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**Relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus:  
the present conditions, status quo and perspectives**

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## Introduction

Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus are two important neighbours of Poland and the European Union, naturally separating them from Russia. After gaining independence in 1991, they faced the choice between re-integration with Russia or strengthening their own statehood and position in the international arena. In the mid-1990s, Belarus decided to choose the first option, whereas Ukraine, though it did not resign from cooperation with Russia, strove to develop an independent foreign policy and tighten its contacts with the Euro-Atlantic structures. Over the last 14 years, the two states have not attached excessive importance to bilateral relations<sup>1</sup>, also researchers have not shown much interest in the issue<sup>2</sup>.

This study aims to discuss the main conditions of Ukrainian – Belarusian relations, to present the manner in which they evolved at the political, economic and cultural levels in the years 1991–2005, and particularly after the Orange Revolution (November – December 2004); as well as make an attempt to provide an answer to the question about the extent to which the transformations of 2004 in Ukraine can influence the change of the political situation in Belarus. The democratisation of Ukraine will certainly foster the evolution of the political situation of its northern neighbour, but it will not become a decisive factor affecting changes in Belarus.

## 1. Ukraine and Belarus: similarities and differences

Ukraine and Belarus are two predominantly flatland countries, situated in the eastern part of the European continent, separated by a border of 975 km<sup>3</sup>. The fact that they are direct neighbours is not the only factor making the two states close. Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus are also connected by a common history, similarity of the cultures and languages, economic and familial ties<sup>4</sup>. Some Ukrainian specialist believe in fact that Belarus is in many respects the closest partner of their country<sup>5</sup>.

Ukrainians, Belarusians and notably Russians belong to the group of eastern Slavs. Most of the Ukrainian and Belarusian territories used to belong to the Kievan Rus, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Commonwealth of Two Nations and finally the Russian Empire. Five years after the Bolshevik Revolution, in December 1922, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, the Belarus Socialist Soviet Republic, the Trans-Caucasian Socialist Soviet Republic and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic created the USSR<sup>6</sup>. In 1945, in compliance with the provisions of the Yalta Conference (January – February 1945)<sup>7</sup>, the two republics became – along with the Soviet

<sup>1</sup> V. Horbach, *Klucz leży w Rosji*, „Przegląd Środkowoeuropejski”, July 2005, No. 40, p. 27; Ё. Чекаленко, *Зовнішня політика і безпека України. Людина – Суспільство – Держава – Міжнародні структури*, Національний інститут проблем міжнародної безпеки, Київ 2004, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> The few publications devoted to Ukraine and Belarus include the following books: A. Goujon, *Nationalism in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Space: the cases of Belarus and Ukraine*, „Arbeitspapiere des Osteuropa – Instituts der Freien Universität Berlin” 1999, No. 22; P. White, R. Rose, *Nationality and Public Opinion in Belarus and Ukraine*, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow 2001; О.О. Долженков, *Україна — Білорусь: досвід політичної трансформації*, Одеський юридичний інститут Національного університету внутрішніх справ – „Астропринт”, Одеса 2003.

<sup>3</sup> From the geographical perspective, the border is natural only in a small part – in the area of Chernychov and Homel it runs along the Dnieper river for approximately 100 kilometres. On the other hand, it is justified by the ethnic structure of the lands through which it runs – with the exception of the Western fragment, separating the Brestskaya *oblast* from Ukraine.

<sup>4</sup> In the spring of 2004 a survey was conducted in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in which questions were asked about the factor which was most likely to foster the tighter ties among the three states in the future. In all the three countries, the respondents most often indicated their common past (Russia– 33%, Ukraine – 22%, Bielarus– 30%), family ties (28%, 30% and 25%, respectively) and common economic interests (25%, 42% and 33%, respectively). See *Россияне хотели бы жить в России, Украинцы – в союзе Славян, Белорусы – в Европе*, „Пресс-выпуск” (Всероссийский центр изучения общественного мнения, Москва), No. 85 of 24 May 2004., <http://www.wciom.ru/?pt=9&article=766> (22.08.2005).

<sup>5</sup> V. Horbach, *Klucz leży w Rosji*, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> See Декларация об образовании Союза Советских Социалистических Республик, Москва, 30 декабря 1922 г., <http://hronop.km.ru/dokum/ccsr1922.html> (23.08.2005); Договор об образовании Союза Советских Социалистических Республик, Москва, 30 декабря 1922 г., [http://hronop.km.ru/dokum/192\\_dok/ussr-dog.html](http://hronop.km.ru/dokum/192_dok/ussr-dog.html) (23.08.2005). From the perspective of many years, the understanding was of little significance – the Russian Federation Socialist Republic and the Russian Communist Party (the Bolsheviks) began to play a dominant role in the new state. Formally, however, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic and the Belarus Socialist Soviet Republic contributed to the creation of the Soviet superpower (*cf.* M. Heller, A. Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy. Historia Związku Sowieckiego*, Polonia Book Fund Ltd, London 1985, vol. 1, p. 123–128).

<sup>7</sup> Protokół pracy Konferencji Krymskiej, Yalta, 11 February 1945 r., [in:] *Teheran–Jalta–Poczdam. Dokumenty konferencji szefów rządów trzech wielkich mocarstw*, KIW–PISM, Warszawa 1972, p. 210.

Union – founding members of the UN. The solution was mostly meant to strengthen the position of the USSR in the new organisation – thanks to which the USSR had three votes in the UN General Assembly, and the representatives of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic and the Belarus Socialist Soviet Republic did not pursue independent policies in the Organisation<sup>8</sup>.

In August 1991, a few days after the so-called Moscow putsch, Ukraine and Belarus proclaimed independence<sup>9</sup>. In December, the leaders of the three “Slavonic republics”, Boris Yeltsin, Leonid Kravchuk and Stanislaw Shushkievich signed the historic understanding in which they announced the end of the USSR and established a new structure – the Commonwealth of Independent States<sup>10</sup>. In the early 1990s, the two states had to face similar challenges, consisting in overcoming the heritage of the USSR, solving the problems brought about by the independence and obtain legitimisation for their policies<sup>11</sup>. Alaksandr Lukashenka, elected as Belarusian president in 1994, decided to achieve this by authoritarian methods. At the beginning of the decade fears appeared that his Ukrainian counterpart, Leonid Kuchma, might decide to follow his example<sup>12</sup>. Ukraine and Belarus were also brought closer to each other by the international situation. Western leaders did not conceal that the two states stood little chance of joining the European Union soon<sup>13</sup>. This, on the other hand, did not change the fact that the EU – especially after the enlargement of 2004 – faced the necessity of developing a common policy towards the new eastern neighbours<sup>14</sup>.

For those reasons, many politicians and columnists used to mention Ukraine and Belarus together, many still do, not infrequently together with Russia (“the Slavonic republics”), Russia and Kazakhstan (“the nuclear republics”<sup>15</sup>) or Russia and Moldova (the neighbours of the enlarged EU). Consequently, they do not notice the differences between the two states, they do not appreciate the importance of the differences and only too often perceive them through the context of Russia<sup>16</sup>. Ukraine, Belarus and Russia are the heirs of Kievan Rus, just as France and Germany are the heirs of the Carolingian Empire. This does not mean, however, that differences among them should be neglected, especially as the three states have clearly different attitudes towards their common heritage, which happens to be one of the important sources of tension among them. Ukraine is dominated by the concept according to which Kievan Rus is believed to be the source of Ukrainian statehood, which is to help consolidate the young republic. Russian historiography, and to a certain extent its official Belarusian counterpart, advocate the opinion that the heir of Kievan Rus was the Grand Duchy of Moscow, and subsequently Russia. Consequently, uniting the Ruthenian (Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian) lands seems a

<sup>8</sup> In order to make the accession to the UN possible for the Ukrainian and Belarusian Republics, the Constitution of the USSR was amended in February 1944: the Soviet republics were given the right to conclude international agreements and maintain diplomatic and consular relations. It was a peculiar solution, as parts of other federation states do not have such rights. In practice, however, it was of purely facade character. (R. Bierzanek, J. Symonides, *Prawo międzynarodowe publiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1994, p. 121). For more on the issue, see В.Е. Снапковський, *Путь Беларуси в ООН: 1944–1945 гг.*, Наука і тэхніка, Минск 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Постанова Верховної Ради Української РСР «Про проголошення незалежності України», Київ, 24 серпня 1991 року, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=1427-12> (24.08.2005); Закон Белорусской Советской Социалистической Республики о придании статуса конституционного закона Декларации Верховного Совета Белорусской Советской Социалистической Республики о государственном суверенитете Белорусской Советской Социалистической Республики, Минск, 25 августа 1991 г., <http://pravo2000.by.ru/baza32/d31377.htm> (24.08.2005).

<sup>10</sup> Угода про створення Співдружності Незалежних Держав, Мінськ, 8 грудня 1991 р., [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=997\\_077](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=997_077) (23.08.2005).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. A. Lapatniova, A. Regamey, *Biélorussie, Ukraine: la politique des symboles*, “Nouveaux mondes” (Genève), automne 1999, p. 37–60.

<sup>12</sup> A. Duleba, *Echecs ukrainiens*, „Nouvelle alternative”, automne 2001, t. 16, No. 55, p. 121–129.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. E. Balladur, *Pour un nouveau Traité de l’Elysée*, “Le Monde” z 30 października 1994 r.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the issue, see primarily *Polityka rozszerzonej Unii Europejskiej wobec nowych sąsiadów*, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, Warszawa 2003, [http://www.batory.org.pl/doc/nowi\\_p.pdf](http://www.batory.org.pl/doc/nowi_p.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> After obtaining independence, Ukraine and Belarus, albeit quite unexpectedly, became nuclear powers, as the Soviet nuclear arsenals had been placed in their territories. This fact was a source of considerable anxiety to the international community, particularly Western states, who wanted to see the post-Soviet arsenals transferred to Russia *in toto*. The postulate was realised only in 1996, but already in the years 1993–1994 Belarus and Ukraine joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1968 as states having no nuclear weapons (for more on the issue, see C. Charveriat, *La dénucléarisation de la Biélorussie, du Kazakhstan et de l’Ukraine*, „Relations internationales et stratégiques”, automne 1996, No. 23, p. 66–75).

<sup>16</sup> See Д. Бовуа, *Така лукава “потрійна єдність”*, „Політика і час” 1998, No. 3 p. 61–67.

natural task of Russia, and the existence of an independent Ukraine and Belarus, not connected with Russia, seems an incomprehensible phenomenon<sup>17</sup>.

**Table 1.**  
Ukraine and Belarus – the most significant geographical and socio-economic indices

	Area	Population (2005)	GDP (2004)	Growth of the GD (2004)	GDP per capita (2004 r.)
Ukraine	603,7 tys. km <sup>2</sup>	47,4 million	USD 299,1 billion	12%	6300 USD
Belarus	207,6 tys. km <sup>2</sup>	10,3 million	USD 70,5 billion	6,4–11% <sup>a</sup>	6400 USD

Source: *The World Factbook 2005*, Central Information Agency, Washington (D.C.) (electronic version), <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html> (24.08.2005); *World Economic Outlook. April 2005. Globalisation and External Imbalances*, International Monetary Fund, Washington 2005, p. 209.

<sup>a</sup> the CIA provides lower estimates than the IMF.

The discrepancy in the perspectives regarding common history – though perhaps the most symptomatic factor – is not the only difference between Ukraine and Belarus. The countries are also different in terms of the most basic geographical and socio-economic indices (cf. Table 1), but also – and most importantly perhaps – in terms of the development of the national awareness, partly resulting from the somewhat different histories of the two countries. Though the Belarusian and Ukrainian lands used to belong to the Commonwealth of Two Nations, the former were a part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the latter were mostly connected to the Crown as a result of the Union of Lublin (1569). In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the whole of Belarus became a part of the Russian partition, whereas the Ukrainian lands were divided between Russia and Austria. The situation was of significant importance for the development of the two nations – the Belarusians were brought closer to Russia by the language and religion, though it made the development of national awareness more difficult, whereas in Galicia the Ukrainian identity was supported both by the language and the Ukrainian Church of the Byzantine – Slavonic rite<sup>18</sup>. There are no significant independence traditions in Belarus (with the exception of the references to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania<sup>19</sup>), whereas Ukraine may relate to the Cossack tradition (17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries), the Ukrainian and Western Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1921), or the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (the 1940s and 1950s). Notably, in the Soviet times, Belarus did not see any cultural revival similar to the one which took place in Ukraine in the 1960s<sup>20</sup>. Consequently, Belarusian national awareness is much weaker than Ukrainian, which explains the different evolution of the two states after they regained sovereignty. Under Lukashenka's rule, Belarus became a dictatorship, openly relating to the tradition of the USSR and striving to reintegrate with Russia. Ukraine, on the other hand, did not follow the example of the Baltic republics which joined the EU and NATO only 13 years after gaining independence, but it is nevertheless trying to painstakingly reform itself and strengthen its state structures and develop its relations with Russia according to new principles<sup>21</sup>.

## 2. The legal and treaty basis of mutual relations

The beginning of direct cooperation dates back to the Soviet times. In December 1990, the Ukrainian and Belarusian Socialist Soviet Republics signed a bilateral agreement on cooperation, which came into force in August 1991. For both the republics, formally still belonging to the USSR, it was one of the first quasi-international agreements of this type. The understanding between the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic and the Belarusian Socialist Soviet Republic related to the historic and cultural ties between the two nations and emphasised the

<sup>17</sup> T. Kuzio, *Nation Building, History Writing and Competition over the Legacy of Kyiv Rus in Ukraine*, "Nationalities Papers", March 2005, t. 33, No. 1, p. 49–50. See also C. Merlin, *Faussees évidences slaves: Russie, Ukraine, Biélorussie*, "Relations internationales et stratégiques", printemps 1994, No. 13, p. 102–114.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the conditions which made the development of the Belarusian nation impossible see T. Snyder, *Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus 1569–1999*, Yale University Press, New Haven – London, 2003, p. 41–45.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 281, 284.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Bunt pokolenia. Rozmowy z intelektualistami ukraińskimi*, rozmawiały i opatrzyły komentarzem B. Berdychowska i O. Hnatiuk, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2000, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> T. Kuzio, *National Identity and Democratic Transition In Post-Soviet Ukraine and Belarus: A Theoretical and Comparative Perspective*, „East European Perspectives” of 24 July 2002 and 7 August 2002., vol. 4, No. 15–16, p. 9, <http://www.taraskuzio.net/academic/perspective.pdf>.

necessity of developing cooperation based on the common principles of international law. The two republics recognised each other as sovereign states and expressed a will to develop cooperation on numerous levels and agreed to hold regular consultations on the issue<sup>22</sup>. An important goal which the two signatories kept in mind was the will to develop horizontal structures (republic – republic) within the USSR and the will to weaken the dominant position of the federal authorities.

Though the understanding of December 1990 was of general nature, it became the basis for bilateral relations between the two republics. A year after it was concluded, when the end of the USSR was officially announced, Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus recognised themselves as independent states and established diplomatic relations<sup>23</sup>. In June 1992, a Ukrainian embassy in Minsk was opened. The diplomatic representation of Belarus in Kiev began functioning only in October of the next year<sup>24</sup>. The post of the ambassador of Belarus in Ukraine is presently held by Valancin Vialitschka. Until August 2005, the position of the Ukrainian ambassador in Belarus was held by Petro Shapoval, who was recalled by President Victor Yushchenko, perhaps due to the ambassador's excessive leniency towards the Belarusian regime. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that President Lukashenka, when saying goodbye to the ambassador, paid him enthusiastic compliments, proposed that he should stay in Belarus and work for the two nations and even assured him that if Shapoval should have any problems in the future, he could always move to Belarus together with his family<sup>25</sup>. In December, Valentin Nalivaichenko was appointed the ambassador.

Bilateral relations at the highest level were initiated in December 1992, when Ukraine was visited by the Belarusian Prime Minister, Viachaslau Kiebach. A number of bilateral agreements were signed during the visit, e.g. the agreement on free trade, visa-free movement, military cooperation, settling the mutual financial liabilities, cooperation in science and technology and trans-border and customs cooperation.

In July 1995, Leonid Kuchma paid an official visit to Belarus. The most important result of the visit was the bilateral treaty on friendship, good neighbourly relations and cooperation, which came into force in August 1997. In its preamble, the treaty related to the close ties of the past between the two nations and emphasised the importance of their cooperation, particularly the role of the agreement between the two Soviet republics of December 1990 (which served as a model for the treaty of 1995). Article 1 of the treaty defined the principles on which mutual relations were to be based, such as sovereignty and equal rights, non-interference in the internal affairs, ban on the use of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for human rights and diligent compliance with obligations following from international law. The treaty also recognised the inviolability of the existing Ukrainian – Belarusian border and stated that the two sides did not have – or would not have in the future – any territorial claims. Article 3 established the mechanism for bilateral consultations and exchange of information in the situation where one of the signatories felt threatened. In Article 5 the two states agreed to guarantee the same rights to all its citizens regardless of their nationality, religion or political views. They also granted to the citizens of the other state living in their respective territories rights equal to those enjoyed by their own citizens, similarly as in the agreement of 1990. Article 21 established a mechanism of regular consultations on bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Article 22 stated that the parties would sign separate agreements regarding issues of common interest. The treaty was signed for 10 years with the possibility of it being automatically prolonged (Article 27)<sup>26</sup>.

The treaty of 1995 established a basis for the further development of Ukrainian – Belarusian relations. This is evidenced by over one hundred bilateral agreements binding the two states, out of which approximately 60 were

<sup>22</sup> Договір між Українською Радянською Соціалістичною Республікою і Білоруською Радянською Соціалістичною Республікою, Мінськ, 29 грудня 1990 року, [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No.eg=112\\_011](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No.eg=112_011) (25.08.2005).

<sup>23</sup> See Постанова Президії Верховної Ради України Про встановлення дипломатичних відносин з державами – суб'єктами колишнього СРСР, Київ, 11 грудня 1991 року, [http://www.nau.com.ua/cgi-bin/nauonlu.exe?ppwr+389\\_a+guest](http://www.nau.com.ua/cgi-bin/nauonlu.exe?ppwr+389_a+guest) (09.01.2006); Постановление о заявлении Президиума Верховного Совета Республики Беларусь О Признании Независимости Суверенных Государств, Минск, 27 лістапада 1991 г., <http://pravo2000.by.ru/baza31/d30777.htm> (24.08.2005).

<sup>24</sup> В. Величко, *Состояние и перспективы белорусско-украинских отношений*, „Вестник МИД” (Министерство иностранных дел Республики Беларусь) 2004 г., No. 3, [http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/publications/issue/vestnik/No3\\_2004/Chapter8.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/publications/issue/vestnik/No3_2004/Chapter8.htm) (25.08.2005); *Українсько-білоруські відносини*, <http://www.ukraineinfo.org/main/publication/content/1028.htm> (4.08.2005).

<sup>25</sup> А. Лукашенко предложил послу Украины П. Шаповалову работу в Беларуси, 17 августа 2005 г., <http://newp.by/333/2005-08-17/4892/> (26.08.2005).

<sup>26</sup> Договір про дружбу, добросусідство і співробітництво між Україною і Республікою Білорусь, Мінськ, 17 липня 1995 р., [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No.eg=112\\_692](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No.eg=112_692) (20.10.2005).

concluded over the last 10 years<sup>27</sup>. Two documents among them deserve particular attention. During the subsequent visit of the Ukrainian president to Belarus in December 1998, an agreement on economic cooperation in the years 1999–2008 was concluded<sup>28</sup>. In July of the next year, an agreement on cooperation for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities was signed<sup>29</sup>.

### 3. Economic cooperation

Ukraine and Belarus are not each other's main partners in the economic sphere. For both states cooperation with Russia is of primary importance, with 29% of the Ukrainian trade and as much as 58% of Belarusian foreign trade<sup>30</sup> going to Russia. The most significant data on trade between the two states in 2004 can be found in Table 2.

**Table 2.**  
Trade between Ukraine and Belarus in 2004.

	Ukrainian export / Belarusian import	Belarusian export / Ukrainian import
Value (in millions of USD)	545–550	538–540
Position of Belarus among Ukraine's trade partners (the CIS states)	4	3
Position of Belarus among Ukraine's trade partners (all states of the world)	14	10
Share in the Ukrainian foreign trade (in %)	1,67–1,68	1,85–1,86
Position of Ukraine among trade partners of Belarus (the CIS states)	2	2
Position of Ukraine among trade partners of Belarus (all states of the world)	3	5
Share in the Belarusian foreign trade (w %)	3,33–3,36	3,91–3,93

Source: Географічна структура зовнішньої торгівлі товарами за 2004 рік, [http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2004/zd/ztt/ztt\\_u/ztt122004\\_u.htm](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2004/zd/ztt/ztt_u/ztt122004_u.htm) (9.08.2005); *Статистическое обозрение за 2004 год*, s. 83 (electronic version), [http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/economic/statistic/StatReview\\_2004/02.Production.pdf](http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/economic/statistic/StatReview_2004/02.Production.pdf) (26.08.2005); *Republic of Belarus: Statistical Appendix*, "IMF Country Report" (International Monetary Fund), June 2005, No. 05/218, p. 42.

Ukrainian – Belarusian trade reached its highest level in the second half of the 1990s, but rapidly dropped after the economic crisis of 1998. It has been growing for the last five years, though its level is not stable – particularly in terms of Belarusian exports to Ukraine (cf. Graph 1). In 2004, the balance of trade between the two states exceeded USD 1 billion. According to prognoses, its value in 2006 is to reach USD 1.5 billion<sup>31</sup>. Over the last several years, the dynamic growth of bilateral trade in services has also been observed, though its share in the whole of trade between Ukraine and Belarus in 2004 amounted to as little as 6.7%. The value of services exported from Ukraine to Belarus totalled to USD 51.8 million, whereas the value of the services imported was USD 22 million<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> The author's own calculations made on the basis of the legal acts to be found at ЛІГАБізнесІнформ, <http://search.liga.kiev.ua/> (25.08.2005). As a comparison it is worth adding that Ukraine and Poland are presently connected by approximately 80 bilateral agreements (*ibidem*).

<sup>28</sup> Договір між Україною і Республікою Білорусь про економічне співробітництво на 1999–2008 роки, Мінськ, 11 грудня 1998, [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=112\\_022](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=112_022) (25.08.2005).

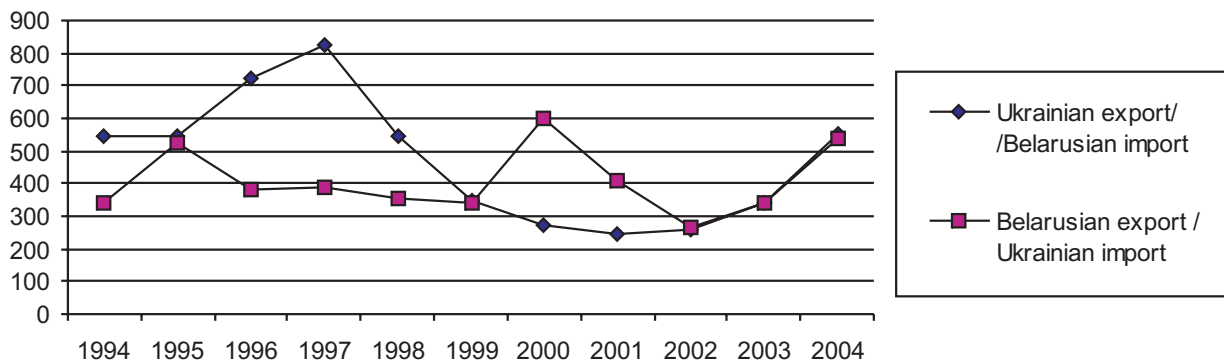
<sup>29</sup> Угода між Україною та Республікою Білорусь про співробітництво у забезпеченні прав осіб, які належать до національних меншин, Київ, 23 липня 1999 року, [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=112\\_025](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=112_025) (25.08.2005).

<sup>30</sup> Data of 2004. Author's own calculations on the basis of: *Republic of Belarus: Statistical Appendix*, "IMF Country Report" (International Monetary Fund), June 2005, No. 05/218, p. 42; *Географічна структура зовнішньої торгівлі товарами за 2004 рік*, [http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2004/zd/ztt/ztt\\_u/ztt122004\\_u.htm](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2004/zd/ztt/ztt_u/ztt122004_u.htm) (9.08.2005).

<sup>31</sup> П. Кириллов, *Беларусь–Україна: лучше не бывает?*, [http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/0-ya\\_gruppa/tema/18-10-05-1](http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/0-ya_gruppa/tema/18-10-05-1) (18.10.2005).

<sup>32</sup> *Географічна структура зовнішньої торгівлі послугами з країнами-найбільшими партнерами за 2004 рік*, [http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2004/zd/ztp/ztp\\_u/ztp1204.html](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2004/zd/ztp/ztp_u/ztp1204.html) (9.08.2005).

Graph 1



Trade between Ukraine and Belarus in 1994–2004 (in USD million)

Source: Л.С. Негель, *Тенденції динаміки зовнішньої торгівлі України з країнами СНД*, „Стратегічна панорама” 2000, No. 3–4; the Internet archives of the State Committee of Statistics of Ukraine, <http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua> (26.08.2005).

The main Belarusian exports to Ukraine include primarily mechanical vehicles (particularly the BielAZ trucks and the Belarus tractors), machines and household equipment (Minsk fridges, freezers, TV sets), chemical and oil products (plastics, cosmetics, ethylene polymers, polyethenes, coke and oil bitumen as well as other oil derivative products). Belarusian buses MAZ produced by the Minsk Vehicle Plants can be seen in the streets of Kiev and Donetsk. Ukraine exports primarily iron ore and metal alloys as well as metallurgical products (pipes, metal sheet plates and fittings), food and agricultural products (wheat, corn etc.), machines and equipment. Metallurgical products are of particular importance in the trade exchange between the two states. Approximately 70% of Belarusian industry is based on imports from Ukraine<sup>33</sup>. This structure of trade dates back to Soviet times, when heavy industry plants located in the Ukrainian Republic would provide raw materials and semi-finished products that were then processed by the machine industry and light industry plants in the Belarusian Republic<sup>34</sup>.

It should be noted that the Ukrainian – Belarusian trade cooperation does encounter certain problems. In December 1992, the agreement on free trade, mentioned above, was signed. The agreement was not fully implemented, and after the agreement on the Russian – Belarusian customs union was signed in January 1995, it practically expired: on the Ukrainian – Belarusian border, the common, Russian – Belarus custom rates were in force<sup>35</sup>. At the beginning of this decade, the anti-dumping procedures applied by the Ukrainian side towards Belarusian exporters were a problem, as they were connected with the fact that Belarus was not regarded by Ukraine as a market economy. The problem was successfully solved thanks to a bilateral agreement of May 2004.<sup>36</sup>

Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus cooperate also in terms of investment, the importance of which is marginal. Fifty eight enterprises with Ukrainian capital are registered in Belarus, whereas Ukraine has 83

<sup>33</sup> *Українсько-білоруські відносини, op.cit.*; *Двустороннее сотрудничество*, [http://www.belembassy.org.ua/index.php?id=4&ch\\_id=7&ar\\_id=40](http://www.belembassy.org.ua/index.php?id=4&ch_id=7&ar_id=40) (8.08.2005); В. Величко, «Большегрузное» сотрудничество, „Киевские Ведомости”, 14 июня 2003 года.

<sup>34</sup> А.С. Філіпенко, В.С. Будкін, А.С. Гальчинський та ін., *Україна і світове господарство: взаємодія на межі тисячоліть*, „Ливідь”, Київ 2002, p. 253–254.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 254. Belarus tried to take advantage of the existing situation. In the late 1990s, despite the provisions of the Russian – Belarusian agreement on the customs union, some goods could still be brought from Ukraine to Belarus according to preferential custom duty rates. In this way, Belarus took over the export from Ukraine to Russia – Russian importers were better off bringing Ukrainian goods through Belarus (connected with Russia thanks to the customs union) than directly from Ukraine. The phenomenon increased the revenues to the Belarusian budget, but was unfavourable for the Russian Federation, which lost on the falling trade with Ukraine (A. Eberhardt, *Problemy rosyjsko-białoruskiej współpracy handlowej*, copied material).

<sup>36</sup> *Белоруссия и Украина отменяют антидемпинговые меры*, 21 мая 2005, <http://www.proua.com/news/2004/05/21/192547.html> (6.10.2005); *Двустороннее сотрудничество, op.cit.*

enterprises with Belarus capital<sup>37</sup>. The total value of Ukrainian investment in Belarus and Belarusian in Ukraine over the last few years does not exceed twenty million dollars<sup>38</sup>. The most important joint enterprises include the establishment of the production line for the MTZ Belarus tractors in the Kiev Lenin Mill, belonging to the Ukrprominvest concern. As many as two thousand tractors were produced in 2004<sup>39</sup>.

#### 4. Social contacts

According to official data, Ukraine has 275 thousand Belarusians, and for every fifth person in this group Belarusian is the native language. Consequently, the Belarusian minority totals 0.57% of all the inhabitants of the country. This is relatively small, especially in the context of the fact that the Russian minority in Ukraine amounts to 8.33 million people (17%)<sup>40</sup>. There are 237 thousand Ukrainians in Belarus (2.4% of all the population of the state) and 1.14 million Russians (11.3%)<sup>41</sup>. The contemporary migration movements do not seem to significantly affect the status quo. During the first eleven months of 2004 2,860 inhabitants of Ukraine moved to Belarus, and 960 persons left Belarus to move to Ukraine in the same period<sup>42</sup>.

Belarusians live primarily in southern and eastern Ukraine (the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Donetsk, Dnipropetrovska, Luhanska, Kharkivska and Odeska oblasti) and its north-western part, on the border with Belarus (the Lutska and Kievka oblasti); a large Belarusian community also lives in Kiev<sup>43</sup>. The Ukrainian minority in Belarus is concentrated in the Brest area on the Ukrainian border (north-western part of the country). There are significant differences between the two minorities. The Belarusians living in Ukraine are mostly relatively new immigrants, who came to the Ukrainian industrial centers in the times of the USSR, whereas the Brestskaya oblast is a region traditionally inhabited by Ukrainians<sup>44</sup>.

In 1999, Ukraine and Belarus signed an agreement on cooperation for the protection of rights of the persons belonging to national minorities, mentioned above. Moreover, Ukraine is striving to establish a bilateral commission which would deal with the issue, Ukrainian – Belarusian talks have been underway since 2003<sup>45</sup>. The Ukrainian attempts result primarily from objections regarding the situation of the Ukrainian minority in Belarus, including the difficulties it encounters in obtaining access to Ukrainian mass media, culture and the language<sup>46</sup>.

The common history, the linguistic closeness and inter-governmental cooperation joining the two states and – last but not least – national minorities well integrated with the host countries should *a priori* foster mutual relations of the two societies and development of contacts. In practice, however, due to the lack of the appropriate tradition

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*; *Замежняя інвестыцыя*, <http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/index.php?d=economic/investment&id=32> (8.08.2005).

<sup>38</sup> *Поступление иностранных инвестиций в экономику Республики Беларусь за 2004 год с разбивкой по странам-инвесторам*, <http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/index.php?d=economic/investment&id=10> (29.08.2005); В. Величко, *Состояние и перспективы...*, *op.cit.*

<sup>39</sup> *Українсько-білоруські відносини, op.cit.*; *Двустороннее сотрудничество, op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> Data as of 2001, cited after: *Всеукраїнський перепис населення 2001*, <http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/> (29.08.2005).

<sup>41</sup> Data as of 1999, cited after: *Национальный Состав Населения Республики Беларусь*, <http://www.belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/p5.htm> (29.08.2005). The numbers regarding the Ukrainian minority in Belarus are not questioned, whereas serious discrepancies appear regarding the numbers of Belarusians living in Ukraine. The Ukrainian World Coordination Council gathering Ukrainian NGOs estimates for instance that the Belarusian minority in Ukraine totals to approximately 440 thousand persons. See Ё. Назаренко, *Рівні права для всіх*, "Вісник УВКР" (Українська Всесвітня Координаційна Рада), червень 2002, No. 6, <http://www.uvkr.com.ua/ua/visnyk/uvkr-2002/june/rivni-prava.html> (29.08.2005).

<sup>42</sup> *Статистическое обозрение за 2004 год*, p. 154, [http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/economic/statistic/StatReview\\_2004/07.Demography.pdf](http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/economic/statistic/StatReview_2004/07.Demography.pdf) (29.08.2005).

<sup>43</sup> *Всеукраїнський перепис населення...*, *op.cit.*

<sup>44</sup> For more information on the national minorities in the two countries see: В. Курашик, *Білоруси в Україні*, „Політика і час” 1994, No. 9; Л. Лукашенко, *Доля українського заграниччя: Берестейщина та Підляшшя*, part 1, "Вісник УВКР" (Українська Всесвітня Координаційна Рада), жовтень 2002, No. 10, <http://www.uvkr.com.ua/ua/visnyk/uvkr-2002/october/dolya-ukr.html> (30.08.2005), part 2, *ibidem*, *єснїїдїрї* 2002, No. 11, <http://www.uvkr.com.ua/ua/visnyk/uvkr-2002/november/dolya11.html> (30.08.2005). The grandfather of the former Ukrainian premier Victor Yanukovich came from the village of Yanuli in the Vitebsk oblast. In the 1920s, however, he left the Belarusian Republic in search for work and moved to Donbas (cf. *Зовнішня політика України в умовах глобалізації. Анотована історична хроніка міжнародних відносин*, Видавництво «Генеза», Київ 2004, p. 111).

<sup>45</sup> Доповідь Голови Державного комітету України у справах національностей та міграції Г.Г. Москаля на засіданні підсумкової колегії «Про підсумки діяльності Держкомнаціміграції України за 2003 рік та завдання на 2004 рік», [http://www.scnm.gov.ua/ru/a?news\\_ofic\\_038\\_dop1](http://www.scnm.gov.ua/ru/a?news_ofic_038_dop1) (29.08.2005).

<sup>46</sup> Л. Чекаленко, *Зовнішня політика і безпека України, op.cit.*, p. 99.



and the political situation in Belarus, the leading role is still played by official factors and as a result the development of cultural cooperation in a broad sense is not free from political influences.

Days of the Belarusian Culture are periodically organised in Ukraine and similar events take place in Belarus. Recently such an event took place in Minsk, Homel and Polotsk during the first days of the Orange Revolution (November 2004.), which did somewhat influence its course<sup>47</sup>. Days of Belarusian Culture in Ukraine are scheduled for 2006 for yet another time. Days of Minsk in Kiev and Days of Kiev in Minsk have also been organised over the last few years. It is also worth noting that since the early 1990s, Ukrainian artists have participated in the annual International Arts Festival "Slavonic Bazaar" in Vitebsk<sup>48</sup>, and that the year 2002 was devoted in Belarus to the memory of Taras Shevchenko<sup>49</sup>. All the events were aimed at helping the two societies become familiar with the artistic heritage of the partner state, promotion of its literature and language, and emphasising the importance of bilateral relations and the cultural closeness of the two states<sup>50</sup>. The cooperation on education between them is a separate issue. Ukrainian and Belarusian universities signed over 20 bilateral understandings. Paradoxically, as a result Ukrainian students have somewhat broader access to Belarusian language, whose role in Belarus is – as is widely known – systematically limited<sup>51</sup>.

## 5. Ukrainian – Belarus border: cooperation and problems

Ukrainian – Belarusian relations must not be perceived exclusively in the context of the central-level contacts. Most of the Ukrainian oblasti cooperate with their Belarusian counterparts. It is the oblasti on the border that are most interested in cooperation: the Volynska, Rivenska, Zhytomyrska and Chernivetska oblasti on the Ukrainian side and Brestskaya and Gomelskaya oblasti on the Belarusian side. Increasingly, these forms of contacts are also chosen by regions further from the border. Cooperation on the local level is also developing, involving such regions as Ratnivski (the Volynska oblast) and Malorystki (the Brestskaya oblast), Dubrovitski (the Rivenskaya oblast) or Stolinski (the Brestskaya oblast)<sup>52</sup>.

Euroregions are a unique form of cooperation between the units of the two states. The Brestskaya oblast (Belarus), the Volynska oblast (Ukraine) and the Sokalski and Zholkevski regions (the Lvivska oblast, Ukraine), as well as the Lublin Voivodship (Poland) cooperate within the Bug Euroregion. It was established in 1995 following an initiative of the local authorities in Poland and Ukraine, though talks on the issue had begun as early as in 1992. In 1998, Belarus joined the structure. According to the statutes, the goals of the Bug Euroregion include: development of cooperation in spatial management, communication, transport, education, health protection, culture, sports and tourism, protection and improvement of the natural environment, liquidation of threats and results of natural disasters as well as the institutional cooperation and cooperation among business entities. An important element of the tri-partite action should also be the implementation of various projects financed from the resources of the European Union<sup>53</sup>.

Thanks to the experience acquired in the process of establishing the Bug Euroregion in 2003 the Dnieper Euroregion was created, and it includes the Chernihivska oblast (Ukraine), Gomelskaya oblast (Belarus) and

<sup>47</sup> The official note on the Days of Ukrainian Culture in Belarus in 2004: В. Жованик, *Блиск мистецької палітри*, „Президентський вісник”, 17 грудня 2004 року, <http://www.visnyk.org.ua/sections/side/41c1b7c08053f/> (24.10.2005); the memoirs of one of the participants: Т. Поліщук, *Повернення до іншої країни*, „День”, 1 грудня 2004 року.

<sup>48</sup> In the past, the festival was used to emphasise the ties among the three „Slavonic republics”. In 2001 its closing ceremony was attended by the leaders of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia: Alaksandr Lukashenka, Leonid Kuchma and Vladimir Putin. This year, however, controversies occurred regarding whether Ukraine should participate in an event involving the promotion of the former Soviet stars and Slavonic pseudo-folklore under the patronage of the Belarusian president. (Л. Солодка, *Чи треба Україні брати участь у «Слов'янському базарі»?*, „День”, 28 липня 2005 року.). Moreover, Ukrainian journalists suspected that the festival contest was conducted in a dishonest manner and that Ukrainian artists were deprived of the prizes due to them, as the organisers decided to punish Ukraine for the Orange Revolution. See . Біла, *Україна і Світ*, 21 липня 2005, <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/article/2005/7/6F8703E6-9CD0-476A-ADD9-71E093DAFE81.html> (4.08.2005).

<sup>49</sup> В. Величко, *«Большегрузное» сотрудничество, op.cit.*

<sup>50</sup> П. Шаповал, *Україна: стабільність и уверенность в будущем*, „Вестник МИД” (Министерство иностранных дел Республики Беларусь) 2004 г., No. 3, [http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/publications/issue/vestnik/No3\\_2004/Chapter8.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/publications/issue/vestnik/No3_2004/Chapter8.htm) (25.08.2005).

<sup>51</sup> В. Величко, *«Большегрузное» сотрудничество, op.cit.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>53</sup> For general information, see: [http://www.euroregionbug.lubelskie.pl/viewpage.php?page\\_id=1](http://www.euroregionbug.lubelskie.pl/viewpage.php?page_id=1) (30.08.2005).

Bryanskaya oblast (Russia). Its goals are similar to those pursued by the members of the Bug Euroregion<sup>54</sup>. The creation of the Polesie Euroregion, also including Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian administrative units, is presently being considered<sup>55</sup>. With the due appreciation for the Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian will to develop cross-border cooperation, it should be noted that it does encounter certain problems. The post-Soviet republics are strongly centralised states, still distant from the standards of Western democracy. There are no traditions of self-government or civil society, which hinders the development of true cooperation within Euroregions and may result in its being manually operated by the central authorities of the states<sup>56</sup>.

An important element of bilateral relations, both at the regional and at the central level, is the cooperation on the liquidation of the effects of the Chernobyl tragedy (April 1986). The effects were the strongest for the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet Republics, as well as the western lands of the Russian Republic<sup>57</sup>. The importance of the problem is illustrated by the fact that this was the subject of the first working visit of President Lukashenko in Ukraine<sup>58</sup>. The goals of the cooperation on this issue include exchange of information, research into and minimising the aftermath of the disaster of 1986 as well as increasing the involvement of other states in the removal of its consequences<sup>59</sup>. An example of bilateral cooperation was the participation of Ukrainian specialists in the removal of contamination in polluted areas in Belarus and treating Belarusian children in Crimea and the Ukrainian victims of the tragedy in specialist centres in Belarus<sup>60</sup>. On the multilateral level, the two states cooperate primarily on the UN forum. In December 1999, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the strengthening of cooperation for the liquidation of consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, prepared by Ukraine, Belarus and Russia<sup>61</sup>. Moreover, Ukraine proposed on the forum of the Organisation that 26 of April should be proclaimed the day of remembrance of the victims of the Chernobyl disaster. The proposal was supported by the Belarus authorities<sup>62</sup>. Moreover, the Republic of Belarus also participates in the works of the International Chernobyl Center (ICC), created in April 1996, on the tenth anniversary of the disaster, presently situated in Slavutych<sup>63</sup>.

Another significant issue raising controversy in Ukrainian – Belarusian relations is the problem of the unregulated status of the common border. The problem adversely affects bilateral cooperation and may hinder the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine, which would suit Belarus and Russia<sup>64</sup>. In Soviet times, the borders between the individual republics of the federation did not play a very significant role. It was only in 1995 that the Ukrainian – Belarusian treaty on friendship, good neighbourly relations and cooperation was signed, and it recognised the inviolability of the existing border. In the next two years its delimitation was finished<sup>65</sup>. A protocol and detailed

<sup>54</sup> Створення Єврорегіону «Дніпро» і його загальна характеристика, <http://www.chernihiv-oblast.gov.ua/article.php?lg=ua> (30.08.2005). for more On Euroregions: seria Euroregion Bug, vol. 1–16, Politechnika Lubelska – Norbertinum, Lublin 1994–1997; В.Н. Тканко и др., *Еврорегион «Днепр» – проблемы развития и функционирования*, Управление внешних сношений и внешнеэкономической деятельности Черниговской областной государственной администрации – Украинское национальное координационное бюро секретариата Приграничного сообщества Еврорегион «Днепр», Чернигов 2004.

<sup>55</sup> *Українсько-білоруські відносини, op.cit.*

<sup>56</sup> M. Guz-Vetter, *Nowe granice UE: Polska–Ukraina–Białoruś. Jak wykorzystać doświadczenie polsko-niemieckiej współpracy transgranicznej?*, „Analizy i Opinie” (Instytut Spraw Publicznych), listopad 2004 r., No. 29, p. 7, <http://www.isp.org.pl/files/9262164140489729001117010800.pdf> (10.11.2005).

<sup>57</sup> According to the estimations of international organisations, it was necessary to relocate 163 thousand persons in Ukraine, 135 thousand in Belarus and 52.4 thousand in Russia following the catastrophe in Ukraine. (The Human Consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident. A Strategy for Recovery. A Report Commissioned by UNDP and UNICEF with the support of UN-OCHA and WHO, 25 January 2002, p. 32, <http://www.undp.org/dpa/publications/chernobyl.pdf>; 23.08.2005).

<sup>58</sup> See *Зовнішня політика України в умовах глобалізації, op.cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>59</sup> *Українсько-білоруські відносини, op.cit.*

<sup>60</sup> Л. Чекаленко, *Зовнішня політика і безпека України, op.cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations General Assembly, (Resolution on the) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimise the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, A/RES/54/97, 54<sup>th</sup> session, 73<sup>rd</sup> plenary meeting, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1999, <http://daccessdnp.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/245/71/PDF/N0024571.pdf?OpenElement> (12.09.2005).

<sup>62</sup> Л. Чекаленко, *Зовнішня політика і безпека України, op.cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>63</sup> The internet address of the Center: [www.chernobyl.net](http://www.chernobyl.net).

<sup>64</sup> It should also be noted that the issue of the Ukrainian – Belarus border is not the only problem which Ukraine faces. The Ukrainian – Russian border has not been demarcated, the two states are in dispute over the course of the border in the region of the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov. Moreover, one of Ukraine's neighbours is the Republic of Transnistria, formally a part of Moldova, not recognised by the international community as a separate state. The issue of the ultimate shape of the sea border between Ukraine and Romania is to be adjudicated upon by the International Court of Justice. (*The World Factbook 2005*, Central Information Agency, Washington (D.C.)) (electronic version), <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html> (24.08.2005).

<sup>65</sup> Л. Чекаленко, *Зовнішня політика і безпека України, op.cit.*, p. 28.

maps defining the course of the borderline were appended to the agreement<sup>66</sup>. Already in July 1997 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a law thanks to which the ratification of the agreement was possible<sup>67</sup>. However, until today the understanding has not been ratified by Belarus, which makes the demarcation of the common border impossible. Belarus demands that Ukraine should first repay the debts incurred at the beginning of the previous decade by Ukrainian enterprises to Belarusian contractors. Belarusian authorities estimate that the volume of the liabilities total approximately USD 200 million. The Ukrainian side believes the debts are four times lower and besides does not agree that the state should pay the debts of Ukrainian entrepreneurs<sup>68</sup>.

The unregulated status of the border fosters such problems as illegal immigration and smuggling (the region is famous for mass smuggling of horses and cattle as well as alcohol)<sup>69</sup> and adversely affects relations between the Republic of Belarus and Ukraine. The Ukrainian authorities – particularly since the Orange Revolution – bitterly criticise the attitude of the Belarusian side regarding the border agreement and stress that the lack of legal regulations regarding a border of almost one thousand kilometres is an “anomaly in Europe”<sup>70</sup>. Belarus belittles the importance of this problem and refers to the fact that the agreement has been signed and that its status as a non-ratified document does not affect the work of the border services or cooperation on the border. The opinion is partly right. Both states are bound by the agreement on the visa-free movement signed in December 1992<sup>71</sup>. Until 2004, a Ukrainian travelling to Belarus and Belarusians travelling to Ukraine could do so as holders of internal passports (identity cards). Now, they must have a foreign passport, whereas Belarusians need to have a stamp in their internal passports thanks to which they can use them as external passports (there are no separate internal and foreign passports in Belarus). In the past, this was not necessary for Belarusians travelling to Ukraine<sup>72</sup>. Observers believe, however, that the unsolved problem of the border suits the Belarusian side, as it is an effective means of exerting pressure on Ukraine with regard to the debts of the 1990s.<sup>73</sup>

## 6. Discrepancies in the foreign policies

At the onset of independence the Ukrainian and Belarusian Soviet Republic made attempts to cooperate in the area of foreign policy. Examples of cooperation include the aforementioned Ukrainian – Belarusian agreement of December 1990 as well as unofficial talks held in the years 1989–1991 regarding the creation of a new structure in the area of the USSR called the Baltic and Black Sea Community, which was to include Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia<sup>74</sup>. In December 1991, the two states took – together with Russia – the decision to dissolve the USSR and create the Commonwealth of Independent States. However, it soon turned out that they had different visions of the future of the post-Soviet area and their place in it. Belarus decided to favour rapprochement with Russia, whereas Ukraine witnessed – and still does – a debate on the main directions of foreign policy, connected mainly with the question whether Ukraine should be a part of Europe or Eurasia and whether it should follow the “Polish” or the “Belarusian” path<sup>75</sup>.

In the 1990s, the two states pursued various policies towards the CIS. For Ukraine, the Commonwealth was to be a mechanism both facilitating “a civilised divorce” of post-Soviet republics and helping strengthen Ukrainian

<sup>66</sup> Договір між Україною і Республікою Білорусь про державний кордон, Київ, 12 травня 1997 року, [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No.eg=112\\_004](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No.eg=112_004) (30.08.2005) (does not contain the protocol or the maps).

<sup>67</sup> Закон України Про ратифікацію Договору між Україною і Республікою Білорусь про державний кордон, Київ, 18 липня 1997 року, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No.eg=491%2F97-%E2%F0> (30.08.2005).

<sup>68</sup> Л. Чекаленко, *Зовнішня політика і безпека України, op.cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>69</sup> Нелегальна міграція та контрабанда як виклики безпеки кордонів в контексті відносин Україна – ЄС, „Аналітичні доповіді” 2003, No. 13, <http://foreignpolicy.org.ua/ua/papers/index.shtml?id=2380> (6.10.2005).

<sup>70</sup> *Аномалія на границі и неразбериха в долгах*, 26 апрелья 2005, [http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/1-ya\\_gruppa/politika/26-04-05-1/](http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/1-ya_gruppa/politika/26-04-05-1/) (09.01.2006).

<sup>71</sup> Угода про безвізовий в'їзд громадян України в Республіку Беларусь і громадян Республіки Беларусь в Україну, Київ, 17 грудня 1992, [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No.eg=112\\_051](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No.eg=112_051) (29.08.2005).

<sup>72</sup> Ю. Свірко, *Щоб поїхати до Білорусі, громадянам України з нового року будуть потрібні закордонні паспорти*, Мінськ, 2 вересня 2004, <http://radiosvoboda.org/articletext/2004/09/d95c7b67-90a3-49df-b443-1bae7062de3c.html> (6.10.2005).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. В. Гречанинов, *Кордони як необхідний атрибут держави та засіб гарантування національної безпеки України*, лютий 2001, <http://borderp.cpcfp.org.ua/ua/analytics/security/document1.shtml> (6.10.2005).

<sup>74</sup> V. Hoiubieu, *Polityczne elity Białorusi wobec wyborów kierunków polityki zagranicznej*, [http://www.bialorup.pl/index.php?pokaz=polityczne\\_elity\\_bialorusi&&Rozdzial=polityka](http://www.bialorup.pl/index.php?pokaz=polityczne_elity_bialorusi&&Rozdzial=polityka) (8.11.2005).

<sup>75</sup> T. Kuzio, *Identity and nation-building in Ukraine. Defining the ‘Other’, ‘Ethnicities’*, December 2001, t. 1, No. 3, p. 359.

independence. Belarus, similar to Russia or Kazakhstan, was hoping that the CIS would make the consolidation of the post-Soviet area possible. Ukraine sabotaged the development of the Commonwealth<sup>76</sup>. It bluntly refused to join the Treaty on Collective Security (the so-called Tashkent Treaty), adopted in May 1992, (Belarus signed the document in December 1993)<sup>77</sup> and until today has not ratified the Statute of CIS, signed in January 1993.<sup>78</sup> The lack of agreement among the member states regarding the future of the CIS became one of the reasons for its paralysis<sup>79</sup>. It was also a source of tensions between Ukraine and Belarus. In 2002, Lukashenka opposed Kuchma chairing the CIS Council of Heads of States and mentioned Ukraine's failure to ratify the Statute of CIS as an indication that Ukraine is not a full member of the organisation<sup>80</sup>. Finally, the Belarusian president changed his mind, perhaps because Russia supported the candidature of Kuchma<sup>81</sup>.

In September 2003, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan decided to establish a new integration structure - the Common Economic Space<sup>82</sup>. However, the states, particularly Russia and Ukraine, never reached an agreement regarding the character of the CES. Even during Kuchma's rule, Ukraine approached the project with caution and believed that integration within the Common Economic Space should be limited to a free trade area<sup>83</sup>. After the changes in government circles last year, opinions have even been voiced that Ukraine might leave the CES altogether<sup>84</sup>.

Objections regarding more advanced forms of integration (a customs union) result primarily from the fact that they could hinder Ukraine's accession to the European Union and would moreover require the creation of supranational bodies dominated by Russia. Belarus has a negative opinion of Ukraine's attitude towards the CES, and particularly of the fact that it selectively complies with agreements concluded within the structure<sup>85</sup>. According to Belarusian authorities, the development of cooperation within the new structure without the participation of Ukraine makes no sense - Belarus may just as well cooperate with Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan under bilateral agreements, the CIS and the Eurasian Economic Community<sup>86</sup>. Ukraine seems to attach little significance to the objections of her neighbour. In November 2003, an expert from Kiev openly said that the future of the CES depended primarily on Russia and its negotiations with Ukraine, and the opinion of Belarus is of secondary importance<sup>87</sup>.

Even before Lukashenka took office (July 1994), Belarus began to tighten its relations with Russia<sup>88</sup>. In April 1996 a decision to create the Association of Belarus and Russia was taken, followed by the establishment of the Union of Belarus and Russia a year later and the Federation State in December 1999. However, the various formal and informal instruments of influence allowing Russia to effectively control the Belarusian neighbour are of even greater importance. It should be noted that in the past, close ties with Russia seemed favourable to the Belarusian authorities - they strengthened the position of the authorities and had a stabilising effect with regard to the

<sup>76</sup> M.A. Piotrowski, *Wspólnota Niepodległych Państw*, [w:] P. Parzymies (ed.), *Europejskie struktury współpracy. Informator*, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Warszawa 2000, p. 177.

<sup>77</sup> Договор о коллективной безопасности, Ташкент, 15 мая 1992 года, <http://www.dkb.gov.ru/b/azb.htm> (11.10.2005).

<sup>78</sup> Устав Содружества Независимых Государств, Минск, 22 января 1993 года, <http://www.cis.minsk.by/main.aspx?uid=180> (11.10.2005).

<sup>79</sup> M.A. Piotrowski, *Wspólnota Niepodległych Państw*, *op.cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>80</sup> Лукашенко: Кучма не заслужив бути лідером СНД, 9 жовтня 2002 року, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/archive/2002/october/9/news/3.shtml> (8.08.2005).

<sup>81</sup> Л. Чекаленко, *Зовнішня політика і безпека України*, *op.cit.*, p. 157

<sup>82</sup> Угода про формування Єдиного економічного простору, Ялта, 19 вересня 2003 року, [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=997\\_990](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=997_990) (11.10.2005 r.).

<sup>83</sup> A. Górka, *Między „nowym sąsiedztwem” a Wspólną Przestrzenią Gospodarczą*, „Komentarze” (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich), 20 maja 2004 r., <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pub/koment/2004/05/040520e.htm> (11.10.2005)

<sup>84</sup> Ł. Adamski, *Ukraina zastanawia się nad wyjściem z WPG*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” of 24 April 2005.

<sup>85</sup> Білорусь критикує Україну за ЕЗП, 3 травня 2005, <http://foreignpolicy.org.ua/ua/headlines/foreign/bilateral/index.shtml?id=4596> (11.10.2005).

<sup>86</sup> Білорусь: ЄЕП без України не має сенсу, „День”, 11 листопада 2005 року

<sup>87</sup> Dlaczego MSZ Białorusi krytykuje Ukrainę, Radio Swoboda, 12 November 2003, <http://www.bialorus.pl/index.php?pokaz=archiwum&&Rozdzial=archiwum&&strona=99&&wybrane=4975> (11.08. 2005).

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *Białoruś*, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/get.pl?r=baza/bialorus1.htm> (11.10.2005).

situation in the country. More and more often, however, Lukashenka realises the negative consequences of submission to its eastern neighbour.<sup>89</sup>

The Russian Federation also plays a key role in the foreign policy of Ukraine, striving to establish partner-like, though asymmetrical relations with Russia<sup>90</sup>. The milestones of this policy include the Ukrainian – Russian treaty on friendship, cooperation and partnership<sup>91</sup> of May 1997, the adoption of which was a clear signal that Russia ceased to treat Ukraine as a “seasonal state”, followed by the Orange Revolution (November - December 2004), which, in spite of Russia’s efforts, gave power to Yushchenko. Officially, Ukraine admits that integration within the federation structures is a sovereign right of Russia and Belarus and declares that it still wants to develop friendly relations with the two states and strengthen its own independence<sup>92</sup>. In practice, however, it manifests a somewhat unfriendly attitude towards the integration of Russia and the Republic of Belarus and rejects proposals regarding its accession to the structures established by the two states<sup>93</sup>. Ukraine’s reluctance towards Russian – Belarusian cooperation stems from at least four reasons. Firstly, the submission of the Belarusian state to the Russian Federation strengthens the position of the latter in the CIS area, which does not help Ukraine’s interests. For this reason, Kiev tries to counteract the domination of Russia in the region, promoting such initiatives as cooperation within GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova)<sup>94</sup>. Secondly, the integration of Russia and Belarus adversely affects economic cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and Ukraine. As this study has already mentioned, one of the results of tighter relations between Russia and Belarus was the expiration of the Ukrainian – Belarusian free trade agreement<sup>95</sup>. Thirdly, the rapprochement between Belarus and Russia confirms the Russian thesis on the commonwealth of the three Slavonic nations, towards which – as we mentioned above – Ukraine has a negative attitude. Finally, a certain rivalry between Ukraine and Belarus for Russia’s favours can be observed (it is more visible on the Belarusian side). Clearly, each of the two states would rather have Russia show less interest in relations with the other one.

Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus also have different attitudes towards Euro-Atlantic structures. The former strives – or at least it claims – to integrate with the structures, the latter – criticised because of its internal situation – maintains very limited contacts with them. The situation does not favour closer cooperation between the two states<sup>96</sup>. From the beginning, Ukraine was an active member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and the Euro-Atlantic Cooperation Council as well as – since 1994 – of Partnership for Peace<sup>97</sup>. In July 1997, the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine was signed<sup>98</sup>. At the beginning of this decade, relations between the Alliance and Ukraine became cooler, mainly in connection with the Ukraine being accused of selling the Kolchuga radar system to Iraq. In November 2002, President Kuchma – similar to Lukashenka - was not invited to the NATO summit in Prague, though eventually he attended it anyway<sup>99</sup>. Belarus, on the other hand, did join the Partnership for Peace, but it does not participate in any NATO activities, and the official propaganda continues to present the Alliance in very unfavourable light<sup>100</sup>. Both Ukrainian and Belarusian societies remain unfriendly towards the Alliance, and this primarily results from the heritage of the Soviet propaganda, which presented NATO

<sup>89</sup> A. Wierzbowska-Miazga, *Republika Białoruś czy republika białoruska?*, „Prace OSW” (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich), listopad 2001, No. 3, p. 23–25.

<sup>90</sup> T.A. Olszański, *Ukraina wobec Rosji: stosunki dwustronne i ich uwarunkowania*, „Prace OSW” (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich), listopad 2001, No. 3, p. 5–6.

<sup>91</sup> Договір про дружбу, співробітництво і партнерство між Україною і Російською Федерацією, Київ, 31 травня 1997 року, [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=643\\_006](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?No. eg=643_006) (11.10.2005).

<sup>92</sup> Заява МЗС України, 10 грудня 1999 року, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/information/?mfa/1999/12/1001.html> (4.08.2005).

<sup>93</sup> In March 1999 during Lukashenka’s visit in Kiev the Ukraine authorities openly rejected the proposal to join the structure. (*Зовнішня політика України в умовах глобалізації, op.cit.*, p. 107).

<sup>94</sup> T. Kuzio, *Identity and nation-building...*, *op.cit.*, p. 360

<sup>95</sup> Л. Чекаленко, *Зовнішня політика і безпека України, op.cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 154.

<sup>97</sup> *NATO Handbook*, NATO Office of Information and Press, Brussels 2001, p. 88

<sup>98</sup> Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and Ukraine, Madrid, 9 July 1997, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/ukrchrt.htm> (13.10.2005).

<sup>99</sup> Lukashenka did not receive a Czech visa, which made his arrival impossible. The Czech authorities did not decide to take a similar step towards Kuchma (J. Bielecki, *Nieproszony gość*, „Rzeczpospolita” of 21 November 2002).

<sup>100</sup> J. Konieczna, *Spółczesność Białorusi, Ukrainy i Litwy wobec NATO i procesów jego rozszerzenia*, „Tydzień na Wschodzie” (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich), No. 208 z 4 stycznia 2001 r., <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/get.pl?r=prace/2001/0101/010104B.HTM> (4.08.2005).

as an aggressive bloc. The intervention in Yugoslavia (March – June 1999) also contributed to the growing distrust towards the Alliance. It should be noted, however, that Ukraine's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance is quite consistently supported by approximately one third of Ukrainians, whereas in Belarus the support for the NATO option never exceeds ten percent<sup>101</sup>.

More significant differences can be observed in relations with the European Union. The Ukrainian authorities – particularly since the time of the Orange Revolution – declare their will to accede to the EU<sup>102</sup>, though in practice their actions in this area are highly inconsistent. As early as in June 1994, Ukraine signed the partnership and cooperation agreement with the European Communities<sup>103</sup>. In December 1999, the European Council adopted a common strategy on Ukraine<sup>104</sup>. As a result of the democratic changes, opinions that Ukraine could become a EU member in the next 10-20 years are more and more common<sup>105</sup>. Belarusian relations with the EU have significantly deteriorated since the mid-1990s, which was directly connected with the authoritarian direction chosen by Lukashenka. The partnership and cooperation agreement signed in March 1995 never came into force. In September 1997, the European Union imposed first sanctions on Belarus. In the summer of 1998, a crisis occurred in bilateral relations, connected with the Belarusian authorities violating the status of Western states' embassies in Minsk. In October 2000, the EU did not recognise the results of the Belarusian parliamentary elections. The referendum on constitutional reform (October 2004) was assessed in a critical way. Presently, Belarus takes limited advantage of the European Neighbourhood Policy and is in fact “a forgotten neighbour” of the EU<sup>106</sup>.

Two issues are worth noting here. Firstly, in spite of the foreign policy differences between Ukraine and Belarus, the problem relatively rarely becomes an issue of controversy between the two states. Belarus does not criticise the European aspirations of Ukraine, which – at least officially – has the same standpoint as regards its northern neighbour's integration with Russia. Secondly, the discrepancies mentioned above are not supported by the views of the citizens of the two states, as they are (apart from the NATO problem) quite similar. At the beginning of this decade, 65% of Belarusians and 57% of Ukrainians believed that the disintegration of the USSR was a great misfortune. In the same period, integration with the EU was supported by 55% respondents in Belarus and 62% in Ukraine<sup>107</sup>. According to some studies, in 2004 – before the Ukrainian revolution – the integration between Russia, Ukraine and Belarus was supported by 23% of Ukrainians and – surprisingly – only 17% of Belarusians. At the same time, 15% of respondents in Ukraine and 32% in Belarus allegedly wanted their countries to become a part of a united Europe<sup>108</sup>. The latter data, however, do not seem utterly credible<sup>109</sup>.

## 7. Contradictions in internal politics

The Orange Revolution was an important event in Ukrainian – Belarusian relations not only because it confirmed the pro-European orientation of the Ukrainian foreign policy, but also, most importantly perhaps, due to the internal changes which it brought about in Ukraine. During Kuchma's rule, Ukraine, unlike Belarus, was not a typical authoritarian state. There was still a free media and the political opposition was strongly represented in the

<sup>101</sup> А. Биченко, Л. Поляков, *Скільки НАТО потрібно українцям?*, 1 липня 2000, <http://www.ucerps.org/ua/show/544/> (9.08.2005).

<sup>102</sup> See e.g. Звернення Президента України Віктора Ющенка до українського народу, Київ, 23 січня 2005, [http://www.president.gov.ua/news/data/11\\_142.html](http://www.president.gov.ua/news/data/11_142.html) (13.10.2005).

<sup>103</sup> Угода про партнерство та співробітництво, яка започатковує партнерство між Європейським співтовариством та їх державами-членами з одного боку та Україною з іншого боку, Люксембург, 16 червня 1994 року, <http://www.ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/eu/ua/publication/content/2112.htm> (13.10.2005).

<sup>104</sup> European Council Common Strategy on Ukraine, 1999/877/CFSP, Helsinki, 11 December 1999, „Official Journal of the European Communities”, 23<sup>rd</sup> december 1999, No L 331, p. 1–9.

<sup>105</sup> In January 2005 the European Parliament formally declared that the road to the EU remained open for Ukraine, see Резолюція Європейського Парламенту щодо результатів виборів в Україні, 13 січня 2005 року, <http://www.ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/eu/ua/publication/content/1996.htm> (13.10.2005).

<sup>106</sup> *Zapomniany sąsiad – Białoruś w kontekście rozszerzenia UE na wschód*, seria „O przyszłości Europy”, report 4, The Batory Foundation, Warszawa, September 2001; on the relations between Belarus and the EU see particularly E. Toledanko-Laredo, *Les relations entre l'Union européenne et la Biélorussie entre 1991 et 2001*, “Transitions” (Bruxelles) 2001, t. 42, No. 1, p. 197–232.

<sup>107</sup> *A European or a Slavic Choice? Foreign Policy and Public Attitudes in Post-Soviet Europe*, “Europe – Asia Studies” 2002, t. 54, No. 2, p. 192, 194.

<sup>108</sup> *Россияне хотели бы жить в России, оп.сit.*

<sup>109</sup> According to other sources at the beginning of 2005 the support for the integration with the EU in Ukraine reached 47%, see *Українське суспільство. Всеукраїнське дослідження*, Соціс, березнь 2005 (source material).

Parliament. Nevertheless, the ruling elites gladly used authoritarian methods, with the murder of the journalist of the Internet newspaper "Ukrainska Pravda" Heorgiy Gongadze in 2000 as an example. The situation radically changed after the new Cabinet came to power. The Ukrainian perception of the situation in Belarus changed as well.

In the past, Ukraine would oppose actions taken against the Republic of Belarus, aimed at its isolation, on the fora of international organisations (UN, OSCE, Council of Europe). It would often support the official standpoint of the Belarusian partner regarding the respect for human rights in Belarus and emphasised the necessity of not breaking relations with this state<sup>110</sup>. Also, Ukrainian society had quite a positive opinion about the Belarusian president. In 2002, he was the second most popular CIS leader, and his activities were positively viewed by 32.7% of respondents. Putin held the first position (62.4%), whereas Kuchma came only third (18.2%)<sup>111</sup>.

During the presidential campaign of 2004, "the Belarusian thread" appeared. Victor Yushchenko promised that Ukraine under his rule would become "the locomotive which would pull Russia and Belarus towards the European Union"<sup>112</sup>. What his adversary, Victor Yanukovich, proposed to the electorate was – according to some observers – "the Belarusian option": increasing the role of the Russian language, integration with Russia, stability at home and marginalisation of the opposition<sup>113</sup>.

After the end of the Orange Revolution an opinion appeared in Kiev that Ukraine should help its northern neighbour<sup>114</sup>. In April 2005, the Ukrainian delegation for the first time supported the adoption of the resolution regarding the situation in Belarus by the UN Commission on Human Rights – in previous years it had voted against it<sup>115</sup>. The Ukrainian authorities justified this decision with the necessity to realise the ideals of the Orange Revolution. They also emphasised that Ukraine had no intention of getting involved in the internal affairs of other states, but it could not but be interested in the problem of respect for human rights – particularly in the post-Soviet area<sup>116</sup>.

In the same month two important events affected the Ukrainian – Belarusian relations. At the beginning of April, during the official visit of the Ukrainian president in the United States, Victor Yushchenko and George W. Bush published a joint statements in which they expressed an opinion that a new era of strategic partnership had begun in relations between the two states. They also emphasised the importance of the transformations which had taken place in Ukraine and agreed to act for peace and democracy in the world and support the freedom movements in such countries as Cuba and Belarus<sup>117</sup>. The Cuban authorities officially protested against the declaration, whereas the Belarus authorities expressed their surprise at the fact that the United States and Ukraine were getting involved in the internal affairs of Belarus and emphasised that Belarus was going to solve its problems by itself. In Ukraine, the anti-presidential opposition criticised the declaration, claiming that it was most awkward due to the friendly relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus<sup>118</sup>. The official comments explained that the Ukrainian standpoint on Cuba and Belarus was an example of new accents in the Ukrainian foreign policy. They also expressed the belief that friends – i.e. Ukraine, Belarus and Cuba - should openly discuss existing problems<sup>119</sup>.

At the end of April, in the centre of Minsk, near the seat of the presidential administration, five Ukrainians participating in an illegal demonstration organised on the nineteenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster were

<sup>110</sup> Л. Чекаленко, *Зовнішня політика і безпека України, op.cit.*, p. 157; В. Величко, *Состояние и перспективы...*, *op.cit.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ваша думка*, Український центр економічних і політичних досліджень імені Олександра Разумкова, 26 листопада 2002, [http://www.uceps.org/ua/opros/16/?show\\_q\\_id=39&idТема=2&m\\_razdel=102](http://www.uceps.org/ua/opros/16/?show_q_id=39&idТема=2&m_razdel=102) (9.08.2005).

<sup>112</sup> *Ющенко впевнений, що „саме Україна втягне Росію і Білорусь в Євросоюз”* (bez daty), <http://foreignpolicy.org.ua/ua/headlines/foreign/multilateral/index.shtml?id=3894> (9.08.2005).

<sup>113</sup> К. Оровецький, *Перемога Лукашенка і український вибір 31 жовтня*, 20 жовтня 2004, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/archive/2004/october/20/3.shtml> (8.08. 2005).

<sup>114</sup> See e.g. А. Санніков, *Нова роль України*, „Дзеркало Тижня”, 7–13 травня 2005 року; V. Horbach, *Klucz leiy w Rosji, op.cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>115</sup> See reports of the sessions during last few years, <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/2/sessions.htm> (13.10.2005).

<sup>116</sup> До брифінгу в МЗС, 19 квітня 2005 року, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/mfa/ua/publication/content/3598.htm> (13.10.2005).

<sup>117</sup> A New Century Agenda for the Ukrainian-American Strategic Partnership. Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Viktor Yushchenko, [Washington], 4<sup>th</sup> April 2005, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/04/20050404-1.html> (17.10. 2005).

<sup>118</sup> *Białorusko-kubańskie implikacje wizyty prezydenta Ukrainy w USA*, „Tydzień na Wschodzie” (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich), No. 15 (393) of 14 April 2005.

<sup>119</sup> Коментар МЗС України щодо питання дотримання прав людини як одного з ключових елементів зовнішньої політики України на сучасному етапі, Київ, 12 квітня 2005 року, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/information/?mfa/2005/04/1201.html> (4.08.2005).

arrested. Apart from them, several citizens of Belarus and Russia were put in custody. The Russians were released – perhaps because the Russian ambassador in Minsk criticised their behaviour and emphasised the fact that they had broken Belarusian law<sup>120</sup>. The arrest of the Ukrainians, however, was fiercely criticised by the Ukrainian authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the Belarusian authorities had violated both the provisions of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950 and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963. The accusations were justified inasmuch as the arrested persons were not allowed to contact the Ukrainian consul, their right to defence was also restricted<sup>121</sup>. Ukraine was also strongly critical of the double standards applied by the Minsk authorities towards the citizens of Russia and Ukraine<sup>122</sup> and demanded that the Ukrainians be released. The demands were not satisfied and the Ukrainians spent – in compliance with the verdict of the Minsk court – several days in a Belarusian arrest<sup>123</sup>.

Another incident in bilateral relations took place in the summer of 2005. At the beginning of August, Ukraine and Moldova supported the declaration of the European Union, criticising the systematic and increasing repression by the Belarus authorities against the representatives of the civil society, political opposition and media. The declaration also condemned the activities against the Union of Poles in Belarus, declaring them to contravene the OSCE commitments of Belarus<sup>124</sup>. The Republic of Belarus criticised the standpoint of Ukraine and Moldova. The diplomatic representatives of the two states were summoned to the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where they were informed that the support for the EU declaration had the nature of an unfriendly act towards Belarus. The diplomats were also informed about “the activities of the Belarusian authorities for the protection of national minorities in that country”<sup>125</sup>.

In Ukraine and in other neighbour states of Belarus there is a growing need to develop a common policy towards the state. The situation in Belarus was the subject of talks between the presidents of Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Georgia, who met in mid-August 2005 in Yalta. They did not proclaim any joint declaration, but according to Aleksander Kwaśniewski, they were in full agreement regarding the fact that the Belarusian authorities should cease the violation of the rights of the Polish minority<sup>126</sup>. At the end of the month, pursuant to the telephone consultations of the Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Latvian prime ministers, a decision was taken to establish a joint working team, whose tasks should include the coordination of the policies of the four states towards Belarus<sup>127</sup>. The first meeting of the body, made up of high officials and diplomats, took place in September 2005<sup>128</sup>. So far, however, its activities have brought no results.

<sup>120</sup> A. Санніков, *Нова роль України, op.cit.* Szerzej na temat tego incydentu zob. *Арешт українських громадян в Білорусі*, 26 квітня 2005 року, <http://foreignpolicy.org.ua/ua/topic/index.shtml?id=4532> (17.10.2005)

<sup>121</sup> Коментар Прес-служби МЗС щодо затримання у м. Мінськ громадян України, 27 квітня 2005 року, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/information/?mfa/2005/04/2701.html> (4.08.2005); Коментар Прес-служби МЗС щодо затримання у м. Мінськ громадян України, 27 квітня 2005 року, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/information/?mfa/2005/04/2703.html> (4.08.2005). In Article 6, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms provides that everyone is entitled to fair hearing, including the possibility to prepare for the defence, to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing, see the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (consolidated version), London, 4 November 1950., [in:] S. Bielec (ed.), *Prawo w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Wybór dokumentów*, Aspra-JR, Fundacja Studiów Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2004, p. 251. The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations in Article 36 provides that “consular officers shall be free to communicate with nationals of the sending State and have access to them”, and if the person so requests, the competent authorities of the receiving State shall, without delay, inform the consular post of the sending State if, within its consular district, a national of that State is arrested or committed to prison or to custody pending trial or is detained in any manner”, see the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Vienna 24 August 1963, [in:], S. Bielec (ed.), *Prawo w stosunkach międzynarodowych, op.cit.*, p. 183

<sup>122</sup> See e.g. Viktor Yushchenko unveils intention to meet with Belarussian President in Moscow on May 8 to discuss arrest of Ukrainian citizens in Minsk, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2005, <http://ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/eu/en/publication/content/2535.htm> (17.10.2005).

<sup>123</sup> Коментар Прес-служби МЗС щодо затримання у м. Мінськ громадян України, 29 квітня 2005 року, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua/information/?mfa/2005/04/2901.html> (4.08.2005).

<sup>124</sup> Declaration from the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Belarus, Brussels, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2005, 11625/05 (Presse 205), [http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/cfsp/85899.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/cfsp/85899.pdf) (17.10.2005).

<sup>125</sup> О приглашении на встречу в МИД Беларуси руководителей дипломатических миссий Молдовы и Украины, 3 августа 2005 года, [http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/index.php?id=1&d=press/news&news\\_id=3538](http://www.mfa.gov.by/rus/index.php?id=1&d=press/news&news_id=3538) (17.10.2005).

<sup>126</sup> A. Staszkiwicz, J. Junko, *Kwaśniewski: chcemy, by nasi partnerzy włączyli się w dialog z Białorusią*, [http://dziennik.pap.com.pl/index.html?dzial=POS&poddzial=POLI&id\\_depezy=17144392](http://dziennik.pap.com.pl/index.html?dzial=POS&poddzial=POLI&id_depezy=17144392) (18.08.2005).

<sup>127</sup> *Koordinacja działań Polski, Litwy, Łotwy i Ukrainy wobec Białorusi*, Warszawa, 24 August 2005, [http://www.kprm.gov.pl/2130\\_14459.htm](http://www.kprm.gov.pl/2130_14459.htm) (17.10.2005).

<sup>128</sup> *Pierwsze spotkanie zespołu roboczego rządów Polski, Litwy, Łotwy i Ukrainy*, Warszawa, 16 September 2005., [http://www.kprm.gov.pl/2130\\_14596.htm](http://www.kprm.gov.pl/2130_14596.htm) (8.11.2005).



The Belarusian authorities, similar to their Ukrainian counterparts, proclaim their wish to further develop mutual relations. At the same time, they do not conceal that there are certain frictions<sup>129</sup> in the relations between the two states and that they actually have a negative opinion of the changes which took place in Ukraine at the end of 2004 - not only because of the fact that President Yushchenko's group is critical of the political situation in Belarus. Lukashenka undoubtedly hoped to see Yanukovich win the presidential elections in Ukraine. This is clearly shown by the fact that directly after the second round of the elections – which had been manipulated - he congratulated Yanukovich on his victory, as one of few world leaders, along with Vladimir Putin<sup>130</sup>. Another element of importance is the fact that in this period the head of the Belarusian state maintained direct telephone contact with the outgoing Ukrainian president Kuchma, who appointed Yanukovich as his successor<sup>131</sup>.

The expectations of the Belarusian president did not come true. Ukrainian society decidedly opposed the rigging which was to ensure the victory of Yanukovich. Moreover, Belarusians also got involved in the Orange Revolution. Dozens of Belarusian flags were on display at Independence Square<sup>132</sup>, and the representatives of the anti-Lukashenka opposition (the civil initiative Charter '97, the "Free Belarus" coalition and the youth organisation *Zubr* [meaning "bison" in Belarusian]), who protested in Kiev under the slogan: "Today Ukraine, tomorrow Belarus", made no secret of the fact that the events in Ukraine were of immense importance to them<sup>133</sup>.

Columnists and experts are not in agreement regarding whether the Ukrainian revolution is a harbinger of analogous transformations in Belarus<sup>134</sup>. There is no doubt, however, that Lukashenka is fearful of such a scenario. For this reason, he manifests a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards his new Ukrainian counterpart and tries to increase control over Belarusian society. Initially, he spoke positively of Yushchenko, emphasising him being an intelligent, clear-headed man. Lukashenka assured that the transformations in Ukraine would have no negative consequences for bilateral relations<sup>135</sup>. This opinion evolved over time. In May 2005 Lukashenka said that the situation in Ukraine was turning from bad to worse and warned that the West would fail to keep the promises of assistance made to the new Ukrainian authorities. For that reason, he added, instead of meddling in Belarusian internal affairs, Ukraine should deal with its own problems<sup>136</sup>. In July 2005, Lukashenka said that Poland and Lithuania wanted to bring a "colourful revolution" to Belarus and counted on Ukrainian support in the issue<sup>137</sup>.

Already in early 2005, during the Christian Orthodox Christmas, the Belarusian leader said that there were going to be no "pink, orange or banana revolutions" in Belarus, as it had already used up its quota of wars and insurrections. Lukashenka also assured his citizens that – in compliance with his duties – he would guarantee peace and security in Belarus<sup>138</sup>. These were no empty declarations. Over the last year, the Belarusian authorities made their internal policy much stricter and increased repression towards opposition political parties,

<sup>129</sup> Лукашенко: в отношениях с Украиной есть политические проблемы, Минск, 12 июля 2005, <http://rian.ru/politics/cis/20050712/40892242.html> (17.10.2005).

<sup>130</sup> *Reakcje międzynarodowe na wydarzenia na Ukrainie w dniach 22–25.11.2004*, „Komentarze” (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich) of 26 November 2004, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pub/koment/2004/11/041126.htm> (2.09.2005 r.).

<sup>131</sup> *Сегодня состоялся телефонный разговор Президента Республики Беларусь Александра Лукашенко с Президентом Украины Леонидом Кучмой*, Телеканал БТ-1, 24 ноября 2004 года, [http://www.ukraine-emb.by/text/info/2004\\_11\\_24-Telef-Luk-Kuchma.htm](http://www.ukraine-emb.by/text/info/2004_11_24-Telef-Luk-Kuchma.htm) (20.08.2005).

<sup>132</sup> P. Reszka, *Demokratyczna zaraza*, „Rzeczpospolita” of 12–13 February 2005.

<sup>133</sup> *Belarus opposition members stream to Kyiv protests*, „Kyiv Post”, 10th December 2004. “Zubr” is the Belarusian equivalent of “Otpor!”, “Pora!” and “Kmara!” – student organisations which played an important role during the transformations in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004 r.). For more on the issue see J. Žeber, *Niespełnione marzenie Andreja Zajcewa*, „Tygodnik Powszechny” of 17 April 2005.

<sup>134</sup> See e.g. the speeches made during the conference of the Centre for International Relations of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation „Before the Storm? Political Perspective for Belarus in 2005/2006”, Warsaw, 30 maja 2005 r., „Przegląd Środkowoeuropejski”, July 2005, No 40, p. 21–28.

<sup>135</sup> *Александр Лукашенко считает Виктора Ющенко проукраинским Президентом*, БелТА, 9 февраля 2005 года, [http://www.ukraine-emb.by/text/info/2005\\_02\\_09-Lukashenko.htm](http://www.ukraine-emb.by/text/info/2005_02_09-Lukashenko.htm) (20.08.2005).

<sup>136</sup> Лукашенко: Украина должна обратить внимание на свои проблемы, Минск, 7 мая 2005 года, <http://rian.ru/politics/cis/20050712/40892242.html> (8.08.2005).

<sup>137</sup> Лукашенко: в друзья мы ни к кому не напрашиваемся, Минск, 29 июля 2005 года, <http://rian.ru/politics/cis/20050729/41053144.html> (8.08.2005).

<sup>138</sup> К. Позняк, *Именем контрреволюции*, 10 января 2005 года, [http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/0-ya\\_gruppa/tema/10-01-05-1/](http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/0-ya_gruppa/tema/10-01-05-1/) (17.10.2005).

non-government organisations and the media<sup>139</sup>. The Union of Poles in Belarus – one of the largest social organisations (and until recently, an independent body) active there – was one of the victims of the policy. These actions were apparently approved by Russia, previously critical of Lukashenka, but now ready to support his policy, fearing that Belarus could experience similar transformation to Ukraine's<sup>140</sup>.

The negative influence of the Orange Revolution on relations between Ukraine and Russia – and potentially also Belarus – is perhaps best evidenced by the gas crisis which happened at the end of 2005. In December, the Russian monopolist Gazprom demanded that from January 2006 Ukraine should pay four times more than before for gas imported from Russia: not 50 dollars, but approximately 230 dollars for 1000 m<sup>3</sup>. As Ukraine rejected the postulate, on 1 January 2006 the deliveries of gas were stopped. Officially, Gazprom's decisions were explained by economic reasons, but there is no doubt that they were to discredit Yushchenko and destabilise the situation in Ukraine ahead of the parliamentary elections in March 2006. The thesis regarding the political background of the crisis is confirmed both by the fact that no similar actions were taken towards Belarus, where the price of gas was maintained at a level below 50 dollars<sup>141</sup>, as well as the comments of Lukashenka, who openly stated that the price increase was a "punishment" for the policy of the new Ukrainian authorities<sup>142</sup>. The Belarusian president happened to make no mention of the fact that in February 2004 Russia had for a short time stopped delivering gas to Belarus to force greater leniency on the part of the Belarusians<sup>143</sup>.

## 8. Prospects

Although the last year saw problems in Ukrainian – Belarusian relations, the two states continue their political dialogue. Regular bilateral meetings at the highest level can serve as evidence. First of them took place during the sixtieth anniversary of the end of WW II in Moscow in May 2005. It was organised following Yushchenko's initiative, as he wanted to discuss with Lukashenka the issue of the Ukrainians detained in Minsk as well as – most probably – to solve the problems which appeared in bilateral relations<sup>144</sup> in the spring of 2005. The Belarusian president originally showed little interest in the proposal, but he ultimately accepted it<sup>145</sup>. The talks between the two leaders ended the tensions related to the April events in Minsk. Yushchenko accepted the explanations of the Belarusian president (Lukashenka said he had not been informed of the whole issue) and decided to wave the incident aside<sup>146</sup>.

The two leaders met again in August, this time during the CIS summit in Kazan. The main issue of the talks was the development of the bilateral cooperation – particularly in the area of the economy. Other subjects included the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. Yushchenko and Lukashenka agreed that

<sup>139</sup> In June 2005, amendments to the Act on political parties and social associations was adopted; the changes make the activity of those organisations very difficult and facilitate their delegitimation. Since the beginning of the year, the legislation concerning media was also amended – those failing to comply with it, may be liquidated. Amendments were also introduced to the act on the internal army, which may use regular ammunition, also at the president's order – without defining the circumstances in which such an intervention is possible. See R. Sadowski, A. Wierzbowska-Miazga, I. Wiśniewska, *Białoruś. Nieznany sąsiad UE*, Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, Warszawa, sierpień 2005, p. 8–10.

<sup>140</sup> A. Fieduta, *Oczekiwanie najgorszego*, „Przegląd Środkowoeuropejski”, July 2005, No. 40, p. 21. In the recent years Russia was critical about Lukashenka, but after the Ukrainian revolution gave him clear support. Consequently, it can be claimed that over a short period, the changes in Ukraine turned out to be – in a paradox way – beneficial for the Belarusian president. Nevertheless, it must not be excluded that fearing the unfavourable course of events in Belarus, Russia may wish to make this state even more submitted to itself in order to maintain its influence there, but it would be against Belarusian interests.

<sup>141</sup> See e.g. G.L. White, *Russia turns up gas pressure*, “The Wall Street Journal” (New York) from 19 December 2005.

<sup>142</sup> Kublik, *Gazowy pat Rosji i Ukrainy*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” z 30 grudnia 2005 r.

<sup>143</sup> On his issue see: *Rosja–Białoruś: kryzys energetyczny*, „Komentarze” (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich) z 26 lutego 2004 r., <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pub/koment/2004/02/030226b.htm> (2.01.2006).

<sup>144</sup> *Ющенко обговорить з Лукашенко інцидент із затриманням українців в Білорусі*, 4 травня 2005 року, <http://ua.proua.com/news/2005/05/04/140324.html> (18.10.2005).

<sup>145</sup> *Лукашенко не планує зустрічатися з Ющенком у Москві*, 4 травня 2005 року, <http://ua.proua.com/news/2005/05/04/182008.html> (18.10.2005).

<sup>146</sup> *Ющенко пробачив Лукашенку арешти українців в Мінську*, 9 травня 2005 року, <http://ua.proua.com/news/2005/05/09/135454.html> (18.10.2005).

there were certain problems in the relations between the two states and expressed their hope that the problems could be solved<sup>147</sup>.

Another meeting of the two leaders was to take place in October 2005 in Chernobyl or in Homel<sup>148</sup>, but it was put off. Instead, the Ukrainian prime minister Yuri Yehanurov came to Minsk on an official visit, which was the first visit of the Ukrainian representative in Belarus at this level after the Orange Revolution. The new head of the Ukrainian government held talks with President Alaksandr Lukashenka and his Belarusian counterpart, Siarhei Sidorski. The talks concerned the development of economic cooperation and solving the problems between the two states. Yehanurov and Sidorski signed four agreements regarding the bilateral cooperation of the states<sup>149</sup>. Summing up the visit, the Ukrainian Prime Minister emphasised the importance of the dialogue with Belarus, but also expressed his hope that the next presidential elections would be of a democratic nature<sup>150</sup>.

Ukraine also tries – similarly as during the Kuchma period – to counteract the isolation of Belarus in the international arena. It believes such a policy to be ineffective. According to the Ukrainian leaders, the cases of the violations of human rights anywhere in the world should be clearly reacted against, but nevertheless, no iron curtain should be built around Belarus, as it will not help solve any problems. Instead, assistance should be offered to Belarus in its participation in international relations<sup>151</sup>. This policy is manifested by the Ukrainian support for the Belarusian postulates regarding its closer contacts with NATO, and particularly including it in the PARP system, one of the instruments of Partnership for Peace<sup>152</sup>. From Ukraine's perspective, cooperation with Poland may play an important role. On the one hand, at the request of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the Ukrainian president was trying to tone down the tensions between Poland and the Republic of Belarus, connected with the policy of the Belarusian authorities towards the Union of Poles in Belarus<sup>153</sup>. On the other hand, joint Polish-Ukrainian-Belarusian initiatives are being taken. Both Kiev and Warsaw viewed them as helpful in solving the problems of Belarus and its neighbours and counteracting the isolation of that country in the international arena. This policy resulted in a trilateral meeting in Kiev in late September 2005, attended by the head of the Polish National Security Bureau Jerzy Bahr, the secretary of the Belarusian Security Council Hienadzij Nievychlas, the secretary of the Ukrainian Council of National Security and Defence, Anatoli Kinah and the Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Borys Tarasiuk<sup>154</sup>.

It is also worth noting that in spite of the changes which took place in Ukraine, Ukrainian society has a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the situation in Belarus. In March 2005, about one third of respondents had a positive opinion of Lukashenka's policy, the same number viewed it negatively<sup>155</sup>.

The Ukrainian revolution is probably not a harbinger of analogous transformations in Belarus. There are fundamental differences between the two states. Ukraine has strong independence traditions (the Cossack history, Western Ukrainian People's Republic, Ukrainian People's Republic, Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists – Ukrainian Insurgent Army), missing in the case of its northern neighbour, which to some extent explains the low level of Belarusian national awareness, the nostalgia for the USSR and the phenomenon of Lukashenka's rule. In Belarus, the opposition is absent from the structures of power, whereas in Ukraine during Kuchma's time,

<sup>147</sup> Президент України зустрівся з Президентом Республіки Білорусь, 27 серпня 2005, [http://ww8.president.gov.ua/news/data/1\\_2476.html](http://ww8.president.gov.ua/news/data/1_2476.html) (18.10.2005).

<sup>148</sup> А. Зайцев, Лукашенко и Ющенко встретятся в Чернобыле?, 26 сентября 2005, [http://naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/1-ya\\_gruppa/politika/26-09-05-1/](http://naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/1-ya_gruppa/politika/26-09-05-1/) (18.10.2005).

<sup>149</sup> П. Кириллов, Беларусь–Украина, *op.cit.*

<sup>150</sup> In a most unusual and ambiguous manner, Yehanurov also commented on the leadership skills of Lukashenka, saying that after the meeting with the Belarusian president he understood why in the 1930s some German women shouted; "I want to have the Führer's baby" (Премьер-министр Украины сравнил Лукашенко с Гитлером, Хартия '97, 2 ноября 2005 года, <http://www.ucpb.org/rus/show1prel.shtml?no=7449>; 2.11.2005).

<sup>151</sup> П. Кириллов, Литва и Украина против изоляции Беларуси, 7 октября 2005, [http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/1-ya\\_gruppa/politika/07-10-05-1/](http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/1-ya_gruppa/politika/07-10-05-1/) (18.10.2005).

<sup>152</sup> Украина поможет Беларуси в переходе на новый уровень сотрудничества с НАТО, 16 ноября 2005, [http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/0-ya\\_gruppa/novosti/politika/16-11-05-21/](http://www.naviny.by/ru/content/rubriki/0-ya_gruppa/novosti/politika/16-11-05-21/) (2.01.2006).

<sup>153</sup> Juszczenko obiecał rotós, „Rzeczpospolita” z 20 sierpnia 2005 r.; Віктор Ющенко провів телефонну розмову з Президентом Білорусі Олександром Лукашенком, 12 вересня 2005, [http://ww8.president.gov.ua/news/data/1\\_2831.html](http://ww8.president.gov.ua/news/data/1_2831.html) (18.10.2005).

<sup>154</sup> Polsko-białorusko-ukraińskie rozmowy w Kijowie, „Wiadomości” (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich), No. 170 of 30 September 2005, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/news/09/050930.htm> (18.10.2005).

<sup>155</sup> In the scale of 1–10, 32.8% of respondents gave the Belarusian President marks ranging from 1 to 4, 34.8%: 5–7, and 30.3%: 8–10 (Українське суспільство, *op.cit.*).

Yushchenko's National Alliance "Our Ukraine", the Julia Timoshenko Bloc (BJuT) or even the Communist Party of Ukraine played an important role in the political life of the country. In Belarus, there is no opposition media or oligarchs who would be ready to support democratic changes, and this factor was of considerable significance in the time of the Orange Revolution thanks to the independent television station Channel 5, belonging to one of the close associates of the current president, Petro Poroshenko. Finally, there is no candidate who, similarly to Yushchenko, would naturally unite the popular opposition movement against the authorities in Belarus. Admittedly, the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Forces did propose a joint candidate for the Belarusian president in early October 2005, who will in 2006 be Lukashenka's rival, but Alaksandr Milinkievich does not have a similar position in the Belarusian political scene as that held by Yushchenko in the last years of Kuchma's rule<sup>156</sup>.

There seems to be no possibility that democratic Ukraine should naturally pull Belarus and persuade it to start the reforms (as e.g. in the case of the Soviet Union and states of the eastern block in the late 1908s). Neither of the two states is the main partner of the other one, and they attach greater importance to the relations with Russian and/or Western states<sup>157</sup>. Bilateral economic cooperation is not of such great significance in the case of the Ukrainian economy (for the Belarusian economy the situation is slightly different). The social contacts between the two states are also relatively low, especially as compared to the ties between Ukraine and Russia or Belarus and Russia. Some analogy with the situation in post-colonial states can be noticed here – after regaining independence, they also had to painstakingly build mutual relations, often ignored in the colonial time as compared with the colony – metropolis contacts<sup>158</sup>.

In spite of all these limitations, it seems that the Orange Revolution will have some influence on the situation in Belarus, and for several reasons. Firstly, the Ukrainian events of 2004, similarly as the 2003 Revolution of Roses in Georgia, proved that democratic transformations in the CIS area are possible. As a result, Belarus, until recently perceived to be one of the many authoritarian or semi-authoritarian post-Soviet states, today is viewed by the United States and the European Union more as a challenge. Western states may decide that since the democrats were successful in Ukraine, the opposition in Belarus should be supported by even greater involvement<sup>159</sup>. Secondly, the success of the Yushchenko political group might convince Belarusian society of the necessity to introduce changes in Belarus. There is also a reverse correlation: a failure of the Ukrainian democrats will probably strengthen the position of Lukashenka in his country<sup>160</sup>. Thirdly, a democratic Ukraine might play an important role in the group of states cooperating over the transformations in Belarus. The Ukrainian state does not have sufficient potential to initiate changes in Belarus by itself. However, this does not change the fact that Ukrainians know Belarus better than the Poles do (let alone the representatives of Western states) and unlike the latter, are treated with sympathy there<sup>161</sup>. For this reason, they could be valuable partners. According to some experts, due to the geographical closeness of the two states and similarities between them, particularly those regarding the language, Ukraine is the right place to host an independent radio station broadcasting in the Belarusian language, or at least some of its transmitters<sup>162</sup>. The project of establishing such a station has been discussed in Poland, and now also in the EU, for a long time, but has not been implemented so far.

Nevertheless, Ukraine should not be believed to unambiguously support all the activities aimed against the Lukashenka regime. The new Ukrainian authorities genuinely wish to promote democracy in the area of the former USSR – both for the sake of prestige (the political activity in the region is a certain substitute of the successes on the road to the European structures, difficult to achieve), for ideological (realising the ideals of the Orange Revolution) and pragmatic reasons (the transformations in the post-Soviet republics should increase the stability of the region and limit the influence of Russia). Moreover, in the first months, the Yushchenko group wanted to stress that they were breaking away from the past and wished to pursue a new, independent, pro-Western policy

<sup>156</sup> R. Sadowski, *Białoruska opozycja ma wspólnego kandydata na prezydenta*, „Komentarze” (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich) of 6 October 2005, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pub/koment/2005/10/051006.htm> (18.10.2005).

<sup>157</sup> The Polish authorities seem aware of the problem. In May 2005 Aleksander Kwaśniewski declared on the Polish radio that „if any state could influence the current situation in Belarus and the attitudes of the Belarusian leaders, it is not Ukraine, not Lithuania and not Poland, but [...] Russia.”, *Sygnaly Dnia*, 6 May 2005 r., <http://www.prezydent.pl/x.node?id=2542439> (18.10.2005).

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Z. Dobosiewicz, *Integracja gospodarcza krajów rozwijających się*, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 1991, p. 36–38

<sup>159</sup> This evolution was often noted by Janusz Onyszkiewicz, the Polish Deputy to the European Parliament, see e.g. *Wiceszef PE Janusz Onyszkiewicz – gość Jolanty Pieńkowskiej*, 27 July 2005, <http://www.polskieradio.pl/trojka/salon/default.asp?ID=2319> (18.10.2005).

<sup>160</sup> С. Калякін, «Не робіть нам поганих подарунків...», „День”, 9 серпня 2005 року.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>162</sup> К. Нольте, *Україна може тісніше співробітничати з Європейським Союзом у питаннях Білорусі*, 25 травня 2005, <http://www2.pravda.com.ua/archive/?50425-4-new> (18.10.2005).

towards Russia. In those circumstances taking a firm stance towards Belarus seemed a natural solution. Belarus is not one of the main partners of Ukraine, and besides, it has been criticised by the international community for its failure to respect human rights and democratic standards for a long time. Consequently, Ukraine did not risk much when it took “unfriendly” actions towards Belarus, and at the same time could demonstrate its attachment to the ideals of the Orange Revolution. Presently, after the September political crisis, Ukraine is striving for a certain normalisation in relations with its neighbours in the CIS area – primarily with Russia. It is enough to remember that the new Ukrainian prime minister, Yuri Yehanurov, went to Moscow on his first foreign visit. Ukraine seems to be undergoing an analogous, though less spectacular evolution towards Belarus. The Ukrainian authorities are undoubtedly critical of Lukashenka’s policy and hope to see the situation in Belarus change<sup>163</sup>. Ukraine’s policy towards Belarus seems to be undergoing a similar evolution, though less spectacular. Ukrainian authorities are undoubtedly critical towards Lukashenka’s policy and hope to see the situation in this country change. However, they do wish to maintain normal relations, develop economic cooperation, jointly solve the most important problems (the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, the border issue etc.) and also – in the course of the dialogue – persuade Belarus to manifest greater openness towards the world and respect its obligations regarding democracy and human rights.

The Belarusian authorities do not want a confrontation with Ukraine either. Lukashenka is tired of the growing dependence on Russia. He is not ready for a radical change in foreign policy, but probably needs a partner who would allow Belarus to increase and diversify foreign trade, function as a mediator in its official and unofficial contacts with Western states and liberate it from the necessity to cooperate only with Russia. Ukraine, as a “Slavonic republic” may be suitable for this role<sup>164</sup>. Its ties with Belarus – at least those which concern political discourse – can be found on a number of levels. Besides, Ukraine is not a member of the Euro–Atlantic structures: the EU and NATO, which are not very friendly towards the Belarusian authorities. It is one of the important economic partners of Belarus (the third among CIS states and the fifth in the world). And, last but not least, it also wants to develop bilateral relations and rejects proposals regarding the isolation of Belarus in the international arena. All this makes Ukraine a natural partner from the perspective of the Belarusian authorities.

The tensions between the two states following the Orange Revolution must not be ignored. It should be noted, however, that the problems have not resulted in the discontinuation of the bilateral dialogue, because both Ukraine and Belarus are increasingly aware of the importance of the mutual relations<sup>165</sup>. It can be assumed that similarly as over the last fourteen years, when the two states have tried not to emphasise the differences between them regarding foreign policy, they will now try to develop a *modus vivendi* in the sphere of bilateral relations, regardless of the disputes about internal policy. Ukraine and Belarus remain neighbours, and this geographical condition cannot be changed.

<sup>163</sup> T. Bielecki, *Kijów znów w objęciach Moskwy*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 1 October 2005

<sup>164</sup> See. П. Кириллов, *Беларусь–Украина*, *op.cit.*

<sup>165</sup> V. Horbach, *Klucz leży w Rosji*, *op.cit.*, p. 27.