Parliamentary Elections in Belarus

Forming a Party or Running Alone?

Boris Eselevich

24-06-2015

Student number: s1410865
E-mail: boris.eselevich@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. J. Oversloot
Second reader: Prof. P. Kopecký

"Well you know, we have the President…"[1]

Belarus is located at the heart of Europe but differs from most other European political systems. The president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, builds on the notion of Soviet nostalgia and 'the good old days'. Nevertheless, his institutional practice somewhat differs from the political systems in contemporary Russia and in other post-Soviet states. Although Belarus has a parliament and regular elections, the vast majority of the parliament members are nonpartisan. This stands in contrast to the practice common in other post-Soviet nations. The main argument in this paper will be that due to the specific institutional and historical constraints, voters are more likely to elect candidates on a personal, rather than on a partisan level. This research would be conducted via cognitive field interviews (N = 18) with Belarusian constituencies. It will inquire why parties are practically irrelevant in the Belarusian parliament while they play a more significant role in Kazakhstan and Russia.

Introduction

Most contemporary authoritarian regimes are relying on political parties. Similarly to the rest of the former communist states, Belarus was left with a ready-made party structure following the fall of the Soviet Union. However, Alexander Lukashenko, the president of Belarus, not only decided against using a party to gain his power, but has also refused to use the services of one ever since. The center of our attention will be the failure of political parties in Belarus, in light of their success elsewhere (i.e. in Kazakhstan and in Russia). This research would strive to complement existing literature on electoral systems and attitudes towards parties in authoritarian and specifically post-Soviet regimes. This research will also strive to add to the knowledge on Belarus and uncover its mysteries. As the tensions between Russia and the European Union (EU) are escalating, Belarus is located in the middle and is largely ignored or at least overlooked. It is time to shed light on innovation in authoritarian rule; Belarusian style.

This research is constructed in three parts. We will begin with describing the inclination of the single-member-district (SMD) system for technically allowing independent candidates to be elected. Indeed, it could be the electoral system itself that instigates independents to compete for a place in the parliament[2]. While the parliaments of Russia and Kazakhstan mainly consist of partisan representatives (notwithstanding these parties' political positions towards the government), in the Belarusian parliament partisan members are a mere minority (see figure 1).

---

[1] A recurring motive when talking to Belarusians about the lack of political parties in the parliament.
[2] In this paper, all various lower houses of representatives will be called 'parliaments' and not by their official names, for efficiency and comfort.

The availability of the SMD system and its inheritance from the Soviet days provides for the possibility of independent parliament members to be elected. Thus, SMD allows for independent candidates, but does not cancel out the benefits candidates might receive from partisan membership. It has been suggested elsewhere that the system of SMD "works against the institutionalization of democratic politics in a newly competitive state"[3]. The second step would be investigating what was done by the government in concern of the political parties after the consolidation of power. The claim for the unavailability of parties in Belarus might be connected to the way the leader sought to be represented. The conscious choice of the anti-establishment path (which included the anti-party and anti-corruption rhetoric) might have caused deterioration in the popularity of parties in general. Thus for Lukashenko who rose to power as an independent (in contrast to Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan), it could have been more beneficial to remain party-free (an anti-party man could be deemed to be closer to the people).

Despite the notion that this brings us closer to the understanding of nonpartisan representation in Belarus, Russia again stands as a stark contradiction. Following an initial period, Putin did opt to join and head a political party. Consequently, we see that the SMD system and the initial institutional setting require one more piece to complete our puzzle. The political history of Belarus is burdened with critical junctions[4]. Building on such junctions, this paper is proposing that partisan domination is substituted in Belarus by reactionary rather than proactive ideas: control of opposition and prevention of internal threat to the presidential power. Control over parliament members is executed via clientelism[5], rather than through party ties. In other words, it might be easier for Lukashenko to control and guide candidates and members of parliament through nonpartisan ties such as political or economic dependence. In addition, political parties in Belarus are usually devoid of traditional ideological substances and cannot offer their constituencies a voice in guiding general state policy. As an effect, the system concentrates on providing local, district based solutions rather than leading general, country-wide policies or

---

[3] Sarah Birch, "Single-Member District Electoral Systems and Democratic Transition", *Electoral* Studies 24 (2005): 283.

[4] Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen, "The Study of Critical Junctions: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism", *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (2007): 341-369; Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics", *The American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000): 263-265; Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics", *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 399-400.

[5] Herbert Kitschelt, "Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities", *Comparative Political Studies* 33, no. 6/7 (2000): 845-879; Anna Grzymala-Buse, "Beyond Clientelism: Incumbent State Capture and State Formation", *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 4/5 (2008): 638-673.

pushing for an ideological change. Such a passive rule in Belarus, in contrast to the more proactive regimes in Kazakhstan and Russia, could be called Defensive Authoritarianism. Our research is based on cognitive field interviews with randomly selected voters in Belarus[6]. The local view on the lack of political parties in Belarus is expected to shed more light on the political arena in that country. The aim of such analysis is to understand how the voters perceive the electoral and party systems by knowing who to vote for in absence of parties.

<u>Partisans and Nonpartisans: The SMD system in Belarus</u>

Many scholars have classified, refined and applied[7] the various electoral systems employed in democratic regimes[8]. The electoral systems that interest us the most here are naturally majoritarian, proportional and mixed systems. Although each of the systems has yet more unique national variants, we can say the following in general: (a) The majoritarian system requires candidates either to win an absolute majority (of more than 50 per cent of the vote) or in some cases at least a plurality ("first-past-the-post") to earn a seat in the parliament; (b) The proportional system aims to trade the greater efficiency of government formation in majoritarian systems for a larger inclusion of minorities. The seats are divided in accordance to the number of votes each party receives (taking into account the electoral threshold if present). (c) Finally, mixed systems combine the two aforementioned options. In Russia for instance[9], half of the parliament members were elected through a majoritarian system and half through a proportional system[10], while in Kazakhstan ten candidates were elected based on a proportional system and 67 through SMD[11]. It is important to point out that even before the constitutional changes of 2007 eliminated the participation of independent candidates in the parliamentary elections in Russia and Kazakhstan, the number of independent parliament members was never as large as is still the case in Belarus (see figure 1).

---

[6] For a more detailed overview of the process and a description of the selected population see appendix 1.

[7] Douglas Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Rein Taagepera and Matthew S. Shuggart, *Seats and Votes*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Arend Lijphart, "The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws", *The American Political Science Review* 84, no. 2 (1990): 481-496.

[8] Realizing that our story is about an autocracy, it is still important to present the origin and the research of the election system in Belarus (plural single-member district) with the aim of understanding its consequences.

[9] Both Russia and Kazakhstan were examples to such a system before the constitutional changes, that took place in both countries in 2007 and eliminated the majoritarian part.

[10] Pippa Norris, "Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems", *International Political Science Review* 18, no. 3 (1997): 299-304.

[11] Rico Isaacs, "The Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan, August 2007", *Electoral Studies* 27, no. 2 (2008): 382.
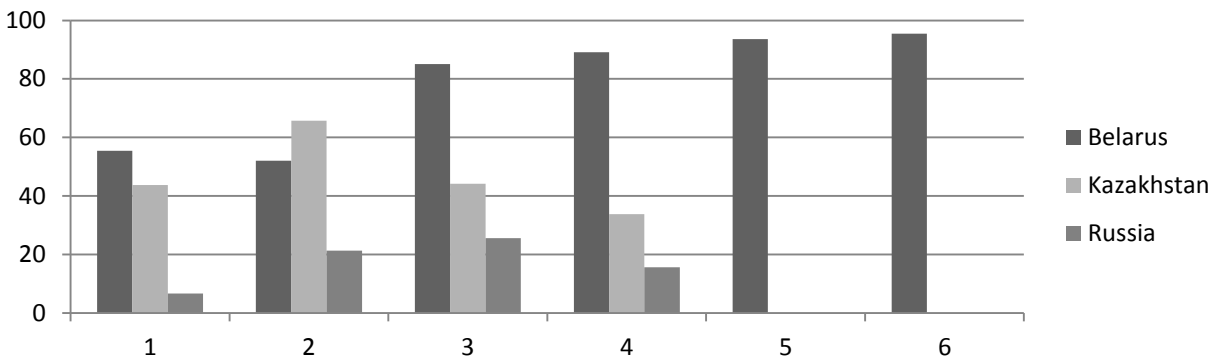
As suggested above, it is hypothesized that majoritarian systems would favor two-party configuration, while proportional representation (PR) electoral system would encourage a more fragmented party-system[14]. Indeed, PR systems are more likely to produce a system with a multitude of political parties, which are likely to yield more proportional results. Moreover, majoritarian systems are more likely to produce two-party systems[15]. Although all three countries in question are no full democracies[16], nor are they near having fair elections, those elections do exist regularly[17].The argument is that majoritarian electoral systems weaken the tie between the party, the candidate and the citizens because individual rather than partisan virtues of candidates are more emphasized[18]. Thus, the inherited Soviet system in which elections were held in a majoritarian method and allowed for independent candidates[19] permitted the practice to continue well into the post-Soviet era[20]. Cox for instance identifies the historical transition of

---

[12] Praline Database on National Parliaments, N.D., http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp [accessed: 25 February, 2015]; '1' represents earliest elections cycle, while '6' represents the latest.

[13] Russia: 1993-2003 the system was mixed. 225 members elected based on the majoritarian system, and 225 based on proportional. Ukraine had the same system at 1994-2002 and again from 2012.

[14] Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties*, (London: Methuen Press, 1954), 217; William H. Riker, "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science", *American Political Science Review*, 76 (1982), 755-760.

[15]Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 62, 166-168.

[16] Although they were not suspected of being democratic at the time, the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe suggests at a possible fall under the transition during the Third Wave: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 23-25.

[17]TimmBeichelt, "Autocracy and Democracy in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine", *Democratization* 11, no. 5 (2004): 115-117.

[18] Dawn Brancati, "The Electoral Fate of Independent Candidates Worldwide", *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 3 (2008): 652-653.

[19] Note: In the Soviet Union the practice of independent candidates was not unusual, as not all could become party members, although if they were designated to win, they were still doing so on the behalf of the party.

[20] Robert G. Moser, "The Impact of the Electoral System on Post-Communist Party Development: The Case of the 1993 Russian Parliamentary Elections", *Electoral Studies* 14, no. 4 (1995): 377-398.

more power to the parliament as the reason behind the increase in party identification and party significance in the West.[21] Such aspects of partisan change assumed the increasing power of the House of Commons over the Monarch. Political parties now offered their constituencies participation in governance in exchange for the electoral support.

Notably, studies have found that parties are gaining popularity in Russia: more people vote based on the party rather than on the personality of the candidates. In other words, voters in Russia connect parties with such notions as identity of the party's leader, economic and social conditions[22]. This seems to be in contrast with the practices of party-based identity in Belarus. Albeit having currently as many as fifteen active political parties to choose from, potential voters could not name most of them by name. In fact, most would only name the Communist Party (While in practice *two* Communist Parties operate in Belarus today) and the Belarus Popular Front (BPF), which was the spear head of the opposition in the 1990's but is rather weak nowadays. Others yet suggest the pro-Lukashenko *Belaya Rus'* public movement as a political party, though it was never turned into a regular party. It would appear that in Belarus, party identification became only weaker with time. All the while, the practice in Russia points at the opposite direction. It suggests that parties in Russia are successful in creating party-centered ballots. Moreover, it shows that it is not impossible for voters to adjust to party-centered politics. Still, opposition parties such as *Yabloko* found it hard to find parliamentary success.

Despite early promises, Yabloko entered the 21st century on the wrong foot. Unfortunate decisions left the party struggling electorally and without sufficient financial backing[23]. That suggests that parties in Russia still struggle: even a relatively established and known party as Yabloko finds it difficult to win seats in the Russian parliament[24]. However, that might indicate an inability of opposition parties to gain power, due to their inability to supply potential voters with a voice in the government. In contrast, parties who can offer an ideological agenda (The Communist Party) or certain influence in the government (United Russia) gain more success.

---

[21] Gary W. Cox, "The Development of a Party-Oriented Electorate in England, 1832-1918", *British Journal of Political Science* 16, no. 2 (1986): 208-211.

[22] Timothy J. Colton and Henry E. Hale, *Context and Party System Development: Voting in Russian Parliamentary Elections 1995–2004 in Comparative Perspective*, (Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 2004): 1-2, 22-23.

[23] Henry E. Hale, "Yabloko and the Challenge of Building a Liberal Party in Russia, *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 7 (2004): 993-1020.

[24] Martin Dewhirst, "Censorship and Restrictions on Freedom of Speech in Russia: 1986-1991-2001", in *The Legacy of the Soviet Union,* eds. Wendy Slater and Andrew Wilson (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 200-201. 186-207

Indeed, parties in Russia were making financial incentive to attract voters. *United Russia* was on the high at its first elections in 2004 and mainly relied on voters who considered the economy to be in a good shape and those by whom the level of democracy was seen as sufficient[25]. United Russia gave Putin the ability of installing a stronger organization than before (*Unity*[26] was a fraction of smaller organizations made up for the parliamentary elections of 1999), which gave him a stricter control of the governing apparatus. This less official approach was supplemented by electoral reforms that were intended to increase the role of the parties (such as a move to a proportional system on the regional level)[27]. In other words, the change of the electoral system followed the initiation of stronger parties initiated, and not vice versa.

Despite first signs suggested that Kazakhstan might be on its way to democratization and a strong parliament, the president soon began absorbing more and more power. One of the causes for such a turn of events were the challenges that the newly independent state had to deal with in the 1990's. The economy was strongly integrated in the SU and Kazakhstan struggled in its first independent steps. Moreover, the geographic integrity of the republic was under question mainly due to the ethnic divide, which has also been mirrored in the political arena[28]. Nazarbayev used a party from the very first day for guaranteeing sustainable rule through securing economic stability, nationalization and general marginalization of other groups[29]. Once the decision to rule by party has been made, the next step was limiting the influence of opposition parties, for instance those parties based on ethnicity, religion or gender[30]. The Kazakhstani electoral system is described as a 'mixed-member majoritarian' (MMM) system. The voter had to cast two votes: one in the SMD system, and one for a party list. The former composed the majority of seats in the parliament, while a smaller share went to the proportionally elected seats[31]. Parties were

---

[25] Henry E. Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia? Democracy, Federalism, and the State.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 92-107.

[26] *United Russia* is a pro-government party, is a result of a 2001 unification of a number of previous political parties, of which the most important for us are *Unity* and *Our Home – Russia* (when the former split from the latter in 1999). The pro-government political parties were used as a top-bottom structure to ensure control in the parliament and through the regions. It mainly began with *Russia's Choice* (1993 – 1995), continued with *Our Home – Russia* (1995-2001)*,* and after a short use of *Unity* (1999 – 2001) the ruling elite uses *United Russia* (2001 -) at present.

[27] Ibid, 231-233.

[28] RafisAbazov, "The 1999 Presidential Elections in Kazakhstan", *Electoral* Studies 20, no. 2 (2001): 314-315.

[29] Ryan Kennedy, "A Colorless Election: The 2005 Election in Kazakhstan, and What It Means for the Future of the Opposition", *Problems of Post*-Communism 53, no. 6 (2006): 47-48.

[30] Donnacha O Beachian, "Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan, September and October 2004", *Electoral Studies* 24, no. 4 (2005): 762-769.

[31] Even though constitutions and seat number changed, the 2004 election, the last under this system, included 67 seats for SMD electorate and ten for the proportional system for a combined of 77.

mainly divided among supporters of Nazarbayev, disillusioned elites and the opposition[32]. The stability of the regime in Kazakhstan is related to economic change, too. As noted above, Kazakhstan's economy was extremely weak at the start, but is becoming stronger ever since. The national sources of income, such as natural resources and (independent) media outlets, are closely related to Nazarbayev and his elite. That success depends much on the ability of opposition movements to mobilize this new economic power of a developing upper-class to their support[33]. We can see that when economic growth offered opportunities for the opposition, the electoral system was changed to retain the position of the (pro-government) parties.

Nevertheless, can we discuss parties in nondemocratic regimes using research on parties in democracies? Democracies are argued to have an inherent systematic need for political parties[34]. Parties are claimed to be interconnected with the democratic rule on a number of levels. Political parties help communicate the preferences of the political system and the citizens. Moreover, in the democratic sense the party serves as a mediator between the civic society and the state; channeling interests and preventing tyranny[35]. However, political parties are extremely common in less democratic regimes, too. Authoritarian regimes may maintain political parties for various reasons and to their advantage. Leaders of such regimes can use parties to control the military, exercise control over population and ensuring popular support, or for monitoring of elites on various levels thereby maintaining their loyalty to the common cause. Moreover, authoritarian parties are used to mobilize the masses. In sum, parties in authoritarian regimes are useful to penetrate and control society[36]. This makes the authoritarian party a literal tool of control in the hands of the party elites in a double way. A party in a dictatorship could be used to distribute spoils through offering career paths for sympathizers with the aim of gaining more popular support[37] and eliminating potential emerging opposition from the inside by 'sharing the cake'[38]. For the ruler, parties and other legislating organizations are institutions that help with the task of

---

[32] Ibid, 765-777.

[33]Bhavna Dave, "Kazakhstan's 2004 Parliamentary Elections: Managing Loyalty and Support for the Regime", *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, no. 1 (2005): 6-7, 12.

[34] E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government*, (New York: Rinehart, 1942), 1; John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 12-14.

[35] Alan Ware, *Citizens, Parties and the State: A Reappraisal,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), *23*-27.

[36] Jennifer Gandhi, *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 30-38.

[37] Ibid, 77, 166-167.

[38] Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections Under Authoritarianism", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12 (2009): 403-422; Beatriz Magaloni and Ruth Kricheli, "Political Order and One-Party Rule", *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13 (2010): 123-143.

governing (also, for instance, through delivering the concerns of the people to the dictator)[39]. Those reasons make the absence of parties as relevant actors in the political system of Belarus even more interesting.

In contrast, opposition to rule through political parties can be summarized in three claims. Firstly, conservatives often argue against parties because they are seen as a rival to the current, conservative social structure. New parties are a certain threat to the established elite. Secondly, administrative circles oppose the public-wide participation in politics due to a lack of efficiency. Finally, there are the 'populists' who accept public participation but not its organization, claiming that the current system is acceptable in terms of linking the citizens to the government. Huntington goes further to remark that a 'no-party state' is a legitimate state in a traditional society but the process of modernization turns the state into an 'anti-party'[40]. It means that while originally, a state could legitimately exist without political parties; such practice is practically deemed impossible in modern societies. We see that the Belarusian case would suggest a certain combination of the three, with a stress on the last. If the current situation in Belarus provides for enough linkages with citizens, why have parties? To be clear, parties *de jure* exist in Belarus. Moreover, political parties are *not* outlawed in Belarus, as they are elsewhere. Additionally, real opposition movements are legally allowed to form political parties. The staggering fact here is that Lukashenko himself avoids using a party mechanism to his own help[41].

Lukashenko came to power some three years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Among other things, Lukashenko became famous for bringing various Soviet practices back; something that is often argued to generate his popular support. A political party however, was something he distanced himself from. Today, parliamentary elections in Belarus happen regularly on most occasions, and so exists a law which allows, promotes and specifies the activity of political parties on the political stage in Belarus[42]. True enough, a law on political parties does not ensure political freedom. However, this law proves one issue, at least on the face of things: political parties, and their virtue, are something that the Belarusian leadership is aware of. The issue of lawfulness came up more than once during the interviews, especially with Belarusians who were

---

[39] Gandhi, *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*, 79-80.
[40] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), *403-407.*
[41] Kathleen J. Mihalisko, "Belarus: Retreat to Authoritarianism", in *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, eds. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[42] Matthew Frear, "The Parliamentary Elections in Belarus, September 2012", *Electoral Studies,* 33 (2014).

familiar with academic work. They stressed that the SMD system in Belarus and the alleged lawfulness of political parties (but the constitutional nonpartisan status of the president) are fundamental for a discussion on political parties. Consequently, parties are allowed, but in a system where it is the governmental apparatus that is setting the norm, it is crucial to see how Lukashenko shields his presidency from the possibility of adopting a party. If so, we see how the potential of active parties is rhetorically encouraged (but practically discouraged) by supplementing an unfavorable for local political parties electoral system (SMD) with dictating an unfavorable for them (nonpartisan presidency) governing practice.

In comparison, nonpartisan members were a familiar face in the Russian parliament too (albeit to a smaller extent). Non-affiliated parliament members obtained seats in parliament in the 1990's but that changed following the constitutional reforms of 2007. As seen in figure 1, despite partisan members being a majority, up until 2007 a certain share of independents was the norm. Russia had a mixed electoral system before the constitutional reform, as was highlighted earlier. 225 of the 450 members of the parliament were elected in a nation-wide proportional system and the other half in a majoritarian system of SMD. A change to the electoral system was passed in Russia in 2005, thus taking full effect in the subsequent 2007 elections. It changed the mixed system into a complete proportional one (with a 7% threshold) of 450 seats, turning independent participation impossible[43]. However, the amount of independents in Russia and Kazakhstan was proportionally smaller than in Belarus even before these changes. The fact that authoritarian regimes can learn and adapt in prevailing against (would-be) democratic opposition[44], helps in understanding the measures which Lukashenko takes to remain in power. The regime in Belarus appears to be basing itself on *alleged* democratic practices such as a legitimate electoral system, while supplementing it with other institutional ideas such as a nonpartisan presidential position, to create a working mechanism of connecting the government with the voters. This innovation through stagnation could prove to be useful for autocracies and democracies alike in terms of the alleged need for political parties.

---

[43] For an overview of the system and the institutional change: Erik S. Herron and Misa Nishikawa, "Contamination Effects and the Number of Parties in Mixed-Superposition Electoral Systems", *Electoral Studies* 20 (2001) 71; Bryon Moraski, "Electoral System Reform in Democracy's Grey Zone: Lessons from Putin's Russia", *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 4 (2007): 541-543.
[44] Thomas Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion: Concepts, Dynamics, and Future Research", *International Studies Perspectives*, 11 (2010): 378-379.

Electoral systems and the Political Parties

As most historical accounts will tell, Belarus had never existed as an independent entity, until the immediate aftermath of the First World War when it gained independence for a short period of time. However, it was quickly absorbed in the upcoming SU[45]. The next chance for independence materialized in 1991 when the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) proclaimed independence. Unlike in Kazakhstan where the president remained in power from the Soviet days and Russia, where the incoming president Yeltsin played a very active role in the transition, the Belarusian leader Lukashenko came to the front of the stage through the parliament. From then on, building on the weakness of the system and perhaps even helping weaken it himself, Lukashenko took the task of consolidating his power. The curious fact was that he did so without the help of a political party. Certainly, Lukashenko was never one of the leading party elites in the Soviet days, but he was a member of the communist party, at the peak of his career as a young director of a *kolkhoz* when the BSSR proclaimed independence.

One of the possible explanations to the specificity of the former Soviet Union (SU) nations is the claim that parties in post-Soviet states help grow national identities. The break of the SU changed not only the political systems in the former Soviet space, but it changed the view of national identity too. Where previously the international appeal of the proletariat guided the interests of the state and formulated people's identities, the national identity had to take the empty space in the newly independent nations[46]. To understand what titular nationalities are, we need to go back to the 1920's. This is important to comprehend the value and the uniqueness of a national identity in the post-Soviet states today as many of those identities came to life or were at least enhanced by the hands of Lenin and Stalin[47]. After initial struggles with identifying and sorting, the 1937 census showed 99 nationalities[48]. The primary reason for encouraging self-determination within the borders of titular identities was preventing secession[49]. Despite the fact that national identities are widely deemed as utterly important especially when discussing the

---

[45] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: at a Crossroads in History*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

[46] Philip G. Roeder, "Peoples and States after 1989: The Political Costs of Incomplete National Revolutions", *Slavic Review* 58, no. 4 (1999): *858*.

[47] Rogers Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account", *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (February, 1994): 51.

[48] Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1997), 30-31.

[49] Ibid, 29.

viability of new democracies[50], scholarly research rarely mentioned national identities as forces which drive and pull political parties to form and solidify[51]. We see that national identities could be reinforced by political parties in new states[52]. In other words, a regime which only recently gained independence could allegedly invest in emergence of parties as those parties generate national identity even where this identity was originally weak. This adds to the puzzle of weak to non-existent parties in Lukashenko's Belarus[53]. It must be noted, that Belarus has officially two state languages: Belarusian and Russian. However, the practice is more complicated than that. On the one hand, it is extremely hard to encounter the Belarusian language spoken on the street in Minsk or in the other cities in Belarus[54]. On the other hand, trivial signs as street names and public transportations stops are in Belarusian only when one would expect them to be in both languages. Consequently, one must assume that the government is pushing for the superiority of the national Belarusian language while the people commonly reject it. For the people, the picture is more complicated than that. In the 1990's, at the beginning of the Lukashenko era, Belarusian was the language of the opposition. Opposition conferences and meeting were held strictly in Belarusian while the government pushed for the supremacy of the Russian language. However, today the interests are reversed. The contemporary opposition has no preference for a specific language, but looks at it as a tool of communication rather than as a national manifestation. Meanwhile, it is the government who now makes attempts at an increased use of the Belarusian language officially.

A place where national identities played a significant role is Kazakhstan. When speaking of a titular identity in Kazakhstan, one speaks of the Kazakh identity. The titular identity was usually strongly emphasized. However, due to a relatively large non-Kazakh community, the division

---

[50] See for instance: David Lane, "The Orange Revolution: 'People's Revolution' or Revolutionary Coup?", *The British Journal of Political and International Relations* 10, no. 4 (2008): 525-549; Mark R. Beissinger, "A New Look at Ethnicity and Democratization", *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 85-97.

[51] For rare examples see: Carrie Manning, "Constructing Opposition in Mozambique: Renamo as Political Party", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, no. 1 (1998): 161-189; Vera Tolz, "Forging the Nation: National Identity and Nation Building in Post-Communist Russia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 50 (1998): 993-1022.

[52] Inna Melnykovska, Rainer Schweickert and TetianaKostiuchenko, "Balancing National Uncertainty and Foreign Orientation: Identity Building and the Role of Political Parties in Post-Orange Ukraine", *Europa-Asia Studies* 63, no. 6 (2011): *1064*-1068.

[53] One of the ways national identities show themselves are through the use of the local language. My interviews showed that through the 1990's those were the opposition parties that invested in the usage of the Belarusian language. However, that faded away, and nowdays these are the governmental elite that is inclined in this direction, albeit without the structure of the party. That is to suggest that although parties can add to generating a national identity, identities play little role in the absence of political parties from the Belarusian political arena.

[54] See appendix 1 for the geographic limits of this study.

was even more obvious. The tensions between the Kazakh and the Slavic (Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian) identities were allegedly visible[55]. After the independence of Kazakhstan, the strife for a strong Kazakh identity unsettled a number of minorities. Unlike the rest of the European minorities (German, Polish, Ukrainian etc.), the Russian minority was substantial. Overall, the Kazakh language was promoted over the Russian and various Russian organizations and political parties were prevented from forming. Nazarbayev sought after the promotion of nationalization and the local language through politics and parliament, too. For instance, a special Assembly of the People was created which was directed at representation of the ethnic minorities, but was far from proportionally representative[56]. We see that despite the original deep integration of Russians and the Russian language in the public and social life of Kazakhstan, the nationalistic (Kazakh) notions were used to establish a certain political system, which would leave out the especially big Russian minority and gather the support of the Kazakhs and the other minorities. Thus unlike in Belarus, in Kazakhstan the national identity ticket was played through the usage of the political system and the political parties, to strengthen the existing regime.

Unlike some party systems, in which parties often start at the civilian level, gathering support and supporters with the aim of challenging the political power[57], here parties are looked at in a different light. The parties[58] of Russia and Kazakhstan (the two states in our pool who do have ruling parties), are top-bottom structures, rather than bottom-top as in the West[59]. They are tools of the leadership and are kept under the strictest control by the elite to limit claims for power from the bottom. Nazarbayev used his party as described above, while Lukashenko has not. The president of Kazakhstan re-configured and renamed his party, adjusted the system, but never actually disbanded the party he was the head of. Nazarbayev used the existing party and the close ties it had with the public to build his power, while by the time Lukashenko ascended to power, the party mechanism was perhaps less relevant for such a purpose. The most curious case here

---

[55] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Asian Interior: The Myth of "Tsentral'naiaAziia"", *Orbis* 38, no. 4 (Fall, 1994): 549-551.

[56] Sebastien Peyrouse, "Nationhood and the Minority Question in Central Asia: The Russians in Kazakhstan", *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 3 (2007): 481-484.

[57] Robert G. Moser, "Independents and Party Formation: Elite Partisanship as an Intervening Variable in Russian Politics", *Comparative Politics* 31, no. 2 (1999): 147.

[58] A fraction in the post-Soviet world resembles to a Western Party-in-parliament as it is the party's representatives in the parliament. However, a fraction can comprises a number of full parties, parts of parties, full or part of organizations or independent candidates.

[59] Hans Oversloot and Ruben Verheul, "Managing Democracy: Political Parties and the State in Russia", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 22 (2006): 383-405.

however, is that of Russia. Yeltsin ascended to power virtually as the 'destroyer' of the regime, as a revolutionary perhaps, someone who fought the parties. Parties were affiliated with him, but he was not officially a member of any party and remained so until the end of his leadership. His successor Vladimir Putin rose to power as a non-partisan member of the inner circle of the power apparatus. Nevertheless, unlike Yeltsin and Lukashenko he did opt for officially adopting a party. Putin's reasoning for *United Russia* came from the idea that independents were at times harder to control than partisans whereas coming from a structure of power originally, it may have appeared to him easier to mute possible mutinies within his party. Some of the independent candidates in Russia were either sponsored by oligarchs, or were oligarchs themselves, with their capital in hand, capable of financing themselves all the way into the parliament (and potentially further). *United Russia* was kept to protect against such initiatives, especially in the time after the magnitude of the oligarchy-based capitalism in Russia revealed itself in all its glory[60]. The quick and decisive 1990's reforms led by one of the key figures at the time, Anatoly Chubais. He argued that a fast privatization would leave the sympathizers of the communists no chance to resist. Such quick privatization led to a concentration of key industries in the hands of certain people; the oligarchs[61].

Although the practice in Kazakhstan was one of certain privatization of state assets into "well-positioned hands", Belarus refused mass privatization almost entirely[62]. The regime in Belarus used it to prevent resources from the opposition with a stress on keeping the heavy industry and the agriculture sector in state's hands. Moreover, keeping the economy nationalized, Lukashenko ensured that deflection from him would not only bare risks but would also hold no economic rewards[63]. The Belarus economy is unique and thus was predisposed for Lukashenko's rule in a number of ways. Firstly, it lacked the leadership required to promote initial liberal reforms and lagged behind its neighbors. Secondly, this leadership and power arrived at a time of economic crisis and caused a certain degree of improvement to the economy. Thirdly, the economic sector in Belarus is more production oriented than in Russia due to unavailability of natural resources. Fourthly, the ratio of urban population was lower in Belarus than in Russia providing for less

---

[60] Henry E. Hale, "Why Not Parties? Electoral Markets, Party Substitutes, and Stalled Democratization in Russia", *Comparative Politics* 37, no. 2 (2005): 151.
[61] Paul C. Dower and Andrei Markevich, "A History of Privatization in Russia", *Journal of Comparative Politics* 42, no. 4 (2014): 855-873.
[62] Scott Radnitz, "The Color of Money: Privatization, Economic Dispersion, and the Post-Soviet "Revolutions"", *Comparative Politics* 42, no. 2 (2010): 131, 141.
[63] Ibid, 139-140.

capitalist opportunities to begin with. Finally, Belarus' economic conditions were the fastest growing in the Soviet Union. This leads to the idea most people felt improvement during the Soviet rule and were disapproving of post-Soviet and pre-Lukashenko economic reforms[64]. Moreover, the strategic position of Belarus as discussed above has grave implications for economic control, too. This position allowed Lukashenko to increase his bargaining position vis-à-vis the Russians to a certain extent, but it also served the deepening of the connection of the Russian and the Belarusian economies. In fact the Belarusian economy is greatly dependent on Russian oil and gas subsidies and other economic allowances[65].

Russian economy, as mentioned above, offered various chances for new businesses, through natural resources or through huge factories. Kazakhstan grew economically in major part due to its own reserves of natural resources[66]. Both cases provided potential opportunities of alternative funding for the opposition, which would have resulted in alternative bases of power. In comparison; the Belarusian economy has little to offer for outside companies if it was to be opened. In other words, state-owned economy in Belarus has happened not only because it suited Lukashenko, but also due to the fact that it was more feasible. Parties in Russia were created due to a specific junction of events. First, early privatization allowed the financing of opposition and pro-government parties. That was followed by trading off the possibility of an inner-partisan political threat which might evolve from a partisan structure, for a better control of the governing apparatus. Parties in Kazakhstan were adopted, among other things, to enforce the national identity and to a lesser extent, to play an enforcing role on the opposition. As such, the power was centralized through the party but some privatization and trade were made possible. The Belarusian government is in complete control of most of its valuable industries firstly, because its economy is not as robust as the economies of Kazakhstan and Russia. Consequently, where Putin turned to solve the issue of a better control of parliament members[67] by the means of creating a party, and where Nazarbayev had the party originally installed matters of identity and

---

[64] Leonid Zlotnikov, "Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector and a Middle Class as a Source of Political Change in Belarus", in *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West*, eds. Margarita M. Balmaceda, James I. Clem and Lisbeth L. Tarlow (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 123-125.

[65] Margartia M. Balmaceda, "Belarus as a Transit Route: Domestic and Foreign Policy Implications", ", in *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West*, eds. Margarita M. Balmaceda, James I. Clem and Lisbeth L. Tarlow (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 163-164.

[66] Martha Olcott Brill, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 4.

[67] The fact that creating a ruling party helped against private funding of independent power helped his decision, too.

himself being a previous head of Kazakhstan in the SU days, Lukashenko had no such trouble in the first place (no privatization, no identity crisis), leaving the major part of the Belarus economy state-led.

Lukashenko's rise to power in Belarus was mainly based on the ticket of having an image of someone who fights corruption and the newly introduced multiple-parties. In the beginning of the 1990's Lukashenko was one of the most active members in the Belarusian parliament. This, together with the fact that he was not considered a political threat, earned him the seat as the chairman of the anti-corruption commission in 1993. Lukashenko took this chance, exposing his opponents and placing a large part of the blame on the structures of political parties. The president addressed parties as an unnecessary middle man. Lukashenko's aim to present himself as a direct representative of the public, and not of the interests of political parties. When considering that, Lukashenko's refusal to turn the Belaya Rus' movement into a party proper[68] might be based on the idea that for the electorate, parties would mean corruption, something that the opposition is busy with. In that way, parties in the opposition are not helping themselves. In the public, they are seen as shallow organizations, devoid of any ideological context.

Belaya Rus' is considered being the future government party of Belarus which leaves Lukashenko with more options open[69], thus removing any necessity of commitment. Nevertheless, Lukashenko himself is not a member of that social movement. This public association, being pro-government but not directly guided by the top might serve a different role than United Russia for Putin. At present, the movement is still relatively young and labeled 'public' rather than political, suggesting that it belongs to the people rather than the government[70]. The leaders of Belaya Rus' are thought to be pushing for turning the movement into a governing party proper. However, Lukashenko is firm in his stand against it. The idea is clear especially in light of Lukashenko's contrast with Putin. The latter is an apparatus person, one that has ties throughout the governing structure and knows his ability to control it. The former worked his way up from the bottom, understanding that initiating a political party might bring benefits to the other activists in Belaya Rus' but not necessary to Lukashenko himself. That

---

[68]Frear, loc. cit.

[69] David R. Marples, "Outpost of Tyranny? The Failure of Democratization of Belarus", *Democratization* 16, no. 4 (2009): 760.

[70] Elena Korosteleva, "Was There a Quiet Revolution? Belarus After the 2006 Presidential Election", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25, no. 2 (2009): 328-332.

works well with Lukashenko's hard worked image; of one that belongs to the people, fights corruption and the pro-Western attitudes by the opposition.

Indeed, the government has a number of ways to deal with the opposition in an autocratic country. To do so, it definitely helps for the opposition to be relatively known and organized which makes it easier to track. Anti-opposition practices allegedly include: blaming parties with inherent corruption[71]; and the identification of 'parties' with the West. That method of political engineering is not unique in Belarus but is argued to occur freely in the post-Soviet world. Building on earlier, even on tsarist practices, 'fake' parties were created when the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (KPSS) was still in control. One of such parties in contemporary Russia was the Liberal Democrats (LDP and later LDPR) led by Zhirinovsky. The idea was to take votes from the 'Democrat' party of the opposition posing as not only Democratic but 'Liberal', too[72]. Moreover, there were many techniques of initiating such parties (small parties and splitters, clones, planted 'double-agents' to direct the party)[73] but also various ways to hijack an election just in case a legitimate opposition party did come across. These included a commanding order of how to elect; ballot manipulation (results were manipulated *even* if there is no opposition like there was mostly the case in Kazakhstan); through sponsoring; through practically blackmailing citizens by turning off their heating or electricity[74]. We can see that similarly to Yeltsin, Lukashenko tried to impose the image of someone who 'rescued' Belarus from the hands of the parties, someone who brought back the 'good' parts of the old regime, discarding the allegedly wrong parts (parties) away. However, it still does not fully explain the inability of parties to emerge later on in Lukashenko's rule.

Learning and innovating

Modern autocracies could be seen as sources of learning and political innovation. Looking at what is happening to his partners for the Eurasian Economic Community (Russia and Kazakhstan), may have helped Lukashenko to set a route for his own political organization. Lukashenko understood that he could not make a party as in Kazakhstan, having no according elitist basis. He has seen Putin's alleged success with *United Russia* in controlling the oligarchs

---

[71]Mihalsko, loc. cit; Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 163.
[72] Wilson, op. cit., 22-25.
[73] Ibid, 161-172.
[74] Ibid, 73-74, 147-148.

at home. However, Lukashenko understood that another way was simply keeping these industries on hand, thus cutting the chances of opposition arising on that front to begin with. Creating a ruling party would perhaps nullify his hardly fought efforts for a non-aligned, simple Belarusian image and would potentially give a chance for the local opposition to establish itself. Thus unlike Nazarbayev who was invested in the party, Lukashenko had no such commitment. Unlike Yeltsin in the 1990's who refused to control a large party officially on the one hand, but helped privatizing state-owned industries and by doing so sponsor the rise of oligarchs, Lukashenko left the Belarusian government in control of all key industries. Finally, unlike Putin who then had to deal with oligarchs and the question of power control by the means of political party, Lukashenko found it easier to deal with the situation as it is, leaving little room for independent threat to develop, and preventing such a threat of rising from within a potentially strong political party. This proves the general notion developed from the population in my research. The public in Belarus appear to be satisfied with a status-quo, relying on the 'devil you know', rather than risking something for an alternative.

We have seen that two of the factors contributing to the failure of parties to gain power are the lack of ideological basis on the one hand and the inability to compete for governing positions on the other. Potential voters were seeing parties as representing no 'special', ideological values, and were mostly open and adamant about the fact that the opposition cannot achieve a position of power. If this is the case, a legitimate question arises: Why vote at all? Why a large part of the voters in Belarus take an interest in the elections and cast their vote? Why attend elections meetings or listen to political campaigns? As mentioned above, the SMD electoral system in Belarus (and indeed world-wide) allows for independent candidates to parliament more so than other known systems. However, basing myself on the interviews, I can proclaim that the work of parliamentarians in Belarus is not devoid of content. Being a personality-based electoral system, SMD allows for more direct contact of the representative with his or her constituencies. Although in liberal democracies the link between the representatives and the voters is based upon the former's will to be reelected[75], in Belarus such a link is available too. Thus, the SMD not only allows for the independent candidates to emerge, but it provides them with a tool to get elected, by leveling the playing field with the party-representatives. The result is a distorted version of what has been labeled *pork barrel* politics. The 'pork barrel' system operates in a way,

---

[75] David R. Mayhew, *Congress, the Electoral Connection*, (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1974).

where elected representative work in a way, that their own district would benefit the most. Benefits are geographically targeted, and even economically inefficient project are given a green light[76]. It is distorted, because where in liberal democracies the model is mainly used to describe those economic inefficiencies[77], in Belarus it could be used to help explaining why voting occurs. In fact, it was consisted throughout the interviews. My interviewees seemed to decide upon whom to vote for, based on the familiarity of the candidate, combined with what this candidate can do for them on a local level. So a former parliament member underlined to me, that his elections campaign was based upon 'solving issues', rather than striving for power or promoting ideologies, two issues we have already mentioned not to be a part of Belarusian parliamentary politics. Consequently, the parliament members are using the (sometimes very narrow) leeway place they have to try and help their constituencies (or at the very least promise to do so). Thus, since parties cannot offer the ideological substance or promise an influential place in the government, all that remains is the potential solving of local issues. Based on that, more and more partisan candidates in Belarus are running their election campaign concentrating on this notion, thus giving up the advantages the party could have provided them with originally. If so, the capturing of the power by the ruling apparatus by above mentioned methods, with president Lukashenko at its front, causes the failure of parties, but also in a way *promotes* the link between voters and their representatives. We see that the SMD electoral system is crucial to understanding the emergence of independent members of parliament in Belarus, and the public's remaining will to cast a vote. However, we have also seen that the SMD has not explained the full picture. Building on it, we showed above how inherited political institutions were addressed when Lukashenko ascended to power and how he deals with political parties through his presidency. Parties are not allowed to achieve political power and so cannot build themselves from the top, but parties also struggle to find ideological basis and so find it hard to build themselves from the bottom. Political parties in Belarus are kept at status quo: not strong enough to challenge for power, but also not weak enough to disappear.

---

[76] Thomas D. Lancaster, "Electoral Structures and Pork Barrel Politics", *International Political Science Review* 7, no. 1 (1986): 69-70.
[77] Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry R. Weingast, "Political Preferences for the Pork Barrel: A Generalization", *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 1 (1981): 96-111; Kenneth N. Bickers and Robert N. Stein, "The Congressional Pork Barrel in a Republican Era", *The Journal of Politics* 62, no. 4 (2000): 1070-1086; Anthony J. McGann, "Social Choice and Comparing Legislatures: Constitutional versus Institutional Constraints", *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 12, no. 3-4 (2006): 443-461.

Conclusion

This paper aimed at explaining the evolution of independent representation in parliament of Belarus, in comparison to a lesser presence in Russia and Kazakhstan. The first step was explaining the influence of the SMD electoral system. It was found that although it provides the ground for independent candidates. Next, the possibility of structural influences was examined. It was suggested that the initial policies of Lukashenko, the president of Belarus are responsible for holding the parties weak. Finally, it was added that the top-down structure which emptied parties of any governing possibilities and personality based elections are crucial in the weakness of parties in Belarus. There is no sole reason which is responsible for the absence of political parties in the Belarusian parliament. Instead, it is a combination of the basis of power, the electoral system, but chiefly the way the governing system were designed.

The practical implications are wide. A system of governance, in which parliamentary candidates run and are elected based on personal attributes and the solutions they intend to use in order to deal with local issues, may well be an alternative to a party system in which solutions are constrained by decades-old party ideology. The governing system, despite offering a strong authoritarian regime, still has a pluralistic society, in which some debates are still happening. Opposition and pro-governmental movements operate with a degree of freedom and the state provides a stable ruling mechanism. Independent representation might be a legitimate alternative to the partisan rule. The theoretical framework provides interesting aspects for political science as well. The method of field interviews combined with literature which included both Western and Belarusian/Russian authors provided a new insight into an established authoritarian regime. The conclusions drawn above, were common to most of the interviewees, with the varying background of the respondents playing little role in their answer.

This paper is an example of innovation in authoritarian regimes. We have seen how a relatively unknown regime manages to not only survive for over two decades, but remain stable even in the face of turmoil in nearby states combined with economic crises. Nevertheless, this paper has only opened the first door. Future research ought to continue its route, with a more extensive round of interviews, including citizens in Russia and Kazakhstan, countries which were only included in the current paper for comparison. This would allow us to extend the conclusions drawn above, and proclaim stronger assumptions. Belarus remains largely a riddle. This research though, is the first step towards unlocking it.

Bibliography

Abazov, Rafis. "The 1999 Presidential Elections in Kazakhstan". *Electoral* Studies 20 (2001): 313-321.

Aldrich, John H. *Why Parties?* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Ambrosio, Thomas. "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion: Concepts, Dynamics, and Future Research". *International Studies Perspectives* 11 (2010): 375-392.

Balmaceda, Margarita M. "Belarus as a Transit Route: Domestic and Foreign Policy Implications". In Margarite M. Balmaceda, James I. Clem and Lisbeth L. Tarlow (eds.), *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West*, 162-191. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Beachian, Donacha O. "Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan, September and October 2004". *Electoral Studies* 24 (2005): 762-769.

Beichelt, Timm. "Autocracy and Democracy in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine", *Democratization* 11 (2004): 115-117.

Beissinger, Mark R. "A New Look at Ethnicity and Democratization". *Journal of Democracy* 19 (2008): 85-97.

Bickers, Kenneth N. and Robert N. Stein. "The Congressional Pork Barrel in a Republican Era". *The Journal of Politics* 62 (2000): 1070-1086.

Birch, Sarah. "Single-Member District Electoral Systems and Democratic Transition", *Electoral* Studies 24 (2005): 281-301.

Belarus' Segodnya (SB). http://www.sb.by [last accessed: 21 June, 2015].

Brancati, Dawn. "The Electoral Fate of Independent Candidates Worldwide". *The Journal of Politics* 70 (2008): 648-662.

Brubaker, Rogers. "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account". *Theory and Society* 23 (1994): 47-78.

Capoccia, Giovanni and R. Daniel Kelemen. "The Study of Critical Junctions: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism". *World Politics* 59 (2007): 341-369.

Chudakov, M. et al. *Politicheskie Partie: Belorus' I Sovremenniy Mir*. Minsk: Tesei, 2005.

Colton, Timothy J. and Henry E. Hale. *Context and Party System Development: Voting in Russian Parliamentary Elections 1995–2004 in Comparative Perspective*. Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 2004.

Cox, Gary W. "The Development of a Party-Oriented Electorate in England, 1832-1918". *British Journal of Political Science* 16 (1986): 187-216.

Dave, Bhavna. "Kazakhstan's 2004 Parliamentary Elections: Managing Loyalty and Support for the Regime". *Problems of Post-Communism* 52 (2005): 3-14.

Dewhirst, Martin. "Censorship and Restrictions on Freedom of Speech in Russia: 1986-1991". In Wendy Slater and Andrew Wilson (eds.), *The Legacy of the Soviet Union,* 186-207. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Dower, Paul C. and Andrei Markevich. "A History of Privatization in Russia". *Journal of Comparative Politics* 42 (2014): 855-873.

Duverger, Maurice. *Political Parties*. London: Methuen Press, 1954.

Frear, Matthew. "The Parliamentary Elections in Belarus, September 2012". *Electoral Studies* 33 (2014): 343-356.

Gandhi, Jennifer. *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Gandhi, Jennifer and Ellen Lust-Okar. "Elections Under Authoritarianism". *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 403-422.

Golosov, Grigorii V. "The Effective Number of Parties", *Party Politics* 16 (2010): 171-192.

Hale, Henry E. "Yabloko and the Challenge of Building a Liberal Party in Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies* 56 (2004): 993-1020.

Grzymala-Buse, Anna. "Beyond Clientelism: Incumbent State Capture and State Formation", *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (2008): 638-673.

Hale, Henry E. "Why Not Parties? Electoral Markets, Party Substitutes, and Stalled Democratization in Russia", *Comparative Politics* 37 (2005): 147-166.

Hale, Henry E. *Why Not Parties in Russia? Democracy, Federalism, and the State.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Herron Eric S. and Misa Nishikawa. "Contamination Effects and the Number of Parties in Mixed-Superposition Electoral Systems". *Electoral Studies* 20 (2001): 63-86.

Huntington, Samuel P. *Political Order in Changing Societies.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

Isaacs, Rico. "The Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan, August 2007". *Electoral Studies* 27 (2008): 381-385.

Kennedy, Ryan. "A Colorless Election: The 2005 Election in Kazakhstan, and What It Means for the Future of the Opposition", *Problems of Post-Communism* 53 (2006): 46-58.

Kitschelt, Herbert. "Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities", *Comparative Political Studies* 33 (2000): 845-879.

Korosteleva, Elena. "Was There a Quiet Revolution? Belarus After the 2006 Presidential Election". *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 25 (2009): 324-346.

Korshuk, V., Kochanovskiy A. and Romanovskiy I. *Politicheskie Partie Respubliki Belarus'*. Minsk: BSU, 2005.

Kotlyarov, Igor'. *Istoria Polleticheskich Partiii Obshetvennich Dvizhenii Respubliki Belarus'*. Minsk: MIU, 2007.

Kotlyarov, Igor'. *Fenomen Mnogopartiinosti v Sovremennom Belorusskom Obshestve*. Minsk: FUAinform, 2009.

Kotlyarov, Igor'. "Simulyakri Politicheskogo Prostranstva". *Satzialogia* 1 (2014): 64-71.

Lane, David. "The Orange Revolution: 'People's Revolution' or Revolutionary Coup?". *The British Journal of Political and International Relations* 10 (2008): 525-549.

Lancaster, Thomas D. "Electoral Structures and Pork Barrel Politics". *International Political Science Review* 7 (1986): 67-81.

Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Lijphart, Arend. "The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws". *The American Political Science Review* 84 (1990): 481-496.

Lijphart, Arend. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

Manning, Carrie. "Constructing Opposition in Mozambique: Renamo as Political Party". *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24 (1998): 161-189.

Magaloni, Beatriz and Ruth Kricheli. "Political Order and One-Party Rule". *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (2010): 123-143.

Marples, David R. "Outpost of Tyranny? The Failure of Democratization of Belarus". *Democratization* 16 (2009): 756-776.

Mayhew, David R. *Congress, the Electoral Connection*. New Haven, Yale University Press: 1974.

McGann, Anthony J. "Social Choice and Comparing Legislatures: Constitutional versus Institutional Constraints". *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 12 (2006): 443-461.

Melnykovska, Inna, Rainer Schweickert and Tetiana Kostiuchenko. "Balancing National Uncertainty and Foreign Orientation: Identity Building and the Role of Political Parties in Post-Orange Ukraine". *Europa-Asia Studies* 63 (2011): 1055-1072.

Mihalisko, Kathleen J. "Belarus: Retreat to Authoritarianism". In Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, 223-281. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Moraski, Bryon. "Electoral System Reform in Democracy's Grey Zone: Lessons from Putin's Russia". *Government and Opposition* 42 (2007): 536-563.

Moser, Robert G. "The Impact of the Electoral System on Post-Communist Party Development: The Case of the 1993 Russian Parliamentary Elections". *Electoral Studies* 14 (1995): 377-398.

Moser, Robert G. "Independents and Party Formation: Elite Partisanship as an Intervening Variable in Russian Politics". *Comparative Politics* 31 (1999): 147-165.

Norris, Pippa. "Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems". *International Political Science Review* 18 (1997): 297-312.

Olcott, Martha Brill. "The Asian Interior: The Myth of "Tsentral'naia Aziia"", *Orbis* 38 (Fall, 1994): 549-565.

Olcott, Martha Brill. *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002.

Oversloot, Hans and Ruben Verheul. "Managing Democracy: Political Parties and the State in Russia". *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 22 (2006): 383-405.

Oversloot, Hans . "*Ot partiivlasti k Edinoj Rossii:* Konets rossijskoj mnogopartijnoj sistemy", in: M.A. Bljumenkrants (sost.), *Vtoraja Navigatsija. Filosofija. Kul'turologija. Literaturovedenië: Al'manach 10*, Prava Ljoedini, Char'kov 2010. 18-33.

Oversloot, Hans. "Kratkijobzor 'bezpartijnoj' sistemy Rossiii maloverojatnost' izmenenija rezjima", in: M.A. Bljumenkrants (sost.), *Vtoraja Navigatsija. Filosofija. Kul'turologija. Literaturovedenië: Al'manach 12*, Prava Ljoedini, Char'kov 2013. 83-103.

Pierson, Paul. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics". *The American Political Science Review* 94 (2000): 251-267.

Peyrouse, Sebastien. "Nationhood and the Minority Question in Central Asia: The Russians in Kazakhstan". *Europe-Asia Studies* 59 (2007): 481-501.

Praline Database on National Parliaments, N.D., http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp [accessed: 25 February, 2015].

Radnitz, Scott. "The Color of Money: Privatization, Economic Dispersion, and the Post-Soviet "Revolutions"". *Comparative Politics* 42 (2010): 127-146.

Rae, Douglas. *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

Riker, William H. "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science", *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982), 753-766.

Roeder, Philip G. "Peoples and States after 1989: The Political Costs of Incomplete National Revolutions". *Slavic Review* 58 (1999): 854-882.

Sartori, Giovanni. *Parties and party Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Schattschneider, E. E. *Party Government*. New York: Rinehart, 1942.

Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry R. Weingast. "Political Preferences for the Pork Barrel: A Generalization". *American Journal of Political Science* 25 (1981): 96-111.

Singer, Matthew M. "Was Duverger Correct? Single-Member District Election Outcome in Fifty-three Countries". *British Journal of Political* Science, 43 (2013): 201-220.

Strom, Alexandra. "Ambitzii I Bolshe Nechego". *Politika* 10 (2013): 66-70.

Taagepera, Rein and Matthew S. Shuggart. *Seats and Votes*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics", *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 369-404.

Tishkov, Valery. *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame*. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1997.

Tolz, Vera. "Forging the Nation: National Identity and Nation Building in Post-Communist Russia". *Europe-Asia Studies* 50 (1998): 993-1022.

Ware, Alan. *Citizens, Parties and the State: A Reappraisal.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987.

Willis, G. *Cognitive interviewing. A "how to" guide*. Meeting of the American Statistical Association. Available at: http://www.uiowa.edu/~c07b209/interview.pdf. (1999).

Wilson, Andrew. *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Zaprudnik, Jan. *Belarus: at a Crossroads in History*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993.

Zlotnikov, Leonid. "Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector and a Middle Class as a Source of Political Change in Belarus". In Margarita M. Balmaceda, James I. Clem and Lisbeth L. Tarlow (eds.), *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West*, 122-161. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Appendix 1

To make this research a reality, cognitive interviews were assessed, and supplemented by a comprehensive reading of the main Belarusian newspaper[78] with the aim of tracing back the official view on political parties. The field interviews (N = 18) were conducted with randomly selected adults of Belarusian nationality, who were at least illegible to vote in the previous parliamentary elections of 2012. Most of my interviewees live in the electoral districts of Minsk. For reasons of variance, one interviewee came from the city of Brest, and two from Gomel. It can be said, that no substantial difference was found based on geographic changes[79]. Three of the respondents emigrated from Belarus in the early 2000's, which produced the opportunity of comparing contemporary views to how the electoral process was perceived at the day. The youngest interviewees were in their 20's, while the oldest was in his early 70's. Respondents came from varying educational backgrounds: from no higher education, to a full professor status and one former parliament member. Overall, there was an equal distribution on the gender variable. All interviews were conducted in the Russian language, which I command fluently.

---

[78] The leading newspaper in Belarus today is "Belarus Segodnya" (Belarus today) which is accepted as the word of the government. Online data is freely available from 2000. For earlier additions the Belarus national archives in Minsk would have to be visited. *Belarus' Segodnya* (SB), http://www.sb.by [accessed: 24 March, 2015]; *Archivi Belarus'*, http://archives.gov.by [accessed: 24 March, 2015].

[79] Interviews would be conducted over the internet, or preferably face to face to allow a more cognitive approach; G. Willis, *Cognitive interviewing. A "how to" guide*, Meeting of the American Statistical Association, To be downloaded from: http://www.uiowa.edu/~c07b209/interview.pdf, (1999): 3-9; Examples of questions which will guide my inquiry could be found in appendix 1. Please note that they will be notasked directly: these question will merely serve as guides through the set of cognitive interviews.