

Belarus' FOREIGN POLICY INDEX

№ 31 March–April 2016

Dear readers,

We are happy to present the thirty-first issue of Belarus Foreign Policy Index. In this new issue, we explore Belarus's foreign policy in the five key dimensions in the months of March and April 2016.

In Belarus's relationship with Russia compromise was reached in quite a few cooperation areas. Minsk was using the available EEU instruments with more confidence and subtlety, gradually gaining more authority in the bloc. Belarus continued lobbying its interests via heads of Russian regions. These arrangements facilitated a partial recovery of two-way trade.

Following the lifting of the EU sanctions, the bilateral relations with Europe entered a new quality phase. No fundamental changes took place; however, the agenda for further deepening and expansion in the relationship was being built on a more systemic basis. The level of diplomatic contacts kept increasing.

The relations with China continue developing in the "declarative" track. The Belarusian administration and Chinese companies operating in Belarus seek to adapt to the tightening of China's financial policy and come up with new formats for investing in Belarus. They have not made much progress, though.

The military and military-technical component of Belarus's relationship with the developing world grew more significant.

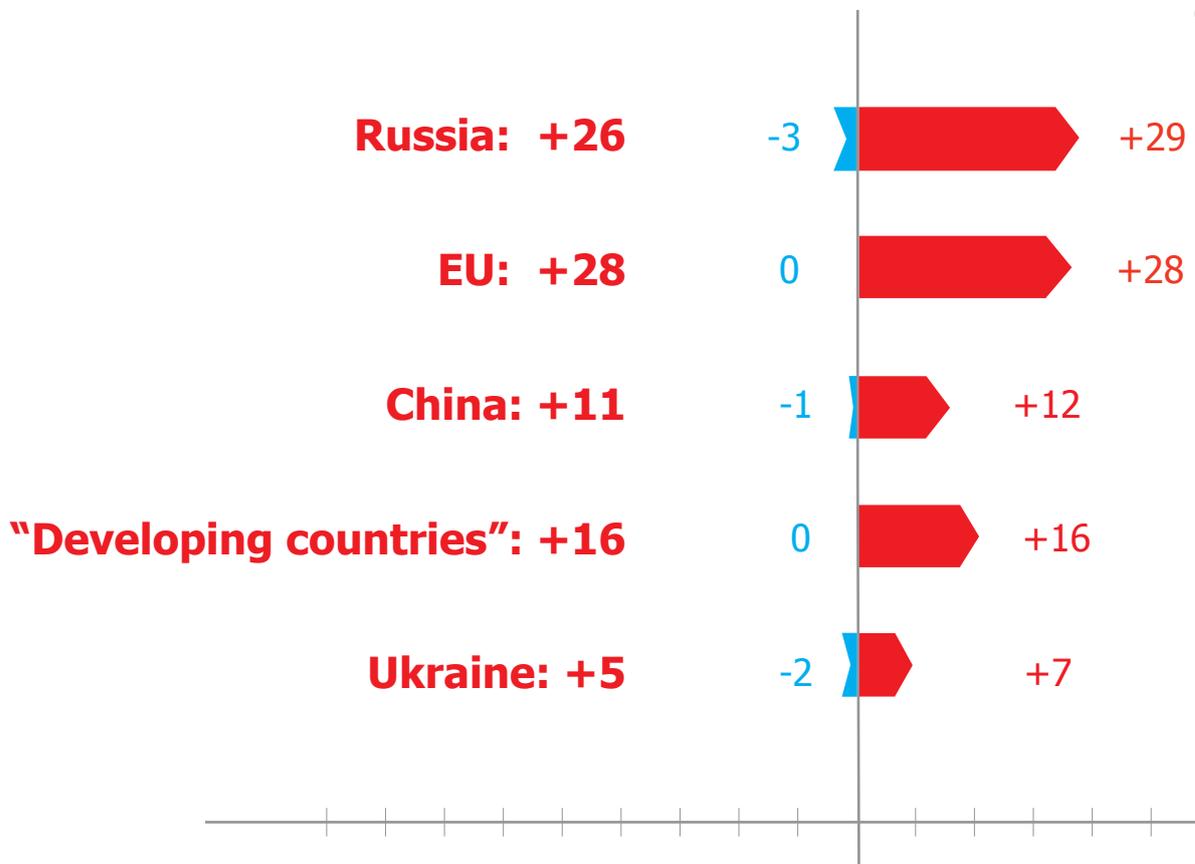
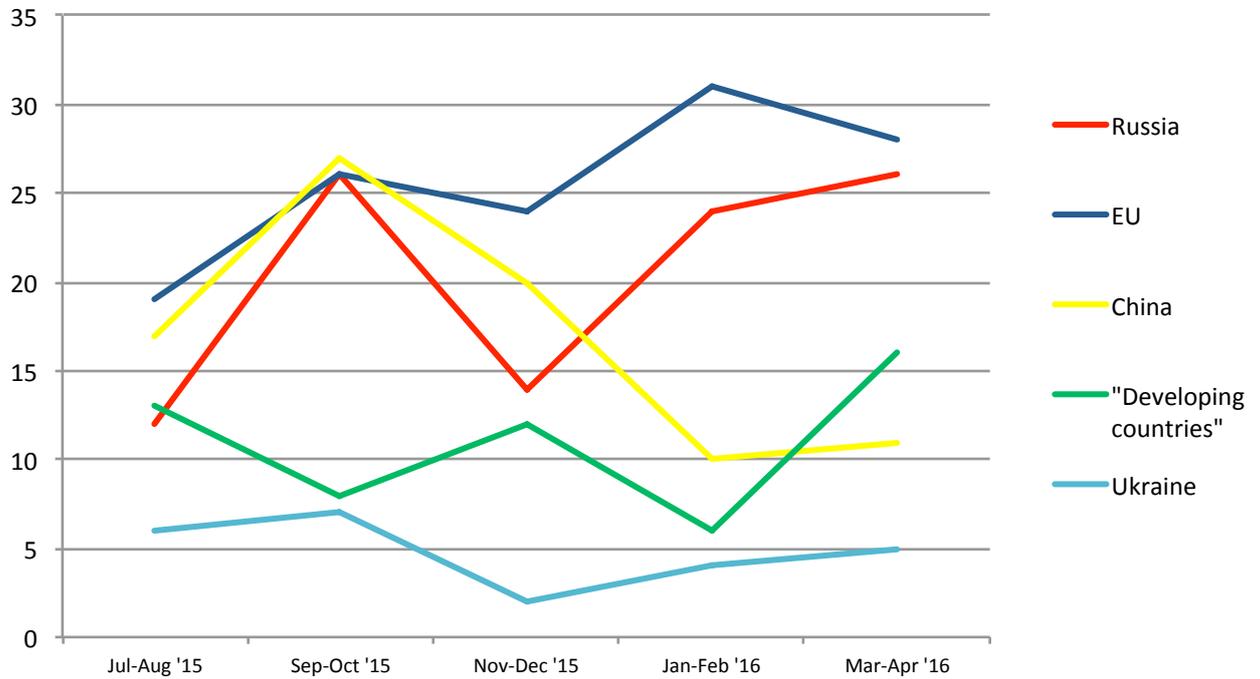
In the Middle East, Belarus continued its efforts seeking convergence with the conservative Arab regimes and their allies. The relations with the Latin American countries are still in decline. Belarus not only finds it difficult to identify new partners and projects, but also faces challenges when trying to protect the interests of Belarusian companies. Minsk has redoubled its efforts to promote its relations with African and Southeast Asian countries.

In the Ukrainian dimension, a slack period was observed in the political sector, whereas economic contacts kept developing at a high pace. A new "trade war" was over, and new areas for economic engagement were outlined.

Dzianis Melyantsou
Editor
Belarus Foreign Policy Index

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Relations development indices:



Development of the Belarus–Russia relationship

+29



-3

Summary index: +26

Total positive points: +29

Total negative points: -3

Main trends

In March and April 2016, Belarus and Russia managed to reach compromise on the Russian loan and trade, while military cooperation mostly developed in favor of Belarus. Ideologically, the Kremlin's policy on Belarus still builds on conclusions and advice of "old" and moderate expert groups; however, "new," critical groupings continue their attacks in the media.

Belarus was using the available Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) instruments with increasing confidence and subtlety, gradually gaining more authority in the bloc and channeling some controversial issues via that integration organization. In addition to the EEU institutions and direct contacts with the Kremlin, Belarus continues to lobby its interests through heads of Russian regions. These arrangements and low benchmarks for comparison in 2015 facilitated a partial recovery of two-way trade and improvement in the effectiveness of Belarusian export supplies to Russia.

Description of the key events

In January–March 2016, two-way trade between Belarus and Russia amounted to USD 5.4 billion, a decrease by 11.8% from the first quarter of 2015. Export to Russia dropped by only 7.2% to USD 2 billion, which is close to last year's level. Import deliveries from Russia recovered slower and reached USD 3.36 billion, down by 14.4% year-on-year. Visible progress was attained for all major export commodity groups. Last year's problem, when Belarus managed to recover (or almost recovered) supplies of its finished products to Russia in volume terms, but was still considerably behind the previous year's figures in value terms, was resolved for some items (trucks, refrigerators, medications, socks, and meat). Improvements were reported for most of the key commodity groups (light industry, foodstuffs, tires, and plastic); however, serious concerns still remain over supplies of farm machines and tractors.

The Belarusian government redoubled its efforts to lobby the country's interests via the EEU institutions. First, on 29 April, an agreement was signed between the Eurasian Economic Union and Belarus on the terms and conditions for the operation of the EEU Court in its territory. Under the Agreement, Belarus transfers to the Court, free of charge, buildings and premises located at 5 Kirov Street in Minsk. On the same day, First Deputy Foreign Minister Aliaksandr Michnievič said that if "some countries" intended to continue discriminating against Belarusian-made products in their markets, Belarus would sue them. He referred primarily to Russian norms and standards pertaining to state procurement. On 14 April, the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) prescribed that the Russian side should abolish the limitations —originally imposed until 1 January 2018— on the procurement of commodities for the defense and security sectors in other member states of the Eurasian Economic Union. Russia was instructed to correct the violation detected and send respective notices to the EEC and all of the member states. Furthermore, on 31 March, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation submitted to the govern-

ment a draft resolution envisaging limitations of state purchases of imported foodstuffs and making up for the deficit by way of procurement in Belarus and other EEU member states. The document aims to limit state purchases of fish, meat, dairy and grocery products from foreign suppliers and replace them with products offered by manufacturers from the EEU.

However, the Belarusian government considers this progress to be a half-measure and continues to insist on the full involvement of Belarusian producers in the Russian state procurement system (the status of “national” manufacturers in the internal Russian market). We have already pointed to the fact that state procurement is a major niche of the Russian market, with at least 40% of Russia’s GDP channeled through this segment. The amount involved is therefore a lot higher than in the case of a loan from the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) or lower natural gas fees (the two items that are normally emphasized by the media).

Second, because the EEU institutions prove to be more effective, the indicative planning of gas, crude oil, and refined oil supplies was transferred to the EEU from the Union State. On 25 April, heads of concerned ministries of the EEU member states signed a corresponding agreement. It is planned that the first “balances” of energy resources will be prepared in October 2016, i.e. the new rules will become effective starting 2017.

Third, the EEU institutions continue implementing various measures to protect the EEU market from foreign competitors, and some of such arrangements were proposed by Belarus.

For example, the decision of the Eurasian Economic Commission on the procedure for the development, adoption, amendment, and implementation in the Eurasian Economic Union of common sanitary, epidemiological, and hygienic requirements and procedures comprises provisions on priority rights of manufacturers from the EEU member states to bid in competitive tenders and electronic auctions.

For its part, Belarus incurs certain costs, as it has to comply with the EEU requirements: on 5 April, Presidential Decree No. 124 dated 21 March came into effect for Belarus to upgrade its foreign trade regulations to the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty. Belarus has made amendments to the list of goods of foreign origin subject to special conditions for being admitted to state procurement procedures. As it makes progress in asserting its interests in the EEU markets, Belarus will inevitably have to open up its domestic market, including the holy of holies — the state procurement segment — to “allied” manufacturers, including those in Russia. Furthermore, Russia also started to make a more active use of the EEU institutions in its trade wars. For example, during the period under review, Russia insisted that the EEU introduce anti-dumping duties against metal rods from Ukraine (ferrous industry), and will obviously continue making such moves.

Because sales of Belarusian-made products in the Russian market still remain a serious challenge, Belarus still positions itself as a “gateway” to the Russian market. During his meeting with top-ranking officials in the Hungarian administration, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Uladzimir Makiej said that legal ways had to be found to bypass the mutual sanctions imposed by Russia and the EU. Speaker of the lower house of the Belarusian parliament Uladzimir Andrejčanka said on the sidelines of a forum in Bangkok that Belarus could become a solid foothold for the promotion of Thai goods to the markets of the EEU and the EU.

The 20th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty on the Union State of Belarus and Russia became a vivid demonstration of the changing priorities of the ruling elites of the two countries regarding the formats of integration. First, the level of the representatives of the two countries was rather low — the two heads of state limited themselves to congratulatory messages; second, as we mentioned above, the transfer of the bilateral “integration” agenda to the multilateral format covers, among others, energy issues; and third, the “jubilee” interview of Prime Minister of Belarus Andrej Kabiakoŭ to RIA Novosti contained lots of complaints about Moscow’s unequal economic policy on its ally (the “jubilee” interview of Russian Ambassador Alexander Surikov also has a fair number of keen reproaches).

In his interview Kabiakoŭ mentioned all of the “sensitive” issues on the bilateral agenda. Specifically, he spoke about payments for Russian energy in foreign exchange and payments for Belarusian products in rubles, which negates the combined effectiveness of two-way trade for Belarus (and causes further increases in the trade deficit), unfair prices of Russian natural gas and crude oil for Belarus and prices of Belarusian gasoline in the Russian market, as well as discrimination against Belarusian-made products in Russian state procurement schemes.

The transfer of integration priorities from the Union State to the EEU and interstate bilateral engagement within the EEU do not imply the end of the Union State. It is designed to play an important symbolic role serving as the prototype for more advanced integration forms. Also, the Union State remains responsible for political and social issues beyond the interstate agenda and areas of responsibility of economic blocs.

Another important factor is that the Union State enables Minsk to pursue independent contacts with Russian regions, which would otherwise be impossible on a purely interstate basis. In March and April, meetings were arranged with heads of Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Kaliningrad, Oryol, and Bryansk Regions. In the first two cases, energy supplies and inclusion of engineering products, especially farm machines, in the state order, were emphasized; the third meeting focused on construction services; and the fourth and fifth meetings with Russian governors centered on the promotion of Belarusian food products and farm machines (also via the state procurement mechanism).

As we forecast in the previous issue, during the period under review the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (EFSD) extended a USD 2 billion loan to Belarus “to support economic policies and structural transformations of the government and the National Bank of the country in 2016–2018.” The lending conditions turned out to be rather tight (including limitations on wage hikes, increase in the share of utility costs and transport fares paid by households, and liberalization of prices), which can partially account for the delays in the provision of the loan.

Forecast for the near future

No serious changes in the relationship between Belarus and Russia will be likely in the next two months. Russia will hardly fully comply with Belarus’s demands to reduce gas prices, or more accurately, change at least part of payments for supplies to Russian rubles. However, we believe that the “gas leverage” will help Belarus effectively promote its interests when it comes to the Russian state procurement system. Furthermore, a temporary reduction factor may be applied to gas purchasing prices, or Belarus may enjoy a small Russian loan to make up for the difference in prices of Russian natural gas and Belarusian products, caused by the fast depreciation of the Russian ruble in the previous period.

Most of the current trends will likely continue — massive lobbying of Belarusian manufacturers via the EEU institutions and Russian regions, gradual transfer of trade policies to the area of responsibility of the EEU, where arrangements to protect the market from suppliers beyond the EEU will have to be combined with measures to safeguard domestic markets against the EEU partners.

Development of the Belarus–EU relationship

+28



0

Summary index: +28

Total positive points: +28

Total negative points: 0

Main trends

After the Council of the European Union lifted most of the sanctions against Belarus in February 2016, the bilateral relations entered a new quality phase. No fundamental changes are taking place; however, the agenda for further deepening and expansion of the relationship is being built on a more consistent basis. The level of diplomatic contacts continues increasing. Both Belarus and the EU are still lacking trust in each other, but both are willing to build it up.

Description of the key events

March and April were marked by a slew of contacts and events of various levels. The chronicle of the most significant events begins with the Minsk visit of EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis, who had meetings with Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej, President Aliaksandr Lukashenka, and participated in the international conference *Death Penalty: Bridging the Gap*, which was organized at the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and the UN/UNDP Office in Belarus.

The Belarusian president emphasized the importance of the human rights issue for the Belarus–EU relationship and traditionally focused on the interconnection of economic and humanitarian factors in this domain: *"Permanent dialogue, regular contacts are needed because we are talking about an economic and deeply psychological issue. We cannot avoid constant dialogue, because we will never achieve anything."* Lukashenka said he hoped *"the period when the EU and Belarus, having built a wall between them, were trying not to have a proper conversation, but exchange phrases, is now over."*¹

On 16–17 March, Uladzimir Makiej paid a visit to Budapest. Priority areas for the consolidation of the bilateral relations were outlined during his meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary Péter Szijjártó — agriculture and processing of farm produce, mechanical engineering and the pharmaceutical industry, innovations and communication, as well as construction and tourism. Credit and investment cooperation and promotion of interbank cooperation were addressed separately.

At the end of the visit the ministers signed the Program of Cooperation between the respective ministries with a list of specific measures for years to come. The visit and document can be interpreted as a reflection and consequence of the diplomatic momentum between Minsk and Budapest (as against other EU member states), which has been observed over the last few years. During his visit Makiej also met with Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén and Vice Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary Sándor Lezsák, who heads the parliamentary Belarus–Hungary friendship group.

1. http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-so-spetsialnym-predstavitelem-es-po-pravam-cheloveka-stavrosom-lambrinidisom-13214/

The visit of Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski to Belarus was probably the main highlight of the first two spring months under review. Given the overall tense relationship between Minsk and Warsaw, specifically the tensions between the two neighbors during the rule of the right-wing Law and Justice Party, the visit by the Polish foreign minister — the first one in the last eight years in the bilateral framework — became especially symbolic and significant.

On 22 March, Waszczykowski held a round of talks with Minister Makiej. According to the press service of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, the sides explored the status and prospects of the bilateral relations in political, economic, humanitarian, cultural and other areas. They also discussed the schedule of joint intergovernmental activities for 2016, including the next meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Polish Commission for Economic Cooperation. Other issues addressed at the meeting included approaches to improving the legal framework for bilateral cooperation, especially cross-border cooperation, and plans for the modernization of the Belarusian-Polish border. Focus was also on the attitude of the two countries to the situation in the region, as well as engagement with international and regional organizations and third countries. Following the talks, Makiej said at a press conference that the meeting was open, sincere, and rewarding.

The following day, President Lukashenka received Minister Waszczykowski. The head of state called for taking the bilateral relationship to a new level in order to effectively address current challenges. According to him, Minsk will be guided by the same criteria that are employed by Polish foreign policy: *"We will protect our sovereignty and independence just the way you do. We will use your example to implement our social and economic policy in the country. But we will try to do it in a way so that no one could ever reproach us for the deficit or absence of democracy. We will seek to achieve at least the level of it that you have in Poland."*² Lukashenka emphasized that Belarus intended to pursue the *"closest cooperation with Poland."* For his part, Waszczykowski said that the new Polish government believes the relations between the two countries in the last few years were not normal, and therefore decided to embark on dialogue and resolve all issues that can be addressed in the foreseeable future without any preliminary conditionality.

On 25 March, another European high-ranking politician paid a visit to Minsk — Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia Karl Erjavec, who came to Belarus as part of a Slovenian delegation of business communities. The negotiations at the Foreign Ministry traditionally encompassed both the bilateral agenda and the Minsk–Brussels relationship. The two countries agreed to hold a meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission to address trade and economic cooperation in June. On the same day, the Slovenian politician was received by President Lukashenka. The meeting also focused on economic issues. The Belarusian head of state said: *"To build up the stability of our economic relations, it would be helpful for us to implement several large-scale joint projects, maybe 3 or 4 [...] These are already in the pipeline and will help establish closest contacts between the two countries in such a way that even the European Union is unable to affect them, because the economy is the pillar."*³

On 6–7 April, Brussels hosted the first meeting of the Belarus–EU Coordination Group, a new format of structured comprehensive dialogue, which builds on the so-called "temporary phase" implemented in previous years with a view to exploring possibilities for deeper cooperation in various areas. The Belarusian delegation to Brussels was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna, and the EU delegation was led by Deputy Secretary General for the External Action Service (EAS) Helga Schmid. Representatives of Belarus's civil society were invited to the meeting.

2. http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-ministrom-inostrannyx-del-polshi-vitoldom-vaschikovskim-13313/

3. http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-zamestitelem-premjer-ministra-ministrom-inostrannyx-del-slovenii-karlom-erjajtsem-13341/

It was declared that the sides thoroughly examined possibilities for the intensification of dialogues in the economic, financial, and environmental sectors and considered prospects of launching new bilateral dialogues on trade, energy, customs, innovations, and standardization, as well as stepping up cooperation in modernization, technical assistance, and human rights. Overall, the introduction of the Coordination Group format should be treated as a step forward in the process of consistent expansion and substantiation of the agenda for the Belarus–EU relationship.

The visit of Bulgarian Foreign Minister Daniel Mitov became another highlight of the reviewed period (Bulgaria had assumed the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe). The Bulgarian foreign minister met with his Belarusian counterpart Makiej — first a face-to-face meeting was organized, and an extended meeting followed.

Two-way trade between Belarus and the EU member states amounted to USD 2.747 billion in January–March 2016, down by 25.7% year-on-year. Belarusian export reached USD 1.62 billion, which represents a reduction by 32.4% from the first quarter of 2015, whereas import from the EU totaled USD 1.127 billion, down by 13.4% year-on-year. Belarus reported a USD 494 million surplus in its trade with the EU.

Forecast for the near future

The relations between Belarus and the EU remain within a cautiously optimistic track. The bilateral framework will be progressively filled with new contacts and new targeted projects and events, mostly in the economic sector. Visa facilitation remains on the agenda — talks will continue, and the corresponding agreement may be initiated at the end of the year.

An additional factor for the current status of the relationship between Belarus and the EU is the election issue: Belarus will hold parliamentary elections on 11 September, and the election campaign will begin soon. As was the case with last year's presidential election, official Minsk will be doing its best for the relations with the EU to remain at least at the current level following the parliamentary campaign.

Development of the Belarus–China relationship

+12



-1

Summary index: +11

Total positive points: +12

Total negative points: -1

Main trends

March and April 2016 saw the “declarative” trends in the Belarus–China relations continue. Apart from the previously announced arrangements to supply products by Spartak confectionery to China, the rest of the developments during the reviewed period are mere declarations.

The Belarusian administration and Chinese companies operating in Belarus seek to adapt to the tightening of China’s financial policy and come up with new formats for investing in Belarus. However, the overall economic situation in the country, as well as the deep-rooted peculiarities of the bilateral cooperation framework (use of “tied” loans, “grey” schemes, etc.) become serious obstacles to the success of these attempts.

Description of the key events

The two months under review further consolidated the trend towards a reduction in the intensity of contacts between Belarus and China. The only more or less real achievement during the period of March and April 2016 was the signing of a contract for supplies of products by Spartak confectionery and some other Homiel Region-based manufacturers to China⁴. Contracts to implement this cooperation were signed in the course of the visit of a delegation from the Homiel Region of Belarus to the Chinese province of Jiangsu on 29 March–1 April 2016.

China is notably growing increasingly interested in supplies of Belarusian-made products. Work is still underway to certify farm products for sale in the Chinese market. Following the said visit of the Homiel Region delegation to China an announcement was made that Chinese companies were interested in the operation and management of farms in Belarus. However, given the poor track record of the implementation of such projects, these plans will hardly hold much promise. Anyway, food products account for a minute share of two-way trade between Belarus and China. It looks like it is not the source that can dramatically transform the very nature of bilateral trade.

Belarusian and Chinese officials eagerly reported an increase in Belarusian export supplies to China in 2015. Indeed, the year 2015 became the most successful year in terms of both import-to-export ratio and overall value of Belarusian export deliveries. In 2014, Belarusian export to China amounted to USD 640.3 million, and in 2015, the figure increased to USD 781.6 million⁵. Given the overall reduction in Belarusian export, these

4. For more details on the peculiarities and prospects of this cooperation projects see the previous Index issue.

5. http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/makroekonomika-i-okruzhayushchaya-sreda/vneshnyaya-tor-govlya_2/osnovnye-pokazateli-za-period-s-__-po-___gody_10/eksport-tovarov-respubliki-belarus-po-stranam-s_2/

figures seem to demonstrate progress in the bilateral relations. However, a more thorough analysis puts the optimism of Belarusian officials in doubt.

In some of the previous Index issues we repeatedly pointed to the fact that the authorities willingly publish current statistics for all of the smaller commodity items, while data for the key export commodity for the national economy — potash fertilizers — are normally provided too late and in a generalized form. Foreign sources need to be consulted, the more so because Chinese statistics are a lot more open than Belarusian domestic sources. Of Belarus's combined export of USD 781.6 million in 2015, potash fertilizers accounted for USD 650 million⁶. Therefore, this item alone is responsible for 82.7% of Belarus's export to China in value terms. In 2014, potash fertilizers accounted for 77.1% of supplies from Belarus⁷. Moreover, even in absolute terms, potash export went up by USD 156 million year-on-year, whereas combined export deliveries to China increased by less than USD 145 million, which implies that other export items showed a decrease.

Unfortunately, Belarusian statistics is reluctant to provide accurate information about the price of potash fertilizers exported to China. In our previous Index issues, as well as some other publications⁸ it was noted that Belarus offers dumping prices in the Chinese market for potash fertilizers seeking to address the shortage of foreign exchange in the country. On the other hand, China has already mastered the potash market meltdown scheme by accumulating vast potash reserves in order to eventually force suppliers to slash prices. Given the significant increase in the deliveries of Belarusian potash to China in 2015 and apparent knock-down prices, a conclusion can be drawn that in their campaign to procure the much needed foreign exchange for the country the Belarusian authorities created preconditions for a drop in potash prices in 2016. The first two months of 2016 prove that the forecast was accurate: export prices of Belarusian potash delivered beyond the CIS fell by more than 13%, from USD 491,796 per 1,000 tonnes to USD 427,804 per 1,000 tonnes⁹. Notably, these are average export prices, whereas China is known to be importing potash at markedly lower rates, compared to other consumers. The deepening of the economic crisis in Belarus not only affects the country's policy on the export of potash fertilizers, but also causes the administration to put more pressure on the power vertical with demands to redouble efforts to find new sources of foreign exchange. There is hardly any other reason why Belarusian officials have become so much more creative whenever they make comments on Belarus's engagement with China.

For instance, on 1 March, Deputy Chair of Minsk City Executive Committee Žanna Birič said at a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Natallia Kačanava, which addressed instruments to improve the socioeconomic complex pursuant to Decree No. 78, that Belkommunmash was planning to manufacture electric buses jointly with China. However, it turned out almost immediately that such statements were based exclusively on the task for the capital city to raise more than USD 100 million in net FDI from China in 2016, rather than any specific calculations or real economic arrangements. The fact that the entire country managed to raise only USD 48.354 million in net FDI from China in 2015¹⁰ makes such ambitious plans and tasks look too optimistic. Some experts, including Hans Timmer, World Bank Chief Economist for Europe and Central Asia, indeed note China's growing interest in investment in the CEE region; however, this interest alone does not mean China will automatically boost its investments in the CEE economies. Belarus needs to continue improving its environment for investors, including the regulatory framework.

6. <http://www.worldsrichestcountries.com/top-belarus-exports.html>

7. http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/makroekonomika-i-okruzhayushchaya-sreda/vneshnyaya-torgovlya_2/ofitsialnye-publikatsii_12/index_734/

8. See, for example: <http://belarusdigest.com/story/belaruskali-enterprise-saved-belarus-2015-24166>

9. http://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial_statistika/TT100E06.pdf

10. <http://www.economy.gov.by/ru/invpolicy/invest-klimat/pezultat>

It appears that exaggerated expectations of successful cooperation with China can be observed at all levels of the Belarusian administration. In his interview to China Central Television (CCTV) on 1 March Aliaksandr Lukashenka shared his high hopes of the future success of the China–Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP) project and Belarus’s involvement in the Silk Road Economic Belt project. However, no significant progress has been reached so far in the implementation of both projects in Belarus.

Chinese companies are growing increasingly interested in the organization of travel to Belarus; however, the practical implementation of this interest calls for the introduction of a visa-free regime for organized groups of tourists, the issue that has been discussed long enough. The move to allow tourists to travel without visas has been postponed many times, though.

Forecast for the near future

As in the previous period, a trend can be observed towards further narrowing of the cooperation between China and Belarus. Work to implement the most significant bilateral projects has considerably slowed down. It is quite likely that in 2016, Belarusian export supplies to China will drop, mostly because the achievements reported in 2015 can be attributed to the hikes in potash deliveries to China at dumping prices.

The unfeasible and unreasonably high targets for the country’s collaboration with China inevitably result in new failures and accumulation of problems in the implementation of the existing projects.

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

(Asia, Africa and Latin America)

Summary index: +16

Total positive points: +16

Total negative points: 0

+16

0

Main trends

In the Middle East, Belarus continued its work to establish closer ties with the conservative Arab monarchies and their allies (Turkey and Pakistan).

The relationships with Latin American countries are still in decline. It is hard for the Belarusian side to find new partners and projects; moreover, the country still faces challenges when trying to protect the interests of Belarusian companies.

Minsk stepped up its efforts to promote its relations with African and Southeast Asian countries. The Belarusian government reached certain progress in contacts with Thailand and Indonesia and made further steps to restore the once active relations with Sudan.

The military and military-technical component of Belarus's relationship with the developing world grew increasingly significant.

Description of the key events

Middle East

Lebanon. On 21 March, Adnan Kassar, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Lebanon's Fransabank, visited Belarus. In fact, Kassar has been coming to Minsk annually. The big businessman is an old partner of the Belarusian government and not only runs his business in Belarus, but also is involved in some of Minsk's projects in the Arab world. Kassar had a meeting with Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej.

OIC. On 13–14 April, President Aliaksandr Lukashenka participated in the summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul. He met with the president of Turkey, emir of Qatar, prime minister of Afghanistan, vice-president of Indonesia, and president of Pakistan on the sidelines of the forum.

The main objective of the visit to Istanbul was the receipt of the observer status and networking within that regional organization, dominated by conservative regimes associated with the West. Minsk has sought observer statuses in regional organizations of this kind for a few years now, since Belarusian diplomats regard them as excellent possibilities for building contacts with remote economies, where there are no Belarusian representative offices.

One example of this policy is the receipt of the observer status in the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in April 2015 and involvement in CICA-organized events. Foreign Minister Makiej attended the CICA session on 27 April 2016 and held a series of meetings, including with the foreign minister of Turkey, secretary general of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and deputy foreign minister of Afghanistan¹¹.

11. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus U. Makiej holds a number of bilateral meetings in China 27-04-2016 http://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/f158d9aa0e76510a.html

Pakistan. On 6–8 April, Head of Department of Asia, Australia and Oceania of the Foreign Ministry Andrej Hrynkievič made a working visit to Pakistan, mostly to Karachi. He had a series of meetings with representatives of Pakistani organizations and agencies and must have explored possibilities for supplies of Belarusian commodities via the port of Karachi.

In March, Belarus's Amkodor was reported to have plans to buy a 50% shareholding in Pakistan-based Fecto Belarus Tractors Limited and invest up to USD 20 million in the modernization of the assembly factory for Amkodor products and MTZ tractors. The upgraded facility is expected to begin operations in October. Amkodor is also planning to promote machines manufactured by Gomselmash and other Belarusian producers in the markets of not only Pakistan, but also Afghanistan and Sri Lanka¹².

On 13–14 April, Federal Minister for Industries and Production of Pakistan Ghulam Mur-taza Khan Jatoi visited Belarus. The visit received little media coverage. Khan Jatoi said that Belarusian machines could be used in projects associated with the construction of the China–Pakistan economic corridor¹³.

Qatar. On 25–26 April, Doha played host to the third meeting of the Joint Committee on Cooperation between the Governments of Belarus and Qatar and second meeting of the Joint Business Council. The 20-strong Belarusian delegation was led by Minister of Trade Uladzimir Kaltovič. The delegation comprised not only representatives of state agencies and enterprises, but also First Vice-President of the National Olympic Committee, Aide to the President of the Republic of Belarus with respect to Physical Education, Sports, and Tourism Maksim Ryženkoŭ. The head of the Belarusian delegation met with the prime minister – minister of the interior of Qatar, as well as the minister of economy and trade. Belarus and Qatar signed a Memorandum of Understanding in sports between the Ministries of Sport of Belarus and Qatar, as well as the Agreement on Cooperation between Beleximgarant, a unitary export–import insurance company, and Qatar Development Bank (QDB)'s Tasdeer export–import program¹⁴.

Ahead of that meeting, on 29–31 March, Viktor Lukashenka, national security advisor to the president of Belarus, visited Qatar to attend DIMDEX 2016, the international maritime naval defense and security exhibition, and met with the prime minister of Qatar.

Africa

Nigeria and Ghana. On 4–7 April, a Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ visited Nigeria and Ghana. The delegation included representatives of MAZ, MTZ, and Gomselmash.

A new round of consultations was held between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Nigeria, Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investments, Ministry of Agriculture, the Chamber of Commerce of the city of Abuja, and representatives of the local business communities. The meetings explored possibilities for the establishment of assembly factories of Belarusian tractors and automotive equipment in Nigeria, the operation of the Belarusian trading house in Lagos, and the organization of the visit of Nigerian businessmen to Belarus. MTZ and partner Nigerian companies Aulic Nigeria and EFORCE – AGRO Development signed a protocol of intent to supply Belarusian-made machinery¹⁵.

A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Ghana and the first round of consultations between the Foreign Ministries was held in the

12. Aliaksandr Zajac, Amkodor buys 50% in a Pakistani factory 19 March 2016 <http://news.tut.by/economics/489073.html>

13. Will Belarusian-made machines be used by Chinese subcontractors? 14 April 2016 <http://news.tut.by/economics/492567.html>

14. Meeting of the Joint Committee on Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the State of Qatar 23-04-2016 http://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/ea98aa9ce7355b5f.html

15. Consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Nigeria 05-04-2016 http://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/d9383b09a97554ff.html

course of the delegation's visit to Ghana. Also, negotiations were arranged with the leadership of the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and representatives of the local business community. The issues addressed at the meeting were similar to those discussed in Nigeria. A protocol of intent was signed between MTZ and Unigreen Ghana, and it was agreed that a delegation of Ghanaian businessmen would come to visit Belarus¹⁶.

African Union. On 21–23 April, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma visited Belarus. She met with Government officials, leadership of the Foreign Ministry, Industry Ministry, State Committee on Science and Technology, and the National Bank. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Foreign Ministry of Belarus and the AU Commission to regulate the regime of political consultations and exchange of information¹⁷.

Sudan. On 26–27 April, Minsk hosted the third meeting of the Belarus–Sudan joint commission for cooperation. Co-chairing the Belarusian part of the commission was Energy Minister Uladzimir Patupčyk, and the Sudanese part of the commission was co-chaired by Minister of Petroleum and Gas Mohammed Zayed Awad, who also met with the leadership of the Council of Ministers, Foreign Ministry, Energy Ministry, and visited some Belarusian companies. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Belarus hosted the Belarus–Sudan business forum and a business matchmaking session for entrepreneurs.

Asia

Mongolia. On 10–11 March, Bayanselenge Zangad, Minister of Construction and Urban Development of Mongolia, visited Belarus. She had a series of meetings at the Council of Ministers. Two-way trade between Belarus and Mongolia amounted to USD 23.2 million in 2015 (export supplies from Belarus reached USD 23.1 million). In 2013, the Belarus–Mongolia commission for trade and economic cooperation was established, and in 2014, the Belarusian diplomatic mission was opened in Ulan Bator.

Thailand. On 14–18 March, a parliamentary delegation of Belarus, led by Speaker of the lower chamber of parliament, the House of Representatives, Uladzimir Andrejčanka, paid an official visit to Thailand. The speaker conducted negotiations with the leadership of the country, including with President of the National Legislative Assembly Pornpech Wichitcholchai and Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha. The first Belarus–Thailand Business Forum was held, and an official document was signed to establish friendly relations between the Viciebsk Region of Belarus and the province of Ayutthaya. Ahead of the visit, on 25–27 February, a Thai delegation visited Belarus, led by Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Defense Prawit Wongsuwan.

Singapore. On 18–19 April, Minister of Trade and Industry of Singapore Koh Poh Koon visited Belarus. He met with Foreign Minister Makiej and had meetings at the Council of Ministers. Representative offices of major Belarusian companies have been established and currently operate in Singapore — BelAZ, Belshina, MTZ; however, two-way trade amounted to mere USD 30.9 million in 2015. Minister Makiej had a meeting with his Singaporean counterpart during his visit to the UN Headquarters in New York on 22 April.

Indonesia. On 27–30 April, Minister of Defence of Indonesia Ryamizard Ryacudu visited Belarus. He met with President Lukashenka, leadership of the Ministry of Defence and the State Military Industrial Committee, and visited several companies of the military industrial sector. Lukashenka once again invited the Indonesian president to visit Belarus. He also admitted that military and technical cooperation would become an important area for engagement¹⁸. In 2013, an intergovernmental Agreement on cooperation in the defense

16. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Valiancin Rybakoŭ visits the Republic of Ghana 07-04-2016 http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/bc0a334fbfa816cb.html

17. Chairperson of the African Union Commission visits Belarus 22-04-2016 http://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/a1c0cf699da83a40.html

18. Meeting with Indonesia Defense Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu 28 April 2016 http://president.gov.by/en/news_en/view/meeting-with-indonesia-defense-minister-ryamizard-ryacudu-13558/

industry was signed during President Lukashenka's visit to Indonesia, and the Belarus–Indonesia commission for military and technical cooperation was established.

Latin America

Ecuador. On 27–28 March, Speaker of the Ecuadorean parliament Gabriela Rivadeneira Burbano visited Belarus. President Lukashenka said he was planning to visit Ecuador this year. In 2012, Lukashenka paid his first official visit to Ecuador, and in 2013, President Rafael Correa Delgado paid a return visit to Minsk. In June 2014, Belarus and Ecuador introduced a visa-free regime. In 2015, trade between the two countries amounted to USD 77 million. In late March, it was reported that Ecuadorean state-owned CELEC had run into debts and owed a Belarusian contractor originally hired to build power lines. Payments to Belzarubezhstroy amounting to USD 18.7 million were reported to have been six months overdue¹⁹.

Seeking new channels of cooperation with Latin America Minsk made use of less conspicuous contacts and events. On 5 April, the Honorable Consulate of Belarus was unveiled in Rosario, Argentina. In the course of his visit to the UN Headquarters in New York on 22 April Minister Makiej met with Argentinean Foreign Minister Susana Malcorra and Costa Rican Foreign Minister Gonzalez Sanz. On 26–28 April, a delegation led by Ruslan Jesin, Deputy Director of the Foreign Economic Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visited Chile.

Forecast for the near future

In the Middle East, the Belarusian government seeks more active engagement with Turkey. Contacts with the Arab monarchies will remain stable, whereas the relationships with Iran and Syria will remain in decline. South and Southeast Asia are even more promising destinations, whereas Minsk has excellent possibilities to further its relations with Pakistan and some other countries of the region (Indonesia, Malaysia, Indochina, and Thailand).

In Latin America, Ecuador has the most capacity as a prospective partner in the foreseeable future. Despite attempts to reach out to new markets in that region, much time is required to effectively approach them, while the traditional partners — Cuba and Venezuela — will be too busy dealing with their domestic issues.

Minsk continues its attempts to expand its relations with Africa, but it must be aware of the complexity of this mission; therefore, these attempts take the form of periodic contacts at a comparatively low level, rather than foreign policy "assaults", as is the case with other regions of the world. Some noticeable contacts may soon be reported with countries in the East (primarily Ethiopia and Kenya), South (primarily Angola and Mozambique) and West of Africa (primarily Nigeria and Ghana).

19. Siarhiej Viasnin, Ecuadorean debt: Belarusian builders suffer from empty pockets in a foreign land 2 May 2016, *zautra.by* http://www.zautra.by/art.php?sn_nid=21267

Development of the Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Summary index: +5

Total positive points: +7

Total negative points: -2

+7

-2

Main trends

Amid the stagnation in the “political front” during the two months under review, the bilateral relations in the economic sector continued developing quite rapidly. Another “trade war” was over, and new areas for economic cooperation were outlined.

The bilateral framework remains strategically important for both countries.

Description of the key events

In March and April 2016, official Minsk continued demonstrating its friendly attitude to Ukraine; however, Ukraine accounted for a much smaller proportion of the official rhetoric of the Belarusian state leader. President Lukashenka made a single important remark about Ukraine during the reviewed period.

On 31 March, in the course of his meeting with U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Carpenter Lukashenka reiterated that Washington could play an important role in the resolution of the conflict in Donbas: “If the United States wants to stop the war in the East of Ukraine tomorrow and chooses to make steps in this direction, the bloodshed will be stopped.” The statement was quite symptomatic, as it runs counter to the official policy of the Kremlin, which rejects any possibility for the United States to be involved in the peace process.

Also during the two months under review, Minsk once again showed its ambiguous position on Crimea. On 8 April, Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej said that when recognizing the affiliation of Crimea *“the reality should be taken into account. We must proceed from the understanding who de facto owns Crimea now [...] We do not imply that we agree or disagree with someone. We believe the main idea now is to preserve the territorial integrity and inviolability of the remaining portion of Ukraine.”*

Previously (in March), Spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Minister Zmicier Mirončyk cautioned his fellow citizens that the government did not approve of their visits to Crimea. He also made it clear that in this matter the Belarusian authorities tend to comply with the Ukrainian legislation and warned against any attempts to enter Crimea from the territory of Russia.

In March, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus Paviel Muraviejka said that official Minsk did not see any military threats coming from the territory of Ukraine. He also said that the Belarusian authorities were non-judgmental about Ukraine’s cooperation with NATO and did not see anything provocative or hostile in that sort of engagement.

Minsk remained one of the crucial venues for negotiating ways to resolve the military conflict in Donbas. However, in April, this important status was challenged due to the

activity of the Belarusian side: on 26 April, First Vice Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Iryna Gerashchenko, Ukraine's representative at the Minsk talks, was denied entry to Belarus. The situation was resolved only after the interference of President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko and Belarusian Ambassador to Ukraine Valiancin Vialička. Gerashchenko was only given a temporary (one-month) entry permit, though. Previously, the Belarusian authorities denied Ukrainian MP Ihor Huz entry to Belarus. In both cases, the Belarusian authorities cited the database of "personae non gratae," which is shared with Russia (it turned out that it was the Russian side that included the Ukrainian politicians in the database).

Also during the two months under review, new positive trends appeared in the bilateral trade and economic relations. On 13 April, a new "trade war" between the two countries was de facto over. The Interdepartmental Commission for International Trade of Ukraine suspended the introduction of a 39.2% special duty on the import of some goods originating in Belarus. The duty was supposed to be imposed on 1 May as a "measure to reciprocate for Belarus' unfriendly actions pertaining to Ukrainian confectioneries and breweries," however, the move was postponed until 15 September.

In March, Ukrainian companies for the first time purchased Belarusian grain. This new import from Belarus became possible due to the sharp reduction in rye crops in Ukraine last year.

Air transportation showed a solid growth. In April, Belarus and Ukraine lifted limitations on the number of designated carriers for all flights between the two countries. As a result, the frequency of daily Kyiv–Minsk flights increased to eleven for each country.

In March, Ukraine's Bohdan and Belarus's MAZ signed an agreement on the production of dual-use trucks from Belarusian and Ukrainian components at the Cherkasy-based facility. It is planned to assemble model 5316 4x4 trucks, model 6317 6x6 trucks, and, at a later phase, model 6425 6x6 tractors. The agreement is especially important in the light of the fact that Bohdan is connected with the family of President of Ukraine Poroshenko. In April, it was reported that the Defense Ministry of Ukraine decided to buy Bohdan–MAZ vehicles for the armed forces, which may result in a complete stoppage of the plant in Kremenchuk.

Also during the two months under review, the two countries encountered a series of problems associated with the crossing of the state border by citizens of Belarus and Ukraine.

Belarus refused to recognize the new ID passports of Ukrainians. In early March, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said that it had sent specimens of new passports to Belarus, and Ukraine never received any warnings from Belarus regarding the use of ID passports within the framework of the agreement on visa-free travel. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry responded that "the visa-free regime of travel between Belarus and Ukraine remains valid under the applicable agreement," and additional consultations were required concerning the use of Ukrainian ID cards. Prior to the resolution of the issue, only Ukrainians holding foreign passports (owners of ID cards) or internal old passports will be allowed to cross the Belarusian border. The first round of talks to adjust the agreement between the governments of Belarus and Ukraine on visa-free travel was held in early April.

Bilateral cooperation in customs procedures evolved in parallel with the above issues. On 2 March, Roman Nasirov, Chief of the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine, visited Belarus. When concluding his visit he said: "We have possibilities to take the cooperation between the customs services to a whole new level. This is evidenced by the successful implementation of the unique PRINEX project, which will benefit both countries. Building on our cooperation we not only simplify border-crossing customs procedures, which will facilitate the development of international trade, but also ensure that our officers work in comfortable conditions."

The two countries also agreed to put in place an Eastern Partnership project to equip road checkpoints with scanners to inspect goods without unloading vehicles.

In April, Belarus' trade performance was officially reported. In January and February 2016, Ukraine was Belarus's second-largest trade partner, second-largest importer of Belarusian goods and fifth-largest exporter of its products to Belarus (in the first two months of 2015, the respective ranks were 2, 3, and 5). Belarus has enjoyed a solid trade surplus for a long time — USD 267 million in January–February 2016, up from USD 209.5 million in the same period of 2015. Belarusian export supplies increased from USD 314 million to USD 363 million, and import dropped from USD 104 million to USD 96 million.

Oil products and liquefied gas account for 68% of Belarus's export to Ukraine. In volume terms, supplies increased from 436,000 tonnes to 663,000 tonnes. Other important export items include mineral and nitrogen fertilizers, tires, tractors and truck-tractors, and polished glass. The main imported items from Ukraine are vegetable oil waste products, metals, vegetable oil, confectionery, and pharmaceuticals.

Forecast for the near future

Due to objective factors, the Belarusian and Ukrainian authorities will seek to build up the capacity for mutually beneficial bilateral relations in the political, economic, transit, and military sectors.

Official Minsk focused on the promotion of its relations with the United States, and the Ukrainian issue remains a critical point here; therefore, Minsk will continue its efforts to contribute to the resolution of the crisis in Ukraine.

Annex

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development index

Development of the Belarus–Russia relationship

Date	Event	Point
1 March	Protective measures imposed in the Belarusian market for fire-fighting systems	-1
1 March	Department for the operation of the EEU internal market is established	+2
4 March	Governor of Bashkortostan Dmitry Sharonov visits Belarus	+1
14 March	Decision on exchange of information by EEU tax agencies	+2
15 March	Prime Minister Andrej Kabiakoŭ visits Tatarstan	+1
16 March	Meeting of the Belarus–Russia Council in Kaliningrad	+1
18 March	Resolution of the oil products dispute	+1
21 March	EEU products allowed in the Belarusian state procurement system	+1
23 March	EEU: uniform sanitary and epidemiological and competitive bidding standards	+2
23-25 March	Delegation of Russia's Oryol Region visits Belarus	+1
28 March	Agreement on the EFSD loan	+3
31 March	Russian Agriculture Ministry: state procurement of food products in the EEU	+2
1 April	Union State jubilee, assurances and commitments to union relations	+2
1 April	Kabiakoŭ's interview with criticism of Russia's economic policy regarding Belarus	-1
1 April	Governor of Russia's Bryansk Region visits Minsk	+1
4-5 April	Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Speaker of the lower chamber of parliament Viktor Huminski visits Moscow to participate in Union State jubilee celebrations	+1
5 April	Decree 124 to upgrade Belarusian foreign trade regulations to EEU Treaty	+2
8 April	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej says deployment of a Russian airbase in Belarus not on the agenda	-1
13 April	Meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council	+1
19 April	Speaker of the lower chamber of parliament U. Andrejčanka participates in the first meeting of speakers of Eurasian parliaments	+2
25 April	Agreement on the introduction of balances of energy goods in the EEU	+1
29 April	Agreement on the Minsk premises for the EEU Court	+2
Total		+26

Development of the Belarus–EU relationship

Date	Event	Point
3-4 March	Deputy Foreign Minister Aliena Kupčyna visits the Czech Republic, participates in consultations between the Foreign Ministries	+1
9-10 March	President Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej meet with EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis	+2
9 March	Makiej meets with Chairman of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, former President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering	+1
11 March	Kupčyna meets with French Ambassador Dominique Gazuy	+1
11 March	Kupčyna meets with EU Special Representative for Human Rights Lambrinidis	+1
11 March	Opening of the I Belarusian Theatre Seasons in France as part of the Days of Belarusian Culture in France	+1
16 March	Makiej meets with EBRD President Alain Pilloux	+1
16-17 March	Makiej visits Hungary	+2
21 March	Makiej meets with Polish Ambassador Konrad Pawlik	+1
22-23 March	Lukashenka and Makiej meet with Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski in the course of his visit to Belarus	+3
25 March	Lukashenka and Makiej meet with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia Karl Erjavec	+3
31 March	Kupčyna meets with German Ambassador Peter Dettmar	+1
31 March	Kupčyna meets with Head of the EU Delegation to Belarus Andrea Wiktorin	+1
1 April	Kupčyna meets with a Bulgarian parliamentary delegation	+1
1 April	Makiej and Kupčyna meet with State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Annika Söder	+1
6-7 April	First meeting of the Belarus–EU Coordination Group	+2
11 April	Makiej meets with Bulgarian Foreign Minister Daniel Mitov in the course of his visit to Belarus	+2
14 April	Deputy Foreign Minister Jaŭhien Šestakoŭ meets with Minister of Agriculture of Latvia Jānis Dūklavs	+1
21 April	Kupčyna meets with Hungarian Ambassador Vilmos Sziklavári	+1
21 April	Kupčyna meets with Head of the EU Delegation to Belarus Andrea Wiktorin and UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative Sanaka Samarasinha	+1
Total		+28

Development of the Belarus–China relationship

Date	Event	Point
1 March	Belkommunmash mulls joint electric buses production with China	+1
1 March	President Aliaksandr Lukashenka gives interview to China Central Television (CCTV)	+1
4 March	Press conference of Liu Xuesong, trade and economic councilor at the Embassy of China in Belarus	+1
9 March	Chinese companies show increasing interest in investment projects of the Augustów Canal travel and recreation park	+1
10 March	JSC Company for the Development of the Industrial Park joins the World Economic Processing Zones Association	+1
15 March	China Xinjiang Bingtuan Construction & Engineering (Group) Co. Ltd. offers Homiel Region administration to implement a joint investment project in the rural industry	+1
18 March	Visa-free regime with China for organized groups of tourists will become effective in April or May, said Director of the Tourism Department at the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of Belarus Vadzim Karmazin	+1
24 March	Conference focusing on the development of the Chinese economy, Belarus–China engagement, and joint construction of the economic zone of the Silk Road Economic Belt	+1
24 March	State Committee on Science and Technologies of Belarus and Shanghai Municipal Science and Technology Commission sign a cooperation agreement	+1
1 April	Homiel Region and Jiangsu Province agree joint activities to promote the Silk Road Economic Belt project	+1
8 April	China–Belarus Industrial Park is expected to have 100 residents within 36 months, said Minsk region Governor Siamion Šapira	+1
15 April	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej and Chinese Ambassador to Belarus Cui Qiming discuss upcoming high-level contacts	+1
21 April	Negative remarks about the CBIP development pace in President Lukashenka's annual address	-1
Total		+11

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

Date	Event	Point
10-11 March	Minister of Construction and Urban Development of Mongolia Bayanselenge Zangad visits Belarus	+1
14-18 March	Parliamentary delegation led by Speaker of the lower chamber of parliament Uladzimir Andrejčanka visits Thailand	+1
27-28 March	Speaker of the Ecuadorean parliament Gabriela Rivadeneira Burbano visits Belarus	+1
4-5 April	Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Valiancin Rybakoŭ visits Nigeria	+1
6-7 April	Belarusian delegation led by Rybakoŭ visits Ghana	+1
13-14 April	President Lukashenka participates in the summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul	+3
18-19 April	Minister of Trade and Industry of Singapore Koh Poh Koon visits Belarus	+1
21-23 April	Chairperson of the African Union Commission Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma visits Belarus	+1
25 – 26 April	Minister of Trade Uladzimir Kaltovič visits Qatar	+2
26 – 27 April	Minister of Petroleum and Gas of Sudan Mohammed Zayed Awad visits Belarus	+2
27-30 April	Minister of Defence of Indonesia Ryamizard Ryacudu visits Belarus	+2
Total		+16

Development of the Belarus–Ukraine relationship

Date	Event	Point
2 March	Roman Nasirov, Chief of the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine, visits Belarus	+1
11 March	Statement by the General Staff of Belarus about Minsk's non-judgmental attitude to Ukraine's seeking cooperation with NATO	+1
17 March	Statement by the Foreign Ministry of Belarus calling for Belarusians to comply with Ukrainian regulations when visiting Crimea	+1
31 March	President Lukashenka's statement on the importance of the involvement of the United States in the resolution of the conflict in Donbas, which is in line with official Kyiv's policy, but runs counter to the Kremlin's stance	+1
March	Agreement between Ukraine's Bohdan corporation and Belarus's MAZ on further expansion in their cooperation	+1
March-April	Problems with the recognition of new Ukrainian ID passports by Belarusian agencies	-1
March-April	Export of Belarusian oil products to Ukraine goes up by a third	+1
8 April	Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej says deployment of a Russian airbase in Belarus not on the agenda	+1
April	Ukrainian officials encounter problems when trying to enter Belarus	-1
Total		+5

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**