

Summary of the doctoral thesis

**Political and economic relations  
between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China**

The aim of the thesis is to define the systemic and geopolitical conditions of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus (RB) towards the People's Republic of China (PRC) and to analyse the impact of Belarusian-Chinese bilateral relations on the internal situation in the Republic of Belarus, as well as to examine its current geopolitical role in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Bilateral relations have been analysed in the spheres of politics, economy and financial relations, as well as in the field of military affairs, tourism and education. The main focus was paid to the influence of the Russian Federation's policy, as well as other important players in the region (the European Union, the United States, Ukraine) on the nature of bilateral Belarusian-Chinese cooperation. An important aspect of the research is a case study – the functioning of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park Great Stone, which is an important element of the new Chinese expansionist policy entitled Belt and Road Initiative.

The doctoral thesis is based mainly on official government documents of the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China, as well as books, scientific articles, reports, analyses and annuals of Belarus, China and Poland. Bilateral agreements, protocols and declarations, annual *Proclamations of the President of the Republic of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus*, legal acts of the higher (laws, resolutions, decrees of the President of the Republic of Belarus) and lower level (Decrees of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus), statistical data have also been analysed. A valuable supplement was also press articles, interviews, Internet sources of pro-state media and independent research centres.

There was conducted a query in the archives of the Great Stone China-Belarus industrial park within the framework of the implementation of the research project No. POWR.03.03.00-IP.08-00-P13/18 of the PROM NAWA program. The author of the thesis also researched at the National Archives of Belarus and scientific libraries of the Republic of Belarus, as well as in Republican Institute of Sinology named after Confucius of the Belarusian State University.

The theoretical base for this analysis is neoclassical realism, which combines systemic (international relations level) and subsystem (state level) perspectives. The analysis of Belarusian-Chinese political and economic relations was based on a specific methodology, including: the empirical approach, the institutional and legal analysis, the data analysis, the behavioural method, and the comparative method.

This doctoral thesis consisted of five chapters, grouped in three larger parts: theoretical (Chapter I), descriptive (Chapters II and III) and explanatory (Chapters IV–V).

The first chapter describes the genesis of the neoclassical realism theory, its basic assumptions and the method of applying it to the analysis of political and economic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China.

The second chapter of the work is devoted to the analysis of the basic conditions of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus towards the People's Republic of China as a starting point for considerations on cooperation, its strengthening or weakening on the international arena.

The third chapter presents the contemporary trends in the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China. The backgrounds and role of Chinese globalism in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and in the international arena are described. Next, it presents the historical background of the development of bilateral relations.

The fourth chapter presents a structural-quality characteristics of bilateral relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus. Analyses of the assessments of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation were carried out in such areas as political cooperation, investment policy, trade policy and cooperation in other fields.

In the fifth chapter of the dissertation, in the form of a case study, an analysis of the history of the establishment and operation of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park Great Stone was conducted. An important part of this chapter is the study of state propaganda activities, which actively uses the Industrial Park, presenting it as a great success of Lukashenka's policy towards China.

The main conclusion of the doctoral points out that Lukashenka's active political support for Belarus's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative did not lead to any substantial success of multi-vector policy of Belarus, which pretend to be a tool of relatively cunning manoeuvring between the main players in the region, i.e. Russia, the European Union and China. The status of bilateral Belarusian-Chinese relations can be characterized in terms of extensive political cooperation, bringing clear benefits to China, and sometimes inflicting simultaneous stagnation in development of economic and investment relations. The Chinese

ignore the needs of Belarus today in the field of obtaining technologies necessary to modernize its outdated industry. RB is unable to offer China the stability and security of transit routes under the Belt and Road Initiative. The crises of recent years: the SARS COVID-19 pandemic, mass protests in Belarus in 2020 and Russia's war against Ukraine, have resulted in a worsening of mutual economic relations and a collapse of China's investment policy in Belarus. The structure and level of Chinese foreign investments in the Republic of Belarus have a marginal impact on the state of the Belarusian economy, which is currently struggling with a crisis. Despite this, China's presence in Belarus is widely used by Lukashenka's government for propaganda purposes, both in domestic and foreign policy. The vivid display of successful bilateral relations in the Belarus public media is intended mainly to convince its own population about Lukashenka's so-called image success on the international arena. The development of Belarusian-Chinese relations is currently possible only within the framework of the Russian Federation's foreign policy. Before the mass protests of 2020 Belarusian-Chinese relations were a certain alternative to Belarusian dependence on Russia, but after the introduction of sanctions their significance greatly diminished.

Keywords: Belarusian-Chinese relations, foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus, neoclassical realism, People's Republic of China.

20.05.2023

Tatiana Ivanow