

Between East and West: what's next for Belarus? (podcast)

Belarus has recently moved to the headlines of major international news outlets because of massive protests against the rule of president Lukashenka. But unlike in Ukraine, protests in Belarus has not yet lead to political changes.

The KCL Eurasia Society, KCL Diplomacy Society and the Ostrogorski Centre hosted public discussion "Between East and West: What's next for Belarus?" on 12 April 2017.

Speakers:

Prof. Yarik Kryvoi

Originally from Minsk, he is a legal academic working for the British Institute of International and Comparative Law and teaching at the University of West London. Yarik is also and Editor-in-chief of Belarus Digest. A Harvard Law School grad, Yarik has been working for international law firms and taught law in the United Kingdom, Russia, Belarus and the United States for over ten years.

Dr. Alex Kokcharov

Principal Analyst with IHS Markit Country Risk, responsible for analysis of political, operational and security risks in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Alex holds a Master's degree in Geography and Economics from Belarusian State University in Minsk and a PhD in Economic Geography from the University of Oxford.

Moderator: **Torsten Hertig**, Master student at the King's Russia Institute and President of KCL Eurasian Society

The topics discussed included the following:

- Social parasites' protests and authorities' response,

the case White Legion (2:20)

- What can the West do? History of Western sanctions against Belarus, pros and cons of sanctions (8:57)
- Why is the EU position towards Belarus different this time? The need of differentiated approach towards authorities and society (12:33)
- The inconsistency of the EU visa regime policy (14:31)
- Geographical and demographical factors in Belarus politics, the significance of capital Minsk (17:03)
- Political system of Belarus, authoritarian regime (19:20)
- Economic recession in Belarus, economic dependence on Russia (22:50)
- Belarus foreign policy balancing (25:44)
- Social parasites' protests (29:28)
- The possibility of Russian intervention (33:10)
- What if Lukashenka is unable to govern any more? Can Russia take advantage of that? (39:14)
- How likely is Russia's pushing for more serious integration? (46:18)
- How should the EU react to crackdown on protests in Belarus? (53:42)
- What did Lukashenka promise Putin in exchange for oil and gas dispute resolution? (56:40)
- Is the Lukashenka regime currently unified or there are internal fractions? (58:40)
- What kind of cooperation could Ukraine and Belarus have? Would this irritate Russia a lot? (1:03:50)
- How do the Russian media see social parasites' protests in Belarus? (1:10:46)
- How does the regime rationalise its crackdown on people who ask him for help? (1:14:06)