



# Belarus' FOREIGN POLICY INDEX

№ 26 May–June 2015

Dear readers,

We are pleased to present the twenty-sixth issue of Belarus Foreign Policy Index, in which we review the country's foreign policy in the five key dimensions in May and June 2015.

Belarus maintained a friendly tone in its relations with **Russia**, seeking to stay within the track of its commitments as Russia's ally. Slump in two-way trade continued, and Minsk tried making up for it elsewhere in the world.

Contacts with the **European Union** further stepped up in the run-up to the Eastern Partnership summit in Riga, which, nevertheless, did not come to the desired expectations. Belarus continues balancing cautiously between Russia and the EU while doing its utmost not to provoke its eastern neighbor.

The centerpiece of the relationship between Belarus and **China** during the two months under review was the visit of President of China Xi Jinping. Originally designed to give a powerful impetus to the bilateral relations, the visit did never yield the results expected by both countries, though. Official Minsk's hopes to garner substantial financial support from China did not come true; however, China did not succeed, either, in having Belarus offer it additional concessions.

Belarus seeks to step up its cooperation with the countries of the **Middle East and South Asia**, which have close connections with the West. Minsk also succeeded in providing a new impetus to its relationships with the largest economies of South Asia by maneuvering between Pakistan and India. The military and technical component has expanded in Belarus's contacts with the developing world in recent months.

The relationship with **Ukraine** has become less active in the public sphere, mostly because of the upcoming presidential election in Belarus and unwillingness to incite further confrontation with the Kremlin; however, it remains constructive and mutually beneficial.

We welcome your insights and proposals and will be happy to answer any questions.

Dzianis Melyantsou  
Editor  
Belarus Foreign Policy Index

3 Russia

6 EU

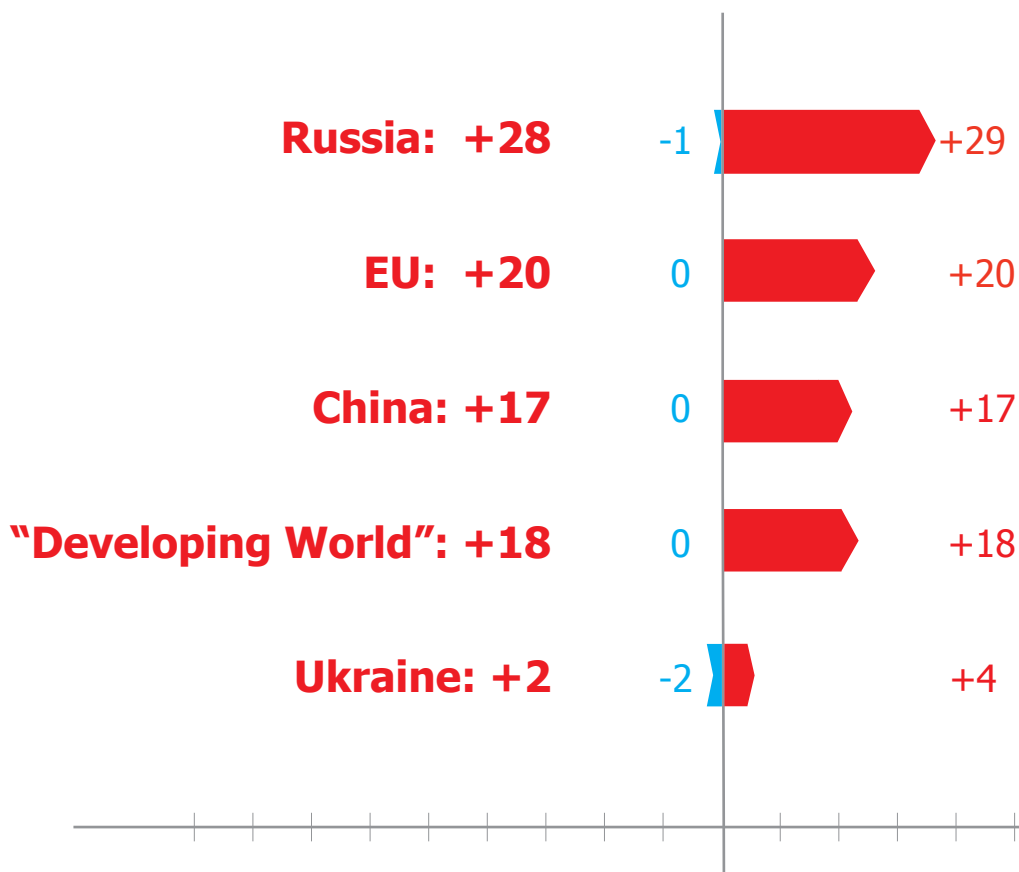
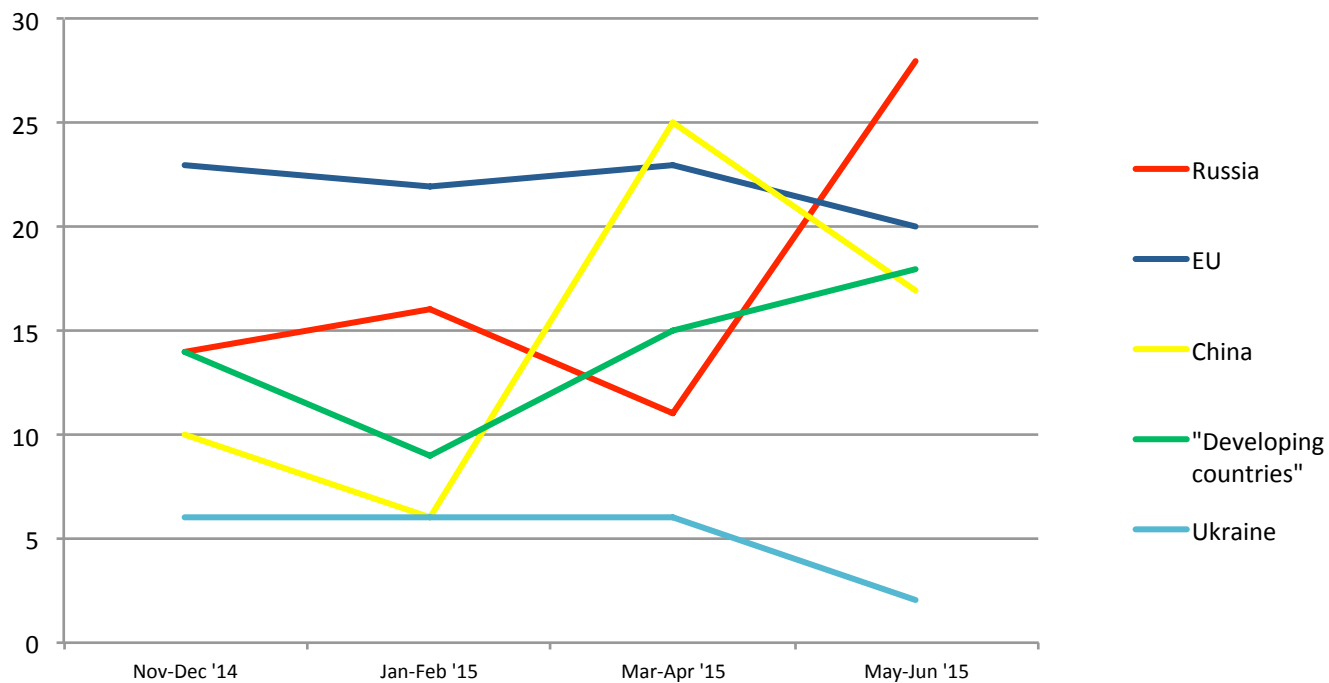
9 China

12 "Developing  
World"

19 Ukraine

22 Annex

## Relations development indices:



# Development of the Belarus–Russia relationship

+29



-1

Summary index: +28

Total positive points: +29

Total negative points: -1

## Main trends

In May and June 2015, the overall tonality of the relations between Belarus and the Russian Federation was moderately friendly. Belarus and Russia had found common ground in most of the main areas for collaboration. Talks were conducted during the two months under review, and agreements on trade and economic cooperation were reached with eight Russian regions.

Belarus actively promoted the interests of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in its relations with third countries (India, Vietnam, and the United Nations). Efforts continued for Belarusian manufacturers to be recognized as “national” producers in the Russian market. These arrangements did not produce a positive impact on two-way trade, though, and recession continued.

At the same time, the general trend characteristic of the past two years — the cautious balancing between the commitment of an ally and aspiration to counterbalance the dependence on Russia by stepping up contacts with the West and the “developing world” — continued.

## Description of the key events

The period under review began with a state visit by President Aliaksandr Lukashenka to Russia on 8 May to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the victory of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War. Despite expectations of the media, Lukashenka’s refusal to participate in the Victory Parade in Moscow the following day did not cause a conflict between the Belarusian and Russian administrations, but was interpreted as a gesture of an ally. The Kremlin agreed that Belarus shared the feelings that the Russians have about the victory in the Great Patriotic War, because Minsk was having its own parade and organized festivities. The Belarusian president accounted for his non-participation in the Victory Parade in Moscow citing the need to stay at home during the celebration in the election year: *“I’ll tell you, like one human being to another: what does this year mean to Belarus? It is the year of the presidential election that will take place in a few months. And you are telling me that I’m supposed to leave Minsk for some other country? Any politician, any leader will try to demonstrate the best qualities and that he is always with his people. But I’m supposed to leave, aren’t I?”*

Lukashenka’s visit to Moscow ahead of Victory Day drew a line under the cold spell in the relationship between Belarus and Russia and marked the commencement of intensive talks over the entire range of mutual relations. In early May, agreements were reached on a new regime for transiting goods to/from Kaliningrad that appears to be more convenient to Russia, and in early June, Belarus and Russia agreed to step up passenger traffic with Kaliningrad.

On 21 May, Minsk played host to a meeting of the Interbank Currency Council of the central banks of Belarus and Russia, where the two banks specified their approaches to financial collaboration. On 22 May, Belarusian Ambassador to Russia Ihar Pietryshenka met with Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Grigory Karasin. They addressed the main

areas for cooperation, including mutual trade. On 3 June, agreements were signed in Minsk stipulating the range and volume of food deliveries to Moscow. The Belarusian side declared approximately a 3% increase in food supplies to the Russian capital city in 2015 compared with the 2014 level. Belarus plans to increase vegetable deliveries to Moscow by 13% year-on-year, cheese supplies by 20% and canned food export by 28%.

On 8 June, Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Moscow, where he spoke about the strategic partnership status of the relationship between Belarus and Russia. For his part, Lavrov thanked President Lukashenka for his agreement to participate in the BRICS and SCO summits. On 12 June, Lukashenka addressed his congratulations to Vladimir Putin on Day of Russia, in which he emphasized the strategic partnership of the two countries. On 17 June, an agreement was reached at the Belarusian Industrial Forum on the construction of a company manufacturing farm machinery in the Omsk Region of Russia (OAO Gomelagrokomplekt and OOO Soyuz-Agro), and talks were underway over the draft agreement with VTB-leasing about the financing of purchases of Belarusian-made farm machines by Russian agrarian companies.

Some of the challenges to the engagement between the two countries were effectively addressed or became closer to resolution within the framework of the EEU. Specifically, on 6 May, members of the lower chamber of the Belarusian parliament, the House of Representatives, ratified the Agreement on the introduction of uniform vehicle certificates within the EEU, thus removing probable technical barriers to sales of Belarusian machines in Russia. The other portion of problems was resolved within the framework of the Union State. On 9 June, State Secretary of the Union State Grigory Rapota met with Prime Minister of Belarus Andrej Kabiakoŭ in Minsk. They agreed to continue supporting manufacturers in Russia and Belarus, while Rapota in effect pledged that Russia would subsidize joint ventures between Belarus and Russia manufacturing farm machines. On 24 June, during the 48th session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, Rapota confirmed his position concerning the equality of economic terms for Belarusian and Russian producers essentially the way the Belarusian side envisions it. Furthermore, the state secretary of the Union State noted progress in the transport sector — Belarusian lobbyists had long been trying to have Russia abolish licenses for Belarusian road carriers in Russia.

The Belarusian administration intensified talks with heads of Russian regions. Specifically, within the framework of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), Belarusian Ambassador Pietryšenka reached preliminary agreements on supplies of Belarusian machinery with Governor of the Khabarovsk Region V. Shport, Governor of the Kurgan Region A. Kokorkin and Head of Chuvashia M. Ignatyev. On 25 June, Pietryšenka met with Head of the Ivanovo Region A. Khokhlov and made an arrangement on supplies of buses and other mechanisms to sell Belarusian-made products in Russia. In May, Mahilioŭ Region officials met with their counterparts from the Russian Bryansk Region, and in June, Viciebsk Region officials had a meeting with Pskov Region counterparts to promote regional cooperation — during those two meetings numerous agreements were signed on sales of Belarusian products and services.

Bilateral defense cooperation was developing extensively. On 16 June, Belarus signed a contract with Russian Helicopters Holding for the supplies of 12 MI-8MTV-5 military transport helicopters for the Belarusian army *"on the same terms and with the same characteristics as those delivered to the Russian Armed Forces."* On 17 June, Defense Minister of Belarus Andrej Raŭkoŭ said that by the end of 2015, four battalions of S-300 surface-to-air missile systems would be on alert in Belarus, and talks were underway over the delivery of S-400 systems to Belarus.

Agreements were also signed at the level of ministries and agencies. Specifically, the Ministries of Healthcare of Belarus and Russia called for mutual recognition of postgraduate education. The Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Institute of History of Science and Technology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Institute of Natural History of the Chinese Academy of Sciences signed a trilateral agreement on the establishment of the International Research Center of the History

of Science and Technology. The Minsk Ecclesiastical Academy and Russian Christian Humanitarian Academy signed a cooperation treaty.

Against this backdrop, the press conference of Russian Ambassador A. Surikov, where he declared Moscow's support for Lukashenka at the upcoming presidential election and made a forecast about the soonest possible resolution of all oil-related troubles, looked like a logical result. At the same time, some Russian media that used to expose Belarus's pro-Western and nationalist sentiments became less passionate.

Meanwhile, despite active negotiations and numerous agreements and draft agreements, two-way trade between Belarus and Russia further shrank: in January–April, it amounted to USD12.15 in value terms (67.2% of the same period in 2014). Export to Russia dropped by 40% year-on-year to USD5.22 billion, while import from that country decreased less dramatically, by 27.6% to USD7.32 billion. Belarus reported a deficit of USD2.101 billion in trade with Russia during the first four months of the year. Belarus's export and overall trade turnover with countries beyond the CIS fell slower in January–April than those with Russia: overall trade turnover shrank by 22.6%, and export fell by 19.8%. The considerable reduction in Belarus's export supplies to Russia should be attributed to the depreciation of the Russian ruble, general decrease in the financial soundness of the Russian market, and slowdown in the Russian economy.

In May and June, despite certain progress and promises by both Russian and Belarusian officials, some of the most significant challenges to Belarusian–Russian collaboration remained unresolved, including the refinancing of Belarusian state and corporate debts to Russian banks; restrictions in the Russian market applying to Belarusian farm produce; and Russia's claims concerning supplies of oil products to that country pegged to the volume of Russian crude oil delivered to Belarus.

When it comes to the framework of the EEU, certain risks have emerged, associated with the intention of EEU officials to vest in supranational institutions the functions of border control and trade engagement with the EU — the issues that are essential for preserving Belarus's state independence. Whereas the issue of control of commercial borders is primarily a matter of trust between Belarus and Russia, the willingness of the EEU to get under its control the commercial relationship between Belarus and the EU in the context of prolonged political confrontation (and expanding commercial anti-sanctions) between Russia and the EU may cause serious conflicts.

## Forecast for the near future

It seems Moscow has put up with the need to level down its requirements for its principal ally and is ready to invest in Belarus without making its contributions conditional on unreserved approval by Belarus of all of Russia's initiatives, in the first place, those associated with Russia's confrontation with Ukraine and the West. Moreover, in this new context, Russia may be ready to see certain advantages in an additional involvement of Belarus in the global world.

However, this political thaw is not yet supported by any substantial economic breakthroughs, because there is no respective agreement between the two countries, and the Russian economic crisis determines the paying capacity of the Russian market and, consequently, the volume of trade between the two economies.

One should expect Russia to find opportunities for providing Belarus with more significant loans than at the end of April and beginning of May. Cooperation between ministries and agencies and contacts with Russian regions will also help promote Belarusian export deliveries to Russia; however, this impact will become conspicuous at a later phase.

# Development of the Belarus–EU relationship

+20



0

Summary index: +20

Total positive points: +20

Total negative points: 0

## Main trends

The relationship between Belarus and the European Union during the period under review can provisionally be divided into three segments, which were characterized by the following trends:

- Contacts intensified in the run up to the EaP Summit in Riga as a reflection of Minsk's involvement in consultations to prepare for the event;
- Temporary reduction in the intensity of contacts immediately following the summit; "digestion" of its outcomes;
- New intensification phase during the final ten days of June.

## Description of the key events

In early May, Austria's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Integration Sebastian Kurz paid a visit to Minsk. He was received by President Aliaksandr Lukashenka and held negotiations with his Belarusian counterpart Uladzimir Makiej. The visit of the Austrian minister did not give any significant impetus to the relations between Belarus and the EU (no major progress had been expected, anyway); however, it definitely contributed to further normalization of the Belarus–EU relationship. It is noteworthy that three days later, on 7 May, Vienna played host to consultations between the Foreign Ministries on political issues, where the Belarusian delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna.

Up until 21 May, when the Eastern Partnership Summit began in Latvia's capital city, all of the participants in the initiative had been coordinating the draft final declaration. A week before the summit, on 15 May, Uladzimir Makiej took part in a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group and the Eastern Partnership in Slovakia. According to the diplomats who were present at the meeting, the ministers openly exchanged opinions about the future of the EaP, as well as prospects of the engagement between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. Uladzimir Makiej reiterated the two fundamental EaP priorities of official Minsk, namely, the avoidance of political confrontation and development of pragmatic collaboration between the EU and its Eastern European partners.

In Bratislava, the Belarusian minister also held a series of bilateral meetings with his counterparts. Specifically, he met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic Miroslav Lajčák.

The EaP Summit in Riga naturally became the main event for the relationship between Belarus and the EU in not only May and June, but also several previous months, although it should be treated as a transitional event now that the European Union began revising its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), of which the EaP is an integral part.

Therefore, it was hard to expect any critical decisions before the fate of the ENP was to be decided in autumn 2015. Nevertheless, because of the events in Eastern Europe that took place since the previous EaP Summit in Vilnius, emotions around the summit in Riga were running high.

The event proved rather complicated for Minsk. Rather unexpectedly for regular diplomatic practice, even following lengthy consultations, the phrasing of one of the fundamental positions for Belarus's foreign policy remained uncoordinated — the one concerning the status of Crimea. The Belarusian delegation found itself in the epicenter of pressure by the majority of the participants in the summit, who insisted on using the phrasing about the annexation of Crimea by Russia. Official Minsk argued that the proposed wording was unacceptable citing the need to avoid stronger separating lines in the region and its own neutral position on the Ukrainian crisis.

Following long and nerve-racking talks, the word "annexation" ultimately made it into the final version of the declaration. Belarus declared its separate position, though.

What are the outcomes of the summit for Belarus?

On the one hand, the draft joint declaration, which became available online back in March, looked a lot more ambitious for Minsk. Specifically, it had been planned to initial the agreements on visa facilitation and readmission within the framework of the summit and announce the launch of mobility partnership between Belarus and the European Union. The original drafts of the declaration also included points about the likely commencement of the implementation of a modernization "roadmap" for Belarus.

However, none of those expectations eventually materialized. In this context, some observers drew the conclusion that the summit appeared to be unsuccessful for Belarus. Furthermore, certain irritation at the course of the summit and the text of the final declaration could be sensed in some statements and backstage comments by the members of the official Belarusian delegation, especially when it came to visa issues. For instance, Minister Makiej made the following comment on the frustrated initialing of the visa agreements:

*"At some stage our partners discovered some technical catches that prevented us from initialing the agreements during this summit. Therefore, we continue working and have agreed that experts will continue their meetings. Believe me, this is not our fault, and, naturally, work on these agreements will take some time."<sup>1</sup>*

Nonetheless, it would be fair to characterize the Riga Summit as a positive experience for Belarus. First, the diplomatic groundwork that had been done for the Riga summit, but appeared to have no logical continuation, remains relevant for all concerned parties. It is quite likely that these initiatives will be implemented without being pegged to any milestone events or landmark dates.

Second, despite its diplomatic abstractness, the joint declaration reflects two principles, which official Minsk has advocated since the inception of the Eastern Partnership project: the principles of differentiated relationships of the EU with the partner states depending on their ambitions, and priority of pragmatic cooperation over humanitarian issues. It is symbolic, for instance, that the declaration deliberately commends Belarus's two initiatives: the business forum and the harmonization of electronic markets in the EaP.

Contacts and events within the framework of the Belarus–EU relationship became less intense immediately following the summit in Riga, albeit for a short while. The participants must have been "digesting" the outcomes of the summit. On top of everything else, Minsk needed to make sure that its position in Riga would not be misinterpreted in Moscow.

During the final days of June, the relationship between Belarus and the EU was highlighted by a few more important events. Two of them should be described separately.

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1. <http://news.tut.by/politics/449064.html>

First, Minsk for the first time played host to a round of informal EaP ministerial dialogues attended by Johannes Hahn, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, and Alain Le Roy, the Secretary General of the European External Action Service. When speaking at the meeting, Minister Makiej made a series of emphatically positive remarks about the EU, including the one concerning Belarus's willingness to put an end to the cyclical nature in its relations with Brussels.

Second, Swedish Ambassador to Belarus Martin Oberg presented his credentials to President Lukashenka. This effectively ended the notorious diplomatic conflict between Minsk and Stockholm, when the two countries minimized the level of their relations in August 2012.

Two-way trade between Belarus and the EU economies amounted to USD6.302 billion in January–May 2015, which represents a decrease by 28.4% year-on-year. Export supplies from Belarus totaled USD4.026 billion, down by 21.3% from the first five months of 2014, and import from the EU dropped by 39.4% to USD2.276 billion. Belarus thus reported a surplus in its trade with Europe amounting to USD1.75 billion.

## Forecast for the near future

With the presidential election in Belarus getting closer (11 October 2015), it is becoming an increasingly important factor for the Belarus–EU relationship. Given recent activities and statements by Belarusian officials, the administration of the country will be trying to do its best in order to create a favorable international ambience around the election. The authorities will hardly allow the internal liberalization of the election campaign on the model of the 2010 election, whereas their policy on international observers representing the OSCE and the EU will be deliberately constructive.

In addition, Belarus will be actively involved in the consultations associated with the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy and settlement of the Ukrainian crisis.

Therefore, unless something extraordinary should happen, Belarus and EU will go through a phase of constructive engagement in July and August.



# Development of the Belarus–China relationship

+17



0

Summary index: +17  
Total positive points: +17  
Total negative points: 0

## Main trends

The two months under review were highlighted for the Belarus–China relationship by the state visit of President of China Xi Jinping (the second one in the history of the bilateral relations) on May 10–12. Despite the media buzz and numerous accompanying events, the actual outcomes of the visit were far from those originally expected by the two countries. Official Minsk's hopes to garner substantial financial support from China did not come true; however, China did not succeed, either, in having Belarus offer it additional concessions.

## Description of the key events

The months of May and June marked a milestone in the history of the relations between Belarus and China. On May 10–12, President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping paid a visit to Belarus — the second visit by a Chinese head of state (the first one took place back in 2001, when Jiang Zemin came to Belarus). Naturally, the event of such a high level had been thoroughly prepared, and the signing of more than 50 agreements and memorandums in virtually all of the areas of bilateral cooperation was timed to coincide with the visit, along with the Belarusian–Chinese Interregional Business Forum.

Despite its growing disillusionment with China as a source of fast and cheap loans and amid the deficit of fully-featured support from Russia and complicated negotiations with the IMF, Belarus still has to rely on Chinese loans, although it is well aware that its relationship with Beijing in this area requires adjustments.

Apart from having access to lending, official Minsk hopes to have China's support in the implementation of two major investment projects — the construction of the China–Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP) and involvement in the Silk Road Economic Belt project. Belarus relies on China's direct investments in these projects implemented in Belarus, as well as assistance of the Chinese administration in the engagement of Chinese companies as CBIP residents.

However, the implementability of these plans of the Belarusian government appears to be quite illusionary. China as a rule provides tied loans envisaging the spending of from 50% to 70% of the total amount on Chinese-made equipment and implementation of investment projects by Chinese contractors. The interest rate (albeit set individually for each investment project based upon specific agreements) is also higher than the Belarusian authorities wish it were.

Xi Jinping's visit did not become a breakthrough in terms of the credit cooperation between Belarus and China. Various Belarusian officials who commented on the economic outcomes of the visit mentioned various figures — from the impossible USD18 billion (Deputy Chief of the Presidential Executive Office M. Snapkoŭ) to the "modest" yet equally improbable USD3.5 billion or USD7 billion (Prime Minister A. Kabiakoŭ and Minister of Economy U. Zinoŭski). Their Chinese counterparts were more discreet when describing

prospects of further collaboration between Belarus and China. China's state news service Xinhua only mentioned a SWAP agreement (which is not even a tied loan) amounting to 7 billion yuan (approximately USD1.15 billion) in its press release.<sup>2</sup>

Importantly, previously, China and Belarus reached an agreement on a long-term credit line amounting to USD15 billion, which has not been fully disbursed so far. There is in effect a certain adjustment in the terms of lending within the framework of the same credit line, as well as the confirmation by the Belarusian side of its intention to continue taking out Chinese loans in the future (especially following highlight declarations by President Lukashenka, who back in 2014 criticized the existing forms of cooperation between the two countries). Furthermore, a loan agreement was signed by the China Development Bank and ASB Belarusbank on the provision of a USD300 million loan. Therefore, from the perspective of credit cooperation, the outcomes of the visit were more than modest, although in the current economic and political circumstances (the upcoming presidential election) official Minsk is happy to have any external financial injections.

The second important issue for Belarus and China is the development of the CBIP project. The Belarusian side hopes that Chinese producers will launch major manufacturing facilities at CBIP. Their economic considerations underlying the project are not clear. So far the construction of the Park has been taking too long, and it is premature to speak about the opening of any production facilities within the CBIP. The construction is currently performed by a Chinese contractor that uses mostly Chinese loans, which will have to be repaid by the Republic of Belarus. Announcements have been made about negotiations for China Merchants Group to buy into Company for the Development of the Industrial Park and control a 20% stake. The Group will become the second-largest shareholder in the CBIP operator after Sinomach. In practice it means that even a larger portion of Chinese tied loans extended for the construction of the CBIP facilities will remain with Chinese companies.

During his stay in Belarus Xi Jinping visited the CBIP and took part in the ceremony to present registration certificates to the first seven residents of the Park. This increase in the number of residents (even given the need to show some tangible result to the Chinese top officials) is questionable, because the CBIP is still at the initial phase of its construction. According to official reports, the main site of the Park will have roads, including those with improved pavement, power, water supply, and sewerage, gas, communication, and engineering networks, as well as a transformer substation only as late as the end of 2016, and only at the start of 2017, properties will be ready to be leased to potential investors (the administrative and business center, office areas, and standard production premises). No plans have been developed yet for the creation of production facilities at the CBIP.

The Chinese side appears to be more interested in the Silk Road Economic Belt project, which will enable that country to intensify its contacts with Central and Eastern Europe. Specifically, in the course of the visit, a package of loan arrangements was signed between Belarusian Railway and the Export-Import Bank of China as part of the transport infrastructure campaign with a view to financing a series of investment projects ("Renewal of the Rolling Stock of Belarusian Railway. Acquisition of Eight Electric Locomotives", "Electrification of the Maladziečna–Hudahaj Railway Section", "Renewal of the Rolling Stock of Belarusian Railway. Acquisition of Ten Electric Locomotives"). Belarus and China also signed a framework agreement on the promotion of all-round strategic cooperation between the Export-Import Bank of China and Belarusian Railway. Further, memorandums on logistics cooperation were signed. However, it should be noted that this project will be implemented over a very long period of time, the arrangements will be financed from tied Chinese loans, and China is also working on alternative logistics projects.

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2. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-05/13/c\\_134235227.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-05/13/c_134235227.htm)

Unfortunately, there is no available information on another key issue of the Belarus–China relationship — the cooperation between the two economies in the potash sector. It would be safe to assume that the Chinese side is monitoring the economic situation in Belarus hoping that when things further deteriorate, China will be able to gain a firmer foothold in the Belarusian market for potash fertilizers.

### Forecast for the near future

One should not expect any significant breakthroughs in the fulfillment of the bilateral cooperation objectives announced by Belarusian officials. Moreover, given the high corruption component in the implementation of Chinese projects in Belarus, new scandals may erupt. The Belarusian administration, which has obtained insignificant financial support from China, will refrain from any active moves in this foreign policy segment before the presidential election.

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

(Asia, Africa and Latin America)

Summary index: +18

Total positive points: +18

Total negative points: 0

+18

0

## Main trends

Belarus continues seeking closer ties with the countries of the Middle East and South Asia, which are closely connected with the West. Against this backdrop, contacts with the countries of the region that challenge the West have been minimized. This trend is becoming increasingly consistent.

Minsk has managed to give a new impetus to its relations with the major economies of South Asia by successfully maneuvering between Pakistan and India. Belarus has in effect built up its relations with Pakistan over the past few years while maintaining its partnership relations with India.

In Southeast Asia, Belarus continued establishing contacts with some previously undiscovered economic partners (Indonesia and Myanmar during the two months under review). Stable ties with traditional partners, such as Vietnam, remain in place.

The military and technical component in Belarus's contacts with developing countries has recently expanded again.

## Description of the key events

### South Asia

**India.** Indian President Pranab Mukherjee paid a visit to Minsk on 2–4 June. That was the first ever visit to Belarus of an Indian state leader, although the Belarusian head of state visited India in 1997 and 2007. The visit was politically important for the Belarusian administration as evidence of the country's valid and proper external policy. According to Lukashenka, *"attempts to put Belarus in its place and isolate it are hopeless as long as we promote relations with such giants as India."*

Top-level negotiations addressed cooperation in the petrochemical and mining industries, mechanical engineering, power engineering, pharmaceuticals, science, education, culture, and the military and technical sector. Commenting on areas for cooperation, Lukashenka said that the Belarusian side was willing to *"participate in the modernization of the Indian mining industry and contribute to increasing the performance of its oil and gas sector."* Specifically, the head of state reminded that India successfully operated BelAZ heavy dump trucks. Lukashenka also spoke about the feasibility of the organization of joint manufacturing facilities to make buses, trucks, municipal vehicles and road-building machines.

Belarus is also interested in having Indian investors inject money in its pharmaceutical sector and involvement of Indian companies in the China–Belarus Industrial Park. Lukashenko also offered India his support in approaching the markets of the Eurasian Economic Community.

The Indian side had a slightly different focus, though, centering mostly on potash. Mukherjee said: *"We import significant amounts of potash fertilizers from Belarus, which*

*is necessary for our food security program. Indian companies are interested in long-term contracts for supplies of potash fertilizers from Belarus. Belarus will have a guaranteed market, and India will enjoy deliveries by a reliable supplier. Our companies are also open to investment in Belarusian potash mines.”* Furthermore, he said India was interested in the organization of joint assembly facilities of Belarusian farm machines, as well as machinery for the mining industry in India.<sup>3</sup> Indian officials said India was ready to lend Belarus USD100 million to finance joint projects with Indian companies.

Belarus and India signed a roadmap for bilateral cooperation, protocol to the intergovernmental agreement on the avoidance of double taxation and prevention of tax evasion, memorandums of cooperation in finance, standardization, and information support, broadcasting, textile, clothing, and fashion industry.<sup>4</sup>

In 2014, Belarus’s export to India increased by 24.2% year-on-year. In January–March 2015, two-way trade expanded by 78.7% to USD103.5 million, and Belarus logged a substantial surplus. Belarusian exports to India include potash fertilizers, synthetic yarn, trucks, and compound synthetic filament.<sup>5</sup>

**Pakistan.** On 19–20 May, Head of the Office for Asia, Australia and Oceania of the Foreign Ministry of Belarus Andrej Hrynkievič paid a working visit to Pakistan. He held meetings in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and central office of the prime minister to discuss the current status and prospects of bilateral relations, as well as possible consultations between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries, and the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarus–Pakistan Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation.

On 28–29 May, President Aliaksandr Lukashenka paid an official visit to Pakistan, where he held talks with President of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

The Islamabad Declaration of Bilateral Partnership was signed as a result of the visit. The Belarusian president invited Pakistan to establish production facilities at the China–Belarus Industrial Park. Belarus is especially interested in having Pakistan establish contemporary sewing and textile companies in Belarus.

In the run-up to the visit and during Lukashenka’s stay in Pakistan, a large Belarusian delegation visited that country, comprising government officials and businessmen, and heads of major state- and privately-owned organizations. They reached agreements on the creation of joint ventures with Pakistani companies. Approximately 20 documents were signed as a result of the visit, mostly aiming at expanding the engagement between the two countries in the industrial sector, agriculture and foodstuffs, science, investments, information and communication, and education.<sup>6</sup>

**Afghanistan.** On 15 June, President Lukashenka had a telephone conversation with his Afghanistan counterpart Mohammad Ashraf Ghani at the initiative of the Afghan side. The two heads of state discussed bilateral relations and the situation in the Central Asian Region. Lukashenka invited his counterpart to visit Belarus.<sup>7</sup>

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3. Belarus and India are working on a roadmap for bilateral engagement, BelTA, 1 June 2015, <http://news.tut.by/economics/450134.html>

4. Official visit of President of India Pranab Mukherjee to Belarus, 3 June 2015, [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/ofitsialnyj-vizit-prezidenta-indii-pranaba-mukerdzhi-v-belarus-11477/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/ofitsialnyj-vizit-prezidenta-indii-pranaba-mukerdzhi-v-belarus-11477/)

5. Lukashenka: We will disappoint those who do not believe in our relations with India, 3 June, <http://news.tut.by/politics/450471.html>

6. Belarus and Pakistan sign the Islamabad Declaration of Bilateral Partnership, 29 May 2015, [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/belarus-i-pakistan-podpisali-islamabadskuju-deklaratsiju-dvustoronnego-partnerstva-11453/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/belarus-i-pakistan-podpisali-islamabadskuju-deklaratsiju-dvustoronnego-partnerstva-11453/)

7. Lukashenka invites Afghanistan’s President to visit Belarus, 15 June 2015, <http://news.tut.by/politics/452103.html>

A few days later, on 19–22 June, the special envoy of the President of Afghanistan responsible for cooperation with the CIS member states paid a visit to Belarus. He discussed prospects of cooperation and supplies of Belarusian products to Afghanistan with Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ.<sup>8</sup> He also met with President Lukashenka.

### Southeast Asia

**Vietnam.** In the course of his working visit to Kazakhstan on 28–29 May, Prime Minister of Belarus Andrej Kabiakoŭ met with Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyễn Tấn Dũng.

On 25–26 June, Minister of Public Security of Vietnam General Trần Đại Quang paid a visit to Minsk. That was his fourth visit to Belarus. Belarus's partner of the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security is the KGB. Trần Đại Quang also had a meeting with Prime Minister Andrej Kabiakoŭ.

Over the past decade, two-way trade between Belarus and Vietnam has quadrupled to USD170 million<sup>9</sup> or USD200 million<sup>10</sup>, according to various sources. It is planned that the agreement on free trade between the EEU and Vietnam will open additional opportunities for the development of economic relations. In December 2014, the Belarusian government simplified the procedure for Vietnamese citizens to obtain Belarusian visas, and starting 1 July 2015, Belarusian citizens coming to Vietnam for less than 15 days will not have to obtain Vietnamese visas, whatever their passport types or purpose of their visit. Belarus will become the eighth country, to which Hanoi grants such a regime.

**Indonesia.** On 24–25 May, Speaker of the Regional Representative Council (the Upper House of the Indonesian Parliament) Irman Gusman visited Belarus. He met with Prime Minister of Belarus Andrej Kabiakoŭ and President Lukashenka. Among specific proposals mentioned by Kabiakoŭ were "*possibilities for the establishment of an outsourcing company for BelAZ and joint development of minerals in Indonesia.*" According to the Belarusian premier, talks are underway over supplies of MAZ machinery to Indonesia, and Belarus can train scientific personnel of top qualifications for that country.<sup>11</sup> Aliaksandr Lukashenka said that in the course of his visit to Indonesia in 2013 an agreement was reached to evolve from simple trade relations between the two countries to cooperation ties and called for establishing interregional cooperation (to this end, representatives of one of Indonesia's provinces have recently visited Brest).

On 22 June, Minsk hosted the fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarus–Indonesia Joint Commission for Trade, Economic, and Technical Cooperation. The Indonesian delegation was led by Dian Triansyah Djani, General Director of American and European Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. The protocol of the session was signed, alongside a memorandum of cooperation between BelTA and Indonesia's news service Antara.<sup>12</sup>

Two-way trade between Belarus and Indonesia increased to USD215 million in 2014 from USD1.8 million in 1995. In 2011, Belarus opened its embassy in Indonesia, and the Indonesian Embassy will soon open in Minsk. Potash fertilizers account for more than 90% of Belarus's export supplies to Indonesia. Further, Belarus supplies caprolactam, polyamides, dump trucks, tractors, and other products.

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8. On the meeting between Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus V. Rybakoŭ and special envoy of the President of Afghanistan, 22-06-2015, [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/e3710fd8334487b2.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/e3710fd8334487b2.html)<sup>9</sup>. Андрей Кобяков встретился с премьер-министром Вьетнама, 29.05.2015, <http://www.government.by/ru/content/5925>

9. Andrej Kabiakoŭ meets with the Prime Minister of Vietnam, 29.05.2015, <http://www.government.by/ru/content/5925>

10. Kabiakoŭ: the potential for the promotion of mutual trade turnover between Belarus and Vietnam is not exhausted, 26.06.2015, <http://www.government.by/ru/content/5944>

11. Andrej Kabiakoŭ meets with Irman Gusman, 25.05.2015, <http://www.government.by/ru/content/5919>

12. On the meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarus–Indonesia Joint Commission for Trade, Economic, and Technical Cooperation, 22-06-2015, [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/ab94ef85ef492044.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/ab94ef85ef492044.html)

According to Belarusian Ambassador to Indonesia Uladzimir Lapata-Zahorski, "in 2013, the office of Belarusian Potash Company resumed its full-scale operations in Singapore (...) we managed to neutralize the negative consequences of Uralkali's decision. The trend towards the decrease in the share of Belarusian potash fertilizers in the Indonesian market has been successfully overcome." In 2014, Indonesia imported 752,400 tons of potassium chloride from Belarus, almost three times as much as in 2013 (when 255,100 tons were supplied).

BelAZ dump trucks have been in use in the Indonesian province of East Kalimantan since 2012. Work is currently underway to begin supplies of BelAZ trucks to South Sumatra. A delegation of that Indonesian province on 10–14 May visited BelAZ. Belarus seeks to begin deliveries to other provinces as well. According to the ambassador, in 2014, Belarus managed to reverse the negative trend towards a curtailment in supplies of Belarusian tires to Indonesia.<sup>13</sup>

**Myanmar.** On 21–22 May, a parliamentary delegation of Myanmar led by Speaker of the House of Nationalities of the Assembly of the Union of Myanmar Khin Aung Myint visited Minsk. The head of the delegation had a meeting with Prime Minister Andrej Kabiakoŭ and President Lukashenka.

Andrej Kabiakoŭ said that Belarus was interested in expanding the range of products exported to that country "using mineral fertilizers, mine trucks, metals, diesel generators, radio electronic products, tires, petrochemical products, foods and pharmaceuticals." He also said that military and technical cooperation between Belarus and Myanmar was a promising area for collaboration.<sup>14</sup>

Lukashenka emphasized similar aspects: "We are ready to cooperate in every area — from the training of civil and military professionals in our educational institutions to cooperation in agriculture and industrial modernization. You have substantial mineral resources. We are ready to provide requisite machinery for agriculture and mining companies."<sup>15</sup>

### Middle East

**Saudi Arabia.** On 5–7 May, a Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ visited Saudi Arabia to participate in the first session of the Joint Committee on Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The delegation comprised representatives of the Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Healthcare, the National Academy of Sciences, National Agency of Investment and Privatization, industrial enterprises and businesses.

Rybakoŭ met with Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry of Saudi Arabia for Foreign Trade, Secretary General of the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Deputy Chairman of the General Presidency of Youth Welfare. The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding in sports. In the course of the first meeting of the Joint Committee on Cooperation between the Governments of Belarus and Saudi Arabia, an agreement on cooperation between the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry was signed, and an agreement was reached concerning the establishment of the Belarusian–Saudi Business Council.

13. Interview of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to Indonesia Uladzimir Lapata-Zahorski to Belarusy i rynek newspaper (June 2015) <http://mfa.gov.by/press/smi/cb0a27921ddc4d37.html>

14. Andrej Kabiakoŭ meets with a parliamentary delegation of Myanmar, 22.05.2015, <http://www.government.by/ru/content/5917>

15. Meeting with Speaker of the House of Nationalities of the Assembly of the Union of Myanmar Khin Aung Myint, 22 May 2015, [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predsedatelem-palaty-natsionalnoy-sojuznogo-sobranija-mjanmy-xin-aung-mjintom-11411/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predsedatelem-palaty-natsionalnoy-sojuznogo-sobranija-mjanmy-xin-aung-mjintom-11411/)

Rybakoŭ also met with Nizar bin Obaid Madani, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Saudi Arabia.<sup>16</sup>

**Iraqi Kurdistan.** On 27 May, Minsk hosted the first meeting of the Belarusian–Kurdish Joint Group for Trade and Economic Cooperation. The Kurdish delegation was led by Minister of Trade and Industry Samal Sardar.<sup>17</sup> Its members were received by Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej and held meetings with the leaderships of the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Education, Administration of the High-Technology Park, Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and visited MAZ. In September 2014, Makiej visited Iraqi Kurdistan, and in April, Belarusian humanitarian aid was delivered there.

**Turkey.** On 27–28 May, Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey Ali Kemal Aydın visited Belarus. Political consultations were held between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Turkey.

**UAE.** On 4–5 June, Minsk played host to a round of consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and the United Arab Emirates. There is no official information concerning the officials participating in the consultations. The UAE delegation also had a meeting with the leadership of the Belarusian Ministry of Healthcare, which explored possibilities for further cooperation in medical tourism and increasing export of Belarusian medical services. Representatives of the UAE visited several medical institutions in Belarus.

**Egypt.** On 14–16 June, a Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ visited Egypt. The delegation comprised representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as some manufacturing companies. Consultations between Belarus and Egypt were organized at the level of deputy ministers. Rybakoŭ also met with Minister of Industry, Trade and investment of Egypt Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour and Chairman of the Egyptian Council for Sustainable Development Motaz Raslan.

### Africa

**Guinea.** On 17–18 June, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guinea Koutoub Moustafa Sano paid a working visit to Belarus. According to Minister Makiej, Minsk sees “serious potential” in its partnership with Guinea and is ready for mutually beneficial cooperation in the manufacturing sector, agriculture, education, and medicine.<sup>18</sup> The following day he added: “*self-professed ‘experts’ will sneer: Belarus has found the best partner — Guinea is one of the poorest countries in Africa, and there are no real prospects there ... I have a totally different vision, though. For some reason, Australia, China, France, United States, and UAE seek active cooperation with that country.*”<sup>19</sup> The two countries signed a protocol on regular consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Guinea.

**Mozambique.** On 17–18 June, a Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ paid a visit to Mozambique. The delegation comprised representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and some Belarusian companies, including Promagroleasing and MAZ. The delegation

16. On the visit of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Valiancin Rybakoŭ to Saudi Arabia, 08-05-2015, [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/b38855d4ca41838b.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b38855d4ca41838b.html)

17. On the first meeting of Belarusian–Kurdish Joint Group for Trade and Economic Cooperation, 27-05-2015, [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/f86b1f7cf001e53d.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f86b1f7cf001e53d.html)

18. Materials of media availability of Minister of Foreign Affairs Uladzimir Makiej following his meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guinea Koutoub Moustafa Sano, 17-06-2015, [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/dd25c996e67b6176.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dd25c996e67b6176.html)

19. Verbatim report of media availability of Minister of Foreign Affairs Uladzimir Makiej following his negotiations with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guinea Koutoub Moustafa Sano (18 June 2015, Minsk), 18-06-2015, [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/bd88e48675e2e537.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/bd88e48675e2e537.html)



was received by Prime Minister of Mozambique Carlos Agostinho do Rosário, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Oldemiro Balói, Minister of Agriculture José Pacheco, and members of the political bureau of the governing party FRELIMO. A regular round of consultations between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries was held.

**Zimbabwe.** On 18–21 June, Belarusian Ambassador to South Africa with concurrent accreditation in Zimbabwe Andrej Maučan visited Zimbabwe. The delegation included Chairman of the Board of the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus Siarhiej Rumas, CEO of BelAZ Piotr Parchomčyk and other representatives of Belarusian businesses. They had meetings with President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe and some Zimbabwean ministers. The Belarusian delegation participated in the ceremony of the commencement of the operation of BelAZ machinery at a coal pit in that country (Zimbabwe has purchased more than USD12 million worth of Belarusian trucks).<sup>20</sup>

### Latin America

**Venezuela.** In early June, First Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food of Belarus Leanid Marynič paid a visit to Venezuela. The Belarusian official met with Vice-President for Food Security, Sovereignty and Provision of Venezuela, Minister of Food Carlos Osorio to address cooperation in the food sector, including supplies of Belarusian food to Venezuela.<sup>21</sup>

**Mexico.** On 21–25 June, Head of the America Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Alieh Kraučanka visited Mexico. In the course of his visit he participated in consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Mexico at the level of heads of territorial departments. During his stay in Mexico, Kraučanka had meetings at the Mexican parliament and held negotiations with the leadership of the Mexican Business Council for Foreign Trade and Chamber of Commerce of Mexico City.<sup>22</sup>

## Forecast for the near future

Contacts with Pakistan have a special place in Belarus's relationships with South Asia — they develop consistently, and, judging by the number of official contacts, including those associated with military and technical cooperation, may soon result in major transactions in the military and technical sector. In response, India might offer Minsk an alternative to damage Pakistan's interest, which enables the Belarusian leadership to maneuver between the two opposing countries. Furthermore, Belarus has been making headway in its relations with other countries in South Asia (Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Bangladesh).

In the Middle East, Belarus will be trying to continue building up its relations with new partners — the conservative regimes that are either established allies of the West or share its vision. Belarus de facto accepts the new reality in the region: specifically, the defeat of Iran, Iraq, and Syria, and emergence of a new political entity (Kurdistan), as well as the strengthening of Sunni Arab regimes in the region and Turkey. At the same time, the prospects of these new partnerships are not clear, which is proven by previous attempts to establish relationships with the conservative monarchies of the region (Qatar, Oman).

In Southeast Asia, Minsk keeps its focus on its traditional partners (Vietnam and other economies of Indochina), despite significant diversification efforts. This is for the most

20. On the visit of Belarusian Ambassador A. Maučan to Zimbabwe, 22-06-2015, [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/a0728273d7c5bd86.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/a0728273d7c5bd86.html)

21. Belarus may start supplying food to Venezuela, 10 June 2015, <http://news.tut.by/politics/451403.html>

22. On the visit of Head of America Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Alieh Kraučanka to Mexico City, 26-06-2015, [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/d5c8bf7bf3dc0705.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d5c8bf7bf3dc0705.html)

part due to serious challenges that Minsk is facing when trying to promote its engineering export, which is why Belarusian export to some countries of the region is almost exclusively represented by potash fertilizers.

When it comes to other regions, in Latin America, Belarus will seek to promote relationships primarily with Ecuador; however, apart from that, its activities in the region will remain limited despite recent sporadic contacts with Argentina and Mexico. In Africa, Minsk seeks to develop its relations with some major and relatively stable countries, such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique, and Angola. However, it is also trying to find new opportunities in riskier relationships with less stable and less well-off countries, including Zimbabwe.



# Development of the Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Summary index: +2

Total positive points: +4

Total negative points: -2

+4

-2

## Main trends

During the two months under review, the bilateral relations between Belarus and Ukraine became markedly less active in the public sphere, which can be attributed to the upcoming presidential election in Belarus. Apparently, in this context, the incumbent president is unwilling to incite further confrontation with the Kremlin, the more so because he has already benefitted from his position on Ukraine by achieving a marked improvement of the country's relationship with the West.

Despite the certain public "cooling" of the relations between the two countries, they remain constructive. Belarus is objectively interested in keeping one of its largest sales markets, whereas official Kyiv wishes to ensure the maximum security of its northern border, uninterrupted supplies of oil products and neutralization of Russia's attempts to impose trade limitations.

## Description of the key events

On 4–5 May, Chiefs of the Frontier Services of Belarus and Ukraine Leanid Malcaŭ and Viktor Nazarenko met in Kyiv. It was announced following the meeting that the two countries were planning to conduct joint border control at the Novye Yarilovichy–Novaja Huta border checkpoint. Furthermore, they explored opportunities for arranging joint actions to combat illegal migration and smuggling across the state border with the joint monitoring of the border. They also signed the following document: the Agreement between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of Belarus on the Operation of Frontier Envoys, Protocol of Cooperation between Operational Units, and the Plan for Cooperation between the Frontier Services for 2015–2016.

In May and June, official Minsk's position on Ukraine and the conflict in Donbass remained largely pro-Ukrainian, although the focus was largely shifted from the demonstrative backing of official Kyiv to the support for peaceful ways to resolve the Donbass crisis. On the one hand, this can be attributed to the need for the Belarusian leadership to consolidate Belarus's status as the leading negotiating platform to settle the Ukrainian crisis. Belarus to a great extent succeeded in doing so: throughout May and June, a series of meetings and consultations were held in Minsk as part of the work of the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine (Ukraine–Russia–OSCE), which, however, proved to have little efficiency and did not result in any tangible political dividends for the Belarusian authorities.

On the other hand, ahead of the presidential election in Belarus, President Lukashenka made obvious his intention to minimize any confrontation in Belarus's relationship with Moscow, including concerning the Ukrainian issue. This became especially conspicuous in the course of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga on 21–22 May. At the end of the event, its participants were supposed to approve the joint declaration. However, Belarus and Armenia refused to endorse the phrasing, which mentioned the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea by Russia. This incident did not provoke sharp tensions between official

Minsk and official Kyiv, though. When asked at the concluding press conference whether Kyiv was willing to be involved in the EU program alongside the countries that refused to recognize the annexation of Crimea, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko diplomatically replied that it was a problem of those countries, not Ukraine. He noted that Belarus should decide independently whether it would share the global position on Crimea. He refused to comment whether such a position of official Minsk would affect the bilateral relations between Ukraine and Belarus.

The Belarusian authorities also sought to “shade” their stance on Crimea. In their public comments first Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej and then President Lukashenka focused on Belarus’s opposing any confrontation with Russia rather than non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea. When speaking at the 7th Congress of the Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions on 22 May, Lukashenka said that the main objective was to put an end to human casualties in the east of Ukraine and after that decide “whom to blame.” According to the Belarusian state leader, European countries are trying to draw Belarus into the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. *“We must assert our interests. Why should we be against Russia? Moreover, we have provided the peace platform for Ukraine. Leaders of the global powers have gathered here to stop the war,”* he concluded.

For his part, Uladzimir Makiej, who represented Belarus at the EaP Summit in Riga, noted that Belarus had signed the final declaration *“with a proviso in order for the declaration to be a constructive and future-oriented document. We can refer to it as a proviso. The main thing now is not to make any emotional statements.”*

The statement by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin can be regarded as an indication of the fast detente in the bilateral relations. On 8 June, he said in the course of a meeting of the Ukraine–NATO Interparliamentary Council that Belarus had a European future ahead of it, and called for the European Union to step up its cooperation with a view to achieving a visa-free regime with Belarus.

During the period under review, Lukashenka himself made repeated remarks about the Ukrainian issue, specifically, on 9 May, in the course of the festive meeting celebrating the 70th anniversary of the victory in the War against Nazism, on 16 June during his meeting with representatives of the OSCE, and on 21 June when meeting with Head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill of Moscow. According to Lukashenka, *“Belarus has done a lot for peace to come to the Ukrainian land. And we are ready to do even more — everything it takes to stop this war.”*

In the course of his meeting with OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier and ODIHR Director Michael Georg Link, Lukashenka criticized the work of the OSCE, saying: *“the fact remains, we would like to see a more active involvement of the OSCE, a more prominent role of this organization in the normalization of the situation in Ukraine.”* Lukashenka’s position turned out to be consonant with that of official Kyiv.

On 13 May, Chairman of the Ukrainian part of the Ukrainian–Belarusian commission for trade and economic cooperation, Deputy Prime Minister of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine Hennadii Zubko paid a working visit to Belarus to hold negotiations with Belarusian Prime Minister Andrej Kabiakoŭ and Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Siamaška. Following the negotiations, Zubko said that Belarus could provide financial support for Ukrainian manufacturers of farm machines. *“We have an opportunity to maximize the localization of production of farm machines and increase the share of manufactured components for Belarusian combine harvesters to 30%, thus creating new jobs,”* he said. According to him, the Belarusian side said it was ready to provide financial programs to reduce loan rates or provide such farm machines on lease terms.

In June, the Ukrainian media and some Ukrainian experts cautiously discussed the increase in the activity of Belarusian security services on the state border. On 2 June, Lukashenka instructed the State Border Committee, Defense Ministry, and the Interior Ministry to inspect the system of enhanced border protection in the south of the country and territorial defense of the Homiel Region, and tighten control on the Ukrainian border. The chiefs of the security services were instructed to practice activities to gradually

increase the protection of the state border in the south of the country. On 19 June, these measures were attributed to attempts to import weapons and illegal drugs from Ukraine to Belarus, which became more frequent in recent months.

On 15 June, Belarusian armed forces began a command-staff exercise on the Ukrainian border involving territorial defense troops of the Homiel Region. The main objective of the exercise was to combat guerilla units and illegal armed groups. When commenting on the exercise, A. Melnik, a military expert at the reputable Ukrainian Razumkov Center think tank, said that they should not alarm anyone, being a routine exercise conducted in the presence of international observers. He also said that for countries that border on a state that is at war it is standard practice, and Ukraine is taking similar measures on its border with Transnistria.

On 29 June, First Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Aliaksandr Michnievič and his Ukrainian counterpart Natalia Halibarenko discussed the developments in Ukraine and the conflict zone in the east of the country in the course of their meeting in Minsk. They addressed the current agenda for bilateral relations, including ways to step up mutual trade and the organization of the next meeting of the intergovernmental Belarusian–Ukrainian mixed commission for trade and economic cooperation.

### Forecast for the near future

Apparently, Minsk and Kyiv will seek to continue building up potential for bilateral relations in the foreseeable future; however, these contacts will likely be less active and demonstrative in the public sphere as last year, at least until the end of the presidential election campaign in Belarus.

Despite its unwillingness to irritate the Kremlin, official Minsk continues promoting its economic relations with Ukraine and providing its services in the resolution of the conflict in Donbass. This is important, among others, in the context of the normalization of Belarus's relations with the West.

## Annex

### Catalogue of events underlying the relations development index

## Belarus–Russia relationship

Date	Event	Point
6 May	Telephone conversation between A. Kabiakoŭ and D. Medvedev	+1
6 May	Lower chamber of parliament ratifies the Agreement on the introduction of uniform vehicle certificates within the EEU	+3
7–8 May	Aliaksandr Lukashenka visits Moscow	+3
14 May	Positive remarks about the bilateral relationship at the conference celebrating the 20th anniversary of customs cooperation	+1
20 May	Situation with supplies of farm product to Russia has been settled, says Deputy Prime Minister M. Rusy	+1
21 May	Meeting between P. Kallaur and E. Nabiullina	+2
21–22 May	Meeting between Belarusian Ambassador to Russia I. Pietryšenka and Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia G. Karasin	+1
27 May	U. Makiej's statement that Russia remains a priority despite the development of relations with the EU ("Europe cannot fill Russia's place")	+1
1 June	Meeting between A. Kabiakoŭ and D. Medvedev in Kazakhstan — plans to refinance Belarus's debts to Russia are confirmed	+2
8 June	U. Makiej meets with S. Lavrov; statement about strategic partnership	+2
9 June	Meeting between A. Kabiakoŭ and G. Rapota; statement about close ties and development of the Union State	+2
10 June	Statement by Russian Ambassador to Belarus A. Surikov about support for A. Lukashenka at the upcoming election	+2
17 June	A. Raŭkoŭ comments on strategic military cooperation with Russia	+1
19 June	Statement by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food about limitations imposed by Russia	-1
29 June	U. Makiej: Belarus is ready to provide a platform for dialogue on the common economic space of the EU and the EEU	+1
May–June	Active work with Russian regions	+3
May–June	Interdepartmental cooperation (science, space, religious education, healthcare, postgraduate education)	+3
<b>Total</b>		<b>+28</b>

## Belarus–EU relationship

Date	Event	Point
4 May	Austria's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Integration S. Kurz visits Minsk; he meets with A. Lukashenka and U. Makiej	+2
4 May	U. Makiej meets with G. Erler, Federal Coordinator for Cooperation with Russia, Central Asia, and the Eastern Partnership Countries and Special Envoy of the Federal Government of Germany for Germany's 2018 OSCE Chairmanship	+1
5–6 May	A. Kupčyna visits France	+1
7 May	A. Kupčyna visits Austria	+1
7 May	Belarusian delegation participates in the first meeting of the trade ministers of the Eastern Partnership member states in Brussels	+1
13 May	A. Kupčyna meets with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland K. Pawlik	+1
15 May	U. Makiej visits Slovakia to participate in a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership Initiative	+2
21–22 May	U. Makiej takes part in the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga	+2
8 June	A. Kupčyna meets with a delegation of the Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST) of the Council of the European Union	+1
18 June	A. Kupčyna meets with a delegation of the European Parliament	+1
24 June	U. Makiej meets with German Ambassador W. Maas	+1
25 June	Swedish Ambassador M. Oberg presents credentials to A. Lukashenka, which marks the renewal of diplomatic relations between Minsk and Stockholm at the top diplomatic level	+1
29 June	The fifth round of informal ministerial dialogues of the Eastern Partnership initiative	+2
May–June	Positive materials in the official media and statements by the leadership of the country about the relationship with the EU	+2
May–June	Consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Austria (3 May, Vienna), consultations between Belarus and Germany on foreign policy analysis and planning (12 May, Minsk), 7th meeting of the Belarusian–Czech mixed commission for economic, industrial, scientific and technical cooperation (11–12 May, Ostrava), consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Sweden (19 May, Minsk), consultations between Belarus and Estonia on contractual issues in mutual protection and encouragement of investments (25–26 May, Minsk), consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Finland (26 May, Minsk), consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Croatia (8 June, Minsk), meeting of the Belarusian–Polish working group on trade and investment (15 June, Warsaw), 9th meeting of the Belarusian–Swiss joint committee on trade and economic cooperation (22 June, Minsk), Belarusian–Polish consultations on contractual legal issues (22 June, Warsaw), Belarusian–Czech consultations on consular issues (24 June, Minsk)	+1
<b>Total</b>		<b>+20</b>

## Belarus–China relationship

Date	Event	Point
4–5 May	Visit of a delegation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	+2
10–12 May	Visit of President of China Xi Jinping to Belarus, signing of the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation	+3
11 May	Belarusian–Chinese interregional business forum in Minsk; 25 agreements are signed	+3
12 May	First seven residents of the China–Belarus Industrial Park receive registration certificates in the presence of Xi Jinping and Aliaksandr Lukashenka	+1
20 May	China plans to invest in the construction of wind power units in the Viciebsk Region, said Deputy Chairman of the Viciebsk Region Administration A. Mackievič following the visit of an official delegation from China's Heilongjiang province, which included representatives of Chinese businesses	+1
5 June	AB Belarusbank is ready to offer credit support for joint Belarusian–Chinese investment projects using the credit line of the China Development Bank	+1
11 June	Belarus and China will introduce visa-free travel for group travels, said Director of the Tourism Department of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism V. Karmazin	+1
15–27 June	Joint Belarus–China anti-terrorism exercise Dashing Eagle 2015	+1
17 June	Concept for the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt project will create considerable opportunities for the promotion of the China–Belarus relations (Ambassador Cui Qiming)	+1
17 June	China will provide Belarus with 200 million yuan for additional financing of the project to build a university hostel and prepare and implement the project "Construction of Social Housing"	+1
25 June	CBIP is open to investors from any country of the world that is interested in the creation of high technology companies, said Deputy Economy Minister A. Jarašenka at the opening of the Day of the Belarusian Economy at EXPO 2015 in Milan. Investments in the CBIP project are expected to reach approximately USD120 million in 2016 alone (Karacejeŭ)	+1
25 June	Foreign minister U. Makiej meets with Gao Yusheng, special representative of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the UN system reform	+1
<b>Total</b>		<b>+17</b>



## Belarus's relationships with the "Developing countries"

Date	Event	Point
5–7 May	Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister V. Rybakoŭ visits Saudi Arabia	+1
21–22 May	Speaker of the House of Nationalities of the Assembly of the Union of Myanmar Khin Aung Myint visits Minsk	+1
24–25 May	Speaker of the Regional Representative Council (the Upper House of the Indonesian Parliament) Irman Gusman visits Belarus	+1
26–27 May	Minister of Trade and Industry of Iraqi Kurdistan Samal Sardar visits Belarus	+2
27–28 May	Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Ali Kemal Aydın visits Belarus	+1
28–29 May	President Lukashenka pays an official visit to Pakistan	+3
2–4 June	Indian President Pranab Mukherjee pays an official visit to Belarus	+3
14–16 June	Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister V. Rybakoŭ visits Egypt	+1
17–18 June	Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Guinea Koutoub Moustafa Sano pays a working visit to Belarus	+1
17–18 June	Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister V. Rybakoŭ visits Mozambique	+1
19–22 June	Mohammad Shaker Kargar, the Afghanistan president's special envoy on the CIS states, visits Minsk	+1
25–26 June	Minister of Public Security of Vietnam Trần Đại Quang visits Belarus	+2
<b>Total</b>		<b>+18</b>

## Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Date	Event	Point
4–5 May	Chief of the Belarusian Frontier Service L. Malcaŭ visits Kyiv to hold negotiations with Ukrainian counterpart V. Nazarenko	+1
13 May	Deputy Prime Minister H. Zubko visits Minsk to have negotiations with Prime Minister A. Kabiakoŭ and Deputy Prime Minister U. Siamaška	+1
22 May	Belarus refuses to support the reference to the annexation of Crimea in the final document of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga	-1
May–June	Series of statements by Lukashenka about readiness to facilitate the resolution of the Ukrainian crisis	+1
June	Belarusian security services step up operations in the vicinity of the Ukrainian border, causing concerns of a part of Ukraine's political community and society	-1
29 June	First Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus A. Michniewiĉ and his Ukrainian counterpart N. Halibarenko meet in Minsk	+1
<b>Total</b>		<b>+2</b>

## 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**