



MINSK BAROMETER

Monitoring of
foreign policy and
regional security

Dear readers,

Dear readers!

We proudly present the sixth issue of Minsk Barometer, which analyzes Belarus's foreign policy and the status of security in the months of November and December of 2018.

Belarus chose to escalate the negotiation process over the terms of cooperation in the oil and gas sector with **Russia**. In response, the Kremlin conditioned the resolution of energy pricing issues on the deepening of integration. This caused a new media wave about the possibility of the annexation of Belarus. Anyway, no dramatic drop of the index of the Belarus-Russia relationship is observed.

The volumes and intensity of contacts with the **European Union** continue to grow; however, negotiations over politically significant topics remain unsuccessful.

The contractual framework is being expanded with a view to increasing Belarusian exports to **China**.

At the same time, Minsk continues to normalize its relations with the **United States**, using, among other things, informal channels.

The perception of the cooperation between Belarus and **Ukraine** through the prism of the Russian-Ukrainian war continued to create stress points in the Ukrainian media field.

The Belarusian army continues to be optimized in line with actual needs and available financial resources. At the same time, the leadership of the Armed Forces pays considerable attention to the character guidance of military personnel, enhancing their motivation, as well as preparedness for new forms of warfare. The situation in the region remains tense, but stable, and returns back to the **green** sector.

Best regards,

Dzianis Melyantsou,

Editor, the Minsk Barometer
Head of Foreign Policy of Belarus programme,
Minsk Dialogue expert initiative

4 Relationship with Russia

7 Relationship with the European Union

11 Relationship with China

14 Relationship with the U.S.

17 Relationship with Ukraine

22 Security Barometer

28 Appendix 1
Catalogue of events underlying the relations development indices

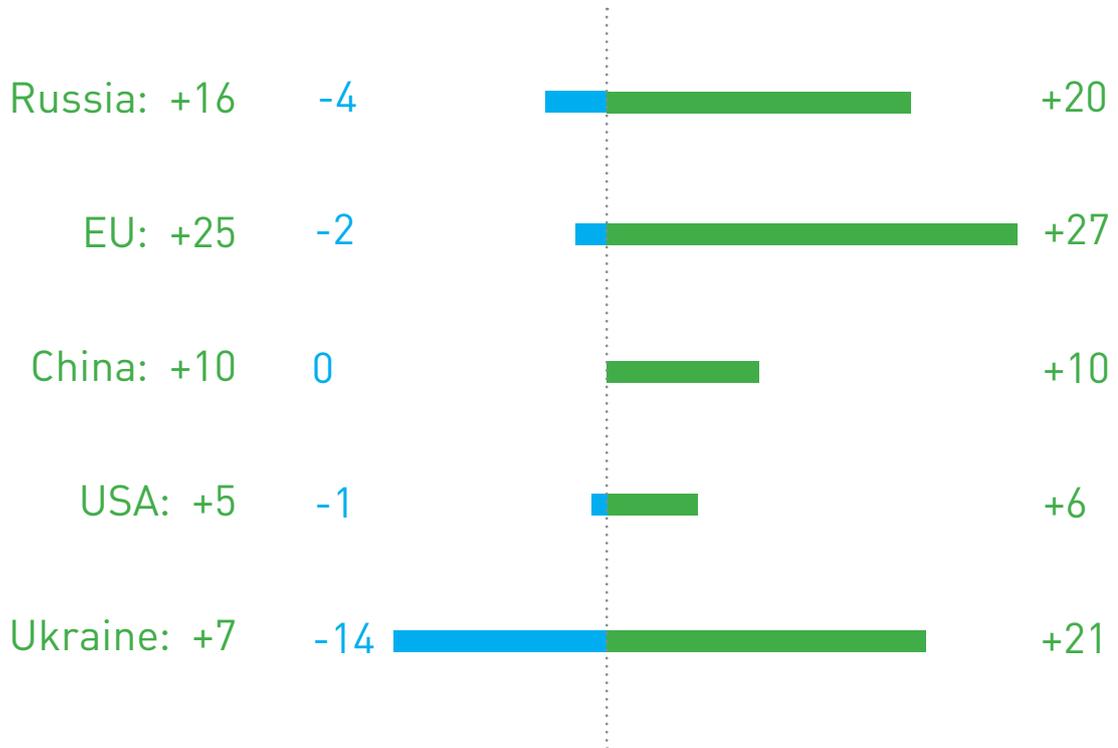
35 Appendix 2
Catalogue of events underlying the security indices

37 Appendix 3
Color scale of regional security tensions

38 Authors

Minsk Dialogue
Track-II Initiative

Relations development indices:



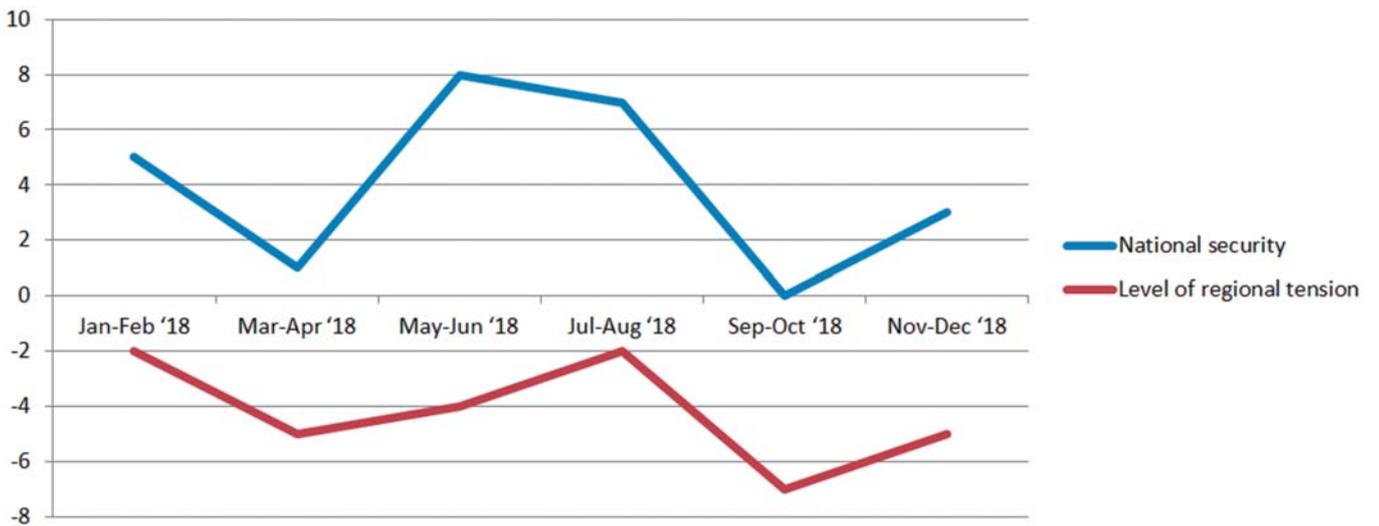
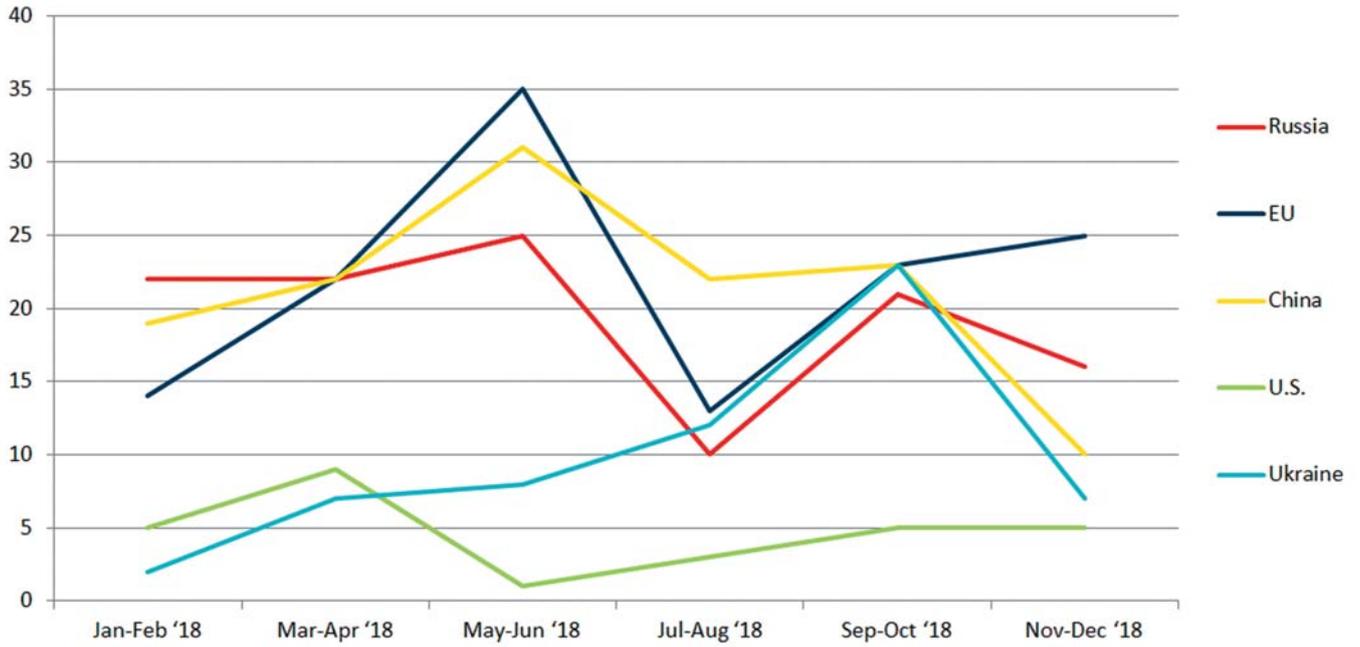
Security:



National: +3

Level of regional tension: -5
(Green level)

The green level 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.



Relationship with Russia

+20



Resulting index: +16

Positive points: +20

Negative points: -4

-4

Trends

1. Belarus chose to escalate the negotiation process over the terms of cooperation in the oil and gas sector.
2. In response, Russia pegged the resolution of the gas pricing issues in 2020 and compensation for the tax maneuver for Belarus to the reanimation of the Union State and deepening of integration.
3. Russia is likely to continue its “pragmatization” attempts, i.e. imposing integration as a mechanism of subordination.

Developments and processes

Political agenda

In the final two months of 2018, contacts between the leaderships of Belarus and Russia were unusually dense: two scheduled meetings were held within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) (of heads of government and heads of state), the Union State also had two scheduled meetings (also of heads of government and heads of state) and there was one unplanned meeting of the presidents (on December 29).

The political background of those meetings was confrontational. First, Belarus continued to seek the fulfillment by Russia of its obligations under the agreement on the creation of the EEU, threatening to revise that agreement. Second, it brought to public the conflict within the CSTO, thereby undermining the reputation of that integration bloc. Third, Belarus once again decidedly turned down the idea of having a Russian military base. Fourth, it made some progress in its relations with the United States, while Russia’s relationship with Washington continued to deteriorate. As a result, Russia de facto refused to discuss energy issues, pegging their resolution to the resuscitation of the 1999 union treaty. At the meetings of the presidents on December 25 and 29, no specific agreements were reached, but, apparently, the Union Treaty will somehow remain on the agenda for some time, especially since a working group has already been established to elaborate the Union Treaty.

Notably, since his rise to power, Putin has repeatedly attempted to revise the 1999 Union Treaty, intending to give the Union State more pragmatism or clearer contours. But it turned out to be impossible. The Union Treaty is based on parity principles; according to it, in the Union State, the vote of Belarus weighs as much as that of Russia. In many respects, this is precisely why Putin preferred to transfer a significant part of the Belarusian-Russian agenda to the new integration association, the EEU, where the principle of decision-making and distribution of benefits is closer to being proportional, that is, Russia has an advantage over the allied countries.

Ambassador Mikhail Babich spoke to media outlets with extensive interpretations of the Belarus-Russia contradictions and Russia's interest in the Union project.¹ Although naturally he sided with the Kremlin, nonetheless, the diplomat conscientiously explored the intricacies of the existing contractual framework, distorting the situation in favor of Russia a lot less than Russian government officials did before him.

Oil maneuver and gas prices

On November 27, at a meeting of the EEU heads of government, Aliaksandr Lukashenka raised a claim to Russia for the unfair distribution of customs duties, for extending temporary exemptions from the common market for an indefinite period (for example, government procurement in Russia), and for endlessly delaying the creation of a common energy market.² Ten days later, on December 6, at a meeting of the EEU Supreme State Council in St. Petersburg, he used even sharper expressions.³ Within the EEU, the parties did not reach any compromise, and on December 13, at a meeting of the governments of the Union State, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev actually made it clear that the conditions for the supply of oil and gas to Belarus could be improved as long as integration within the Union State was promoted. The meetings of the presidents on December 25 and 29 did not expand that proposal.

In terms of natural gas, the essence of the parties' contradictions is as follows: Belarus is seeking equal tariffs for gas pumping across the EEU. One of the condition for the sale of Beltransgaz (the Belarusian gas transit company) to Gazprom was a change in the price formula – since 2012, the price has been tied to domestic Russian prices, and not to world oil prices. However, as oil prices dropped globally, the price of gas for Belarus once again became almost the same as the price for Poland or Germany (minus shipping costs and duties). The relatively high gas price for Belarus is attributed to high tariffs applied to transportation, storage, and management of gas delivery, fixed in U.S. dollars. After the 2016 conflict, Russia agreed to compensate for the inflated gas price with the so-called oil "re-clearance", i.e. agreed to channel to the Belarusian budget export duties for 4 million tons of oil. However, the contract and, accordingly, the supplemental agreement will expire at the end of 2019, and Belarus has been striving to have gas prices reduced starting in 2020.

When it comes to oil, conditions for Belarus are changing already in 2019 – due to the tax maneuver, i.e. the redistribution of income of the Russian budget from export duties on oil in favor of taxes on the extraction of minerals. At the same time, Russian oil refineries will receive, as compensation for the hike in oil prices, the so-called reverse excise, while for the Belarusian refineries, the price of oil will simply increase. Belarus's position is that either Belarusian refineries could somehow receive this reverse excise, or prices for them would be regulated by the application of some factor, or a reverse excise would not be introduced in Russia – so that the conditions for the refineries would be the same, as originally arranged in the Union documents.

The position on oil will be very difficult to assert, since Russia's dependence on Belarus in oil transit is insignificant, and the creation of a common oil market in the EEU was postponed until 2025.

The position on natural gas will be somewhat easier to assert, even though the share of the Belarusian route in the total Russian gas transit to the EU is less than in its oil transit, and the gas pipeline (as opposed to oil pipelines) is owned by Gazprom. The fact is that the year 2019 is the last year of Gazprom's take-and-pay contracts with most of the major European

1 Mikhail Babich: decent development of the Union State serves the interests of both Russia and Belarus <https://tass.ru/interviews/5920657?fbclid=IwAR0qONcE2EBQwqwm78Gt7eYfINAx0deyTcOJ0zvnHthmYGZcyP4PC98mTM>

2 Barriers, exemptions, unfair distribution of duties. Lukashenka has no mercy for the EEU's sore spots <https://news.tut.by/economics/616978.html>

3 "No equality – no Union." What Lukashenka and Putin argued about in St. Petersburg <https://news.tut.by/economics/618203.html>

consumers. In addition, with Ukraine, the prime gas transiter to the EU, there is no gas transit contract starting from 2020. In other words, Gazprom in 2019 will face many complex and interrelated tasks, and, given the importance of the Belarusian route, concessions for Belarus are likely. However, most likely, concessions will be offered only for the year 2020, so that after the problems with European consumers and Ukraine have been resolved, they will be abandoned.

Border and state debt refinancing

No agreements on the crossing of the Belarusian-Russian border by third-country nationals and on Russia's loan to Belarus to refinance its national debt were concluded at the end of 2018, although both agreements are highly ready. Russia intends to introduce additional checkpoints for foreigners on the Belarusian-Russian border. It also agrees to refinance the Belarusian state debt in the amount of USD 630 million.

Trade

In the first 10 months of 2018, Belarusian exports to Russia amounted to USD 10.7 billion, the same as in January-October 2017, while Russian imports to Belarus went up by 21.3% over the same period in 2017 to USD 18.8 billion. Accordingly, the deficit in trade with Russia amounted to USD 8 billion.

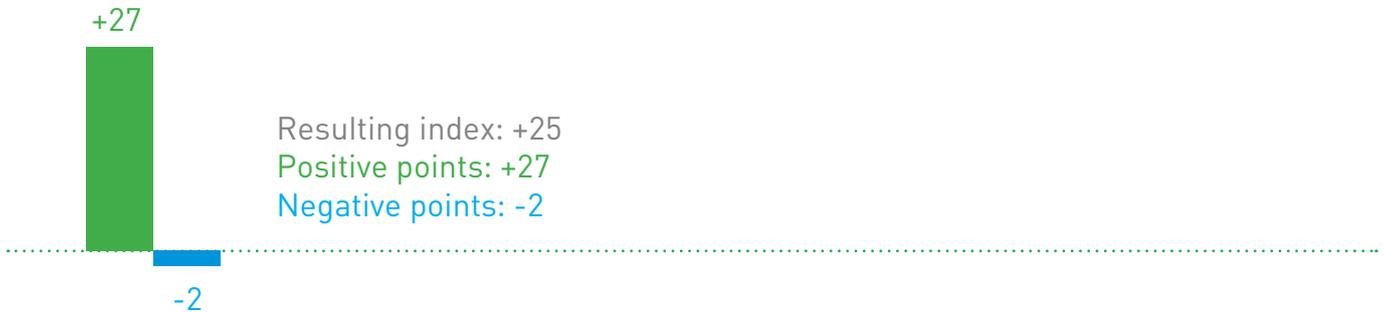
The main trends remained in terms of the product mix. Exports of the machine-building complex increased, but agricultural machinery supplies decreased in both volume and value terms. In the group of food products, growth was achieved in meat, sour milk, fish, whereas in butter, cheese, sausages, and especially milk, Belarusian producers ceded their positions in the Russian market. As for household appliances, light industry products, furniture and medicines, it takes a lot of effort to keep the positions. Russia, in addition to raw materials and spare parts, is rapidly increasing its supplies to Belarus of television sets, communications equipment, and automobiles.

Forecast

Russia's pegging of the terms of oil and gas supplies to the depth of integration shows that Moscow views integration associations solely as a one-way process – the extension of domestic Russian rules to allied countries, depending on the degree of closeness. However, the 1999 Union Treaty serves these purposes the least. Therefore, there is a low probability that the working group will be able to come to any significant results.

The strength of the negotiating position of official Minsk on the terms of oil and gas supplies largely depends on the weight of Belarus in the Russian transit of these goods to Europe, rather than on the "big" agreements. And this weight decreases as Russia acquires its own infrastructure. However, in the near future, no significant changes in the balance of forces will occur. Accordingly, a compromise, to which the parties will eventually come to, must be reached on terms that are not too different from those of 2016-2017. At the same time, such a compromise on these issues cannot be expected in the first half of 2019, since the Russian administration believes the pre-election season, which Belarus is facing now, offers a chance to raise prices for its ally.

Relationship with the European Union



Trends

1. The volumes and intensity of contacts and joint projects with the EU institutions and member states continue to increase, including the gradually enhancing interaction with European financial institutions
2. At the same time, trade relations are characterized by ambiguous dynamics. On the one hand, the results of mutual commodity trade in 2018 are positive for Belarus. On the other hand, Minsk began to speak openly about the use of non-tariff barriers by Brussels in order to limit the possibilities of Belarusian agricultural exports.
3. Negotiations on politically significant topics – agreements on partnership priorities and visa facilitation – have been fruitless. New contradictions arise in the negotiation process, generating irritation and fatigue among the negotiating teams and beginning to undermine the trust and cautious optimism about the future of relations that were slowly shaped over the last few years.

Developments and processes

November 1 was the final day of the meeting of the Munich Security Conference Core Group, so some of its results should be mentioned in the current review. The fact that the meeting was held in Minsk cannot be called an event within the framework of the Belarus-EU relationship, although the Munich Conference is mostly perceived by many as an element of Germany's foreign and security policy. In any case, the event became a landmark from the practical point of view. Among other things, a number of bilateral meetings between the leadership of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry and counterparts from the EU were held on the sidelines.

In many respects, the speech by Aliaksandr Lukashenka at a meeting with the participants of the event was significant in terms of the relations between Minsk and the European Union. On the one hand, many positive assessments were given. For example, the importance for Belarus of a strong EU was mentioned. On the other hand, the Belarusian president also criticized the EU. In particular, because of the demands concerning democracy and human rights, which are not supported by the EU's willingness to pursue a real expansion of economic cooperation with Belarus.¹

Lukashenka dwelt on his remarks later, on December 11, during his meeting with German Ambassador Peter Dettmar.² He stated that Belarus "can meet halfway in many issues, but

1 Opening of the meeting of the Munich Security Conference Core Group, http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/otkrytie-vstrechi-osnovnoj-gruppy-mjunxenskoj-konferentsii-po-bezopasnosti-19782/

2 Meeting with Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Germany to Belarus Peter Dettmar, http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-chrezvychajnym-i-polnomochnym-poslom-germanii-v-belarusi-peterom-dettmarom-20043/

not all”, which are of interest to Berlin. And he hinted at the importance of progress in trade relations:

“You have built a fence and do not even let anyone close to the fence. Worse than Trump’s wall on the border with Mexico, but it is invisible, economic. Therefore, we would like to finally remove these fences. If the European Union is so committed to the market economy, why have fences at all?”

Incidentally, the Belarusian president emphasized the particular importance that Minsk attaches to its relations with Berlin. This is connected, perhaps, not only to the central role of Germany in the EU, but also to the increasingly obvious difficulties of negotiating with supranational bodies of the EU, which is why Belarus will objectively attach increasing importance to bilateral relations with individual member states.

Difficulties in the dialogues with the European Commission and the European External Action Service once again showed at the 6th meeting of the Belarus-EU Coordination Group, which took place in Brussels on December 12-13. The meeting traditionally addressed a broad range of issues: cooperation in economics and finance, trade, investment, education, science, environment, energy, transport, digital technologies, international technical assistance, as well as human rights and cooperation within the Eastern Partnership. The content of some discussions, in particular concerning trade in agricultural products, turned out to be a disappointment for the Belarusian side.³

According to Minsk, the problem is not the existence of some insurmountable disagreements or technical difficulties, but the fact that the European Commission may not respond to official appeals and requests from Belarus for months or even years. That is, it simply ignores the Belarusian counterparts, despite assurances to the contrary. This is not to say that this was news for Minsk. But the repetition of such a scenario from one meeting of the Coordination Group to another leads Belarusian diplomats to the conclusion that this is nothing but a non-tariff barrier, and that Brussels is not even going to have a serious conversation on topics that affect its economic interests.

In addition, the feeling of disappointment in Minsk is intensifying due to the already indecently prolonged lack of results in negotiations on visa liberalization and agreement on partnership priorities. Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej commented on the situation:

“I have already said that some new moments constantly arise related to the initiatives of our European partners. Not even all of them, but individual countries of the European Union. They constantly offer some things aimed at a certain change and even toughening of the initial versions of these agreements, which is not quite acceptable for us.”⁴

It is now not only about Lithuania, which, apparently, purposefully torpedoes any progress in the negotiations between the EU and Belarus in order to get Minsk to abandon its project to build a nuclear power plant. It is also about Poland, which put forward an additional condition to increase the number of accredited Polish consuls within the framework of negotiations on visa liberalization.

This situation contrasts markedly with the apparent progress in project collaboration. For example, on November 14, the project to support the development of entrepreneurship in the Belarusian regions was officially launched. The project is designed for three years and is one of the largest projects of this kind ever implemented in Belarus. The financing (EUR 8 million) is provided by the EU and UNDP.

The highlight of the period was the signing on November 20 of the first agreements totaling EUR 160 million with the European Investment Bank (EIB), which opened a new financial chapter in the relationship between Belarus and the EU. After the meeting with

³ D. Melyantsou, EU-Belarus Coordinating Group: all quiet on the western front?, <http://minskdialogue.by/research/opinions/koordinatcionnaia-gruppa-belarus-es-na-zapadnom-fronte-bez-peremen>

⁴ Makiej: new points constantly emerge in talks with the EU over readmission and visa issues, <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/makej-v-peregovorah-s-es-po-readmissii-i-vizovym-voprosam-postojanno-voznikajut-novye-momen-ty-328680-2018/>

Siarhiej Rumas and the signing ceremony, EIB Vice-President Alexander Stubb said that the first investment package has two directions. The first one is a large project with Minskvodokanal for the reconstruction of the Minsk wastewater treatment plant (co-funded by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development). The second one envisages support for small and medium-sized enterprises through Belarusbank and Belagroprombank. According to Stubb, this is only the beginning of cooperation: the M7 highway (Minsk-Ašmiany-Kamienny Loh) project has been thoroughly prepared, and other possibilities are being explored.⁵

On November 21, Lukashenka had a face-to-face meeting with Stubb. He announced the commencement of a new phase in the relations of Belarus with the EIB and even called the current moment “historical”⁶. Notably, during the meeting, Lukashenka addressed to his interlocutor, who used to be the premier of Finland, a request for assistance in developing cooperation between Minsk and Helsinki.

Another noticeable event of the period was the visit of Michail Miasnikovič to Paris to participate in the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. This visit can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, the invitation on behalf of the French leadership was sent to the President of Belarus, who eventually decided not to attend. On the other hand, the speaker of the Council of the Republic delegated to Paris – in addition to participating in official ceremonies – held a large number of bilateral meetings and conversations, including with heads and senior officials of EU countries, in particular, with the presidents of France and Lithuania, and the foreign minister of Poland. He also met with President of the French Senate Gérard Larcher. The Belarusian side emphasized that this is the first meeting in the history of bilateral relations between the speakers of the upper chambers of parliaments of the two countries.

According to the National Statistics Committee⁷, two-way trade between Belarus and the countries of the European Union amounted to USD 15.935 billion in January–November 2018 (up by 24% year-on-year). Belarusian export reached USD 9.477 billion, which represents an increase by 37.4% from January–November 2017. Import from the EU was at USD 6.458 billion (up by 8.5%). Belarus’s surplus in trade with the EU countries amounted to a bit more than USD 3 billion.

Forecast

In the coming months, it can be expected that the relationship between Belarus and the EU will continue to develop in a contradictory manner. On the one hand, the intensity of contacts and project cooperation in various fields will continue to expand. On the other hand, negotiations on politically significant agreements are in limbo, contradictions in trade are becoming increasingly apparent. Such a paradigm will allow moving forward only where the parties have no contradictions. But at the same time, it will create additional uncertainty in the relationship as a whole and negatively affect the level of mutual trust.

At the same time, the draft agreement on partnership priorities that has been worked out for several years is now beginning to lose its relevance. Not only because of the long expired timeframes, in which it had originally been planned to sign the document, but also in view

⁵ European Investment Bank signs first agreements with Belarus totaling EUR 160 million, <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/evropejskij-investitsionnyj-bank-podpisal-s-belarusju-pervye-soglashenija-na-160-mln-ev-ro-326272-2018/>

⁶ Meeting with Vice President of the European Investment Bank Alexander Stubb, http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-vitse-prezidentom-evropejskogo-investitsionnogo-banka-aleksandrom-stubbom-19915/

⁷ Belarus’s balance of foreign trade in commodities, http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/makroekonomika-i-okruzhayushchaya-sreda/vneshnyaya-torgovlya_2/operativnye-dannye_5/balans-vneshnei-torgovli-tovarami-respubliki-belarus/

of the growing conviction in Minsk that new concessions regarding the conditions set by Lithuania will only lead to the appearance of new requirements from Vilnius.

However, the conclusion of agreements on visa facilitation and readmission looks quite realistic in 2019. Before the emergence of a new controversy connected with the demand of Poland to increase the number of Polish consuls accredited in Belarus, progress was made in these negotiations on a matter that had long remained a stumbling block. The EU wanted to include in the text of the agreement a separate clause on its suspension in the event of a change in the international situation and, in particular, in case new sanctions should be imposed on Belarus. Minsk, on the other hand, was categorically against it, since there is nothing of this kind in the EU's agreements with other neighbors. It seems that the number of consuls is another issue that the parties will be able to resolve as well.

Relationship with China

+10



0

Resulting index: +10

Positive points: +10

Negative points: 0

Trends

The contractual framework is expanding with a view to increasing Belarusian exports to China and promoting the Great Stone industrial park.

Developments and processes

The participation of the Belarusian delegation in the China International Import Expo in Shanghai, as well as regular meetings of the intergovernmental cooperation committee and the working group for the development of the Great Stone industrial park became milestones of the bilateral relationship in November and December. They included visits of high-level Belarusian officials to China: Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Mikalaj Snapkoŭ, Minister of Economy Zmicier Kruty, Minister of Industry Paviel Uciupin, Minister of Agriculture and Foodstuffs Lieanid Zajac, Minister of Culture Jury Bondar, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrej Dapkiunas, and Chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technology Aliaksandr Šumilin. In the follow-up of the meeting of the intergovernmental cooperation committee, a protocol, an action plan for organizing the Year of Education, and a plan of cooperation between the Ministries of Culture for 2019-2022 were signed.

The China International Import Expo resulted in a number of agreements on the development of the China-Belarus Industrial Park (CBIP) (agreement on the establishment of the Chengdu-European Industrial Subpark within the Great Stone; a memorandum on trade and economic cooperation with the pilot zone of the regional trade and economic cooperation China-SCO), as well as on the export of Belarusian products to China (opening of a representative office of Zhengzhou Hub International, which will load Belarusian products in railway containers on the Zhengzhou–Duisburg route; memorandum on cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Belarus and China Merchants Group concerning food exports to China). A Belarus-China business forum was also held on the sidelines of the exhibition, and contracts were signed for the supply of dairy products worth USD 30 million between Miasomolochnaya Kompaniya CJSC and Sinoby Agriculture and for deliveries of petrochemical products worth more than USD 13 million.

During the period under review, a fairly active bilateral discussion was underway concerning financial and banking issues at the working level with the People's Bank of China, the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, and the China Banking Association (CBA).

Overall, in 2018, contacts at the top, high and working levels became more frequent, and inter-regional dialogue was intensified. The efforts of the Belarusian side to expand deliveries of Belarusian products to China and to increase two-way trade were perceptible and quite productive, although, despite the growth, export targets (USD 860 million in 2018¹) are unlikely to be achieved. An important result of the Year of Tourism is the coming into effect of

¹ Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 347 dated 12.05.2017 as revised in Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 475 dated 21.06.2018

a 90-day visa-free stay for Belarus and China, which led to a certain increase in the number of Chinese tourists.

Throughout the year, there was a reshuffle in the Belarusian government, which had no palpable effect on the rhetoric and dynamics of bilateral efforts. Against the backdrop of problems with the project at the Sviethlorsk-based Cellulose and Cardboard Factory and the cardboard factory in Dobruš, the new team initiated the update of information on Chinese projects in Belarus, which can help analyze shortcomings in the work with Chinese investors.

Great Stone CBIP

In November and December, the number of CBIP residents increased to 41 companies:

- LLC Sykay Technology (MSK) (Kinhood navigation systems, more than USD 500,000 in investments)
- Yunzhi Technology Ltd. (LED transparent screens and LED monoblocks, USD 3.2 million in investments)
- China-Belarus High-Tech Aerospace Research and Development Center LLC (R&D in space technology with the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), USD 2 million in investments).

In 2018, the number of companies registered in the Park increased from 23 to 41, and some residents embarked on construction – China Merchants, Weichai Holding Group, and others. Furthermore, the construction of the first residential building started. Announcements were made about the establishment of the China-Belarus cooperation center of scientific and technological achievements transformation and the Belarusian-Chinese fire safety and industrial safety center. In December, the most developed component of the park – logistics – was further reinforced: the Sinotrans headquarters in the Eurasian region opened in the Park.

According to Minister of Finance Maksim Jermalovič, the Belarusian side expects at least USD 180 million in investments in 2018.² By 2020, more than 100 residents are expected to populate the CBIP, with more than USD 2 billion in investments, at least USD 1 billion in output, and 6,500 new jobs.

Other Projects

In the period from November to December 2018, there was no significant development of other projects.

During 2018, CITIC appeared to be the busiest Chinese company in Belarus. The company's initiatives include a biotechnological production project in Belarusian agro-industrial complex, based in the Minsk Region (using a loan of the Export-Import Bank of China), joint projects with JSC Amkodor; a project to build an Amkodor-Mash factory of special equipment and a multipurpose facility in Minsk, as well as meetings with President Lukashenka. Other important projects for Belarus are the construction of residential buildings, a football stadium, and a swimming pool financed from Chinese technical and economic assistance.

The anti-projects of the year include the Sviethlorsk-based Cellulose and Cardboard Factory and the cardboard factory in Dobruš – in the latter case, the prime contract with the Chinese company was dissolved, and the implementation pace is far from that scheduled.

² BelTA report dated 22.12.2018 <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/objem-privlechennyh-investitsij-v-velikij-kamen-v-2018-godu-sostavit-ne-menee-180-mln-330428-2018/>

Forecast

In the new year, the political dialogue will not change its tonality, work will continue to expand Belarusian exports to China and promote the CBIP, and new agreements for these purposes will be outlined. The international forum “One Belt, One Way” that according to the Belarusian side will be held in the CBIP in June 2019 will serve as another impetus to this endeavor.

The Year of Education can bring about an increase in the number of Chinese students in Belarus, an expansion of educational programs and exchange programs, which in general will have a positive effect on the mutual perception of the parties. However, to ensure an effective understanding of the Chinese partners, it is necessary to compile information on Chinese projects in Belarus and draw appropriate conclusions, which will also help achieve the planned economic indicators.

Relationship with the U.S.



Trends

1. Minsk continues to normalize its relationship with the United States, using inter alia informal channels.
2. Washington is getting increasingly interested in the region of Eastern Europe and, in particular, Belarus. The focus of this interest is security.

Developments and processes

Less than a week after Wess Mitchell, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, visited Minsk, a delegation of influential American analysts came to Belarus, including: Glen Howard (President, Jamestown Foundation), Mike Carpenter (senior director, Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement, University of Pennsylvania), and General Ben Hodges (senior analyst, Center for European Policy Analysis), General Bruce McClintock (RAND Corporation, former defense attaché in Russia), and Vladimir Socor (senior analyst, Jamestown Foundation).

Some of these researchers used to hold high positions in the U.S. Government. For example, Michael Carpenter is a former deputy assistant secretary of defense, and General Ben Hodges served as a commander of the US Army Europe up until 2017.

The delegation met with Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej and Defense Minister Andrej Raŭkoŭ, as well as with President Lukashenka.

The press office of the presidential administration, which normally shares information about meetings of this kind very sparingly, this time covered the events meticulously, offering plentiful quotes by the head of state, which indicates the willingness to employ this communication channel to deliver messages to both Washington and Moscow and demonstrate to the Belarusian audience the improvement of the relationship with the West.

Lukashenka noted that this meeting was important not only for the Belarus-U.S. relationship, but also for the entire European region. *“Restoring normal relations with the United States, maintaining good-neighborly relations with the European Union, expanding its partnership with NATO, Belarus seeks to build an equitable dialogue with everyone.”*¹ The president pointed to the fact that Belarus is located between the two largest centers of power and is therefore extremely vulnerable in the event of a conflict between them: *“Realizing that our security directly depends on the situation around us, we make efforts to stabilize the regional situation, and not to shake it, not to cause tensions. In the current framework, any actions that violate the fragile status quo in the region are fraught with another escalation that will certainly affect our country.”* He noted that Belarus is in a military alliance with Russia, whose relations with the West are not great at the moment. However, at the same time “there are still no bases of other states in the territory of Belarus.” According to him, the Belarusian military are able to effectively

¹ Meeting with a team of U.S. analysts (http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-gruppoj-amerikanskix-analitikov-19813/)

repel any aggression and conflict in the territory of Belarus, if need be. At the same time, he emphasized that if NATO continued to “intimidate” by deploying bases in Poland, or in some other way, Belarus would need more effective weapons, primarily missiles.

Lukashenka also made a somewhat unexpected statement that Belarus was interested in a strong and united Europe and strong transatlantic partnership: *“This is the main pillar of our planet, and God forbid we destroy it. We are confident that the security of the entire continent depends on the solidarity of countries in the region and the preservation of the military and political role of the U.S. in European affairs. And here we are not exaggerating. Without America, unfortunately, we are not going to resolve a single issue, including the Ukrainian conflict.”*

Therefore, the Belarusian president publicly sent several important messages to the West: first, about the importance of Belarus in the military-strategic dimension and in the matter of resolving the Ukrainian conflict; second, about the desire to improve relations with the West and the recognition of the importance of the United States in the stabilization of the region; third, about the undesirability of the deployment of an American military base in Poland, which can cause a backlash from Moscow and provoke further militarization of the region. At the same time, Moscow was confident in the union commitment of Minsk and in the combat capability of the Belarusian army.

Considering the fact that in the Obama administration Carpenter was the main supporter of “defrosting” relations with Belarus, whereas Hodges – one of the opponents of an American military base in Poland – still has some influence in the military community, official Minsk is extremely interested in using this informal channel to make itself heard and further lobby for normalization of relations in the U.S. administration.

Furthermore, the circulation of executives between the state administration and think tanks that is typical of the United States leaves no doubt that these people will eventually return to leading posts in Washington. In this context, Minsk’s diplomatic efforts can have serious dividends.

Therefore, the visits of Assistant Secretary of State Mitchell and the delegation of analysts, which took place almost at the same time, clearly indicate the U.S. increased attention to Belarus. This, in turn, also reflects the changes in Washington’s approach to the region as a whole.

This revisited approach is also reflected in an interview with the head of the U.S. diplomatic mission in Belarus, Jenifer H. Moore to the BelaPAN news agency.² In the interview, Moore *de facto* recognizes Belarus’s “own way”, which offers a striking contrast to the legacy rhetoric of promoting democracy and emphasis on human rights protection. In her interview the American diplomat makes a number of important statements:

- The Belarus-U.S. trade and economic relationship has significant potential. *“We observe an increased number of high-tech companies that come to Belarus to draw qualified specialists with a high level of education, that are interested in supporting the industry.”* American companies and investors *“look where there is stability, transparency and predictability, which are encouraged by an independent court system and respect for the rule of law.”*
- The United States appreciates Belarus for its contribution to regional security and is interested in cooperation in this area: *“As our bilateral relations normalize, we also hope to intensify the security dialogue with Belarus. Furthermore, we highly appreciate Belarus’s commitment to openness and transparency in the field of arms control, as well as international commitments to build confidence and security measures”;*
- There are no plans to substantially change the U.S. military presence in Poland;
- Washington and Minsk have the political will to return their ambassadors, but there are technical obstacles related to the restoration of a full embassy staff;
- The United States is not interested in undermining the relationship between Belarus and Russia. *“For Belarus, close relations with Russia are natural. This is due to geography, culture,*

² Jenifer H. Moore: the U.S. won’t ask Belarus to choose between the East and the West (<https://naviny.by/article/20181129/1543495501-dzhenifer-mur-ssha-ne-budut-prosit-belarus-vybirat-mezhdu-vostokom-i>)

history and human relations. The United States is not interested in undermining these relations. We are not interested in asking Belarus to make a choice between the East and the West”;

- Belarusian officials have become more open. In particular, during the last round of the dialogue on human rights, in addition to representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Belarusian side was represented by officials of the Investigative Committee, the Central Election Commission, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Ministry of Justice and the Parliament. *“Following the meeting, the embassy acquired a lot of contacts of representatives of those ministries and agencies that are ready to continue communication. For us it is a noticeable improvement compared to what we had several years ago, when only a few officials were ready to discuss some issues with us.”*

In addition, Jenifer Moore announced that in the first nine months of 2018, over 18,000 Belarusian citizens and residents applied for a U.S. visa. Over the past few months, the number of Americans who visited Belarus has increased by 50%. The result can be attributed to the increase in the period of visa-free stay in the country.

On November 8-9, Valier Skakun, director of the Humanitarian Affairs Department, visited Washington. According to the official media report, the purpose of the visit was to discuss ways to streamline the attraction of foreign charitable aid to Belarus. The main event in the course of the visit was the thematic discussion with representatives of 11 American charitable organizations, the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAid). On November 9, Skakun met with Brad Freden, Director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, to discuss the involvement of the U.S. in the implementation of a humanitarian program in Belarus.

On December 6, Washington played host to the 12th Parliamentary Intelligence Forum, organized by Congressman Robert Pittenger. The forum was attended by over 300 representatives of parliaments, international organizations, embassies and the expert community. Belarus was represented by Ivan Korž, deputy chairman of the standing committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, and Uladzimir Bazanaŭ, deputy chairman of the standing committee on national security. On the sidelines of the conference, the Belarusian MPs had bilateral meetings with counterparts from the United States, Azerbaijan, Germany, Moldova, and Lithuania.

Two-way trade between Belarus and the United States in January-November 2018 amounted to USD 614.3 million, an increase by 14.6% year-on-year. Belarusian exports amounted to USD 217.5 million (up by 7.4%), and imports reached USD 396.8 million (an increase of 19.1%). The deficit for Belarus amounted to USD 179.3 million.³

Forecast

In the coming months, the relations with Washington will slowly but surely improve. The normalization process will be encouraged, among other things, by the aggravating relationship with Russia. An additional motive is the need to provide a favorable foreign policy context in the run-up to the presidential election in Belarus and the need to prevent the possible support of opposition candidates by the United States.

In 2019, the process will continue to restore full operations of the embassies and return the ambassadors, who were recalled back in 2008 in the wake of a diplomatic scandal between the two countries. However, it is unlikely that this process will be completed in 2019. One should not expect the removal of U.S. sanctions, either. Most likely, this will be one of the conditions for having a more free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections in Belarus. In addition, this decision must be made by the legislative, not by the executive branch of the United States, which is more difficult in terms of procedure.

³ Foreign trade with individual countries in January-November 2018 (http://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/makroekonomika-i-okruzhayushchaya-sreda/vneshnyaya-torgovlya_2/operativnye-dannye_5/eksport-import-s-otdelnyimi-stranami/)

Relationship with Ukraine

+21



Resulting index: +7
Positive points: +21
Negative points: -14



-14

Trends

1. Active two-way project-focused communication and engagement continued.
2. Ukrainian companies did not abandon their attempts to limit the supply of some products from Belarus using political and administrative leverage.
3. The perception of cooperation between the two countries through the prism of the Russian-Ukrainian war continued to create stress points in the Ukrainian media field. For the first time, the information background created by national and foreign media produced a direct impact on both political and economic relations between the two countries.

Events and developments

Politics

Belarus voted three times against resolutions put forward by Ukraine:

- In the main committee of the UN General Assembly on November 16 on the draft resolution “Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine” (A/73/685) and on December 22 at the session against the final adoption of the document;
- On December 18 at a session of the UN General Assembly against resolution A/RES/73/194 “The problem of militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.”

Kyiv interpreted such actions as unfriendly towards Ukraine, and the votes caused criticism by diplomats and politicians. The Ukrainian media covered the response of the head of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry¹ regarding the incident in the Black Sea, but the vote in the UN, which turned out to be negative for Ukraine, set the tone for discussions. The chair of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine referred to this position as “unacceptable” and explicitly accused Belarus of political support for Russia in the UN.² The accusation was picked by many Ukrainian media outlets in connection with some other developments: the negotiations between Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Vladimir Putin, as well as Dmitry Medvedev’s statements about the need for further integration within the framework of the Union State of Belarus and Russia. Ukraine’s central and most influential media outlets dwelt on Belarusian-Russian relations throughout almost the entire month of December, emphasizing the theme that “Russia will absorb Belarus.” There is no sense in

1 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-polytics/2595755-incidenti-podibni-do-kercenskogo-prizvodili-do-svitovih-voen-mzs-bilorusi.html>

2 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-polytics/2603463-gerasenko-pro-golosuvanna-v-oon-nejtralna-bilorus-zavzdi-pidtrimue-rf.html>

giving separate links to materials, since there were more than fifty in the most influential Ukrainian media alone (those were unique materials). Against this backdrop, the statements made by Belarusian officials about the protection of the independence of the country were not perceived positively, but were considered only as a phase of the opposition that official Minsk was doomed and ready to lose. An exception is Lukashenka's several statements, which were quoted by both politicians and journalists:

- On November 6 about the unfeasibility of placing foreign military bases in Belarus³, and
- On December 14 in an interview with Russian regional journalists. Notably, BelTA provided detailed quotes about the need for peaceful settlement in Ukraine⁴, but the Ukrainian media picked different remarks – that it was impossible to “squeeze Belarus into Russia region by region.”⁵

Nevertheless, despite the accumulated negativity, several extremely important events took place in the bilateral relations that may have an impact on further development of cooperation between Belarus and Ukraine, as well as on alleviating the accrued political and media issues. The main developments are as follows:

- Signing of the Memorandum between the Administration of Sea Ports of Ukraine (AMPU) and Beltopenergo on the resumption of navigation on the Dnieper,
- Agreement on scientific and technical cooperation between the Center for Nuclear and Radiation Safety of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Belarus and the State Scientific and Technical Center for Nuclear and Radiation Safety of Ukraine,
- Licensing of the Ukrainian channel UA:TV for broadcasting in Belarus.

An important phase in the development of the relationship between the two countries was marked by the “Belarus-Ukraine: the search for points of contact” expert consultations. The events were alternately held in November in Kyiv⁶ and in December in Minsk⁷. The positive effect of such meetings lies in the fact that media representatives are not invited to attend, so the meetings become an opportunity to discuss sensitive issues and find instruments to neutralize the negativity in the bilateral framework.

One of the news topics that form public opinion about neighboring countries is the opening of a renewed monument to the victims of the Holodomor in Belarus, which passed almost unnoticed in Belarus, but appeared to have special significance for Ukrainians. Moreover, the story of the Holodomor is not so much about a mass famine, as about the rescue of starving Ukrainians by Belarusians.

In December, the media of the two countries published “protocol” interviews with the heads of the diplomatic missions. Belarus Ambassador to Ukraine Ihar Sokal focused on joint economic projects, talking about seven operational joint ventures and the growth of two-way trade.⁸ His Ukrainian counterpart centered on the war with Russia, political positioning of Belarus (in particular, he mentioned vehicles with the license plates of the DPR and LPR), as well as the opportunity for Belarusians to safely visit Ukraine.⁹ If we evaluate the statements in terms of “positive/negative” for the bilateral framework, the interview with the Belarusian

3 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/2573892-rozmovi-pro-vijskovu-bazu-rosii-u-bilorusi-ne-bils-ak-balacki-lukasenko.html>

4 <https://www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-o-reshenii-konflikta-v-ukraine-poka-ne-pozdno-nado-bashku-v-ruki-vzjat-i-chto-to-sdelat-329386-2018/>

5 <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/2601110-podilili-bilorus-na-oblasti-ta-zaphati-v-rosiu-ne-vijde-lukasenko.html>

6 <https://www.prostir.ua/?news=ekspertnyj-forum-ukrajina-bilorus-poshuk-tochok-dotyku>

7 <http://www.niss.gov.ua/articles/3229/>

8 <https://interfax.com.ua/news/press-release/469148.html>

9 https://www.sn-plus.com/ru/page/mainevents/9080/?fbclid=IwAR31SssvL2DycqMt0wJgSypqYz0yB-mhYpg_RyFC-zXLnAJfhExNB-iE2Z88

ambassador was more likely with a “+” sign, whereas that of his Ukrainian counterpart was apparently with a “-” sign with respect to the Belarusian authorities and with a “+” sign with respect to regular citizens. The latter is not surprising in the light of official statistics of the State Border Service of Ukraine – Belarusians were the leaders of inbound tourism in Ukraine.¹⁰

On the eve of the New Year holidays, a statement about the need for a speedy search for options to resolve the conflict in Donbas was made by Foreign Minister of Belarus Uladzimir Makiej.¹¹ Amid the weakening media wave about a possible merger of Belarus and Russia, the statement did not come unnoticed in Kyiv.

According to a SOCIS sociological survey, Ukrainians’ attitude is most positive to Belarus and Germany. Both countries scored equal proportions of 84.1%.¹²

Economy

In the economic sector, the end of the year is traditionally marked by the completion of the execution of contracts and creation of a framework for cooperation in 2019. Analysts noted a sharp decline in the supply of Belarusian oil products to Ukraine in November 2018. Combined volumes dropped by 40% from October. At the same time, the share of deliveries from Lithuania increased. Against this backdrop, Ukrnafta, controlled by the Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskyi, once again called on the government to introduce anti-dumping duties on oil products imported from Belarus.¹³

Unsuccessful attempts of Belarusian companies to acquire Ukrainian assets continued. Neftebitumnyi Zavod, owned by the Belarusian oil trader Interservice, applied for the purchase of shares in Ukraine’s PJSC Centrenergy. However, two weeks after the deadline for the submission of documents, people’s deputy of Ukraine Serhiy Leshchenko said that the Belarusian company did not have the “necessary funds” to complete the transaction and asked the head of government to check Interservice’s corruption ties with the leaders of the People’s Front party.¹⁴ As a result, Vitalii Trubarov, head of the State Property Fund of Ukraine, announced the cancellation of the tender for the sale of shares of the electricity generator, since both potential buyers were withdrawn from the tender.¹⁵

Against the negative media backdrop for Belarus, the months of November and December became a period when a number of Ukrainian companies unsuccessfully tried to limit imports of Belarusian products. To this end, administrative leverage was actively used, among other instruments. For example:

- The joint venture making trolleybuses BKM Ukraine was removed from the tender for the supply of 80 vehicles to Kyiv and is currently trying to appeal against this decision;
- Since December 7, Ukrainian customs officers have denied entry of Belarusian-made nitrogen and compound fertilizers, demanding that customs duties should be paid. During the first few days they did not provide any information about the reasons for the delay, and only a week after the decision came into effect they issued a report about suspicions that

10 <https://www.facebook.com/DPSUkraine/posts/1181891928629220>

11 <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/makej-nuzhno-nezamedlitelno-zanjatsja-razresheniem-konflikta-v-ukraine-331166-2018/>

12 <https://www.unn.com.ua/uk/news/1770638-sotsiologi-nazvali-krayini-do-yakikh-ukrayintsi-stavlyatsya-naybilsh-priyazno>

13 https://www.ukrtatnafta.com/news/12112018_%D0%93%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%83%20%D0%92.%D0%91._%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BA%D1%86_.pdf

14 <https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/political/552390.html>

15 <https://economy.apostrophe.ua/article/jenergetika/2018-12-17/bez-deneg-pochemu-v-ukraine-sorvalas-bolsh-aya-privatizatsiya/22727>

the products supplied from the territory of Belarus were of Russian origin.¹⁶ Belneftekhim concern said it hoped that the production of additional documents would help resolve the issue¹⁷;

- The Interdepartmental Commission for International Trade extended the antidumping investigations with respect to Belarusian salt and with respect to Belarusian filament lamps (for three months).

At the same time, despite administrative obstacles, manufacturers of automotive and passenger vehicles can be pleased with their performance in November and December:

- BelAZ entered into new contracts for the supply of dump trucks to PJSC ArcelorMittal Kryviy Rih and YuGOK;
- MAZ sold 23 buses to Mykolaiv and signed a contract worth 189 million hryvnia for the supply of buses to Zaporizhia;
- A joint venture in Yuzhmash (Dnipro) supplied a batch of new trolleybuses with autonomous running to the city of Kropyvnytskyi, there have been reports about the planned deliveries to Zaporizhia and Kramatorsk;
- Bogdan Corporation, which assembles MAZ army trucks, delivered 200 vehicles to the Ukrainian army in 2018;
- Ukrainian Armor company delivered to the troops a new batch of 14 Varta armored vehicles ahead of schedule. The vehicles were produced with the help of Belarusian engineers and assembled on the MAZ chassis.

Belarusian manufacturers have a solid footing in the Ukrainian market and good prospects, given that 2019 could see a new record in passenger transport purchases: under the program “Municipal Public Transport” alone, credited by the European Investment Bank and the EBRD, 153 new trolleybuses, 56 trams and 227 buses are expected to be procured. However, this means that competition will also enhance, including through the use of administrative resources.

Prospects of assembling military equipment are more than positive, given the expansion of the defense order in the budget and good (compared with competitors) feedback from security agencies (Security Service of Ukraine, Armed Forces, National Guard, and State Border Guard Service).

Belarusian road builders have redoubled efforts to enter the Ukrainian market. According to Ambassador of Belarus to Ukraine Ihar Kizim, by the end of 2018, the portfolio of orders for the repair and reconstruction of highways placed with Belarusian companies had reached USD 50 million.

Forecast

As was noted in the previous issues of the Barometer, the media may become the main source of threats to the cooperation between the two countries. The Belarusian side, in particular the Belarusian Embassy in Ukraine, almost completely ignores this problem. The two electoral campaigns in Ukraine this year will raise the degree of politicization of society and narrow the scope of response of the main political actors. They will no longer be able to ignore the information noise and, quite likely, will try to act in accordance with the media-defined framework of perception of the positive and the negative. This means that not only prospective, but also ongoing projects can be jeopardized. A simple example: during the entire period when Belarusian fertilizers were blocked on the border, Belarusian diplomats never made a single statement in the Ukrainian press.

¹⁶ <https://agrorereview.com/news/stalo-vidomo-prychynu-zatrymky-dobryv-na-kordoni-z-bilorussyu>

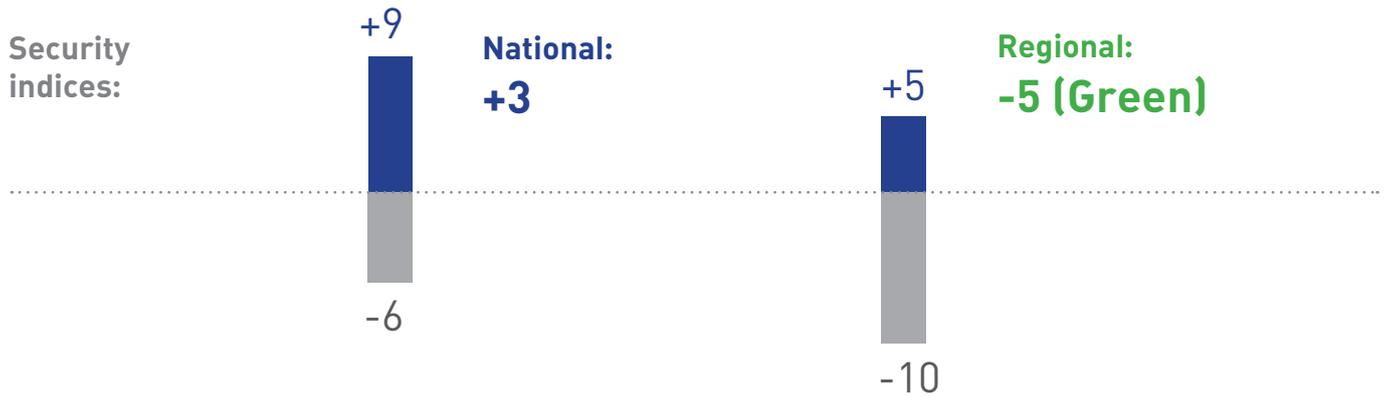
¹⁷ <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belneftehim-rasschityvaet-na-vozobnovlenie-postavok-udobrenij-v-ukrainu-posle-proverki-329436-2018/>

The upcoming elections require the soonest possible resolution of the political issues accumulated over previous periods. It is extremely important for Belarus to resolve the spy scandal and, possibly, to hold one or two events that could attract the attention of the press in a positive way.

For Belarus the year 2019 will rather become a year to keep its positions in cooperation with Ukraine. Until the end of the electoral campaigns in Ukraine, there simply will not be a subject capable of important and responsible decision-making. This situation will last at least until August or September, when the configuration of forces in the future composition of the parliament has become clear. Under these conditions, it is extremely important to begin active work in the information field. Otherwise, political and economic losses will be unavoidable.



Security Barometer: status of national and regional security



Trends

1. The Belarusian army continues minimum rearmament with supplies of exclusively domestically manufactured products. Only air defense systems are exported on a regular basis. Arms and equipment supplies from Russia are delayed in many respects for economic reasons.
2. The army continues to be optimized in accordance with the actual military needs and financial possibilities. The armed forces leadership is paying much attention to the morale and psychological state of military personnel, their motivation and preparedness for new forms of warfare, including in cyberspace. A new unit – an IT company – was formed to this end.
3. The regional situation remained tense, yet stable. All countries of the region are acquiring new weapons, and many of them are working on the deployment of new units, including foreign ones. All this undermines regional cooperation, but does not pose an immediate threat to Belarus’s security or the risk of a military conflict.

1. National security

Overall state of the army

On November 20, after the General Staff summed up the results of the academic year, the Defense Ministry released a statement on the upcoming “full reconsideration” of Belarus’s defense plan for the next five years. According to official reports, a phased build-up of the combat component of the military commands was carried out in the 2017/2018 academic year in line with the operational strength optimization policy. The immediate reaction forces were reinforced, which increased the emergency response capacity of the armed forces.

In other words, the army is being restructured and, judging by the available information on procured weapons, exercises and official statements, the emphasis is put on the special operations forces and missile units, as well as maintaining the air defense units, primarily their ground-based elements, at the proper level. Other types of the land forces may be subject to reductions. The air force is being reduced since Belarus does not need that much of it and cannot afford it actually, and Russia is reluctant to provide its assistance at this point. As a result, Belarus mainly relies on Yak-130 jets, Mi-8 helicopters and various UAVs, which will allow removing Su-25 fighters from the armory without jeopardizing the air force component of the Joint Air Defense System.

Two events below were part of these trends. On December 4, the 1146th surface to air-missile regiment, which was formed a year ago and equipped with Tor-M2, has taken up duty to protect the Belarusian nuclear power plant.

On December 15, Defense Minister Andrej Raŭkoŭ spoke about the plan to revise the terms for granting draft deferment. According to the minister, as a result of the mass deferments, *“nearly 80% of young people do not obtain military occupational specialties ... This affects security and the defense capacity of the country.”* He also spoke about measures to increase motivation of conscripts through doubling money allowances for compulsory-duty servicemen from January 1 (from BYN 29.25 to BYN 2.79 per month), better accommodation and less demanding schedule if it is not related to military training.

The November-December trial in the case of massive corruption during the procurement of Russian diesel fuel for the Belarusian Ministry of Defense through Lithuanian UAB Aksamedia in 2012-2016 was a step towards greater transparency of the army. The damage was said to amount to millions of U.S. dollars.

Equipment of the national army

Armament. On December 7, military unit 97061 received the newest R-934UM2 automated USW jamming stations. In December, the 85th, 86th and 127th signal brigades, 557th engineer brigade and some other units were supplied with new and upgraded radio relay stations, tropospheric communication stations, integrated control operating rooms, and R-414MBRP Sosna-2 radio relay station prototype designed in 2018. Chief of General Staff for Combat Management Major General Ihar Karol says that the Army Signal Corps is fully equipped with Belarusian-made systems. Also, territorial defense units are being supplied with communications equipment of Belarusian manufacture financed from regional budgets.

Supplies from Russia. In November, ten T-72B3 tanks were delivered to one of the battalions of the 120th infantry brigade. The army also received one more (the fifth since 2011) Russian-made Tor-M2 air defense system under the contract of October 2017. Four vehicles were supplied to the 1146th surface to air-missile regiment. Not a single source specifies the modification of this system. Probably, Russia provided an export modification again.

On December 14, President Lukashenka said that Russia was not providing Belarus with the necessary hardware and materiel. *“NATO has expanded. I say, give me a dozen jets. They*

say it's too expensive. I ask, "Do you mean that I am to buy them for this kind of money? I don't have that much. I have to pay for gas. I need to pay back loans. Do you really want me to buy a gun to protect you? They are piled at your warehouse, rotting." Lukashenka also reminded that the agreement on the lease of two military facilities in Belarus, which Minsk provided free of charge, will expire soon.

Defense industry. State Military-Industrial Committee Chairman Raman Haloŭčanka told Belarus-1 TV channel that Belarus was setting up production of small arms. Prototypes assembled solely from domestic components are already available. So is ammunition of local manufacture.

Following the meeting with the president held on November 12, Haloŭčanka said that the head of state instructed the Committee to design missile weapons, which would serve as a "deterrent factor." Another order was *"to accelerate the development of attack UAVs, which could significantly strengthen air groupings, or even replace manned aircraft."* Back in 2009, the General Staff formed a department for the development and operation of unmanned aircraft systems. In recent years, Belarus's defense industry has provided the army with reconnaissance and attack fixed wing and rotor drones.

The Belarusian army is actively exploring UAV application possibilities. A round table on countering hostile UAVs chaired by Air Force and Air Defense Commander Major General Ihar Holub was held in November. The officers looked into the drone attack on the Russian airbase in Syria and practiced airfield protection with the use of camouflage sprays. In December, Colonel Ihar Daniłčyk, head of the Electronic Warfare Directorate at the General Staff, announced tests of electronic warfare means that can be used against UAVs scheduled for 2018.

Army training

On November 1-2, Defense Minister Raŭkoŭ supervised an operational training for commanders of the armed forces organized on a site near the Nieman River, Hrodna Region. The military studied tactical river crossing techniques. The exercise involved a reinforced mechanized battalion assisted by air force and air defense units.

A training session for Signal Corps commanders was held in mid-November at the base of the 74th detached signal regiment in Hrodna under the supervision of General Staff Signal Commander Colonel Alieh Miščanka. A delegation of the Main Directorate of Communications of the General Staff of Russia took part in the event.

An operational-tactical seminar for special operations forces commanders was held on November 20-22, 2018 at the Losvido training range of the 103rd airborne brigade.

In late December, the Joint Council of the transport troops of Belarus and the railway troops of Russia held a session at the base of the 30th railway brigade in Sluck.

International cooperation

CSTO. President Lukashenka and Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej took part in a session of the CSTO Collective Security Council on November 8 in Astana. Media representatives were not admitted during the main part of the session.

On November 21, Secretary of State of the Security Council Stanislau Zas participated in the sixth meeting of the CIS secretaries of Security Councils in Moscow. The parties discussed international and regional security matters.

In November and December, Belarus made efforts to ensure the election of its representative – Secretary of State of the Security Council Stanislau Zas – as CSTO secretary general. Armenia wanted its candidate for the office. Kazakhstan supported Belarus, and the Kremlin did not basically object to Zas's appointment.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization held the Indestructible Brotherhood-2018 exercise from October 30 to November 2 near Yekaterinburg, Russia. Belarusian units were involved. According to the scenario, CSTO forces were engaged in a peacekeeping operation outside the CSTO member states upon a resolution of the UN Security Council. The exercise was the final stage of the Combat Brotherhood strategic exercise.

Union State. On November 13, the Council of Ministers of Belarus approved the military doctrine of the Union State. Russian President Vladimir Putin endorsed it on December 19. Although the doctrine was supposed to be adopted by the end of 2018, apparently, President Lukashenka did not sign it before 2019. The doctrine is yet to be finally approved by the Supreme State Council of the Union State. It will replace the first doctrine of 2001. The draft has not been published yet. The new doctrine is symbolic rather than political. Much attention is paid to nationalist and religious extremism, missile defense arrangements, the plan to place weapons in space, involvement of private military companies in combat operations, and organized crime and illegal migration within the Union State, which facilitate illicit arms and drugs trafficking. The doctrine includes two new sections, one of which concerns the defense industry and military-technical cooperation.

The latter is important since Russia is seeking to substitute Belarusian components in its defense industry. Minsk seems to have a big problem: State Military-Industrial Committee chief Haloŭčanka even had to comment on this trend in November. *“Russia independently works on a vehicle at KamAZ, which can compete with vehicles of the Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant. ... We will continue competing with the Russian machinery. Probably, certain joint projects will follow. We don’t rule out a less optimistic scenario in the Russian market.”*

Alternative areas of cooperation. Defense Minister Raŭkoŭ made an official visit to Vietnam on November 14-16. On November 17-20, Minsk hosted the seventeenth session of the Belarusian-Vietnamese commission for military-technical cooperation attended by Deputy Minister of Defense of Vietnam Be Xuan Truong.

On November 22-24, a delegation of the British Ministry of Defense headed by Director of International Security Policy in the UK Ministry of Defense Nicholas Gurr visited Belarus.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of the armed forces of Pakistan General Zubair Mahmood Hayat made an official visit to Belarus on December 16-19. He met with the president and the minister of foreign affairs of Belarus.

On December 18, representatives of the Defense Ministries of Belarus and Serbia met to discuss bilateral military cooperation.

2. Regional Security

Deployment of new types of weapons around Belarus

Russia announced massive supplies of upgraded T-72B3M tanks to the army. It was also stated that since 2012, the number of land-, sea- and air-based carriers increased 12-fold, and the number of high-precision cruise missiles went up 30-fold. Over the same period, the Russian army received over 1,800 UAVs of various types. Forty new military units were formed to apply the drones.

The Lithuanian army received the first two upgraded PzH2000 self-propelled 155-mm howitzers (firing range of 40 km) purchased from Germany in September 2015. Lithuania will get 18 howitzers in total. Until now, the maximum caliber of Lithuania’s artillery was 105 mm with a firing range of around 11 km.

Latvia plans to procure Kongsberg NASAMS medium-range air defense systems. Lithuania has already ordered them as well.

Regional force buildup

At a meeting with American analysts on November 6, President Lukashenka called the speculations about the placement of a Russian military base in Belarus a “far-fetched problem.” *“We are in a military-political alliance with Russia. It does not matter whether there will be a military base here, or not. We do not place this base here not because we want to show you or someone else that we are a sovereign and independent state. We do not place it, because it is not needed here,”* he said.

On November 16, Russian Ambassador to Belarus Mikhail Babich said that *“since 2015, no one has proposed to deploy a Russian military base in Belarus, either explicitly or implicitly.”* Moreover, even Poland’s plan to deploy an American base does not change anything in this regard. *“We do not separate ourselves from Belarus in terms of defense,”* Babich stressed.

In December, President Lukashenka once again called the speculations about the Russian air base in Belarus an ill-conceived PR stunt. According to the Belarusian leader, “no one needs that base”, since Russian jets can arrive in three or four minutes anyway. According to Lukashenka, he offered the Russians Belarusian airbases. *“Land 10, 20 or 30 planes on any airfield whenever you want”*, but this must be a joint Belarusian-Russian operation, he said.

It was reported in November and December that the United States and Poland achieved progress in the talks on the U.S. permanent military presence in Poland. Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said that it was “a done deal” and the parties were yet to determine the forms of this presence. They abandoned the initial plan to set up a large base, and it is only about the U.S. military at a number of Polish military facilities now.

Regional conflicts

Ukraine. There was no considerable military action on land in the east of Ukraine. There was some at sea, though. On November 25, warships of Ukraine and Russia came into a clash in the Sea of Azov. Russian border guards damaged and captured Ukrainian ships and blocked the Kerch Strait. In response, on November 28, the Ukrainian leadership imposed martial law for 30 days in ten regions of the country, including the Chernihiv region, which borders on Belarus.

In early December, Ukrainian officials, particularly President Petro Poroshenko and head of the Security Service of Ukraine Vasyl Hrytsak said that there was a possibility of Russian invasion. Referring to satellite images, Ukraine’s leadership claimed that about 80,000 Russian troops and a significant amount of war materiel were concentrated on the eastern border of Ukraine and in Crimea. However, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg only expressed his concern regarding the growing tension, and a U.S. Department of Defense official told The New York Times that the U.S. military saw no large concentration of Russian forces on the Ukrainian border after the incident in the Sea of Azov.

On December 14, President Lukashenka said that he would prefer NATO’s presence in Ukraine, rather than continued radicalization there. He also reminded that he proposed to send Belarusian servicemen to control the Russian-Ukrainian border in Donbas, but Ukraine rejected his proposal.

Baltic States. In November, the Latvian security police detained three individuals on suspicion of *“actions that were supposedly aimed at supporting actions of a foreign state and creating a threat to national security of the Republic of Latvia.”*

It was reported on December 19 that several persons suspected of spying for Russia had been arrested in Lithuania since October, former diplomat, member of parliament, Vice Mayor of Vilnius Algirdas Paleckis among them. The exact number of the arrested persons is unknown. Security agencies even refuse to confirm or deny the arrests. The son of former Prime Minister Kazimira Prunskienė can be among those arrested.

Regional exercises

From October 25 to November 23, NATO held the Trident Juncture command and staff exercise in Norway, involving 45,000 troops. According to the official scenario, the military practiced defense operation in the Baltics and Northern Europe, primarily in Norway. It was the largest NATO exercise since 2002.

On November 4-18, 3,500 servicemen of 14 countries took part in the Iron Wolf exercise in Lithuania. The purpose was to rehearse redeployment of significant forces and around 1,000 units of equipment to different parts of Lithuania. The program also included combined operations and combat firing.

Military forces and headquarters of ten NATO member states took part in the regular Anaconda exercise from November 7 to December 6. It involved 12,500 troops in Northern Poland and 5,000 in side events in the Baltics. The exercise covered the Baltic Sea and international airspace. Anaconda exercises have been held every two years since 2006. This year, its scale was much smaller than before. The 2016 exercise was the largest one (31,000 personnel from 24 countries). According to the scenario, the military protected Poland's eastern border from an attack of regular troops. It also included elements of a hybrid war.

Belarus sent its observers to Anaconda-2018 and Trident Juncture-2018.

Forecast

1. Belarus will continue the gradual optimization of the army and the entire national security architecture by building a more mobile and compact army with a focus on national security, staying away from major conflicts, primarily between Russia and NATO. These changes make Belarus less dependent on unreliable and unstable Russian support, and enable the republic to avoid reciprocal concessions in other areas of cooperation.
2. Belarus and Russia will still be allies, but their relationship in the defense sector will be complex as never before due to Minsk's objective unwillingness and inability to bear the snowballing burden of allied relations with the Kremlin, and Moscow's reluctance to provide adequate assistance to make it easier.
3. Minsk will continue pursuing moderate security policy towards NATO and Ukraine regardless of what the Kremlin would demand, because the tough policy of the Russian leadership deprives Belarus of the freedom of maneuver, which is critical in this geopolitical situation. For example Russia wants Belarus to sever certain ties with the neighboring countries, but does not offer anything tangible in exchange.

The situation in the region will depend on the major players – the U.S., Russia and the EU. The smoldering conflict in the east of Ukraine will continue to come closer to the Transnistrian scenario. The separation lines will be more and more distinct, communications will be cut off, and mutual hostility will grow stronger. At the same time, regional economic and strategic interests associated with the redirection of transit flows would justify a serious conflict outbreak even less now, and the very modest forces and weapons available in the region make it impossible for now. The recent structural constraints cannot be quickly overcome, and breakthroughs, for example in the Suwalki Corridor, are impossible in the foreseeable future since there are no even minimum conditions in Belarus for that.

Appendix 1

Catalogue of events underlying the relations development indices

Relationship with Russia

Date	Event	Point
6 November	Lukashenka's and Babich's statements on the military base	+2
16 November	Telephone conversation between Putin and Lukashenka	+1
21 November	Lavrov's visit, Makiej's statements on support for Russia internationally	+2
24 November	Ban on 4 Belarusian meat-processing enterprises	-2
27 November	Meeting of the EEU Heads of Government	+3
1 December	Lukashenka's interview to Russia 24	+1
6 December	Meeting of the EEU Heads of State in St. Petersburg	+3
13 December	Meeting of the Governments of the Union State	+3
17 December	UN vote on Kerch	+2
25 December	Lukashenka meets with Putin	+3
26 December	Lukashenka-headed meeting with negative remarks about Russia regarding unfair terms of trade	-2
Total		+16

Relationship with the EU

Date	Event	Point
1 November	Makiej's meeting with Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz.	+1
1 November	Makiej's meeting with Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák.	+1
5 November	Kraučanka's meeting with the Deputy Director-General of the European Commission for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Katariná Mathernová.	+1
5 November	Makiej's meeting with State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary Csaba Balogh.	+1
6 November	9th meeting of the Belarusian-Hungarian Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation at the level of deputy foreign ministers; business forum.	+1
11 November	Miasnikovič's visit to France	+1
14 November	An agreement is signed to launch a project on the development of entrepreneurship in Belarusian regions, funded by the EU and UNDP.	+2
14 November	Makiej's meeting with Austrian Ambassador designate to Belarus Aloisia Wörgetter.	+1
16 November	Lukashenka's meeting with former president of Latvia Guntis Ulmanis.	+1
20 November	Kraučanka's visit to Bulgaria; 8th meeting of the Belarusian-Bulgarian Intergovernmental Commission at the level of deputy ministers of foreign affairs and economy; business forum.	+1
20-23 November	First ever official visit to Germany of the working parliamentary group of Belarus on cooperation with the German parliament.	+1
20 November	Signing of the first agreements between Belarus and the European Investment Bank; Rumas's meeting with EIB Vice-President Alexander Stubb.	+2
21 November	Lukashenka's meeting with EIB Vice-President Alexander Stubb.	+1
23 November	Kraučanka's meeting with Director for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany Michael Siebert.	+1
23 November	Kraučanka's meeting with Director at the Eastern Division, Plenipotentiary of the Minister for the Eastern Partnership in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Jan Hofmök.	+1
29 November	Belarusian-Latvian business forum in Viciebsk, four agreements on interregional cooperation signed.	+1
5-7 December	Kraučanka's visit to Austria.	+1
7 December	13th meeting of the Belarusian-Polish Intergovernmental Coordination Commission on Cross-Border Cooperation at the level of deputy foreign ministers of Belarus and the Ministry of Interior and Administration of Poland.	+1
11 December	Lukashenka's meeting with German Ambassador Peter Dettmar.	+1
12 December	Deputy Chairman of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly Pirštuk meets with head of the Czech-Belarusian inter-parliamentary friendship group Daniel Pawlas.	+1
12-13 December	6th meeting of the Belarus-EU Coordination Group.	+1

MINSK BAROMETER: Monitoring of foreign policy and regional security

№ 6 (November and December 2018)

Date	Event	Point
13 December	Inauguration ceremony of the Honorary Vice-Consulate of Belarus in France's Biarritz, which will work in the department of Pyrenees-Atlantiques of New Aquitaine.	+1
19 December	16th meeting of the Belarusian-German working group on trade and investment with the participation of Šestakoŭ.	+1
23 December	Belarus's Ambassador to the EU Michniewiĉ confirmed the proposal previously made by Minsk to host an Eastern Partnership Summit.	+1
November-December	A number of negative statements by the Belarusian leadership regarding the development of cooperation with the EU (mainly on trade cooperation and the emergence of new difficulties in the negotiation process on partnership priorities and visa facilitation).	-2
November-December	Overall positive materials in official media and statements of the country's leadership on the EU	+1
Total		+25

Relationship with China

Date	Event	Point
1 November	11th meeting of the Working Group on the China-Belarus Industrial Park, chaired by Minister of Economy of Belarus Zmicier Kruty and Assistant Minister of Commerce of China Fu Ziyang in Beijing	+1
2 November	3rd meeting of the Belarusian-Chinese intergovernmental cooperation committee chaired by Mikalaj Snapkoŭ and member of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee Guo Shengkun	+1
5 November	Meeting of the Minister of Culture of Belarus Jury Bondar and Minister of Culture and Tourism of China Luo Shugang	+2
6-10 November	Operation of the Belarusian pavilion at the China International Import Expo, Shanghai, with the participation of Kruty, Snapkoŭ, Uciupin, Bondar, Zajac	+1
7 November	Belarusian-Chinese business forum with the participation of Rudy, Snapkoŭ, representatives of the Ministry of Commerce of China	+1
8 November	Solemn ceremony of the meeting of the train with Belarusian dairy products in Chongqing	+1
30 November	International scientific-practical conference celebrating the 40th anniversary of the policy of reform and opening up of China with the participation of Rudy and Ambassador Cui Qiming	+1
22-23 December	The closing ceremony of the Year of Tourism (Minsk)	+1
28 December	Interview of the Ambassador of China Cui Qiming to BelTA "Friendship of Belarus and China has become an all-weather phenomenon"	+1
Total		+10

Relationship with the U.S.

Date	Event	Point
4-6 November	Visit of American analysts to Minsk, their meeting with Lukashenka, Makiej and Raŭkoŭ	+1
6 November	Positive statements by Lukashenka regarding the Belarusian-U.S. relations during a meeting with American analysts	+1
8-9 November	Valier Skakun, director of Humanitarian Affairs Department, visits Washington	+1
29 November	Interview with U.S. Charge d'Affaires Jenifer Moore with positive statements about Belarus and the outlook for relations with the U.S.	+1
November-December	Increase in the number of American tourists in Belarus due to an extension in the period of visa-free stay	+1
6 December	Participation of Belarusian parliamentarians in the 12th Parliamentary Intelligence Forum	+1
November-December	A number of negative references to the U.S. in the press in connection with the possible establishment of an American military base in Poland	-1
Total		+5

Relationship with Ukraine

Date	Event	Point
16 November	Belarus's voting in the 3rd Committee of the UN General Assembly	-1
17 December	Belarus's voting on the Azov Declaration in the UN General Assembly	-1
22 December	Belarus's voting against the UN GA's resolution on human rights in Crimea	-1
18 November	Statement by Iryna Herashchenko about Belarus supporting Russia in the UN	-1
6 December	Makiej's statement on the incident in the Kerch Strait	+1
14 December	A new proposal to transfer the work of the Trilateral Contact Group on Donbas from Minsk to Astana	-1
2-30 December	Media wave in Ukraine about a possible absorption of Belarus by Russia	-1
6 November	Lukashenka's statement about the unfeasibility of deploying military bases in Belarus	+1
14 December	Lukashenka's statements on Ukraine as well as the impossibility of "squeezing Belarus region by region into the Russian Federation"	+2
18 December	Memorandum on the restoration of navigation on the Dnieper	+1
5 December	Treaty between Gosatomnadzor of Belarus and the State Nuclear Safety Center of Ukraine	+1
18 December	Ukrainian TV channel obtains a broadcasting license in Belarus	+1
November-December	Expert meetings on bilateral relations	+1
2 November	Meeting of the Belarusian-Ukrainian Commission for the Coordination of Protection and Sustainable Use of Transboundary Conservation Areas	+1
13 November	Meeting of the demarcation commission	+1
24 November	Agreement on cooperation in education in the forestry sector	+1
22 November	Humanitarian cooperation between BelAZ and YuGOK	+1
29 November	Creation of a working group on the cooperation of metrology offices	+1
13 December	Sokal's interview to Interfax-Ukraine	+1
27 December	Kizim's interview to the newspaper Svobodnye Novosti	-1
30 November	Belarusian Red Cross Society issues certificates to migrants from Donbass	+1
27 December	Kizim's interview to the newspaper Svobodnye Novosti	-1
1 December	Belarusian Oil Company cuts supply of petroleum products to Ukraine by 40% in November 2018	-1
11 December	Unsuccessful attempt to buy shares of PJSC Centrenergo by a Belarusian company	-1
12 November	Ukrnafta demands imposing anti-dumping duties on Belarusian oil products	-1
7 November	Blocking of Belarusian fertilizers on the Ukrainian border	-1
2 November	Anti-dumping investigation into salt	-1
20 December	Anti-dumping investigation into filament lamps	-1

Date	Event	Point
22 November	Contract between BelAZ and ArcelorMittal Kryviy Rih	+1
22 November	Contract between BelAZ and YuGOK	+1
13 December	Contract between MAZ and Zaporizhia	+1
22 November	Contract between MAZ and Mykolaiv	+1
30 December	Delivery of 200 MAZ-Bogdan vehicles to the Ukrainian army	+1
18 December	Delivery of 14 Varta armored vehicles to the Ukrainian army	+1
Total		+7

Appendix 2

Catalogue of events underlying the security indices

Date	Event	National security	Regional tension
November-December	Changed terms of compulsory military service in the Belarusian army, including raised service pays, new draft determent rules, etc.	-1	-1
25 October-23 November	Trident Juncture exercise of NATO in Norway	-1	-1
30 October-2 November	Unbreakable Brotherhood exercise of the CSTO near Yekaterinburg	+1	0
4-18 November	Iron Wolf exercise in Lithuania	0	-1
6 November	Lukashenka's statement on the unfeasibility of the Russian military base	+1	0
6 November	Statement by the Russian army command on the significant increase in the number of missiles and UAVs	0	0
7 November-6 December	Anaconda exercise in Poland and the Baltics	0	0
November-December	Observation of the Anaconda and Trident Juncture exercises by representatives of the Belarusian armed forces	0	-1
12 November	Lukashenka's instructions to the State Military-Industrial Committee regarding rocket and missile engineering and accelerated development of UAVs	+1	0
13 November	Approval of the new military doctrine by the Union State Council of Ministers	+1	0
16 November	Statement by the Russian Ambassador to Belarus Babich regarding the inexpediency of the Russian military base	+2	+2
November	Supplies of T-72B3M and Top-M2 to the Belarusian army	0	0
20 November	Statement by Polish Defense Minister Blaszczak on the U.S. base in Poland	+1	+1
22-24 November	Visit of a UK military delegation to Belarus	+1	0
25 November	Clash of Ukrainian and Russian ships in the Sea of Azov	+1	0
28 November	Martial law in Ukraine	0	-1
Early December	Statement by the Ukrainian leadership on the probable Russian invasion	-1	-1
December	Supplies of communication and radioelectronic warfare systems to the Belarusian army	-1	-1
4 December	Putting of the 1146th surface to air-missile regiment on combat duty	+1	0

MINSK BAROMETER: Monitoring of foreign policy and regional security

№ 6 (November and December 2018)

Date	Event	National security	Regional tension
Mid-December	Supply of PzH2000 self-propelled howitzers to the Lithuanian army	0	-1
19 December	Information about the secret arrests in Lithuania on suspicion of espionage	+1	0
Total		+3	-5 (Green)

Appendix 3

Colour scale of regional security tensions

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

Authors

Sergey Bogdan, political expert, analyst at the Ostrogorski Centre. He received his doctoral degree from Freie Universität Berlin. Research interests: Belarus's external policy and military security.

Valeria Kostyugova, political commentator and consultant. She serves as head of Agency of Policy Expertise (Vilnius, Lithuania), editor of the expert community website Nashe Mnenie (Our Opinion). Research interests: Belarus-Russia relationship, Belarusian political parties and political organizations.

Olga Kulai, analyst at the Center for Strategic and Foreign Policy Studies (Minsk, Belarus), holds a master's degree in Oriental Studies from the School of International Relations at Belarusian State University. She has work experience at some Chinese companies in Minsk, as well as at the Republican Confucius Institute of Sinology at Belarusian State University. Research interests: China's foreign policy and external investments.

Dzianis Melyantsou, political analyst, expert in international relations, coordinator of Foreign Policy of Belarus programme, Minsk Dialogue expert initiative. He specializes in Belarus's foreign policy, as well as national and international security.

Yauheni Preiherman, political analyst, expert in international relations, head of the Minsk Dialogue expert initiative. Main research interests: foreign policy of small nations, international relations in Eastern Europe, Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security.

Igor Tyshkevich, expert of the International and Internal Policy program at the Ukrainian Institute for the Future.