



Mapping civil society of Belarus

Briefing paper

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Introduction

One of significant problems of transformations' efficiency in Belarus is not the inconsistency of actions and policies of domestic democratic agents and this of foreign policies towards Belarus. The European Union policy towards Belarus considers only to a small extent the setups of Belarusian civil society and political opposition. Such a situation has been formed not due to the EU and its member states' reluctance to include Belarus into the political decision-making processes. Launching the European Dialogue on Modernization (from March 2012), the practice of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum activity, invitation of the political opposition representatives to be the observers in EURONEST, regular consultations with the civil society on the priorities of development programs, and many other facts demonstrate rather the opposite. The objective of harmonization of the policies and consideration of opinions both of Belarusian civil society and political opposition can not be solved by European politicians for other reasons. Firstly, due to the absence of a joint strategy of Belarusian democratic forces, and secondly, due to the total plurality of opinions inside Belarus.

Belarusian Democrats do not have a unified position on the strategy for changes in the country, as well as on the policy tools of international influence on the authoritarian regime. Such situation leaves no other outlets for the EU, but making decisions on the basis of their own understanding of the situation and their own notions about the effective tools of influence. In its turn, it reduces greatly the overall effect of any EU actions so far as their actions' assessment on the part of Belarusians is very controversial. The opposition and civil society fail to clearly explain to the population the meaning and the purpose of public policy steps of the European Union in a joint message. This incapacity in a situation of massive state propaganda contributes to a growth of anti-European sentiments.

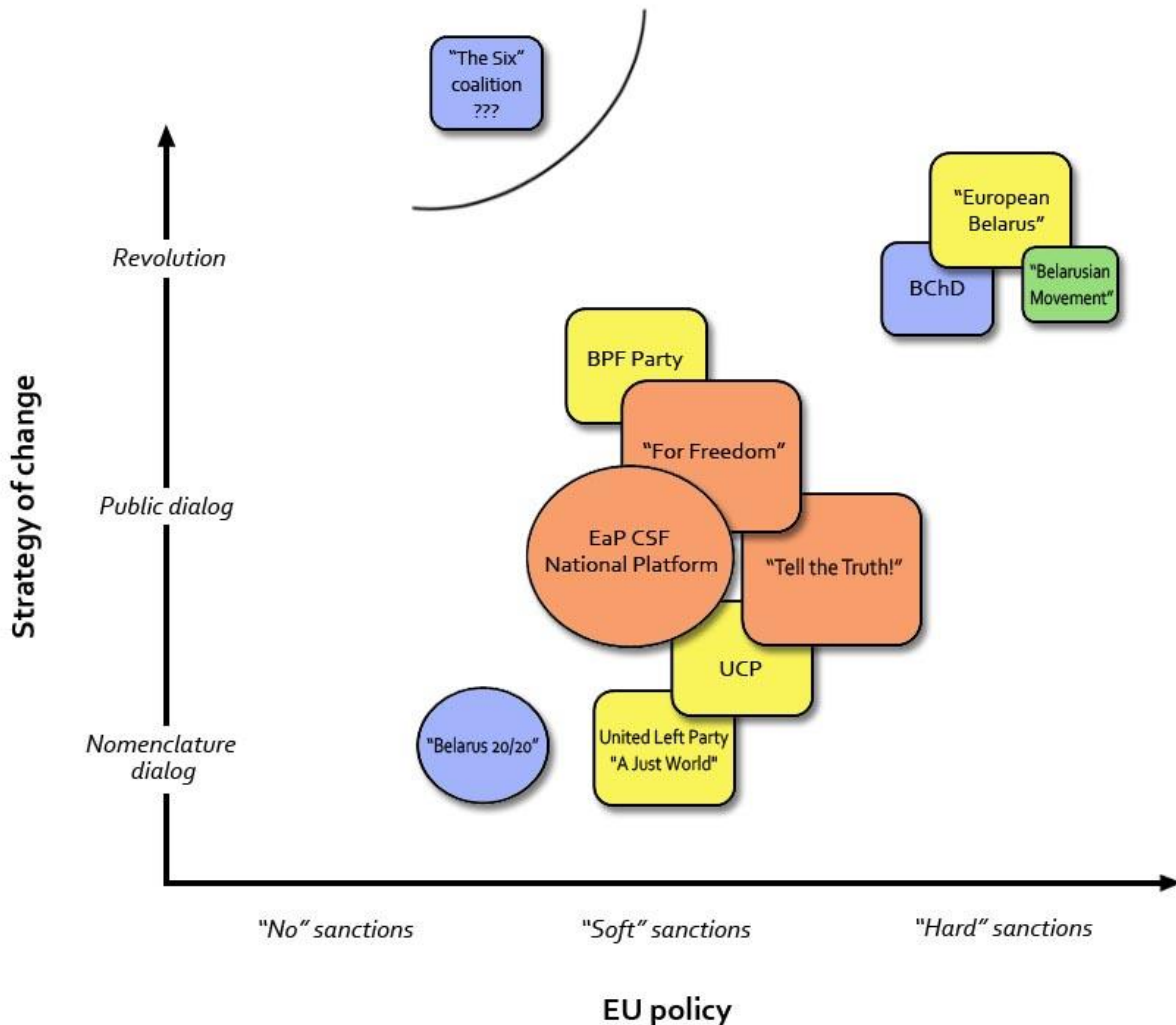
It is rather obvious that the Belarusian political forces' consolidation (particularly, this of the political opposition and civil society) is a major obstacle to any possible changes. Currently, the variance of opinions has led to the fact that the achievement of such unity in the nearest future is a very difficult task. This review examines the dynamics of relationships and guidelines of major political forces in Belarus in two aspects since the last presidential election:

1. The strategy for internal changes in Belarus;
2. The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus.

The basis for determining the positions have been taken statements of political and social subjects, expressed in documents, public speeches and interviews of political forces' leaders and leaders of civil society organizations.



1. The map of Belarusian social and political forces



2. The coordinate system: internal and external policies

Positions of Belarusian agents, with regard to **the strategy for internal changes in Belarus**, are distributed on a nominal scale, from the authoritarian regime transformations through the dialogue with bureaucracy representatives, transition to democracy through a format of the public dialogue ("the round table"), to revolutionary forms of changes. These transition methods represent a kind of peculiar ideal types of changes.

Nomenclature dialogue is a method of transformation that suggests that the consolidated Belarusian political regime can be changed at the expense of the internal efforts of bureaucracy which may enter into an alliance with some loyal-minded political forces. This approach is based on the premise of heterogeneity of the elites and the possibility of engaging a part of the bureaucracy representatives in dialogue with a range of social forces,

which would provide additional benefits to the bureaucracy in the form of contacts and relations with the EU, intellectual products, etc.

Public dialogue supposes transition through the organization of a broad negotiation process (the "round table") between the Belarusian authorities and consolidated democratic forces. Since it is obvious that the Belarusian authorities themselves will not agree to such negotiations, the strategy of public dialogue implies forcing the authorities to the negotiating process.

Revolution supposes the displacement of the current political regime representatives in the course of mass street protests of citizens and bringing to power a new democratic government. The key role in the revolution strategy has the "Square" metaphor as a key element for transformation.

The subjects of the Belarusian civil society and political opposition perceive differently **the external agents' role of in the course of possible changes** and assess differently, as well, the effectiveness of their policies' different options. For the purposes of our analysis it will be enough to confine ourselves to the political actions undertaken by the EU after December 19, 2010, or more specifically, to the attitude of Belarusian social and political forces to the nature of restrictive measures (sanctions) against Belarus. This attitude is expressed by three groups of positions: absence of sanctions, soft (or symbolic) sanctions, tough sanctions.

Absence of sanctions. Proponents of this position believe that the policy of the EU sanctions against Belarus is ineffective and even principally harmful. The sanctions limit, in particular, the possibilities of dialogue with the bureaucracy representatives, the engagement of officials in the sphere of European relations, and lead to increased consolidation and growth of the supporters of the regime and growth of repressions against political and civil activists.

Soft (symbolic) sanctions. Point targeted sanctions are acceptable against individuals responsible for human rights' violations and supporting the Belarusian political regime. Proponents of the "soft" version of sanctions allow for the possibility of adoption of restrictive measures in the form of accounts' freezing, visa sanctions, limitations of diplomatic contacts at the highest level, introduction of sanctions against businessmen and some enterprises, boycotting sports events, etc. That is, any measures are allowed that do not affect the population in general, but the broad economic sanctions are not allowed.

Tough sanctions. This option involves the introduction of any kind of sanctions, up to the broad economic sanctions and trade embargo.

3. The area of Belarusian subjects: the actors

The principal characteristic of the area of Belarusian subjects is its homogeneity in terms of types of actors, and at the same time, significant dispersion of opinions and activity-related guidelines of these actors. In terms of composition, social base, large-scale participation, types of available activities, all the subjects from political parties, NGOs, trade unions and churches to informal civic initiatives are virtually indistinguishable from each other. During the years of the authoritarian regime existence all the independent activity had been displaced in the same field — the civil society sphere, where the typological differences are not significant.

Without claiming to have complete descriptions, we'll select the largest and most active subjects, based on the following criteria¹:

1. Large-scale participation and number of members;
2. Lobbying potential in the EU;
3. Potential of the attitudes and contacts with the Belarusian bureaucracy representatives;
4. Material and technical resources (including financial prosperity);
5. Intensity of activity (completed projects, organized activities, etc.);
6. Representation in the media;
7. Expert and intellectual potential;
8. The potential of coalition actions with other actors.

The subject composition of civil society in Belarus:

A. "Political forces"

A.1. The coalition of political parties "The Six" (**A.1.1.** Movement "For Freedom"; **A.1.2.** The campaign "Tell the truth!"; **A.1.3.** The BPF Party (PBNF); **A.1.4.** The United Civil Party (OGP/UCPB); **A.1.5.** Belarusian Christian Democracy (BCD, BChD); **A.1.6.** The United Left Party "A Just World").

A.2. The European Belarus civil campaign.

A.3. The organizing committee for the creation of "Belarusian Movement" ("Belaruski Rukh").

B. "Social forces"

B.1. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum National Platform (EaP CSF National Platform, National Platform).

B.2. The group "Belarus 20/20" (BISS, Office for Democratic Belarus, Institute for Privatization and Management (IPM), BEROC).

4. The area of Belarusian subjects: opinions

It is not so easy to clearly define the positions of the subjects of socio-political field in Belarus, due to several reasons. Firstly, their opinions and guidelines may vary; secondly, statements of various leaders of the same structure may be different from each other; thirdly, most statements are estimative in nature or are just reactions to events, but do not reflect the actual position of the structure; fourthly, not all positions are

¹ Integral estimate of the relative weight of a subject is given on the basis of our own expert opinions and on the data of quarterly civil society monitoring of the Centre for European Transformation.

expressed publicly. Thus, we will define some general line on the basis of publicly expressed opinions and the nature of the subjects' activity, if possible.

A. "Political forces"

A.1. The coalition of political parties "The Six"

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "2".

The strategy for internal changes: there is no common position.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: there is no common position.

Comments: Inability to agreed decisions and actions reduce the effect of unification to a minimum and make all the coalition not stronger than the weakest of its members.

A.1.1. Movement "For Freedom"

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "4".

The strategy for internal changes: public dialogue.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: symbolic sanctions.

A.1.2. The campaign "Tell the Truth!"

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "4".

The strategy for internal changes: public dialogue.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: their position is not entirely clear, the campaign is rather a supporter of symbolic sanctions, but it admits also the possibility of tougher measures by the EU.

Comments: The attitude of the leaders of the campaign "Tell the truth!" to the EU's restrictive measures is less certain. We can talk about their attitude of *possibility of introducing* tougher economic sanctions, while welcoming the soft restrictive measures' option.

A.1.3. The BPF Party

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "3".

The strategy for internal changes: the position is not entirely clear. The party leaders rather follow a not very distinct script of non-violent revolution, where mass protests play the key role. The dialogue, or the "round table" are considered the right tools, but currently these are not possible to apply due to the

authorities' reluctance of holding a dialogue and opposition forces' weakness. This prejudices the very strategy of public dialogue.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: symbolic sanctions.

A.1.4. The United Civil Party (UCP)

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "3".

The strategy for internal changes: public dialogue; in some cases, position is shifted towards the possibility of bureaucracy dialogue "on specific issues" (eg, discussion with the government of anti-crisis program).

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: rather symbolic sanctions. The party and its leaders seek to take the estimated position which doesn't let to clearly see their attitude to tougher variant of the sanctions.

A.1.5. Belarusian Christian Democracy (BCD, BChD)

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "2".

The strategy for internal changes: it is not entirely clear, but rather revolutionary. The BCD leaders V. Rymasheuski, P. Sevyarynets have claimed also about the need for dialogue, but recently approaching of the BCD with the radical opponents of such an approach takes place.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: tough sanctions.

A.1.6. The United Left Party "A Just World"

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "3".

The strategy for internal changes: it is not entirely clear, but rather it is a nomenclature dialogue. This is indirectly confirmed by the strategy of the party, aimed at the unconditional participation in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: symbolic sanctions.

A.2. The European Belarus civil campaign

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "3".

The strategy for internal changes: revolution.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: tough sanctions.

A.3. The organizing committee for the creation of "Belarusian Movement"

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "1".

The strategy for internal changes: revolution.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: tough sanctions.

B. "Social forces"

B.1. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum National Platform (National Platform)

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "4".

The strategy for internal changes: public dialogue.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: symbolic sanctions.

B.2. The group "Belarus 20/20" (BISS, Office for Democratic Belarus, Institute for Privatization and Management, BEROC)

Estimation of the relative weight of the subject: "2".

The strategy for internal changes: rather a nomenclature dialogue.

The attitude to the European Union restrictive measures against Belarus: review of existing sanctions in favor of the reduction, in particular, it is proposed to exclude the sanctions against businessmen and enterprises.