



# MINSK BAROMETER

Monitoring of  
foreign policy and  
regional security

Dear readers!

We are pleased to present the eighth issue of Minsk Barometer, which analyzes Belarus's foreign policy and the security status in the months of March and April 2019.

There was a marked increase in the number of confrontational topics in Belarus's relationship with Russia: the conflict over the Russian ambassador, the ban on the supply of Belarusian-made goods, the situation around oil transit and supplies. As a result, the relationship index dropped to an all-time low of minus 9 points.

The number of contacts and projects with the European Union continues to grow. This notwithstanding, there is still no tangible progress in the negotiations on politically significant arrangements.

In the China dimension, the monitoring period was dominated by Lukashenka's visit to Beijing and the signing of bilateral agreements.

The relatively high pace of bilateral contacts with the U.S. remains in place, but it fails to lead to any breakthrough improvement in the relationship, either.

The presidential election in Ukraine produced a significant impact on bilateral engagement. Despite this, several new formats of cooperation between the two countries became operational.

As far as security is concerned, the trend towards gradual militarization of the region continued. Under such circumstances, Minsk is relying on multi-directionality and transparency.

Best regards,

Dzianis Melyantsou,

Editor, the Minsk Barometer  
Coordinator of Belarus's Foreign Policy programme,  
Minsk Dialogue on International Relations

**4 Relationship with Russia**

**9 Relationship with the European Union**

**12 Relationship with China**

**15 Relationship with the U.S.**

**18 Relationship with Ukraine**

**22 Security Barometer**

**31 Appendix 1**  
Catalogue of events underlying the relations development indices

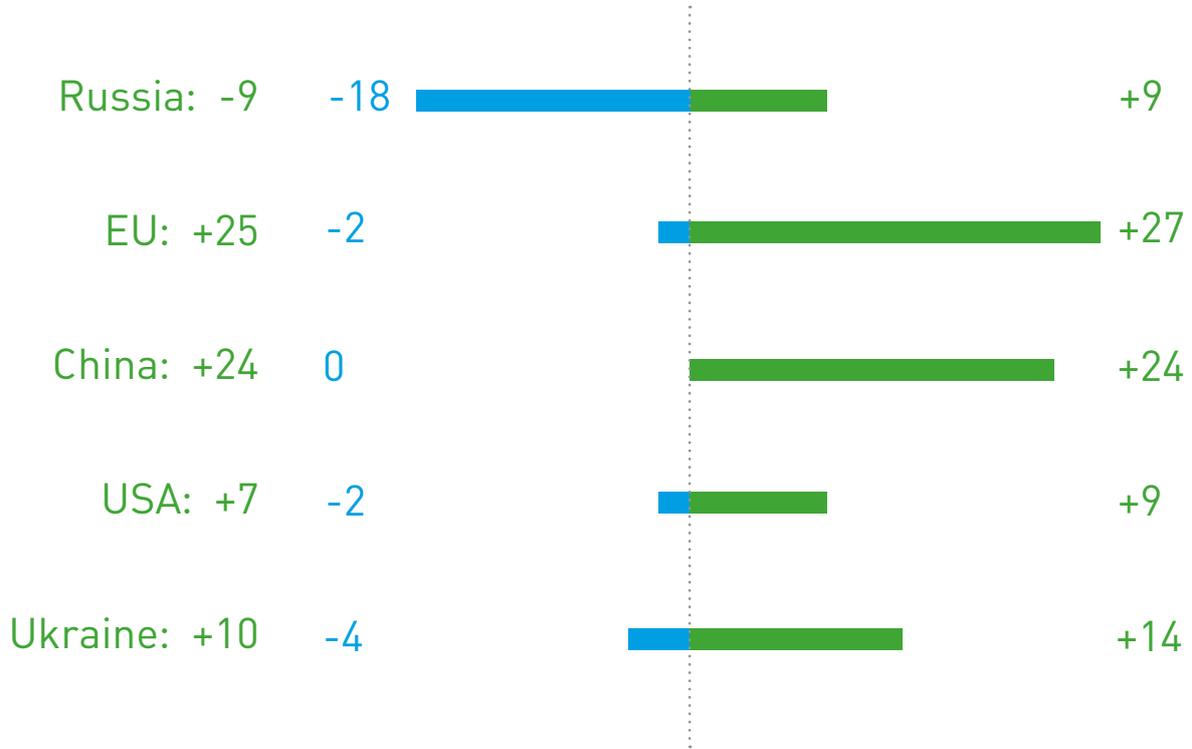
**38 Appendix 2**  
Catalogue of events underlying the security indices

**40 Appendix 3**  
Color scale of regional security tensions

**41 Authors**

Minsk Dialogue  
Track-II Initiative

## Relations development indices:

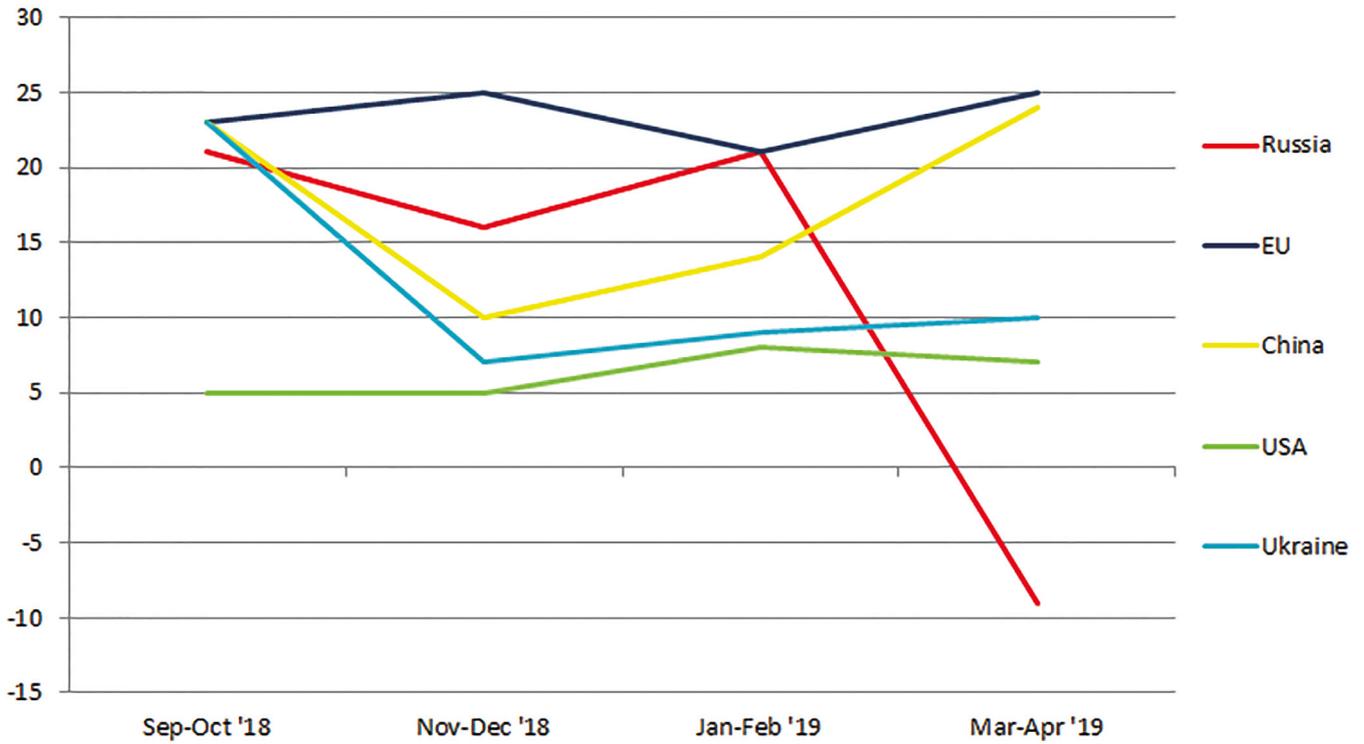


## Security:

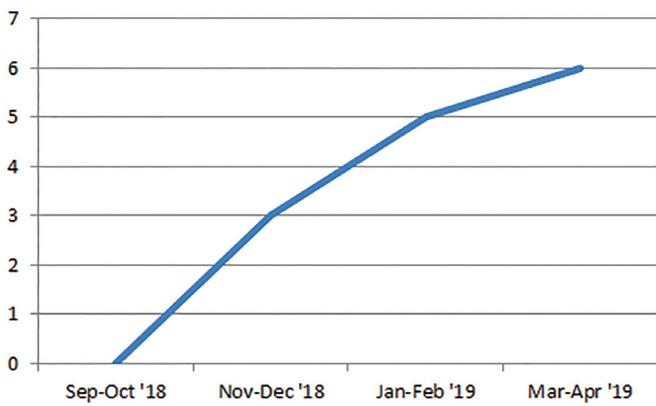


The green level indicates the presence of military activities, which do not pose a direct threat and will not necessarily lead to the escalation of tensions. Such a situation calls for cautious attention.

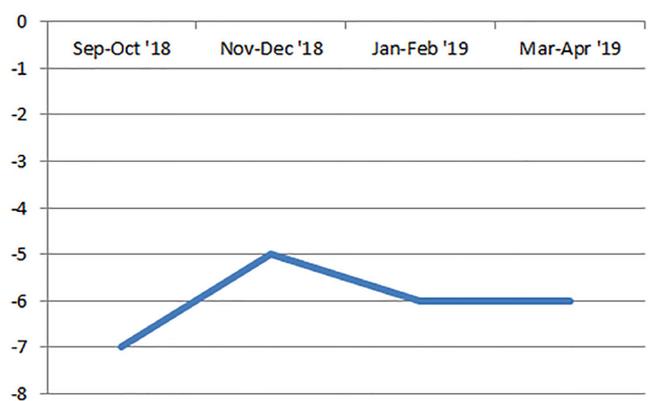
### Dynamics of foreign policy indices



### National security



### Level of regional tension



# Relationship with Russia

+9



Resulting index: +9

Positive points: +9

Negative points: -18



-18

## Trends

1. The Kremlin replaced its ambassador to Belarus, seeking to avoid confrontation.
2. Despite the decrease in the level of high-pressure rhetoric, the number of confrontational directions is growing.
3. The situation around oil transit and supply has become extremely tense.
4. None of the issues on the bilateral agenda have been resolved.

## Developments and processes

### Political agenda

The political agenda for the months of March and April was shaped by the conflict between the Belarusian Foreign Ministry and Russian Ambassador Mikhail Babich, the exchange of proposals to “deepen integration” within the framework of the revision of the 1999 Union Treaty, negotiations over the transit and supply of Russian crude oil, as well as the problem of contaminated oil in the Belarusian section of the Druzhba pipeline.

During that period, Belarus and Russia did not come any closer to resolving any of the conflict-riddled areas of cooperation. On the contrary, new ones were added to those already in existence: the ban on the import of Belarusian beef, the contamination of the Druzhba oil pipeline, etc.

President Putin’s recall of his ambassador and the appointment of a new one in accordance with the wish of the Belarusian leadership, *inter alia*, clearly indicate that Russia does not have a definite plan to assert its interests in Belarus.

### Framework of the union with Russia

On March 1, Big Talk with the President was held with invited guests including both the elites and some representatives of the Belarusian counter-elites. Most of the statements made by the head of state concerned Russia. Below are some of the bullet points:

- 98% of Belarusians are against the merger with Russia;
- the adoption of joint decisions is only possible on an equal basis;
- Belarus’s contribution to integration is not sufficiently compensated by Russia;
- Belarus will continue to seek compensation for the tax maneuver;
- Belarus will continue to seek equal gas prices;
- in its foreign policy, Belarus has supported and will continue to support Russia, unless it harms the interests of Belarus;

- the state will not engage in “soft Belarusization” but will not prevent civil society from pursuing it, while impeding the penetration of Russian propaganda;
- in security, Belarus has supported and will continue to support Russia, but will not allow Russia’s campaigns against other countries from its territory.

On March 5, Aliaksandr Lukashenka outlined the country’s approaches to its relations with Russia within the framework of the EEU at a government session. He urged the government to “return to the package principle in eliminating barriers and restrictions” in trade. The “package” principle implies that Belarus is exchanging its signature under the agreements on the EEU norms for Russia’s commitments in areas that are critical to Belarus.

### **Mikhail Babich**

On March 14, Russian Ambassador Mikhail Babich challenged some details of the statements made by the Belarusian president in an extensive interview with RIA Novosti. Specifically, he said that Moscow does not offer Belarus to join Russia, but the terms of trade, including in oil and natural gas, depend on the depth of integration, that Minsk is free to choose the degree of integration and the respective conditions, as well as that Moscow is expecting Minsk’s decision on the degree of integration and is going to consider terms and conditions concerning natural gas, oil and loans only after such a decision has been taken.

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry regarded the ambassador’s statements as interference in the internal affairs of Belarus and inappropriate sermons<sup>1</sup>. In addition to those statements, the Belarusian authorities disliked the ambassador’s actions, in particular, his trip to the country’s enterprises, his contacts and conversations with directors of enterprises, heads of regions, state agencies, and representatives of the opposition. In response, official Minsk suggested that Moscow recall the diplomat. On April 30, Putin relieved Babich of the post of Ambassador and Special Envoy of the President of the Russian Federation and appointed Dmitry Mezentsev in his stead. Mezentsev is also a senior official, but he has some experience of diplomatic work. Incidentally, Mezentsev knows President Lukashenka personally.

The story of Mikhail Babich’s appointment and resignation suggests that the media, including those Belarusian (and international), tend to significantly underestimate the degree of Belarus’s sovereignty, and, consequently, the degree of Russia’s influence on Belarus. This situation also manifests the significant uncertainty of Russia’s goals in Belarus and the experimental nature of its moves. In addition, Babich’s recall will significantly reduce the Kremlin’s trust in those groups of influence in Russia that advocate extending Putin’s rule through the use of the Union State of Belarus and Russia.

### **Union Treaty**

Nevertheless, the revision of the Union Treaty is likely to continue, both because of bureaucratic logic and Russia’s desire to relinquish some of its obligations as an ally. To date, the parties have exchanged proposals to improve the Union State, but no information on the content of these proposals has been disclosed – even Babich failed to clarify the situation. However, judging by the overall direction of the ambassador’s statements, it is primarily a question of the synchronization of financial, industrial and customs policies, and it is obvious that Moscow can treat such synchronization exclusively as the adoption in Belarus of Russian laws and practices. The Belarusian leadership thinks in terms of projects rather than builds a specific system. It is unlikely that the work to revise the Union Treaty might lead to any fundamental changes both in the Treaty itself and the Russia-Belarus relationship in principle.

<sup>1</sup> Response of head of the information and digital diplomacy office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Anatol Hlaz, to a question by RIA Novosti ([http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/f117caa7096d06f8.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/f117caa7096d06f8.html))

## **EEU**

Deputy Prime Minister Pietryshenka said in an interview with Zviazda daily that Belarus continues to work on amending the rates for the distribution of import customs duties starting in 2020<sup>2</sup>. *“For all options that we have as a result of preliminary calculations, distribution rates for Belarus are raised by 0.65-1.36 percentage points and are reduced for Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, and for some options, such rates are also reduced for Kazakhstan and Russia, which is why our partners insist that the current rates should become permanent. However, their proposal, naturally, does not have Belarus’s support. The work to recalculate distribution rates continues and, I believe, will be completed in 2019, and rates meeting the economic interests of our country should be established for us in 2020,”* said Pietryshenka. He also said that Belarus still opposes the exemptions and imitations in mutual trade and tariff formation, as well as attempts to disguise trade restrictions as phytosanitary, veterinary, and other measures.

Following the meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council in Yerevan on April 30, no decision on duties was taken, but Dmitry Medvedev said the move would be made within two weeks. Belarus does not intend to extend the current rates for the distribution of duties within the EEU, and, according to Medvedev, in this case, the previous rates effective before the accession of Kyrgyzstan and Armenia to the EEU will automatically come into effect.

## **Food supplies**

On April 4, Rosselkhoz nadzor imposed an import ban on bone-in beef supplies from Belarus and other countries (Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan), which do not obtain the official International Epizootic Bureau (IEB) status as countries with a controlled risk of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). For some reason, Russia intends to urgently obtain the official IEB status.

Once again, Russia’s decisions taken without the approval of its partners in the Union State and the EEU led to a dramatic change in terms of trade. For Belarus, the ban may imply significant losses in its exports. Specifically, bone-in beef exports in 2018 amounted to over USD 300 million.

Problems with supplies of dairy products were resolved in neither March nor April, but after the meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council in Yerevan on April 30, Dmitry Medvedev said that Russia intended to withdraw from sectoral restrictions on Belarus, but make decisions on each enterprise separately. Meanwhile, the export of dairy products to Russia continues to decline, just as overall export. In January and February 2019, milk exports decreased by another 25% year-on-year.

On April 11, Rosselkhoz nadzor appealed to the Federal Security Service and the Ministry of Transport seeking to suppress animal products supplies from Belarus according to the documents confirming transit through Russia to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. On the same day, a ban was imposed on deliveries of apples and pears from Belarus to Russia, and a bit earlier, on exotic herbs.

On April 12, Lukashenka commented on the new Russian bans at a government session: *“They are under sanctions themselves and condemn them, and I absolutely support them here. But at the same time, they use the same weapons against their closest allies.”*<sup>3</sup>

## **Oil**

Although difficulties in Belarus’s relations with Russia became increasingly serious in all dimensions, crude oil transit and supplies proved to be the core of the confrontation.

<sup>2</sup> Pietryshenka: the EEU can be called an economic union only in anticipation of real results (<http://www.zviazda.by/be/news/20190319/1552981591-petrishenko-nazyvat-eaes-ekonomicheskim-soyuzom-segodnya-mozhno-tolko>)

<sup>3</sup> Lukashenka: The good we do to Russia always turns out to be evil for us (<https://news.tut.by/economics/633476.html>)

On April 5, Belarus notified Transneft of its intention to raise the tariffs for the pumping of Russian crude oil along the Belarusian route by 23% (after the planned increase from February 1). On April 11, Lukashenka instructed the government to consider upgrading the Druzhba oil pipeline without focusing on the prevention of damages to Russia, since it disregards the interests of Belarus. Following the government meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Pietryshenka confirmed that negotiations with Russia over the terms of crude oil and natural gas supply after 2020 were not progressing and did not rule out the possibility that the upgrade of the Druzhba pipeline might cause a suspension of transit.

In response to the threat to suspend the transit of crude oil through the Belarusian section of Druzhba, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said that in case of a force majeure situation Russia would have its crude transited via seaports, although such a scheme was unadvisable. In fact, today Russia does not have sufficient capacity to fully compensate for any suspension of transit through Belarus. The Federal Anti-Monopoly Service of Russia believed it impractical for Belarus to increase tariffs applied to the transit of Russian crude oil by 23%.

On April 19, Belneftekhim reported a marked deterioration in the quality of Russian crude. Transport through the pipeline had to be suspended, but contaminated oil reached Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany, which also suspended its receipt. It took more than two weeks to eliminate the contamination.

On May 2, the Homiel branch of the Druzhba pipeline began to deliver oil to Belarus in compliance with the Urals quality standards. Nevertheless, the situation with oil contamination is still far from being completely resolved. No one knows for sure how soon oil will be purified in the European countries that receive crude from Druzhba. In addition, the Russian port of Ust-Luga also received contaminated oil via BTS-2 (Unecha is the hub where the oil pipeline is divided into Druzhba and BTS-2).

Oil contaminated along the Druzhba pipeline became a new factor in bilateral relations. The incident caused significant damages to the Belarusian oil sector, which lost not only a portion of its revenues, but also had to recover its equipment. Transneft will also suffer losses both because of its failure to meet its contractual obligations and due to the need to compensate for losses suffered by Belarus and other affected partners. The amount of compensation is currently a matter of negotiation.

## Forecast

Some important decisions should be taken in May and June, specifically those pertaining to the preservation or change of the mechanism for the distribution of customs duties in the EEU.

The new Russian ambassador is likely to build a more constructive relationship with the receiving country's leadership. As noted earlier, Babich's dismissal will undoubtedly affect the credibility of the arguments put forward by those advocating for further extension of Putin's rule through the renewal of the Union State. Accordingly, expectations from the revision of the Union Treaty will be lowered in both countries. The parties' proposals as to the revision of the Union Treaty will probably become available for discussion.

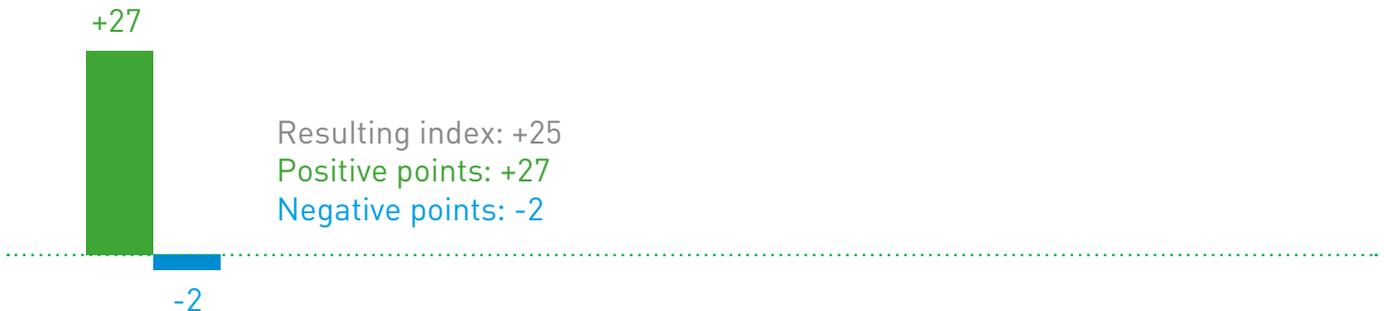
The transit of Russian energy carriers to Europe via Belarus still remain powerful leverage in talks with Russia. However, as Russia builds its own pipelines and redirects crude oil exports using new facilities, the effectiveness of this bargaining chip is gradually diminishing. Starting in 2020, the transit value of Belarus may further decrease, and from 2025 onwards, it might disappear altogether due to the redirection of some Russian oil exports to China.

The main problem for Belarus is that by the year 2020, the Eastern Siberia–Pacific Ocean oil pipeline (ESPO-2) is projected to reach its design capacity, and Russia will divert oil from

European supplies. Apparently, Belarus will become affected as well, since the European market has become less profitable for Russian oil companies compared with the Chinese market – Urals is cheaper than Siberian Light, and the route to Europe is longer. In addition, the Druzhba pipeline is already old, whereas Transneft, which has spent significant borrowed funds on building new oil pipelines, is primarily interested in ensuring the recovery of its investments.

The incident with the contamination of extensive volumes of oil in the Druzhba pipeline may contribute to the temporary shutdown of the pipeline. However, Transneft will be needing this old pipeline for at least three more years, and the fact that the company breached its obligations so seriously theoretically strengthens the negotiating position of the Belarusian side in its efforts to make contracts in the near future.

# Relationship with the European Union



## Trends

1. A quality consequence of the growing number and level of contacts between Belarus and the EU countries and institutions, as well as the increasing volume of project cooperation is the overall improvement of the communication atmosphere.
2. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of tangible progress in the negotiations on politically significant topics: the partnership priority and visa facilitation agreements. This situation has the opposite effect on the trust-building process and limits many opportunities on both sides.
3. In the context when Lithuania's position has actually blocked negotiations with Brussels, Minsk is placing increasing emphasis on bilateral cooperation with individual EU member states.

## Developments and processes

The period under review began with a major president-led meeting on March 5 focusing on Belarus's involvement in the integration structures and cooperation with European organizations<sup>1</sup>. Topping the agenda were relations with Russia against the backdrop of numerous contradictions on both the bilateral and multilateral (within the EEU) tracks. However, a great deal of attention, as it followed from the topic of the meeting, was also paid to Belarus's relations with the EU. Lukashenka pointed to both the achievements and pending challenges in these relations.

For example, he turned his attention to the growth of investments, expanding trade surplus and the overall development of contacts with the EU, especially highlighting the record-breaking cooperation with the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Also, according to the Belarusian president, the Eastern Partnership is becoming increasingly pragmatic, as new projects emerge that may interest Minsk. At the same time, Lukashenka said that "the ice in the relations with the European Union has not melted." Specifically, he pointed to the remaining, albeit symbolic, sanctions. He also stressed that the EU "haggles even over minor issues, avoids talks about a new basic agreement, and there is still no clear legal framework for cooperation."

The president outlined the immediate priorities in Belarus's relationship with the EU for the near future: the signing of partnership priorities and agreements on readmission and visa

<sup>1</sup> Meeting on Belarus's involvement in integration structures and cooperation with European organizations, [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/soveshanie-po-voprosam-uchastija-v-integratsionnyx-strukturax-i-sotrudnichestva-s-evropejskimi-20640/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/soveshanie-po-voprosam-uchastija-v-integratsionnyx-strukturax-i-sotrudnichestva-s-evropejskimi-20640/)

facilitation. At the same time, he made a traditional emphasis on the fact that “any ideas and exchanges that are alien to our people or detrimental to national interests are absolutely unacceptable.”

Also during the meeting, Lukashenka formulated a more conceptual vision of the relations with the EU in terms of the sought-for foreign policy balance: “We will only achieve balance when the European Union’s market turns into a real-life alternative to the Russian market not on paper, but in practice, based on specific results.” The same focus was conspicuous in the president’s annual address to the Belarusian nation and the parliament, delivered by Lukashenka on April 19<sup>2</sup>. In his address, he reiterated the need to preserve a strong EU.

No serious progress was achieved in March or April in the negotiations on partnership priorities and the agreement on visa facilitation, which Lukashenka referred to as the immediate priorities in the country’s relationship with the EU. At the 7th meeting of the EU-Belarus Coordination Group, held on April 24-25, Brussels yet again voiced its commitment to the soonest completion of the talks on partnership priorities and noted that the signing of the document would mark a new phase in the relations. However, the process remains blocked by Lithuania. In Minsk, this state of affairs is defined as an impasse, although further negotiations are still a possibility.

The situation with the visa facilitation agreement looks more optimistic. Here, the parties managed to resolve the issue of the number of Polish consuls in Belarus – Warsaw had wished to peg the increase to the signing of the agreement. However, the problem with the readmission agreement remains on the agenda. Russia refuses to undertake to receive persons deported from the EU to Belarus, who initially came to the Belarusian territory from the Russian Federation. Under these conditions, in order not to amass illegal aliens, Belarus is in talks with the EU over possible mechanisms for the return of deportees to their respective countries of origin.

As for the 7th meeting of the EU-Belarus Coordination Group itself, it was held in a very positive atmosphere, which demonstrates the significantly improved communication between Minsk and Brussels. Significant attention was paid to the assessment of the projects that are already underway and to the discussion of promising projects implemented with financial assistance from the EU. In this regard, the meeting continued discussions within the framework of the first annual consultations between Belarus and the EU on the implementation of international technical assistance projects and programmes, which took place on March 4.

The highlight event of the monitored period was the visit of Austrian Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz to Belarus. The main reason for the long-planned visit was the unveiling of the monument to the victims of Nazism Array of Names on the site of the memorial complex Trascianiec. The ceremony was held on March 28. In the evening of the same day, a solemn event was held to commemorate Austrian citizens killed by Nazis in Belarus.

On March 29, first Lukashenka and then Siarhiey Rumas held negotiations with Kurtz. The focus was on economic cooperation and regional security. On the latter, Minsk and Vienna largely coincide, which is due to similar characteristics of the countries in the system of international relations: Belarus and Austria are small states of Eastern and Central Europe, which naturally share standpoints amid escalating geopolitical tension between Russia and the West.

One more remarkable event of March and April was another visit of the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Suma Chakrabarti to Minsk. In recent years, the growing cooperation with the EBRD has become one of the main results of the normalization process between Belarus and the EU. Last year, the Bank’s investments reached a record EUR 360 million, and Belarus became one of the top ten countries in terms of cooperation with the EBRD. According to Chakrabarty, he would like to see Belarus in the

2 Address to the Belarusian nation and the National Assembly, [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/poslanie-beloruskomu-narodu-i-natsionalnomu-sobraniju-20903/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/poslanie-beloruskomu-narodu-i-natsionalnomu-sobraniju-20903/)

top five in the coming years. Lukashenka, for his part, suggested that the next meeting of the EBRD Board of Governors scheduled for 2022 be held in Belarus.

According to customs statistics<sup>3</sup>, two-way trade between Belarus and the European Union in January-February 2019 decreased by 10.8% year-on-year to USD 2.5 billion (24.3% of Belarus's total trade turnover). Belarusian exports decreased by 16% to reach USD 1.5 billion. Imports from the EU countries edged down by 1.2% to USD 987.1 million. Belarus registered a surplus of USD 615.5 million in trade with the EU.

## Forecast

Belarus will continue to place increasing emphasis on bilateral cooperation with the EU member-states, since potential for deepening and expanding the relations between Minsk and Brussels is blocked by Lithuania, whose leadership has openly declared its objective to force Belarus to abandon its plans to commission its nuclear power plant in Astraviec. If a candidate with a less radical position on Belarus should win the next presidential election in Lithuania in May, Minsk and Vilnius might eventually embark on a constructive dialogue on the issue of the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant and the broader agenda for the bilateral relationship. However, even in this case, the process will be slow – and consequently, its effects on the relations between Minsk and Brussels will also be postponed.

Following Kurtz's visit to Belarus, Lukashenka is expected to pay a return visit to Austria in the second half of the year. For the reason described above, Minsk regards this visit as a higher priority than its involvement at the highest level in multilateral events within the EU (for example, those conducted under the aegis of the Eastern Partnership), although Lukashenka's participation in the EaP events would enable him to personally clarify many aspects of the Belarusian foreign policy to the leaders of the EU countries. Nevertheless, the head of state seems to assume that with no significant progress in the negotiations over partnership priorities and the visa facilitation agreement, his visit to Brussels will be premature.

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<sup>3</sup> Results of foreign trade of the Republic of Belarus in January-February 2019, [http://www.customs.gov.by/ru/2019\\_stat-ru/view/itogi-vneshnej-torgovli-respubliki-belarus-za-janvar-fevral-2019-goda-10606/](http://www.customs.gov.by/ru/2019_stat-ru/view/itogi-vneshnej-torgovli-respubliki-belarus-za-janvar-fevral-2019-goda-10606/)

# Relationship with China

+24



Resulting index: +24

Positive points: +24

Negative points: 0

0

## Trends

1. During the period under review, active preparations were underway for Lukashenka's visit to China, as well as for the signing of bilateral agreements.
2. Scheduled implementation of bilateral projects continued.

## Developments and processes

The highlight of March and April was the visit of President of Belarus Aliaksandr Lukashenka to China to take part in the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation at the highest level. As part of the Forum, bilateral meetings were held with President of China Xi Jinping, Vice President Wang Qishan and heads of a number of other states. Ahead of the official visit, two Belarusian delegations visited China with a preparatory mission. The first one (March 18-19) was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Andrej Dapkiunas, who held a roundtable meeting on the Belarus-China relationship and consultations between the Foreign Ministries with his Chinese counterpart, while the second one (March 26-28) was led by Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Mikalaj Snapkoŭ, who is responsible for the Chinese vector. That second delegation also included Deputy Economy Minister Aliena Piarminava and Head of the CBIP Administration Aliaksandr Jarašenka. The visit of Ms. Shen Yueyue, a Vice-Chairwoman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee (April 2), can be regarded as a preparatory meeting organized by the Chinese side.

In April, the Lukashenka-led delegation comprised Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Snapkoŭ, Minister of Economy Zmicier Kruty, Minister of Foreign Affairs Uladzimir Makiej, Minister of Healthcare Valier Malaška, Chairman of the State Customs Committee Jury Sianko, Minister of Agriculture and Food Anatol Chacko, and Chairman of the Board of Belarusbank Viktor Ananič.

The Belarusian president made a speech at the top-level session about the need to develop digital transport corridors between China and Europe, to abolish the permit-based system of international road transport, and to ensure a better connectivity of infrastructures. Lukashenka noted that Belarus was already working in all those areas and even called for establishing new standards within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative: *"It depends on us whether to follow the new standards of economic cooperation, create a new big family or return to the outdated geopolitical maneuvers."*<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, the establishment of new standards by China and the modification of the current system of international economic relations, in particular, through activities within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative is one of the key concerns of the U.S. and a number of the EU countries.

It is also noteworthy that Snapkoŭ and Ambassador Kiryl Rudy became proxies at the round table within the framework of the Forum on April 27, while Russia was represented by Vladimir Putin, a guest of honor who sat to the right of Xi Jinping.

<sup>1</sup> A video in BelTA's report dated April 25, 2019, <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-prizyvaet-k-koordinatsii-dejstvij-stran-na-vsem-protjazhenii-pojasa-i-puti-345530-2019/>

During the president's visit, Minister of Economy Kruty had a busy schedule – he met with senior managers of a number of Chinese companies (China Railroad Construction Corporation, China Merchants, ZTE) and agreed with the Chinese side the concept of holding a regional cooperation and development forum within the Belt and Road Initiative at the CBIP on July 2, 2019.

The visit resulted in the signing of the following key documents:

- The Intergovernmental Agreement on international road transport of passengers and cargoes<sup>2</sup>;
- The Intergovernmental Agreement on technical and economic assistance (CNY 800 million, or about USD 118 million) for the construction of a football stadium, swimming pool, supply of equipment for the State Customs Committee of Belarus and "other projects agreed upon by the parties"<sup>3</sup>;
- The loan agreement between Belarusian Railway and Eximbank of China (EUR 65.7 million) for the project "Electrification of Homiel–Žlobin–Asipovičy and Žlobin–Kalinkavičy. Stage 3. Žlobin–Kalinkavičy section" against the security of Belarusbank;
- The agreement between Belarusbank and the China Development Bank on a EUR100 million loan for the development of the national economy of Belarus.

The package of documents signed during the visit also includes the anticipated agreement on the mutual recognition of authorized economic operators and China's programme on the management of bona fide companies. Possibilities for Panda bonds were not further discussed.

During the visit, the Belarusian Embassy in China reported an increase in the number of accredited Belarusian dairy producers in the Chinese market, and some enterprises managed to have the range of products with access to the Chinese market expanded<sup>4</sup>. According to a message on the website of the General Administration of Customs of China, 54 Belarusian companies currently obtain permits to import dairy products. As a comparison: France has 255 companies on the list (excluding permits for feeding formulas), New Zealand has 186, Germany has 124, Poland has 86, Lithuania has 20, and Ukraine has 32<sup>5</sup>.

During the period under review, another media tour for Chinese journalists (10 media outlets) was organized. Notably, this time their programme did not include meetings with senior Belarusian officials. The organizers limited themselves to the CBIP, HTP, Belarusian enterprises, and the presentation of the programme of the 2nd European Games 2019.

### **Great Stone China-Belarus Industrial Park**

During the monitored period, the number of CBIP residents increased to 44 companies – LLC Electric Technological Company Corhelm-Bel (production of nanotechnological electric heating household boilers) became a CBIP resident.

The CBIP has expanded its portfolio of cooperation arrangements – the agreement between the administrations of the Xian Chanba Zone and the CBIP, the agreement with the company

2 The text of the agreement has not been made available at the time of publication. According to preliminary reports, the document provides for the exchange of a certain number of permits for the carriage of passengers and cargoes, exemption from transport taxes, fees, and some other payments related to such carriage.

3 The text of the intergovernmental agreement on the provision of technical and economic assistance dated April 25, 2019 was published on May 1, 2019, <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=101900012&p1=1&p5=0>

4 Communication of the Embassy of Belarus in China dated April 26, 2019, <http://china.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/a9f72835798fa0d7.html>

5 General Administration of Customs of China, lists of attested foreign dairy companies, <http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/jjyj/jckspaq/xxfw63/2161292/index.html>

Shaanxi Baoguang on its intention to join the CBIP, the framework agreement on strategic cooperation between twin-parks and the Xian National Civil Aerospace Industrial Base. The CBIP also signed a deal to establish a sub-park of Shaanxi Province. Therefore, a trend has been outlined towards the search for partner resources in the form of parks, special economic zones in China and the creation of a certain number of sub-parks of China's provinces as one of the ways to further develop the CBIP.

On March 26, Beijing hosted a meeting of the Board of Directors and the annual general meeting of shareholders of Industrial Park Development Company, where the parties planned to establish an investment fund to support small and medium-sized businesses and venture projects on the basis of the China-Belarus Cooperation Center of Transformation of Scientific and Technical Achievements, which is being built with the use of Chinese financing. The planned sources of funding were not reported to the general public.

The CBIP is actively preparing for the forum slated for July. On April 18, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the CBIP Administration organized a site visit to the park for diplomats accredited in Belarus, attended by Foreign Minister Makiej. The main outcome of Lukashenka's visit to China for the CBIP was the approval with the Chinese side of the concept for the forum to be held at the Park.

## Forecast

Whereas the current period under review was marked by the preparations for Lukashenka's visit to China, the next two-month period will be centered on the preparation and conduct of the Belt and Road Forum for Regional Cooperation and Development at the China-Belarus Industrial Park (to be held in early July). Given that the Belarusian organizers, led by Minister of Economy Kruty, have already secured the support of the Chinese side by signing the concept of the Forum, high quality implementation will remain the only challenge to tackle. Since the forum is a regional event, the Chinese media will need to provide their assistance to ensure a greater public response, because the 2nd European Games will likely dominate the media throughout the entire period of the preparation for the forum. Belarus is also expected to enter the Panda bond market, something that it failed to do during the first months of spring.

# Relationship with the U.S.

+9



Resulting index: +7

Positive points: +9

Negative points: -2

-2



## Trends

1. The pace of bilateral contacts in the political, economic, and humanitarian domains remains relatively high.
2. These contacts, however, fail to ensure a breakthrough improvement in the relationship
3. The U.S. continues to criticize Belarus for human rights abuse.

## Developments and processes

The pivotal event of the period under review was the visit to Minsk of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent. According to scant information shared by the Foreign Ministry, at his meeting with Minister Uladzimir Makiej the U.S. official discussed the status of the Belarus-U.S. relations; Minsk also officially informed the U.S. about the cancellation of the restrictions on the number of employees of the U.S. Embassy in Minsk, which had been in place since 2008<sup>1</sup>. Those limitations remained the last technical barrier to the restoration of full diplomatic relations at the level of ambassadors. The meeting at the Foreign Ministry probably addressed specific steps to bring back ambassadors to Minsk and Washington.

This is not the first contact of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Kent with the leadership of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry. At the end of January, he already met with Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Alieh Kraŭčanka in Washington.

Kent also met with First Deputy Interior Minister Ivan Padhurski. According to the press service of the Ministry of the Interior, Padhurski voiced the willingness of the ministry to “strengthen and foster cooperation with the U.S.’ law enforcement agencies in all areas of mutual interest.”<sup>2</sup> A broad range of issues on the international agenda concerning security matters and efforts to counter global challenges and threats were also discussed at the meeting.

In addition to the official talks, George Kent visited the Janka Kupala Park to honor the memory of the activists of the Belarusian national movement Anton and Ivan Luckievič. The American diplomat noted the relevance and importance of their legacy to present-day Belarus<sup>3</sup>.

On March 5, a Belarusian delegation led by Deputy Minister of Healthcare Viačaslaŭ Šyla visited the United States in order to establish contacts with leading American medical institutions and pursue joint humanitarian projects with American charitable organizations. The delegation visited the Project C.U.R.E. charity in Colorado. Following the meeting, a

1 [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/db8ab7f707f5dee2.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/db8ab7f707f5dee2.html)

2 <https://belapan.by/archive/2019/03/05/995525/>

3 <https://by.usembassy.gov/be/deputy-assistant-secretary-kent-commemorates-brothers-lutskevich/>

memorandum was signed on free of charge deliveries of medical equipment to Belarus. A meeting was held in Utah at Intermountain Healthcare, the leading clinic of the state<sup>4</sup>.

On March 8, Thomas Tighe, President and CEO of Direct Relief, a Santa Barbara (California)-based non-profit organization that focuses on life-saving medications for cancer and other diseases, and Deputy Minister Šyla signed an agreement that will greatly increase the amount of cancer therapies shipped into the country's major medical centers. To date, Direct Relief has delivered USD 3 million worth of medications to the Center of Pediatric Oncology, Hematology, and Immunology in Minsk.

On March 13, Charge d'Affaires, a.i. of Belarus in the U.S. Paviel Šydloŭski spoke at a working lunch dedicated to Belarus at the Washington Intergovernmental Professional Group. The meeting was attended by officials at the U.S. Department of Commerce and other government agencies, analysts and experts. Šydloŭski made a presentation of Belarus's economic opportunities and investment prospects with a focus on the HTP and the Great Stone China-Belarus Industrial Park<sup>5</sup>.

On April 11, Foreign Minister Makiej met with a delegation led by Assistant Administrator for USAID's Bureau for Europe and Eurasia Brock Bierman. The parties addressed the status of bilateral engagement, as well as promising areas for cooperation, including the development of small and medium-sized businesses, tourism and culture.

Bierman attended the opening ceremony of the Venture Day Minsk startup conference. In his welcoming address he said he believed in Belarus and was pleasantly surprised to discover the business potential of our country. He noted that the U.S.' authorities planned to help local entrepreneurs build global innovative companies.

On April 25, Deputy Foreign Minister Alieh Kračanka met with U.S. Charge d'Affaires in Belarus Jenifer H. Moore. The Foreign Ministry's traditionally discreet press service reported that the meeting focused on the promotion of the Belarus-U.S. relationship, including in the context of the bilateral visits that were held this year, as well as upcoming international events<sup>6</sup>.

During the period under review, there were some negative developments as well. On March 1, during Big Talk with the President Aliaksandr Lukashenka criticized the U.S. for interfering in the internal affairs of Venezuela: "Take the latest developments in Venezuela. After all, this is a terrible absurdity that was presented by the U.S. to the Venezuelan authorities. They have already decided on a new president there. Is this normal?"<sup>7</sup>

On March 13, U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo presented new Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, which criticizes the Belarusian government and its domestic policy. In the section dedicated to Belarus the report refers to the country as an authoritarian state, where the president has all the power. Human rights issues included torture; arbitrary arrest and detention; life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; undue restrictions on free expression, the press and the internet, including censorship, site blocking, and criminal liability for libel and defamation of government officials; violence against and detention of journalists; severe restrictions on freedoms of assembly and association. The document states that the Committee for State Security (KGB), riot police, and other security forces, often without identification and in plain clothes, beat detainees on occasion<sup>8</sup>.

4 <http://usa.mfa.gov.by/en/embassy/news/b93b55fb8250b8de.html>

5 <http://usa.mfa.gov.by/en/embassy/news/a824ef62b4c0bae5.html>

6 [http://mfa.gov.by/press/news\\_mfa/b94f8c7c8f1c6d35.html](http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b94f8c7c8f1c6d35.html)

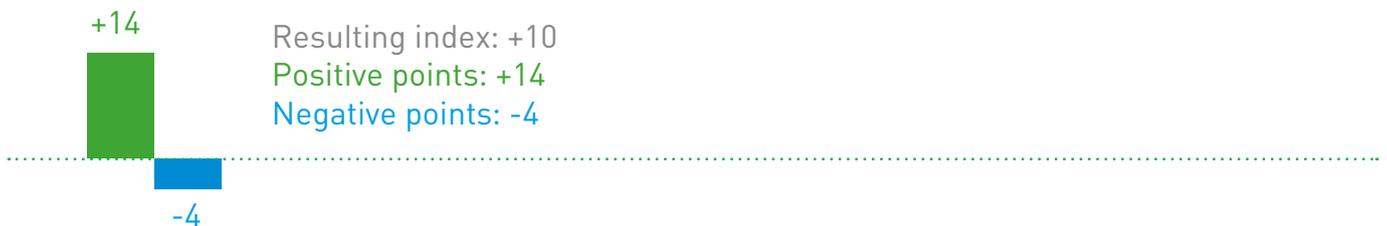
7 <https://belapan.by/archive/2019/03/01/995182/>

8 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018 (<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>)

## **Forecast**

In the coming months, before the start of summer vacations, we should expect a relatively high intensity of contacts between Minsk and Washington. However, these contacts will remain at a low level and will not lead to any significant change in the quality of the bilateral relationship. The process of restoring diplomatic relations at the level of ambassadors will continue in the background. It might take quite long, though, probably about a year or more, unless the parties agree on unsynchronized return of the ambassadors, in which case Minsk might appoint head of its mission in Washington as early as this summer.

# Relationship with Ukraine



## Trends

1. The presidential election in Ukraine produced a significant impact on the bilateral framework.
2. Belarusian political initiatives and statements in Ukraine were traditionally viewed through the prism of the war with Russia.
3. The electoral period, which will continue in Ukraine up until October 2019 with only a short break, caused an overall negative media background regarding Belarus.
4. Several new formats for cooperation between the two countries were developed.

## Developments and processes

### Politics

The presidential election overshadowed the practical aspects of the collaboration between the two countries. Any initiatives and news about the Minsk-Kyiv engagement were pursued by Ukrainian political elites, journalists and part of Ukrainian society through the prism of the relations between Minsk and Moscow and between Kyiv and Moscow. At the same time, the Ukrainian media often covered more eagerly those statements that concerned the Belarus-Russia relationship, rather than the relations between Belarus and Ukraine.

The politicization of Ukrainian society and negativity-driven campaigning by a number of presidential candidates created preconditions for strengthening the generally negative information background around Belarus – the Ukrainian media featured at least four waves of publications about the danger to Belarusian independence or threats to the Ukrainian statehood from the north.

However, over the past two months, several events took place at the level of individual agencies or regions, which can be characterized by the words “for the first time” or “after a long break.” Those included:

- On March 28, Warsaw played host to a working meeting of representatives of the General Staffs of Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus<sup>1</sup>;
- On March 27, the first (in the past 15 years) emergency training of dispatch operators of power grids of Belarus and Ukraine was organized. The scenario envisaged a sudden failure of the Russian side to ensure the regulation of the main power grids. An agreement was reached to hold such events annually<sup>2</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mil.by/ru/news/85607/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ua.energy/osnovni-podiyi/ukrenergo-ta-biloruskij-operator-systemy-peredachi-elektroenergiyi-provely-spilne-protyavarijne-trenuvannya/>

- On April 25, the first meeting of the interstate working group on interregional and cross-border cooperation was held<sup>3</sup>. The idea behind such a coordinating body was agreed at the first Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine;
- On April 26, Minsk hosted negotiations of oil pipeline system operators of Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, and Russia, focusing on methods to tackle the problem of low-quality raw materials supplied from Russia<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, the list should include some recurring events:

- the meeting of the border commissioners of the two countries held on March 1 to agree plans for border management and cooperation for 2019 (notably, in April, work continued on the demarcation of the border between the two countries in the section within the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone);
- the joint exercises of organization of the Ministries of Emergency Situations of Belarus and Ukraine that took place on April 29-30. Previously, Belarusian fire teams were involved in the protection of Ukrainian villages in the Rivne Region from forest fires spreading from the territory of Belarus.

The said developments formed the backbone for engagement, being mechanisms for cooperation between the two countries. Naturally, they receive less media coverage and are less exciting than political statements made by state leaders, which are to a great extent responsible for the overall media background.

Over the past two months, the Belarusian president made a few remarks about the presidential campaign in Ukraine. In early March, he was certain that Petro Poroshenko would be victorious, but a month later, he said that if there was no worthy candidate to elect, the Ukrainians might probably wish to postpone the election. However, as the date of the second round approached, he spoke quite flatteringly of Volodymyr Zelensky, comparing him to Ronald Reagan, and was one of the first heads of state to congratulate Ukraine's president-elect even before the publication of the official results of the poll<sup>5</sup>. Those diametrically opposed assessments could have had negative implications for the state-to-state relations, but in the case of Volodymyr Zelensky's victory this did not happen for several reasons:

- Zelensky is a newcomer in Ukrainian politics and his rise to become the front-runner was a surprise even for many experts and representatives of political elites in Ukraine itself;
- The victory of the "non-system" candidate came as a surprise to most of the heads of states that have close contacts with Ukraine.

The second meeting of the Belarusian leader with the Ukrainian politician Viktor Medvedchuk held in 2019 understandably irritated the Ukrainian political elites and the media. The reason is Medvedchuk's close ties with Vladimir Putin, along with the pro-Russian political agenda of his party For Life and the movement Ukrainian Choice. Ukraine's Ambassador to Belarus Igor Kizim pointed to the problem in public, telling journalists that the frequent meetings between Medvedchuk and the Belarusian president "raise questions."<sup>6</sup>

When commenting on the statements of the Ukrainian ambassador, one should note the intensification of the efforts of the countries' diplomatic missions. For example, during the two months under review, Igor Kizim:

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-ukraina-obsudili-podgotovku-k-ii-forumu-regionov-v-zhitomire-345500-2019/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/peregovory-belarusi-rf-ukrainy-i-polshi-po-uregulirovaniyu-situatsii-s-nekachestvennoj-rossijskoj-345577-2019/>

<sup>5</sup> [http://president.gov.by/ru/news\\_ru/view/pozdravlenie-vladimiru-zelenskomu-s-izbraniem-na-post-prezidenta-ukrainy-20924/](http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/pozdravlenie-vladimiru-zelenskomu-s-izbraniem-na-post-prezidenta-ukrainy-20924/)

<sup>6</sup> <https://news.tut.by/economics/633223.html>

- visited the Viciebsk<sup>7</sup> and Mahilioŭ<sup>8</sup> Regions of Belarus, where he made statements about the need to expand cooperation between the regions of the two countries. He also spoke about the feasibility of opening an honorary consulate of Ukraine in Mahilioŭ;
- gave an extensive interview to the Ukrainian news agency Ukrinform about the Belarus-Ukraine relationship, noting positive dynamics in the humanitarian, economic, and political spheres<sup>9</sup>.

The change of rhetoric of the Ukrainian ambassador regarding the crisis with the kidnapping of the Ukrainian national Pavlo Hryb in Belarus is particularly noteworthy. The diplomat drew a direct connection between the incident and an act of provocation of the Russian security services, saying, "Frankly speaking, I feel a little sorry for the Belarusians, because we know what 'nasty tricks' Russians can play in other countries."

Equally positive rhetoric is characteristic of his counterpart, Belarus's Ambassador to Ukraine, who gave an interview to the Belarusian news agency BelTA<sup>10</sup>. Ihar Sokal told journalists about the positive pace of cooperation development, while adding that without revising the strategy of Belarusian companies for entering the Ukrainian market, it would be difficult to achieve the desired levels of trade turnover, voiced by Presidents Lukashenka and Poroshenko.

Another landmark event for the media background was the expulsion from Belarus of a militant from the Vostok illegal armed group, one of the first Donbas separatist units.

## **Economy**

The period of change of political leadership is never a good time to start new projects. Therefore, the development of cooperation between Belarus and Ukraine followed the path of renewal of some of the existing mechanisms.

For example, Ukgasbank signed an updated agreement with the Ministry of Finance of Belarus with a view to launching an export credit system for Belarusian machinery<sup>11</sup>.

Belorusneft continued to expand its presence in the market for Ukrainian gas and oil producers. Specifically, it is drilling especially deep wells for DTEK Naftogaz<sup>12</sup>.

A well-cementing contract was signed with the Ukrainian state-owned concern UkrGasVydobuvannya.

In addition, on April 24, UkrGasVydobuvannya officially announced the start of accepting applications for natural gas PECs (Production Enhancement Contracts)<sup>13</sup>. Belorusneft is recognized as a company that is capable of making such long-term deals for independent production. The Ukrainian side is planning to make its first PECs by the end of 2019.

In March and April, the Belarusian company Neftebitumny Zavod closed a major deal to purchase a 51% stake in PrikarpatZapadTrans<sup>14</sup>, the operator of the 1,000+ km products

7 <https://www.belta.by/opinions/view/regionam-ukrainy-nuzhno-aktivnee-razvivat-sotrudnichestvo-s-vitebskoj-oblastju-6824/>

8 <http://mogilev-region.gov.by/news/mogilev-s-vizitom-poseshchaet-chrezvychaynyy-i-polnomochnyy-posol-ukrainy-v-belarusi-igor-kizim>

9 <https://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-society/2665107-igor-kizim-posol-ukrainy-v-belarusi.html>

10 <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/belarus-dostigla-vysokih-pokazatelej-v-torgovle-s-ukrainoj-no-eto-daleko-ne-predel-6788/>

11 <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ukrgazbank-budet-predostavljat-igotnye-kredity-na-pokupku-beloruskoj-tehniki-344696-2019/>

12 <https://expro.com.ua/novini/dtek-rozpochav-programu-glibokogo-burnnya-6-sverdlovin-na-machuhskomu-rodovisch->

13 <http://www.nefterynok.info/novosti/ukrgazdobycha-cherez-8-mesyacev-rasschityvaet-zaklyuchit-pervye-pec-kontrakty>

14 <http://www.amc.gov.ua/amku/control/main/uk/publish/article/148208>

pipeline with the same name. This system is used to supply diesel fuel to the markets of Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary and a number of other countries in the region.

The beginning of spring could have been called a relatively calm and completely positive period in the development of the economic relations between the two countries, had it not been for:

- The beginning of an anti-dumping probe into the supply of Belarusian-made aerated concrete blocks to the Ukrainian market,
- The closure of the Belarusian market to pork supplies from the Kirovohrad Region of Ukraine due to the risk of ASF spread.

Nevertheless, the general economic background can be characterized as positive, despite the fact that some projects were suspended pending the formation of a new government team in Ukraine.

## Forecast

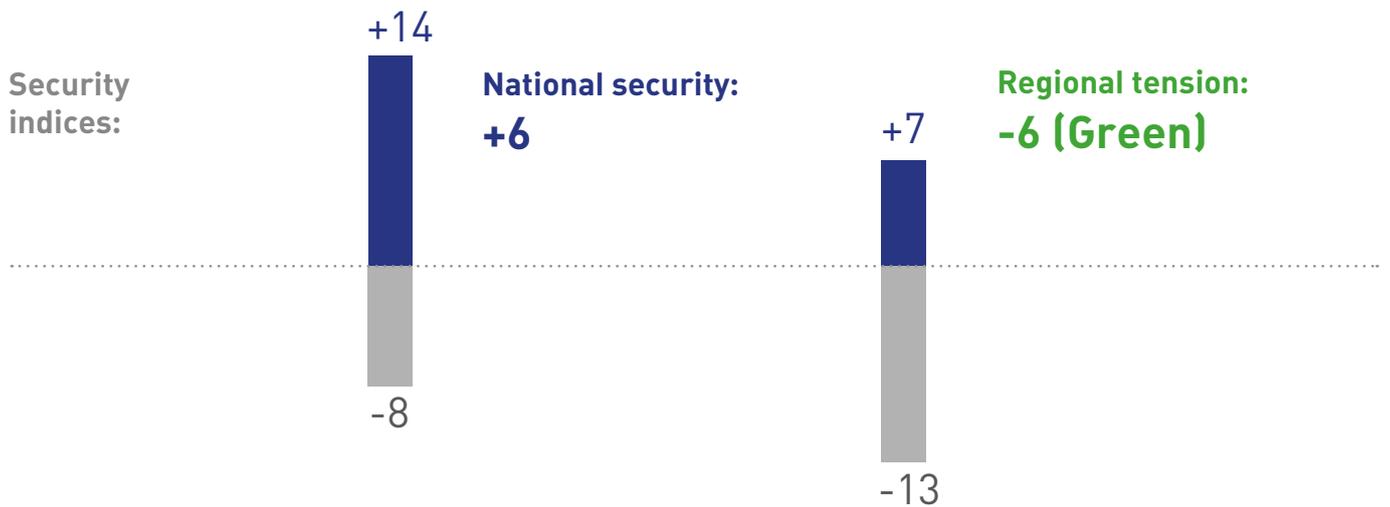
As predicted in the previous issue of Barometer, some Ukrainian manufacturers seek administrative and political methods to fight against Belarusian imports. This notwithstanding, the relations between the two countries continue to deepen. Their further development over the next four or five months will be conditional on the following factors:

- The change of leadership in Ukraine – the process that will continue until November 2019 and will be accompanied by the elimination of a number of established lobbying networks,
- The oil crisis, which manifests itself in the ban on direct supplies of oil products from Russia to Ukraine and the problem of contaminated oil in the Druzhba pipeline. The joint work of the two countries may become the basis for a new configuration in the hydrocarbon supply market in the region.

Media attacks and acts of provocation aimed at inciting a conflict between Kyiv and Minsk will continue until at least October. The reason is the parliamentary campaign in Ukraine. Some of the parties will employ negative and frightening rhetoric in their campaigns seeking to mobilize their electorate. In such circumstances, any media provocation by external players can be picked up and utilized by representatives of Ukrainian political elites.



# Security Barometer: status of national and regional security



## Trends

1. The militarization of the region continued. Russia, NATO and Ukraine pursue long-term rearmament programs, build up defense infrastructure and deploy new military units. Belarus's neighbors are involving players from outside the region, primarily the United States and other NATO members.
2. Poland is the region's largest investor in the armed forces. Warsaw is seeking to change the regional and European alignment of defense forces, both in relation to Russia and Western Europe. The Belarusian leadership is trying to avoid confrontation with this new player.
3. Realizing the futility of attempts to win the arms race, Minsk relies on its multi-directional policy and transparency. Belarus steps up contacts with NATO members, primarily Poland, and enhances the transparency of its military activities, while trying to restrain trends towards the antagonism and isolation of the opposing sides in the region, hoping for the allies' understanding in this matter.

## 1. National security

### Overall status of national security

During his meeting with representatives of the expert community and the media held on March 1, President Lukashenka voiced concerns about the situation. *“New trouble zones are emerging along our border. The treaties that ensured a balance of military forces on the planet are bursting at the seams. A new arms race is in full swing,”* he said. He pointed out that Poland was going to spend around USD 50 billion on defense, which, as he said, did not alarm the media as much as Russia’s force buildup in the Western Military District. Lukashenka emphasized that wars or conflicts would never originate from the territory of Belarus, especially in relation to Poland<sup>1</sup>.

On April 19, in the course of his annual address to the nation and the parliament, Lukashenka called national security one of the three priorities of government policy, along with “the nation’s prosperity” and “the policy of peace.” He largely repeated his speech made on March 1, but this time, he identified the fundamental source of conflicts: “the tension in political dialogue of the global leaders—the U.S., China and, partly, India and Russia.”<sup>2</sup>

At the 4th Moscow Security Conference held on April 24, Defense Minister Andrej Raŭkoŭ said that Belarus and entire Europe found themselves “between the geopolitical grindstones [Russia and NATO].” Moreover, the “distinct smell of the global hybrid war” is everywhere [...] The situation in Europe can now be described as ‘all-against-all confrontation’. We believe that both the West and the East are mutually responsible for that.” His statements differed from those made at the last year’s conference, when Raŭkoŭ criticized the increasing presence of the U.S. and NATO near the Belarusian border.

The adoption of the Information Security Concept by the Security Council of Belarus on March 18 should be viewed in this very context of “hybrid threats.” It provided the official vision of the essence and content of national security in the field of media.

Minsk is concerned about the situation with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). *“This is the most important focus area now,”* Lukashenka said at a meeting with the leadership of the government and supreme state authorities, *“Given the global trends, the relevance of this organization is beyond doubt. However, a noxious situation has arisen in the CSTO.”* Minsk failed to achieve the appointment of its representative as the CSTO secretary general, which indeed depreciates the CSTO as a tool for ensuring national security<sup>3</sup>.

Against the backdrop of problems with the CSTO, Belarus continued little-binding relations with the CIS institutions. On March 13-14, a Belarusian delegation led by Chief of General Staff Alieŭ Bielakonieŭ took part in a regular session of the CIS Chiefs of Staff Committee in Moscow.

### Equipment of the national army

In his annual address to the nation and the parliament, the president said that work to create anti-tank missile systems was nearing completion, and that testing of the domestically-manufactured strike drones had begun<sup>4</sup>.

1 Lukashenka: “We are against any manifestations of aggression, both military and media”, March 2, 2019, Issue No.25, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/03/02/aleksandr-lukashenko-my-protiv-lyubyx-proyavlenij-agressii-kak-voennoj-tak-i-na-zlobu-dnya-informacionnoj/>

2 Lukashenka: “People is what we value the most in the military organization”, 20 Apr 2019, Issue No.45, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/04/20/aleksandr-lukashenko-glavnoe-v-voennoj-organizacii-eto-lyudi/>

3 President: A noxious situation has arisen in the CSTO, TUT.BY, 5 March 2019 <https://news.tut.by/economics/628681.html?crnd=34824>

4 Lukashenka: “People is what we value the most in the military organization”, 20 Apr 2019, Issue No.45, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/04/20/aleksandr-lukashenko-glavnoe-v-voennoj-organizacii-eto-lyudi/>

In March, citing its sources in the Ministry of Defense of Belarus, Jane's Defense weekly wrote that the Belarusian army received cruise missiles with a range increased to 300 km for the B-300-M Polonaise multiple rocket launchers. The proportion of Belarusian components in Polonaise also increased<sup>5</sup>.

The latest domestic tractors for the 2B23 mortars were tested during an exercise with the 120th infantry brigade in a realistic environment. Also, for the first time, the military massively used the Cayman armored vehicles<sup>6</sup>.

### **Army training**

On March 18-22, Chief of General Staff Bielakonieŭ supervised a joint staff training of the Belarusian-Russian Joint Command of the Regional Force Grouping titled "Planning of the Application of the Regional Force Grouping for Ensuring Military Security of the Union State." According to Bielakonieŭ, the Joint Command included Belarusian and Russian officers, and the exercise involved "task units of the armed forces of the Russian Federation and Belarus, territorial defense headquarters of all regions and Minsk city, and operations groups of the national defense and security components." The event was part of the preparation for the Union Shield-2019 exercise scheduled for September<sup>7</sup>.

A joint exercise of the airborne forces of Russia and the special operations forces of Belarus took place on March 25-29 in the Ulyanovsk region of Russia. A battalion tactical group, which included a company of the 38th air assault brigade of Belarus, practiced peacemaking operations.

In late March, a unit of the 11th infantry brigade took part in a battalion tactical exercise with field firing at the Obuz-Lesnovsky training ground under the supervision of Deputy Commander of the Western Operational Command Ihar Dziemidzienka. The military rehearsed joint counterattacks with the air force, air defense and artillery, applying the Tunguska and Iгла air defense systems, Yak 130 jets, Mi 8MTV 5 helicopters, Grad ("Hail") multiple rocket launchers, antitank guided missiles, and armored infantry carriers<sup>8</sup>.

A similar battalion tactical exercise with field firing was held in early April with the 355th tank battalion of the 120th infantry brigade supported by the air force and artillery at the 227th combined-arms training ground in Barysaŭ under the supervision of Major General Uladzimir Kulažin, the deputy commander of the North-West Operational Command. The program included a counter attack of a tank battalion reinforced with UAVs and Mi-24 helicopters.

Following the above exercises, from April 2 to 4, a two-stage tactical combat defense exercise with the 120th detached Guards infantry brigade was held at the same 227th combined-arms training ground under the supervision of Major General Andrej Žuk, the commander of the North-West Operational Command. The first stage included the organization of defensive combat operations, development of defense positions, areas and fortified belts, personnel training and weapon arrangements to perform the assigned tasks. The second stage focused on the management of military units and subunits in a defensive battle.

The exercise involved more than 1,100 military personnel, nearly 40 tanks (including T-72B3), 60 infantry combat vehicles, heavy artillery (Msta-B and Gvozdika self-propelled howitzers), R-409MB1 Citrus upgraded radio relay stations, 2S12B mortars, Superkam-350 drones, Yak 130 jet trainers and Mi 8MTV helicopters. Belarus voluntarily invited German,

5 Dmitry Fediushko, Belarus to adopt extended-range missile for V-300 Polonez-M MRL system, 19 March 2019, <https://www.janes.com/article/87327/belarus-to-adopt-extended-range-missile-for-v-300-polonez-m-mrl-system>

6 Double strike of the allied landing force, 20 Apr 2019, Issue No.45, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/04/20/dvojnoj-udar-soyuznogo-desanta-2/>

7 Joint staff training, March 19, 2019, Issue No.31, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/03/19/sovместnaya-shtabnaya-trenirovka-6/>

8 Spring "Hail" can be hot, 2 Apr 2019, Issue No.37, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/04/02/vesennij-grad-byvaet-zharkim/>

Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Estonian observers and military attachés of foreign embassies<sup>9</sup>.

A tactical exercise with the 231st artillery brigade was held at the beginning of April near Asipovičy. Before it began, the brigade marched about 300 km<sup>10</sup>.

On April 6, the Defense Ministry summed up the results of a comprehensive combat and mobilization readiness check of the armed forces conducted from January 29 to March 5. Around 1,400 persons liable for call-up and 20 vehicles were mobilized, and a stationary communications system was arranged in cooperation with enterprises of the Ministry of Communication, in particular Beltelecom<sup>11</sup>.

In early April, three training grounds of the Hrodna and Brest Regions hosted a special tactical exercise with reconnaissance and fire assault units. According to official sources, "the exercise was based on a comprehensive approach to the organization of reconnaissance and fire strikes on a simulated enemy." The exercise involved units of combat support, special intelligence, communications reconnaissance and electronic warfare, and UAV operators. The 6th and 11th infantry brigades and the 111th artillery brigade constituted the combat component<sup>12</sup>.

On April 16-18, the 103rd airborne brigade and an airborne assault battalion of the 38th airborne assault brigade of Belarus and an airborne company of the 137th airborne regiment of the 106th airborne division of Russia (1,000 troops and about 100 units of equipment, including helicopters, UAVs and rotary-wing aircraft) took part in a battalion tactical exercise at the Brest training grounds. They practiced counter-sabotage operations, taking a designated area under control, and search and elimination of sabotage-reconnaissance and armed opposition groups<sup>13</sup>.

Some changes were made to the military education curricula. In March, media reported about amendments to joint decree No. 2221 of the Ministries of Defense and Education of Belarus. Two hundred academic hours were added to the training programs for junior commanders and reserve officers<sup>14</sup>.

9 Valerjan Šklennik, Hanna Zankavič, The largest exercise of 2019 took place at the 227<sup>th</sup> combined arms training ground, 24/04/2019 <http://zviazda.by/be/news/20190423/1556028347-samyja-buynyya-vuchenni-2019-goda-prayshli-na-227-m-agulnavayskovym>; Valerjan Šklennik, Large exercise is being held near Barysau, 04/04/2019, <http://zviazda.by/be/news/20190404/1554366208-vyalikiya-vuchenni-prahodzyac-pad-barysavam>.

10 Divisions ask for fire, 2 Apr 2019, Issue No.37, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/04/02/diviziony-prosyat-ognya/>

11 Results of the comprehensive check are summed up, 6 Apr 2019, Issue No.39, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/04/06/podvedeny-itogi-kompleksnoj-proverki/>

12 The task is to find and destroy, 9 Apr 2019, Issue No.40, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/04/09/cel-vskryt-i-unichtozhit/>

13 Aliaksandr Palitajeŭ, Back in the rank, 16 Apr 2019, Issue No.43, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/04/16/snova-v-edinomstroyu-3/>

14 Military education of Belarus in questions and answers, March 26, 2019, Issue No.34, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/03/26/voennoe-obrazovanie-belarusi-v-voprosax-i-otvetax/>

## 2. Regional Security

The smoldering warfare in the east of Ukraine continued. Combined Forces Operation Commander Sergei Naev said on May 2 that over the year since the operation's transformation, Kyiv regained control over three settlements and about 24 km<sup>2</sup> of territory without violating the Minsk agreements<sup>15</sup>.

On March 13, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense of the United States Catherine Wheelbarger told the Congress that the U.S. "had come forward with a very serious robust offer" to Poland regarding the deployment of an American base. General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, said in the Congress that he proposed combining the permanent stationing of troops in Poland and rotation of some units. According to the general, an actual base and the money for that base will be available in two or three years<sup>16</sup>.

Vilnius also strengthened ties with Washington. On April 2, the sides adopted a strategic cooperation roadmap that defines cooperation priorities for 2019-2024. The other two Baltic states are working on similar defense plans.

Russian officials have regularly reported an increased number of flights of foreign reconnaissance aircraft and UAVs near the borders of the Russian Federation and Russian military facilities abroad, primarily over the Baltic Sea, near Crimea and the Krasnodar Territory, as well as near the Russian bases in Syria. Their number reached three dozen a week in March-April<sup>17</sup>. In turn, in late April, Latvia said that three ships of the Russian Navy were seen in its exclusive economic zone.

### Exercises

The active phase of the Dynamic Front 19 exercise in Latvia, Germany and Poland with around 3,200 military personnel of 27 countries, including 1,700 servicemen of the United States, and civilian militia was held on March 2-9. The exercise was designed to enhance the mutual fire support skills of NATO member states and partners of the organization<sup>18</sup>. They also worked on the application of the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS).

The Sea Shield 19 NATO naval exercise took place on April 5-13 in the southwestern part of the Black Sea. It involved 20 ships and 2,200 troops of NATO, Georgia and Ukraine. Moscow reinforced the Black Sea Fleet for the period of the exercise.

On April 8, Latvia hosted the Iron Spear 2019 exercise as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States. The allies practiced combat interaction<sup>19</sup>.

In response to the exercise of the Russian strategic air force in the Rostov region, a grouping of Ukrainian troops that were engaged in the conflict in the east of Ukraine conducted a fighter aviation and air defense exercise on April 13.

From April 12 to May 5, NATO held the Furious Hammer tactical field exercise in Latvia involving Estonia, the UK, France and Denmark.

15 Naev said how much territory is taken back by Ukraine this year, 05/02/2019, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/2692148-naev-rozpoviv-skilki-teritorij-povernuli-pid-kontrol-ukraini-za-rik.html>

16 Prepare to man Fort Trump? US has made Poland a 'very serious robust offer' for base, March 13, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2019/03/13/prepare-to-man-fort-trump-us-has-made-poland-a-very-serious-robust-offer-for-base/>

17 Defense Ministry: 28 aircraft conducted reconnaissance at the border of the Russian Federation, 04/29/2019, <https://rg.ru/2019/04/29/minoborony-28-letatelnyh-apparatov-proveli-razvedku-u-granic-rf.html>

18 Dynamic Front 19 to Integrate Multinational Fires Capabilities By 7th Army Training Command, March 1, 2019, [https://www.army.mil/article/217953/dynamic\\_front\\_19\\_to\\_integrate\\_multinational\\_fires\\_capabilities](https://www.army.mil/article/217953/dynamic_front_19_to_integrate_multinational_fires_capabilities)

19 "Iron Spear" tank exercises start in Latvia, April 8, <https://eng.ism.lv/article/society/defense/iron-spear-tank-exercises-start-in-latvia.a315275/>

In the second half of April, NATO’s multinational battlegroup rehearsed defensive and offensive actions in the Eager Leopard exercise in Lithuanian Pabrade with 650 personnel, including units of the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany and Norway<sup>20</sup>.

In late April, around a dozen warships, boats and supply vessels of the Baltic Fleet took part in a scheduled exercise off the coast of the Kaliningrad Region. Taking part in the exercise were around a thousand servicemen and 50 units of equipment. Simultaneously, a shipborne antisubmarine strike group of the Baltic Fleet held an exercise in cooperation with the Baltic Fleet’s naval aviation<sup>21</sup>.

**Building trust and cooperation**

The growing number of confidence-building measures set a new trend in the Belarus-NATO relationship. Speaking about the invitation of observers to military exercises, Andrej Carik, head of the Verification Directorate of the Defense Ministry’s International Military Cooperation Department, said that the ministry was seeking to raise the level of mutual trust, *“especially with the countries that are close to Belarus or border on Belarus. Representatives of five states interested in the mutual invitation of observers were invited to observe operations of the 120th brigade.”*<sup>22</sup> In March-April, Belarus and NATO made efforts to increase transparency (see the table below).

**Table 1. Confidence-building measures under the CFE Treaty, Vienna Document 2011 and Open Skies Treaty, and voluntary measures taken by Belarus and NATO**

Date of inspection	Composition of the delegation	Inspected state	Note
25-29 March	France, Germany, Poland	Belarus	North-West Command of the land forces, 19th infantry brigade were inspected
End of March	Slovakia, Poland	Belarus, Russia	Observation flight on Ukrainian plane
1-5 April	Belarus, Ukraine	France	Assessment of the HQ of the 1st land forces division
1-4 April	Belgium, Netherlands, UK	Belarus	Verification of compliance of the exercise of the 120th infantry brigade with the maximum scale of military activities subject to prior notification under the Vienna Document
1-5 April	Finland, Belgium	Belarus	Verification of compliance of the exercise of the 120th infantry brigade with the maximum scale of military activities subject to prior notification under the Vienna Document

20 NATO battlegroup exercises in Lithuania, 17 Apr. 2019, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_165745.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_165745.htm)

21 Baltic Fleet ships begin training near Kaliningrad, 04/25/2019, <https://rg.ru/2019/04/25/reg-szfo/pod-kaliningradom-korabli-baltflota-nachali-trenirovku-v-more.html>

22 Valerjan Šklennik, Hanna Zankavič, The largest exercise of 2019 took place at the 227th combined arms training ground, 04/24/2019, <http://zviazda.by/be/news/20190423/1556028347-samyya-buynyya-vuchenni-2019-goda-prayshli-na-227-m-agulnavayskovym>

Date of inspection	Composition of the delegation	Inspected state	Note
7-11 April	Russia, Belarus	UK	Verification of compliance of the Joint Warrior-2019/1 multinational exercise with the maximum scale of military activities subject to prior notification under the Vienna Document
23-26 April	Belarus	Poland	Two inspections of military units
End of April	Portugal, Spain, Czech Republic	Belarus	

A delegation of the NATO Headquarters visited Belarus on April 14-17. Belarusian government agencies and NATO representatives held an annual meeting on mutual inputs to the Planning and Review Process of the NATO Partnership for Peace program<sup>23</sup>.

On March 4-6, the Ministries of Defense of Belarus and Poland held consultations in Warsaw<sup>24</sup>. On March 28, Warsaw hosted a multilateral meeting of Joint Staff officers of Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine on measures to enhance confidence and security in the region<sup>25</sup>.

### Regional force buildup

In early March, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced the reinforcement of the military grouping in Crimea. Details were not made public<sup>26</sup>.

In mid-March, more than 1,500 American servicemen were urgently redeployed from the U.S. to Poland, which was the largest redeployment of troops from the United States to Europe after the end of the Cold War. Upon arrival, the troops received weapons and equipment stored in the Netherlands and began training in Poland. This rotation supplemented the already practiced rotations of the forward-stationed troops for training purposes<sup>27</sup>.

On March 8, representatives of Latvia, Denmark and Estonia opened the NATO Headquarters Multinational Division North at the Latvian Ādaži base near Riga. Canada, the United States, Germany and, probably, Poland will send their troops to the headquarters in the future. Works are underway to build new barracks for the allied forces in Ādaži<sup>28</sup>. At the end of February, the Latvian Ministry of Defense officially informed about the plan to allocate EUR 50 million a year until 2022 for building up its military infrastructure. In the coming years, most of this money will be spent on the base in Ādaži.

In mid-April, the NATO Battlegroup Estonia was reinforced with four British AW159 Wildcat multi-purpose helicopters. They will stay there until the end of May.

23 Partnership for Peace, Apr 18, 2019, Issue No.44, <https://vsr.mil.by/2019/04/18/partnyorstvo-radi-mira-2/>

24 As part of bilateral military cooperation, 03/04/2019, <https://www.mil.by/ru/news/84876/>

25 "Good neighborhood belt" development, 03/29/2019, <https://www.mil.by/ru/news/85607/>

26 Russia strengthens the military grouping in Crimea, 11/03/2019, <https://rg.ru/2019/03/11/rossiia-usilila-vojsko-vuiu-gruppirovku-v-krymu.html>

27 Rapid deployment of Fort Bliss soldiers to Poland tests Army's force flexibility, March 21, <https://www.army-times.com/news/your-army/2019/03/21/rapid-deployment-of-fort-bliss-soldiers-to-poland-tests-armys-force-flexibility/>

28 Number of Latvian soldiers stationed at Adazi base to be raised by 600, 2019-03-27, [https://www.baltictimes.com/number\\_of\\_latvian\\_soldiers\\_stationed\\_at\\_adazi\\_base\\_to\\_be\\_raised\\_by\\_600/](https://www.baltictimes.com/number_of_latvian_soldiers_stationed_at_adazi_base_to_be_raised_by_600/)

## Deployment of new types of weapons around Belarus

Russia and the United States made very important steps in the region. On March 4, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued the decree that officially suspended the fulfillment of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty). Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said on March 16 that Moscow was going to take measures to achieve a balance in the INF Treaty. The Kremlin will not deploy missiles in the European part of Russia unless the U.S. places its missiles in Europe.

On March 22, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko spoke about the need to take the opportunities that arose as a result of the INF Treaty suspension and set a new Ukrainian missile program in motion. He said that much had already been done in this area<sup>29</sup>.

Warsaw made strenuous efforts to significantly reinforce the Polish army. In early March, the Polish Defense Ministry approved a technical modernization plan for 2017–2026. It provides for the procurement of weapons and military equipment for a total of USD 48.8 billion. This year, PLN 11 billion will be allocated for technical modernization, and this amount will increase considerably from year to year up until 2027.

In April, Reuters reported that the United States was willing to sell the latest F-35 fighters to several more countries: Poland, Romania, Spain and Greece. If the contracts should be signed in 2020, the first fighters can be supplied in 2024. According to Polish Rzeczpospolita daily, Poland can purchase one or two squadrons, i.e. 16 to 32 jets<sup>30</sup>.

On April 26, Polish Minister of Defense Mariusz Błaszczak endorsed a contract for the supply of four AW101 anti-submarine and rescue helicopters worth USD 104 million to the Polish navy. They will replace Soviet Mi-14 helicopters. The AW101 helicopters will be delivered before the end of 2022<sup>31</sup>.

In late March, the Polish army received eight more 155-mm Krab self-propelled howitzers and several support vehicles. That was the beginning of the formation of the second of the three planned howitzer battalions. In 2016, the Polish Ministry of Defense entered into a contract for the supply of three Krab battalions (96 howitzers) worth USD 1.1 billion.

Several countries of the region show interest in new UAVs. On March 11, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced supplies of medium-range reconnaissance-strike drones to the Russian army this year. On March 20, the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine reported the completion of tests of Bayraktar TB2 UAVs of Turkish manufacture. According to President Poroshenko, the Ukrainian army has received “a weapon that is totally new for Ukraine.” It became known in early March that the Latvian army purchased the Penguin C UAVs.

On April 11, media informed that the Estonian army received the last of the 44 CV-9035NL armored vehicles worth a total of EUR 113 million ordered from the Netherlands.

## Forecast

- Belarus’s air force is depleted as a result of another handover of aircraft to Serbia, expecting new planes from Russia. The Kremlin will provide them, but, most likely, in the minimum required quantity. One should not expect any other considerable weapon supplies from Russia to Belarus soon.

29 President: We must use opportunities arising from INF Treaty termination to strengthen our defensive capacity - March 22, 2019 <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/mayemo-skoristatsiya-mozhливostyami-pripinennya-diyi-dogovor-54170>

30 Zbigniew Lentowicz, Ameryka sprzedaje Polsce supermyśliwce F-35, 05.04.2019, <https://www.rp.pl/Przemysl-Obronny/304059925-Ameryka-sprzedaje-Polsce-supermyśliwce-F-35.html>

31 MON kupił cztery nowe śmigłowce dla Marynarki Wojennej, 26.04.2019, <https://www.rp.pl/Przemysl-Obronny/190429602-MON-kupil-cztery-nowe-smiglowce-dla-Marynarki-Wojennej-Umowa-podpisana.html>

- The United States is likely to increase its military presence in Poland. Warsaw will significantly increase the financing of its army. Poland's dominance in the region will grow, and it will become a quite powerful European actor.
- Further mutually provoked escalation of the military presence and arrangement of new military facilities and weapons in the region is highly probable, especially since the countries of the region and those outside it have already planned a significant increase in spending for these purposes. The deployment of nuclear missiles in the region will lead to increased pressure on Minsk coming from Moscow, which wants its ally to be more active when it comes to regional confrontation.

## Appendix 1

### Catalogue of events underlying the relations development indices

## Relationship with Russia

Date	Event	Point
1 March	Big Talk, current policy on Russia is outlined, emphasis on alliance	+1
5 March	EEU-related orientation for government	+1
14 March	Negative comment of the Foreign Ministry of Belarus about Ambassador Babich	-2
19 March	Pietryšenka's comment on Belarus in the EEU	-1
22 March	Makiej on Ambassador Babich	+1
1 April	Siluanov on a loan for Belarus	+1
2 April	Congratulations on Unity Day	+1
2 April	Publication of a poll conducted by VTsIOM on the attitude of Russians to the merger with Belarus	+1
2 April	Rapota on the Union State	+1
2 April	Negative comment by Siamaška on the EEU	-1
4 April	Introduction of a ban on the supply of bone-in beef from Belarus	-2
5 April	Belarus notifies Transneft of the increase of tariffs by 23%	-2
11 April	Lukashenka on the suspension of transit of Russian oil	-2
12 April	Rosselkhoznadzor bans import of apples and pears from Belarus	-1
18 April	Makiej on Medvedev's forgetfulness	-1
19 April	Negative comment by Babich about Makiej's failure to account for Medvedev's role	-1
19 April	Foreign Ministry on Babich's destructive role	-1
19 April	Belneftekhim announces oil contamination in Druzhba	-3
20 April	Lukashenka: "Russia must deal with Babich on its own"	-1
30 April	Ambassador Babich is recalled	+1
30 April	Putin appoints Mezentsev new Ambassador to Belarus	+1
<b>Итог</b>		<b>-9</b>

## Relationship with the EU

Date	Event	Point
4 March	Kraŭčanka meets with Ambassador of Romania Viorel Mosanu.	+1
4 March	First annual consultations between Belarus and the EU on the implementation of international technical assistance projects and programmes.	+1
4 March	Meetings of Lukashenka and Makiej with EBRD President Suma Chakrabarti.	+1
5 March	Belarusian-Croatian consultations between the Foreign Ministries at the level of deputy ministers.	+1
7 March	Negative comment of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry on the statements of Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė about Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant.	-1
7 March	Kraŭčanka meets with Ambassador of Romania Viorel Mosanu.	+1
12 March	Negative comment of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry on the decision of the Institute of National Remembrance of Poland to reconsider the assessment of the field commander Romuald Rajs ("Bury"); summoning the Ambassador of Poland to the Foreign Ministry for giving explanations.	-1
12-13 March	Šestakoŭ's visit to Slovakia.	+1
19 March	15th meeting of the Belarus-Austria intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation.	+1
20 March	Kraŭčanka meets with a delegation of the Swedish Defence Commission.	+1
25 March	Positive assessment of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry of the declaration of the Institute of National Remembrance of Poland that its previous statement regarding Romuald Rajs ("Bury") has no legal effect.	+1
25 March	Meeting of the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives Varaniecki with a parliamentary delegation of the Netherlands.	+1
25-26 March	Kraŭčanka meets with the secretary general of the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, the deputy minister of foreign affairs of Slovakia and representatives of the European External Action Service within the framework of his visit to Bratislava to participate in the OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference.	+1
26 March	Miasnikovič meets with the President of the Polish Chamber of Commerce Andrzej Arendarski.	+1
28-29 March	Visit of Austrian Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz to Minsk, opening of the monument to victims of Nazism Array of Names, negotiations with Lukashenka and Rumas.	+2
9 April	Meeting of the head of the working group of the National Assembly on cooperation with the British Parliament, Alieh Rummo, with Alison Mary Suttie of the House of Lords.	+1
16 April	Miasnikovič and Kraŭčanka meet with a delegation of the Senate of the French Republic led by Chairman of the France-Belarus Friendship Group of the French Senate Charles Guené.	+1

Date	Event	Point
16-17 April	Šestakoŭ's visit to the Czech Republic to participate in the international conference "10 Years of Eastern Partnership: Economic Convergence and Business Opportunities" and the territorial export conference.	+1
17 April	Belarusian-Estonian consultations between the Foreign Ministries at the level of deputy ministers.	+1
17 April	Kraŭčanka meets with Martin Harris, Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO).	+1
18 April	11th meeting of the Belarus-Czech Mixed Commission for Economic, Industrial, Scientific and Technical Cooperation in Prague.	+1
18 April	Opening ceremony of the new office of the Embassy of Finland in Minsk; negotiations between Kraŭčanka and Markku Keinänen, under-secretary of state for external economic relations.	+1
19 April	Positive statements about the EU in Lukashenka's annual address to the Belarusian nation and the National Assembly.	+1
24-25 April	7th meeting of the EU-Belarus Coordination Group in Minsk.	+1
24 April	Kraŭčanka meets with Thomas Mayr-Harting, Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia in the European External Action Service.	+1
26 April	Dapkiunas meets with Ambassador of Poland Artur Michalski.	+1
29 April	Deputy Chair of the Council of the Republic Ščotkina with Vice President of the Italian Senate Paola Taverna.	+1
March-April	Overall positive materials in the official media and statements by the country's leadership regarding the EU.	+1
<b>Итог</b>		<b>+25</b>

## Relationship with China

Date	Event	Point
1 March	Positive statements by Lukashenka about China at a meeting with community leaders and experts	+1
15 March	Opening of a joint advanced technologies research and education center of the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics (BSUIR) and East China Computer Technology Research Institute	+1
19 March	Opening of the Belarusian-Chinese research center for emergency management and response at the University of Civil Protection at the Emergencies Ministry	+1
18-19 March	Deputy Foreign Minister Dapkunas visits China, participates in consultations between the Foreign Ministries	+1
21-23 March	Days of the Minsk Region in Chongqing, attended by Governor of the Minsk Region Isačenka	+1
22 March	Minsk Region–Chongqing Business Forum	+1
26-28 March	Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Snapkoŭ visits China, meets with Commerce Zhong Shan	+1
27 March	Belarusian-Chinese cooperation forum, Xian	+1
28-29 March	Delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Liašenka visits Zhejiang Province to study local experience in electric transport development	+1
29 March	International Conference “Modern China: building socialism with Chinese characteristics of new era” at the Confucius Institute of Sinology at Belarusian State University	+1
1 April	Signing of a town twinning agreement between the cities of Homiel and Hohhot (Inner Mongolia) during the visit of a Chinese delegation to the Homiel Region	+1
2-3 April	Visit of Shen Yueyue, Vice-Chairwoman of the NPC Standing Committee, meetings in the Belarusian parliament and with Prime Minister Rumas	+1
4 April	Visit to the Mahilioŭ Region of a Shaanxi Provincial Government delegation	+1
15 April	Signing of an agreement on the establishment of the joint Belarusian-Chinese Institute (Belarusian State University and Dalian Polytechnic University)	+1
16-20 April	Media tour for Chinese media (4th) organized by the Ministry of Information of Belarus in conjunction with the Embassy of Belarus in China	+1
19 April	Positive statements by Lukashenka about China in his annual address to the nation and the parliament	+1
23-25 April	Lukashenka’s visit to China to participate in the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation at the top level; bilateral meetings with President Xi Jinping and Vice President Wang Qishan	+3

Date	Event	Point
25 April	Signing of a loan agreement between Belarusian Railway and Eximbank of China (EUR 65.7 million) (EUR 65.7 million) for the project "Electrification of Homiel–Žlobin–Asipovičy and Žlobin–Kalinkavičy. Stage 3. Žlobin–Kalinkavičy section"	+1
25 April	Signing of intergovernmental agreements on international road transport of passengers and cargoes, on technical and economic assistance (CNY 800 million), loan agreement for the development of the national economy of Belarus (EUR 100 million)	+3
27 April	Snapkoŭ's participation in roundtables of the Belt and Road International Forum (Beijing)	+1
<b>Итог</b>		<b>+24</b>

## Relationship with the U.S.

Date	Event	Point
1 March	Lukashenka criticizes the U.S. for interfering in Venezuela's internal affairs	-1
1 March	Charge d'Affaires of the U.S. attends a commemoration ceremony at the Yama memorial	+1
3 March	U.S. inspection team visits the 336th Missile Artillery Brigade	+1
4 March	Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent visits Belarus, meets with Ivan Padhurski and Uladzimir Makiej	+1
5 March	A delegation led by Deputy Minister of Healthcare Viačaslaŭ Šyla visits the U.S. Agreement signed on significant increase in supplies of cancer therapies	+2
13 March	Charge d'Affaires, a.i. of Belarus in the U.S. Paviel Šydloŭski spoke at a working lunch on Belarus at the Washington Intergovernmental Professional Group	+1
13 March	U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo presents a report on the human rights situation in the world with criticism of Belarus	-1
20 March	Charge d'Affaires of the U.S. attends the opening of Women in Tech Week	+1
11 April	Makiej meets with a delegation led by Assistant Administrator for USAID's Bureau for Europe and Eurasia Brock Bierman	+1
25 April	Kraŭčanka meets with U.S. Charge d'Affaires in Belarus Jenifer H. Moore	+1
<b>Итог</b>		<b>+7</b>

## Relationship with Ukraine

Date	Event	Point
1 March	Brest region. Meeting of the chief border commissioners – agreement of interaction plans for the year	+1
1 March	Statements on Crimea and Ukraine by Lukashenka during the Big Talk	+1
18 March	Permission to acquire PrikarpatZapadTrans by Šakucin's Neftebitumny Zavod	+1
22 March	Growth of two-way trade for the third year in a row, noted by both Ambassadors – Kizim and Sokal – in their respective interviews	+1
27 March	First interstate emergency training of dispatch operators of power grids of Belarus and Ukraine	+1
29 March	Meeting of representatives of the General Staffs of Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus	+1
31 March	Interview of Ambassador of Ukraine Kizim to Ukrinform. Generally positive dynamics, alleviation of tension in the Hryb case	+1
1 April	Lukashenka meets with Martin Sajdik, statement about willingness to expand involvement in conflict settlement in Ukraine	+1
4 April	Lukashenka's meeting with Medvedchuk and negative reaction of the Ukrainian ambassador	-1
3 April	Militant from the Vostok illegal armed group expelled from Belarus to Ukraine	+1
8 April	Interview with Ambassador of Belarus Sokal to BelTA news service	+1
11 April	Border demarcation in the Exclusion Zone	+1
18 April	Belarus does not buy Made in Crimea products	+1
20 April	Antidumping probe launched into supplies of aerated concrete blocks from Belarus to Ukraine	-1
22 April	Import of pork from the Kirovohrad Region to Belarus is banned	-1
25 April	First meeting of the joint working group on cross-border cooperation in Zhytomyr	+1
29-30 April	Joint exercises of the two countries' Ministries of Emergency Situations	+1
March -April	Negative media background (more than 50 publications) on the possible "dismantling" of Belarus's independence or military threat to Ukraine coming from the north	-1
<b>Итого</b>		<b>+10</b>

## Appendix 2

### Catalogue of events underlying the security indices

Date	Event	National security	Regional tension
March-April	Eight mutual inspections, observation flights and invitations to observe Belarusian and NATO exercises	+3	+3
02-09.03	Dynamic Front 19 exercise in Latvia, Germany and Poland	0	-1
04-06.03	Consultations between Defense Ministries of Belarus and Poland	+1	+1
08.03	Opening of the NATO Headquarters Multinational Division North in Latvia	-1	-1
Early March	Announced reinforcement of the Russian grouping in Crimea	0	-1
Early March	Publication of a part of the approved plan of the technical modernization of the Polish army in 2017-2026	-2	-2
March	Statements by Russian and Ukrainian officials on putting strike drones into service	-2	-2
Mid-March	Urgent redeployment of U.S. troops to Poland	-1	-1
18.03	Adoption of the Information Security Concept	+1	0
18-22.03	Joint staff exercise of the Joint Command of the Belarusian-Russian regional grouping of forces	0	0
22.03	Statement by Ukrainian President Poroshenko on the new national missile program	0	-1
28.03	Multilateral meeting of representatives of the Joint Staffs of Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine	+2	+2
End of March	Battalion tactical exercise with field firing with a unit of the 11th infantry brigade	+1	0
02.04	Signing of the strategic cooperation roadmap by Lithuania and the United States	0	0
Early April	Information about the U.S.' willingness to sell F-35 fighters to Poland	-2	-2
Early April	Tactical exercise with 231st artillery brigade	+1	0
Early April	Tactical exercise with the reinforced 355th tank battalion of the 120th infantry brigade	+1	0
Early April	Tactical exercise with the 120th infantry brigade	+2	0

## MINSK BAROMETER: Monitoring of foreign policy and regional security

№ 8 (March and April 2019)

Date	Event	National security	Regional tension
Early April	Special tactical exercise with reconnaissance and fire assault units	+1	0
08.04	Iron Spear 2019 exercise in Latvia	0	0
05-13.04	Sea Shield 19 naval exercise	0	-1
13.04	Fighter aviation and air defense exercise in the east of Ukraine	0	0
14-17.04	Visit of the delegation of NATO Headquarters to Belarus	+1	+1
16-18.04	Joint exercise with the special operations forces of Belarus and airborne troops of Russia near Brest	0	0
Second half of April	Eager Leopard NATO battlegroup exercise in Lithuania	0	-1
End of April	Scheduled training and exercise with the shipborne antisubmarine strike group of the Baltic Fleet	0	0
12.04-05. 05	Furious Hammer NATO exercise in Latvia	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>+6</b>	<b>-6 (Green)</b>

### Appendix 3

## Colour scale of regional security tensions

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

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