

Lukashenka - Putin negotiations, discussion at KCL, Belarus-China achievements – Ostrogorski Centre digest

In April, analysts at the Ostrogorski Centre discussed the results of negotiations between Putin and Lukashenka in Saint Petersburg, ways to respond to continuing political repression in Belarus, prospects for Belarusian-Turkmen relations, and achievements of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation over the last 25 years

The Centre, together with the KCL Eurasia Society and KCL Diplomacy Society, hosted a public discussion entitled 'Between East and West: What's next for Belarus?'

We have also added new profiles and updated existing ones on our BelarusProfile.com database of influential people in Belarus.

Analytics

Siarhei Bohdan discusses [what Russia got in exchange for gas and oil concessions](#). Moscow wants closer collaboration with Minsk in the spheres of security and foreign policy. The two governments clearly chose to resolve the issues critical to each of them: Russian gas and oil supplies for Minsk, Belarusian security and foreign policy cooperation for Moscow. Nevertheless, numerous other issues continue to undermine relations with Russia. Now, even leading experts in the Belarusian government doubt the utility of Moscow-led Eurasian

integration in its current form.

Alesia Rudnik writes about a [‘game’ called ‘blue whale’](#), popular among youngsters across the post-Soviet space. The game consists of 50 dangerous quests potentially culminating in suicide. Belarusian law enforcement services have initiated two criminal cases after two Belarusian youngsters attempted to commit suicide while playing the game. Nevertheless, a direct correlation between teen suicides and the game remains difficult to draw. The hyperbole surrounding the game in the media is not evidence of the game’s existence in real life. Under such circumstances, it is important that control of social media does not turn into censorship.

Igar Gubarevich analyses the [prospects of Belarusian-Turkmen relations](#) after plans for a plant in Garlyk came to an end. The plant, which is worth over \$1bn, and is capable of producing up to 1.4m tonnes of fertiliser per year, has become the flagship project for Belarusian-Turkmen cooperation. However, as trade turnover continues falling and Turkmen remain unsatisfied with Belarus’s role in the Garlyk project, the future of bilateral relations remain a big question.

Between East And West: What’s Next For Belarus? (Podcast)



Events unfolding in Belarus have recently been headline news for major international news outlets because of the massive protests against president Lukashenka. Unlike in Ukraine, however, protests in Belarus have yet to lead to political change.

The Kings College London (KCL) Eurasia Society, KCL Diplomacy Society, and the Ostrogorski Centre hosted a public discussion entitled 'Between East and West: What's next for Belarus?' on 12 April 2017 in London. The discussion featured prof. Yarik Kryvoi, founder of the Ostrogorski Centre, and Dr. Alex Kokcharov, Principal Analyst with IHS Markit Country Risk. The podcast of the discussion and a list of key issues discussed are [available here](#).

Comments in the media

Ryhor Astapenia discusses the [decline of the 'third class in Belarus'](#) on *naviny.by*. The 'third class' involves small towns and villages, which currently struggle most with socioeconomic problems: unemployment, low salaries, undeveloped business, poor quality of healthcare, alcoholism, and rapid depopulation.

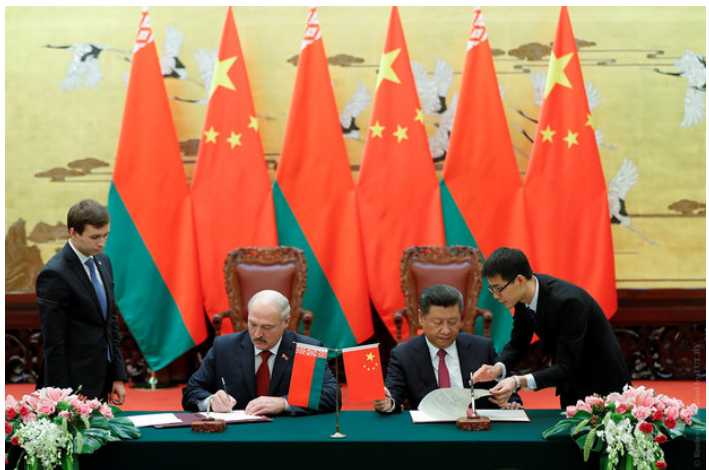
Siarhei Bohdan comments on [achievements in Belarusian-Chinese relations over the last 25 years](#) for Polish Radio. Since the early 2000s, Minsk has relied heavily on China, which it expects to become a major superpower in the long-run, thus ensuring a good position for Belarus. China is also important as a counterbalance to Russian influence. However, Moscow dislikes the openly pro-Chinese rhetoric of Minsk. Meanwhile, Belarus continues to have a large negative trade balance with China.

On Polish Radio, Alesia Rudnik talks about the [dangerous online game 'Blue Whale'](#), which has become widespread in social networks in the post-Soviet space. The game has

resulted in a number of suicides, but the scale and consequences of its spread in Belarus remain unknown.

Siarhei Bohdan discusses the [results of the negotiations between Lukashenka and Putin](#) on 3 April on Radio Liberty. Moscow sees the military exercise West 2017 as an important move in its spat with the West, while Minsk would like to minimise the effects of the show, and is eager to make the drills as transparent to the West as possible. The two sides also discussed strengthening their joint air defence system as Russia becomes increasingly concerned with defence in the Western direction.

Ryhor Astapenia on Radio Liberty discusses what [concessions Russia wants from Belarus](#) and which of them the Belarusian government is ready to offer. Recent talks between Lukashenka and Putin have not been successful, and the parties keep returning to the old conditions which existed before the energy dispute. Russia has little interest in acquiring Belarusian companies. Belarus is also losing its significance for Russia in the political and security fields, and the Kremlin is not as willing to support its ally as before.



On Polish Radio, Yaraslau Kryvoi talks about the [EU's policy towards Belarus](#). Europe should continue its policy of engagement, but at the same demonstrate its willingness to bring back sanctions if Minsk continues to violate human rights. The EU should also draw a line between policy towards the authorities and Belarusian citizens, since citizens of Belarus can not freely elect their government.

Igar Gubarevich discusses the [West's reaction to a new wave of](#)

[political repression](#) in Belarus on Polish Radio. These events came as a surprise to Western diplomats and politicians, and their first reaction was very cautious. According to Igar, the West must call a spade a spade and speak openly about human rights violations. Such actions of the authorities are unacceptable if Belarus wants to have good relations with Europe.

Belarus Profile

The BelarusProfile.com database now includes the following profiles: [Miraslaŭ Lazoŭski](#), [Marat Markaŭ](#), [Viktar Ananič](#), [Alieh Kraučanka](#), [Iryna Kascievič](#), [Ihar Siarhiejenka](#), [Heorhi Hryc](#), [Aliaksandr Liachaŭ](#), [Siarhiej Špiahun](#), and [Ihar Maršalaŭ](#).

We have also updated the profiles of [Anatoł Isačenka](#), [Viktar Ščačko](#), [Iosif Siaredzič](#), [Valiery Kulakoŭski](#), [Vadzim Zakreŭski](#), [Lieanid Małcaŭ](#), [Usievalad Jančeŭski](#), [Aliaksandr Jakabson](#), [Valiery Capkala](#), [Ihar Buzoŭski](#), [Sviatlana Kalinkina](#), [Valier Malaška](#), [Siarhiej Kanoplič](#), [Viktar Prakapienia](#), [Ryhor Kisiel](#), and [Jaraslaŭ Kryvoj](#).

Think tanks in Belarus are encouraged to submit their research for inclusion into the database by [emailing us](#).

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](#).