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Explaining party system development in post-communist Belarus

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EXPLAINING PARTY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

IN POST-COMMUNIST BELARUS

Submitted by Elena A. Korosteleva-Polglase

For the degree of PhD/MPhil

of the University Bath

2001

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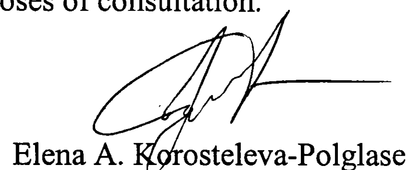

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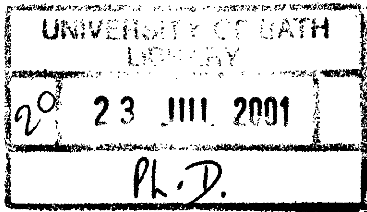
UNIVERSITY OF BATH
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23 JUL 2001
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To my Father,

for his never ending love, courage and sacrifice…

Abstract

This thesis intends to explain the problematic development of the political party system in post-communist Belarus. There has been very little scholarly discussion of post-communist Belarus either in the West or in Belarus itself. Nevertheless, Belarus proves to be a good candidate for analysis as it demonstrates some generic features, typical of third-wave democracies (Huntington, 1971). At the same time, Belarus has pursued its own *sui generis* path of transition. Behind its democratic *façade* of semi-regularised elections, full suffrage, and constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties, one can witness an increasing misbalance of power that is heavily weighted towards the president and away from parties and the legislature. This necessitates a discussion of party system development and associated with it, democratic deficit in the new regime.

The thesis proceeds in five chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the principal features of third wave transitions, and focuses on the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which follow a different path of development to other regimes. The result is that they are becoming 'outsiders' in the 'new' Europe. In Chapter 2 an analysis of transitional theories will be undertaken in an attempt to develop a complex explanatory framework, known as the 'structure-agency approach', to study Belarus' party system. Chapter 3 focuses on the chronological development of structural and institutional determinants of party system development in Belarus. Chapter 4 examines parties as three-dimensional decision-making agencies, that are parties in public office, central office and grassroots vis-à-vis their voters. The thesis concludes in Chapter 5 with a wider discussion of what type of democracy, if any, is likely to become established in Belarus and what needs to be done in order to sustain it.

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Introduction. Disclosing third wave transitions: Towards an explanation of party system development in Belarus

Research objectives

This thesis attempts to explain the problematic development of the political party system in the Republic of Belarus. After a decade of transition Belarus remains effectively in a pre-*perestroika* era with limited economic or political restructuring. This is manifested in a centrally controlled state economy; state owned media; power lying in the hands of a nomenklatura that closely resembles that of the pre-*perestroika* ruling elite; a sophisticated system of patronage; low-level public contestation; and even lower inclusiveness in the decision-making process.

Concurrently, Belarus has not genuinely enjoyed the practice of free and fair elections and the growth of non-governmental sector. This is due in part to its ineffective legal framework and hollow system of representation, and in particular the weakness of political parties. Political parties, a cornerstone of most democratic regimes, are becoming increasingly less influential, suffering partisan decline and lacking power.

The principal task of this research will therefore be to develop an understanding of this phenomenon and explain, through the use of empirical research, the reasons for Belarus' protracted party system development, which is characteristic of many new transitions, but especially of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

A general introduction to the phenomena of third wave transitions and particularly the CIS will precede the examination of the party system in Belarus. Individual emphasis will be placed on economic factors[1] as part of the structuring environment, which is particularly important for successful democratisation in these countries. This includes the CIS complex relations with the European Union and global economic community, contrasted with the CIS structural dependence on Russia during the reform process. It is believed that an understanding of the 'philosophy' of these states, which are gradually developing into 'outsiders' of the 'new' Europe[2], is necessary for examining the particularities of the system in operation in Belarus.

The following chapter will discuss existing transitional theories, which will assist in the search of a more explanatory framework for the analysis of Belarus' party system formation. A tripartite framework grounded on structures, institutions and agency will be adopted to allow a comprehensive analysis of why party system development has been so slow in Belarus.

The thesis aims to demonstrate that the failure of the political party system in Belarus cannot be explained purely in terms of the failure of parties to organise, unite and to grow into a coherent system that can offer a forum for public contestation and inclusiveness (Dahl, 1971). It will be argued that inherited structures – especially

[1] This will form part of a 'structure-agency' framework used in this thesis for assessing party system development in Belarus.

impending economic crisis, weak state and the nomenklatura's control over the decision-making process - and their subsequent institutional reinforcement have also affected successful democratisation and party system institutionalisation in the republic.

The novelty of this research lies in its pioneering analytical inquiry into party system functioning in Belarus, as well as a non-standard methodological technique of analysis, which will be outlined below.

The problem outline

The last decades of the twentieth century have witnessed the birth of many *new* regimes. Most countries in Latin America and almost all states in Eastern Europe have begun remarkable transformations from a semi-closed economy towards a free market; and from dictatorial style regimes towards liberal democratic polity. Many political scholars emphasise the *sui generis* nature of the new regimes, primarily associated with (i) high complexity of transitional tasks[3] and (ii) incomplete and non-progressing system institutionalisation. Scholars agree that many new regimes fit the minimal criteria of a polyarchy (Dahl, 1971), but as "a type not yet theorised" (O'Donnell, 1993). Third-wave democracies are often cited as 'democracies by default', 'semi-democracies' or even '*façade* democracies' (Whitehead, 1992; Mainwaring, 1996; O'Donnell, Schmitter,

---

[2] This debate is pursued by S. White, M. Light, and J. Löwenhardt as part of their research project, entitled 'The Outsiders: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the New Europe', within the ESRC programme 'One Europe or Several?'. See chapter 1 for further references.

Whitehead, 1986; White, 2000). This essentially implies little system change, populist politics, lowering of public expectations of what could be achieved through political action, and consequently, low-level participation and delegated leadership in an '*il*-legal' environment, that is to say a system that is not protected by its own constitution. Regimes of this type are, paradoxically, sustainable, and characterised by various degrees of *non*-institutionalisation, *under*-representation and *non*-intensive political competition. This suggests that a continuing inquiry into theories of transition, and especially of party system development, which lies at the core of democratic policy-making, should be undertaken.

Post-Soviet states have appeared to embark on a more complex transition to democratic polity than any other in the European region. Historically, these countries were strongholds for socialism, and simultaneously, the initiators of transition. Culturally and structurally, they suffered most from inherited legacies, and unsolved conflicts. Their present developments have led to economic stagnation and impending system collapse, as well as the lingering threat of 'red' (or 'red-brown') dictatorship, populist and mass alienated politics, extreme social divisions, and growing international isolation. The latter is particularly alarming for the CIS states. The dual enlargement of the European Union and NATO eastwards, as well as the incorporation of more successful Central and East European countries (CEECs) into a global capitalist market means that the former Soviet Union states feel increasingly isolated from the 'new' Europe. This isolation is not only geographical, but also isolation outside a newly built political and

[3] This includes democratisation, state and market building – the 'triple' transition, as described by Claus Offe (1991).

economic 'Schengen Wall'. This sense of exclusion especially amongst the borderland countries like Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, has begun to manifest in an emerging conflict of identities - such as pro-European versus pro-Slavic Russian - and in an understanding of the limited opportunities that the ruling elite might take in this structurally constrained environment[4]. The situation is aggravated by Russia strengthening its control measures over the borderland countries, primarily through demanding debt payments and limiting energy supplies to the dependent CIS states. Belarus therefore appears to be a suitable candidate for analysis as it is quintessence of the difficulties associated with third wave transition and the CIS in particular. Its transition to democracy has been slow and disruptive. In 2001, Belarus was in its eleventh year of 'transition' from the *old* to the *new* regime, and its democratic progress remains unsound; economic restructuring has not been initiated, parties remain weak and powerless, and the prospect of dictatorship is looming.

An overview of Belarus

The Republic of Belarus formally declared independence from the former Soviet system on the 25 August 1991 and became - for only the second time in its history (a short-lived National Republic having been established in 1918) - an independent sovereign state. However, its move to democracy appears to be a long and unsuccessful *detour*. Its

---

[4] This will inevitably be a painful choice. If the ruling elite's orientation is towards a wider Europe, a country has to embark on lengthy and unpopular reforms, which are non-profitable and costly in a short-term. If it is a pro-Russian choice, it will imply short-term economic sustainability with an inevitable

first parliamentary elections in March-April 1990 resulted in a short-term success for the democrats, who established the first 'Democratic Club' with nearly one third of seats in parliament. However, the communist majority overruled and continued a counter-reform course similar to that of the pre-*perestroika* period. In 1992 the nationalists initiated the call for new parliamentary elections, which was widely supported by the electorate, but contemptibly ignored by the old-fashioned parliament. The latter was replaced only in 1995 by a new multi-party legislature after the first relatively competitive elections. Whilst changing its external appearance, parliament internally remained unchanged. There was still a relative majority of non-partisan (48) and left-oriented candidates (communists (22) and the agrarians (17)) and very few others[5]. Its democratic tenure was brief and in most respects ended with the introduction of the presidency in 1994. The first President of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, dissolved the parliament in 1996, following an alteration to the 1994 Constitution. Nevertheless, parliament continued to meet and was still recognised by all major international authorities on the basis of the 1994 constitution. President Lukashenko's term of office should have expired in July 1999, however he did not accept this, and altered the constitution by referendum accordingly, allowing himself two more years in power. Consequently, parliamentary elections took place in autumn 2000; however, none of the existing opposition parties expressed a desire to participate in them[6], and thus did not attempt to negotiate with the authorities via democratic means. At present the country is

---

prospect of pending system collapse. The situation is such that the CIS are essentially centred on Russia, both structurally and economically, and may not have much the freedom to make their own choice.

[5] See Appendix 2 for more details.

preparing for the forthcoming presidential election, however, it remains unclear which opposition candidate will emerge to challenge President Lukashenko, and whether parties will use this opportunity to reinforce their 'fading' mandate[7].

Historically Belarus possessed the structural foundation on which democracy could be built but this appeared to be insufficient for national consolidation. This foundation included a relatively stable economy[8], vast intellectual capital, existing political divisions, an emerging opposition, and eager voters. However, structural and institutional settings[9] - as well as the decisive intervention of the 'elite factor' - have delayed democratisation. Notably, political parties - the basis of a strong democratic system – have failed twice to gain office and to sustain the momentum for change: first in the 1995 parliament and second, to win votes and seats in the 2000 parliamentary

---

[6] PCB and LDPB are the only exception to this pattern. They at least nominated their candidates for the elections 2000.

[7] There are presently two 'frontrunners' (S. Domash, and V. Goncharick), which consider themselves as the joint opposition nominees. This decision, nevertheless, has not yet received an approval of the CCDF (Coordination Council of democratic Forces). See for details, recent news on http://www.belarusnews.de/news_en/index.shtml retrieved June 2001

[8] See Appendix 5 for detailing economic statistics.

[9] Such structural factors include the persistence of the 'Soviet' power elite and their total control over the decision-making process, the lack of electoral practice and an outdated electoral code, pending economic crisis with a limited reform programme, a strong presidency wielding the precedence of decree over law, state-owned and controlled mass media, and the non-existent independence of judicial and legislative bodies from the state. The 'elite factor' includes lack of organisational unity amongst the opposition, and their ill-articulated ideological and programmatic profiles, as well as Lukashenko's unprecedented impact, and political interference from Moscow in the decision-making process in Belarus.

elections. Petty disputes, lack of co-operation and arguments between and within the parties lead to a pessimistic prognosis about their future potential. For their continuing inability to win seats in parliament, parties have become increasingly disregarded by the electorate, who would rather enjoy short-term benefits from the state, than long-term promises of parties. The populist president, Alexander Lukashenko with his appointed loyal administration and system of clienteles continues to control the 'representative' institutions of Parliament, as well as the Constitutional Court, mass media and the state bureaucracy. Paradoxically, the regime in Belarus remains sustainable, as in many other post-Soviet democracies, with the power balance heavily weighted towards the presidency and away from the legislature.

Party system formation in Belarus seems to reveal common and simultaneously unique features of new transitions. Nevertheless, there has been little academic discussion of its development vis-à-vis third-wave democratisation. This research initiates discussion regarding party transition and democracy building in Belarus, and attempt to explain why these developments have followed a different to democracy course. Political parties will be the principal focus of this research, on the grounds that parties:

> ... articulate interests, aggregate interests, recruit leaders, make government policy, transmit policy decisions to the people, carry out policy, adjudicate disputes, and educate or coerce entire peoples. Of course, other institutions, public and private, also perform these functions. But what distinguishes parties from all the rest is their emphasis on linkage. Parties are seen, both by their members and by others, as agencies for forging links between citizens and policy-makers. Their

raison d'etre is to create a substantive connection between rulers and ruled (Lawson et al., 1988:1).

Due to shortage of space, this analysis will explicitly focus on parties, and the structural/institutional aspects of democratisation associated with them. Other no less important tools for building democratic polity, such as civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), elites, state bureaucracy, and mass communication will only be briefly mentioned. Parties' role in sustaining democracy, and the quality of regime that weak parties entail in Belarus, will raise additional discussion in the concluding chapters of the thesis.

Thesis structure

The thesis will proceed in five chapters. The first chapter offers a brief descriptive analysis of third-wave democratisation, including the CIS. It will be suggested that the emerging democracies considerably differ not only from prior waves of democratisation of the twentieth century (Huntington, 1991), but also from each other – across regions and nations. Research of distinguished scholars such as Samuel Huntington, Philip Schmitter, Juan Linz, Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, Robert Dahl, Peter Mair, Stephen White and others will be consolidated to identify both unifying and dividing features of the third-wave turnover. Particular emphasis will be given to the analysis of the differences in development of the former Soviet states (CIS) vis-à-vis Central European democracies (CEECs). In a grotesque way the CIS represent a new 'quality' of emerging polyarchies. They may formally lack institutionalisation, but,

nevertheless, continue to function in a structured and passively sustainable way. The generic feature of these regimes is that public democratic expectations may cohabit successfully with dictatorial forms of governance and be expressed in the form of full delegation of representative powers to the *chosen* leader – in a desperate hope for change and stability. This is argued to be a dangerous mixture of 'dual legitimacy' when the presidency may contest the legislature's natural rights on the basis of supreme legitimacy of power. The issue of 'the outsiders', which the borderland countries of the CIS are becoming, with the dual expansion of the EU and NATO, and the process of globalisation of finance, will be raised respectively to underline the complexity of their transition.

With the purpose of finding an adequate analytical framework for analysis of Belarus' party system, critical research of existing transitional theories will be given in Chapter 2. By and large contemporary transitional literature may be differentiated in two principal frameworks - structure and process-oriented. Although, these methodological divisions are more speculative than real, they will, nevertheless, aid understanding of the explanatory logic of both traditions. The structure-oriented framework will emphasise the *static* strength of structures and institutions that set benchmarks for further system development. This will primarily include neo-institutional, cleavage-oriented, and cultural analyses. The process-oriented framework will offer a *dynamic* outlook on democratisation, and highlight the importance of agency, which develops existing constraints into a structure of opportunities for decision-making. Elite analysis and rational choice theory will be at the heart of discussion. Likewise, path-dependent analysis can be termed as a 'middle-way' approach, which combines standpoints of both

traditions. In conclusion, a joint 'structure-agency' approach will be summarised in an attempt to reflect the complexity of transition in the new democracies. Elster's et al (1998) tripartite approach of structures, institutions and decisions, cross-referenced by 'forward' and 'backward' linkages, will be adopted for the analysis of Belarus' party system formation.

The following chapters will form the central part of the thesis and present research findings of party system development in Belarus, from the 'structure-agency' perceptive. Chapter 3 will analyse recent historical developments in Belarus from both structural[10] and institutional perspectives, and highlight the 'inherited' complexity of the developing post-Soviet regime. Historical overview allows the mapping of 'forward' and 'backward' linkages in time, in order to understand the impact of structures and agency on national decision-making process. Section 3.1 will view party system developments from a cleavage-oriented perspective. It will be, nevertheless, established that the most common problems for Belarus, such as limited elite rotation, indecisive and disintegrated opposition, unprecedented scale for populist leadership, public tolerance and effective absence of choice, *are not* merely consequences of the existing conflicts and legacy structures.

---

[10] The structural approach adopted in this research utilises a broader understanding of 'structures'. It refers to such variables, as state, vested interests, interest organisations, cultural legacies and social divisions - as well as the economic factors outlined in chapter 1- to demonstrate their interdependence and a joint impact on the decision-making process in Belarus.

This will be complemented by the examination of institutional constraints (presidency, electoral code, constitution-making) in section 3.2. Scholars, such as Shugart and Carey (1992), Linz (1994), Geddes and Lijphart (1996), note that a strong presidency can be particularly 'undermining' for party settlement in new regimes. However, policy-makers acting according to enduring traditions, and institutional settings, may also have a debilitating impact on the system. It will be argued that in order to avoid immobilism in decision-making and to secure their survival, the 'old-style' nomenklatura crafted the presidency in Belarus by having the 'right' people placed in office. However, with Lukashenko's coming to power, this scenario was radically altered. A poorly written constitution allowed enough leeway for the new president to manoeuvre and to create a regime of his own design. The outcome of the political game – the infamous 1994 constitutional crisis – was the establishment of the super-presidential democracy with a 'pocket' parliament, a malleable Constitutional Court, powerful executives and state-owned mass media. The electoral code was such that it did not allow smaller or opposition parties to pass the vote threshold and to obtain seats in parliament.

Nevertheless, the regime in contemporary Belarus can be described as a polyarchy (Dahl, 1971), which practises semi-institutionalised elections, and from which people expect accommodation of their interests. However, the undercurrent of the democratic façade is lowering public contestation and inclusiveness in the national decision-making process. This has been occurring through the power accretion by the president and the respective decline of parties, and the limited influence of other interest organisations. The *organised practice* of election campaigns is an example of such policy-making. At present this implies a foregone conclusion in favour of the authorities in the so-called

'equal and free' election race. This section will conclude by demonstrating that informal institutionalisation has strengthened, and a more sophisticated system of patronage, and loyalty has been introduced with Lukashenko's succession to power.

Chapter 4 will focus on the analysis of *agency* – that is to say political parties, and their role in the process of building democracy in Belarus. Their three-dimensional organisation – in public office, in central office and on the ground – will be the subject of empirical research. In section 4.1 it will be argued that global trends in contemporary party politics such as declining partisanship, candidate and capital centred campaigns, flexible membership, and limited regional networks, have also affected new democracies. Although new systems operate in a different set of circumstances, they nevertheless, tend to adapt more efficient survival strategies. This may explain why so many parties tend to ally with the state, and why so few follow a 'mass party' route. When applied to the case of Belarus, these new developments in party politics take a grotesque form, reinforced by unfavourable institutional and structural settings. In the continuing struggle with a strong presidency, Belarus' legislature has surrendered its rights and power to the incumbent leader, Alexander Lukashenko. Many parties have been forced to relegate themselves into a 'parallel society' and become increasingly 'forgotten' by voters seeking short-term benefits. Some parties, despite a vibrant start, have died; and the remainder has been compelled to capitulate their partisanship to the president in exchange for seats in parliament. Parties in parliament and their ways of sustaining and promoting themselves will be the focal point of this chapter. The author has used a new and non-standard analytical technique based on single ballot voting by members of parliament to receive an informative picture of the 1991-1999 legislatures'

structural development and the formation of policies of coalition and factions in Belarus. Comparison with the Russian Parliaments between 1991-92, based on a similar technique, will give additional strength to the explanation of the ominous development of Belarus' semi-parliamentary democracy.

Parties' organisational faculty in central office and on the ground will be examined in section 4.2. It will be argued that parties that grew from mass movements or successor organisations are presently moving away from mass type organisations. They, along with newly emerged liberal and social democratic parties, are attempting to adapt a more flexible mode of existence. The specificity of the style of ten out of seventeen registered parties in Belarus will be discussed.

In section 4.3 voters' perception of parties will be analysed. Examination of the general trends in voting behaviour such as voters' profiles, attitudes, preferences, and choice volatility, helps to approximate public perception of parties in Belarus and to add understanding of their initial success and consequential failure on the national political arena. Particular emphasis will be given to the examination of the differences in electorates of anti-system and pro-governmental parties, as well as of the anti-system parties and the president.

Chapter 5 will draw on Belarus' experience of building democracy and hypothesise various forms that the new regimes may take. It will be subsequently discussed what type of regime and mode of representation might develop in Belarus; and more importantly, what role, parties and the party system will play in society in an attempt to

provide sustainability of reform. It will be argued that the new polity in Belarus can be described as a delegative regime (O'Donnell, 1993). On the surface it meets Dahl's (1971) minimalist criteria for democracy, but inwardly is characterised by low-intensity citizenship, limited representation and delegation of the public mandate to the elected leader of the nation. In addition, section 5.2 will discuss the issue of differentiating a regime that may nominally fulfil democratic requirements - from a state as a mechanism for power realisation. The state reinforced by certain institutional arrangements cannot operate in a democratic manner, and draws on existing structural properties of the previous regime. This halts further democratisation. With reinforcement of democratic institutions, this dilemma may successfully resolve in a semi-presidential form of governance, associated with a strong leadership controlled by mechanisms of public representation. A discussion in relation to plausibility and sustainability of this type of regime in Belarus will be raised in the concluding chapters.

Research

The author has developed a novel technique for analysing party system performance in a new democracy. It is based on a three-dimensional inquiry into party politics, and uses a combination of methods to achieve the required understanding of parties' interactional configurations.

First, for the analysis of parties in public office the author applied the technique of single ballot voting using SPSS package[11]. The study of MPs' voting positions over time was based on their response to 'hot' issues presented for discussion in parliament. While voting, deputies should unequivocally express their own opinions by voting 'yes', 'no' or 'undecided' to the issue discussed. Time series analysis is used to aggregate their discrete preferences into a coherent picture of voting patterns and coalition behaviour. Single ballot voting is a unique source of information, provided it is run on a broad database, and there is no strict partisan discipline within the legislature, which can limit dispersion of opinions. This method gives a fuller picture of latent and evident political bonds between the members of parliament, as well as helps to draw an accurate image of political actors in parallel to their rhetoric and communicative skills. In order to receive an adequate structure of MPs' positions in political space, an extensive database needs to be collated. This research is unique as it allows the structure of the Belarusian Parliament to be viewed dynamically. The research utilises the results of single ballot voting published in parliamentary bulletins (13 sessions) from 1990 to 1999, and includes at least 30 issues (questions) debated on a daily basis by approximately 345 members of parliament.

The informative value of the above method, which was relevant for the analysis of parties in public office, has been improved by a series of cross-interviews, conducted by

[11] The initial method was developed and tested by the Centre for Applied Political, Economic and Social Research (INDEM), Moscow. See *Rossiiski Monitor: Arkhiv sovremennoi politiki [Russian Monitor: Archive of Contemporary Politics], 1992-1995.* The author has replicated the technique for the analysis

the author with major political figures and experts. In order to illustrate the organisational faculty of parties in Belarus, interviews were deemed more important than other sources of information. They were held twice, in 1996 and 1999, and reflected the most controversial time in the political development of Belarus and involved at least two members of party leaderships.

In the final stage of analysis, electoral response was deemed to be important for understanding party system development, and hence, was examined along with party structural analyses. Such variables as voter volatility, and public attitudes towards various modes of the changing system have been estimated. The data was collected and analysed with the author's direct involvement in the projects[12] conducted by the Centre for Social and Political Research, BSU. An experimental method of Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA), developed by A. Russell et al (1992) in their analysis of voting behaviour of the British electorate, was replicated for this research to outline voters' attitudes to social and political change in the transitional society. In addition, the calculation of voters' electoral volatility, based on the outcomes of the opinion polls rather than election results, in application to the new democracies, gives a new insight

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of Belarus' parliaments between 1990 and 1999, and added extra value to the method – a dynamic comparative outlook on the evolution of structures, and patterns of voting behaviour in parliament.

[12] These projects include 'New Democracies Barometer: Belarus' in 1994, 1996, 1998 in co-partnership with The Centre for Strategic Development, Institut for Advanced Studies, Vienna, and Strathclyde University, Glasgow; INTAS 99-245 on 'Charismatic Political Leadership in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine: its emergence, mobilisation, and sustainability', coordinated by the University of Bath for 2000-02 period; and many domestic sociological reviews with the author's direct involvement in the project management.

and an extra strength to the applied research methodology[13]. Altogether these methods help to develop a more holistic view of parties and their potential with voters, as well as to identify their prospects for further development.

In conclusion, the aim of this research is to develop an understanding of party system operation in a transitional state and parties' contribution to fostering democratisation. It is hoped that this research will benefit political science with both country-specific information, and a tested methodology of analysis of political systems of the new regimes.

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[13] This method of calculation of voter volatility has been debated by the author in her publication entitled "Electoral volatility in post-Communist Belarus: explaining the paradox", *Party Politics,* 6(3): 343-358.

Chapter 1. Democratisation in the CIS compared to other third wave transitions

This chapter will emphasise a distinctive nature of the third-wave transitions[14] in CEECs, CIS and Latin America. More importantly, it will highlight specific features of post-Soviet regimes for the study of party system development in Belarus, as part of the CIS framework.

Section 1.1 examines what makes new democracies different from the preceding waves of democratisation during the twentieth century. It will be argued that third-wave democratisation is a *sui generis* process, primarily associated with the need for radical and wholesale transformation of polities, and the consequences of continually non-institutionalising systems. Research of leading regional experts will be consolidated to identify distinguishing features of the third-wave turnover.

In section 1.2 the analysis of transitions within CIS will confront general patterns of development in the new regimes. It will be premised on such factors as (i) economic externalities and elite strategical considerations; and (ii) structural and cultural settings - to identify the CIS path as dissimilar to other third wave transitions. It will be argued that, primarily, because of their economic, political and cultural closeness to Russia, the dual expansion of Europe[15], and the process of globalisation of national economies[16],

[14] In this research only Latin American, CEECs and CIS transitions are included for comparison.

[15] This implies the inclusion of the new members in NATO, and the eastward enlargement of the European Union. In relation to the latter, a two-tier system of accession has been adopted '*Regular Report from the Commission on the Progress towards Accession…*', 13 October 1999,

these countries are becoming "a new borderland between full members of the European family and the rest of the Eurasian landmass" (White et al., 2001: 1). New international trends naturally affect the prospects of developments for the CIS, which grow to be increasingly excluded and isolated by an emerging 'Schengen wall'[17] from the rest of Europe and the global community. They seem to have ultimately stuck in their attempt of simultaneous restructuring of state, nation and economic markets; they are presently characterised by a fragile balance between an authoritarian presidency and prospects of dictatorship; and their party systems are noted for a continuing impairment of function.

Belarus appears to be an enlightening summary of the CIS problematic development, especially in terms of problematic settlement of such representative institutions as parliaments and party systems. It reflects not only a mixed style of reformation, comprising intensive state intervention and slow liberalisation of the national economy;

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http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report_10_99/intro, retrieved March, 2001. This in the first instance included such CEECs as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and in the second, Slovakia, the Baltic countries, Romania, Bulgaria, and Malta.

[16] Third wave democratisation provided financial capitalism with new opportunities for the alleviation of internal problems of over-accumulation by the advanced societies. The emergence of new regimes was taken as the emergence of new markets for a global capitalist economy, and, hence, the opportunity for its geographical expansion. These developments, however, were also marked by the increasing vulnerability of new states to re-current global economic crises. Russia and its neighbourhood was one of the worst examples hit by financial crisis of 1998. If CEECs were able to structurally and institutionally foresee potential implications of the global economic decline; for Russia, and dependent CIS, recent financial stagnation in contrary had disastrous repercussions.

[17] Presidency conclusions, Nice European Council Meeting, 7-9 December 2000: http://europe.eu.int/coucil//off/conclu/dec2000/ retrieved March 2001.

but also the CIS cultural and structural particularities that turn these new regimes into the outsiders of the process of globalisation. Parties are traditionally deemed as important channels of representation of public will and popular control over the government decision-making in a democratic state. Hence, their formation, organisational capacity and access to policy-making in Belarus will be the primary concern of the further analysis.

In conclusion it will be noted that due to the unprecedented nature of third wave transitions, a more elaborate and complex methodology will be required to enable a holistic analysis of the new regimes, and their party systems. Various analytical frameworks and theories of transitions will, therefore, be explored in the next chapter for the purpose of adopting a multifaceted approach to examine developments in the new transitions.

1.1 Particularities of the third-wave democratisation

There were only a few dozen democracies in the world until the late 1970s. Since then the number has grown considerably, and many excellent analyses of the distinctive nature of what Huntington (1991) terms 'third-wave' democracies have been undertaken. In his seminal work, "The Third Wave: democratisation in the later 20th century", he offers a well-defined classification of democratic changes over the span of a century. However, Huntington particularly focuses on the third wave that took place in Southern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s, moved to Asia, and a decade later spread across East Central Europe. The beginning of the 1990s, consequently, saw an

unprecedented number of democratic elections in many Latin American democracies and in all new CEECs and the CIS.

Huntington (1991) noted that the generic character of third-wave democratisation frequently collides with the distinct individualism of democratic reforms in the newly emerged states. For example, one can observe five different patterns of regime change within the third-wave turnover: cyclical change, second-try change, interrupted democracy, direct transition from non-democratic regime and decolonisation. These regimes also differ in their mode, length and the pace of transition, structural changes, the people primarily responsible for bringing about change, and their prospects for survival.

Nevertheless, they all associate with some transition features that go beyond their national contexts and that bring them into one league of newly democratised states. For example, in all democratic regimes, principal government officials were chosen through competitive elections, in which the bulk of the population could participate. As Huntington (1991:174) states, all new regimes have invariably learnt that elections may not be necessarily the life of democracies, but they are frequently the death of dictatorship. Another demonstrable feature is that no matter what transitional mechanisms had been used[18] almost all new democracies were achieved by non-violent

[18] Huntington (1991: 114) singled out three major types of transition mechanisms: these are transformation, replacement and transplacement. Transformation occurs when elites in power take the lead in binging abut democracy. Replacement occurs when opposition groups take the lead in regime change. Transplacement takes place from a joint action of government and opposition groups.

means of negotiation, compromise and agreement. Furthermore, the 'globality' of change is also a 'specific' quality of third-wave democratisation. This implies not only numeric occurrence of changes around the globe[19], but also their global character in political and economic terms, which advances the implantation of capitalism, as well as the formation of various military-strategic and political alliances on transnational levels through cooperation with the developing economies.

Apart from some generic features, the third wave transitions are also characterised by some *analogous conditions*, which have mobilised change. The five most significant conditions include:

1) deepening problems of legitimacy of non-democratic systems where democratic values become widespread, and economic failures obvious;
2) the global economic growth and its influence on living standards throughout the world, education values, and a greatly extended middle class in many countries;
3) changes in the doctrine and activities of the church as opponents of non-democratic regimes;
4) changes in the policies of external political actors, including the attitude of the European Community towards expanding its membership;
5) 'snowballing' or effect of democratisation by stimulating and providing models for regime change in other countries (Huntington, 1991: 40-108).

[19] As Huntington emphasizes, democratisation took place in almost thirty countries between 1974 and 1990, not considering later developments in the former Soviet bloc countries.

The enormity of tasks, the new regimes have to achieve, and conditions within which they operate, undoubtedly differentiate them as *sui generis* transitions from prior waves of democratisation. As many scholars note, in third wave turnover, change occurs in a situation of "[an] unprecedented degree of social destructuring, volatility and fluidity" (Batt, 1991: 50). Having limited prior democratic experience, new states have to attempt a wholesale transformation, which takes place in the situation of ongoing economic crisis, worsening living conditions, and growing crime and despair amid the general population. This heavily burdens reformatory initiatives, and the prospects for stability in these countries. The majority of the new regimes are facing a "triple transition" (Offer, 1991: 14) – a process, which involves not just democratisation, but also marketisation, and state building itself, including regulation of state resources, settlement of territorial issues, and definition of national identities; and not all democracies are successful on this path.

Democratisation in itself is a challenging task for the new regimes, which necessarily involves, according to Dahl (1971: 1-16), a parallel development of the two dimensions – public contestation and participation. In early twentieth century Europe, democratisation advanced in the direction of extending the right to participate in elections and office, where the principle of contestation had already been established. By contrast, the third-wave regimes have to accommodate *de novo* the two mentioned dimensions. As Dahl (Ibid: 8) states that regimes[20] nevertheless, may only be conceived as democratised when they are "substantially popularised and liberalised, that is, highly

[20] Dahl names these regimes as polyarchies and emphasises that fully democratic regime may not be possible, but only approximated. See Dahl (1971: 9), footnotes.

inclusive and extensively open to public contestation". This process, having taken over a century to occur in many industrialised democracies, is marked by four crucial stages: "[first] the formal *incorporation* of strata and categories of residents kept out of the system under the original criteria; [second] the *mobilisation* of those enfranchised citizens in electoral contests; [third] their *activation* into direct participation in public life; [fourth] the breakdown of the traditional systems of local rule through the entry of nationally organised parties into municipal elections, what we call the process of *politicisation*" (Rokkan, 1970:227). The new regimes, in opposition, did not result from or through a long-term process of democratisation, but were created in the aftermath of collapse of the naturally competing socialist systems, and in which citizens had already been effectively 'incorporated', 'mobilised', 'activated', and 'politicised' under the previous regimes (Mair, 1997: 180). Furthermore, new achievements of the global economy and acceptance of the idea of supra-national state by many European nations place additional constraints on the process of assimilation of the new regimes into a global community. Hence, it is questionable whether in a short time and a highly pressured international environment the bias towards a desirable stability in the new regimes may emerge at all, to be buttressed by equally important representative infrastructures, such as party systems. Mair concludes:

> The potential instability at the level of electorate and within the context of competition already makes for an uncertain and volatile mix, which in itself, would seem to exacerbate the potential for conflict between different elites. If we then add to that mix the fact that, in this triple transition, these elites are playing for very high stakes, both substantially and strategically, then it is difficult to

> avoid the conclusion that these newly emerging systems will also prove significantly more competitive than in the case of established party systems... The danger then is of instability and uncertainty encouraging competition and conflict, which, in turn, encourage even greater instability (Mair, 1997: 196-7).

It is a seeming paradox that these new systems show no tendency for complete institutionalisation, but nevertheless, prove sustainable, and relatively structured in their own domestic ways.

The second crucial challenge for the third wave regimes is an immediate task of state and market building. There are a few repercussions that such requirements might entail. The weak state is inclined to oversee the redistribution of wealth, and in itself is the source of great wealth. Nominally it owns firms, lands, and natural resources, which during transition suddenly become available for competition of external elites. Hence, a weak state creates powerful incentives for political players to access the state mechanism, and they play an exceedingly high-stake game to achieve power control over the nation. Furthermore, because markets and states are being simultaneously built, there are fewer formal political and institutional constraints both on the state, and the private business. Many interest organisations emerge in an attempt to influence the process of decision-making at a state level. However, the multiplicity and specificity of the private interests are not often conducive to the public mandate: they tend to cause manipulation of state resources, and leave politicians vulnerable to various clienteles, who become wealthy early in the transition. The particular implications of this dichotomy between weak state and powerful vested interests can be twofold.

First, in transition, political competition and elite changes naturally promote economic reforms and weaken the power of vested interests. As it appeared in practice, powerful interests intend to capture key elements of public policies and manipulate reforms to their own advantage. Many of the transitions, especially further east in the CIS (Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Moldova)[21] were led by the same political elites that ruled the country in the communist era. These countries have shown the index of liberalisation and privatisation[22] during the first years of transition twice as low as in those countries[23] where political executives were replaced. Placed under pressure, the successor incumbents often implemented reforms in such ways that preserved or even extended privileges available to certain elites, as was the case in Albania, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine.

In the absence of a strong commitment to reform and lack of institutional coercion, powerful vested interests, i.e. *nomenklatura*, impose a heavy imprint on the content of reforms and their timing. The redistribution of assets prior to transitions tends to create powerful interest groups that constrain progress of economic reforms at a later stage. This inefficiency of state to organise initial policy choices often results in an elite-centred and power-coagulation effect on the process of democratisation; and implies further alienation of the population from the decision-making process. Hence, the

[21] For fuller reference see *Transition report 1999: Ten years of transition*, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). London. Chapter 5.

[22] *Transition Report 1999*, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), 1999. Section for Country assessments, p. 181.

evidence of reforms in the new states suggests an important dimension for assessing the quality and prospects of democracy.

Second, developing states may allow excessive penetration of global capital in national economies, interest manipulation, and as a result continuing destabilisation of these regimes in short and medium-term financial reform. For example, financial liberalisation and privatisation, as the CEECs and Russia's experiences suggest, increase their openness and incorporation to the global market, and ensuing advantages of this process. This, on the other hand, may over-expose developing markets[24] to the shocks of international finance, and recurrent global crises, and form grounds for the emergence of the 'prosperity-versus-stability' divide within the new nations. Massive and rapid privatisation by foreign strategic capital tends to bring prospects of capital concentration, and interest accumulation, dependence on foreign investments and capital speculations, and consequently, the narrowing of channels for domestic economic control.

Building respective institutions to effectively sustain reformation is a complementary task to the process of achieving stabilisation within the transient states. Many of the new democracies chose constitutions that prescribed an elected president, an independently elected parliament, and an independent judiciary. Yet, the realities of practical politics in both regions have been quite different from the formal constitutional arrangements.

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[23] These are first of all Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia and Hungary.

[24] Russia's example is the most educating. For more details see Nesvetailova, N., & Korosteleva, J. (2001) *Dependent development in the modern Finance Capitalism*, paper presented at BASEES, 7-9 April.

The adoption of electoral codes in many regimes often followed the interests of dominating elite groups at the outset of transition[25]. The judiciary and mass media have not been an efficient means of providing greater protection of human rights, which can help to break down the stranglehold of interests restricting the competition. Furthermore, the office of president has dominated the politics of most Latin American democracies, ex-Soviet bloc countries, and the Southern Tier of East Central Europe (Romania, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic (FYR), Bulgaria, Slovakia), regardless, whether or not the president came to power through free elections or through force of arms. For many years scholars have been debating the role of 'presidentialism' in the process of democratisation (Linz, 1996; Shugart and Carey, 1992; Geddes, 1996; Lijphart, 1996). Discussion revolves around such principal issues as the relative merits of presidential over parliamentary arrangements in fostering democratic consolidation. A strong presidency, which is culturally natural to many CEECs, CIS and Latin American transitions, raises three major enquires in relation to the system stabilisation:

i) the extent to which the design of national electoral code can influence power distribution in society;

ii) the real prospects for balancing executive-legislative relations;

iii) the degree of dependency of party system development on the strong presidency in society.

[25] Commonly, the communist nomenklatura was remaining the dominant interest group in public offices of CEECs and CIS. This often stipulated the promotion of majoritarian electoral systems to sustain their control over the process of national decision-making.

Some scholars observe that there is a connection between weak parties, undeveloped state and strong presidencies; and that a parliamentary as opposed to a presidential system, is seen as more supportive of democratic consolidation. Other scholars tend to defend the presidential system, or at least, its 'mixed', 'semi-presidential' alternative, that combines an individually elected president and a prime minister subject to parliamentary confidence. For example, Linz (1994) believes that presidential power could be controlled in new democracies, if legal institutional arrangements are met, and a democratic code is followed. It is also frequently argued that a long-established historical tradition of strong leadership cannot merely cease, and therefore, it is popular rationale to accept and to control 'presidentialism' as a 'homing pattern' of electorate and elite behaviour. It is also assumed that presidential authoritarianism can be a survival mechanism for new democracies during times of social, political or economic crises. At the outset of transitions, this however, often comes at the expense of democratic institutions and civil society, and may not be easily eradicated with further democratisation of society.

In terms of marketisation, the guidance and monitoring of economic and state reforms by various international organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU), and NATO have had a dual effect on democratic succession of the third wave regimes. On the one hand, monetary and fiscal regulations reviewed by the IMF; and common strategies and programmes of cross-border cooperation and partnership developed by the EU, and NATO, have created powerful incentives for countries to reform. On the other hand, this has also produced greater pressure, social inequalities and decreasing opportunities for those at the bottom to develop the human

capital or skills needed for survival in the new structure. This may be seen as a natural law of survival; however, for the ex-Soviet countries with 'overstated' socialist welfare system, this course of action may be disastrous. As Nagle and Mahr observe:

> ...to the extent that these nations remain, as they are at the moment, on the periphery of the capitalist core, the dilemma of achieving mass consent for a system of great inequality and scant material gains for the majority may block the democratisation process, and lead to bouts of instability and retreat from democratic norms (Nagle and Mahr, 1999: 245).

As Pridham (1998) argues, processes like Europeanisation, in the case of post-communist countries, or Americanisation in the case of Latin America, provide systemic pressure, both in formal and qualitative terms, in that the established form of the political regime in advanced democracies becomes the royal model for a new regime. There are two forms of ensuring the continuity of this pressure: the first is a diffuse sense of following European or American models of system development, which can occasionally be detrimental for a developing nation. Second, it is transnational cooperation that provides a pertinent and a more stimulating mechanism of advancement for the third wave countries. For example, countries close to the EU can benefit from the process of regional integration though the 'democratisation effect' arising from trade with western partners and through political cooperation. This issue draws upon a closer relationship of the new democracies with the West and the USA, and imposes certain strengths on the young economies, which some scholars characterise as a "new western remote-control colonialism" (Nagle and Mahr, 1999:

273). The level of integration into a wider economic community, the geopolitical location and the experience of economic reforms by the new regimes stipulate their diversity and success on the path towards democracy[26].

The most striking feature of the third wave democratisation, nevertheless, proves to be their tardy and perpetually incomplete institutionalisation. After ten years of reform, many new transitions appeared to demonstrate no tendency towards further consolidation of their regimes. Laurence Whitehead (1992) observes that democratic institutions in many new states simply do not comply with the supposedly classic patterns of Western democracies. Among the countries that for the past two years achieved considerable economic growth are, nevertheless, many of those, which remain politically vulnerable and unbalanced[27]. Political scholars agree that many new regimes may fit the minimal criteria of polyarchy (Dahl, 1971), but as "a type not yet theorised" (O'Donnell, 1993). Third-wave democracies are often cited as 'democracies by default'

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[26] There is, nevertheless, growing discussion in relation to the 'core/semi-periphery/periphery' divides in economic development of new transitions. Their integration into a global economy is often seen as dependent on bigger economies, and as a result presumes their 'secondary' role on a global market. For detailing, see Panitch and Leys (eds.) (1999). *Socialist Register 1999: Global Capitalism Versus democracy*. London: Merlin Press. Boswell, and Chase-Dunn (2000) *The Spiral of Capitalism and Socialism*. London: Lynne Rienner. Burbah, R et al (1997) *Globalisation and Its Discontents*. London: Pluto Press.

[27] These are firstly Tajikistan, Bosnia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Croatia. Fore more information see *Transition Report 1999*, EBRD, "Changes in transition indicators 1998-99", pp. 26-30.

or 'façade democracies'[28] (Whitehead, 1992; O'Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead, 1986), which implies little system change, entrepreneurial politics, and lowering of public expectations of what may be achieved through political action, and this leads consequently to low-level participation and delegated forms of electoral politics. If representative mechanisms remain undeveloped, the states may face a lingering prospect of legitimate dictatorship, as currently they operate within the context of a strong leadership and no legal framework. These new types of regimes are, paradoxically, sustainable and can be characterised by various degrees of non-institutionalisation, under-representation and limited political competition.

Comparison with established regimes might offer some explanation of the problematic emergence and development of the third-wave democratisation. It allows estimation as to what degree new democracies are different, but it cannot constructively explain *why* they are different and what their *finale* would be, given that after a decade they remain largely non-institutionalised. In addition, the global political modality has changed, and what was relevant for an explanation of party formation four decades ago, does not fit the contemporary complex party agenda[29].

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[28] Whitehead uses a synonym phrase in Portuguese '*para os ingleses ver*' to describe 'façade democracy' which implies the old habit of holding elections 'for the English to look at' (1992:150).

[29] A wide discussion of the relevance of cleavage theory of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) to the party formation may be recalled. It sharply divided academic community in the late seventieth (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Mair, 1997 versus Franklin et al, 1992). Later debates revolved around such issues as disruption of traditional voter alignments, non-partisan tendencies and single-issue agenda in contemporary party politics.

An overwhelming supply of empirical data is available for political scientists to draw conclusions regarding new types of transitions. Nevertheless, it appeared to be impossible to 'match' the novelty of research findings in a 'straightjacket' of existing analytical frameworks. Theoretical and methodological deficiency has been revealed whilst discussing such issues as:

i) typology of new party systems, which appears to be different from the ones used for advanced democracies;

ii) analytical framework that needs to go beyond individual conclusions of cleavage-oriented, institutional, cultural, or elite approaches; and

iii) the joint impact of structures and agency on sustainability of the emerging party systems and regimes.

Notably, in search for an appropriate methodology to study new regimes, many traditional typologies of party systems have been applied to describe developments in changing societies. A numeric criterion has been one of the most conventional and frequently adopted means of party system classification. With the notable exception of Dahl (1971) who built his typology on the form of competitiveness of opposition, for assessing the degree of stability, Duverger (1954), Blondel (1968), Rokkan (1970) and Sartori (1976) base their research on the principal distinction between the two-party versus multiparty type systems. Sartori (1976), nevertheless, attempts to supplement a numeric party categorisation with ideological distance that separates parties in the system. His typology, focusing more on inter-party competition, has captured more efficiently the diversity of party system institutionalisation in new regimes.

Nevertheless, Sartori's methodology, as with many others, failed to differentiate the existing variety of 'polarised pluralism' in the new multi-party regimes, and to classify them within the league of non-institutionalised party systems. It is consequently noted that the Latin American experience of party politics, for example, cannot reveal any clear relationship between the type of party system (or degree of internal party system fragmentation) and democratic stability.

The degree of institutionalisation, representation and competition may play a more informative role in defining party systems in the new democracies. For example, in both Latin America and Eastern Europe, the two-party systems that are supposedly secure, range from stable to volatile democracies. Moreover, new democracies often demonstrate an extraordinary proliferation of parties with entrepreneurial and profiteering motives. Mainwaring (1999), Kitschelt et al. (1999), Norden et al. (1998) and others insist on adopting a more resilient view of party politics that offers not only 'modified' dimensions for analysis, but also a more complex explanation of transitional processes.

Mainwaring (1999) suggests that institutionalisation may offer a better axis for analysis of the newly emerged party systems. It is not the number of parties or their ideological diversity, but the degree of party system institutionalisation that structures the political process. "In inchoate systems, parties are important actors in some ways, but they do not have the same structuring effect" (Mainwaring, 1997:8). A poorly institutionalised system is characterised by considerable instability in patterns of party competition, weak roots in society, comparatively low legitimacy of parties, and weak party

organisation (Mainwaring, 1999). Lower institutionalisation thus means that the levels of uncertainty in nonetheless functional systems would be higher than in institutionalised systems. Such factors as the number of parties and ideological distance would have less predictive power under conditions of constant flux. As long as parties remain sustainable even when less institutionalised in the new democracies, this parsimonious means of analysis can be useful for comparative analytical purposes.

A second dimension of analysis of party systems may be the form of representation (Norden et al., 1998). Degrees of public representation are used to determine whether or not a political system is authentically democratic. There are various forms of representation, and parties are traditionally one element. However, the new democracies reveal the magnitude and the variety of forms of representation, pointing to the apparent trade-off in governability of the system. For example, new democracies are often cited as highly entrepreneurial; especially when:

> ...some flamboyant leaders emerge from almost nowhere, capture the majority of the vote on the basis of the vaguest of slogans and the loosest of commitments, and then proceed to govern arbitrarily without restrain from party structures, parliamentary processes, legal or bureaucratic norms, until popular support is exhausted and another equally ill-prepared and erratic takes his place (Whitehead, 1992: 151).

These forms of representation, when one receives a full popular endorsement to sway national destinies, has been widely termed as '*delegative democracy*' (O'Donnell,

1994); or *movimentismo* which emphasises direct mass participation in sustaining the system; or '*cesarismo democratico*' (Linz, 1994). Belarus, for instance, may be referred to as a 'delegative' type of regime, associated with a publicly elected president who, nevertheless, has accredited a dictatorial right to decide what may be 'suitable' for his country. Hence, identifying new forms of representation helps to understand and explain why a system is able to reproduce so effectively despite the apparent lack of institutionalisation. This may also help to foresee possible implications of unequal power distribution for the future stability of new regimes.

A third dimension suggested by Norden et al. (1998) for the comparative analysis of emerging party systems are the patterns of party competition. Deborah Norden noted that even if parties are not explicit in most definitions of new democracies, competition still remains, and that competition eventually tends to take root in a developing polity. It is not the degree of institutionalisation of party competition, the party format, or their number, but the way, parties compete in weakly institutionalised systems, that permits an understanding of survival mechanisms in new systems. A number of cases demonstrate the influence of combative, moderately competitive, and collusive inter-party relationships on regime stability. (Norden et al, 1998: 429-30, Table 1). For example, regimes with combative competition, when elites seek alternative ways of defeating opponents have proved destabilising for the system. Collusive behaviour characterised by high cooperation of competing political actors may prevent access for new players to public office, and by that limit the scope of representation. As Norden suggests, the most stable regimes are likely to be regimes with moderate party competition, such as Chile prior to 1964 and Venezuela in the 1960-70s. It has also been noted that there is a strong correlation between

balanced legislature-executive relations and pace of reforms. Democracies may break down when governments gain too much power at the expense of a legislature, or when parties turn their competition into a battle against the president, as have occurred in Belarus. Alternately, there may be inter-party relations emerging from a 'disloyal' opposition, whose purpose is to hinder the government's efforts to implement policies, as happened in Latin American[30] (UCRI and UCRP in 1958-66 Argentina) and East European (LDPR in 1996, and KPRF in Russia, 2001) regimes.

In conclusion, one has to recognise the unique and unprecedented nature of the new democracies that needs theorising. New democracies do not necessarily relate to the experience of established regimes, and should be examined on the basis of what they possess and may potentially acquire, rather than what they lack. They may not necessarily be institutionalised, but may well be sustainable and functioning, which implies existence of certain structural, institutional and elite arrangements behind the scene and requires new dimensions for analysis. The following section will demonstrate the diversity of the new regimes within the CIS, and emphasise the importance of a more resilient approach for understanding multidimensionality of the third wave democratisation.

1.2 CIS vis-à-vis other third wave transitions: what makes them different?

Despite a shared inspiration for change, new democracies, nevertheless, demonstrate much regional dissimilarity. Due to their geo-political location and economic position,

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[30] Radicall parties in the legislature, in an attempt to overthrow or diminish the influence of the leading party, or government, can often stipulate this situation.

the newly emerged states within the ex-Soviet Union appeared to have a more complex transition than that of East Central Europe and Latin America. For these regimes "it has proved much easier to dismantle communist rule than to construct a democratic political system in its place" (White, 1997b: 19). Volatility and increasing 'privatisation' of official policy-making by powerful vested interests, impenetrable bureaucracy, corrupt government, economic and political stagnation, continuing national impoverishment, and waves of mass protest are only a few features characteristic of the post-Soviet environment. Not attempting serious reforms, the CIS countries are becoming the 'outsiders' of the general course of democratisation within the new Europe: they are no longer totalitarian states, yet they are still distant from any stable form of a democratised state. In addition, with political and economic globalisation and the involvement of CEECs in transnational framework of cooperation[31], the position of the CIS on the international arena rapidly attains the quality of self-contained regimes situated beyond Europe's new 'Iron Curtain'[32]. As Light (2001: 1) notes[33], "there is an increasing belief

[31] There is a wide range of economic, political and military strategic policies that the EU and NATO offer to sustain stability in the regions with their expansion eastwards: from Partnership for Peace, Partnership and Co-operation Agreements, common strategies to modest programmes of cross-border cooperation and aid.

[32] The theme of 'outsiders' is being presently developed by Light, M., White. S., and Löwenhardt, J. under the ESCR research project (L213252007) entitled "*The Outsiders: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the New Europe*". For details, see Light, M., White. S., and Löwenhardt, J (1999) '*A wider Europe: the view from Moscow and Kyiv*'; White, S. (2001) '*Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine: Looking East or looking West?*'; Löwenhardt, J. (2001) '*Two forgotten countries: Belarus and Moldova*'; Light, M. (2001) '*Ukraine: Between Russia and the West*', papers presented for BASEES Conference, 7-9 April.

[33] Light, M. (2001) '*Ukraine: between Russia and the West*', paper presented for BASEES annual conference, Cambridge, 7-9 April.

in the outsider states that being 'between' is not just a physical reality, but implies having to chose between Russia and the West". A feeling of exclusion has also been reinforced by gradual economic progress of the CEECs, contrary to the CIS performance, lagging far behind in their development, despite the shared legacies of the Soviet past.

After a decade under a new regime, at least a 'minimal' definition of democracy may be applied to the majority of the new states within Central and Eastern Europe. This firstly presumes a number of freely contested elections with full suffrage and the absence of massive fraud; secondly, effective guarantees of civil liberties (freedom of speech, assembly, and association); and finally, government accountability and system legality (Huntington, 1991; Przeworski, 1996; O'Donnell, 1993). Nevertheless, the CIS regimes display an apparent conceptual 'stretching' of the definition of democratising polyarchies behind their democratic *façade*. They can be regarded as polyarchies inasmuch as they have an institutionalised practice of elections, which is nevertheless, embodied by poorly functioning institutions of representation. Stephen White comments on the Russian case:

> Russians are evidently committed to the electoral process, and the forms of representative democracy have so far been carefully observed. But their experience shows the limitations of any changes of this kind so long as there is no rule of law, no coherent system of parties, a media that is generally beholden to the government, and a government that is not itself accountable to elected institutions (White, 2000a: 321).

As noted, the CIS group countries can be formally described as regimes moving towards 'democracy' as a state counter-posed to socialism. However, even their 'move to democracy' has to be carefully applied within the area: despite their façade features, some countries, "fall short of democratic practice" and "go beyond a competitive struggle for the popular vote" (White, 2000a: 322).

Economic, institutional and structural developments in these countries remain unsound. In comparison to their western neighbours, the post-Soviet states in the majority have not fully embarked on economic restructuring; they are heavily dominated by the presidency; and have administratively controlled political competition. Furthermore, they all lack legality and an effectively functioning state, and nevertheless, the CIS group remains relatively sustainable due to the existing infrastructure of informal and 'patrimonial' rules and regulations.

Some scholars explain the difference in the CIS protracted development by referring to their missing structural and institutional incentives, which include the non-existence of the pre-totalitarian democratic experience, absence of the pre-empting cleavages for party competition and of the pre-communist constitution, in opposition to those in the Baltic states, and other Central European democracies. Notably, the availability of a prior democratic experience, associated with partially competitive elections and representative mass politics, has vividly stipulated a more advanced pace of reformation within the CEECs. The length of communist rule, and the occurrence of democratic 'ruptures' during the communist term also matter for

structural and ideological reinforcement of the mode of transition. In this sense, the ex-soviet republics stand less favourably in advancing democratic reforms, having been a seat and a stronghold of state socialism for seventy years. If Poland (1918-1926), Hungary (1945-47) and Czechoslovakia (1918-38) enjoyed a few years of democratic experience and served a comparatively small period under the socialist regime, it becomes clear why CIS, having seventy years of building communism on their shoulders, are presently lagging behind.

The relative strength of civil society and its contribution to the process of democratisation can be another cause for differentiation. For example, the ever-lasting legacy of totalitarianism in post-Soviet countries had left little understanding by the population of the need for civil society. The practice of democratic centralism and pervasive state control resulted in a political environment in which little value was attached to the notions of personal opinion, diversity, dissent and political tolerance – the necessary prerequisites for the emergence of a pluralistic political system. In addition, these countries displayed little understanding of the 'stimulating role' of the opposition, even in the late 1990s. Soviet ideology has been carefully cultivated on the principles of antagonistic dichotomy 'we-they', where 'they' implied the westernised world. In addition, the modes of extrication from communist rule clearly make a further impact. In most CEECs the socialist exit involved mass social movements and counter-elite participation, rather than the limitation of regime transformation to decision-making of like-minded individuals. Ex-soviet countries had an elaborate state machine with full access of the communist elite to state resources and power. This has largely remained intact, thereby causing an extended 'farewell' to the old rule, everlasting

accommodation for some vested interests and a continued state of non-institutionalisation.

The following analysis of (i) economic externalities and strategic elite considerations; and (ii) structural and cultural settings, will aid fuller identification of diverse and more complex conditions for building democracy within the CIS. Belarus is singled out for reference as a cumulative medium of transitional problems within the CIS, and third wave transitions in general.

1.2.1 Economic externalities and elite strategic considerations

The principal difference between the CIS and CEECs lies in the protracted economic development of the former, which, in turn, is the consequence of their structural and cultural diversity[34].

Many CIS regimes have not yet seriously considered the wholesale restructuring of their economic systems. The relatively enthusiastic initiation of reforms at the outset of transition seems to have stalled towards the end of the decade, and after the 1998 financial crisis in Russia went into continuing recession. The average index of transitional progress in the new European democracies varies from 2.3 in the CIS (1.5 in Belarus), 2.7 in the Balkan countries, 3.2 in the Baltic countries, to the highest 3.5 score

[34] This in the first instance includes the CIS geo-political and – economic locations; lack of pre-democratic experience of reforms; high strength of the communist legacies; patriarchal cultural mode; and strategic dominance of power elites over foreign policy-making.

in East Central Europe within the 0-4.3 interval (EBRD, 1999: 24). However, as some scholars note, these 'raw' data measured with equal intervals, will demonstrate even a more significant downfall of the average CIS score[35]. In economic terms the majority of CIS, with notable exception of Russia, are characterised by a slow process of privatisation of large-scale enterprise, which often do not exceed 25% of the overall national assets, though a substantial number of smaller companies have been privatised, especially former communal properties[36]. Improvements in corporate governance have been minimal; also little progress has been made in the spheres of promoting legislation on competition and institutions; providing security of investments, and price liberalisation. Nevertheless, despite the existing bias towards state intervention, privileging state over private output, and maintaining a dominant state sector in the majority of the CIS, there is no evidence to suggest that economic reversal to the system of full central planning of the past will be possible.

The immediate scope of market expansion across the CIS looks limited, and the long-term capacity of the system is highly compromised by a low record of foreign investment, poor credibility of national currency, barter pay-offs and consequential 'dollarisation' of the systems. However, the slow pace of reforms has had some positive implications for the CIS regimes. As Colin Lawson (1999:7) notes, "the inflation performance is now much better than in their hyperinflationary period of 1992-95, but is still significantly worse than

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[35] See Colin Lawson's argument in his paper "Path Dependence approach and the economy of Belarus: the consequences of late reforms", presented for the conference *'Belarus: The forgotten heart of Europe?'*, University of Bath, ERI, February, 1999.

[36] For more details see *Transitional Report*, EBRD, 1999.

most of the CEECs states". This is particularly correct for the case of Belarus, which inflation in 1999 was 182% against a CIS median of 18%.

The unemployment rate is rather low in comparison to the CEECs, and was about 6.2 in average across the CIS in 1997[37], which is twice as low as the average in CEECS that year. This reflects political, social and economic policies of the CIS (low wages, regular payments, full employment, etc), but nevertheless hides a significant amount of under-employment and structural problems, which are respectively mirrored by a monthly poverty line income *per capita* of $21 on average, in 1998-99 (EBRD, 1999:16). Accordingly, the life expectancy in the CIS in 1997 was lower than that recorded in 1989, and decreased to 54-61 years for males in 1997 (EBRD, 1999: 7). Belarus demonstrates a balanced medium in relation to the above-mentioned developments[38]. The republic has been classified as a lower middle-income country according to World Bank Classification[39]. Nevertheless, even if some of the transition indicators in Belarus presently demonstrate no economic decline, there are grounds to question the

[37] The rate of unemployment in CEECs is much higher, and equals on average to 12.8 in 1997 across the CEECs. For more details see *Transition Report, EBRD 1999*, country by country.

[38] In accordance to the EBRD's indicators, the transition is about 39% complete for the CIS as a whole, and it is 15% complete for Belarus. Belarus' score of transition progress is 1.5 out of 2.3 of the CIS in average. During 1997-98 the CIS received $27.6b in direct foreign investment, of which Belarus accounted for $444m, which is per capita terms Belarus' $44 compares to a CIS average of $69. Corruption index in Belarus reaches 3.4 (58th) against Moldova and Ukraine of 2.6 (75th accordingly). In other words, Belarus typifies an average score of transition progress amongst the CIS. For more details, see *Transition Report*, 1999; Lawson, C. (1999) "*Path dependence and the economy of Belarus*", Bath University, ERI.

sustainability of its growth and progressive development in the future. Belarus' cumulative level of direct foreign investment *per capita* has been rated as "the lowest of its former centrally planned neighbours"[40]. In addition, its private sector contribution to GDP was 20%, compared with 70% in Russia, 55% in Ukraine; and 45% in Moldova (Ibid). Belarus has not progressed far in any of the main transition indicators, including (i) macro-economic stabilisation; (ii) private sector development; (iii) liberalisation of prices and trade; (iv) enterprise reform; and (v) development of financial institutions (see Appendix 5). Hence, analysis of Belarus' controversial progress in transition will be illustrative of the CIS development in the whole.

There are a number of possible explanations for such diverse patterns and poor economic performance of the CIS. The geo-economic and political positions of the CEECs determine their more advanced pace of reform. Notably, the degree of exposure to Western market culture and principles of capitalist economy prior to transition has affected the extent to which transitional countries accepted market-supporting institutions. The CEECs' proximity to Western Europe has clearly benefited them in this regard. The pre-communist economies of many CEECs (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic) were fairly advanced and had cross-border ties with western countries. In addition their people had more opportunity for travelling and interaction with Europeans, which obviously widened their attitudes to the common prospects of development. Furthermore, market-oriented reforms were introduced in many CEECs at

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[39] *World Bank Development Report,* 1996.

[40] *Economic Trends*, quarterly. January-March Report, 2000.

the beginning of the 1990s. In the CIS the same period was marked by confrontation between communist forces and the growing influence of democrats.

At the other extreme, is the CIS structural and cultural dependency on Russia's resources, especially energy supplies, goods market and allegedly foreign policy-making. This is of particular importance for smaller satellite countries of the Russian Federation, such as Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, which found them caught 'between' the expanding influence of the EU/NATO and weakened, yet very ambitious Russian state. Their geo-political location and structural legacies of economic interdependence within the former USSR dictate a more complex agenda for the restructuring of the CIS states, and is the matter of elites' strategic foreign policy-making.

The Commonwealth of Independent States[41] was initially created in an attempt to bolster economic development of disintegrated new states; and to bring a sense of security to the emerging nations. For smaller countries, integration with Russia was sought to provide substantial economic rewards to their national economies, and most notably cancellation of their debts to Russia, subsidised fuel supplies, and access to ex-soviet goods and service market. The policy of re-integration was particularly vital for Belarus,

[41] The CIS was designed to become the Commonwealth of Slavic nations, i.e. Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. On 8 December 1991 (Belaveza Treaty) Russia, Belarus and Ukraine formed the CIS, and the Soviet Union came to a vital end. Later it developed into a union between all NIS within the former USSR, with other eight republics joining the grouping. The CIS is neither a state, nor federation or confederation. Its developing structure aims to emulate that of the EU (Rontoyanni, 1999), and establish a single economic and legal space involving a monetary union; and provide common foreign and defence policies.

which was designed as an intellectual basis and a manufacturing arena for the former USSR, and had high-level dependency on energy supplies from Russia.

The superior standards of western economies are likely to keep western markets closed for the newly emerged independent states, at least in the medium term perspective. Hence, many CIS members have seen the recovering Soviet-era customers as an alternative means of expanding trade, and balancing national economies. In addition, trade of smaller states was initially oriented towards the Russian market and that of other CIS. For example, in 1998 Belarus exported over 73.7% of its goods to the CIS and 65% to Russia alone. Because of Belarus' inability to pay in hard currency, 74%[42] of its payments to Russia (i.e Gazprom) have been made through barter arrangements since 1997. Moldova has been exporting 80% of the value of all exports to Russia, and its energy debt to Russia amounts to about 11% of its GDP[43]. Ukraine exports to Russia equalled 56.9% in 1998 and included mainly ferrous metals, machinery and food. Respectively, 68.8% of its imports from Russia were gas, oil and petroleum products[44]. Estimates of Ukraine's debts to Russia equals to US$2b[45]. Presently, Russian main exports to the CIS are oil and gas, which forms a lucrative industry for the former, and keep satellite states under control due to their limited natural energy resources.

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[42] It has increased to 92% in 1999. Selivanova, I (1998) *Economic Integration of Russian and Belarus*, http://www.yabloko.ru/Themes/Belarus/belarus-25.html, retrieved in 20 October 1999.

[43] Löwenhardt, J. (2001) *Two Forgotten Countries: Belarus and Moldova.* http://www.gla.ac.uk/external/basees/Löwenhardt.pdf retrieved 19 March, 2001

[44] For more details see *EBRD, Transition Reports*, 1999; http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/Ukraine/trade.htm; retrieved April 2001.

[45] See *Jamestown Foundation*, 18 October 2000 monitor. Vol. 6, Issue 194.

Table 1.2.1-1. The share of oil and gas in Russia's exports to the CIS

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
The share of oil/gas in total exports, %	51.4	36.1	49.7	53.6	58.5	59.2
Value, billion US$	7.3	5.3	6.2	6.4	5.3	4.0

Source: Gosudarstevnnii Tamozhennii Komitet [State Customs Committee], 1996, 1998, 2000.

Following the establishment of the Russia-Belarus community and especially after the conclusion of the 'Treaty on the Formation of a Union State' (December 1999), Gazprom reduced the price on oil/gas to US$15 for Belarus as the most loyal ally to Russia within the CIS, and to US$26 for Russian regions bordering Belarus[46], against US$78 for Ukraine. Lack of internal resources for the initiation of economic restructuring and paying their debts, and limited foreign investments have created mutual dependence of the CIS on the foreign policy-making of Russia in the first place, and then, each other's strategic programmes. Belarus' example is the most enlightening. Since signing a mutual 'zero-sum' agreement in 1996, Russia's debt to Belarus of US$300m for exit and service of nuclear machinery, and usage of Belarus' military bases, was written off in exchange for a similar procedure with the Belarus' debt to Russia of US$470m for received credits in 1992-93, and 1995. Belarus' GDP (% change) has grown from (–10.1%) in 1992 to +10% in 1997; the rate of unemployment went down three times, and the deficit of the state budget was surprisingly small. These

[46] Selivanova, I. (1998) *Economic Integration of Russia and Belarus*, http://www.yabloko.ru/Themes/Belarus/belarus-25.html, retrieved 20 October 1999.

Russian concessions to create the 'Belarus' miracle' of 1996-97 have been carefully weighted by government elites of both countries. Part of it was Russia's growing interest in keeping Belarus at short hand as a geo-political and strategical buffer between the expanding West and a still weak East. The integration of national air forces had a particular significance for Russia, as its security was clearly threatened by the incorporation of some CEECs into NATO and their aircraft ventures to the central part of the Russian Federation[47]. There have also been security considerations for keeping 'tight control' over the CIS against the enlargement of NATO in CEECs, and such recent episodes as NATO bombing campaigns against Iraq and Yugoslavia without the explicit sanction of the UN Security Council, and the western reaction to the second Chechen campaign[48]. In addition, Georgia and Azerbaijan have announced their intentions to join NATO, and Ukrainian leadership is torn apart between the opportunity of immediate benefits from trading with Russia, or a prospect of a periphery role and financial losses, which its membership in NATO might entail.

As one can witness, Russia's policy-making towards the CIS has naturally determined these countries' (willing or unwilling)[49] orientation towards the East (Russia) and the Slavic union, by that forming a grouping of the EU 'outsiders'. Simultaneously, there

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[47] See *RIA-Novosti Daily Review*, DR012599, 25 January, 1999:10.

[48] See development of the argument in Rontoyanny, C. (2000) *A Russo-Belarusian 'Union State': a defensive response to a western enlargement?*, working paper, ESRC project '*One Europe or several?*'

[49] There is much debate regarding the multi-directionality of the CIS foreign policies. Countries like Ukraine and Moldova seem to be willing to cooperate with the West, however their internal resources and high economic dependence on Russia preclude further implementation of their intentions. For more details see, www.one-europe.ac.uk , www.one-europe.ac.uk/events/2000/conference/Löwenhardt.pdf retrieved March 2001.

have been some stipulations by some CIS states (Ukraine, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan) oriented towards sustaining strategic cooperation and various aid programmes with the EU, which nevertheless, had very limited effect, and proved to be a rather costly exercise. It appears that the situation of 'the outsiders' develops with the potentially difficult necessity to make a clear choice by the CIS states: European or Slavic. This becomes a real dilemma for the CIS when Russia actively tightens its control over their independent decision-making, which randomly tends to favour some western options and available opportunities for restructuring the CIS economies.

1.2.2. Structural, institutional and cultural diversity of the CIS

To economic dependence from Russia, structural, institutional, and cultural factors may be added, that reinforce the CIS gravitation *away from* the expanding Europe. This firstly relates to a limited elite rotation within the CIS and the full engagement of the former soviet nomenklatura in the policy-making process. EBRD data confirms that progress in regime stabilisation at the outset of reforms was higher in the countries where political executives were replaced. In contrast, the CIS states, especially Belarus, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Moldova display little reforming progress over the past ten years of transition, keeping the same elite echelons in power. As Belova (1999: 5) suggests, in Belarus there has been no significant elite change until 1994, and even with Lukashenko's succession to power, the move happened to be from regional elites upwards and horizontal shifts amongst the former corps. The effective system of patronage created by Lukashenko, and full presidential control over the national decision-making process have resulted in economic stagnation, and pending collapse of

the entire system. Even when protracted periods of liberalisation took place (mainly between 1989-1992) in some of the CIS states, access of controlling vested interests to power have limited the effect of democratisation, and helped even more to consolidate the control of incumbents over the state/private revenues, blurring distinction between private benefits and bureaucratic regulations. In Russia, for example, not only has the income inequality substantially risen, but also spending on social benefits has actually become regressive over the course of transition.

The issues of state, territory and national identities come to play no less important role in fostering 'philosophy' of the outsiders. The self-identities are defined in a lesser degree within the CIS than those in the CEECs, which leaves these countries unstable and vulnerable to the process of the enlargement of the EU and international community. This protracted self-identification has also been largely centred on the policies of Russia towards the neighbouring states, as well as the century long disputes over historically partitioned territories. Natasha Kuhrt comments[50], "...as long as Russia is doubtful of its own ability to maintain supreme authority within its own territory, it will be sensitive to interventionist practices elsewhere". This is effectively true not only in relation to Russia's regional separatist tendencies, but also to the continuing disputes over 'Russian-speaking' territorial spots in satellite countries[51]. These cases include Moldovan Dnestr Republic with Russian military majority, in Moldova; Crimean feuds

[50] Kuhrt, N. 'State Sovereignty as a Factor in post-Soviet Russian Foreign Policy', paper presented for BASEES, 2001, 7-9 April, www.gla.ac.uk/external/basees/kuhrt.pdf retrieved March 2001

over Russian military bases in Ukraine; and Belarus' claiming back over 1bRUS debt from Russia for using its military bases in 1998-99. In addition, as appeared from recent opinion polls, many CIS states operate within the contexts of mixed identities: on the one extreme, there is a 'European versus Slav' cleavage; and on the other hand, - 'national versus supra-national, pro-Russian' conflict. The table below vividly demonstrates great confusion by the public over the issues of national identities: The majority of the population in three countries indicates their mixed priorities towards the West/East prospects of development and cooperation.

Table 1.2.2-1. 'European versus Slav' cleavage

The question: Would you support a president who believes that the Union of Slavs is beneficial to the nation?

	Yes (percentage)	No	Undecided
Belarus	55	13.7	31.1
Russia	65.1	11.8	23.1
Ukraine	60.7	12.7	26.7

The question: Would you support a president who will seek a closer union with the EU?

	Yes (percentage)	No	Undecided
Belarus	75.7	3.9	20.3
Russia	79.6	6.3	14.1

[51] The Dnestr Moldovan Republic, a separatist regime, controls over 12% of Moldova's territory and almost all of its heavy industry. See Löwenhardt, J. (2001) *Two Forgotten Countries: Belarus and Moldova*, www.gla.ac.uk/external/basees/Löwenhardt.pdf retrieved March 2001

Ukraine	71.2	7.1	21.8

Source: INTAS research project (99-00245), opinion polls, December-January 2001. Representative nation-wide samples in Russia (19000), Belarus (1200) and Ukraine (1600). Author is a project network coordinator.

This closely corresponds with Stephen White's data assessing public and elites' attitudes to a wider Europe[52]: 55% in Belarus strongly or somewhat favour their country's membership in the EU; 69% in Moldova; 57% in Ukraine and 47% in Russia, with quite substantial share of undecided votes (31% in Belarus; 24% in Moldova; 32% in Ukraine; and 41% in Russia). The growing public perception in themselves as the European 'outsiders' and the emergence of the 'West versus East' conflict, have been already manifested by the divisions within the social structures of the CIS. As White et al. note, European-oriented segments of the population are mainly those who support pro-market parties, have experience of travelling, are of younger generation and speak national language at home. They are confronted by pro-communist party supporters, and those who have relatives in Russia and across the CIS.

Another feature that brings the CIS states into a separate transitional group is a dominating public attitude towards a strong leadership, embodied by the presidents and subordinated to them governments. Recent public opinions, conducted in three borderland countries, reflect popular belief in a president as the most powerful institution in the country: these are 23.7% in Russia, reinforced by 20.1% of those who believe that Russian government is also influential. In Belarus 75.1% believe in Lukashenko, accordingly reinforced by

23.2% of those who positively regard Lukashenko's government and 30.4% - the police. In Ukraine 60.2% consider the president as powerful, 54.4% - the government and 34.3% - the national parliament[53]. People in the CIS also favour the governance by decree (nearly 50% in Russia; 30% in Ukraine; and surprisingly only 24% in Belarus). These tendencies and popular attitudes are reflected in policy-making of these countries, and the existing controversy between their often-unruled leadership and public support for interest contestation. Institutions of parliament appeared to be poorly functioning in the majority of the CIS, largely controlled by either pro-presidential party supporters (total majority in Belarus) or the communist umbrella parties (Moldova –49.9%; Ukraine – 40.9%; Russia – 29.4%). The effective number of parties in parliaments ranges from 6.89 in Russia to 23.06 in Ukraine as opposed by 3.5 on average in CEECs (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, and Bulgaria) in 1996. Parties in places proved to be weak, fragmented and disorganised (with the notable exception of communist successor parties). There are no class or ethnic divides, considerable enough to stipulate the growth of the opposition. Civil society is largely undeveloped, discouraged by a weak legislature, often state-owned mass media, and incapacitated constitutional court. The case of Belarus remains illustrative in relation to the truncated representative powers bestowed to democratic institutions. For example, the president fully controls the legislature, appoints six members of the constitutional court, whose chairman became to have a limited term of office in accordance to 1996 amendments to the constitution. Mass media are epitomized by the

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[52] For more details, see White, S (2001) *Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine: Looking East or Looking West?* www.gla.ac.uk/external/basees/white.pdf. Retrieved March 2001.

[53] INTAS research project on charismatic political leadership in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine (99-00245), university of Bath, ERI: www.bath.ac.uk/~mlpeak

state run BT, the only nation-wide channel; Belarusian Radio 1 is unchallenged; and state-owned press has about 3 million circulation against 300 000 of 53 privately owned papers.

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter was to give a general introduction to the phenomenon of third wave transitions, and the CIS in particular, for the future analysis of Belarus' party system development. It was observed that CEECs, CIS and Latin American democracies considerably differ from prior waves of democratisation, including those of early stages of third wave turnover. This firstly relates to the tasks they face – triple transition of state, market and attitudes; and then their continuous non-consolidation collided with their paradoxical sustainability. In certain cases this might even suggest an emergence of the new type of democratic polyarchy – under-representative and non-competitive regime with a popularly delegated leadership. The CIS states appear to pursue a more complex transitional path that was predestined by their historical past, existing structural and economic problems and international pressure of expanding global community. With these developments they feel increasingly isolated and form a new phenomenon for analysis – the case of 'outsiders' within a wider Europe. Belarus appears to be in the centre of the CIS transitional turmoil simultaneously accumulating problems common to a wider process of democratisation.

For analysis of the party system development in Belarus, a suitable analytical framework is required that will be able to draw on the aforementioned transition dilemmas of the CIS states and third wave democracies in general. Chapter 2 will undertake this task.

Chapter 2. Theories of democratisation: in search of a complex explanatory framework of the party system development in Belarus

Third wave democratisation poses a major theoretical challenge to students of political science, since its nature differs from that what explanatory theories anticipated. New systems are largely characterised by limited pre-democratic experience, enormity of transitional tasks, intense pressure of the international environment, vague cleavage structures, rapid proliferation of 'fringe' interest organisations, and a leadership 'market' flooded by populists. The challenge therefore is to understand, explain and predict the course of political change in the new democracies, and notably in Belarus. For this purpose a methodological inquiry into existing theories of transition will be undertaken in this chapter.

Developments, especially with democratic advancement into Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, were incongruous to any transitional theory, as they mainly portrayed democratisation as the outcome of a contingent and country-specific set of structures and institutions, or otherwise patterns of interactions between political actors. They failed to fully explain the infinite paradoxes relevant to individual countries, and continuity of third-wave transitions *per se*. The wholesale transformation of economic, political and cultural environments, and their global character invites urgent revision of the existing theories in relation to third wave transitions, which, it is argued, will become 'the deepest, broadest, and the most durable transformation in world history' (Remmer, 1995: 104). The aim of this chapter will, therefore, be to adopt, through a

critical analysis of existing theories, a multifaceted methodological framework that will be able to explain prolonged party system development in Belarus.

Many students of comparative socio-political science have begun to experiment with a variety of new approaches to study third-wave democracies, including party system formation. Despite their diversity, they all reflect the novelty of the situation, and are inevitably impregnated with analytical eclecticism. Nevertheless, existing transitional literature can be differentiated in two principal frameworks – a structure-oriented and a process-oriented one[54]. Methodological frontiers between the two analytical traditions are superficial; especially given the novelty of the subject[55]. The message is however to demonstrate the difference in driving forces used by both frameworks. The structure-oriented tradition focuses on the *static* side of transition, which provides the system with both constraints and opportunities for functioning. The process-oriented tradition emphasises its *dynamic* side, which is more dependent on the procedural decision-making and readily available strategic opportunities for agency. In an attempt to capture

[54] This division is offered by the author, expressing her vantage point on the difference between systemic outlook of structural, institutional and cultural theories on building democracy, and procedural understanding of change, reflected by rational choice and elite decision-making theories. The path-dependence analysis lies somewhat in-between the two, however, it will be treated within the second grouping by the author, on the grounds that it views change as originally stemming from elites' actions, which are secondary circumscribed by a system of constraints and opportunities.

[55] The path-dependent approach is the most vivid example of growing eclecticism, and can be termed as a middle way theory, along with neo-institutionalism, and rational choice theories. Nevertheless, it will be examined within the process-oriented approach to substantiate its fundamentals, high-level contingency and reliance on decision-making process, which are occurring in a pre-constituted environment.

in full, the versatility of the third-wave world, modern approaches often gravitate towards balanced convergence, and use complex methodological explanations for this purpose.

Most notable efforts have been made in the direction of the *structure-oriented* framework, which will be analysed in the section of the chapter. This will include the following approaches:

- Neo-institutionalist analysis of Huntington (1991), O'Donnell (1993, 1994), Mainwaring (1994; 1999); Shugart and Carey (1992); Linz (1994, 1996);
- Historical-structural approach, introduced by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), and further developed by Agh (1993, 1994), Kopecky (1995), and Mair (1997), Kitschelt (1992, 1995, 1999), Evans and Whitefield (1993, 1998), Cotta (1994), Bielasiak (1997), and Markowski (1997, 1999);
- Cultural theory presented by Gibson & Duch (1994); Inglehart (1996); Schopflin (1996); Jowitt (1992); Toka (1995); Sakwa (1997) and others.

In the second section, the *process-oriented* framework offered by Higley and Burton (1989); Collier & Norden (1992); Offe (1991); Pridham (1995, 1999); and Przeworski (1995, 1998) will be outlined. It views new regimes in Eastern Europe and Latin America as highly contingent on the situational configurations of human resources and their decision-making during the process of their development. Within this tradition, the rational choice theory including elite approach, as well as path-dependent analysis will be examined.

There are certainly many other directions of the investigation of modern realities such as modernity and post-modernity approaches, globalisation analysis and contingency studies[56], which, nevertheless, are beyond the scope this research, as space and logic do not permit the development of these arguments. The goal of this research is to delineate a framework that will be sufficiently explanatory for portraying the process of party system development and democratisation in Belarus as a newly emerged state.

In conclusion of the chapter, a complex approach to the analysis of party system in Belarus will be recapitulated. It is based on the multifaceted involvement of structures and agency into the analysis of the versatile nature of the transient world. The method

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[56] Within the modernity approach and its post-modern developments more notable works belong to Antony Giddens (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Ulrick Beck (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage; and Zygmunt Bauman (1991) *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Contingency theory focuses more on how the organisation's structure fits the environment, and their interdependence. For details see Greenwood, R., et al (1980) *Patterns of Management in local Government*. Oxford: Martin Robertson; Perrow, C. (1986) *Complex Organisations: A critical Essay*. N.Y.: Random House. Within the neo-institutional tradition, a policy network approach is becoming popular, which studies policy-making behaviour within institutional contexts. Marsh, D., and Rhodes, R., (1992b) *Implementing Thatcherite Policies: Audit of an Era*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press; Gamble, A. (1990a) 'Theories of British Politics', *Political Studies*, XXXVIII, 3: 404-20. On globalisation see Cammack, P. (1999) "Interpreting ASEM. Inter-regionalism and the new materialism", *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*, 4:1; (1998) "Globalisation and the death of liberal democracy", *European Review*, 6(2): 249-63; D. Potter et al (eds.) (1997) *Democratisation*. Cambridge: Polity Press/Open University.

attempts to surmount the one-sidedness of existing theories and is essentially based on Elster's et al. (1998) view of structures, and institutions *vis-à-vis* decision-makers, of which parties are part. Adaptation of eclectic methodologies seems to be a contemporary response to the complexity of modern realities. Mainwaring (1999), for example, in his later works suggests a three-dimensional outlook that amalgamates comparative macro-analysis, institutionalism and rational choice theory in his examination of the Brazilian party system. Kitschelt et al. (1999) moved beyond a structural-historical analysis to adopt a more multifaceted view of political parties, and their institutional and cultural linkages. Elster et al. (1998) likewise offered a synthetic approach that includes all three aforementioned elements - legacies, institutions and decisions – as well as forward and backward linkages, to allow a fuller picture of transition in Eastern Europe.

The chapter will proceed in three parts. A critical analysis of the existing methodologies will be given in sections 2.1 and 2.2. They will outline the principal advantages and crucial drawbacks of the structure-oriented and process-oriented approaches in application to the transient societies of Eastern Europe and Latin America. Finally, Chapter 2.3 will summarise the 'structure-agency' framework utilised by the author in an attempt to form a complete picture of party system development in Belarus.

2.1 The structure-oriented framework

By and large all modern research can be divided into two principal areas of analysis. The first theoretical perspective is a *structure-oriented approach* that understands

democracy as a political system, which is firmly embedded in social structures, institutions, cultural traditions and enduring legacies of the past. Within this analytical framework the following approaches will be identified:

a) neo-institutionalist approach (often cited as a mobilisation-institutionalisation approach) views weak party systems as a dysfunction of the institutional environment which fails to provide a complex realisation of political participation and to meet rising public expectations of the modern world;
b) historical-structural approach (often cited as a cleavage-oriented approach) focuses on the analysis of cleavages, legacies and other structural factors which form the basis for the emergence of the oppositional politics; and finally,
c) cultural analysis, which regards political systems as expressing the 'ethos' of a given social milieu, and by that dependent on the cultural 'mode' and long-lasting traditions and legacies of society in the process of building democracy.

Before moving on to the analysis of existing analytical approaches, there is a line of reasoning that needs highlighting. Theoretical frameworks frequently refer to the process of democratisation as a whole, often without specifically mentioning parties and party systems, which are, nevertheless the locus of this research. The default assumption is, however, that parties, as essential part of building democracy, are implicitly included in the theoretical quest of all modern theories of transition.

2.1.1 The neo-institutional approach

The neo-institutionalist approach emphasises the powerful role of formal institutional arrangements in determining the political behaviour of self-interested politicians, regardless of their social and cultural context. It is rooted in a systemic view of society. From this perspective, societies are seen as networks of interrelated sectors or sub-systems, where the 'outputs' of each sector serve as 'inputs' into others. Social change must be balanced, in the sense that the development of one sector cannot far outpace the development of others. Social change must also be cumulative or self-sustaining, in the sense that development of one sector stimulates the development of others. In other words, this approach presumes *a priori* advancement of institutional settings within a given society that should enable further development of parties and other political and social forces.

The most notable attempt to explain the problematic emergence of the new regimes and party system formation in Eastern Europe and Latin America belongs to Huntington (1991); O'Donnell (1993,1994); Mainwaring (1994, 1999); Linz (1994); Shugart and Carey (1992); and Fish (1995). Samuel Huntington notes, "...the primary problem of politics is the lag in the development of political institutions behind social and economic change" (1991:5). More specifically, a delay in development of party systems in the new democracies seems to be conditional on two elements: social mobilisation and political response. The first signifies the process in which major clusters of prior social commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialisation and behaviour; however new institutional structures are not yet available. The second element follows on from the first, with the formation of political and social organisations that binds and expresses public interest on an official level. Deutsch

(1961: 501) stresses, "...if the government fails to meet the increasing burdens put upon it by the process of social mobilisation, a growing proportion of the population is likely to become alienated and disaffected from the state". In other words, regime transformation involves the realisation of high levels of social forces, which poses an immediate threat to political order; and if the existing regime lacks institutional capacity to respond effectively to assimilation of the freed social forces, the situation is likely to become volatile and unmanageable. As Huntington (1991: 79) notes, "political stability...depends upon the ratio of institutionalisation to participation". That is to say the greater the gap between institutionalisation and participation, the greater the likelihood of political instability.

Hence, the two principal forces of political modernisation, identified by Deutsch, Huntington, Sigelman and others, are *social participation*, realised through various interest-organisations, and *institutionalisation* of the system. The former implies incorporation of the freed mass energy and strategic action of the populace into established social structures. The latter means the construction of institutional rules, procedures and formal organisations to constrain and simultaneously enable political behaviour. When society is transient, public aspirations released during the process of social mobilisation, may find no political forces or institutional incentives to bind them, and hence, emerge volatile. If society can afford plurality of political opinions, these frustrations are unlikely to be displaced against the new political order. Energies will be devoted to an individual or group advancement and the establishment of legitimate political institutions. However, in order to avoid anarchy in legitimising various interest-organisations, certain institutional arrangements need to be made. They must

form a context of constraints and opportunities, which will stream strategic actions of the agency.

If the infrastructure of effective political institutions has developed, government can absorb mass participation and can respond to the demands for change. If infrastructure is missing, political participation on a mass level will prove highly destabilising (Sigelman, 1979). By infrastructure, a combination of various political and social organisations is implied, where the leading role in absorbing the conflict is given to political parties. The higher the level of organisation in political institutions, the more chances the system will have to survive and develop further. Therefore, institutionalisation of parties and other organisations, by which Huntington meant "acquisition of value and stability" and "playing within the established rules by available means", will foster power balance and the prospect for democratic stability in the new democracy. In contrast, if the infrastructure proves to be ineffective in satisfying public needs, the released mass energy will be delegated to the executive level of the state and this may result in popular alienation, non-participation and apathy towards any political discourse.

Huntington specified four criteria for gauging institutionalisation, conceiving each as a continuum: adaptability-rigidity, complexity-simplicity, autonomy-subordination, and coherence-disunity. He posited further that the closer an organisation aligns to the first term in each pair, the more institutionalised it would be. At the same time, Huntington does not deny the importance of political actors as independent forces, and this makes his approach more eclectic. He suggests that the prospect of successful democratic

consolidation depends upon the position of the previous power-holders in the post-transitional environment, as well as the determination of the new actors playing the game. In advancing this eclectic agenda, Huntington suggests examining both actors' choices and the institutional context, within which choices are made. This is not to say that actors have choices with random outcomes of their decision-making, or that actors are equally likely to introduce any set of institutional designs. He implies that the difference in institutions is achieved by the relative power of actors involved in the process of institution building.

In summary, to understand the logic of the institutional approach of the late 1970s, one must emphasise the role of the hierarchical institutions that provide much needed structuration, constraints and opportunities for political forces. The overall stability of the system and, hence, prospects for democratisation (in case of the newly democratised states) depends upon the level of institutionalisation of the existing political infrastructure, which is aimed at popular mobilisation and the provision of representative channels for mass participation. The major drawback of this approach seems to be in the concept of 'institutionalisation' itself. As new democracies show little sign of further stabilisation, but prove nevertheless, sustainable, this posits the question as to whether 'institutionalisation' is essential for explaining party system development. Later theories attempted to surmount this controversy by differentiating degrees of institutionalisation in the new democracies. The new additions developed by O'Donnell (1993, 1994, 1996), Mainwaring (1994, 1999), Fish (1995), Moser (1995, 1998), Linz (1994, 1996), Shugart (1993, 1996) and others appeared to be even more eclectic than that of Huntington. Their approaches include analysis of the human factor as equally

complementary (rather than *contributory*, according to Huntington) element in the process of regime institutionalisation.

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) were captivated by the idea of the impact of the human factor on the institutional setting, and suggested that transitions from one regime to another occur due to the emergence of a schism between hard-liners and soft-liners. Thereafter, however, transition advances through a series of bargains between elites[57] adapting the institutional environment to their own needs. O'Donnell (1993), nevertheless, sees the institutional factor as the driving force of change, where the concept of the state[58] becomes dominant. Accordingly, the state conflates three important dimensions that provide a functional background for the existing order - organisational/bureaucratic, legal and ideological. As mentioned previously, an ineffective state may result in a tendency for personalistic rule of precedence in regions, which is open to arbitrary practices and populism, and which does not allow party

[57] This and the previous statements overlap with some postulates of the rational choice theory. The problem is that both approaches, the institutional and the rational choice, may be seen as closely related and complementary. However, in order to underline, what is the driving force in both theories, the author has placed them under the two different analytical frameworks, i.e. the structure- and the process-oriented respectively.

[58] Theories of the state and its impact on transition increasingly develop. The mainstream contemporary studies include pluralism (Dunleavy and O'Leavy, (1987) *Theories of the State*. London: Macmillan), elitism, especially corporatist studies (Cox, A. (1988) "The Old and New Testaments of Corporatism", *Political Studies*, 36: 294-308); modern Marxism (Jessop, 1982; Skocpol, T. et al. (eds.) (1985) *Bringing the State Back in*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); the convergence theories (Etzini-Halevy (1993) *The Elite Connection*. Oxford: Polity Press).

system institutionalisation[59]. The lack of a well-functioning state leads to power concentration and manipulation in the hands of powerful elite groups. This may be associated with the national leader, as in the case of Belarus, and rival elite groupings, as in case with Russia. In both cases 'privatised' power may formally allow legitimate forms of governance; directly elected politicians, and constitutionally written liberties. At the same time, these structures of power imply alienation of citizenry from the policy-making process, lack of transparency in the decision-making process, and low-level representation, which naturally impedes the process of party system settlement.

It is essential to note that the state in O'Donnell's definition is a '*modus operandi*' rather than a mere conglomerate of the three-dimensional constituents. He argues that in some cases, poorly organised states with high power concentration lead to unequal social protection and provision of citizenry with basic rights and freedoms. This, consequentially, may result in the system of informal rules and structures, which can be functional, but have no *stimuli* for system institutionalisation. The failure of the state to provide an efficient institutional framework may not directly affect the operation of the regime, but it definitely does not contribute to its stabilisation. The consequence of an ineffectual state combined with the process of regime transformation is long running and decisive. Depending on the mode of leadership, the state may serve as a benchmark or a stepping-stone to power institutionalisation or abuse. The consequences of the latter may be a dictatorial monopolisation of power, or power dispersion on regional levels in the form of 'sultanistic' governance. The country may well have a democratic regime or

[59] The best examples of this kind of developments are Russia, and the other CIS, especially those where there has been little or no rotation of political elites in power.

at least the potential for one, but it cannot be a democratic state if it has weak law and informal infrastructure. In other words, the country may be described as democratic, if the conclusion is based on *façade* features of regime, i.e. free elections, competitive parties, proclaimed liberties, and institutions of law and representation. This, however, may 'successfully' coexist with authoritarian governance and non-democratic policy-making; and may eventually lead to a dictatorial state.

O'Donnell (1993, 1994) makes valuable points, which may be readily applied, to Belarus. Nevertheless, his institutionalism proves limited in explaining the role of the 'human factor' in decision-making in post-communist politics. For example, the structural environment of Belarus presupposed a semi-parliamentary system with optimistic prospects for further institutionalisation. The president, however, altered this course, and eventually succeeded in introducing a system of a personal rule. This demonstrates strategic selectivity of decision-makers in a relatively structured environment. The role of political actors operating in uncertain and opportunistic institutional settings appeared to be as significant to democratic consolidation as institutions themselves.

Mainwaring (1993) offers a more balanced approach for the explanation of the process of building new democracies. He argues that:

> ...institutions create incentives and disincentives for political actors, shape actors' identities, establish the context in which policy-making occurs, and can help or hinder in the construction of democratic regimes (1993: 198).

This leads to the conclusion that despite the significance of the human factor, institutions still mould the system and dictate the mode of development for party politics. Interestingly, Juan Linz (1994), and Shugart and Carey (1992) arrived at a similar conclusion in their research of new democracies. However, in his later study of Brazil, Mainwaring (1999) uses a more complex approach that combines comparative macro-analysis, institutionalism, and rational choice. The first compares class structures, states, political regimes, and patterns of economic and political development across cases and time. This is complemented by historical institutionalism within which he believes "...institutions are relatively autonomous and are themselves important actors in political life" (1999: 7). He submits in conclusion that "...it is important to examine linkages between structural and ideational/cultural factors and formal institutions" in order to feature the new and versatile world (Mainwaring, 1997: 9).

In their study of institutional settings - presidential versus parliamentary democracies - in the new democracies, Linz and Valenzuela (1994), Shugart and Carey (1992), Shugart (1993, 1996, 1998) come to a common conclusion that institutions are important for providing a safe environment for the consolidation of democracy. This implies that whatever configuration of social forces the system may have, it is difficult to sustain democracy in the presidential system, and that it would have a greater chance of flourishing in a parliamentary system. As Linz argues:

> The combination of presidentialism, a fragmented multiparty system, and undisciplined parties has made it difficult for presidents to function through party

channels and has encouraged anti-party practices. It is not only personalities and political culture, but also political structures that explain why presidents have acted against parties (Linz, 1994: 36).

Shugart and Carey (1992) note that in Latin American democracies, there may be a correlation between weak parties and strong presidencies. They argue that inefficient legislatures made up of weak parties and egocentric politicians tend to delegate power to the president as a way of overcoming immobilism. When applied to Eastern Europe, Shugart suggests that communists, who were relatively powerful at the time when the institutions were chosen, particularly favoured strong presidencies. This was thought to control the legislature and to act as a brake on potentially unruly or unpredictable parliamentary delegates (Geddes, 1996:27). As evidence suggests, strong presidencies have entrenched in countries in which the president had the support of the strongest party and the legislature was relatively weak. Arend Lijphart (1996) in his analysis of Eastern European democracies suggests that strong presidentialism could also be a response to the uncertainty of the future and an attempt to secure stability. Belarus, however, demonstrates an exception to the rule when the presidency was sought by *all* political forces as a panacea from the fear of uncertainty and responsibility.

Stephen Fish's (1995) study of party formation in the waning years of the Soviet regime demonstrated that in the context of formal institutional rules, which left considerable material power to the Communist Party and its successors and very little leeway for the entrenchment of other representative institutions, Gorbachov's *glasnost'* and *perestroika* could only generate uncertainty and disparagement. In the aftermath of *demokratizatsiya*

in 1991-1993, Yeltsin's administration failed to make a realistic breakthrough whilst operating within the 'old Soviet' constitutional framework. Only after 1993, with changing institutional settings, had Russia definitely advanced on the path of democratisation. One, nevertheless, could be simultaneously optimistic and negative about Russia's democratic future. As Fish argues, with the adoption of the new constitution, establishing the State Duma, which is elected through a mixed proportional representation and single-member district system, new prospects have opened up for Russia. The country, in his eyes, indeed developed 'a genuine multiparty political system, albeit a fluid and inchoate one' (1995b: 340). The environment, nevertheless, continues to be volatile and unpredictable, prone to extreme administrative centralism and autocratic leadership bequeathed by the former regime. The institutional environment appears not to allow Russia to irreversibly break away from the past, which takes effective decision-making and respective amendments within the structures. Hence, such occurrences as extreme political movements[60], the rise and fall of one-day politicians, the superficiality of parties, and their paradoxical survivability in the highly unstable and detached electoral milieu, need more complex explanations than the merely institutional.

Robert Moser's analysis of party system formation in Russia also underlines the importance of 'new institutionalism' (1998: 72). His findings suggest that the effect of electoral institutions is paramount to the consolidation of the political system. Russia's

[60] The movement of Russian National Unity [RNE, Russkoe Natsional'noe Edinstvo] is the best example of this kind.

plurality and PR single-member district electoral system have been exceedingly conducive to the effective presidential election of 1996. At the same time Moser states that:

> ...consolidating effects expected of majoritarian electoral systems operate only at the presidential level in Russia because of the undeveloped state of Russian political parties and their failure to recruit a country-wide network of well-known local candidates to contest elections in districts across the country (Moser, 1998:72).

Moser's research suggests that there is a cross-national effect of various political structures. He states that consolidation of the party system in Russia is "...partly a consequence of electoral systems and [partly of] the political and social structure" (Moser, 1998: 73). Further institutionalisation is only possible through the combination of institutions and the conscious efforts of political elites and masses.

In conclusion, the neo-institutional approach offers a valuable comparative explanation of why the process of party system institutionalisation varies under certain institutional configurations. This highlights the controversial point of the theory: institutions reflect strategic actions of the agency by that enhancing the awareness of structures, and of the constraints/opportunities they impose. In other words, institutions provide the basis for further action, simultaneously being a result of this action – a permissible environment for political actors. When 'fixed' into place, institutions tend to have a long-lasting effect on party system development, until the moment when they are improved by respective decisions. The principal disadvantage of this approach can be described as a 'chicken-egg' dilemma: the contextualising role of institutions is quintessential, but

nevertheless, they were brought into being by individuals, whose strategic actions initiated transition, and in addition keep them in motion.

2.1.2. The historical-structural approach[61]

Since the 1960s and especially after the influential work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), the cleavage-orientated approach, based on the analysis of social and political conflicts and legacies, has become dominant in the explanation of party system formation. It regards 'cleavages' as long-term structural divisions, which give rise to opposing opinions that competing political organisations represent. Obviously not all social/political divisions may produce cleavages, as well as not all cleavages may find their representation by political forces, especially in the new democracies. Nevertheless, once existing divisions have been electorally 'mobilised', they tend to have a profound effect on a structure of the party system, and the process of democratisation. Although, cleavages and legacies do not solely determine the outcome of transition, they do have a structuring impact on the course of events. Therefore, despite many challenges, in recent decades the 'social cleavage' approach remains important for studying party system formation.

In their analysis of the structure of party competition within west European countries, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) argued that political parties emerged in a form, which is decisively marked by primary social divisions as those democracies moved towards universal suffrage. They identified four basic 'social cleavages', which had been

[61] This will be viewed from a cleavage-oriented perspective as central part of the structural framework.

particularly important for determining the programmatic structuring of later party competition. These are:

a) the centre and periphery;
b) religious believers and secular citizens;
c) urban and rural strata;
d) capital and labour.

The particularly valuable asset of the theory is its historical outlook on existing party configurations. Lipset and Rokkan (Ibid: 2) argue that "...parties do not simply present themselves *de novo* to the citizens at each election; they each have a history and so have the constellations of alternatives they present to the electorate". This also helps to understand the mechanics of party system settlement, termed as the 'freezing' hypothesis, which includes encapsulation of political conflicts into the societal fabric by existing parties and full public mobilisation.

There is much controversy in studying party system formation based on cleavages, as the latter may not necessarily exist or be a formative basis for party political competition in the new democracies. In this respect three sub-approaches can be visualised within the historical structural analysis. The first sub-approach insists that there is no continuity with the past and hence, the role of cleavages must be limited and party formation slow and unstable in new societies. The second sub-approach suggests that even if historical linkages are broken, new cleavages can emerge in response to a highly controversial transient environment, and by that foment new party politics. The

third approach submits that despite periods of war and totalitarianism, a brittle continuity with pre-authoritarian cleavages can be found, and this may offer a slow but certain impetus for party system development.

Within the first analytical tradition, Agh (1993, 1994), Kopecky (1995), and Mair (1997) advocate little connection with the past in party political development, rather emphasising the *sui generis* nature of their emergence. Indeed, new East European democracies when compared to those in Spain, Portugal and Greece, are transitions, which show little tendency for settlement and "...[are] still relatively weak and suffering from all kinds of infantile disorder" (Agh, 1993: 242). Supported by evidence of the extraordinary multiplicity of parties and their frequent dissolution and re-alignment, some scholars suggest that "...to build and maintain a stable electorate of loyal supporters, sharing the values and ideology of the party, they must look extremely demanding, if not impossible" (Kopecky, 1995: 519). This is however, not to conclude that the stabilisation of electoral behaviour is entirely impossible as the new party systems consolidate. It seems to be a long-term and far-reaching process of framing the political environment of Eastern Europe. Only a handful of newly enfranchised voters may have entered mass politics with pre-existing partisan loyalties. Civil societies are undeveloped, mass party politics are largely inchoate, and electoral markets are open and available. As Mair (1997:187) states, "...it seems plausible to conclude that, at least in the medium term, the post-communist democracies will be unlikely to develop strong cleavage structures...", which implies limited prospects for party system stabilisation.

Within the second tradition, Kitschelt (1992, 1995, 1997), Evans and Whitefield (1993, 1998), Cotta (1994), Bielasiak (1997), and Markowski (1997, 1999) suggest that new profound conflicts may appear from the great variety of relationships existing in the re-structuring societies, stipulated by the aftermath of the post-communist period. They may have the potential to stabilise the politics of given systems by anchoring party loyalties and polarising the party universe. As Kitschelt states:

> ...[the] economic institutions and resources that deceased communist systems bequeathed to the democratic successor regimes will have a powerful influence on emerging political preferences, interests, and party strategies (Kitschelt, 1992: 10).

Termed as a 'middle-way' theory, this approach implies intensive formation of cleavage structures, followed by party posturing and collective electoral response under the guise of deep social/political conflicts and controversies of transition. Bielasiak (1997: 26) for example, notes, "...[that] the absence of past cues and party loyalty as determinants of voting behaviour necessitates a novel determination of the issues that are most salient to the transition". This implies that "...old structures and old struggles are being left behind, and from a multitude of new options, the political field is narrowing to a more manageable dimension" (Bielasiak, 1997: 41). To summarise, these scholars place the major emphasis on the role of *contemporary* cleavages, which do not reflect the conflicting 'historicity' of the full-suffrage period, but express the highly controversial issue agenda of transition societies.

Maurizio Cotta (1994) offers a mixed approach to the cleavage-based emergence of party systems, which can be seen as a two-step inquiry. First, he states that pre-communist party systems do not provide the relevant background for the formation of new party systems; and their legacies are on the whole marginal (Cotta: 1994). A new regime cannot merely resume on the basis of the existing pre-authoritarian cleavages. Non-democratic and post-communist periods may be more stimulating for party system formation. They may either provide favourable conditions for the survival of the previously dominant party or foment the emergence of an 'illegal' opposition or multi-interest politics. As Cotta (Ibid: 118) states, "...new parties can develop on the basis of [existing] conflicts that have the potential for sustaining a broad and durable political mobilisation".

Accordingly, Evans and Whitefield (1993: 535) argue that in the absence of well-formed party loyalties, single issues and present social divisions associated with them may be the focus for party mobilisation. Voters' identification with parties that follow a single-issue agenda may facilitate a tendency for the party system to eventually consolidate. As Evans and Whitefield comment:

> ...even though in many cases these parties were still in their infancy, they may have provided electors with a way of understanding political disputes and a basis for voting decisions (Evans and Whitefield, 1993: 535).

It is also suggested that market experience, ethnicity and security of nationhood may intensify the emergent patterns of social cleavages, along which political parties

compete. In most transitional countries, they insist, marketisation is more likely to polarise the citizenry, and therefore, to "...provide a plurality of political identities from which parties can derive stable support" (Ibid: 522).

In a similar vein, Kitschelt (1995: 448) argues that "...it is plausible to question whether post-communist party systems organise around lasting lines of conflict that are based on rival political programmes and value commitments", or simply around clientelistic favours and people's personal attraction to a topic field. This suggests that the existence of manifest incentives at the early stage of post-communist democratisation may be of greater salience than profound divisions of interests for motivating people to vote and binding them to a party.

The emergence of programmatic parties, along clear-cut divides, and with strong collective identities, is costly. This requires that voters possess cognitive skills and the ability to make an intelligible choice between competitive party alternatives. Kitschelt (1995) believes that this led some scholars to deny the possibility of programmatic party competition and post-communist democratic consolidation in the future[62]. In contrast, he asserts that it is highly plausible for post-communist countries to develop programmatically structured party competition over time, due to the salience of transitional conflicts, based on certain pre-conditions[63]. These conditions may vary

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[62] This is the actual meaning of the *tabula rasa* approach, articulated by Mair (1997) and others.

[63] These conditions for party programmatic structuring include the following variables: (1) pre-communist heritage: (i) timing, profile and extent of economic development and (ii) inter-war democratic experience; (2) patterns of communist rule: (i) communist regime mode and (ii) mode of democratic transition; (3) democratic

across time and space, and hence, differently influence the speed of party formation. According to Kitschelt, the 'system time' variables, i.e. the length of the electoral game and democratic experience, as well as the number of effective parties, most immediately correlate with party system settlement.

In their recent work Kitschelt et al. (1999) suggest using a more complex approach. This includes historical legacies as well as actors' strategic choices, inasmuch as the former cannot fully explain the process of party formation in new democracies. They (Ibid: 19) state, "...legacies at least initially shape the resources and expectations that help actors to define their interests and to select the ways and means to acquire political power". Simultaneously, they insist that choices of political actors also matter. Actors have to make decisions under conditions of great uncertainty, because unique constellations of institutions and transient conditions make it difficult for participants to define their preferences and select more advantageous strategies to outplay their opponents. Thus, more recently Kitschelt et al. (1999) have taken a more flexible view in order to understand and explain the unpropitious societal environment for building a strong party system in the new democracies.

Finally, the historical approach pursued by Rose and Urwin (1970), Bartolini and Mair (1990), Rivera (1996), suggests that there is both *uniqueness* and *continuity* in the development of party systems when compared with the past. This approach relies on a substantive evaluation of the Lipset and Rokkan (1967) thesis of party system

institutions, i.e. the structure of (i) executive power and (ii) electoral system; and finally (4) number of effective parties and number of elections run after the collapse of communism (Kitschelt, 1995: 454)

formation. Emphasis is placed on a continuity of cleavage structures, which will persist and regain their strength and influence over party development after a non-democratic period. This continuity is conditioned by the degree of conflict encapsulation in society, which cannot be simply replaced by change of political discourse, and will find a means to be expressed by political forces.

To recapitulate, the main thesis of the historical-structural approach is that emerging party competition is stipulated by political conflicts that either revived or emerged *de novo* in transition, by that framing possible directions of party system developments. The speed of, and the potential for, structuring cleavage-based parties vary widely across post-communist countries, depending on their historical and institutional conditions.

New research and developments in party politics in emerging democracies have demonstrated that cleavages have effect on party system consolidation. However, it appears to have limited reference to past structures, and is not an influential basis for present party configurations. Kay Lawson's (1999) research of East Central Europe concludes that it is possible to identify clear-cut cleavages in the *earlier* histories of new European nations, although most of these received only limited partisan representation and did not endure. There has been little or no freezing effect: the twentieth-century wars and totalitarianism destroyed the foundations for the emergence of new oppositional politics. This research demonstrates that in the majority of new democracies, existing political divisions appear to play a *limited* role in determining the formation of new parties. She nevertheless, notes that one division seems to exist

everywhere, unambiguously assuming the guise of a true cleavage. That is between the *minority,* who benefit from transition and the *majority* who are not benefiting and want to maintain or re-establish some measures of pre-transitional social security. Parties seek to reassure the majority, but in office they tend to follow, out of faith to its eventual efficacy or hope of personal gain, the will of the minority (Lawson, 1999, Chapter 2).

In summary, the conclusion of many contemporary scholars in relation to historical-structural theory is that it does not fully correspond to post-authoritarian and post-totalitarian realities. Such scholars as Lawson, et al. (1999), Kitschelt et al. (1999) and Mainwaring (1999) observe, that parties in the new democracies do not form necessarily in response to structured cleavages, but for the chance of gaining power. The major cleavage – conservative vis-à-vis reformist – shapes neither the party system nor the parties' programmes in or out of power; and voters have no clear-cut partisan home.

Nevertheless, the cleavage approach is still informative for the analysis of new systems, as it provides an insightful standpoint for the formation of political oppositions, and emerging social divisions. For example, structural analysis of Belarus, explains the evolution of the party spectrum and the principal undercurrents of party politics between 1990-1996 at the outset of transition. It also may be useful for transcending the impact and consequences of the emerging divide in the 'outsider' countries, such as Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and other members of the CIS. It primarily relates to the existence of mixed identities (pro-European vis-à-vis Slavic) amongst the CIS, and their prospects

for development and democratic consolidation[64]. Their contemporary policy-making placed crucial emphasis on strategical programmes for the oppositional sides, and may well form the basis of political competition in the future. Nevertheless, the cleavage-based approach cannot solely define, why a strong presidency, for example, outplayed existing factional divisions within the 1996 parliament; or why super-presidentialism has endured despite the efforts of the opposition and a suitable cleavage background in Belarus. This therefore requires methodological broadening.

2.1.3 The cultural approach

The cultural approach emphasises differences in the social and historical conditions of the new democracies. In application to the CIS this assumes the influence of past Soviet traditions and East European mentality, and the strength of civil society in explaining diverse forms of democratic transition and the pace of democratisation in the newly emerged states. Gabriel Almond (1956: 396), a pioneer of the cultural approach, defined political culture – the key element of the cultural approach – as "a particular pattern of orientations to political action", a "set of meanings and purposes" within which every political system operates. Political culture therefore refers to beliefs, values, and expressive symbols, which convey the ethos of a given culture.

[64] See Chapter 1 for more detailed discussion.

The notable work belongs to Gibson and Duch, Inglehart, Schopflin, Johnson, Toka, Sakwa, and others[65]. They all base their analysis on the assumption that cultural context is paramount for understanding contemporary curves in democracy building of the newly emerged states. Many of them are not surprised by the politics of extremism, ephemeral parties, short-lived populists and despondent electorates. They regard present developments as one of many political indicators of crisis, in cultural identity and doctrine of living, left by the collapse of socialism, prolonged totalitarianism and limited democratic experience. From this perspective, the post-communist milieu is a 'genesis environment', in which no stable frameworks for orienting social actions exist, and in which therefore, as Jowitt states (1992), "...wholly unprecedented forms of social organisation may eventually emerge". In addition, the legacy of cynicism, alienation and despair inspired by decades of communist rule have left the post-Soviet public largely unfamiliar with the western norm of civic participation and tolerance, and highly susceptible to demagogic and charismatic appeals. Focus on cultural factors may explain why there are so many political parties that form and disappear. Party instability simply reflects the general post-communist confusion about political loyalties, disarray

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[65] Gibson and Duch (1994) "Postmaterialism and the Emerging Soviet Democracy", *Political Research Quarterly*, 47; Ronald Inglehart (1990) *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Societies*. Princeton University Press; Rasma Karklins (1994) "Explaining regime change in the Soviet Union", *Europe Asia Studies* (46): 29-45; Schopflin (1993) *Politics in Eastern Europe*, 1945-1992. Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Johnson (1992) 'Some thoughts on democracy and its cultural context', *Ethnic and International Affairs* 6: 41-55; Jowitt (1996) 'Dizzy with democracy', *Problems of Post-Communism* 43 (1); Sakwa, R. (1998) 'Left or right: CPRF and democratic consolidation', in Löwenhardt (ed) *Party Politics in Post-communist Russia*. London: Frank Cass; White, A (1999) *Democratisation in Russia under Gorbachev 1985-1991: the Birth of a Voluntary Sector*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

and uncertainty of the future[66]. Richard Sakwa underlines the following features of the 'Soviet culture' as influential:

> This syncretic 'communism of transition' is oriented towards the state and has few authentic roots in the transformative processes in society, yet it gives voice to the suffering of millions and by grouping its programme in an idiom that responds to the traditions and needs of a large part of a disoriented society (Sakwa, 1998: 154).

A major issue for cultural theorists is the involvement of civil society, which is deemed to be *modus viviendi* for the new state. It encompasses issues of mass politicisation and public participation in national life. Civil society is argued to be an arena of politically active citizens that orders their relations according to the system of law (Kumar, 1996).

Defined as a polity of self-organised groups of individuals that are relatively autonomous from the state and attempt to advance their interests by assembling into organisations and solidarities, civil society, thus, reinforces the 'human' side of transitional process. The idea of civil society is to involve interested individuals into policy-building and the decision-making process of the state. Its capacity also extends to the level of people's mobilisation in an attempt to express their support or opposition and challenge to the established regime.

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[66] The emerging philosophy of the outsider countries, noted by White, S., Light, M., and Löwenhardt, J. in their research of cultural identities amongst the populace and elites in Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Moldova, seems to be fundamentally rooted in their cultural predisposition towards the expanding

Some scholars suggest distinguishing civil society from political society, as a democratic setting is specifically arranged to contest the legitimate right of exercising control over public power and the state apparatus (Linz and Stefan, 1996:8). They argue that civil society may challenge regimes, whereas political society aims at creating conditions for regime composition and consolidation. This involves activity of those core institutions of a democratic political society — political parties, elections, rules, leadership, inter-party alliances, and legislatures — by which society constitutes itself politically, in order to choose and monitor democratic government. On the other hand, the segregation of societies into politically active and socially oriented has no particular importance during the early stages of democratisation, as both might be either nascent or non-existent legacies of the pre-democratic period.

The mode of political participation, its patterns and symbolic meaning prior and during regime change determines the pace of democratic transition. Yet the roots of political participation and the potential for voters' mobilisation lie within civil society, and in the norms, values and attitudes held by ordinary citizens. Understanding the role of opposition, the necessity of democratic institutions in sustaining the balance of power, and the articulation of political tolerance and dissent, forms the basis for the emergence of pluralistic and institutionalised political system.

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international environment, and structural/cultural dependence on Moscow-centred policy-making. See Chapter 1 for more details.

It is, however, questionable whether new democratic states could accommodate a delicate balance between mass political involvement and a growing apathy and despair among the general population. Cultural theorists attempt to delineate perspectives for national democratisation by analysing social and historical pre-dispositions of a given country. The legacy of authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe seems to have left little incentive for developing a civil society. The practice of democratic centralism and pervasive state control has resulted in a political environment in which little value was attached to personal opinion, diversity, dissent and political tolerance — prerequisites for the emergence of a pluralistic political system.

There are, however, two opposing views submitted regarding the development of political participation during Soviet times that accordingly influence an understanding of the prospects of democratisation. The first interprets political participation as largely consistent with the style of authoritarian or totalitarian system, i.e. existence of popular involvement, associated with coercion, conformist and regime-directed mobilisation. Mass mobilisation, however, had a generally alienated and depoliticised character, to the extent that people's formal acts of participation, such as voting in elections, or their membership of work-related groups, had only a symbolic or career-oriented meaning and conveyed little about their true sense of loyalty and attachment to political system (Gitelman, 1992). An alternative view (Bahry, 1987; Friedgut, 1979) is that political participation was far more complex than it may have appeared on the surface. At the individual level, participation fulfilled a variety of social and political needs, and at the aggregate level it met essential systemic requirements, providing a degree of elite responsiveness to policy issues – the basis for stability. There is little doubt that in the

previous regime formal voting acts had had few consequences for the political system. There have been, however, considerable debates about the nature and form of other types of political participation. At the local level, citizens could have made their own choices about the composition of various interest groups.

With democratisation, the political system and civil society offer new opportunities for mass participation. Bahry (1987: 841) argues that the patterns of civil society and political mobilisation uncovered on the eve of democratisation may well develop at the local level, while activism at the aggregate level may remain limited to a smaller number of citizens. Transitions are characterised by a release of mass energy, as well as a great potential for mass mobilisation. Democratisation, nevertheless, depends on whether emerging institutions can provide a respective arena for realisation and alteration of cultural clichés. If there are no adequate representative mechanisms for channelling public needs, people's collective choices may become deconstructive or apathetic allowing the emergence of delegative politics. In the words of Larry Diamond:

> ...civil society must play a significant role in building and consolidating democracy. Its role is not decisive... However, the more active, pluralistic, resourceful, and institutionalised is civil society, the more effectively it balances the tensions with the state (Diamond, 1994:16).

Johnson and others have modified John Locke's standard notion of civil society and suggest that emphasis should be made on "...the protection and / or self organisation of social life in the face of totalitarian or authoritarian state" (Johnson, 1992: 45). He (Ibid:

46) argues that civil society is created in opposition to the government in order to sustain a balance in society, and hence, it depends on mutually reinforcing patterns of responsibility and interconnectedness. This implies that for the creation of a democratic society there must first be a democratic culture, and in this culture there exists independent, free associational groupings. It is, therefore, a phenomenon that arises from the community as a whole rather than being imposed by a particular elite, or directed by certain institutional settings. Nevertheless, it is exceedingly difficult to prioritise attention in explaining some extraordinary occurrences in the course of development of new democratic states. As cultural theorists suggest it is important to understand the context in which political society operates. Ronald Inglehart explains his 'culturalist' position as follows:

> People have a variety of needs and tend to give a high priority to those, which are in short supply. This concept is similar to that of marginal utility of the consumer in economic theory. But it is complemented by another equally important hypotheses: that people tend to retain a given set of value priorities throughout adult life, once it has been established in their formative years (Inglehart, 1990: 249).

In a similar vein, Gabor Toka argues that democratic consolidation may not require systemic variables like 'hyper-institutionalised' parties: "The quality of democracy is a great enough stake to justify the development of a strong party system even if that would not contribute much to the consolidation of democracy" (1997:62). For example, newly democratised states of East Central Europe are generally regarded as no less institutionalised than some consolidated democracies in Latin America (Chile,

Venezuela, Argentina, etc.). Toka (Ibid: 62) argues that "...laying the stress on 'democracy' rather than on 'consolidation' suggests different priorities". It attaches greater importance to societal forces and ideological 'readiness' of political actors to follow their beliefs. Thus, he continues, that ideological polarisation in society may compensate for lesser institutionalisation. In order to test his proposition, Toka examined the undercurrents of choices of those voters who displayed relatively long lasting loyalties to parties in the new democracies. It appeared that voters, who relate their party preferences to attitudes of issues, are the least likely to change their party choice over time. Other factors, such as style of organisations, party fragmentation, degree of stability of inter-party competition, or institutional background paradoxically appeared to be less important for determining the level of democratic consolidation. This speaks more about the 'quality of democracy', which may survive "...in the absence of relatively cohesive and persistent parties" (Toka, 1997: 31), provided that civil society is ready to receive democratic change. Toka notes that parties are more likely to be by-product of democratic development rather than its creators. This may explain why election outcomes in some advancing democracies may be volatile and sudden, inciting the rise of new actors and disappearance of the old, and nevertheless, not jeopardising national prospects for democratisation.

The cultural approach operates within a historical framework, and offers explanations of why contemporary political development occurs in one way rather than another. It, nevertheless, gives little consideration to the system perspectives under strategic action and transformative decision-making of the agency. This leads to the central downfall of this tradition. Its practitioners appear to forget that culture is the product of many and

various influences, and that its use as an explanatory variable should never be other than that of an intervening, complementary factor. The actual relationship between the normative order and political or social or economic structure is likely to be one of mutual reinforcement over time, and this interaction makes it hard to decide which, if any, factor is most important. Political culture must form part of any explanation of the performance of political systems, but eventually one must analyse how cultural orientation came to be formed.

In summation, the above three approaches have been examined within the structure-oriented analytical perspective, which offers a great number of positive arguments and emphasises the primordial influence of 'structural' factors, such as legacies, cleavages, institutions and cultural traditions. They undoubtedly set the context for democracy building, but not directly and solely determine its outcome. As Dalton (1988:128) notes "...contemporary party politics stands in the shadow of past events". One may still question not the validity but the sufficiency of the 'structure-oriented' framework. Individually these theories cannot capture the full diversity of the developing regimes, which are also much dependent on agency, collective strategy and contingency factors. The advantages of this framework will be integrated further into a complex 'structure-agency' methodology.

2.2 The process-oriented framework

Another analytical tradition - the *process-oriented approach* - views the mode of transition and its outcomes as path-dependent and subject to a variety of opportunities and availability of means. Huntington eclectically notes:

> ...a democratic regime is installed, not by trends, but by people. Democracies are created not by causes but by causers. The motives of political leaders are varied and variables, mixed and mysterious, and often unclear to themselves. Leaders may produce democracy because they believe democracy is the end in itself, because they see it as a means to other goals, or because democracy is by-product of their pursuit of other goals (Huntington, 1991:116).

Within this tradition, rational choice theory, including elite decision-making[67], and path-dependent analysis will be critically analysed. The former sees political actors (elites, interest organisations, individuals) as responding rationally to the opportunities provided by formal institutional settings within a given social environment. The latter suggests that implications of transition are the matter of contingent collective choice of strategies.

The process-oriented approach is based on the assumption that:

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[67] There are many directions that contemporary elite theory takes, and, hence, only a summary view will be presented here. Most notable works are power elite studies (Wright Mills, 1956) which look at closed policy networks and contingent elite circulation; revisionist pluralism (Dahl, 1958; 1971), which focuses on multiple pressure groups and their bargaining role in policy-making; corporatism studies (Schmitter, 1979; Cox, 1988;) centred on state-group intermediation; and neo-corporatism (Held, 1991; Birch, 1993) which places the emphasis on identifying powerful social and economic interests in policy networks.

> ...the high degree of indeterminacy embedded in situations where unexpected events, insufficient information, hurried and audacious choices, confusion about motives and interests, plasticity and even in-definition of political identities as well as talents of specific individuals are frequently decisive in determining outcomes (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, 1986: 5).

2.2.1 The rational choice theory

The key concept of this approach rests on the idea of 'crafting' (Di Palma, 1990), which implies a purposful set of actions undertaken by political actors in order to initiate trasformation of a political regime. 'Crafting' democracies is a creative process that demonstrates the domination of the human factor in the process of polity transformation. The major elements of political crafting include coalition building, forging compromises and making commitments, mobilising electoral support, and inspiring adequate public perceptions. Regardless of national context, the emphasis in this approach is made on the fact that the change of regime is not only subject to the mechanical influence of structures, institutions and traditions. It is rather a process of creation in which relevant structures and institutions are reciprocally involved.

A growing body of literature is dedicated to the process of 'crafting' of the new democracies (Rose and Mackie, 1988; Rose and Mishler, 1996; Pridham, 1995; Higley et al. 1998; Lijphart, 1996; Collier, 1991 and other). Terry Karl and Philippe Schmitter argue that:

> ...searching for the causes of democracy from probabilistic associations with economic, social, cultural, psychological or international factors has not so far yielded any general law of democratisation, nor is it likely to do so in the near future, despite the recent proliferation of cases (Philippe and Schmitter, 1991: 269-284).

Hence, they reject the quest for "...a set of unique and identical conditions" in favour of "...a contingently sensitive understanding" of political-cum-economic interaction of actors, subsequently reflected in structures and institutions (Philippe and Schmitter, 1991: 270). Their process-oriented approach seeks to generalise the ways, in which variations in the mode of democratic transition shape democratic outcomes.

There are two principal elements within rational choice theory, which determine the course of action in the newly emerged states. These are elite decision-making and electors' strategic acting in the process of system institutionalisation. As Rose and Mishler surmise:

> ...if people cannot elect politicians to represent their views, then the regime may be effective but it is not democratic. However, a regime in which elected leaders are weak risks being an ineffectual, broken-back democracy (Rose and Mishler, 1996:224).

The most notable efforts in the direction of elite analysis and electors' strategic choice belong to John Higley et al. (1989, 1998) - the elite compromise approach; Barbara Geddes and Arend Lijphart (1996) - the rational institutional choice; Adam Przeworski (1991; 1996) - the decentralised strategic choice model; and Claus Offe (1991) - the economic ratio model[68].

In its original form rational choice theory was somewhat complementary to the neo-institutional framework, accounting for the reciprocal influence of both institutional factors and individuals, as well as the role of elites in the process of polity building. The principal assumptions relate to utility maximization, the structure of preferences, decision making under conditions of uncertainty, and, more broadly, the centrality of individuals in the explanation of collective outcomes (Green and Shapiro, 1994). Traditionally the 'rational choice' approach was seen within economic theories that operated by categories of costless mobilisation, self-interest and sufficient information (Downs, 1957; Robertson, 1976; McLean, 1991; Budge and Keman, 1993; and so on)[69]. As Green and Shapiro assert:

[68] There are obviously many other directions of elite study. The above-mentioned, in author's view, more adequately reflect the task outlined in this research – to explore the impact of structures, institutions and decisions on the party formation in a transient society. The role of elite decision-making is subject to discussion in this chapter.

[69] Full description can be found in Downs, A. (1957) *Economic Theory of Democracy*. Addison-Wesley Publishers; Robertson, D. (1976) *A Theory of Party Competition*; McLean, I. (1989) *Democracy and New Technology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, etc.

> ...rational choice theorists agree on an instrumental conception of individual rationality, by reference to which people are thought to maximise their expected utilities in formally predicted ways (Green and Shapiro, 1994: 17).

Recent contributions extended the 'economic-oriented' view in the direction of voting behaviour, societal co-operation and leadership analyses applied to the new regimes.

Rational choice theory was initially conceived as an economic-oriented model. Despite the multiplicity of various approaches where rational choice theory is used as a key methodology, they all have a common departure point that can be summarised as follows. First, rational behaviour is typically identified with 'maximisation of some sort' (Green and Shapiro, 1994: 14). Second, there should be some consistency in the rational action, when 'individual units act in conformity with some rational pattern' (Ibid: 14). Third, rational choice theorists routinely assume that each individual maximises *the expected value* of his own payoff, measured on some utility scale (Ibid: 15). Fourth, there is a widespread agreement among rational choice theorists that the relevant maximising agents are individuals, through which collective outcomes must be explained. No matter what collectivity is involved in the real world – party, bureaucratic agency, state – actors of the game are treated as super individuals, with one set of goals and outlooks that can be described as, "...selfish maximization of gains and reduction of losses" (Downs, 1957). Fifth, they assume the existence of a sufficient informative framework for the operation of political actors.

Ian Budge (1993) and Hans Keman (1993) have attempted to widen the pure rational economic outlook of democratic development and apply it to the political science of newly established states. They also suggest that rationality has some moral connotations: "...to recognise someone as rational is to recognize that his/her choices are considered ones worthy and ethical" (Budge 1993:89). Downs' (1957) initially argued that parties competing for voters could array themselves by means of policy pronouncements on a range of alternatives along a left-right continuum. They sought to be situated as close as possible to major concentrations of electors. This implies that parties, in principle, could alter their placements on the continuum in order to attract voters, because they are exclusively motivated by a desire to win office. In contrast, Keman et al (Ibid: 94) argue that this does not normally happen with political actors, especially during the early stages of popular mobilisation. Whatever desire for office they may have, political leaders are also attached to their party's ideological stances, presumably by the same rational token and in order to be identified by voters in the long-term. In addition, electors may also act rationally seeking continuing articulation by parties on some timely and specific issues. Uncertainty, along with party competition, makes parties' actions moderate and 'fuzzy' referring to the context of limited institutional environment. Vice versa, a more structured environment may heighten immoderation and benefit-seeking opportunities. To put it differently, as Geddes notes:

> ...those who make the changes...that is, the members of roundtables, constituent assemblies, and legislatures...pursue their own individual interests above all else, and that their interests centre on furthering their political careers.... The extreme

> fluidity of the East European political context does not preclude explanations based on individual interests of politicians, *but* it does require incorporating timing into the explanation (Geddes, 1996:18-9).

Josep Colomer (1995) offers a rather different interpretation of rational choice theory in his analysis of the Spanish model of democracy. He submits a supportive argument highlighting the complementary nature of neo-institutionalism to rational choice theory:

> [Democratic] consolidation does not mean that democratic institutions are socially efficient, but simply defines a situation in which, given the bargaining strength of the political actors, none of them find it advantageous to risk new political changes of the rules of the game (Colomer, 1995: 125).

Colomer acknowledges that after applying a rational choice framework, his research outcomes received more meaning and value:

> A framework defined by the analysis of decision-making as derived rational calculations, the relevance of institutional constraints, and attention to the frequently unintended consequences of actors' choices has proved very useful for explaining real behaviour of voters, parties, governments and other policy-makers in a democratic regime (Colomer, 1995: 125).

He summarises that newly established institutions demonstrate a high degree of 'path-dependence', or in other words, dependence on negotiations and compromises between

rational actors of the transitional political game. As the by-products of rational choice, institutions in turn determine strategic behaviour:

> ...frequent logrolling among parties, shifting coalitions without elections, migrations of representatives to groups different to those by which they were elected, and non-representative power distributions within institutions (Colomer, 1995: 128).

Hence, one may conclude that the rational choice of individuals is bound to the existing institutional setting, which in itself was constructed by their rational behaviour.

In summary, this approach offers the major point for discussion – the impact of decisions and collective strategies on structurally constrained environment. This is to say that (i) politicians have ideological as well as office-seeking motivations. They will not say or do anything to serve their immediate advantage, which can totally repudiate their long-term rationale. What is uppermost in a particular situation depends on circumstances, however ideological and strategic motivations are never absent. (ii) This can effectively be applied to electors who aim at seeking immediate benefits from the operating system and cast their votes in accordance with their rationale, and approval of the leadership.

The new generation of scholars of rational choice theory offer a rather different outlook focusing mainly on elite theory, and underlining the importance of political consensus and co-operation in contemporary decision making. In their collection of studies Higley

and Burton (1989) address the issue of elite compromise, which is seen as, "...the essential precondition for consolidating democracy" as well as, "...a parsimonious way to confront the complex reality of multiple causation" (Ibid: 339). The roots for elite compromise are sought as a process of 'elite settlement' and 'elite convergence', which are in turn linked to historical legacies of conflict, traditional echelons of leadership, and economic prosperity. As Karen Remmer (1995) notices, the variables that may give rise to elite consensual unity are not well elaborated and conditions under which elite consensus leads to democracy are not yet specified. Nevertheless, the resultant framework highlights the importance of elite consensus and co-operation, based on a rational choice between opportunities and constraints, of which the decision making process is part.

2.2.2 The path-dependent approach: a middle-way approach

This methodological approach appears to be difficult to define within either the structure-oriented or the process-oriented perspectives, as it includes elements of both: institutional settings and decision-making. It can be equally termed as a 'middle way' theory, as it offers a dual view of reality: (i) from a decision-making perspective circumscribed by, (ii) a structure of constraints and opportunities, where the main role belongs to the factor of contingency. As long as the leading part of this approach relates to the decision-making process, which takes place in unknown and often unpredictable circumstances, it seems to be better described within a process-oriented tradition. This approach provides the relevant grounding for an introduction to the complex analysis of Belarus' party system.

Adam Przeworski (1991) offers an abstract formula for understanding the diversity of conditions associated with building of party system and democracy. He defines democracy as "...a system of ruled open-endness, or organised uncertainty", and addresses the issue of democratic sustainability in terms of contingent collective choice and decentralised strategic compliance. He believes that political democracy is not *the* political system of a particular level or historical pattern of development, but a consensual framework or co-operative equilibrium between rationally acting elites, available institutional arrangements and the political choice of electors, and can be achieved in a variety of ways. As Przeworski continues:

> What matters for the stability of any regime is not the legitimacy of this particular system of domination but the presence or absence of preferable alternatives... A regime does not collapse unless and until some alternative is organised in such a way as to present a real choice for isolated individuals... If legitimacy is in fact efficacious in maintaining a particular regime, it is precisely because it constitutes organised *consent* (Przeworski, 1991: 51-3).

Przeworski stresses that in order to understand transitions to democracy it is important to define them as a process of creating specific institutions with their effects upon the capacity of various groups to realise their interests. The important fact is that individuals create these institutions during the process of collective bargaining. One can find Przeworski's approach rather eclectic, as he continues emphasising the co-operative influence of structures and agency, contextualised in time.

He raises a debate about legacies and prospects of system consolidation. Przeworski finds little connection between the modality of transition and the features of the emerging regime (1991: 94-99). In his opinion, democratic consolidation entails a new process and distinct dynamics that differentiates it not only from the former regime but also from the transitional process. Stable party and economic systems, thus, emerge as by-products of transition rather than its initiators. Once established, the durability of new regimes depends upon their economic 'performance' and:

> ...profound economic reforms must be undertaken if there is to be any hope that the deterioration in living conditions experienced by many nascent democratic countries will ever cease (Przeworski, 1991: 189).

Przeworski addresses this problem in terms of the attitudes of three types of actors – politicians, technocrats, and the voting population – and their resulting choice of strategies. What emerges as the optimal strategy, however, is the adoption of reform programmes, regardless of electorate support. This naturally does not bring a desirable equilibrium to society, and a new formula is required. Przeworski pessimistically acknowledges that the factors conducive to such an optimising policymaking style do not appear to be present in most new democracies.

Barbara Geddes (1996) begins her rational choice theory by stating that neither the commonly used neo-institutional approach nor economic explanations of the institutional changes are relevant or sufficient for understanding transitions in Eastern

Europe and Latin America. Her principal assumption is that democratic policy reflects elite decision-making in the institutionally shaped environment that requires 'incorporation of timing' inn the explanation (Geddes, 1996: 91).

By 'timing' she implied first of all a set of pre-existing institutional arrangements that have been negotiated/chosen by certain decision-makers. Furthermore, democratic transitions must not be viewed as either purely people's strategic choice on the one hand, or a favourable set of institutions on the other. It is a combination of factors that advances elite power, reinforced by a set of structural circumstances that have made negotiations possible:

> Where decision makers can best assure their own personal security and advancement by using funds efficiently to implement programs or by hiring experts and following their advice, they will do so. Where they can best further their own interests by exchanging the resources under their control for political support or by simply appropriating them, they will do this (Geddes, 1996:19).

Drawing upon game theory, historical evidence and comparative data analysis, Geddes (1996) argues that the dilemma confronted by politicians is essentially a collective action problem. Its solution depends on a specific set of democratic institutions and reform initiatives. Arend Lijphart notes in a similar line with Geddes that:

> ...the consolidation of democracy is governed by the logic of mobilisation. The political context of a new democracy renders the mobilisation of those affected by

> economic liberalisation more likely because of the lowering costs of political action in relation to the case in the pre-democratic period. Moreover, new democracies create incentives for entrepreneurship, for in the new political conditions labour and political activists must secure and organise social and political forces. Economic liberalisation presents them with an inventory of grievances that easily translates into a political agenda (Lijphart, 1996: 236).

In other words, a combination of economic factors, collective strategic choices and political leadership can present enough incentives for democracy to consolidate. However, this is only possible when some advancement has been achieved in the institutional settings of a given socio-political milieu.

In a similar vein, Claus Offe (1991) advances a proposition that new democracies have to undergo a 'triple transition' – a process, which involves not just democratisation and enhancement of a collective strategic choice; but also marketisation and wholesale economic transformation. Hence, one must traverse three crucial stages in the process, which, as Offe (1991: 867) points out, "...were mastered over a centuries-long sequence in the case of the 'normal' western European countries."

He concludes with a somewhat pessimistic prognosis regarding the establishment of consolidated regimes in Eastern Europe. His logic renders the sequence of formative measures that should be undertaken by a newly emerged state to promote democracy. First, a market economy must be introduced, however, this has to be set in motion only under pre-democratic conditions. "Only a developed market economy produces the

social structural conditions for stable democracy and makes it possible to form compromises within the framework of what is perceived a positive-sum game" (1991: 881). However, the introduction of marketisation is a political project, which may not be necessarily successful, and may not acquire enough public legitimacy. As he stresses, this is where problems begin, and where every theory of transition including rational choice strategy, must fail. His argument also emphasises the importance of the duality of structure-agency in the analysis of contemporary transitions, as single categories cannot adequately explain ongoing transformations.

Green and Shapiro (1994) suggest that whatever may be said on behalf of the analytical elegance or heuristic value of the process-oriented tradition, empirical applications have tended to suffer from two classes of methodological infirmities. The first encompasses what may be described, "as pedestrian methodological defects", (1994: 33) when statistical techniques are misapplied, or incorrect hypotheses are used to measure empirical facts. These methodological errors are common to any theory, and should be taken as principal shortcomings of the approach. The second class of error is more fundamental and rooted in universalistic aspirations. As Green and Shapiro state, "...these concern the ways hypotheses are conceptualised, the manner in which they are transformed into testable propositions, and the interpretation of empirical results when tests are conducted" (1994: 33). This type of errors is method-driven and may be pathological to the theory. In the above scenario, a biased view on what scholars call the reality of strategic action, asserting their subjective interpretation regarding the degree of contingency of events, as well as the rationality of choice, may be argued as

erroneous. This is what the rational choice and path-dependent theorists do not often account for, and where they become the determinists of human action.

To sum up the overall argument, two juxtaposing frameworks – the structure-oriented and the process-oriented approaches – appeared to offer a narrow-focused view of democratic transition in third wave democracies. Individually they highlight some valuable and relevant points conducive to an understanding of the extraordinary occurrences that take place in the new Europe. However separately they cannot fully encompass structural, institutional, cultural and contingent strategic policy-making aspects of the wholesale transformation of the new regimes. A more complex framework is discussed in the third section in an attempt to combine the beneficial insights of the submitted theories and to surmount deficiency of information caused by uncertainty, and past-dependency of transition, on the one hand, and agents' strategical thinking, on the other.

2.3. Parsimonious analytical framework: structure-agency debate

The *structural* and *process oriented* frameworks individually emphasise the importance of structures, institutions and decisions in the process of building democracy. This cannot by itself explain the versatile nature of the newly emerging regimes. As Elster et al. (1998) observe, *structures*, of which legacies and cleavages are part, by definition, are determinants of the present outcomes connected to the past that include inherited endowments of political actors with material resources, mentalities and traditions. The mode, in which they operate, simultaneously constrains and enables agency to future

strategic action (individual or collective). In contrast, *institutions* are subject to 'crafting' by policy-makers, and implicate both 'direct effect' upon structured contexts, within which actions take place, and through which their partial transformation occur, and 'strategic learning' on the part of the actors involved, enhancing awareness of structures and the constraints/opportunities they impose. Once established, they operate in a manner to profit some politicians and discourage others from certain motions under institutionalised rules. They may explain the implications of political discourse, but by themselves, they are subject to alteration by decision-makers in a volatile and semi-structured environment. Finally, *decisions* are most directly concerned with fostering the desired outcomes of the decision-maker, and can be amended if necessary at short notice. As Elster et al. (1998: 294) recapitulate, "...durability [of a democratic regime] decreases from 'legacies' to 'decisions', and intentionality increases, with 'institutions' being placed in an intermediate position on both of these dimensions".

Structures and agency logically entail one another, as "...a social or political structure only exists by virtue of the constraints on, or opportunities for, [the] agency that it affects" (Hay, 1995: 189). This implies that structures do not exist independently of the activities they govern, i.e. agents' intentions and strategies, and *vice versa*. Dualism and interdependence of structure and agency has been widely reflected in a dialectic view of this relationship by social and political sciences. Theories of structuration (Giddens, 1976), and critical realism (Jessop, 1990) underline the idea of mutual dependency and internal relatedness of the social structure and human agency. Giddens (1976: 121), for example, stresses, "...social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet, at the time are the very medium of this constitution". In continuation, Jessop (1990: 129)

argues that, "...the form of the state is the crystallisation of past strategies as well as privileging some other current strategies. As a strategic terrain, the state is located within a complex dialectic of structures and strategies", and needs to be analysed from this perspective (vantage point). Structures do not determine outcomes *directly,* but define the limits of options and strategies for actors. Structured constraints also imply resources and opportunities, which may be selectively realised by actors. Hence, strategic action is a dialectical interplay of intentional and knowledgeable, yet structurally embedded actors and the pre-constituted (structured) contexts they inhabit. Actions occur within structured settings, yet actors have the potential to transform those structures through their actions (Hay, 1995).

A balanced account of the transition, the process of party system building, and the determinants of their institutionalisation, hence, should include the above considerations, and emphasise the joint effect of, "...the residues of the past, the configuration of rule-making actors...and a future-oriented strategic actions" (Elster et al, 1998) on the process of democratisation. Consequently, many scholars, explicitly or implicitly, arrived at a similar conclusion that encompasses causality and consequences of democracy building and involves the structure-agency debate. The works of Mainwaring (1999), Elster et al.(1998) and Kitschelt et al (1999) are examples of this genre. Elster et al (1998), nevertheless, provides a more accommodating explanatory model, which has been partially included in this research.

Elster et al. (1998) argue that this synthetic approach offers a more inclusive explanation of the problematic development of third wave transitions, and therefore, may be better equipped to capture its controversy. He continues:

> Rather than opting for one of the three types of the independent variables, such an approach would have to allow for backward and forward linkages, and other forms of complex interaction. *Forward* linkages occur when structures select agents and institutional settings, and the latter in turn select choices and decisions. *Backward* linkages would be cases in which choices put agents and institutional rules in their place, and these new arrangements alter or nullify the determining force of structural legacies or replace them with newly created legacies (Elster at el, 1998: 295, my emphasis in italic).

In their research of some CEECs democracies, Elster et al. argue that many new democratic institutions such as parliament, parties, trade unions, other interest organisation, and labour and capital markets, are often forced to amalgamate the properties of the socialist state in their transitional context; and by that their progressive development may be jeopardised. This 'forward linkage' causally shapes the mode and the legitimacy of political authority, which, determined by the past, is often based on the belief of "...the sanctity of time-honoured rules and powers" (Weber, 1978: 226). Elster et al (1998: 302) note that these conditions generate a personalistic view of authority, which is rooted in the power of the master, and not in the overall reasonableness of an order, which is governed by the rules and embodied in the institutions.

The 'backward linkages' can be identified between choices, which create institutions and agents, which in turn alter inherited structures. As in the case of Belarus, the rational choice of the legislature and the public's desire for strong leadership resulted in the introduction of a presidency in 1994 with the purpose of controlling a developing crisis. This, however, soon became a stepping-stone to a plebiscitarian dictatorship imposed by the president elect, Alexander Lukashenko.

The differing effects of 'forward' and 'backward' linkages may be observed over time, determining the degree of involvement for structures and agency. As it was initially noticed, the durability of structures decline with decision-making, and in opposition, strategic selectiveness increases with a move from decisions to institutions, as a definitive set of constraints and opportunities becomes operational. As Elster et al conclude:

> ... whether decisions or structures have a dominant influence on the shape of the societies in transition seems to depend largely upon the robustness of the extant institutions which in turn is mainly determined by the overall structural affinity of the respective societies to the soviet-type communism (Elster et al., 1998: 304).

In other words, there is a definitive relatedness between structures, institutions and creative agency, which tends to have a joint effect on the process of democratisation of the new regimes.

The structure-agency approach appears to be more beneficial and encompassing for understanding party system developments in the new democracies. As a consequence, the methodology used for this research comprises many features of the three-dimensional method, offered by Elster and often found in works of many other scholars studying the new regimes. The proposed framework, hence, will include elements of rational choice theory in conjunction with structural and cultural conceptions; and will offer a more elaborate outlook of the post-Soviet environment. The following suppositions can be submitted in support of a joint analytical framework for the analysis of the party system formation in post-soviet Belarus.

First, democratic transitions are structurally framed by many factors left over from the past that may have both stimulating and inhibiting effect on the process – 'forward linkage' (Elster et al, 1998). In Belarus' case, one may think of the enduring Soviet mentality with high economic and political dependency on Moscow, low-intensity citizenship and subdued national consciousness. This certainly determined the slow break away *from* and the hidden agenda of a union *with* Russia. To this range there may be added old-fashioned and 'impervious' bureaucracy; limited elite rotation and therefore, continuing communist domination in power; public fear of the opposition; economic crisis and the national choice for strong leadership. Altogether this has led to the alteration of a semi-parliamentary regime into a super-presidential republic, with the eventual domination of the president's will over the law in Belarus. This is not to say that there were no cleavages that could provide a background for a more democratic scenario. The 'identity-based' and power related conflicts existed in parallel with other structural arrangements, but failed to consolidate into definitive oppositional forces due to non-democratic decision-making of

the legislature between 1990 and 1994. Not altering the electoral code, and not having feasible programmes for economic and political reforms stipulated the emergence of non-democratic institutional rules in Belarus, which were consequentially reflected in existing structures and elite decision-making.

Second, these alterations are undoubtedly linked to the public's cautious attitude to newly acquired independence, burdened with inherited legacies and societal conflicts – 'backward linkage'. This accelerated the process of power concentration in hands of the president, and approved crucial alterations in the constitution in favour of the incumbent and at expense of other democratic institutions (legislature, constitutional court, mass media, parties and non-governmental organisations). In addition, vertical governmental control ('presidential vertical') put constraints on various level authorities and offered them no other alternative than compliance to the president. The lack of accountability by the 'Soviet old guard' bureaucracy; tacit 'seat guarantees' for conformist candidates in parliament; state controlled media; a Constitutional Court appointed by the president, and economic inaction demonstrate how the interaction between existing structures, and human agency can eventually stipulate a tendency for a plebiscitarian dictatorship in the country.

Third, public strategic choice is also an independent factor in the game. Both structures and institutions have created enough leeway for the realisation of populist agendas, and opportunities for non-partisan politics. Alexander Lukashenko was simply an example of such a scenario, whose rise to power cannot be individually attributed to his personality, or cultural traditions, or lack of the constitutional order. On the other hand,

parties' decline cannot be a mere consequence of their self-preserving actions or institutional limitations. These are parts of a joint 'structure-agency' effect that determine an overall course of events. As Gerardo Munck (1994: 370) states, "...the importance of choice lies not only in the choices that start a transition and move it long, but also in the shaping of new institutions".

In summary, placing actors in structured institutional settings will aid an understanding of the implications for non-consolidating new regimes. Rather than assuming that either institutions or political actors individually play a leading part in building democracy; a view offered in this research, insists that one can learn about transitions only by considering a combination of forward and backward linkages between structures, institutions, and agency. As Munck (1994: 371) notes, "...if we are to show that transitions are moments open to agency, we must show that particular outcomes would not have been the same without the intervention of actors".

Cleavage-oriented structural and institutional arrangements, such as the presidency, electoral code and constitution making, will form the essential part of the analytical inquiry into the party system development in Belarus. Parties, on the other hand, will be regarded as the principal agents of the political game, and will be viewed from a three-dimensional perspective comprising a public level of representation – parties in public-office; internal and grassroots levels – parties as organisations and in the electorate. This should enable an understanding of developments in party 'policy-thinking' on elite and mass levels (Ilonskii, 1998). Finally, the level of electors' expectation will be included into the analysis. This is hoped to give a full picture of parties' functioning in society,

and hence, an estimation of the level of system institutionalisation and prospects for further democratisation. As Herbert Kitschelt writes:

> Electoral party competition has been supplemented and, in some instances, even displaced by other modes of political involvement and collective decision-making, especially corporatist and plebiscitarian forms of interest intermediation. Nevertheless, universal suffrage, competing political parties, and legislative bodies *remain central distinctive features of modern democracy*. For this reason, the configuration of party systems and their stability profoundly influence the effectiveness and popular acceptance of a democratic order (Kitschelt, 1992: 7; italics is original).

Chapter 3. *The impact of structure* on party system development in Belarus, between 1988 and 2000

In previous chapter it has been established that in order to capture uniqueness and controversy of the third wave democratisation, complex analysis of structures, institutions and agency is required. In this chapter the impact of structure, which will include political conflicts and inherited legacies, and existing institutional arrangements will be analysed in relation to the party system formation in Belarus.

The chapter will proceed in two sections. Section 3.1 will focus on the realisation of legacies, potential conflicts and cultural clichés in Belarus between 1988 and 2000, and their influence on party development. As further discussion will demonstrate, legacies and cleavages have a considerable impact on party system formation, but cannot fully explain the complexity of its development in modern society. For example, parliamentary elections in 2000 displayed major systemic controversy over parties' functioning, when opposition parties had the capacity to win votes and seats in public office, but were limited in their institutional choice by existing constraints in society. Internal undemocratic control of elections in Belarus prevented parties from further participation in the political game. Elections were 'organised' to serve the interests of authorities, when all principal financial, institutional and human state resources were mobilised to aid pro-governmental organisations to win seats. Local authorities, under the control of the presidential 'hierarchical structure', motivated people to vote for predetermined candidates. A similar situation occurred in the state-owned enterprises, institutions and other governmental bodies. This was purely based on informal

canvassing and unofficial mechanisms of pressure; and could not be verified by independent observers. In addition, media resources, formally available to all candidates, soon became sidelines in assisting the president's loyal subjects[70]. This situation clearly demonstrates the powerful role of both structural and institutional elements, which can often have a more enduring effect on the party system operation than collective strategies of political 'dissidents'.

Therefore, the effect of *structures* will be the primary concern of section 3.1. In section 3.2 the impact of *institutions* on the process of party system development will also be brought into highlight. This will include such issues as presidentialism, constitution making, and the electoral code as the principal elements of the institutional structure, which can variably affect a newly emerged party system.

Belarus' overview

Belarus has been chosen for analysis amid other post-Soviet republics due to its demonstrative and simultaneously unique mode of transition. There has been very little

[70] The Belarus' Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship and monopolisation of mass media (Article 33). Citizens of Belarus are also guaranteed the right to obtain, store and distribute 'full, reliable and timely information about the activities of state agencies, public associations, political, cultural and international events, etc.'(Article 34). Simultaneously Article 34 specifies that 'the use of information can be limited by the law, in order to protect citizens, and to allow the exercise of their rights in full'. These limitations are enumerated in Article 5 of the Press Law, and give much leeway for authorities to use their control over the information, especially on the eve of elections.

scholarly discussion of Belarus' political and economic development, either in the West or in Belarus itself. Nevertheless, it is a typical example of the problematic transition of the post-communist systems and accumulates most of the generic features of the ex-Soviet states. Belarus experiences economic hardship and pending social and economic decline. In this collapsing order, halfway policies and the effective absence of any economic programmes have drawn the country into a situation of inaction as the best option. Institutional and structural incentives, like the introduction of a majority run-off electoral system, bicameral parliament, strong presidency, powerful executives, lack of legality, superfluous parties seem to be similar to the developments in other post-Soviet states. The surface configuration of political conflicts also shows signs of similarity, being characterised by reformist and national movements, in opposition to the successor and conservative activities of the old-guard elite. There is also a long-lasting tradition of governance by decree and political volition, attributive to neighbouring states. Culturally they share a common public expectation of a strong leadership that may possess exceptional powers and a political vision, which is needed to surmount economic and political hardship. Charisma, for example, becomes a substitute for legitimate authority and is 'authority' in itself. Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, is an example of a surviving charismatic leader in an uncertain and malleable environment. His actions and background have secured his role as a hero for the majority of the population, namely the urban working class and rural peasants. With this support, and by skilfully exploiting Slavic passivity, tolerance and sentimentality, Lukashenko continues finding ways to distract people's attention from economic disasters and even more so from the inadequacies of the 'new democratic regime'. In the absence of any concrete measures to deal with inflation, poverty and black market

activity, the slogans of 'jailing the thieves' have become part of his rhetoric. Lukashenko is particularly good at publicly castigating ministry officials and representatives of local governments. Nonetheless, the deteriorating economy cannot but threaten his position as President. Lukashenko has used the project of the union of Belarus with Russia as a hint to return to the prosperity, stability and faith of the 'old' Soviet system. The execution of the union depends on whether this issue is included in the policy agenda of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and Russian political elites, which are split in regards to its realisation[71].

Populist activities and empty pledges by the leadership and power-seeking opposition can be found elsewhere within the former Soviet Union. Legitimate but ineffective parties and still incipient party systems reveal other features of Belarusian politics, which are common to the other states. For example, Pammett and DeBardeleben observed the extreme influence leftover authoritarian legacies and unaccountable styles of governance have upon the poor status of parties in the case of Russia, which is in turn effectively true for any other ex-Soviet republics:

> Opportunities for parties to perform their major functions of holding government accountable, effecting policy and distributing benefits have been extremely limited. The pervasive atmosphere of corruption and profiteering has involved a number of party leaders, shown up the powerlessness of others and generally

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[71] The project realisation allegedly depends on whether Russia is willing to see Lukashenko as part of the process. His leadership in the Belarus-Russia Union is subject to vehement debates amongst Russian political elites.

made it difficult for the public to trust politicians (Pammett and DeBardeleben 2000: 382).

Populist presidents, their unlimited authority, the flagrant past of the Communist party, powerful executives and puppet legislatures in the ex-Soviet countries continue reinforcing the perception of parties as 'second-order' preferences by the general electorate.

At the same time, Belarus considerably differs from other post-Soviet states by demonstrating some unique features of its transition. Belarus was deemed to be a 'well-qualified' candidate for democratisation, but appeared to be its 'own worst enemy' by halting democratic consolidation. Belarus has accidentally adopted a 'third way' of socialist development, which is different from that of the New Labour or Schroeder's Neue Mitte polices. It means nothing else than an, "old-style attempt to reconcile state ownership and markets, but has no intention to construct a market economy or harden its soft budgets" (Nuti, 1999: 3). This might be a suitable solution in the medium term, but is fraught with inevitable system collapse and further isolation of the country from the global economy and benefits of cooperation with the EU.

Belarus can be described as a command economy without central planning. State enterprises are still dominant, and there is widespread administrative control over outputs of large state enterprises. Prices, exchange rates and subsidised credits and employment are centrally controlled. Its geographical location should have been beneficial, however, instead it appears to be a burden. Belarus is a 'black hole' between its 'westernising'

neighbours, such as Poland, Lithuania and partly Ukraine, and self-styled ambitious Russia on the east. Politically, Belarus is a combination of 'old-style' strong leadership and idealistic endeavours to improve people's life. It can still be described within the best Soviet traditions. Most notorious examples would include nationally organised *subbotniki*, collective street sweeping, monthly reports by the state bureaucracy, public purging of 'clumsy' bureaucrats by the president, a well paid KGB and militia staff, and public parades. There are also presidential directives that have precedence over the constitutional law; media censorship, collective responsibilities of government officials for harvesting, organised elections and obligatory public sports events.

In addition, Belarus' relations with the European Union and the USA have increasingly faltered. Negotiations over Belarus' application for full membership of the Council of Europe were delayed following concerns over the conduct of the parliamentary elections in 1995. In January 1997, subsequent to the referendum on changes to the Constitution and the extension of Lukashenko's term in office by two years, Belarus' 'Special Guest' status in the Council of Europe was suspended, and international dialogue was ceased. Further expansion of the European Union eastwards, and the encapsulation of Poland, and the Baltic States, as well as the Ukraine's application for a membership in NATO may eventually draw a modern 'iron curtain' with Belarus becoming a buffer between Russia and the West.

As a small transient polity, Belarus is facing an inevitable dilemma of striking a partnership for the purpose of further development. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, Belarus' choice is structurally biased towards Russia, which allows her pursuing an

incremental strategy of reform at a relatively low cost. Inclusion of the western 'vector' in Belarus' foreign policy-making seems to be a remote perspective, as it will require radical re-consideration of its relations with Russia, and a policy of multiple compromises on Belarus' side, which the incumbent leadership is not prepared to undertake.

Hence, it seems that Belarus, as any other transient economy, is able to pursue existing opportunities to the extent that the structurally constrained environment permits. It is nevertheless believed that incremental and consistent policy-making by the agency has the advantage of formulating a more successful strategy to undertake a partial transformation of the structured context.

3.1. Structural analysis of Belarus' political history

3.1.1 The road to independence

In this section the impact of cleavages, and cultural and structural legacies[72] including the continuity of power by vested interests and their manipulation of the weak state, will be viewed from a historical perspective. A brief disclosure of Belarus' history will be advantageous to the strategy outlined in Chapter 2, which allows establishing 'forward'

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[72] The economic factor as part of the structure inherited from the 'Soviet' past has been analysed in Chapter 1 to underline the degree of dependency of Belarus on Russian policy-making, and its low credibility on the international arena.

and 'backward' linkages in order to understand the modality of transition and reasons for parties' decline.

Belarus formally declared independence from the Soviet Union on the 25 August 1991 and became for only the second time in its history (a short-lived National Republic having been established in 1918), an independent sovereign state. However, her independent path to democracy appeared to be a long and unsuccessful *detour*. It is a common assumption that Belarus' post-communist party politics did not have enough structural, cultural or institutional incentives for democratic advancement. Some scholars suggest that national conflict divisions were subtle and hence, failed to produce a viable background for the formation of the cleavage system and party competition based upon them. Due to traditional tolerance, popular conservatism and leftover legacies, mass political mobilisation was minimal, and representation has easily acquired a delegated form of governance-by-decree reinforcing traditions of a strong leadership (Furman, et al, 1998; Marples, 1999; Lubachko, 1971; Szporluk, R, 1979, etc.).

The aim of this research is to examine the course of party system formation from a structural perspective. The provisional hypothesis is that Belarus' political development was subject to a complex interaction of factors, in which the structural fabric played a determinant, but not a solely role in de-fostering democratisation. Equally causative have been populist and self-profiteering elite decision-making, and institutional arrangements introduced in the course of transition.

Unlike other newly emerged states, Belarus had a limited pre-authoritarian experience, which did not aid the development of institutional and participatory skills for independent existence and democratic policy-making. In addition, authoritarian legacies of a Moscow centred system, inactive civil society, mixed population demographics, a lack of natural resources, and a strategic geopolitical position pre-determined Belarus' role *within* the operation of the CIS. Nevertheless, the resources and incentives in Belarus to stimulate an independent and democratic path of development did exist; and comparative analysis suggests evidence of the concealed power of political/social conflicts that could have predisposed the emergence of opposition forces and mass mobilisation[73]. Paradoxically, neither the conflicts, nor elite bargaining inspired political forces to follow the path of democratisation. This analysis will demonstrate that despite existing cleavage structures and initial institutional incentives (semi-parliamentary regime), the process of building democracy has taken an alternative route.

At the beginning of the 20th century the centre-periphery divide in Belarus was associated with nationalist calls for independence and sovereignty and had dominated the pre-totalitarian ensemble of political conflicts. Other conflicts became 'subordinate' in their salience, spreading along the 'nation-building' line as the central axis of party competition. Independent nationalist movements formally started in 1902 with the emergence of the Belarusian Revolutionary Hramada, which was subsequently renamed as the Belarusian Socialist Hramada in 1903. Apparently, the idea of nationhood had become dominant long before the beginning of the century with the emergence of mass nationalist

[73] See Korosteleva, E.A. (1998a) *Political Cleavages and Voting Behaviour in Belarus 1991-1998: an Evaluation of the "Freezing Hypothesis"*, unpublished MA thesis. Manchester: Manchester University.

movements such as 'Land and Freedom' and 'Talk'. The Belarusian Socialist Hramada, though, was the first exclusively Belarusian party, with a definite programme and a clear nationalist stance. In alliance with the communists (to secure national statehood) it mobilised most of the population of Belarus, of which 74,6% considered themselves Belarusians (Guthier, 1977). During the Revolution period other nationalist political parties and organisations emerged like the Belarusian People's Hramada, the Belarusian Autonomous Union, and the Christian Democratic Union.

The *interwar* conflict in Belarus covered two major periods: pre-Soviet Belarus (including a year of independence), and West-versus-East Belarus (1919-1939). After Belarus' partition between Poland (Western part) and Russia (Eastern part) in 1921 (Brest-Litovsk Treaty) and the formation of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922, the politics of both parts of the nation diverged geographically rather than ideologically. In the *eastern* part of Belarus (BSSR) the New Economic Policy of the 1920s rendered concessions to a national revival, known as 'Belorussification'. For example, the extent of the official use of the Belarusian language by the early 1927 was almost 100% amidst the legislature and most of the executive, and 30-50% among other commissariats (Lubachko, 1972: 85). 81% of the population recognised Belarusian as their native and official language. With Stalin's succession to power, a purge of Belarusian National-Democrats was organised, and by 1937 "Belarusians comprised only 15% of the professional staff of the higher educational institutions of BSSR" (Ibid: 111).

In 1922 the Belarusian Peasants' and Workers' Association, a popular peasant movement representing the *western* part of Belarus under the Polish government, was founded: It

held 11 seats in the lower House and 3 in the upper (Zaprudnik, 1993: 238). It was the largest political party with an anti-Soviet and pro-Belarusian ideological background at that time. Its nationalist stance deepened later with the repression of national minorities in Poland. The second largest political party was the Belarusian Christian Democratic Party (BCD): its adherents were almost exclusively Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Belarusians. The official programme of the party nevertheless was based on the principle of unification of Belarusian lands and of recognition of its independence.

It is important to note that Belarusians were the least urbanised national group within its ethnic area: in 1913 86% of the population lived in the countryside. The urbanisation factor appeared to have played a significant role in Russification of the nation. By 1939 25% of the population became urbanised, being dominated by the spreading influence of Russia. The relation between occupation/social status and nationality may be regarded as a signpost in these conflicts. For example, in 1897 "fewer than one-fifth of 1% of Belarusians was engaged in professional occupations" (Guthier, 1977: 46). This was due to the low level of literacy and education amongst the population. By 1926 only 15.7% of the Belarusian population was classified as office and professional workers, among them were 8.4% urban Belarusians. With the growth of urbanisation and industrialisation the division between rural/nationalists and urban/workers/socialists reached its height. Guthier (1977: 283) notes, "as Belarusians have entered into an urban and mobilised environment they have displayed a high susceptibility to Russianization... In the Soviet Union urbanisation and Russianization were marching together".

As one can witness, the advent of a multi-party system in post-Soviet Belarus was based on a few profound conflicts, of which the centre-periphery conflict became the most prominent. It was steered by the sense of political inequality and was mainly associated with calls for freedom and autonomy from Moscow on the national level; and on the regional level – with urban/rural frictions between the regions and the Minsk capital. Paradoxically, this configuration of conflicts remained relatively intact until the time of *perestroika,* and the post-authoritarian period became tinged by a dilemma between national independence and post-Soviet commonwealth. As Vakar (1956: 125) notes that with Belarus' reunification, since the late 1930s Belarusian partisan loyalties were divided between communism and nationalism as the dominant cleavage. This constellation of conflicts consequently developed into a left-right linear spectrum of party alternatives in the early days of democratisation, with the communists/socialists, who were generally pro-union, on the left, and the nationalists, liberalists and democrats, who were West-oriented, on the right of the national spectrum. What is more extraordinary is that these '*perestroika*' conflicts had persisted relatively unchanged until 1994, when the presidential period began in the country.

After the collapse of socialism in the early 1990s, a new era of mass democratic movement began with the establishment of the Belarusian Popular Front movement (BNF), and was inspired by examples of victorious Popular Fronts in the Baltic countries and in Poland (Silitski, 2000). Unlike its neighbours, Belarus was considerably less powerful in mobilising mass public support for an opposition based on the demands of independence and revival of national culture and language. The nationalist movement was initiated by a small group of Minsk-based Belarusian intelligentsia. Perhaps the politics of

'Bohemian' intelligentsia would have found more appreciation among the general population if it had not been extreme radicalism of some of its leaders with Zenon Pozniak at the helm. Valentina Tregibovich, the former member of BNF Soim (high council), in her interview commented on party failure at the 1995 elections:

> There was no comprehensible programme for electors. We were obsessed by the national idea without realising that the average voter was not ready for it. When we came to the second round of elections, the majority of the population did not understand our extreme and passionate calls for independence, and obliteration of the soviet past. We were strangers to the people. We were not ready to agitate, as we did not know what to say in the end (Tregubovich, from interview, March, 1999).

The national movement started with the emergence of informal youth organisations in the republic in the late 1980s, which preceded the 1988 mass open protest on the Day of Remembrance for the victims of Stalin's genocide[74] in Kuropati. This was a topical theme in post-Soviet times and brought immediate popularity to the BNF. In addition, BNF based its nationalist rhetoric on a broader basis and included such issues as implications of the Chernobyl' disaster, and persecution of the officials-in-charge in the aftermath of the disaster. In opposition to other post-soviet states, Belarus was the only republic that

[74] Among them the most well-known were the following: the Talaka club, emphasising Belarus's socio-political and national uniqueness; the Spadchyna (Heritage) club, concerned with artistic problems of national culture and history; the Krynichka (Springwell) club, advocating for national revival; Switanak (Dawn) Association, concerned with ecological problems and national uniqueness; Suchasnik (Contemporary) Club and the Minskaya Alternativa (Minsk Alternative), characterised by extreme right views and high level of politicisation (Zaprudnik, 1989: 41).

remained relatively prosperous, stable and homogeneous, despite the gradual deterioration of its economy, and continuing political turmoil. Hence, newly emerged parties found it uneasy to include issues of market liberalisation and state building in their manifestos, as the people did not feel this urge as in the CEECs at that time.

BNF successfully promoted some democratic-orientated independent candidates for the USSR parliamentary elections in 1989 and for Belarusian elections in 1990, wherever it failed to nominate its own candidates. Having elected only 25 MPs in the 360-strong Belarusian Supreme Soviet[75], BNF nevertheless fostered the organisation of the Democratic Club, comprising more than 100 'soft-line' MPs. Still 'old-fashioned' in the majority, the parliament had to make certain concessions to the democrats who were increasingly supported by the population. This included the election of Stanislav Shushkevich (a university professor, promoted by the BNF in its election campaign) as the first deputy Chairman of the Parliament, and the agreement to adopt the Declaration of State Sovereignty in July 1990. The Club supported many incumbent politicians, including Alexander Lukashenko himself, today - the acting president of the country. A part of the democratic opposition united into a new party, the Social-Democratic Assembly and established a faction of the 'brave twelve' in parliament. Despite the fact that the democratic wing of the parliament comprised only 28% of members of the 1990-parliament, it held the initiative for change. As Furman et al. (1998: 112) state, "they were style gurus for the rest of the parliament". The appearance of democrats and their growing influence in parliament is an example of a 'forward' linkage in Elster's et

[75] See Appendix 2 for details on results of parliamentary elections. Additional information can be obtained from Zaprudnik (1993) *Belarus: at a Crossroads in History*. Chapter 6. Boulder: Westview Press.

al terms (1998), which only was made possible through the existing conflicts and nuances of the post-*perestroika* structures.

The political showdown that followed the August 1991 events (coup d'état in Moscow) resulted in suspension of the Communist party, appointment of Shushkevich as a speaker of parliament, restoration of national symbols, and proclamation of Belarus' independence. The opposition took the initiative in these changes but failed to decisively push the old nomenklatura out of power. The latter retreated from the party cabinets to the institutions of the executive power, and largely infiltrated the Council of Ministers as the top decision-making body in the country. Together with parliamentary supporters, 'hard-liners' formed the Party of Power headed by the Prime Minister Viacheslav Kebich. This nomenklatura's motion might be noted as a 'backward' linkage, when structures determined the choice of the agency, and triggered a new effect of structuration, such as realisation of the idea of the presidency, non-alteration of the national electoral code, and re-allocation of state resources in such ways that national privatisation cannot be possible outside the system of clienteles.

Like other post-communist states, Belarus did not avoid the extraordinary party proliferation at the beginning of the 1990s[76]. In November 1990 the liberal United Democratic Party (OGP) emerged on the basis of a parliamentary faction of like-minded deputies, and Alexander Dobrovol'skii, a prominent opposition politician, became its leader. In 1991 the liberal farmers' party, the Belarusian Peasant Party emerged, but

[76] Parties and interest groups' proliferation is another vivid example of 'forward' linkages, characteristic of all new regimes.

'died' soon after the 1996-7 political reshuffles. The existence of the Social Democratic Assembly in the 1990-parliament inspired many smaller right nationalist democratic and liberal movements in Belarus. In June and July 1991 the radical National Democratic Party of Belarus was registered; and the Belarusian Christian-Democratic Union held its first congress. At the end of 1991 a group of pro-Russian and market oriented intellectuals organised a movement called Democratic Belarus, and registered accordingly in 1992. Subsequently, part of its support united with the United Civic Party, and another part launched a sister-branch to the Russian party 'Yabloko'. In total, the years 1991 and 1992 were prolific for the emergence of many alternative and influential party and non-governmental organisations that gave a solid basis for the settlement of contemporary opposition. Smaller but no less important parties should also be mentioned such as the People's Accord, which was led by Gennadz Karpenko (deceased). Another pro-Russian patriotic oppositional party was Slavic Union 'White Russia', which was established in 1992 with the major goal of achieving a union of Slavic nations. The People's Movement (NDB) united both communists and pan-slavists, and was analogous to the red-brown bloc in Russia. Sergei Gaidukevich headed the centre-left Liberal Democratic movement, which later became a mirror organisation of the LDPR in Russia. The leadership of PCB and LDPB played a significant role in discharging the moderate democrat Shushkevich from his position of parliamentary Speaker. By 1992 the Agrarian Party had registered its leader Semion Sharetskii. On the left of the spectrum the Communist successor party was named as the Communist Party Belarusskaya (of Belarus). It was rejoined in 1993-1994 by a group of some smaller satellite parties of socialist orientation: Belarusian Labour Party, Party of Labour and Justice, Socialist Party, Republican Party, Party of All-Belarusian Unity and Consensus.

As one can witness, the existing structural divisions made their impact on the formation of the opposition politics, as 'forward' and 'backward' linkages took place. There may even be an impression that by 1992 Belarus' political spectrum had finally moulded, and public interests found representation through various parties, along the linear cleavage line – from anti-reform socialist on the left to liberalist nationalist on the right. This, however, was not the case. In the early days of democratisation Belarus seemed to have had a choice of political parties, but not the effective political players to alter the course of the game. The inherited soviet institutional environment did not support the politics of developing opposition[77]. The parliament was still dominated by the communists, the government and regional executives were represented by the old style nomenklatura, no laws were passed or economic actions were taken to reinforce democracy, and finally, no serious coalition actions were made to secure a democratic alliance in parliament. A combination of a structurally constrained environment and incapacity of democratic forces to sustain the balance of power had a dual effect on the course of democratisation. If one compares Belarus with its ex-Soviet neighbours, Russia and Ukraine, it becomes obvious that parties did not have distinct policies, or

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[77] There have been no reforms undertaken in regard to regional legislature-executive powers. The structure of local 'Soviets' was adapted to the needs of the 'new' system. In addition, from 1996 the heads of all-level regional executive committees were appointed by the president [Art. 85]. This phenomenon was subsequently named as the 'presidential vertical'. Reformist political parties have limited influence in regions, which provides elected MPs in local councils with pro-communist, and often pro-Lukashenko's majority. Local deputies appoint executive committees headed by Lukashenko's nominees. As a result, contemporary power distribution in regions exerts well-structured control over decision-making by president and 'old-style' nomenklatura.

profiles, individual or ideological platforms or recognisable party leaders – anything that could have helped them entrench in people's minds during the first years of democratisation. As Furman et al. put it adroitly:

> ...if in Belarus there were real opponents of communism in power, like in Russia and Ukraine, both camps could have accumulated various means of battling each other. In contrast, in Belarus there was 'nobody' in power, and mass protest has taken a different shape (Furman et al., 1998:124).

The structuring effect of cleavages, especially the 'centre-periphery' one[78], has not been fully sufficient for the decisive formation and sustainability of the opposition. In addition, the impact of formal institutional settings, legacies and 'old-style' decision-making also had implications for the protracted course of events.

The opposition led by the BNF failed to account for the national specificity of the Belarusians, of which tolerance and discretion were the principal features. Furman et al. (1998: 115) argue that 'the principal paradox of Belarusian nationalists was that they wanted to be 'the same as others' or at least 'not worse than others', like the Baltic nations, or Poles. However, if the latter were raised on a crystallised national consciousness and memories of a democratic past and they fought for a pre- existing

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[78] The 'centre-periphery' cleavage encompasses many issues, of which union with Russia versus Belarus' sovereignty is the primary. It also includes a cultural-political division between Minsk and the regions, and urban areas versus periphery. This cleavage proved to have a structuring effect on the formation of public attitudes and choices of political candidates.

independence, for the Belarusians it was a struggle for the unknown –the idea of nationhood and the reality of a nation state. If the idea was captivating, the reality was disenchanting, as it was connected to the Slavic past and a notion of the 'great Soviet people', as well as interwoven family ties, cultural heritage, memories of the Second World war, and a collective survival of Stalin's repression. Unlike Ukraine or Poland, where a strategic compromise between parts of the nationalist opposition and the nomenklatura took place to ensure the viability of reforms and national independence, Belarusian politics of the period was characterized by a confrontation between the Party of Power (the government and its allies in parliament), and the BNF-led opposition, which was radical minority. The BNF, having limited chances to base its policies on historical memories or national consciousness, had to conceptualise their own idea of Belarus' history, and promote aggressive images of imperialist Russia. The BNF leader, Zenon Pozniak had followed this principle when structuring his organisation. The party had an inviting democratic façade, but appeared to have a hierarchical and highly centralised structure with leadership having the sole prerogative of decision-making.

BNF radicalism and incongruent attempts of other democratically minded MPs could not resist the pressure of the old-guard elite. Their dialogues in parliament were conflict-ridden and frequently resulted in impasse. As a consequence, the BNF chose an "all-or-nothing" strategy and started campaigning for a referendum on the dissolution of the Parliament in December 1991. About 440 thousand signatures were collected in favour of the motion within three months. Using technicalities, the government and the parliamentary majority postponed discussion of the issue until the autumn of 1992, and then refused to authorise the vote on the ground of violation of signature collection

procedures[79]. The failure of the referendum proved that the BNF had not yet accumulated sufficient resources to unilaterally counterweight the Party of Power. Self-destructing strategies of some democratically minded MPs, lies and frauds and internal conflicts led them to the eventual failure to publicly demonstrate their ability of gaining power. The government outplayed the opposition by striking a sort of social contract with the public, having kept abundant cheap food as a means of securing compliance with authority.[80]

After the failure of the democrats with the referendum campaign their fragile unity fatefully fractured. The democratic forces also hoped to find support from their protégé in the legislature, Stanislav Shushkevich – the Parliament Speaker, who on the contrary, after gaining power had chosen to collaborate with the incumbent government. Speaking in favour of reforms, he lacked an institutional capacity (and the political will) to ensure their implementation, pursuing instead fruitless efforts to find "accord" among increasingly antagonistic factions in parliament. To some extent his position, cautious and ambivalent, reflected his status as a democratic speaker in a conservative parliament. Nevertheless, many democrats considered his behaviour as betrayal, and the whole campaign as a failure of democracy.

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[79] This is additional evidence of the effective impact of 'forward' and 'backward' linkages: Opposition failed to unite and decisively resist nomenklatura's advancement - 'forward linkage'. Ideologically it was not prepared to use public opinion to its advantage, which gave strategical precedence to the Party of Power - 'backward linkage'.

[80] Public support for the referendum was dramatically low. If according to the sociological service of the Council of Ministers, 42% were ready to vote in favour of dissolution of Parliament in February, 1992, and 34% against; their numbers swapped places by March and became accordingly 32% and 38%, in «Smenit' Rukovodstvo Netrudno...» *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, 3 April 1992, 1.

The rejection of the referendum petition gave an incentive to a hard-line reaction on behalf of the Party of Power. Within a few months, an independent TV-station was closed, privatisation was suspended, and a ban of the Communist Party was lifted. These actions freed previously suppressed pro-Communist support. The Party of Communists of Belarus (PCB) quickly restored its regional organisations with help from loyal supporters, and became the largest political party in the country. Finally, in March 1993 Kebich suggested that Belarus should create an economic union with other CIS states and abandon its neutral status in favour of joining the CIS military alliance. The motion to join the CIS collective security treaty was sharply opposed by Shushkevich, who again became an opponent of the pro-government majority. This generated a tension that grew into confrontation between the parliamentary speaker and the Prime Minister. The battle was over in January 1994 with the Party of Power seemingly taking the lead[81], as the Speaker was removed from the office and replaced by compliant and politically 'faceless' Miacheslav Gryb. This is where decision-making and new institutional arrangements come to the fore, entailing a number of consequences that have fatally altered the course of democratisation in the country.

3.1.2 Lukashenko's rise to power

There was a growing confrontation and inevitable stalemate between the democratic opposition and an increasingly re-active government. Worsening economic conditions led to a rise of apathy and disaffection of the population in representation of their

[81] This is an additional example of the 'forward' linkage, when 'Soviet' structures empowered the agency, i.e. the Party of Power, to make the right strategic choice in a selective environment.

interests by political players, and neither democrats, nationalists, nor the Party of Power and communists enjoyed much public support. The situation of fragmentation of political forces and increasing distrust and alienation of the population created a remarkable opportunity for the rise of a 'new type' politician, namely Alexander Lukashenko[82].

Lukashenko was young and eager to use power to his advantage, which was a symbol of unruly freedom and unlimited resources within the former USSR. At the same time, he was a layman who initially wanted better prospects for his people. He has subsequently been one of the most controversial maverick figures in contemporary politics of Eastern Europe. He is known for his sympathy to Russia, 'common-sense' strategy to unite with Russia, and open nostalgia for the Soviet times. Ready to surrender his country's economic independence, he nevertheless, is willing to 'play it back' politically, as a future president of the Belarus-Russia Confederation. His first years in politics were marked by an uncompromising fight with the old-fashioned nomenklatura, which later became his most loyal ally in the formation of the system of patronage[83]. He criticised democrats for their inability to address economic and social problems, and never had his

[82] This is the best example that provides evidence to a 'forward' linkage, i.e. a structural opportunity for a Lukashenko-type politician to rise, favoured by disappointed electors, underestimated by powerful nomenklatura, and supported by democratic forces as a 'less of two evils' candidate. Simultaneously it shows that nomenklatura failed to control a changing environment, and to account for new developments in structures – 'backward' linkage.

[83] Alexander Lukashenko formed a system of executive control – 'vertical' – over the process of decision-making at regional levels. This, in combination with the unaltered regional structures, and the conservative majority on the periphery, gives overwhelming support to the president.

own programme for surviving the economic crisis. In the early 1990s Lukashenko even advocated the introduction of "a state of economic emergency," warning the public about the imminent advance of nomenklatura's dictatorship.[84] He contributed to a split within the Party of Communists by participating in the formation of the faction "Communists of Belarus for Democracy" in the 1990 Parliament (Silitski, 2000). In the mid-1990s he became known as the most notorious opponent of party politics, considering it as an ineffective and destructing means of seeking power.

In 1991 after the August coup *d'état* in Russia, he joined the conservative majority in parliament, and supported the policy of his initial opponent, Viacheslav Kebich – nomenklatura's mighty. In the summer of 1993, he visited Moscow to demonstrate his adherence to the anti-Yeltsin opposition in the Russian Parliament. A few months later, Lukashenko addressed the People's Movement of Belarus, an umbrella organisation of Communists and allied groupings, with the call to fight for the restoration of the USSR. His political fortunes grew from his remarkable skills of manoeuvring, as well as from the mistakes of his opponents. They underestimated him as a political player; and overlooked his talent to speak as the voice of the common man. Subsequently, on the 1st of July 1994 Lukashenko was elected by 80% of the vote as the first president of Belarus[85].

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[84] Alexander Lukashenko, «*Diktatura: Belorusskij Variant*?» Reprinted in *Adkrytae Hramadstva*, no. 1/6 (1999), 37-40.

[85] See for reference, the site of world election results at http://www.agora.it/elections/election/belarus.htm, retrieved June 2001; http://jurix.jura.uni-sb.de/~serko/law_pol/politics.html retrieved June 2001; Election Watch, Volume 5(1994) – *Journal of Democracy*: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/joural_of_democracy/election_watch/v005, retrieved June 2001.

As Furman et al. (1998:126) suggest, there were two components that helped Lukashenko to win the presidential election. First, in public perception he was the only one who voted against the dissolution of the USSR, supported the integration with Russia, and who was against the introduction of 'wild capitalism' and the BNF nationalism in Belarus. Second, Lukashenko was a representative of a new generation of politicians: young, charismatic and partisan free. He was born to a poor family, and therefore, his succession to power made him a symbol of the new time. Being 'a common man', he was elected to serve the interests of common people in Belarus. His image and strategies in 1994 were even somewhat close to that of Timinskii in Poland in 1990, Zhyrinovskii in 1993-4 and Lebed' in 1996 in Russia. The fact that Lukashenko, an unknown and single candidate, managed to defeat articulated forces of both the democratic opposition and authorities, embodies the essence of the politics of Belarus: populist, new, and party-free[86].

Silitski (2000) suggests that the self-defeating strategies of Lukashenko's major opponents also contributed to his victory. Both opposition candidates, Pozniak and Shushkevich, underestimated their own chances to win elections without finding new

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[86] A 'forward' linkage demonstrates a strategic selectivity of structures. For example, it is useful to note that Lukashenko's strategy was similar to that of his opponent Kebich – the most powerful voice of nomenklatura. While rallying for presidential power he publicly promised to imprison Kebich for his corruption and betrayal of the national interests. The moment Lukashenko came to power, he offered him a position of a Parliamentary Speaker, and surrounded himself with the members of Kebich's nomenklatura and advisory team. They both did not have any feasible political doctrine, both were political chameleons and both were allegedly Moscow protégés. Age was the main difference in electoral appeal between the two candidates: Lukashenko, the younger, was also shrewder and more competitive.

allies among the voters or within elites. They failed to address the most important issues of the election campaign – a balanced freedom, free of nationalism at one extreme, and economic dependence at another. BNF became more militant in its nationalism. As Silitski (2000) notes the non-BNF democrats have frequently been accused by Zenon Pozniak of being Moscow puppets. The fact that BNF attempted to imitate victorious Popular Fronts of the Baltic States in a country with a weak sense of national identity, restricted their electoral support to ethnically conscious voters – the demonstrative impact of a 'backward' linkage that 'put' the initiative of democrats into an environment of subdued nationalism.

Linz and Stepan (1996: 17) argue that national revival is an important dimension of democratisation in as far as it provides a basis for consolidation of the state, without which 'no modern democracy is possible'. In a country with broken national traditions, like Belarus, the approach to forging the idea of nationhood, and a revival of culture and language by parties must be moderate, appealing and broad. The radical and uncompromising demands of the nationalists moved them away from the mass voter. Equally inefficient was the presidential campaign of Shushkevich, the former Speaker of Parliament. He and his campaigners counted on his prior popularity and sought to regain it. However, as Silitski (2000) comments, Shushkevich's election platform was extremely narrowly focused and consisted of a lengthy lecture on economic and political reforms that appealed only to highly educated constituents in cities, and primarily in Minsk. Vladimir Novikov, a communist candidate, was another captivating figure, but his campaign could not offer anything better than the camouflaged retreat to the USSR and socialist economy, of which doctrine he was rather vague. Finally, hopes on Kebich and his Party of Power

were promising, but groundless even with the support of Russia. The latter provided support to Kebich by extending cheap credits and selling fuel at discount prices,[87] which was far from being enough to save his 'colourless one-issue campaign' (Silitski, 2000).

Lukashenko's campaign, in opposition, was more efficient, and multi-dimensional. His pledges included eradication of corruption, bringing down inflation, and development of closer ties with Russia and other CIS states, i.e., the issues of foremost concern for the majority of voters, some of which were overlooked by the opposition for the reason of maintaining the ideological purity of their platforms. Capitalising on the growing antagonism between the Party of Power and the opposition, he placed himself as a centrist "wisely opposing the extremes of irresponsible partisanship" (Silitski, 2000). He blamed the failure and chaos in the country on the selfish and irresponsible elite in power. He drew a clear line between himself, as a moderate progressive, and those who were in power or seeking power at that time:

> Why is our life what it is? It is because politicians who represent themselves or their parties had always lied to the people. They broke down the Soviet Union under slogans of unity and economic integration. They announced reforms and robbed the country. They promised prosperity in the market paradise and reduced the people to misery (A. Lukashenko, «Otvesti Narod ot Propasti,» *Narodnaja Hazeta,* 14 June 1994, 2).

[87] Alexander Starikevich, «Sensacionnyj Rezultat Vyborov v Belorussii,» *Izvestia*, 26 June 1994, 1.

3.1.3 Aftermath of the new presidency: 1996-2000

The New Constitution of the Republic of Belarus was adopted on March 15th, 1994, and was designed to support a 'strong presidency' at the initiative of the Party of Power, which sought to prolong its political life by electing Kebich as President. The majority of MPs, who later became members of the Belarusian opposition, nevertheless supported the decision to endorse unlimited authority in the future president. Miacheslav Gryb, Petr Kravchenko, Victor Gonchar and others claimed that the country would be washed over by chaos and economic demise unless a strong presidency was introduced. Interestingly, the 'new democratic generation' in parliament thought so as well, and was hoping to benefit from the introduction of a presidency[88].

Members of parliament failed to envisage the threat that the new Constitution in its support of a strong presidency, may inflict on a weak state, torn apart by nomenklatura's interests. Silitski (2000) comments that apart from institutional and structural deficiencies, the country did not have lasting traditions of civil society and local government. Regional authorities were politically and financially weak, and confined to central power. Since there was only one centralised state TV broadcasting station, one Central Radio station, one state publishing house, and one State Committee on the Press (SCP)[89], all campaigns through the mass media channels were heavily censored. In

[88] A 'backward' linkage puts MPs' initiative in a traditionalist framework of individual governance, and demonstrates both institutional and structural effect on the process of decision-making.

[89] It has been the sole agency in Belarus for registration of mass media. It has also been empowered to monitor the media and issue written warnings if the Press Law is violated. It can also suspend a media

addition, the President was granted by the 1994 Constitution the right to appoint middle-rank judges and to hire and fire ministers, except for the Prime Minister and his deputies, which meant that a system of personal authority began to coalesce even before the 1996 referendum.

Lukashenko's arrival in power sharpened the political situation. He immediately put himself into conflict with parliament, whose dissolution he might have wished for, nevertheless, at that time was inappropriate. Parliament suggested the introduction of an electoral system similar to that in Russia (mixed plurality with PR to correct the proportion of parties in parliament), that Lukashenko strongly opposed. He in turn issued a special decree about 'The provision of equal opportunities for citizens during preparation and election campaigns of MPs', which in reality limited opportunities for campaigners to canvass. The president also decided to initiate a referendum on the day of the parliamentary elections. This action put an end to a promising start of economic and political reforms, and incidentally granted the president power to follow the course of painless 'inaction' rather than radical reforms. The referendum was centred on the four principal questions: giving the President the right to dissolve the Parliament, approving closer ties with Russia, introducing Russian as the second state language, and replacing the post-independence national symbols with Soviet-era ones. These questions allowed agitation of the pro-Russian and pro-Communist vote in the elections into the

outlet for up to three months for any violation of the Press Law. If a media outlet receives more than on warning in a year for violation of Article 5, the SCP or a prosecutor can initiate its closure through the courts. Provided that the SCP is mainly composed of Lukashenko's appointees, headed by Vladimir Zametalin in 1997-8, the impartiality of its decisions may be questioned.

13th convocation of the Supreme Soviet, whose date coincided with the referendum. Positive answers on all four questions guaranteed another victory for Lukashenko over the developing party system and democratic representation. As a result, and despite high activity of the factions in parliament, political coalitions were non-existent. The BNF formed an alliance with four less known nationalist parties. The liberals attempted to form a bloc called "Civil Accord" that would unite the United Democratic Party, Party of People's Accord, and the Civil Party, which were labelled by Pozniak as the 'agents of Moscow' in Belarus. The Civil Accord, however, was never formed, and candidates from three parties ran against each other as well as against the candidates from the BNF-supported bloc. As a result, BNF and United Democrats failed to elect a single MP, whereas the Social Democrats elected just one. Unlike the democrats, the Communists and their allies (the Agrarian Party) managed to unite and through that gained about 50 seats in the new Parliament. As Silitski (2000) states, "the 13th Supreme Soviet appeared to be even more pro-Communist and reactionary than its predecessor". Election outcomes were in accord with the unsuccessful efforts of democratic forces. 27 Communists and 30 Agrarians, 5 representatives of the Party of People's Accord, and 1 Social Democrat –in total 119 out 260 entered the 1995 Parliament[90]. There were not enough MPs to activate parliament, and Lukashenko proposed to have a second election run-off in November and threatened that if unsuccessful, he would introduce direct presidential rule.

[90] See Appendix 2 for details. Otherwise, consult the site of world election results at http://www.agora.it/elections/election/belarus.htm, retrieved June 2001.

In spite of the obstruction by the president, the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation was elected. New trends were noticed during the second run-off period. A new political party, the United Civil Party, was created through the merger of the United Civic Party (OGP) and the Civic Action (GD). Furthermore, BNF and OGP agreed to combine efforts in campaigning for their joint candidates. As a result, they won a majority of constituencies in the by-elections in Minsk. Success of the opposition in the second election run-off helped to balance uneven forces in the pro-communist parliament, and drew them closer together[91]. The organisation of factions began in the new Supreme Soviet. 44 Communist MPs united into one group. The Agrarian faction comprised 48 MPs including 34 members of AP. Pro-democratic Civic Action in turn gathered 18 MPs including non-partisan Stanislav Shushkevich and as many as the faction of the Social Democratic Union, with 12 PNS members, and 2 BSDG. At the beginning of 1996 non-partisan and pro-president oriented MPs formed their own faction 'Zgoda' (Accord), which comprised of 59 pro-Lukashenko supporters[92]. A democratically minded MP and a leader of AP, Semion Sharetskii was elected as a Spokesman of Parliament. The Parliament soon found itself in a disagreement with Lukashenko over his moves to concentrate power in his hands at the expense of the Parliament. Even the communists, however ideologically close they were to Lukashenko's third-way-socialist policies, soon realised a difference in their position. As a consequence, political parties and parliamentary factions from the Communists to the Agrarians, and Civil Action

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[91] This demonstrates a creative impact of the agency on a structurally constrained environment.

[92] See Ygrinovich, K. (1996) *Analiz Politicheskoi Structuri 13-go Verkchovnogo Soveta Respubliki Belarus* [Analysis of Political Structure of the 13th Supreme Soviet], Minsk: NISAPI

moved closer together. Only 60 members of the "Accord" faction and some non-partisan MPs appeared to support Lukashenko in the 1995 legislature. As Silitski (2000) stresses, "across-the-board consolidation allowed the Parliament to bring forward a remarkable opposition to Lukašenka's efforts to establish one-man rule".

Lukashenko, in reply to the growing power of parliament, initiated a second referendum. He proposed the formation of a bicameral legislature that would at best rubber-stamp presidential decrees and the transfer of many parliamentary functions (such as appointment of members of the constitutional court, central election committee, and even of some MPs) to himself. The constitutional amendments, if supported, would have *de-facto* endangered still fragile and unstable institutions of democracy in Belarus. The parliament opposed and offered its version of the law. It included such questions as rejection of extra-budgetary funds, nationalisation of government finances; and introduction of popular elections of the heads of local administrations. A vigilant body of seven major oppositional parties (from PCB to BNF) was organised to control Lukashenko's activity. Victor Gonchar was appointed to be a head of the Central Election Committee responsible for preventing irregularities during the referendum.

The concerted efforts of the opposition and legal support of the Constitutional Court forced Lukashenko to certain concessions. For example, he agreed to reschedule the date of the referendum from November 7th to November 24th, and to include MPs' questions into the referendum ballot. In practice, however, he continued acting above the law and visible consensus. He overruled decisions of the Constitutional Court, put the mass media under tight control, and unilaterally declared a referendum to have legal

power to transfer responsibility for conducting the referendum to local authorities. In violation of the law, voting started two weeks before the due date, which was normally allowed only for itinerant voters on Election Day. Victor Gonchar was expelled from the Election Committee and the opposition lost control of the voting process. The final united action by the opposition was to proclaim impeachment of the acting president Alexander Lukashenko. The case was supported by 70 MPs (about 40% of the parliament) and was passed to the Constitutional Court.

This moment marked mysterious actions and a demonstrative retreat by some 'revolutionary' opponents. First of all, and suddenly, Sharetskii and Karpenko, a deputy speaker of the Supreme Soviet, called the crowd that gathered in front of the parliament in support of impeachment, to disperse and go home peacefully. They claimed that the conflict had subsided and the parliament would be able to negotiate with the president. Then, the Constitutional Court was strangely slow in dealing with impeachment proceedings, allegedly under pressure and blackmail of the presidential office. On November 21st, a high-ranked delegation of Russian leadership, including Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin and speakers of both houses of the Russian Federal Assembly arrived in Minsk to broker a compromise. Naively, part of the opposition hoped that Russian intervention would be a panacea to the situation of chaos and illegality; and that the Russian democratic leadership would not allow the establishment of a super-presidency in Belarus. As Silitski (2000) observes the opposition underestimated the extent, to which the Russian government would be pro-Lukashenko oriented, especially with NATO moving eastwards, against Russia's consent.

The eventual compromise between the president and the opposition foresaw the advisory endorsement of the popular vote (referendum) and its subsequent consideration by the Constitutional Assembly, which was given the mandate of amending the Constitution on the basis of referendum results. It appeared to be, though, that Lukashenko was in control of the 2/3 of the Assembly by having one third of his supporters from parliament and commanding another third by appointment. This Moscow deal forced the opposition to formally 'surrender' their antagonistic position to the president[93]. 87% of electors officially voted in favour of Lukashenko's Constitution, which was signed in to effect on November 27th[94] On November 28th, the parliamentary chamber was shut, the Constitutional Court dismissed, and the House of Representatives composed of 110 members were invited by Lukashenko to commence. This *de-facto* inaugurated a system of personal rule in Belarus behind a democratic facade. The Lower Chamber was composed of 70% of members of the 'Zgoda' faction of the prior parliament; as well as about 50% of the communists and agrarians, and a few percent of members of the Social Democratic Union from the prior parliament[95]. No member of the Civic Action faction entered the new legislature. Anatolii Malofeev, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Belarus during 1990-1991, was appointed Chairman of the new parliament[96]. The 1996 institutional crisis had debilitating consequences for many

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[93] The opposition claimed gross violations in the voting procedure and refused to recognize the results of the vote.

[94] For details see *British Helsinki Committee Report on 1996 Referenda*, at http://www.bhhrg.org/belarus/belarus1997/referendum.htm, retrieved June 2001.

[95] *Parliament: the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus*, Minsk 1997

[96] This symbolises a 'reversal' of prior structures to their 'places', in Elster's (1998: 295) words – example of a 'backward linkage' in action.

parties, including the PCB, which split on Lukashenko's supporters – the Communist Party of Belarus headed by Victor Chikin, and those who remained in opposition to authorities led by Sergei Kaliakin. The former PCB lost about 50% of its membership, and the Agrarian Party ceased to exist. However, as recent evidence suggests the pro-regime party core was revamped by the presidential endorsement in spring 1999. There also was a break within the BNF, which led the party to a split in 2000. Furthermore, many smaller political organisations, i.e. parties, NGOs, and new-wave trade unions quietly disappeared from the Belarus political scene.

The alteration of Belarus' transitional path did not occur merely due to either Lukashenko's excellent skills of manoeuvring or incongruent strategies of his opponents, including ill-prepared opposition, which lacked internal unity, and fought petty wars with each other. At the other end, as 'forward' and 'backward' linkages demonstrated, there were structural factors, such as resourceful opportunities for the old-guard elites, censorship, and public adherence to a strong leadership, that stipulated non-democratic political change. The whole situation had opened up a window of opportunity for the rise of Lukashenko-type politician and formed a paradoxically sustainable regime based on a combination of a strong leadership, and truncated representation of public interests – a delegative type of polyarchy. This presumes unlimited authority of the popularly elected leader, juxtaposed by limited representation and low intensive citizenship (O'Donnell, 1993). Despite its democratic façade, this type of regime may lead to a dictatorship, when not reinforced by functional representative institutions.

The 1997-98 political years were characterised by continuing party decline, and their further disintegration. The new pro-presidential parliament proved to be compliant and non-initiative, living up to Lukashenko's orders and his promises of support for the parliamentary elections in autumn 2000[97]. The opposition have begun the politics of coalition and trust to each other, which spectacularly failed in April 1999 during their campaign for an alternative presidential election. Petty disputes, internal disagreements between the members of the opposition; and profiteering individualism let them down again. As Silitski (2000) notes:

> ...the November 1996 referendum looked as a fair and civilised process compared to the opposition elections in 1999. A well-known leader, Pozniak, who ran as BNF's candidate against Michael Chigir[98], withdrew from the race in the last days before the vote in order to prevent Chigir's rising to political prominence[99] (Silitski, 2000: 27).

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[97] Lukashenko's pledges to 'defend' his loyal deputies were fully fulfilled at the parliamentary elections 2000. The first run-off was passed by the majority of non-partisan candidates, two members of the Communist Party of Belarus, 3 from the Agrarian Party, 1 from Party of People's Accord (PNS) and 1 from Social-Sport Party – all pro-governmental organisations. See Appendix 2 for details. Otherwise, consult http://www.rec.gov.by, retrieved November 2000 (subject to administered access by Belarus' authorities); or http://www.agora.it/elections/election/belarus.htm, retrieved June 2001; or British Helsinki Committee Report on 2000 elections at http://www.bhhrg.org/belarus/belarus%202000/startpage.htm, retrieved June 2001.

[98] Michael Chigir was a former Prime Minister, who was dismissed by Lukashenko for his liberal views.

[99] See: Zenon Pozniak, "Praekt Čyhir," Naviny, 12 March 1999, p.2

Pozniak's behaviour eventually led to a split within the Belarusian Popular Front (BNF) in September 1999. When the majority of the BNF congress disapproved of Pozniak's tactics and did not re-elect him for another term in office, his loyalists attempted to form a new party, which they called the Conservative Christian Party. The United Civil Party, of which Victor Gonchar was a member, was also close to a split over his maverick tactics. With a younger generation of leadership coming to power, party profiles as well as their tactics and popularity are gradually changing for the better. Nevertheless, despite their efforts, today's opposition failed to unify and oppose illegitimate actions of the president. Moreover, in some cases, the opposition seemed better at discrediting themselves than Lukashenko's propaganda.

The population had made their rational choice by supporting the president in hope for short-term benefits. The newly introduced institutional structures moulded the president's authority and public choice. The rest was the matter of cosmetic politics and nurturing of autocratic will. Lukashenko consequently introduced a 'command hierarchy' of his loyal appointees to control authorities at various levels. This helped him curtail developing trends of de-centralisation and regionalism. The fact that regional elections of representative bodies went on without scandalous interference of the opposition proved how well trained the presidential bureaucracy had become. Furthermore, Lukashenko's decree Number 2 on 'Compulsory registration of political parties and non-governmental organisations' passed in January 1999, facilitated further decline of the incipient party system in Belarus.

Always active, trade unions were also wisely curbed on the eve of the parliamentary elections. The leader of traditional trade unions, Nikolai Goncharik, who might have become one of the bright contestants for the presidency in 2001, was forced to a deal with the president. The compromise was motivated by the president's voluntary decision to take a 'holiday-making' privilege away from the unions and appoint a special procedural committee to do it. Furthermore the president had decided to decentralise the method of payment of the unions' membership fees, forcing the unions to collect them individually. Traditionally, 1% of membership fees was debited automatically from workers' wages and hence, was a 'non-painful' procedure for both sides. After a presidential decree, it would become a procedure similar to club membership, when members had to pay individually to the unions' treasurer. It is obvious that in the situation of national impoverishment not many unions' members would have agreed to accept the new deal. Hence, trade unions had to opt for a compromise with the president on the eve of parliamentary elections 2000.

Presidential policy towards the main education institutions in the country is also worthy of mentioning. Knowing that the opposition targets universities as large pools for their potential recruits, especially of the Belarusian State University in Minsk, the president appointed a new rector, Viacheslav Kozulin[100]. He suddenly decided to play by democratic rules and even organised his own election, being the only candidate on the list for nomination within the university.

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[100] Subsequently, Kozulin has received a Ministerial portfolio, parallel to that held by Vasilii Strazhev, the Minister of Education, to control universities' policy-making in the country.

3.1.4 International standpoint and further discussion

Teresa Dumasy (2000) observes that Belarus' position has worsened on the international arena with the introduction of presidency. Over the last few years, the lack of significant economic and commercial interest in Belarus from Western Europe has allowed the European Union to pursue a consistently tough line on democracy and human rights in Belarus. Nevertheless, beyond sporadic periods of dialogue and optimism, this has produced little consistent improvement in relations or in the level of democracy in Belarus. In 1999 hopes for progress were raised when Lukashenko, frustrated by Russia's foot-dragging over the Union, indicated that he wished to improve relations with the West. Rather than heralding a shift in policy however, it soon became clear that this was intended to push Russia into speeding up the process of integration. There was also optimism last September when the Belarusian government agreed to begin preliminary round-table talks with the opposition and non-governmental organisations, mediated by the OSCE[101]. Lukashenko appointed Mikhail Sazonov as his official representative at the talks, which were aimed at establishing agreement on the conditions and procedures for free and fair parliamentary elections in October 2000. These were to include a revised electoral code, access for the opposition to the state media, and determination of the functions of the future parliament. While a set of arrangements was accepted for opposition access to the media on 5 November, before the end of the month they were rejected by Lukashenko and on 7 December, the day before the signing of the Union Treaty with Russia, Sazonov was dismissed. Lukashenko has since decided to abandon

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[101] See OSCE report on the assessment of the electoral code in Belarus: http://www.osce.org/odihr/election/bela00-1-adopted.htm, retrieved June 2001.

OSCE-mediated talks, and proceed with direct dialogue between government and representatives of civil society, including some opposition parties. However, the majority of the opposition parties already refused to participate directly.

Such false moves and about-turns by Lukashenko have instilled scepticism in the West towards the sincerity of Belarus' desire for rapprochement with the EU. In the eyes of some Western commentators, Lukashenko is both unwilling and unable to change. He has identified himself so closely with unification with Russia, and harbours such deep mistrust of the West, that it is impossible for him to redress the balance in foreign policy and to permit an internal move towards a policy based on Western values. Clearly, however, such an attitude leaves little room for dialogue or improving relationships with the West, who adopt a passive policy awaiting a more democratic leadership.

Belarus has survived for over ten years – the longest period in its history – as an independent state. It has often been stressed that the country occupies an important geo-strategic position at the very centre of Eastern Europe. To its northwest and west side are such states as Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania that have clearly taken on economic reforms and developed, albeit with varying degrees of success, as new democracies. To the South and East are countries such as Ukraine, and Russia that have embarked on reforms, but have run into difficulties of both a political and an economic nature. They have not given up the struggle, but are facing questions potentially as serious as those in Belarus today. Belarus is a relatively homogenous republic, and it has a highly educated workforce. Its lack of natural resources might be considered as an impediment but it is

not an insuperable one for a modern state, as the example of Japan has shown. Thus in some respects, Belarus might have significant advantages as a developing nation state.

Belarus is facing serious alternatives, but there is nothing inevitable about the decisions to be made. Either it can take its place as one of the European states that recognizes human rights and a pluralistic political system (as stipulated in the 1994 Constitution), or it can become a political and economic outsider. As such it will remain isolated from its neighbours through adherence to a state-controlled society and economy, with diminishing democratic and human rights, and with all power vested in its president. This latter alternative also entails the increasing impoverishment of its population with potentially devastating social consequences. As David Marples observes:

> ...the western democracies can facilitate change and a path of democratic reform first and foremost by recognizing that whereas the opposition has clung fastidiously to the rules of law set forth in the Constitution, the presidential administration has violated and continues to violate those laws at will (Marples, 2000: 57).

Until western policy, as epitomized by the OSCE and the European Union, acknowledges that international assistance is necessary for the Belarusians to understand what is required of them then there cannot be much hope of progress in any dialogue between the major antagonists in Belarus. Instead Belarusians will continue to experience the demagogic and erratic rule of Alexander Lukashenko, self-proclaimed "Orthodox atheist" and "president for life" (Marples, 2000).

As one has witnessed:

(i) Structural legacies, of which a weak state, fully exploited by nomenklatura, ineffective law, system of patronage, and structural dependence on Russia remain the principal predicaments to party system institutionalisation;

(ii) This has been also reinforced by public traditionalist adherence to a strong leadership, medium nationalist stance, and pining for prior stability, which was usefully deployed by Lukashenko on referenda;

(iii) In addition, existing but subtle political divides, of which centre-periphery, as well as European/Russian identity are primary, – appeared to have both positive and negative effects on the consolidation of the opposition.

Forward and backward linkages have demonstrated that a new regime in Belarus was structurally driven to amalgamate the properties of the socialist state. New developments were bound to occur in a situation dominated by former structures, and pervasive agency, i.e. nomenklatura. The effect of backward linkages can be identified when institutional choice takes place, bringing alterations to existing structures. It will become more evident with a detailed analysis of institutional engineering in Belarus presented in the next section. It will be demonstrated that institutions as well as individuals are the other significant driving forces to affect system settlement and prospects for democratisation.

3.2 Analysis of institutional environment in Belarus

This section will investigate how the institutional environment may jeopardise the development of a newly emerged party political system. Theoretical debate about the impact of presidentialism on the consolidation of parties will precede the analysis of its implications for Belarus. The issues of constitution-making, electoral code, and delegated decision-making in the new state will also be examined. The logical question whether a strong presidency can co-exist with competitive parties, will be at the core of discussion in this section.

Political parties are a necessary component of a democratic polity (Epstein, 1967: 8), and their emergence is fundamental to achieving political stability in the newly emerged democracies. Yet, there is much evidence to suggest that political parties are having trouble establishing themselves as credible institutions in the post-communist regions. Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and other post-Soviet republics are good examples of such behaviour. As Pammett and DeBardeleben (2000: 373) point out "while political parties and other electoral groupings have emerged in abundance, they may not form important reference points for citizens nor fulfil many of the functions commonly attributed to parties in the western literature".

The experience of established democracies suggests that political parties are key institutions linking citizens with a broader political process. They fulfil this function in several ways: by aggregating and representing diverse public interests in the political arena; by orienting voters' choice at elections; and once in power, by affecting a policy-

making process that allows citizens to hold governments accountable for their actions (Ware, 1996; LeDuc and Norris, eds. 1996; Duverger, 1954, 1980; Sartori, 1976, Lawson et al., 1988, etc.). In order for parties to do so, there must not only be the agents' will, but also the appropriate institutional structure, which will allow existence of competition and full representation of interests.

East European transitions to democracy appeared to be more complex than transitional theories could have foreseen. The paradox is that legitimate parties may not necessarily lead to a democratic settlement of the system, and adequately channel public interests within power institutions. Some democracies may have relatively structured parties, which may enjoy stable public support, have recognisable names, an identifiable leadership, and even resources to compete. Nevertheless, the anticipated consolidation or even a tendency towards it, never occurred, as experience of many CIS states reveals[102].

The political situation in Belarus is such that, the party system remains incipient, and legitimate national parties are powerless. This is undoubtedly conditioned by leftover legacies and cultural norms, which provide emerging parties and other interest organisations with already a non-favourable environment for their settlement. This primarily includes weak state, dominated by communist nomenklatura, economic decline, non-transparent bureaucracy, state-owned media, and public historical

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[102] See debate regarding 'incomplete democracies' by Rose and Shin (1998) *Qualities of Incomplete Democracies: Russia, the Czech Republic and Korea compared.* CSPP, 302. Glasgow: Strathclyde University; Rose and Mishler (2000) *Political Support for Incomplete Democracies: Realist versus idealist theories and measures.* CSPP, 333. Glasgow: Strathclyde University.

adherence to a strong leadership. In addition, widespread hostility to the very idea of a political party has been the negative legacy of the past associated with 70 years of single-party rule and lack of any opposition.

However, the institutional background plays no less important role in structuring the opposition and their representation on the political arena. This is to say that there are not only structures, and cultural legacies, but also institutions that determine party system development and national prospects for democracy. The perpetual question here is why legitimate parties cannot surmount their ideological diversity and result in a coherent system – a vital part of democratic institutionalisation. Instead, one witnesses parties' internal weakness and self-seeking politics, which are 'demoralised' even further by the institutional structure within which they operate. As some scholars insist, apart from parties' organisational weakness and lack of experience, a strong presidency and its implications are the other key for protracted system consolidation in third wave democracies. Let us pursue this argument.

Duverger (1954: xxxiii) notes, "the development of parties seems to be bound up with that of democracy, that is to say with the extension of popular suffrage and parliamentary prerogatives". This suggests that parties first, are "a necessary though insufficient condition for consolidating democracy and governing effectively" (Ibid); and secondly, they are also inevitable by-product of democratisation.

The level of party development and performance, hence, must be causally linked to the degree of democratic maturity of the nation. The latter implies 'embedded-ness' of

parties into the societal fabric, and thus some regularity in the patterns of inter-party competition and thus relative predictability of the outcomes of the electoral game. This also suggests that "party organisations are not subordinated to the interests of ambitious leaders; they acquire an independent status and value of their own" (Mainwaring, 1997: 23). As one can see there is a degree of reciprocity between building party system and building democracy. However, the logic of the argument does not entirely reflect the complexities of political transition of the new states. When democratised, new regimes may not necessarily contain stabilised parties or settled constituencies, but nevertheless, acquire some degree of democratic irrevocability[103]. There also may be an opposite tendency when parties may be legitimate and electorally recognised players of the game, which is not necessarily democratic in nature. What is clear is that parties need *institutional incentives* to form a 'habit' of representation amongst the populace, to express their right 'to be heard' and to challenge the government when necessary. This lawful 'habituation' is essential to ensure the irreversibility of the process of democratisation for the country via popular support.

Sartori (1976: 268) defines a structured party system as "a state of the system in which the major parties become 'solid' and more 'real' than the personalities". This definition, however, does not establish the difference between 'structured' parties and a 'structured' party system. Sartori (1994:108) suggests that party systems actually enjoy an inherent bias towards stability, as parties consolidate: "Once electorates had become

[103] This occurred in Russia, and implies a situation of public awareness and expected participation in political life of the country. At least Russian people can expect to be heard and, if disagree, have a right to manifest against regime.

fully mobilised, and once the institutional structures of mass democracy had become consolidated, a crude equilibrium became established; thereafter, and at least to a larger extent, the laws of inertia could take over" (Ibid:108). This may not necessarily be the case, as many new democracies demonstrate, however, what is true, is that the institutional environment that produces an inertia effect, is indeed essential for maintaining stability. Institutions foment the 'quality of democracy' and determine parties' 'freezing into place' (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), with which democratic equilibrium and party system institutionalisation tend to establish.

The issue of strong presidencies amid the institutional structures is of particular importance for the newly emerged democracies, and it assists the answer of why structures or agency are not individually sufficient for the consolidation of a democratic regime.

3.2.1 The impact of a strong presidency on party system formation

Democracy allows different forms of democratic government. It rests on the idea of legitimacy and accountability of the rulers vis-à-vis the ruled. Two basic concepts that underlie the rich variety of institutional patterns of democratic government can be distinguished here. One system aims at expression of the sovereign unitary and homogeneous popular will through the legislative institutions (parliamentary sovereignty). Presidency is another alternative for the expressions of the public will (executive sovereignty). Government systems may range between the two extremes, from the legislature with full power of decision-making to the reverse case where the parliament is a mere addition to the popularly elected (executive) president (Elster et al.

1998: 94-5). It is frequently argued that presidential systems are less stable and therefore particularly perilous for settling democracies that are usually overloaded with economic, social and political problems and inherited legacies of the authoritarian past.

Shugart and Carey (1992) note, in their study of Latin American democracies, that most presidential democracies are characterised by weak and unstable party systems. They argue, for example, that inefficient legislatures, made up of weak parties and egocentric politicians, tend to delegate powers to the president as a way of overcoming immobilism. Shugart also submits that in the case of Eastern Europe where the past legacies provide strong incentives for the communists to remain in power or to re-assert their influence, the presidency would be the optimal solution to meet their demands. This is thought to control the legislature and to act as a brake on potentially unruly or unpredictable parliamentary delegates. Barbara Geddes (1996) argues that the delegation of power to a president may indeed take place, however the legislature in these circumstances tends to have a different rationale. Geddes (Ibid: 29) suggests that this happens because weak and fragmented parties undermine the legislature's ability to develop and by that contribute to the accretion of presidential powers. As evidence shows, strong presidencies have been maintained in those countries, in which the president had the support of the strongest party, or was a popular figure in his own right, and the legislature was relatively weak. On the other hand, Arend Lijphart (1996) argues a strong presidency may also be a response to uncertainty and crisis, as an attempt to bring stability and reassurance. In any event, a critical debate about the merits and liabilities of presidentialism and its consequences for new democracies has become

widespread. This necessarily highlights the impact of institutional settings and constitution making on party system formation.

Juan Linz (1994), the main opponent of presidentialism as a suitable form for a sustainable democracy, defines it as a regime in which, the president is a popularly elected[104] chief executive with a fixed term in office. Under 'pure' presidentialism, the president also possesses the right to appoint ministers regardless of the composition of the congress. Linz believes that a presidential regime has more vices than virtues for the advancement of a new democracy. 'Dual democratic legitimacy' and 'rigidity' of the system are regarded as the principal 'perils' of presidentialism that may endanger the prospects for stability of a new democracy, and undoubtedly inhibit party system development.

Przeworski (1996: 49) notes, "parliamentary systems in the poorest countries, while still fragile, are almost twice as likely to survive as presidential democracies". Linz (1994) grounds his analysis on a historical overview of newly established democratic regimes, and concludes that presidential systems are potentially fated *not* to develop into a stable and flourishing democracy.

First, since both the president and the assembly have competing claims to legitimacy, and both, "...derive their power from the vote of the people in a free competition among well-defined alternatives, a conflict is always latent and sometimes likely to erupt dramatically; there is no democratic principle to resolve it" (Linz, 1994: 7). In a parliamentary democracy, if the majority of the assembly approves a change against the

[104] Or elected by the Electoral College.

will of the president, it can replace the government by exercising a no confidence vote. In opposition, presidentialism is fraught with stalemates and revolutions.

Second, the fixed term of the president's office may cause rigidity, "...that makes adjustment to changing situations extremely difficult; a leader who has lost the confidence of his own party or the parties that acquiesced his election cannot be replaced" (Linz, 1994: 9-10). In contrast, by virtue of their ability to promote changes in the cabinet and government, parliamentary systems afford greater opportunity for survival.

Third, presidentialism "introduces a strong element of zero-sum game into democratic politics with rules that tend toward a 'winner-take-all' outcome" (Ibid: 18), which may imbue the presidents with a feeling that they do not need to undertake the tedious endeavours to construct coalitions and make concessions to the opposition.

Fourth, the style of presidential politics is less propitious to democracy than that of parliamentary politics. As Mainwaring (1997: 450) argues the sense of being representative of the entire nation may lead the president to be intolerant of the opposition.

Finally, political outsiders, entrepreneurs or non-partisan candidates are more likely to win the chief executive office in presidential systems with potentially dangerous effects. As Mainwaring (Ibid: 451) writes, "individuals elected by direct popular vote are less dependent on and less beholden to political parties. Such individuals are more likely to govern in a populist, anti-institutionalist fashion". In conclusion Linz submits:

> ...the basic structural characteristic of a presidential system makes it more likely that they will encounter serious difficulties and that, under certain circumstances, they might contribute to the breakdown of democracies that, with adequate parliamentary institutions, might have had a better chance to survive (Linz, 1997: 1).

Other scholars (Shugart and Carey, 1992; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997; LeDuc and Norris, 1996; Taras, 1997; Moser, 1998) add complementary institutional elements, such as electoral incentives, concurrency of elections, psychological effect of elections, and constitution making, to the conditions that may strengthen the 'perils of presidentialism'. For example, proportional representation, and district magnitude tend to foster multi-party systems, which may be beneficial for developed democracies, but fraught with overrepresentation and interest dispersion in the legislature of the new regimes. As a consequence, weak coalitions, party disputes, factional conflicts will dominate and the politics of non-resistance to presidential power accretion may entrench. The president may even gain the majority of the mixed vote in the legislature[105].

Concurrent elections[106] may have a dual effect (van der Eijk, 1996) on those who vote 'with the boot' by expressing anger and dissatisfaction with incumbent authorities, or acting parties and 'with heart' by placing hopes and endorsing a leader of the nation with full power to govern. A psychological effect as Moser (1998: 58-9) describes, "is

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[105] For example, as happened in Belarus, non-partisan faction may form the core of the president's supporters in Belarus.

[106] This also includes effect of concurrent political events such as the 1995 parliamentary elections and a referendum, initiated by the president in Belarus.

much like the assumed consolidating effect of single-member district electoral systems". Since only one individual can occupy a presidency, voters tend to refrain from supporting marginal candidates out of fear of wasting their vote, and support more popular candidates who are capable of winning office and governing with better effect, even if they are not their first choice.

Another obstacle for advancing democracy in a presidential system relates to the procedure of candidate selection. To become elected, candidates for the presidency need to assemble a broad multi-party coalition in multiparty systems, and, hence, they are obliged to take supra-party postures or to distance themselves from parties (Mainwaring, 1995). Candidates with anti-party proclivity are, therefore, more likely to be elected. In office, they continue pursuing supra- or anti-party policies, having powerful incentives for doing so: they need parliamentary support for decision-making or they tend to circumvent the legislature, feeling no need for consensual decision-making.

Finally, constitutions often create favourable circumstances for promoting strong presidencies. New and inexperienced legislatures frequently do not take into account outcomes of the presidential office if they are not reinforced by other controlling mechanisms (separation of powers, non-confidence vote, right of the referenda, independence of mass media and so on). In some cases presidencies may be produced "by the tailor for the tailor" (Elster, 1998), or simply to escape the straightjacket of governing by rules.

Linz (1994: 34) notes 'perils' of presidentialism: a tendency to produce a rather enduring effect on the system, which is associated with (i) perpetually weak parties; (ii) ongoing legislative-executive conflict that tends to settle down into one of the extremes, and often, as a result (iii) increasing power of president. He states that one of the *features* of presidential regimes in new democracies is the evidence that parties are weak, lack discipline and representatives behave in parochial and self-interested ways. These characteristics of parties and their parliamentary representatives, in turn, make it possible for strong presidencies to flourish, especially in multi-party systems. To support this argument, Lijphart (1996; 240) argues that a president's power depends on more than his/her formal constitutional prerogatives and the prestige conferred by direct elections. Presidential power may be enhanced under the two different conditions: a strong pro-presidential party in the legislature or a large number of weak and ineffective parliamentary parties.

According to Linz (1994: 35), a president without a clear majority in a multiparty situation with ideological and disciplined parties finds it difficult to govern, and even more difficult with an opposition majority in congress. This tends to perpetuate a vicious circle in party and presidential system development. Disintegrated parties initially enhance a strong presidency, which does not allow effective party system stabilisation, even if parties thrive afterwards. Linz points out that the situation with fragmented legislatures, thus, gives a president the possibility of:

> ...convincing individual legislators, of producing schisms within the parties, and forming local clientelistic alliances that enables him to govern and enact his program without a majority [in parliament] (Linz, 1994: 35)[107].

He concludes that the idea of a more disciplined and 'responsible' party system is structurally in conflict, if not incompatible, with pure presidentialism, especially in the process of its accretion. In the situation of a multi-party system with highly competitive parties, further developments are likely to be in the direction of limitation of party activities. Thus, it is not only personalities and political culture, but also political structures that explain why presidents act against parties.

The consequences are likely to be the continuing weakness of the party system even if parties attempt to surmount their organisational inefficiency, and the effect of 'second-order' preferences by the electorate of parties in favour of the president. The implication is that a balance of power in the country would not really be altered by the results of parliamentary elections or activities of parties-in-office, nor would the composition of government or the efficacy of reforms. Voters' perceptions of parties as lacking power tend to distort the process of establishing party system equilibrium.

One has to agree that the spectre of presidentialism looms over the newly established state. In their critical analysis of Linz's argument against presidentialism, Mainwaring and

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[107] This is exactly what happened in Belarus over the years. Parliament was rather fragmented which allowed the president to find an 'individual approach' to most of the deputies (110 out of 156), and finally to 'call' for obedient and loyal parliament in 1997.

Shugart (1997: 451) however, state that parliamentary systems may well possess similar incentives for the breakdown of fragile democratic regimes: "to a lesser degree than in presidential systems, conflicting claims to legitimacy also exist in parliamentary systems". In consequence, they argue that presidentialism affords some attractive features:

> ...that can be maximized through careful attention to constitutional design' and they partially offset the liabilities of presidentialism. This includes a greater choice for voters at elections: 'voters can support one party or candidate at the legislative level but another for the head of government (Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997: 460).

This, however, may have a dual effect. Van der Eijk and his colleagues (1996) in their analysis of European elections observed a paradox when voters tend to promote more 'important' parties as more effective in decision-making, on the national level, and less known parties on the European parliamentary level. This may be related to the situation of presidential elections, when voters having 'a greater choice' can treat a president as a more effective 'investment' and indifferently cast their votes for parties at other elections. Firstly this can occur when two institutions possess unequal powers to arbitrate the process. A second feature, Mainwaring and Shugart identify (1997), is electoral "accountability and indentifiability" where the latter refers to the voters' ability to make an informed choice prior to the elections based on their ability to assess the likely range of post-election governments (Ibid: 461). This, however, can be equally applicable to parliamentary systems, when parties nominate individuals to act for and be identified on parties' behalf prior to elections. Finally, the congressional independence of presidents from parliaments in legislative matters may allow the resolution of

deadlocks without antagonism. At the same time this can be fraught with political volition of the superior side – the president, and consequently, with inaccuracy and even irresponsibility of decision-making.

Party system stabilisation depends on structured institutions and institutionalised procedures. Mainwaring (1997: 391) notes that democracy cannot thrive on the kind of erratic personalised political life that results from the absence of such institutions. Presidential systems are less favourable to an institutionalising democracy than parliamentary systems (Linz, 1994), especially in the case of multi-party systems. Multi-partism increases the likelihood of the executive-legislative deadlock and immobilism in decision-making. It also increases the likelihood of ideological polarisation, and interest fragmentation. Finally, as Mainwaring (1993: 212-3) submits, with multi-partism, presidents need to build inter-party coalitions to get measures through the legislature, which are less stable and more difficult to form than in the parliamentary form of governance. Nevertheless in his article with Shugart (1997: 467) they suggest that "extreme multi-partism does not doom presidential democracies, but it does make their functioning more difficult".

As analysis suggests, presidentialism may be a 'slippery' path for a young democracy, fraught with danger of reversal course and dictatorial politics. Nevertheless as history indicates, if 'treated' carefully on the constitutional, institutional and electoral levels, it may survive and lead democracy to stability (USA model, France, contemporary Finland, Switzerland). Apart from the USA, the named examples are semi-presidential or hybrid systems, which, as many argue, causally makes it possible for them to survive.

Realising the potential danger of the pure type of presidentialism for democracy, Duverger developed the concept of semi-presidentialism[108]. This presumes a popularly elected president holding considerable powers and in opposition a prime minister who possesses executive and governmental powers and can stay in office only if parliament does not express its opposition to him (Duverger, 1954: 122). As Barno, Bayerlein and Veser (1998) assert, semi-presidentialism can be commonly regarded as a more suitable regime for newly emerged democracies, which are transforming from authoritarian political systems associated with non-existent or weak party structures, and need a decisive guidance.

It has been argued that stable and firm governments can be guaranteed by an executive presidency with a democratic appearance, but without too much interference from parliament. In general terms what semi-presidentialism allows is the strong governance by the head of state, and by which the prime minister is fairly independent and forms a third angle in disputes. This may eliminate extreme cases and stalemates in development of new democracies, inasmuch as the Prime Minister possesses enough power to arbitrate the conflict. This mechanism of semi-controlled presidency could be archetypal for new democracies opting for strong leadership and representative governance.

There are no existing regimes to refer to for descriptions of semi-presidential regime; and the experiences of the French Republic, and the Weimar Republic, are the only historical examples available. Nevertheless, Sartori (1994:110) asserts that semi-

[108] Shugart and Carey (1992) termed it as 'premier-presidential' system that implies some limitations of presidential powers.

presidentialism as well as semi-parliamentarism can improve the pure types of regime: to quote Sartori "our best hopes lies in mixed solutions" (Ibid: 115). Potential danger may be that transient semi-presidential regimes can move to their extreme, i.e. the fully presidential form of governance, if not reinforced both institutionally and culturally. Again, Belarus is an example of this kind of development: it was launched as a sustainable semi-parliamentary republic associated with the supreme power of parliament and the president was to fulfil the duties associated with the head of state. Nevertheless, with the conflict of 'dual legitimacy', weak coalition incentives for parties in office, and other factors, constitutional configurations were eventually altered in favour of presidentialism. Consequently, the Republic is presently moving toward a super-presidential regime that has a danger of sliding into dictatorship due to the lack of controlling mechanisms in society.

3.2.2 Belarus' institutional environment

Belarus is a useful candidate for analysis of a failing democracy, in which the power of the president dominates weak and fragmented opposition parties and an explicitly 'tamed' legislature. What becomes particularly clear is the continuing connection between the past and the future; that is, when individuals operating within certain structural environments make choices ('forward linkage'), which in turn originate from the 'mist of the past' ('backward linkage') (Elster et al, 1998). Whatever scenario was initially planned or 'tailored' for the country, the outcome has nevertheless been triggered by a combination of factors, in which constitution making and electoral arrangements play an important role.

In Belarus the strong presidency was self-tailored by the 'old-guard' communist majority in parliament, to secure their position in a changing society. Barbara Geddes (1996: 23) adroitly notices that, "stronger presidencies and more majoritarian systems of legislative representation tend to be associated with Communist parties that were relatively strong at the time the institutions were chosen". In all cases of East European democracies, communist negotiators favoured a strong presidency, since they still possessed relative popularity and power, and were expected to win the post and by that strengthen their power and legitimacy. As Geddes (Ibid: 22) asserts communists' preferences for majoritarian systems had three sources. These are [1] overestimation of their own popularity; [2] the desire of many successor party politicians to run as individuals unhampered by the party label; [3] and their control of the grassroots, intact in most cases, which provided them with a pre-existing local political machinery and patronage network. So, when it comes to a discussion of the issue of the presidency, two questions become apparent: (i) why should the parliamentary republic need a presidency; and (ii) what design it will have.

In Belarus, a republic that was torn with conflicts and petty wars between politicians, the Presidency was seen as the best means to establish order and authority over disputes. The downside, though, was to secure the position of the Party of Power, as the conservative majority in parliament led by the Prime Minister Viacheslav Kebich. As Silitski observes:

> ...the adoption of a new Constitution that established the position of a 'strong' President was a continuation of the hardliners' march that started with the removal of Šuškievich. The "Party of Power" sought to consolidate its grip on power by electing Kiebich as a President (Silitski, 2000: 17).

Many members of parliament, who later joined the anti-system opposition, had supported the initiative of the Party of Power to concentrate unlimited authority in the hands of one man. One of them was the parliamentary speaker Miacheslav Gryb, who claimed that unless a presidency was introduced, the country would stay ungoverned[109]. Another was Viktor Gonchar, a popular deputy of the Supreme Soviet and in the future Lukashenko's enemy, who recently went missing. Although parliamentary in origin, a new democratic regime was deemed to become arbitrary if the presidency, culturally agreeable with the traditions and authoritarian attitudes of the elite and compliance of the electors, were instituted in the changing society. Economic decline and political disarray reinforced the choice of the presidency. Sartori (1994: 108) argued that the general disagreement of "people who endorse presidentialism, is that effectiveness is to be preferred to paralysis, and the parliamentary systems are immobilist and inefficient".

[109] "I believed that the authority in Belarus should have a certain force, because Parliament could not decide anything. The speaker and the prime minister had no power, for they could be appointed and removed at any time. The Parliament is split on clans, groups, such as agriculture, defence industry, electronics; there was no chance to decide anything. We have a normal constitution, but people were not ready for a democracy. If there were a normal President, the Constitution would work. But he is a sick man." Interview with Miacheslav Gryb by Vitali Silitski (2000).

14 March 1994 was the turning point in the democratic history of Belarus. According to the new constitution, the republic was designed to be semi-parliamentary with a bulk of power belonging to the parliament, and accordingly 'balanced' by presidential authority. The Supreme Council was the highest representative, standing and sole legislative body of state power. Amongst others, it had the principal right to (i) call national referenda; (ii) adopt and amend the constitution; (iii) call elections; (iv) form the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda; (v) elect the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, the Procurator-General; and (vi) indict and remove the president from office, by no less than 2/3 of the elected members of parliament, if he/she violated the law, or committed crime[110] [Article 86].

According to the 1994 constitution the president was the head of state and the Chief Executive. He had the right (i) to ensure the cooperation of executive bodies with the legislature; (ii) to appoint and dismiss, with the consent of the Supreme Council, the Prime Minister, his deputies, ministers of foreign affairs, finance, defence, and other; (iii) to introduce to the Supreme Council candidates for election for the post of the chairman of the Constitutional Court, chairman of the Supreme Court, and so on; and finally (iv) to be a Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces [Article 100]. It is worth mentioning that the president did not have power to dissolve the parliament.

[110] Belarus' Constitution 1994, http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/, retrieved June 2001. The analysis of constitution-making in Belarus can also be found at http://www.tourolaw.edu/Publications/interationallawrev/vol6/part3.html, retrieved June 2001.

This was a situation where the 'perils of presidentialism' started undermining the government and parliament. On 24th June 1994 Alexander Lukashenko received 44.82% of the popular vote in the presidential election, Kebich finished second with 17.33%, Pozniak third with 12.82%, and Shushkevich fourth with 9.91%. In the second round of voting which took place on 10th July, the conservative communist forces capitulated: Lukashenko won 80.4% over Kebich who respectively received only 14.2% from voters (voter turnout was estimated about 70%)[111]. The psychological effect of the presidential election with the majority run-off in a single member district had an impact as well. In a 'winner-take-all' election people invested their votes in Lukashenko as against Kebich – the better of the 'two evils'. His image as a young, enthusiastic, corruption-fighter, and non-nomenclatura recruit had its effect. In addition, some electors obviously came to vote, 'with the boot' having negative pre-dispositions for Shushkevich as a loser-democrat and Pozniak as a 'Nazi supporter' as the media portrayed him. V.Kebich, V. Novikov, and A.Dubko were seen as 'shadows' of the past, to which the majority of the population did not want to retreat. Alexander Lukashenko took office already with plans to fully restructure power institutions to his advantage. As a result the eventual breakdown of semi-parliamentary regime into a system of personal rule occurred due to a combination of factors, of which parties, public attitudes, existing structures and institutions were part. As Linz (1997) posits, a strong presidency depends on the support of other institutions, or otherwise, their malfunctioning.

The 'mechanical' effect of the presidential election was such that voters were encouraged to focus on individuals and endorse their trust in non-partisan candidates –

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[111] See for information http://www.agora.it/elections/election/bearus.htm, retrieved June 2001.

political entrepreneurs – rather than party members. As Mainwaring (1997: 22) suggests, "in the inchoate party system, the space for populists is greater because party affiliations do not structure the vote... Voters are more likely to respond to personal appeals than to the candidates' party affiliation". Lukashenko was elected as a populist figure and he continued acting as an 'anti-party' man, and in so doing, he violated the rules of the game which was thought to become the only 'game in town' – semi-parliamentary democracy. The situation of dual legitimacy immediately occurred, causing more impasses in decision-making than ever before. At this time Lukashenko's personality played an overwhelming role in the politics that brought him popular support in a system of weakening parties and a non-productive, conservative and confrontational legislature.

While actions of the legislature might have facilitated Lukashenko's rise to power, his policy has been to reduce its powers significantly so that the parliament would become a compliant and uncritical tool in president's hands. His first major conflict with parliament transpired in 1995 when he proposed to call a referendum, which coincided with the parliamentary elections for the 13th Supreme Council. Lukashenko wisely counted on the psychological effect that the questions might have on electors while voting for the parliamentary candidates[112]. These questions were related to the approval of closer ties with Russia; the introduction of Russian as a second state language; the replacement of the post-independence national symbols with the Soviet-era ones; and giving the President the right to dissolve the Parliament. In other words, by introducing

[112] Once again, Lukashenko carefully deployed the impact of cultural norms and classic 'homing' patterns of voters' behaviour in his campaign for super-presidential power.

these issues for the referendum, he aimed to provoke public nostalgia and destroy voters' emerging nationalist stance in one movement. As McMahon (1997: 131) records, eighteen BNF deputies led by Pozniak went on hunger strike to protest at the referendum. The parliament agreed to accept only one of the four questions, which was on closer ties with Russia. Lukashenko responded that if the parliament refused his offer, he would dissolve it on the basis of the violation of the Constitution. The police, on the grounds of a bomb search, forcibly removed opposition deputies from the parliament building. Parliament had eventually to agree to accept three questions proposed by Lukashenko, except the one, which was allowing its dissolution by the president. This power conflict indicates how fragile the balance of dual legitimacy was in society, and how more assertive the politics of one man could be in order to out-play fragmented parties and a weak parliament.

The 1995 parliamentary elections were held twice, due to the failure to produce sufficient quorum from the 174 elected MPs for convening the legislature, according to the 1994 Constitution. More crucially, in the interim period Lukashenko governed by decree, which enabled him to acquire even more power. Soon after the first referendum, and on the pretext of the ineffective legislative-executive relationship that inhibited the operation of both, Lukashenko proposed to call another referendum to vote on his version of the new Constitution. As Margery McMahon (1997: 132) notes, "although still largely composed of conservatives and neo-communists, the parliament tried to resist and obstruct Lukashenka's decrees and the gradual accumulation of power in his hands". Parliament in reply to the president's draft of the new constitution designed their own, offering a tighter control of presidential powers. Both versions were presented for public consent in a

referendum on 7th November 1996. Due to his popularity, which was opposed by an awkward 'president-dumping' campaign led by the opposition, Lukashenko's version of the constitution won overwhelming support of 70.5% of the vote, whereas the parliament's version received only 7.9%[113]. This demonstrates once again the effect of 'liabilities' or 'perils' of presidentialism, in which the president always aims to expand his power and avoid tedious compromises over the 'dual legitimacy'.

Another peril – system rigidity – came to the fore when Lukashenko's version of the Constitution was accepted. His tenure in office was now extended by another two years (until 2001), and he also received the right to set the date of elections, call parliamentary sessions and dissolve the legislature [Art.84]. The parliament was divided into two chambers. The lower chamber – the House of Representatives- was composed of 110 MPs from the 13th Supreme Soviet, who recognised Lukashenko's constitution. The upper chamber comprise the Council of Republic with 68 members, eight of which are directly appointed by the president and 56 elected by secret ballot of deputies of local soviets in the country's regions[114].

More specifically, with the altered Constitution the president became the sole Head of State. He also altered the nomination procedure for the presidency [Article 81]. Previously a candidate had to collect 100,000 signatures from the electorate for a nomination, or alternatively he could be recommended by no less than 70 MPs of the parliament. Lukashenko, by cancelling the latter, eliminated the possibility of the

[113] *British Helsinki Committee Report on 1996 Referenda*, at http://www.bhhrg.org/belarus/belarus1997/referendum.htm, retrieved June 2001.

parliament to nominate a presidential candidate. Apart from other responsibilities, the president has also obtained the right to [Article 84]:

(i) call regular and extraordinary elections to the House of Representatives, the Council of the Republic and local representative bodies [*used to be a prerogative of the parliament*];

(ii) dissolve the chambers of the Parliament;

(iii) appoint six members of the Central Commission on Elections and National Referenda [*used to be a full prerogative of the parliament*];

(iv) form, dissolve and reorganize the Administration of the President – the presidential 'vertical' that also has control over activity of the local councils in the regions and Minsk [*and hence, has control over the election procedure into the upper chamber of the legislature*];

(v) appoint with the consent of the Council of the Republic the Chairperson of the Constitutional, Supreme and Economic Courts from among the judges of these courts [*which previously used to be an advisory function of the president*];

(vi) appoint with the consent of the Council of the Republic the judges of the Supreme and Economic Courts, Chairperson of the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections and National Referenda, the Procurator-General, the Chairperson and members of the Governing Board of the National Bank [*used to be the sole prerogative of the parliament*];

(vii) appoint six members of the Constitutional Court, and other judges of the Republic of Belarus [*used to be the sole prerogative of the parliament*];

[114] *Parliament: The National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus*. Minsk, 1997.

(viii) dismiss the Chairperson and judges of the Constitutional, Supreme and Economic Courts, the Chairperson of the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections and National Referenda, the Procurator-General, the Chairperson and members of the Board of the National Bank [*used to be a sole prerogative of the parliament*];

(ix) appoint and dismiss the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces [*used to be a sole prerogative of the parliament*].

In summary, by amending the constitution Lukashenko has not only changed the arrangements of governance - with popular consent he also shifted power away from the legislature and formed a regime of supreme presidential authority[115]. The implication of this restructuring was the alteration of the course of democratisation, which could no longer be called 'representative'. With some stretching, Belarus' transitional façade can be defined as a 'delegative' type of democracy; however the balance between this democracy and echoing dictatorship is very fragile. The autumn 2000 parliamentary elections could have 'saved' the situation from a looming prospect of plebiscitarian dictatorship if opposition parties had participated in campaign. This however, did not occur, and the country presently finds itself on the path, remote from democracy.

There has also been an effect of "a zero-sum game" during the regime's turnover. Lukashenko proved that it is quite possible to outplay institutional limits and to tailor

[115] The 1996 constitution has a similar design to that of the Russian Federation, 1993 (S. White, 2000. Ch.3). The difference in regimes' development, then seems to lie in the strength of political players, the initiation of reforms and power restructuring.

the constitution for the tailor's needs, if personal ambitions and available resources permit. In order to achieve such stunning results, one must play 'the game' as forcefully, devotedly and under the principle of 'winner-take-all' or 'all or nothing' as the president does. Belarus is presently characterised by a malleable parliament, and even weaker parties. Behind this *façade* there appear to be not only agents, but also agency that allows unlimited public tolerance of political volition and demagoguery; and structural loopholes for these outrageous moves in politics.

Lukashenko managed to avoid the showdown, which Yeltsin faced with the Russian Congress of People's Deputies in autumn 1993. He, nevertheless, achieved greater results associated with a 'pocket' legislature, a defeated opposition and full power in his hands, by relatively peaceful means, and without bloodshed or military intervention. The Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma, attempted a similar reshuffle, but failed to outplay the legislature in 1995-6. In fact, the regime in Ukraine can presently be described as a 'tryarchy' (or semi-presidential) based on shared power between President, Prime Minister, and Chairman of parliament. (Wilson, 1996: 95). As Wilson notices, Ukraine is much ahead of Belarus on the way to the real *constitutionalism*, which occurred with the consensual "passing of the 1996 constitution" which demonstrated "the willingness of politicians to allow their behaviour to be guided by constitutional norms" (Wilson, 1996: 95).

Lukashenko has successfully created a protective mechanism for his presidency – a system of patronage, clientelism and patrimonialism. It works for the majority of the population based on a well-laid infrastructure and public relations. The president

regularly meets with the people, he listens to their needs, and organises public hearings of parliamentary sessions to demonstrate his power and commitment to his electors. Lukashenko is rarely interviewed on television, but he is regularly mentioned in the news; and he is always at the heart of national central events (marathon, special Olympic games for children in need, etc.). He uses the lever of 'Prime Minister and his Cabinet' as a scapegoat for his policy-making failures. Two Prime Ministers and their Cabinets[116] have been dismissed during the past five years not to mention minor 'domestic' government reshuffles.

When Mainwaring enumerated the 'appealing features' of presidentialism, he perhaps meant its realisation within a reasonably institutionalised system, where each aggrandising attempt of the president over the legislature, is rebuffed by the latter in accordance with the law. Therefore, according to Mainwaring (1997), features such as a 'greater choice for voters' which allows the electorate a clear choice of leaders on both governmental and parliamentary levels, or 'electoral accountability' of the elected policymakers who should feel "responsible to the citizens" (Ibid: 461), and "independence of representatives in legislative matters", have little applicability to transitional systems of Eastern Europe. Under high uncertainty and economic pressure, they move from one extreme in power to another; and are still crafting their legal systems to optimise their effectiveness.

As McMahon (1997: 135) observes, "Lukashenka's actions have given rise to concerns that he is building a dictatorship, and that the country's shift to totalitarianism is under

[116] These are M. Chigir (dismissed in 1996) and S. Ling (1997-9).

way". Paradoxically Lukashenko himself invited analogies with fascism when he 'discovered' some appealing features of Hitler's governance of Nazi Germany. A comparison with the Weimar Republic, as a historical parallel between patterns of party systems' development, may be relevant to the current situation in Belarus. At the same time, this parallel has its own limits and, hence, must be treated carefully in comparison (Sakwa, 1996, Hanson, 1997; Feldman et al., 1994). As Richard Sakwa (1996: 371) argues, despite some apparent parallels between the two cases, "...references to Weimar ... should be tempered by the fact that the world of the 1990s was a very different one from that of the 1920s or 1930s". However what is true, is that Belarus, as well as Russia, Ukraine and other ex-Soviet republics "[face] the Old Weimar dilemma of how to run a democracy in the absence of a sufficient number of democrats", and that its leadership is "repeating the mistake committed by Weimar – giving absolute freedom to the enemies of democracy" (Hanson and Kopstein, 1997: 252).

Hanson and Kopstein (1997) used a three-dimensional approach in their comparison of the Weimar Republic and Russia after perestroika. They assessed:

(i) the degree of completeness of the revolutionary break with the prior imperial regime;

(ii) the degree of international pressure to marketize the economy; and

(iii) the degree of institutionalisation of a system of programmatic and representative political parties.

Hanson and Kopstein (1997: 256) found that the Weimar republic was born out of a weak revolution, in the sense that it never broke decisively with its pre-revolutionary past either sociologically or culturally. The commitment of the old imperial elites to the new democratic order was minimal and far from enthusiastic[117]. As Dahrendorf (1967) commented, "...military officers and large agrarian interests still had undue influence on political discourse, while the social guarantors of democracy, the bourgeoisie, remained hopelessly weak and not very committed to constitutionalism." The result was a utopian backlash that captured the state at the earliest possible convenience (Turner, 1975). Secondly, Germany in 1918 and later was exhausted by war. Its endeavours to develop, '...organised capitalism' was under pressure from the uncertainty of the post-war situation. As a result, state protection of declining industrial enterprises, cartelisation, agricultural subsidies to large estates in the East, subsidies to the armed forces, and to the conservative academia continued unabated (Hanson and Kopstein, 1997). International pressure was also very high. Scholars note that:

> ...the failure of the Weimar government to fully reform Germany's heavily statist and protectionist economy might not have been sufficient to undermine democratic consolidation in the absence of significant and simultaneous pressures from the international market (Ibid: 259).

What is certain is that the burden of reparation payments and the strains of maintaining currency parity after 1929 reinforced the credibility of the extreme right who claimed a 'special path' for Germany without international interference. The revolution of 1918

[117] These developments are particularly similar to those at the outset of transition in Belarus.

might not have altered much of the social structure of the republic, but it did create an entirely new set of political institutions in Germany that channelled these social interests in a new way. Hanson and Kopstein (1997) commented, 'although the Reich had possessed a parliament, it did not have parliamentary government. Parties in the Reichstag did not actually determine national policy.' This was altered in 1923 with the introduction of proportional representation. The head of the state was a president, popularly elected for the seven-year term by the principle of the majority run-off. This was the route by which Hindenburg came to power in 1925. The system was initially designed as a semi-presidentialism. The president had rather limited powers and could only exercise them with the consent of the chancellor and his cabinet; he could govern by decree only in emergency cases. The Weimar party system displayed striking continuity with the past, and was characterised by established and identifiable political parties. The spectrum was essentially composed of five-parties ranging from the conservative right to the socialist left. It must be noted that the Weimar had a very articulated party system, in which the dimensions of party competition were clear to the citizenry. This involved the existence of ideological parties with clear group loyalties, which were potentially dangerous for the newly developing democracy. As Hanson and Kopstein (1997: 262) argue "each party ended up standing fast for its own principled, particularistic version of the public good and refused to compromise. This was a recipe for gridlock". In summary, the Weimar republic in the 1920s and 1930s was characterised by the legislature being a superior articulator, but an extremely poor arbiter of social interests. The gap between the legislature and the executives was widening, and eventually allowed the country to slip into a semi-dictatorship by presidential decree. As Linz notes:

> ...it was this combination of presidential power to dissolve the Reichstag and freedom to appoint a chancellor who would countersign the dissolution that led at the end of Weimar Republic, to the fateful elections in which the Nazis gained strength and finally, in the semi-free March 1933 election, a majority (Linz, 1997: 48-49).

With Hitler's becoming a chancellor of the Weimar Republic and his further succession to power in 1933, the fall of democracy and the dawn of dictatorship began.

If one compares the initial development of the two republics, Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Belarus, certain similarities can be observed. Both countries had protracted and incomplete ends to their prior regimes; both had stalled economies with inherited legacies from statist and protectionist styles of management, and both did little to deter economic demise. With minor differences, the style of political governance also has much in common: power-seeking legislatures; an arising dilemma of 'dual legitimacy' between the parliament and the president, which was rather a duel between the chancellor and the parliament in the Weimar republic.

The difference between the two republics is not in party strength, but rather in the partisan affiliation of the chosen leaders. In any case this led to a lack of compromise and demise of representation in both republics. In the Weimar republic Hitler had partisan support from the nationalists, which was a necessary catalyst for the promotion of individual governance. Lukashenko, on the contrary, is a non-partisan popularly

elected leader who, nevertheless, managed to set up a puppet House of Representatives, appoint a Council of Republic, and Constitutional Court. In other words, he has full power, but with one difference. There is a fragmented, underground, but nevertheless, existent opposition to the incumbent, which still offers Belarus a chance to develop the fragile path towards democracy. In addition, international environments are different. If Belarus can be structurally prepared to take a chance of re-orienting itself towards the West and global economy, it may avoid wasteful feuds over the power distribution in society. This will be the argument of the next section.

3.2.3 Institutional requirements for building democracy

This section will investigate, whether there is a connection between presidentialism and weak party systems, and what requirements are necessary to sustain a strong presidency under control. In Belarus the general population allowed the introduction of supreme presidentialism over a semi-parliamentary regime, by that reducing their access to a decision-making process, and prospects for rapid recovery. It is obvious that with presidentialism, elections have a winner-take-all basis, which means that even when a presidential candidate wins the majority, a huge proportion of the population will go un-represented. In addition, in a transient regime, the choice of a candidate may often be the lesser of two evils, especially reinforced by a two-round majoritarian code, in a single member district. Presidentialism is also fraught with dictatorial politics – a phenomenon that post-communist nations wanted to avoid so much. Nevertheless, people happened to favour strong leadership and endorse their presidents with unlimited support as the ones who appeal to them directly and can make decisions faster and more efficiently than any

possible coalition of weak and dispersed opposition. As Mainwaring (1997) notes, imaginative accountability and identifiability is what matters for a suffering nation.

Unfortunately populist leaders do little to improve structural and economic conditions, which may be painful in the medium term, and which, nevertheless, present the core solution for furthering democratisation. As Przeworski pessimistically argues:

> ...institutional choice offers a partial escape from the trap. Yet since it appears that poor countries are more likely to choose presidentialism, little solace is offered by the possibility of institutional engineering. Equally little solace is offered by political learning. Most countries returning to democracy usually go back to whatever constitution they had in the past, even if it never worked (Przeworski, 1996: 49).

Despite the pessimistic prognosis of Przeworski, institutional engineering still matters. As one can witness from the above analysis, when the president is legally endorsed with unlimited power, it is difficult for the party system not only to break through the vicious circle of public oblivion and weakness, but also to counteract the increasing authority.

One can trace some enlightening parallels in the development of legislative-executive relations in Belarus' democracy with that of the European Union. Experience of the European Parliament in re-gaining power balance from executive authority may be of a particular use for this analysis. First, one has to mention that the European Parliament has many similarities with national parliaments of the member states, and the people of

Europe directly elect the European Parliament. It is made up of party representatives, which express different ideological and programmatic positions. It is also similar to national parliaments in that it is able to discuss and form opinions on all European Union legislation as well as being able to debate topical and urgent matters. The European Commission is designed to be the High Authority in the structure of the European Union. The Council of Ministers is the main executive body.

If the structure of the European Union (EU) were 'related' to a national-level structure, the closest resemblance it could have is a semi-presidential democracy. Initially, the European Parliament was on a fundamentally weak footing. It was not envisaged to be the European Coal and Steel Community's legislature, as this position was to be granted to the Council of Ministers. The Parliament's focus was to be a discursive committee, which would debate policy but not make final decisions. As a result, the balance of power in the European Union was highly overweighed by the executive. The Council of Ministers lacked transparency, and the pillar structure allowed the Commission to have full control over decision-making. The deficiency of equality in power arrangements became obvious during the four elections to the European Parliament, 1979-1994. These vivid outcomes were:

(i) falling turnout of voters and unpopularity of elections as such;

(ii) under-representation, as there was a tendency for the larger national parties to do worse at the European elections, for the smaller to benefit, and for the incumbent national government parties to suffer losses (Reif, 1984; Eijk, 1996);

(iii) rising democratic deficit associated with the lack of accountability and transparency in the decision-making process.

There were many suggestions regarding the result optimisation at the European level. Lack of politicisation of the Union's issues and motivation for voters to partake in elections are part of the discussion. In contrast, van der Eijk et al. (1996) suggests that the principal concerns of scholars should not be the formation of new attitudes to the 'new Europe' as a supranational state, or unification of the electoral codes, or allowance of Europe-wide media coverage, or creation of a single electoral system. The primary task is to give the legislature more power and by that balance the system of decision-making.

The effect of electoral voting that occurred at the European elections was defined as 'quasi-switching', as voters did not mean to radically switch their choices from one party to another, but to vote rationally considering the consequences that both national and European elections can have for nations and individuals. Eijk and Franklin (1996) defined this type of strategic voting as a pseudo-change of preferences which was caused by:

(i) voting with the 'head' – the first-order preferences for those parties who may have stronger chances to win and influence the system;

(ii) voting with 'heart' or 'throw away' – a second-order preferences for smaller or less known candidates; and

(iii) voting with 'the boot' against the incumbent or poorly performing parties – a 'punishment effect'. This explanation helps to understand the paradoxical

effect of European voting, the origin of democratic deficit in Europe, and what needs to be done in this respect on the level of general law.

Returning to the situation in Belarus, a comparison of the arrangement of legislative-executive relations indicates that the principle reason for popular support of the president in the republic lies within the weak powers of the legislature. As Linz noted, weak legislatures tend to behave in parochial and self-interested ways, allowing presidential power to increase and to create a vicious circle of such development.

Therefore, institutional engineering seems to be one possible solution for the presidency to stay in control, and the basic step is to revise the national constitution. Many scholars emphasise that the process of transition is concomitant with constant constitution making. Unfortunately, in Belarus the president is difficult to compromise with. This is one of the perils of presidentialism: once in power, and when the office has been tailored to his/her fit, the president will continue playing the 'all-or-nothing' game.

The international community recently described the situation with human rights and unlimited presidential authority in Belarus as 'an authoritarian police state where human rights are routinely violated' (the resolution of U.S. Congress of 3rd May 2000). The OSCE (AMG) offered to the president a series of compromises on the electoral code at the autumn parliamentary elections 2000[118]. These included giving the opposition access to the state-controlled media, expanding the powers of the current legislation on the

[118] See OSCE report at http://www.osce.org/odihr/election/bela00-1-adopted.htm, retrieved June 2001; or OSCE Belarus homepage at http://www.osce.org/belarus/index.php3, retrieved June 2001.

basis of the 1994 constitution, and to stop the persecution of the opposition. Lukashenko refused to compromise and allowed limited access of the opposition to the media. This obviously did not have any desirable effect, and the opposition parties remain out of power, with the new pro-Lukashenko parliament still in operation.

What is needed is a complex approach to institutions, structures, and agency, such as parties and other interest organisations. The introduction of a mixed system of voting – plurality voting with party list, PR – is a necessity. In this case the opposition may be motivated to participate in elections, and voters could then receive a real choice for casting their preferences. Unfortunately, as it stands, the authorities refused to alter the electoral code for the fear of voters' confusion on the eve of parliamentary elections. Those candidates or parties who allied with the state and 'timely' entered the 1997 House of Representatives on Lukashenko's invitation, have received unlimited presidential support for their campaigns to win office, which the majority of them did. Allegedly the president had a list of chosen deputies who were 'assisted' in the election campaign by local authorities, which has indeed predestined the structure of the 2000 parliament. It is clear that unless the constitution is changed, and democratic institutions are given equal powers, the republic will be balancing between a *façade* democracy, and plebiscitarian dictatorship.

In summation, the structural and institutional analyses of Belarus' political history demonstrated that the party protracted development was indeed determined by the joint effect of 'Soviet' legacies and their embodiment in institutional structures. Communist dominance and public adherence to leave under decrees rather than laws, created a

unique structure of opportunities for the elected president, who then manipulated institution-making to his advantage. The super-presidential republic, however, may not survive long as a progressing polyarchy, unless it is counter-balanced by other representative institutions.

Chapter 4 – the central part of research – will focus on the organisational analysis of parties as the leading decision-making agency in the new regime. This should help to understand the role and contribution of parties to building democracy in contemporary transient regimes.

Chapter 4. *The role of agency*: Parties and party system development in Belarus

As the previous analysis demonstrates, actions occur and acquire their meaning in relation to an already pre-constituted environment. Yet actors have the potential and the power to transform these structures through their actions. In the study of party system formation, the analysis of existing structural and institutional conditions is vital. Nevertheless, parties logically form the centre of this research: through their strategic learning they change structures and shape institutions in the new regime. Parties' organisational capacity, and public realisation should help to establish, why a desirable consolidation of the party system in Belarus did not take place, as in many other post-Soviet regimes, and what will be the system's prospects for democratisation.

There is an increasing tendency to view national parties in a global context of change, which, is thought to affect the development of emerging democracies. Since the beginning of the 1970s, Western Europe has faced definite trends of decline in partisan support and identification. There has also been an increase in electoral volatility (Pedersen, 1979; Franklin, Mackie, and Valen et al., 1992), and a decrease in party membership (Mair and van Biezen, 2001; Dalton et al, 1984; Katz, 1997). This goes in parallel with the extensive growth of single-issue groups and personalisation of politics. In addition, developing corporatist structures have been seen as gradually replacing parties as political agenda setters. From these observations, it was concluded that parties no longer function as they used to in established democracies. Two principal types of problems of party change can be identified: on the micro-level, re-definition of the relationship between parties and their electorates, and on the macro-level, re-

consideration of the role of parties versus other political actors in society. Both problems inevitably lead to a discussion of whether parties decline as traditional channels of mass representation; or whether they merely adapt to a changing environment across the globe. This should include parties in new democracies, who naturally seek more accommodating forms of survival.

Changes in party systems occur with changes in voting patterns. When the general level of voter knowledgeability has risen in a global context, and politics became more accessible through new developments in mass communication, and voters begin to choose (Rose and McAllister, 1986). This implies such consequences as loosening of partisan ties and massive voter detachment from their socially determined group loyalties. Parties respectively have to undergo certain structural changes in order to survive in a highly fluid and competitive environment. Party organisations understandably, re-orient towards public office rather than follow costly traditional 'mass forms' of existence. This trend of party organisational development may permit extra material sources, may give less dependency on membership and public recognition, and may ease the mechanism of governance by means of leadership supremacy in decision-making. Party campaigns have become more professional, issue-based rather than programmatic, and almost exclusively capital intensive. New developments seem to be resulting in a rational, more efficient and less costly model of party organisation that helps secure their continuing role in society. Some scholars argue that this is a new evolutionary stage of party development called 'cartelisation' (Katz and Mair, 1995, 1996), others are more inclined to take these 'new' features as proliferation or structured plurality of contemporary party types from the 'catch-all

party' (Kirchheimer, 1966), the 'electoral-professional party' (Panebianco, 1988), the 'witness party' and the 'responsible party' (Sartori, 1976), to the 'programmatic party' and the 'modern cadre party' (Kool, 1996), and so on.

The key argument of this preamble is twofold. First, developments in party politics as suggested, are global, and it is believed, they affect new party systems in post-communist states. Second, no matter what type or stage of development contemporary parties are taking, it is important to develop an understanding of why a particular form of party organisation has entrenched, what modality it offers, and what are the prospects for its surviving the global electoral change. Although, party systems in the newly emerged democracies of Eastern Europe operate in a radically different set of circumstances, their development, nevertheless, is thought to be more susceptible to global changes in voting behaviour and party performance. This is conditioned by the fact that parties in emerging democracies learn to survive under extreme pressure from two sets of conditions: their own political environment, and global change. Therefore, whatever the national circumstances may be for advancing democracy within newly established systems, it seems sensible to argue that global party strategies (that is to survive more effectively and at lesser cost), will be adopted by the majority of new political players. This is especially true in the contemporary context of trans-national co-operation and international aid. Therefore, one may consider such 'western' issues as voter de-alignment, emphasis on the role of leadership, decline in membership, possible alliance with the state, and a tendency for non-partisan politics to be generic to any contemporary party system, no matter what stage of party organisation and party democracy they live through. Global changes applied to a singular country will,

however, reflect national predispositions for change, and may, therefore, take a unique organisational form in each given society.

Though still developing, Belarus' party system seems to emulate both the global mode of party adaptability and an East European transitional 'uniqueness'. That is to say during its eleventh year of transition, Belarus faces a paradox that may be characteristic of many of the societies in the post-Soviet space. That is, the legitimate actors of the political game – political parties - remain powerless and non-effective for their voters. They function for themselves and in a self-contained 'virtual reality' with no real representation, finance or ideological purpose. Voters in turn sensibly prefer to switch their preferences away from parties to the president as a more credible and resourceful opportunity for change. In these circumstances in order to survive, parties with 'top-to-down' organisation and with limited regional network, have to learn to collaborate with the state and international communities whenever possible. It is argued that state subventions assist party functioning, as do links with international *familles spirituelles*. The dominance of leadership, flexible membership, and professionalized electoral campaign for non-committed voter can all help change the parties' image for voters and secure their survival in the emerging democracy.

Paradoxically, these modern and mature features of party developments, nevertheless, do not foster party system consolidation and national democratisation, which has, in fact taken an inverse course in Belarus. Moreover, parties do not seem to matter much for voters in practical terms, and may decline further if institutional and structural configurations are not altered.

Chapter 4 will analyse parties as essential *agents* of the political game in Belarus, from the three principal angles of party organisation, i.e. parties in public office, parties in central office and on the ground. Voters' perception of parties will complement the analysis. The degree of cohesiveness and representativeness of parties in government; the level of their effectiveness as organisations; and whether there is an authentic linkage between parties and their voters, will be analysed. Further study will suggest that parties have begun attaining new qualities that may assist in their future survival. However, their breakthrough will depend on a consensual solution between agency and structure, of which paternalist public attitudes, the Soviet-style legislature, the lack of law and the elected president, Alexander Lukashenko, are the embodiment.

The chapter will proceed in three sections. Section 4.1 will focus on parties' behaviour in the Belarus parliament between 1990 and 2000. Section 4.2 will provide analysis of parties' organisational structure and their regional network. Section 4.3 will include a comparative outlook of the pro-government vis-à-vis anti-system electorates, in order to understand how a strategically selective agency operates in the system of constraints and opportunities.

4.1 Parties in public office: between representation and autocracy

> The nature of parties must be sought through an appreciation of their role in the process of governance.
>
> (V.O.Key, 1964: 200)

Leading political parties traditionally gauge their performance in votes and seats; and their position in parliament tends to indicate the level of party identification by voters, and the strength of their partisan bonds (Gibson and Harmel, 1998; Janda and Goldman, 1998). With the gradual decline of traditional voter alignments in established democracies, and intrinsic non-commitment of voters in new regimes, it became a priority for parties to secure their governmental position, and as such, place less emphasis on participatory linkages. This can be measured through the share of votes/seats, and parties' coalitional behaviour in public office, their legislative achievements, and cabinet participation. This chapter focuses on the analysis of parties' operation in the Belarus' parliaments 1990-2000, based on the above variables.

As Koole (1996: 514) notes, all political parties are commonly oriented to the state, which seems to be a natural mechanism of party functioning. They design their programmes not only to represent voters' interests but also to 'conquer' the state – a symbol of power. Therefore, for example, since 1945 all major parties in established democracies have aimed to obtain 'governmental status', but not all of them have succeeded. In the last two decades this trend became widespread and resulted in a majority of leading parties

acquiring 'governmental status' in *all* European democracies (Katz and Mair, 1996: 529). To be in power is not the only incentive for parties who aim for public office. More stimulating is the opportunity for rational collaboration with the state, and the ensuing financial and statuary advantages that this collaboration may entail.

With the expansion of the state, and its complex symbiosis with civil society, a new and more accommodating phenomenon of party existence has occurred - their 'material' cooperation with the state. As Kay Lawson et al (1988) note parties still *claim* to serve as agencies of linkage because that is one way to maintain legitimacy - to capture votes - which are the currency of the markets of power. However, when in power, parties place more emphasis on policy-making and self-seeking benefits than on transmission of policy decisions to the people and representation of their needs. For example, the opportunity for major parties to increase their income from the state by a simple act of a majority vote in parliament will make them less susceptible to signals from the grassroots, more financially independent and more efficient in their operation. The state in turn enjoys sustainable legitimacy through mutual collaboration with respective representative bodies.

This mutuality of interests between the state and parties has led to certain changes in the structural and institutional organisation of parties, i.e. strengthening of the leadership, simplification of membership, growing demand of managerial skills and of capital-intensive election campaigns, as well as eventual recognition of the dominant role of parliamentary party over extra-parliamentary organisations. Parties seem to be achieving a democratic quality, in the words of Duverger (1954: 182-3), which firstly associates with the precedence of parliamentary representatives over party leaders, and the

members of the electorate over the members of the party. However, party alliance with the state appeared to be not idealistic but have a 'materialistic' nature, and the role of citizenry and parties in the decision-making process has considerably altered. The distinguishing quality of parties used to be their emphasis on *linkage,* when parties were seen, both by their members and by others, as agencies for forging links between citizens and policy-makers (K. Lawson et al, 1988). Their contemporary task is more adjusted to a policy-making function rather than to that of representation, which makes them more oblivious to people's needs and interests, and more conscious about their 'self-seeking' benefits. As Lawson et al. suggest:

> ...if parties have been reduced to a 'keeper of the seal' in developed nations, and to the rudimentary organization necessary for 'the institutionalisation of participation *from above'* in developing nations, it may mean only that other organizations have replaced parties as agencies of democratic linkage (Lawson et al., 1988: 20).

Or at least there may be a tendency for the eventual demise of party politics in conventional terms.

New trends in party development are also present in transient democracies of Eastern Europe. This is to say that in the new regimes parties seek more expedient and less costly means for survival. National societal circumstances, on the other hand, put their own stamp on the nature of party system development. Therefore, it may be hypothesised that in the new democracies, the amalgamation of a national structural discourse with a global party initiative for survival, may produce a unique effect on

party system development: consolidating parties seek to behave rationally over time, and may either overstretch their potential and remain non-institutionalised, or develop more consensual politics, if a structural-institutional background permits.

In transition, parties naturally seek a more accommodating balance between the state and society. When human and financial resources for the majority of parties are limited, the most adequate solution would be to ally with the state and place less effort on the mobilisation of increasingly uncommitted voters. The process of 'cartelisation', thus, seems, to be a timely response by parties to the difficulties of the transitional period. As Mair notes:

> Particularly after the break-up of the forum or consensus parties that led the transition from Communist rule, parties have tended to show many features of the cartel model. They tend to have organisational structure of the mass or catch-all models (chairman, executive, geographically defined layers of organisation, national congress), but given widespread antipathy toward the idea of party and the absence of the social basis for mass parties, they generally have very small membership. They are heavily dependent on the state for their resources… (Mair, 1996: 122).

In other words by allying with the state and distinctly focusing on their parliamentary activity, parties may achieve two tasks at once: they can safeguard minimal organisational survival for the present and secure long-term benefits for the future. The potential danger of this policy line, however, is that parties may lose their support to a dominant pool of uncommitted voters.

The situation in Belarus can be characterised by similar 'accommodating' trends in party political development. However, the peculiar form it often takes, illustrates the powerful influence of national circumstances on the process of party building. Parties are legitimate but increasingly less influential players in the political game, and demonstrate continual signs of decline. Under the pressure of structural, institutional and cultural conditions, parties are seemingly losing their political vigour and public support. Although they have settled in numbers and have become better structured and ideologically refined, parties continue to be second rated[119] by the people, and thus seek opportunities to survive both public and presidential disdain.

Two distinct periods of party development can be observed in Belarus. The first is associated with a slow but steady move towards democratisation between 1990 and 1996; when the leading parties enjoyed public support as well as the benefits of public office. The second period is characterised by the retreat of oppositional parties into a parallel society and their self-preserving activities after the dismissal of the publicly

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[119] The term was introduced by Reif (1984) in his analysis of European elections in the article 'National electoral cycles and European Elections 1979 and 1984', *Electoral Studies*, 3(3): 244-55. He implied that the 'second-order' elections have ostensible, a window-dressing nature, when 'there is much less at stake as compared to first-order elections', and hence, voters prioritise these elections less than those to national parliaments. There may be a parallel between voters' attitudes to parties and the president in Belarus; and the usage of 'second-order' preferences by voters to demonstrate their lack of interest in party politics seems to be adequate.

elected parliament by the president in 1996. Whereas those parties who re-entered the new parliament, continued receiving benefits negotiated with the president[120].

When in public office, new parties developed organisational links with the state (OGP and Social Democrats), and attempted to gradually shift away from the masses (PCB, BNF, LP, LDP)[121]. After failing to remain in office, the majority of parties went underground, experiencing dramatic structural and ideological change. They lost their financial, technical, media and, most important, human resources. The best example is the PCB, which split after the dissolution of parliament, and the splinter Communist Party of Belarus (CPB) emerged with Vladimir Chikin as leader. Sergei Kaliakin, the PCB leader believes official authorities initiated the split. Some party members were offered attractive positions in government, and therefore, left the oppositional PCB as an 'ideologically untenable' party, whereas others became weary and disappointed by the politics of opposition. Party membership decreased by 50% in one year, and presently comprises 9300 supporters[122]. The same happened to AP, which lost its human capital because party members could not afford to resist the pressure of regional authorities. However, it has recently 'resurrected' itself as a pro-presidential party, and received a 'bonus' of three seats in the first round of the 2000 parliamentary elections from the authorities for its zeal and loyalty. The parliamentary 'Union of Labour' had also split and the PNS emerged headed by president-oriented Leonid Sechko.

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[120] For more chronological details, see Marples, D. (1999) *Belarus: The Denationalized Nation.* Post-Communist States and Nations. Harwood Academic Publications.

[121] Full list of party names is available in Appendix 1.

[122] Ministry of Justice, Belarus, 1999.

Nevertheless, after counting losses, some parties, especially on the right (reformist wing), managed to re-structure and find other sources of finance by establishing links with western *familles spirituelles* and receiving generous donations from their clientele and well-wishers. This pool of resources cannot last long and is largely conditioned by the party's prospects for winning public office. Other, more traditional parties, like the communist and the labour parties, and in part the nationalists, were less successful in securing their reputation and finances with western help, and presently struggle for survival by attempting to maintain party discipline through promises and street democracy. Thus, party organisational efforts have always been sensibly directed at gaining public office – a symbol of security and power; and adapting their internal structure to the demands of this reality. The latter, as practice demonstrates, is characterised by the gradual acquisition by oppositional parties of managerial skills, reduction of membership and members' mutual autonomy, and finally, capital intensive and issue-based campaigns. Hence, global trends have impacted on national transition and party system development in the Republic of Belarus. There is, nevertheless, one problem, that is, these trends somehow do not stipulate party system institutionalisation: parties in Belarus remain legitimate, but powerless.

Therefore, in this chapter, the focus of analysis will be on parties in public office, their structure and leadership between 1990 and 2000. The task will be twofold: first, to identify the mode and prospects of party system development by means of assessing their activities in public office; and secondly, to establish whether parties in Belarus are really declining or whether they are subject to survival strategies. For these purposes a statistical and descriptive analysis of MPs' voting behaviour was conducted.

4.1.1 Methodology and working hypotheses

The relatively new method of Multidimensional Scaling based on a single ballot voting has been specially adopted by the author for the analysis of parties' structure in Belarus' parliaments between 1990 and 2000.

Political structure of the parliament can be regarded as a combination of deputies' individual positions and their spatial constellations. On the one hand, these positions should reflect the deputies' political legacies, of which ideological stance, partisanship, political biography, personal ambitions and functional duties are the most salient. On the other hand, the distribution of deputies' positions in space may reveal existing or potential conflicts, around which extra-parliamentary oppositions may emerge.

This study of MPs' positions over time is based on their voting response to some 'hot' issues presented by parliament for discussion. While voting, deputies have to express their own opinions by voting 'yes', 'no' or 'abstained' to the issue. By using time series, aggregation of their discrete preferences into coherent voting patterns and coalitional configurations can be achieved. Single ballot voting is a unique source of information, provided it is run on an extensive database, and there is no strict partisan discipline within the legislature which could limit dispersion of opinions. This method allows a fuller picture of latent and evident political bonds between the members of parliament. It may help draw an accurate image of political actors, parallel to their rhetoric and communicative skills, which becomes evident from MPs' interviews and the text below.

Three principal approaches may be used to define parliamentary structure. First, traditionally MPs' voting behaviour may be assessed on a comparative basis. In particular, the estimation of deputies' positions in the legislature can be derived from the correlation between MPs' expected and real voting behaviour, assessed by external expert organisations. The share of probability that 'ideal' judgment will coincide with MPs' real behaviour will indicate the level of performance and functional fulfilment of the candidates. This method, for example, is widely used for observing Congress' activity in the USA. Recently it has been applied in Russia for assessing the efficacy of the Duma (Parliament) (Sobyanin, 1997). The principal difficulty of this approach rests in its potential subjectivism rooted in expert opinions.

The second approach operates within a broader database providing statistical observations of issues in time series. It also gives an aggregate picture of existing and potential tendencies of deputies' voting patterns, but is unable to operate with individual cases and interpret individual issues (Satarov, 1992).

In this research a third approach, initially introduced by the INDEM[123] Centre (Satarov, 1992) for structural analysis of the 1990-1992 Russian parliaments has been developed. It vividly combines advantages of the two previous methods and allows operation with objective data of smaller quantities of similar statistical precision. The method avoids previous shortcomings by building voting patterns on the basis of the *real* opinions of *individual* political actors. In multidimensional space a place is reserved for each deputy according to his/her voting pattern. Deputies with similar responses are clustered

[123] Institute for strategic Economic, Social and Political Research, Moscow.

together in space, and those with opposite views are scattered at a relative distance [Euclidean] from each other. Received through (i) interpretation of constellations of the disputed issues, and (ii) allocation of deputies' names, their partisanship, the ideological dimensions designate existing conflict lines and provide a background for segregation of deputies into groups. Further group analysis, developed by the author, assists examination of levels of cohesion, activity, conformity, professionalism and interest orientation of deputies in factions.

In order to adequately structure MP' positions in political space, an extensive database is required. This research is unique in this sense, that it allows dynamic analysis of the structure of the Belarusian Parliament, comprising the results of single ballot voting from 1990 to 1996 parliamentary bulletins[124] (13 sessions), and includes at least 31 issues (questions) debated by approximately 345 members of parliament[125].

MPs' choices were converted into ordinal matrices of numbers ranging from '-1' as a negative choice through '0' -abstained/did not vote, to '+1' as a positive option. Deputies' absence was treated as a missing system variable. Factor and Multidimensional Scaling analyses within the SPSS package allowed results to be further interpreted. The most debatable issues like dissolution of the USSR, ban of the CPSU, or dismissal of the pro-

[124] A major source of data is the annual parliamentary bulletins retrieved from the Presidential Library, Minsk, 1998. When missing, the author collected them from contacts with parliament.

[125] The author has developed an original method for single ballot analysis by adding a dynamic outlook on MPs' voting patterns in Belarus' parliaments between 1990 and 1999. This gives not only a 'snapshot' of the deputies' behaviour specific to a certain political year, but also outlines emerging conflicts and tendencies over time, and on a comparative basis.

democratic Spokesman of the 1992 parliament, were chosen for analysis[126]. The issues must be such that they can generate a wide scope of opinion and maximal personal engagement into the argument. Application of Factor analysis helped to separate these conflict issues in statistical and literal terms, around which the deputies' opinion considerably split. The method of Multidimensional Scaling helped to construct a coherent picture of MPs' positions in space. Received conflict lines, as well as actors' groupings, proved meaningful and revealing. The use of object-score analysis[127] within the multiple scaling allowed segregation of MP's into factions and examination of degrees of activity, cohesion, conformity and voting profiles of these groups[128].

A similar technique was used for analysis of the political structure of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies between 1990 and 1992[129]. This can form a basis for comparison of the former with the Belarus parliaments of 1990-1996. The first seven Russian Congresses of People's Deputies were indeed the first indecisive attempt of the

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[126] This proved to be the most difficult part of the analysis. Each parliamentary session had a multifaceted agenda. In order to chose a number of issues, annual combined parliamentary reports had to be analysed first (content analysis). When a list of issues was compiled, it was followed by individual analysis of voting results on each debated issue and its full contextual background retrieved from separate bulletins for each year from 1990 to 1999. The eventual matrix on a single year combined of about 345 cases against at least 31 issues (statistically significant), and was seven times more for the overall database.

[127] This method, available within SPSS 8.5, was found by the author as very informative about the group structure of voting deputies, and hence, was utilised to receive a fuller picture of both MPs and factions.

[128] Indexes were developed by the author (with a notable exception of Ia) in an attempt to achieve a fuller picture of factional activity in Belarus' parliaments between 1990 and 1996.

[129] Full description can be obtained from Special bulletins 'Rossiiskii Monitor' (Satarov, 1992-5) issued by INDEM, Moscow.

democrats to break through the old Soviet mentality in order to establish a new course. Elected MPs had gone through a short but rich parliamentary experience before they were dismissed in September 1993 by president Yeltsin. The composition of the parliament was very similar to that in Belarus. The old-guard communist bloc dominated the parliamentary arena. Hesitant and dispersed democratic forces were slow to emerge and this caused an intensifying conflict between the parliament and the president, which resulted in a stalemate and eventual parliamentary demise in 1993.

Belarus' parliament had undergone a similar 'thorny' path before its dismissal by president Lukashenko in 1996. The difference in life span, despite the obvious contextuality, has its own validation for comparison of the two national parliaments. For Belarus, as a newly emerged state with 'imported' rather than inborn democracy, it should take much longer to establish itself on a sovereign democratic path than that in Russia, due to various historical, economic and political reasons. Moreover, Congresses in Russia convened twice a year, 'doubling up' deputies' skills in decision-making, whereas in Belarus parliamentary sessions took the normal annual routine. Unicameral at that time, both national parliaments had to act in the situation of political uncertainty and extreme time pressure. The working regime was extremely tense – about 400 decrees and law corrections had been processed each year by both Parliaments. Finally, the nature of parliamentary conflict – between the old 'conservative' and the new 'reformist' as well as between pro- and anti-presidential camps – makes both parliaments valid for comparison, especially as data permit.

Working hypotheses

The first parliament was elected in Belarus in 1990, and in the best Soviet traditions was dominated by a majority of communist nomenklatura. According to law, fifty places out of 360, elected on the plurality basis, were allocated to a group of veterans, which was normally in favour of the communists. In these circumstances, the Belarusian Popular Front (BNF), a nationalist movement and a party calling for organisation of a broad coalition of pro-democratic forces in parliament. The oppositional democratic Club of 100 deputies was established soon after. It consisted of 25 members of BNF (not impressive compared to its Baltic neighbours) and of non-partisan, but democratically minded MPs, including Alexander Lukashenko, MP from the Mogilev region, and then a young director of a collective farm. The large force of party nomenklatura, nevertheless, had to make concessions to the democratic bloc. On a consensual basis and in opposition to Nikalai Dementei, a veteran functionary, the Chairman of the Supreme Council, Stanislav Shushkevich, a popular moderate MP from Minsk was elected as a first deputy. Viacheslav Kebich, a long-time factory manager and later a state planning *supremo*, was appointed to the position of the Prime Minister. Initially, Kebich had the reputation of a moderate democrat when compared to the majority of a reactionary Belarusian leadership. He supported the extended autonomy of Belarus from Moscow in economic affairs, and the initiation of mild economic reforms including some privatization. Thus, he became a promising candidate for the 1994 presidential election. Eventually, the Democratic Club broke up; and, as former members of the Club reveal, one of the reasons for its split was the fact that too many deputies wanted to be its leader.

Muddling through the overcrowded issue arena, the domination of the conservative wing, fictional democratic blocs[130], and indecisiveness of the three sequential spokesmen (Dementei, Shushkevich and Gryb), the parliament, nevertheless, made some decisive steps towards further democratisation. The 'Party of Power' composed of the government and its allies in parliament (with Kebich as head) soon emerged, although its political position at first was undefined. The toleration of freedom of speech and political expression by authorities was considerable; and moderate economic liberalisation took place. From 1993, however, the Belarusian political arena became characterised by a rather antagonistic, although non-violent, confrontation between the Party of Power, and the BNF-led opposition. This configuration of political forces was similar to that in Ukraine, where the party nomenklatura also maintained a strong power position, led by President Kravchuk, and was opposed by a moderate democratic and nationalist opposition. Based on consensus and compromise, the issue of independence facilitated political unity in Ukraine for a continuing period[131], and this became the principal difference in politics between the two countries. The political attitudes of the governing elites in both countries were strikingly different as well[132]. The Belarusian

[130] One example of fictitious democratic groupings was the creation of the pro-democratic faction 'Belarus' in the 1993 parliament. It was headed by Viacheslav Kebich, and was formed for the presidential campaign before the 1994 election.

[131] There is a large section of the major opposition party, the Rukh, and other nationalist movements, including the Ukrainian Republican Party (URP). Kravchuk supported the latter, even though URP opposed him in the Presidential elections.

[132] Thus, in March 1991, the referendum on restoration of the USSR returned a 'yes-vote' from about 82% of Belarusians and 70% of Ukrainians. The 12% difference by itself could not explain the divergence of political trajectories between two countries. Moreover, public opinion in both countries

Party of Power was remarkably more conservative, even reactionary, than that in Ukraine or Russia in the Soviet era, and this conservatism seems to have helped to promote the conflict between the president elected in 1994, and the pro-democratic opposition. New and much freer parliamentary elections took place in 1995. However, the 13th Supreme Soviet appeared to be even more controversial than its predecessor. The communist and agrarian MPs of the newly elected Parliament declared their allegiance to Lukashenko. Yet, it was not clear whether the Parliament would have the chance to convene at all, as only 119 out of 260 deputies were elected. Lukashenko publicly declared that he would introduce presidential rule if parliamentary by-elections did not succeed. By December 1995 the 13th Supreme Soviet of 196 MPs was finally elected, despite the hindrances created by presidential authorities during the elections[133]. The new Parliament was still dominated by the Left - pro-government, Communists and Agrarians – who held almost 50 seats, and together they could vote/promote almost any decision. The speaker of the new Parliament, Semion Sharetskii, was the head of a collective farm representing the Agrarian Party. The leftwing factions, however, soon found themselves in disagreement with Lukashenko over his attempts to concentrate power in his hands at the expense of Parliament. As a consequence, political parties and

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was, perhaps, subject to "split consciousness." In Belarus, for a number of years the majority of the people were in favour of both national independence and a union with Russia. Consequently, in 1997 both issues were equally supported by large part of the population. In Ukraine, the same referendum produced 70% in favour of the union, while about 80% voted in favour of sovereignty of Ukraine. The referendum in Ukraine in December 1991 resulted with almost 90% for independence; while the 1995 referendum in Belarus on a "closer economic integration between Belarus and Russia" ended up with about 80% supporting the issue (Silitski, 2000).

[133] See Appendix 2 for details; or http://www.agora.it/elections/election/belarus.htm, retrieved June 2001.

parliamentary factions, except for 60 members of pro-Lukashenko faction 'Zgoda' and a few others, moved closer to each other. As Furman et al state:

> The political spectrum of Belarus began to take a strange shape. It seemed unclear how the parties succeeded in covering fully the political field (from the nationalists, social democrats, liberals to the communists, pan-slavists and greens). However, a new force, the President, had emerged. As this force grew, it began to pressurise the entire party spectrum. Because of pressure, parties naturally get closer to each other (Furman, et al. 1998: 135).

With the succession of Alexander Lukashenko to power, the newly elected parliament was soon 'dissolved' on the basis - in Lukashenko's words - of its inefficiency and inability to make adequate decisions. The new parliament was enacted in January 1997, and was composed of 110 MPs from the previous Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation, which had convened on Lukashenko's conditions. The new legislature became bi-cameral, non-partisan, compliant and unanimous in the best Soviet traditions.

Based on their observations of unsuccessful party progress revealed by continuing features of decline in partisan support and identification, many scholars conclude that undeveloped parties have already failed in Belarus (Zaprudnik, 1993; Marples, 1999; Manaev, 1998; Silitski, 2000). The party system remains incipient; leaders' political ambitions overstated, the general public under heard, and the power of the president dominant. The fact, that leading parties failed to remain in public office and to re-gain power in 2000, has also highlighted their downfall. Their activities in parliament

between 1990 and 1996 were explicitly characterised by petty frictions, lack of internal unity, inability to coalesce and to promote their factional interests, and overestimation of their authority and public loyalty.

As Rose and Mackie (1988:536) note, if a party did not partake in more than two elections in a new democracy, it can be regarded as an ephemeral party. However, what can be said if parties did not partake in elections deliberately, and not because of their weakness or lack of resources? The case of newly emerged democracies cannot be summarised in one statement, but has to be 'inclusively' analysed. Even though there have only been two official parliamentary elections – in 1995 and 2000, one presidential election in 1994 and one anti-presidential election campaign in 1999, it would still be misleading to make any assumptions regarding parties' survivability – and this is the peculiarity of Belarus as a new democracy! Parties were available for elections, and were identified and supported by voters. However, there were also a number of predicaments, both institutional and human, which parties failed to overcome. In the 1995 parliamentary elections, for example, (i) voter turnout was extremely low (just above 50%)[134], and those who turned up, demonstrated, in the majority, their traditional loyalty to the communists; (ii) parties canvassing strategies were over-ambitious and incongruent with their images; (iii) institutional (electoral code, constitution, presidency) and structural (government structure, economic crisis, state-owned media, scope for election fraud) contexts were not in favour of radically minded BNF or indecisive liberals and democrats; and finally (iv) culturally, the population in Belarus was not ready for a radical move to the wholesale re-structuring of their society.

[134] http://www.agora.it/elections/election/belarus.htm, retrieved June 2001.

Conversely, in 2000 the oppositional parties simply boycotted the elections to protest against the gross violations of law by the president and his administration. This, however, has been one of the limited opportunities for the opposition to enter into the dialogue with the authorities, and to reinforce their mandate in voters' opinions.

Parties' continuing inability to win public office alienates their voters from them and makes them less influential game-players. Paradoxically, the majority of the population, in spite of their 'practical' ignorance of parties, undoubtedly support their presence in society, as an antidote against the tendency for authoritarianism and a sliding back to the USSR. Moreover, remaining parties have small but stable group loyalties, which may be only 1% of the entire population, but this is the most politically active and committed part. Recent events such as the March of Freedom 1 (1999) and 2 (2000) and Independence Day rally (2000) gathered thousands of protesters who willingly showed their dissatisfaction with the regime. At the fore of these events have always been political parties. Therefore, the simple verdict that parties are failing cannot fully describe the complexity of their political development and explain parties' continuing upheavals. In this respect, the following tasks and hypotheses will be put forward:

First, party performance in the new democracy is heavily dependent on their position in government. The analysis of party behaviour in the Belarusian Parliaments between 1990 and 1999 should shed important light on the issue of party failure and prospects for political rejuvenation. It will be suggested that initial indecisiveness of democrats and politics of self-preservation, considerably hindered the process of institutionalisation of parties in parliament.

Second, inherited structures, including the pool of resources in the hands of the old-style nomenklatura, and public attitudes towards a strong leadership considerably decelerated the process of democratisation. The overestimation of external factors and unjustified beliefs in Russian or Western aid to promote democratic changes in Belarus did not benefit the opposition. In later years institutions and alterations in law have further stipulated the anti-oppositional politics and non-democratic changes.

The analysis below will demonstrate that the pre-1997 Belarusian parliament had the potential to remain in power, and to develop into a large democratic body that could have promoted the further democratisation of the society. However, it became clear that to have the potential for system institutionalisation is not enough, and evidently, does not of itself provide the basis for irreversible democratisation. Political actors do not solely define the rules of the game; there are also structures and institutional norms that stipulate the further course of events. The emerging democrats in Belarus were confronted by a conservative majority of Soviet-style functionaries who had the advantage of skills, electoral support and control over the state resources. Consequentially, the democrats were defeated by the nomenklatura, as well as by Soviet legacies, public attitudes, formal and informal linkages and institutions. Therefore, one can witness intensive vote interchange; legitimate, but voiceless parties; the tendency for the presidency to strengthen, and continuing political and economic stagnation. The logic of parties' failure in parliament and possible mechanisms of its reiteration will be discussed in the text below.

It must be noted that the issue of personal ambitions and commitment of party members to democratisation are important for an understanding of party system development in new states. Weak party bonds, members' self-seeking benefits and lack of uniformity tend to bring a party system to stall. If, however, the party structure is operative, this can be subdued to a general goal of party activities. As Sartori notes:

> … the existence of parties by no means eliminates selfish and unscrupulous motivations. The power-seeking drives of politicians remain constant. Nevertheless, even if the party politician is motivated by crude self-interest, his behaviour must depart—if the constraints of the system are operative—from the party motivation (Sartori, 1976: 25).

Therefore, the overall party structure, both internal and external will be subject to further investigation.

4.1.2 Belarus' Parliament between 1990 and 1999: a general picture.

The 1990-1996 Belarusian parliaments accumulated the 'cream' of political society in the sense that the majority of the party leadership was elected into public office. This allowed some parties like PCB, BNF, AP, and ODP to settle down further, and others – GD, PNS, BSDG, etc – to be centrally launched. Largely orientated towards public office, parties were top-down structured and had very weak links with their grassroots. While in public office, parties were financially supported by the state. All party representatives had their own office, staff, technical, financial and media resources.

These accommodating developments strengthened a tendency for the domination of parliamentary party over extra-parliamentary organisations. In 1996 there was an attempt to create a joint party – parliamentary office structure: ODP and GD merged into the faction 'Civic Action' (GD) and set up the United Civic Party, largely based in parliament. PNS in alliance with BSDG NG found themselves in a similar situation: they formed a social-democratic faction, 'Labour Union', with the majority of their leadership in parliament. These tendencies have been concomitant with a reduction in numbers of party central office staff, and relocation of staff for public office by the majority of parties. By 1996 all parliamentary parties were using state resources to subsidise their own staff, including regional organisations: from technical equipment to free usage of communication sources and the state owned mass media. PCB and BNF were the only exception to a general tendency of the cooperation with the state. They based their principal 'party machinery' outside of parliament, and had a comparatively large proportion of staff attached to the central office (about 10-15 paid staff). They represented a distinctive mass type of party with an extensive regional network and relatively large membership of 16 000 for PCB and 7 000 for BNF[135] in 1996. The situation with BNF in parliament was less favourable than that of any other party. It managed to promote 44 candidates during the parliamentary elections in 1995[136], but

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[135] PCB had a compulsory membership fee – 1% of monthly wages. With the 1996 financial failure, it changed its policy towards a more flexible and affordable form of cooperation with its members, on the basis of free donations and voluntarily contributions. On the other hand, BNF initially had a non-compulsory membership fee largely based on donations. One of the modern features of the BNF organisation is membership flexibility: there is no clear-cut distinction between members and non-members as long as the latter could contribute to the party legitimising myth.

[136] See, http://jurix.jura.uni-sb.de/~serko/law_pol/politics.html, retrieved June 2001.

failed to have a single candidate elected to parliament during the second election run in November-December. This is thought to be due to the party's radical and militant style of politics, especially during the election campaign, and reported fraud by authorities of adding non-existent (deceased) names to electoral lists in voting constituencies, and manipulating their vote to their own advantage.

The programmatic structure of 1990-1999 Belarusian parliaments demonstrates a two-dimensional polarisation, which can only be observed during the 1990-1996 period. It is based on identification of deputies' names and their partisan stances, as well as interpretation of voted issues. Party competition is organised along two principal conflict lines, 'conservative-reformist'[137] and 'power allocation'. The first divide highlights economic populism, authority, state social protection, re-union with Russia versus sovereignty, economic liberalism and support for EU integration. The second divide displays the conflict over power distribution in the new democracy: this revolves around power arrangements between the legislature and the executives in the first instance, and with the introduction of the presidency, develops into a 'democracy-dictatorship' dilemma. These developments seem to be similar to those in Russia and according to White and McAllister:

[137] Scholars avoid naming this divide as 'left-right' due to the general confusion and the absence of clear interpretation of the issue. It nevertheless has a particular meaning characteristic of the CIS with communist successor, agrarians, and labour parties on the left, and in opposition to them, social democratic, liberal, and nationalist parties (see Kitschelt, H. (1995); Markowski, R. (1997); Evans, G. and Whitefield, S (1998); Janda, K. (1988).

> The dimensions of party competition are likely to follow two cleavages: a reformist cleavage and a communist cleavage. The reformist cleavage is complex, insofar as it is clearly divided between those who retain some communist sympathies and those who oppose communism in principle. Nevertheless, the evidence about the social bases of this dimension suggests that it may become aligned along an economically interventionist/ free-market cleavage (White and McAllister, 1995: 67).

There are similarities in voting patterns between 1990 and 1991, as well as the 1992-1995 parliaments. The 1996 parliament was a watershed in conflict development between the legislature and the president, after which parliament was dissolved and reformed in favour of a more compliant one. If in 1990 and 1991 one could trace a centrifugal tendency with equal power weight in distribution of political forces, the 1992-1995 parliament displayed an opposite tendency. The reformists appeared to be on the left outside of the spectrum, being dominated by the communists on the right. This unprecedented situation can be explained by negative voting by the democrats on the majority of the issues advanced by the conservative bloc. The 1993 parliament is clearly pro-communist, with the policy-making initiative in hands of the conservative majority, and its regular boycotting by pro-democratic forces. The stalemate was inevitable, and both blocs called for the 1994 presidential election. The 1994 parliament proved an exception with the democratic forces breaking through and re-gaining the initiative. This was determined by the events of the political year: the unexpected victory of a non-partisan candidate Alexander Lukashenko during the presidential election, and the scandalous defeat of the old-style conservative forces that supported Kebich in his 'back-to-the-USSR' campaign for the presidency. The distribution of MPs' positions during the 1992-1995 parliaments was characterised by

their gradual re-location along the 'power conflict' line. In essence, the 1996 parliament marked the apex of power conflict in society.

From the general analysis of MPs' positions in parliament one may notice that despite transitional political confusion and ideological vagueness, the communist bloc appears to be more unified than others. Historical legacies and institutional frameworks indeed had an effect on party discipline and structure. Furthermore, ideologically confused deputies, who voted inconsistently and rightward, can be more often found among the communists than any other party. However, the reformist wing had gradually solidified into a stable opposition by 1996. An analysis of the party coalition potential highlights the issues of professional immaturity and party leaders fearing to lose their 'familiar spots'[138]. Developments in the 1996 parliament clarify that even though parties were under pressure from the pro/anti-presidential divide, they nevertheless became relatively unified. Their resistance to Lukashenko's violations of law in October- November was indecisive and weak, and ultimately failed after brief negotiations with Viktor Chernomyrdin, one the Russian leading politicians.

Comparative analysis suggests that Belarus' parliament between 1990 and 1999 was better structured in its political alliances, and more resistant to change, than that of the Russian Congresses between 1990 and 1992. According to the MPs' voting positions, Belarusian legislatures, however, are characterised by a unified conservative, rather than a democratic bloc. Using methods of data reduction in assessing MPs' voting results,

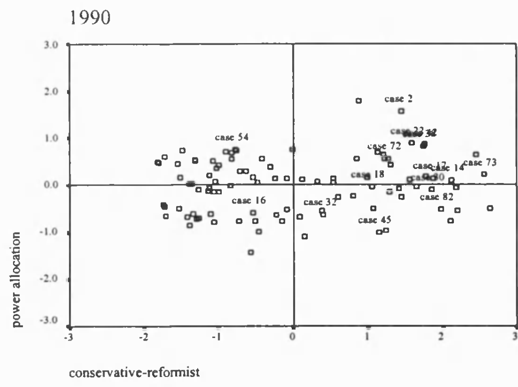
[138] More to the point, the deputies were afraid of losing their 'free ride' from the government, and hence, moderately played their oppositional role in the political game.

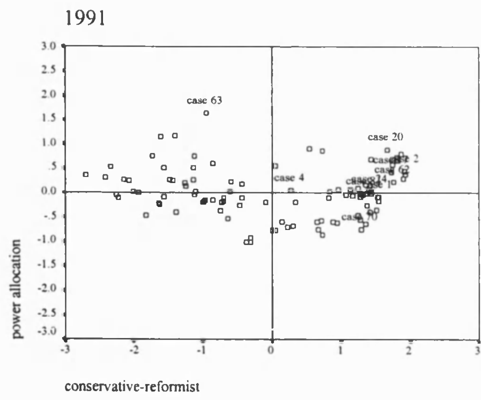
one can approximate parliamentary structure and establish possible patterns of deputies' voting behaviour.

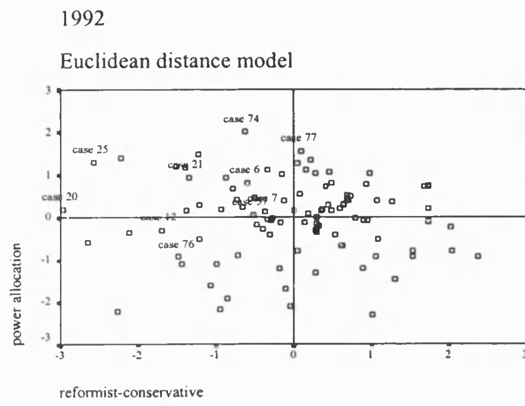
Figures 4.1.2-1. Positions of members of Belarus' parliaments between 1990 and 1996

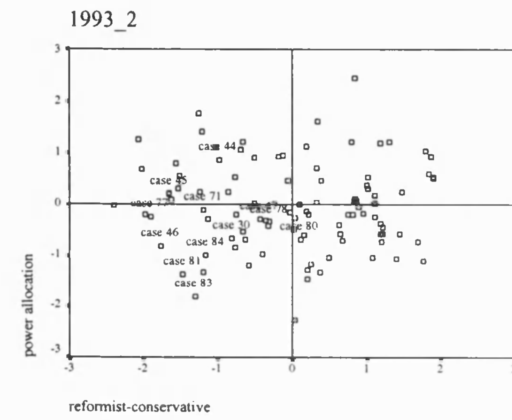
Notes: Graphics are based on the Multi-dimensional analysis of deputies' voting behaviour received from parliamentary bulletins (13 sessions) between 1990 and 1996. Distribution of named cases reflects voting preferences of those deputies, who formally belonged to a democratic bloc in parliament. For full description of methodology see text (section 4.1.1).

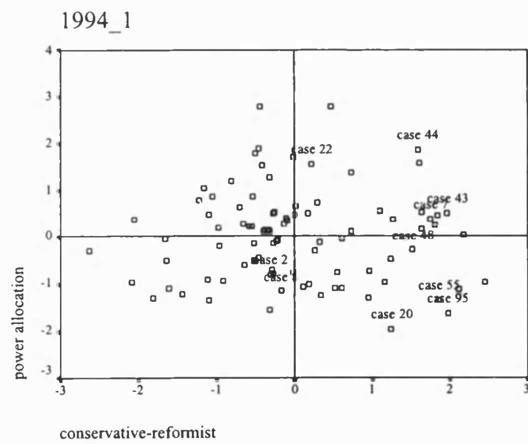
Source: Parliamentary Bulletins 1990-1996, Presidential Library, Minsk, Belarus, 1998.

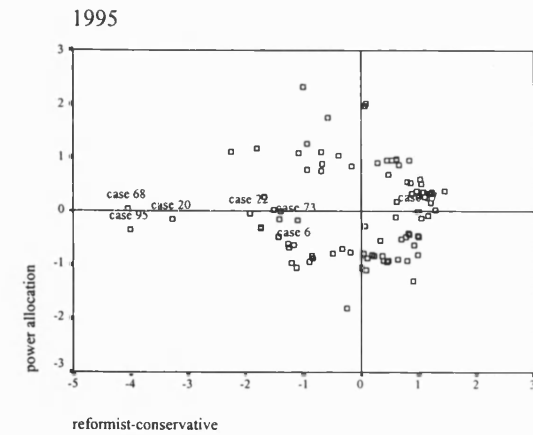

1990
power allocation
conservative-reformist

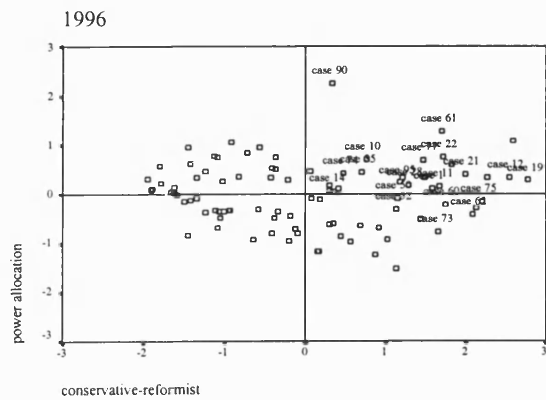

1991
case 63
case 20
case 4
power allocation
conservative-reformist


1992
Euclidean distance model
case 74
case 77
case 25
case 6
case 76
power allocation
reformist-conservative


1993_2
case 71
case 46
case 84
case 81
case 83
power allocation
reformist-conservative


1994_1
case 44
case 22
case 43
case 20
power allocation
conservative-reformist


1995
case 68
case 20
case 95
case 6
power allocation
reformist-conservative


1996
case 90
case 61
case 10
case 73
power allocation
conservative-reformist

1990 parliament: According to deputies' positions and voting tendencies on 'hot issues', a two-dimensional polarisation in the legislature was observed, with the communists on the left and the new democrats on the right and partially in the centre. The Y-axis is less intense and seems to accumulate less controversy according to the degree of dispersion of opinions. The issue of legislative power arrangement on the national level received much interest from the democratic group, and caused some degree of polarisation in discussion. The ideological controversy of mobilised interests in the 1990 parliament also generated factional activity among the deputies. The picture reflects crystallisation of the pro-democratic opposition.

If one were to compare these findings with the spatial distribution of MPs' positions in the first Russian Congress of People's Deputies (16 May -22 June 1990), elected after the declaration of sovereignty by Russia, there is little difference to be observed. Both plots are evenly distributed along the 'conservative-reformist' axis – the main line for party competition[139].

1991 parliament: A similar pattern of voting behaviour among deputies can be traced in the 1991 parliament. In the latter case, though, the democratic camp seemed more crystallised. According to the deputies' configuration and issue distribution, the left-right division still persists, with pro-communists on the left and pro-democrats – on the right. The distribution of MPs' positions became 'butterfly' shaped, spreading more

[139] The only difference is in labelling of the left and the right ends of the spectrum: in Russia the right end of the chart is conservative and the left end is reformist. The Belarusian parliament attained similar shape in 1993, and 1995.

along the Y-axis – 'power allocation' conflict. The principal controversy that steered the conflict, refer to such issues as the mandate and functions of the Supreme Soviet, the role of CPRB in Belarus, which was consequently banned that year, the dismissal of democratic-oriented Spokesman Stanislav Shushkevich; de-politicisation of the government; and transition to the market economy. The ideological disparity between deputies has sharpened. Each issue positively voted for by one camp, led the other camp sequentially to its rejection. Faction-analysis, however, suggests that the bloc of hard-liners was more cohesive and consistent in their voting patterns, and fully subjugated to the parliamentary arena. This ideological polarisation between the communist-dominated majority and pro-democratic minority eventually led to a deadlock in decision-making. In 1992 the BNF encouraged the initiation of a signature-gathering campaign for a referendum with the purpose of dissolution of the old parliament and election of a new parliament.

1992 parliament: The left-right pattern in MPs' voting behaviour attained a centripetal tendency. Ideological polarisation had dramatically subsided. Interestingly, existing ideological blocs reversed: The democratic opposition moved to the left end of the X-axis, which might have implied their defensive position, illustrated by negative voting on a majority of the issues. On the other hand, this relocation of poles may suggest the communist advancement. At the same time, factional analysis confirmed consolidation of the democratic forces. There is a distinct democratic tail in the picture, which indicates a certain degree of polarisation of forces including the extreme positions of some democratically minded MPs. Figure 3 points out an increasing ideological divide along the 'power line'. As an analysis of voting issues confirms, principal debates

revolved around the reformation of parliamentary structure and the introduction of new procedural regulations.

If one compares the 1992 legislature in Belarus with the third Russian Congress, 28 March-5 April 1991, an obvious significant difference becomes evident in performance of the two national parliaments. Both legislatures reached their crucial point when old communist forces advanced. In Russia the conservative wing convened an extraordinary session in order to ban Yeltsin from power, which was pro-democratic at that time, from governance. Parliamentary polarisation was razor-sharp: democratic forces in response to the conservative motion consolidated to defeat the attack. In Belarus the conservative camp in parliament also became intensively engaged, trying to secure benefits in relation to the introduction of the presidency. In reply, democratic forces within the nationalists and social democrats organised a campaign on vote collection to call for new parliamentary elections. Contrary to the situation in Russia, their endeavour failed, due to internal disagreements within the party leadership. This has signified a new era in party and parliamentary developments in Belarus.

1993 parliament: The distribution of deputies' positions in the 1993 parliament is characterised by a high degree of dispersion and a further centripetal move. The parliament appeared to be more 'centrist', and MPs' voting patterns lack any ideological or programmatic division. Competition lines also seemed blurred and faction analysis suggests no separation whatsoever. The general picture illustrates domination of the communists in parliament.

1994 parliament: Voting patterns of the deputies began attaining some centrifugal features. Interestingly, the ideological ends of the spectrum have changed again: the reformists moved back to the right, and the communists formed a left orientated opposition. Pole change suggests that democratic forces re-gained their confidence and concomitantly their constructive initiative, which was reflected in their positive voting results. According to this picture there was no balancing centre. The communist bloc this time looks more consolidated and left centred. This may imply some uncertainty or moderation in communist voting behaviour. As results confirm, they either abstained from voting or voted rather hesitantly and inconsistently. A 'power divide' prevailed as the central line for party competition. The principal issues raised for discussion in parliament related to the introduction of the presidency and measures for economic revival of the country in a situation of crisis.

1995 parliament: The 1994 centrifugal movement gained in scale in 1995. There was a distinct lack of a balanced centre, with a very heavy communist tail on the right (spectrum ends have reversed again!) and rather dispersed democratic forces in defence on the right. The left-right divide has gradually sharpened, reducing tension over power allocation in society. Factional analysis suggests, however, that both conflict lines have contributed to party competition in parliament. The domination of traditional nomenklatura persisted.

The structure of Russian Parliaments, the fourth (21-25 May 1991), the fifth (10-17 July 1991) and the sixth (6-21 April 1992) Congresses resembles that in Belarus. Both

parliaments demonstrated a gradual loss of ideological profile by existing political factions and groups of interest.

1996 parliament: From figure 7 one can see that the centrifugal motion of political forces has resulted in their even distribution along the X-axis. Its linear form resembles that of the 1990 legislature. However, the composition of political forces is radically different. Disintegrated communists, pro-presidential faction 'Zgoda', and non-partisan candidates, represent the left pole of the spectrum. The centre is blended and represented by the moderately left agrarians and transient communists. Civic Action and Social Democratic factions complete the picture on the right reformist end. Individually positioned, the deputies did not display much controversy along the power allocation line. Party competition in reality, however, was characterised by high tension between parliament and the president, which resolved in favour of the latter. Only factional analysis indicates rising disagreements: factions, rather than individuals were engaged in the conflict. This marked a new development in party politics of Belarus.

If compared with the seventh (1-14 December 1992) Russian Congress of People's Deputies, a striking similarity in structure of both parliaments arises again, especially in the light of the forthcoming common finale: parliaments' dissolution by the presidents due to the occurred impasse in decision-making. The only difference, though, is that democratic forces in the Russian Parliament were more unified, whereas in Belarus' the right bloc was still obscure.

Despite the consequent failure, both national parliaments had well-articulated factions. The Belarusian legislature had five factions: 'Zgoda' (57 members) with Vladimir Konoplev (the deputy Chairman of the House of Representatives), agrarian faction (45) with Michael Giryt' as leader, communist faction (43) – Sergei Kaliakin, faction of social-democrats 'Labour Union' (18) – Leonid Sechko; and liberal faction 'Civic Action' (18) – Stanislav Bogdankevich. The remaining 18 were independent non-partisan members of parliament. In the Russian parliament in 1992 there were 10 well-defined factions, and six of them entered the new parliament on the basis of the 1993 elections.

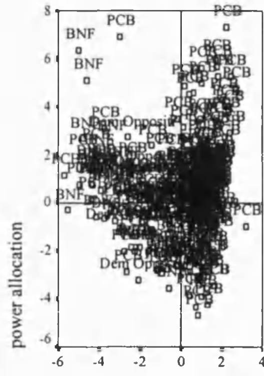
Factional analysis of parliamentary structure between 1990 and 1996 showed much similarity in configuration of ideological blocs. If parliamentary pictures reflected some degree of polarisation between deputies, the factional analysis proved the opposite, i.e. this polarisation occurred between individuals rather than ideological groups. 1994 and 1996 parliaments stand aside from the general picture. The shape demonstrates a relative advance of the pro-democratic factional forces. Their detailed analysis will be provided later in the text.

Figures 4.1.2-2. Positions of factions in Belarus' parliaments between 1990 and 1996

Notes: Graphics are based on the Multi-dimensional analysis (object-score) factions' positions in parliament, which were obtained from parliamentary bulletins (13 sessions) between 1990 and 1996. Factions are named. For full description of methodology see text (section 4.1.1).

Source: Parliamentary Bulletins 1990-1996, Presidential Library, Minsk, Belarus, 1998.

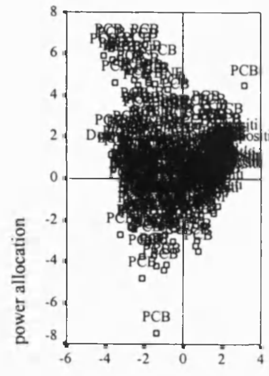
1990 Object Scores



conservative-reformist

Cases weighted by number of objects.

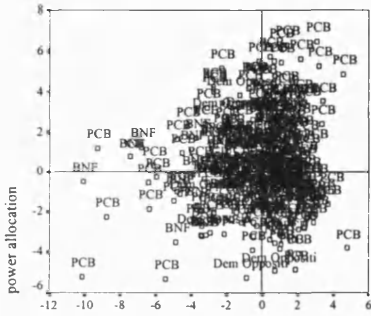
1991 Object Scores



conservative-reformist

Cases weighted by number of objects

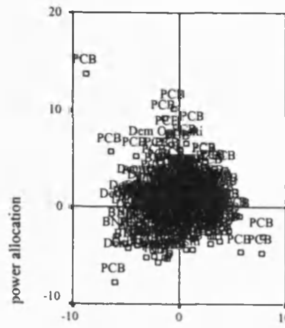
1992 Object Scores



conservative-reformist

Cases weighted by number of objects.

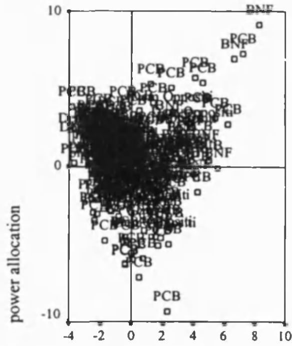
1993 Object Scores



conservative-reformist

Cases weighted by number of objects.

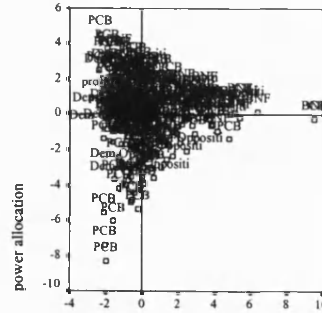
1994 Object Scores



conservative-reformist

Cases weighted by number of objects.

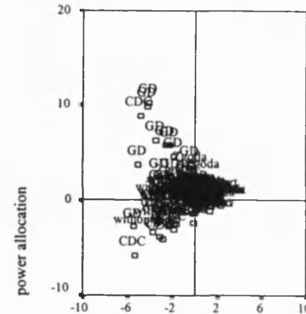
1995 Object Scores



conservative-reformist

Cases weighted by number of objects.

1996 Object Scores



conservative-reformist

Cases weighted by number of objects.

Shortly after the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet of the 13th convocation in 1996, a new bi-cameral legislature was formed in Belarus. In January 1997 110 deputies entered the House of Representative of the National Assembly of Belarus. The upper house – The Council of Republic – had 64 members; eight of who were appointed by the president, and the rest were elected from the six regions of the republic and Minsk.

The practice of single ballot voting was cancelled by a joint decision of deputies, as it "could have again caused a deadlock in discussion" (from interviews with members of parliament). This respectively did not allow further analysis of parties' coalitional behaviour. The aim of the new legislature was to work 'effectively', without any 'ideological' complications. Therefore, the voting procedure was simplified to the level of aggregate results only. This makes it impossible to draw a picture of personalised positions of the members in the new parliament. However, the unanimous way of voting in most cases can give a general impression of the parliamentary structure as such (Bulletins of 1-5 sessions of the House of representative of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, 1997-1999). This unified voting undoubtedly had increased the efficacy of the new legislature. If the 1996 Parliament (9 January – 11 July) had considered only 59 bills, 399 decrees, and the quantity of rejected proposals was about 600; the new parliament produced 261 bills and 836 decrees for the two-year period (20 December 1997- 10 February 1999). Interestingly, 239 bills were ultimately approved by the president and only 22 were left for re-consideration by parliament[140]. According to the new regulations the president forms the parliamentary agenda and makes procedural suggestions. Nevertheless, the fact that the new parliament was more

[140] *Summary reports, Parliamentary Bulletins 1990-1999*, Presidential Library, Minsk, Belarus.

'productive' in its legislative activities had a negative contribution to a declining image of the oppositional parties.

As one can see the new parliament has radically changed: non-partisanship and compliance were peacefully negotiated between the president and the new members of parliament. The former obtained a trouble-free existence from parliament, and the newly entered MPs attained power and access to state resources, including relatively high salaries, and free accommodation in the capital of Belarus, Minsk.

4.1.3 Factional politics in the 1996 parliament

For the first time in Belarus' history the parliament was formally divided into 5 party factions, two of which were pro-democratic ('Civic Action' and 'Union of Labour'), another two – left-oriented ('The Communist and The Agrarian Factions) and the largest pro-presidential faction 'Zgoda'; and 18 non-partisan members of parliament. The number of pro-democratic deputies could have been much higher if the amendment to the electoral law introduced by the 12th Supreme Soviet, had been enacted. It was designed to lower the threshold for the attendance of the parliamentary elections from 50% to 25%. Lukashenko suggested not enacting it to the Constitutional Court until after the next elections. Bowing to this pressure, the Constitutional Court revoked its judgement. As Silitski (2000: 21) notes, this decision considerably reduced the chances of the oppositional parties to obtain enough votes in order to win seats in parliament (second rounds were mostly carried out in urban areas where neither the Communists or Agrarians had strong support).

The elected 1995-6 parliament, nevertheless, had well-defined political factions. As Multidimensional analysis and Crosstabulation show, the three distinct blocs can be observed in the 1996 legislature. The largest two factions, pro-presidential 'Zgoda' and non-partisan deputies, were followed by the Communists (PCB) and the Agrarian Party (AP). Civic Action (GD) and Social Democrats (CDC) formed the opposite pole of the model. The principal issues that polarised the parliament were 'to interpret whether the dissolution of the USSR was legitimate', to approve further actions towards re-union with Russia, change of the state coat of arms, public right of ownership, new additions to the law on parliamentary elections and so on. There was a distinct 'left-right' demarcation on certain ideological issues, with 'Zgoda', non-partisan, PCB and AP on the left and the democratic bloc on the right. 'Zgoda' was the only faction that voted positively on the issues related to empowering presidential authority, being opposed by the rest of the parliament.

The major concern of MPs was to maintain separation of powers between the legislature and the executives. For the first time, most irreconcilable political opponents began working together. With Civic Action's insistence many liberal economic laws were adopted, for which most factions, except the Communists, positively voted. Broad political coalition of oppositional forces resisted Lukashenko's desire to establish one-man rule for at least a year.

The overall analysis showed that party competition in parliament was scattered and non-partisan. Members of parliament frequently acted on personal grounds rather than from partisan or factional perspectives. The politics of factions was rather ineffective; only the 1990, 1992 and 1996 parliaments displayed some movement towards coalitional

behaviour of deputies. Otherwise, the individual choice of faction-members dominated proceedings, rather than a concerted promotion of factional interests. As issues-analysis suggests the 1996 parliamentary factions displayed remarkable cohesion along the power line – presidential divide[141]. Nevertheless, they failed to resist presidential pressure and were consequently dismissed from office. Existing polarisation in the 1996 parliament could have resulted in fierce and long-term resistance by the democratic forces to the presidential volition. However, this has not been the case.

A closer look at the distribution of the deputies' positions in space in accordance with their ideological profiles, demonstrates no principal division. Only the Social Democrat (CDC 'The Labour Union') and 'Civic Action' factions appeared to stand out clearly from a general factional bulk; the rest merged into a complex political magma. The findings confirm that the programmatic and ideological profiles of the majority of MPs were largely blurred, thus aiding Lukashenko's victory.

Similarity and difference between political factions in parliament can be depicted using a number of indices. Index of voting (Iv) characterises the level of political engagement of deputies into the process of decision-making. Its score is determined by (i) ultimate response of the group members to raised issues; (ii) their crystallised position rather than 'vacant' vote of abstention or absence; and finally (iii) the level of integrity of opinions within the group. Therefore, the higher the score, the more fully mobilised, active and

[141] This can be illustrated by the manner of voting on the issue to give a vote of non-confidence to the Cabinet of Ministers: the split occurred mainly between the left-oriented 'Zgoda', and the bloc of Civic action and CDC. The rest of the parliament remained neutral.

deeply engaged the group in discussion. Index of cohesion (Ic) reinforces the meaning of the previous variable by indicating the level of dispersion of opinions from an average voter within a faction. It is measured as a mean of standard deviation deducted from 1 as a whole, and shows that with a higher score, a group becomes more cohesive and less controversial. Index of conformity (Ico) measures the level of resemblance of group behaviour to that of the entire parliament. It is counted as a relative share of mean opinion from that of the overall model. The closer the score is to '1' the more the conflict/consensus relationship within the group resembles that in parliament. If the score is beyond the range [0; 1] this may indicate that the group actually exercises a radically diverse pattern of behaviour from the parliamentary majority. The last index – the Index of activity (Ia) – was introduced by Ygrinovich (1996, Table 6) in her analysis of the 1996 parliament, and was calculated as a group average of deputies' voting scores. The higher the score the more active a deputy's behaviour is.

Table 4.1.2-1. Indexes of factions' voting behaviour in the 1996 parliament

Factions	Indexes			
	Of voting	**Of cohesion**	**Of conformity**	**Of activity**
Zgoda	0.07	0.47	**2.72**	-1.59
The Communists	0.23	0.53	0.88	-0.98
The Agrarians	0.23	0.41	0.88	-0.32
Non-Partisan	0.26	0.38	0.77	+0.07
Civic Action	0.25	0.41	0.81	+1.34
CDC Union of Labour	0.32	0.41	0.62	+0.93

Note: Further explanation can be found in the text.

Source: author

From the analysis of parliamentary factions it becomes clear that the 1996 parliament did not have distinctive factional divisions. The democratic bloc was increasingly engaged into political discussion, given the higher level of *Iv* and *Ia*; however it was less organised and more personified in the process of decision-making. The left, the Communist and the Agrarian factions in opposition, were more unified and disciplined, however their traditional compliance with the leadership led to their failure to resist Lukashenko's accretion of power. The most persistent and decisive in its voting behaviour was the pro-presidential faction 'Zgoda'. Its voting pattern (Ico) appeared to be radically different from the entire parliament, which reinforces the argument regarding the existence of a strong anti-Lukashenko divide between the parties in parliament. Non-partisan members of parliament, as anticipated, acted rather inconsistently by signifying a general mode of uncertainty, conformity and growing apathy towards ideology-based politics. Finally, according to Ygrinovich, the new legislature appeared to be composed of the least active and most compliant members of the previous parliament (1996:15-18). Moreover, after applying a discriminant method to determine MPs' motives for entering the new parliament, Ygrinovich discovered that the factor of loyalty to President Lukashenko motivated 72% of pro-presidential MP's and discouraged 68% of anti-presidential MP's from joining the new parliament. Therefore, the president obtained the support of the less active and the most compliant part of the deputies' corps and in so doing revived the 'old Supreme Soviet'.

Analysis of groups' interest-orientation suggests that there was no major programmatic division between factions. They did not have clear policies; were inconsistent in their issue voting behaviour and did not deliver their promises to their electorates. However, ideological separation took place, despite declining party competition. As cross-tabulation confirms the left-oriented factions PCB, AP, and to some degree, Zgoda often voted against the democratic right Civic Action and CDC simply on the basis of disagreements in form rather than in nature.

4.1.4 Further discussion

As it was hypothesised at the beginning of the chapter, the parliamentary arena is highly desirable for parties in the new democracies. It brings power, security and benefits by providing relatively independent existence for parties from the electorate. With global changes in party politics, strategies for co-operation with the state prevail, not only in established democracies, but also in new and developing ones. The initial hypothesis suggested that new parties would act in accordance to their rationale and 'practical logic', and therefore, would attempt to find less costly and more effective means for survival.

This analysis of Belarusian parties in public office, however, delivers an ambivalent conclusion. First, one can conclude that the parties in public office indeed had an opportunity for institutionalisation and successful survival. Belarus' two pre-1997 parliaments had developed into a structured body with well-defined cleavages and organised competitive forces. There was a certain degree of polarisation of interests, which under a moderate number of parties, with relative proportionality of forces, might

have had the potential to result in a stable system. Moreover, contrary to the general opinion that Belarus had no incentives to generate oppositional politics and by that to condition democratic breakthrough, our study has confirmed that Belarus' parliament in 1990-1996 was better structured than that of Russia before its dissolution in 1996. There were two salient divides associated with 'conservative-reformist' and 'power distribution' conflicts. They included such traditional issues as populism and moderation on the left, to marketisation and liberalisation on the right. Issues of sovereignty were also at stake, as opposed to the communists' idea of a happy return to the USSR. Power arrangements, as a second conflict line for party competition, came to the fore in 1992 and gradually reached its apex in 1996.

Over time the Belarusian legislature has developed well-organised and legitimate factions, and seems to have moved away from individual politics to the politics of factional coalitions. If in 1990 there was a moderate democratic minority opposed by the overwhelming majority of the communist nomenclature, by 1996 the situation was radically different. There was a formal division of the entire parliament into party factions, and the full engagement of members of parliament could be observed. Even non-partisan deputies have acted as if they belonged to a single group, having many parameters in common.

However, as analysis shows, the system potential does not in itself provide the motivation for irreversible democratic changes and party settlement. The 1996 parliament 'surrendered' its legitimacy in favour of an individual governance of the president in peaceful cooperation with the newly 'adapted' House of Representatives;

state owned mass media; newly appointed Constitutional Court, and pre-*perestroika* structures of regional powers.

Two equally important conclusions can be drawn from the received picture. The first and most obvious conclusion is that parties cannot fully sustain themselves in the unfavourable environment of Belarus, where institutional and structural conditions *by proxy* disregard opposition. Oppositional parties cannot bring together 'fringe' interests of civil society with the state, which in addition are entirely 'blocked' on regional levels by old-style nomenklatura. Governmental parties in turn have considerably reduced their efforts in linking the state with civil society, which occurred due to the availability of material resources and growing independence of the electorate. This leaves disillusioned voters with a choice to rationally switch their votes away from the parties who have increasingly become their 'second-order preferences', and to 'delegate' the president maximal authority to lead the country out of crisis. The issue of whether democracy can be possible at all, and without parties, is presently at stake and at the centre of political discussion.

On the other hand, if one evaluates party development, both oppositional and governmental, in terms of global change of party modality, it would be clear that parties are attaining a new quality, which may allow them to survive in the future. The 'presidential divide' appeared to be both damaging and stimulating for the party political development. Governmental parties by allying with the state have negotiated their benefits for future parliamentary campaigns and by that secured their prospect for survival. It may be observed that the president has bargained with loyalist parties for

seats in public office, which has led to a victorious electoral campaign for the parliamentary election:

> The state is able to ensure an honest and fair election campaign for you. You are head and shoulders above the others. You have a huge parliamentary experience. Our people are decent and just. If they sit down [to think it over], they will decide that there is no need to change one pack of people for another [menyat shilo na mylo]. Why do we need other [deputies] if these have already learned [their job] and can do something? So be quiet over those howls from abroad. We have done everything to secure international recognition for our elections. We have done everything. (RFL/RE, Vol. 2, No. 15, 18 April 2000)

The situation of electoral and financial decline stimulated oppositional parties to seek new organisational, ideological and economic opportunities for survival. As the analysis demonstrated, successfully or not, they are developing a new image within civil society and the international community. The oppositional parties by and large have moved away from a mass type of organisation, and remain such only on paper. They utilise catch-all strategies for their political campaigning, and have a relatively stable core clientele of voters, mainly urban-based. Politics as such became more atomised and issue-oriented. Parties, knowing their poor grassroots potential, have re-oriented to a more professionalized (with considerable contribution from sociological and various consultancy groups) and more financially grounded electoral campaign. They became flexible in their membership: the best example is the Belarusian Popular Front. They are more centralised and leadership dominated, which is due to the absence of an

appropriate regional network, limited financial resources and the necessity to act swiftly in a highly fluid and unpredictable environment.

In the light of the above discussion the logical question would be whether or not parties are failing in Belarus. The analysis of parties in public office between 1990 and 2000 has demonstrated that parties are actually surviving. However what effect this can have on their future development, especially after the parliamentary elections 2000, is the question of their mobilisation and rationality. If the oppositional parties instead of boycotting elections as they did in the spring and autumn 2000 elections, fully and wisely engaged in politics of winning seats in parliament, and if the governmental parties took the challenge respectively, this could have created a productive opportunity for a 'round table' agreement between the opposition and the president, and given the former another chance for consolidation. This may certainly sustain the country on the edge of democracy, although façade, and associated with a strong leadership, but nevertheless, sustained by representative politics. The parties in their majority did not take this opportunity and whether they will have another chance is the question of the uncertain future.

4.2 Parties as organisations: central office and regional network

Party organisation is often cited as a key independent element in explaining party 'effectiveness' (Duverger, 1954; Janda, 1980; Katz, 1996). The latter is conditioned by a number of factors, of which external elements such as electoral system, constitutional arrangements, and historical legacies are equally important. However, the way parties are organised and function, can determine their prospects for adaptation and survival, especially in the changing environment of the new democracies of Eastern Europe.

As an aggregate of individuals forming constellations of rival groups (Sartori, 1976: 72), party organisation functions as a three-level political institution. The first level – party in public office – was considered in the previous chapter as decisive for party survival in the process of democracy building. The second and the third levels – party in central office and party at grassroots – will be the focus of examination in this chapter. This analysis will contribute to an understanding of parties' protracted development in post-communist Belarus.

Party central office includes party staff headed by the chairman or general secretary as well as representatives of various affiliated and ancillary organisations. As a rule the central office plays a leading role in party organisation for the purpose of maintaining tight control over such 'organisational uncertainties' as communication and resource allocation. However, with an increasing tendency towards more direct politics in a modern environment, party in public office becomes a dominant means for party adaptation and survival (Katz, 1996; Panebianco, 1988).

The party on the ground consists of organised supporters nation wide. This level of party organisation, which is often cited as regional, may employ its own professional staff and include public officeholders; nevertheless, it is primarily composed of party volunteers – the basic units of party organisation. As Panebianco (1988) notes, the motivation for individuals at this level is conversely different from that in public office and is based on solidaristic and collective incentives, rather than that of electoral advantage and power seeking. An analysis of these two levels of party organisation, hence, will aid the explanation of the unsuccessful process of party system formation in Belarus.

4.2.1. Methodology and working hypotheses

Before discussing how parties are organised outside of public office in Belarus, the methodology of analysis will be introduced. Keneth Janda (1980:98) in his cross-national survey offered a popular definition of 'party organisation' as structured patterns of interaction that are prescribed by formal rules of procedures or by traditions and unwritten rules. Respectively, a higher degree of formalisation of party organisation should offer more complex patterns of behaviour and hence, increase chances for effective adaptation and survival of political parties. The significance of the organisational quality of parties has been considered by many prominent scholars and respectively described as 'structural differentiation' (Huntington, 1991), 'party articulation' (Duverger, 1954), 'sub-unit structure' (Sartori, 1976), or 'party institutionalisation' (Panebianco, 1988). These academic attempts were directed at establishing the degree of 'effectiveness' and 'sustainability' of party systems in a changing society.

Janda and Colman (1998) suggest four major criteria for analysing the degree of party organisation. These are (i) complexity, (ii) centralisation, (iii) involvement and (iv) coherence. Their classification largely coincides with Sartori's checklist for the analysis of party factions as elementary units of party organisation (1976: Ch.4). These four criteria will be used throughout the chapter in order to delineate the level of organisation of parties in Belarus. (I) Party complexity involves regularised procedures for co-ordinating the efforts of party supporters in executing the party's strategy and tactics. Janda (1980) suggests the following parameters for its measurement: structural articulation, intensiveness, extensiveness and pervasiveness of organisation; frequency of local meetings; maintenance of records and organisation of labour. (II) For the analysis of 'centralisation of power' which has been theorised as the location and distribution of effective decision making authority within the party, the following components are named: nationalisation of structure; selection of national leader and parliamentary candidates; funds allocation; policy formation, control of communication; discipline; and leadership concentration. (III) By 'involvement' Janda and Colman (1998) mean the level of commitment of party activists to the party's objectives and doctrine. This criterion includes membership requirements and participation; material and purposive incentives; and doctrinism. (IV) The last index assesses the level of coherence and factionalism within the organisation and will be employed to explain controversial party performance in Belarus.

Many scholars of party politics (Kitschelt, 1992; Evans and Whitefield, 1993; Pridham and Lewis, 1996; Szczerbiak, 1999; Kopecky, 1995; Mair, 1996; Kitschelt et al., 1999) have examined internal, structural and organisational issues of contemporary parties in

the new democracies, and generally hypothesised that new parties are likely to be characterised by a weak grounding in civil society arising from a low membership base, weak organisation and the low priority assigned to building up local structures; a high level of dependence on the state for financial and material resources; together with centralised patterns of decision-making alongside a high level of autonomy given to basic and intermediate structures on local decisions. As Kitschelt (1992, 1995, 1998) argues new parties under these circumstances are, therefore, more likely to develop along the lines of the catch-all, electoral-professional or cartel party type, which have greater chances for survival in a fluid and highly uncommitted electoral environment.

Simultaneously, modified *mass* type parties, which are mainly successor organisations, may also persist because they have inherited a relatively robust membership, a well-established network with material resources, and they may have remained committed to their doctrine[142]. These parties are relatively well organised and extensive, but nevertheless, may have difficulty in adapting to a transient and increasingly depoliticised public environment, unless they move away from the costly model of 'mass' organisation and become more flexible. These two arguments will be tested in the context of Belarus; and consequently, a more adaptable party model will be depicted and theorised.

The analysis of parties in central office and at 'grass roots' will aid the understanding of the causes of gradual party decline in Belarus. If parties fail to act as organised interests in public office, one may accordingly assume that they place more emphasis on their

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[142] For a similar analysis see Derek Hutcheson "Parties and their members in Central Russia", paper presented for BASEES, 7-9 April, 2001.

extra-parliamentary activities – for the purposes of survival and search for electoral advantage. Alternatively, parties' bad organisation, and policies of self-preservation, reinforced by structural and institutional anti-party modality, may have determined their 'public' failure. These and other hypotheses regarding more likely forms of party survival and organisational prospects of new democracies will be contested in this chapter using Belarus as an example.

Data collection and further analysis will include evidence from registered official sources of information (Ministry of Justice, published materials, and parties' own sources) and from cross-interviews with party leadership, middle-rank members, and political experts. In order to depict the 'real' degree of party organisation in Belarus, interviews were deemed primary to other forms of information and were conducted twice, in 1996 and 1999 involving at least two members of party leadership in conversation.

Context:

The years 1996 & 1999 reflect the most controversial time in the political development of Belarus. In 1996 the president overruled parliamentary authority and dismissed it as non-effective and disloyal. Many parties, which were in the 13th Supreme Council, went underground and began politics of resistance against the aggrandising power of the president. The beginning of 1999 was marked by a new conflict between parties and the president. Lukashenko signed decree No. 2, which required compulsory registration of parties and other organisations and by that imposed a political audit on existing parties. Interestingly, this happened on the eve of the local parliamentary elections, which were scheduled on the 4th of March, and obviously put not only parties' participation in

elections, but also their legitimate existence under threat of official closure. Another signal of the developing conflict was the forthcoming 'anti-presidential' election, which was legitimately declared by the underground opposition on the 16th of May on the basis of the 1994 Constitution. These two facts together had spurred new political debates and opposition.

Sampling[143]:

Interviews were face-to-face and on average lasted two hours. Although semi-structured, the questionnaires allowed considerable leeway for initiating in-depth situational analysis. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed afterwards[144]. For the purpose of representation, interviewees were selected on the basis of their ideological/political profiles. Politicians were chosen on an equal basis from the two conflicting blocs – official and oppositional. They were also selected on the criterion that they either play or have the potential to play an influential role in contemporary Belarusian politics. The selection method was three-tier, and included (i) the expert opinion of leading political scientists and journalists; (ii) analysis of the leaders' popularity scores in opinion polls; and (iii) their accessibility[145]. The interviewees were

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[143] See appendix 6 for details.

[144] Interviews were recorded and transcribed in Russian, and may be conditionally available on request.

[145] This perhaps was the most difficult part of a selection procedure. For the purpose of comparison, the author naturally attempted to include those politicians who were interviewed in 1996, and are still relatively influential. This however, was difficult. For example, interviews with the president and some members of his administration were not possible in 1999, as they became less accessible and more 'cautious' about public relations with 'outsiders'. Nevertheless, the author managed to target about 90% of the previous sample, most of which were party members of both political sides.

initially contacted by phone, and if they agreed to be interviewed this was followed by a visit at their place of work. The samples of respondents in both years largely coincide, giving a rich background for comparison.

In 1996 interviews focused more on leaders' 'life-stories', and their analysis as individuals. In other words, an interviewee's narrative description of 'what I am, and how and why I have achieved this' formed the basis for the qualitative analysis. Interviews included a wide range of topics, of which discussion of system of values, attitudes, and political dispositions were prioritised. Interviews were based on a biographical method that required an introspective analysis of self-development from the selected respondents. Twenty-six politicians were interviewed in 1996, including party leaders, and members of parliament and government[146].

In 1999 interviews focused on the assessment of leaders' ideological and political credibility, internal/external organisational relations and discussion of their strategical standpoints. 17 respondents were analysed, of which 12 were party leaders from the two conflicting blocs, and 5 were political experts. The number of parties had declined from 35 to 28 and eventually to 17 by 1999, of which only a dozen may be considered credible on the national level. Amongst the interviewees of the oppositional parties were two members of BNF, Vintsug Viachorka (a liberal wing) and Anatol Krivorot (a radical wing); a leader of PT, Alexander Bukchvostov; the first secretary of the PCB, Sergei Kaliakin; two members of the OGP, Alexander Dobrovol'ski and Gennadi Karpenko; a leader of BSDG

[146] Detailed information of the findings can be obtained from Korosteleva (1997) "Cotemporary agents of the political game in Belarus: a methodological inquiry", unpublished thesis, BSU, Minsk.

NG, Nikolai Statkevich; and finally, Sergei Gaidukevich, a leader of LDPB. The pro-presidential bloc was represented by some members of parliament, such as a leader of SD PNS, Leonid Sechko, a leading member of the CPB, Vladimir Pletyukchov, deputy Spokesman, Vladimir Konoplev, and a non-partisan MP, Valentina Samuseva. Experts were chosen from academia, government and mass media. Amongst them were Professors David Rotman, and Oleg Manaev, the Minister of Education, Vasilii Strazhev, and media representatives, Valetina Tregubovich (also a former member of the BNF Soim), and Alexander Feduta, a leading political journalist. With prior agreement, the interviews with some experts were not recorded for personal safety reasons.

The results received, both from interviews, and other published sources of information, were informative for explanation of party system development in the new democracy, as well as complementary to the analysis undertaken in the previous section.

4.2.2 The 'mass type' party organisations in Belarus.

This enquiry is based on the analysis of ten out the seventeen publicly recognisable political parties. Five of them - PCB (Party of the Communists of Belarus), the parliamentary CPB (the Communist Party of Belarus), PT (Labour Party), a parliamentary AP (Agrarian Party), and partly women's Party 'Nadzeia' (Hope) – are successor parties with inherited organisational legacies from their communist predecessor. This includes relatively extensive membership and regional networks. The remaining five are 'new' parties of pro-democratic orientation, which in the majority have emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. They include BNF (The

Belarusian Popular Front) and CCP (Christian Conservative Party) – a BNF splinter organisation since 1999; OGP (United Civic Party, liberals); LDPB (Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus); BSDP NG (Belarusian Social Democratic Party 'People's Unity'), and a parliamentary party SD PNS (Party of People's Consent).

Not only do these party groupings differ ideologically, spreading from the conservative left to the reformist right of the political spectrum in Belarus between 1990 and 1996, they also differ in their organisational modes and loyalty to the incumbent president, which respectively determines their parliamentary status and prospects for survival. 'Mass' type party organisations are represented on the left by the PCB, and on the right by BNF and LDPB. The remainder follow contemporary trends in politics and have a highly centralised and regionally undeveloped organisation. They are oriented to gaining public office as this is deemed the major arena for political activities. Our analysis of party organisational structure will demonstrate whether their different modes (ideological, organisational, pro/anti-presidential) matter for party system institutionalisation, and what challenges and prospects various types of parties are facing in transition.

The 'mass' party organisations have significantly deviated from the original definition by Duverger (1954). Nevertheless, many have a relatively active grassroots regional network based on cells, clubs, and factions. Their membership considerably exceeds that of the new parties, and in the majority, have obligatory fees and related privileges. The most successful existing mass party organisations are PCB and BNF, and 1996 marked a major milestone in their subsequent developments.

A major mass democratic movement was established in Belarus on 19 October 1988, when the Belarusian Popular Front (BNF) emerged. The BNF followed the structural forms of nationalist movements in the Baltic States, and was led by a group of national intellectuals, including the renowned Belarusian writer Vasil Bykau (Bykov) and archaeologist Zenon Poznyak, the Front's elected chairman. BNF declared a policy of achieving greater state sovereignty for Belarus and democratisation of Belarusian society as its goals. The legacies of the Soviet past, among which are Russification of Belarusian society, pro-union attitudes and greater tolerance of Belarusians, created considerable difficulty for the BNF when attempting to mobilise electoral support in the new democracy. The BNF, nevertheless, due to its originally inclusive political strategy, managed to extend its appeal beyond the core nationalist constituency, and to position itself as an umbrella movement for all democratic forces that existed in Belarusian society at the beginning of the 1990s.

The BNF as a party was established on 30th May 1993, on the third congress of the movement, and registered in August that year. As Poznyak stated, the party was organised in order to secure the movement in achieving its public goals. Officially they were separate organisations, however, their organisational structures (leadership and core membership) largely coincided.

The governing body of the party is the congress that meets biennially. Between congresses the party is managed by the Soim (council), which is appointed by congress. Soim in turn appoints an executive body to implement party strategy in

practice. Before 1999 leadership was shared between the chairman[147] and his six deputies: Liavon Borschevskii (who was an acting chairman until 1999), Stanislav Gusak, Yurii Khadika, Anatol' Krivorot, Vintsug Viachorka and Sergei Popkov. The party was highly disciplined and organised as a totalitarian microcosm with a central collective decision-making body. However, Poznyak gained more power and established a system of personal rule within the party after his re-election in 1995. His governance in this sense closely resembled that of Lukashenko on the national level. This brought conflict and disagreements within the leadership especially concerning party strategies and tactics. Since 1995 the party divided into two factions, though co-ordinated by consensus and discipline. The radical wing was dominant and headed by Poznyak. It pursued an extreme nationalist stance that offered no compromise and co-operation between Belarus and Russia. It was also highly averse to the policy of coalition and consensus between like-minded parties and accused them of being 'agents of Moscow' and having a limited ideology. This has obviously delayed the co-operation between parties, in an attempt to oppose the growing power of the president. The liberal wing, headed by Vintsug Viachorka is more moderate in its policies and was inclined to compromise with other political actors. Disagreements eventually tore the party apart, and since autumn 1999 a splinter party – The Conservative Christian Party (CCP) emerged led by Poznyak.

BNF is one of the most complex and pervasive political organisations in the country. The party operates through cells in the regions, which have the right to assemble into territorial Rada (councils), and promote candidates for parliamentary elections, which in

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[147] After the 1996 crisis Zenon Poznyak went in exile to the USA and later to Poland.

turn have to be approved by Soim. At the same time, the BNF is a highly centralised organisation. As some party leaders claim, the party 'totalitarian' structure is a temporary but an effective way to surmount the situations of crisis. The party also has satellite youth and women's movements, and before the split in 1999 it had an extensive regional network with party cells in each region of Belarus, especially in its western part. Official party membership exceeded 5200 supporters before 1999. However, due to a new policy of a flexible membership, which allows party members to include anyone who could consistently contribute to the legitimation of its status, the number of party 'supporters' reached over a million and involved 18% of the voting population. When the party split, the original BNF led by Viachorka, maintained a membership of 2500 core supporters; and Poznyak's group had just over 1000[148].

The BNF is a well structured organisation. Prior to autumn 1999 it held regular leadership meetings, and once a month – more inclusive meetings with the members of Soim. It has a permanent staff of 6-9 members in the national headquarters office, which are well equipped and possess good record-keeping facilities. It is engaged in wide publicity by printing magazines, bulletins, newspapers, books on history, human rights, world nationalist political movements, and on Belarus' internal affairs. Strict rules and a strong organisational spirit have recently brought the party more support than when the movement first began. Previously it was a rather closed organisation: access to party leaders for an outsider was limited, and one had to go through several secretaries before being granted an appointment. Furthermore, the party has a very strong ideology, which was formulated by intellectuals who came into the party with existing democratic and

[148] *Ministry of Justice*, Minsk, Belarus 2000.

nationalistic beliefs. As Liavon Borschevskii, deputy chairman, and a teacher of Belarusian literature and language in one of Minsk gymnasiums stated in 1996:

> I personally would not want to be involved into politics. It is a dirty business. However, I have to do it in order to support my faith. Personally, I'd rather continue teaching. I now have so many scholars and followers. Teachers keep visiting me from all over the country. It is so important to know that someone needs you...(from Borschevskii's interview, October 1996, at the BNF headquarters).

Notwithstanding internal frictions the party remained highly active between 1996 and 1999. It was at the heart of such events as the March of Freedom 1 and 2 (Autumn 1999, and Spring 2000), and other demonstrations in Belarus. Moreover, electoral campaigning for the alternative presidential election in May 1999, was largely organised and delivered by the BNF: 60% of its supporters were in electoral commissions for the presidential campaign. However further developments, such as Poznyak's last minute withdrawal from the electoral race in 1996 and 2000, and his accusations of betrayal by colleagues in opposition, have destroyed the BNF as a unitary organisation and led to the final debilitation of an already poorly performing opposition.

In 1999, from the interviews with Anatol' Krivorot, Vintsug Viachroka, and Valentina Tregubovich, and other published sources of information[149], it was revealed that there

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[149] Martinovich V. 'Pozniak vse blizhe' [Pozniak gets closer], *Belarusian Business Paper*, 17 September 1998, issue 502; Kchodiko Yu. (1997) Problemi orgaisatsii I provedeniia publichniksh kampanii v Belarusi

has been much controversy about the politics of coalitions within the pre-1999 BNF. Poznyak's adherents did not generally support the idea of a joint political strike against the president. As Anatoli Krivorot affirms, the BNF does not need to form union with the opposition, as it is better organised and operates more effectively by itself. Conversely, Viachorka, Tregubovich and Kshodiko, noted that the BNF needed to act in accord with other parties, for which a good relationship with OGP, BSDG, BSDP NG, PT and trade unions could be a promising new start. The party split in this sense was fortunate as the liberal wing is now able to follow its own strategy in collaboration with other parties and NGOs. As Vintsug Viachorka states:

> The more authentic instruments [for restoration of democracy in the country] can be, for example, the creation of a broad coalition between political parties, mass actions directed to resolving several social issues by these actions organised by political parties together with independent and even so-called official trade unions. This can also be used in the negotiation process. If there is enough pressure from society on the regime, it is possible to force the regime to hold free elections and so on, so there is a much more realistic scenario to solve our problems. This discussion was one of the main motivations of changes within the BNF (Marples, 2000b: 2).

Due to the policy of flexible membership the party has been experiencing financial difficulties. However, from informal sources, it became evident that the party presently survives on some generous donations, such as 'donations-in-kind' (second-hand

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[Problems of organisation and implementation of public campaigns in Belarus], *NISAPI News*, 2: 9-11; David Marples and J. Shimko (2000) 'Interview with Vintsuk Viachorka', Spring, *Belarusian Review*.

equipment or sponsorship of specific events) by wealthy party supporters, as well as from a pool of grants that became available to the party with Poznyak's departure to the West. The party also attempts at establishing firm links with its *familles spirituelles* abroad, especially in Poland, Ukraine, Baltic States, United Kingdom and USA.

The BNF is one of the very few political organisations in Belarus that retains a very strong doctrinaire nature. This was possible due to the faith and continuing efforts of the intellectuals who founded the Front. Poznyak's militant nationalist stance has threatened the party's balanced position in society. Not surprisingly, more people voted for the BNF itself rather than for Poznyak, who in addition, was portrayed by the media as an aggressive Belarusian chauvinist. Although, the party has a distinct policy programme, the 1995 party conflict, when none of the BNF representatives was voted in parliament, made the party to re-assess its strategy. 'New Belarus' with orientation towards the European Union became more articulated in party campaigns. It may be possible that with growing despondency among people (especially younger generations) and party's educational policy in regions, the doctrinaire approach by the new BNF could receive more support.

The second mass type party organisation for analysis is the PCB, and its splinter, the CPB. The Party of Communists Belarusskaia (PCB) was established in December 1991 and registered with the Ministry of Justice a year later. As a successor party, the PCB inherited much from its communist predecessor CPRB, including its organisational structure, partisan loyalty and various material resources. It had 18542 official members in 1993, and was 'over'-represented in parliament. However, with a gradual shift in public attitudes towards a more democratic style of governance, the original PCB had to

undergo many ideological, structural and demographic changes. People's attitudes to the idea of communism changed, as they did not want to go back to the USSR. In order to survive, the party has had to adapt a more flexible and moderate policy and shift away from the 'old dogmas' of Marxist-Leninism to a more indefinite and mixed doctrine of 'third way socialism'[150]. This implies a course of moderate reforms, state renovation, modification of the social security system and maintenance of public ownership of land. Furthermore, the party has been a primary agent for economic and political alliance with Russia, i.e. the fostering the Minsk agreement on CIS in 1991, the collective security pact and single monetary union in 1993.

However, over time the party began losing support and by 1997 had halved in number. During the crisis of 1996 the party split after the dissolution of parliament. Kaliakin, the party leader believes that it was official authorities that initiated the split. Some party members were offered attractive positions in government, and therefore, they left the oppositional PCB as an 'ideologically untenable' party. Party membership decreased by 50% to 9300 supporters and it has experienced a generational shift. The 'old communist believers' as well as those who support Lukashenko have left the party; and, paradoxically enough, this was the turning point for revival of the party's fortune. In 1999 15 000 party supporters were officially registered and whose location was evenly distributed between 143 local, 6 regional (in each region of Belarus) and Minsk branches.

[150] For more details on the third-way socialism see M. Nuti's paper entitled "*Belarus: A Command Economy Without Central Planning*" presented to CREES seminar series, University of Birmingham, February 2000.

From 1996 interviews with party leaders, as well as from various documentary sources the PCB seemed externally to be a well-organised, pervasive and well-represented organisation, holding the majority of seats in the 1990 and 1995 parliaments. The two most prominent leaders of the party – Sergei Kaliakin and Vladimir Novikov – were elected into the legislature. Internally, however, the party was less unified and monolithic than it appeared on the surface. From 1994, the PCB comprised three main streams: the new communists ('pink'), hard-line communists, and pro-presidential supporters. The latter, however left the PCB when the opportunity occurred. There was also rivalry between the three party leaders: Sergei Kaliakin, Vladimir Novikov and Victor Chikin. Kaliakin was moderately left, non-orthodox, and uncompromising. Novikov was flexible, well-spoken and, hence, he stood greater chances of winning votes at the next parliamentary elections. This was confirmed when he drifted away from the party being offered a lucrative position in government after the dissolution of parliament in 1996.

From the 1999 interview with Kaliakin it became clear that the party had developed a more flexible style. Contrary to the BNF and other oppositional parties, the Communist Party Belarusskaia was capable of political compromises and, being in opposition, nevertheless, decided to participate in regional elections. According to recent opinion polls, after the major split in 1996, the party's constituency has radically renewed. The party increased its ground support by moving away from pensioners and old-style communists to middle aged party voters. It has adapted a catch-all strategy and at present enjoys a wide audience of supporters, amongst which representatives of private business and the self-employed can also be identified. The party also collaborates with youth communist organisations and aims at establishing closer links with both official

and independent trade unions. However, trade unions are more reluctant to develop co-operation with the PCB. Until recently, trade unions planned to promote their own candidates in the elections.

The party has regular meetings and convenes the People's Congress – the major governing body - triennially. The Congress was attended by 5 000 delegates and was last held in March 1999. It discussed changes in the party programme and organisation, and according to opinion polls the party became more cohesive and active. It has the potential to win seats at parliamentary elections, if there is a free and fair political game.

The party leadership is not generally open about funding, however, the major source of finance appears to be membership subscription at a local level. Larger donations, as Kaliakin noted, are irregularly available from their supporters. The party does not have paid staff, and operates with the help of volunteers. Nevertheless, its central office and facilities create the impression of a relatively prosperous organisation (PCs, photocopier, faxes, printers, etc.). Local party organisations generally receive very little organisational help and no material assistance from their national headquarters. One of the limited material resources for the PCB local branches is their publications, which are available on subscription ('Tovarisch'[Comrade]; and others). Before 1996 the regional network had relied heavily on parliamentary support and has been experiencing much difficulty in opposition since the dissolution of parliament.

In 1996 a splinter party 'The Communist Party of Belarus' emerged, led by Victor Chikin, an ambitious and pro-presidential oriented politician. On registration in 1999

the party had 7000 formal members[151]. Its policy is a sheer non-market stance and strongly supports the president. Some members entered the new parliament in 1997. It possesses a relatively extensive regional network having representatives in 90 district, regional and city branches. The party's central organisation is well supported financially by their representatives in parliament and government. However, it pays less attention to maintaining its network compared to the PCB. Access to the leadership is very limited. Unfortunately the party secretary, Victor Chikin, who has been recently promoted to the position of the head of national TV and Broadcasting Company, was not available for interview due to his busy work schedule. However, party MPs appeared to be more accessible than its leaders.

In his interview, Vladimir Pletyukchov, a leading member of the CPB, and chairman of the Education committee in parliament, underlined that his membership in the party is secondary to his present position, and he has professional duties over his partisan interests. He stated that the major task for all members of parliament was to organise a successful joint repulse to the presidential opposition during the parliamentary elections. In this respect some parliamentary deputies organised the Belarusian Patriotic Popular Union with membership open to presidential supporters. Paradoxically, as a 'non-partisan' parliament, it became totally engrossed in the politics of forming a new 'party of power'. Zealous deputies were stopped by a presidential decree, which required partisan homogeneity for party formation.

[151] Official source of information is the Ministry of Justice, Belarus, 1999

Vladimir Pletyukchov considers political opposition to be real and 'dangerous'. He believes that official authorities should not underestimate the strength and political will of the opposition, and must undertake *'firm measures to erase'* the problem. On the question of why the parliament was presently non-partisan, he commented that this decision was collective and aimed at increasing the effectiveness of parliamentary work. He also added that the members of parliament 'are not yet civilised enough to work within a factional structure'. Further, he underlined that the practice of single ballot voting which was used in 1990-1996 parliament and ceased to exist in 1997 parliament, was "...a pressure on free expression of one's will and therefore, it was unanimously decided for it to be stopped. It is a populist' desire to demonstrate how good one could be. We are here for work, not for demonstration" (interview with Pletuykchov, Parliament, 1999). On the question whether there is a party-of-power in Belarus analogous to that in Russia, he said that there was no such term, and all who are in parliament today with exception of very few members, are presidential supporters: "We are all a united party-in-power led by the president". He added that the parliamentary work routine has been changed on the president's request. Previously deputies formed a daily agenda, now it is the prerogative of the president, and MPs have the right to debate it.

Due to continuing presidential support, the party focuses very little on mobilisation of its voters to support its legitimacy. It is clear that pro-presidential parties currently benefit from allying with the state. At the same time, parties who are supported by the government, do not work with their core constituencies, and may face the danger of declining partisanship, and lack of recognition amongst the population, if power configurations were to alter.

The Agrarian Party (AP), another mass type organisation, was registered in 1992 and soon grew into a uniform 'class' party representing Belarusian peasantry. Its membership increased from 250 in 1992 to over 12000 supporters in 1997. The party's principal ambitions are to unite all those who are involved in the agrarian sector of the economy in order to undertake effective and radical reforms, although with moderate interference by the state. The AP's chairman Semion Sharetski was elected as Spokesman of the 1995 Parliament, and later became an active signatory of Charter-97[152]. He is presently in exile in Lithuania. The party had a modest central office, largely based in parliament, which was the principal means of existence for the party. Its 'geography' could be described as largely rural, especially concentrated in the south of Belarus.

With the 1996 crisis the party split and ceased to exist, having lost its human and material resources. Recently, with the encouragement of the president, the party has undertaken a revival as a new, pro-president orientated organisation. The first congress after nearly five years was held on 31st March and pledged loyalty to Alexander Lukashenko. Mikhail Shumanski, chief editor of the pro-government newspaper "Narodnaya gazeta," was elected chairman of the party and promised to "co-operate constructively with the government". In his opinion, the party should defend the interests of peasants by entering all branches of government and taking an active part in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Shumanski believes that the Agrarian Party may become the largest political party in Belarus. The new Agrarian Party will survive, as long as the existent power balance in society continues. Although it presently has

[152] On political organisations and documentation of 1996-1998 see http://jurix.jura.uni-sb.de/~serko/law_pol/politics.html, retrieved June 2001; and http://charter97.org/, retrieved June 2001.

only a few thousand supporters, it looks like that having non-compulsory membership and access to governmental resources could safeguard both the party's victory at the elections[153] and a presidential seat for Lukashenko in the future.

The next mass type organisation for analysis is the Labour Party (PT). It was founded in 1993, registered in 1995, and grew in the heart of the trade unions' movement to represent their interests in parliament. The Labour Party is a left-oriented organisation, which pursues traditions and principles of international social-democratic and labour movements. Party chairman, Alexander Bukchvostov, was elected in 1996. Regional political clubs are the primary units of the party and are governed by the Regional Association of BPT and regional seminar of party clubs, which is called at least once a year.

Trade union based, the party has been effective in its interactions with the authorities. Party membership exceeds 1000 and it has largely inherited the network, structure and human resources from traditional trade unions. It is a publicly recognised political movement and apparently better organised compared to other newly established trade unions (they are now more 500) and related parties. It is urban based, with its main locations in Minsk and Gomel.

In his interview in 1996 A. Bukchvostov pointed out that all parties were important as long as they represent public interests. He sounded knowledgeable and confident when describing party goals and strategy, and principled when speaking about the danger of

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[153] This is what exactly happened: the AP obtained 6 seats in the 2000 parliamentary elections. See Appendix 2 for details.

dictatorship in the country. However, as reality has demonstrated, since 1996 he has had few controversial compromises with the authorities, which led to the alteration of party policy by breaking agreements with his comrades-in-arms.

The interview revealed that the party did not undergo major changes. The leadership continues with its conformist policy. For example, as Bukchvostov stated, the party would abstain from participation in the regional elections and re-registration of parties, unless, "...official authorities would force us to do the opposite. We do not want to create any precedents" (Bukchvostov, interview at party headquarters, 1999). From the leader's viewpoint the party should continue acting independently, as in his opinion, the majority of parties in Belarus are superficial organisations, with ambitious and self-minded politicians. BPT has tried to establish alliance with the PCB, however, failed to reach a compromise on some ideological issues. As Bukchvostov insists, the BPT is a moderately left organisation and, hence, differs from the communists. As he states further, "We, by ourselves, are capable of solving the problems of regime and need no help from other parties in order to do so" (1999 interview, at PT's headquarters).

The party's central office has one paid member of staff and a party secretary. The party's financial situation has worsened over time, and presently it survives on donations and occasional fees form its supporters and well wishers. It is a highly centralised organisation and can be considered as a mass party only on paper. Latest developments show that there has been a split within the party regarding its participation in regional elections. Some party members decided to ballot independently from the party and there was no decision

reached within the party regarding a joint coalition with other opposition parties to run an alternative presidential election in May 1999.

The Belarusian Women's Party 'Nadzeia' [Hope] has an approximated mass type party organisation, although it had a modest start, when it was established and registered in 1994. The party leader, Valentina Polevikova, maintains very close links with official trade unions led by Viktor Goncharik. When interviewed in 1996, Polevikova did not deny that the party was created as an ancillary organisation to support trade unions in the 1995 elections. They did not have a formal policy, or mission statement, and seemed not to be sure of their future post-election plans. However, surprisingly, they survived and increased their membership from 200 in 1994 to 5000 in 1999. Primary units exist in some regional centres; however, the party's major locations are Minsk and Mogilev. The party membership is flexible: anyone over 18 years of age can join the party, provided he/she is politically concerned. Its sources of funding are unknown, and the chairman refused to discuss the subject. Allegedly the party exists on a grant support scheme from the USA.

The ideology and structure of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus (LDPB) is similar to that of the LDPR in Russia. It was regionally established in 1991, and registered as a party in 1994. It has a liberal nationalist orientation. With Zhyrinovskii's new policy of increasing party legitimacy in the regions of Russia, the LDPB is presently working on developing their own regional network in Belarus. The party states that it has a membership of 18 000 registered supporters, and its leader, Sergei Gaidukevich 'jokes' that it could have been more, if more drink were provided! Its

funding sources are unclear, however the mere fact that the party was ready to pay $2000, if necessary, for the 1999 registration, indicates that the party may have enough money to support itself. Paid staff is limited, and the leader, unlike his colleagues in Moscow, avoids media attention. It is believed that if it were not supported by its *familles spirituelles,* the party would not be able to undertake serious efforts to maintain steady electoral support in the republic.

In summary, mass type parties in Belarus appear to be organisations on 'paper'. They prove relatively weak, and many depend on the state for material and financial resources. Only central decision-making structures enjoy some degree of financial independence. Formally some parties have extensive regional structures, which are not fully functional. In reality only the BNF and PCB can truly be considered as mass parties, with modern survival policies. The BNF and PCB assist their local branches in developing organisational infrastructure, and by that reduce their dependency on other financial sources. In the majority, anti-Lukashenko parties do not support policies of coalition, and hence, cannot organise themselves into a coherent opposition. Thus, they find it impossible to resist the increasing power of the president. They do not trust each other, and often pursue ineffective strategies against the current regime.

4.2.3 The 'new' type of party organisations

'New' parties are generally pro-democratic in orientation, and occupy the right end of the political spectrum in Belarus. As a rule, they are organised from the top down, with weak linkages to society, and a low membership base. They are generally located in

urban areas and assign a low priority to building up local structures. Mathew Wyman comments in his analysis of Russian political parties:

> Party leaders may continue to have incentives not to build their parties into mass organisations. Mass membership may indeed be a potential nuisance to leaders, restricting their freedom of manoeuvre and taking up time, which they wish to spend in other activities. The potential benefits of having mass membership can in part be offset as the state replaces membership as a source of finance and media access (Wyman, 1996:279).

Nevertheless, this scenario can be effectively applied to Belarusian political parties. Their campaigns are usually dependent on the state for material resources. The United Civic party (OGP), The Belarusian Social-Democratic Party 'People's Assembly' (BSDP NG) and PNS are three examples of this new type of party organisation.

OGP is the leading liberal conservative party in the Republic of Belarus. It was established in October 1, 1995 as a result of a merger of two like-minded parties – United Democratic Party (formed in 1990) and Civil Party (formed in 1994). It stands for an independent sovereign Belarus that pursues domestic and foreign policies according to its national interests. Before spring 2000 Stanislav Bogdankevich was party chairman. He is a former professor, ex-chairman of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, member of the 13th Supreme Council, and a leader of the parliamentary fraction 'Civil Action'. There were also four vice-chairmen: Alexander Dabravolski, lawyer, deputy of the 1989-1996 Supreme Council, and a chairman of the commission for mass media, religion, and

connections with public organisations, chairman of the Executive Committee of the OGP; Gennadi Karpenko, doctor of technical science, deputy spokesman of the 1996 Supreme Council, former mayor of Molodechno, and a leader of the PNS in 1993; Vasilii Shlindikov – former MP, chairman of the parliamentary Commission for Economic Policy, chairman of the Association for Economic Development, and Anatoly Liabedzka who recently succeeded to the position of the chairman; he is a former MP, acting chairman of the Commission for Foreign Affairs, and a chairman of the Association of Young Politicians.

From official records it has been established that the party has 3500 members, of whom 45% belong to the private sector of economy, 25% to a state sector, 20% are from science, education, art, 10% pensioners, students and other categories. 55% of members are university graduates and over 100 members have Doctoral degrees. The party has a Governing Body – the Congress that is convened at least biennially. The National Committee (70 members) governs the Party in between Congresses, and the Political Council (20 members) manages daily party operations directly or through the Executive Committee. The party network consists of 6 regional, 28 city and 66 district branches with headquarters in Minsk.

As party leaders claim, OGP actively co-operates with independent trade unions that are members of the Congress of Democratic Trade Unions of Belarus. They also affirm that continuous education and training programs are held with party members and the public in the form of seminars, conferences, skills exchange, monthly publication of the party bulletin, the newspaper 'Gramadzyanin' (10000 copies weekly) and other analytical and

educational materials. The party was a founder of the non-governmental organisation 'Adkrytae Hramadstva' [Open Society] in 1993. 'Open Society' has its own specialised magazine published in Poland, which is also available electronically.

During the 1995 parliament, the OGP organised the faction "Civil Action", which consisted of 22 members, but presently has no representative in the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus.

As documentary evidence and the results of the 1996 interviews suggest, the party leadership came from a highly intellectual background: at least one of the leaders' parents had higher degree, all first-kin relatives had higher degrees, and so do their spouses. Three out of five leaders were noted for earnest study at school, and two of them have doctoral degrees. Personally, they think, they became leaders due to circumstances and had never played leading roles in an organisation before. They believe that knowledge and professionalism are a toolkit for achieving equilibrium in society. They nominated Stalin and Hitler as negative role models, and they espoused a low opinion of other parties' potential in Belarus. Genadz Karpenko (deceased) stated that so far no party in Belarus had accommodated the people's needs since the early 1990s. The general impression of the party leadership concludes that they are an assembly of autonomous individuals, rather than a group of like-minded party members. The party organisation was highly oriented on parliament and heavily centred on leadership decision-making.

Interviews with the same party leaders in 1999 reinforced the initial impression that the party was a political agglomerate of individuals, rather than a unity. Interviews revealed that party political leaders had different strategical approaches and had not compromised on a general 'policy programme' for the party as such. The party is an alliance of populists with a vague doctrinaire background and this can be confirmed by the lack of concerted programmatic appeal, absence of an ideological profile or concrete economic programme had they come into power. On the eve of the 1999 alternative presidential election they split into factions regarding the issue as which candidate should be supported. Furthermore, their actions for organising and co-ordinating opposition to the president appeared to be more like far-reaching ambitions of the party leaders than a potential reality. All party campaigns have focused on the one objective – to overthrow the president.

In contrast with party leaders' statements, their network appeared to be highly undeveloped and they refused to give the exact number of party members in regions to an independent journalist. Party leaders unrealistically place their hopes on the working classes and peasantry (from their interviews) as their potential constituencies. As a party of intellectuals they hardly have access to the masses. Their major location is Minsk, and they operate with a very limited number of representatives in the regions:

> It is true that we have limited influence on peasantry outside large cities. The problem is that the opposition is reluctant to go to the masses. As for the large cities we work mainly through trade unions (interview with Karpenko, party headquarters, March, 1999)

Interestingly, party leaders state that they have established successful links with the trade unions. However, the New Trade Union (Bykov) appeared to be their only link to trade union's support, which was discovered by the author after analysing a multitude of documents and correspondence. This trade union exerts negligible influence on workers. The party leaders also believe that they may be able to collaborate with the social democrats (Statkevich) and other parties and NGOs, including BNF. However, this seems to be a one-sided opinion, which was not confirmed by the other in their interviews.

Party finance is largely based on sponsorship, grants from the West, and voluntary membership fees. The party has many contacts and closely co-operates with the British Conservative Party. The party has a very spacious office, well equipped (about 6-9 PCs, some photocopies, scanner, and other IT products) with technically qualified staff and many volunteers.

A schism appeared in the party leadership over the choice of candidate for the alternative presidential election, and the issue of participation in the regional and recent parliamentary elections reinforced conflict within the party. However, the recent election of a new leader, Anatoly Liabedzka, may radically alter the party's prospects. Liabedzka has wide contacts both in Western Europe and the USA, and is literate, well spoken, fluent in English and Polish, and supports consensual and coalitional policies. It is hoped this will bring an extra pool of party followers for the future elections, provided that institutional incentives are altered.

The Belarusian Social-Democratic Party 'People's Assembly' (BSDP NG) was founded in 1995 and registered in 1996 when it merged with the Party of People's Accord (PNS). As BSDG it had existed since 1993 and was a successor to the 'historical' BSDG founded in 1902. Since the dissolution of parliament the two parties, the BSDG and the PNS, took different routes and as a result, split on this basis. Nikolai Statkevich, Doctor of technical science, presently leads BSDP NG. It has a party membership of around 1000 people and has a limited network of party supporters. The party survives exclusively on membership fees (1% of monthly wages) and donations. It has 17 local papers, however only two of them are profitable. The party Central Committee appoints an executive bureau, which is largely filled by Minsk activists (about 20). It has 3 paid members of staff in the headquarters – a two-room flat that fulfils many functions. The party is relatively small, but very lively. Together with the BNF it organised a protest march in October 1998, having mobilised more than 3000 participants for the event.

In his 1996 interview Nikolai Statkevich mentioned that he would rather be a scientist than a politician. Nevertheless, his achievements as a politician are noticeable. He initiated a 'Chernobyl' rally in the early 1990s and organised a political movement to solicit a national armed force for Belarus. He was among the very few politicians who decided to ballot during the recent parliamentary elections, despite the fact the party boycotted them. He believes that a sensible compromise can be the only way for parties to survive conflict with the authorities and eventually this should bring a balance of power to society (from his interview, February, 1999). He supports the idea of coalitions and eagerly promotes co-operation with the Party of Labour to form the 'Social Democratic Union'. His recent policy was to establish a formal union with the BNF and

the OGP. When interviewed in 1999, Statkevich was rather disappointed by the position of coalition denial that the former BNF regularly takes. This gave basis for many disagreements in regards to the party internal policy and external relations. The leadership of the Labour Party when interviewed did not mention the fact of established collaboration with Statkevich's party BSDP NG.

In conclusion, new parties find it difficult to survive in a society with weak roots and lacking financial resources. Their strong and inflexible anti-Lukashenko and anti-system feelings exacerbate their position even further. A sensible solution would be to negotiate with the state and to win votes and seats in the parliamentary elections. They, nevertheless, boycotted the autumn 2000 elections and disapprove of any compromise with the authorities[154].

With structural and institutional incentives favouring the incumbent government, there can be little chance for them to be voted into office, and hence, there are limited hopes for delivery of their electoral pledges to electors – their only 'currency' in the market of power. Somehow, the new parties do not fear losing their legitimacy in terms of votes. The new liberal and democratic parties seem to have found lucrative support from international organisations; and presently survive on grants, bursaries, and direct collaboration. Their connections have expanded over years: OGP has major support from the British Conservatives; BSDP NG obtained some aid from the south west of Europe and Moscow colleagues. BNF enjoys considerable support from the USA as

[154] According to the President's Decree No.8 (12.03.2001) 'On some measures concerning the rules of receipt and utilization of foreign gratuitous aid', parties will find it more difficult to survive and to fully prepare for the presidential election in autumn 2001, because of their high reliance on western sponsorship.

well as from neighbouring countries. This international co-operation remarkably altered parties' style of management and stirred their ambitions for cartelisation. Parties become increasingly 'professional'. They, for example, operate a sociological database to locate their potential electorates and undertake market research to improve their campaign strategies. With limited access to public broadcasting, parties established their own publishing centres and agencies. Such 'alternative' sources of information like 'Naviny', 'Otkritoe obschestvo', 'Gramadzianin', Belorusskaa Gazeta and others, seem to be relatively popular amongst the readers. The majority of them are printed in neighbouring states, which limits their availability to a wider readership. As an alternative source of information for people (especially the youth) the Internet and new technologies may eventually open up a wider window of opportunities.

4.2.4 Further discussion

It would be beneficial to the analysis to observe pro-governmental party organisations, their structure and 'effectiveness', which in their support of the president enjoy considerable material and financial aid. The only party that remained partisan is the Social Democratic Party of People's Accord (SD PNS) led by Leonid Sechko. Interviews with the deputy Spokesman of the House of Representatives, Vladimir Konoplev, who was also a head of the largest faction in the 1995 parliament 'Zgoda', and non-partisan members of the new parliament, will also be analysed.

Leonid Sechko, leader of SD PNS, was rather reluctant to comment on current events, including the opposition between the president and parties in Belarus. He originally refused

an interview, but, when it was mentioned that the deputy spokesman had also been interviewed, he changed his position. On the questions of why parliament stopped the practice of single ballot voting as well as factional policy, he answered that he is unaware of the former. Regarding the abolition of the faction politics, he said that the procedure was rudimentary, as there are no motions towards any kind of grouping in parliament. Leonid Sechko added further that with the majority of parliament being presidential supporters there is no need to work in factions. Throughout the interview he seemed to display a sense of guilt, as if he were betraying his personal beliefs. He refused for his interview to be recorded in the first place, but then again when it was mentioned that the deputy Spokesman had allowed recording, he eventually agreed. He did not want to say much about the present party organisation, but referred a lot to past years and its history. At present, the SD PNS membership is 2050 covering all regions of Belarus. It has 50 regional and 135 primary units, of which the majority are concentrated in Gomel (797 members), Grodno (444) and Mogilev (320) regions. Sechko refused to talk about party finances, however he did mention that the president supports them when necessary. The party is largely based in parliament and has a paid staff of 4 members. Sechko believed that he would win seats in parliamentary elections 2000, which he did – one seat in the first round of elections.

Valentina Samuseva is a non-partisan member of parliament, who was also interviewed. The conversation was informal and not recorded. It appears from the interview that she supports the majority of policy-making decisions and finds that working in discipline and without factions is very productive and remunerating. She scored the lowest on the activity scale according to her voting in the former parliament (Ygrinovich, 1996). In the new elections to parliament she did not win a seat.

Vladimir Konoplev, the Deputy Spokesman of the 1997 parliament, is an essential part of the president's team. In 1996 he chaired the largest faction 'Zgoda' (Consent) in parliament. He felt 'at home' in the 1996 parliament – the mere fact that for the purpose of his interview he walked into the first available office and asked the staff to leave the room tells that his alliance with the president gave him sufficient authority to be above the party politics. In his 1996 interview he confirmed that he was always an informal leader. Having experienced much hardship, he became a very determined and shrewd politician. His political creed was to reinforce an individual authority in order to maintain order in society.

In his 1999 interview he kept associating himself with the president: "If necessary *we* will take radical measures against the opposition", "...the president acted super diplomatically in 1996 trying to solve the crisis. And *I* would like to do the same. I am sure *we* will find the way out (speaking about the stalemate with opposition in the country)", and so on. He does not trust anyone and thinks that the most lasting coalition would be based on 'knowing people's nature' and 'their preferences'. He encourages unanimity: "we do not have orthodox thinkers in parliament. If we vote, we vote in majority, as we know that the question should have been prepared by a committee in charge". He is a devotee and is unlikely to betray the president (his schoolmate) unless it was a self-preserving situation: "In order to achieve a new stage in national development we must know our responsibility. We must remember that we are professional cadre to support the course of our popularly elected and committed to its duty president A. Lukashenko" (from his interview, March 1999, in parliament).

The situation of non-partisanship, lack of competition and absolute unanimity in parliament indicates a situation of a pocket legislature in the hands of the president. Members of parliament will readily surrender their ideological beliefs, and remain compliant to the president, as long as they are in office – a symbol of power established for over 70 years. Out of fear of losing their position, members of parliament agreed to change parliamentary procedure and thus allow the president to manipulate the political agenda.

To sum up, contemporary parties experience factional divisions in their organisation and they possess ephemeral membership and vague ideologies and discipline. To some extent, they are their own worst enemy and their problems mainly stem from within. Party leadership seems to be based on the self-seeking opportunities of the politicians. The cultural and institutional environment is such that 'power conflict' has become dominant in structuring parties' activities. Consequently, parties have lost their ideological gloss and programmatic profile in the struggle to overthrow the president, who due to their disintegration, grew in power and electoral trust.

The most organised parties, BNF and PCB, failed to provide adequate leadership to prevent internal feuding. BNF has resisted this tendency longer than any other, and only recently split. PCB faced a party division in 1996 and was devastated by it, as the party lost 50% of its membership. This was a tangible conflict as it related not only to personalities but also to the policy agenda and re-definition of its ideological standpoints. Those who joined the splinter party CPB, and supported the president, were 'hard-line' communists. They believed in 'third-way' socialist economy, social security and public

proprietorial rights. The Agrarian Party reinvented itself as a pro-governmental organisation and enjoys seats in the new parliament as a bonus for its loyalty. Reformist parties, i.e. OGP, BSDP NG, BSDG, and partly LDP are dominated by the leadership and are essentially candidate-centred. As it appeared from interview and content analysis, these parties, by and large, have 'flexible' memberships. On paper they purport to represent a wide network of more than 2000 supporters on average, but in reality they are very limited. Therefore, only 17 parties out of 28 have survived the recent political audit – a forcible re-registration of parties declared by the president.

If one compares parties' cross-references towards one another regarding the policy of coalition making, one would find that there is a discrepancy between party rhetoric and action. In interviews party leaders keep naming each other as political partners, for example: OGP referred to BSDP NG as their primary associate, and BNF, trade unions, PT and PCB were OGP's already established contacts. BSDP NG who found itself closer to BNF and PT did not enthusiastically confirm this linkage. The BNF in turn affirms that as long as parties continue pursuing their personal ambitions, it will not form any alliance with them. The Labour party (PT) remains independent and hopes to collaborate with the communists if they 'tone down' their orthodoxy. The communists in turn assume that they already have a potential partner in the trade unions, and are unwilling to support any collaboration with the liberals and democrats. Parties have recently tried to overcome their ideological differences in order to resist the move towards dictatorship together. They attempted to organise a united movement with a single co-ordinating body and to rally

uniformly for the presidential election. They spectacularly failed to do so at the finale of their electoral campaign[155].

Another issue relates to parties' collective boycotting of regional and national level elections. The opposition parties refused to participate in any of them, as their demonstration against gross violations of law by the authorities. This, nevertheless, can be regarded as a strategic mistake, as by not having representatives at any levels within government will not allow negotiation with the authorities who are presently in the position to dictate the rules of the political game. Huntington (1991: 174, 190) notes that elections are not only the life of democracy; they are also the death of dictatorship. The opposition in Belarus has yet to learn this lesson.

This information shows how dramatically dissipated parties are at present in Belarus. Ambitious party leaders are unable to overcome personal feuds when attempting to campaign together against the president. They are limited by formal and informal institutional (high threshold for turnout, majority voting, single member district) and legal (alterations in the constitution, new law requirements for party candidates, etc.) rules. Moreover, they lack a distinct ideological profile and doctrine, and have limited power resources and organisational cohesiveness. Parties therefore attempt to mobilise support from the population that does not foresee them as equal to Lukashenko. This issue will be thoroughly analysed in the next section.

[155] The BNF literally withdrew its candidate and refused to participate in election race because it found that OGP was dishonestly trying to promote its own candidate on others' behalf.

Nevertheless, parties still survive, and are gaining skills. One can say that in Belarus contemporary parties, as perhaps many transitional parties, are seeking 'accommodating' opportunities to adapt. They are more candidate-centred due to their volatile electoral 'currency'; policy-making has become the sole prerogative of party leadership rather than party membership, therefore, circumstances, rather than existing programmes or ideologies dictate decision-making. Organisational structures are thus flexible and low-maintenance. Even those parties, which closely resemble true mass parties, BNF and PCB, in fact only tend to look like mass parties with regular members, press, congresses, branches, etc., but in practice deploy independence of leadership, taking dictatorial forms at times, and emphasise predominance of parliamentary activities. Belarusian liberals and democrats never had strong relations on the ground, and on this basis, develop modern strategies (publish on-line, internet discussion-clubs, youth conferences, public seminars) to capture free and uncommitted voters.

It would be logical to assume that parties should aim to win office, in order to justify their existence. However, if they collaborate with the incumbent government they will lose their credibility and financial 'comfort', by way of grants and partnership aid from the West; and certainly receive little welcome from the authorities. Hence, they chose to continue consulting their western partners regarding anti-system policies, and do not compromise and sit on 'round-table' discussions. This consequently becomes their long-term vocation. In the situation of increasing dictatorship, they should logically mobilise their scarce resources in order to oppose the president and fulfil their mandate. As analysis shows, this seems to be political rhetoric rather than action, as parties fail to unite in order to successfully run an anti-presidential election campaign. Moreover, they initially did not

believe in it as the formal opposition campaign. They regarded it as an action of propaganda and therefore did not invest a full range of required resources. Meanwhile, they have allegedly received ample support and investments from abroad in order to organise this pseudo-manifesto.

Party policy at present seems to be to make enough efforts in order to be visible, rather than compromise and win office. As Grigorii Golosov concludes in his analysis of parties in Russia, which again can be vividly applied to the situation in Belarus:

> The role of party organisation proved to be at best unclear, while strong personalities, attractive ideologies, the use of media, and power bases in the state apparatus and specific constituencies matter so much (Golosov, 1998: 535).

Nevertheless, there seems to be prospects for parties to re-establish their authority. One is to survive by capturing uncommitted votes in regions, and another is to negotiate with the state. Hunting for votes can be quite fulfilling provided that the power cleavage is highly divisive. Thus mass party organisations may still be able to regain vitality and mobilise voters' support. The aforementioned 'new' parties may also attempt to form a wide anti-presidential coalition, as this is the only realistic means for them to survive while in opposition. Negotiation with the state is also necessary, as institutional, structural and cultural environments are becoming increasingly unfavourable for parties in exile. By not fighting the battle today, they may lose the war tomorrow. The issue of whether electoral mobilisation can be foreseeable and what chances parties may have with their alienated voters will be raised in the following section.

4.3 Political parties and their voters in Belarus

Kay Lawson et al. (1988) note, "...to the extent that parties ever operate in a fashion to enhance citizen control of government, they do so because citizens have made it clear that only thus are their votes to be secured". Parties exist to provide linkage between citizens and the state. In new democracies, this linkage is frequently broken or non-established, and parties, hence, find themselves in the position of representing 'fringe interests' in society. It is a hard work to mobilise uncommitted and apathetic voters, whom in addition prefer short-term benefits from agencies in power to far-reaching pledges of parties in opposition. Nevertheless, adaptation to these irregularities in voting behaviour seems to be a survival strategy. Another possible route is, of course, to collaborate with the state and rely on the ensuing benefits of this alliance. This, however, depends on the government's term in office, and assumes favourable relations between the sides involved. In any event, it is beneficial to determine the electorate's attitudes to existing political players, in order to assess the possible prospects and directions of their 'investments' at election time.

In this chapter, the level of party legitimacy and public knowledge of existing players of the political game in Belarus will be examined. This should help establish linkage patterns between existing parties and their voters, and to estimate parties' potential for further development. The analysis will highlight public awareness of, and attitudes to, political players and whether the 'presidential divide' that stipulated the conflict, really matters for electoral politics in the process of party system settlement. This chapter will proceed in four sections:

1) a brief description of the methodology applied by the author will be given in the first section;
2) the voting environment in Belarusian society will be examined in the second section;
3) in the third section attention will be drawn to the relations between parties and their voters;
4) and finally, in section four the principal characteristics of the president's electorate will be discussed, as to whether it is different from that of the contemporary parties, and if this difference matters for maintaining the power balance in society.

4.3.1 Methodology of data collection and analysis

For the study of general trends in voting behaviour the method of Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA), developed by A. Russell et al (1992) in their analysis of the effect of 'Thatcherism' on voting patterns of the UK population[156], has been innovatively adopted. For this reason the author selected compatible data based on a single criterion. The database of the project "New Democracies Barometer: Belarus" initiated in 1992, and implemented on a regular basis 1994, 1996, 1998, was used to follow voting trends in Belarus[157]. Data collection was grounded on similar polling techniques, repeated questions, and representative random samples of 1000

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[156] Russell, A., Johnston, R. and Pattie, C. (1992) "Thatcher's children: exploring the links between age and political attitudes", *Political Studies* XL: 742-56.

[157] The author was part of the project's analytical team. In 1996 the author co-supervised research with Prof. David Rotman, Centre for Social and Political Research, Minsk State University, Belarus.

respondents.[158] This allows a detailed description of tendencies in voting behaviour of the Belarusian electorate and the 'authoritarian effect', if such exists.

Analysis is based on the assessment of six variables, which map changes in public attitudes chronologically. Questions were designed along the 'reform-anti-reform' cleavage – a uniformly divisive line in the majority of the newly emerging democracies of Eastern Europe (Kitschelt, 1995). The questions reflect (i) people's opinions on the transition economy of 1989, (ii-iii) economic and political prospects of communist rule (iv) the necessity of a multi-party system and freely contested elections and (v) the introduction of direct presidential rule, in the case of a national emergency.[159] Each of the attitudes observed in the three surveys was re-coded in a standardised manner so that 'pro-communist' responses was given a value of (-1), neutral opinions were coded as (0), and 'pro-democratic' replies were allotted a score of (+1). This undoubtedly limits the informational content of responses, but simultaneously ensures continuity on the aggregate level across a wide range of individual scores.

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[158] The 1992 data was not available to the author at the time of calculation.

[159] The following questions were used:

(1) Here is a scale for ranking how the economy works: the top +100 through to the worst -100. Where on the scale would you place the socialist economy before 1989?

(2) ...Where on the scale would you place the former communist regime?

(3) ... Where on the scale would you place the present system of governing with free elections and many parties?

(4) Here are some statements about the rules that determine how the country is governed. Do you agree or disagree that... we should return to the communist regime

(5) ... the army should govern the country

An experimental Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) was utilised simultaneously with the Analysis of Variance for each election year. The focus was only on the statistically significant MCA coefficients.[160] Attitudinal variables were considered dependent on age, place of residence, education, and occupational status. The output proved valid and significant. In fact these results allowed not only an investigation of general trends in voting behaviour, but also helped approximate public attitudes to the leading political parties. This will be demonstrated further in the text.

In the following sections, the author also introduced the analysis of voters' volatility based on opinion polls rather than election results, for the purpose of identifying the linkage between parties and their electors. To examine the dynamics of electoral choice in Belarus, the results of the 1991-1999 opinion polls were analysed. The annual indexes were calculated as mean net and mean gross volatility (Pedersen's formula) in voting preferences[161]. The outcomes proved informative and help to reiterate the effect of structure and agency on the party system development in Belarus.

4.3.2 The 1990-1999 Belarusian electorate: trends in electoral behaviour

Public opinion in Belarus is highly divided. On the one hand the Belarusian electorate distinctly favours strong leadership and the populist promises of the incumbent

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(6) ...it would be better to get rid of Parliament and have a strong leader to govern the country

[160] Statistically significant coefficients here are those, which take a probability of 0.1 (few cases) or 0.05 and less, thereby providing evidence that a relationship between variables exists and that the observed result is unlikely to be due to the sampling variation.

president and authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko. His public rating has not changed over the last three years and remained consistently around 41-45% on average, whereas the rating of other political actors has significantly declined. On the other hand, the electors show positive and stable attitudes to further democratisation, resistance to the idea of dictatorial governance and no desire to retreat back to the USSR. This controversy may be conditioned by a number of factors, of which the following are perhaps the most important.

First, the salience of existing political conflicts and their under-representation determine the degree of controversy and division in society. On the one hand, public opinion favours the issues of independence, nation building, inevitability of radical economic reforms, and on the other hand, re-union with Russia, social security and immediate state benefits. It is literally split in two. Nevertheless, existing political players inadequately represent people's needs, as oppositional parties are not in public office to make policies; and pro-governmental parties unanimously express the official discourse dictated by the president. These factors obviously lower the degree of representation of public interests, which subsequently causes high levels of volatility and public distrust of parties. Parties are perceived therefore as not being capable of winning office, and the population becomes increasingly apathetic to their pledges.

Consequently, this increases people's approval of the presidential authority, despite the fact that the people in principle are strongly against dictatorial governance and would theoretically opt for democracy. In addition, Alexander Lukashenko's strong personality

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[161] The detailed description of the advantages of this method will be discussed in the section 4.3.3.

is a complementary factor to his success. He is charismatic, simple, fast learning, and has the political will for change. This distinguishes him from the rest of the political milieu of 'faceless' parties, over fifteen hundred NGOs, numerous trade unions, puppet parliament, and inaccessible government. As Huntington (1991) notes, it is important for regime sustainability that the public can distinguish between the regime and the government or rulers. The public may be attracted by the populist promises made by President Lukashenko; however, they should also understand that dictatorial governance will not facilitate democracy building.

People may simply confuse the issues of democratic freedoms, with their personal concern for better living. The West is depicted as offering unlimited opportunities and welfare provisions, which the populace may positively assess as the goal in a democratic future. In reality people resist any change that may endanger their status quo, of personal security and a regular source of income. These hypotheses will be explored in the further text in relation to the principal subject matter.

According to Christian Haerpfer (2000), despite recent non-democratic developments, Belarus, nevertheless, demonstrates one of the highest indexes of 'democratic thinking' in Eastern Europe (41%). By this Haerpfer means a general pattern of voting behaviour – electoral potential – that includes negative rating of the past communist regime, positive rating of democracy, optimism for the future, support for a legitimate parliament and political parties, and rejection of authoritarianism. According to Haerpfer, the index of democracy 'measures the support for democracy' and identifies 'those segments of post-communist society, which can be rightly labelled as 'democrats'. In other words, 41% of

the voting population in Belarus have positive expectations for the future and regards democratic freedoms as a means to achieve a better quality life.

By applying different methods of analysis, Rose (1998) et al. support the hypothesis of Belarus' potential for further democratisation. Rose argued that in 1996 up to 57% of population strongly disapproved of the president's authority and voted in preference of a democratic parliamentary system. Paradoxically, support for the increasingly dictatorial government can also be observed, as one can witness an increase in public approval of the government from 35% in 1992 to 48% in 1998. Furthermore, 48% of the population approve of free elections and a multi-party political system, whereas 35% simultaneously strongly disapprove. This demonstrates a high-level polarisation within society and the existing potential for mass mobilisation. This also suggests that in principle people are in favour of further democratisation, however their ultimate 'rationality' and fear of change causes them support the president.

People are disappointed by parties' ineffective policies and hence, become increasingly uninterested in their activities. As such 72% do not trust parties at all, and 18% remain neutral (Rose, 1998). Nevertheless, people still consider parties to be a necessary tool for building democracy and would support them if they believed they had the potential to enact change. For example, when asked whether parliament should be suspended and parties abolished in order to keep order in society, 73% of Belarusians answered 'no' (Haerpfer, 2000:11). Additionally, 72% of the population also strongly disapprove of the abolition or restriction of any party activity in society – in comparison with 57% in 1994 and 60% in 1996. 46% of Belarusians are against any continuation of authoritarian rule.

However, there is an apparent conflict between representation and leadership in Belarus. People conscientiously believe that, as representative institutions, parties are necessary. But as long as they are ineffective, 76% of the population agree that, "...a strong leader can do more for the country than all the discussions in parliament" (Mishler, 1996:232). As he further elaborates:

> In Belarus and Bulgaria there is widespread faith that representation and strong leadership can coexist, and in these two countries the largest group resolves the tension by being leadership democrats (Mishler, 1996:235).

This implies that a considerable part of the population supports the necessity of economic and political reforms. However, legacy-oriented and unsure of the opposition's potential, the public is more inclined to support strong and unified leadership, which may guarantee some consistency in decision-making.

Further analysis suggests that depending on age, place of residence, income, and the era of socialisation, people's attitudes differ considerably in terms of their support for the current regime, democratic freedoms and political actors. The method of Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) was applied to identify the above named effects.

The *Age* variable appeared to be significant and therefore, a special age index was calculated to measure the difference in public attitudes of various age groups. 1990 was considered the first year at which respondents may have freely voted. Each year since has been measured as an independent political marker with a distinct political milieu. It

was expected that the new 'entrees' (young voters) that lacked previous political experience, would be more open to political suggestion and therefore mirror any political change. It was also expected that the electoral environment in which they first became socialised (*here*: political year) should exert a long-lasting influence on their dispositions and future choice of political actors.

This 'intake' technique is based on the null hypothesis of no discernible difference between different sections of the electorate socialised under various political events, including the first presidential election. This was achieved by separating groups into cohorts according to each political year. Thus, the first intake would occur in 1990 being socialised prior to the year 1991. The 1991 intake will consist of two intakes respectively — 1990 and 1991. By 1998 the intakes will comprise nine in total.

Two significant periods can be observed in the development of electoral politics: 1990-1996 and 1997-1999. The first period is 'practical' conservatism, which the majority of the electorate reflected in their answers. The resultant negative Grand Means (GM) - a rate of -0.4-0.5 for an average voter - along with the negative rate of chosen attitudinal variables in the majority of the cases, indicated a clear *left tendency* in the electoral choice of the population between 1990-1996. Especially illustrative are the questions that assess public attitudes to (i) the communist economy, (ii) the economy of the 1989 transitional period and (iii) a possible return to communist rule. This helps us understand why president Lukashenko followed a vague line of 'third-way' socialism in his policy-making.

The second period is distinguished by a remarkable shift to the 'reformist right' in public attitudes to politics and growth of the 'protest electorate'[162] (Rotman, 2000: 3). These factors contribute to the increasing ideological division between sectors of the Belarusian population.

As potential cross-cut divides, such variables as the place of residence, education, and social status have been included in the analysis. *Place of residence*, paradoxically, appeared to be a less informative index. Nevertheless, one can trace the gradual shift from left to right in the general voting patterns of the population - GM has altered from –0.5 to –0.1. Additionally, there is a striking difference between urban and rural population. Most of the rural population, including those in smaller cities of no more than 100 000 inhabitants, perceive liberal changes in the regime and economy quite negatively, and lean leftward in their aggregated attitudes. The residents of Minsk clearly demonstrate their predisposition to democratic and nationalist politics. Frequent fluctuations in the attitudes of big city dwellers suggest their fluid political positions and hence their openness to political suggestion. Table 1 clearly demonstrates the above-mentioned tendencies.

Table 4.3.2-1. The left-right distribution of public attitudes in different regions of the country in relation to the introduction of direct presidential rule had civil unrest occurred

[162] The definition of 'protest electorate' is offered by Rotman (2000), and includes those who are in opposition to the incumbent government and demands alteration of the political course. A more detailed description will be given in section 4.3.3

Region	GM	Minsk	City	Town	Village
1994	**-0.5**	0.13	0	0	-0.18
1996	-0.24	0.3	0	0	-0.22
1998	**-0.14**	0	0	**-0.56**	**-0.32**

Note: There are 1000 (100%) respondents included in each election year. A negative coefficient indicates that the group is to the left of the average voter; a positive coefficient indicates a relatively right-wing group. Only statistically significant differences are reported.

Source: Centre for Social and Political Research, BSU, with the author participating in the project. Author's calculations.

'Practical' conservatism has been expressed towards the introduction of a multi-party system and freely contested elections by the general voter. However, this tendency has recently altered towards more positive attitudes to democratic freedoms: GM has changed from –0.25 to +0.29. The average voter in large cities and Minsk demonstrates far greater tolerance towards oppositional politics.

Table 4.3.2-2. The left-right distribution of public attitudes in different regions of the country in relation to the necessity of multi-party system and freely contested elections

Region	GM	Minsk	City	Town	Village
1994	**-0.25**	0	0.11	-0.33	-0.13
1996	-0.19	0	0	0.16	-0.16
1998	**0.29**	**0.12**	0	**-0.5**	0

Note: There are 1000 (100%) respondents included. For further details and explanation see Table 1 and the text.

Public attitudes have also proved dependent on the *level of education*. The better informed and qualified the voter group, the greater the chance is for liberal democratic attitudes to entrench. This is demonstrated by the distribution of respondents' answers to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that we should return to communist rule?"

Table 4.3.2-3. The left-right distribution of public attitudes amongst different educational groups of the population in relation to return to communist rule

Education	GM	elementary	secondary/specialised	higher/incomplete higher
1994	**-0.5**	-0.22	0	**0.38**
1996	-0.24	-0.17	0	**0.31**
1998	**0**	-0.19	0	**0.38**

Note: There are 1000 (100%) respondents included in each election year. For further details and explanation see Table 1 and the text.

By analysing the correlation between the *occupational status* of individuals and their attitudes to regime transformation, one witnesses a clear shift towards the reformist end of the political spectrum among the general population. Thus, by 1998 the pro-libertarian cluster, that advocates economic and political independence, largely includes full and part time employed, self-employed, categories such as students, housekeepers, etc., and those who rely on state benefits. Among those who would vote for re-union with 'elder brother' Russia, are pensioners, both unemployed and employed, and 'other state beneficiaries'.

Table 4.3.2-4. The left-right distribution of public attitudes in different occupational groups in relation to return to communist rule

Occupation	GM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1994	0.47	0	0	-0.22	0.20	0.20	0.34	-0.10	-0.25	0	0.14
1996	-0.13	0	0.12	0.57	0.47	0.34	0.41	-0.27	-0.43	-0.14	0.46
1998	**0.12**	**0**	**0**	-	**0.60**	**0**	**0.52**	-0.30	-0.36	-0.12	**0.52**

Note: There are 1000 (100%) cases included in each election year. Key to occupation groups: 1- full-time employed; 2- part-time employed; 3- apprentice; 4- self-employed; 5- unemployed, no state benefit; 6- unemployed, state benefit; 7- pensioner, employed; 8- pensioner, unemployed; 9- other state beneficiaries; 10- not employed (student, housekeeper, etc.).

The *age variable*, nevertheless, proved to be the most indicative. It shows the existence of a generational effect on the formation of political attitudes and voting behaviour of electors. As hypothesised at the beginning, there is a clear-cut difference between newly socialised cohorts and other sectors of the electorate. Indeed, the distribution of answers to the question whether a return to communist rule is desirable, demonstrates a continuing right-wing increase facilitated by the electoral newcomers. Older voters show much greater resistance to social change.

Table 4.3.2-5 The left-right distribution of public attitudes in different age groups in relation to return to communist rule.

Age	GM	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
1994	0	0.28	0.15	-0.15	-0.34
1996	-0.13	0.30	0.18	-0.17	-0.38
1998	**0.12**	**0.29**	**0.12**	**0**	**-0.37**

Note: There are 1000 (100%) cases included in each election year. For further details and explanation see Table 1 and the text.

The generational effect occurs when newly socialised cohorts enter the electorate annually. The noticeable fact is that each new cohort intensifies the flexibility of support for different blocs within the political the spectrum. There is still much confusion and controversy among the general public about such issues as oppositional politics, economic freedoms, and strong presidency. The newly enfranchised electorate (1997-98) seems to be increasingly radical in this respect. This allows a critical retrospective score of the socialist past and positively receives democratic features associated with non-dictatorial government, multi-party system and free elections.

Table 4.3.2-6. Generational effect calculated on the basis of voters' separation into cohorts according to the election year when they became socialised into politics.

Attitudes	*GM*	*1(1990)*	*2(1991)*	*3(1992)*	*4(1993)*	*5(1994)*	*6(1995)*	*7(1996)*	*8(1997)*	*9(1998)*
To the return to communist rule										
1994	0	0	0.67	0.33	0	0.38				
1996	-0.13	0	0.36	0.29	0.77	0.13	0.46			
1998	0.12	0	0.17	0.18	0.48	0.48	0.19	**0.59**	**0.44**	**0.44**
To the socialist economy of 1989										
1994	-0.50	0	0.44	0.25	0	0				
1996	-0.90	0	-0.13	0	0	0	0			
1998	-0.61	0	**0.33**	0	0.16	0	**0.31**	0.16	**0.28**	**0.56**
To the communist economy										
1994	-0.25	0	0.57	0	0	0.25				
1996	0.88	0	0	0	0	0	0			
1998	-0.30	0	0.15	-0.17	**0.35**	**0.59**	0.17	**0.25**	**0.52**	0.18

To the necessity of multi-party system and freely contested elections										
1994	-0.25	0	0	0	0.32	0.25				
1996	-0.19	0	0	-0.30	0.54	0.15	0.19			
1998	0.13	0	-0.17	0	0.17	0	**-0.30**	-0.13	**0.28**	0
To the introduction of direct presidential rule had political unrest occurred										
1994										
1996	-0.24	0	0	0	0.66	0	0.12			
1998	0	0	**0.29**	0	**0.36**	**0.37**	0	0.17	**0.22**	0.12

Note: There are 1000 (100%) respondents included in each election year. The entries in this table are MCA coefficients, which show the average distance between each group and the average voter in the data set. Negative coefficients indicate more left-wing groups, positive coefficients – relatively right-wing groups. Only statistically significant differences are shown

Individual analysis of differentiated cohorts is necessary, as the first generation of electors in the 1990 election displayed no deviation from the average left-oriented voter. This suggests the lack of adequate underpinning of personal beliefs by a cleavage structure, which should have occurred in the initial process of crystallisation. These resulted in the outbreak of floating votes, open to political suggestion. The generations of 1991 and to a lesser degree 1992 show a growth of democratic ambition and sufficient immunisation against appeals for a return to the 'better past'. This may be due to intensive political clashes and the successful manifesto of anti-Communist umbrella parties. In the 1992 election campaign the Nationalists failed to assert their influence; and the Communists, being better organised, strengthened their majority in parliament. This scenario presumably influenced the 1993 enfranchised electorate, who manifested less determination for further democratisation. The 1994 'entrees', who were initially hypothesised as Lukashenko supporters, in fact demonstrated more desire for change

than those of previous years. Further radicalisation of all intakes has accelerated since the 1996 events, which changed the constitution and dissolved parliament.

These general tendencies in Belarus' voting behaviour seem to closely correspond with findings of similar research undertaken by Mishler and Rose (1996), Wyman (1996), Fish (1995), McAllister and White (1995), Dobson (2000), Wilson (1999), Rose, White and Munro (2000) in other post communist democracies. These scholars unanimously agree that public opinion in Belarus compared to that in other democracies is divided by sharp pro-presidential (in average of 20% of firm voters) vis-à-vis pro-oppositional (in average of 30-33%) cleavage. The rest (about 29-30%) are indecisive voters, who form an attractive buffer, which both sides will aim their campaigns at during the forthcoming presidential election. For example, according to recent independent surveys[163], 39% of Belarusians say that Belarus is not a democracy (16% disagree); 43% say that people have limits of freedom (31% disagree); 39% say that media is not free (39% disagree); 37% agree that western criticism of human rights abuses in Belarus is justified (29% disagree); and 56% say that the government should enter into a dialogue with the opposition (19% disagree). As Dobson (2000) underlines, when presented with two options, half (51%) of the population say that people should be free to say whatever they want, even if this increases tensions in society. Simultaneously, 39% say that it is

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[163] R. Dobson (2000) *Belarusians want more freedom, but haven't given up on Lukashenko.* Opinion analysis, Office research, Department of State, Washington D.C. 20520; Rotman, D. (1999, 2000). *The president and his electorate* (ERI, Bath University); Manaev. O. (1997, 1998) *Paradoxical electorate.* IISEPI. Minsk.

better to live in a society with strict order, even if it requires limiting freedom of speech. Residents of Minsk are twice as likely to be pro-reformist and anti-system.

Despite the split of opinion, people, nevertheless, firmly believe (at least 2/3 of the population) that democratic institutions are necessary to balance power in society. For example, as Dobson (2000: 2) notes 55% (versus 22%) say that it is impermissible to cancel scheduled elections; 53% (versus 27%) are against banning meetings and demonstrations; 54% (versus 22%) do not support censorship of mass media; and 54% (versus 16%) are strongly against disbanding parliament and ruling by decree.

Scholars indeed confirm that one of the unique features of new democracies is a paradoxical combination of democratic attitudes of the population with a desire to have strong leadership. Rose and Mishler (1996: 234) suggested in this respect a fourfold typology of political leadership: from representative and leadership democrats to the disaffected and authoritarians. According to them 74% of the population in Russia, for example, are either unqualified adherents of parties and other representative agencies, or else support government with representative institutions made more effective by a stronger leadership. In Belarus, however, these publicly supported representative institutions have not materialised into effective political bodies and accordingly this has enhanced the delegation of power to the president.

Studies into voting behaviour suggest that education and affluence are the most influential factors in determining people's attitudes. The case of Belarus appeared to be more complicated. In their studies, Rotman (2000), Manaev (1998), Furman et al (1998) suggest

that those who are likely to protest against the incumbent government are mainly full-time workers who may not possess a higher education or have sufficient means of living. The role of trade unions in the anti-system movements has been paramount until recently, when they were forced to bargain with authorities for their own survival.

The general conclusion of this section is that the electorate is split in two and is potentially ready for mobilisation. This may allow some leeway for parties to re-establish their reputation through organising collective resistance to the contemporary regime and promoting forms of co-operation with the authorities in order to re-gain lost power and resources.

In the following sections public support for parties and the president – the two 'oppositional' forces in the country – will be analysed. This will aim to answer the question, "why public support of parties hypothetically is high, but practically is non-existent in Belarus".

4.3.3 Explaining electoral volatility

Since 1997 on average 18-20% of the population have actively supported political parties in Belarus, and less than 1% of the population have been directly involved in party membership. About 25% of the population have an explicit awareness of the existence of political parties and their 'opposition' to the president (Rotman, 2000; Manaev, 1998; Belapan, 1999; Furman et al 1998). Public trust of parties, nevertheless, has gradually declined. An index of 'trust' for various political institutions depicts the following tendencies (Rotman, 2000)[164].

The aggregated index of trust was 50%[165], which signifies that only half of the population actually trusts of existing institutions. From this index it was revealed that 65% of the population trust the president, 49% the government; 42% local authorities; 45% heads of regional administration, and 15% political parties. In fact the level of trust of Lukashenko's government has grown by around 6% since 1997. In addition, the

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[164] Rotman, D. (2000) "Social-political and economic situation in the Republic of Belarus: contemporary developments", paper presented at the University of Bath (ERI) Conference, 'Belarus: The forgotten Heart of Europe?", February 2000. The opinion poll was nation-wide, with a stratified sample of 1000 respondents representing all social classes of the Belarus' population. Information was collected in 55 residential districts around the country. Confidence level is 95%.

[165] These trends of electoral behaviour have been confirmed by data gathered within recent polls' such as INTAS project (99-00245) 'Charismatic Political leadership in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine', University of Bath, ERI. For example, 40.8% trust of Lukashenko, and consider his leadership promising for implementation of reforms. About 75.1% believe that Lukashenko's presidency is the most powerful institution in the country; and so is his government (23.2%) and the police (30.4%) supported by the president.

distribution of answers regarding whom the electorate would vote for if the presidential election were held tomorrow, was such that 28% of the population said that they could not distinguish any worthwhile candidates for office; 8% would vote against all candidates by spoiling the ballot paper; 14% would not vote at all; 26% did not know; and only 24% had a specific choice, of which about 17% belonged to the president (Belapan, 1999). In other words, in 1999 public opinion appeared to be split into thirds, of which 42% said they would definitely *not* vote, 26% were hesitant, and 32% would vote, with 17% for Lukashenko. Whereas, in 2000 the distribution of answers has radically altered: 42% of the population say they would vote for Lukashenko; 41% say that they are undecided and only 2% of the electorate could name an alternative candidate to Lukashenko (Dobson, 2000: 4). It is clear that the electoral trust of parties and their leaders is in danger of extinction; and the group of presidential supporters has the potential to grow further.

It appears, in theory that parties are deemed to be necessary for national democratic development, but in practice the majority of the population does not support them. In order to explain the existing controversy of public opinion regarding political parties, one has to analyse specifically the *linkage* between parties and their voters. For this purpose structural levels of electoral volatility will be examined[166].

The measure of electoral volatility reflects individual vote shifts, and displays the distribution of party strength during the course of observation. Assuming that the parties' 'ideological' positions are fairly stable and have recognisable images for

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[166] For more discussion see Korosteleva E. (2000) "Electoral volatility in post-Communist Belarus: explaining the paradox", *Party Politics*, 6(3): 343-358

Belarusian voters, the index of volatility should reflect the degree of stability of elector's preferences and the level of their mobilisation in general.

Electoral volatility can be measured on the basis of election results or opinion poll evidence, depending on data availability and its informative value. In the case of the newly emerged democracies, with a limited number of election runs and non-settled patterns of voters' participation and party competition, sample surveys can estimate perspectives for party system development. There are several reasons for this consideration. First, opinion polls permit an enhanced number of observations over a given period, and therefore, statistically improve chances of receiving valid results. In addition, if opinion polls are conducted on a regular basis, say 3-5 times a year, and allow approximation of results on a nation-wide sample, with a 95% confidence probability, this may provide a parsimonious and reliable measure of volatility over time. By this, it is implied, a full-term observation of voting behaviour covering various levels of political activity in the annual cycle may be obtained. This may also include election campaigns, which more effectively reflect the microcosm of change amongst voters.[167] Third, the levels of survey volatility are expected to be higher and more receptive to change with the increasing frequency of observations, as this period is when voters form their opinions and are more prone to change their point of view. Therefore if patterned choice or short-lived allegiance should emerge, the character of volatility will immediately identify it. The final advantage of the poll-calculated index of volatility in this context is its capacity to indicate political change in action, rather than in stasis. It reflects the immediate outcomes of the political game - by that pre-empting the negative effect of power misbalance after the elections. However, one should be aware of the projective character of

[167] See D. Farrell et al. (1995: 110-127)

any measure of electoral volatility based on intended voting, which may approximate, but not necessarily coincide with the reality.

To examine the dynamics of electoral choice and the level of party institutionalisation in Belarus, the results of the 1991-1999 opinion polls were analysed[168]. The annual volatility indexes were calculated as mean net[169] and mean gross change in voting preferences. In the first instance (mean net), the absolute differences in party support between opinion polls, which were attached to the most salient political events of each year, were summed and divided by two. Counted as an average thereafter, the mean annual volatility index represents an alternative to Pedersen's measure of net volatility, as it is year specific. It examines the degree of *individual voter instability* over the course of separate political events and campaigns during a given year. In turn, mean gross volatility refers to *aggregate-level* changes in voting and was calculated as the percentage of 'voters' who change their preference during the annual observation[170]. Both measures were utilised in order to conceive change as multi-layered and multi-dimensional: net volatility reflects instantaneous change in voting, i.e. from one observation to another, and gross volatility shows accumulation of vote shifts in total throughout the year.

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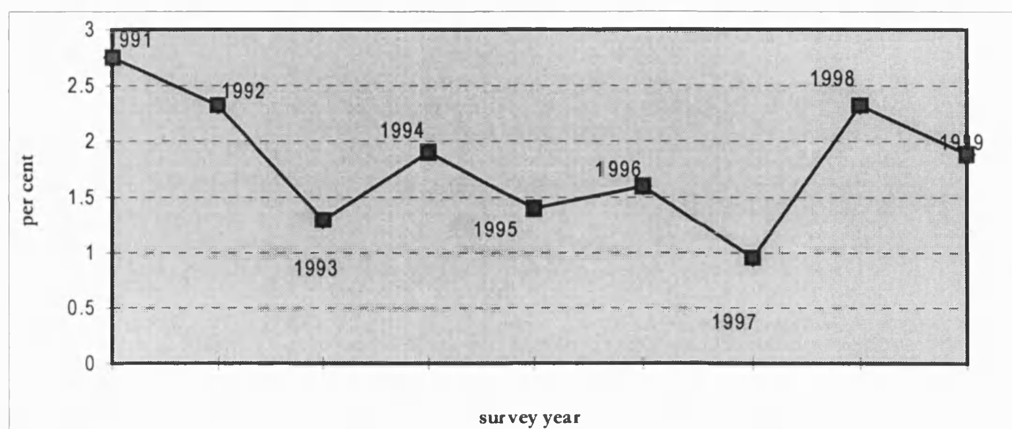
[168] With the author's participation, opinion polls were conducted on a regular basis 3-4 times a year between 1990 and 1999 by the sociological service 'Public Opinion' which was renamed as the Centre for Social and Political Research (BSU) in 1996. A stratified nationwide sample with a 95% confidence level is normally used, representing all adults over the age of 18 with at least 1000 respondents each time (Rotman, 2000; Korosteleva (2001 forthcoming)).

[169] Pedersen, M. (1997) "Dynamics of European party systems: changing patterns of electoral volatility", *European Journal of Political Research* 7(1):1-26.

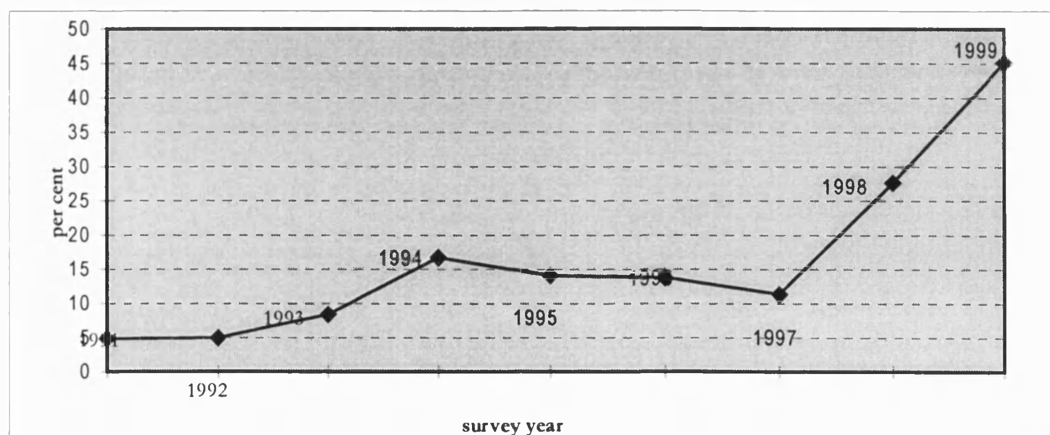
[170] See Farrell et al (1995: 110-127).

Figure 4.3.3-1. Mean Gross Volatility 1991-1999



Note: see text for details of estimation.
Source: author. Opinion polls 1991-1999, Centre for Social and Political Research, Belarusian State University, Minsk.

Figure 4.3.3-2. Mean Net Volatility 1991-1999



Note: This measure indicates the absolute differences in party support between opinion polls that were attached to the most salient political events of each year, which were summed and divided by two. The annual index of volatility is calculated as the average of observations at a given year. See text for further explanation.
Source: author. Opinion polls 1991-1999, Centre for Social and Political Research, Belarusian State University, Minsk

The mean gross volatility (Fig.4.3.3-1) reflects the continuing decline in vote mobility between existing party alternatives over time. On the aggregate level this may suggest either a settlement of party choice by voters or a decrease of their interest in party politics in general. This observation, however, contradicts the mode of the net volatility, which displays a steady tendency of growth. Vote interchange has intensified in recent years, and attained the shape of a straight progressive line, according to Figure 4.3.3-2. The question should be as which of the tendencies, presented in both graphics, is correct.

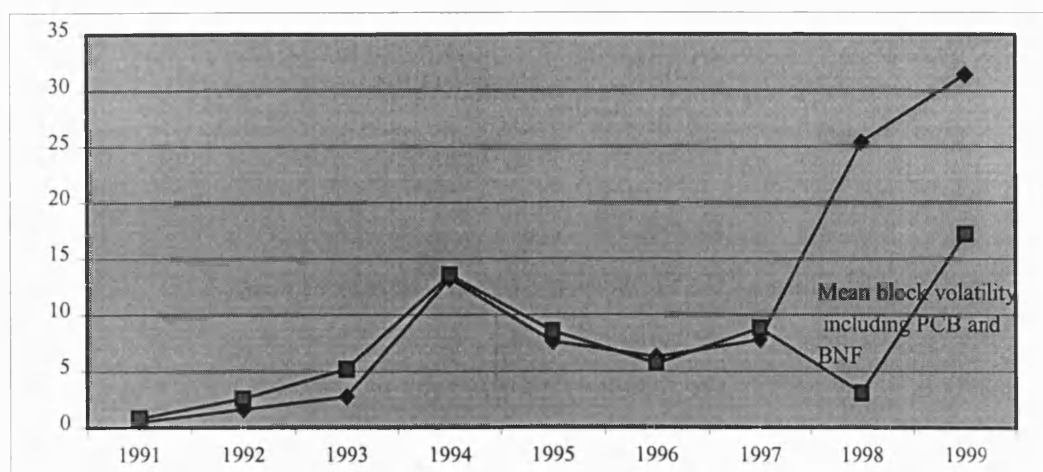
The net volatility, which measures change from one point in time to another, is designed to be more sensitive to any variation in public attitudes. It can be referred to as reflecting 'individual' shifts of votes on the aggregate level; and therefore should be more precise in its measurement. By displaying a positive growth of mobility in voters' choice, it confirms a tendency for decline in voters' attachment to existing parties. The two measures of volatility, however, cannot contradict, but should supplement each other. Indeed, it has been established that Belarusian voters generally favour representative institutions as a means for building democracy. Therefore, if one assumes that both tendencies are correct - on the aggregate level people's choice of the party alternatives are shown as 'settling down' or 'depoliticising', yet, on the individual level change in preferences persists – one would have to search for a 'third party' that distorts the balance between these two.

Alternative analysis of volatility between and within existing ideological groups of parties may shed some light on the aforementioned paradox.

Total volatility (gross/net) reflects electoral mobility of broader party fronts and gives a general impression of party settlement within the electorate. The measure of bloc volatility provided below is more informative for identifying the particularities of party institutionalisation, as well as voters' dispositions and cohesion of choice.

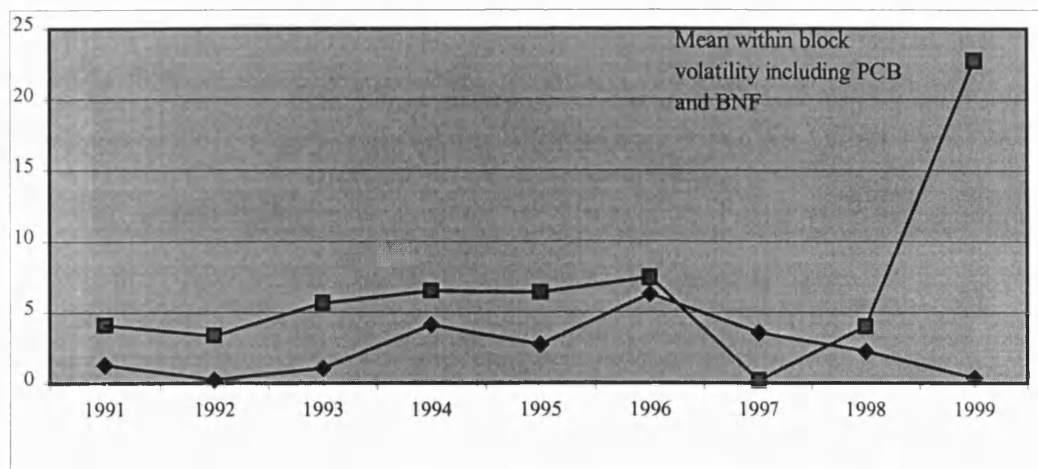
Bartolini and Mair's approach (1990), although based on estimates from sample surveys rather than election results, was used to assess the levels of bloc and within-bloc volatility between two ideological camps of Belarus' political spectrum: conservative (communists and other related parties) versus reformist (social democrats, liberals, and nationalists). The party division is relative and based on expert estimations, and results of other surveys (Kitschelt, 1998, Evans& Whitefield, 1998; Bobkov, 1998; Ygrinovich, 1996; Markowskii, 1998, and other).

Figure 4.3.3-3. Comparing Mean Block Volatility (BV) 1991-1999: Structural Influence of PCB and BNF



Note: The measure of BV implies a standard calculation of volatility for each of two ideological blocks of parties, which is as follows. BV=ABS {P(iV+jV+kV) + P(oV+mV+nV)}/2, where P(iV+jV+kV) represents absolute net change in the average vote for parties i, j, and k, all of which come from the same block, between two consecutive opinion polls. 2-block division was used, the centre parties were related to the left or right end of the spectrum according to their ideological stances. Calculation of BV with hypothetical exclusion of two parties from analysis, PCB and BNF, is based on the same arithmetical routine, but without taking the party voting results into account. For further details see the text.
Source: author. Opinion Polls 1991-1999, Centre for social and Political Research, Belarusian State University, Minsk.

Figure 4.3.3-4. Comparing Mean Within-Block Volatility (WBV) 1991-1999: Structural Influence of PCB and BNF



Note: WBV measures volatility within each of two party blocks. It was calculated as follows: Total Net Volatility – Block Volatility (BV) = Within-Block Volatility (WBV), is the sum total, for each block, of those party net changes which have an algebraic sign contrary to that of the block as a whole (Bartolini and Mair, 1990:22). Calculation of WBV with hypothetical exclusion of two parties from analysis, PCB and BNF, is based on the same arithmetical routine, but without taking the party voting results into account. For further explanation see the text.
Source: author. Opinion polls 1991-1999, Centre for Social and Political Research, Belarusian State University, Minsk.

The results conform to the general pattern of the growth in volatility exhibited by the mean net total measure (Fig.4.3.3-2). Evidence suggests a distinct increase in levels of bloc and within-bloc volatility (Fig. 4.3.3-4) during 1994-1996 (the first years of Lukashenko's presidency), and later in 1998 (as conflict develops between the underground opposition and the president), tapping voters' discontent during the course of the political year. In contrast, a remarkable fall of voters' interest can be observed during the parliamentary elections in 1995, and after the 1996 crux of parties' battle against Lukashenko's violation of law. This may generally imply the existence of a 'second-order' effect on party choice by voters in the situation when the president holds the preponderance of power and the legislature, and political parties are virtually powerless.

In addition, the calculation of bloc/within-bloc volatility, based on the 'exclusion' from the analysis of the two major parties, PCB and BNF, which apparently constitute the central ideological axis of party competition, produces intriguing findings[171]. If we compare Fig. 4.3.3-3 and 4.3.3-4, we can see that the patterns of bloc volatility (BV) and within-bloc volatility (WBV) of these two parties, both in and out of analysis, differ significantly in shape. That is in the sense the BV and WBV levels display a similar growth line until 1997, and then the BV 'shoots up' and WBV respectively 'goes down' with the two leading parties excluded from analysis. In addition, when the parties are in the game, the WBV noticeably rises. Given the meaning of both measures, and the

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[171] The removal of the two leading parties - PCB and BNF - from analysis implies a standard calculation of bloc volatility but without taking the two parties' voting results into account. This is based on the estimation of absolute net change in aggregate vote for each group of parties from the same bloc, which

ideological significance of both parties, one should question the rise of WBV with two parties 'on board'. It is logical to assume, for example, that when parties theoretically are 'out of the game'; BV should rise because voters regard these parties as ideological markers and would find it difficult to orient without them. It is also clear why the WBV subsides with their exclusion from the game: ideological meanings of the camps lose their distinct profile. What is puzzling here is the rise of the WBV with the two parties included in the analysis. It may be hypothesised that, either; the *real* significance of these two leading parties for voters has necessarily declined. Or, there are other important 'players' in the institutional scenario of Belarus that make voters unexpectedly switch-away their settling preferences.

To recapitulate the argument: there is an increasing tendency for voters' mobility, as the measure of net total and bloc volatility demonstrates; and this is despite the overall potential for party settlement within their core constituencies or the growing public apathy (mean gross volatility). Before 1996, the extreme density and fragmentation of the political universe, which was associated with a great number of small and hardly discernible parties, could largely explain this. Later developments in voting behaviour, with parties settled in numbers and core voters, none the less, continues to reflect intensive vote interchange. This may be caused by voters' indecisiveness over the 'conservative-reformist' ideological cleavage. However, it is highly unlikely this will occur, because the factual ideological divisions between existing parties are blurred. On the other hand, this may be caused by the presence of 'a third party' (institution or

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is summed up and divided by two at the end. This technique is hypothetical and allows only projective conclusions, which should be treated in conjunction with other studies.

agency), which voters may find more resourceful and appealing, and which disrupts their partisan loyalties. In any event, both hypotheses inevitably lead to an argument over the contribution of the leading parties to the process of decision-making: neither situation would have been possible if the national parties enjoyed sufficient power to balance representation in society.

In addition, if one compares the degree of total and bloc volatility, before and after the presidential election in 1994 and especially after 1998, one can see that electoral interchange has intensified in practice but not *in principle*, highlighting no real dilemma of choice between parties for voters. As Rose (1998) noticed, volatility of people's choice is also accompanied by the growth of non-voting and negative voting. Electoral instability may be explained by change of priorities in voters' motivation, provided that they act rationally. If this is the case, it could explain the actual decline of voters' interest in party politics, where the change of motivation in electors' preferences may be ascribed to the existing conflict between the president and the opposition parties in Belarus.

Once again the interdependence of structures and agency has demonstrated its logic. Parties may enjoy steady legitimacy if structures and cultural predisposition so allow. An explanation of vote-switching between big national parties with small, but relatively stable constituencies can be formulated on the basis of 'second-order' preferences, when there is not so much at stake on the parliamentary level, as compared to the presidential, and voters can manipulate their choice. The implication is that the balance of power in the country would not really be altered by the results of parliamentary elections or every day party actions, nor would the composition of government or the efficacy of reforms.

Due to new constitutional and institutional arrangements, there is little leeway for parties to accomplish their mission during their political cycle. Voters may 'cherish' their beliefs and remain faithful to parties' ideologies, however this does not prevent them from responding rationally to the opportunities provided by the existing institutional order. In turn, powerless parties tend to undermine the legislature's ability to pursue its own aggrandisement at the expense of the presidency, and thus contribute to the accretion of presidential powers. This pushes to the forefront the second line of party competition — the 'Lukashenko-anti-Lukashenko' divide.

It is obvious that public opinion is extremely divided. In their earnest desire for social change, people are torn between parties, which ought to provide access to power for the citizenry to rule the country, and the president, who seems to them, more capable of coping with public needs. Therefore, they often surrender their party loyalty for an opportunity to acquire immediate revenues, which are pledged by the government. It is interesting to note that the presidential and the underground parties' electorates clash considerably, and this forms an environment for vote switching along the 'president-anti-president' divide. In other words, contemporary voters perform rational 'flexibility' in their voting behaviour, which allows them to pursue their own short-term policies despite their ideological motivations and personal beliefs.

Another explanation of the 'swing-or-not-to-swing' voting behaviour in Belarus may be ascribed to parties' organisational insufficiency and their continuing inability to resist increasing the power of the president. Parties act in accordance to their rationale and in pursuit of the more accommodating strategies in order to survive voters' impartiality

and institutional-cum-structural predicaments. Nevertheless, their actions seem to be in continuing discrepancy with voters' rational choice. This is when the opportunities for populist leaders and perhaps other agencies for interest representation emerge. The latter (NGOs, new trade unions, and other interest organisations), though, express fringe interests and, hence, enjoy only limited support from the population. All these enhance the rudimentary image of parties within society, which if no consensus is achieved and no legal attempts by them are made to win public office, will bring parties to their political demise.

Van der Eijk, Franklin et al. (1996), in their research of the European Parliamentary elections develop a notion of 'quasi-switching' to explain the vote fluidity between individual parties in low-salient elections. This term does not imply *change* over time or radical realignments or party decay, but rather in contrast between voting preferences in the election sequence, while party loyalties remain continuous. This framework seems to prescribe well the case of problematic institutionalisation of the new party system in Belarus. Public behaviour is marked by 'swing-or-not-to-swing' attitudes to both governmental and oppositional policy offers, which does not *yet* imply de-alignment of voters from parties, but rather voters' rational choice in a constitutionally limited environment.

The institutional and human effects of the presidency on parties' settlement with their existing and potential voters will be subject to analysis in the next section.

4.3.4 The President and the parties' electorates: what is the difference?

In previous sections, it was established that both parties and voters tend to act rationally in an attempt to optimise their benefits in the situation of uncertainty and pending crisis, in Belarus. Their rationale, nevertheless, appears to be different. Parties have scarce electoral support and remain out of power. Instead of channelling the governed to their governors, parties often act out of instincts of self-preservation. They cannot afford to mobilise the mass of uncommitted voters, so they either ally with the state to access the unlimited pool of resources, or seek funding elsewhere to acquire votes for the purpose of winning office. Electors, in turn, make their own preference for 'political investment' and seem to choose to support the president as the more realistic source for social change. In other words, parties act by themselves and for themselves, and so do voters. The famous 'participatory linkage' as described by Kay Lawson (1988) appears to lie elsewhere.

If parties do not enjoy public support, theoretically there should be other organisations that can 'channel' public interests. In an unfavourable institutional and structural environment, NGOs, trade unions, youth movements, unions and other interest organisations do not appear able to disrupt the concentration of power in hands of Lukashenko. The majority of the electorate believes that with Lukashenko in power the continuity of incremental reforms and minimal social security will be guaranteed, especially when there is no alternative choice of leadership. This, of course, does not prevent them from supporting representative institutions for the purpose of building democracy. The majority of the population believes that democratisation and strong leadership can co-exist.

The principal question, nevertheless, remains as to why the discrepancy between public expectations and people's real choice persists even when parties go beyond their self-seeking motives, and try to re-establish linkage with their voters. It is puzzling why people theoretically believe in a party's mission, but stake little hope on their capacity to govern; or conversely, why people steadily support Lukashenko knowing that power concentration may lead to dictatorship. This raises the question; as to what extent the existing 'presidential divide' between the parties and the incumbent can damage voters' choice, and the prospect for democratisation.

According to Oleg Manaev (1998:22), in 1994 48.7% of the population believed that President Lukashenko could solve the economic and political crisis of the country. This level of electoral endorsement steadily continued over the next six years, and decreased by 4% between 1995 and 1999. Conversely, public expectations that parties are capable of governing the country out of the economic-cum-political crisis have significantly declined. In 1991 79.9% of the population believed that parties were an essential element for building a democratic future. However, by 1998 only 3.9% of the electorate still adhered to this premise, with the main decline (from 60% of confidence to 3.9%) occurring between 1996 and 1998 when many parties failed to remain in public office. Nevertheless, public attitude to the fact that parties are fundamental for balancing power in society, paradoxically, did not change very much, and remained on average at 29.6% between 1996 and 1999[172]. These calculations suggest that the dilemma of choice for the

[172] Rotman, D.G., Korosteleva E.A., et al. (1996) *Kakoy Mi Vidim Nashu Belarus? Dannye operativno-socioloogicheskisch oprosov 1994-1995* [What Kind of Belarus Do we See?], The results of sociological observations 1994-1995] (Minsk), Part 3. Rotman, D. (1997) "Kakoi mi vidim Belarus?"[What Belarus

Belarusians has been as whether to support the president or parties; and who would be the better 'political investment' for saving democracy. High-level volatility of people's choice is evidence of the painful process of the formation of public opinion, which has increasingly leaned towards the presidential-led administration during recent years. The situation can be likened to 'robe pulling' between the president and the remaining parties. This occurs because both blocs recruit their 'human capital' from a largely overlapping and rationally oriented pool of electors.

Therefore, one has to answer the question as to "what are the principal features of the presidential electorate in contemporary Belarus, as opposed to that of parties". The core of presidential supporters displays certain social-demographic characteristics[173]. They form around 17.9% middle aged and 37.5% elderly population, those without a higher education (47.3%), and full-time labour in state enterprises (43.2%) or retired (45.3%). Lukashenko's followers mainly reside in small towns (24.6%) and villages (42.7%), and use a mixed language (local dialect) in every-day communication (45.1%). Paradoxically, the description of Lukashenko's electorate closely matches that of his opponents. Among them are approximately the same percent of the middle aged (24.8% between 30-39 and 30% over 40), and full-time workers (45.5%) and those with mainly school/college education (41%). The principal social-demographic characteristics of the electoral opposition to the president are [1] young adults aged between 20 and 29

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can we see?], *Narodnaya Gazeta* [People's Paper], 21 October, p.1,3; Rotman, D. (1999) *Sociological Report 1998-99*.

[173] For more details, see Manaev, O. (1998) "Belorusskii Electorat: Za i Protiv Presidenta" [Belarusian Electorate: For and Against the President], *NISAPI News* 1: 22-8

(32.3%); [2] higher educated people (23.9%); [3] residents of Minsk (31%) and other large cities (34.8%); [4] those who speak Russian or Russian and Belarusian[174].

Income indicators confirm that there is no difference between presidential pro-electors and counter-electors: there are 58% of those who live on or below the poverty line in both ideological blocs. At the same time, the majority of Lukashenko's supporters think that their income, as well as the economic situation in the country has changed for the better with recent years or at least has not worsened. Among those who do not support the president are those who are not satisfied with their worsening living standards and the economic situation of the country in consequence. Paradoxically, the majority of Lukashenko's supporters (62%) would find it difficult to survive if the situation became worse, whereas those in opposition (49.5%) would try to find some means of coping with the collapsing order.

From the above data it is clear that both the president and the opposition recruit their principal resources from similar social groups of electors, with an added extension to the oppositional side (youth, intelligentsia, and urban residents). This demonstrates how divided and controversial public opinion is at present in Belarus. As mentioned previously, the situation resembles 'robe pulling' between the parties and the president for votes, where the president seems to have already won the authority to shape the institutional environment.

[174] Sociological data of opinion polls, presented by IISEPS in *IISEPS NEWS* 1:22-28, Minsk, 1998.

When one examines ideological beliefs and personal motivations of both electoral camps, considerable differences become apparent. Among Lukashenko's electorate are those who support a planned, state-regulated economy, public ownership of property and a moderate pace of reforms. They also advocate high levels of social security and full guaranties of state benefits. Interestingly, these issues advanced by the part of the population, which mainly exists on state benefits and under state protection – and subsequently also forms the majority of the Lukashenko's electorate. Among those who would never vote for the Lukashenko, are those, who support the principles of market economy, low state interference, high, but irregular income, and the possibility to earn money, which the contemporary system lacks. In the majority of its parameters: income, age, social status, and economic activity, Manaev has described Lukashenko's electorate as 'socially' vulnerable. Secondly, it has clear anti-reform, anti-market and state-oriented stance. Third, popular psychology depicts Belarus as a 'defending fortress' that blames others for its misfortunes and whose main features are collectivism, low tolerance to dissidents, and growing xenophobia. In other words, a process of 'conservation' of Lukashenko's electorate has taken place where more passive parts of it became dominant (Manaev, 1998:10).

If one compares Lukashenko's electorate between 1994 and 1999, one finds a striking transformation in the cohort of his supporters. Remarkably, with all the political and economic upheavals that have occurred during recent years, he has not lost support, and his gains have also been minimal. On average 12-14% of the elderly, with school education, low income and highly dependence on the state have joined Lukashenko's followers. They are also the regular audience of the state owned Belarusian television service and consumers of official newspapers. The new 'entrees', however, do not

support the idea of going back 'to the USSR'; they believe the possible political union with Russia controversial (36.7% are against); and support the idea of market socialism. To summarise, people's ideological attitudes, levels of confidence and trust of political players demonstrate radical difference between those who support the president and those who support parties. This is especially true in relation to public attitudes towards the necessity to reform government, means of living and personal involvement in politics.

If one must label the mode of mobilisation of the presidential and oppositional electorates, the former can be described as being more inclined to delegate authority for decision-making to its representative (in this case, the president) and 'passively' relies on their 'trustee' to sway the nation's destiny. With time this attitude generates hostility to other forms of representation, and may have a reverse effect on the level of public mobilisation that may result in mass depoliticisation, and further alienation from the process of decision-making (O'Donnell, 1996).

The oppositional electorate seems to act rather differently, being a discussant of critical issues of social welfare rather than a passive observer. Mass demonstrations, partisanship, readership of both official and oppositional sources of information, and a more crystallised position towards the needs of the country are the main attributes of this part of electorate.

When one analyses the level of trust of various political and social institutions, three profiles of the Belarusian electorate can be observed:

Table 4.3.4-1. Public trust of political and social institutions in Belarus, 1998

Political values Public attitudes to social institutions:	**President's supporters (26.0%)**	**All respondents (100%)**	**President's opponents (20.8%)**
Government:			
Trust	**61.6**	**26.2**	2.6
Do not trust	5.9	**25.9**	**76.2**
New Parliament:			
Trust	**36.1**	15.8	2.6
Do not trust	10.2	**24.7**	**67.1**
Constitutional Court:			
Trust	**35.8**	20.1	9.0
Do not trust	19.2	33.3	**70.4**
Army:			
Trust	**52.2**	30.5	12.9
Do not trust	9.0	21.2	**53.7**
Local Authorities:			
Trust	**41.8**	**21.2**	5.8
Do not trust	22.8	**35.1**	**70.4**
Traditional Trade Unions:			
Trust	12.0	7.2	3.9
Do not trust	18.2	**27.3**	**56.3**
Independent Trade Unions:			
Trust	5.4	9.5	18.6
Do not trust	**23.8**	**22.4**	**36.7**
13th Supreme Soviet:			
Trust	16.9	8.5	9.0
Do not trust	19.5	**26.5**	**53.9**
Church:			
Trust	**65.0**	**48.3**	**39.5**
Do not trust	7.4	11.8	**25.1**
Official Mass Media:			
Trust	**75.1**	**43.7**	15.8
Do not trust	5.1	21.0	**60.1**
Independent Mass Media:			
Trust	13.8	**25.4**	**33.9**
Do not trust	**33.8**	**24.1**	**21.9**

Source: Retrieved from Manaev (1998:27), Independent Institute for Social, Economic and Political Research (NISEPI), Minsk.

As one can see from the table, public opinion (middle column) in general is very divided and ready for political mobilisation. Three groups of the population can be clearly observed – pro-governmental, oppositional and undecided voters. The latter group allows considerable leeway for politicians to manoeuvre in an attempt of recruiting additional voters for the forthcoming presidential election in 2001. It may be noted, that the pro-presidential part of the Belarusian electorate seems to be more consolidated and coherent in its judgement; whereas the 'protest electorate' seems to be more sceptical, and less enthusiastic in its support of non-presidential institutions, like the former parliament.

It has been observed that, the 'practical' and 'visual' accomplishments of the president (clean streets, finishing of long-term projects, low but regular wages, warm houses in the winter, food on shelves, and so on) work for his popularity. His audience respectively has become accustomed to see his short-term promises fulfilled, which creates a difficulty for the president to switch from 'cosmetic' to more radical reforms in the longer term. As Manaev (1998: 12) points out, today's followers believe in the president not because he is prospective, but because he pledges to overcome the crisis swiftly using non-painful and habitual methods. For example, he promised that prices on alcohol and vodka in particular, would remain relatively stable, and by doing that he knew he would instantaneously satisfy the majority of the distressed population. This proved the effectiveness and exactness of his governance. Thus the chances for the opposition to win office become very limited, as they are unable to use a similar tactics, and have to operate by promises. In order for the opposition to become institutionalised,

a knowledgeable and well-informed electorate is needed. In addition, parties must alter their strategies, and switch the blame for their failures from the president, and concentrate on a consensual and programmatic political game.

The initial hypothesis seems to have correctly suggested that the electorate does not support parties because they inadequately represent voters' interests. They tend to support the president because he fulfils people's basic expectations in the most visual way possible, and there is no one else to choose as an alternative option to his increasing authority. The motivation 'self comes first'[175] gives an adequate picture of the public rationale in defining their priorities. In addition, data demonstrates that at least two thirds of the electorate have no understanding of the democratic issues advocated by parties and other institutions. A statement like "...it does not matter if Lukashenko has violated the Constitution, what matters is that he is at least trying to do more than just to bluff as others do...", is a common conviction among the electorate. They judge by what they see, but not by what they are promised in grandiloquent terms. After more then ten years of transition with no sound achievements, the electorate has become more conservative and wary of political and economic experiments and pledges. This seems to be one of the main reasons for such a large proportion of the 'hesitant electorate', and the challenge for parties is therefore to mobilise these undecided votes. As Rotman (2000: 4) confirms there are presently approximately 53.7[176] per cent of the population

[175] This Russian proverb 'svoya rubashka blizhe k telu' [self comes first] adequately illustrates people's rational choice in Belarus.

[176] According to other surveys, the number of undecided votes is 41% (Dobson, 2000) or 47.9% (Manaev, 1998), or 54% (Belapan, November 1999), which suggests that about fifty percent of the population on

who are undecided about their attitudes to contemporary political players. This figure remained unaltered between 1997 and 1999.

The Centre for Social and Political Research, BSU, has introduced a new technique to measure the dynamics of voting behaviour using specific 'projective' questions as a 'sieve' for separating respondents into various groups according to their loyalties (Rotman, 2000). According to their evaluation, there are presently 18% of core supporters[177] of the incumbent president compared to 15.6% in 1997 and 16.0% in 1998[178]. The number of opponents (protest electorate) has not considerably changed and accounted for 28.4% in 1999. The ranks of 'hesitant voters' have slightly declined recently and accounts for 53.7% of the population. The presidential loss of potential votes equals 13.3%, and the gain is 14.5%, compared to 11% in 1998. So far, one can conclude that the president has gained rather than lost electorate's confidence[179]. The situation is one that he is entrusted to develop policies, as long as they have vivid and

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average do not have clear political stance, and may well form a pool of supporters for one of the camps: governmental or oppositional.

[177] There may seem to be a discrepancy in figures that 18% (Rotman, 2000) or 15% (Belapan, 1999) will support the president against 41-45% (Rotman, 2000; Dobson 2000) who would vote for him, if presidential election were tomorrow. This, however, could be explained by the fact of conditionality, when the former represents a *core* of Lukashenko's constituency and would vote for him in any occasion; whereas the latter are those who are very likely to vote for him, if such an opportunity emerged.

[178] Recent opinion poll within INTAS (99-00245) project, showed that in 2001 'firm supporters' form about 8.7% as against 34.7% of Lukashenko's 'opponents' amongst the electorate.

[179] In later estimations (2001 opinion poll in Belarus, INTAS), the president's support equals to 42%, and consists of 8.7% 'firm supporters', 20.1% of those who steadily vote 'yes' for Lukashenko, and 13.2% of his electoral gain. For more details see Rotman (2001) INTAS Report, University of Bath, ERI.

convincing outcomes. This allows him so much leeway for electoral manoeuvring that the idea of 'pulling the robe of representation' away from the parties is a credible one.

The data suggest the 'hesitant electors' form a desirable pool of potential recruits, or floating voters, for both the president and parties. However it is the president who is best positioned to motivate the undecided vote and parties would therefore need to vastly increase their segment of the electorate from 2% to an overall majority, in order to change the situation (Dobson, 2000). Even if the situation spirals out of control, Lukashenko presently remains the only plausible candidate for the presidency[180], and as long as public opinion[181] remains higher than that of the opposition he will continue to rule.

This respectively raises the question of what chances the opposition stand when attempting to mobilise Lukashenko's opponents and motivating the floating electorate, in order to win office. This will certainly be a difficult, but not an impossible task to achieve. Although institutionally constrained, and structurally remote from the electorate, the opposition parties must demonstrate more initiative, especially at the grassroots, and be more pro-active with the electorate. However, most importantly in building their credibility with voters, parties must alter their communication strategy with the authorities in order to compromise and form consensus; as this seems to be the only way to gain office.

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[180] This would be likely, if externally supported candidates will not appear to 'play' in tune with Lukashenko's agenda using such issues as union with Russia, stable and high wages, and security.

[181] Public opinion is also reinforced by respective structures and institutions of unlimited presidential powers (see Chapter 3 for details).

Despite their recent failure, parties nevertheless, have learnt to survive. Even though some 'mass' parties, like the PCB, AP, BNF, PT, and others, lost substantial human resources, they presently do not rely on state gratuity. They have broadened their appeal and expanded their network with international organisations. The new liberal and democratic parties have found ample support from the West by way of grants and direct collaboration. This international co-operation has remarkably altered the parties' style of management and instilled ambitions for winning public office.

Parties' management strategies have also changed since 1996. Realising how limited their influence is on the wider audience of voters, instead of advocating new parliamentary elections, parties have done the opposite. They organised an electoral campaign to call for an alternative presidential election and by doing so inflamed public opinion. First, parties advertised candidates who could be considered an alternative to the president, and although party backed, they were not tainted by bad public perceptions. Second, they provoked an aggressive reaction from the authorities, by way of public threats, imprisonment, media bans, and a re-registration campaign imposed by the president on parties. Altogether, this created a negative reaction towards the authorities among the population. Third, the opposition underlined that the incumbent president had actually outstayed his legitimate tenure in office according to the Constitution of 1994.

According to Huntington (1991: 150-1), the opposition in Belarus is acting according to the classic plan that third wave democracies use in order to overthrow undemocratic rulers. This is as follows:

1. "Focus attention on the illegitimacy or dubious legitimacy of the authoritarian regime; that is the most vulnerable point". The opposition has started education campaigns illustrating the illegitimacy of Lukashenko's regime. Parties' boycott of the recent parliamentary elections, was however, a step in the wrong direction. They definitely demonstrated the illegality of the regime, and at the same time, lost another chance of winning office.

2. "Authoritarian rulers over time alienate erstwhile supporters. Encourage these disaffected groups to support democracy as the necessary alternative to the current regime". In reality, the opposition had chosen Michael Chigir, the former Prime Minister, to be their prime candidate for the alternative presidential election in May 1999. Many other ousted members of Lukashenko's government have also joined the opposition.

3. "Support from the military could be helpful in the event of a crisis, however, it is preferred to be military *laissez-faire* in the argument between authorities and opposition". The opposition in Belarus had limited support from the military in face of the former Minister of Defence Yuri Zakharenko. From informal sources, the upper military echelons began if not disagree, then to question Lukashenko's policy and its implications.

4. "Practice and preach non-violence. Seize every opportunity to express opposition to the regime, including participation in the elections it organises". As practice shows, continuing Marches of Freedom, and demonstrations have been organised in order to resist the regime. However,

the refusal of many oppositional parties to participate in elections failed to advance democratisation.

5. "Develop contacts with the global media, foreign human rights organisations, and trans-national organisations". Previous sections demonstrated how successfully the opposition used the opportunity to be anti-system, and hence, attract western aid in the situation of increasingly non-democratic politics of Lukashenko.

6. "Promote unity among opposition groups. Attempt to create comprehensive umbrella organisations that will facilitate co-operation among such groups". The opposition is slowly but steadily moving to the stage when it could unite to resist the tendency towards authoritarism in the country. It is hoped that a generational shift within the leadership of some parties will allow the policy of coalition to become dominant.

7. "When the authoritarian regime falls, be prepared quickly to fill the vacuum of authority that results". This is what the opposition has to learn to do, as it seems that the majority of parties do not have programmes for building authority had they come to power.

8. "Force authority to hold elections". Unfortunately, the opposition did not participate in the 2000 parliamentary elections, and did not use the opportunity to challenge authorities.

If parties cannot win office now, they can at least prepare themselves for other electoral campaigns, and a role in public life. What is more important is that they can learn how to sustain 'delegative' democracy without the danger of dictatorship.

In summary, the data used in these three sections suggests an ambivalent answer to the question, whether parties are failing in Belarus. If one evaluates party development as a linkage between civil society and state, it is clear that parties are attaining a new quality, which may allow them to survive in the future. The 'presidential divide' appears to be both damaging and stimulating for party political development. On the one hand, the political balance of the country is weighed towards the president; which has enabled voters to rationally switch their choice away from parties who increasingly become 'second-order preferences', and 'delegate' to the president maximal authority to lead the country out of crisis. Voters' perceptions of parties as lacking power will obviously hinder the process of establishing party system equilibrium in Belarus.

On the other hand, the situation of electoral and financial decline has stimulated parties to seek new opportunities for survival. As the analysis demonstrated, successfully or not, parties are developing a new image within civil society. Parties are presently characterised as attaining a distinct cartel shape, which may be unique to Belarus. At present it is a 'state detached' model of party cartelisation for the opposition. It is believed development in the direction of communication with the state is the only sensible means for Belarusian parties to survive the present political decline.

Parties should focus on professional-electoral campaigning, that is more based on financial investments during this period, and intends to utilise sociological information,

and modern means of communication, including Russian broadcasting channels, the Internet, and street canvassing, especially in regions. At the same time, agents' behaviour by itself will not provide a sufficient background for the advancement of democracy. There are much bigger tasks to achieve: these are the alterations of institutions and structures, including those of regional legislature-executive powers, and respectively of public rationality, on which parties' authority for winning office is founded.

Belarus as a transient regime faces particular difficulties with an existing public dilemma between representation and leadership. The prospects for party system consolidation as one means for sustaining democratic balance in society will be analysed in the next chapter; as well as the possible alternatives for further developments of the current regime. It is believed that the regime in Belarus may progress towards a form of a 'delegative' democracy and may be prevented from sliding into plebiscitarian dictatorship if parties and other interest organisations were to revive round-table talks with authorities and, by that, re-gain public confidence.

Chapter 5. Democratic perspectives for party system institutionalisation in Belarus

> Post-communist transitions, however 'troubled', may still be regarded as transitions to democracy – if only because leading political actors recognize that there is nothing else to make a transition to… They may do a lot of harm, but cannot challenge the centrality of the democratic project.
>
> (Ghia Nodia, 1996: 15)

The principal focus of this chapter will be on the quality of democracy and the role of parties in developing regimes, including Belarus. As scholars note, new polyarchies show little tendency for further system institutionalisation. In more than ten years of transition many CIS continue facing ineffective parliaments, volatile and non-partisan electorates, manipulative interest organisations, and legitimate but powerless parties. Despite these socio-cum-political problems, reinforced by economic stagnation, the new CIS regimes nevertheless, remain sustainable and functional. This suggests that there may be some infrastructures, which ensure the process of system sustainability and informal institutionalisation. The essential inquiry, therefore, will be, first, to define whether the new regimes can be classified as democratic, and, second, to establish what infrastructures exist to make new democracies functional, and finally, to assess parties' contribution to system sustainability.

This chapter will discuss alternative conceptual forms of democracy offered by contemporary scholars, in an attempt to differentiate new regimes. This will assist in

identifying the path that Belarus' regime has taken, and the prospects for its party system development. As suggested, Belarus might be classified as an incomplete democracy of a 'delegative' type (O'Donnell, 1993). This presumes popular vote endorsement of an individual leader, which may seem democratic in form, but is dictatorial in practice. If legal and representative institutions are not reinforced in Belarus, the regime may eventually develop into dictatorship[182]. Over a few years, it has moved from an initial semi-parliamentary system to an individual rule, which is characterised by increasing power of the president, weak parliament and declining parties. This is despite continuing practice of elections, international assistance, and popular support for democracy. Accordingly, this raises the issue of the quality of new democracies and the role of parties in supporting them. Democracy does not appear to be only "about voters casting their competitive ballots on polling day as [an] institutionalised interaction between regime and society" (White, 2000a). There are many other, formal and informal, mechanisms involved to provide democratic sustainability and ensure that democracy becomes the 'only game in town' (Kitschelt et al. 1999).

5.1 Democracy with adjectives: analytical differentiation

The third wave of democratisation has presented scholars with the challenge of conceptualising new transitional regimes. Although transitions in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe may be classified as democracies, they, nevertheless, differ considerably in their mode, paths and 'quality' of democratic

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[182] Or at least remain incomplete and hence jeopardising the process of democracy building over the years to come.

consolidation. After a decade of transformation, some new regimes may approximate a democratic state, in accordance with their legal and economic achievements; whereas others are observed as to be 'static' and 'incomplete' or indeed 'failing' to institutionalise further. The striking feature that brings the majority of the new regimes[183] together is that despite their vivid non-institutionalisation, they are functional and sustainable. This may imply that 'informal system institutionalisation' (O'Donnell, 1996) has taken place, and that this has made it possible for these regimes to survive.

In contemporary literature, there are two general tendencies, which attempt to classify new regimes and account for their diversity. On the one extreme, analytical differentiation has occurred in an attempt to capture varied forms of emerged democracies. At the other extreme is the growing concern, regarding the proliferation of these theories and explanatory frameworks that breed conceptual stretching of the primary understanding of democracy. As a result, there is a respective effort to reduce the plethora of opinions to a common denominator or at least a standardised classification.

What one can witness today is an overabundance of alternative conceptual forms of 'democracy' that frequently appears with 'adjectives' to reflect the complexity of transition. Examples from amid the hundreds of subtypes that have emerged include 'authoritarian democracy', 'neopatrimonial democracy', 'military-dominated democracy', 'protodemocracy', and 'delegative democracy', to which a reference will be made further. Paradoxically, they are all grounded on a standardized usage of the root term of

[183] This has particular reference to the new regimes in the CIS. See chapter 1 for more details.

democracy, which Joseph Schumpeter (1947) and Robert Dahl (1971)[184] accurately formulated. These are, nevertheless, procedural definitions that have been widely exploited in research of third-wave democratisation at the level of national political regimes. Dahl and Schumpeter's definitions refer to democratic procedures rather than substantive policies or holistic systems classified as liberal democracy. These procedural definitions are 'minimal' in the sense that they offer the smallest possible range of attributes that are seen as producing the effect of democratic consolidation. This is where problems begin. Reality offers a vast range of third-wave democracies that may fit Dahl's criteria as democratic, but exercise non-democratic practices, or have a low degree of institutionalisation that stipulates further instability and unpredictability of the system. The only possible way to 'operationalise' these regimes seems to be by adding adjectives to the root term of 'democracy' in some standardised way.

For comparison of developing democracies some scholars tend to construct a 'ladder of abstraction' (Sartori, 1976), and offer classical subtypes of democratic regimes that can usefully serve either to increase differentiation or to avoid conceptual stretching. Sartori's initial proposal was to move up the ladder to the concepts that have fewer defining attributes and correspondently fit a broader range of cases, or move down with the reversed effect. However, as David Collier and Steven Levitsky (1997) argue, the main problem with this strategy is that scholars typically tend to add adjectives to the regime type, which is by default regarded as democratic. This generates regime subtypes

[184] For discussion of procedural definition of democracy, which has been used here, see also O'Donnell (1993, 1994, 1996), Huntington, (1991); L. Dimond, J. Linz and S. Lipset (1989) *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*; and G. Di Palma (1990).

that often may be quite remote from the actual meaning of democracy. Examples include 'civilian', 'competitive', 'electoral' regimes. Collier and Levitsky (Ibid: 437) argue further that "the resulting subtypes remain more general than the concept of democracy... although scholars thus achieve some conceptual differentiation in relation to regimes, they do not specifically commit themselves to the idea that the case under discussion is a democracy", and confusion often takes place.

As an alternative strategy for dealing with a variety of the new regimes, other scholars have created 'diminished' subtypes that contribute both to achieving differentiation and to avoiding conceptual stretching (Collier and Mahon, 1993). In contrast with the above scheme of analysis, diminished subtypes are not full instances of the root definition of 'democracy', and hence, allow more modest claims to the extent of democratisation. In other words they generally identify specific attributes that are *missing* in developing democracy, at the same time referring to other attributes that are *present*. With their principal focus on missing features, they clearly differentiate the case from the root definition of democracy. Examples here include 'oligarchical democracy' with *missing* full suffrage; 'controlled' or 'restrictive' democracy with *missing* full contestation; or 'illiberal' democracy with *missing* civil liberties, and so on (Collier and Levitsky, 1997). These subtypes are a useful means for simultaneous definition and avoidance of conceptual stretching of the meaning of 'democracy', especially in cases that are less than fully democratic. They also provide differentiation by creating new analytic categories. As Linz and Stepan (1996), Mainwaring (1999), and many other scholars have pointed in the analysis of the new post-authoritarian or post-totalitarian regimes,

there is a real need to move beyond a dichotomous conceptualisation of democracy and recognise its 'hybrid' or 'mixed' character.

Some scholars suggest shifting the overarching concept of democracy to the concept of a democratic government or democratic state. For example, in the analysis of post-1985 Brazil, O'Donnell (1993) named the government as 'democratic' meaning that it was democratically elected, however in practice it may have been opposite to what classic definition of democracy offers. He argued further that Brazil can be recognized as having a 'democratic' regime following the minimal definition of democracy, but the failure of the legal and bureaucratic institutions to protect and promote a broader set of rights for citizens excludes it from the range of democratic states. This strategy will be discussed below.

On the other hand, for the countries that are less than fully democratic, another problem arises, such as whether it would be better to avoid identifying these countries as subtypes of democracy, for example, in cases of growing violation of human rights or restriction on electoral competition, and to classify them within a 'dictatorial' or 'post-totalitarian' type of regime (Linz, 1996).

In summation, one has to be careful when analysing and labelling newly emerged transitional regimes. They may well have democratic prerequisites, but never develop into a fully established democracy. They balance unevenly between the extent of institutionalisation and non-democratic practices. Provided that Belarus formally meets Dahl's criteria to be classified as a democracy in minimalist terms, this research will

follow the second aforementioned direction, which searches for *what is missing* in the regime in order to understand how it can be made more democratic.

5.2 Delegative democracy: illusory consolidation or sustainable regime?

Guillermo O'Donnell suggests, that "the problem with new polyarchies is not that they lack institutionalisation" (1996: 35), which is traditionally seen as a predicament to efficient system operation. If they survive but not according to a supposedly classic pattern of democratisation, there must be some other informal or hidden mechanisms, that help to sustain non-institutionalised policies and to receive significant public support. Elections and "informal, permanent and pervasive particularism" (Ibid: 35) may be the two principal features, as O'Donnell argues, that create a functional and *informally* structured polyarchy. This is obviously not a fully operative liberal democracy, but it can be defined as the minimal circuit for democratisation. The question is whether the system has enough incentives to progress further to a well-balanced polity.

If one returns to Dahl's (1971) definition of polyarchy, five principal attributes referring to minimal criteria for democracy, may be identified. These include:

1) elected officials;
2) free and fair elections;
3) inclusive suffrage;
4) the right for contestation;

5) basic civil liberties – freedom of expression, alternative information; and associational autonomy.

All five relate to the issue of elections, by which the public express their votes; the government is elected; decisions are made; and established liberties guarantee further democratisation. O'Donnell expands the list of democratic criteria by adding that

1) officials should serve their office to the end of their constitutionally mandated terms;
2) elected authorities should not be the subject of severe constraints, or vetoes, or exclusion from certain policy domains by other non-elected actors, especially armed forces;
3) there should be an uncontested national territory that clearly defines the voting population; and finally,
4) there should be a generalised expectation that a fair electoral process and its surrounding freedoms will continue into an indefinite future (Ibid: 35-36).

This, he argues, should exclude such countries as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and many others of Eastern Europe and Latin America (Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Honduras, Brazil) from the range of democratic regimes. O'Donnell's suggestion may have its own rationale, however, it does not assist the reduction of the multifarious theories of democracy. Perhaps it is more sensible to regard 'muddling-through' regimes as borderline procedural democracies using Dahl's minimal criteria, which in fact may form an 'interim', transitional type of regime that lies between non-democratic,

on the one hand, and fully democratic polities, on the other. Dahl (1971) puts it as, "polyarchies [are] polities characterised by some degree of stability in representation and leadership; but they are not yet democracies." For the purpose of analysis it may also be useful to establish what are the attributes that are missing to make a polyarchy fully functional, and what are the central factors that inhibit their entrenchment.

O'Donnell narrowed Dahl's definition of democracy in order to identify the principal 'markers' of democratisation. In his view, elections may serve as a minimal requirement for initiation of democratic consolidation, and often signify the irreversibility of democratisation, through which system institutionalisation gradually takes place. If elections are institutionalised - that is practised and accepted - it would imply a situation when:

> ...leaders and voters take for granted that in the future inclusive, fair, and competitive elections that take place as legally scheduled, voters will be properly registered and free from physical coercion, and their votes will be counted fairly. It is also taken for granted that the winners will take office, and will not have their terms arbitrarily terminated. Furthermore, for this electoral process, freedom of opinion and of association and an uncensored media must also exist. Countries where elections do not have these characteristics do not qualify as polyarchies (O'Donnell, 1996: 37).

As one can see, elections act as markers of democratisation: at elections, constitutional rights and institutional settings are normally stipulated even further, producing an enduring effect on governance and interest representation.

Nevertheless, the democratic appearance of a regime can be misleading, and the practice of elections often may not be entirely encompassing. Belarus' political façade, for example, can be regarded as democratic when elections are scheduled in accordance with the law, and the public can cast their preferences following their expectations. In addition, the occurrence of massive forgery is highly unlikely, as well as open realisation of coercive mechanisms by authorities or explicitly fraudulent usage of the mass media. However, this is not because the system is democratic or strained by international vigilance, but because there are some other *informal* mechanisms that allow the government to achieve desirable results and manipulate public opinion. The phenomenon of *organised* elections exemplifies one of these elaborate levers that the state may use to sustain its democratic exterior in third-wave regimes[185]. This implies *de facto* approved election outcomes by the head of state. For example, in Belarus the president gave his full support to some MPs, which were consequently 'assisted' by local authorities in their campaign for the parliamentary elections 2000. The phenomenon of 'assistance' derives from presidential particularism and supremacy of power – features typical of incomplete 'democracies'. Structures and mechanisms,

[185] More details can be found in *OSCE/ODIHR Statement of Conclusions on Parliamentary elections in Belarus. Vienna 30 August 2000.* at http://www.osce.org/belarus/publications/30-8-2000.pdf/ retrieved June 2001.; or OSCE Belarus homepage at http://www.osce.org/belarus/index.php3, retrieved June 2001.

created by the president, i.e. the presidential 'vertical', informal vigilance, expanded KGB authority, empowered police forces, and a system of patronage[186] – exert considerable influence throughout the system to censor election campaigns, and control the formation of public opinion. In this sense, the competition for the 2000 parliamentary elections in Belarus was a foregone conclusion, as a presidential verdict of who would be elected in public office had already taken place. A similar conclusion can be applied to Russia, as Stephen White (2000a: 303) suggests, "the Russian elections of 1999 and 2000 ... were better seen in terms of a dynastic succession that made clear that the president and his entourage were now in a position to organise elections that satisfied formal requirements but which would also give them the result they wanted".

On the other hand, whatever organisational 'quality' the new transitions may have, elections still signpost some degree of formal or informal institutionalisation for a democratising regime. This is where a paradox lies. If elections are regular, people expect to express their verdict of the previous government and to choose the next whom best suit their needs. Simultaneously, this public intention is carefully manipulated by elite decision-making. In façade regimes, like Belarus, a popularly voted president governs in whatever manner he considers fit for the country, by crafting institutions and laws to his 'design'. This means that elections are run according to existing constitutional laws and

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Additionally, the OSCE conclusion and recommendation regarding the alteration of electoral code in Belarus can be found in http://www.osce.org/odihr/election/bela00-1-adopted.htm, retrieved June 2001.

institutional arrangements. In fact, the aim of such an exercise is quite democratic – to achieve routine stability. This can even lead to the eventual recognition by political parties and organised interests that elections are the only alternative to gain power lawfully (Linz, 1996). However, the fact remains that public opinion is clandestinely manipulated, and there is no equal accessibility of mass media for oppositional politicians. The lack of legality demonstrates that *procedural* democracy in Dahl's terms is far from being democratic. What matters is not the degree of institutionalisation, or formalised elections, but the daily routine, in which parties, legislature, executives, and other organisations are given equal opportunities to exert their power.

O'Donnell argues (1996) that many third wave polyarchies may not be institutionalised in the classical sense, but they may be well sustained by informal and influential, and sometimes concealed institutions of clientelism, or more generally, particularism. This includes various sorts of relationship ranging from hierarchical particularistic exchange, patronage, nepotism, and favours, to actions that, under the formal rules of the institutionalised package of polyarchy, would be considered corrupt. However, this is the style, within which an informally structured system functions and survives.

Belarus adequately demonstrates neo-patrimonial relations, in which a better 'action' outcome can be achieved through informal channels of communication: actions of

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[186] See Belova, O. (1999) *Difficulties of elite formation in Belarus after 1991*, paper presented for ERI conference, 'Belarus: the Forgotten Heart of Europe?', University of Bath, February. The author explores various mechanisms of patronage, inherited from the soviet regime and stipulated by Lukashenko.

favour, *blat* (bribery), connections, and so on[187]. These 'informal' and patrimonial routes of communication make the system operational, and can only be possible if there is an external structure for them. Scholars observe that the difference between real and legal practices is considerable in the newly emerged polyarchies. O'Donnell submits:

> ...with many of these countries claiming to be democracies and adopting a constitutional framework, the persistence and high visibility of the split between real and formal, may not necessarily threaten the survival of their polyarchies – but neither does it facilitate overcoming the split (O'Donnell, 1996: 43).

He continues his observation of particularism in Latin American democracies by underlying that it is a permanent feature of a human society, and it indeed inhabits consolidation of most of the contemporary political institutions. The system exterior may look democratic, when the top leaders are popularly elected, and decision-making

[187] As Olga Belova comments (1999: 15): "All the mechanisms of recruitment that Lukashenko introduced reveal different forms of patronage when the personal consideration is decisive in the appointment. The main recruitment strategy he used to create the Presidential Administration staff was the recruitment from the old associates, mainly from his supporters during electoral campaign. This is why Leonid Sinitsin, who was a manager of the electoral team, became the chief of the Presidential Administration. Ivan Titenkov, in charge of financial support for the electoral team, got a post of Presidential Manager ("*upravliayushiy delami presidenta*"). Viktor Sheyman, ex-responsible for the security of Lukashenko, was appointed as the Secretary of the National Council of Security. Vladimir Konoplev, MP assistant of Lukashenko and responsible for collecting votes in Mogilev oblast during the electoral campaign, became First Advisor of the President. In the same manner most of the electoral campaign team members were rewarded for their support by the new appointments".

may have some degree of transparency[188]. Nevertheless, democratically organised regimes in scrutiny often enjoy non-democratic practices[189], as well as democratically elected leaders may intend to exercise dictatorial rule. Both are typical features of modern democracies.

'Delegative regime' is one of the subtypes of incomplete democratic regimes that reflect controversial democratisation, and imperfect party system development as a result of power imbalance in society. O'Donnell defines a delegative type of democracy as a regime where,

> ...whoever wins election to the presidency is thereby entitled to govern as he or she sees fit, constrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations and by a constitutionally limited term of office (O'Donnell, 1994: 59).

Democracy can be achieved through a combination of factors, of which institutional and structural arrangements, elite rational choice and voters' collective strategies, and economic requisites are part. According to O'Donnell, some newly emerged regimes are democratic but not in the manner that representative democracies assume. In addition,

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[188] In Belarus' case, Lukashenko often uses the practice of referenda – a popular approval of his manipulative actions.

[189] See report on *Human Rights in Belarus, 1999*:
http://www.hrw.org/hrw/worldreport99/europe/belarus.html retrieved June 2001; or *Nation in Transit Report* 2000, at http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nitransit/2000/belarus/belarus.htm;
http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nitransit/2000/belarus/belarus_intro.htm; and
http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nitransit/2000/belarus/belarus_democ.htm, retrieved June 2001.

these democracies are not and do not seem to be on the path towards becoming a representative democracy. They may also be quite enduring. Historical legacies of non-democratic past, and deep social and economic crises tend to reinforce certain practices of delegative, rather than representative styles, of governance. This implies that political institutions during the 'second wave' of their transformation – after breaking away from a non-democratic regime – may become institutionalised in the way that cultural prerequisites anticipate, and elite-bargaining permits.

Delegative regime is more common in a presidential democracy, where the president is an embodiment of the nation, and the principal definer of its interests. Policies of the government may be radically different from that of the presidential campaign, as the president has been given the right to do what he deems best for the country. The prevailing discourse of relations between institutions and actors is patrimonial; and clientelism and particularism largely determine the course of action. The president puts himself above party or any interest-group organisation, as well as other institutions, such as legislature, courts, and local councils, and turns them into "nuances that come attached to the domestic and international advantages of being a democratically elected president" (O'Donnell, 1994: 60).

Despite non-democratic nuances, delegative regime fits Dahl's minimal definition of democracy. This type of governance even implies more democracy, as it involves more direct participation and citizens' approval of policy-making. In reality it is obviously less liberal than representative democracy or any other type. Delegative democracy is strongly majoritarian and frequently survives in plurality systems with majority run-off. As

O'Donnell theorises, parliament, parties and the press are formally free from presidential control in delegative democracies; however, there may be some informal restrictions or indirect channels of control that put an end on 'free' activities of the bodies.

Delegative democracy theoretically may be called a 'representative delegation' when the whole nation delegates its representation to one. With this in mind, one can trace similarities between both regimes especially in the field of accountability. What happens in the ideal type of a delegative democracy, though, is that vertical accountability is strengthened, as the pyramid structure presumes individual responsibility for collective decision-implementation. Thus, ministers tend to have effective portfolios, as they are answerable to the prime minister and the president whose legitimacy is dependent on the ballot box. Horizontal accountability, in contrast, is minimal, which means that responsibility of appointed officials across a network of relatively autonomous powers, like other institutions, is not usually called into question by other institutions.

Furthermore, as O'Donnell (1994: 61) argues, since "the institutions that make horizontal accountability effective are seen by delegative presidents as unnecessary encumbrances to their 'mission', they make strenuous efforts to hamper the development of such institutions". The transparency of decision-making is also minimal, as vertical accountability to the president seems sufficient for the system to function, and horizontal responsibility has little if any effect. Mainwaring adds, "[a] weakly institutionalised party system is at the core of delegative democracy" (1999: 328).

The logic of power delegation also presumes that the executive does little, or opposes strengthening the judiciary and the legislature. The resulting shortage of effective and autonomous institutions places immense responsibility on the president. The typical incumbent in a delegative democracy wins elections by promising to save the country from a crisis at a minimal cost to everyone; yet, when in power, he gambles the fate of his government on policies that entail substantial costs to many parts of the population. This results in policy-making under pressure. The president always is ready to play an 'ace move' in order to remain in power. This frequently results in sacking prime ministers, reshuffling cabinets, and obstructing the government in office. With spectacular enactment of the promised policy packages by the president, the anti-representative features of a delegative democracy accentuate, as well as the tendency for further personalisation and concentration of power in the hands of the incumbent. Decision-making becomes more spontaneous and frenzied, more based on presidential decrees rather than the rule of law. Short-term regulations and unilateral hasty executive orders are the likely outcome of such governance that tend to accumulate problems further and result in a massive gridlock, disarray and revolutionary motions. Unless the president has learnt 'scapegoating' and mobilising quick-fix benefits, the country could face revolution. It is true that delegative regimes are more prone to breakdowns and interruptions. However, as O'Donnell observes (1994) delegative democracies can also exhibit a remarkable capacity for endurance if public support for regime is achieved[190].

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[190] See Rose and Mishler (2000) *Regime Support in Non-democratic and Democratic Contexts*, CSPP 336. Glasgow: University of Strathclyde.

Delegative democracy alongside presidentialism is relatively widespread amongst transitions of Latin America and CIS, and has frequently been labelled as *caesarism*, or *caudillismo*, *presidentealismo*, populism, and the like. What is worth noting, and which is common to the above named alterations of the subtype, is the fact that although they possess 'the democratic genus', they, however, 'could hardly be less congenial to the building and strengthening of democratic political institutions' (O'Donnell, 1993: 62). Understandably, as long as presidential policies are recognised as successful by the electorate, delegative presidents are constrained by the constitutionally limited terms of their office and tend to improve the situation by promoting constitutional reforms with alterations in favour of the incumbent. They frequently utilise the mechanism of direct democracy and referenda, because as popularly elected they are entitled to direct communication with their voters. This obviously further weakens whatever horizontal accountability still exists, and makes anaemic the remaining democratic institutions. As O'Donnell suggests (1993: 45) "pervasive particularism, delegative rule, and weak horizontal accountability" might enable "old authoritarian practices to reassert themselves".

What many scholars find paradoxical and dramatic is the fact that the emergence, strengthening, and legitimation of effective institutions and congenial practices take time to endure, during which a complex process of positive learning occurs. However, in order to deal effectively with economic and social crises the newly democratised countries require such institutions already to be in place, which instant institutionalisation is not possible. O'Donnell comments:

> ...this is the drama of countries bereft of a democratic tradition: like all emerging democracies, past and present, they must cope with the manifold negative legacies of their authoritarian past, while wrestling with the kind of extraordinary severe social and economic problems that few if any of the older democracies faced at their inception (O'Donnell, 1994: 68).

This paradox may entail endurance of these 'low-quality' or façade democratic regimes, which nevertheless, can be incrementally altered and put into practice, if structures, agencies and agents would act in congruence for this purpose.

5.3 Can democracy develop from a delegative regime in Belarus?

As one has already seen from the above description, Belarus is a good candidate for the analysis of the logic and mechanics of development of a delegative democracy. Some observers submit that Belarus is not a polyarchy, as it has one of the worst human rights records in Eastern Europe[191]. Nevertheless, according to Dahl's (1971) minimal criteria Belarus can be formally classified as a procedural democracy associated with institutionalised elections, constitutionally guaranteed liberties, and basic social security[192]. The operation of the system is reinforced by existing informal rules and

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[191] Human Rights Watch Reports, Belarus 1999 & 2000, http://www.hrw.org/hrw/worldreport99/europe/belarus.html, retrieved June 2001, http://www.hrw.org/hrw/wr2k/Eca-03.htm, retrieved June 2001 http://www.osce.org/odihr/election/bela00-1-adopted.htm, retrieved June 2001.

[192] Experience of elections in Belarus is rather limited, but existent. There have been three sets of parliamentary elections so far: in 1990 –semi-soviet styled parliamentary elections, in 1995 – much freer

structures that together make it relatively manageable, and to certain degree, successful in overcoming economic crises compared to Russia and Ukraine.

There is, however, an obvious controversy in the argument. Despite a democratic façade, the regime in Belarus does not function democratically. Failure includes abuse of human rights and ineffective guarantees of civil liberties. The paradox is, however, that the system is actually structured in accordance with democratic laws: popular elections for the legislature and the president; there is also a constitutional law, which was altered by referendum; independent judiciary, and no media censorship. The difference, as O'Donnell (1993) points out, seems to be between a democratic regime and a democratic state. Regime may be 'designed' as democratic, that is allowing some degree of 'public participation' including full suffrage, elections, political competition and certain civil liberties. The state, however, may not work in the same manner, and may be rather suppressive and authoritarian. As O'Donnell argues the authoritarian state has a fundamental characteristic:

> ...there does not exist (or if it exists, it does not have real effectiveness, or can be annulled and hoc, or is subordinate to secret rules and /or to the whim of the rulers) a legal system that guarantees the effectiveness of rights and guarantees that

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but still overwhelmed with the communist conservative majority, and in 2000 won by the majority of pro-presidential candidates. The presidential elections were held only once in 1994; and with the referendum on amendments of the 1994 constitution the president's term in office was extended until 2001. Belarus is lagging behind Russia and Ukraine that seem to be more open and pro-democratic.

> individuals and groups can uphold against the rulers, the state apparatus, and others at the top of the existing social and political hierarchy (O'Donnell, 1993: 1360).

In other words, an individual can enjoy full citizenship, but has no real rights to reinforce its meaning in the situation of truncated legality. This includes situations when individuals are unable to receive fair treatment in courts, or obtain services from state agencies to which they are entitled, or to be safe from police violence, etc. A curious disjunction arises from such a state/regime dilemma: the participatory rights of citizens are generally respected, but the liberal component of polyarchy is systematically missing. The concealed denial of liberal rights produce an effect of disparity in the distribution of economic, social and political resources, and marches alongside low-intensity citizenship, because "a state that is unable to enforce its legality supports a democracy of low-intensity citizenship" (O'Donnell, 1993: 1361).

The situation in Belarus is such that it allows citizens to formally pursue their rights and enjoy some liberties, which does not necessarily mean their effective implementation. One, for example, is not safe from the police, which can illegally charge a citizen for a fabricated crime, or even assault someone without accusation or reason. One is also subject to long corridors of bureaucracy in order to satisfy minimal queries or to obtain a tedious official signature. One can also be defenceless before courts or any other authority that possesses even a minimal share of power; and finally one can have freedom of associations and choice, which may be claimed illegal by authorities at any time and for any insignificant reason. In other words one can enjoy freedom that cannot be reached or is only available to certain segments of the population. In Belarus, people connected to

officials in power can feel relatively safe and 'capable'. 'Feeling safe' when one is attached to the *right* people, is 'particularism', which creates extensive networks of clienteles and dictates its own *informal* laws that are more powerful and much more effective than that of the 'state-of-the-law'. Therefore, O'Donnell is correct in stressing that formal institutionalisation can rarely be seen in the new democracies that are nevertheless, sustainable because they enjoy informal laws and paternal accountability – a structural problem of the new regimes.

As mentioned previously, presidentialism is frequently a prevailing form of governance in a delegative democracy, in which popularly elected presidents eventually aim at expanding their powers. Belarus sets a relevant case study for this. By legal means on the basis of a referendum, Alexander Lukashenko has shifted the form of governance from semi-parliamentarism to a super-presidential regime with full authority constitutionally granted to the president. Within a few years he has developed a system of personal rule where if the relevant authority cannot solve the problem, Lukashenko will. He is the law, and the guarantor of law. Alterations in the 1994 constitution officially stipulate unlimited authority of the president who appoints the majority of the Constitutional Court, and holds parliament compliant under the quick-fixed benefits, which deputies enjoy. If they are compliant, such a presidential guarantee allows them to be re-elected. The only remaining principal – vertical accountability – works in a reverse to a normal polyarchy. This is when government officials are responsible for their actions not before electors but before the popularly elected president and his appointees, who embody the voice of the nation.

Horizontal accountability is non-existent, as within the structure of super power, only one person has the legal right to control the system. NGOs and political parties may function freely if they are officially registered with authorities, and must re-register on the president's demand, which in turn creates numerous obstacles for their formal acclamation. As a result, in Belarus many smaller parties ceased to exist after the 1999 presidential decree on re-registration. NGOs also stopped proliferating as another possible alternative for expressing public interests. Trade unions have been also 'tamed' by manifold bureaucratic and financial means of presidential power control. As described previously they cannot afford to resist presidential pressure, as the latter controls a pool of resources on which trade unions build their authority with their members. Notably, membership fees are deducted directly from members' wages, discount holiday vouchers and summer camps for children, health centres and sanatoriums, etc. – all these benefits that have traditionally been administered by trade unions, may be taken away from them by presidential decree. Hence, trade unions toned down their public critique of presidential authority and symbolize 'the dog that never barks'. Parties continue doing exceptionally poorly in the situation of the accretion of executive authority at the expense of the legislature. They failed to sustain parliamentary government, and now they are failing, often by their own actions, to remain as visible and acting competitive forces of the political regime. Nathan Yanai (1999: 8) particularly stresses that parties "are bound to become anaemic and to lose their viability, if they abandon their claim to lead institutions of government or if they consistently fail to be represented in them". Their ever failing and non-competitive image tends to create enduring perceptions in voters that parties are not capable of winning office and providing an alternative government. This seems to be a sheer waste of vote and not worthy of electoral investment. This may mark the end of parties as well as other representative institutions in the republic. Delegative power is

total and cumulative, which obviously entails low-intensity citizenship and depoliticisation of the population.

Since 1997 the Belarusian Parliament became non-factional, non-partisan and non-initiative. The bargain between MPs and the president was reciprocal and assumed a policy of *laissez-faire* for the former. The president has ensured that parliament will not interfere with his decision-making to have unlimited rule of the country. Parliament, in turn, agreed on comfortable conditions of living (free accommodation in the capital of Belarus, free public transport, good wages, and profiting connections, and finally a promise of being re-elected in the second run for office), and a non-painful pass to the 2000 parliament for the majority of deputies. Thus the meaning of the organised elections derives from this silent negotiation between the president and the parliament.

What is really disturbing about the whole situation is the fact that the remaining institutions of democracy may begin to behave in parochial ways following public expectations of their continuing failure. This produces an effect of a vicious circle and has an enduring image of failure on interest representing organisations, other than a president. The chief executive will remain the principal hope for change for the majority of the population, especially in worsening economic and social conditions. In turn, parties, NGOs and trade unions continue their attempts to mobilise certain segments of the population in an attempt to overthrow the president and win office, but at present these attempts seem to be a foregone conclusion in the system of the presidential rule.

The logical question would be whether the delegative democracy in Belarus might be possible with national predisposition to a strong leadership; and whether this type of regime can guarantee a stable democratic future. O'Donnell observes that:

> ...delegative democracies in general, because of their institutional weakness and erratic patterns of policy making, are more prone to interruption and breakdown than representative democracies (O'Donnell, 1994: 67).

However, there can be certain conditions under which such systems survive and even progress to more effective forms of governance.

First of all, economic reforms are 'the magic wand' for achieving political stability. Przeworski (1997) argues that poorly institutionalised regimes have equal chances to generate economic growth and by that to guarantee more stable government and a more tolerant electorate. In presidential regimes, economic growth is more likely to happen, associated with consistency in policy-making and functional state mechanisms of decision-implementation.

Secondly, constitutional and electoral codes have to be such as to promote equal opportunities for various representative institutions to win office, and to be answerable to their citizens. This means that the Belarusian constitution has to be altered in order to limit accretion of presidential powers and to reach a reasonable balance of 'dual legitimacy' with other interest organisations. Perhaps the introduction of a third party –

a prime minister – to the game may help to avoid collisions in decision-making. Parliamentary authority needs to be strengthened by legal means.

Third, parties by reorganising themselves, reaching 'round-table' agreements with authorities, and seeking international cooperation, may vastly improve their chances to access power. As many scholars suggest, parties must become more publicly initiative. The instrument of initiative, according to Muller (1999: 309) "clearly has the potential to lend additional weight to an issue and to have a distinct impact on the processes of issue competition and opinion formation". Any initiative shown by parties on the ground may increase the legitimacy of demand and provide a degree of publicity that the oppositional parties have difficulty achieving by other means. Because of this, even if the opposition does not win on the issue of the initiative itself, it may be able to use the surrounding publicity to shift the issue agenda. This can be, nevertheless, quite a risky enterprise, but the Belarusian parties have little to lose in order to follow this strategy.

In summary, metaphorically speaking Belarus is like a building site within the new-Europe. Historically it has some foundations on which to construct a legitimate democratic state. However, it needs to be strengthened institutionally and by consensual decision-making of political workmen. A definitive international standpoint in foreign policy-making will be conducive to identifying future prospects for national development, and respectively a position of parties on the political arena.

Further Discussion and Conclusion

The principal objective of the thesis has been an attempt to explain the problematic development of the political party system in the Republic of Belarus. The thesis proceeded in five chapters.

The discussion began with a general overview of the particularities of the CIS and broader transitional states, in order to outline the complexity of the environment within which contemporary parties in Belarus operate. Subsequent chapters analysed existing transition methodologies in order to help realise that a complex tripartite framework was required for analysis of causes and consequences that have affected party system development in the new regime. Hence, structures, institutions and agency (*per se* parties) form the basis of research. Structural study of parties was grounded on an overview of Belarus' political history and existing institutional arrangements; and became part of a wider discussion of parties' failure to consolidate in Belarusian society. From the agency perspective, parties were discussed as a three-dimensional organisational entity, which was actively involved in public office, in central office, and at a grassroots. Additionally, the analysis of parties' core constituencies, and public perception of parties was included in the study in order to identify the modality of relationships and failure to sustain participatory linkages between parties and their voters. The final chapter discussed parties' prospects in a transitional environment, as well as forms of democratic developments of the new regimes.

The aim of this concluding chapter will be first, to summarise the principal arguments of the thesis, and second, to develop a hypothesis for the further prospects of party system institutionalisation and democratisation in Belarus. It will be established that the regime in Belarus had the potential to incrementally build democracy, utilising such prerequisites as a relatively stable economy, and social-political conflicts; however this did not take place due to incongruous interactions of structure and agency. As it has appeared, legacies and inherited structures, reinforced by institutional developments, created an unfavourable environment for further party system consolidation in Belarus. At the other extreme, parties' low ideological profile, their inability to capitulate on voters' preferences, their limited organisational and financial capacities and the alteration of the competition mode - which focused political parties' attention on the unequal struggle against the president - explains why they remain legitimate but increasingly powerless players of the political game. This has been reflected in their declining membership and partisan support, and their low impact on policy-making in the country.

The public's failure to be included in the decision-making process, through the failure of parties and other interest organisations, facilitated a formal process of power delegation to an individual leader. This has had a great impact on the mode of democratisation in the country. Parties have become increasingly 'second-rated' by the population, which favours the immediate achievements of the president. The formal contribution of trade unions, and non-governmental organisations remains unsound, as there are limited structural and media mechanisms to articulate their mission. In addition, since 1997 the essential function of parliament as an interest-accommodating arena has halted, due to the total unanimity of opinions amongst the pro-presidential forces in the legislature. Institutions

encapsulated the new structural arrangements providing further support for a strong presidency. Today's Belarusian society is highly divided: many favour the incumbent President and oppose democracy, as they favour the policy of integration with Russia and the CIS in opposition to those who favour democracy and closer union with the EU.

'Philosophy' of third wave transitions and the CIS

Third-wave democratisation has challenged classic theories of transition, and unquestionably requires further conceptualisation. Early discussions of the uniqueness and complexity of third wave transition have been understandably situational and based on hypotheses rather than definitive conclusions. In this respect many scholars (Kitschelt et al. 1999; Lawson et al. 1999; Mainwaring, 1999; Elster et al, 1998) naturally aimed at adapting a more complex approach to understanding causality and consequences of slow democratisation of the new regimes, especially those of the CIS. Consequently, the 'structure-agency' approach was used to reflect the controversial nature of these emerging polities, as it allows a threefold view of the joint impact on the process of building democracy of:

1. structural conditions inherited from the non-democratic past;
2. successively introduced institutional environment to reinforce a developing regime;
3. and strategical decision-making by the agency, of which parties are part.

The analytical method was essentially based on Elster's et al (1998) approach to understanding transitions, and included his argument of tripartite relations between

legacies, institutions and decisions, as well as his dual framework of 'forward' and 'backward' linkages[193].

Despite the diversity of their national contexts third wave regimes appeared to demonstrate many commonalities in their transition to democracy, which, admittedly, brings them into one transitional league. They not only share similar transitional features (elected governments, non-violent extrication from the prior regime and a globality of change), but are also characterised by analogous conditions that triggered this transformation around the globe. These are:

(i) exacerbated problems of legitimacy of prior regimes;
(ii) global economic growth;
(iii) powerful influence of the Church;
(iv) instigating international environment; and finally
(v) the effect of democratisation that provides models for regime change.

The third feature that unites new regimes is the enormity of tasks they have to achieve simultaneously - democratisation, state building and market liberalisation. These have proved difficult to follow, and ultimately only few regimes have been successful. The final and perhaps most notable feature of many new regimes is their continuing non-consolidation. This has particular relevance to the CIS states. All new regimes have adopted elections as a signpost of democracy, but not all of them attempt to reiterate

[193] See Chapter 2 for more detailed discussion of the chosen methodological framework, which draws on the vantage points of structure- and process-oriented traditions of analysis.

their democratic practices on a daily basis[194], which considerably reduces levels of contestation and public inclusiveness – the basic principles of democracy (Dahl, 1971). These naturally inhibit the progression of democratic institutions, especially those of representation, and often promote forms of delegated leadership, fraught with unruly individual authority. Nevertheless, these regimes prove sustainable and functional in their own domestic ways.

In this research the CIS states have been singled out for their more complex, though less successful democratisation. It was argued that, primarily because of their economic, political and cultural closeness to Russia, and the dual expansion of Europe and NATO, these countries are becoming political-cum-economic 'outsiders' of the general process of globalisation. New international trends affect stabilisation within the CIS countries, which are becoming excluded by a new 'Schengen Curtain' between them and 'new' Europe. They seem to be stuck in their attempt to simultaneously restructure the state, nation and economic markets and they are characterised by fragile, failing systems of representation and increasingly authoritarian presidencies.

Chapter 1 argued that the principal determinants for such protracted and often inverse development lie in economic and structural dependence of these countries on Russia, their lack of national resources, and hence, their limited ability to embark on radical reform ventures. In addition, their cultural 'traditionalism', ethnic heterogeneity and

[194] These are equal rights and opportunities for citizens in every-day life. For a more elaborate discussion see Chapter 5.

adherence to a Slavic Union as a quick-fix form of co-operation[195] frequently becomes an impediment to democratisation and reform. As part of the third wave turnover, Belarus exemplifies transitional problems of the CIS, as well as draws on the difficulties of new democracies in the whole.

Implications of a weak party system for Belarus

Outwardly, Belarus seems to be a stable economy characterised by optimistic transition indexes[196] and economic growth. Inwardly, however, it presents a case of impending economic and political crises with no policy for reform. Externally, Belarus 'fits' Dahl's (1971) criteria of a developing polyarchy, as it has an institutionalised practice of elections and nominally guaranteed constitutional liberties to its citizenry. Internally, the legal and bureaucratic systems fail to protect and promote individual human rights, and there are many *informal* mechanisms that allow the government to manipulate public opinion to its own advantage. Finally, there is an impression of an active political society in Belarus. This is associated with a stable number of national political parties of crystallised ideological profiles, a multiplicity of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the consolidation of trade unions. However, this does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that they all possess equal opportunities for accessing the decision-making arena in Belarus. Since the alteration of the 1994 Constitution this has been the

[195] This is in opposition to a secondary-periphery role on the global economic and political market, in public and elite perception.

[196] See discussion in Chapter 1 and Appendix 5 for detailing statistics.

sole prerogative of the incumbent president, and his government and subsequently Belarus is ruled under a system of super-presidentialism.

The research demonstrated that the party system continues to decline, despite the efforts of parties to re-establish themselves and of international organisations to strengthen the role of the non-governmental sector in building democracy in Belarus. Moreover, one would expect better-structured outcomes from a system that has survived at least four major elections – the 'markers' of democratisation. Belarus, nevertheless, is the notable exception to the rule, in the sense that despite electoral practice, players still have a limited understanding of fully contested elections as the only means to win power in a democratic society. Belarus has experienced three semi-independent parliamentary elections in 1990, 1995, and 2000, and one presidential election in 1994, and yet, it has achieved little movement towards further democratisation. Elections may help parties to win votes and seats, and hence, advance their policy-making on the national stage. This, however, does not occur, when parties pursue individual strategies or simply boycott elections, as happened in autumn 2000, and do not even attempt to negotiate with the authorities. Consequently, parties remain in a position outside parliament, and the president continues enjoying the steady support of around 40% of the population. The forthcoming presidential election is scheduled for Autumn 2001, and there has been little change seen in the political arena in terms of the configuration of potential candidates, or coalition reshuffles amongst parties and other interest organisations in an attempt to promote their own alternative candidates. Parties continue suffering partisan decline and membership difficulties, and presently remain dormant. In addition, the recently adopted Presidential Decree No. 8 (12.03.01) 'On some measures concerning the rules of receipt and utilization

of foreign gratuitous aid', is now in force and parties will find it more difficult to organise co-operation with the West by way of sponsorship of their election campaigns, and to mobilise uncommitted voters.

It has been established that there is a degree of dependency between prolonged development of parties, and structural properties of the past reinforced by *ad hoc* institutions. Parties depend on the power of the legislature, and strength of legal institutions, limited elite rotation and Lukashenko's system of patronage, state-owned media and impending economic crisis. They are also reliant on public support and cultural adherence to a strong leadership. Even more, they are dependent on their own organisational resources and collective policy-making. Hence, in order to explain parties' protracted development in Belarus, a range of external and internal determinants were analysed. The following conclusions have been drawn in relation to the failure of the party system to consolidate in Belarus:

First, this research demonstrates the definitive impact of structures and institutions on the process of building a stable party system and democracy. In Belarus, low level economic reforms (including limited liberalisation and privatisation); nominal rather than the essential rule of law and power separation; the nomenklatura's control over state resources (including mass media); and a pervasive system of patronage[197] have

[197] ISA European Institute, Sussex University, GJW Europe 'Evaluation of the PHARE and TACIS Programme, 1992-1997'. http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/evaluation/reports/tacis/951432.pdf, retrieved June 2001

considerably inhibited the way, by which individual citizens can participate in decision-making through political parties and interest organisations. These include the following:

(i) According to UN estimates the Republic of Belarus is presently characterised by regular but low paid wages and pensions, low-level unemployment, a relatively low external debt, apparently high growth rates, and the highest standard of living in the CIS since 1996. Nevertheless, there are grounds to question the sustainability of Belarus' progressive development in the future. Belarus' cumulative level of direct foreign investment *per capita* was the lowest amongst the CIS, its private sector contribution to GDP was also minimal and on average 45% less than that in other NIS[198]. Belarus has not advanced in any of the principal reform directions, including (a) macro-economic stabilisation; (b) private sector development; (c) liberalisation of prices and trade; (d) enterprise reform; and finally (e) development of financial institutions. In other words, the relatively progressive economic façade disguises a situation of impending economic crisis, and inevitable worsening of living conditions. Future economic uncertainty, stemming from limited diplomatic relations with the West, and its obvious dependence on elite decision-making in Russia, further isolates Belarus from the global economic community, and makes it an 'outsider' of further democratisation.

(ii) This thesis argues that as a weak state, Belarus was not legally or logistically prepared to embark on the course of democratic reforms, and subsequently has been manipulated by the former communist nomenklatura to their own advantage. Targeted privatisation, and favourable conditions for certain business players, has widely promoted state

[198] *Transition Report, 1999*. EBRD. See Chapter 1 for more detailed explanation.

monopolisation of economy, and limited advancement of independent interests. Elite strategical considerations and public 'traditionalist' adherence to a strong leadership creates a unique opportunity for institutional reinforcement of the uneven power balance in society, that is in the hands of the vested interests, and away from weak democratic forces. Respective institutional steps have been undertaken to strengthen the authority of successor elites. This included the introduction of the presidency, strategic 'conservation' of a majoritarian electoral code and the pre-*perestroika* power structures, and the quest for economic-cum-political Union with Russia. The leftover Socialist 'properties' secured by the weak state, for example, decisively outplayed the democratic initiative in 1992[199]. A similar outcome took place during the 1995 election campaign, when the system did not simply allow the accession of nationalists to the new legislature. The 1996 crisis demonstrated the precedence of the President and the Moscow elites' decision-making,[200] over the national constitutional law, and the dissipated efforts of the opposition.

(iii) It is, therefore, often suggested that the introduction of the presidency as well as Lukashenko's outstanding ability to manoeuvre through the political landscape, *was one of the* crucial factors that brought the country to a political standstill, and halted institutionalisation of representative bodies, notably parties and parliament. As a result,

[199] This is when the BNF embarked on the initiation of the referendum to re-elect the 1990 conservative parliament in Belarus. It effectively failed, not only because of existing disagreements amongst the democrats, liberals and nationalists, but also because of the power precedence by nomenklatura in the 1992 Belarusian parliament. The latter overruled BNF's decision to have a referendum on the issue.

[200] The same can be said about the practice of 2000 parliamentary elections, when international observers claimed gross violations of the democratic laws, and Russia was the only state to stand up clearly in support of the 'democratic' procedures in Belarus.

parties had to re-focus their attention from pursuing their own mandates in policy-making to embarking on a political battle with a much more powerful opponent – the president. Lukashenko significantly reinforced an existing system of patronage and clientelism in Belarus, which allowed him full control over the decision-making process. In the short term Lukashenko has introduced his own system of personal rule, where governance by decree dominates the law; and the separation of powers between legislature, executives, and Constitutional Court becomes nominal. Moreover, the mass media were 'nationalised' and the union with Russia set in motion. Naturally, the nation's cultural adherence to a strong leadership and the weakness of democratic institutions, have ensured that a 'delegative' rather than 'representative' style of policy-making has remained dominant. This is to say that the electorate tends to empower the incumbent who seems to be more capable of initiating and pursuing change, rather than investing their 'political currency' in the pledges of parties and other interest organisations. Thus, by granting the president a full mandate, around 40% of the electorate have presently ensured their interest representation and another 40% remain floating voters (Dobson, 2000: 4).

Second, parties as the principal agents of the political game, have the potential to develop a coherent system of interest representation, but do not make sufficient efforts to promote democratic culture and a plurality of opinions in Belarusian society. They have been moulded by numerous political climaxes (March of Freedom 1-3, other political protests 1992, 1996, 1998-2000, alternative presidential election, Political Rally 2001, 26 April), which did not instigate the formation of elementary structures for public contestation and inclusiveness, especially in regions. Not surprisingly, the performance of Belarusian political parties has been poor and the electorate remains

disenchanted. Moreover, voters' expectations of parties as an indispensable part of the national process of decision-making are gradually fading.

The thesis continued by analysing parties from three principal dimensions: parties in public office, in central office and at grassroots.

(i) The analysis of parties' activity in parliament has demonstrated that parties had the potential to develop well-functional coalitional politics during the 1990-1996 period. Party competition was polarised and organised along the two principal conflict lines, 'conservative-reformist' and 'power allocation'. The first divide included issues of economic populism, authority, state social protection, and union with Russia versus national sovereignty, economic liberalism and support for integration with the EU. The second divide displayed the conflict over power distribution between the democratic forces and conservative nomenklatura in the first instance, and with the introduction of the presidency, between the legislature and the president. By 1996 parties successfully established a culture of factions, promoting their group interests in parliament. These developments reiterated political parties' potential to become better organised and more competent, even when they were under pressure of the pro/anti-presidential divide and ideologically immature. It is believed that their failure to resist the accretion of presidential power in 1996 and onwards was considerably weakened by two factors: their inability to compromise, and the interference of structural and institutional 'properties' of the system. Since 1996 there has been no effective move by parties to form coalitions and/or to develop a reasonable dialogue with the authorities. Pro-governmental party organisations, in opposition, have accommodated themselves in public office, and presently enjoy short-term benefits; whereas

oppositional parties continue drifting even further away from realistic politics; which altogether encourages voters to support discrete, populist and anti-party individuals.

(ii) On the extra-parliamentary level, it has been established that two types of party organisations have developed in Belarus. The first group was hypothesised as a modified mass party organisation having a relatively active regional network based on cells, clubs, and factions; flexible membership, associated not with fees, but commitment to promote the party's name and ideology; and labour-based campaigns. The best examples of such developments are the nationalist BNF and neo-communist PCB. Having limited financial resources many 'mass' type parties became dependent on the state between 1990 and 1996. Only central decision-making structures seemed to enjoy some degree of financial independence. The aftermath of 1996 crisis demonstrated the 'survivability' of mass type organisations. Relatively successful examples were BNF, PCB, CPB, neo-AP and LDPB. BNF found ample support on the West. PCB and LDPB largely remain afloat thanks to Russian well-wishers. CPB and neo-AP entirely depend on the state as their primary material source of existence.

The majority of pro-democratic parties enjoy a 'new' type of organisation. As a rule, they are organised from the top to down, having weak linkages to society, and a low membership base. They are generally located in urban areas and assign low priority to building up local structures. OGP, BSDP NG and PNS were included as examples of modern types of party organisation. It was established that many new parties were successful in establishing strong links with their western *familles spirituelles*. This co-operation is mainly available to them through a system of grants, bursaries, technical and educational assistance, as well as direct

involvement in international projects[201]. New type, pro-presidential parties (PNS, for-example) are more dependent on state resources than those of mass type organisations, and are increasingly becoming functionary parts of the state machinery. The management of new parties has undergone both 'generational' and methodological shifts. Contemporary parties rely more on opinion polls and market research, as well as Internet resources and public relations (seminars, conferences, and staff exchange).

Additionally, pro-presidential parties[202] appear to have their representatives in public office, although the latter remain non-partisan in parliament in accordance with MPs' mutual agreement. They seem to ultimately rely on state resources, as their party leaders share key positions in government, or enjoy considerable benefits from their associates in parliament. They have no distinct ideological profiles or economic programmes, and definitively lack voters' support.

(iii) Overall analysis has suggested that parties in Belarus are highly fragmented, especially in the regions, and have limited influence on the decision-making process. Oppositional party leaders are unable to overcome personal feuds and to uniformly campaign against the president. They are limited by formal and informal institutional settings (high threshold for turnout, majority voting, single member district) and legal

[201] It is not yet known how the opposition parties will survive under the president's decree demanding full registration of foreign aid (No. 8, 12/03/01). The West has already begun a boycotting campaign against Lukashenko's decision (see EBRD's resolution, IMF conclusion, and the OSCE, AMG in RFL/RE Vol. 5 No. 70-74).

[202] They can be found amongst both types of party organisations. Examples are CPB as a mass type of organisation, and PNS SD as a modern type of organisation.

rules (alterations in the constitution, new law requirements for party candidates, etc.). All parties lack clear ideological doctrine and policy manifestos, especially those policies applying to system reform, and have limited linkages with their voters.

(iv) As it appears, the political balance in the country is weighed towards the president; which has enabled voters to rationally switch their choice away from parties who have become 'second-order preferences', and 'delegate' maximal authority to the president to lead the country out of crisis. Voters still view parties as indispensable pillars of building democracy, however their perceptions of parties as incapable of winning power make them seek immediate benefits and a sense of security from more powerful players in the country. Public opinion is presently very divided. Three distinct groups can be observed in the population: these are pro-governmental, oppositional and undecided voters. The latter group, which forms 1/3 of the voting electorate, may allow considerable leeway for politicians to manoeuvre in an attempt to recruit additional voters for the forthcoming presidential election in 2001. It should also be noted, that the pro-presidential part of the Belarusian electorate seems to be more consolidated and coherent in its opinion; whereas the 'protest electorate' is more critical, but less unified.

With a weak party organisation, there is a greater scope for personalities, and a greater likelihood that individuals will be important contenders in the power game. There are also fewer chances for coalitional politics in the legislature, which is vital for keeping the balance in semi-presidential polyarchies. Parties' survival is also limited when they do not have the opportunity to publicise their manifestos and mobilise their supporters.

What must be ensured, is that institutionally and structurally there are equal opportunities for parties and individual candidates to compete for seats and votes in public office. Existing structures, *informal* rules and levers of *clandestine* control and opinion manipulation by authorities do not promote this democratic option.

System prospects for the future

There is no 'recipe' for democracy. The efforts of parties' alone cannot provide a suitable alternative to the current regime, especially when the electorate has their own rationale for supporting the presidency over parties. Cognitive frameworks and institutions cannot be altered on demand, and require careful revision. What is certain though is, that in order to re-build a ship at sea a floating dock is required and thus a joint approach to structure and agency is necessary.

Popular interests are traditionally voiced through the panoply of mechanisms: unions, social movements, parties and other interest organisations. Voter-governor linkages may also be sought elsewhere (Lawson et al., 1988). Nevertheless, parties continue to be seen as the most important mechanisms of power mediation between society and state in contemporary politics of new democracies. When they are weakened organisationally, institutionally, or structurally, the power balance will be naturally transferred to a stronger 'player'. As Eijk et al (1996) in their research of the democratic deficit in the European Union demonstrates, party failure often does not lie with uncommitted voters, or lack of media coverage, but it is grounded within the weak powers of the legislature. If one analyses the arrangement of legislative-executive relations in Belarus, it becomes clear

that parliament has no *real* power for decision-making and no incentives for partisan debates, which considerably undermines the influence of parties and other interest organisations' in politics. The balance of power, hence, must be constitutionally guaranteed and players must be given equal chances to build their authority. This also presumes full re-structuring of regional powers from the influence of 'old-style' nomenklatura. Additionally, parties must offer clear and inclusive programmes for further economic and political reforms, and use them to manifest their readiness for fair and competitive political game.

On the other hand, Linz (1994. 1996) notes that a strong presidency and structured parties are a contradiction in terms, and the president will always seek opportunities to expand his power at the expense of other institutions. In this case, a 'delegative democracy', based on a semi-presidential regime, may be a solution for a transient regime aiming to enjoy both entities – strong leadership, and representative politics.

In conclusion, this thesis is written to contribute to the theory of transitional regimes, both in empirical and methodological terms. It has demonstrated that a transition to democracy is a lengthy and often disenchanting process, which is associated with the joint impact of past legacies and existing conflicts; and the accumulative effect of powerful institutions. Nevertheless, the process of decision-making, which has the power to adjust the constraints and opportunities of the system to the requirements of democracy, is seen as playing the leading role in third wave democratisation. Parties are still part of the political game in the new regime; however, in the case of Belarus they presently remain dormant and unclaimed.

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APPENDIXIES

Appendix 1.
Table 1. Political Parties in Belarus. January 2000

Party acronym or name	Full English name of party	Date of foundation, membership; leader	Structure	Ideology
AP	Agrarian Party	1992; 12 000 (in 1997); Michael Shimannskii	Local branches in villages, kolkhoz	Agrarian, Socialist
BNF	Belarusian Popular Front	1993, re-established in 2000; 2500; Vintsug Viachorka	Branches in all regions, especially Western part of Belarus	Liberal nationalist, democratic
BPP	Belarusian Peasant Party	1991; +1000; Evgeni Lugin	Local organisations in most regions	Nationalist, Liberal
BPP	Belarusian Patriotic Party	1994; +1000; Anatoly Barankevich	Not known	Communist; pro-Lukashenko
BPT	Belarusian Party of Labour	1993; +1000; Alexander Bukchvostov	Party clubs	Socialist
BSDG NG	Belarusian Social Democratic Party 'Narodnaya Gramada'	1991; 2000; Nikolai Statkevich	112 regional organisations	Social-Democratic
BSDP	Belarusian Social Democratic Party	1998; +1000; Stanislav Shushkevich	City and regional branches	Centre right
CCP	Conservative Christian Party	2000; +1000; Zenon Pozniak	Branches in Minsk, and some regions of Belarus	Radical nationalist, democratic
CPB	Communist Party of Belarus	1996; 7 000; Victor Chikin	90 District, regional and city branches	Communist
Green	Belarusian Green Party	1992; 1000; Nikolai Kartash	Mainly in Gomel, and Minsk	Ecological
LDPB	Liberal-Democratic Party of Belarus	1994; 18 000 (in 1997); Sergei Gaidukevich	District and regional organisations, especially in Eastern part f Belarus	Russian chauvinist
Nadezhda	Belarusian Women's Party	1994; 5 000 (in 1999); Valentina Polevikova	Regional and city organisations in Minsk and Mogilev	Social democratic

Table 1. Continued

Party acronym or name	Full English name of party	Date of foundation, membership; leader	Structure	Ideology
OGP	United Civil Party	1995; 3500; Anatol' Lebedko	Minsk, 6 regional; 28 city and 66 district braches	Liberal, conservative
PCB	Party of Communists Belarusian	1991; 15 000; Sergei Kaliakin	143 local, 6 regional and Minsk branches	Communist
SD PNS	Social Democratic Party of People's Accord	1991; re-registered in 1997; 2050; Leonid Sechko	50 regional and 135 primary units, mainly in Gomel, Mogilev and Grodno	Pro-presidential
RPTS	Republican Party of Labour and Justice	1993; 1000 (in 1995); Anatoly Netilkin	Not known	Socialist
SSBR	Slavic Union 'White Russia'	1992; 1 500 (in 1997); Nikolai Sergeev	Regional organisations in Gomel and Vitebsk; local branches in Eastern part of Belarus	Russian chauvinist
SSP	Belarusian Social Sport Party	1994; 7 000 (in 1995) Alexander Alexandrovich	Not known	Pro-presidential

Source: Ministry of Justice 1999; Bobkov et al. (1997) Politicheskie Parti Belarusi [Political Parties of Belarus]. Minsk: BGEU.

Appendix 2. Results of parliamentary elections in 1990, 1995, and 2000.

Table 2-1. Elections 1990. One-party system

(1 round – 4 March 1990; 2 round – 22 April 1990)

Among 360 MPs, 148 were elected by the principle of majority run-off, single-member district. Amongst them, there were 5.4% women, 1.4% labour and 7.4% peasants; and 93.9% member of CPSU; and 6.1% non-partisan. Turnout was 87% of voters.

Source: *Sovetskaya Belorussia* [Soviet Belarus], 23 April 1990

Table 2-2. Elections 1995: Multi-party system

(1 round – 28 November 1995; 2 round – 10 December 1995)

Parties	Party name in English	Seats	Votes	Faction
PCB	Party of Communists Belarussian	42	21%	Communist
AP	Agrarian Party	33	17%	Agrarian
PNS	Social Democratic Party of People's Accord	8	4%	Social Democrat 'Union of Labour'
BSDG	Belarusian Social Democratic Party 'Narodnaya Gramada'	5	2%	Social Democrat 'Union of Labour'
Other parties	OGP; VES; SSBR; BPT; SSP; BPP; BNP; BSP; and other	15	8%	Some belonged to 'Civic Action'
Non-partisan		95	48%	Accord
Total		198	100%	

Source: *Narodnaya Gazeta*, 11 December, 1995.

Table 2-3. The House of Representatives of the National Assembly, Belarus, 1997

Factions	Accord	AP	PCB	Soc-Dem	Civic Action	Non-partisan	Total
Seats*	52	24	21	6	0	7	110
Percent	47.3	21.8	19.1	5.4	0	6.4	100

Source: Narodnaya Gazeta, 27.11.96

Note: * these are those deputies who agreed on Lukashenko's invitation to the re-structured Parliament.

See text for details.

Table 2-4. Election results 2000

(1 round – 15 October 2000; 2 round – 29 November)

Parties	Party name in English	Seats	Votes	Ideology
CPB	Communist Party of Belarus	6	6.2%	Communist, pro-presidential
AP	Agrarian Party	6	6.2%	Agrarian, pro-presidential
RPTS	Republican Party of Labour and Justice	2	2.1%	Socialist, pro-presidential
BSS	Belarusian Social Sports Party	1	1%	Pro-presidential
LDPB	Liberal-Democratic Party of Belarus	1 (suspended)		Russian chauvinist
SD PNS	Social Democratic Party of People's Accord	1	1%	Pro-presidential
Non-affiliated		81	83.5%	
Total		97	100%	

Source: http://www.rec.gov.by , retrieved November, 2000. All Belarusian sites are subject to administrative control and accessibility. They often may be temporary 'unavailable', depending on the 'political climate' in the country.

Turnout at 1 round – 61%; 2 round – 53.8%.

Appendix 3. Parties' electoral profiles. December 2000.

Table 3-1. If parliamentary elections were tomorrow, what party or public organisation would you vote for? Division of electoral support by gender and age

Political parties	Male %	Female %	18-29 %	30-44 %	45-59 %	60 and older, %	Total %
No answer	48.1	51.9	26.3	24.2	18.9	30.7	
	34.9	33.0	36.3	30.4	27.0	41.9	33.9
Agrarian party	47.8	52.2	13.0	33.7	23.9	29.3	
	9.4	9.0	4.9	11.5	9.3	10.9	9.2
Belarusian Party "Zeljonye"	50.0	50.0	50.0	25.0		25.0	
	.4	.4	.8	.4		.4	.4
Belarusian Women Party "Nadezhda"	22.5	77.5	15.0	35.0	37.5	12.5	
	1.9	5.8	2.4	5.2	6.3	2.0	4.0
Belarusian Party of Labour	40.9	59.1	4.5	36.4	22.7	36.4	
	1.9	2.4	.4	3.0	2.1	3.2	2.2
Belarusian Patriotic party	61.1	38.9	11.1	27.8	55.6	5.6	
	2.4	1.3	.8	1.9	4.2	.4	1.8
Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada	58.8	41.2	41.2	29.4	11.8	17.6	
	2.1	1.3	2.9	1.9	.8	1.2	1.7
Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Narodnaya Hramada)	62.5	37.5	25.0	12.5	18.8	43.8	
	2.1	1.1	1.6	.7	1.3	2.8	1.6
Belarusian social-sport party	100.0		33.3	66.7			
	.6		.4	.7			.3
Belarusian Ecological Party Zelyonykh BEZ	25.0	75.0	25.0	50.0	25.0		
	.2	.6	.4	.7	.4		.4
Belarusian peoples patriotic union	25.0	75.0		50.0		50.0	
	.2	.6		.7		.8	.4
Belarusian people front	60.0	40.0	22.2	35.6	33.3	8.9	
	5.8	3.4	4.1	5.9	6.3	1.6	4.5
Belarusian patriotic youth union	37.0	63.0	44.4	29.6	7.4	18.5	
	2.1	3.2	4.9	3.0	.8	2.0	2.7
Belarusian union of women	33.3	66.7	33.3	27.8	33.3	5.6	
	1.3	2.3	2.4	1.9	2.5	.4	1.8
Belarusian union of youths	45.8	54.2	58.3	25.0	12.5	4.2	
	2.4	2.4	5.7	2.2	1.3	.4	2.4
Belarusian Helsinki committee		100.0	100.0				
		.2	.4				.1
Belarusian public coalition "Yabloko"	57.9	42.1	42.1	31.6	21.1	5.3	
	2.4	1.5	3.3	2.2	1.7	.4	1.9
Movement for social progress and justice	45.5	54.5	18.2	36.4	27.3	18.2	
	1.1	1.1	.8	1.5	1.3	.8	1.1
Communist party of Belarus	49.4	50.6	3.8	16.5	43.0	36.7	
	8.4	7.5	1.2	4.8	14.3	11.7	7.9
Liberal-Democratic Party	52.6	47.4	47.4	34.2	13.2	5.3	
	4.3	3.4	7.3	4.8	2.1	.8	3.8
United Civic Party	42.3	57.7	30.8	30.8	26.9	11.5	
	2.4	2.8	3.3	3.0	3.0	1.2	2.6
Party of the communists of Belarus	42.9	57.1	14.3	23.8	38.1	23.8	
	1.9	2.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	2.0	2.1
Republican Party	57.1	42.9	57.1	28.6	14.3		
	.9	.6	1.6	.7	.4		.7

Table 3-1. Continued

Political parties	Male %	Female %	18-29 %	30-44 %	45-59 %	60 and older, %	Total %
Republican Party of Labour and Justice	39.1 1.9	60.9 2.6	17.4 1.6	17.4 1.5	26.1 2.5	39.1 3.6	2.3
Social-Democratic Party of Human Agreement	50.0 1.1	50.0 .9	40.0 1.6		20.0 .8	40.0 1.6	1.0
Company of the Belarusian language	100.0 .4		50.0 .4	50.0 .4			.2
Christian-conservative party (splinter BNF)	80.0 1.7	20.0 .4	10.0 .4	30.0 1.1	40.0 1.7	20.0 .8	1.0
Trade unions		100.0 .2	100.0 .4				.1
Lukashenko	14.3 .2	85.7 1.1	14.3 .4	14.3 .4	14.3 .4	57.1 1.6	.7
Non-partisan candidate		100.0 .4	50.0 .4			50.0 .4	.2
Against all	37.1 5.6	62.9 8.3	25.7 7.3	30.0 7.8	20.0 5.9	24.3 6.9	7.0

Note: INTAS Project (99-00245) on charismatic leadership in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, sponsored by European Union and hosted by University of Bath (more details available on www.bath.ac.uk/~mlpeak). This table displays Crosstabulation analysis.

Source: Centre for Social and Political Research, BSU, Minsk; with author coordination.

Table 3-2. If parliamentary elections were tomorrow, what party or public organisation would you vote for? Division of electoral support by education

Political Parties	Elementary (up to 7 forms at school) or without education	Incomplete secondary education (8-9 forms)	Secondary general (10-11 forms)	Professional technical education	Secondary special education (college)	Incomplete higher education	Higher education	Total
No answer	11.2 46.9	13.9 40.5	22.4 36.0	11.2 29.5	22.1 29.8	5.3 35.3	13.9 29.4	33.9
Agrarian party	10.9 12.3	20.7 16.4	25.0 10.9	12.0 8.5	19.6 7.1	2.2 3.9	9.8 5.6	9.2
Belarusian Party "Zeljonye"		25.0 .9		50.0 1.6			25.0 .6	.4
Belarusian Women Party "Nadezhda"	2.5 1.2	7.5 2.6	15.0 2.8	20.0 6.2	32.5 5.2	10.0 7.8	12.5 3.1	4.0
Belarusian Party of Labour	4.5 1.2	36.4 6.9	22.7 2.4	9.1 1.6	22.7 2.0		4.5 .6	2.2
Belarusian Patriotic party		22.2 3.4	27.8 2.4	11.1 1.6	27.8 2.0	5.6 2.0	5.6 .6	1.8
Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada			17.6 1.4	5.9 .8	41.2 2.8	5.9 2.0	29.4 3.1	1.7

Table 3-2. Continued.

Political Parties	Elementary (up to 7 forms at school) or without education	Incomplete secondary education (8-9 forms)	Secondary general (10-11 forms)	Professional technical education	Secondary special education (college)	Incomplete higher education	Higher education	Total
Belarusian social-sport party				66.7 1.6			33.3 .6	.3
Belarusian Ecological Party			25.0 .5	25.0 .8	25.0 .4		25.0 .6	.4
Belarusian peoples patriotic union		25.0 .9			50.0 .8		25.0 .6	.4
Belarusian Popular front		4.4 1.7	11.1 2.4	8.9 3.1	40.0 7.1	6.7 5.9	28.9 8.1	4.5
Belarusian patriotic youth union	3.7 1.2	3.7 .9	33.3 4.3	22.2 4.7	14.8 1.6	11.1 5.9	11.1 1.9	2.7
Belarusian union of women			22.2 1.9	22.2 3.1	22.2 1.6	11.1 3.9	22.2 2.5	1.8
Belarusian union of youths			20.8 2.4	12.5 2.3	54.2 5.2	12.5 5.9		2.4
Belarusian Helsinki committee		100.0 .9						.1
Belarusian public coalition "Yabloko		5.3 .9	21.1 1.9	5.3 .8	36.8 2.8		31.6 3.8	1.9
Movement for social progress and justice	9.1 1.2		18.2 .9	9.1 .8	27.3 1.2		36.4 2.5	1.1
CPB (Chikin)	11.4 11.1	15.2 10.3	19.0 7.1	17.7 10.9	25.3 7.9	2.5 3.9	8.9 4.4	7.9
Liberal-Democratic Party	2.6 1.2	5.3 1.7	10.5 1.9	15.8 4.7	36.8 5.6	7.9 5.9	21.1 5.0	3.8
United Civic Party		7.7 1.7	19.2 2.4	7.7 1.6	19.2 2.0	3.8 2.0	42.3 6.9	2.6
PCB (Kaliakin)	4.8 1.2	4.8 .9	19.0 1.9	19.0 3.1	28.6 2.4	4.8 2.0	19.0 2.5	2.1
Republican Party			14.3 .5	14.3 .8	57.1 1.6		14.3 .6	.7
Republican Party of Labour and Justice	13.0 3.7	13.0 2.6	26.1 2.8	17.4 3.1	21.7 2.0		8.7 1.3	2.3
Social-Democratic Party of Human Accord	10.0 1.2	10.0 .9	30.0 1.4	20.0 1.6	10.0 .4	10.0 2.0	10.0 .6	1.0
Company of the Belarusian language			100.0 .9					
CCP (splinter BNF)	10.0 1.2		10.0 .5	20.0 1.6	30.0 1.2	10.0 2.0	20.0 1.3	1.0
Trade unions					100.0 .4			.1
Lukashenko	28.6 2.5	28.6 1.7	28.6 .9	14.3 .8				.7
For non-partisan candidate					50.0 .4		50.0 .6	.2
Against all	11.4 9.9	7.1 4.3	24.3 8.1	10.0 5.4	18.6 5.2	7.1 9.8	21.4 9.4	7.0

Source: BSU, Centre for Social and Political Research. See table 3-1. for details.

Table 3-3. If parliamentary elections were tomorrow, what party or public organisation would you vote for? Division of electoral support by occupation

Political Parties	Worker	Civil worker	Agricul-tural worker	Business groups	Pensioner	Student. pupil	Unem-ployed	House-wife	Total
No answer	24.5 34.9	21.2 25.7	.6 7.4	4.4 34.1	33.9 42.9	5.9 31.7	5.0 44.7	4.4 35.7	33.9
Agrarian party	22.8 8.8	27.2 8.9	10.9 37.0	2.2 4.5	31.5 10.8	1.1 1.6	1.1 2.6	3.3 7.1	9.2
Belarusian Party "Zeljonye"	25.0 .4	25.0 .4			25.0 .4		25.0 2.6		.4
Belarusian Women Party "Nadezhda"	27.5 4.6	40.0 5.7	2.5 3.7	2.5 2.3	17.5 2.6	5.0 3.2	2.5 2.6	2.5 2.4	4.0
Belarusian Party of Labour	18.2 1.7	27.3 2.1	13.6 11.1	4.5 2.3	27.3 2.2	4.5 1.6	4.5 2.6		2.2
Belarusian Patriotic party	27.8 2.1	27.8 1.8	11.1 7.4	5.6 2.3	11.1 .7	5.6 1.6	5.6 2.6	5.6 2.4	1.8
Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada	17.6 1.3	41.2 2.5			23.5 1.5	11.8 3.2	5.9 2.6		1.7
Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Narodnaya Hramada)	18.8 1.3	31.3 1.8			37.5 2.2		6.3 2.6	6.3 2.4	1.6
Belarusian social-sport party	33.3 .4	33.3 .4				33.3 1.6			.3
Belarusian Ecological Party		50.0 .7		25.0 2.3		25.0 1.6			.4
Belarusian peoples patriotic union	25.0 .4	25.0 .4			50.0 .7				.4
Belarusian popular front	22.2 4.2	40.0 6.4	2.2 3.7	8.9 9.1	11.1 1.9	6.7 4.8	6.7 7.9	2.2 2.4	4.5
Belarusian patriotic youth union	22.2 2.5	18.5 1.8			14.8 1.5	25.9 11.1	7.4 5.3	11.1 7.1	2.7
Belarusian union of women	27.8 2.1	33.3 2.1		11.1 4.5	5.6 .4	5.6 1.6	11.1 5.3	5.6 2.4	1.8
Belarusian union of youths	25.0 2.5	20.8 1.8		4.2 2.3	8.3 .7	33.3 12.7		8.3 4.8	2.4
Belarusian Helsinki committee								100.0 2.4	.1
Belarusian public coalition "Yabloko	15.8 1.3	47.4 3.2	5.3 3.7	10.5 4.5	5.3 .4	5.3 1.6	5.3 2.6	5.3 2.4	1.9
Movement for social progress and justice	18.2 .8	54.5 2.1			18.2 .7	9.1 1.6			1.1
CPB	20.3	25.3	1.3	3.8	44.3		1.3	3.8	
	6.7	7.1	3.7	6.8	13.1		2.6	7.1	7.9
Liberal-Democratic Party	36.8 5.9	36.8 5.0	2.6 3.7	5.3 4.5	5.3 .7	10.5 6.3		2.6 2.4	3.8
United Civic Party	15.4 1.7	50.0 4.6	3.8 3.7	15.4 9.1	7.7 .7	7.7 3.2			2.6
PCB	14.3 1.3	42.9 3.2	4.8 3.7		28.6 2.2			9.5 4.8	2.1
Republican Party	14.3 .4	42.9 1.1		28.6 4.5				14.3 2.4	.7

Table 3-3. Continued.

Political Parties	Worker	Civil worker	Agricul-tural worker	Business groups	Pensioner	Student. pupil	Unem-ployed	House-wife	Total
Republican Party of Labour and Justice	30.4	13.0	4.3		34.8		8.7	8.7	
	2.9	1.1	3.7		3.0		5.3	4.8	2.3
SD Party of Human Accord	30.0	10.0			30.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	
	1.3	.4			1.1	1.6	2.6	2.4	1.0
Company of the Belarusian language	100.0								
	.8								.2
CCP (splinter BNF)	40.0	30.0			20.0	10.0			
	1.7	1.1			.7	1.6			1.0
Trade unions						100.0			
						1.6			.1
Lukashenko	14.3				57.1	14.3		14.3	
	.4				1.5	1.6		2.4	.7
Non-partisan candidate		50.0			50.0				
		.4			.4				.2
Against all	25.7	32.9	2.9	4.3	25.7	4.3	2.9	1.4	
	7.6	8.2	7.4	6.8	6.7	4.8	5.3	2.4	7.0

Source: BSU, Centre for Social and Political Research, 2001. See table 3-1. for more details.

Table 3-4. If parliamentary elections were tomorrow, what party or public organisation would you vote for? Division of electoral support by place of residence

Political Parties	Minsk	Oblast city	Region centre	Other town	Village	Total
No answer	25.4	11.8	30.4	5.9	26.5	
	52.1	22.7	35.8	33.3	28.9	33.9
Agrarian party	2.2	10.9	15.2	3.3	68.5	
	1.2	5.7	4.9	5.0	20.3	9.2
Belarusian Party "Zeljonye"	50.0	25.0	25.0			
	1.2	.6	.3			.4
Belarusian Women Party "Nadezhda"	10.0	40.0	32.5	2.5	15.0	
	2.4	9.1	4.5	1.7	1.9	4.0
Belarusian Party of Labour	13.6	4.5	31.8	4.5	45.5	
	1.8	.6	2.4	1.7	3.2	2.2
Belarusian Patriotic party		11.1	55.6	5.6	27.8	
		1.1	3.5	1.7	1.6	1.8
Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada	11.8	47.1	17.6		23.5	
	1.2	4.5	1.0		1.3	1.7
Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Narodnaya Hramada)	12.5	25.0	12.5	18.8	31.3	
	1.2	2.3	.7	5.0	1.6	1.6
Belarusian social-sport party			66.7		33.3	
			.7		.3	.3
Belarusian Ecological Party Zelyonykh BEZ	25.0	25.0	25.0		25.0	
	.6	.6	.3		.3	.4

Table 3-4. Continued.

Political Parties	Minsk	Oblast city	Region centre	Other town	Village	Total
Belarusian peoples patriotic union	25.0 .6		25.0 .3	25.0 1.7	25.0 .3	.4
Belarusian popular front	13.3 3.6	28.9 7.4	31.1 4.9	8.9 6.7	17.8 2.6	4.5
Belarusian patriotic youth union	11.1 1.8	25.9 4.0	22.2 2.1	14.8 6.7	25.9 2.3	2.7
Belarusian union of women	27.8 3.0	27.8 2.8	11.1 .7	16.7 5.0	16.7 1.0	1.8
Belarusian union of youths	25.0 3.6	12.5 1.7	37.5 3.1	20.8 8.3	4.2 .3	2.4
Belarusian Helsinki committee	100.0 .6					.1
Belarusian public coalition "Yabloko	21.1 2.4	26.3 2.8	21.1 1.4		31.6 1.9	1.9
Movement for social progress and justice	27.3 1.8		36.4 1.4	9.1 1.7	27.3 1.0	1.1
Communist party of Belarus	10.1 4.8	13.9 6.3	39.2 10.8	2.5 3.3	34.2 8.7	7.9
Liberal-Democratic Party	2.6 .6	34.2 7.4	15.8 2.1	7.9 5.0	39.5 4.8	3.8
United Civic Party	11.5 1.8	53.8 8.0	23.1 2.1		11.5 1.0	2.6
Party of the communists of Belarus	9.5 1.2	9.5 1.1	33.3 2.4	14.3 5.0	33.3 2.3	2.1
Republican Party			57.1 1.4		42.9 1.0	.7
Republican Party of Labour and Justice	17.4 2.4	13.0 1.7	47.8 3.8	4.3 1.7	17.4 1.3	2.3
Social-Democratic Party of Human Agreement	30.0 1.8	10.0 .6	50.0 1.7		10.0 .3	1.0
Company of the Belarusian language	100.0 1.2					.2
Christian-conservative party (splinter BNF)	10.0 .6	20.0 1.1	20.0 .7		50.0 1.6	1.0
Trade unions			100.0 .3			.1
Lukashenko		14.3 .6	42.9 1.0	28.6 3.3	14.3 .3	.7
Non-partisan candidate			100.0 .7			.2
Against all	14.3 6.1	18.6 7.4	20.0 4.9	2.9 3.3	44.3 10.0	7.0

Appendix 4. Some behavioural trends within the Belarusian electorate, January 2001

Table 4-1. Whose influence, in your opinion, is more powerful today in the country?

Army	5.9%
Business Groups	13.7%
Intelligentsia	1.5%
International Community	3.5%
Parliament	5.6%
Opposition	4.4%
Political Parties	3.2%
Government	30.4%
Police	23.2%
President	75.1%
Prime Minister	4.9%
Trade Unions	.5%
CIS leadership	3.8%
Journalists	4.3%
Church hierarchy	8.1%
No one	7.5%
Other	2.4%
No answer	.4%

Note: INTAS project (99-00245) on charismatic leadership in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, sponsored by the European Union and hosted by the University of Bath (more details available on www.bath.ac.uk/~mlpeak).

The table displays analysis of frequencies.

Source: Centre for Social and Political Research, BSU, Minsk; with author coordination.

Table 4-2. If presidential election were this Sunday, whom would you vote for?

Bogdankevich	1.1%
Vecherko	1.4%
Gajdukevich	.6%
Goncharik	.8%
Ermoshin	5.6%
Zametalin	.1%
Kaljakin	.3%
Kebich	2.3%
Lebed'ko	1.5%
Lukashenko	42.0%
Malofeev	1.0%
Mjasnikovich	.6%
Pozniak	3.3%
Polevikova	.2%
Statkevich	1.0%
Chigir'	6.7%
Shareckij	.6%
Shejman	.1%
Shipuk	.2%
Shushkevich	4.5%
Gonchar	.1%
Ling	.1%
Dubko	.1%
Refused to answer	.2%
Against all	5.1%
No answer	20.5%

Table 4-3. Do you think economic and political situation would become better if someone else came to power?

Bogdankevich	.1%
Vecherko	.8%
Gajdukevich	.2%
Ermoshin	1.0%
Kebich	.5%
Lebed'ko	.7%
Lukashenko	.2%
Malofeev	.2%
Pozniak	2.3%
Polevikova	.1%
Statkevich	.1%
Chigir'	4.2%
Shipuk	.1%
Shushkevich	.8%
Khodiko	.1%
Masherov	.2%
Pavlov	.3%
Dubko	.1%
Masherova (daughter)	.1%
The leader of the united opposition	.3%
Anyone, except Lukashenko	3.5%
No	27.3%
Difficult to say	57.2%
Refused to answer	.4%

Table 4-4. What political parties and movements do you know?

Agrarian party	17.0%
Belarusian Party "Zeljonye"	7.6%
Belarusian Women Party "Nadezhda"	7.8%
Belarusian Party of Labour	1.6%
Belarusian Patriotic party	1.4%
Belarusian Social-Democratic Gramada	5.4%
Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Narodnaya Gramada)	.2%
Belarusian social-sport party	.2%
Belarusian Ecological Party Zelyonykh BEZ	.8%
Belarusian peoples patriotic union	.6%
Belarusian people front	54.2%
Belarusian patriotic youth union	21.7%
Belarusian republic club of voters	.3%
Belarusian union of women	2.0%
Belarusian union of youths	9.2%
Belarusian Helsinki committee	.5%
Belarusian public coalition "Yabloko"	8.2%
Movement for social progress and justice	.1%
Communist party of Belarus	37.9%
Liberal-Democratic Party	9.7%
United Civic Party	3.3%
Party of the communists of Belarus	10.1%
Republican Party	1.2%
Republican Party of Labour and Justice	.2%
Social-Democratic Party of Human Agreement	2.0%
Company of the Belarusian language	1.7%
Christian-conservative party the BNF	1.9%
Democratic party	.4%
Party of people's agreement	.3%
Trade unions	.9%
Lukashenko	.2%
Party of beer-lovers	.6%
Charter -97	.3%
Belarusian union of the military men	.1%
People's will	.1%
Union of the business groups	.1%
None	.9%
No answer	19.3%

Table 4-5. If parliamentary elections were tomorrow, what party or public organisation would you vote for?

Party or organisation	%
Agrarian party	9.2%
Belarusian Party "Zeljonye"	.4%
Belarusian Women Party "Nadezhda"	4.0%
Belarusian Party of Labour	2.2%
Belarusian Patriotic party	1.8%
Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada	1.7%
Belarusian Social-Democratic Party (Narodnaya Hramada)	1.6%
Belarusian social-sport party	.3%
Belarusian Ecological Party Zelyonykh BEZ	.4%
Belarusian peoples patriotic union	.4%
Belarusian people front	4.5%
Belarusian patriotic youth union	2.7%
Belarusian union of women	1.8%
Belarusian union of youths	2.4%
Belarusian Helsinki committee	.1%
Belarusian public coalition "Yabloko"	1.9%
Movement for social progress and justice	1.1%
Communist party of Belarus	7.9%
Liberal-Democratic Party	3.8%
United Civic Party	2.6%
Party of the communists of Belarus	2.1%
Republican Party	.7%
Republican Party of Labour and Justice	2.3%
Social-Democratic Party of Human Agreement	1.0%
Company of the Belarusian language	.2%
Christian-conservative party the BNF	1.0%
Trade unions	.1%
Lukashenko	.7%
For the person who is not a member of the political party	.2%
Against all	7.0%
No answer	33.9%

Appendix 5. Comparison with other Transition Economies[203]. Economic Statistics

Belarus is a lower middle income country according to World Bank classifications,[204] in the same classification as neighbouring states such as Ukraine, Russian Federation, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Slovakia. Basic economic indicators are shown in Table 11.1. In terms of GDP growth, the Belarus economy grew at a rate in excess of other transition economies during 1998. Much of this growth was accounted for during the first half of 1998, prior to the Russian crisis. However, the recent decline in output, calls into question the sustainability of this growth, as has been discussed in this and previous Bulletins. Rates of consumer and industrial producer price inflation are considerably greater than in other transition economies, although the unemployment rate has been kept to a minimum due to an inflexible labour market. GDP per capita in dollar terms, although difficult to estimate accurately, is considerably lower than Belarus' immediate neighbours, especially Poland and the Baltic States, and this gap has widened considerably during the last five years.

Table 11.1. Basic economic indicators for ECE transition economies, 1998

	Real GDP growth, %	*Industrial Output growth, %*	*CPI, %**	*IPPI, %**	*Unemployment rate, % of labour force***	*GDP per capita, US $*
Eastern-Central Europe						
Albania	8.0	4.1	20.6	..	12.6	930
Bulgaria	3.5	4.3	22.3	22.8	12.2	1315
Croatia	2.3	3.7	5.7	-1.2	17.2	4820
Czech Republic	-2.3	1.6	10.7	4.9	7.5	5479
Hungary	5.1	10.6	14.3	11.3	9.1	4730
FYR Macedonia	2.9	4.5	0.6	4.0	..	1548
Poland	4.8	5.0	11.8	7.3	10.4	3887
Romania	-7.3	-17.0	59.2	34.6	10.3	1695
Slovak Republik	4.4	4.6	6.7	3.3	11.9	3793
Slovenia	3.9	4.6	8.0	6.0	7.9	9779
Baltic States						
Estonia	4.0	1.8	8.2	3.8	9.6	3593
Latvia	3.6	3.1	4.7	1.9	13.8	2622
Lithuania	5.2	7.0	5.1	-3.9	6.4	2890
European CIS						
Belarus	8.3	11.0	73.0	70.0	2.3	1396
Moldova	-8.6	-11.0	7.7	9.7	1.9	432
Russian Federation	-4.6	-5.2	27.8	7.0	12.4	1867
Ukraine	-1.7	-1.5	11.0	13.0	3.7	846

Note: * Annual average, % change over preceding year.
** End of period.
.. data are not available.

Sources: Economic Survey of Europe, 1999, No.1, United Nations, Geneva; EBRD Transition Report 1999

As shown in Table 11.2, the cumulative level of FDI inflow per capita (1989-1998) into Belarus has been the lowest among the European transition economies, particularly Belarus' near neighbours of Poland and the Baltic States. However, the level of external debt in Belarus, shown in Table 11.2, at 17.6% GDP in 1998, is considerably lower than

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[203] Extracted from *Economic Trends*, Quarterly issue, January-March, 2000 www.bettacis.minsk.by; pp. 83-86

[204] World Bank Development Report 1996.

the level of external debt in most transition economies, and this is a very positive factor for Belarus, as it is not burdened by excessive debt servicing costs. Although the level of trade with non-CIS countries is low, the current account deficit of 6.6% GDP in 1998 was lower than that of all three Baltic States, and a number of the other transition economies.

Table 11.2. Comparative External Trade, FDI and Debt Statistics

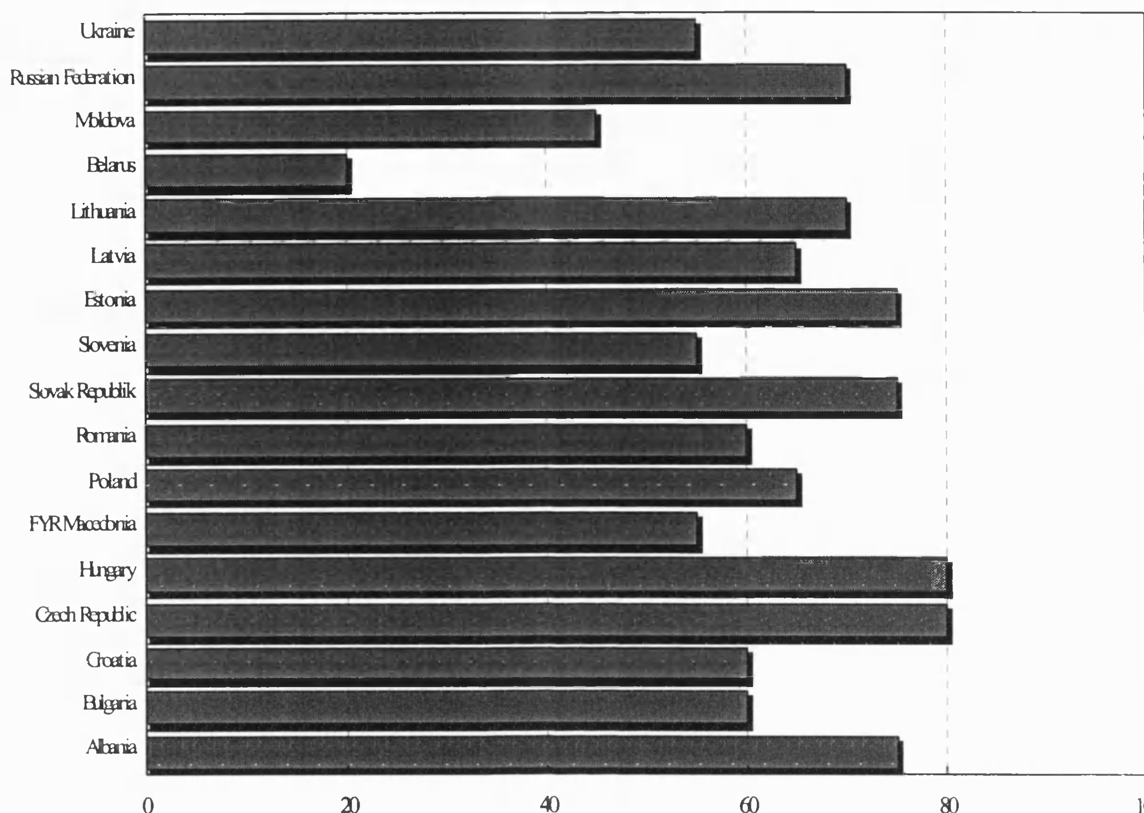
	FDI inflow, US$ m			External Debt,	Current Account,
	1998	cumulative 1989-1998	cum. 1989-1998 per capita	% GDP	% GDP
Eastern-Central Europe					
Albania	45	423	132	29.4	-6.3
Bulgaria	401	1323	159	92.6	-2.3
Croatia	854	1997	444	37.5	-7.1
Czech Republic	2485	9957	967	41.7	-1.9
Hungary	1453	16459	1627	55.9	-4.8
FYR Macedonia	175	242	121	39.5	-9.0
Poland	6600	15066	389	29.9	-4.5
Romania	2040	4510	200	25.2	-7.9
Slovak Republik	508	1762	326	58.5	-10.1
Slovenia	154	1192	596	25.4	0.0
Baltic States					
Estonia	575	1382	953	55.8	-9.2
Latvia	220	1604	642	47.6	-11.1
Lithuania	921	1534	415	34.8	-12.1
European CIS					
Belarus	141	456	45	17.6	-6.6
Moldova	88	330	76	71.9	-19.7
Russian Federation	1200	8901	61	55.1	0.9
Ukraine	700	2626	52	27.6	-2.8

Source: EBRD Transition Report 1999

Progress in Transition

In terms of transition indicators (i.e. progress towards a market economy), Belarus rates amongst the lowest of its former centrally planned neighbours, and it is this point that brings into question the sustainability of growth and development for the future. Figure 11.1 displays EBRD estimates of the private sector shares in GDP in mid-1999 for European transition economies. The level of private sector contribution is a primary indicator of transition to a market economy. As is shown in the Figure, the level of contribution of the private sector in Belarus is the lowest compared to not only the most advanced transition economies, but also compared to European CIS countries. Thus, private sector contribution to GDP in Belarus was 20% of total in 1999, compared with 70% in the Russian Federation, 55% in Ukraine and 45% in Moldova.

Figure 11.1 Private sector share in GDP in mid-1998, %



Source: EBRD Transition Report 1999

Table 11.3 displays the EBRD estimates for cumulative progress in transition. As indicated by the EBRD Transition Report 1999, Belarus has not progressed far in any of the main transition indicators, including:

- macro-economic stability,
- private sector development,
- liberalisation of prices and trade and developments of competition policy,
- enterprise reform,
- development of financial institutions (liberalisation of interest rates, reform of the banking system, and development of securities markets and non-banking financial markets).

Economic progress by the transition economies has been closely correlated with progress in these transition components. Given the link between progress in transition and economic growth, it is unlikely that sustainable long-term economic growth in Belarus will come without substantial progress in liberalisation of markets, privatisation, and the development of a genuinely commercially orientated financial sector.

Table 11.3. Progress in Transition

	Population (millions, 1997)	*Large Scale Privatisation*	*Small Scale Privatisation*	*Governance and enterprise restructuring*	*Price liberalisation*	*Trade and foreign exchange system*	*Competition policy*	*Banking reform and interest rate liberalisation*	*Securities markets and non-bank financial institutions*
Eastern-Central Europe									
Albania	3.2	2	4	2	3	4	2	2	2-
Bulgaria	8.2	3	3+	2+	3	4+	2	3-	2
Croatia	4.5	3	4+	3-	3	4	2	3	2+
Czech Republic	10.3	4	4+	3	3	4+	3	3+	3
Hungary	10.1	4	4+	3+	3+	4+	3	4	3+
FYR Macedonia	2.0	3	4	2	3	4	1	3	2-
Poland	38.8	3+	4+	3	3+	4+	3	3+	3+
Romania	22.4	3-	4-	2	3	4	2	3-	2
Slovak Republik	5.4	4	4+	3	3	4+	3	3-	2+
Slovenia	2.0	3+	4+	3-	3	4+	2	3+	3
Baltic States									
Estonia	1.4	4	4+	3	3	4	3-	4-	3
Latvia	2.4	3	4	3-	3	4+	3-	3	2+
Lithuania	3.7	3	4+	3-	3	4	2+	3	3-
European CIS									
Belarus	10.2	1	2	1	2-	1	2	1	2
Moldova	4.3	3	3+	2	3	4	2	2+	2
Russian Federation	146.7	3+	4	2-	3-	2+	2+	2-	2-
Ukraine	50.7	2+	3+	2	3	3	2	2	2

Note: The numerical indicators are intended to represent the cumulative progress in the movement from a centrally planned to a market economy in each dimension, rather than the rate of change in the course of a year. An approximate interpretation of the classifications is: 1 = Little progress towards market economy, 2 = moderate progress, 3 = substantial progress, 4 = significant / near complete progress, 4+ = standards & performance typical of advanced industrial economies

A precise definition of the classification of each category in the table above is included in the EBRD Transition Report 1999, and the report contains are much more detailed discussion of the progress in transition than we are able to include here.

Source: EBRD Transition Report 1999

Appendix 6. List of interviewees, 1996 and 1999, Belarus.

1996: included 26 members of government, legislature and party members.

1. Alpeev, A.N. – leader of the Movement for People's Defence, Rector of the non-state Institute of Humanities and Economics

2. Bogdankevich, S.A. – chairman of 'Civic Action' faction, 1995-6 parliament; leader of OGP, MP

3. Borschevskii, L – deputy leader, Belarusian Popular Front

4. Bulakhov, D. P. – leader, Party of all-Belarusian Union and Accord, MP

5. Bukchvostov, A.I. – leader, Labour Party, chairman of trade unions for the car and agriculture industry, MP

6. Giruts, M.I. – leader of Agrarian Faction in Parliament 1995-1996, MP

7. Gonchar, V.I. – chairman of Election Committee, 1995-6, MP

8. Gryb, M.I. – member of Committee of International affairs, MP

9. Dobrovl'skii, A. – deputy Chairman of OGP, MP

10. Zametalin, V. P. – deputy head of Presidential Administration, head of the committee on mass media and information

11. Kaliakin, S.I. – first secretary of PCB, MP

12. Karpenko, G.D. – Deputy spokesman of the 1995-6 parliament.

13. Konoplev, V. N. – leader of 'Zgoda' Faction, MP

14. Kravchenko, P.K. – chairman of the committee of International Affairs, MP

15. Kuchinskii, V.F. – president's aide, MP, member of the Movement for People's Defence

16. Lukashenko, A.G. – the president

17. Novikov, V.N. – deputy chairman, PCB

18. Polevikova, V.T. – chairwoman, women's party 'Nadezeya'

19. Posokhov, S.A. – president's aide, Presidential Administration

20. Sosnovskii, A.V. – Minister of Culture

21. Statkevich, N. V. – chairman of BSDG NG

22. Strazhev, V.I. – Minister of Education

23. Tsikhinya, V.G. – chairman of the Constitutional Court

24. Chigir, M.N. – the Prime Minister

25. Sharetskii, S. G. – chairman of Agrarian Party, MP

26. Shushkevich, S.S. – former Spokesman, member of the committee of economic reforms, MP

1999 interviews included 17 members of government, legislature and political parties.

1. Viachorka, V. – deputy leader of BNF (liberal wing)

2. Krivorot, A. – deputy leader of BNF (radical wing)

3. Bukchvostov, A. – chairman of the Labour Party

4. Kaliakin, S. – first secretary of PCB

5. Dobrovol'skii, A. – deputy leader of OGP

6. Karpenko, G. – deputy leader of OGP (independent)

7. Statkevich, N. – chairman of BSDG NG

8. Gaidukevich, S. – leader of LDPB

9. Sechko, L. – leader SD PNS, MP

10. Pletyukchov, V. – member of CPB, MP, member of the committee of education

11. Konoplev, V. – deputy Spokesman, MP

12. Samuseva, V. – non-partisan MP, chairman of the committee of education

13. Rotman, D. – director of the Centre for Social and Political Research, BSU

14. Manaev, O. – Director of the Independent Institute (NISEPI) for Social, Economic and Political Research

15. Strazhev, V.I. – Minister of Education

16. Tregubovish, V. – journalist, former member of BNF Soim

17. Feduta, A. – political analyst