

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF
POLAND, ROMANIA, AND BELARUS AFTER THE FALL OF THE SOVIET
UNION**

by

Yuliya Brel

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Affairs and Public Policy

Spring 2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my academic advisor, Dr. Danilo Yanich, for his extensive support and tireless guidance through the process of writing my dissertation, and for believing in me when I would not believe in myself anymore. I also wish to thank the members of my Dissertation Committee, Dr. Morrison, Dr. Tóth, and Dr. Hinteá for their invaluable advice and assistance at every stage of my work. Next, I would like to thank my colleagues from the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research, and CADSR's director, Professor Edward Ratledge, for creating the friendliest and most comfortable working atmosphere possible, and for all the support and encouragement I was receiving from them for years. I would also like to express my particular gratitude to my parents who never had a single doubt I could do this work, and whose enthusiasm helped me persevere through the challenges of the doctoral program. Finally, I wish to give my very special thanks to my partner, Andrew M. Fournier, for his unconditional love, endless patience, and immense support, and for showing to me what it really means to be strong and determined when pursuing one's goal and following one's dream.

DEDICATION

To my wonderful children, Darya and Valery, with love and admiration, and in hopes of forgiveness...

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ABSTRACT

When communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and in the former Soviet Union collapsed, the general expectation was that the countries in the region would move in the direction of democratization. Almost thirty years later, it is clear that the establishment of democratic forms of government in the CEE states and the former Soviet Union is far from ubiquitous. Some countries did democratize and even managed to consolidate those democracies; others built semi-democratic regimes, while still others went full circle and consolidated their authoritarianism. This dissertation is a comparative case study of post-communist development in Poland, Romania, and Belarus along the dimension of civil society. It employs Ronald Inglehart's theory of modernization and post-modernization to analyze the connection between economic development and democracy, and to determine whether civil society was a prerequisite for successful democratization, or whether it could emerge over time due to other factors. It also explores the idea of whether strong national consciousness (or the absence of it) could be another possible explanatory factor of the countries' divergent post-communist trajectories. The analysis confirms that economic development alone is not a sufficient condition for a successful transition from authoritarianism to democracy. It also finds that the presence of a vibrant civil society is not always a requisite condition for the initiation of a democratic transition. Civil society is, however, required for the

consolidation and sustainability of democracy. Finally, the findings suggest that the strength of nationhood, ethnic or civic, might have exerted a significant impact on the trajectory of the countries' post-communist development.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Between November 1989 and the summer of 1990 communist regimes all over Eastern Europe fell and were replaced by democratically elected governments (Milestones: 1989-1992). On December 26, 1991 the Soviet Union was dissolved too. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the former Soviet republics, found themselves in transition from their communist past. Since democratic states promoted political and civil freedoms, good governance, citizens' control over politicians and public policies, and could offer their citizens numerous other advantages, democracy continued to be considered 'the best form of government' by a majority of people in the world (Diamond, 2008a, p. 48). The countries of the region also embarked on a course to a democratic future, or so it was assumed by many politicians, scholars, and ordinary people at that time. According to Glenn (2009), however, 'it may be tempting to see the path of democratization as inevitable in hindsight, but it was not a foregone conclusion' (p. 1).

The collapse of the communist ideology left Eastern Europe beset with various political and economic problems. The best way for solving the problems was seen in establishing democratic governments in the region with the help of the international community. The latter acted on the assumption that the CEE countries and the former Soviet republics were missing something, and that 'something' was civil society (Sampson, 2003a, p. 138). The concept of civil society began to be seen as a panacea for solving the multiple problems of post-communist Central and Eastern European

countries (Llamzares & Crosier, 1999, p. 553). In spite of its almost ubiquitous usage, the concept still remains a contested one, and ‘riddled with contradictions’ (Hann, 1996, p. 1).

Almost three decades into the process of transition and democratization, it is clear that liberal democracy has become firmly-established only in some post-communist states. Poland, for instance, has become a consolidated democracy, Romania – a semi-consolidated one, whereas Belarus has turned into a consolidated authoritarian regime (Shenkan, 2018, p. 12). The question then is: why was the outcome of the transition process so diverse in different Eastern European and post-Soviet countries? The example of just these three countries shows that it is a mistake to think that there was only one pathway that post-communist societies could follow in order to modernize, and that modernization should be equated with the implementation of Western models and ideas (Blokker, 2005). Social and political scientists have tried to explain the differing patterns of post-communist transition. They offered numerous explanatory factors, such as historical legacies, initial social and economic conditions, proximity to the West, the role of political elites, etc. (Ekiert et al., 2007).

Adhering to just one theory might not be enough to answer the question of why Poland and Romania have managed to become democratic, and Belarus has not. Is it enough to say that because Poland was the only country that did have civil society by the end of the 1980s, it was a major reason for democracy initiation and later for its consolidation in that country? If one takes it as a premise that neither Romania nor Belarus, unlike Poland, had any kind of civil society before 1989 and 1991 respectively, what does then explain the fact that one of the countries has become democratic and the other – authoritarian, and is gradually sliding to a virtual dictatorship? It seems that a

better way to thoroughly understand the complexity of the political and economic transformations in the region might ‘require theoretical and methodological diversity, political imagination, and detailed contextual knowledge’ (Ekiert et al., 2007, p. 13), i.e. something that can be referred to as ‘theoretical eclecticism’ (Teorell, 2010, p. 28).

In this dissertation I studied the reasons for the persistence of undemocratic modes of development in some Central and Eastern European countries versus successful transition to and consolidation of democracy in others three decades after the collapse of communist regimes. I did it by means of considering the factors that contributed to the divergent development trajectories of Poland, Romania, and Belarus in their post-communist histories. I also explored what role, if any, civil society played in the different results the countries attained after the collapse of communism. In addition, I inquired into the possible impact the strength or weakness of the nationhood had on the success or failure of the democratization process in the three countries.

In my work I employed a comparative case study method, which is the most commonly used approach to examine communist and post-communist countries. I also utilized the ‘theoretical eclecticism’ approach and treated the problem from several theoretical perspectives. First, I applied the modernization theory to consider the possible contribution of economic development to democracy promotion. Then I inquired into the role civil society might have played in the countries’ transition and whether its existence was a prerequisite for transforming authoritarian regimes into democratic ones. I explored the possibility of civil society’s development along with the process of democratization, and whether it could be the outcome of democracy rather than its prerequisite. Finally, I looked into whether nationalism and modernization might be connected, and if strong nationhood could facilitate successful transition from

authoritarianism to democracy, whereas weak nationhood could, on the contrary, impede it.

The empirical evidence obtained through the analysis of secondary qualitative and quantitative data and the extant scholarly literature indicated that the preexisting theories had some flaws. The use of multiple embedded cases helped me to offer a more solid explanation of the divergent outcomes in the post-communist development of Eastern European countries. The explanation is presented along the dimensions of economic, social, and political changes that took place there, the condition and role of the countries' civil societies, and the state of their national consciousness. My work contributes to the deepening and broadening of the post-communist transition theories in several ways. To begin with, it confirms that economic development may be a characteristic feature of both democratic and authoritarian regimes, and that on its own economic progress does not create democracy. Economic development might facilitate the process of democratization only if it occurs together with certain social and cultural changes that produce specific shifts in people's attitudes, values, and beliefs, which in their turn make support for democracy become deeply rooted in society. Next, it offers an answer to the question about what comes first: democracy or civil society. Although the presence of a functioning civil society in a country that is able to exert a meaningful impact on the policy-making process is viewed by many as a prerequisite for successful democratization, my work shows that civil society may be either a condition precedent or a collateral factor of an effective transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Lastly, my findings suggest that the strength of nationhood, ethnic or civic, might have made a significant impact on the trajectory of the countries' post-communist development and propose pathways for further research.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review considers two highly contested concepts in social sciences, namely democracy and civil society, their connection with each other, and the importance of civil society for the success of the democratization process in post-communist Central and Eastern European countries. It also explores how Ronald Englehart's theory of modernization and post-modernization couples economic development with a country's potential for democratization, and how cultural values and beliefs may become either facilitators or impediments on the way of transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Finally, it looks into the role of nationalism in modernization, and whether a society's success in modernization can be determined, at least to some extent, by the strength of its nationhood.

2.1 Democracy

Fareed Zakaria (2003) begins his book *The Future of Freedom* with the statement that we live in a democratic age (p. 13). In today's world in more than a hundred countries governments are created by elections in which every adult citizen has the right to vote (Ibid.). Democracy is currently considered the best form of government among all others in the world (Diamond, 2008a, p. 48). It is not surprising, since democracies offer their citizens numerous advantages. Besides other things, democratic countries constrain internal violence, win external wars, are conducive to the creation of wealth, and in general 'provide more comfortable life' for the people (Archibugi,

2008, p. 50). In addition to the practical advantages, democracy also possesses what Archibugi (2008) called ‘an intrinsic value’ (p. 41). At the same time, nothing is perfect, and no perfect democracy exists either (LeDuc et al., 2014, p. 3).

Democracy, as many other concepts in social sciences, remains an essentially contested one. This means it is ‘multi-dimensional, internally complex, abstract, qualitative, and value-laden/evaluative, implying that a consensus about the measuring of such a concept is not to be expected’ (Gallie, 1956, p. 184). The most basic definition of political democracy is that it is the rule of people (Zakaria, 2003, p. 18). Robert Dahl (1971) defined democracy with respect to its key characteristic, i.e. ‘the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals’ (p. 1). Another definition of political democracy was offered by Bollen (1990). He delineated the concept as ‘the extent to which the political power of the elites is minimized and that of the non-elites is maximized’ (p. 9). In the view of Bollen (1990), if the non-elites have little control of the elites, then one can talk about a low degree of political democracy, and vice versa (Ibid.).

Dahl also argued that for a polity to be democratic in procedural sense, it has to satisfy three criteria (Krouse, 1982, p. 458). The first criterion is ‘political equality,’ which includes socioeconomic prerequisites; the second is ‘effective participation,’ and the third is ‘the criterion of enlightened understanding’ meaning that citizens should possess at least some competence to make decisions about their preferences with respect to certain matters (Ibid., pp. 458-459). Schumpeter defined procedural democracy as competition for political power by means of free elections (Møller & Skaaning, 2013a, p. 143). Huntington (1991) also saw procedural democracy as the process of selecting leaders through elections (p. 6).

Dahl's definition of democracy was given almost half a century ago. Currently, democracy is mostly understood as 'liberal democracy'. It is a political system which is characterized not only by free and fair elections. Although elections are indeed 'the hallmark of democracy' (Gandhi, 2014, p. 173), they alone do not make a regime democratic, since many autocracies around the world also hold elections on a regular basis and use them as a disguise for their rule (Merkel, 2004, p. 55). When states mix elections with authoritarianism, democracies become illiberal (Zakaria, 2003, p. 91). Consequently, 'free and fair regular contested elections' are just the minimal procedural criteria for democracy (Gill, 2002, p. 2). Real liberal democracy also possesses such attributes as the rule of law, a separation of powers, as well as the protection of freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, etc. (Zakaria, 2003, p. 17). Therefore, for a country to be considered democratic, it has to observe political and civil rights of its citizens besides holding elections. In addition, democracy is based on three distinct criteria such as nonviolence, popular control, and political equality (Archibugi, 2008, p. 26). Finally, stability of a democracy depends on 'legitimacy and voluntary compliance,' since a democracy is 'a system of popular consent' (Diamond, 2008b, p. 89). To summarize,

Democracy is a political system based on the autonomy and freedom of individual citizens, and the determination of public power and policies through competition between groups of citizens, based in parties and interest groups (Diamond, 1995, p. 108).

In the view of Zakaria (2003), however, the set of freedoms that are part of the definition of democracy, and which can be referred to as constitutional liberalism, 'has nothing intrinsically to do with democracy and the two have not always gone together, even in the West' (p. 17). Although the notions of democracy and liberty might have

merged at some point, nowadays ‘democracy is flourishing; liberty is not’ (Ibid.). Zakaria (2003) further argues that for a country to be called democratic, it is not enough for it to simply guarantee a fixed set of rights whether they are social, political, economic, or religious (p. 19). Constitutional liberalism is a tradition, deeply rooted in Western history, which ‘seeks to protect an individual’s autonomy and dignity against coercion, whatever the source – state, church, or society’ (Ibid.). In addition, for liberal democracy to work properly, people need to share certain cultural values (Fukuyama, 1999, p. 11). Therefore, the most successful liberal democracies are those that manage to marry ‘strong formal institutions to a flexible and supportive informal culture’ (Ibid., p. 12).

2.2 Determinants of Democracy

After the collapse of the communist ideology in Eastern and Central Europe, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the general expectation was that all the countries in the region would move in the direction of democratization, i.e. towards the establishment of democratic political regimes. Democratization, however, turned out to be not ‘a seamless process,’ and as time went on, it became clear that “‘transitions” from authoritarianism to democracy were neither inevitable nor irreversible’ (LeDuc et al., 2014, p. 1).

What are then the prerequisites or determinants of democracy? Bunce (2000) maintains that there exist ‘some islands of consensus’ for scholars on the matter (p. 706). The first thing researchers tend to agree upon is the relationship between economic development and democracy. Already in 1959, Lipset talked about economic

development as one of the principal characteristics pertaining to stable democracies (p. 71). According to Lipset (1959), ‘the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy’ (p. 75). Since Aristotle, it has been argued that only in a rich society in which there were relatively few poor citizens, the majority of the population could have enough competence to participate in politics in a meaningful way to withstand ‘the appeals of irresponsible demagogues’ (Ibid.). Later studies confirmed the hypothesis of Lipset/Aristotle that a higher standard of living was conducive to democracy promotion (Barro, 1999, p. 182). However, when countries find themselves ‘at the bottom of the democratic ladder,’ economic development does not lead to democracy (Hadenius & Teorell, 2005, p. 102-103). It tends to have a significant impact only in those countries where democracies have taken stronger roots. In the words of Bunce (2000), a higher level of economic development is important not so much for the very existence of democracy, as for how it can be sustained over time. Therefore, she argues, economic reform is the best predictor of democratization. Even though it is hard to say exactly how the connection works, a higher level of the country’s economic development might be connected with sustainability of democracy (Bunce, 2000; Lewis, 1997).

There are other requisites of democracy besides economic development. Lipset (1959) argued that the stability of a democratic system also depended on the effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system (p. 86). Effectiveness means the actual performance of a political system and how well it can satisfy the expectations of the members of a society. Legitimacy concerns the political system’s capacity to persuade the public that the currently existing political institutions ‘are the most appropriate or proper ones for the society’ (Ibid.).

Another common ground for interpreting the concept of democracy is the role of political elites in the process of democratization (Bunce, 2000, p. 707). Transition to democracy depends on what type of values and interests political leaders have, and what type of actions they take. However, when democracy is established, its subsequent course depends on many different factors, and elites with their attitudes and behavior are only one of those (Ibid., p. 709).

The next 'island of consensus' concerning democracy and the process of democratization is the idea that parliamentary systems play a superior role with respect to presidential systems when it comes to the survival and consolidation of democracy (Bunce, 2000, p. 711). The idea seems to be applicable to almost all new democracies, where the probability of strengthening democratic governance increases under the parliamentary form of government (Ibid.).

Yet another factor to which democratic performance might be sensitive is elections (Bunce & Wolchik, 2009, p. 247). Between the second half of the 1990s and the beginning of 2000s, elections in different post-Communist countries led to outcomes that could be roughly divided into two groups: the first, where authoritarian leaders were defeated and replaced by democratic forces, and the second, where the opposition tried to resist the power of the old regime and eventually failed (Ibid.). According to Bunce and Wolchik (2009), the difference in the electoral outcomes later contributed to the democratic performance that occurred in these countries after the elections (p. 249). Elections per se do not 'produce' democracy, but they are an important step to remove dictators from office, which is a necessary condition for democratization (Ibid., p. 251).

What other factors, besides the ones that have been mentioned, can help democracies succeed? Many authors agree that another important condition for

democracy is what Congleton (2003) called ‘fortuitous culture’ (p. 27). The fortuitous culture is ‘a key prerequisite of democracy’ (Almond & Verba, 1963). It simply means support for democratic norms and certain behavior associated with it that is widely spread among citizens of a certain country (Ibid.). When a new democratic regime is introduced, it does not mean that support for it becomes grounded in citizens’ beliefs, and that democratic values turn into ‘widely-shared norms’ in society instantaneously (Fuchs & Roller, 1994; Congleton, 2003). Although people may in general be for democracy, this type of support is what Wright (1976) labeled ‘assent’ (as cited in Fuchs & Roller, 1994, p. 12). For democracy to be established in the true sense of the word, ‘consent’ is necessary. One can talk about ‘consent’ when support for the democratic values and structures becomes anchored in the community. The transition from ‘assent’ to ‘consent’ may only happen over longer periods of time when the reality of democracy has given people enough positive experience (Fuchs & Roller, 1994, p. 42). Therefore, in the words of Congleton (2003), ‘democracies may need a bit of luck to succeed’ (p. 27). The ‘luck’ in this case is a combination of fortuitous culture and economic improvements that can turn democracy into ‘an appealing and effective form of governance’ in the eyes of people (Ibid.).

One more factor that is believed to be important for the degree of democratization in post-communist states is social capital. Putnam (1993) defined social capital as referring to ‘features of social organization such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action’ (p. 167). Fukuyama (2001) understood social capital as ‘an instantiated informal norm that promotes co-operation between individuals’ (p. 7). The instantiated norms that constitute social capital are related to such virtues as honesty, reliability, reciprocity,

and the like (p. 8). Consequently, communities with higher levels of social capital can cooperate better for the sake of dealing with social problems, making governments more responsive, and strengthening the performance of democratic institutions (Dowley & Silver, 2003, p. 95). On the contrary, communities with lower levels of social capital have to submit to the governments that are much less responsive, efficient, and honest (Ibid.).

When Lipset wrote his paper in 1959, he drew a disappointing conclusion that European democracy and liberty had been born when unique and possibly unrepeatably circumstances had come into being (p. 103). Contemporary history, however, proved that it was possible for certain post-authoritarian countries to become democracies in the true sense of the word, even though the circumstances under which the transformation took place differed greatly from the ones Lipset had referred to. The issues that all new democracies had to face during the process of transformation were breaking with authoritarian rule, building democratic institutions, and cooperating with the previous authoritarian elites (Bunce, 2000, p. 176).

Although there are no perfect democracies, fortunately nowadays there are fewer absolute autocracies either (LeDuc et al., 2014, p. 3). In spite of the fact that it is currently impossible to attain a perfect democracy, it is still possible to build a good one. The goals of a democracy should be providing its citizens with political and civil freedom, popular sovereignty, political equality, and good governance (Diamond & Morlino, 2004, p. 21). If citizens of a country can enjoy the mentioned freedoms and political equality, and exert control over public policy and politicians with the help of stable institutions, then one may say that the country has established a good democracy (Ibid., p. 22).

2.3 Transition and Consolidation of Democracy

Democratic transition can occur in different ways. Eastern European countries that share a common communist past took diverse paths when transiting to democracy. Lewis (1997) defined the following forms of transition: a negotiated, or evolutionary one; a collapse later followed by transition; or moderate to severe violence leading to conflicts on the grounds of ethnicity and/or language, or territory (p. 4). At the basic level the country could be considered as moving in the direction of democratization if its communist party stopped being a monopolistic ruler, if amendments that reflect democratization of the regime were introduced into the country's constitution, and if free elections and parliamentary democratic legislature were adopted (Ibid., p. 5).

Larry Diamond (2008b) singles out a set of democracy drivers for authoritarian regimes to convert into democracies. He divides the drivers into three categories: internal, external, and regional. Internal drivers include, for example, crises of the regimes' legitimacy; successful economic development of authoritarian regimes, since such development may facilitate changes that will lead to value shifts towards democracy; and the rise of civil society (pp. 88-105). Among the external factors that drive democracy, Diamond (2008b) names diffusion and demonstration effects, peaceful pressure, sanctions and aid conditionality, democracy assistance, and democratization by force 'when all else fails' (pp. 106-134). As for the regional influence, the factor that is most applicable to the Eastern European and former Soviet countries is what Diamond (2008b) calls the 'European lead' (p. 136). The European Union proved to exert the most 'powerful impact on democratization in its own neighborhood' making politicians, activists of civil society, and intellectual leaders in the region understand that embeddedness of their countries in European institutions would make the process of democratization irreversible (pp. 136-137).

Similarly, Linz and Stepan (1996) divide the factors that can initiate transition into domestic and international ones (pp. 71-76). They believe that domestic factors play a predominant role in transition initiation, since without a division inside the authoritarian regime itself no transition can begin (p. 72). Among the domestic factors that may initiate transition from authoritarianism, Linz and Stepan (1996) name an uprising of civil society, a sudden collapse of the regime, an armed revolution, or a military coup (p. 71). International factors that may influence the process of transition include foreign policies, zeitgeist, which is the democratic spirit of the time and an almost ubiquitous support for democratic political regimes, and diffusion (pp. 73-76). Møller and Skaaning (2013b) also identified the general zeitgeist and active leverage from the established Western democracies as important factors that make post-communist countries democratize (pp. 70-71).

Mancur Olson considers post-communist transition from an economic point of view. In his opinion, at the initial stage transition is generally regarded as ‘a change from a system governed by Marxist-Leninist ideology to one governed by capitalist-democratic ideas’ (Olson, 2000, p. 155). The system of state ownership and a planned economy governed by the Communist party was seen as transforming into the one with private ownership, a free-market economy and a democratic government. Transition, thus, was seen by many as simply replacing one economic system with another. From this perspective, ‘the essence of transition [was] privatization of state-owned industry’ (Ibid.).

Āgh (1998) singles out three major components in the process of post-communist transition. They are political, economic, and social transitions (pp. 51-62). Each of the components has its own structural, transitional, and systemic problems to

overcome (Ibid.). With so many problems to resolve, it is not surprising that the degree of success varies in different post-communist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It is also obvious that the level of democratization in the region is not the same everywhere, regardless of what tool is used to measure the difference.

How can one understand, however, whether a democratic transition in a certain country is complete? Linz and Stepan (1996) define a completed transition as a situation when

sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure* (p. 3).

Ideally, the process of transition goes through three stages, namely, liberalization, democratization, and consolidation (Fuchs & Roller, 1994, p. 42). The stage of consolidation presupposes that the democratic regime that has been established in the country is irreversible, i.e. 'it is difficult to envisage ... the possibility of democracy breaking down' (Diamond, 2008b, p. 295). When a country achieves the stage of consolidation, it inevitably has to face the problem of institutionalization of the new democratic regime (Fuchs & Roller, 1994, p. 42). Institutionalization in its turn depends on the extent of citizens' support of 'the values and structure of this democracy as implemented by the constitution' (Ibid.). Therefore, democratic consolidation or 'democratic rootedness' depends on whether and to what extent masses support democracy (Hadenius & Teorell, 2005, p. 102).

2.4 Civil Society

Diamond (2008b) and Linz and Stepan (1996) name the rise or even an uprising of civil society among the set of factors/democracy drivers that may impact conversion of authoritarian regimes into democracies. Although the concept of civil society is as contested as the one of democracy, and although until now there is no agreement on its precise definition, civil society is believed to be ‘the essential feature of any democracy’ (Hardt, 1995, p. 27). What is this feature then? Where did it come from, and why is it important?

Some researchers believe that the concept of civil society came into being centuries ago. Already Plato was searching for the principles to ‘frame the community’s moral life’ (Ehrenberg, 2011, p. 15). Other researchers consider that the idea of civil society appeared during the time of Scottish Enlightenment (Seligman, 2002, p. 28). Enlightenment philosophers, such as Hobbes, Locke, and Smith, concerned themselves with the moral sentiment, which instinctively united men and made them act in society guided by kindness and friendship, and which was for them an axiomatic property of the human mind (Seligman, 2002, p. 17). The thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment saw civil society, in the first place, as ‘a realm of solidarity held together by the force of moral sentiments and natural affections’ (Ibid., p. 19).

In the 18th century Kant disagreed with the Scottish thinkers that people possessed innate moral sentiment, and instead saw civil society as based on the sense of moral duty, which humans intrinsically possessed (Ehrenberg, 2011, p. 21). According to Seligman (2002), civil society as a normative model of social life ended with Hegel and Marx (p. 24). For Hegel civil society was not ‘the realm of ethical realization’ and was clearly distinguished from the state (Ibid., p. 25). Marx saw civil society and its conflicting forces as subjugating the state (Seligman, 2002, p. 27). His most important

contribution to the theories of civil society was his discovery that civil society itself had to be democratized (Ehrenberg, 2011, pp. 22-23).

Gramsci later included the family in civil society as he considered that precisely the family was shaping citizens' political preferences and transmitting culture (Chambers, 2002, p. 91). Thus civil society stopped being understood primarily in economic terms, and began to be seen 'as a system of ideas, values, ideologies, and interests understood primarily in sociological and political terms' (Ibid.). Still later, developing the theory of civil society, Habermas introduced the concept of the 'lifeworld,' which is

a repository [that] contains the accumulated interpretations of past generations: how the people who went before us understood their world, themselves and each other, their duties, commitments..., their art and literature, the place of science, religion, and law, and so on (Chambers, 2002, p. 91).

Habermas contrasted the lifeworld to the state and the economy. The lifeworld operates through communication, whereas the state operates through power, and the economy – through money. Power is hierarchical and coercive, and communication is egalitarian and persuasive. Economic exchanges aspire to profit, efficiency, and instrumental success, while communication strives for production and transmission of meaning (Chambers, 2002, p. 93).

The concept of civil society has acquired worldwide omnipresence in social sciences research since the end of the Cold War. Today there exists a popular assumption that the concept bears relevance 'to strengthening development and democracy' (Lewis, 2001, p. 1). According to Lewis (2001), the idea of civil society was resurrected in the 1980s 'by dissident intellectuals in communist Eastern Europe'

(p. 3) leading a democratic transition from below (Bernhard & Kaya, 2012, p. 2). Civil society rapidly revived into a major object of study, as a result of the struggle against totalitarian regimes in Eastern European countries, and the collapse of communism (Howard, 2002, p. 157). Some Eastern European dissidents believed that the communism crisis was ‘a revolt of civil society against the state’ (Ehrenberg, 2011, pp. 23). Nowadays, civil society tends to be identified with almost anything. It is seen as either multiparty systems, or the rights of citizenship to individual voluntarism, or even as the spirit of community (Seligman, 2002, p. 13).

In the bulk of literature on civil society one can discern several important issues concerning the concept. One of them is the lack of consensus on how civil society should be defined (Bowden, 2006; Malena & Finn Heinrich, 2007; Chandhoke, 2007). Another is a problem of determining the exact location and function of civil society in post-industrial societies (Bowden, 2006). Still another problem concerns the question of whether civil society can be measured, and if yes, how it can be done (Malena & Finn Heinrich, 2007; Bailer et al., 2009; Finn Heinrich, 2010). Also, more than twenty five years after the downfall of the communist ideology in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, it seems that researchers of civil society have gradually begun to realize that the concept that originated in Western Europe might not have the same shape and content in the eastern part of the European continent (Kordonsky, 2006; Grødeland & Aasland, 2011). In this connection, one more question that emerges within the civil society discourse with respect to Eastern European countries concerns the ability or inability of civil society there to exert influence on governance and to further good governance. If civil society in some post-communist states is fundamentally different from what it is in Western Europe, if it uses non-traditional ways to achieve its

goals, can one, therefore, expect the existence of institutions that are ‘fair, judicious, transparent, accountable, participatory, responsive, well-managed, and efficient’ for conducting public life (Grindle, 2008, p. 1)?

Although nowadays scholars generally agree that the presence of civil society is important for a country’s democratic development, some researchers believe that the concept, however useful for analysis, has less value as a tool for policy makers (Lewis, 2001, p. 3). The first reason for that is precisely the lack of agreement about what civil society is, which makes it difficult to identify the policy purposes. Secondly, because the concept is chiefly theoretical, it might not be directly applied in practice. Finally, the concept might be ‘historically specific to particular time(s) and place(s) and may be sensitive to differences of history, culture and economy’ (Lewis, 2001, p. 3). If the assumption is correct, according to Lewis (2001), the concept of civil society might have no meaning outside its original context, and even if it does have a meaning in non-Western environment, it may be greatly impacted and complicated by the historical, cultural and political differences within that environment (Ibid.).

Regardless of the fact that no unified definition of the concept of civil society exists so far, typically it is understood as an ‘intermediary entity, standing between the private sphere and the state ... encompass[ing] *pluralism* and diversity’ (Diamond, 1994, pp. 5-6; emphasis in the original). The most important function of this ‘intermediary entity’ is believed to be ‘channeling social interests, making citizens active, and building local communities’ (Makowski, 2010). Civil society, therefore, is an important institutional link which connects the private sphere of life with its public counterpart (Lewis, 2013, p. 7).

The matter of the precise role of civil society in modern democracies is just as contested as the definition of the concept. According to Bowden, in spite of the absence of agreement on the role of civil society, many believe that it has an important function in building a partnership with the state (Bowden, 2006, p. 170). By this Bowden (2006) means that civil society is not operating in the vacuum, but rather ‘functions in a balanced interdependence with the market and, more importantly ... the state’ (p.178). Oxhorn (2007) contributes to the argument by saying that civil society should not be considered separately from the state since the latter ‘both conditions civil society’s development and reflects civil society’s strength in the nature of its own institutions and public policies’ (p. 327).

Other scholars believe that one should not exaggerate the importance of the state when considering the relationship between civil society and democracy (Reiter, 2009, p. 21). Reiter (2009) argues that civil society’s influence on democracy is ‘soft,’ and that the only thing it can really do ‘is to instill democratic mores among those participating in its associations’ (p. 30). This, in its turn, can only happen if civic associations follow democratic procedures, and pursue democratic aims. If people get together simply to bowl, it is unlikely that they are promoting democratic values and trying to achieve democratic aims. The democratic potential of an association is therefore determined by ‘who participates, how democratic this participation is, and what aims, other than bowling, a given group pursues’ (Reiter, 2009, p. 32).

A third group of scholars is concerned, however, 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). It might have 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 all possible problems. Consequently, because at present civil society is referred to by anyone who bothers to do so in such a wide number of instances, ‘it must have lost both shape and content’ (Ibid.).

Whether civil society has actually lost its shape and content is a debatable question. However, the absence of concord with regard to what civil society is, and what role it plays or should play in a society, leads to another issue in the studies of the concept. Some scholars raise the question of whether the concept can be measured in spite of its being hard to define and conceptualize (Malena & Finn Heinrich, 2007). There are theorists who 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, 1992). However, if civil society cannot be measured, it will be difficult to understand how its strength can be enhanced (Malena & Finn Heinrich, 2007, p. 340).

Some researchers actually maintain that although the existence of civil society in many Eastern European countries is not questioned any longer, and although it has well established institutions, is legal and supported by the state, it nevertheless was and is relatively weak (Howard, 2002; Makowski, 2010; Wallace, et al., 2012). There is a tendency among them to regard civil society in those countries as ‘structurally deficient’ (Ekiert & Foa, 2011; Howard, 2002). They argue that in some Eastern European states ‘democracies without citizens’ have been established, i.e. basic civic rights were granted and democratic procedures implemented, but voluntary activity and civic engagement failed to be enhanced (Ekiert & Foa, 2011, p. 1).

Other researchers, on the contrary, believe that civil society has been ‘a real material force’ in Eastern Europe (Bernhard & Kaya, 2012), that it ‘has been a key component of the European identity’ (Vogel, 2008), and that empirical foundation, on which the idea of weakness of civil society is based, is rather questionable (Ekiert, 2012). The very tendency to consider civil society as either strong or weak has been subjected to criticism (Bernard & Kaya, 2012). This group of scholars maintains that civil society in Eastern European countries is not actually so feeble (Ekiert & Foa, 2011, p. 39). Some of those countries are believed to ‘possess vigorous public spheres and active civil society organizations ... able to shape domestic policies’ (Ibid.).

Thus, at present ‘the most precise statement one can make about civil society is that it is an extraordinarily vague idea,’ which is very difficult, if at all possible, to measure (Beck, 2001, p. 15). Nevertheless, there is 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).

The process of democratization, however, has failed in some of the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. Western policy circles began to talk about a ‘democratic recession’ and became quite pessimistic with respect to democracy’s global prospects (Carothers, 1999, p. 2). A number of explanations were offered to account for the recession. First of all, the countries were poorly prepared for democracy in traditional terms – they lacked the socio-economic foundations and other structural prerequisites for democratization. Secondly, the attempted transitions were unsuccessful due to citizens’ discontent entailed by the protracted social and economic

crises as well as incompetent governance. Finally, many of those societies had ethnic and religious divisions which were exacerbated by elections (Ibid.).

The way civil society and its contribution into the process of democratization are conventionally understood, stems from the Western European schools of thought developed by Locke, Montesquieu, de Tocqueville, and later by Dahrendorf and Habermas (Merkel, 1999). This understanding, however, might not be fully applicable to the post-Soviet and post-communist countries of Eastern Europe. It might be just a traditional vantage point that ‘channeling social interests, making citizens active and building local communities’ may occur only by means of democratic procedures through the activities of NGOs and other entities of the ‘third sector’ (Makowski, 2010).

Nevertheless, it has been argued for a long time that democracy requires a strong and vibrant civil society. The adjective ‘vibrant’ has become the ‘adjective of choice’ to describe a well-established and functioning civil society (Ottaway & Carothers, 2000, p. 4). But what is a ‘vibrant’ civil society? Freedom House suggests that in order to define whether civil society in a given country is ‘vibrant,’ one should consider how the number of charitable, nonprofit, and nongovernmental organizations increases, whether civil society groups improve the quality of their performance, how actively the public participates in private voluntary activity, and other similar aspects (Freedom House, 2018).

Even though democracy might not need civil society at the stage of its formation, it does need it ‘for the sake of its coherence and stability over time’ (Walzer, 1995). In the opinion of Chandhoke (1995), democratic theory has privileged civil society ‘as a vital precondition for the existence of democracy’ (p. 9). That is why authoritarian states try to stifle it. Civil society is a property of a democratic state. If the state does not

protect civil society, does not enforce ‘rights of free expression, freedom of associations, freedom to dissent,’ etc., civil society becomes crippled (Ibid.). Thus, a strong and functioning civil society is often (but not always) viewed as one of the essential components of democracy, which should be supported and funded, although obviously it is not a sufficient one (Dowley & Silver, 2003).

Several conclusions can be drawn from everything said afore. Although democracy and civil society are rather contentious concepts, researchers do agree on some aspects concerning them. As for democracy, many believe that there is a strong connection between economic development and democracy, and that higher living standards might be conducive to democracy promotion and its sustainability. On the other hand, economic development in itself may not be sufficient in order to facilitate liberalization that would give rise to the process of democratization and consequent consolidation of democracy. Besides economic development, democracies require support from the masses. Until people see democracy as an appealing form of governance and agree that they prefer it over any other form, no democratic rootedness can take place. In addition to economic development and ‘fortuitous culture,’ a strong and vibrant civil society is required for democracy to flourish. Even though civil society might not be needed at the stage of democracy formation, and although it is not the only precondition of democracy, civil society is still considered to be important for democracy’s stability over time, and is regarded as its essential element.

All the countries that embarked on post-communist transition in the late 1980s and early 1990s, had to deal with three major components of the process, namely

political, economic, and social. So far there is no theory, which would alone 'explain the changes in post-communist societies' (Aidukaite, 2009). There is, however, a theory that addresses the connection between the political, socio-economic, and cultural changes currently underway in modern societies, and by extension explains success or its absence in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in a profound way. It is the theory of modernization and post-modernization offered by Ronald Inglehart.

2.5 Modernization Theory

It has been argued since the middle of the twentieth century that economic development leads to democracy, that it is conducive to democracy, and that democratic institutions are more likely to exist in rich countries than in poor ones. According to Inglehart (1997), the connection between democracy and economic development is so strong, that it can help predict which countries may become democratic (p. 160). At the same time, wealth alone does not guarantee that a country will democratize. Authoritarian regimes are as likely to develop economically as democratic ones, since economic prosperity helps authoritarian rulers to hold on to power. Diamond (2008b) ascertains that the ability of authoritarian regimes to provide the population with order and economic development is actually the only basis of legitimacy for such regimes, since their performance is what helps them, to a significant extent, justify themselves (p. 90). If they mismanage the economy, they run the risk of making their regimes more and more brittle with time (Holmes, 1997, p. 83). On the other hand, dictators find themselves in 'a classic catch-22' (Diamond, 2008b, p. 90). If they are capable of producing sustained economic development, before long society may change its preferences in favor of democracy and choose to liberate itself from the dictatorship (Ibid.).

Therefore, although economic development may encourage the emergence of democratic institutions and a political culture that will enable their thriving, ‘stable democracy is not a necessary consequence’ of such development (Inglehart, 1990, p. 17). Success of the process of democratization and subsequent consolidation and sustainability of democracy also depends on the existing social structure and political culture, as well as on the likelihood of specific cultural and social changes that need to take place in a society for it to become democratic (Inglehart, 1997, p. 161).

Industrially developed societies differ fundamentally from those which are underdeveloped since economic changes go together with cultural and political changes ‘in coherent patterns’ (Inglehart et al., 1998, p. 7). The connection among the economic, cultural, and political changes is the core of modernization theory (Ibid.). Modernization is a theory based on the concept of human progress (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, p. 15). It can be defined as a broad syndrome of changes that are linked with modern economic development (Inglehart, 1997, p. 70). The changes comprise

urbanization, industrialization, occupational specialization, mass formal education, development of mass media, secularization, individuation, the rise of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial motivations, bureaucratization, the mass production assembly line, and the emergence of the modern state. The material core of this process is industrialization... (Ibid.).

Modernization, however, is neither a linear process, nor the final stage of development (Inglehart, 1997, p. 5). When it reaches a point of diminishing returns, it turns into what Inglehart et al. (1998) call ‘Postmodernization’ (p. 9). This new trajectory shifts the emphasis from the importance of economic growth to individual autonomy and subjective well-being (Inglehart, 1997, p. 75).

As for culture, in a given society it defines its survival strategy and plays an important role with respect to legitimating its political and economic systems (Inglehart, 1997, pp. 53-54). Inglehart and Baker (2000) claim that cultural heritage of a society can exert such a strong impact on that society's values and beliefs that they may endure even in spite of modernization (p. 19). This happens because culture changes very slowly (Inglehart, 1997, p. 65). It takes much more time to change people's worldviews than introduce technological innovations. However, for democracy to evolve into something stable and mass based, it is important that norms and attitudes supportive of democracy emerge among the general public, i.e. that support for democracy becomes part of culture (Inglehart, 1990, p. 23).

In a traditional society culture as a survival strategy had the core function of maintaining 'social cohesion and stability in a steady-state economy' (Inglehart, 1997, p. 75). When traditional societies switched to Modernization, economic growth and means for maximizing the output of tangible things, i.e. industrialization, became most important (Ibid., pp. 75-76). In the Postmodern era the most important thing is maximization of individual well-being, i.e. quality of life, which strongly depends on subjective factors (Ibid., p. 76). People living in stable democracies have much higher levels of subjective well-being and interpersonal trust than those living under authoritarian regimes (Inglehart et al., 1998, p. 23). At the same time, although Post-modern values are linked with economic development, the presence of economic development is not a guarantee of a wider spread of the values (Inglehart, 1997, p. 103). Nevertheless, as Inglehart et al. (1998) find, economic development contributes to the emergence of cultural patterns 'that are increasingly supportive of democracy' (p. 23). Finally, if Modernization as a phase of economic development can engender either

democracy or an authoritarian regime, then the correlation between Post-modernization and democracy is incredibly strong: $r = .88$ (Inglehart, 1997, p. 104).

Thus, if economic development contributes to the promotion of democracy and its sustainability over time, and if it engenders changes in the economic structures of societies that eventually ‘produce shifts in attitudes and values in the direction of democracy’ (Diamond, 2008b, p. 98), all post-communist countries whose economy was on the rise stood a good chance of their transition unwinding in the direction of democratization, and subsequent entrenchment and consolidation of democracy. In the words of Ronald Inglehart (1997), ‘... wealth *alone* does not automatically produce democracy’ (p. 161). Certain cultural and social changes are also required for the democratization process to be successful, since ‘both social structure and political culture play important roles in the emergence and survival of democracy’ (Ibid.).

2.6 Nation-Building

To summarize Inglehart’s ideas, economic, cultural, and political changes that are occurring in present day societies are connected with each other. This connection is the essence of modernization theory, which is based on the concept of human progress. Modernization is thus a massive set of changes associated with current economic development. Snyder (2003) adds to this that ‘modernization is linked to nationalism’ (p. 4). The linkage between modernization and nationalism does exist ‘even if theories of modernization cannot explain the essential particulars of national success and failure’ (Ibid.).

In order to try to understand the connection between the two concepts, first it is necessary to answer the question: what is a nation? There are, probably, as many definitions of the concept as there are definitions of culture, civil society, democracy,

and the like. Anthony Smith (1989), for instance, defines a nation as ‘a named community of history and culture, possessing a common territory, economy, mass education system, and common legal rights’ (p. 340). For Will Kymlycka (1996), a nation is ‘a historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture’ (p. 11). It should be noted that if common history and culture are almost always mentioned among the defining characteristics of a nation, a common language is not.

In his book *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Smith (1986) argues that the concepts of nation and nationalism are historically Western formations (p. 144). Such features and qualities as ‘[t]erritoriality, citizenship rights, legal codes and even political culture,’ which distinguish nations, characterized, at first, precisely Western European societies (Ibid.). Smith continues by defining the ‘core’ of ethnicity as a quartet of ‘myths, memories, values and symbols’ (Ibid., p. 15). Recital of myths is extremely important for nation-building as it arouses ‘an intense awareness among the group members of their “common fate”’ (Armstrong, 1982, p. 9). In the view of Mirsky (1997), shared values, traditions, memories, and myths are even more important for nation-creating than a common language or ‘blood’ (pp. 17-18). If Snyder (2003) is correct with respect to connecting modernization and nationalism, the presence (or absence) of a strong national consciousness might be another possible explanatory factor that together with Inglehart’s theory of modernization and post-modernization clarifies why the post-communist histories of Central and Eastern European countries turned out to be so divergent.

It is important to inquire into why some of the CEE countries and post-Soviet states managed to democratize whereas others did not and instead consolidated

authoritarian regimes because autocracies create numerous problems for the people they rule over. They also impose danger on the stability and peace in the countries around them and in the rest of the world (Silitski, 2015, p. 9). In addition, in autocracies democratic governance is not possible. Political pluralism may not be tolerated there; institutions are often unaccountable and irresponsible; civil society is virtually non-existent or severely suppressed; the elections outcomes are invariably rigged; and power is exercised arbitrarily since the rule of law is not in place.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

In my dissertation I am considering the pre-, during-, and post-communist development of Poland, Romania, and Belarus to answer the questions of whether economic development contributed to the countries' successful democratization or the absence of it, whether the existence of civil society was a necessary prerequisite for their transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime, and whether the presence or absence of a strong national consciousness was another possible explanatory factor for the differences in the countries' post-communist development trajectories.

I chose Poland, Romania, and Belarus for my analysis because, due to the differing results the countries have attained within the last three decades of their modern history, they presented a significant opportunity for studying the factors that might have contributed to the divergent outcomes in the post-communist development of CEE states. On the eve of the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and other countries of the Eastern Bloc, Belarus was doing much better economically not only in comparison with most of the Soviet republics, but also in comparison with Poland and Romania. However, after the disintegration of the USSR and revolutions in the CEE countries, all newly-independent states had to cope with deep economic crises engendered by the disruption of the previous economic ties. All of them eventually managed to overcome the decline, and experienced improvement and growth of their economies. Despite the progress in the economic situation, political outcomes in the three countries under analysis turned out to be diverse. The latest *Nations in Transit*

2018 Report by Freedom House indicated that in 2018 Belarus was a consolidated authoritarian regime, Romania – a semi-consolidated democracy, and Poland – a consolidated democracy (Shenkkan, 2018, p. 12 in Freedom House Nations in Transit 2018 Report).

The research method I am using in my work is a comparative case study method. The Comparative Method as the system of culture classification has been known, at least, since the 19th century (Nisbet, 1969, p. 189). Its roots, however, might be ‘as old in Western thought as Greek and Roman interest in origins and cultural stages’ (Ibid.). Rose et al. (1998) indicate that the case study approach is the most common one used to study communist and post-communist countries (p. 69). It is used so widely because after the collapse of the Soviet Union, over a dozen of ‘disparate successor states’ emerged in Eastern Europe, thus presenting researchers with a greatly increased number of opportunities for comparative case-studies (Ibid.).

The case study approach is a ‘detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events’ (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 5). George and Bennett (2005), single out four major strengths of case studies. They are

- their potential for achieving high conceptual validity;
- their strong procedures for fostering new hypotheses;
- their value as a useful means to closely examine the hypothesized role of causal mechanisms in the context of individual cases;
- their capacity for addressing causal complexity (p. 19).

Case studies also possess some obvious limitations. These include

1. Recurrent trade-offs:
 - the problem of case selection;
 - the trade-off between theoretical parsimony and explanatory richness, and keeping the number of cases to be studied manageable;
 - the related tension between achieving high internal validity and good historical explanations of particular cases versus making generalizations that apply to broad populations.

2. Inherent limits:
 - a relative inability to render judgements on the frequency or representativeness of particular cases;
 - a weak capability for estimating the average ‘causal effect’ of variables for a sample (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 22-34).

As for the research design, my comparative case study consists of multiple embedded cases. This means that each individual case includes analysis of qualitative and quantitative (surveys) data. In case of quantitative data, the comparison I am doing is within case, and the results are not pooled across the countries (Yin, 2018, pp. 60-61). With respect to qualitative data, the comparison is between cases. The logic underlying the given case study is the one of replication. In my research it is theoretical replication, which implies that each individual case ‘predicts contrasting results, but for anticipatable reasons’ (Ibid., p. 55). The analytical strategy I followed in my work relied on theoretical propositions (Yin, 2018, p. 168). I tested the theories offered by other scholars as well as my own hypothesis with regard to the factors that affected the post-communist development of Eastern European countries and led to rather diverse outcomes.

In my work I employed two analytical techniques: pattern matching and explanation building. According to Yin (2018), the former is used to make comparisons between an empirically based pattern, which is the result of the case study findings, and a predicted one (p. 175). In political science this method is referred to as the congruence method (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 181). When employing this technique, a researcher starts with a theory, and later explores to what extent the theory is able ‘to explain or predict the outcome of a particular case’ (Ibid.). If the empirical and predicted patterns turn out to be compatible, the internal validity of the comparative case study, i.e. the degree to which the study enables the investigator to choose among alternative explanations, might be strengthened (Yin, 2018, p. 175). The latter technique refers to analyzing the case study data via building an explanation about the said case (Ibid., p. 179). The explanation building method also has a counterpart in political science, which is called process tracing (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 205). As Goldstone (1991) noted,

To identify the process, one must perform the difficult cognitive feat of figuring out *which* aspects of the initial conditions observed, in conjunction with *which simple principles* of the many that may be at work, would have *combined* to generate the observed sequence of events (p. 59; emphasis in the original).

As mentioned above, one of the strengths of case studies is their potential to achieve high conceptual validity. This means that case studies let researchers ‘identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts [researchers] intend to measure’ and thus make a valuable contribution to the expansion and improvement of the existing theory (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 19).

For my analysis I utilized the extant scholarly literature, and data produced by reputable and trustworthy entities such as the United States Agency for International

Development (USAID), TheGlobalEconomy.com, the World Bank, the World Bank Group's Doing Business Reports, Index Mundi, World Values Survey, and Freedom House Reports on Nations in Transit. USAID reports were used for creating the graphs reflecting the dynamics of the Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSO Sustainability Index). TheGlobalEconomy.com is a tool for acquiring reliable economic and other data on different countries in the world. It was used to create graphs for selected economic, political, and social indicators on the basis of official sources which included the World Bank, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, UNESCO, the World Economic Forum, and various other sources. When TheGlobalEconomy.com did not have the information I needed, I used data directly from the site of the World Bank or from the Doing Business and Nations in Transit reports to create the necessary graphs. The Index Mundi data were used to show the religious denominations composition in Belarus, Poland, and Romania as well as the numbers of atheists and non-believers in the three countries. The World Values Survey data were employed to analyze the attitudes of the citizens in the three countries to democracy and their ethnic belonging. The fact that all the data were retrieved from reliable sources, and produced for each of the countries under study following the same procedures made the comparative analysis possible and helped to strengthen the conceptual validity of my case study.

In my work, I first compared how the Polish, Romanian, and Belarusian nations emerged and developed from the ancient times until their respective communist regimes collapsed. I then continued my comparative analysis by looking at the condition of civil society in the three countries beginning with the time when the countries found themselves under the communist regimes and after the collapse of the regimes until

present. In the words of Béteille (2012), civil society in its current understanding ‘as a distinctive set of ideas, institutions, and social arrangements’ is a characteristic feature of the modern world (p. 64). Béteille (2012) also ascertains that as an aspect of society, civil society ‘does not exist everywhere nor has it existed at all times’ (p. 63). Among the three countries, Poland is considered to be the only one that ‘came out of the 1980s with a civil society of significance’ (Berglund et al., 2013, p. 26). Neither Romania nor Belarus had any kind of civil society, as it is understood in the West, before 1989 and 1991 respectively, when the communist regimes in those countries collapsed. The analysis of civil society’s condition in each country ends with a graph presenting the dynamics of Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index between 2000 and 2016. The scores for CSO Sustainability Index were available for each year between 2000 and 2016. However, for the sake of conciseness and demonstrativeness only the scores for the years 2000, 2008, and 2016 are presented.

The final part of my comparative analysis is based on the theory of modernization and post-modernization which first stemmed from the ideas of Max Weber, and was later developed by many other scholars including Adam Przeworski, Larry Dimond, Juan Linz, Ronald Inglehart, etc. Since it is believed that economic development might be conducive to democracy provided it simultaneously entails changes in social structure and political culture, comparing the economic conditions as well as social structure and political culture of Belarus, Poland, and Romania and the changes that occurred in these spheres over time seemed a logical step to make.

3.1 Variables

- I. The relationship between economic development and democracy

It has been argued since the times of Aristotle that in richer societies more people could participate meaningfully in politics and therefore contribute to the sustaining of democracy (Lipset, 1959, p. 75). Lewis (1997), Barro (1999), and Bunce (2000) also maintained that higher levels of economic development resulted in democracy promotion and its sustainability over time. In the words of Diamond (2008b), economic development engendered changes of the social and economic structure of a society as well as produced certain shifts in attitudes and values conducive to democracy (p. 98). In line with this statement, Inglehart (2016) claimed that economic development promoted democracy by bringing structural and cultural changes into a society, and thus impacted the desire of citizens for free choice, including in politics (p. 21).

In their book *Human Values and Beliefs* Inglehart et al. (1998) ranked the countries whose populations had been surveyed according to their Gross National Product per capita, starting with the poorest country and moving down to the richest one. Inglehart et al. (1998) state that it is important to take GNP, or GDP, into consideration because a society's values and beliefs are related to its level of economic development: the perspectives of people in richer countries are consistently different from the points of view of people in poorer countries (p. 3). Among the countries in my analysis, in terms of GDP per capita, Belarus has been the poorest one over the period of observation, followed by Romania. Poland has rounded up the three countries with the highest GDP.

Since, besides GDP, Inglehart did not mention any other economic indicators in his work I had to decide what other indicators to select for my comparative analysis to illustrate the dynamics of the countries' economic development. There exist dozens of economic indicators, though. The question was how to define a group of most important

economic indicators that would serve my purpose best. To decide which economic indicators could be considered as ‘key’ ones, I studied the reports by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank Open Data resources, such sites as TradingEconomics.com, EconomyWatch.com, TheGlobalEconomy.com, and Markets.com that are on-line tools for comparative economic analysis whose data are based on official sources rather than on third-party providers. I observed which economic indicators were consistent across all these sources to identify those that could be ‘the most comprehensive measure[s] of overall economic performance’ (Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, 1999). Consequently, I selected the following economic indicators for my comparative analysis: GDP per capita, consumer price index (inflation), and household consumption as percentage of GDP, unemployment rate, economic freedom (overall index), ease of doing business, and foreign direct investment (FDI).

II. The relationship between the quality of life and democracy

Social indicators research as a field of social science emerged in the U.S. in the 1960s (Land, 1983, p. 2). It was an attempt made by NASA 'to detect and anticipate the impact and side effects of the American space program on the U.S. society' (Noll, 2002, p. 1). It turned out that sufficient data as well as a conceptual framework and a methodology were missing (Land, 1983, p. 2). That was when the term and concept of ‘social indicators’ emerged. They were defined as ‘statistics, statistical series, and all other forms of evidence that enable us to assess where we stand and are going with respect to our values and goals’ (Bauer, 1966, p. 1).

Some twenty years later social indicators began to be defined as statistical time series that were used for monitoring the social system. They helped to identify changes as well as guide intervention when one was necessary ‘to alter the course of change’ (Ferriss, 1988, p. 601 in Land & Ferriss, 2007, p. 518). Mancur Olson also defined a social indicator as a ‘statistic of direct normative interest which facilitates concise, comprehensive and balanced judgments about the condition of major aspects of a society’ (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1969, p. 97 in Land & Ferriss, 2007, p. 520). According to Stuart Rice, social indicators ‘delineate *social states*, define *social problems* and trace *social trends*, which by *social engineering* may hopefully be guided towards *social goals* formulated by *social planning*’ (emphasis in the original) (Fanchette, 1974, p. 7 in UNESCO). Therefore, social indicators can be divided into three classes. First come normative welfare indicators, then satisfaction indicators, and, finally, descriptive social indicators (Land, 1983, p. 1). Social indicators in these three classes fall into objective and subjective categories. Objective social indicators are such as unemployment rates, estimates of life expectancy, school enrollment rates, etc. (Land, 2016, p. 1). Subjective social indicators include ‘measures of subjective well-being’ like individuals’ satisfaction with their life as a whole or how happy they feel (Ibid.). In the words of Diener and Suh (1997), economic indicators used by policy makers are not sufficient to evaluate a society (p. 189). Social indicators and subjective well-being measures are also important since they ‘add substantially to the regnant economic indicators’ (Ibid.).

In the words of Inglehart (1997), economic development gives rise to two types of changes that facilitate democratization (pp. 162-163). These are social and cultural changes. Social changes are entailed by industrialization and include such aspects as

urbanization, mass education, and greater income equality among others. All these and other aspects constitute what Inglehart (1997) calls the ‘Modernization’ syndrome (p. 163). Rising levels of education, for example, seem to be important not only because the nature of work changes and requires now ‘specialized knowledge and autonomous judgment’ (Ibid., p. 168). The level of one’s formal education also reflects political skills: literacy may be conducive to high voting turnouts, whereas higher education might be necessary in order to take the initiative ‘to seek specific policy changes at the national level’ (Inglehart, 1997, p. 169).

Drawing upon Inglehart’s ideas and based on the extant scholarly literature, I identified the following social indicators for my analysis: health spending per capita and as percent of GDP; life expectancy at birth, birth and death rates; education spending as percent of GDP, and tertiary school enrollment; percent of population who identified themselves with the prevalent religious denominations; population size, and percent of urban population.

III. The relationship between the effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system and democracy

As mentioned afore, effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system also influence the stability of the democratic system (Lipset, 1959, p. 86). In other words, it is important how well a political system performs, and whether members of a society feel that their expectations are satisfied. It is also essential for a political system to be able to persuade the society that the currently existing political institutions are the most desirable ones. Inglehart (1997), too, emphasizes the role played by political culture in democracy’s emergence and consequent sustainability (p. 161). Almond (1956) defined

political culture as the embeddedness of a political system ‘in a particular pattern of orientations to political action’ (p. 396 (in “Comparative Political Systems” *Journal of Politics*, 18(3), p. 396)). Beer (1958) stated that political culture is a sector of the general culture of a society ‘concerned with *how* government ought to be conducted and *what* it should try to do’ (p. 12, emphasis in the original (in Beer, S. H. & Ulam, A. B., eds. *Patterns of Government*, 1958)). Quite often political culture is defined as the composite of ‘assumptions, traditions, conventions, values, modes of expression...’ which underlie the political process (Formisano, 2001, p. 411). In the words of Inglehart (1997), although political culture might not be the ‘immediate cause’ that facilitates transition to democracy, it might be ‘a central factor in [its] survival’ (p. 215).

To identify the political indicators for my analysis I inquired into the Freedom in the World by Freedom House reports, Nations in Transit reports that are based on the data of the World Bank, World Bank Indicators 2010, World Development Indicators, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index (BTI), and Worldwide Governance Indicators. As a result of my inquiry, the following political indicators were identified for the analysis: rule of law, government effectiveness, control of corruption, regulatory quality, voice and accountability, political stability index, political rights index, and civil liberties index.

IV. People’s attitude to democracy

Inglehart (1997) claims that although it is possible for democratic institutions to be imposed from above or even from outside, their survival depends on whether there is mass support for them in a society, that is ‘whether they take root among the public’ (pp. 163-164). Therefore, for democracy to become stable, the public should develop ‘a

deeply rooted sense' of its legitimacy (Ibid., p. 206). It seemed, thus, important to consider the levels of support democracy enjoyed in the three countries under study.

In order to analyze the attitudes of citizens in Belarus, Poland, and Romania to democracy as well as the extent of pride they took in their national belonging, I used the data from Wave 3 and Wave 6 of the World Values Survey. The World Values Survey (WVS) began in 1981 as a study of ten Western European societies by the European Values Survey group (EVS) (World Values Survey, 2012). The study was later replicated in more than a dozen of other countries. According to Inglehart et al. (2000), the studies conducted in those countries showed that 'pervasive and partially predictable cultural changes were taking place' (p. 4). Therefore, it was decided to conduct similar surveys globally. Ronald Inglehart from the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan coordinated carrying out the surveys in some countries outside Europe, as well as in Eastern Europe. WVS measure 'changing values concerning religion, gender roles, work motivations, democracy, good governance, social capital, political participation, tolerance of other groups, environmental protection, and subjective well-being' (World Values Survey, 2012). The sampling design for the surveys was stratified multi-stage random sampling. The samples were selected in two stages. At the first stage, locations were randomly selected in order to ensure a representative sample of all types of locations proportional to their population (Inglehart et al., 2000, p. 9). At the second stage a sample of individuals was randomly drawn up (Ibid.).

Rose et al. (1998) when talking about the New Democratic Barometer surveys mentioned that asking the same questions in different countries could help 'identify the extent to which differences of opinion within a country [were] complemented by

similarities across national boundaries’ (p. 70). The same is applicable to the World Values Survey with respect to the three countries under analysis. Identical sets of political, economic, and social questions that were asked in Belarus, Romania, and Poland made it ‘possible to compare how people with different nationalities but the same socio-economic characteristics respond to democratization’ (Ibid., p. 77).

The surveys in Wave 3 were conducted between 1995 and 1998, and the surveys in Wave 6 took place between 2010 and 2014. I chose these two waves because they were the only ones in which Belarus, Poland, and Romania participated together. Also, these particular waves gave me an opportunity to follow the dynamics in respondents’ attitudes to various aspects of democracy as well as in pride they took in their national identity over fourteen- to fifteen-years’ time spans. In Belarus the surveys were conducted in 1996 and in 2011; in Poland – in 1997 and 2012; and in Romania – in 1998 and 2012.

3.2 Wave 3 Surveys Characteristics

Belarus: the data were collected by the NOVAK-Laboratory Institute from Minsk, Belarus, between December 5 and December 30, 1996. The respondents universe consisted of the national population, both sexes, 18 years of age and older. The sample size was 2,092; the estimated error equaled 2.2%. The sample was representative of the entire population. The survey was conducted by means of personal face to face interviews; the response rate was 48.8% (Belarus 1996, Technical Record).

Poland: the data were collected by the Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS) from Warsaw, Poland, between March 3 and October 25, 1997. The respondents universe consisted of the national population, both sexes, 18 years of age and older. The sample size was 1,153; the estimated error equaled 2.9%. The sample

was representative of the entire population. The survey was conducted by means of personal face to face interviews; the response rate was 76.9% (Poland 1997, Technical Record).

Romania: the data were collected by CSPO Ltd Market, Media and Opinion Research from Bucharest, Romania, between June 8 and June 22, 1998. The respondents universe consisted of the national population, both sexes, 18 years of age and older. The sample size was 1,239; the estimated error equaled 2.8%. The sample was representative of the entire population. The survey was conducted by means of personal face to face interviews; the response rate was 82.6% (Romania 1998, Technical Record).

For my analysis I chose the following questions from Wave 3:

How interested would you say you are in politics?

Do you agree or disagree that democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government?

How proud are you to be Belarusian (Polish, Romanian)?

3.3 Wave 6 Surveys Characteristics

Belarus: the data were collected by Serban Tanasa between November 18 and December 15, 2011. The respondents universe consisted of the national population, both sexes, 18 years of age and older. The sample size was 1,535; the estimated error equaled 2.6%. The sample was representative of the adult population of the country aged 18 and over. The survey was conducted by means of personal face to face interviews (Belarus 2011, Technical Record).

Poland: the data were collected by CBOS (Public Opinion Research Center) between January 25 and February 3, 2012. The respondents universe consisted of the

national population, both sexes, 18 years of age and older. The sample size was 966; the estimated error equaled 3.2% (Poland 2012, Technical Record).

Romania: the data were collected by Metromedia Transilvania between October 1 and December 31, 2012. The respondents universe consisted of the national population, both sexes, 18 years of age and older. The sample size was 1,503; the estimated error equaled 2.6%. The survey was conducted by means of personal face to face interviews (Romania 2012, Technical Record).

From Wave 6 I used the following questions:

How interested would you say you are in politics?

What do you think about having a democratic political system as a way of governing this country?

How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?

And how democratically is this country being governed today?

How proud are you to be Belarusian (Polish, Romanian)?

The analysis of the statistical data was performed with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The appropriate statistical test for association was Chi Square since the variables were nominal. Respondents' age and level of education were used as control variables to understand responses to other questions. These characteristics of respondents were chosen following the statements of Inglehart et al. (1998) in *Human Values and Beliefs*. Inglehart and colleagues (1998) maintain that fundamental value changes occur in society when older birth cohorts in a society's adult population become replaced by younger ones (p. 10). The scholars also claim that value systems are different not only between poor and rich societies. They

are also different within societies between more and less educated strata of the population (Inglehart et al., 1998, p. 7). Therefore, it seemed important to cross respondents' attitudes to democracy with their age and level of education.

For the sake of clarity and illustrative purpose, the multiple age-groups of respondents were collapsed into just three: 18-29, 30-49, and 50 and older, and the education level options were collapsed into primary, secondary, and higher. Also, if a question had numerous answer options such as 'very interested/somewhat interested/not very interested/not at all interested', they were collapsed into 'interested vs. not interested' dichotomous answer options in which 'very interested' was combined with 'somewhat interested' into 'interested,' and 'not very interested' was combined with 'not at all interested' into 'not interested'. The same applied to the questions with the answer options 'strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree' that were collapsed into the 'agree/disagree' pair, and 'very proud/quite proud/not very proud/not at all proud' that were transformed into the 'proud/not proud' pair.

Since I was comparing six different groups of people (three age groups and three education level groups) in three countries, each across two different surveys, the findings turned out to be quite copious. Therefore, in order to make the data more explicit, legible, and concise, all percentages were rounded to the nearest integer, and in the final graphs I am presenting only the 'positive' answers of the respondents. This means that only the percentage of respondents who said they were interested in politics, agreed that democracy was the best form of government, and stated they were proud to be Belarusian (Romanian, Polish) are reflected in the graphs. Due to the fact that all the

answer options were made dichotomous, the answers missing from the graph are the corresponding ‘negative’ responses that together with the ‘positive’ responses add to 100%. For example, if the graph shows that 71% of Belarusians in the age group of 18-29 year-olds said they were proud of their ethnic belonging, it means that 29% said they were not, although the graph does not provide the latter number.

Finally, in the graphs that illustrate the dynamics of respondents’ answers to the questions about how important it was for them that their countries were governed democratically, and to what extent they believed their countries were actually being governed democratically, I used only the answers of respondents across age groups. This was done due to the fact that in Belarus the sample of respondents with primary education who answered those questions turned out to be extremely small, and thus could not be employed for comparative analysis. Analysis of various indicators ends up with a democracy score for each country between the years of 1999 and 2017. It shows the level of democratic progress for Belarus, Poland, and Romania over the time period of their post-communist transition.

Although some researchers claim that democratic institutions are more likely to be supported by those who are younger and better educated, and that ‘these variables alone can account for a respectable amount of variance in the dependent variable’ (Gibson and Duch, 1994, pp. 20-21 in Inglehart, 1997, p. 211), the Chi Square analysis proved that it was not always the case. For most questions the Chi Square numbers were large (from 7.764 to 56.664) indicating the presence of a strong relationship among the variables. Also, the probability associated with a Chi Square statistic was less than 0.05

for each of those questions. The large Chi Square numbers and the p-value lower than 0.05 made generalizations from a random sample to a population possible and indicated that the variables in the population were associated. However, for some questions, such as, for instance, the question about whether a democratic political system was good or bad, the Chi Square number was very low for respondents in Belarus (2011) and Poland (2012) in the age groups, and for Romania (2012) in the education groups. The Chi Square number was 0.839, 4.313, and 5.518 for Belarus, Poland, and Romania respectively. The p-value equaled 0.657, 0.116, and 0.063 for Belarus, Poland, and Romania respectively. Similar results were obtained for the questions that asked respondents whether they were proud to be Belarusians (2011), or Poles (2012), or Romanians (1998) depending on the level of education. When the Chi Square numbers were so small, and the p-values were high, it was a sign that the findings were not statistically significant. It can be ascertained, therefore, that in those cases respondents' attitudes towards democracy and the level of their pride in their national affiliation did not depend much, if at all, on their age or level of education.

To conclude, my comparative case study analyzes various conditions (e.g., economic, political, social, cultural) that existed in the three countries before they became communist states, at the time when the communist regimes collapsed there, and the changes that occurred in these spheres along the way until 2017. As an outcome of my analysis I am offering a more profound explanation of the differences in post-communist histories of Eastern European countries along the dimension of civil society,

economic condition, and national consciousness, and thus contribute to the deepening and broadening of the post-communist transition theories.

Chapter 4

BRIEF HISTORIES OF POLAND, ROMANIA, AND BELARUS BEFORE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMUNIST REGIMES IN THE COUNTRIES AND UNTIL THE REGIMES' COLLAPSE IN 1989-1991

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and collapse of the communist regimes in other countries of the Warsaw Pact, the general expectation was that the countries would commence a transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Between 1989 and 1991, few could foresee that the changes might acquire a multi-vector nature. Almost three decades into the process of transition, it has become obvious that development in the direction of liberal democracy was not always a predictable outcome of transition. Social scientists tried to explain the diverse end results the CEE countries have attained from the points of view of the countries' communist legacies, their modes of transition from the authoritarian rule, proximity to the European Union, economic condition on the eve of the old regimes' fall, and so on.

It seems, however, that an additional explanatory factor should be looked for in the countries' pre-communist histories. The following chapter presents a snapshot of the histories of Poland, Romania, and Belarus from the ancient times until today. It also touches upon the process of nation formation in these three states. The presence of a strong national consciousness might have been another reason that contributed to the countries' successful democratization. Or vice versa, the absence of the national consciousness might have impeded transition towards democracy and instead facilitated consolidation of authoritarianism.

POLAND

More than any other country in post-Communist Europe, Poland contributed to making the possibility of the 1989 regime changes a reality (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 291).

4.1 A Brief History of Poland

Unlike some other countries in Europe, Poland was never conquered by the Romans. That is why there is no particular Year One ‘from which to launch a historical survey’ (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001, p. 3). The conventional year of Poland’s ‘beginning’ is considered to be the year AD 966 when the Piast dynasty ruler of what has come to be recognized as Poland accepted Latin Christianity (Holmes, 1997, p. 68; Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001, p. 3). In the 14th century the Piast dynasty was replaced by the Jagellonian of Lithuania and Poland (Holmes, 1997, pp. 68-69). Jogaila, the ruler of Lithuania, and ‘the illiterate heathen,’ was looking for a union with Poland in hopes to gain support against the Teutonic Knights and his uncle’s Kestutis’ ‘dangerous son’, Vytautas (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001, pp. 32, 34). In 1386 Jogaila married Jadwiga, who was the first female monarch of the Kingdom of Poland. Before that he promised to convert to Catholicism and to annex the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) to Poland (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001, pp. 32). Thus, the future Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania began first as a personal union between the Kingdom’s monarch and the Duchy’s duke (Chodakiewicz, 2012, p. 46).

Less than a hundred years later, the Jagellonian dynasty was ruling over Hungary and Bohemia in addition to Poland and Lithuania, the latter covering the territory

between the Baltic and the Black Seas already at the time of Jogaila and Jadwiga's marriage (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001, pp. 32-33). In 1569 the Kingdom of Poland and the GDL concluded a federal union in Lublin. In the words of Chodakiewicz (2012), 'The resulting Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania (*Rzeczpospolita, Respublica*) ... was the largest and the freest nation in Europe' (p. 48). In this multiethnic state that comprised, besides Poles and Lithuanians, also Ruthenians, Germans, Jews, Italians, and others, 'Poland and Poles were the conduits of the Western culture' (Chodakiewicz, 2012, p. 52). To be a Pole meant to be a Polish nobleman, to enjoy the liberties the status entailed, and to belong to the West/Europe culturally (Ibid.). Snyder (2003), supports this idea by stating that the nation of this largest realm of early modern Europe 'was its nobility, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant' (p. 1). The noblemen, whether of Polish, Lithuanian, or Slavic origin, were united by 'common political and civil rights' (Ibid.). Therefore, when referring to themselves in either Latin or Polish, the inhabitants of *Rzeczpospolita* would say they were 'of the Polish nation,' thus identifying Polishness with Europe (Snyder, 2003, p. 1; Chodakiewicz, 2012, p. 52). Snyder (2003), also states that the Union of Lublin marked 'the creation of the early modern Polish nation,' but being a Pole indicated citizenship and belonging to the Western European civilization rather than speaking the same language or being part of the same ethnic group (pp. 3-4).

Closer to the end of the 16th century, the Jagellonian dynasty collapsed, and Poland surrounded by powerful neighbors was left with a weak government (Holmes, 1997, p. 69). According to Chodakiewicz (2012), by the mid of the 17th century the state already entered 'a period of decline and calamity' (p. 53). By the end of the 18th century, Poland was still a very large country that included not only the territory of the present-

day Poland (its eastern and central parts), but also what later became Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, and Ukraine (Polonsky, 1972, p. 1). Poland's landed gentry dominated its political life and elected the king and the parliament (Ibid.). In 1791, it even enacted a constitution, which was the first such law codified in Europe (Holmes, 1997, p. 69). This, however, did not save the already weakened *Rzeczpospolita* from being torn among the Romanovs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Habsburgs. Russia, Austria, and Prussia partitioned Poland three times in 1772, 1793, and 1795, with Austria, however, eschewing the second partition (Holmes, 1997, p. 69; Chodakiewicz, 2012, p. 52). For the next 130 years or so the Polish nation became stateless.

The Poles never accepted the loss of independence, and the resentful gentry revolted many a time between 1830 and 1863. All the revolts were 'ruthlessly crushed,' and after the Uprising of 1863 whose suppression was accompanied by 'savage measures,' any attempts at regaining Poland's independence by means of armed insurrection were given up (Polonsky, 1972, p. 1). Nevertheless, the last uprising was important for the Polish society since that was 'the last time that the representatives of all ethno-religious groups of the old Commonwealth acted in concert and solidarity' against the common enemy (Chodakiewicz, 2012, p. 60).

Having lost their state, the Poles, however, did not lose their national consciousness. Despite the vicissitudes, national consciousness would spread widely among the Polish-speaking population in urban and rural areas after 1864 (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001, p. 186). According to Lukowski and Zawadzki (2001), this was facilitated by the fact that all educated Poles, regardless of the place where they lived, shared a common language that dated back to the 16th century as well as cultural bonds 'which transcended the state frontiers and reached wider sections of society' (p. 186).

Another factor that consolidated Polish society in the absence of the state was the Catholic Church (Ibid., p. 187).

When the empires that partitioned Poland at the end of the 18th century collapsed as a result of World War I, Poland re-emerged. In 1916 it was proclaimed the Kingdom of Poland, but two years later, in November 1918, it became a Polish Republic (Holmes, 1997, p. 69). Between 1918 and 1922, the reborn country fought nine different wars virtually against all its neighbors – Germans, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Czechs, and the Bolsheviks (Chodakiewicz, 2012, p. 71). Although the Poles had long been dreaming of independence, comprising a single state out of disparate parts that for over a century had been under three different foreign rules proved to be ‘a slow and difficult process’ (Polonsky, 1972, pp. 2-3, 7). So much longed-for independence thus ‘presented the Poles with daunting and, in the end, insuperable problems’ (Ibid., p. 506).

The problems included, among others, the mostly agrarian nature of the Polish economic structure, industrial backwardness, an army requiring modernization, critical overpopulation, the unresolved issue of seven national minority groups comprising about a third of the total population, and widespread illiteracy (Wynot, 1974, pp. 2-19). In addition to everything, the political development of Poland between the two World Wars was ‘marked by internal divisiveness’ (Ibid., p. 21). Thus, the re-creation of the Polish state and regaining of independence proved to ‘create almost as many problems as [they] had solved’ (Polonsky, 1972, p. 10).

Holmes (1997) indicates that at the beginning of the interwar years the Poles tried to establish liberal democracy, but they were not successful (p. 69). In November 1918, Marshal Jozef Pilsudski became Chief-of-State of the Second Polish Republic and formed the provisional government (East, 1992, p. 108). In March 1921, Poland adopted

a new constitution and had five years of parliamentary democracy after that (Ibid., p. 109). However, by 1926, Poland had succumbed to a dictatorship (Chodakiewicz, 2012, p. 71). It was the result of a successful coup d'état organized by Pilsudski in May 1926 (Holmes, 1997, p. 69). Nevertheless, the Pilsudski regime was unable to resolve the pressing problems of the Polish state (Polonsky, 1972, p. 508). The Marshal's untimely death in 1935 was followed by a power struggle that almost led to chaos in the country (Holmes, 1997, p. 69). In the face of the imminent danger of German invasion, Poland failed to properly prepare its army for the war, to solve its economic problems, and to address the issue of national minorities (Polonsky, 1972, pp. 507-508). Consequently, in 1939, Poland was unable to resist the German invasion and yet another division, this time between Germany and the USSR based on the secret part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact – the German-Soviet Frontier Treaty.

During World War II, the Poles offered brave resistance to the Nazi invaders 'drawing strength from a sense of identity and pride which had kept Polish nationhood alive before' (East, 1992, p. 110). In 1943, the United States and Great Britain began to gradually give in to Stalin's moves 'on the Polish question' (Kersten, 1991, p. 5-6). While Russia 'violently protested' against providing the Poles with any support in their resistance, the Allies were leaning more and more to the argument that Poland was now 'within the Soviet zone' thus washing their hands of leaving the Poles without assistance (Ibid., p. 5).

When World War II ended, the Poles found themselves in a unique situation that had never before existed in Polish history (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 258). Their state had become a true nation-state for the first time. It happened due to the fact that many of the Jews who lived in Poland before the war were exterminated, the ethnic Germans were

expulsed, and the ethnic Belarusians and Ukrainians ended up in the territories annexed to the Soviet Union. Now the majority of the citizens of Poland were ethnic Poles and belonged to the Roman Catholic Church (Ibid.).

After World War II, the Soviet Union felt strong enough to ignore the West with its ‘guarantees of democracy,’ to create a communist-dominated regime in Poland, and to keep the country within the sphere of its influence (East, 1992, p. 110). With respect to the Polish post-war economic recovery, just like in the Soviet Union itself and in other satellite countries, the Stalinist regime placed emphasis on nationalization and investment in heavy industry (Ibid.). The attempts at collectivization in agriculture, however, were given up by the end of the 1950s because the traditional Polish peasantry offered stubborn resistance to it (East, 1992, p. 110). Like other Central and Eastern European countries in the Soviet zone of influence, within a few years Poland was ‘transformed into [a] mere carbon [copy] of the Soviet political system’ (Berglund et al., 2013, p. 24). According to Berglund et al. (2013), the consequences of this were manifold:

The traditional middle class and rural constituencies of the liberal, conservative and agrarian parties were wiped out and the traditional working class and urban constituencies of the left-wing parties were substantially strengthened; the countryside was impoverished and the role of traditional religious values was sharply reduced; illiteracy was wiped out or sharply reduced; the average level of education jumped upwards as dramatically as industrial output and the standard of living (p. 24).

4.2 Poland and the European Union

The Polish state resurrected in 1916, after having been incorporated into three different empires for over a century. Poles, thus, were an ‘old nation but a new state’

(Rose et al., 1998, p. 78). This statement finds a lot of support in terms of historical evidence. Already the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania was not only the largest, but also ‘the freest nation in Europe’ (Chodakiewicz, 2012, p. 48). Therefore, the idea of ‘a return to Europe’ became the focal point of all the activities in Poland after the Revolution of 1989 (Snyder, 2003, pp. 2-3).

‘Returning back to Europe’ did not, of course, mean going back to what had existed before communism was imposed in Eastern Europe. For the CEE countries in the 21st century ‘returning to Europe’ meant, first and foremost, joining the European Union and partaking of the achievements Western Europe had accomplished after World War II (Snyder, 2003, p. 290). Poland, as other aspirant counties, had to prove it would be able to share the norms and practices that had been accumulating in Western Europe for decades, and that it could become successful before the EU accession (Ibid., pp. 291-292). To claim that Poland owed its democratic status solely to the EU would be incorrect; however, the influence and involvement of the European Union undoubtedly made a difference (Berglund et al., 2013, p. 30).

In the 1990s, the European Union introduced new conditions for the prospective members. The additional conditions were elaborated by the European Council in Copenhagen, in June 1993. These criteria, habitually referred to as the *Copenhagen criteria*, were originally specified for the Central and Eastern European countries, but later acquired general application (Tatham, 2009, p. 207). The criteria were prompted ‘more by political concerns than purely economic ones’ and read as follows:

- That the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;

- The existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with the competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; and
- The ability to take the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union (Ibid.).

The new conditions specified that countries seeking EU membership had to meet certain democratic standards before accession. Now the standards have moved ‘beyond the ... formal democracy criteria utilized in previous decades into areas of substantive democracy’ (Pridham, 2007, p. 3). Formal democracy, although it affects legislative and institutional levels, does not actually alter an existing political culture in any fundamental way (Ciobanu, 2015, p. 260). Substantive democracy, on the other hand, ‘attempts to tie citizens and their representatives together, and involve an active citizenry and an influential civil society’ (Ibid., pp. 260-261).

Although Poland experienced difficulties complying with some of the criteria, after 1989 it made remarkable progress in political, economic, and social transformation, and eventually joined the European Union on May 1, 2004 (Copsey, 2013, p. 196). After the accession, Poles definitely became richer, received greater opportunities, and started living more secure lives (Ibid.). In addition, Poland, together with other new democracies of Eastern Europe, found itself ‘at the receiving end of a massive cultural transfer of Western principles of good governance’ (Berglund et al., 2013, p. 30). Those included such aspects as political pluralism and institutional accountability and responsiveness, as well as an active civil society, human rights, the rule of law, and democratic elections (Democratic Governance, n.d.). Thus, Poland’s transformation from communism to democracy and market economy turned out to be ‘spectacularly successful’ with its 2011 extremely successful EU Presidency

symbolically marking ‘the end of the long journey back to European normality’ started in 1989 (Copsey, 2013, pp. 208-209).

ROMANIA

Of the former Warsaw pact countries in Eastern Europe ... Romania [had] numerous distinctions. It had the last transition. It had the most violent regime termination. It was the only country that had nothing remotely close to a national round table. It is the country where the successor regime committed the most egregious violations of human rights. ... It is the only country where a former high Communist official was not only elected to presidency in the first free election, but re-elected (Linz & Stepan, 1999, p. 344).

4.3 Origins

Romania is a 'Latin island' in the 'Slavic Sea' of Poles, Bulgarians, Ukrainians and others (Heifner, 1997, p. 470; Pop, 1999, p. 34). Wallachia and Moldavia, two Danuban Romanian principalities, emerged at the beginning of the 14th century (Hitchins, 2014, p. 16). When they united in 1859, they formed the basis of modern Romania. The third Romanian land that joined the Romanian state only in 1918 was Transylvania. The political unification of all Romanians that occurred in 1918 was considered 'the greatest achievement in all of Romanian modern history' (Pop, 1999, p. 124).

Before the Romans conquered these territories at the beginning of the 2nd century AD, they used to be the Kingdom of Dacia inhabited mostly by two related peoples – the Getae and the Dacians, often referred to as Geto-Dacians or simply Dacians (Hitchins, 2014, p. 7). At the end of the 14th century, Wallachia and Moldavia had to confront the Turkish Ottoman armies, and between the middle of the 15th and the middle

of the 16th centuries, their princes were forced to accept the vassal status to the Ottoman sultans (Ibid., pp. 27-30). From the ancient times and until joining the union of Wallachia and Moldavia, the area of today's Transylvania and later the Principality of Transylvania was under the rule of the Romans, the Kingdom of Hungary, the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, and then under the control of the Habsburgs Empire.

By the beginning of the 19th century most of the Balkan territories constituted part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman government ruled over a predominantly Christian population. The majority of the population of the Balkan Peninsula was Orthodox Christians and fell under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople acting as the Ottoman government agent (Jelavich & Jelavich, 1977, p. 4). Most of the Christian population was peasants (Ibid., p. 7). The inhabitants of Wallachia and Moldavia became part of the world of Byzantine Orthodoxy already in the 14th century and embraced its spiritual and aesthetic ideals (Hitchins, 2014, p. 37). In the words of Hitchins (2014), those ideals were peculiar to the peoples of Southeastern Europe and differed greatly from the ones of Western Europe (p. 37). By the 18th century the Ottoman government began to appoint Phanariot Greeks to the posts of princes or governors instead of Romanians in Wallachia and Moldavia (Jelavich & Jelavich, 1977, p. 10). The Ottoman Court turned to the wealthy Greek families that lived in the Phanar district in Constantinople because of their 'invaluable diplomatic and financial services to the empire' and in order to counter Russian and Austrian ambitions in the principalities as well as the disloyalty of the local princes (Hitchins, 2014, pp. 55-56). This partnership established what was called the Phanariot regime which lasted from 1711 in Moldavia and from 1716 in Wallachia until 1821 (Ibid., p. 56).

Thus, by the end of the 18th century, the principalities were under a Christian Phanariot Greek regime, which means that the Ottoman government did not administer them directly. They had a native aristocracy of large landowners. Also, due to Romania's geographic position between two great conflicting powers – Russia and the Habsburg Empire – its leaders had to rely more on diplomacy than on arms to achieve their goals (Jelavich & Jelavich, 1977, p. 84-85). Romanian princes returned to power in the principalities by 1821-1822 after a century of Phanariot rule, i.e. Greeks in the service of the Turks (Pop, 1999, p. 95). After signing an agreement with Russia in 1828, the Romanian principalities found themselves under Turkish suzerainty and Russian protection (Ibid., p. 96). During the years of the Russian protectorate the Romanian national feeling rose greatly. It was especially noticeable among the educated and privileged young men who had studied in Western Europe, in particular in Paris, France. One of the ideas they had in common was 'the unification of Romanian lands in an independent state' (Jelavich & Jelavich, 1977, p. 94).

In 1848, just like in many other European countries, Revolutions burst out in Moldavia and Wallachia seeking a union of the principalities and their independence. Although the revolutions were defeated, they laid a foundation for future democratic changes and a program for the country's modernization that functioned until 1918 (Pop, 1999, p. 103). A war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire (1853-1856), which also involved France and Britain, finally 'brought the union and independence of the principalities nearer to fulfillment' (Hitchins, 2014, p. 101). The Treaty of Paris of March 30, 1856 impacted the political destiny of the principalities in a decisive manner, and by 1859 it became clear that 'the momentum toward the union of Moldavia and Wallachia was irreversible' (Ibid., pp. 101, 105). Some years later, however, the Great

Powers started to become a threat to the union. Therefore, it was decided to accept a foreign prince as the country's leader. On May 10, 1866 the parliament proclaimed that Romania would maintain its unity under Charles I of the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen dynasty (Pop, 1999, pp. 111-112). Among the first important documents ratified under the new ruler was the Constitution of 1866 – ‘the first really modern fundamental law to be adopted democratically by the elected representatives of the Romanian people’ (Ibid., p. 112). At the time the Constitution turned out to be ‘one of the most advanced fundamental laws in Europe’ (Ibid.). This liberal document

limited the powers of the prince to those of a constitutional monarch, provided for representative government, made ministers responsible for their act, reinforced the principle of the separation of powers; guaranteed the citizenry equality before the law, complete freedom of conscience, of the press, and of public meetings, the right of association, and the protection of one's domicile and person against arbitrary search and arrest (Hitchins, 2014, p. 113).

4.4 Between the East and the West

Romanian elites had been trying to find the right place for their countries among their neighbors since the establishment of the Wallachian and Moldavian principalities in the 14th century. They debated what they should look to as a model – the East or the West. Sometimes their Byzantine religion and culture made them look to the East (Hitchins, 2014, p. 22). Obviously, the Orthodox Church was not likely to support any movements that could lead to ‘the westernization and secularization’ of the Romanian and other Balkan societies (Jelavich & Jelavich, 1977, p. 8). On the other hand, the Romanians in Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania were never completely isolated from the West, and never lost the awareness of their Roman origins (Hitchins, 2014, p.

22). Thus, Orthodox Christianity and Romania's geographical location as a 'Latin island,' as well as a border between East and West, eventually shaped the Romanian identity (Heifner, 1997, p. 470).

The 17th century made the aspects of the national issue and struggle for the Romanians' national emancipation more salient (Pop, 1999, p. 84). The century turned out to be what Hitchens (2014) called 'a crisis of conscience for the elites' due to 'the new intellectual and cultural currents' stemming from the West (p. 47). By the middle of the 18th century intellectuals were searching for an answer to the questions of the Romanians' origins and national identity in 'the context of ... the fierce competition for empire-building among the Habsburgs, Romanovs, and Ottomans' (Verdery, 1991, p. 30). Also, by that time Romanian intellectuals had acknowledged the superiority of the West with respect to its progress in acquisition of material wealth and in the development of sciences, and would measure the achievements of their own country in the spheres of politics, economy, and culture against the example of the West (Hitchens, 2014, p. 49). If before the second half of the 18th century, Romanians identified themselves mostly as members of the Orthodox Church, then after the union of Moldavia and Wallachia in the middle of the century such notions as 'nation' and 'fatherland' acquired a special meaning. In the words of Hitchens (2014), the new Romania was envisioned by many as a secular state and 'the embodiment of the liberal ideas predominant in Western Europe of the time' (p. 64).

Opinions about the origins of the Romanians were mainly divided into three groups. The first group comprised 'Latinists', i.e. those who believed that the Romanians were 'the lineal descendants of the legions of Roman Emperor Trajan and of colonists he brought from Rome' (Verdery, 1991, p. 31). The second group

emphasized the Dacian origin of the Romanians and stated that the original inhabitants only ‘adopted the Latin language and some elements of Roman civilization’, but beyond that preserved their own culture and bloodline (Ibid.). The third group united people who maintained that modern Romanians were the descendants of the Roman colonists who intermingled with the indigenous Dacian inhabitants of the lands. Therefore, they constituted the so-called Daco-Roman camp (Ibid.). According to Verdery (1991), none of these views suggested a ‘purely eastern ancestry’ of the Romanians, but placed the origin of the Romanian nation ‘between pro-westernism and indigenism’ (p. 31).

With the end of the Phanariot era, Romanians’ contacts with the West that many of them identified with Europe (Hitchins, 2014, p. 112) strengthened, and ‘the existence of a Romania/West dichotomy’ began to be stressed (Michelson, 1997, p. 12). Since Romania was simultaneously looking at the East and the West, an ‘acute conflict between forms (Western ones) and base (native ones)’ developed (Ibid.). Romanian intellectuals were very well aware of the differences between East and West and realized they had to choose between these two options. The necessity for making a choice ‘lay at the heart of Romanian history from the 1770s to the 1860s’ (Hitchins, 2014, p. 65).

It was obvious that the West could be either followed or rejected, but it could hardly be ignored (Hitchins, 2014, p. 112). Therefore, the debates over the paths for national development were oscillating between the European and traditional options. They were swaying between support and negation of industrialization, the idea about whether or not Romania should remain an agrarian state and thus preserve its values and social structure, the importance of parliamentary democracy and religion, etc. (Verdery, 1991, p. 47). In the words of Michelson (1997), already the ‘generation of 1848 was preoccupied with becoming European,’ and westernizers of various kinds would

dominate political and cultural life in Romania until 1914 (pp. 13-14). The general debate about the Romanians' identity and the path of the nation's development would continue until World War II (Hitchins, 2014, p. 121).

4.5 The Choice

Beginning with the 1900s, Romanian politicians and thinkers were preoccupied with defining 'Romanians' essential character' and strove for the creation of 'a strong national polity, economy, and culture' (Verdery, 1991, p. 46). The debate between the 'Europeanizers' and the 'Traditionalists' continued during the interwar period. They argued about whether Romania should join the West and become part of its economic and political structures, or whether it should look for a unique way in its own traditions and heritage, or, perhaps, combine elements of the two approaches (Michelson, 1997, p. 17).

During the interwar period Romania's political power was highly centralized with some decentralization occurring in 1928 after the first free elections (Holmes, 1997, p. 78). The democratic phase, however, did not last long. A sequence of events between 1930 and 1947, when the powers of parliament and political parties were reduced, a quasi-fascist group, the Iron Guard, became powerful only to be put down later by General Antonescu, the overthrow of the latter in 1944, the occupation of Romania by the Soviet troops in August of the same year, and the abdication of the last Romanian king in 1947 led to the point when by 1948 'Romania had become a Soviet-style communist state' (Ibid., pp. 78-79). After Romania became a communist state, it was drawn away from the West and its ideals.

The question of Romania's connection to the West was raised anew after the fall of the Ceaușescu regime in 1989. The widespread feeling in the Romanian society was

that the country ‘had been excluded from its rightful place in Europe after the Second World War’ (Pridham, 2007, p. 1). As Michelson (1997) stated, one could draw an analogy between the beginning of the 19th century when the Phanariot regime ended and the end of the 20th century when the Communist rule was overthrown – both events ended cultural and political isolation of Romania from the West (p. 20). During thirty years after Ceaușescu was toppled ‘integration into and acceptance by the West’ have been the goal of most Romanians (Parau, 2015, p. 241). Carothers (1999), too, noted that precisely the Romanians’ perception of their society as ‘Western and, more specifically, European’ was one of the important factors that helped sustain the country’s process of democratization even in spite of the difficulties it encountered along the way (p. 323).

It is, therefore, obvious that Romania could not simply ignore the West. In general, it did not have much choice after the collapse of the Communist regime (Michelson, 1997, p. 23). Romania could either join the West, that is the industrialized and modernized world, or it could become part of the ‘unfortunate alternative to the West,’ which was the third world (Ibid.). It seemed clear that *tertium non datur*, i.e. there was no third possibility for the country. Out of the two options Romania chose the former – to join the West. This meant Romania aspired to become a member of the European Union.

4.6 Romania and the European Union

In the words of Mungiu-Pippidi (2006), in no other Central European country did the public want to join Europe as much as it wanted it in Romania (p. 13). Even Romania’s communists became eventually convinced that being part of the EU would

be very advantageous for the country (Ibid.). The path to the European Union membership proved to be quite tortuous, though.

Romania's 'entangled revolution' (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, p. 4) led to a controversial and a very unclear regime change with the new ruling elite comprised mostly of former Communists until 1996 (Pridham, 2007, pp. 2, 7). The country's 'all-encompassing transformation' was not engendered by a peaceful revolution as in other Eastern European states (Ciobanu, 2015, p. 261). Rather, it was given an impetus by the anarchical uprising of 1989, i.e. 'a spontaneous popular revolt' (Ibid.). Consequently, Romania's transition was sudden and violent. Following the protests in Timisoara in support of a protestant minister, Laszlo Tokes, who dared to confront the authorities and remark upon political and religious rights, Ceaușescu ordered his security forces to attack the protesters. This gave rise to protests across the country, which ended in Ceaușescu's ousting from power, his attempt to flee the country, a subsequent arrest, a 'show trial,' and a 'summary execution' of him and his wife, Elena, on December 25, 1989 (Carothers, 1999, p. 73; Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 359). Several days before the trial and execution, the power in the country was assumed by Ion Iliescu, a former Communist party official, and his supporters who formed the National Salvation Front (NSF). Thus, the first *stage* of the transition to post-communism was the establishment by the NSF of a provisional government in which Iliescu became president and Petre Roman – premier (Holmes, 1997, p. 82). The second stage was the holding of free elections in May of the same year when the NSF won by a landslide, and Iliescu secured about 85% of votes in the presidential election (Ibid.).

Since Ceaușescu was replaced by people who had very strong links to the old regime, Romania's ambiguous transition raised a lot of doubts about whether the

country would follow a democratic path (Carothers, 1999, p. 74, 78-79). Rumors circulated that the revolution ‘had been a fake, a film scripted by the Romanian communists’ (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 345). That it was ‘a preplanned putsch by insiders rather than a result of a popular revolt’ (Carothers, 1999, p. 74), and even ‘a beautifully orchestrated piece of Kremlin music conducted by Maestro Gorbachev’ (Codrescu, 1992, p. 206).

Since ‘the uprising was too short, spontaneous, and politically manipulated,’ no serious governing alternative program was offered to replace what had existed before (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 359; Ciobanu, 2015, p. 261). Therefore, Romania’s transition turned out to be protracted and its democratization was labeled ambiguous, and democracy – incomplete (Ibid.). Pridham (2007) stated that by any definition Romania presented a difficult EU accession case (p. 11).

Like other prospective members, Romania, had to comply with the Copenhagen Criteria and the *acquis communautaire*. It had to introduce free and fair elections, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and respect for and protection of national minorities in addition to establishing a functioning market economy (Berglund et al., 2013, p. 30). Romania experienced various conditionality difficulties some of which were common for many CEE countries, but its own two most difficult problems were the introduction of a judicial reform and fight against corruption (Pridham, 2007, pp. 7-8).

By June 1995, when the country submitted its EU membership application, ‘Romania had very little to show to its European partners’ (Papadimitriou & Phinnemore, 2013, p. 238). In 1996, the first democratic alteration of power occurred in Romania, and Emil Constantinescu representing the Romanian Democratic Convention,

a center-right coalition, came to power. His government finally took significant steps on the way of integrating Romania into the Western world (Ciobanu, 2015, p. 269). For several years after that, the European Commission would note that Romania was unable to meet the economic accession criteria and establish a functioning market economy (Papadimitriou & Phinnemore, 2013, p. 239). Between 2004 and 2007, under the leadership of another center-right government Romanian state officials saw their main task in persuading the EU that they were genuinely trying their best to comply with all possible expectations and requirements of the Union (Ibid.). However, security considerations resulting from the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Romania. They helped the country to become included into the accession process, and finally on January 1, 2007 Romania entered the EU.

On 31 December 2006 there were scenes of euphoria in University Square and elsewhere in the center of Bucharest, where according to a foreign correspondent, ‘tens of thousands counted down the seconds to midnight; fireworks then lit the night sky and Beethoven’s Ode to Joy played while small groups formed circles and danced the Hora, a traditional Romanian folk dance’ (Pridham, 2007, p. 1).

Since Romania was forced to address ‘cronyism, corruption, [and] fraud’ already before the accession (Diamond, 2008b, p. 138), the accession euphoria was followed by reforms of the justice system and more concerted efforts to address the problem of corruption among state officials (Ciobanu, 2015, p. 269). Due to the fact that Romania had much less liberal experience in its past than some other Central European states (Diamond, 2008b, p. 138), after the accession the country also had to face ‘social and political polarization, factionalism, populism, and serious attempts to reverse the process of democratization’ (Ciobanu, 2015, p. 269).

BELARUS

‘The story of Belarusian nationalism is an unusual, even unlikely story, and one hardly ideal for the purpose of modern myths of national consolidation’ (Rudling, 2015, p. 317).

4.7 The Early History of Belarus

The early history of Belarus, the origin of the country’s people, its name, and ultimately of the Belarusian state are extremely controversial issues. It is believed that the Belarusian people ‘have no history of independent existence before 1991’ apart from a brief period in 1918, thus lacking ‘a continuous state tradition’, and that until recently the Belarusian lands have always been a part of other, much larger polities (Bennett, 2011, p. 1; Yekelchik, 2008, p. 9). The history of Belarus is so closely intertwined with that of Rus (Russia), Lithuania, and Poland that sometimes it is hard to tell whether it actually had a history of its own. As David Marples (1999) put it, to reconstruct the Belarusian national past one would have to make “‘historical leaps” over centuries of uncertain existence’ (p. 4).

In English, the modern-day Republic of Belarus is known under several confusing names: Belorussia (Bielorussia, Byelorussia), Belaya Rus, White Russia, or White Ruthenia (Lubachko, 1972, p. 1; Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 2). The etymology of the country’s name is still not clear. One of the most plausible explanations is that the territory was called ‘Belaya Rus,’ meaning ‘White Rus,’ to indicate that it was left unscathed by the Mongol invasion of 1240 (Lubachko, 1972, p. 1; Marples, 1999, p. 1). Some even believe that it would be more correct to call Belarus ‘Litva’ (another word

for ‘Lithuania’) since the Belarusian lands used to be incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), and, therefore, the people in the region allegedly used to identify themselves as Litsviny (Ioffe, 2003a).

What is known to historians is that at the end of the 10th century on the current territory of Belarus there existed the Polatsk principality, which was later annexed to Kyevan Rus by the Kyevan prince, Vladimir. In the 13th century the Mongol invasion of the Russian lands began. It ended in the destruction of Kyevan Rus and the city of Kyev. In the 14th century the Belarusian lands were absorbed by the GDL. In the GDL, Lithuanians were greatly outnumbered by Slavs (Marples, 1999, p. 1). Nevertheless, it was the Slavs who were seeking ‘protection in vassalage to Lithuania’ for the sake of defense against the Mongols and Teutonic Knights (Lubachko, 1972, p. 2). By the 15th century, the GDL had become the largest state in Europe, having extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

In 1386 the Lithuanian Grand Duke, Jagailo, married the Polish Queen, Jadwiga, and accepted the Polish crown. This personal union between the Duchy and the Polish Kingdom was transformed into a federation in 1569 at Lublin, thus establishing the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or *Rzecz Pospolita*. If the personal union (also known as the Union of Krewo) had as its aim the consolidation of efforts for the sake of protection from the Teutonic Knights, the Union of Lublin was needed to protect the lands of the GDL and Poland from Muscovy (Lubachko, 1972, p. 3). The establishment of the Commonwealth also ‘marked the beginning of the direct Polonization of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania’ (Ibid.). The event gave rise to Polish eastward cultural and religious expansion, and at the same time significantly diminished the influence of Rus on the new state (Plokhy, 2006, p. 115). Thus, since 1569 and until the

end of the 18th century, future Belarus was part of the Polish state. Between 1772 and 1795 three partitions of Poland occurred. *Rzecz Pospolita* was taken apart by Austria, Prussia, and Russia, with the latter eventually taking over all the Belarusian lands that used to be part of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Ibid., p. 4).

4.8 The Language Problem

The idea that the GDL was a Belarusian (rather than any other) nation state is often premised on the claim that the Belarusian language was the official language of the Duchy (Marples, 1999; Lubachko, 1972). The claim, however, seems to be far-fetched. Although it is true that before Lithuania accepted Catholicism in 1387 it had no written language, neither did the GDL actually have an official language at that time (Krapauskas, 2000, p. 26). The word ‘Belarus’ itself did not become ‘a marker of collective identity’ until the end of the 19th century (Ioffe, 2003a, p. 1245), even though it is believed that the term originated between the 12th and the 14th centuries (Zparudnik, 1993, p. 2). Therefore, the language that is often referred to as Belarusian when talking about the GDL was, most probably, the Ruthenian language – a variety of east Slavic languages spoken in the Duchy and later in *Rzecz Pospolita* (Stone, 2001, p. 4). According to Pavlenko (2010), the GDL ‘adopted as its official language the literary version of Ruthenian, written in Cyrillic and also known as Chancery Slavonic’ (p. 139). Krapauskas (2000), too, supports this idea by stating that ‘[b]y the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Chancery Slavonic dominated the written state language in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania’ (p. 26). However, Chancery Slavonic ‘was not a spoken idiom,’ and though it belonged to the group of east Slavic languages, ‘it was a dialect unto itself that had thousands of non-Slavic words’ (Ibid.). It should also be mentioned that besides Ruthenian, such languages as Lithuanian, Polish, German, and even Latin

were used in the GDL state documents, and the choice of a language depended on the historical period and the purpose of the document (Pavlenko, 2010, p. 139; Krapauskas, 2000, p. 26; Stone, 2001, pp. 4, 46).

At present, the language problem still exists in Belarus. Currently, it is possible to discern three versions of the Belarusian language. The first one, referred to as ‘Tarashkevitsa,’ was the first standardized version of the language established by the Belarusian linguist Branislaw Tarashkevich in 1918. At the moment, ‘Tarashkevitsa’ is not recognized by the Belarusian authorities as an official linguistic norm. It is spoken mainly by oppositionists and those Belarusians who believe that ‘Tarashkevitsa’ is the true Belarusian language. In 1933, another version of the Belarusian language, the so-called ‘Narkomovka,’ was introduced by means of a reform (Ioffe, 2003b, p. 1017). ‘Narkomovka’ was a Russified version of the Belarusian language, which had a similar to Russian word use, grammar, and syntax. Ever since its introduction, ‘Narkomovka’ has been taught at schools as the standardized Belarusian language. However, the actual number of speakers of this version of the language is not known (Ibid.). Finally, the version of the Belarusian language that is most widely spread in the country is the form of colloquial speech called ‘Trasyanka’. The word can be translated from Belarusian as ‘a mixture of hay and straw’ meaning low quality cattle feed (Kittel et al., 2010, p. 49). ‘Trasyanka’ does not have a written form, but the number of people who claim using it daily is quite impressive. According to some research, on average three out of four people in Belarus practice ‘Trasyanka’ to some extent (Kittel et al., 2010, p. 54).

4.9 Religion

The Kyevan prince Vladimir converted to Orthodox Christianity in 988. Eventually, Orthodoxy became the dominant religion in the lands of future Belarus as well. Lithuanians, on the contrary, were pagans until the end of the 14th century, when Jagailo accepted Catholicism as part of the agreement to marry the Polish queen. In the union state of Poland and Lithuania, Catholicism naturally was the dominant religious confession. The nobilities of the Belarusian lands eventually started to convert to Catholicism and even assimilate into Polish culture (Yekelchuk, 2008, p. 12). In 1596, at the Union of Brest, the Orthodox Bishops also established the Uniate Church. The Uniate or Greek Catholic Church was a unique religious body in that it united the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. It kept the Orthodox practice and rite but recognized the Pope and Roman Catholic doctrine (Bennett, 2011, p. 1).

However, between 1596 and 1796, the year when Catherine the Great died, those who adhered to the Uniate Church were mostly peasants. By 1796 they had made up over 80% of the population in the former Polish/Lithuanian lands now belonging to the Russian Empire, which was four-fifth of the population as a whole (Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 45). The majority of the gentry and nobility, on the other hand, 'had been thoroughly Polonized' (Ibid.). In the words of Zaprudnik (1993), if Orthodoxy was associated with Russia and Catholicism with Poland, then 'Uniatism was plebeian, associated with Eastern rites but Western ecclesiastical allegiance' (Ibid.).

In 1839, the tsarist regime liquidated the Uniate Church altogether and made the Uniates reunite with the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1840 Russian tsar, Nicholas I, issued a decree that banned the use of the name 'Belarus' (as well as 'Litva') (Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 50). From that time on, this part of the Russian Empire was called either the North Western Territory, or the North-Western Province, or Western Russia,

or simply Russia (Lubachko, 1972, p. 4; Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 50). By doing so, the tsarist Russia ultimately denied Belarus a separate nationhood (Lubachko, 1972, p. 4). For the tsarist regime the now mostly Orthodox inhabitants of the North-Western Province became ‘a branch of the Russian people’ and ‘a natural integral part’ of the Russian nation since Russian imperial state policy did not recognize the existence of Belarusians as a separate ethnicity (Rudling, 2015, pp. 305, 33).

4.10 National Consciousness

Elena Gapova (2004), speaking about Belarusians who were rethinking or building anew their national identity during Perestroika on the eve of the Soviet Union collapse, mentions that the people would have ‘nothing ready at hand: neither the idea of great culture (as Russia) nor a church that could speak the national language, nor could an uncontested language itself do so, nor recognized ancient statehood, nor universally known national genius’ (p. 70). The same, however, is true about the late 18th century when ‘the age of nationalism’ arrived, and when all over Eastern Europe nationalities were reinvented by intellectuals who understood the concept of nation ‘as a cultural community rooted in peasant culture’ (Yekelchik, 2008, p. 9).

The Belarusian national movement and modern nationalism in general arrived to Belarus extremely late; and even by the end of the 19th century the national consciousness of the Belarusians was only beginning to evolve (Wilson, 2011, p. 61; Rudling, 2015, p. 32; Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 63). The modern form of nationalism was based on ‘cultural “purity” and “authentic” cultural expressions,’ but this was problematic on the territory where as late as in 1870 the locals would not understand the question about their ethnic belonging (Rudling, 2015, pp. 32, 42-43). People who lived in the North-Western Province of the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th and the

beginning of the 20th centuries were predominantly poor peasants who had insufficient land (Lubachko, 1972, pp. 6-7). The majority of them were illiterate: 71% in 1897, and 63% in 1905 (Ibid.). The identity of the Belarusian peasants was mainly religious (Orthodox), and the question of ‘Who were the Belarusians?’ hardly worried the majority of them (Rudling, 2015, pp. 42-43). By the end of the 19th century, there were very few Belarusians in such professions as jurists, doctors, teachers, and the like, and the middle and trading classes were almost non-existent (Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 63; Marples, 1999, p. 2). In addition, according to the 1897 census, in all major cities the majority of the population spoke Yiddish: 40% in Vilna, 51.2% in Minsk, and 73.9% in Pinsk to name just a few (Marples, 1999, p. 2). Therefore, at the beginning of the 20th century, Belarusians ‘lacked an urban base from which to launch a claim to statehood,’ and any nationalist movement, cultural or political, would have to ‘rely for support on the lowest, most passive, and least educated social stratum, the peasantry’ (Marples, 1999, p. 2; Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 63).

4.11 The Uprising of 1863

In 1861, tsar Alexander II issued the manifesto that liberated the serfs in the Russian Empire. On the eve of the Reform, 54% of peasants in the North-Western Province were serfs (Lubachko, 1972, p. 4). The Reform, however, was not thoroughly thought through. Although the serfs were emancipated, the land they received did not become their property (Ibid., pp. 4-5). In 1863, this ‘freedom without land’ gave rise to unrests in Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus (Lubachko, 1972, p. 5). In the words of Zaprudnik (1993), the uprising of 1863 had various dimensions: social, religious, and cultural (p. 57). It was, however, dominated by the gentry with 70% of all insurgents belonging to that class (Ibid.). Although the unrest took hold of different parts of the

Russian Empire, it was mainly the nationalist rebellion of the Polish landowners and elite. Belarusian peasants, who mostly identified with the Orthodox religion and Russia, remained largely passive and indifferent towards the event (Rudling, 2015, p. 37). In general, only 18% of all the rebels belonged to peasantry (Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 57).

The uprising was suppressed followed by harsh punishments of participants and sympathizers, executions, and exiles. Since the insurgents were mostly Polish nobles, the use of the Polish language was banned. The tsarist regime inundated the North-Western Province with Russian-speaking teachers, landlords, and priests, and directed most of the money collected as penalties to the construction of Orthodox churches and support of their priests (Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 58).

4.12 National Awakening

According to Rudling (2015), at the beginning of the 19th century, such adjectives as 'Belarusian' or 'Lithuanian' did not yet denote a separate ethnicity (p. 33). The idea that Lithuania and Belarus could be something other than Poland began to emerge only after the Polish revolts of 1830-31 and 1863-64 (Ibid.). Also, after 1863 attempts were made in various ethnographic, linguistic, and historical publications 'to substitute the "Russian" character of the North-Western Province' (Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 58). Delineating the Belarusian ethnos proved to be a difficult task, though (Rudling, 2015, p. 43). The Belarusians lived along Huntington's 'civilizational fault line,' on both sides of 'the cultural border of Europe' (Rudling, 2015, p. 43; White & McAllister, 2005, p. 17). The Western regions of future Belarus belonged to the Western Christian world, whereas the eastern regions – to the Orthodox and Islamic civilization (White & McAllister, 2005, p. 17). Consequently, no homogeneity existed among the inhabitants

of the Belarusian lands either in terms of culture, historical experience, or religion, and therefore, identity (Rudling, 2015, p. 43).

Nevertheless, the second part of the 19th century witnessed Belarusian literary awakening. That was another challenging endeavor. Since whatever was then called Belarusian was spoken almost entirely by peasants, and the upper classes used either Polish or Russian, the promoters of the Belarusian language ‘had threadbare material for their language-building project’ (Wilson, 2011, p. 87). Belarusian writers of the 19th century could not claim Church Slavonic, used in the GDL, to be a foundation for the rebirth of Belarusian since the former ‘was already archaic back in the Middle Ages’ (Ibid.). All that was left for them was a dialect that naturally had no readership in the upper strata of the society (Wilson, 2011, p. 87; Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 52). Reinventing the Belarusian language was nevertheless extremely important for ‘the fledgling Belarusian movement’ because national languages were the foundations of ‘all national causes in Central and Eastern Europe’ in the 19th century (Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 55).

4.13 First (Unexpected) Independence of Belarus

Between 1905 and 1917 Belarusian territories were involved in the revolutionary regime change and World War I. The period of 1917-1920 was marked by the collapse of the Russian, German, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian Empires. It was also the time of the Polish state reemergence, the conclusion of World War I, the Russian Civil War, and the Polish-Soviet War (Rudling, 2015, p. 66). The front lines of all the wars ran through the territory of future Belarus. The Germans occupied one-third of Belarus in the fall of 1915. They were surprised to ‘discover’ a new nationality in the occupied lands – the Belarusians (Ibid., p. 73). At first, they did not even know what to call them, and considered them ‘an extremely diffused, but superficially Polonized tribe’

whose ‘shelters, clothes, and economic modes were of a primitiveness [one] would not have considered possible in the twentieth-century Europe’ (Rudling, 2015, p. 73).

The time span between 1917 and 1920 also witnessed six different attempts of statehood declaration in the Belarusian lands (Rudling, 2015, p. 66). Two of those attempts proved to be extremely important and exerted a lot of impact on all future history of Belarus. The first of the two most notable attempts was the declaration of the Belarusian People’s Republic (BPR) on March 25, 1918, when the land was still occupied by the German army. The new government failed to have the statehood of the new republic recognized, though (Rudling, 2015, p. 87). It was very much preoccupied with the introduction of the new national symbols: a national emblem and a flag. The emblem resembled greatly the one of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania depicting ‘an armed knight on a white stallion against a red background’ (Ibid.). The white-red-white flag, which was also designed ‘to look old,’ was actually created in 1917 by the nationalist activist Klaudiusz Duz-Duszewski using the colors of the regional heraldic tradition (Ibid., p. 88).

The BPR was destined to live just a short life of about 10 months because it lacked the necessary means to survive and ‘died an inevitable death’ after the Central Powers (Germany, Austro-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria) were defeated in November 1918 (Marples, 1999, p. 3). In the words of Marples (1999), the declaration of Belarusian independence in March 1918 was premature (p. 4). The reasons for that were numerous. First, the Belarusian elite ‘was a small and persecuted minority’ (Ibid). Second, 97.4% of the urban population consisted of non-Belarusians, since the majority of ethnic Belarusians were peasants and did not live in the cities (Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 67). What is more important, Belarusians neither accepted nor supported the existence

of an independent Belarusian state. In short, there were no prerequisites of national statehood in Belarus in 1918 (Marples, 1999, p. 4). The fact, however, is never mentioned by the present-day Belarusian nationalist opposition. Nor does it ever acknowledge that the BPR was established under the German occupation. Nevertheless, this short-lived unrecognized state has become a symbol of Belarus' true independence and nationhood for those opposed to the current regime in the republic.

The second notable, and this time successful, attempt to establish a Belarusian polity occurred in 1921 when the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) came into being (Rudling, 2015, p. 66). The Bolsheviks felt that the Belarusians were ready to fight for their own independence and granted it to them in the form of the BSSR (Lubachko, 1972, p. 188). In 1922, the formally independent BSSR joined the Russian, Ukrainian, and Transcaucasian republics to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) 'each with the right to secede from the Union at will' (Ibid.). The creation of the Belarusian republic, just like the BPR in 1918, did not receive much public support. In the words of Hirsch (2005), from the start, it was an example of creating a nation 'from above,' i.e. on the basis of ethnographic data (p. 149). That is why many peasants 'were reportedly not keen on becoming Belarusians,' and were even afraid they would be forced to use the Belarusian language that was allegedly their native (Wilson, 2011, p. 104). In general, in the 1920s a majority of Belarusian citizens were hardly in favor of a Belarusian state (Marples, 1996, p. 12).

At the beginning of the BSSR existence, the Soviet authorities were surprisingly very benevolent to the republic's cultural development. Already in July 1921, the Belarusian State University was founded, and in August 1922 – an Institute of Belarusian Culture (Marples, 1999, p. 7). In general, the first decade in the life of the

BSSR was the time of ‘a systematic policy of “Belarusization”’ when the Belarusian language and culture really flourished for the first time in the history of Belarus (Ibid.).

In the 1920s, the Soviet government implemented the New Economic Policy (NEP). The intention was not only to revive the economy by means of making concessions to the peasantry and restoring private enterprise, but also to reconcile with local nationalities (Lubachko, 1972, p. 80). During the NEP period the development of national cultures was deliberately encouraged and nurtured (Marples, 1996, p. 11). The Institute of Belorussian Culture (Inbelkult), for instance, began to do scientific research to study all the aspects of Belorussian culture and history (Lubachko, 1972, p. 80). This type of research was something new, since Belarus had never been studied as a separate entity under the tsarist regime (Ibid.).

The policy of Belarusization was part of the Soviet policy of nationalization when minority nationalities that were believed to have suffered ‘national and cultural oppression before the Revolution’ were given a chance to develop their language and culture (Lubachko, 1972, p. 189). The idea was that the national minorities, instead of copying the Russian culture, should develop a culture of their own, which in fact was already ‘deeply rooted in their traditions’ (Ibid.). By the 1930s, however, the policy of nationalization was replaced by a different one – ‘Friendship of the peoples’. The main tenet of the latter was ‘rehabilitation of the Russian culture and Russian nationalism as the foundation of the Soviet unity’ (Bekus, 2014, p. 46). Among other things, by implementing the new policy an effort was made to bring the Belarusian language closer to Russian (Yekelchik, 2008, p. 22). Thus, on the one hand, the Soviet regime contributed to the industrial and cultural development of the BSSR as well as to the creation of its national elite (Marples, 1996, p. 12). On the other hand, the repressions

that started in the 1930s and culminated in the Great Terror of the late 1930s eliminated or silenced the majority of the Belarusian nascent cultural elite. After the 1930s, Russian became the dominant language in the Belarusian cities. Therefore, the previous deliberate promotion of a feeling of distinctiveness among Belarusians by the Soviet authorities did not manage to materialize completely (Marples, 1996, p. 12).

In 1921, when the BSSR was formed, not all the Belarusian lands found themselves within the borders of the new republic. Following the treaty of Riga of March 18, 1921, Belarus was divided between the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic and Poland (Zaprudnik, 1993, pp. 70-71). The situation changed only on September 17, 1939 when two weeks after the German occupation of Poland, Soviet troops crossed the Polish border in the East under the pretext of protecting ‘the life and property of the population of West Ukraine and West Belarus’ (Ibid., p. 88). The Soviet soldiers were welcomed by the majority of the population in Western Belarus, since the locals had very little idea about the crimes the Soviet regime had been committing in the USSR (Zaprudnik, 1993, p. 89). The Soviet government did its best to keep the people in Western Belarus in ignorance and maintained a strictly guarded border between the two parts of the republic until German tanks swept it away during their attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 by (Ibid.).

Thus, the brief and arguable independence of Belarus in 1918 should hardly be considered evidence that the country was in any way prepared ‘to form a national state based either on historical precedent or linguistic foundations’ (Marples, 1999, p. 2). According to Rudling (2015), by the end of World War I, the Belarusian nationalists were still ‘a small, detached circle of intellectuals’ (p, 307). The peasantry, who the nationalists claimed to represent, treated them with indifference or even suspicion

(Ibid.). However, the nationalists who suffered greatly during the Stalinist purges, and many of whom perished during that time, left an important legacy for the future generations of Belarusians. Those included the Belarusian State University and the Academy of Science, the school system and the publishing houses, and the BSSR itself (Rudling, 2015, p. 313).

4.14 Belarus after World War II; the Reconstruction of the Economy

Before the North-Western Province of the Russian Empire became the BSSR, it was ‘arguably the poorest region of European Russia’ (Ioffe, 2004, p. 86). It was mostly an agrarian area ‘beset with rural overpopulation’ and possessing ‘meager manufacturing’ (Ibid.). The Soviet Union, however, brought to Belarus modernization in the form of industrialization and rapid urbanization. The traditional Belarusian ‘society of landowners and peasants’ was transformed into an industrial one (Hill, 2005, p. 2). The process was intensified even more after the end of World War II. Since Belarus was one of the first Soviet republics to be attacked by the German army in the summer of 1941, and because the occupation of its lands lasted for so long – from June 1941 to August 1944 – it endured great sufferings and destruction during the period. About a quarter of the population was killed. Most of the republic’s infrastructure was destroyed. In Minsk alone, from 80% to 90% of all the buildings that existed before the war were demolished (Ioffe, 2004, p. 86).

Belarus’ industry received another impetus to development in the post-war reconstruction. Many in the republic felt it was ‘only just compensation for the horrors of the war’ (Wilson, 2011, p. 117). The Eastern European countries that found themselves in the sphere of the Soviet influence after the war, created *cordon sanitaire* between the USSR and Western Europe. In the words of Ioffe (2004), due to the fact,

Belarus' location was not considered vulnerable by the Soviet government anymore (p. 86). Since it stopped being a frontier region which bordered a hostile state (Poland), instead 'the BSSR became a prioritized region' (Rudling, 2015, p. 316). From the late 1950s, Belarus began to emerge as one of the major Soviet manufacturing republics (Ioffe, 2004, p. 86). Among other things, Belarus produced heavy trucks, synthetic fibers, and microchips; it processed oil and had high-tech industry, which was mostly military-oriented (Ibid.). Society too, benefited greatly from modernization. It benefited from the systems of universal education and health care, as well as from widened lifestyle opportunities and rising prosperity (Hill, 2005, p. 2). The social structure also became more homogenous due to the enormous human losses in the Jewish population during the war and other social changes, with ethnic Belarusians finally dominating the urban life in the republic (Wilson, 2011, p. 117). In addition, if any religious cleavages between the Orthodox majority and Roman Catholic minority did exist, they were now 'below the surface' (Ibid.).

Another characteristic trait of the BSSR was the extent to which the republic's population was Russified and Sovietized. Before the Revolution of 1917, the languages predominantly used in Belarusian cities were Polish, Russian, and Yiddish. However, after the Revolution due to various historical developments, Polish and Yiddish were gradually pushed out of the urban areas, and Russian became the only medium of communication. For the Soviet people in general 'Russian was linked to progress, development, and upward social mobility' (Rudling, 2015, p. 316). For the Belarusian people to adopt and internalize the Russian language was much easier than for the citizens of other Soviet republics. First, because Russian had been widely spread in Belarus even before the Soviet regime and was well known among the people who lived

there; second, the linguistic differences between the two languages were not significant; third, the number of the Russian-speakers increased greatly in Belarus after the war due to the migration of Russian specialists and military personnel to compensate for human losses and help restore the republic's infrastructure in the post-war period (Gorenburg, 2006, p. 274). Naturally, the new comers would settle mostly in cities, making them even more Russian-speaking through their patterns of settlements (Ibid.). On their part, when the Belarusian peasants would move into the cities, they would switch to Russian without compulsion as they did not perceive the language they spoke being much different from Russian (Rudling, 2015, p. 316).

Thus, by the time the Soviet Union started falling apart Belarus had become 'one of the most loyal Soviet republics' (Wilson, 2011, p. 117). It was flourishing economically (Hill, 2005, p. 3) and was 'an undeniable Soviet success story' in many other respects (Ioffe, 2004, p. 88). Its citizens were 'the most Soviet of all people in the former USSR' and were extremely proud of the fact (Rudling, 2015, p. 317).

4.15 Second (Reluctant) Independence of Belarus

In the words of Hill (2005), 'Belarus is ... perhaps the least-studied European state to emerge from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991' (p. 1). Rudling (2008), called independence that Belarus acquired in 1991 'reluctant' (p. 62). This seems to be correct since Belarusians, unlike Poles, or Hungarians, or even Ukrainians, never 'dreamed of breaking free to return to the family of European nations from which they had been torn' (Bennett, 2011, p. 4). There was little, if any, support among the population for separation from the USSR (Rudling, 2008, p. 61). Also, there was almost no dissent in Belarus besides the one limited to intellectuals fighting to defend the

national language (Yekelchyk, 2008, p. 24), no *samizdat* activity or demand for independent statehood (Hill, 2005, p. 3).

Much of this could be explained by the weak sense of national identity (Rudling, 2008, p. 62), as Belarusians ‘had little sense of separateness’ with respect to Russia and the Soviet Union at large (Bennett, 2011, p. 4). Bennett (2011) maintained that unlike the citizens of the Balkan States, Belarusians never regarded Russians as conquerors or occupiers. Neither did they blame the latter for Communism, but rather shared their distaste for the regime with them, and in general stayed close to Moscow (p. 4). Since Belarusians had no previous experience of being independent or democratic, they had ‘no desire to strike on their own’ and never actually chose the path of independence (Ibid.).

National awakening began in Belarus only in 1987, and was concerned with the protection of the Belarusian language and culture against assimilation (Yekelchyk, 2008, p. 25). When independence arrived in Belarus in the form of ‘a profound shock’ (Bennett, 2011, p. 4), it became clear that ‘Nationalism [was] not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness’ (Gellner, 1964, p. 169). Apparently, in Belarus there was no nation to be awakened. Paraphrasing Gellner (1964), the nascent Belarusian opposition and civil society had to invent a nation where it did not exist (p. 169).

One can argue, therefore, that the Belarusian nation has never actually been formed, if by ‘nation’ one understands a historical community that possesses a distinct history, culture, and language, and shares common values, traditions, memories, and myths. Due to the fact, promoters of ethnic nationalism in Belarus were doomed to fail in their attempt to ‘awake’ the Belarusians from their long sleep and make them return to their roots, i.e. their national identity and language. Belarusian nationalists did not

take into consideration that the identity appeared in any distinct form relatively recently and only among a very small stratum of intelligentsia, and that the mass population was reluctant to accept it from the start. Promoting radical ethnic nationalism in the country where the majority of the population spoke Russian and felt a strong attachment to the Russian culture and history was a burdensome and ungrateful, if not unwise, task.

It is also a debatable question whether civic nationalism could be a consolidating force in Belarus since there were hardly any political views that brought the Belarusians together. When it comes to the Belarusian identity, most researchers agree that in Belarus national consciousness is weak and divided, that it is ‘a highly problematic concept,’ and even that Belarus is ‘a denationalized nation’ (Sanford, Jocelyn, Marples as cited in Hill, 2005, p. 2). In short, Belarus is a republic ‘with a deeply damaged national identity’ (Silitski, 2003, p. 39). Thus, if Snyder (2003) is correct with respect to connecting modernization and nationalism, the presence (or absence) of a strong national consciousness might be one of the possible explanatory factors for why the post-communist histories of Poland and Romania differ so greatly from the one of Belarus.

4.16 Conclusion

The brief historical insights of Poland, Romania, and Belarus delineated above indicate similarities as well as differences in the countries’ and their nations’ emergence, establishment and development. If Poland and Romania can be defined as old nations but new states, when it comes to Belarus, the case is not so clear-cut. For most of Belarus’ history it is difficult to say if until 1991, when it stopped being part of the Soviet Union and became the Republic of Belarus, the country actually had a history of its own. Very little is known about what was going on in the lands of the present-day

Belarus before they were incorporated into the GDL, and then into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Its position of the land in-between, i.e. Belarus' location on the boundary between Western and Eastern Orthodox civilizations, might have played a role in the formation of a very weak ('damaged') national identity of Belarusians.

From this perspective, Poland and Romania present a completely different case. Poland used to be a state in which the first European civic nation was formed. When the Polish state stopped existing due to the partitions for more than a hundred years, Polish civic nation transformed into an ethnic one that helped keep all the Poles together by means of a common language, religion, and historical memories even when they lived in three different empires. Romanians, on the contrary, have first formed into an ethnic nation when future Romania existed in the form of three different principalities that also were part of other larger polities. The understanding among Romanians that they were one nation later inspired the ideas of creating a state in which all Romanian lands and people would be united.

Besides the solely ethnic component, what makes Poland and Romania similar is the perception of the people in those countries that they belonged among the other European countries. At some point being a European country began to imply supporting Western European values and beliefs, namely the one pertaining to liberal democracy. That is why, when Poland and Romania liberated themselves from the communist yoke, the concept of 'returning to Europe' quickly became the main part of the post-communist discourse in both countries. Although far from being the only reason for the countries' successful or almost successful democratization, the incentive of joining the EU, the modern quintessence of Europe, was undoubtedly an important factor that defined Poland's and Romania's post-communist development.

Unlike Poles and Romanians, the majority of Belarusians never considered it important to support Western European democratic values. One of the explanations for the fact might be that they did not perceive themselves as Europeans, and never actually saw in Russia, or by extension in the Soviet Union, an enemy or an occupant. Therefore, when independence was granted, the Belarusian nationalist opposition was unable to persuade the citizens that Belarus, too, should 'return to Europe'. Instead, Belarus gravitated back to Russia creating a replica of the Soviet Union in the form of the Union State of Russia and Belarus in 1996, only five years after the disintegration of the USSR.

Chapter 5

CIVIL SOCIETY IN POLAND, ROMANIA, AND BELARUS UNDER THE COMMUNIST REGIMES AND IN THE POST-COMMUNIST PERIOD BETWEEN 1989-1991 AND 2017

Although civil society is a concept that is difficult to define and measure, it is believed to be an important element of modern democratic states. A strong and well-functioning civil society is required to make democracy coherent and stable over time. Without this essential component of democracy, no modern state can be considered democratic. The following chapter explores the condition of civil society in Poland, Romania, and Belarus before the disintegration of communist regimes there, as well as the role it played, if any, in the process of transition from authoritarianism and later in consolidation of the new regimes in those countries.

The international community – a multitude of international governmental and non-governmental organizations – began to assist Eastern European countries with building civil society and supporting their attempts at democratization since 1989. U.S. promoters of democracy, in particular, would start with implementing a model of democracy that included such categories as elections, state institutions, and civil society (Carothers, 1999, p. 86). Those promoters also assumed that the process of democratization consisted of a number of ‘relatively set’ steps (Ibid., p. 87). First, the old nondemocratic regime whose legitimacy was becoming weaker would permit a political opening under the pressure for liberalization on the part of the society. A political opening is understood here as referring to ‘a varied set of processes that modify and expand access to power’ (Piombo, 2009, p. 4). Then, when the opening would occur,

various opposition groups and other civic actors would demand conducting multiparty national elections. As a result of the elections a new government would come to power. This step would mark the end of the initial transition. After that the country would move to a gradual consolidation of democracy, which included ‘the rationalization and democratization of the main state institutions’ (a top-down change) and ‘the strengthening and diversification of civil society’ (a bottom-up change) (Carothers, 1999, p. 87).

The question was whether any foundations existed on which to build civil society, or whether it was necessary, if at all possible, to import it from the established Western democracies (Sampson, 2003a, p. 144). Some argued, for instance, that in the Soviet Union civil society was never completely dead even at the peak of Stalin’s rule (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 187). Eastern Europe allegedly ‘had its fair share of supposedly independent civil society associations’ (Linz and Stepan, 1996 as cited in Berglund et al., 2013, p. 26). Unlike American NGOs, though, they were in no way autonomous (Quigley, 2000, p. 196). Eastern European civil society organizations were, on the contrary, ‘monitored, controlled and infiltrated by the communist regimes to the point that they hardly qualified as non-governmental organizations’ (Linz and Stepan, 1996 as cited in Berglund et al., 2013, p. 26). Other researchers claimed that Eastern Europe had no civil society at all under communism (Wedel, 1994, p. 323). Regardless of the opposing opinions about the preexistence of the foundations for building civil society or their absence, it was considered important that civil society as one of indispensable ingredients of democracy should be essentially ‘home grown’ (Phillips, 1999, p. 70). It was necessary to mobilize the home-grown models to find solutions for the problems of transitional societies (Sampson, 2003a, p. 144).

Another question that still remained was whether foreign interventions and ‘civil society development schemes’ they were bringing could actually contribute to the creation of civil society (Ibid.). It was claimed that in practice democratization assistance on the part of Western democracies largely turned into ‘transplanting organizations to bolster civil society, along with political institutions, constitutions, and legal codes to Central-East Europe’ (Phillips, 1999, p. 70). Sampson (2003a) believed that civil society development in that part of the world boiled down to exporting or cloning, and transplanting Western models onto the local grounds (p. 144). In some Eastern European countries, the tendency eventually led to the creation of what was called ‘project society’ (Sampson, 2003a, p. 21). The concept implied that civil society did not become a host of civic associations independent from the state that could function as a buffer between it and citizens (Wedel, 1994, p. 323). Instead it turned into a world of projects in which ‘money, knowledge, people, and ideas’ circulated (Sampson, 2003a, pp. 138, 149).

The process of democratization has different stages, and civil society plays different roles at each of them (Mercer, 2002, p. 7). In the view of Linz and Stepan (1996), first of all, ‘an uprising of civil society’ may initiate transition (p. 71). Diamond (2008b) also claims that exactly an increase in the capacity of autonomous cultural and intellectual organizations that first happened ‘surreptitiously,’ gave rise to democracy in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (p. 104). Independent advocacy groups functioning as the core of civil society emerged as pushback on communist regimes since they tried to control all activity in society and repress dissent (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002, p. 6). Thus, in order to bring down authoritarian rule, it was necessary to mobilize civil society on a broad scale (Diamond, 2008b, p. 91). Some researchers argue,

however, that after transition has been initiated, civil society ‘should be demobilized so as to allow for the development of normal democratic politics’ (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 9).

Another point of view is that civil society’s active stance is also very important during the periods of democratic transition, and not only at the initiation stage, as it helps to further pressure for political change (Mercer, 2002, p. 7). When it comes to the next stage of democratization, i.e. to the consolidation of democracy, civil society is also believed to play an important role ‘in checking abuses of state power, preventing the resumption of power by authoritarian governments and encouraging wider citizen participation and public scrutiny of the state’ (Ibid., p. 8). Larry Diamond (1994), for example, believes that for such stages as consolidation and maintenance of democracy ‘a vibrant civil society is probably more essential’ than for the initiation stage (p. 7).

On the other hand, some extant literature on civil society in Eastern Europe posits that formation of civil society automatically followed the introduction of democracy in that part of the world, rather than preceded it (Pietrzyk, 2001). It is also argued that civil society should not be regarded as a key player in overthrowing communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989 (Bernhard, 1996, p. 308), but rather as ‘a master frame with which movements sought to mobilize popular support’ (Glenn, 2001, pp. 2-3). To sum up, Linz and Stepan (1996) affirm that

a robust civil society, with the capacity to generate political alternatives and to monitor government and state can help transitions get started, help resist reversals, help push transitions to their completions, help consolidate, and help deepen democracy (p. 9).

5.1 Civil Society in Poland

In 1956, in Poland, the Catholic Church was allowed to teach religion in public schools (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 261). In the words of Linz and Stepan (1996), that meant that since then the Church ‘was never again mortally threatened’ (Ibid.). The Church was also ‘the only major non-communist structure’ before independent trade unions emerged (East, 1992, p. 112). In spite of its occasional collaboration with the regime, the Church together with nationality remained the source of pride for the Poles, especially after a Polish Cardinal was elected the Pope of Rome, John Paul II, in 1978 (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 264; East, 1992, p. 112).

Linz and Stepan (1996) argue that the existence of the Catholic Church in communist Poland was ‘a latent source of pluralism’ since it was a formal organization with an international base and power (p. 260). In addition, in contrast to almost complete closeness of the Soviet Union, and the Iron Curtain behind which the Soviet citizens lived, the Poles were allowed to travel internationally, and research at Polish universities in the fields of social sciences managed to develop ‘by far the greatest degree of autonomy and creativity in Eastern Europe’ already after 1956 (Ibid., p. 261). Thus, in spite of being a communist state, Poland did enjoy some degree of pluralism.

Although being limited in nature (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 256), Poland’s social pluralism might have been a factor that facilitated the emergence of Solidarity – the first independent trade union in all the Warsaw Pact countries. It was founded in September 1980 under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa, and was a result of Gdańsk Agreement, which in its turn was the outcome of strikes at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk. According to the Agreement, the government conceded ‘the right to strike and the right to form free trade unions’ (East, 1992, p. 128). A year later, by the fall of 1981, Solidarity with its 9.5 million members possessed what Linz and Stepan (1996) called ‘hegemony in

civil society' (p. 263). Apparently, making concessions when the shipyard workers were rioting against price increases seemed acceptable for the government. When Solidarity began 'calling for political change including free elections,' however, it became inadmissible (East, 1992, p. 128). In December 1981, General Jaruzelski, the leader of the Polish United Workers' Party, declared martial law, arrested Solidarity's leaders, including Wałęsa, revoked the Gdańsk Agreement, banned strikes, and suspended trade unions. Since 1982 for the next six years, Solidarity was officially dissolved and existed only in the underground (Ibid.).

By 1987-1988 economic problems in Poland exacerbated, and its authoritarian regime had to recognize them. Jaruzelski's government decided to put to a referendum a package of economic changes. Unexpectedly for many, and in the first place for the Polish communist government, the economic referendum failed (Glenn, 2001, p. 72). The turnout proved to be only 67%, and the government received less than 50% of the required support (East, 1992, p. 129). In addition, Pope John Paul II appealed to the authorities to relegalize Solidarity (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 265). In the spring of 1988, Solidarity resumed strikes. It soon became clear that neither the government nor Solidarity could on their own mobilize enough political support in order to address the daunting problems Poland was facing (Glenn, 2001, p. 72). This was the time when the idea of a pact between the regime and Solidarity emerged. According to the 'anti-crisis pact,' Solidarity would agree to participate in the government having a limited voice, and the authorities would in exchange relegalize the trade union (Ibid.).

Poland is a classic example of a 'pacted transition'. According to Linz and Stepan (1996), the pacted transition implied that democracy in Poland had to start with the old regime's constitution still in effect (p. 265). Important negotiations were held

between the communist regime and the opposition, and as a result the former retained strong positions both in the legislature and in the state apparatus (Glenn, 2001, p. 70). In the words of Glenn (2001), in 1988, however, very few believed that the negotiations could actually lead to real competitive elections or become a serious challenge to the Polish communist regime (p. 71). Nevertheless, the informal talks between the opposition and the government were followed by formal Round Table talks at the beginning of 1989, although at the time of the talks Solidarity still remained technically illegal (Holmes, 1997, p. 71).

Since Solidarity did not believe in the possibility of ‘a full transition to democracy,’ and expected that the Communist regime would continue to control Poland’s politics, it had to agree to partially free elections, the result of which would be a pactured parliament (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 267; Glenn, 2001, pp. 97-98; Bartkowski, 2009, p. 5). In spite of the fact that, according to the agreement, only elections to the Senate would be completely free, whereas 65% of the lower house, the Sejm, would be elected in non-competitive elections, the elections to the contested seats ‘brought a decisive victory for Solidarity’ (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 268; Bartkowski, 2009, p. 5). However, due to the semi-free nature of the first parliamentary elections of June 1989, it took the Poles longer than most of their neighbors to conduct normal parliamentary elections (Holms, 1997, p. 71).

Although the Round Table talks of 1989 in Poland gave impetus to the fundamental changes in other Eastern European countries, Poland quickly ‘slipped from being the front-runner in democratic changes to lagging behind’ (Geln, 2001, p. 129). Its pactured and relatively peaceful transition created a situation when two thirds of the seats in the lower house ended up in the hands of the Communist regime representatives,

with the first President being a communist himself. President Jaruzelski was not only a communist and a general. He was the one responsible for implementing martial law in 1981 (which was lifted only in 1984 (Bartkowski, 2009, p. 4)), and he also participated in forcible resettlement of Ukrainians in 1947 (Snyder, 2003, p. 275). Since Solidarity adhered to ‘the self-limiting philosophy of nonviolent struggle,’ it had to agree to a pacted transition, which allowed the ruling elite to preserve its economic and social status (Bartkowski, 2009, pp. 4-5). The pacted transition also meant that Poland’s democratic constitution was drafted by ‘a body with nondemocratic origin’ and that its own full transition was delayed (Linz & Stepan, 1996, pp. 268, 267).

As argued by Lukowski and Zawadzki (2001), even when Poles were stateless, ‘[i]n the realm of culture Poland certainly existed’ (p. 189). Being located between such giants as Russia and Germany, however, the Poles endured stresses and influences from East and West alike (Wynot, 1974, p. 1). After the Polish state was recreated in 1919, it had to start the difficult process of transition from tradition to modernity (Ibid.). In 1989, Poland as a nation-state chose to define itself as part of the West, to commit ‘to a western security and political identity,’ and to begin its return to Europe (Snyder, 2003, p. 5). ‘Returning to Europe’ meant for Poland the choice to integrate into the EU with the respective decision following the first democratic elections of June 1989 almost immediately (Copsey, 2013, p. 188). The possibility for Poland to become part of the EU ‘creat[ed] incentives for Polish political actors to act in a responsible, democratic manner’ (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 292). Nevertheless, joining the EU was going to be a lengthy and difficult process. The difficulties Poland had to address before it could become an EU member were numerous. They included the fact that Poland was a large and poor state; the mostly agricultural and uncompetitive nature of its economy that

needed to be quickly transformed into a market one; and the necessity to establish liberal democracy governed by the rule of law (Copsey, 2013, p. 188).

Poland's spectacular success in transforming from an authoritarian into a democratic state manifested itself also in the condition of its civil society. As Linz and Stepan (1996) noted, Poland's civil society had established a tradition of producing strong achievements long before 'the historic changes of 1989' (p. 292). In 2016, social and political organizations of Poland or its third sector organizations included associations, social organizations similar to associations, foundations, faith-based charities, business associations, employers' organizations, political parties, and trade unions (Statistical Yearbook of Poland, 2017, pp. 186-187). The total number of organizations was 91.9 thousand (Ibid., p. 190). All the organizations met the criteria defining the non-profit sector entities (Statistical Yearbook of Poland, 2017, p. 186). This meant that all of them had formal nature and sustainable organizational structure, were institutionally separate from public administration, operated on a non-profit basis (without financial profits for the members), were self-governing, and participation in the organizations was voluntary (Ibid.).

According to the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Sustainability Index, the scores Poland has received across seven major dimensions of civil society sectors between 2000 and 2016, indicate that the country's civil society enjoys enhanced sustainability. A country's civil society sustainability is considered to be enhanced if the scores for various dimensions of civil society sectors are between 5 and 7 on the scale from 1 to 7, where 1 corresponds to the worst, and 7 corresponds to the best score. Enhanced sustainability means that civil society's commitment to developing certain aspects of its different sectors is significant, that the local CSO community exhibits 'a

commitment to pursuing reforms and developing its professionalism in this area,’ and that the local CSO community recognizes the need for reforms and has a plan as well as the ability to pursue them on its own (USAID, 2017, p. 258).

Table 1 and Figure 1 below show that beginning with 2000, Poland’s scores on seven dimensions of civil society sectors were between 5.1 and 6.4. Although, with the exception of Advocacy dimension, the scores somewhat decreased between 2000 and 2016, Poland’s CSO community has never left the enhanced sustainability range.

Table 1: CSO Sustainability Index Scores (Poland)

Year	Legal environment	Organizational capacity	Financial viability	Advocacy	Service provision	Infrastructure	Public image	Overall score
2000	6	6	5.5	6	6	6	6	5.9
2008	5.7	5.4	5.3	6.1	5.8	6.3	5.8	5.8
2016	5.9	5.4	5.1	6.4	5.8	5.6	5.6	5.8

Source: CSO Sustainability Index Data

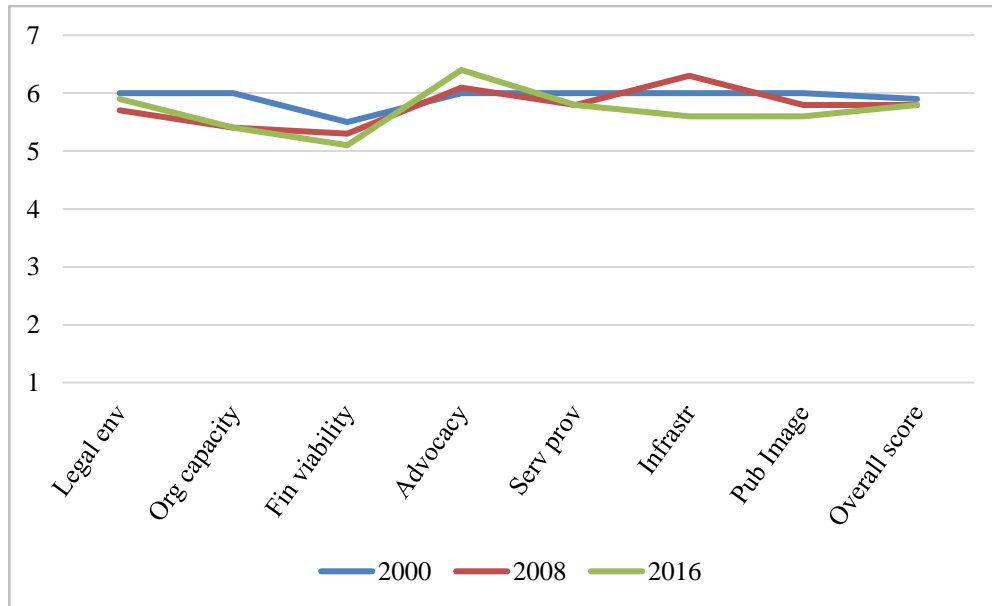


Figure 1: CSO Sustainability Index Scores (Poland)
 Source: analysis of CSO Sustainability Index Data

5.2 Civil Society in Romania

Non-governmental and non-profit organizations existed in Romania before World War II. Scholars, however, differ in their assessments of the quality of Romania's civil society in the interwar period. Some claim that Romania's interwar experience of democracy was one of the weakest in Eastern Europe, but that its indigenous fascist movement was one of the strongest (Linz & Stefan, 1996, p. 344). Others, on the contrary, believe that Romania came to its transition, among other things, with some democratic traditions (Carothers, 1999, p. 324). Those traditions could be nothing more than a popular myth about a period of democracy in Romania between the wars. Nevertheless, the myth was widely accepted (Ibid.).

Over the timespan after the downfall of Ceaușescu and until quite recently Romania's civil society has been subject to criticism for being incipient and weak. Twenty five years after the collapse of communism in that country, Romanian civil society still lacked 'the power to influence and negotiate policy-making' (Ciobanu, 2015, p. 268). Its weakness was attributed to the Romanian political system, namely to its top-down structure (Ibid.). Badescu (2003) argued that the level of civil society's development in the past accounted for how well it was functioning in the present (p. 124). In Romania civil society was 'effectively dismantled' by its communist government after World War II (Johnson & Young, 1997, p. 303). That is to say, there was virtually no civil society in the country under Ceaușescu because of the enormous fear of him and his security services that existed among the people (Linz & Stefan, 1996, p. 353).

Unlike other Eastern European countries, Romania had no organized opposition before transition began. The reason for that was the nature of the Ceaușescu regime, which was not only totalitarian, but also exhibited the characteristics of a regime that Max Weber defined as 'sultanistic' (Linz & Stefan, 1996, p. 347). In Weber's understanding a sultanistic regime is different from simply personalistic and totalitarian regime in that the 'sultan' is inclined to place his family members in the key government positions and in general manifests strong dynastic tendencies (Ibid., p. 349). According to Linz and Stefan (1996), in a totalitarian/sultanistic state absolutely no one, be it an individual, a group, or an institution, is exempt from the arbitrary intervention of the 'sultan,' which inevitably leads to a complete lack of institutional autonomy or pluralism (p. 351). Thus, rather than by an organized domestic opposition, Romania's transition was prompted by such external factors as democratization in other countries,

the long-term economic distress that undermined Ceaușescu's dictatorial regime, and by popular pressure from below (Carothers, 1999, p. 80).

Was there any other way for a power change in Romania under the extremely coercive rule of Ceaușescu, except by means of a violent popular revolt? Some scholars claim that there was none. A 'pacted' transition would require such players as hard- and soft-liners in the existing regime, and moderates and radicals in the opposition (Linz & Stefan, 1996, p. 356). Within Ceaușescu's sultanistic regime neither the existence of 'moderate, democratic, and visible' opposition nor any room for soft-liners was possible (Ibid.). Therefore, although the Romanian revolution did not differ *qualitatively* from the revolutions in other Eastern and Central European countries since 'it was part of a more general phenomenon', the degree of violence that accompanied the country's transition, made the Romanian case an exceptional one (Holmes, 1997, p. 83).

Since any kind of dissent was brutally suppressed in Romania under Ceaușescu, when the communist regime fell, there was neither a movement nor an individual to contest for power in the state with any effectiveness (Linz & Stefan, 1996, p. 354). As a consequence, civil society in Romania received much negative attitude over the transition period due to its role, or rather the absence of any role, under the communist regime (Badescu, 2003, p. 124). The development of civil society in the post-communist period was also stifled by numerous factors (Parau, 2009, p. 121). The factors included adherence to informal networking instead of formal organizations, poverty, general distrust of domestic institutions since they failed to improve people's wellbeing, demoralization of the public, etc. (Howard, 2003; Welch, 2004).

At the same time, regardless of the criticism and an 'unusually dismal starting point', in the first ten or so years after communism, Romania's democratic progress was

quite substantial (Carothers, 1999, p. 323). In less than a decade after the revolution, the Romanian Ministry of Justice registered about 5,000 organizations (Johnson & Young, 1997, p. 304). By 2010, there were already 62,000 registered non-profit organizations in Romania, even though only approximately a third of them were carrying out any activities (Romania, 2010, p. 6). As for modern Romanian multiparty system, for example, it is rooted in the country's past (Carothers, 1999, p. 82). The two main political groupings of the 1920s and 1930s were reestablished after the fall of communism (Ibid.). As Carothers (1999) noted, the historical continuities prove that 'democratization is almost always a long-term process and that sudden openings and rapid democratic change are seldom either as new or as decisive as they often appear' (p. 82).

Whether or not Romanian civil society deserves criticism with respect to its weakness and stifled development can be illustrated by the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Sustainability Index. Over the years, the overall strength and vital capacity of various civil society sectors in Romania, as gauged by the index, have placed it among the countries with evolving sustainability. Evolving sustainability across seven different dimensions of civil society sectors (scores between 3.1 and 5 on the scale from 1 to 7 where 1 equals the worst and 7 equals the best) means that a civil society sector's progress may be 'impeded by practices/policies in the area,' or in a better situation it may be 'minimally affected by practices/policies in the area' (USAID, 2017, p. 258). In the best case scenario, in the countries with evolving sustainability, progress may be 'somewhat enhanced by practices/policies' in certain areas (Ibid.). Table 2 and Figure 2 below shows that between 2000 and 2016, Romanian civil society has reached a plateau regarding the sustainability level of most of the civil society sectors'

dimensions. Since the highest score on this scale is 7, which corresponds to a significantly enhanced level of sustainability (USAID, 2017, p. 258), it is evident that Romanian civil society has yet to achieve a lot of goals with respect to its development in order to transfer from the evolving level of sustainability to an enhanced one.

Table 2: CSO Sustainability Index Scores (Romania)

Year	Legal environment	Organizational capacity	Financial viability	Advocacy	Service provision	Infrastructure	Public image	Overall score
2000	5	3	2.5	4.5	4	4	4.5	3.9
2008	4.5	4.4	3.9	4.6	4.9	4.7	4.3	4.5
2016	4.4	4.5	3.8	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.3	4.5

Source: CSO Sustainability Index Data

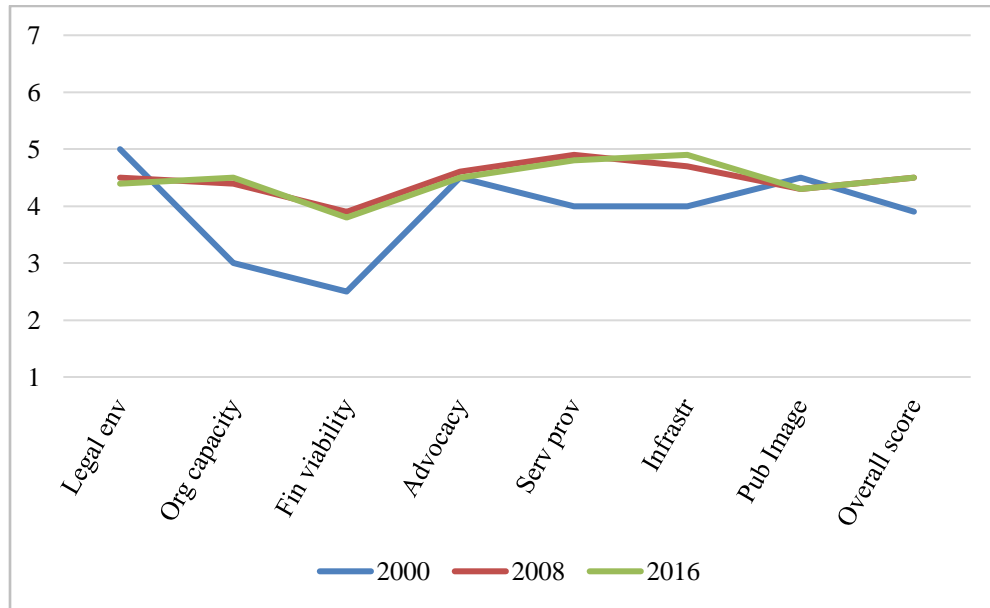


Figure 2: CSO Sustainability Index Scores (Romania)
 Source: analysis of CSO Sustainability Index Data

5.3 Civil Society in Belarus

A formal opposition first appeared in the republic as a result of two significant events. The first was the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, which although happened in Ukraine in April 1986, caused the 70% of the radioactive fallout to be spread on the territory of Belarus ‘rendering thousands of hectares unusable for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years, and visiting a lethal poison on the population of that region’ (Hill, 2005, p. 3). The Soviet people were not informed about the catastrophe at once. Even the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev found out that the disaster had occurred only three days later (Bennett, 2011, pp. 5-6). A second event was the discovery of mass graves of Stalin’s repressions victims at Kuropaty, near Minsk (Hill, 2005, p. 3). The discovery

was made by the archeologist Zenon Poznyak who became the leader of the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF), the major mass democratic movement in Belarus in the 1980s. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and the Soviet government's incompetence and cover-up of the real scale of the tragedy also contributed to the establishment of the BPF (Bennett, 2011, p. 6).

This movement turned into a nationalist one, and was similar to new movements in other republics. The movements and their activists first concentrated on the revival of national languages and culture trying to persuade the governments to restore education in the native language (Gorenburg, 2006, pp. 299-300). In the words of Gorenburg (2006), political demands came later when the activists started to promote the idea of sovereignty and independence for their regions as they considered it the best way to ensure a cultural revival (Ibid.). In case of Belarus, however, a nationalist movement appeared 'in a republic with a deeply damaged national identity' (Silitski, 2003, pp. 38-39). That is why, just like in 1918, the BPF demands for independence, and especially Belarusization, 'appealed only to a tiny group of national intellectuals' (Silitski, 2003, p. 39).

Between 1991 and 1997, Belarus went through three stages of its political evolution and has been largely at a standstill ever since (Rudling, 2015, p. 55). The first one lasted from 1991 to 1994, when attempts at establishing independence, liberalization, and democratic institutions were made. The second period, 1994-1996 was characterized by a conflict between president Lukashenko and parliament, strengthening of the presidential powers with the simultaneous weakening of independence and democratic institutions. Finally, from 1997 on the country has lived under 'one-man authoritarian rule' (Ibid.).

The appearance of the populist outsider, Lukashenko, on the political scene of Belarus was all the more logical in a society split into ‘isolationists’ who were pro-Russian and Soviet- nostalgic, and ‘westernizers’ who supported anti-Russian nationalist ideas (Rudling, 2015, pp. 62-63). Promotion of radical ethnic nationalism was a bad choice in a pro-Soviet society with a Russian-speaking majority (Silitski, 2003, p. 43). The Belarusians still had fresh memory of their relatively decent standard of living under the Soviet regime (Hill, 2005, p. 9), and now with the advent of democracy they were suffering from hyperinflation and general sharp decline in the quality of life. Therefore, they preferred to support the populist who promised to maintain the ‘Soviet-style form of economic management’ and restore the ties with Russia (Ibid., p. 10).

According to Silitski (2003), it is quite possible that pro-Soviet Belarus did not have all the necessary prerequisites for establishing democracy (p. 47). However, it might have had a chance for establishing ‘democracy without prerequisites’ (Fish, 1998). Instead, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Belarusian people missed their chance for democratization. Belarus was turned into ‘a living museum, a microcosm of the USSR, in international shadow under the authoritarian leadership of president Alexander Lukashenko’ (Bennett, 2011, p. 2). Playing the ethnic nationalism card thus proved to be the biggest mistake of the Belarusian opposition. As Silitski (2003) noted, the socio-economic structure of the Belarusian society required the opposition to focus on a different set of political issues (p. 47). It, on the contrary, got immersed in self-destructive behavior and internal disunity, failed to develop enough pragmatism, attract grassroots support, and become appealing to the public (Ibid). As a result, by 2018, Belarus has become a consolidated authoritarian regime, with many observers inside

and outside the country believing that the term ‘dictatorship’ is more appropriate for defining Belarus’ political regime (Hill, 2005, p. 12).

What does civil society in Belarus look like after 27 years of independence, and 25 years of Lukashenko’s rule? According to the International Consortium ‘EuroBelarus,’ after more than 20 years of independence, Belarusian civil society still finds itself at a formative stage. It is small with respect to the number of people and organizations with a strong civic position able to influence the development of the Belarusian society. Also, the existing civil society actors still do not play any important role in today’s Belarus. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, within the last 20 years in Belarus ‘civil society has not actually had favorable environment that would contribute to its formation and development’ (EuroBelarus, n. d.).

The official data of the Belarusian Ministry of Justice show that in January 2017 there were 2,731 public associations, 36 unions of public associations, and 31 trade unions registered in Belarus (Egorov et al., 2017, p. 4). In addition, there are about 3,000 NGOs that are registered in other organizational and legal ways, or registered outside the republic, or are unregistered (Ibid.). In the words of Egorov et al. (2017), this number of NGOs is extremely low for a country like Belarus, including in raw numbers and per 100 thousand population (p. 4).

The dire state of Belarusian civil society is confirmed by the scores of the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Sustainability Index. According to the scores (on the scale from 1 to 7, where 1 corresponds to the lowest, and 7 corresponds to the highest score) Belarus has received between 2000 and 2016 with respect to seven major dimensions of civil society sectors, the sustainability of its civil society is between somewhat and significantly impeded. This means that the Belarusian authoritarian government

‘aggressively opposes the development of independent CSOs,’ and that the growth of the CSO sector might be prevented by ‘a hostile environment and low capacity and public support’ (USAID, 2017, p. 258). Finally, progress in the CSO sector ‘may be hampered by a contracting economy, an authoritarian leader and centralized government, a controlled or reactionary media, or a low level of capacity, will, or interest on the part of the CSO community’ (Ibid.). It should be noted that if the CSO Report mentions all the above impediments in hypothetical terms, in the reality of Belarus they are all facts on the ground.

Table 3 and Figure 3 below indicate that between 2000 and 2016, the only dimension of Belarusian civil society, which significantly improved was advocacy. The score for this dimension went up from 2 to 4.7. The scores for the rest of the dimensions remained extremely low, especially with respect to the legal environment and financial stability of the sector.

Table 3: CSO Sustainability Index Scores (Belarus)

Year	Legal environment	Organizational capacity	Financial viability	Advocacy	Service provision	Infrastructure	Public image	Overall score
2000	1	3	2	2	3	3	2	2.3
2008	1	2.9	1.4	2	2.5	2.5	2	2
2016	1.3	3.3	1.7	4.7	2.9	2.9	2.4	2.5

Source: CSO Sustainability Index Data

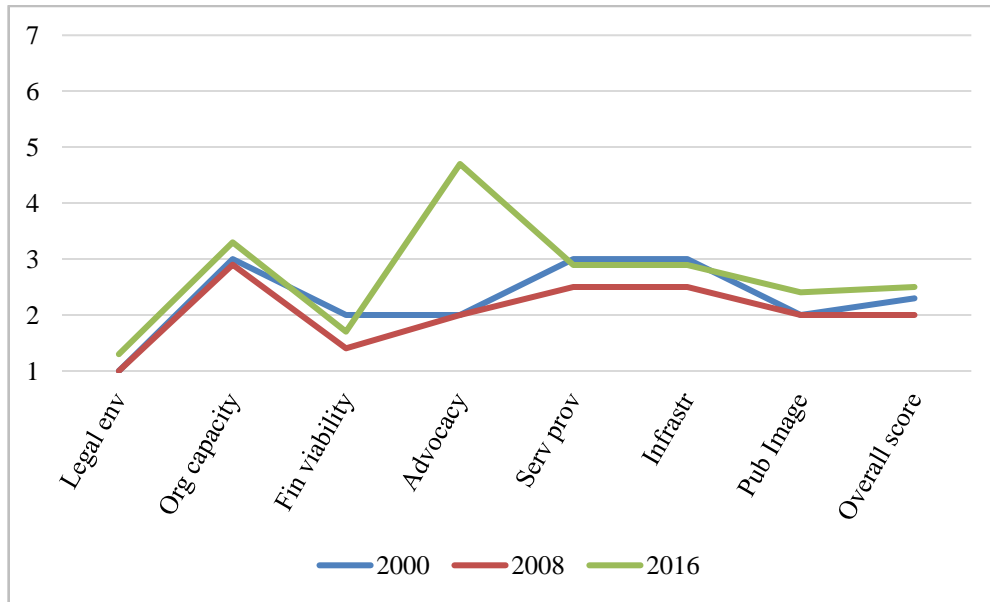


Figure 3: CSO Sustainability Index Scores (Belarus)
 Source: analysis of CSO Sustainability Index Data

5.4 Conclusion

The rise of civil society is one of the democracy drivers that scholars regard as conducive to the initiation of transition from authoritarian to democratic modes of governance. Civil society is also seen as playing an important role in subsequent consolidation of democracy once liberal democracy has been introduced. The examples of Poland, Romania, and Belarus show that the said pattern may not always be present and that transition may begin even when no civil society exists. At the same time, the initial liberalization and attempts at democratization may or may not facilitate the development of civil society that would be capable of exerting a meaningful impact on the country's public policies.

Poland is an example of a country where civil society did exist before the collapse of the communist regime. It was quite autonomous, enjoyed great support among the Polish citizens, and was able to become a real force in the negotiations with the incumbent regime. It helped the country to make its transition in a peaceful way, and contributed to Poland's further successful democratization and consolidation of democracy.

Ceaușescu's totalitarian/sultanistic regime in Romania, quite the opposite, made the existence of civil society in that country virtually impossible until the very moment of the regime's disintegration. The legacy of the Ceaușescu rule and Romania's extremely violent transition mode (between 689 and 60,000 killed according to various estimates (Holmes, 1997, p. 83)) made Romania's case one-of-a-kind in all of Central and Eastern Europe. Thirty years after the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime, Romanian civil society is still seen by many as weak, and its public is still divided into those who are strongly attached to the past and old attitudes, behaviors and values, and those who support radical change at societal as well as institutional levels (Ciobanu, 2015, p. 260). Since Romania's democracy has not been consolidated so far, some even fear that a reversal to an authoritarian regime might still be possible.

Finally, Belarus is a country where the citizens did not feel a need for civil society under the communist rule as the government was able to take care of them 'from the cradle to the grave' and provide them with a relatively high standard of living and political stability. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the nascent civil society put an undue emphasis on the nationalist component of its struggle against the communist legacy. Such a strategy in a society that had no hostile feelings either towards the Soviet Union in general or towards Russia in particular, and where the majority of the

population spoke Russian as their first language proved to be fallacious and doomed to failure. Having neither internal experience with civil society as was the case in Poland with Solidarity and the Catholic Church, nor any external pressure to create an environment for its development as it happened in Romania when the country decided to join the EU, it was only logical that no favorable conditions for civil society's development and strengthening were ever created in Belarus.

Chapter 6

FINDINGS: DETERMINANTS OF DEMOCRACY

The given chapter presents comparative findings on the economic, social, and political conditions that existed in Poland, Romania, and Belarus between 1990 and 2016. The findings are used later on to analyze a possible relationship between the economic development and democracy, between the quality of life and democracy, as well as between the effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system and democracy. To compare economic, social, and political conditions in the three countries various corresponding economic, social, and political indicators are examined.

6.1 Economic Indicators

Indicators: GDP per capita; Consumer Price Index (inflation); Household Consumption as percentage of GDP; Unemployment Rate; Economic Freedom (overall index); Ease of Doing Business; Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

GDP

If economic development is strongly correlated with the level of support for democracy and sustainability of democracy over time in a given society, then the three countries had a good potential for democratization. Over the course of 26 years, GDP in all the three countries has grown. In the year of 2000, however, GDP in Belarus and Romania dropped in comparison with the values of ten years before, while in Poland it continued to grow. By 2016 Romania had almost doubled its GDP, Belarus doubled it, and Poland increased it more than twofold in comparison with 1990.

Table 4: GDP per Capita in U. S. Dollars by Country by Year

GDP per capita (PPP) in USD	1990	2000	2016
Belarus	\$8,354	\$7,563	\$16,752
Poland	\$10,277	\$14,732	\$26,036
Romania	\$11,480	\$10,523	\$21,615

Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com

There is, however, no agreement among economists on the level of per capita GDP necessary to consider a country's economy as developing or developed. The numbers range from \$12,000 to \$15,000 and from \$25,000 to \$30,000 (Investopedia, 2018). According to the lower range, by 2016 all the three countries had had a developed economy. If one adheres to the upper range, though, then by 2016 only Poland had reached the amount of GDP sufficient for the developed economy status.

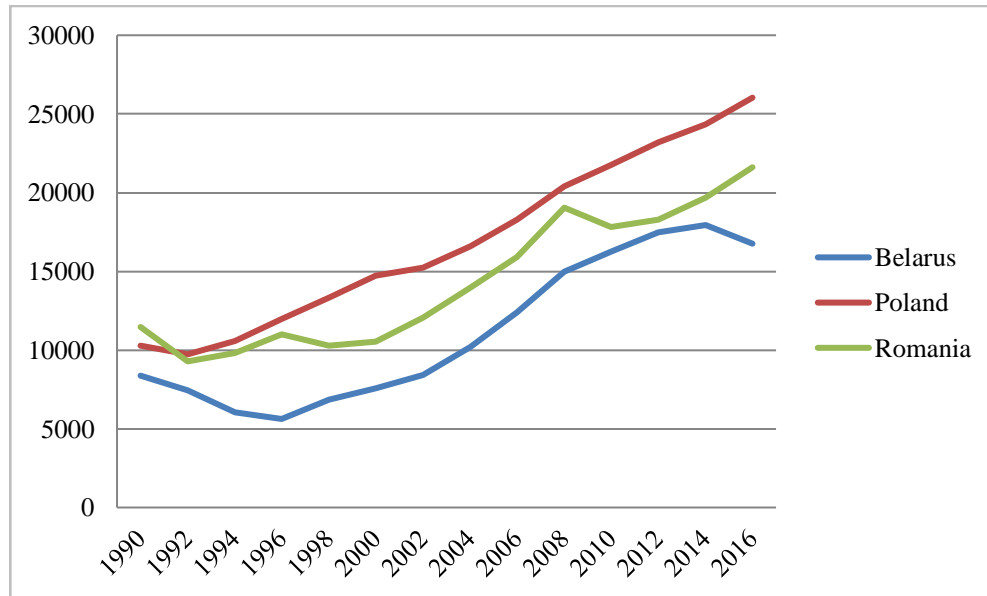


Figure 4: GDP per Capita, Purchasing Power Parity (in U.S. Dollars)
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Consumer Price Index (CPI)

Another measure of how well a country's economy is doing is the rate of inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The World Bank defines inflation as 'the annual percentage change in the cost to the average consumer of acquiring a basket of goods and services that may be fixed or changed at specified intervals, such as yearly' (World Bank, 2018a).

Policymakers generally consider an acceptable inflation rate, i.e. the one associated with more or less stable prices, to be around 2% (Garfinkel, 1989, p. 9; Billi & Kahn, 2008, p. 23; Federal Reserve System, 2011; Evans, 2013, p. 3). It took Poland and Romania many years to come close to such a low rate of inflation. Belarus, on the other hand, has never managed to achieve the acceptable or optimal inflation rate within the observation period.

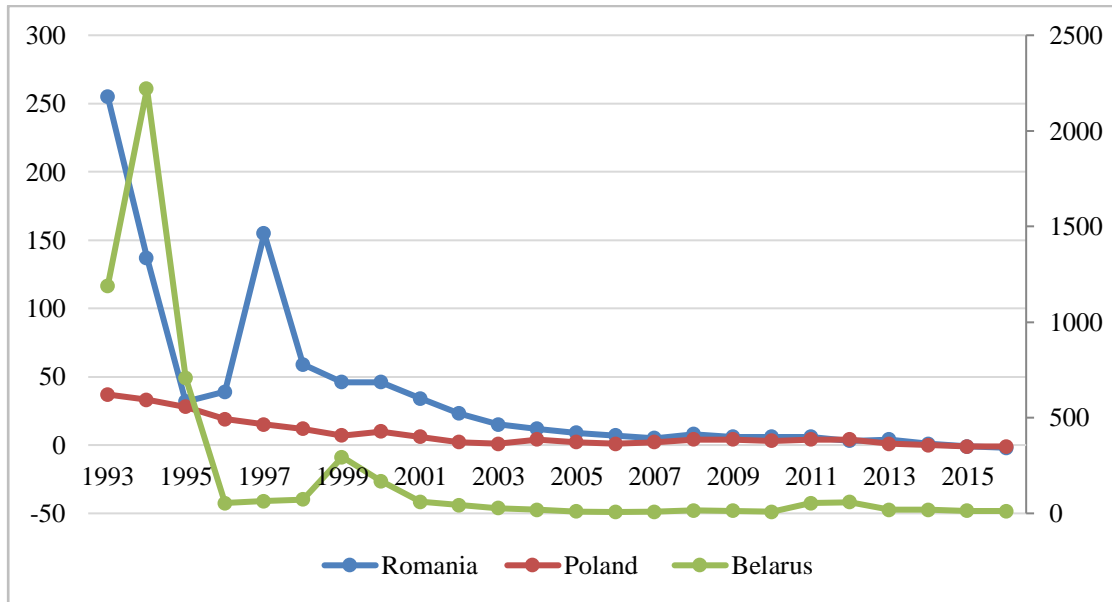


Figure 5: Inflation. Using secondary axis for Belarus (CPI, in %)
 Source: World Bank (due to the fact that between 1993 and 2000 the CPI values for Belarus were so extreme, a secondary axis is used for Belarus to avoid skewness).

According to Figure 5, Belarus has almost invariably suffered the highest levels of inflation in comparison with Poland and Romania between 1993 and 2016. The only exceptions were the year of 1997, when inflation in Romania equaled 155% and in Belarus – 64%, and the year of 2006, when the level of inflation in Belarus and Romania was the same (7%). Neither Poland nor Romania ever had such high inflation as Belarus in the first few years after the collapse of the communist regimes in the countries. In 1993, Belarus’ inflation level, for example, was 1190%, whereas in Romania it was 255%, and in Poland – only 37%. In the following year inflation in Belarus grew up to the record 2221%, while in Romania and Poland it decreased to 137% and 33% respectively. Inflation in Poland has been steadily decreasing throughout the period of observation reaching negative values in 2015 and 2016. In Romania, except for a sudden

increase in 1997, the inflation rate has also been declining, and just like in Poland reached negative values in the same years: 2015 and 2016. In Belarus, although inflation had never reached the numbers of 2000% anymore after 1994, it was fluctuating all the time. For instance, it would go down to 53% in 1996 after being 709% in 1995, and then spike to 294% in 1999 after equaling 73% in 1998. The lowest value inflation in Belarus had ever reached was 7% in 2006. By 2016, when Poland's and Romania's inflation rates were negative, in Belarus inflation was 12% (World Bank, 2018a).

Household Consumption

A country's economic performance can also be measured using consumption level and consumer dynamics (Vollmer, 2013, p. 1). Household final consumption is viewed as 'an essential variable for economic analysis of demand' (OECD Data, 2018). It is the market value of all the goods and services that individual households purchase (TheGlobalEconomy.com). According to OECD (2018), the goods and services include such items as food, clothing, housing (rent), energy and transport, durable goods like cars, health costs, leisure, and miscellaneous services. There are various ways of measuring household final consumption. One of them is to measure it in millions of US dollars in current prices and PPPs as percent of GDP (OECD, 2018). Usually, household final consumption makes up about 60% of a country's GDP (Ibid.).

Eurostat (2018a) data indicate that in 2017 in the European Union, household consumption expenditure equaled at least 50% of GDP in 19 EU member states out of 28. Household consumption was the highest in Cyprus (67.7%), Greece (66.6%), and Lithuania (63.8%). It was the lowest in Luxemburg where it accounted for just 28.6% of the country's GDP (Eurostat, 2018a). Household consumption is determined by disposable income (Scutaru et al., 2015, p. 822). There exist two types of households:

those that use all of their disposable income on consumption of goods and services, and those that manage to save part of their income and consequently increase their ability to consume in the future (Ibid.). In a consumption-based economy progressively greater consumption of goods is considered to be ‘economically beneficial’ (Vollmer, 2013, p. 1). A different theory states, however, that ‘the true source of wealth’ for a society is production, not consumption (Ibid.). Thus, according to Vollmer (2013), in a healthy economy conditions should be established for producers to create more wealth ‘for others to consume and finance future production’ (p. 1).

Figure 6 below shows household consumption as percentage of GDP for the three countries, beginning with 1990. It follows from the graph that Belarus’ level of household consumption has been the lowest among the three countries over the whole period of observation. In Poland, when its economy recovered after the crisis engendered by the collapse of the communist regime, household consumption has almost always been around the 60% mark reaching the maximum of over 66% in 2002 (TheGlobalEconomy.com). Romania, on the contrary, has demonstrated relatively high levels of consumption between 1990 and 2016 reaching its peak of almost 77% in 1998 (TheGlobalEconomy.com). In the words of Vollmer (2013), being a consumption-based economy in a consumption-driven society is in itself neither good nor bad (p. 1).

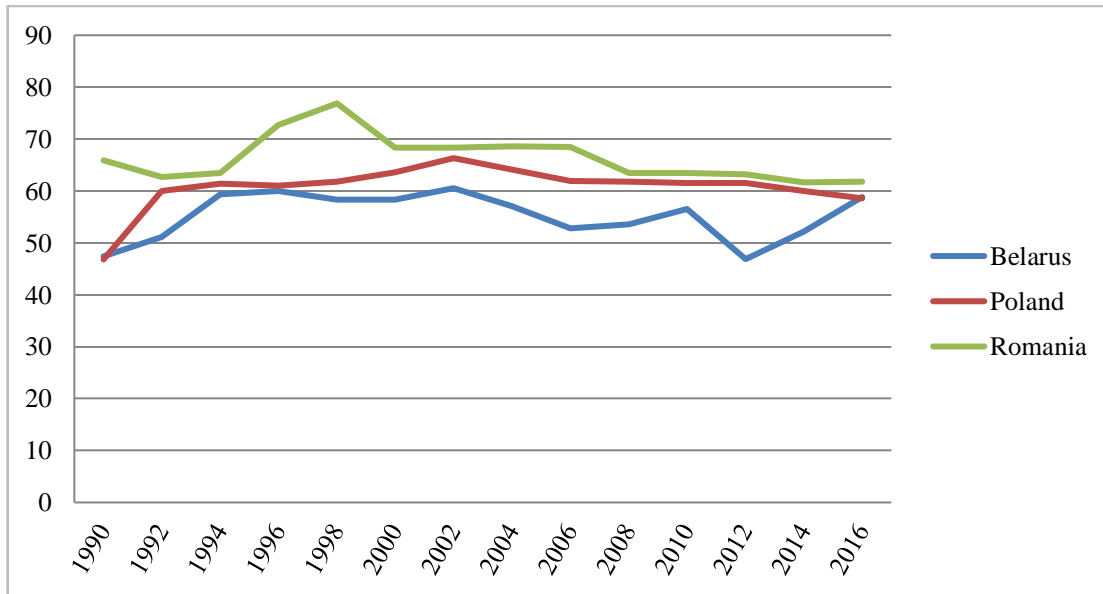


Figure 6: Household consumption as percent of GDP (in %)
 Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Unemployment Rate

Such indicator as the unemployment rate is another measure of the health of a country's economy. It refers to those individuals in the labor force 'who were without work and immediately available to start work during [some reference] period and who had actively looked for a job at some time during the preceding four weeks' (Brandolini et al., 2006, p. 154). Certain unemployment rate is viewed as acceptable since at any given time there are always people who are in the process of changing jobs. A country is considered to have 'full employment' if its unemployment rate is between 5% and 6%. This is the unemployment rate that is considered to be 'consistent with stable inflation otherwise known as the nonaccelerating inflation rate of unemployment (NAIRU)' (Bernstein & Baker, 2013).

If 'full employment' ranges from 5% to 6%, then until recently Belarus has been doing exceptionally well according to this economic indicator. Its unemployment rate has been below 1% from 1991 to 2016 with the minimum of 0.5% and maximum of 0.9%. However, the official employment and unemployment statistics for the first quarter of 2018 show that the unemployment rate in Belarus equaled 5.1% (not pictured in Figure 7), which is still within the limits of 'full employment' (Belstat, 2018).

The unemployment rates in Poland and Romania have been considerably higher than the ones in Belarus throughout the time period. Poland's unemployment rate reached its maximum of 19.9% in 2002 (TheGlobalEconomy.com). Since then it has almost always been on a steady decline reaching 6.2% (the historical minimum) in 2016 (Ibid.). In Romania the unemployment rate fluctuated between 5.6% (the lowest) and 8.2% (the highest) within the time period under analysis (Ibid.).

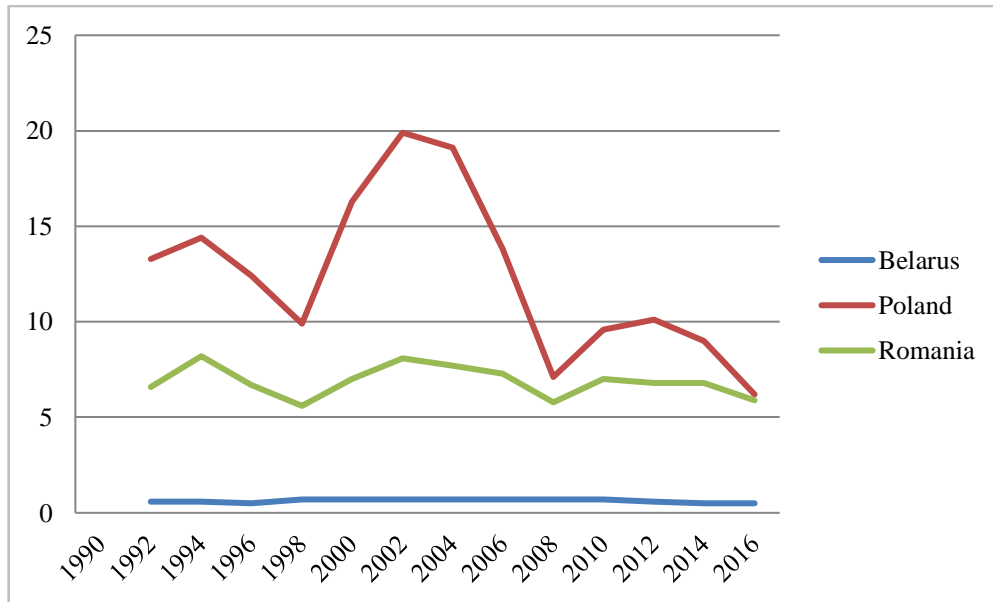


Figure 7: Unemployment rate (in %)
 Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Economic Freedom

As James Wallner (2017) noted in the foreword to the *2017 Index of Economic Freedom* report, ‘Economic freedom is a critical element of human well-being and a vital linchpin in sustaining a free civil society’ (p. ix). Therefore, the Index of Economic Freedom is indicative of a country’s performance in certain key policy areas. The policy areas are grouped into categories that represent ‘four aspects of the economic environment over which governments typically exercise policy control’ (Methodology, 2018). These include the Rule of law, Government size, Regulatory efficiency, and Market openness. The overall economic freedom is scored on a scale of 0 to 100, where the score of 100 represents the maximum freedom (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

Countries that score between 80 and 100 are considered to be economically free. Those that score between 70 and 79.9 are mostly free; between 60 and 69.9 – moderately free; between 50 and 59.9 – mostly unfree, and those between 0 and 49.9 – repressed (Miller & Kim, 2017). In 2017, Hong Kong, Singapore, and New Zealand ranked first, second, and third among 180 countries in the world scoring 89.8, 88.6, and 83.7 respectively. The countries that ranked 178, 179, and 180 were Cuba (33.9), Venezuela (27.0), and North Korea (4.9) respectively (Ibid.).

In terms of economic freedom, Poland has been doing better than Belarus and Romania throughout most of the years under analysis, with the exception of the years from 2007 through 2011 when Romania was doing slightly better. In general, the maximum value Belarus has ever managed to reach on the scale from 0 to 100 was 50, which placed its economy on the threshold between mostly unfree and repressed. In Poland, the maximum equaled 69 (moderately free and getting very close to mostly free), and in Romania it was 67, which placed it within the range of countries with moderately free economies (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

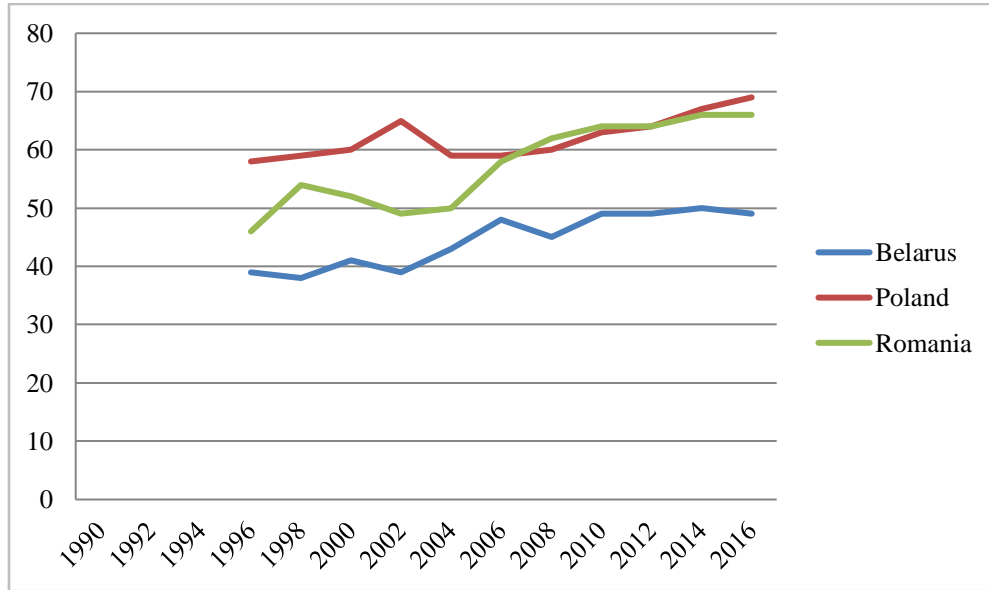


Figure 8: Economic freedom, overall index (0-100) (in points)
 Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Ease of Doing Business

The Ease of Doing Business Index measures to what extent the regulatory environment of a given country is ‘conducive to the starting and operation of a local firm’ (World Bank, 2018b). In other words, it measures ‘aspects of business regulation and their implications for firm establishment and operations’ (World Bank Group 2018, p. 1). The index ranks 190 countries from 1 to 190. The country that scores 1 has the most conducive regulatory environment for doing business. Consequently, the country that ranks 190 has the least conducive to business regulation. In 2018, the three countries that had the most favorable environment for doing business were New Zealand (1), Singapore (2), and Denmark (3). The countries with the worst business regulation were Venezuela (188), Eritrea (189), and Somalia (190).

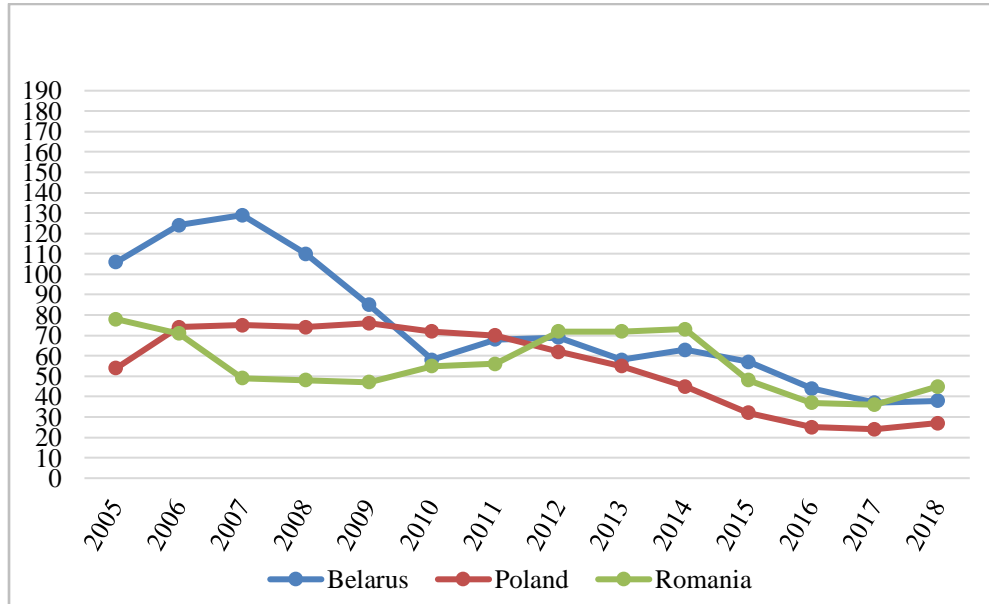


Figure 9: Ease of doing business (in points)
Source: Doing Business Yearly Reports

If according to most of the indicators mentioned above Belarus ranked third, i.e. it was doing the worst in comparison with Poland and Romania, then with respect to the Ease of Doing Business Index it has been performing much better beginning with 2010. As Figure 9 shows, for two years (2010 and 2011) Belarus' rank was even better than the one of Poland (58 and 68 vs. 72 and 70). After 2011, Poland's rank has been invariably improving, while the ranks for Belarus and Romania have been fluctuating and interchanging. In general, after 2014, the ranks of the three countries were decreasing, which was the sign of improvement in the countries' regulatory environment. If in 2014 Belarus, Poland, and Romania scored 63, 45 and 73 respectively, then in 2018 their indices were 38, 27, and 45 (World Bank, 2018c). Only

in Romania the rank increased in 2018 in comparison with 2017 indicating some worsening of the regulation for starting and operating a business in the country (45 vs. 36).

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

According to Barkauskaite and Naraskeviciute (2016), foreign direct investment, or FDI, is ‘one of the most effective tools helping to improve country’s economic growth’ (p. 61). FDI refers to direct investment equity flows, which reflect the aim of direct investors – resident entities of one economy – to obtain a long-term relationship with residents in another economy identified as direct investment enterprises (TheGlobalEconomy.com; Duce, 2003, p. 2; Patterson et al., 2004, p. 3). This type of relationship implies that the direct investor enjoys ‘a significant degree of influence on the management’ of the direct investment enterprise (Duce, 2003, p. 2). The European Commission indicates that direct investors are those owning 10% or more ‘of the ordinary shares or voting rights, or the equivalent’ in direct investment enterprises (Barkauskaite & Naraskeviciute, 2016, p. 61).

Like many other developing and emerging economies, Eastern European countries consider FDI a valuable means to help boost their economic development, modernize their economies, and contribute to their income and employment growth rates (OECD Overview, 2002, p. 5; Kornecki, 2006, p. 1). Economic growth is believed to be ‘the most potent tool for alleviating poverty in developing countries’ (OECD Overview, 2002, p. 5). FDI can contribute to the economic growth of a country by triggering technological spillovers, assisting human capital formation, enhancing international trade integration, and facilitating the creation of a more competitive business environment which in its turn helps intensify enterprise development (Ibid.).

According to Popescu (2014), the correlation of FDI to such inputs as labor, domestic capital and export ‘has a notable effect on GDP growth’ (p. 8159).

Since FDI flows bring with them various benefits to countries’ economies, governments naturally try to attract the highest possible flows of foreign direct investment (Barkauskaite & Naraskeviciute, 2016, p. 61). The positive impacts of FDI include GDP growth, increase of productivity, international trade integration, higher wages in foreign companies, human capital formation, diffusion of technologies, more training opportunities, and job creation (Ibid., p. 62). FDI, however, can also have negative impacts on domestic producers if certain conditions are not implemented. Barkauskaite and Naraskeviciute (2016) identify such negative impacts of FDI as displaced local business, unfair competition, and the loss by local producers of their market position (p. 62).

Immediately after the collapse of the communist regimes in the Central and Eastern European countries, foreign investors did not regard them as attractive locations for FDI. However, as soon as the CEE countries managed to overcome the transition recession and caught up with the GDP per capita rates of the Western European states, ‘the CEECs became prime targets for FDI’ (Gauselmann et al., 2011, p. 343). According to the Ernst and Young’s (EY) *2014 European Attractiveness Survey*, investors ranked CEE countries as fourth among the most attractive FDI destinations in the world after Western Europe, China, and North America (EY’s Survey, 2014, p. 11). As for the ranks of individual Eastern European countries, Poland has figured among the most attractive ones for FDI for years, with Romania ranking third among the most attractive for FDI markets in CEE by 2014 (EY’s Survey, 2014; Drzewiecki & Krawczyk, 2014; U.S. Department of State, 2015; Santander Trade Portal, 2018). In Belarus, on the contrary,

despite its government’s effort to promote FDI, policies of the central as well as of local governments ‘often reflect an old-fashioned, Soviet-style distrust of private enterprise – whether local or foreign’ thus limiting FDI in many key and most profitable sectors of the Belarusian economy (U.S. Department of State, 2017).

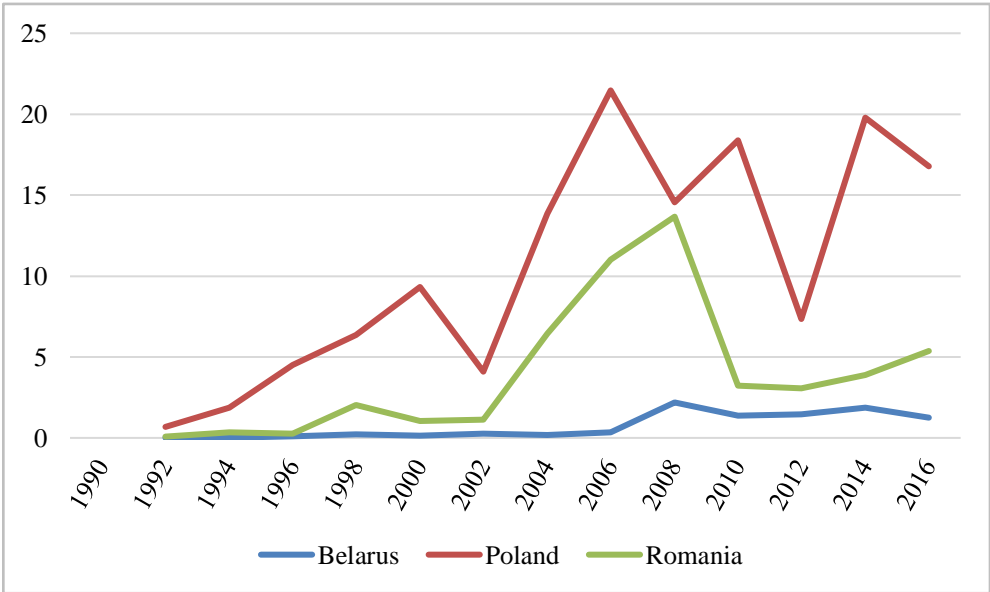


Figure 10: Foreign direct investment (in billions U.S. Dollars)
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

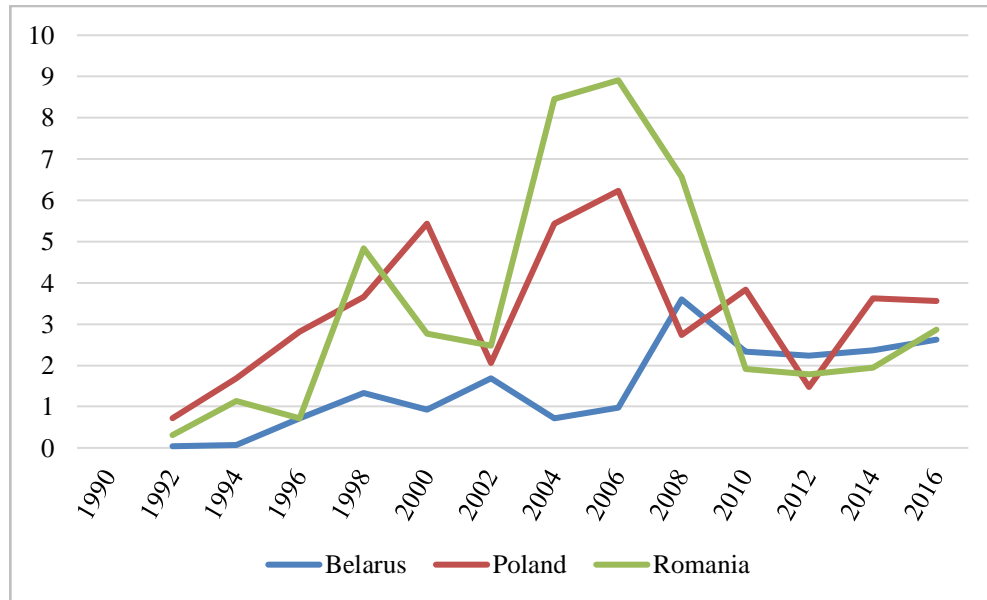


Figure 11: Foreign direct investment (in percent of GDP)
 Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

According to Figures 10 and 11, with respect to the amount of investment in terms of billions of USD, Poland has been the most attractive country among the three for FDI since 1990. The only exception was a sharp decline in 2013 followed by as sharp an increase in 2014 (\$0.8 vs. \$19.78 billion respectively). From this point of view, Belarus has been the least attractive country for foreign investors throughout the years. However, the second graph shows that over many years within the period of observation FDI constituted the largest percent of GDP not in Poland, but in Romania. It was especially high in the latter country between 2004 and 2008. In Belarus, the share of FDI in GDP spiked in 2011 to 6.48%, and in Poland the peak occurred in 2006, when FDI made up 6.23% of the country's GDP (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

6.2 Conclusion

According to the most of the economic indicators discussed above, between 1990 and 2016 Belarus has been doing the worst in comparison with Poland and Romania. The only exceptions are the unemployment rate, which has been very low in Belarus not only with respect to the other two countries under analysis but also according to the generally accepted unemployment rate corresponding to full employment, and the ease of doing business. However, in spite of the fact that the indicators values for Belarus were lower, and sometimes considerably lower, than the ones for Poland and Romania, the overall trends for this country, just like for the other two, have been towards improvement and progress. In all the three countries GDP per capita was increasing, as well as household consumption, and economic freedom. Inflation and unemployment rates were abating, or continued to be low. The environment for doing business was improving too. Although Belarus received the least amount of FDI in terms of billions of USD, the share of foreign direct investment in its GDP was sometimes significantly higher than in either Poland or Romania.

6.3 Social Indicators

Indicators: Health spending as percent of GDP; Life expectancy; Birth rate; Death rate; Education spending as percent of GDP; Tertiary school enrollment; Religions; Other indicators (various).

Health

Health spending as percent of GDP

Between 1995 and 2014, health spending per capita in Belarus increased from \$70 to \$450. In Poland during the same time period per capita health spending grew

from \$197 to \$910, and in Romania – from \$53 to \$557 (TheGlobalEconomy.com). In spite of the fact that Belarus has had the lowest health spending per capita in dollar terms throughout most of the observation period, when it comes to health spending as percent of GDP, Belarus used to rank the highest until 2007. Poland and Romania than outran Belarus with respect to this indicator, although in 2013 Belarus managed to pass Romania again.

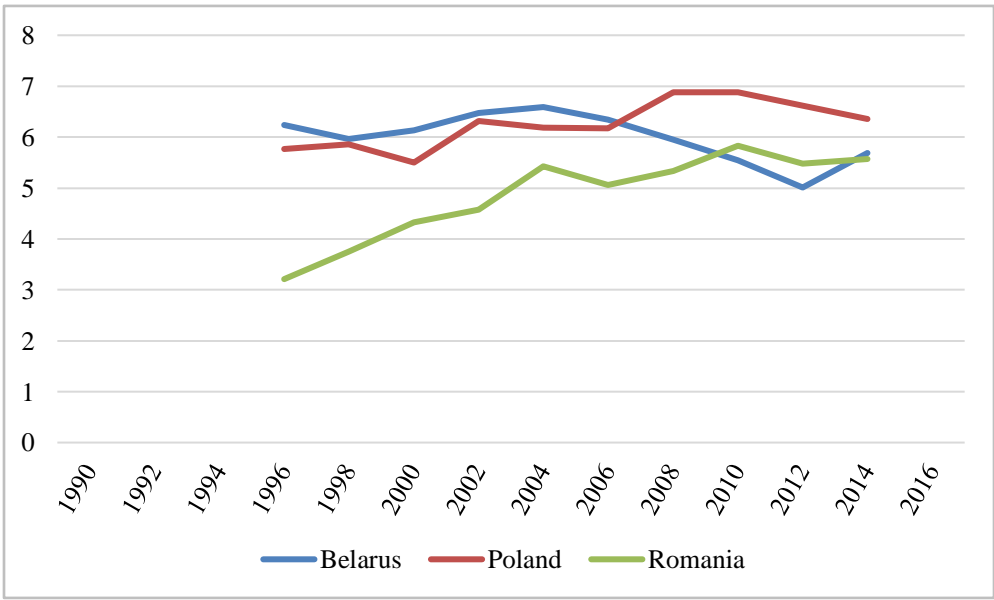


Figure 12: Health spending (in percent of GDP)
 Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Life expectancy at birth, total years

Definition: Life expectancy at birth indicates the number of years a newborn infant would live if prevailing patterns of mortality at the time of its birth were to stay the same throughout its life (World Bank, 2018d).

At the beginning of the observation period, life expectancy was quite low in all three countries. Between 1990 and 1992 life expectancy in Belarus was higher than in Romania, but then the latter took over. In general, Poland has had the highest life expectancy among the three countries throughout the period of observation, with Romania ranking second most of the time, and Belarus – third. The overall trend, however, was a steady increase in life expectancy, with some fluctuations in Romania, and more variation in Belarus.

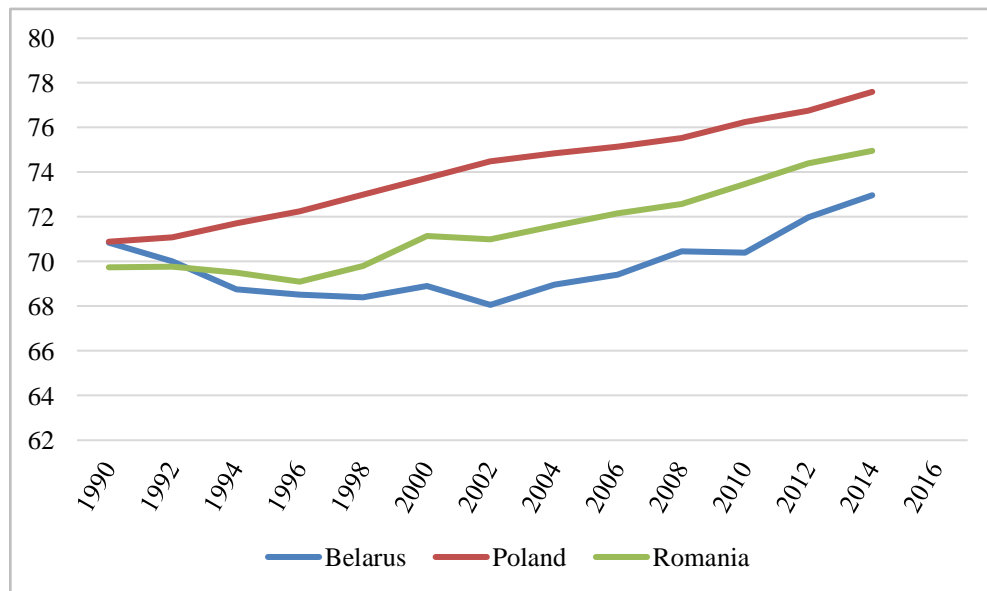


Figure 13: Life expectancy (in years)
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Birth rate

Definition: Crude birth rate indicates the number of live births occurring during the year, per 1,000 population estimated at midyear (World Bank, 2018e).

The crude birth rate does not consider either age or sex differences among every 1,000 of the population (Rosenberg, 2018, n. p.). It is likely that some people in every thousand are men, and that some women in the same group are incapable of or unwilling to give birth in a given year (Ibid.). That is why the crude birth rate is called ‘crude’.

According to Eurostat (2018b), in 2016 the crude birth rate in the European Union equaled 10.1. The World Bank data indicate that in 2016 the crude birth rate in Central Europe and the Baltics was 10, and in Europe and Central Asia, excluding high income countries, it was 15 (World Bank, 2018e). In general, a crude birth rate of over 30 per 1,000 is considered high, and of less than 18 per 1,000 – low (Rosenberg, 2018, n. p.). In 2016, such countries as Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, South Korea, and Monaco had the crude birth rate of 8, while Angola’s crude birth rate equaled 42, Chad’s – 43, and Niger’s – 48 (World Bank, 2018e).

At the beginning of the observation period, crude birth rates were approximately the same in Belarus, Poland, and Romania. Then all of them experienced a decrease in this indicator, which lasted until 2004 in Romania, 2006 in Belarus, and 2007 in Poland. After that, Belarus had a steady increase in its crude birth rate, while the values of the indicator for Romania and Poland were going up and down, though insignificantly, but never reaching the numbers of 1990.

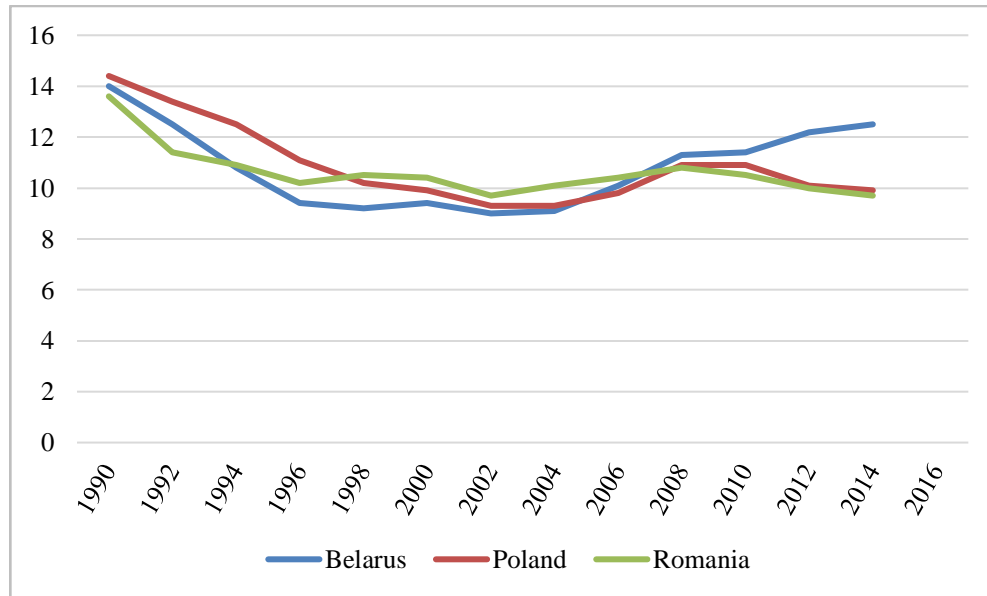


Figure 14: The number of births per 1000 people, per year
 Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Death rate

Definition: Crude death rate indicates the number of deaths occurring during the year, per 1,000 population estimated at midyear (World Bank, 2018f).

The crude death rate has been the highest in Belarus throughout the period of observation, except for 1992 and 2015 when it was lower than the one in Romania. Poland has had the lowest death rate among the three countries with some minor fluctuations.

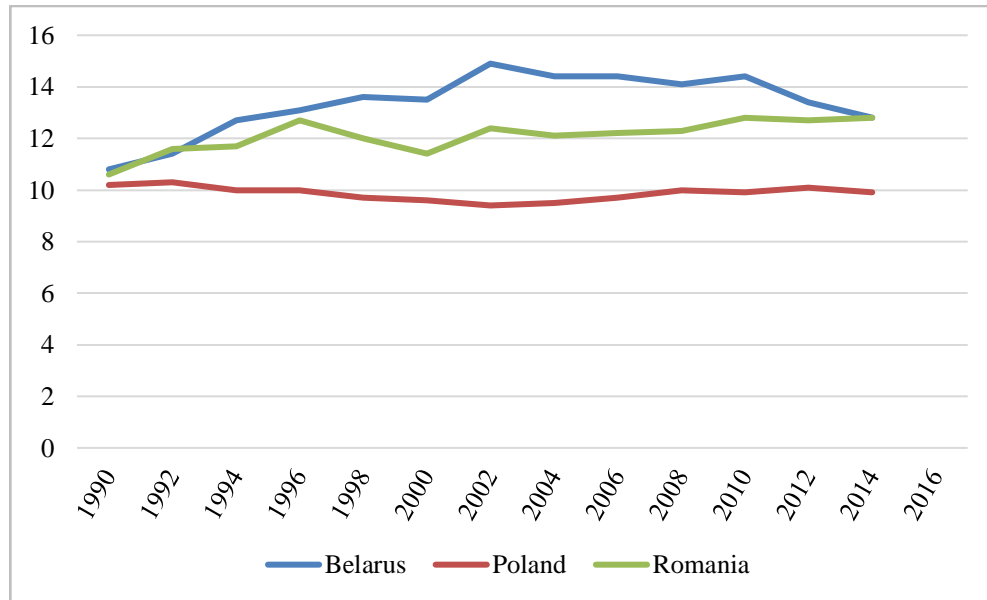


Figure 15: The number of deaths per 1000 people, per year
 Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Education

Education spending, percent of GDP

Definition: General government expenditure on education (current, capital, and transfers) is expressed as a percentage of GDP. It includes expenditure funded by transfers from international sources to government. General government usually refers to local, regional and central governments (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

As for public spending on education, Belarus has been the leader during almost the whole period of observation (the highest value: 6.2% in 2000). Poland has ranked second, reaching the peak of 5.36% in 2004. Romania's spending on education has been the lowest among the three countries between 2000 and 2014. The largest amount of money the Romanian government spent on education within the time period under

analysis occurred in 2010 and equaled 3.46% of the country's GDP (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

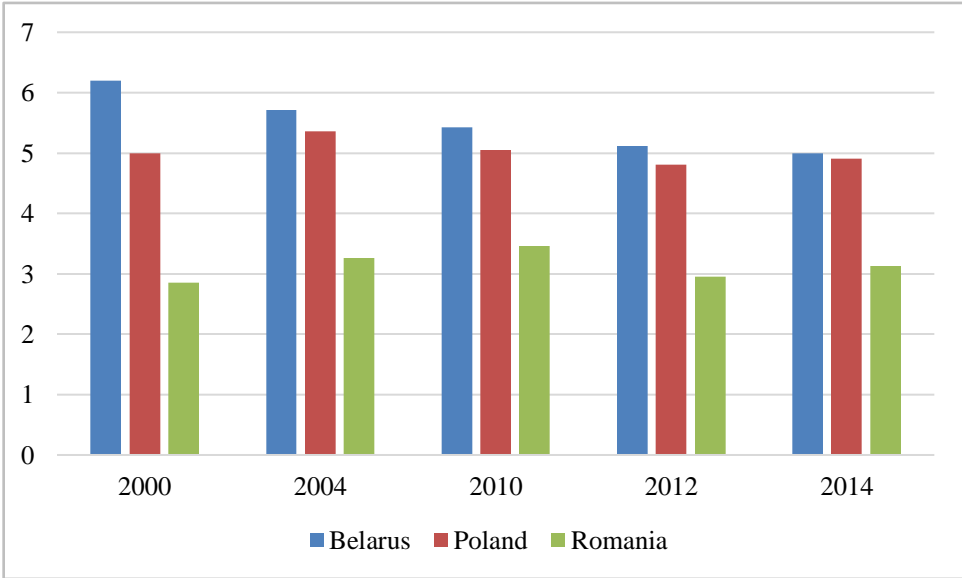


Figure 16: Government expenditure on education, total (in percent of GDP)
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Tertiary school enrollment

Definition: Gross enrollment ratio is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. Tertiary education, whether or not to an advanced research qualification, normally requires, as a minimum condition of admission, the successful completion of education at the secondary level (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

Figure 17 representing tertiary school enrollment shows that Belarus not only has had consistently higher enrollment rate than Poland and Romania throughout the period of observation, but also that the enrollment ratio was relatively very high. Since 2007, Belarus tertiary school enrollment ratio exceeded 71%, reaching the peak of 91% in 2013 (TheGlobalEconomy.com). Romania has ranked third within the timeframe, having reached almost the same level of tertiary school enrollment as Poland only once, in 2009.

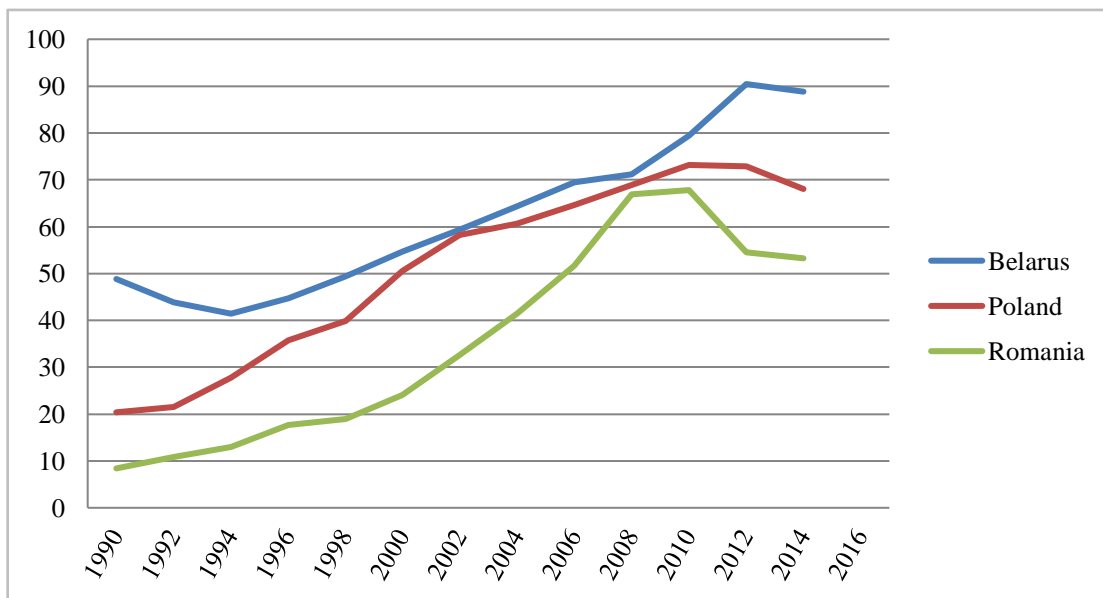


Figure 17: Tertiary school enrollment (in percent of all eligible children)
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Religion

Such cultural heritage of a society as religion or the fact that a country used to be communist exerts a significant impact on its values that will endure even in spite of modernization (Inglehart & Baker, 2000, p. 19). This assertion is within the framework of Huntington's (1993) idea that the West and East of Europe are currently divided in a cultural way (p. 29). This means that Europe is divided along the boundary of Western (Catholic and Protestant) Christianity, and Orthodox Christianity and Islam.

Although religion was not officially banned in Eastern European countries under communist regimes, in many of them practicing religion openly was highly discouraged. States would perform 'explicit and severe antireligious campaigns' to emphasize their secular nature and support the official ideology of atheism (Hart et al., 2013, p. 6). The fall of communist regimes, however, entailed a growth in religious communities in many Central and Eastern European countries as well as an increase in trust in the churches (Ibid.).

Table 5: Religious Denominations in Belarus, Poland, and Romania

2011/2012	Catholic	Orthodox	Others	Non-believers/atheists/unspecified
Belarus	7.1%	48.3%	3.5%	41.1%
Poland	87.2%	1.3%	0.8%	10.8%
Romania	4.3%	81.9%	7.3%	6.5%

Source: IndexMundi

As it follows from Table 5, in 2011/2012, Belarus was the least religious country among the three – over 41% of respondents in Belarus identified themselves as non-believers. Although the majority of the religious Belarusians belonged to the Orthodox Church, just like the majority of the religious Romanians, the difference in the number of people who identified themselves as belonging to this denomination was 33.6 percentage points in these two countries (81.9% of Orthodox Christians in Romania vs. 48.3% in Belarus). The Poles have been traditionally very religious, even under the Communist regime, with the majority of believers belonging to the Catholic Church (87.2% of the population in 2012). Poland, however, was not the most religious country among the three. Romania turned out to be the most religious one. Only 0.2% of respondents in Romania said they were either atheists or did not practice any religion, and 6.3% did not specify their religious affiliation, while in Poland 10.8% of respondents did not specify if they belonged to any religious denomination.

Other indicators

Population size

Definition: Total population is based on the de facto definition of population, which counts all residents regardless of legal status or citizenship. The values shown are midyear estimates (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

Population in the three countries has declined over the period of observation. However, if in Poland the decline equaled less than 2% (if one compares the year with the largest population to the year with the smallest), then in Belarus it was over 7.5%. The most dramatic decrease in the population occurred in Romania – the difference

between the highest and the lowest numbers made up a little more than 15% (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

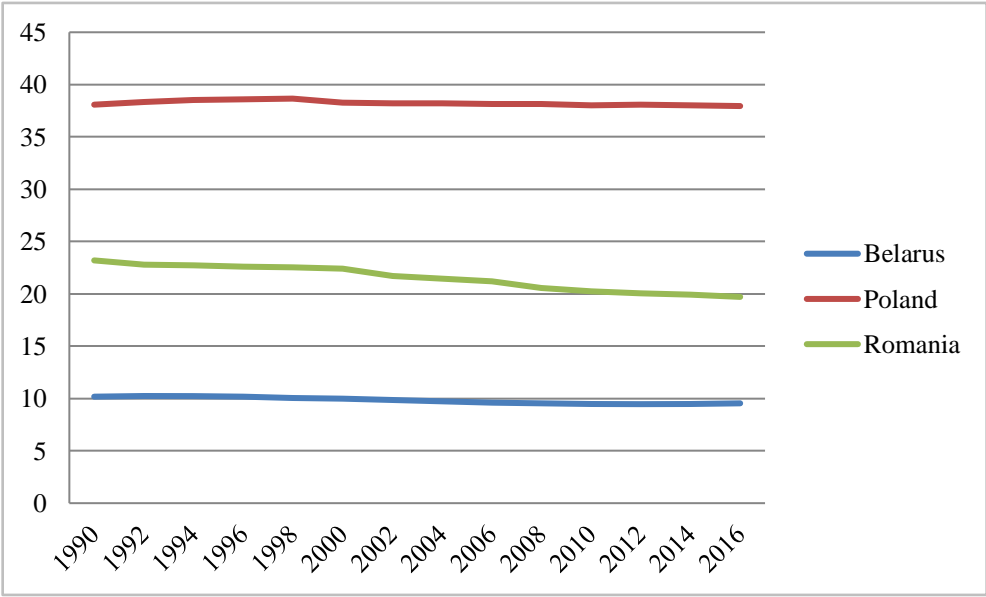


Figure 18: Population size (in millions)
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

Percent urban population

Definition: Urban population refers to people living in urban areas as defined by national statistical offices. The data are collected and smoothed by United Nations Population Division (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

Although Belarus has had the smallest population among the three countries, it has had the largest percent of urban population throughout the period of observation. Moreover, the number of urban dwellers has been constantly growing reaching 77% by

2016. In Poland, the percent of urban population has decreased slightly between 1990 and 2016. In Romania, the percent of urban population has been fluctuating between almost 55% and 53% over the timeframe (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

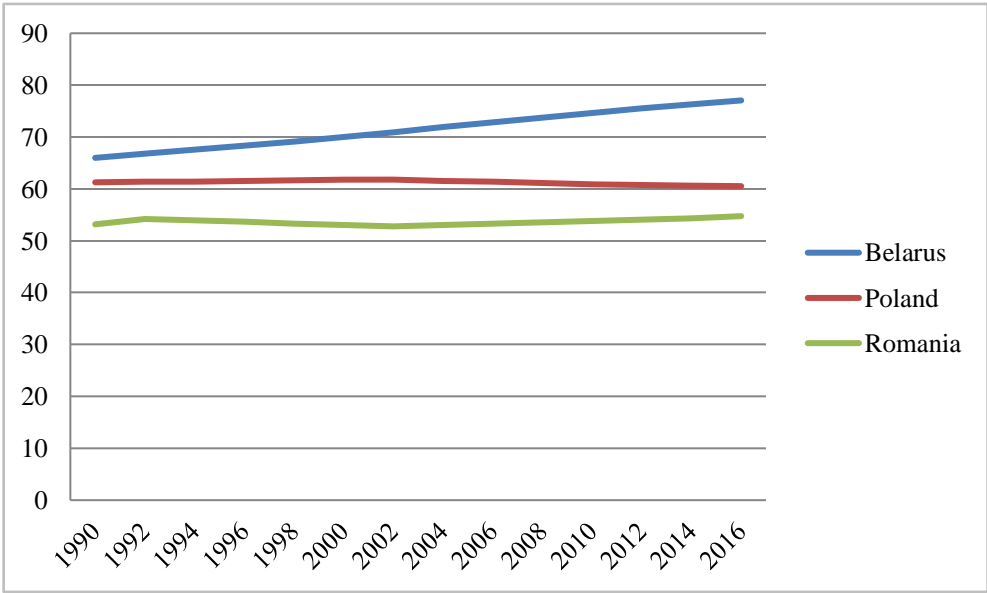


Figure 19: Urban population (in %)
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com; World Bank

6.4 Conclusion

Social indicators produce a mixed picture. Poland may nominally spend more on health than either Romania and Belarus, but at the same time health spending per capita has been on the rise in all the three countries, and Belarus’ spending on health as percent of GDP used to be the highest among the three between 1995 and 2007. Although Belarus has the lowest life expectancy and the highest death rate as compared

to Poland and Romania, at the same time it has the highest birth rate. Belarus also spends more on education in terms of percent of GDP and enjoys the highest tertiary enrollment among the three countries. At its highest, in 2013 slightly over 91% of all eligible young people were enrolled in tertiary education in Belarus, which meant that all of them had successfully completed secondary education. In Poland, the highest number was 73.2% of all eligible children enrolled in tertiary schools in 2010; in Romania – 71.3% in 2009. In addition, Belarus has the largest percent of urban population, and over 40% of the population who identify themselves as non-believers, which is an indication of Belarus being a highly secularized society.

6.5 Political Indicators

Indicators: Rule of Law; Government Effectiveness; Control of Corruption; Regulatory quality; Voice and Accountability; Political Stability index; Political Rights index; Civil Liberties index.

Successful provision of the institutions that support markets and determine how well markets can function and individuals behave in markets is called ‘good governance’ (World Bank, 2002, p. 99). According to the *World Development Report 2002*, good governance includes such properties as the creation, protection, and enforcement of property rights, the provision of the regulatory regime and of sound macroeconomic policies, and the absence of corruption (Ibid.). Below are different indices that measure citizens’ *perceptions* of how well the political systems in the countries under analysis are performing with respect to various aspects of governance. The aspects include Rule of Law, Government Effectiveness, Control of Corruption, Regulatory Quality, Voice and Accountability, Political Stability index, Political Rights index, and Civil Liberties index. Most of the indices were created on the basis of the

World Bank data (as used by TheGlobalEconomy.com), with the values ranging from -2.5, which corresponds to the weak performance, to 2.5 – strong performance. However, the Political Rights and Civil Liberties indices were based on The Freedom House data (as used by TheGlobalEconomy.com), and their values range from 7 (weak) to 1 (strong). For the sake of consistency, when a larger digit represents a higher value, the value ranges for the Political Rights and Civil Liberties indices were reversed, so that 7 equals strong and 1 equals weak performance respectively.

Rule of Law

Definition: The index for Rule of Law captures perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

According to the Rule of Law index, Poland has been doing better than the other two countries. It reached its maximum of 0.86 in 1998, and then got very close to that value (0.84) in 2014. Romania was below zero until 2008, and then started improving slowly. Belarus' values for the Rule of Law index have always been negative, reaching the negative maximum of -1.34 in 2002. Since the maximum value the Rule of Law index can have is 2.5, even Poland has room for improvement in this respect (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

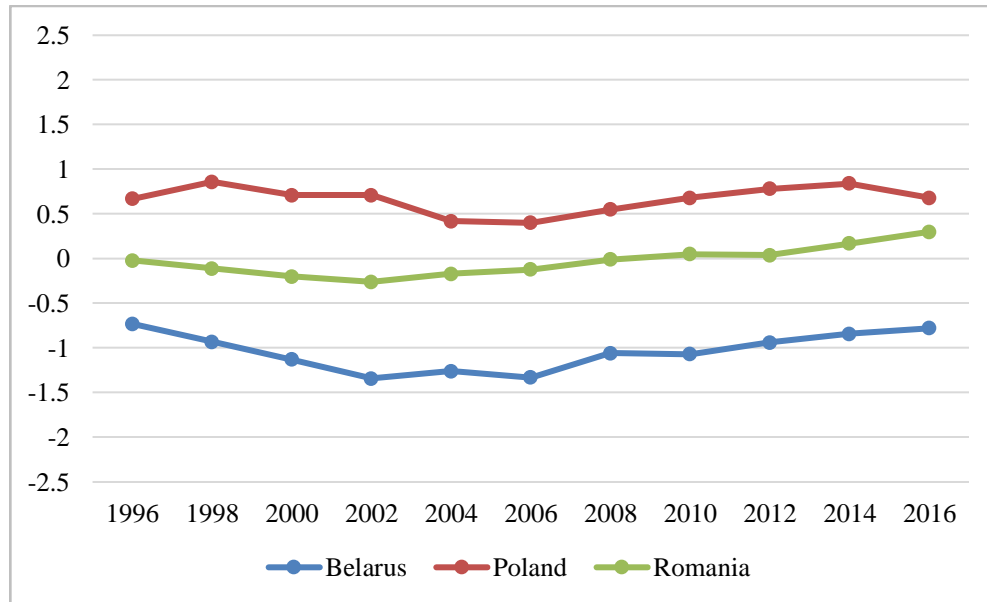


Figure 20: Rule of Law Index
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com

Government Effectiveness

Definition: The index of Government Effectiveness captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

Government effectiveness has also been the weakest in Belarus, with the situation a little bit better in Romania, and still better in Poland. The values for Romania, though higher than for Belarus, have nevertheless been negative all the time. Poland

reached its maximum of 0.83 in 2014, but by 2016 its Government Effectiveness index decreased to 0.69.

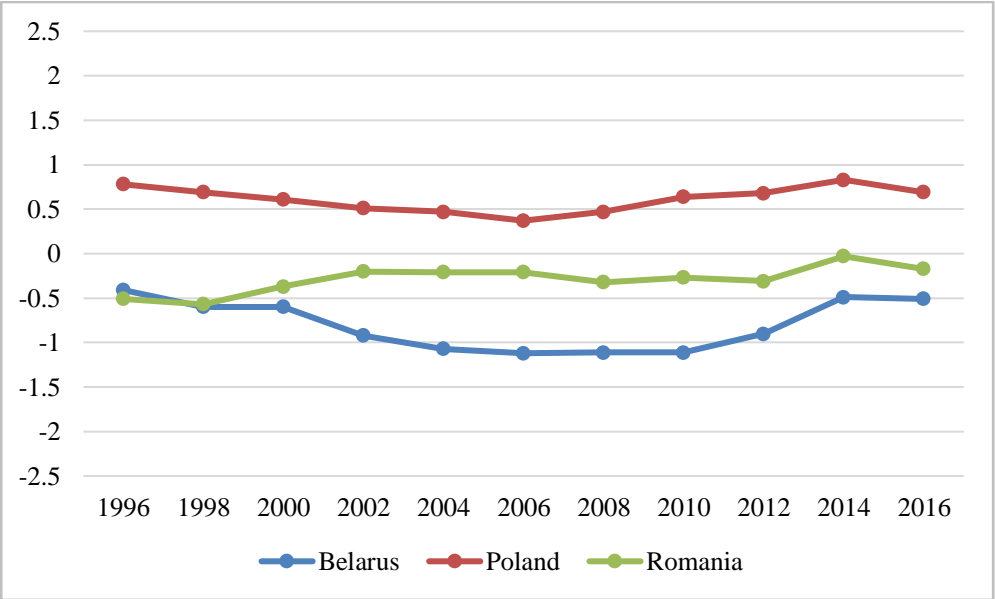


Figure 21: Government Effectiveness Index
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com

Control of Corruption

Definition: The index for Control of Corruption captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as capture of the state by elites and private interests (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

Poland was able to control corruption much better than either Romania or Belarus. Although it still has a long way to go to the maximum value of the Control of Corruption index, its index values have always been in the positive part of the scale.

The values for Romania and Belarus have always found themselves in the negative half of the spectrum, with Romania doing slightly better than Belarus, with its best value equaling 0 in 2016. The maximum Belarus has ever reached with respect to this index was -0.29 in 2016.

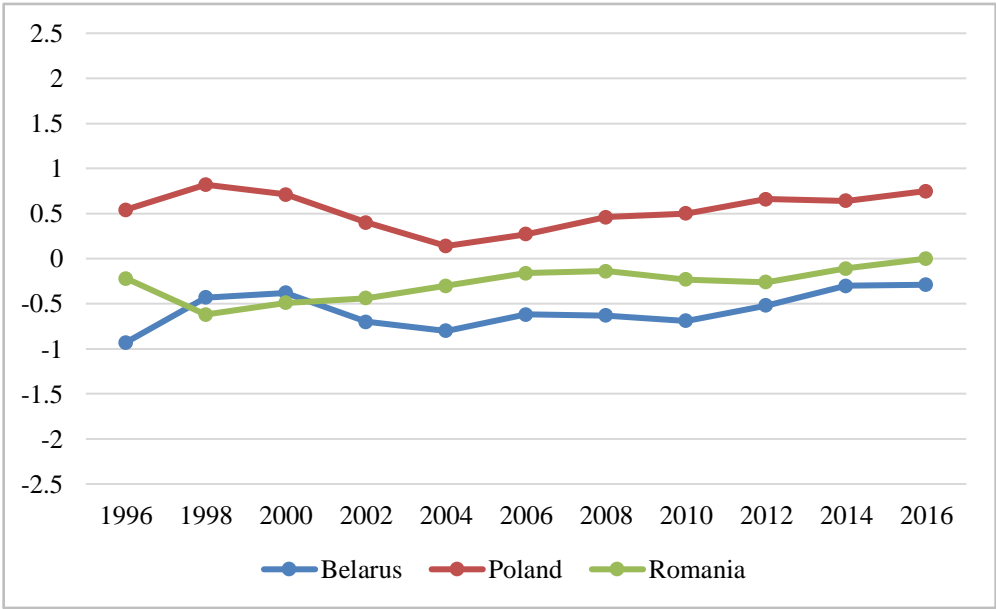


Figure 22: Control of Corruption Index
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com

Regulatory quality

Definition: The index of Regulatory Quality captures perceptions of the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

With respect to the Regulatory Quality index, Belarus has had the lowest values throughout the period of observation. It reached its historical minimum of -1.77 in 1998, and its best result (-0.94) in 2016. The values for Poland have always been positive, with the peak of 1.05 in 2013 and 2014. Romania's values have mostly been positive too, steadily increasing since 2004 with minor fluctuations, reaching their maximum of 0.66 in 2011.

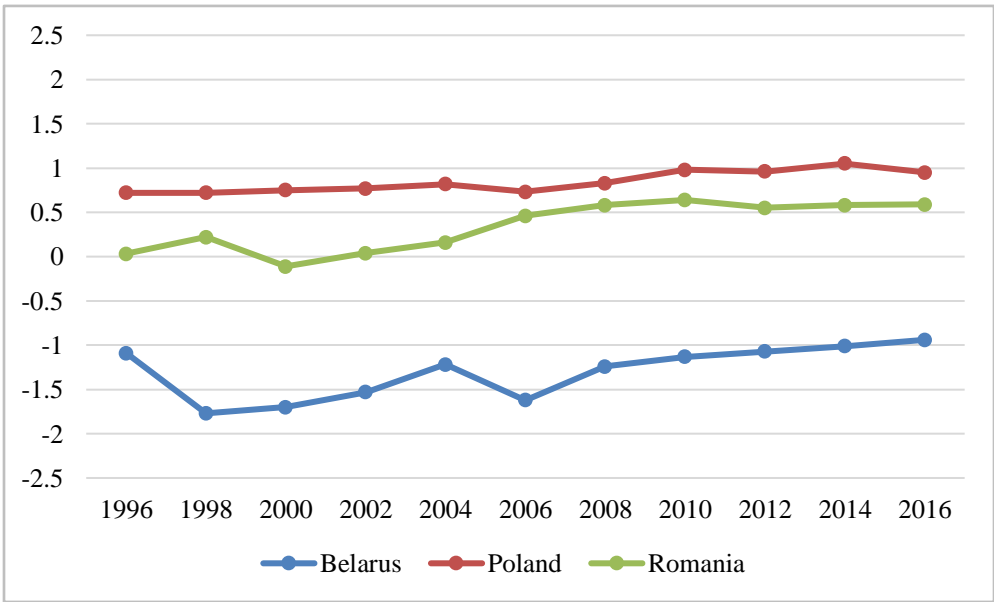


Figure 23: Regulatory Quality Index
 Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com

Voice and Accountability

Definition: The index for Voice and Accountability captures perceptions of the extent to which the citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well

as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

Belarus has been doing the worst with respect to its Voice and Accountability index, with the peak equaling -1.77 in 2005. From 1998 to 2005, the values were steadily decreasing. The values for Poland and Romania have always been positive, with Poland’s maximum of 1.09 in 1998 and 2002. Romania’s peak of 0.52 fell on 2006.

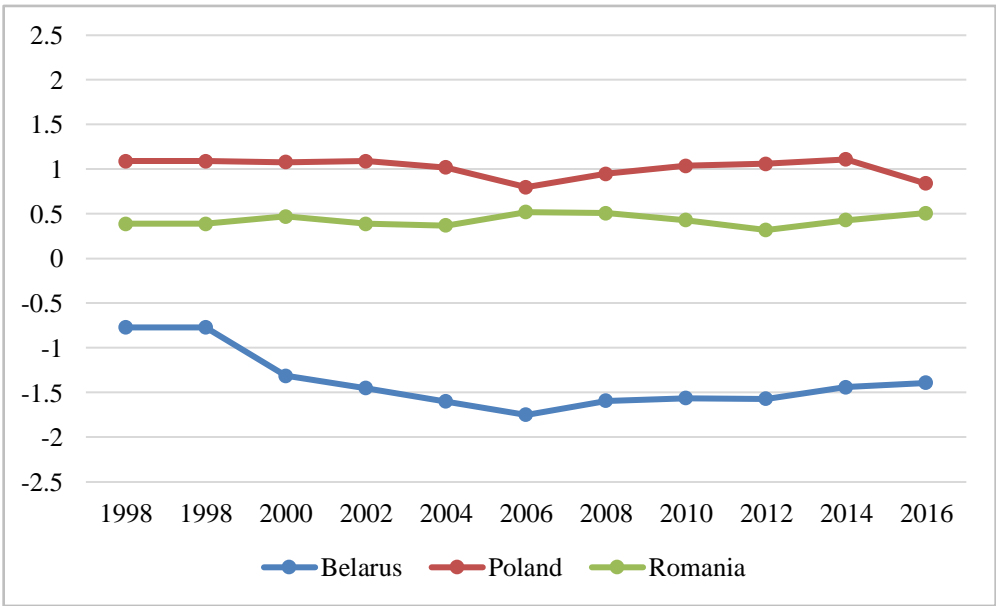


Figure 24: Voice and Accountability Index
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com

Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism

Definition: The index of Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism measures perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or

overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically-motivated violence and terrorism. The index is an average of several other indexes from the Economist Intelligence Unit, the World Economic Forum, and the Political Risk Services, among others (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

With respect to political stability, Poland again has been doing better throughout the years, with a brief exception in the year of 2003 when Belarus managed to surpass it (0.58 vs. 0.69). From 1996 to 2007, the level of political stability in Poland fluctuated. Beginning with 2007, however, its Political Stability index has been steadily growing until 2013, when a decline ensued. As for Romania and Belarus, their indices have been very unstable over the time period, reaching occasionally negative values.

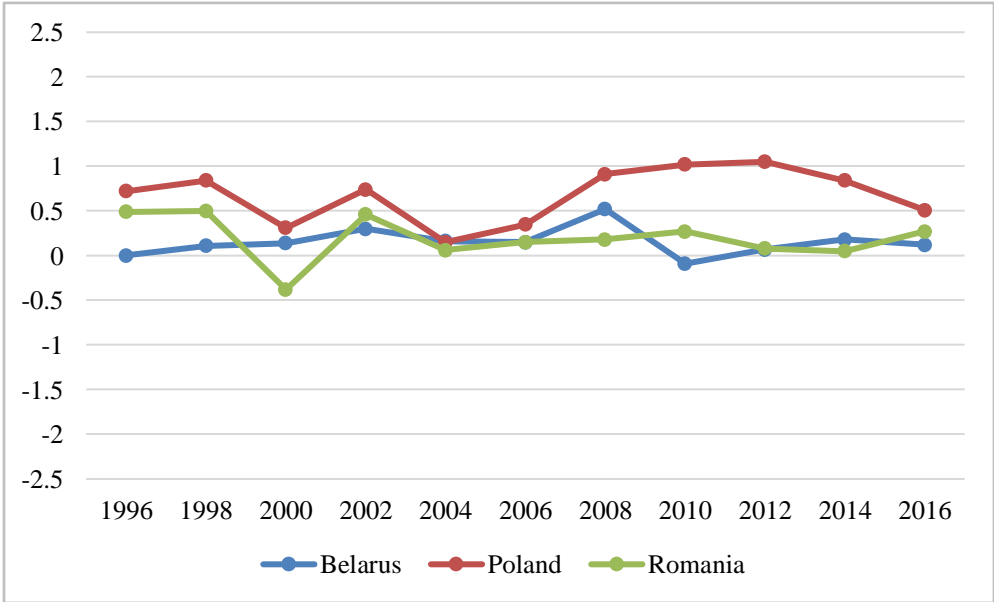


Figure 25: Political Stability Index
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com

Political Rights

Definition: The Political Rights ratings from the Freedom House evaluate three categories: electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and the functioning of government (TheGlobalEconomy.com). The index ranges from 1 (weak rights) to 7 (strong rights).

In 1991, the situation with political rights was the worst in Romania. Belarus at that time found itself somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. Since then, however, the Political Rights index has been improving in Romania and Poland, equaling 6 in the former country throughout most of the years (with the exception of 2003), and 7 in the latter. In Belarus, on the contrary, the values of the index were getting worse declining from 4 (the highest value) to 1 (the lowest possible).

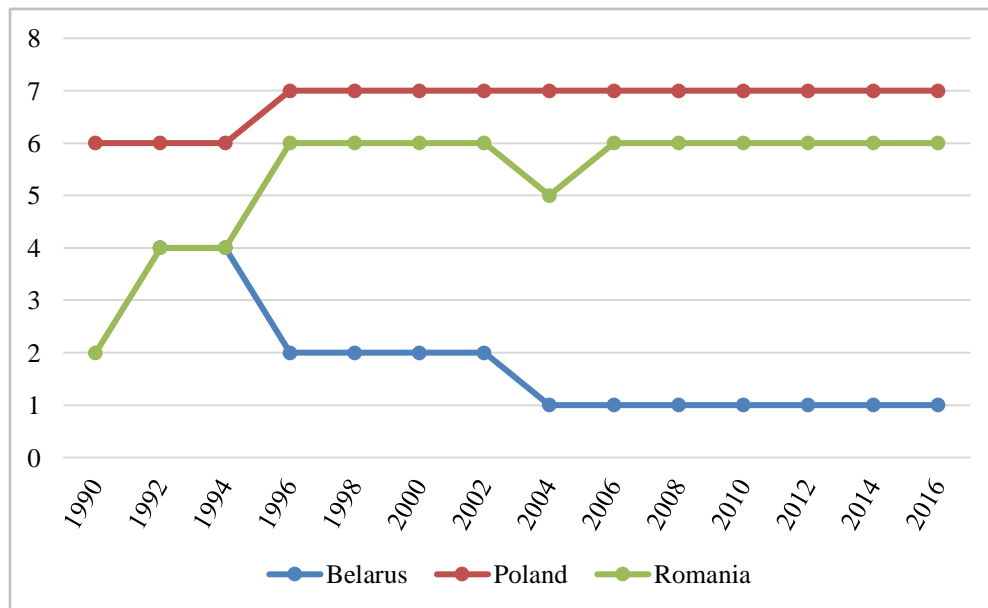


Figure 26: Political Rights from 7 (strong rights) to 1 (weak rights)
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com

Civil Liberties

Definition: The Civil Liberties index from the Freedom House evaluates the following: freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights (TheGlobalEconomy.com). The rating ranges from 1 (no liberties) to 7 (strong liberties).

In 1991, the situation with civil liberties was again the worst in Romania. Beginning with 1995, however, the situation in Belarus worsened, reached the value of 2 in 1996, and has remained there ever since. Romania reached the value of 6 in 1997, which proved to be a plateau that has never changed since that moment. Poland remained at the value of 6 from 1990 to 2013, and then reached the value of 7 at which it remained until 2015, when a slight decrease in the value occurred.

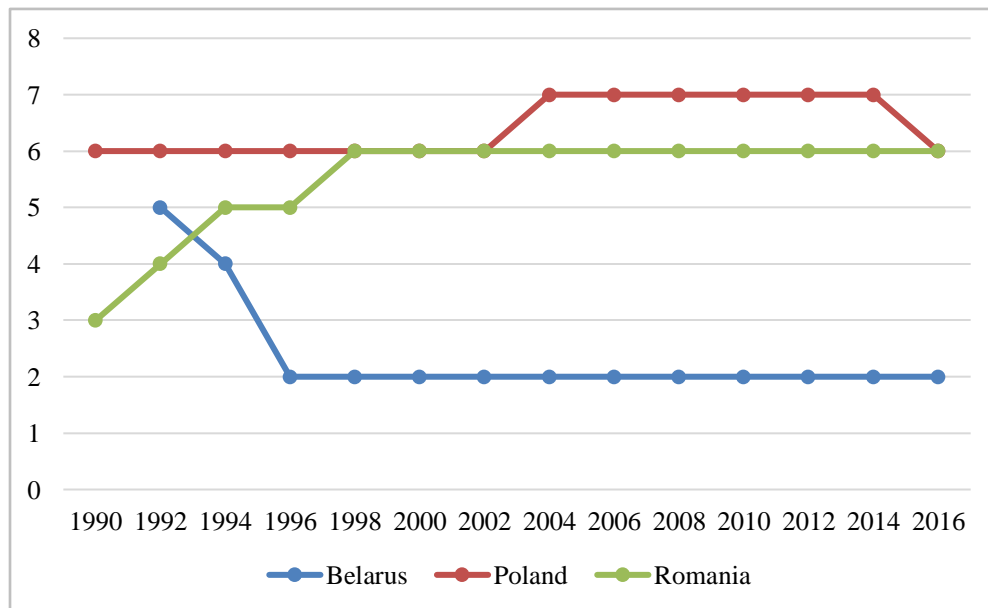


Figure 27: Civil Liberties Index from 7 (strong liberties) to 1 (no liberties)
Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com

6.6 Conclusion

All the political indicators described above demonstrate that the level of effectiveness and legitimacy of Poland's political system is high enough to sustain stability of its democratic system. Romania has been struggling in many respects in comparison to Poland. However, the trend in the values of its indices has always been upward showing that the Romanian society perceives its political system as capable of improving various aspects of governance. Belarus, quite the opposite, has been doing the worst according to almost all the indicators. The only exception is the index of Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism. With respect to this index, the values for Belarus and Romania have been fluctuating over the period of observation. At some points the values were higher in Belarus, at others – in Romania. All in all, the data show that the Belarusian society does not perceive its political system as being able to provide the necessary conditions for good governance.

6.7 People's Attitudes to Democracy

World Values Survey

Wave 3 (1996-1998)

Belarus (1996), Poland (1997), Romania (1998)

How interested would you say you are in politics?

In the second half of the 1990s, more respondents in Belarus were interested in politics than either in Poland or in Romania. This was consistent across all the age groups and levels of education. Within the groups of respondents in Belarus, those who were fifty and older, and those with higher education expressed most interest in politics

in comparison with respondents in the younger age groups and those with lower levels of education.

Do you agree or disagree that democracy may have problems but it is better than any other form of government?

When answering the question about whether they agreed or disagreed that democracy was the best form of government, in all the three countries an overwhelming majority of respondents across all age and education level groups said they did. However, the percentage of those who answered in the affirmative was higher in Poland and Romania than in Belarus. Thus, if in Romania in the age group of fifty-year-old and over, 85% said democracy was the best form of government, and in Poland there were 90% of such respondents, then in Belarus – only 76%. The same situation was observed, e.g., across the groups of respondents with higher education. The percentage of respondents in those groups who said that democracy was the best form of government was 96%, 90%, and 83% in Poland, Romania, and Belarus respectively. Nevertheless, in Belarus, too, in absolutely all the groups preference was given to the option ‘agree’ over ‘disagree’ by a long shot.

How proud are you to be Belarusian (Polish, Romanian)?

In 1996, the majority of Belarusians, regardless of their age or level of education, were proud of their national belonging. In Poland, in 1997, the difference between those who were and were not proud to be Poles was astounding. For example, in the age group of respondents between 18 and 29, those who were proud to be Poles made up 93% and those who were not – just 7%. In the group of respondents between 30 and 49 the

difference was 97% vs. 3%, and in the group of 50 years of age and older – 98% vs. 2%. In the groups of respondents with primary, secondary, and higher education the numbers of those who were proud to be Poles were 99%, 97%, and 93% respectively. In 1998, in Romania, an overwhelming majority of respondents in all the groups were also proud of their ethnic affiliation. For example, in the group of respondents aged 50 and over, those who were proud to be Romanian made up 88%, while those who were not – only 12%, i.e. the difference was 76 percentage points. All in all, although a whopping majority of respondents in the three countries were proud of their national belonging, Poland again ranked first among the three according to the number of people proud to be Poles, followed by Romanians, and rounded out by Belarusians.

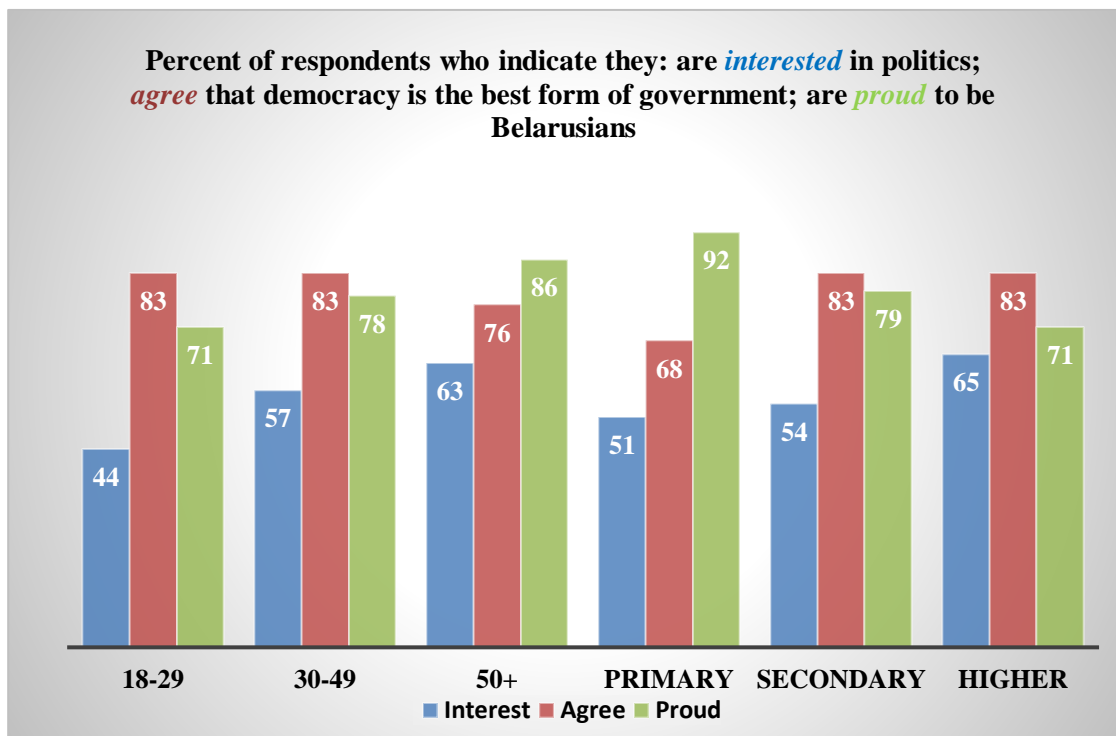


Figure 28: Belarus: attitudes toward democracy by age & education (%)
Source: WVS data, 1996

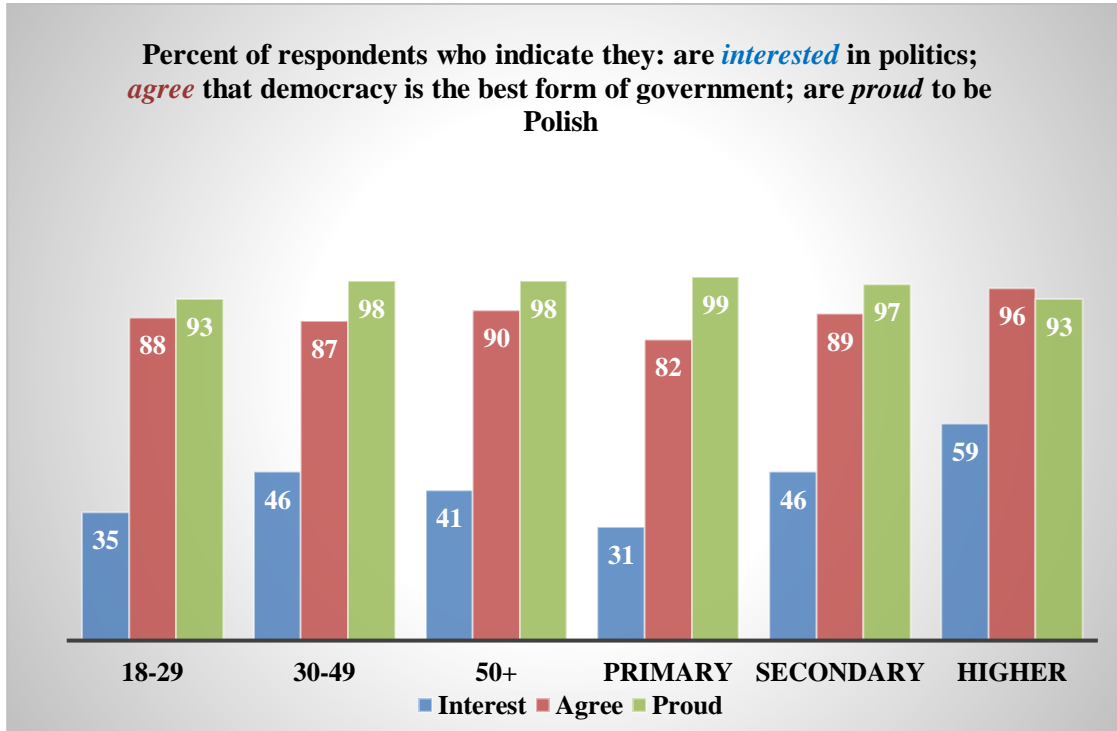


Figure 29: Poland: attitudes toward democracy by age & education (%)
Source: WVS data, 1997

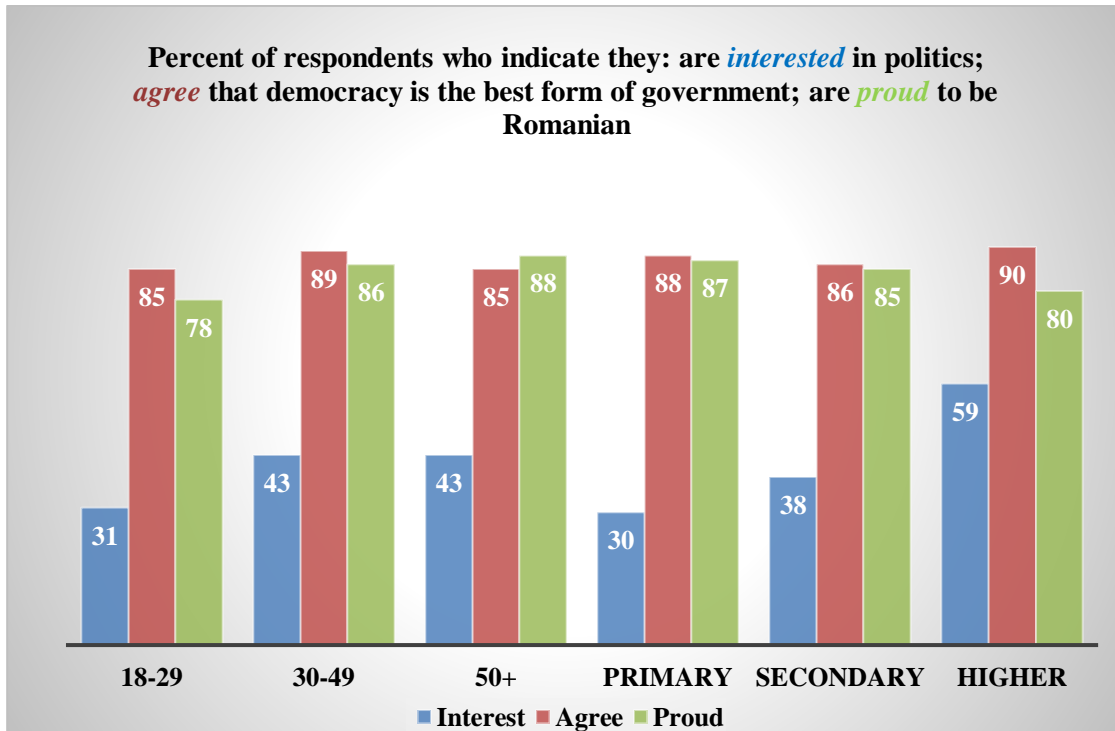


Figure 30: Romania: attitudes toward democracy by age and education (%), 1998
Source: WVS data, 1998

Wave 6 (2011-2012)

Belarus (2011), Poland (2012), Romania (2012)

How interested would you say you are in politics?

By 2011, in Belarus the numbers of respondents who said they were interested in politics had dropped considerably in comparison with 1996. For instance, if 15 years ago 57% of respondents in the age group between 30 and 49 were interested in politics, then by 2011 there were only 39% of such people. In the group of respondents with

higher education only 43% said they were interested, which made up a 22 percentage point decrease from the number in the survey of 1996. In Poland, 15 years later the situation with respondents' interest in politics remained practically the same. In most groups fewer respondents were interested in politics than not interested. Only in the group of respondents with higher education, 55% were interested while 45% were not. In 2011, in Romania, there was not a single group of respondents in which more people would say they were interested in politics than not interested.

What do you think about having a democratic political system?

In 2011, in Belarus, an overwhelming majority of respondents (from 84% to 89% across the age and education level groups) considered having a democratic political system a good form of governing the country. In Poland, in 2012, the answer option 'good' to the question about having a democratic political system of governing the country won by a landslide over the option 'bad' across all the groups as well. In the group of respondents with higher education, for example, the difference in the number of people who chose 'good' vs. 'bad' made up 86 percentage points (93% vs. 7%). In Romania, too, a great majority of respondents across all the groups said it was good to have a democratic political system to govern the country (from 81% to 90%).

How proud are you to be Belarusian (Polish, Romanian)?

Just like 15 years ago, in Belarus, most respondents in every group chose the answer 'proud' over 'not proud'. The difference in all the groups made up 50 percentage points and more in favor of the 'proud' respondents. In Poland, in every group a whopping majority of respondents said they were proud to be Poles. Across all the

groups the number of those who were proud was over 90%. In the group of respondents aged 50 and over, for example, this number reached 98%. In 2012, most Romanians, too, were still proud of their national identity, regardless of their age or level of education.

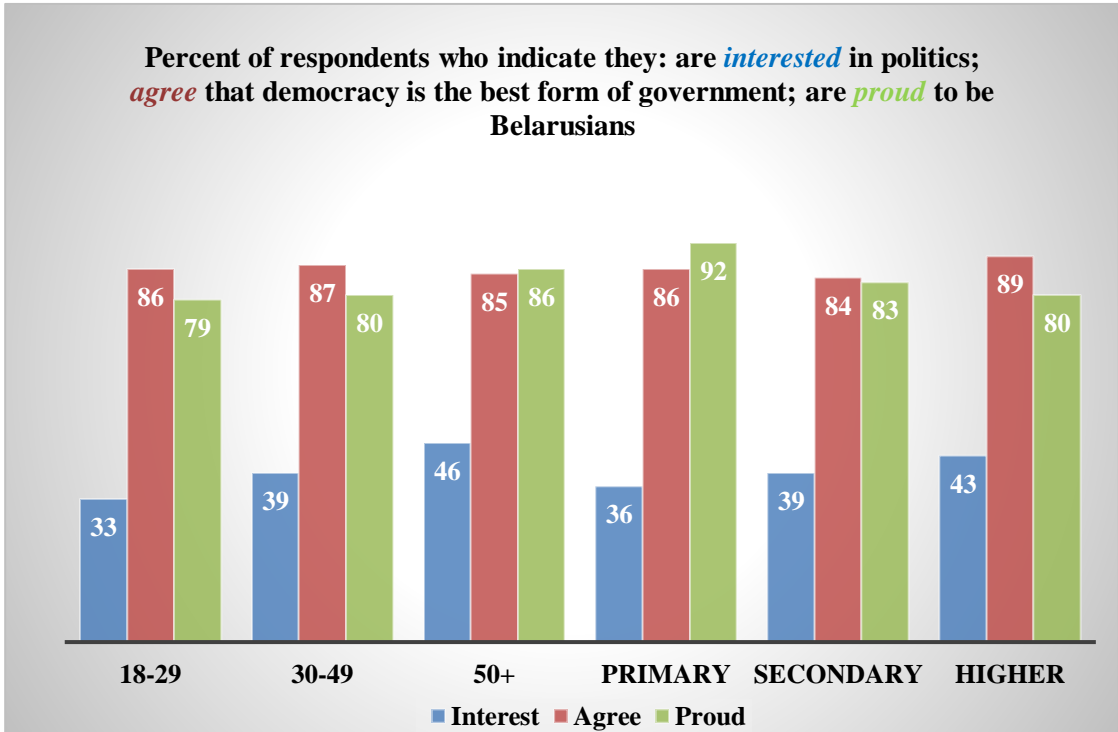


Figure 31: Belarus: attitudes toward democracy by age and education (%), 2011
 Source: WVS data, 2011

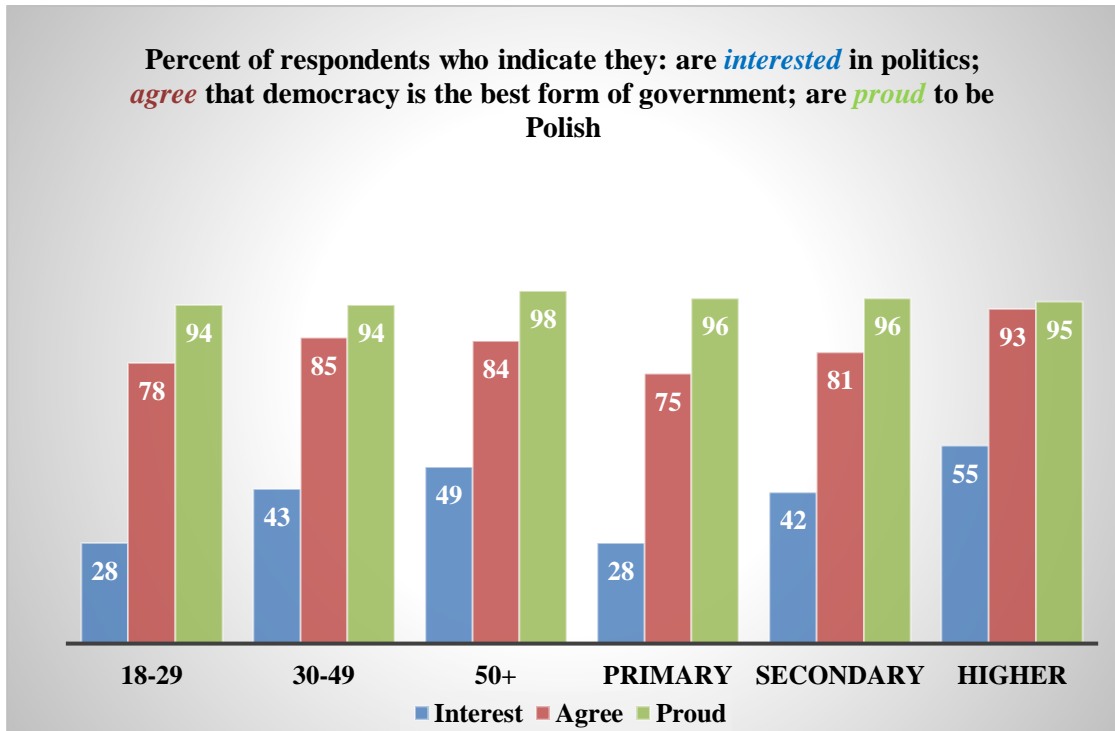


Figure 32: Poland: attitudes toward democracy by age and education (%), 2012
Source: WVS data, 2012

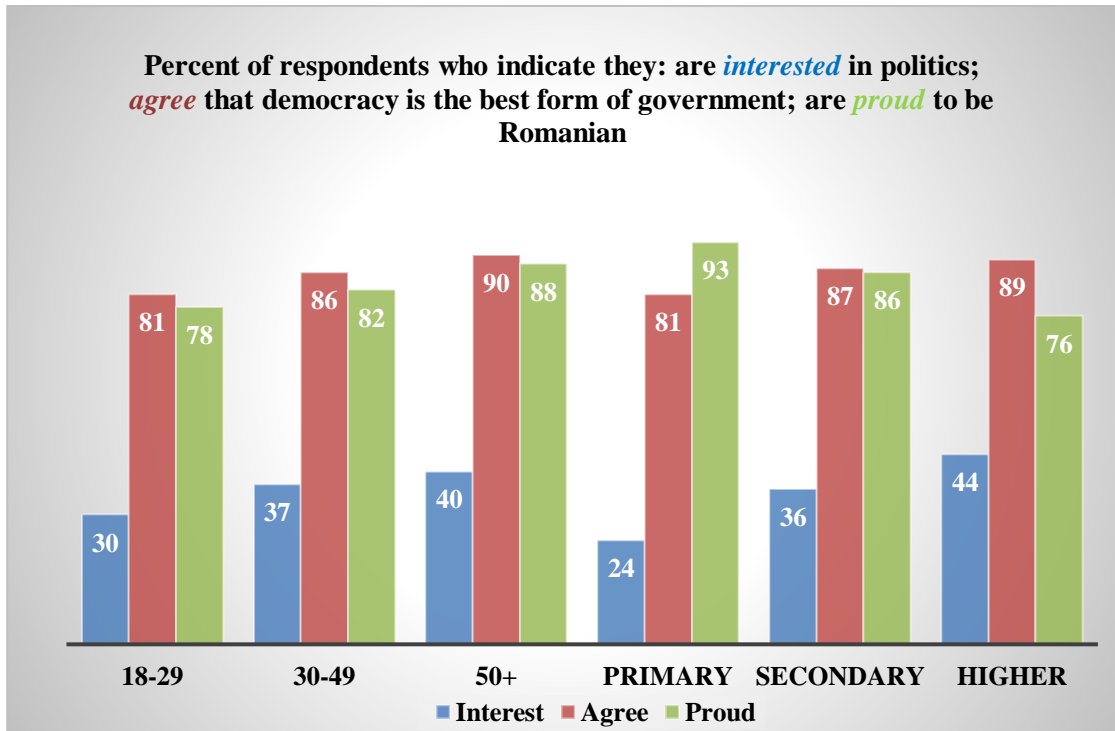


Figure 33: Romania: attitudes toward democracy by age and education (%), 2012
Source: WVS data, 2012

How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically? On this scale where 1 means it is 'not at all important' and 10 means 'absolutely important' what position would you choose?

In Belarus, across all the age groups a plurality of respondents chose the answer option 'absolutely important' when answering the question about how important it was for them to live in a democratically governed country. An overwhelming majority of Poles in every age group also stated it was 'absolutely important' for them to live in a country that was governed democratically. In Romania, too, the answer option

‘absolutely important’ to the question about the importance of living in a democratically governed country won by a landslide in all the age groups without exception.

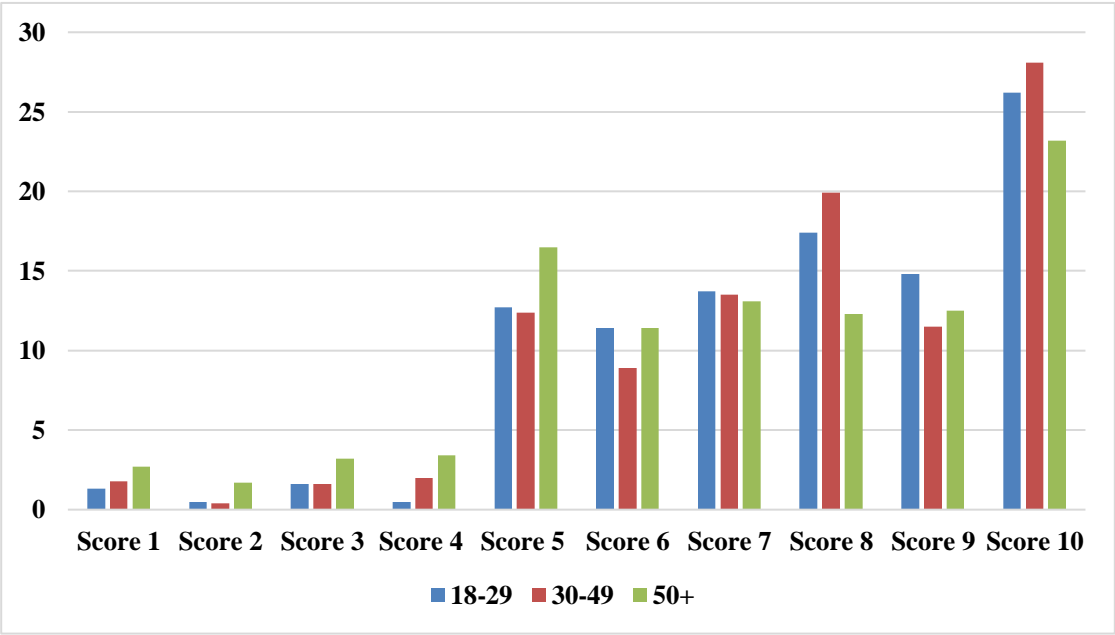


Figure 34: Importance of democracy depending on age (Belarus, %)
Source: Analysis of WVS data, 2011

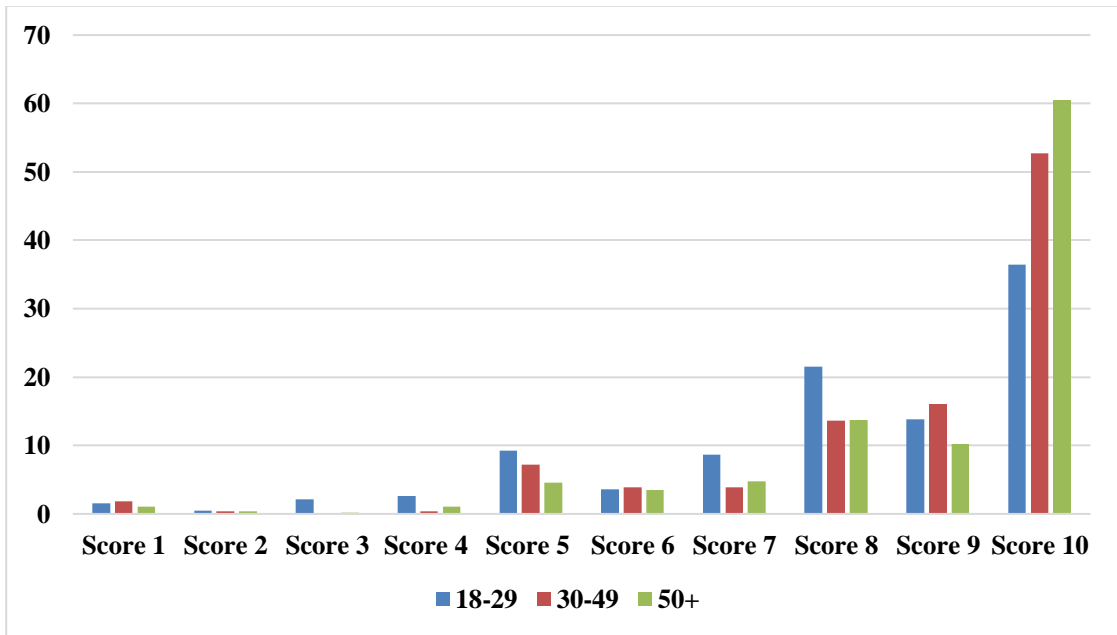


Figure 35: Importance of democracy depending on age (Poland, %)
 Source: Analysis of WVS data, 2012

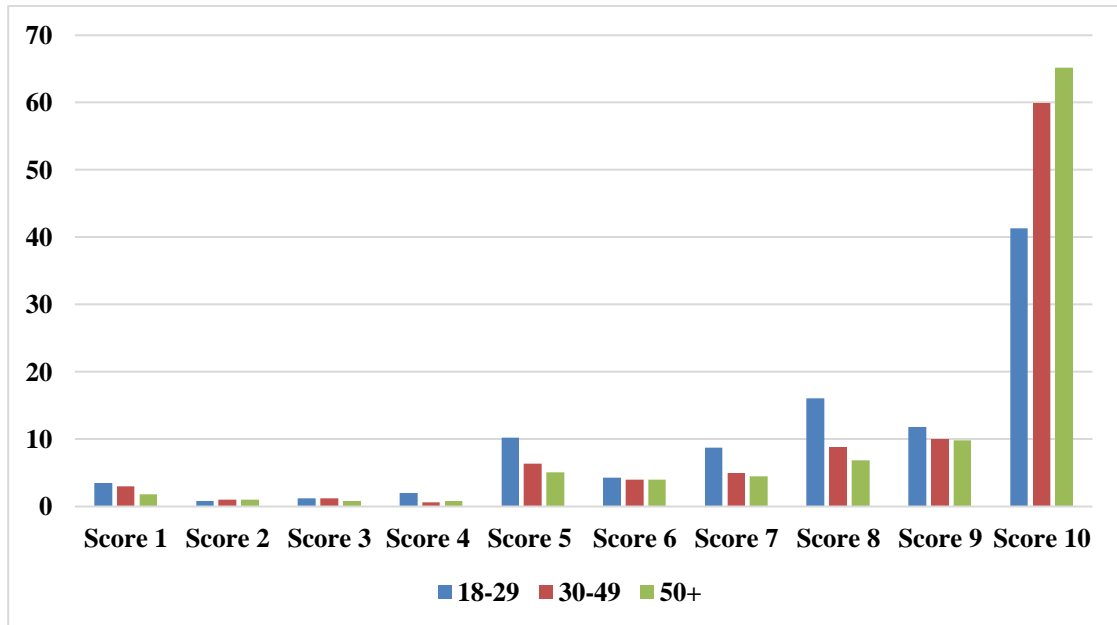


Figure 36: Importance of democracy depending on age (Romania, %)
 Source: Analysis of WVS data, 2012

And how democratically is this country being governed today? Again using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that it is ‘not at all democratic’ and 10 means that it is ‘completely democratic,’ what position would you choose?

Answering the question about how democratically the country was being governed most Belarusians across all the age groups chose 5 on the scale from 1 to 10, which was in the middle of the spectrum between ‘not at all democratic’ and ‘completely democratic’. The answers show that with respect to governing the country, a plurality of Belarusians did not consider that it was governed undemocratically. At the same time, the choice in the very middle of the spectrum left a lot of room for improvement. When respondents in Poland were asked how democratically their country was being

governed, most Poles assessed the extent of democratization as either 5, 7, or 8. Although the Romanians considered it absolutely important to live in a country governed democratically, in 2012 the best assessment of how democratically it was actually governed was 5 on the scale from 1 to 10 in the age group of those between 30 and 49 years of age. On the other hand, the answer ‘not at all democratic’ was chosen by a plurality of respondents aged 50 and above.

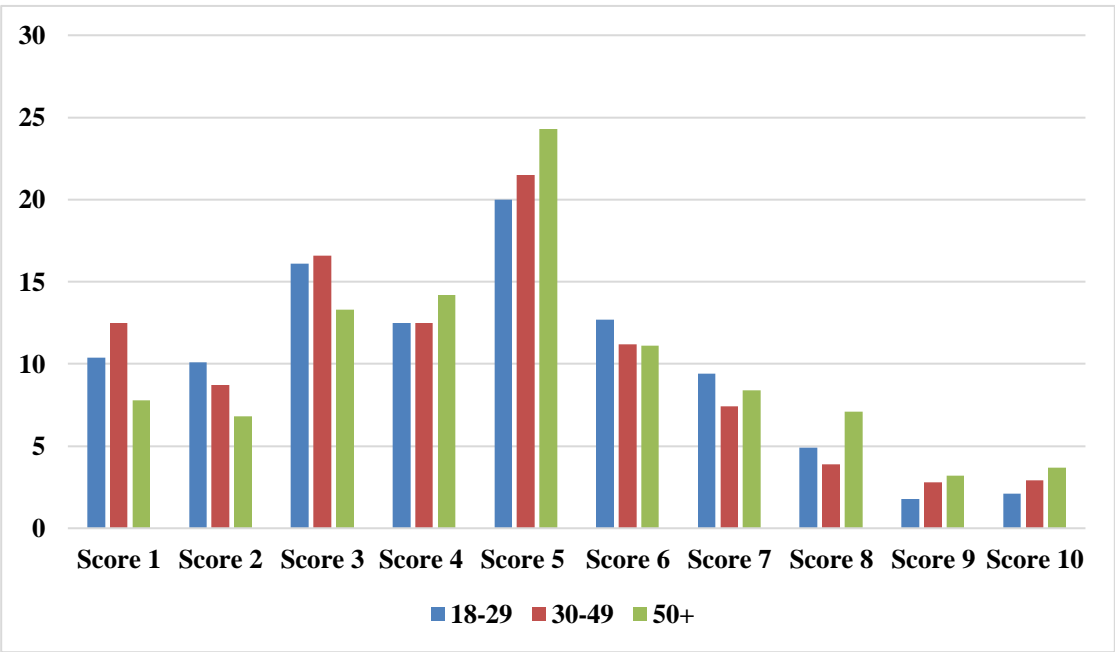


Figure 37: How democratically the country is governed depending on age (Belarus, %)
 Source: Analysis of WVS data, 2011

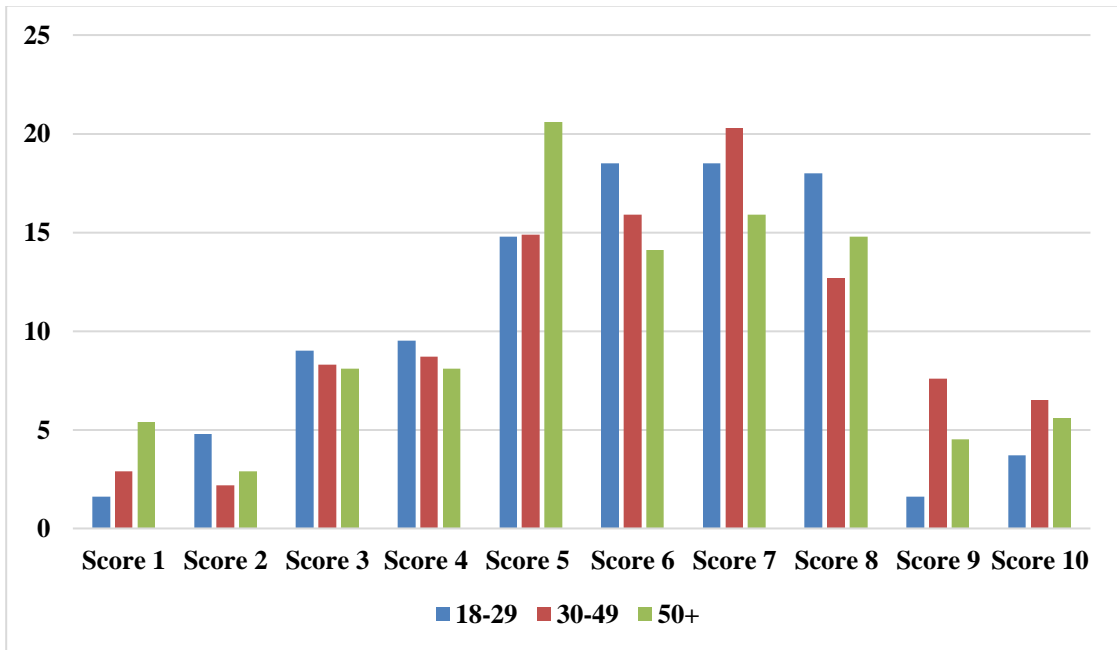


Figure 38: How democratically the country is governed depending on age (Poland, %)
 Source: Analysis of WVS data, 2012

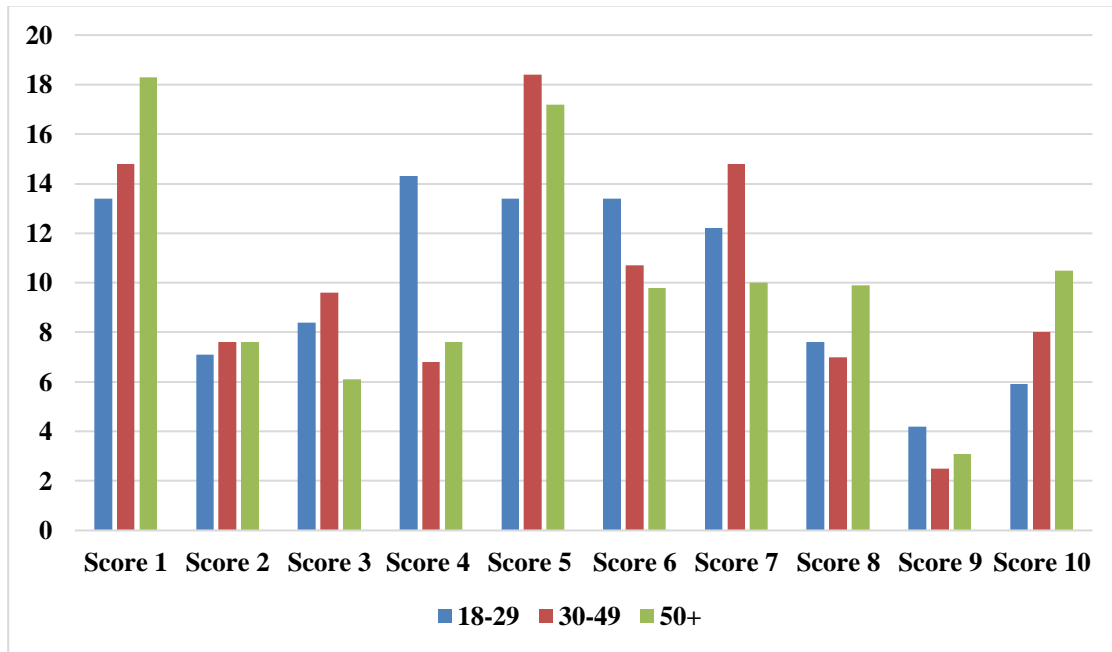


Figure 39: How democratically the country is governed depending on age (Romania, %)
 Source: Analysis of WVS data, 2012

6.8 Conclusion

Between 1996 and 1998 Belarus was the country whose citizens were more interested in politics than those in Poland and Romania. Fifteen years later in all the three countries the situation was the same: more people were not interested in politics than interested. When asked what they thought about democracy as a form of government and political system, overwhelming majorities of respondents in the three countries agreed that democracy was the best form of government and that having a democratic political system was good. Support for democracy was great in the 90s as well as in 2011 and 2012. Also, for most respondents in Belarus, Poland, and Romania

it was absolutely important to live in a democratically governed country. However, the extent to which a country was governed democratically from respondents' point of view proved to be the highest in Poland followed by Belarus. Many Romanians, on the contrary, believed that their country was not at all governed democratically, though the Romanians were the most ardent supporters of the importance of living in a democratically governed country. Although respondents in all the three countries were proud of their national identity in the 90s and 15 years later, on the scale from 1 to 3 the Poles proved to be the most proud nation followed by the Romanians, and rounded out by the Belarusians.

6.9 Democracy Score

Democracy score measures progress and setback for democratization in different countries in the world. It is the average of ratings on seven indicators: national democratic governance, electoral process, civil society, independent media, local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence, and corruption (Schenkkan, 2018, p. 22). Freedom House bases its ratings on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories that are tracked in a given year (Kazakevich, 2018). In the figure below, however, 1 equals the lowest and 7 equals the highest level of democratic progress to make them consistent with the other figures were larger scores represent better outcomes.

Economic and social indicators cited above demonstrate that all the three countries had a potential for successful democratization. The political indicators, on the other hand, showed that unlike the Polish and Romanian citizens, the Belarusians did not perceive their political system as being effective and legitimate, and capable of

providing the necessary conditions for good governance. The graph below presents the democracy scores for the three countries between 1999 and 2017. It is indicative of the idea that economic development per se does not produce democracy, and that other factors need to be in place for a country to democratize.

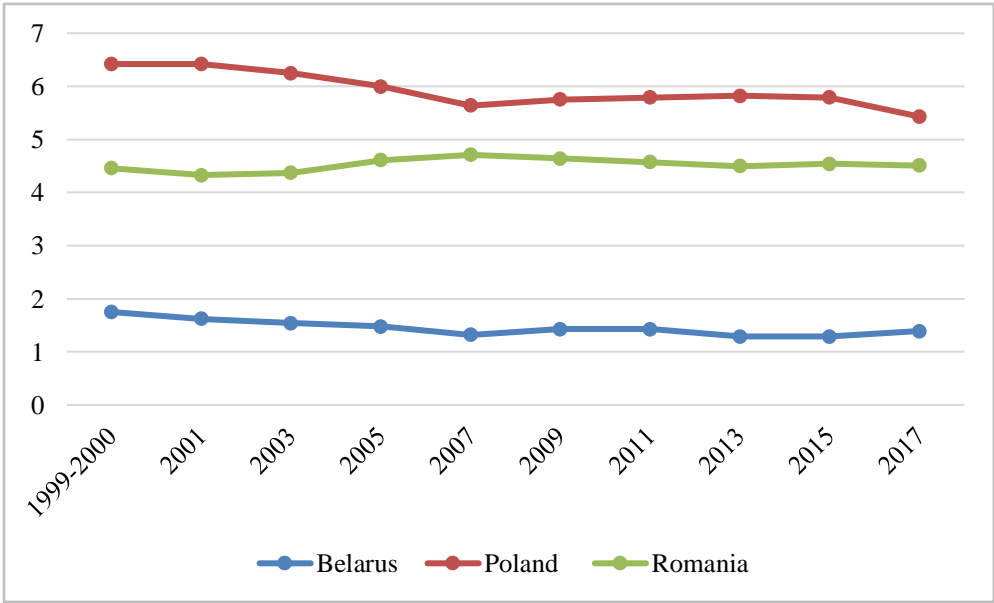


Figure 40: Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores
 Source: Nations in Transit by Freedom House Reports (Reports sources: the World Bank, World Bank Indicators 2010; World Development Indicators).

6.10 Conclusion

In terms of economic development, Belarus ranked third in comparison to Poland and Romania over the time span between 1990 and 2016. This, however, did not mean that the overall trend in its economic development was downward. With respect

to some social indicators Belarus has been doing even better than either Poland or Romania. Respondents in all the three countries expressed a lot of support for democracy, and the importance of living in a democratically governed country. Their perceptions of how democratically their countries were actually governed varied greatly, with many Romanians, for instance, believing that their country was governed not at all democratically. Despite the fact that the Belarusians mostly estimated the degree to what their country was democratically governed as 5 on the scale from 1 to 10, Belarus failed with respect to most of the political indicators. Although many respondents chose 5 when answering the question about how democratically Belarus was governed, the Belarusian society in general did not perceive its political system as being capable of providing the conditions for good governance.

Economic development might be conducive to democracy (Burkhart & Lewis-Beck, 1994, p. 907). Modern economic development is also linked with various other changes such as urbanization, industrialization, secularization, and mass formal education to name just a few (Inglehart, 1997, p. 70). All these changes, if to a different extent, can be found in all the three countries under analysis. With respect to some of the changes, like urbanization, or mass formal education, or secularization, Belarus is ahead of Poland as well as Romania. Nevertheless, Poland is a consolidated democracy, Romania is heading there, but Belarus having gone full circle turned into a consolidated authoritarian regime. Out of the three countries Belarus seems to be a proof of the statement that ‘economic development is about as likely to take place in democratic as in authoritarian regimes’ (Inglehart, 1997, p. 160).

If democratization is not a necessary consequence of economic development, it seems important to consider the role of other factors in the post-communist transition

of Belarus, Poland, and Romania to understand the differences among them. Such factors are their pre-communist histories, religion, nationhood (or its absence), and the mode of the countries' transition after the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Another factor might be the presence or absence of civil society that could have been conducive to a successful transition or could have been a collateral factor that developed along the way due to other reasons.

Chapter 7

ANALYSIS: “ASSENT” AND “CONSENT” TO DEMOCRACY IN POLAND, ROMANIA, AND BELARUS AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE COMMUNIST REGIMES IN 1989-1991 AND UNTIL 2017

7.1 Introduction

Between 1987 and 1991 most of the countries that began their transition to democracy had per capita income ranging from \$1,000 to \$6,000, which placed them in the upper middle income group (Inglehart, 1997, p. 160). By 1992, in the majority of these countries the governments assumed power by means of free elections (Ibid.). According to TheGlobalEconomy.com, in 1990, per capita income in Belarus was \$8,354, in Poland – \$10,277, and in Romania – \$11,480. Following Inglehart’s definition, the per capita income in the three countries at that time corresponded to the ones of the upper middle income group. By 2016, the per capita income in Belarus, Poland, and Romania was \$16,752, \$26,036, and \$21,615 respectively (TheGlobalEconomy.com).

All the three countries had to deal with hyperinflation at the beginning of their transition periods (Bogetić & Mladenović, 2006; Kolodko, 1991; Tugui, 2000). However, Belarus struggled with high inflation longer than the other two, and experienced ongoing economic crises over the course of most of its independence years. Although Belarus had the lowest household consumption as percent of GDP among the three countries, it also had the lowest unemployment rate throughout the years of observation. The overall index of Economic Freedom was improving in the countries

under analysis, as well as the environment for doing business. Belarus, on the other hand, was lagging behind Poland and Romania with respect to being an attractive destination for foreign direct investment.

As for the social indicators, most of them were improving in the three countries, with the only exception of the number of births per 1,000 population per year. Low crude births rates are, on the other hand, characteristic of many countries around the world, especially those that are well-developed economically. Belarus having been behind Romania and Poland with respect to most economic indicators, turned out to be the leader regarding many social indicators. It had the highest birth rate, spent more on education as percent of GDP, had the highest rates of tertiary school enrollment, the highest percent of non-believers/atheists, and urban population. Since mass formal education, secularization, and urbanization are indicators of modernization linked with economic development, and economic development is believed to be conducive to democracy promotion and its sustainability, it would be logical to expect that Belarus, Poland, and Romania would find themselves among the countries developing in the direction of democratization.

Also, overwhelming majorities of respondents in the three countries proved to be supportive of democracy as a form of government and stated it was absolutely important for them to live in a democratically governed country. At the same time, if one considers respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness and legitimacy of their respective political systems, it becomes clear that Belarus is not only trailing behind Poland and Romania, but also that the values for most of its political indicators are found close to the very bottom of the spectrum. In addition, extremely low democracy scores

for Belarus throughout the years of observation show that in Belarus democracy has been experiencing setbacks rather than any progress.

Thus, if economic development is instrumental in promoting democracy and contributes to its sustainability, and if it engenders changes in the economic structures of societies that eventually give rise to shifts in values and attitudes also directed at democracy, then all the three countries stood a good chance of their post-communist transition unwinding towards democratization with subsequent entrenchment and consolidation of democracy. With respect to Poland and Romania, the assertion that economic development may facilitate democracy seems to be correct. However, democracy is not automatically produced simply because countries become wealthier. Certain cultural and social changes are also required for the democratization process to be successful, since the emergence and survival of democracy depends on society's social structure as well as on its political culture.

From this perspective, Belarus demonstrates that economic development does not always entail cultural and social changes that are necessary for successful transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime with subsequent consolidation of democracy. Belarus might be an example of a country that proves that the sequence 'economic growth – democracy' is not always the case. It is obvious that in spite of 'assent' for democracy, no real 'consent' for this form of government and political system took roots in the Belarusian society. As it has been mentioned, at the moment Belarus is considered to be a consolidated authoritarian regime in contrast to Poland's consolidated and Romania's semi-consolidated democracies. There are even voices supporting the idea that the process currently developing in Belarus is, in fact, neo-

totalitarianism since the country has never actually made any democratic transition at all.

If economic development per se is not necessarily a promise for a country's democratization, then what factors may increase the likelihood of the required cultural and social changes necessary to democratize a certain society? An answer to the question might be found in pre-communist histories of Eastern European countries. The processes that were underway at that time, from my point of view, influenced the development of the countries' communist regimes, the modes of transition from the regimes, and subsequent success (or its absence) in their post-communist periods. The example of the three countries under analysis shows that different modes of transition, violent as well as negotiated, may lead to similar outcomes, i.e. ensuing democratization; whereas a peaceful transition may end up in consolidation of authoritarianism. Some events in the countries' pre-communist histories also might have either helped create possibilities for civil society emergence and development after the collapse of communism, or posed impediments to its very existence. I suggest that a lot depended on the strength of the countries' nationhood and on their citizens' perception of themselves as belonging to the Western European civilization (or on the absence of such perception). Those who felt a strong connection to Europe, like Poland and Romania, made every possible effort 'to return' to where they felt they belonged. Alternatively, the majority of the Belarusian citizens did not ever consider themselves part of Western Europe. I argue that they never managed to become either an ethnic or a civic nation, and the fact might have predestined Belarus' inability and even unwillingness to democratize.

7.2 Poland: Transition by Pact

Poland is the only country among the three analyzed in this work that has succeeded in consolidating democracy. This means that all the democratic institutions are firmly established in Poland, democracy as a value is deeply entrenched in the culture of the Polish society, and that society at large supports this form of government over any other. The concept also implies that a reverse trend, i.e. going back to authoritarianism, is not possible. According to almost all the indicators considered, whether economic, social, or political, Poland was doing the best in comparison to Belarus and Romania within all the years of observation.

Between 1990 and 2016, Poland's economic indicators were invariably getting better: the GDP per capita and household consumption were increasing, and economic freedom improving. Inflation, as well as unemployment rate, was abating, while the environment for doing business was upswinging. With respect to foreign direct investment, the country has been the most attractive destination in Eastern Europe for years. As far as social indicators are concerned, Poland was doing quite well too, having, for instance, the highest life expectancy among the three countries, the lowest death rate, and a relatively high ratio of tertiary school enrollment. When it comes to political indicators, Poland has been an indisputable leader among the three countries over the whole period of observation. In addition, an overwhelming majority of Poles agreed that democracy was the best form of government in 1997 as well as in 2012, and were unquestionable leaders with respect to taking pride in their national belonging in both surveys. Finally, between 1999 and 2017, Poland's democracy score was not only the highest among the three countries, but also very close to the highest scores on the Democracy Score scale. Thus, it comes as no surprise that throughout the transition

period, Poland has been considered ‘the prodigy ... of the EU-accession class’ (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2005, p. 214).

Although Poland’s post-communist development trajectory is in many respects different from the ones of Belarus and Romania, the three countries share some similar historical experiences. Those include their being part of various large empires, their coming to state and nation building and consequently to democracy relatively late, and a common heritage of communist rule (Berglund et al., 2013, p. 15). In the period between the two World Wars, Poland also greatly resembled Romania. It was an old nation, but a new state that reemerged at the beginning of the 20th century in the aftermath of the turmoil in Europe, when large empires collapsed, and, in doing so, gave their constituent parts a new chance for establishing independent statehood. After the disintegration of the Russian empire, Belarusians, on the contrary, did not share Poles’ and Romanians’ sentiment for building a nation-state. Also, just like Romanians, Poles blamed the foreign rule for their social and economic backwardness at the time. Just like Romanians, they believed that if all the Polish lands could be brought together in one state, the fact would solve their problems; and very soon after it happened they had to admit that instead of solving problems, independence created new ones. After World War I, Poland, similar to Romania and Belarus, underwent only partial modernization, and just like them endured Soviet domination after World War II. Before the Second World War, all three countries were largely agrarian societies, whose peasants were mostly illiterate. In addition, in Poland and Romania the unresolved ethnic minorities’ issues added to the existing sets of already inextricable problems.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Poland and Romania, like other Eastern European countries, found themselves at the periphery of Western European civilization

and had to make a choice between the West and the East, as well as decide what mode of development they would adhere to: modernization or traditionalism. Belarus, on the contrary, never devoted much attention to the question of choice between the two options: West/modernization and East/traditionalism. After the collapse of communist regimes in 1989-1991, the three countries commenced the process of democratization, which in Belarus was curtailed already after 1994. Finally, when the process of democratization began in the early 1990s, Poland and Romania started to gravitate towards the West, while Belarus – towards the East, i.e. Russia.

What makes Poland different, however, is her unique history between 1386 and 1795. Personal at first (through the marriage of Jogaila and Jadwiga), and then federal union of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania entailed the formation of a civic nation in Europe, a one-of-a-kind experience at the time. Although not all the claims can be reconciled with historical facts, the Commonwealth can be regarded as the ‘cradle of democracy’ in early modern Europe, as well as of ‘civic patriotism, and exceptional tolerance’ (Plochy, 2006, p. 167). Poles were able to create not only a civic nation, but also an ethnic one. If in the Commonwealth being a Pole meant to be a citizen, share the values of the Commonwealth, and belong to the Western European civilization, then later, after Poland was partitioned by the three empires, it began to mean speaking the same language and being part of the same ethnic group. The sense of common identity and ethnic pride helped keep Polish nationhood alive during the years of partition and the calamities of the world wars.

Another source of pride for the Poles as well as a nation consolidating factor was undoubtedly the Catholic Church. If in the Soviet Union the Communist government was quite successful in suppressing the Orthodox Church, then communist

Poland remained as religious as it was possible. The relative autonomy of the Catholic Church under the Polish Communist regime created conditions for pluralism (albeit limited), which in its turn might have opened the way to the emergence of independent trade unions. The most remarkable of all of them was Solidarity, the first independent trade union in all of Eastern Europe whose legitimacy was recognized by a communist government. Solidarity managed to win the trust of the Polish citizens and consequently received considerable support from the public as a serious negotiating party during the roundtable talks between the trade union and Poland's ruling communist elite.

However, in order to mobilize the society for the first democratic election and to secure a successful outcome, Solidarity needed support of the Catholic Church. Citizens' Committees that were formed on the basis of local parishes played a significant role in building the opposition's organizational infrastructure, helped mobilize voters, and influenced their opinion (Glenn, 2001, pp. 127-129). Therefore, the importance of local parishes in Solidarity's, and by extension civil society's success cannot be overstated. If in Romania the opposition was blamed for playing little, if any, role in Ceaușescu's downfall and in resistance before that, in Poland Solidarity enjoyed great societal support precisely due to its role in the opposition and the impact it exerted on the process of transition.

Thus, by the time Poland embarked on its democratization course, it had already had experience in democracy. First, it was within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, even though it was confined to the noble estate only. Second, it had five years of parliamentary democracy under the Piłsudski government. The strong position of the Catholic Church in this communist state also exerted its undeniable impact on the country's political culture creating opportunities for pluralism and hence

conditions for negotiations in case of conflicts. Poland was the country where transition from authoritarianism was peaceful and happened by means of a pact, i.e. negotiations between the ruling elite and a democratic opposition strengthened by civil society. In the Soviet bloc, Poland was one of the very few countries that actually possessed quite autonomous civil society entities. That is why, among the three countries under analysis, Poland is a true example of a ‘vibrant’ civil society being one of the prerequisites for a country’s successful transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Although currently it is believed that precisely Poland’s transition by pact delayed its full transition to democracy, the historic contribution it made in the breaking-down of Communism in Eastern Europe was unprecedented (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 267).

Poland’s national consciousness and its historical memories of being a European nation might have increased the likelihood of cultural and social changes needed to democratize the Polish society. Poland’s strong nationhood is rooted in its ancient history when, in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Polishness equaled Europe. Promoting what would later become Western European democratic values, the Polish state was exactly the opposite of what connoted the idea of Western Europe between the 15th and 19th centuries (Chodakiewicz, 2012, p. 52). At that time, the beliefs advanced and supported by Western European states encompassed, for example, absolute monarchy and perpetual war conflicts. They also included religious intolerance and persistent civil contentions (Ibid.).

Later the feeling of belonging to the same ethnic group and culture, as well as the shared language and religion, helped Poles who were living in three different states after the partitions, to preserve their nationhood. Strong national consciousness facilitated the restoration of the Polish state once the nation got this chance after World

War I. After the collapse of the Communist regime, the concept of ‘returning to Europe’ turned out to be a very strong motivating factor for the Polish nation. It helped Poles to make an extraordinary effort in establishing a free market economy and switching to liberal democracy as a form of government within a relatively short period of time.

Ten years into the process of transition, Poland managed to consolidate democracy, thus giving her people a chance to experience life in a stable democratic state, and, as a consequence, improve their levels of subjective well-being and interpersonal trust. High levels of interpersonal trust in their turn enabled people to engage in activities for the sake of common good. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the number of NGOs in Poland reached almost a hundred thousand by 2016. Obviously, civil society in Poland encounters various problems in its day-to-day functioning. The specific issues that the Polish civil society has to confront are, however, beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, if the current regime in Poland is defined as consolidated democracy, it means that its civil society is independent and strong, and can sustain itself. It also implies that the state (bureaucracy) cannot impose undue pressure on civil society’s activities, and that the right of assembly and association is strongly protected (Freedom House, 2018).

Since Poland has had a consolidated democracy for almost twenty years, it is an apparent sign of consent for this form of government in the Polish society. It also testifies to the fact that the Polish political society enjoys enough autonomy to be able to craft agreements with respect to the institutions that generate public policy (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 269). In addition, it means that, since Poland is a consolidated democracy, its public supports the said institutions because people in general believe in the preeminence of the democratic form of government over any other alternative. The

general public and key actors, however, can only agree that democratic institutions are better for their society than anything else, if the public at large has consented to democracy. Poland is thus an example of a country where support for democracy has become part of culture, and where democracy itself has evolved ‘into something stable and mass based’ (Inglehart, 1990, p. 23).

7.3 Romania: Transition by Violence

Romanian economic and social indicators have also been improving over the years of observation. Just like in Poland and Belarus, its GDP per capita was growing, whereas inflation and unemployment rates were decreasing. Romania was also getting freer economically, and the environment for doing business in the country was improving too. The household consumption, however, used to be much higher than the acceptable 60% of a country’s GDP. It reached almost 77% in 1998 following a sudden increase in inflation the year before. The reason for that might have been as follows: due to the high rate of inflation, Romanians had to spend most of their disposable income on goods and services and were unable to save much. After the peak of 1998 though, Romania’s final consumption was generally decreasing, getting closer to the 60% mark by 2008. Romania mostly ranked second among the three countries with respect to the amount of foreign direct investment (FDI) in billions of US dollars, but for a number of years it was the leader regarding the share of its GDP made up by FDI.

As for social indicators, Romania was mostly trailing behind Poland and Belarus against health spending as percent of GDP, public spending on education as percent of GDP, and tertiary school enrollment. It also had the lowest percent of urban population and proved to be the most religious country among the three: only 6.5% of respondents said they were either non-believers or atheists, or did not specify their belonging to a

religious denomination, as compared to 10.8% of such respondents in Poland, and 41.1% in Belarus.

In 1998, Romanians, just like Poles, were less interested in politics than Belarusians. However, a great majority of respondents (from 85% to 90%) across all age and education groups agreed that democracy was the best form of government. Romanians were also very proud of their national belonging: from 78% to 88% in 1998, and from 76% to 93% in 2012. By 2012, they had lost even more interest in politics, but overwhelming majorities (between 81% and 90%) supported the democratic form of government over any other alternative. Expressing their opinions about how important democracy was for them, a great majority of respondents chose 10 on the scale from 1 to 10 where ten meant the greatest importance. However, when asked about how democratically Romania was actually governed, respondents' answers turned out to be quite diverse with a large number of them choosing 1 on the scale from 1 to 10.

Such variance in answers to the question about how democratically the country was governed came as no surprise since, with respect to political indicators, Romania has been struggling quite a bit. At the same time, the overall trend in Romania has been directed towards progress and improvement of governance. Taking into account the severity of Ceaușescu's totalitarian/sultanistic regime, when it fell, it seemed unlikely that Romania possessed much potential for successful democratization. Its economy was gasping with exertion, its political field was completely mopped out, providing no opportunity for a strong opposition political figure or a movement to emerge; its civil society was virtually non-existent. Nevertheless, within less than two decades after the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime, the country managed to take a quantum leap to the point where it not only established a market economy, but also created stable institutions

that guaranteed democratic governance and human rights, as well as the rule of law and protection of minorities. By virtue of achieving all those goals, Romania eventually cleared the way for itself to the European Union. In general, the incentive of EU membership is believed to be a key factor in Romania's post-communist success in spite of its being 'the foot-dragger of the EU accession class' (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2005, pp. 234, 214).

Romania began its transition after it had suffered an unprecedentedly severe form of communist rule, having no civil society to speak of, and with a low level of economic development. Over the course of the 20th century, just like other neighboring countries, Romania had to confront numerous obstacles. Those included comparatively late and limited modernization, marginalized economy, and a society that was mostly agrarian and rural; the absence of stable democratic politics, and a significant minority population that Romania acquired after Transylvania had been incorporated into the Romanian state (Crowther & Suci, 2013, p. 370). Still earlier, Romania used to live for centuries under foreign occupation, and even when it did acquire autonomy, it was only partial for a long time. It tended to blame its relative economic underdevelopment on its position as 'the gate of Europe' defending Western Europeans from 'the infidel Turks' (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2005, p. 216). In short, Romania might have been the least prepared country among other Eastern European states to set in motion the process of democratization.

One of the reasons for Romania's lack of preparedness to embark on the process of transition from authoritarianism to democracy was the weakness of its organized opposition. Unlike Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia, Romania under Ceaușescu could not possibly have any civil society that would be active before the beginning of

transition. Unlike the Catholic Church in Poland that possessed international power and significant autonomy within the country, the Orthodox Church in Romania had neither a transnational scope nor any internal independence (Linz & Stepan, 1996, pp. 260, 351). So the Church could not become an organizing force for the Romanian opposition either. Also, in the country, where it was required to register typewriters with the police, and having an unreported conversation with a foreigner could easily entail a criminal charge, promotion of any kind of civic education and a ‘vibrant civil society’ was out of question (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 351; Carothers, 1999, p. 81). Since civil society was literally non-existent in Romania on the eve of the Communist regime’s collapse in the country, the only way Ceaușescu could be brought down was by violence. In spite of the dismal starting point, after the Revolution of 1989, Romania kept advancing towards democracy if slowly and painfully, but surely. By the time the country became an EU member, it had managed to comply with the Copenhagen criteria, which, among other things, required the achievement of stability of institutions that would guarantee democracy. An active civil society was one of those.

It seems, however, that the reasons for Romania’s astonishing success in its post-communist development should be looked for not only in the period of transition to democracy, but also in the country’s pre-communist history. In this respect, Romania presents a very unique case. From the beginning of their history, Romanians were part of the Eastern Orthodox civilization. Simultaneously, most Romanians, before Romania came into existence as an independent state, lived under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, which could not but influence their worldview. At the same time, the Orthodox Romanians were a Latin Island in the Slavic Sea. Although there is no commonly accepted agreement on the origin of the Romanian nation, the idea that Romanians were

either direct descendants, or descendants with some indigenous alloy, of the Roman settlers made Romanian intellectuals of the previous centuries promote the idea of the nation's belonging to the Western European civilization.

Another important characteristic of Romanians is their strong nationhood that existed long before all three principalities were united into one state. The idea of unification most probably would have never emerged, hadn't Romanians in Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania identified with one nation. And that was in spite of the fact that, in line with Huntington, the principalities found themselves for centuries under the influence of different civilizations – Western Christianity (the Habsburgs), Orthodox Christianity (the Russian Empire), and Islam (the Ottoman Empire). The fact makes Romania resemble Poland, when the Polish nation torn among different powers (Habsburg Austria, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Russian Empire) by means of partitions, managed to preserve its nationhood despite the non-existence of the Polish state for more than a hundred years.

Long before Romanian principalities united into a single state, intellectuals who had come to appreciate Western ideas and examples began to ponder the concept of the Romanian nation. In Moldavia and Wallachia the search for the Romanians' identity and origin began at the end of the 18th century. In Transylvania too, the sense of community based on ethnicity rather than on social or religious belonging was arising. The Romanian people were striving for national independence due to a strong sense of distinctiveness. That combined their Orthodox cultural heritage and the belief in Roman pedigree of the Romanians. The latter even let some writers consider Roman lineage 'a reason to re-Europeanize the Romanians' (Hitchins, 2014, p. 70).

In short, Romanians wanted to take an equal place among the European nations since they strongly believed in their belonging to Europe. One can even argue that the idea of belonging to Europe lay at the heart of Romanian ethnic consciousness (Hitchins, 2014, p. 71). Romanian intellectuals in the 18th and 19th centuries regarded Western Europe as an example to follow, and therefore considered reinstating connections with it as their major goal. In the 21st century, too, the Romanians' perception of themselves as a nation belonging to the Western European civilization proved to be the factor that played a significant role in their successful post-communist transition to democracy and sustainability of the democratic choice over time.

To summarize, although economic development may not ultimately entail the establishment of a stable democracy, and although the economic development per se may or may not have facilitated the emergence of democratic institutions and a democratic political culture in Romania, the country was obviously able to move from the authoritarian, or more precisely totalitarian, regime to a democratic one. The post-communist history of Romania demonstrated that the country had the potential for the necessary cultural and social changes which, according to Inglehart (1997), were required in order for the Romanian society to democratize (p. 161). The potential was likely to be found in the strong national consciousness of the Romanians and their perception of themselves as a Western European nation that even the forty years of the Communist regime were unable to destroy. The desire 'to return to Europe' was apparently strong enough for the Romanians to make every possible effort to comply with the criteria necessary for the EU accession.

Finally, Romania is an example of a country that proves that the existence of an active, or 'vibrant,' civil society is not always a necessary prerequisite for a successful

transition from authoritarianism (totalitarianism in Romania's case) to democracy. Conditions for the emergence and ensuing successful development of civil society may be created along the way when society at large shifts from assent to democracy to consent. Since the idea of a 'return to Europe' was largely supported by the Romanian society, and since Europe represented by the EU required the presence of an independent, active, and powerful civil society before Romania could become its full-fledged member, the Romanian government had to create the environment in which civil society could flourish. This had to happen regardless of whether the Romanian authorities wanted it or not because the Romanian society had made its choice. And that choice, as previously in Romanian history, was to be part of the Western European civilization.

7.4 Belarus: Transition by Surprise

With respect to the most economic indicators enumerated above, Belarus has been unable to keep up with either Romania or Poland between 1991 and 2016. The only exception was the unemployment rate indicator that remained exceptionally low over the period of observation making the unemployment rate in Belarus correspond to full employment over a quarter of a century. Here, however, a caveat should be made. Speaking about Soviet statistics, David Marples (1999) once noted that they were 'notoriously unreliable as an indicator of actual economic conditions' (p. 20). The same can be said about the present-day official Belarusian statistics. On the other hand, even if the official statistics present the reality in a more favorable light, the unemployment level in Belarus has nevertheless been relatively low over the years. Also, even though Belarus mostly ranked third among the three countries regarding the economic indicators, the general trend was still towards progress and growth.

The social indicators are the only group in which Belarus managed to outpoint the other two countries according to some positions. Belarus, for instance, had the highest birth rate, spent more on education as percent of GDP, and had the highest tertiary school enrollment, the largest percent of urban population, and of non-believers. The situation with the political indicators, on the contrary, was quite deplorable. The values for most of them were so low in Belarus so as to indicate that Belarusians had no confidence that their political system could provide the required conditions for good governance.

In 1996, Belarusians, regardless of the age group or level of education, turned out to be more interested in politics than either Poles or Romanians. Also, an overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that democracy was the best form of government and said they were proud to be Belarusians. Fifteen years later, in 2011, Belarusians were not interested in politics so much anymore, but the percentage of those who supported democracy over any other form of government and took pride in their national belonging was still very high and had even slightly increased in comparison with 1996. For the majority of respondents, too, democracy was extremely important scoring 10 on the scale from 1 to 10. At the same time, very few respondents chose 10 when answering the question about how democratically Belarus was governed. Finally, Belarus' proved to be an absolute loser with respect to its democracy score as compared to Poland and Romania. Not only was the score lower than the ones for Poland and Romania between 1999 and 2017, but it was also very close to the bottom of the spectrum on the Democracy Score scale.

How did it happen that Belarus' post-communist development diverged so much from Poland's and Romania's? If one applies Inglehart's theory of modernization/post-

modernization to Belarus, it becomes clear that Belarus actually possessed many of the prerequisites for a successful establishment of democracy. For instance, the Belarusian society had a high level of urbanization and education, but a low degree of income inequality, and no serious religious or ethnic conflicts (Silitski, 2003, p. 37). As is known, however, authoritarian regimes are also able to develop economically since favorable economic conditions help dictators to legitimize their rule and factor into their survival (Diamond, 2008b, p. 90). The authoritarian regime of President Lukashenko was able to create economic stability in the republic, at least for some time, and provide the citizens of Belarus with the important social services such as free universal health care and secondary education, as well as pensions, paid maternity leaves, and other benefits (Rudling, 2008, p. 72). In addition, Lukashenko's government managed to ensure political stability in the country, which was reflected by the fairly high scores of the Political Stability Index (Haerpfer, 2005, p. 163).

In spite of the relative economic and quite real political stability, no conditions existed in the country that would actually give rise to civil society. If after 27 years of independence Belarusian civil society is still at a formative stage, it comes as no surprise that it was unable to undertake any coherent actions that would be conducive to the transformation of the Belarusian political regime in the direction of democratization. Therefore, it seems that neither the social and economic prerequisites for democracy, such as living standards, degree of industrialization and urbanization, and the level of education, nor the action (or inaction) of individuals or civil society as a whole can, on their own, explain why Belarus' post-communist development trajectory differs so much from that of Poland or Romania. The idea that modernization and nationalism are connected seems to provide a better ground for creating a more feasible explanation of

Belarus' difference. The fact that Belarusians have not formed into either an ethnic or a civic nation might have stipulated their reluctance and ultimately inability to democratize.

Even by the beginning of the 20th century Belarus lacked most of the building blocks necessary for nationalism. Those included 'a public sphere, and education system, an industrial base, and a critical mass of nationally conscious intellectuals, as well as a developed system of communication' (Rudling, 2015, p. 306). Another key factor that handicapped the national Belarusian movement before 1917 was the absence of local universities (Wilson, 2011, p. 115). Since the building blocks of nationalism were missing, it was only logical that the idea of an independent national Belarusian state was not supported by the masses in 1918, and the Belarusian People's Republic (BPR) lived just a short life of ten months.

When the Soviet regime took over and converted the BPR into the BSSR, the development of the Belarusian nation was promoted for about a decade between the 1920s and the 1930s. Again, the majority of the population (the peasantry) was reluctant to accept the Belarusian identity artificially imposed on them. Thus, it was a paradox that the Soviet policy of nationalization forcibly implemented in the 1920s, contributed to the recreation (or even creation), reinvention, and establishment of the Belarusian nation. In spite of the coercive character of the policy, the decade between the 1920s and 1930s is dubbed by some researchers as the Golden Age of the Belarusian culture and language, which they did not enjoy ever again.

When Stalin's nationalist policies changed, representatives of the Belarusian elite were largely repressed and eliminated, and the policy of Russification began to be implemented. It turned out to be quite successful, perhaps, due to the fact that it was just

a continuation of what the tsarist regime had been doing before, and the ‘new’ policy was actually nothing new for those who lived in Belarus. There is no way of telling what would have happened if Stalin had not decided to replace the policy of nationalization by the policy of ‘Friendship of the peoples’. The latter promoted the Russian language and culture as the foundation for the unity of the Soviet people in all the Soviet republics. The problem was that the promotion was happening to the detriment of national cultures and languages. Hadn’t the policy been changed, the post-communist history of Belarus might have been completely different.

After World War II, Belarus enjoyed rapid industrialization and overall economic development, which put her among the Soviet republics with the highest standards of living. Also, because the Russian language was so widely spread as a means of communication in all private and public spheres of life, and because the majority of the population never seemed to consider it a problem to identify themselves as Belarusians who spoke Russian as their first language, the inhabitants of the BSSR did not feel any hostility towards the ‘brotherly’ Russian people. In addition, being much better off economically than the population of many other Soviet republics, Belarusians did not have any aspirations to separate themselves from the USSR in order to reach a certain level ‘of normal life available to people in Western Europe’ (Krastev, 2018, p. 50). Their life was already quite ‘normal’ – no inhuman brutality of the Ceaușescu regime in Romania, or economic turmoil in Poland to compare with. Finally, although Belarus, as many other Eastern European states, has always been on the boundary between the Western European and Eastern Orthodox civilizations, its elites and society at large have never found themselves contemplating the choice between the eastern and western modes of development.

To summarize, Belarusians were quite content with their life within the Soviet Union, and unlike the Baltic republics, or Ukraine, or Socialist countries of the Eastern Bloc did not aspire to national independence and 'returning to Europe'. That is why, the day the people of the BSSR woke up to find out that the Soviet Union was no more, and the republic was now an independent state, came as a surprise. On March 17, 1991 an All-Soviet Union referendum was conducted in the USSR. It was the only referendum throughout the history of the country's existence. The only question put to the referendum asked the citizens if they 'considered it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal, sovereign republics, in which the rights and freedoms of people of all nationalities will be fully guaranteed' (Duffy-Toft, 2003, p. 98)? In Belarus, almost 83% of all the referendum participants said 'yes' to the question (Walker, 2003, p. 118). In the country as a whole, 76% of the participating population supported the preservation of the Soviet Union (Ibid., p. 117), the numbers being announced by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on March 21, 1991. Besides conducting the referendum, it was also decided to prepare a new Union Treaty. At first, a renewed Soviet Union was envisioned as a federation (Walker, 2003, p. 105). The Treaty was supposed to be signed on August 20, 1991, but the failed coup against President Gorbachev that took place between August 18 and August 21, 1991 obstructed the signing (Smith, 1993, p. 1). The text of a different draft treaty was published on November 26, 1991. This document provided for a 'Union of Sovereign States,' which this time was to be a confederative state (Walker, 2003, pp. 149-150). The Treaty was scheduled to be signed on December 9, 1991. However, on December 8, 1991 representatives of Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine concluded the Balavezha Accords that 'effectively brought the seventy-four-year history of the USSR

to an end,' and declared the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Ibid., p. 158).

This was contrary to what the majority of the population in Belarus had expressed their support for nine months prior. Therefore, it is possible to say that the people were just handed independence. The work that was obviously being done behind the scenes and led to the signing of the Accords contradicted the will of the republic's population. That is why I called Belarus' transition 'transition by surprise'. The collapse of the USSR caused an abrupt severance of the economic ties with Russia, which made the country plunge into a protracted economic crisis. The years between 1991 and 1994 before the first (and so far only) Belarusian president was elected in the first (and so far only) democratic election began to be associated for many people with political and economic chaos and a considerable decrease in the quality of life.

Against this background, the attempt of the Belarusian nationalist opposition to appeal to the historical memory of the Belarusians and evoke the country's heroic past did not resonate with the majority of the population. Although Belarusian national historiography tends to appropriate the historical legacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania exclusively for the Belarusian nation (Plokhy, 2006, p. 87), it has no reasonable explanation of what was happening in the Belarusian lands between 1386 (the Union of Krewo) and 1918, when the BPR was formed. The over 500 years' gap in history is a vivid example of the actual absence of a distinct history of Belarusians. The myth of Kalinowski being the leader of the Belarusian national movement in the 19th century, or of Francysk Skaryna, a son of a wealthy Polatsk merchant, who was educated at the universities of Poland and Italy, and in the 16th century translated the Bible allegedly into Belarusian, were unable to become the shared myths of the nation.

The language problem poured even more oil on the flames. The BPF under the leadership of Poznyak managed to ensure the passing of a new language law in 1990. The law envisaged a gradual switch to the Belarusian language as the only official and everyday language of the republic. In a few years it became clear that the implementation of the law had largely failed. The population confirmed the fact at a national referendum in 1996 when the majority voted for giving the Russian language the same official status as Belarusian, thus completely pressing Belarusian out of the public sphere.

Since a distinct Belarusian national identity was never formed due to various historical reasons, the efforts of the opposition to recreate an ethnic Belarusian nation united by belonging to the same ethnos, language, and religion were doomed from the start. Under such circumstances, no ethnic nationalism supported by the masses could ever emerge. The majority of Belarusians did not want ‘to return to Europe,’ as they never really considered themselves to be part of it in a generalized sense. Nor did they feel united by certain political views, or some shared political rights, or allegiance to the country itself to be ready to fight for its independence. What they, apparently, wanted was to go back to the Soviet Union. And the young populist, Alexander Lukashenko, turned out to be the figure on which the masses pinned their hopes for returning to their comfortable Soviet past, let it be in a modified form. Lukashenko skillfully played the strings of people’s discontent with the ethnic nationalism promoted by the BPF, and managed to make people associate civil society and opposition almost exclusively with forceful Belarusization and radicalism. All this raises the question of why Belarusians expressed so much pride in their national belonging in the surveys of 1996 and 2011. Explanations may vary from a quite superficial one (respondents simply

did not feel comfortable admitting they did not like being Belarusians) to something much more profound. Finding a thorough answer to the question is, however, beyond the scope of this dissertation.

In conclusion, it is necessary to reiterate that, due to its pre-communist and communist histories, by the time Belarus became independent, it did not have a civil society to speak of. Ordinary Belarusians, just like Romanians, had little understanding of what civil society was and why it was important to create an environment conducive to its development. Unlike Poles, who never eliminated the presence and influence of the Catholic Church in and on their society, and who had a strong tradition of the trade unions movement, Belarusians had no experience in resisting the policies of the authorities by means of actions spearheaded by civil society entities. Since Belarusians never aspired to become part of the EU, they never had to comply with any criteria that would contribute to the establishment and development of a civil society capable of exerting a meaningful impact on the state authorities' policies. Consequently, neither the society at large, nor the government of Belarus had any real incentive to contribute to the emergence of a 'vibrant' civil society that would be able to manifest people's interests and become a buffer between the citizens and the state. Therefore, when the overwhelming support for democracy as the best form of government expressed by respondents in Belarus is coupled with the country's extremely low scores for most political indicators, it might be a sign that so far, only assent to democracy exists in the Belarusian society but no consent.

7.5 Conclusion

The existence of a strong and active civil society is undoubtedly not the only prerequisite for democracy. Although it is not sufficient by itself, civil society is still one of democracy's fundamental building blocks. Such countries as Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia that had democratic opposition and functioning civil societies long before the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, had relatively peaceful transitions and were among the ten countries that joined the European Union during its largest single expansion in 2004. Thus, Poland, which was one of the first Eastern European countries where the uprising against the communist regime started, neatly fits the theory of civil society being a precondition for democracy. Its civil society was well-structured and organized before the collapse of the communist regime in the country, and enjoyed a wide popular support. Therefore, Poland owes its spectacular success in the country's post-communist development in no small part to its 'vibrant' civil society. The involvement of the latter in the process of democratization spearheaded Poland's transition to the market economy and democratic governance, and consequent consolidation of democracy.

Almost thirty years of post-communist history proved, however, that the preexistence of an active, well-established, 'vibrant' civil society was not always a condition precedent for a successful transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Romania, for instance, could not have any structured resistance and dissent under Ceaușescu due to the totalitarian nature of his regime and the ubiquitous presence of Securitate in every aspect of the Romanians' life. Nevertheless, after Ceaușescu's fall, conditions were created in the country that made the emergence, establishment, and development of civil society possible. The desire of Romanians to return to Europe and join the EU made them comply with certain requirements for that to happen. One of the

requirements was the creation of an environment conducive to civil society's development. Therefore, it can be argued that civil society may not be a necessary precondition for a successful transition from authoritarianism towards democracy. It can be a collateral factor that may appear in the process of democratization.

Finally, Belarus is an example of a country that had many, if not most, prerequisites for democratization, or so it seemed at the beginning. However, due to various reasons, the nascent civil society that appeared in the country in the late 1980s turned out to be mostly a radical nationalist opposition, which proved to be a mistake in a predominantly Russian-speaking country that did not see itself separate from its big brother in the East. Therefore, the goals of the opposition to create a nation-state out of Belarus following the example of the Czech Republic, or Hungary, or Slovakia, did not resonate with the majority of Belarusians. The new regime that came to power in Belarus by means of a democratic election also managed to discredit the opposition in the eyes of the society and squeeze it out of the political process.

Steven Fish (1998) once called the situation in Mongolia 'democracy without prerequisites,' referring to the virtual absence in the country of most of the factors conventionally regarded necessary for democratization. Although at the start Mongolia lacked the majority of the required democracy building blocks, the country's political transformation was nothing but remarkable. Paraphrasing Fish, Silitski (2003) defined what occurred in Belarus 'prerequisites without democracy' (p. 50). This definition seems to be quite accurate, since Belarus' post-communist history proves that favorable socio-economic conditions do not always lead to transition from authoritarianism to democracy. They may be conducive to democratization as well as to the reestablishment of authoritarianism. In case of Belarus, the available prerequisites for democracy did

not yield the expected result. Instead, an authoritarian regime was reestablished and consolidated, the only difference this time being the absence of the communist rule.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

In the modern world, democracy is considered by many to be the best form of government. There are many reasons for why it is so. According to the Freedom House, advantages of a democratic government system include, among other things, competitive elections; independent, vibrant, and sustainable civil society; independent, diverse, and sustainable media; national and local governmental systems that are stable, democratic, and accountable to the public; independent, impartial, and timely judiciary that is capable of defending fundamental political, civil, and human rights; and the absence of excessive corruption within the government, economy, and society (Freedom House, 2018). Democracies facilitate the creation of comfortable, secure, and wealthy lives for their citizens and are intrinsically valuable. In democracies political societies are able to come to agreements concerning institutions and can promote public policies. Citizens of democratic states exert control over politicians and public policies and enjoy political and civil freedom and good governance. Therefore, when communist regimes in Central and Eastern European countries collapsed, and the Soviet Union disintegrated, it seemed that transition from authoritarianism/totalitarianism to democracy was the only logical, possible, and desirable choice for all the CEE countries and Soviet Union successor states.

Almost three decades after the downfall of communism it is obvious that transition to democracy was neither the only logical, nor always possible, nor unquestionably desirable mode of development in all cases. Some CEE countries and

former Soviet states did democratize and became part of the EU and NATO, others tried to do so but failed, still others did not even make attempts to move in the direction of democratization. In this dissertation I analyzed the post-communist development of three Eastern European countries – Poland, Romania, and Belarus – and tried to explain the differences in their modern histories. I looked at whether they possessed any of the building blocks of democracy at the time of their communist regimes' downfall, and how they managed (or did not manage) to use those to their advantage.

My analysis showed that Poland and more so Romania were struggling economically on the eve of the transition start, whereas Belarus enjoyed a relative economic prosperity within the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. When all the economic ties were abruptly cut as a result of the Soviet Union's dissolution and revolutions in the CEE countries, Belarus experienced a severe economic crisis that was also characteristic of all other states in the region. The economic conditions in Romania and Poland became even worse than they were under communism. Therefore, when all three of the countries began their transition, their economies found themselves in a comparable dismal state. However, with time, the countries managed to overcome their economic crises, and their economies eventually gained an impetus for growth.

Economic development is believed to be an important requirement for successful democratization, but it is definitely not the only one. Moreover, economic development may contribute to both the establishment and consolidation of democracy and the strengthening of authoritarian regimes. Successful democratization also depends on such factors as political culture and social structure, and the probability of the occurrence of very specific cultural and social changes that are required for the shift

from authoritarianism to democracy. My analysis indicated that the necessary changes took place in the Polish and Romanian societies, whereas in Belarus they did not.

Research also finds that the presence of a vibrant civil society is another prerequisite for successful initiation of liberalization, democratization, and subsequent consolidation of democracy. My analysis, however, shows that this is not always the case. Of course, countries like Poland that had a stable and well-structured civil society, whether in the form of independent trade unions or the Roman Catholic Church, had a better chance for a successful transition toward democracy. On the other hand, Romania did not have any civil society at hand when the Ceaușescu regime fell. Nevertheless, by the time the European Union decided the country was ready to become its member, Romania had created the necessary conditions for its civil society's establishment, development, and sustainability. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that civil society is not always a prerequisite for successful democratization. It can actually be its consequence.

As for Belarus, it is distinctive among the three countries with respect to its civil society. Just like Romania, Belarus did not have civil society in Western European understanding during the Soviet times. Some opposition to the regime only appeared closer to the end of the Soviet Union's existence. However, the Belarusian opposition placed undue emphasis on its nationalistic agenda, which proved to be a mistake in a mostly Russian-speaking country that, unlike Poland or Romania, never considered Russia to be an aggressor, an occupant, or any threat for that matter. The nascent Belarusian civil society, therefore, did not receive enough support from the population as was the case in Poland. The Belarusian authorities, just like the majority of people in Belarus, never aspired to join the EU. That is why, unlike in Romania, civil society in

Belarus could not hope for support on the part of the government either. Since neither the Belarusian public nor the authorities felt any need for civil society, almost three decades into its independence Belarusian civil society is weak, mostly invisible, and unable to exert any meaningful impact on the decision-making processes and public policy in the country.

In my study of the development trajectories of Poland, Romania, and Belarus, I also inquired into whether the presence or absence of national consciousness played any role in how the countries changed after the fall of communist regimes. As a result of my analysis I came to the conclusion that the strong national identity of Poles and Romanians might have been one of the significant factors that influenced their post-communist development. The Romanian and Polish nations were formed centuries ago. Even when Poland and Romania did not exist as states, and when their peoples lived in different empires subjected to foreign rules, they still felt connected by means of their common language, religion, culture, and history. They aspired to unification, and to the creation of states where all Poles and all Romanians could live together. The two peoples received the chance for state building at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although at the start the creation of the Polish and Romanian states brought to the population as many problems as it resolved, uniting all the Polish lands and people, and all the Romanian lands and people into respective states was considered a great historical achievement, something worth fighting for.

When it comes to the national consciousness, Belarus stands apart among the three countries yet again. Although Belarusian historiographers and members of the opposition tend to claim that already the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a Belarusian state, thus insisting that Belarus has a great history of its own, there is little evidence

that can support the claim. The people who lived on the territory of what eventually became the Republic of Belarus used to belong to a number of various larger polities throughout the course of history. Their Belarusian identity, as distinct from Russian or Polish, began to form only at the beginning of the twentieth century, and much research suggests that it was, in many respects, artificially created by the local intellectuals, and later forcefully imposed upon the population by the Soviet authorities. The true origin of the Belarusian ethnos is obscure. The very existence of the Belarusian language is questionable. The majority of the republic's population prefers to speak the Russian language while identifying themselves mostly as ethnic Belarusians and see no paradox in the fact.

When the communist regimes all over Central and Eastern Europe collapsed, 'returning to Europe' became number one priority for many countries of the region. 'Returning to Europe' meant joining the European Union and by extension supporting the Western European values of liberal democracy and freedom. For Poles and Romanians, specifically, it meant 'going home,' since the peoples in Poland and Romania perceived themselves as European nations and believed that their right place was in Europe among other countries-members of the EU. But the 'prodigal children' could not just go back. They had to prove to the EU that they deserved to be a part of it. For this to happen, Poland, Romania, and other CEE countries, and the Baltic States had to comply with certain criteria, such as establishing functioning market economies, as well as institutions that would guarantee democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. The incentive of the European Union's membership helped Poland and Romania to introduce the required changes into their political, economic, and social systems in spite of all the difficulties the countries had to face.

Since the majority of Belarusians never considered themselves to be a European nation, they never felt the desire to join the EU. Therefore, the EU could not exert any real pressure on the country's authorities to make them take steps in the direction of liberalization and democratization. In the absence of a functioning civil society and opposition, the Belarusian authorities experienced no internal pressure either. Consequently, when soon after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the development vector of Belarus turned in the direction of neo-authoritarianism, no real resistance was offered to the authorities to prevent this from happening.

To summarize, my research confirmed that economic development might be conducive to both democratization and strengthening of authoritarianism, and that prosperity alone does not produce democracy. It confirmed that successful liberalization, democratization, and consolidation of democracy required that certain cultural and social changes must take place in a society. The changes then would facilitate a shift in the population's values, beliefs, and worldviews so that 'assent' to democracy could transform into 'consent' for this form of government.

As for civil society, the theory asserts that it is an essential feature and one of the cornerstones of liberal democracy. This implies that a state cannot be democratic if it does not have civil society. Civil society is seen as an important institutional link connecting public and private spheres of life. The sustainability of democracy is not possible without a strong and vibrant civil society. Some scholars, however, believe that the concept of civil society might only be relevant to certain times and places, and therefore have no meaning in non-Western European environment. Consequently, it might not be applicable to all possible historical, cultural, and economic contexts.

Others, on the contrary, are convinced that in Eastern Europe, too, civil society is a real force relevant to enhancing development and democracy. In countries, like Poland and to a great extent like Romania, civil society can be defined as ‘vibrant’ because it is able to channel social interests, make citizens active, and help build local communities. It is made manifest in the growing numbers of charitable, nonprofit, and nongovernmental organizations, and the active participation of the public in private voluntary activity. In countries, like Belarus, civil society is weak and almost invisible. Belarus is a country that has democracy in terms of basic democratic procedures and nominally existing democratic institutions, but whose citizens fail with respect to civic engagement and involvement in voluntary activities.

My analysis allows for a theoretical conclusion regarding the importance of civil society at the stage of initiating transition from authoritarianism. Although many theorists claim that civil society is an important prerequisite for a country’s transition from authoritarianism to democracy, the presence of a vibrant and well-structured civil society may not always be necessary for the transition initiation. In the absence of civil society, transition may be initiated by violence, as was the case in Romania. It may also be initiated by external factors, as was the case with an almost clandestine agreement among the leaders of Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine to dissolve the Soviet Union and establish the Commonwealth of Independent States. Unlike Poland, where civil society existed before the collapse of its communist regime, neither Romania, nor Belarus had one when they stopped being communist states. However, Romania managed to create favorable conditions for the emergence and establishment of its civil society on the way to democracy. Belarus, on the other hand, failed to do so. Therefore, it is possible to draw a conclusion that civil society might be either a condition precedent

as in Poland, or a consequence of successful democratization as in Romania. In case when civil society is not in place, and neither society at large nor the government makes a conscious effort to establish and to develop it, civil society might be doomed. A country cannot be considered truly democratic if it does not have civil society, regardless of the level of its economic development or the formal presence of democratic institutions. Belarus, therefore, is a vivid example of a country that has established an ‘imitation democracy’ or ‘democracy without citizens’.

Finally, my findings contribute to the theories of post-communist transition by suggesting that a strong national identity, as well as peoples’ perception of themselves as belonging to the family of European countries, could be an additional explanatory factor of a country’s success or failure on the way to democracy. Even when some or all democracy building blocks were missing, as in Romania, the desire of its people to ‘return to Europe’ gave them enough incentives to introduce all the necessary changes into their economy, politics, and social structure to be admitted to the EU. The reverse also seems to be true. Belarus is an example of a country that seemingly had all or most of the democracy prerequisites, but absent the desire to join the European Union, did not use them to democratize and, on the contrary, strengthened its neo-authoritarian regime.

8.1 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The major limitation of my dissertation is that it is a case study. As such, it may possess high internal validity and present a feasible historical explanation. On the other hand, by definition, case studies do not allow for generalizations that could be easily applied to other similar contexts and have no external validity. This being said, case studies may achieve high conceptual validity and thus help to make a valuable

theoretical contribution to the field. By giving researchers some grounds for drawing theoretical conclusions and undertaking further analysis, case studies help move the field forward and expand and improve the existing theory. The inferences drawn from the analysis of Poland, Romania, and Belarus present an opportunity for acquiring a more profound explanation of why the trajectories of their post-communist development differ so much from each other. The conclusions about whether civil society is necessarily a prerequisite for successful democratization or its possible consequence, and whether the strength or weakness of national identity was an important factor impacting the transition trajectory may be applicable to other countries in the region.

In spite of the case study limitation, my dissertation may facilitate further research focused on specific questions. The most essential questions are as follows. First, when democracy is consolidated, it means that all the democratic institutions are firmly established, democracy as a value is deeply entrenched in the society's culture, and that the society at large supports this form of government over any other. In addition, consolidated democracy implies that a reverse trend, i.e. going back to authoritarianism, is impossible. However, in light of what has been happening all over Western Europe for the last several years, the assertion might not be so unambiguous anymore. Right-wing parties began to raise their voices in Sweden, France, Austria, and the Netherlands prompted by the migrant crisis engendered by the war in Syria. In Hungary the nationalist government led by Victor Orbán erected barriers to prevent illegal immigration and decrease the numbers of refugees. Countries such as Slovakia, Estonia, Bulgaria, and Poland announced they would only take 'Christian asylum seekers or none at all' (Shuster, 2016). Stances like these coupled with the appeals of the right-wing forces in France, the Netherlands and other places to conduct 'their own

Brexit-style plebiscites on E.U. membership' contribute to the EU erosion and question the irreversible character of consolidated European democracies (Ibid.).

Second, more research is needed to answer the question of when an authoritarian regime is defined as consolidated, whether it also means that it is irreversible. If so, and if civil society in a certain country is unable to exert any serious impact on the country's governance and policy making process, what could its role be? Finally, I claim in my dissertation that due to various reasons Belarusians did not manage to form into either an ethnic or a civic nation in the course of their history. I see it as one of the reasons that explains their inability and unwillingness to democratize after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, the survey data analyzed in my work showed that an overwhelming majority of Belarusians were proud of their ethnic identity. They were proud to be Belarusians at the end of the 1990s as well as fifteen years later. Therefore, further research may inquire into the paradox to find an explanation for how weak national identity may coincide with a lot of pride people take in their national belonging.

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