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## **IN THE SHADOW OF WAR... STRATEGIC AND IDEATIONAL DETERMINANTS OF RUSSIA'S POLICY TOWARDS BELARUS AFTER AUGUST 2020**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In August 2020, as a result of the structural changes taking place in Belarusian society, the downplaying of the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and, finally, the rigged presidential elections, Aleksandr Lukashenko's political regime found itself facing an unprecedented crisis in the history of its existence (Moshes, Nizhnikau, 2022). The fear in Lukashenko's eyes was such that he turned to Russia for help (Higgins, Nechepurenko, 2020).

The dramatic episode of Russian-Belarusian integration negotiations of 2018–2020, the blockade of oil supplies, tensions accompanying the unsatisfactory, according to Lukashenko, assistance from Russia during the pandemic period, or, finally, allegations of Russian attempts to interfere in the presidential election were gone (Bohdan, 2020). The Kremlin provided Lukashenko with assistance, although voices were heard among the Russian power elite that the situation where Lukashenko found himself was finally the perfect moment to remove him from power.

The price Lukashenko had to pay for Russian support in the face of Western economic sanctions that began to be introduced in response to repression was enormous. In the perspective of three years, it turned out to be participation in the aggression against Ukraine. Most commentators agreed that the Russian assault on Ukraine, including the attempted seizure of Kyiv, would not have been possible without the prior subjugation of Belarus, i.e., obtaining Lukashenko's permission to launch an attack on its territory. Although Belarusian soldiers did not participate, the fact that Lukashenko permitted Russia to use Belarusian territory and rail and energy infrastructure for the war against Ukraine put him in line with Putin (Götz, 2023). Belarus was condemned by the West and was struck with additional sanctions, more severe than those introduced in response to political repression.

They have further exacerbated the dependence of the Belarusian economy on Russia, especially in the infrastructural dimension (Slyunkin et al., 2022). Lukashenko's

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sickly reign of power has brought disaster to the entire state. “Shrinking clinging with bruised fingers to the presidential seat” has pushed Belarus even deeper into the abyss of dependence on Russia, with all the negative consequences for it and the stability of the entire Central and Eastern European region (Drakakhrust, 2024).

Why did the Kremlin decide to support Lukashenko and maintain the continuity of his regime in power at a critical moment for him? Why did the Kremlin delay the moment of legal international formal subjugation of Belarus? How did Russian stability affect the stability of Lukashenko’s regime in power? What was the price of Russian support? What are the prospects for the continuity of Lukashenko’s power regime in light of Russia’s post-2020 policy toward Belarus?

### THE PRICE OF RUSSIAN SUPPORT

Belarus has paid a large price for Lukashenko’s desire to remain in power, and its territory and infrastructure have been used for Russian aggression against Ukraine. Russia has increased military cooperation with Belarus to an unprecedented and unimaginable level before August 2020. For many years, Lukashenko tried with all his might to limit the presence of Russian troops on Belarusian territory.

In the new political realities after 2020, Russian troops are indeed permanently present in Belarus (Dyner, 2021). In 2020, Lukashenko announced the creation of another training centre in Belarus, this time with the tactical ballistic missile system Iskander (*Lukashenko zayavil...*, 2022). In February 2020, on Lukashenko’s initiative, the largest military exercise since the collapse of the Soviet Union was carried out on the territory of Belarus, Union Resolution 2022 (Spatkay, 2022).

By seeking Russia’s support and giving evidence of his boundless loyalty, Lukashenko was not only providing Russia with “evidence of gratitude” in the sphere of hard security but was also inserting himself with his anti-Western rhetoric into the Russian narrative. His statements in the sphere of foreign and defence policy began to be filled with content, transferred from the arsenal of Russian propaganda (Levchenko, 2021). This was no coincidence, as the Kremlin dispatched teams of seasoned spin doctors to “improve” the coverage of the protests on Belarusian television after scores of local journalists quit in protest (Mirovalev, 2020).

Participation in the hybrid war against Europe, stimulating the emergence of a migrant crisis on the eastern borders of the European Union, and later in the full-scale aggression against Ukraine drew additional sanctions from the West on Belarus and deepened its already existing political and economic isolation, making Lukashenko even more dependent on Russia. Belarus lost its traditional markets, the EU’s because of the sanctions, and Ukraine’s because of its involvement in the aggression. The EU strengthened its sanctions policies from 2021 so that they would take effect painfully and immediately and expanded the catalogue of sanctioned products, which until then had mainly concerned petroleum products, to include wood, metals, plastics, etc. In total, the sanctions were to affect 70% of Belarusian exports to the Union (representing 17% of total Belarusian exports) (Slyunkin et al., 2022). Belarus also lost the Ukrainian market (which still represented 14% of Belarusian exports in the year) and ac-

cess to the port infrastructure there. Belarus became dependent on the rail and port infrastructure for economic cooperation with countries further abroad. The Belarusian government estimated a 32–36% drop in exports due to Western sanctions and the war in Ukraine in 2022, or \$16–18 billion (*Golovchenko: sanktsii...*, 2022).

Russia has not left Lukashenko alone in the face of Western sanctions and unequivocal and unconditional loyalty to the gathering theme of confrontation with the West and war with Ukraine. Belarus received several financial and economic concessions from Russia. These covered a wide range of issues and, in some cases, were linked to the institutionalisation of the work of the Union State vide compensation for the fiscal manoeuvres (650 million in 2023 and 680 million in 2024) (Alekseyeva, 2023). Without major problems, the two states agreed on a gas supply price of \$128.52 per cubic metre for Belarus in 2022 (*Belarusian PM...*, 2024).

Belarus received a loan of \$1.5 billion from Russia, bringing its debt to \$8.1 billion at that time (Khurmanova, 2021). As part of a coordinated effort to counteract the effects of Western sanctions, Russia agreed with Belarus to grant it another loan of \$1.5 billion for import substitution projects (*Rossiia vydelit...*, 2022). At the same time, it obtained from the Russian government the possibility of postponing, from April 2023 to the period 2028–2030, the payment of the instalment of the loan of \$1.4 billion (*Russia to postpone...*, 2022).

However, the scale of Russian aid to Belarus was considered moderate, calculated solely to maintain the stability of the sociopolitical situation. Russia has not compensated Belarus for all the losses Belarus has suffered from its complicity in the aggression against Ukraine, and some commentators also note that it does not want to help Belarus beyond its means (Levovskiy, 2023).

But Russia's material compensation for the losses suffered by Belarus due to its participation in the aggression against Ukraine was also accompanied by actions that did not have a less significant impact on the stability of Lukashenko's political regime: 1. Russia's conservative approach to reforming the Belarusian political system; 2. allowing Belarus not to participate directly in the war against Ukraine; 3. moving away from the "incorporationist" scenario of "deeper integration" that Russia was pushing in the 2018–2020 period, to a scenario that did not formally violate Belarusian sovereignty.

## RUSSIA AND THE REFORM OF THE BELARUSIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

The changes within the Belarusian political system were rather slow and conservative at the same time. From Lukashenko's point of view, the constitutional reform strengthening the position of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly secured his interests and his "coterie," making it the formal *veto player* in Belarusian politics (*Bol'she polnomochiy...*, 2021). At the same time, it was an "investment for the future." The presidential elections did not go as planned by the ruling political camp, and a person from outside the "coterie" took office. A number of other amendments to the constitution also indicated that it was being rewritten with a view to safeguarding Lukashenko's security, e.g., in terms of immunity for those vacating the presidential office and

holding them accountable for “actions taken while in office” (*Bol'she polnomochiy...*, 2021).

Given that the Kremlin has made it clear on many occasions that the political transition in Belarus is not its own exclusive affair, this shows that it accepts the established *status quo* (Polessky, 2023: 70). Therefore, Russia has decidedly toned down its expectations of Lukashenko and the political changes in Belarus compared to the initial period of the Belarusian revolution. On the basis of statements by the most influential representatives of the Kremlin, elite predictions were made at the time that the Kremlin was facing unprecedented social protests as a result of the delegitimisation of its rule and was finally ripe for parting with Lukashenko, whose attitude was fostering the destabilisation of the political situation in Belarus, with all negative consequences this would have for Russian interests (Leukavets, 2021: 97–98). Putin's plan for Belarus envisaged, among other things, that within the framework of constitutional reform, there would be a liberalisation of the rules of political parties, a reduction in the powers of the president in favour of the government and parliament, which would be “sold” as liberalisation. Russia was supposed to seek only to modernise Belarusian authoritarianism, so it took on the characteristics of electoral authoritarianism, similar to the Russian model of political regime (*Belarus: The Birth...*, 2020). These suspicions were also supported by leaks such as the Chernov dossier, which indicated that, based on a strategy prepared in autumn 2020, Russia intended to engage in Belarusian politics and build a permanent foundation for Russia's presence in the Belarusian political system (*Plan B*, 2020).

The changes to the constitution also had a non-political dimension and concerned defence issues and undoubtedly met Russia's expectations. The “flagship” element of Belarus' international identity – the status of a neutral state and a nuclear weapons-free state – disappeared from the Belarusian constitution (*V proyekte Konstitutsii...*, 2021).

## PROSPECTS FOR INTEGRATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BELARUS

At this new stage of bilateral relations, the integration process between the two countries has intensified, but it has occurred in a very different atmosphere than before 2020. During a visit to Minsk in December 2022, Putin commented on the nature of further integration between the two countries and asserted that Russia “does not intend to incorporate anyone” (*Putin: U Rossii net...*, 2022).

Both states dynamised the process of state integration and the building of the Union State, but their effects in legal and economic terms proved to be unspectacular in relation to defence cooperation, which was always governed by its own laws and stood apart from the largely empty, symbolic-ceremonial integration in other areas of the Union State.

In November 2021, at a meeting of the Supreme Council of the State Union of Belarus and Russia, a document on the main directions of the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty on the Establishment of the Union State in 2021–2023 was signed, which contained 28 integration programmes – before 2021 known as “road-maps” (Dyner, 2021). Comments on the signing of the integration programmes empha-

sised that their content was a testimony to the lack of readiness on the part of Russia to return in its relations with Belarus to plans for close integration of the two states, the establishment of common political institutions, currency, and supranational regulatory structures. Integration programmes were reduced to: “noncommittal rhetoric” (Samorukov, 2021).

In the sphere of state integration, Lukashenko managed to retain control over the tax and customs spheres. Despite proposals from Russia before 2020 to establish supranational regulatory structures and authorities in light of 1999, a tax committee was set up in 2022, and a date was set for creating a consultative customs centre (*Budet zapushchen...*, 2023). Even if Belarus made significant concessions (regarding indirect taxes, VAT, and excise duties), in the long run, these proved to be beneficial for it. Even before the outbreak of war in Ukraine, both reached an agreement on the infamous tax manoeuvre, which Putin and Lukashenko concluded in Sochi in April 2021 (*Rossiia i Belorussiia...*, 2021). The prospect of significant funds flowing into Belarusian refineries finally opened up to Belarus thanks to the agreement on the unification of tax rules regarding indirect taxes in October 2022 (*Belorussiia planiruyet...*, 2023).

Political commentators were in no doubt that Russia's decision to settle the issue of offsetting the tax manoeuvre positively for Belarus had political overtones and was linked to work on the Union State's integration programme, as it had been in 2011 and the abolition of oil duties for Belarus, in the face of an agreement on the Common Economic Space. The whole process of integrating the two countries into the State of the Union (apart from defence) was down to technical issues, facilitating economic cooperation between the two countries under Western sanctions and enabling regular contact between industry officials of both countries (Shraybman, 2024).

### **THE STABILITY OF THE BELARUSIAN POLITICAL REGIME AFTER AUGUST 2020**

Continued and deepening dependence on Russia, tangibly demonstrated by its complicity in the aggression against Ukraine, has led most political commentators to conclude that Belarus has lost all subjectivity (sovereignty) and that Lukashenko has become dependent on the Kremlin (Matsukyeich, 2023). Lukashenko himself rejected these insinuations. The crowning argument for the thesis that Belarus retained its sovereignty was its lack of participation in the war. In turn, when Lukashenko said that Belarus was not losing its sovereignty, he was not being truthful (*Soveshchanie...*, 2024). No solutions were adopted until 2024 that would contradict this claim.

Suppose one compares Russia's actual and formal achievements in the work of “opening up” the Belarusian political regime, transforming it into a regime susceptible to the influence of pro-Russian forces and institutionalising the integration of the two states in line with Russia's expectations, i.e. the incorporation of Belarus. In that case, one can agree with the statement that Russia achieves its goals in Belarus through informal actions (Shraybman, 2024). Belarus does not lose its sovereignty in the formal dimension, realising successive stages of integration with Russia, but its room for manoeuvre, i.e., the actual framework for the realisation of sovereignty,

shrinks. Its room for manoeuvre in its relations with Russia, as Artiom Shraybman (2024) wrote, was more or less the same as that of the Belarusian oligarchs in its relations with itself.

Without questioning the validity of the argument that Russia does indeed control Belarus, the question remains: why does Russia prefer to play this tiresome and prolonged game with Lukashenko instead of ending the farce? One can assume that a further formalised, and therefore overt attempt to maximise profits and their consumption would entail negative consequences for Russia's interests, especially in the context of the planned and implemented aggression against Ukraine.

For these reasons, Russia did not decide whether to try to replace him with another politician, integrate Russia and Belarus, or force Lukashenko to participate directly in the war. An important factor influencing Russia's decision not to involve Belarus in a direct conflict with Ukraine (of Belarusian soldiers) was the negative attitude of Belarusian public opinion towards the war (of which the railway guerrillas, for example, were tangible proof) and positive towards cooperation and moderate towards integration with Russia (*What Belarusians think...*, 2022). The condition of the Belarusian army was far from perfect, and its loyalty to the Russian command was questionable.

Each of these issues mentioned (removal of Lukashenko/incorporation of Belarus/engagement in war) would have resulted in consequences that were difficult to foresee. To a greater or lesser extent, they would have damaged the stability of the political regime, for which Russia was not prepared. The decision to support Lukashenko in 2020 was, after all, to a large extent, among other reasons, also driven by concern for the stability of the regime in Belarus. It was not motivated by sympathy for Lukashenko but by the threat of a social conflict that spread and the possible need for military intervention to pacify the revolution, similar to Kazakhstan's "Bloody January" and/or the West taking the initiative, with all the negative geopolitical consequences of this.

One may risk claiming that the concessions Lukashenko agreed to and the gains in the sphere of military cooperation and Belarus' participation in anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian ventures satisfied Russian expectations; second, Belarus' "strategic autonomy" was effectively broken, isolation from the West and the sanctions policy became a fact. As an aggressor state, Belarus ceased to be an interlocutor with the West, although some countries (Hungary, Switzerland) continued to maintain contact with the Belarusian "regime."

As Samorukov (2021) observed in the context of the conclusion of an agreement on 28 integration programmes, they were "disappointing" from the point of view of the dynamics and degree of subordination of Belarus to Ukraine. Russia thus toned down its appetite for integration, for fear of destabilisation of the political situation in Belarus, a front of Belarusian political elites fiercely defending their privileges, a political system built around Lukashenko exercising total control over the power camp... and a possible turn towards the West in a gesture of despair (Samorukov, 2021). Lukashenko has become so entwined with Belarusian statehood that, to many, his overthrow seemed possible only through a fundamental demolition of the Belarusian state, economy, and society.



If this conundrum was legitimate before the outbreak of the war, its onset reinforced the need for a conciliatory policy toward Lukashenko. Political changes, constitutional reform, and work to deepen the integration of the two states after 2020 were of secondary importance. If further implementation could negatively affect the security of the “rear” (logistical hub), they had to be abandoned.

The degree of informal subordination of Belarus to Russia achieved renders obsolete the assumption that a patron-client relationship links the two states. It would be more appropriate to speak of the relations connecting them in terms of subordination, i.e., vassal relations. In light of the existing findings in the literature on the principle of the patron-client relationship, this is a relationship between two states that is asymmetric, voluntary, and mutually beneficial. The post-2020 model of relations between the two states does not allow one to speak of benefits for Lukashenko, let alone Belarus. The voluntariness of this deal is contradicted by Belarus’ consistent pre-2020 policy of not recognising the Russian annexation of Crimea or the “independence” of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Why would Lukashenko voluntarily and for his own benefit agree to be complicit in unleashing a war against Ukraine, his key economic partner and a brotherly nation? Why would he risk further sanctions in the name of cooperating with Russia? Why would he risk the Belarusian army being dragged into the war after all, and Belarus being targeted by the Ukrainian army? The only acceptable answer to this question is preserving the political regime’s power and stability, even at the expense of state sovereignty.

However, from the perspective of 2024, an important caveat must be made: the value of Belarus in the eyes of the Kremlin increased the moment it decided to launch an aggression against Ukraine. Both from a strategic point of view (physical security) and precisely from an ideational point of view. Belarus had an important role to play from the point of view of reinforcing Russia’s wartime autobiographical narrative. The Kremlin perceives that the West’s apparent imposition of its social identity on Ukraine (and potentially, via a kind of normative osmosis, on Russia) poses not only a tangible security threat to Russia but also a deeper ontological threat. It challenges Russia’s sense that Russian identity should be socially valued, prioritised, and deemed positive, if not superior to the West, especially in Russia and its self-defined “near abroad” (Dawson, Smith, 2022: 185).

Without Lukashenko or as part of Russia, Belarus would not have had the desired authenticity and persuasive power. What the Kremlin needed was Belarus as an independent state, with Lukashenko as the symbol of Belarusian statehood, retaining the (the appearance of) independence and freedom of action in the international arena while accepting the leading role of Russia. This assumption is important for at least two reasons which logically intertwine after February 2022. Before 2022, the integration routine and Belarus’ participation in Eurasian integration was important (symbolic); the signing of 28 integration programmes occurred on 4 November on Russian National Unity Day. After the outbreak of war, its role was further strengthened, as cooperation with Belarus proved that Russia was able to maintain nonantagonistic partner relations with its neighbours. Further integration with Belarus confirmed that it did not need to be detrimental to other states. Belarus engages unconditionally and enthusiastically with Eurasian integration structures and Putin’s

symbolic historical undertakings, which are used to formulate accusations of Russophobia against the West, to foster a revision of history, and to support fascism (*I v gore...*, 2024).

As the war began, Belarus legitimised, publicised, and reinforced Russia's version of aggression against Ukraine. Lukashenko was the only politician from the post-Soviet area to support Russia in the face of aggression (a special military operation to protect the civilian population of Donbas') (*Tyelyefonny...*, 2022). He was able to "catch up" with Putin by reporting that "if it had not been for the preemptive attack six hours before the expected attack, they (Ukrainians) would have attacked our troops, Belarus and Russia, who were on manoeuvres" (*Lukashenko o podgotovke...*, 2022). Lukashenko was part of his narrative about the reasons for the outbreak of war (a special military operation), which was both inevitable and preemptive. Some of his statements, such as the public insinuation that "the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine was notified of the possibility of combat action, but took no steps" (*Lukashenko: voyennoye...*, 2022), fit in with the Russian narrative that Ukraine sought war, did not want peace with Russia, and that its Western patrons were preparing it for war with Russia. Lukashenko indulged in monologues about the threat from the West and emphasised Russian-Belarusian brotherhood. At times, his actions were interpreted as "coming out ahead" – he signalled in advance the Kremlin's decisions and legitimised them, for example, regarding the organisation of military manoeuvres in February 2022 or the deployment on Belarusian territory of tactical nuclear weapons.

## CONCLUSIONS

The article answered the questions formulated in the introduction. First of all, from the perspective of Russia, in the face of a political crisis, the threat of losing a well-known and difficult but predictable partner had to be supported. Otherwise, Belarus would probably follow Ukraine's example and find itself, under the rule of democratic forces, in the orbit of Western influence.

Secondly, further efforts to dismantle Lukashenko's regime of power and/or accelerate the integration process (formal subjugation of Belarus) would have negative consequences from the point of view of the planned and implemented aggression against Ukraine. For the same reasons, Russia did not force Lukashenko (Belarusian army) to participate directly in the war, assuming that the gains would be limited and the consequences unpredictable.

Moreover, collaboration with Belarus in the process and reintegration of the post-Soviet space, referring to shared historical traumas and moments of glory, is a contribution to the construction of a routine, coherent narrative of Russia's biography. The political crisis in Belarus heightened Russian anxiety, and in the face of and after the preparation for aggression, Belarus was used to legitimise, publicise, and reinforce the Russian narrative regarding the legitimacy of launching a war against Ukraine.

Last but not least, given Russia's approach to the question of the continuity and stability of the Belarusian political regime in its current form, no significant course



correction is to be expected. The ongoing war in Ukraine reinforces the importance of Belarus in the eyes of the Kremlin and intensifies the concern for the socio-political stability of its only ally.

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## ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of the fraudulent presidential elections held in August 2020, the authoritarian regime of Belarus, built around Aleksandr Lukashenko, found itself facing the most serious crisis in its history. Faced with an unprecedented threat to the legitimacy of power, Lukashenko decided to ask for support from Russia, which, until recently, he had accused of trying to interfere in the elections. The Kremlin's decision to assist Lukashenko is considered one of the key factors, if not the most important, that determined the downfall of the Belarusian revolution. The price Belarus had to pay for Lukashenko's retention of power was the growing economic, political, and military dependence on Russia, which resulted from the sanctions policy of the West. The scale of Belarusian dependence on Russia after 2020 is most clearly illustrated by the fact that Lukashenko was forced to make territory and infrastructure available to Russia in order to launch an aggression against Ukraine. Despite the fact that Russia has made Belarus so dependent that it has made it an accomplice of aggression, the Kremlin has chosen not to intervene more seriously in Belarusian politics, removing Lukashenko from power, nor to accelerate the process of integration of the two states; The aim of the article is to answer the questions: why, having at its disposal a broad (and virtually unlimited) set of tools for influencing Belarus, Russia ensured the stability of Lukashenko's political regime – it did not use them for the permanent and institutionalised subjugation of Belarus, the reconstruction of the political regime there, and its penetration by pro-Russian forces? The article is empirical in nature and, in terms of the research method used, is based on an exegesis of the symbolic statements and authoritative actions of Russian and Belarusian policymakers, as well as a decision-making analysis maintained in the material and ideational strands of international relations. From a broader perspective, it is a critical contribution to considering the dimensions of the patron-client relationship between Russia and Belarus, as well as the determinants of Russia's foreign policy decision-making process, both in realist and constructivist terms or ontological security.

**Keywords:** Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, war, Lukashenko

**W CIENIU WOJNY...**  
**STRATEGICZNE I IDEOLOGICZNE UWARUNKOWANIA POLITYKI ROSJI**  
**WOBEĆ BIAŁORUSI PO SIERPNIU 2020 ROKU**

**STRESZCZENIE**

W następstwie sfalszowanych wyborów prezydenckich, które odbyły się w sierpniu 2020 r., autorytarny reżim Białorusi, zbudowany wokół Aleksandra Łukaszenki, stanął w obliczu najważniejszego kryzysu w swojej historii. W obliczu bezprecedensowego zagrożenia legitymizacji władzy Łukaszenka zdecydował się poprosić o wsparcie Rosję, którą do niedawna oskarżał o próbę ingerencji w wybory. Decyzja Kremla o udzieleniu pomocy Łukaszence uważana jest za jeden z kluczowych, jeśli nie najważniejszych, czynników, który przesądził o upadku białoruskiej rewolucji. Ceną, jaką Białoruś musiała zapłacić za utrzymanie władzy przez Łukaszenkę, była rosnąca zależność gospodarcza, polityczna i militarna od Rosji, wynikająca z polityki sankcji Zachodu. Skalę uzależnienia Białorusi od Rosji po 2020 roku najlepiej obrazuje fakt, że Łukaszenka został zmuszony do udostępnienia Rosji terytorium i infrastruktury w celu przeprowadzenia agresji na Ukrainę. Pomimo faktu, że Rosja uzależniła Białoruś do tego stopnia, że uczyniła ją współwinną agresji, Kreml nie zdecydował się na poważniejszą interwencję w białoruską politykę, odsuwając Łukaszenkę od władzy, ani na przyspieszenie procesu integracji obu państw. Celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na pytania: dlaczego Rosja, mając do dyspozycji szeroki (i praktycznie nieograniczony) zestaw narzędzi oddziaływania na Białoruś, zapewniła stabilność reżimu politycznego Łukaszenki – nie wykorzystała ich do trwałego i zinstytucjonalizowanego podporządkowania sobie Białorusi, przebudowy tamtejszego reżimu politycznego i jego penetracji przez siły prorosyjskie? Artykuł ma charakter empiryczny i w zakresie stosowanej metody badawczej bazuje na egzegezie oświadczeń symbolicznych i działań autorytarnych decydentów politycznych Rosji i Białorusi, a także analizie decyzyjnej utrzymanej w nurcie materialnym i ideacyjnym z zakresu stosunków międzynarodowych. W szerszej perspektywie stanowi krytyczny wkład w rozważania nad wymiarem relacji patron–klient między Rosją i Białorusią, a także uwarunkowaniami procesu decyzyjnego Rosji w sferze polityki zagranicznej, tak w ujęciu realistycznym, jak i konstruktywistycznym czy bezpieczeństwa ontologicznego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Białoruś, Rosja, Ukraina, wojna, Łukaszenka