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# ***Belarus at a Crossroads: Strategic Leverage in Authoritarian Hands, Democratic Potential in Exile***

By

**Dr. Lizaveta Dubinka - Huhscha**



## Introduction

As war rages in Ukraine and tensions between NATO and Russia remain high, Belarus finds itself in a paradoxical position on the geopolitical map: seemingly peripheral, yet extraordinarily central. Often dismissed as an extension of Russia's strategic interests, Belarus under the autocratic leadership of Aliaksandr Lukashenka plays a more complex role than its geopolitical position might suggest. While the country is often regarded as a satellite state of Moscow, it simultaneously holds significant leverage in the region. Yet it is also the site of a growing democratic opposition, currently exiled, that holds a different kind of influence – one that transcends traditional forms of power.

This article seeks to explore the various “cards” that both the Lukashenka regime and the Belarusian democratic opposition hold in the current geopolitical landscape. Despite Belarus's heavy economic and political reliance on Russia, the country still has critical leverage points – primarily strategic rather than economic – that it can use in shaping regional outcomes. Furthermore, the democratic forces, while lacking traditional tools of state control such as control over the armed forces or territory, have developed a set of strategies to influence international policy and encourage Western assistance for their cause. Belarus's fate is inextricably linked to Europe's broader security and democratic stability, making it a key player in the current geopolitical context.

## Lukashenka's Leverage: Geography, Military Ties, and Authoritarian Tactics

While Belarus may seem to have limited power given its growing economic dependency and political subjugation to Moscow<sup>ii</sup>, the Lukashenka regime continues to maintain several important levers of influence. These leverage points are primarily strategic rather than economic, and they reflect the multifaceted ways in which Belarus can affect both regional stability and broader global security.

### 1. Geostrategic Location: A Key Player in European Security

Belarus occupies a unique and crucial geographical position between Russia, Ukraine and member states of the European Union (EU) and NATO. The country forms a land bridge, providing essential access for Russian military forces to transit towards NATO's eastern borders. This location gives Belarus significant leverage in the ongoing geopolitical standoff between the West and Russia, particularly when military tensions are high along NATO's eastern frontier.

Belarus's territory serves as a **critical conduit** for Russian military personnel and equipment, allowing the Kremlin to project power into Eastern Europe. In the event of escalating tensions or a conflict with NATO, Belarus would act as a staging ground for Russian forces, serving as a direct threat to the stability of countries like Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Over the past few years, Belarus has increasingly leveraged its geographical location in ways that utilise hybrid tactics, notably through the facilitation of irregular migration. In 2021 and 2022, significant numbers of migrants were directed toward the EU's external borders,

particularly affecting Poland and Lithuania<sup>iii</sup>. This was seen as a deliberate tactic, designed not only to destabilise the EU's eastern border but to exert political pressure on European governments, particularly in response to sanctions imposed on Lukashenka's regime following the 2021 forced Ryanair flight landing.

In this sense, Belarus is much more than a passive actor in Russia's strategy – it plays an active role in creating instability at the EU's periphery, thereby limiting the West's ability to project stability and security in the region.

## **2. Military Integration with Russia: A Dangerous Alliance**

Belarus's military alliance with Russia is another critical point of leverage. As a member of the Union State – a political and military pact between the two countries – Belarus is heavily integrated into Russia's defence infrastructure. Lukashenka's regime continues to host Russian military personnel, equipment, and even nuclear weapons on its soil, making Belarus a crucial partner for the Kremlin's strategic ambitions in Eastern Europe. The alliance offers several key strategic advantages to Russia.

Firstly, by hosting Russian troops and weapons, Belarus serves as a staging ground for Russian military operations, providing essential infrastructure for the deployment of Russian troops and weaponry along NATO's eastern frontier. Russian forces are stationed in Belarus under the guise of joint defence exercises, but their presence represents a tangible threat to NATO members in the region.

Belarus also participates in large-scale joint military drills with Russia, such as the Zapad exercises, which demonstrate the coordinated defence capabilities between the two countries<sup>iv</sup>. These exercises are often positioned as routine military training, but in reality, they showcase the growing military integration between the two nations, signalling to NATO the potential for the rapid escalation of a military conflict should tensions increase.

And finally, Belarus functions as a physical and strategic **buffer zone** for Russia<sup>v</sup>. Should NATO increase its presence along its eastern flank, Belarus could be used by Russia as a launchpad or staging ground for operations, offering the Kremlin a significant strategic advantage in the event of hostilities.

This military alliance makes Belarus not only an essential player in Russia's defence strategy but also a concern for NATO and the EU, which view the regime in Minsk as a destabilising force in the region. For the Baltic and Nordic countries, this translates into heightened risks of military provocations near their borders, hybrid operations such as disinformation campaigns or cyberattacks originating from or coordinated through Belarus, and increased pressure on regional airspace and maritime routes in the Baltic Sea. These states must also be prepared for potential escalations involving the Suwałki Gap, a critical corridor connecting the Baltic states to the rest of NATO and a potential flashpoint in any confrontation involving Belarus and Russia.

## **3. Repression as a Bargaining Chip: Hostage Diplomacy**

Another significant aspect of Lukashenka's regime is its use of internal repression as a

diplomatic tool. The regime is known for its heavy-handed tactics against political opposition, including the imprisonment of journalists, activists, and opposition leaders. However, this repression is not just aimed at quelling internal dissent; it also serves as a tool for negotiating with the West.

Lukashenka has long used political prisoners as bargaining chips in his dealings with Western powers<sup>vi</sup>. By offering to release political prisoners or introduce limited democratic reforms in exchange for sanctions relief or diplomatic engagement<sup>vii</sup>, Lukashenka plays a high-stakes game of **hostage diplomacy**. This tactic creates a diplomatic dilemma for Western governments, which must balance their desire to hold the regime accountable for human rights abuses with the pragmatic need to engage in dialogue to ensure stability in the region. And there are indeed indications that some Western countries have, at times, softened their stance in response to such overtures – particularly during periods of regional crisis or heightened geopolitical tension. While the EU and the US have generally insisted on principled conditionality, past instances of sanctions being eased following prisoner releases or superficial reforms suggest that Lukashenka’s strategy can at least temporarily influence Western policy, especially when it is framed as a trade-off for regional de-escalation or migration control.

While the regime has made minor concessions in the past, such as releasing selected political prisoners or allowing small amounts of political space for opposition groups, these gestures are typically short-lived and come with little substantive change in the overall political environment. Lukashenka uses these actions to create the illusion of reform while maintaining the underlying authoritarian structure of his regime. For instance, this can be seen in the most recent amnesty law, signed by Lukashenka on 3 July 2024 to mark the 80th anniversary of Belarus’s liberation from Nazi invaders<sup>viii</sup>. Although the law led to the selective release of a limited number of political prisoners, it was widely interpreted as a tactical move to ease international pressure rather than a genuine case of liberalisation<sup>ix</sup>. Most recently, in April 2025, an announcement of an amnesty in anticipation of Victory Day on 9 May 2025 was made by the authorities in Minsk. According to the recently appointed Head of the Presidential Administration in Belarus Dmitry Krutoi, this amnesty will apply to 8,000–9,000 people out of 20,000, and it is to be perceived as act of humanism<sup>x</sup>. However, it will not apply to political prisoners<sup>xi</sup>, who instead have the possibility to ask for a pardon.

This strategy allows Lukashenka to retain **a degree of leverage** over the West by trying to use internal repression as a means of securing diplomatic and economic concessions from Western governments.

#### **4. Energy and Infrastructure: Key Economic Leverage**

While Belarus’s importance as an energy transit hub has diminished in recent years due to the EU’s diversification of energy supplies, it still remains a critical player in the energy supply chain between Asia and Europe. The country is home to key oil and gas pipelines, including the strategic “Druzhba” pipeline, which was previously used to transport Russian oil to Europe. Germany and Poland ceased purchasing Russian oil in 2023, and Germany now receives oil from Kazakhstan via the northern branch of the Druzhba pipeline<sup>xii</sup>.

Additionally, Belarus plays a key role in facilitating trade between China and the West<sup>xiii</sup> via

its rail and road infrastructure. Despite the challenges posed by Western sanctions, these transit routes remain crucial for the flow of goods, especially under conditions of heightened economic tension between Russia and the West.

While not as significant as it once was, Belarus's energy and infrastructure still provide it with important economic leverage, allowing the regime to retain a degree of influence over Europe's energy security. However, this leverage is increasingly being contested. In June 2024, Polish President Andrzej Duda visited Beijing and linked the issue of irregular migration from Belarus to the European Union with the transit of Chinese freight through Belarusian territory. He warned that Poland might restrict the Malaszewicze rail border crossing, a critical point for Chinese exports to Europe, unless Belarus ceased orchestrating migrant flows into Poland. This diplomatic pressure led to a significant decrease in irregular border crossings from Belarus into Poland, highlighting the vulnerabilities in Belarus's position<sup>xiv</sup>. Moreover, China's Belt and Road Initiative, which relies on Belarus as a transit route, has been impacted by Belarus's actions, prompting Beijing to seek assurances from Minsk regarding the security and efficiency of these logistics channels. These developments underscore the limitations of Belarus's economic leverage and the complex interplay between energy, infrastructure, and geopolitical relations.

### **5. Hybrid Threats<sup>xv</sup> and Disinformation: Shaping European Narratives**

While there is currently no conclusive evidence that Belarus is actively participating in Russian disinformation campaigns in Europe, the potential exists for Belarus to be utilised as a platform or conduit for these activities. According to investigations conducted by *Debunk.org*, Russian outlets actively engage in disinformation campaigns aimed at manipulating public opinion and influencing political outcomes across the EU<sup>xvi</sup>. It is important to note that Belarus itself has at times been a target of such efforts originating from Russia.

In this broader strategic landscape, Belarus might be seen not merely as a passive ally of Russia, but as a country whose actions – deliberate or otherwise – can influence regional stability and democratic resilience in Europe.

## **Democratic Forces in Exile: Soft Power and Strategic Symbolism**

While the Lukashenka regime wields significant strategic leverage, the democratic opposition, led by figures such as Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and other exiled leaders, also holds important cards. Although the opposition lacks territorial control or a military force, it has developed an impressive capacity for influencing international policy and engaging with global democratic institutions.

### **1. Moral Legitimacy: A Beacon of Hope**

The Belarusian opposition enjoys broad recognition as the legitimate representative of the Belarusian people, particularly among Western governments<sup>xvii</sup>. The 2020 protests, sparked by allegations of electoral fraud in the presidential election, showcased a deep and widespread desire for change. Despite the regime's violent crackdown on protesters, the opposition remains a powerful symbol of the people's aspirations for democracy, freedom,

and European integration.

This moral legitimacy grants the democratic forces significant soft power, allowing them to engage with international actors and mobilise international support. The opposition is regularly consulted by Western governments, international organisations, and human rights bodies, positioning it as a key player in any future transition in Belarus. Western governments, especially the EU, the US, and the Baltic states, continue to recognise the opposition as a potential partner for the eventual democratisation of Belarus<sup>xviii</sup>. This support is vital in maintaining pressure on Lukashenka's regime and ensuring that Belarus remains on the international agenda.

## ***2. Strategic Framing: The Struggle for Democracy in Belarus***

The Belarusian opposition has framed its struggle as part of a broader global contest between democracy and autocracy. By positioning Belarus's future as intrinsically linked to **regional security** and the larger European project, the opposition has successfully made its cause a matter of geopolitical importance. This framing resonates particularly strongly in the context of Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine, with many Western officials seeing Belarus as a potential linchpin in the struggle against Russian expansionism.

The opposition has managed to align itself with the European project and gain **international attention**. By emphasising its desire to integrate Belarus into the European Union, the opposition positions Belarus as an essential part of the European democratic family, countering Russia's efforts to pull the country into its sphere of influence. Through coordinated diplomatic efforts and grassroots campaigns, the opposition has succeeded in keeping Belarus on the radar of Western policymakers. The narrative that Belarus's democratic future is integral to regional security helps justify continued sanctions on the Lukashenka regime and ensures that the country's democratic movement remains a priority for Western governments.

## ***3. Counterweight to Russia: Belarus as a Strategic Asset***

A free and democratic Belarus would significantly weaken Russia's strategic position in Europe. By ending Belarus's role as a Russian vassal state, the West would effectively sever a crucial military corridor that allows Russia to project power into Eastern Europe. In doing so, Belarus would become an important ally in the broader **effort to contain Russian expansionism**.

In this context, the Belarusian opposition not only represents the democratic aspirations of its people but also serves as a potential counterweight to Russia's aggressive ambitions. A democratic Belarus would not only support Ukraine's territorial integrity but also help stabilise Europe's eastern flank.

## ***4. Diaspora Advocacy: A Vital International Network***

The Belarusian diaspora, which has grown significantly in the aftermath of the 2020 protests, plays an increasingly vital role in supporting the democratic movement. The diaspora is active in lobbying Western governments, organising events, and raising awareness about



the human rights violations taking place in Belarus. Through coordinated advocacy efforts, the Belarusian diaspora has been instrumental in ensuring that the plight of the Belarusian people remains visible on the international stage<sup>xix</sup>.

In the aftermath of the 2020 protests, Belarusian opposition leaders in exile established the Coordination Council to facilitate a peaceful transition of power. This body has been instrumental in representing the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people on the international stage. In May 2024, the Coordination Council held its first direct digital elections, with over 6,700 Belarusian citizens participating, underscoring the diaspora's active engagement in the democratic process<sup>xx</sup>.

The “people’s embassies of Belarus”, which were established by the diaspora in 2020, serve as informal diplomatic missions advocating for Belarusian democracy<sup>xxi</sup>. These embassies operate in over 20 countries, engaging with foreign governments and international organisations to raise awareness about human rights violations in Belarus. Their efforts have been recognised in resolutions by the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe<sup>xxii</sup>.

In addition, the diaspora provides critical financial and logistical support to opposition leaders, helping to sustain the movement despite the repression it faces. The solidarity of the Belarusian diaspora helps amplify the opposition’s message and ensures that their struggle continues to resonate beyond the borders of Belarus.

## Limitations of the Opposition’s Influence

Despite these strengths, the Belarusian opposition faces several challenges that limit its ability to effect immediate change within the country. First and foremost, the opposition lacks control over territory or armed forces, which severely limits its ability to challenge Lukashenko’s regime directly. Without military backing or the ability to mobilise large-scale protests, the opposition’s efforts have been largely confined to diplomatic channels and soft power.

Second, there is a growing risk of **international fatigue**, particularly as the war in Ukraine continues to dominate the attention of Western governments. While the situation in Belarus remains an important issue for the EU and the US, it risks being overshadowed by other global crises, particularly as the ongoing conflict with Russia shows no signs of abating.

Finally, the opposition lacks a clear and unified vision for the future of Belarus. While it has succeeded in framing the struggle for democracy in Belarus as part of the broader European project, there is still uncertainty about the exact mechanisms through which the country can transition to a functioning democracy. This ambiguity makes it difficult for policymakers to develop a comprehensive strategy for engaging with the opposition and supporting its efforts. To address this, Western governments and institutions could improve coordination with exiled democratic forces to invest in long-term political capacity-building, not just short-term support. This includes helping opposition actors develop detailed blueprints for transitional justice, constitutional reform, and economic restructuring. Moreover, the West should promote platforms for dialogue among fragmented opposition groups to encourage building a consensus on a shared democratic roadmap. Expanding funding for Belarusian

civil society – including independent media, youth networks, and human rights organisations – could also help to cultivate a bottom-up democratic culture, which is essential for a sustainable transition. Finally, and most importantly, clearer conditionality and a more strategic use of diplomatic incentives could reinforce accountability while still encouraging constructive engagement.

## **A Strategic Path Forward: From Values to Security**

To regain momentum, the Belarusian democratic forces and their Western allies must frame the situation not just as a **moral cause** but as a **strategic necessity** for the future of Europe. By articulating a clear roadmap for the future of Belarus – one that ties the country's democratisation to regional stability and security – the opposition could increase its influence in international discussions and attract further support.

### **1. Tying Belarus to Regional Security**

Lukashenka's continued rule serves as a direct enabler of Russian aggression in Ukraine. Ending Belarus's role as a Russian ally would significantly weaken Russia's ability to sustain its military operations in Ukraine and, by extension, its broader geopolitical ambitions in Europe. By positioning Belarus as part of the European security architecture, the opposition can argue that Belarus's future stability is essential for the long-term security of Europe.

### **2. Exposing Hostage Diplomacy**

The international community must recognise Belarus's systematic repression as a form of hostage-taking carried out by the state. Coordinated pressure campaigns targeting those responsible for the detention of political prisoners can help delegitimise the Lukashenka regime on the global stage. Moreover, countries that continue to engage with Belarus diplomatically must be held accountable for their role in sustaining the authoritarian regime.

### **3. Smarter Sanctions**

Sanctions remain one of the most effective tools available to the international community to put pressure on the Lukashenka regime. However, sanctions can be made even more effective by enforcing secondary sanctions on countries and entities that continue to engage economically with Belarus and targeting dual-use technologies, including surveillance equipment, that aid in the repression of the Belarusian people.

### **4. A Vision for Transition**

The democratic opposition must articulate a clear and achievable roadmap for the transition to a post-Lukashenka Belarus. This should include a plan for a peaceful political transformation, the establishment of free elections, and the gradual integration of Belarus into European institutions. While this process will be difficult, a clear vision is essential to attracting international support.



## 5. Coordinated Advocacy

Finally, Belarusian opposition leaders should strengthen ties with Ukraine, which shares many of the same security concerns regarding Russia. By presenting a united front in their diplomatic efforts, Belarus and Ukraine can bolster each other's causes, making the case for a democratic Belarus as integral to the broader effort to defend European sovereignty.

## Conclusion: Minsk as the Missing Piece

The future of Belarus is inextricably linked to European security and democracy<sup>xxiii</sup>. A Lukashenka-led Belarus will continue to enable Russia's aggressive foreign policy and acts as a destabilising force in the region. However, a democratic Belarus – one aligned with European values and institutions – would help secure Europe's eastern frontier and provide a crucial counterbalance to Russian expansionism.

The choice facing Western policymakers is clear: Belarus's fate must be treated as a strategic priority. It is no longer a question of **whether** Belarus will transition to democracy, but of **how quickly** the international community can support that transition and ensure the country's future stability and integration into the broader European project.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup>During a meeting in the Oval Cabinet on 28 February 2025, US President Donald Trump criticised Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, asserting that he was “punching above his weight” and lacked the necessary strategic leverage, stating that he did not have “the cards”. This notion of political and strategic capacity was later echoed during the webinar “*State Identity of Belarus in the Context of Regional Security: Relations with Russia and the War in Ukraine*”, organised by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Belarus on 22 April 2025. One of the central questions raised in the discussion was whether Belarus, in light of its geopolitical positioning, indeed possesses “the cards” – thereby applying the same framework used by Trump in his critique of Ukraine.

<sup>ii</sup> Link to the recent policy paper by Lizaveta Dubinka-Hushcha & Roza Turarbekava on [www.belarusnetwork.org](http://www.belarusnetwork.org)

<sup>iii</sup> European External Action Service. *Foreign Affairs Council Discusses Situation at Belarus-EU Border*. 15 Nov. 2021, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/foreign-affairs-council-discusses-situation-belarus-eu-border\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/foreign-affairs-council-discusses-situation-belarus-eu-border_en). Accessed 10 Mar. 2025.

<sup>iv</sup> “Russia and Belarus Will Hold a Joint Military Drill in September.” *Associated Press*, 20 Feb. 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-belarus-drills-ukraine-war-putin-lukashenko-ad45228521bfe71964f7d70d5ff934a4>. Accessed 10 Mar. 2025.

<sup>v</sup> Kofman, Michael. “The Role of Belarus in Russian Military Planning and Strategy.” *An Ever Closer Union?* Clingendael Institute, 2021, <https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2021/an-ever-closer-union/annex-3/>. Accessed 10 Mar. 2025.

<sup>vi</sup> Leukavets, Victoria. *Lukashenka’s Political Manoeuvre: Decoding the Significance of Prisoner Releases*. SCEEUS Commentary No. 13, 30 Sept. 2024, <https://sceeus.se/publikationer/lukashenkas-political-manoevre-decoding-the-significance-of-prisoner-releases/>. Accessed 10 Mar. 2025.

<sup>vii</sup> Preiherman, Yauheni. *Belarus Hopes to Reset U.S. Ties with Prisoner Release*. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 22, no. 22, 20 Feb. 2025, <https://jamestown.org/program/belarus-hopes-to-reset-u-s-ties-with-prisoner-release/>. Accessed 10 Mar. 2025.

<sup>viii</sup> “Belarus Announces Amnesty for Political Prisoners Ahead of May 9 Victory Day.” *BBC News*, 15 Apr. 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx92y22nrzdo>. Accessed 20 Apr. 2025.

<sup>ix</sup> “Belarus Pardons Political Prisoners Amid New Amnesty Law.” *Legal News Feed*, 5 July 2024, <https://legalnewsfeed.com/2024/07/05/belarus-pardons-political-prisoners-amid-new-amnesty-law/>. Accessed 20 Apr. 2025.

<sup>x</sup> “Krutoi: Amnesty in Belarus Will Primarily Apply to Vulnerable Categories of Convicts.” *BelTA*, 28 Apr. 2025, <https://eng.belta.by/society/view/krutoi-amnesty-in-belarus-will-primarily-apply-to-vulnerable-categories-of-convicts-167533-2025/>. Accessed 29 Apr. 2025.

<sup>xi</sup> Deutsche Welle. “Lukashenko bolshe ne vypuskaet politzaklyuchennyh, zapad ne uslyshal signal.” *Deutsche Welle*, 23 Oct. 2023, [www.dw.com/ru/lukashenko-bolse-ne-vypuskaet-politzaklyuchennyh-zapad-ne-uslyshal-signal/a-72378720](http://www.dw.com/ru/lukashenko-bolse-ne-vypuskaet-politzaklyuchennyh-zapad-ne-uslyshal-signal/a-72378720). Accessed 29 Apr. 2025.

<sup>xii</sup> Tunik-Fryz, Volodymyr. “Transit of Russian Oil through Ukraine Dropped by 15% in 2024.” *Ukrainska Pravda*, 7 Feb. 2025, [www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/02/7/7497131/](http://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/02/7/7497131/). Accessed 10 Mar. 2025.

<sup>xiii</sup> Kravtsova, Maria. “Strategic Growth in China-Europe Rail Network Announced at Xi'an Meeting.” *Orda*, 22 Feb. 2025, <https://en.orda.kz/strategic-growth-in-china-europe-rail-network-announced-at-xian-meeting-5195/>. Accessed 20 Apr. 2025.



<sup>xiv</sup> “The ‘Revolving Door’ of Political Prisoners in Belarus.” *Freedom House*, 8 Aug. 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/article/revolving-door-political-prisoners-belarus>. Accessed 20 Apr. 2025.

<sup>xv</sup> Hybrid threats combine the use of conventional and unconventional, military and non-military activities in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific political objectives. Hybrid campaigns are multidimensional, combining coercive and subversive measures, using both conventional and unconventional tools and tactics. They are designed to be difficult to detect or attribute. These threats target critical vulnerabilities and seek to create confusion to hinder swift and effective decision-making. *Source: European External Action Service. A Europe that Protects: Countering Hybrid Threats.* European Union, 2025, [www.eeas.europa.eu/node/46393\\_en](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/46393_en). Accessed 20 Apr. 2025.

<sup>xvi</sup> “Manipulated Voices: Belarus’s Disinformation Targeting Lithuanian Democracy.” *European Security*, 31 May 2024, <https://european-security.com/manipulated-voices-belaruss-disinformation-targeting-lithuanian-democracy/>. Accessed 20 Apr. 2025;

<sup>xvii</sup> RFE/RL. “Lithuania Gives Belarusian Opposition Official Status.” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 5 July 2021, [www.rferl.org/a/belarus-lithuania-official-opposition/31342168.html](http://www.rferl.org/a/belarus-lithuania-official-opposition/31342168.html). Accessed 20 Apr. 2025.

<sup>xviii</sup> Borrell, Josep. “The EU Continues to Stand for a Free and Democratic Belarus.” *European External Action Service*, 8 Aug. 2024, [www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-continues-stand-free-and-democratic-belarus\\_en](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-continues-stand-free-and-democratic-belarus_en). Accessed 28 Apr. 2025.

<sup>xix</sup> Jaroszewicz, Marta, Marta Lesińska, and Kamil Homel. “The Rise of a New Transnational Political Nation: The Belarusian Diaspora and Its Leaders after the 2020 Protests.” *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2022, pp. 35–56. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36874/RIESW.2022.1.3>. Accessed 20 Apr. 2025.

<sup>xx</sup> Bienvenu, Hélène. “Belarusian Opposition in Exile Holds Online Elections for Its Coordination Council.” *Le Monde*, 21 May 2024, [www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/05/21/belarusian-opposition-in-exile-holds-online-elections-for-its-coordination-council\\_6672151\\_4.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/05/21/belarusian-opposition-in-exile-holds-online-elections-for-its-coordination-council_6672151_4.html). Accessed 20 Apr. 2025.

<sup>xxi</sup> “People’s Embassies of Belarus.” *Belarus Abroad*, 2025, <https://www.belarusabroad.org/>.

<sup>xxii</sup> Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. *Resolution 2530 (2024): A Democratic Future for Belarus.* Council of Europe, 25 Jan. 2024, <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/33352/html>. Accessed 20 Apr. 2025.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Van den Broek, Wicke. “Democratic Belarus in the EU: Here to Stay.” *New Eastern Europe*, 25 Oct. 2024, <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2024/10/25/democratic-belarus-in-the-eu-here-to-stay/>. Accessed 10 Apr. 2025.