

How Lukashenka's Election Manifestos Evolved to 'Yes, we Could'

In this blogpost I am sharing my analysis of the changes in Lukashenka's political rhetoric since 1994. Authors like J. Budge, D. Robertson, D. Hearl studied political rhetoric in democracies, and S. Oates has contributed some interesting insights on the post-Communist Russia. Building on their work, I attempted to trace the evolution of Lukashenka's election manifestos.

Over time, the manifestos have become shorter, better structured and better organized. However, their content has not changed substantially. The same dichotomies like "the wealthy and the poor", "the West and the East", "stability and experiments", "corruption and order," etc are employed while the important issues like Chernobyl or inflation are never mentioned.

Lukashenka's 2010 election manifesto recently published in Belarus demonstrates notable changes in the political communication over the 16 years of Lukashenka's rule. Below are some of my observations.

The intensification of WE (a change in the definition of the audience)

In 2010 manifesto, different forms of "we" were used more than thirty times. Lukashenka has managed to outdo his previous manifestos, which were nearly half in length. At the same time, in 1994 manifesto the substantive meaning of "we" was better defined and categorized. In particular, several categories such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, health conditions, education, employment and pensions

were distinguished.

Six years later, in 2001 manifesto more emotional signals were made about the “we” with the use of such metaphors as “united and friendly family” while the number of classified groups had diminished.

In 2010 manifesto, the metaphors of nation as family are still used, but the cognitive map of nation shows fewer points connected to the traditional subject of welfare. Interestingly, in Lukashenka’s latest manifesto, the emotional construct “we did” resembles “yes we can” in US President Barack Obama’s speeches.

Shorter than twitter (a change in form)

The balance of three traditional parts of Lukashenka’s manifestos – “describing the situation”, explaining the “deeds” and outlining the “plans” – has changed. The part devoted to “plans” has become shorter. At the same time, the style of the manifesto is different: paragraphs are now shorter and the use of titles and introductions makes the text easier to read. We can describe this style as the one used in the SMS-messages or Twitter posts, especially popular among the youth who also happen to be the most “invoked” part of the population in this manifesto.

There are also some changes in the timelines constructed in the manifestos. In 2001 and 2006, the focus was on the situation before 1994 (with different inflation indicators for illustration). The existing timeline was: Time before 1994-à deeds (present) à plans (future). The timeline in the latest manifesto contained no references to the pre-Lukashenka period.

Rates and ratings

With no pre-1994 period to measure against, the legitimization of power is now achieved by using “rates and ratings.” This

technique provides a sense of “independent, globally-international, and authoritarian” views on the situation. The ratings are used as figures to hammer the “recognized facts” home one more time.

Inflation figures

Inflation as a construct from the past was presented both in words and figures in all previous manifestos. The latest manifesto, however, does not build a bridge to 1994 inflation. This year, the president clearly does not feel comfortable discussing inflation.

Forgotten Chernobyl

The issue of Chernobyl was present in the two first manifestos. However, in 2006 and 2010 manifestos there were no references to the catastrophe. This could be considered a sign that the issue is becoming uncomfortable for the president or is no longer connected to the interests of a wider public.

Using “the East” instead of Russia

The number of statements about Russia and the meaning of its foreign policy has decreased since 1994. In 2006 and 2010, Russia was not mentioned in manifestos at all. At the same time, Europe and the West are mentioned as an example of high living standards and a source for aspiration for the Belarusian people.

Democracy and human rights

Democracy and human rights, the traditional building blocks of the political rhetoric in Western democracies are not represented in the latest manifesto. Previously the word democracy had been used only once – in the 1994 manifesto. The issue of human rights is mentioned much more often.

New developments

2010 manifesto also contains some new points. In particular, it mentions the goal of developing information technologies and creating a new face for the Belarusian economy. This would entail “no less than 100 considerable investment projects” and the development of new industries (nano- and bio-technologies, alternative energy, space exploration, etc.).

by Solvita Denis, Contributing writer

Russia Is Not Willing to Pay for its Imperial Prestige

This week, after a bitter gas transit conflict with Belarusian government, Russian Gasprom declared that preliminary gas prices for Belarus next year should be about USD 250. Now it pays 185 dollars. Even some naïve oppositional analysts welcomed what they considered ‘European’ prices, joking of Lukashenka’s ‘stupid’ wish to live ‘of Russian cost’.

The prices for gas and oil, they forgot, are specific prices. Since gas and oil depend on infrastructure to ship them to consumers, therefore the Russian gas price for Belarus shall be different one than tariff for more distant Germany or Belgium. Furthermore, the prices for such strategic commodities are anyway politically influenced. So, Belarus which has allied itself with Russia since 1995, has all reasons to demand be given cheaper gas and oil than other countries.

And at least it should not be suddenly hit by arbitrary Russian decisions to increase price by almost 100 dollars. After all, the Belarusian side has carried out its part of agreement with Kremlin – it gave Moscow a small bit of

imperial grandeur by agreeing to be a 'small brother' and ally, it secured a segment of Russian borders and followed most Russian foreign policies. So why Russia agreed to sell China its gas considerably cheaper than Belarus?

It seems that this time it is Russia that wants to live as an empire 'of Belarusian cost', by giving Lukashenka nothing for it, and even openly threatening and abusing him. Russian elites' greed is stronger than imperialistic appetites? As a columnist Vitaly Portnikov put it in his article published on grani.ru,

... if there are no money, why to play an empire? If Belarusians and Russians are almost one people, then is it acceptable to send brothers an ultimatum? Freeze them [by cutting gas supplies in winter]? Threaten with sanctions? Indeed, that state, whose abolishment has been named a biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century by Medev's predecessor [Putin], that state began to fall apart not the moment when US President Ronald Reagan declared it to be 'an evil empire', and not the moment General Secretary Gorbachev proclaimed 'glasnost' and 'perestroika'. It has fell apart when Moscow decided to put a blockade on Lithuania [which was then a part of the USSR].

Something similar is now happening with integration initiatives of Belarus and Russia from previous years. Really, Moscow presently pursuing a greater aim – Customs Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan – did not even bother to do anything with numerous previous agreements with Belarus – on integration and establishment of the Union State of Belarus and Russia – which legally stay in the way of new Russian endeavor to reconquest lost lands.

They were not cancelled, nor amended, nor even mentioned by anyone, as Belarusian political analyst Vitali Silitski points out in his article on the website of BISS. It seems, that for

Russian not only pathetic alliances and brotherhood but even solid legal documents are just empty papers to be torn anytime deemed necessary. Or as a Russian proverb put it,

A guy is a master of his word, he can give it and he can take it back.

Or as Silitski said,

All treaties concluded with today's Russia and its leadership preoccupied with [imperial] greatness can remain just a useless scrap of paper, if Kremlin sees an opportunity to act according to the right of the strong. The [European] enthusiasts of various 'Streams' [projects to build pipelines to ship Russian gas and oil into Europe – Nord and South Streams] should think better on it.

Such behavior makes today's Russian government a clear security threat not only for former Soviet republics, but even for Europe as a whole. The post-Soviet countries realized it, and Moscow does not allow them to forget – going from aggression against Georgia to gas conflicts with Belarus and Ukraine and continuing with coup d'etat in Kyrgyzstan.

So far, European Union did not react to Russian policies strongly enough to stop Kremlin. Eastern Europe clearly lost its importance for European strategists, preoccupied with southern and southeastern flanks of European foreign policy. Yet the time might show that Russia and aftermath of its activities in former Soviet countries will pose much bigger threat to European security. After all, it is Russia which while ever more supplying Europe with oil and gas, demonstrates outright contempt for agreements with partner countries and maintains a lawlessness on its own territory.

SB

Money and Brotherhood: What Belarus Means to Moscow?

Every time facing confrontation with Moscow, Belarusian president speaks about immaterial and spiritual – common Slav roots, history and kinship of Belarusians and Russians. Emotions and sentiments can matter a lot in international politics and are an effective tool in national foreign policy of some countries. Reiterating his declarations on Belarusians' and Russians' unity, Lukashenka is undoubtedly targeting Russian sentimental bonds to his country, not his Belarusian compatriots.



Russians are mostly longing for their imperial and Soviet history to be appreciated and positively articulated abroad. Lukashenka perfectly realized it a very long time ago. He understood that huge potential of Russian frustration and anger at losing former imperial greatness had harbored immense opportunities for political projects in Russia. One did not need to be even a Russian politician to conquer neighboring country's hearts and minds by playing old imperial motives!

After coming to power in mid-1990s, Lukashenka shrewdly posed himself as a warrior for restoring Soviet Union and his version of pan-Slavism. It fared quite well for a while and he got very popular in Russia whose residents ever more were seeing him as a fine alternative to hard-drinking Boris Yeltsin in 1990s. Belarusian president was firmly on his way into Kremlin. But then Colonel Putin unexpectedly put an end

to it at millenium turn. Lukashenka could not compete with dynamic new Russian leader.

Belarusian regime's Russian policy contracted to more humble limits. It began to implement a new, however, pretty familiar paradigm – while playing on emotional, spiritual and mythological bonds to Belarus in Russian mentality, Belarus should have become the very best Russia's ally to be cared of and defended at any cost by Moscow support and money. Actually, one can guess that Lukashenka wanted to be for Russia what Israel is for United States, i.e. a strategic ally which significance is not limited to solely economic or military issues.

In this context many of his words do not appear so irrational. Thus, these days, after new gas complications with Kremlin, he said:

It is unacceptable to treat Belarus this way [as Russian leadership now] It doesn't matter that we had difference in cost [for gas]. After all, for Russia itself there is a big difference between Belarus and other nations... Belarus for Russia has quite another value We will survive. However, I believe, it is unacceptable to treat so an allied people [Belarusians] with which you [Russians] together were dying in the trenches [during the World War II]. And these are no emotional speeches, though emotions for us, Slavs are also important.

In 2009, Lukashenka himself indirectly admitted using 'Israel model' in his Russian policy an interview an extreme right-wing Russian newspaper "Zavtra":

Americans are funding Israel and give it as many credits as they [Israelis] can spend and then cancel their [Israelis'] debts. They [Americans] are completely financing Israel's defence. Let's not literally but conceptually use their model. After all, we are more for you than Israel for

America. We are part of your defense, part of your security.

Of course, Russians feel themselves more emotionally attached to Belarusians than to most other post-Soviet nations. Yet, Minsk despite all efforts did not manage to implement the 'Israel model'. Perhaps, since it could not organize effective pro-Belarus lobby in Moscow. Or the reason for this failure can be found in another more tragic case of imperial sentiments for lost Slavic lands that led to a political catastrophe. Probably, Belarus seems to Russian politicians more like Kosovo for Serbs. They want it merely back.

They are not ready to tolerate its distinctiveness and freedom, nothing to say about supporting its independence and prosperity. On the contrary, America consider Israel a partner and ally. Russian political elites view Belarus as some remnant of their great empire and treat it as they treat.

SB

Belarus Not Worried about Losing Key National Companies

The news on a legal move by the Belarusian parliament to allow privatization of most profit-making public property objects – the Belaruskali Company and strategically important oil pipelines – generated little publicity. However, it is these assets that make up a major part of the Belarusian economy: the enterprise Belaruskali makes Belarus isthe world's third largest producer of potash mineral fertilizers, and the pipelines give Belarusian government a certain leverage in its relations with Russia and Europe. In addition, both

Belaruskali and the pipelines a major source of foreign currency for Belarus, which badly needs foreign capital.

As always, the rationale for the Parliament's decision was not announced widely and openly, as should happen when the companies of such strategic importance are involved. The Interfax news agency informed that the pipelines and Belaruskali will be excluded from the list of obligatory state property objects and that the latter will be transformed into a joint stock company. The decision has been taken by the Parliament that lacks independence due to the nature of the Belarusian political system and usually just rubber-stamps the bills upon the executive's request.

Will the Belaruskali and the pipelines be sold to the insiders and the cronies of the Belarusian regime or to other interested clients? There are good reasons to suspect that Alyaksandr Lukashenka's government is going to handle these trading matters secretly, as had happened in the so-called 'Oman deal' when a huge plot in historical area of Minsk has recently been sold – at unexpectedly low cost and under favorable conditions – to someone from the Middle East.

Many Western experts view privatization as a major step in the post-Communist transition process. They blame the failure to privatize for the consolidation of the current Belarusian regime. The Russian experience of the 1990s, however, suggests that privatization without strong legal basis, robust law enforcement agencies and transparent property administration system may have catastrophic consequences. In Russia, it ended with the destruction of the national economy and the enrichment of a few unscrupulous "businessmen" of criminal nature who had connections to the Russian government.

Today's Belarus lacks the basic legal and law enforcement preconditions for privatization. It seems that, not unlike their Russian colleagues two decades earlier, Belarus' ruling elite is reaching consensus on the ownership issues behind the

closed doors to hedge against an emergency departure from power. Because even the most durable non-democratic regimes one day expire, it makes perfect sense for the incumbent elite to worry about the future: to buy some state-owned objects for themselves, to sell them and divert some money to black accounts, or – last but not least – to prolong the regime's lifetime and trade some public property for loyalty of economic, administrative and local elites.

Such privatization will definitely cause only fatal economic and social degradation of the country. Nevertheless, the prospects of losing the national potash company and the pipelines hardly seems to cause any public concern in Belarus. Even during the presidential election campaign, the Belarusian opposition is so preoccupied with its internecine calamities that it pays no attention to the news about the imminent privatization of the key Belarusian companies.

Such behavior proves the conceptual and expert weakness of the Belarusian democratic opposition, which does not seem to have enough able professionals to run the country after the long period of political marginalization. Undoubtedly, any government due to come after Lukashenka will have no opportunity to reconsider dubious privatization deals or misused credits. It will have to pay for it by working under the constraints of the sold-out and degraded national economy.

SB

How to Benefit from Being

Encircled by Soviet-Type Nuclear Plants



On 26 April 1986, a human error and the Soviet equipment caused the Chernobyl disaster – the largest technological catastrophe ever. For many days Soviet authorities attempted to conceal the scale of the disaster. The Soviet Union admitted that an accident had occurred only after radiation levels set off alarms at the Forsmark Nuclear Power Plant in Sweden. Instead of immediate evacuation, people were taken to the streets on the the May Day to celebrate the communist party with red banners and portraits of Lenin.

Because of the wind direction, the bulk of contamination ended up in Belarus which suffered more than any other country from the disaster. Chernobyl-type nuclear plants are more than just history. The territory of Belarus is literally encircled by Soviet-type nuclear plants. Just across the border are Smolensk and Kursk nuclear plants in Russia, Ignalina plant in Lithuania, and nuclear plants in Ukrainian Rivne and Chernobyl. The European Union authorities considered Ignalina unsafe and Lithuania had to close it down last year.

The Russian authorities do not think that their Soviet-type plants are too dangerous and Ukraine perhaps lacks funds to replace its own. The closure of Ignalina decreased energy dependence of Lithuania, which plans to build another nuclear plant on the border with Belarus. Russia also depended on Ignalina and plans to build a nuclear reactor in its Kalinigrad enclave. Vladimir Putin already signed a decree to begin construction. This will increase to seven the number of active and recently closed (but still dangerous) nuclear plants close to the Belarusian border. Belarus has none on its own territory.

Belarus authorities has long dream of [building](#) its own nuclear plant and it is is likely to appear on the Lithuanian border. Although Russia's assertiveness in using its natural gas and oil as strategic weapons may justify the rush to build more nuclear plants, it should not blind the decision-makers. The costs of building a nuclear plant are enormous and require heavy external borrowing. Purchasing and recycling radioactive fuel is also very expensive and Belarus will have to rely on Russia for that. And at some point, the nuclear plant will need to be dismantled which takes decades.

For instance, it will take 20-30 years to complete dismantlement of the Ignalina plant. If you all these maintenance costs are put together, the nuclear energy is far from cheap. Chernobyl showed the world that nuclear energy is particularly dangerous in undemocratic and nontransparent societies. Belarus learned the [lesson](#) the hard way with human suffering of hundreds of thousands and hundreds of billions dollars in economic losses. Still many tend to forget that in the absence of full transparency and independent control mechanisms, nuclear energy is a too dangerous toy to play with. It is true that Belarus cannot control nuclear stations across its border and is exposed to any potential accidents.

The fact that it cannot do anything about it should be accepted and building its own station will not change it. Belarus is not exactly the [ideal](#) of democracy and good governance and the risks of a human error similar to that which caused Chernobyl are too high. If the Belarus nuclear plant sponsored, built, fueled and maintained by Russia it will make the country even more dependent upon its Eastern neighbor. Instead of exposing itself to more foreign debt and dependence upon Russia, Belarus should bargain with Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine and buy cheap nuclear energy from them. They will always have a surplus of energy to sell. And given the competition between these countries, the price will be reasonable. Ripping the benefits of cheap nuclear energy

without bearing the costs of maintaining nuclear plants would be a wise policy for a country which suffered so much from Chernobyl.

YK

Common Currency for Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia: as Far as It Has Always Been

Several observers say that the introduction of a common currency should be the next step of the integration of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. The three countries have recently created a customs union and it is logical to assume that the integration will continue. However, there are reasons for being sceptical about it. Russian officials have been feeding the world – and in first place the Russian public opinion – with promises of a soon restoration of the USSR since the very moment of the USSR's collapse. Exploitation of post-Soviet stigmas for PR purposes has been actively used already under president Yeltsin, who initiated the creation of the so-called Union of Russia and Belarus (later renamed to the Union State of Russia and Belarus).

Aliaksandr Lukashenka, the president of Belarus, has also based his state ideology on the population's Soviet nostalgia and on exploitation of key Soviet ideological symbols like the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. The customs union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus has already a concrete effect as the three countries have switched to a common tax code. As a

result of newly introduced import duties, automobile prices in Belarus have risen by 20% and [Russian telecom operators have had trouble importing equipment](#). President Lukashenko has several times stressed that the union will only make sense if Russia cancels duties on oil exports to Belarus.

Belarus would economically benefit from a common currency more than Russia or Kazakhstan, because Belarus' exports are largely oriented on Russia. However, it seems highly unlikely that the president of Belarus would give away some of his economic decision making power to a foreign centre. Belarusian officials have always demanded an equal representation of Belarus and Russia in the management of the eventual common central bank of the Union State. For obvious reasons, this is a condition Russia could never have accepted. Besides that, introduction of a common currency requires synchronization of economic systems of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. At present they are very different and hardly compatible.

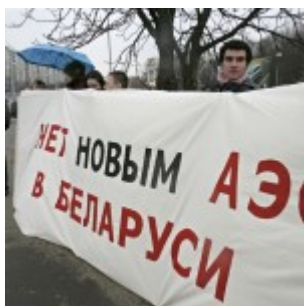
Resource-based economies of Russia and Kazakhstan react against global macroeconomic shocks in a way very different than the economy of Belarus. Therefore there are no indications that the talks of a new Eurasian empire will this time result in anything different from previous times. Ukraine's president Yanukovich has already de facto rejected Putin's proposal to join the Russian-Kazakh-Belarusian customs union. Ukraine would only cooperate with the Union as long as it doesn't contradict with the country's WTO membership. Kazakhstan won't give up its independence despite Nazarbayev not having appointed a heir yet. It's hard to imagine that the local elites won't be able to find a new leader. Different officials including Pavel Borodin, the Secretary of the Union State, have been predicting a soon introduction of a common currency since early 2000s. To be exact, Russia's deputy prime minister Igor Shuvalov only said he "would not rule out the possibility in the long-run of a switch to a unified monetary space". I.e., introduction of a common currency is a thing as

far as it has been all these years.

The Soviet Union is gradually being rebuilt as Vladimir Putin eyes a return to the Kremlin. The man who declared the collapse of the Communist state to be the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century” appears determined to forge a new empire. The latest evidence emerged in a suggestion by Igor Shuvalov, First Deputy Prime Minister in Mr Putin’s Government, that Russia may abolish the rouble and create a common currency with Kazakhstan and Belarus. [Read the Full story](#)

Read news stories at [Belorusskie novosti](#), [Global Times](#) AČ

Belarusian Nuclear Power Project: Dangerous and Expensive



On September 2nd, Belarus moved one step closer to building its first nuclear reactor by signing an agreement with Russia’s AtomStroyExport for constructing a nuclear power plant in Astravets, Hrodna region. The launch of the first nuclear plant unit is scheduled for 2016 and the second – for 2018.

For Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka – who announced building the power plant during his annual visit to the contaminated Chernobyl zone – a domestic nuclear energy source is a “national security” guarantee. Today Belarus uses minimal domestic electric production capacity and is able to provide for only 10 percent of its energy needs.

Approximately 75 percent of its electricity is imported from Russia, a supplier not shy about exploiting the energy dependence of its neighbors turning energy “from a purely economic issue into a political one,” as Lukashenka himself acknowledged.

Diversifying energy supplies to Belarus is indeed an exigent matter. But a nuclear plant built by Russia on a Russian loan, serviced by Russian technicians and fed with Russian fuel might be a very good deal for Russia, but will hardly make Belarus more independent. Moreover, the new nuclear plant would supply only 25 percent of Belarus energy needs and would begin operation in 2016 or later, even according to the most optimistic prognoses. What will happen to the high-level radioactive waste from the power plant is still unclear, but in solving this problem, Belarus would most likely also have to rely on Russia (although currently neither Russia nor Ukraine permit the import of radioactive waste).

Belarusian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection has reassured the population that the nuclear power plant would meet international standards on nuclear and radiation safety. However, the track record of Russian power stations is far from comforting. No further proof is needed when one remembers the Chernobyl catastrophe on 1986 – the worst nuclear power plant disaster in history and the only level 7 instance on the International Nuclear Event Scale. An estimated 260 million curies of radiation were released – about 200 times more radiation than was released by the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Belarus faced 70 percent of the fallout, and twenty-three years later, one fifth of its territory is

still radioactively contaminated. Already in 1992, Belarus was spending 20 percent of its budget on Chernobyl-related problems.

Another disturbing example is Mayak, a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in Chelyabinsk oblast in Russia. Working conditions at Mayak resulted in severe health hazards; by the beginning of the twenty-first century about half a million people in the region have been irradiated in one or more of the incidents.

One need not look far back, however. Just this August, about seventy people were killed in an accident at the Sayano-Shushenskaya hydroelectric station. The consequences would have been much more serious, had the station been a nuclear power plant. Despite significant technological advances, nuclear power remains a dangerous energy source.

In the midst of financial crisis and borrowing left and right, Belarusian government seems oblivious to the costs of the nuclear power plant – up to \$12 billion not counting the expenses on a spent fuel storage facility. For comparison, Belarus' annual budget in 2008 was about \$25 billion. The loan to finance the project will probably come from Russia since Belarusian financial system is just as poorly diversified as its energy. Being slow to send the last \$500 million installment of its \$2 billion loan to Belarus this summer, Moscow is hardly a reliable creditor, and it has never been never squeamish to use the dependency of its smaller neighbors to its own advantage.

Despite all this, in the eighteen years of its independent history marred by the Chernobyl disaster, Belarus has been edging closer to acquiring a nuclear power plant. Belarus announced started a program to examine 15 possible sites for constructing a nuclear power plant. In 1996, Belarusian Energy Minister, Valentin Gerasimovm announced that Belarus was seeking \$3.5 to \$4 billion in aid to build a nuclear power

plant. In 1997, the Dubrowna region in northeast Belarus volunteered to host a nuclear power plant. In 2002, Lukashenka named Russia as main partner in the area of energy and nuclear research.

The nuclear power station will be built in Astravets, the most beautiful part of the country full of Belarus historical landmarks. The proposed site is just 20 kilometers from the Lithuanian border and 50 kilometers from Vilnius. International law does not allow building nuclear power plants so close to the border without informing and receiving approvals from neighboring countries. However, Lithuania has not been officially notified about the project yet and is concerned about the plans of the Belarusian government no less than the Belarusian citizens.

Opponents of the project point out that Astravets is far from being an ideal location for a nuclear power plant due to its wind rose and seismic instabilities in the area. In 1909, the region experienced an earthquake measuring 7 on the Richter scale. The most recent earthquake occurred in 1999.

Before deciding to spend an exorbitant amount on the nuclear project, the Belarusian government should read the numerous studies that explain why nuclear power is neither environment-friendly nor cost-effective when compared to other carbon-free or low-carbon options, which include wind power, combined-cycle gas power plants, and energy efficiency measures.

In the end, building a nuclear plant will only deepen Belarus' economic dependence on Russia and will not contribute to the country's wasteful level of energy consumption. Most importantly, in the absence of independent environmental expertise and very limited access of media and public to the project, the Russian-built station might be very dangerous to Belarus and its EU neighbors.

New York Times: U.S. and Belarus in Dispute Over Inmate

The New York Times

Ellen Barry of New York Times wrote this article on the fate of Emanuel Zeltser. The American lawyer has been jailed by Belarusian KGB for almost a year on charges of possessing forged documents and commercial espionage. The article suggests that Zeltser has become a victim of a battle for assets of a Georgian-born tycoon Badri Patarkatsishvili who died in London under mysterious circumstances in 2008.

It is estimated that Mr. Patarkatsishvili's assets are worth around \$15 billion. Mr. Zeltser's defence alleges that their client has become a victim of Boris Beresovsky, a former Russian tycoon now based in London. The U.S. Government and Amnesty International so far have been unsuccessful in pressing the Belarusian Government to release Mr. Zeltser.

"It's very exceptional," said Jonathan M. Moore, the United States chargé d'affaires in Belarus. "This is the only time in my knowledge that a citizen of any country was arrested immediately upon arrival, held by the KGB, sentenced in a closed trial and has been held for so long when the state of his health is such a concern."

Read the full text of the article in [New York Times](#).