

## A b s t r a c t s

### Contours and Contrasts. A Closer Look at Belarus

Sjarhej Pan'koŭski  
Minsk: the Fourth Rome?

The authoritarian regime in Belarus is endeavouring to strengthen its position and to justify the country's poor relations with its neighbours. The ideological basis of these efforts is the thesis that the Belarusian people have a specific mentality, specific values, and a specific world view. The regime has been taking steps to create a uniform state ideology that will unite the population. At the same time, it is trying to establish political control over more and more areas of society. In doing this, the Lukashenka regime is continuing a Soviet tradition. On closer examination, the basis of the regime's ideological programme turns out to be identical with the traditional demands of messianic Russian fundamentalism.

David Marples  
Bac'ka Lukashenka: rule without charisma

The article is concerned with President Alyaksander Lukashenka and his continuing popularity in Belarus, which remains considerably higher than that of any of the opposition leaders despite the country's deepening economic predicament. It explores the reasons behind his longevity in power, and asks whether there are features and characteristics common to the Belarusians that might explain this unusual phenomenon. These factors are placed in the context of the history and development of Belarus, particularly in the Soviet period, its proximity to Russia, its relative lack of national consciousness, and its fragmented and divided opposition movement.

Svjatlana Navumava  
Parties without power: harmless thorns in the side of the autocracy

Parties play no more than a marginal role in the political life of contemporary Belarus. As a result of the absolute majority vote electoral system, restrictive controls, and strict regulations governing registration, they have no real way of obtaining access to political power. However, President Lukashenka's authoritarian system of rule is not the only reason why the efforts of the opposition parties have largely failed. The parties themselves have shown little ability to form alliances or to serve as a forum where the protest potential present in the population can be articulated.

Iryna Buhrova

## Unity before diversity: regions in centralized state

Belarus's regional structure, which was shaped during the Soviet period, has been becoming noticeably more differentiated in recent years. Active regions can be distinguished from undecided or depressed regions on the basis of economic, social, historical, and cultural factors. The development potential of these regions varies, and this also applies to their potential in relation to European integration processes. However, the unfolding of these regions and the ambitions of the local elites in even the active regions are being held back by the rigid, centralist policy of the Belarusian state leadership.

Elke Knappe

## Still relying on the state: agriculture in Belarus

Agriculture has traditionally played a significant part in Belarus's economy and was the chief source of income for the rural population. After independence, the agrarian sector became a symbol of the regime's continued adherence to the old, inefficient, large-scale enterprises, state planning, and control over economic activities. This prevented the introduction of market principles in agriculture, and the consequences have been a dramatic decline in production and growing self-sufficiency.

Alena Rakava

## Against the current: small businesses in Belarus

The development of small and medium-sized businesses has a key role to play in the structural economic changes under way in the transformation states, and is therefore promoted by means of various instruments of state economic policy in most of these countries. Belarus is an exception in that the contribution of the private sector to GDP and the number of small and medium-sized businesses per 1000 inhabitants are minimal by comparison with other countries undergoing transformation. Nevertheless, private businesses are continuing to develop in Belarus in spite of the repressive conditions. Small businesses can therefore play a positive socioeconomic role if broader market reforms are carried out.

Jaŭhen Šyrokaŭ

## Bending with the wind: the economics of energy and sustainable development in Belarus

For some years now the Belarusian authorities have been making efforts to reduce the country's dependence on energy imports from Russia by means of energy-saving and decentralized forms of energy generation. Alternative and renewable sources of energy have played an important role. Thanks to these endeavours, Belarus is now the most energy-efficient state in the CIS. Even greater gains would be possible if state support for NGOs and private firms were to replace the current policy of relying largely on dirigiste methods. These are the actors with the greatest potential for innovation in the search for appropriate ways of using alternative and renewable forms of energy.

## Astrid Sahn

### Society as an autonomous sphere

In contemporary Belarus, different conceptions of civil society are competing with one another. President Lukashenka adheres to the concept of social structures guided by the state and loyal to the system, and so continues to uphold the conception of society as a state-directed sphere that is familiar from the tsarist and Soviet periods. Many oppositional organizations, on the other hand, remain firmly opposed to the state. An increasing number of independent NGOs, however, are trying to enlist the support of both the population and the state for a new, cooperative relationship. Belarusian civil society is thus proving to be remarkably resilient, to a greater degree than its Russian and Ukrainian counterparts and in spite of the difficult political conditions in Belarus.

## Peter Junge-Wentrup, Björn Kunter

### Cooperation instead of confrontation: joint German-Belarusian initiatives

A unique network of German-Belarusian initiatives is challenging Belarus's (self-)isolation and making it possible to find starting-points from which to develop European integration and reforms from below. As these initiatives become more professional and larger projects are launched, ideas that started as peace initiatives are becoming serious partners in development cooperation.

## Viktar Čarnaŭ

### Education instead of instruction: teachers' initiatives in Belarus

Most political education in contemporary Belarus takes place in civil society. Regional teachers' initiatives form the backbone of this system of political education. Cooperation between professional NGOs from the third sector and the teachers' initiatives is helping to construct an infrastructure for political education, and exposing broader strata of Belarusian society to the influence of the third sector.

## Herbert Wohlhüter

### Integration instead of separation: people with disabilities in Belarus

Since 1990 the situation of people with impairments in Belarus, especially of those with mental and multiple disabilities, has improved noticeably thanks to some measures of reorientation in social policy. NGOs and their international partners are playing a significant role in this development in civil society, and the state has in many cases reacted positively. In this way, principles of subsidiarity are being formulated for the first time. However, there are considerable shortcomings in cooperation between the actors. The most important of these is a lack of the competence in social planning needed to make the rights of disabled people a reality.

Petra Rentrop

## Memory work: plural history and civil society

In Belarus, history in the public sphere is still primarily present in its Soviet interpretation. This is particularly true of representations of the Second World War, which is the central point of reference of Belarusian historical culture and identity. Western observers have largely failed to notice that the official images of war in academic treatments and in society are being challenged by pluralist interpretations of history. This article traces these tendencies in the historiography of the war, presents NGOs and historical initiatives which are approaching military history from a new perspective, and asks what significance these developments have for change in Belarus.

Norbert Randow

## Disappeared, forgotten, banned: eight hundred years of Belarusian literature

The best-known Belarusian literary figures are Vasil Bykaŭ, Ales Razanaŭ, and Svjatlana Aleksievič. All three have been forced into exile by political circumstances. Contemporary authors writing in Belarus are focusing on the country's history. There is a long history of autonomous Belarusian culture. This article reconstructs literary developments from Euphrosyne von Polack via Francisk Skarina up to the Belarusian renaissance of the 19th century. The flowering of Belarusian literature after the 1905 revolution was ended by Stalin's terror, but neither under the German occupation during World War II nor in emigration has Belarusian literature fallen completely silent.

Ingo Petz

## Belarus starts rockin'

Rock music in Belarus is a fairly new phenomenon in which elements of Belarusian folk music are combined with western jazz, rock, and hard rock. After a period of growth and innovation during the perestroika years and the early years of independence, this new rock music began to be treated as an "enemy of the state", just as it had been in the Soviet era, after the election of the authoritarian President Lukashenka. Since 1998 there has been a broad youth movement in rock music which has taken up the cause of Belarusian freedom and independence, but which is experiencing a growing creative crisis because protests against Lukashenka have had so little effect. In spite of these difficulties, rock music has succeeded in establishing itself as an art form that makes an important contribution to Belarusian culture and identity.

Rainer Lindner

## Belarus, the EU, and the legacy of Europe

Belarus is and always has been part of Europe. The country's geographical space has been shaped by the history and culture of the European continent, and as a peripheral region this space has repeatedly been affected by war, occupation, and campaigns of

extermination. Since 1991 Belarus has asserted itself as a sovereign state, but by the mid-1990s the country had become an authoritarian state, abandoned the course of European integration, and saw union with Russia as its preferred future option. The ongoing enlargement of the European Union presents both Belarus and the EU with an opportunity to begin a new phase in their relations. Germany and Poland can only help if Belarus itself shows a willingness to rethink its policies and makes an effort to alter its domestic policy course.

Uladzimir Ulachovič

### David without Goliath: Belarus and European egocentrism

Belarus's new proximity to the EU brings with it both advantages and disadvantages. Since the EU is principally preoccupied with itself, it is unlikely to have any resources to spare for an active policy towards Belarus. At the same time, a limited degree of cooperation is very much in the Union's own interest. It would be possible to place the main responsibility for the Europeanization of Belarus in the hands of the EU's partner Russia, though this could mean that Belarus would be even more overshadowed by Russia. It follows that regional cooperation is becoming more important for Belarus, though this cannot take the place of the improvement of the country's relations with the EU.

Heinz Timmermann

### Kolobok's union: a turning point in Belarus-Russian relations?

Since Putin became president of Russia, the empty integration rhetoric about Belarus-Russian relations of the Yeltsin period, with its declaration of union between the two states, has been replaced by pragmatic policies based on interest. The two sides are pursuing different strategies. Lukashenka is seeking to obtain maximum economic benefit for Belarus without losing control of economic and fiscal policy as central levers of power. Putin is prepared to carry on respecting formal Belarusian sovereignty, but he sees Russia as the dominant partner in the union. This article analyses the divergences undermining the union project by looking at three examples: the text of the constitution, the common currency, and Russia's provision of cheap gas supplies to Belarus.

Aleh Manaëŭ

### The long march – but where are we going?

#### Changing conceptions of integration

In the last three years there has been a clear shift in the lines of political conflict in Belarus. Up until 2000, two seemingly incompatible answers were given to the question of Belarus's place in the world: either with Russia, or with Europe. Today, the majority of Belarusians are in favour of a dual integration strategy along the lines of "Russia and Europe" or "with Russia towards Europe". This shows that Belarusian society has become more open, flexible, and mobile. This is why President Lukashenka has been forced to look for new sources of legitimation for his rule, which is not as strong as it once was.