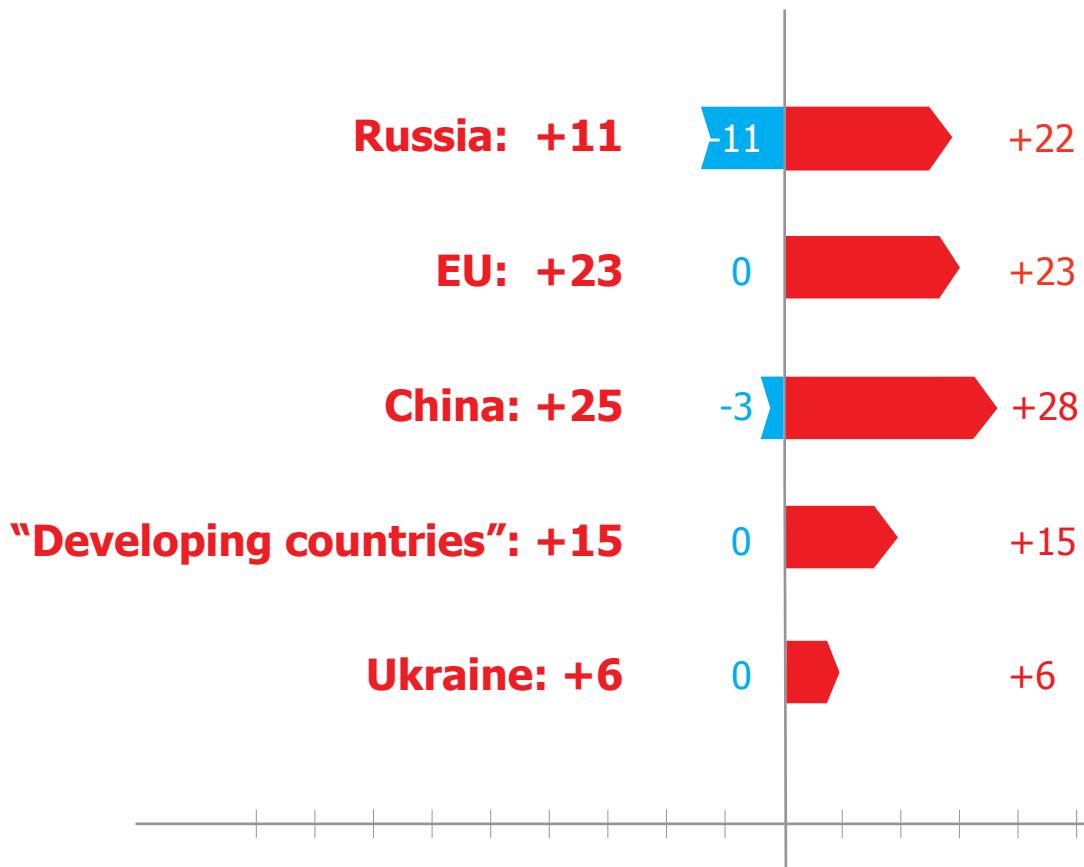
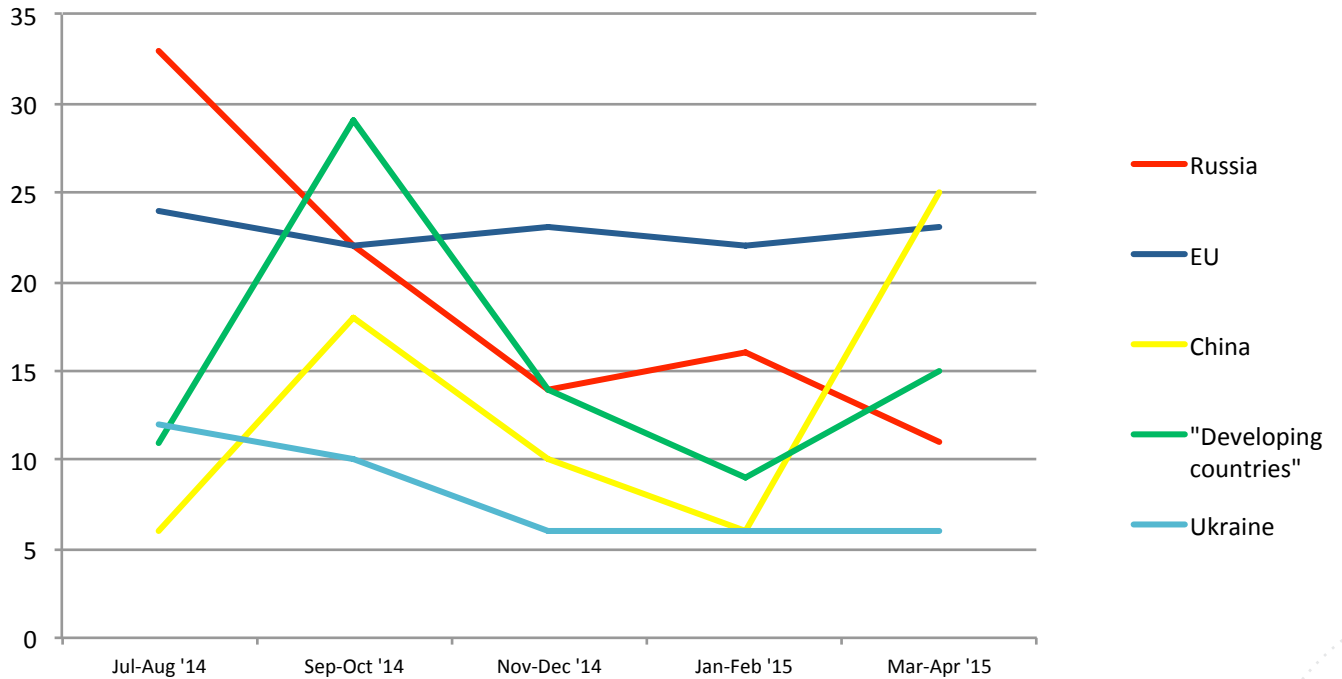
In its relations with the "**developing world**" Belarus mostly focused on the Middle East. Once Minsk managed to improve its relationships with the West, it made changes to its contacts with the rest of the world accordingly. This is the reason why Minsk sought closer ties with the allies of the West in the Middle East—the conservative monarchies of the Persian Gulf and Pakistan.

Belarus's relations with **Ukraine** remained active and friendly. Official Minsk's role of a facilitator in the resolution of the crisis in Ukraine remains an important factor for Minsk to break its political isolation.

Dzianis Melyantsou
Editor
Belarus Foreign Policy Index

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Relations development indices:



Development of the Belarus–Russia relationship

+22



-11

Summary index: +11

Total positive points: +22

Total negative points: -11

Main trends

- 1) Belarus intensified its contacts in all of its foreign policy areas seeking alternatives to the Russian market in the wake of the drop in export supplies to the Russian Federation;
- 2) Tensions between the two countries still remain concerning both supplies of farm products and refined oil to the Russian market and collaboration in other areas, including joint manufacturing projects;
- 3) Belarusian officials have numerous meetings with heads of Russian regions seeking to establish direct channels for the supply of Belarusian products;
- 4) Political statements by the Belarusian leadership about Russia remained contradictory.

Description of the key events

The most significant top-level contacts were associated with the operation of the post-Soviet integration blocs—the meeting of the Supreme State Council of the Union State of Belarus and Russia on 3 March and the meeting in Astana in the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) on 19–20 March. Interestingly, during those events, the Russian side put forward plans to further deepen integration, which were subsequently repudiated by the Belarusian side. In the course of the Moscow meeting, President of Russia Vladimir Putin spoke about the probable establishment of a single visa area within the framework of the Union State, whereas spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of Belarus Zmicier Mirončyk said that “it is not a matter of one day, but rather of several years.” During the top-level meeting in Astana, Putin announced the possibility of creating a currency union within the EEU. Lukashenka, however, said that the issue was not on today’s agenda.

Also during the Astana EEU meeting, another trend became visible. It is premature to speak about it as an established tendency, but there is indirect evidence that engagement within the EEU is strengthened “along its perimeter” as opposed to the “radial” (via Moscow) model characteristic of the post-Soviet space. Previously, in 2014, Kazakhstan’s and Belarus’s efforts aimed to uphold their interests within the framework of the EEU looked a lot like pre-planned activities. During the meeting in Astana, Nursultan Nazarbayev directly thanked Aliaksandr Lukashenka (not Putin) for the timely launch of the new bloc and the organization of a “Normandy Four” summit.

During the period under review, two-way trade between Belarus and Russia kept falling—in January–March, it dropped by 34.7% year-on-year to USD 6.057 billion. Export supplies to Russia fell by more than 40% to USD 2.178 billion, while import from that country decreased less, by 27.1%, to USD 3.88 billion. Belarus’s trade balance with Russia came to a deficit of USD 1.702 billion. Belarus’s export and combined trade turnover with countries beyond the CIS dropped markedly slower than its trade with Russia: combined trade turnover fell by 22.4%, and export decreased by 19.6%. The significant reduction in export supplies to Russia can be attributed to the depreciation of the Rus-

sian ruble, overall contraction in Russia's paying capacity and slowdown in the Russian economy.

Export to Russia narrowed for all of the main commodity items in value terms and for almost all commodities in volume terms. The few commodity groups with an increase in export deliveries to Russia were tires, polymeric materials, medications, some dairy products, and refrigerators. Export of trucks and tractor units fell more than supplies of any other commodities.

In addition to the objective problems of the Russian economy, limitations imposed by the Russian Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance (Rosselkhozadzor) further contributed to the drop in export deliveries. In March and April, many of the bans that the Russian service had applied to Belarusian meat products and other foods in previous months remained in place.

During the period under review, tensions in Belarus's relationship with Russia also remained in supplies, processing, and export of oil. On 22 April, Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Siamaška said that Russia's demand that Belarus should send back to its market 3.1 million tons of oil products refined from Russian crude oil was not a compulsory requirement, and the volume of deliveries should be determined by the market situation, specifically the rate at which the Russian ruble strengthens against foreign currencies.

There is no progress in the implementation of previously announced five integration projects¹. According to Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Arkady Dvorkovich, their implementation requires political will. Belarusian officials have not been showing political will in these issues.

Economic challenges and differences did not affect the military cooperation between the two countries, though. In April, Russia supplied four state-of-the-art combat and training aircraft Yak-130 to Belarus within the framework of a previous contract—they will form a separate wing with the 116th assault air base. Some headway was also made in the collaboration between law-enforcement agencies of the two countries—an agreement was signed to enhance the effectiveness of engagement in combat against crime, and a coordinating meeting was held on the enforcement of the legislation aimed against human trafficking.

In March and April 2015, heads of two Russian regions—Chuvashia and the Chelyabinsk Region—visited Belarus. In late April, Russia transferred to Belarus a loan amounting to RUB 6.2 billion (USD 110 million).

Bilateral cooperation in foreign policy turned out to be quite active during the reviewed period. On 10 March, Russia requested Belarus to represent it in the Joint Advisory Group on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. This is the first time Belarus has performed intermediary functions representing its ally. Traditional consultations between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries took place on March 25. The Belarusian side stepped up its rhetoric promoting the idea of the "integration of integrations," which envisages the convergence of the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union to ultimately create a free trade zone spanning the area from Lisbon to Vladivostok. In the course of his visit to Georgia, Aliaksandr Lukashenka said Belarus was ready to act as an intermediary between Russia and Georgia. Belarus's advocating the interests of the Russian Federation, which found itself in political isolation, adds new flavors to the foreign policy collaboration between the two nations.

In March and April, following a brief pause, the Russian news agency Regnum resumed its publications of severely critical materials about the Belarusian administration. Accusa-

1. The integration industrial projects referred to are as follows—Integral and Ruselectronics of Rostec, Minsk Wheeled Tractor Plant (MZKT) and Rostec, Peleng and Federal Space Agency Roscosmos, Grodno Azot and EuroChem or Gazprom Investproject.

tions and attacks against President Lukashenka on the Regnum portal, as well as on the webpage of Imperia project and the popular Vzgljad website became especially bitter for his alleged encouragement of “anarchistic unbridled nationalism.” They cite “sightings” of signs with town names and posters in the Belarusian language, instances of teaching in the Belarusian language, and mentions of historic figures associated with Belarusian (but not Russian) history in the official media. No specific response to those attacks followed; however, in his address to the parliament and the nation the Belarusian president found it necessary to provide justification, at least for the signboards.

The message by the Belarusian president to the parliament and the nation on 29 April was to a great extent addressed to the Russian audience as well. Lukashenka’s statements about foreign and domestic policies were primarily aimed to prevent Russia’s interference in Belarus’s domestic affairs. Specifically, this applies to the presidential election campaign—Lukashenka presented it as a fully controlled and predictable process. Russia and Belarus are still connected by “inseparable strategic cooperation.” Lukashenka did his best to convince the Kremlin that Belarus would refrain from inclining towards the West and from “untamed nationalist policy” and would move within the track of Russia’s foreign policy. However, he also emphasized the importance of independence and sovereignty for Belarus.

Forecast for the near future

Belarus will likely continue trying to consolidate its role as a channel to transmit Russia’s position in the international scene. Possibly, it will use, among other venues, the platform of the Eastern Partnership summit in Riga.

As for economic cooperation, the ongoing economic crisis will become the decisive factor—Russia will partially pay the costs that Belarus will incur by offering direct financial support in the form of loans and lifting limitations on supplies of Belarusian products. Direct contacts with heads of Russian regions can provide certain support in the restoration of the original volume of supplies to the Russian market.

The military situation in Ukraine will likely further escalate in the near future; however, these circumstances will hardly be serious enough for Belarus to give up on its neutrality, even though conditional, in this matter.

Development of the Belarus–EU relationship

+23



0

Summary index: +23

Total positive points: +23

Total negative points: 0

Main trends

- 1) High-level representatives of the EU countries and institutions continued making visits to Belarus. Attempts were made to revise Europe's relationship with Belarus within the framework of those visits and numerous consultations between the Foreign Ministries in the context of the new regional situation and in the light of foreign and domestic political activities by the Belarusian authorities;
- 2) Talks between Belarus and the EU over visa facilitation and the "interim phase" (dialogue on modernization) are nearing completion;
- 3) Preparations for the Eastern Partnership summit in Riga are underway. Minsk and Brussels would like to see progress in Riga enabling them to reach a whole new level of relations. Although the bilateral relationship obviously improves, further progress is impeded by the unsettled issue of political prisoners in Belarus.

Description of the key events

The relationship between the European Union and Belarus is going through significant thaw that can be compared to that of 2008–2010. The bilateral relations are improving against the backdrop and under the influence of a package of internal Belarusian and regional factors. The main factor is official Minsk's position on the Ukrainian crisis and its diplomatic success in the creation of a negotiating platform to resolve that crisis. Also apparent is the willingness of the Belarusian authorities to minimize the scope and intensity of conflicts in their relations with the West, which is traditional for the Belarusian political cycle ahead of the presidential election, which is scheduled to be held at the end of the year.

The current period under review, unlike the previous two months, was not marked by new negotiations of the Contact Group on Ukraine, Normandy Four summit, or any other formats. The conflicting parties and international observers focused on implementing Minsk II ceasefire agreements and preparing the agenda for the next meeting of the Contact Group. In this context, bilateral issues—visa facilitation, modernization (talks within the framework of the "interim phase"), as well as political prisoners—regained their priority status in the media scene. Nevertheless, the unusually strong interest in Belarus shown by EU member states and institutions (compared with previous years) is primarily attributable to Minsk's official stance and activities on the Ukrainian crisis.

It is safe to say that the relationship with Belarus is being revised with adjustments made based upon the combination of all external and internal circumstances, as well as ahead of the EaP summit in Riga and against the backdrop of the recently launched review of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The number of consultations between the Foreign Ministries and meetings of intergovernmental commissions is a vivid example of this process—in March and April, twelve events of this kind were organized. In January–February, officials at the Belarusian Foreign Ministry organized only three rounds of

consultations with their counterparts in EU member states.

Also noteworthy is the series of group diplomatic visits to Minsk by representatives of EU member states in order to discuss pressing regional issues, bilateral EU–Belarus issues, preparations for the EaP summit in Riga, as well as prospects for the engagement between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. On March 19, Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna received a delegation of high-ranking diplomats (ambassadors for EaP issues) representing the Foreign Ministries of Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, and the Czech Republic. On 17 April, Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej and Aliena Kupčyna met with political directors of the Foreign Ministries of the Weimar Triangle countries (France, Germany, and Poland).

Consultations on modernization with the European Union (the so-called “interim phase”) should be considered separately. On 9 March, a Belarusian delegation led by Aliena Kupčyna participated in the fifth round of consultations in Brussels. This time, the consultations focused on human rights, among other issues. In the course of her visit to Brussels, the head of the Belarusian delegation traditionally held a series of meetings in the European Commission and the European External Action Service, specifically, with Johannes Hahn, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, and Helga Schmidt, Deputy Secretary General for the External Action Service.

On 12 March, Minsk played host to the third round of talks over the draft agreement on visa facilitation between Belarus and the European Union. The positions of the negotiating parties were approximated as a result of the talks and consultations that followed. Overall, the draft agreement on visa facilitation is ready for initialing, which may take place during the EaP summit in Riga.

The main event during the two months under review took place on 16–17 April, when European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Johannes Hahn came on a visit to Minsk. He was received by President Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej. The head of state spoke about Belarus’s aspiration to closer cooperation with the European Union, especially in technology, economy, and security. He suggested revising the Eastern Partnership program in order to better focus on these priorities and identifying several areas for cooperation between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union.

The second most significant event of the first two months of spring was Uladzimir Makiej’s participation in the ministerial meeting of the EaP member states in Luxembourg on 20 April. The meeting centered on preparations for the EaP summit in Riga. Makiej reiterated Belarus’s position, which remained unchanged—official Minsk insists on real equality between the EU and all of the partner states, focus on applied areas of cooperation, and dialogue between the EU and the EEU on prospects of establishing a common economic area. As part of his visit, Makiej also held meetings with the leadership of the European Commission, the European External Action Service, and his counterparts from the EU and Eastern European states.

On 28 April, Uladzimir Makiej met with Petr Drulák, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. Also in April, the Belarusian foreign minister met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary Péter Szijjártó, who was on a visit to Belarus on 28–29 April.

Active efforts of Makiej’s four deputies (Michnievič, Kupčyna, Hurjanaŭ, and Rybakoŭ) in the European dimension of Belarus’s foreign policy became quite conspicuous in March and April. Aliena Kupčyna, who supervises the European policy focus, naturally played a special role in the process. In addition to the said visit to Brussels to participate in a regular round of consultations on modernization, she paid a visit to Berlin. Kupčyna held talks with Angela Merkel’s advisor and state secretary of the German Foreign Ministry, participated in consultations between the Foreign Ministries, and acted as a panelist at the international conference East Forum Berlin 2015. On 24 April, she visited Budapest,

where she took part in the opening ceremony of the new building of Belarus's Embassy in Hungary and conducted negotiations with the leadership of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry.

Two-way trade between Belarus and the European Union member states amounted to USD 3.731 billion in January–March 2015, down by 28.9% year-on-year. Export from Belarus totaled USD 2.442 billion, a decrease by 23% from January–March 2014, and import from the EU dropped by 37.9% year-on-year to USD 1.289 billion. Belarus's trade balance came to a surplus of USD 1.153 billion in the first quarter of 2015.

Forecast for the near future

In the Belarus–EU relationship, May and June will be marked by the Eastern partnership summit in Riga. It is quite likely that the agreements on visa facilitation and readmission will be initialed during the summit, and an EU mobility partnership may be launched. It follows from the draft concluding document of the summit, which has been leaked to the web, that based upon the results of the consultations within the framework of the "interim phase," an announcement may be made on the commencement of the implementation of a roadmap on modernization, or at least progress in consultations on this matter will be mentioned.

These prospects may further the process of active improvement in the relationship between Minsk and Brussels, at least up until the presidential elections in Belarus. It is symbolic that in June, Minsk is expected to host—for the first time ever—an informal meeting (dialogue) of the foreign ministers of the Eastern Partnership member states, which is likely to be attended by Commissioner Johannes Hahn. Belarus's continued efforts to act as an intermediary in the process to resolve the Ukrainian crisis and its active involvement in the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (Minsk was for the first time invited to take part in such a review and has already submitted its proposals) should also contribute to the strengthening of positive trends in the relationship between Belarus and the European Union.

The issue of political prisoners in Belarus remains unsettled—it is the only obstacle to progress in many promising areas for cooperation. In this context, the level of Belarus's involvement in the summit in Riga remains vague. Belarus (as all the other EaP member states) has received an invitation to the summit as a country, without an indication of any specific official, which is why the media and diplomatic community will keep making guesses about who will represent Belarus in the Latvian capital city.

Development of the Belarus–China relationship

+28



-3

Summary index: +25
Total positive points: +28
Total negative points: -3

Main trends

In March and April, Belarus–China relations reached a new peak in at least the past three years, which was mostly caused by preparations for the upcoming visit of President of China Xi Jinping to Belarus.

In the difficult economic context, official Minsk hopes to reap as many benefits as possible from China and may consider selling some Belarusian companies. The Chinese authorities, for their part, are aware that Belarus's disillusionment with China as a source of fast and cheap money will call for making adjustments to their policy on Belarus.

Description of the key events

The two months under review became a landmark period for the bilateral relationship between Belarus and China from the point of view of the intensity of contacts ahead of the visit of President of China Xi Jinping to Minsk. Official Minsk has long sought a meeting between Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Xi Jinping in order for the two leaders to revise the current status of the bilateral relations and determine a new strategy for their further development. It had been planned that such a meeting would take place in February 2014 on the sidelines of the Winter Olympics in Sochi; however, it appears that the Chinese leader avoided meeting with his Belarusian counterpart back then.

Over the past two years, the Belarusian authorities have revised the country's relationship with China. The administration of the country has been disillusioned with China as a source of fast and cheap loans. Hopes of increasing supplies of Belarusian-made products to the Chinese market failed, which is evidenced by Belarus's enormous deficit in two-way trade with China in the past few years. Under the circumstances, the Belarusian authorities pin hopes on not so much tied Chinese loans, as real investment designed to encourage the production of commodities that are eagerly sought in foreign markets and boost export deliveries. Pivotal elements of this strategy include Belarus's involvement in the Silk Road Economic Belt project (primarily through the China–Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP), intensification of the project to assemble and sell Chinese Geely vehicles in Belarus and, from the look of it, sale of some Belarusian companies to China in order to receive financial resources that official Minsk needs so badly.

As was noted above, the Belarusian side would like to shift the main focus in its cooperation with China from tied loans towards direct investments in Belarus's real economy. In January–March 2015, Belarus de facto did not apply for loans to Chinese financial institutions—the total amount of loans provided by Chinese banks during that period reached USD 44.7 million (loans taken during the first quarter of 2015 totaled USD 136 million). The exact amount of Chinese loans extended to Belarus remains unknown; however, the Belarusian president spoke about USD 5.5 billion worth of loans from China. Belarus has thus used slightly more than one-third of the Chinese USD 15 billion credit line; however, official Minsk must be considering further borrowing from China on old terms unbeneficial. According to President Lukashenka, he ordered to put together a special group to revise the areas for cooperation with China and technical projects that are currently

underway.

The Belarusian authorities are not ready to give up on Chinese loans, although the practice of such cooperation remains quite doubtful. Belarus was reported to be ready to use EUR 51 million from the credit line opened via the Export-Import Bank of China for the modernization of the second factory of Orša Flax-Processing plant. However, the lending project envisages the involvement of a Chinese contractor, purchases of Chinese materials and non-transparent (and probably unfavorable for Belarus) terms of supply of flax products to China, which is characteristics of all Chinese loan agreements. The situation around the flax factory is symptomatic and perfectly describes the specific nature of the relationship between Belarus and China. In 2014, China markedly increased purchases of raw flax (from three to ten times year-on-year depending on the type of materials); however, it hardly ever buys Belarusian-made flax products. Apparently, Belarusian flax is used for the production of Chinese textile, which successfully competes with Belarusian products, including in Belarus's domestic market.

Minsk regards the visit of Xi Jinping to be a turning point, which will determine the strategy for the development of bilateral relations. One of the priority areas for cooperation is the security sector. Official Minsk is interested in using Chinese technologies for establishing control of the country's information space (including for the storage by Belarusian providers of information about websites visited by their subscribers, which will become mandatory starting 1 January 2016, as well as for charging users of Skype and Viber). On 7–10 April, State Secretary of the Belarusian Security Council Aliaksandr Myažujeŭ paid a visit to China. He met with almost all of the senior Chinese officials at security services, including Meng Jianzhu, Secretary of Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China. Belarus actively adopts the experience of Chinese armed forces, borrows specific military technologies and transfers some of its own developments to China.

In the opinion of official Minsk, this close cooperation in the security sector effectively makes up for shortages in other areas for cooperation. However, as crisis developments become increasingly pronounced in Belarus, the authorities seek additional finance in China as well. The CBIP is at the top of the agenda, despite insignificant progress. The CBIP project was discussed during all meetings between Belarusian and Chinese officials during the two months under review. Specifically, the decision was made to sign an agreement on the construction of the CBIP electrification system. However, as in other CBIP development areas, a Chinese company will act as the prime contractor.

The Belarusian side pins high hopes in efforts to attract regional Chinese companies and active involvement of Chinese regions in the CBIP operation. Despite the emphatic requests by the Belarusian side, Chinese negotiating partners give no specific promises. It appears that statements by the Ministry of Economy about more than 350 Chinese companies willing to become residents of the CBIP represent the desired effect, rather than the real situation. In order to increase the appeal of the CBIP, official Minsk is making significant efforts to accelerate the construction of essential infrastructure for the industrial park.

The Belarusian Embassy in China is also looking for potential investors and residents of the CBIP, albeit without any tangible results.

An important problem that raises special concerns of Minsk is the imbalance in two-way trade. Belarusian export of commodities to China markedly increased—from USD 460.7 million in 2013 to USD 641.5 million in 2014, which represents an increase by almost 50%. At the same time, import significantly decreased—from USD 2,829 billion to USD 2.371 billion. However, Belarus's deficit in two-way trade with China remains sizeable, at USD 1.73 billion.

The possible sale of some Belarusian companies to Chinese investors remains a debatable issue. According to reports published by the opposition media, a Chinese investor may buy into Belaruskali. China would naturally be interested in such a deal; however, official Minsk has a history of overpricing the asset. Peleng is a likelier candidate for sale;

however, its sale to China amid rapidly developing military and technical cooperation between the two countries, as well as reduction in supplies of military equipment from Ukraine, may displease the Kremlin.

Forecast for the near future²

The visit of President of China Xi Jinping to Minsk, which has been thoroughly prepared over the past few months, will definitely give an impetus to the implementation of previous agreements and will encourage the execution of joint projects. However, progress in the implementation of specific investment agreements will depend on further developments in both Belarus and the bilateral framework.

2. Xi Jinping's visit to Minsk took place from 10 to 12 May, when the Index was being prepared for publication. During the visit, a series of agreements were signed (including on the provision of loans for Belarus), which will be analyzed in detail in the next issue of the report.

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

(Asia, Africa and Latin America)

Summary index: +15

Total positive points: +15

Total negative points: 0

+15

0

Main trends

1) Foreign policy efforts of Belarus in the "developing world" focused on the Middle East during the last few months. There were also some high-level contacts with countries of South Asia and Southeast Asia. The remaining regions of the developing world stayed in the background, probably due to the scarcity of resources available to the Belarusian government;

2) An obvious trend emerged in Belarus's foreign policy towards complementing improvements in its relations with the West with corresponding adjustments to its relationships with other regions of the world. This is the main reason why Minsk continued its policy to converge with the allies of the West in the Middle East—the conservative monarchies of the Persian Gulf and Pakistan, and why Minsk received the foreign minister of the DPRK so coolly.

Description of the key events

Middle East and North Africa

On 9 March, Permanent Representative of Belarus to the League of Arab States Siarhiej Račkoŭ participated in the 143rd session of the League of Arab States at the level of foreign ministers. Conservative Arab regimes prevail in that association—Minsk has recently developed closer ties with them, and they are all hostile to the current governments of Iran, Syria, and Iraq.

Oman. On 22–23 March 2015, an Omani parliamentary delegation paid a visit to Belarus. The delegation held meetings in the Belarusian parliament and the Foreign Ministry. One month later, on 21–22 April, a deputy foreign minister of Oman visited Belarus in order to hold the IV round of political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Oman.

Syria. The Syrian industry minister paid a visit to Belarus on 1–2 April to participate in the VI meeting of the Joint Belarusian–Syrian Commission for Trade, Economic, and Technical Cooperation. The members of the Syrian delegation met with Deputy Prime Minister Michail Rusy and visited the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, as well as some Belarusian companies. Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ had a meeting with his Syrian counterpart.

Iraq. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq Ibrahim Al Jaafari paid an official visit to Belarus on 8–11 April. He held talks with Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej, met with President Lukashenka, visited the National Assembly, the Ministry of Healthcare, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Industry, as well as MTZ tractor producer. In his interview with Belarus-1 Channel Al Jaafari said that Iraq was interested in purchasing MTZ products, having its law-enforcement specialists and medics trained in Belarus, and developing cooperation in education and science. Nevertheless, the visit turned out to be rather fruitless, as only

a single document was signed as a result of the meetings—the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Sports between the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of Belarus and the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Iraq.

Qatar. The Belarusian Embassy in Qatar officially opened on 14 April, although it became operational last year. Furthermore, the third round of consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Qatar was held in Doha, attended by Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ. Commenting on the opening of the embassy in that country Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ referred to Qatar as "*Belarus's long-time political partner.*"³

UAE. On 15–16 April, Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ visited the United Arab Emirates. He met with a deputy foreign minister of that country and the economy minister, who visited Belarus in February 2015. The first round of political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries was held.

Algeria. Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ paid a visit to Algeria on 27–29 April. The Belarusian delegation comprised representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Meat and Dairy Company, MAZ, and BelOMO. A new round of consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Algeria was held. The Belarusian delegation also met with the secretary general of the Ministry of Trade of Algeria and Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Algeria. Further, a Belarus–Algeria business forum was held. Algeria, which used to have close ties with the Soviet Union, can become a promising foreign policy focus for Belarus.

Libya. In March, Reuters reported with reference to a confidential report by the U.N. Security Council's Panel of Experts on Libya that in 2013–2014, Belarus supplied munitions to Libyan armed units. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry denied those allegations saying that the supplies were legal and meant for the Libyan government, which never reported afterwards that someone else had taken possession of the cargo.⁴

Asia

DPRK. On 9–11 March, Foreign Minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Ri Su Yong paid an official visit to Belarus. He held talks with Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej and Trade Minister Valiancin Čekanaŭ and met with Prime Minister Andrej Kabiakoŭ and First Deputy Prime Minister Vasil Maciušeŭski. The members of the North Korean delegation also visited Belarus's leading exporting companies.

Contacts between Belarus and the DPRK are rare. The Belarusian side received the delegation from that country quite coolly, which is evidenced by many factors, apart from the possible reduction in the duration of Ri Su Yong's stay in Belarus—the Foreign Ministry had announced in the run-up to the visit that the DPRK minister would stay from 8 to 12 March⁵, that is, two days longer than he actually stayed in Belarus. The Foreign Minister of the DPRK never had a chance to meet with President Lukashenka. The Belarusian side distanced itself from that contact, and in his official comment, the spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Ministry said: "*I cannot say that the relationship between our countries can be characterized as very intensive.*"⁶

3. Verbatim report of the online conference with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ at the Belarusian Telegraph Agency (31 March 2015) <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/ababd2c-5c9c26f83.html>

4. Arciom Šrajbman, Reuters: Belarus supplied munitions to Libyan armed groups. TUT.BY, 19 March 2015, <http://news.tut.by/politics/440408.html>

5. Concerning the visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK Ri Su Yong to Belarus 05-03-2015 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c18bea7a92418dce.html

6. Answers by Head of the Information Department, Spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Ministry Zmicier Mirončyk to journalists' questions during a media briefing on 5 March 2015 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d0de35e2dfd81a24.html

During his media availability, Foreign Minister Makiej was also conspicuously discreet and said: *"I acknowledge the similarity of approaches of Belarus and the DPRK towards many issues of the international agenda,"* although the standard comment following negotiations with developing countries includes a traditional statement about the coinciding positions on all of the discussed issues⁷. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry also emphasized in its official statement that the foreign minister of the DPRK held a series of "protocol meetings"⁸ with Belarusian high-ranking officials.

Mongolia. Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ paid a visit to Mongolia on 22–25 April. Rybakoŭ participated in the III round of consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, held talks at the Ministry of Roads and Transport, and well as the Ministry of Construction.

South Asia

Pakistan. On 1–3 April, Deputy Foreign Minister Rybakoŭ visited Pakistan. The Belarusian delegation comprised representatives of the Council of Ministers, Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Justice, State Committee on Science and Technologies, National Agency of Investment and Privatization, MTZ, Naftan, Mogotex, and the National Library. Meetings were held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources, Ministry of Science and Technology, and Ministry of Information of Pakistan.

India. Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej paid an official visit to India on 13–15 April. The delegation included the directors of BelAZ, MTZ, and Belarusian Potash Company. Makiej was received by Indian President Pranab Mukherjee, who confirmed his intention to visit Belarus soon. The Belarusian foreign minister held talks with his Indian counterpart Sushma Swaraj and met with India's deputy minister of defense.

Makiej also held talks with heads of large Indian companies that are interested in cooperating with Belarus. Focus was placed on the increase in supplies of Belarusian-made large dump trucks, farm machines and automotive equipment to India.

Latin America

The consortium comprising Belorusneft, Ecuador's Petroamazonas and Chile's ENAP in mid-April signed a 20-year contract with the Hydrocarbons Secretariat of Ecuador (SHE) for exploration and production of oil in the Ecuadorian Amazonian region. *"In addition to the contracts that have been signed today, there is an important strategic alliance with the friendly nations,"* said Ecuador Minister of Strategic Sectors Rafael Poveda.

Under the contract, produced oil will be sold to Ecuador; whereas the participating companies will share incomes according to their interests in the project (Belarus owns 7% in the consortium). This is not Belorusneft's first contract in Ecuador—in early 2015, it contracted the development of the Armadillo field and continues implementing seismic exploration projects.

7. Materials of the media availability of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Uladzimir Makiej following his meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK Ri Su Yong (9 March 2015, Minsk) 09-03-2015 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/cf26fc61ecc21505.html

8. Concerning the results of the visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK Ri Su Yong to Belarus 11-03-2015 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/fd24ef5a90f22f2d.html

Forecast for the near future

It appears that Minsk is looking to reap economic and political benefits from converging with the countries of the Middle East—especially the conservative Arab regimes—that are allies of the West. In the near future, this trend will likely continue, and so will active contacts with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Pakistan. Minsk has every chance of closing very big deals soon, specifically, there are indications that it is close to signing serious arms supplies contracts with Pakistan.

Iran and its allies may make attempts to maintain partnership relations with Belarus, and official Minsk will likely maneuver between the “radical” regimes and the bloc of the Middle Eastern countries that are associated with the West (especially the Arab monarchies), while prioritizing the latter.

In Latin America, Belarus achieved certain progress in building its relations with Ecuador and continues relatively active cooperation with Venezuela. Belarus seems to be recovering from the crisis in its relationships with Latin American countries that was caused, among others, by the change in the top administration of Venezuela. Contacts will continue growing more prominent, albeit at a slow pace.

Belarus’s relations with Africa are facing numerous challenges, as Deputy Foreign Minister Hurjanaŭ has admitted recently. Although Minsk has expanded the network of its embassies in that continent and reanimated some of the stalled projects in African countries (specifically, the assembly of tractors in Ethiopia), tangible results will hardly appear in the foreseeable future.

When it comes to the Asian region, in addition to quite stable relationships with its traditional partners (including Vietnam and Mongolia), Minsk will likely step up its efforts in South and Southeast Asia, where it has been working with some countries for some time now (Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Myanmar). In addition to cooperation in nondefense projects, Minsk is actively working on building up its military and technical collaboration with Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh and some other countries that have remained undiscovered by Belarus until quite recently.

Development of the Belarus–Ukraine relations

Summary index: +6

Total positive points: +6

Total negative points: 0

+6

0

Main trends

During the period under review, the bilateral relations remained active and friendly.

Belarus's peacemaking efforts aimed to resolve the crisis in Ukraine produced the first results—progress has been observed in Belarus's relations with the United States. In early March, the U.S. sanctions against the Belarusian oil producer Belorusneft were reported to have been lifted. In late February, a high-ranking official of the U.S. Department of State visited Belarus.

Description of the key events

In March and April, the position of official Minsk on Ukraine and the conflict in Donbass remained pro-Ukrainian and held an important place in Aliaksandr Lukashenka's public rhetoric. The president referred to the Ukrainian issue quite often during the two months under review.

Official Minsk maintained its stance on Ukraine during March and April supporting the territorial integrity of that country, refraining from recognizing the annexation of Crimea by Russia and demonstrating a friendly attitude to the post-Maidan leadership of Ukraine.

The Belarusian authorities focused on turning Minsk into a key negotiating venue to resolve the Ukrainian crisis and kept emphasizing their willingness to continue facilitating this process. In early March, spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Ministry Zmicier Mirončyk said Belarus was ready to "create the most comfortable conditions for the effective work of the contact group." He added that "where necessary, the Belarusian side is capable of completing preparatory arrangements to a very tight schedule." On 27 March, First Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Michnievič referred to Belarus as a "donor of stability" in Eastern Europe against a very tense backdrop of international relations (he was speaking at the Minsk Dialogue forum). He went on to say that it is owing to its positive and constructive foreign policy that Minsk became an acceptable venue for the negotiations of the Ukrainian issue.

Also during the two months under review, President Lukashenka stepped up his contacts with his Kazakhstan counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev over the Ukrainian issue. Their bilateral meeting in Astana on 19 March focused on Ukraine. Following the meeting, Nazarbayev said that the positions of Belarus and Kazakhstan on the situation in Ukraine were the same. He emphasized: "It is important that all decisions should be based upon the fundamental principles of international law."

In late March, the Belarusian president voiced in his interview with Bloomberg the initiative for the United States to take a more active role in the negotiating process to resolve the Ukrainian crisis. According to him, "the most alarming thing is that the United States was not openly involved in this process. I believe that there can be no stability in Ukraine without Americans." He said that he voiced his standpoint during his meetings with U.S. officials. Lukashenka's declaration should be considered in the context of his earlier state-

ments, when he accused the United States of triggering and maintaining the crisis in Ukraine.

In late April, U.S. Ambassador to Russia John F. Tefft said that President Barack Obama considered joining the Normandy Four “if he is invited.” In other words, the U.S. president may theoretically come to Belarus.

It should be noted that Lukashenka’s initiative will definitely benefit Kyiv and is out of tune with the official position of the Kremlin. In this regard, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that he did not rule out the return of the negotiating process to resolve the situation in Donbass to the so-called “Geneva format,” which involved the United States.

Lukashenka got back to that initiative in late April in his annual address to the Belarusian nation and the National Assembly. He said that if the United States was eager to normalize the situation in Donbass, “the situation will be normalized, I’m 100% positive... If the U.S. has a different position, there will be no peace there. Is there anyone who cannot understand this? Even ordinary people can.”

March and April saw Belarus and Ukraine further their cooperation in the defense industry. At the start of April, Belarusian and Ukrainian media published reports that Belarus provided assistance in the rearmament of the Ukrainian army. Specifically, it was noted that Orša Aircraft Repair Plant, in which Ukraine’s Motor Sich holds 57%, provided repairs of Mi-24 helicopters of the Ukrainian army, which were damaged in the area of combat operations in Donbass.

In March, UNICEF published a survey, which said that as a result of the conflict in the east of Ukraine, more than 1.5 million local residents were forcibly displaced, of them 62,500 people moved to Belarus, including 2,500 people so far in 2015. On 25 March, the information was confirmed by Belarusian Ambassador to Ukraine Valiancin Vialička. He said that Ukrainians would be able to find employment in Belarus; they would be provided with jobs, school and university education. Previously, President Lukashenka said that measures taken by the Belarusian authorities allowed “assisting people who suffered as a result of the armed conflict in Ukraine as soon as possible.” At the same time, Speaker of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus Michail Miasnikovič said Belarus was concerned about the pressure that arriving Ukrainians were putting on the local labor market.

In April, the demarcation of the Belarusian–Ukrainian state border continued. On 27 April, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko signed the law “Concerning the ratification of the agreement between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Poland on the junction point of the state borders of Ukraine, the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Poland,” which was approved by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on 8 April. The three countries undertook to establish, within three months of the date the agreement came into effect, a Joint Ukraine–Belarus–Poland commission to identify the junction point of the state borders in the field and prepare and sign the demarcation documents.

In April, the conflict around the operation of the Belarusian air carrier Belavia in Ukraine was finally settled. The Ukrainian aviation authorities issued an official permit for the Belarusian company to perform 14 flights between Kyiv and Minsk on a weekly basis. Further, the air carriers Ukraine International Airlines and Belavia extended the current codeshare agreement enabling them to share the same flights.

On 28 April, Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej met with Ukraine’s Ambassador to Belarus Mykhailo Yezhel. According to official reports, they discussed the current agenda for the bilateral relations, prospects of enhancing trade and economic cooperation and engagement within the framework of international organizations. The meeting was criticized by the Ukrainian media, because the Ukrainian president had dismissed Yezhel from diplomatic service on 25 April after the Prosecutor-General’s Office of Ukraine said he was a suspect in the criminal case concerning the destruction of the Ukrainian army logistics (back when Yezhel served as Ukraine’s defense minister).

In January–February 2015, Belarus's surplus in two-way trade with Ukraine reached USD 214.6 million. However, because of the dramatic reduction in trade turnover (from USD 770.9 million to USD 424 million), Belarus's trade surplus also fell (from USD 335.7 million in January–February 2014). During the first two months of the year, Belarusian export to Ukraine dropped from USD 553.3 million to USD 319.4 million, and import more than halved from USD 217.6 million to USD 104.8 million.

Forecast for the near future

Kyiv and Minsk will seek to maintain friendly relations and further increase their cooperation.

Kyiv still considers converting some of its power plants to fuel oil, which is planned to be imported from Belarus. Official Kyiv is also interested in importing electricity from Belarus and is already involved in talks with respective Belarusian agencies.

The expert and political communities continue discussing the possibility for Belarusian peacekeepers to be involved in the resolution of the Donbass crisis.

Annex

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development index

Belarus–Russia relationship

Date	Event	Point
3 March	Meeting of the Supreme State Council	+3
3 March	Belarusian Foreign Ministry denies Vladimir Putin's statement about the creation of the single EEU visa area	-1
2 March	OSCE consultations are held	+1
10 March	Russia requests Belarus to represent its interests in the Joint Advisory Group on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe	+1
19 March	EEU meeting in Astana	+3
20 March	Denial of Putin's statement about the currency union	-1
27 March	Aliaksandr Michnievič's statement about the approximation of the EU and the EEU (integration of integrations)	+1
1 April	Meeting between Andrej Kabiakoŭ and Grigory Rapota	+1
2 April	Miasnikovič criticizes the slow pace of the creation of the common market and harmonization of EEU legislations	-1
2 April	Exchange of warm remarks on the occasion of Unity Day	+1
9 April	Meeting with the president of Chuvashia	+1
9 April	Ratification of the agreement on the loan for the construction of Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant	+2
14 April	Stonewalling of integration processes (Arkady Dvorkovich's statement)	-3
14 April	Andrey Kabiakoŭ makes comments on the decrease in trade turnover	-1
16 April	Andrey Kabiakoŭ makes comments on the refinancing of loans	+1
22 April	Uladzimir Siamaška comments on gasoline supplies to Russia	-1
23 April	Lukashenka visits Tbilisi—his statement on mediation	+1
27 April	Chelyabinsk Region Governor visits Belarus	+1
29 April	Consultations between the Foreign Ministries on the OSCE and Council of Europe	+1
29 April	Statement about allied relations with Russia in the course of the annual address	+1
30 April	Disbursement of an intergovernmental USD 100 million loan	+3
March–April	Anti-Belarusian publications by some Russian media	-1
March–April	Disputes over pork supplies	-2
Total		+11

Belarus–EU relationship

Date	Event	Point
5 March	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej meets with Balogh Csaba, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary	+1
9 March	A Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna visits Brussels to participate in the 5th round of consultations on modernization with the EU	+2
12 March	Third round of consultations between Belarus and EU in Minsk on the draft visa facilitation agreement	+1
18-21 March	Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ visits Italy	+1
19 March	Aliena Kupčyna meets with a delegation of high-ranking diplomats from the Foreign Ministries of EU member states—Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, and the Czech Republic	+1
30 March	Uladzimir Makiej meets with Head of EU Delegation to Belarus Ambassador Maira Mora	+1
8 April	Aliena Kupčyna meets with Ambassador of Germany Wolfram Maas	+1
16 April	Consultations at the level of heads of analytical units of the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Visegrad Four member states in Minsk	+1
16-17 April	Aliaksandr Michnievič visits Lithuania	+1
17 April	Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ meets with representatives of the Embassies of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the EU Delegation to Belarus	+1
17 April	Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Uladzimir Makiej meet with Johannes Hahn, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy	+2
17 April	Uladzimir Makiej and Aliena Kupčyna meet with political directors of the Foreign Ministries of the Weimar Triangle countries	+1
20 April	Uladzimir Makiej attends the ministerial meeting of the EaP member states in Luxembourg	+2
21-22 April	Aliena Kupčyna visits Germany	+1
27 April	Aliena Kupčyna meets with Head of EU Delegation to Belarus Ambassador Maira Mora	+1
28 April	Uladzimir Makiej meets with Petr Drulák, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic	+1
28-29 April	Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary Péter Szijjártó visits Belarus, meets with Uladzimir Makiej	+1
March–April	Positive materials in the official media and statements by the leadership of the country about the relationship with the EU	+1

March–April	Consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Italy (3 March, Minsk), consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Hungary (4 March, Minsk), consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and the Czech Republic (12 March, Prague), consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Belgium (19 March, Minsk), political consultations between Belarus and Poland (20 March, Minsk), political consultations between Belarus and Romania (3 April, Minsk), economic consultations between Belarus and Estonia (7 April, Tallinn), consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Slovakia (15 April, Minsk), consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Germany (21 April, Berlin); 10th meeting of the Belarus–Poland commission for cross-border cooperation (23 April, Bialystok), consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and the Czech Republic (27 April, Minsk), talks between Belarus and Belgium over contractual and legal issues (29 April, Brussels).	+2
Total		+23

Belarus–China relationship

Date	Event	Point
6 March	Speaker of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly Uladzimir Andrejčanka meets with China's Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming	+1
12 March	Beijing hosts consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and China	+1
19 March	BPC reaches agreements with a consortium of Chinese buyers on an increase in potash prices to USD 315 per ton of potassium chloride for supplies to China in 2015	+1
25 March	Belarus's Ambassador to China Viktor Buria meets with Deputy General Director of China National Machinery Industry Complete Engineering Corporation Yang Jing	+1
26 March	Beijing hosts consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and China	+1
31 March	Viktor Buria meets with deputy director of the international cooperation department of Air China	+1
31 March	Belarus expects more effectiveness from China's direct investments, says Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Hurjanaŭ	-1
3 April	Social and leased housing built using Chinese funds may appear in Belarus's regions, says Deputy Prime Minister Anatol Kalinin	+1
7-10 April	State Secretary of the Belarusian Security Council Aliaksandr Myažujeŭ pays a visit to China	+2
8 April	President Lukashenka and Foreign Minister Makiej meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi	+2
8-11 April	A delegation of the Presidential Executive Office of Belarus led by Aliaksandr Kosiniec visits China to discuss the upcoming visit by President Xi Jinping	+2

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9-11 April	A delegation of the Belarusian Economy Ministry lead by Minister Uladzimir Zinoŭski visits China to participate in the fourth meeting of the Working Group on the Development of the CBIP	+2
10 April	Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus plans to open a program to finance joint Belarusian–Chinese projects with the attraction of foreign loans	+1
13 April	A delegation of Gansu Province visits Hrodna	+1
14 April	A program for cooperation between Mahilioŭ and Nanjing for 2015–2016 is signed	+1
16 April	Head of the Presidential Executive Office of Belarus Aliaksandr Kosiniec reports to President Lukashenka about cooperation with China; statement is made about the revision of some projects	-1
16 April	Belarus and China continue their practice of holding joint military exercise; a respective agreement was reached in Moscow at a meeting of Belarus's Defense Minister Andrej Raŭkoŭ and his Chinese counterpart Chang Wanquan	+1
17 April	President Lukashenka meets with Deputy Minister of Commerce of China Zhong Shan	+2
17 April	Conference with President Lukashenka addressing cooperation with China; moderate criticism	+1 -1
17 April	Four companies plan to become CBIP residents, says head of the CBIP Administration Andrej Hal	+1
18 April	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ meets with China's Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming	+1
23 April	Draft Belarusian–Chinese intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in education is signed	+1
24 April	CBIP Administration discusses prospects of the development of the economic relations between Belarus and China. Most of the CBIP infrastructure is to be completed by the end of 2015, says Chairman of the Minsk Region Administration Siamion Šapira	+1
29 April	Positive statements about Belarus – China relations, CBIP, announcement of the visit by Xi Jinping	+1
29 April	Fourteen Belarusian companies will begin supplying dairy products to China, says First Deputy Agriculture Minister Leanid Marynič	+1
Total		+25

Belarus's relationships with the "Developing countries"

Date	Event	Point
9-11 March	Foreign Minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Ri Su Yong visits Belarus	+2
22-23 March	An Omani parliamentary delegation visits Belarus	+1
1-2 April	Syrian Industry Minister Tu'ma visits Belarus	+2
1-3 April	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ leads a Belarusian delegation to Pakistan	+1
8-11 April	Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq Ibrahim Al Jaafari visits Belarus	+2
13-14 April	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Rybakoŭ visits Qatar	+1
13-15 April	Foreign Minister of Belarus Uladzimir Makiej visits India	+2
Mid-April	Belorusneft signs a contract with Ecuador for exploration and production of oil in the Amazonian region	+1
15-16 April	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Rybakoŭ visits the UAE	+1
22-25 April	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Rybakoŭ visits Mongolia	+1
27-29 April	Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Rybakoŭ visits Algeria	+1
Total		+15

Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Date	Event	Point
March–April	A series of statements by representatives of official Minsk supporting the territorial integrity and unitary format of Ukraine, non-recognition from the legal point of view of the annexation of Crimea by Russia, demonstration of a friendly attitude to the post-Maidan leadership of Ukraine. Continued efforts to promote Minsk as the main negotiating venue for the resolution of the Donbass crisis	+2
March–April	Lukashenka's initiatives to involve the U.S. in the Minsk process to settle the Ukrainian conflict	+1
March–April	Deepening of cooperation between Belarus and Ukraine in the defense industry	+2
March–April	Belarusian authorities offer support to Ukrainian refugees in Belarus	+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**