

MINSK BAROMETER

Monitoring of
foreign policy and
regional security

Dear readers!

We are happy to present the tenth issue of Minsk Barometer, which reviews Belarus's foreign policy and security status in the months of July and August 2019.

The ultimatum-like rhetoric in Belarus's relationship with Russia gave way to the compromise-based approach. "Big Integration" has been replaced by many smaller projects — the revision of the Union Treaty is carried out sector-wise, without giving up the principle of parity.

The relations with the European Union were characterized by an active agenda that some would deem non-standard for the summer months. The parties are satisfied with the normalization of the bilateral framework.

Regional cooperation dominated in the China dimension, whereas in the media, export supplies of Belarusian-made goods prevailed.

John Bolton's visit brought the level of political engagement with the United States to a higher level. At the same time, Minsk is looking for new instruments to intensify its cooperation with Washington.

In Ukraine, attempts continued by individual financial and industrial groups and lobbyists to safeguard their positions against Belarusian imports with the use of administrative leverage. In the backdrop, a more rational framework for cooperation between the two states is being shaped.

When it comes to security, Minsk is consistently seeking ways to cooperate with NATO and NATO's partners. One of the most significant aspects of cooperation is the planned expansion of Belarus's participation in peacekeeping effort. The militarization of the region around Belarus continues and is aggravated by the global confrontation between the U.S. and Russia; however, the current security status has remained fairly stable.

Yours respectfully,

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4 Relationship with Russia

8 Relationship with the European Union

11 Relationship with China

14 Relationship with the U.S.

17 Relationship with Ukraine

21 Security Barometer

30 Appendix 1
Catalogue of events underlying the relations development indices

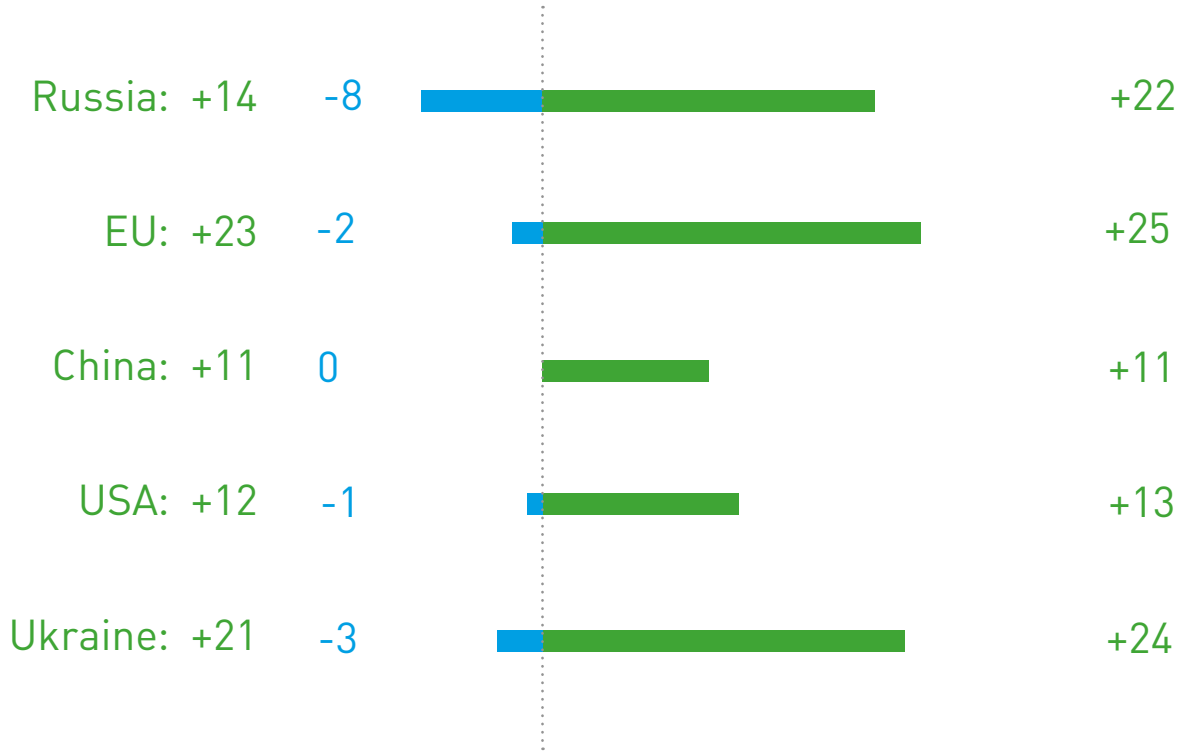
36 Appendix 2
Catalogue of events underlying the security indices

38 Appendix 3
Color scale of regional security tensions

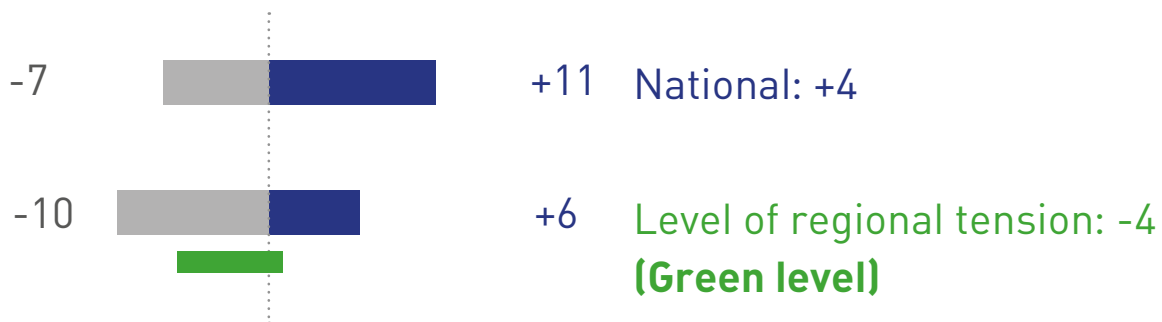
39 Authors

Minsk Dialogue
Council on International
Relations

Relations development indices:

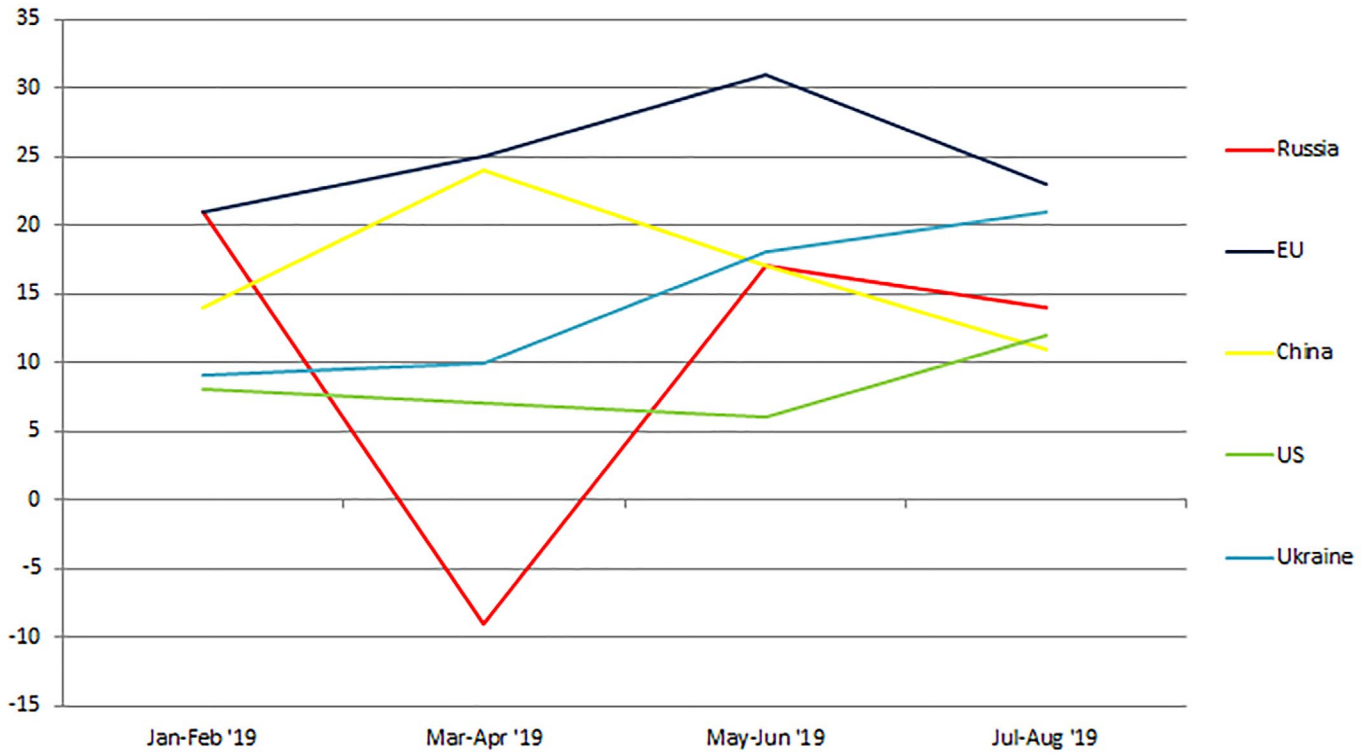


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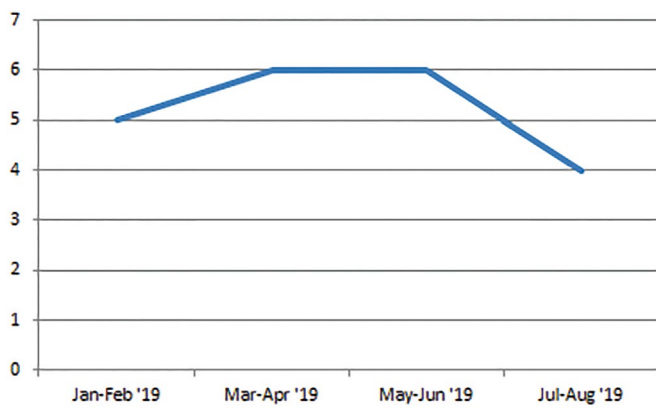


The green level indicates the presence of military activities, which do not pose a direct threat and will not necessarily lead to the escalation of tensions. Such a situation calls for cautious attention.

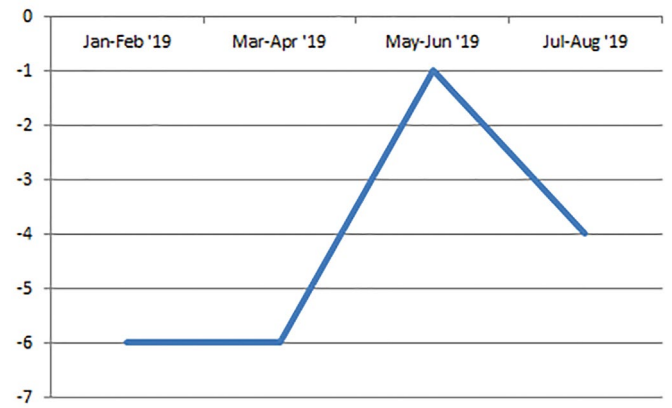
Dynamics of foreign policy indices



National security



Level of regional tension



Relationship with Russia

+22



-8

Resulting index: +14
Positive points: +22
Negative points: -8

Trends

1. The ultimatum-sounding bilateral agenda evolved into that based upon compromise.
2. The transit value of Belarus for Russia remains in the short run.
3. Big integration is replaced with a large number of smaller projects – sector-wise improvements are being introduced to the Union Treaty, without amending the parity principle.

Developments and processes

Political agenda

In July and August, compromise-seeking trends underpinned by lowered mutual expectations, which were captured in the previous report, continued and led to the replacement of the ultimatum-like agenda with that building on compromise.

Whereas in July, the Russian government's Dmitry Kozak delivered an ultimatum – negotiations for gas and oil supplies would be possible only after all of the integration issues were resolved — by the end of August, it had become clear that Russia would hardly enjoy a new independent route for its supplies to Germany before New Year, therefore the ultimatum-sounding approach to gas supply matters was becoming groundless. For its part, the Druzhba oil pipeline accident and the way Transneft (and for what it's worth, the Kremlin) deals with covering its counterparties' losses showed that Russia's allied guarantees were not robust, as Russia seems to behave more responsibly in its dealings with unallied partners.

However, even before it became clear that Russia had nothing up its sleeve to bolster "Medvedev's ultimatum", it had predictably split into two parts: the unification of a portion of trade and social regulations in the scope of the campaign to update the integration process within the framework of the Union Treaty, and traditional bargaining over the terms of oil and gas trade relying on the leverage available to both parties.

Union Treaty

Efforts to "revise" the Union Treaty transformed into work on the "development" of the Union Treaty in July-August. This focus shift in public communication of spokespeople for the working groups implies, in the first place, that attempts to amend the Treaty itself and thereby violate the principle of parity of both parties in making decisions with respect to Union integration would be abandoned.

According to the logic voiced by representatives of the governments of Belarus and Russia, before going over to deeper integration (including the establishment of supranational bodies) one should advance in integration at the grassroots level.

Therefore, the working groups responsible for deepening the integration process made up their mind to develop the so-called integration “roadmaps”, i.e., plans to bring together the framework conditions in respective segments of their engagement. Originally – at the start of July – plans had been reported to present 10 maps of this kind by the anniversary of the Union State, whereas by the end of August, the list of anticipated roadmaps had been expanded to 28.

In July and August, the parties repeatedly verified their approaches to the presentation of the Union’s achievements and plans originally slated for December 8 – at the level of heads of working groups, heads of government and heads of state. Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Belarus Dmitry Mezentshev appeared to be most expressive in presenting the outcome of those meetings: “I am absolutely positive that ahead of the 20th anniversary of the Union Treaty, the evaluation of the Treaty, its scope, and significance will be affirmed again at the highest level, at the level of our national leaders.”

In order for the anniversary of the Union not to be clouded by disputes, and for the national leaders to be able to verify its scale and significance, all matters of the bilateral framework that have not or cannot be agreed should be taken beyond the borderlines of the integration program and its roadmaps and tackled using customary methods, i.e. debate and disputes, but off the Union’s mainstream.

According to Siarhiej Rumas, the integration program submitted for approval to the heads of state is based on the “two countries – one market” assumption, which envisages equal terms of trade for economic agents, and does not contain any political issues. Most likely, it is lacking any specifics. It comprises a plan to implement 28 roadmaps for the synchronization of framework conditions in various economic segments (tax, fiscal, credit, energy, etc.). Apparently, in the best case scenario, the two presidents will approve the program and its roadmaps at the Supreme State Council of the Union State at the end of the year.

Oil

According to spokesman for Russia’s Foreign Ministry Grigory Karasin, Russia is not considering compensation for the tax maneuver, but it might ponder on ways to mitigate its impact on Belarus. The mechanism and size of this mitigation effort will be addressed in a package with other issues. The media believe that these ‘other issues’ should be understood as “to deepen integration”, a possibility that cannot be ruled out. But it is obvious that as long as other issues – the volume and price of transit to the EU for Russian oil traders, the terms of their cooperation with the Belarusian refineries, the terms of their gas sales in Belarus, cooperation in fuel supplies to Ukraine – remain attractive for the Russian oil sector, integration will seem to them to be quite deep.

Other effective leverage – in addition to appealing terms of cooperation – includes the manifestation (or, even better, the availability) of real alternatives as this cooperation is being phased down. Reports about the intention of Belarusian Oil Company (BOC) to take a license from the U.S. Treasury for the purchase of U.S. crude are still a demonstration. However, these intentions should not be considered unrealizable. If Russian crude price should go up to the global level for Belarus, why should it buy crude from Russia at all (the more so because it is of poorer quality compared with alternatives)? As for crude coming all the way from the U.S., the delivery price would be exorbitant, but the U.S.’ companies are also producing oil throughout Eurasia.

On August 1, Gorneltransneft Druzhba increased its oil pumping tariffs by 3.7% with the consent of Russia’s Transneft. However, as we pointed out in the previous report, it is highly likely that the decrease in pumping volumes through Belarus will persist, despite the fact that the aftermath of the accident at Druzhba has been effectively dealt with.

Compensation for other losses suffered by Belarus as a consequence of the Druzhba accident remains undecided. Meanwhile, the combined decrease in foreign currency proceeds in May-June reached almost 10%, and the main contributor to that decline was the loss caused by the reduction in export deliveries of oil products.

Anyway, Transneft has managed to tackle compensation issues only with Ukraine so far. Moreover, the Russian state-run monopoly clearly seeks to not only escape its responsibility for the accident, but also benefit from it by raising pumping rates, taking control of all the oil acceptance points, and imposing independent crude examination costs on Russian oil traders. Russian oil companies and industry experts slam Transneft for its irresponsibility, call on the government to intervene, and even Rosneft board member and Nord Stream 2 board member Gerhard Schröder voiced his criticism. Furthermore, Transneft is currently in conflict with the Russian Ministry of Finance over the amount of budget assignments. Nevertheless, the government does not seem to rush with its decisions regarding the Druzhba accident.

Apart from the lack of clarity concerning the compensation for the losses suffered by Transneft's counterparties, no answers have been given so far to the following questions: 1. How was it possible that 5 million tons of crude were polluted with reagents? 2. Who did this? 3. Where did the significant volumes of crude that were replaced with diluted and dirty oil disappear from the pipe? 4. How will this dirty oil be disposed of?

The indifference of the Russian authorities to these matters and Transneft's dodging its financial obligations will inevitably cause European consumers to cut their purchases of Russian crude.

Natural gas

The Belarusian Ministry of Energy expects¹ to have talks with Russia over the gas price in September–November and conclude them by December 8 – in the best case scenario – or before New Year. According to the minister, Viktor Karankievič, Belarus has prepared its proposals. These probably include suggestions to reduce Russia's transit tariff applied to natural gas supplies to Belarus. This issue is also considered within the EEU.

According to preliminary data shared by Ambassadors Uladzimir Siamaška and Dmitry Mezentsev, the window of opportunity is quite narrow for the negotiations of the terms of gas supply and transit starting in 2020. The price formula will not be revised.

The situation around the future natural gas contract is very complicated. As of August 31, Denmark had not granted its permission to construct the Nord Stream-2 pipeline in its territorial waters. Previously, representatives of Gazprom were saying that Denmark's permit received by the end of August would mean there was still a chance to complete the construction before the start of 2020. Therefore, Gazprom will have to try to agree gas transit to the EU with Ukraine and Belarus, given that Russia's main bargaining chip – Nord Stream-2 – will not be operational when the contract is supposed to be negotiated and ready to be signed.

Belarus may thus count upon having the same price level (about USD 130 per 1,000 cubic meters) for another two years.

However, the drop in natural gas prices in Europe and the slumping demand for Russian gas due to the launch of LNG plants in 2019 (the share of liquefied gas in the EU markets doubled to 20% from 10% in 2019) encourages Gazprom to raise prices for those consumers that, unlike in Europe, have no alternatives.

Therefore, in January–July 2019, Russian natural gas prices in the EU went down by 13%–16% from USD 246 per 1,000 cubic meters and still remain significantly higher than spot market prices – USD 208 vs. USD 130 per 1,000 cubic meters. During the same period, prices for buyers in the CIS increased by 9% to USD 163 per 1,000 cubic meters, and Russia's domestic prices edged up by 4%. Nevertheless, the cash gap – the difference between Gazprom's revenues and expenses – is projected at USD 7 billion by the end of 2019.

¹ Energy Ministry: active phase of talks with Russia over gas price expected in September–November (<https://news.tut.by/economics/651358.html>)

Belarus is currently the second-largest buyer of Russian pipeline gas (after Germany). Obviously, Gazprom will try to compensate for its losses in the EU markets at the expense of its current buyers that have no alternatives, primarily Belarus.

Industry and finance

Some progress has been made in promoting Belarusian-made products in Russia. The Forum of Regions resulted in an agreement that Belarus's BELAZ mine truck manufacturer would be included in the targeted program supporting exports of jointly made Russian–Belarusian products. Most likely, these are Russian federal programs to promote industrial exports, which replaced federal import substitution programs on July 1. The inclusion of Belarusian producers in such programs would be a great achievement for domestic manufacturers, made possible through the harmonization of industrial policies within the framework of the revision of the Union Treaty.

Furthermore, during the period under review, Rosselkhoznadzor food and produce watchdog lifted some of the restrictions originally imposed on Belarusian companies. For its part, the Ministry of Industry of Belarus, Rosagroleasing and VTB signed an agreement in August to include 80 Belarusian enterprises in the leasing support program. BELAZ became a supplier of 90-ton dump trucks to the Industrial Metallurgical Holding of the Russian Federation, while Belkommunmash became a supplier of trolleybuses to Novokuibyshevsk.

Another promising domain was discussed during Herman Gref's visit to Minsk and the High Technologies Park. Sberbank is already the largest foreign creditor of Belarusian enterprises, and engagement in the IT and personnel training for the industry would become a cherry on top of the package of agreed government policies within the Union State.

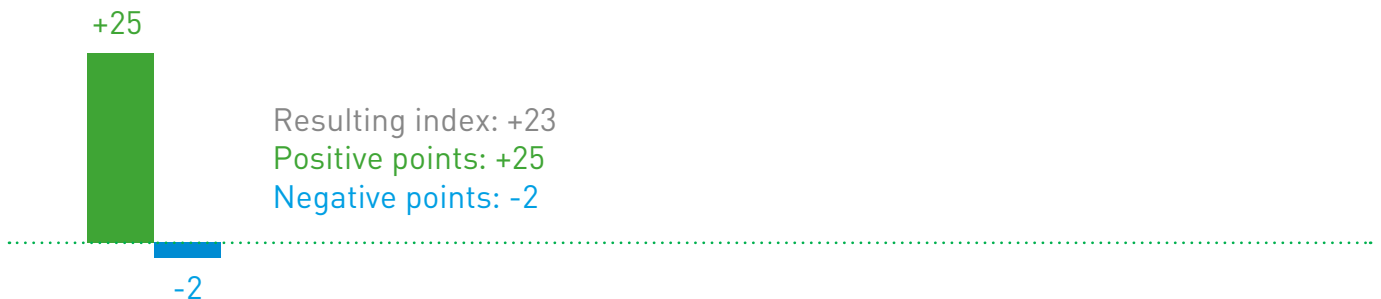
Having received no loans from Russia and EDB, Belarus placed USD 160 million worth of government bonds in Russia at 8.65%.

Forecast

As of early September, the likeliest scenario for the development of the Belarus–Russia relationship comprises the low degree of confrontation, confirmation of Union values for both countries, and celebration of the Union State anniversary at the end of the year. It is also quite probable that the current level of Russian energy prices will be preserved for Belarus for another year or two. Neither party is motivated to agree such issues for a longer period of time. Russia will have a better understanding of its place in the EU energy market and Belarus's role in energy supplies after 2021–2022, when Nord Stream-2 is likely to become operational, when Poland's LNG purchase plans have been partially executed, and when projects to deliver pipeline gas and oil to China have been implemented. Over the next two years, Belarus has a good chance to reduce the energy consumption of its economy and, consequently, its demand for Russian energy, as well as to test any possible alternatives.

At the same time, for reasons beyond Belarus's control, due to significant changes in Russia's position as a natural gas and oil seller in the EU markets in 2019, upcoming deadlines under Ukraine's contract and construction of Nord Stream 2, as well as uncertainty about the U.S. sanctions both in the capital markets and with respect to the developer of Nord Stream 2, Russia is likely to have escalating conflicts with the rest of the world. In this case, the two countries' plans to reach compromise will be harder to implement.

Relationship with the European Union



Trends

1. The uncharacteristically eventful summer months reflect the ongoing general trend towards further intensification of contacts and are associated with major reshuffle in the diplomatic corps.
2. The parties laud the results of their work in previous years and declare their willingness to convert the number of contacts into the quality of their relationships.

Developments and processes

The months of July and August are always the most uneventful ones, mostly due to traditional vacations and lack of any significant diplomatic and political events. This time, however, the summer months became an exception in the bilateral Belarus–EU framework. This is to a great extent a result of a concurrence of circumstances: several heads of diplomatic missions of the EU were replaced at once, which became reason enough for numerous contacts between the respective diplomats and top officials of Belarus.

Immediately after the 6th Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia, on July 22, President Aliaksandr Lukashenka had a meeting with Head of the EU Delegation to Belarus Andrea Wiktorin, who concluded her diplomatic mission. In recent years, the Belarusian president has made it a tradition to meet with outgoing ambassadors, whose contribution to the development of the bilateral track Minsk truly appreciates. At the same time, some political statements were made during the meeting¹:

- Belarus is ready to build up its policy dialogue with the EU and urges it not to wait for the conclusion of the upcoming political campaigns (parliamentary and presidential elections);
- Minsk relies on the EU's assistance in stabilizing the situation in Ukraine.

The latter may seem unexpected from the perspective of the bilateral Minsk–Brussels framework. However, it fully reflects both the diplomatic priorities of Belarus and the concerns of the country's leadership over regional and national security.

On August 7, the Belarusian president held a similar meeting with UK Ambassador Fionna Gibb, who was leaving Minsk. As during his conversation with Wiktorin, the Belarusian leader emphasized the remarkable progress made in recent years in the bilateral relationship and focused on the personal role of the diplomat. He also called for drawing on the recent

¹ Meeting with Head of the EU Delegation to Belarus Andrea Wiktorin, http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-glavoj-predstavitelstva-es-v-belarusi-andrea-viktorin-21596/

achievements to ensure further progress. Interestingly, Lukashenka requested London to help Belarus improve its relations with the U.S.²

Other senior Belarusian officials met with outgoing Wiktorin and Gibb as well, including the prime minister, speakers of both chambers of the Belarusian parliament, and the foreign minister, and all of them were emphatically positive. The state media covered the conclusion of their respective missions in a similar positive tonality.

In the light of the rotation of the EU ambassador, the progress of the relationship between Minsk and Brussels in recent years – which proved to be most active for the bilateral track – was sort of summarized for the general public. Since 2015, when Andrea Wiktorin was appointed ambassador, Minsk's political dialogue with both institutions and member states of the EU has markedly intensified and normalized. The EU's technical assistance to Belarus has augmented, along with economic cooperation. Specifically, trade turnover between Belarus and the EU increased from USD 14.4 billion in 2015 to USD 17.3 billion in 2018. Belarus's export supplies expanded from USD 8.6 billion to USD 10.2 billion.³ These indicators are naturally subject to change and fluctuations. However, when the results of recent years are summarized, the picture is positive.

There is the other side to this picture, though. For a long time, the two capitals have declared that they are "very close to the signing" of politically significant agreements – on visa facilitation and readmission, as well as on partnership priorities. However, these deals have not been signed yet. Work on the first two documents has been completed, and the only thing left is the formal signing procedure. As for the latter agreement, it is being blocked by Lithuania. The EU maintains that it is difficult to start talks about a new basic agreement – something that Minsk insists on – without legally enshrining partnership priorities.

The visit of Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs to Belarus became the highlight of the period. During the meeting, Siarhiej Rumas said that the two countries have a successful medium-term action plan, which was signed by the heads of government in 2018 and includes a broad range of areas for cooperation. The invitation for Lukashenka to visit Latvia still remains open. Traditionally, Minsk wishes to prepare a rich agenda for such a visit, including opportunities to approve specific projects (in particular, those pertaining to transit of oil products and cooperation in IT). One of the focal points is to enable the expansion of the use of seaport infrastructure and transport and logistics possibilities. Obviously, Minsk is viewing the possibility of broadening its logistics cooperation with Latvia amid issues in its relations with Lithuania, whose Klaipeda port is actively used for the transportation of Belarusian goods.

Another important topic for the period under review is Belarus's collaboration with European Investment Bank (EIB). The bank's management expects its total loan portfolio supporting projects implemented in Belarus to reach EUR 1 billion in a few years' time (currently the total amount of project financing with the involvement of EIB is EUR 335 million⁴). Special focus in the current cooperation programs is on support for small and medium businesses. EIB currently cooperates with Belagroprombank and Belarusbank in the implementation of such programs and would like to expand the list of its partners. Following Rumas's meeting with a vice-president of EIB, loan agreements were signed to finance the reconstruction of the M7 Minsk–Vilnius highway (EUR 110 million) and modernization of a water treatment system (EUR 66 million).

2 Meeting with Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Fiona Gibb, http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-chrezvyčajnym-i-polnomochnym-poslom-soedinnenogo-korolevstva-velikobritanii-i-severnoj-irlandii-21732/

3 On the meeting of Minister of Foreign Affairs Uladzimir Makiej with Head of the EU Delegation to Belarus, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/a3d33e634f096518.html

4 EIB's combined loan portfolio in Belarus may expand to EUR 1 billion, <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/obschij-kreditnyj-portfel-eib-v-belarusi-mozhet-uvlechitsja-do-1-mlrd-evro-356001-2019/>

Two events reported during the reviewed period should be given the minus sign. On July 26, the Lithuanian charge d'affaires was summoned to the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, where protest was declared against the interference of the Lithuanian authorities in a commercial transaction involving a Belarusian company. Minsk labels this interference as "openly unfriendly", "creating a dangerous precedent of the politicization of engagement in business."⁵ Lukashenka's refusal to personally participate in the memorial events in Warsaw marking the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War (despite the clear logic of his refusal) can also be treated as a negative development.

Forecast

The positive momentum propelling the relationship should remain during upcoming autumn. The expected signing of the agreements on visa facilitation and readmission can give them a politically important impetus. At the same time, the relationship should also be considered in the context of the conclusion of the work of the outgoing European Commission and preparations for the commencement of the new tenure. Therefore, one can hardly expect any "big" news within the Minsk–Brussels framework.

⁵ Report by the press service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f811fa3d4dbb3069.html

Relationship with China

+11



Resulting index: +11

Positive points: +11

Negative points: 0

Trends

1. Regional cooperation is the dominant track for the bilateral relationship.
2. Meticulous coverage of exports of Belarusian products in the official Belarusian media.

Developments and processes

No significant bilateral political developments were reported during the monitoring period. Regional cooperation became the most actively covered area of Belarusian–Chinese relations in July and August. Dialogue was especially intensive with China’s Chongqing and Guangdong; there were sporadic visits of Chinese officials to Brest and Homiel. All of those visits were painstakingly covered by the official Belarusian media, sharing information about the progress achieved in the campaign to expand the export of domestically-made Belarusian products to China as a whole or to certain Chinese provinces. Belarusian media outlets also published consistent reports focusing on the operation of the Consulate General of the Republic of Belarus in Shanghai.

After the opening of the Minsk Region office in Chongqing during the previous period under review, Deputy Chairman of the Minsk City Executive Committee Mikalaj Rahaščuk visited Chongqing again in August. A meeting was organized, attended by Belarus’s Ambassador Kiryl Rudy and Mayor of Chongqing Tang Liangzhi, to address, among other issues, the opening of the Consulate General of the Republic of Belarus in Chongqing in 2020.¹

In early July, the Great Stone China-Belarus Industrial Park played host to the scheduled Belt and Road Forum for Regional Cooperation and Development. Overall, the relationship between Belarus and China was not the keynote of the forum. In fact, it became a networking event to establish contacts with potential investors and financial institutions from other countries. The forum brought together officials, bankers, representatives of international companies and research institutes from 30 countries. The top-ranking representatives of the Chinese side were Vice Chairperson of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) He Wei and Vice Minister of Commerce Qian Keming, while the Belarusian side was represented by Deputy Head of the Presidential Executive Office Mikalaj Snapkoŭ and Minister of Economy Zmicier Kruty. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was notably well represented by Managing Director for Economics, Policy and Governance at the EBRD Mattia Romani.

The economic controversy between China and the U.S. had an impact on the plans of the Ministry of Finance of Belarus – at the start of August, it was reported that the ministry decided against the placement of Panda bonds due to the “high volatility in the Chinese

¹ Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 480 dated July 22, 2019 (<http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C21900480&p1=1>)

market.² Given the intensity and diversity of the China–U.S. disagreements and the time it might take to deal with them, Belarus will be unable to place its bonds for quite a long time, despite its high rating of AA+ assigned by a Chinese rating agency.

Great Stone

The Belt and Road Forum for Regional Cooperation and Development resulted in 11 new residents coming into the park (about USD 60 million in declared investments), bringing the total number to 56. A series of agreements and memoranda were signed on the sidelines of the forum: on the establishment of CJSC International Terminal Great Stone; on cooperation between the Ministry of Communication and IT and the Ministry of Education of Belarus, and Huawei office in Belarus; and a contract for cooperation with fDi Intelligence to look for and engage potential investors.

An important practical development for the Park's residents is the opening of the first CBIP residential building in August, built by China Railway 25th Construction Bureau Group and financed from China's technical and economic assistance.

Other projects

In the run-up to the Belt and Road Forum for Regional Cooperation and Development, First Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Aliaksandr Turčyn met with Chairman of the Board of China National Machinery Industry Co (Sinomach) Zhang Xiaolun to explore new mechanical engineering projects for the Great Stone Park. In July and August, the corporation opened the office of the China Machinery Industry Federation (CMIF). The park can therefore reckon to have a number of new projects with the engagement of the CMIF.

From July 12 through 21, Chinese children visited the Belarusian holiday camp Zubronok as part of the intergovernmental agreement on the terms and conditions for the rehabilitation of underage citizens. Belarusian children visited a similar camp in China.

In July and August, China's Greenland Holdings initiated activities to pave its way for working in Belarus. The company intends to facilitate supplies of Belarusian-made food (approximately worth USD 600 million over the next four years), build the Hotel Shanghai and contribute to the opening of the direct Shanghai–Minsk flight.

In August, a meeting with President Aliaksandr Lukashenka focused on landmark sports facilities, including a swimming pool and a football stadium, which will be built using funds from China's technical and economic assistance (about USD 235 million, anticipated construction period 2020-2023). According to Minister of Economy Zmicier Kruty, Belarus has already raised USD 225 million³ in such funds for other facilities over the past 12 years. The pool and the stadium will be designed and built by a general contractor from China in accordance with Chinese standards and applicable requirements of FINA / FIFA; the projects enjoyed certain exemptions and preferences^{4,5}. Snapkoŭ and Kruty are personally responsible for the construction of the swimming pool and the stadium.

2 Report by BelTA news service dated August 8, 2019 (<https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-ne-planiruet-razmeschat-obligatsii-na-evropejskom-i-kitajskom-rynkah-v-2019-godu-357645-2019/>)

3 ONT channel's story dated August 6, 2019 <https://ont.by/news/nacionalnyj-futbolnyj-stadion-i-bassejn-postroyat-v-minske-kitaj-pomozhet-kak-skoro-nachnyotsya-realizaciya-proekta-dolozhili-prezidentu>

4 Ordinance of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 307 dated 13 August 2019 <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P31900307&p1=1&p5=0>

5 Ordinance of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 306 dated 13 August 2019. <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P31900306&p1=1&p5=0>

Forecast

The observed intensification of regional cooperation at the level of local authorities and individual companies really matters, as it can ensure excellent results, including decent export figures, which Belarusian officials are supposed to attain as mandatory targets. However, the production capacity of Belarusian enterprises is notably limited, and the permanent increase in export deliveries to China may lead to tangible changes in the structure of exports and sales in the domestic market. Therefore, the increase in the planned volume of exports to China should be a well thought out balanced move both for the domestic market and for the country's foreign economic policy. New opportunities for Belarusian enterprises will likely open up at the next international exhibition of imports in Shanghai slated for this November, while the expanding Belarusian representation in China (the opening of regional offices, the new consulate general in Chongqing in 2020) may contribute to an improved understanding of the Chinese market and Chinese consumers.

Relationship with the U.S.

+13



-1

Resulting index: +12
Positive points: +13
Negative points: -1

Trends

1. Increased level of contacts at the political level.
2. Official Minsk is looking for new tools in order to intensify its cooperation with the United States, specifically the engagement of lobbyists.

Developments and processes

On July 9-10, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent visited Minsk for the second time this year. He had a meeting with Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej. No details of their negotiations were reported, and neither were the specifics of Kent's other meetings in Minsk. However, it can be assumed that the officials addressed the procedure for the return of the ambassadors and further normalization of the relations between the two countries. During his previous visit to Belarus in March, Kent promised that U.S. representatives would be visiting Belarus on a regular basis.¹ The developments reported during the two months under review confirm his words.

On July 9, Deputy Foreign Minister Alieh Kraŭčanka met with a delegation from the U.S. Department of Energy. According to the press service of the Foreign Ministry, the parties discussed joint efforts and prospects of further expansion of cooperation in nuclear non-proliferation and the global physical nuclear security regime, and exchanged their views on other relevant areas of cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear power.² Notably, the U.S. Embassy in Minsk focuses on a different aspect, namely, "cooperative efforts to expand the U.S.-Belarus bilateral relationship and continue our long-standing partnership on nuclear security."³

On July 16-18, Deputy Minister Kraŭčanka paid his third visit to Washington since the start of the year. The main purpose of his visit was to attend a conference on the promotion of religious freedom, initiated by the U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo. Attending the event were heads and senior officials representing Foreign Ministries from 115 countries, as well as religious leaders and activists. The conference became the largest human rights event ever organized in the U.S. Department of State. By participating in such events, Minsk, among other things, makes it clear that it does not turn down an invitation to engage in dialogue on human rights and is ready to discuss issues that it does not feel quite comfortable about.

1 U.S. Department of State on when the U.S. ambassador will return to Minsk, whether sanctions will be lifted, and what sort of threat Russia poses to Minsk (<https://news.tut.by/economics/628850.html>)

2 On the meeting of Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Alieh Kraŭčanka with a delegation from the U.S. Department of Energy (http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/dadbcc7e83d20c56.html)

3 Representatives from the U.S. Department of Energy visit Minsk (<https://by.usembassy.gov/be/representatives-from-the-department-of-energy-visit-minsk/>)

As part of the same visit, Kraŭčenka had a number of high-level meetings. In particular, he met with Fiona Hill, adviser to U.S. President Donald Trump and Senior Director for Europe and Russia on the National Security Council, Philip Ricker, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, and Brian McCauley, Director at the Office of Europe and Eurasia of U.S. Department of the Treasury.

On August 13-14, a delegation from the House of Representatives of the U.S. Congress led by Michael Quigley, the U.S. Representative for Illinois, visited Minsk. The congressman held talks with Deputy Foreign Minister Andrej Dapkiunas. Issues addressed included regional security and opportunities for the expansion of the Belarus–U.S. cooperation in trade, economic and humanitarian spheres.

It is notable that in its official message the U.S. Embassy said that one of the objectives of the visit was to “underscore the United States’ commitment to supporting the sovereignty and independence of Belarus.” Anyway, this is consistent with Washington’s approach to Eastern Europe, previously voiced by Assistant Secretary of State Wess Mitchell, who referred to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belarus as a “bulwark against Russian neo-imperialism.”

During the period under analysis, official Minsk publicly declared its interest in improving its relations with Washington, including through the help of third countries. For example, on August 7, Lukashenka said at a meeting with UK Ambassador Fionna Gibb that he counted on Britain’s support in the promotion of Belarus’s relationship with the United States.⁴

This interest in further normalization with the U.S. became increasingly relevant amid the intricate negotiations with Russia in the oil and gas sector. At the end of August, it was reported that Belarusian Oil Company had hired lobbyist David Gencarelli in the U.S. to obtain a license for purchasing U.S. oil and to ultimately have the U.S. lift its sanctions against Belarus.

To date, sanctions against a number of Belarusian enterprises (including the Belneftekhim concern) have been suspended, but a special permission from the U.S. government is required for U.S. companies to engage with Belarusian businesses in each particular case, which is a significant complication for trade and economic cooperation.

The highlight of the months of July and August was undoubtedly the visit of the U.S. President’s National Security Adviser John Bolton to Minsk

Bolton’s visit became the first one of such a high level for the bilateral relationship in the past two decades. It sort of underlines the first phase of the cautious policy of normalization pursued by the two countries since 2013.⁵

The main theme and tonality of the talks suggest that Washington is increasingly considering Belarus as an independent state with its own interests and foreign policy, with which it is possible to engage to address regional issues. During the visit, the Belarusian leadership once again voiced its interest in continuing to improve the relationship.

The format of the talks between the heads of the security councils of Belarus, Poland and Ukraine in the presence of the U.S. President’s National Security Advisor was also unprecedented.

At the same time, the visit of Trump’s advisor should rather be regarded as a familiarization trip, since no decisions or agreements were reached during the talks. Bolton’s almost immediate resignation following his Eastern European tour attests against the versions about some sort of negotiations for a “big deal” and options of Belarus’s reorientation towards the West. Nevertheless, it is hard to overestimate this visit for the Belarus–U.S. relationship. This

⁴ Lukashenka hopes to enlist support of the UK in furthering Belarus’s relationship with the U.S. (<https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-rasschityvaet-na-podderzhku-velikobritanii-v-razvitii-otnoshenij-belarusi-s-ssha-357495-2019>)

⁵ For more details on Bolton’s visit see the research paper “Bolton in Minsk: is he mission possible?” (<http://minskdialogue.by/research/opinions/bolton-v-minske-vypolnima-li-missii>)

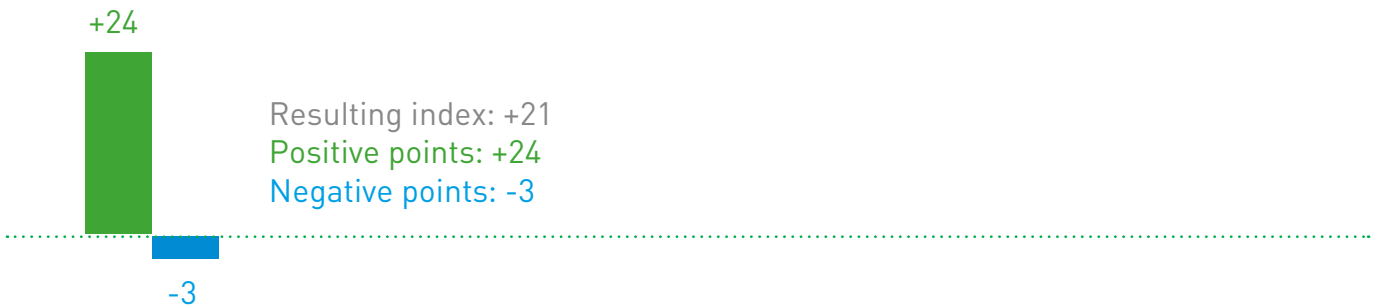
visit alone will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the continued policy of normalization and improvement of the overall atmosphere of engagement between the two countries.

Public statements by representatives of the Belarusian authorities condemning the withdrawal of the U.S. from the INF Treaty can be regarded as a negative development. It should be noted, however, that Minsk tried its best to pick the right words and avoiding harsh negative assessments.

Forecast

Contacts and communication within the U.S. track will continue to enhance. As the mechanism for the return of the ambassadors is approved, diplomatic interaction will intensify. There will hardly be any immediate economic effect from the normalization due to the lack of U.S.' interest in the Belarusian market and insufficient competitiveness of Belarusian-made goods in the U.S. market. Nevertheless, positive trends will prevail in the trade and economic sector as well.

Relationship with Ukraine



Trends

1. Attempts of some financial and industrial groups and lobbyists to protect their positions in the Ukrainian market against Belarusian imports continued with the use of administrative leverage.
2. At the same time, a more rational framework for cooperation between the two states is being formed. Minsk and Kyiv are close to developing algorithms to ensure rapid response to challenges and/or media attacks.
3. Official Minsk has actively demonstrated its willingness to further cooperation.

Developments and processes

Politics

The month of July became a period of active exchange of positive signals at the highest level. On the one hand, the Belarusian and Ukrainian leaders demonstrated their intentions to promote cooperation between the two countries, while on the other hand, they had several substantive meetings focusing on practical aspects of collaboration:

- On July 2, Aliaksandr Lukashenka received an official invitation to visit the Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine in Zhytomyr;
- On July 3, the Belarusian leader received congratulations from Volodymyr Zelensky and Leonid Kuchma on Belarus's Independence Day. The Ukrainian president voiced his ambition to develop the relationship between the two countries, calling it a "priority" for Kyiv;
- On July 8, during a televised address related to attempts to organize a live link-up between Ukrainian and Russian television channels, President Zelensky shared his idea of expanding the Normandy format of negotiations and having another round in Minsk.¹ His Belarusian counterpart supported the initiative and reacted on the same day;
- On July 9, Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus Alieh Bielakonieŭ visited Kyiv, where he met with his counterpart, Ruslan Khomchak. The sides addressed the engagement and cooperation between the two agencies;
- On July 10, Secretary of the Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine Andriy Halushchak and Minister of Transport of Belarus Aliaksiej Avramienka held talks in Minsk;
- On July 15, Belarus's Ambassador to Ukraine Ihar Sokal said in an interview with BelTA that there was considerable potential for the development of Belarus-Ukraine cooperation;

¹ Address by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky (<https://www.president.gov.ua/videos/zvernennya-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelenskogo-1593>)

- On July 31, the presidents of Belarus and Ukraine had a telephone conversation, which was later praised by both Lukashenka² and Zelensky.³

August was less eventful. This was largely due to the “dead” political period in Ukraine, as well as due to the holiday season. However, several practical events took place during the final month of the summer, and the end of August was marked by several extremely important political signals.

- From August 5 to 8, representatives of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence conducted routine inspections of Belarusian military facilities;
- On August 17, Ukraine Culture Days were organized in Minsk;
- On August 24, President Lukashenka congratulated his counterpart Zelensky on Ukraine’s Independence Day, saying that he expects to develop a “strategic partnership” between the two countries⁴;
- The day before, on August 23, during his meeting with the premier, the Belarusian president spoke about making available “assistance to Ukraine”, which Zelensky had requested previously.⁵ What was implied here was perhaps the increase in supplies of oil products and electricity – which in fact became obvious later in August, as respective developments took place;
- On August 31, Zelensky met with his Polish counterpart Andrzej Duda and mentioned the E-40 waterway project when commenting on cooperation priorities – the plan envisaging the restoration of the Trans-European transport corridor, which is of extreme importance for Belarus;
- On the same day, a meeting of the heads of the Security Councils of Belarus, Poland, Ukraine and the National Security Advisor to the U.S. President took place in Warsaw. For the first time ever, regional security issues were discussed in such a format.

Other positive signals include the work of the Ukrainian police, who detained the arsonists of the asphalt and concrete factory controlled by Belarus’s SMT No. 8, which fulfils contracts for the construction and repair of roads in Ukraine. The incident was reported in February 2019 and caused the Belarusian Embassy to officially appeal to the Ukrainian authorities.

In July and August, the two countries demonstrated new approaches to resolving conflicts. For example, on July 27, an attempt was made to spread information via the Ukrainian media about the alleged concentration of Russian troops in the Chernobyl area in the territory of Belarus. The author of that deliberate “leak” was a political expert close to Petro Poroshenko’s team. However, in contrast to previous periods, the response of the authorities and security forces was quite discreet. The 61st mountain brigade issued a statement that it would check the facts and be ready to react in case of a real threat.⁶ The subsequent inspection of the Ukrainian military soon took the issue off the table.

The second episode is associated with business and the lobbying of Ukrainian fertilizer producers. The Ukrainian Chemists Union asked the authorities to introduce import quotas.⁷

2 Lukashenka, Zelensky address preparations for the Forum of Regions and situation in Donbas (<https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-obsudil-s-zelenskim-podgotovku-k-forumu-regionov-i-situatsiju-v-donbasse-356727-2019/>)

3 Volodymyr Zelensky, Aliaksandr Lukashenka discuss preparations for the Second Forum of Regions of Ukraine and Belarus (<https://www.president.gov.ua/news/volodimir-zelenskij-ta-oleksandr-lukashenko-obgovorili-pitan-56657>)

4 Lukashenka relies on stronger strategic partnership with Ukraine (<https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-rasschityvaet-na-ukreplenie-strategicheskogo-partnerstva-s-ukrainoj-359469-2019/>)

5 Lukashenka says Zelensky asked Minsk for support (<https://interfax.com.ua/news/political/608889.html>)

6 Facebook account of the 61st light infantry brigade (<https://www.facebook.com/61opebr/photos/a.668906723579563/708362029634032/?type=3&theater>)

7 Ukrainian Chemists Union proposes to impose quotas on import of fertilizers (<https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/603702.html>)

The appeal caused the Interdepartmental Commission for International Trade at the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to launch an anti-dumping investigation into importers with respect to two commodities at once.⁸ These efforts amid the upcoming change in the composition of the commission (and the Cabinet itself) look more like an attempt to secure a competitive edge. The Belarusian side organized a visit of heads of fertilizer manufacturers to Ukraine six days after the probe was reported. This promptness and orderly response can prove quite effective.

Therefore, it would be safe to say that both the Ukrainian and Belarusian sides have started exchanging first signals of an active policy aimed to prevent disputes in bilateral relations.

Another fact that formally belongs to business and economy should nevertheless be described in the political portion of the review. The owner of the Ukrainian magazine Focus, Anatoliy Yevtukhov, confirmed the sale of Focus (the deal has not been closed yet) to the owner of Belarus's BF Group, Artur Hranc. The Ukrainian media deal is interesting from the political perspective, as Focus is one of the most influential political media in Ukraine. The printed version is published as a political glossy magazine, whereas the electronic version is an information and analysis portal. A Belarusian businessman controlling such a media resource implies excellent opportunities for Belarus to influence the Ukrainian media.

Economy

Some developments that may prove critical for the economic engagement of the two countries took place during the period under review:

- Upon the launch of the electricity market, Ukraine started to import electricity from Belarus. That was a critical decision, especially against the backdrop of the anticipated decrease in power generation by the Ukrainian power system and planned launch of the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant;
- The debut run of the Klaipeda–Kyiv container train was organized. The Lithuania–Belarus–Ukraine container train project was a subject of negotiations back in 2018. The corresponding agreement was signed in May 2019. The announced frequency is twice a week. The project may link the ports of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, thereby strengthening the position of Belarus as a transit country;
- Amid restrictions applied to Russian fuel supplies to the Ukrainian market, Belarus is increasing its diesel fuel exports and has a chance to further expand its market share to 50%-55% by the end of 2019.

The decline in the Ukrainian passenger transport market caused by the pause in the implementation of the EBRD's programs in Ukraine resulted in sales contracts of MAZ and Belkommunmash. Sixty-four Belarusian buses will be delivered to Mariupol, whereas Belkommunmash will produce a batch of trolleybuses with an autonomous travel capability for Dnipro (former Dnipropetrovsk).

When it comes to trade restrictions, oppositely directed processes were reported. On the one hand, the restrictive measures against the supply of Belarusian fiberboard to the Ukrainian market expired. On the other hand, antidumping measures were introduced with respect to the supply of matches from Belarus.

The situation kept developing around the anti-dumping probe into fertilizer supplies from third countries. However, in contrast to the cases we described above and the situation with the restrictive measures against cement, the Belarusian side has been showing an active position in the fertilizer-related matter. Specifically, directors of chemical enterprises from Belarus visited Ukraine to meet with stakeholders, including representatives of the Cabinet of Ministers. This policy may be successful; however the visit may have to be repeated due to the change of power in Ukraine and the reformatting (including reorganization and partial liquidation) of ministries.

⁸ Interdepartmental Commission for International Trade makes a series of decisions to protect Ukrainian manufacturers (<http://www.me.gov.ua/News/Print?lang=uk-UA&id=28dc9692-178b-4ef4-a140-0c1c002cfbda>)

Therefore, despite some negative signals, given the upcoming Forum of Regions in October 2019, the Republic of Belarus can arguably significantly intensify its cooperation processes with Ukraine within the next three or four months. Moreover, the position of the Ukrainian authorities can be formulated as “relations with neighbors are a priority.”

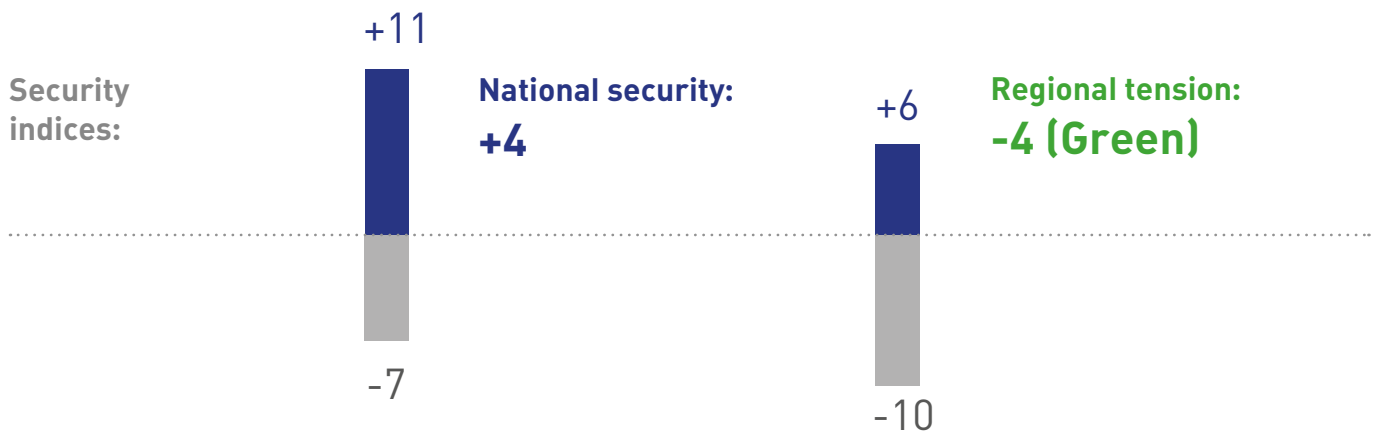
Forecast

The promotion of cooperation between the two countries will be taking place within the context of aggravated confrontation between Ukrainian financial and industrial (oligarchic) groups and the authorities. Given that the key media outlets are controlled by oligarchs, this implies certain risks of new media attacks, which will accompany attempts of administrative confrontation in some areas. While building a policy on Ukraine, one should also take into account the heterogeneity of the new power elites and the internal struggle within Zelensky’s entourage. The oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskyi (his spheres of interest include finance, metallurgy, oil) has not managed to achieve dominance in the new president’s team and will try to strengthen his positions. Rinat Akhmetov (metals, energy, transport) will seek to maintain his positions using political leverage. Victor Pinchuk, who has influence over the Golos political party, will try to shape the government’s decision-making. The oligarchs Medvedchuk, Firtash, Novynskyi who are close to Russia and “pro-European” former Ukrainian president Poroshenko are all in a rigid opposition to Zelensky. This tangle of contradictions and confrontation may have a negative impact on the development and implementation of long-term projects.

Nevertheless, given the overall configuration of the forces, Belarus and Ukraine have a window of opportunity to elaborate a new neighborhood policy and foster long-term cooperation.



Security Barometer: status of national and regional security



Trends

1. Minsk places emphasis on the available domestic resources in ensuring its national security. This is evidenced by the national leadership's commitment to taking risky steps to provide the required number of draftees for the army amid Russia's minimized arms supplies.
2. The Belarusian government is consistently seeking ways to cooperate with NATO and its partners. In the meantime, NATO is increasing its presence and builds infrastructure almost all along the Belarusian border.
3. The Belarusian leadership promotes cooperation with the West towards a greater involvement in peacemaking operations, being eager to contribute to the resolution of the conflict in the east of Ukraine – this ambitious mission may prove rewarding and is therefore a driver of the sluggish army reform.
4. The militarization of the region around Belarus continues, gathering pace due to Russia's global confrontation with the United States. The current security situation has remained quite stable, though. The parties to the conflict in eastern Ukraine have managed to prevent its escalation. Russia vaguely voiced its willingness to discuss the withdrawal of troops from Moldova, and NATO and its key members and partners were promoting their security cooperation with Belarus, communicating at the highest level.

1. National security

Overall status of national security

On July 24, President Lukashenka enacted the law “On amendments to the laws ensuring the effective operation of the national army.” It was adopted urgently, and will already be in effect by the time of conscription this autumn. The law reduces the number of education-related draft deferment reasons, and enables military enlistment offices to independently compile lists of draft dodgers banned from travelling abroad. The new law will affect a large number of young people. Lukashenka completely supports the novelty, seeing no other option. “Do you want to become part of Russia, so that it will protect us? You do not. And neither do I,” he said, addressing critics of the law.¹

“The law will not result in an increase in the numerical strength of the armed forces by a single person in peacetime,” says the Ministry of Defense. “This concerns exclusively the recruitment of compulsory-duty servicemen.” Since 2016, the ministry has been making efforts to increase motivation for military service. Furthermore, since 2014, those who have not served in the army have been entitled to enlist as contract soldiers, and, starting this year, serve in the Interior Ministry troops. Nevertheless, over the past decade, the number of conscript personnel has almost halved for objective reasons. Specifically, around 10,000 people were drafted into the army and other security agencies during each spring and autumn draft in the period from 2005 to 2017, and there were only about 4,200 in the spring draft of 2019.²

Minsk cautiously responds to accusations and comments on the recent developments in the region. At a briefing focusing on the Union Shield exercise, Chief of General Staff Alieh Bielakonieŭ said that major NATO exercises, such as Anaconda-2018 and Dragon-2019, attested to NATO’s considering “force response to crises and conflicts”, and there is sufficient reason to talk about “a shift in emphasis from defensive/special to defensive/offensive actions.” He emphasized, though, that “Belarus sees no threat from the West and is making no accusations of aggressive intents, unlike the case back in 2017, when Belarus itself was accused before the West exercise.” Bielakonieŭ also pointed to the fact that Union Shield-2019 would be held far from the European borders of Russia to avoid aggravation.³ There is a possibility that Minsk might have insisted on the change of location.

Belarus is cautious not only because it borders on three NATO members or candidates, but also because Moscow is reluctant to assist its ally in building its defense capacity. Only very recently has Minsk made headway in the purchase of Russian jet fighters. (The terms of supplies have not been made public so far.) In August, the Irkutsk Aviation Plant showed the first two Su-30SM fighters intended for Belarus. Reportedly, they were commissioned as far back as March. Belarus entered into the supply contract in 2017 and expects to receive 12 fighters by the end of 2020.⁴

1 President to critics of the “law of deferments”: “Do you want to become part of Russia, so that it will protect us? You do not. And neither do I” (<https://news.tut.by/economics/644035.html>)

2 No one stands back when it comes to defending Motherland (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/aktualno/the_defense_work_nationwide/)

3 Union Shield-2019: Firsthand information (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/aktualno/union_shield_2019_from_the_horse_s_mouth/)

4 Rossiyskaya Gazeta: Super-maneuverable fighter jets assembled for Belarus, August 19 (<https://www.sb.by/articles/rossiyskaya-gazeta-dlya-belarusi-sobrali-sverkhmanevrennye-istrebiteli.html?fbclid=IwAR1KBUwnb3Y9Xlx5VXe69-UZ4UOgWD7jdA1mIKjnbxXwuYx9087Rqq4sA6A>)

Army training

In early July, the Air Force and Air Defense Command held a two-day workshop conference on the application of unmanned aerial systems in air force and air defense operations and countering UAVs. Attending the event were representatives of security agencies and domestic enterprises engaged in designing and manufacturing drones.⁵

An operational-special exercise with the Signal Corps took place on July 8-12 under the supervision of Chief Signal Officer Major General Alieh Miščenka. It involved over 1,500 personnel and 350 units of equipment of Belarus and officers of the signal section of the Western Military District of Russia.⁶ An exercise with electronic warfare units was held on July 9–11 to test the performance of communication systems exposed to jamming in a hostile reconnaissance environment. It was officially reported that “almost the entire range of the EW equipment is being manufactured and upgraded in Belarus.”⁷

A demonstrational comprehensive tactical exercise with live firing was conducted in the second week of July with an airborne battalion squad of the 103rd airborne brigade. It included a stream crossing, finding and blockading a hostile unit in a populated locality, and an urban combat operation. Back in the early 2010s, the military were mainly trained to operate in marshy and forested terrain. The focus has shifted to urban combat in the past few years.⁸

As part of the scheduled combat readiness exercise, on July 23-26, several units of the 336th rocket artillery brigade and the 465th missile brigade were put on alert to fulfill the assigned task. The program included an accelerated 400-km march of units equipped with the Tochka-U tactical guided missile systems and Polonaise multiple rocket launchers, a missile strike control practice, quick repositioning, and repelling of an attack of a sabotage-reconnaissance group.⁹

In early August, the Minsk City Executive Committee hosted a multi-stage training session with the management of the Minsk regional territorial troops supervised by First Vice Mayor Fiodar Rymašeŭski. The officials practiced accumulation and processing of information on staffing and comprehensive logistics support for the troops.

In early August, the 30th railway brigade took part in a command-and-staff exercise under the supervision of head of the Transport Support Department of the Ministry of Defense Major General Jury Šaplaŭsky. Among other things, the brigade practiced rebuilding of damaged bridges and railways.¹⁰

A tactical exercise with an infantry battalion of the 120th infantry brigade reinforced with a tank company, a howitzer self-propelled artillery battery, a mortar platoon and a combined air defense group was held in early August. The program included a live firing practice.¹¹

The first stage of an operational-tactical exercise of the air force and air defense of Belarus took place in mid-late August at the Russian Ashuluk training ground. The military used the S-300, Tor-M2 and Buk air defense systems. Firing in motion during quick repositioning was practiced for the first time in the history of the national army.¹²

5 In the sky and on land (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/boevaya_podgotovka/in_heaven_and_on_earth1/)

6 Ministry of Defense informs (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/obyavleniya/the_ministry_of_defence_informs1/)

7 Call the EW to blind the enemy (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/boevaya_podgotovka/to_the_enemy_blind_call_ew/)

8 Squad, to the battle! (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/boevaya_podgotovka/department_to_fight/)

9 Never caught unprepared (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/boevaya_podgotovka/check_not_caught_off_guard/)

10 No limit to perfection (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/boevaya_podgotovka/limit_to_no_improvement/)

11 Battalion calls fire (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/boevaya_podgotovka/battalion_asks_for_a_light/)

12 Sky shield tested for hardness (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/boevaya_podgotovka/celestial_shield_tested/)

The Belarusian-Russian-Egyptian Defenders of Friendship-2019 tactical anti-terror exercise was held on August 26-28 in the Ryazan Region of Russia. It involved over a thousand personnel and 100 units of military hardware. Belarus delegated an air assault battalion of the 38th air assault brigade.

A cannon self-propelled artillery battalion of the 51st artillery brigade took part in a tactical exercise with live firing in late August at the Asipovičy training ground.¹³

The engagement of the Belarusian army in civilian activities was minimized this year, which is a positive development. In late July, 60 servicemen and 50 vehicles were provided by the 11th infantry brigade and the 147th surface to air-missile regiment to transport harvested crops in the Hrodna and Mahilioŭ Regions.¹⁴

The national military education system was further enhanced in August. A military education department was set up at the Belarusian State Technological University to train junior commanders and reserve officers. As of today, there are military departments at seven universities and military schools at six. Over the past three years, 100 graduates (around 10% of reserve officers) have been called up every year.¹⁵

International contacts of the Belarusian army and security agencies

On July 9, Chief of General Staff, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Ruslan Khomchak had a brief meeting with Chief of General Staff of Belarus Alieh Bielakonieŭ in Kyiv. They discussed regional security matters, risks and challenges the states need to respond to, and bilateral military cooperation.¹⁶

On July 9-11, representatives of the armed forces of Belarus and Kazakhstan met in Minsk to share expertise in the manufacture and application of new digital communication means.

On July 10-12, a delegation led by Chief of General Staff, First Deputy Minister of Defense of Belarus Alieh Bielakonieŭ took part in the UN Conference on Peacebuilding. On the sidelines of the conference, Bielakonieŭ met with Chief of General Staff of Italy Enzo Vecciarelli, who said that Italy would consider the engagement of a Belarusian unit in one of the UN missions.¹⁷ Bielakonieŭ also held meetings with the heads of the delegations of the UK, Germany and Serbia.

A regular session of the Joint Board of the Belarusian KGB and the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service was held on July 10 in Brest. "Among other things, we discussed attempts of Western countries, their intelligence services, to interfere in the internal affairs of our states in a quite aggressive manner," FIS chief Sergei Naryshkin said. "We understand that we need to step up our cooperation and build up capacities of our security services."¹⁸ KGB Chief Valier Vakulčyk showed more continence in his speech.

On July 26, during his official visit to Belarus, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Edgars Rinkēvičs met with Minister of Defense of Belarus Andrej Raŭkoŭ. Latvian Armed Forces Commander Leonīds Kalniņš made an official visit to Belarus on August 18-19.

13 Hyacinths call fire (<https://www.mil.by/ru/news/91510/>)

14 Army extends helping hand to farmers (https://vsr.mil.by/rubrics/vremya_sobytiya_lyudi/army_agricultural_workers/)

15 Now at BSTU as well. New universities with military departments on the list (<https://news.tut.by/society/648932.html>)

16 Meeting of chiefs of General Staffs of Belarus and Ukraine (<https://www.mil.by/ru/news/89222/>)

17 Belarus and Italy explore peacemaking cooperation opportunities. (<https://www.mil.by/ru/news/89334/>)

18 Belarus and Russia need to strengthen cooperation and capacities of security agencies (<https://www.mil.by/ru/news/89241/>)

Chief of General Staff of Serbia Milan Mojsilović visited Belarus on August 13-16. He assessed the progress of the upgrade of the MiG-29 jets handed to Serbia.

On August 30, U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton met with President Lukashenka in Minsk and took part in a meeting with State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus Stanislau Zas, National Security Bureau chief Paweł Soloch and Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Oleksandr Danyliuk at the National Security Bureau in Warsaw on August 31.¹⁹

¹⁹ Secretary of State of the Security Council of Belarus Stanislau Zas meets with President Trump's advisor in Poland (<https://news.tut.by/economics/651689.html>)

2. Regional Security

Overall situation in the region

One more ceasefire took effect in eastern Ukraine on July 21. The sides to the conflict resumed hostilities in early August in violation of the previous ceasefire, which escalated the situation in Donbas and complicated diplomatic efforts once again. This puts the work of the tripartite contact group to resolve the situation in Donbas in question, and the Ukrainian government warned that it would suspend its membership in the group until the Normandy format summit, for which there is still no schedule.²⁰ Later, the situation improved, and the planned meeting of the Contact Group took place in Minsk on August 21.

On August 24, President of Moldova Igor Dodon said that Russia proposed to dispose of the ammunition stored in Transnistria. This can lead to the withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova, since the problem of ammunition inventories was an excuse for Russian military presence there.

The bargaining with the Kremlin and the results of Bolton's visits to the countries of the region seem to have motivated U.S. President Donald Trump to reconsider the decision to allocate USD 250 million in military assistance to Ukraine in 2020, which he made in late August. The money cannot be used until the revision has been completed.

The continuing demolition of global arms control can severely affect the situation in the region. On August 2, the United States withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), and, on August 19, Pentagon announced tests of the 500-km land-fired Tomahawk cruise missile. The applied MK41 launcher can also be used in the Aegis Ashore missile defense system in Poland and Romania. Moscow said that the Aegis Ashore could be used to launch cruise missiles, which violated the INF Treaty in the first place. The Russian president said his country would not get dragged into the "destructive arms race", but would by all means respond to Washington's acts. The Kremlin believes that the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, which expires in February 2021, is also under the threat of becoming defunct.²¹

Exercises and confidence building measures in the region

The final stage of the Baltic Protector exercise in Estonia with the multinational expeditionary forces led by the United Kingdom ended on July 3-7. The military rehearsed the delivery of seaborne reinforcement to the Estonian army (the culmination of the exercise) and defense of Saaremaa. The program of the exercise that began in May included maneuvers of 44 ships and around 4,000 personnel in the territorial waters of Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the Baltic States.²²

The 22nd Ukrainian-American Sea Breeze exercise took place on July 1-12 in the south-west of Ukraine. It involved contingents of 19 NATO members and partners, over 3,000 personnel, 28 warships and supply vessels and 27 aircraft. For the first time, the military practiced river operations, particularly countering attempts to block the sea gate on the Danube River.²³

A bilateral command and staff exercise with the North and East Operational Commands

20 Kommersant: Explosive situation in Donbas (https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4054214?from=main_5)

21 The SNF hour is upon us: Vladimir Putin to respond to American cruise missile tests (https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4072152?from=four_mir)

22 Allies rehearse delivery of seaborne reinforcement to Estonian army; prime minister hails Baltic Protector international cooperation (<https://rus.delfi.ee/daily/estonia/foto-i-video-soyuzniki-otrabotali-pribytie-voennoj-pomoschi-estonii-s-morya?id=86742721>); Prime minister hails Baltic Protector international cooperation (<https://news.err.ee/958280/prime-minister-hails-baltic-protector-international-cooperation>)

23 Ukrainian-American Sea Breeze-2019 kickoff ceremony in Odessa (<http://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2019/07/01/v-odesi-vidbulasya-urochista-czeremoniya-vidkrittya-ukrainsko-amerikanskih-navchan-si-briz-2019/>)

and the Center and East Air Commands, airborne assault troops and task units of other defense forces was held on July 23-25 under the supervision of the Ukrainian land forces commander. The military worked on operation planning and troop management during air strikes, land operations, air support for troops, and reconnaissance.²⁴

On August 1–9, Russia conducted the Ocean Shield-2019 exercise in the Baltic Sea with 49 ships and motorboats, 20 support vessels, 58 aircraft and over 10,000 personnel provided by the Northern and Baltic Fleets managed by the commander-in-chief of the Russian Navy.

Ukraine’s naval aviation practiced search and rescue and anti-submarine operations in a week-long exercise in early August over the Black Sea. Also, in early August, Ukraine held an exercise with a tactical aviation brigade in the Khmelnytskyi region.

On August 5-13, Latvia hosted the Reaper Raider exercise of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group. The military were trained in conducting airborne operations using U.S. Army helicopters. The exercise involved the NATO units deployed in Latvia and units of the Latvian and American armies.²⁵ The exact scale of the exercise is unknown.

On August 8, the Latvian Ministry of Defense organized an exercise, in which employees of banks and other financial institutions were trained in countering Russia’s attempts to undermine the national finance system in conditions of hybrid warfare.²⁶

A series of Namejs-2019 maneuvers is taking place August 12 through October 6 inside and beyond training grounds in all of Latvia’s regions. The goal is to assess the preparedness of all segments of the Latvian army to safeguard national security both independently and jointly with NATO’s allied forces. Together with the police, border guards, local authorities, reservists and volunteers, the military undergo training that is divided into two parts: countering hybrid threats (August and the first half of September) and responding to conventional threats.²⁷ Details are unavailable in the public domain.

Meanwhile, Belarus implemented eight confidence-building measures provided for by international agreements (see Table 1).

Table 1. Confidence-building measures under bilateral agreements on the confidence- and security-building measures in supplement to the Vienna Document 2011, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Treaty on Open Skies

Date of inspection	Composition of the delegation	Inspected state	Note
July 8-12	Belarus, Russia	Lithuania	Observation flight under Open Skies Treaty
July 16	Germany, UK	Belarus	Inspection of unit #54804
From July 29 to August 1	Poland	Belarus	Inspection of a district and the 38th air assault brigade
From July 30 to August 1	Belarus	Lithuania, Latvia	

24 Bilateral command and staff exercise in Ukraine (<http://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2019/07/26/u-zs-ukraini-vidbu-lisya-dvostoronni-komandno-shtabni-navchannya/>)

25 Latvijā notiek gaisa taktiskās pārvietošanās vingrinājums “Reaper Raider” (<https://www.mil.lv/lv/zinas/latvija-notiek-gaisa-taktiskas-parvietosanas-vingrinajums-reaper-raider>)

26 Jamie Dettmer, Baltic States Increase Efforts to Identify Russian Spies (<https://www.voanews.com/europe/baltic-states-increase-efforts-identify-russian-spies>)

27 Sākas Nacionālo bruņoto spēku militāro mācību cikls “Namejs 2019” (<https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates/sakas-nacionalo-brunoto-speku-militaro-macibu-cikls-namejs-2019>)

Date of inspection	Composition of the delegation	Inspected state	Note
August 5-8	Ukraine	Belarus	Inspection of a district and the 38th air assault brigade
August 14-16	Latvia	Belarus	Inspection of the 6th infantry brigade
August 19-23	Belarus	Poland	Two inspections of the 21st mountain infantry brigade (Rzeszów and Jarosław)
August 26-29	Poland, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, U.S. and France	Belarus	Inspection of the 231st artillery brigade

Military presence in the region

In July, the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group in Latvia received reinforcements from Italy and the United States. The number of its main battle tanks, including the Abrams M1A2 SEPv2 and Ariete tanks, has doubled. NATO says this is a temporary measure for the next two months.²⁸

Warsaw's plans can have a more far-reaching effect on the configuration of forces in the region. Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Błaszczak said that army enlargement was one of the national priorities. "We have a little more than 100,000 soldiers, about 120,000 if we count the territorial defense troops. We need more than 200,000," he said. The minister specified that "the potential threat comes from the East", and therefore, "Poland is forming a division stationed east of the Vistula."²⁹

Lithuania is also busy building up its army. Chief of Defense Valdemaras Rupšys, who was appointed in July, said that the completion of the formation of the Žemaitija infantry brigade was one of his priorities.³⁰ It is one of the three brigades of the Lithuanian land forces started in 2016 with headquarters in Klaipėda.

Deployment of new types of weapons around Belarus

The ceremony of signing a contract on the repair and modernization of T-72 tanks of the Polish army took place on July 22. This work is to be completed by 2025.

In late July, Russian media announced the start of the serial manufacture of the Su-57 fighters. In 2019, the Russian Aerospace Forces will receive 12 of them, which is, apparently, a political demonstration. It was reported in early August that a squadron of the regiment of the Russian Western Military District deployed near Tver would be rearmed with the less advanced Su-35s. Earlier, the Su-35s replaced the jets of the Western Military District's air regiment based in Karelia.³¹

In August, the United States Department of Defense released images that show the progress in building the Aegis Ashore missile defense system in Polish Redzikowo. On August 9, NATO reported the completion of the upgrade of a similar system in Romania, which was put into

28 NATO's enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup uparmours in Latvia, Jane's Defence Weekly (<https://www.janes.com/article/90528/nato-s-enhanced-forward-presence-battlegroup-uparmours-in-latvia>)

29 Mariusz Błaszczak: budujemy potencjał polskiej armii, Polskie Radio (<https://polskieradio24.pl/130/7010/Artykul/2354076,Mariusz-Blaszczak-budujemy-potencjal-polskiej-armii>)

30 Lithuania's new chief of defense hopes to step up IFV, artillery system procurement (https://www.baltictimes.com/lithuania_s_new_chief_of_defense_hopes_to_step_up_ifv_artillery_system_procurement_-_bns_interview/)

31 New Su-35 squadron formed in Tver (<https://www.mil.by/ru/news/90005/>)

operation in 2016. The facility in Redzikowo is expected to be commissioned in the second half of 2020.³²

On August 29, the U.S. sanctioned the sale of multipurpose joint light tactical vehicles worth USD 171 million to Lithuania. The Lithuanian army plans to procure these Humvee successors with weapons and FMS 500 equipment for them.³³

Forecast

Russia's confrontation with its opponents will lead to the militarization and rearmament of the regional forces of the parties. In the long term, this is fraught with dire consequences. In the short run, they will be busy restructuring their military capacities and deploying additional allied forces.

Along with the rapprochement with the NATO and U.S. leaderships, Belarus will seek expedient security cooperation with Poland, which obviously strives for the status of a regional NATO leader, taking it over from Germany. Minsk is not going to take a stand against Warsaw, but, as Russia's satellite, it cannot ignore Poland's growing military strength and the state of the Poland–Russia relationship. Minsk pursues the policy of transparency and dialogue as the foundation for its relations with other NATO members and Ukraine. Lithuania is an exception, but it is unable to influence Western institutions and the United States singlehandedly.

Belarus will continue building its army more and more autonomously from Russia, being guided by its own considerations and capabilities. Air defense in the broad sense remains the only segment important to the Kremlin in cooperation with Belarus. In other areas, Minsk has nothing to expect from Moscow. The latter will continue enhancing its defensive capabilities in its territory and reorient its defense industry towards minimal cooperation with Belarus. The neighboring countries are well aware of this. They speak about the "threat from the East", basically, upon closer analysis, meaning the Kaliningrad Region.³⁴ In this situation, Belarus will restructure its army towards greater neutrality and simpler technologies, and recalibrate the military training programs to meet less ambitious objectives set to the more neutral country, although it formally remains a CSTO member and Russia's ally engaged in joint exercises.

32 Amerykańska baza w Redzikowie nabiera kształtów (<https://radar.rp.pl/swiat/nato/14221-aegis-ashore-w-redzikowie>)

33 Litwa planuje zakup następcy Humvee (<https://radar.rp.pl/przemysl-obronny/14429-litwa-planuje-zakup-nastepcy-humvee>)

34 Perfect example: Niespełniony sen o polskim czołgu (<https://radar.rp.pl/modernizacja-sil-zbrojnych/13687-niespelniony-sen-o-polskim-czolgu>)

Appendix 1

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development indices

Relationship with Russia

Date	Event	Point
1 July	Kruty comments on the work being done on the Union Treaty	+1
3 July	Siamaška presents credentials to Putin	+1
4 July	Clean oil at Naftan	+1
8 July	Kozak's ultimatum on deeper integration	-1
9 July	Lukashenka's meeting with Rapota	+1
9 July	Joint intelligence board meeting in Brest	+1
11 July	Siamaška's visit to Novgorod	+1
15 July	Youth Forum of Belarus and Russia	+1
15-18 July	Reconnaissance before Union Shield 2019 exercise	+1
16-18 July	Forum of Regions in St. Petersburg, signing of contracts worth USD 550 million	+2
17-18 July	Lukashenka's meeting with Putin	+2
31 July – 8 August	Ministry of Finance places its bonds	+1
6 August	Druzhba tariffs raised	+1
8 August	Limitations on livestock products in Russia	-1
22 August	Agreement between Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Federal Antimonopoly Service	+1
23 August	Agreement between Belarusbank and Russian Export Center	+1
30 August	Telephone conversation between Lukashenka and Medvedev	+1
July-August	Rosselkhoznadzor lifts its bans	+3
July-August	Delayed negotiations over gas and oil prices	-2
July-August	Delayed agreement on mutual visa recognition	-1
July-August	Delay of USD 600 million loan	-1
July-August	Union Treaty revision (roadmaps)	+2
July-August	Unclear payments due to Druzhba accident	-2
Total		+14

Relationship with the EU

Date	Event	Point
4 July	Kraŭčenka meets with French Ambassador Didier Canesse	+1
8 July	Kraŭčenka meets with members of the Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST) of the European Council on Foreign Relations	+1
10 July	Kraŭčenka meets with Polish Undersecretary of State Marcin Przydacz	+1
15 July	Šestakoŭ participates in the opening ceremony of Belavia flight to Munich	+1
22 July	Lukashenka's meeting with Andrea Wiktorin	+1
23 July	Makiej meets with German Ambassador Manfred Huterer	+1
24 July	Rumas meets with Vice President at European Investment Bank Vazil Hudák, two new agreements are signed	+2
25-26 July	Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs visits Minsk, meetings with Makiej, Rumas and Lukashenka	+2
26 July	Makiej meets with Head of the EBRD Office Alexander Pivovarsky	+1
26 July	Belarusian Foreign Ministry declares its protest to charge d'affaires a.i. of Lithuania	-1
29 July	Makiej meets with Head of the EU Delegation Andrea Wiktorin	+1
29 July	Makiej meets with Latvian Ambassador Martins Virsis	+1
31 July	Andrejčenka meets with Latvian Ambassador Martins Virsis	+1
2 August	Kraŭčenka meets with British Ambassador Fionna Gibb	+1
5 August	Kraŭčenka meets with Charge d'Affaires a.i. of the Netherlands in Belarus Paul van Oostveen	+1
5 August	Kraŭčenka meets with Ambassador of Latvia Einars Semanis	+1
7 August	Lukashenka's meeting with British Ambassador Fionna Gibb	+1
7 August	Andrejčenka meets with Head of the EU Delegation Andrea Wiktorin	+1
8 August	Andrejčanka meets with British Ambassador Fionna Gibb	+1
14 August	Rumas meets with British Ambassador Fionna Gibb	+1
20 August	Makiej meets with British Ambassador Fionna Gibb	+1
26 August	Makiej meets with parliamentary delegation of Germany	+1
27 August	Lukashenka's refusal to participate in memorial events in Warsaw marking the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War	-1
30 August	Makiej meets with British Ambassador Jacqueline Perkins	+1
July-August	Generally positive materials in the official media and statements by the country's leadership regarding the EU	+1
Total		+23

Relationship with China

Date	Event	Point
2 July	Belt and Road Forum for Regional Cooperation and Development, Great Stone Park	+1
11 July	Visit of a delegation from Yunnan province, meeting at the House of Representatives of Belarus	+1
12-22 July	Health improvement trips of Chinese schoolchildren in Zubronok camp and of Belarusian schoolchildren to China as part of an intergovernmental agreement	+1
26 July	Reception on the occasion of the 92nd anniversary of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in Minsk with the participation of Minister of Defense of Belarus Raŭkoŭ	+1
1 August	Memorandum on the establishment of twinning relations between Minsk District and Yubei District, Chongqing	+1
21-22 August	Deputy Minister of Information Buzoŭski visits China to participate in the Beijing International Exhibition	+1
21-23 August	Deputy Minister of Economy Piarminava visits Guangdong	+1
22 August	Commentary of the spokesman for the Belarusian Foreign Ministry on the situation in Hong Kong with the commitment to One-China Policy	+1
27 August	Deputy Chairman of the Minsk Region Executive Committee Rahaščuk visits Chongqing	+1
30 August	Opening of Belarus national exposition at the 8th Beijing International Biennale	+1
30 August	Opening of the Chinese Language and Culture Center at Viciebsk State University	+1
Total		+11

Relationship with the U.S.

Date	Event	Point
2 July	U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo congratulates the Belarusians on Independence Day	+1
9-10 July	George Kent's visit to Minsk and meeting with Uladzimir Makiej	+1
9 July	Deputy Foreign Minister Kraŭčenka meets with a delegation from the U.S. Department of Energy.	+1
16-18 July	Deputy Foreign Minister Kraŭčenka visits Washington	+1
2 August	U.S. is slammed for withdrawing from the INF Treaty	-1
7 August	U.S. Charge d'Affaires Jenifer Moore laid flowers at the grave of Ruth Waller at the Military Cemetery in Minsk. Statement on the return of the American ambassador in 2020	+1
13-14 August	A delegation of the U.S. House of Representatives led by Congressman Michael Quigley visits Minsk	+1
29 August	Bolton's visit to Minsk, negotiations with Lukashenka	+3
31 August	Bolton's meeting with Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus Stanislau Zas and heads of the Security Councils of Poland and Ukraine in Warsaw	+1
August	Numerous statements by the Belarusian leadership on the need to improve the relationship with the United States	+2
August	Belarusian Oil Company hires a lobbyist to obtain a license for purchases of American crude	+1
Total		+12

Relationship with Ukraine

Date	Event	Point
2 July	Lukashenka is officially invited to the Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine	+1
3 July	Zelensky's congratulations on Belarus's Independence Day	+1
5 July	Antidumping investigation into match supplies from Belarus	-1
8 July	Zelensky's proposal to expand the Normandy format and hold a meeting in Minsk. Lukashenka supports the idea	+1
9 July	Bielakonieŭ meets with Khomchak	+1
9 July	Inauguration of Lithuania-Belarus-Ukraine container train	+1
10 July	Negotiations of the secretary of the Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine with the minister of transport of Belarus in Minsk	+1
10 July	Ukraine starts importing electricity from Belarus	+1
12 July	Expiry of anti-dumping measures against fiberboard deliveries from Belarus	+1
15 July	Statement by Sokal on potential for cooperation with Ukraine	+1
27 July	Fake reports about the presence of Russian troops in the Chernobyl area in Belarus	-1
31 July	Telephone conversation between Lukashenko and Zelensky	+2
30 July	Belarusian company MenuGroup buys Ukrainian service company eda.ua	+1
1 August	Arsonists of the asphalt-concrete plant owned by a Belarusian company detained	+1
2 August	Belarusian entrepreneur Hranc is the new owner of Ukraine's Focus (political glossy magazine)	+1
6 August	Representative of the Ukrainian president in the Cabinet Andriy Gerus reports 25% increase in diesel fuel supplies from Belarus	+1
5-8 August	Belarusian military facilities are inspected by the Ukrainian military	+1
19 August	Belarus increases potato supplies to the Ukrainian market, which drives down retail prices	+1
17 August	Days of Ukrainian Culture in Minsk	+1
22 August	Investigation of nitrogen fertilizer supplies to the Ukrainian market initiated	-1
22 August	Delivery of buses to Mariupol and a contract for the supply of trolley-buses to Dnipro	+1
23 August	At a meeting with Rumas, Lukashenka declares support for Ukraine at Zelensky's request	+1
24 August	Lukashenka congratulates Zelensky on Independence Day	+1
27 August	Ambassador Ihar Sokal meets with Deputy Minister for European Integration Taras Tokarski	+1

Date	Event	Point
31 August	When in Warsaw, Zelensky raises issues of the E-40 transport corridor	+1
31 August	Meeting of the heads of the Security Councils of Ukraine, Poland, Belarus and Trump's National Security Advisor Bolton in Warsaw	+1
Итог		+21

Appendix 2

Catalogue of events underlying the security indices

Date	Event	National security	Regional tension
July-August	8 mutual inspections by Belarus and foreign states under the CFE Treaty and Vienna Document 2011	+1	+1
July 1-12	Ukrainian-American See Breeze exercise	0	-1
Early July	Final stage of Baltic Protector exercise in Estonia with multinational expeditionary forces	0	-1
July 8-12	Joint exercise with Signal Corps and electronic warfare units of Belarus	+1	0
July 9	Task meeting of Belarusian and Ukrainian chiefs of General Staff	+1	+1
July 10	Session of the Joint Board of the KGB of Belarus and the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service	+1	-1
July 10-12	Chief of General Staff of Belarus takes part in the UN Conference on Peacebuilding	+1	+1
July 20	Statement by the press office of the 61st brigade of Ukraine	-1	-1
July 22	Lithuanian national security agency ousts the Belarusian company from the tender on gas pipeline construction	-1	-1
July 24	President of Belarus endorses the law on draft deferment	+1	0
August 1-9	Ocean Shield-2019 exercise of the Russian Navy in the Baltic Sea	0	-1
August 19	The U.S. tests the 500km land-fired cruise missile	-1	-1
Early August	Command and staff exercise with the 30th railway brigade of Belarus	+1	0
August 5-13	Reaper Raider exercise of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group in Latvia	-1	-1
August 12	Statement by the Polish Defense Ministry on the enlargement of the Polish army	-2	-1
Since August 12	Series of Namejs-2019 maneuvers in Latvia	-1	-1
Mid-late-August	Operational-tactical exercise of the air force and air defense of Belarus at the Ashuluk training ground	+1	0
August 18-19	Visit of Latvian armed forces commander to Belarus	+1	+1

Date	Event	National security	Regional tension
August 30	Visit of U.S. President's national security adviser to Belarus	+1	+1
August 31	Meeting of the state secretary of the Security Council of Belarus, U.S. President's national security adviser, head of the National Security Bureau of Poland and secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine in Warsaw	+1	+1
Total		+4	- 4 (Green)

Appendix 3

Colour scale of regional security tensions

Colour Value	Numerical Value	Interpretation
White	higher than -1	Low likelihood of escalation. Non-threatening situation
Green	from -2 to -6	Presence of military activities, which do not pose a direct threat and will not necessarily lead to the escalation of tensions. Such a situation calls for cautious attention.
Yellow	from -7 to -12	Military and other activity is observed that is capable of leading to the escalation of tensions. The situation calls for close attention.
Orange	from -13 to -17	Military preparations in the region. Growing tensions. Situation is threatening.
Red	-18 and lower	Sharp escalation of tensions. The conflict is virtually unavoidable. A pre-war situation.

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