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## RUSSIA AND BELARUS

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*The next issue of Russian Analytical Digest will be published on 5 September 2006. We wish our readers a pleasant summer.*

## Analysis

# Integration – A Path to Self-Assertion? Relations between Belarus and Russia in the International Context

By Astrid Sahm, Minsk

### Summary:

The latest presidential elections in Belarus have shown that Aleksandar Lukashenka continues to enjoy the support of the political leadership in Moscow. In view of the stagnation in the Belarusian-Russian integration process as well as the numerous conflicts in the bilateral relations, the Kremlin's position can only be understood against the backdrop of the increasingly visible competition over integration and values between Russia and the West.

### A history of virtual integration

Ten years ago, on 2 April 1996, Belarus and Russia began a process of integration by signing an association treaty for the two countries that provided for economic and military cooperation as well as political convergence. In the years that followed, Lukashenka and Boris Yeltsin continued on this course when they concluded agreements on the formation of a political union in 1997 and on a common united state in 1999. In practice, this integration was largely virtual, aiming primarily at assuaging post-Soviet nostalgia in large segments of the electorates in both countries. Furthermore, Belarus under Lukashenka offered the Russian leadership its services as an anti-Western outpost in international relations, as could be seen particularly in the run-up to the 1999 Kosovo War. In return, the Belarusian president expected to be subsidized economically with low gas prices and demanded support for his efforts to win international recognition for the new Belarusian constitution introduced in 1996. He also hoped that the integration process would give him leverage in Russian domestic politics.

The changeover from Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin also brought about a fundamental transformation in Belarusian-Russian relations. Instead of virtual integration, the Russian side embarked on a more pragmatic policy that aimed to increase Russia's economic clout in Belarus and to avoid any aggravation of recently improved relations with the West.

### Enduring economic and political conflicts

The upshot of this development is that in the last few years, Lukashenka has no longer been able to rely fully on the Kremlin's enduring loyalty. One central bone of contention in their bilateral relations is the continuing refusal of the Belarusian president to permit the privatization of the Belarusian natural gas company Beltransgas and to allow the Russian

Gazprom group to acquire a controlling interest in the company, as he had promised in the mid-1990s. In April 2002, Lukashenka had again agreed to let Beltransgas go public in return for deliveries of gas to Belarus at domestic Russian prices. In 2002, therefore, Belarus only paid US\$22.60 per thousand cubic meters of gas for deliveries by Gazprom, which covered approximately 80 percent of Belarus' requirements. Subsequently, however, the Belarusian leadership managed to prevent the privatization of Beltransgas by asking for a vastly exaggerated selling price of US\$5 billion when bidding started – while the Russian side estimated the company's value at US\$6 million.

In autumn of 2003, Gazprom reacted by demanding that the gas price be raised to US\$50 per thousand cubic meters, which would have put Belarus on equal footing with Ukraine. However, when the Russian corporation tried to enforce this demand in February 2004 by cutting off gas supplies to Belarus completely at short notice, it found that its leverage in this respect was limited. For although this measure, which Lukashenka described as a "terrorist act of the highest order," helped sway the Belarusian side to agree to the price raise, the negative reaction of Gazprom's Western customers to the prospect of delivery shortages caused by the Belarusian-Russian conflict severely damaged the company's reputation. The end result was that from 2004 on, Belarus paid US\$46.70 per thousand cubic meters of gas, which was still significantly lower than the world market price at the time, approximately US\$120. At the same time, Gazprom cancelled efforts to further expand the volume of its transit capacity via Belarus, and announced the construction of a new alternative pipeline route through the Baltic Sea.

Moreover, no agreement was reached between the two sides on the major political projects within the Belarusian-Russian integration process. The main

obstacle to the agreed monetary union has been Lukashenka's refusal to approve the conversion of the Russian Central Bank into a single emission center, which would have implied conceding essential aspects of Belarusian sovereignty. Accordingly, the signing of a constitutional treaty for the union of the two states has been postponed repeatedly since 2002. In his verbal sparring with the Belarusian head of state, Putin managed to conduct himself in such a way that, unlike in the 1990s, Lukashenka was regarded as the main impediment this time around. Deprived of his image as an "integrator", Lukashenka increasingly pursued a policy of domestic autarky by making a distinction between the Belarusian model on the one hand, and the West as well as Russia on the other. This strategy could be seen, for example, in the restrictions on broadcasts of Russian television channels, which increasingly featured criticism of official Belarusian policy. Furthermore, for the first time, the Belarusian opposition found a political ally in the Union of Right Forces in Russia. This party, together with three other Duma factions, voted in favor of a Duma hearing on the fate of "disappeared" Belarusian opposition members in 2002. As a result, the Union's leader Boris Nemtsov was expelled from Belarus and banned from re-entering the country for three years.

### Countering the "Colored Revolutions"

Tensions in Russian-Belarusian relations gave rise to hopes in the West that a common policy on Belarus could be pursued in the interest of democratizing the country. These expectations were based mainly on Putin's reticent attitude towards the Belarusian constitutional referendum of October 2004 that cleared the way for Lukashenka to run for the Belarusian presidency an unlimited number of times. In the end, however, Russia – unlike the West – recognized the election results without qualifications. After the Russian leadership had been unable to engineer a transfer of power from Kuchma to Yanukovich in the Ukrainian elections, and thus to integrate Ukraine more securely into the post-Soviet integration processes directed by Russia, they again regarded Aleksandar Lukashenka as a partner who would ensure that Belarus remained within the Russian sphere of influence and to whom there was no alternative. In the run-up to the Belarus presidential elections, therefore, Russia's support for Lukashenka was all but unambiguous. One example of this preferential treatment is the contract on gas deliveries that Belarus signed with Gazprom in late 2005 at a price of US\$46.90 per thousand cubic meters, at a time when the international market price was US\$235, while Ukraine was forced after lengthy negotiations

to pay an average price of US\$95. Simultaneously, the Belarusian opposition has been unable to win new allies in the Russian political establishment since the December 2003 Duma elections, in which the liberal-conservative parties failed to win parliamentary representation.

Increasingly authoritarian tendencies in Russia have also led the Russian leadership to turn away from the Western model of democracy. Moscow instead insists on a doctrine of Western non-interference in the domestic affairs of the post-Soviet states. Accordingly, Russia not only assessed the Belarusian presidential elections in March 2006 positively, but also questioned the criteria applied by the OSCE in its election monitoring. At the same time, the Russian leadership continued to oppose EU- and US-imposed sanctions against Belarus and advocated diplomatic compromises in relations with Minsk. In factual terms, this implies that the West would have to fully and unequivocally recognize Lukashenko's political system and discard its strategy of isolating Belarus politically.

### Russia's new economic offensive

The Kremlin's political backing for Lukashenka is not absolute, however. Immediately after his re-election, both the Russian leadership and Gazprom made clear that Belarus would have to pay "European prices" for gas deliveries from 2007 onwards. The rates have yet to be negotiated; however, it is clear that the price will be determined largely by the question of whether the Belarusian leadership finally agrees to privatize the Beltransgas corporation on the terms demanded by Russia. An increase in energy prices would mean a reduction of the Belarusian GNP by between five and 12 percent – thus throttling the hitherto unfettered economic growth in Belarus, which experts believe was boosted by indirect economic subsidies worth between US\$500 million and US\$1.2 billion annually from Putin's Russia. By raising the economic pressure, the demands of Russia's energy policy dovetail with the policy of the West vis-à-vis Belarus, allowing Russia to continue its current strategy of "partnership despite antagonism" (Lilia Shevtsova) towards the West. For, in view of the insurmountable differences in values, Russia cannot actively support the political demands the West makes of Belarus.

Continuing this policy of integration with Belarus also leaves several options open to Putin for the Russian elections in 2008. On the one hand, Belarus can serve as a template for a third term in office for Putin, while on the other hand, after his current term in office expires, the common federated state presents him with the prospect of a new political function that

no other body created by Russia in the post-Soviet sphere, including the Single Economic Space, can offer. Until the struggle for power in Russia is settled, Aleksandar Lukashenka can therefore count on the continuing political support of the Kremlin. This situ-

ation can only be alleviated on the basis of a shared consensus on values, which can hardly be achieved by way of sanctions.

*Translated from the German by Christopher Findlay*

#### *About the author:*

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#### *Recommended reading:*

- Bruce, Chloë (2005): Friction or Fiction? The Gas Factor in Russian-Belarusian Relations, Chatham House Briefing Paper, REP BP 05/01, available at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/pdf/research/rep/BP0501gas.pdf>
- Deyermond, Ruth (2004): The State of the Union: Military Success, Economic and Political Failure in the Russia-Belarus Union, in: Europe-Asia Studies 56, 8: 1191–1205

## Tables and Diagrams

### Belarus and its Neighbors: Economic Indicators

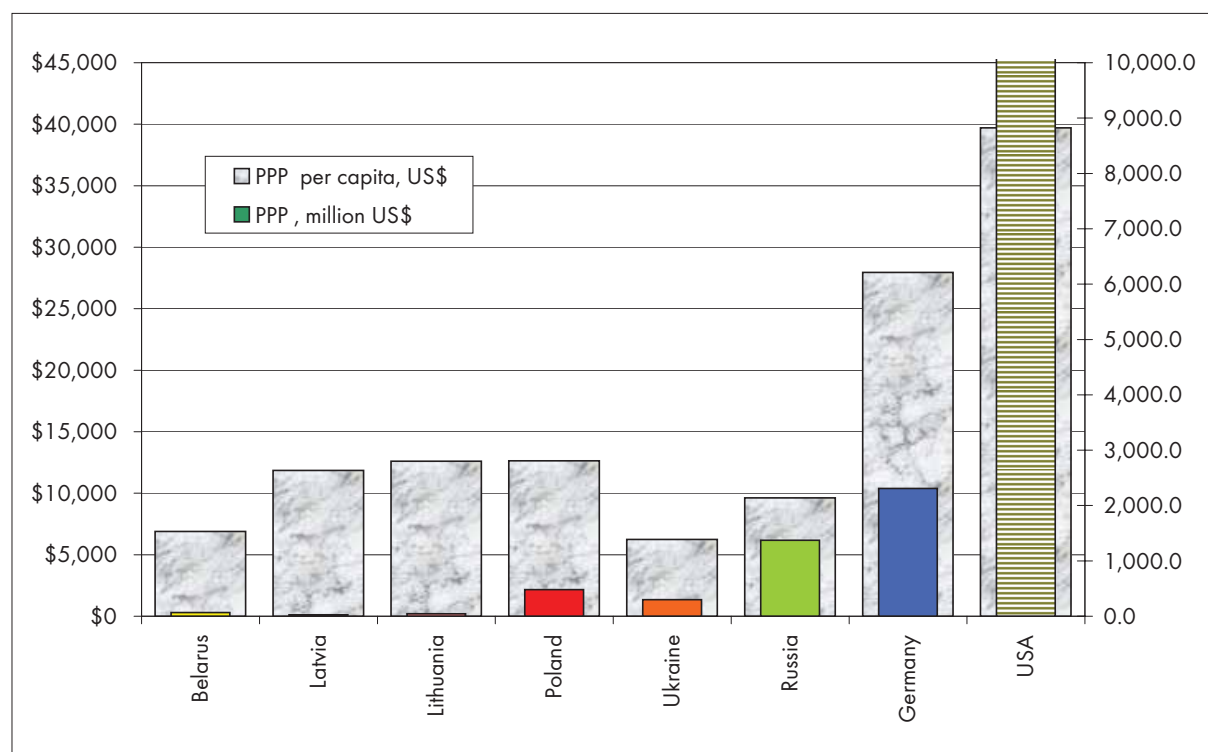
#### Belarus: general facts

Area	
Belarus	207,595 sq km
Germany (for comparison)	357,050 sq km
USA (for comparison)	9,631,420 sq km
Population	
Belarus	9,773,000
Germany (for comparison)	82,460,000
USA (for comparison)	293,500,000
Nationalities in Belarus	
Belarusian	81.20%
Russian	13.20%
Polish	4.10%
Ukrainian	2.90%

Approximately 3 million Belarusians and their descendants live outside of Belarus

Sources: <http://www.belarus-botschaft.de/> – [http://www.bfai.de/ext/anlagen/PubAnlage\\_928.pdf](http://www.bfai.de/ext/anlagen/PubAnlage_928.pdf) – The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank: 2006 World Development Report. Equity and Development, Washington DC: A copublication of The World Bank and Oxford University Press 2005, 292f. – CIA World Factbook 2006

### Economic performance of East and Central European economies in 2004 (World Bank data, PPP)



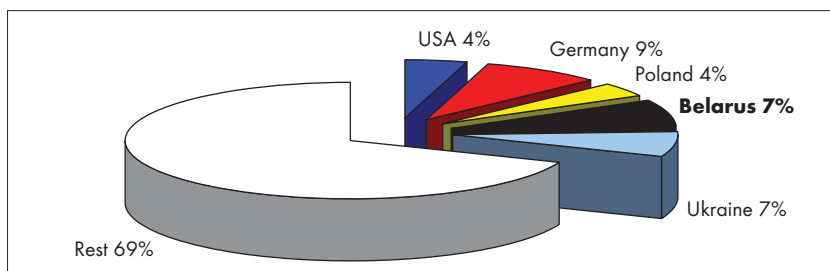
### Economic performance of selected East and Central European states and the USA

	Population, 2004			Gross national income (GNI), 2004		PPP gross national income (GNI), 2004		Life expectancy at birth (years), 2003		Carbon dioxide emissions per capita, metric tons
	Millions	Average annual % growth	Density people per sq km	US\$ billions	US\$ per capita	US\$ billions	US\$ per capita	Men	Women	
	2004	2000-4	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2003	2003	2000
Belarus	9.8	-0.4	47	20.9	2,120	68.0	6,900	62	74	5.9
Latvia	2.3	-0.7	37	12.6	5,460	27.0	11,850	66	76	2.5
Lithuania	3.4	-0.5	55	19.7	5,740	43.0	12,610	66	78	3.4
Poland	38.2	-0.3	125	232.4	6,090	482.0	12,640	71	79	7.8
Ukraine	48.0	-0.8	83	60.3	1,260	300.0	6,250	63	74	6.9
Russia	142.8	-0.5	8	487.3	3,410	1,374.0	9,620	60	72	9.9
Germany	82.6	0.1	237	2,489.0	30,120	2,310.0	27,950	76	81	9.6
USA	293.5	1.0	32	12,150.9	41,400	11,655	39,710	75	80	19.8

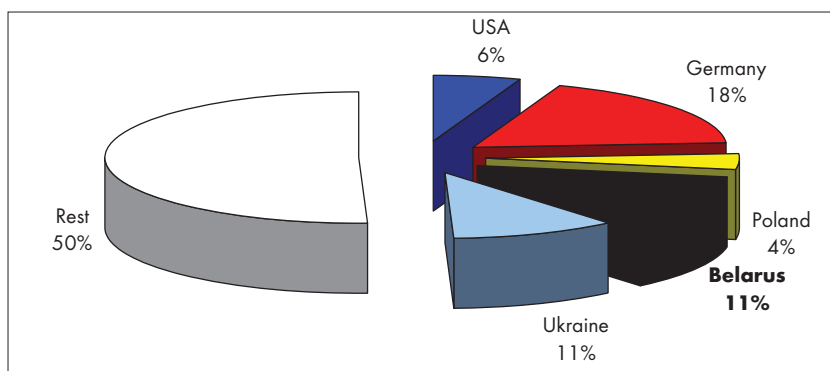
Source: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank: 2006 World Development Report. Equity and Development, Washington DC: A copublication of The World Bank and Oxford University Press 2005, 292f.

## Russian foreign trade with selected neighboring countries 1995–2004

### Russian exports 2004



### Russian imports 2004



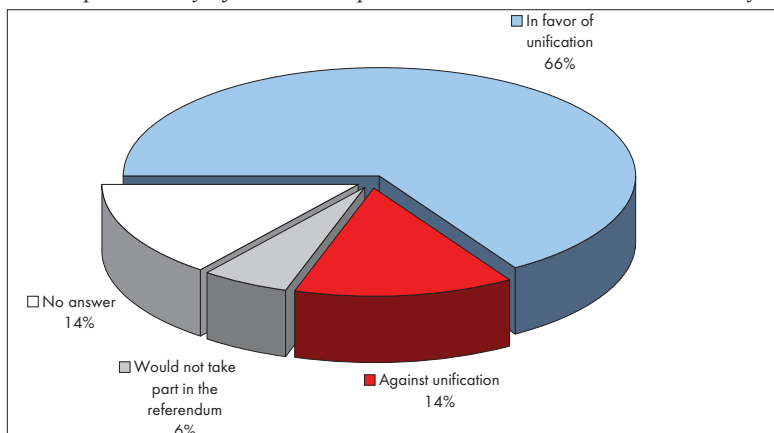
	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Russian exports (US\$ millions, established prices)</b>						
USA	4.315	4.644	4.198	3.989	4.206	6.586
Germany	6.208	9.232	9.194	8.060	10.419	13.300
Poland	1.688	4.452	4.200	3.720	4.619	5.699
Belarus	2.965	5.568	5.438	5.922	7.602	11.143
Ukraine	7.149	5.024	5.282	5.885	7.595	10.771
<b>Russian imports (US\$ millions, established prices)</b>						
USA	2.648	2.694	3.253	2.980	2.959	3.197
Germany	6.483	3.898	5.808	6.598	8.102	10.575
Poland	1.321	716	962	1.300	1.713	2.310
Belarus	2.185	3.710	3.963	3.977	4.880	6.463
Ukraine	6.617	3.651	3.845	3.230	4.437	6.096
<b>Russian exports (development in %, 1995 = 100)</b>						
USA	100%	107.6%	97.3%	92.4%	97.5%	152.6%
Germany	100%	148.7%	148.1%	129.8%	167.8%	214.2%
Poland	100%	263.7%	248.8%	220.4%	273.6%	337.6%
Belarus	100%	187.8%	183.4%	199.7%	256.4%	375.8%
Ukraine	100%	70.3%	73.9%	82.3%	106.2%	150.7%
<b>Russian imports (development in %, 1995 = 100)</b>						
USA	100%	82.8%	122.8%	112.5%	111.7%	120.7%
Germany	100%	60.1%	89.6%	101.8%	125%	163.1%
Poland	100%	54.2%	72.8%	98.4%	129.7%	174.9%
Belarus	100%	169.8%	181.4%	182%	223.3%	295.8%
Ukraine	100%	55.2%	58.1%	48.8%	67.1%	92.1%

Sources: <http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/brus05/lswPrx.dll/Stg/25-05.htm>  
<http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/brus05/lswPrx.dll/Stg/25-06.htm>

## Opinion Survey

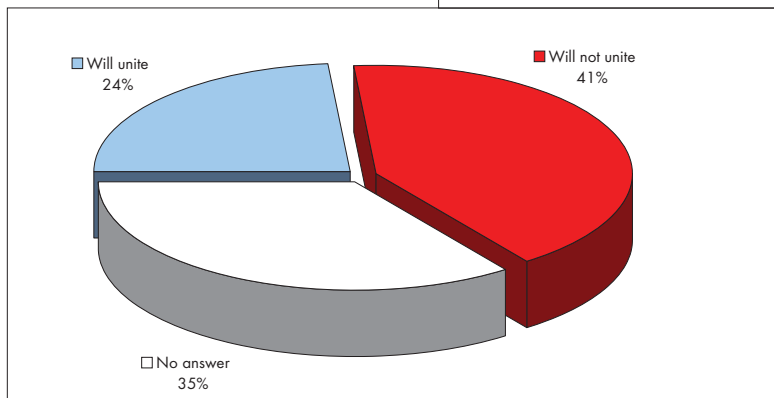
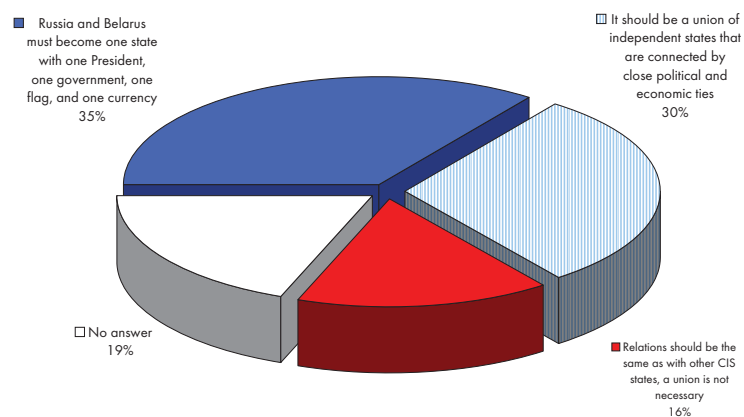
### Russian Opinions on Relations with Belarus

Source: opinion surveys of the "Public Opinion Foundation" (FOM), 25/26 February 2006 <http://bd.fom.ru/zip/tb0609.zip>



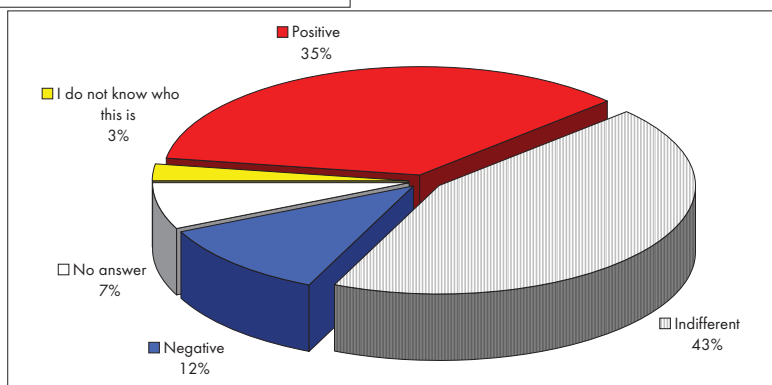
**Would you vote today in favor of unifying Russia and Belarus?**

**What kind of union would you be in favor of?**



**Will Russia and Belarus unite within the next few years in order to constitute one state?**

**What is your opinion of Lukashenka?**

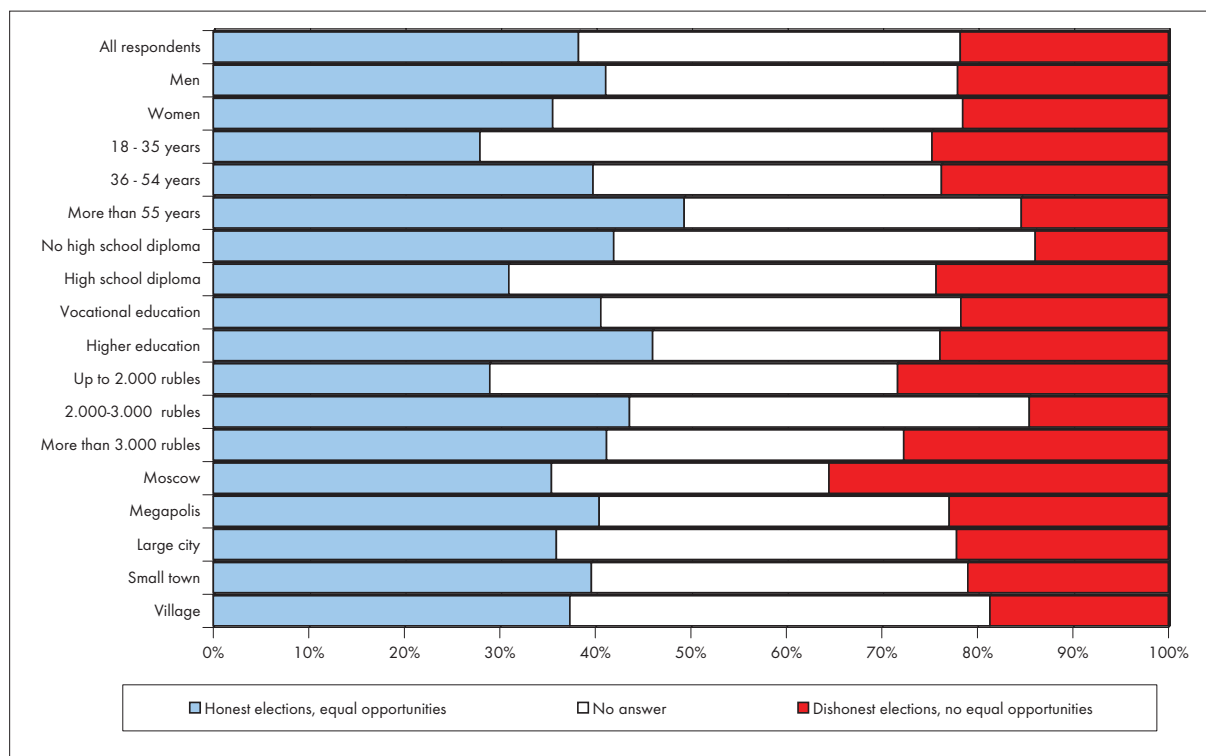


## The Opinions of Russians on the Presidential Elections in Belarus

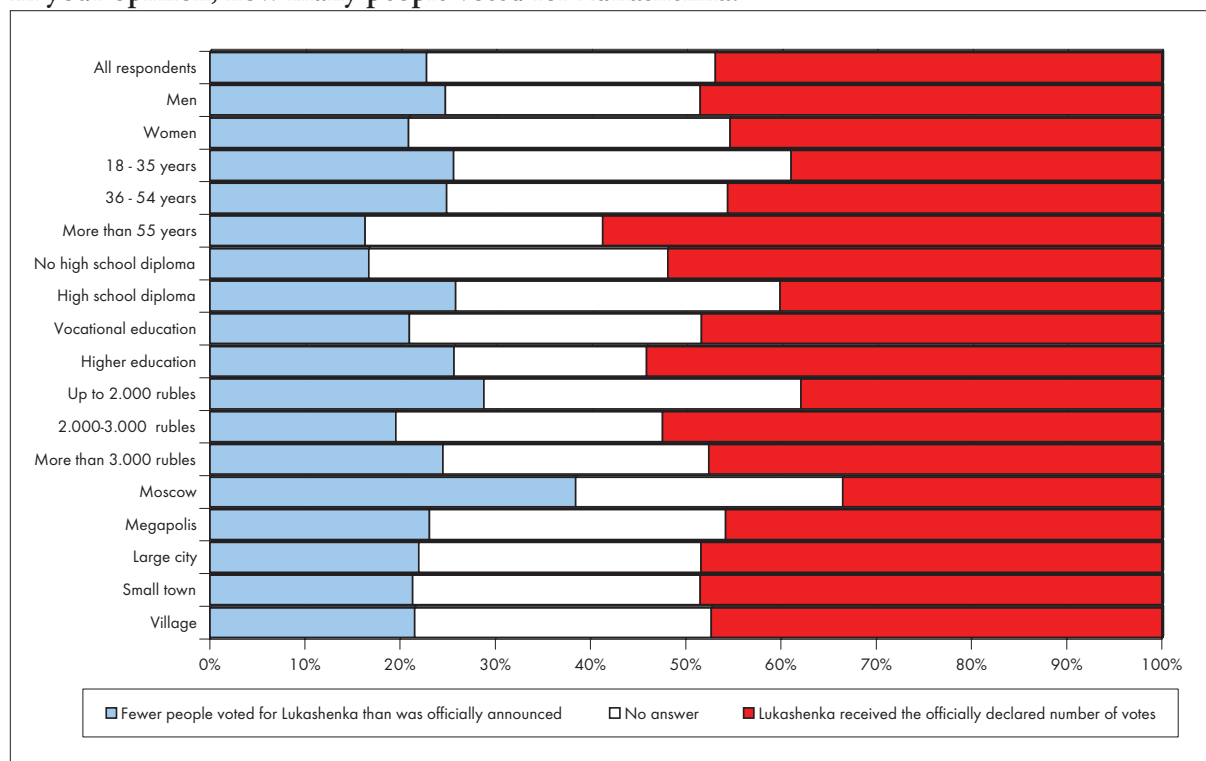
Source: Opinion surveys of the "Public Opinion Foundation" (FOM) of 25/26 March and 8/9 April 2006

<http://bd.fom.ru/zip/tb0615.zip>

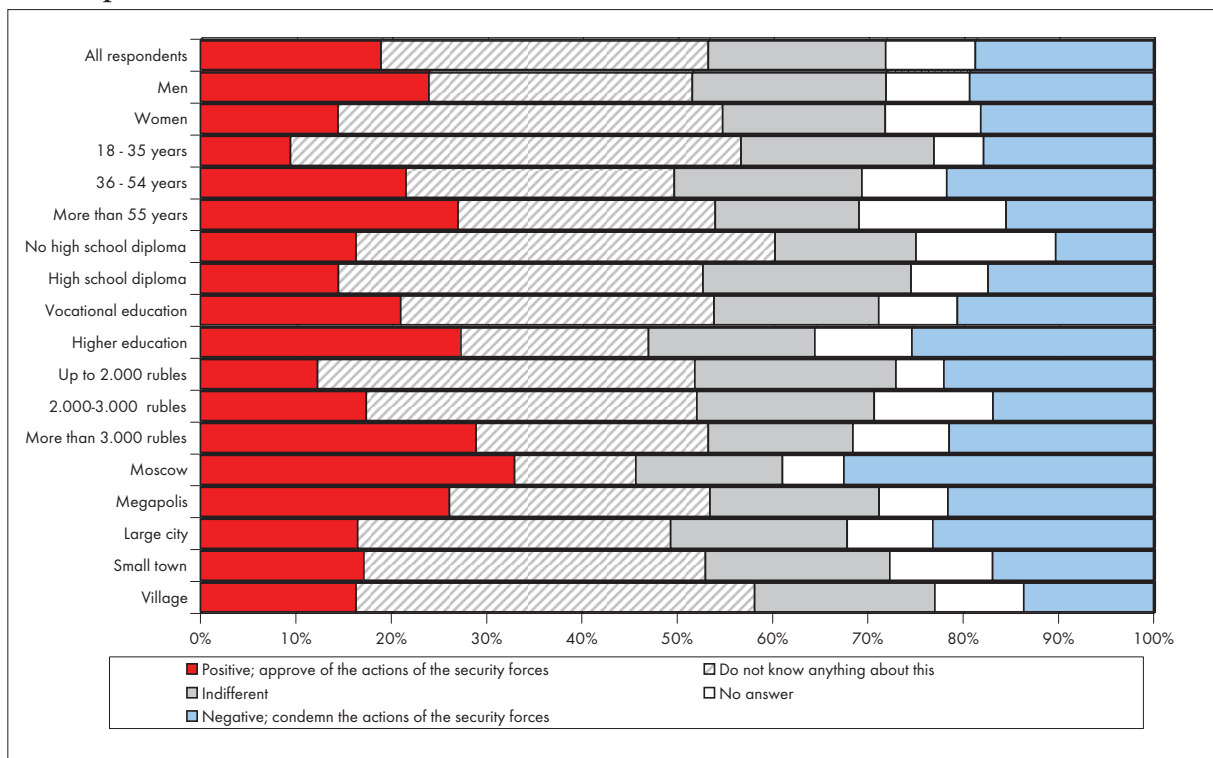
Do you believe that the presidential elections in Belarus were conducted honestly and that all candidates had equal opportunities?



In your opinion, how many people voted for Lukashenka?



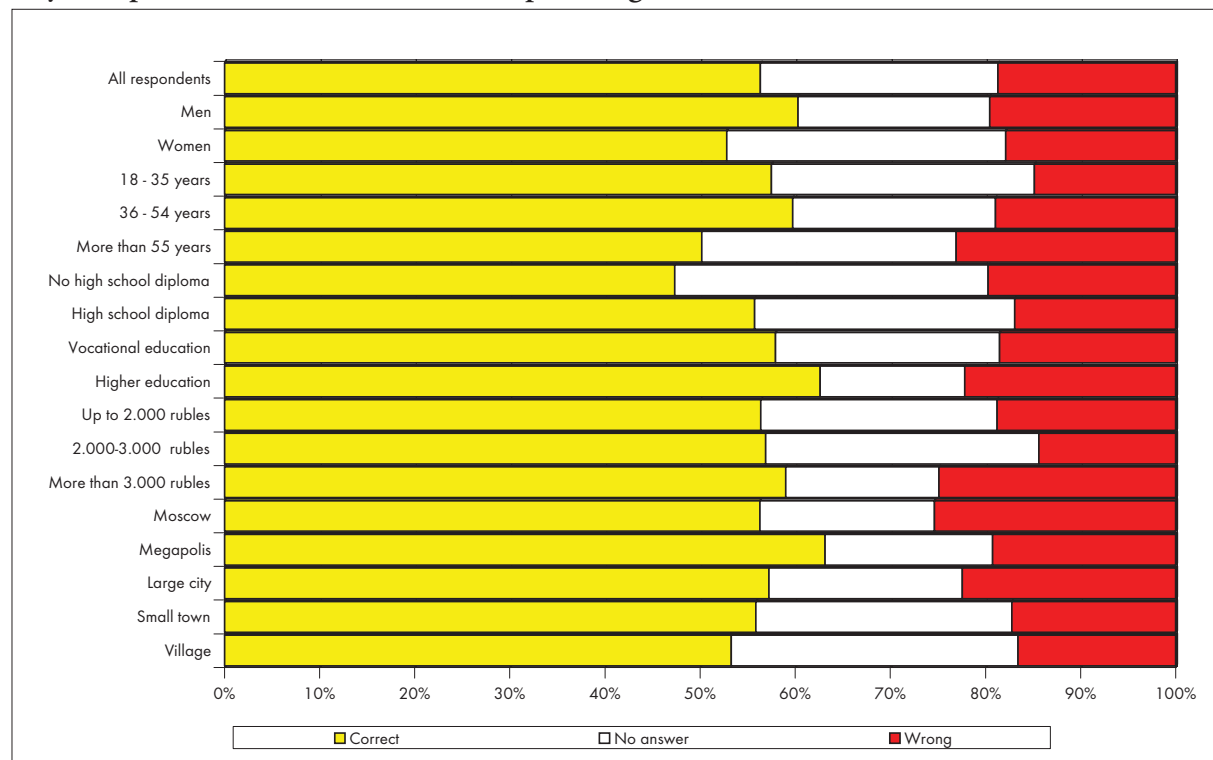
What is your attitude concerning the fact that the demonstration of the opposition in Minsk was dispersed and that demonstrators were arrested?



## A Russian-Belarusian Gas Conflict?

Source: Opinion surveys of the "Public Opinion Foundation" (FOM) of 8/9 April 2006 <http://bd.fom.ru/zip/tb0615.zip>

In your opinion, is it correct to raise the price of gas for Belarus?



**Regional Report****Belarus Expands Cooperation with the Russian Regions**

By Sergei Sarychev, Kursk

Russia's cooperation with Belarus has transitioned from a period of romantic expectations for a united government to one of pragmatic business deals. While efforts to promote integration have stagnated, Belarus has been actively developing trade ties with the Russian regions. The ties are lopsided since Russia sends investment and goods to Belarus, while Belarus only sends goods to Russia. Currently, the two sides have no alternative to the existing relations, though the situation could change with Russia's entry into the World Trade Organization if Russia seeks to make its industry more competitive internationally. As Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko told Altai Krai Governor Aleksandr Karlin on 8 June 2006, "Belarus's cooperation with the Russian regions saved the union of the two countries." Thus, while bilateral relations are making little progress in terms of integration, trade relations between the countries are expanding rapidly.

Relations between Russia and Belarus are developing against the background of an incipient union between the two countries. The union foresees the creation of a united customs and economic space, unified energy and transportation systems, intensified cooperation in humanitarian and social spheres, and common foreign, defense, and security policies. The main institutions of the union have already been established—the Supreme State Council, which includes the heads of state, parliamentary speakers, and prime ministers, and the Council of Ministers, consisting of members of the two countries' governments. The main working institution of the union government is the Permanent Committee. The union government is planning to create a parliament in the future. Members of the lower house of the parliaments in both states are working on a Constitutional Act for the union. The main principles of the new act will be preserving the sovereignty, equal rights, and international status of each of the members of the union, according to the official web site of the Russian embassy in Belarus (<http://www.belarus.mid.ru>).

Many of the aspects of the union are simply declaratory and the actual level of cooperation varies from one sphere of activity to the next. The relations between Russia and Belarus are well grounded in law since there are more than 120 inter-state and inter-governmental agreements. Most importantly, there is an agreement on creating a unified customs space.

Economic integration is moving slowly. The unified currency was not introduced as planned in 2005, nor is there agreement on issues of taxation, budgets, credit policy, insurance, or monetary policy. Nevertheless, the trade ties of the two countries are rapidly increasing. Bilateral turnover was \$15.8 billion in 2005, according to the Russian embassy in Belarus. Belarus makes up 6 percent of Russia's foreign trade,

while Russia accounts for 50 percent of Belarus's trade. The figures are growing rapidly: in the first two months of 2006, Belarus's overall trade turnover was \$6.16 billion, growing from the analogous period a year earlier by 38 percent, mainly on account of the country's trade with Russia. Today, Belarus is heavily dependent on its trade with Russia.

There is intense foreign policy cooperation between Russia and Belarus and their positions are often the same or similar on the main issues. They work together closely in such international organizations as the UN and the CIS. According to the Russians, they are also strengthening their cooperation in the spheres of defense, security, counter-terrorism, and combating crime.

Russia and Belarus are also working together to create a "unified information space." The majority of cable television networks in Russia retransmit Belarus-TV. Every Thursday Radio Rossii broadcasts an hour-long discussion of issues in Russian-Belarusian integration, while Radio Mayak produces similar shows with even greater frequency. The mass media of Russia and Belarus cooperate through the Information Agency of Belarus and Russia (<http://www.soyuzinfo.ru>). This agency provides news about Belarus to regional newspapers in Russia and news about Russia for newspapers in Belarus. The web sites of the Belarusian embassy in Moscow (<http://www.embassybel.ru>) and the Belarusian president (<http://www.president.gov.by>) focus on the audience working with the Russian part of the Internet and have lots of information about the cooperation of Russian regions with Belarus.

**Belarus's Relations with the Russian Regions**

Belarus's relationship with the Russian regions has been key to the development of ties between the

countries. Currently, Belarus has direct relations with 68 of Russia's 88 regions ([http://www.embassybel.ur/commercial\\_economic\\_relations/regional\\_cooperation](http://www.embassybel.ur/commercial_economic_relations/regional_cooperation)). Most of these agreements address concrete economic projects. The city of Minsk and Belarus's six oblasts have region-region agreements with 80 Russian regions. Six Russian regions have representations in Minsk, while Belarus has consulates in dozens of Russian regions.

Belarus's most dynamic relations are with Moscow, St. Petersburg, Moscow Oblast, Smolensk, Yaroslavl, Bryansk, Tyumen, Nizhny Novgorod, Saratov, and Tula. Trade with these regions accounts for 80 percent of Belarus's trade with Russia. Belarus benefits from these relations with Russian regions because it creates a much bigger market for Belarusian goods. Additionally, ties to Belarusian machine-building plants improve the position of large factories in the Russian regions. Establishing such interregional ties is one of the most developed forms of bilateral cooperation.

Belarus's trade with the various regions depends on their economic profile. Kaliningrad, for example, imports Belarusian construction materials, shoes, knit wear, and agricultural products. In return, Kaliningrad loads Belarusian exports on ships to further destinations and exports fish and seafood to Belarus. Trade with Bryansk was \$171 million in 2004, increasing 30 percent from 2003. This region mostly imports farm equipment in exchange for agricultural products. Belgorod, by contrast, focuses on exports of ferrous metals.

Moscow city has the most developed ties with Belarus of all the Russian regions. When Lukashenko met with Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov on 13 March 2006, he announced "We are friends, I have never hidden this." Luzhkov has proposed building a Moscow House in Belarus to increase trade and facilitate greater ties in industry and high technology. Recently, Muscovites began investing in the Belarusian construction industry, particularly the development of a large number of new residences in Minsk. The city of Moscow and Belarus also created the Council for business cooperation, whose seventh meeting took place at the end of May. Topics discussed included the consumer market, cooperation in agricultural trade, and construction.

Recently, the Russian regions have also begun cooperating with Belarus through President Putin's seven presidential envoys. On 9 March 2006, Belarusian Prime Minister Sergei Sidorsky met with deputy presidential envoy for the northwest federal okrug Lyubov Sovershaevaya. It is also common for Sidorsky to

travel to the regions. In December 2005, for example, he visited Samara and Ulyanovsk and met with the governors, local politicians, and businessmen, visiting enterprises and signing agreements.

### Kursk as a model region

Kursk Oblast, where I live, serves as an interesting case study of relations with Belarus. It signed a cooperation agreement with Belarus relatively late, waiting until 2002, when Governor Aleksandr Mikhlov formalized relations during a visit to Belarus. Among regions trading with Belarus, Kursk stands slightly less than the average in terms of turnover. However, as is typical, trade relations are growing quickly and in a variety of sectors at once. In some ways, Kursk is like a model of Russia, since its economy is focused on raw materials and energy (iron ore and electricity), while other sectors are relatively poorly developed.

Belarus is the eighth largest trading partner for Kursk, following Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Hungary, and China. Trade in 2005 was \$69 million, growing from 2004 by 4.1 percent. The main products from Belarus are farm equipment (tractors, combines), bulldozers, graders, engines, ferrous metal, tires, and a variety of other goods. Kursk sends baked goods, pharmaceuticals, plastics, and other products to Belarus. Kursk's Grinn Corporation (<http://www.grinn-corp.ru>) is the largest dealer representing Belarusian automobile factories in Russia. On Kursk's central streets, there are at least five stores that sell exclusively Belarusian goods. Other Kursk stores sell Belarusian goods that are considered to be high quality and low cost by local consumers. There are frequent visits of delegations between Belarus and Kursk. Trade fairs selling Belarusian goods in Kursk and Kursk goods in Belarus are also common.

Beyond the extensive trade, representatives of Kursk and Belarus participate in a variety of councils and associations. These include the Council of leaders of border regions in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, which includes 16 regions from these countries. The Central Black Earth Association is also active and includes numerous Belarusian and Ukrainian regions. At the last meeting in Belgorod, the group discussed various aspects of creating a unified education space for Belarus and the Russian regions. Conferences on educational issues are now frequent. In November 2005, members of the Academy of State Service in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine discussed issues of managing local government. There is also an annual Teacher of the Year festival, which includes the participation of teachers from 10 regions in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. This year, Kursk Oblast will organize the

fifth annual Slavic Commonwealth festival, bringing together 400 students from 64 universities in Belarus and Russia. Ukrainian students stopped participating in this project after the Orange Revolution.

### Three scenarios for future developments

There are three potential scenarios for the future development of relations between Belarus and Russia in the near term (to 2008). The first “union” scenario foresees the realization of the existing agreements between the elites of the two countries on the most important problems of integration and the adoption of new measures. These developments would include the launch of the union parliament, the adoption of the Constitutional Act, and the introduction of a single currency. These political features of the integration process are the most difficult to achieve. If such measures are carried out, maximal progress is possible in relations between the two countries and in relations between their regions because the issues that are today handled asymmetrically on the level of Belarus-Russian regions would instead be resolved directly by the regional elites of the two states or by the union government. The economic, social, and cultural integration of the Russian regions with the Belarusian regions, with an anticipated spurt in economic growth, would necessarily incur a reduction in both sides’ sovereignty. The chances of this scenario being realized are not great due to both internal and external political reasons. Internally, there is no realistic plan for the elites to work together, the Belarusian elites are not prepared to give up even a part of their current powers, and both sides are strongly inclined to maintain as much stability as possible. Externally, there is

opposition from NATO and the European Union in the form of their new members—Poland and the Baltic states.

The second scenario anticipates the continuation of the status quo, with a preservation of the current situation because the elites on both sides are not ready to go any farther. In this case, the main form of relations will remain along the axis of Belarus-Russian regions and these relations will continue to develop intensively primarily based on the mutually complementary economies of the two countries. This scenario is the most likely because it satisfies almost everyone (though more in Belarus than in Russia). The downside of this outcome is that it is based more on the past than the future. Accordingly, any significant social-political changes in the years ahead could curtail its realization.

The third “Ukrainian” scenario envisions an opposition victory in Belarus. If there were such a dramatic change of government in Belarus, the country would likely preserve only minimal economic and cultural ties with Russia and the Belarusian elite would shift its focus to the European Union and NATO. Russia would be politically isolated and start to work more closely with Asian countries. Naturally, Russia would work actively to prevent such an outcome. It is extremely unlikely that such events would occur before 2008. Even if the liberal opposition came to power in the 2008 Russian presidential elections, the Belarusian opposition has little hope for success. Lukashenko will hardly give up power voluntarily, as Leonid Kuchma did in Ukraine and Edward Shevardnadze did in Georgia. Moreover, the Belarusian opposition is extremely weak.

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## About the Russian Analytical Digest

The Russian Analytical Digest is a bi-weekly internet publication jointly produced by the Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen ([www.forschungsstelle-osteuropa.de](http://www.forschungsstelle-osteuropa.de)) and the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich). It is supported by the Otto Wolff Foundation and the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language Russlandanalysen ([www.russlandanalysen.de](http://www.russlandanalysen.de)), the CSS analytical network on Russia and Eurasia ([www.res.ethz.ch](http://www.res.ethz.ch)), and the Russian Regional Report. The Russian Analytical Digest covers political, economic, and social developments in Russia and its regions, and looks at Russia's role in international relations.

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## Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen

Founded in 1982 and led by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Eichwede, the Research Centre for East European Studies (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa) at the University of Bremen is dedicated to socialist and post-socialist cultural and societal developments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Research Centre possesses a unique collection of alternative culture and independent writings from the former socialist countries in its archive. In addition to extensive individual research on dissidence and society in the Soviet Union, in 2006, a group of international research institutes will be assembled for a collaborative project on the theme "The other Eastern Europe – the 1960s to the 1980s, dissidence in politics and society, alternatives in culture. Contributions to comparative contemporary history" which will be funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

In the area of post-socialist societies, extensive research projects have been conducted in recent years with emphasis on political decision-making processes, economic culture and identity formation. One of the core missions of the institute is the dissemination of academic knowledge to the interested public. This includes regular email service with more than 6,000 subscribers in politics, economics and the media.

With a collection of publications on Eastern Europe unique in Germany, the Research Centre is also a contact point for researchers as well as the interested public. The Research Centre has approximately 300 periodicals from Russia alone, which are available in the institute's library. News reports as well as academic literature is systematically processed and analysed in data bases.

## The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) is a Swiss academic center of competence that specializes in research, teaching, and information services in the fields of international and Swiss security studies. The CSS also acts as a consultant to various political bodies and the general public.

The CSS is engaged in research projects with a number of Swiss and international partners. The Center's research focus is on new risks, European and transatlantic security, strategy and doctrine, state failure and state building, and Swiss foreign and security policy.

In its teaching capacity, the CSS contributes to the ETH Zurich-based Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree course for prospective professional military officers in the Swiss army and the ETH and University of Zurich-based MA program in Comparative and International Studies (MACIS), offers and develops specialized courses and study programs to all ETH Zurich and University of Zurich students, and has the lead in the Executive Masters degree program in Security Policy and Crisis Management (MAS ETH SPCM), which is offered by ETH Zurich. The program is tailored to the needs of experienced senior executives and managers from the private and public sectors, the policy community, and the armed forces.

The CSS runs the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), and in cooperation with partner institutes manages the Comprehensive Risk Analysis and Management Network (CRN), the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact (PHP), the Swiss Foreign and Security Policy Network (SSN), and the Russian and Eurasian Security (RES) Network.

Any opinions expressed in Russian Analytical Digest are exclusively those of the authors.

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