

Trump's election, military cooperation with the US, comments on KEF 2016 – digest of Belarusian analytics

In November Belarus analysts focused on implications of Donald Trump's election for Belarus-US relations, ways to reform Belarusian economy discussed at Kastryčnicki Economic Forum, as well as developments in human rights situation.

Dzianis Meľjancoŭ believes that after the election of the US president Donald Trump the Belarusian-American relations will develop in the same direction while, Andrej Jahoraŭ thinks that Donald Trump may initiate a review of the entire package of sanctions previously imposed by the US.

BISS presents a regular monitoring, which explores Belarus's foreign policy in the five key dimensions. The monthly monitoring of Belarus Security Blog argues that the agreement on US-Belarusian cooperation in the military sphere is rather a political and symbolic act.

Analysing the Kastryčnicki Ekanamičny Forum 2016 Siarhiej Čaly states that in 2011 the public was ahead of authorities, while now it's clear that the government is ahead of society.

This and more in the new edition of digest of Belarusian analytics.

US presidential elections and

Belarus

[There will not be radical change in US foreign policy – Dzianis Meľjancoŭ](#), a senior analyst of the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) believes that after the election of the US president Donald Trump, the Belarusian-American relations will develop in the same direction as the recent two years. Belarus is far from the top list of US interests, and a process of normalisation will be gradual.

[Trump winning the US presidential elections will change nothing for Belarus](#) – Donald Trump may initiate a review of the entire package of sanctions previously imposed by the US, but there will be no automatic lifting of sanctions against Belarus. How will the US foreign policy change after the billionaire populist winning the office, considers [Andrej Jahoraŭ](#), the Director of *the Centre for European Transformation*.

Foreign policy

[Belarus foreign policy index #34 \(September-October 2016\)](#) – BISS presents a regular monitoring, which explores Belarus's foreign policy in the five key dimensions. In September-October, the tension in relations with Russia was not removed that expressed in the high negative index of relationship, which was not observed for a long time. In relations with the West and the EU in particular, the experts observe a gradual positive dynamics after the parliamentary elections.

[National defense and security. October 2016](#) – According to  the monthly monitoring of Belarus Security Blog, the agreement on US-Belarusian cooperation in the military sphere is rather a political and symbolic act. The level of trust between the parties is obviously not enough for any significant practical cooperation. The goal of Minsk remains

unchanged: the preservation of the existing political regime intact.

[Strategic assessment: Belarus weathers economic doldrums as rapprochement with West proceeds](#) – Grigory Ioffe considers the recent developments in Belarus under five major themes: economic decline, parliamentary elections, uneasy relations with Russia; rapprochement with the West; and domestic “liberalisation.” The fifth trend clearly accompanies Belarus’s warming relations with the West, and is seemingly dependent upon it.

Civil society and human rights

[Belarus civil society is trying to find a comfort zone](#) – journalist [Paŭliuk Bykoŭski](#) notes that the last presidential (2015) and parliamentary (2016) elections show that for the first time CSOs were not involved in the mobilisation campaign or boycott. The recent trend is that many pro-democracy organisations distance themselves from politics. For an external observer, the situation in the Belarusian civil society looks frozen for decades.

[Human rights situation in Belarus: October 2016](#) – According to the monthly monitoring of the Human Rights Centre *Viasna*, October was not marked by any significant changes that could contribute to qualitative changes in the human rights situation. Namely, *Viasna* welcomes the very fact of the adoption of a National interagency action plan on human rights but notes that the country’s human rights community was not properly invited to discuss it.

[Human rights activity: unforeseen traps](#) – Liudmila Hraznova, human rights activist talks about a visible differentiation of the Belarusian human rights community. There are two

approaches: a tougher one based on western standards, and a more moderate – from the point of view of internal situation of a post-totalitarian state of the country. These two approaches have the same importance, according to Hraznova.

Kastryčnicki Economic Forum 2016

[Trends in the development of small and medium business in Belarus.](#) Small and medium businesses are not able to solve the problem of unemployment which is caused by restructuring of state-owned enterprises

[Proven ways do not work and will not work. It is time to "turn on the brain."](#) TUT.by economic observer, Aliaksandr Abuchovič analysing the Kastryčnicki Ekanamičny Forum, [KEF 2016](#) notes that in contrast to previous years, when foreign mentors strongly pushed Belarus for reforms, this year representatives of almost all international organisations urged not to hurry and stressed that each country has its own path of reforms.

[Society should know their interests and formulate a request for reforms.](#) In a regular TUT.by program *Economy in Simple Words* economist [Siarhiej Čaly](#) sums up the results of Kastryčnicki Ekanamičny Forum, [KEF 2016](#), held on November 3-4 in Minsk. In 2011 it was obvious that the public was ahead of authorities, but now it's clear that the government is ahead of society – this is the key finding of KEF-2016 from Siarhiej Čaly.

Belaruspolicy

[Trends in the development of small and medium business in Belarus.](#) The dynamics of macroeconomic indicators of small and medium businesses in recent years shows the reduction of its

role in the economy of Belarus. This is largely predetermined by falling incomes, which indicate the focus of small and medium businesses on the demand of households. Most companies focus on saving their business and optimising costs, including cuts on employees.

[Elements of neutrality in Belarusian foreign policy and national security policy.](#) The study identifies the main elements and manifestations of neutrality in the Belarusian foreign policy and national security policy

These trends prove that small and medium businesses are not able to solve the problem of unemployment during the crisis which is caused by restructuring of state-owned enterprises. Therefore, the government should first create the environment conducive to the development of the private sector.

[Elements of neutrality in Belarusian foreign policy and national security policy.](#) This study examines the three following questions. Firstly, the authors examine the origins and development of the Belarusian neutrality. Secondly, the study identifies the main elements and manifestations of neutrality in the Belarusian foreign policy and national security policy.

At the same time, the authors compared this model of neutrality with other, especially the Finnish one (after WWII) as far as its context and certain conceptual traits are concerned. Third, the study assesses the importance of neutrality for the consolidation of the Belarusian statehood, as well as the prospects and problems of its realisation.

Belarus Digest prepared this overview on the basis of materials provided by Pact. This digest attempts to give a richer picture of the recent political and civil society events in Belarus. It often goes beyond the hot stories already available in English-language media.