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PREREQUISITES AND CHALLENGES FOR TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN BELARUS: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS
(Perėjimo į demokratiją prielaidos ir iššūkiai Baltarusijoje: politiniai, ekonominiai, socialiniai ir kultūriniai matmenys)

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Prerequisites and Challenges of Transition to Democracy in Belarus: Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Dimensions
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ABSTRACT

(Text of the abstract)

Key words: democracy, Belarus, regime change, public and expert opinion.

This master thesis put in the spotlight the problem of the dictatorship in Belarus, its durability and the destructive effect it produces on both the internal affairs of the country and the external ones.

The question the researcher raises in the paper is whether there are and what are the prerequisites and challenges for the transition of the current political regime of Belarus to a genuine and sustainable democracy.

The object of the thesis are the factors that premise transformation of the present authoritarian regime of Belarus into a veritable and durable democracy, as well as the ones that impede the process.

The research objective, in turn, is detection and analysis of the prerequisites and challenges for transition to democracy in a modern Belarus.

In the first chapter the author discusses the phenomenon of transition to democracy with the help of the relevant theories of prominent scholars and comes to the conclusion that the process in question is a complex phenomenon not only of a political, but also of an economic, social and cultural nature. Moreover, the study of theory showed that democratic transition should be examined in its completed form, namely from the establishment of democracy till its stabilization and routinization in the country. As well, transition process should not lead to democracy as such, but to democracy, that is genuine, stable and durable enough to resist remaining autocratic vestiges and other occurring obstacles.
As a result of theoretical analysis, the researcher came up with a concept of binary of democratic transition, that introduced the transition phenomenon as a combination of two interrelated processes, following each other – democratization and democratic consolidation. The concept was presented and explained in the paper in a form of graphic scheme in order to maximize the clarity of the proposed idea (see Scheme No. 1).

Besides, the study of the theory helped the author to define and expound 6 stages that are the main prerequisites of transition to democracy (see Scheme No. 2) and discuss them afterwards regarding the case of present-day Belarus. This part of the research revealed the unsuitability of conditions for a democratic transition in the country at the moment, as well as helped to explain why the transition to democracy in Belarus in 1991 failed and did not lead to actual realization of democratic practices.

Empirical part of the study embraced both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The quantitative research involved collection of the secondary data, namely social surveys’ and opinion polls’ results from reliable sources, its accumulation, structuration and charting. Decision to use secondary data was made owing to the existence of credible sources, namely international and domestic institutions specialized on conducting of surveys and opinion polls\(^1\), that cover questions required for the research at the global level and, hence, provide ability for the researcher to conduct comparative analysis. The method of comparative analysis was used to examine and interpret the results of the collected surveys’ and polls’ data, which helped to generate evidential conclusions for the scientific paper.

In the qualitative part of the study, the researcher collected and analysed the expert opinion obtained through interviewing. The interviews will be semi-structured and interpreted after being conducted by the means of content analysis.

In a sum, quantitative and qualitative parts of the study uncovered the public and expert opinion of Belarusians on current regime and democracy, which, in turn, were used by the author to find out whether the people are eager and ready to make a change towards democracy. Thereby, the evidential data accumulated during the empirical study, helped the researcher to find out whether

\(^1\) World Value Survey, EU Neighbourhood Barometer, Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies.
there are and what are the prerequisites and challenges for transition to democracy in present-day Belarus.

The research conducted by the author made her conclude that apart from unfavourable for democratic transformations political, legal and economic environment, that is created and maintained by the public authorities, there are also social and cultural issues that impede transition of the country to democracy. Present-day Belarus definitely needs time to create democratic institutions and arrange their proper functioning, stabilize the economy and international relations, reconsider their national identity and, more importantly, become politically mature. Another transitional regime preceding democracy, but inspired by its principles and values, is required to fill the gap in political incompetence and lack of experience in democratic governance.
SANTRAUKA

(Santraukos tekstas)

Reikšminiai žodžiai: demokratija, Gudija, režimo kaita, visuomenės ir ekspertų nuomonė.

Šis magistro darbas nagrinėja **diktatūros problemą Baltarusijoje**, jos ilgaamžiškumą ir žalingą poveikį šalies vidaus ir išorės reikalams.

Darbe autorė kelia **klausimą**, ar yra ir kokios yra prielaidos ir iššūkiai perėinant nuo dabartinio Baltarusijos politinio režimo į tikrą ir tvarią demokratiją.

**Tyrimo objektas** yra veiksniai, kuriantys dabartinio autoritarinio režimo Baltarusijoje transformacijos prieštarai į tikrą, stabilią ir patvarią demokratiją, taipogi veiksniai, kurie trukdo procesui.

**Mokslinio darbo tikslas** yra prielaidų ir iššūkių perėjimo į demokratijos šiuolaikinęje Baltarusijoje nustatymas ir analizė.

Pirmajame skyriuje autorė aptaria perėjimo prie demokratijos reiškinį, naudodama žinomų mokslininkų teorijas. Daroma išvada, kad nagrinėjamas procesas yra sudėtingas ne tik politiniu, bet ir ekonominiu, socialiniu bei kultūriniu požiūriu. Be to, teorinis tyrimas parodė, kad demokratinis perėjimas turėtų būti išnagrinėtas užbaigtose formose, būtent – nuo demokratijos sukūrimo iki jos stabilizavimo ir įsitvirtinimo šalyje. Be abejo, pereinamasis procesas neturi vesti į demokratiją, kad galėtų atsispirti likusiems autokratiniams likučiams ir kitoms pasitaikančioms kliūtims.

Remdamasi teorine analize, autorė pateikė dvylę demokratinio perėjimo sąvoką, kuri parodė perėjimą kaip dviejų tarpusavyje susijusių procesų derinį - demokratizaciją ir demokratinę konsolidaciją. Tyrėja pristatė ir pateikė savo koncepciją schema, siekiant padidinti siūlomos idėjos aiškumą (žr. schema Nr. 1).

Be to, teorinis tyrimas padėjo autorei apibrėžti ir paaškininti 6 etapus, kurie yra pagrindinės perėjimo prie demokratijos prielaidos (žr. schemą Nr. 2) ir vėliau jas aptarti dabartinės Baltarusijos atveju. Ši tyrimo dalis parodė, kad šiuo metu šalyje yra netinkamos demokratinio perėjimo sąlygos, taip pat padėjo paaškinti, kodėl 1991 m. perėjimas prie demokratijos Baltarusijoje nepavyko ir nesukėlė realios demokratinės praktikos įgyvendinimo. Empirinė tyrinė tolimos dalis apėmė tiek kiekybinius, tiek kokybinius tyrimo metodus. Kiekybiniai tyrinė aiškina apėmė antrinių duomenų, būtent
socialinių apklausų rezultatų iš patikimų šaltinių, surinkimą, kaupimo, struktūrizavimo ir diagramos braižymą.

Sprendimas naudoti antrinius duomenis pasirinktas dėl patikimų šaltinių iš tarptautinių nacionalinių institucijų, kurios specializuojasi apklausų vykdymu, apima klausimus, reikalingus mokslo tyrimams pasauliniu lygmeniu, ir todėl suteikia tyrėjui galimybę atlikti lyginamąją analizę. Lyginamosios analizės metodas buvo naudojamas išnagrinėti ir interpretuoti surinktų tyrimų ir apklausų duomenų rezultatus, kurie padėjo sukurti įrodą mokslinių tyrimų darbui. Lyginamosios analizės metodas buvo naudojamas išnagrinėti ir interpretuoti surinktų tyrimų ir apklausų duomenų rezultatus, kurie padėjo sukurti įrodą mokslinių tyrimų darbui. Kokybinėje tyrimo dalyje tyrėjas surinko ir išanalizavo intervijų metu gautą ekspertų nuomonę. Intervių buvo atlikta struktūruota forma po to interpretuotas turinio analizės priemonėmis.

Apibendrinant, kiekvienas ir kokybinės tyrimo dalis atskleidė baltarusių viešąją ir ekspertinę nuomonę apie dabartinį režimą ir demokratiją, kuriuos autore, savo ruožtu, naudojo norėdamas sužinoti, ar žmonės yra pasiruošę ir nori daryti pokyčius demokratijos kryptimi. Tokiu būdu, empirinio tyrimo metu gauti įrodienys padėjo išsiaiškinti, ar yra ir kokios perėjimo prie demokratijos dabartinėje Gudijoje prielaidos bei iššūkiai. Autorės atlikta tyrimas padėjo padaryti išvadą, kad išskyrus nepalankią politinę, teisinę ir ekonominę aplinką, kurią sukuria ir prižiūri valdžios institucijos, yra ir socialinių bei kultūrinių klausimų, kurie trukdo šaliai pereiti prie demokratijos. Dabartinė Gudijai reikia laiko sukurti demokratines institucijas ir organizuoti jų tinkamą veikimą, stabilizuoti ekonomiką ir tarptautinius santykius, persvarstyti savo nacionalinį identitetą ir, svarbiausia, tapti politiškai subrendusia. Dar vienas perėinamosios režimas prieš demokratiją, įkvėptas jos principų ir vertų, yra būtinas norint užpildyti politinės nekompetencijos ir demokratinio valdymo patirties trūkumo spragą.
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INTRODUCTION

“I shan’t be holding on to this job for life. As soon as people decline my services, I’ll put my briefcase under my arm and I’ll be off.”

– Alexander Lukašenko

Already for 25 years Belarus is ruled by an irreplaceable dictator, who severely violates international law, political freedoms of the citizens, their civil and human rights. His arbitrariness and disobedience to the rule of law, as well as to the international standards of democracy, undermined country’s economy and its reputation in the international arena. For many years, Belarus is blackmarked as “Europe's last dictatorship” and at the moment country’s political regime is classified as “consolidated autocracy” by the independent watchdog Freedom House.

Authoritarianism in Belarus is a particular phenomenon in terms of durability not only in Europe, but already in the whole world. According to the statistics, it outlived the average comparable political regime by 1 to 17 years, conditional on the type of considering regime, which raises a question of whether there are any prerequisites of political regime change at the present time and whether those changes will be sustainable enough to confront the remnants of the authoritarian regime.

At the moment Alexander Lukašenko run for his fifth term in office, having won every presidential election since independence in 1991. The upcoming elections are not far-off, and hopes for political change are growing from both the national and international levels. In a while, to be exact in August-September 2020, the country will undergo another election process, which opens a door for new attempts to overthrow Lukašenka's dictatorship and establish a long hoped-for, genuine

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democracy. In fact, the presidential election can be held even earlier – approximately in the autumn of 2019\(^5\) – which makes the issue even more relevant.

Both the international community and many Belarusians are seeking for changes in the state's political system, which will give impetus to the economic growth of the country, reduce political tensions, restore nation's reputation in the global affairs, help to recover the national legacy and culture from years of dictatorship. However, even if the upcoming elections will be able to break the vicious circle of Lukašenka's re-election, whether all the voters themselves are ready for democratic changes? As the current example of Poland and Hungary shows\(^6\), it is not enough to establish democracy to carry out actual democratic practices in the country. The values of democracy must be rooted not only in the dimensions of politics and economics, but also at the level of society and culture.

Belarus already failed its first attempt to transform the system to genuine democracy after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 for several reasons, that will be explained in the chapters of the research. However, are there any prerequisites for the regime change in present-day Belarus? What challenges the country can face after Lukašenka's dictatorship will be finally overthrown and the regime democratized? How to establish democracy in the country, that will be sustainable and durable enough, to resist backsliding of the introduced regime? Those matters will be considered in this paper.

All the above lead us to the research problem, which is current authoritarian regime durability in Belarus and the harmful effect, which it produces in the internal affairs of the country, as well as the external ones.

The research question is whether there are and what are the prerequisites and challenges for the transition of the current political regime of Belarus to a genuine and sustainable democracy?

Thus, the object of the thesis is the factors that premise transformation of the current political regime of Belarus into democracy, as well as the ones that impede the process.


The research objective, in turn, is detection and analysis of the prerequisites and challenges for transition to a veritable and durable democracy in a modern Belarus.

The tasks need to be carried out to reach the objective of the thesis are the following:

- discuss the phenomenon of transition to democracy via existing related theories;
- expound the concept of binarity of democratic transition;
- define the main stages that are prerequisites for a democratic transition;
- explain why the transition to democracy in Belarus after the country gained independence, failed and did not lead to actual realization of democratic practices;
- apply and describe the defined above stages premising democratic transition regarding the case of present-day Belarus;
- detect and analyse prerequisites and challenges for transition to democracy in present-day Belarus.

The scientific work will consist of theoretical and empirical parts.

Theoretical study of the phenomenon of democratic transition will be conducted with the help of existing relevant theories of prominent scholars. In the process of theoretical analysis, the stages premising democratic transition will be defined and afterwards applied to the case of Belarus.

In the empirical part the researcher will try to detect and analyse the main prerequisites and challenges for the transition to democracy in modern Belarus on the basis of the data obtained from the public and expert opinion analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods will be used by the author to achieve the thesis’ objective.

The quantitative part will involve collection of the secondary data, namely social surveys’ and opinion polls’ results from reliable sources, its accumulation, structuration and charting. Decision to use secondary data was made owing to the existence of credible sources, namely international and domestic institutions specialized on conducting of surveys and opinion polls, that cover questions required for the research at the global level and, hence, provide ability for comparative analysis. The

7 World Value Survey, EU Neighbourhood Barometer, Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies. Additionally, will be used report on civil society of Belarus provided by Civil Society Forum of Eastern Partnership, Center for European Transformation and Lawtrend, as well as CS sustainably index produced by United States Agency for International Development, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in partnership.
A method of comparative analysis will be used to examine and interpret the results of the collected surveys’ and polls’ data, which will help to generate evidential conclusions for the scientific paper.

In the course of the research, the author will try to collect the most relevant data, however the usage of older records will be considered to trace the evolution of opinions, which will provide another dimension for comparative analysis, or rather historical political analysis.

In the second part of the empirical research, the researcher will use qualitative methods for interpreting and analysing the expert opinion obtained through interviewing. The interviews will be semi-structured and interpreted after being conducted by the means of content analysis.

In a sum, both quantitative and qualitative parts of the study will let the author detect and analyse the prerequisites and challenges for transition to democracy in modern Belarus.

Without a doubt, many works have already been written, analysing the possibilities and problems of democratic transition in Belarus. However, majority of them concentrate on the establishment of democracy as such, but do not consider question of the regime’s stability and durability, as well as actual realization of democratic practices in the country. They are also quite fragmented and do not cover the full range of factors (defined in the paper by the author as combination of prerequisites and challenges) that affect democratic transition process. Furthermore, not enough attention is given to the public opinion regarding the current regime of the country and democracy as such. As well, not many relevant research projects embrace both public opinion and the expert one. Therefore, hopefully, the research will manage to provide novel and original approach to study the phenomenon, and also discover new, valuable information on the topic, that will enhance interest to the subject-matter and contribute to its future exploration.
1. TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY, ITS NATURE AND MAJOR DETERMINANTS

1.1. Review of the Theories of Democratic Transition

Before to proceed to the immediate topic of our research paper, let's first examine several existing theories of the phenomenon in question to get a catch-all understanding of it.

In political science, there are several theories of transition to democracy, each of which emphasizes a specific component of democracy's establishment and reinforcement. In this section of the chapter we will consider theories of the most prominent scholars in the scientific field, as well as less known, so that to have a deeper insight into the considering process. To be exact, we will explore theories of Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996), Adam Prezeworski (1992), Guillermo O'Donnell (1996), Samuel Huntington (1993), Andreas Schedler (1998, 2001), Larry J. Diamond (1999) and many others. A look at various approaches to the study the phenomenon will help us to attain a more vivid understanding of the diversity of factors and features of transition process, as well as ways to explore it.

We will start our exploration from the pioneering theory of Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan. From the authors’ point of view, transition to democracy should be analysed in its completed form, namely considered as “completed democratic transition” or “transition to consolidated democracy.” The scholars stated that “the path of how to complete a transition to democratic regime should be taken,” so that to study how different non-democratic regimes transform into democracy or fail to do so, and what determinants, “arenas” as mentioned in the text, regulate the process.

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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.
According to the theory of Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, a transition to democracy can be regarded as complete, when the democratic regime becomes routinized, institutionalized, normalized and legitimized. Figuratively speaking when it is “the only game in town.”\(^{13}\) Let's have a short look at behavioural, attitudinal, constitutional and also psychological factors, which makes democratic transition accomplished.

Behaviourally, democracy becoming the only unconditionally accepted choice when there are no political groups or actors who attempt to overthrow the democratic rule or to facilitate domestic or international violence in order to secede from the state. Here is meant, that the behaviour of the newly elected government, that is a product of democratic transition, is no longer interfered by the problem of how to eschew democratic breakdown. Attitudinally, a democracy is fulfilled when even in the face of severe political and economic crises, the overwhelming majority of the people believe that any further political change should originate from democratic procedures. Constitutionally, a democracy becomes steadfast when all of the actors in the polity believe that any conflict within the state and above should be resolved according to established norms, and that violations of these norms are impermissible. This implies that any decisions, resolutions and operations carried out by the authorities, political actors, as well as citizens of the state should be bounded by the specific procedures and laws, constitution in particular, and also institutions that are authorized by the new democratic process. The last point by virtue of which a democracy is thought to be complete, is the psychological acceptance of democratic values and principles by the people, which means its recognition and approval as absolute, namely attachment to democratic norms and values within a given society\(^{14}\).

Moreover, Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan introduced five interconnected and mutually reinforcing conditions, which they called “five arenas of consolidated democracy”\(^{15}\). Those ones are thought to be essential and must be crafted by one society in order to complete democratic transition. The first condition is free and lively civil society, by the means of which people are able to manifest interests and will. The second one is relatively independent political society, in which political actors compete for the legitimate right to exercise control over public power and the state apparatus. Third,

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
well-defined and respected by the political actors and the government in particular rule of law, which effectively protects individual freedoms and associative life. The fourth arena to mention is bureaucracy, actually used by the newly established democratic government and its leaders. And the last one to refer is institutionalized economic society, adopted and supported not only by the governmental structures, but by the citizens as well\textsuperscript{16}.

Apart from essential conditions for democratic transition Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan outline two important caveats to consider in a research on the subject-matter. First, when we say that a regime is a consolidated democracy, the possibility of future rollback cannot be excluded. However, the phenomena of backsliding should be related to the problems connected with a specific historical background and context of the democratic transition process.

The second caveat is that we should not assume that there is the only one type of consolidated democracy. Precisely this issue is a great concern in the area of the research. Also, we should not regard the state, when a democracy can be named a consolidated one, as a finishing point of its development as such. Consolidated democracies constantly continue to improve their quality by the means of economic growth and deepening public participation in the political and social life of the country. It is important to take into consideration that there is a continuum from low-quality to high-quality democracies\textsuperscript{17}.

Another important work to explore is Adam Przeworski’s “Games of Transition”\textsuperscript{18}. The scholar considers establishment of “self-sustaining”\textsuperscript{19} (consolidated) democracy as the central question of democratic transition, however argues that “even if established, it need not be self-sustaining. <…> self-sustaining democracy is only one among the possible outcomes of breakdowns of authoritarian regimes”\textsuperscript{20}. Therefore, from his point of view, establishment of a democratic rule and start of democratization process, does not guarantee sustainability and durability of the regime, and the fact, that it will reach consolidation point.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
From the standpoint of Adam Przeworski, a transition to democracy can be completed and reach "self-sustaining" level, when there is a real possibility of alternation of the party representatives in the office and the results of this alternation is actually reflected on government policies. Besides, to complete transition effective civilian control should be established over the military to eliminate arbitrary, violating the rule of law, use of force by state bodies. Several important problems should be also resolved to consolidate a democracy, namely construction of institutional framework for contestation, establishment of competitive representative regime and economic conflict resolution procedures via democratic institutions.

The author distinguished several phases in the transition process, namely liberalization and democratization, which would preferably lead to a "self-sustaining democracy" or a consolidated one, however it is not a mandatory result of the transition. Adam Przeworski used game theoretic approach to analyse peculiarities of the interactions between two competing groups in democratic transition, so that to clarify the strategies and beliefs of the actors. The game theoretic model, proposed by the scholar, is considered to be classic in studies of democratic transition and especially applicable in cases characterized by elite-led, also named top-down, liberalizations. It became also popular in exploration of the third-wave democratizations.

Przeworski's game theoretic analysis portrays strategic interaction of civil society and liberalizers, and demonstrates that, if to solve the game as a one with incomplete information, a better understanding of the role of uncertainty in the process of transition can be gained. Strictly speaking, the model proposed by the scientist suggests, that the strategic decisions in democratic transition process are made by different actors, who are interdependent and usually different in approaches to the regime's reformation. Those strategic decisions effect each other and makes some of the actors losers, others winners. This reflect inherent instability and uncertainty surrounding the democratization process, which can be examined by the means game theory.

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.
The scholar also examined relation between economic development and political regime. In another work, to be exact “Democracy and development”\textsuperscript{23}, Adam Przeworski with other scientists used a two-stage regression model of James Heckman to study the impact of political regimes on material well-being, defined as economic growth rates, investment, productivity, population growth, birth and death rates and income. This work of the collective of scholars is considered to be a remarkable achievement, since it dispels the idea of mutual influence between political regime (democracy in particular), and economic development. The scientists find out that economic growth does not generate democracies, but political instability affects income growth in dictatorships. The incomes per capita grow faster in democracies, simply due to the fact that population rise faster under dictatorships. In a one word, the research shows that political regimes have a greater impact on demographics than on the economic development as such.

The correlation between development and democracy was also studied by Barbara Geddes, who also suggested the model of democratization as strategic interactions between elites and citizens. However, the imperial research on democratization, conducted in her paper “What Causes Democratization”\textsuperscript{24}, confirmed the relationship between economic development and democracy. Adam Przeworski for his part, argues that economic development affects democratic stability, but does not cause democratization as such. The explanations for these correlations still remain contested.

Another one important outcome of the Barbara’s Geddes’ research is confirmation of the fact that countries with a higher level of education of the population are more likely to be democratic. Therefore, the level of education of the citizens, as well as political actor, and their political awareness can be considered in the democratic transition process as well.

However, the scholar admitted, that two context factors should be taken into account while studying phenomenon of democratic transition, namely the historical period of the transition process and the type of the regime that is replaced by a democracy\textsuperscript{25}.


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
One more scholar on democratic transition Andreas Schedler\textsuperscript{26}, also concluded that the process of establishment and strengthening of a democracy, is both context-dependent and perspective-dependent. It comes from the specific period of establishment and strengthening of a democracy, as well as the type of political regime we want to set up and the type we want to eliminate. Basing on this double distinction, Andreas Schedler distinguish five different concepts of democratic transition: the avoidance of democratic breakdown, the prevention of democratic erosion, the organization of democracy, the ending of democracy, and the deepening of democracy. The goals of transition as such, according to the author’s view, will be affected by each country’s unique starting point.

Nevertheless, another prominent scholar, namely Larry Jay Diamond\textsuperscript{27}, rejects theories that privilege preconditions in the process of transition to democracy. He argues that democracies emerge at different rates and in different forms. From his point of view to make democratic transition complete requires sustainable political institutions, accountability, the rule of law, active civil society and improved economic performance. All the conditions listed are presented as foundation of legitimacy for the newly established regime.

Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl\textsuperscript{28} agree with viewpoint of Larry Jay Diamond and further stress that democracies, that reached state of consolidation and are, expectantly, stable and durable, will not necessarily be better at solving different socioeconomic problems, than previous form of the government or any other one. Thereby, they state that democracies are not necessarily economically efficient and not likely to appear more ordered or stable than autocracies. In general, the work of the authors is more concentrated on the intentionally broad definition of democracy, but not on democratic transition as such. It focuses on the general concept of democratic rule, its procedures and institutions, as well as its key principles, which are defined as contingent consent and bounded uncertainty. Contingent consent here means that elected officials and citizens obey the rules


of democracy and accept them as unconditional. Unbounded certainty for its part, indicate that the outcomes of future elections are unclear until they de facto occur.

Widely known American political scientist Samuel Huntington in his book “The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century” marks the end of a regime transition process using so-called “two-turnover test”, where the transition to democracy occurs if “the party or group that takes power in the initial election at the time of transition loses a subsequent election and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to the winners of a later election.” The author also argues that a backsliding in the transition process is less likely to happen and democratic consolidation is more likely to take place in more economically developed states that undergo the transformation peacefully and have previous experience with democratic governance, as well as external support from international community.

Guillermo O’Donnell for his part, disputes the idea that democracy can be consolidated only if the main conditions for it are met. He claims that imperfect democracies that are not fully and officially institutionalized can also endure. The author challenges others theories of democratic transition, that are considering institutionalized polyarchies as a benchmark. Vice versa, he supposes that whether democracy will be consolidated is determined not by the quality of the transition process, as Samuel Huntington stated, but by a simple fact that it endured. Hereby he pushes imperfect democracies to the same level with highly-developed ones, and substantially reduced requirements for a regime to achieve consolidated democracy status.

30 ibid.
31 ibid.
However, the Guillermo O’Donnell’s views were highly criticized by Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros and Hans-Jürgen Puhle, who argued in their paper that certain socio-political practices can preclude success of the transition process and result in democratic backsliding. They perceive movement towards consolidated democracy as a process of stabilization, routinization, and institutionalization of political behaviour. In course of time informal practices, for example clientelism, are thought by the authors to be antithetical to democratic survival.

As well worthy to mention Gerard Alexander, who in 2001 presented a theory of democratic transition based on the “strategic choices of political elites.” In the paper the author examines strategies of elite actors on the right side of the political spectrum in five European states using rational-choice approach. Gerard Alexander suggests that elites in particular must choose democracy to boost consolidation process. However, he acknowledges that choice is often based on self-interested reasons and conditioned by context-specific issues.

Over time the theories of democratic transition were revised and in another work of Andreas Schedler (2001) and in the paper of Gerardo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen (2002), the issues of how to measure level of democratic consolidation were risen. The latter two authors highlight the challenges a researcher face, while studying phenomenon of democratic reinforcement, namely conceptualization, measurement and aggregation. Andreas Schedler for his part, states that when consolidation thought to be complete and established democratic regime is likely to undergo, then observable measures of endurance are required. The scholar advocates that behavioural evidence is superb to attitudinal and economic evidence, because it is more connected with the subject of interest,


36 Ibid.


namely regime stability. That leads to a conclusion that democracies are likely to survive when political actors behave democratically.

And the last point to mention, is the impact of “transnational pressures”\textsuperscript{39}, proposed by the Jan Zielonka and Alex Pravda\textsuperscript{40}, on the process of transition to democracy. In their book, the authors analysed how do the external patterns of transition process effect its progress and how different international actors and various types of transnational pressures shapes political development in the region, namely Eastern Europe, that also falls within the scope of our interests.

The range of approaches to the study of democratic transition, as well as viewpoints on what premises it and effects its development, are extremely broad in the field of political and social sciences. Unfortunately, we cannot cover full range of them in this research paper and, accordingly, concentrate only on several of them. The theories mentioned above, are selected in accordance to their relevance to the subject-matter, trustworthiness and originality of the approach, and will help us to create the theoretical framework for further application to the case of our study.

1.2. Binary of the Democratic Transition Process

All the discussed above theories lead the author to a conclusion that the process of transition to democracy is a complex phenomenon, that should not be understood only as democratization of political system or political change in a democratic direction. Transition to democracy is also an economic, social and cultural phenomenon, that includes transformation of the country's economy, liberalization of civil society, raise of political culture, and in general, rooting of democratic values and norms in the society. As well, analysis of democratic transition should not be finalized at the point of establishment of democracy, but examine the development of the regime, its stabilization and routinization in the country.

Moreover, to analyse the phenomenon to a full extent, we should consider not transition to democracy as such, but to democracy, that is genuine, stable and durable enough to resist remaining autocratic vestiges and other occurring obstacles. That’s why in this chapter we will look at the


\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
considering transition phenomenon as a combination of two interrelated processes, following each other – democratization and democratic consolidation.

The idea that the researcher came up with was to a great extent inspired by the concept of “completed democratic transition” also named as “transition to consolidated democracy” of Juan José Linz and Alfred Stepan, as well as proposed by Adam Przeworski “transition to self-sustaining democracy”. Therefore, in this chapter we will concentrate not only on the transition to democracy as such, but put emphasis on the sustainability and self-reliance of the established regime, and furthermore, its correspondence to international standards.

Although the processes of democratization and democratic consolidation are interconnected and can be discussed together, it is important to understand that they differ in definition, driving forces, duration, sequence and character of procedures. Democratization is regarded as introduction of democratic system and its principles in a non-democratic state, while democratic consolidation is the process of how that newly established democracy matures, becomes sufficiently durable and is unlikely to revert to authoritarianism or any other form of non-democratic governance. Democratization is antecedent in transition process and usually takes a way less time in comparison with consolidation, which involves in-depth process of rooting of democratic practices into political and economic systems, as well as into the society and culture of a country. Strictly speaking, democratization works more on introduction of democratic standards of governing in the state and its economy, and gives less attention to the adoption of these standards at the dimension of society and culture. On the contrary, consolidation means that democracy is already established in the state structures and institutions (the process of democratization already underwent). What remains is routinization of previously established democratic rules and their recognition as unconditional by political actors and citizens. Consolidation of a democracy to a great extent involves rooting of

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41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.


democratic norms and values at the level of society and afterwards culture. Therefore, democratization touches on more public sphere, which in this paper we will consider as a binary of state and economy\textsuperscript{46}, represented by the governmental institutions and political actors; while democratic consolidation focuses more on the civil and private spheres, and to a larger degree connected with legitimation, political culture and civil society.

However, it is important to note, that the spheres are highly interconnected, as well two considering processes, which means that they impact one another, and one and the same determinant can be applied to both, but effect to a different extent. It also means that democratic backsliding, due to democratic decline in certain sphere, can occur on different stages of transition, even when democracy is already consolidated.

To make the proposed concept of binary of democratic transition clearer, let's have a look at the created by the author scheme, which depicts the idea in a visual manner and hopefully, helps to understand the essence of the proposed concept better.

Scheme No. 1: Binary of Democratic Transition Process

**Binary of the Process of Transition to Democracy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autocracy</th>
<th>Democracy in Transition</th>
<th>Consolidated Democracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PUBLIC SPHERE</strong></td>
<td><strong>CIVIL SPHERE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PRIVATE SPHERE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State and its Political and Economic systems, governmental structures and institutions, bureaucracy and public administration, political actors and agencies.</td>
<td>Legitimation, Political Culture, Civil Society, Non-governmental organization, unions and groups, as well as non-state public actors and the media</td>
<td>Traditions and culture, customs and norms of social behaviour, mentality and attitudes, family and informal social networks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Symbol proposed by the author stands for the interconnection and mutual influence of two processes on each other.

2. The condition when a democracy is considered consolidated, should not be regarded as a finishing point of its progress. Consolidated democracies constantly continue to improve their quality by the means of economic growth and deepening public participation in the political and social life of the country. There is a continuum from low-quality to high-quality democracies.


Source: created by the author.
1.3. Theoretical Framworking and Detection of the Stages Premising Transition to Democracy

Acquainted with several the theories on democratic transition and the concept that will be attributed to the process in question, we move to the formation of theoretical framework, which will serve as a foundation of future analysis and help to define the main stages that prerequisite the process of transition to democracy.

As we can see, the constituents and conditions of the transition to democracy vary from theory to theory. That's why we need to narrow down the scope of scientific interpretations and concentrate on the main ideas, that are more applicable to the case of our study.

In the section below, we will define and analyse 6 stages that a regime must undergo in order to complete transition to democracy. We will take “five arenas of consolidated democracy”\(^47\), proposed by Juan José Linz and Alfred Stepan, and add “transnational pressures”\(^48\) of Jan Zielonka and Alex Pravda, which can be also considered as “external support from international community”\(^49\) suggested by Samuel Huntington. Therefore, 5 stages will mostly touch on internal affairs of the country, while the last one external. In the analysis of these stages will try to modernize and specify the conditions mentioned in proposed by the scholars “arenas”, and provide more detailed, evidential investigation.

Consequently, the stages that presuppose democratic transition, which will be discussed are:

1. Reestablishment of the Rule of Law and Constitutional Reformation;
2. Introduction of a New Market System and Reforming of the Economic Society;
3. Institutional engineering and Regulation of Bureaucratic Procedures;
4. Legitimation of Legal, Political and Economic Systems and Influence of Civic Culture;


5. Liberation of Civil Society and Endorsement of Civic Participation;

Apart from the stages, we will pay attention to the specific historical background (Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan), previous experience with democratic governance (Samuel Huntington), specific period and context of the democratic transition process (Andreas Schedler), but avoid the perspective-dependent factor (A. Schedler), namely what type of democratic regime should be established to complete democratic transition. We will not consider the last one, since there are no abilities to confirm or determine suitability of any existing democratic orders to the case of our study. What are we trying to do, is to look at the phenomenon from a general perspective, and therefore, we should also eliminate idea of “imperfect democracies”\textsuperscript{50} of Guillermo O’Donnell and take as a benchmark Western-inspired liberal democracy with a free market economy.

Moreover, role of economic development in the transition process (Adam Przeworski, Barbara Geddes, Samuel Huntington, Larry Jay Diamond), will be considered in the second, defined above stage of democratic transition.

The question of political institutions, accountability, the rule of law (Larry Jay Diamond), elections and “alternation of the partisan in the office”\textsuperscript{51} (Adam Przeworski, Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl) will be raised in the first and third stage, defined above.

Issue of legitimization (Larry Jay Diamond) will be undercovered in the fourth stage, while level of education (Barbara Geddes) will be touched upon in the last stage describing civil society and political culture. The role of demographic factors (Adam Przeworski), will be presented shortly in the last part of our research.

In our theoretical framework we would avoid the idea of the decisive role of elites, their choices and strategies decisions in democratic transition (Gerard Alexander, Adam Przeworski), however keep in mind importance of the behaviour and compliance to the principles of democracy.


of the political actors and citizens (Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros and Hans-Jürgen Puhle).
1.3.1. Reestablishment of the Rule of Law and Constitutional Reformation

“Order is law, and it is more proper that law should govern, than any one of the citizens: upon the same principle, if it is advantageous to place the supreme power in some particular persons, they should be appointed to be only guardians, and the servants of the laws.”

– Aristotle

Any more or less arranged society requires a legal framework to be ordered and regulated. Such framework is provided by a certain system of binding rules, namely laws, that control human behavior. The laws here play a role of a specific mediator of relations between people. It is laws that regulate and ensure that individuals of a community adhere to the will of the government, that is given authority to govern a country. However special mechanism needed to control actions of the government as well. In this case the rule of law steps in. It implies that every person is a subject to the law, including representatives of the authorities and governmental institutions. Therefore, governance in the country must be conducted according to it. This phenomenon can be also referred to as German Rechtsstaat or French État de droit. It originated from 19th century Classical liberalism ideology and represent the ideal of constitutional state, in which the power of the government is limited in order to protect citizens from the arbitrary exercise of authority. The supremacy of national constitution in Rechtsstaat guarantees the safety and constitutional rights of its citizens.

The rule of law stands in contrast to an autocracy, where supreme power is concentrated in the hands of one person or authorized group. Just as authoritarian regimes oppose and disregard


universal obedience to the laws, so democracies honour and recognize it as fundamental principle of governance and state apparatus. That’s why the rule of law and commitment to it, is crucial in the process of transition to democracy, as well as constitution, which occurs to be a carrier of fundamental principles one society acknowledge.

Reestablishment of the rule of law, modification and ratification of the constitution, means rebuilding a legal carcass of a society construct and democracy in particular, by the mean of which other substantial parts, such as civil and political society, will be able to function properly. During the period when a country was ruled by an authoritarian leader or group, not only is the rule of law affected, but the constitution usually turns out to be ideologically loaded and rather difficult to amend. Hereby, recovery of the equal obedience to law by everyone and constitutional redesign, if needed, is substantial stage in democratic transition. The more governmental structures of the state operate according to the principle of the rule of law and adhere constitution, the more the quality of newly established democracy and the less likelihood of democratic backsliding.

Worth to mention here also separation of powers and independent judicial system, which grants citizens with the right to turn to courts to defend themselves against the state and its officials. The law in genuine and self-sustainable democracies should be fairly, impartially and consistently enforced by the institutions with jurisdictional competences that are independent from the other assigned governmental branches. No one can be arrested, imprisoned or exiled arbitrarily, without fair, transparent and public trial.

Another important point to touch upon while speaking about democratic transition and the rule of law, is elections. Elections endorse democratic governance of a state by empowering the citizens, namely electorate, to select leaders and to hold them accountable for their performance in office. The whole idea of democracy itself is literally “rule by people” (from Greek “δημοκρατία”)\textsuperscript{55}, which suggests that the citizens of a state are the ones to exercise power. This is true in direct, classical form democracy, which dates back to ancient Greece and Rome. However, in most modern societies, democratic government is conducted through representatives by voting. Hereby, voting and the process of election stand as fundamental mechanism of modern representative democracy. Nearly all contemporary Western liberal democracies, which became a benchmark in modern world, are

representative ones, apart from few exceptions, such as constitutional monarchy of the United Kingdom or federal republic of the United States.

To establish veritable and stable democracy one country should have elections that are competitive, transparent and well-administrated. Competitive elections create a state of formal accountability between policy makers and citizens. Accountability of electing process can be easily undermined if, elected candidate violate re-election or, for a certain reason, political party or coalition is so dominant in the country that there are no choices for voters among alternative candidates, parties or policies. Opposition parties and candidates must possess the freedom of speech, assembly and movement, which are required to openly express their critique of the current government and offer alternative policies and candidates to the electorate\(^56\).

Moreover, elections often serve platforms for the discussion of public issues and facilitate the expression of popular opinion, through promulgation of the future intentions and policies of the candidates to public examination. This stimulates legitimacy of a newly elected state representatives, obedience and respect of the citizens to a renewed policy. Therefore, the voters are willing to participate and to accept the results of the “democratic game”\(^57\). In addition, proper democratic elections also provide political education for the electorate and ensure government responsiveness to the will of the people.

All the mentioned above clearly shows reestablishment of the rule of law, determined by the constitution, with respected separation of power and autonomous judicial system, as well as competitive and transparent elections is a vital stage in transition process to a democracy. Nevertheless, not all young democracies, that declare themselves as such, comply with these requirements and, respectively, are subjects to democratic backsliding. The example of this phenomenon we will investigate in the 2\(^{nd}\) chapter of the paper, devoted to the case study of democratic transition process in Belarus, where the rule of law is violated on regular basis, constitution became an instrument of supreme power of the leader and the electorate is discouraged by the absence of electoral transparency and accountability.


1.3.2. Introduction of a New Market System and Reforming of the Economic Society

Another important prerequisite to mention while speaking about democratic transition is economy. In fact, not only political and legal systems need to be reformed to get rid from autocratic bounds, but economic as well. Hereby, there is a necessity in special policies directed to improvement in economic efficiency, elimination of market distortion, stabilization of equity or employment rate. Economic reform in former autocratic states usually refers to the process of deregulation, namely reduction in regulation in economy from the side of the government, rather than incensement of governmental programs to resist influence of the market. Here is meant economic liberalization, which is one of the decisive features of benchmarked nowadays Western-style liberal democracy.

The wave of economic liberation, started after World War II, was afterwards endorsed by several events, such as the Great Inflation in 1970s, the early 1980s recession and, finally, the collapse of the Communist bloc in the end of 1980s. Therefore, neoliberal movement emerged and reached its peak in the end of a Cold War. While classical liberalism was more concentrated on political aspects, the cornerstone of neoliberal ideology became model of free market capitalist economy, also referred as Laissez-faire or economic system, where governmental interference is minimized, and the main determinant in the allocation of capital and production is natural market signals, created by the conditions of supply and demand. This is why nowadays any democracy that wants to be recognized by the international community, prosperous and stable, should adopt the rules of a free market capitalist economy, played at the global level.

The concept of economic liberation implies reduction of government intervention in an economy in exchange for broader participation of private sector entities. Such scheme is thought to increase competitiveness in order to encourage economic development. Liberalization policies comprise privatization of government organizations and assets, open market and reduction of barriers.

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for trade, integration into the world economy and great labour market flexibility, lower tax rates and unrestricted flow of capital. In general, economic liberalization is thought to be a beneficial and desirable process for emerging democracies, since it boosts economic growth and makes economy relatively independent from the governmental branch. In this way it increases well-being of citizens and endorse development of civil and political (civic) society, that we will discuss in following sections\textsuperscript{61}.

However, some scholars stress\textsuperscript{62} that post-Cold War neoliberal idea of global economic liberalization does not actually promote economic growth in developing countries, but contributes to the accumulation of capital by transnational corporations. Free trade introduces rigid competition from more established economies, which can easily swallow local businesses and industries, and end in failure of developing countries. As a result, economic situation and poverty level in low-income nations is not improving, but rather leading to an increase in absolute poverty and wealth inequality between countries. Another reason why transition to democracy from economic point of view can be hard for developing countries, is that usually such countries have lower educational standards and are not technologically advanced. That means that labor market and production facilities cannot adjust to changing demands of the newly introduced market. Here is why young democracies often struggle to adapt to a changing economic environment\textsuperscript{63}.

Regardless of the duality of views on the liberal economic model, acceptance of its rules is considered to be an important step towards complete democratic transition in a country and its integration into the global market. This suggests that appropriate level of market autonomy and its openness, as well as balanced distribution of ownership between the public and private sectors in the economy, are determinative factors for transition to a democracy. If all the property would be concentrated in the hands of a state, along with decisions about pricing, labour, supply and

\begin{itemize}
  
  \item \textsuperscript{62} Mohammed Nuruzzaman. \textit{Economic liberalization and poverty in the developing countries}. Journal of Contemporary Asia, Volume 35, 2005 - Issue 1, 2011. Found at: https://doi.org/10.1080/00472330580000071
  
  \item \textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
distribution, the autonomy of political society, as well as civil one, would not exist and, accordingly, democracy, even if established, is a subject to democratic rollback 64.

Nevertheless, we should confess that idea of free-market capitalism is in many ways a platonic ideal, that can be approached but never reached. In fact, condition of complete freedom of the market and total absence of governmental interference into economy is hardly possible and, as a matter of fact, is not suitable for democratic transition. There are three reasons for that. First of all, pure market economies would never emerge and survive without a degree of state regulation. Markets require legally enforced agreements, the issuance of money, regulated standards and protection of the property of both public and private sectors65. Secondly, any market, even the most successful one, can collapse at a certain time and be in need of state corrections to come back into its stable position66. Thirdly, democracy should provide policies that generate asserts in the areas of education, health and transportation, as well as provide certain economic safety for its citizens and alleviation of economic inequality67. Establishment of such policies is definitely responsibility of the state authorities. Hereby, a role for the state in economy, even in the most liberal one, is crucial and cannot be eliminated.

All of the above leads us to the conclusion that to reach adequate level of sustainability, a young democracy should have a mixed economy, where autonomy and openness of the market is balanced with requisite state regulations. Thus, competitive liberal economy slightly adjusted by the government, released from trade barriers and integrated into the world market, is a key to economic growth and efficiency of a country, which for its part, provides fertile ground for raising of political and civil societies. However, any developing country is facing certain risks while entering a merciless game of free market capitalist economy, full of skilled and experienced players in the field.


65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.
1.3.3. Institutional Engineering and Regulation of Bureaucratic Procedures

Both political and economic systems should be institutionalized, which means to be standardized and regulated by specific organizational structure, so that to function properly and efficiently. There are different ways how to define what is institution and the process of institutionalization, however in this paper we will concentrate more on political concept of institutionalization process, which implies establishment of governmental institutions and specific bodies responsible for overseeing or implementing the policy\(^68\). Here we face with institutions as organizations responsible for creation, enforcement and application of laws. However, they can also be defined as recognized structures of rules and principles within which the mentioned above organizations operate.

Usually, there is a great variety of institution within a state, which coordinates political, economic and legal procedures, manages social- and healthcare sector, take care of education and welfare of people, and much more. Institutions are responsible for structuring and management of the political, economic and social segments of a society. Thus, they play an important role in shaping degree of a regime’s stability and the process of transition to democracy itself.

Moreover, economic institutions in particular, such as property rights and regulatory institutions, institutions for macroeconomic stabilization and social insurance, institutions for conflict management and others, are thought to be the main source of economic growth in a country\(^69\). They also have a decisive impact on investments in physical and human capital, technology, industrial production and resource distribution within a state. Nevertheless, institutional design of economic, as well as other sectors, highly depends on the distribution of political power among the elite groups and state representatives, and therefore functioning of political institutions. In fact, exactly political institutions determine both the *constraints and incentives*\(^70\), key players in a given society face. This


crucial feature of political institutions and strategic allocation of powers they provide, help to cultivate a credible mechanism to decrease risks of inappropriate behaviour of political and economic actors. In other words, political institutions provide stimulus for government officials and other public representatives to abide the rules established within a system\textsuperscript{71}.

Carlos Pereira and Vladimir Teles in their book “Political Institutions, Economic Growth, and Democracy: The Substitute Effect” defined that political institutions fundamentally matter for inceptive democracies, but not that much for already consolidated ones. Usually, stable democracies have a well-established system of political institutions, functioning of which is harmonious and fruitful for the regime durability. Young democracies, on the contrary, need an effective and active presence of political institutions to manage shaky political and economic systems. Therefore, influence of political institutions on economic indicators is more visible and needful for newly established democratic regimes. Thus, there is a regress in importance of political institutions in relation to economic performance, within a progress of transition to democracy. Once democracy is consolidated and favourable institutional conditions are provided, the importance of the political entities loses intensity\textsuperscript{72}. This obviously shows how significant are political institutions and their establishment in the process of democratic transition and how they determine model of socioeconomic improvement of a country.

Apart from institutions, any state apparatus needs effective administration mechanism to implement its policies and ensure adequate functioning of the political system. Such mechanism is bureaucracy. It helps to maintain order, maximize efficiency and eliminate policy violations. It ensures enforcement of legal rules and maintains a hierarchy of authority. In fact, state sector organizations and public officials at various levels of government are key players in the policy process. Civil servants, bureaucrats and representatives of regulatory agencies largely shape public image of the government\textsuperscript{73}. Thereby, behaviour of the officials, who are responsible for the conduct of government policies and programs, plays an important role in state apparatus functioning and,  


\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{73} Tobias Bach and Martino Maggetti. The Politics of Bureaucracy. European Consortium for Political Research, Section S680, 2017. Found at: https://ecpr.eu/Events/SectionDetails.aspx?SectionID=646&EventID=96
consequently, democratic transition per se. Definitely bureaucracy is not the most defining determinant of the transition, but still, worth of a short notice.

The implementation of government policy by the civil servants usually referred to as public administration. It is an important bureaucratic procedure to mention, since it builds a transition from the state and the government to the citizens every day. It helps to establish a connection between these two very distant from each other existing society parts.

Nevertheless, to be effective and fruitful a bureaucracy needs to be usable\textsuperscript{74} by the newly established democratic government. Unfortunately, many young democracies experience problems in that regard, because of the remnants of previous bureaucratic systems and misconduct on the part of public servants, who are affected by ideology of previous autocratic regime. That’s why reform of the state bureaucracy can be a serious challenge, as the officials cleave to old habits. Such issues are also very common in Post-Soviet countries, which we will analyse in the following chapter.

Thereby, the usability of the state bureaucracy and behaviour of civil servants, as well as proper institutional arrangement, is valuable determinant of transition process.

1.3.4. Legitimation of Legal, Political and Economic Systems

After a legal and political systems were re-established according to principles of democracy, it should also receive sufficient legitimacy of the public, so that to function properly and efficiently. Here we are heading to the second stage of transition process, namely legitimization.

We already slightly discussed political legitimacy in the 1\textsuperscript{st} section of the chapter and it is clear that legitimization is a process by the means of which a regime or authority is becoming accepted by the community members and justified to exercise power. Legitimacy is thought to be a primary condition for ruling a state, without which a government will suffer political stalemate and likely collapse. Indeed, it is difficult to exert influence over others, possessing only the use of power.

However, legitimacy and the process of its amplification is rather a social phenomenon of a psychological nature, than political one\textsuperscript{75}. That statement can be argued, but socio-psychological


perspective here indeed should not be skipped. Hereby, legitimization appears as attachment of a
specific ideology to social norms and values within a given society as a result of socio-psychological
process. Legitimacy can be considered to be reached, when people internalize their feelings of
obligation to obey group of officials and their authoritative decisions, and do it on a voluntary basis.
People should believe that they ought to submit themselves to legal system formed in a state of their
own free will, rather than because of fear of punishment or expectation of remuneration. Consequently,
the level of voluntary consent to be governed directly affects the level of efficiency of
the state system functioning and helps to forecast dynamics of political and legal systems.

Recognizing legitimacy as a socio-psychological phenomenon we should acknowledge that
such factors as moral values and standards enshrined in a community, cultural and religious traits of
a country, level of education and resistance to political views and media, personal beliefs and
attitudes, motivation and even emotional state of individuals, can substantially shape obedience to
the authorities and legitimization process. Therefore, legitimization is connected not only with
consolidation of the regime, but also with social reorganization of the society.

The factors, mentioned above, can also explain why legitimacy sometimes persist in certain
autocratic regimes. Especially vivid occurrence of obedience under authoritarian rule can be found in
the Post-Soviet space, where people’s way of thinking, mentality and even culture have been transformed over decades of ideological pressure. This phenomenon we will examine in detail
in the following chapters.

Moreover, not only legitimization if affected by socio-psychological factors, but also voting
behaviour. Electoral behaviour for its part, shapes election process and future outcome of it. This
issue is a subject of political psychology, which is trying to use "psychological lens" to understand
an explain political phenomena. In fact, efficiency of an election process cannot be achieved only by
the means of transparency, competitiveness and good organization, mentioned before. Enormous
role is also given electorate, its eagerness to participate and political awareness. It is important for
electorate to make informed political choices, even if the level of political attentiveness and
experience of voting is low.

The phenomenon of legitimacy is highly interconnected with civic or also called political culture of the nation. Civic culture\textsuperscript{77} represents a set of ideas and beliefs about how political system should be constructed and operate. Those beliefs give meaning to a political process in a public eye and promote stability and survival of the regime or vice versa stimulate its rejection. Political culture also indicates level of citizens' conviction in their influence on political processes and acceptance of civil obligations. This stimulates political participation in variety of its forms, ranging from voting to attendance of a public demonstration.

In addition to the legitimization of the governmental structures and legal system, the rules of a new market and economy should be adopted and routinized. People should be eager and ready to enter new economic game, which presumably ought to be beneficial not only for the country’s wealth, but for the well-being of the individuals themselves. However, in many autocratic states changes in the economy are perceived as dangerous and not accepted with ease, which makes transition process even more difficult. Examples of this can again be found in the former Soviet Republics, were absence of entrepreneurial opportunity and competition resulted in pervasive lack of motivation by individuals due to deficiency of rewards, as well as recognition of low levels of financial well-being and income inequality as norm.

It is also worth noting that economic changes go hand in hand with social ones, which is reflected in the theories of socioeconomics. Here is meant that social and economic factors relate and influence one another, boosting or decreasing socioeconomic development of one country. Legitimation of the economic system and satisfaction or discontent with it, is often an important factor that shapes legitimacy of the government and public policy, and should not be neglected in the research process.

All the mentioned above clearly shows that voluntary-based legitimation of political, legal and economic systems is a significant stage in democratic transition process. It is highly interconnected with civic political culture of a country, that defines general trust of people to the authority and the state policy, belief in political participation and civic duties. However, legitimacy is a complex socio-psychological phenomenon with an extensive range of volatile factors, making the nature of it unstable and hard to forecast.

1.3.5. Liberation of Civil Society and Endorsement of Civic Participation

The last, but not less important stage of democratic transition is liberation and enhancement of the 3rd sector or civil society. By civil society here we consider a range of self-generating and self-reliant organized groups, that are independent from the state and function on voluntary basis. Well-established and lively civil society sector is an indicator of awareness of the people and their concern about country's affairs, eagerness to participate and shape government policy, citizens' belief in their influence on political processes and recognition of civil obligations. In a one word, independent, voluntary, law-abiding, tolerant and pluralistic civil society is a proof of presence of mentioned in previous section political society. Both societies are highly interconnected and operate as a watchdog of the government and as a loudspeaker of public will and interests.

Civil society organizations and actors play a decisive role in transition process for several reasons. First of all, civil society organization monitor, limit and to a certain extent control the power of a state. Usually is a well-established and authoritative state rule of law is obeyed and function properly. However, in former autocratic countries, emerging from decades of dictatorship, there is an obvious need to find another way, apart from the rule of law, to check and restrain the power of political leaders and state officials. This way is proposed by civil society actors, that watch how state officials use their authority and raise public concern in case of any abuse of power. Especially important is participation of civil society organizations in monitoring the conduct of elections. Such wise the 3rd sector endorse transparency and accountability in government and keep the citizens, as well as international community, aware about the current state of affairs in the country.

This generates a second significant function of civil society, namely exposure of corrupt conduct of the officials and lobbying for good governance reforms. Even if anti-corruption laws

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80 Ibid.
and institutions exist in the governance sector, they usually cannot provide full transparency of actions and data, because they are state-dependent, unlike organizations of the 3rd sector.

A third role of civil society is promotion of political participation and educating of people about their rights and civic obligations as citizens. The 3rd sector actors encourage people to take part in important public events and group decision-making, such as elections, demonstrations, public manifestations and etc. NGOs also create special spaces and environments for debates on public issues and for expression of citizens' opinions. They even establish a training ground for new type of political leaders, who are thought to shape future political landscape of the country. In general, they are engine of political society.

Fourth, civil society organizations also help to develop and adopt new for former autocracies values of democratic life, such as tolerance and open-mindedness, respect for the law and civility, moderation and compromise. Settlement of democratic values in a culture and mentality, effected by decades of autocratic rule, is not an easy task. However, without them a democracy can hardly be stable. Such values cannot simply be taught – they should be cultivated in young and old generations through various projects and programs that practice participation and debate.

The fifth point to mention, is a role of civil society organization in education. After authoritarian regime, extensive reforms are needed to revise the curricula, rewrite the textbooks, and retrain the teachers in order to educate young people about the mistakes of the past and teach them the principles and values of democracy. Such a mission cannot be performed only by officials of the Ministry of Education. It requires civic participation. Civil society here should be involved as a constructive partner.

Another important function, or it is better to name it a major tool of the 3rd sector organizations, is lobbying. NGOs and interest groups can present views and express concerns of the citizens to the governmental bodies to persuade them for future changes. They use lobbying as a tool to establish a dialogue with relevant government structures and agencies, so that to influence their actions and decisions.

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81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
Moreover, civil society agents play a significant role in mediating and helping to resolve conflict\textsuperscript{84}, both in the domestic and international level. Having autonomous, not biased position, NGOs are used as an effective mediator in different types of contradiction and clashes. The 3rd sector offer well-developed programs and training to relieve political and ethnic conflict, and instruct people how to solve their disputes peacefully through reaching of consensus.

All the mentioned above clearly shows that civil society is an unconditional part any genuine, well-established democracy should have. However, the functioning and activity of the 3rd sector under authoritarian regime is severely restrained by the limitation of public participation, unjustified and illegitimate use of force, violation of basic political freedoms, such as freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and the right to participate in public affairs. Those ones are essential for both civil and political societies. Usually, under authoritarian rule, independent civil society agents are perceived as enemies are pursued by the state authorities, which are trying to eliminate any kind of disobedience and legitimate their actions by manipulating public opinion, total control over the media and other sources of information, creating fake NGOs and etc. Nevertheless, in democracies civil society is not an opponent of the government, but an essential provider of accountability, responsiveness, transparency, effectiveness and hence legitimacy for the government\textsuperscript{85}. What actually civil society is supposed to do is to strengthen citizens’ respect for the state and promote positive engagement with it. It also beneficial for improving state reputation at the international level.

Besides, important to mention, that development of the 3rd sector of society is highly dependent on financial backing, since the biggest part of civil society agents operate on the voluntary basis and did not accept donation from the governmental institutions, so that to keep themselves independent and self-reliant. However, certainly they cannot function and implement their programs without any financial support. Therefore, need for alternative non-governmental sponsors and investors exist. Financing is a big obstacle to any NGO to overcome and an issue that can undermine its independence and impartiality, that’s why it should be taken into account.

Summarizing the aforementioned, civil society to a great extent can be named a cornerstone of democratic transition, because it monitors and restrains the power of the state, expresses public

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
will and interests, lobbies for good governance reforms, provides civic education and promotes
democratic values of life, keep the citizens and international community aware about the current state
of affairs in the country, mediates and helps to resolve conflicts on domestic and global levels. Civil
society endorse its transparency and accountability of the authorities and, hence, legitimacy of the
government, which, accordingly, leads to the proper and efficient functioning of political system as
such. It also encourages political participation and shapes belief of people in their influence on public
decision-making and political procedures, which for their part, help to build and reinforce political
society. However, it is pretty hard for a voluntary-based, non-profit NGO to stay independent and
impartial, due to the lack of sufficient financial support and donor-reliant funding model.

1.3.6. Transnational Pressures and Impact of Global Affairs

Following the internal stages that shape the transition process, let’s turn to its ‘external
environment’, and discuss how and to what degree international community and its actors stimulates
or obstruct democratic expansion in the country, and how important is adoption of the international
principles of global affairs by a country in transition, to achieve sustainability and durability of the
regime.

After several waves of democratization, in particular after the democratization wave following
WWII (Western-style liberal democracy), democracy surged the world and resulted in adoption of its
principles as regulatory basis of global community’s affairs by many international agents. It greatly
expanded trade liberalization, globalization process at the political, economic, social and cultural
levels. A need for broad international cooperation and global governance aroused, occurred such
phenomena as transnationalism and multilateralism. However, to make the ‘game’ of international
relations fulfilled, all the players should enter and accept its rules. That is why many international
actors and their unions are interested in adopting as many countries as possible of the standard of
democracy, as well as others internationally accepted principles of governance, public administration,
trade and etc. Therefore, members of global community, in case they are interested, are trying to
influence internal affairs in the country, so that to promote internationally accepted democratic
principles, values and norms, and, hence, boost establishment of veritable democracy and its
strengthening in the country. However, assistance in strengthening democracy and the eagerness to
assist in its establishment is not always a case. Sometimes international actors consciously and
unconsciously hinder the process of transition.
Usually international actors use such tools of influence as sanctions and imposition of other different types of penalties or punishments for the violation of the international democratic standards, as usual, by the authoritarian governments and its political actors. They also exercise soft power by promotion of democratic standards and values via social and educational programmes, supporting civil society organizations, lobbying, media broadcasting and propaganda. The use of hard power (coercion and The use of force) hardly takes place and applied only in case of severe conflict or warfare, when life of civilians is in danger, as well as international security. All these tools we will regard as transnational pressures, which to a certain extent, though as a rule not the main one, shape the democratic transition process.

Special meaning in democratic transition process also have international organizations, unions and partnerships, that conduct special programmes and projects stimulating growth of democratic practises in the countries in transition, support and finance domestic democratic institutions and their activities, provide humanitarian aid and other kinds of assistance in case of conflicts, political tensions and etc. Besides, important role international organizations play in elections, providing independent observers and stimulating transparency of the process. They also provide unbiased reviews, data and experts’ opinions on the state of affairs in a transitional country, actual actions and events that take place there, which helps to raise awareness not only of the global community, but the citizens of the country themselves.

Nevertheless, not only global community is interested in adoption and rooting of the democratic standards in a country in transition, but the country itself, in case it intent to establish and successfully consolidate genuine democracy, interested in entry into the ‘game’ of international relations, where the deals of politics, economics and law are considered, as well as global issues are solved. In fact, any country recovering from autocratic rule, needs to reestablishment diplomatic relations and introduce new status to the global community, as well as meet other requirements of the world affairs, which is the first step towards international recognition and acceptance. Involvement in international decision-making and problem-solving, and membership in diverse international organizations and associations, is an important stage in the democratic transition process, that facilitate the sustainability of the regime and reduce likelihood of democratic backsliding.
1.4. Generalization and Mapping of the Formed Theoretical Framework

As a result of review of the relevant theories, accumulation of knowledge about the process in question, and identification of its major prerequisites, the researcher came up with six stages, that premise democratic transition described above. We will further use them to outline and visualize constituents of democratic transition, as well as some of our conclusions, in a form of a graphical scheme.

In one word, to make a democratic transition complete requires well-managed institutionalized political, legal and economic systems, where government is separated by powers, state officials respect the rule of law, and the constitution, ensure transparency and accountability of the governance. Legitimization of these systems is an essential condition of their functioning, which is induced by autonomous, non-profit, voluntary-based and law-abiding civil society. Civil society for its part, promotes political participation and provides civic education for the citizens, by means of which endorse development and performance of political culture. Entrance and acceptance into global affairs, which requires adoption of international principles of democracy and the rules of the market, is important for the country in transition as well, to restore diplomatic relations and introduce new global reputation of the country.

To bring this summary to visual form and make the theoretical framework for future research clear and definite, the author proposes graphical scheme, where the stages are depicted with their main characteristics. However, important to admit that the scheme is already slightly adapted to the case of our study and certain additional peculiarities of the subject of our study, such as geopolitical position (this factor is further described in the section of the following chapter), are included.
both the level of education and public awareness, which are unreasonably placed by the researcher in the private sphere due to tripecy of choice, relate to all three spheres to a different extent. The government establish public educational institutions (public sphere), where the population (private sphere) raise its erudition and awareness, which afterward to a great extend shape the political culture and civil society. The 3rd sector organizations as well raise level of education, providing educational programme to the civilians. Therefore, considering factor can be linked to all the given in the scheme shpere.

transnational pressures are already presented in adapted form for the subject of the research (Belarus), namely special attention is given to the geopolitical position, though it is not always plausible for each country. Therefore, in case of application of the created scheme to the other instances, the factor of geopolitical position should be excluded or reconsidered.
In the scheme proposed a model of two spheres – public and private, that in combination with each other form the third one – civil. Each sphere has its own units, which are the gears of an interconnected mechanism of State – Civil society – Citizens (Public – Civil – Private) and initiate its functioning.

Public sphere is represented by the state, considered as a government and its representatives bound with economy and the market by the state policy, and institutionalized and administrated by the bodies of bureaucracy.

Civil sphere consists of co-dependent and interrelated entities of civil society and political culture, that cultivate and stimulates legitimation process of mentioned above public sphere particles. Passing the process of legitimacy by the political, economic and legal systems, as well as state institutions and bureaucracy, is an unconditional prerequisite for democratic transition.

Private sphere, determined by the citizens (individuals) and their informal groups (families and etc.), depicts culture, traditions and national identity of a country, rooted in its history and legacy.

Important to notice, that such factors as level of education (¹) and public awareness (²) are placed by author to the private sphere unreasonably, due to triplicity of choice, since both to a different extent relate to all three spheres. The government establish public educational institutions (public sphere), where the population (private sphere) raise its erudition and awareness, which afterward to a great extend shape the political culture and civil society (civil sphere). The 3rd sector organizations as well raise level of education, providing educational programmes to the civilians (Civil-Private). Therefore, considering factor can be linked to all the given spheres.

Easy to observe, that each spheres ‘gear’ is embraced by a circle of features and to some of them (civil society) range of qualities is extra added. Those features and qualities play a substantial role in the process of democratic transition and need to be considered while studying the phenomenon.

All the constituents (‘gears’) of the transition process and actions between them take place inside of the spheres, that indicates their internal character. However, as concluded before, one external factor will be considered, namely transnational pressures. Exactly transnational pressures are already presented in adapted form for the subject of our study, namely special attention is given to geopolitical position (³,⁴), though it is not always plausible for each country. Therefore, in case of application of the created scheme to the other instances, the factor of geopolitical position should be excluded or reconsidered.
2. ADVERSE CONDITIONS FOR
THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN BELARUS

2.1. Democratic False Start or the Translational Failure of 1991

The Collapse of the Soviet Union released many nations from the ideological imprisonment. Unfortunately, Belarus was not lucky to fall into a trap of another authoritarian regime. Already 25 years, since independence and until now, the country has been ruled by a dictator, whose governance has been marked by non-democratic practices, constant violation of human rights and freedoms, rigged elections, violent suppression of peaceful demonstration and beatings of its participants, jailing of opposition leaders, journalists and political activists.

Belarus declared independence from the Soviet Union on August 25, 1991, which brought hopes for a bright future of the country and national resurgence. In 1994 the Constitution was adopted, where the Republic of Belarus was proclaimed as a democratic social state that guarantees respect for political rights and freedoms, as well as the separation of powers. Adoption of the constitution was a significant step towards democratisation of the regime in the country. Nevertheless, shortly after the adoption, to be exact on July 20, 1994, Alexander Lukashenko was elected for the post of president and, during the referendums of 1995, 1996 and after 2004, made the amendments of the constitution that took key powers off the parliament and gave him total control over the branches of the government and an absolute and indefeasible authority. It was a false start of democratic transition, which immediately resulted in a rollback to totalitarian regime, set up and regulated by the president.

Reason of the democratic transition failure in Belarus, namely anti-democratic constitutional reforms and election of autocratic leader, will be further explained in detail in the section, where political system of the country, constitutionalism, rule of law and elections are described (see 2.2.2 Constitution as a Tool of Autocratic Rule and Disrespect to the Rule of Law).

2.2. Hindrances to Transition to Democracy in Belarus

The example of Belarus one more time proofs our statement that establishment of democracy and corresponding start of the democratic transition does not guarantee that it will be completed, and democratic rollback may occur at every stage of the process.

In the following sections of the chapter, we will analyse and define the factors that can be prerequisites for democratic transition in Belarus, using the stages defined and schematized in the previous part of the research, as well as certain conditions that are significant for our particular case. Therefore, we will apply our model of six stages to study case of democratic transition in Belarus, as well as consider historical background of the country, the context and peculiarities of its geopolitical location. This will help us to explore distinctive features of the political, economic, social and cultural environments for the democracy’s foundation and reinforcement, and whether they premise and to what extent stability and durability of the established regime.

2.2.1. Geopolitical Complexity and Crisis of National Identity

For many centuries, Belarusians were staying on the crossroads: one path was directed to the West, the other to the East; so, our roads, starting together, diverged in different, opposite directions.87

– Ignat Abdiralovich

Before turning to the defined in the last chapter democratic transition constituents, it is important to understand the complexity of geopolitical location of Belarus, which in many ways determines political and economic state of affairs in the country, shaped its history and, therefore, culture and traditions.

Geographically, Belarus was predestined to sit at the core of the clash of cultures and civilizations. It is located in the North European Plain, the geopolitical superhighway of Europe and a place, where numerous conflicts and disputes between other nations have been resolved, and often

in a violent way. The country turned out to be stuck between constantly confronting Western and Eastern European polities. The area has historically been the invasion route of European powers like Germany and France into Russia and vice versa. Belarusian lands often served as a battlefield and were not once occupied, invaded and ravaged. After being a part of Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 18th century, the country was invaded and incorporated into the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union. Moreover, Belarus was subject to Nazi occupation of WWII, during which it lost more than 25 percent of its population, and then was reincorporated into the Soviet Union with the Germans’ defeat.

For many years, the country was torn into pieces and joined to various more powerful polities, which reflected in the modern heterogeneity of the Belarusian ethos, mentality and culture. Many scholars agree on that Belarus is currently undergoing a national identity crisis and only minorities of people recognize their past and legacy. In the book of David Marples Belarus is referenced as "denationalized nation", and there respectively shown how step by step deteriorated Belarusian sense of national belonging in the flow of historical, political, economic and cultural changes. Indeed, owing to such confusion in the country's past and insufficient historical awareness, many Belarusians have lost their sense of national identity, which nowadays resulted in weak political culture and absence of interest in their own country’s state of affairs.

Lack of sense of national belonging, disputes on country's legacy and history should be considered while analysing the prospects and challenges of democratic transition in Belarus, since they shape political culture and civil society of the country.

Geopolitical controversy as well highly affected politics of the country and its economy. Unfortunately, Belarus is a landlocked country not possessing enough resources to stay independent and is forced stick to powerful allies, that would provide to the country political patronage and

88 The term “invasion”, used by the author of the article, is controversial and cannot be considered an irrefutable opinion. The interpretation of this historical event is bilateral, which reflects complexity of geopolitics of the country, that consequently affected the political views of both the scholars and Belarusians themselves. Some consider it to be a forcible annexation, others conscious and voluntary joining the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.


financial support. Already for 25 years according to the Constitution, Belarus is an independent Republic, however *de facto* relies a lot on the neighbouring countries, to great extent on Russia, because of current state policy and dependence on Russian financial and energetic backing and subsidies.

Thereby, we can clearly see how important is the question of geopolitics in case of Belarus and how it shaped and still shaping country’s politics and economy, how it made it dependent on greater powers, and politically and economically slavish. Complexity of geopolitical position also to a great extent affected Belarusian history and legacy and resulted in insufficient historical awareness of the people and crisis of national identity. Those factors from their part weaken modern political culture, and to a certain degree cause Belarusians’ indifference to their own country’s state of affairs and lack of eagerness to changes.

### 2.2.2. Constitution as a Tool of Autocratic Rule and Disrespect to the Rule of Law

As was already mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, failure of Constitutional reform was the first and one of the most defining factors of inability of democracy to root in Belarus.

After the document entered into force in 1994, it experienced two substantial reforms, each of which boosted the further decline of democratic governance and turned the regime into a dictatorship. Modern Belarusian Constitution fails to fulfil its main purpose and protect the country from the usurpation of power. Quite the other way, it has become a tool of autocratic rule and gave full control over the government branches to the ruler and let him exercise power in all spheres of society.

After being adopted in 1994, the Belarusian Constitution contained all the prerequisites to make the state genuinely democratic with obeyed rule of law, fulfilled separation of powers and autonomous judicial system. However, the constitution was not corresponding to the views of the first democratically-elected president, who remained in permanent conflict with other branches of the state, namely the Supreme Council (legislative) and the Constitutional Court (judicial), from the very beginning of his assumption of office.

Alexander Lukašenka was chosen for the post of president during two-round national election on June 23 and July 10, 1994. The elections were mainly dominated by the debates on country’s relations with Russia. Nevertheless, they were not about who is for and who is against closer ties with Moscow – both main candidates, Vyačeslav Kebič and Alexander Lukašenko, stood for economic
union with the Eastern ally and argued about who oppose the collapse of the Soviet Union the most. However, Lukashenko was the only Belarusian deputy to vote against the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. Lukašenka campaigned against Government corruption and inflation, and scored an overwhelming victory, gaining 80% of votes. His victory in the elections is largely associated with the difficult economic situation in the country and people’s striving for economic reform, as well as with the broad populist company of Lukašenka.

Shortly after the election, newly elected president addressed the State Duma of Russian Federation proposing a new Union of Slavic states, which culminated the creation of the Union State of Russia and Belarus in 1999 and predetermined the political and economic orientation of state policy.

To have the evidence and better understanding of the transformations that the constitution went through, that lead to the reinforcement of Lukašenka's power, let's have a short glance to the history of constitutional crisis in Belarus.

In 1995 Alexander Lukašenka put forward a proposal to hold a four-question referendum, which suggested equating of Russian language status with Belarusian, rollback of national symbols to the former BSSR, adoption of the policy of economic integration with Russia and amendments to constitution, that allowed early elections in case of violation of the constitution by the Parliament. The Parliament, for its part, approved the date and only one question concerning economic integration with Russia. Lukashenko declared that he would not accept decision of the Parliament on the questions and would take personal responsibility for the referendum. This action is considered the start of the confrontation between the state branches - the President and the Supreme Council (the parliament) of Belarus together with the Constitutional Court.

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92 Ibid.


94 Ibid.
Right after the conflict, 19 deputies-representatives of the Belarusian Popular Front carried out a hunger strike, protesting against the referendum despite the Parliament's decision and in return were beaten by OMON militants, which made the situation even more tense and going beyond the law\(^{95,96}\).

On 14 May 1995 the referendum finally took place, where Alexander Lukašenka put forward all four questions, regardless the decision of the Supreme Council. According to the official results, all the raised questions were approved by approximately three-quarters of voters, with a turnout of 64.8\%\(^{97}\).

However, the validity of the referendum was widely questioned by the opposition and the international representatives. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly rejected the results of the referendum and declared that it violated international standards. Members of the Belarusian democratic opposition for their part stressed that the organisation of the referendum involved several serious violations of the acting legislation, including the Constitution of Belarus\(^{98}\).

According to opinion of former parliament member Siarhei Navumčyk, the referendum was illegal and, therefore, its results have no legal power, because it violated articles 17, 78 and 148-2 of the Belarusian Constitution, as well as several laws\(^{99}\).

First of all, according to the 1995 Law on national referendums, the national symbols and official language were not allowed to be questioned. Secondly, the Law on status of deputy of the Supreme Soviet was violated by the unlawful and arbitrary beating of the deputies. Thirdly, according to the monitoring data, campaigning for the referendum question exceeded the allowed limit, when opinions of the representatives of opposition didn't have sufficient media coverage, which one more

\(^{95}\) Ibid.

\(^{96}\) Inna Studzinskaya. 10 years ago were beaten members of the opposition of Belarusian Popular Front, which held a hunger strike inside the parliament building. Translated from Belarusian by the author. Radio Liberty, 2005. Found at: https://www.svaboda.org/a/794453.html


\(^{98}\) Ibid.

time violated the Law on status of deputy. Fourth, at the time of the voting the observers, as well as officially registered ones, recorded fraud in vote counts, that violated the Law on national voting (referendum). Moreover, the formalities of approval of the referendum by the Supreme Council were not accomplished\textsuperscript{100}.

The changes in the language and national symbols that followed the referendum, had harmful effect on the national identity of the country and lead to mass closing of Belarusian language schools and minimization of Belarusian language programmes on the media. Economic policy became focused on Russia and the Constitutional amendment give rise to another referendum, that future transformation of the Republic to presidential with absolute power of the head of state.

In 1996 Alexander Lukašenka initiated another seven-question referendum on changing the date of the country's Independence Day, changing the laws on the sale of the land, abolition of the death penalty and another, more substantial amendments of the constitution. The proposed amendments immensely enlarged the power of the president and diminished the role of the parliament. In return, the Supreme Council step up with a counter-proposal to abolish the Institution of President and transform Belarus into a parliamentary republic. For its part, the Constitutional Court ruled that the results of the planned referendum can only be advisory, but not binding. Nevertheless, the president managed to issue a special decree that made the referendum results legally binding. A group of deputies who opposed the decree initiated an impeachment procedure against Alexander Lukašenka and asked the Constitutional Court to examine the occurred issue\textsuperscript{101}.

This marked the beginning of constitutional crisis in Belarus, which lead to intervention of Russian officials, who tried to negotiate a compromise. On 22 November 1996, the confronting sides – the president and the Supreme Council of Belarus with the Constitutional Court – came to reconciliation. An agreement, according to which the parliament was made to suspend the impeachment, and Alexander Lukashenka to withdraw the mandatory implementation of the referendum by the decree, was signed. However, the next day, president-supporting group in the

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.

parliament rejected the agreement, which gave the president a freedom to maintain the referendum as legally binding and amend the constitution extensively decreasing the power of the parliament.\(^{102}\)

On 24 November the referendum finally took place and Lukashenka managed to won on all the points he proposed. However, the referendum, like its 1995 predecessor, was rejected by the international community, except of Russia and some other CIS countries, for violations of electoral norms, manipulation on the use of state-owned media by the president and disinformation of the voters. It was also condemned by international organizations, such as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as contravening democratic standards and not once described as a “further consolidation of Lukašenka's dictatorship”.\(^{103}\)

The procedure of the referendum was as well not recognized by the head of the Central Electoral Committee Viktar Hančar, who detected multiple falsifications. Shortly after referendum, Viktar Hančar was dismissed by the president without consulting the parliament as it was required under the law. In 1999 the discharged head of Central Electoral Committee mysteriously disappeared and was presumably killed.\(^{104}\)

On November 26, 1996, the Constitutional Court discontinued the impeachment procedure, that marked finish of political struggles in favour of the president.\(^{105}\) After the referendum Alexander Lukašenka formed a new parliament from loyal to him deputies and dismissed the ones representing opposition. The new body, namely the House of Representatives, was formed and became the lower chamber of the National Assembly (bicameral parliament).

In 2004, after victory in election of 2001, that was widely denounced as fraud by international community, Alexander Lukašenka initiated another referendum. Being in the end of his

\(^{102}\) Ibid.


constitutionally-limited two terms, the president proposed amendment in Constitution, that removed limitation of presidential terms for any individual, allowing to the ruler of the country to stay in power as long as he or she is elected. This time the National Assembly and Judiciary, staying loyal with the president, didn’t rise questions about voting falsifications and violation of article 112 of the Electoral Code, this prohibited the raising of issues related to the presidential election to a referendum\(^{106}\). The referendum was also noted by several arbitrary arrests of journalists, representatives of opposition and protesters against the result, which in addition violated freedom of speech and assembly, as well as human rights\(^{107}\).

After being already barred from membership in the Council of Europe in 1997 for numerous voting irregularities and anti-democratic practices, the Belarusian Constitution was officially proclaimed by the Venice Commission as “illegal and not respecting minimum democratic standards and thus violating the principles of separation of powers and the rule of law”\(^{108}\). The results of the all referendums were declare unconstitutional and anti-democratic. The EU, USA and OSCE followed and withdrew recognition of Alexander Lukašenka and formed by him National Assembly as the legitimate authority of Belarus. At the moment, Belarus is a holder a Special Guest status\(^{109}\) in the Council of Europe, however the country didn’t manage to meet the condition set by the organization yet, namely declare a moratorium on the death penalty. Presently, Belarus is the only European state that continues to carry out punishment by death\(^{110,111}\).


\(^{109}\) Ibid.

\(^{110}\) Ibid.

In the modern Belarusian Constitution, the president dominates in all three branches and has exclusive powers in each field, which violates the separation of powers and democratic standards of rule. The head of the state can appoint and dismiss all the judges except for six of the Constitutional Court, elected by the upper house of the Belarusian parliament. However, as it was already mentioned, the members of the National Assembly (Belarusian Parliament) are loyal towards presidential policy and at the moment no candidates appointed by the president were disapproved. The Constitutional Court several times referred to such problems of the Constitution, as the absence of an ombudsman-institute or the presence of mentioned above death penalty, but those appeals were not considered\textsuperscript{112}.

President also have right to make decrees and edicts, that possess the same legal force as laws. Moreover, the article 137 of the revised Constitution states that presidential decrees must prevail in any case of conflict with other laws, which gives to the head of the state influential legislative power.

\textit{De jure} the president is not the chief of the executive branch, but appoints the ministers and other members of the government. The House of Representatives approves the candidature of prime-minister, but in case it fails to do so twice, the president is allowed to dissolve the lower house of the parliament. However, during Alexander Lukašenka 25 years of rule, The House of Representatives (lower chamber) has never disputed any presidential decisions, as well as Council of the Republic (upper chamber)\textsuperscript{113}.

There are also cases of multiple human rights violations within the Constitution and \textit{de facto} deviation from it, such as nonexistence of corresponding law for the right to choose alternative civil service instead of mandatory military service mentioned in the Constitution\textsuperscript{114}.

All of the above, clearly shows that election of authoritarian ruler, which lead to antidemocratic constitutional amendments, was one of the major reasons of democratic transition failure in Belarus, which undermined the separation of power in the country and rolled back established democracy. Therefore, to conduct a transition to genuine, sustainable and durable democracy in


\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

Belarus, extensive meticulous constitutional redesign is required, that would endorse autonomy and separation of state branches and limit them from exercising the core functions of the others.

2.2.3. Economic Dependence and the Trap of ‘Kremlin loans’

From the very beginning of independence Belarus faced with series of financial crises, that became a relatively constant satellite of the country.

In 1991-1995 all sectors of the national economy suffered from a deep economic crisis occurred after the collapse of the Soviet Union, because of loss of the key consumers of the country’s industry, shocks of price liberalization, overwhelming growth in prices for energy resources and raw materials. The citizens, in the face of economic shock, have chosen autocratic ruler, that launched ‘market socialism’ policy and took in his hands the state’s economy and the redistribution of wealth produced within the country. The new leader, highly opposing Western capitalism, started extensive, economic intervention into in the market, industry and country’s finance, as well as headed for the establishment of close financial bounds with Eastern neighbour – Russia. Moreover in 2008 he expanded his right to intervene in the management of private enterprises, which largely increased presidential control over the private sector of economy. The suppression of private economic initiatives and overwhelming regulations of the market by the government, along with raised from state policy dependency on Russian market and energy resources, afterwards turned out to be the main prerequisite for the following crises and economy stagnation115.

The period between 1996 and 2000 Belarusian economy was affected by economic crisis in Russia, that resulted in a sharp increase in prices and the devaluation of the national currency. Between 2001 and 2005 the economy stabilized and even showed growth due to performance of the industrial sector. However, another crisis, that was provoked by electoral campaign of the president, who raised the average salaries in Belarus to $500 per month, swept the country. Belarusians, in fear of devaluation of the ruble, started to convert their savings to foreign currencies, namely dollars and euros, that led to the most serious balance of payments crisis since country’s independence. Inflation reached 108.7% and Belarusian ruble fell drastically. Average salary (counted in dollars) decreased from $530 in December 2010 to $330 in May 2011. Recovery of the country from the crisis was very

difficult due to the budget deficit and isolative domestic policy of the president, that was heavily criticized by the EU and other members of international community. Overcoming of the crisis made the country borrow huge amounts of money from Russia and trap itself into ‘Kremlin loans’, which further even more increased dependence on the Eastern neighbour\textsuperscript{116}.

Nevertheless, the range of crises continued and in 2015 Belarus was affected by financial crash in Russia, that led to two years of intense recession. The Belarusian rouble depreciated by almost 60%. In January-November 2015 the GDP of Belarus declined by 3.9%. The employment rate substantially declined\textsuperscript{117}. Country again had to get out from economic disaster.

The range of economic crises mentioned above give a clear picture of two main problems – internal – state economic policy seeking control over both public and private sectors of economy and constantly intervening into the country’s market, as well isolating it from any undesirable partners from the ‘capitalist world’, – and external, that is as well quite connected with the internal one – the overwhelming dependence on Russia in terms of export-import, energy and resources supply and huge national debts.

In fact, not only economic troubles in Russia, as well as political ones – for example, sanctions imposed on the Federation after occurrence of the conflict with Ukraine – have an impact on Belarusian economy, but any turbulence in Russia-Belarus relations. There was already series of energy disputes between two countries, that provoked negative affect on the domestic economic affairs of the country\textsuperscript{118}.

Regardless of the all crises mentioned, there is an improvement in current state of Belarusian economy, however it does not free country from Russian exposure, as well as from drawbacks of state policy. First of all, moderate cyclical expansion of the economic activity in 2017 brought to an end two-year recession and stopped deterioration of people’s incomes, however the public debts

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continue to grow\textsuperscript{119}. Belarus’s GDP went up 2.4%, which the first positive result since 2014.\textsuperscript{120} Important factors that had a positive effect on country’s economy are resolution of Russian-Belarusian oil dispute that last a year and general improvement of the economic situation of the Eastern neighbour. However, the state policy contributed only to a slight improvement in the economic situation in Belarus. Presidential ineffective economic policy still aims at preserving of heavy industry and soviet-time plants and industries, that already for a long time sucking out the Belarusian budget. The president shows fear of the social destabilisation that could be provoked by massive layoffs of personnel from decommissioned plants. Moreover, the government still continuing its policy of regulation of citizens’ wages for pretty much the same reason – to reduce public dissatisfaction about the state policy and improve image of the presidential governance\textsuperscript{121}.

On the other hand, despite of preserving of the Soviet time ‘economic relics’, the government recently decided to launch liberal reforms in specific post-industrial sectors, such as IT, which could be a nice start toward liberation of the economy. Thereby, at the moment Belarusian authorities are quite ambiguous in their economic policy\textsuperscript{122}.

Regardless of overall moderate economic growth in the country’s since 2017, the results of foreign trade are deteriorating, and furthermore external debt is raising\textsuperscript{123}, which means that the economy is growing on already spoiled ground, that might effect situation in future. Besides, important to keep in mind, that the main reason of relative economic stabilization at the moment is external, namely improvement of Russia-Belarus relations and economic situation in Russia.

This leads to a conclusion that as far as Belarus will strategically aligned with Russia, the country’s economic situation will be directly affected to the performance of Eastern partner’s economy and relations with it. However, it is very hard to get rid from the bounds with Russia, since

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Kamil Kłysiński. Is the crisis over? The economic situation in Belarus after two years of recession. Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW). Found at: https://belarusdigest.com/story/surviving-year-two-of-recession-digest-of-the-belarusian-economy/
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
it is the main exports’ partner, energy-supplier, as well as lender. Moreover, tightens connection with Russia the policy of the president, who is attached to the former Soviet practices of governance and strongly oppose Western capitalist model of economy, privatization and free market.

2.2.4. ‘Lukašenka’s Nomenklatura’, Incompetent Officials and Corruption

Bureaucratic system of Belarus is quite classic for any authoritarian regime, in our case for a dictatorship. It is represented by a large bureaucratic apparatus, the purpose of which is to keep both state affairs, as well as the affairs of citizens under control, and report to the president in case something contradicts the state policy. It manages both public and private sectors, namely state institutions, finance, trade, industry, and even media with civil society organizations that are meant to be independent.

The only requirement any official must meet to be recruited is loyalty to the head of the state and his personal convictions. This is how Belarusian bureaucracy became one of the pillars, on which Lukašenka regime and his power holds. The president very carefully examines bureaucrats for loyalty and support of his views, so that to prevent emergence of any doubts about his presidency and opposition to his policy. That’s why representatives of the public administration are usually people of older generations with very pro-Soviet, as well as pro-presidential views. Besides, even if a disagreement occurs, usually officials prefer to keep silence, so that to maintain their power and high social position.

Attachment of the state’s leader to the Soviet times and governing practices reflected as well on the public administration system of the country, often referred as “Lukašenka’s nomenklatura”124. However, in USSR times influential posts in the government were filled by Communist Party members, in modern Belarus – by presidential policy adherents. Nevertheless, ‘nomenklatura-style’ bureaucracy is a common phenomenon not only in Belarus, but in the post-communist region in general, since it turned out to be pretty hard to get rid of Soviet leftovers125.


There is no veritable transparency in Belarusian public administration, since the state tries to make impression of its presence by the means of national media and press, that are also managed by the bureaucracy institutions, which locks the vicious cycle of the state governance.

The state officials are not responsive to the citizenry, and, vice versa, quite often exercise their power against citizens based on personal biases, if those biases do not contradict state policy. To beg an official to make concessions, the people often have to resort to tools of corruption, that became an indivisible part of bureaucratic apparatus. Nevertheless, interesting is that fighting bureaucracy remains one of the priorities of the state policy of Belarus carried out by KGB service. This is also visible in recent scandal in Belarusian Healthcare, that led to massive detentions of the medical elite. However, independent experts consider the actions of the authorities as electoral PR to embellish public image of the state, and declare the impossibility of defeating bureaucracy under the current political and economic system.

Particular phenomenon in Belarus is the usage of the corruption punishment as a tool to catch successful entrepreneurs of the country, since the advance in their business contradict the state policy of nationalization. In fact, the state sentence Belarusians up to 15 years in prison for taking a bribe. The government fabricate corruption cases and sentence the entrepreneurs guilty only of their success. That’s why the most flourishing Belarusian businessmen are usually imprisoned of had imprisonment experience. Such a powerful mechanism of filtering of too prosperous Belarusians, who do not approve state monopoly over industry by their actions, severely violates economic freedoms, as well as human rights of the citizens.

Coming back to the question of Belarusian bureaucrats, apart from being corrupt and biased, they are also usually not possessing policy expertise and are often incompetent in public administration, which mostly connected with aforementioned election according to the loyalty to the president, but no to their professional skills and merits. This, creates a bureaucratic apparatus filled

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127 Corruption in Belarusian healthcare. Sputnik, 2018 Found at: https://sputnik.by/trend/minzdrav-korrupciya/

128 Ibid.

129 Top Belarusian businessmen: half either were imprisoned or are imprisoned. Hartya 97, 2017. Found at: https://charter97.org/ru/news/2017/8/5/258739/
with ineffective, but ideologically sound officials. As the time has shown, such apparatus function steady during the years of uninterrupted Russian subsidization and high oil prices, but once financial support from the East partner came to an end, the system collapse. This can be easily tracked in the years of financial crises, destabilized conservative financial system and industry, as well as Governance Effectiveness Diagram provided by the World Bank (see Diagram No. 1). Thereby public administration system of Belarus severely lacking experts, that will be able to deal with arising problems and provide new solutions. However, the president position remains very conservative and adamant – he is reluctant to adopt new reforms, as well as not eager to accept new progressive member possessing professional skill to the ‘officials’ elite’, since apart from improvement of bureaucratic system functioning, they can undermine the ruler’s presidency130.

In a sum, we can clearly see that bureaucratic system of Belarus is not efficient in its direct duty – administration of the public sector, as well as problem solving. It is stuck in Soviet times and directly bound with the President, who is too conservative to accept any reforms, because is afraid of losing support from the officials and, hence, the power. The bureaucrats, selected on the basis of their loyalty to the ruler, but not their professional skills, do not possess enough competence for effective management, as well as are biased and corrupt. Fighting corruption turned out to be one of the state’s electoral campaigns and a tool against successful private businesses, that supports the policy of nationalization of the economy by the government. Belarusian autocracy has distinctive features of bureaucratic-authoritarian regime, that are completely inconsistent with the principles of democracy.

2.2.5. Civil Society Under Iron Fist and Authoritarian Legitimation Tools

Political, legal and economic environment in Belarus remains stable not appropriate for functioning of civil society organizations. From the first begging the government established total control over the sector and repressed all the adverse to state policy opponent. For example, in 1996,
the Open Society Foundation, which was supporting many 3rd sector initiatives in Belarus, was expelled from the country. This was also followed by expulsion of other donor organizations131.

The country’s authorities severely violate political freedoms and civil rights of the citizens, as well put restriction on NGOs establishment, activities and provision of financial support from the donors. Thereby, Belarusian NGOs, seeking possibilities to release themselves from the state control and to have ability to function properly, usually leave the country and find a shelter in neighbouring countries of the EU132.

Moreover, civil society in Belarus is used for the legitimatization of authoritarian rule. It is realized in a form of quasi-autonomous and government-organized 3rd sector organization. For example, Belarusian Republican Youth Union, participation in which is mandatory for all young Belarusian, who want to study in Belarusian higher education institutions. It is often called Belarusian ‘Komsomol’133 and is used as a governmental tool that promote patriotism and support to state policy among the younger generation.

Legitimacy of the current regime in Belarus is also achieved by the means of national media and television, as well as mass propaganda and glorification of the achievement of the state, that are often faked. Besides, the operating of independent media is severely hindered by the state and, in particular, violation of the freedom of speech and expression. Independent Belarusian media, as well as civil society organization, have to operate outside of the country to stay autonomous.

The researcher further explored actual state of civil society in the country in the following chapter (see 3.7. Civil Society in the Cage of Destructive Legal, Political and Economic Environments).


2.2.6 Spoiled International Reputation and Undermined Diplomatic Relations

After gaining independence in 1991, Belarus was recognized by the international community and joined several intergovernmental organizations such as Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States, Partnership for Peace, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank\textsuperscript{134}. This paved the way for a successful, as it seemed, beginning of the international relations. However, in a while the situation deteriorated after coming of a new president to office and start of realization of anti-democratic policies in the country. This was also a start of the history of sanctions in the country, that were for the first time imposed by the EU in 1994 for authoritarian practices, violating human rights and rule of law\textsuperscript{135}. Further sanctioning of the country for lack of commitment to democracy and political and civil rights, was continued by the other countries. Moreover, in response to authoritarian character of governance by the state, The EU has not yet ratified the bilateral Partnership and Cooperation Agreement concluded with Belarus in 1995. That’s why the economic relations between the country and the Union till now are covered by the established in the Soviet times Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Besides, Belarus was expelled from the Council of Europe and remains the only European country not possessing membership in the organization. Also, application of Belarus for membership in the WTO made in 1993 is still in accession, because of nonconformity with organization’s requirements. In March 2005 the European Parliament officially announced the government of Belarus as a dictatorship\textsuperscript{136}.

Relations with the Eastern neighbours and the main ally of the country’s government Russia are covered by the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as supranational union with Russia was established to provide greater political, economic, and social integration between countries.

The state policy clearly shows Russia-oriented direction of development of international relations and cooperation, however on practice the president frequently running into conflicts with the main political and economic ally on the matters of politics and especially economics, as well as trying to state country’s independent position. Especially the relations between two states deteriorated


\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
on the ground of war in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, however recently slightly improved due to stabilization of economic situation in Russia and resolution of the countries’ dispute on prices of oil.

Deterioration of the relations with the main ally on the basis of conflict with Ukraine, as well as desire to enhance public image right before the elections, made the president to make a concession from his policy. In 2015 Alexander Lukašenka released political prisoners and opposition candidates, imprisoned after the election in 2010, that was positively evaluated by the international community, which suspended most of the sanctions against Belarus, apart from the ones directed on the country's officials and the president in person. Moreover, in May 2009 Alexander Lukašenka let country join Eastern Partnership initiative of the European Union aimed at strengthening relations between the Union and former Soviet Republics, promotion of democratic values and respect for human rights, support of civil society and provision of civic education.\footnote{EU NEIGHBOURS: East. Belarus. Found at: https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/eu-in-action/belarus}.

Therefore, we can conclude that after the election 2015 positive changes occurred in the relations with Western community, however they were mostly connected with the fears of the president to lose his power during the elections of 2015 and improve his public image by mitigating his policies. As well, he considered the risk, that if he would keep his policy on cooperation with Russia, that at that time was in an extensive military conflict with Ukraine, that would provoke severe indignation by citizenry and, accordingly, undermine his presidency and take away his power.

Speaking about transnational pressure, the Western countries mostly use soft powers (educational programmes promoting democracy, supporting of Belarusian NGOs and etc.), as well as economic sanction. However, they aimed directly at the state officials and the president in person, which shows great respect and compassion for the citizens of the country.

Regarding pressures from the East, we face with great dominance of Russia in politics, economy, and furthermore in state’s media and television. Even the language is predominantly Russian, because of the state policy. The second pressure from the East is Ukraine, or rather military conflict there, that produces great tension in both Belarusian political affairs and the public.
3. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN BELARUS

“Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.”

– Franklin D. Roosevelt

The aforementioned words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt – a democrat who won a record number of presidential elections in US history and brought the country out of the Great Depression – remind us of one simple truth about possession of power in a polity, namely in a democratic one. Being justly elected for 4 terms, the great leader strongly believes that the power is not in the hands of the government, rulers, parliament or others state institutions and political actors. The ones who actually rules in the country are the voters, since precisely their decision shapes the way the state function. It is important to understand, that a state is not an apparatus, that takes control over the people, but a system that helps to organize their communities. Therefore, the people are the ones to determine their state functioning and take action in case the authorities think differently and held themselves above the law or adjust it to exalt their power.

Alexander Lukašenko broke the Roosevelt’s record in terms in the office, however all the elections, apart from the first one, where recognized as undemocratic and not representing real voters’ choice. So, if the governance of the current president is not what Belarusians really want, why do they then let to be ruled by a dictator and do it already for that long? Are they satisfied with the current state of affairs or eager for changes? Or maybe they consider that current authority, regardless of


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being undemocratic, will deal with the present-day Belarusian “Great Depression”\textsuperscript{139}?
To get deeper into those issues, we will turn to the actual attitudes of people, which in turn will let us to find out whether there are prerequisites for the regime’s transformation in present-day Belarus, what are their peculiarities, if any, and what problems can occur in the process.

In this chapter, representing empirical part of the research, we will analyse factual attitudes of Belarusians with the help of accumulated social surveys’ and polls’ data, collected from reliable sources, which afterwards lead us to certain conclusions, drawn from deductive reasoning.

In fact, political attitudes and values is a key tool for explanation of political behaviour, which is regarded as people’s actions regarding authority and the government\textsuperscript{140}. Since the starting stage of transition to democracy, as we defined before, is reformation of the political system, then political attitudes in particular will be decisive in detecting prerequisites for establishment of democracy (democratization) in Belarus. However, to find out whether the introduced regime will be durable and stable enough (consolidation), we will need to go deeper into the cultural values and people’s beliefs.

In this surveys’ analysis we will try to cover questions regarding the level of confidence of Belarusians in their current authorities, state bodies and the president in particular; degree of satisfaction with their country’s economy, geopolitical orientation and general desire for changes. As well, we will define how do the people perceive democracy and what are their attitudes towards democratic principles of governing, economy, values and norms of social behaviour. Moreover, we will have a look inside of the political culture of Belarus and its civil society, by investigating the responses on the questions of overall interest in politics, level of active citizenship and political participation. Finally, we will have a glance into the private sphere, and try to define correlation between cultural traits of Belarusians and their aspirations for democracy.

Hopefully, obtainment of the answers to the questions mentioned above, will let us understand what are actual attitudes of Belarusian to the current state of affairs in their country and whether they are eager to make a turn towards democracy.

\textsuperscript{139} Used figuratively by the author of the paper to point at the current problematic economic situation in Belarus, a row of economic cruises a country recently went through, and financial recession.

3.1. **Methodology, Sampling, Context Effect, Data Collection and Charting of the Accumulated Figures**

The empirical qualitative part of our research will include several stages\(^\text{141}\):

1. Finding of the reliable sources of secondary data;
2. Checking the research methodology of the selected surveys and polls;
3. Investigating the context-dependency of the results;
4. Specification of sampling criteria (for comparative survey analysis);
5. Defining relevant to the topic questions, available at the source and collection of those surveys’ results (answers of the respondents);
6. Structuration and charting (visualization) of the accumulated results;
7. Detection of the factual trends in responses of respondents, that will be used as evidential data to form subsequent conclusions;
8. Drawing of the conclusions by deductive reasoning methods.

As it was already noted above, the data used in the empirical study will have secondary character, namely it will not be produced by the researcher him/herself. Decision to use secondary records was made owing to:

- inability of the researcher alone to hold an appropriate survey procedure and, therefore, receive plausible results;
- existence of trustworthy sources, to be exact institutions, that are internationally recognised and specialized in polling, which will guarantee high quality and reliability of the results;
- coverage of the data by aforementioned institution, that are different in geographical scope and time the surveys are conducted, which gives ability to conduct comparative analysis.

The credible sources, found for the research, are represented by international and domestic institutions directly specialized on caring out of surveys and opinion polls. The usage of both external and internal sources for data collection, let to hold analysis on two levels: global, where the subject

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of study (Belarus) is compared with the others chosen by the researcher samples (countries)\textsuperscript{142}, and domestic, depicting general tendency of the attitudes of citizens of the country in question.

The data for comparative surveys’ analysis (global level) will be mainly taken from World Values Survey Online Data-archive\textsuperscript{143}, while general image of attitudes (domestic) will be provided by Annual Survey Report of EU Neighbourhood Barometer\textsuperscript{144} and Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies\textsuperscript{145}. The data from EU Neighbourhood Barometer\textsuperscript{146} will be also used for the comparative analysis of the attitudes of Belarusians between 2016 and 2018 to understand how did the they evolve in such short period time.

The World Value Survey for its part, will give us opportunity to go back to the very beginning of Lukašenko’s regime and check how Belarusians perceived it at that time and what where their attitudes to democracy. To be exact, in the analysis of opinions’ shift in time, we will be considering 1996 – year that depicts attitudes of the citizens right after coming of Alexander Lukašenko into power and holding the second referendum – and 2011 – that is the most recent data from the source at the moment, that will be used with regard to the current state of affairs in the country.

Speaking of a national polling institution, it is important to choose the one, that is independent from the state and autonomous, because falsification of the results in support of the government is a common phenomenon in autocracies. As well, important to keep in mind that the people living under dictatorship are often afraid to participate opinion polls with questionnaires on the topics connected with the regime, and can distort their answers in order to protect themselves from future state prosecution.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{143} World Values Survey Online Data-archive. WVS Database. Found at: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp


\textsuperscript{145} Results of the nation opinion poll, June 2-12, 2016. Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies. Found at: http://www.iiseps.org/?p=4733&lang=en

In our research we will use data provided by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, which mission is promotion of formation of civil society and free market economy in Belarus through study socio-economic and political process of transition from totalitarianism to democracy and active promotion of values and principles of liberalism. Currently the organization is registered as public institution in Lithuania and operate completely separately from the state bodies of Belarus.

Table No. 1: The Structure of the Surveys’ and Polls’ Sources for Data Collection

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<tr>
<th>The Polling Organization</th>
<th>Status of Institution</th>
<th>Years the survey was carried out</th>
<th>The Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wave 6: 2010-2014 (Belarus: 2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Neighbourhood Barometer</td>
<td>One of EU Regional Policy Projects (The EU and its Neighbouring Regions)</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>global / domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies</td>
<td>Autonomous National Public Association (Belarus)</td>
<td>June 2-12, 2016</td>
<td>domestic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Created by the author.

To obtain plausible results, the researcher should consider peculiarities of survey procedures, such as the fieldwork, universe, sample size and its region, geographical scope and probability of

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76
miscalculations\textsuperscript{148}. As already mentioned above, in our empirical study we are using secondary data, which means that the survey analyst should pay special attention to the specificities of the collected surveys' methodology, so that to make quality control and ensure trustworthiness of the accumulated data (see Table No. 2: The Surveys’ Methodology and Fieldwork Procedure Specification).

\textit{Table No. 2: The Surveys’ Methodology and Fieldwork Procedure Specification}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical scope</th>
<th>Data Collection Organization, Interviewers</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Estimated Error</th>
<th>Survey procedure and Fieldwork</th>
<th>Fieldwork Period</th>
<th>Universe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Serban Tanasa</td>
<td>1535</td>
<td>2,6</td>
<td>face-to-face interviewing at the respondent’s home using the structured questionnaire</td>
<td>18-11-2011 - 15-12-2011</td>
<td>National Population, Both sexes, 18 and more years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Levada Analytical Center</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>2,0</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>21-09-2011 - 16-10-2011</td>
<td>The number of interviews was distributed by settlements taking into account the number of population residing in these settlements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Research &amp; Branding Group</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2,6</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>01-12-2011 - 12-12-2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Saar Poll LLC</td>
<td>1533</td>
<td>2,6</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>18-11-2011 - 02-12-2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>CBOS – Public Opinion</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>3,2</td>
<td>Personal Face to Face Interview</td>
<td>25-01-2012 - 03-02-2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Research Centre</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Contact Method</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2046</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>22-07-2013 - 13-11-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>ARS Research AB Intervjubolag et IMRI</td>
<td>1206</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>Personal Face to Face Interview</td>
<td>04-02-2011 - 29-04-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Análisis Sociológicos Económicos y Políticos (ASEP)</td>
<td>1189</td>
<td>2,9</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>28-02-2011 - 06-03-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Neighbourhood</td>
<td>Belarus, six Eastern Partner countries</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>March 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both sex population aged 15 and over, and living in the country. Two-stage sample design, with settlements as primary sampling units (PSUs) and individuals as secondary units.
Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies
Belarus
Specially trained interviewers, having a long experience in research and given instructions before each poll
1512
0.03
Domiciliary with the face-to-face method of interview
June 2-12, 2016
Both sexes, 18 and older. Each type of settlement and in each region is determined in accordance with population and volume of a sampling.

Source: created by the author.

However, while reasoning the accumulated data, it is worthy not only to keep eye on the surveys’ methodology and procedures, but also consider the context, since it to a great extent shapes the attitudes of people\(^{149}\). Therefore, it is important to clarify what were the main events that could influence people's opinions, and take them into consideration in the research discourse.

For the analysis of the actual attitudes of Belarusians were taken 3 aforementioned survey sources, that have slight difference in time of conducting – 2011, 2016 and 2018. Therefore, apart from standard survey miscalculation, such as sampling variability, interviewer effects, frame errors and response bias\(^{150}\), error owing to the context-dependency may occur. To minimise it let’s have a look at the indicative events of the span of time between the first and the last surveys’ holding. We will also consider year of the 4th presidential election in Belarus, namely 2010, since it caused widespread indignation among both the citizens and the international community, and affected the context in the long run, covering the period we are interested in.

The events that defined the context of Belarusians’ responses to the surveys’ questions were sorted by the researcher, coded with the colour and presented in a timeline, created by the author (see Scheme No. 4: Timeline of the Main Attitude-Shaping Events in Belarus from 2010 to 2018.).


TIMELINE OF THE MAIN INDICATIVE EVENTS IN BELARUS FROM 2010 TO 2018

**Presidential Elections 2010**
- On the election night the protesters were violently suppressed by the riot police. Hundreds of protesters were killed. Over 700 persons, including presidential candidates, as well as activists, journalists, and civil society representatives were arrested by the Minsk Police. The Opposition leaders were jailed.

**Financial Crisis of 2011**
- Belarus cut the official rate of its currency, the Belarusian Ruble, by 36%, leaving its value undervalued by about 39% in terms of the interbank rate. This was followed by the most serious balance of payments crisis since independence. Inflation reached 180%. Ruble fell drastically. Average salary plummeted in dollar terms, decreasing from $530 in December 2010 to $330 in May 2011.
- IMF Emergency Loan

**Great Belarusian Recession** of 2014-2015
- The financial crisis in Russia caused two years of recession in Belarus and forced big declines in economic growth. The Belarusian ruble depreciated by almost 60% per cent. In January-November 2015 the GDP of Belarus declined by 3.9%. The employment rate substantially declined.

**The Timeline Legend**
- Event affecting the political situation in the country
- Event affecting the economic situation in the country
- Events in the international relations of Belarus (West)
- Events in the international relations of Belarus (East)
- Events in Ukraine
- Terrorist Attack

Part of the survey analysis will have comparative character\textsuperscript{151}, where the attitudes of Belarusians will be examined in comparison with the countries with similar and opposite qualities.

For sampling procedure will be used following criteria:

- Common Heritage and Past (Former Soviet Republics or not);
- Economic Development\textsuperscript{152};
- Regional Representation (Limited by Europe’s Parts);
- Membership in Political and Economic Unions (the EU and the CIS);
- Presence in the Survey Waves, Availability and Relevance of the Data.

The countries chosen are: Belarus (the subject of study), Russia and Ukraine, Poland and Estonia, Germany, Sweden and Spain. The states will be sorted into 4 groups (including Belarus as a separate one) according to the aforementioned criteria\textsuperscript{153}.

Ukraine and Russia were selected on the basis of common past, close geographical position, representing Eastern European states-members of the CIS, cultural resemblance and expected similarity in beliefs and values. We can also consider those countries important in the analysis, because each of them has a special influence on the country’s state of affair, that is obvious from the timeline (see Scheme No. 3).

Estonia and Poland, carrying common Soviet legacy as well, have developed in another direction and in a while after gaining independence turned into members of the EU. However, both countries are not long-term participant of the Union and experienced a lot on problems in the economy and politics during the time of their ‘recovery’. Even though the two states already gained status of “Developed Countries”, their level of prosperity is not as high as in Western European countries. The political landscape is not flawless as well – at the moment autonomy of justice system in Poland is in


danger on the background of multiple violation of the rule of law by authorities, and the country itself is in the spotlight of the EU and the media as "a leading case of democratic backsliding".

Besides, important to note, that the countries differ in regional representation, and representative of the Baltic states in interesting to add, because the Baltic nations were the ones to show the greatest civil resistance to the Soviet power, and perceived incorporation into the USSR as violent annexation unlike the other Soviet Republics.

Adding of such countries as Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Estonia in the surveys' analysis will be interesting for us, since it will show to what extend common past and cultural traits, generated by that time (the USSR), effect attitudes of people, their values and beliefs. Whether the remnants of the Soviet past can be a reason of democratic backsliding in the region and, accordingly, a challenge for the transition to democracy in Belarus. We will also find out how 'shift to the West' of the Republics, that joined the EU, changed people's perceptions, if did, and how far or close Belarusians are from them.

Germany, Sweden and Spain are taken as examples of countries that are already for a long time members of the EU, having stable enough economic and political situation, but representing different regions and, accordingly, different cultural values of the people.

To make the sampling grounds clearer and visibly understood from the charts, the researcher sorted the countries and coded their groups with colours, showed scheme below (see Scheme No. 4: Colour Coding and Sampling Criteria).

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Next stage of our empirical study is the selection and structuring of the survey questions, that presented in the source and sufficiently relevant to the topic.

The picked questions will be sorted to 4 categories, revealing:

- Level of the people’s satisfaction/dissatisfaction with present-day situation in the country under the rule of the president A. Lukašenka;
- General perception of democracy by Belarusians, principles of governing, economy and values;
- Degree of interest in politics, political participation and active citizenship;
- Extent to which the culture, people’s beliefs and values boost or decrease aspirations for democracy.

The answers to the selected questions will be structured and arranged into charts to bring the results into visual form. Certain visual emphasis will be made to demonstrate clearly and understandably revealed trends in attitudes, stressed in the researcher’s observations. The chart will be presented in the following chapter together with the interpretive text.

**Source**: created by the author.

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1.2 the CIA The World Factbook of Developed Country Status (DCs), 2018

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156 Ibid.
3.2. Satisfaction / Dissatisfaction with the Current State of Affairs and the Regime

After checking the reliability of the collected data and sources, clarifying the methodology, sampling criteria, context effect and questions of interest, let’s go straight to the results and define what actually Belarusians think about current situation in their country, the regime and economy. We will start from the domestic level, finding out general levels of satisfaction and trust to the authorities, and then will try to compare those indicators with the sampled above countries to understand to which side of the Belarusians are more inclined in their choices.

3.3.1. Disapproval of Lukašenka’s presidency versus Trust in the Authorities

In accordance with EU Neighbourhood Barometer data survey report, general satisfaction of Belarusians about the way current political regime works is ambiguous, but relative majority is dissatisfied (47%). However, satisfaction level has increased by 11% from 2017. Worth to mention that Western residents of the country are notably critical with the functioning of the present-day political system: only 27% are satisfied versus 43% of Eastern residents and 49% of Northern and Central residents, which shows that the population is geographically not homogeneous in attitudes157 (see Chart No. 7).

Pursuant to the ISEPS nation opinion held in June, 2016, majority of Belarusians disapprove of the absolute power of the President and consider that “the state, built under the rule of Lukašenka” only partially belongs to them. However, the quantity of the people who totally approve Alexander Lukašenka governance is higher, than the quantity of those who completely disfavour his presidency (see Chart No. 2-3).

Belarusians consider that the president in his reign to a great extent relies on the presidential hierarchy line, the military, police and KGB service together with the state officials. As well, they think that certain support to Lukašenka’s presidency is coming from the elderly people and people living in rural areas, as well as heads of big enterprises (see Chart No. 4).

Nevertheless, according to the World Value Survey, general perception of Belarusian of dictatorship is still a way more positive than in the Western countries, however a lot more negative than in Eastern neighbouring countries (Russia and Ukraine). Strictly speaking, in their attitudes toward having a strong leader possessing total authority, Belarusian are staying between Western and Eastern nations (see Chart No. 5).

Despite of the main disapproval of Lukašenka’s presidency and relative dissatisfaction with the regime, Belarusians still show a great level of confidence in the government and the armed forces, and are ambiguous about the parliament, courts and the police. However, slightly bigger quantity of Belarusians tends to trust to the two last-mentioned institutions, than not to trust. Besides, Belarusian turned out to be very suspicious about political parties of their country, which is quite natural, since they have a little influence within the Belarusian political system (see Chart No. 6).

At the global level, Belarusian are a way more confident about their government, parliament and even political parties, to which they in general tend not to distrust, than their Eastern neighbours and furthermore even some Western states. However, trust to the courts does not exceed that in Western states, such as Germany and Sweden. Assurance in Armed forces highly overwhelm that of any other country, however very visible is tendency that its level is higher in the former Soviet Republics, which can be justified by the tensions over the conflict in Ukraine and rivalry of Russia and NATO in military forces in the region. Regardless of high level of confidence in the armed forces, Belarusians mistrust to the police a lot more than Western European nations, but less than Eastern European states (see Chart No. 7).

Especially surprising is that the majority of Belarusians think that nearly all democratic indicators apply to Belarus. Inherent in the Belarusian political system turned out to be gender equality (75%), the rule of law (60%), respect for human right (56%), freedom of media (55%), free and fair elections (54), independence of the judiciary system (54%), freedom of speech (53%) and protection of the rights of minorities (53%)158. The only not-applicable to Belarus indicators appeared to be lack of corruption (38%) and equality and social justice (48%). However, compared to 2017 negative opinions decreased for most indicators, to the benefit of more positive views, which corresponds to aforementioned raise in level of satisfaction about current political regime (see Chart No. 8). This is presumably connected with the relative improvement of economic situation in the

158 Ibid.
country (see Chart No. 9), about which, as the next section of the chapter shows, Belarusians are a way more concerned, than about political affairs.

*Chart No. 1: Level of satisfaction with the way political regime works*

![Chart No. 1: Level of satisfaction with the way political regime works](https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east/stay-informed/publications/opinion-survey-2018-belarus)


*Chart No. 2: Share of Belarusians who consider that the fact that almost all state power is concentrated in hands of Lukašenka is favourable / no good for the country*

![Chart No. 2: Share of Belarusians who consider that the fact that almost all state power is concentrated in hands of Lukašenka is favourable / no good for the country](http://www.iiseps.org/?p=4733&lang=en)

Chart No. 3: Share of Belarusians who agree, partially agree or disagree that “It is not my state, built under the rule of Lukašenka”


Chart No. 4: Share of the respondents who consider that president Alexander Lukašenka mainly relies on the following institutions / groups of people

Chart No. 5: Share of the respondents who think that having a strong leader who does not have to bother with the Parliament and elections is good

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.

Chart No. 6: Level of confidence of Belarusians in the following institutions

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.
Chart No. 7: Share of Belarusians who are very confident with the following institutions in comparison with the sampled countries

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.

Chart No. 8: Extent to what Belarusians think the following democratic indicators apply to Belarus

3.3.2. Economic Pessimism and Blaming the President for the Crisis

According to the IISEPS nation opinion held in June, 2016\(^{159}\), majority of Belarusians consider that the country’s economy is in crisis and the reasons for it are internal (see Chart No. 10-11). They also think that there is no development in the country and the economy stagnates (see Chart No. 12). To a greater extent they hold the President and the government responsible for the crisis, but at the same time hope more that the country’s ruler, and less the foreign countries, as well as Belarusian entrepreneurs, will help in overcoming economic problems. In the crisis overpassing between two supporting ‘camps’ – the Western countries and Russia – they choose neither and consider them equally helpful in improvement of the country's economy (see Chart No. 13-14).

However, Belarusian are in general very pessimistic about possibilities of economic improvement in the country and a substantial percentage of respondents expected a worsening of socio-economic situation in Belarus (see Chart No. 15).

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\(^{159}\) Results of the nation opinion poll, June 2-12, 2016. Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies. Found at: http://www.iiseps.org/?p=4733&lang=en
Most Belarusians also believe that all citizens of neighbouring countries except Ukraine, enjoy higher standards of life in comparison with Belarus. This shows that Belarusians are generally highly dissatisfied with their degree of wealth and material comfort, and aware of the complexity of the situation in Ukraine, that is in a state of war \(^{160}\).

Moreover, according to the survey of EU Neighbourhood Barometer held on 2018\(^{161}\), Belarusian consider economic problems, such as low salaries, unemployment, price hike, low living standards, poverty and the crisis as such, the most acute in the country (see Chart No. 16). That shows that the people are a way more concerned about economic situation in the country than political affairs.

**Chart No. 10: Share of Belarusians that think that Belarussian economy is in crisis**

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Yes} & \text{No} & \text{Don't Know / No Answer} \\
80 & 0 & 0 \\
70 & 0 & 0 \\
60 & 0 & 0 \\
50 & 0 & 0 \\
40 & 0 & 0 \\
30 & 0 & 0 \\
20 & 0 & 0 \\
10 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 0 \\
\end{array}\]


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\(^{160}\) Ibid.

**Chart No. 11:** Share of Belarusians that agree / disagree that reasons for economic crisis in the country are internal


**Chart No. 12:** Share of Belarusians who agree that “Amid the current troubled situation Belarus is rightly considered as a nook of stability” or rather consider that “Belarusian stability is closer to stagnation, and there is no development in the country”

Chart No. 13: Share of Belarusians who consider that the following institutions / people are responsible for the current crisis in Belarus

Source: created by the author, data from the Nation Opinion Poll, June 2-12, 2016. IISEPS

Chart No. 14: Share of Belarusians who rely on the following institutions / people in overcoming of the Crisis?

Source: created by the author, data from the Nation Opinion Poll, June 2-12, 2016. IISEPS
**Chart No. 15:** Share of Belarusians that expect improvement / worthening of the socio-economic situation in Belarus in the nearest future?

**Source:** created by the author, data from the Nation Opinion Poll, June 2-12, 2016. Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies. Found at: http://www.iiseps.org/?p=4733&lang=en

**Chart No. 16:** Problems Belarusians consider the most pressing in their country

3.3. Geopolitical Orientation and EU-CIS controversy

Geopolitical orientations of Belarusian are expressed best in their answers to hypothetical situations, such as referendum on joining the EU or integration with Russia or armed conflicts between NATO and Russia.

On a hypothetic referendum more Belarusians voted “for” integration with Russia, than joining the EU, however there is an obvious raise in sympathy for the EU since December 2015 (see Chart No. 17).

On the background of Russian military divisions and bases increasement in the Western region of the country, and NATO’s deployment of battalions in Poland and the Baltic states, Belarusians tend to support Russian side more, however the majority prefer to stay natural (see Chart No. 18). Surprisingly, in case of hypothetic armed conflict between two sides, the majority, that has chosen to stay neutral, decrease, but the quantity of respondents who support Russia increase and already highly differ in quantity with NATO supporters (see Chart No. 19).

Important to notice, that young people tend to distance themselves from a conflict and avoid supporting any side in geopolitical confrontation. Besides, there is a clear dependency on the age of respondents – older Belarusian show a way higher level of support to Russia\(^{162}\), which is mostly connected to attachment of the older generation to the Soviet values and beliefs, as well as disability to reach independent media due to linguistic and educational barriers.

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\(^{162}\) Results of the nation opinion poll, June 2-12, 2016. Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies. Found at: http://www.iiseps.org/?p=4733&lang=en
Chart No. 17: Choice of Belarusians on hypothetical referendum for joining the EU or integration with Russia

Chart No. 18: On the background of Russian military divisions increasement in the Western Region of the country, and NATO’s deployment of battalions in Poland and the Baltic states, share of Belarusians who support NATO and Western countries / Russia

Chart No. 19: In case of hypothetic armed conflict between NATO and Russia, share of Belarusian that would choose to support NATO and Western countries / Russia


In their attitudes towards the EU Belarusians are mostly neutral, however the ratio of the respondent with positive view of the Union to the negatively oriented is high (see Chart No. 20). Neutral perceptions decreased by 10% since 2017 with a comparable growth in more negative views. The tendency also shows that younger citizens, highly educated individuals and residents of larger settlements have mostly positive image of the EU in comparison with people of older generation and residents of rural areas.

In the main Belarusians tend to trust to the EU, however compared to 2017, the level of distrust in the EU increased by 11% (see Chart No. 21). The analysis of socio-demographic groups of the respondents showed that as usual younger citizens display a higher level of trust (57%) than other
residents, while residents of the Northern and Central Belarus are particularly critical – 49% of them openly distrust European Union\(^\text{163}\).

Regardless of the average trust to the EU among Belarusian, they consider Russia provide a way more support to the country (see Chart No. 22).

Important to notice, that according to the comparative analysis of trust of Belarusians toward different institutions, great mistrust is shown towards NATO, which make the aforementioned choices of Belarusians about the side to support in confrontation of Russia and NATO, questionably applicable in defining geopolitical orientation of the respondents (see Chart No. 23). There is a high probability that Belarusians expressed their attitude towards NATO as such, but not to the Western states' union.

*Chart No. 20: Image of the EU by Belarusians*

![Chart No. 20: Image of the EU by Belarusians](image)


Chart No. 21: Level of Trust towards European Union and its Evolution


Chart No. 22: Share of Belarusians that consider that the following institutions provide more, the same, or less support to their country than the European Union

In their views of CIS Belarusians are ambiguous, however more people tend to see themselves as a part of the Commonwealth and show trust towards it, but not to a greater extent (see Chart No. 24-25). In comparison with other countries-members of CIS, namely Russia and Ukraine, attitudes of Belarusians do not differ much, however show that they are slightly more confident about the organization than Ukrainians, and to a large extent than Russians. Interestingly, Russians also have a lower sense of self-determination with the Commonwealth (see Chart No. 26-27).


**Source:** created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.
Chart No. 25: Level of confidence of Belarusians towards the CIS

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.

Chart No. 26: Self-determination as part of the CIS in comparison

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.
3.4. Desire for Changes and Disbelief in the Reflection of the Voters’ Choice on the Election Results

Regardless of general dissatisfaction with the political regime’s functioning, disapproval of Lukašenka’s presidency and very high level of discontent about country’s economy, majority of Belarusians prefer to maintain current situation than to make changes (see Chart No. 28). To a great extent elections and a less referendums remain the most realistic and desirable variants of changes for the biggest part of Belarusians (see Chart No. 29), although their applicability gradually decreases (2014 – 50.1% and 29.4%, 2016 – 44.1% and 26.2%), to the benefit of street protests\(^\text{164}\). Surprisingly, many Belarusians consider Belarusian electoral law not worse than in other countries with internationally recognized elections, and are quite confident about competence of electoral

\(^{164}\) Results of the nation opinion poll, June 2-12, 2016. Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies. Found at: http://www.iiseps.org/?p=4733&lang=en
committees, however, according to their hands-on experience, do not feel that their will is expressed in absolutely democratic atmosphere, as well as do not you believe that results of elections depend on their vote (see Chart No. 30).

Belarusians tend to be very uncertain in their factual choices of presidential candidates – they give approximately equal amount of vote in support of Lukašenka, opposition and other candidates, as well as against all (see Chart No. 31). However, electoral rating of Lukašenka has slightly grown from 27.3% in March up to 29.5% in June 2016, despite of decrease in the trust level toward him from 41.7% to 38.6%. This phenomenon is to a large degree connected with the lack of candidate alternatives together with external challenges, that suppress the radicalization of critical attitude towards the current power165.

Chart No. 28: Aspiration for Changes of Belarusians


165 Ibid.
Chart No. 29: The most realistic and desirable variants of changes according to Belarusians’ opinion


Chart No. 30: Opinions of Belarusians on Belarusian electoral law, electoral committees and their voter's experience

3.5. View of Democracy and its Fundamental Principles

After getting to know what Belarusians think about current situation in their country, political regime and the president, what is their geopolitical orientation and level of aspiration for changes, let’s try to find out how do Belarusian view democracy, its principles of governance and functioning of the economy.

According to the data of World Value Survey, the biggest part of Belarusians consider democracy very or quite important (see Chart No. 32), however the level of importance of democracy is still not comparable to Western countries, as well as to some if the former Soviet Republic, namely Poland, Estonia and Ukraine. View of democracy of Belarusians is more similar to the main economic partner of the country – Russia. Nevertheless, the percentage of people who absolutely oppose democracy is lower than in both Russia and Ukraine, which indicate that the level of radical rejection of democracy in the country is not so pronounced (see Chart No. 33).
Speaking about democratic political system, Belarusians definitely don’t feel as positive about it as Western countries, however are more open for it then neighbouring countries, to be exact Russia and Poland (see Chart No. 34).

The most essential characteristics of democracy from standpoint of Belarusians are free elections and civil rights, however the level of their significance in still a way lower than among Western nations, and closer to Eastern neighbours. Nevertheless, interesting phenomenon is that Belarusians coincide with West-European respondents that democracy is not about equal incomes, taxation of the rich and substitutions for unemployment, which turned out to be very important in democracy to the Eastern neighbours (see Chart No. 35). This is presumably connected with greater inequality and open visibility of oligarchy classes in Ukraine and Russia, respondents of which are more caring about economic redistribution in democracy.

**Chart No. 32: Level of importance of democracy for Belarusians**

*Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.*
Chart No. 33: Level of importance of democracy for Belarusians in comparison with the sampled countries

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.

Chart No. 34: Share of Belarusians who consider that having a democratic political system is very good, compared with the samples countries

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.
3.6. Discouraged Political Culture and Lack of Political and Social Participation

Politics turned out to be mostly not important for Belarusians, which is also very visible in comparison with other countries and especially Western ones, the citizens of which show great interest in political matters. Level of curiosity about political affair is equally low in post-soviet countries, as well as among Southern European state, which mainly connected with culture (see Chart No. 36-37).

Belarusians show very low participation level in different kinds of public actions, regardless of their sphere (politics, culture, environment and etc). The only type of social activity they relatively often join are public working days, organized on mandatory basis by the government (see Chart No. 40). Besides, majority of Belarusians have never volunteered in their lives (see Chart No. 39).

Disinterest of Belarusians in politics and political participation proves also their low in comparison with other states, with the exception of Russia, level of active membership in political parties (see Chart No. 38).

All the mentioned above show great weakness of political culture of Belarus and extensive lack in public participation and social engagement.
Chart No. 36: Importance of politics in life of Belarusians

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.

Chart No. 37: Level of interest in political affairs of Belarusians in comparison with the sampled countries

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.
Chart No. 38: Belarusians who have ever volunteered

Chart No. 39: Share of Belarusians with experience of participation in various types of joint actions, 2016

3.7. Civil Society in the Cage of Destructive Legal, Political and Economic Environments

Unfortunately, analysis of civil society in Belarus is very problematic due to the lack of adequate statistics, which don’t let the researcher to track the dynamics of numbers and changes in the structure of Belarusian NGOs and provide plausible conclusions. The available statistics do not allow to estimate the number of actually operating civil society organizations in the country due to several factors:

- lack of data from independent sources, as well as its inaccuracy, since many Belarusian NGOs are registered abroad or work informally owing to the problematic procedure of registration and restriction on activities in the country;
- high probability of fraud in the data provided by the governmental institutions, that try to create the picture of the civil society supporting the state policy and its public image. Besides, in the official lists are added quasi-autonomous and government-organized 3rd
sector organizations, which are out of our interest. We are analysing only number of fully independent NGOs.

Regardless of the problem of the data accurateness and trustworthiness, the author of the paper will try to provide general estimation of the 3rd sector of Belarus with the help of the data collected from the report on civil society of Belarus\textsuperscript{166} published in 2018 by the collective of independent, creditable and internationally recognized organizations, to be exact Center for European Transformation, Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend), Civil Society Forum of Eastern Partnership.

Moreover, we will try to compare sustainably of the 3rd sector of Belarus with other counties, using the data from Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index\textsuperscript{167}, issued in 2017 by the United States Agency for International Development; Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance; Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in Partnership with FHI 360 and International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). However, the scope of the report on civil sector sustainability in limited by Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, that’s why from the sampled countries will be presented CSO indexes of only Russia, Ukraine and Poland.

The number of civil society organizations in Belarus in comparison with other countries of a similar level of economic development remains quite low, not speaking about advanced economies\textsuperscript{168}. The reason for that is poor political and legal environment created and maintained by the state authorities, failure of the government to ensure the basic rights and freedoms of the citizens.


According to the experts’ opinion\textsuperscript{169} since 2015, the political environment in Belarus has not changed, as well as no changes were made to legislation, that highly restrict NGOs activities.

The NGOs face with such problems from the side of legal framework as complexity of bureaucratic procedures in registration of organization, restrictions on the activities and risk of criminal liability for them, obligatory requirement of coordination of initiatives with the state and its participation in the organization’s decision-making\textsuperscript{170}.

Moreover, Belarusian NGOs experience great financial deficiency to implement their programmes. Regrettfully, the state as well determine financial well-being of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} sector agents. The legislation regulates the procedure for granting free aid from Belarusian legal entities, individual and entrepreneurs, and defines a closed list of possible ‘targets’ for which this assistance can be presented. Among these ‘targets’ there are no many significant fields, such as human rights, gender equality, environmental protection, animal welfare, improvement of the status of children, support for the talented youth and etc. Allocation of funds for purposes that are not included in defined by authorities the list is possible only with the consent of the President. Besides, the legislation forces organizations to hold accountable to the state on the use of funds provided. This impedes functioning of non-profit organizations, does not allow them to accumulate funds, create capital and finally use it. Moreover, for violation of the legislation on sponsorship (gratuitous financial aid), administrative liability is imposed\textsuperscript{171}.

All the problems mentioned above can be tracked on the CSOs’ sustainability index of Belarus, which is clearly worse than in any of the presented countries (see Chart No. 41).

Speaking about spheres of interest of Belarusian CSOs, the biggest (in comparison among themselves) by the number of organizations and initiatives are engaged in culture and social services. The next largest sectors are youth CSOs, religious organizations, CSOs involved in education or educational services; business associations and public organizations that develop business culture in Belarus. The smallest in terms of the number of organizations are sectors connected with trade and

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
relatively new types of CSOs in the country working with media and urban planning, as well as the ones that involved in the development of civil society itself (see Chart No. 42)

There is practically no progress in the movement towards a dialogue with the state on the development of civil society and reduction of the restrictions on its functioning. Since 2015 only a change at the level of rhetoric, which is becoming less aggressive and tense, can be noted. Noticeable increase in the intensity of communication and conversations about the change in the rules of conditions for the civil society organizations, still did not lead to actual implementations\textsuperscript{172}.

General picture described above is an obvious reflection of the previously discussed situations in country's political and economic affairs, that to a large extent determine the environment for the operation of the civil society agents. The dialogue with the authorities for changes looks ostentatious and seems to be maintained by the government to endorse public image of the state, however the tension of contradiction calmed down.

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
Chart No. 41: Civil Society Sustainability Index in comparison with other countries

Source: composed by the author form the 2017 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index: for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. United States Agency for International Development; Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance; Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in Partnership with FHI 360 and International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), 2018.

Chart No. 42: Representation of thematic sectors (by the number of CSOs) in the overall structure of the civil society of Belarus


Found at: https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2018_Civil-Society-Belarus_RU.pdf
3.8. Comparative Mapping of Culture: Dichotomy of Belarusian Beliefs and Values in Aspiration for Democracy

"With the right people, culture, and values, you can accomplish great things."

– Tricia Griffith

Every human society has its own specific beliefs and values, that compose its culture, so does Belarusian nation. Years of studies proved that culture play a key role in the economic growth, emergence and further development of democratic institutions, rise of tolerance and social and gender equality. In fact, people’s beliefs define the extent to which societies have effective government.  

The research project of Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel based on the World Value Survey results, shows how world cultures vary and how do they relate to economy and standards of living in the countries, their political regimes and empowerment of people, level of religiousness and life satisfaction (see Chart No. 43). Especially interesting to us the part of the scholars’ study devoted to relation of the cultural values to people’s aspiration for democracy.

The researchers define two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation in the world – traditional values versus secular-rational and survival values versus self-expressional.

High level of traditional values indicates the importance of religion, family traditions and parent-child ties in the nation. Besides, such people usually with ease submit themselves to authority, and respect the rule even of obviously authoritarian rulers. Societies who possess these values usually reject divorce, abortion, and euthanasia, as well as have particularly high degree of national pride and nationalistic outlook. Nations having secular-rational values, that oppose traditional ones, are a way


\[\text{174 Ibid.}\]
more open open-minded, tolerant and cosmopolite. They tend to accept non-traditional families, are less concerned about religion and do not unconditionally accept all the authority’s actions\textsuperscript{175}.

The people with high \textit{survival values} prioritize economic and financial security over political freedoms. As usual, they come from low-income countries with low level of well-being. The study has shown, that those values has also connection with a relatively ethnocentric outlook and low levels of trust and tolerance. In contrast to survival, \textit{self-expression values} rise demands of people in public expression and participation in decision-making, economic and political life of the country. Such nations also show inclination to environmental protection, have high level of tolerance for foreigners, gays and lesbians and gender equality\textsuperscript{176}.

Speaking about aspiration for democracy, the study revealed that desire for liberty and autonomy largely decrease in the nation, where people are growing up in poor economic conditions with low level of standards of living. As long as physical survival remains difficult, the pursuit of physical and economic security tends to dominate the desire for democracy. Vice versa, when basic physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, self-expression values are growing. The findings from the World Value Survey demonstrate that mass self-expression values are extremely important in the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions in a society\textsuperscript{177}.

The case of Belarus corresponds the study results – regardless of massive lack of civil freedoms and regular human rights violations, the people are still a way more concerned about their economic condition and financial well-being and consider the problems of the economy the most acute in the country (see Chart No. 16).

WVS researchers identified that the empowerment of citizens can lead to democracy as well. The process of human development, that is to a great extent based on the growth of the level of education, enables desire of people to govern their own lives and motivate them for changes, leading to regime’s transition to democracy in autocracies. Growth of aspiration of citizens for autonomy and independence (empowerment) combined with the spread of self-expression values leads to the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{175}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{176}
\item Ibid.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
overthrow of authoritarian regime, that enable people to gain freedom of choice in how to live their own lives, and to choose their political system of governance178.

If to look at the cultural map, produced as a result of Ronald Inglehart’s and Christian Welzel’s research (see Chart No. 43), Belarus took place in the top left corner, among the others countries with high scores in secular-rational and survival values.

The enormous domination of survival values over the values of self-expression discussed above is a very natural and understandable phenomenon, if to take into account current state of Belarusian economy and low level of living standards. Results of the analysis conducted in the previous sections of the chapter (3.1-3.7) correspond to the mapped position of the country and as well demonstrate propensity of Belarusians to prioritize economic security over civil rights and freedoms. This is definitely a challenge for a transition to democracy in the country.

The strong concern about economic situation of Belarusians can be tracked also by the means of comparative analysis of materialism-post-materialism index. The analysis shows, that high materialism level is not only a feature of Belarusians, but a very common phenomenon among former soviet Republics in general, however the ones, who developed in ‘western’ direction and managed to improve to a certain extent their economy, are less disquieted about their material comfort (see Chart No. 44).

Interestingly, regardless of being very concerned about their economic state of affairs, Belarusians turned out to be very secular in their views, progressive, pluralistic and tolerate, as evidenced by the high level of secular-rational values. In fact, the score of secular-rational values of Belarus is equivalent to such of Germany and the Netherlands, that gives a hope that raise of empowerment and self-determination among Belarusians would lead to increase in their desire for autonomy and liberty, and further result in transition to democracy in the country.

The tendency of the cultural map shows, that combination of secular-rational and survival values is primarily common in eastern-world countries, however very visible is that Belarus is ahead of its Eastern neighbours in secular-rational indicators, and closer to the Baltic states, which increases country’s potential for the regime change.

178 Ibid.
Nevertheless, the contradiction between secular-rational and survival values give us ambiguous result with regard to peoples’ aspiration for democracy in the country. However, important to note that the values are not static and have a tendency to change over time due to formerly discussed context-dependency. If two compare the most recent cultural map (2014) with earlier instances (2008), one can notice a progress and growth in secular-rational values, however the survival index does not change (see Chart No. 45). This leads us to a conclusion that Belarusians are liberal in their views, but their liberal spirits fade before their huge concerns about financial well-being. Therefore, stabilization of economy in Belarus is an important stage towards democratic transition, that would give people space and time to engage into political life of the country, raise awareness and interest in it.

**Chart No. 43: Belarus on the cultural map, 2015**

Chart No. 44: Materialist-postmaterialist (survival-self-expression) index of Belarus in comparison with the sampled countries

Source: created by the author, data from World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014.
Chart No. 45: Belarus on the cultural map, 2008

3.9. Profiling of the Respondents: Regional Heterogeneity of Attitudes and Dependence on Demographic Factors

According to our aforementioned findings, there is an obvious dependence of the responses of Belarusians on such characteristics as age, level of education, size and the region of settlement.

The EU Neighbourhood Barometer profiling results shows that Belarusians with positive image of the EU and democracy, are younger, better educated, usually living in big cities and are generally representatives of the Western region of the country (see Chart No. 32). Democracy-oriented individuals are also using modern media sources, such as the internet and social networks, and accessing them more in Belarusian, than in Russian. They as well read more media in foreign languages, than Belarusians with neutral or negative opinion about democracy (see Chart No. 33).

Interesting opening is that Belarusian with positive view of democracy and the EU are more optimistic about their future, as well as future of Belarus (see. Chart No. 34).

Chart No. 46: Socio-economic characteristics and geographical location of Belarusians with a positive image of the EU and democracy

Chart No. 47: Exposure to information about the EU and media usage among Belarusians with a positive image of the EU and democracy


Chart No. 48: View of the future among Belarusians with a positive image of the EU and democracy

3.10. Considerable Findings of Public Opinion Analysis

3.10.1. Nothing is more important than financial stability and well-being

Economic security and material comfort turned out to be the most important in the lives of Belarusians, which is rooted in the overall difficult economic situation in the country. That can be both a challenge and a prerequisite for transition to democracy in Belarus.

On the one hand, low standards of living of Belarusians decrease their general interest in politics and political state of affairs in the country, as well as reduce their motivation in participation in decision-making in the country and civil society activities. This weaken political culture of the country and boost indifference of the people in the political life, because they are distracted by the financial survival goals.

On the other hand, dissatisfaction with the way country's economy runs and blaming for that the President can be a substantial prerequisite for the regime's change and transition to democracy.

3.10.2. Political Indifference and Uncertainty, Lack of Impulse for Changes

Regardless of general dissatisfaction about the regime and strong disapproval of Alexander Lukašenka presidency, Belarusians are still very unwilling to make any change and participate in political life of the country, as well as are ambiguous in their geopolitical orientation. They also show general indifference to politics and political affairs of Belarus, as well as are uncertain about the candidate to choose in case of democratic elections. This to a great extent connected with the aforementioned overwhelming anxiety of Belarusians about their financial well-being, as well as the lack of candidate alternatives, weakness of the opposition, its fragmentation and disability to cooperate for a common goal. This suppress the radicalization of critical attitude towards the current power and desire of the people to make a change.

The researcher concludes that strong and well-organized opposition is needed in transition process to provide for the people convincing alternative(-s) and, accordingly, decrease electorate’s ambiguity, as well as boost political debates and, hence, civic education of the citizens.

3.10.3. Democracy is not About Incomes, but Free Elections and Civil Rights

Despite of the indifference to political affairs, uncertainty in their political choices, as well as low living standards and poor economy, Belarusians feel positive about democracy and consider it a way more important than its Eastern neighbours, though still not the such extent as Wester countries.
Moreover, they agree with Western countries on the point that democracy is not about economic matters, such as income equality, capital distribution and substitutions for unemployment, but about political and civil freedoms, as well as free elections.

On the one hand, a positive attitude towards democracy and an awareness of its importance in political issues is a great advantage of Belarus compared to other countries of Eastern Europe and is definitely a prerequisite for the demotic transition in the country. However, as the former analysis has shown, Belarusians are much more concerned about their financial well-being, and prefer improvement of economic situation to political change. This leads us to the conclusion that establishment of democracy is not a prior problem for Belarusians, that also explains the fact that Belarusians are lacking aspiration for change of the regime.

3.10.4. Progressive Youth and Nostalgic Older Generations

Demographic factors, such as age, level of education, as well as size of a settlement, turned out to be decisive in transition to democracy in the country.

Younger citizens, highly educated individuals and residents of larger are a way more positive in their view of democracy, more West-oriented and supportive to the EU, as well as they more eager to make changes. Older generations and residents of rural areas of the country feeling greater sympathy to the current regime, are more Russia-oriented and prefer stability instead of changes.

This phenomenon roots in the high level of attachment to the Soviet values and nostalgic moods about USSR times of the older people. Besides, due to disability to reach independent media on the grounds of linguistic and educational barriers, older generations are much more affected by the state propaganda and are often misinformed about current state of affairs by the means of national media and television. Nevertheless, younger people, born in already independent Republic and not carrying the remnants of Soviet times, are far less affected by the state propagation due to higher level of education, developed language skills, enthusiasm and generally more positive view of the future. In addition, interesting fact is that young Belarusians care much more about peace and security in the country and in general, which lead us to presumption that they are less nationalistic, show more humaneness, tolerance and open-mindedness and, accordingly, more willing to cooperate and engage into civil society and international activities.

All stated above, brings the author to the conclusion, that high rate of materialism in the country can be connected not only with economic problems, but with the demographic situation, namely low ration of growth of younger population to the older (see Chart No. 49). However, this
hypothesis needs to be further proved by the means of separate analysis of materialism-post-materialism index among two regarded groups.

The factor of the size of a settlement is as well mostly grounded in the difference in education and, accordingly, level of influence of the state propaganda and national media. People in rural areas are a way less enlightened, interested and aware about current state of affair in the country and abroad. However, migration to urban areas in Belarus, as well as Human Development Index, is growing, which indicates a potential for transition to democracy.

From the author’s standpoint, Belarusian youth is the biggest prerequisite and hope for the overthrowing of the current regime, which would initiate the process of transition to democracy in the country. The author considers that generational change, leading to cultural ‘desovietization’ of the nation, along with the raise of education and awareness should be a big step towards democratization and rooting of democratic values in the country. However, she notes that this process may take a lot of time, but the progress is already visible in county’s demographics and high human development index that is growing. HDI value increased from 0.657 to 0.808 Between 1995 and 2017, which is an increase in 22.9 % from the time of gaining independence

Chart No. 49: Age structure of Belarus

Source: created by the author, based on Belarus: Age structure. CIA World Factbook, 2018. Found at: https://www.indexmundi.com/belarus/age_structure.html

Chart No. 50: Human Development Index of Belarus in comparison with sampled countries

Another distinctive tendency among the respondents of the surveys is that Belarusians living in the Western part of the country are a way more positive in their view of democracy and EU-oriented, apart from the resident of Eastern and Northern parts of the country, who are feeling comfortable about current regime are more Russia-oriented.

In fact, Western Belarusians are more liberal-minded and democracy-supportive, not just because of geographical closeness, but due to historical grounds. Western part of the country was for a longer time on the Western side of the ‘iron curtain’ (attached to the Second Polish Republic during the interwar period), and moreover Western provinces of Belarus were annexed to the Russian Empire a way later that Eastern. This geohistorical dissonance between regions reflected in heterogeneity of cultures, confessions, peoples’ beliefs and mentality. However, this factor is not progressive, since there is no sufficient difference in growth between countries regions, that is present between rural and urban areas for example.

1.3.7. Materialism-Secular-Rationalism Controversy

An analysis of cultural values showed that Belarusians are quite secular, open-minded, pluralistic and tolerant, and are significantly ahead of their eastern neighbours in these matters. This is obviously a great prerequisite for transition to democracy, however secular-rational values of Belarusians are largely overwhelmed by the high level of materialism, which is a natural outcome of the difficult economic situation in the country. This leads us to a conclusion, that to release people’s potential for changes, they should be given at least some financial freedom. Therefore, improvement of economic situation in Belarus is an essential step towards transition to democracy.

The researcher deduces that stabilization of the economy and improvement of the people’s standards of living is an essential stage in the process of transition, that will help to release and implement to full extend mentioned above potential, defined by the author as combination of progressive youth and secular-rational values of Belarusians. This way, the citizens won’t be distracted by the financial survival goals and will be able to participate more in country’s political and social life, and, accordingly, raise political culture, that is currently devastated.

That’s why the author further recommends to pay a lot of attention to the economic issues in the process of establishment and following reinforcement of democratic regime, although improvements of the country's economy combined with its shift towards democracy can be a great
challenge, since Belarus is highly dependent on its currently major economic partner Russia, that oppose democratic principles of rule. This means that a step towards democracy can be negatively assessed by the powerful neighbour and lead to economic partnership break or, at least, deterioration of relations between countries, which in turn, only worsen economic situation in the country and bring the following financial crisis.

Therefore, the researcher suggests to work not only on the economic stabilization, but also revision and reestablishment of diplomatic relations, that will help to keep the balance between powerful Eastern and Western partners in both politics and economy, and furthermore introduce a new status of the country to the world community.
4. EXPERT OPINION ON TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

4.1. Methodology and Sampling of the Respondents

“Always listen to experts. They'll tell you what can't be done, and why. Then do it.”\textsuperscript{180}

— Robert A. Heinlein

After getting to know what actually Belarusians think about their regime and democracy, let’s turn to Belarusian experts and the people who are directly involved in the political and social life of the country. Expert opinion from different areas will help us to evaluate the current situation in Belarus better, as well as, hopefully, open new perspectives of the understanding and exploring the object of study.

The second part of our empirical study will be conducted in form of semi-structured interviews, which would allow respondents to express themselves on the topic to a full extent, and bring new ideas and views on the problem. The researcher – in this part already an interviewer – will provide the interviewees with a framework of themes to be discussed, and will inform them about the questions that will be asked beforehand, so that the respondent have time to accumulate their thought on the issue.

In the work on the interviews we will use method of content analysis\textsuperscript{181} to disclose the content of communication and code its. However, important to mention that, since qualitative research has interpretative nature, the importance of the content and the codes extracted from its, will be determined by the interviewer. Nevertheless, we hope that the researcher will be able to detect the codes accurately and provide convincing conclusion afterwards.

The stages of our qualitative content analysis of the interviews will include:

- selection and formation of necessary questions / questionnaire;


\textsuperscript{181} Ian Dey. \textit{Qualitative Data Analysis: A User Friendly Guide for Social Scientists}. Taylor & Francis, 2003
• sampling the respondents according to their professional skills and political experience within the county;
• arrangement of the interviews and familiarization of the interviewees with the questions;
• conducting of the interviews and data collection (audio and text format);
• organising and presenting the interview results in textual, structured form;
• coding the data;
• interpreting the data, defining its interrelating or contradicting, providing conclusions.

For the interviews sessions the researcher created a questionnaire, composed from 3 open questions of different characters, that are highly interconnected with the paper’s objective and topic in general. Different types of the questions were selected by the author in order to:

• get to know the opinion of the respondent regarding the current political regime of Belarus, and understand whether he or she is opponent or supporter of it (Introductory-Clarifying type);
• let the responded to define the prerequisites and challenges for the regime’s transition to democracy and argument his or her opinion (Interpretative-Explanatory type);
• provoke the respondent and give them a space for unpredictable answers slightly going beyond the main research question (Provocative-Expanding type);

As well, the respondent was asked to comment of the surveys’ analysis, in case they eager to do so. This will expand the analysis scope to three-dimensional comparative study: data-researcher-respondent (see Scheme No. 1).

The questions that will be represented in the questionnaire are the following:

- How can you define and describe current political regime of Belarus? (Introductory-Clarifying Question);
- What prerequisites and obstacles for the transition to democracy in Belarus you can define from the side of politics, economy, society and culture? Argument your answer, please. (Interpretative-Explanatory type);
- Speaking about the regime’s transformation, do you personally consider democracy (Western-style liberal one) as a right choice for Belarus? Argument your answer, please (Provocative-Expanding type);
- The results of the surveys’ analysis shows that … . How can you comment on this? (Extra).

The sampling of the respondents was conducted according to their professional skills and political experience within the county, as well as, definitely, approval / disapproval to participate. For the purpose of ethics the interviewees were offered two possible forms of participation:

1. Open interview, where the personality was fully revealed;
2. Partially anonymous interview, where only the Field of Expertise and Occupation was mentioned.

The researcher didn’t provide possibility for completely anonymous interview, because the question of respondents’ professional skills and experience is decisive. As well, the author skipped profiling of the interviewees, since such factors as age and gender are not meant to shape the responses of the respondent. What is actually of our interest is aforementioned occupation and field of expertise, experience and status in Belarusian society (see Table No. 1).
Table No. 3: The Interviewees and Description of their Field of Expertise / Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Occupation / Field of Expertise Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Uład Vialička</td>
<td>General Director of the International Consortium “EuroBelarus”(^{182}).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Andrej Vaškievič</td>
<td>Belarusia historian, author of many books on Belarusian, Polish and Lithuanian history. Head of the Recent History Department of the Grodno State Historical and Archaeological Museum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Mikola Dziadok</td>
<td>Political activist, former political prisoner (2010-2015), anarchist. Journalist of independent Belarusian newspaper “Novy Chas” (“New Time”). Has a degree in law, studying currently international politics and economics at EHU(^{183}).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{182}\) International Consortium “EuroBelarus” was established in 2007 for stimulation and support of pro-European development of Belarus as competent actor in European relations at all possible levels. More data: https://en.eurobelarus.info/consortium/

\(^{183}\) European Humanities University – private, non-profit liberal arts university founded in Minsk in 1992, but expelled for political matters by the Belarusian authorities in 2004. Relocated to Vilnius and in March 2006 was granted official status of a Lithuanian university by the government. Currently operates with support from the European Union, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Governments of Lithuania and other European countries, as well as the United States, NGOs and foundations like MacArthur Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and many others. More data: https://en.ehu.lt/about/
Before the interviews, the respondents were asked about their language preferences, so that to make the conversation comfortable for them and increase the extent of self-expression. Besides, the interviews were taken in different forms and took different amount of time (see Table No. 4).

Table No. 4: The Interviews data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
<th>Interview form</th>
<th>Interview language</th>
<th>Interview time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>December 29</td>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>Belarusian</td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>December 28</td>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>21 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>December 28</td>
<td>Personal meeting</td>
<td>Belarusian</td>
<td>1 hour 25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>December 20</td>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>December 13</td>
<td>E-mail answer</td>
<td>Belarusian</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews were conducted with the help of the book of Raymond L. Gorden “Basic Interviewing Skills”\(^{184}\). The majority of them were recorded and one provided by the respondent in written form. The researcher decided not to transcript the results, but provide them in the authentic format due to the limitation of time of carrying out the research. The reader can find the result in the annex (see Annex No. 1).

To make the results of the interviews clear, structures and insightful we will use method of open coding\(^{185}\), where 3 categories according to the questions asked will be created. In addition, we will divide the answers of the second complex question into 4 more subcategories in accordance with the area mentioned – politics, economy, society and culture. As well, there will be division by the type of the listed factors of democratic transition – prerequisites and challenges (see Table No. 5).

However, since we are using semi-structured interview technique with open questions, the respondents are not obliged to answer in strict correspondence to the coding structure, since we want...


to reach maximum disclosure of interviewees’ opinions on the subject-matter. Therefore, the open coding method is used not to limit and compress the results, but to organize them in the way, that the reader will be able to grasp at a glance key finding of the interview.

Moreover, we respect the right of each respondent to evade the answer or provide an incomplete response, as well as express him- or herself on additional corresponding to the topic questions.

Table No. 5: Coding and Categorization of the Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category / Subcategory</th>
<th>Subcategory 1</th>
<th>Subcategory 2</th>
<th>Subcategory 3</th>
<th>Subcategory 4</th>
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<td><strong>Category 1:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of current political regime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category 2:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining prerequisites and challenges for transition to democracy in Belarus in the following areas (Subcategories)</td>
<td>Prerequisites</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Society</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Category 3:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitability of democratic regime (Western liberal) for the case of modern Belarus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2. Interviews’ Results and Coding

Get acquainted with the methodology, let’s familiarize with the interviews results. In this section the answers to the interviewer’s questions will be presented in structured form according to the defined above categories and subcategories, and further transformed into codes. We will use method of open coding to provide the main insights from the interview text to the reader and arrange the accumulated data in a structured, clear way.\textsuperscript{186}

4.2.1. “Tacit Consent” Legitimacy, ‘Dirty’ Politics, the Problem of Duality and “Hutarskoj” Character

Interviewee No. 1: Uład Vialička.

Category 1: Perception of current political regime

The respondent defines current political regime of Belarus as advanced bureaucratic-authoritarianism, that is tied to one person. It is peculiar by its durability, number of revolutions and the phases through which it has passed. However, authoritarianism in Belarus is distinct from Russian one, where autocratic pressures are a way more pervasive. Belarusian type of authoritarianism is “authoritarianism with tacit consent”.

Category 2. Subcategory 1: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition from the side of Politics

The interviewee considers that there are obvious, all known, long-lasting constraints from the side political system, which is beyond the traditional understanding of what democracy is. Already several generations were brought up in its framework and have never seen and experienced what a true democratic governance is. This is to say that the system has evolved and the people have adopted to it and its modifications. There is a great share of power of the authorities in both political system and life of the citizens, who mostly used to live in such conditions. The political regime we have today is not comparable to the one it was in 90-s and we need to consider its evolution.

The opponents of the political regime are showing great level of marginalization. There is no competitive opposition, as well as its ability to mobilize for actions. Moreover, representatives of

\textsuperscript{186} Ian Dey. \textit{Qualitative Data Analysis: A User Friendly Guide for Social Scientists}. Taylor & Francis, 2003
opposition and political activists are often stigmatized for their political activities and heavily criticized by the public, as there is a *general perception of politics as something dirty and unfavourable*. This image is successfully used and endorsed by the government.

Moreover, the respondent perceives crisis in Ukraine and change in Russia’s behaviour in the political arena as a big challenge for democratic upheavals in Belarus. Russia has proved to be a great opponent of democratic change. This opens up a ‘corridor of opportunities’ for Belarus, namely puts it in front of a choice of which path to take – revolution for democracy in Ukraine was suppressed by quite original methods, that resulted in what we have at the moment. I will be hard for Belarus too to stay away from influence of Russia, if it would like to intrude in the process (*of democratization* – added by the author). However, we can have a look at the example of Armenia, that is currently undergoing the process of democratization, and where, interestingly, geopolitical factor produces minimal effect on the changes of political system.

**Category 2. Subcategory 2: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition from the side of Economy**

From the point of view of the respondent, there are no obvious obstacles for transition to democracy from the side of economy, apart from the fact that it is governed by non-market principles and the public sector is largely dominant over the private one.

As well, he believes that economic questions can hardly be a prerequisite for regime’s transformation. Political reforms are the most important stage on the way to democracy. Nevertheless, we already observed how dissatisfaction about economic state of affairs – for example, ‘Parasite Tax’, Presidential Decree on the taxation of the unemployed – made Belarusians get out of their ‘comfort zone’ and show direct protest. However, the current political system has a great resource of sustainability and resilience to overcome any tensions and outrage from the residents. The range of crises, the country underwent, and the level of people’s compliance to accept them, proves that economic issues can hardly be used in changing of present political situation and, accordingly, establishment of democracy.

**Category 2. Subcategory 3: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition from the side of Society**

The interviewee claims that there are many problems from the side of the society.

First of all, the people do not have an example of true democracy and never experienced genuine democratic rule. Secondly, economic well-being for them is much more important than
question democratic values and sometimes even personal beliefs. They prioritize political stability and economic security to the questions of liberty, equality, personal freedoms and rights. The third problem is absence of political discussion, that would provide political awareness and civic education for the people. The media represent political issues in very specific, usually confusing for the citizens, who does not possess enough political competence, way. There are two media camps - national media, that glorifying current arthritis, and independent, that doing the opposite. Therefore, political communication is very complex and usually doesn't really help the people to attain any political awareness. Moreover, “there is no politics to discuss in Belarus except the president” and, as the respondent already mentioned, it is often blackmarked as dirty matter that is best not to touch. Shortly speaking, Belarusian citizenry does not have appropriate political competence and experience, as well as interest in political affairs.

The interviewee defines a typical feature of Belarusian society – “tacit consent”. The people pay in form of “tacit consent” and disinterest in politics for the economic stability and security that the present regime offers, and often do in without realization. This is on what state’s legitimacy grounds.

Category 2. Subcategory 4: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition from the side of Culture

The respondent notes that many statements express with regard to the role of society in transition process (subcategory 3) are connected with culture, for example absence of political competence and mechanisms for its creation, as well as phenomenon of “tacit consent”.

The main problem the interviewee mentions regarding culture is duality, which reflect in everything – two languages, two flags, two attitudes to authorities. There is no consensus between the warring parties. What is important there is a great duality in the question of “What is Belarus?” and “What is democracy?”. From the point of view of the respondent, Belarusians (the ones do not fully approve of the current regime – added by the author) can be divided to tree groups:

- The ones who openly show their “Belaruskasc” (Belarusian identity – added by the author) in a form of language, Belarusian-style closes and etc., but have nothing to do with actual politics;
- The ones who show clear civil protest, interest and involvement in political affair of the country;
- The ones who prefer to use “tacit consent” and subordination to the current regime, since they don’t see alternatives and consider democracy to be unobtainable goal.
The respondent list such cultural features of Belarusians as patience, discipline and hardworkingness as favourable for democracy, however some of them, like patience, are very beneficial for current regime maintenance. Negative features, that are harmful for democratic style of governance and by which Belarus is distinct from its Eastern neighbours, are incommunicability, high level of individualism and personal isolation, defined by the interviewee as “hutarskoj”\textsuperscript{187} character or “maja hata s karju, nichego ne znaju”\textsuperscript{188}.

**Category 3: Suitability of democratic regime (Western liberal) for the case of modern Belarus**

The respondent confirm that Western liberal democracy is suitable, but we nee to add time factor. It will take time to grow a political culture and democratic values. At the moment Belarusian society is corresponding to social democratic model, but nor a liberal one.

While answering, he raises a question that transition to democracy is not ‘a dot’, but a way. To understand democratic transition as ‘dot’ is against the concept of democracy as such. The country will need to go through a process of transit, and “liberal dictatorship” will be very useful of the first stages. Transition to democracy should be made by non-democratic means. Strictly speaking, to be transformed to democracy, Belarus firstly needs to become another type of autocracy, that will to enforce obedience to democratic principles of rule, as well as root democratic values in the society. In a one word, Belarus will need its “Saakashvili”, noted the interviewee with humour. The example of such ‘democratic dictatorship’ we see in current Armenia, where apart from enforcement tools, exist maximum level of respect towards citizenry.

**Extra: Comment on the Result of the Surveys’ analysis**

The respondent showed eagerness to comment on the public opinion analysis findings and agree with the biggest part of the results. However, he doesn’t agree on the point that all Belarusian youth disapprove Lukašenka’s rule, as well as all the people of older generation support him. Belarusian mentality is complex and does not depend on age factor. First of all, not all young people possess high education. Secondly, the president managed to attract young people by financial and

\textsuperscript{187} “hutarskoj” means coming from the “Hutar”. In Belarus “Hutar” are named farmhouses that are isolated, because of their location that is very far from the other houses in a village. Explained by the author.

\textsuperscript{188} The idiom “maja hata s karju, nichego ne znaju” is a common expression in Belarus, which means “none of my business”. It can be literarily translated as “My hut is on the edge, I know nothing”. Explained by the author.
social benefits, that they are eager to accept. This divide young generations of Belarusians into two separate camps. The same situation is present among the older people. Sometimes, retrospective they have is a great advantage in understanding of actual state of affairs.

Besides, the interviewee states that Belarusian open-mindedness and tolerance is a myth – the environment in Belarus does not generate those qualities, but more endorse ‘status quo’ among the citizens regardless of age. Speaking about cosmopolite feature, it is present only among Belarusians who possess high education, as well as international experience.

Table No. 6: Coding of the response of the Interviewee No. 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1:</td>
<td>advanced bureaucratic-authoritarianism, “authoritarianism with tacit consent”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2:</td>
<td>Subcategory 1 Subcategory 2 Subcategory 3 Subcategory 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisites</td>
<td>- dissatisfaction about economic state of affairs - patience, discipline, hardworkingness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Non-market economy, domination of public sector in economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overwhelming power of the authorities, marginalization of the opposition and lack of its competitiveness, geopolitical factor, Russia, crisis in Ukraine</td>
<td>non-market economy, domination of public sector in economy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Category 3:** Western democracy + time factor, social democratic model, process of transit, ‘democratic dictatorship’

**Extra** Complexity of Belarusian mentality, no dependence on age factor, two separate camps, open-mindedness and tolerance is a myth, ‘status quo’, limitation of cosmopolitanism

**Source:** created by the author.
Interviewee No. 2: Anonymous

**Category 1: Perception of current political regime**

The respondent defines current political regime as long-lasting dictatorship and notes that during 25 years there are almost no changes.

**Category 2. Subcategory 1: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition from the side of Politics**

From the standpoint of the respondent, the main problem from the respondent view is that all the power is concentrated in the hand of one person, who does not care about the people and prioritize his own ideals. It is hard to speak about changes when dictator ruling the country. Belarusians are living under great pressure and the protests of do not help. There was a slight sign of democratizations from the side of government and tries to turn to ‘the West’, but they are mostly used for endorsing public image of the authorities.

As well, there is a problem from the side of the opposition, who are not able to provide for the people a strong leader to trust and lead to democracy. Belarusian opposition is very fragmented and vague.

The interviewee as well told that independent journalists are often judged, fined and imprisoned for their activities. If you (a journalist – added by the author) work inside the country, it is very difficult to resist the constant persecution and harassment from the state and KGB, that helps it in this matter. That’s why independent media mainly works from outside.

**Category 2. Subcategory 2: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition from the side of Economy**

There is a great economic decline in the country, that is reflects on people’s salaries and well-being – notes the respondent. Difficult economic situation mostly connected with the state policy and Russia’s influence.

**Category 2. Subcategory 3,4: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition from the side of Society and Culture**

The respondent also showed her great concern about problem of ‘Kremlin’: Russian television, as well as media makes a great impact on the people. There is a great dominance of Russian language as well. In general, presence of Russian dominance is very felt in the country and already
in the society and culture. Belarusian language, as well as national identity, is infringed. The society is not ready for belarusization, but there is a progress. Especially in 2014, when conflict in Ukraine appeared, wave of ‘cultural renaissance’ swept Belarus. The society activated, the desire to show “who we are”, to show our identity, occurred. From the side of the culture it resulted in growth of *belarusization*, nationalism, raise of importance of the question of identity.

As well, important to notice that Belarusian language is moving from villages to the city. If formerly only representatives of rural area spoke Belarusian, now the youth actively started to use the mother tongue.

There is also belarusization that is stimulated by the government – noticed the interviewee. However, as usual, it is just an ostentatious maneuver to maintain the public image and fear of the authorities to lose their power.

The respondent believes that another problem is older generations of Belarusians, who are very nostalgic about Soviet time and “do nothing apart from watching national television, represented by Russian TV channels”. The youth, however, are quite Western-oriented.

Moreover, the interviewee claims that Belarusian society is becomes more and more stronger, which is seen in it ability for ability for *self-mobilization*, that was shown during protests against ‘Parasite Decree’, where huge masses of people got out to the streets even without leader. Besides, there are many initiatives and activities not stimulated by ‘external force’, such as rallies in memory of the missing, and many others.

**Category 3: Suitability of democratic regime (Western liberal) for the case of modern Belarus**

The respondent agree that Western-style democracy is favourable regime for Belarus, because the progress Western countries made in both politics and economics is exemplary.
Table No. 7: Coding of the response of the Interviewee No. 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1:</td>
<td>long-lasting dictatorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2:</td>
<td>Subcategory 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisites</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Dictator with absolute power, Russia, fragmented and vague opposition, persecution and harassment from the side of government, KGB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3:</td>
<td>Western-style democracy, political and economic progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: created by the author.
4.2.3. Democracy in Belarus – question of Time for Political Growth

Interviewee No. 3: Andrej Vaškevič.

Category 1: Perception of current political regime

While answering the question the respondent, raised another issue, namely – how to define democracy? From his point of view, democracy is first and foremost an effective and real functioning electoral system, which in turn, endorse appropriate functioning of the other part of the state apparatus. In addition, he mentioned importance of separation of powers. The state system of Belarus definitely does not work as well as, for example, in Great Britain, but not as badly as in African countries. However, Belarus is less democratic, than democratic. The respondent defines modern Belarus as “Interwar Poland”, and concludes that “democracy is a way”.

Category 2: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition in Belarus

(Subcategories are not present in the answer)

The interviewee considers that the most acute problem of Belarus regarding transition to democracy is historical. It is a problem of political growth, which is currently ongoing. If Belarus had an experience of independence before it would be a way easier to reach level of adequate political maturity and transit. Belarusians don’t have experience of life as an independent nation. As well – the respondent states – all most all former Soviet Republics didn't manage to transform in genuine democracies. The only exception can be Baltic states, but is arguable from the point of view of the interviewee.

The respondent believes that democracy is a question of time. Each year of independence gives more chances for transition.

There is slight development from the side of Belarusian society – notes the interviewee. Appear more and more different civil communities, groups and initiatives. However, civil society as such is not much present, as well as economic elites to support it.

Presence of money is an important factor, from the point of view of the respondent. Nowadays, more and more people (Belarusians – added by the author) possess financial capital. Every human, having appropriate level of wealth, start to think about political issues and authorities, and look at the future perspectives. Many people became concerned about “future of children” and in in what environment they will live.
What do we see in the whole world – says the interviewee – global challenges to the all democracy. Democracy is losing its position in the world. The Chinese model shows itself as a successful alternative, but everything will be clear over time.

“Factor of Russia” is as well very influential in Belarus and don’t let to practice democracy at the moment. We see it on the example of Ukraine.

Another significant point, from the respondent view, is country’s demography. The population is decreasing and it will highly influence on the situation in the country, however it I hard to predict in what way.

**Category 3: Suitability of democratic regime (Western liberal) for the case of modern Belarus**

The respondent considers existence and applicability of different models of political system to the case of Belarus, however he is standing for respect of human values and think that Western democracy – American one in particular – is preferable.

*Table No. 8: Coding of the response of the Interviewee No. 3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1:</td>
<td>“Interwar Poland”, less democratic, than democratic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2:</td>
<td>Subcategory 1</td>
<td>Subcategory 2</td>
<td>Subcategory 3</td>
<td>Subcategory 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre requisites</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>More people with financial capital</td>
<td>Time, relative progress in civil society, demography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Absence of separation of powers and real functioning electoral system, Russia</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Historical background, need for political growth, absence of experience as an independent state, absence of economic elites.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.4. Belarusian Mentality, Fear and “Waiting for a hero”

Interviewee No. 4: Mikola Dzidok.

Category 1: Perception of current political regime

The respondent defines current political regime as distinct authoritarian.

Category 2: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition in Belarus

(The respondent avoided subcategories and was very precise and laconic in the answers)

The prerequisites the interviewee listed are:

- Geographical proximity to Europe;
- Interdependence of Belarusian and European economies and, in general, presence of Belarusian economy in European market;
- Relatively small but active pro-European and pro-democratic strata in Belarusian society, who, from the respondent’s opinion, will certainly contribute to transition to democracy.

The challenges the interviewee named:

- Mentality of the majority of Belarusians
- The absence of political will from the side of the leader for democratic transition
- The absence of democratic institutions, that should be created from the very beginning of political process

Category 3: Suitability of democratic regime (Western liberal) for the case of modern Belarus

The respondent does not consider Western liberal democracy as an ideal or as a goal to be reached, because of his personal convictions as an anarchist and believe in self-organizing, stateless society based on a decentralized planned economy, self-governance of the communes and decentralization of political units. However, the interviewee agree that Western-style democracy promotes certain level of human rights and political participation, and that’s why is better than what we (Belarusians – added by the author) see now.

Extra: Comment on the Result of the Surveys’ analysis

The interviewee strongly disagrees with several surveys’ results.

He is confident that Belarusians are not confident about the government, but afraid of express their real opinion and thoughts, since they do not trust surveys, they do not trust anyone who asks
questions and do not trust even each other. When Belarusians say “Yes, I trust my government” it is just question of personal security. In fact, Belarusians perceive the state and the governmental institutions as a hostile entity, which aims to draw money from them and control them. However, Belarusians does not express their mistrust, because it could be dangerous.

As well, the respondent doubt that Belarusians were sure about what are democratic indicators, while saying that they apply to Belarus. The interviewee is sure that Belarusians don’t have clear definition of democracy and what principles in has.

Moreover, the respondent claims that there is a high level of xenophobia in Belarus, especially toward migrants and minorities.

Besides, the interviewee says that Belarusians are mainly not optimistic about their future, regardless of the results of the survey. Especially negative about future are the activists, who are already for a long time involved in political life of the country and see how everything is developing in the worse side (from personal experience of the respondent).

The respondent is sure that the results of the surveys are largely distorted, because of the fear of Belarusians to express their real opinion and lack of trust.

Concerning aspiration for changes, the interviewee thinks that Belarusians probably want changes, but their political culture is very poor and they don’t want to act. He states that “this is Belarusian mentality – they are waiting for hero, who will bring changes, but doing nothing from their side”.

The interviewee agrees, that Belarusians value economic security and stability more that political freedoms or human rights, which is the result of national education and 25 years of Lukašnka’s regime that made people think so. The president places great emphasis on financial prosperity and well-being through propaganda and the media, and this influences the mentality. Besides, problems with the economy are the reason why people are migrating so massively.

Table No. 9: Coding of the response of the Interviewee No. 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1:</td>
<td>distinct authoritarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2:</td>
<td>Subcategory 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisites</td>
<td>Geographical proximity, economic interdependence, pro-democratic strata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Mentality, absence of democratic institutions, absence of political will,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3:</td>
<td>stateless society based on a decentralized planned economy, self-governance of the communes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra:</td>
<td>distortion of the surveys’ results, lack of trust, personal security, fear, xenophobia, mentality, “waiting for a hero”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: created by the author.

4.2.5. “New Soviet” Belarusians and Attitude to Innovations

Interviewee No. 5: Uladzimir Matskevič

Category 1: Perception of current political regime

The interviewee defines the regime as Post-Soviet advanced authoritarianism.

Category 2: Prerequisites and Challenges for Democratic Transition in Belarus

(The respondent avoided subcategorization in the answers, although slightly commented the areas he didn’t want to express opinion on)

Note from the Author: The respondent showed a great competence in the object of study and, in fact, already made of was involved in several researches on the relevant topic, which kindly shared with the author. Since the answers of the interviewee were very extensive and included a presentation of a series of other relevant studies of him and his colleagues, the researcher decided to sort them, by topics.
Attitude to Innovations and New Three “Worlds”

The interviewee thinks that before speaking about changes in Belarus one needs to clarify who is actually interested in the reforms, who have the will and the necessary resources to carry them out. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to determine the structure of modern society, what the forces that drive it.

The author distinguishes the new global division of criteria: attitude to innovation.

The respondent claims that neither political or economic systems, nor geopolitical configurations, but attitude to innovations is decisive factor for the countries of all regions, and determines their place in the world. Proposed by him determinative factor (attitude to innovations) the interviewee explains as ability to accept, consume and produce novelties of a contemporary world, namely technological and social innovations.

He divides the modern world into three parts, the “three worlds”:

- those who are the first to perceive technological and social innovations, implement them and, thereby, become leaders, receiving the lion’s share of economic and socio-cultural profits (the “first world”);
- those who are in the mode of perpetual modernization and borrowing – striving for the acceptance of the new, but not having enough capabilities or resources, to consume the innovations, that are already developed and tested by the "first world" (the “second world”);
- those who resist innovation, do not want nothing new, and as a result, face with imposed consumption, i.e. still consumes innovation, but without any profit and development (the “third world”).

This how the people of the world (in geographical sense) are divided into other “words” according to their attitudes to the new. The respondent notes that, there are a way more similarities between people living in totally different geographical, but affiliating to the same “worlds”, than between neighbours in one and the same house.

Therefore, the main problem for Belarus is the inability of interaction between people of different “worlds” for the purposes of political transformations that would change the position and direction of the country’s development and give it a new perspective.

The problem is that Belarusians of the “first world”, being the main innovation resource and included in the global structure of production and consumption of innovations, precisely because of
their globalized character are practically not rooted in territorial or country’s locality, and therefore have no interest in domestic political changes. Political reform in the country is interested in the people of the “second world”, those who strive for change and for the new, but for one reason or another do not fall into the global world. Turns out that in political reforms are interested only people of the “second world”, those who strive for change and for the new, but who are not able to fulfil the requirements of the modern innovative society. The dialogue and interaction between the “worlds” is the main problem of the area.

**Thoughts on Belarusian Economy**

From the point of view of the respondent pretty much the same situation is going on in economics. In the modern world the economic model changes with accordance to the innovation and advances of social and technological nature. However, Belarus inherited from the Soviet Union redistributive type of economy, that contradicts modern economic tendencies, and not eager to accept rule of a new ‘innovation’ game. The process of de-Sovietsitization should be conducted not only regarding Belarusian mentality, but other sectors – politics, economy and many other.

**“New Soviet” Belarusians and failed ‘de-Sovietization’**

The main problem of Belarusian culture the respondent named is incompleteness and not inefficiency of the process of country’s ‘de-Sovietization’. Already for 25 years ‘De-Sovetization’ is ongoing in Belarus and still didn’t bear its fruits. The incompleteness of the deconstruction of Soviet norms in all spheres of public life, the slow and chaotic changes in the semiotic environment (here is meant presence of Soviet symbolism – added by the author), the lack of systematic work with historical memory — the list of steps, that were not taken in order to de-sovietisize the county, is very long. In addition to unresolved internal problems, we are experiencing the influence of multidirectional processes occurring in the nearest neighbouring countries: the unfolding process of de-communization in Ukraine and contradicting to it process of re-Sovietization and re-Stalinization in Russia.

One of the dimensions of the problem of ‘de-Sovietization’ is the prevalence and characteristics of Soviet identity in Belarusian society.

Self-identification “with the Soviet people” during the first decade of the 21st century was considered to be “vanishing” by sociologists. Despite the fact that its prevalence in that period fluctuated around 15-25%, the researchers pointed at the “outgoing” character of the Soviet identity, based on the fact that it was typical for older age groups, respondents with primary, incomplete
secondary education, residents of the villages. Therefore, it was thought to disappear from the structure of the social identity of Belarusians “in a natural way”.

However, the surveys of recent years showed that the prevalence of identification “with the Soviet people”, that in reality has not existed for a quarter of a century, remains at the same level as at the very beginning of the 2000s, when the “Soviet people” were fully aware of themselves 23.9% -13.8%. In average degree only 40% of respondents noted an absence of self-identification with “the Soviet people”.

The study conducted by the Center for European Transformation in August 2016 by – shares the interviewee – showed that the prevalence of identification “with the Soviet people” remains at the same level as at the very beginning of the 2000s. According to a national poll, a quarter (25.6%) of the population of Belarus “often” feels proximity “with the Soviet people”, another 18.5% - sometimes, and only 22.8% “almost never” feel this proximity. In order to understand whether we are actually dealing with a certain tendency, we turned to the data of the latter years obtained – the respondent provided a scheme with level of self-identification “with the Soviet people” from the research (see Scheme No. 5). The study showed that the level of identification of Belarusians with the Soviet people is not decreasing, and in recent years has even increased, although not to a large extent.

**Scheme No. 6:** Level of proximity of Belarusians with “the Soviet people” in years

![Chart showing level of proximity of Belarusians with “the Soviet people”](https://eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/Pic011.png)

**Source:** Aksana Shelest. “New Soviet” Belarusians: Characteristics and Prevalence of Identification with the “Soviet People”. Online: [https://eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/Pic011.png](https://eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/Pic011.png)
The interviewee shares a concept of “New Soviet” Belarusians – the type of modern Belarusians with great level of self-identification with “the Soviet people” – as well as another part of the study, which answer the question of “Who actually are those “New Soviet” Belarusians?”

Analysis of “New Belarusian” group showed that:

- “New Soviet Belarusians” are still more in the older age groups, but in all age groups their share is at least 20%, as well there is no difference in age groups from 16 to 24 and from 25 to 44 years, that usually have different values;
- Surprisingly, among respondents with higher education, the proportion of “New Soviet Belarusians” turned out to be higher than in other educational groups.
- The share of “Soviet Belarusians” is also higher among the citizens than among the villagers;
- Type of employment (state enterprise, private sector, own business) practically does not affect the identification of oneself with “the Soviet people”.

Thus, the respondent states that we are witnessing a process of some kind of “renaissance” of Soviet identity, “New Soviet identity” is becoming “younger”, “more educated” and “urbanized”.

The study also showed that “Soviet Belarusians” as well show dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs in the country, but the development vector (at least, the economic one) is directed “back” – towards the restoration of the command-administrative type of the economic structure.

Well, why there is no “natural” withering away of Soviet identity – the respondent wonders – the answer is simple. The official Belarusian ideology diligently broadcasts Soviet patterns and norms, largely relying on the glorification and romanticization of the Soviet period in the life of the country, while the pro-European oriented part of Belarusian civil society recognized the end of the process of de-Sovietization too early and focused its efforts on other fronts.

**Category 3: Suitability of democratic regime (Western liberal) for the case of modern Belarus**

From the point of view of the respondent at the moment Belarusian society is not meeting the requirements of the Western, a way more progressive society and it is impossible to predict what will be in the future in all the matters.
Table No. 10: Coding of the response of the Interviewee No. 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1:</td>
<td>Post-Soviet advanced authoritarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2:</td>
<td>Subcategory 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisites</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>The most progressive and innovative Belarusians, who are capable of making political reforms, are territorially disconnected with the country, the lack of dialogue between innovative and less inavative groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3:</td>
<td>Not corresponding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: created by the author.
4.3. **Listening to the Experts: Reconsideration of the findings and opening New Perspectives**

The interviews taken made the researcher to reconsider her previous finding, as well as opened new perspective on the subject-matter.

First of all, the question of truthfulness of the surveys’ results was raised. Indeed, fear of expression of a real opinion and lack of trust is a typical phenomenon in autocracies, that often distorts the surveys’ outcomes. However, certain surveys’ analysis results comply with the opinions of the interviewee, but, as the tendency shows, not with the ones with high level of competence in the problem (Respondent No. 1 and 5).

First of all, the question of demographical factor should be reconsidered. As it was proved by the study of one of the experts, self-determination as “Soviet people” is not connected with the age, size of settlement and even education. In fact, there are new generations of “Soviet Belarusians” who are “younger”, “more educated” and “urbanized”. The problem is connected with the state propaganda of Soviet values, and lack of attention to the problem of ‘de-Sovietization’ from the side of not Sovietic public. As well, there are several external problems, such as ‘de-communization’ in Ukraine and ‘re-Sovietization’ in Russia. Therefore, the process of ‘de-Sovietization’ in Belarus, that the author considered before as a natural process of evolution of the people’s identity and rebirth of the nation, surprisingly, experience rebirth in return.

Nevertheless, in parallel of new ‘sovietisation’ is ongoing process of ‘belasification’, that makes the question of **national identity in modern Belarus very complex**. The nation experience both ‘renaissance’ of the Soviet identity and Belarusian one.

The problem of identity is redoubled by the problem of stigmatization of politics as something ‘dirty’ and legitimacy of a ‘tacit consent’, mentioned by the 1st respondent. Both phenomena are of socio-cultural nature and used by the government in exchange for economic stability and security. This results in lack of interest and involvement in political affairs, revealed as well in the survey’s results. Lack of interest together is ‘blackmarked’ politics, in turn, cause deficiency of political discussion and competence, as well as mechanism for its creation.

However, the roots of the mentioned above issues are a way deeper and coming from the country’s centuries-old history – to be exact, **absence of experience of democratic rule and true independence**, which was mentioned by several respondents.
Therefore, combining the conclusions of the 1st and the 3rd respondents, transition to democracy in modern Belarus is hardly possible from the first beginning – the country, in particular, the society needs time for reconsideration of its own identity and for political growth. Before to transit to genuine democracy, the country need to undergo through ‘democratic dictatorship’, proposed by the interviewee No. 1, that would enforce obedience to the principles of democracy and root its values in the society and Belarusian culture.

Nevertheless, the problem of overthrowing of the current regime and transforming it (not speaking about democracy now) is a big challenge as well, that is related to the issue of the lack of people inside of the country possessing desire and resources for changes. To be precise, we are facing the problem of geographical and social disconnection of the country’s elites capable of political reforms (representatives of the “1st world” from the concept of the 5th interviewee). In fact, the biggest part of the country’s elite is living outside of the country and, hence, have no interest in changes of domestic political affairs or are not able to implement their aspirations. The researcher concludes, that Belarusian political, economic, as well as social environment is not suitable for the progressive Belarusian elites, that are looking for opportunities to realize their potential in other countries. Therefore, the country lose its main driving force for changes.

Speaking about the environment, apart from already discussed issues of legal, political and economic affairs, there is a lack of progress and innovations in the country. The non-compliance with requirements modern progressive societies (for example Western ones) is a big step away from not only democracy, but proper development of the country.

The researcher also concludes, that the problem of fragmented marginalized opposition, that was mentioned in the previous chapter and by the interviewees, can be easily connected with the of the problem of elites, and marginalization with the culture and presence of “Soviet Belarusians” in it.

Here we can as well mention “status quo” or “waiting for hero” mentality, mentioned by the 1st and the 4th respondents. Mentally the people prefer not to act, regardless of their dissatisfaction with the state of affairs, that is also proved by the surveys’ results. Instead, Belarusians tend to wait for the elite or a leader (‘a hero’), that would initiate political reform in the country. However, as we previously concluded, the elites, as well as Belarusian opposition, are not forceful enough at the moment to provide for the people impulse for change. Nevertheless, as the interviewee No. 2 noticed, there are certain shifts in people’s behaviour and recently they showed ability for self-mobilization.

However, the factor that endorse “status quo” approach of Belarusians to deal with the problems of political affairs, can be supported by such cultural traits as individualism and personal
isolation, named by the 1st respondent as “hutarskoj” character. It can be also included in the list of reasons why the country needs time for growth in both political direction and in socio-cultural.

Another surveys’ results’ myth that was dispelled, though without proper evidence, is existence of secular-rational values in Belarusian culture, such as tolerance, cosmopolitanism and open-mindedness, as well as their affiliation with the youth and population possessing high level of education. Two respondents (No.1 and 4) disagree with the results of the surveys’ regarding this point. The respondent No. 4 even claims that it is vice versa – there is a high level of xenophobia in Belarus, especially toward migrants and minorities. This controversy can be explained by the statement of the 1st interviewee – complexity of Belarusian mentality, which is expressed not only in duality of aforementioned Sovietization-Belarization processes, but in duality of culture in general, political and social attitudes, even country’s symbols and language. What worsen the situation is the problem of the lack of consensus between the poles of this duality.

The author also considers worthy of attention question of geopolitics. The problem of regional Eastern European influence – both Ukraine and Russia – was mentioned by all the respondent, but approached from different perspectives. Russian impact turned out to be all-encompassing and reflects on all sectors of the country – politics, economy, society and media, culture and language. This means that the geopolitical factor should be attentively analysed and concerned before any changes appeared.

Lastly, the researcher concludes that apart from the problems of the political, legal and economic systems, that are state-owned and obvious, there are social and cultural issues that impede transition of the country to democracy. Present-day Belarus definitely needs time for political, economic, social and cultural growth before transformation into genuine and sustainable democracy. Another transitional regime preceding democracy, but inspired by its principles and values, is required to fill the gap in political incompetence and lack of experience in democratic governance.
CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research has raised the problem of dictatorship in Belarus and its direct destructive effects on the country’s economy, society and culture.

The author of the paper, in her aspiration to find out whether there are prerequisites of the pernicious regime’s transition to democracy and what hinder their realization, carried out a range of theoretical and empirical studies, which explored the phenomenon of democratic transition itself, uncovered the current situation in the country, as well as public and expert opinion on the topic.

Having studied the relevant theories on democratic transition, the author came to the conclusion that the process in question is a complex phenomenon, that should be examined in its completed form, namely from the establishment of democracy till its stabilization and routinization in the country. Therefore, it is important to consider not transition to democracy as such, but to democracy, that is genuine, stable and durable enough to resist remaining autocratic vestiges and other occurring obstacles.

As a result of theoretical analysis, the researcher came up with a concept of binary of democratic transition, that introduced the transition phenomenon as a combination of two interrelated, following each other processes – democratization and democratic consolidation. The concept was presented and explained in the paper in a form of graphic scheme in order to maximize the clarity of the proposed idea (see Scheme No. 1).

Besides, the study of the theory helped the author to define and expound 6 stages that are the main prerequisites of transition to democracy (see Scheme No. 2) and discuss them afterwards regarding the case of present-day Belarus. This part of the research revealed the unsuitability of conditions for a democratic transition in the country at the moment, as well as helped to explain why the transition to democracy in Belarus in 1991 failed and did not lead to actual realization of democratic practices.

Empirical research, based on analysis of social surveys and a series of interviews, uncovered the public and expert opinion of Belarusians on current regime and democracy, which, in turn, were used by the author to find out whether the people are eager and ready to make a change towards democracy. Thereby, the evidential data accumulated during the empirical study, helped the researcher to find out whether there are and what are the prerequisites and challenges for transition to democracy in present-day Belarus.
The research conducted by the author made her conclude that apart from unfavourable for
democratic transformations political, legal and economic environment, that is created and maintained
by the public authorities, there are also social and cultural issues that impede transition of the country
to democracy. Present-day Belarus definitely needs time to create democratic institutions and arrange
their proper functioning, stabilize the economy and international relations, reconsider their national
identity and, more importantly, become politically mature. Another transitional regime preceding
democracy, but inspired by its principles and values, is required to fill the gap in political
incompetence and lack of experience in democratic governance.

Nevertheless, the reader should consider that the research has limitations, since for the public
opinion analysis, were used different sources of data, as well as there was a slight difference in the
periods of conducting of the surveys. Thus, some errors may occur due to the context-dependency
and volatility of people’s opinions in time, as well as difference in approaches of carrying out of the
polling procedure by selected polling organizations. Moreover, in any survey analysis is present total
survey error. As well, important to keep in mind that the respondents living under dictatorship are
often afraid to participate in opinion polls with questionnaires on the topics connected with the
regime, and can distort their answers in order to protect themselves from future state prosecution.
Therefore, the results of the surveys may not to a full extent reflect public opinion, since the people
tend to hide their true perceptions.

The author hopes that the research will be helpful for better understanding of the phenomenon
examined in the paper and further study of the topic.

For further exploration of the topic, the researcher recommends to continue work on the
interviews and present opinion of the experts from the field, that are not mentioned in the paper. In
addition, interesting interviewees can be representatives of opposition and civil society organizations,
as well as state officials and police, if there will be possibility to have an honest conversation with
them. Besides, since the surveys’ results are constantly updating, revision of the public opinion is
recommended to track the changes in the people’s attitudes.
LIST OF LITERATURE AND SOURCES

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Surveys


Reports


Maps


Legal acts


Epigraphs


**Additional Sources**


LIST OF ANNEXES

Annex No. 1: Interview Records.