

MINSK BAROMETER

Monitoring of
foreign policy and
regional security

Dear readers,

We are pleased to present the second issue of the Minsk Barometer, which involves regular monitoring of Belarusian foreign policy and the current national and regional security situation.

From March to April this year, relations with Russia were increasingly set in the context of confrontation between Russia and the West, and Belarus's expectations of cooperation with Russia were both high and unrealistic.

Negotiations on agreements with the European Union remain at a stalemate, but cooperation on projects and industry dialogue continue to develop quite successfully.

In regards to relations with China, dialogue in the military sphere has intensified. There has also been continued penetration of Belarusian exporters to Chinese markets, yet Minsk has stated that it is not content with the implementation of a number of joint projects.

The diplomatic activity of Belarus in the US has increased and a new post of Honorary Consul in Utah has been established.

The general background of relations with Ukraine has improved. Both parties have put to one side the issues of political orientation and have instead focused on the development of joint projects.

Minsk continues to optimize the army and bring it into line with its own needs and financial capabilities. A practical inspection and assessment of the capabilities of the territorial defence system is being conducted. Simultaneously, special attention is being paid to resolving issues of mobilization and coordination. The situation in the region around Belarus has somewhat worsened compared to the previous period, but this aggravation has been demonstrated through dialogue, not action.

We hope you find this issue informative and would be pleased to receive your comments, questions, and recommendations on improving our monitoring.

Best regards,

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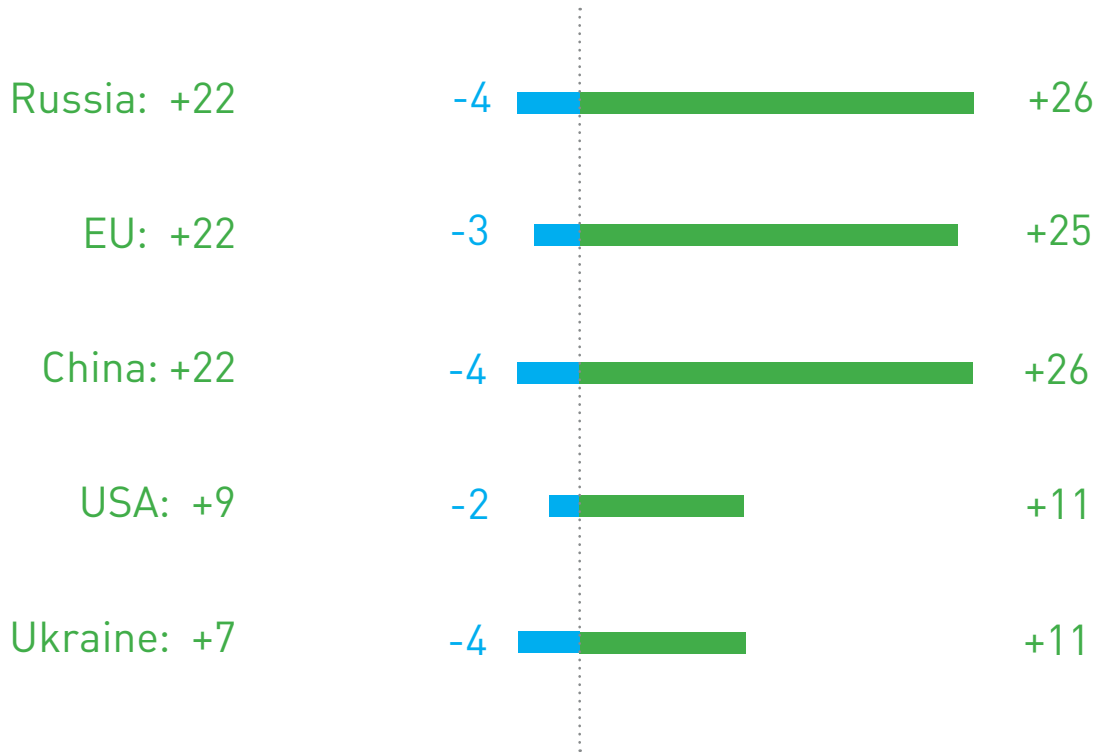
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Minsk Dialogue
Track-II Initiative

Relations Development Indices:



Security:



Side insert: the Green level indicates military activity that does not pose a direct threat and may not necessarily lead to an escalation of tension. This situation does however require careful attention.

Relationship with Russia

+26



Total index: +22

Positive points: +26

Negative points: -4

-4

Trends

1. The political background of relations between Belarus and Russia are increasingly set in the context of confrontation between Russia and the West.
2. Belarus's expectations of cooperation with Russia were both high and unrealistic.

Events and Developments

Political background

The political background of relations with Russia in March and April was governed by the sanctions of the USA, Great Britain and the EU against Russia. Belarus's support for Russia in Russian media was assessed as insufficient, and in Belarus, as excessive. A meeting was held on 2nd April, the Union Day of Belarus and Russia, where they discussed the mutual recognition of allegiance in relations. In addition, issues such as resolving bilateral problems, mainly food supplies to Russia, the preparation of an agreement on mutual visa recognition and the development of cooperation with Russian regions, were discussed alongside this meeting. Both sides also prepared for the convening of the Supreme State Council of the Union State.

Belarusians, at both official and public levels, expressed sympathy to Russia regarding the tragedy in Kemerovo.

Trade and milk

The volume of mutual trade continues to grow, amounting to \$5.3 billion from January to February 2018. As is typical, imports from Russia are growing faster (127% as compared to a similar period in 2017) than Belarusian exports to Russia (111%). Belarus' net balance is traditionally negative and for the first two months of the year amounted to \$0.8 billion. By the end of the year it could approach the record levels of 2011-2012 at approximately \$10 billion.

The tone of relations with Russia have been set by disagreements regarding the supply of dairy products. For now, these disputes have not significantly prevented the export of these products to Russia: for two months, the supply of milk amounted to 109.4% compared with a similar period last year, and dry and condensed milk – 106.3%. The supply of cheese, cottage cheese, butter and eggs has decreased.

Meanwhile, Rosselkhozadzor's threats of sanctions and sanctions affected the Russian market, leading to an increase in prices, and put at risk the second most important item in Belarusian exports, dairy (the lead item in Belarusian exports to Russia). The Belarusian side has utilized all available instruments to resolve the conflict, including the bodies of the EEU and the Supreme State Council of the Union State.

Minsk is obliged to take part in negotiations on the regulation of supplies as they have been initiated by the Russian side. However, Minsk does not support centralization, price fixing, or quotas.

Belarus proposed creating an independent laboratory for the assessment of dairy and other agricultural products. This proposal was adopted and did not exacerbate the development of the main conflict. In fact it muted its severity as the Russian side several times postponed the introduction of large-scale bans, and did not introduce them during the negotiation process. Moscow proposed to create a "one-stop shop" for the import of Belarusian products to the Russian market, and the details of its creation and mechanisms are still being discussed.

The threats to impose a ban on the supply of Belarusian dairy products shows evidence of the Russian government's, and the Russian industry's approach to the common market of the EEU. From comments made by Russia during the course of this conflict, it is clear that they see the common market as an expansion of the Russian market, and not as a market for the products of its members. For example, Rosselkhoznadzor imposes the same measures against Belarusian dairy products as it does against Kazakh crop products.

The development of the conflict shows (as we suggested in the previous issue) that the Russian side is not so much seeking to limit the supply of dairy products, but instead seeking that Belarus agrees to transfer the flow of goods to major Russian importers – with the appropriate distribution of profits from sales.

It is also important to note that only the most exclusive Russian industry specialists are interested in the measures used by Rosselkhoznadzor and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to regulate the Russian dairy market. If the state lobbyists achieve their goals, it will be the producers, who are not close to these specialist circles, who will be forced to carry out long, troublesome and expensive procedures in order to purchase Belarusian raw materials (milk powder) at inflated prices set by the Russian Ministry of Agriculture.¹

In other words, the Belarusian milk conflict is not only between Belarus and Russia, but also within Russia itself. The Russian Dairy Union appealed to the Federal Antimonopoly Service (FAS) in order to prevent the Russian Ministry of Agriculture intervening in the market as the "single supplier" is actually a private monopoly of public money and under state protection in the dairy sector.² Belarus will not be the main victim if it is able to agree on acceptable terms of centralized procurement.

In summarizing the milk conflict, it is possible to draw several conclusions:

- 1) The vast majority of "unexpected" trade restrictions against Belarus by the Russian state is led by businesses close to the Russian leadership, and often their interests are contrary to those of other Russian businesses. The negotiations on the settlement of this conflict should be conducted rationally. The solution will be quicker and less painful if the interests of major players are taken into account.
- 2) Even in those areas where the interests of the "near-Kremlin" companies and state-owned companies have not yet been clearly expressed, conflict is only a matter of time as the Belarusian and Russian economies are becoming more competitive. The heads of Russian government agencies are also becoming increasingly dependent on large businesses, specifically as they are embedding themselves in business corporations.
- 3) The current intergovernmental instruments are insufficient. Conflicts with Russian lobbyists would arise less frequently and would be easier to resolve if Belarusian producers, both public and private, acted independently; firstly within the framework of the EEU institutions at the technical regulations approval stage and other trade rules, and secondly; within the framework of domestic regulation.

1 "Lyudmila Manicka : A "one-stop shop" is a threat to the dairy industry" (<http://vologda.mk.ru/politics/2018/04/23/lyudmila-manickaya-odno-okno-eto-ugroza-dlya-molokopererabatyvayushhey-otrasli.html>)

2 "The Dairy Union asks the FAS to examine regulation of the dairy market" (<http://www.agroinvestor.ru/markets/news/29725-molochnyy-soyuz-prosit-fas-razobratsya-v-regulirovanii/>)

The visa agreement and the Supreme Council of the Union State (SCU)

As Belarus and Russia did not come to a compromise on the visa issue, they are preparing for a compromised and temporary version of an agreement regarding the mutual recognition of visas. This is in order to allow this issue to be settled in time for the World Cup in Russia this summer. This temporary and shortened version of the agreement is scheduled to be signed before June 4, 2018 and according to the Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus, Ihar Shunevich, the technical side of the agreement has already been completed. The 2018 World Cup will be held in Russia from June 15 to July 16, and June 4 is the deadline for registering the guests and participants of the games.

The signing of this agreement has potentially been postponed to allow for a ceremonial signing at the Supreme Council of the Union State, the date of which has not yet been decided.

Oil, gas and other issues

It is likely that Belarus will raise the issue of creating “equal conditions for business entities” at the next meeting of the SCU. In Belarus, the provision in the Treaty on the Union State is interpreted as regarding the formation of a single pricing policy for main gas pipelines for Russian consumers and for consumers of other EEU countries. And in regards to oil – Belarus seeks the creation of conditions where within the EEU, the price for members can not be higher than for third countries.

However, this issue cannot be resolved in a way that will satisfy Belarus at this or subsequent meetings of the SCU. This is because firstly, the Belarusian side has already squeezed out as much as possible with regards to the price of gas – namely, the reduction factor and pegging the price of gas for Belarus to the Yamalo-Nenets district in Russia.

Secondly, if one year of conflict trading with regards to the price of oil has not led to more impressive results, then now with the rise in oil prices, more weighty arguments will be required, which could be dangerous to introduce.

It is also important to note that the allotment of duties in the Belarusian budget for the transit of 6 million tons of Russian oil (despite the fact that this oil does not enter the territory of Belarus physically) is powerful leverage for Russia in any negotiations on the terms of supply of both oil and gas.

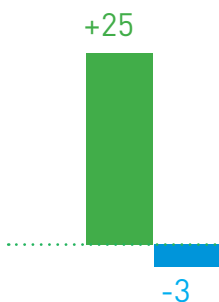
In other respects, bilateral relations are developing fairly smoothly. The Secretary of the Russian Security Council, N. Patrushev, visited Minsk on March 13-14, where he met with the Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus, S. Zas', and discussed countering common security threats. On April 10-12, large-scale joint Belarusian-Russian ground exercises were held in the Brest region. In addition, many interdepartmental meetings were held, and preparations for the Forum of the Regions of Belarus and Russia are ongoing.

Forecast

If the resolution of the milk dispute ends on Russian terms, with the creation of an intermediary-monopolist, then we can expect attempts to promote this scheme in other sectors. If it is possible to establish constructive cooperation without a “one-stop shop” for Belarusian exports, the attempts of the Russians to put it under control will never cease.

In addition, another conflict is expected in the field of food supplies to Russia: from July, the import of products to Russia is expected to be carried out only using electronic certificates, and it is unlikely that Belarusian (as, indeed, Russian) enterprises will be able to fulfill the requirements of Rosselkhoznadzor by this date.

Relationship with the European Union



Total index: +22
Positive points: +25
Negative points: -3

Trends

1. Negotiations on politically significant topics remain in a stalemate, such as agreements on visa facilitation, readmission and the priorities of the partnership until 2020.
2. Mutual trade is showing positive indicators.
3. Project cooperation and industry dialogue continues to develop, although without progress on the partnership's priorities this development will be increasingly limited.
4. Belarus's diplomatic relations with individual EU States and institutions have retained their intensity and are fairly broad in terms of geography; in some cases their level has been on the rise.

Events and Developments

Relations between Belarus and the EU have continued to develop, but March and April have not brought any new shades to relations. One of the most significant events of this period was U. Makei's visit to London, which took place on March 27-28. This was the first official visit of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry to the UK since 1993 and it was in response to Alan Duncan's, the UK Minister of State for European and the America's, visit to Minsk the previous autumn.

The program of the Belarusian Foreign Minister in London was rich; he held meetings with Alan Duncan, the Foreign and Commonwealth Minister, Boris Johnson, and Greg Hands, the State Minister for Trade Policy of the Ministry of Foreign Trade. The Belarusian delegation also met with members of the All-Party Parliamentary group on Belarus at Westminster Palace, and with Prince Michael of Kent in Kensington Palace, a member of the Royal Family who visited Belarus in 2016.

It is important to note that in addition to numerous issues of bilateral cooperation (especially with regards to economics), the meetings actively discussed regional security and initiatives aimed at reducing international tension. This was laid out in the context of the expected exit of the UK from the EU, which has pushed London to search for new niches for its own diplomatic activity. Makei also spoke at the roundtable "Modern Belarus and its place in Europe" organized by the Center for European Reforms.

Another component of the Belarusian Minister's programme in London was talks with the President and Vice-President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The Bank's headquarters also signed a loan agreement for the reconstruction of the P-80 road (a section of the second ring road around Minsk). The EBRD will allocate €42.5 million to finance this project.

The attention of the mass media was drawn to this visit, and particularly the Russian media. The attention was not regarding the content of the visit, but rather the background against which the visit took place.

The trip coincided with the scandal over the attempted poisoning in Salisbury of the former Russian intelligence officer, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter. While clearly the visit of the Belarusian delegation was prepared in advance and only accidentally coincided with the events in Salisbury and the subsequent sharp escalation in Russian-British relations, nevertheless, Minsk was still subjected to accusations in the Russian media.

Another notable event during this period was the 5th meeting of the Belarus-EU Coordination group, which was held on 26-27 April in Minsk. The EU delegation was led by Thomas Mayr Harting, Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and included representatives of the EEAS and the European Commission Directorate-General. The Belarusian delegation was headed by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, A. Krauchanka, and included representatives of the Foreign Ministry and other public administration bodies. The EU delegation was also received by the First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, M. Ryzhankou, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, U. Makei. Traditionally, representatives of some Belarusian NGOs have participated in the work of the Coordination group and they were admitted to more sessions than at previous meetings. Notably, cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership was discussed in their presence for the first time. At the same time as the meeting of the Coordination group, a renewed EU-Belarus dialogue on economic and financial issues was held.

Among the main topics of the two-day meeting were the digital economy, privatization, the work of small and medium-sized enterprises, transport, finance, trade, agriculture and phytosanitary standards, the Bologna process and cooperation in the field of education and science, ecology, nuclear energy, human rights, cooperation in the migration sphere, as well as prospects for the development of the Eastern Partnership.

In general, the meeting was held in a positive and constructive atmosphere, yet there was no significant progress made. It concerned the most important sectoral topics (for example, trade and investment) and key political topics such as the priorities of the partnership. However, negotiations on the priorities of the partnership remain blocked by the requirements of the European Union (a Lithuanian initiative) with regards to the safety of the Belarusian nuclear power plant. Despite this, both Minsk and Brussels continue to express hope for the early conclusion of the negotiations.

At the same time, EU representatives emphasized that the signing of partnership priorities would increase the opportunities for financing programs in Belarus. Hopes for Belarus's future accession to the WTO are associated with the solution of many complex and controversial issues in the field of trade and investment between Brussels and Minsk.

The general tone of Belarus-EU relations in the Belarusian media and the content of the speeches of the country's leadership remains largely positive. In particular, in the annual address to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly, which A. Lukashenka gave on April 24, the EU did not receive any prominent criticism (in contrast to his speech in 2017). On the contrary, the President of Belarus said that "there has been an increase in the level of political contact and an expansion of economic cooperation."¹ He also spoke of the potential of the Eastern Partnership stressing that it should be aimed at specific projects and should not create new dividing lines between the East and the West. In addition, Makei gave a positive interview to the TV channel "Euronews" which was recorded the day before the 100th anniversary of the Belarusian People's Republic (BNR).

On the negative side of the Belarus-EU relationship chart, one can see the reaction of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry to the resolution of the European Parliament adopted on April 19. According to the Press Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, D. Mironchik, "the drafters of the document were unlikely to be objective, their goals were different."²

¹ Message to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly, 24 April 2018 (http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/poslanie-k-belorusskomu-narodu-i-natsionalnomu-sobraniju-18594/)

² Response of the Head of Information and Digital Diplomacy Department – Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, D. Mironchik, to a question from BelaPAN Agency, April 20, 2018 (http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d4172598285b9b8a.html)

The main barrier to positive relations with the EU is Lithuania's position on the Belarusian nuclear power plant which is under construction, and Vilnius's desire to use any multilateral opportunities to put pressure on Minsk. In recent months, both Minsk and Vilnius have periodically resorted to presenting diplomatic notes to each other related to security in the nuclear sphere. At the same time, the leadership of Belarus has continued its attempts to reduce bilateral tension on this topic. In particular, on 10 April, the Deputy Minister of Energy, M. Mikhadyuk, gave an interview to the broadcaster LRT which answered many Lithuanian concerns.

It is interesting that outside the framework of the conflict over the BelNPP, relations between Belarus and Lithuania do not experience difficulties. Contacts are currently developing and not only through the Foreign Ministry. For example, on March 15 Vilnius was visited by the Chairman of the State Customs Committee, Yuri Senko, who held talks with his Lithuanian counterpart and signed a Memorandum on cooperation during the 2019 European games. Also the trade turnover between the two countries showed positive dynamics. In January-February³ trade was 64.6% more than in the same period last year. Exports from Belarus increased by 74.2%, while imports from Lithuania increased by 33.9%. For comparison, trade with Latvia during this period increased by 58.3%, with Poland by 29%, with Russia by 20.6%, and with Ukraine by 19.7%.

In total, according to Belstat,⁴ the trade turnover between Belarus and the European Union member states from January to March 2018 amounted to \$4.4 billion (an increase of 149.9% for the same period in 2017). Belarusian exports amounted to \$2.7 billion and this figure is 69% more than the same period in 2017. Imports from the EU amounted to \$1.7 billion (an increase of 26.5% compared with the same period last year). The surplus of trade with EU countries for Belarus was \$1.6 billion.

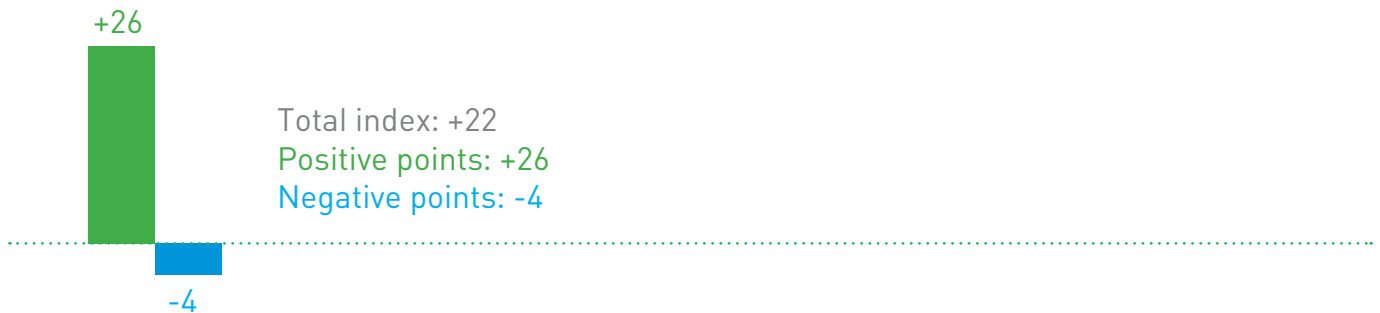
Forecast

Several important visits are planned between the EU and Belarus in the coming months, but any improvements in relations will depend on the development of politically significant topics. In particular, they will continue to look for a resolution to the stalemate of the negotiations on the priorities of the partnership until 2020. There are hopes for progress with regards to the expected publication of the results of the stress tests of the Belarusian nuclear power plant conducted by European experts. The assumption is that the European experts will be able to submit a final report in June. Outside of this, the relationship is unlikely to experience any significant changes.

³ Data on the foreign trade of the Republic of Belarus for individual countries, January-February 2018 (http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/makroekonomika-i-okruzhayushchaya-sreda/vneshnyaya-torgovlya_2/operativnye-dannye_5/eksport-import-s-otdelnyimi-stranami/)

⁴ Balance of foreign trade in goods of the Republic of Belarus (http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/makroekonomika-i-okruzhayushchaya-sreda/vneshnyaya-torgovlya_2/operativnye-dannye_5/balans-vneshnei-torgovli-tovarami-respubliki-belarus/)

Relations with China



Trends

1. Dialogue in the military sphere has intensified.
2. Active penetration of the Chinese market by Belarusian exporters has continued.
3. The Belarusian side are voicing their dissatisfaction with the implementation of a number of joint projects.

Events and Developments

The meetings held on military-technical dialogue in March and April received positive feedback with regards to Belarus and Chinese cooperation. These meetings were held alongside the visit to Belarus of the new Chinese Minister of Defence, Colonel-General Wei Fenghe, and the visit to China of the Minister of Defence of Belarus, Andrei Raukou, in order to meet with heads of the SCO military departments.

Belarus became the second country after Russia to be visited by the new Chinese Minister of Defence following his appointment. According to BelTA, Wei Feng called Belarus and China "iron brothers"¹ under the leadership of Xi Jinping and Alexander Lukashenka. However, Chinese sources do not mention the phrase "iron brothers" in the same coverage, and instead refer to the "the constant deepening of Belarusian-Chinese trust and the mutually beneficial relations of the comprehensive strategic partnership,"² under the leadership of the two leaders. During the visit, the President of Belarus noted that China "played a decisive role in strengthening the defence capability of Belarus", and helped to create "the most modern space units, send the most modern satellite into orbit" and "the most modern missile weapons for the Belarusian army"³. Lukashenka also thanked the Chinese Minister and promised to remember the support they have provided.

During this visit, both parties signed another agreement on China's provision of free military-technical assistance. What exactly is provided for in this agreement is still unknown. However according to a previous similar agreement, signed in October 2017 for \$ 4.5 million, the list of equipment is still being agreed.⁴

1 "Wei Fenhe: Belarus and China have become iron brothers" (http://www.belta.by/politics/view/vej-fenhe-belarus-i-kitaj-stali-zheleznymi-bratjami-297490-2018/?utm_source=belta&utm_medium=news&utm_campaign=accent)

2 Belarusian President Lukashenko meets Wei Fenghe, 06.04.2018 (http://www.mod.gov.cn/shouye/2018-04/06/content_4808834.htm)

3 "Lukashenko: China has played a decisive role in strengthening Belarus's defence capabilities", 06.04.2018 (<http://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-kitaj-sygral-reshajuschuju-rol-v-usilenii-oboronosposobnosti-belarusi-297481-2018/>)

4 "Belarus and China are Reliable Friends", Belarusian military newspaper "Vo slavu Rodiny", Issue №65, 07.04.2018 (<https://vsr.mil.by/2018/04/07/belarus-i-kitaj-nadyozhnye-druzya/>)

A meeting was held at the beginning of March which focused on the results of economic development in 2017, and which also highlighted a number of problematic Chinese projects in Belarus. The President called the work on several investment projects unsatisfactory, such as BelGee, the Sviethorsk Pulp and Paper Mill, and a Paper Mill in Dobrush.

Following this meeting, U. Siamashka gave an interview to "Glavny Efir" on March 4th and stated that the reason for the issues with these projects (the Sviethorsk Pulp and Paper Mill and a Mill in Dobrush) lies in the fact that "the contractors missed the deadlines."⁵ It should be noted that the General Contractor for the project of producing bleached pulp in Sviethorsk is the Chinese engineering Corporation, SAMSE, which is also the General Contractor for the construction of infrastructure at the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park. With regards to the Mill in Dobrush, the Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus admitted that the contract with the former Chinese General contractor - Xuan Yuan Corporation – had been terminated, as it became clear that "it was not able to make the project a success, it was not engaged in these projects, and it was not competent."⁶

Nevertheless, in his annual address to the people and Parliament, Lukashenka highlighted the "advanced development" of bilateral relations between Belarus and China. He noted that Belarus is "an active and equal participant in "One Belt, One Road" and stressed his appreciation of this initiative, calling it "a new model of interstate cooperation, built on the principles of support and joint development".⁷

PR campaigns of the Belarusian Embassy

During this period of monitoring, the Belarusian Embassy in China ran a number of notable PR-campaigns to shape the image of Belarus. First, the Embassy initiated a campaign to change the name of Belarus in Chinese from the traditionally accepted 白俄罗斯 ("Byelorussia") to 白罗斯 ("Belarus"), which from a linguistic point of view reflects the country's name more accurately. The proposed changes are necessary to counter the frequent perception of Belarus being part of Russia by the Chinese. Belarusian Ambassador to China, K. Rudy, while meeting with representatives of the Chinese media, reported that the formal process in Chinese agencies for such renaming had already begun however the timing of such changes are not made public.

Secondly, within the framework of the Year of Tourism, the Embassy of Belarus held an event with the Chinese portal "Zhangovan" where they reposted educational videos about Belarus.

Thirdly, in the framework of cooperation with the Chinese tourism portal, the Belarusian Embassy hosted guests from the media sphere – once during a dinner with Chinese bloggers and once on an open day.

All of the above initiatives can be assessed positively, since the chosen channels of influence through social networks are relevant for potential Chinese consumers.

Belarusian Exports

One of the results of Belarusian efforts to increase exports to China in March and April was an increase in the number of certified suppliers. In April, seven poultry exporters were added to thirty-two enterprises exporting meat and dairy products. Deputy Prime Minister, M. Rusev, has introduced ambitious plans for the expansion of agricultural and food product exports to China from \$17 million in 2017 to \$100 million in 2018.⁸ This optimism is supported by

⁵ Recording of the program "Glavny Efir" from 04.03.2018 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSH1Q0uZqJQ>)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Transcript of the President's Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly 24.04.2018(http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/poslanie-k-belorusskomu-narodu-i-natsionalnomu-sobraniju-18594/)

⁸ "Belarus Set to Reach \$100 million in Food Exports to China", 01.03.2018 (<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-belarusi-postavlena-zadacha-vyjti-na-100-mln-po-eksportu-produktov-pitanija-v-kitaj-292306-2018/>)

the volume of contracts with Chinese partners – \$114 million in 2018, according to existing delivery schedules. This was stated by A. Bahdanau, the head of the main department of Foreign Economic Activity of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, in early March.⁹

In March Belarus was visited by representatives of another Chinese company that could offer contracts for the purchase of Belarusian products - Guangzhou Xinjinlei Import and Export Trade.

The second important result of these two months regarding exports was the opening of the joint company "Belarus Food and Agriculture (Shanghai) Co. Ltd." in Shanghai at the end of April. It was formed from the CJSC Meat & Dairy Company and Drex Food Group Co. Ltd., and will promote and sell Belarusian meat and dairy products in China.

Great Stone

During the monitored period the CBIP expanded the list of residents by 5 (it now has 33 residents):

- Assis Ltd (the production of miniature electronic boards, laboratories for the application of RFID-tags, automatic trading system of electronic components)
- Standard NOUVEAU Ltd (the production of new materials)
- GeoMedia Ltd (the production of devices to maintain heart function)
- CJSC Recombel Company (the production of solar panels up to 300 MW per year)
- CJSC Aviation technologies and complexes (the development and production of unmanned aviation complexes)

Both the Belarusian and Chinese sides continue to promote the CBIP. In April the Industrial Park was visited by Belarusian and foreign officials, bank representatives, the Minister of the Economy of Belarus, V. Zinowski, Prime Minister, A. Kabiakou, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, S. Aslov, and a representative of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in Belarus, A. Pivovarsky. On the Chinese side, the Park also hosted a delegation of the Council for the Promotion of South-South Cooperation. In March an investment forum was held in Beijing called "Investments in Belarus – A Country with an Actively Developing Economy on the Silk Road" organised by the Chinese Center for International Knowledge on Development of the State Council of China and the EBRD.

With regards to the infrastructure of the CBIP, in April the construction of the motor plant "MAZ-Veichai" began and production is scheduled to begin at the end of the year. The Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, M. Snapkou, shared his plans that ten residents of the Park should be "built" by the end of this year.¹⁰ At the same time, the Belarusian side recognizes that the number of residents of the Park does not necessarily equal the number of enterprises in the Park that are operating and contributing to "developing the economy of the future".

In March and April new directions for the development of the Industrial Park were presented to a wide audience. At the Forum of Belarusian-Chinese Trade and Economic Cooperation in March in Chengdu, the Ambassador of Belarus to China announced a proposal to create a Sichuan sub-Park in the CBIP for the arrival of companies from the Sichuan province.

At the beginning of April there were discussions between the Council of Ministers (A. Kalinin), the Belarusian Ministry of Transport and Communications and the CJSC "Company for the Development of the Industrial Park" about establishing a joint transport airline carrier. The creation of a joint international corporation for engineering, design and construction

⁹ "Belarus Increased its Share of Dairy Products Exported to China from 11% to 64%", 01.03.2018 (<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-uvlechila-dolju-molochnoj-produktsii-v-eksporte-v-kitaj-s-11-do-64-292133-2018/>)

¹⁰ "Ten residents of Great Stone plan to build enterprises in 2018", 15.04.2018 (<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/desjat-rezidentov-parka-velikij-kamen-v-2018-godu-planirujut-postroit-predpriyatija-298920-2018/>)

contracting activities, as well the creation of a joint plant for the production of metal structures, was designated as a future contractual issue.

During March and April the logistics division did not significantly develop. The administration of the CBIP noted the possibility of negotiations with Deutsche Bahn, but contrary to previous statements released, the signing of documents on Duisburger Hafen AG becoming a shareholder of the CBIP development company was postponed from March to mid-May.¹¹

Forecast

In a continuation of these trends, we should expect a variety of joint events within the framework of the Year of Tourism to promote Belarus and Belarusian goods in the Chinese media and business community in the near future.

Positive statements from the Belarusian side on bilateral cooperation and the initiative "One Belt, One Road" will remain unchanged, with criticism of some joint projects and possible consequences for their curators on the Belarusian side.

Belarus and Chinese partners in the CBIP will continue their efforts to increase the number of Park residents and the amount of investments. However, more tangible progress may occur after the formation of the infrastructure base of the Park, which, according to the current resolutions of the Council of Ministers, is scheduled for the end of 2018 and would reduce the capital costs of construction for potential investors.

¹¹ Duisburger may become a shareholder of the "Great Stone" parent company in mid-May", 15.04.2018 (<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/duisburger-mozhet-stat-aksionerom-upravljajushej-kompanii-velikogo-kamnja-v-seredine-maja-298922-2018/>)

Relations with the United States

+11



-2

Total index: +9

Positive points: +11

Negative points: -2

Trends

1. The diplomatic activity of Belarus in the U.S. has, to some extent, intensified.
2. The U.S. remains critical of Belarus's state of democracy and respect for human rights.

Events and Developments

During this analyzed period, the amount and the quality of contact between Minsk and Washington increased significantly. On March 27, during a visit to the United States, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, Aleh Krauchanka, met with the recently appointed Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Wess Mitchell. It should be noted that this was a fairly high level meeting when taking into account the state of Belarusian-U.S. relations. Krauchanka also discussed human rights issues with Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Michael Kozak. In addition, the Deputy Minister held a meeting with experts of the RAND Corporation, one of the leading research centers of the U.S., during which he outlined the foreign policy approach of Belarus and the view of the regional situation.¹

The main event of this period was the establishment of a new post of Honorary Consul of Belarus in Utah. On 29 March, the official inauguration ceremony of Dennis Neuenschwander took place. Neuenschwander is one of the key figures of the Mormon Church and has been a key figure in promoting Mormon missionaries in countries of the former socialist bloc, including Belarus. The issues of cooperation between Belarus and Utah in the political and economic spheres were discussed during the meeting of Krauchanka with the Utah Congressman, Chris Stewart, the leadership of both chambers of the State Legislative Assembly, the Heads of the Utah International Trade Commission and the Department of Economic Development. The Deputy Minister also met with Russell Nelson, the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, to discuss prospects for working together to promote family values and educational and humanitarian cooperation.² Russell Nelson was the same priest who dedicated Belarus as an area for preaching the gospel by Mormon missionaries. The ceremony took place on May 11, 1993 in the Yanka Kupala Minsk Park.³

On March 23 a meeting was held in Minsk between the Chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technology, Aliaxandr Shumilin, and the Honorary Consul of Belarus in Florida, Mikhail Morgulis. The meeting was devoted to the prospects of the development of Belarusian-U.S. scientific, technical and innovative cooperation. In particular, they discussed

1 On the visit of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Oleg Kravchenko, to the United States (http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/da6002c238dd8361.html)

2 Interestingly, in comparison to the English version, on the Russian version of the Foreign Ministry website family values are called universal values.

3 "4 European lands dedicated", Church News, June 12, 1993 (<http://www.ldschurchnewsarchive.com/articles/23051/4-European-lands-dedicated.html>)

the intensification of ties achieved following the National Exposition of Belarus at the International Exhibition Conference in the field of high technologies of eMerge Americas, primarily educational programs and the exchange of scientists. As part of the transfer of advanced technology, a long-term scientific internship for the Assistant of the Department of Infectious Diseases of the Belarusian State Medical University was organized at the Sloan-Kettering Memorial Cancer Center in New York.

At the meeting, Shumilin noted that contracts were signed for \$220,000 following the International Exhibition-Conference on High Technologies eMerge Americas. Also organizations in the U.S. fulfilled contracts worth more than \$13 million.⁴ Belarus has continued its cooperation with eMerge Americas: in April 2018, the Head of the Embassy of Belarus to the U.S. visited the exhibition and the participation of Belarusian representatives in 2019's exhibition will be considered.

On April 4-6 a Foreign Ministry delegation headed by the Director of the Department of Foreign Economic Activity, Raman Sobaleu, visited Washington. The main purpose of this visit was to discuss the issue of Belarus's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as the access of Belarusian goods to the American market. For Belarusian exporters, there are restrictions on some groups of goods, in particular Belarus does not have a country certification for the supply of meat products to the U.S., and the supply of dairy products is quota-based, so the supply needs an American importer with appropriate quotas. In addition, there is an anti-dumping measure against building bars produced by the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant (BMZ).

On April 18 the Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, Aleh Krauchanka, met with Margo Ellis, the Senior Assistant to the Administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Two days later, on April 20, in Washington, the First Deputy Minister of Economy, Dzmitry Krutoy, met with the Assistant Administrator of the agency, Brock Burman. The meetings were centered around discussions of cooperation between Belarus and the agency, as well as the prospects and directions of bilateral cooperation.

USAID implements projects in Belarus, for example projects to support entrepreneurship, the expansion of the role of the private sector in the economy, professional exchanges, combating human trafficking and providing assistance to vulnerable groups. Last year, there was information suggesting the newly elected President Trump would completely suspend the financing of the Belarusian program in the 2018 fiscal year. However, the USAID budget for 2019 includes \$1.5 million for Belarus.⁵

On April 14, in response to the rocket attacks on Syria by a coalition of the U.S., Great Britain and France, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry issued a statement strongly condemning these actions and called on all parties involved to "immediately stop the use of military force against other states and seek ways to resolve the conflict by peaceful means at the negotiating table."⁶ However while this is a clear act of diplomatic support by Minsk to its ally, Russia, it also demonstrates a desire not to aggravate relations with the U.S., as in the Foreign Ministry's statement the countries of the coalition are not directly named.

On April 20 the U.S. Department of State released an annual report on the observance of human rights in the world, in which Belarus is called an authoritarian state, where, among other things, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as human trafficking, are practiced.⁷ The Belarusian Foreign Ministry called a similar resolution of the European

⁴ "Prospects of scientific and technical cooperation with the U.S. were discussed in Minsk" BelaPAN. 23.03.2018 (<https://belapan.by/archive/2018/03/23/948372/>)

⁵ Congressional Budget Justification. Foreign Operations. Appendix 2 (<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/279517.pdf>)

⁶ Statement of the Foreign Ministry of Belarus, 14.04.2018 (http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/bb6cc980cdd68313.html)

⁷ Belarus Human Rights Report 2017 (<https://by.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2017-Human-Rights-Report.pdf>)

Parliament (published almost simultaneously with the State Department report) a “rubber stamping” which devalues the efforts of diplomacy of the European Union.⁸ Yet they did not comment on the American report referring instead to a separate bilateral dialogue on human rights with the U.S..

As predicted in the previous issue of the Barometer, on April 27 the U.S. once again extended the regime of suspension of sanctions against nine Belarusian enterprises for six months.⁹ Despite the lack of significant progress in the issues of democratization and human rights in Belarus, the U.S. is not interested in the deterioration of relations with a country that contributes to the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine and does not pose a threat to regional security. The U.S. continues to support the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Belarus.

The decision of the U.S. Treasury to suspend the sanctions will be valid until October 30 2018. The sanctions against a number of Belarusian enterprises were imposed by President George Bush on June 16, 2006 in connection with human rights violations in Belarus. The sanctions have since been periodically extended and the list includes the Belarusian Oil Trading House, Belneftekhim USA Inc., Belshina, Grodno Azot, Grodno Khimvolokno, Lakokraska, Naftan and Polotsk-Fiberglass. On October 29, 2015, after the Presidential elections in Belarus, the U.S. Treasury decided to partially suspend sanctions for six months (until April 30, 2016) to allow transactions. This decision is extended every six months.

There is a growing practice in Belarusian-U.S. diplomacy of engaging the Western expert analytical community in dialogue. In addition to the conversation between Deputy Minister Krauchanka and the staff of the RAND Corporation, Uladzimir Makei met with the Senior Researcher of the Jamestown Foundation (U.S.), Vladimir Sokor. During this meeting, according to the press service of the Foreign Ministry, they discussed the state and prospects of Belarusian-U.S. relations, the situation in the region and the world, as well as issues of interaction with the international analytical community. This was the third meeting of the Minister and the analyst in under two years. Previously, it had been Jamestown Foundation who launched the process of normalization of relations between Minsk and Washington, meeting with the Belarusian President in January 2013.

Contact has been maintained with influential Jewish organizations in the U.S.. On March 2, 2018 a delegation of the leadership of the American Jewish Committee, composed of investors and large American businesses, visited Belarus. During the visit meetings were held with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Makei, the leadership of the National Bank, government agencies, and consulting agencies and businesses.

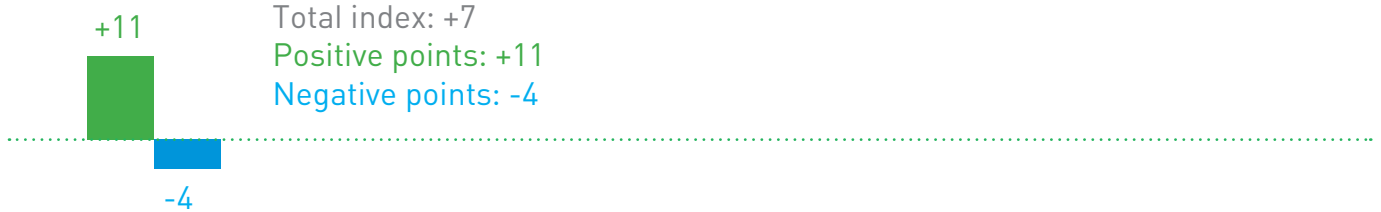
Forecast

In the coming months, we will see the continuation and intensification of Belarusian-U.S. contact in various areas of cooperation. The gradual normalization of relations will continue as both sides are interested in stable cooperation and the U.S. positively assesses the role of Belarus in the Eastern European region.

⁸ The Response of the Head of Information and Digital Diplomacy Department, Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, D. Mironchik, to BelaPAN Agency (http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/d4172598285b9b8a.html)

⁹ Issuance of Belarus General License 2E, 27.04.2018 (https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20180427_33.aspx)

Relations with Ukraine



Trends

1. Both parties have put to one side the issue of political orientation and are focusing on the development of joint projects, such as a scheme that allows one to focus on obtaining benefits (including in the long term), ensuring the economic security of both parties and creating a wider field for political maneuvering in the future.
2. Attempts to circumvent "intense political issues" have created opportunities for provocations from both lobbyists within the countries and from external forces.
3. The overall background of bilateral relations has improved compared with January-February.

Events and Developments

Politics

In March the Presidents of Ukraine and Belarus held their second telephone conversation. According to the press service of Lukashenka, the conversation touched upon the development of intercultural dialogue and the implementation of programs regarding trade and economic cooperation.¹ However, there is also the possibility that the conversation turned to topics that are a source of problems in bilateral relations, in particular "the case of spies".² The publication "Ukrainskaya Pravda" (Ukrainian Truth) reported, referring to the "Belarusian partisan," that an agreement was supposedly reached.

A month after this telephone conversation, the Belarusian side organised a meeting of the Minister of Culture of Belarus with the Deputy of the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture where they discussed issues of "the promotion of Ukraine" in the Belarusian information space.³

In March, a meeting of the Advisory Council of the National Banks of Belarus and Ukraine was held to discuss the issues of monetary and foreign exchange policy. This was an important event as Belarus is actively developing export lending for the supply of goods to Ukraine. In particular, on the website of the Ministry of Economic Development of Ukraine, out of the three banks crediting medium-sized businesses under special programmes, two advertise products of Belarus export credit and only one supports the national producer.⁴

1 Telephone conversation with the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, 27.03.2018 (http://www.president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/telefonnyj-razgovor-s-prezidentom-ukrainy-petrom-poroshenko-18416/)

2 "Belarus agreed with Ukraine about exchange of Sharoika", 26.03.2018 (<https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2018/03/26/7175832/>)

3 The Ministry of Culture considered the promotion of Ukrainian culture in the Republic of Belarus, 27.04.2018 (<https://www.kmu.gov.ua/ua/news/u-minkulturi-rozglyanuli-pitannya-promociyi-ukrayinskoyi-kulturi-v-respublici-bilorus>)

4 "Belarus and Ukraine discussed the strengthening of cooperation in the monetary and foreign exchange policy", 26.03.2018 (<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-ukraina-obsudili-ukreplenie-sotrudnichestva-v-chasti-denezhno-kreditnoj-i-valjutnoj-politiki-295765-2018/>)

In addition, work on the demarcation of the border has intensified. The process, which gained a good pace in 2016, risked slowing down last year against the background of the Zapad-2017 exercises and statements from a number of Ukrainian politicians about the need to revise the border. On April 18, the 16th meeting of the Joint Commission on Demarcation was held in Mazyr.

On 2 April an agreement of cooperation was signed between the NGO "The Association of Ukrainian Cities" and the Belarusian NGO "Twin Cities". While at first this agreement between NGOs did not appear important, "The Association of Ukrainian Cities" unites the self-government of the most successful Ukrainian cities, is one of the key structures in the policy of decentralization pursued by the Ukrainian government and is an influential political player.

Another positive sign was the column of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Pavlo Klimkin, which was devoted to Belarus. The official reason was the 100-year anniversary of the BNR, but the text, despite the historical context and the mentioning of the "Grib case", was aimed at promoting the history of a conflict-free neighbourhood and the necessity of developing relations.⁵

However, Klimkin's remark about the "Grib case" and the comments given by the Ambassador of Ukraine to Belarus, Igor Kizim, to the Agency "Interfax-Ukraine"⁶ demonstrate that the topic of kidnapping a Ukrainian citizen on the Belarusian territory is a sensitive one for Kiev. Given that Grib is in a Russian jail, it is clear that Russia has played a role. All possible options are fraught with reputational risks for Minsk:

- A direct accusation against Russia would aggravate Belarusian-Russian relations. A statement of fact without charges is tantamount to a recognition of the inability to control one's own territory. This could lead to a negative reaction of the Ukrainian press, the aggravation of Belarusian-Ukrainian relations and the creation of a conflict platform in the Russian direction.
- A statement on the detention of a Ukrainian as a result of a joint operation is tantamount to the recognition of an unfriendly act towards Ukraine. This is already the basis for the exchange of notes of protest and the deterioration of relations.
- Attempts not to react and not to notice the problem from the Belarusian side could have been justified in the first months, but now such behavior could lead to accusations from the Ukrainian media and the beginning of an anti-Belarusian media campaign.

Thus, Belarusian diplomats are faced with a considerable task to find a wording that will satisfy all sides in an official response to the Ukrainians.

Economy

On March 10, an exhibition of Belarusian goods "Made in Belarus" opened in Kiev. The event included the conference "Ukraine-Belarus: Prospects for Cooperation" in which the diplomatic corps and business representatives of the two countries participated. A number of agreements on the export of Belarusian products to the neighbouring country were signed. In particular officials spoke about the expansion of MAZ's presence both through direct sales and through joint ventures. Among those, BelTA gave an example of the work of PAT "Spetsbudmash" for the production of municipal equipment based on the Minsk chassis.⁷ The Ambassador of Ukraine to Belarus, Igor Kizim, in an interview said that he hoped that the market of the neighbouring country will become one of the main ones for

5 "The Ukraine and Belarus. The logic of history", 25.03.2018 (<http://www.istpravda.com.ua/columns/2018/03/25/152224/>)

6 "Ukraine has not received any reply from Belarus regarding the abduction of Grib", 10.04.2018 (<https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/general/497800.html>)

7 MAZ produces municipal and road-building equipment near Kiev (<http://www.belta.by/economics/view/reportazh-kak-pod-kievom-na-baze-shassi-maz-delajut-kommunalnuju-i-stroitelno-dorozhnuju-tehniku-298630-2018/>)

MAZ⁸ - a good sign for Belarus, given the presence of Ukrainian manufacturers of similar equipment.

In the same interview, the Ukrainian diplomat confirmed that both parties continue to work on strategically important project for the restoration of international navigation on the Dnieper.

The beginning of the supply of diesel fuel from the Mazyr refinery to the Kyiv port with a periodicity of 3-4 barges per month (since 2016, gasoline was only supplied on an irregular basis to the pier in Ukrainka, Kyiv region), confirmed his words.

However, against the background of prolonged consideration of the law "on internal water transport" and the lack of guarantees of normalization of tariffs for vessel escorts and locking on the Ukrainian side, the Republic of Lithuania, which in this project acts as a competitor to Kyiv, has concluded long-term contracts for the transshipment of Belarusian potash fertilizers and oil products through its ports (with delivery by rail).

The issue of exporting oil products and the strengthening of positions in the Ukrainian market was raised not only in connection with logistics. In March, an important incident for Minsk took place – the Ministry of Economic Development of Ukraine refused to introduce quotas for the supply of gasoline and diesel fuel from Belarus, and justified this by saying "the introduction of barriers to imports can lead to the destabilization of the motor fuel market."⁹ Thus, the attempt of the Ukrainian oligarch, I. Kolomoysky's, to lobby interests of his own oil refining assets ended in nothing, and the Belarusian suppliers at least until mid-2019 are insured against repeated complaints with the requirement of quotas of supplies.

Another positive signal was the information in the Ukrainian media about the consultations on the creation of a Belarusian-Ukrainian enterprise for the production of aircraft.¹⁰ In terms of the prospects of mass production of passenger aircraft the project is doubtful, yet it does have a rational foundation. It allows the corporation "Antonov" to bypass the Assembly in Minsk, Russian sanctions, and the enterprises from Russia, which are dependent on Ukrainian supplies – similar to the restrictions imposed by Kiev. Belarus receives economic benefits, technologies in the field of aircraft construction, and reputation dividends in the form of statements on the establishment of the production of Belarusian aircraft.

Information sphere

Belarus continues its policy of expanding the presence of Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian content in its media space. The BTRC, in collaboration with StarLightMedia, the holding of Viktor Pinchuk, replaces Russian shows with Ukrainian ones on the channel Belarus-2. In July "Days of Ukrainian Culture" will be held in Belarus.

An important element of the work in the information sphere will be the participation of a Ukrainian as a representative of Belarus in the Eurovision song contest. Attempts to counter this from representatives of Belarusian show business were finally stopped by Aliaxandr Lukashenka, who said that "he sees nothing special in this."¹¹

However, attempts to cause a wave of anti-Belarusian publications have continued in the Ukrainian media. In March, after one of the "war correspondents" published fake news, even

8 "Ukraine expects to increase cooperation with regions of Belarus" 22.04.2018 (<http://www.belta.by/interview/view/ukraina-rasschityvaet-na-rost-sotrudnichestva-s-regionami-belarusi-6208/>)

9 "The interdepartmental commission on international trade adopted a number of decisions on unfair imports", 20.04.2018 (<http://www.me.gov.ua/News/Detail?lang=uk-UA&id=1f71ee26-9c5f-45df-bb40-3514efac304a&title=MizhvidomchaKomisiiaZMizhnarodnoiTorgivliUkhalilaNizkuRishenStosovnoNedobrosovisnogolportu>)

10 "To bypass Belarus, Antonov is looking for outlets on the Russian market", 22.03.2018 (<http://biz.liga.net/all/transport/article/v-obkhod-sanktsiy-antonov-ishchet-vykhody-na-rossiyskiy-rynok>)

11 "Lukashenko unconcerned about the fact that Belarus at "Eurovision" will be presented by a Ukrainian", 20.03.2018 (<http://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-spokojno-otnoshus-k-tomu-chto-belarus-na-evrovidenii-budet-predstavljat-ukrainets-294821-2018/>)

serious publications came out with information about the Russian troops blocking Belarusian roads.¹²

On the other hand, in April, an attempt was made to launch a cyber attack on Belarusian websites (in particular, the Interior Ministry structures), and the perpetrators posed as well-known Ukrainian groups.

A relatively new type of information provocation is the launch of the topic through regional publications that refer to local structures of law enforcement agencies that do not have their own Internet resources. In particular:

- In the Kirovograd region, information is being disseminated that the SBU, represented by the regional administration, is warning Ukrainians about the danger of recruitment by the Belarusian special services.¹³
- In the Rivne region, the local press is reporting that Ukrainians have to pay fines for staying in Belarus with new ID-cards instead of old passports.¹⁴

The coordinated timing of these negative incidents may indicate a planned information attack against Belarusian-Ukrainian relations. The peak of these incidents was on March 14-16. And the fake news that appeared on March 26 was rather an attempt to play on the Freedom Day (part of the Ukrainian media has ignored the peaceful event, focusing on detention). Such actions are designed, among other things, for the further spreading of rumors, which may lead to a deterioration in the overall perception of Belarus and Belarusians by Ukrainians.

Forecast

In the coming months, Belarus and Ukraine will continue to expand trade cooperation. It is possible that new joint ventures will be created and a number of Belarusian companies could enter the Ukrainian market. First and foremost this concerns organisations engaged in drilling and the exploration of minerals, construction and road construction. Belarus, through the establishment of joint ventures, will try to strengthen its role as a Russian-Ukrainian intermediary in the exchange of technology and goods, the direct supply of which is prohibited by the trade restrictions laws adopted in both countries.

In the information sphere, there will be a gradual expansion of the presence of Ukrainian content (and the topic of Ukraine as a whole) in the Belarusian media space. Minsk will continue the policy of compensating for Russian information influence.

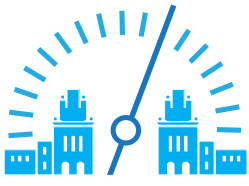
Regional cooperation will continue to develop. This work at the level of cities and local enterprises allows, on the one hand, to attract funds from various EU programs, and on the other, creates conditions for economic and cultural cooperation at the local level. Local authorities in Polish, Slovak and Lithuanian cities could also be partners.

Attempted information attacks on bilateral relations will continue. The new trend of using local media for fake news adapted for the residents of a particular region is alarming. This could become a problem comparable to the anti-Ukrainian information attack in Belarusian society in 2014 in the absence of a proper response.

12 "Russian Army units blocked a road in Belarus: people are alarmed". 15.03.2018 (<https://www.obozrevatel.com/abroad/armejskie-podrazdeleniya-rf-perekryili-trasu-minsk-baranovichi-zhurnalists.htm>)

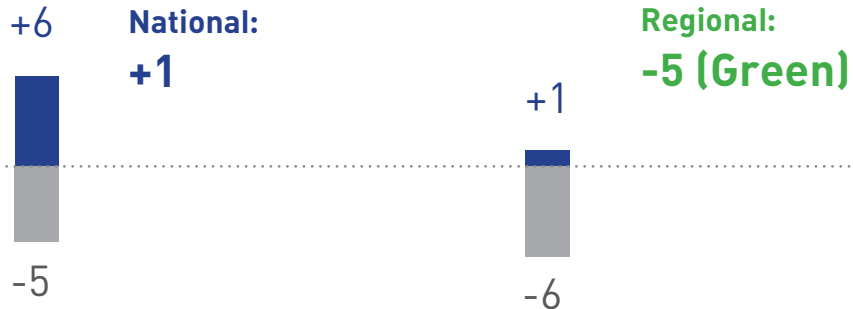
13 "SBU warns migrants workers in the Kirovograd region about recruitment in Russia and Belarus", 14.03.2018 (<http://uc.kr.ua/2018/03/14/sbu-poperedzhaye-zarobitchan-kirovogradshhyny-pro-verbuvannya-v-rosiyi-ta-bilorusi/>)

14 "Belarus does not recognize the ID card. There has already been a penalty", 26.03.2018 (<http://erve.ua/news/society/bilorusi-ne-viznayut-iD-kartki-vzhe--pershi-shtrafi.html>)



The Security Barometer: Status of National and Regional Security

The security
indices:



Trends

1. Minsk is optimizing the army, bringing it in line with its own needs and financial capabilities. This means creating an increasingly compact army and a reduction in certain types of heavy weapons that are not vital for the defence of the country.
2. The main priorities for the Belarusian leadership are air defence, special operations forces (SOF), the system of territorial defence and missile formation. While the first sector is developing in many ways for the sake of and with the assistance of Russia, Minsk is developing the last three on its own.
3. There is currently a practical assessment of the territorial defence system underway, focusing on its ability to solve key problems in the country's defence. At the same time, special attention is being paid to the development of issues in the supply of mobilization resources and the coordination of units.
4. The situation in the region around Belarus has somewhat worsened compared to the previous period and remains uncertain. While combining strong statements and demonstrative steps, the same actors continue to behave in a contradictory manner. (See the reaction of the leadership of the Baltic States to the missile exercises announced by the Russian Federation, or the readiness to settle border issues with Lithuania, despite the expulsion of Russian diplomats.)

1. National security

Changes in the state of technical equipment of the Belarusian army

In March it became clear that during the last three years the Belarusian military had been trained in Russia on the landing of heavy cargo. At the end of 2017 parachute platforms P 7 with a multi-dome parachute system ISS 5-128R for heavy cargo were purchased in Russia. Thanks to this, for the first time since 2005 the MTR of Belarus succeeded in landing heavy

airborne equipment. At the beginning of March, they landed a loaded GAZ-66 by parachute, and at the end of the month they landed a ZU-23-2 and ammunition. During the year, four more exercises and further purchases of such equipment are planned.¹

Belarus settled for transferring important equipment without immediate replacement. In the coming months, Minsk will hand over four Mi-24 assault helicopters to Afghanistan while India will cover the costs.² In addition, on 21 April the Minister of Defence of Serbia announced the delivery of four MiG-29 fighter jets from Belarus, without any payment coming from Belgrade.³ This most likely took place around the beginning of April. It is possible that Belarus will give Serbia additional equipment later on, such as in November, and the Serbian media has written about the possible supply of six MiG-29 jets and four divisions of s-300 air defence systems.⁴ Supposedly, the transfer of non-surplus equipment to Serbia is a condition for Moscow to reduce the price of Su-30's which Minsk intends to purchase.

Training of the Belarusian army

During the period under review, intensive training was provided to troops at the lower level up to squadron. The priorities have remained the same, in particular considerable emphasis was placed on preparation for actions in urban areas and night operations.

Two joint exercises were held with Russia. On March 19-22, a joint battalion tactical exercise with the forces of the SOF of Belarus and the airborne forces of Russia was held in the Ulyanovsk region of Russia, during which peacekeeping tasks were completed. These exercises could be considered as preparation for a possible peacekeeping mission in eastern Ukraine.

The Belarusian-Russian tactical exercise which took place on April 9-13 in the Brest region was of a different nature. It included landing and combat shooting and included the participation of around 450 soldiers and 70 pieces of equipment. It was a training operation against illegally armed groups, sabotage and intelligence groups.

In addition, another significant event was the tactical exercise of the 19th Separate Guards Mechanized Brigade. It took place from 23 to 27 April with the participation of more than 1,000 troops, more than 30 tanks, 50 armored vehicles, 15 artillery and MLRS. Amongst other things, the strengthening of the state border area in conjunction with the border units was practiced.

Checking the combat readiness of the army

On March 12, less than a week after the "comprehensive inspection" of the armed forces was completed, the President ordered that a practical "combat readiness check" of the Belarusian army begin. This check took approximately a month.

Units of various branches of the armed forces were subject to inspection, including carrying out exercises with live fire, in particular from heavy weapons such as the MLRS and self-propelled guns. Special attention was paid to the combat readiness of the air force and air defence. The mobilization system has been extensively and thoroughly tested. Not only were about 2,000 military conscripts called from the reserve, many of whom had last performed military duty 15-20 years before, but a separate mechanized brigade was formed and its ability to carry out military operations was tested.

1 "There is landing!" 03.03. 2018, Issue No. 43 (<https://vsr.mil.by/2018/03/03/est-prizemlenie/>)

2 "India to supply four Mi-24 assault helicopters to Afghanistan", IHS Jane's Defence Weekly 06.04.2018 (<http://www.janes.com/article/79066/india-to-supply-four-mi-24-assault-helicopters-to-afghanistan>)

3 "The Army of Serbia received four "MiG-29" from Belarus", Wulin, the Minister of Defence, 21.04.2018, (<http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/402369/Vojska-Srbije-dobila-cetiri-miga-29-od-Belorusije>)

4 "Serbia gets s-300 and MiG's from Belarus!", 26.11.2017 (<http://www.alo.rs/alo-saznaje-srbija-dobija-s-300-i-migove-iz-belorusije/133022>)

On April 11 the President of Belarus signed a decree on the conscription of up to 100 reserve officers who did not do military service. The last time a call of the same scale was made was in 2016. This is evidence of the shortage of personnel at the lower command level (platoon) and is designed to form a personnel reserve and to establish a mobilization system at different levels. Despite the fairly effective military education system, the percentage of officers resigning from service before the completion of their first contract and immediately afterwards is very high. Therefore, junior lieutenants and officers, who are called up from the reserve, are appointed to the positions of platoon commanders, deputy commanders of companies and even company commanders.

Territorial Defence

In early March two command-staff exercises were held with staff from the headquarters of the territorial defence of the Grodno region and the United Slonim-Zelva district. Such events are not likely to be covered by the media.

On 12-15 March periodic courses on "territorial defence" were held at the faculty of the General Staff of the Military Academy with the chairmen of the district (city) executive committees. Topics studied included legal issues, the formation of the district headquarters of the territorial defence and the units of the territorial army. In addition, demonstration classes on the storage of material and equipment were held, as well as on the creation of a command center to control of the district headquarters of the territorial defence.

International Contacts

On the 5-8 April the Minister of Defence of the People's Republic of China, Wei Fenhe, visited Belarus. Following this visit, a new stage in military-technical cooperation (primarily in the field of missile weapons and air defence) can be expected. Among the most promising areas of cooperation are "joint combat training, military education, provision of free military assistance, as well as cooperation within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization through military departments". Also an agreement between the Ministry of Defence of Belarus and China was signed on the provision of free military assistance to Belarus.⁵

Later Belarus also demonstrated an intent to continue cooperation with Beijing. In particular, on April 13, the Chief of the General Staff, Belokonev, took part in a regular meeting of the CSTO Military Committee in Astana, and on April 20, he participated in a regular meeting of the Committee of Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces of the CIS Member States. On April 23-24 the Belarusian delegation, headed by Defence Minister Ravkov, also took part in a meeting of the heads of military departments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member States in Beijing. It is not clear whether the visit of the Minister of Defence to Uzbekistan in April was associated with cooperation within the post-Soviet structures or the SCO.

2. Regional security

Deployment of new weapons in the region

Lithuania and Latvia are strengthening their air defence systems. In early March the Latvian Defence Ministry received the first of three ordered anti-aircraft Lockheed Martin TPS-77 radars. On March 29 the Lithuanian Defences Ministry announced the purchase of five Israeli radar stations for €2.8 million. The radar stations are scheduled to be included in Lithuania's defence system by the end of 2019 and will close the gap in the radar field in Varenska,

⁵ The results of the official visit of the Minister of Defence of China, 10.04.2018, Issue No. 66 (<https://vsr.mil.by/2018/04/10/ob-itogax-oficialnogo-vizita-ministra-oborony-kr/>)

Shpanchenko, the Vilna area on the border with Belarus and in Jurbarkas and Pagehouston, the areas bordering Russia.

On March 28, Poland signed an unprecedented deal (costing \$4.75 billion) with U.S. corporations to purchase a specially modified Patriot air defence system, and related components, some of which are still being developed. The first deliveries are scheduled for 2022. Warsaw intends to deploy a system of weapons in the region, seriously changing the military-strategic situation, which may entail a reaction from Russia and a new arms race.

Ukraine received a batch of old Soviet armored vehicles from Central Europe.⁶ Latvia has started using new army equipment such as reconnaissance drones. On April 17, the Latvian Defence Ministry reported that next year, with financial support from the U.S., Latvia will purchase three UAV systems RQ-20A Puma (nine UAVs) worth more than \$3 million.

Increasing military presence on the borders of Belarus

On 15 March, the Polish Minister of National Defence, Mariusz Blaszczak, announced the formation of a new professional army division in the eastern part of Poland. He explained that "part of the key to the military security of Poland is strengthening the eastern wall, and we plan to relocate part of our armed forces from west to east".⁷

Conflicts in the region

On March 16, the Ukrainian leadership announced the change from April 30 of the so-called "anti-terrorist operation" in the east of the country to the "operation of united forces", in accordance with the "law on the reintegration of Donbass". In fact, it is a fully-fledged military operation with a transfer of power in the two eastern regions to the army bodies, which will be in charge of other siloviki and control bodies. This, regardless of intentions, is an objective step towards a military solution to the conflict.

During the period under review, both Russia and NATO demonstrated a dual approach to the contradictions existing between them, including in the region around Belarus. Both the U.S. and NATO have maintained working contact with the Russian side (for example, between the Commander-in-Chief of NATO forces in Europe and the Chief of the Russian General Staff, etc.), and prepared a regular meeting of the NATO-Russia Council.⁸ NATO has demonstrated a willingness to combine deterrence with dialogue – a "dual policy", as Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg regularly mentioned.⁹

On the one hand, Washington announced the allocation of around \$100 million to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia for the purchase of large-caliber ammunition and about \$70 million for training military personnel and the purchase of equipment. In addition, the U.S. President Trump openly criticized Russian actions at a meeting with the presidents of the three Baltic republics. However, at the same meeting, Trump also called on the Baltic leaders to improve dialogue and relations with Russia.¹⁰

On the other hand, Russia used rhetoric and symbolic gestures rather than a show of force, let alone military action. In response, perhaps, to the expulsion of Russian diplomats from the

⁶ "Ukraine buys BMP-1AK in Poland and the first machines were already in the army", 10.04.2018 (https://gazeta.ua/articles/life/_ukrayina-kupuye-v-polschi-bmp1ak-pershi-mashini-vzhe-u-vijskah/830907)

⁷ "A strong army means a safe Poland", 15.03.2018 (<http://www.mon.gov.pl/aktualnosci/arttykul/najnowsze/odprawa-kierowniczej-kadry-mon-i-szrp-72018-03-15/>)

⁸ "Foreign Ministers setting stage for NATO Summit, Secretary General Says" (<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1504441/foreign-ministers-setting-stage-for-nato-summit-secretary-general-says/>)

⁹ "NATO allows Russia into the new house", 28.04.2018 (<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3618182>)

¹⁰ "Donald Trump to Baltics: I've been tough on Russia, but want better relations", USA TODAY, 03.04.2018, (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/04/03/donald-trump-meets-baltic-leaders-worried-russia/480957002/>)

Baltic States, Moscow announced the testing of missiles in the exclusive economic zone on 4-6 and 17-19 April in Latvia, which was a legal yet unprecedented step. However, Russia did not launch any missiles.¹¹ It is noteworthy that despite the harsh criticism of these Russian exercises by the leadership of the Baltic countries during the announced maneuvers, the leaders of all three countries, as well as the leadership of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Defence, and other senior officials, still went to meet with the U.S. leadership in Washington.¹² This could indicate the perception of these Russian steps as frivolous.

On April 5, despite the expulsion of Russian diplomats, Moscow approved the protocol on the demarcation of the border with Lithuania. The demarcation of the entire border of Lithuania will be completed with the entry into force of the relevant documents.

Military exercises in the region

On 16-20 April, the military exercises "Brave Griffin" were held in Klaipeda and its surroundings, in Lithuania, with the participation of about 800 troops of the motorized infantry brigade "Zemaitija". On April 18-30, Latvia hosted the "Hammer of Fury" exercises with the participation of military contingents from Latvia, Estonia, Great Britain, Denmark and France. There is conflicting and limited information about the scale of the exercise, with figures ranging from 500 soldiers to 1,300 soldiers from the Estonian army alone.

On 26 March, an assessment of threats to the national security of Lithuania by the Department of State Security (DGB) and military intelligence of the country was published. A significant part of this assessment covered issues related to Belarus. Once again, it was stressed that the Astravets nuclear power plant does not meet the requirements of international nuclear safety. One of the threats listed was the activity of investment and financial companies, in particular, those engaged in financial technologies. It stated "the origin of their capital, their activities and connections [...] in states hostile to Lithuania [Lietuva priesiskose valstybese] do not meet the interests of national security." At a press conference the head of the DGB, Darius Jauniskis, said that "it is the money of Russia and Belarus", effectively calling Belarus a hostile state.

Forecast

Minsk will prepare the army for further reform, and this will depend on the success of ongoing experiments with territorial defence, the training of reservists, and prioritised development of selected segments of the army, such as the SOF, missile forces and air defence. We should expect a corresponding rearmament and write-off of a number of heavy weapons and reduction in the variable composition of the army as a whole.

Russia does not intend to strengthen the Belarusian army beyond a basic level. In addition to the ground air defence system, the Kremlin does not intend to support other components of the Belarusian army. As a result, it is likely that Minsk will receive new Russian fighters at a reasonable price only by agreeing to transfer some more property to another Russian ally. This would minimize the increase in defence capabilities that the Belarusian government would hope to achieve through the purchase of new equipment.

Belarus will continue its policy of expanding cooperation with China in the military and

¹¹ "Our guest - Minister of Defence of Latvia, 26.04.2018 (<http://lr4.lsm.lv/lv/raksts/deystvuyuschie-lica/nash-gost-ministr-oboroni-latvii.a102987/>)

¹² "Russia tests missiles in the Baltic Sea, a day after Baltic leaders met with Trump", 04.04.2018 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russia-tests-missiles-in-the-baltic-sea-a-day-after-baltic-leaders-met-with-trump/2018/04/04/0a35e222-380d-11e8-af3c-2123715f78df_story.html?utm_term=.6998e8d14c13)

military-technical field. Thus, Minsk is trying to avoid a dangerous choice for Belarus between further rapprochement with Russia or the West. Minsk will also continue to maintain positive relations with NATO and remain a member of security treaties with Russia.

The situation in the region in the coming months will remain relatively tense but stable. Changes, such as the building up NATO forces, for example, are not expected. The exception is the situation in eastern Ukraine, which is fraught with the resumption of the active phase of the armed conflict. Otherwise, all parties will continue to slowly but steadily pump up the region with military resources. The main risks for Belarus lie in the consequences of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, as well as the redistribution of transit flows, in particular gas, in the region.

Appendix 1

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development indices

Relationship with Russia

Date	Event	Point
13-14 March	N. Patrushev visits Minsk	+2
25 March	Support for Russia over the Kemerovo tragedy	+2
27 March	A. Kabiakou visits St. Petersburg	+2
2 April	Messages exchanged regarding Union Day	+2
6 April	Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Minsk	+1
6 April	Support to Russia in the framework of the Council of Foreign Ministers	+2
12 April	Belarusian delegation visits Sakhalin	+1
10-12 April	Joint exercises of paratroopers in the Brest region	+2
13 April	Inter-MFA consultations	+1
14 April	Condemnation of strikes against Syria by a coalition led by the U.S. (support for Russia's position)	+2
March -April	Meetings of the heads of administrations, namely parliaments, prosecution offices, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, customs offices, educational departments, communication departments, industrial cooperation, scientific departments, and heads of the regions – 8 in total	+9
March -April	Dairy supply dispute	-3
April	Claims of African Swine Flu	-1
Total		+22

Relationship with the European Union

Date	Event	Point
12 March	Krauchanka participates in the annual meeting of senior officials of the Eastern Partnership in Brussels.	+1
13 March	Consultations between deputy ministers of the MFA of Belarus and the Czech Republic in Prague; A. Krauchanka meets with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Martin Stropnitsky.	+1
14 March	The Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Iryna Kastsevich, meets with Czech Ambassador, Milan Eckert, and signs a bilateral pension security agreement.	+1
14 March	The Lithuanian Ambassador is handed a note expressing concern about the lack of operational information on the incident at the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant.	-1
15 March	The Chairman of the State Customs Committee, Yury Sianko, visits Lithuania and holds negotiations with the Director General of the Customs Department under the Ministry of Finance of Lithuania, Arunas Adomenas, and signs a memorandum on cooperation during the 2nd European Games.	+1
15-16 March	Krauchanka visits Paris	+1
20 March	Deputy Prime Minister, Anatoly Kalinin, meets with the Slovak Ambassador, Josef Migash	+1
26 March	U. Makei meets with the Ambassador of Italy, Stefano Bianchi	+1
27-28 March	U. Makei visits Great Britain	+2
4 April	U. Makei meets with the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, Lukasz Parizek	+1
4 April	Consultations take place between the Deputy Foreign Ministers of Belarus and Slovakia	+1
6 April	A. Krauchanka meets with Wolfgang Utershnig, the Head of Department for Youth Affairs of the Lower Austrian Land Government and the curator of the project "Holidays for Children from Belarus"	+1
9 April	A. Krauchanka meets with the temporary Charge d'Affaires of the Netherlands, Paul van Oostveen	+1
10 April	The Deputy Energy Minister of Belarus, Mikhail Mikhadyuk, conducts a big interview on the construction of BelNPP with the Lithuanian television and radio company, LRT	+1
11 April	Deputy Ministers of the Foreign Ministries of Belarus and Denmark hold consultations in Minsk	+1
12-13 April	A. Krauchanka visits Portugal for a second round of political consultations and bilateral meetings; the signing of the Interstate Agreement on Economic Cooperation and the Protocol on Cooperation between the Foreign Ministry on Bilateral Consultations.	+1
19-22 April	The Chairman of the Minsk City Executive Committee, Andrei Shorets, visits Hungary and the 'Days of Minsk' are held in Budapest	+1
20 April	The Belarusian Foreign Ministry reacts negatively to the resolution of the European Parliament on Belarus	-1
23-25 April	Consultations take place between Deputy Ministers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Belarus in The Hague (the first time in history)	+1

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Date	Event	Point
24 April	In a speech to the Belarusian parliament and people, Lukashenko expresses a positive view of relations with the EU	+1
26 April	U. Makei meets with the Managing Director of the European External Action Service for Europe and Central Asia, Thomas Mayer-Harting	+1
26 April	A. Krauchanka meets with the State Secretary of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the EU and Trade, Oscar Stanstrom	+1
26-27 April	The fifth meeting of the Belarus-EU Coordination Group is held in Minsk	+2
26 April	The Chairman of the State Customs Committee, Yury Sianko, visits Finland and holds talks with the General Director of Customs in Finland, Antti Khartikaynen, signing a plan of bilateral cooperation in regards to training	+1
27 April	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus has a negative reaction to a note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania regarding the fire at BelNPP	-1
	There were mostly positive stories in the mass media and in statements from the leadership in Belarus in relation to the EU, including an interview given by U. Makei on the tv channel "Euronews" on March 24	+1
Total		+22

Relationship with China

Date	Event	Point
2 March	Lukashenka notes the unsatisfactory work on a number of investment projects at a meeting to assess economic development in 2017	-1
2 March	International science conference "The Ideas of Socialism with the Chinese Specifics of the New Era and their Strategy for Implementation" held by the Republican Confucius Institute of Sinology at BSU	+1
4 March	Interview of U. Siamashka to "Glavny Efir": The contract with the former general contractor on the Dobrush project will be dissolved	-3
9 March	In an interview, the Ambassador of Belarus to the PRC declared that the "One Belt One Road" initiative brings opportunities for the development of Belarus	+1
21 March	Lukashenko congratulates Xi Jinping on his re-election as President of PRC	+1
23 March	A forum on Chinese-Belarusian trade and economic cooperation is held in Chengdu	+1
22-23 March	A Belarusian parliamentary delegation, headed by A. Rybak, meets with the Deputy Chairman of the PCNP of the 13th Assembly, Aleken Eminbakh, the Deputy Minister of Commerce of the PRC, Fu Ziyin, and the Director of the Eurasian Department of the Minister of Commerce of the PRC, Luo Weidong	+1
27 March	The investment forum "Investing in Belarus: An Economically Active Economy on the Silk Road" is held in Beijing. The forum was organised by the Research Center for the Development of the State Council of the PRC and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, with the participation of the Deputy Minister of Economy, P. Utyupina.	+1
28 March	The signing of an agreement on investment in the CBIP between the Chinese Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), the Xi'an Aerospace Scientific and Industrial Corporation, the Administration of CBIP and the SZA0 Industrial Park Development Company	+1
April	The registration of 5 new residents of CBIP: LLC "Assis", LLC "Standard NUVO", LLC "Duomedica", CJSC "Recombel", CJSC "Aviation technologies and complexes"	+1
5-8 April	Official visit of the Minister of Defence of the PRC, Colonel-General Wei Fenhe, to Belarus, with the signing of an agreement on free military-technical assistance from China.	+4
6 April	The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, S. Aslova, visits the CBIP with the Ambassador of Tajikistan to Belarus, M. Hakdoada and the Minister of the Economy of Belarus, U. Zinovski	+1
9-12 April	A delegation of the Council on the Promotion of South-South Cooperation visit Belarus with the Ambassador of the PRC in Belarus	+1
10 April	Memoranda of Understanding are signed between the Belarusian railways and the Chinese company "DHL Global Forwarding" and "Belintertrans-Transport-Logistics Center"	+1
14 April	The Prime Minister of Belarus, A. Kabiakou, visits the CBIP	+1
16 April	The Ambassador of Belarus, K. Rudy, participates in a working meeting of the "16+1" platform for the development of interregional cooperation in Jinan City	+1

Date	Event	Point
19-20 April	A delegation from the PRC, led by the Director General of the Center for Material Evidence of the Ministry of Public Security, Zhao Kimin, visits Belarus within the framework of the international scientific conference "Eurasian Partnership of Forensic Experts: Challenges, Solutions and Prospects for Development"	+1
19 April	The trade and investment forum "Belarus – a Country of Forests" takes place in Shanghai, with the participation of the Chairman of the Trust "Bellesbumprom", U. Nazarov	+1
20 April	In an interview with BelTA, the Ambassador of the PRC, Cui Tzimin, states that the participation of Belarus in the "One Belt One Road" initiative is very important for China	+1
21 April	Ceremonial opening in Shanghai of the joint company "Belarus Food and Agriculture (Shanghai) Co. Ltd" (from the CJSC "Meat and Dairy Company" and the "Drex Food Group Co. Ltd.")	+1
22 April	The opening of the Center for the Study of Chinese Language and Culture at the Confucius Institute for Science and Technology at BNTU	+1
24 April	The Defence Minister of Belarus, Lieutenant-General A. Ravkov, meets with the Deputy Chairman of the Central Military Council of the PRC, Colonel-General Zhang Yusia	+1
25 April	The completion of the certification of 5 Belarusian enterprises to export poultry to China	+1
26 April	Belarusian-Chinese consular consultations in Beijing	+1
29 April – 4 May	Press tour of Chinese media in Belarus	+1
Total		+22

Relationship with the U.S.

Date	Event	Point
2 March	Delegation of the Leadership of the American Jewish Committee visit Belarus	+1
23 March	The Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology, A. Shumilin, meets with the Honorary Consul of Belarus, M. Morgulis, in Florida	+1
27 March	A. Krauchanka visits the U.S. and meets with U. Mitchell	+1
29 March	The new post of Honorary Consul of Belarus is established. Krauchanka meets with the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Russell Nelson, and other various state officials	+3
4-6 April	A delegation from the Foreign Ministry, led by the Director of the Department of Foreign Economic Affairs, Roman Sobolev, visits Washington	+1
13 April	U. Makei meets with a Senior Researcher of the Jamestown Foundation, V. Sokor	+1
14 April	The Belarusian Foreign Ministry releases a statement condemning the missile strikes against Syria	-1
18 April	O. Kravchenko meets with the Senior Deputy Assistant Administer of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Margo Ellis	+1
20 April	The First Deputy Minister of Economy, Dzmitry Krutoy meets with USAID Assistant Administrator, Brok Birman	+1
20 April	The U.S. State Department releases a critical report of Belarus's observance of human rights	-1
27 April	The U.S. suspends the extension of sanctions against nine Belarusian enterprises for a further six months	+1
Total		+9

Relationship with Ukraine

Date	Event	Point
16 March	Cyberattack under the guise of Ukrainian hackers	-1
15 March	Information provocation in the Ukrainian press regarding Russian troops in Belarus	-1
20 March	Lukashenka's statement on the Ukrainian at the Eurovision Song Contest	+1
25 March	Klimkin's column in the "Ukrainian Pravda"	+1
26 March	Negotiations on cooperation at the level of the National Bank	+1
14 March and 26 March	Fake news dispersed through regional mass media	-1
27 March	Telephone conversation between the Presidents	+2
2 April	Agreement on cooperation between the AUC and "Wildlife Cities"	+1
10 April	Statement by Kizim on the "Grib Case" (and Kizim's statement on UP)	-1
10 April	Exhibition "Made in Belarus"	+1
12 April	Deliveries of diesel fuel along the Dnipro river to Kiev and work on the restoration of shipping (see Ambassador's interview)	+1
20 April	Refusal of "Ukrnafta" on the demand for a quotation of Belarusian imports	+1
22 April	Interview of the Ambassador of Ukraine to Belarus with BelTA	+1
27 April	Meeting with the Ministry of Finance	+1
Total		+7

Appendix 2

Catalogue of events underlying the security indices

Date	Event	National Security	Regional Security
Early March	Commissioning of new parachute systems in the Armed Forces	+1	0
12 March — mid- April	Practical inspection of the combat readiness of aircraft	+1	0
12-15 March	Courses on local security in the Military Academy of Belarus for the Chairmen of District and City Executive Committees	+1	0
15 March	Warsaw announces the buildup of forces on the eastern border of Poland	-1	-1
26 March	Negative remarks on the role of Belarus in Lithuania's Annual National Security Assessment	-1	-1
28 March	Poland purchases Patriot Air Defence Systems	-1	-1
Early April	Transfer of Belarus fighters to Serbia	-1	0
5 April	Russia completes the demarcation of the border with Lithuania	0	+1
5-8 April	The Ministry of Defence of the PRC visits Belarus	+1	0
6 April	A deal including the sale of Belarusian assault helicopters	-1	0
9-13 April	Belarusian-Russian tactical exercise MTR in the Brest region	+1	-1
18-30 April	NATO drill "Hammer of Fury" in Latvia	0	-1
23-27 April	Staged military exercises of the 19th Independent Guards Mechanised Brigade of the Armed Forces of Belarus	+1	0
30 April	The end of ATO and an army operation deployed in eastern Ukraine	0	-1
Итого		+1	-5 (зелёный)

Appendix 3

Colour scale of regional security tensions

Colour Value	Numerical Value	Interpretation
White	more than -1	Low likelihood of escalation. Non-threatening situation.
Green	from -2 to -6	The presence of military activities which do not post 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 could lead to the escalation of tensions. The situation calls for close attention.
Orange	from -13 to -17	Military preparations taking place in the region. Growing tensions. The situation is threatening.
Red	-18 and less	A sharp escalation of tensions. Conflict is virtually unavoidable. A pre-war situation.

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