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THE BELARUSIAN PROTEST MOVEMENT OF 2020 FROM AN EASTERN EUROPEAN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The situation in Belarus has been widely discussed since mid-2020s. Among the reasons for such attention are the rigged presidential elections in 2020, the ensuing mass protests, and the transformation of a relatively "soft" autocracy into a highly repressive regime eager to violate its own Constitution and fundamental international law (Benedek 2020; HRW 2021). The massive and continuous protests have involved hundreds of thousands of citizens. Yet the regime of Aljaksandr Lukašenka has survived and has developed additional institutional responses that undermine the protesters' potential to change the direction of the political development of the country in Europe's geographic centre.

In this article, I will look for answers to the question of which factors worked against the protesters' democratic agenda and supported the deeper autocratization[1] of the Lukašenka regime. To find it, I will first describe major tendencies of the development of the Belarusian state (in comparison with Russia and Ukraine). Then, I will analyse the factors supporting both mass protests and the repressive turn of the regime in comparison with other protest movements in Eastern Europe. Finally, I will draw conclusions about the factors that supported the stability of the regime and influenced the further autocratisation of Belarus.

([1]) Here I use the term autocratization to signify democratic back-sliding in a country (or region) and evolution of a regime from less to more repressive autocracy (Hellmeier et al. 2020; Boese et al. 2021).

Belarusian political development

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Belarusian state politics developed through a combination of a Soviet political legacy and specific post-Soviet conservative creativity (Marples 2013: 7ff; Etkind – Minakov 2020: 10-11).

The leadership of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic was among the initiators of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Beloveža Accords (1991) were drawn up on the Republic's territory with the active participation of Stanislav Šuškevich (Chairman of Belarus' Verchovnyj Sovet), Vjačeslaŭ Kebič (Chairperson of Belarus' Council of Ministers), and Pëtr Kraŭčenka (Belarusian Minister of Foreign Relations). The first two politicians stayed in power after the Union's dissolution, ruled the country and oversaw both the foundation of Belarus as an independent state and its early socio-economic crisis (Marples 2013; Aslund 2007). An internal political struggle between the political elites around nation-building strategies delayed economic reforms and added to its socioeconomic decline during its first years of independence. By 1995, the Belarusian economy lost 36% of its GDP (Aslund 2007: 60).

Aljaksandr Lukašenka, an ardent oppositional populist, used resentment against nostalgic support for Soviet rule and resentment against national democrats, winning presidential elections in 1994 with 80% of participating voters (i.e. 56% of all voters) (Svedenija 1994; Koulinka 2012: 23ff). This event basically changed the direction and the pace of the institutional reform of the state which went from slow democratic to fast autocratic. A widespread Western view of Lukašenka is that he became the "last European dictator" (BBC 2001; European Parliament 2006). However, a more realistic analysis shows that Lukašenka was not the last, but the first post-Soviet dictator and a leader of autocratisation in Eastern Europe (Minakov 2019; Skaaning 2021).

The autocratic reforms of Lukašenka aimed at the establishment of a top-down vertical 'pyramid of power' which incorporated all branches of state power, all central and local government institutions, all big state and private enterprises, and major informal power groups (Hale 2014: 68ff; Minakov 2016). This power vertical was managed by a post-Soviet landmark "presidential administration"

institute, a hybrid institute of power, able to informally control all government institutions, security and defence structures, and major public and private corporations. Another important body remains the informal interinstitutional (*mežvedomstvennaja*) security commission[2] that coordinates all Belarusian security services, police, secret units, censors and mass media top-managers, and other groups of *siloviki* and *medijšiki* and provides the regime with full control over the political situation in the country. Under the supervision of the presidential administration, autocratic reforms were fast and decisive, supported by Belarusian citizens in the referenda of 1995, 1996 and 2004. Lukašenka was also deemed to have attracted sufficient votes for the presidential post in the – rigged and unfair – elections of 2001, 2006, 2010, 2015, and 2020.[3] By 2001/2, when the first signs of the autocratic turn in Vladimir Putin's and Leonid Kučma's regimes appeared, Belarus was an established effective autocracy governed under a non-free regime (Karatnycky et al. 2003).

The data available in the Varieties of Democracy database demonstrate the dynamic of political regimes in Belarus (V-Dem 2021). If we measure this dynamic in line with the three major elements of democratization – electoral, liberal, and participatory (Brunkert et al. 2019: 425) – we can see how fast Belarus developed its autocracy.

The electoral principle of democracy reflects the practice of making rulers responsive to citizens "achieved through electoral competition for the electorate's approval" (Hicken et al. 2021: 43). So, in terms of electoral democracy, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine were improving up to 1994, when Belarus started downsizing electoral rights; it radically worsened in terms of the status of electoral rights in 1997 and 2002. In Russia, the status of electoral rights started to decline around 2000/1, with radical drops in 2003 and 2011. Their decline in Ukraine started in 1998/9, and worsened in 2010, but electoral quality improved radically in 2004 and 2019 (for all three countries, see: Graph 1).

([2]) This commission has changed its name several times since 2001, mirroring Republic's Security Council's coordinative functions, while avoiding the formalities associated with Council activities.

([3]) The questionable quality of these elections was properly reported in the OSCE ODIHR reports.

The Liberal Democracy Index measures the protection of "individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority" (Hicken et al. 2021: 44). Again, after several years of same democratic betterment in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine in the 1990s, the first of these nations started losing its liberal democratic quality in 1996 and remained stably illiberal until 2020, when the situation worsened even more there. Russia has been stably losing its liberal democracy since 2000. And Ukraine has oscillated between comparatively worse (1998-2004, 2010-18) and better (2005-9, 2019-20) situations in terms of individual and minority rights (for all three countries see: Graph 2).

The participatory democracy index measures how active is "participation by citizens in all political processes, electoral and non-electoral" (Hicken et al. 2021: 44). In terms of democratic participation, Belarus started its decline in 1994 and reached the bottom by 2001. Since 2002 elections, referenda, local councils and other public institutions have lost room for citizen participation with democratic effect. The Belarus power vertical used de jure democratic institutions for its legitimation up until 2020, when non-free and unfair elections started working against Lukašenka's legitimacy. Russia was slowly limiting citizen participation, yet still used this element for the Putin regime's legitimacy in 2020 when it needed approval of the autocratically amended Constitution. Meanwhile, Ukraine kept the citizens' participation in decision-making at the level of 1992 with two periods of betterment (2004-9, 2019-20) (for all three countries see: Graph 3).

Out of three countries, it was Ukraine that demonstrated its adherence to the path of democratization, although it never achieved the status of free and fully democratic polity.[4] But Belarus was a leader in the autocratisation in Eastern Europe. Early on, Belarusian society, in spite of the long pre-service of its own lacunas of democratic culture that became so visible in 2020, accepted a special kind of social contract which preserved the socio-economic interests of the majority population in return for an ever-growing nondemocratic

([4]) For this see the Freedom House reports on Ukraine and the Economist Democracy Index.

consolidation of power in the hands of an unchangeable president (Wilson 2016). Belarusians' social security, household income, and GDP per capita remained much higher than those of Ukrainians (Minakov 2019: 176, 189). Through this autocratic social contract, Belarusians traded their political rights for socio-economic interests.

After two decades of existence, the Lukašenka regime entered a period when a succession plan needed to be prepared. As with other post-Soviet autocracies, the Belarusian regime was – and still is – based on authoritarian rule and patronalist/neopatrimonial culture (Fisun 2012: 88-89; Hale 2014: 18ff). The threat to such regimes usually stems from the deterioration of its authoritarian leader's health and his/her physical ability to keep control over the vertical of power. Aged Azerbaijani and Kazakhstani leaders were ready to pass power to their prepared successors: to Ilkham Aliev in 2003, and to Qasim-Jomart Toqaev in 2019, respectively.

Lukašenka started preparations for the slow transition of power in 2015, as did Nursultan Nazarbaev. After the shock of Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the Belarusian president made several critical steps to grant his regime's security: he organized early presidential elections in 2015, repressed pro-Russian and pro-Western NGOs, and replaced heads of security services and army with more loyal (and less connected to Kremlin) persons. He was easily re-elected, while attempts of protests were effectively suppressed by police and the KGB (Minakov 2017: 47ff). However, he lost time deciding succession. His choice of successor constantly shifted between one of his sons (the Azerbaijani model) and one of his most loyal collaborators (the Kazakhstani model) (BBC 2015; Intellinews 2021).

Another vulnerability of autocracies stems from rulers' personal mistakes. Lukašenka, for example, failed to recognize the growing popular dissent connected with the COVID-19 epidemic (the seriousness of which Lukašenka long denied) and socio-economic problems (Guriev 2020; Ilyushina - Picheta 2020). An attempt to repeat the usual trick of autocratic re-elections was seemingly impossible in 2020, yet the aged ruler ignored these risks.

Thus, Belarus was the European dictatorship that initiated an era of authoritarian creativity by post-Soviet elites. In the 21st century, Belarus became an important "link" in the Eastern European "au-

thoritarian belt" together with Azerbaijan, Russia, and Turkey (Minakov 2020). In this "belt", Belarus has its own geopolitical and geoeconomic niche: it gained from being the major channel of trade between Russia and the EU (especially after the Russo-Ukrainian multidimensional conflict in 2014), while keeping NATO and Russia at a distance from each other. Lukašenka successfully balanced relations of Belarus with the Western countries and Russia, defending his regime's autonomy and economic success; and maintaining a strong nondemocratically consolidated state, and territorial integrity.[5]

Belarusian society paid for that territorial integrity and relative socio-economic success with delayed nation-building; securitized politics; the presence of non-free media, of controlled education, and of a minimally developed party system and civil society (Marples 2013; Wilson 2016; BTI 2020; HRW 2021). This balance of gains and losses framed the political picture before the 2020 presidential elections and mass protests in Belarus.

Mass protests in Belarus and their results (as at 2021)

Belarus has its own history of political protest that resulted in the specific protest culture in 2020.

The roots of Belarusian protest culture go back to late Soviet Perestrojka. In the absence of strong parties – those that would be part of Belarus' political landscape or local branches of all-Union parties – the protest movements had a civic, non-partisan nature. In contemporary studies of protest movements, researchers differentiate between partisan and civil modes of engagement with political movements (Cohen - Arato 1992; Bohman - Regh 1997; Mische 2015). Partisan engagement is usually associated with "instrumentalism and strategic manipulation", while civic engagement is more directed at "dialogue and extra political forms of association" (Mische 2015:

([5]) The territorial integrity is quite unusual for Eastern Europe, as Armenia (since 2021), Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine do not fully control their internationally recognized territories. Autocracy "paid back" Belarus in this regard, as it provided autocratic Azerbaijan with a means to collect resources for a partial return of control over break-away Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020, and even take over some Armenian territories in 2021.

45; see also: Putnam 2000). In the early 1990s, the boom of small parties in Belarus did not coincide with the productive involvement of citizens in decision-making processes critical to the fundamental issues of the new society, a factor which Lukašenka used in his populist campaign of 1994 (Koulinka 2012). The first big protests against the emerging autocracy in 1997-98 returned to the Perestrojka-era civic mode of citizens' engagement in resistance movements. The "Minsk Spring" protests (1996-97, *Menskaja Vjasna*) were directed at defending the Constitution, not some parties' programs. They were carried out by joint forces of civil organizations with the participation of activists from the nationalist, communist, and democratic parties (Šrajbman 2016).

These protests were severely suppressed, providing the emerging regime with a new experience arisen from its need to exercise preventive control over mass media and educational institutions, as well as to repress civil and political opposition. The Lukašenka regime used harsh repressive measures to fight opposition parties that decided to hold alternative presidential elections in 1999. The measures included the kidnapping and murder of opposition politicians (Ahljad 1999: 7, 12, 23-30.).

The growing consolidation of power in the hands of one person; the amalgamation of resistance movements and the 2001 presidential elections became joint causes of new protests in Belarus – this time, led by a new class of small private entrepreneurs. These protests involved up to 200.000 people, led first by economic, and then by socio-political demands (Ahljad 2001: 7). Later, the protests were supported by workers' unions, opposition parties, and Belarusian intellectuals. And the protests continued far beyond the presidential elections in which Lukašenka won in unfair competition. These protests lasted until 2003 (Ahljad 2002, 2003).

The list of further significant protests in Belarus also included:

- *The Plošča – 2006* or *The Jeans Revolution*: the attempted "colour revolution" of 2006 connected with another unfair presidential electoral campaign (Kostenko et al. 2006: 12);
- *The Plošča – 2010*: the protests against the rigged presidential elections of 2010 (Belaruskaja Pravda 2016);

- The "silent" protest of 2011, organized with the use of social media and provoked by worsening of socio-economic conditions. These protests were not particularly massive, but they spread around the country and the participants were young people (see monthly and quarterly reports at Spring96.org as of 2011);
- The *Non-spongers' Marches* (*Marši netunejadcev*) in 2017 brought tens of thousands of Belarusians onto the streets to protest against three main points: a law "to prohibit spongers",[6] socioeconomic issues, and non-free elections. These marches were held in Minsk and in smaller towns around Belarus between February and April, 2017 (see monthly and quarterly reports at Spring96.org as of 2017).[7]

Thus, in hindsight, the protests of 2020 were not unique, as the following four points demonstrate. First of all, Belarusian protest movements between 1996-2017 also involved civic, non-partisan engagement. In the absence of strong popular parties during that period, Belarusian protests were organized around a wide complex of interests and demands that united economic, social, and political issues like household incomes, communal tariffs, honest taxation, political representation, honest elections, and civic liberties at large. This distinguishes Belarusian protests from other mass protest movements such as those in Ukraine (2004, 2013-14) and Georgia (2004, 2006) in which political aims were considerably more important that socioeconomic ones. Nevertheless, the civic agenda of post-Soviet "colour revolutions" and of Euromaidan were very much the same, being rooted in a common Perestrojka experience (Minakov 2012: 60ff; Gerlach 2014: 12ff).

([6]) Those who did not have official work and thus did not pay taxes and social fees to the State budget. The regimes accused these – usually self-employed or small business – people in being "parasites" on the "people's body". According to the presidential decree as of April 2015, all of them had to pay a special fee of 250 USD annually. This decree caused protests already in 2015, but only in 2017 they consolidated many groups involving them into mass protests.

([7]) These numerous monthly and special reports are accessible at Spring96.org (<http://spring96.org/ru/publications>).

Secondly, Belarusian protests tended to proliferate to periphery cities and involved different strata of the population united around a common cause. This amorphous proliferation of protests was an essential factor for the protests of 2020. In the Georgian and Ukrainian protests, the capitals played a somewhat more important role than Minsk did in Belarusian protests.

Thirdly, protests were usually connected with the prospect or results of elections. In the absence of other democratic institutions, unfair elections provoked strong civic emotions, revealing Belarusian politics's restricted and exclusive nature. This feeling of harmed civic dignity and of righteous civic anger was also very evident in the Belarusian protests of 2020 and bears a strong resemblance to the emotional impulses behind the Armenian (2018), Georgian (2004, 2006), Moldovan (2009, 2015, 2018), Russian (2011-12) and Ukrainian (2004, 20013-14) protest movements.

Moreover, the Belarusian protests evolved into an element of political culture in which protesters were not discouraged from ongoing participation in protest movements despite a lack of political change. The protests of 2010 and 2017 lasted for months. This ability to resist the lack of a positive response to protesters' demands was an important aspect in the mass protests of 2020. This differentiates the Belarusian protest movement from the Armenian, Georgian and Ukrainian ones, which were much more pragmatic: these latter were, in Charles Tilly's terms, the real "challengers" of the political order and, in several instances, achieved a change of regime and some temporary democratic progress (Tilly 1978: 52; Atanesyan 2018: 82; Nodia et al. 2018: 8ff).

Thus, the protests that started in August 2020 were not unique, since they were founded on a long-evolved political culture of Belarusian protest. However, they turned out to be unprecedented in terms of the participants' dedication to peaceful protest, their avoidance of structured action – at least on Belarusian soil – and their sheer numbers.

In spite of all socioeconomic, political, and epidemic complications, the Belarusian government remained steadfast in its will to conduct elections in the usual way. On this occasion, unlike in previous presidential elections, there were several candidates who did

not come from the permitted opposition groups (that usually participated in the staged competition). The blogger, Sjarhej Cichanoŭski; the businessman, Viktar Babaryka; and an entrepreneur, Valeryj Capkala, turned out to be too dangerous – the first two were arrested, and the latter emigrated. Five "more acceptable candidates" registered in their place, among whom were Svjatlana Cichanoŭskaja and Aljaksandr Lukašenka. After the first round of elections (August 9, 2020) Aljaksandr Lukašenka was announced the winner of the elections with 80,10% of the votes (Svedenija 2020).

The result of the presidential elections was disputed by internal and external actors. Already, by the end of voting day on August 9, many citizens who doubted if their votes would be taken into account by the government started to gather in central squares in big cities. The more or less trustworthy polls demonstrate that most Belarusians – over 70% (Astapenia 2020) or 65% (Krawatzek 2021) – felt that the presidential election results were being falsified. Belarusians, like most members of other societies with a shared experience of Perestrojka/post-Soviet societies, ascribe a particular moral value to honest elections and the political legitimacy of elites (Herron 2009: 12ff). The cynical behaviour of the Belarusian authorities and their use of brutal force in the first days after the election prompted citizens to protest, finding solidarity in a strongly shared spirit of civic values.

Starting from the evening of August 9, 2020, the mass protests lasted until March 2021. According to a variety of sources, between 700,000 and 1 million people had participated in protests around Belarus by the end of 2020 (Krawatzek 2021). The protesters were ready for a continuous peaceful campaign against the government – up to a year – and most of them did not fear beating and/or imprisonment (Thinktanks.by 2020). Over 70% of protesters participated in mass actions for the first time in 2020 (Onuch 2020). As ofthe end of 2020, more than 30,000 protesters had been arrested, over 1,300 injured, dozens had gone missing, and many activists had been forced to leave Belarus (Onuch 2020). Even though sporadic protests continued until June 2021, by this time, the core leaders of the protests had either emigrated or been imprisoned.

Like other post-Soviet peoples living through mass protests, there was a rift in Belarusian society between the supporters of the pro-

tests and the supporters of the regime. Between 14 and 15% of the people polled expressed their support for or participation in protests; around 70% of respondents were critical of protests (Beljaev 2021; Krawatzek 2021). Furthermore, 42% of the polled were strong critics of the regime, while 13% strongly supported Lukašenka, and 17% expressed moderate support towards him (Krawatzek 2021). Belarusian levels of support for and participation in protests resemble the levels of support for Euromaidan or the Armenian protests of 2018 (Fond Demokratyčni Iniciatyvy 2015; Atanesyan 2018).

Another shared feature between Belarusian and other post-Soviet protest movements is the role played by social media. The Ukrainian "Orange Revolution" was informationally supported by the pro-opposition website of Ukrajins'ka Pravda and by TV Chanel 5. Twitter played a special role in the Moldovan and Armenian protests. Both Ukrainian Euromaidan protestors and anti-Maidan activists communicated via Facebook and VKontakte. And in 2020, communication between protesters was facilitated by the Nexta Telegram channel. In the absence of formal movement leadership, the civic engagement model needed a media channel for information and advice that these media provided – for the most part – in the cases mentioned above.

Another feature that Belarusian and other post-Soviet mass protests have in common is the importance of foreign recognition of the opposition as a legitimate force (Stewart 2013: 111ff). Belarusian opposition leaders – at least those who avoided imprisonment – are now acting from united opposition centres situated either in Lithuania or Poland. The US and EU member state governments did not recognize the results of the 2020 presidential elections and supported the opposition and its leadership (Moshes - Nizhnikau 2021: 177ff).

Despite of many commonalities, the Belarusian protests of 2020 have four unique distinguishing features that separate the movement they are a part of from other revolutionary movements in the post-Soviet region. First of all, this difference stems from the so called "tactics of water". The protesters did not gather forces in one place in a capital to engage in a fight with security forces. Instead, protests took place in different locations around the capital and around the country wherever possible, with constant multiple protest sites. Also, the protest movement did not have a permanent leadership: Svja-

tlana Cichanoŭskaja and Maryja Kalesnikava were more symbolic figures than political actors aiming to be leaders. This prevented police forces from timely reactions and provided high visibility for the protests under conditions of media silencing and/or vilification of the movement.

Secondly, the Belarusian protests remained peaceful for a very long time. Leaders, participating intellectuals, and rank-and-file activists adhered to the practice of peaceful resistance. The role of radical groups was minimal despite police brutality and mass arrests. Unlike in many Armenian, Georgian, or Ukrainian cases, Belarusian protesters did not take over government institutions. This pacifism did not lead to political change, but it provided the movement with moral supremacy and permanent peaceful pressure on the authorities.

Thirdly, political parties in Belarus played a very different role to the roles played in other post-Soviet states. In Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, opposition parties offered a political solution to the protesters. In Belarus, the opposition parties were very weak and inefficient, so their role in promoting the protests' political agenda was minimal. Instead, Lukašenka's "pyramid of power" remained loyal to its patron despite of the repressive turn of the regime. If in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine local *siloviki* were too corrupt and disunited to suppress protests effectively, the Belarusian inter-institutional commission coordinating all different groups of *siloviki* was very effective, united, and loyal to the president.

Finally, the Russian factor was very different in Belarus. In Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, protests were connected to the conflict between Russia's ruling groups and Western and post-Soviet national elites. However, in Belarus, Russian elites were divided: part of them supported opposition groups, other were more inclined to support the existing regime (Global Risks Insights 2020). A significant part of protesters – at least initially – were oriented towards Russia (Deutsche Welle 2020). Yet by the end of August the Russian government started providing media and security staff, as well as financial support to the Lukašenka regime (Wilson 2021: 359-374).

In summary, the Belarusian protests of 2020 failed to achieve either a change of regime or more ambitious revolutionary aims. In-

stead, the Lukašenka regime lost its patronal legitimacy and had to become much more repressive. In 2021, the Lukašenka-led "constitutional process" and permanent negotiations with the Kremlin on a possible closer Union signalled the termination of the previous "social contract". With the presence of citizens having had direct experience of participation in mass protests and unjust punishment, as well as the experience of "the failure of the authorities to address problems such as stagnating salaries and pensions, unemployment and labour migration", Aleksander Lukašenka can rule only by force, with the very low level of trust and legitimacy (Douglas 2020).

Conclusions

In the above, I have analysed the factors that worked against the democratic agenda of the 2020 Belarusian protest movement and supported the deeper autocratisation of the Lukašenka regime. In the first place, the protest movement – despite its mass mobilization comparable to successful revolutionary movements in Armenia (2018), Georgia (2004), and Ukraine (2004, 2013-14) – lacked a firm political leadership able to translate its demands into political change. However, the length and the number of participants in the protests shows that there is considerable potential for future political change in their favour.

For the time being, Lukašenka managed to sustain control over the country. The top-down vertical 'pyramid of power' remained loyal to Lukašenka. The Belarusian security services have demonstrated a high level of efficiency in their ability to defend the ruling group through both an excessive use of force and through illegal repressions. However, the regime has to become extremely repressive in the process. This change has cancelled the previous social contract and development model. Belarus is now divided from within; it is sanctioned and isolated by EU member states and Ukraine, and it depends much more on Russia's support. Its role as a bridge between the West and Russia is now untenable.

Further autocratisation of the Lukašenka regime makes Belarus an even more unstable link in the Eastern European authoritarian belt. The regime survived the 2020 crisis, but it is only a matter of time before it collapses due to the ills of authoritarianism and the internal

contradiction between repressions and legitimacy which cannot be sustained forever.

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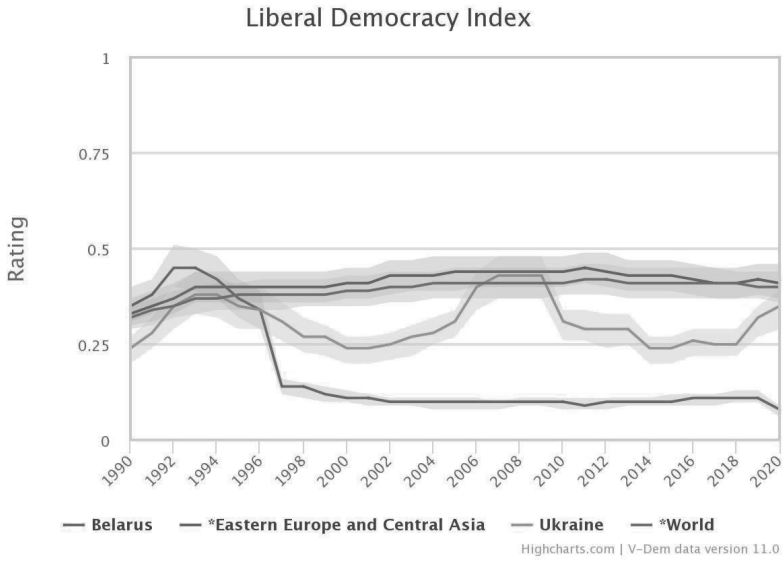
Il movimento di protesta bielorusso del 2020
da una prospettiva comparata est-europea

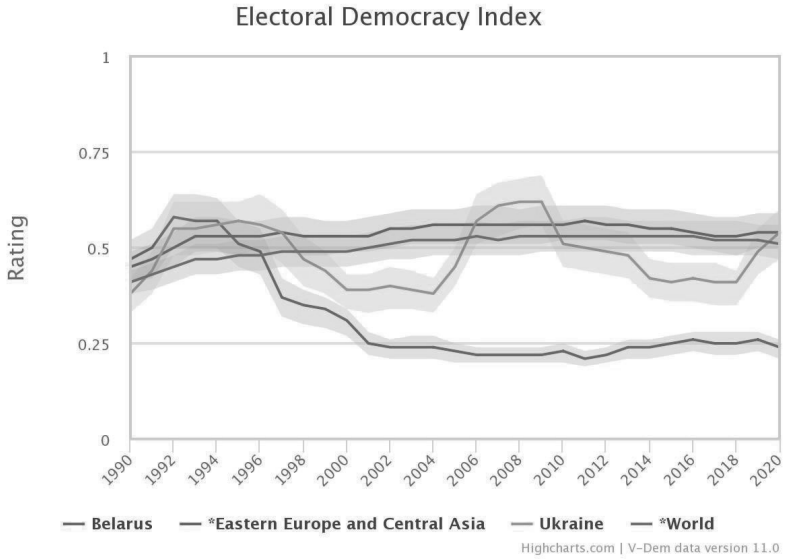
Quali fattori hanno indebolito l'azione del movimento di protesta bielorusso, contribuendo così al rafforzamento del regime di Lukašenka? Il governo bielorusso è sopravvissuto alla crisi del 2020 perché i manifestanti non sono riusciti a consolidare la loro forza politica, in un contesto segnato dalla lealtà della classe politica nei confronti della "piramide del potere" in Bielorussia. Comparando il movimento di protesta bielorusso con quello di altre nazioni post-sovietiche, si può osservare come il prezzo pagato dal regime per la propria sopravvivenza (repressioni di massa, regressione socio-economica, scarsa legittimità) abbia posto le basi per un suo futuro collasso.

Keywords: Belarus, Eastern Europe, protest, regime, movement, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia.

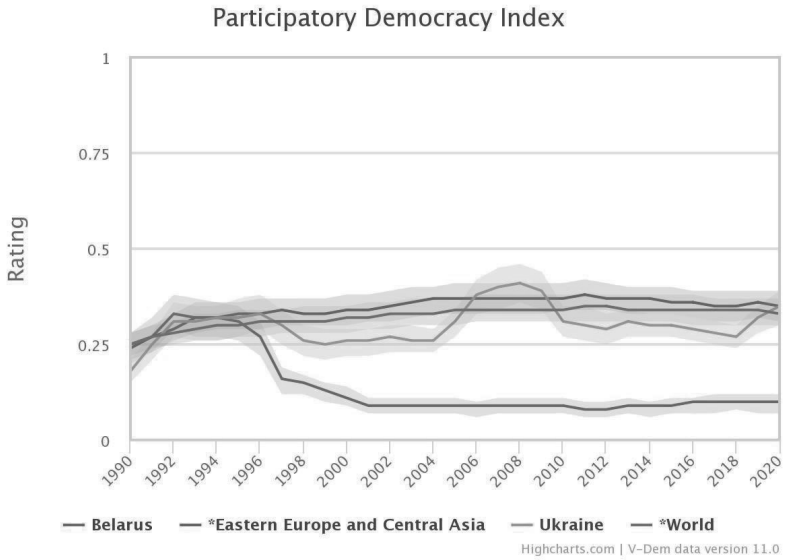
APPENDIX: GRAPHS



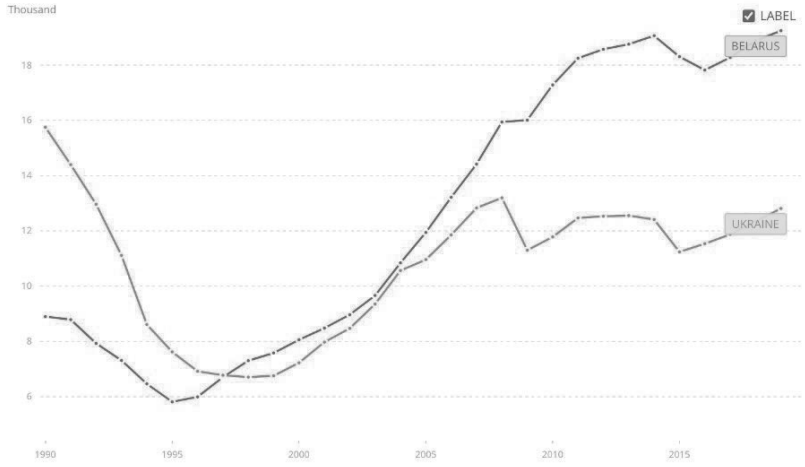
Graph 1. The Electoral Democracy Index in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine 1990-2020 (source: V-Dem, version 11)



Graph 2. Liberal Democracy Index in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine in 1990-2020 (source: V-Dem, version 11)



Graph 3. Participatory Democracy Index in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine in 1990-2020 (source: V-Dem, version 11)



Graph 4. Participatory Democracy Index in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine in 1990-2020 (source: V-Dem, version 11)

INDICE

BELARUS' EUROPEA

Alessandro Achilli, Oxana Pachlovska, Laura Quercioli Mincer
La Belarus' fra presente e passato, *nation building* e molteplicità culturale. Prefazione dei curatori 9-24

Oxana Pachlovska
Perché la bielorussistica oggi? Al posto di un'introduzione 25-60

Mikhail Minakov
The Belarusian Protest Movement of 2020 from An Eastern European Comparative Perspective 61-83

Marco Puleri
Oltre l''anomalia bielorussa'? Nuove concettualizzazioni dell'autonomia politica e culturale nazionale nella Bielorussia d'età post-sovietica 85-104

Manuel Ghilarducci
La riflessione linguistica nella poesia bielorussa tra autoreferenzialità e performatività (1908-2016) 105-126

Gun-Britt Kohler
Insights into the Belarusian Literary Market (1905-1932) 127-152

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern
An Alternative Modernity: Zmitrok Bjadulja and His Creation of the Belarusian Jew 153-177

Anna Belozorovich
Il professore "elettrico" Jakub Narkevič-Iodko e la tenuta Nadnëman: processi di memoria e ricostruzione, tra scienza e letteratura 179-206

Arnold McMillin
Aspects of Belarusian Verse Parodies 207-231

Giulia De Florio
Dmitrij Strocev e la resistenza della poesia 233-255
Tomasz Kamusella
Al'herd Bacharėvič's *Sabaki Ėŭropy*: A Belarusian *1Q84*? 257-275

STUDI E RICERCHE

Lidia Federica Mazzitelli
Impersonal Constructions in Belarusian and closely Related Languages: A Typological and Areal Account .. 277-310
Anita Kłos
"Adoratore della scienza" o "raffinato cesellatore"? Stanisław Lem legge Italo Calvino 311-333

IN MEMORIAM

Maria Bidovec
Andrea Trovesi (1971-2021) 335-339

RECENSIONI

Elissa Bemporad, *Eredità di sangue. Ebrei, pogrom e omicidi rituali in Unione Sovietica*. Castelvecchi, Roma 2021 (Simone A. Bellezza) 341-344
Zbornik o Ljubomiru Marakoviću. Zbornik radova sa znanstvenoga skupa, Zagreb-Topusko, 25-26. travnja 2019. Glavni urednik Tihomil Maštrović. Hrvatski studiji Sveučilišta et al., Zagreb et al. 2020 (Andrea Sapunar Knežević) 344-349
Predrag Petrović, *Horizonti modernističkog romana*. Čigoja štampa, Beograd 2021 (Luca Vaglio) 349-355
Alfrun Kliems, *Underground Modernity: Urban Poetics in East-Central Europe, Pre- and Post-1989*. Transl. Jace Schneider. CEU Press, Budapest 2021 (Alessandro Achilli) 355-358
Dmitrij Strocev, *Terra sorella*. Trad. e cura di Giulia De Florio. Valigie Rosse, Livorno 2020; Dmytro Strocev, *Pyl, ščo tan-*

cjuje. Duch i litera, Kyjiv 2020; Dmitrij Strocev / Dzmitrij Strocaŭ, *Belarus' oprokinuta / Belarus' perakulenaja*. Trad. di Andrėj Chadanovič. Novye mechi, s.l. 2021 (Alessandro Achilli) 358-360

Note biografiche sugli autori 361-364

Elenco dei revisori per il volume del 2021 365-366