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*External Security Strategies of Belarus*

ABSTRACT

Under President Lukashenko, three Belarusian national security strategies have been announced: the first in 1995, the second in 2001 and the third in 2011. The first proposal, formulated after Lukashenko's victory in the presidential elections in 1994, outlined Belarus as a neutral state, unbound to any military block in the absence of external enemies. The direction of the foreign policy pursued by the president of Belarus was reflected in the second strategy, where security against NATO and EU member states was sought in a federal state with the Russian Federation. Under the third national security scheme Belarus was to remain in Russia's military security system. Nevertheless, an important security factor was considered to be the modernisation of the economy with foreign capital participation and the need to diversify the supplies of fuels, thus reducing the country's dependence on its earlier partner. The subsequently issued documents: the military doctrine of the State, whose assumptions were published on 20 July 2016, and the Concept of security of the Belarusian state borders for the period 2018–2022, prioritised further development of relations with the Russian Federation and the member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. A new element of the 2019 defence plan is the prevention of external aggression and internal disturbance that contribute to the destabilisation of the state.

**Key words:** Belarus, security strategies, the Russian Federation, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Belarus covers an area of 207,595 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 9,451,000. The state borders on Poland in the west, on Lithuania and Latvia in the north, on Russia in the east and on Ukraine in the south. Belarus is a founding member of the United Nations, the CIS, the Union State of Russia and Belarus and the Eurasian Economic Union. It participates in the activities of the OSCE, the Eu-

ropean Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Monetary Fund.

Aleksandr Lukashenko has been the President of the Republic of Belarus since 1994. During his rule, three national security strategies of Belarus have been developed. The first of them was formulated in 1995. Following the change in the Belarusian foreign policy and strengthening the ties with Russia, the document was thoroughly amended and was published in 2001 by a presidential decree. The third, most comprehensive strategy, in force since 2011, contains a detailed analysis of the types of external security and the steps intended to maintain it. The aim of the study is to present the external security concepts envisaged by the three strategies. The research hypothesis is as follows: The successive versions of the strategy made the external security of Belarus increasingly dependent on Russia and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. To test this hypothesis, the author formulated the following auxiliary questions: 1) How was external security perceived in the first strategy?; 2) What changes in the security concept were introduced in the second document?; 3) Who ensured the external security of Belarus according to the third strategy, published in 2011?

The following research methods were used in this study: the decision analysis method and the comparative method. The article is based on analysis of the Belarusian security strategy documents, the available literature and website materials.

#### EXTERNAL SECURITY ACCORDING TO THE 1995 AND 2001 STRATEGIES

The basic objectives of the security policy of Belarus were formulated in the Constitution of the Republic of 1994. Article 18 of the Constitution indicates that Belarus is committed to the objective of making its territory an area free of nuclear weapons and of ensuring neutrality of the state [Konstituciâ Respubliki Belarus' 1994]. The military doctrine of the Republic of Belarus, passed by the Parliament in 1992 provided that the state would not accede to any military block because of the absence of external enemies. The national security strategy of 27 March 1995 stipulated state neutrality, nuclear-free status, reluctance to participate in international armed conflicts, refraining from the supply of arms to parties of conflicts, non-involvement of the citizens of Belarus in external conflicts and exclusion of access to the state's territory for the purpose of transport of weapons of mass destruction or foreign troops [Pešenie Soveta Bezopasnosti Respubliki Belarus' ot 27 marta 1995 g. «Ob utverždenii Konceptii nacional'noj bezopasnosti Respubliki Belarus'»]. This position was complemented by important international documents adopted by Belarus in the 1990s, concerning non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and prohibition of the use of chemical, biological and tactical weapons [Czachor 2011a: 3].

The next national security strategy of the Republic of Belarus was approved by presidential decree No. 390 of 17 July 2001. It was published after Belarus had signed the Treaty on the creation of a union state of Russia and Belarus in 1999

[Ukaz Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus' ot 17 iûlâ 2001 goda no. 390 «Ob utverzhenii Konceptii nacional'noj bezopasnosti Respubliki Belarus'»; Czachor 2008b: 97]. The introductory part of the document provides the definition of “national security” as a set of means and methods for the protection of vital interests of individuals, the society and the state against external and internal threats. It was stressed that the provisions of that document should be taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of measures to ensure security based on the principles of international law and national legislation [Wierzbowska-Miazga 2009: 189].

The security strategy states that the Republic of Belarus is an active member of many international organisations, such as the UN, OSCE, CIS and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation; it also participates in the activities of other international organisations. The foreign policy of the state was described as an independent but subject to pressure from the USA and NATO [Byčkovskaâ 2011].

The most important tasks of the Republic include strengthening the state's independence and sovereignty, inviolability of frontiers, preservation of territorial integrity, development of the democratic state, ensuring public opinion support for the concept of foreign policy pursued by the government, development of cooperation with other countries and upholding the existing systems of international and regional security. Belarus opposes the illicit proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, extremism, terrorism, organised crime, and narcotic drug and psychotropic substance trafficking. The main threats to the state security identified in the document were: 1) the establishment or extension of military and political alliances whose activity may harm Belarus; 2) the use of or threat to use force to resolve territorial conflicts; 3) activity of foreign services and organisations aiming to compromise the national interests of the Republic of Belarus; 4) uncontrolled dissemination of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and its transit across the country's territory; 5) efforts that exacerbate the socio-political and social conflicts; 6) increased corruption and crime rate [Ukaz Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus' ot 17 iûlâ 2001 goda no. 390 «Ob utverzhenii Konceptii nacional'noj bezopasnosti Respubliki Belarus'»].

The external security of Belarus should be supported by an active foreign policy involving: 1) consistent implementation of the democratic state principles and ensuring the rights and freedom of citizens; 2) strengthening the authority of Belarus in the United Nations; 3) supporting the efforts of the UN aimed at maintaining peace, universal nuclear disarmament and the promotion of human rights in the world, as well as participation in the operations undertaken by the UN, except for military operations.

The document stressed the importance of military and political cooperation of Belarus undertaken in the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. For this purpose, the state participates in the activities of the OSCE, cooperates with the EU and is a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Belarus favours peaceful resolution of disputes by way of mediation and combating organised crime and corruption. With the aim of arms reduction and the conversion of defence industry, it also participates in the activities of the CIS [Mironowicz 2015: 120].

The external security of Belarus in the sphere of economy is related to overcoming the economic crisis caused by the fall of the Soviet Union. The economic transition of Belarus is intended to lead to production growth and an improved quality of life of the population. The duties of the state include maintaining a balance between national and international legislation, development of enterprises in competitive conditions, innovation, boosting foreign trade, keeping the external and internal debt at a low level, maintaining a safe level of budget deficit, protection of the domestic market against unfair foreign competition, provision of state aid for the development of agricultural production and creation of a single economic space with the Russian Federation in accordance with the treaty concluded [Eberhardt 2008: 68]. The state is interested in the development of trade and in more favourable legal arrangements in its economic relations with other partners.

The following main threats to the external economic security of Belarus were identified: decline of production capacity, predominance of energy-intensive technologies and high production costs, low technical and scientific potential of the economy, poor competitiveness of Belarusian goods and services on foreign markets, and human capital flight. In order to ensure the safety of Belarus in the economic sphere, the strategy recommends the following measures: developing a long-term economic strategy that takes into account the treaty on the creation of a Union State of Russia and Belarus, creating the conditions for sustainable socio-economic development, adjustment of the state's economic policy to improve its position in the international arena, building a market economy, taking advantage of the country's transit location between the east and the west, harmonising the interests of the partners within the Union State of Russia and Belarus and full participation of Belarus in the activities of the WTO.

The shape of the external security of Belarus in the military sphere is adversely affected by the expansion of NATO to the east, the creation of the rapid reaction forces and increased armament expenditure by the members of that organisation. Other factors that threaten the security of the Republic of Belarus in the military sphere also include the use of or the threat to use military force, the presence of weapons of mass destruction, military expansion of other countries, and difficulties in reaching agreement between the Collective Security Treaty Organisation member states. To ensure the military safety of Belarus, it is also necessary to prevent military conflicts, neutralise threats, participate in international security systems and disarmament and arms control processes, develop a programme to provide upgraded equipment to the armed forces and to strengthen cooperation with Russia and other members of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. Belarus intends to ensure its military security in cooperation with Russia, and the two states prepared an army equipment plan for 2001–2005 [Śliwa, Brażkiewicz 2010: 104].

Among the other important issues related to the external security of Belarus was environmental protection. The Strategy emphasises that 25% of the country's territory was contaminated as a result of the Chernobyl catastrophe. The potential nuclear threat for Belarus is presented by the operating nuclear power plants in Smolensk,

Rivne and Ignalina located in the neighbouring countries, and pollution levels in large cities, rivers and other bodies of water many times over the permissible values. A high risk to the natural environment of Belarus may also be caused by natural disasters, failures of chemical plants, gas and other pipelines, radioactive waste, soil degradation, deforestation and low ecological culture. Ensuring the security of Belarus in the sphere of environmental protection is related to the sustainable use of natural resources, creating a system for environmental pollution monitoring and implementation of programs for the conservation of biological diversity, including rare species of plants and animals, rapid response to industrial accidents, creation of an integrated system of forest resources management, development of research in the fields of ecology and environmental security [Zakon Respubliki Belarus', 26 noâbrâ 1992 goda no. 1982-XI «Ob ohrane okružaúšej sredy»].

The information space of Belarus is affected by foreign radio and telecommunications infrastructure and Internet availability. The country is heavily dependent on foreign software and IT equipment. Imperfect legislation in the sphere of information makes it possible to manipulate information and exert a negative impact on the awareness and morality of the Belarusian society. The points of vital importance for the Republic in this area include the establishment of an efficient information security system, particularly with respect to state and commercial secrets, participation of Belarus in the activities of international organisations dealing with information security, combating cybercrime and creating an efficient public information protection system.

The system guaranteeing national security and the related legislation should protect the interests of individuals, the society and the state. Control over the security system is exercised by the president of Belarus via the National Security Council and the Council of Ministers. The functioning of the security system is protected by the law of the Republic of Belarus. Ensuring the external security of the state requires the collection of information on threats, decision-making, control over the activities of governmental bodies in the field of safety and keeping the population informed of any national security issues [Ukaz Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus' ot 17 iúlâ 2001 goda no. 390 «Ob utverždenii Konceptii nacional'noj bezopasnosti Respubliki Belarus'»].

The document complementing the national security strategy of 2001 was the military doctrine of the Republic of Belarus, adopted on 3 January 2002. The doctrine is defence-oriented and states that no state is treated as hostile by Belarus. The security policy echoed the priority of the security strategy: safeguarding the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the state. It considered an outbreak of a conflict on a global scale to be unlikely. It was emphasised that Belarus has no territorial claims against other countries and does not recognise any claims relating to its borders. The policy advocated peaceful resolution of disputes by negotiation. National security was associated with the construction of a common defence space with Russia in the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation [Kuzneva 2011: 115–116].

## THE THIRD SECURITY CONCEPT

On 9 November 2010, President Aleksandr Lukashenko signed the new national security concept of Belarus. The document was published by decree No. 621 of 30 December 2011. Its foreword states that the aim of the strategy is to consolidate efforts and increase the effectiveness of the activities of governmental bodies and other organisations to ensure national security. The concepts of national security, national interests, threats to the national security are explained in greater detail here; the document also defines the types of national security [Ukaz Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus' ot 30 dekabrà 2011 goda no. 621 «O vnesenii izmenenij i dopolnenij v nekotorye ukazy Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus' po voprosam Sledstvennogo komiteta Respubliki Belarus'»].

The document stresses that the Republic of Belarus is an independent and sovereign European state, pursuing a foreign policy based on the principle of neutrality. The main national interests in the political sphere identified in the strategy are compliance with the constitutional human rights and freedoms, sustainable development of the democratic state, the development of civil society, counteracting corruption effectively, participation of Belarus in the resolution of international problems, improving the mechanisms collective security at the global, regional and bilateral level, good contacts with the global powers based on effective diplomacy, strategic partnership and development of friendly relations with other states.

In the context of security in the economic sphere, the strategy repeats the recommendations formulated in 2001: improving the competitiveness of the Belarusian economy, sustainable development, innovation and investment in human capital, reducing production costs, improving the intensity of exports and stability of the national financial and monetary systems, ensuring non-discriminatory access of Belarusian goods and services to global markets, increasing the availability of foreign credit resources and foreign investments and, finally, improving the self-sufficiency of Belarus.

Security in the sphere of science and technology, as defined in the document, means creating a knowledge-based economy, introduction of advanced technologies in all spheres of social life, as well as international cooperation in the area of science and technology.

Security in the sphere of information is related to the creation of the information society and participation of the Republic of Belarus in organisations for the protection of information. Military security is understood as: strengthening the sense of patriotism in the society, readiness to defend national interests, maintaining peace in the region and preventing the threats to use military force, protection of independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Belarus, maintaining defence capabilities in accordance with the country's military capacity, improving the international mechanisms to ensure military security, development of military cooperation with the Russian Federation, improving the efficiency of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation [Dyner, Śmigielski 2010: 23; Rozanov 2004: 2].

Safety in the environmental sphere was associated with ensuring good living conditions for citizens, eliminating the effects of radioactive contamination in the territory of the country, rehabilitation of areas at risk of contamination, protection of natural resources, rational use of natural resources, protection of biodiversity and landscape diversity, and helping to maintain a global and regional ecological balance of natural systems.

Belarus created appropriate conditions for preventing or neutralising threats to national security. The Belarusian socio-political model is based on the rule of law principles. The state, as defined by the document, was considered an active entity of international relations, acting with a view to ensuring international and European security and guided by the principles of mutual respect, equality and justice. The foreign policy of Belarus is based on comprehensive cooperation with the Russian Federation and the other post-Soviet states, dialogue with the countries of Western Europe and greater interaction with the EU [Czachor 2011b: 26; Stankiewicz 2011: 128].

The Belarusian state borders are secure because they are not the subject of disputes or territorial claims. The state is gradually implementing a social-oriented market economy model, aiming to improve the standard of living of the population. Nevertheless, the Belarusian economy remains one of the most expensive in Europe. A high degree of dependence on energy supply, high production costs and low exports of goods and services undermine the position of Belarusian operators in foreign markets. The deterioration of the financial standing of the economy is related to the increase in external public debt. Despite the fact that Belarus has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the post-Soviet states, the quality of life of Belarusian citizens compares unfavourably with other states. Belarus also suffers a significant delay in the processes of computerisation.

The military security of the Republic of Belarus is based on the principle of resolving national issues without using force [Andryiashka 2019: 12–13]. Nevertheless, the army remains the guarantor of independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state. The trends associated with the ageing of weaponry and military equipment and military infrastructure deterioration have been fully overcome.

The concern about external interference in the country's independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty or imposition of a political course contrary to its national interests remain potential threats to the state's security. There are also justified fears of losing foreign markets, discrimination against Belarusian producers and goods, acts of terrorism in the territory or in the airspace of Belarus, the use of its territory or space by terrorist organisations, acts of ethnic extremism and racial hostility, civil disturbances, threats of violence resulting in a threat to independence, territorial integrity or state's sovereignty, incidents such as equipment breakdown, epidemic or epizootic occurring in the territory of Belarus or in the vicinity of its borders, illegal distribution of weapons of mass destruction or their components, delivery systems, technology and other hazardous substances and materials, attempts to destroy the

national spiritual traditions and moral values, or a loss or disclosure of secrets protected by law which may cause damage to the national security.

In the political sphere, the main external threats to national security also arise from the conflicts between the main actors in the global policy, which adversely affect the international and regional security, the clash of geopolitical interests of world powers, the threat of international terrorism, illegal trade in technologies, equipment, arms, ammunition and radioactive, chemical, biological and other hazardous substances, weakening of the integration structures and operation of international organisations, and Belarus's participation in the operation of special services of foreign countries, which might compromise security. The main risks in the economic sphere include deteriorating foreign trade conditions, the use of loans and investments at high interest rates, protectionist measures and barriers discriminating Belarusian goods and services established by other countries, the emergence of new transit corridors and energy transport systems that reduce the capacity of Belarus in that respect, and discrimination by international organisations [Koczan 2011: 69].

In the field of science and technology, external threats to national security arise from the limited access of Belarusian scientists and operators to latest technologies, along with the policy of foreign companies that encourages human capital flight.

In the social sphere, the main external threats include loss of national identity and cultural diversity of the Belarusian Diaspora, infringement of the rights and interests of compatriots, increased cross-border crime rate, foreign activities of criminal organisations posing a threat to life, health, freedom or social rights of the citizens of Belarus. An additional security risk in the demographic sphere is the influx of illegal immigrants to Belarus.

The threats identified in the sphere of information were as follows: outside influence on the information space of the Republic, information activities of foreign states, international organisations and individuals that are detrimental to Belarus, preparation and waging of wars in the information space by foreign parties, dissemination of information about Belarus that is false or contrary to the national values of Belarus, attempts to exploit the information resources of the state, leading to infringing its national interests.

The main external threats to military security were considered to include resolution of conflicts with the use of military forces, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their manufacturing technology, the creation of European military and political alliances disturbing the balance of forces, military infrastructure development near the borders of Belarus, decline of the potential and defence capabilities of the military and political alliances of which Belarus is a member.

In the field of environmental protection, the external sources of threats to the national security of Belarus mentioned in the strategy were: the global climate change related to the depletion of the ozone layer, cross-border air and water pollution, building of facilities that harm the environment near Belarusian borders and radioactive waste storage by the neighbouring countries near the Belarusian border [Wojcieszak 2017: 111].

The principal methods of external threat mitigation in the political sphere involve pursuing a foreign policy based on the principles of mutual respect, equality and partnership, non-interference in the affairs of sovereign states, detection, prevention and liquidation of political and diplomatic attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of Belarus, countering the violation of state sovereignty or encouragement of such violation. Threat mitigation should be also aimed at strengthening the authority of Belarus in the UN and the Security Council, undertaking efforts towards nuclear disarmament, participation in the UN non-proliferation treaties and peacekeeping operations, development of international cooperation in combating transnational organised crime related to terrorism, illegal migration and human or drug trafficking. Belarus should increase its participation in the activities of the OSCE, in creating favourable customs solutions and the single economic space within the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as in the initiatives and tasks of: the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Central European Initiative, Organisation of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and others. Mitigation of security threats also means the development of good neighbourly relations zone with the neighbouring states, comprehensive border management, implementation of the strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, fostering the relations with the EU member states, remaining in active dialogue with the EU to conclude a new partnership and cooperation agreement and to achieve the abolition of discriminatory measures in relation to Belarus, participation in international projects related to the production and transport of fuels, tightening the strategic partnership with China and Venezuela, development of cooperation with India, Vietnam, and Brazil and engaging in a constructive dialogue with the USA [Mironowicz 2011: 125].

In the context of globalisation, the strategy emphasised that an important factor in ensuring the country's sustainable development is the integration of Belarus with the global economic space. Protection against external threats in the economic sphere is linked to the diversification of the import of fuels and energy resources. It is also advisable to improve the functioning of trade organisations, transnational corporations and financial and industrial groups. Important factors improving the functioning of the Belarusian economy include: improving the efficiency of foreign debt management, reducing the cost of foreign debt servicing and creating a positive image of the state abroad which may contribute to the development of cooperation with international economic and trade organisations and integration associations, and to an improved position of the domestic producers in foreign markets.

In order to ensure protection against external threats in the field of science and technology, it is necessary to have access to international scientific and technical databases, create a system of research centres and innovative companies producing high-technology goods and exporting them to third-world countries.

The military security of Belarus is based on the principle of non-aggression and the use of non-military measures to solve disputes. Protection against external threats to the Republic's military security means pursuing a state policy that aims

to strengthen the European security system. The development of military and technical cooperation with the Russian Federation is intended to improve the defence capacity of Belarus in the east of Europe. Belarus advocates the conclusion of new agreements on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Republic of Belarus collaborates with NATO and the EU with the aim of improving the security in Europe. At the same time, it continues its efforts to improve the effectiveness of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation activities, recognising it as the main instrument of collective security in the post-Soviet space [Sadowski 2017: 121].

Mitigation of external threats to the national security in the area of environmental protection requires the development of international cooperation in the resolution of transnational legal issues, climate change assessment and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The legal basis of the national security system is provided by the Constitution, presidential decrees and other legal acts, including international agreements. The entities responsible for ensuring national security are the president of the Republic of Belarus, in charge of the security system, exercising his powers through the Security Council of Belarus and the Council of Ministers, the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, which adopts laws concerning state security and the Security Council of Belarus, responsible for the external security policy. The Council of Ministers develops the measures intended to ensure security and monitors their implementation. Public administration bodies at different levels implement security programs, whereas courts deal with cases concerning the maintenance of security [Malak 2003: 158; Dwyer 2018: 2].

According to the law of Belarus, its national security services included the armed forces, public security bodies, border services, presidential security service, the Operational and Analytical Centre, the customs, financial regulators, government agencies responsible for the areas of industry, energy, transport, security, communication, information and environmental protection. The main functions of the security system include the adjustment of the legal bases for security provision, monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the status of security, identifying the priorities and tasks of ensuring security, development and implementation of operational activities to mitigate security threats, coordination and evaluation of the effectiveness of all the entities responsible for security and for informing citizens about the status of security.

The issue of the external security of Belarus is also dealt with by the military doctrine of the state, published on 20 July 2016. Chapter V of that document provides that no state is considered to be an enemy of Belarus, which condemns the use of armed forces in conflict resolution, being guided by the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and compliance with international law. Belarus pursues a policy of peace but excludes unilateral reduction of military capabilities in the absence of such action on the part of other countries. The state participates in the work of the UN, the OSCE, maintains relations with NATO and the EU, but

the priority areas in its military policy is further development of the relations with the Russian Federation, in the framework of the Treaty on the creation of a Union State of 8 December 1999, and with the parties to the Collective Security Treaty Organisation Agreement of 15 May 1992 [Zakon Respubliki Belarus' 20 iûlâ 2016 goda no. 412-Z, «Ob utverždenii Voennoj doktriny Respubliki Belarus'»].

The major external threats to Belarus mentioned in the document include: conflict resolution with the use of armed forces, deployment of weapons of mass destruction in the territories neighbouring Belarus, European expansion of military alliances where Belarus is not a member and the limitation of its participation in alliances, occurrence of serious conflicts or conducting combat and offensive training in the territories neighbouring Belarus, the activities of terrorist and extremist states and organisations that train illegal armed formations to destabilise the situation in the Republic, discrimination against the rights of Belarusian citizens in other countries, and the imposition of sanctions and embargoes on goods exported to Belarus [Zakon Respubliki Belarus' 20 iûlâ 2016 goda no. 412-Z...; Hatešev 2016: 429].

The issues of external security of Belarus are also referred to in the “Concept of security of the Belarusian state borders for the period 2018–2022” [Ukaz Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus' 16 oktâbrâ 2018 goda no. 410, «Ob utverždenii Konceptii obešpečeniâ pograničnoj bezopasnosti Respubliki Belarus' na 2018–2022 gody»]. The concept was developed in connection with the activation of threats to security in the border area and the need to address the cross-border threats. The concept identifies the following main threats to security on the country's external borders: militarisation or rising crime in the border areas of Belarus's neighbours, the possibility of transit across Belarus of terrorists, extremists, members of international criminal groups and illegal immigrants, the violation by such persons of border crossing points, reduction of the operational capacity of the country's border services, increase in illegal imports of narcotic drugs, psychotropic drugs, arms and ammunition and radioactive, chemical and biological materials, and occurrence of mass riots and armed conflicts in the territory of neighbouring countries near the state border [Bohdan 2000].

The external security of Belarus is based on the principles of integrity of the state border; priority of national interests in the border area while respecting the principles of international law; peaceful resolution of border-related problems; state's responsibility for ensuring the protection of the state border; respect for human and citizen rights and freedoms and determination of the powers and responsibilities of the state authorities in solving problems relating to ensuring border security.

The priority areas for strengthening border security in the short and medium term are as follows: improving national and international legislation on border security; coordination of the activities of state authorities in respect of state border policy; construction and modernisation of state border and borderland infrastructure; increasing the transit capacity of the Republic of Belarus with account being taken of the strategic partnership commitments; development and implementation of the concept of integrated state border management; development of the relations with

neighbouring countries in respect of border issues with a view to maintaining peace in the border area.

The State's border policy aims at improving the protection of the external border of the Union State, developing information systems to support border services in the border security process, enhancing the operational capacity of border service operational units, training of military and civilian border services, improving measures to combat corruption among border guards, improving combat and mobilisation readiness of border services in view of the increase in their number, improving the material, technical and scientific support of border guard authorities [Ukaz Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus' 16 oktâbrâ 2018 goda...].

Other documents include the new Defence Plan of Belarus for 2020–2024, adopted by the Security Council on 19 December 2019, and the Concept of Armed Forces reconstruction and development until 2030 [*Lukašenko utverdil novyj plan oborony Belarusi. Na čem sdelany akcenty?* 2018]. These proposals restate the principles adopted under earlier documents. Belarusian defence strategies prioritise the development of an independent national security architecture and continuation of military cooperation with friendly countries. The Belarusian armed forces have never attacked any other state and merely constitute an instrument of war prevention, protecting the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The new Defence Plan places strong emphasis on the prevention of external military aggression against Belarus and scenarios of state destabilisation originating from armed conflicts or social and political riots. Having analysed the experiences of conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, Bolivia and Venezuela, military experts have formulated conclusions about the likely stages of conflict escalation in Belarus. They argue that the hypothetical conflict is likely to begin with riots started by the opposition or sabotage and intelligence cells inspired by certain international actors to undermine the stability of other states. Such threats are to be counteracted by the Belarusian military deploying response forces to secure the state border and to protect key inland facilities [Ravkov 2020: 25]. It is therefore a priority to equip the armed forces with new, modernised weapons and equipment. Since 2014, an important role in this process has been played by the Belarusian defence industry, which has been entrusted with the task of construction of missile weapons, a medium-range air defence system and armoured vehicles, and the development and testing of unmanned assault and reconnaissance aerial vehicles. China, a provider of military technology for the Belarusian defence industry complex, will play a major role in the development of the armaments industry. In the medium term, the financing of the armed forces in accordance with the defence package adopted in December 2019 is intended to cover unmanned aerial vehicles and electronic and radar intelligence. The military will purchase new assault aircraft, rocket systems and tanks. The government of Belarus also envisaged the purchase of ammunition – primarily anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles – as well as other types of ammunition.

## CONCLUSIONS

Since President Aleksandr Lukashenko came into power, three national security strategies have been announced. The first, published in 1995, was a quite concise document. The state did not favour an alliance with any party. The document was based on the idea that Belarus would not enter into any military block or alliance because it had no external enemies. Neither would it participate in armed conflicts, supply weapons or allow the transit of troops through its territory. The second strategy, published in 2001, was far more comprehensive. It defined the concept of security and declared a multi-sectoral external security policy, but the main role in defence was given to Russia and integration within a Union State with Russia. The establishment or expansion of military and political alliances, seen as potentially detrimental to Belarus, was identified as a particular risk to the external security of Belarus. The source of that threat was NATO, joined by Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in 1999.

The external economic security was undermined by the low scientific and technical potential and the fact that Belarusian goods were not sufficiently competitive to be launched in foreign markets, including the EU. The measures indicated to reinforce security in that area was closer integration of Belarus within the Union State and development of trade cooperation with post-Soviet states. Further external threats were identified in the military sphere, science and technology and environmental protection. They were often connected with measures undertaken by the western neighbours of Belarus.

The next strategy, published in 2011, abandoned the anti-NATO and anti-EU rhetoric, but clearly stressed that Belarus was to remain part of the military security system of the Russian Federation and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. New aspects of external security threats from other partners were identified: attempts to deprive Belarus of its transit country status, or discriminatory economic policy pursued by the individual countries. However, modernisation of the economy with foreign capital participation as well as the need for diversification of fuel supplies were also recognised as factors of importance for the strengthening of external security. These objectives demonstrate the changing factors seen as external threats and the absence of such threats from the Russian Federation – Belarus's principal partner.

A similar interpretation of the issue of external security of Belarus is shown in the military doctrine of the state, whose assumptions were published on 20 July 2016, and the Concept of security of the Belarusian state borders for the period 2018–2022. These documents emphasise that the priority of the military policy is to further develop the relations with the Russian Federation – under the Treaty on the creation of a Union State of 8 December 1999 – and with the parties to the Collective Security Treaty Organisation Agreement of 15 May 1992. The new Defence Plan of Belarus for 2020–2024 and the Concept of Armed Forces reconstruction and development until 2030 reiterate the principles adopted in the earlier policy documents. The De-

fence Plan places emphasis on the prevention of external military aggression against Belarus and scenarios of internal state destabilisation originating from armed conflicts or social and political riots. These threats are to be mitigated by the Belarusian army with response forces to defend the state border and facilities in the country.

The research hypothesis, proposing that the successive versions of the strategy made the external security of Belarus increasingly dependent on Russia and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, has thus been confirmed.

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