

through the Kaliningrad port (export to third world countries), as well as using the Kaliningrad airport for organizing transit flights to European countries.

Kaliningrad State Technical University carries out long-term cooperation with Grodno State Agricultural University, the Belarusian State Agricultural Academy, State Scientific Institution “The Joint Institute for Power and Nuclear Research – «Sosny», Sukhoi State Technical University of Gomel, Belarusian State Technological University, Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics, National Institute for Higher Education, Polessky State University.

We forecast further expansion of cooperation in the field of academic and scientific interuniversity cooperation, youth policy and within the Baltic University Programme.

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BELARUSIAN-NORWEGIAN COOPERATION ON THE ISSUE OF UN REFORM: CURRENT STATE AND PROSPECTS

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The article deals with one of the most relevant topics of today's world politics, which is the United Nations reform. The authors examine the problem through one of the key measures to be taken during the reforming process – the improvement of regional

cooperation. *The purpose* of the study is to assess the prospects of inter-state cooperation between Norway and Belarus in the direction of the UN reform. *The relevance* of the study is determined by the importance of the discussion on the ways to increase the effectiveness of the UN and the active development of the Norwegian-Belarusian relations in the context of global relations, as well as the insufficient development of the issue in historiography. The authors conclude that there exist 20 initiatives supported simultaneously by Norway and Belarus, which can become the foundation for Norwegian-Belarusian cooperation in the aforementioned direction. At the same time, significant steps to deepen such cooperation can be taken if more than 10 mutually complementary initiatives are implemented on a joint basis. In order to transfer to such fruitful cooperation more smoothly the authors also initiate three preparatory steps, which are supposed to be the impetus for further development of bilateral relations.

Keywords: foreign policy; Norway; Belarus; bilateral relations; multilateral diplomacy; UN reform; regional cooperation; globalization.

БЕЛОРУССКО-НОРВЕЖСКОЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО В ОБЛАСТИ РЕФОРМИРОВАНИЯ ООН: СОСТОЯНИЕ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ

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В статье рассматривается одна из наиболее актуальных проблем современной мировой политики – реформа Организации Объединенных Наций. Авторы исследуют ее через одну из ключевых мер, которые необходимо предпринять в процессе реформирования – улучшение регионального сотрудничества. *Целью* исследования является оценка перспектив межгосударственного сотрудничества Норвегии и Беларуси в направлении реформирования ООН. *Актуальность* исследования определяется важностью дискуссии о путях повышения эффективности ООН и активного развития норвежско-белорусских отношений в контексте глобальных отношений, а также недостаточной разработанностью данного вопроса в историографии. Авторы приходят к выводу, что существует 20 инициатив, поддерживаемых одновременно Норвегией и Беларусью, которые могут стать основой для норвежско-белорусского сотрудничества в указанном направлении. В то же время значительные шаги по углублению такого сотрудничества могут быть предприняты, если на совместной основе будет реализовано более 10 взаимодополняющих инициатив. Для более плавного перехода к плодотворному межгосударственному сотрудничеству авторы также выделяют три подготовительных шага, которые должны стать толчком для дальнейшего развития двусторонних отношений.

Ключевые слова: внешняя политика; Норвегия; Беларусь; двусторонние отношения; многосторонняя дипломатия; реформа ООН; региональное сотрудничество; глобализация.

In the twenty-first century, when the contradictory process of globalization continues to intensify the international community is particularly concerned about the prospects of the United Nations considering it as an integral element of the modern system of international relations and global security. An intrinsic condition for the modernization of the UN is supposed to be the qualitative improvement of regional cooperation both at the level of country teams at headquarters (representative offices and delegations to forums) and at the level of regional organizations. The result of bilateral inter-state cooperation and joint efforts to strengthen and update the work of the UN can be the modification of ways out of the current crisis for the better when the number of critics of the post-1991 world order is constantly growing.

In this regard, considering the possibilities of cooperation on the issue of UN reform can open up new horizons for Belarusian-Norwegian cooperation, and bring relations between Minsk and Oslo to a qualitatively new level. *The purpose* of the study is to assess the prospects of inter-state cooperation between Norway and Belarus in this direction. *The relevance* of the study is determined by the importance of the discussion on the ways to increase the effectiveness of the UN and the active development of the Norwegian-Belarusian relations in the context of global relations, as well as the insufficient development of the issue in historiography. When conducting the research, the authors were guided by system, value, macro- and micro-historical *approaches*, there were used both general scientific (analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, induction, deduction) and special *methods* (institutional, structural and functional, analysis of political and diplomatic discourse). *The object* of the research is the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Belarus at the present stage. *The subject* of the research is the activity of the diplomatic missions of Norway and Belarus in the UN aimed at adapting and updating the work of the organization in the light of new trends and processes in international life (initiatives, proposals, projects and their content).

The impetus for the study was a significant intensification of cooperation between Belarus and Norway in different spheres of public life, both on the European and global levels. An actively promoted format of political dialogue in recent years has been consultations between the foreign ministries of the two countries [1], there has taken place a regular dialogue between the foreign ministers of states [2, 3], including in the framework of the UN [2], significant progress has been made in the field of trade, economy and technology exchange [1]. At the same time, Minsk and Oslo emphasize the need for further participation in the development of multilateral diplomacy. The studied aspect of inter-state cooperation has been repeatedly

discussed in the framework of the joint Belarusian-Norwegian dialogue [1, 3]. The authors are of the opinion that joining efforts on the issue of UN reform can become a catalyst for the development of a new vector of interaction between the two states on the world stage.

The study revealed that the key areas of institutional reform of the UN, considered by the Norwegian side, are the reform of the Security Council (SC), modernization of the General Assembly (GA), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Human Rights Council (HRC), as well as peacekeeping. This mainly coincides with the directions of the UN reform being developed by the Republic of Belarus, except that the Belarusian diplomacy also has a well-formed position on the issue of the UN Secretariat reform.

The study found that 20 initiatives supported simultaneously by the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Belarus can become the foundation for Norwegian-Belarusian cooperation in the framework of UN reform (see table 1). At the same time, significant steps to deepen such cooperation can be taken if more than 10 mutually complementary initiatives are implemented on a joint basis (these are the initiatives supported by either of the parties, but being estimated to meet the interests of the other party). It should be noted that the authors recorded the largest number of them in the analysis of Norwegian and Belarusian approaches to the reform of the UN Security Council. Such a situation may highly likely indicate that the reform of this central UN body will serve as a starting point for the joint expression of the will of states in the process of reforming the organization as a whole.

Table 1. Common and mutually complementary initiatives of the Republic of Belarus and the Kingdom of Norway in the UN reform process

	Mutually complementary	Belarus	Norway
Clarification of UN funding issues		+	+
• completeness, unconditionality and compliance with time limits by states in fulfilling financial obligations	MC		+
• priority of budget financing of UN activities over sponsorship	MC	+	
• consideration of the business segment as a partner in financial matters		+	+
Clarification of issues of interaction between the GA and the SC		+	+
• legal support of the process	MC	+	
Updated and more effective UN country teams		+	+
Development of cooperation with regional organizations		+	+
• including Groups of Friends		+	+

	Mutually complementary	Belarus	Norway
• special attention to the African Union	MC		+
The expansion of UN cooperation with civil society		+	+
The UN Security Council reform		+	+
• a more transparent, inclusive and accountable body		+	+
• expansion so as to reflect the realities of the modern world		+	+
• expansion in both the permanent and the non-permanent category		+	+
• special attention to the region of Africa		+	+
• special attention to the Eastern Europe region, as well as other underrepresented regions	MC	+	
• expanding the representation of developing states	MC		+
• more opportunities for small states to be elected	MC		+
• the principle of fiscal neutrality	MC	+	
Strengthening the role of the President and Vice-presidents of the GA		+	+
• financial and technical assistance	MC	+	
• providing a better “institutional memory”		+	+
• additional powers, including in informal negotiations to move directly to the topic of negotiations instead of general discussion	MC		+
Optimizing the election process for the Secretary-General		+	+
• achieving greater transparency in the process		+	+
Optimizing the interaction of the ECOSOC with international economic organizations, including the World Trade Organization (WTO)		+	+
• reducing politicization of approaches to cooperation with developing countries	MC	+	
• solving the problem of “monopolization” of rights to join the WTO	MC	+	
• developing a joint WTO-UN strategy to assist countries affected by conflict, instability or violence	MC		+
Achieving gender equality within the UN		+	+
Peacekeeping reform		+	+
• more goal-oriented missions		+	+

Source: authoring on the basis of the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus [4], the UN Digital Library [5] and the United Nations PaperSmart [6]

The authors found out that the potential of bilateral cooperation in the framework of UN reform is not limited exclusively to mutually complementary initiatives. There is a host of proposals on which only one of the two states has formed an opinion. Finding a compromise on such issues could significantly deepen Norwegian-Belarusian cooperation in the UN.

To illustrate, let us consider some aspects of the reform of the above-mentioned Security Council. Thus, the Belarusian diplomacy has not previously expressed the need to update the rules on the use of the veto by permanent members of the Council. At the same time, the Norwegian side has formed its position on this issue: “It must be recognised that in instances today where the Council fails to live up to its Charter obligations, a main source of this inability to act is the veto” [6].

In the framework of the authors’ research, an inversion of this example was found as well. The Republic of Belarus supports the creation of a clear mechanism for the introduction and lifting of sanctions, as well as countering their impact on non-involved states. According to the position of the Belarusian diplomacy, the “humanitarian limits” of sanctions must be determined and the likely consequences for third countries and the civilian population, especially the most vulnerable groups, must be calculated [5]. Nonetheless, when the authors studied the Norwegian approaches to the reform of the UN Security Council the formulated position on the issue of sanctions was not found.

This example clearly demonstrates the potential of Belarusian-Norwegian cooperation in reforming the Security Council, as well as the UN system as a whole. Reaching an agreement and finding common ground on a wealth of such issues could greatly contribute to bringing Norway and Belarus closer together at both the regional and global levels.

Along with that, there are certain contradictions in the positions of states in relation to some UN bodies (in particular, the Human Rights Council). Historically, there has been a “split” between Western and Eastern interpretations of the concept of “human dignity”, which underlies the understanding of human rights. Western states (primarily, the United States, Western European countries, and other developed countries) focus on civil and political rights, while the opposition bloc (in particular, Russia, Belarus, and China) recognize the socio-economic rights of citizens as a basis [7]. Meanwhile, it is the Western interpretation that largely determines the work of the HRC, which explains a number of criticisms to this body from Eastern States.

Overall, the thesis about the importance of real respect for human rights throughout the world fully meets the interests of both countries. In addition, the issue of gender equality is of paramount importance for both Belarus and Norway. That is why both states highlight in their positions the crucial importance of achieving gender balance within the UN system [6, 8].

If to sum up, it is possible to conclude that at the present stage and while maintaining the current dynamics of development of Norwegian-Belarusian relations in the near future, the vector of United Nations reform can become one of the key elements of cooperation between the two countries. However, such cooperation cannot be conducted without proper preparation. In this regard, the authors initiate three practically implementable steps that make it possible to set up to the full the interaction between Norway and Belarus in the field of UN reform.

First, as has been repeatedly noted in the framework of interdepartmental consultations, one of the priorities of bilateral cooperation, for the time being, is the creation of a developed legal framework [1, 3]. In this context, it would be apt to pay special attention to the problem of UN reform and the joint capabilities of states. The development of a legal framework that takes into account such opportunities and promotes their practical implementation would be a significant step towards long-term and fruitful cooperation in this area.

Secondly, the transfer of bilateral relations to the level of embassies will be of help to strengthen cooperation. At the moment, relations are established at the level of the concurrent embassies: the role of the Embassy of Belarus to Norway performs the Embassy of Belarus in Sweden, while the role of the Royal Norwegian Embassy to Belarus performs the Royal Norwegian Embassy in the Ukraine. Taking the aforementioned step, in addition to the actual confirmation of the intentions to further develop inter-state cooperation, will allow the embassies to become a kind of coordination centres that direct the mutual efforts of Minsk and Oslo in the field of UN reform.

Finally, the third significant step towards successful cooperation in implementing the UN reform can be the accession of the Republic of Belarus to the ACT (accountability, coherence and transparency) Group, of which Norway is a member. This group includes 25 small and mid-sized countries that are focusing on reforming the UN Security Council, primarily in its current composition. Even now, there are prerequisites for Belarus to consider the possibility of joining the ACT Group:

- of the eleven key measures proposed by the interstate association, 45% is directly or indirectly in the interests of the Belarusian side (in the rest, the position has not been formed yet, which leaves a space for potential collaboration);

– of the five priorities of the association, 40% is Belarus' priorities as well in the reform of the Security Council (in respect of the others the situation is identical to the situation with the measures) [4, 5, 6, 9].

Thus, the study revealed the potential of bilateral relations between Norway and Belarus in the direction of United Nations reform. The implementation of the preparatory steps outlined by the authors and the progressive development of the Belarusian-Norwegian dialogue on the world stage, especially within the framework of the UN, will significantly bring together the friendly peoples of the two countries that have close historical ties.

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