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## The Third Sector and Political Communication in Belarus: Highlights on the Topic of Social Policies from the Presidential Campaign 2010

The main purpose of the article is to show specifics of political communication in a non-democratic regime (Belarus). First, we elaborate the typology of the third sector organizations according to their loyalty to the State and autonomy of their action. Then we describe the third sector organizations engaged in social policies in Belarus. We employ the qualitative discourse analysis framework and focus on public speeches and public acts, related to social concerns and performed by Lukashenka and alternative candidates in September-December 2010. The study shows that the State in Belarus effectively reduces discursive and policy action opportunities of the third sector organizations and marginalizes their political representation. The electoral campaign crucially lacked any stronger alternative social policy proposals. The State (the third sector organizations, subordinated to the State, the state-run media, the governmental officials, and the state institutions such as KGB, military forces) performed pivotal mobilization and public relations roles on behalf of the incumbent President, thus inaugurating a new wave of terror, which followed Lukashenka's victory on December 19, 2010.

### Introduction

The study intends to show specifics of political communication, broadly construed as “purposeful communication about politics”<sup>1</sup> in a non-democratic regime (here, Belarus). For this purpose we analyze political communication concerning one selected issue (social affairs) in the Presidential electoral campaign of 2010. Our choice of the social security issue is related to the assumption that the introduction of neo-liberal

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<sup>1</sup> McNair B., *An Introduction to Political Communication*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 24.

social security reforms in 2007<sup>2</sup> drastically curtailing social benefits in Belarus might have affected content and forms of political communication, and contentious appraisals of the neo-liberal shifts in public policies could be fairly perceptible during the high-stake Presidential electoral campaign.

We should bear in mind that in 1994 actual Belarusian President Alyxander Lukashenka<sup>3</sup> came to power to “preserve positive heritage of the Soviet Union” and throughout his lengthy stay in power continued the state-led welfare policies. Until 2007-8 Belarus conducted Soviet-type social policies based on values of egalitarianism and was arbitrary “equalizing” everybody. According to official statistics in 2006 a social support scheme with various kinds of benefits covered two thirds of Belarusian population<sup>4</sup>. Lukashenka’s social concerns have been maintained despite economic deterioration; his slogan for 2010 Electoral Campaign was “Ot sohraneniya – k primumnojeniu!” (in Russian) [From Preservation to Increase]<sup>5</sup>. While the electoral slogans of his competitors emphasized the imminent change of the situation: “Ya pryshou kab vy peramagli!” (in Belarussian) (Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu) [I came for you to win]; “Vmeste my pobedim” (in Russian) (Andrei Sannikau) [Together we’ll win!]; “U nas vse poluchitsya” (in Russian) (Ales Michalevic) [We will succeed]; “Postroim novoe - sohranim luchshee!” (in Russian) (Yaraslau Ramanchuk) [Creating the New – Preserving the Best], etc.

The Belarusian case study is exceptional in the post-communist context. For at least ten to fifteen years after the collapse of the Communist party rule in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) the liberal discourse, emphasizing pluralism, individual rights and freedom of enterprise has been found to be hegemonic everywhere<sup>6</sup>, except in Belarus. Notions of social and distributive justice lagged behind, failing to enter the political agenda and public discourse in rapidly liberalizing states of the CEE, concerned with state-capacity building and fostering national identities, amidst efforts to integrate the EU<sup>7</sup>. By way of contrast, in Belarus, since 1994, instead of any longer-term goals, the state was and still is self-referential and pri-

<sup>2</sup> Since 2007 President Lukashenka’s power position starts changing (Belarus-Russia relations go worsening) and prompts concerns about social security.

<sup>3</sup> Here and further names of Belarusian politicians are given in Belarusian transliteration as they are officially written in national passports.

<sup>4</sup> Informational materials prepared by Informational-Analytical Center under the President’s of the Republic of Belarus Administration for informational-propagandistic groups, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Electoral Program of Presidential Candidate Alyksandr Lukashenka”, *Belarus Segodnya*, <http://sb.by/post/108854/>, 27 11 2010.

<sup>6</sup> In particular, in the Czech Republic and Poland, see: Dryzek J.S. and Holmes L.T., *Post-Communist Democratization: Political Discourses across Thirteen Countries*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 269-270.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed account about Lithuania see Matonytė I., “Why the Notion of Social Justice is Quasi-Absent from the Public Discourse in Post-Communist Lithuania”, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. XXXVII, No 4, 2006, p. 388-411.

marily engaged in maintenance of its leader. However, the non-democratic rules of political life might occasionally allow some limited action of the third sector. Salamon underlines that even the most repressive states allow and even encourage popular engagement in social policies<sup>8</sup>.

Engagement of the third sector in social policies is inevitably reflected in political communication as it might include public questioning about the way policy is administered, participation in the agenda setting, proposing policy solutions, opening up space for public discussion, carrying-out concrete projects, etc. It encompasses attempts to change policies or influence decisions of any institutional elite through enhancement of civic participation to promote collective goals or public interest<sup>9</sup>. The third sector activities in the domain of social policies usually are classified between two extremes: limited-commitment activities (e.g. sending or signing correspondence to the state officials, asking for public information, organizing small self-help groups, etc.) and highly demanding actions (e.g. organizing public events, campaigns, manifestations, etc.)<sup>10</sup>.

Academic attempts to analyze activities of the third sector and its representation in political communication remain peripheral in Belarus. In this respect it is worthwhile mentioning the empirical research projects conducted by the Belarusian Institute of Strategic Studies (BISS) on social contracts in modern Belarus<sup>11</sup>, the common project of Eastern European Studies Center (EESC, Vilnius, Lithuania) and the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus on the role of non-governmental organizations in Belarusian society<sup>12</sup>, and we diligently refer to their insights in the present article.

<sup>8</sup> Salamon, L.M., "Explaining Nonprofit Advocacy: An Exploratory Analysis. Center for Civil Society Studies", working paper [series No. 21], Center for Civil Society Studies, 2002, p. 4. [http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/CCSS\\_Working\\_Papers/CCSS\\_WP21\\_ExplainingNPAAdvocacy\\_2002.pdf](http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/CCSS_Working_Papers/CCSS_WP21_ExplainingNPAAdvocacy_2002.pdf), 3 05 2011.

<sup>9</sup> For more details see: Boris & Mosher-Williams, "Nonprofit advocacy organizations: Assessing the definitions, classifications, and data", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 27, 1998, p. 488-506. Reid, E. J., "Nonprofit advocacy and political participation" in Boris E. T. & Steuerle C. E. ed., *Nonprofits and government*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 1999, p. 291-308.

<sup>10</sup> Salamon, L.M., "Explaining Nonprofit Advocacy: An Exploratory Analysis. Center for Civil Society Studies", working paper [series No. 21], Center for Civil Society Studies, 2002, p. 4. [http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/CCSS\\_Working\\_Papers/CCSS\\_WP21\\_ExplainingNPAAdvocacy\\_2002.pdf](http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/CCSS_Working_Papers/CCSS_WP21_ExplainingNPAAdvocacy_2002.pdf), 3 05 2011.

<sup>11</sup> See: Haiduk K., Rakova E., Silizki V., eds., *Social Contracts in Contemporary Belarus*, SPb: Nevskij Prostor, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Eastern European Studies Center (EESC, Vilnius, Lithuania) and the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus, *Obschestvennye ob'edineniya; ih rol' v sovremennom belorusskom obschestve. Analiticheskaya zapiska po rezul'tatam nacional'nogo sociologicheskogo oprosa* [NGOs' Role in Belarusian Society. Report on public opinion poll], Minsk, 2010, <http://www.actngo.info/by/node/1354841>, 3 05 2011, (in Russian).

## 1. Research Methodology

It is well known that in the non-democratic context the data drawn from the institutional perspective alone is not informative enough and needs to be substantiated by insights offered by other approaches, such as discourse analysis, participant observation, qualitative interviews, etc. Therefore in this study we employ policy and discourse analysis, enabling us to assess a wide-ranging panorama of actors engaged in social policies. We also hold that “the crucial factor that makes communication ‘political’ is not the source of the message, but its content and purpose”<sup>13</sup>. Public speeches, media (Internet and newspapers) publications, official documents and reports of the social projects constitute the corpus of our empirical material. We employ the qualitative discourse analysis framework, searching for messages and meanings resulting from discursive acts, performed in particular circumstances (here, in the Presidential electoral campaign). We follow Michel Foucault, for whom **discourse** denotes specific historical significations that form identities of both subjects and objects<sup>14</sup>. A more quantitatively oriented discourse analysis approach, emphasizing numerical account of collocations and topographic research of discursive elements,<sup>15</sup> which requires a refined selection of texts, is rendered impossible under current political-cultural conditions in Belarus<sup>16</sup>.

We scrutinize public speeches of the president, speeches, publications and electoral programs of other nine presidential candidates, on-line publications of the largest Belarusian Internet news-agencies, articles from the national press, expert-analytical texts, information from web-sites of the third sector organizations in Belarus, laws and normative acts of Belarus, etc. (full list of materials is provided in the Annex 1). We concentrate on the period of Presidential electoral campaign 2010 from its official start on September 24 until the day of election (December 19, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Denton R.E., Woodward G.C. *Political Communication in America*, New York: Praeger, 1998, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Foucault M., *The archaeology of knowledge*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> van Dijk T., “Political Discourse and Political Cognition” in Chilton P., ed., *Politics as Text and Talk. Analytic approaches to political discourse*, Philadelphia: Johns Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002, p. 203-237.  
Luskin, R.C., “Measuring Political Sophistication”, *American Journal of Political Science*, No. 31 (4), 1987, p. 856-899.

<sup>16</sup> Many not state-run Belarus dailies and weeklies (printed and Internet versions) do not keep their proper archives. An editor of a leading independent national weekly explains: “Our materials might constitute a basis for criminal charges against us by Lukashenka’s repressive and unpredictable regime”.

## 2. Towards a Typology of the Third Sector in Belarus

The description of five types of the third sector organizations provided by analyst Chernov is the best known in Belarus<sup>17</sup>. Chernov distinguishes governmental NGOs (GoNGOs), created by the actual Belarus state, with the purpose to mobilize and channel popular support for the governmental policies; post-governmental NGOs (postGoNGOs), former Soviet social organizations, re-activated under Lukashenka regime; donors' NGOs (DoNGOs), initiated by international organizations; party-NGOs, created by political parties or political movements to recruit their members and maintain activities and, finally, grass roots NGOs. However, this remarkable inventory of the third sector organizations explores their organizational peculiarities and does not deal with activities and discourses espoused by them. After all, GoNGOs and postGoNGOs basically overlap in their mission and loyalty to the current regime; while DoNGOs and party-NGOs are similarly politicized and ostracized by their anti-Lukashenka stances. Grass roots NGOs, as portrayed by Chernov, hardly deserve the label of an 'organization', since their human and financial resources do not meet the criteria of sustainability.

It is beyond any doubt that the third sector in the non-democratic Belarusian state is weak and there are limited possibilities and incentives for lay people (vs. elected and/or appointed officials) to participate in the public policy process<sup>18</sup>. The third sector has apparent difficulties establishing organizations and generating autonomous projects in Belarus. The non-democratic regime restricts and violates human rights, represses civic initiatives, discourages public interest in social life and, as a result, limits the opportunities to recruit people to non-governmental organizations and to efficiently carry out alternative public policy projects.

In such a context Belarusian political parties resemble interest groups and engage in civic activism, while their truly political potential is miserable. The Law on Political Parties (1994) was amended in 2005 to explicitly prohibit any simultaneous membership in several political organizations, to require establishing local party offices in at least a half of Belarusian regions (6) and to severely limit

<sup>17</sup> Chernov V., "Tretii Sektor v Belarusi: evaluatsiya, sovremennoe sostoyanie i perspektivy razvitiya" ["The Third Sector in Belarus: Evolution, the Current State and Perspective of Development"], *e-journal Wider Europe Review*, Vol. 4, No. 14, 2007, <http://review.w-europe.org/14/2.html>, 20 04 2011 (in Russian).

<sup>18</sup> According to the EESC research (2010), public awareness about non-governmental organizations in Belarus is weak; Belarusian people do not participate in voluntary activities (only 9, 1 per cent participated in the NGOs activities in last year). However, Belarus people positively evaluate contribution of the third sector to solving social problems (81, 4 per cent of respondents hold it very important). Yet, only 0, 4 per cent of Belarusian people themselves are members of social organizations (note 13).

international fundraising. Practice of implementation of this law is vehemently criticized by local activists and international experts. In 2010, in Belarus there were fifteen officially registered political parties and several parties acted without legal registration (for instance, the Belarusian Christian Democratic Party which sponsored Vital Rymasheuski and the Social Democratic Party *Narodnaya Hramada* of Mikola Statkevich in the Presidential campaign 2010). The Criminal Code of Belarus (Article 193-1) imposes criminal liability for participants in the activities of an unregistered organization. According to the report “The 2009 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia” issued by USAID, the Belarusian state over-complicates the registration of NGO and a lot of organizations are left unregistered<sup>19</sup>. Several think tanks, human rights, entrepreneurs’, youth and other NGOs are registered abroad (primarily, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine) or act in Belarus without any legal status.

Yet, the restrictive legal-political context does not annihilate the third sector completely. As Diamond claims, even under authoritarianism, “civil society may continue to function, both through religious, professional, cultural, social and human rights organizations (which may be monitored, subverted, and harassed) and through covert means, such as underground media”<sup>20</sup>. According to expert evaluation, every second organization of the third sector in Belarus in 2010 functioned unregistered<sup>21</sup>.

Western scholars differ in how they characterize the relationships between the third sector and the state: some see the groups and organizations of the third sector as being most usefully in opposition or at least a counterbalance to the state power<sup>22</sup>, while others propose that partnerships and interdependencies between the two are the most beneficial for social development<sup>23</sup>. Public policy analysts show that social policy goals are best achieved through a dialogue with social partners<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Europe and Eurasia Office of Democracy, Governance and Social Transition, *The 2009 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition June-2010.

[http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe\\_eurasia/dem\\_gov/ngoindex/2009/complete\\_document.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex/2009/complete_document.pdf), 29 07 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Diamond, Larry. *Developing Democracy towards Consolidation*, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999, p. 337-338.

<sup>21</sup> Korovenkova T., “Tret’emu sektory nujen zayavitel’nyi princip” (in Russian), [The Third Sectors Needs the Declarative Principle], *Belapan Internet news-agency*, 2010 June, 14 [http://naviny.by/rubrics/society/2009/03/14/fic\\_articles\\_116\\_161668/print/](http://naviny.by/rubrics/society/2009/03/14/fic_articles_116_161668/print/), 20 07 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Nisbet, R. A., *Community and Power*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

<sup>23</sup> Salamon L.M., Anheier H.K., “A Comparative Study of the Non-profit Sector: Purpose, Methodology, Definition and Classification,” in Saxon-Harrod S. and Kendall J. eds., *Researching the Voluntary Sector*, Tonbridge: Charities Aid Foundation, 1993, p.13 - 43.

<sup>24</sup> Esping-Andersen G. & Gallie D, Hemerijck A., eds., *Why We Need a New Welfare State*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

and inclusion of the third sector in design and delivery of social services<sup>25</sup>. Other authors underline that the third sector organizations are capable to generate new ideas and solutions for the problems and in general are more innovative than the state<sup>26</sup>.

Therefore we aim to study the intricate socio-cultural situation and analyse various social organizations along the lines of their loyalty to the current regime and their autonomy of action (for the analytical scheme see Figure 1). For the purpose of our study, dealing with a non-democratic regime, we find the typologies proposed by Salamon and Anheier<sup>27</sup> and Young<sup>28</sup> quite useful in describing three patterns of interaction which might emerge between the state and the third sector:

- The oldest (dating to Alexis de Tocqueville) is a liberal pattern: the third sector is a healthy, independent opposition (Salamon and Anheier), engaged in an adversarial relationship (Young) to the state power, producing an alternative set of services and opinions.
- Another pattern (which empirically is the most frequently observed) emerges when the third sector acts as an agent of the state (Salamon and Anheier), or is a supplement to government (Young). In this case, the third sector produces services on behalf of the government, and is largely regulated and controlled by the state agencies. We might call this pattern subsidiary or collaborationist, depending on political and organisational peculiarities of the regime.
- The third pattern is the one where the third sector acts in partnership with the government (Salamon and Anheier) or complements the government (Young). Though the third sector and the state are not necessarily equal in power, authority or resources but they might exhibit high levels of cooperation and mutual support, in all stages of the public policy process. This pattern is highly praised by political and intellectual sponsors of multi-level governance.

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<sup>25</sup> Evers A. & Laville, J.-L. eds., *The Third Sector in Europe*, Cheltenham: Edgar Elgar 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Cousins M. *European Welfare States: Comparative Perspectives*, London: Sage, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Salamon, Anheier, (note 23), p. 13 – 43.

<sup>28</sup> Young D., “Alternative models of government-nonprofit sector relations: theoretical and international perspectives”, *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, 29, 2000, p. 149-172.

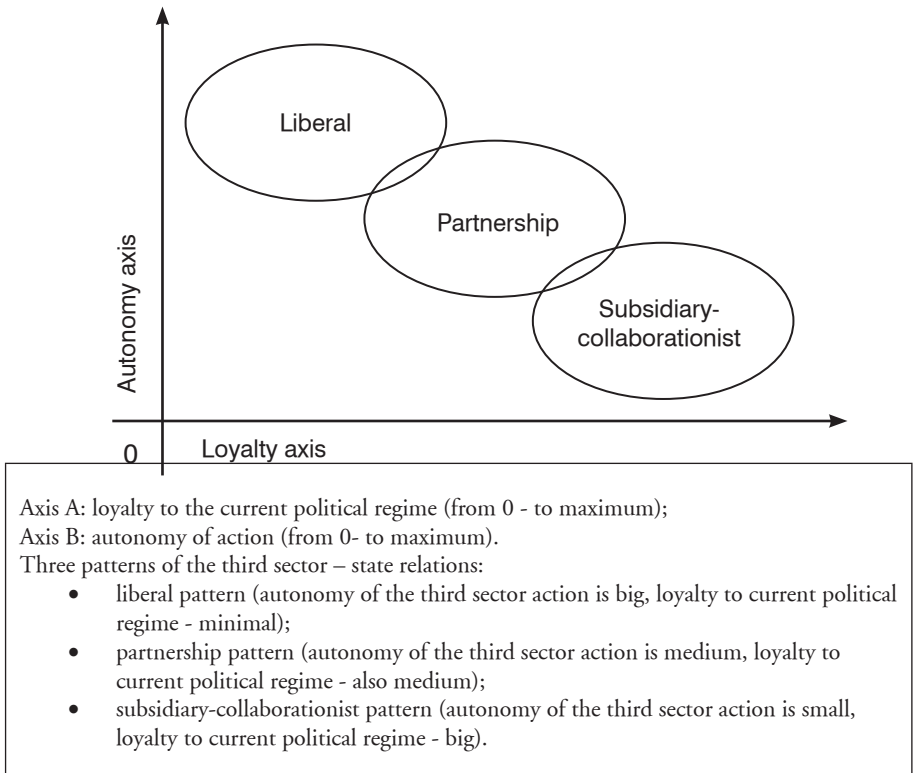


Figure 1. **Scheme of the third sector and the state relations (theoretical model)\***

With reference to Belarus, we hypothesize that 1) there exist only two types of third sector organizations: the liberal and the subsidiary-collaborationist; 2) the two types of NGOs are clearly distinguishable (i.e. they do not have any overlap in their activities and discourses); 3) both types of public discourses (liberal and subsidiary-collaborationist) have been amplified in the Presidential electoral campaign 2010 (i.e. the collaborationist version obtained an overwhelming political success).

\* Source: established by the authors of the article, on the basis of Salamon and Anheir (1993) and Young (2000) theories.



### 3. Liberal NGOs

All social organizations in Belarus have to undergo the financial scrutiny of the Department of Humanitarian Activities at the Ministry of Finance and membership fees are the most obvious source of funding. However, fees cannot be high in a country with \$12 880 annual GDP per capita in 2009 (according to the World Bank Database). With a low (30 per cent) share of private sector in GDP (EBRD, 2009)<sup>29</sup>, corporate donations and philanthropy could only be miserable. Thus, the third sector organizations highly depend on external (state or international) financing, which is closely monitored by the government officials.

In such circumstances, in Belarus many social organizations cluster in the liberal pattern (see Figure 1 above) and, in exchange for liberty and autonomy of their action, develop and nurture adversarial relations with the state. The state reacts to them with a sea of silence: activities of such oppositional organizations in Belarus are only randomly covered by TV, radio and print media. Even if these NGOs create some news (as it frequently happened in the Presidential campaign), the state-run media do not cover them. In electronic media the presence of the oppositional NGOs is somewhat higher. But these bits of news remain known only by a limited auditorium of like-minded people, since Internet media is not much followed by an average Belarusian fellow citizen.

Among the most noticeable oppositional NGOs are: the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus which in 2010 united 264 youth, social, human rights, ecological, educational, and support organizations<sup>30</sup>. The Belarusian Ministry of Justice refused its registration three times and currently it functions illegally. Other examples are organizations of businessmen and entrepreneurs (for instance, the “Perspective”, the International Organization for Freedom of Entrepreneurship (registered in Ukraine) and youth NGO Malady Front [Youth Front] (registered in the Czech Republic)<sup>31</sup>. These organizations many times publicly invited the government to start a dialogue, but their initiatives remain in vain. The Assembly of Pro-democratic NGOs in 2009 initiated public campaign “Stop 193.1”, with the aim of abolishing criminal liability for the activities of unregistered NGOs. It led to the rumors that eventually the type of responsibility for such activities might be shifted from criminal to administrative. In March 2010, the Assembly

<sup>29</sup> European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Strategy for Belarus 2009*, p. 25 <http://www.ebrd.com/downloads/country/strategy/belarus.pdf>, 29 07 2011.

<sup>30</sup> See: <http://belngo.info/about.html>

<sup>31</sup> Belarusian authorities consider “Malady Front” to be radical organization. Some of its activists were arrested well before the Presidential elections and its vice-chair Nasta Palazhanka was sentenced to 1 year of imprisonment, charged for organizing massive disorders on December 19, 2010 in Minsk.

and other Belarusian NGOs started a campaign against the adoption of the new Law on Non-Governmental Organizations, which made NGO registration even more complex, introduced new obligatory forms of activity reports and stipulated that once convicted person cannot be among the founders of any organization, etc. At the same time, some campaigners acknowledged that the proposed law introduces some positive innovations, for instance, the new system of public purchases (in Russian – “socialnii zakaz”). Representatives of 110 NGOs signed the collective petition, addressed to the Belarusian Parliament and Government and asked to further liberalize the draft<sup>32</sup>. There was no official reaction to this oppositional document. Instead there was high mediatization of the fact that the draft of the law is enthusiastically supported by some “socially relevant organizations”. For instance, the official newsletter the Belarusian Association of Social Workers published positive comments about the law a week before elections<sup>33</sup>. However, the Belarusian Parliament sent the draft law back to the Ministry of Justice for its further revision.

Many oppositional NGOs were involved in the presidential campaign 2010: they provided human and organizational resources for the alternative candidates, organized activities in the regions, collected signatures and conducted non-partisan election observation. Electoral observation campaigns were organized by the NGO Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BHC), Human Rights Center “Viasna”<sup>34</sup> (which was deprived of its legal registration by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus in 2003 because of election observation activities during Presidential Campaign 2001 and currently it functions illegally) and Movement for Freedom. After elections, held on December 19, 2010, oppositional NGOs became targets of repressions. They faced KGB interrogations, withdrawal of computers, official warnings from the Ministry of Justice regarding their activities, etc. Numerous civic activists have been arrested.

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<sup>32</sup> See the text of NGOs’ petition: <http://www.lawtrend.org/ru/content/about/news/kolobr?lawtrendorg=nqkndqecgsfy>

<sup>33</sup> Belarusian Association of Social Workers: Newsletter, № 160, 10 12 2010, p. 3 – 4.

<sup>34</sup> On 4 August 2011 Ales Bialiatski, Chair of Viasna, was arrested for, “concealment of profits on an especially large scale” (article 243, part 2, Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus). This article envisages up to 7 years of imprisonment and the confiscation of property. The reason for Bialiatski’s detention was disclosure of information about his bank accounts abroad (in Lithuania and in Poland).

#### 4. Subsidiary-Collaborationist NGOs (Governmental-Public Organizations GPOs, Founded by the Republic of Belarus, and Pro-Governmental Social Organizations PGSOs)

Revelatory of a non-democratic regime, there exist specific governmental-public organizations (GPOs) in Belarus and they do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (and are not included in the above mentioned Chernov's five-fold typology of NGOs in Belarus). These organizations are initiated and might be reorganized or liquidated only with the President's permission (approval), and the President could be their founder and member<sup>35</sup>. The main goal of the GPOs is to help in "fulfilling the incumbent government tasks" (art.1). Officially, there are 7 such GPOs in Belarus<sup>36</sup> and they all but one are established on the basis of former Soviet para-military and sport associations (see Annex 2). Formally, half a million people are members of the GPOs (with hugely overlapping membership)<sup>37</sup>. Yet, in reality activities of the GPOs extend only to their most active members and government officials. The GPOs implement the state projects (for instance, the DOSAAF was involved in the social-patriotic program "Young Talents of Belarus" 2006 – 2010). The GPOs might be regarded as an extreme case of the collaborationist pattern (see Figure 1 above): the GPOs crucially lack autonomy and are completely loyal to the state. Interestingly, the GPOs are not very visible in the public sphere and the majority of them do not run any web-site. However, their public invisibility has explanations (rent-seeking and self-service of their members) other than the disinterest and censorship of the official media. The role of GPOs in electoral campaigns always was and remains mysterious. Undoubtedly, their members have been actively involved in electoral activities in favor of Lukashenka. Let alone consider the fact that the GPO Presidential Sport Club is chaired by Dzmitry Lukashenka, son of the Belarusian president.

Yet another type of the third sector organization – we label them Pro-governmental social organizations (PGSOs) – in Belarus is regulated by the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (which also regulates the above described

<sup>35</sup> Law On Governmental-Public Organizations 2006, art. 2-3.

<sup>36</sup> Golovanov V. G., Slizhevsky O. L., *Nepravitel'stvennyye organizatsii Belarusi: progress i dostizheniya* [Non-governmental Organizations of Belarus: Progress and Achievements], Minsk: Publishing House "Belii Veter", 2010, p. 477 - 497 (in Russian).

<sup>37</sup> Golovanov V. G., Slizhevsky O. L., (note 38), p. 33.

oppositional NGOs). The biggest part of the trade unions in Belarus<sup>38</sup> also can be labeled as PGOSs. In fact, trade unions present a vivid illustration of the dichotomous structure of the Belarusian third sector where some organizations (such as Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FTUB)) legitimize and help sustaining the non-democratic regime, while the anti-Lukashenka trade-unions are marginalized and suppressed in most of enterprises.

The PGSOs do not display any clear animosity towards the state in general and are fairly loyal towards the current political regime in Belarus. In the above provided three-fold typology, the PGSOs clearly belong to the collaborationist-subsidiary pattern (see Figure 1 above), albeit their autonomy of action is bigger than that of GPOs and loyalty to the current regime should not be taken for granted.

According to the Belarusian Ministry of Justice (July 1, 2010), there were 2,274 registered Non-Governmental Organizations in Belarus (among which 228 international, 673 national and 1,373 local) in addition to 23 associations and 94 foundations. Formally, it is impossible to differentiate between oppositional NGOs and PGSOs. However, their differences in practice are striking. The PGSOs are easy to register, they are supported by officials, their organizational structure is clear and hierarchical and they are often led by state officials or heads of the state-controlled enterprises. Based on information, provided on the web-sites of the biggest PGSO, more than 7, 5 million people (total population of Belarus is 9, 5 million people) are members of PGSOs. Evidently, the numbers are inflated and there is also an important overlap of membership.

The PGSOs are supported from the state budget, have preferential treatment when organizing some activities (do not pay for the rent of premises), are assisted in recruitment of new members (for instance, the Belarusian Republican Union of Youth (BRUY) has premises in most Belarusian Universities and schools). They co-opt active people, provide services for their members and carry out activities, in support to the state-led projects.

According to the official ideology, the mission of the PGSOs includes “cooperation with the purpose to effectively realize social programs”<sup>39</sup>. The telling example of such collaborationist role assigned to the PGSOs is the above described story of the Belarusian Association of Social Workers, in late 2010 engaged in promotion of the new law on NGOs.

Notwithstanding clear-cut lines between international (donor) and national

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<sup>38</sup> There is a separate Law on Trade Unions (Law on Trade Unions, 1992 with amendments), which extends to the oppositional trade unions.

<sup>39</sup> Informational-Analytical Center under the President's of the Republic of Belarus Administration, Informational materials for informational-propagandistic groups, No.8 (2009).

(state and membership) financing of the NGOs in Belarus, drawn in Chernov's typology, in reality Belarusian PGSOs frequently participate in internationally sponsored projects (by OSCE, UNDP, etc.). For instance, PGSO SCAF (Support Centre for Associations and Foundations) was unsuccessfully involved in the OSCE and CIVICUS supported project "Interaction between State and Non-governmental Organizations" (2009 - 2010)<sup>40</sup>.

One of the most visible PGSOs, the Belarusian Women's Union (BWU), is led by Nadezhda Ermakova, current Head of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus<sup>41</sup>. Members of the BWU board are Marianna Schetkina, current Minister of Labor and Social Security and Antonina Morova, current parliamentarian and Head of the Permanent Commission on Education, Science, Culture and Social Development in the Council of Republic<sup>42</sup> and former minister of Labor and Social Security. The BWU is an umbrella organization for women's activities in social policies. Because of personal affiliation of its leaders to the executive and legislative institutions of Belarus this PGSO is on the top of social affairs agenda.

Similar relations and affiliations with the state are typical for Belaya Rus' [White Russia]. In 2009-2010 Belaya Rus' established 162 Soviet-styled public advisory centers (in Russian – "obschestvennye priyemnye") in Minsk and other regional centers aimed at solving education and health care problems on the community level<sup>43</sup>. Activities of these public advisory centers received wide coverage of the state-run media. In 2010 the chairman of Belaya Rus', Alyaksandr Radzkov, former Minister of Education, became a leader of Lukashenka's electoral headquarters and members of Belaya Rus' collected signatures for Lukashenka<sup>44</sup>. In January 2011 Radzkov was appointed a vice-chairman of the Administration of President of the Republic of Belarus. Three other board members of 'Belaya Rus' are deputies of the House of Representatives<sup>45</sup>.

The Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC) occupies a peculiar place in the third sector. The Belarusian government significantly contributes to the BOC finances. In return, the BOC reproduces the official discourse of Belarus as a

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<sup>40</sup> For more information about problems with SCARF involvement see: Civicus, *Statement on the Civil Society Index in Belarus*, Posted on 12 11 2010, <http://civilsocietyindex.wordpress.com/2010/11/12/civicus-statement-on-the-civil-society-index-in-belarus/>, 1 05 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Ermakova, former president of Belarusbank (the biggest state-controlled commercial bank), was appointed to the new position by the President in late July 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Council of Republic is an upper chamber of the Belarusian Parliament.

<sup>43</sup> Belaya Rus'. "Obschestvennye priyemnye Belai Rusi vostrebovani u naseleniya", [Public Advisory Centers are in Great Public Demand] <http://www.belayarus.by/ru/?guid=12619>, 4 05 2011, (in Russian).

<sup>44</sup> Belaya Rus', "Belaya Rus' vkluchaetsya v izbiratel'nuu kampaniu po vyboram Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus", posted on 24 09 2010 [Belaya Rus' Enters Presidential Electoral Campaign], 30 04 2010, (in Russian).

<sup>45</sup> House of Representatives is a lower chamber of the Belarusian Parliament.

socially oriented state, underlying that such are traditional orthodox values. Since 2003, the Social Department of the Minsk Eparchy runs several charity houses and realizes programs of social support. In early 2010, the BOC affiliated itself with the Inter-confessional Mission Christian Social Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Healthcare as well as with some NGOs (the ACT and the Belarusian Red Cross) to participate in a big international project in the sphere of AIDS prophylactics. The BOC cooperation with the Belarussian government received controversial media attention in the country<sup>46</sup>.

Alongside to big PGSOs, there are numerous small PGSOs (in Chernov's typology they belong to the grass roots NGOs) whose target groups are women, children and disabled people (see Annex 2). Activities of these PGSOs are limited to the projects, financed by the governmental or private (mostly international) grants and organizations (Orthodox and Catholic churches including). These social-service-delivery oriented PGSOs do not criticize the regime, but are rather autonomous in their actions and experience similar difficulties in fund-raising to what oppositional NGOs do. These small, precarious social organizations exhibit a certain overlap of subsidiary-collaborationist and liberal patterns in the third sector activities in Belarus.

As already suggested above with the example of Belaya Rus', PGSOs are widely used as a tool of the state, performing its functions and attaining its goals. PSGOs provided a convenient pool of electoral observers, required by the amended electoral law<sup>47</sup>. The PSGOs also turn easily into instruments of Lukashenka's political communication and propaganda (for instance, in autumn 2010 BRUY gave several public performances like theatrical pieces on the streets in Minsk against Russian NTV-channel which during Belarussian Presidential electoral campaign put on the air TV-film "Kriestnii Bac'ka" (reference to the God Father) criticising Lukashenka). Smaller PGSOs upon direct request from the authorities also got involved into Lukashenka's campaign.

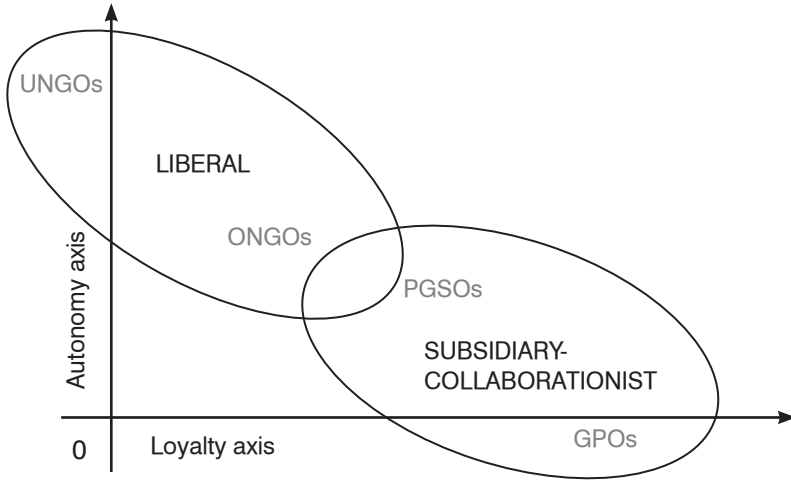
In sum, in Belarus we can distinguish the subsidiary-collaborationist vs. liberal divide cutting through the third sector (see Figure 2). There are no signs of the partnership pattern in actual relations between the third sector and the state in Belarus and its perspectives are dim. The third sector in non-democra-

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<sup>46</sup> For example, oppositional internet media Charter 97 and printed newspaper Narodnaya Volya criticized Orthodox hierarchy for supporting Lukashenka. At the same time briefly after elections Orthodox believers published in social media public appeal to the Orthodox Church with request not to support non-democratic actions of Belarussian government.

<sup>47</sup> Central Electoral Commission, Information about membership in Precinct and Territorial Election Commissions (PECs and TECs), <http://www.rec.gov.by/pdf/prb2010/sved3.pdf>, <http://www.rec.gov.by/pdf/prb2010/sved12.pdf>

tic Belarus exhibits only two ways of dealing with the state and carrying out its activities: the liberal pattern (autonomy of action of the oppositional NGOs is big/ medium, their loyalty to the current political regime is minimal/ medium, while many unregistered NGOs are openly disloyal to Lukashenka's rule); and the subsidiary-collaborationist pattern (autonomy of action of the GPOs and PSGOs is medium/ small, but – on the contrary – their loyalty to the current regime is big/medium; GPOs and several big PSGOs indeed do not carry any autonomous action, but rather implement the State conceived projects). Liberal autonomous activities of oppositional NGOs experience external and internal organizational difficulties alongside with their modest resources. Frequently, they engage in overtly anti-governmental action and display overt animosity and adversarial attitudes to the current regime (therefore part of the liberal pattern is schematically projected on the negative part of the axis A). Collaborationist-subsidary activities of the GPOs and PGSOs officially encompass almost three quarters of the Belarusian population and act as instruments of the state, without any significant independent initiatives. Schematically, some of their actions are to be projected on the negative part of the axis B, representing the complete lack of their autonomy of action and their subservient relation to the State. Meanwhile, there is a (small) overlap between liberal and subsidiary-collaborationist action driven small and medium scale social-service delivery oriented organizations in Belarus. Yet, this overlap does not indicate any potential of cooperation between liberal and subsidiary-collaborationist organizations of the third sector in Belarus: the overlapping activities of NGOs and PSGOs are competitive and based on the zero-sum game logics, where the PSGOs – thanks to their loyalty to the State, unequivocally have an upper hand.



Abbreviations: UNGOs-unregistered NGOs, ONGOs- oppositions NGOs, GPOs- governmental public organizations, PGSOs- pro-governmental social organizations.

Axis A: loyalty to the current political regime (from 0 - to maximum); axis B: autonomy of action (from 0- to maximum). Extension to the negative part of the axis A illustrates that a significant part of the third sector activities attempt to undermine, delegitimize the current political regime in Belarus. Extension to the negative part of the axis B illustrates that a significant part of the third sector activities do not only lack autonomy of action, but indeed they are directly controlled and initiated by the State itself.

Figure 2. **Scheme of the third sector and the state relations in Belarus (2010)\***

In the following sub-sections we explore how this double structure and the identified overlap of some organizations of the third sector have been reflected in the Presidential elections 2010 in Belarus.

## 5. Presidential Campaign 2010

Contrary to the previous electoral campaigns, in 2010 restrictive measures against oppositional candidates in the pre-electoral phase were not so brutal<sup>48</sup> and

\* Source: Authors.

<sup>48</sup> However, in May 2010 several members from Nyaklyaeu's civic campaign "*Tell the Truth*" were arrested and imprisoned for several days.



the electoral campaign in Belarus 2010 was rather rich in terms of tools and messages known in liberal political communication. Yet, the 2010 presidential elections spurred the unprecedented protests, followed by severe repressions and massive arrests.

The elections took place in the context of worsening relations with Russia. As mentioned above, since 2007 Belarus engaged in forced liberalization. In 2008-9 the Belarusian authorities (headed by Vladimir Makei, the chief of the Presidential Administration) made important steps towards inclusion of Belarus into EU Eastern Partnership. The EU achieved the small, humble feat that the Belarusian government slightly democratized its electoral legislation<sup>49</sup>. The most important changes included: replacement of a permission-based system to hold public meetings by a simple two-day notification procedure for candidates and proxies; duty to broadcast debates between candidates by the state media; possibility for candidates to set up individual accounts for their campaign funds; requirement that at least one third of the members of Precinct and Territorial Election Commissions (PECs and TECs) are drawn from representatives of political parties and public associations. However, the other 2/3 could be appointed by local authorities from the pool of nominees by labor collectives and individual applicants<sup>50</sup>. The revised PECs and TECs still were heavily dominated by the state officials.

Moreover, the last provision of the liberalized electoral legislation was cynically circumvented by Lukashenka's regime: the majority of nominees from 'public associations' belonged to organizations, clearly loyal to the President (see Table 1). According to the OSCE report, the vast majority of nominations for the election commissions made by organizations loyal to the President have been approved (out of 781 such nominees for the TEC 729 have been appointed at 93 per cent success rate). While from organizations which have been considered oppositional by the OSCE only 20 percent of nominees were appointed. As a result they got only 0, 7 percent of the total number of TEC members. Almost the same numbers were on the PEC level, where 93 percent of nominees of loyal and 17 percent of oppositional organizations were appointed. The total number of oppositional members of PEC was 0, 26 percent<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> The Belarusian Electoral Code was amended on January 4, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> According to the Constitution and Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus members of election commissions are appointed by local authorities. There are three ways to be nominated to the election commission: individual application; nomination by labour collective and by public organizations (political parties or NGOs registered in Belarus). Practically, authorities can select and appoint completely submissive to the regime members to these commissions, because people can be easily controlled by the threat to lose their workplace (arbitrary non-prolongation of a short-term labor contract) or these members belong to pro-governmental organizations and/or work in State institutions.

<sup>51</sup> Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Republic of Belarus Presidential Elections 19 December 2010. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, Warsaw, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/75713>, 22.02.2011.

For instance, the OSCE reports that Belaya Rus' counted for 7, 4 percent of total number of the TECs members and 5, 5 percent of total number of the PECs members; respectively Belarusian Republican Union of Youth (BRUY) 7, 1 and 5, 5; Belarusian Women's Union (BWU) 5,6 and 5,8; Belarusian Public Organization of the Veterans of the Second World War- 4,8 and 3,1 and Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FTUB) 11,7 and 13,5. In addition, clearly collaborationist social organizations for the TECs provided 36, 6 percent and for the PECs 33, 4 percent of members, thus sufficing the new (the EU imposed) liberalizing norm of one third of electoral observers from 'public organizations'.

According to IISEPS opinion-poll (conducted in October 2010) in response to the open-ended question: "Do you know who is going to run for president in the current elections?" the known candidates were ranked in the following way: Lukashenka – 72, 3 percent; Nyaklyaeu – 32, 4 percent; Sannikau – 13, 6 percent; Ramanchuk – 6, 2 percent; Statkevich – 5, 5 percent; Michalevic – 4, 4 percent; Rymasheuski – 3, 7 percent and "a different politician" (18 names, less than 3% each) – 12, 1 percent<sup>52</sup>. All oppositional candidates ran their individual electoral campaigns. All but two candidates (Dzimitry Us and Viktor Tsiarshchanka) represented political parties or public movements (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Information-mobilization structures and social issues of the Presidential campaign in Belarus 2010<sup>53</sup>**

Candidate	Web-site	Type of web-site (personal and/or party/ organization affiliated)	Affiliated organizations	Coverage of social issues*	Emphasized social issues
Ryhor Kastusiu	<a href="http://narodny.org/">http://narodny.org/</a>	Web-site of Belarusian Popular Front (BPF)	BPF is a registered oppositional political party	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appeal to political justice</li> <li>• need to reform of judicial system</li> <li>• respect for human rights</li> </ul>

\* Charter 97 is one of the most popular Belarusian Internet media outlets, created in 1997. In September 2010 one of its leaders, journalist Aleh Bebenin, was found dead in his house. The Belarusian authorities affirm that Bebenin committed a suicide. However, this explanation is not trusted by human rights fighters in Belarus and abroad. On December 19, 2010 the editor-in-chief of Charter 97 Natalya Radzina was arrested and detained for 2 months in the KGB prison. In June 2011 she fled the country and asked for political asylum in Lithuania.

<sup>52</sup> *Presidential Elections-2010: "A Landscape before the Battle"*, IISEPS, October 2010, <http://www.iiseps.org/e10-10-01.html>, 25 04 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Source: web-sites of the candidates, qualitative research of the authors. Coverage of social issues in electoral campaigns of candidates (qualitative evaluation established by Tatsiana Chulitskaya):

-	absent
+	weakly covered
++	fairly well covered
+++	strongly covered

Candidate	Web-site	Type of web-site (personal and/or party/ organization affiliated)	Affiliated organizations	Coverage of social issues*	Emphasized social issues
Alyaksander Lukashenka	<a href="http://president.gov.by/">http://president.gov.by/</a>	Official portal of the President of the Republic Belarus	All PSGOs (and most probably GPOs), state agencies and state-run media	+++	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• socially-oriented paternalistic state</li> <li>• care about citizens' well-being</li> <li>• attention to the ageing population</li> <li>• ultra-conservative children and family policy</li> <li>• absence of social stratification in Belarusian society</li> <li>• sympathy to a social 'looser'</li> </ul>
Ales Michalevic	<a href="http://michalevic.org/">http://michalevic.org/</a>	Personal	Public movement "For Modernization", lacked not only financial but also human resources	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• political challenges</li> <li>• claim for better inclusion of socially vulnerable groups</li> <li>• promotion of equal opportunities</li> </ul>
Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu	<a href="http://nekliaev.org/">http://nekliaev.org/</a> <a href="http://zapraudu.info/">http://zapraudu.info/</a>	Two web-sites: personal and of civic campaign "Tell the Truth"	Civic campaign "Tell the truth" established in early 2010, network and sporadic action based	++	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fight against poverty</li> <li>• restoration of expropriated (in 2008) social benefits</li> <li>• poverty and unemployment in the country</li> </ul>
Yaraslau Ramanchuk	<a href="http://roman-chuk2010.org/">http://roman-chuk2010.org/</a> <a href="http://ucpb.org/">http://ucpb.org/</a>	Two web-sites: personal and political party United Civic Party of Belarus (UCPB)	UCPB is a registered oppositional political party	++	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• solidarity with socially vulnerable groups</li> <li>• injustice of current social security system</li> <li>• artificial character of low levels of unemployment in Belarus</li> <li>• poverty in the country.</li> </ul>

Candidate	Web-site	Type of web-site (personal and/or party/ organization affiliated)	Affiliated organizations	Coverage of social issues*	Emphasized social issues
Vital Rymasheuski	<a href="http://rymasheuski.org/ru">http://rymasheuski.org/ru</a> <a href="http://bchd.info/">http://bchd.info/</a>	Two web-sites: personal and political party Belarusian Christian Democrats (BCD)	BCD is an unregistered oppositional political party	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demographic problems</li> <li>• traditional Christian family values</li> <li>• restoration of social benefits</li> </ul>
Andrei Sannikau	<a href="http://sannikov.by/">http://sannikov.by/</a> <a href="http://europeanbelarus.org/">http://europeanbelarus.org/</a>	Two web-sites: personal and civic campaign "European Belarus"	Civic campaign "European Belarus" established in early 2008, network and sporadic action based. Internet based media resource "Charter 97" <sup>1</sup>	++	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• request for a shift from the state paternalism to social partnership</li> <li>• demand to increase social benefits</li> <li>• state responsibility towards socially vulnerable citizens</li> <li>• need to restore independent trade-unions</li> </ul>
Mikola Statkevich	<a href="http://statkevich.org/news.php">http://statkevich.org/news.php</a> <a href="http://bsdpng.org/bsdpng/">http://bsdpng.org/bsdpng/</a>	Two web-sites: personal and political party Belarusian social-democratic party "Narodnaya Hramada" (BSDP NH)	BSDP NH is an unregistered oppositional political party, splinter of Belarusian social democrats in 2004	-	NA
Viktar Tsiarshchanka	<a href="http://tereshchenko.org/">http://tereshchenko.org/</a>	Personal web-site	NA	-	NA
Dzmitry Us	no web-site	No web-site	NA	-	NA

The campaign lacked competition between Lukashenka and alternative candidates, and was marked by instances of pressure, harassment and misuse of administrative resources to promote the incumbent president. The oppositional candidates had difficulties accessing the mass-media, especially, the state-run TV. The total time of news coverage of President Lukashenka campaign's activities and his official duties in the state run TV channel primetime was 89 percent<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> OSCE report, (note 50), p. 3.

Lukashenka participated in the Fourth All-Belarusian People's Assembly, which took place on December 6-7, 2010 in Minsk and was aired by the main national TV channels (ONT, First Channel and CTV)<sup>55</sup>. In numerous widely mediatized statements participants of the event endorsed the President's electoral program (the then Prime Minister Siarhiei Sidorski was the chairman of this Assembly).

The media campaign of oppositional candidates was limited mostly to alternative Internet media and a few Internet-based radio-stations (Radio Racija and European Radio for Belarus, broadcasting from Poland) and an independent TV-channel Belsat (also broadcasting from Poland).

On December 4, 2010 from 17.00 till 18.00, the direct TV-debate of the presidential candidates took place on the first Belarusian TV-channel. It occurred for the first time in the history of political communication in Belarus. Free airtime program was provided in an uncensored format, although debate was anchored by two journalists loyal to Lukashenka's regime. In the program oppositional candidates vocally criticized the current President who was absent<sup>56</sup>.

An important actor of the electoral campaign 2010 in Belarus was Belarusian coercive power and military interests' groups. As early as December 17, 2010, representatives of KGB and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) officially warned about possible mass disorder<sup>57</sup>. The independent Belarusian and foreign media leaked information about tensions between KGB and MIA during the campaign<sup>58</sup>. Yet, these observations were denied by the joint public statement of Vadim Zaitsev, head of KGB and Anatolii Kuleshov, Minister of MIA. Media commentators and

<sup>55</sup> The All Belarusian People's Assembly (Belarusian: Usebelaruski Narodny S'hod) was established by the Presidential Decree on August 29, 1996 and approved by the Belarusian Parliament in the Law "On Republican and Local Assemblies" (in Russian: "O respublikanskikh i mestnykh sobraniyakh" № 411-3, July 12, 2000). According to the Law, the goal of the Assembly is "to provide direct civic participation in the governance of the state" and the President summons it "as it may be necessary". The first assemblies took place in October 1996 and May 2001 before the controversial referendums that vastly expanded powers of the President. The third Assembly was summoned in March 2006. The assemblies are usually held in the Palace of Republic (the biggest assembly hall in the centre of Minsk). The exact number of the delegates is defined each time by the President to "proportionally represent all Belarusian regions".

<sup>56</sup> Rastaev D., *S'eli debaty. Agitacionnyy rezulz dostig apogeya* ["TV debates consumed. The campaigning feast at its heights"], December 6, 2010 <http://belgazeta.by/20101206.48/010016521/>, 20 04 2011 (in Russian).

<sup>57</sup> BELTA, *Otdel'nye predstaviteli oppozitsii pytalis' zakupit' elektroshokery i petardy*, [Opposition representatives tried to buy petards and electric shockers], December 17, 2010, [http://www.belta.by/ru/all\\_news/politics/Otdelnye-predstaviteli-oppozitsii-pytalis-zakupit-elektroshokery-i-petardy---KGB\\_i\\_535954.html](http://www.belta.by/ru/all_news/politics/Otdelnye-predstaviteli-oppozitsii-pytalis-zakupit-elektroshokery-i-petardy---KGB_i_535954.html), 20 04 2011 (in Russian).

<sup>58</sup> There were materials in Belarusian and foreign media, for instance, "Podpolkovnik KGB v otstavke; belaruskie spetslujby ispol'zuut Lukashenko dlya prinyatiya vygodnyh dlya nih reshenii" [Retired KGB colonel; Belarusian secret services use Lukashenko for promoting their decisions] <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,14767520,00.html> 14 01 2011 (in Russian). Among Belarusian media 'Belarusian Partyzan' and its journalist Svyatlana Kalinkina ('Narodnaya Volya' newspaper) was the most active one in writing about secret services and their role in electoral campaign.

experts, discussing the role played by the military interests groups in the aftermath of the elections, emphasized that not only Belarusian but also Russian secret services might have been involved in post-electoral repressions<sup>59</sup>.

In terms of the landslide victory of Lukashenka, the results of presidential elections 2010 did not differ much from the previous rigged elections in Belarus, Lukashenka won by 79, 6 % (see Annex 3 for detailed results). Interestingly, as late as summer 2011, there are no disaggregated results by individual precincts, published neither on the website of the Belarusian CEC or in any other official form.

The presidential campaign and especially its aftermath reflected the growing civic awareness of Belarusian citizens. The number of protesting people in Minsk on December 19, 2010 was – by different estimations – between twenty and forty-thousand. It could be explained by relative liberalization of the whole campaign which mobilized citizens<sup>60</sup> and by electorate's dissatisfaction with the political and socio-economic situation in the country. A splash of grass-roots initiatives, which aimed to support people who were arrested on December 19 and later, further politicized the third sector in Belarus. For instance, just before Christmas 2010 the public campaign Guarding Angel [Angel chranitel'] was launched on the Internet ([www.by-angels.org](http://www.by-angels.org)). It coordinated activities of sympathizers for imprisoned people. Nonetheless, the coercive power and secret services forcefully expanded into the public sphere and the third sector of Belarus.

## 6. Social Affairs Discourse in Lukashenka's Campaign 2010

The main statements of Lukashenka electoral program in the social sphere were: increase of quality of life; support for families with three and more children, increases in children's benefits; development of housing program; increases in pensions; and combating unemployment. The incumbent President emphasized future social development, which might be assured by ultra-conservative children and family policy, where children act as guarantors of enjoyable old age for their parents (allowing the state to disengage from concerns about elderly). In his electoral program Lukashenka acclaimed that "being a socially-oriented state, we

<sup>59</sup> Tomkovich A., *KGB vs FSB i drugie igrы spetssluzh* [KGB vs FSB and other games of secret services], November 2010, <http://nmbny.eu/news/discussions/2921.html>, 3 08 2011 (in Russian).

<sup>60</sup> Martinovich V., *Kak proiti k peremenam?* [How could we get to changes?], December 13, 2010, <http://belgazeta.by/20101213.49/010080141/>, 21 04 2011 (in Russian).

should protect them [old people left without their family care]! If we leave them in despair, we will be left by our own children”<sup>61</sup>.

In public speeches in autumn 2010 Lukashenka doubted the very existence of social stratification (poor vs. rich) in Belarusian society and praised the homogeneity of his nation. According to the president, citizens should not take any sort of social support for granted and that they should feel obliged and grateful if they are given it. Lukashenka in his rhetoric cares about any citizen in a “difficult life situation”. This sympathy and willingness to help the loser is opposed to the (market) culture of individualism and consumerism. The paternalistic president establishes a simple causal relation between social security provision by the state and citizens’ loyalty and gratefulness to the political leadership. Lukashenka in his annual Speech to the Nation on April 21, 2010 emphasized “people go to public hospitals and schools for free, but there is nothing for free for the state, but they [people] forget about it”<sup>62</sup>. In the opening speech of the All Belarusian People’s Assembly Lukashenka in overtly electoral mood claimed that “the state voluntarily takes the majority of social security costs”<sup>63</sup>. In spite of pressing needs and ongoing neo-liberal cuts in social spending, during the presidential campaign 2010 Lukashenka remained paternalistic and populist in his rhetoric: he emphasized a socially-oriented state, caring about citizens’ well-being (especially in regions and small towns), and he was very attentive to the aging population.

## 7. Coverage of Social Affairs by the Oppositional Candidates

The cornerstone of the programs of alternative candidates was personalized critiques of president Lukashenka. He was attacked for worsening relations with Russia and stalemate in relations with the EU. Lukashenka’s opponents advocated economic modernization as the only way to reform Belarusian economy. Alternative candidates voiced concerns about demographic crisis and asked to restore social benefits (in particular, transport benefits to children and pensioners, curtailed in 2008); they also criticized the short-term contract system of employment (which

<sup>61</sup> Electoral Program of Presidential Candidate Alexander Lukashenko, *Belarus Segodnya*, <http://sb.by/post/108854/>, 27 11 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Delivered on April 21, 2010 in the House of Representatives of Parliament and broadcasted in real time by the First National TV Chanel. The transcript of the Speech is published on official web-site of Belarusian President <http://president.gov.by/press10256.html>

<sup>63</sup> President of the Republic of Belarus, *Speech on the Fourth All Belarusian People’s Assembly*, December 6, 2010, <http://president.gov.by/press101782.html#doc>, 2 08 2011 (in Russian).

is widely used and supported by the pro-governmental trade unions in Belarus instrumental to control workers' discontent) and promoted ideas of pension system reforms; in particular, they spoke of the need for private pension funds.

The strongest social concerns were expressed by Yaraslau Ramanchuk, a neo-liberal candidate, promoting an electoral program of "Million of New Working Places for Belarus". In his program Ramanchuk spoke of a 'big society' understood as a network of solidarity with socially vulnerable groups. The candidate emphasized that it is unjust when "a deputy gets a big pension but not an ordinary worker" (TV-speech, 25 11 2010). Ramanchuk emphasized the artificial character of low levels of unemployment in Belarus and spoke of rampant poverty in the country.

The leading oppositional candidate Andrei Sannikau postulated the shift from paternalism to social partnership "ot paternalizma k socialnomu partnerstvu" (in Russian). He demanded to restore social benefits and increase social support payments (scholarships, pensions, parental benefits). Sannikau stressed that "socially vulnerable citizens should get more (from the state)" (TV-speech on 01 12 2010). Additional money for this eventual redistribution should be generated from curtailed expenses on bureaucracy. Sannikau espoused the idea to legitimate genuine trade-unions as politically independent organizations defending true rights of workers.

The web-site "Tell the Truth" of the well-financed oppositional candidate Uladzimir Nyaklyaeu's contained a special section devoted to social issues and samples of applications to officials by activists.<sup>64</sup> Nyaklyaeu promised to fight against poverty, denied by the current regime. Nyaklyaeu claimed to restore and increase social benefits which in 2008 were expropriated from people (TV-speech, 3 12 2010). Nyaklyaeu's campaign quite extensively used social problems to appeal to voters. The candidate launched a project of the Internet advisory councils parallel to the public advisory councils under realization by PGSO Belaya Rus' (see above).

National-conservative candidate Vital Rymasheuski concentrated on the problems of family. In 2009-10 Rymasheuski's party BHD conducted a project "Mocnaya Syam'ya – Mocnaya Belarus" (in Belarusian) ["A Strong Family - a Strong Belarus"], raising public awareness about demographic problems. Rymasheuski emphasized traditional Christian family values and used strong patriarchal rhetoric. Rymasheuski's presidential program<sup>65</sup> advocated market-based but socially-oriented economy. He endorsed the idea to restore social benefits

<sup>64</sup> See the section "Rate of Lie" on the web-site "Tell the Truth" <http://zapraudu.info/rating>

<sup>65</sup> Rymasheuski V. Electoral Program 'Hrystsiyanskaya Belarus – Spravyadlivaya Ulada' ["Christian Belarus – Just Power"], <http://www.sb.by/post/109065/> (in Belarusian), 18 04 2011.



(in particular, to students and Chernobyl's emergency and recovery operation workers). Another conservative candidate Ryhor Kastusiou<sup>66</sup> mostly appealed to political justice and underlined the need to reform the judicial system as well as to respect human rights.

One of the youngest presidential candidates (aged 35), Ales Michalevic in his electoral program "Belarus: The Strategy of Evolution" highlighted political challenges (to respect checks and balances and divisions of power, to publically control activities of state institutions, to develop a multi-party system, etc.). The principle of "inclusion of vulnerable groups and building a society of equal opportunities" was described in the section "Solidarity in Belarus" of his political program. The candidate who did not hide his military-service past, former leader of Belarusian social-democrats Mikola Statkevich, concentrated on personal critiques of Lukashenka. Similarly, Tsiarshchanka concentrated on economic issues while Us made brief anti-Lukashenka statements demanding reforms of national electoral laws.

In sum, social problems were at the center of Lukashenka's electoral campaign, but they remained peripheral in the programs of oppositional candidates. Indeed, there was no overlap whatsoever in Lukashenka's vs. nine alternative candidates' electoral discourses, as related to social affairs. Lukashenka continued to promote ideas of state-led policies, where the third sector is eventually assigned a minimal subsidiary-collaborationist role, while the oppositional candidates largely espoused the liberal model of the third sector, engaged in social policies aimed to remedy the blatantly dysfunctional state. Only Andrei Sannikau's electoral campaign displayed some hints to the idea of untapped potential, which might be generated by the state-third sector partnership in Belarus.

## Conclusions

We observe that state dominance in the field of social policies remains practically immutable and the third sector (as well as private business) continues to be squeezed to the state-led social action and political communication designs in Belarus. Unlike democratic regimes where NGOs are mediators between the market and the state and are broadly engaged in solving social problems, the Be-

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<sup>66</sup> Kastuseu R. Electoral Program "Svaboda i adkaznasc'. Ekanamichny rost. Nezavisimosc' i Euraatlantychny Vybar" ["Freedom and Responsibility. Economic Growth. Independence and Euro-Atlantic Choice"] [http://narodny.org/bnf/kampaniji/vybary\\_2010/376.shtml](http://narodny.org/bnf/kampaniji/vybary_2010/376.shtml) (in Belarusian).

larusian third sector and its advocates are marginalized by the state.

The study shows that the state dominates the political communication in Belarus and even in the electoral campaign it effectively reduces discursive action opportunities of the third sector organizations and alternative candidates. The state (with the president Lukashenka in the forefront) is the main and practically unchallenged designer and implementer of social policies and leader of public discourse about social affairs.

The governmental-public organizations (GPOs) and pro-governmental social organizations (PSGOs) are agents of the state—they help it carry out social activities aimed to smooth social discontent and are not concerned with the efficiency or civic appreciation of their services. These organizations champion the subsidiary-collaborationist pattern of the state-third sector relations. The prearranged participation of these organizations in public policy process and elections turns them into laborious promoters of state-conceived initiatives.

Oppositional NGOs and anti-Lukashenka political proponents in actual Belarus limit their activities and discourses to the liberal pattern of the state-third sector relations, where the logic of protest against the state (Lukashenka's rule) dominates. In fact, liberal NGOs and alternative candidates in elections 2010 were not outspoken advocates of social policies, but they rather concentrated on political freedoms and basic human rights. However, it seems that if we analyze political communication produced by the oppositional NGOs and alternative presidential candidates from the cultural anthropology perspective (the bottom-up approach, employing qualitative interviews and participant observations) instead of limiting ourselves to institutional and discursive accounts, we might find more cases of engaged civic advocacy produced by the third sector in Belarus, yet these activities crucially lack public visibility.

Symptomatically for a non-democratic regime, coercive power sources (KGB, military interest groups) also found their place in pro-Lukashenka political communication in the presidential electoral campaign 2010. They efficiently hampered attempts to expand potential of the third sector in any domain of public policies in Belarus.

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## **Annex 1. Information Materials (September-December 2010) used in the study**

1. Public speeches (transcribed) of the President of the Republic of Belarus Alyaksandar Lukashenka from the official web-site <http://www.president.gov.by>.
2. Public speeches, publications and electoral programs of other nine presidential candidates in 2010 and materials of their web-sites.
3. Materials, prepared by the Informational-Analytical Center under the Presidential Administration of the Republic Belarus for informational-propagandistic groups (in Russian “informacionno-propagandistkije gruppy”).
4. On-line publications of the largest Belarusian Internet news-agencies: Belta <http://www.belta.by/> and Belapan <http://www.naviny.by/>. The first one is state-run and broadcasts official information. The second is a private news-agency and publishes information from official and oppositional sources. We also refer to publications of the popular oppositional Internet news-agency Belarusian Partyzan (<http://www.belaruspartisan.org/bp-forte/>) which is known for its critiques (blackmail, compromat) of the Belarus officials and Internet newspaper Charter 97 (<http://charter97.org/be/news/>) which supported presidential candidate Sannikau.
5. Articles from the state-run dailies Narodnaya Gazeta and Belarus Segodnya (former Sovetskaya Belarus) and independent mass media: weekly Belgazeta, dailies Nasha Niva and Narodnaya Volya.
6. Analytical texts of the Belarusian intellectual Internet journal Nashe Mnenie [Our Opinion] (<http://nmnby.eu/>), in particular, in the analysis of participation of former KGB and military officials in elections in Belarus.
7. Information from web-sites of the third sector organizations in Belarus.
8. Analytical reports and data of opinions polls from the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS, headed by Aleh Manaev) (<http://www.iiseps.org/eindex.html>), the Eastern European Studies Center (EESC, Vilnius, Lithuania, headed by Kristina Vaičiūnaitė) (<http://www.eesc.lt/en>).
9. Laws and normative acts of the Republic of Belarus from the official web-site <http://www.pravo.by>.
10. The web-site of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Belarus (CEC) (<http://www.rec.gov.by/>).
11. Reports of international organizations such as UNDP (<http://undp.by/en>) and the OSCE ([www.osce.org](http://www.osce.org)).

## Annex 2. The Third Sector Organizations in Belarus (Mentioned in the article)

Oppositional NGOs	Governmental Public Organizations GPOs	Pro-governmental social organizations PGSOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembly Of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus</li> </ul> <p>Human rights organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Human Rights Public Association Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BHC)</li> <li>• Human Rights Center “Viasna” (unregistered)</li> </ul> <p>Think tanks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belarusian Institute of Strategic Studies (BISS) (registered in Lithuania)</li> <li>• Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) (registered in Lithuania)</li> </ul> <p>Youth organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth NGO Malady Front, [Young Front] (registered in Check Republic)</li> </ul> <p>Political parties and public movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement For Freedom (headed by Aliaksander Milinkevich, ex-candidate for Presidential elections 2006)</li> </ul> <p>Other organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Organization for Freedom of Entrepreneurship (registered in Ukraine)</li> <li>• Republican Public Organization of entrepreneurs Perspective</li> <li>• International educational NGO ACT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOSAAF - Voluntary Association for Assistance to Army, Air Force and Navy</li> <li>• Dynamo - Belarusian Physical Training and Sport Society</li> <li>• Belarusian Society of Hunters and Fishermen</li> <li>• Belarusian Society Vedy (Knowledge)</li> <li>• Presidential Sport Club</li> <li>• Belarusian Republican Water-Area Rescue Society</li> <li>• Belarusian Voluntary Fire-Fighters' Society</li> </ul>	<p>Big PGSOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Republican Public Organization Belaya Rus' (Belaya Rus')</li> <li>• Belarusian Women's Union (BWU)</li> <li>• Belarusian Republican Union of Youth (BRUY)</li> <li>• Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FTUB)</li> <li>• Belarusian Public Organization of the Veterans (of the Second World War)</li> <li>• Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC)</li> </ul> <p>Small PGSOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Centre for Associations and Foundations (SCAF)</li> <li>• Belarusian Red Cross (BRC)</li> <li>• Belarusian Association of Social Workers (BASW)</li> </ul>

### Annex 3. Presidential Elections Results: official (CEC) and alternative (IISEPS national opinion poll)<sup>67</sup>

Candidate	Official CEC results Per cent of votes (%)	IISEPS results Per cent of votes (%)
Lukashenka	79.6	51.1
Sannikau	2.43	6.1
Nyaklyaeu	1.78	8.3
Rymasheusky	1.09	3.7
Ramanchuk	1.98	3.2
Michalevic	1.02	2.7
Statkevich	1.05	1.7
Kastusiou	1.97	1.6
Tsiareshchanka	1.19	0.6
Us	0.39	0.5
against all candidates	6.5	5.1
Voter turnout	90.65	No data

*September, 2011*

<sup>67</sup> Source: information of CEC and results of IISEPS opinion poll. NB: the aggregated official numbers differ much from the opinion poll results, announced by the IISEPS, which – however – confirm Lukashenka's victory in the first round of presidential elections 2010.