Belarus’s Hybrid Linguistic Practice: Language as a Post-Colonial Legacy

Last week MoveHub.com released an infographic showing the second language spoken in countries across the globe. The infographic revealed many surprises, such as that Polish is the second language in the UK and that Turkish is the second language in Germany. There was a curiosity about Belarus, too: Belarusians’ second language is … Belarusian!

The paradox of Belarus’s linguistic identity is that most Belarusians speak Russian on a daily basis. Not unlike other post-Soviet states that broadly use Russian, Belarus has struggled with elaborating an appropriate language policy. What distinguishes Belarus from other nations, however, is that the very nature of its linguistic identity remains contested.

Analytical Paper: Belarusian Identity – The Impact of Lukashenka’s Rule

The regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka rejected the ethno-national model of state suggested by his predecessors in the early 1990s. Instead, he restored a soviet style “statist nation” with a centralised bureaucratic machine at its core.

These are the conclusions reached in a new analytical paper
"Belarusian Identity: The Impact of Lukashenka's Rule" released by the Centre for Transition Studies today.

Identity issues, particularly those surrounding language and historical narrative, formed the foundation of the persisting cleavage between the authoritarian regime and the democratic opposition in Belarus since 1994. The population of the country, although not nearly as divided with regard to its identity as Ukraine, also has not produced a consensual version of self-determination.