OLGA LAVRINENKO *

Protests Against Fraudulent Elections in Belarus as Emancipation of the Parallel Civil Society

* [lavrinenko.olga@gmail.com] (Graduate School for Social Research, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland)

Abstract

In the authoritarian regimes dissident social activists are not recognized as agents who are capable of participating in decision- and law-making processes. In addition to the factual deprivation of political rights, representatives of the dissident social movements experience cultural deprivation of esteem from the entire society, since the majority of people in authoritarian regimes as a rule do not intend to protest against authoritarianism, perceiving the social order as legitimate and, consequently, the struggle against authoritarianism as illegitimate.

As the result of such rigid conditions, social activists are experiencing pressure both from the state and from fellow-citizens who do not recognize them as actors struggling for the 'common good'. Therefore, it is possible to claim that in authoritarian regimes social movements are not embedded into the broader civil society, but represent rather a parallel civil society, which possesses its own identity and source of emancipation.

This claim was confirmed by findings of my research, which was conducted from a sample of social activists with application of the Biographical-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM). BNIM was applied for the purpose of reconstructing ethically-oriented recognition and instrumentally-oriented redistribution dimensions of the social struggle in the context of Belarusian consolidated authoritarianism.

Keywords: civil resistance, recognition, redistribution, emancipation, parallel civil society.

Introduction: Redistribution vs. Recognition dimensions of the social struggle

This paper undertakes the task to explore redistribution and recognition dimensions of the protest mobilization under the conditions of the Belarusian consolidated authoritarian regime with the examples of the 'protest squares' of 2006 and 2010, with the purpose to find how these dimensions of social struggle are presented in the social struggle of Belarusian dissidents. Undoubtedly, the two 'protest squares' remained in the contemporary history of Belarus as the most noticeable episodes of civil resistance to the authoritarian state. The waves of public outrage in both cases were caused by the cases of massive electoral fraud in the presidential elections. Finding their expressions in the mass political protests organized at the main squares of Minsk, civil resistance represented ethically-oriented attempts of emancipation from the powerful authoritarian system and recognition of the dissident social actors' identity, rather than instrumentally-oriented demands of power redistribution.

From a theoretical point of view, I propose to explore these two contradictory approaches to the studies of protest mobilization. The first one is instrumental, structural, institutional, while the second is ethically-idealistic, socio-cultural and non-institutional. The first approach, connected with the set of political opportunity structure (POS) (Eisinger, 1973; Kitschelt, 1986; Tarrow, 1994, 2013; Kriesi, 2004) and resource mobilization (RM) theories (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978), implies that social actors decide to mobilize on the basis of rational calculation, weighing potential benefits and losses of unconventional models of participation. Favoring structural conditions, such as the opening up of the relatively closed political system (Eisinger, 1973); the openness/weaknesses of the political system (Kitschelt, 1986); perceived liberalization of the regime (Tarrow, 2013); anticipation of the support from other disadvantaged social actors (Tilly, 1978); and low repressive capacity of the system (Della Porta and Fillieule, 2004) also determine the probability of protest mobilization, providing a rationale for involvement in the collective action. The second approach to the protest mobilization studies discussed in this paper is a 'socio-cultural' approach (Habermas, 1984, 1996, 1999; Castells, 2012; Honneth, 1995; Fraser, 2005; Offe, 1985; Touraine, 1981, 1983). This approach certainly undermines the grounds of the structurally and instrumentally oriented approach to the issue of protest mobilization.

In contrast with the first approach, representatives of the second one reject instrumental rationalism (Habermas, 1984) and redistribution demands (Honneth, 1995) as the main explanations of the protest mobilization. These theorists call for the principally new societal project embodied in the New Social Movements (NSM). In the macro-sociological sense, NSM project is certainly anti-structuralist, since it calls for the sociology of action, where social actors (not social structure) define relations between each other (Touraine, 1981). Decentralization, expressed in the network structure of the contemporary social movements and usage of the new technologies for self-organization with the purpose of mobilization decrease the governmental control capacity over social movements' activities (Castells, 2012).

In this first part of the paper, the two dimensions of the social struggle are discussed, revealing the gap in the literature on studies of protest mobilization in the Belarusian authoritarian regime. In the second part of the paper, the discussion of the main definitions used in the paper (civil society, parallel civil society, social movements, opposition) is provided with the purpose to define where Belarusian dissidents are placed among this variety of definitions.

The third part is devoted to the comprehensive description of the methodology chosen for conducting the empirical part of the research. In choosing the strategy of interview data gathering, I follow the guiding principles of the Biographical-Narrative Interpretive Method (Jameson, 2005; Rosenthal, 1998; Wengraf, 2006), since I am particularly interested in how the interviewees make sense of their social struggle. BNIM is based on a constructionist approach to the interview data, and, therefore, allows reconstruction of the redistribution and recognition dimensions of the social struggle, exploring which is prevailing among the social actors in Belarus. The qualitative principles of data gathering in my research are supplemented by the quantitative principles of data analysis: the unit of analysis is not the respondent, but his/her statements. Since each respondent is a carrier of many statements, this at least increases the magnitude of the primary analytical units array, making this array statistically significant. I decided to withdraw from longer quotations, presenting analysis at the aggregate level, since the size of the article is restricted and data reduction is essential to comply with editorial requirements.

The fourth part of the paper contains analysis of the electoral situations of 2006 and 2010, focusing on the legal and political context in which the electoral campaigns unfolded, claiming that the political opportunity structure during that time was extremely closed, and, therefore, that mass protest mobilizations were not expected. Finally, in the conclusion, the results of the qualitative interviews' analysis are discussed. As the result of analysis, it was revealed that the ethically-oriented motives (80 per cent of statements) prevail over instrumentally-oriented (20 per cent of statements) (Table 1), allowing characterization of the social struggle as struggle for the recognition of the dissident actors' unique identities, previously denigrated by the authoritarian system.

Redistribution and recognition approaches to social struggle in social theory

Overall, according to the POS and RM approaches, social actors mobilize, when they perceive that the political opportunities structure begins to open, providing an opportunity window for outsiders to enter the field of political struggle with their own demands. Besides this, social actors calculate to what extent their participation in the protest actions will be beneficial for them, estimating potential benefits and losses of this participation, and if the benefits outweigh losses, they are likely to engage in protest actions.

This approach to social movements' mobilization was sharply criticized, because of its focus on invariant structural determinants, mixing up structural factors

with non-structural, neglecting non-structural factors and the role of agency in social change (Gamson and Mayer, 1996; Goodwin and Jasper, 1999).

Gamson and Mayer (Gamson and Mayer, 1996) suppose that the main drawback of POS is its catch-all character. Since this concept is too broad, completely different aspects of social movement environments (political and cultural) are often referred to this concept. The methodological fallacy in applying this theory is concluded in the fact that in trying to explain everything by the introduction of a cluster of variables, this theory risks explaining nothing. For the different purposes of research, political opportunity structure could be methodologically introduced as cluster of dependent, intervening or independent variables (Gamson and Mayer, 1996: 275-276).

The cultural dimension of social movement activity, often neglected by POS theorists, needs particular attention, since every movement appears in certain cultural environment, which means that not only political institutions and variance of relationships between political actors influence social movement activity, but also the history, political culture, 'cultural climate', zeitgeist prevailing in the country where this movement is appearing. Another important issue is emphasizing the smaller, issue-specific opportunities instead of a dichotomous 'Big Opportunity', which is usually used by most scholars working in this tradition (Gamson and Mayer, 1996: 282).

Similarly to Gamson and Mayer, Goodwin and Jasper (Goodwin and Jasper, 1999), criticize POS for its broad and catch-all character, which involves tautology and triviality. They argue that if the POS concept includes every factor related with environment (X variables), where social movement (Y variable) operates, the causal relations between them (X leads to Y) seem to be rather obvious (Goodwin and Jasper, 1999: 31). Goodwin and Jasper reject the invariant modeling of POS, proposing to acknowledge the diversity of elements shaping collective actions, including interactions between culture and agency, emotions and strategizing. According to them, the weaknesses of the POS approach come from the strong biases toward 'structure'. So many causal variables and mechanism are referred to using the label 'structure' that this tool becomes unreliable from a methodological point of view. When 'structural' factors (i.e., factors assumed to be relatively stable over time) are analyzed as the main and only determinants of social movement activity, other 'non-structural' factors are often neglected or also analyzed as 'structural'.

It is interesting that Goodwin and Jasper criticize not only the POS approach to the studies of protest mobilization, but also the 'cultural framing' analyzed by Gamson and Mayer as a necessary complementary dimension of protest mobilization studies. According to Goodwin and Jasper, 'cultural framing' is tautological to the same extent as POS (Goodwin and Jasper, 1999: 43-44). Moreover, 'cultural framing' (understood as identities, grievances, shared goals) together with 'mobilizing structures' (understood as organizations and advocacy networks) build a circular argument, since social movements themselves could also be defined through these terms as 'organizations and advocacy networks, which share collective identities, common grievances and goals'. In this way, the logical error appears in the way that causes of mobilization are mixed up with pre-existing characteristics of social movements.

To overcome the conceptual and methodological drawbacks of POS, they recommend following several principles, the main idea of which is a proposition that empirical variation requires conceptual variation. Different kinds of movements require different kinds of approaches, and POS is not always a necessary framework of analysis. In a similar way, emphasizing the collective identity is not required for all types of movements (Goodwin and Jasper, 1999: 52).

The guiding principle of the recognition approach for studies of social struggle is understanding the social conflict as an attempt to get the conditions for self-realization back.[1] This understanding of the social conflict strictly differentiates from the mainstream understanding of the conflict as the struggle for redistribution of the resources, and symbolic or political power. The political-philosophical debate between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser (Honneth and Fraser, 2005) accurately touched these controversial issues. Fraser introduces a two-dimensional concept of justice, which includes both perspectives of recognition and redistribution, while Honneth stands for the recognition-centered approach to social justice. But what is most important, is that despite differences between the two approaches, the recognition concept is present in both. By proposing a two-dimensional model, Nancy Fraser does not question the importance of the concept of recognition. However, she introduces dimension of redistribution analyzing social conflicts more in political science terms, in comparison with Honneth, who is clearly a moral philosopher.

As a rule, scholars who study protest mobilization in the Post-Soviet countries concentrate on the variations of the first approach (Kalandadze and Orenstein, 2009; Bunce, 2003; Bunce and Wolchik, 2006a, 2006b; D'Anieri, 2005, 2006; Karatnycky, 2005; Mitchell, 2004; Silitski, 2005a, 2006b), trying to evaluate to what extent the 'electoral revolutions' (a term, introduced by McFaul, 2006) were successful or why some of them failed. If post-elections protests had relatively successful outcomes (as in the case of Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004 and Kyrgyzstan in 2005), scholars sometimes compare them with the wave of revolutions in Central Europe that occurred from 1988 to 1992 (Aslund and McFaul, 2006; Karatnycky, 2005; Silitski, 2005a), even calling the revolutions of 2003-2005 'a second wave of revolutions', which had effects on the democratization of these states comparable with the democratization effect of the first wave of revolutions (Bunce and Wolchik, 2006a).

Generally, the above-mentioned research studies had chosen an institutional approach to the study of protest mobilization, evaluating the 'electoral revolutions' as the peculiar feature of pseudo-democratic political regimes. I avoid usage of this concept, since it is too tendentious to call post-elections protests revolutions, even if those protests gathered large numbers of participants and had an influence on regime change. In any event, the term revolution can be applied only in the case of significant systemic transformation (for example, transformation from a command to a market

---

[1] Axel Honneth elicited three conditions essential for self-realization and identity-formation: a) love and basic self-confidence; b) respect for human rights and dignity, which is established legally and institutionally; c) solidarity and self-esteem in the sense of recognition of the agents, previously denigrated as the contributors to the common good (Honneth, 1995).

economy), while the aftermaths of the post-elections protests did not in fact bring any systemic transformations.

As for the second approach to the protest mobilization in the Post-Soviet countries, there is a certain gap in the scientific literature regarding this issue. The phenomenon remains understudied and, therefore, the present research is probably the first attempt to explore both the instrumentally-oriented redistribution and ethically-oriented recognition dimensions of the social struggle in the context of Belarusian consolidated authoritarianism, by the example of protests against the fraudulent presidential elections of 2006 and 2010.

'Civil society', 'parallel civil society', 'social movements', 'opposition': Where can Belarusian dissidents be placed?

I evaluate the ethically-oriented social struggle for recognition pursued by Belarusian social activists as emancipation of the nascent *parallel civil society*, which could contribute to the democratization of the authoritarian regime and also to the creation of a postmodern-type civil society in Belarus. Among a number of civil society definitions[2], it is possible to distinguish three main characteristics of the postmodern-type of civil society: 1) civil society as a third sector, opposed to both the state and the market (Żuk, 2001); 2) civil society as a sphere of polity, where individual and collective actors, relatively autonomous from the state, try to articulate their values and interests (Linz and Stepan, 1996); 3), and civil society as a political society, i.e., as a sphere of contest for public power (Kopecky, 2003).

What should be emphasized here is the autonomous character of individual and collective actors' functioning, actors who compose civil society in all three definitions, and their controlling functions. When we evaluate the situation at the aggregate level in Belarus, it is possible to claim that there is no civil society in the above-mentioned terms. Formally, over two thousand registered non-governmental organizations are active in Belarus[3], but they resemble Soviet-type quasi-NGO organizations. Such Soviet-type organizations could not be referred as civil society, since they completely lack any autonomy from the state. Moreover, they do not implement controlling functions over the state. They rather function as the regime's legitimization toward internal and external observers, receiving grants from governments and, overall, do not make any demands for regime democratization, since they are embedded in the system and have financial and status interests.

---

[2] For more comprehensive analysis of the (un)civil society concepts, please see Piotrowski, G. (2009) Civil Society, Un-Civil Society and the Social Movements. *Interface: a journal for and about social movements,* 1 (2): 166 – 189.

[3] According to the Ministry of Justice, these official quasi-non-governmental organizations are represented by sport organizations (525); charities (349); culture and leisure clubs (295); youth groups (178) etc. Besides this, there are 82 registered foundations, 22 associations; 35 professional and labor unions. (Golovanov and Slizhevsky, 2010: 34).

Besides these registered quasi-non-governmental organizations, there are also organizations that are not able to obtain a registration, because of their anti-governmental nature, aimed at a contribution to the transformation of the regime from authoritarian to democratic. For these independent and as a rule non-registered organizations, the quasi-non-governmental entities can not be the partners in the creation of the postmodern type of civil society, since being non-autonomous and not controlling the state they contradict the very notion of a post-modern civil society.

Evaluating the situation with civil society in Central Europe, Grzegorz Piotrowski emphasized that in the Central European Countries 'the call for the autonomy of civil society was in fact the call for freedom and the creation of parallel and independent structures as a means to achieve it' (Piotrowski, 2009: 171). This is exactly a direction in which Belarusian dissidents are going. Therefore, despite the concept of 'parallel society' having a specific Central European connotation connected to a larger extent with the heritage of Vaclav Havel, Vaclav Benda, and Adam Michnik, it also could be placed in the contemporary Belarusian context.

Belarusian dissident circles create a parallel civil society, differentiated from any official pro-governmental and pro-authoritarian structures. This 'parallel society' contributes to the formation of wider protest movements, which hypothetically could achieve regime change. Besides this, dissident circles lay the cultural foundations of the future civil society of a democratic regime. Similar to the *samizdat*, they have alternative publishing sources[4] and alternative mass media[5], which became available mainly because of technological development (Internet, satellite television). Thanks to these independent sources of information, citizens have the opportunity to feel that they belong to the group of differently-thinking people, which also maintains their identity.

Overall, the protests against fraudulent elections of 2006 and 2010 illustrate the linkages between dissident circles and wider protest mobilizations and even allow claims about the existence of a 'dissident social movement' in Belarus. In order to make points of differentiation between social movements and civil society actors (NGOs), proposed by Piotrowski (Piotrowski, 2009: 184-185), it is relevant to apply the term 'social movement' in relation to the Belarusian dissident activists. Firstly, looking at the source of funding, Belarusian dissident activists are not relying on state funds. Moreover, they are not able to get any, because they are not registered as official third sector. Secondly, they have an undoubtedly confrontational attitude toward the state. Thirdly, they politicize their claims and protests against fraudulent elections, thus representing cases of politicized mobilization. Fourthly, they have a strong *collective identity* and that is why I introduce 'recognition' theories (Honneth, Habermas) into this paper.

---

[4] They publish books in Poland and Lithuania.

[5] Newspapers, mainly circulated in the Internet (*Nasha Niva, Belorusskiy Partisan*); information portals (*Naviny.by, charter97.org*); radio (*Radio Racyja, Evropeyskoye Radio dla Belarusi*) and satellite TV channel *Belsat*, based in Warsaw, but can be watched in Belarus using satellite dishes and receivers.

The 'Struggle for recognition', conceptualized by Habermas and Honneth, represents a source of collective identity formation. A claim for recognition is indisputably connected with the intention to give back the conditions for self-realization, which are restricted in the authoritarian regime. Therefore, following the logical chain, my reasons for calling the Belarusian dissident circles a specific type of social movement will be as follows. Claims for recognition, which create the sense of belonging to the wider groups of morally outraged people, were expressed in the protests against the fraudulent elections. Protests against fraudulent elections were inspired by the dissident circles, which spread the information about the high probability of electoral fraud in both cases, and invited dissidents to come to the squares. Common in both cases was a sense of belonging to the wider group of people, who share the same claims for recognition and, therefore, a common identity. These people came to the squares not only to support certain leaders, but to support certain ideas and express their claims for recognition as a group of people sharing values which differentiate from the mainstream.

At the same time, it should also be pointed out that those social activists, who call themselves 'opposition' in Belarus, from the clear political science view, cannot be called that. In democratic regimes the opposition fights for power and redistribution, while in authoritarian regimes, where opposition is unable to win elections, they rather fight for ethical demands of recognition. Therefore, I prefer to use the term 'dissident social activists', or 'dissident social movements', although sometimes in the text I also use the term 'opposition' when referring to people who oppose the regime or define themselves as opposition.

Principles of data collection and analysis

For the interviews I chose people representing the most active groups of social struggle for the reason that they verbalized specifics of their political group easier; therefore it facilitates 'extraction' of axiological materials. The narrative interview begins with SQUIN – Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative(s). In my case this single-question reads: 'Can you please tell me the story of your life, describing all the experiences and events which were important for you and induced you to begin your social struggle?' This question initiates a set of follow-up questions when my informants begin to tell the stories concerning their participation in the events of 2006 and/or 2010. I asked to them to speak about motives (ethical or instrumental), which drove them to take part in the protest actions and, their expectations and impressions from these events, I also asked them to reconstruct the sequence of events and the development of the situation after the elections of 2006 and 2010. When I conducted interviews I paid particular attention to the description and analysis of the POS made by informants, trying to identify, whether the POS was perceived as opening up or not.

Settings. The principal of sample formations is snowball sampling. For the purpose of network finding, initial acquaintances among Belarusian social activists, who fleeing

abroad after the events of 2006 and 2010, bring a sufficient contribution to the sample formation on the principle of snowball. Among initial acquaintances the following were people affected by the regime: two opposition leaders; a former political prisoner; a journalist; and a sociologist who were forced to emigrate because of power oppression against them and the companies, where they worked.

Overall, I conducted 13 interviews according to the principles of Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method. The average duration of the interviews was 180 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Warsaw: some of the interviewees resided there on a temporary basis, others were just visiting the city on a business or for other reasons. I was trying to recruit people with different professional backgrounds, ages, and genders, from ideologically different social movements, as well as people not attached to any movements in order to reduce the selectivity bias. The only necessary condition for recruiting a person was participation in the post-elections protests in 2006 or/and 2010.

Research focus. I operationalized the construct of 'ethically-oriented motives' through the argumentation type of the respondent, in which the following patterns of justifications occur: 1) participation with the aim to re-establish/defend the respect of the human rights and dignity; 2) participation with the aim to re-establish/defend the self-esteem of the person, previously denigrated by the system; 3) participation as expression of the solidarity with previous two groups.

However, to prevent the potential threat of exemplary chosen instances, I introduce a rival construct of 'instrumentally-oriented' motives, characterized by the occurrence of the following patterns of justifications: 1) participation in the protest actions with the aim to get some benefits from the government; 2) participation in the protest actions as a part of larger PR-campaign; 3) participation in the protest actions without expression of the solidarity with denigrated groups, but with the aim of supporting concrete leaders.

Elections, electoral fraud and protest mobilization in 2006 and 2010.

Analysis of the legal framework in which social activists operated during the electoral campaigns of 2006 and 2010, indicates that the authorities made all possible efforts to criminalize any anti-governmental protest actions and activities of the dissident groups. Overall, it is possible to define three types of amendments that negatively affected dissidents groups: 1) amendments to the Criminal Code, concerning activities of the non-registered organizations; 2) amendments to the Electoral Law, concerning the voting rights, procedures of agitation and electoral observations; 3) amendments to the Law on Mass Assemblies, concerning the organization and conduct of rallies, picketing and other mass assemblies.

1) Amendments to the Criminal Law.[6] The House of Representatives (Belarusian parliament, which consists of deputies absolutely loyal to the president) adopted amendments in December 2005 to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. Several new articles were introduced into the Criminal Code. According to article 193-1, activity on behalf of an unregistered organization is punishable with two years of imprisonment. Article 293 (Mass disorders) was supplemented by a third part, according to which training or other forms of preparation for participation in 'mass riots', or financing of such events is punishable with six months to three years of imprisonment. The Criminal Code was also amended by the new article 369-1 (Discrediting the Republic of Belarus), where the notion of discrediting is refers to any 'false' (from the official viewpoint) information about the political, economic, social, military, or international situation of Belarus. Such activities are punishable with imprisonment of up to two years.

2) Amendments to the Electoral Law. According to the amendments, people who are kept by a court verdict in a state of deprivation of liberty, were deprived of active and passive voting rights (article 4.1). It was also determined in article 35 that only registered political parties, NGO activists, and labor collectives could be nominated to the electoral commissions. International observers can work at elections only if they are invited by the authorities (article 13). Article 45 (regulating agitation procedure), which repeats the amendments to the Law on Mass Assemblies, is presented below.

3) Amendments to the Law on Mass Assemblies. The fixing of the significant restrictions on freedom of assembly was amended to Articles 5 and 6 of the Law on Mass Assemblies. According to these amended regulations, it is necessary to obtain permission from the local authorities to organize a meeting with constituencies in the framework of an electoral campaign. Organizers of such events are obliged to finance the police services (safeguarding of the meetings), ambulance (which should be on duty at the meeting), and cleaning the territory after the event.

Elections of 2006: high repressive capacity of the system and extremely closed POS.

It was against such a background that the presidential campaign unfolded. On December 27, the Central Electoral Commission registered initiative groups of eight potential contesters, who were allowed to collect signatures to be nominated as candidates. In the end, only four of the eight potential contesters collected more than 100 000 signatures necessary for registration. Only these candidates were allowed to participate in the elections. The list of candidates included incumbent president Aliaksander Lukashenka, Aliaksander Milinkevich (candidate nominated by Congress of Democratic Forces), Aliaksander Kazulin (Belarusian Social Democratic Party), Siarhey Haydukevich (pro-presidential Liberal Democratic Party).

---

[6] All legal documents could be accessed through on-line database:
http://etalonline.by/?type=card&regnum=Hk0600139

To describe the political stances of these candidates briefly[7], Aliaksander Lukashenka traditionally called for preserving of the authoritarian stability expressed in the paternalistic welfare state, which attracts mainly socially disadvantaged people and pensioners. Siarhey Haydukevich was not differentiated from Lukashenka, since Haydukevich always filled the role of Lukashenka's 'sparring-partner'. In practice, Haydukevich's Liberal Democratic Party has nothing in common with liberal democracy. Participating in elections, Haydukevich legitimizes the electoral process for external observers by creating the illusion of a moderate alternative candidate's presence.

Aliaksander Milinkevich (leader of the 'For Freedom' movement) was elected as a candidate by the Congress of Democratic Forces in 2005. The central point of Milinkevich campaign was the idea of Belarusian integration in Europe. He supposed that the European option for Belarus could guarantee democratic transformation of the country (and all derivatives from that, such as respect for human rights and free and fair elections) and maintenance of sovereignty in the face of pro-Russian influence.

Aliaksander Kazulin (who was at that moment a leader of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party) did not participate in the Congress of Democratic Forces, preferring to act as an independent candidate. The main message of his program was the necessity to renovate the power apparatus. In general, Kazulin did not emphasize the issue of Belarusian integration into Europe, in comparison with Milinkevich, for whom this issue was central. Despite the fact that Milinkevich behaved in a restrained and calm way, and did not condemn Kazulin directly because of his decision to run for president, people from Milinkevich circles[8] did not welcome the decision of

---

[7] Description is based on data from open sources (Belarusian independent mass-media and information portals) and represents the author's own observation and analysis.

Chto mogut predlozhit' belorusam potentsial'nyye kandidaty v prezidenty? (What can the potential presidential candidates offer to Belarusians?). Retrieved from http://zautra.by/art.php?sn_nid=6504&sn_cat=17 Accessed: 01-06-2015

Gaydukevich nazval lidera ob"yedinennoy oppozitsii Milinkevicha autsayderom izbiratel'noy gonki (Gaydukevich called the leader of the united opposition Milinkevich outsider in the race). Retrieved from http://news.tut.by/elections/62599.html Accessed: 01-06-2015

Milinkevich: Ob"yedinennaya oppozitsiya - ne "zapadnyy proyekt" (Milinkevich: United Opposition is not "Western Project"). Retrieved from http://afn.by/news/i/70509 Accessed: 01-06-2015

Milinkevich obvinil Kozulina v provokatsii (Milinkevich accused Kozulin of provocation). Retrieved from http://lenta.ru/news/2006/03/25/kozulin/ Accessed: 01-06-2015

Politsovet ob"yedinennykh demsil utverdil predvybornuyu programmu Milinkevicha (The political council of united democratic forces adopted the electoral program Milinkevich). Retrieved from http://news.tut.by/elections/64261.html Accessed: 01-06-2015

Predvybornaya kampaniya v Belorussii vstupila v final'nuyu stadiyu (The election campaign in Belarus has entered the final stage). Retrieved from http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/02/20/four/ Accessed: 01-06-2015

Predvybornyye lozungi kandidatov v prezidenty Belarusi: s 1994 malo chto izmenilos' (Election slogans of the presidential candidates in Belarus: since 1994, they has changed not much). Retrieved from http://dw.com/p/OK62 Accessed: 01-06-2015

[8] In the case of present research, informant #8 (a person, who cooperated with Milinkevich closely) spelled out his concerns about splitting of the opposition electorate by the several candidates.

Kazulin to begin an independent campaign, supposing that participation of the several candidates from the opposition in the elections would create a more comfortable situation for the current regime, since several candidates split the electorate. As my informants noted, during the electoral campaign, opposition candidates encountered numerous instances of the notorious 'administrative resource' usage. Representatives of the opposition candidates were not allowed to collect signatures in student dormitories, because administration simply did not let them into the building, while representatives of Lukashenka and Haydukevich were welcomed. Observers also told about the cases when people were forced to sign for Lukashenka. Those people who supported opposition candidates also faced pressure, including threats of dismissal from their workplace or expulsion from their university.

Besides this, management of business companies and directors of educational establishments gave their employees and students instructions how to vote in advance, threatening negative consequences if they would not follow these instructions. By March 19th, 31 per cent of constituents had voted by absentee ballots.[9]

The quality of the electoral process deteriorated during the counting of vote cast. Independent observers from OSCE evaluated negative counting procedures in 50 per cent of cases.[10] Among the violations noted were failures in completing the established procedure, presence of unauthorized persons in the commissions, manipulations with protocols of voting results, and improper handling of complaints. Nearly 70 per cent of precinct election commissions did not announce the number of votes cast for each candidate before drawing up the protocols.

Official results indicated that Lukashenka received 83 per cent of votes, Milinkevich – 6.10 per cent, Kazulin –2.2 per cent, Haydukevich –3.5 per cent, and 5.2 per cent voted against all candidates.[11] The opposition did not agree with the official results, also making claims about dozens of violations and the unfairness of the contest. After the elections, supporters of the oppositional candidates came to Oktyabrskaya square to express their disagreement with the official results of the elections.

Kazulin and Milinkevich delivered speeches at a rally, saying the elections were fraudulent, not reflecting the will of the people. They demanded that democratic elections be conducted on July 16, 2006. A tent camp was organized, and the rally lasted more than four days. Despite the fact that during the first five days the government permitted these actions to continue, the police regularly detained protesters who were leaving the venue of the rally or returning there. They were reported to prevent people from bringing protesters supplies, warm clothing, and blankets.[12] Despite the policing of protest, many protesters continued their actions

---

[9] Tsentralnaya Izbiratelnaya Komissiya Respubliki Belarus (Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Belarus) (2006) http://www.rec.gov.by/sites/default/files/pdf/Archive-Elections-PRB2006-Sved1.pdf Accessed: 31-05-2015.

[10] OSCE (2006, June 7) Belarus, Presidential Election, 19 March 2006: Final Report.

[11] Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Belarus (2006).

[12] Description of the protest event based on evidence given by informants # 2, 7 and 9.

until police officers dispersed the tent camp and arrested the remaining participants. Within a week after the rally, 500 to 1 000 people, including Kazulin, were detained.

Finally, Kazulin was sentenced to five and a half years of imprisonment for three counts: two counts of 'malicious hooliganism', and one count of 'organization of group activities violating public order'. He was pardoned by Lukashenka in 2008 due to the pressure of Western economic sanctions on the Belarusian regime. After his release from prison, he withdrew from political activity. Milinkevich lives in exile in Poland, trying to coordinate European and Polish humanitarian programs for Belarus. He has distanced himself from politics, preferring involvement in cultural diplomacy. He often comes out to the conferences in support of Belarusian political prisoners, visits EU institutions and national parliaments, calling for a more active position from the EU on the issue of Belarusian authoritarianism.

Elections of 2010: greater dispersion of the opposition and pseudo-opportunities

All restrictive measures, introduced into the Criminal Code, the Electoral Law, and the Law on Mass Assemblies in 2006, continued to act without any degree of mitigation. Some degree of liberalization concerned only providing airtime on state television for opposition candidates and allowing them to organize election campaigns without obstacles from the side of local authorities and state security services.

Overall, ten candidates (including Lukashenka) participated in the elections in 2010. Among them, eight candidates – Rygor Kastuseu, Ales Mikhalevich, Uladzimir Niaklyaeu, Andrei Sannikau, Mikalay Statkevich, Yaraslau Ramanchuk, Vital Rymasheusky and Dzmitry Vuss could be evaluated as opposition candidates.

Sannikau, a former diplomat and Niaklyaeu, poet and novelist, accumulated the greatest amount of resources for their election campaigns.[13] Their campaigns were widely covered in the independent media. These candidates attracted journalistic attention, largely due to the stature of their previous achievements. Niaklyaeu, who launched a campaign 'Tell the Truth', was widely known in Belarus as a poet and novelist. He largely attracted voters who, on the one hand, were tired of politics and political conflicts that were considered an immoral phenomenon, but on the other hand, continued to consider themselves opposition-minded people. The main points of his program included modernization in all spheres of society, development of small and medium-sized businesses and privatization in the economic sphere; as well as constitutional reform, and the development of self-government in the political sphere.

Sannikau launched the campaign 'For a European Belarus' and attracted primarily those voters, for whom Belarusian integration into Europe was the issue of paramount importance. In his program, Sannikau proposed constitutional reform, limiting the president's powers. Sannikau's economic program involved the liberalization and modernization of the economy, however, it was less developed in comparison with the economic parts of the programs prosed by Mikhalevich and Ramanchuk.

---

[13] Description is based on data from open sources (Belarusian independent mass-media and information portals) and represents the author's own observation and analysis.

Ales Mikhalevich, who had previously collaborated with Milinkevich circles and worked for his headquarters in 2006, acted as an independent candidate in 2010. He largely focused on economic issues, somehow distancing himself from the socio-cultural issues. The main ideas of the program were increasing economic freedoms, optimization of business procedures, separation of business from state power, and reducing the tax burden. His program was also in tune with the program of Yaraslau Ramanchuk, a Belarusian liberal economist. Ramanchuk focused on the idea of reducing the tax burden and the modernization of the Belarusian economy.

Two other similar programs were proposed by Kastuseu and Rymasheusky. These candidates paid more attention to socio-cultural issues in their programs, as compared with Mikhalevich and Ramanchuk, who concentrated on economic issues. The program of Kastuseu, representative of the Belarusian People's Front (the oldest movement in Belarus, formed in the late eighties), was permeated with the ideas of 'saving the Belarusian nation'. Among the political demands for the realization of this idea, he put the constitutional reform, reform of the security services and carrying out lustration. His economic program included land reform, the development of small and medium-sized businesses, economic integration with the EU, the introduction of the new currency. Kastuseu was the only candidate who emphasized in his program the idea of keeping Belarusian language as the only state language for the administrative procedures.

Program of Rymasheusky, candidate of Belarusian Christian Democracy, was founded on the idea of building the economy and politics based on Christian values. Political demands of the program included the fight against corruption and the development of self-government. Among the economic components of the program, it is possible to distinguish the development of medium-sized businesses, although, in general, the economic program of the candidate was weak.

Statkevich, former Army officer, nominated by the Social Democratic Party, focused on issues of education reform, and labor laws, as well as the modernization of the economy. In his program, he noted that his goal was to show voters that there is an alternative for the current government. But, overall, his program could be evaluated as a weak in both economic and political dimensions. Dzmitry Vuss, an entrepreneur, proposed a program, which consisted of mostly economic propositions (increasing pensions, creation of a more simplified taxation scheme, development of agro-industrial production). Vuss was not connected with any political forces and participated in the elections rather with instrumental purposes of self-promotion, which probably was necessary for him to enter the field of political struggle.

My informants noted that compared to the previous elections, candidates were provided with more opportunities to campaign, but, at the same time, opposition leaders realized that authorities had their own plans and strategy for the campaign. For example, informant 5, who worked in the electoral headquarter of one of the candidates, asserted, that despite the opposition candidates appearing on the state television for the first time in many years, his colleagues from headquarters did not perceive these developments as a positive sign, because one of their colleagues, an opposition journalist, was allegedly assassinated by the regime secret services. Factually, Lukashenka somehow slackened the pressure for a while with the aim to

demonstrate that Belarus had begun to liberalize. Such measures were necessary for him to attract additional funds from Western financial institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund).

On election day, the illusion of liberalization had been dispelled. The Central Election Commission announced that Lukashenka got 79.67 per cent of the votes. According to official figures, Andrei Sannikau, runner-up, scored only 2.43 per cent. The other candidates received less than 2 per cent of the votes.[14] The OSCE observation mission documented violations at 46 per cent of polling stations.[15]

About 30 thousand people gathered at Independence Square in front of the Government House by the evening of December 19. People came to take part in the protest rally despite threats from the authorities, who warned that participation in the protest action after the elections would be treated as terrorism. Authorities claimed that foreign intelligence agencies prepared provocation after the elections, and the protesters themselves were willing to apply violent methods of struggle.[16]

When the results of the voting were announced, and the protesters knew that according to official estimates, Lukashenka was far ahead of all his competitors, a few dozen masked men began to smash windows of the Government House on Independence Square. While the rest of the demonstrators were peaceful, law enforcement officials began a crackdown on the rally, beating protesters indiscriminately, and even detaining passers-by on the streets adjacent to the square.

On December 20, it was officially announced that Aliaksander Lukashenka had won the presidential elections. The Belarusian authorities presented the events on Independence Square as an attempt by the opposition to overthrow the legitimate government. In his speech in the parliament, Aliaksander Lukashenka claimed that the opposition was preparing a coup.[17]

Overall, more than 40 people were accused of organization or participation in mass disturbances, including six presidential candidates. Five of them: Uladzimir Niaklyaeu, Mikalai Statkevich, Andrei Sannikau, Dzmitry Vuss and Vital Rymasheusky were sentenced to various terms of deprivation or restriction of freedom. Ales Mikhalevich was detained in March 2011, but managed to flee abroad soon after he was released from the KGB remand prison on condition of not leaving the country. After leaving Belarus, Mikhalevich was granted political asylum in the Czech Republic.

This short description and analysis of the 2006 and 2010 electoral situations allows for assuming that ethically-oriented demands of recognition drove social actors

---

[14] Tsentralnaya Izbiratelnaya Komissiya Respubliki Belarus (2010). Svedeniya o rezultatakh golosovaniya po vyboram Presidenta Respubliki Belarus 19 dekadria 2010 goda (Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Belarus. Elections' results, December 19, 2010). Retrieved from http://www.rec.gov.by/sites/default/files/pdf/Elections-PRB-sved21.pdf Accessed 31-05-2015

[15] OSCE (December 19, 2010) Belarus, Presidential Election, 19 December 2010. Interim Report. No. 2. http://www.osce.org/odihr/74514 Accessed: 31-05-2015

[16] Description of the protest event is made based on the evidence of informants # 4, 5, 6 and 7.

[17] Human Rights Watch (March 14, 2011) Shattering Hopes Post-Election Crackdown in Belarus http://www.hrw.org/reports/2011/03/14/shattering-hopes-0 Accessed: 31-05-2015

to rise against the authoritarian system under the pretext of fraudulent elections, since the political opportunity structure in fact did not promise liberalization and, therefore, if to analyze the protest mobilization in the framework of political opportunity structure theories, these mobilizations simply could not occur, since the initial conditions were too restrictive and consequences of participation promised to be too negative. Therefore, with a high degree of probability it is possible to claim that the rational calculation of the cost and benefits of participation in the protest actions should prevent social activists from taking part, if they are pragmatically-minded activists, who understand that losses in the case of participation outweigh the benefits.

Conclusion and Discussion: Representation of the Social Struggle Patterns in the interview data

Social actors reconstructed 'the stories of their struggle' during the interviews, in which they described their perception of political opportunity structure before the elections of 2006 and 2010, and their vision of the civil resistance against the consolidated authoritarian regime. Thanks to cooperation with social actors, it was elicited how the protests against fraudulent elections represent the social struggle. As was found, protests constituted the emancipation of the participants in these events. Actors did not perceive the regime as legitimate because they felt a threat to their dignity from the side of the system. Overall, the struggle was one of a socio-cultural character, rather than of a political character, since actors aspiring to the recognition of their identity, whereas aspiration for power did not determine their actions.

The interview data array gave reasons for approximate distribution of similar responses on a three-point scale which included a minority type of response, an approximately equal type of response, and a majority type of response in each dimension of demands, which were coded in the third section of this paper as instrumentally and ethically oriented types of responses.

During the interview data analysis, it was revealed that the ethically-oriented motives (80 per cent of statements) undoubtedly prevailed over instrumentally-oriented (20 per cent of statements) (Table 1), allowing characterization of the social struggle as a struggle for recognition of the dissident actors' unique identities, previously denigrated by the authoritarian system. Overall, the minority types of responses referred to the universe of demands coded as 'instrumentally oriented motives'. In this universe of answers were, 1) participation in the protest actions with the aim to force some beneficial measures from the government did not appear among the statements; 2) participation in the protest actions as a part of larger PR-campaign appeared in 15 per cent of statements and 3) participation in the protest actions without expression of the solidarity with denigrated groups, but with the aim of supporting the concrete leaders – among five per cent of statements.

In the ethically-oriented universe of answers, 1) participation with the aim to re-establish/defend the respect of the human rights and dignity appeared in 40 per cent of statements; 2) participation with the aim to re-establish/defend the self-esteem of the person, previously denigrated by the system – 25 per cent of statements and 3)

participation as expression of the solidarity with previous two groups – 15 per cent of statements.

Ethically-oriented type of response ('morality', 'values', 'mission', 'autonomy', 'human rights', 'dignity', 'solidarity', 'emancipation')			Instrumentally-oriented type of response ('interest', 'benefits', 'profits', 'PR campaign', 'leader', 'protest as a tool', 'opportunity window', 'redistribution')		
Defense of human rights and dignity	Defend self-esteem of person, previously denigrated by the system	Expression of the solidarity with previous two groups	Getting some benefits from the government	A part of larger PR-campaign	Supporting of the concrete leaders
40%	25%	15%	0%	15%	5%

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents' statements (ethically and instrumentally-oriented types of response)

In regards to 'social desirability bias', which could be a crucial problem in studies of differences between ethical and instrumental dimensions of social struggle, it was easy in my research to approach this problem, because in Belarus participation in the protest actions is socially undesirable and an unacceptable form of behavior regardless of the motives which drove social activists to choose this form of behavior. Therefore, my respondents acknowledged the fact that they had chosen an undesirable form of behavior, justification of this choice is free from any intention to give a socially desirable answer. Any type of protest behavior justification, even ethically-oriented, will be socially undesirable in a Belarusian context.

Placing these results into the social context of authoritarianism, it could be concluded that participants in the protests mobilized after the fraudulent elections factually represented a nascent parallel civil society, which is not embedded into the official authoritarian structures and contains ethical demands for the democratization of the system, making it oriented toward human rights and dignity.

However, an instrumental type of motivation was also presented in the respondents' statements and it was connected with intentions to support 'opposition leaders' and attracting the attention of the wider population to their activities. In 2006, when the 'united opposition' agreed to nominate Aliaksander Milinkevich as the single candidate, it looked very promising for social activists, who supposed that mobilization of support for the 'united opposition' candidate could be a sufficient resource for regime change.

Interviewees who participated in the post-elections protests in 2010 also believed in some degree of regime liberalization, assuming that even in the case of protest mobilization's failure they would not have been repressed. Therefore, participation in political protests for them was a rational decision: the losses of participation did not outweigh the benefits. The fact that seven opposition candidates

were registered was evaluated by the social actors as the opening of the political opportunity structure.

As long as there are activists willing to resist the system's domination, the potential of social struggle still remains. The further perspectives of the social struggle will to a larger extent depend on the development of the regime. In the case of liberalization, socio-cultural dissident circles will get a chance to transform their struggle for recognition into the articulated political claims, becoming a real political opposition, operating in the institutional dimension. Otherwise, they will preserve their socio-cultural character.

Nowadays, the political claims of most of them are too abstract and have rather symbolic significance, rather than the elaborated programmed claims, which could be realized in the short and medium term perspective. Internal conflicts, such as failures in negotiating and making a broader coalition, will also influence the character of their struggle. Social activists might lose the chance to enter the field of 'normal' politics even in the case of regime liberalization, if they will not acquire the ability to negotiate, thus building a united opposition.

References

Aslund, A. and McFaul. M. (2006) (Eds.) *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough.* Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Belatski, A., Labkovich, V., Revyako, T. and Stefanovich, V. (2006) *Narusheniye Prav Cheloveka v Belarusi v 2006 godu (Human Rights Violations Chronicle in 2006).* https://spring96.org/ru/editions/reviews Accessed 07-07-2015

Bunce, V. J. (2003) Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons From The Postcommunist Experience. *World Politics, 55 (2): 167-192.*

Bunce, V. J., and Wolchik, S. L. (2006a) Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions. *Journal of Democracy,* 17 (4): 5-18.

Bunce, V. J., and Wolchik, S. L. (2006b) International Diffusion And Postcommunist Electoral Revolutions. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies,* 39 (3): 283-304.

Della Porta, D. and Fillieule O. (2004) Policing Social Protest. In Snow, D. A., Soule, S. A. and Kriesi, H. (eds.) *Blackwell Companion in Social Movements.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 217-241.

D'Anieri, P. (2005) What Has Changed in Ukrainian Politics? Assessing the Implications of the Orange Revolution. *Problems of Post-Communism, 52* (5): 82-91.

D'Anieri, P. (2006) Explaining the Success and Failure of Post-Communist Revolutions. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies,* 39 (3): 331-350.

Castells, M. (2012) *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age.* Chichester: Wiley.

Eisinger, P. K. (1973) The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities. *The American Political Science Review*, 67 (1): 11–28.

Fraser, N. AND Honneth, A. (2005) *Redystrybucja czy Uznanie? Debata polityczno-filozoficzna (Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange).* Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej Edukacji TWP.

Gamson, W.A. and Meyer, D.S. (1996) Framing Political Opportunity. In McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., and Zald, M. N. (eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 275-290.

Golovanov, V.G. and Slizhevsky, O.L. (2010) *Obshchestvennye obyedineniya Belarusi: Rezultaty raboty i dostizheniya* (*NGO in Belarus: Progress and Achievements*). Mozyr: Bely Veter.

Goodwin, J. and Jasper, J.M. (1999) Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine: The Structural Bias of Political Process Theory. *Sociological Forum*, 14 (1): 27-54.

Habermas, J. (1984) *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Habermas, J. (1996) *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought).* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Honneth, A. (1995) *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflict.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jameson, F. (2005) *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions.* London: Verso.

Kalakadze, K. and Orenstein, M. A. (2009) Electoral Protests and Democratization beyond the Color Revolutions. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42 (11): 1403-1425.

Kitschelt, H. P. (1986) Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, 16 (1): 57-86.

Kopecký, P. and Mudde, C. (2003) (eds.) *Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe.* New York: Routledge.

Kriesi, H. (2004) Political Context and Opportunity. In Snow, D., Soule, S. and Kriesi, H. (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 67-90.

Linz, J. J. and Stepan, A. (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

McCarthy, J. D., and Zald, M. N. (1977) Resource Mobilization and Social Movement: A Partial Theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82 (6): 1212-1241.

Offe, C. (1985) New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics. *Social Research,* 52 (4): 817-868.

Piotrowski, G. (2009) Civil Society, Un-Civil Society and the Social Movements. *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements,* 1 (2): 166-189.

Rosenthal, G. (1998) (Ed.) *The Holocaust in Three Generations: Families of Victims and Perpetrators of the Nazi Regime.* London: Cassell.

Silitski, V. (2005a) Is The Age of Post-Soviet Electoral Revolutions Over? Democracy At Large, 1 (4): 8-10.

Silitski, V. (2005b) Preempting Democracy: The Case of Belarus. *Journal of Democracy,* 16 (4): 83-97.

Tarrow, S. G. (2013) *Power in Movement Social Movements and Contentious Politics.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tilly, C. (1978) *From Mobilization to Revolution.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Touraine, A. (1981) *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Touraine, A., Dubet, F., Wieviorkaand, M and Strzelecki, J. (1983) *Solidarity: Poland 1980-81.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wengraf, T. and Chamberlayne, P. (2006) *Interviewing for Life-Histories, Lived Situations and Personal Experience: The Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) on Its Own and As Part of a Multi-Method Full Spectrum Psycho-Societal Methodology.* University of East London, London. www.uel.ac.uk/cnr/Wengraf06.rtf Accessed: 31-05-2015.

Żuk, P. (2001) *Społeczeństwo w działaniu (Society in Action).* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.