POLITICS
AND SOCIETY
IN BELARUS

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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

The political scientists of European Humanities University (EHU) together with the Belarusian office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) are pleased to introduce you to a collection of academic works by students and alumni of the political science programs at EHU. This is already the third issue through which we intend to introduce to interested audiences analysis of political events, institutions, public policy and, broadly speaking, the Belarusian political sphere.

At the same time, this collection of works is quite diverse in its topics. The authors examine a broad variety of topics, including protest activities and political parties in Belarus, and two topics that look at the system of higher education from different angles – the politics of memory and employment distribution of graduates of Belarusian universities. In spite of our focus on disseminating knowledge of Belarus we also include in this issue an article devoted to analysis of Russian media in the context of Ukrainian events. We find this inclusion possible, as the topic is very much timely.

The collection is intended for European and Belarusian politicians, activists, political scientists as well as those who are interested in alternative views on and a vision of Belarus.

We hope that the articles will be interesting for you and you will learn more about our country and its current political situation.

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES AND NUMBERS OF PROTESTS IN BELARUS

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SUMMARY

This article presents research designed to distinguish correlations between three socio-economic indicators in Belarus (exchange rate, average salary, consumer price index) and protest activity of Belarusian citizens. These variables were chosen strategically as they are recognized as the most important for the population of Belarus. The main research methods are statistical analysis and model estimation. It was found that a correlation exists at the level of at least two out of the three indicators. However, the correlation depends strongly on the time delay and an assisting variable "Elections" – a major political event in Belarus.

Determination of a correlation between exchange rate, average salary, and consumer price index and conditions for protest activity of Belarusian citizens could become a foundation for future research in looking at protest potential of Belarusians under different socio-economic conditions, taking as a hypothesis that social and political unrest in Belarus is not spontaneous. Additionally, it provides opportunities for forecasting political events in Belarus. However, since correlations do not imply causality the authors do not go too far in their assumptions and assertions.

KEYWORDS:
Belarus, protest, economy, mass meetings, public disobedience, statistics.

INTRODUCTION

According to Freedom House (Freedom House 2018), the Republic of Belarus is a consolidated authoritarian regime. The Belarus constitution guarantees freedom of association, but in practice there

are restrictions on protests and political activities (Freedom House 2018). As a result, political activities and especially political protests in Belarus have resulted in some unexpected forms and outcomes. Many protests of different types and intensity across the country were held over the several last years related to specific political events such as elections, tax against "social parasites", etc. (Makhovsky 2017; Chyzhova 2016). Typical for nondemocratic regimes, state-controlled media covered the protest activities in a way that resembled propaganda with the outcome of decreasing trust in media (Freedom House 2018). At the same time, studies in the field of political protests are limited. One of the exceptions are annual reports made by the national think tank 'Palytichnaya sfera ("Палітычная сфера"), which cover all types of political activities quantitatively and qualitatively (Chyzhova 2014; Chyzhova 2015; Chyzhova 2016). This article intends to contribute to the studies in this field, though it represents just one empirical case study.

According to a widespread logical assumption, civil protest activity is related to people's dissatisfaction with social-economic conditions. It seems trivial to state that if people have less money and material goods they will more likely rise up against the authorities and protest, as the authorities are the decision-makers responsible for constructing social, political, and economic reality. However, the real correlation between these two factors is not so clear and should be studied in each concrete case. The goal of the article is to study the correlation between social, economic, and political protest activity in Belarus over the 2013-2015 period with main economic parameters that define the level of welfare: a) mean wage; b) Belarusian ruble currency rate; and c) the consumer price index.

The article has the following structure. First, I describe the theoretical background of the research with explanation of such concepts as political participation and types of political activities. Second, I present typical characteristics of Belarusian protest activities, defining the limitations and alternative ways of conducting the research. I then set out the hypothesis, present possible outcomes of the empirical part of the analysis and discuss the methodology of the research with data for the modelling with an explanation of data-gathering process and a final statistical model. The final two sections deal with empirical results and conclusions.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN BELARUS

Issues of political participation in non-democratic states are regarded as important for the context of research. McClosky

and Merolla (2008) describe different types of political participation in general. However, for the purpose of this article the research of Makhovsky (2017) and Chyzova (2014; 2015; 2016), who investigate the field of political participation and protests activities in Belarus, have special importance.

Before discussing that research, however, political participation should be defined. McClosky (2008) states that political participation refers to those voluntary activities by which members of society participate in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly, the formation of public policy (McClosky 2008). Merolla (2008) cites definitions by Verba and Nie in which political participation include those activities of private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take. Both of these definitions are useful for the current research. Still, both Merolla and McClosky define different forms of political participations in general. According to these authors political participation has different forms, such as direct and indirect political participation and their sub-divisions (McClosky 2008; Merolla 2008). According to Keren "political protest involves attempts by individuals or groups to address or stop perceived injustices within a political system, without overturning the system itself" (Keren 2006). In this regard, protest activities can be defined under both forms of direct and indirect political participation and the same forms correspondingly.

According to some theoretical approaches, we can define protest activity as part of direct political participation, as a wide range of activities: mass meetings (both sanctioned and non-sanctioned by the state); protest rallies (both sanctioned and non-sanctioned by the state); public performances; strikes; mass civil disobedience; other forms of public expression of dissatisfaction of state policy or social order, etc. Civil protest, therefore, may be any collective action aimed to express certain dissatisfaction, anger or hatred towards policy of an upper classes, or to draw attention to a problem of a certain group of people (Carothers 2015; Youngs 2015). Such precise divisions within the approach to direct political participation is important for sampling, during the initial data analysis, and before conducting the main stage of research – the approximation of a statistical model for possible correlations.

Assumptions made in the research are close to grievance theory, which asserts that economic inequality itself will be the issue that spurs protest participation and contradicts relative power theory. In this regard, as inequality increases, poor people are more likely to be

excluded from the political agenda (Solt 2015).

However, it is not just popular outrage and dissatisfaction among the population that are the reasons for protest. The other apparent trend is that opposition groups that organize protests are also becoming more active and inspired when economic conditions are worsening, trying to draw more support from dissatisfied people and enlarge their social base and advance in challenging authorities. There should, therefore, be one more factor for a negative correlation between economic indicators and the number of a protest actions in Belarus.

Researchers in the field of protest activities in non-democratic regimes (Pramen 2017; Makhovsky 2017) claim that one of the typical characteristics of an authoritarian system is that any protest, disobedience or explicit non-satisfaction becomes highly politicized even if initially it was not connected with governmental policy. As a result, we may state that in the Belarusian case any protest – strike, art performance regarding the legalization of marijuana or local protest against a gentrification – is usually perceived by the media, state structures and public opinion as a political anti-government protest.

As mentioned above, economic conditions may be a crucial reason for civil protest. In Belarus we can find examples of this tendency at least twice – in 2011, during the "silent protests", which took place during the financial crisis in Belarus[2] and in 2017 during the so-called "parasite tax protests".[3]

In this regard, by looking for the correlation of the number of protest actions with a social-economic indicator and the welfare level we may evaluate the "sensibility" of Belarusian people towards a decreasing of their welfare conditions and their ability to protect their rights through a civil protest.

FEATURES OF BELARUSIAN PROTESTS ACTIVITIES RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Before describing the methodology it is necessary to present limitations of the research. Some variables in the modeling may interact with each other and create inaccuracy in conclusion. Also, including a large amount of variables in the model seems problematic. Nevertheless, to avoid possible errors and inaccuracy the research has the following limitations:

1. Real reasons of protest may include a huge number of variables, many of which are impossible to predict and which require

the collection of large amounts of data.

2. We cannot properly distinguish economic, social, and political protests. That means we do not know whether people are protesting low salary, cutting social benefits or the state power itself. Even if correlation may be clear causation remains vague.

3. Belarusian official statistics are tricky, because sometimes conceal or distort real numbers concerning social-economic indicators for political reasons. (Nasha Niva 2017; AFN 2009). Because of such precedents we cannot rely on official statistics. For the clarity of research collection data will be not from official state sources but from independent databases.

4. As mentioned above, political participation has different forms and subdivisions. We focus on political actions performed on the streets and those which carry an explicit protest message because they are relatively easy to measure quantitatively. We do not include actions of indirect political participations such as boycotting of elections because of difficulties in measurement.

FACTORS INFLUENCING PROTEST ACTIVITY

Factors that influence protest activity in Belarus (which we will explain through economic indicators) are, in fact, multiple and, in some cases, difficult to predict. Those that are more or less visible include repressive policy of the Belarusian state; current Belarus-EU relations; the scale of enthusiasm and courage within opposition groups; the number of social-economic issues raised by media and reflected by opposition groups; local events; and power abuses.

Some of the factors are very hard or even impossible to predict. Since Belarus is an authoritarian country where many, if not all, crucial political decisions are made non-transparently, all actions by authorities that trigger of protest activity usually depend on the will of one person (President Lukashenka).

ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF QUANTITATIVE MEASURING OF PROTEST ACTIVITY

There are several alternative ways to measure correlation between protests and economic indicators, including the following:

2 - Boldyrev, Oleg (2011), "Belarus: Silent protests frighten regime", BBC Russia. Рэжым доступу: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-13975788

3 - Makhovsky, Andrei (2017) Thousands of Belarusians take to the streets to protest the "Parasite law". Reuters. Рэжым доступу: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-belarus-protests/thousands-of-belarussians-take-to-the-streets-to-protest-parasite-law-idUSKBN15W1Y0.

a) Choice of another economic indicator. Instead of mean wage currency rate and consumer price index one could select unemployment rate, median wage, and real wages.

b) Several more variables may be included in the model, such as the number of administrative detentions, fines, and criminal cases because of the political reasons.

c) We can also narrow down the number of events we understand as protests and confine them only to mass street actions (however, in this case we should also define what is a "mass" action). The same data may also be reorganized and analyzed as panel data. We can take a single unit (for example, protest rallies) and track it from 2013 to 2015, observing how this particular type of protest was growing in terms of numbers of participants over the period observed. Hypothesis

Our hypothesis is that there is both a positive and negative correlation between economic indicators and protest activity in Belarus. We expect a negative correlation with variable "Wage", meaning that increasing independent variables by one unit will decrease a dependent variable. In other words, decreasing economic inequality by increasing wages can contribute to a decrease in the number of protests. We also expect the opposite situation or a positive correlation with variable "Election", meaning that an increase of one unit in this variable will also increase the coefficient of the variable "Number of Protests". With historical perspective then we can see that after elections in Belarus there is a quantitative increase in the number of protests.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA
DATA

We used modeling and statistical analysis as the primary methods for research. Statistical analysis is used in data gathering and interpreting and the data itself is drawn from protests in Belarus and economic indicators in the period of 2013-2015.

Due to limitations in data collection we avoided official statistical data sources. Instead, data for the variable "Mean wage" (see Annex 3) and "CPI" (see Annex 1) was collected from an open-source database (Trading Economics, "Belarus Core Consumer Price"; "Belarus Average Monthly Wages"). However, due to the denomination of the Belarusian ruble in 2016[4], we decided to convert average wage to euro in order to follow a similar structure in our data. Because of fluctuation of the exchange rate we used a currency converter[5]. For the variable "EUR per BYR" (see Annex 2) we used similar data. We also used quantitative data on the number of the protests from the "Political sphere" reports, only

those we consider direct actions of protests (Chyzhova 2014; Chyzhova 2015; Chyzhova 2016).

VARIABLES

Data for the variable "Number of Protests" was taken from "Palytichnaya sfera". We use just those actions that carry explicit protest message and are performed on the street, in a public space. We exclude from the model so-called "social" protests, which can be viewed as both direct and indirect political participation. Authors from "Palytichnaya sfera" combined such actions as petitions and applications to officials, or collective petitions to mass media. Given this, "social" protests are not incorporated into our theoretical framework.

2013 (SEE ANNEX 4)

During 2013, protests seemed not to have significant visual increase except in November and December, during which 10 and 17 protest actions were observed, respectfully. The total number of public protests for that year is 64. (Chyzhova 2014).

2014 (SEE ANNEX 5)

2014 was marked by a significant increase of protest activity in the period from January to March. This rise may be explained by the local elections held March 23, which spurs public interest to politics and mobilizes political parties and organizations. The total number of protests during this year is 81 (Chyzhova 2015).

2015 (SEE ANNEX 6)

2015 is the year presidential elections were held in Belarus – the most important political event and one of the most triggering factors for protests. This may at least partially explain the slight and stable growth of protest actions from July to November 2015 with a peak reached in October (16 actions) – the month when elections occurred. The total number of protests in that year was 96 (Chyzhova 2016).

A preliminary comparison of indicators of dependent and independent variables offers that there is no correlation of protests in Belarus with mean wages, CPI, and currency rate. Such factors as presidential elections or other political events have a much larger effect.

4 - MyFin.by, "Деноминация будет проведена с 1 июля 2016 в Беларуси". Рэжым доступу: https://myfin.by/stati/view/5461-denominaciya-budet-provedena-s-1-iyulya-2016-v-belarusi

5 - Tut.by, "Конвертер валют". Рэжым доступу: https://finance.tut.by/calcs/konv_val/

ELECTIONS

To estimate further, we created a "dummy" or binary variable "Elections" where "1" represents presence of any kind of elections in Belarus and "0" represents their absence. In this regard we have two elections during the 2013-15 period (Tsentral'naya komissiya Respubliki Belarus' po vyboram i provedeniyu respublikanskikh referendumov).

MODELING

It is first necessary to check properties of the data we have. In conducting research we are dealing with time-series data that needs to be tested for stationarity, meaning that statistical indicators are constant over the given period. Our data sets have binary or so-called "dummy variables" as well as quantitative variables. There are no reasons for testing binary variables for stationarity due to the nature of such data. In our case the test can be applied for all variables except "Elections".

We then run an Augmented Dickey-Fuller test to test the presence of a unit root, formulated by the following equation:

$$\Delta Y_t = \alpha + \beta Y_{t-1} + \gamma T + \varphi_i \Sigma \Delta Y_{t-i} + u_t$$

We find that the dataset needs to be adjusted. In this regard, we applied differentiation for variables "MeanwageEUR" and "EURperBYR" which will have additional letter "d" following the name of the variable.

Model 16: OLS, using observations 2013:04-2015:12 (T = 33)
Dependent variable: Numberofprotestactions

	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-ratio	p-value	
const	−184,825	172,772	−1,070	0,2963	
d_MeanwageEUR	−0,0234972	0,0251591	−0,9339	0,3605	
d_MeanwageEUR_1	−0,0506658	0,0498651	−1,016	0,3206	
d_MeanwageEUR_2	−0,147528	0,0469992	−3,139	0,0048	***
d_EURperBYR	−2,89051	15,3057	−0,1889	0,8519	
d_EURperBYR_1	−27,9461	11,8541	−2,358	0,0277	**
d_EURperBYR_2	12,5476	7,45827	1,682	0,1066	
CPIpercent	1,46995	1,50206	0,9786	0,3384	
CPIpercent_1	−1,46604	1,88034	−0,7797	0,4439	
CPIpercent_2	1,88884	1,66490	1,135	0,2688	
Elections	11,8416	3,48688	3,396	0,0026	***

Mean dependent var	6,818182	S.D. dependent var	5,670398
Sum squared resid	308,9363	S.E. of regression	3,747340
R-squared	0,699744	Adjusted R-squared	0,563264
F(10, 22)	5,127076	P-value(F)	0,000678
Log-likelihood	−83,72933	Akaike criterion	189,4587
Schwarz criterion	205,9202	Hannan-Quinn	194,9975
rho	0,262495	Durbin-Watson	1,372071

After the OLS estimation we can see that a significant effect appears only with a time lag of 2 months. Nevertheless, according to the calculations we can observe that p-value shows statistical significance (with p-value lower then 0,05 at the level of significance of 95%) for variables d_MeanwageEUR_2 and d_EURperBYR_1.

CPIpercent_2 shows no significant effect even with a time lag of 2 months (p-value lower then 0,05).

For the dummy variable Elections we can observe a highly significant effect with a positive correlation.

PROTEST ACTIVITIES IN BELARUS: EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Characteristics of direct and indirect political participation with different types of political actions and socio-political variables researched lead us to several conclusions. Firstly, analysis of initial data shows that political participation has several subdivisions. Still, not all protest activities could be quantitatively measured, which leads to limitations of the research. Secondly, due to the complicated political situation in Belarus official statistical data seems questionable. For this research, therefore, we collected data from independent databases, adjusting them in order to keep a similar data structure.

In analyzing the suggested model we can conclude that such economic indicators as mean wage (calculated in euro) have correlations with the dependent variable of numbers of protests with a time lag of two months, while the currency rate of the Belarusian ruble (per euro) correlates with a time lag of one month.

Statistical evidence shows that increase by one unit in the variable representing mean wage and euro rate correlates with a decrease in the number of protest actions with a time lag of two months for "mean wage" and one month for currency rate (statistically significant negative correlations). Nevertheless, there is no statistical

evidence to assume that the variable representing he consumer price index has any type of correlation with the number of protests in Belarus in a given sample.

At the same time there is statistical evidence of positive correlation with the binary variable of elections. Here an increase by one unit in the variable (the appearance of elections) correlates with a growth in the number of protest actions.

Summing up, according to the preliminary model in a given data sample we can see from the calculations that we have evidence that political factors – such as elections – have a stronger statistical correlative effect with Belarusian protest activities than with economic factors.

CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration the current political situation and details of political activities in Belarus, we can highlight several important points. Conducting research and gathering data on protests in Belarus should take into consideration existing limitations, such as the current political situation, the problematic nature of national statistical data, and differences in types of political participation.

According to calculations we can see that in the given sample political factors have stronger and statistically more significant correlations than economic factors. However, we need to remember that such correlations appear in the given sample from 2013-2015 and may vary with an expansion of sample or through the inclusion of additional variables into the model.

This research on protest activities is not finished. However, existing data and empirical results of this research can be used as a starting point for future investigations by extending the number of variables with actual data. Research in this field can be conducted using a similar methodology in other countries with similar political systems. A comparative analysis can then be conducted to find possible similarities and for forecasting potential outcomes.

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ANNEX 1
CPI MONTHLY: 2013-2015

Year/Month	CPI percent
January 2013	102,8
February 2013	100,6
March 2013	100,6
April 2013	100,4
May 2013	100,6
June 2013	100,5
July 2013	101
August 2013	100,8
September 2013	100,6
October 2013	101
November 2013	101,3
December 2013	102,39
January 2014	101,2
February 2014	101
March 2014	101,2
April 2014	101,4

May 2014	102,9
June 2014	101,7
July 2014	101
August 2014	100,8
September 2014	100,8
October 2014	100,7
November 2014	100,6
December 2014	100,6
January 2015	101,8
February 2015	101
March 2015	100,9
April 2015	100,7
May 2015	100,8
June 2015	100,9
July 2015	100,5
August 2015	100,8
September 2015	100,8
October 2015	100,7
November 2015	101,2
December 2015	101,2

ANNEX 2
BELARUSIAN CURRENCY RATE 2013-2015

Year/Month	EUR per BYR
January 2013	0,86
February 2013	0,87
March 2013	0,86
April 2013	0,87
May 2013	0,87
June 2013	0,87
July 2013	0,88
August 2013	0,89
September 2013	0,9
October 2013	0,91
November 2013	0,93
December 2013	0,94
January 2014	0,96
February 2014	0,96
March 2014	0,98

April 2014	0,99
May 2014	1
June 2014	1,02
July 2014	1,02
August 2014	1,03
September 2014	1,04
October 2014	1,06
November 2014	1,07
December 2014	1,08
January 2015	1,1
February 2015	1,6
March 2015	1,5
April 2015	1,4
May 2015	1,4
June 2015	1,5
July 2015	1,6
August 2015	1,5
September 2015	1,8
October 2015	1,8
November 2015	1,7
December 2015	1,8

ANNEX 3
MEAN WAGE: 2013-2015

Year/Month	Mean wage BYR	Mean wage EUR
January 2013	4368023	372,06
February 2013	4504840	398,23
March 2013	4692789	422,32
April 2013	4888296	431,42
May 2013	4988338	443,4
June 2013	5159884	450,24
July 2013	5450175	462,65
August 2013	5547075	466,13
September 2013	5374793	438,69
October 2013	5477569	447,14
November 2013	5348781	420,83
December 2013	5854664	447,6
January 2014	5322441	405,05
February 2014	5389193	403,38

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March 2014	5753101	423,95
April 2014	5860652	423,45
May 2014	6055941	441,07
June 2014	6198540	446,25
July 2014	6455276	467,09
August 2014	6364471	463,2
September 2014	6335320	472,08
October 2014	6377912	473,13
November 2014	6194398	459,86
December 2014	6805978	473,29
January 2015	6023213	345,36
February 2015	6129105	411,62
March 2015	6483703	405,99
April 2015	6536111	410,81
May 2015	6687564	410,28
June 2015	6883744	405,54
July 2015	7008649	419,72
August 2015	6970521	352,24
September 2015	6862950	344,73
October 2015	6837568	356,77
November 2015	6748775	350
December 2015	7424092	365,71

ANNEX 4
MONTHLY PROTEST ACTION IN BELARUS, 2013
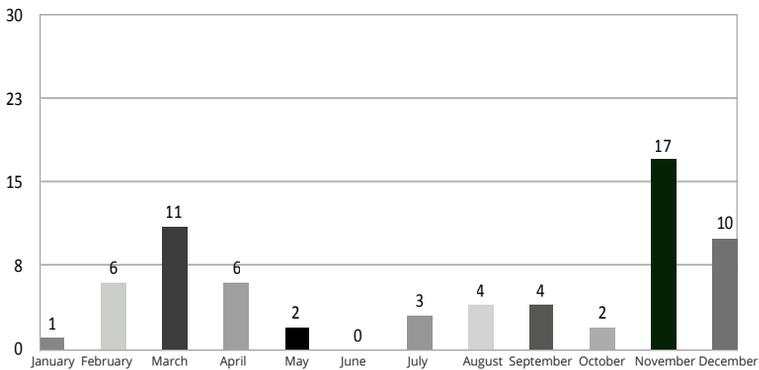
ANNEX 5
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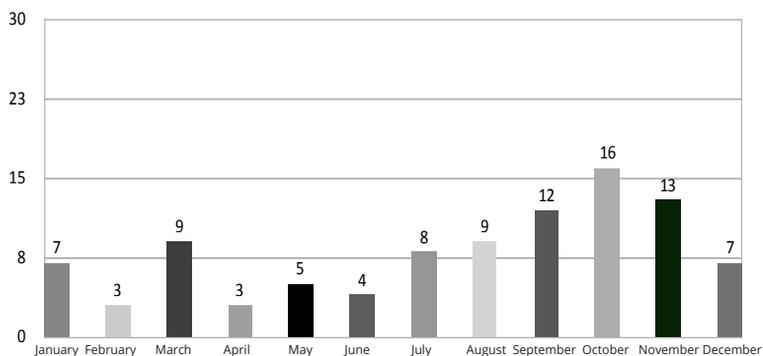
ANNEX 6
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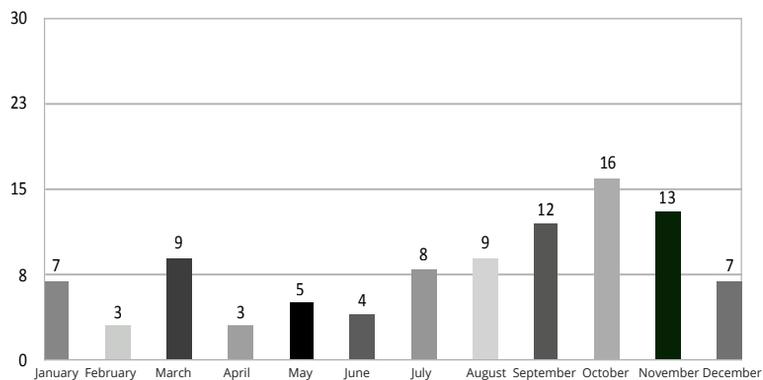
IMPLEMENTATION OF MEMORY POLICY VIA EDUCATION SYSTEM DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS (1991-2001)

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SUMMARY

National history is an important tool to implement memory policy though the education system of the nation state. National history is the foundation of the "invented" traditions shaping the political elite with education strategies of reconstructing, forgetting, tabooing, and commemorating of a nation's past. Memory asymmetry is a feature of shaping versions of Belarusian history and narratives on which they are based resulting in conflict between official and national versions of history.

This study focuses on the 1991-2001 transitional period of implementation of memory policy in the Republic of Belarus. Using education practices, the study demonstrates how the national historical memory of the Belarusian nation was shaped; how application of memory policy methods are selected; and the traumatic period in the Belarusian history policy that resulted in shaping the official version of memory with no alternative is designated.

Using theoretical analysis of the nation, memory concepts, analysis of archival data at the National Archive of the Republic of Belarus (archival fund 498 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Belarus), semi-structured interviews with experts, and qualitative discourse analysis, it was found that education makes the memory policy public, even if it is not recognized as the official memory policy of the government. Implementing language policy and creating national history during the transitional period of the mid-1990s, the traditional administrative command system of education management contributed to an increase in «anomalies» – tension areas concerning national history, Belarusian and Russian, and the memory about war that fragment the communicative memory of the nation. The emerging

memory asymmetries resulted in a paradigm shift for memory policy, from the national to the official paradigm. Official policy was shaped under a no alternative situation when it was already impossible to return to a "Soviet" history and the memory of the war was the only collective memory about the past. Obscuring national history enabled the creation of a different version of national history.

KEYWORDS:

memory policy; history policy; historical memory; language policy; education system; official history; official memory; memory asymmetry.

INTRODUCTION: CHARACTERISTICS OF CREATING A NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

Historical memory is an integral part of nation creation and development. The national memory is not only a nation's collective memory, it also absorbs alternative versions of the communicative memory of social groups. At the same time, in a nondemocratic regime national memory experiences many transformations and reflects the official vision of history that is supported with significant institutional resources applied to education practices. The official memory seriously depletes the national memory space resulting in displacement and elimination of an important historical narrative and in a loss of connection between the nation and history.

In this article, the concepts of "history policy" and "memory policy" are closely connected. Memory policy is considered to be a broad concept including history policy implemented by the government via education (courses in Belarusian history at various levels of the education system) and which creates a single vision of the national education system (Paradigm of the National School, Paradigm of History and History Education in the Republic of Belarus). Using the concepts of "national memory" and "official memory" enables one to delimit the content of the concept of the "historical memory of the Belarusian nation" as types of the nation's collective memory. The concept of "national memory" includes possible alternative paradigms of history. The concept of the "official memory" reflects the government contract for interpreting historical events and is related to instituting the nondemocratic regime in the Republic of Belarus and to the president A. Lukashenka.

The concept of the "nation" is inextricably related to the government, politics, history, and education playing key roles in

its creation, or "representation" (Anderson 2001). As the product of human beliefs, preferences, and inclinations (Gellner 1991), the nation "invents traditions" (Hobsbawm 1983) which have a fictitious connection to history during nation building via ritual and symbolic practices. The fictitious nature of the connection resides in deliberate anchoring of new memories, events, facts, and commemorative dates. A new historical truth supplants the previous version of history while explaining its falseness. At the same time, common ground between official and alternative traditions is found to consolidate memories and to resolve the conflict of memory. Memory not only revives the past but also reconstructs it relying on a certain social framework (Halbwachs 2007, 2005): time, space, memory existing inseparably with a certain social group. Jan and Alleida Assmann distinguished communicative memory (memories shared by people inside a group) and cultural memory (symbolic forms of the past to which memories are attached). Memory and history are not the same. So many types of memory about the past exist as social groups (Nora 2009). The necessity to reconsider the national history extends the collective memory space.

One of the special characteristics of shaping historical memory in Belarus is, in the first place, the approach to studying Belarusian history (the "Great Polish paradigm", to a lesser degree, and the "Great Russian paradigm" in combination with Communist ideology in the 1930-1990s (Beach 1993)); secondly, it is conflict of well-known projects of national memory – memory based on the positive interpretation of the Soviet past which reflects, to a significant degree, the official vision of history imbedded by the Soviet authorities and memory based on the national perspective that distances itself from the Soviet past and insists on the importance of the pre-Soviet period as the foundation of self-identification among Belarusians (Lastoŭski 2010). As Bratačkin mentions in an interview (Valynec 2016), the official version of historical memory is characterised by elimination and exaggeration, escape from traumatic events in the history of Belarusian society that are not reflected in the historical memory, including the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, the history of Kurapaty, and political repressions of the 1920-1950s in Belarus. This situation has resulted in significant distortions of the historical memory and loss of national identity of the Belarusian nation.

The main conclusions of the article are based on an analysis of the archival data of orders, instructions, and correspondence with the Supreme Council of the Republic of Belarus, the Council of Ministers, and the Ministry of Education (National Archive of the Republic of Belarus, archival fund 498), which enables the consideration of

implementation of education policy in the area of history and nation building carried out via the system of education institutions and control over their completion. The data are rounded out with interviews with experts reflecting individual perception of significant historical events, allowing for the connection of individual memories to regulatory documents creating a discursive description of events.

IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL MEMORY POLICY IN REPUBLIC OF BELARUS IN 1991-2000

Implementation of the national memory policy in Belarus began upon the demise of the Soviet Union and was carried out through nationalising the education system in three areas: language policy ("Belarusisation"), revision of content and approaches in the national system of education (Paradigm of the National School of Belarus), and through preparation of the Paradigm of History and History Education. In 1991-1992, primary education management functions were transferred from the level of the Soviet Union to the national level. During this period, the Ministry of Education became the only governing body coordinating operation of all education institutions. At the same time, the lack of textbooks for Belarusian-speaking forms evolved, and the issue of lack of printing facilities loomed large. This was related mostly to the fact that the government plan for procurement and publication of textbooks was in force during the existence of the Soviet Union. The introduction and implementation of the Languages Law required systematic creation of Belarusian-speaking forms, however mid-level officials were unable to forecast their number under constantly changing circumstances and printing houses were also used to accepting orders for several years in the future. The printing industry and the document management system lacked one characteristic – the traditional Belarusian letters of "i" (i) and "ў" (ŭ). In the document management system, the Belarusian "i" was replaced with either "1" or the English variant "I". Revival of cultural traditions lacked research personnel in the fields of music, painting, and architecture.

According to 1991-1995 archival records, including orders of the Minister of Education and instructions of deputy ministers, minutes of the boards of the Ministry of Education, correspondence with the Supreme Council, and the Presidential Administration, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Belarus implemented a national memory policy in the following areas:

1. Translation of educational content into the national – Belarusian – language.

2. Preparation of original national textbooks in Belarusian

history.

       3. Creation of a history paradigm within which the transition to new education content would be carried out.

       4. Conducting research and research and methodology workshops on issues surrounding updated historical content.

       5. Introduction of a history of Belarus course in the curriculum at all levels of the education system.

       6. Holding national festivities and contests and establishing national museums at education institutions and organising tourist walking tours at places of cultural and historical interest.

       7. Introduction of national symbols.

       8. Engagement of mass media on issues and future prospects for education.

       As seen from the content of measures taken to shape the historical memory of the nation, the following methods were used: Remembering and forgetting history. Remembering and the revival of the national historical discourse was carried out under conditions where there was a lack of essential work and a lack of training of history teachers and national history literature. This was the case in secondary education institutions ("… what I used: V. Lastoŭski, "Каротки нарыс гісторыі Беларусі" (Short Outline of the History of Belarus) by U. Ihnatoŭski, "Старажытная Беларусь" (Ancient Belarus) by Mikola Jermalovič (the period I worked with), the fact that I lived in Polotsk helped as well. It is a historic city, the cradle of nationalism history, so to say, a history teacher notes) as well as at higher education institutions (I. Ramanava confirms there was a lack of literature corresponding to today's requirements). However, "information deprivation" influences historical memory and memories positively and requires preservation of information. Books published during the early 1990s were in high demand (I. Ramanava) and were discussed and used during classes and lectures. Teachers took dictation of topics at workshops on the subject of the history of Belarus. During the period, discourse on war, which used to occupy a significant place in the Soviet history in the image of the liberator soldier, stood on the sidelines. Understanding of the national history as history of an equal nation state in the context of European history moved to the forefront.

       Transformation of sites of commemoration was carried out in connection with an attempt to revive national cultural traditions, for example holding the First All-Belarusian Kupala Night on the Radahošča hill not far from Sviciaź Lake and holding the first regional history expedition of secondary school students (Naš Kraj).

A shift in the perception of time was an important component of creating national memory. Stepping awayfrom the linear perception of history traditional for Soviet historiography set forth in the textbooks by L. Abecedarski, E. Zaharuĺski proved necessary. The history of Belarus was meant to promote national dignity, national identity, to become the centre of understanding of the Belarusian fate, and to renew and connect the washed-away past to the present.

Use of symbols. The first paper covers of textbooks in the history of Belarus had the white-red-white flag and the Pahonia national emblem. These textbooks were remembered by teachers and students as the first books with the flag. The first state symbols of the Republic of Belarus ingrained in the collective memory were the national symbols of Pahonia.

Active use of the mass media. In the early 1990s a number of periodicalswerecreated.Ttheirprincipalobjectivewastopubliclydiscuss processes taking place in the education system, to provide guidance to teachers, to make regulatory documents public, and to publish new materials on the history of Belarus and its traditions. Publication of the following journals began during that period: Bielaruski Histaryčny Časopis, Pačatkovaja Škola, Pralieska, Adukacyja i Vychavannie, Bielaruskaja Mova i Litaratura, among others. Nastaŭnickaja Hazieta was actively used and the history paradigm was openly discussed in articles published there.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE POLICY

The Languages Law formed the basis of the national language policy. At the same time, the top-down administrative system of introducing Belarusian in the national education institutions with stringent administrative control "was unpromising" (says P. U. Cieraškovič, a member of the research group National School of Belarus). Through examining archival records, implementation of the Languages Law was analysed and it was determined it falls largely into two periods: the first period (1991-1993), during which Belarusian was extensively introduced at all types of education institutions; and a second period (1994-1995) when the Belarusisation of the education system was criticised and the significance of strides made was devalued.

The first period of 1991-1993 can be characterised as a period of administrative control at all levels of the system of education. Successes achieved in reviving the language, cultivation of affection towards the history of the home country, holding special events, performances in Belarusian, etc., took prominence in the analysis of

institutional operation. The following bottlenecks of the language policy mentioned in the analytical part of the orders of the Ministry of Education at that time were noted:

1. Despite a gradual increase of Belarusian-speaking classes and playgroups, the Ministry of Education noted that the rate was not high enough for the transition of all general education schools and childcare facilities to Belarusian-speaking within the period set forth by law.

2. Subject teachers showing preference towards Belarusian language and literature were lacking and primary school teachers partially lectured in Russian.

3. Differentiated additional training of teachers through courses was not properly conducted.

4. There were not enough textbooks for Belarusian-speaking classes. The economic crisis and centrally-planned economy were unable to quickly adjust to the changing circumstances, specifically the rate of opening Belarusian-speaking playgroups and classes.

5. The education system saw discrimination in which only general education schools were transformed to lyceums and upper secondary schools.

6. There was a lack of single-discipline and technical dictionaries.

A realisation by the Ministry of Education of the fact that rapid introduction of Belarusian into the system of education was impossible culminated during the second period, which saw criticism of the introduction of Belarusian and support of active attacks on Belarusian as justification for the unfeasibility of rapid Belarusisation.

1994 was a critical year in shaping language policy. Preconditions for introducing bilingualism at the government level were created. The Ministry of Education initiated numerous inspections of the implementation of the Languages Law which contributed to so-called asymmetries (hereinafter "memory asymmetries") between the implementers and administrators, brought about some distress and rejection of the language by some segments of the population; not only language as a means of communication, but also the history of the language and national traditions and becoming a source of antagonism during the introduction of the Belarusian-language course. Collective memory actively used mechanisms of displacement of the foreign, unaccepted, and the imposed. The 1995 referendum on language policy was required to formalise political decisions made. Belarusians' collective memory was influenced as a result of open debates at

sessions of the Supreme Council. At the same time, the popular choice was predetermined: nostalgia for the recent past supported by mass media, individual resistance to acceptance of Belarusian as part of the national memory, and lack of distance between the national memory as the basis for the sovereignty and the collective memory of the Soviet past were all powerful influences.

The introduction of Belarusian caused a memory conflict at the level of communication when the normal framework was unable to change under authoritarian pressure and resulted in significant resistance between generations. (For example, a father could see his Belarusian-speaking child as poorly educated in Russian.) The situation became upsetting for the majority of the country's population. The collective memory shaped on the basis of patterns of the Soviet person who used Russian as the only means of communication was not prepared to evolve under the influence of the Language Law handed down.

Belarusian became part of the communicative memory of a group of intellectuals, activists, students of Belarusian-speaking cohorts who shared and accepted cultural revival as part of their own cultural and social memory based on memories of the pre-Soviet period, ethnic traditions, and reinterpretation of historical facts.

IMPLEMENTATION OF HISTORY POLICY IN THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Belarus created quite democratic conditions for the authors of the Paradigm of the National School – the authors of Belarusian history textbooks and history paradigm. The history policy cannot be considered separately from the language policy while the national memory is inextricably linked to the language of communication.

The National Paradigm of History and History Education of the Republic of Belarus became a forward-looking document in the area of national history policy because it strived to step away from the Soviet perception of history – its denationalisation. In parallel with the Paradigm, syllabi in Belarusian history were created, a history course in the curriculum of education institutions was introduced, and hours were allocated to this academic discipline in the curriculum. The Paradigm was prepared in Belarusian and it included the basic principles of syllabi and content for historical education.

The Paradigm was based on the idea of continuous and

contradictory development of Belarusian society. It was noted that history studies in the 5th-11th grades would contribute to the national and cultural revival of Belarusian ethnicity, understanding of the uniqueness of the historical path, and understanding of values and national differences from other European ethnicities and cultures.

The Paradigm authors disengaged from the forming of linear history used in Soviet historiography and made a transition to a concentric method of historical studies enabling the clarification of regularities of the Belarusian political, social, cultural, and economic way of life.

As a result of work on the paradigm, the place of secondary education in the education system as the main part in development of students' worldview shaped by teachers based on respect for the person was conceptualised. Changeable political conditions did not contribute to the implementation and understanding of the paradigm of the national education system at the level of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Belarus. The Paradigm required changes in approaches to teaching and learning that shapes a pluralistic worldview, diversity of the ideals of socio-political life demonstrated by recognising subjectivity of the physical world requiring, among others, internal, personal shaping of the "Soviet person" with a lasting framework of memory on the existence only precise, objective, and logical explanations with no place for personal thoughts. The paradigm paid little attention to the conflicts between the narratives of the Soviet and the national.

The history and historical education paradigm had significant influence on the national policy of the Republic of Belarus because it was supported at all levels of government. Revision of the historical education content evoked by the national revival resulted in a shift in understanding of the place of the Belarusian nation in European history and in understanding of the origin of Belarusians and of their path. Creation of the paradigm was considered to be an important political step to reviving the historical past. The authors of the historical paradigm strived to establish a connection between the updated content of the past and present that coalesced in the idea of a sovereign Belarus. The unique historical path of Belarusians led to considering the future of the nation separately from the great powers.

Lack of the government censorship helped change the "frames of memory", transforming them by reviving Belarusian culture, language, and national symbols (flag and Pahonia coat of arms), which

became the main components of the national memory policy.

While 1993 was the year of active shaping of the national discourse by leading history intellectuals, 1994 became the turning-point year for the national memory policy and the year of the entering of a new official policy. It can be divided into two periods – prior to the Belarusian presidential election and the time of the election itself, which resulted in the education minister's replacement on the eve of the academic new year. The political reality of restoring friendship with the "fraternal nation", the 50th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War (as World War II is known in Belarus)6 became the recreated foundation of the collective memory.

1995 became the year of crisis for history studies, with reinstatement of the downplaying of history and a concerted effort to gloss over important events. On June 6,1995, the Order No. 276 on the Establishment of Expert Panels to Review Syllabi and Textbooks in the History and Humanities of the General Education System signed by U. Stražaŭ was issued ("Pursuant order of the President of the Republic of Belarus A. R. Lukashenka No. 07-304-336 of 06/09/1995, to approve the composition of the expert panels to review the content of syllabi and textbooks of the humanities subjects of the general education system"). In his interview, H. Sahanovič mentioned the presidential edict to exclude new national history textbooks. Human Rights Watch also mentioned on their website the order to confiscate school textbooks and to return Soviet textbooks but it was later recalled and deleted from the record-keeping system. However, performing the presidential order, a commission headed by U. Zamiatalin was established, it included the author of the old Soviet textbooks in the history of the BSSR E. Zaharuĺski. This resulted in reviewing the content of the history syllabi and textbooks. At the same time, some bodies of authors, in particular the History of Belarus in the Ancient Times by the authors H. Štychaŭ, U. Pliaševič, V. Fiaduta, received the visa "Approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Belarus" as instructional material. In December 1995, a governmental commission was established to prepare new textbooks in the humanities and civic field.

The following years became years of struggle against Belarusian historians at the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and Hrodna State University.

Consistent pushing out ofthe national history policy to the periphery creates a communicative-memory centre – a zone of

alternative national memory, on the one hand, and, on the other, a dedicated policy of creating the official memory stripped of alternatives. Against the background of large-scale preparations for celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Great Victory, stepping-up of the collective memory of the recent past, the tragedy of the national history remained, in fact, unnoticed.

Consequently, confirming E. Hobsbawm's (Hobsbawm 1983), intellectuals' efforts to create new traditions were insufficient. The nondemocratic regime with administrative command traditions of order approval and performance, while losing its ideology component (the distinctive feature of history policy in the Soviet Union), turned out to be unable to create a space capable of allowing the revival of cultural traditions, making language the national wealth of the nation, and of accepting the historical truth about the uniqueness of the Belarusian path. The leaders of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Belarus in particular, were not prepared to overcome the mnemonic censorship established in the Soviet era, namely ignoring the existence of the Belarusian-speaking rural population and unpleasant national historical events of the Soviet era; in tabooing the use of Belarusian in day-to-day communication; of colouring over Belarusian history while applying a dedicated strategy of elimination of the national culture and squeezing-out the social cultural memory. An official public acknowledgement of the traumatic past, of the heritage of the Soviet Union which depersonalised the national identity of the Belarusian nation, was required.

TRAUMATIC DISMANTLEMENT AND THE OFFICIAL SHAPING OF MEMORY POLICY

The official memory policy that replaced the national historical memory policy and Soviet history could not choose an "absolutely purged national variant" of history. The national "revival" was actively included in the collective memory as the recent past. It was the past that included Belarusian nationalism, was opposed to current authorities, and was used, varyingly, as an alternative historical memory. For the official memory policy, under the prohibition of national history, one option remained –soft clouding, impenetrability, internationalisation of memory, one-sidedness in the vision of the Belarusian people's resistance to the authorities, and inclusivity in the form of selected, safe topics from medieval Belarusian history. The Great Patriotic War became the only possible option which engaged patriotic sentiments for the nation rather than national ones. In his textbook on the Belarusian history of 1917-1992, V. Sidarcoŭ wrote, "Thus, a place of honour in our history is returned to those who were erased from its pages by the

totalitarian Bolshevik authorities and included among the enemies". The official coercive memory policy resulted in transformation and effacement in the sentence, but it has a deep inclusive sense: "Thus, pay attention to those who directly participated in the historical process and attempt to understand the motives of their behaviour or to put yourself in their position". As I. Ramanava noted in an interview, Belarus has historians who honestly believe that if happy people celebrating the November 7 are present in a photo, it reflects the happiness of the Belarusian nation as a whole. That each of those Belarusians went to celebrate the November 7 in their best clothes and footwear (even in open-toe sandals). At the same time, I. Ramanava saw a something different in the photo. People were forced to have their pictures taken for the sake of history. "Maybe they (historians) had been 'kicked in their heads' for a long time to make them see what was required?", said I. Ramanava. "Then let them prepare guidelines to explain working with pictures, among others."

Transition from the national memory policy to the official memory policy shaped in Belarus occurred in the short political period of actual national independence. This period can be divided into three stages during which a paradigm shift occurred.

At the initial stage of 1991-1993, a swift change of memory policy paradigms took place, from a transformational change of the "Soviet memory heritage" to a national memory policy. It was furthered by granting Belarusian status as the official language and by recognising national sovereignty. Areas of tension – "anomalies" – amassed in response to coercive introduction of Belarusian into the system of education, which, in turn, resulted in an overwrought perception of Belarusian history, exacerbated by a lack of research and instructional literature necessary to reconsider new historical content in Belarusian. At the same time, a conflict existed between the "Soviet" collective memory, traditions, history, language communication, culture, teaching and learning methods, and the collective memory of "national revival" that strived to divide the collective space through an updated interpretation of the past.

The "anomalies" occurred as a reaction to the swift 5-year rate of introducing Belarusian determined by the administration without laying a foundation that should have included a budget; teaching, training, and advanced training of staff; incremental introduction of Belarusian in all aspects of life; preparation of professional dictionaries; etc. The leaders' understanding of the impracticality of making a complete transition to Belarusian within the intended 10-year period

contributed to a growing asymmetry of memory between the Russian- and Belarusian-speaking populations. The asymmetry of memory created preconditions for manipulating memory policy, critiquing the teaching and learning process and leading to attacks on the policy of national revival.

As far as incremental policy transformation was concerned, not a "step forward" but a "step backward" to the past social memory and system of education management was made. Protection of the language and history policy via the education system in the form of inspectors' analytical reports was ineffective, thus the experiment did not take the form of new improvements in the policy via an open public discussion of recognising responsibility for the changes taking place, but rather of reviewing and masking problems and conflicts in the education system. It was possible that the internal fight for influence mentioned by H. Sahanovič in an interview resulted in the return of memory and nostalgia for the Soviet past. The changes that occurred at this stage demonstrated the inability of the Belarusian government to recognise the painful nature of new developments. The Belarusian education system turned out to be unprepared to independently develop a stage-by-stage programme of reorganising the content of the national education system for which the foundation (in the form of the Paradigm of the National School, Paradigm of History, and History Education in the Republic of Belarus) had already been created. The tradition of dependence of education management on the centre in Moscow stripped the Belarusian system of independence in the form of research and procedural frameworks of education. Existing national education-development institutions were unable to provide the necessary research and training tools. Assessment of teaching aids and evaluations of textbooks were of either a formal or personal nature, which resulted in authors having to take direction on the approval/ disapproval of teaching aids from the Ministry of Education in the context of a a new political environment.

The national memory policy required not only a transformational change of the education system but also resolution of the conflict of generations in which the "Soviet parents" did not understand and did not accept the otherness of their "Belarusian children". A memory conflict arose at the generational level, which resulted in numerous collective "anomalies" and areas of increased tension. Ways to relieve pressure through explaining the need for the official policy along with analysis of the situation from the point of view of success of the language policy were ineffective. An active process of the memory policy paradigm shift began, manifesting itself in a shift from stressing

national independence to a traditional patriotic paradigm of the victory in the Great Patriotic War. The memory of the victory of the Belarusian people in the war later cemented in the official memory policy was shared emotionally by generations and ensured a connection between the present (defence of the new generation) and the past (feeling of pride for the older generation). The election of the first president of the Republic of Belarus and changes in the policy contributed to fragmentation of the memory policy. Recognition of Russian as the second official language created opposition to Belarusian and a review of the content of the national history textbooks increased the memory asymmetry at the expense of a nostalgic return to the past.

The national memory policy was rejected and the only possible patriotic paradigm of victory was accepted during the crisis of 1994-1995. The Great Patriotic War was blacked out as the historical memory of the nation and the accent was shifted from the image of the Soviet victor soldier to the image of the victorious Belarusian nation in the hard-won fight against the fascism in the occupied territories. No alternative versions able to change the national memory policy were articulated. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Belarus was forced to accept the necessity of changing the language policy depending on decisions made at the highest level.

Public contestation of the official memory policy implemented is characterised by parents' community resistance to a decrease in Belarusian-speaking forms and a transition to Russian as the language of instruction. The views of those who wished to maintain the language of instruction were not, in fact, taken into consideration and it was suggested that schools that had classes of those wanting to continue studying in Belarusian could be equipped. At the stage, the Ministry of Education had to resolve conflicts concerning Belarusian-speaking classes in favour of Russian-speaking. In addition, the Ministry of Education needed an explanation for a language policy implemented that did not correspond to the one set forth by law at the government level. The changes that affected the history policy, the textbooks aimed at denationalisation, de-ideologisation, and de-partisanship, were obvious to historians who resisted at the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences and in departments of history until personnel reshuffle and dismissals were effected. These changes took place unnoticed by the public at large.

The next stage of the shaping of official memory policy occurred 1995-2001. In 1997, textbooks in Belarusian history were evaluated and published and the content of the academic subjects of

Belarusian language and literature was changed. With them, the system of education institutions was changed, with Russian-speaking schools and cohorts reinstated at secondary and higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

The Belarusisation policy commenced upon signing the Languages in the Belarusian SSR Law in 1990 and contributed significantly to the "revival" of national history and cultural traditions. The documents prepared within the system of education– Paradigm of the National School, Paradigm of History, and History Education in the Republic of Belarus – were forward-looking and creative in 1991-1993. These texts had been prepared without administrative and governmental control, creating possibilities for extending the national memory. Advanced ideas of nation-building were not always understood within an academic approach at the Ministry of Education, which gave rise to areas of tension in the national history memory policy.

The dictated administrative introduction of Belarusian created an area of tension and estrangement of the Russian-speaking population in country, which resulted in a memory conflict at the level of communication.

The memory policy paradigm shift from national to official began prior to the Belarusian presidential election in the first half of 1994. It is possible to believe that the change of the historical memory policy paradigm had been prepared in advance to exacerbate the conflict of the Belarusian nation's memory and to create areas of increased tension in the field of the national memory policy revival.
The nondemocratic regime, in particular the administrative command system of pressure, contributed to national memory fragmentation at the communicative-memory level in cases of transitional periods of political regime change and political "thaw". Fragmentation of the communicative memory in the education system was manifested in the change in interpretations of "Soviet" and national history, in having to acquire new historical knowledge by all stakeholders of the teaching and learning process, in the language policy, and in the necessity of transitioning to Belarusian as the language of instruction at education institutions over five years.

Fragmentation of the communicative memory at the levels of interpersonal and intergenerational relations caused "anomalies" – memory conflicts which resulted in various asymmetries of collective memory, including the following:

1992-1993 – nationalism asymmetry. The period during which the national history policy, Belarusisation, and revival of cultural traditions was actively shaped. The Soviet memory of the nation transformed into the national collective memory of the nation, which included updated content of history.

1994-1995 – official memory asymmetry. Rise of resistance to nation-building processes. Support of the ideas of bilingualism, memory of the war, opposition to national history.
The memory conflict which arose was further manifested in a politically negative perception of the national history, which began to be labelled as oppositional and prohibited.

The collective memory of the nation was forced to reconsider alternative versions of the past – the national and Soviet history. The national version of history was filled with tabooed and obscured topics about the "golden age" of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, repressions of the 1920-1930s, forced Russification and collectivisation, etc. Open discussions enabled the acceptance of traumatic events of the recent past, however accepting responsibility and guilt of the nation for human tragedies was not publicly formalised. The national history underestimated the significance of the collective memory of the war, which was perceived as traumatic, creating an additional situation of trauma and the opportunity for manipulating the memory of the Great Patriotic War.

Consequently, the national history was unable to become the shared collective memory of the nation without recognising the right of the "Soviet" interpretation of the traumatic memory ща the war as an important fact in the life of the Belarusian nation.

The official history policy that surfaced as a result of the memory policy paradigm shift from the national to the official openly criticised national ideas and included memory of the war in the context of Belarusian history as an important part of the heritage of the Belarusian nation.

As a result of the memory policy paradigm shift, the national history policy was harshly criticised and took on negative political connotations, which resulted in having to transform the history policy. It was already impossible to return to the Soviet history because, even with resistance, the national history was accepted as an important part of past memory and related to political events of the present. Influence of foreign policy and pressure from Russia in the area of

history cooperation resulted in moderating statements and in a policy of understating important events of the 20th century while requiring preservation of the national sovereignty of the Belarusian state. In this context, the creation of memorable events of the nation's past was essential. The memory of the Great Patriotic War was an important, collectively shared, traumatic memorable event of the nation. The situation contributed to commemoration of the war: 1994-1995 were the years of celebrating the 50th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from Nazi German occupants and the victory in the Great Patriotic War (i.e., the period closely related to the recent past of the nation). During the period, the memory of the Soviet victory in the war was shared by a majority of Belarusians. The memory of the war connected the past to the nation's present, resulting in patriotic feelings, devotion to one's native country, and respect for war veterans and contributed to sharing individual and collective feelings.

Consequently, the official memory policy could not have alternative versions of interpreting the historical events.

The national history "lost" to public criticism because the obfuscation and tabooing strategies in the education system were traditional processes and were shared by the collective memory of the nation. The process of traumatising the collective memory requires public acceptance of the nation's guilt for the above strategies. This enables the sharing of responsibility and including the traumatic past as the nation's component alternatives. The national memory policy that began as a "revival" of the national history and the Belarusian language, culture, traditions and was implemented via the education system could not change only the nation – it required changes from the stakeholders of the public administration who were in no hurry to reorganise the system to consider areas of tension areas that appeared at that time. Implementation of the memory policy via the education system in the transitional period of 1991-2001 demonstrated the memory asymmetry of the executive personnel of the administrative system of control and of the Belarusian people. The executive personnel use the official memory policy as the leading policy of submission and create their own variant of the special communicative memory of the authorities not shared by most of the nation.

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REPRODUCTION OF SPACES OF LEGITIMATE VIOLENCE IN THE RUSSIAN MEDIA DISCOURSE ON FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS UKRAINE (2014-2017)

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SUMMARY

The aim of the article is to uncover the particulars of instruments for legitimizing violence in certain regions within the framework of a media discourse on Russian foreign policy towards Ukraine in 2014-2017. As a result of the analysis of data from the Russian media news discourse using tools of critical discourse analysis, it was shown that strategies for legitimizing violence in Ukraine, due to its inclusion in the national narrative of Russia, can apply rational or affective legitimacy principles as a basis, depending on the context (local or international). Russian foreign policy and discourse around it are opposed to the (neo)liberal attitudes of the Western Other, which lies at the center of the Russian national narrative and the narrative of statehood through the concept of 'sovereign democracy'. This allows the two different legitimizing strategies to be applied to Ukrainian territories and spaces of violence within them.

KEY WORDS:

spaces of violence, media, Russia, Ukraine.

Over the last few decades, with the advancements of the constructivist understanding of space (Springer, Le Billon 2016: 1-3) academic interest in the connections between space and violence in the social sciences has grown. This research, inspired by the works of Janosh Prinz and Conrad Schetter (2017), Derek Gregory and Alan Pred (2006), focuses on the question of constructing spaces of violence by using discursive instruments. The aim of this work is to identify instruments for legitimizing violence through the analysis of media discourses on Russian foreign policy towards Ukraine in 2014-2017.

STATEHOOD AND NATIONAL IDENTITY NARRATIVES: PRODUCING SPACES, BORDERS AND VIOLENCE

While Lefebvre (2015) writes about the spaces of representation and Harvey (2011) notes the particulars of relational space studies,

both authors point out the sharply increased popularity of studies of space and its undoubtedly important and underestimated cognitive function. The spaces and their representations are embedded in the imaginaries – they originate from mental and cultural structures. In the forming of the 'territories of states' there is the social practice (bureaucracy on the borders, taxation, roads, police jurisdictions, etc.), created by the state to maintain its territoriality. At the same time, local practices of social interactions and exchanges, experience, and mobility characterize these, supplemented by narratives and images that discursively reproduce the territory no matter where and why they are created. In this article I will take a look at global social changes and the reasons why spaces produced by narratives about the state and nation are especially flexible.

The understanding of a state's territoriality has its origin around the time of the Treaty of Westphalia – largely considered a concentration of the right of legitimate violence (Бурдьё, 2007: 226) of the sovereign state on its territories and the necessary national component of statehood and sovereignty (Murphy, 1996: 92). It has subsequently been reaffirmed by the Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations. The end of the 20th century was a turning point for international relations paradigms, especially for the theoretical interpretation of space, territory, and sovereignty. Significant changes in the customary world order have taken place with a concomitant rise in the influence of the neoliberal understanding of power with a monopoly on violence and territory. Under the principles of a free market, electoral democracy and human rights as universal values, states have turned into 'strong free market states' with a strong military apparatus (Bonefeld, 2010: 15-24). In this context, the rigidity of borders defined by the monopoly on violence as an aspect of statehood has been weakening.

Globalization, as shown in various studies on nationalism, has a dual effect on cultural life and identity: the stronger the impact of globalization on cultural and social diffusion, the greater is the chance of the emergence of aspirations for self-determination at the local level. John Urry (2000) considers the morphology of flows and social networks as a power structure that changes social life and makes the border and territory extremely unstable. This also means that the sovereign nation-state can no longer handle the challenges posed by global problems and tendencies. Western ideas about statehood, positivist international law and 'public' definitions of power are unable to capture the growing importance of non-state actors in politics and economy, informal regulatory structures, and private economic power.

Held and McGrew (2003) emphasize that this problem is a threat for the sovereignty of the state, the borders of which are now permeable. It is this context of the 'weakening' of the vision of national state borders with monopolies of violence on their own territory that enables the coexistence of various strategies for legitimizing violence in conjunction with space, even if these strategies are controversial.

The post-neoclassical approach considers the processes of national identity construction and its reproduction as a narrative or a performance by collective actors about themselves and the Other (Bhabha, 1993: online). National identity or the assertion of 'who we are' and 'what we want' is expressed through stories, allegories, metaphors. Therefore, for the study of national identity, the most valuable entities are cultural texts (art, literature, architecture, media, etc.), as well as those communicative spaces where these texts are reproduced. Since collective identity is forged from various social performances and narratives, it is and must be a fluid, adaptive phenomenon that easily produces new contextualization. The answers to the questions 'who are we?' and 'what do we want?' are reformulated depending on external calls. As Ankersmit notes in the 'Narrative Logic' (2003), a narrative representation of the identity of a nation is associated with language properties and instruments, which does not provide an opportunity for a discrete description of unique attributes and markers of subjects. Identity can only be represented in the form of a narrative. Gellner talks about the design and reproduction of national identity as a relatively autonomous process in relation to individual history. He explains the stratification of national identity by the purposes and intentions that are pursued by descriptions and representations: describing local ontologies and experiences on the one hand, and politically directed, national political narratives designed by political elites on the other (Gellner, 2008: 152).

Ansi Paasi (1998) and other modern political geographers combine the above-mentioned trends in the understanding of the space and territoriality of the state to form, a narrative of 'us' and 'others.' The building of the values of communities and their boundaries occurs through stories that provide people with common experience, history and memories, and thereby connect these people together through vital narratives related to the institutions of the nation, state and territory. They are usually related to ontological narratives – stories that actors use to understand their lives as members of communities and to determine who we are. Moreover, the author points out that it is not only narratives on the nation that construct representations about boundaries and territoriality, but that spatial imagination helps

to reproduce identity: 'Boundaries between 'us' and 'others' are critical elements in establishing 'us' and excluding 'others'.' (Paasi, 1998: online). The growing flexibility then of identity building narratives about state and nation result in the increasing destabilization of spaces and borders.

CONNECTING TERRITORY AND LEGITIMATE VIOLENCE THROUGH THE DEFINITION OF 'UNGOVERNED TERRITORIES', THE 'RUSSIAN WORLD' AND 'SOVEREIGN DEMOCRACY'

The combination of sovereignty with territoriality and a monopoly on violence and national narratives still appears as a dominant principle of the world political order, despite modern global challenges. How is this relationship being used and changed in cases when the territorial integrity of a state is violated by a military invasion? I try to find the answer to this question by looking to theories of the spaces of violence and discursive legitimization of armed interventions with a focus on the Russian military presence in Ukraine.

Prinz, Schetter (2017) reveal the violent logics behind the concepts of 'fragile' and 'failed' states that lay the groundwork for legitimizing violence on the 'ungoverned territories' of the Middle East. This term is derived from a contradictory split in the concept of sovereignty. On the one hand, the idea of sovereignty is necessary to maintain the established world order of national states and their territoriality, whereas a monopoly on violence of a state on its own territory depends on recognition of the fact of sovereignty and autonomy by international actors. 'Ungoverned territories' within the American national narrative and rhetoric of 'the war on terrorism' are used to incite panic and create anxiety among people before 'the territories of the Other'.

Russian foreign policy has mirrored this term on the basis of growing confrontation with Western political actors in 2004-2008, especially with the expanding of the NATO block to the Baltic States and the wave of 'color revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. A new concept of non-interference in internal affairs called 'sovereign democracy' was articulated. The meaning of this concept is that any state in its internal affairs has the right to its own special understanding of democratic development, governance and attitude to civil society in their country (Krastev, 2006: online), in direct contrast to a 'fragile' state that does not correspond to 'universal' democratic principles. This concept was used for articulating the injustice of interference by the West in the internal political crises of other states. The core of this concept is the notion of Western democracies as 'weak states' – overly

liberalized and, therefore, incapable of making independent decisions. Further I will show how this mirrored 'fragile' state has helped Russian foreign policy discourse to explain and legitimize violence in Ukraine.

Another important part of this legitimation is a term related not to a narrative about the state, but to the national narrative of Russia – the notion of the 'Russian world'. It is a part of a long-term and large-scale project to build a national identity of Russia that rose to prominence with the aggravation of the situation in Ukraine in 2013-2014. Hutchings and Szostek (2015) note that the national narrative is especially important for Russia as a country with an imperialist past that in the modern world has to give up and search for its national borders anew. The concept of the 'Russian world'[1] confirms this statement, connecting Russian-speaking people scattered around the world and making the territorial building of national identity more flexible and easily transformable according to changing circumstances. This nostalgia for imperial power is also reflected in the geopolitical representation of Russia as a regional and global geopolitical 'magnet', self-considered a responsible world power in international decision-making and especially of neighboring countries (Frear, Mazepus, 2017: 1-37). 'Compatriots', 'Russian speakers', and 'ethnic Russians' settled in various countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union, are integral parts of the 'Russian world' and need the 'protection' of the Russian state. This may be under Russian legal protection, like in case of the massive 'passportization' in post-Soviet countries (granting Russian citizenship), or under military protection, as in the annexation of Crimea. Dmitrova and others (2017) also note a second 'layer' of the 'Russian world' narrative 'based on an intellectual tradition that views Russia as a distinct and self-sufficient civilization, embedded in a geopolitical order of traditional values, myths, spiritual demands and cultural habits'. (Dmitrova and others, 2017: 13). In this context, the rights of the Russian authorities to intervene are consolidated and legitimized in the affairs of countries where 'compatriots' live, because it is assumed that a Russian person in any case will retain his 'Russianness', wherever s/he is.

The common part of different modalities of the discourse on Russia's national identity is the opposition to the global 'enemy' in the face of the West. Hutchings and Szostek singled out several functions

1 - 'Russkiy mir'.

2 - Presently, RIA Novosti is owned by Russia Today. The second source, VESTI.ru, is a news branch from the largest federal media network, the Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company. Both sources are widely quoted.

that this discursive opposition has. First, it simultaneously legitimizes any actions of Russia in the eyes of the public and devalues criticism from the West. Second, it supports the logic where Russia is a 'great force' to be reckoned with. And finally, this narrative about the 'enemy' is expressed and accepted by the public and by the ruling elite, thereby influencing the reproducing of state policy in this regime (Hitchings, Szostek, 2015: online).

RUSSIAN MEDIA DISCOURSE AROUND FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS UKRAINE

My research focuses on the ideological content of the Russia's foreign policy discourse as well as on the strategies and dynamics of legitimizing violence in certain territories. During my empirical research I have sampled the 40 most popular (from 50 to 500 thousand views per site) and discussed (up to 200 comments in the most popular Russian social network 'VKontakte') news articles about events in the south-east of Ukraine from the community 'RIA Novosti' (vk.com/ria, 2.3 million subscribers) and 40 articles from the community 'VESTI.ru | RUSSIA 24 '(vk.com/vesti, almost 300 thousand subscribers), thematically related to the incidents in the south-east of Ukraine for 2014 and for 2017[2]. Analyzing all the data I follow the key principles established by the methodology of critical discourse analysis.

The majority of the articles selected that focused on legitimizing violence describe clashes during protests and rallies as well as hostilities and victims. A smaller proportion of materials describes political decisions and political actors' responses to armed violence. The RIA completed each Ukrainian story with a special 'coda' irrespective of its purpose or traditional genre of news story, In the first half of 2014, it was important to point out the illegality of the coup and the inhumanity of its organizers, which threatened the lives of the 'head of state' and caused death during the protests. I note that only in the context of events before and during the 'coup' of the end of 2013, the police and other units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine are called 'law enforcement agencies'. In the situation after the 'coup', such wording disappears completely and is replaced by 'siloviki'[3] and 'SBU'[4] (without writing in full, mentioning 'security' as part of this term). In the superstructures of riot/disaster news, the wording 'law enforcement' or 'security services', along with their proactive actions, play a special role. It guarantees calm and control over the

3 - Could be roughly translated as 'strongmen'. In this context, used to refer to people from the security or military services employing force on behalf of the government. (MK).

4 - 'Security Service of Ukraine'..

situation in a lawful manner. This 'soothing' fragment of the structure of the genre of reports about illegal and dangerous events is deliberately lifted by the Russian media out of news of riots and military clashes in Ukraine. This implies a powerlessness of official authorities that has developed after the events of Euromaidan in the eyes of readers and thereby contributes to a sense of anxiety, danger, and disorder associated with the entire territory of Ukraine controlled by the new government.

In subsequent messages, Russia is introduced as an actor in events. It condemns violence and helps in negotiations. A cultural element appears – the Russian language – in conjunction with a pro-Russian attitude. If in the first half of the year protesters were called supporters of federalization (language of narratives about statehood) and the territory of the protests were designated quite accurately, the argument changed in the second half of the year. Now the key factor is not the form of state apparatus, but Russian language. The narrative about the Russian nation is included, while territories are designated wider than before while specific cities and flashpoints are omitted.

The difference in the particulars of the designation of a place in news texts is noticeable. In both news sources, there was a difference between speaking of violence between the opposing sides – 'siloviki' and 'opolchentsy'[5] – regarding territoriality. Maps with designations of places of hostilities or clashes are very rare. Therefore, even minor details of verbal formulations concerning the place of action become significant. In the articles about the losses of the 'opolchentsy' caused by Ukrainian forces, places are described in a particular way so that the reader can imagine positions relative to stable landmarks. The articles specifically name the three key cities of Donetsk, Kharkov and Lugansk, which are repeated from message to message and fixed in spatial imagination. They also specify districts in the cities, directions, and distances. The opposite tendency was found in articles about the successes of the 'opolchentsy' and the victims of the 'siloviki'. In the context of violence that the Russian media are attempting to legitimize there is no specificity or help for the reader's spatial imagination. The wording either simply points to the south-east of Ukraine, or adds to this the names of small settlements without designating their location with tools mentioned above. The Russian media discourse of violence is the blurring of borders. These spaces are intentionally created simply by 'belonging to Ukraine' without any specific binding. This is in tune

5 - 'the people's militia' (translation MK)

6 - Here and further, DPR – Donetsk People's Republic, LPR – Luhansk People's Republic.

with constructing the instability of the entire Ukrainian territory and the powerlessness of internal forces in the fight against chaos.

Some elements of discourse about the nation and territory should be scrutinized in this media discourse. Only the 'siloviki' are called Ukrainian: the forces of 'self-defense' ('opolchentsy') of the DPR and the LPR[6] are deliberately excluded from the 'Ukrainianness'. They are attributed to the previously mentioned 'pro-Russian sentiment', but only in articles appearing in 2014. In addition to 'siloviki' and 'Security Service of Ukraine', on the side of illegitimate violence are also such designations as 'Ukrainian military', 'Right Sector fighters', as well as clearly negative 'armed radicals', 'armed extremists', and 'violent thugs'. The actions of these actors also have obvious negative connotations. In the texts analyzed they threaten (sovereignty, people's lives), use firearms, military equipment or Molotov cocktails, open fire, kidnap people, stand behind attacks, destroy objects, and violate agreements. All these actions are pro-active violence. If these subjects declare something, this fact is followed either by writing a refutation or by insinuating that the statement is untrue (through the use of the words 'supposedly' or 'despite (some facts / circumstances)'). In cooperation with entities associated with the West (representatives of the United States, the EU), Ukrainians never behave as active subjects – representatives meet with them, share intelligence, and send assistance.

On the other side of the conflict are 'supporters of federalization', 'fighters of self-defense', 'activists', and 'protesters'. It should be noted that in the context of Euromaidan, the words 'activist' and 'self-defense' are quoted in the media analyzed as a sign of mistrust of the veracity and accuracy of these designations relative to 'riotous radicals'. In regards to subjects on the side of legitimate violence, these quotes are not used. None of the 'siloviki' and 'radical' actions listed earlier are repeated by the 'opolchentsy' subject. Even if there are casualties on the side of the Ukrainian forces, there is no indication of direct proactive actions to kill or liquidate. 'Opolchentsy' are surrounded, ambushed or under fire; they manage to get a tank, take control of a building, occupy the building, enter the building – but not capture. They 'distinguished themselves', managed to change position, displayed talents, defended people and cities, fought off, and returned checkpoints. There are clear connotations of joy for the success of this side of the conflict. References to Russian language and the 'Russian world' are present only in those texts in which there are no Western actors. And in the absence of mentioning Western actors (in a local context), the 'Russian-speaking' cultural narrative begins to take

on a spatial character ('Russian-speaking space'). However, as soon as international actors appear in the message (European Union, United States, United Nations, NATO, etc.), the discourse switches from the national to the state level. The articles are immediately talking about legitimacy, legality, government bodies and international agreements, measures that Russia is ready to go for or clearly denounce and repeating the line of denial of any military presence and military support from Russia in the south-eastern territories of Ukraine.

This shift to the narrative about statehood also shows the difference in tools for legitimizing violence in the United States, as discussed earlier in this article ('ungoverned territory'). According to 'sovereign democracy' principles, Western states (and hence Ukraine, which succumbed to their influence after Euromaidan) are 'weak' because of excessive liberalization, leading to disorder. Russia legitimizes the actions of the 'opolchentsy', recognizing the bodies of the LPR and the DPR as capable of exercising a monopoly on violence on their territories. Although it does not produce official recognition, the messages clearly show a constant reference to the illegitimacy of Ukrainian authorities and the absurdity of their actions and statements, while the actions of representatives of the authorities of the LPR and the DPR are described in a more neutral manner. Their participation in the Minsk negotiations as independent actors is not under any doubt. Russian foreign policy and discourse opposes the (neo)liberal attitudes of the Western Other, which lies at the center of the Russian national narrative and the narrative of statehood through the concept of sovereign democracy. However, this does not prevent the Russian discourse on legitimate violence and the justification of military actions from adopting the logic of rational legitimacy and pragmatic political militarized decisions regarding foreign territories in the context of the division of zones of influence with Western countries. This logic works both in relation to the military presence in Syria or Afghanistan, not included in the Russian national narrative, and relative to Ukraine, which is included in the national narrative. But when international political actors are absent in a statement another strategy of justifying violence may emerge. Affective legitimacy takes the place of rational legitimacy: rigid denial of the Russian military presence in south-eastern Ukraine fades into the background and the Russians are said to defend their 'brother' nation contrary to their own interests out of fraternal love. In this context rationality is endowed with a negative meaning and is associated with greed and pragmatics.

Finally, it has been revealed that not only (inter)national and (inter)state components, but also the connection with the concepts

of 'us' and 'Other', play a role in the particulars of creating spaces of violence. Territories where (illegitimate) violence against 'us' and territories where 'we' exercise (legitimate) violence against the Other differ in their descriptions as if they were descriptions of 'our' territories and distant territories that are drawn as 'black spots' of national identity. Places of illegitimate violence are described in detail in the materials analyzed, almost as if the territory belongs to the national 'we' and, therefore, falls under the monopoly on legitimate violence. On the other hand, the language of statements about victims on the side of the 'Other' is vague and blurry regarding territories, making the legitimate violence happen on the territory of the 'Other' or the 'black spot'. Even though those are the very same territories, they can be spoken about very differently depending on which parties are mentioned (only local actors or the global ones), or which side of the conflict has gotten the upper hand in a particular piece of media. This is showing how flexible and contradictory the narratives about territory and borders, violence, and legitimacy can be today.

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SYSTEM OF MANDATORY JOB PLACEMENT AS A REGULATION TOOL OF THE LABOUR MARKET FOR RECENT GRADUATES IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

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SUMMARY

The article examines the issue of efficiency of the system of mandatory job placement as a regulation tool of the labour market for recent graduates in the Republic of Belarus. Within the study, the opinions of the graduates of a Belarusian higher education institution (HEI) were analysed and expert opinions on the tool were also studied. The purpose of the article is to explore the practice of applying the placement tool in Belarus.

According to university graduates and experts, the results of the study demonstrated that the institution of job placement is inefficient because, contrary to the goals set, it does not provide recent graduates with jobs and decent salaries. As a result of general dissatisfaction with job placement, recent graduates take care of their employment independently, are placed not according to their professions, and work the time designated at institutions that do not correspond to the level of their training and specialisation. Recent graduates also change their job placements or reject them outright. Conversely, according to assessments reviewed, professional qualifications of graduates of Belarusian HEIs frequently do not correspond to labour market demand. Salaries of recent graduates are characterised as low, forcing them to look for additional sources of income. A recommendation in the public policy of regulating the employment market for recent graduates in Belarus is to review the mandatory job placement and to

replace it with other tools and practices.

KEYWORDS:

Belarus, recent graduate, labour market, mandatory job placement, efficiency

INTRODUCTION

Numerous methods of regulating the labour market of recent graduates exist but Belarus has preserved the mandatory job placement system for graduates of educational institutions whose higher education costs are covered through the state budget. According to national laws, "job placement is the procedure for determining a graduate's place of employment, which is carried out by a state education institution or by a governmental agency in situations determined by the Government of the Republic of Belarus to ensure social protection of graduates, satisfy the needs of economic and social sectors for professionals, workers, and office employees" (Education Code of the Republic of Belarus, 2011). The job placement system has been at the centre of academic, expert, and civic discussions for a long time. Since job placement is mandatory, some experts consider it to be forced employment (Лаўрухін, 2016). Belarus' accession to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2015 provided a stimulus for additional discussions of the tool. As is well known, the country's acceptance to the EHEA was conditional and stipulated reforms of the higher education system according to Bologna system principles (Грамадскі Балонскі камітэт, 2015 г.), which theoretically were to result in changes to job placement laws as well, as they did not correspond to EHEA requirements. The system, however, continues to function up to today. The controversy surrounding the job placement issue and its assessments and its importance to young people in Belarus makes a study of the tool especially important.

The study focused solely on the main target group of the job placement system – HEI graduates. The subject matter of the study covered recent graduates' thoughts and expert opinions concerning mandatory job placement. Due to limited resources, a case study method was employed, applying it to the thoughts of graduates of one Belarusian HEI (2015 graduates of the Mahilioŭ branch of the Belarusian State Academy of Music). Various aspects of the job placement system were examined:

1) The number of workplaces for recent graduates;

2) Correlation of professional qualification awarded with labour market needs;

3) Correlation of graduates' salaries, expectations, and level of training;

4) General satisfaction with the job placement institution.

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE JOB PLACEMENT SYSTEM IN BELARUS

The establishing and functioning of the mandatory job placement system in Belarus is conditioned by the historical context and practices under the U.S.S.R. The job placement system was used as a tool to regulate the youth labour market in the U.S.S.R. and was a mandatory tool initially (Панчыщын, Сахарская, 2014). Upon the demise of the U.S.S.R., the factor which contributed to the continuation of the job placement system as an institution in Belarus was the use of the labour market regulation model with a focus on quality as an indicator of employment. Initially, the job placement system was voluntary and graduates' and their parents' wishes in selecting the region of employment were taken into consideration. Gradually, however, the system became mandatory.

The target group of the mandatory job placement system includes graduates of vocational, secondary, specialised secondary, and higher education institutions who study at a reduced cost and/or receive stipends from the government. Stakeholders include government agencies, employers, civic organisations (including educational, youth, expert, and others), international organisations, and representatives of the target group and their parents directly. The laws of the Republic of Belarus heavily regulate the job placement procedure (Education Code of the Republic of Belarus, 13/01/2011; Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 821, 22/06/2011). In line with Belarusian public policy, the job placement procedure is a closed process regulated by the government which essentially cannot be influenced by other stakeholders, including representatives of civil society.

METHODOLOGY

The implementation of the mandatory job placement system in Belarus was examined through the lens of thoughts and understandings of recent graduates as well as experts in the system of higher education system. The main research methods included a survey and interviews. The survey was carried out in the form of a formal group questionnaire of graduates of the pedagogy faculty of the Mahilioŭ branch of the Academy of Music who graduated in 2015. The electronic survey was sent to the participants via social media (VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Facebook) in the period of 15/12/2016

to 05/01/2017. This polling method was selected because social media enable contacting respondents who were employed under job placement at various places most quickly and economically. The total number of respondents was 21 (twenty-one) persons. When the survey began, several respondents were unavailable, while others declined participation. Lack of graduates' interest in the survey topic as well as low socio-political activism of the group could be among the possible reasons for refusal to participate. Consequently, the total number of the respondents was 11 (eleven) persons ages 24 to 28 years and included 7 (seven) women and 4 (four) men. Of the 11 (eleven) respondents, 7 (seven) are married and 2 (two) have children.

During the study of expert opinions of the job placement tool, a semi-structured expert interview was used. 4 (four) interviews in total were conducted. They were held from 22/12/2016 to 03/01/2017 in person or by Skype and lasted 30 to 75 minutes. During the interviews, experts were focused on detailed discussions of issues surrounding mandatory job placement, which allowed them to gain much data for analysis.

SUFFICIENCY OF WORK PLACES FOR RECENT GRADUATES

The indicator of the number of work places for recent graduates was considered among the indicators of the assessment of the efficiency of the job placement tool. Assessments of the possibility of the government institutions to provide the first work place to recent graduates were noted as well.

In the opinion of experts surveyed, recent graduates are inadequately placed in Belarus. Since the best students largely study free of charge at universities, they are later provided with job placements at the most essential places that do not guarantee good placements for mandatory work. As a result, well-trained recent graduates can work at places where not all of the competences they have developed are necessary. One of the respondents described the situation as follows: "Personnel are inadequately provided with job placements. Examining the situation at hand, initially, the best students are theoretically enrolled at universities during selection… – they are enrolled at discounts provided by the government… As such, they are placed in positions that are not filled in considering labour market needs, i.e. the least prestigious places with no future prospects… All in all, a straight-A student with the best marks, with presidential grants has to go to the countryside where his/her potential will not be required for two years at the very beginning of his/her career."

Among the reasons for the situation lack of coordination between the

labour market and education services market was noted. "Coordination" is considered to be connection of the education market to the labour market where employers create demand for certain professional standards and competences on which education institutions should focus while preparing education standards. One statement on the issue was as follows: "The higher education system focuses on so-called education standards. These are prepared by the HEI itself and by the Ministry of Education. The labour market is the last thing of interest to anyone. Professional standards, in their turn, are the reference provided by the employer... The most important thing is that the government requires ensuring an employer's demand for certain competences. If this does not happen, no administrative measures are able to change the situation."

Consequently, experts believe that the administrations of Belarusian HEIs pressure graduates and manipulate statistics to produce positive outcomes on job placement: "In our country, everything is based on figures, on statistics. It works well in the education system. Many years' worth of reports on job placement statistics exist. HEIs tend to submit positive data". In particular, support by education institutions of mandatory work outside of one's profession was mentioned as an example of manipulated date: "It is a widespread practice today – job placement not according to one's profession. It is a violation of the law. The most interesting thing is that only recent graduates would be held liable for a violation... Our laws provide for no liability on the part of education institutions. HEIs recommend you receive employment anywhere to provide statistics".

Survey participants assessed negatively the job placement tool as a means of providing recent graduates with the first work place. Specifically, a majority of recent graduates (81.8%) answered in affirmatively to the following question: "Did you look for a job placement independently?" The following quote from the survey can be seen as indicative of opinions on the issue: "When we were provided job placements, the director of our branch said, 'Look for work places on your own.' ..."We looked for work places ourselves ..."

The survey data also enables one to see assessments of how difficult it was for graduates to find a placement for their mandatory job (please refer to fig. 1). in responding to the question "When you were looking for a job placement was it complicated for you to find a placement?" more than half (60%) of respondents answered in the negative, however the remaining 40% cited difficulties with finding their first work placements. This distribution of answers may be directly

related to the musical profession (music teacher/playing musical instruments) and the professional field of those surveyed, however it can also be an indicator of more general trends of difficulties with finding a first work placement for recent graduates.

Fig.1. Distribution of answers to the question "When you were looking for a job placement was it complicated for you to find a placement?"
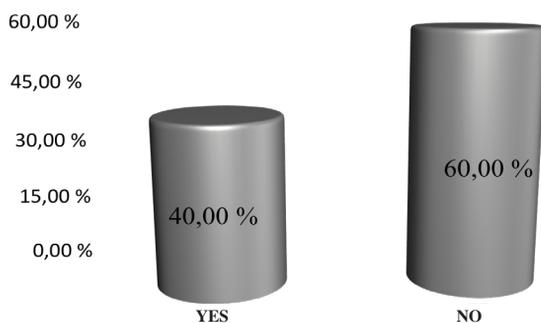
In conclusion, it is possible to say that the Belarusian government is not always able to satisfy its obligations in relation to recent graduates; in particular, to provide a first place of employment to graduates of state education institutions due to a lack of work places. Consequently, understanding that the job placement system is unable to provide a first job upon graduation, education institutions propose that graduates look for employment themselves despite the current regulatory requirements.

CORRESPONDENCE OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION RECEIVED TO LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

According to expert opinions, job placement not fitting to the qualification obtained is actively employed in today's Belarus. Graduates are "advised" to find employment anywhere and carry out mandatory work outside of their field of study or expertise. The situation is reflected in the comment of one expert: "You find employment in one field but can work in another one. Later, it is discovered that you work not in your professional field. According to the law, the recent graduate is held liable... S/he should refund the money if s/he has worked in a field that is different from her education. The HEI and the employer have no financial liability."

In addition, according to experts the quality of education and

student' competences have deteriorated because Belarus has had an artificial system of meeting demand for higher education for a long time. One respondent stressed that the ability of the labour market to absorb all graduates is not only a quantitative but also a qualitative issue because only an insignificant percentage of recent graduates have the competences required by Belarusian employers: "According to an assessment by HR agencies, correspondence of the employers' expectations to the competences received by graduates is around 8%... It is possible to have more or fewer graduates, depending on whether the market can absorb such competences. They [graduates] are mostly incompetent. In the situation of lack of work places, employers will not employ them. They do not need them."

At the same time, the results of the questionnaire demonstrated that 9.1% of recent graduates believe that their work place does not correspond to the professional qualification they received. 36.4% of respondents indicated that their job placement did not fully correspond to their professional qualification. It also showed that in the opinion of recent graduates, job placement is carried out not according to degrees or qualifications received (45.5% of respondents in total tended to think so), which, in turn, shows a violation of the law which prohibits such job placement. In addition, almost half of those surveyed (45.5%) believed that they worked in an institution or organisation that did not correspond to their level of training.

Considering the education obtained and the needs of today's market, both experts and graduates spoke about the mismatch. From a practical point of view, it means that students receive an education that is not needed in the labour market and, as a result, they have to "pay back through work" in another field. Consequently, it is possible speak about the functional deformation of the job placement tool, which is manifested through its failure to perform the following primary functions: 1) employment in the professional field; and 2) employment at an organisation corresponding to the level of employee training.

CORRESPONDENCE OF SALARIES TO TRAINING LEVEL OF RECENT GRADUATES

In responding to questions about correspondence of salaries to the training level of recent graduates, experts noted the low salaries of graduates and explained that from the point of view of the government recent graduates were perceived as a cheap workforce. For example, one expert noted the following: "What actually happens to recent graduates and their salaries? We have a recent graduate whom you may employ for two years. S/he is under your thumb. Legally, you

may pay him/her as much as you wish. Of course, the minimum salary at least. Would you look to pay him/her more?"

Concerning the case analysed, 72.7% of respondents surveyed stated that, in their opinion, the salary paid did not correspond to their knowledge and professional skills. In addition, the same number of respondents (72.7%) confirmed that they had secondary employment – an indicator of insufficient payment for work, compelling respondents to find money for themselves and for their families. The fact of secondary employment combined with low salaries of recent graduates highlighted a lack of guarantees and possibilities to have desirable salaries through mandatory job placement.

## SATISFACTION WITH JOB PLACEMENT INSTITUTION

Some of the experts surveyed characterised the state of affairs concerning job placement as presenting a lack of choice and pointed at the compulsory nature of the tool. The following statement is indicative: "The meanness of the situation is that they say to you: to get rid of forced labour, you have to buy yourself out of slavery. Forced labour remains forced labour but when you agree to it, you have no choice left." However, one of expert did not agree, indicating that job placement has no element of compulsoriness because one only must pay to be free of it. The expert considers the possibility to reject job placement as the key point: "I believe that the statement of forced labour is an exaggeration. The element of compulsoriness is missing: pay and you are free to go. The key point is the possibility to reject job placement. It is not slavery."

According to expert opinion, the job placement tool generally demotivates young people not only during mandatory work but also during later stages of their work lives. The following should be considered demotivating factors in the opinion of those surveyed: low salaries, poor work and life conditions, the impossibility of terminating mandatory work placements, employer pressure, lack of desire to work in the field of training, and the impossibility of changing one's professional field without mandatory work. Speaking about job placement, one of the respondents indicated that it "demotivates a recent graduate because, on the one hand, s/he understands that s/he is unable to find normal work in the labour market normally. For instance, we speak about a scholarship student who will have to go there where s/he is sent, to some village. On the other hand, when s/he arrives at the village s/he understands perfectly well that s/he is there because of job placement, s/he has the guarantees of the recent graduate who may not be dismissed with no certain extraordinary

actions on his/her behalf. At the same time, s/he understands perfectly well that the work place is not prestigious and the employer will not find a replacement for him/her, s/he has no motivation to work there." At the same time, all experts noted the existence of adequate alternative options in job placement systems abroad, for example the assigning of work place quotas, stimulation of business enterprise among youth, special funds for education financing, cooperation with foreign funds, etc.

Opinions among recent graduates concerning the question "Are you satisfied with your work placement you obtained under job placement?" were divided almost equally: 54.6% were rather satisfied with their job placement while 45.5% were rather dissatisfied. Reasons for dissatisfaction include job placement not corresponding to qualifications, job placement in an institution that does not correspond to the level of training, and low salaries.

Fig. 2. Distribution of answers to the question "Are you satisfied with your work placement you obtained under job placement?"

Rather dissatisfied   Rather satisfied

46 %

55 %
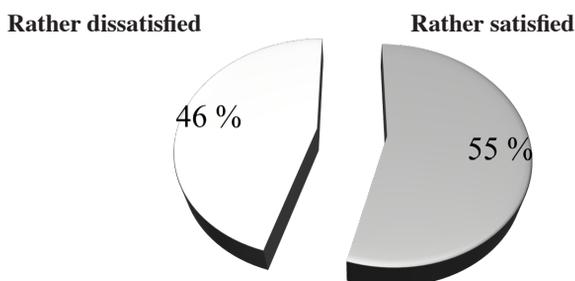
In addition, the majority of those surveyed in the case study (72.7%) indicated that, if they had an opportunity, they would most likely reject their job placement and would change their work places later on.

In general, a negative assessment of the institution of job placement and dissatisfaction with it is demonstrated by graduates' intent (when possible) to reject job placements and change their work placements. Dissatisfaction results from a lack of choice, low salaries, job placement not matched to qualification and/or at an institution not corresponding to the level of training, poor work and life conditions, employer pressure, etc.

CONCLUSION

From a theoretical point of view and from the point of view of law, the job placement tool in Belarus seems to be independent and functioning, however its operation demonstrates a number of downsides. In general, it is possible to state that the mandatory job placement system in Belarus is an inefficient tool of regulating the labour market. This is evidenced by such indicators as an insufficient number of jobs for recent graduates, lack of correspondence of professional qualification to labour market needs, lack of correspondence of salaries of recent graduates to the level of training, and general dissatisfaction of graduates with the institution of job placement. For instance, lack of work places is a simple result of lack of coordination between the labour market and education market, in particular the absence of a system of professional standards and competences which should be prepared by employers and on which basis educational standards should be further prepared for recent prospective graduates. In addition, due to lack of coordination, personnel is distributed inefficiently when the best recent graduates are assigned non-prestigious work places. As a result of a lack of coordination and lack of work places, the main task of the tool – "mandatory employment of graduates" – is not accomplished, resulting in graduates having to look for work placements on their own. At the same time, due to lack of demand for professional qualifications obtained in the labour market, the job placement tool is unable to perform its main functions: employment in a professional field and at an institution corresponding to the level of training. In this situation, while violating the law, education institutions help recent graduates to find employment not in their professional field. The reason for the situation is that education institutions intend to ensure wide-scale mandatory employment to later reflect positive statistics. Conversely, the job placement tool cannot guarantee an intended salary because recent graduates' salaries are low.

In conclusion, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that, in general, recent graduates are dissatisfied with the institution of job placement. The main reason for dissatisfaction is the compulsory nature of job placement that, as a result, restricts free choice and the possibility to change work placements in the event of emergence of any negative factors that do not satisfy recent graduates. However, the availability of alternative programmes of the mandatory job placement tool points to the prospect of addressing the problem of employment using other more efficient methods if the Belarusian government changes its regulation priorities in the field.

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ANALYSIS OF THE FUNCTIONING OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS: CASE OF POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS IN 2006-2016

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SUMMARY

The Belarusian political system evolved as a result of a continuous party-building process which began in the early 20th century and was renewed upon termination of the one-party communist state under the Soviet Union (CPSU). In 1990, 25 parties were registered in Belarus. Over the next several years, the party system experienced stormy developments – new parties emerged, some parties disappeared, and a number of parties experienced internal splits. Several years later, following the establishment of Alexander Lukashenka's personalist dictatorship, parties preserved their legal status but began to lose their political influence. The subject of this analysis is the party system of Belarus, including party ideology and activities of political parties in 2006-2016. The main objective is to analyse the party system of 2006-2016 and to identify its features. Main tasks include describing theories concerning the functioning of political parties in democratic and nondemocratic systems; analysing and classifying political entities; and identifying their specific role. Applying such methods as qualitative discourse analysis, analysis of secondary data, and semi-structured interviews, the author concludes that external and internal conditions of the functioning of political parties negatively influences the emergence of new parties and contributes to the weakening of existing parties. The particular nature of the political field determines the emergence of new forms of activities – "party-like entities" which, while lacking the formal status of parties, carry out the functions identical to political parties. The similarity of the political entities' programmes does not allow for an analysis of the Belarusian party system only from the point of view of programme ideologies. The

mixed criterion that combines the criteria of loyal or disloyal attitudes towards the ruling elite and the real or phantom operation mode permits the classification of political entities as opponent entities and phantom entities. Two parties (the Communist Party of Belarus and the Liberal Democratic Party) do not fall into the either group, combining loyalty towards authorities and a non-phantom operation mode.

KEYWORDS:

political system; party; multiparty system; party genesis; political pluralism; party ideologies.

INTRODUCTION

Political parties carry out several important functions – representative, integration, political struggle, socialisation, etc. The ideological function implemented in the creation of party ideologies and political programmes is not less important. Even though opinions about the end of the era of ideological struggle and alignment of party programmes are expressed with ever increasing frequency, ideological pluralism manifests itself quite clearly and does not allow for making statements about ideological standardisation. At the same time, most Belarusian parties have similar positions on key issues, which does not allow for their classification according to ideological criterion only.

A very paradoxical situation has emerged in Belarus, with weak political parties, an insignificant presence of party representatives in parliament (currently 16 of 110 deputies), low authority of parties among the population, and a low political culture combined with the presence of fifteen party entities (only those registered by the Ministry of Justice) of a diverse ideological spectrum – from far right conservatists to communists. It should be noted that despite the formal indicator the programme analysis allows that neither far left nor far right parties are present among the Belarusian parties.

Over years of political apathy and lack of demand from society and the government, the party entities degenerated significantly in terms of resources and organisation. The programmes of numerous entities have not been updated for a long time and target groups, their needs, and interests are almost not considered. Lack of knowledge of electors' interests and potential leads to employing sporadic means of engagement. Consequently, hostile external conditions in combination with the internal systemic crisis of parties result in the existence of a weak party system with marginalised leaders and strategies which are insufficient for current realities. The special characteristics of the Belarusian political field and party genesis determine the period for

analysis – 2006-2016. Until 2006 inclusive, the party structure was almost completely established and new parties were not registered. Only one party – Nadzieja Belarusian Women's Party – was liquidated in 2007. In 2016, during the last parliamentary election, a representative of a democratic party – United Civic Party – became a deputy for the first time in a long time.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Researchers have no single opinion concerning the place of parties in the political system. For example, the contemporary American political scientist Thomas Birkland considers political parties to be a separate informal actor of public policy equally with social movements, non-governmental organisations, etc. (Birkland 2014) while authors G. Almond and B. Powell place political parties with special groups of interest that struggle for political power (Almond, Powell 1996). M. Duverger classifies parties' positions in political parties according to their origin – while bourgeois parties (among which the author includes those that are conservative and liberal) are based on competing groupings (committees) whose activities are centred around electoral processes and are close to parliamentary activity, new socialist parties are based on popular masses united by a strong ideology. Duverger considers such parties closer to movements in the political field (Дю-верже 2002). The American authors A. Schwartz and K. Lawson write that parties are "the political wing of organised groups of interests" (Schwartz, Lawson 2005: 270).

For a long time, the position that the basis of a political party is an ideology that is embodied in a written party programme dominated the research literature. Duverger writes that the analysis of parties' ideological doctrines is a liberal approach and that it cannot provide a comprehensive idea of political parties. The researcher herself tends to prefer structural analysis while studying party infrastructure (Дюверже 2002). The well-known Italian researcher G. Sartori prefers the electoral approach and writes that a group of people united by participation in elections and by effort to win power via its nominees is a party (Sartori 2005). Marxist class theory should be mentioned in this context. Here a political party is treated as a political organisation consisting of the most active representatives of the civic class that defends the proletariat's interests.

Depending on the approach, the content of party functions varies, however almost all parties to a greater or lesser degree carry out the following functions: interest aggregation and articulation;

development of a political course; integration and socialisation of citizens; recruitment; mobilisation of resources; mediation between citizens and authorities; shaping of citizen opinion, etc.

Contingent on the positions of political parties in a country, types of parties and connections among them, a distinctive party configuration – a party system – is created. Party systems differ by the number of parties and their qualitative characteristics. To a significant degree, the structure of the party system is determined by the type of political regime in the country.

Most democratic countries are characterised by multiparty or two-party systems. According to Duverger's classification, widely accepted as a standard, the existing electoral system influences the number of parties in a country most (and is influenced by the party system simultaneously). At the same time, he notes that these are only general reference points which do not exhaust all characteristics of mutual influence of the electoral and party systems (Дюверже 2002).

DOES BELARUS NEED ITS OWN CLASSIFICATION FOR POLITICAL PARTIES?

Neither the Constitution nor national laws determine the current type of the Belarusian party system. The opinions of Belarusian political scientists differ in respect to how many parties Belarus can be considered to have – no-parties, a quasi-two-party system, or a multiparty system.

Belarus currently has fifteen parties of different ideologies registered by the Ministry of Justice. This analysis covers these parties and four quasi-party entities that are most active in politics – Tell the Truth campaign (TTC), Freedom Movement (FM), Belarusian Christian Democracy (BCD), and Bielaja Ruś. Classification of the 19 entities is a significant problem since the classifications available do not cover all the entities due to the specific nature of the Belarusian political system. We suggest applying a mixed criterion to classify parties and quasi-party entities: loyalty/disloyalty to the authorities and real/phantom operation mode (with phantom operation mode understood as non-participation of some entities in political processes – except nomination of observers and members of election committees – combined with an almost complete lack of political campaigns). Consequently, the classification is as follows:

1.   Parties/Entities   Opposing   Current   Authorities (Opponents)

These include the BPF Conservative Christian Party (BPF CCP), BPF Party; Just World Belarusian Party of the Left (JWBPL), United Civic Party (UCP); Belarusian Social Democratic Hramada Party (BSDH); Freedom Movement (FM); Tell the Truth (TT); Belarusian Christian Democracy (BCD); and the Belarusian Green Party.

Despite various political tactics and activity levels, all the above parties and organisations challenge the authorities with a political alternative and, occasionally, form joint coalitions.

2. Parties/Entities Legitimising A. Lukashenka's Power (Phantoms)

These include the Belarusian Social and Sport Party, Popular Concord Social Democratic Party, Belarusian Agrarian Party (BAP), Republican Party, Republican Labour and Justice Party, Belarusian Patriotic Party (BPP), Bielaja Ruś Republican Association (BR).

This group of parties (except Bielaja Ruś) has distinctive features which fundamentally set it apart from the other group. These parties were established in 1992-1997 and functioned as classic parties only during the first years of their existence (candidates' participation in elections, voters' interest aggregation and accumulation, etc.) presenting a weak alternative to incumbent leaders.

Over time, the parties degraded organisationally and ideologically, declared loyalty to present authorities, and began to perform a new function – to ensure legitimacy of electoral processes. Despite a formally large number of members in these parties, they, with few exceptions, do not nominate their members as candidates (except the BPP, whose leader M. Ulachovič participated in the 2015 presidential elections), do not hold political campaigns and events, and do not communicate directly with mass media. However, during elections, these parties demonstrate unusual activity as observers. Bielaja Ruś differs from the above group by its formal status, origin (at the time of its establishment in 2007, the idea was that it would have become the party of government but the idea was not fully supported by A. Lukashenka, and no organisational changes are observed at the moment), and a significantly greater number of members (engaged via the vertical power structure), however it fulfils similar functions.

3. The Communist Party and the Liberal Democratic Party – distinct from the above categories

These parties can be placed neither in the first nor the second group of parties. They are brought together by the fact that they perform the function of legitimising the current head of state, but they at the same time are not phantoms. They hold some events (although not very actively), the parties' members give interviews in the mass media, and the parties' websites are often updated and include information about current events and party news.

For instance, eight members of the Communist Party are deputies of the lower chamber of the parliament, the House of Representatives, and 320 are deputies of local Councils. The Liberal Democratic Party is often labelled "pseudo-opposition" for its quite democratic programme while maintaining friendly relations with the authorities, although party leaders contest this. The LDP is not prominent for its number of observers or appointees to electoral committees among other parties (despite the declared number of party members at over 40,000 people), however the party leader, Siarhiej Haidukievič, is almost always nominated as a presidential candidate (though he withdrew his nomination in 2010).

WHY ARE THE BELARUSIAN PARTIES (NOT) SO WEAK?

When the topic of parties and the party system is addressed in official discourse, it is invariably negative, however it is possible to agree with a lot of the criticism of the (not only) democratic parties. Parties do almost no work with voters during the time between elections; they are often engaged in interpersonal struggle instead of political activities; party leaders do not rotate; and parties have demonstrated their inability to take responsibility for milestone events– (For example, none of the parties (although half of the candidates were representatives of opposition parties/quasi-party entities) took responsibility and admitted guilt for the organisational disaster of the so-called "2010 Plošča".)

At the same time, the official discourse omits several issues of the party system directly related to the authoritarian nature of the Belarusian political regime.

First, Belarus provides no possibilities for party development – the current parties are just able to survive. Political opponents have no access to state mass media, and the audience covered by non-governmental newspapers, television, and independent websites is insignificant. State mass media conduct smear campaigns against opposition parties and their leaders regularly. Democratic parties are discriminated against during electoral campaigns as well, with party

candidates often not registered as deputy nominees (at various levels) on far-fetched grounds, candidates that are significantly limited as to selection of places for campaigning and holding meetings with the voters, and in which party activists are unable to become members of election committees. The government uses repressive methods in relation to parties as organisations (e.g., by refusing government registration as is the case with the Belarusian Christian Democracy) and towards party members (issuance of prosecutor's warnings, criminal prosecution for participation in unregistered associations; pressure at the place of work or studies; "preventive talks" with relatives, etc.).

Second, the Belarusian government has created an extremely hostile environment for financial support of parties which resulted in their being relegated to the shadow sector. In democratic countries parties usually have several sources of financing: government financing, private funds, and own funds of parties. These can include member fees as well as funds from services or promotional party products. In Belarus, it is a widespread opinion that the government should not participate in party expenses (which is established by law), and the party budget should consist of member fees. Lack of government financing concerns not only democratic parties but also the so-called "pro-government" ones or those which are included in the "loyal opposition" (e.g., the Liberal Democratic Party or the Communist Party of Belarus). However, these entities enjoy a certain organisational relaxation of rules in the form of provision of premises for the central and regional party offices free of charge or at low prices and provision of premises for conventions or party meetings. At the same time, democratic parties do not apply for government financing mostly because, in that case, they will lose the possibility to call upon their "non-systemic nature" in an attempt to receive financing from foreign foundations, which is the key financial resource of parties. Consequently, a vicious circle is created where, on the one hand, parties require funds for political campaigns, salaries for managers, organisational needs (e.g., office rental); on the other hand, it is almost impossible to raise funding legally, and parties have to apply for assistance to foreign donors in circumvention of the formal procedure set forth by Belarusian laws. In this case, in addition to the danger of criminal proceedings against their leaders for violating laws, parties come under strong criticism by civil activists who accuse them of secrecy, lack of public reports on their activities, inefficient spending of funds, and activities for the benefit of donors and not for national interests.

It is also complicated for parties to raise funding from businesspersons or other wealthy individuals because anonymous

funding of parties' activities is prohibited in Belarus (article 24 of the Political Parties Law), and public demonstration of sympathy to any of the democratic parties means jeopardising one's business and personal security. It is worth noting that parties do not lobby for the development of government financing mechanisms. The reasons for this are partially apathy and lack of initiative and partially lack of a compelling need. Other motives include partisan interests and a drive to mitigate responsibility, as it is always more complicated for foreign donors to check spending of funds according to their intended purpose and correspondence of actual expenses with those included in a budget.

It is important to note that the government not only limits political parties seriously in their possibilities for financing but also attempts to regulate political campaign tactics through funding. In 2013, for example, prior to local elections, legislative amendments were passed according to which candidates were not to be provided government financing for outreach if candidates advocated an election boycott. (Previously, candidates were required to refund government money spent for printed outreach materials if they had withdrawn from an election prior to voting but had been able to advocate for any forms of participation or non-participation in elections.)

Third, it is practically impossible to register a new political party. The last party created – the BPF Conservative Christian Party – was registered by the Ministry of Justice in 2000. The registration procedure is quite complex, long, and expensive. Some political initiatives – we would conditionally label them "quasi-parties" – are granted status as "public associations" or "educational institutions" to avoid a complicated registration process and minimise their responsibility despite the fact that the objectives set forth by the entities and their practical political activities are clearly of a partisan nature. The most well-known democratic quasi-party entities include the For Freedom Movement (it has the formal status of a national human rights educational public association) and the Tell the Truth campaign (prior to deregistration it had the status of a campaign of the Movement Forward Research and Education Institution). These organisations used to be the political and resource base of presidential candidates Aliaksandr Milinkievič and Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ, respectively. To a lesser degree, the Bielaja Ruś National Public Association can be deemed a quasi-party entity as it announced the possibility of transformation into the party of government while still remaining an association. In addition, several parties exist, that are either deregistered (e.g., the Narodnaja Hramada Belarusian Social Democratic Party) or have not been registered despite

numerous attempts (for example, the BCD made five unsuccessful attempts to register as a party in addition to attempts to register as a national or regional public association). Despite lack of a formal status, these parties participate in politics equally with others using legislative mechanisms available. For example, party activists stand at parliamentary elections not in party lists but by gathering signatures or submit applications to government entities not on behalf of parties but on behalf of individual citizens.

Another factor in hampering party development in Belarus in the opinion of political scientists is the majority election system. M. Pliska writes that it is the worst political system under Belarusian conditions: "Without doubt, it will mothball the situation of political crisis in the country and will be the means for the ruling clan to preserve political power in their hands" (Плиско 2004). It is of interest that the chairperson of the Central Election Committee L. Jarmošyna consistently favours the proportional election system, stating that voting for party lists will increase competitiveness and selection of the most able candidates. At the same time, no changes in a transition to the mixed or proportional system are observed.

PARTIES' EXTERNAL PROBLEMS ARE COMMON, INTERNAL ONES ARE DIFFERENT

What do the leaders of political parties think about the efficiency of their work? In this study, several semi-structured interviews were held with leaders of the BCD (Paval Sieviaryniec), Just World Belarusian Party of the Left (Siarhiej Kaliakin), UCP (Anatoĺ Liabiedźka), and FM (Jury Hubarevič). During the interviews, it was found that the political parties and organisations in question did not consider their activities successful because they could not win political power. To measure the results and efficiency of separate campaigns, the entities used various tools: the FM, JWBPL, and BCD used sociological data of independent institutes (the IISEPS and the Democracy and Social Market Institute, in particular). Conversely, the UCP did not use the results of sociological studies because "sociology cannot exist in an authoritarian country" (A. Liabiedźka). Three entities – the FM, JWBPL, and BCD – measured their results by the number of new members of their party/organisation. However, this criterion is quite conditional because an insignificant number of new members started participating in political activities (A. Liabiedźka). Besides the evaluation methods listed, the UCP employed focus groups, internal polling, expert evaluation, and auditing.

Each person surveyed was asked a question concerning a fundamental change or event that had taken place in the party/

organisation in ten years. Liabiedźka and Kaliakin thought it to be an achievement that their parties continued to exist despite the hostile political environment. Liabiedźka noted that the UCP was the only party that was able to avoid internal discord (although the threat had existed). According to Sieviaryniec, the most important event was the increase of members from 20 to 4,500 persons. According to Hubarevič, the FM had had its most fundamental change in 2010 when the entity ceased to target presidential elections in their activities and had changed its strategy.

Those surveyed acknowledged that the low efficiency in the operation of their entities was the result of internal problems. Personnel issues were the main problems facing the FM and JWBPL. While the FM lacked regular activists to work in the regions, the JWBPL required "status persons" (S. Kaliakin) who would improve the party image. A. Liabiedźka noted that the party faced a lack of young people under 35 years and explained this by young people's unwillingness to risk without receiving obvious benefits. The BCD faced a problem of inefficient management when "we have a lot of people but are unable to organise them" (Sieviaryniec).

Those surveyed unanimously evaluated the condition of the current Belarusian party system as "critical", the reason for which being the absence of a democratic political regime and absence of free elections, in particular. Free elections not only enable political parties to win political power, expand their number of followers, and popularise their ideologies, but also to exclude weak parties (Liabiedźka) and assess party potential (Kaliakin). In addition, with non-free elections the functioning of parties was crucially influenced by the majority election system (Kaliakin), repressions, lack of legal possibility for parties' support by entrepreneurs (Sieviaryniec), and lack of legal registration (Sieviaryniec; Hubarevič).

According to Sieviaryniec, a lack of legal status significantly hindered the BCD in its work with its target group – religious people, owing to the fact that governmental registration is important to the heads of churches. In addition, having a legal status reduced insecurity among party members. In Hubarevič's opinion, registration expanded the possibilities for a political entity but also created new obstacles – the necessity to have a legal address and regional branches (expenses for leasing offices), official red tape, the threat of organization liquidation (Hubarevič). The leader of the JWBPL Kaliakin noted issues with the laws, in particular the requirement to submit data concerning new party members to the Ministry of Justice (including place of work),

which alienated potential party members.

Concerning the conditions for parties to overcome the political crisis, the opinions of those surveyed differed. While leaders of the UCP, BCD, and JWBPL did not see possibilities to reform a party under the current authoritarian regime ("impossible without a revolution" (Kaliakin)), the FM's representatives spoke about possible implementation of reforms (the first stage of reforms, at least) within the current political system.

Accordingly, those surveyed had similar positions concerning most issues related to the diagnosis of external problems of the party system (main issue – lack of free elections) and evaluation of party activities (inefficient activities). They settled various internal party issues, determined by varying statuses of entities (parties/organisations; legal/illegal) and the experience of political work (personnel issue, lack of registration, lack of legal financing possibilities, etc.).

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the conditions of the operation of political entities determined by harsh Belarusian laws and repressive government tactics do not contribute to emergence of new parties and incite the weakening of existing parties. The specific features of the Belarusian political field determine the emergence of new forms of political activities –so-called "quasi-party entities" – that do not allow for the analysis of party structure from the point of view of programme ideologies but, instead, require a new approach. This study offers mixed criteria based on loyal/disloyal attitudes to the ruling elite and of real/phantom operation mode. Despite the fact that the limited format of an article does not permit to include the analysis of party programmes and their implementation, several issues are worth mentioning: the programme provisions on the topics of economy; social sector, education, family; environment; national language and culture; religion, church are often similar not only within their groups but also among all entities in general. Significant discrepancies of programme statements among groups as well as in groups are most obvious on the topics of internal policy, government; foreign policy, and security. Also, sociological data demonstrate that programme provisions and implementation of campaigns are not well known at the grassroots level. Some parties (in particular, the Belarusian Green Party), while having a high level of support of their programme provisions by voters due to certain reasons (organisational, resource, leadership or others), for some reason do not utilise their full potential in implementing their campaigns.

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POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAMMES AT EHU

The European Humanities University (EHU) is a non-governmental university in the field of liberal arts, established in Minsk in 1992. Due to repression of academic freedoms, the university was forced to terminate its activities in Minsk in 2004 and subsequently renewed its operations in Vilnius (Lithuania). EHU is the only Belarusian university operating in an environment of real academic freedom. In 2018/2019 approximately 730 Belarusian students study humanities and social sciences in BA, MA, and PhD programmes at EHU.

Almost 3 200 alumni have graduated from EHU since its establishment in Minsk in 1992. Of these, two-thirds have graduated in the Vilnius period. According to a recent poll, 62.2% of graduates reside in Belarus permanently, having returned there upon completing their studies at EHU. 83.3% are employed full time and their employment is fully or partially related to their field of studies at the university. Most graduates are employed in the private sector (64.6%) as well as in non-governmental organisations (17.4%) and Belarusian government institutions (10.1%).

The political science programmes at the EHU have been realized within different academic departments and units during different periods of its existence: while in Minsk the French-Belarusian Faculty offered education in the sphere of political science; upon relocation to Vilnius, Svetlana Naumova, Anatoliy Kruglashov, Andrei Kazakievich, Victor Martinovich, and Andrei Stsiapanau participated in the work, heading and managing the political science programmes.

Currently, two political science programmes function within Social Sciences Department at the EHU. At the BA level, we offer high- and low-residence programmes for World Politics and Economics (a successor of the Political Science and European Studies programme). It is an interdisciplinary programme that prepares specialists in the field of political and economic sciences. The programme was established by and is offered in cooperation with Vytautas Magnus University of Kaunas (Lithuania). It trains political scientists and professional analysts to be able to comprehensively interpret and analyse, compare and evaluate, theoretically describe, and simulate economic and political processes in global and regional contexts. Graduates of the World Politics and Economics programme are awarded a BA degree in political science with an additional specialization in economics. The studying process is

balanced between the political science and economics disciplines.

At the MA level, we offer a political science programme in public policy. The objective of the MA programme is to train specialists in the field of public administration, civil society management as well as professional activities at international and national civil society organisations. The programme was jointly created with the Faculty of Public Administration at Leiden University (Netherlands) and ROI, the Dutch Institute for Public Administration. Programme graduates are awarded an MA degree in political science.

The period of studies in the high-residence BA programme is four years, while the low-residence BA programme is a five-year programme. The period of studies for the MA programmes is a year and a half. The period of studies in the high-residence PhD programme is four years or one year in the case of external learning.
The core academic staff of the Political Science Programmes of EHU includes professor Tatiana Shchyttsova; professor emeritus Ryhor Miniankou; associate professor Andrei Stsiapanau, PhD; lecturer Tatsiana Chulitskaya, PhD; and lecturer Uladzislau Ivanou, PhD. Visiting lecturers of the department include professor Vyachaslau Paznyak; professor Aliaksandr Kavaliou, Candidate of Economic Sciences; and Ina Ramasheuskaya, MA – an expert at SYMPA/BIPART.

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KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION, BELARUS COUNTRY OFFICE

Freedom, justice and solidarity are the basic principles underlying the work of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS). The KAS is a political foundation, closely associated with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU).

In our European and international cooperation efforts we work for people to be able to live self-determined lives in freedom and dignity. We make a contribution underpinned by values to helping Germany meet its growing responsibilities throughout the world.

We encourage people to lend a hand in shaping the future along these lines. With more than 80 offices abroad and projects in over 100 countries, we make a unique contribution to the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, and a social market economy. To foster peace and freedom we encourage a continuous dialogue at the national and international levels as well as the exchange between cultures and religions.

Human beings in their distinctive dignity and with their rights and responsibilities are at the heart of our work. We are guided by the conviction that human beings are the starting point in the effort to bring about social justice and democratic freedom while promoting sustainable economic activity. By bringing people together who embrace their responsibilities in society, we develop active networks in the political and economic spheres as well as in society itself. The guidance we provide on the basis of our political know-how and knowledge helps to shape the globalization process along more socially equitable, ecologically sustainable and economically efficient lines.

We cooperate with governmental institutions, political parties, civil society organizations and handpicked elites, building strong partnership along the way. In particular, we seek to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation at the national and international levels on the foundations of our objectives and values. Together with our partners we make a contribution to the creation of an international order that enables every country to develop in freedom and under its own responsibility. Currently Konrad Adenauer Foundation runs its Belarus office in Vilnius (Lithuania).

The main task of the KAS activities towards Belarus is the

support of those forces that are working for the creation of a free, democratic and lawful Belarus that is going to have its place among the European Community of states. To this end, the Foundation organizes educational events and consultations, dialogue and information programs in neighboring countries, in Germany, and in Brussels.

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