

## BELORUSSIAN OPPOSITION INTELLECTUALS VERSUS ALEXANDER LUKASHENKO: SEARCHING FOR EFFECTIVE STRATEGY

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**ABSTRACT:** THE ARTICLE ANALYZES HOW BELORUSSIAN OPPOSITION INTELLECTUALS SEARCH FOR EFFECTIVE STRATEGY OF CONFRONTATION WITH THE PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC OF BELARUS ALEXANDER LUKASHENKO. THE AUTHORS REVEAL CONTRADICTIONS AND DIFFICULTIES IN OPPOSITION'S STRUGGLE.

**KEY WORDS:** BELARUS, ALEXANDER LUKASHENKO, BELORUSSIAN OPPOSITION, CONFRONTATION STRATEGY.

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THE events of Ukrainian “Euromaidan” in the end of 2013 – beginning of 2014 turned out to be nearly one of the most serious disturbances of the post-Soviet space for the last two decades. They raised many new questions, revealed the tendencies of possible political transformations in the newly independent states, forced the political elites and vast masses of population in many countries and regions to consider the challenges of the modern world.

WE can agree with the well-known Russian researcher of transformations on the post-Soviet space Vladimir Gelman, who noted that the question about the reasons for differences of post-Soviet transformations remains open, and therefore it is necessary to formulate new theoretical framework for the analysis<sup>1</sup>.

IT goes without saying that Ukrainian events affected neighboring Belarus. All the more the problems of democratic transit are burning enough for Belarus. These problems are especially topical for Belorussian opposition and generally for all Belorussian intellectuals who seriously worry about the future of their country.

OPPOSITION movement in modern Belarus grew in difficult conditions of a crisis after the collapse of the Soviet Union - firstly as the response to the policy of the Soviet authorities,

<sup>1</sup> Gelman V. Ya. Post-Soviet political transformations (Drafts to a theory) // Polis. Political studies. 2001. № 1. P. 15 (in Russian)

secondly as the reaction to the activity of Belorussian president – Alexander Lukashenko. The crucial role in the process of understanding and evaluating social and political situation in Belarus was played by Belorussian intelligentsia. It was Belorussian intelligentsia that tried to solve the difficult problem – interpretation and finding the guidelines of future development of society and state - often doing it together with the representatives of Belorussian opposition.

**BELARUS** in its political development stands apart from other East European countries. Geographical proximity, and also historical and economic connection with Europe, it would seem, could facilitate the broadcasting of the European liberal values on Belarus and its successful democratic transition, but in this country a particular specificity of political development has developed.

**THESE** specific issues have attracted the attention of various researchers from different countries. We can mention the works by Alexandra Goujon, Grigory Ioffe, David Marples and other scientists and analysts<sup>2</sup>. As it was noticed by these researchers, in Belarus in view of the lack of stable political traditions, the development of political pluralism proceeds slowly. The power system in every way constrains this process, demonstrating intolerance to any forms of opposition. In such conditions, the development of opposition movement is very problematic. The process of unification of opposition forces is difficult, the electorate of opposition for the time present is sprayed on various candidates and cannot turn into monolithic force, therefore opposition leaders and representatives of national Belorussian intelligentsia cannot change the political atmosphere in the country and extend the number of their supporters.

**THIS** situation is connected largely with restrained sentiments that prevail in the Belorussian society. Radical democratic reforms, which have been long argued by Belorussian intellectuals, don't satisfy with a significant portion of Belorussians. Moreover, watching the unstable situation after the "rose revolution" and the "orange revolution" in Georgia and Ukraine, many Belorussians did not want the recurrence of such situation at home, and therefore didn't wish coming to power of opposition.

**IN** the surroundings of Belorussian intellectuals, there is another trend. The intellectual environment is nourishing for discussion and analysis of alternative development ideas of

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<sup>2</sup> Changing Belarus. European Union Institute for Security Studies Chaillot paper № 85 / Edited by D. Lynch. – Paris, 2005. URL: <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp085.pdf>; Gira V. S., Dambrauskaite Z. Prospects of regime transformation in Belarus. – Madrid, 2010. URL: [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_eng/Content?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/Elcano_in/Zonas_in/DT12-2010); Goujon A. Language, nationalism, and populism in Belarus. URL: [http://www.pravapis.org/art\\_goujon1.asp](http://www.pravapis.org/art_goujon1.asp); Hadyka Y. Belorussian national idea within the context of national ideas of neighboring countries. URL: [http://old.bialorus.pl/index.php?pokaz=anus2003\\_3&&Rozdzial=ksiazki](http://old.bialorus.pl/index.php?pokaz=anus2003_3&&Rozdzial=ksiazki); Ioffe G. Cultural wars, soul-searching and Belarus identity // East European politics and societies. – 2007. – № 21. URL: <http://www.eep.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/21/2/348>; Lynch D. Time for new thinking in Belarus / Institute for Security Studies. URL: <http://iss.europa.eu/new/analysis/analy127.pdf>; Marples D. Belarus persecutes oppositionists. URL: [http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article\\_id=2372445](http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2372445); Praneviciute J. Belarus – the unfulfilled phenomena: the prospects of social mobilization. URL: [http://kms1.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/120651/ichaptersection\\_singledocument/28906494-a39d-4255-ac98-025b0e7dd397/en/Chapt.8.pdf](http://kms1.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/120651/ichaptersection_singledocument/28906494-a39d-4255-ac98-025b0e7dd397/en/Chapt.8.pdf); Radzik R. Identity of Belorussians and Ukrainians – similarities and differences // Annus Albaruthenicus. – 2004. – № 5. URL: <http://www.kamunikat.fontel.net/www/czasopisy/annus/05/04.htm>

society and the state. Questions of formation and development of national culture, language, identity and originality are constantly in the centre of attraction of Belorussian intelligentsia. Especially clearly the ideas of national revival can be traced among supporters and members of one of the most famous nationally oriented parties of Belarus - Belorussian Popular Front (BPF). This Association started its activities in the late 1980s and especially energetically advocated for the idea of Belorussian independence.

**BPF**, having at the very beginning of its activity ponderable support, could not hold its position in the future, reducing its activities mainly to the reforms in the sphere of culture. However, in the minds of the majority of Belorussian citizens strong ties with Russia played a more significant role than perspective, but largely illusory relations with Western countries, promoted by the BPF. Moreover, the BPF in fact had no program of economic reforms, which at the time Belarus really need - all these factors in total predetermined a decline in the popularity of this party.

**WITH** coming to power of Alexander Lukashenko conditions for the development of opposition in Belarus deteriorated significantly because of the intolerant attitude of the head of state to any uncontrolled movements. If at the beginning of his first presidential term Lukashenko tried to avoid confrontation with anyone, then afterwards the internal political activity of the regime reduced to a purposeful struggle against any forms of dissidence.

**IN** general, we can note a number of distinctive traits of Belorussian opposition intelligentsia. Initially, the political activities of the opposition assumed character alienated from the real life, that is, the leaders of the opposition movement often advocated for the goals and values that had not been paramount for the majority of Belorussian citizens. But the Belorussian society itself was enough controversial, not enough structured in socio-political terms, and society in the country could not create a complete framework for stowage of large-scale opposition bloc<sup>3</sup>.

**IT** largely determines the presence of a significant number of various opposition political parties and associations, which appeared in Belarus in the course of time. In terms of number opposition parties in Belarus are mostly small, and during the official registration in the Ministry of Justice, many of them barely overcame the necessary quantitative boundary that is why in the literature in regard to Belorussian parties you can often find such definitions as "dwarf" or "sofa".

**POLITICAL** parties often broke to pieces, which was typical, for example, to Belorussian Popular Front that demonstrated no unity regarding tactic activity. The unwillingness of the leaders of opposition parties because of personal ambitions to compromise necessary for effective joint action during election campaigns complicated the position of the opposition. This embarrasses the process of consolidation in the ranks of opposition, without which we cannot really expect the election victory and wide-ranging support among the population.

**THE** connection of Belorussian intelligentsia with opposition can be traced differently. The most popular leaders who showed themselves on different stages of Belorussian opposition development grew from the rows of Belorussian intelligentsia. For example, Zenon Poznyak – archaeologist and art historian (founder of Belorussian Popular Front), Vintsuk Vecherko – teacher and journalist (leader of BPF party), Anatoly Lebedko – teacher of history (leader of United Civil Party), Alexander Kozulin – former rector of Belorussian State

<sup>3</sup> Borzova I.S. Belorussian democratic opposition in 1990-s – beginning of the XXI century // Yaroslavl Pedagogical Bulletin. The Humanities. 2010. №4. Volume 1. P 72-76 (in Russian)

University and opposition candidate during presidential elections in 2006, Alexander Milinkevich – candidate of science in physics and mathematics (leader of “For freedom” movement and united candidate from opposition during presidential elections in 2006).

It should be noted that public initiative “Rada of Belorussian intelligentsia” appeared in Belarus and had much in common with Belorussian oppositionists – it voted for nomination of united opposition candidate against Lukashenko. The head of “Rada of Belorussian intelligentsia” Vladimir Kolos expressed his opinion about the role of this organization: “The aims that we follow are the understanding of the situation in our society and formulation of suggestions for their optimal solution made for people, authorities and organized opposition. And also activation and consolidation of our intelligentsia, procurement of inclusion of its representatives into civil and political activity because now it is vital for Belarus”<sup>4</sup>.

**REPRESENTATIVES** of Belorussian opposition and intelligentsia fighting for national revival first of all had to interpret and demonstrate specific character of national identity as historically grounded one, having European routes in its basis and significantly different from Russian identity. And in this Belorussian intellectuals are very much like “nationally thinking” Ukrainian intellectuals: they insist that authentic Belorussian identity was distorted during the Soviet period and is placed by the alien Soviet variant of Belorussian identity.

**THE** first space that can be interpreted as national (as mentioned in the work of the employee of European Humanitarian University Elena Gapova) is culture: in all post-Soviet countries national politics grew from groups that were restoring historical memorials, making archaeological excavations, etc. In Belarus the examples of such associations can be “Talaka”, “Maisternya”, “Tuteyshiya” and some others. Those who articulated national idea defined it as freedom: freedom to know the truth about their history, freedom to read national literature, freedom to speak national language<sup>5</sup>.

**BELORUSSIAN** oppositionists and representatives of national intelligentsia have their own view to the history of Belarus that does not coincide with official one. They make their own accents while evaluating historical events thus constructing national myth about the “golden age” of Belarus. One of the most important period of the history is the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that was formed in the XIIIth century. As some historians and politicians think, Belorussian political traditions that are based on the principles of democracy, pluralism and oriented to the West go back to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania<sup>6</sup>.

**THIS** vision of the past, present and future of the country was clearly formulated during the political struggle around the presidential elections in 2006 by the leader of Belorussian social-democratic party “People’s Gromada” Nikolay Statkevich. Analyzing political models in different countries of post-Soviet space he sharply opposed European model of relations between state and society (that was found in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Armenia) and Asian one (for example in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Analyzing this, Belorussian oppositionist raised very important question: “Why in Belarus that have not faced tatar and

<sup>4</sup> “Belorussian Gavel” Vladimir Kolos. BDG – Business newspaper. URL: <http://bdg.by/news/news.htm?76817,68> (in Russian)

<sup>5</sup> Gapova E. Belorussian intellectuals: between class and nation. URL: <http://belintellectuals.eu/publications/193/> (in Russian)

<sup>6</sup> Goujon A. Nationalism and identity in Belarus. URL: <http://centre-fr.net/IMG/pdf/AlmanachGoujonRU.pdf>

mongol yoke, communal land use, with its historical traditions of Magdeburg law we see Asian model of power?"<sup>7</sup>

IT should be noted that the answer to this question has not been really found by Belorussian intellectuals. Particularly Nikolay Statkevich himself gave unclear explanation of the reasons why the power of president Lukashenko is so stable and why is modern Belarus inclined to authoritarianism. As Statkevich supposes the reason is in the consequences of "transformational shock" after reforms that influenced Belorussians in the beginning of 1990s and in the support of Lukashenko from Russia<sup>8</sup>. But it is clear that reform shock among Belorussians was left in the past and the influence from without (not only from Russia but also from the West) can be found in many countries of post-Soviet space. Nevertheless, the appearance in Belarus of such tough and authoritarian leader as Alexander Lukashenko is not so surprising if we take into account the tendency to new authoritarianism typical for all post-Soviet space (or the tendency to the "new Caesarism")<sup>9</sup>.

IN the case of "new Caesarism" we are talking not just about the hard authoritarian power of archaic type, but of strong presidential power, formally using democratic institutions. But this power is necessarily individual, which aspires to increasing expansion of the real prerogatives of the ruling "Caesar".

ONE of the most impressive examples of such ruler is Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus. Although the same tendency to "new Caesarism" we see in almost all other states on the post-Soviet space, without those extremes and curiosities, which the current leader of Belarus is so endowed.

WE can identify the most significant characteristics in "new Caesarism", which at present is emerging more clearly on the post-Soviet space:

1. It is the regime of personal power, and not, for example, of a "ruling party".
2. "New Caesarism" definitely puts itself over all the political institutions in its country, that is secured by the corresponding titles, whether it's the Elbasi («national leader») in Kazakhstan, Turkmenbashi («father of the Turkmen») in Turkmenistan or just the Father in Belarus.
3. An integral feature of such a regime is a social maneuver required for domination over all the main orders. But social maneuvering necessarily implies populism, i.e. more or less permanent addressed sops for single social groups whose loyalty will be claimed before the next election or in other relevant for authorities circumstances. Thereupon, it is essential that this kind of social maneuvering significantly embarrasses the consolidation of democratic forces, as supports paternalistic sentiments among the masses.
4. The regime does not have a clear ideological orientation. And it is also quite natural, as rigid ideological framework would be too uncomfortable corset for "Caesars", would prevent them to adjust to changing state of affairs. And, in addition, would prevent their regimes to imitate "real democracy".

<sup>7</sup> Statkevich N. We are Europeans. Belarus as battlefield of values. URL: <http://www.br.minsk.by/index.php?article=28017&year=2006> (in Russian)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Usmanov S.M. New Caesarism in the context of problems of social, economical and political modernization on the post-Soviet space // News of the Southern Federal University. Pedagogical sciences. №8. P. 62-68 (in Russian)



5. The absence of a development strategy. This feature is very significant and, in fact, absolutely natural for regimes of “new Caesarism”. Unlike having a well thought-out program of necessary changes for a few decades ahead developed by the Chinese “communist elite”, “new Caesars” of the post-Soviet space are concerned with preservation of power for themselves here and now. Any real development program would be the script of sufficiently rapid departure from the political scene in favor of one or another successor for them, that, for many reasons for “new Caesars” themselves is not attracted to<sup>10</sup>.

**THE** characteristic of new authoritarianism on the post-Soviet space as a particular system of power – “new Caesarism” - seems to us more exact and essential for understanding of developed system of government than, for example, the latest developments of modern transitology, as the concept of “electoral authoritarianism” by Andreas Schedler<sup>11</sup>, or the approach of Andrew White with highlighting of the crucial role of “ruling party”<sup>12</sup>, or the model of “virtual democracy” by Andrew Wilson<sup>13</sup>. The understanding of such regimes as variations of “new Caesarism” has its advantages in comparison with the interesting and very accurate observations of Bulgarian researcher Ivan Krastev, who talks about having all democratic institutions and preserving the openness with respect to the outside world in the case of “vegetarian authoritarianism” in modern Russia<sup>14</sup>.

**THAT** is why, from the point of view of the “new Caesarism” concept, these almost insurmountable difficulties arise in opposition forces, as well as among single intellectuals. Really, if we take into account the most essential features of “new Caesarism”, it turns out that for people who live now in new independent states, political parties in general are neither authoritative nor relevant (both “ruling” and opposition parties). We have emphasized this fact in paragraph 1 of our description of “new Caesarism” (it means that it is the regime of personal power, and not, for example, regime of a ruling party).

**ANOTHER** problem for opposition forces in the conditions of new authoritarian regimes appears: the ruling “new Caesars” put themselves above all political institutions (see paragraph 2 of our classification). Therefore isolated, internally uncoordinated opposition cannot be authoritative in the masses. Moreover, social maneuvering of “new Caesars” supports paternalistic sentiments and embarrasses the consolidation of those opposition forces, which underline their democratic essence (see paragraph 3 of our classification).

**HOWEVER**, we would like to mention essentially non-ideological nature of “new Caesarism” and the lack of development strategy in such regimes on the post-Soviet space objectively represent their weakness (noted in paragraphs 4 and 5 of our classification). And these weaknesses could potentially be used by opposition forces in their activities. But only if they deeply comprehend the issue. However, the Belorussian opposition intellectuals haven’t solved this problem yet.

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<sup>10</sup> Usmanov S.M, Budanova I.A. Unclear contours of the future: perspectives of new Caesarism on the post-Soviet space // Ivanovo State University Bulletin. 2012. Issue 1. P. 130 (in Russian)

<sup>11</sup> Schedler A. (ed.). Electoral authoritarianism: the dynamics of unfree competition. Boulder, 2006. XI. 267 pp.

<sup>12</sup> White D. Dominant party systems: framework for conceptualizing opposition strategies in Russia // Democratization. 2011. Vol. 18. №. 3. P. 681 – 683.

<sup>13</sup> Wilson A. Virtual politics: faking democracy in the post-Soviet world. New Haven, 2005. XVIII. 332 pp.

<sup>14</sup> Krastev I. Paradoxes of new authoritarianism // Journal of Democracy. 2011. Vol. 22. №. 2. P. 5 – 13.

**BEFORE** the presidential election campaign of 2006 started, Belorussian oppositionists have several times declared that the experience of the “color revolutions” (especially in Georgia and Ukraine) is interesting for them and they are ready to act using this scenario. Particularly, the leader of United Civil Party Anatoly Lebedko in 2005 personally met with Mikhail Saakashvili and Nino Burdzhnashvili in Georgia where he got a warm welcome. Lebedko also mentioned that Belorussian opposition wants to repeat Ukrainian variant in Belarus<sup>15</sup>. He agreed with the statement of American president George W. Bush that orange revolution is a convincing example for the people from all over the world.

**THUS** Lebedko and some other Belorussian intellectuals oriented themselves to the model of “revolution by pattern” comparing and analyzing not concrete realities but forcing the concrete model of events’ development. In this case American analyst Ted Galen Carpenter turned out to be very acute. He prognosticated that some “good revolutions may turn bad”<sup>16</sup>. This exact situation happened with Anatoly Lebedko and some other Belorussian opposition intellectuals who hurried to be glad for the success of Euromaidan in the beginning of 2014. Lebedko personally visited barricades in Kiev and suggested to join democratic efforts of three countries – Belarus, Russia and Ukraine – against dictatorial regimes<sup>17</sup>.

**THIS** demarche did not add sympathy to Belorussian oppositionists among their potential supporters. On the contrary, many critical opinions have been demonstrated. Particularly, the leader of Belorussian party “The greens” Oleg Novikov noted: “The fact that the most of Belorussian oppositionists directly supported Maidan not orienting themselves in Ukrainian politics and its tendencies is their greatest mistake<sup>18</sup>”. Another oppositionist and analyst from Minsk, Valery Karbalevich, stressed that many Belorussians supported primary peaceful Maidan in Kiev. But when the power scenario started to be realized the average people were very frightened: “Now the authorities will point to Ukraine while suppressing any protest: do you what it to be like this?”<sup>19</sup>.

**ESPECIALLY** relevant for Belorussian opposition is the search for a model of development of their country, which would be an alternative to the existing system of government headed by Alexander Lukashenko. For the time present, in this respect, Belorussian opposition leaders face with great difficulties. One of the most characteristic evidence of this, in our opinion, are the materials of the round table held in June 2013 in Vilnius under the aegis of the Centre for research of Eastern Europe. The representatives of different trends among the opposition took part in this round table, including so experienced and well-known figures as Alexander Milinkevich, Anatoly Lebedko, Sergey Kalyakin, Grigory Kostusev. During the round table negative evaluation of Lukashenko policy and Russia as its main ally sounded normal for the opposition. In the latter case the representative

<sup>15</sup> Belorussian opposition prefers Ukrainian variant. URL: <http://afn.by/news/i/59633> (in Russian)

<sup>16</sup> Carpenter T.G. Good revolutions gone bad. National interest, 2011. June 1. URL: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/good-revolutions-gone-bad-5387>.

<sup>17</sup> Khodasevich A. Belorussian opposition at barricades in Kiev // Independent newspaper, 2014. January 27. URL: [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2014-01-27/7\\_belorussia.html?id\\_user=Y](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2014-01-27/7_belorussia.html?id_user=Y) (in Russian)

<sup>18</sup> Antisocial oligarchic capitalism in Ukraine. URL: <http://left.by/archives/822> (in Russian)

<sup>19</sup> Klaskovsky A. Belorussian Maidan will be strangled in fetus. URL: [http://naviny.by/rubrics/politic/2014/2/5/ic\\_articles\\_112\\_184477/print/](http://naviny.by/rubrics/politic/2014/2/5/ic_articles_112_184477/print/) (in Russian)

of BPF party Grigory Kostusev expressed himself most bluntly when he described Russia as “the greatest evil for Belarus”<sup>20</sup>.

**HOWEVER**, much less certain were the judgments of the participants of the round table about possible alternative to the existing situation. Indeed, the participants agreed with Alexander Milinkevich that changes in Belarus should not be revolutionary, but evolutionary, because Belorussians as Lithuanians, Germans and other Europeans don't want bloody transition<sup>21</sup>. But the essence of their alternative project has been stated very indefinably by oppositionists. Here the reflections of the representative of a political campaign "Tell the truth!" Andrey Dmitriev would be worth mentioning. He drew attention to the young and silent generation of Belorussians: “While their silence is neither in support of the regime, nor in our support. While it is silence of indifferent”. According to Dmitriev, the opposition will have to formulate an alternative, gaining confidence of this silent majority “working with their interests”<sup>22</sup>.

**DIFFICULTIES** of Belorussian intellectuals in their search of alternatives for Alexander Lukashenko's policy become easier with the help of investigations of European and American public figures and scientists. Especially the ideas of Polish analysts who very thoroughly study problems of neighbour country could be noticed.

**TAKE**, for example, considerations of an employee of the Centre of Eastern studies in Warsaw Camille Klysinsky published in 2012. Polish analyst gave very distressing assessment of the state and activity of Belorussian opposition. In his opinion, it is not able yet to govern a country as it is disintegrated, inclined to conflict, suffers from the lack of political culture and has no experience of government. However Klysinsky gives Belorussian oppositionists some very specific recommendations - designed reforms should not be too hard, the lack of thinking must be overcome, it is desirable for the opposition to build bridges with officials within the existing regime: “...experienced managers, the same directors, certainly will be needed after the change of power”. Moreover, Polish researcher openly names without any confusion those high-ranking state officials from “Lukashenko team”, who, in his opinion, can enter in the future government of present Belorussian opposition<sup>23</sup>.

**HOWEVER** there is a tendency among Belorussian opposition intellectuals to refuse the patterns and to seek for new more realistic scenarios of social and political transformations. In this case the confessions of one of the most known Belorussian oppositionist Alexander Milinkevich made in 2013 before Ukrainian Euromaidan are very typical.

**SOME** aspects in the reflections of Alexander Milinkevich are noteworthy. First of all it is the recognition of modern Belorussian opposition's bankruptcy: “It is not a secret that for the last years Belorussian opposition has weakened”. In this context Belorussian oppositionist recognizes opposition's responsibility: “Our fault is really serious because we are locked in our ghetto”. Secondly it is the appeal to radical change of the fight strategy against the system of power created by Alexander Lukashenko. “I am convinced, - says Milinkevich, that opposition should look for supporters also among authorities. We can't say that there are only

<sup>20</sup> Erofeev O. Belorussian opposition against bloody revolutions on the way to Europe – the second Lukashenko will come. URL: <http://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/abroad/belorusskaya-oppozicija-protiv-krovavyh-revolycij-naputi-v-evropu-pridet-vtoroy-lukashenko.d?id=4344411#ixzz35e2vADzH> (in Russian)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Klaskovsky A. Belorussian opposition is unable to rule the state at the present moment. URL: <http://nv-online.info/by/314/opinions/50953/BC.html> (in Russian)



dictators and criminals among authorities. There are also reputable people and people with experience there." Milinkevich also reminds that "they should be pro-European people – it is very important – because the future of Belarus is in the European Union." The third aspect of Milinkevich's political program stipulates to refuse to rely on the Square (Minsk analogue of Maidan in Kiev): "It is time to refuse the wrong ideas that the fate of Belarus will be decided by the Square and united candidate. Sacralization of the Square turned out to be fallacious." From his side Milinkevich suggests to the opposition the scenario of thoroughly developed step-by-step actions: "It is necessary firstly to define the tasks then the strategy how to win and after that to elect the candidate". Finally Belorussian oppositionist stressed that it is necessary to involve more actively ambitious and competent specialist from youth<sup>24</sup>.

**IN** addition, for the opposition part of Belorussian intelligentsia the question about the separation of the main leaders of opposition parties from the current Belorussian reality is very serious, and hence from a significant part of their potential supporters. This fact has been repeatedly recognized by members of opposition movement. Perhaps one of the most impartial assessments of this kind is the announcement of experienced organizer from Belorussian socio-democratic party (Gromada) from Vitebsk Anatoly Gnevko, made in June 2014. Like some other opposition activists, Vitebsk social democrat sharply criticized the opposition leaders for the gap between real life, excessive tendency to make pronouncements for effect, inactivity: "At the present time, opposition is not united, part of it lives in the country, slightly feels the breath of the Motherland, does something. Another part (maybe larger) lives abroad and from dictation of unknown person creates "Belorussian house", "foundations", "clubs" and so on, worrying about their personal well-being. Go home, Gentlemen, till it's too late, there's plenty to do here at home... The opposition must not rest on their laurels, but rolling up their sleeves, doing all selflessly to serve people"<sup>25</sup>.

**THERE** is another opportunity for more accurate interpretation of the possibilities and prospects of Belorussian opposition forces - it is the use of comparative analysis of two similar phenomena on the post-Soviet and post-Yugoslavian spaces. Namely, by comparing the position and prospects of democratic opposition in Belarus and Montenegro. This comparison does not seem arbitrary and accidental. There are definite parallels despite all differences in these phenomena. Like relatively small size Belarus has historically been closely linked with huge Russia, little Montenegro has centuries-old relationships with much larger Serbia. Moreover, in the current state of Belarus and Montenegro there is another very important analogy: the longstanding domination in both countries of a single political leader. If in Belarus it is Alexander Lukashenko, in Montenegro it is Milo Djukanovic. However, Montenegro is a much more democratic society in comparison with Belarus. But in Montenegro authoritarian political trends are quite obvious.

**ACTUALLY**, this comparative analysis of the activities of Belorussian and Montenegrin opposition we have already conducted<sup>26</sup>. So here we can give only the main considerations and conclusions of our analysis. We believe that both cases represent, on the one hand, the

<sup>24</sup> Belorussian oppositions needs young wolves and experiences top-managers. URL: <http://www.interfax.by/news/belarus/1141220> (in Russian)

<sup>25</sup> Victims of Chernobyl support colonel Gnevko. URL: <http://www.belaruspartisan.org/bel/blogs/volchanin/chernobyltsy-podderzhivayut-polkovnika-gnevko> (in Russian)

<sup>26</sup> Borzova I.S., Dokuchaeva N.A. The role of opposition and intelligentsia in the formation of civil society in post-communist countries of the Eastern Europe in the end of XXth – beginning of the XXIst century (by the materials on Belarus and Montenegro) // Intelligentsia and world. 2013. № 3. P. 35 – 51 (in Russian)

examples of “democratic transition” differing from each other, on the other hand, can be interpreted in the framework of one more concept - competitive authoritarianism. At the same time the main indices of this concept will also be different for both countries. So, Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, analyzing the case of Belarus, characterize the level of “links” (“linkage”) as “low” and “pressure” (“leverage”) as “middle”<sup>27</sup>, that shows quite high “resistance” of Belorussian state to external democratization, the consequence of which partly is low opposition activity, on the one hand, and the strength of the central government, on the other. The development of civil society in Belarus is also difficult, as the very concept of civil society intends the creation of society of western type - democratic. Low liability of socio-political relations in Belarus to western influence (in various fields) embarrasses the formation of civil society institutions.

**AS** for Montenegro, although the authors of the concept of competitive authoritarianism do not consider this country directly (they analyze only the case of Serbia, evaluating the level of «links» and «pressure» as «high»)<sup>28</sup>, we have reasons to believe that Montenegro within the framework of the concept of competitive authoritarianism can be characterized by a higher level of openness than Serbia. The level of democratization in Montenegro according to the main indices is higher than in Belarus, but in fact, Montenegro also belongs to countries with a regime of competitive authoritarianism - when competitive elections exist in conditions of serious violations of democratic procedures. The presence of wide spectrum of opposition parties in Montenegro does not mean the peaceful replacement of power. In fact in the country the same political forces remain in power for many years and, although in Montenegro the pressure of the authorities on opposition is not as pronounced as in Belarus, even the high level of influence of Western democracies does not lead to the formation in Montenegro of democratic regime and effective civil society.

**HOWEVER**, among significant differences of [discussed](#) cases, there are similarities. In particular, it is important to note that within quasi democratic regimes both in Belarus and Montenegro, opposition forces are often formed by the representatives of intellectuals on the basis of nationalist ideology and national idea.

**BOTH** Belorussian and Montenegrin phenomena are examples of “many-sided” democratic transition on the space of Eastern Europe, under conditions of which even the presence of opposition forces coming mostly from the circles of intellectuals with high civic activity, does not guarantee the stowage of democratic regime and the formation of civil society.

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<sup>27</sup> Levitsky S., Way L. Competitive authoritarianism. Hybrid regimes after the Cold War. Cambridge University Press, 2010. P. 201

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., P.104

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