Anna Shadrina

# National identity and ageing: 'Pensioners' in post-2020 Belarusian political narratives

[a.shadrina@ucl.ac.uk] (University of Liverpool)

Intersections. EEJSP
10(3): 55–73.
https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v10i3.1253
https://intersections.tk.hu

**Abstract**

This article explores how Belarusian political actors, speaking from diverse civilisational perspectives, discuss the place of older citizens, particularly less privileged women, in society. It demonstrates how the persistent logic of Cold War geopolitics animates social hierarchies in territories positioned between Western and Russian influences. Through an analysis of state-controlled and opposition media, I find that the official national project and the ethnocentric concept of Belarusianness share a discursive construction of 'pensioners' as an inferior Other. Invested in confrontation with the West, the autocratic regime claims moral superiority by representing 'pensioners' as objects of state care. Drawing on the narrative of suffering under communism/Russian colonialism, advocates of a 'European' Belarus discuss older people as obstacles to democracy. By exploring the narrative of 'in-between-ness', which champions a democratic Belarus that belongs neither to the Soviet past/Russia nor to the West but is connected to both, I argue that rejecting binary logic in national self-determination opens up opportunities for intergroup solidarity.

**Keywords:** Belarus; borderland; in-between-ness; nationalism; older people; Othering

## 1 Introduction

This article contributes to research that explores the ideological tensions produced by the geopolitical location of territories situated between two imperial formations – the global West and Russia (Mayerchyk & Plakhotnik, 2021, p. 126; Plakhotnik & Mayerchyk, 2023, p. 25). It discusses how, speaking from diverse civilisational perspectives, Belarusian political actors use the categories of gender and old age as markers of the European East/West divide. It examines how this practice reproduces social and moral hierarchies.

Politics is rarely considered in conjunction with gender and ageing, yet these phenomena are closely related. While women outlive men everywhere in the world, power largely lies in the hands of older men (Carney & Gray, 2024, p. 517). The fear of death and

the emphasis that modern societies place on productivity and autonomy produce an image of older people, especially those who require social assistance, as an unhealthy, costly burden (Higgs & Gilleard, 2015, pp. vii, 84). This stigmatising perspective primarily targets older women because they are more often structurally disadvantaged. Globally, governments have implemented 'active ageing' policies to tackle social exclusion in later life. Yet, politicians often promote populist narratives blaming societal problems on older people (Segal, 2014, p. 45).

Since taking power in 1994, the regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka has considered retirees to form its support base. Simultaneously, the Belarusian ethnocentric opposition portrayed those who supported Lukashenka based on his promise to control unemployment, wages, and prices as 'sovki' (a derogatory term for 'Soviet people') and 'crazy babushkas'. Led in the 1990s by the Belarusian People's Front, this opposition movement promoted Belarus' 'European' identity through a non-Soviet version of history and by favouring the Belarusian language over Russian (Gapova, 2008, pp. 5, 10).

In 2020, a group of Belarusian retirees, mainly comprising women, held 'The Pensioners' Marches' to demand the resignation of Lukashenka. The older activists broadened the scope of the months-long anti-authoritarian resistance that unfolded that year, following the rigged presidential election. To make their voices heard and to protect themselves from state violence, they placed the idea of old-age vulnerability at the centre of their identity activism. Despite the survival of the autocracy in 2020, state-controlled media have worked diligently to discredit the influence of 'The Pensioners' Marches' (Shadrina, 2023, pp. 3, 14).

This article considers whether the participation of retirees in the 2020 protests has influenced the way in which the autocratic system and pro-democratic civil society discuss the role of older citizens in their national projects. To address this question, I analysed pro-government and anti-authoritarian media narratives about national identity in the aftermath of the 2020 uprising.

My findings suggest that the visibility of retirees as a distinct political subject during the 2020 mass mobilisation has had a partial effect on the imaginaries of the Belarusian nation. In this article I shall demonstrate that the ruling regime and the ethnocentric segment of civil society both claim moral superiority by establishing themselves as the normative political subjects against 'pensioners,' who are constructed as the inferior Other. In both instances, older women are the primary targets of the politics of Othering.

Articulated in confrontation with the West and invested in recycling the Soviet legacy, the official national project portrays 'pensioners' as a unified group, deprived of agency and in need of state protection. Building on the narrative of suffering from communism/Russian colonialism, the ethnocentric project of Belarusianness discusses 'pensioners' as an obstacle to the democratisation of the country. In both these narratives, the intersection of gender and ageing that constitutes the image of the inferior Other serves as an implicit reference to the less privileged social position of those whose subsistence depends on the state.

However, the proponents of Belarusian civilisational 'in-between-ness' offer a national project that deviates from the logic of Othering. This segment of civil society interprets the 2020 protests as a transformative anti-authoritarian alliance that brought together

citizens across their social differences. Within this imaginary, Belarus belongs neither to the Soviet past/Russia nor to the West, but is connected to both. By refusing to self-identify in opposition to one of the two imperial formations, the advocates of this perspective seek to transcend the East/West divide, and to unite Belarusians around confronting the problem of social inequality.

I present my findings in the following order: first, I discuss the socio-economic position the Lukashenka regime offers to older citizens. After identifying the theoretical groundings and the methodological approach of my study, I explore the representations of older people in the official narrative and the alternative visions of Belarusianness. I conclude by discussing the significance of my findings for research on nationalism and political participation in later life.

## 2 Ageing in authoritarian Belarus

In Belarus, neither of the two official languages – Belarusian or Russian – have a word for 'retirees.' After reaching pensionable age, individuals are commonly referred to as 'pensioners,' irrespective of their employment status. This practice implicitly de-emphasises the contributions to society that older citizens have made throughout their lives and foregrounds their status as recipients of social benefits.

In the state ideology, the term 'pensioners' serves as a symbolic resource to create a fixed imaginary in which a quarter of the population are constructed as objects of state care. According to the National Statical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Belstat), from the total Belarusian population of 9.2 million (Belstat, 2023a, p. 28), 2.3 million receive an old-age pension (Pavluchenko, 2024). To create a critical distance from this imaginary, in my study I refer to those who have disengaged from paid employment as 'retirees' and to those entitled to an old-age pension as 'people of pensionable age' or 'older people'.

The production of the binary opposition of 'the vulnerable – the protector' is a feature of Lukashenka's ideology. To gain electoral support at the beginning of his political career in the 1990s, he capitalised on the sense of uncertainty about the future caused by the dissolution of the USSR. By exaggerating the uncertainty, he portrayed himself as a strong leader capable of establishing stability (Bekus, 2010, p. 85). To maintain his image as the protector of the nation, state-controlled media promote the idea that, unlike in other countries, Lukashenka has been paying old-age pensions without fail. Within this imaginary, the autocrat is equated with the state.

The stability ideologeme resonates with many Belarusians who lived through the early post-Soviet years, when wages and pensions were paid irregularly in many organisations affected by the collapse of the centralised economy. With Russian subsidies, living standards in Belarus increased between 1996 and 2010. However, between 2014 and 2016, economic growth declined, which resulted in the gradual shrinking of the social welfare system. The regime demonstrates both paternalistic and bureaucratic capitalist features: it allocates substantial budget resources to maintaining industry and the public sector, while oppressing Belarusians politically and appropriating the surplus created (Buzgalin & Kolganov, 2020, pp. 442–444).

Life expectancy at birth in Belarus is 78.1 years for women and 68.1 years for men (World Health Organisation, 2024). Due to the ten-year gap in longevity, there are two and a half times as many women of pensionable age as men (Belstat, 2021, pp. 72–73). 18.8 per cent of Belarusians entitled to an old-age pension remain employed (Kozlovskaya, 2020). Nine per cent of men work past pensionable age, compared to 28.7 per cent of women (Belstat, 2023b, p. 58). Between 2016 and 2022, the pensionable age in Belarus was increased from 55 to 58 for women and from 60 to 63 for men. The minimum contribution period required for registration for an old-age pension was also increased from 15 to 20 years.

The Belarusian state pension system depends on contributions from working people, whose payments go to the Fund of Social Protection. Any surplus in the Fund can be used by the state budget, and any deficit can be covered by the state budget (Lisenkova & Bornukova, 2017, p. 104). The number of working-age people has been declining due to low birth rates and outmigration. This dynamic has caused a deficit in the Pension Fund, which was estimated to be about 0.9 per cent of quarterly GDP in 2022 (Lvovsky & Bornukova, 2022, p. 6). In 2022, voluntary pension savings options were also introduced.

The ratio of the average pension to the average salary in Belarus is about 40 per cent. In 2022, the average pension amounted to 630.8 rubles (Belstat, 2023a, p. 83), equivalent to USD 250 (National Bank, 2022). The 17.8 per cent of Belarusians who rely on the average pension as their only source of income (Belstat, 2023a, p. 56) can afford to meet their basic needs but must save for months to purchase durable consumer goods such as refrigerators and washing machines. In addition, 23.8 per cent of people of pensionable age have incomes lower than the average pension (Belstat, 2023a, p. 56). The minimum subsistence level in 2022 was calculated at 377.1 rubles for the working-age population and 256.7 rubles for retirees (Belstat, 2023a, p. 58), equivalent to USD 150.80 and USD 102.60, respectively (National Bank, 2022).

Only fully retired Belarusians receive the full old-age pension. Citizens of working age who are registered as unemployed are eligible for free retraining, but Belarusians of pensionable age do not receive this benefit. A presidential decree in 2000 prescribes that a worker cannot be fired in the two years before reaching pensionable age. However, a 2002 presidential decree, which ended the Soviet system of permanent employment, places older employees in a vulnerable position. It allows employers to favour younger workers by not renewing the contracts of older ones. In the early 2000s, a nationwide programme was adopted to provide social services to the oldest citizens living alone in remote areas. However, there was still a gap between the need for these services and the ability to provide them (Padvalkava 2019, pp. 100, 97).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Belarusian state retained control over key industries. Trained for the Soviet planned economy, most of those who are currently aged over 60 were not motivated or did not have the resources to compete for better-paid jobs in private companies or to become entrepreneurs (Shadrina, 2023, p. 2).

In parallel, 'new class' formations have been developing in Belarus, particularly among those involved in the IT sector and the global media market. This process divides society into those whose livelihoods come from the global post-industrial service and creative economies, and those who depend on the state for their income (Gapova, 2021, p. 4). While the socio-economic backgrounds of those aged 60+ varies, most citizens of pensionable age belong to the latter group.

## 3 The study

My media analysis is inspired by gender studies, postcolonial theory, and critical gerontology. Within these fields, the concept of Othering elucidates the politically charged practice of identity formation through the production of symbolic boundaries between self and Other, establishing relations of power (Brons, 2015, p. 70). De Beauvoir (2009 [1949], pp. 21, 506) argued that in patriarchal societies, women are positioned as the Other in relation to men, who are afforded the status of normative subjects. Following this claim, Said (2003 [1978], pp. 1, 39) and Spivak (1985, p. 256) showed that the same oppressive logic maintains class inequality and colonial domination. The fixed notions of 'sameness' and 'otherness' also underpin the ageist hierarchy between middle-aged and older people (van Dyk, 2016, p. 109).

To explore how the category of 'pensioners' is constructed in the official rhetoric concerning the national distinctiveness of Belarus, I analysed news reports published between 2020 and 2024 on the largest state-owned media portal *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. By applying the keywords 'pensioner(s)' and 'national idea' to the portal's search string, I found 3,000 articles in the first category and 62 in the second. In addition, I searched for the same keywords in the transcripts of 152 radio interviews with members of civil society who oppose the Lukashenka regime, published in two books – *The Belarusian National Idea* (Lukashuk & Harunou, 2020) and *The Belarusian National Idea in Exile and at War* (Lukashuk, 2023).

Drawing on an inductive approach of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84), I coded the reports and the interviews using the following categories: 'Belarus' civilisational position promoted' and 'the identity offered to older citizens'. I then examined the data sets to find patterns and to explore the underlying assumptions that inform the most common statements. The quotes used in this article were translated into English by me.

## 4 Old-age Othering in state media

Offering the vision of Belarus as an upgraded version of the Soviet developmental project, at the beginning of his political career Lukashenka secured the support of those who prioritised resource distribution through policy rather than the market – including most retirees, and factory and agricultural workers (Gapova, 2008, p. 5). Relying on Russian subsidies, over the last 30 years, he has built a centralised, repression-based system, which promotes its legitimacy by portraying liberal Western-style democracy as evil (Bekus, 2010, p. 215).

Seeing the Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas in 2014 as a potential threat to its sovereignty, the regime invested in emphasising Belarus' distinctiveness from Russia (Bekus, 2023, p. 108). The government endorsed apolitical civil society initiatives promoting Belarusian culture and history (Astapova et al., 2022, p. 14). However, to suppress the 2020 protests, Lukashenka turned to the Kremlin for help. Putin's support resulted in a change of narrative. Presenting Russia as Belarus' closest ally since 2020, the Lukashenka regime allowed Russia to pursue its full-scale invasion of Ukraine from the territory of Belarus in 2022.

Between 2020 and 2024, the concepts of 'national idea' and 'national identity' were cited interchangeably in state media in four main contexts. In the first thematic bloc, the publications aimed to discredit the 2020 protests and to legitimise Lukashenka's sixth term in office. To illustrate, in this quote, a high-ranking academic discusses the anti-authoritarian resistance as a Western plot to destroy the union of the Belarusian people and the authorities:

> It is obviously a coup attempt initiated by the intelligence services of Western countries. […] there were no obvious reasons for the socio-political crisis. […] Belarus is the quintessence of the Eurasian balance and a shining example of stability and prosperity, sovereignty, and independence. […] Many people don't like this. (Shchokin, 2020)

In the official media, the narrative of suffering due to the hostility of the West is aimed at presenting the state and the Belarusian population as united against the external threat. The related aim is to deflect attention away from the unprecedented levels of state violence and mass repression which have unfolded since 2020.

In the second thematic bloc, 'the national idea' was cited alongside discussions concerning the economic sanctions imposed by Western countries on major Belarusian enterprises following the Lukashenka regime's crackdown on civil society in 2020. For instance, in her address to members of the National Assembly, the chairwoman of the Council of the Republic interprets the sanctions as a measure aimed at tormenting Lukashenka's supporters:

> The odious pseudo-democrats are sinking deeper into psychosis. […] After failed attempts at 'blitzkrieg' and strangulating us by the sanctions, they continue to poison our citizens with tons of dirty lies and fakes, resort to the vilest provocations and literally terrorising Belarusians, who have a firm pro-state position. (Kochanova, 2022)

The chairwoman builds her narrative on the 'victim–perpetrator' dichotomy to claim moral superiority for the regime, to justify state violence, and to shift the blame for the violence to its opponents.

In the third thematic bloc, the term 'national idea' was mentioned as part of a discussion of Belarus' role as Russia's main geopolitical ally. This perspective, for instance, is featured in a transcript of a public lecture given by the chairman of the pro-government party *Belaya Rus*:

> The historical experience of both Belarus and Russia shows the world the miracle of preserving many ethnic groups that were not suppressed or forced out by the hegemonic ethnic group. The paradox of the West is that it applies the principle of pluralism it had formed exclusively for domestic use. (Romanov, 2022)

To legitimise the alliance of the Lukashenka regime with that of Putin in the context of Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, the speaker diverts attention away from Russia's history of imperial violence before, during and after the Soviet era, and portrays the West as the site of aggression. This strategy corresponds with the official memory politics which focuses on the role of Belarus in the victory of the Soviet army in the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945) but ignores the mass repressions that took place during Stalin's rule (Marples & Laputska, 2021, p. 32).

The fourth theme – the outcome of the 2022 Constitutional Referendum – manifested in all the publications cited above. The latest change to the constitution gives Lukashenka more power and allows Russian troops and nuclear weapons to be stationed permanently in Belarus. While the referendum was held without adhering to democratic standards, the speakers represented its results as indicative of the unanimous choice of a nation united against external threats.

When it comes to the representations of older people in the official rhetoric, the term 'pensioners' operates as a figure of speech rather than a marker of the age group entitled to the old-age pension. This is evident from the fact that while Lukashenka himself reached pensionable age a decade ago, state media avoid associating him with 'pensioners' and represent him as the provider of social security:

> The great merit of the Head of State is that he always protects the interests of ordinary people: he supports young professionals and pensioners, large families, and children. (Khomiakova, 2024)

On other occasions, Lukashenka portrays himself as a patron of the elderly:

> We will all be old people. Therefore, old people should not be forgotten. I would like this [charitable initiative] to continue, so that we come to our old people and give them gifts, wishing them a Happy New Year and Merry Christmas. (Lukashenka, 2022)

Since the regime does not allow critical debates over its actions, the narrative strategies used by the press to discuss the relationship between the state and older citizens are limited to repetitive stories in which 'vulnerable pensioners' either fall victim to accidents and scammers or express gratitude to the system for its tireless care. The former rhetoric, for instance, is demonstrated in the following report in which the police are portrayed as caring representatives of the state who visit 'pensioners' to instruct them on how to protect themselves from scammer schemes:

> Pensioners are the most vulnerable victims of scammers. The elderly are very trusting and even naive, which is what scammers take advantage of, and shamelessly rob defenceless old people. (Yankovich, 2024)

The photo illustrations included in this report depict young male police officers instructing older women who represent 'the vulnerable pensioners'. The reports in this thematic bloc do not consider the responsibility of the state for policies that implicitly prioritise the interests of younger citizens over those of retirees (Shadrina, 2023, p. 9), and for cultivating the image of older people as vulnerable that the scammers exploit.

The narrative of older people expressing their gratitude to the system for its tireless care, for instance, is shown by the following report about activists from the state-approved youth organisation who are depicted as helping rural residents to prepare for winter: 'The guys, inspired by the President, chopped wood, and filled the woodpile to the brim […]. The grandpas and grandmas were very grateful, some even had tears in their eyes' (Shestakevich, 2022). The benevolently patronising tone of the report obscures the responsibility of the state for the fact that in rural areas, some older citizens live without central heating.

The images of 'vulnerable pensioners' are supplemented with stories about the 'young-old' presented as 'capable Others' (van Dyk, 2016, p. 111). For instance, Kucherova (2020) and Boyarchuk (2023) discuss a 71-year-old woman who works as a model and posts on social media, and a 64-year-old woman who demonstrates achievements in sports. These stories challenge the image of 'pensioners' as objects of state care. However, they simultaneously exoticise women of pensionable age who are capable of taking care of themselves. They celebrate the activities that would not be considered a reason for publication if the protagonists had not reached pensionable age.

In contrast to 'the capable young-old', 'pensioners' are often implicitly discussed as a burden on the state. To illustrate, during a meeting with sports officials, Lukashenka (2024) evaluated the achievements of Belarusian football and ice-hockey as 'worthless', even though Olympic sports, 'like pensioners, they sit on the shoulders of the state'. This utterance is a slightly mitigated version of the Russian colloquial expression 'to sit on someone's neck', which means taking advantage of someone by relying on their generosity without giving anything in return. In line with the official ideology, in this quotation Lukashenka claims moral superiority by presenting the autocratic system as a victim of unfair treatment and blaming problems in state-controlled spheres on someone else.

## 5 Old-age Othering in the 'European Belarus' narrative

To explore alternative perspectives on the national identity, I analysed 152 interviews with Belarusian public figures who oppose the ruling regime. The interviews were conducted for the radio programme *Idea X* on *The European Radio for Belarus (The Euroradio)*. The radio station was established by Belarusian journalists in Poland in 2005. Between 2009 and 2020, the station broadcast in Belarus. Following the 2020 protests, the staff were forced to flee the country. Currently, the station broadcasts from abroad.

Perceiving Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas as a potential threat to Belarus' independence, the radio hosts Zmicier Lukashuk and Maxim Harunou initiated debates about the country's national idea. Their programme *Idea X* aimed to preempt a potential Russian territorial claim over Belarus under the pretext that Belarus does not exist as a separate nation (Lukashuk & Harunou, 2020, p. 10). The transcripts of the radio interviews were published in three volumes. For this study, I analysed the first and the last collections. Since the authoritarian regime recognises *The Euroradio* as an extremist group, when citing the interviewees, I shall use pseudonyms.

The hosts asked members of civil society to reflect on their vision of Belarus' history and its civilisational orientation. Based on my analysis, the speakers' perspectives represented two popular narratives. The first one, discussed in this section, rejects the importance of the Soviet past. It is based on the claim that communist rule, a form of Russian colonisation, interrupted the development of the Belarusian national project. Formed by the end of the Soviet era, this rhetoric revives Belarus' historical associations with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Gapova, 2008, p. 5)

By making a connection between the modern nation and the medieval state, the proponents of this narrative present Belarus as originally belonging to the European civilisa-

tional space, and later occupied by the foreign Soviets (Gapova, 2002, p. 646). The adherents of this perspective interpret the investment of the Lukashenka regime in recycling the Soviet legacy and its current alliance with Russia as 'anti-national' (Bekus, 2023, p. 100).

The narrative of victimhood in relation to communist evils is not a Belarusian invention. Based on a mixture of historical facts and fiction, the rhetoric of suffering due to Soviet totalitarianism has been used by politicians in many Eastern European countries to claim the status of innocent victims (Barton Hronešová, 2022, p. 8).

The symbolic repertoire of the narrative that portrays the Belarusian nation as a victim of pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet Russian expansionism includes several tropes. One is the representation of Belarusians as completely deprived of agency: 'We've got a neighbour who has been Russifying our people over several centuries' (Speaker B, 2020, p. 266).

In this way, the narrative of suffering as a result of Soviet colonisation renders generations of Belarusians, who witnessed the communist era, as non-present in history. It ignores the legacy of Soviet-time dissidents as well as cases of collaboration between the locals and the Nazis during German occupation of Soviet Belorussia in 1941–1944 (Oushakine, 2013, pp. 26, 297–298). However, a more nuanced representation of history would disrupt the 'victim-perpetrator' binary, depriving the speaker of the possibility of claiming moral superiority (Barton Hronešová, 2022, p. 8).

To distance Belarus from associations with anything Soviet – and subsequently Russian – some of the proponents of this perspective portray Russia as an Asian Other:

> […] a few centuries ago, our eastern neighbour saw this quality of Belarusians [docility] and used the Russian language against them. […] In the Middle Ages, we had the Magdeburg Law in our cities. […] These are the places where democracy, parliamentarism, elections and the like begin. […] Now look at the Horde cities. These cities have absolutely no understanding of democracy and its necessity. They only understand the need for a strong hand. And they brought that here. (Speaker C, 2020, p. 39)

Within the dominant Eurocentric perspective, Western Europe is understood as 'Europe' while Eastern Europe is imagined as being outside of political and cultural 'Europeanness'. The imaginary homogeneity of 'Europe', associated with progress, is constructed through its opposition to non-white non-European Others. This epistemology consequently conflates 'Europeanness' with whiteness; prompting Eastern European subjects to seek 'the capital of Europeanness' through racialising others (Krivonos, 2023, p. 1503).

Creating distance from the socialist understanding of social justice is another trope of the narrative of suffering due to communism, which is interpreted as being incompatible with democracy:

> The first generations of poets [who identified as Belarusian] mainly portrayed Belarusians according to the Marxist model as an 'oppressed class'. Until now, schoolchildren have been tormented by the poem *But who marches there?* by Yanka Kupala. […] Kupala and some of his predecessors endlessly aestheticised the lifestyle of peasants and workers and didn't understand how dangerous it was. […] As a result, in 1994, the people from Kupala's poem elected their president. (Speaker D, 2020, p. 311)

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the ethnocentric narrative in Belarus served to legitimise the substitution of the Soviet status-based system of stratification with the new property-based class system. The advocates of this perspective argued that by destroying the institution of private property, the communists had deprived individuals of autonomy, which is the constitutive feature of democracy (Gapova, 2008, pp. 5, 10).

The proponents of this narrative are often public figures with symbolic capital that is convertible outside the state economy. Initially, their position differed from that of postcolonial scholars of South Asia, who explained colonialism in Marxist terms as economic oppression resulting in other forms of subjugation. However, with time, the postcolonial intellectual project globally shifted to identity politics, replacing the discussion of structural inequality with ethnic dominance (Gapova, 2020a, p. 4). This shift enables those with more symbolic and economic resources to promote their own interests as 'national' interests.

Within the narrative of suffering as a result of communism, irrespective of whether the less privileged groups supported Lukashenka or not, the pro-welfare stance – as well as dependence on the state economy – became equated with advocacy for authoritarianism:

> [...] such different perspectives, not only ideological but also generational, largely divide Belarus into the Soviet and the new Belarus. And however hard you try; you see that they [older people] are not willing to engage in a dialogue. They are willing to fight immediately. [...] At times, I even think that it would be cosy to just make two separate Belaruses, like was done with Korea. (Speaker H, 2023, p. 225)

Those who do not possess the resources to generate income independently from the state economy, usually older citizens, are portrayed as backward and hostile towards the advocates of the 'European' Belarus. The interests of those in less privileged social positions are interpreted as an obstacle to Belarus' democratic future, which is allegedly only achievable through ethnocentric 'pro-European' nationalism:

> [...] they don't have their own national idea, mostly. Because they are alright that way – there is a home, work, money enough to get by. [...] It's not just different generations fighting over Belarus, it's cities fighting with villages. (Speaker K, 2023, p. 226)

Within this perspective, 'the national' is equated with a pro-democratic stance, and by extension with the free market. The interests of those dependent on the state economy are marginalised and marked as anti-national, philistine, and lacking a great cause. This position originates in early research into the nation-building process in Belarus after the end of Soviet socialism, which promoted the idea that 'the underdeveloped national consciousness' of Belarusians resulted in the democratic failure of the country (Marples, 2012, p. 189).

Challenging the assumption that nationalism can only manifest through the rejection of the Soviet past and in opposition to the authoritarian state, Bekus (2010, p. 6) argued that the ruling regime offered its Russian-speaking national project based on an appeal to the Soviet experience. She also demonstrated that irrespective of their attitudes to the autocratic system, most Belarusians support national independence (Bekus, 2010, p. 150).

From this perspective, the narrative of a Belarusian East/West divide reflects the post-Soviet reconfiguration of masculine privilege (Gapova, 2002, p. 641). While some proponents of the 'European' identity are female, they speak from the position of the masculine subject capable of surviving without relying on social welfare. They often portray the women who came of age during the Soviet era and who are economically dependent on the state as responsible for Belarus' democratic failure:

> They will physically go away sooner or later. […] I wouldn't fire women with the 'nest' hair style [an old fashion 'big hair' style), I'd keep them as a rarity. (Speaker Y, 2023, p. 244)

This quote implies that the Belarusian East/West divide coincides with the generational divide. The categories of gender and age within this narrative broadly signify the class position of those Belarusians who are excluded from the global economy. The more privileged advocates of 'European' Belarus replace the debate about social inequality with one concerning taste and a moral choice. By ridiculing citizens dependent on the state economy, this part of civil society produces a moral hierarchy within which the interests of those who do not support this stance are interpreted as anti-Belarusian and immoral.

## 6 Intergroup solidarity in the 'borderland' narrative

While the narrative of suffering due to communism has proven unable to unite Belarusians, the 2020 protests – the largest in the country's history – brought together citizens from all social backgrounds, spanning multiple geopolitical perspectives and group interests. The anti-authoritarian resistance was driven by Russian-speaking opposition candidates and the new class of skilled professionals who derive income from outside the state economy (Gapova, 2021, p. 47). The slogans the protesters carried during the months-long rallies were written in three languages: Belarusian, Russian, and English.

As Gapova (2020b) points out, the political mobilisation preceding the protests often featured two national flags that had traditionally symbolised opposing viewpoints. For the ethnocentric opposition, the official red-green flag represented Lukashenka's authoritarianism, supported by Russian expansionism. For Lukashenka's supporters, the white-red-white flag adopted by the anti-Soviet and subsequently anti-Lukashenka opposition at the end of the twentieth century represented a threat to the status quo orchestrated by the West. She emphasises that during the 2020 election campaign, both flags took on different meanings – they symbolised the potential for a new Belarusian future that bridges the divide between those involved in the global economy and those dependent on the state.

This vision of the 2020 uprising is shared by a portion of public figures interviewed by *The Euroradio*. For instance, one interviewee describes their experience of the protests in the following way:

> […] what happened in 2020 was a great meeting of the two Belarusian peoples. One of them wanted to build their homes, raise their children, they wanted peace and quiet, they wanted to live on their land. They looked down on the others a bit, to whom I belong, without much interest, as though we were freaks. We also looked down on them a bit. But in 2020, we met, looked each other in the eyes and realised that our distrust was meaningless. […] we walked in the same column […] – workers, entrepreneurs, baristas, writers. (Speaker S, 2023, p. 144)

By those who 'wanted peace and quiet,' the speaker refers to the less privileged social groups for whom the appeal of the ethnocentric opposition to move towards democracy through neoliberal capitalism signifies an existential threat. Those 'others' in this example represent a group who possess various forms of capital to successfully navigate the global economy. The willingness to acknowledge the difference in interests and to seek commonalities that the speaker demonstrates is linked to a distinct civilisational position. The proponents of this stance champion a democratic Belarus that belongs neither to Russia nor to the West but is connected to both. Here is how another interviewee discusses this version of Belarus' identity:

> I've always articulated that Belarus is not Russia, it's situated at the crossroads between Europe and Russia. It's quite easy for my interlocutors to identify Belarusians both as Europeans and as those who have a particle of Russianness. (Speaker R, 2020, p. 157)

The vision of Belarusian identity formed through disidentifying from the Eastern and Western imperial influences was first formulated in the early twentieth century. One of the most vivid examples of this position – the 1922 poem by Yanka Kupala *Tuteishiya* [The people from here] – promotes a territorial rather than a cultural attribution of Belarusianness (Bekus, 2010, p. 210). The poem is Kupala's satirical response to Russian and Polish claims to Belarus; Kupala's characters who identify as Belarusian react to these claims by retreating away from both (Ioffe, 2003, p. 1244).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a group of Belarusian intellectuals explored the potential of 'tuteishaść' or the state of 'from-here-ness' as a version of the national identity based on 'un-belonging' to either Russian civilisational space or to the West (Pershai, 2008, p. 86). Another vision of Belarus' self-sufficiency is based on acknowledging the influence of both. Building on Mignolo's (2000) concept of 'borderland' as a space in-between, some scholars imagine Belarus as present on both sides of the East/West European divide (Shparaha, 2005). The proponents of this perspective refuse to formulate the national idea in opposition to either external or internal subjects. Speaker Q (2023, p. 329) discusses the limits of national self-identifications that are based on confrontation:

> It's impossible to build something based on the thesis 'we are against something' – against Russians, the West, against internal enemies. […] If your national idea is to confront the enemies, at some point there won't be a nation – everyone will be eliminated.

This deviation from the logic of Othering opens up opportunities for solidarity across social groups:

> I believe that our way forward is to acknowledge our unique past, our shared heroes with other nations, and our complex history. […] We must support one another; we must strive for social justice to ensure that individuals and groups are not excluded from social participation. (Speaker M, 2020, pp. 175–176)

Another proponent of this perspective explains that at the beginning of his career, Lukashenka's promise to retain the Soviet-style welfare system resonated with the interests of those for whom Soviet modernisation was associated with access to education, an eight-hour working day, guaranteed housing with electricity and central heating, and guaranteed employment:

> It was a miracle for people. It's not surprising that they supported Lukashenka when he said that we'd return to the Soviet Union. (Speaker N, 2020, p. 195)

This speaker explains that championing resource distribution through policy rather than the market does not imply advocacy for authoritarianism. From this perspective, it is the autocratic system and the ethnocentric segment of civil society who pursue their interests by representing those dependent on social security as unquestioning supporters of the repressive regime.

Unlike the proponents of the narrative of suffering due to communism, the advocates of 'in-between-ness' do not seek a 'European' identity by Othering those who do not possess the capital to succeed outside the state economy:

> […] an average woman must think about how to ensure that her three sons would not have to bring their own families to live in the parents' one bedroom apartment on the outskirts […] When does she get to read books? That's the problem. […] Now look at those who participated in the protests. Those were, mostly, young people who have some level of education, and often not a Belarusian education. Those who can travel. (Speaker W, 2023, pp. 306–307)

The speaker emphasises that open political confrontation requires resources that are often unavailable to less privileged citizens, especially women, to whom society delegates the responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of their families. The fact that the participants of the 2020 'Pensioners' Marches' were mostly comprised of older women emphasises the political significance of that collective action. The attendees of the Marches simultaneously overcame their personal vulnerability by exposing themselves to state violence and used the notion of old-age vulnerability promoted by the state in the hope that the riot police would not use force against the group represented as objects of state care. Although they faced state brutality as the rest of society, their political subjectification came as a shock to the system (Shadrina, 2023, pp. 3, 18).

Social inequality and intergroup solidarity are the central themes featured in the 'borderland' narrative:

> Many people think about democracy […] while our parents think about how to survive on a pension of $100 […]. When it's a struggle for survival, there is no place for philosophical thoughts. […] It's impossible to build anything by saying that what was before isn't important, but here is our new history, we will start building it from now on. […] We don't need to look up to either Russia or the West. We must look inside ourselves, who we are, and how we can help one another. (Speaker O, 2023, pp. 39–40)

By reclaiming the socialist language of social justice, the proponents of the 'in-between' national project aspire to unite Belarusians across generations and social groups. The champions of the 'borderland' perspective acknowledge the Soviet legacy, including Stalin's repressions and forced migration, as well as the achievements of the Soviet developmental project. They advocate a democratic Belarus and condemn the Russian war against Ukraine.

## 7 Conclusion

The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the war in Donbas, and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have mobilised debates about Belarusian sovereignty and national distinctiveness. My article explored how, speaking from diverse civilisational perspectives, Belarusian political actors use the categories of age, gender and class to reproduce or challenge the East/West European divide. It demonstrated that the imaginaries of the Belarusian nation that rely on the East/West dichotomy are productive of the practice of Othering. It further argued that the refusal to rely on binary logic in national self-determination promotes intergroup solidarity.

This article makes three contributions. First, it demonstrates how the tenacious logic of Cold War geopolitics animates social differentiation in territories positioned between Western and Russian influences. Second, it includes the interests of older citizens in the debates surrounding national projects. Third, by exploring the visibility of retirees in political narratives, following the 2020 anti-authoritarian 'Pensioners' Marches,' my article offers a more nuanced understanding of the impact generated by old-age identity activism.

Referring to the 2020 'Pensioners' Marches' held in Belarus during the largest anti-authoritarian protests in the country's history, I asked whether the participation of retirees in the mass mobilisation has influenced the ways in which the autocratic system and democratic forces discuss the role of older citizens in their national projects. To address this question, I analysed narratives about national identity promoted in Belarusian state-controlled and opposition media, following the 2020 uprising. I demonstrated that the autocratic system and the ethnocentric segment of civil society both establish themselves as the normative political subjects against 'pensioners', who are constructed as the inferior Other. Older women, who are often structurally disadvantaged, are the primary targets of the politics of Othering.

In contrast to the portrayal of the West as a space where citizens suffer a lack of social protection, the Lukashenka regime presents itself as a paternalist state effectively protecting 'vulnerable pensioners'. Within this imaginary, despite their generational and social differences, 'pensioners' are represented as objects of state care. The narrative of suffering due to Soviet totalitarianism/Russian colonialism, promoted by the ethnocentric opposition, discusses 'pensioners' as obstacles to the democratisation of Belarus.

In these narratives, the intersection of gender and ageing that constitutes the image of the inferior Other operates as an implicit reference to the less privileged social position of those who do not have the resources to successfully navigate the global economy. Speaking on behalf of the ruling elite and the middle-class civil society, both perspectives legitimise post-socialist privilege. In this sense, the visibility of retirees as a distinct political subject during the 2020 protests has not affected the exclusionary imaginaries of the Belarusian nation.

However, based on my findings, there is a segment of the democratic forces that refuses to identify with one of the two imperial formations. This part of civil society imagines Belarus as present on both sides of the East/West divide. This civilisational position allows its champions to seriously consider the concerns of citizens whose lives are far from the hegemonic notion of the masculinist subject capable of surviving without relying on social welfare. Rather than building on the colonial practice of Othering, this perspective promotes social solidarity.

## References

Astapova, A., Navumau, V., Nizhnikau, R. & Polishchuk, L. (2022). Authoritarian cooptation of civil society: The case of Belarus. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *74*(1), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2021.2009773

Barton Hronešová, J. (2024). The uses of victimhood as a hegemonic meta-narrative in eastern Europe. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies, 32*(2), 442–458. https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2110456

Bekus, N. (2010). *Struggle over identity: The official and the alternative 'Belarusianness'*. Central European University Press.

Bekus, N. (2023). Reassembling society in a nation-state: History, language, and identity discourses of Belarus. *Nationalities Papers*, *51*(1), 98–113. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2022.60

Belstat (2021). *Results of the 2019 census. Volume 2.* National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. Altiora Forte. https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload/iblock/e2c/jpupn3rl7trtmxepj6vmh07qy6u5o09i.pdf

Belstat (2023a). *Social conditions and living standard of population in the Republic of Belarus. Statistical book*. National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload/iblock/747/h2d3js5a6ro9svs5xv2zi0fb8ov7o41i.pdf

Belstat (2023b). *Statistical book*. National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload/iblock/0a7/lk1zigmat2zbcwvo3ljrfm1tow2f5zd2.pdf

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brons, L. (2015). Othering, an Analysis. *Transcience*, *6*(1), 69–90.

Buzgalin, A. V. & Kolganov, A. I. (2021). The protests in Belarus: Context, causes and lessons. *Critical Sociology*, *47*(3), 441–453. https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205209823

Carney, G. & Gray, M. (2024). Introduction: demystifying ageing and power. In A. Ledeneva, E. Teague, P. Matijevic, G. M. Moisé, P. Majda & M. Toqmadi (Eds.), *The global encyclopaedia of informality: A hitchhiker's guide to informal problem-solving in human life* (pp. 517–520). UCL Press.

de Beauvoir, S. (1997) [1949]. *The second sex*. Vintage.

Gapova, E. (2002). On nation, gender, and class formation in Belarus… and elsewhere in the post-Soviet world. *Nationalities Papers*, *30*(4), 639–662. https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2002.10540511

Gapova, E. (2008). Negotiating Belarusian as a 'national language'. In E. Andrews (Ed.), *Linguistic changes in post-communist Eastern Europe and Eurasia* (pp. 131–160). Columbia University Press.

Gapova, E. (2020a). Пограничное состояние: Белуруские постколониальные дискуссии после пакта Молотова-Реббентропа [The borderline state: Belarusian postcolonial discourses after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact]. *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie,* (165), 314–329.

Gapova, E. (2020b) Новое на этих выборах: оба флага на митингах [New things during this election: the two flags on the rallies]. *Facebook.com,* https://www.facebook.com/elena.gapova/posts/pfbid02DwVXbpeYR4an1eTzno1yGnw6qejWpQHabU7eq17NKSie1sxxzsSaZ6Kapf3Prsyjl

Gapova, E. (2021). Class, agency, and citizenship in Belarusian protest. *Slavic Review, 80*(1), 45–51. https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2021.21

Kozlovskaya, E. (2020, February 25). Здоровье, консультации, обучение предпринимательству. Что предложит пожилым стратегия «Достойное долголетие — 2030» [Health, consultations, entrepreneurship training. What will the 'Decent Longevity 2030' strategy offer to older people?']. *Respublika*. https://www.sb.by/articles/garantii-tretego-vozrasta.html

Higgs, P. & Gilleard, C. (2017). *Rethinking old age: Theorising the fourth age*. Bloomsbury.

Ioffe, G. (2003). Understanding Belarus: Belarussian identity. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *55*(8), 1241–1272. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966813032000141105

Krivonos, D. (2023). Racial capitalism and the production of difference in Helsinki and Warsaw. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *49*(6), 1500–1516. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2022.2154911

Lisenkova, K. & Bornukova, K. (2017). Effects of population ageing on the pension system in Belarus. *Baltic Journal of Economics*, *17*(2), 103–118. https://doi.org/10.1080/1406099X.2017.1318000

Lukashuk, Z. (2023). *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя ў выгнанні і на выйне [The Belarusian national idea in exile and at war].* Studio Magenta.

Lukashuk, Z. & Harunou, M. (2020). *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя [The Belarusian national idea].* Medysont.

Lvovsky, L. & Bornukova, K. (2022). Пенсионная реформа Беларуси. *[The pension reform in Belarus].* BEROC.

Marples, D. (2012) [1999]. *Belarus: a denationalized nation*. Routledge.

Marples, D. R. & Laputska, V. (2022). Maly Traścianiec in the context of current narratives on the Holocaust in the Republic of Belarus. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *74*(1), 31–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2021.1954600

Mayerchyk, M. & Plakhotnik, O. (2021). Uneventful feminist protest in post-Maidan Ukraine. In R. Koobak, M. Tlostanova & S. Thapar-Björkert (Eds.), *Postcolonial and postsocialist dialogues: Intersections, opacities, challenges in feminist theorizing and practice* (pp. 121–137). Routledge.

Mignolo, W. (2000). *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking*. Princeton University Press.

National Bank of the Republic of Belarus (2022). The official rate of currency exchange. *National Bank of the Republic of Belarus*. https://www.nbrb.by/statistics/rates/ratesdaily.asp

Oushakine, S. A. (2013). Postcolonial estrangements: claiming a space between Stalin and Hitler. In J. Buckler & E. D. Johnson (Eds.), *Rites of place: public commemoration in Russia and Eastern Europe* (pp. 285–315). Northwestern University Press.

Padvalkava, K. (2019). Implementing the MIPAA in Belarus: Review and lessons from the progress. *International Journal on Ageing in Developing Countries*, *3*(1).

Pavluchenko, N. (2024, June 16). Более 90 процентов граждан, которых касаются новации, открыли базовые счета для пенсий в банке — Павлюченко [More than 90 per cent of citizens affected by the innovations have opened basic accounts for pensions in the bank – Pavluchenko]. *SB. Belarus Segodnya.* https://www.sb.by/articles/bolee-90-protsentov-grazhdan-kotorykh-kasayutsya-novatsii-otkryli-bazovye-scheta-dlya-pensiy-v-banke.html

Pershai, A. (2008). Localness and mobility in Belarusian nationalism: The tactic of tuteishaść. *Nationalities Papers*, *36*(1), 85–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990701848374

Plakhotnik, O. & Mayerchyk, M. (2023). Pride contested. *lambda nordica, 28*(2–3), 25–53. https://doi.org/10.34041/ln.v.874

Said, E. (2003) [1977]. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books.

Segal, L. (2014). *Out of time: The pleasures and the perils of ageing*. Verso Books.

Shadrina, A. (2023). Autocratic power and older citizens: The political subjectification of retirees in Belarus. *Sociology, 58*(4), 894–910. https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385231217586

Shparaga, O. (2005). V poiskah rabichih metafor [In search of working metaphors]. *Nashe Mnenie*. https://nmn.media/articles/358

Spivak, G. C. (1985). The Rani of Sirmur: An essay in reading the archives. *History and Theory*, *24*(3), 247–272. https://doi.org/10.2307/2505169

Van Dyk, S. (2016). The othering of old age: Insights from postcolonial studies. *Journal of Aging Studies*, *39*, 109–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2016.06.005

World Health Organization. (2024). *Belarus. Health data overview for the Republic of Belarus.* World Health Organization https://data.who.int/countries/112

## Appendix

### Newspaper articles cited in Section 4

Boyarchuk, D. (2023, December 16). Пять прыжков с парашютом, черный пояс по карате – это все про 64-летнюю Елену Чернову из Речицы [Five parachute jumps, a black belt in karate – that's all about 64-year-old Elena Chernova from Rechitsa]. *SB. Belarus Segodnya.* https://www.sb.by/articles/staret-nekogda-.html

Khomiakova, S. (2024, June 14). Народ сказал: узнали мнение людей о темах, которые на неделе затронул Президент [The people said: we found out people's opinions about the topics that the President touched upon this week]. *Narodnaya Gazeta*. https://www.sb.by/articles/narod-skazal-uznali-mnenie-lyudey-o-temakh-kotorye-na-nedele-zatronul-prezident.html

Kochanova, N. (2022, March 15). Выступление председателя Совета Республики Национального собрания Натальи Кочановой на открытии восьмой сессии [Speech by the Chairperson of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly Natalya Kochanova

at the opening of the eighth session]. *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. https://www.sb.by/articles/vystuplenie-predsedatelya-soveta-respubliki-natsionalnogo-sobraniya-natali-kochanovoy-na-otkrytii-vo.html

Kucherova, M. (2020, February 4). Ольга Шатыко в 69 лет впервые вышла на подиум [Olga Shatyko walked on the podium for the first time at 69]. *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. https://www.sb.by/articles/legko-li-byt-molodoy234.html

Lukashenko, A (2022, December 29) Cited in Isaenok, S. & Kozlovskaya, E. (2024, January 13). Акция «Наши дети» стала одним из символов бескорыстия и единения людей в современной истории Беларуси [The 'Our Children' action has become one of the symbols of selflessness and unity of people in the modern history of Belarus] *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. https://www.sb.by/articles/marafon-dobra-nashi-deti-2024.html

Lukashenka, A. (2024, February 29). Лукашенко: если в целом оценивать наши спортивные достижения, они никуда не годны [Lukashenko: if we evaluate our sporting achievements as a whole, they are worthless]. *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. https://www.sb.by/articles/lukashenko-esli-v-tselom-otsenivat-nashi-sportivnye-dostizheniya-oni-nikuda-ne-godny.html

Romanov, O. (2022, December 17). Романов о составляющих белорусской национальной идеи: это наш проект развития страны [Romanov about the components of the Belarusian national idea: this is our project for the development of the country]. *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. https://www.sb.by/articles/nashe-mesto-v-mire.html

Shchokin, N. (2020, October 7). Щёкин: Беларусь не должна стать чьей-то второсортной колонией [Belarus must not become someone's second-rate colony]. *SB. Balarus Segodnya*. https://www.sb.by/articles/filosofiya-nashego-budushchego.html

Shestakevich, D. (2022, November 15). У добрых дел нет выходных. Активисты БРСМ присоединились к эстафете тепла [Good deeds have no days off. BRSM activists joined the heat relay]. *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. https://www.sb.by/articles/u-dobrykh-del-net-vykhodnykh-aktivisty-brsm-prisoedinilis-k-estafete-tepla.html

Yankovich, A. (2024, May 31). В Минске милиционеры посещают пенсионеров и предупреждают о мошеннических схемах [In Minsk, police visit pensioners and warn about fraudulent schemes]. *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. https://www.sb.by/articles/v-minske-militsionery-poseshchayut-pensionerov-i-preduprezhdayut-o-moshennicheskikh-skhemakh.html

## Radio interviews cited in Sections 5 and 6

Speaker B. (2020). Беларусы мусяць быць гаспадарамі ў сваей Беларускай хаце [Belarusians must be masters in their Belarusian home]. In Z. Lukashuk & M. Garunou (Eds.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя [The Belarusian national idea]* (pp. 262–267). Medysont.

Speaker C. (2020). Самае лепшае ўкладанне — укладанне ў дзяцей, яны будучыня краіны [The best investment is investing in children. They are the future of the country]. In Z. Lukashuk & M. Garunou (Eds.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя [The Belarusian national idea]* (pp. 36–43). Medysont.

Speaker D. (2020). Мая націдэя: Беларусь мусіць быць бязмежнай ва ўсіх сэнсах [My national idea: Belarus must be limitless in all senses In Z. Lukashuk & M. Garunou (Eds.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя [The Belarusian national idea]* (pp. 310–315). Medysont.

Speaker H. (2023). "Жыве Беларусь!" – гэты выраз стаў кодавым, нашай агульнай ідэяй ['Long live Belarus!' – this expression became a code, our common idea]. In Z. Lukashuk (Ed.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя ў выгнанні і на выйне [The Belarusian national idea in exile and at war]* (pp. 224–229). Studio Magenta.

Speaker Y. (2023). Быць гаспадарамі на сваей зямлі – спрадвечная нацыянальная ідэя беларусаў [To be masters of one's own land is an ancient national idea of Belarusians]. In Z. Lukashuk (Ed.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя ў выгнанні і на выйне [The Belarusian national idea in exile and at war]* (pp. 241–246). Studio Magenta.

Speaker S. (2023). Мая нацыянальная ідэя застанецца нязменнай – мова і свабода [My national idea will remain unchanged – language and freedom]. In Z. Lukashuk (Ed.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя ў выгнанні і на выйне [The Belarusian national idea in exile and at war]* (pp. 144–149). Studio Magenta.

Speaker R. (2020). Базуючыся на найлепшых гістарычных момантах, шукаць, як зрабіць Беларусь дэмакратычнай і глабальнай дзяржавай [Based on the best historical moments, look for ways to make Belarus a democratic and global state]. In Z. Lukashuk & M. Garunou (Eds.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя [The Belarusian national idea]* (pp. 165–161). Medysont.

Speaker Q. (2023). "Дабрабыт, самарэалізацыя, свабода" – тры словы нацыянальнай мары беларуса ['Prosperity, self-realisation, freedom' – three words of the Belarusian national dream]. In Z. Lukashuk (Ed.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя ў выгнанні і на выйне [The Belarusian national idea in exile and at war]* (pp. 325–331). Studio Magenta.

Speaker M. (2020). Беларусь для сябе і для ўсяго сусвету — мая нацыянальная ідэя [Belarus for myself and for the whole world is my national idea]. In Z. Lukashuk & M. Garunou (Eds.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя [The Belarusian national idea]* (pp. 174–179). Medysont.

Speaker N. (2020). Жыць па-людску і па справядлівасці — спрадвечная мара беларусаў [To live humanely and with justice is an ancient dream of Belarusians]. In Z. Lukashuk & M. Garunou (Eds.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя [The Belarusian national idea]* (pp. 192–202). Medysont.

Speaker W. (2023). Салідарнасць і барацьба – без гэтага нам не прыйсці да новый Беларусі [Solidarity and struggle – without this we cannot come to the new Belarus]. In Z. Lukashuk (Ed.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя ў выгнанні і на выйне [The Belarusian national idea in exile and at war]* (pp. 305–310). Studio Magenta.

Speaker O. (2023). Любоў – ўся Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя ў гэтым адным слове [Love is the entire Belarusian national idea in this one word]. In Z. Lukashuk (Ed.), *Беларуская нацыянальная ідэя ў выгнанні і на выйне [The Belarusian national idea in exile and at war]* (pp. 38–42). Studio Magenta.