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# БЕЛАРУСЬ: ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЕ САМООПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ И ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ПЕРСПЕКТИВНОЙ СТРАТЕГИИ В ОТНОШЕНИИ РОССИИ

## Аннотация

В исследовании анализируется, как строились отношения России и Беларуси с момента обретения независимости белорусским государством в 1991 году. Различные подходы к изучению трансформаций, произошедших и происходящих на постсоветском пространстве, анализируют сложное и противоречивое соотношение центробежных и центростремительных процессов. Используемая авторами методология, основанная на сочетании сравнительного и факторного анализа, позволяет проанализировать «особый случай» отношений России и Беларуси, которые, преодолевая имеющиеся между ними противоречия и расхождения в понимании смысла и целей интеграционного процесса, постепенно пришли к согласованию позиций по ключевым вопросам двусторонних отношений. Сочетание количественного и качественного анализа позволяет авторам оценить не только текущее состояние, но и ближайшую перспективу российско-белорусских отношений с учетом протекающих на наших глазах изменений в мировой политике. В результате проведенного исследования выявляется сложная динамика и диалектика взаимоотношений двух тесно связан-

ных друг с другом государств, которыми являются Россия и Беларусь. Анализ внешнеполитической (и прежде всего дипломатической) активности Беларуси и ее приоритетов позволяет авторам уточнить и углубить их итоговые заключения по рассматриваемой ими теме. В итоге авторы приходят к заключению о том, что наиболее перспективным вариантом внешнеполитической стратегии для России и Беларуси является развитие союзнических отношений в контексте участия обеих стран в построении Большой Евразии как качественно нового пространства многосторонней кооперации.

**Ключевые слова:** Россия, Беларусь, глобальная реальность, внешнеполитическая стратегия, внешнеполитическая идентичность, союзнические отношения, качественные эволюционные трансформации, стратегическое партнерство, многосторонняя кооперация, проект модернизации.

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## POLITICAL SCIENCE

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# BELARUS: FOREIGN POLICY SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE FORMATION OF A LONGTERM STRATEGY TOWARDS RUSSIA

## Abstract

The study analyzes how relations between Russia and Belarus have been built since the independence of the Belarusian state in 1991. Various approaches to the study of transformations that have occurred and are taking place in the post-Soviet space analyze the complex and contradictory relationship of centrifugal and centripetal processes. The methodology used by the authors, based on a combi-

nation of comparative and factor analysis, allows us to analyze the «special case» of relations between Russia and Belarus, which, overcoming the contradictions and differences between them in understanding the meaning and goals of the integration process, gradually came to an agreement of positions on key issues of bilateral relations. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis allows the authors to assess not only the current state, but also the near

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future of Russian-Belarusian relations, taking into account the changes in world politics taking place before our eyes. As a result of the conducted research, the complex dynamics and dialectics of the relationship between two closely related states, which are Russia and Belarus, are revealed. The analysis of the foreign policy (and above all diplomatic) activity of Belarus and its priorities allows the authors to clarify and deepen their final conclusions on the topic they are considering. As a result, the authors come to the conclusion that the most promising variant of the foreign policy

strategy for Russia and Belarus is the development of allied relations in the context of the participation of both countries in the construction of Greater Eurasia as a qualitatively new space of multilateral cooperation.

**Keywords:** Russia, Belarus, global reality, foreign policy strategy, foreign policy identity, allied relations, qualitative evolutionary transformations, strategic partnership, multilateral cooperation, modernization project.

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## Introduction

Today, modern Belarus is in a situation of strategic choice and change prompting it to reflect on its foreign policy strategy and its place in the changing global reality. Having experienced a rather serious political crisis in 2020 and unprecedented pressure in connection with it from the EU and a whole group of neighboring states, as well as having faced significant challenges to their own statehood related to the modern armed confrontation inside and around neighboring Ukraine – a crisis in the political sphere (primarily a crisis of confidence), a crisis of the socio-economic model, the crisis of political identity and the crisis of the former political and ideological foundations, the country managed to resist. Belarus managed to return to the evolutionary track of development by adopting a new Constitution aimed at modernizing the country's political system at a referendum on February 27, 2022. Today's Belarus is trying to formulate an updated and attractive image of the future, which could attract to its side a significant majority of the population, and above all socially active groups and young people. The latter inevitably presupposed the question of a new foreign policy identity that meets the needs of the development of Belarusian society and at the same time is a response to existing external challenges and problems.

Among the main possible scenarios for the development of the situation in and around Belarus, according to experts, the following seem to be the most likely:

1. The repetition of crisis situations that took place in the recent past is extremely undesirable, since it threatens to damage state sovereignty, destructive and chaotic processes, increasing social anomie and frustration,
2. The "freezing" of the situation (rejection of qualitative evolutionary transformations) – which will only aggravate the existing problems.
3. Evolutionary and step-by-step political reform – with a gradual departure from the state-corporation model (with one dominant political actor) - through a long-term political compromise and a new "social contract" to a system of broader political representation and participation (the opportunity for which is provided by the new Constitution of the Republic of Belarus adopted at a referendum in February 2022).

In terms of foreign policy, the best option for the development of events is not any "takeover" option, but the preservation of the sovereign Belarusian state in close cooperation and allied relations with Russia.

For Belarus, a favorable option seems to be the development and publication of a program of political and socio-economic modernization based on the consensus of the majority, preserving the achievements of the past (in the field of social policy) with a gradual expansion of political and economic freedoms (without "spontaneous liberalization").

The authors are deeply convinced that Belarus should not be a "subordinate party" or a "resource" in the foreign policy game, but should implement a consensual program of evolutionary changes and integrate more deeply into the "development space" (built jointly with Russia on the basis of a multilateral partnership with China and providing it with broader opportunities) on the basis of an agreed modernization project based on modern technologies, the specific features of which are to be determined in the near future.

### **Belarus between China and Russia. How Belarus' foreign policy strategy matches classic theories of small states' foreign policy**

This section is devoted to the analysis of Belarus' foreign policy and theories of foreign policy strategies of small states. We are going to evaluate whether Belarus' behavior matches the classic theories of small states' foreign policy strategies or not. We will dwell on the understanding of the foreign policy strategy choice of a small state – Belarus towards two great powers: China and Russia.

The Republic of Belarus always declares multi-vectored foreign policy. Nowadays, Belarusian foreign policy is not limited to relations with Russia. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation is still a very important country for Belarus, even though Belarus' foreign policy became wider as we can observe in figure 1 – "Belarus foreign policy indices 2011-2018". The figure is developed with the help of a long-term analysis of Belarus' foreign policies from January 2011 to August 2018 by Belarusian scholars. This figure proves that Belarus is open to dialogue and cooperation with everyone. However, Belarus, just like each small state that needs to survive in the world, pursues its own goals and national interests

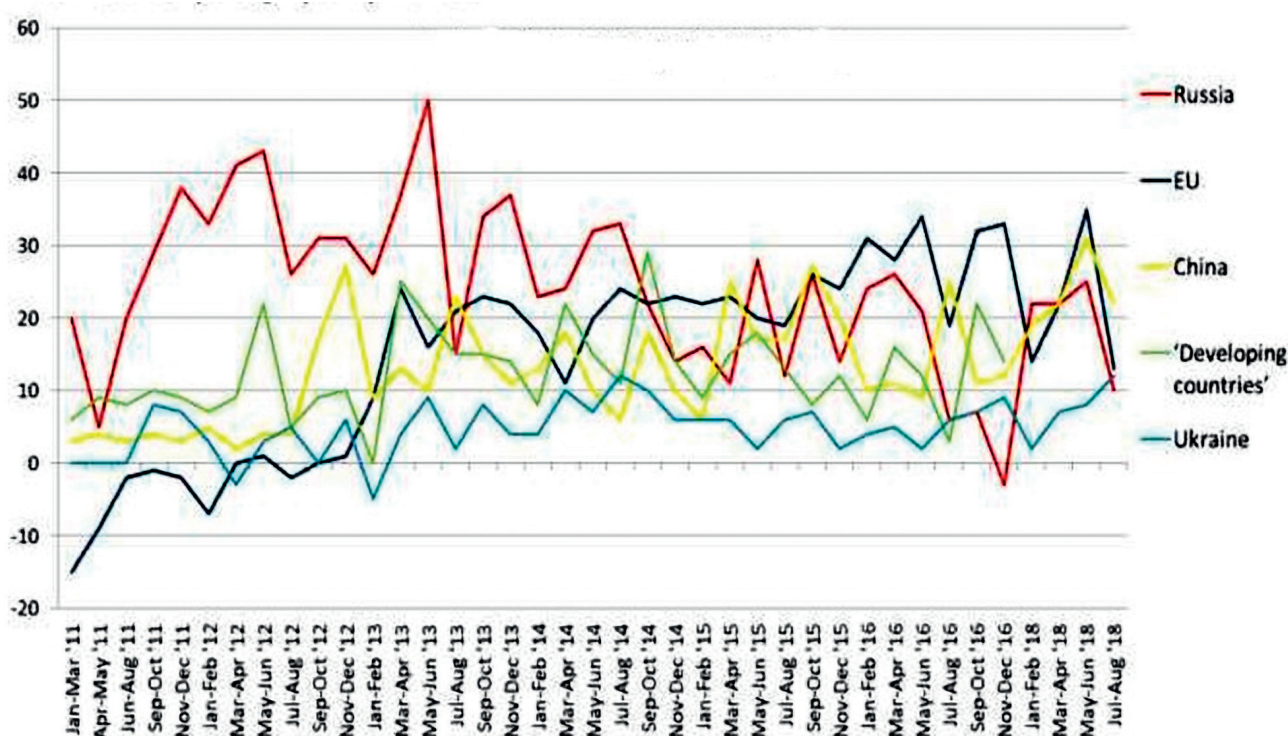


Figure 1: «Belarus Foreign Policy indices 2011-2018» [11]

in international relations and cooperation with other states. The most important lines for Belarus are the red and yellow ones that represent Russia and China, respectively. The figure shows that during different years, when Belarus' foreign policy is more concentrated on China, the yellow line is rising, foreign policy towards Russia is getting worse a little bit, and the red line is falling, that means that during that short period of time they were not in the big priority or there were some events that serve as a reason for their falling, and vice versa, when Belarus' foreign policy is concentrated more on Russia, the red line is rising, China's line decreasing that the reason for this is Russia's good and understanding relations with Belarus. China and Russia are two Great powers in the world, and they are very important for Belarus because they both connect with it; however, these connections are very different, which demands their study separately.

In order to identify the small states' choice of strategic behavior, it is important to examine its economic relations, its military and diplomatic capabilities that, without any doubt, influence the choice of small states' foreign policy strategy. Thus, the development of Belarus' relations with China and Russia influenced a lot on Belarus' choice. Furthermore, table 1 – “Overlook on the theory of small states' foreign policy strategies” is presented below and provides us with three strategies and a concrete description of each of them, which will be useful in further understanding of Belarus' foreign policy strategy. We argue that Belarus doesn't follow each of these strategies in its full understanding. In addition, the Republic of Belarus used these strategies in different time peri-

ods, managing to combine them, thus not resorting to the vision of the big threat in the face of the People's Republic of China or the Russian Federation.

Classic strategies of small states' foreign policies that are presented in table 1 – “Overlook on the theory of small states' foreign policy strategies” are aimed to have a threat from the outside, which would have forced a small country to unite with a great power in order to defend itself. However, in the case of Belarus, this situation is a little bit irrelevant, because 1) The relations between Russia and Belarus are established so that these countries will stand up for each other in the presence of any threat; 2) China and Belarus signed an agreement on military cooperation between the ministries of defense of China and Belarus. Moreover, the Sino-Belarusian and Russo-Belarusian relations have different backgrounds of their establishment and development, thus it is obvious that Belarus' cooperation with these two countries has been built in a different way. Belarus' choice in favor of one of the strategies towards China and Russia is made with the help of understanding the situation in which Belarus finds itself during different times.

#### Belarus' choice of foreign policy strategy towards Russia

The official relations between Russia and Belarus were established in 1992; however, the collapse of the USSR in 1991 put the beginning for deeper development of relations and cooperation between them. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus hardly could survive in the world that it faced. Belarus was very dependent on Russia, even today it

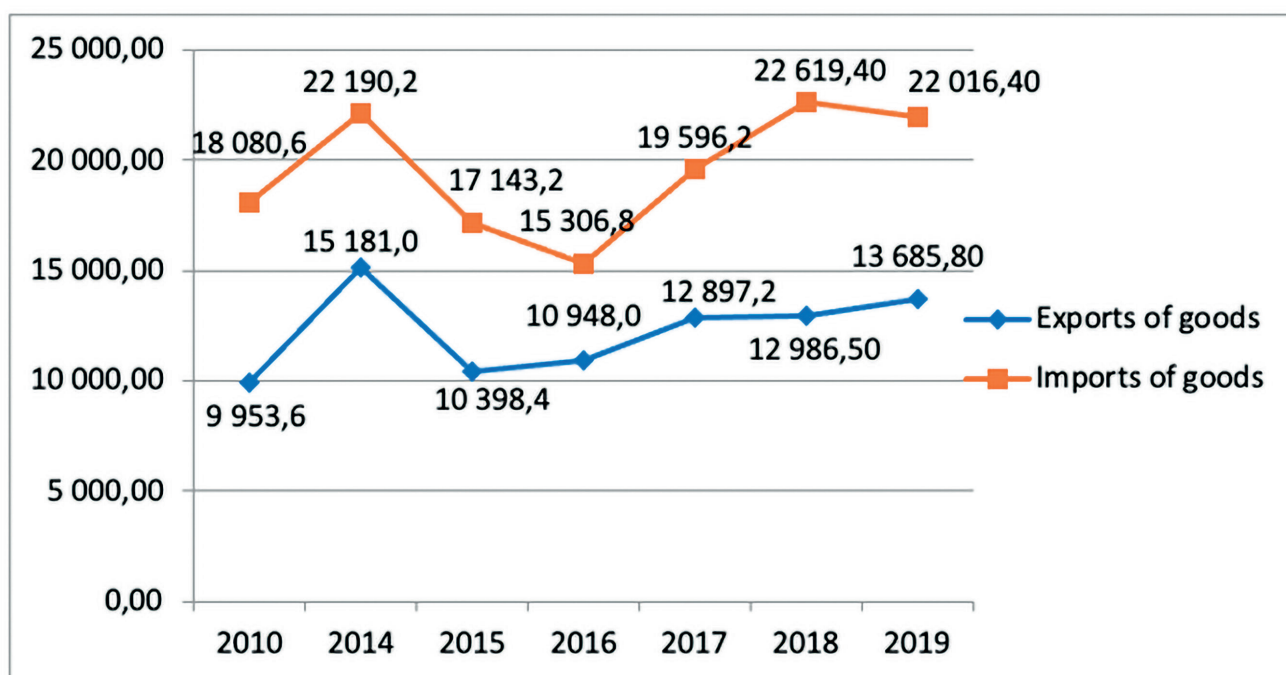
Bandwagon strategy	Balancing strategy	Hedging strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Great power's domination over a small state;</li> <li>- ally with Great Power for getting advantages;</li> <li>- partial dependence on the Powerful State;</li> <li>- a small state follows political, economic strategies of the big state;</li> <li>- agree with the political view of a big state;</li> <li>- a small state cannot defend itself from the third state or the great power itself;</li> <li>- ally with the source of danger;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation;</li> <li>- creates an alliance with Power state, avoiding to be conquered by the third state that encroaches upon its independence;</li> <li>- allies against a rising power to prevent hegemony;</li> <li>- to form an alliance and cooperate against a common enemy;</li> <li>- Availability of nuclear weapon plays an important role;</li> <li>- the main method in the stabilization of the International system and base for International order and security;</li> <li>- equalize the influence on the world order of powerful, bigger state;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- remain neutral between two major security threats until one become very dangerous to require siding with the other;</li> <li>- allows offset risks and improve its situation in relation to the rising power while avoiding a major confrontation;</li> <li>- give freedom (can cooperate with other states without control from a big state);</li> <li>- through the strategy, a state conducts a counteracting policy – strengthen economic cooperation while preparing for a diplomatic and military confrontation;</li> <li>- state through this strategy tries to improve its position in the world order;</li> <li>- helps to save independence and autonomy;</li> </ul>

Table 1: «Overlook on the theory of small states' foreign policy strategies»

is still depending on it. By the way, it is obvious that Russia is the main investor that has a big impact on Belarus' economy. The biggest trade turnover of Belarus is with Russia, see figure 2 – “Belarus foreign trade in goods with Russia (USD million) 2010-2019”. Russia and Belarus have very close connections based on their mutual historical background,

way of thinking, and culture. It is difficult to say what exact strategy the Republic of Belarus uses towards the Russian Federation. We are inclined to think that Belarus uses each strategy; nevertheless, the strategies are combined and have some changes. The choice depends on the situation and period of time in which Belarus finds itself.

Figure 2: «Belarus' foreign trade in goods with Russia (USD million) 2010-2019» [2, p. 441]





After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Belarus did not have any other alternative as to bandwagon with balancing. The reason is that the economy of the country was destroyed as it was oriented toward the USSR. During that period, Belarus found itself in a situation, where it did not know where to move further, but Belarusian people claimed unification with Russia because no one expected the collapse of the USSR. Anton Susyaev argues that after the collapse of the USSR, the development of independent Belarus had several factors that influenced a lot on the relations between Russia and Belarus. He divides them into two groups: the first group is the historical and national-ethnic factors: Belarus was less affected by the processes of – national revival in comparison with the other republics of the former USSR; primarily, that was due to the lack of historical request for the establishment of a national state [10, p. 325]. In the period of centuries of Russian and Belarusian peoples' coexistence, the common culture, way of economic life, and mentality were established. Belarusian people together with Ukrainians are very close to Russian people genetically and linguistically. However, in comparison with Ukraine, Belarus did not try to be totally separate from Russia. The second group that Susyaev stressed is political and economic factors: Belarus, which does not have a wide base of raw materials, served as the – “assembly shop” of the Soviet Union, which is why Belarus was interested not in the formation of a new national identity, but in the maximum preservation of the Soviet identity, ensuring the former life and economic standards [10, p. 326]. During that period of Belarusian history, Belarus chose to be dependent on Russia. It allied with great power in order to get advantages and benefits. The table 1 – “Overlook on the theory of small states' foreign policy strategies” shows us that a small state, which chose the bandwagon strategy, follows the same strategies of policy and economy of the big state. Especially during that period, Belarus followed them; moreover, it completely agreed with the political view of Russia. Belarus cannot protect itself from outer threat, because it was too weak and the only way to defend itself and to win time for development and re-establishment of its economy was a big state's dominance that Belarusian people saw in Russia. The balance of power was presented by the agreements that both countries signed on cooperation and other alliances, including the military one that they created during the period of 1991-1995. There were not a lot of them; however, they played a big role in the case if there would be a third state that would want to conquer Belarus. For example, in 1993 Belarus joined the collective security treaty organization (CSTO – ODKB). In 1995, both countries signed the treaty of friendship, good neighborliness, and cooperation for 10 years. But it was not total control from Russia's side over Belarus, because Belarus began to establish relations with other states, for instance, we know Belarus also established official diplomatic relations with China in 1992.

Things changed when Belarus began to rise on “its own legs” a little bit, and at that time Belarus chose a partial balance of power strategy as its foreign policy strategy towards Russia. It is

noticeable that at the end of the 90s Belarus began to sign a lot of treaties and agreements with Russia. Both countries started to cooperate a lot. Moreover, Belarus and Russia started to create different alliances; they signed agreements on the joint protection of their territories. The partial balance of power strategy also gave an opportunity for Belarus to save its independence as the Republic of Belarus started to declare its independence more accurately after the adoption of the constitution in 1994. Article 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus says that the Republic of Belarus protects its independence, territorial integrity, and constitutional order, provides law and order [8]. The period from 1995 to 2013 was full of cooperation and the signing of different kinds of treaties, and agreements that can prove the choice of the balance of power foreign policy strategy by Belarus. For example, the agreement on the establishment of a community of Russia and Belarus was signed in 1997. The agreement on equal rights of citizens was signed in 1998, and the agreement on the establishment of the Union State was signed in 1999. Additionally, the agreement on using a single migration card was signed in 2004. In 2009, the Presidents of both states signed the agreement on the joint strategic exercise of the armed forces of Russia and Belarus that are planned to be held every two years, and in 2010, the customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan was established. However, despite the classic definition of balance of power, Belarus did not use it fully, as during that time it did not see a threat in Russia and all their cooperation was and is addressed on the mutual help if there would be an outer threat and cooperation, that is why the balancing was partial. But Belarus balanced between Russia and the West, because it was under pressure as the West looked at Belarus and wanted to make Russia weaker, depriving its brother.

When the Ukrainian crisis broke out in 2013, it led to the aggravation of Russia's relations with the West, which created a threat in the relations between Russia and Belarus. On the one hand, Belarus stayed constant in its choice of foreign policy strategy, balancing between Russia and the West. Belarus emphasized the independence of its position, for example, the President of the Republic of Belarus recognized the legitimacy of the new Ukrainian government in 2014 [5]. He supported the preservation of Ukraine's territorial integrity. On the other hand, Belarus signed the treaty on the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union and supported Russia at the UN General Assembly in 2014, where it voted against the adoption of the resolution that accepts the territorial integrity of Ukraine [4]. However, at the same time, Belarus refused to sign the final statement of the Eastern Partnership summit in Riga in 2015, because of the presence of the phrase – “annexation of Crimea” [3]. Thus, we argue that during this period, there was a combination of two strategies – Hedging and Balancing. The ambiguous position of Belarus shows that it has chosen the strategy that can be characterized as a hedging strategy with a partial balance of power. The reason for that is that after the Ukrainian crisis, new possibilities were opened in front of Belarus. The Republic of Belar-

us started to disagree with Russia in some situations thus opening the way to cooperate with the West. However, let's be realistic, who needs Belarus in Europe? The west is too busy with the Ukrainian situation that wants to be a part of the European Union. At the same time, another Great power that pays attention to Belarus is China, during that period their cooperation is rising, however, without any doubt, Belarus sees a reliable partner in China and takes the development of relations with China as a priority of Belarus' foreign policy, thus Belarus has another way if something happens.

The Republic of Belarus remained a little bit neutral among Russia, China, and the West in order to calculate all the risks for hedging between them for its own interests and benefits. The Ukrainian Crisis served as the cause for imposing sanctions on the Russian Federation. However, it is also not good for Belarus, because of these sanctions the investments from the main investor – Russia may become less in the future.

On the whole, Belarus' choice of foreign policy strategy towards Russia is very difficult to identify, because it cannot be described in full understanding by any of the classic strategies of small states' foreign policy strategies. From 1991 to 1995 the strategy that was chosen by Belarus was the bandwagon with a partial balance of power that was caused

by the situation in which Belarus needed to survive after the collapse of the USSR. From 1995 to 2013 Belarus chose the partial balance of power strategy. This was the period when Belarus started to recover, the first president of the Republic of Belarus was elected in 1994, and he began to rule Belarus towards new possibilities and opportunities. From 2013 to the present day, the Ukrainian crisis worked as an impetus for changing the policy of Belarus. We argue that the recent foreign policy strategy towards Russia that is used by Belarus is a hedging strategy with partial balancing, because the behavior of Belarus shows the presence of main characteristics from both strategies, such as cooperation, creation of alliances with Russia – a Great power, and at the same time Belarus wants and can cooperate with other states, calculate different risks of cooperation or declaration of its position. It does not see a big threat in Russia, even if the media has some news about calling Russia an enemy of Belarus, they cannot be serious as the relations are too deep, however, sometimes they have their disagreements and a different opinion on world issues. Alexander Lukashenko allows himself to maneuver in the international arena in order to compensate for its external pressure and to meet the interests of the Belarusian economy and Belarusian people.

Table 2: «Belarus' foreign policy strategy choice towards Russia 1991-present day»

1991-1995	1995-2013	2013 – present day
<b>Bandwagon strategy</b>	<b>Partial Balancing strategy</b>	<b>Hedging strategy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Great power's domination over a small state;</li> <li>✓ Ally with a Great Power for getting advantages;</li> <li>✓ Partial dependence on the Powerful State;</li> <li>✓ A small state follows political, economic strategies of the big state;</li> <li>✓ Agree with political view of a big state;</li> <li>✓ A small state cannot defend itself from the third state or the great power itself;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Cooperation (a big number of agreements were signed);</li> <li>✓ Creates an alliance with Russia, avoiding to be conquered by the third state that may encroach upon Belarus' independence;</li> <li>✓ Form an alliance and cooperate against a common enemy (if it appears) (a number of common military exercises, starting from 2009 );</li> <li>✓ Availability of the nuclear weapon plays an important role (Russia has a nuclear weapon, Belarus refused to have it);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Remain neutral between major security threats until one become very dangerous to require siding with the other;</li> <li>✓ Allows offset risks and improve its situation while avoiding a major confrontation;</li> <li>✓ Give freedom (can cooperate with other states without control from a big state);</li> <li>✓ State through this strategy tries to improve its position in the world order;</li> <li>✓ Helps to save independence and autonomy;</li> </ul>
<b>The balance of power (partial)</b>		<b>The balance of power (partial)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Cooperation(a big number of agreements were signed);</li> <li>✓ Creates alliance with Russia, avoiding to be conquered by the third state that may encroach upon Belarus' independence;</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Cooperation (a big number of agreements were signed);</li> <li>✓ Creates alliance with Russia, avoiding to be conquered by the third state that may encroach upon Belarus' independence;</li> </ul>

Name of products	2015	2016	2017
Crude oil, mln t	22.9	18.1	18.1
Petroleum products, thsd t	1 627.0	1 682.0	3 326.6
Natural gas, bn m3	18.8	18.6	19.0
Ferrous metals, thsd t	2 451.2	2 348.3	2 827.8
Tubes of ferrous metals, thsd t	219.5	208.0	230.8
Insulated wire, cable, thsd t	22.5	20.1	20.5
Internal combustion engines, thsd. units	30.7	34.2	12.2
Constructions of ferrous metals, thsd t	45.4	48.7	49.3
Equipment for the heat treatment of materials, thsd units	26.0	43.6	52.3
Machinery and mechanical appliances for special purposes, thsd units	23.6	32.6	41.6
Communication equipment and parts therefor, thsd units	1 581.8	1 416.6	1 421.1
Automatic data processing machines, thsd units	359.0	470.2	598.5
Passenger cars, thsd units	86.9	51.0	44.1
Parts and accessories of motor vehicles and tractors, thsd t	12.3	16.0	23.0
Medicaments put up in forms or packings for retail sale, t	1 717	1 732	1 960
Vegetable oils, thsd t	63.9	70.6	102.2
Frozen fish, thsd t	33.8	32.9	34.2

Table 3: «Imports of major products by Belarus from Russia 2015-2017»

### Background on contemporary economic relations with Russia, including trade and investments

In this section, we are going to discuss the economic relations between Russia and Belarus that will be useful in understanding Belarus' foreign policy towards Russia. The Russian economy is characterized as multi-layered industrial-agricultural, economic complex. Russia exports natural resources that Belarus needs, such as oil, natural gas, differ-

ent metals, and chemicals; moreover, Russia exports a wide range of civil and military equipment and vehicles. Table 3 – “Imports of major products by Belarus from Russia 2015-2017” provides us with information that Belarus exports a lot of natural resources from Russia.

Russia is a very important trade partner for Belarus, the big percentage of all Belarusian products go to the Russian market. That is why those – “dairy wars” had a bad impact on

Table 4: «Data on Belarus' foreign trade with China and Russia in January-November 2018»

	Trade turnover		Export		Import		Balance, Thousand of USD
	Thousand of USD	In % to January-November 2017	Thousand of USD	In % to January-November 2017	Thousand of USD	In % to January-November 2017	
<b>Total</b>	<b>65 679 508,6</b>	<b>115,1</b>	<b>30 779 792,0</b>	<b>116,5</b>	<b>34 899 716,6</b>	<b>113,9</b>	<b>-4 119 924,6</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>3 305 951,2</b>	<b>117,8</b>	<b>437 904,7</b>	<b>137,8</b>	<b>2 868 046,5</b>	<b>115,2</b>	<b>-2 430 141,8</b>
<b>Russia</b>	<b>32 524 794,2</b>	<b>111,1</b>	<b>11 824 298,3</b>	<b>100,2</b>	<b>20 700 495,9</b>	<b>118,4</b>	<b>-8 876 197,6</b>

Belarus, especially on its economy. Table 4 – “Data on Belarus foreign trade with China and Russia in January-November 2018” shows that, overall, trade turnover with Russia is too high (32 524 794, 2 thousand USD). However, at the same time, the trade turnover with China is lower and constitutes only 3 305 951, 2 thousand USD.

The data from the Russian Federation federal customs service points out that in 2017 the foreign trade turnover between Russia and Belarus increased by 26% compared to 2016 [7]. The National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus published the data on foreign trade with Russia that is collected in figure 2 – “Belarus’ foreign trade in goods with Russia (USD million) 2010-2019”. It is undeniable that Belarusian foreign trade with Russia is high. Moreover, according to the data from the official website of the Russian Federation federal customs service, the foreign trade turnover of Russia and Belarus in January-April of 2018 amounted to 10, 705 billion dollars [9]. The figure 2 proves that foreign trade with Russia is rising. From 2010 to 2014, we can

see growth in both import and export. From 2014 to 2016, the import of goods declined year by year; however, the import went up in 2017. The exports of goods dropped in 2015, but from 2015 to 2019 it was rising. The figure 2 provides evidence that foreign trade between Russia and Belarus is developing and rising in 2017. In 2017 the import of goods was 19 596, 2 million dollars and the export of goods was 12 897, 2 million dollars. Trade plays a very important role in the relations between Russia and Belarus, because it shows their support of economic relations.

The investments from Russia to Belarus also reflect the relations between these two countries. Figure 3 – “Structure of investments in the real sector of the economy of the Republic of Belarus from abroad in 2019, by major investor countries” provides evidence that the Russian Federation is the major investor in Belarus. From a total of 100%, Russia invests the biggest amount of money (45,1%), and it constitutes the first position among countries, that invested in Belarus in 2019.

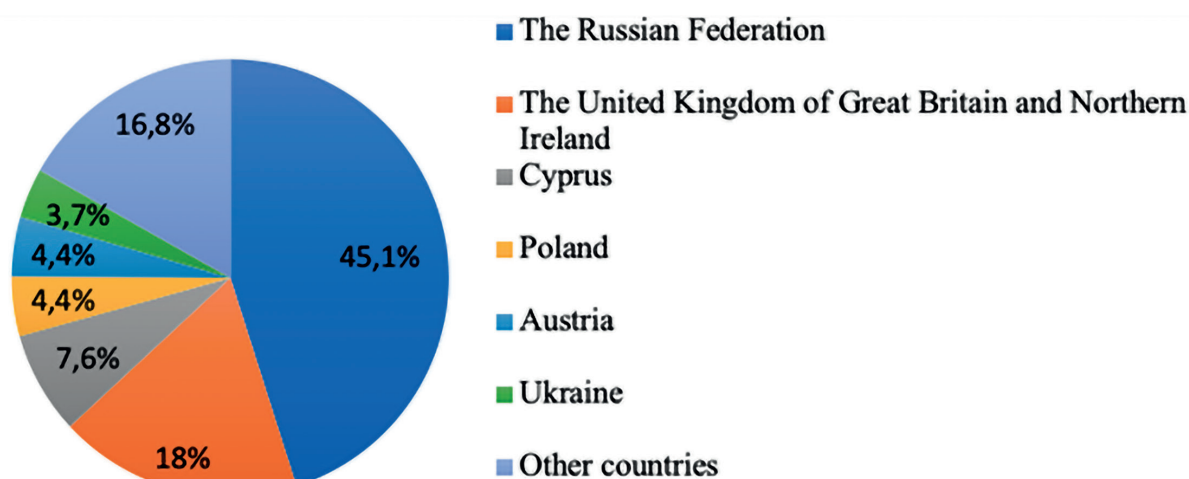


Figure 3: “Structure of Investments in the real sector of the economy of the Republic of Belarus from abroad in 2019, by major investor countries” [2]

According to the data from the National Statistical Committee of Belarus, we created figure 4 – “Foreign investment in the real sector of Belarus’ economy by China and Russia from 2010 to 2017 (USD million)”. The figure provides strong evidence that Russian investments in the real sector of the economy are higher than Chinese ones. There was the largest amount of investment in the year of 2011 that was received from Russia, during the period from 2010 to 2017. However, in 2012 the investments drop. Furthermore, after the year of 2013, the investments come down; this can be connected to some misunderstanding between Russia and Belarus. Moreover, the figure 4 shows the total amount of foreign investment in the real sector of Belarus’ economy and compares them with Russian and Chinese investments. This figure also shows that the Russian Federation’s investments constitute the biggest part of all abroad investments.

Figure 5 – “Foreign direct investment in the real sector of Belarus’ economy by China and Russia from 2010 to 2017(USD million)” helps to compare the investments from Russia and China. This figure also provides information that shows a big amount of direct investments from the Russian side in the real sector of Belarus’ economy. There was the largest amount of money in 2011 that was invested in Belarus from 2010 to 2017. In 2012 investment dropped, and again raises in 2013; however, up to 2015, they go down again, in 2016 moved a little bit up, and then falls in 2017 to a point lower than investments in 2015. At the same time, this figure provides numbers of the total amount of foreign direct investments that we can compare with investments from Russia and China. The figure proves the words that Russia is the main investor in Belarus, because even if the investments declined, in total the investments from the Russian side are



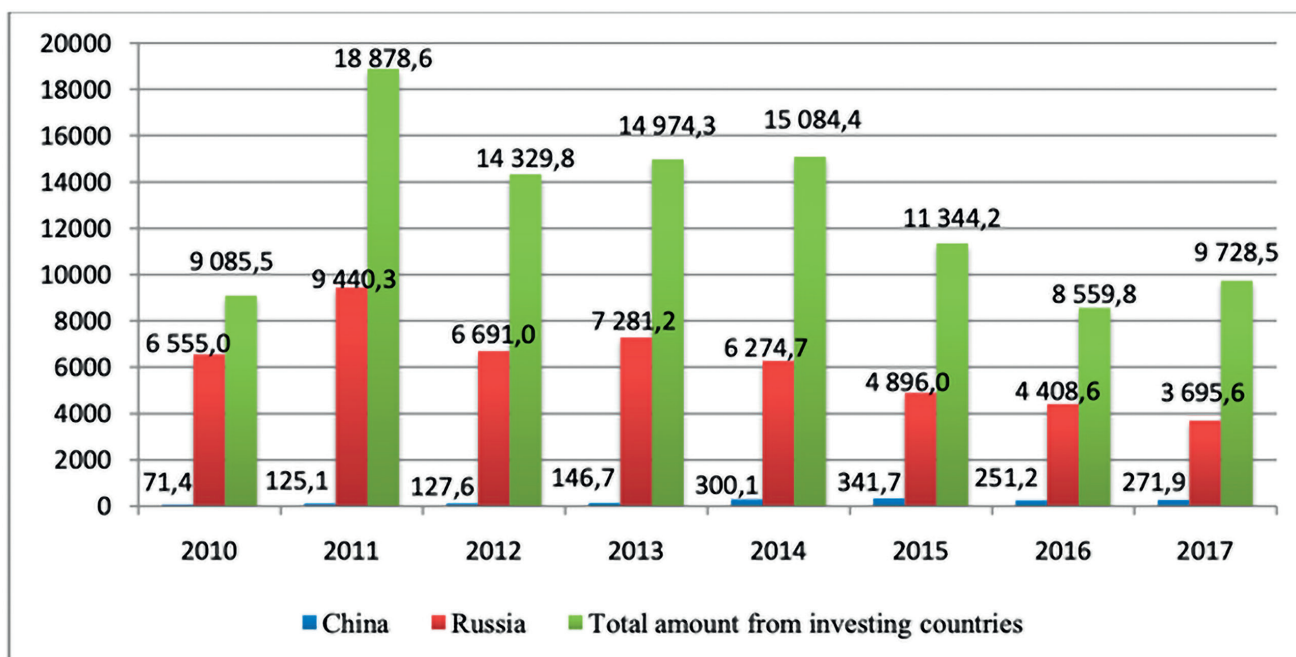
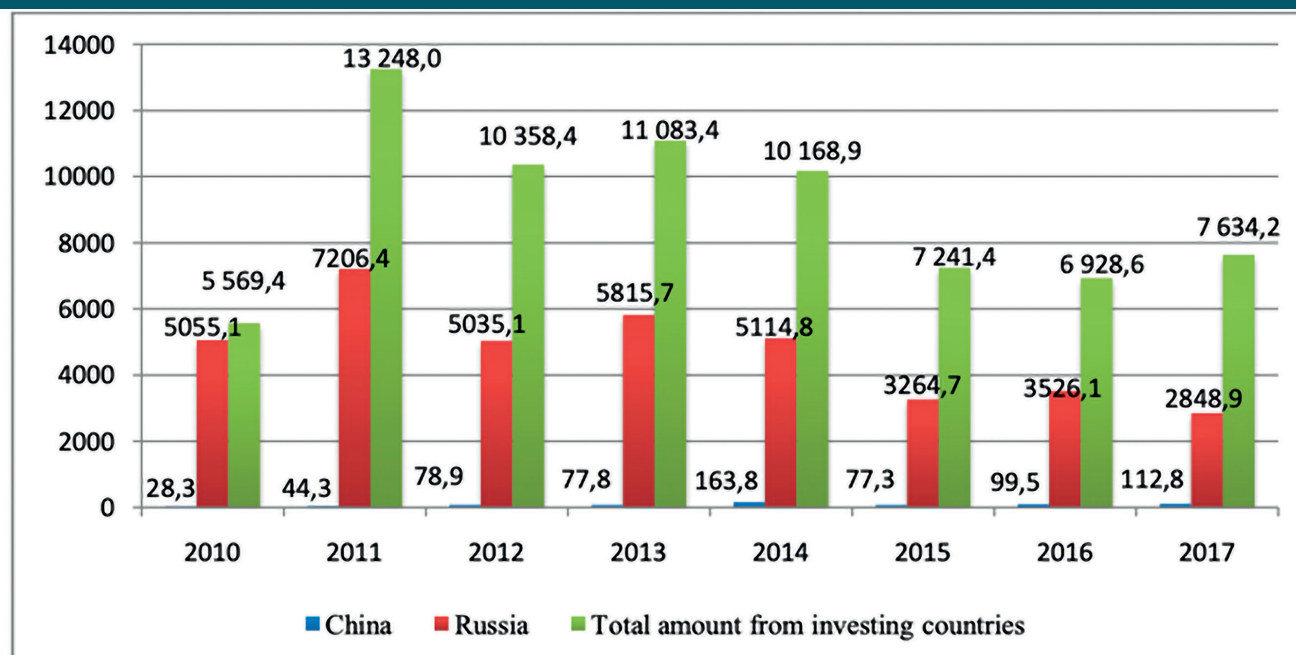


Figure 4: «Foreign investment in the real sector of Belarus' economy by China and Russia from 2010 to 2017(USD million) » [1, p. 408]

higher than any other country, and the investments are higher than the Chinese ones. In 2017 the investments from the Russian side constitutes 2 848, 9 million USD, in comparison, China invested only 112, 8 million USD. However, the figure shows the decreasing tendency in Russian investments that, of course, have connections with the relations between these two countries. Especially, with the Belarusian attempt to stay neutral in some questions, which are very important in the political arena today.

On the whole, the Russian Federation is the main trade and economic partner of Belarus, its share in trade turnover with Belarus among all countries is around 50%. Belarus ranks first in the list of Russia's trade with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS countries). In addition, Belarus is the fourth among all trade partners of Russia. Moreover, Russia is the main country investor in Belarus. One of the main reasons for such a situation is that the ties between the two countries are deep and close that is

Figure 5: «Foreign direct investment in the real sector of Belarus' economy by China and Russia from 2010 to 2017(USD million) » [1, p. 410]



why Russia holds first place among the investor countries in Belarus and has a big trade turnover with Belarus. However, from 2011 to 2017, the investments declined, which can be the reasons of misunderstandings between the two countries in their politics, and one of the reasons for the rise of trade turnover can have connections with sanctions that were imposed by the West toward Russia.

## Results

Small states are very weak in the political arena, that is why there is a need for them to try to choose various foreign policy strategies in order to defend themselves. One of the independent states that has emerged as the result of the collapse of the Soviet Union is Belarus, which is trying to survive in our rapidly developing and uncertain world. Belarus' foreign policy strategy cannot be characterized by any of the ideal types of small states' foreign policy strategies from the classic theories.

Our research shows that Belarus combines some characteristics from the classic small states' foreign policy strategies, and it does not fully follow any of them. The choice of Belarus' foreign policy strategy in 1991 was characterized by the situation in which it found itself. From 1991 to 1995, Belarus' foreign policy strategy towards Russia was a bandwagon with the balance of power. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Belarusian economy was destroyed and there was only one way to re-establish its economy and develop: stay dependent on Russia, because the economy of Belarus during the Soviet Union's times was oriented toward the USSR. The balance of power was presented by a large number of agreements in cooperation and the creation of different alliances between Belarus and Russia; moreover, they also signed a military treaty on the joint collective security in 1993 in order to protect itself if there would be a threat from another country. Furthermore, Belarus didn't see a threat in Russia that is why Belarus used some characteristics from the balance of power strategy.

From 1995 to 2013 Belarus' foreign policy towards Russia is characterized by the choice of partial balancing. It connects with the reason that Belarus began to "rise on its own legs". It deeply developed cooperation with Russia. For example, in 1999 the Presidents of both states signed the agreement on the establishment of the Union State of Russia and Belarus. In the same year, they signed the agreement on the joint defense order of member states of the Union of Belarus and Russia. In 2009, the Presidents of both states signed the agreement on joint strategic exercises of the armed forces of Russia and Belarus, which are a planned event and is held every two years. Also, the agreement on the joint protection of the external border of the Union State in the airspace and the creation of a unified regional air defense system was signed between Russia and

Belarus in 2009. Moreover, Belarus and Russia are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization that is another alliance in which these two states are included. In 2009 the agreement on the establishment of the collective rapid reaction force of the collective security treaty organization (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) was adopted. It is obvious that during the period of 1995-2010, Belarus developed cooperation with Russia and created different alliances that are very helpful for saving Belarus' independence if there would be a need.

However, the Ukrainian Crisis that broke out in 2013 allowed Belarus to behave in a different way; it started to have its own opinion on some world issues that sometimes were not the same as Russia's. The Ukrainian Crisis served as an impetus for raising the importance of Belarus in the way of dealing with the situation in Ukraine. Belarus became — the negotiation table between the West and Russia on the Ukrainian issue. These all allow Belarus to change its choice of foreign policy strategy in favor of a hedging strategy with a partial balance of power that gives Belarus more freedom. This explains Belarus' own opinion on important world issues in which Russia wants or needs Belarus' support. Belarus has started to calculate all the risks and benefits that it may get from the situation; that is why Belarus' positions on different issues are ambiguous and changeable. The balance of power is presented in the form of cooperation and the signing of a large number of agreements. However, the fact that relations between Russia and Belarus are too deep and close cannot be ignored. Both countries are connected by the ties of common history, culture, and mentality that make them stand up for each other, even though they have some misunderstandings from time to time. Furthermore, Belarus and Russia conduct a lot of combined exercises, which are directed to defend the borders of both states. For example, Russia and Belarus had a joint strategic exercise – Zapad-2013 (West-2013) in 2013. In 2015, Russia and Belarus had a combined exercise – Shchit Soyuza-2015 (The Union Shield- 2015), and the combined military exercise of Russia and Belarus – Zapad-2017 (West-2017). In 2018 the two countries held the combined military exercise "Boevoe Bratstvo-2018" (Combat Brotherhood-2018) under the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CS-TO), the combined military exercise "Nerushimoe Bratstvo-2018" (Unbreakable Brotherhood-2018) under the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Moreover, in 2019 Belarus and Russia are going to have combined military exercise — Shchit Soyuza-2019 (the Union Shield-2019) [6], and in 2020 Belarusian-Russian tactical exercise «Slavic Brotherhood – 2020» was organized. In 2019 Minsk and Moscow announced the signing of further integration strategy of the Union State.

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