RE-ENVISIONING CIVIL SOCIETY

IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

by

Yuliya Brel

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Urban Affairs and Public Policy

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DEDICATION

To my father with the deepest respect and appreciation

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ABSTRACT

The concept of civil society emerged hundreds of years ago. However, even today there exists no unanimously accepted definition of civil society. At the same time, civil society is considered to be the essential feature characterizing democratic states. It is regarded especially important for the states currently in the process of transition from authoritarian regimes. This paper seeks to study the role of civil society in the Republic of Belarus – one of the former republics of the Soviet Union. The analysis is based on the data from the national public opinion poll conducted in Belarus in September 2014 by the Independent Institute of Sociological, Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS). The survey data are considered against three main constructs, namely the language problem, two realities and the resource state. The analysis shows that few Belarusians are involved in public activity; they mostly trust public organizations supported by the state, and in general believe that civil society is controlled by the former. The findings may imply that Belarusian citizens do not see civil society as an intermediary between them and the state, and thus their will and interests might be manifested by other means. Consequently, if in today's world the presence of a well-established and successfully functioning civil society is considered to be a must for a country's democratic development, then Belarus is in urgent need for one. If Belarusian citizens do not recognize the necessity of changes, the ramifications might be catastrophic and lead to a situation similar to the one currently observed in Russia and Ukraine.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of civil society emerged centuries ago. However, thinkers and theorists understood it differently in the course of its long history. Even now there exists no unanimously accepted definition of civil society that would satisfy everyone involved in studying the concept, utilizing it as a tool for policy making, or 'pondering on how people could best meet their individual needs while also achieving collective ends' (O'Brien, 1999).

The idea of civil society 'received its first coherent formulation in the cities of ancient Greece' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 3). During the classical period such philosophers as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero understood it as a 'politically organized commonwealth' (Ibid.). After the collapse of the Roman civilization, medieval thinkers saw civil society as a 'Christian Commonwealth' and moved 'from an ideal of self-sufficiency to a recognition of dependence'. Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment lifted the understanding of the concept onto a new level. A more secular approach to civil society was underway which led to viewing it as 'organized around private interests' (Ehrenberg, 1999, pp. 29, 55).

> … the spread of markets would give rise to theories of an autonomous, protected, and self-regulating economic sphere apart from and morally

superior to that of the state. Whether thought of as political or religious commonwealth, older notions of universal civil society would soon be eclipsed by the logic of individual interest." (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 79)

According to Muukkonen (2000), the goal of Reformation and Enlightenment theorists was to liberate civil society from the Church, while liberal thinkers were trying to unchain it from the state.

In the nineteenth century Karl Marx almost equaled civil society to political economy (Muukkonen, 2000), but later his 'criticism of Hegel would take him to the negation of civil society' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 132), and he would drop the term altogether.

Lewis (2001) ascertained that the concept of civil society 'fell into disuse' having exerted great impact on the prominent thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However it was revived by the end of the Cold War, and since that time the idea of civil society has been regarded as the necessary premise for establishing democracy. Lewis stated that it acquired 'a global ubiquity' in the twentieth century, and policy makers all over the world assumed 'its global relevance to strengthening development and democracy' (Lewis, 2001, p. 1).

Nowadays 'there is growing agreement about the importance of civil society, but there is also growing disagreement about its exact meaning' (Pietrzyk, 2001). It is sometimes viewed as 'the aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions

that manifest interests and will of citizens', or in a more general sense as 'the elements such as freedom of speech, an independent judiciary, etc., that make up a democratic society', or even as volunteering 'as a defining characteristic of the organizations that constitute civil society (NGOs, NPOs)' (Civil Society, n.d.). It can also be defined as the presence of institutions that allow the population to control the authorities (Kamensky, 2005)[1], as 'the population of groups formed for collective purposes primarily outside of the State and marketplace' (van Rooy, as cited in Lewis, 2001, p. 1), and in many other ways. Consequently, those who attempt to study civil society at the present moment inevitably face the problem of giving the concept a particular definition as 'the concept has come to mean different things for different people causing a great number of

Although at present 'civil society is proposed as the essential feature of any democracy' (Hardt, 1995, p. 27), Lewis argues that 'the concept is <…> historically specific to particular time(s) and place(s) and may be sensitive to differences of history, culture and economy' (p. 3). He poses a question whether the idea 'has meaning outside the context in which it originally evolved', and whether in non-Western contexts it may be complicated even further by the differences in culture, history and politics.

The difficulties, which researchers might experience when trying to analyze civil

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1 Here and elsewhere in the paper translation of all the sources originally in the Russian language was performed by Yuliya Brel.

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society outside the Western context, are perhaps not the biggest problem in this respect. Hardt (1995), for instance, argues that 'civil society has withered away' (Hardt, 1995, p. 40) altogether, and by this he means that the social conditions necessary for civil society no longer exist in Western Europe and North America.

In my paper, however, I am going to adhere to the definition of civil society suggested by Sirianni and Friedland (n.d.) as it seems to be comprehensive enough to embrace various features ascribed to the concept of civil society in the West.

> Civil society refers to that sphere of voluntary associations and informal networks in which individuals and groups engage in activities of public consequence. It is distinguished from the public activities of government because it is voluntary, and from the private activities of markets because it seeks common ground and public goods. It is often described as the "third sector." For democratic societies, it provides an essential link between citizens and the state. Its fundamental appeal since its origin in the Scottish Enlightenment is its attempt to synthesize public and private good (Sirianni & Friedland, n.d.).

To expand this definition it seems necessary to add that the concept of civil society should not be limited to the number of voluntary associations of citizens involved in activities important to the public. Voluntary associations and informal networks should also follow 'a democratic praxis and [pursue] democratic aims as the main criteria to determine civil society's democratic potential' (Reiter, 2009, p. 32).

In spite of the fact that the concept of civil society is 'ubiquitous in research on democratization' (A. T. Green, 2002, p. 455), it has been considered especially important 'in the transition from authoritarian regimes' and 'for the durability of effective

democratic institutions' after the collapse of the communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe (Ibid.). In my paper I am seeking to study the role of civil society in one of the former Soviet Socialist Republics, namely in the Republic of Belarus, and find out whether the citizens of the republic understand the concept of civil society differently from the citizens in Western European and North American countries. I am also trying to test the proposition that Belarusian civil society plays an unusual role in that country not commensurate with the conventional understanding of the concept, and in case any differences are detected, I will endeavor to analyze their implications for the future development of the Belarusian nation.

With the help of the data from the national public opinion poll conducted in Belarus in September, 2014 by the Independent Institute of Sociological, Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) I will attempt to find an answer to the following research questions: What is the attitude of Belarusian citizens to civil society in Belarus? Does the attitude to the civil society concept in Belarus differ from the one in the West? Do such characteristics of respondents as their gender, age, type of settlement and status affect their attitude to civil society? If so, are there any patterns in the attitudes of the citizens to civil society in Belarus?

In this connection one may ask a legitimate question: Why is Belarus' political and economic development worth studying? In the words of Korosteleva, Lawson, and March, it is important because 'unlike many other post-communist states, [Belarus] has

defied all expectations and failed to move either in the direction of nationalism or towards democracy and a free market' (Korosteleva, Lawson, & March, 2003, p. 1). Consequently, 'such contradictory developments need to be taken into account by general theorists of transition and the process of democratization' (Ibid.).

Since civil society is commonly perceived as a fundamental constituent of democracy, it seems important to me as a representative of Belarus and a researcher to find answers to the above questions in order to better understand the processes that are underway in Belarus at the moment, as well as their implications for the future of my country.

> It is also important because although the term civil society is used quite frequently, it is a "richly evocative but under theorized concept" (Alexander, as cited in Muukkonen, 2000). However, the generally accepted view on civil society, as the one 'founded on rights, associations, the public sphere and normative assumptions, played and still plays a central role in the development of liberal democratic theory and also in its supra-national extension' (Pietrzyk, 2001).

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Classical Period

First the notion of civil society appeared in ancient Greece. The term used was 'societas civilis', which meant an association of citizens and 'emphasized the commitment to a shared destiny' (Muukkonen, 2000). The concept of civil society pertained to 'communal life in the polis, the Greek city-state' (O'Brien, 1999). Classical thinkers were trying to find an answer to the question of how people could achieve a "good life" if their individual needs always conflicted with the needs of society (Ibid.).

In general, classical thinkers believed that civilization was made possible by political power (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 3). They considered civil society

> … a natural institution and its political expression [was] the most inclusive and important association to which individuals belonged. Its foundation will always be justice informed by reason understood as the common good, and all legitimate state formations are founded upon this first principle (Ibid., p. 26).

2.2 The Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages the central role in the definition of civil society was played by the concept of good life (Muukkonen, 2000), and the state and civil society began to be viewed as a Christian Commonwealth. The Church would elaborate the doctrine of the

Original Sin and 'justification of coercive political power … that would locate the Church at the center of civil society' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 29). If for Greeks politics was something natural for human beings, then 'the Church located it alongside war, slavery, and property as a purely conventional result of failure' (Ibid.). The state was seen 'as the consequence of humanity's fallen nature', and it 'could have a role in correcting this error only under the guidance of the Church' (Muukkonen, 2000).

2.3   The Reformation (the Beginning of the 16th Century)

The new era demanded a change in the view of civil society. Although new economic and political structures were yet in the process of emerging, 'civil society could no longer be understood as a universal political or religious commonwealth' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 55).

Niccolò Machiavelli was an Italian diplomat, politician and philosopher, whose 'thoroughly secular approach to politics anticipated a distinctly modern understanding of state and society' (Ibid.). He realized that the Church could no longer establish boundaries for political activity. Machiavelli gave importance to 'the stability and leadership in maintaining civil society', which he understood 'in the classical way as a civilization' (Muukkonen, 2000). He saw civil society 'as a sphere where public and individual interests [were] mediated', with a sovereign prince being its guarantor (Ibid.).

In Germany Martin Luther, a prominent figure of the German Reformation and a

founder of the Protestant religion, fought against the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, 'which [he] viewed as being corrupt' (O'Brien, 1999). For Luther, God and the state coexisted in two separate spheres. 'God establishes and sanctifies earthly authorities because no kingdom can exist without law and coercion'; however, the activity of the state should be 'limited to protecting life, property, and other requirements of earthly life' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 69). Luther's main contribution to the idea of civil society was 'that people should be free to choose their own religious commitments while demonstrating charity and service to their neighbors' (Muukkonen, 2000).

The famous book *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher, was published in 1651, the year when the English civil war of 1642-1651 ended. It demonstrated 'that civil society cannot exist in the absence of state power' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 70). If people constantly struggle for individual power, it will limit their social development, and they will have to look for a new foundation for their society based on the civic virtues (O'Brien, 1999). Hobbes believed that 'the state [played] the most important role as it [guaranteed] peace and self-preservation', and 'all moral principles [derived] ultimately from individual self-preservation' (Pietrzyk, 2001).

John Locke, another English thinker, 'argued that the power of the state should be limited so as not to threaten the basic rights of the citizens' (O'Brien, 1999). If Hobbes believed that civil society could 'flourish only when the state [was] strong' (Pietrzyk, 2001), Locke considered that 'the most important aspect of social life was freedom of

individuals who first create civil society and then the state which protects individual's rights' (Ibid.). Locke, and later Adam Smith, saw 'the core of civil society' in 'individual property, and thus their civil society was the market' (Muukkonen, 2000).

2.4 Enlightenment – the Age of Reason (Late 17th-18th Centuries)

Hobbes and Locke regarded civil society 'as a contractually produced and politically guaranteed instrument of individuals' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 91). The social contract theory appeared during the Age of Enlightenment and was addressing 'the questions of the origin of society and the legitimacy of the authority of the state over the individual' (Social Contract, n.d.). The core of the theory was the view that political and moral obligations of a person depended upon a contract or agreement between the person and the state, according to which an individual voluntarily relinquished some of his freedoms to the ruler, and in return received protection of his remaining rights. Hobbes gave the theory 'its first full exposition and defense' (Social Contract Theory, n.d.) with Locke and Rousseau becoming its ardent proponents later (Ibid.).

According to Ehrenberg (1999), however, Adam Ferguson, an intellectual leader of Scottish Enlightenment, did not want to 'base civil society on contract' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 92). His civil society was 'polished and refined' (Pietrzyk, 2001), and its citizens enjoyed civil and political liberty, which for Ferguson were the main attributes of civil society (Ibid.).

Adam Smith was 'to produce the first fully modern theory of civil society' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 96), which was 'a specifically bourgeois conception' (Ibid.). It was a commercial society 'characterized in terms of division of labor, system of law, contracts, money, exchange and private property' (Pietrzyk, 2001). Smith was also the one who thought that 'society would be better off if marketplace exchanges were unconstrained by the state' (O'Brien, 1999). In Smith's words it is the 'obvious and simple system of liberty where everyone is left perfectly free to pursue his own interests in his own way' (Smith, as cited in Pietrzyk, 2001).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau elaborated a moral theory of civil society, which 'tried to adapt Roman virtue and Machiavellian republicanism' to the new reality of spreading markets and the deeply-rooted 'power of aristocrats and kings' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 150). For him civilization was based on natural sentiment that was going along with love to oneself (Muukkonen, 2000). Rousseau introduced the concept of a 'savage man' who could only become 'a moral being *in* civil society' as opposed to Locke's 'man' who was 'fully formed before the transition to civil society' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 152).

Rousseau was very much concerned with 'the massive and pervasive inequalities present in [existing states]' (Dent, 2005, p. 157). He posed his famous question about a man who is born naturally free, but is in chain everywhere, 'How did this change come about? I do not know. What can make it legitimate?' (Rousseau, as cited in Dent, 2005, p. 126). Rousseau was looking for 'a morally and rationally justified basis for rule and

organization' as the question of 'how regulation and order [was] actually at work in society' did not interest him that much (Ibid.). His philosophical views on civil society can be summarized in his own version of the Golden rule: "Do what is good for you with the least possible harm to other" (Muukkonen, 2000).

The French political thinker and historian Alexis de Tocqueville also made his significant contribution into the development and understanding of the concept of civil society. His famous work *Democracy in America* provides an analysis of American society and its democratic state. When travelling around America, Tocqueville was struck by 'the general equality of condition among the people' and 'the weakness of the state' (de Tocqueville, as cited in Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 160).

Just like Adam Smith, Tocqueville was looking for an 'invisible hand'; however, if Smith was talking about it with reference to the market and economic relations, Tocqueville was interested in how American society was regulated in terms of social and cultural interrelations among people. In the core of Tocqueville's theory of civil society was his understanding that the responsibilities of the government should be confined to the political sphere, and civil society formed by voluntary associations should pursue the citizens' private issues and should not be concerned with either politics or economics (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 167).

Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher of the 18th century, stated that in civil society 'people should treat other people as ends in themselves rather than means to the ends of others' (O'Brien, 1999). He tried 'to base civil society on an intrinsic sense of moral duty that unites all human beings' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 110) as he regarded civil society as 'a set of possibilities appropriate to civilized people' (Ibid., p. 113). The concept of social contract was an important issue in Kant's understanding of civil society.

> In all social contracts, we find a union of many individuals for some common end, which they all share. But a union as an end in itself which they all ought to share and which is thus an absolute and primary duty of all external relationships whatsoever among human beings, is only found in a society in so far as it constitutes a civil state, i.e. a commonwealth (Kant, as cited in Pietrzyk, 2001).

For Kant 'the main purpose of civil society [was] to force human beings to respect each other's rights' (Pietrzyk, 2001). He also was the first civil society theorist who suggested 'that a functional civil society should be seen as distinct from the state' (O'Brien, 1999). Finally Kant made an attempt 'to ground a moral theory of civil society on a stronger foundation than competition and self interest' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 118), and thus greatly influenced the later work of Hegel and Marx.

2.5   The 19th Century

Cohen and Arato called Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's understanding of civil society described in his book *Philosophy of Right* (1821) 'the first modern *theory* of civil society' (Cohen & Arato, as cited in Bowden, 2006, p. 162). His concept of freedom stood 'at the beginning of all modern theories that consider civil society apart from the state' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 124). He based his theory on the idea that social life can be

divided into three spheres: the family, civil society and the state. The state, according to Hegel, reconciles the family, which is the neutral phase, with civil society – the antithesis of the family (Muukkonen, 2000).

Unlike Hegel, Karl Marx did not see the state as 'an ideal final goal of the history' (Muukkonen, 2000), but rather as 'an oppressive mechanism that served the bourgeois civil society' (Ibid.). Marx maintained that the best type of the state was democracy, and felt that Hegel was erroneously idealizing the state (O'Brien, 1999). Just like Alexis de Tocqueville, Marx 'posited an egalitarian and active civil society – a democratized civil society – as a context for successful democratic government' (Niemi, 2011, p. 40). As it has been mentioned afore, Hegel's concept of freedom had laid the foundation of considering civil society separately from the state. Marx, however, 'engaged in a powerful form of democratic theorizing which emphasized how liberal democracy as a political form was by itself insufficient to freedom' (Ibid.).

As Pietrzyk (2001) argues, Marx considered that the problems of civil society could be solved not by separating it from the state, but by completely eradicating the former (Pietrzyk, 2001). In the words of Murthy (2009), civil society for Marx '[was] primarily the site of the contradiction between labor and capital, which eventually should result in revolution' (Murthy, 1999, p. 38). His criticism of Hegel led him to the negation of civil society (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 132). Marx saw civil society as 'the sphere of unbridled individualism, of pursuit of profit which leaves no stone unturned and of an

overpowering egoism' (Van Herpen, 2012, p. 10). He criticized civil society and human rights, because for him 'human rights only *sanction* and *legitimize* this egoism and are therefore the ideological expression of human alienation' (Marx & Engels, as cited in Van Herpen, 2012, p. 10). Modern man lives and works daily in civil society in which 'he acts on the basis of pure egoistic self-interest', consequently 'civil society is for Marx the negation of the social essence of man' (Van Herpen, 2012, pp. 8, 10).

2.6   The 20th Century – Civil Society and Capitalism

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist theoretician and a leader of the Italian Communist Party in the 1920s. He also wrote on political theory, sociology and linguistics (Antonio Gramsci, n.d.). In Bowden's words, Gramsci 'was the next theorist to tackle the concept of civil society with any real vigor' (Bowden, 2006, p. 168). Gramsci is known for his notion of cultural hegemony, which 'signaled a new focus on ideological and cultural matters that sparked an important super-structural theorization of civil society' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 208). The theory of cultural hegemony elaborated by Gramsci, described how states utilized cultural institutions in order to maintain power in capitalist societies (Antonio Gramsci, n.d.).

According to Hwang and Kuo, Gramsci enunciated the closest to the post-Marxist version of civil society (Hwang & Kuo, 2013, p. 33). Just like Marx, Gramsci understood ideology 'as secondary phenomenon after institutions' (Ibid.). At the same time he averred that 'cultural … capital plays an important role for the survival of the hegemony

of capitalism' (Ibid.). Gramsci believed that at some point civil society would transit from 'the sphere of necessity to that of freedom' and ideologies in this case would become forces 'capable of shaping and creating a new history and contributing to the formation of a new power which will progressively emerge' (Bobbio, as cited in Hwang & Kuo, 2013, p. 33). Gramsci laid emphasis on ideology and saw 'the state's task as combining hegemony and coercion, persuasion and force, consent and dictatorship' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 210). His civil society was far from 'an autonomous sphere of voluntary associations', but rather was 'constituted by class power, market relations, and the commodity form as any other sphere of capitalist society' (Ibid.).

Gramsci reshaped the broad notion of society and political community into a triadic conception, in which he juxtaposed civil society to the state and economic or market spheres (Bowden, 2006, p. 168). It could be therefore concluded that 'a modern capitalist liberal-democratic society [was] composed of three sets of social relations: the relations of production <…>; the coercive relations which characterize the state; and all other social relations which make up civil society' (Simon, as cited in Bowden, 2006, p. 169).

Gramsci is also believed to have initiated 'the process of adding three crucial components to the understanding of civil society' (Fleming, 2000, p. 2). The first component was the role of civil society 'in the formation of values, action-oriented norms, meanings and identifications'. The second was the emphasis on 'informal

networks, initiatives and social movements, as distinct from more formal voluntary associations and institutions'. Finally, it was the working out of 'the communicative, deliberative conception of the "public sphere" that was mostly elaborated by one of the greatest sociologists of the modern world – Jürgen Habermas (Ibid.).

As Ehrenberg noted, Habermas's concept of a "discursive public sphere" contributed greatly to contemporary theories of civil society (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 219). 'By the public sphere,' Habermas said, 'we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed' (Habermas, as cited in Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 219). According to Fleming, Habermas located public sphere in civil society

> where people [could] discuss matters of mutual concern as peers, and learn about facts events, and the opinions, interests, and perspectives of others in an atmosphere free of coercion and inequalities that would incline individuals to acquiesce or be silent (Fleming, 2000, p. 2).

Lubenow suggests that Habermas 'defines public sphere as constituted of life world, responsible for guaranteeing its autonomy and protecting it from administrative system' (Lubenow, 2012, p. 59). His theory of the life world and the two systems is 'very comprehensive and complex' (Krey, 2004). Developing the theory Habermas creates 'a sophisticated social model, archetype, or construct by which to understand and criticize the present late-stage of capitalistic society today' (Ibid.). The concept of the life world was first introduced by Edmund Husserl in his work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936). To oversimplify what is meant by the life world one could consider it 'as a universe of what is self-evident or given, a world that subjects

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may experience together' (Lifeworld, n.d.). Habermas saw the life world as 'more or less the "background" environment of competences, practices, and attitudes representable in terms of one's cognitive horizon' (Ibid.).

Hwang and Kuo ascertain that most of the Western states are relatively indifferent to what lies in the general interest of their citizenry when setting their agendas (Hwang & Kuo, 2013, p. 50). That is why Habermas specifies necessary conditions for 'genuine democracy'. First of all, these are links between the lawmaking institutions of the political system's core and the peripheral public sphere. Then come voluntary associations of civil society as social basis for the political public sphere. Finally, it is a common democratic political culture that meets the political system halfway (Habermas, as cited in Hwang & Kuo, 2013, p. 51).

2.7   Civil Society in the Post-Industrial World

The late 20th century witnessed the emergence of post-industrial societies in the developed countries of the world. The term was introduced in 1974 by American sociologist Daniel Bell in his book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. It is related to some other concepts used in sociology, such as post-fordism, information society, post-industrial economy, etc. Post-industrial society is characterized by the stage in the development of a society when the production of goods gives way to the production of services, as well as information, i.e. when 'the service sector generates more wealth than the manufacturing sector of the economy' (Post-Industrial Society, n.d.).

The end of the 20th century was also marked by the end of the Cold War between the Western and Eastern Blocs and the rebirth of civil society's topicality. Although it has been generally accepted that 'democracy requires a strong and lively civil society – if not for the sake of its formation then for the sake of its coherence and stability over time' (Walzer, as cited in Bowden, 2006, p. 156), civil society still remains an ambiguous concept, 'an extraordinarily vague idea' (Beck, as cited in Heinrich, 2005, p. 211), 'very elusive, escaping conceptual grasps and evading surefooted negotiation of the concept itself' (Chandhoke, 2007, p. 607).

However, in spite of its vagueness, the concept of civil society might have a core idea 'that is composed of a variety of different yet ultimately related conceptions' (Jensen, 2006, p. 39). According to Jensen (2006), civil society can be considered from the point of view of three other different concepts, namely the *sphere* concept, the *Scottish* concept and the *Lockean* concept (Jensen, 2006, p. 40). The first core concept contrasts civil society with government. Rosenblum and Post held that

> <…> civil society is the realm of social life which, when viewed from the perspective of government, is characterized by plural and particularist identities. <…> [it] is a zone of freedom for individuals to associate with others and for groups to shape their norms, articulate their purposes, and determine for themselves the internal structure of group authority and identity (Rosenblum & Post, as cited in Jensen, p. 41).

The second concept of civil society attempts 'to describe a space wherein private and individual interests are reconciled with public and social goods' (Seligman, as cited

in Jensen, 2006, p. 42) – the idea elaborated by the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment. Finally, Jensen is talking about John Locke's idea of civil society described in his *Second Treatise on Government*. He maintains that for Locke civil society 'represents a people's departure from the state of nature in order to establish legitimate coercive power' (Jensen, 2006, p. 44).

Jensen (2006) concludes that none of the mentioned concepts can be considered as basic, and that no connection actually exists among the concepts of civil society. In his understanding, 'attempts to find a general account or universal framework in which to discuss the idea of civil society' should be abandoned, and instead 'our approach to a particular theory of civil society must carefully and explicitly describe the issue that our appeal to civil society is thought to confront' (Jensen, 2006, p. 54).

According to Bowden, although there is no agreement on the precise role of civil society in modern democracies, 'almost all modern political ideologies based on the ideal of democracy advocate an important function for civil society' (Bowden, 2006, p. 170). He refers to Kumar for an explanation of the civil society's appeal. The idea attracts people because of the

> …combination of democratic pluralism with the continuing role for state regulation and guidance, mak[ing] it appear hopeful to societies seeking to recover from the excesses of state socialism; at the same time it seems to offer help in the refashioning of radical politics in those societies where socialism has lost whatever appeal it once possessed (Kumar, as cited in Bowden, 2006, p.171).

> Bowden also holds that civil society is not operating in the vacuum. By this he

means that 'it functions in a balanced interdependence with the market and, more importantly <...> the state' (p.178). Oxhorn (2007) supports this statement by maintaining that although 'everyone agrees that civil society is conceptually distinct from the state', it does not exist in isolation from the latter (Oxhorn, 2007, p. 326). In the words of Oxhorn, civil society in North America is predominantly understood in a 'liberal Tocquevillian' way, that is as one 'focus[ing] on the individual and his or her culture beliefs such as "civility", "trust", and "associability" (Ibid.). Oxhorn further argues, however, that these beliefs precisely must be regarded 'as possible ideal goals toward which civil societies might strive' (Ibid.). In his opinion, civil society should not be considered separately from the state 'that both conditions civil society's development and reflects civil society's strength in the nature of its own institutions and public policies' (Oxhorn, 2007, p. 327). Rucht (2011) contributes to this polemic by saying that when the concept of civil society was reintroduced into the modern Western theoretical discourse, it was mostly drawn 'on the classical liberal ideas', but at the same time theorists acknowledged that 'civil society and the (democratic) state could not be strictly separated and are, moreover, interdependent' (Rucht, 2011, p. 392). According to Rucht (2011), major twentieth century theories on civil society are focused not so much on the values like liberty or individual autonomy, but rather on such concepts as 'self-control, compassion, tolerance, justice and recognition of the other' (Rucht, 2011, p. 394).

Some scholars, on the other hand, are concerned that 'civil society has come to mean everything to everyone remotely interested in it' and thus the whole idea 'has been

flattened out' (Chandhoke, 2007, pp. 607-608). Chandhoke (2007), for instance, believes that it happened due to the fact that after the importance of civil society had resurrected, the concept became attractive to many 'political agents' pursuing quite diverse goals. Civil society is now considered as a panacea for solving such problems as 'expanding the market at the expense of the state, transiting from mass politics to single-issue and localized campaigns, undermining confidence in accepted modes of representation', etc. (Ibid.). In Chandhoke's view, neither de Tocqueville, nor Marx, nor Hegel, has ever conceptualized civil society 'as an alternative to or as independent of the state' (Chandhoke, 2007, p. 609). She holds that the state and civil society precondition each other, and that the logic of one composes the other. These two concepts, however, 'have been uncoupled' today (Ibid.). Finally, because civil society is referred to by anyone who bothers to do so in such a wide number of instances, in Chandhoke's opinion 'it must have lost both shape and content' (Ibid.).

Other scholars, like Reiter (2009), consider that the importance of the state should not be overstated when one tries to understand civil society's relationship to democracy (Reiter, 2009, p. 21). Reiter maintains that because the influence of civil society on democracy is 'soft', all that it can do for democracy 'is to instill democratic mores among those participating in its associations' (Reiter, 2009, p. 30). To do so, civic associations must, first of all, follow democratic procedures, which include 'abiding by democratic rules when electing leaders and deciding upon courses of action [and] democratic representation', and secondly they must pursue democratic aims. How can one decide

whether an association is actually promoting democratic values and trying to achieve democratic aims? Reiter suggests that 'the only way to determine [this] is by comparing [the group's] actions and its praxis with the core values of democracy and liberalism, namely civil, political, and social rights and adherence to the principle of justice' (Reiter, 2009, p. 32). He concludes by saying that it is important why people get together: 'to promote rights, to organize against minorities, or simply to bowl' (Ibid.). In Reiter's words, bowling by itself exerts no influence on democracy, because factors that determine the democratic potential of an association are 'who participates, how democratic this participation is, and what aims, other than bowling, a given group pursues' (Ibid.).

2.8   Civil Society in Western Europe

So far it has been discussed how the concept of civil society is understood in North America. It is equally important, however, to mention how civil society is perceived in Europe, namely in the countries-members of the European Union. Kohler-Koch (2010), for instance, considers it important 'to account for the widely alleged virtue of civil society for European Union (EU) democracy by linking it to the idea of representation' (Kohler-Koch, 2010, p. 100). Linking the concepts of civil society and representation is not an easy thing to do though. First of all, it is difficult due to the fact that 'the idea of civil society and the idea of representation are conceptual rivals' (Schmalz-Bruns, as cited in Kohler-Koch, 2010, p. 100). Secondly, in Kohler-Koch's view, the concept of democratic representation is linked to the state that in its turn is

linked to the nation state. The EU, on the contrary, 'is neither a state nor a nation' (Kohler-Koch, 2010, p. 101). Finally, although civil society is believed to contribute substantively into 'the democratic legitimacy of the EU … it is not linked to the concept of representation' (Ibid.). Kohler-Koch (2010) then asks a question whether all representation claims are flawed. She maintains that 'the representation claim is valid not because of a formal authorization but because citizens have accommodated to the system and because the respective stakeholder audience accepts the outcome of conflict settlements as being legitimate' (Kohler-Koch, 2010, p. 112).

As it has been already mentioned, modern scholars consider civil society to be a vague and elusive concept. Some of them like Malena and Heinrich (2007), however, raise the question of whether civil society can be measured in spite of its being hard to define and conceptualize. They admit that some theorists do not agree that it is necessary, to say nothing about possible, to measure this idea as it is 'primarily theoretical, normative, and abstract … without any clear, distinct, or measurable empirical manifestation in social life' (Tester, as cited in Malena & Heinrich, 2007, p. 339). Nevertheless, they ascertain that 'there are compelling reasons for endeavoring to measure and compare civil society' (Ibid.). The first reason for doing so is to actually find out whether civil society is simply an abstract idea or a real-life phenomenon. Secondly, as it has also been indicated, civil society is frequently linked to such 'crucial social and political goals … as democracy, development, good governance, poverty reduction, and social justice' (Ibid.). Consequently, if civil society could be measured, it

would offer 'the potential to verify and inform those hypothesized relationships' (Ibid.). In addition, much effort has been made lately to strengthen civil society. However, if civil society cannot be measured, it would be difficult 'to understand what factors influence its 'strength' or "health" (Malena & Heinrich, 2007, p. 340).

To measure civil society Malena and Heinrich (2007) suggest using some indicators to gauge four civil society dimensions. First they talk about structure that analyzes the size, actors, activities and resources of civil society. Then they mention external environment in which 'civil society exists and functions'. The third dimension concerns the values proclaimed by civil society. Finally, the fourth dimension estimates the impact that the activities of civil society actors exert on governance and development goals (Malena & Heinrich, 2007, p. 341).

Although, according to Heinrich (2005), empirical research on civil society has recently improved, 'yet, compared to the progress made in conceptualizing and measuring related concepts, such as governance, democracy, human rights and social capital, empirical civil society research still lags far behind in conceptual clarity and operational rigor' (Heinrich, 2005, p. 224).

To summarize what has been discussed afore, it is important to reiterate that although the concept of civil society emerged centuries ago and has gone anything but a simple way in its development, at present 'the most precise statement one can make about

civil society is that it is an extraordinarily vague idea' (Beck, as cited in Heinrich, 2005, p. 211). Nevertheless, there exists a widely spread opinion that the existence and successful functioning of civil society is important for modern democratic states as 'construction (or reconstruction) of civil society is one of the cornerstones of liberal democracy' (Bowden, 2006, p. 156).

2.9   Civil Society in Eastern Europe

Civil society as an idea was resurrected in the second half of the 20th century 'by dissident intellectuals in communist Eastern Europe … engaged in anti-totalitarian struggle' (Lewis, 2001, p. 3), and is strongly associated nowadays with the downfall of communism. According to Pietrzyk (2001), the literature on civil society in Eastern Europe posits that formation of civil society automatically followed introduction of democracy in that part of the world.

However, what made a country democratic? Orr argued that it was, first of all, competitive elections, and then a set of 'supporting conditions' (Orr, 2008, p. 858) including freedom of the press and freedom of organizations. In addition, in post-socialist East-Central Europe civil society was regarded 'as the main alternative vision and organizational form' (Gagyi & Ivancheva, n.d., p. 4). In its turn 'a healthy civil society require[d] strong markets and weak states' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 178). In Poland, for instance, the Solidarity movement understood civil society as 'the hope of liberal society

with freedom of thought, freedom of belief and market economy' among other things (as cited in Muukkonen, 2000).

Due to the fact that the concept of civil society was revitalized in 'the turbulence of East Europe' (Muukkonen, 2000), it came to be 'explicitly identified with the opposition' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 193) throughout the region. In Poland the opposition emerged as a result of 'the appearance of a human rights movement <…> and an <…> alliance between disenchanted workers and dissident intellectuals'. In the USSR Gorbachev realized at some point that 'revolution from above' was impossible, and that market reforms and 'liberation of civil society' were necessary. In Czechoslovakia Vaclav Havel believed that 'the only proper task of the state <…> [was] to defend the institutional bases of a depoliticized, independent, pluralist, and self-organizing civil society' (Ehrenberg, 1999, pp. 189-193).

Some scholars argue, however, that prominent Eastern European dissidents interpreted the concept of civil society in different ways. They understood civil society as 'anti-politics' (Konrad), 'independent life of society' or 'life in truth' (Havel), 'parallel polis' and 'second culture' (Benda), 'new evolutionism' (Michnik) etc. (Gagyi & Ivancheva, n.d., p. 9). These various views of civil society had 'at least three divergent political messages', all of them connected with the idea of relationship between civil society and the state: the former was supposed to either avoid any engagement with the latter, or use it 'instrumentally and from afar', or 'simply [take] over the state' (Ibid.).

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At the same time, such dissidents as Adam Michnik for instance, thought that opposition should impose limits on itself and that democratic activity should focus on establishing 'voluntary non-state associations' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 190). According to Wallace, Pichler and Haerpfer (2012), citizens of Eastern European countries vigorously 'welcomed the freedom to join civil society institutions' (Wallace, Pichler & Haerpfer, 2012, p. 5). The scholars' comparative analysis, however, shows that the general level of participation in voluntary associations in Eastern Europe is rather low and the growth is quite limited (Wallace et al., 2012, p. 16). They continue by saying that although civil society is sometimes measured by civil society associations and by 'the percentage of enrolment in these institutions and the number of these institutions altogether' (Wallace et al., 2012, p. 6), participation in non-state associations 'is not the only way to capture civil society' (Wallace et al., 2012, p. 17). Nevertheless, Wallace et al. conclude that in spite of some indication of growth, 'civil society in Eastern Europe was weak and remains weak' (Ibid.).

Why is Eastern European civil society considered weak though? Gagyi and Ivancheva (n.d.) hold that the reason for its weakness lies in the fact that as a social dimension, civil society was an imported 'Western model of modernization' (Gagyi & Ivancheva, n.d., p. 6). It was thought to be significant because 'it was understood to be an element of Western democracy taking root in less developed Eastern grounds' (Ibid., p. 7). Those who brought the concept to 'the other Europe' were speaking the language 'using terms like dètente, disarmament, and peace' that people who were struggling to

survive in the state socialism environment could not understand (Ibid., p. 8). Nevertheless, Eastern European civil society was regarded as a 'victory of (Western) liberal democracy over (Eastern) socialism' (Ibid., p. 9). Now that the state had withdrawn from many spheres of social life the void had to be filled with something and the 'something' turned out to be civil society represented by the NGO sector (Ibid., p. 9), although it is debatable whether the non-profit sector was accepted in Eastern Europe. This narrow interpretation of civil society in Eastern Europe equating it to the number of existing NGOs persists in the present day civil society discourse with regard to Eastern European countries (Grødeland & Aasland, 2011, p. 130).

According to Grødeland and Aasland (2011, p. 129), nowadays NGOs are assigned with 'a watchdog function' with respect to corruption. However, it is a difficult task for NGOs in post-communist Europe. The reason for that, in Grødeland's opinion, is the largely informal character of civil society in post communist states (Grødeland, as cited in Grødeland & Aasland, 2011, p. 130). Informal mechanisms of dealing with various issues are the legacy of Eastern European countries' communist past and as such represent 'a social norm, shaping the behavior of post-communist citizens' (Ibid.). In the West civil society consists of a host of different voluntary associations that include trade unions, religious and charity organizations, self-help groups, etc. When the East European bloc collapsed and Western donors gained access to Eastern countries, they of course 'promoted civil society by giving priority to the establishment of new NGOs … [that were] heavily dependent on donor funding, thus effectively functioning as cheap

implementers of the latter's strategies rather than as independent watchdogs' (Grødeland, as cited in Grødeland & Aasland, 2011, p. 130).

Wallace et al. (2012) enumerate some other reasons that account for the weakness of civil society in Eastern Europe (Wallace et al., 2012, p. 4). The list comprises the suppression of free speech and associations that existed during the communist regime and consequently slow advance in the process of creating voluntary associations after the collapse of communism. The slow advance is ascribed to the fact that the associations were emerging 'in a climate of distrust, suspicion of formal institutions, and economic collapse, which [led] to people being concerned with the struggle for existence rather than participating in public life' (Howard, as cited in Wallace et al., 2012, p. 4). In addition, people in East European countries were not able to understand the new rules of the game and lacked perspectives in life due to the anomie caused by the changes (Ibid.).

Wallace et al. (2012) also raise a question whether the condition of and attitude to civil society in the former Soviet republics was any different from the one in East European countries. They hypothesize that in the newly emerged Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that includes Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine as a participating state but not an official member, civil society should be more suppressed in comparison with other former Soviet bloc East European countries because of a more authoritarian nature of the regimes in the CIS. According to Ehrenberg (1999), however, civil society

was never completely dead in the Soviet Union even at the peak of Stalin's rule. By the time the confrontation of the Cold War declined, the state was not interfering so much with private life of the Soviet citizens anymore and 'networks of civic associations were developing relatively freely' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 187). There were some other indicators, which proved that 'a Tocquevillean civil society of autonomous organizations could grow in a socialist environment' (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 191). The indicators included urbanization, the transformation of the countryside, widespread literacy and mass education, declining interest in politics, the slow growth of 'underground' economy, etc. Even the mouthpiece of the Communist party newspaper *Pravda* 'acknowledged the existence of more than 30,000 <…> grass-roots voluntary associations dedicated to various types of civic improvement' (Starr, as cited in Ehrenberg, 1999, pp. 191-192).

At first glance it might seem that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the 'seeds' of the civil society concept should have fallen into a very fertile ground, especially because 'civil society [has become] the new mantra of the government and political elite' (Domrin, as cited in Stepanenko, 2006, p. 573). However, just as everywhere else in the world, no unanimous understanding of the 'mantra' meaning exists in the former Soviet Union countries 'as each interprets it in light of its own political interests' (Stepanenko, 2006, p. 573).

The nascent civil society was not completely powerless though. In some former Soviet republics it helped unfold the so-called 'colored revolutions': the Rose revolution

in Georgia, the Orange revolution in Ukraine, and the Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan. Similar reasons led to 'colored revolutions' in each of the three countries. They included avoidance of democratic institutions or manipulation of them for the sake of gaining certain outcomes by the previous regimes of those countries, rigging the elections outcomes and violation of human rights (Galbreath, 2010, pp. 169-170). The question, however, remains whether the 'colored revolutions' actually managed to turn the tide in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan with regard to the condition of civil society there. In Galbreath view (2010), in Georgia and Ukraine the situation with democratic institutions, elections and human rights improved, with Georgia also managing to reduce its level of corruption. As for Kyrgyzstan, the events there were generated mostly by 'a regional split between north and south' rather than by a search for democratic and human rights reforms, and thus the Tulip revolution ended in 'replacement of one ruling political family by another' (Galbreath, 2010, p. 174).

One more important question is how the difficulties of democratic and market reforms in post-Soviet countries can be explained. Stepanenko (2006), referring to Walzer's statement, holds that the explanation lies in the lack of 'the civil society argument' (Stepanenko, 2006, p. 572). Although Stepanenko (2006) is talking about Ukraine, the same explanation can be extrapolated to many other countries of the former Soviet Union. The lack implies

> the shortage of developed modern traditions, practices, and especially institutionalized mechanisms that enable systematic (not spontaneous) citizens' political and social engagement. The lack of historically stable democratic institutions, values and often civic identities for the people

living in post-Soviet countries <…> Sharp political and cultural cleavages on the issues of people's values and identities <…> Furthermore, <…> Waltzer's point also involves 'the paradox of the civil society argument' – that civil society requires a stable and accountable democratic state as its institutional prerequisite (Ibid.)

It seems that the weakness of civil society in the former Soviet states is conditioned by the same factors as in the East and Central European countries. These factors are as follows: anomie with respect to the changes and new values inculcated by the West, the traditional informal character of relationships among civil society actors, which is the legacy of the communist reality, and something that could be referred to as the language problem, i.e. formal borrowing of Western concepts, such as 'democracy', 'elections' or 'parliament' from the Western discourse without actual implementation of the content of those concepts in post-communist societies.

In the opinion of Korosteleva et al. (2003), Belarus in particular was one of the post-Soviet countries whose transition to democracy was more difficult than of any other country's in the European region. There were historical as well as cultural reasons for that, and as a result the country experiences economic stagnation, social division and international isolation. Korosteleva et al. (2003) consider Belarus to be 'a good candidate for analysis' as it is a vivid example 'of the difficulties associated with third-wave transition' (Korosteleva et al., 2003, p. 3).

<…> Belarus [is] in <…> 'transition' from the *old* to the *new* regime, and, nevertheless, its democratic progress remains unsound, economic restructuring has not been initiated, parties remain weak and powerless, and the prospect of dictatorship is looming. Indeed, contemporary Belarus has arrived at a crossroads of transition: what lies ahead is either an irrevocable path to democracy or a slide backwards to dictatorship (Ibid.).

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is to study the role of civil society in the Republic of Belarus and the attitudes of its citizens to the concept, and to examine how Belarus citizens understand civil society compared to the West.

According to Ioffe (2008), 'Belarus is the least studied and least understood European state to emerge from the breakup of the Soviet Union' (Ioffe, 2008, p. 231). Indeed, there are a lot of paradoxes in this country, as for instance 'a popular [autocrat] versus a squabbling opposition; consensual colonialism versus elitist nationalism' (Eurozone, as cited in Ioffe, 2008, p. 231). Although Belarus 'has received relatively little attention from western scholars and policy-makers' (Korosteleva et al., 2003, p. 1), it does deserve further study due to its unique geographical position and 'its singular path of political and economic transition' (Ibid.).

The data used for the analysis are secondary data that come from an attitudinal survey conducted in the Republic of Belarus by the Independent Institute of Sociological, Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) in September 2014. These surveys have been conducted in Belarus every three months for about twenty years. The sample design is

multi-stage random, the unit of analysis is individuals 18 years of age and older. The sample includes 1,506 respondents; the margin of error equals 0.03. The number of sites for interviewing respondents in every type of settlement in every region was defined in conformity with the size of the population and the sample volume. The respondents' addresses were chosen with the help of the random walk sampling method (with the probability proportional to the size of the settlement). The survey was conducted by the face-to-face method at the place of a respondent's residence, not by phone. The data quality control '[was] carried out <…> in the following way: by control of the interview blank fill quality; by spot check (up to 10%) of the conducted interviews over the phone; by logical control of the aggregate results; data re-weighing', etc. (IISEPS, n.d., a).

The analysis of the statistical data was performed with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Because the variables are nominal, the appropriate statistical test for association was Chi Square.

Attitude of respondents to Alexander Lukashenko, President of the Republic of Belarus, i.e. respondents' trust or distrust in him, was used as a control variable to understand responses to other questions. A number of demographic explanatory variables, such as respondents' gender, age, level of education, type of settlement and status, have also been used for the analysis. According to Barrington and Herron (2001), age 'has been noted as an important factor in studies of post-Soviet public opinion', as well as gender, because 'in the post-Soviet region women's attitudes about the regime

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and government are more likely to reflect traditional political orientations' (Barrington & Herron, 2001, p. 577). IISEPS opinion polls of many years show that traditionally people with higher education are more inclined to support political and economic reforms than those with only secondary education, for instance. In addition, for Belarus in particular, the place of residence and social status prove to exert impact on how respondents answer the questions that they might interpret as politically significant. As analysis of all demographic characteristics of respondents used by IISEPS is beyond the scope of the given paper, only the above-mentioned characteristics were chosen as the most interesting and illustrative ones.

Chapter 4

PUBLIC OPINION POLL ANALYSIS

4.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings on the attitudes of Belarusian citizens to the concept of civil society based on the data of the public opinion poll conducted in Belarus by the Independent Institute of Sociological, Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) in September, 2014 (IISEPS, 2014 a). An analysis of the survey findings will be performed against three main constructs, namely the language problem, two realities and the resource state. At the moment the three theories are rather popular among sociologists and political scientists in Russia and Belarus, and are the subject of heated discussions and theoretical research.

In addition, it seems necessary to explain why I often refer to Russian scholars in my analysis and extrapolate their findings to Belarus. Also, some sociologists in Belarus consider Belarusian society to be a split one; therefore the concept of a split society will be introduced in this chapter too. Finally I am going to touch upon the issue of reliability of public opinion polls conducted in the Republic of Belarus by independent research centers.

4.2 Belarus – Russia

According to Plokhy (2006), after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991 and the appearance of fifteen new states on its ruins, the outside world saw that the Soviet Union was not Russia, although in the West the two terms had been used interchangeably for decades. The fusion of the notions was wrong not only with regard to the former non-Slavic Soviet republics, but also with regard to Ukraine and Belarus, which together with Russia form the so-called Slav triangle. Although the three countries 'have much in common when it comes to their culture and history', all of them chose their 'own path in the turbulent transition from communism' (Plokhy, 2006, p. 1). As for Belarus, 'after a brief period of democratic development, [it] refused to reform its political and economic system and took refuge in Soviet-style ideology and Stalin-era authoritarianism' (Ibid.).

The mutual history of these three countries goes back to Kyivan Rus', which ended with the Mongol invasion of the territories between 1237 and 1240. That was a turning point at which Russian history went one way, and the histories of Ukraine and Belarus took another (Plokhy, 2006, p. 50).

Since the beginning of the 13th century the territory of the modern Republic of Belarus was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). In terms of civilization the GDL should be regarded as Eastern periphery of the Western-Christian civilization. Almost all the towns there had Magdeburg Law of Rights, that was 'a set of town privileges <…> which regulated the degree of internal autonomy within cities and

villages, granted by the local ruler' (Magdeburg Rights, n.d.). Ancient town halls – the buildings of the towns' self-administration – are still preserved in the center of many Belarusian towns. None of the Russian towns ever had Magdeburg Law of Rights. Historians, however, are still debating whether the GDL was primarily a Lithuanian state, a Lithuanian-Rus' polity, or a Rus'-Lithuanian one (Plokhy, 2006, p. 87). The present day Belarusian national historiography tends to claim most of the historical legacy of the Grand Duchy for the Belarusian nation (Ibid.).

At the end of the 18th century after three Partitions of Poland (in 1772, 1793, and 1795) the largest part of the GDL territory was attached to Russia. As a result of the purposeful policy of Russification conducted by the Russian Empire and later by the USSR, no full-fledged nation was formed in Belarus. In the opinion of Korosteleva et al. (2003), 'Belarus possessed the structural foundation on which democracy could have been built, but this appeared to be insufficient for national consolidation' (Korosteleva et al., 2003, p. 4).

Belarus became independent from the Soviet Union on August 25, 1991. Its first (and so far only) president was elected in 1994, and has been continuously reelected ever since.

At present the population size of the republic equals 9.5 million people including 84% of ethnic Belarusians and 8% of ethnic Russians[1-2]. At the same time, according to

the IISEPS data (IISEPS, 2014 a), only 6% use the Belarusian language as the language of their everyday communication; 62% use the Russian language, 12% – both Russian and Belarusian, and 20% use '*trasianka*' – a vernacular mixture of both languages. In the words of Radford University Professor Gregory Ioffe, *trasianka* (literally, a mixture of hay and straw) is a blend of Russian and Belarusian that is sometimes described as a 'disgusting creature of Soviet assimilation', a 'perversion of the language system', or a 'Creolized pseudo-language' (Ioffe, 2008, p. 4).

One of the first public opinion polls conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) before the disintegration of the USSR (March, 1991) registered the largest share of 'the Soviet man'[3] in Belarus (Table 1) among all other Soviet republics (Gudkov, 2004, p. 142). Yuri Levada, Russian sociologist and political scientist, defined the main characteristics of 'the Soviet man' as 'coercive self-isolation, state paternalism, egalitarian hierarchy, [and] imperial syndrome' (Gudkov, Dubinin, & Zorkaya, 2008, p. 5).

Table 1:   **Who do you consider yourself to be in the first place: a citizen of the USSR or a citizen of the republic where you live? (%)**

	Citizen of the USSR	Citizen of my republic	DA
Belarusians	69	24	7
Russians in other republics	66	22	12
Russians in Russia	63	25	12
Ukrainians	42	46	12
Estonians	3	97	0

Attention should be paid to the fact that the share of 'the Soviet man' in Belarus turned out to be even larger than among ethnic Russians living in other republics: 24% and 22% respectively (Table 1). According to Kuzio (2003), abrasive Russification conducted in Ukraine and Belarus between 1950s and 1980s with the purpose of producing 'an eastern Slavic core majority for the Soviet Union' led to the situation that 'today, the Soviet Belarusian identity – which president Lukashenko has promoted since 1994 – is stronger than [even] the Belarusian ethnocultural one' (Kuzio, 2003, p. 3).

Consequently, during the years that have passed after the disintegration of the USSR the 'Soviet man' part in Belarusian society did not virtually change. The mentioned social type is being constantly reproduced within the framework of the Belarusian authoritarian model including its imperial constituent. The validity of the conclusion is confirmed by IISEPS opinion polls conducted in 2014. As a response to the occupation of the Crimea by Russia (to put it more precisely: in response to the TV-version of the mentioned event formed by the Russian TV-channels) the so-called Anomaly-2014 (the term coined by IISEPS) was formed in Belarusian society: an increase in social sentiments and support of the authorities against the background of accumulating negative phenomena in the economy. The fact should not surprise much as according to IISEPS, 85% of Belarusians watch news programs on Russian TV, and 86% – on Belarusian TV, and 48% of Belarus citizens share the version of the events in Ukraine broadcast by Russian TV-channels (ISSEPS, 2014 b).

The nature of Belarusian and Russian societies is based on similar fundamental characteristics. The same, however, can be said about the nature of statesmanship. In spite of the fact that the history of Belarusian statesmanship does not exceed three hundred years, it is based on the principles of the 'Russian Power' that were completely formed at the end of the 16th century. The authors of the concept of the 'Russian Power' are Russian historians Fursov and Pivovarov. In Fursov's view (2008), the hallmark of every large and complex social system consists in its core element as an essential item of its organization. In the Hindu system it is a caste, in the antique – a polis, in the capitalist – capital. The basic element for understanding the Russian world and history is power. This power does not boil down to statesmanship; it is not political. Its main features are above-lawfulness and socially homogeneous character (Fursov, 2008, p. 14).

It should be noted that at present 'Russian Power' in its classical version functions precisely in Belarus. In Russia for the last two decades social homogeneity has undergone deformation never yet seen throughout its centuries-old history. In particular, the decile coefficient, which is the ratio of incomes of the wealthiest 10% of the population to the incomes of the poorest 10%, makes up 17 in Russia and about 6 – in Belarus[4], which corresponds to the European level.

Here a 'subjective' factor should also be mentioned. In Belarus the level of intellectual potential in the realm of soft sciences is incommensurable with Russia. Official Belarusian science does not go beyond the scope of the doctrines prescribed by

the authorities. No original theories that would explain the peculiarities of the national development have emerged in Belarus during the years of independence (S. Nikaliuk, IISEPS expert, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

To summarize, there are a number of reasons why it seems appropriate to use the theories elaborated by Russian researchers and extrapolate them to Belarus in my analysis. Among them are the mutual history of Belarus and Russia, the fact that the Russian language is used for everyday communication by over 60% of Belarusian citizens, the absence of Belarusian national identity, and the presence of Belarusian Soviet identity. In addition, it is necessary to mention the same fundamental characteristics of society in both countries, the impact Russian TV exerts on the formation of public opinion in Belarus, and the absence of any serious scientific theories explaining the processes, which are currently underway in Belarusian society.

ENDNOTES

[1] Here and elsewhere in the paper all percentages have been rounded up to the nearest integer for the sake of convenience.

[2] Belarus-Population Census: Ethnic Composition of the Population of the Republic of Belarus. Retrieved form http://catalog.ihsn.org/index.php/catalog/4377

[3] Studying the 'Soviet man' social type is the main direction in the research of sociologists of Yury Levada's School. Systematic work in this field has been conducted since 1989.

[4] Popov, V. (2009, May 25). *Where Russia Now Stands.* Retrieved from http://globalbrief.ca/blog/2009/05/25/where-russia-now-stands/

Yemelyanau, M. (2009). *Inequality in Belarus from 1995 to 2007.* Retrieved form http://eng.beroc.by/webroot/delivery/files/WP1_eng_Yemelyanau.pdf

4.3   Split Society

Belarusian society is first and foremost characterized by a split. In their book

Russian authors Akhiezer, Klyamkin, and Yakovenko (2013) consider split as a socio-

cultural phenomenon with a clear division between the pre-state and state cultures.

> The fundamental difference of the state organization of life from the pre-
> state one (congeneric) consists in the fact that the former embraces large
> communities of people who are far away from each other in terms of
> space, whereas the latter spreads only to local communities where
> everyone knows everyone else by sight. This alone predetermines a
> considerable difference between a state and pre-state cultures.
> Involvement into a large society presupposes an ability to handle
> abstractions, one of which is the concept of the state (Akhiezer, Klyamkin,
> & Yakovenko, 2013, p. 40).

Although representatives of a pre-state culture perceive the state as a large

patriarchal family, the state is not an analogue of one. In a family, in particular, the head

communicates with the members of the household directly, i.e. without intermediaries.

That is why for the modern bearers of the pre-state culture state institutions are devoid of

their own legitimacy. There is no room for intermediaries between a common person and

the head of state in 'the picture of the world' of a pre-state person. Thus trust ratings of

state institutions are derivatives from the rating of the state's first person.

A pre-state culture representative is apolitical. It is impossible to imagine a

political struggle for the right to be considered the head of the family! Due to the fact,

electoral ratings of the top state officials in Belarus seldom exceed the statistical error –

Belarusians simply do not perceive them as politicians. It is not uncommon for the

citizens of Belarus not to know the last name of the prime minister or the parliamentary

speaker. Consequently, Lukashenko has every reason to repeatedly call himself 'the only politician' when talking to his inner circle.

Society's split into the bearers of state and pre-state culture can be considered in terms of modernized and traditional groups of the population. The corresponding demographic characteristics of each part of the split society follow from here. In a split society there is no basic consensus (there is no agreement on what the basic values are).

> Consequently, a split is characterized by a vicious circle, i.e. activation of positive values in one of the two parts of the split society, which brings into action the powers of the other part of society negating these values. Activation of progress and development values, of the aspiration to follow the path of modernization can activate static traditionalist values by a certain part of the people. At the same time, activation of traditionalism values pushes part of society to educational values, to the fight for progress (Akhiezer, 1995, p. 6).

In practice this means impossibility for the institution of parliamentarism to function, as each side of the split society considers suggestions of the opposite side not simply mistaken, but altogether criminal.

Outwardly the split of Belarusian society is registered in the attitude to the head of state. However, this is true only when the president's trust rating is high: in times of trouble when the president does not 'live up to the expectations' of his electorate, his trust rating decreases; however, it does not mean that his supporters convert into his opponents and begin to support the opposition advocating for the European way of the country's development. The main factor that divides Belarusian society into two unequal parts (a majority and a minority) is connected with human capital[1]. A typical representative of the

majority is an elderly person (more often a woman than a man), with a low level of education who lives in the rural area. This person is not capable of fitting in the market economy and consequently needs support on the part of the paternalistic state. It is natural that he is more inclined to trust state mass media and share the official assessments of the domestic and foreign events.

A typical representative of the Belarusian minority has opposite socio-demographic characteristics. It is a person who can construct personal life strategies on his/her own, and the main obstacle in the way of realizing these strategies is the authoritarian power and centralized economy. On the official level the state does not notice representatives of the Belarusian minority. On the unofficial level, however, they are the objects of careful attention of the state repressive bodies. The interests of the Belarusian minority are not represented by any of the power institutions.

In September 2014 (IISEPS, 2014 c) 54% of Belarusians trusted president Lukashenko, and 33% – did not. This rating value should be considered high, that is why an analysis of answers to the politicized questions can be conducted quite objectively using the respondents' attitude to Lukashenko as a criterion of their division into a majority and a minority.

In full compliance with the assumption put forward before, women trust Lukashenko more often than men: 61% vs. 45%; people with primary education – more

often than those with higher education: 84% vs. 44% (it is necessary to note that among Belarusians with higher education there are a lot of public sector employees: those who work in the education and health care systems, state employees, i.e. people whose material wellbeing is determined directly by the state); residents of the rural area more often than residents of the capital: 62% vs. 38%; elderly people of 60 years of age and older – more often than young people aged between 18 and 29: 79% vs. 33% (IISEPS, 2014 c).

It has already been mentioned that the split of Belarusian society is registered mainly when respondents are asked questions, which they perceive as politically loaded. If a question is not perceived by respondents as a politicized one, the split society dichotomy may not be so obvious. Let me illustrate this by using the attitude of the majority and minority of Belarusian society to the annexation of the Crimea by Russia as an example (Table 2).

Table 2:   **Attitude to the annexation of the Crimea by Russia (%)**
              Chi Square 161,634; P < 0.05

	All respondents	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
It is the restoration of the Russian territories, of historical justice	60	64	23	13	100
It is an imperialistic seizure, occupation	27	34	56	10	100
DA/NA	13	45	33	22	100
Total	100				

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According to the table, 60% of Belarusians supported the Russian propaganda version about the events in the Crimea ('It is the restoration of the Russian territories, of historical justice'). Only 27% supported the opposite point of view ('It is an imperialistic seizure, occupation'). This is a standard ratio of the answers to politicized questions. It approximately corresponds to the structure of Belarusian society at voting during the presidential elections that has been registered since 1994, i.e. the figures reflect the differences in the respondents' attitude towards Lukashenko, and thus the split of society into a majority and a minority.

In contrast to the attitude to the annexation of the Crimea, the attitude of Belarusians to civil society does not look politicized at the first glance (Table 3).

Table 3:   Are you involved in public activity? (%)
Chi Square 10,310; P < 0.05

	All respondents	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
Yes	17	55	35	10	100
No	79	52	34	14	100
NA	4	70	19	11	100
Total	100				

The split in this case manifests itself in the fact that supporters and opponents of Lukashenko mean different things by civil society and public activity − each part of Belarusian split society is talking about 'its own' civil society. For the former these are

the entities supporting the state. For the latter these are opposition bodies. That is why one should not be surprised that regardless of the fact whether respondents stated they were involved or not involved in public activity, the ratio of supporters and opponents of Lukashenko proved to be about the same: 55% vs. 35% – among those who were involved, and 53% vs. 34% – among those who were not.

ENDNOTES

[1]   Human capital – the stock of knowledge, habits, social and personality attributes, including creativity, embodied in the ability to perform labor so as to produce economic value. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_capital

4.4 The Language Problem

Any attempt to expertly discuss social and political problems in the Slav triangle (Belarus-Russia-Ukraine)[1] strikes against the language problem. According to Akhiezer et al. (2013), it is possible to invent one's own language in order to describe one's own special way, however it will not help much – the peculiarity of a language does not allow to compare a registered phenomenon with others described in terms of Western sciences (Akhiezer et al., 2013, pp. 218-219).

Western social sciences are tailored to explain a certain type of society – the one where power and property are detached from one another, where the economic, social and political spheres are distinctly differentiated (Nikaliuk, 2014). The basic units of such society are market, civil society and politics. Economics, sociology and political science use these basic units as units of analysis in their realms. In the words of Kordonsky (2000), certain notions borrowed from orthodox social sciences such as 'parliament', 'president', 'government', 'democracy', 'authoritarianism', 'constitution', 'politics', 'impeachment' etc. are no more than borrowed words one can use to talk about things that do not actually exist in the reality of the former Soviet countries like Russia or Belarus. Consequently, the language of Western social sciences cannot be used to describe Belarusian reality with its *quasi*-market, *quasi*-civil society and *quasi*-politics as it is simply not commensurate with it.

In the opinion of Russian economist Naishul (2004), in the largest part of the post-Soviet space the language picture consists

> of the fractions of what we learned at school in the civics class, of the fractions of what we learned at the University in the Marxism class, of the fractions of what we adopted from imported foreign impressions and from our own trips abroad. This is basically the conceptual apparatus we are using (Naishul, 2004).

The following example illustrates how the post-Soviet societies borrow the form of a certain concept from the western reality without actually borrowing its content. On December 29, 2003 Chairman of the lower chamber of the Russian Parliament Boris Gryzlov answering the question how the party *United Russia* was going to support the inter-factional dialogue, said literally the following: 'It seems to me that the State Duma is not the site to conduct political battles, defend some political slogans and ideologies. It is a site where we should engage in a constructive and efficient legislative activity'[2]. The mentioned statement of the parliamentary speaker was reduced by journalists to the aphorism –'Parliament is not a place for discussion'. Its popularity has only been growing with years. However, how should it be perceived? As nonsense? As a lapsus linguae? Yes, it is a slip of the tongue, but a Freudian slip. In the Russian civilization a monological way of thinking prevails. That is why any opponent is perceived by mass consciousness as an enemy, and lawmakers – as babblers unable to do real work. The latter conclusion is not unreasonable. If a dialogue is absent from culture as a means for finding consensus, then social unity can be supported mainly by virtue of strict centralized power. In this respect parliamentarism in the post-Soviet space is a tribute of time – modern democratic countries are supposed to have parliaments, and modern

Russia and other post-Soviet states want to look democratic in the eyes of the world, hence they have parliaments. However, there is no more practical sense in it than in the word 'democratic' that dictators like to include into the names of countries (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the German Democratic Republic, the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea under Pol Pot, etc)[3].

It seems necessary to begin the discussion of the language problem with an analysis of the Russian word '*gosudarstvo*' (*государство*) whose English counterpart is the word '*state*'. According to Schmitt,

> the state... is to the highest degree singular, idiographic, determined by time phenomenon, which should be dated by the epoch from the XVI to the XX centuries, and which came out of the Renaissance, Humanism, Reformation and Counter-Reformation... The state is predominantly the product of a religious civil war, of overcoming it by means of neutralization and secularization of confessional fronts (as cited in Pivovarov, 2006).

However, the Russian civilization, whose peripheral part is Belarus, knew neither the Renaissance, nor Humanism, nor Reformation with Counter-Reformation. There is a completely different model of relations behind the word 'GO-SU-DARstvo'. Although there is no unanimous opinion about the etymology of the word '*gosudarstvo*' among Russian scientists, most researchers agree that it is connected with '*gosudar*' (*государь*) or '*gospodar*' (*господарь*) – the ancient Russian word for Prince-the-Ruler, which in its turn comes from the word '*gospod*' (*господь*), i.e. God (State, n.d.). In the opinion of Russian sociologist Bessonova (2006), the first syllable 'GO' is also the first syllable of the word '*gospodin*', which means 'lord' or 'master'. 'SU' was the old way of addressing

noblemen in Ancient Russia. The syllable 'DAR' is the root of the verb 'to present with' (Bessonova, 2006, p. 15). Thus the word '*gosudarstvo*' means the system of traditional mastery or rule where the first person (the virtual owner of the territory and the population living there) distributes resources among his subjects. Political science calls such systems of rule *patrimony.*

To illustrate the aforesaid, let me provide an example from the book *The Russian Revolution* by Richard Pipes (1990), an American historian.

> Accustomed to the authority of the *bol'shak*[4] in the household, by analogy [the peasantry] viewed the Tsar as the *bol'shak* or master (*khoziain*) of the country. The peasant 'saw in the Tsar the actual owner and father of Russia, who directly managed his immense household' (Zajtseff, as cited in Pipes) – a primitive version of the patrimonial principle underlying Russian political culture (Pipes, 1990, p. 118).

Consequently, it is no coincidence that during the all-Russian population census the last Russian emperor Nicolas II wrote 'Master of the Russian land' in the column 'Occupation' (Census, n.d.).

Pipe's citation puts forward how peasants perceived the tsar at the end of the 19th century. Today, however, is the 21st century. Nevertheless, even today people with pre-state thinking prevail in Belarusian society. They perceive the state as a large family and the first person of the state as its father. For instance, a passage from the official biography of the President of Belarus reads as follows:

> A. G. Lukashenko sets a high value on people's support and is proud of being referred to in the vernacular as "father" – as respected people who

courageously defended the interests of the family and community have always been referred to in our country[5].

The socio-economic model of modern Belarus is a counterpart of a unitary enterprise, i.e. an enterprise with one owner (UE "Belarus"). It does not provide for the presence of political interests of the UE employees, including by businessmen. The latter are owners of their enterprises entirely formally[6] as they themselves are virtually property of the 'father'. An excerpt from a speech given by A. Lukashenko at the press conference on July 20, 2004 goes to prove the aforesaid (attention should be paid to the following: referring to himself in the third person is a distinctive feature of president Lukashenko),

> Many people say that Lukashenko does not want privatization of enterprises as he wants to influence the situation in the country in this manner, that it is easier to retain "dictatorship" this way, and rule the country with authoritarian methods. This is complete nonsense. It is always easier to talk to an owner of a private business. You tell him something – he will do it. Otherwise he risks losing his property[7].

Election campaigns in Belarus, in which opposition parties constantly participate, are a shining example generated by the language problem. After years-long unsuccessful participation in elections[8] opposition politicians came to a unanimous conclusion that "*there are no elections in Belarus*".

It is true that after 1996 when the president started to form the composition of elections committees personally, no one has been counting votes. However, this is not the reason for the absence of elections in Belarus, it is the consequence. In the West political parties are subjects of the election process. At that the status of the ruling party is often a drawback rather than an advantage, as the ruling party is responsible for all the real and

alleged current problems. In Belarus during elections opposition parties have to face the state itself and not the parties supporting the head of state. The state conducts the election process as a special-forces raid mobilizing for this purpose all types of resources – from administrative and coercive to financial ones (Nikaliuk, 2014).

Not long ago Anatoly Rubinov, Chairman of the Council of the Republic (the upper chamber of Belarusian Parliament), said the following in his speech,

> The year of 2015 is a special year for all of us as this year presidential elections are going to take place in Belarus. One should keep in mind that not only the head of state, but all of us will take account in front of the voters of what has been done. That is why our task is to most actively participate in the events connected with running the pre-election presidential campaign, and to make known to every voter the state policy pursued by our president for the sake of consolidation and well being of the country[9].

According to Nikaliuk (2014), this means that mobilization of 'the wheels of state' is going at full speed as we are approaching another electoral special-forces raid. The Council of the Republic is one of its 'cogs'. It is ready '*to most actively participate in the events*' and it is clear on whose side (Ibid.).

In the USA no one would ever think about asking a question what candidate – Republican or Democratic – the FBI, the CIA or the army will support at the next presidential elections. In Belarus, however, everybody knows too well whom the servicemen will support in 2015. All of them will be mobilized to defend 'law and order', which in practice will mean persecution of opposition parties' activists. However, if instead of elections there are *quasi*-elections in Belarus, then instead of the deputies –

quasi-deputies sitting in *quasi*-parliament[10], and instead of the president – a *quasi*-president. Their rights and duties are described in the *quasi*-constitution (Nikaliuk, 2014).

In spite of two decades of independence and substantial changes that occurred in Belarusian society, unchecked power as the backbone of the authoritarian regime remained intact. However, even in Belarus it needs at least some formal legitimization. Thus, the procedure of its legitimization in which the majority of Belarusians participate from time to time is continued to be called 'elections' (Nikaliuk, 2014). Today most modern authoritarian regimes have to 'play' elections imitating democracy. They are compelled to do so by the international context – investors consider electoral authoritarianisms as more stable and thus more appropriate for investment than non-electoral ones (Magaloni, as cited in Golosov, 2011).

It is obvious that political parties will participate in the elections, as it is required by the language created to describe a different reality in which political process is understood as a race for power by means of the election procedure. *Quasi*-parties engage in *quasi*-politics in hopes of winning *quasi*-elections because they cannot rely on society. If one understands society as a system of stable connections based on solidarity, mutual values, the feeling of belonging and mutual interests, then such society does not exist in Belarus, and what is conventionally considered to be society is *quasi*-society.

Why is it so? Russian sociologist Levada (2005) gave the following answer to this question:

> This society is too dissociated; it is devoid of centers of attraction. It is dissociated not only in terms of our space <…> dissociation of people, atomization is brought up to such a degree, which is difficult to find around the globe. They are like peas in a sack: the sack holds them together, however take away the sack and they will shower. Those are people whose main task will be to protect themselves. If there is a misfortune, if something bad has happened to someone, what do people do? They draw consolation from the fact that it has not happened to them (Levada, 2005).

The state plays the role of the sack today, just like it used to do it 100 and 500 years ago. From the point of view of western soft sciences it is also a *quasi*-state. It has not been created by society. On the contrary, it creates society, forming and eliminating its structural elements for the sake of solving its main task – surviving in history.

Distribution of answers to the question 'Who do you think civil society is subject to?' asked by IISEPS in September 2014 illustrates how public opinion perceives the place of civil society in Belarus (Table 4). It can be deduced from the table that Belarusians view civil society mostly as a state structure because the most popular answer option turned out to be 'To the government' (37%). Its popularity exceeded the popularity of the option 'It leads itself on its own' almost two times (19%).

Table 4:   **Who do you think civil society is subject to? (%)**
             Chi Square 134,194; P < 0.05

	All respondents	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
To the government	37	67	22	11	100
To foreign funds	7	64	25	11	100
To opposition parties	8	57	33	10	100
To those who pay	20	48	36	16	100
It leads itself on its own	19	29	58	13	100
NA/DA	9	53	28	19	100
Total	100				

Two thirds of all the respondents who think that civil society is controlled by the government trust the president. It seems that it is difficult for a Soviet person who is the backbone of Lukashenko's adherents to imagine that social (economic, political, etc.) activity of citizens is possible outside the state. Consequently, it is quite natural that the option 'government' proved to be the most popular one. On his part, Lukashenko regularly makes statements like 'our civil society relies on deputies' councils, trade unions, a powerful youth organization and its allies'[11]. The state does not even conceal financing such entities. Hence, everything that is not 'state' or 'government' is perceived by Lukashenko's supporters as suspicious or altogether wrong. That is why they can easily believe in civil society's (its oppositional segment's) dependence on foreign funds or other bodies that might be willing to pay.

The only answer option where the number of those who distrust the Belarusian president exceeded the number of his supporters was 'it leads itself on its own'. If civil

society is the 'sphere of voluntary associations and informal networks' which is 'distinguished from the public activities of government because it is voluntary, and from the private activities of markets because it seeks common ground and public goods' (Sirianni & Friedland, n.d.), then in Belarus only 19% of all respondents think so, and roughly two thirds of them do not support president Lukashenko. For a majority of the population, including both supporters and opponents of the president, civil society is inseparable from the government, and whatever is 'government' can hardly be 'informal'.

It is possible to conclude then, that although the idea of civil society does exist in the public discourse in Belarus, it is more of a borrowed collocation, rather than a concept understood in a particular way in Western Europe and North American countries.

ENDNOTES

[1] In the given paper Russia is regarded as an independent civilization and Belarus as its peripheral part.

[2] The verbatim of the State Duma session, session — 1 (715) d.d.12/29/2003, Collection: Bulletin N 1(715) Part 1: pp. 4-31

[3] On March 1, 2014 Russian President Vladimr Putin applied to the Federation Council for permission to bring troops into the territory of Ukraine (to the Crimea). The Federation Council made decisions that changed the historical vector of modern Russia's development the same day without any discussion!

[4] The Russian peasant household was organized on a simple authoritarian model, under which full authority over the members and their belongings was entrusted to one person, known as *bol'shak* or *khoziain*. The family patriarch was usually the father, but the post could also be assigned, by common consent, to another adult male. (Pipes, 1990, p. 93)

[5] The web portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus
http://23.orsha.schools.by/pages/internet-portal-prezidenta-rb

[6] Due to its size Russia is organized not according to the principle of a unitary enterprise, but of a closed joint-stock company. It does not, however, give any additional rights to the Russian businessmen. Let me cite a statement of one of the richest people in Russia, the aluminum king Oleg Deripaska: "If the state tells us we must renounce our company, we will do it". http://www.newsru.com/finance/13jul2007/deripaska.html

[7] The verbatim of President A. Lukashenko's press conference. (2004, July 20).
Retrieved form http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/stenogramma-press-konferentsii-aleksandra-lukashenko-5914/

[8]   After 1996 none of opposition candidates got into Parliament, in spite of the fact that according to the independent sociological services, about 30% of voters support the opposition.

[9]   Speech of Rubinov, A. N., Chairman of the Council of the Republic. (2014, December   19).   Retrieved   from   http://www.sb.by/belarus/article/v-edinstve-i-konsolidatsii-nasha-sila.html

[10]   Belarusian Parliament is not a place for discussion either. It does not even have parliamentary factions.

[11]   The report of the President of the Republic of Belarus at the 3rd All-Belarusian People's Assembly. (2006, March 3).
Retrieved from http://www.intelros.org/lib/doklady/likashenko2.htm

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Retrieved from http://www.intelros.org/lib/doklady/likashenko2.htm

4.5   Reality-1 and Reality-2

The abundance of *quasi-* mentioned above gives rise to the phenomenon of split reality. For the sake of convenience I am going to use hereafter the terms 'Reality-1' (*quasi*-reality) and 'Reality-2'.

Reality-1 exists in the public space – it is what one can officially talk about (Kordonsky, 2000). For instance, its political constituent is described in the Constitution and a train of corresponding laws. To describe Reality-1 we use the language borrowed from the western humanities. Reality-2 is a world in which all types of relations among subjects are based exclusively on informal rules. The language of Reality-1 is employed at teaching students at Departments of Humanities at Belarusian universities. Official Belarusian science is trying not to notice Reality-2. It continues the Soviet tradition whose essence boiled down to justification of ideological doctrines. The scale of this type of activity in the USSR was reflected in the number of scientific communism professors at universities, which exceeded 10 thousand people. However, at the end of the 80s when the decomposition of the centralized economy began, the leadership of the country found it difficult to even put together a squad of only 17 reformists – the team of E. Gaidar and A. Chubais who became members of the Russian government in 1991 and were supporters of market economy with a rigid control on the part of the state (Illarionov, 2015).

Below are the words of the author of the two realities theory, Russian sociologist

Kordonsky (2000), describing the conflict between Reality-1 and Reality-2:

> The conflict manifests itself in the fact that state business interferes with private business, state institutions interfere with the citizens of the state, society interferes with public figures, political parties and organizations interfere with politicians. And so it goes into infinity. In Reality-2 people do their business and set up their own living spaces, and in Reality-1 they are fighting against their mirror reflections and cannot defeat them (Kordonsky, 2000).

Reality-1 coincides with the 'official' view of civil society in Belarus. It contains

a *quasi*-civil society, which in its turn is subdivided into the bodies financed by the state

and the ones financed by western funds. In the public space the former are viewed as the

buttress of the state:

> A stable state cannot rely solely on the authorities, remarks president A. Lukashenko. As Confucius used to say, 'no power can hold its ground without the people's trust'. That is why it is very important for such civil society entities as local Councils, trade unions, youth and veterans' organizations to play a more and more important role in the state[1].

Reality-2 is reflected in independent nation-wide public opinion polls that have

been conducted in Belarus since the beginning of the 90s by two non-governmental

sociological agencies: the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies

(IISEPS) and the Axiological Laboratory 'Novak'. In 2006 IISEPS was closed down

under a contrived pretext. At the present moment it is registered in Lithuania. Its head,

Dr. Oleg Manaev, 'has been repeatedly warned by the General Prosecutor's Office that

the continuation of polling in Belarus by an institution not registered in Belarus is a

criminal offence' (Ioffe, 2008, p. 193). 'Novak' continues to work, but it is restricted

from conducting surveys on a wide range of political issues (a special license is required for the purpose).

When it is impossible not to notice Reality-2 – for instance when state agencies conduct public opinion polls – the results of such polls are not published. It is not difficult to understand such closedness as knowledge about Reality-2 articulated publicly can destroy Reality-1. For example, in Reality-1 one can find a united Belarusian nation consolidated around the president whose electoral rating never goes below 90%. State sociological agencies' employees, however, do not record such high level of support, and consequently, the results of public opinion polls contradicting Reality-1 are not published. They are inaccessible not only to students, but also to faculty and most high-rank officials.

As for the entities financed by western funds, according to president A. Lukashenko's statement, 'We keep under control all those lawless, enemy NGOs and the fifth column' (Ibid.). 'The fifth column' is the opposition political parties. The authorities tolerate the existence of the 'lawless' entities of civil society financed by western funds just like they put up with the existence of parliament in Belarus, however their activity is kept at bay.

In Russia debates pertaining to civil society are frequently dominated by the idea that it is necessary to develop and strengthen civil society on the model of the countries

where civil society is already strong and well-developed. Western European and North American civil societies 'where there are strong civil society organizations capable of solving the citizens' problems by efforts of the citizens themselves – without or with minimal participation on the part of the state – are taken as a role model' (Kordonsky, 2006 a). However, the vicennial experience in civil society's functioning in Reality-1 explicitly testifies to the fact that civil society organizations created by the state or made according to an external pattern survive only with constant exterior financial and organizational replenishment. They do not grow into the everyday life (Ibid.).

In Reality-2 civil society entities are not even in the question. However, civil society does exist in Reality-2, but according to Kordonsky, it differs essentially from the one researchers are used to. It is not organized, although it is all permeating and rich in opportunities for solving many problems (Kordonsky, 2006 a).

Kordonsky argues further that a non-organized civil society can be regarded as the reverse side of the all-organizing state. Both the state and civil society are interdependent, and this mutual dependence is crucial. Neither state initiatives, nor private interests can be realized and satisfied without taking into account private interests of state officials and participation of the state – without a lobbied law, a bribe to an official, under the table payment to members of the top brass and siphoning off the budget among business entities (Kordonsky, 2006 a).

In Reality-2 civil society's efficiency is reached owing to its unique institutionalization.

There exist popular and stable civil society institutions: home or restaurant feasts, Russian sauna with and without prostitutes, hunting and fishing, amateur clubs (such as playing football on Saturdays by state officials), spending leisure time together, dacha coops. <…> Practicing religious worship, drinking, entertaining themselves, shooting birds, taking a steam-bath and gossiping about who charges how much and for what services, people are looking for and usually find the ways to approach officials who will help them minimize taxes, win a tender, get land for real estate development, accommodate a relative at upscale hospital, confer a son immunity from the draft, place a daughter to a quotable higher education establishment, get back the documents for one's car appropriated by the traffic police, cease criminal procedures against a partner or organize a shake-down of one's competitor by law enforcement officers. Every settlement has its parish, a Russian sauna, a restaurant, a club in the worst case scenario, where people gather to solve the problems of satisfying their needs at the expense of material and administrative resources, nominally belonging to the state' (Kordonsky, 2006 a).

From everything listed above the Russian sociologist draws the following conclusion: institutionalized, but non-organized – and insusceptible to organizing – civil society exists everywhere where there are people. At the same time civil society exists nowhere as in each case it is impossible to point at a stable organization in which civil relations are realized (Ibid.).

The table below illustrates the aforesaid with the help of the answers of Belarusian citizens to the following question, 'What, in your opinion, most often leads to wealth?' asked in different years (IISEPS, 2015).

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Table 5: **What in your opinion most often leads to wealth? (%)**
Each line in the table should be considered as a separate question

Answer options	December 1993	January 2007	December 2014
Personal connections	72	43	47
Dishonesty	56	16	22
Work	37	68	44
Talent	32	35	25
Luck	30	39	38
Education	22	38	26

The year of 1993 (the first column) was marked by the system crisis in Belarus after the disintegration of the USSR: most enterprises were not working, and the average monthly salary made up about twenty dollars. It was the time when the planned economic model was not functioning anymore, and a new model had just started to take shape (Nikaliuk, 2015).

Just as in other countries of Eastern Europe, the first opinion polls conducted by IISEPS diagnosed anomie of the Belarusian society, i.e. the condition of the value-normative vacuum characteristic of transition and crisis periods when the old social norms and values have stopped operating, and new ones have not been established yet (Ibid.). Anomie gives rise to degeneration of the value of work and education in society. That is why only 37% of respondents thought that work could help them become rich,

and education was regarded as a means for getting prosperous by a little more than a fifth of respondents.

On the contrary, such values as personal connections (the old boy network) and dishonesty increase. This revaluation, in the opinion of Nikaliuk (2015), is extremely rational as precisely the individual strategies constructed on the basis of personal connections, and not collective actions, are helpful to surviving in chaos. Due to the fact personal connections (72%) and dishonesty (56%) played such an important role with respect to attaining wealth in respondents' opinion.

Stability that came to Belarus after 2005 changed the value priorities of Belarusians (the second column). The need for personal connections for the sake of attaining material wellbeing did not, of course, lose its importance for good (43%). However, it yielded to work (68%) and almost graded up to education (38%). Thus a well-known political science truth was confirmed: everywhere in the world people set similar goals to themselves (material wealth, health, etc.), but the ways of attaining them are to a great extent determined by the framework established by the authorities (Nikaliuk, 2015).

In 2007, however, Belarus gross external debt almost doubled: from 6.8 to 12.5 billion dollars[2]. For the first time the state had to refer to foreign loans to support a two-digit earnings-growth rate. Consequently, it can be stated that the socio-economic model

formed under the guidance of president A. Lukashenko exhausted its resource in 2006. At the moment the country is crawling, slowly but surely, into a new system crisis. All the attempts of the state to stimulate the economic growth with the help of domestic and outside investments ended up in a failure. The year of 2014 became a turning point. From the modernization scenario the state proceeded to the mobilization one having made the focal point of its activity the struggle for strengthening the discipline (first of all in the top down command structure). Here a direct historical analogy suggests itself: in the Russian Empire servitude of society always began from above.

As it has already been said afore, a non-organized civil society is a reverse side of the all-organizing state. The December opinion poll of 2014 (the third column) recorded the priority of personal connections over work again – 47% vs. 44% respectively. The value of education considerably decreased too (26%) (Nikaliuk, 2015). When the state proceeds with the mobilization scenario, society responds with animation of civil activity in Reality-2.

Reverting to the question about respondents' involvement in public activity (Table 3) one can see that only 18% answered that question in the affirmative. Among all the respondents who were involved in public activity 55% trusted president Lukashenko. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that civic activity of the majority is as a rule fictitious. It boils down predominantly to performing state tasks: participation in authorized demonstrations, financing public organizations (payment of trade union dues,

etc.), signing letters, participation in useful initiatives and so forth. This is the activity in Reality-1 where the number of members in the official trade unions makes up about 4 million people (in independent trade unions – about 10 thousand). However, the ratios are approximately the same in youth organizations, political parties, human rights organizations and the like.

The following tables – 6, 7 and 8 – summarize the answers to the questions concerning respondents' attitude to various public institutions. Table 6 contains the percentages of respondents who trust the enumerated institutions. For every question in this table the Chi Square number was large indicating a strong relationship among the variables. The probability associated with a Chi Square statistic was less than 0.05 for each question, thus it was possible to generalize from a random sample to a population, and claim the two variables were associated in the population.

Table 6:   **Do you trust the following public institutions? (trust, %)**
        Each line in the table should be considered as a separate question

	Trust (all respondents)	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
Public organizations in general	38	68	21	11	100
Independent trade unions	27	59	32	9	100
Official trade unions	44	78	14	8	100
Independent research centers	31	52	36	12	100

Table 6 Continued

Human rights organizations	34	63	27	10	100
Political parties and movements	21	55	35	10	100

It can be clearly seen that the highest level of trust is enjoyed by the official trade unions: 44% of all respondents trust them. The head count of the official trade unions was mentioned above. It is necessary to remember, though, that an attitude to trade unions is being formed in society not only under the influence of mass media, but also under the influence of respondents' personal experience. Opponents of Lukashenko perceive official trade unions as a state entity, and their attitude to the state is in general negative. Thus it is not surprising that among those who trust official trade unions, 78% also trust Lukashenko. As Belarusian official trade unions are virtually a state institution, the attitude to them is extremely politicized.

On the other hand, one will not find such a considerable difference in the level of trust in political parties and movements: out of all the respondents who trust them 55% trust Lukashenko and 35% do not trust him. It might seem that it is impossible to find a more politicized institution than political parties. One should keep in mind, though, that in Belarus there are pro-Lukashenko as well as opposition parties. That is why in the given case we register the attitude of the parts of Belarusian split society to 'their' parties.

However, at transferring from the group of respondents who trust public institutions to the group of those who do not trust them (Table 7), it becomes clear that the question about trust in political parties and movements is not completely devoid of its politicized constituent. More respondents do not trust political parties and movements than any other institutions – 31%, and the number of those who trust Lukashenko among those who do not trust the mentioned institutions is also the largest in the list – 57%.

Table 7: **Do you trust the following public institutions? (do not trust, %)**
Each line in the table should be considered as a separate question

	Do not trust (all respondents)	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
Public organizations in general	16	35	50	15	100
Independent trade unions	20	56	33	11	100
Official trade unions	20	27	61	12	100
Independent research centers	19	49	42	9	100
Human rights organizations	17	43	47	10	100
Political parties and movements	31	57	34	9	100

The most interesting answers in this set of questions seem to be in the group of those who found it difficult to answer (Table 8).

Table 8: **Do you trust the following public institutions? (difficult to answer/no answer, %)**
Each line in the table should be considered as a separate question

	Difficult to answer/no answer (all respondents)	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
Public organizations in general	51	47	39	14	100
Independent trade unions	53	50	34	16	100
Official trade unions	36	38	41	21	100
Independent research centers	50	56	29	15	100
Human rights organizations	49	51	33	16	100
Political parties and movements	48	51	32	17	100

In each question, with the exception of the one concerning the respondents' attitude to the official trade unions, the number of respondents who found it difficult to answer or did not want to give any answer was roughly about 50%. Such a large number of those who cannot define their attitude to public institutions may be explained in the following way: these institutions exist in Reality-1, and people live in Reality-2. They do not contact much with public institutions in Reality-2 except for the official trade unions, and subsequently do not trust them. Another explanation may be that respondents are simply afraid to tell the interviewers the truth about their attitude to independent trade unions or political parties and movements.

In the next set of questions respondents were asked whether they knew anything about the activity of public organizations (Tables 9-10). Before proceeding to the analysis of the data in the tables, it is necessary to mention that the number of respondents who refused to answer each of these questions was less than 1%, that is why their answers are omitted from the analysis. Secondly, the Chi Square test showed that the Chi Square number was large for every question in the set except for the one concerning the knowledge about official trade unions (Chi Square 1,149). Also the probability associated with a Chi Square statistic was less than 0.05 for all the questions with the exception of the one about official trade unions ($P > 0.05$). This statistic once again supports the assumption that the attitude to official trade unions and hence the respondents' knowledge about their activity is influenced not only by their attitude to the president, but also by respondents' personal experience, and consequently the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is not very strong.

Table 9: **Do you know anything about the activity of any public organizations? (know, %)**
Each line in the table should be considered as a separate question

	I do, because I have participated in their events or received their services (all respondents)	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
Public organizations in general	89	52	35	13	100

Table 9: Continued

Independent trade unions	74	51	36	13	100
Official trade unions	92	54	33	13	100
Independent research centers	78	52	37	11	100
Human rights organizations	77	53	35	12	100
Political parties and movements	82	52	35	13	100

Table 10:   Do you know anything about the activity of any public organizations? (do not know, %)
Each line in the table should be considered as a separate question

	I do not know anything about it (all respondents)	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
Public organizations in general	10	64	22	14	100
Independent trade unions	26	60	25	15	100
Official trade unions	8	53	32	15	100
Independent research centers	22	60	22	18	100
Human rights organizations	23	57	26	17	100
Political parties and movements	17	62	24	14	100

As for the knowledge about the activity of public institutions, official trade unions are in the lead again – 92% of respondents know about their activity because they either participated in the events or received the services from these organizations. Also the

smallest number of respondents does not know anything about the activity of the official trade unions – only 8%. Independent trade unions can be considered absolute losers in this respect – the smallest number of respondents participated in their activities or received their services, and the largest number of them does not know anything about the activity of independent trade unions: 74% and 26% respectively. On the other hand, if one remembers the head count of the official and independent trade unions – 4 million vs. 10 thousand – it must be admitted that 74% of respondents who know about the activity of the independent trade unions because they participated in their activity or received their services is quite a large number.

A comparatively large share of Lukashenko's supporters (52%) who received services of independent research centers might be connected with the fact that the latter (including those conducting public opinion polls) publish the results of their research on a regular basis. Their opponents familiarize society with the outcome of their research extremely rarely due to the reasons indicated above. Thus the relatively high trust rating of independent research centers among Lukashenko's supporters may also be explained by the same factor.

In the words of Greene (2011), an English political scientist, 'Russia is not entirely devoid of social institutions, but it is close' (S. Greene, 2011, p. 461). As usual, this idea can be extrapolated to Belarus. By saying this, Greene does not

> refer to the myriad establishments laid out on paper, enshrined in bricks
> and mortar, and endowed with budgets of varying generosity; rather [he

refers] to the fact that none of these "paper" institutions <…> allows [Belarusian] citizens to predict with reasonable accuracy how any given social or state-societal interaction will proceed (Ibid.).

This citation is a good illustration of Kordonsky's theory about two realities. 'Paper' institutions exist in Reality-1; however, they have nothing to do with the real life people live. Therefore the 4 million official trade unions head count or the numerical preponderance of political parties supporting Lukashenko turn out to be no more than 'paper' institutions, which are not in any respect '[sets] of ingrained rules and norms governing behavior for individuals or groups of individuals that allow one to predict with reasonable accuracy what the reaction will be to any given action' (Ibid.).

Distribution of answers to the next set of questions (Tables 11-12) turned out to be the most interesting one (just like in the previous set of questions the percentages of those who refused to answer are omitted from the analysis as for each question the share of such respondents made up less than 1%).

Table 11:   **Have you ever participated or could you participate in the types of public and political activities mentioned below? (participated, %)**
Each line in the table should be considered as a separate question

	Participated (all respondents)	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
Participation in a charity event	40	57	31	12	100
Financial support of a public organization	15	61	31	8	100

Table 11 Continued

Pasting up ads, distributing newspapers of an organization	10	49	39	12	100
Participation in an authorized demonstration	18	49	35	16	100
Signing a petition or a letter	18	44	44	12	100
Participation in an initiative valuable to the community (neighborhood clean-up, site improvement, etc.)	75	54	34	12	100
Participation in an unauthorized demonstration, a protest action	4	16	69	15	100

Table 12:   Have you ever participated or could you participate in the types of public and political activities mentioned below? (did not participate, %)
Each line in the table should be considered as a separate question

	Did not/could not participate (all respondents)	Attitude to Lukashenko			
		Trust	Do not trust	DA/NA	Total
Participation in a charity event	60	51	35	14	100
Financial support of a public organization	85	52	34	14	100
Pasting up ads, distributing newspapers of an organization	90	54	33	13	100
Participation in an authorized demonstration	82	55	33	12	100

Table 12 Continued

Signing a petition or a letter	82	55	31	14	100
Participation in an initiative valuable to the community (neighborhood clean-up, site improvement, etc.)	25	52	30	18	100
Participation in an unauthorized demonstration, a protest action	94	55	32	13	100

First of all, the Chi Square number for the questions concerning participation in a charity event, financial support of a public organization, pasting up ads, participation in an authorized demonstration, and signing a petition or a letter proved to be small and the probability associated with a Chi Square statistic was more than 0.05 which made the findings not statistically significant.   Thus, it could be stated that respondents' participation in these events does not depend much, if at all, on their attitude to president Lukashenko.

The Chi Square number for the last two questions about participation in an initiative valuable to the community (neighborhood clean-up, site improvement, etc.) and participation in an unauthorized demonstration or a protest action was large and the probability associated with a Chi Square statistic was less than 0.05 which was statistically significant. Consequently, one can ascertain that there is a rather strong

relationship between respondents' participation in the mentioned activities and their attitude to Lukashenko.

The first thing that arrests one's attention is the high percentages of those who did not/could not participate in any public or political activities with the exception of initiatives valuable to communities – only 25% of such respondents. The tables also show that if respondents at all participated in any type of public or political activity, an absolute majority took part in the mentioned above initiatives (neighborhood clean-up, site improvement, etc.). Neighborhood clean-ups and site improvements are a type of civic activity inherited by Belarusians from the 73 years of the Soviet power rule; hence it is only natural that 75% indicated they had done it.

Attitude to unauthorized demonstrations is the most politicized one that is why although only 4% of all respondents participated in them, 69% of them do not trust Lukashenko.

ENDNOTES

[1]   Address by the President of the Republic of Belarus at the 3rd All-Belarusian People's Assembly. (2006, March 3).
Retrieved from http://www.intelros.org/lib/doklady/likashenko2.htm

[2]   Belarus gross external debt (n.d.).
Retrieved from http://newpresidentbelarus.com/Home/ViewArticle/91

4.6   Resource State

In Simon Kordonsky's view, civil society in Russia (and the same can be argued about Belarus) is inchoate by the resource nature of the state (Kordonsky, 2007). In simple terms, a resource state is a state where resources are distributed not by means of a free market but by the state that concentrates in its hands the maximum of resources and further redistributes them in accordance with its own norms.

Allegedly in a resource state the population defends itself from the state's proclivity to establish unqualified control over the distribution of resources with the help of civil society. Some Belarusian sociologists believe that Belarus is a resource state, just like Russia is, and just like the Soviet Union used to be. They consider it to be a mistake to view civil society in Belarus the same way it is viewed in the West, i.e. as something that is opposed to the state like good is opposed to evil, or light is opposed to darkness (Kordonsky, 2006 a), since in a resource state civil society is a product of people's self-organization with the purpose of overcoming state limits at resources redistribution.

According to Russian economist Movchan, a resource is 'any advantage thanks to which an economy can get revenue not proportionate to the investment and effort' (Movchan, 2014). In Russia the treasures of the soil serve as resources. First of all, these are oil and gas. In the first quarter of 2014 53% of the federal budget was formed owing to oil-and-gas revenue. The prime cost of oil extraction in Russia makes up about $15 per barrel. That is why the state still has an opportunity to receive revenue 'not proportionate

to the investment and effort' even taking into account the present slide in prices below $50 per barrel.

The main resource of Belarus is imperial ambitions of Russia, that is to say Russia subsidizes Belarus not for the sake of economic gain, but by virtue of its imperial nature. It has no other means to retain Belarus' loyalty except by providing it with economic doles. In this way Belarus proves to be almost totally dependent on Russia economically, and de facto becomes one of its provinces thus satisfying Russia's imperial ambitions. Lukashenko, however, has been using the ambitions to his own advantage carrying out the policy of 'oil in exchange for kisses'[1] for two decades already. In 2012, as per calculation of the employees of the Institute of Economics of the National Academy of Science of the Republic of Belarus, the sum of energy subsidies made up about $10 billion – 16% of GDP[2].

In the above-mentioned example the most important thing seems to be not the fact that the state gets revenue 'not proportionate to the investment and effort', but that getting revenue is not connected with functioning of the market. The state then redistributes the received revenue among the elite as well as among the population. This redistribution is carried out in a non-market way too.

The millennial economic history of Russia testifies to the fact that precisely the scarcity of resources multiplied by the huge territory facilitated the forming of non-market mechanisms of concentration and further redistribution of resources by the state.

Charles Tilly's famous formula maintains that European states were formed according to the principle – 'institutions in exchange for resources' (as cited in Etkind, 2013). This means the sovereign would form such institutions as parliament in exchange for the people's agreement to provide him with resources, for instance taxes and conscripts (Ibid.). Etkind holds that in Russia the elite is capable of exploiting natural resources without any participation of the population, which does not mean that the elite necessarily eliminates the population or that the latter dies out due to its uselessness. Quite the contrary – the state's opportunity to get super profits not connected with the economic activity of the citizens allows it to ultimately change the principals of relationship with society. Consequently, the state makes out of the population an object of its incessant care, guardianship, support … and control (Etkind, 2013).

According to Russian sociologist Bessonova (1997), 'In the course of economic evolution mankind has worked out two types of viable economic mechanisms within the framework of which it is possible to coordinate the efforts of large communities: market and distributive' (Bessonova, 1997). Bessonova contrasts the basic elements of the market, such as private property, purchasing and selling, profit and private labor, with the system of distribution, or distributive economy.

The basic relations in [the latter] are handing-over and distribution. Property is presented as something public and simultaneously official[3], the signals of feedback are grievances, and private labor from the first model is countered by service labor, i.e. labor for the benefit of the state or society (Bessonova, 2008).

Distribution of resources on the scale of a state, however, cannot be carried out individually. That is why an estate society is a mandatory condition for the existence of the distributive economic model. Bessonova (2008) argues that initially classes and estates are concepts introduced for analyzing social structures in order to describe and explain undeniable differences in the consumer and legal state of people. The concept of classes is used to describe social hierarchies with respect to consumption, while the concept of estates is introduced to describe hierarchies of service or tendance of rights and privileges (Kordonsky, 2008, p. 24). The fact that Soviet society, as well as post-Soviet societies as its descendants, had an estate structure is supported by Fitzpatrick (1999), an Australian-American historian. Some of her profound observations with respect to the Soviet estate system go as follows:

The main way class was significant in Soviet society was as a state classificatory system determining the rights and obligations of different groups of citizens. By stressing class, in another paradox, the regime had managed to engineer something like a de facto reversion to the old and despised estate system, where your rights and privileges depended on whether you were legally classified as a noble, a merchant, a member of the clerical estate, or a peasant. In the Soviet context, 'class' (social position) was an attribute that defined one's relationship to the state (Fitzpatrick, 1999, p. 12).

Fitzpatrick underlines that relations between classes were not so important in Stalinist society – 'what mattered was the relationship to the state' (Ibid.). She explains further why the relationship to the state was the most important thing for the estates: it

happened because the state 'in particular, [was] an allocator of goods in an economy of chronic scarcity' (Ibid.). This 'chronic scarcity', or in Kordonsky's words 'a permanent resource shortage' (Kordonsky, 2006 b), is a more or less deep crisis in which a resource state constantly finds itself. Scarcity of resources leads to the inability of the state to satisfy the normative needs of the population. Thus it becomes necessary to create conditions in order to increase the amount of resources. Such conditions are created by means of distributing the budget money (and other resources) among the social-accounting groups (estates) of employees in the sphere of education, health care, agriculture, construction and culture proportionally to the importance of these groups for the state (Ibid.). According to Kordonsky (2006 b), estates are pre-class. They are created by the state, and the relations among them are regulated not by laws, but by a supreme arbiter, whether it is a president, a secretary general or a monarch. There is no market there, as it is redundant in this case; instead there is a distributive system.

The estates structure of society implies inequality of citizens before the law, first of all with respect to material benefits. The state gauges the estates not only depending on their importance for the former, but also depending on their contribution to the safety of the ruling group. In Belarus, for instance, the role of the top estates is assigned to defense and law enforcement representatives and government employees, which is reflected in the size of pensions and the amount of other benefits these people get from the state.

Permanent shortage of resources also gives rise to a particular conflict between the authorities and society. According to Timofeev (2000), in modern post-Soviet states society as a consumer is interested in a free interaction of competing producers, whereas the authorities as a monopolist are interested in an absolute control over economy (Timofeev, 2000, p. 233). The conflict mirrors in political categories as well – it is a conflict between a democracy and an authoritarian or even totalitarian regime. In western societies aggravation of such conflicts is impeded by a powerful, flexible, and viable middle class. This stratum of society is the real engine of market competition and the basis of political democracy. However, there is no 'middle class' in today's Russia. What about Belarus then? In a sense modern Belarus, just like Russia, had to face similar problems. In the words of Pivovarov (2005), if the communist regime was oriented towards eliminating the reasons for the conflict, the present regime cannot and does not want to struggle against conflicts as such. It has to exist under the conditions of acute public contradictions. Consequently it strives to minimize them.

Dahrendorf, a German-British sociologist, philosopher, political scientist and liberal politician, considered the middle class to be the basis of the 'social plasma' in which conflicts become localized and stop being acute. In our reality, however, the plasma is not social; it is authoritative. In contrast to the 'social plasma' that functions with the help of clear procedures and rules of the game compulsory to all, the 'authoritative plasma' is constructed on the basis of corruption (Pivovarov, 2005). In

post-Soviet countries corruption is the environment, where the state and civil society unfold themselves in time and space (Ibid.).

From Kordonsky's perspective, in Russian society corruption is an aggregate of tools that has been worked out to allow citizens to neutralize the reformatory innovations of the state at least since Peter the Great (Kordonsky, 2006 a). Kordonsky believes that 'our corruption' is nothing else but the system of actions performed by the members of civil society, which lets them pursue their goals in spite of state norms, rules and laws, and which uses state officials for satisfaction of their needs. At the same time state officials use their work-related opportunities to satisfy their personal needs, as well as the needs of their relatives, acquaintances, etc. (Kordonsky, 2006 a). This happens because state officials are also members of civil society just like ordinary citizens, and they use it in full to attain their goals (Ibid.). The state, of course, is trying to fight corruption. For this purpose it creates various organizations, including civil society organizations, called upon to struggle against corruption. However, if it is possible 'to solve problems' with the help of these organizations, very soon they turn into entities that themselves multiply corruption. If it is impossible to solve problems through them, then these organizations do not mean anything. Thus Kordonsky draws a conclusion that by fighting against corruption the state is in essence fighting against civil society (Kordonsky, 2006 a).

Although outwardly the state exerts itself trying to deal with corruption, to defeat it is next to impossible as corruption in Russian and Belarusian reality is none other than

'a form of the social system binding' (Kordonsky, 2012). The distributive mechanism of coordination also contributes to the rampancy of corruption:

> The head of the distributive system called upon to serve society as a whole and promote establishment of law and justice, tends to abuse his position and institute autocracy. Ordinary officials-the-distributors who ensure realization and coordination of handing-over and distribution are prone to the temptation to change the flow of resources for a bribe, thus giving rise to corruption. Agencies that structure the economic reality and concentrate resources for solving problems, lead to disintegration of the economy, establishment of agency barriers, etc. (Bessonova, 1997).

While market economy proves to be not ideal either, in it the so-called failures of the market (a situation when market equilibrium is not efficient) are eliminated with the help of the state. In a distributive (resource) economy, however, it happens with the help of the powerful informal civil society institution functioning in Reality-2. Bondarenko, Gudkov and Krasilnikova (2013) claim that assistance or services rendered to people through social networks of informal relationships are not regarded as anything criminal or indecorous in Russia (and Belarus) (Bondarenko, Gudkov & Krasilnikova, 2013, p. 93). They form the realm of total mutual corruptness of society, which represents a whole layer of social norms and concepts that make social life more flexible and capable of meeting the requirements of the population.

> The price for such quasi-traditionalism is a high degree of stagnation in the most important spheres of social life where precisely the legal forms of regulation, specialized knowledge, formal and special social intermediaries and systems of communication should have been highly-prized (Bondarenko et al., 2013, p. 94).

As it has already been indicated, social capital turns out to be the key factor determining the electoral structure of Belarusian society. The authoritarian power and its leader are supported in the first place by the Belarusians unable to survive under the

current conditions without the paternalistic guardianship on the part of the state. These are representatives of the social periphery – people with a low level of education, the elderly, those who live in towns and the rural area, women more often than men. The question about subjection of civil society is a typical example of a politicized question. Hence one should expect dependence of the answers distribution on the demographic characteristics, which is being observed in practice (Table 13).

Table 13: Distribution of answers to the question: 'Who do you think civil society is subject to?' by socio-demographic characteristics (%).
The table is read across

	Government	Foreign funds	Opposition parties	Those who pay	It leads itself on its own	Total
Gender:						
Male	36	9	6	25	24	100
Female	44	7	11	20	18	100
Age:						
18-29	35	7	6	23	29	100
30-49	42	8	9	22	19	100
50+	40	0	40	20	0	100
Education:						
Primary	50	2	27	14	7	100
Incomplete secondary	52	8	9	20	11	100
Secondary	40	10	9	23	18	100
Vocational	37	8	8	25	22	100
Higher	37	5	5	21	32	100
Type of settlement:						
Capital	28	8	5	26	33	100
Regional center	47	6	9	18	20	100
City	37	10	10	24	19	100
Town	37	9	12	25	17	100
Rural settlement	48	8	9	20	15	100

Table 13   Continued

Status:						
Private enterprises employees	34	6	6	19	35	100
State employees	46	10	4	18	22	100
State enterprises employees	37	9	9	24	21	100
Students	40	8	5	29	18	100
Retirees	49	9	13	20	9	100

Attention should be paid to the first and the last but one columns ('Government' and 'It leads itself on its own'). Lukashenko regards civil society as toe holds of the state (trade unions, local councils, youth and veterans organizations), and he publicly remarked upon the issue time and again. Consequently women, elderly people, the badly educated citizens, rural residents and state employees ardently support the idea that civil society is subject to the government. It is difficult for these people with the hierarchal type of thinking to agree that organizations, which are not subject to the state, also have the right for existence.

The difference between the two mentioned columns is observed with respect to almost every socio-demographic characteristic, except for the answers of respondents who live in the capital and those who are employed at private enterprises. In all these groups the percentages of respondents who suppose that civil society is subject to the government are considerably higher than percentages of those who believe that it leads

itself on its own, e.g. females – 44% vs. 18%, respondents aged 50 and older – 40% vs. 0%, respondents with primary education – 50% vs. 7% etc.

On the other hand, those who live in the capital or work at a private enterprise are more likely to belong to the minority of Belarusian split society. Among other things, they might be better educated and capable of taking care of themselves without the paternalistic interference of the state (private enterprises employees). In general, however, the distribution of the data in the table shows once again that in spite of the gender, age, level of education, type of settlement and social status, many people in Belarus perceive civil society as a state rather than an independent institution whose task is to represent the interests of the citizens and be an intermediary between them and the state.

ENDNOTES

[1] Belarus receives Russian gas at the price 2.5 times lower than the market one, and oil at the price used within Russia (i.e. without export duties). Two thirds of oil-products produced from the Russian oil the republic sells to Europe at market prices.

[2] Retrieved from http://news.tut.by/economics/347538.html

[3] Public/official property is characterized by two attributes: the rights to own it are distributed among all business entities and do not belong to anyone in their entirety; the second characteristic – access to it is realized in the form of service. In October, 2014 Sergey Pugachev (who used to be called 'the Kremlin banker' due to his closedness to the Russian president), former senator and founder of the *Mezhprombank,* which became bankrupt in 2010, told the *Financial Times* that there was no private property in Russia, only predial serfs belonging to Putin. According to Pugachev, businessmen in the RF were only nominal owners of their assets, and the country's economy had transformed into a feudal system.

Retrieved from http://slon.ru/fast/business/bloomberg-uznal-o-vytesnenii-biznes-elity-iz-blizhnego-kruga-putina-1208092.xhtml

4.7   Reliability of Public Opinion Polls Conducted in Belarus

Before summing up the chapter, it seems necessary to answer the question how reliable public opinion polls conducted in Belarus are. In Ioffe's view (2008), the question of polls reliability emerges from time to time due to the presumption that 'we all know that Belarus is a dictatorship', which by default means 'ordinary people are afraid to openly express their opinion' (Ioffe, 2008, p. 219). Is it really so? According to the information on the IISEPS official site describing the survey procedure,

> On average the number of respondents who refuse to answer questions does not exceed 20%. A third of them refuse to answer because they are afraid of possible repressions for not agreeing with the official point of view, another third – due to their unwillingness to be involved with any unofficial bodies and actions, <…> and approximately the same amount of refusals is motivated by everyday reasons (fatigue, family conflicts, being busy with household chores, etc.) (IISEPS, n.d., b).

Thus the rough number of those who are actually afraid to express their true opinion equals 7%, which means that in general people have no fear to speak up their mind when answering the survey questions.

Ioffe also argues that 'the attitude towards Lukashenko revealed by [independent] surveys correlates with other opinions not rigidly connected with political loyalty' (Ioffe, 2008, pp. 219-220). He points at the fact that among other things supporters of Lukashenko dislike the West, prefer to work at state-owned enterprises, and value low, but steady earnings. If these people were supporting Lukashenko only because of fear, why would not they choose 'pro-European, liberal and market' options when responding to the questions that are not frightening?

The fact that Lukashenko's supporters do not identify with those options means that they vote for Lukashenko because he actually personifies their values, such as attachment to economic security, dependency on the state, risk aversion, and distrust of private business. <…> Consequently, it does not make sense to fault the surveys just because their results are not to one's liking (Ioffe, 2008, p. 220).

Ioffe's idea that public opinion polls conducted by independent research centers in Belarus can be considered reliable and be trusted is also supported by the results of the polls conducted in the republic by Gallup, Inc. This organization is an American research-based company that was established in 1935 and has been conducting public opinion polls all over the globe for many years.

According to a Gallup poll conducted in Belarus in 2007, a close relationship with Russia was more important for Belarusian citizens than a close relationship with the countries of the European Union and the Unites States – 44% vs. 6% and 6% respectively (English & Esipova, 2008 a). At the same time only 11% of Belarusians approved of the job performance of the American leadership and 27% – of the European Union leadership versus 51% of those who approved of the job performance of the Russian leaders (Ibid.). The question whether Belarus should integrate with Russia or join the European Union has been asked by IISEPS time and again for many years. The surveys show that Belarusians usually tend to favor a closer integration with Russia over an opportunity to become part of the EU. The results of the Gallup polls coincide with the ones IISEPS frequently gets when respondents answer this question (Table 14) (IISEPS, n.d., c).

Table 14: **If you had to choose between integration with Russia and joining the European Union, what choice would you make? (by year, %)**

	12'07	12'08	12'09	12'10	12'11	12'12	12'13	03'14	06'14	12'14
Integration with RF	47.5	46.0	42.3	38.1	41.4	37.7	36.6	51.5	46.9	44.9
Joining EU	33.3	30.1	42.1	38.0	39.1	43.4	44.6	32.9	33.1	34.2
DA/NA	19.2	23.9	15.6	23.9	19.5	18.9	18.8	15.6	20.0	20.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Another question asked by Gallup in 2007 concerned the attitude of Belarusians to democracy. Sixty percent of respondents said democracy was important and only 15% – it was not (English & Esipova, 2008 b). However, among those who said that democracy was important, only 31% indicated they were 'somewhat satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the way democracy was working in Belarus (Ibid.). According to IISEPS, when respondents were answering the question 'In what direction is political life in Belarus developing at the moment?' the option 'development of democracy' was chosen by 24% in 2009, by 25% in 2010, and by 17% in 2011 (IISEPS, 2011). In June, 2014 30% of respondents chose the same answer option (S. Nikaliuk, IISEPS expert, personal

communication, January, 2015). In March 2013 only 18% of respondents agreed that successful modernization in the country could be ensured by the development of democracy and enhancement of the citizens' political and public activity (IISEPS, 2013). In September 2014 52% of respondents believed that a democratic candidate could never win the presidential elections in Belarus (IISEPS, 2014 d). Finally, in December 2014 56% of the population agreed with president Lukashenko that people in the post-Soviet countries were 'fed up' with democracy and needed a 'strong state' that would not allow chaos to happen vs. 32% who did not (Ibid.).

The study of answers presented by Gallup's analysts with respect to the respondents' demographic characteristics is also in concordance with the above - mentioned traits of the Belarusian majority:

> Belarusians who are 65 and older are the least likely (40%) age group to view democracy as important to the development of their country. This may be because many Belarusian retirees enjoy higher pensions and other benefits that their former compatriots in other former Soviet nations do not have, making the need for democratic changes less evident to older Belarusians. Within this age group, females are much less likely than males to say democracy is important to the development of their country. About a third (32%) of females 65 and older say democracy is important compared with 51% of males 65 and older who share this view (English & Esipova, 2008 a).

Due to the fact that Gallup, Inc. possesses the world acclaimed reputation, and that the findings of Gallup, Inc. coincide with the findings of IISEPS, challenging the reliability of the results of the national opinion polls conducted by IISEPS in Belarus may prove unfounded. Also, taking into account that no more than 7% of all respondents fear

to express their true opinion, it can be ascertained that 'the poll-faulting argument does not withstand scrutiny' (Ioffe, 2008, p. 219).

4.8 Conclusion

Drawing a conclusion from everything discussed above, it seems that the concept of civil society in Belarus might differ substantially from what is understood by it in the West. The mentality of people who have lived for dozens of years under the communist regime is unlikely to fundamentally change overnight. Although they might be willing to borrow the concepts of democracy or parliamentarism in form, it does not necessarily mean they are as willing to borrow them in content and thus the anomie with respect to somebody else's values would be quite natural.

At the beginning of the paper I chose to adhere to the definition of civil society given by Sirianni and Friedland, namely that 'civil society refers to that sphere of voluntary associations and informal networks in which individuals and groups engage in activities of public consequence' (Sirianni & Friedland, n.d.). Now that Belarusian respondents' attitudes to civil society and its constituents have been analyzed, it is possible to deduce some inferences and see whether Belarusians perceive civil society differently from the citizens in Western Europe and North America.

First of all, the analysis shows that very few respondents are involved in public activity – only 18%. If voluntary involvement in public activity is considered necessary

in order '[to be] distinguished from the public activities of government [and for the sake of seeking] common ground and public good' (Ibid.), then in Belarus the number of those who think it is important is not very high. Secondly, when the matter concerns trust in public institutions, Belarusian respondents tend to favor those that are 'official', which for many people equals 'state', rather than 'independent' ones – 44% (official trade unions) vs. 27% (independent trade unions). Official trade unions are also the winners among the public organizations whose activity respondents are aware of, and whose activity they were involved in – 92%. When it comes to participation in public or political activities, the respondents' involvement boils down mainly to participation in an initiative valuable to the community, such as neighborhood cleanup, site improvement, etc. – 75%. It should be noted here that in Belarus neighborhood cleanups, site improvements, and the like are in most cases not voluntary actions of citizens at all. The idea of subbotnik (a voluntary neighborhood cleanup on Saturday) was introduced after the October Revolution, with the first all-Russian subbotnik held on May 1, 1920 that became famous thanks to Vladimir Lenin's personal participation in it (Subbotnik, n.d.). During the Soviet times participation in subbotniks was an important part of propaganda. In Lukashenko's Belarus it became a part of the president's PR campaigns and a compulsory thing for ordinary citizens who are made to take part in subbotniks under the threat of not being paid for a working day in case they refuse to do so.

Finally, if civil society 'provides an essential link between citizens and the state', because 'it is distinguished from the public activities of government <...> and from the

private activities of markets' (Sirianni & Friedland, n.d.), then logically it should not be subject to anyone, but 'lead itself on its own'. However, just 19% of respondents think so and 37% think it is subject to the government. This idea is mostly supported by women (44%), those who are over fifty (40%), have primary (50%) or incomplete secondary (52%) education, live in rural areas (48%) and are either employed in the public sector (46%) or have retired (49%), i.e. by all the social periphery groups whose representatives completely depend on the paternalistic state as far as their well-being is concerned.

If citizens of the Republic of Belarus mostly think that civil society is subject to the state, it may imply that they do not see civil society as an intermediary between them and the state, and thus their understanding of the concept differs from the one accepted in the West. If people do not trust formal civil society organizations and do not participate much in their activity, it may mean that their will and interests are manifested by other institutions – the more informal ones, which are not organized and have no formal structure. Although Belarus has 'a stable number of national political parties with crystallized ideological profiles, a multiplicity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the consolidation of trade unions', it does not imply 'they all possess equal opportunities to gain access to the decision-making arena' (Korosteleva et.al, 2003, p. 5). President Lukashenko is a populist 'with his appointed loyal administration and system of clienteles' who '[controls] the 'representative' institutions of parliament, as well as the Constitutional Court, the mass media and the state bureaucracy' (Korosteleva et.al, 2003, p. 4). Under such conditions what institution can fulfill the functions of civil society?

According to Kordonsky, '[it is] the distributive mode of life, [which] functions in such a way so as to limit the interference of the state in the citizens' everyday routine – [it] performs the civil society functions although it is not civil society in essence' (Kordonsky, 2000).

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

In the words of Auzan, civil society's main aria, main topic is mutual rights (Auzan, 2004), and according to the Nobel laureate Ronald H. Coase, rights are a key to solving the problem of externalities (as cited in Auzan, 2004). Consequently, it is the competency of civil society to decide, which rights should be established and how these rights should be exchanged (Ibid.). Due to the fact that civil society is generally regarded as one 'founded on rights' (Pietrzyk, 2001), and believed to be extremely important 'in the transition from authoritarian regimes' (A. T. Green, 2002, p. 455), it seemed essential to explore the attitude of the citizens in Belarus – 'the least studied and least understood European state to emerge from the breakup of the Soviet Union' (Ioffe, 2008, p. 231) – to the idea of civil society.

Although the concept of civil society is extremely transcendental, in order to find out what people think about it, it was necessary to define it. In this paper civil society was understood as the 'sphere of voluntary associations and informal networks in which individuals and groups engage in activities of public consequence', and which was 'distinguished from the public activities of government because it is voluntary, and from the private activities of markets because it seeks common ground and public goods'

(Sirianni & Friedland, n.d.). The voluntary associations also had to pursue democratic aims and exert influence on democracy; otherwise 'an explanation of the elements at work within civil society' may come down to no more than '[glossing] over [its] internal diversity' (Reiter, 2009, p. 32).

According to North, Wallis, and Weingast (2009),

> Developed open access countries have significant numbers of formal organizations. <…> On the private side in 1996 there were 1,188,510 tax-exempt organizations (654,186 religious and charitable institutions, 139,512 social welfare organizations, 31,464 war veterans organizations, 80,065 taxable and nontaxable farmers cooperative organizations, 77,274 business leagues, and 91,972 fraternal benevolent societies) [in the United States]. <…> there is approximately 1 formal not-for-profit organization for every 160 people. <…> The numbers are impressive, particularly considering that the entire country had somewhere in the neighborhood of two hundred formal business incorporations between 1776 and 1800 (North, Wallis & Weingast, 2009, p. 9).

In comparison with the USA, the number of NGOs in Belarus is much smaller – 5,289 (NGO.by, n.d.). Nevertheless, Belarusians do participate in initiatives valuable for their communities and charitable events; however, most of them are not involved in any public activity, and membership in an organization is largely claimed for official trade unions.

Although the concept of civil society emerged in Western Europe, it was borrowed by Belarus, as well as by many other post-communist states, and at the moment exists in the public discourse of that country too. However, if Hegel described civil society as 'the institutional separation of the society and the state' (Murthy, 2009, p. 42), then almost two fifths of Belarusians have a different view on the matter as in their

opinion civil society is controlled by the government.

Applying Kordonsky's theory of the resource state to Belarus, it might be possible to ascertain that Belarus *is* such a state, as resources in that country are distributed not by a free market, but rather by the state itself. That is why in Kordonsky's view, regardless of which political force will come to power as a result of national elections, it will have to expropriate resources for the sake of their further redistribution. Hence, the level of population's trust in representative institutions is low, and their uselessness can be seen by an unaided eye. For many people they have transformed into the attributes of the failed transformation of socialism into capitalism (Kordonsky, 2006 b), and in this respect are no more than 'paper institutions' existing in Reality-1.

Living under the conditions of two realities – Reality-1 and Reality-2 – where representative institutions, be it parliament or NGOs, are perceived as useless, Belarusians have to solve their problems and express their interests in other ways. There exists a powerful informal civil society that does not fit into the definition referred to through the course of this paper. True Belarusian civil society is not organized and has no official structure, but it is capable of manifesting citizens' interests and is rich in opportunities for problem solving to a no lesser extent than the traditional civil society of Western European and North American countries. Belarusian civil society entities emerge spontaneously as soon as they are needed. In the reality of Belarus a restaurant, a club or a sauna can become a civil society organization may the need be. It would exist

for as long as one needs it to find 'the right' people who would help him solve his personal problems, or until one searches out another way to overcome state limits at resources distribution.

Consequently, informal networks, connections, and corruption in general become the binding elements of society. They are not perceived by the citizens as wrong or indecent – after all, it is the system that makes them constantly resort to corruption. At the same time, the state pretends to be fighting corruption, and notable cases of high-ranking officials accused of illegal actions involving corruption appear in the news on an incredibly regular basis. However, people are not even surprised by such events – if someone holds a high position in the government or manages a large state enterprise, it goes without saying that one day this person might be accused of being engaged in corruption. The fact that ordinary people are doing the same thing, let it be on a smaller scale, is not even recognized as corruption has virtually become a set of social norms and concepts. This is how people live in Reality-2. In the West civil society, among other things, is called upon to be a watchdog over corruption. However, when corruption is a norm and an integral part of life, how can Belarusian civil society play the role of a watchdog if the only way it can function is by means of corruption itself?

In spite of the fact that Belarus has adopted 'the practice of elections' and other 'democratic liberties', it still demonstrates 'a different mode of development', which can be referred to as 'façade democracy' (Korosteleva et.al, 2003, p. 2). Although outwardly

it might seem that it has a stable economy, inwardly it constantly struggles with economic and political crises. If outwardly it might look that it has institutionalized the practice of national elections, and that its constitution nominally guarantees certain liberties to its citizens, inwardly individual human rights are being constantly violated (Korosteleva et.al, 2003, p. 5). If outwardly it seems that there is civil society in the country with established representative institutions, then inwardly 'access to the decision-making area' 'has been the sole prerogative of the incumbent president and his government' since the constitution was altered in 1996 (Ibid.).

Thus it can be stated that the Belarusian model of civil society is one based on utility, which is a forced necessity rather than a crime in the corrupt system of the Belarusian state. People engage in corruption because many of their everyday needs – from housing to health care – cannot be met in any other way. Under such circumstances it is highly unlikely that civil society can ever become a real and relevant institution that functions between the citizens and the state.

What implications does everything discussed above have for the future progress of Belarus – the country geographically located in the very center of Europe? If in today's world the presence of a well-established and successfully functioning civil society is considered to be a must for a country's democratic development, then Belarus is in urgent need for one. Although it is going to be extremely difficult for the country to actually adopt western democratic values and become part of the European community, it

is possible as the example of other Eastern European countries and the Baltic States proves.

However, if Belarusian citizens do not recognize the necessity of changes, the consequences might be rather serious. Belarus may become isolated from the civilized western world. It may be completely absorbed by Russia and thus become one of its provinces not only de facto, but also de jure. Finally, the deepening economic and political crises the country is experiencing at the moment may lead to catastrophic ramifications similar to the ones observed in other countries of the former Soviet Union, namely in Russia and Ukraine.

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