

## **Belarus' engendered national construct and its possible consequences for foreign policy behavior.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The case of Belarus constitutes a serious interpretative puzzle for foreign policy analysts. The country's behavior deviates in a marked way from what may be perceived as a typical foreign policy orientation among Central and Eastern European states that were formerly dominated by the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Not only is Belarus' foreign policy – atypically - directed towards Russia, but the country made in the past a number of moves which are surprising in the inter-state relations. To quote an example, Belarus gave away her nuclear power without any negotiations<sup>2</sup>, before all the deadlines, and displayed considerable passivity in the international arena epitomized by such statements as the one authored by S. Sushkievich, speaker of the Parliament; "We are a small country, we will accept whatever Russia and Ukraine agree on"<sup>3</sup>.

This paper, focusing on one particular interpretative aspect of the Belarusian case, contests the explanations that derive the Belarusian path from the lack of national identity, and, ultimately, proposes a de-politicized conceptualization of national identity. Furthermore, it hypothesizes that the engendered nature of the Belarusian identity may have serious consequences for the state behavior in the international arena, even if the 'testable' causal relationship might be difficult to be produced. The paper draws attention to the benefits resulting from the studying of identity (for example through discourse analysis) and tries to demonstrate that this type of research can offer a rich source of information relevant for foreign policy research.

The material analyzed was collected during a series of extended interviews with about 40 elite members<sup>4</sup>, including artists, (former) businessmen and people involved in various ways in politics. Furthermore, I make reference to the analysis of such sources as the everyday press, samples of textbooks from primary and secondary schools (starting from the 1950s and finishing with the late 1990s).

The analysis of the above mentioned material discloses the existence of quite an interesting identity construct that undermines the frequently quoted argument on the 'no-identity'<sup>5</sup> problem of Belarusians. At the same time we observe that the Belarusian case cannot be easily pushed into one of the available 'national identity' categories. But is this 'definitional incompatibility' tantamount to the claim that Belarusians do not possess national feelings? Or, maybe, the 'no-identity' claim is simply based on the assumptions resulting from a particular 'legitimized' and gendered definition of national identity? If, indeed, the definition of national identity is inherently gendered, then it can result in the production of Belarus as a deficient subject.

On the following pages I am focusing on the aspect of the gendering of the Belarus' national discourse and its possible consequences for the international practice. I have selected this particular aspect as the literature has not addressed it so far. I realize that my task, in order to be complete, should embrace both the identity construct produced by the entity that I am looking at (Belarus) and the constitutive 'outside'. This is, however, too vast undertaking for this paper to deal with and, consequently, the emphasis will fall only on the self-made identity constructs.

## 1. IDENTITY: GENDERING

If we perceive identity as possessing no essence or core, we will, consequently, appreciate that it is open to modifications and re-statements. These are feasible due to the nature of the discursive fields in which identity is called into being. If identity is, following the propositions of feminists' criticism, an effect of language [6](#), then seeing gender not as possessed but as what a person 'does' [7](#) allows us to see how gendering of various entities, not necessarily only individuals, is connected with the action taken by them, and how what they say about themselves makes them do certain things. Thus, people and organizations become what they are also as a result of the utterances they make [8](#) and the gendering of language can be reflected and transmitted into a gendered behavior. .

The existence of the 'gendered discourse' has been generally acknowledged, at least since the beginning of the last century, and there is a plethora of studies on the gendering of everyday language<sup>9</sup>. In this context, my particular interest was to see if the gender-imbued language influences also the behavior of a larger and more complex unit (such as a state, for example) if used in the self-description of this unit.

The analysis of the interview material allowed me to identify certain main concepts around which the Belarusian discourse is built. In the introductory stage of my analysis I attempted to diagnose the alternative perception of the world resulting from specific linkages between various concepts in Belarus and different definitions of commonly known notions like 'democracy' and 'sovereignty'. It was precisely at this point, while looking at the em- and dis-powering discursive practices – that I encountered the problem of the gendered discourse. In the Belarusian self-descriptions, I noticed, the 'gendered' elements are bound in the prevailing discourse to produce a weak, impotent being. One cannot help noticing that the construction of Belarus draws on binary oppositions, imbuing the representation with value, and leaving it open to judgment.

## 2. 'DIFFERENT' IDENTITY?

### Non-existence hypothesis

As stated above, it is quite frequently claimed that the lack of national feeling is responsible for the unusual behavior of Belarus on the international stage. Indeed, this country presents an interesting case as it cannot be denied that independence and sovereignty did surprise it. This, however, is not a strong enough argument to raise the claim that there is no such thing as Belarusian identity. This identity, as I was convinced by my research, does exist but - as any identity - it is specific and cannot be simply easily pushed into an available compartment.

The Belarusian case is a fascinating story as it is a living proof of the thesis of the unnaturalness of national constructs. In Belarus in the 19th century the very same family members could become representatives and, indeed, national heroes, of different nations, to quote a notorious example of the brothers Tyszkiewicz, of whom 'one was Lithuanian, one was Polish, and one was Belarusian'. This shows how much national identity (as any type of identity) is a result of personal choice. In Belarus national identity is still frequently a matter of individual decision; many Russian-born Belarusians adopted this country as their homeland only in the early 1990s. This was the case of one of my interlocutors who, nevertheless, declared strong concern over the fate of the country and got profoundly involved in a political discourse over the Belarusian future.

Belarus is accused of being without its own nation because it has no state traditions, and because of its pro-Russian inclinations. The first observation is true only to some extent. Never a completely independent political organism, Belarus formed part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and then the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth. Furthermore, the Statutes of the Grand Duchy were written in Belarusian and the very first printed books in the Commonwealth appeared in this language. [10](#) The second part of the argument against Belarusian national identity is based on the refusal to acknowledge the important fact that Belarusian identity was forged at the time when the Soviets came to power. Consequently, Soviet ideological element constitutes an inherent and vital part of this particular identity. We might conclude that the Belarusianness as such possesses a soviet (but not necessarily Russian) element but this does not undermine its existence as a distinct unit.

### *Defining*

Definitions are usually contestable and the definition of what constitutes 'national identity' is a particularly difficult one. One needs to define two concepts, 'nation' and 'identity', each of them problematic enough. While it is hard to catalogue the characteristics of nations, definitions of nationality predominately embrace the element of political will, the highest form of which is the creation of a nation state [11](#). Even if the political element is not explicitly mentioned it is more or less assumed that the nation is either the creator or the creation of the state [12](#). This understanding leads, however, to a conflation of the concepts of state and nation and the loyalties developed vis-a-vis these two. State and nation may be closely interrelated as in the French case, the two may be thought of independently, like in the German case [13](#), but I would like to claim that it is possible to imagine a nation that does not aspire (apart from a small group of the elite) to a separate statehood, too.

The definition that stresses the indispensability of the political element lies, I believe, at the basis of the declaration that the Belarusian national feeling does not exist. However, this insistence on the political dimension may be analytically limiting. There are, after all, nations that do not entertain excessive political and separatist ambitions like the Welsh and the Scottish. Moreover, the legal claim to a territory does not necessarily have to coincide with the moral one. The latter is, in Belarus, quite strong and transpires in the interviews and the references to lands which were originally 'theirs', and then 'taken away'. [14](#)

The scholars make a massive mistake, claims Walker Connor, by equating nationalism with the feeling of loyalty to the state rather than the nation. [15](#) Similarly, Greenfield derives national identity from the feeling of the belonging to the people, [16](#) and abundant literature points to the ideational character of the nation, refusing any tangible characteristics to it and celebrating, instead, people's self-perception. [17](#) Sensitive to these arguments I was convinced by the accumulated interview data that the Belarusians possess this sense of common belonging and the self-perception of being 'other' than the neighboring nations. [18](#) This 'certitude that we are simply different, we a Belarusians' [19](#) is, however, in most cases, not charged with a strong political element.

Consequently, the understanding of nation that I decided to embrace and defend here is built on the arguments developed by [Oommen](#)<sup>1</sup> and on his differentiation between

**ethnic** and nation. The latter is characterized by simultaneous cultural and territorial belonging, while the former lacks the territorial element. Thus, this understanding relies on the presupposition that there is a clear difference between the concepts of the state as a political entity and of the nation as a cultural (moral) one. Belarusians repeatedly demonstrate throughout the interviews that they constitute a unique entity, and this is accompanied by a strong feeling of territorial belonging.

#### *Masculinisation of concepts via 'Power' component*

Nancy Hirshmann claims that the presence or absence of power [20](#) has been the essential difference between the masculine and feminine constructs. The power of the state, mimicking the (masculine) individual consists in its autonomy, singularity, ability to secure the inside sphere and expand through the military or cultural imposition on the outside. As this male-female dualism inscribed in epistemology deeply permeates the perceptions of reality, the possible alternatives of international behavior that are not designated as 'male' are automatically excluded. The dominant paradigms in IR realism and liberal institutionalism reflect the engendered character of the construction of the knowledge about the world as they compete over the attributes of bigger 'realism' and 'objectivity'. [21](#)

As the ways of knowing were produced as reflection of the experience and identity of a male individual, all new nationalisms wishing to find spatial encapsulation within state boundaries referred to the nation's virility and prowess. In this context the construction of Belarus as clearly effeminate and un-manly subject deserves attention. The lack of strong political aspirations might have led to the situation where national and heavily engendered images were hoisted to the state level when this new entity appeared in Belarus (and this took place, practically, without any dissident movement or fight). Thus - to explain the moves on the international arena - this vocabulary of femaleness and weakness might have been imported to this arena from the level of a national self-image.

Speaking of the gendered discourse one needs to see the difficulty stemming from the existence of different femininities [22](#) and masculinities functioning respectively in different discourses. In this text we rely on some mainstream, mythologized and naturalized schemata which, according to Levis-Strauss, are organized in two chains of opposing characteristics. [23](#) We are referring, moreover, to the table of dichotomies developed by Rebecca Bryant Lockridge [24](#), with the assumption that the influence of these archetypal visualizations of the world may be of consequence at the level of practice. The important female characteristics mentioned in her essay include: receiving, refuge, connotation, being at one with nature, emotion, mystic and mystery, chaos, intuition, inner-orientation, subjective element, emphasis on life and nature, cooperation, immanence, earth, communal bond, timelessness, eternity and inward life. Similar registers of dichotomized categories of objectivity/subjectivity, reason/emotion, knowing/being and public/private are presented in E. F. Keller's, S. Harding's and A. Tickner's critical texts<sup>1</sup>.

Referring to these simplified registers of 'female' characteristics encoded in both common sense and academic discourse; we would like to see how the internalization of these features may structure actors' action. Many of these polarized discursive constructs

stress female in-action and the lack of the power of agent. If this quality of inaction and passivity is, in turn, (over)present in the national discourse, it may be easily en-acted by the elite members and constrain certain actions while enabling and later justifying others. It may define what is a natural and normal behavior in a given context, producing elite as a 'subjugated knower and constrained actor'. [25](#)

### 3. SELF-DESCRIPTIONS

#### 3. A. *Tolerance (Passivity), Victimization and Irresponsibility*

Passivity and inaction dominate as national characteristics notoriously referred to. Even in the WW2 narrative the heroism of Belarusians is somehow tainted by passivity - it is heroism brought about by history, provoked, and not something that would make Belarusians the makers of the history, or its active subjects.

We may see that the passivity or 'tolerance', as Belarusians prefer to call it, is rationalized in Belarusian discourse by the experiences of the war and heavy population loss. The war narrative, on the surface stressing the resistance, in fact portrays the nation as a victim to a brutal terror. The terrifying war stories illustrated by the animated installations at the Minsk WW2 museum are retold to newer and newer generations, instilling the feeling of suffering and loss. On the other hand, the WW2 partisans are frequently evoked with pride as they epitomize Belarusian ability to willingly offer their life for their country.

Believed and reproduced by almost everybody, only recently this narrative has been undermined by some anti-system historians who started to re-describe the war experience. According to recent research, the partisans were simply forced to join the Russian divisions under the threat of execution and did it unwillingly. Instead of being beloved by the local population, the partisans were feared. Too weak to attack the Germans, they troubled village people with demands for scarce food. This counter-story is, however, very unpopular and told tentatively and only in alternative publications. [26](#)

Interestingly, even those who personally experienced the 'real' partisans' activity have been so attracted by this mythic narrative that they seem to become actively involved in its promulgation and the 'group forgetting' of their lived experience [27](#). As one of the journalists quipped cynically, each year the number of combatants is growing.

Although generally peaceful and unwilling to get involved in conflicts, Belarusians perceive themselves as constantly in the epicenter of these conflicts due to their position in-between Russia and Europe. They become heroes as if against their will. Their heroism is heavy, tragic and desperate, its memory brings pain and feelings of injustice, as exemplified by a child-hero, Marat Kaziej, who was killed throwing bottles with petrol at German tanks.

The Belarusian space is, similarly, presented throughout history as a precious land, that is the passive object various strangers try to divide. It is the place that is indispensable but which has at the same time no voice of its own. This attitude is particularly visible in the Russian intention to grasp that space as a road to the world, the essential passage through which everything comes to Russia, both good, and evil. The emphasis on the 'naturally given' position (geopolitics) indicates as well the attitude of inaction and the belief in the external sources of history

Some interlocutors justify the today's peaceful coexistence of Belarusians and Russians with the national quality of 'tolerance'. Belarusian tolerance is painted as qualitatively different from that of the European Community as it is 'real' and 'natural', and it contains an emotional component that the European community is devoid of. It is claimed that in the case of the Community, there is more indifference than tolerance.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, several interviewees state that tolerance is solely a Belarusian myth and speak of the homophobia or anti-Semitism as counter-evidence.

Belarusians are peace-loving and cooperative people, claim the interviewed, illustrating this with the stories of coexistence of nations in the distant past. One of them states that this 'tolerance' is the greatest reason of pride to him as it is the value that the nation carried intact through all the post-war years and could now donate to the European Community. Another states that Belarusians can boast the fact that 'they never took anything from anybody... (although) they took things from us and we just looked calmly at this' <sup>29</sup>. Thus, things taken away include, apart from their native land, Belarusians symbolic values. The name of the country was taken away by Lithuanians, the same with the coat of arms, heroes and national history <sup>30</sup>. This theme of undeserved harm and deprivation returns in many variations throughout the material.

The gender imbued conceptualizations appear again when I am told that in spite of their alleged tolerance, the Belarusian people have to be *controlled* as they may not know what to do with their freedom. Therefore, as three of my interlocutors claim, Lukashenko is maybe not the worst option possible. <sup>31</sup> Discussing among themselves the Belarusian case, they explain, of their own accord and not being prompted to do this by any question, the nature of Belarusian nationalism. It is the nationalism that they describe as 'good', and devoid of aggression, expressed in the willingness to live in 'this country in peace' and, 'to be happy'. And yet, in spite of this some Belarusians believe they compatriots need to have a strong authority over them, something like 'a lid' that would keep the 'steam in the cauldron'.

### *3.B Invisibility, Suffering and Silence*

The references made to the role of the country in world politics contain the idea of invisibility and muteness. Belarus is not heard and this indicates the denial of the role of a speaker, which is also a frequent theme in feminist analyses. <sup>32</sup> Belarusian 'patience' and silence is strongly emphasized or even exaggerated and Belarusians themselves like to make jokes about their ability to cope with difficulties without protesting or fighting them. Two most frequently repeated jokes refer to this quality. In one of them the Belarusian who is hanged between a German and a Russian survives the execution and then comments on his experience. In the beginning, he admits, it was hard but then he 'got used' to it. In the other joke, having sat on a pin, a Russian throws it, Ukrainian hides it in his pocket and Belarusian remains seated because if the pin was where it was it means that 'for some reason it should have been this way'.

The ability to 'suffer' is commented on by many interlocutors, but not necessarily liked by everyone. As one of the interviewees sarcastically put it, Sisyphus is an archetype of the Belarusian and 'masochism is our national feature'<sup>33</sup>. Further in the discussion he speaks of the passive suffering which results from many years of despotism having been experienced by his country. The notion of extreme endurance is recurring in



all interviews, notwithstanding if you converse with the politician, historian or an accidental travel companion on the train.

### *3. C. Fear, Locality, and Smallness*

Fear is an emotional state frequently attributed to femaleness [34](#) and in the interviews the fear of conflict or change is one of the recurring themes. In the majority of cases the interlocutors lead the listener, via the topic of fear, to the twin theme of domesticity, and shelter, to the traditional associations of home and safety, attachment and settlement [35](#). Home is a central idea dominating the questions referring to highest 'values' of life; the family and its happiness is the main aim mentioned. This may be seen as a consequence of the sharp division between the private and public spheres. The withdrawal from the latter is justified by its association with something dirty, dangerous and destructive. Interestingly, the 'home' theme is frequently connected with the positive evaluation of Soviet Belarusian Republic, when industrialization and raising living standards brought well-being to this land, increased consumerism and led to a discourse reminiscent of this in the 1950s in Britain, where home was described as a site of affluence. [36](#)

Belarusians see themselves as open and hospitable, which would be quite typical for any nation's self-description. But in their self-portrayal they are as well modest, naïve, weak, not appreciating themselves enough, sincere and satisfied with the little they have. The quality at which they constantly point, if compared to Russians, is the ability of Belarusians to work very hard and to look after their own household. Thus, they fence their land and within it they plant trees and vegetables, unlike Russians who are prone to change places, to 'mount a horse at any time' and go ahead of themselves. The reason for this difference is explained by geographic conditions again - Belarusians imagine themselves as being 'small'. In contrast, they speak of vast space as provoking Russian mobility.

The recurring topic of the lack of change, or life-as-it-always-was, is well illustrated by an interpretation offered by one of the interviewed. She referred to an already symbolic title of the novel by Ivan Melesh 'Ludzie na balotie'. The 'boloto', mud or mire, represents the place that is cut off from the rest of the world, - nobody can reach it unless the water is frozen. This has two types of consequences. Firstly, the 'new' cannot reach this place which is eternally the same, stagnated and backward. Mud, or swamp is a place of physical sickness as well, of a bad, stale atmosphere. On the other hand due to isolation, some archaic, traditional values that were lost elsewhere may be kept alive here, so it is a treasury of all things purest and noblest. [37](#)

While the change is not sought and may be dangerous if self-provoked, there is still a hope for the intervention of some positive forces into individuals' life. Thus, life itself may bring unexpected, lucky developments and this reliance on fate is connected, according to one of the interviewees, with the tendency to fall into mysticism. [38](#)

### *3.D. Eugenics*

Female interlocutors, as a rule, make comments on the male part of the population, which is according to them highly effeminate and unable to cope with life. Husbands are compared to children and described as additional burden, they are seen as weak psychologically, prone to alcoholism and depression [39](#). This, they say, is the result

of the war, the fact that so many men died, and that the new generations were brought up by single women, mothers and grandmothers, who feared conflict and aggression most of everything in the world. Thus, the vast destruction of today's Belarus and the task of 'mending' of lives assigned to women are responsible for the passivity of the male population.

According to one of the interviewees who resorts to a genetics discourse, the wars, starting from the Napoleon's wars, led to the death of the 'heroes'. The survivors are just weak and cowardly men, child-like and capricious. On the one hand weak, they have, on the other one, the capability of manipulating women to do everything for them. They are not willing to compromise and discuss, not able to listen and argue. [40](#)

The view that Belarusian nature is somehow defective in a biological sense is present in scientific pieces as well. This opinion reverberates in texts written by Belarusian authors. For example J. Zaprudnik implies that the present developments are resulting from the Belarusian 'fitness' having been impaired by Stalinism, WW2 and Chernobyl.[41](#) Another author diagnoses Belarusian society as inert and apathetic, while the leader of the Belarusian National Front, Z. Pazniak, describes Belarusians as 'seriously sick', heading either towards death or complete rebirth [42](#). Finally, the writer M. Tkacou sees his countrymen as 'genetically' pessimistic and cautious, 'dominated by fear of any change making things worse than they are at present'.[43](#)

### *3.E.Child*

The interviews demonstrate too, that the contemporary elite adopts quite an esoteric position vis-à-vis the population. The predominant feeling detected within the material is the elite's projection of the sentiment of superiority and knowledge. This attitude could be described as a parent-child relationship, in which the child proves to be not only stubborn but incapable and unintelligent, too. The nation's 'childhood' is posed in opposition to the elite's maturity and reason.

The patronizing attitude of the contemporary elite, especially this nationally-minded, seems to be the continuation of the tendency displayed by some charismatic heroes of Belarusian national mythology, like Kastus Kalinouski. This highly respected political leader and anti-czarist fighter had the custom of addressing his people in a manner betraying contempt and superiority. Thus, he asked them how they 'dared' to help Muscovites and concluded that it was because they were simply 'stupid like sheep'. [46](#) Today, one could detect similar disregard for his compatriots in Z. Pazniak's comments. [47](#)

This attitude is not exceptional, and the feeling that the nation did not grow-up enough to be treated seriously surfaces in many interviews. One of the interviewed, a painter, reasons in the following way: all western European nations had time to refine their suffrage, which in the beginning was 'naturally' limited to a certain group of people in each country. The analogous process should take place in Belarus now because people do not know what to vote for, they are 'cattle' like, and do not remind even conscious citizens. He embarks on a biological metaphor stating that the gene pool of the nation was debilitated and weakened through the years of physical destruction (executions, imprisonment, and now consequences of the Chernobyl explosion) and emigration. His interpretation falls within the framework of the eugenic discourse, implying the necessity



of improving the national genetic pool. This attitude of elite alienation, as Pawluczuk observed is interesting but uncommon in Central and Eastern Europe's context, where leaders of the popular movements like 'Solidarnosc, Sajudis, and movements in Ukraine, Czechoslovakia and Hungary - were proud of the communion with the masses and perceived it as their strength.' [48](#)

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of the interview material demonstrates, firstly, that the visualization of Belarus is strongly imbued with gendered principles that were identified beforehand on the basis of Lockridge's categories. Belarusians, while referring to their country's positioning the world, stressed, among others, its vulnerability, passivity, victimization, muteness, invisibility and 'smallness'. Moreover, the remarks made by the interviewed on the history of the nation, as well as the concrete characteristics and values referred to by them, indicate that the commonly accepted view on Belarus' lack of national identity is not adequately reflecting the situation. It would be, therefore, more prudent to see the source of this claim in the gendering inherent in the very definition of 'national identity'.

Thus, although I am aware of marked differences appearing, for example in the Ukrainian or Lithuanian discourses, I cannot easily agree with the 'lack of national sentiment' diagnosed for the Belarusian case. My interlocutors were clearly able to state their separate status vis-à-vis other nations, including Russians. Sometimes this 'difference' was, as they declared, in the 'indescribable sphere of feeling', but in most cases it was documented by the attribution of concrete features to 'us' and 'them' i.e. non-Belarusians.

The Belarusian national construct as identified and sketched in the paper may have, I would like to conclude, serious consequences for the foreign stance of Belarus. It's heavy gendering may account for the country's passivity in the international arena, the half-hearted efforts to design its own foreign cooperation block, and its docility in getting rid of nuclear weapons. The beliefs about Belarusian passivity, weakness and smallness could be, in turn, easily used in (Lukashenka's) discourse that propounded the necessity of being in a close relationship to an immediate, strong neighbor.

The analysis of 'outside' discourses, like the statements coming from Russia, Poland and 'The West' would be vital at this point to obtain a complete picture of the situation. The introductory analysis of Polish reactions vis-à-vis Belarus made me aware of the marked lack of interest in the neighbor who was once within the same political organism with Poland. The media information on Belarus is not satisfactory, the knowledge of an average citizen about Belarusians quite poor and frequently tainted by prejudice. The fact that the foreign investment in Belarus was small and that the country received quite inadequate assistance after the Chernobyl tragedy point to indifference of the West [49](#).

Thus, the development of the present study could consist in the discussion on the 'outside' discursive factors. The 'outside' and 'inside', if analyzed together, could demonstrate even more forcefully how foreign policy may be a result of the discursive practices (including gendering), rather than economic or military dependency or lack of national identity.

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Interviews, in chronological order, according to the indication of the interviewed, the full names, first names or initials given.

December 2000

W. A., director of a historical archive, Minsk.

January 2001

I. L. historian, researcher, Minsk.

May 2001

Vladimir Dorohov, journalist, Russian background, Minsk

28-30 August 2001

V- Russian speaker, working for NGO, Irina - R. speaker, employed by state institution, Tzwieta, working for a women organisation 'Women's Reply', group of 3 female interviewees, 2 from Minsk one from Brzesc: a ballet dancer, a linguist and a housewife. All of them Russian speaking., A.S., journalist, Belarusian speaking, Minsk, V. M. radio journalist, Belarusian speaker, Minsk

September 2001

D. H, researcher, Skaryna Centre September 2001, Minsk

1 Skak argues that rejecting non-alignment strategies these countries tend to engage into what she called 'Einbindung'. This happens because they fear abandonment and staying outside of European co-operation. Mette Skak, *From Empire to Anarchy. Postcommunist Foreign Policy and International Relations* (London:

Hurst and Company, 1996): 282.

2 Belarus never bargained, demanded concessions or security guarantees (unlike Ukraine), Taras Kuzio and Marc Nordberg "Nation and State Building, Historical Legacies and National Identities in Belarus and Ukraine: A Comparative Analysis", in *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, XXVI (1999): 60 :88,

83

3 In 1991, at Belovezhskaya summit, in Peter Rutland, "How the SU ended EOMRI Analytical Brief, No.

453 (11 November 1996)

4 By 'elite' I understood people who may have some influence (official or not) on the formation of the views of general public (like politicians, artists); people whose opinions are in some way prominent and may influence the discussion in the public sphere. Therefore, elite for me included both members of the official apparatus (many Belarusian were protesting this inclusion as they claimed that those people did not represent adequate intellectual level to be called 'elite') and the people working in opposition.

5 'No-identity' claim is one of the most frequent explanations of the Belarusian specificity. It consists in stating that the international orientation of Belarus is a result of the fact that Belarusians have no national identity. E.g. Kathleen J. Mikhalsko, 'Belarus Retreat to Authoritarianism' in K. Dawisha and Bruce Parrot, *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 223-282. As well in David Marples, *Belarus: a Denationalised Nation*, (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1999).

6 Mary M. Talbot, *Language and Gender, An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998): 144

7 Ruth Wodak, *Gender and Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996): 13

8 This stands in opposition to traditional sociolinguistic approaches, Deborah Cameron, "Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity, in Sally Johnson and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof *Language and Masculinity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997): 47:65, 49

- 9 Eg. Anne Pauwels on the sexism in language in her *Women Changing Language* (London: Longman, 1998), R. Wodak, *Gender and Discourse* (1996), Sara Mills ed., *Language and Gender* (1995), Mary M. Talbot, *Language and Gender, An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).
- 10 Ray Taras, 'Nations and Language Building: Old Theories, Contemporary Cases', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 4. No 3 (Autumn 1998): 79:101.
- 11 John Stuart Mill claims that people constitute nationality when they desire to be under the same government, 'governed by themselves', 'Considerations on Representative Government', in *The Nationalism Reader*, ed. Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Ishay (New Jersey: Humanities press, 1995): 98. K. Deutsch describes the modern nation as the bond between the state and the people, Weber describes it as a community that 'normally' would tend to produce a state, Ernst Barker makes the state the maker of the nation and A. Smith speaks of it as an 'active ethnicity'. T.K. Oommen, *Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997): 49:55; I. Prizel offers a five-partite typology of nationalism but all categories are based on the existence of a polity, in *National Identity and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 12 Barry Buzan, 'The Idea of the State and National Security', in R. Little and M. Smith, eds. *Perspectives on World Politics* (London: Routledge 1996): 37.
- 13 Ole Weaver, 1999 'Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory', in Lene Hansen and Ole Weaver, *Between Nations and Europe: Regionalism, Nationalism and the Politics of Union* (London: Routledge, 1999): 59.
- 14 This is the opinion frequently voiced in the interviews e.g. V.M, Irina (August 2001) or M.A. and W.A. ( May 2001, December 200), Minsk.
- 15 Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: the Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 91.
- 16 Greenfield quoted by Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997): 19
- 17 Connor states that self-view determines if a nation exists or not, and Seton-Watson refuses the possibility of a scientific definition of a nation. Oommen, (1997): 55.
- 18 If anything, we may speak of competing versions of the national identity, one of which is represented by the anti-Soviet group and the other embracing the Soviet, pan-Slavic tradition<sup>18</sup>. Both groups, however, display the decisiveness in stating their difference vis-à-vis other nations. Moreover, the distinctiveness of Belarusians from both the groups mentioned is felt and reproduced in stereotypes about the world. It is, however, predominately a-political.
- 19 Interview, Vladimir Dorohov, journalist, Russian background, originally in Lukashenka's camp, Minsk May 2001.
- 20 Nancy Hirshmann, *Rethinking Obligation: A Feminist Method for Political Theory* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).
- 21 Marysia Zalewski and Jane Parpart, *The 'Man' Question in International Relations*, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998): 76.
- 22 On the construction of different femininities Jennifer Coates, 'Thank God I am a Woman' in Wodak, *Gender and Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996): 232:263.
23. One of them associated with masculinity and expressed by warmth, brightness, sound, dry and upper position and femininity as represented by coldness, darkness, silence, dampness and lower position.
- Włodzimierz Pawluczuk, *Ukraina, Polityka I Mistyka* (Krakow: Nomos, 1998): 213.
24. Based on the analysis of the variety of texts: T'ai chi, medieval alchemists, Tantra, Psychonanaltical literature (C.Jung, E. Neumann, J. Soinger), S. de Beauvoir, S. Firestone, S. Griffin , K. Marx, J. Campbell,

Blackburn, Oppenheimer, L. Appignanesi. She recognises the contradictions inherent in this type of division and ascription as for example passivity/static quality may be variously ascribed. Rebecca Bryant Lockridge 'Six Readers Reading Six Photographs,' in Linda A.M. Perry, Lynn H. Turner and Helen M. Sterk, *Constructing and Reconstructing Gender*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992): 93:115, 98:99.

25 Mary M Talbot, *Language and Gender* (1998): 157.

26 Interview with a historian, I. L., 20 January 2001 Minsk.

27 Interview with D. H., researcher, Skaryna Centre September 2001, Minsk

28 Interview with W. A., director of a historical archive, Minsk, December 2000.

29 Interview with V. M. radio journalist, 29 August 2001, Minsk.

30 Unpublished article of Belarusian versions of history and heraldic, untitled, by Ihar Lalkov, historian, employed at the state research institute, version of December 2000.

31 Interview on 28 August in Minsk, 3 female interviewees, 2 from Minsk one from Brzesc: a ballet dancer, a linguist and a housewife. All of them Russian speaking.

32 E.g. the research on the amount of talk given to women in British quality newspapers show the disproportion, Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard, 'Man in the News: the Misrepresentation of Women Speaking in News-as-narrative-discourse', in Sara Mills, ed. *Language and Gender, Interdisciplinary Perspective*, (London: Longman, 1995): 226:239.

33 Interview, A.S., journalist, Belarussian speaking, Minsk , 30 August 2001.

34 Study on sexism by Louise Pusch quoted in Anne Pauwels *Women Changing Language* (London: Longman, 1998): 25.

35 Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home. Gender, 'Race' and National Identity, 1945-64* (London, UCL Press, 1998): ix

36 Ibid, xiii

37 I.M. September 2001, Minsk.

38 T. recounts the experience of her mother who dreams of finding a treasure and has specific plans of dividing money between the family and friends. September 2001, Minsk.

39 Interview in Minsk 29 August with V., Russian speaker, working for the illegal NGO organisation and in the evenings as a phone operator, same statements - interview in Minsk, 30 August, with Irina, Russian speaker, working for a state institution.

40 Interview in Minsk on 30 August with Tzwieta, working for a women organisation 'Women's Reply'.

41 Jan Zaprudnik, 'Development of Belarusian National identity and Its Influence on Belarus Foreign Policy Orientation', in R. Szporluk ed., *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New states of Eurasia* (Armonk,: New York, 1994): 129:149, 131.

42 David Riach 'Nation Building: Identity Politics in Belarus', *Canadian Review in Nationalism*, XXVII (2000): 49:63, 58.; and Z. Pazniak, 'O russkom imperializmie I ego opacnosti', *Narodnaya Gazeta*, May 1993, no 5-6.

43 Quoted by Geordge Sanford 'Belarus on the Road to Nationhood', *Survival*, vol. 38, no.1, (Spring 1996): 131:153, 135.

44Pawluczuk (1998): 96.

45 Ibid, 105.

46 Ibid, 98:99

47 Ibid, 104.

48 Ibid, 99.

49 Andrei P. Tsygankov shows for example that The Baltic states were granted MFN and Generalised System of Preferences status earlier than other republics. in "Defining State Interests After Empire: National Identity, Domestic Structures and Foreign Trade Policies of Latvia and Belarus', Review of International Political economy ( 2000): 101:129, 125.

1 T.K. Oommen, Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).

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<sup>i</sup> Ann Tickner 'A Critique of Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism' in Robert C. Art and Robert Jervis *International Politics*, ( New York: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1996), p 17- 29; Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections of Gender and Science* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1985); Sandra Harding *The science Question in Feminism*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).