

KEY INTERESTS AND STRATEGY OF BELARUS AT GLOBAL ARENA

CLAVE Y ESTRATEGIA DE BIELORRUSIA EN LA ARENA GLOBAL

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Summary

The article deals with the topic of key interests and strategy of Belarus at global arena. Unlike many countries in the world, economic diplomacy in Belarus lies at core of the formation of foreign policy. The main idea of the article is that for neighboring countries it is necessary to take into account the importance of economic diplomacy in shaping the foreign policy of Belarus to properly build relations with the country.

Keywords: Belarus, Strategy, Economic Diplomacy.

Resumen

El artículo aborda el tema de la clave y la estrategia de Bielorrusia en el ámbito mundial. A diferencia de muchos países en el mundo, la diplomacia económica en Bielorrusia se encuentra en el centro de la formación de la política exterior. La idea principal del artículo es que para los países vecinos es necesario tener en cuenta la importancia de la diplomacia económica en la configuración de la política exterior de Bielorrusia para construir adecuadamente las relaciones con el país.

Palabras clave: Bielorrusia, Estrategia, Diplomacia Económica.

Introduction

Economic interest is the key topic for strategy of Belarus in the global arena. Unlike many countries in the world, economic diplomacy in Belarus is not one of the narrow tools for the formation of foreign policy, but lies at its core.

Economic diplomacy is usually one of the instruments of foreign policy activity, it is determined by it, and many states have a rather narrow scope in a wide range of foreign policy actions. But this is not the

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case of Belarus. Belarus is one of the few countries in the world in which 80-90 percent of foreign policy activity is dictated by the economic interests of the nation, business entities and Belarusian citizens. This is an extremely pragmatic foreign policy, designed primarily to create a favorable environment for the functioning of the Belarusian economy. What factors led to the formation of such an unusual for many countries of the world foreign policy?

Development

First of all, an unusual situation prevailing in the country in the 1990s. Coming to power in 1994, the Belarusian president adopted a non-standard decision for other countries in the region to maintain the former economic structure as the basis of the economy, dominated by large industrial enterprises, which mainly produce goods for export, and large agricultural enterprises. Another potential scenario can be conditionally called Latvian - in 1990-1995, Latvia lost 68 percent of industrial production, and mainly because it was a political decision aimed at reducing resource dependence on Russia and reducing the impact of the Russian-speaking population employed at large industrial enterprises. Indeed, in the mid-1990s, when fundamentally important decisions were made about the national interests of the Belarusian state, leading liberal economists were recklessly dominant in the world, and they assured that the services sector had finally won, and recommended that the republics of the former Soviet Union get rid of industrial enterprises, selling them for any price to anyone who wants to buy. They said about the high risk that a foreign investor has by buying an industrial enterprise in such a historical period, so you have to sell very cheap, otherwise he will not risk buying at all. Unsold industrial enterprises were offered to go bankrupt in order to build a modern economy oriented to the sphere of services. It was promised that this is in the national interests of the former socialist countries, since this is the situation in the international environment. In the short and medium term, such a proposal seemed reasonable, providing an opportunity to shift the concern for the modernization of national enterprises to the shoulders of a caring investor, but in the long run it was a trick. The propaganda of total privatization turned out to be only external attempt to Belarus in the acquisition of the most important objects of the industrial potential very cheap by representatives of Western business.

The Belarusian leadership, through understanding the true sense of the meaning of national interests in the context of identifying genuine national interests, was able to recognize the prospects for maintaining the large industrial sector in state ownership with the necessary conversion and modernization by the support of the state and was able to find the necessary funds for these purposes by preserving the country's export-oriented specificity. As a result, Belarus succeeded by being the first of the CIS republics reaching the level of GDP equivalent to 1991 and demonstrated high economic growth rates and enviable political stability. The Belarusian scenario required close integration with the Russian economy as a source of natural resources necessary for the functioning of industrial enterprises and the main sales market, as in Soviet times, of the goods produced on them. He also demanded and demands carrying out such foreign policy course, which will allow continuing to ensure the functioning of the dominant public sector.

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Secondly, close military integration with the Russian Federation. As a result of the agreements reached within the framework of the Union State, the Russian Federation has acted as a guarantor of the sovereignty of the Republic of Belarus, having undertaken to protect the country from any military incursions. Accordingly, the guarantees of protection from a friendly state with a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons reduce the need for Belarus to constantly emphasize foreign policy on military security, yielding to the priorities of increasing exports, attracting investments and increasing trade.

Thirdly, the special emphasis on social security and public safety is also unusual for the countries of the region. There are some facts. The death rate of children at birth and up to one year in Belarus in 2013 reached the German and French levels, several times different for the better from other republics of the former USSR.¹ According to criteria of the absence of underweight children under five in the country, in 2006 Belarus reached the fourth place in the world, having outstripped many richer countries. The number of serious crimes recorded for ten thousand people a year in Belarus in 2014 was three times lower than in the leading country that was formed after the collapse of the USSR - in Russia.² Taken together, this shows that there is a well-thought-out and systemic social policy in the country, a developed system of medical care for the population, and a properly structured work of law enforcement agencies, for which considerable economic resources must be spent every year. And they can be allocated only with the successful conduct of foreign economic activity.

An important factor affecting the importance of economic diplomacy as the basis of foreign policy is also the relatively small size of the country and the absence of any great-power past, and hence the need to protect the former high status, which is a very important vector of foreign policy for countries such as France, Russia, Great Britain, Turkey, Poland, Sweden and many others. As a result, instead of spending a lot on the favorable positioning of the country in the world arena, based on the great past, Belarus spends money on foreign business delegations' visits to ensure favorable economic development of the country in the present and future.

A constant factor is the need to permanently combat the problems that have arisen because of the Chernobyl disaster, which resulted in 23% of the country's territory being contaminated with radiation. Up to now, more than a million Belarusian citizens live in areas with an increased radiation level, and the total damage inflicted in 230 billion dollars is not possible to compensate even with time. Successful foreign economic activity is a prerequisite for further rehabilitation of the affected regions, implemented by the state at the system level.

We must not forget also about the unavoidable impact on the mentality of the population of huge human losses due to the inevitable involvement of Belarusians as residents of the center of Europe in all large-scale military battles of the last centuries. The Second World War destroyed almost a third of the country's population and caused incredible damage to the economy, which had to be rebuilt by the entire Soviet Union. The capital of the country - Minsk - was destroyed so considerable that serious plans were discussed to build it anew in a new place, so as not to spend money on take apart the ruins.

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And even during the First World War, the front line passed for several years right across the Belarusian territory, which led to huge casualties among the population and the economy, and a similar situation was on the Belarusian territory in the military conflicts that preceded it. It is not by chance that the Belarusian anthem begins with the words "We, Belarusians, peaceful people", and any politician in power should take into account the absolute lack of readiness of the population for aggressive policies or bellicose statements that can once again plunge the country into the horrors of war. The population expects from the authorities a flexible foreign policy and reasonable compromises that can protect it from new witches of wartime.

Such a strategy to develop economic diplomacy as a basis for the foundations of foreign policy seems justified in the context of rapidly developing globalization. The best positions in the world economy will be for countries that are able to make a worthy contribution to world trade and readiness to provide their territory for effective investments without complications.

Belarus can not pretend to be a key agent of globalization, but it is simply obliged to use these processes for its successful development. And the role of the state becomes decisive for success. In particular, considering how difficult the region is from the geopolitical point of view.

Additionally, the emphasis on the economic factor in the adoption of the most important geopolitical and geoeconomic decisions is the most important means to prevent attempts to involve Belarus in those processes in which it is unprofitable to take part. Belarus simply does not have the resources to engage in fierce geopolitical conflicts and bear the associated costs. Therefore, it is necessary to train foreign players to see Belarus not as a country that should be used on their side in large-scale geopolitical disputes, but as a source of tranquility in the region that can become an island of security in the center of Europe and, if possible, project this installation and on the conflicting parties.

In this regard, during the last three years, along with economic diplomacy, the peacekeeping vector of Belarus' foreign policy has been on the agenda. As the President of the Republic of Belarus noted, speaking at the international conference "Neutral Policy: International Cooperation for Peace, Security and Development" in Ashgabat on December 12, 2015, Belarus stands for unconditional priority of political and diplomatic methods for resolving any international conflicts, including those that broke out recently in the region, stating "Our country is making maximum efforts to peacefully settle these conflicts, and the conflict in Ukraine testifies to that. Minsk today has become that ideal neutral ground on which the most serious issues can be solved. And if this is what the world powers need from us, we are ready to play this role".³

At the same time, the peacekeeping vector of Belarus' foreign policy, with its entire humanistic component, is also aimed at protecting the economic interests of the country. It is difficult to expect positive trends for an export-oriented economy in the belligerent region. Since such a scenario was already calculated in 2014, the main aim for Belarus was the search for new markets for compensation of losses to the former, attracting investors and new technologies to the economy.

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Conclusions

For neighboring countries it is necessary to take into account the importance of economic diplomacy in shaping the foreign policy of the Belarusian state to properly build relations with the Republic of Belarus. Over the past twenty years, Belarus has had many misunderstandings with its neighbors, connected primarily with the fact that they automatically tried on the peculiarities of their foreign policy towards Belarus, unreasonably believing that the priorities of foreign policy in Minsk are no different from the priorities of Moscow, Berlin, Warsaw or Washington. As a result, very often actions to protect Belarus' interests of its economy are treated quite wrongly in foreign policy terms as a manifestation of some ambitions for regional leadership, the desire to change partners for new ones, or the desire to challenge someone without taking into account the consequences. A correct understanding of the specifics of Belarus' foreign policy can allow any country in the world to build an even and calm relationship with it.

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