



Sultanism in Eastern Europe: The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarian Populism in Belarus

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BELARUS IS NOT ALONE AMONG THE TRANSITION STATES of the former Soviet Union in experiencing severe political and economic difficulties in the process of systemic transformation. Gibson identifies the key dangers to the 'new democracies' as '... the authoritarian propensities of leaders, the intolerance of mass publics, the explosion of crime and social anomie'.¹ These dangers have been present in all the post-Soviet states. However, under the rule of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, Belarus has become a notable exception, not only falling out of the flow of the wider processes of democratisation and marketisation but also forming a unique example of failure to create a legitimate post-Soviet nation and state. It has become a state whose official policy of seeking to be incorporated into a union-based relationship with the Russian Federation means that it continues to tread a difficult path between rejection of the consequences of independence and sovereignty on the one hand and the paradox of trying to preserve that independent status within a new or renewed (con)federation on the other.

On 24 November 1996 the voters of Belarus were asked by referendum to choose between support for an authoritarian president with a near-dictatorial executive style or key elements of a democratic state, namely a legislature reflecting the views of the electorate and directly elected local executive power.² Even taking into account the numerous violations of free and fair voting practice observed (certain categories of registered voters had even begun voting ten days before 24 November), the results can be seen as a deciding moment in the history of the state, as they clearly suggested that a unique social experiment was being carried out, involving the creation—apparently with majority popular consent—of a new model of post-Soviet rule.

This model is endowed with all the essential organs of democracy—a parliament, constitutional court, political parties of various orientations, trade unions, etc. However, these organs are akin to 'decorative appendages', as they co-exist with a power hierarchy in which all real executive authority is heavily concentrated in just two socio-political institutions, namely the president himself and 'the people', understood as that majority of voters that support President Lukashenka. By January 1997 Belarus had a bi-cameral legislature, quasi-Constitutional Court and an executive Cabinet of Ministers, all the members of which were direct presidential appointees or presidentially approved candidates. No official explanation has ever been given on

how the question of the composition of the legislature was decided. There are numerous informal explanations, many of which would seem no more reliable than rumour. The capital city of Minsk, where almost one quarter of the state's urban population lives and which is by far the most reformist area of the country, had been deprived of virtually all elected representation. At the same time, an inflated number of rural presidential cronies from (Lukashenka's native) Mogilev *oblast'* had been awarded government and parliamentary posts.³

This Belarusian model, inspired by an individual who claims that Adolf Hitler's Germany best reflects his 'interpretation of a presidential republic', has been termed 'the Second Socialist Revolution of the Late Industrial Era' by Karbalevich.⁴ It is a reversion to some of the worst aspects of the recently debunked Soviet state, including the silencing, often by violent means, of unofficial organisations, relentless harassment of the opposition, the unwarranted arrest and maltreatment of political activists and a determined attempt to restore both the planned economy and highly centralised executive control over the whole of society.⁵ Yet curiously, against all the odds, this nation-specific model of development continues to defy predictions of mass social unrest and devastating economic collapse, suggesting the need to re-evaluate the criteria for post-Soviet transition to democracy and the free market and the deeper social and psychological bases for authoritarianism.⁶

This article is divided into three sections. The first provides a theoretical framework for our discussion of the failure of post-Soviet transformation in Belarus using theories of national identity⁷ and sultanism which are applied in the subsequent sections. The second section surveys national identity, the demographic situation and public opinion as bases for what we view as a developing Belarusian version of sultanism. The third section analyses the sources of authoritarian sultanism in Belarus and its negative impact upon democratic and market economic transformation.

Theoretical framework: national identity and sultanism

Our first theoretical source for analysing the failure of democratisation in Belarus is national identity. National identity, Anthony Smith argues, involves some sense of a political community, some common institutions, a single code of rights and duties, an economic and a social space with clearly demarcated boundaries with which the citizens identify.⁸ National identity also requires that the 'homeland', whose geography is usually lauded, be also a repository of historical memories. This political community (or *patria*) should ultimately possess a single political will that, at the very least, encompasses the majority of the population. National identity, Bhikhu Parekh reminds us, usually refers to a 'territorially organised community' or 'polity'.⁹ These communities share a way of life, culture, self-understanding, bodies of ideas, images, values and bodies of rules and myths.

Not all of these features are immediately present when states become independent. States usually have to implement conscious policies which serve to create national identities by inculcating loyalties, creating social bonds between regions and classes, providing shared values, symbols and traditions that are unique to the *patria* and are different from 'others'. The state is also usually called upon to 're-awaken' historical memories and shared bonds. If a state inherits no unified national identity, such as

Belarus and the majority of Soviet successor states, the ruling elites are called upon to utilise state resources in a policy of nation building to create national and political unity.

Identity is important for two reasons. First, there exist many identities to which one can hold allegiance at the same time. Sometimes these identities overlap without any inherent contradiction. At other times they conflict with one another. Second, identities are not static—they can, and do, change over time. National and other identities are not stationary for they are always in the process of change, adaptation and construction.

Belarusian territories were part of the tsarist empire prior to 1917. This circumstance did not allow the creation of conditions for the growth of a modern Belarusian nation. Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians were all simply classified as ‘Russians’ (that is *russkie*) by the tsarist regime. The Belarusian and Ukrainian languages were banned by the tsarist authorities in the mid-19th century. The creation of the Soviet Belarusian republic in 1922 prevented the complete fusion of Belarusians into Russians, a process which might have occurred if the tsarist empire had not collapsed in 1917. Russians tend to see this as ‘natural’, similar to the nation building found in Western Europe, where outlying provinces were homogenised into nation-states. Within such a process, the fate of Belarusians (‘White Russians’) and Ukrainians (‘Little Russians’) would have been the same as that which befell the Bretons or Alsace in France, the model nation-state which Russian liberals wished the tsarist empire to emulate.

Belarus therefore became a Soviet republic in 1922, with the addition of territory from Poland during World War II, before nation building had created a unified national identity or modern nation. From the 1930s the Soviet regime, as in the tsarist era, continued to foster the development of a local Belarusian ethnographic ‘Little Russianism’—not a modern nation. Perhaps more significantly, the Soviet regime physically destroyed large parts of the creative intelligentsia during the Stalin-era purges. This was followed by wholesale russification in the post-Stalin era. By 1960 there were no Belarusian-language schools left in Belarus except in small numbers in Mostovsky *raion* and Hrodno.¹⁰ Although the 1989 Soviet census reported 74.5% of Belarusians in Belarus as giving Belarusian as their ‘native language’, more recent surveys have found that only 10% of Belarusians (1.5% of urban residents) profess to use the Belarusian language as their preferred language of everyday communication.¹¹ In eastern Belarus, the region of the country most sovietised and russified, 60% of Belarusians were shown to hold disrespectful views about their own language. This view is also held by Lukashenka, who has himself derided the Belarusian language, claiming that English and Russian are the only two ‘great’ languages in the world.¹² The state machinery has resorted to using draconian language-control methods to ensure that the issue of language does not form into a coherent basis for anti-regime thinking. These have included bringing criminal cases against journals that have used ‘non-standard’ (i.e. pre-Stalinist language reform) Belarusian orthography.

During the Soviet era Belarus did not experience mass democratic and nationalist mobilisation in defence of human and national rights. Almost all major popular demonstrations that occurred before the collapse of the Soviet Union were economi-

cally motivated, most noticeably the enormous demonstrations that took place in April 1991 in Belarus' major cities. Ludmila Alexeyeva's impressive study of *Soviet Dissent* included no chapter on the Belarusian national movement.¹³ Belarus, Kazakhstan and the four Central Asian states did not experience the growth of counter-elites and the division of republican communist parties into national and centre-loyal factions that took place in neighbouring Ukraine during the Gorbachev era.

The Soviet regime did, though, foster state building; that is dual loyalty to *both* the USSR and the Soviet republic. Mihalisko points out that '... Lukashenka's rule is a logical outcome of the population's entrenched Soviet mentality and widespread nostalgia for the relative prosperity and stability of the Soviet system'.¹⁴ We would therefore suggest that Belarusian 'Little Russianism' (loyalty to the eastern Slavs as one *russkii narod*) co-exists uneasily with Soviet Belarusian patriotism (loyalty to the Soviet Belarusian SSR, the historical memory of it and its communitarian values). We view the lack of a coherent and homogeneous dissident movement in the pre-Gorbachev era as a precursor handicap to the creation of popular fronts in these states.¹⁵

In Belarus the Popular Front (PF) was only legally registered in July 1991, one and a half years after its analogous Ukrainian Popular Movement (Rukh) in Ukraine. In the aftermath of the failed August 1991 putsch, six states (Belarus, Kazakhstan and the four states of Central Asia) unexpectedly obtained independence when neither the majority of their populations nor *nomenklatura* elites actively sought it. In addition, Belarus, unlike Ukraine, did not hold a referendum to endorse its Declaration of Independence, a factor which Lukashenka has used to his advantage in basing his own political legitimacy upon the March 1991 Soviet referendum for a 'revived union', which was enthusiastically endorsed by the Belarusian electorate. Lukashenka continually points to the fact that he voted against the dissolution of the USSR and its replacement by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

In addition to the lack of national communists or counter-elites, we suggest that the absence of a legacy of national communist tradition in Belarus also prevented the consolidation of statehood during the crucial early years of independence. Between 1992 and 1993 Parliamentary Speaker Stanislav Shushkevych and Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kebich competed over the pace and scope of domestic reform and the country's foreign allegiances. Contrastingly, during the same period in Ukraine, President Leonid Kravchuk, Parliamentary Speaker Ivan Plyushch and all three prime ministers backed state and nation building and a consistent pro-Western foreign policy. State and nation-building policies have been continued by Kravchuk's successor, Leonid Kuchma, and there has been a foreign policy consensus throughout Ukraine's independence which gives priority to sovereignty.¹⁶

After the election of Lukashenka as President in July 1994 state building was frozen and nation building would appear to have gone into reverse. A Belarusian security policy specialist concluded that 'the theme of independence and statehood has been downplayed in official statements. A form of societal inferiority complex has been imposed on Belarus'. Belarusian security policy, he concludes, is, ironically therefore, 'its own greatest security threat'.¹⁷ The most famous Belarusian writer, Vasil' Bykov, lamented that Lukashenka had set out to destroy the Belarusian 'nation', 'its national consciousness, its culture and language'.¹⁸ In a comparative study of Ukraine and Belarus Taras Kuzio & Marc Nordberg found that Belarus

lacked six crucial factors which thwarted its attempts at post-Soviet state and nation building.¹⁹ These included a tradition of national communism, a pool of historical myths upon which to draw, nationally conscious regions that had remained outside the tsarist and initially Soviet states, a nationally conscious primate city (Belarus lost its primate city—Vilnius—to Lithuania),²⁰ continued widespread use of the titular language and influential Belarusian Uniate and Autocephalous Orthodox national churches. Belarus inherited a weak sense of national identity from the former USSR, being one of the most russified of the non-Russian republics.²¹ This provides ground for the popular conviction that a ready-made solution to a large number of the country's most pressing problems, particularly economic, lies in establishing a formalised union with the Russian Federation. In the March 1991 Soviet referendum 83% of Belarusians backed a 'revived union', the highest figure outside Central Asia. Unlike Ukraine, no additional questions were added to the poll calling for either a confederation (by national communists) or outright independence (by national democrats in western Ukraine).

We suggest that the loss of the city of Vilnius has been particularly damaging to the long-term evolution of Belarusian national identity and its ability to promote historical myths in the contemporary situation. An important 'golden era' for Belarusian history and myths was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which included most of modern-day Belarusian territory. Vilnius remains the 'spiritual home' of many Belarusian nationalists.²² The loss of Vilnius to neighbouring Lithuania 'leaves open the field in Belarus to those who link Belarusian history to Russian history and identify the Belarusian people with the Russian people'. Those who seek to tie the fates of Belarus and Russia, such as Lukashenka, 'have little interest in Vilnius, the Vilnius region, and Belarus' heritage in the Grand Duchy'.²³

One of President Lukashenka's first acts upon coming to power was therefore to replace Belarusian national symbols, which included the Grand Duchy's coat of arms (the *Pahonia*), with Soviet Belarusian ones (minus the communist hammer and sickle). Senior members of the presidential administration organised a bizarre (televised) ceremony in which the state's flag was ripped to shreds and then sold for \$10 a shred. This reflected a fundamental shift in the state's ideological legitimacy away from that of Belarusian nationalism to that of Soviet Belarus. This process eventually resulted in the legal prohibition of public display of the historical national symbols: there is no other transition state in the former USSR where carrying the national flag has become a punishable offence, contrary to all international human rights legislation.²⁴ There have been cases of physical assault on young people speaking Belarusian in public. No perpetrators have been detained or prosecuted. Yet relatively new historical myths, particularly relating to World War II, have been actively promoted as a legitimising factor of the lingering Soviet Belarusian identity: the independence anniversary was changed from the 27 July 1990 Declaration of State Sovereignty to the 3 July 1944 liberation of Minsk by the Soviet army. Simultaneously, the president's administration has consistently attempted to identify the opposition movement with fascism and nazism. The state-controlled electronic media frequently refer to the opposition as 'national fascist'.

The degree of societal mobilisation for the four pillars of post-Soviet transformation (democratisation, marketisation, nation and state building) in the former USSR

is dependent upon the strength of inherited national identities. A close parallel exists between strong national identities, civil societies, national-democratic mobilisation and support for these four pillars of post-Soviet transformation.²⁵ We therefore argue that this weak national identity has directly facilitated the establishment of a sultanistic regime, which would appear more natural in an Asiatic social environment, than in Belarus.²⁶ In a comparative study of Belarus and Ukraine, Kuzio found that these factors had influenced the former's desire to return to Eurasia as a Russian dominion with a sultanistic regime and the latter's drive to 'return to Europe', through the support given by Ukrainian elites to these four pillars of post-Soviet transformation.²⁷

Many commentators voice opinions on Lukashenka's personal biography as a source of his eccentric and autocratic manner, yet we suggest that it is precisely the fate of the national idea in Belarus that explains the roots of Lukashenka's authoritarianism. Nationalism came to replace socialist ideology within many former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Adam Michnik believed nationalism to be the last stage of communism. It became the essential socio-political force capable of destroying the totalitarian empire of the USSR and the only readily available philosophy capable of underpinning the wider striving for independence and political and economic reform.²⁸ The democratic and nationalist movements, despite sometimes contradictory internal dynamics, were largely allies in the non-Russian republics of the former USSR, and in these republics national *and* human rights had traditionally been demanded simultaneously. This was, to a certain extent, a natural phenomenon, given that many of the most flagrant abuses of human rights were inextricably linked to nationalist protest or resistance to russification. Those republics where nationalist discontent was most explicitly expressed early in the process of change were the first to begin dismantling the socialist system: the three Baltic Republics, Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine. In those areas where a nationalist revival did not receive popular and/or 'official' support, totalitarian structures remained preserved well into the post-Soviet era, as the fractionalisation of regional Communist Party structures into centre-loyal and National Communist elements did not occur.

It would be erroneous to suggest that the Soviet Belarusian authorities did not take account of the latent possibility of a national revival. The leadership of the Communist Party of Belarus (CPB) was clearly aware of the threat that could arise from a Belarusian nationalist movement. Concerted efforts were made from 1988 onwards by the communist authorities to prevent a such a revival. The Popular Front was long refused legal registration and was forced to hold its inaugural congress in Vilnius, capital city of neighbouring Lithuania. The CPB went to extraordinary lengths to prevent the dissemination of information that would discredit the Soviet period, particularly the period of Stalinist rule. The mass grave in the Kuropaty woods, on the outskirts of Minsk, where thousands of corpses were 'discovered' in the late 1980s, was twice blamed on Nazi occupiers by the authorities' official investigators, although it is widely accepted that the victims died at the hands of the Soviet security police (NKVD). By the fifth year of Lukashenka's rule, discussion of this and similar atrocities had been completely proscribed in the official Belarusian media.

As a result of the lack of national self-awareness and the failure to re-evaluate recent history, there has been no 'revolution of cadres' in Belarus. Gapova believes that 'communism was not perceived as a national enemy force in Belarus

because there is no nation, as such'.²⁹ The Soviet *nomenklatura* remained in power after 1991, 'glimpsing at Moscow, hoping for a miracle'.³⁰ Many ethnic groups in the USSR had readily available historical figures that could be resurrected as commonly shared historical myths for the process of nation and state building in the post-Soviet era. As we have already suggested, the population of the Belarusian SSR identified much more readily with the more recent Soviet heroes of the 'Great Patriotic War'. During 1991–94 a school-based programme of revival through a reinterpretation of the past along national lines was undertaken, based largely on V. M. Ignatovsky's 1926 edition of *Karotki narys historyi Belarusi*. Since 1995, however, President Lukashenka has reinforced the previous pan-Slavic, Little Russian historiography by reintroducing Soviet-era historical textbooks. There is stringent control over the academic community, with teachers and lecturers regularly coerced into putting forward a pro-Lukashenka interpretation of historical and contemporary reality. We argue that the essential consequence of this is the fostering of a belief in and allegiance to the continuity of that which no longer exists.³¹

Contemporary Belarusian identity is based upon two sources which are both useful in securing the loyalty of a majority of the population towards sultanistic authoritarianism. The first is Soviet Belarusian republican patriotism, grounded upon World War II historical myths and the republic's 'achievements' as a key industrial region of the former USSR. The second is a Little Russianism which holds the belief that all the three east Slavic peoples are really not separate nations but, in fact, regional branches of one *russkii narod*. This 'Little Russianism' was propagated by tsarist and Soviet nationalities policies and historiography. As demonstrated by the endless signing of new 'union agreements' and the subsequent failure of the signatory states to implement the conditions of the treaties signed, these two conflicting sources of (non-national) identity in Belarus lead to a confused policy arena which oscillates between either support for union with Russia into one state or the creation of a new union based upon a confederation where Belarus would maintain its 'sovereignty'. This conflict between total absorption by Russia through the union of the 'White' and 'Great' Russian peoples (which we would view as reminiscent of the unification of Italy in the mid-19th century) or a new confederal relationship is an outgrowth of the ambiguous nature of Soviet nationalities policies. While propagating the notion that the three eastern Slavs were slated to fuse in the near future, thereby returning to their alleged unity in the medieval state of Kiev Rus', Soviet policies also served to promote republican state loyalties. This explains why Belarusian President Lukashenka and Russian President El'tsin have at different times promoted both complete union of their two states and the creation of a new union where both would maintain their 'sovereignty'.

The contradictions between Russia and Belarus go deeper, however. Soviet Belarusian state building has provided competing and contradictory loyalties to that of pan-Slavic 'Little Russianism'. Whereas Belarusian pan-Slavism seeks to unite it with Russia (maybe in the manner of a number of *gubernii*), Soviet Belarusian patriotism seeks to defend its 'sovereignty'. The Russian Federation is one of the leading former Soviet states in terms of the pace of its reform process while Belarus is a major laggard in this field. Union of both states is therefore impossible when one state looks backwards to the Soviet era (Belarus) while the other looks to a post-Soviet, capitalist

and democratic future (Russia). This ‘tango of convenience’ resembles a situation ‘where each partner wants to drag the other in his own direction while eyeing him suspiciously’.³²

Lukashenka has therefore contradicted himself by arguing both in support of unity and in defence of his country’s independence. Russian-Belarusian unity, to Lukashenka, ‘does not mean, however, that we agree to lose our sovereignty and independence’. Replying to Russian nationalists who wish Belarus to be incorporated as six *gubernii* within the Russian Federation, Lukashenka said: ‘This will never happen. Even Stalin did not think about that’. Lukashenka particularly loathes the Russian media because

They humiliated the president and the nation. They show that people in Belarus are about to wear bast shoes and that we are beggars. However, we will never lose our independence. I will never allow that to happen.³³

The second approach we utilise to discuss the failure of democratisation in Belarus is that of sultanism, as applied during the Cold War to such leaders as Nicolai Ceaucescu of Romania and Kim II Sung in North Korea.³⁴ Dependencies with only flag sovereignty, such as many of the Central American and African states during the Cold War (e.g. Emperor Bokassa of the Central African Empire), were propped up by external American and French hegemonic powers. These powers established forward military bases in these dominions within their respective spheres of influence. Russian policy towards the CIS since 1992 has consciously modelled itself on the ‘Monroe Doctrine’ formerly pursued by the US in Central and Latin America and France in Africa. The CIS was defined by Russia during the first five years of post-Soviet rule as the ‘Near Abroad’, a term which would seem to signify limited sovereignty and which suggests that the area lies within Russia’s sphere of influence. Sergei Karaganov, head of the Russian Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, believes that the relationship between Russia and the CIS should be modelled upon that pursued by the US during the 1950s and 1960s in Central and Latin America:

The CIS countries could serve as supplies of cheap labour and cheap goods to the Russian economy, creating a circle of dependent states around its perimeter, where Russia would play a dominant economic role.³⁵

We maintain that the closest example within the CIS of former US support for sultanistic regimes in Central America can be found in the Russian-Belarusian case, with Russia playing the role of a hegemonic power and Belarus that of a dominion. Sultanistic regimes exhibit seven characteristics, the overwhelming majority of which are to be found in today’s Belarus:³⁶

1. They are a generic domain of extreme patrimonialism where the state is assumed to be closely bound up with the fate of the leader. The polity is therefore the personal domain of the sultan where the elites are chosen by the sultan, from whom all power is derived. These may include family, friends, cronies, business associates and *mafia*-type structures in the economy functioning on hidden yet paramount connections. There have been periodic reflections of a growing personality cult in Belarus: a presidential decree in early 1998 ordered that portraits of

- Lukashenka be placed in all official offices, and several series of postage stamps have carried his image.
2. The private and public domains are fused. Corruption thrives because there is no defined boundary between personal wealth and the state's resources. Business interests are created by cronies with close contacts to the regime, which deliberately maintains a high degree of state control for the purpose of extracting resources. Such regimes are not interested in open and transparent market reforms or the growth of the private sector because this would reduce state control over the economy. It is an undisputed fact that Belarus has two state budgets: one approved by the country's quasi-parliament (without dissent) and another, hidden from any public scrutiny, controlled by President Lukashenka for his own purposes. Furthermore, nearly all Belarusian industry remains under state control and what exists of the private sector is subject to draconian registration, control and financial inspection regulations.
 3. Sultanistic regimes lack any ruling ideology. Loyalty to the 'sultan' is based *not* upon tradition, ideology, a unique mission or charisma 'but on a mixture of fear and rewards to ... collaborators'.³⁷ Linz believes that 'the legal and symbolic institution of the regime is pure facade and likely to change for reasons external to the system, like the availability of models enjoying legitimacy abroad'.³⁸ No identifiable ruling ideology underpins the Lukashenka regime in Belarus. Nevertheless, pan-Slavism has been defined as the 'state ideology of Belarus'³⁹ and Lukashenka has been proclaimed as the 'saviour of Slavic civilisation'.⁴⁰ This 'Little Russianism' competes with loyalty to Soviet Belarusian 'sovereignty'. Lukashenka, a reform communist in the late Soviet era, has not re-joined either of the two revived communist parties in Belarus, one of which is anyway in opposition to him.⁴¹
 4. The ruler acts with unchecked discretion because there is no rule of law and a low degree of institutionalisation. The sultan is 'above all unencumbered by rules, or by any commitment to an ideology, or value system'.⁴² The binding norms of bureaucratic behaviour are subverted by arbitrary decisions of the ruler, who feels no need to justify his actions by reference to any ideology. Examples that may be cited here are the bizarre humiliation ceremonies to which Belarusian officials are subject by their President, and which are shown by official Belarusian television.
 5. Political plurality is frowned upon. The security forces are built up and are central to the ability of the regime to survive.⁴³ However, unlike totalitarian regimes, society is immobilised and largely not encouraged to join a vanguard political party. There have been half-hearted attempts to restore mass political movements, especially amongst young people, but these have largely failed in Belarus because they have been based predominantly around personal and economic bribery rather than commitment to a defined political attitude. The rural masses, in particular, lack education, remain in poverty and are passive. The Belarusian countryside has undergone a catastrophic social and economic decline in the post-Soviet period, reinforcing this aspect.
 6. By their very nature, sultanistic regimes are unpredictable and elites owe their positions to the regime. After being purged, former members of the ruling elites usually join the ranks of the moderate opposition. The Belarusian opposition to

Lukashenka reflects an unholy cross-spectrum of Belarusian society, ranging from national communists, nationalistic military officers, the national democratic PF, the creative and cultural intelligentsia, bankers and liberal reformers in the Civic Party, and students. Members of the pre-sultanistic regime's elites (1992–95) are highly prominent within the ranks of the opposition and have been the victims of some of the worst persecution. A new tactic, reminiscent of that conducted by death squads in Latin America, is the disappearance of leading opposition figures who fell out with the Lukashenka regime.⁴⁴

7. Finally, sultanistic regimes only collapse when the sultan is violently overthrown because the regime fails to allow peaceful change. The regime has deliberately destroyed the centre ground by driving the centrists into the arms of the nationalists. Lukashenka can therefore present himself as the only pro-Russian force in Belarus.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, nationalists and centrists remain united against Lukashenka because they link the loss of state sovereignty with an end to democratisation and marketisation. As in Ukraine, these four elements of the 'quadruple transition' are closely bound together.⁴⁶

In Belarus the pro-Russian policies of Lukashenka are regarded as 'treacherous' by the nationalist opposition, some of whom have created a 'Belarusian Liberation Army' (BLA) which has claimed responsibility for terrorist actions. The BLA is reportedly linked to the Malady Front (the youth wing of the PF) and the regime has press-ganged students into Pryamoe deistvie (Direct Action) to counter it.⁴⁷ Other nationalistic, paramilitary groups uniting young people and former members of the Association of Military Servicemen are White Legion (*Bely Lehijon*), whose slogan is 'Motherland or Death!', and The Land (*Kraj*). Both groups have been in confrontation with police at demonstrations and with pro-Lukashenka nationalist paramilitaries from Russia. White Legion, The Land and the radical right, unregistered Belarussian Freedom Party all have one policy in common—they rule out negotiations with the Lukashenka regime and only see violence as a means to remove him.

Students, including some individuals who can only be regarded as children, who have courageously demonstrated their non-acceptance of this anti-European regime have been treated as serious criminals representing a threat to the state's security. However, attempts to eliminate all opposition activity through the use of authoritarian measures have largely failed.⁴⁸ We maintain that the current Belarusian conjecture provides only for a violent overthrowing of the regime, although other factors, such as mass political apathy, poverty and lack of information, mean that this is not an immediate prospect. The drive to create a union with Russia in 2000–01, based upon the draft treaty published in October 1999, is likely to generate nationalist opposition.

National identity, demographics and public opinion as bases for 'Lukashenkism'

National identity and demographics

Belarus, despite its compactness, is an ethnically diverse nation. This diversity is not immediately apparent, however, given the high degree of russification and entrenched Soviet mentality already discussed. There have been no attempts to impose ethnicity-based exclusive citizenship laws. We maintain, however, that ethnic issues are

significant, not least because of their potential for demobilisation. The largest ethnic group in the population are Belarusians, who constitute 78% of the population according to the Soviet census of 1989. Russians and Poles make up the greater part of the 22% ethnic minority groups (13% and 5% respectively). Russians in Belarus, who number around one million, are concentrated in the cities of eastern Belarus. The majority of them settled in Belarus after World War II. Few Russians in Belarus live in the countryside. There is, however, no developed Russian sub-culture: the migrants' cultural values became merged with those of the various strands of Belarusian culture that exist to form what can be considered a Belarusian Soviet culture *sui generis*, in which russification was a key formative element. The same can be observed for the political behaviour of the ethnic minorities.

While ethnically non-Belarusian citizens of Belarus do not constitute a homogeneous, monolithic social group, it is important to take into account that the middle-level bureaucratic apparatus in the regions actually over-represents ethnic Russians in Belarus. This fact has been consistently ignored by Western political science specialists and sociologists, yet it clearly has the potential for a significant impact on policy implementation in the regions in that there is no discernible opposition (and indeed little opportunity for the voicing of opposition) from local administrative elites to President Lukashenka's pro-Russian integration policies.⁴⁹ Ethnic Belarusians are under-represented in this important part of the state's administrative structure. This is the result of two inter-linked trends in post-war demographic development. First, many young, ethnically Belarusian technical specialists from the Belarusian SSR settled in other cities of the USSR after receiving a university education and being assigned first positions through *raspredelenie*, thus depleting the available stock of local bureaucrats. Second, Moscow deliberately assigned large numbers of administrators to the Belarusian SSR from other Union republics in the first two decades of the post-war period.

We identify as the most significant division in the population of Belarus the fact that the majority of ethnic Russians live in eastern Belarus and ethnic Belarusians live in central and western Belarus. This has not been reflected in public unrest or statements, but Lukashenka has frequently warned the Polish minority in the southwest of the country against disloyalty, and has accused Poland of creating 'anti-Belarusian centres' and of acting as a base for Western espionage activities. It is worth mentioning that President Lukashenka has visited the area only rarely. Some 40% of the territory of the republic lies in the west, an area annexed from Poland during World War II. It is an area inhabited by four million people, of whom 55% are concentrated in villages. A further 20% live in towns of less than 100 000 inhabitants. There are only two towns (Brest and Hrodno) with populations exceeding 300 000. In these two towns, only half the inhabitants are native city dwellers. It may be inferred from this that western Belarus is largely of rural composition. In western Belarus, Belarusian tradition and language has been better preserved and there is therefore a greater degree of nationalist opposition to Lukashenka. We therefore again find, like in western Ukraine, a high correlation between national identity, civil society, opposition to integration with Russia and support for the four pillars of the post-Soviet transformation process outlined earlier.

The eastern part of the Belarusian state differs significantly. A mere 25% of the

population here lives in villages, 70% or more of the inhabitants of which are above pension age. This has a direct consequence on voting patterns, with a persisting loyalty to the communist past and its socio-political values and symbols. The largest cities are in the east: Vitebs'k and Mohilev, with 340 000–360 000 inhabitants each. Eastern Belarusian culture is therefore overwhelmingly urban, industry-dependent, more 'Sovietised', atheistic and pro-Russian. We suggest that a latent potential for internal division, based on ethnic self-identification, demographic and linguistic factors, is therefore very real.

Language

Language is an important aspect of national self-identification. Belarus presents an interesting example of how language use may become highly divisive and overlap the geographical or social divisions within a state. The Belarusian language is used by less than 10% of the adult population of Belarus as the preferred language of everyday communication, although there is undoubtedly a much higher level of fluency in the language than reflected in this statistic. There is a minority, composed largely of intellectuals, who view the preservation of the Belarusian language as essential to Belarus' future as a sovereign state. Elena Gapova has argued that 'the language question for us is a question of the existence of the nation, our self-identification ... Language ... is the symbolic representation of status.'⁵⁰ However, this is not the commonly held view of the majority of the population, which views the Belarusian language as a relic of a pre-industrial, rural existence. Many Belarusians who have internalised the myths of the Republic's advancement in the post-Soviet era see this modernisation as linked to the adoption of Russian language and culture. A law on a gradual move to Belarusian as the language of official state administration was adopted in January 1990. However, it has not been vigorously implemented and became irrelevant after the population voted by a huge majority (83.1%) to confer equal official status on Russian in the first Lukashenka referendum of May 1995. The Lukashenka period has seen a remarkable decline in the number of Belarusian-language schools and their elimination in Minsk. Some 500 Belarusian-language schools have been closed since 1994 and the last remaining Belarusian-language high school in Minsk was merged with a Russian school in 1999. Yet both the Belarusian and Russian languages have undergone a mutually influenced corruption and linguists insist the majority of the population actually uses a hybrid with borrowings from both languages in everyday communication. We suggest that this invalidates the notion of a possible linguistic purity, diffusing the divisions between Russian and Belarusian self-identification.⁵¹

It may very well be the case, however, that there has been a marked tendency amongst those intellectuals who propose the retention of the language and an enforced Belarusianisation to exaggerate the link between ethnic self-identification and mother tongue. Such views were particularly common in the Popular Front in the late 1980s. They alienated those citizens of Belarus who speak Russian and reject Belarusian (sometimes with disdain) but do not consider themselves any less Belarusian than those who choose to use the native tongue. It can reasonably be claimed that civic self-identification, in which language use only plays a minor part, is of greater

importance in Belarussia than ethnic identity. Indeed, russification is viewed by many Belarusians and Russians as a natural, progressive phenomenon, completely unconnected with the demise of culture. Russian authors argue that '... russification ... by and large ... was a natural process. Given the relatively undeveloped Belarusian language and its similarity to Russian, it was much simpler to switch to Russian than to develop a Belarusian vocabulary and to create a Belarusian linguistic environment to serve modern industry and urban life ...'.⁵² The intelligentsia remains divided on this issue and the population is simply not interested, an ideal ground on which President Lukashenka capitalises to isolate and marginalise the nationalist wing of the opposition. What emerges is a picture in which language has been removed as a potential factor in the edifice of a resurrected nation. This could change as nationalist opposition grows against the union with Russia.

Public opinion

Social opinion is in a state of constant flux and is influenced by changing political and economic circumstances, although certain attitudes, such as those related to social hierarchy, may be less volatile. What emerges from an analysis of these trends in Belarus is a complex picture in which the past, the reform of the contemporary era and prospects for the future are all poorly understood and the population has come to display such a high degree of cynicism and distrust towards multi-party democracy that democratic reform in the immediate future seems rather improbable. One of the most important aspects of Lukashenka's populism is that he has facilitated the preservation of a feeling of the value of the past, of the 'construction of socialist society', as something to be retained. The quasi-restoration of Soviet values of communitarianism and collectivism through mechanisms such as compulsory week-end work-days (*subbotniki*) is indicative of the attempt to preserve an overall system of common values in the absence of a national (or cultural) alternative. This has considerable appeal amongst the elderly, a large demographic group and an important support base for 'Lukashenkism'.

The other potential source of an alternative moral and spiritual leadership, the Church, has played no role in national revival: the Belarusian Uniate Church was banned from 1839 until near the end of the Soviet era, whilst both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, which use Polish and Russian as the language of services respectively, are not anti-Lukashenka. Indeed, Metropolitan Filaret, Archbishop of the Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC), has a pan-Slavic outlook and views Lukashenka as a God-sent gatherer of the eastern Slavs (the BOC is under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church and Patriarch).

Retrospectively, one of the most serious tactical errors of the opposition in Belarus before the referendum of November 1996 was to repeatedly stress the danger of dictatorship and 'fascism' to an electorate that had come to favour the 'strong hand'. The result of the referendum, in which Lukashenka received an overwhelmingly affirmative vote to all the questions he posed, provides clear evidence that the majority of the population either did not take this threat seriously or did not see anything necessarily bad in an authoritarian dictatorship. As a consequence, the Lukashenka propaganda machine (especially the electronic media, which were com-

pletely closed to any alternative voices) carried out its campaign of instilling fear of 'enemies of the people' highly effectively.

In late 1997 Belarus's mass psychological marasmus, as well as its political structures, were ideal for the reinforcement of authoritarian sultanism. In answer to the question 'What type of politician could lead the republics of the former Soviet Union out of crisis?' 30.4% cited Yurii Andropov, followed by Stalin with 18% of votes. These responses give some indication of the popular attitude in Belarus towards liberal values. We suggest that the vacuum left by the collapse of Soviet power left ample room for the development and popularisation of authoritarian views. It was an ideal opportunity for a charismatic demagogue, especially one willing to subjugate and then manipulate the media to his own liking. Lukashenka's rule is not ideologically motivated. It is rather an irrational mix of policies, implemented in a random manner. The whole polity, however, bears the mark of Lukashenka's personality.

The views of Belarusian specialists themselves in this respect are interesting and should be mentioned. Rovdo, a Belarusian expert, characterises the nationalist revival as not only 'inevitable' but also the 'first stage towards overcoming the atomisation and the indifference of society'.⁵³ However, he has also identified two key retrogressive uses of nationalism in the post-Soviet context. First, it has been used by the former communist *nomenklatura* as a means of salvation of their own power and counteraction to liberal-democratic reforms. Second, it has been used by national regional elites to extend their influence over aspects of rule that are more largely the preserve of representatives of other nationalities. There are two reasons why nationalism can achieve this aim, he believes. First, when used as an inclusive ideology, it can act as an organic basis for national consensus and societal integration. Second, it has great mobilisational potential and may serve as the only effective defence against the rise of neo-communism and authoritarianism.

However, the dominant characteristic of the 'Belarusian Path' since independence has been the inability of the national idea to act as a form of articulation of an embryonic civil society. There is no other state in Europe where the majority of the population, together with the head of its executive, consciously wants to rid their state of its national symbols. There is no other state in which the common historical culture, viewed as an alien entity, is subjected to wholesale discrimination and suppression. Belarusian society has not even undergone the initial stages of nationalist revival based on a new political identity and the mobilisation of the masses by a reformist counter-elite. In addition, the roots of totalitarianism are particularly deep in Belarus, which suggests that it is more realistic to speak of a 'contradictory and slow process of the development of civil society from below',⁵⁴ rather than its 'revival'.

Yet it should not be inferred from this that there has been no re-interpretation of nationalism in Belarus: such a process arguably began in 1994, when the Popular Front advanced the idea of a *dzyazhaunitskaya ideya* (i.e. statism) as one of its key strategies. The Popular Front had little success in popularising this idea itself, due to the deliberate misrepresentation of its activities by the official media. Instead, the idea found liberal reflection in the 'Our Home is Belarus' movement, developed by the journalist (and former presidential adviser on the media) A. Feduta and other specialists of the 'Belarusian Perspective' Fund during the first half of 1996. The Belarusian ruling elite also attempts to use a vague statist policy orientation, reflected

in the 'Conception of Belarusian Statehood', developed by the president and his administration, which basically strives to rid the state of everything nationally Belarusian and to replace it with everything that was Soviet Belarusian.

The failure of the democratic movement in the early 1990s has given rise to two main ideological tendencies in the opposition that see differing roles for nationalism. Both have been unsuccessful, however, and we consider that there remains little possibility of their immediate success under Lukashenka's authoritarian rule. The first tendency, the liberal-democratic movement, seeks a solution to the state's problems without using nationalism as the basis of national self-identification. Market reform enjoys priority over national revival. Liberally oriented political parties and independent Russian-language journals have advanced such views most actively. These ideas, for reasons already examined, do not find fertile territory in Belarus. The state does not have a developed middle class or democratic political culture that would support such an approach in voting behaviour. Therefore, they have little potential for social mobilisation. The second tendency, the national-democratic movement, led by the Popular Front and the Belarusian cultural and creative intelligentsia, sees the best future development in a long-term, methodical strategy of developing a renewed Belarusian national consciousness. However, there has been no state support at all for such a strategy and its proponents have been reduced to a ghettoised minority. Such a policy is likely to be unsuccessful without state support (in a manner similar to that provided in Ukraine).

The domestic sources of Belarusian sultanism

The profound nostalgia felt by a large number of former Soviet citizens across the whole of the post-Soviet geopolitical expanse may be a considerable political force, but in few places has it found the type of manifestation in power seen in Belarus. Both the leadership and their electors have shown themselves psychologically incapable of distancing themselves from the Soviet past. Even in the regions of the Russian Federation where conservative, former communist administrators have remained in power (the so-called Red Belt), there has been no attempt to recreate the past (or its rituals and practices) in everyday life.

What are the factors that have encouraged this process in Belarus, to the stage where not only vague historical memories of and admiration for the former state are preserved, but its symbols, practices and traditions are enthusiastically restored?⁵⁵ The reasons are complex and frequently contradictory, encompassing both purely economic and social and psychological elements.

Economic factors

In terms of economic progress, the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (Belarusian SSR) can be seen as a 'shop window' of the (relative) benefits of Soviet socialism. As the 'assembly shop' of the USSR, where high-technology enterprises and plants were concentrated, the Republic's economic development from the late 1960s until the end of the 1980s was one of the more successful in the Soviet Union.⁵⁶ Industry had been in an embryonic state before the beginning of World War II, so the

Republic's economic progress after the war is further romanticised in the popular conception by the fact that it was achieved during the life span of one generation. The Belarusian SSR had the highest incremental levels of capital investment of any Soviet republic—a 385% increase from 1960 to 1975, compared with 270% for the Russian SFSR and 248% for the Ukrainian SSR.

This nature of the Republic's industrial base is of significance in explaining the reluctance to introduce marketising reforms. The general structure of Soviet industry meant that few complete production cycles for manufactured goods existed at the republican level. The presence of a small number of extremely large plants made the transition from planned economy to market with the threat of mass unemployment an unattractive prospect for any of the Republic's post-Soviet governments. Furthermore, the overwhelming dependence on 'near-abroad' suppliers for components and markets for the sale of the industrial goods produced (80% of Belarusian industrial goods are sold in the Russian Federation alone) meant that the economic survival of Belarus would depend on the resurrection of economic ties with the Russian Federation. With some reluctance President Lukashenka's political opponents accept this reality, and open opposition to closer economic integration with Russia is not a salient feature of the moderate political opposition.

The leadership of the 'First Republic' (1991–94), the Shushkevich-Kebich administration, was not of a democratic-reformist orientation. Indeed, it made significant attempts to stifle market reform, largely for reasons of elite self-preservation. However, marketisation occurred spontaneously as a result of the changing economic realities within the country and on its borders, taking on ugly forms in a structural framework that meant it remained (at best) semi-legal. It was at this stage that the processes of 'grabitisation' (*prikhvatizatsiya*) and the embourgeoisement of the state administrative *nomenklatura* began, the net result of which was the fusing of the *nomenklatura* and the emergent entrepreneurial class. The public suffered from increasing inflation, devalued savings and the consequences of the reappearance of unemployment. Although these processes were familiar to all post-communist transition states, the crucial difference was that the first freely contested presidential election, in 1994, was held at a considerably later stage in Belarus than in many other former Soviet republics, when the economic crisis had deepened and was affecting a greater part of the population. Taken together, these two sets of conditions fertilised the disdain for businessmen and communists shared by President Lukashenka and people alike.⁵⁷

Popular support for reintegration with the metropolis

Various integration initiatives with Russia have been expounded by President Lukashenka as a panacea for the country's economic woes, caused, in his view, by two readily identifiable factors: a lack of executive discipline and the disruption of economic ties with the former Union republics. Lukashenka characteristically argued that he 'never planned and [would] never plan to carry out economic reform for the sake of economic reform, introduce a market for the sake of a market, or to carry out privatisation for the sake of privatisation'. So thundered the President at the beginning of his report to the 6000 hand-picked guests of the Soviet-style Congress of the

Republic in late October 1996, demonstrating his idiosyncratic interpretation of the nature of economic reform.⁵⁸ However, this priority has proved misplaced and has not retarded, let alone reversed, economic decline. As Maskyuta pointed out, 'integration ... is like the "building of Socialism" ... It might last for decades and finally end in absolutely nothing'.⁵⁹ By the end of 1997 this appeared to be an accurate prediction: President Lukashenka, desperately using any available method to force the Russian company Gazprom into maintaining adequate gas supplies to Belarus despite an enormous and rapidly mounting debt, had taken to using increasingly draconian methods, including mass exports of food products that were needed by domestic customers. The resulting severe food shortages (and indeed the long-term disappearance from retail sale of a number of basic food products) inside Belarus worried him less, merely resulting in the restoration of distribution norms and ration cards.

Populism

During the post-war era Belarus was a quiescent republic, similar to the six Muslim republics of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Central Asia. There was, however, no Central Asia-style corruption during the 1970s and the Republic had the 'romantic Stalinist' (A. Adamovich's description) and genuinely popular Petr Masherov as its leader. Belarusian Soviet society, a 'model of socialist reality', was profoundly unprepared for reform when Gorbachev began his campaign of *perestroika* and *glasnost* from the Soviet centre in 1985. Yet 12 years later the lack of a unifying opposition figure who would oppose the autocratic personalisation of executive power meant that any attempt to prevent the creation of an authoritarian sultanistic state was doomed to failure. In the midst of an ideological and moral void, caused by the unwillingness of the majority of the people and its leadership to re-evaluate their recent past through fear of the consequences of discrediting perceived achievement, populism became the predominant tendency in Belarus politics. This culminated in the election of Lukashenka in the first presidential election in 1994 by a landslide 81.1%. Lukashenka's electoral mandate consisted overwhelmingly of simplistic yet highly effective rhetoric, promulgating promises such as 'let's get the factories going' (*zapustit' zavody*). Lukashenka had initially attracted a capable team of young specialists who considered that a new candidate, not belonging to the senior communist *nomenklatura*, presented an ideal opportunity to give the Belarusian political scene a 'clean sweep'.⁶⁰ In the event, he received a massive vote in the second round against Kebich, whom Lukashenka had personally discredited with charges of 'corruption'.⁶¹ This expressed desire to return to the certainties of the past existed in Belarus under conditions in which this was a simple impossibility economically.

Weak civil society

Every effort has been consciously made since 1994 to inhibit the development of civil society, which provides a basis for challenge to the authoritarian sultanistic regime by providing a mechanism by which the pluralism of social opinion can be articulated to the organs of state power. Indeed, by early 1997 there were concerted efforts to destroy NGOs by 'financial checks', carried out by commissions usually composed of

members of the presidentially appointed Security Council, allegedly 'exposing' financial irregularities and imposing ruinously large fines.⁶² In those cases where foreigners were involved, a xenophobic, Soviet-style spy mania developed, culminating in the accusation, bordering on the hysterical, by President Lukashenka that Poland and the Czech Republic were setting up and financing 'anti-Belarusian centres'.⁶³ Officially organised demonstrations took place in Minsk on 2 April 1997 during which elderly citizens solemnly held up placards featuring images of NATO aircraft dropping bombs under the slogan 'Iraq-Bosnia-Belarus'. In spring 1999, during the Serb campaign against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, President Lukashenka spoke in strong support of President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia, and offered to send weaponry to assist his regime. There were also denunciations in the official press of Western financial organisations that had halted programmes of economic assistance to Belarus because of the absence of market reform.⁶⁴

Isolated intelligentsia

We identify another factor as having played an important role in hindering post-Soviet development in Belarus. This is the unusual relationship that exists between the intelligentsia and the wider population. The intelligentsia's interpretation of the nation's real position and needs is so far removed from that of the greater part of the population that the former is not accepted as a source of moral authority. For example, opinion poll results on the question of the people best able to lead Belarus out of its current crisis gave a 49% approval rating to Lukashenka, with prominent intellectuals averaging only around 1%.⁶⁵ Czechoslovakia had the playwright Vaclav Havel, Russia had the scientist dissident Andrei Sakharov and Ukraine the poet dissident Vasyl' Stus. Belarus has outstanding thinkers but there are no individuals who enjoy general social respect. The leader of the PF, Zyanon Paznyak, badly misjudged public opinion in the early 1990s and condemned himself to public perception as a 'fringe extremist', especially after receiving political asylum in the USA. Many Belarusian sociologists see this troubled social relationship as a symptom of the excessively rapid industrialisation of the state, which essentially led to the appearance of an urban, Sovietised population with a crude, persistently patrimonial outlook. The majority of urban dwellers in Belarus today left the countryside only within the course of one or two generations. The situation is complicated by the demographic crisis: the country's birth rate is exceptionally low and the population already numbers 2.6 million pensioners, some 37% of the total, whose voting patterns are highly conservative.⁶⁶ In early parliamentary elections, candidates representing the *nomenklatura* and the 'red director' group of industrialists were the most successful.

Nomenklatura capitalism

The leadership of Belarus was reluctant to engage in serious reform from the moment the country gained independence: it would be erroneous to suggest that the rejection of marketising reform began only under the authoritarian sultanism of Lukashenka. Indeed, the genesis of this reluctance relates to the prime ministership of Kebich. The Belarusian polity had entered the post-Soviet era with a significant burden, in the

form of a unicameral parliament, the Supreme Soviet, with a marked pro-communist orientation. It had been formed in the elections of March 1990, in which democratic and nationalist-oriented candidates had been prevented from gaining many seats.⁶⁷ As already discussed, the communist *nomenklatura* of the Belarusian SSR did not fall to nationalists after the defeat of the attempted coup d'état in August 1991 and there was no national communist faction within the CPB. Rather, it took on democratic attributes, whilst apparently dropping its commitment to socialist ideology. The PF's attempt to force a referendum on a vote of confidence in the Supreme Soviet ended in total failure: the communist majority inherited from 1990 was comfortable material for the government and local executives to work with. A milder version of authoritarianism, with an oligarchic form of rule, the concentration of key power decisions in the hands of the executive, more marked pressure on the opposition and attempts to limit media freedom developed during this pre-Lukashenka period. However, limited freedoms of speech and assembly were maintained and political battles were largely constitutional. The 'red directors' of export industries exerted a great deal of pressure on the leadership of the First Republic, with the dual purpose of preserving the state monopoly on property ownership and maintaining internal Soviet markets, especially that of the crucial Russian Federation. Kebich's government was the means by which the interests of this industrial group were expressed. With considerable support from a communist-dominated parliament, his whole economic *raison d'être* was the preservation of the command-administrative model of economic management. Central planning and price controls were actually reinforced throughout 1990–91.

Stalled transition

With all power invested in one person and an intolerance of diversity of opinion, contemporary Belarus resembles a sultanistic fiefdom.⁶⁸ Seen in a theoretical framework, the Belarusian polity is indeed primitive. Heady identifies three essential characteristics of developed polities: a highly differentiated governmental organisation with allocation of role according to merit; a diverse, specialised bureaucracy; and a politically motivated population. Belarus does not meet any of these conditions. The system of rule legitimisation through referenda was developed early in the Lukashenka presidency.⁶⁹ The President has stated that he intends to hold at least one a year on questions of 'national significance'. It is a system that destroys representative democracy by means of its direct replacement with the 'visibility of plebiscite democracy'.⁷⁰ The inexperience of Belarus in matters of pluralistic debate was illustrated by one of the central shortcomings in the work of the Supreme Soviet after the election of President Lukashenka (the 12th and 13th Convocations), namely, a high degree of factionalisation. The factional structure of the parliament was not the principle on which its deputies were originally elected: half the deputies of the final Supreme Soviet (13th Convocation) were independent candidates. The distribution of portfolios was unfortunately done in such a haphazard way that many deputies lacking the necessary professional expertise came to hold responsibilities they did not fully comprehend.

This had two consequences. First, the daily work of the Supreme Soviet was chaotic. Its image amongst the electorate was damaged by biased television coverage

of lengthy, acrimonious (and frequently rather farcical) debate on procedural issues. Second, it meant that many deputies did not pay sufficient attention to the increasingly authoritarian framework being imposed on them by the president and his executive. The factionalisation of parliamentary work led to a stunningly ineffective legislative organ, which constantly hindered the elaboration of any reform. President Lukashenka may well have had some justification in accusing parliament of not wanting economic reform, especially after the spring 1996 sitting of the Supreme Soviet failed to adopt any significant laws. Only three out of 26 new draft laws were eventually passed, in a state of panic, at the end of the summer session of parliament, when the presidential-parliamentary stand-off had reached its critical apex. Despite the convening of a round table in the summer recess of 1996, in which representatives of all political parties participated, the point of no-return had already been passed and the dissolution of a democratically and legally elected legislature was to be undertaken by Lukashenka later that year.

One of the strongest features of the Belarusian political elite during the post-Soviet period has been a remarkable capacity for self-preservation and consolidation. The selection of Kebich as Chairman of the Council of Ministers demonstrated that the *nomenklatura* was aware of the need to use the collapse of central authority for its own good. The replacement of Mykolai Dementei as President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet by Shushkevich, his deputy, in September 1991 continued the trend that ended with Shushkevich's replacement by the conservative, Myacheslav Grib as Parliamentary Chairman in late 1993. Curiously, Dementei, who was famed for his amazingly incoherent speech, was restored to a position of authority as a deputy in the Upper House of the bicameral legislature in January 1997. As no dissident movement and counter-elites had developed during the Soviet era, people and leaders entered the post-Soviet era under circumstances where the mechanisms of privilege and political appointment were unquestioned by counter-elites and civil society.

Conclusions

Public support in Belarus for nation and state building, on the one hand, and democratic and market reforms, on the other, remains low. However, the political scene in Belarus has become so polarised around the personality of one man that no one can engage in serious debate about political or economic reform. Indeed, to disagree verges on criminality. Lukashenka came to power as the opponent of all four aspects of the post-Soviet transformation process discussed earlier, and has subsequently become a hostage of his own pre-election promises, the monopolistic authoritarianism of his policies in power and mass public consciousness.⁷¹

In societies such as Belarus, where the very notion of civil society contradicts cultural tradition and historical stereotype, conflict resolution is achieved by destroying one of the conflicting sides—either literally or by removing its capacity to act. This is the best way of characterising the referendum of November 1996, which ended in complete victory for one side and the complete paralysis of the other. The traditional methods of rule of the Belarusian leadership do not allow the peaceful co-existence of the regime and the opposition, thereby leaving the floor open to the consolidation of a sultanistic authoritarian regime. 'Nationality is a necessary ingredi-

ent, perhaps even precondition for civil society', Shils argues, because 'the nation is necessary for civil society'.⁷² The weakness of Belarusian national identity is a major impediment to the growth of civil society and thereby to Belarusian society's ability to oppose the consolidation of an authoritarian regime. Belarus no longer has a legitimate parliament and is ruled by three organisations whose functions are not clearly separated and whose instructions may be either duplicated or contradictory—the Presidential Administration, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Security Council.⁷³

The Belarusian authoritarian regime developed under Lukashenka and nurtured by Russia bears all of the seven hallmarks of sultanistic regimes found in other parts of the second and developing worlds. The Lukashenka regime exhibits an extreme patrimonialism where the private and public domains are fused. The regime lacks any ruling ideology, except a vague pan-eastern Slavic nationalism that is at odds with the Soviet Belarusian patriotism of the Belarusian ruling elites. The rule of law is not promoted and the country's leader acts in an unchecked fashion in his own private state where he frowns upon political pluralism as a threat to his rule. The elites owe their positions and power to the ruler. If they fall out with the head of state, as many have since 1994, they are forced into the ranks of the opposition or disappear. Sultanistic regimes, such as that in Belarus, loathe centrist consensus politics. Lukashenka's aim has been therefore to destroy the centre ground and thereby portray himself to Moscow as the only pro-Russian force in Belarus holding back the nationalist tide.

The integration of Belarus with the Russian Federation may ultimately lead to the complete loss of Belarusian 'sovereignty', as the possibility of it becoming a territorial-administrative division of the larger and more powerful neighbour has not been excluded. Ironically, the question of the lack of economic reform is instrumental in preventing this process to date—the Russian leadership is aware of the burden an unreformed socialist economy would be.⁷⁴ The move towards Russian–Belarusian integration will inevitably harm the 'quadruple transition' in both countries as democratisation, marketisation and civic nation building are replaced by pan-eastern Slavic nationalism.

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Some of the research utilised in this article was undertaken while S. Eke was a research student at CREES, The University of Birmingham, in 1996–97. The bulk of this material was collected during a visit to Minsk in March–April 1997. During the course of the visit interviews were conducted with many leading Belarusian politicians and officials. These included Aleksandr Dobrovolskiy, Chairman, United Democratic Party; Mikhail Plisko, Adkrytae hramadstva Fund; Grigorii Vasilevich, Chairman, Constitutional Court; Rimma Matusheva, Belarusian Helsinki Committee; Ol'ga Abramova, Secretary of the Supreme Soviet Committee (13th Convocation) on Foreign Affairs; Leonid Zaiko, President, National Centre for Strategic Studies; Vladimir Rovdo, Belarusian Soros Fund; Semen Sharetsky, former Parliamentary Speaker and head of the Agrarian Party and Vasil' Yakavenka, head of the Socio-Ecological Union 'Chernobyl'. S. Eke would like to acknowledge the assistance of numerous individuals in Belarus in gathering information for this article, particularly Nikolai, Lyudmila and Marina Pavlov. The adjective 'Belarusian' has been used both in the context of the post-Soviet Republic and also in relation to the Union Republic that was part of the USSR in order to avoid any ambiguity over names. The views contained within this article do not reflect those of the British East–West Centre, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, affiliated organisations or their sponsors.

¹ See James L. Gibson, 'The Resilience of Mass Support for Democratic Institutions and Processes in the Nascent Russian and Ukrainian Democracies', in Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, NY, M. E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 53–111.

² Four questions were asked. 1: The adoption of amendments to the 1994 constitution, greatly strengthening the president's prerogatives over a new bi-cameral parliament; 2: The introduction of the free sale and purchase of land; 3: The abolition of the death penalty; 4: The introduction of direct elections for local legislative representatives.

³ Since 1990 the Republic of Belarus has been divided into 260 electoral constituencies. Of the equivalent number of seats in the Supreme Soviet, 199 were filled after the 1995 parliamentary elections. The number of seats in the lower chamber of the new parliament, the Chamber of Representatives, was reduced to 110, reflecting the number of pro-presidential candidates from the former Supreme Soviet. The majority of Belarusian constituencies were therefore left without representation in parliament. There were 22 deputies from Mogilev *oblast'* but only 19 from Minsk, where there were 40 constituencies. See Lyudmila Valentinova, 'Tak kovo predstavlyayet Palata predstavitelei?', *Narodnaya volya*, 5 April 1997.

⁴ *Belarus Monitor: Demokraticheskie protsessy v Belarusi, osnovnyye tendentsii i protivorechiye* (Minsk, National Centre for Strategic Research 'East–West', February 1997), p. 10. Valerii Karbalevich is the Scientific Co-ordinator of the National Centre for Strategic Research 'East–West', Minsk.

⁵ The Belarusian Helsinki Committee's representative, Rimma Matusheva, has a large amount of material about the infringement of human and civil rights in Belarus. Eke personally met one of the leaders of a student group who had handed in a petition to the Ministry of Education, complaining about the re-introduction of *raspredelenie*. Dima (surname withheld) had subsequently been arrested and beaten so severely that all the fingers in his left hand had been broken.

⁶ Major demonstrations against President Lukashenka took place in Minsk in early 1996. By late 1997 activists had shown themselves to be nervous of the consequences of taking part in unsanctioned demonstrations—mainly beatings by the OMON anti-riot police and imprisonment on false charges—and open unrest had become much rarer with significantly fewer participants. There was evidence of a move to more concealed forms of protest, including the first terrorist acts (the bombing of a local court building) by the Belarusian Liberation Army.

⁷ For earlier studies see Steven L. Guthrie, 'The Belorussians: National Identification and Assimilation, 1897–1970', *Soviet Studies*, 29, 1 and 2, January and April 1977, pp. 37–61 and 270–283, and George Sanford, 'Nation, State and Independence in Belarus', *Contemporary Politics*, 3, 3, 1997, pp. 225–245.

⁸ A.D. Smith, *National Identity* (London, Penguin, 1991), p. 9.

⁹ Parekh Bhikhu, 'The Concept of National Identity', *New Community*, 21, 2, April 1975, p. 255.

¹⁰ See Anna Engelking, 'The Natsyas of the Grodno Region of Belarus', *Nations and Nationalism*, 5, 2, April 1999, pp. 175–206.

¹¹ In the 1989 Soviet census Belarusians accounted for 77.9% of the republic's population. The more recent survey is reported by Ustina Markusa, 'The Bilingualism Question in Belarus and Ukraine', *Transition*, 2, 29, 29 November 1996, p. 18.

¹² Pal Kolsto, 'The New Russian Diaspora—An Identity of its Own? Possible Identity Trajectories for Russia in the Former Soviet Republics', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 19, 3, July 1996, p. 627.

¹³ L. Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent. Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Middletown, CO, Wesleyan, 1985). Mikhail Kukabaka was the only well known Belarusian dissident, 'who openly denounced the criminality of the Soviet regime'. See Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus. At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, CO, Westview, 1993), pp. 108–112.

¹⁴ Kathleen Mihalisko, 'Belarus: Retreat to Authoritarianism', in Karen Dawisha & Bruce Parrott (eds), *Democratic Change and Authoritarian Reaction in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 259.

¹⁵ See P. D'Anieri, R. Kravchuk & T. Kuzio, *Politics and Society in Ukraine* (Boulder, CO, Westview, 1999), Chapter One, 'The Demise of the Soviet Union and the Emergence of Independent Ukraine', pp. 10–44.

¹⁶ See P. D'Anieri, *Economic Interdependence in Ukrainian-Russian Relations* (Albany, NY, State University of New York, 1999).

¹⁷ Vyacheslau Paznyak, 'Security Dilemmas in Russia and Eurasia', in Roy Allison & Christoph Bluth (eds), *Security Dilemmas in Russia and Eurasia* (London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997), pp. 152 and 159.

¹⁸ Associated Press, 27 July 1997.

¹⁹ T. Kuzio & M. Nordberg, 'Nation and State Building, Historical Legacies and National Identities in Belarus and Ukraine: A Comparative Analysis', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, XXVI, 2 (1999), pp. 69–90. See also T. Kuzio, 'Radical Right Parties and Civic Groups in Belarus and Ukraine', in Peter H. Merkl & Leonard Weinberg (eds), *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties* (London, Frank Cass, 1997), pp. 203–230; and Jan Zaprudnik, 'Development of Belarusian National Identity and Its Influence on Belarus's Foreign Policy Orientation', in Roman Szporluk (ed.), *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, NY, M. E. Sharpe, 1994), pp. 129–149.

²⁰ The capital city, Minsk, became the 'focal point of Russian influence in the republic'. See D. Marples, 'Belarus: The Illusion of Stability', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 9, 3, July–September 1993, p. 263; and K. Mihalisko, 'Politics and Public Opinion in Belarus', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2, 41, 15 October 1993, p. 55. These views do not concur with the election of PF and other pro-reformist members of parliament in the 1990 and 1994 parliamentary elections.

²¹ David Marples points out that 'Belarus remained the least national of the former Soviet states in 1992'. See his *Belarus. From Soviet Rule to Nuclear Catastrophe* (London, Macmillan, 1996), p. 37.

²² Stephen R. Burant, 'Belarus and the "Belarusian Irredenta" in Lithuania', *Nationalities Papers*, 25, 4, December 1997, p. 646. In 1931 Belarusians made up only 0.7% of the inhabitants of Vilnius but in the surrounding countryside they accounted for 50% (Lithuanians were 18%). See D. Marples, *Belarus. A Denationalized Nation* (Amsterdam, Harwood Academic Press, 1999), p. 14. Prior to 1939 the city of L'viv also had a largely Polish and Jewish population but was surrounded by an ethnic Ukrainian majority. In the Ukrainian case, Stalinist nationalities policies led to the ethnic cleansing of Poles, which benefited the Ukrainians who filled the city in the post-war years. In 1926 Ukrainians only accounted for 48.6% of the population of L'viv oblast', a figure which had increased to 90.2% by the 1989 Soviet census. See Vsevolod Naulko & Stephen Rapawy, 'Nationality and Linguistic Changes in Ukraine', *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, LV, 2, Summer 1999, p. 127. Vilnius was also cleansed of Poles but because it was granted to Lithuania—not Belarus—it was filled with Lithuanians (not Belarusians) after 1945.

²³ Burant, 'Belarus and the "Belarusian Irredenta"', in Lithuania', p. 654.

²⁴ *Suppression of Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom in Belarus* (London, Article 19 and Belarus League for Human Rights, September 1997), p. 78.

²⁵ See Kathleen Montgomery & Thomas F. Remington, 'Regime Transition and the 1990 Soviet Republican Elections', *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 10, 1, March 1994, pp. 57–79; and Edward Shils, 'Nation, Nationality, Nationalism and Civil Society', in Steven Grosby (ed.), *The Virtue of Civility. Selected Essays on Liberalism, Tradition, and Civil Society* (Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 1997), pp. 188–224. See also T. Kuzio, 'Ukraine's Post-Soviet Transition: A Theoretical and Comparative Perspective', paper prepared for the conference on 'Problems of Development of Ukraine Since Independence—In the Light of Western Theories', University of Toronto, 5–6 November 1999.

²⁶ It is the absence of nationalism in its primary definition of devotion to the interests of a nation—that makes Lukashenka possible', Mihalisko believes; see her 'Belarus: retreat to authoritarianism', p. 224.

²⁷ See T. Kuzio, 'The Sultan and the Hetman. Democracy Building in Belarus and Ukraine in a Grey Security Zone', in Jan Zielonka & Alex Pravda (eds), *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe: International and Transnational Factors* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

²⁸ V. Tismaneanu & Michael Turner, 'Understanding Post Sovietism: Between Residual Leninism and Uncertain Pluralism', in Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, NY, M.E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 5, argue that, '... the myth of the Soviet supranational interests and identity fell apart under the strikes of the resurrected national(ist) discourses'.

²⁹ *Belarus Monitor: Itogi konstitutsionogo-politicheskog o krizisa v Belarusi: uroki i posledstviya* (Minsk, National Centre for Strategic Research 'East–West', December 1996), p. 36. Gapova is a lecturer at the Belarusian State University, Minsk.

³⁰ *Belarus Monitor: Demokraticheskie protsessy...*, p. 9.

³¹ The process of legitimisation of the new political systems in the former socialist countries has been largely based on nationalism and a reappraisal of the past. Tismaneanu argued that '... legitimacy is ... a major element in the definition and credibility of the new political forces. This legitimisation includes relentless searching for a dignified ancestry, noble predecessors, or heroic moments in the past'. This has been completely absent from the Belarusian polity since 1994, which raises questions about the credibility of the relationship between Belarusian society and government. See Tismaneanu & Turner, 'Understanding Post-Sovietism ...', p. 5.

- ³² Margarita M. Balmaceda, 'Myth and Reality in the Belarusian-Russian Relationship', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 46, 3, May–June 1999, p. 6.
- ³³ Extracted from an interview with Lukashenka in the Kaliningrad newspaper *Yantarnyi kraj*, 2 September 1999.
- ³⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democracy in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman and London, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), p. 112.
- ³⁵ S. Karaganov, 'Russia and the Slav Vicinity', in Vladimir Baranovsky (ed.), *Russia and Europe. The Emerging Security Agenda* (Oxford, Oxford University Press and SIPRI, 1997), p. 299.
- ³⁶ Juan J. Linz & Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 51–54 and 70–71.
- ³⁷ J. J. Linz, 'Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes', in Fred I. Greenstein & Nelson W. Polsby (eds), *Handbook of Political Science*, vol. 3 (Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley, 1975), p. 259.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 260–261.
- ³⁹ Mihalisko, 'Belarus: Retreat to Authoritarianism', p. 246.
- ⁴⁰ *Narodnaya gazeta*, 12 April 1995.
- ⁴¹ K. Mihalisko, 'Belarus: Setting Sail Without a Compass', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1, 1, 3 January 1992, p. 41.
- ⁴² Mihalisko, 'Belarus: Retreat to Authoritarianism', p. 259.
- ⁴³ On the growing violent nature of the Lukashenka regime see Svetlana Aleksievich, 'V Minske zapakhlo krov'yu', *Izvestiya*, 4 April 1997; and Viktor Dyatlikovich, 'Belorusskikh oppozitsionero v sudyat potochnym metodom', *Izvestiya*, 5 April 1997.
- ⁴⁴ See the entry written by T. Kuzio on Belarus in *Freedom in the World. The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1999–2000* (New York, Freedom House, 2000).
- ⁴⁵ Balmaceda, 'Myth and Reality ...', p. 11.
- ⁴⁶ See Taras Kuzio, 'Ukraine: A Four-Pronged Transition', in T. Kuzio (ed.), *Contemporary Ukraine. Dynamics of Post-Soviet Transformation* (Armonk, NY, M. E. Sharpe, 1998), pp. 165–180.
- ⁴⁷ See Mariya Nareiko, 'Student, ty zapisalsya v oppozitsiyu? Zhdi ochered' na otchislenie ...', *Narodnaya volya*, 29 April 1997.
- ⁴⁸ See M. Nordberg, 'Protest and Coercion in Belarus: A Test of Two Competing Research Methods, CARP and SPOT', unpublished paper in the possession of the authors.
- ⁴⁹ Marples, *Belarus: From Soviet Power to Nuclear Catastrophe*, pp. 24–30.
- ⁵⁰ *Belarus Monitor: Itogi ...*, p. 36.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.
- ⁵² Dmitrii Furman & Oleg Bukhovets, 'Belarusian Self-Awareness and Belarusian Politics', *Russian Politics and Law*, 34, 6, November–December 1996, p. 9.
- ⁵³ *Belarus Monitor; Itogi ...*, p. 20.
- ⁵⁴ The following is based largely on an interview by S. Eke with Dr Vladimir Rovdo, Co-ordinator of the Civil Society Programme of the Belarusian Soros Foundation in March 1997. During the interview, the Financial Inspectorate that was to close the foundation on the grounds of financial improbity worked behind a sealed door in the next office.
- ⁵⁵ This includes the restoration of compulsory weekend work-days, the so-called *subbotniki*, and the creation of an official youth organisation, Pryamoe deistvie, nicknamed the 'Lukamol' after the Soviet 'Komsomol'. Even the official newspapers carry names mirroring socialist reality—*Narodnaya volya* and *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* being the most obvious.
- ⁵⁶ The Republic produced a third of the USSR's advanced computer equipment, chiefly for the military-industrial complex, the best Soviet agricultural machinery and a quarter of the USSR's output of radio equipment. See *Belarus Monitor: Demokraticheskie protsessy*, ... p. 8.
- ⁵⁷ See *Belarus Monitor: Ekonomika Belarusi: problemy sistemnykh transformatsii* (Minsk, National Centre for Strategic Research 'East–West', July–October 1996).
- ⁵⁸ *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, 11 September 1996.
- ⁵⁹ See *Belarus Monitor: Itogi ...*, p. 33. Georgii Maksyuta is a specialist at the 'East–West' centre.
- ⁶⁰ The young technocrats surrounding Lukashenka during the election campaign were either removed en masse after Lukashenka won or left of their own volition to join the ranks of the opposition when they understood that Lukashenka tended towards demagoguery. Such was the case with the journalist and adviser on media affairs, A. Feduta. By 1997 Feduta was one of Lukashenka's sworn enemies.
- ⁶¹ Lukashenka showed himself to be a master orator during his time as head of the Parliamentary Commission on Corruption. To give an example of how petty the accusations levelled became, Lukashenka accused Shushkevich of illegally receiving a box of (government property) nails, thus earning Shushkevich the popular name *gvozdekrad*.

⁶² The Belarusian branch of the Soros Foundation was particularly irritating to Lukashenka, as it directly financed democratisation initiatives, led by the opposition. Lukashenka dealt with it effectively by imposing a \$3 million fine for non-payment of taxes. The organisation decided not to pay the fine and simply closed its operations in Belarus.

⁶³ The accusation was made on television on 1 March 1997, during a live link-up between President Lukashenka and the *oblast'* governors, themselves presidential appointees. The programme was dedicated to the spring sowing campaign, but an angry Lukashenka used the occasion to lambast his critics and opponents.

⁶⁴ Belarus has become something of an investment wilderness, with lower direct per capita foreign investment than any other European country. It occupies the unenviable position of 115 out of 155 states for investment potential. See Nikolai Lashkevich, 'Belorussiya: v ocheredi za sotsializom', *Izvestiya*, 28 March 1997.

⁶⁵ 'Belarus' mezhdru proshlym i budushchim', *Narodnaya gazeta*, 25 March 1997.

⁶⁶ Both the rural and urban birthrates have been falling since 1960, with a severe downturn from 1985. There were 19 urban births per 1000 population in 1985, as opposed to 10 in 1994. The corresponding figures for the rural population are 14 and 9. See *Belarus. Sreda dlya cheloveka, Predstavitel'stvo OON v Belarusi* (Minsk, UNDP, 1996).

⁶⁷ Twenty-six PF deputies were elected, representing some 7.5% of the total number of parliamentary seats. Half the deputies were from the City of Minsk. See Furman & Bukhovets, 'Belarusian Self-Awareness and Belarusian Politics', p. 9.

⁶⁸ One author wrote: '... it is the prejudices and emotions of the masses that provide the political basis for power in Belarus ...' See Aleksandr Obukhovich, 'Belarus: shagi v neznaemoe', *Belorusskaya gazeta*, 24 March 1997.

⁶⁹ See Alyaksandr Lukashenka, 'Tol'ko narod v prave reshit' svoyu sud'bu!', *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, 5 November 1996; and Valerii Fadeev, 'Obnovlennaya konstitutsiya a Respubliki Belarus: Deklaratsii real'nost', *Narodnaya volya*, 27 March 1997.

⁷⁰ *Belarus Monitor: Demokraticheskie protsessy* ... p. 21.

⁷¹ On Lukashenka's 'reform' programme see Alyaksandr Lukashenka, 'Reformy dolzhny provodit'sya dlya blaga lyudei!', *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, 11 September 1996; and 'Natsional'naya strategiya: stroim sotsial'no orientirovannuyu ekonomiku', *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta*, 1 April 1997.

⁷² Shils, 'Nation, Nationality, Nationalism and Civil Society', p. 221.

⁷³ Marples, *Belarus: From Soviet Rule to Nuclear Catastrophe*, pp. 36–37.

⁷⁴ Aida Vyigorbina, 'Integratsionny i freidizm', *NG-Stsenarii, Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 March 1997.