

Over the last few weeks analysts of the Ostrogorski Centre focused on the treatment of the Chernobyl issue in Belarus' foreign and domestic policies, as 26 April marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disaster.

They discussed the recent Freedom House report on media freedom worldwide arguing that it wrongly ranked Belarus too low and showed how Belarus' defence industry demonstrated good results even despite Russia's restrictive measures.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Chernobyl disaster, Igar Gubarevich discusses the [return of Chernobyl issue to the list of Belarus' foreign policy priorities](#) after several years backstage. The treatment of the Chernobyl issue in Belarus' foreign policy is an example of good-quality diplomacy. When fighting for resources, Belarusian diplomats have learned to adapt their actions and rhetoric to modern trends and the new vocabulary of multilateral relations.

Artyom Shraibman [criticises the recent Freedom House global report](#), which ranked Belarus in the bottom ten countries in the world in terms of media freedom. Belarus provides complicated conditions for journalists' work, but journalism in Belarus remains a far less dangerous job than in many of the countries ranked more favourably in the report. The expert suggests that engaging more Belarusian experts and revising the questionnaire would help Freedom House fight stereotypes rather than spread them.

Siarhei Bohdan shows how the [Belarusian defence industry has succeeded](#) even while Moscow continues its policy of restricting access to Russian markets for Belarusian defence firms. Minsk is responding by cooperating with Ukraine, China and numerous developing countries. The Kremlin is effectively forcing Belarusians to distance themselves from Moscow and build the economic foundations for an independent state.

## Comments in the media

Siarhei Bohdan comments for Polish Radio on the [possibility for Russia's hybrid intervention in Belarus](#) as a response to NATO activity on its western borders. Experts believe that the Crimean scenario is impossible in Belarus. It is more likely that Russia will be pushing Belarus to establishing military objects on its territory.

Yaraslau Kryvoi at the annual Lennart Meri conference in Tallinn posed a question to the Foreign Minister of Poland Witold Waszczykowski about the [changing perception of Belarus in the new Polish Government](#). According to the minister, there is definitely a new perception of Belarus in Poland because of the new government which tries to open all channels of dialogue with Belarus to keep it as closely as possible to Europe.



Yaraslau Kryvoi comments on the [improvements in Freedom House rating for Belarus in 2015](#). The rating in the field of civil society grew due to the lack of political prisoners, increasing opportunities for civil society to raise funds inside Belarus and peaceful nature of the presidential election. He also explains the [situation with the Brexit referendum](#) and how it may affect Belarus to Belsat TV.

Ryhor Astapenia discusses on the Polish Radio the [feasibility of the construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant](#), chances that authorities will support Belarusian language, why China does not invest in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park and how Belarusians should celebrate V-Day.

Ryhor Astapenia analyses the [chances of Belarusian opposition to boost people's support](#) at the time of economic difficulties. To become more popular, the opposition should become a consolidated force, demonstrate interest in the daily life of Belarusians rather than focus on geopolitical questions.

Ryhor Astapenia explains to thinktanks.by [why public administration in Belarus in its current form remains dysfunctional](#). On a number of his examples shows that the government is unable to set realistic targets and ensure their implementation. This leads to a drop in public trust in the authorities.

Vadzim Smok explains to Radio Racyja [why the Belarusian authorities do not persecute DNR fighters and pro-Russian groups](#) in Belarus. These groups have the support of security forces, the Orthodox Church and the Russian government. In addition, they represent themselves as supporters of Belarusian authorities, although many of them deny the existence of Belarusian nation and statehood.

Siarhei Bohdan talks on Radio Liberty on [pro-Azerbaijan position of Minsk in the new escalation of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict](#) and Lukashenka's visit to Turkey. Analyst sees these action as a continuing attempt to keep Belarus neutral and stick to international law, rather than switch to the side of Russia's enemies.



Ryhor Astapenia comments for Polish Radio on the [failure of Belarusian delegation at the new loan negotiations with IMF](#). Belarusian government does not want to take responsibility and tries to represent reform package as the IMF condition rather than urgent internal need.

Ryhor Astapenia talks on Belsat TV about the [upcoming parliamentary elections in Belarus](#) and new elements of the Belarusian electoral legislation. He predicts that Belarusian authorities will allow a relatively free parliamentary campaign to make elections legitimate for external observers, yet vote counting will hardly become transparent.

## Belarus Profile

The BelarusProfile.com database now includes the following personalities: [Anžalika Borys](#), [Andrej Bastuniec](#), [Mikalaj Chaliezin](#), [Jaŭhien Nieŭhień](#), [Viktar Šadurski](#), [Maryna Zahorskaja](#), [Alieh Trusaŭ](#), [Anton Matołka](#), [Alieh Hajdukievič](#), [Andrej Stryžak](#).

We have also updated the profiles of [Uladzimir Siamaška](#), [Uladzimir Siańko](#), [Iryna Tačyckaja](#), [Paviel Tapuzidzis](#), [Aliaksandr Fiaduta](#), [Andrej Jelisiejeŭ](#), [Anatol Filonaŭ](#), [Valiery Fraloŭ](#), [Andrej Charkaviec](#), [Aliaksandr Cierachaŭ](#), [Valieryj Capkala](#), [Viktar Ciareščanka](#), [Mikalaj Čarhiniec](#), [Aliaksandr Čubryk](#).

## Belarus Policy

The Ostrogorski Centre continues to update the database of policy papers on BelarusPolicy.com. The papers of partner institutions added this month include:

- Tacciana Čulickaja, Natallia Rabava, Iryna Vidanova, Uladzimir Kavalkin, Dzmitry

- Markušeŭski. [Advocacy in belarus: experience of civil society organisations](#). OEEC, 2016.
- Tacciana Čulickaja, Natallia Rabava, Ina Ramašeŭskaja, Uladzimir Kavalkin, Dzmitry Markušeŭski. [Analysis of the social service sector in the Republic of Belarus](#). OEEC, 2014.
  - Kirill Shakhnov. [Belarusian business cycles in a cross-country comparison: industry and aggregate data](#). BERO, 2015.
  - Yuri Tserlukevich, Ilona Babenko, Pengcheng Wan. [Is market timing good for shareholders?](#) BERO, 2015.
  - Aliaksandr Aŭtuška-Sikorski, Jury Čavusaŭ, Uladzimir Arciuhin, Aliaksiej Lašuk, Dzianis Mieljancoŭ, Vadzim Mažejka. [Biannual monitoring of the main trends BISS-Trends \(January-June 2015\)](#). BISS, 2015.

Think tanks in Belarus are encouraged to submit their research for inclusion onto the database by completing this [form](#).

*The Ostrogorski Centre is a private, non-profit organisation dedicated to analysis and policy advocacy on problems which Belarus faces in its transition to market economy and the rule of law. Its projects include Belarus Digest, the [Journal of Belarusian Studies](#), [BelarusPolicy.com](#), [BelarusProfile.com](#) and [Ostro.by](#).*

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