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КИТАЙ – БЕЛАРУСЬ: МНОГОСТОРОННЕЕ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО И ЕГО ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ

Аннотация

В статье анализируются взаимоотношения Беларуси и Китая. Данные отношения были установлены относительно недавно – в 1992 году. Однако более быстрое и стремительное развитие отношений было достигнуто только после объявления китайской инициативы «Один пояс – один путь». Более того, географическое расположение Беларуси делает ее выгодным участником инициативы и дает ей возможность на развитие более тесных и взаимовыгодных отношений между двумя странами.

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POLITICAL SCIENCE

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CHINA-BELARUS: MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND ITS PROSPECTS

Abstract

The article analyzes China-Belarusian relations. The official relations between two states were established in 1992, but the rapid development in their bilateral relations was achieved only after the announcement of the One Belt One Road Initiative. Moreover, the geographical location of Belarus makes it an advantageous participant in the initiative and gives it the opportunity to develop closer and mutually beneficial relations between the two states.

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В статье также рассматриваются экономические отношения Беларуси и Китая, включая торговлю и инвестиции, что в значительной степени определяет сегодня перспективы развития белорусско-китайских отношений.

Ключевые слова: китайско-белорусские отношения, Китай, Беларусь, экономические отношения, торговля, инвестиции.

Конфликт интересов

Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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Данная работа не имела источников финансирования.

The article also examines the economic relations between China and Belarus, including trade and investment, which largely determines the prospects for the development of Sino-Belarusian relations today.

Keywords: China-Belarus relations, China, Belarus, economic relations, trade, investments.

Conflict of interest

None declared.

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The relationship between Belarus and China has considerably intensified and improving over the last decade. During this period, there were a lot of visits and meetings of different levels, and numerous amounts of agreements were signed. Despite the fact that diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China were established relatively not long ago in 1992, the rapid development in their bilateral relations were achieved only after the announcement of the One Belt One Road Initiative that, in turn, was the impetus for both counties to step on a new level in their relations. However, Belarus does not possess any

great and significant amount of natural resources that can be of appeal to China. But the announcement of the One Belt One Road Initiative may have changed the situation. In addition, Belarus is a small country that links Western Europe and Eastern Europe. It is not a secret that the advantageous geographic position of Belarus creates opportunities for developing relations with China within the One Belt One Road Initiative. Belarus can be called as a bridge state on the way of developing communication between China and Europe.

Mutual visits of national leaders at the summits and high levels are of great importance for the activation and develop-

ment of Sino-Belarusian relations. These visits were and are one of the most decisive features in any relations, as, during a visit, leaders have opportunities to meet and discuss different aspects of their relations and come to a decision that will be lucrative and beneficial for both sides. Belarus and China have increased bilateral cooperation since they had established the official relations in 1992, both leaders have demonstrated their willingness to support each other at various international meetings and forums, partially in ones that are concerned with the issues of their mutual interest and importance [16]. The first official visit of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to China took place in the winter of 1995. As a result of this visit, a number of agreements were signed, and the definition of events for the future development of cooperation was accepted [9]. That was the beginning of Sino-Belarusian cooperation; however, that cooperation was not big. During another official visit to China in April 2001, the relationship between the two countries improved considerably. As the result, seven documents were signed, these, in turn, create a lot of opportunities for new mutually beneficial relations in the spheres such as economy, trade, science. However, the most important event was the signing of the Joint Declaration of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus by the heads of two states Alexander Lukashenko and Jiang Zemin; in addition, it is the document for the strategy of further development of Sino-Belarusian cooperation [15]. In the same year, the current leader of China - Jiang Zemin visited Belarus for the first time. Moreover, only two leaders of the PRC visited Belarus and Jiang Zemin was the first one [24].

The symbol of Sino-Belarusian cooperation is the China-Belarusian Industrial Park "The Great Stone" that has a huge impact on the technological modernization and development of Belarus' economy. The Industrial Park is a unique project that has been implemented since 2010 in the framework of bilateral cooperation between China and Belarus. It is located 25 km from Minsk, at the strategically important place, where there is an intersection of three major integration associations that are very important – the Eurasian Economic Union, the European Union, and the Silk Road Project of the XXI century [11]. The Industrial park is the most ambitious project in the long path of Sino-Belarusian cooperation. Nowadays, the post-Soviet countries are one of the priority areas for China in their development of trade and economic cooperation [6]. Elena Dostanko points out that the largest project of bilateral relations between China and Belarus is the China-Belarus Industrial Park that is going to be implemented successfully and take an important place in the Economic Belt of the XXI century's Silk Road that is created by China [10]. However, Myasnikovich assures that the participation of Belarus in the One Belt One Road Initiative can be minimized, because other countries may offer better conditions that at the same time will not include the participation

of Belarus. "In the framework of the implementation of the concept of Economic Belt and Road, different countries offer alternative routes, including Azerbaijan and Georgia with the use of the Transcaspian corridor (without the participation of the Republic of Belarus)" [13]. That is why, nowadays, relations with China are one of the priorities in the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus.

The One Belt One Road Initiative is not just an idea of economic partnership and cooperation, it is, moreover, the way of unifying the international cooperation among countries. This Initiative gives an opportunity for other countries to develop their infrastructure and become part of the international trade system. Fan Zhai argues that the One Belt One Road Initiative "aims to prompt regional integration between China and other Asian, African, and European countries, through enhancing infrastructure and institutional linkages; it intends to establish an international community with shared interests, destiny, and responsibility" [21]. The Initiative was officially announced in 2013 by Xi Jinping, and furthermore, Belarus accepted it with great attention and approval.

It is very obvious that the cooperation between China and Belarus is developing, especially on the way of implementing the One Belt One Road Initiative. Belarus is a very good partner for China, because the Republic of Belarus, as the member-state of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), can play a very important role both in the One Belt One Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union. This will allow China to enter new markets, while Belarus will get investments and develop its infrastructure. Moreover, China will not need to pay tax for its goods, as they can be produced in the Industrial Park "Great Stone" and then can be sent to the EAEU member-countries without taxes. Nowadays the Belarusian media reported and published news about contracts on billions of dollars signed between China and Belarus, but these reports did not mention that the majority of them, that the Chinese side offer, are just loans and investments that are connected with the procurement of China's goods and its services [20]. Andrei Yelisseyeu argues that "China can have two major foreign policy benefits from its engagement with Belarus: it can enjoy Belarus's support for a broad agenda in the international scene and neutralize the diplomatic efforts of Taiwan." We can observe that Belarus offers its political support to China.

During another working visit to China in 2015, the Belarusian President had meetings with Xi Jinping, with a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the CPC, and with the First Deputy Prime Minister of the State Council of China Zhang Gaoli. Moreover, Belarusian President – Alexander Lukashenko took part in a military parade in Beijing, which was in memory of the 70th anniversary of the Victory in the anti-Japanese war and the end of the Second World War [14]. In the same year there was the second official visit of the leader of the PRC – Xi Jinping to Belarus,

the China-Belarus intergovernmental agreement on the mutual establishment of cultural centers was signed on May 10, 2015, in the presence of two leaders. Furthermore, during Xi Jinping's visit to Belarus, both countries signed around 20 agreements, among them the agreement on bilateral friendship, the joint statement on the future comprehensive development of the strategic partnership, the memorandum on deepening relations economic and trade relations between two countries, and the agreement on technical and economic assistance [23]. The Chinese cultural center was opened in Minsk on December, 10 in 2016 and it is a major event in the two nations' cooperation. That shows the willingness and readiness of both countries to learn about each other's culture and cooperate. Cui Qiming, the Ambassador of China to Belarus, said that "the exchanges and cooperation between China and Belarus nowadays are closer than any other time in history, and the center will give a full play in enhancing the understanding and friendship between the two peoples, and help build a more solid social basis for strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries" [8]. In the year of 2017, the President of the Republic of Belarus took part in the "One Belt One Road" Forum, which took place in Beijing. Alexander Lukashenko said that this Initiative is not just a route for trading among countries; moreover, it is a channel for sharing ideas and innovations [12]. On May 30, 2017, the center of Belarusian culture was officially opened in Beijing. It is going to promote the development of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation in cultural, educational, tourism, and information fields [7].

On the whole, the relations between China and Belarus are developing gradually. Friendly relations between two leaders Alexander Lukashenko and Xi Jinping are becoming a solid basis for bilateral cooperation in various sectors of economic, political spheres, and even military spheres. The crucial impetus for the development of these relations is the One Belt One Road Initiative, which also goes through Belarusian territory. The year 2010 seems very important in the cooperation and collaboration, this year marked with the creation of the Belarusian-Chinese Technopark in Changchun and the agreement of both sides to cooperate on the creation of the China-Belarus Industrial Park on the territory of Belarus. Altogether the President of Belarus visited China more than ten times. The PRC's leader visited Belarus only two times, however, Chinese politicians visited Belarus several times during these years. We can observe that Belarus is interested in the cooperation with China and participation in the One Belt One Road Initiative, Alexander Lukashenko said that "We are proud that Belarus and China have developed relations of true allies.... Belarus will continue to exert every effort to implement the One Belt One Road strategy effectively, to construct the China-Belarus Industrial Park "Great Stone" as a pivot point and the 'pearl' of the Silk Road Economic Belt" [1]. The One Belt One Road Initiative is the chance for Be-

larus to develop its economy and infrastructure, enter the international market, and become part of the international trade system. During the meeting with Xiao Yaqing – the Chairman of the state-owned assets supervision and administration commission at China's State Council, Alexander Lukashenko stressed that Belarus and China had reached a very high level of partnership. The year 2017 is a special year for their bilateral ties; China and Belarus celebrate the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations, and by this anniversary, they have intensified their contacts, joint events and have reached a very high level of partnership [5].

Nowadays, the President of Belarus always points out that the relations with China and the assistance in the development of the New Silk Road are very important for Belarus. Additionally, the cooperation between two countries in the field of culture and tourism is becoming more and more active, which in turn was emphasized by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Belarus Cui Qiming [3].

Some main events are presented below in table 1 "Chronology of some main events in the relations between China and Belarus".

China is one of the important partners in the external economy of Belarus. The President of Belarus stressed the importance of China for Belarus numerous times. It is obvious that the Chinese economy is different from Belarusian one, China is the biggest producer and exporter of metals and consumer goods, especially different kinds of electronics and equipment, however, Belarus's economy is characterized by developed agriculture and machine building of heavy industry, such as tractors "Belarus", agricultural vehicles "Gomselmash", trucks "Maz", heavy vehicles of special purpose "Amkodor" and etc. Belarus imports goods that it lacks. Table 2 "Imports of major products from China 2015-2017" provides the information of products that are imported by Belarus from China in a big volume. The table shows that Belarus imports more technical and communication equipment from China.

Chinese Ambassador to Belarus – Cui Qiming in his interview stressed that the volume of trade between China and Belarus in January-October of 2018 reached 3 billion dollars; moreover, the People's Republic of China is the third-largest trading partner and second-largest importer of the Republic of Belarus [20]. Table 3 "Data on Belarus' foreign trade with China in January 2019" provides the total amount of data on foreign trade with other countries and particularly with China. These are official statistics that are taken from the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. We can notice that import is bigger (247 276, 9\$) than export (82 684, 5\$). These can be the evidence of Andrei Yeliseyev's opinion that sometimes the Chinese side offers loans that mass media show as investments, however, they are usually connected with the idea of procurement China's goods and

Table 1. Chronology of some main events in the relations between China and Belarus [19]

1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The official establishment of the relations; - The Embassy of the People's Republic of China was opened in Minsk;
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Embassy of the Republic of Belarus was opened in Beijing;
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First official visit of Belarusian President to China; - Visit of Premier of the State Council Li Peng to Belarus;
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working visit of Belarusian President to China;
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Chairman of the Standing Committee of the national people's Congress Li Peng to Belarus; - Visit of Vice-Presidents of China Hu Jintao to Belarus;
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Official visit of the President of Belarus to China; - The Joint Declaration of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus was signed; - Official visit of the leader of the PRC – Jiang Zemin;
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Belarusian President to China; - Joint Declaration of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus" was adopted;
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confucius Institute was opened at Belarus State University;
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Premier of the State Council Wen Jiabao to Belarus;
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Belarusian President to China;
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Belarusian President to China; - Participation of Belarus in World Expo 2010 in Shanghai; - The creation of the Belarusian-Chinese Technopark in Changchun; - Visit of Vice-Presidents of China Xi Jinping to Belarus; - The Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus and the Chinese Engineering Corporation CAMC (CAMCE) agreed to cooperate on the creation of a China-Belarus Industrial Park on the territory of the Republic of Belarus; - Agreement on military cooperation between the ministries of defense of China and Belarus was signed;
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confucius Institute was opened at Minsk State Linguistic University; - Visit of Chairman of the Standing Committee of the national people's Congress Wu Bangguo to Belarus; - The center of Belarusian culture was established at East China Normal University in Shanghai;
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the People's Republic of China about the participatory development of the China-Belarus Industrial Park;
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Belarusian President to China; - Declaration on the establishment of the comprehensive strategic partnership between Belarus and China was signed;
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confucius Institute was opened at Belarusian National Technical University;
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Belarusian President to China; - Official visit of the leader of the PRC – Xi Jinping; - The Chinese-Belarusian intergovernmental agreement on the mutual establishment of cultural centers was signed; - China-Belarus combined military exercise "Stremitelnyj Orel" (Slashing Eagle) on the territory of Belarus;
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Belarusian President to China; - Chinese Cultural Center was established in Minsk; - Declaration on trusting comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation was signed; - China-Belarus combined military exercise "Stremitelnyj Orel" (Slashing Eagle) on the territory of China;
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Belarusian President to China; - Belarusian President took part in the "One Belt One Road" Forum in Beijing; - 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations; - the first regional Confucius Institute was opened at Gomel State University of F. Skaryna in Gomel; - The center of Belarusian culture was officially opened in Beijing; - Visit of Chairman of the Standing Committee of the national people's Congress Zhang Dejiang to Belarus; - a Department of Chinese Language and Culture was opened at Minsk State Linguistic University; - Chinese poetry began to be translated and published in the Belarusian language;
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit of Belarusian President to China; - Signed an intergovernmental agreement on the mutual visa-free regime for 30 days without a visa (90days in a year); - Participation of Belarus in China International Import Expo 2018; - China-Belarus combined anti-terrorist exercise "Atakuyushchij Sokol-2018" (Attacking Hawk-2018);
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minsk and Shanghai have established twinning ties; - Belarus and China will mutually recognize educational documents; - The Belarusian-Chinese forum of cross-border e-commerce in Qingdao;
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sino-Belarusian Innovation Center of Industrial Technologies appeared in the "Great Stone"; - Belarusian-Chinese intercultural communication center will open at PolesGU; - Belarusian-Chinese Friendship center opened in Minsk; - Chinese library opened at BSU; - Belarus and China signed a memorandum on strategic cooperation in the agriculture field; - Belarus and China signed an agreement on cooperation in the agricultural sector; - Mutual support of China and Belarus in the fight against coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

its services by Belarus [18]. Overall, according to the table 3, is 329 961, 4\$.

the total trade turnover with China at the beginning of 2019 According to the Belarus Ministry of agriculture and food,

Table 2. Imports of major products by Belarus from China 2015-2017 [22]

Name of products	2015	2016	2017
Ferrous metals, thsd t	5.9	29.1	26.2
Internal combustion engines, thsd. units	16.1	32.1	45.1
Constructions of ferrous metals, thsd t	15.8	19.1	21.0
Equipment for the heat treatment of materials, thsd units	6.5	18.3	26.7
Machinery and mechanical appliances for special purposes, thsd units	44.8	70.6	113.7
Communication equipment and parts therefor, thsd units	3 278.7	3 366.8	3 229.9
Automatic data processing machines, thsd units	1 516.6	2 623.6	2 074.1
Parts and accessories of motor vehicles and tractors, thsd t	13.2	19.1	26.8

Table 3. Data on Belarus' foreign trade with China in January 2019 [2]

	Trade turnover		Export		Import		Balance, Thousand of USD
	Thousand of USD	In % to January 2018	Thousand of USD	In % to January 2018	Thousand of USD	In % to January 2018	
Total	5 051 568, 2	95,7	2 451 913, 8	97, 7	2 599 654,4	93,9	-147 740, 6
China	329 961, 4	116, 9	82 684, 5	236, 9	247 276, 9	100, 0	-164 592, 4

the share of agricultural products in the total volume of Belarusian exports to China is more than 21% in 2019 [17].

Figure 1 “Belarus’ foreign trade in goods with China (USD million) 2010–2018” that is created on the basis of the statistical data from the official website of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, shows Belarusian foreign trade with China. The lines of the figure clearly show that the import of goods is bigger than export. We can observe that in 2018 import of goods jumps in comparison with the year 2017, however, the export of goods in 2017 declines and rises in 2018. As it is evident from the figure, Belarus imports more than exports. Of course, it can be con-

nected with the need of Belarus to develop its China-Belarus Industrial park and other projects of the One Belt and Road Initiative that are demanding the technologies, goods, and services from China.

In order to understand the Sino-Belarusian relations more clearly, one should have a look at Chinese investments into Belarus, because investments may show how relations are developing during different years. Furthermore, investments within the One Belt One Road Initiative are one of the important components. Figure 2 “Structure of investments in the real sector of the economy of the Republic of Belarus from abroad in 2018, by major investor countries” shows that

Figure 1. Belarus' foreign trade in goods with China (USD million) 2010 – 2018 [18]

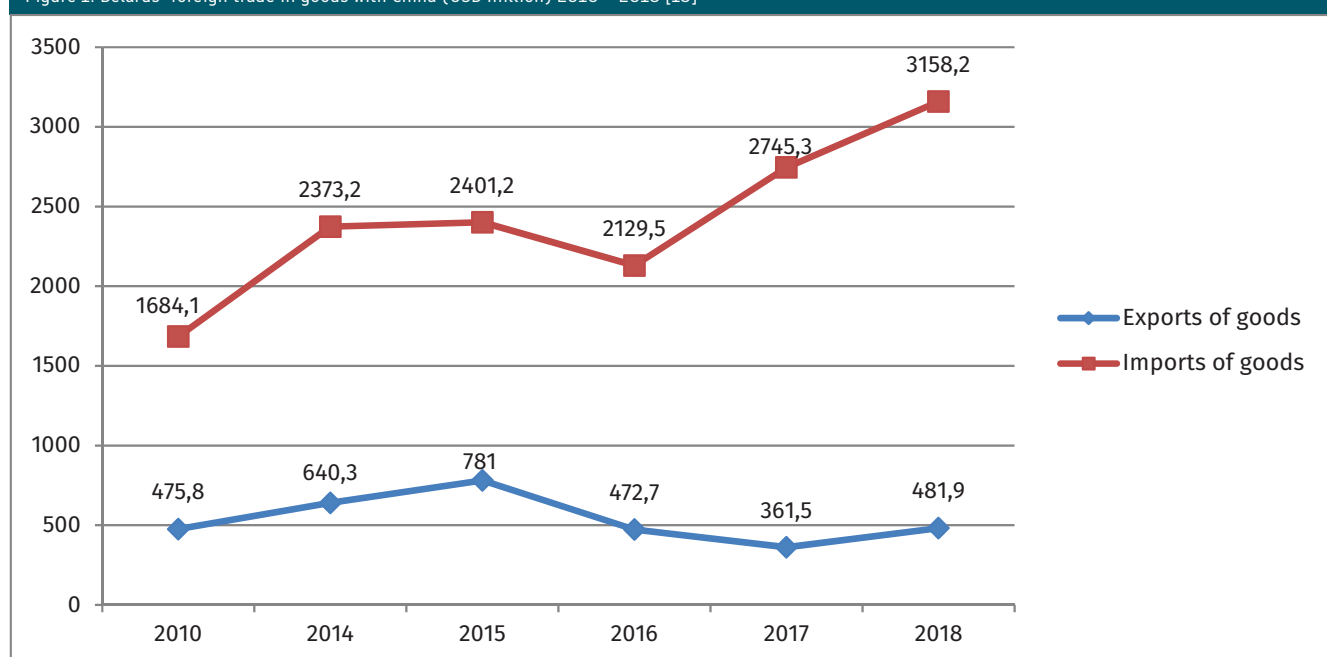
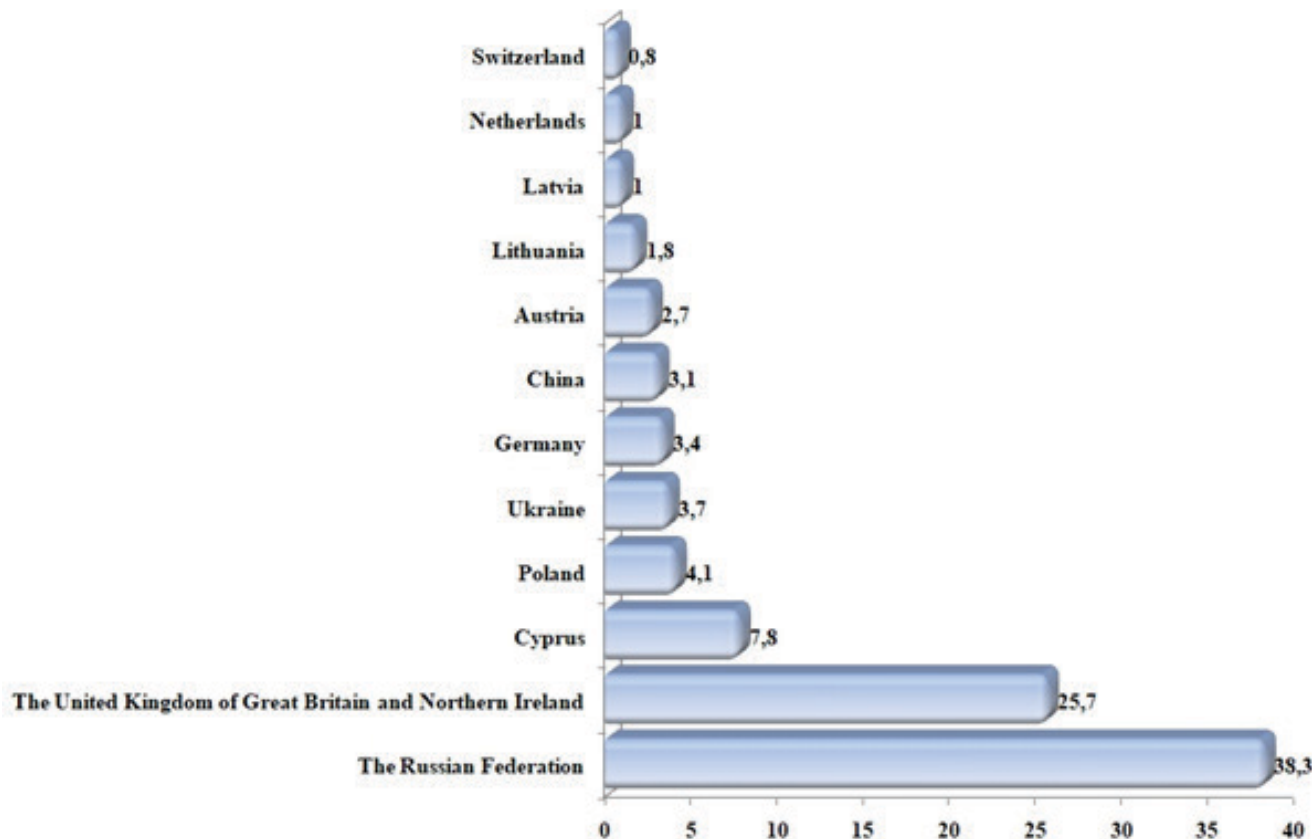


Figure 2. Structure of Investments in the real sector of the economy of the Republic of Belarus from abroad in 2018, by major investor countries [17]



the People's Republic of China is not among top three countries that invest a lot. The Russian Federation invests more (38, 3%) and is in the first position among countries, presented in the figure. However, looking more attentively to the figure 2, it is observable that China is in the first place that invests more into Belarus among Asian country-investors. But, from the total 100% of investments into Belarus, China's investments constitute only 3, 1%, according to the data of in-

vestments into Belarus of 2018.

Additionally, figure 3 "Foreign investment in the real sector of Belarus' economy by China from 2010 to 2018" presents data on the dynamics of China's investments in the real sector of the Belarusian economy. Furthermore, figure 4 "Foreign direct investment in the real sector of Belarus' economy by China from 2010- 2018" shows the dynamics of Chinese direct investments.

Figure 3. Foreign investment in the real sector of Belarus' economy by China from 2010-2018 [17]

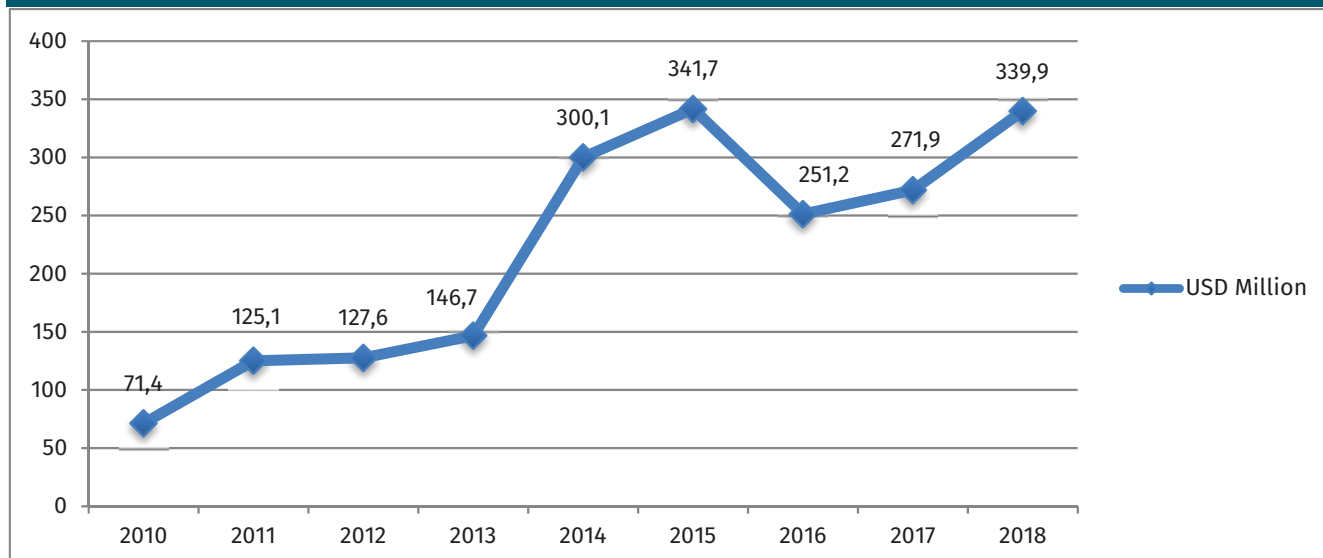
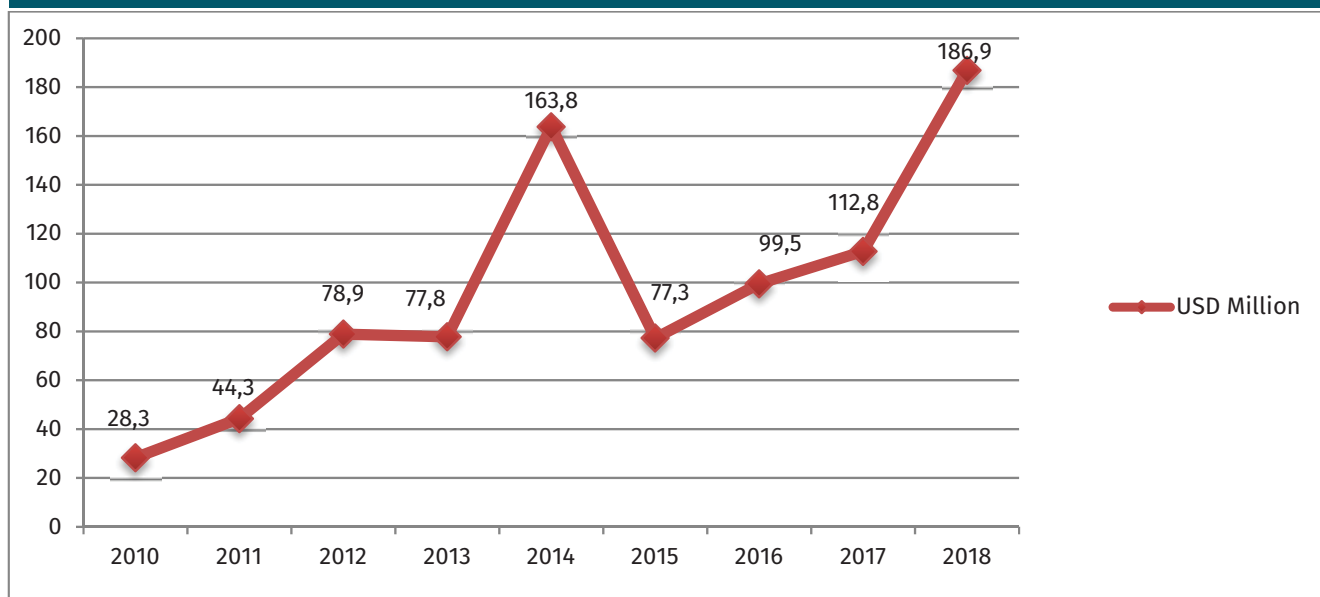


Figure 4. Foreign direct investment in the real sector of Belarus' economy by China, 2010- 2018 [4]



The figures provide strong evidence that Chinese investments and Chinese direct investments from 2010 to 2018 have ups and downs that can be connected with certain events during those particular years; nevertheless, it is obvious that in both figures, starting from 2016, the investments are growing, and in 2017 the investments are still rising. The line in the figure 3 clearly shows that from 2010 to 2013 there was an upward trend, furthermore, in 2014 we can observe that investments rocketed (during this period the One Belt One Road Initiative was announced). 2014-2015 investments were rising a bit, but they fell off in 2016, and in 2017 the Chinese investments began to rise again. Another line of figure 4 provides us with information that from 2010 to 2012 the direct investments rose. From 2012 to 2013 investments remained almost constant, however, the investments jumped rapidly in 2014, and in 2015 the Chinese direct investments slumped almost at the same level as they were in 2013. From 2015 to 2017 there was an upward trend in Chinese direct investments in the real sector of Belarus' economy.

In essence, we can observe that the friendship between the peoples of China and Belarus is becoming stronger, the comprehensive strategic partnership rises to a higher level. Economic relations between the two states are developing and rising year by year. One of the main stimuli that support these relations is the One Belt One Road Initiative.

Mutual Support of Belarus and China in the fight against coronavirus disease (COVID-19) reflects the deep friendship of the two peoples. Interactions between the regions of the two countries have intensified noticeably, and the traditional friendship has become stronger. All six Belarusian regions and Minsk have established twinning relations with the Chinese provinces and cities. Cui Qiming noted that the signing of an agreement on a mutual visa-free regime between China and Belarus further facilitated the exchange between the two countries.

The scheme below provides a basic background on the Sino-Belarusian and Russo-Belarusian relations.

Scheme 1. A basic background on the Sino-Belarusian relations



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