

# 6th Annual 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' Conference

The UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, the Ostrogorski Centre and the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum invites to the Annual London conference on Belarusian Studies.

The conference will take place on **18–19 February 2020** via Zoom.

The conference serves as a multidisciplinary forum of Belarusian studies in the West and offers a rare networking opportunity for researchers of Belarus.

Professor David Marples will deliver the Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies from the University of Alberta, Canada. The title is 'Stalin's Ghosts, Parasites, and Pandemic – the Roots of the 2020 Uprising in Belarus.' [Russian law expert](#).

The working language of the conference is English. Selected papers presented at the conference are peer-reviewed and published in [the Journal of Belarusian Studies](#).

## Conference programme

[Conference Programme\\_05\\_01](#)

The provisional programme of the conference is also available for download [here](#). For any questions, please email [belstudies.conference@gmail.com](mailto:belstudies.conference@gmail.com).

▪ Register on [Eventbrite](#) no later than on 16 February

2021. The conference proceeds will be directed to scholars in Belarus who face difficulties because of their political views.

---

# 6th Annual Conference 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' – call for papers

UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, Ostrogorski Centre and the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum invite paper proposals from established academics and doctoral researchers discussing various aspects of contemporary Belarusian studies.

The conference will take place on **19–20 February** 2021 in the online format. The Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies will follow the main conference panels.

The conference serves as a multidisciplinary forum of Belarusian studies in the West and offers a rare networking opportunity for researchers of Belarus.

The Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies will be delivered by Professor David Marples, Distinguished University Professor at the Department of History & Classics, University of Alberta. The title of his lecture is '**Stalin's Ghosts, Parasites, and Pandemic – the Roots of the 2020 Uprising in Belarus**'.

Stalin's Ghosts, Parasites, and Pandemic – the Roots of the

## 2020 Uprising in Belarus

The organisers are interested in papers that discuss history, political science, political economy, literature, sociology and religious studies. Interdisciplinary studies are particularly encouraged. Selected papers will be peer-reviewed and published in the [Journal of Belarusian Studies](#) in 2021.

To submit a paper please complete [this online form](#) no later than **30 November 2020**. The working language of the conference is English.

The conference organising committee includes Prof Yarik Kryvoi (co-chair), Prof Andrew Wilson (co-chair), Sasha Belavokaya, Peter Braga, Dr Alena Marková, and Dr Karalina Matskievich.

Please spread the word and use hashtag **#BelStudies**.

You can read more about past conferences [here](#). For any questions relating to the conference, please email [belstudies.conference@gmail.com](mailto:belstudies.conference@gmail.com).

- [6th Annual Conference 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' – call for papers \(pdf\)](#)

---

# 5th Annual 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' Conference

UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, the Ostrogorski Centre and the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum invites to the Annual London conference on Belarusian Studies.

The conference will take place on **21–22 February 2020** at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) and the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum in London. The conference reception is sponsored by the Anglo-Belarusian Society.

The conference serves as a multidisciplinary forum of Belarusian studies in the West and offers a rare networking opportunity for researchers of Belarus. The draft programme of the conference is available [here](#).

This year's **Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies** will be delivered by Professor Thomas Bohn from Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, Germany. The title is 'Bagpipe Player and Painted Birds. Belarusian Histories of the People in the Marshes.'

To register for the conference please register on Eventbrite no later than **19 February 2020**. The working language of the conference is English.

The conference organising committee includes Peter Braga, Dr Stephen Hall, Dr Alena Marková, Prof Yarik Kryvoi (co-chair) and Prof Andrew Wilson (co-chair). The conference is supported by the British Association for Slavonic & East European Studies. Please use hashtag #BelStudies.

The speakers and moderators include:

- **Dr Ryhor Astapenia**, *Chatham House, United Kingdom*
- **Yahor Azarkevich**, *University of Glasgow, United Kingdom*
- **Prof Thomas Bohn**, *Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, Germany*
- **Paula Borowska**, *School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, United Kingdom*
- **Peter Braga**, *UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, United Kingdom*
- **Jim Dingley**, *Anglo-Belarusian Society, United Kingdom*
- **Dr Aleh Dziarnovich**, *National Academy of*

*Sciences, Belarus*

- **Dr Sándor Földvári**, *Debrecen University, Hungary*
- **Dr Joanna Getka**, *University of Warsaw, Poland*
- **Tadeusz Giczán**, *School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, United Kingdom*
- **Dr Yuras Hetsevich**, *National Academy of Sciences, Belarus*
- **Prof Grigory Ioffe**, *Radford University, United States of America*
- **Ekaterina Keding**, *Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany*
- **Prof Yarik Kryvoi** (conference co-chair), *Ostrogorski Centre, United Kingdom*
- **Dr Karalina Matskevich**, *Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum*
- **Dr Alena Marková**, *Charles University, Czech Republic*
- **Prof Arnold Barratt McMillin**, *School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, United Kingdom*
- **Dr Angela Espinosa Ruiz**, *Complutense University of Madrid, Spain*
- **Dr Anton Saifullayev**, *University of Warsaw, Poland*
- **Dr Nataliia Steblyna**, *Donetsk National University, Ukraine*
- **Yuliya Yarmak**, *Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, Belarus*
- **Prof Andrew Wilson** (conference co-chair), *UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies.*

For more information and to register, please go to [Eventbrite](#).

---

# 2020 Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century conference – call for papers

UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies and the Ostrogorski Centre invite proposals from established academics and doctoral researchers for individual papers and panels discussing various aspects of contemporary Belarusian studies.

The conference will take place on **21–22 February 2020** at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) in London. The Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies will follow the main conference panels.

The Annual Lecture titled '**Litva and Other Lessons of Belarusian History**' will be delivered by **Professor Norman Davies** CMG FBA FRHistS, professor emeritus at University College London, a visiting professor at the Collège d'Europe, and an honorary fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford.

The conference serves as a multidisciplinary forum of Belarusian studies in the West and offers a rare networking opportunity for researchers of Belarus.

The organisers are interested in papers that discuss history, political science, political economy, literature, sociology and religious studies. Interdisciplinary studies and panel proposals are particularly encouraged. Selected papers will be peer-reviewed and published in [the Journal of Belarusian Studies](#) in 2020.

To submit a paper or panel proposal please complete the online form [linked here](#) no later than **15 November 2019**. The working language of the conference is English. Applicants will be notified about selection by **25 November 2019**.

The conference organising committee includes Peter Braga, Dr Stephen Hall, Dr Alena Marková, Prof Yarik Kryvoi (co-chair) and Prof Andrew Wilson (co-chair). The conference is supported by the **British Association for Slavonic & East European Studies**.

Please use hashtag **#BelStudies**.

For any questions relating to the conference, please email [belauk2020@gmail.com](mailto:belauk2020@gmail.com).

Download this [call for papers \(pdf\)](#).

---

### **Previous conferences**

- 4th Annual 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' Conference & Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies (2019) Keynote speaker: **Dr Anais Marin**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus ([programme](#); [audio](#))
- 3rd Annual 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' Conference & Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies (2018). Keynote speaker: **Dr Alena Marková**, Assistant Professor at the Department of Historical Sociology, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague ([programme](#))
- 2nd Annual 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' Conference & Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies (2017). Keynote speaker: **Dr Alexander Susha**, Deputy Director of the National Library of Belarus, Chairman of the International Association of Belarusian Language and Culture Specialists ([programme](#); [audio](#))
- Conference 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' & Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies (2016). Keynote speaker: **Prof Andrew Wilson**, UCL

SSEES ([programme](#); [audio](#))

- The Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies, **Dr Per Anders Rudling**, Visiting Professor, University of Vienna & Associate Professor, Lund University (2015) ([programme](#); [audio](#))
- 

# Call for Papers: The Fourth Annual London Conference on Belarusian Studies

The UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, the Ostrogorski Centre and the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum in London invite proposals from established academics and doctoral researchers for individual papers and panels discussing various aspects of contemporary Belarusian studies. The conference will serve as a multidisciplinary forum of Belarusian studies in the West and offer a rare networking opportunity for researchers of Belarus.

The Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies will follow the main conference panels. This year the Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies will be delivered by Anaïs Marin (France), Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus.

The organisers are particularly interested in papers that discuss history, political science, political economy, literature, sociology and religious studies. Interdisciplinary studies and panel proposals are particularly encouraged. Selected papers will be peer-reviewed and published in a special issue of the Journal of Belarusian Studies in 2019.

To submit a paper proposal or a panel proposal please complete this form <http://tinyurl.com/belconference> no later than on **10 February 2019**. The working language of the conference is English. The organisers are unable to cover the costs of participants but can facilitate obtaining a UK entry visa. Applicants will be notified about selection by 20 February 2019 at the latest.

The conference organising committee is composed Paul Stephen Hall, Paul Hansbury, Peter Braga, Aliaksandr Herasimenka, Karalina Matskevich. The conference co-chairs are Professor Yarik Kryvoi and Professor Andrew Wilson.

For any questions relating to the conference, please email [belauk2018@gmail.com](mailto:belauk2018@gmail.com).

Please use this hashtag #belstudies

---

## **Podcasts of the 2016 London conference 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century'**

Audio podcasts from the conference 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' held in London in March 2016 became available online.

The conference served as a multidisciplinary forum of Belarusian studies for researchers of Belarus in the West covering a wide range of topics – from history and foreign policy of Belarus to public art and digital engagement.

The Ostrogorski Centre and the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies organised the conference in partnership with

Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum, Anglo-Belarusian Society, and the Journal of Belarusian Studies.

The conference [gathered around 20 speakers](#) and moderators from the United Kingdom, Germany, United States, Canada, Poland and France. The conference panels focused on Belarusian history, politics, foreign policy and political science. Selected papers will appear in the new issue of the The Journal of Belarusian Studies.

Several presentations from the conference are available below as podcasts.

---

The Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies, Professor Andrew Wilson, UCL SSEES. **Explaining Lukashenka's Survival.**

---

Aliaksandr Herasimenka, CAMRI, University of Westminster, United Kingdom. **Comparing digital engagement and mobilisation in Belarus and Ukraine.**

---

Yuliya Brel, School of Public Policy and Administration, University of Delaware, United States. **Belarus – a modern dictatorship.**

---

Ina Shakhrai, Humboldt University Berlin, Germany. **When autocracies have no respect for the Nobel Prize.**

---

Stephen Hall, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, United Kingdom. **The lessons given by the bison to the bear: Belarus teaching Russia authoritarianism.**

---

Peter Braga, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, United Kingdom. **In search of a third wing? Belarus–China relations and balancing amid the Russia–Ukraine conflict.**

---

Siarhei Bohdan, Freie Universität Berlin and Ostrogorski Centre. **To survive in the shadow of Big Brother: increasing elements of neutrality in Belarusian foreign and security policies in the 2010s.**

---

Paul Hansbury, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom. **An awkward partner of Moscow: some thoughts on Belarus-Russia foreign relations.**

---

Dzmitry Suslau, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, United Kingdom. **Constructing urban narratives: contemporary public art in Minsk.**

---

Lena Borise, Harvard University, United States. **Pretonic Prominence in the Aŭciuki Dialect of Belarusian**

---

Vitali Shchutski, University Paris 8, France. **The changing value of the Belarusian avant-garde painting: case study of three private collections.**

---

## **Journal of Belarusian Studies 2015: History of the Belarus- Poland-Lithuania Borderland**

The 2015 issue of the Journal of Belarusian Studies [released](#) today is almost entirely about history. It focuses on the Belarusian-Polish-Lithuanian borderland and the period stretching from the uprising of 1863 to the inter-war period of the 20th century when the territory of today's Belarus was split between the Soviet Union and Poland.

Two longer articles are followed by several essays which resulted from a conference held by the Anglo-Belarusian Society and other London-based organisations at University College London in March 2014.

The issue opens with an analysis of humour as a weapon of the political forces in Eastern Poland, what is now West Belarus, in the interwar period. [The article](#), by Anastasija Astapava from the University of Tartu in Estonia, explains the historical context of the 1920s and how various political groups were struggling for the minds of Belarusians by ridiculing political realities of that time. Rare pictures

from interwar periodicals richly illustrate the article.

✘ Felix Ackermann, a DAAD Associate Professor at the European Humanities University in Vilnius, devotes [his article](#) to the Lukiskės prison in Vilnius. The prison was a hotbed of political struggle in the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It was a place of detention for scores of Belarusians, Lithuanians, Poles and other activists fighting for their causes in multi-ethnic Vilnius at that time. It was the only prison in the Russian Empire to incorporate Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Jewish places of worship at the heart of its infrastructure.

## Kastus´Kalinouški Conference Proceedings

The subsequent four shorter articles resulted from the Kastus´Kalinouški and the Nation-Building Process in Belarus conference, which brought together over a dozen of scholars from Belarus, the United Kingdom, Lithuania and Poland. Kastus´Kalinouški is a national hero of Belarus who led the 1863–1864 uprising against tsarist Russia.

Aliaksandr Smaliančuk, a Belarusian historian from Hrodna who is currently affiliated with the Polish Academy of Sciences, [analyses the research problems](#) which historians face when they tackle the historical role of Kastus´Kalinouški in Belarusian nation building. He argues that Kalinouški should not be seen as a creator or even a bearer of the Belarusian national idea but instead as a link in the gradual evolution of the Lithuanian idea in the ‘Belarusian direction’.

Dorota Michałuk from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Poland [analyses the Polish-language clandestine press](#) published

under the patronage of Kastus´Kalinouški around the time of the uprising against the tsarist authorities in 1863–1864. One of her findings is that the periodicals did not promote the idea of separatism of in Lithuania and Belarus but instead called for national unity and the restoration of the whole of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Uladzislau´Ivanou´ from the European Humanities University in Lithuania [looks at the role of Belarusian old Believers](#) in the Kalinouški uprising. Old believers were a Christian Orthodox sect who refused to accept church reforms in Russia in the 17th century and who after being persecuted settled in the territory of Belarus. The author shows how the old believers tried to reconcile their ‘Russianness’ with their ‘Belarusianness’.

Andrus´Unučak, Head of the Department of Belarusian Statehood at the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, [focuses on the image of Kalinouški](#) in the official discourse of Soviet Belarus. According to the official line of the Belarusian Communist Party, Kalinouški supported a federation with Russia while the Belarusian intelligentsia tried to use the image of Kalinouški to strengthen Belarusian national consciousness.

## Reviews

This issue also includes the transcript of the [first Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies](#), which was hosted by the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies of University College London in March 2015. Per Anders Rudling from the University of Lund in Sweden tracks the development of the Belarusian national idea from the 18th century to modern day Belarus.

The issue also includes two book reviews – [one by Stephen Hall](#) examining the meaning of Europe for the Belarusian and

Ukrainian authorities, and [the other by Siarhej Bohdan](#) looking at relations between various ethnic groups in Eastern Poland in the inter-war period, which is now Western Belarus. Brian Bennett, Chairman of the Anglo-Belarusian Society and a former British Ambassador to Belarus [prepared an overview](#) of activities of the Anglo-Belarusian Society in 2014.



## Fr Alexander Nadson

On 15 April 2015 Fr Alexander Nadson, a spiritual leader of the Belarusian diaspora in the West, a member of the Advisory Board of the Journal of Belarusian Studies and a former chairman of the Anglo-Belarusian Society passed away in London. Fr Alexander left a legacy of not only religious texts and translations but also books and articles on various aspects of Belarusian studies.

Fr Alexander authored the first article in the first issue of the Journal of Belarusian Studies on the writings of St. Cyril of Turaŭ in 1965 and since 1973 served on its editorial board. His last article in the Journal was published in 2013. Jim Dingley's [obituary and a bibliography](#) of his works in English concludes this issue of the Journal of Belarusian Studies.

---

# The Journal of Belarusian Studies: Between Belarus and

# the West

On 9 June Belarusian state television [reported](#) the launch of the Journal of Belarusian Studies in London. It appears that even the Belarusian state TV channel, usually silent about such initiatives, appreciated the importance of the event – the oldest academic journal on Belarus making its return after a 25 year break.

Published by the Centre for Transition Studies and the Anglo-Belarusian Society, the Journal remains faithful to the original mission to promote Belarusian studies in the West. But unlike in the past, the revived Journal will come out in two languages: Belarusian and English to serve as a bridge between Belarusian and Western scholars.

## **Helping Western Scholars Discover Belarus**

The Journal builds on a long tradition. Fr Alexander Nadson, one of the founders of the Journal and the librarian of Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library in London, explained to Belarus Digest that back in 1950s they wanted to promote Belarusian culture in the United Kingdom.

Fr Nadson underlines that these were primarily British people who pushed the whole project forward. Among them was Lord Auberon Herbert and Anglo-French lawyer Guy Picarda, who both took an active role in publishing the Journal. Already in 1960s the Anglo-Belarusian Society began organising public lectures about Belarus in London. Guy Picarda came up with the idea of publishing a journal which would cover Belarus from different academic angles.

In 1965 the first issue of the Journal came out. Professor Robert Auty from Oxford University wrote in the introduction that its mission was to be "a source of information for non-specialist readers about a little-known East European people

and its contribution to civilisation". Although Belarus did not exist as an independent state between 1965 and 1988 the Journal of Byelorussian Studies, as it was known in the past, presented Belarusian culture and history to the English-language readership.

### **The Journal Launches at the University College London**

On 21 May 2013 those who were involved with the journal in the past and with its resurrection gathered for a formal launch at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies – one of the world's leading specialist institutions for the study of Central and Eastern Europe. The panel included Fr Alexandr Nadson, Professor Arnold McMillin and the Journal's editor Dr Yaraslau Kryvoi.

The panellists recalled the history of the Journal and that the renewed Journal aims to cover a broad spectrum of disciplines such as Belarusian culture, history for the Western readership. According to Yaraslau Kryvoi the new vision of Journal also includes an ambition to become a platform for Belarusian and Western academics to share their ideas. In addition to academic articles, the Journal will also include a chronicle of current events of the Anglo-Belarusian Society, as well as sections reviewing books and Internet resources.

The revived Journal of Belarusian Studies is a joint initiative of Anglo-Belarusian Society and the Centre for Transition Studies, an independent think tank with analysts based in London and Minsk. Dr Kryvoi explained that the two most important challenges included finding a team of dedicated people and funding.

Although the idea to put out the journal was already established in 2011, raising money and putting together an editorial team, translators and designers took a while. Attracting high quality academics required not only management

skills but also relying on personal connections and the reputation of the Journal which it had developed since 1965.

## **A Platform to Exchange Ideas between Western and Belarusian Scholars**

The renewed Journal represents a truly international and interdisciplinary publication. It features articles from the social science and humanities disciplines ranging from literature and history to political science.

In the new issue, Journal's editorial is followed by an article of Dr Andrej Kotljarchuk from Stockholm who deals with [memory politics](#) in Belarus and how Belarusian authorities are using it to achieve their own ends. He presents and interprets contemporary trends in memory politics of the authorities. In particular, through the way the state commemorations of the World War II tragedies such the Holocaust, genocide of the Roma people and mass killings of the representatives of the Polish minority.

President of the North American Association of Belarusian Studies Professor David Marples looks at [foreign policy of Belarus](#) towards the West and Russia. He examined relations between Brussels and Minsk between 2006 until the 2010 presidential elections. The author sheds light upon the reaction of the European Union to the aftermath of the elections and the effect of sanctions imposed on Belarusian authorities.

Natalia Sliz, a scholar from Hrodna, describes the rules of [noblewomen's dowry](#) within the legal system in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Many consider the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the golden age of Belarusian history. The Belarusian element was particularly prominent during the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The core of its territory occupied by what is today Belarus, the language was old Belarusian and it had a slavic population constituted the

majority of population.

Professor Emeritus Arnold McMillin's of University College London wrote on the [poetry of Belarusian prisoners](#) serving their sentences for political crimes under Russian, Polish, Soviet and today's rulers. Father Alexander Nadson prepared a bibliography of the assets Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library which deal with proclamation of the Belarusian People's Republic in 1918.

Readers and libraries can order hard copies of the Journal [online](#). Since the main idea is to popularise Belarusian studies for a wide English-language readership, the archive of all issues of the Journal, including the most recent issue are available free of charge at [belarusjournal.com](#). The editorial board has already opened a call for papers for the next issue. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis and the final deadline is 31 August 2013.

---

## Role of the Military in Belarusian Foreign Policy



Belarus' voice is seldom heard on the international scene, and its concerns are rarely taken into account. Minsk has not succeeded in achieving its major foreign policy goals and appears to lack an overall strategy. The much-disputed [customs union](#) with Russia and Kazakhstan, the feebleness of its [military alliance](#), and its [prospects for EU accession](#) are three key examples of Belarus' foreign policy failures.

Belarus seems to be seeking a "[third way](#)" between Moscow and the West, but it is doing so with essentially no international influence. Belarus has few levers to pull and little to bring to the negotiating table. The traditional currency of power in international relations is a strong military backed by a strong economy. Unfortunately for Belarus, it has neither. In order to successfully pursue an independent course in the international sphere, Belarus needs to get its economy on track, rethink its military posture and alliance affiliations, and modernize both its military structure and equipment.

Belarus' 2009 defense budget was \$611 million, which somehow financed an active force of 72,940 and a paramilitary force of 110,000. With a budget of \$611 million, it is hard to imagine that Belarus could project a modicum of force beyond its borders or equip its soldiers with new weapons. Clearly, Belarus is unable to stand up to serious pressure from an external foe. To successfully embark on "a third way" in the international sphere, Minsk needs to develop the military power requisite with such a strategy.

Switzerland, for example, runs a strictly neutral and independent foreign policy, only contributing troops to peacekeeping and monitoring operations – currently 7 international missions. It has a robust territorial defense plan and an impressive logistical operation. It spent \$4.51 billion on defense in 2009 and will spend another \$4.9 billion in 2010. Switzerland's 174,000 reserve force can be mobilized in the event of a crisis, and that force will be equipped with

modern military hardware.

Switzerland's fully capable military allows the country neutrality and independence in its foreign policy decision making, and its military is supported by a \$532 billion GDP. It stood up to the German War Machine in World War II, and will not easily cave to future external pressure.

Belarus, on the other hand, would have to spend 13.3% of its GDP to equal Swiss annual defense expenditures, which would bring it to a level not seen since days of the Soviet Union. The key then to independence in Belarusian foreign policy lies in the economy. Until Belarus can significantly raise its \$60 billion annual GDP to support a modern, fully equipped military, it will not likely be able to run an independent foreign policy able to withstand external pressure.

Belarusian military forces are deployed in a defensive posture that aligns with the military doctrine of the Republic. The military's purpose is to guarantee the inviolability of Belarusian borders and to prevent foreign invasion. Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable to assess that the Belarusian defense budget and force posture align well. It does not take a lot of money to fund domestic troop deployments where little is spent in the way of new platforms and military infrastructure.

A military posture centered on strict territorial defense works for a country such as Switzerland that is self-sufficient and runs a historically neutral and independent foreign policy. But for Belarus, which is not quite neutral and hardly self-sufficient, a single-track defense posture, supported by an antiquated and under-funded military is not requisite to achieving foreign policy goals, as it gives the country no bargaining power and likely would not stand up to outside pressure. Instead, Belarus should consider aligning itself militarily more closely with Europe – and of course economically.

Yes, close military alignment with Europe is a euphemism for increasing cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), with the prospect of eventually gaining full membership status. Participation in the military alliance would begin a process of gaining international credibility for Belarus, as NATO assistance would eventually lead to a complete overhaul of Belarusian force posture, structure, and equipment.

As a member of the world's most powerful military alliance, Belarus would be able to effectively contribute to global security by participating in peacekeeping, counter-terror, counter-proliferation, and stabilization operations around the globe. NATO's new strategic concept, that is currently being developed, could see the Alliance expand its role as a caretaker of global security, and Belarus would gain much by becoming a contributing member.

Currently, Belarus is a long way from qualifying for NATO military assistance, let alone a membership action plan; however, the Alliance eventually expanding to cover the entirety of Europe is not beyond the realm of possibility. There are even credible voices now and again calling for [Russian NATO membership](#).

Belarus essentially has two choices if it would like to get its foreign policy on track and begin to achieve some goals: it can open its economy to massive foreign investment, increasing its GDP and allowing it to develop the type of military commensurate with a self-sufficient state that is capable of pursuing a sometimes unilateral course of action, or it can work to more closely align itself with a capable military alliance that would help to modernize Belarusian force posture, structure, and equipment.

Belarus' current alliance affiliations and dependence on Russia give it little international leverage, and it has effectively alienated itself from the West due to political

considerations. Yet, Belarus does not have the economic or military power to unilaterally achieve major foreign policy goals. Minsk would be well advised to adopt a strategy of closer economic and military cooperation with Europe, and eventually across the Atlantic, which would be in the best interests of its military, the state, and its citizens.

\*Data on defense data taken from:

[The Military Balance 2010](#), International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, England.

*by Andrew Riedy, Contributing Writer*

---

## **As Violence Grows Regional Security Organisations Fail to Make Kyrgyzstan Secure**



Regional security organisations prove to be remarkably inefficient as the ethnic violence unfolds in Kyrgyzstan. This country is Central Asia is a member of a half a dozen of regional organisations and none of them is willing to intervene. Over a hundred is already reported dead and tens of thousands of refugees are trying to flee Kyrgyzstan.

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are just a few of security blocks to which Kyrgyzstan belongs. Apparently, these organisations exist primarily for geopolitical manoeuvring and staging military games rather than for ensuring security.

The former Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev is now a political refugee in Minsk, the capital of another dysfunctional organisation – the Commonwealth of Independent States. Bakiyev keeps repeating that the Kyrgystan interim government led by Roza Otunbayeva cannot control the country. He fiercely denies accusations that his close associates are involved of instigating violence between the Kyrgyz majority and the Uzbek minority in the south of Kyrgyzstan.

Under [personal protection](#) of Alexander Lukashenka, a Belarus authoritarian ruler who has been in power since early 1990-s Kurmanbek Bakiyev feels more secure than a few months ago when he had to flee Kyrgystan. The whereabouts of his son Maxim were unknown until yesterday when he was detained in a London airport where he arrived on a private jet. Under arrest in England Maxim Bakiyev will be much safer than many of his compatriots in Kyrgyzstan torn by violence.

The passive idleness of regional security organisations in Central Asia is worrying. It is one thing to not to intervene when public protests are taking place and the political regimes change, for bad or for good. It is another thing to observe ethnic violence to unfold when hundreds are being slaughtered. The Dutch peacekeepers failed to intervene when thousands of men and boys were massacred in Srebrenica fifteen years ago. The world has a long memory for such atrocities but also a remarkable inability to learn the lessons and to act until it is too late.

YK

---

# Avigdor Lieberman's Murky Dealings in Belarus Unveiled



A loud scandal involving the foreign Minister of Israel and money laundering via Belarusian banks is unfolding. Ze'ev Ben-Aryeh, the former Ambassador of Israel to Belarus, provided Avigdor Lieberman, the Foreign Minister of Israel, classified information when they met in Belarus in 2008.

That information suggested that Lieberman had accepted bribes and evaded taxes using Belarusian banks. Israeli authorities were hoping to cooperate secretly with the Belarusian authorities, but their ambassador kept a copy of the confidential files for himself, and later shared it with his boss Liberman.

The Jerusalem Post reports:

*According to the statement released by police, Israel's former ambassador to Belarus, Ze'ev Ben-Aryeh, allegedly showed Lieberman classified information regarding his investigation by police on allegations that he had accepted bribes and failed to report income to the tax authorities.*

*The documents had been sent to Ben-Aryeh by the Foreign Ministry to hand over to the Belarus government, whose help Israel required in tracing money transfers from a local bank.*

*According to the police statement, "the ambassador, who was supposed to pass the request on discretely and directly to the authorities in Belarus, kept one copy for himself. When*

*Lieberman arrived in Belarus on a visit (during October 2008), [Ben-Aryeh] copied classified information from the request, [and] handed it over to Lieberman illegally when they met. The investigation also deals with Lieberman's involvement in the advancement and job appointments of Ben-Aryeh in the Foreign Ministry in recent months."*

It is interesting that a few years ago the Israeli Embassy in Belarus was closed down completely, but later re-opened. According to Israeli Haaretz newspaper, Avigdor Lieberman became excessively interested in relations between Israel and Belarus long before he was appointed Foreign Minister. As a minister in Ariel Sharon's government, Lieberman actively lobbied for Israel to reopen its Minsk embassy, closed following budget cuts in 2003.

Although this scandal is an internal matter of Israel, Belarus is becoming internationally infamous for its dealings with all kinds of murky "investors". The countries of origin vary from Syria and other Arab countries, Russia, Israel, Iraq, Libya and North Korea. It is often unclear what Belarus has to offer to such investors.

Take an example of [Emanuel Zeltser](#), a US lawyer involved in battle over the legacy of a Georgian-Russian businessman Badri Patarkatsishvili who died in London under mysterious circumstances in 2008. Zeltser spent more than a year in Belarusian KGB prison under bogus charges. It is still a mystery what the whole dispute has to do with Belarus.

Despite its ever changing pro-Russian or pro-Western rhetoric, the only aspiration of the Belarus regime is to remain in power for as long as possible. "Money does not smell" seems to be the prevailing ideology in Belarus today.

Read more about Lieberman's story in [Jerusalem Post](#).

# Arnold McMillin: Belarusian Literature from the 1970s to the Present Day

A new monograph, *Writing in a Cold Climate: Belarusian Literature from the 1970s to the Present Day*, by Prof Arnold McMillin, a distinguished researcher of Belarusian literature, has been published in the UK.

This is a pioneering work of such kind in English, up-to-date and reflecting on Belarusian literature through the eyes of the western scholarship. The book launch will take place in London on 25 February, 5.30 pm (Masaryk Room, floor 4, SSEES, 16 Taviton St, WC1H 0BW).

In the publisher's words:

*Belarusian literature, which survives and, indeed, flourishes in the face of unfavourable domestic political conditions, deserves to be far better known in the West. It continues to flourish as an important aspect of national consciousness in a semi-denationalized state, and at its best can compare with the literature of its Slav neighbours including Russia.*

*The present monograph, the first of its kind, attempts to describe and assess the work of nearly two hundred writers and literary groups, ranging over poetry, prose and drama. The coverage includes provincial as well as metropolitan literature and groupings, and pays particular attention to seven outstanding authors of the period, to historical*

*writing which is particularly important in a country where history has been suppressed and denied, and to the youngest generation of talented poets and prose writers born in the early 1980s at the very end of the Soviet Union's existence.*

*The book is extensively illustrated with examples of poetry in Belarusian with English translation, and of prose and drama translated into English. There is a comprehensive Bibliography of some seventeen hundred primary and secondary sources, and an extensive Index of Names to aid access to individual writers covered.*

The book is available on order from [Amazon](#).  
ISBN: 978 1906540 68 5 Hardback 1136 pages.

II

---

## **RFE/RL: Vera Rich, a British Translator from Belarusian, Dies at 73**

Belarus is a lonely country and Belarusian is a lonely language ignored by its own state and by most Belarusians, who almost exclusively use Russian in their everyday life. The death of [Vera Rich](#) is a big loss for Belarus although most Belarusians will hardly even hear of it. And it is God's big gift to us that there were and there are foreign friends of Belarus like her. Vera Rich has also been known as a translator of Ukrainian literature to English. However, her work was much more vital and important for Belarus than for

Ukraine, where the national language and the national culture are in a much better state. Ukraine has awarded Vera Rich with the Order of Queen Olga, one of the country's most important awards. But despite her significant work in promoting Belarusian culture, she has been ignored by Belarusian officials who since mid 1990s continue the Soviet policy of Russification and discrimination of Belarusian national culture.

*Her first translation of Belarusian literature to English was published by the Belarusian Munich newspaper Baćkaŭščyna in 1957. Vera Rich translated works by Janka Kupala, Jakub Kolas, Natallia Arsiennieva, Maksim Bahdanovič, Aleś Harun, Ciotka, Larysa Hienijuš, Zmitrok Biadulia, Kandrat Krapiva, Voĺha Ipatava, Nil Hilievič and others. Vera Rich was born April 24, 1936 in London. In 1960 she published Outlines, her first collection of poetry. In 1963 she published her second collection of poems called Portents and Images. In 1969, the magazine Nature appointed Vera Rich as correspondent for Eastern Europe and the USSR. She has for the first time visited Belarus only in 1991. After that, she has been visiting Belarus every year or every six months. In 1971, under the patronage of UNESCO, she published the first-ever anthology of Belarusian poetry translated into a Western language: Like Water, Like Fire: An Anthology of Byelorussian Poetry from 1828 to the Present Day. The book was banned in the USSR. In 1977 she published a translation of Taras na Parnasie together with Arnold McMillin. In 2004 Vera Rich published a new collection of Belarusian poetry: Poems on Liberty: Reflections for Belarus.*

[Read the original story](#)

---

# Financial Times: Behemoths in Belarus Belie Stalling Economy



London's Financial Times published another piece on Belarus economy. About a year ago the leading European business newspaper released a [special supplement](#) devoted to promotion of Belarus as an attractive investment destination. This week, Jan Cienski in Minsk describes how the Belarusian authorities are trying to raise some cash without losing control over the state-owned large enterprises:

*The parking lots of Belarusian heavy truckmaker Belaz offer a hard-to-miss clue to how the ex-Soviet republic is tackling the downturn. They are packed with unsold bright yellow behemoths.*

*The reason for the enormous inventories is that the government – through the four largest state-controlled banks – has pumped cash into the state-owned enterprises that make up three-quarters of the economy.*

*The International Monetary Fund foresees no contraction in Belarus this year, in contrast to the deep recessions taking place in neighbouring Ukraine and Russia. Keeping state enterprises afloat has preserved jobs – unemployment is*

*officially only 1 per cent.*

*However, the policy could be storing up trouble for the banking system. Andrei Kobyakov, the country's deputy prime minister, says that the banking system's non-performing loans are only 4 per cent. But Standard & Poor's, the rating agency, says problem assets in the financial system could rise to as high as 35-50 per cent "in a reasonable worst-case scenario".*

*An overwhelmed banking system would have the potential to shake the regime of Alexander Lukashenko, the authoritarian president.*

*"What is happening now is a question of Lukashenko holding on to power," says Irina Tochitsky, deputy director of the IPM Research Centre, an economic policy think-tank. "His ratings are closely tied to people's view of the economy*

*Lukashenko is trying to reform the economy and attract vital foreign investment without losing political control. Until 2007, Belarus was a very strong performer despite undertaking almost no economic reforms. But that year Russia tired of supporting its smaller neighbour and began to demand higher prices for oil and gas.*

*Pushed to the wall by Moscow, Mr Lukashenko began a tentative opening to the west, releasing political prisoners in the hope of attracting much-needed investments. He also undertook a series of economic reforms, reducing red tape, ending government price controls for most goods in shops and taking steps to privatise some state assets.*

Read the full text in: [Financial Times](#).

---

# 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](#).