

No Pro-Russian Political Forces in Belarus

What do you think is the difference between Belarus and Eastern Ukraine? Despite being as much slavophilic, predominantly Russian-speaking and Soviet-nostalgic, the Belarusian society seems to be less pro-Russian than the population of Eastern Ukraine. There are fewer ethnic Russians in Belarus than in Ukraine. Because of president Lukašenka's policy towards Russification and neo-Sovietism, there have been no tensions regarding mass introduction of the national language as in Ukraine. Groups potentially advocating a unification with Russia have never been too active in Belarus.

The question "West or Russia" has never arisen in Belarus as sharply as in Ukraine. Belarusians are pragmatic in this instance, opinion polls show that equal parts of the population support integration with Europe and Russia – with a big proportion of those advocating them both at the same time. For some reasons we have started hearing of pro-Russian organizations in the last months, especially with the scandal around Andrej Hieraščanka (Gerashchenko) a month ago.

Hieraščanka was leader of a pro-Russian organization Russky Dom and a senior official in the administration of Viciebsk Province. He had given an interview for a Russian nationalistic website where he stated that he views "Belarus as an other Russian state and not a separate nation" and accused evil pro-western pro-Catholic powers of wanting to tear Belarus away from mother Russia. After the interview there was a scandal involving an alleged threat to fire Mr. Hieraščanka from his position. Russian pro-Kremlin media wouldn't find a case of discrimination of Russian speakers in Belarus (unfortunately, they don't care about discrimination of Belarusian speakers that is happening in Belarus). But at least a dismissal of a russophile from an official position

would give a chance to accuse Lukašenka's regime of being russophobic. Luckily, the scandal has ended peacefully. It seems a specific feature of the region's modern political russophiles: for some mysterious reason they usually get active in a country once it starts having bad relations with Russia. Something tells that we'll see more of their activity in Belarus pretty soon.

Not a single political party in Belarus regardless of whether it supports President Alyaksandr Lukashenka can be described as pro-Russian, an indication of what the political elite in that country feels and what it assumes will attract the support of the Belarusian people, according to a Moscow commentator. Because Lukashenka dominates the political system, neither the government nor the opposition parties play a great role at least at present. But that does not mean that their programs should be ignored because those provide important clues on what the leaders of these groups believe and think other Belarusians want. "Party ideologues," he points out, "formulate political projects and ideas which reflect the views found among the politically active part of the population of the country" and they "actively promote their views and plans to the voters by means of both the print and electronic mass media."

[Read the blogpost at Window on Eurasia](#)