

Belarus' FOREIGN POLICY INDEX

№ 29 November–December 2015

Dear readers,

We are happy to present the twenty-ninth issue of Belarus Foreign Policy Index, in which we explore Belarus's foreign policy in the five key dimensions in the months of November and December 2015.

In its relationship with **Russia** Belarus managed to not only remain uninvolved in Russia's foreign spats, but also consolidate its neutral position. The meeting between Presidents Putin and Lukashenka did not reveal any visible conflicts, contrary to negative forecasts.

The relations with the **European Union** continued developing within the normalization trend. The potential for full-scale improvement looks increasingly realistic in both Belarus and the EU.

The substance of the **Belarus–China** relationship was contingent upon the trends established in 2015: economically — a mutual trade pattern that is more beneficial to Belarus, and politically — further deepening of collaboration in security and intensification of the multilateral dimension.

In its relations with **the Developing countries**, Minsk was focusing on South and Southeast Asia, as well as the Middle East. Contacts with African states were marginal, despite the visit to Zimbabwe of head of the Belarus President Property Management Directorate. Minsk keeps making efforts to maintain and develop its relations with Vietnam, one of the country's oldest partners that is just as important for Belarus's foreign policy as some of the former Soviet Union states.

Minsk's relationship with **Ukraine** was somewhat tarnished by problems in mutual trade; however, they were resolved quite soon. Both countries kept emphasizing the strategic importance and stability of their friendly relations.

Dzianis Melyantsou
Editor
Belarus Foreign Policy Index

3 Russia

6 EU

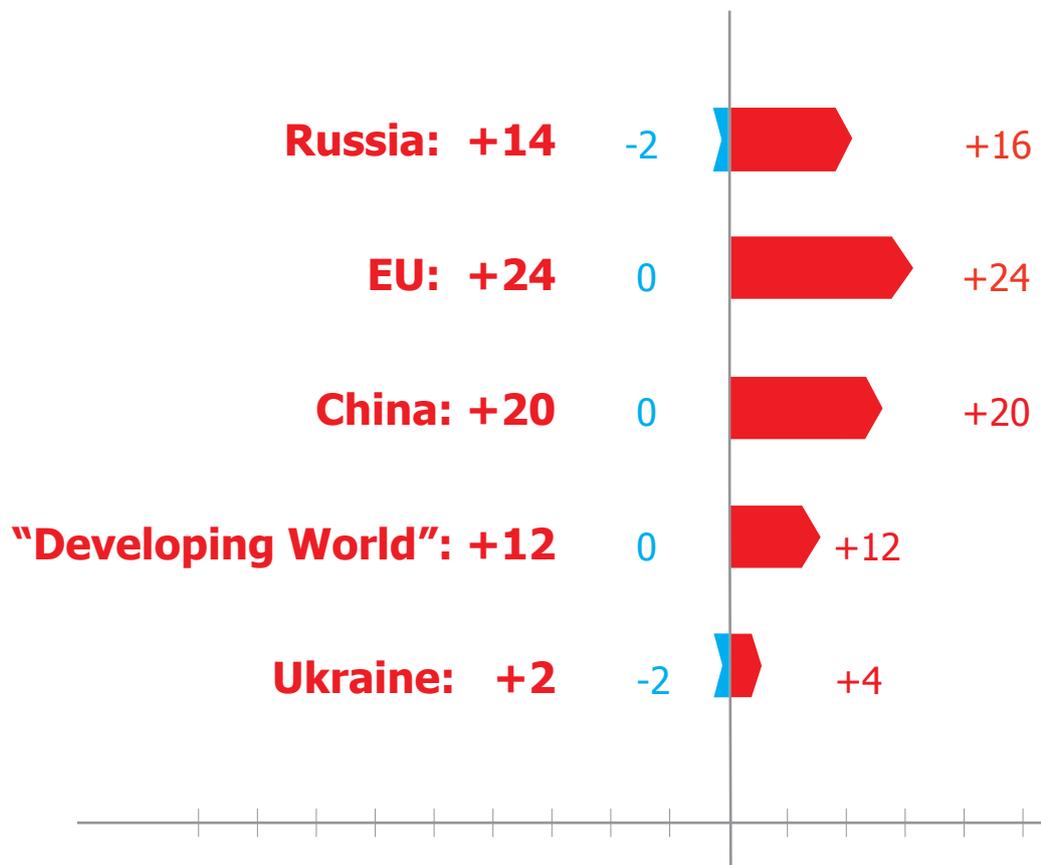
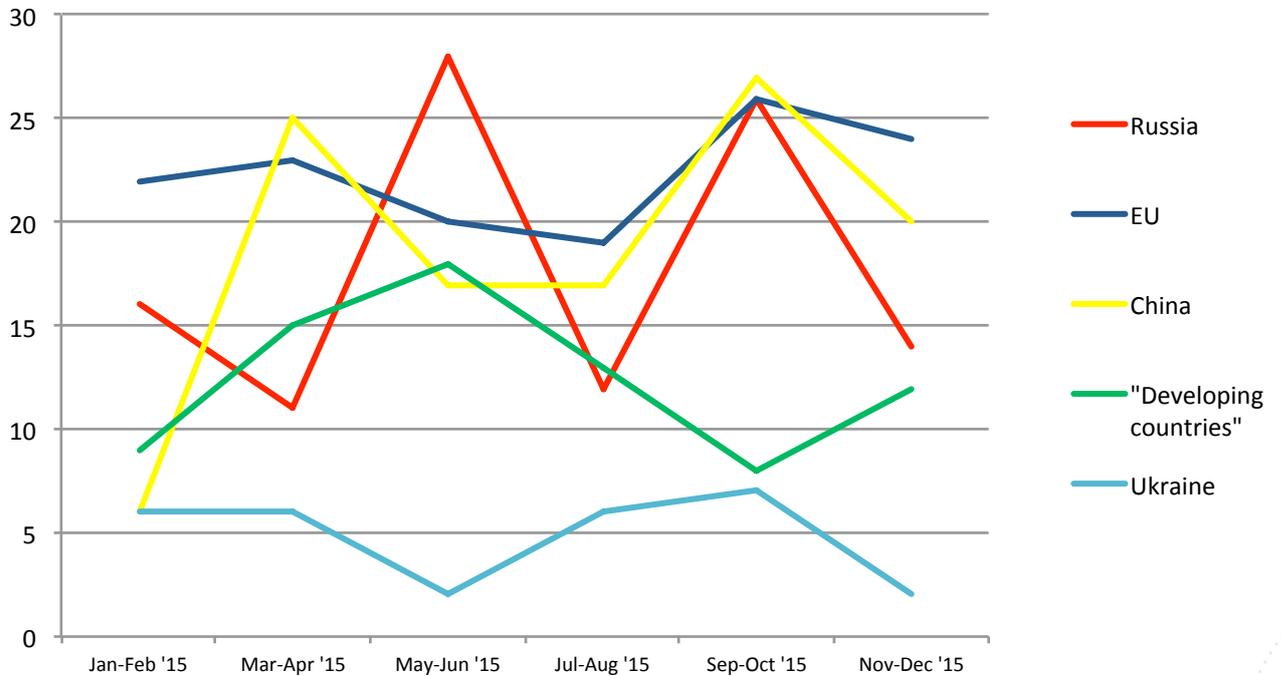
9 China

12 "Developing
World"

16 Ukraine

19 Annex

Relations development indices:



Development of the Belarus–Russia relationship

+16



-2

Summary index: +14

Total positive points: +16

Total negative points: -2

Main trends

Russia's military campaign in Syria and its conflict with Turkey dominated the Russia-related media agenda. The extension of the "Moscow front" did not become reason enough for Minsk to be engaged in the conflicts involving Russia: on the contrary, Belarus managed to strengthen its neutrality. The meeting between Presidents Putin and Lukashenka was held with no visible conflicts and did not meet the negative expectations voiced the day before.

Description of the key events

Our forecast that the issue of a Russian airbase in Belarus would not mar the Belarus–Russia relationship during the two final months of the year appeared to be absolutely accurate, and so did the forecast about further curtailment in two-way trade between Belarus and Russia. At the same time, the forecast that a new loan by the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (EFSD) (previously the EurAsEC Anti-Crisis Fund) would be approved by the end of the year turned out to be too optimistic. Moreover, judging by the activities of the Belarusian government in December 2015 and January 2016, it looks like Belarus had made its choice in favor of the loan by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Overall, Belarus's policy with respect to Russia in November and December 2015 remained within the track of the established trends — the guaranteed alliance with Russia amid the retention of freedom in pursuing relations with other foreign partners, as well as active lobbying of Belarusian manufacturers in the Russian market. In November and December, bilateral contacts became less intensive, and the agenda was built around the agreements on the terms of energy cooperation in 2016, as well as Lukashenka's visit to Moscow.

Despite the tradition and intention, Lukashenka notably made his first foreign visit following his reelection to a country other than Russia. The official reason was that the Kremlin was busy with its operation in Syria and conflict with Turkey. However, against the backdrop of Russia's recent international conflicts and Belarus's emphatically neutral position, this move by official Minsk appears to be quite symbolic.

In January–November 2015, two-way trade came to USD 25.2 billion, which represents a decrease by 26.8% from the same period in 2014. Export from Belarus amounted to USD 9.6 billion, down by 32.7% year-on-year, and import from Russia dropped markedly less seriously, by 22.7%, to USD 15.6 billion. As usual, Belarus reported a deficit in its trade with Russia, at USD 6 billion in the first ten months of the year, same as in January–October 2014. The situation with the main exports looks sad: Belarusian producers were selling their goods to Russian consumers at increasingly lower prices.

	January–October 2015, % of January–October 2014	
	Volume	Value
Trucks	35.7	62.1
Tractors	62.2	45.9
Farm machines	81.3	38.0
Oil products	53.1	36.0
Furniture	88.8	63.3
Meat	103.4	72.7
Milk*	233.0	71.0
Cheese	113.1	81.5

*a rough estimate of two export positions: dairy products and dairy stock

Amid the drop in trade with Russia, the last two months of the year, just as the entire year, were marked by attempts of Belarusian lobbyists to actively promote Belarusian-made products in Russian regions and lobby the procurement of Belarusian goods by Russian state authorities. They also were taking measures to prevent further shrinkage in the two-way trade between Belarus and Russia, which could have been caused by Russia's bans imposed on products manufactured by its foreign policy adversaries.

Efforts by Belarusian lobbyists cannot completely compensate for the tightened terms of trade with Russia; however, the discontinuation of these efforts can result in a significant reduction in trade volumes. For example, the introduction of the Platon system affected 15,000 Belarusian carriers and would have caused hikes in the cost of Belarusian products in Russia. Because of the tensions in trade relations between Russia on the one hand and Turkey and Ukraine on the other Belarus had to introduce additional phytosanitary control procedures for products in transit via Belarus bound for Russia. Progress towards the recognition of Belarusian-made products as "domestically-made" in the Russian market is too slow.

General Director of the Russia–Belarus Business Council Alexander Olshevsky said when commenting on prospects for increasing supplies of Belarusian food to Russia that state procurement of military stocks was redirected to Belarus from China and Korea in 2015, because the latter suppliers were charging in U.S. dollars and became too expensive. In other words, Belarusian products will restore their positions in the Russian market as other countries lose interest in that market and operational costs increase. However, this recovery will hardly help Belarusian manufacturers, which have been selling their products in Russia at a loss.

Meanwhile, there has been no progress so far when it comes to efforts to improve the effectiveness of Belarusian export supplies to Russia. Belarusian export to the Russian market has been growing largely because most of the sales are in Russian rubles, which, however, causes substantial losses of Belarusian manufacturers. At the same time, most of Russia's import supplies (minerals) are paid for in U.S. dollars, which is a major contributor to the balance of payments gap. Given the current rules of mutual settlements that economic entities of the two countries abide by, the relatively harmonious depreciation of the Belarusian and Russian rubles in the last few months of 2015 significantly reduces the benefits that Belarusian producers could reap from the monetary policy that is being put in place by the National Bank of Belarus.

Despite our expectations, the EFSD did not approve the decision to extend a new loan to Belarus in 2015. It is unlikely that the non-provision of the EFSD loan can be used by the Kremlin as an instrument to put Belarus under pressure in the matter of its air base alone. It is more likely that the two countries cannot agree the lending terms.

First, this is about the interest rate on the new loan — the previous loan committed by the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) during the period when Russia enjoyed foreign

loans at low rates was provided at a very high rate of 8%–8.9%. The EFSD might be expecting even more serious profits this time.

Second, the EFSD will not give up on its demands of structural reforms. Judging by the actions of the Belarusian government in December 2015 and January 2016 (in December, it floated more than USD 1 billion in state bonds and raised electricity and natural gas fees, as well as fares), it rather expects a new loan from the IMF, not the EFSD.

Belarus and Russia traditionally had too little time to sign a new agreement on the supplies of Russian natural gas to Belarus before the end of the year; Belarus seeks slight improvements in the terms of trade, and Russia will not yield. Most of the conditions have already been agreed, and there are reasons to believe that they will remain at least as good in 2016 as they were in 2015. At the same time, even if Belarusians manage to enjoy at least some reduction in prices and increase in the volume of supplies, there will still be no significant impact on the status of the Belarusian economy or competitiveness of its manufacturers.

The planned official visit to Moscow had to be postponed because of the Russia–Turkey conflict and Russia’s military campaign in Syria. As was mentioned previously, for the first time in the history of the bilateral relations, Lukashenka’s first foreign visit after reelection was not to Russia (Moscow was third after Hanoi and Ashgabat).

However, Vladimir Putin did not seem to care this much, and, given his welcome address, never bothered to notice that fact. The presidents voiced their complete mutual understanding regarding all of the issues on the bilateral agenda — from foreign policy to economic integration; however, this friendliness and sympathy became possible only because no specifics were discussed at the meeting. Not a single issue that worries Moscow — Ukraine, Turkey, Syria, and the air base — was discussed in detail, and nor were the issues of concern to Belarus — the loan and the status of “domestic” goods in the Russian market.

On the other hand, although Belarus did not support Russia in its withdrawal from the FTA with Ukraine, it agreed to participate in the development of a mechanism to transit Ukrainian goods or goods originating in the EU bound for Belarus and Kazakhstan. Lukashenka is known to share Russia’s concerns over the competition with imports from the EU via Ukraine at zero-rated duties.

Forecast for the near future

Two-way trade will further drop, and so will the effectiveness of Belarusian export deliveries to Russia. Agreements on natural gas and oil for the year 2016 will be signed on the same terms both as far as the price and volume are concerned, possibly with a slight improvement for Belarus. When it comes to the EFSD loan, Belarus will take a brief pause. The entry into force of the Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement will bring about lots of conflicts and ambiguities to the Belarus–Russia trade framework. Belarus will continue consolidating its independent course in foreign policy.

Development of the Belarus–EU relationship

+24



0

Summary index: +24

Total positive points: +24

Total negative points: 0

Main trends

Overall, in November and December, the relationship between Belarus and the European Union continued evolving in the context of the long-term trend towards normalization and gradual development of the mapped agenda. The “pending” issue of the EU sanctions (their extension and simultaneous suspension until late February 2016) caused a certain atmosphere of expectation and even annoyance in Minsk. However, it did not impact the overall development trend for the relationship. Both Belarus and the EU see increasingly realistic prospects for full-scale improvement. The parties are getting ready to give the relations a new impetus if the sanctions should be lifted.

Description of the key events

In November and December, the Belarus–EU relationship was marked by a few significant visits and a series of less important diplomatic contacts.

On 12 November, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Linas Linkevičius paid a visit to Minsk. The visit took place in a constructive atmosphere, as part of the gradually improving relations between the two neighbors that have a broad agenda and numerous issues that both Belarus and Lithuania are ready to discuss and resolve.

On 17–18 November, Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej visited Berlin at the invitation of the German party to have a meeting with Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Federal Chancellor’s Advisor on Foreign and Security Policy Christoph Heusgen, Chairman of the German-Belarusian Parliamentary Group of the Bundestag Oliver Kaczmarek and members of that group, as well as representatives of the German expert community. Judging by the list of meetings, the visit was organized to have an all-round audit of the political relations between Minsk and Berlin. According to Steinmeier, Makiej’s visit to Berlin became an “important indication” and demonstrated “a real prospect of step-by-step improvement in the relationship between Belarus and the West.” Following the talks with his German counterpart, Makiej said: “We are looking into the future with confidence, and I believe we are looking in the same direction.”

On 26 November, Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna participated in the sixth round of informal ministerial dialogues of the Eastern Partnership, which took place in Tbilisi. During the plenary session, she presented Minsk’s traditional approaches regarding the partnership: the need for more differentiation, increase in the effectiveness of the initiative through the implementation of specific regional projects, as well as promotion of dialogue and engagement between the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the EU with a view to ultimately building a common economic area spanning from Lisbon to Vladivostok. Kupčyna also held working meetings with European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn and Deputy Secretary General for the European External Action Service (EEAS) Helga Schmid.

On 7–9 December, a mission of EU experts led by Mathieu Busquet, head of Regional Programmes Neighbourhood East at the DG European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiation, visited Belarus. The mission had been tasked with identifying the priority areas for cooperation with Belarus in 2016. Another visit by EU officials followed: a delegation led by Gunnar Wiegand, Managing Director of Europe and Central Asia Department, Director for Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional Cooperation and OSCE of the EEAS, and Katarina Mathernova, Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations. The latter delegation summarized the results of the mission's work and made a series of important statements.

For the year 2016, the EU identified the following priority areas of cooperation with Belarus: regional development, small and medium-sized business, mobility, and migration, technical assistance in the resolution of economic issues and challenges. On 9 December, the delegation met with Kupčyna to approve the agenda for further implementation of the program "European Dialogue on Modernization with Belarus." Seven thematic priorities were outlined for further work: privatization, trade and investments, environment, energy, transport, social development, and human rights. Within the framework of these priorities, eleven primary activities were identified.

In order to effectively implement all of these priority arrangements, the EU made a decision to double its financial aid to Minsk in 2016. According to Wiegand, this will help Belarus "achieve additional competitive capacity and enjoy new opportunities for economic and regional development." The EU diplomat said that the EU was expecting "further specific steps by Belarus." Specifically, "provisions were being made for a series of steps in the economy and the social sector," and there is a set of political wishes, including the introduction of amendments to the election legislation, simplification of conditions for the work of political parties and NGOs, and the introduction of the moratorium on capital punishment.

On 10 December, members of the delegation held a meeting with First Deputy Economy Minister Aliaksandr Zabaroŭski. They addressed possibilities for expanding investment, trade, and financial cooperation, as well as engagement targeting the development of small and medium-sized business. A declaration was made about the need to establish a working group to further elaborate these issues. The participants also explored possibilities for EU's assisting Belarus in its WTO accession efforts and prospects for international finance institutions to lend to Minsk.

During the Wiegand–Mathernova visit to Belarus, a notable mishap took place. Wiegand told a media briefing on 9 December that the texts of the agreements on visa facilitation and readmission between Belarus and the EU were ready to be initialed and signed. The only obstacle, according to the diplomat, was the fact that Belarusian diplomatic passports did not comply with the EU requirements. However, Kupčyna refuted that statement the following day: *"this is the way they see the situation. This information became quite surprising to us."* Specifically, she noted problems with the readmission agreement: *"we were not granted a transition period for the implementation of the provisions of the accord, but we need it, because we are lacking the requisite infrastructure to host citizens of third countries subject to readmission."*

The incident illustrates the background atmosphere in the relations between Minsk and Brussels. Belarus shows its annoyance at the fact that sanctions still remain, as well as some of the EU's actions. For instance, ahead of the Riga Summit of the Eastern Partnership, when Minsk was ready to initial the visa agreements, Brussels believed the move was impractical, and now it has been changing focus. The Belarusian administration

1. Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions - <http://www.osce.org/ru/odihr/elections/belarus/192001?download=true>

2. Belarus: EU suspends restrictive measures against most persons and all entities currently targeted - http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/press_corner/all_news/news/2015/2015_10_29_en.htm

interprets such steps as the EU's inequitable policy on Minsk.

On 13–14 December, Makiej paid a working visit to Brussels. He held negotiations with High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn. However, especially noteworthy was his meeting with all of the EU foreign ministers, in the course of which the participants exchanged opinions on the status and prospects of engagement between Belarus and the EU, according to a report by the press service of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry.

The Belarusian administration was also making notably positive statements regarding the development of the country's relationship with the EU, and materials in the leading Belarusian media were favorable. Similar conclusions are drawn in the Annual Review of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus and Activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015:

*"The dialogue between Belarus and the European Union is marked by the overall positive dynamics. An important event in the context of the gradual normalization of the relations was the suspension of the restrictive measures of the EU concerning Belarus in October 2015. The intensity and level of political contacts considerably increased."*¹

Two-way trade between Belarus and the EU member states amounted to USD 13.116 billion in January–November 2015, down by 28.9% year-on-year. Belarusian export reached USD 7.899 billion, which represents a reduction by 20.1% from the first eleven months of 2014, whereas import from Belarus totaled USD 5.217 billion, down by 38.9% year-on-year. Belarus reported a USD 2.681 billion surplus in its trade with the EU.

Forecast for the near future

The relationship between Belarus and the EU has gained momentum, which will determine its further intensification. The main landmark is the end of February, when the EU is supposed to make its decision on the future of the sanctions. Up until then the relations will be building on the diverse and gradually deepening agenda, which can be given a new impetus once the sanctions have been lifted.

1. Review of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus and Activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 <http://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/ad9a745931227143.html>

Development of the Belarus–China relationship

+20



0

Summary index: +20
Total positive points: +20
Total negative points: 0

Main trends

In November and December 2015, the substance of the Belarus–China relationship was determined by the trends established throughout the year 2015 and fixed in the course of the two top-level meetings between Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Xi Jinping (in May and September).

Economically, these trends include a gradual improvement in the two-way trade pattern in favor of Belarus, associated with a reduction in Chinese import, primarily within the framework of tied projects, as well as the focus of economic collaboration on the construction of the China–Belarus Industrial Park and the Silk Road Economic Belt project.

Politically, 2015 became a new record year in terms of the number of top-level meetings, as well as the intensification of the Belarus–China cooperation in the international scene (including within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and in the provision of internal security via the exchange of technology and experience in military and technical development.

Description of the key events

The economic results of the year can be described as a gradual improvement of the trade balance in favor of Belarus, which can well be illustrated in the table below:

Export/import balance in the Belarus–China trade in 2011 – September 2015²

	2011	2012	2013	2014	January–September 2015
Export (mln U.S. dollars)	636.6	432.6	460.7	640.3	646.547
Import (mln U.S. dollars)	2193.9	2373.5	2829.4	2373.2	1438.553
Balance (%)	22.5/77.5	15.4/84.6	14/86	21.2/78.8	31/69

Belarusian export to China notably grew in 2014 and 2015, while import from that country kept falling; hence improvements in the structure of the trade balance. This is mostly due to the phasing down of China's lending to Belarus in the form of tied loans. This trend is part of China's general economic policy, which is aimed at improving the situation in the financial sector and reducing debt exposure, especially when it comes to initiatives

2. http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/otrasli-statistiki/torgovlya/vneshnyaya-torgovlya_2/os-novnye-pokazateli-za-period-s-__po-____gody_10/eksport-tovarov-respubliki-belarus-po-stranam-s_2/

by the governments of provinces.³ It was a challenge for the Belarusian administration to retain the USD 15 billion credit line that had been approved by the Chinese leadership long before. China confirmed its intentions to lend following Xi Jinping's meetings with Lukashenka in May and September 2015, albeit subject to slight changes in the lending terms. That was the main reason why the Belarusian authorities had to draft Directive No. 5 of 31 August 2015 "Concerning the development of the relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China" ahead of Lukashenka's visit to China in September.

The said credit line also incorporates the preferential 15-year buyer credit (which is essentially the same tied loan) of the Export–Import Bank of China (China EximBank) amounting to USD 51.835 million, which will be extended in 2015–2017 to finance the second upgrade phase of the Orša flax factory. The decision to provide the loan was taken back in March 2015, which was reflected in one of our previous Index issues.⁴ It was noted back then that in 2014, China substantially increased purchases of raw flax (3 to 10 times from the 2013 level); however, it hardly ever bought any flax products from Belarus. The situation repeated in January–September 2015. Purchases of raw flax or processed flax (foreign trade code 5301) increased by 168% year-on-year in the first three quarters of 2015 in volume terms, while value remained virtually unchanged.⁵ Purchases of "other flax, combed or processed in any other way, excluding scutched and swingled flax" (foreign trade code 530129) increased by 205%. China does not buy flax yarn from Belarus, and bought only USD 1,100 worth of flax fabric from Belarus in the first nine months of 2015. Belarusian flax is apparently used to produce Chinese textiles, which successfully compete with Belarusian-made products, including in the Belarusian domestic market.

An important area for two-way trade is the export of Belarusian potash fertilizers. The main challenges in this area are how to ensure a) consistent supplies, and b) sales at the highest possible price. Throughout 2012 and 2014, the prices of potash fertilizers exported to China were consistently falling: in 2012, they amounted to USD 692 per tonne, in 2013, they dropped to USD 562 per tonne, and in 2014, they further contracted to USD 434 per tonne. As a comparison, for Brazil, the price was set at USD 777 per tonne in 2012, at USD 622 per tonne in 2013, and at USD 510 per tonne in 2014. India paid USD 597 per tonne in 2013 and USD 448 per tonne in 2012. In 2015, the Belarusian authorities sought solutions to that challenge. On 17 November, Belarusian Potash Company and CNAMPGC Holding Limited Corporation signed a memorandum of understanding to 2020; however, the details of the document were not reported.

Amid the tightened policy by the Chinese central government on the provision of finances to implement foreign projects Chinese companies begin asking for more beneficial lending terms. On 11 December, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Belarusian President Mikalaj Snapkoŭ made a statement that the investment climate in the CBIP Great Stone would be improved. Given that many experts already call the benefits offered to the real residents of the de-facto nonexistent CBIP "unprecedented," while their very existence is said to contradict Belarus's commitments within the framework of Eurasian integration, it is hard to imagine ways to "further improve the investment climate." Kiryl Rudy, aide to the Belarusian president, on 15 November mentioned one of them — he said at the opening of the V International Entrepreneurship Forum that a subpark for startups was planned to be established within Great Stone.

Attempts to come up with some investment projects to disburse the credit lines sooner were made in the Brest, Viciebsk, and Mahilioŭ regions. Moreover, the Belarusian au-

3. Drelich-Skulska, B. et [al.]. China's trade policy towards Central and Eastern Europe in the 21st century, example of Poland // *Folia Oeconomica Stetinensia*. – P. 149-174. P. 157.

4. http://belinstitute.eu/sites/biss.newmediahost.info/files/attached-files/BISS_FPI25_2015ru_0.pdf

5. http://belstat.gov.by/kscms/uploads/file/GU_torg/External/2015/oct/tt100e11.pdf

thorities, being aware that the Chinese administration might further tighten its financing policies, even agreed to involve private business in order to disburse loans.

The Chinese leadership has started paying increasing attention to the implementation of the Silk Road Economic Belt project. Official Minsk understands perfectly well that it needs to become part of this project. Although the most preferable route goes through Belarus, there is at least one alternative connecting China and Europe, going through India, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey.

Official Beijing has been focused on transport and logistics capabilities of the countries lying within the new route; it is expected, though, that the main investments in this area will be provided by these countries, as they should be interested in servicing cargo flows from China.

It is in this context that we should consider the plans to establish the China Merchants Group trade and logistics subpark within the Great Stone. The trade and logistics subpark (the second project enjoying special treatment in the unfinished CBIP, alongside the startup subpark) is supposed to start its operation in 2017, although the CBIP development schedule envisages the creation of a more or less developed infrastructure framework within Great Stone itself only as late as the end of 2016. Investments in the project are expected to reach USD 550 million, although no specific investor has been mentioned. The Belarusian party has already issued a statement about its contributions to the project: Belarusian Railway will provide advisory support for the CBIP Great Stone administration and its residents associated with the development of transport and logistics patterns for the delivery of cargoes. The corresponding trilateral memorandum was signed by chief executives at Belarusian Railway, CBIP administration and the company responsible for the development of the park on 22 December 2015.

Forecast for the near future

Despite the comparatively high interest in the development of the relationship with China, the bilateral efforts mostly include meetings, declarations, and memorandums. It appears that the cooperation between Belarus and China will keep shrinking, as real projects (even those with doubtful benefits for Belarus) will be replaced with declarations.

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

(Asia, Africa and Latin America)

Summary index: +12

Total positive points: +12

Total negative points: 0

+12

0

Main trends

In its engagement with the developing world official Minsk was mostly focused on the regions of South and Southeast Asia, as well as the Middle East. Contacts with African countries were marginal, despite the visit to Zimbabwe of head of the Belarus President Property Management Directorate.

High dynamics in the development of the Belarus–Pakistan relations still remains. Cooperation spans a broad range of areas, from textile to defense, and is underpinned by political support at the top level by the two administrations, although it is still at its setting stage.

In the Middle East, Belarus continues to consistently implement its policy towards collaboration with allies or partners of the West. Contacts with Turkey and Minsk's rather favorable attitude to the position that Ankara took up following the incident with the Russian fighter in Syria became new examples of this policy by the Belarusian government.

Minsk is careful about maintaining and fostering its contacts with Vietnam. The latter is one of Belarus's oldest partners that is just as significant for Belarus's foreign policy as many former Soviet Union countries.

Description of the key events

South Asia

Pakistan. On 2–4 November, Head of Department of Asia, Australia and Oceania of the Foreign Ministry Andrej Hrynkievič made a working visit to Islamabad. On 9–11 November, Prime Minister of Belarus Andrej Kabiakoŭ stayed in Pakistan on an official visit, which featured the III Belarus–Pakistan Business and Investment Forum. The premier opened the Center of Belarusian Culture at the National Library of Pakistan, met with President of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and Speaker of the National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq.

*"The bilateral relations have been developing at a very fast rate over the past six months. I will not be giving any estimates now, but these must be among the fastest-developing relations that we have as of today," Andrej Kabiakoŭ said.*⁶

Indeed, over the last few years, the Belarus–Pakistan relationship has been developing very actively. Kabiakoŭ's visit became the third top-level visit in 2015 alone. In May, President Lukashenka visited Islamabad, and in August, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif came to Minsk.

6. Belarus is poised to promote relations with Pakistan in all areas 10.11.2015 <http://www.government.by/ru/content/6109>

In 2014, two-way trade with Pakistan amounted to approximately USD 60 million. According to Kabiakoŭ, there are prerequisites for increasing mutual trade to USD 1 billion. In the course of the visit, contracts were signed for supplies of Belarusian products totaling about USD 55 million.

Kabiakoŭ and Sharif signed the "Roadmap for Bilateral Cooperation for 2015–2020." Further, Belarus and Pakistan signed 17 documents on cooperation in healthcare, customs service, agriculture, education, trade, economy, science and technology, humanitarian activities, and culture. Commenting on areas for cooperation with Belarus, Sharif mentioned "trade, economy, defense, and culture."⁷

The "Roadmap" provides for increasing two-way trade "based upon the principles of balanced trade," which indirectly points to the concern of official Minsk over the challenge of the country's foreign trade balance. Specifically, the "Roadmap" stipulates the establishment of joint ventures and assembly facilities of Belarusian tractors and trucks in Pakistan. In addition, it is planned to supply farm, road-building, and mine machinery, and pursue joint projects in agriculture and food production, and the textile industry — Belarus and Pakistan are planning to establish joint ventures in the two countries to supply their output to not only the two respective markets, but also that of the Eurasian Economic Union. In August, possibilities were voiced for Pakistani clothing manufacturers to come to the Belarusian–Chinese industrial park in the vicinity of Smaliavičy.

India. On 1–2 November, an Indian delegation led by Secretary of the Department of Fertilizers of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers Anuj Kumar Bishnoi visited Belarus. The delegation met with Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Siamaška to discuss supplies and production of potash fertilizers. Belarusian export to India has been growing in the past few years, and potash fertilizers account for a substantial part of supplies.

In 2014, two-way trade exceeded USD 400 million (an increase by 13.5% year-on-year), and in 2015, mutual trade rose by another 20%, getting close to USD 500 million. The increase was due to trade in potash fertilizers. In 2014, BPC supplied 680,500 tonnes of potassium chloride to India (up by 68% from the level logged in 2013 and by 25% from the 2012 level). In 2015, export grew considerably as well: in January–August, India purchased 751,200 tonnes of potassium chloride from Belarus.⁸

Vietnam. President Lukashenka paid a state visit to Vietnam on 8–9 December. The Belarusian state leader met with Secretary General of the Communist Party of Vietnam Nguyen Phu Trong, Chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam Nguyen Sinh Hung and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung.

A program of cooperation in economy, science, education, and culture was signed for 2016–2018, and a series of documents was signed at the level of state agencies.

Following his talks with President of Vietnam Truong Tan Sang Lukashenka said: "*Vietnam is our strategic partner [...], a foothold for us to collaborate with other countries of the region.*" In the course of the talks the heads of state explored possibilities for increasing two-way trade from USD 190 currently to more than half a billion U.S. dollars and even more.

There are certain prerequisites for this, given the signed bilateral documents and the FAT between Vietnam and the EEU. The Belarusian president said that defense and security were in the focus of the two presidents. "*We absolutely support the opinion about the deepening of this cooperation. There are no forbidden topics in our relations with respect to the military industrial complex, and we will keep to this position.*"⁹

7. Belarus, Pakistan sign a roadmap for cooperation 10.11.2015 <http://www.government.by/ru/content/6106>

8. Uladzimir Siamaška meets with Secretary of the Department of Fertilizers of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers of India 02.11.2015 <http://www.government.by/ru/content/6099>

9. State visit to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on 9 December 2015 http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/gosudarstvennyj-vizit-v-sotsialisticheskiju-respubliku-vjetnam-12689/

On the first day of the visit Hanoi played host to the Belarus–Vietnam Business Forum. During the forum, MTZ signed contracts for machinery supplies to Vietnam in 2016. It is planned that deliveries will exceed USD 2 million, which will contribute to the increase in Belarusian exports to that country. In 2014, MTZ supplied USD 1 million worth of machines, the year 2015 saw a 20% increase in deliveries. MTZ CEO Fiodar Damacienka emphasized his company's interest in approaching the ASEAN markets.¹⁰

Middle East

Turkey. On 5 November, Minsk hosted consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Turkey on consular issues. The consultations were attended by representatives of Belarusian law enforcement agencies and institution of justices and their Turkish counterparts.¹¹

On 11–12 November, Prime Minister Kabiakoŭ paid a working visit to Turkey. He had a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekçi, and leadership of Turkish companies (Koç Holding, Şişecam) and delivered a speech at the Belarusian Investment Forum in Istanbul.

Minsk emphatically refused to support either Russia or Turkey following the scandal in the Russian–Turkish relations, caused by the Russian fighter shot down in Syria, despite the discontent of the Russian media and criticism of experts connected with the Kremlin.¹²

The Belarusian position was voiced on many occasions, including by the president, the Foreign Ministry, and the Defense Ministry. On 12 December, Lukashenka said: "*Mistakes cannot be avoided in this turbulent world, but they must be resolved, not hyped [...] this is also true for the recent conflict between our Russia and friendly Turkey.*"¹³

Iraq. On 17–18 December, a delegation of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of Representatives (Parliament) of the Republic of Iraq led by its chairman Hassan Al-Hamdani paid a visit to Belarus. The delegation met with Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ.¹⁴

Lebanon. On 5–7 November, Beirut Governor Ziad Chebib visited Belarus. He had a meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Rybakoŭ.¹⁵

The Sudan. On 21–23 December, Ambassador of Belarus to Egypt with concurrent accreditation in the Sudan Siarhieŭ Račkoŭ made a working trip to the Sudan. He met with Foreign Minister of the Sudan Ibrahim Ghandour, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Sudan Omer Ibrahim, Minister of Petroleum and Gas, co-chairman of the Belarusian–Sudanese Commission for Cooperation Mohamed Awad, and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of the Sudan Ibrahim Al-Dekhairi.¹⁶

10. MTZ contracts USD 2 million machinery deliveries to Vietnam in 2016 8 December 2015 Tacciana Paliežaj, BELTA <http://news.tut.by/economics/476165.html>

11. On consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Turkey on consular issues 06-11-2015 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f91161664740d8df.html

12. How Belarus Disappointed Russia In Ukraine And Syria Siarhei Bohdan 18 December 2015 <http://belarus-digest.com/story/how-belarus-disappointed-russia-ukraine-and-syria-24066>

13. "Not hype up, but resolve": Lukashenka calls on Russia and Turkey to meet halfway in the conflict 12 December 2015 TUT.BY <http://news.tut.by/politics/476723.html>

14. On the meeting between Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus V. Rybakoŭ and a parliamentary delegation of the Republic of Iraq 18-12-2015 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d785c3440fcbe6d.html

15. On the meeting between Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus V. Rybakoŭ and Beirut Governor Ziad Chebib 06-11-2015 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d68fa5bfb4c3c974.html

16. On the working visit of Ambassador of Belarus Siarhieŭ Račkoŭ to the Republic of the Sudan 23-12-2015 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/c82a7ffc319d1625.html

Africa.

Mozambique. On 17–18 November, a Mozambican delegation led by Head of the Mozambique Agribusiness Promotion Centre (CEPAGRI) Abdul Cesar Mussuale visited Belarus. The delegation included representatives of that country's agrarian sector and the business community, and the Mozambican Ambassador to Russia and Belarus. The Prime Minister of Mozambique visited Belarus in 2014; and work is currently underway to hold the first meeting of the joint commission for trade and economic cooperation.¹⁷

Zimbabwe. On 15–19 November, Head of Belarus President Property Management Directorate Viktor Šejman visited Zimbabwe. In the course of his talks with President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe, "a broad range of issues pertaining to further development of mutual relations between the two countries in the construction of transport infrastructure, training of personnel, extraction of minerals, and supplies of equipment and machinery for agribusiness and manufacturing sector" was addressed. The Zimbabwean president was presented an invitation to visit Belarus in April 2016. The meeting focused on the execution of the contract for supplies of Belarusian machinery (MAZ, MTZ, Amkodor, BelAZ worth USD 150 million), which had been discussed during the visit of Zimbabwean Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa to Belarus in July 2015. Further, a Belarusian–Zimbabwean agreement on the establishment of a joint gold mining venture was signed during the visit. The agreement envisages supplies of mining equipment from Belarus and involvement of Belarus in the development of a natural deposit.¹⁸

Forecast for the near future

In the near term, Belarus will continue working in the Middle East with pro-Western regimes, while seeking to balance this cooperation using contacts with opponents of the West, therefore, limited contacts with Iran and Syria should not be ruled out. This sort of maneuvering has been the essence of Belarus's foreign policy over the past two decades.

Minsk will continue consolidating its cooperation with Pakistan, thus deviating from its original plan to develop relations primarily with India. Contacts with India remain, though, and Minsk will obviously try to make use of its closer ties with Pakistan to enjoy more beneficial cooperation terms with India.

Contacts with the countries of South and Southeast Asia will be intensified. This is the most promising dimension for foreign policy from the point of view of increasing Belarusian export supplies. In addition to the traditional stable cooperation with Vietnam, Belarus will likely pursue further contacts with Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka.

Contacts with Africa and Latin America will remain minimal. Belarus's relations with African countries still remain at the level of search for partners or implementation of individual projects (such as supplies of BelAZ trucks), without any progress towards stable long-term cooperation, even though in the past two or three years, the network of Belarusian representative offices in that continent has significantly expanded. In Latin America, prospects look better, however, with the exception of Ecuador, Minsk has not found any new partners in that continent to replace those that it had lost.

17. On the meeting of Head of Africa and Middle East Department of the Foreign Ministry Ihar Liaščenia with a delegation of the Republic of Mozambique 18-11-2015 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f1bc4aaa63d8260b.html

18. "A gold mining joint venture is being set up". Šejman becomes presidential envoy to Zimbabwe 20 August 2015 <http://news.tut.by/economics/473630.html>

Development of the Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Summary index: +2

Total positive points: +4

Total negative points: -2

+4

-2

Main trends

During the period under review, representatives of official Minsk and Kyiv for the most part exchanged critical remarks and comments concerning bilateral trade relations, the possible establishment of a Russian air base in Belarus, and the coming into force of the FTA between Ukraine and the European Union. However, Minsk and Kyiv kept emphasizing the strategic importance and stability of the friendly relations between the two countries.

Belarus is objectively interested in keeping Ukraine as one of the largest markets for its products. The Ukrainian media reported about nonpublic cooperation between Ukraine and Belarus in the military sphere. It was noted that Belarus provided significant support to Ukraine in its efforts to build up the combat capabilities of its armed forces.

For its part, official Kyiv is interested in ensuring maximum security of its northern border, uninterrupted supplies of oil products, and neutralization of Russia's attempts to impose trade restrictions within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Kyiv appreciated the de facto refusal of official Minsk to deploy a Russian airbase in its territory.

Description of the key events

In November and December, the issue of Ukraine took up a lot less space in the public rhetoric of the Belarusian administration and personally President Lukashenka than previously, although Ukraine remains a key dimension of Belarus's foreign policy. Minsk is still a crucial negotiating site to resolve the crisis in Donbas.

Lukashenka himself commented on the significance of the Ukrainian strand of Belarus's foreign policy when he visited a hospital in Minsk on 30 December 2015: *"The event that has taken place (negotiations on Ukraine in Minsk) is very important — primarily to Ukraine, Russia, our continent, the entire region. It gave an impetus, a reason, a prerequisite (as a gift to the West) to lift sanctions against us. They needed a powerful push, and they made good use of it once they had it."*

One of the most important events in the bilateral framework during the period under review was another "trade war."

On 25 November, the Ukrainian interdepartmental commission for international trade (MKMT) made a decision to apply antidumping duties to the import of some Belarusian products. According to that decision, starting 20 January 2016, Belarusian goods sold in Ukraine will be subject to an additional duty amounting to 39.2% of the customs value of respective products, unless Belarus lifts discriminatory measures against supplies from Ukraine.

The new duty can apply to virtually any Belarusian exports, except for oil products. The decision taken by the MKMT had been triggered by resolution No. 666 of the Belarusian Council of Ministers adopted in August on mandatory sanitary and hygienic certification of imported products, which complicated the access of Ukrainian goods to the Belarusian market.

The Belarusian authorities did not acknowledge the problem, though. On 26 November, Spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Ministry Zmicier Mirončyk said that Ukraine violated the provisions of the free trade agreement when it introduced special duties against Belarusian-made goods.

However, the “trade war” was resolved very soon. On 28 December, Minsk hosted the second meeting of the Belarusian–Ukrainian High Level Working Group for Mutual Trade. The Belarusian side was represented by First Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Michnievič, and the Ukrainian party was represented by Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade Natalia Mykolskaya. The two countries managed to approve the algorithm for further joint actions to lift limitations in mutual trade. It was reported that on 26 December, the Ukrainian president signed the law “Concerning measures to encourage foreign economic activity,” which canceled, starting 1 January 2016, the additional import duty applied, among others, to Belarusian products.

The second challenge the two countries had to address was the issue of the establishment of a Russian air base in Ukraine.

On 2 December, Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said that Ukraine would analyze potential threats considering that Belarus “was entering a military alliance led by Russia.” He noted, though, that the Ukrainian side could not specify yet what sort of threats it referred to, but a proper decision would be made as soon as the risk assessment had been completed. However, as of the time of Lukashenka’s visits to Moscow in December, the issue of the deployment of a Russian air base remained undecided, which was well received by official Kyiv.

Belarus’s refusal, alongside with the other members of the Eurasian Economic Union — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia — to support Russia’s initiative to withdraw from the FTA with Ukraine within the framework of the CIS became the third important aspect for the bilateral framework, although Lukashenka made a ritual statement about his “concern” over the coming into force of the FTA between Ukraine and the European Union starting 1 January 2016. He repeated the reasons previously voiced by Vladimir Putin, saying that there were worries that European goods might flow into the Belarusian market via Ukraine.

In the first half of November, the demarcation of a 500-kilometer section of the state border between Ukraine and Belarus started in Volyn. It had been planned that the work would be completed by 15 December.

On 20 November, Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk spoke against the isolation of Belarus at the Annual Assembly of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Civil Society Forum. *“It is very important for the global community, for the European Union, for all of us not to push away and isolate Belarus, and time will come when democratic changes in Belarus will be taking place actively and at a fast pace.”*

On 29 December, Minister of Energy and Coal Mining of Ukraine Volodymyr Demchyshyn said that the Ukrainian authorities were planning to resume electricity export to Belarus and Moldova starting 1 April 2016 after the current cold season. It is planned to export 8.198 billion kWh of electricity in 2016, including 3 billion kWh to Eastern Europe and 5.198 billion kWh to Belarus and Moldova. In previous years, electricity used to be Ukraine’s main export to Belarus.

During the two months under review, Belarus started developing another niche that emerged in the wake of the growing rift between Ukraine and Russia. Minsk has become an important “transit corridor” as the most convenient route for air travel between Ukraine and Russia, once those two countries banned direct flights.

Belarus continues re-exporting Ukrainian-made products to Russia. As an example, during the period under analysis, a scandal broke out because of the 18x increase in apple import from Ukraine for subsequent re-export to Russia.

Belarus has enjoyed a substantial surplus in its two-way trade with Ukraine for quite a long time — in January–October 2015, it amounted to USD 1.26 billion. However, because of the considerable reduction in the overall trade volume (which almost halved year-on-year, from USD 4.97 billion in January–October 2014 to USD 2.8 billion in the first ten months of 2015), the trade surplus for Belarus shrank from USD 2.05 billion in January–October 2014. During the first ten months of the year, export from Belarus decreased to USD 2.03 billion from USD 3.5 billion in 2014, and import almost halved as well, to USD 776 million from USD 1.46 billion.

Forecast for the near future

In the near term, official Minsk will continue building mutually beneficial bilateral relations with Ukraine in the political, economic, and military areas. One reason why this work is deemed important is because in addition to support from the Kremlin the Belarusian authorities seek to establish constructive relations with the European Union and the United States. Minsk's pro-Ukrainian stance has already been properly praised in western capital cities, which was emphasized by Lukashenka in late December.

Annex

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development index

Belarus–Russia relationship

Date	Event	Point
13 November	Days of Minsk in St. Petersburg	+1
16 November	A. Lukashenka meets with Russian Ambassador A. Surikov	+1
22 November		+1
22-23 November	A delegation of the Leningrad Region visits Belarus	+1
23 November	Prosecutor General A. Koniuk presents a report on the results of interagency efforts to return the assets of Belarusian enterprises	+1
24 November	A delegation of the Novosibirsk Region visits Belarus	+1
25 November	Minsk's reaction to the incident with the Russian aircraft shot down by Turkey, statement by the Foreign Ministry	-1
25 November	A board meeting of the financial control authorities, reduction in duty transfer period to 5 days	+1
26 November	A. Kupčyna participates in the sixth round of EaP informal ministerial dialogues in Tbilisi	+1
2 December	Establishment of the Minsk Initiative Belarus–Russia–Ukraine cultural project	+1
7 December	Introduction of tightened phytosanitary control of products from third countries (connection is established to the Rosselkhoznadzor database)	+1
12 December	A. Lukashenka participates in a conference on neutrality in Ashgabat	-1
15 December	A. Lukashenka visits Moscow, meets with V. Putin	+3
22 December	Consultations on the transit of Ukrainian goods to Kazakhstan	+1
25 December	Council of Federation exempts Belarusian labor migrants from mandatory Russian language exam	+1
29 December	Belarus ratifies agreement on mutual recovery of alimony	+1
Total		+14

Belarus–EU relationship

Date	Event	Point
3 November	A. Kupčyna meets with Swedish Ambassador M. Oberg	+1
5-6 November	A. Kupčyna visits Paris, has meetings in the French Foreign Ministry	+1
9-10 November	17th meeting of the Bilateral Belarus–Lithuania commission for trade and economic cooperation in Minsk attended by the economy ministers of Belarus and Lithuania	+1
11-12 November	Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius visits Minsk, holds negotiations with Belarusian counterpart U. Makiej	+2
17-18 November	U. Makiej visits Germany	+2
18-20 November	A. Kupčyna visits Slovenia	+1
23 November	U. Makiej meets with Assistant State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary Z. Csutora	+1
26 November	A. Kupčyna participates in the sixth round of EaP informal ministerial dialogues in Tbilisi	+1
4 December	U. Makiej meets with Finnish Foreign Minister T. Soini as part of a meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Belgrade	+1
9 December	A. Kupčyna meets with an EU delegation led by G. Wiegand and K. Mathernova	+1
10 December	First Deputy Economy Minister A. Zabaroŭski meets with an EU delegation led by G. Wiegand and K. Mathernova	+1
10 December	Honorable consulate of Belarus opens in France's Lyon	+1
10-11 December	11th meeting of the Belarus–Latvia intergovernmental commission for economic, scientific, and technical cooperation in Daugavpils, attended by Minister of Transport and Communications A. Sivak and Deputy Foreign Minister A. Hurjanaŭ	+1
11 December	Political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Greece in Minsk attended by A. Kupčyna	+1
14 December	A. Kupčyna meets with a delegation of the Latvian parliament led by chairman of the commission for international and European affairs	+1
14 December	A. Kupčyna meets with Secretary General for International Economic Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece G. Tsipras	+1
13-14 December	U. Makiej visits Brussels	+2
21 December	A. Kupčyna meets with Ambassador of Slovenia P. Šeligo	+1
21 December	A. Kupčyna meets with Charge d'Affaires a.i. of Poland M. Chabros	+1
28 December	A. Kupčyna meets with Swedish Ambassador M. Oberg	+1
November-December	Positive materials in official media and statements by the administration of the country regarding the EU	+1
Total		+24

Belarus–China relationship

Date	Event	Point
5 November	A. Lukashenka meets with Zhong Shan, Deputy Minister of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese High Representative at the international trade negotiations. Focus is placed on the implementation of agreements on the New Silk Road and development of the CBIP	+2
9-13 November	A delegation of the Belarusian State Customs Committee led by Deputy Chairman V. Arloŭski visits China to participate in a seminar of the Belt and Road initiative	+1
16 November	A subpark for startups is expected to be establishing within the CBIP, aide to the Belarusian president K. Rudy said at the opening of the V International Entrepreneurship Forum	+1
17 November	Belarusian Potash Company and CNAMPGC Holding Limited Corporation sign a memorandum of cooperation to 2020	+1
18-20 November	Exhibition "Products of Autonomous Regions of China (Xinjiang and Ningxia); Trade and Economic Cooperation" in Minsk	+1
18 November	Belarus and China sign protocol to the intergovernmental agreement on mutual visa-free group tours	+1
23 November	The past few years have seen a considerable increase in the number of joint cultural projects between Belarus and China, said Ambassador of China to Belarus Cui Qiming at the opening of the Festival of Chinese Cinema in Minsk.	+1
27 November	Chinese Embassy provides financial support in the arrangement of two language laboratories at the BSU School of Philology	+1
1 December	Belarus and Gansu province are implementing seven joint projects. Their progress was addressed at a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus A. Kalinin Ding Zhongjun, head of the representative office of the Gansu Province Foreign Trade Society	+1
3 December	House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus ratifies interstate Belarus–China agreement on cooperation in education	+2
10 December	Members of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly approve bill on the ratification of the agreement between Belarus and China on mutual establishment of cultural centers	+1
11 December	The investment climate in the CBIP will be improved, says Deputy Chief of Staff of the Belarusian President M. Snapkoŭ	+1
14 December	Belarus is working on the promotion of domestically-made products in the largest Chinese Internet platforms, says Deputy Minister of Trade I. Narkievič	+1
16 December	A contract for the implementation of a technical and economic assistance project envisaging the construction of a hostel with the use of gratuitous Chinese aid is signed at the Belarusian Ministry of Education	+1
16 December	More than 40 investment projects worth approximately USD 200 million have been prepared in the Mahilioŭ Region to effectively disburse Chinese loans	+1
22 декабря	A delegation of the Belarusian interior troops at the Interior Ministry visits China; proposals of joint training of servicemen	+1

22 December	Belarusian Railway will provide advisory support for the CBIP administration and its residents associated with the development of transport and logistics patterns for the delivery of cargoes. The corresponding trilateral memorandum was signed by chief executives at Belarusian Railway, CBIP administration and the company responsible for the development of the CBIP	+1
30 December	A preferential buyer credit of the Export–Import Bank of China (China EximBank) amounting to USD 51.835 million for a period of 15 years will be extended in 2015–2017 to finance the second upgrade phase of the Orša flax factory	+1
Total		+20

Belarus's relationships with the "Developing countries"

Date	Event	Point
9-11 November	Prime Minister A. Kabiakoŭ pays an official visit to Pakistan	+3
11-12 November	Prime Minister A. Kabiakoŭ goes to Turkey on a working visit	+3
15-19 November	Head of Belarus President Property Management Directorate V. Šejman visits Zimbabwe	+2
8-9 December	President A. Lukashenka pays a state visit to Vietnam	+3
17-18 December	Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of Representatives of Iraq Hassan Al-Hamdani visits Belarus	+1
Total		+12

Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Date	Event	Point
November–December	"Trade war"	-2
November–December	Continuation of the demarcation of the state border	+1
November–December	Official Minsk's opposition to the establishment of a Russian air base in Belarus	+1
December	Settlement of the "trade war" in the course of the Belarusian–Ukrainian High Level Working Group for Mutual Trade	+1
December	Refusal of Belarus to support Russia in the matter of the withdrawal from the FTA with Ukraine within the framework the CIS	+1
Total		+2

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**