

## Foreign policy positioning issue of small States (on the example of the Republic of Belarus relations with the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China)

**Abstract.** *Small states are very weak in the political area. That is why there is a need for them to try to choose the various foreign policy strategies to defend themselves. Belarus is a small state that needs to survive in our rapidly developing and politically unstable world. Having emerged as a newly independent state as the result of the collapse of the USSR, Belarus faced a difficult choice in the decision where it was going to move further and on whom it could rely. In particular, in recent years, Belarus needs to make a subtle strategic calculation as to how to manage its relations with two important partners: Russia and China.*

*This article considers the theory of small states' foreign policy strategies in detail. It analyzes the choice of Belarus's foreign policy strategies towards China and Russia. It shows that Belarus combines some characteristics from the classic small states' foreign policy strategies, and it does not fully follow any of them.*

**Key words:** *Small state, bandwagon, balance of power, hedging, China-Belarus relations, Russia- Belarus relations.*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32523/2616-6887/2020-133-4-113-128>

Received: 13.09.2020 / Approved: 20.11.2020

**Introduction.** Nowadays each small state tries to survive in our fast-changing world. There are a lot of small states around the world that are holding memberships in international institutions and organizations and may influence on the important issues. Admittedly, there are a lot of definitions of a small state in international relations, but it is very difficult to find a complete one; however, Evgeniy Preigerman argues that they all are united by the following characteristic "lack of resources for independent or even in alliance with other countries form the environment of its own international existence" [1]. Moreover, it is important to pay attention to the country's economic and military capabilities that influence the identification of a small country. Tsygankov points out that a small state has a weak influence on its surroundings [2, p. 237]. Furthermore, Laurent Goetschel stressed

that the size of a state and its population are very important [3, p. 14]. In addition, Archie W. Simpson stresses that "a small state is not in a position to be a revisionist state; for small states, there are underlying political forces, including geography that shape their political options and establish certain limitations and constraints" [4].

In summary, any small state is identified by certain characteristics. The most widespread are the size, population, economic, and military capabilities of a state. Furthermore, usually, a small state cannot defend itself from the outer threat on its own. Nowadays the majority of states are small states that are holding memberships in international institutions and organizations around the world, and they can play an important role in decision-making. In this sense, Belarus is a "small state".

In international relations, there are three foreign policy strategies that a small state may follow. They are bandwagon strategy, the balance of power strategy, and hedging strategy.

**Bandwagon strategy.** Bandwagon strategy demands domination in the foreign policy of a rising power above a small state. According to Randall L. Schweller, bandwagoning is a strategy that “can have rapacious, predatory ends, and indeed does not require a threat at all” [5, p. 72]. He also distinguishes the “bandwagoning for profit”, where a small state has reasons for following powerful state for getting advantages from it; “... joining a conflict (on the seemingly stronger side) solely in hopes of eventually obtaining material rewards and despite the lack of a real threat” [5, p. 73]. In existing literature of different scholars’ researches, the bandwagon is a strategy, which concentrates on allying with a great and powerful state in order to reap a very good return from prospective victory. Kenneth N. Waltz stresses that the Bandwagon strategy “may seem a less demanding and a more rewarding strategy than the balance of power, requiring less effort and extracting lower costs while promising concrete rewards” [6, p. 38]. We can observe that choosing this kind of state behavior, a small state will gain a lot of advantages. However, “the price” is its partial dependence on the powerful state because the small state should give something instead that will guarantee its security from the outer thread. This also means that the small state will listen to the power state.

Leonid Karabeshkin argues that the choice of post-Soviet states that do not claim for having the status of the world or regional power state is limited by the alliance with the more powerful or more dangerous state (bandwagoning) [7, p. 51]. Bandwagon strategy is a good strategy for a small state if it has an enemy in the face of a third state, then the small state can ally with another, bigger and more powerful state to protect itself from outbound aggression and get a lot of benefit from this alliance. But a small state sometimes does not take into consideration of its sovereignty or autonomy from the big and powerful state. Richard J. Harknett and Hasan B. Yalcin argue that “Bandwagon strategy

in both offensive and defensive terms means the delegation of some part of autonomy to another actor; despite their lack of capabilities, secondary states try to find some clever ways of increasing their level of autonomy instead of an automatic bandwagoning strategy” [8, p. 516]. This statement makes us understand that the bandwagon strategy claims the dependence of a small state from a big state, where a small state should follow political, economic strategies of a big state in order to get those advantages that this alliance possesses. David Garnham states that in the case of bandwagoning the small county’s security became almost fully dependent on a big state, “bandwagoning makes a country’s future security dependent on the continued goodwill of the dominant state” [8, p. 516].

The bandwagon strategy of post-Soviet countries differs a bit from the original strategy of bandwagoning. Without any doubt, Russia has the biggest authority among the post-Soviet countries. According to Gulbaat Rzhiladze, the key issue of state sovereignty is voluntariness/compulsion political decision-making in political or strategic decisions [9, p. 33]. First of all, the bandwagon strategy closely relates to the external authority of a small state. If a small state in one form or another (for instance, joining any coalition, alliance, union and etc.) adjoin the political view of a big state on a voluntary basis (without dictates from the side of this big state, assessing its own goals, interests and the tasks in making a sovereign decision), focusing on it in the long term decision, then there is the presence of authority for this small state in the face of a particular big state [9, p. 35]. Bandwagon strategy is based on the domination over a weaker state, which cannot defend itself from the threat in the face of the third state or even in the face of that great power, which this small state is going to follow. Leah Sherwood argues that bandwagon strategy demands to accept a great power or rising power’s policies [10]. She also defines two types of bandwagoning: “defensive – the small state bandwagons to neutralize or avoid conflict with the rising power, or offensive where it seeks to profit by aligning with the other side” [10].

Therefore, the bandwagon strategy is the voluntary following a powerful and bigger state

in order to get rewards, advantages from this alliance. Usually, this initiative for bandwagon is caused by some problems with which a small state faced; it can be economic problems, even a threat from a country. Bandwagoning means to ally with the rising power that also may be the threat to a small state. However, the big disadvantage for a small state is that it can lose part of its sovereignty, the autonomy that, without any doubt, is very important for each state in our world.

**The balance of power strategy.** There are numerous understandings of balancing strategy in the theory of international relations. This strategy connects with the cooperation between a small state and a big state; the balance of power strategy is also the form of alliance, where states cooperate with each other against an enemy, presented in the face of a third state.

It is a well-known fact that power plays a very important role and is the best way of states' influence on each other in international relations. Furthermore, power is a universal way for achieving goals. Even nowadays, we can observe, that a more powerful state has more chances to influence on smaller states. The balance of power is a tool, which can help to guarantee international security in the world. A small and weaker state can create an alliance with a powerful state in order not to be concurred by a third state that encroaches upon the independence of a small state. Svetlana Budaeva and Detszidema define the balance of power as the policy of a state that is directed to achieve a certain state of the system, as the state of the system itself is characterized by some balance of forces among great powers, and is the mechanism, operating in the international system, which is paying attention to the will of its participants [11, p. 73]. We can notice that bandwagon and balancing strategies have something in common. But there is a slight and important difference. According to Randall L. Schweller, the balance of power is a strategy that seeks to ally against a rising power in order to forestall the hegemony of that powerful state; however, the bandwagon strategy requires a small state to ally with a powerful state for getting benefits from its prospective victory [5,

p. 72]. When a small state is confronted by an external threat, it may either choose balancing or bandwagoning. According to Stephen M. Walt, the balance of power requires to ally with other states against the predominant threat; in comparison, bandwagon defines the alignment with the source of danger [12, p.18]. Additionally, John J. Mearsheimer argues that "the balance of power logic often causes states to form alliances and cooperate against common enemies; states sometimes cooperate to gang up on a third state" [13]. Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen point out that "the balance of power is a valued political objective that promotes national security, upholds order among great powers, and makes the independence of states and their peoples possible" [14, p. 88]. Moreover, they distinguish a hard and a soft balance of power. The former concept is a traditional understanding of the concept that defines military power balancing between major powers [14, p. 89]. The latter one is a recent understanding of this concept, and it argues that the military power of states (for instance, alliances) is not the main focus; it rather emphasizes tacit or informal institutional cooperation among states for the special purpose of joint security against a threat that may occur [14, p. 89]. Nowadays' states are concerned about the balance of power and those advantages that they can get from their cooperation. Alexander Korolev stresses that there are internal and external balancing. According to his findings, internal balancing strategy is that "states concentrate efforts on increasing their capabilities" [15, p. 385], whereas external balancing is a "try to realign with other second-tier states" [15, p. 385]. Moreover, Khayrullin points out that the availability of nuclear weapons plays an important role in the balance of power strategy [16, p. 118]. Of course, the presence of nuclear weapons is very important for a state as it gives the state a certain level of power in the international arena and shows the power and the possibility to defend itself from the external threat. According to Tsygankov, the balance of power is one of the main concepts in the theory of international relations, it is the main method in the stabilization of the international system,

and also is a base for the international order and security [2, p. 131]. Leah Sherwood argues that there is hard and soft balancing. According to her opinion, the hard balancing theoretically is rarely done by small states, because it constrains diplomatic flexibility; however, the general strategy of balancing is the most common strategy for small states in practice [10]. Sherwood argues that “a small state can engage with great power through internal balancing by building up capacities or external balancing by forming counter-alliances” [10].

On the whole, power played and plays a very important role in the world. It is obvious that the balance of power is the strategy in which states cooperate with each other to protect themselves from the outer threat. This strategy helps to control the world’s order and prevent the one country’s hegemony. The balance of power strategy can equalize the influence on the world order of powerful and bigger states. It is the core element in the creation of international order and security in the world.

**Hedging strategy.** Hedging strategy helps a small state to save its independence and stay neutral in the international arena. Rajesh Rajagopalan argues that the hedging strategy is a way of remaining neutral between two major security threats for a small state till one of them becomes extremely dangerous that requires the siding with the other powerful state [17, p. 14].

The hedging strategy is one of the three choices of small states’ foreign policy strategies towards great powers in our unstable and fastly changing world. Hedging is the best way for a state to stay neutral and save its autonomy until there is a need for choosing someone’s side. This strategy helps to avoid the troubles that may occur from the forming alliance; moreover, it prevents the appearing of controversies on the domestic level. Rajesh Rajagopalan points out that the hedging strategy is “sharply attentive to the international security environment... and flexible” [17, p. 15]. We can notice that there is an advantage for a state – to be independent from great powers. However, the state will need to cooperate in case of the presence of a threat from the outside that will lead this state to choose another way of small state behavior.

In understanding the hedging strategy of small states, Leah Sherwood finds out that “a state will hedge when it seeks the middle ground” [10]. That means that a small state will try to balance its cooperation and security dependence from a great power, whilst trying to hedge against a big state. Furthermore, Alexander Korolev argues that the hedging strategy presents itself as the mix of balancing, engagement, cooperation, and competition of risk contingency that may become an indirect balancing, and return maximization that may take the shape of the limited bandwagon [15, p. 376]. There is an opinion that the hedging strategy is an alternative to the balance of power and bandwagon strategies. However, the hedging strategy has something in common with these two strategies. It is less confrontational and aggressive than the balance of power strategy, and it involves less cooperation than the bandwagon strategy [15, p. 376]. It can be assumed that the hedging strategy takes some things from these two strategies. Yoel Guzansky suggests another definition of the hedging strategy. He explains that the hedging strategy “allows a small power, interested in immediate gain, to offset risks and improve its situation in relation to the rising power while avoiding a major confrontation; ... the strategy makes it possible to maintain significant ties with the threatening force and, at the same time, to form alliances to balance the impending threat” [18]. This strategy gives some freedom to a small state; it can cooperate with other different states without any controls from a big state, which allows a small state to cooperate and develop relations with different big powers.

Kei Koga argues that the hedging strategy allows a state to conduct a counteracting policy that means to strengthen its economic cooperation and temporarily avoid confrontation with a powerful state, which may be a potential adversarial state, while a small state can prepare for diplomatic and military confrontation by increasing military capabilities [19, p. 633]. Hedging strategy characterizes the behavior of small and great powers. A state will choose to hedge, when “a state pursues multiple options, mixing confrontation and cooperation in order to spread the risks inherent in achieving a single

objective" [20, p. 307]. The strategy illustrates that a small state, using this strategy, is trying to improve its position in the world order. With the choice of a small state to hedge, it has more freedom in its activities in the international arena. Hedging strategy may involve a lot of players that can be large and small, which are engaged in day-to-day policies of state interests in different areas [21, p. 5]. Hedging, in its essence, is one of the interesting strategies of small states' foreign policy strategies. Van Jackson has understood the hedging strategy as a way of coping with the uncertainty of a small state. This strategy pursues the opposing or contradictory actions that may serve as a way of minimizing or downsizing risks that are associated with the alignment behavior of a small state [22, p. 333].

In the issue, the hedging strategy helps a small state to save its independence and autonomy. This strategy of small states' foreign policy strategies presents itself as the strategy of staying neutral towards two or more great

powers until there will be a need for allying with one of them to protect itself from the outer threat. However, there is one important disadvantage of this strategy, when there will be the time for allying with a great power to resist the threat, it's obvious that successful cooperation is not the deal of one hour, states may not be able to deal with a rapidly developing threat effectively, because the alignments are time-demanding [17, p. 15-16].

Table 1 "Overlook on the theory of small states' foreign policy strategies" provides information about three strategies and the concrete description of each of them, which will be useful in further understanding of Belarus' foreign policy strategies. The table illustrates the major characteristics of bandwagoning, balancing, and hedging strategies, and it helps to determine the boundaries of each strategy. Moreover, a small state may choose to combine some characteristics from different strategies.

<b>Bandwagon strategy</b>	<b>Balancing strategy</b>	<b>Hedging strategy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Great power's domination over a small state;</li> <li>- ally with Great Power for getting advantages;</li> <li>- partial dependence on the Powerful State;</li> <li>- a small state follows political, economic strategies of a big state;</li> <li>- agree with the political view of a big state;</li> <li>- a small state cannot defend itself from the third state or the great power itself;</li> <li>- ally with the source of danger.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation;</li> <li>- creates an alliance with power state, avoiding to be conquered by the third state that encroaches upon its independence;</li> <li>- allies against a rising power to prevent hegemony;</li> <li>- to form an alliance and cooperate against a common enemy;</li> <li>- availability of nuclear weapon plays an important role;</li> <li>- the main method in the stabilization of the International system and base for International order and security;</li> <li>- equalize the influence on the world order of powerful, bigger state.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remain neutral between two major security threats until one becomes very dangerous to require siding with the other;</li> <li>- allows offset risks and improve its situation in relation to the rising power while avoiding a major confrontation;</li> <li>- give freedom (can cooperate with other states without control from a big state);</li> <li>- through the strategy, a state conducts a counteracting policy–strengthen economic cooperation while preparing for a diplomatic and military confrontation;</li> <li>- state through this strategy tries to improve its position in the world order;</li> <li>- helps to save independence and autonomy.</li> </ul>

Table 1: "Overlook on the theory of small states' foreign policy strategies"

**How Belarus' foreign policy strategy matches classic theories?** The Republic of Belarus always declares multi-vectored foreign policy. Nowadays, Belarusian foreign policy is not limited within relations with Russia. Nevertheless, the Russian Federation is still a very important country for Belarus, even though Belarus' foreign policy became wider that we can observe in figure 1 "Belarus foreign policy indices 2011-2018". The figure is developed with the help of a long-term analysis of Belarus' foreign policies from January 2011 to August 2018 by Belarusian scholars. It proves that Belarus is open to dialogue and cooperation with everyone. However, Belarus, just like each small state that needs to survive in the world, pursues its own goals and national interests in international relations and cooperation with other states. The figure shows that during different years, when Belarus' foreign policy is more concentrated on China, EU, or other countries (lines are rising), foreign policy towards Russia is getting worse a little bit, the red line is falling, that means that during that short period of time they were not in the big priority or there were some events that serve as a reason for their falling, and vice versa, when Belarus' foreign policy is concentrated more on Russia, the red line is rising, other lines decreasing, the relations with Russia is good and prosperous.

**Belarus' choice of foreign policy strategy towards Russia.** The official relations between Russia and Belarus were established in 1992. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 put the beginning for deeper development of relations and cooperation between two states. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus hardly could survive in the world that it faced. Belarus was very dependent on Russia, even today it is still depending on it. Russia is the main investor that has a big impact on Belarus' economy. The biggest trade turnover of Belarus is with Russia. Russia and Belarus have very close connections based on the mutual historical background, the way of thinking, and culture. It is difficult to say what exact strategy the Republic of Belarus uses towards the Russian Federation. I am inclined to think that Belarus uses each strategy; nevertheless, the strategies are combined and have some changes. The choice depends on the situation and period of time in which Belarus finds itself in.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Belarus did not have any other alternative as to bandwagon with balancing. The reason is that the economy of the country was destroyed as it was oriented on the USSR. During that period, Belarus found itself in the situation, where it did not know where to move further, but Belarusian people claimed unification with Russia because no one expected the collapse of the USSR.

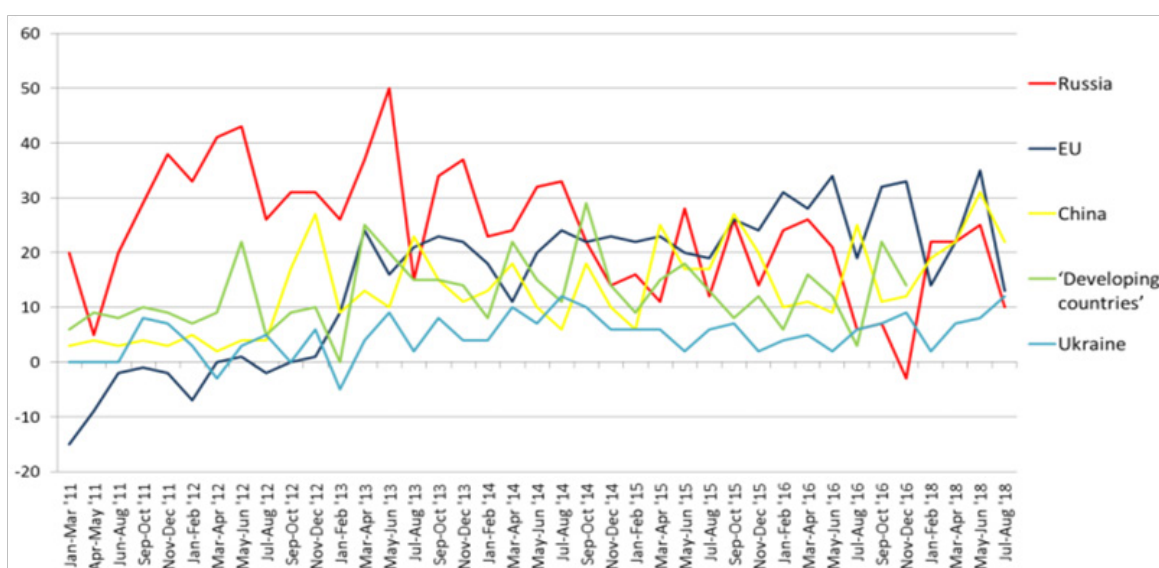


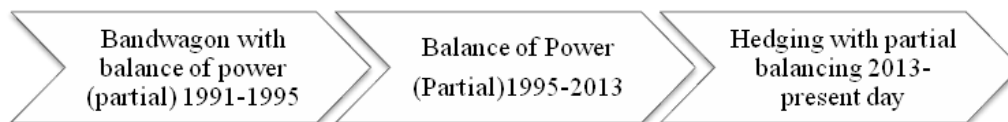
Figure 1: "Belarus Foreign Policy indices 2011-2018" [23]

Anton Susyaev argues that after the collapse of the USSR, the development of independent Belarus had several factors that influenced a lot on the relations between Russia and Belarus. He divides them into two groups: the first group is the historical and national-ethnic factors: Belarus was less affected by the processes of “national revival” in comparison with the other republics of the former USSR; primarily, that was due to the lack of historical request for the establishment of a national state [24, p. 325]. In the period of centuries of Russian and Belarusian peoples’ coexistence, the common culture, the way of economic life, and mentality were established. Belarusian people together with Ukrainians are very close to Russian people genetically and linguistically. However, in comparison with Ukraine, Belarus did not try to be totally separate from Russia. The second group that Susyaev stressed is political and economic factors: Belarus, which does not have a wide base of raw materials, served as the “assembly shop” of the Soviet Union, that is why Belarus was interested not in the formation of a new national identity, but in the maximum preservation of the Soviet identity, ensuring the former life and economic standards [24, p. 326]. During that period of Belarusian history, Belarus chose to be dependent on Russia. It allied with great power to get advantages and benefits. Table 1 shows that a small state, which chose the bandwagon strategy, follows the same strategies of policy and economy of the big state. Belarus cannot protect itself from outer threat, because it was too weak and the only way to defend itself and to win time for developing and re-establishing its economy was a big state’s dominance that Belarus saw in Russia. The balance of power was presented by the agreements that both countries signed on cooperation and other alliances, including military ones that they created during the period of 1991-1995. For example, in 1993 Belarus joined the collective security treaty organization (CSTO - ODKB). In 1995, both countries signed the treaty of friendship, good-neighborliness, and cooperation for 10 years. But it did not mean a total control from Russia’s side over Belarus, because Belarus began to establish relations with other states, for instance, we know Belarus also

established official diplomatic relations with China in 1992.

Things had changed when Belarus began to rise on its own legs a little bit, and at that time Belarus chose a partial balance of power strategy as its foreign policy strategy towards Russia. Belarus began to sign a lot of treaties and agreements with Russia at the end of the 90s. Both countries started to cooperate a lot. Moreover, Belarus and Russia started to create different alliances; they signed agreements on joint protection of their territories. The partial balance of power strategy also gave an opportunity for Belarus to save its independence as Belarus started to declare its independence more accurately after the adoption of the constitution in 1994. Article 1 of the Constitution declares that Belarus protects its independence, territorial integrity, and constitutional order, provides law and order [25]. The period of 1995-2013 was full of cooperation and signing of different kinds of treaties, and agreements that can prove the choice of the balance of power foreign policy strategy by Belarus. For example, the agreement on the establishment of a community of Russia and Belarus (1997), the agreement on equal rights of citizens (1998), and the agreement on the establishment of the Union State (1999). the agreement on the joint strategic exercise of the armed forces of Russia and Belarus (2009). However, despite the classic definition of balance of power, Belarus did not use it fully, as during that time it did not see a threat in Russia and all their cooperation was and are addressed on the mutual help if there would be an outer threat and cooperation, that is why the balancing was partial. However, Belarus balanced between Russia and the West, because it was under pressure as the West looked at Belarus and wanted to make Russia weaker, depriving its brother.

When the Ukrainian crisis broke out in 2013, it led to the aggravation of Russia’s relations with the West that created a threat in the relations between Russia and Belarus. On the one hand, Belarus stayed constant in its choice of foreign policy strategy, balancing between Russia and the West. Belarus emphasized the independence of its position, for example, the President of the Republic of Belarus recognized the legitimacy of



the new Ukrainian government in 2014 [26]. He supported the preservation of Ukraine's territorial integrity [26]. On the other hand, Belarus signed the treaty on the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union, supported Russia at the UN General Assembly in 2014, where it voted against the adoption of the resolution that accepts the territorial integrity of Ukraine [27]. However, at the same time, Belarus refused to sign the final statement of the Eastern Partnership summit in Riga in 2015, because of the presence of the "annexation of Crimea" phrase [28]. Thus, I argue that during this period, there was a combination of two strategies – hedging and balancing. The ambiguous position of Belarus shows that it has chosen the strategy that can be characterized as the hedging strategy with a partial balance of power. The reason for that is that after the Ukrainian crisis, the new possibilities were opened in front of Belarus. Belarus started to disagree with Russia in some situations thus opening the way to the cooperation with the West. At the same time, another great power that pays attention to Belarus was China, during that period their cooperation is rising, but, without any doubt, Belarus sees a reliable partner in China and takes the development of relations with China to a priority of Belarus' foreign policy, thus Belarus has another way if something happens.

The Republic of Belarus remained a little bit neutral among Russia, China, and the West in order to calculate all the risks for hedging between them for its own interests and benefits. The Ukrainian Crisis served as the cause for imposing sanctions on the Russian Federation. However, it is also not good for Belarus, because of these sanctions the investments from the main investor – Russia may become less in the future.

On the whole, Belarus' choice of foreign policy strategy towards Russia is very difficult to identify, because it cannot be described in a full understanding by any of the classic strategies of small states' foreign policy strategies. From 1991 to 1995 the strategy that was chosen by Belarus was the bandwagon with a partial balance of

power that was caused by the situation in which Belarus needed to survive after the collapse of the USSR. From 1995 to 2013 Belarus chose the partial balance of power strategy and this was the period when Belarus started to recover. From 2013 to the present day, the Ukrainian crisis worked as an impetus for changing the policy of Belarus. The recent foreign policy strategy towards Russia that is used by Belarus is the hedging strategy with partial balancing because the behavior of Belarus shows the presence of main characteristics from both strategies, such as cooperation, creation of alliances with Russia – a great power, and at the same time Belarus wants and can cooperate with other states, calculate different risks of cooperation or declaration of its position. It does not see a big threat in Russia, even if the media has some news about calling Russia an enemy of Belarus, they cannot be serious as the relations are too deep, however, sometimes they have their disagreements and different opinions on world issues. Belarus maneuvers in the international arena in order to compensate its external pressure and to meet the interests of the Belarusian economy and Belarusian people.

**Belarus' choice of foreign policy strategy towards China.** Nowadays the development of relations and cooperation with China is a big priority for Belarus. However, in the case of Belarus' choice of foreign policy strategy towards China, we can observe that it is not so complicated as it is in the case of Russia.

The official relationship between Beijing and Minsk was established in 1992. The choice of Belarus' foreign policy strategy towards China was not so difficult – the partial balance of power, because there was no concrete threat from the side of Russia or any other country. During the period of 1992-2010, the relationship was stable. In the spring of 1997, the President of Belarus had his second working visit to China in order to intensify the development of trade relations and attract foreign investments into the Belarusian economy. Moreover, this visit tended to expand the market for selling Belarusian goods [29].



The Joint Declaration of China and Belarus was adopted in 2005 that leads to the new phase in the relations between two states, the phase of comprehensive development and strategic cooperation; the parties express their resoluteness in the spirit of eternal friendship, sincerity, and mutual trust to expand large-scale cooperation in the areas of common interest with a view to mutual development [30]. Evelina Chebanova points out that “before the entry into force of the Customs Code of the Customs Union, Belarusian-Chinese relations developed smoothly, without sharp jumps towards improvement; since 2010 China has become noticeably more active, trade turnover and the number of investment projects were growing rapidly” [31, p. 97]. Furthermore, during a working visit in 2010, the Belarusian President signed around 13 documents on the implementation of joint projects [32]. Belarus’ State Committee on Science and Technology initiated the establishment of the Belarusian-Chinese Technopark in Changchun for expanding scientific and technological cooperation programs with China in 2009 [33]. The Park works on the development of joint projects in innovation, and their subsequent promotion at the markets of Belarus, China, and other countries [34]. The year 2010 was very important in the development of the relations between these two countries. In the same year, 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 in the territory of Belarus [35]. According to the Belarusian Embassy’s report from January 4, 2019, the total number of “The Great Stone” Industrial Park residents reached 42, including 25 Chinese companies [36]. However, their cooperation is not only limited by the creation of the China-Belarus Industrial Park, there are also a lot of different projects in different spheres. Cultural exchange between two countries also developed rapidly; for example, the center of Belarusian culture was established at East China Normal University in Shanghai in 2011. The task of the center is to spread information about the national culture, identity of the Belarusian people, their traditions, and customs [37].

As we can see from what is written above, Belarus cooperates with China in different spheres and such cooperation allows Belarus to stay somehow independent and have a choice in their position towards different countries in the world. The real and more prosperous cooperation began after 2010, thus this year serves as our boundary in changing the choice of Belarus’ foreign policy strategy towards China. The period before 2010 was full of visits and the signing of different agreements. Having analyzed the Sino-Belarusian relationship and cooperation, I argue that starting from 1992 to 2010, Belarus chose the partial balance of power strategy. During that period both states were trying to know a lot about each other, the cooperation was not too big and wide in comparison with these days. There were a lot of visits from both sides, and some agreements were signed, but the cooperation was small, and it could not have a big influence on the relations and made them move on like these days. The reason may be that Belarus is the country of Russia’s influence and it was very dependent from Russia in the 90s, especially economically and politically. In addition, Belarus values relations with China and fully supports Beijing’s position on the issues of Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. Additionally, China is one of the first countries, which recognized the independence of Belarus in 1992 [38, p. 274].

During the period from 2010 to the present day, the relations started to move on. I argue that Belarus chooses the hedging strategy towards China, at the same time allowing itself a partial balancing. The choice in favor of hedging strategy allows Belarus not fully rely on one particular state, that is why the choice of hedging strategy towards China gives Belarus the way for retreat if something happens. The partial balancing is presented by its cooperation and signing of different agreements with China, especially the agreement on the military cooperation between the ministries of defense of China and Belarus that was signed in 2010. These may be the evidence of the close relations between two states and the way of Belarus to secure itself. China and Belarus had combined military exercises, such as China-Belarus combined military exercise “Stremitelnyj



Orel” (Slashing Eagle) in 2015, China-Belarus combined anti-terrorist exercises “Atakuyushchij Sokol-2018” (Attacking Hawk-2018) in 2018. The cooperation between t China and Belarus continue growing after the announcement of the One Belt One Road Initiative in 2013. Moreover, in 2013, the Sino-Belarusian relations stepped into a new stage, following the official visit of the Belarusian President to Beijing. The Belarusian President and Chinese President Xi Jinping signed the Declaration on the establishment of the comprehensive strategic partnership between Belarus and China. The document notes that the cornerstone of the Chinese-Belarusian cooperation is economic cooperation, including trade, economic, and investment [32].

During the official visit of the Belarusian President to China in 2016, Alexander Lukashenko distinguished current Chinese leader –Xi Jinping, with whom Sino-Belarusian relations raised very high during a short period of time. In the result of this visit, two leaders signed the Declaration on trusting comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation that resulted in nearly three dozen joint agreements [39]. The visit of 2018 to China for bilateral relations of China and Belarus meant a lot and this year showed great development in cooperation. Belarus and China signed several documents on the development of cooperation in various fields, such as tourism, economic, financial, customs [40]. Nowadays, Belarus cooperates with China openly and with big enthusiasm. However, Belarus, represented by its leader Lukashenko, calculates all the risks of accepting different positions in the relations with China and does everything that will be good for Belarus’ economy, Belarusian people, and political cooperation with different countries.

Therefore, Belarus’ choice of foreign policy strategy is specified by the relations and cooperation between China and Belarus. During the past few years, their cooperation rose in comparison with the beginning that started from the establishment of official relations in 1992. These all lead to the idea that from 1992 to

2010 Belarus chose the partial balance of power, there was no obvious enemy that encroached on Belarus’ independence; thus, Belarus just needed to cooperate with China and developed their relations. The period was full of visits in order to establish good relations between both states. The period of 2010 to the present days is marked by a jump in their relations; investments are rising, however, the total amount of them from China is low, in comparison with other countries. Foreign trade with China is also rising, especially the import of goods, but export is declining. From 2010 to the present-day Belarus chooses the hedging strategy with partial balancing. According to the hedging strategy, Belarus tries to be neutral among great powers until there will be a need to side with one of them, but each of them can be a threat to its security as Belarus is a small state; however, there is no an obvious threat, that is why there is no need to follow the whole strategy. Belarus calculates all risks of cooperation and alliances with great powers that give it an opportunity for maneuvering. It has freedom in its cooperation with other states; China does not control Belarus’ international cooperation and relations. The partial balancing in Belarus’ strategy is presented by cooperation. Belarus cooperates with China, signs a lot of different agreements, for instance, China and Belarus signed the agreement on military cooperation between the ministries of defense of China and Belarus in 2010 that can be the evidence of military support if there will be a need in it.

Belarus’ foreign policy can hardly be predicted by other countries. After Belarus became an independent state in 1991, the government of Belarus started to use its own interpretation of foreign policy towards partners around the world. It is difficult to try to interpret Belarus’s foreign policy relations and actions through the classic theory of small states’ foreign policy strategies, such as bandwagoning, the balance of power, and hedging. Belarus uses a combination of these strategies, in a selective manner, by combining some characteristics of them. The

reason is that Belarus pursues its own strategic goals and national interests in international relations. Moreover, the President of Belarus – Alexander Lukashenko is very prudent and calculated in the declaration of Belarus' position and his statements. He may influence the choice of Belarus' strategy towards China and Russia.

In summary, Belarus' recent choice of foreign policy towards Russia and China is the hedging strategy with partial balancing. Hedging Strategy gives Belarus an opportunity to remain neutral between two great powers – China and Russia and calculates all the risks of siding with one of them. This strategy gives the chance to avoid some confrontations in the political arena. In addition, Belarus tries to save its autonomy, independence, and tries to improve its position in the world order. Having chosen this strategy, Belarus has the freedom to cooperate with other states, which can be proved by the multi-vector foreign policy of Belarus. There is also a partial balancing in Belarus' foreign policy strategy towards China and Russia. However, even if Belarus has some freedom in her movements, it is still connected with Russia by numerous agreements and alliances in different spheres, including the military sphere and especially by the agreement on the establishment of the Union State. If there are any outer threats for Russia or Belarus, both countries will stay together against an enemy, which is one of the main characteristics of the balance of powers strategy – allying with a great power in order to protect a small state's independence. In this case, if there is a threat to Belarus, Russia will not stay neutral. In one of the statements of Mikhail Babich, – Russian ambassador to Belarus (2018-2019), he points out that any military attack on Belarus will be regarded as an attack on Russia with all

subsequent consequences [41]. Moreover, the Slavic identity plays a very important role in the relations between Russia and Belarus, because common history, mentality, and culture have created a very deep relationship between both countries that, without any doubt, influence on the way of their cooperation. Belarus cannot put Russia and China on the same place. Relations with China were established relatively not long ago. In contrast, Belarus and Russia have hundreds of pages of common history. But the recent increase and development of Sino-Belarusian relations should not be ignored. The choice of Belarus to hedge with partial balancing towards Russia and China shows that Belarus can freely cooperate with different countries, which are seen as important ones for it.

Belarus has an opportunity to establish and develop its good relations with other states in a way that is beneficial for the country's interests and its survival in the political arena. Moreover, Belarus' foreign policy and its choice of strategies towards other countries are defined by the concrete interests of society. The declaration of Belarus' position in the world issues mostly depends on Belarus' national interests and the Belarusian President's opinion; however, they should not seriously break China-Belarus and Russia-Belarus agreements, because these two countries are important for Belarus.

**Conclusion.** It is necessary to note that it is difficult to compare Belarus' foreign policy strategy towards Russia and China. These relations have a lot of different backgrounds of their establishing and developing. However, both countries are very important for Belarus. Russia may be the country that can somehow influence on Belarus' decisions, but this depends on the agreements that both countries signed and Belarus' benefits from that choice.

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**Шағын мемлекеттердің сыртқы саяси ұстанымдары мәселесі  
(Беларусь Республикасының Ресей және Қытаймен қарым-қатынасы мысалында)**

**Аңдатпа.** Шағын мемлекеттер саяси аренада өте әлсіз, сондықтан олар өзін-өзі қорғауда сыртқы саяси стратегиялардың бірін ұстануы керек. Беларусь - бұл КСРО ыдырауының нәтижесінде жаңа тәуелсіз ел ретінде пайда болған шағын мемлекет. Бұл тұрғыда Беларусь қай бағытта алға жылжу және кімге сүйену сынды мәселеде қиын таңдау үстінде тұрды. Әсіресе, қазіргі таңда Беларуссия екі маңызды серікте-

спен: Ресей және Қытаймен қарым-қатынасты қалай басқарудың тиімді стратегиялық есептеуін жүргізуі керек.

Мақалада шағын мемлекеттердің сыртқы саяси стратегиялары жан-жақты қарастырылады. Атап айтқанда, мақалада Беларусьтің маңызды серіктестерге – Ресей мен Қытайға қатысты сыртқы саяси стратегияларын таңдауы талданады. Сонымен қатар, Беларусь шағын мемлекеттердің классикалық сыртқы саяси стратегияларының кейбір ерекшеліктерін біріктіретінін айғақтайды, алайда олардың әрқайсысын толық ұстанбайды.

**Түйін сөздер:** шағын мемлекет, қосылу стратегиясы, күштердің арақатынасы стратегиясы, хеджирлеу стратегиясы, Ресей-Беларусь қатынастары, Қытай-Беларусь қатынастары.

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### **Проблема внешнеполитического позиционирования малых государств (на примере отношений Республики Беларусь с Россией и Китаем)**

**Аннотация.** Малые государства очень слабы на политической арене, поэтому им необходимо придерживаться одной из внешнеполитических стратегий для самозащиты. Беларусь – это маленькое государство; возникнув как новое независимое государство в результате распада СССР, Беларусь оказалась перед трудным выбором: в каком направлении ей двигаться дальше и на кого опереться. В настоящее время Беларуси особенно необходимо сделать тонкий стратегический расчет относительно того, как управлять своими отношениями с двумя важными партнерами: Россией и Китаем.

В статье подробно рассматриваются внешнеполитические стратегии малых государств. В частности, анализируется выбор внешнеполитических стратегий Беларуси по отношению к важным партнерам – России и Китаю. В работе показано, что Беларусь сочетает в себе некоторые черты классических внешнеполитических стратегий малых государств, однако не в полной мере придерживается каждой из них.

**Ключевые слова:** малое государство, стратегия примыкания, стратегия соотношения сил, стратегия хеджирования, российско-белорусские отношения, китайско-белорусские отношения.

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