NATION-BUILDING IN BELARUS

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ABSTRACT

NATION-BUILDING IN BELARUS

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine the process of nation-building in the Republic of Belarus from 1991 till the present time. The focus is made on two main projects of nation-building presented by the official authorities and the political opposition. The main concern of this thesis is to make a comparative analysis of these two projects of Belarussian national identity. Also, the thesis examines the views of the official authorities and the political opposition on the history of Belarus, which is used as a tool of national identity construction in their projects of nation-building. Concepts of ethnic and civic nationalisms are discussed aiming at understanding the nature of nationalism in Belarus together with different theoretical approaches to ethnicity.

Keywords: Belarus, nation-building, nationalism, ethnicity

ÖZ

BELARUS'TA ULUS İNŞASI

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Bu tezin amacı Belarus Cumhuriyeti'nde 1991'den günümüze süregelen ulus inşası sürecini incelemektir. Hükümet ve siyasi muhalefet tarafından ortaya konan iki farklı ulus inşa projesine odaklanılmıştır. Bu tezde söz konusu iki ulusal kimlik inşa projesini karşılaştırılmalı olarak incelenmektedir. Ayrıca tezde, hükümet ve siyasi muhalefet tarafından ulus inşa projelerinin temel bir unsuru olarak kullanılan Belarus tarihi yazımı üzerinde yoğunlaşılmıştır. Etnik ve sivik milliyetcilik kavramları Belarus milliyetciliğinin niteliğini anlamak amacıyla tartışılmış, etnisiteye farklı kuramsal yaklaşımlar da incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Belarus, ulus inşası, milliyetcilik, etnisite

To my parents

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the very beginning God was distributing the lands of the Earth to the nations. Belarussians came to Him and asked for their piece of land. God liked Belarussians very much and told them: "You are so nice people, so I will give you a beautiful piece of land, with forests full of animals, rivers and lakes full of fish, and a rich soil, which will give you big crops". The angel, who was near God, was so much surprised, and asked: "My God, how it is possible, you are giving the heaven to them". God thought for a little while and made His decision: "Your lands will be rich and beautiful, but into the ages of ages you will have the worst authorities".

Belarussian legend[1]

1.1   Introducing the study

The Republic of Belarus is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe bordered clockwise by Russia to the northeast, Ukraine to the south, Poland to the west, and Lithuania and Latvia to the northwest. According to 2009 census, the population is 9,503,807 people. 70% of the total population is concentrated in urban areas. Minsk, the nation's capital and largest city, is home to 1,836,808 residents (20% of the population of the country)[2].

The collapse of the Soviet Union caused the formation of fifteen independent republics and one of them was the Republic of Belarus. The representatives of the republic were directly involved in the signing of Belavezha Accords in December 8, 1991[3], which became the beginning of the independence period in the history of the

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[1] The legend shows the perception of government as the superstructure and the management class which carries no good for the people of Belarus.

[2] Available online at: http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/2009/itogi1.php

[3] The agreement terminating the existence of the USSR.

country. Despite 20 years of independence, the political system of modern Belarus is still influenced by the Soviet past and is often characterized by international and Belarussian political scientists as authoritarian regime[4], demagogical democracy[5] or even sultanism[6]. The functioning of the political system is highly problematic in the country, also complicated by the issue of the definition of nation. Owing to long history of the country, situated at the crossroads between the East and the West of Europe, the nation building process has always been complex. Nowadays it is strongly influenced by both the Russian Federation and the European Union. The natural result of the political and geopolitical situation is the diversity of ideas about national identity of Belarussians. National self-determination of the population of Belarus may take the form of a wide range of endoethnonyms. People define themselves as '*Tuteishi*[7]', 'Belarussian', or 'Soviet' and they may also identify themselves with the historic original naming such as '*litvin*'[8] or '*kryvych*'[9].

Official policy of nation-building is connected with the foreign policy of the country, mostly inspired by its first president and constant leader of the republic, President Aleksandr Lukashenka. Nation-building policy of the official authorities is expressed in national ideology[10] policy, which is actively implemented in the country since early years of Lukashenka's rule. The policy is opposed by the political opposition and intellectual elite, supporting the alternative direction. The alternative

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[4] *Comparative Politics Today.* Ed. By Almond G., Powell G., Strom K., Dalton R., Longman 2004, p.150

[5] Korosteleva, E., *Is Belarus a Demagogical Democracy?* in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs.* 2003, vol. 16 (3); and Korosteleva, E., *The Quality of Democracy in Belarus and Ukraine* in *Journal. of Communist Studies and Transition Politics.* 2004, vol. 20 (1), p. 139

[6] Eke, S., Kuzio, T., *Sultanism in Eastern Europe: The socio-political roots of authoritarian populism in Belarus* in *Europe-Asia studies.* 2000 Vol. 50 (3)

[7] Endoethnonym used in the end of 19th – beginning of 20th century, which means 'local people'.

[8] Historical name of local people, referring to the time of Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

[9] Historical name of local people, coming from the name of the tribe, lived on the territory of modern Republic of Belarus in 7th-12th centuries.

[10] The official name of the governmental nation-state building policy.

movement of these two opposition groups (intellectual elite and the political opposition) gained strength since the late 1980s and originally served as a nationalist alternative to the Soviet regime. In fact, the opposing sides offer different projects of Belarussian national identity, which contain different approaches to the very essence of nation and nationalism in Belarus. These two projects reflect not only the projects of Belarussian national identity, but also the political confrontation between the state authorities and the political opposition. This thesis examines the approaches of both sides related to nation-building in Belarus, considering the similarities and differences. One of the most important goals of this study is to review the views of official and alternative projects of Belarussian national identity in the light of the related theoretical framework.

The peculiarity of Belarus in the sphere of national development is that the majority of the citizens of Belarus identify themselves as ethnic Belarussians; according to 2009 national census 83% of the population identified themselves as Belarussians, 8.26% as Russians, 3.1% as Poles[11]. This feature was the main reason of the absence of ethnic conflicts since 1991, which happened in many other republics of the former Soviet Union. Thus, the confrontation in the sphere of the definition of national identity of the Belarussians can be considered as intra-national. Another important characteristic of Belarus is the fact that during the period of the collapse of the USSR, the nationalist movement in the country was not as influential as the movement of the masses claiming economic stability. It is also important to note that from 1994 to the present time, the regime in Belarus is characterized by a pro-Russian orientation, preserving many of the 'Soviet' elements in the economic and social sphere. These features distinguish the Republic of Belarus from the other countries of the former Soviet Union.

This alignment of forces was more or less clearly delineated in the late 1980s. The mid 1980s was a period of political and social change in the Soviet Union. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev started a new political line named as *glasnost*, which allowed freedom of assembly and the relative freedom of opinion. During this period

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[11] The information of National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus is available at: http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/2009/itogi1.php

active development of societies and clubs, designed to conduct the research and study of ethnography and history, and to discuss political situation could be observed in Belarus.

In October 1988, the Belarussian People's Front (BPF), one of the most important political forces acting in Belarussian opposition throughout its history, was created. At the beginning it functioned as a social movement, and later became a political party. BPF paid a lot of attention to the study of the historical past of Belarus, including the history of the Soviet period.[12] Created as the opposition to the Soviet regime, BPF later played an important role in the early stages of the development of Belarussian independent post-Soviet statehood. It was supported by its youth organization and several political parties, which were partly sharing its political program. However, by the end of the 1990s so called 'nationalist wing' lost its influence in social and political life of Belarus. This happened partly because of the intransigent position of the government towards the opposition. An important role was also played by the lack of coordination between opposition political parties themselves.

The political crisis of the Soviet Union and the time of the formation of separate independent republics in the late 1980s and early 1990s were called as the 'parade of sovereignties'. At the end of 1991, an agreement for the termination of the Union was signed and the USSR was cancelled. At that period a fundamentally new union - the Commonwealth of Independent States was created. It allowed keeping the old economical ties between the states, at the same time recognizing the independence of each state.

Official school textbooks about the history of Belarus point out that an agreement on cessation of the Soviet Union was signed despite the will of Belarussian people, expressed in the referendum in March 1991 (82.7% of the population of Belarussian Soviet Socialistic Republic (the BSSR) voted for the preservation of the USSR)[13]. Historian Zahar Shybeka, representing the alternative

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[12] Krauchanka P., *Belarus na rostanjah*, Vilnius, 2007, p.50

[13] Chigrinov P. G., *Istoria Belarusi*, Minsk, Polymja, 2002, p. 401

view on the problems of Belarussian history, states that this kind of will was expressed because the people of the country did not feel confident enough to overcome the consequences of Chernobyl catastrophe on their own[14]. Belarus along with Russia and Ukraine was most affected by this disaster. The total damage caused by the Chernobyl catastrophe in Belarus is estimated at 235 billion US dollars, which was 32 times more, than the budget of the BSSR in 1985[15].

Independent philosopher, Valentin Akudovich writes that the BSSR was one of the most developed republics of the USSR, and its people did not experience the economic crisis of the end of 1980s – beginning of 1990s in the extent to which it affected the people in the other regions of the Union. For this reason, the population of the BSSR saw no sense to terminate the Union Treaty, which would have continued and deepened the crisis. Akudovich characterizes the Soviet Belarus as a '*Vendee*', the society striving towards restoration of the pre-revolutionary order, reactionary and conservative system.[16] It may also mean that there were no strong nationalist movements (and BPF was not influential enough) that fought for the independence of the state, as it happened, for example, in the Baltic states.

On July 19, 1991 the Supreme Council issued a new law concerning the official name of the state (the Republic of Belarus instead of Belorussia or the BSSR) and national symbols (a white-red-white flag and a national emblem '*Pagonya*'). Belarus was declared a neutral and nuclear-free state. By the end of 1994, the republic's independence was recognized by 193 countries in the world.

The independent status of the country has brought more political and social freedom, democratization of political system, multiparty system and the reform of the electoral code. Thus, after gaining independence, citizens of Belarus got what was lacking in the system of the Soviet Union. At the same time the country suffered from the economic crisis caused by the rupture of economic ties of the Soviet Union.

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[14] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, Minsk, 2003, p. 397

[15] Available online at: http://www.belembassy.org/bulgaria/rus/chernobyl_review.php

[16] Akudovich V., *Kod adsutnasti*, Minsk, 2007, p. 93

The economic system was affected by hyperinflation, shortages, rationing and unemployment.

The period of 1991-1994 was marked by significant shifts in national development of the country, and named as 'the second Belarussian renaissance' or 'national revival'[17]. On the 26th of January, 1990 passed a law "On Languages in the Belorussian SSR" which gave Belarussian language the status of official language of the state. In September 1990 the Council of Ministers of the BSSR adopted the State Program of development of the Belarussian language and other national languages. According to the Law on Languages, Belarus provides comprehensive development and functioning of the Belarussian language in all spheres of public life, "showing concern for the state of free development and the use of national languages spoken by the population of the Republic", "secures the right to free use of Russian as a language of interethnic communication between the peoples", and "creates the necessary conditions for the citizens of the Republic of Belarus for the study of Belarussian and Russian languages and mastery of them"[18].

Belarussian was declared the only official language in the country, and therefore the state documents were translated into Belarussian; its knowledge was necessary in the bureaucratic sphere. School textbooks were also translated into Belarussian. According to Shybeka, if in 1986 some 25% of the school students learned to read by ABC book in Belarussian language, later in 1993 the percentage reached 80% of the pupils[19]. By the beginning of the 1993-1994 academic year, 20 new history textbooks were written and published. The books assigned the important role to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the condemnation of Soviet totalitarianism. The number of books and periodicals published in the Belarussian language increased over time. There were also attempts to popularize Belarussian in mass

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[17] Mechkovskaya N.B., *Yazykovaya situatsia v Belarusi: Eticheskije kolizii dvujazychija* in *Russian Linguistics*. Vol. 18. 1994. p. 299

[18] Koryakov U.B. *Yazykovaja situatsia v Belarussii i tipologia jazykovyh situatsii*. p. 44-45

[19] Shybeka, Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 414

media, but they did not have much success, since most of the population used Russian in everyday life and often were not able to understand Belarussian.

Many of the changes in the national sphere in the period between 1991 and 1994 were made possible under the influence of the political power of BPF and the political forces that supported it. This direction in political forces of Belarus was called as nationalist forces. BPF supported the idea of development in accordance with national priorities, and national culture, and emphasized the necessity of the development of a national language, and the national identity of the nation. In the economic sphere, the party took the position of the priority of market relations, entrepreneurship and private initiative.

Political system in the period of 1991-1994 was a multi-party parliamentary republic. Leadership of the country was carried out by the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) and the Council of Ministers of the Republic (the Government). Due to the many political, strategic, and power differences and the lack of sufficient experience in independent political leadership, the work of the leading bodies in the country was ineffective. The credibility of the authorities declined and previous interest in participating in the political life among the population changed into political indifference.

One of the major players in political struggle of that time was so-called 'Soviet *nomenklatura*' (the bureaucracy that came to power by approving the nomination by the Communist Party of the USSR). Its political opponent was the BPF, representing the democratic and nationalist position. Petr Kravchenko, who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus at that time, in his book, "Belarus at the Crossroads" noted that due to constant political dependence on the governing bodies in Moscow, a mature tradition of decision-making was not formed yet in Belarussian parliament[20]. Shybeka interprets political history of Belarus of this period as a constant struggle of the old (Soviet bureaucracy) and the new (nationalists) political forces[21].

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[20] Krauchanka P., *Belarus na rostanjah, p. 395*

[21] Shybeka, Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 405

In a situation of political uncertainty and struggle the need to introduce the post of President of the Republic was recognized. During the preparation process for the presidential elections, both Shushkevich (the head of Supreme Soviet) and Kebich (the Chairman of Council of Ministers) were considered to be the favorites. At the same period, the Belarussian Parliament launched a campaign against corruption. The head of the anti-corruption commission was the deputy Aleksandr Lukashenka, who has made several high-profile exposes. The most famous scandal of this time was the misappropriation of $100 ('the case of a box of nails') from the budget, done by Shushkevich. Due to the economic crisis in the country, this amount was sufficient to be the cause for a scandal. The latter was forced to resign.

Due to these exposes deputy Lukashenka became very popular as the fighter for truth and justice, representing the opinion of the people. Official sources state that in many ways, it happened due to the economic crisis in the country, while the government paid little attention to the problems of economy and was engaged in the debates about the further development of the country and the redistribution of power. Lukashenka was named as 'the people's candidate'. However, it should be noted that in the period before 1994 there were some economic reforms such as the announcement of privatization, the introduction of the national currency, creation of the conditions for attracting foreign investment and partial price reform. In these circumstances the emerging of private banks, small businesses and farming in the agricultural sector in the country began. At the same time, large plants, the heritage of the Soviet economy, which had no funds for survival, began to close, which gave rise to unemployment; the national currency could not be maintained, and inflation reached 400% per year. These conditions did not satisfy the people, who were accustomed to the fact that the state provides stability and even a small, but regular income in exchange for loyalty to it.

In the second round of the president elections on July 10, 1994, Alexander Lukashenka was elected the President of the Republic of Belarus. Since the election of Lukashenka the regime of the republic changed from parliamentary to the presidential system. This is largely due to the personality of Lukashenka and the policies that he carried out. At the end of 1994, one of the first laws was adopted, and

it introduced the so-called 'presidential vertical', which meant a strict hierarchy of officials of executive and administrative authority directly subordinated to the president[22]. That greatly contributed to the strengthening of the position of the president and the expansion of his powers.

The referendum, initiated by the president was held on May 14, 1995. According to its results, Russian language received equal status with Belarussian (83.3% 'yes'), what made it the second official language of the country. In addition, new state symbols (the coat of arms and flag) were introduced (75.1% 'yes'). Also, the majority (83.3%) voted in support of the president's initiative for integration with Russia. People also approved the legal possibility of early termination by the President of the powers of the Parliament in case of flagrant or systematic violations of the Constitution by the Parliament (77.7% 'yes')[23].

Official history textbook interprets the results of the referendum as an illustration of the fact that the population of Belarus strives for integration with Russia and considers the full use of Russian language in public life as necessary. Since this referendum, the linguistic situation in Belarus is characterized as an asymmetrical bilingualism. Despite the statement that two languages have the status of official, Russian is mostly used by Belarussians in there professional and private life. Support of a legal opportunity of resignation of the parliament by the President is interpreted by the official sources as an attempt to find 'a steady hand' in politics, that is, political body that can take a resolute decision[24].

Opposition sources understand the results of the referendum as a disappointment of the population in public market policy and its possibilities, the aspiration to avoid responsibility, a desire to return to a stable economic and political system of the Soviet type (including the integration trends in Russia). It also

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[22] Shybeka Z*., Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 315

[23] Available online at: http://91.149.157.125/rubrics/elections/1970/01/01/ic_articles_623_169946/

[24] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi*, p. 400

underlines the disappointment of the people in unwarrantedly 'nationalistic' political decisions in a cultural sphere, known as belarusization[25].

At this stage a period of Belarusization and the focus on the priorities of national values in the state-building finishes. Official authorities, inspired by the new president, changed the course of nation-building policy. Rapprochement with Russia in economic and political spheres was proclaimed as the main objective of the development of Belarussian foreign policy. This also affected the internal politics of nation-building. In April 2, 1996, Yeltsin and Lukashenka signed an agreement on the establishing of the Union State of Belarus and Russia. A further development of relations called for the creation of a single state, and the introduction of a common currency and market. However, due to the complex relations between the states, the change of the President in the Russian Federation and other reasons Belarus and Russia still remain as independent states on the world map. The event of the signing of the Union Treaty is referred to as one of the most important events of 1990s by official sources of information. According to an official history textbook, a project of the Union is a "reflection of the aspirations to the integration of the two brotherly peoples"[26].

The elections to the Supreme Council in May 1995 failed because of an insufficient number of elected deputies and the parliament could not carry out its functions from May to October 1995. This period was called as the first parliamentary crisis. In July 1996 the second parliamentary crisis began. It was the largest conflict in the political sphere of life of the Republic of Belarus, which later influenced the nature of presidential power in the country. It was a confrontation between the president and the parliament in the distribution of political powers. The result of it was a new referendum.

On the 24th of November 1996, a referendum in which citizens were offered two versions of the constitution was held. One variant of the constitution was named as presidential, the other as parliamentary. Official sources point to the fact, that the

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[25] Shybeka Z*., Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 320

[26] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi*, p. 407

conflict in the Belarussian political field occurred because that the existing system did not allow the distribution of powers evenly, which led to the conflict of political players. Thus, according to the official version, the president's variant of the constitution provided for an equitable distribution of authority with the transfer of the benefits of the president. At the same time, the parliamentary option eliminated even the presidency itself. Officials understand this conflict as a conflict of power between the president and parliament, the president gave his 'socially oriented' variant of constitution and parliament was trying to make the people go by a 'dark' road of development[27]. Alternative sources say that the president's variant of the constitution gave the president virtually unlimited powers and made the Supreme Council politically powerless[28].

At the November referendum, 70.5% of the population voted for the president's variant of the constitution. At the same referendum votes supported president's initiative to move the Independence Day from July 27th (the day of the signing of Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Belarus) to the 3rd of July (the day of liberation of Minsk from the occupation authorities during World War II). Most voters also gave their votes against the free (unrestricted) sale and purchase of land, and against abolition of capital punishment in the state. At the moment Belarus remains one of the few states in Europe where this kind of punishment is legalized[29].

The parliament of XII convocation, involved to the conflict, was disbanded by the president. The president proposed anti-crisis program of economical development. Its essence was in the governmental support of agricultural sector, the development of socially-oriented economy, the development of trade and industrial ties with neighboring countries, mainly with Russia. Official history books tell how fast and effective the economic development in the country was; it mentions high rates of housing construction, unemployment reduction, increase in GDP, and the growth of industrial production. The official source stresses the fact of state support

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[27] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 410

[28] Shybeka Z*., Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 332

[29] Available online at: http://lukashenkorg.narod.ru/1996.htm

of small and medium-sized businesses; the share of production of non-state enterprises in total industrial production reached 43%[30].

The alternative sources give the statistics according to which the half of non-state enterprises was eliminated in the course of 1996, in Minsk. Private banks were closed or were placed under state control. In addition, an alternative source mentions high inflation, resource and trade dependency on Russia, so that Belarus suffered the consequences of the collapse of the Russian ruble in 1994 and 1998. According to the UN data mentioned in the source, in 2000 more than 75% of the population had incomes below the minimum consumer budget. According to alternative sources, in 2000, 40% state-owned industrial enterprises and 80% state-owned agricultural enterprises were unprofitable[31].

Since the early 1990s, non-governmental organizations have started to appear along with the political parties. NGOs are mostly dealing with non-political purposes: ecology, the struggle for women's rights, civic education and support for entrepreneurs. With enhance of the presidential power and the increasing pressure on the private sector, work of these organizations becomes more and more difficult. They have to go through the procedures of re-registration, the complication of working conditions. Emerging organizations get involved in the struggle for the democratization of the regime, protection of citizens' rights, i.e. their activity becomes politicized. According to studies, which were carried out by NGOs themselves, the most important challenge for the sector is the perception of NGOs as a social 'appendage' of political parties, lack of independence in their development, i.e. politicization stated above. No less important reason for the slow and problematic development of the third sector is the lack of a stable financial base associated with the weak development of private capital in the country, forcing NGOs to find funders abroad, which in turn gives rise to the dependence on foreign capital and foreign opinion[32]. For this reason, the third sector is not perceived by the population of the country as an independent sphere from politics, but rather as a base for the

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[30] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 412

[31] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p 418.

[32] Chernov V., *Tretii sector v Belarusi,* available online at: http://nmnby.eu/news/analytics/1296.html

opposition, which is actively discredited by authorities as 'sold itself out to the West' structure.

Simultaneously with the appearance of the third sector emerged the phenomenon of 'independent intellectuals', initially associated with the political opposition and NGOs, and later took shape as an independent phenomenon. The original basis for the development of independent intellectual movement was the European Humanities University (EHU), which existed as an institution of higher education in Minsk. In 2004, because of the conflict with the authorities the university was deprived of its license and is currently operating in Vilnius, Lithuania as a university in exile for Belarussian students. A distinctive feature of education at the EHU was the Western system of education, contrasted sharply to the Soviet system, adopted in Belarus, both in form and content. In addition to EHU, there are several research organizations, also operating in exile in Lithuania and Poland. They consider the situation in Belarus from a position of Western European perspective and mainly make the research of the functioning of the political sphere of Belarussian state. Researches of the group of independent intellectuals are extremely various in terms of research approaches. Of course, one of the most important themes in these studies is the problem of national development in Belarus and the problem of building of the national state, which will be elaborated in detail in this thesis.

In the field of social development in the period since 1994, alternative sources of information reported the gradual deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus. This fact is confirmed by the closure of opposition newspapers, banning of private practice for lawyers, creation of difficulties for civil society organizations, including NGOs, leading to their closure and/or illegal work, unjustified detention of journalists, and 'complete disappearance' of people who disagree. Official sources deny these facts.

The issue of international cooperation is described by the official sources in the connection to the fruitful development of relations with Russia, Venezuela, and Iran. Opposition sources outline the complicated relationship of Belarussian official authorities with the European Union, which is expressed in the prohibition of entry of the president and senior management to the EU since 2002. Parliamentary

Assembly of the Union of Europe did not recognize the results of the 1996 referendum as legitimate and, accordingly, did not recognize the legitimacy and a new constitution and the parliament. Relations with Russia have also had more and less successful periods. Prior to 1999, when the head of Russia was Boris Yeltsin, relations with Russia were the most fruitful. Since Putin came to power, the process of creating a Union State slowed down.

In accordance with the 1996 Constitution a person could be the president of the Republic of Belarus only two terms for 5 years each. Due to constitutional changes in 1996 (two years after the presidential election), new presidential elections were held in 2001. Candidate Lukashenka won 75.65% of votes[33]. The opposition, the US and the EU did not recognize the election results, saying they were held with the numerous violations and failed to meet democratic standards. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) observers considered that no violations were noticed during the elections and electoral process met the will of the Belarussian people. Election results provoked opposition protests and the blaming the Electoral Commission of falsifying the results. Street demonstrations occurred that were dispersed by the authorities.

In 2004, President Lukashenka initiated a national referendum on the question of the possibility of lifting restrictions of presidential terms for one person. According to the information of Central Election Commission 'yes' votes were given by 79.42% of voters[34]. The opposition considered this referendum illegal in both form and content. There are many reasons for that; one of the most important of them is the violation of the electoral code of the republic. Official sources consider the referendum and its results as a nationwide support the incumbent president.

The next presidential elections took place in March 2006. During the preparation for it, opposition and independent candidates objected to the legality of the participation of Lukashenka, as the 2004 referendum in their opinion, was unconstitutional. The election was won by candidate Lukashenka, he was supported

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[33] Available online at: http://dec19.org/?page_id=24

[34] Available online at: http://news.tut.by/politics/45482.html

by 82, 6% of voters[35]. On Election Day, March 19, at a central square of Minsk the protest rally against the election results was held. It was attended by opposition candidates. As a continuation of the protest action so called 'tent town' was organized: about 25 tents with protesters, who intended to remain in the square to demonstrate their disagreement with the results of the elections. The camp of protesters remained on the square from 19th to 24th March. At night, the March 24th camp was dispersed by police. State-run media claimed that the foreign sponsors paid protesters for their participation in the action. Opposition sources glorify the protesters, who in spite of snow and difficult conditions remained on the square.

Presidential elections in 2010, which was won by Lukashenka (79.65% votes[36]), repeated the same scenario. The differences consisted of a more professional election campaign of candidates. On Election Day, at the central square of Minsk, a meeting was held. Mass protest, according to various sources, collected from 5 to 40 thousand people. The rally was dispersed by a special unit of the police and internal troops with batons. During an unauthorized protest part of the protesters tried to assault the Government House, smashed the windows and broke down the door. Political opposition puts forward a version that windows and doors at the Government House were broken by provocateurs[37]. The official newspaper of the presidential administration "*Sovetskaya Belorussia*" with the reference to declassified documents of the Belarussian security services accused security forces of Poland and Germany of involvement in these events[38].

The economic model of Belarus was proclaimed by the authorities as 'Belarussian economic miracle'. This model avoided the sharp growth of privatization and wide spreading of the small business, and successfully overcame the crisis of the early 1990s, allowing the population to have a low but stable income. The economy of Belarus for over twenty years since the collapse of the Soviet Union

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[35] Available online at: http://www.karty.by/2011/09/10/president-elections-2006/

[36] Available online at: http://www.rec.gov.by/Elections-PRB

[37] Available online at: http://newsby.org/by/2011/01/16/text17970.htm

[38] Available online at: http://www.sb.by/post/111079/

was not upgraded and used the schemes and mechanisms prevalent in the USSR. This became the reason for the economic crisis of 2011. The crisis started in March of 2011. In May a one-off devaluation of national currency by 56.4% was declared. In September there was another devaluation of 52%. During year 2011 inflation reached 189%. Prices on goods greatly increased, the population panicked. President Lukashenka said in the official statement that the blame for the ongoing economic problems in the country at 90% lies on foreign forces seeking to destabilize the Belarussian regime[39].

A new form of protest against existing conditions in the country appeared in social life in June-August 2011. The protests were coordinated through social networks on the Internet. Going to meetings, citizens did not shout slogans or use graphic materials. The rally was a gathering of people at one point, and their communication with each other. Specific form expression of dissent became the applause. The protests took place every Wednesday. Each action ended with arrests, fines, beatings by the police[40]. An important feature of the protests on the early stages was that the 'revolution through social networks' declares no relation to opposition structures. The opposition leaders did not participate in the actions and did not speak about them publicly. Perhaps this fact is connected with the long powerless struggle of the opposition with the existing regime, which partially discredited the opposition. Observed actions served as a struggle for a dignified life, coming from the people directly, as opposed to the proclaimed by the government and opposition. Later political opposition declared the support for the initiative[41]. But the official authorities do not differentiate the opposition protests and protests of 'revolution through social networks'[42].

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[39]Available online at: http://www.ej.by/news/economy/2011/10/29/lukashenko_nashel_vinovnyh_v_belorusskom_krizise_za_predelami_strany.html

[40] Available online at: http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2011/06/23_a_3672161.shtml

[41] Available online at: http://www.interfax.by/news/belarus/94797

[42] Available online at: http://ale.by/news/lukashenko-revolyucii-cherez-socialnye-seti-udalos-protivostoyat-blagodarya-dvum-desyatkam-molodyh-rebyat,-kotorye-prishli-i-sdelali-svoe-delo

In response to the mass protests of citizens, the authorities issued a decree on the prohibition of applause in public places. In late October, came the amendments to the law "On mass events" that limits the possibility of protests. Among the prohibitions set forth in this Act a prohibition on the dissemination of information on mass actions in the media, Internet or other information networks is also mentioned.

1.2   Research problem

This thesis aims to study the process of establishing a nation state in Belarus and focuses on two different projects of Belarussian national identity in a comparative way. One is imposed by the government policy in national sphere. The second represents the opinions of the political opposition and independent intellectual elite. Alternative project, as already noted, is represented by two different groups (the political opposition and independent intellectuals), which may disagree on some issues. However, they share the view on the illegitimacy of the present official authorities in Belarus, and, accordingly, an insufficiency of the official project of nation-building. The opposition and intellectuals also share the view of the historiography of Belarus. For these reasons, in this thesis the opposition and intellectuals will be treated as one group (with a few exceptions), referred to as an alternative position.

In this thesis, the comparison of the two different projects of nation-building that is, the way both parties 'imagine the Belarussian community' will be critically discussed. Their positions will be examined in the light of the dichotomy of ethnic and civic nationalism. They will be also analyzed from the point of view of modernist and ethnosymbolist approaches to nationalism and ethnicity. It is argued that both official and alternative projects of nation-building in Belarus present a mixture of ethnic and civic nationalism.

1.3   Methodology

In this thesis documentary research method is used as the primary method of research. It included a critical review and the analysis of historical sources, official documents and laws, materials of media, monographs, and publications in scientific

periodicals. The literature in Russian, Belarussian, Polish and English languages available in both printed and electronic form, as well as the Internet sources is used. The research itself includes the comparison and elaboration of the positions, consideration of the argument in the broader context. First hand documents used in the research include the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, official and alternative history and ideology textbooks, web pages of the main governing bodies of Belarus and the web resources of political opposition and independent intellectuals.

The method of documentary research has its drawbacks, for example, limitations in the selection of material may lead to one-sided investigation. However, a careful investigation can help to minimize these weaknesses and contribute to the accuracy of the study.

1.4   Organization of the Chapters

The first chapter introduces the study and makes the brief overview of the modern political and economical situation in Belarus. It also briefly points out the problem of Belarussian identity and the approaches to its understanding.

The second chapter is about the theoretical framework including different approaches to nationalism and ethnicity. Various approaches are used to explain the essence and the details of Belarussian situation. In particular, the concepts of ethnic and civic nationalism are discussed together with modernist and ethnosymbolist approaches to ethnicity. In addition, the theoretical framework of nationalism development in post-Soviet countries is included in this chapter.

In the third chapter different the approaches to Belarussian national identity are presented. The aim is to reveal the commonalities and differences among different groups related to Belarussian national identity.

The fourth chapter deals with the reconstruction of the history of Belarus. The events and the issues discussed in the chapter are mostly connected with nation-building process. They are explained in chronological order and commented by official and alternative historians.

The fifth chapter is the concluding chapter. Its goal is to summarize the information provided, and make a general analysis about the nature of the process of nation-building in the modern state of Belarus. One of the important aims of this chapter is the analysis of nation-building in Belarus in the context of theoretical approaches discussed in the thesis.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Studies on ethnicity, nation, national identity and nationalism in the modern social sciences reveal a wide variation of approaches. The presence of the very concept of 'nationality' for the characteristics of a certain community implies also its national history and its ethnic characteristics; the theorists of nationalism are discussing whether they are created or initial. Approaches to the phenomena of nationalism and ethnicity can be categorized into two. One sees continuity between ethnicity and the nation. The other does not necessary see the link between ethnicity and nation. In fact, the assertion of no connection between the phenomena of ethnicity and nation, recognized by the modernist approach, makes the nation to be the manifestation of modernity, and a product of industrial society. The presence of cultural continuation between ethnicity and the nation, which is an idea of ethnosymbolist approach, considers the national community as a continuation of the cultural traditions of ethnicity. In this case, the nation is not considered a new entity, but rather as a new form of ethnicity. The nationalist movement in this case uses the symbolic capital of the ethnic community, significant for its members, which ensures the continuity between these two phenomena. No less significant dichotomy in studies of nationalism is the notion of ethnic and civic nationalism, which also focuses on the key factors which are important for the national community and which is essential for understanding the nature of nationalism. This may be a cultural history and the past of the community, shared by its members and the emphasis on the 'kinship' relationship between its members, as emphasized in ethnic nationalism. Civic nationalism stresses the importance of the community of 'here and now', civil society, which makes its national choice. In this case nationality rather means 'citizenship'. The purpose of this chapter is to consider different approaches to understand the process of nation-building in Belarus.

The process of nation-building in Belarus revealed the existence of two points of view with regard to Belarussian identity. One of them represented the official position of the state, as expressed in the concept of state ideology. The other is the position of the political opposition, as well as intellectuals, representing the position that serves as an alternative to official policy. Thus, we can observe two opposing groups, representing different variants of nation-building in Belarus. The authorities understand and call the opposition as nationalistic, having in mind the negative 'Soviet' meaning of the term, understanding it as an excessive focus on purely national values and goals, disregard international cooperation (with other nations) and lack of the support for national minorities in Belarus. This point of view caused by the fact that the opposition supports the active development of the national language and culture of Belarus, emphasizing the lack of historical connection of Belarussian and Russian cultures, while the official authorities seeking to establish closer relations with Russia. From the viewpoint of the opposition, the policy of the authorities and their approach to the national identity of Belarussians is the successor of the Soviet approach to the phenomenon of ethnicity. In that perspective it is necessary to examine the Soviet approach because this will allow a deeper understanding of the official point of view in post-Soviet Belarus. Although the objective is not to discuss the Soviet theory of ethnos as such, it is argued that its consideration is necessary to analyze the existing social reality.

2.1 Soviet approach to ethnos and ethnic communities

One of the most important distinguishing features of the Soviet theory of ethnos is the perception of ethnicity as a cultural and social phenomenon, which is much less to deal with the political life of a particular people. This can be partly illustrated by the example mentioned in the article of Theodor Shanin[43]. In particular he says that for a Russian speaker, the term '*natsional'nost'* (nationality, meaning ethnicity) relates more to the historical roots of the person, his or her belonging to a particular race, ethnic background, but it certainly does not indicate membership in a

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[43] Shanin T., *Soviet theories of ethnicity: the case of a missing term*, available online at: http://www.newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=1398

particular state. An indicator of the latter is the notion of '*grazdanstvo*' (citizenship), indicating the citizen of which state is the particular person. Thus, in Russian ethnicity and belonging to a particular state are separated and the characteristics are different levels of understanding.

Thus, a nationality, in accordance with Soviet theory of ethnos, confined to the framework of cultural and social sphere, ethnography, and history. Its counterpart in the political sphere is citizenship. This view is typical for theories of primordialism that prevailed in the Soviet approach to ethnicity. In general, the Soviet approach, the concept of 'ethnos' as an element of the theory was first considered in the works of Shirokogorov[44]. The Director of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR Ulian Bromley developed the most well known version of ethnos theory in the Soviet Union. Bromley interpreted the concept of 'ethnicity' in both narrow and in broad sense. In the narrow sense ethnic group was defined by him as a "historically rooted on a certain territory, sustained inter-generational group of people who have not only common features but relatively stable characteristics of common culture (including language) and psychology as well as the consciousness of their unity and difference from all other similar entities, which is fixed in self-name (ethnonym)"[45]. At the same ethnic identity was understood as "a secondary phenomenon, derived from the objective factors". Bromley suggested that the equivalent of a narrow meaning of the term 'ethnicity' in the Russian language would be the word '*natsional'nost*' (ethnicity). In the broad sense Bromley understood 'ethnoses' as ethno-social organisms, which are separated from each other, often large in size and are located within the same state formation. In his theory ethnic groups in their historical development go through a number of stages, such as: tribe – '*narodnost*' (pre-nation, folk) - bourgeois nation - socialist nation, each of which corresponds to a particular socioeconomic formation[46].

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[44] Shirokogorov S. M., *Etnos. Issledovanije osnovnyh printsipov izmenenija etnicheskih i etnograficheskih soobschestv*, Moscow, 2011

[45] Bromley, U.V., *Ethnosotsialnye protsessy: teorija, istorija, sovremennost,* Moscow, 1987, p. 14.

[46] Bromley, U. V., *Ocherki teorii etnosa,* Moscow, 1983

A slightly different concept of ethnicity was developed by ethnographer Nikolai Cheboksarov and anthropologist Sergei Arutyunov. Ethnicity was treated by Cheboksarov and Arutyunov as the type of community, within which the spatial and temporal continuity is based on the intensive information links. For Arutyunov and Cheboksarov the basis for the typing of ethnic groups was the degree of density of synchronical and diachronical information links. Their research distinguished 'stages', which were passed by the ethnos while changing its socio-historical form. The first step, for the authors of this concept is the emergence of written language. After passing it, tribes or groups of closely related tribes become to be *'narodnost'* (pre-nation, folk). After a certain period of time *'narodnost'* is entering the era of mass communication, mass education and universal literacy, and thus, passing the second stage and becoming a nation[47].

Another version of ethnos theory, created by Soviet and Russian historian and ethnographer Lev Gumilev for long time was regarded as an alternative and even oppositional in the Soviet ethnography. Gumilev understood the ethnos as biological community of beings, belonging to the species of *Homo sapiens*, like the habitats of animals. The beginning of ethnogenesis by Gumilev is the so-called 'passionate impulse' (some cosmic radiation). Further development of the ethnic group is determined by the area of settlement and psychobiological characteristics of passionarity. Ethnicity as a 'closed system of discrete type', which 'gets energized from outside and after using this energy goes to equilibrium with the environment, or falls apart'. Passionate impulse often takes place along the boundaries of the regions and in areas of inter-ethnic contacts. Passionarity appeared as a result of shock is not acquired by all residents of the region, but only by the part of them, called as passionarians, the creators of the ethnos. Passionarity is contagious, and passionarians spread it among those who are sympathetic to them. According to Gumilev, this is possible due to the fact that every living organism has a specific energy field. For people ethnicity is serving as this energy field. One of the main

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[47] Arutunov, S. A., Cheboksarov N. N., *Peredacha informatsii kak mechanism suschestvovanija etnosotsialnyh i biologicheskih grupp chelovechestva* in *Rasy i narody*, vol. 2, Moscow, 1972, No 2, p. 19

differences between ethnic groups from each other is the oscillation frequency of their ethnic fields. According to Gumilev, along with ethnos there are other ethnic communities emerging and developing. He calls them as super-ethnos and subethnos. Superethnos - is 'a group of ethnoses that emerged simultaneously in the same region, and manifest itself as mosaic integrity'. Subethnos is a smaller unit, which 'exist only because it belongs to ethnic unity'. Gumilev introduced the concept of ethnos development as a kind of biosocial organism that consistently passes all phases from the birth (ethnogenesis) until the death or the 'last sleep' (homeostasis). The average duration of active 'life' of the ethnos is about a thousand years[48].

As we can see in all of these variants of the Soviet approach to the phenomenon of ethnos, ethnicity is understood as a natural feature of human societies. This suggests that the Soviet ethnographical school had the elements of primordialist direction in the theories of ethnicity. The official approach to nationalism in the modern Belarussian paradigm also uses the elements of primordialism, such as an emphasis on common historical destiny of Belarussians (as well as Belarussian, Russian and Ukrainian people that formed the Old Russian ethnic group). This acts as an explanation of the need for close alliance with the 'brotherly nations' and, thus, the rationalization for state foreign policy in this direction.

The Soviet approach initially considered ethnicity as a given characteristic of human societies, just as it was seen in primordialism. However, it should be noted that, unlike primordialism, the Soviet approach emphasized that nationalism (in the sense of political movement) as an integral feature of the bourgeois communities with advanced level of capitalist relations. But since the Soviet ideology advocated to overcome the capitalist remnants and achieve a new stage of development (socialism, and later communism), the nationalism in this sense was not welcomed. This understanding was one of the reasons for the ethnicity and ethnic history was perceived as a cultural and social phenomenon that has no relationship to politics.

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[48] Gumilev L. N., *Etnogenez i biosfera zemli*, Moscow, 2006

Modern approach to ethnicity and nationalism in Belarus, as already noted, is the successor of the Soviet theory of ethnicity. One of its most important features is a clear distinction between national and political spheres. Despite the fact that the existing regime proclaims its national character, nationalism as a political movement is perceived as negative phenomena and is attributed to the political opposition. In fact, the official government makes a distinction between the 'ethnicity' of loyal citizens and the 'nationalism' of the opposition. In this case nationalism of the opposition means the excessive adherence to national ideals, bordering on fascism. 'Ethnicity' of the citizens loyal to the authorities, involves so-called 'museum' approach to this phenomenon when, the ethnicity is understood as a set of socio-cultural characteristics of the community that are learned from the history, but are not applicable in today's world.

2.2. Civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism

Nationalism as a movement and as part of the political process may have a different substantiation and can focus on different aspects of the development of the nation. Depending on the nature and tasks set up there are several types of nationalisms formed. The most widely used classification is created by Hans Kohn, who introduced the concept of political (civic) and ethnic nationalism[49].

Civic nationalism is a doctrine in which the most important place in the national identity is given to citizenship, the community of citizens (residents of the state) who appear as the carriers of national identity. Legitimacy of the state is determined by the active participation of its citizens in political decision-making, that is, the degree to which the state represents 'the will of the nation'. The main tool for the determination of the 'will of the nation' is the plebiscite, which may take the form of elections, referendum, poll, open public debate, etc. The term of plebiscite in

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[49] Kohn H., *The idea of nationalism : a study in its origins and background*, New Brunswick, N.J. : Transaction Publishers, 2005

a metaphorical sense was also used by Renan, who said that nation is "daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life"[50].

Civic nationalism is better expressed in the development of young nations that have developed in the existing state with a fairly homogeneous population in terms of culture. This was the case in pre-revolutionary France, where early nationalism has actively supported ideas of individual freedom, humanity, human rights and equality. For it was characterized by a rational belief in the liberal progress of the mankind. However, it played an important role at a later time too. Thus, in the middle of the 20th century national liberation struggles of the Third World countries against colonialism often relied on civic nationalism as a way to integrate the society, contrasting it with the characteristic of imperialism principle of 'divide and rule'. The spokesmen of these ideas were Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Nelson Mandela, Robert Mugabe[51].

Civic nationalism suggests that the citizens of the nation-state united by a common culture, which is transmitted through the institutions of modern education, and media. The fact that they share a common culture makes them a nation, whereas factors of ethnic origin and ethnic culture are not of such importance. Thus, it may be noted that civic nationalism is largely associated with liberal democracy, because it can ensure the equal rights of citizens of the nation state. It is also important that civic nationalism is associated with the presence of the national state, which is a form of administration for the nation as a community. Calhoun also notes that the discourse of civic nationalism is based on a modernist approach to the nation, emphasizing that the phenomenon of nationalism got its start in the era of bourgeois revolutions and the development of capitalist relations. Thus, a nation (nation state) has become a new form of domination[52].

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[50] Renan, E., *What is a nation?* Available online at:
http://www.cooper.edu/humanities/classes/coreclasses/hss3/e_renan.html

[51] The President of Zimbabwe since 1987.

[52] Calhoun C., *Nationalism and ethnicity* in Annu. Rev. Sociol. 1993. Vol. 19, available online at:
www.columbia.edu/itc/sipa/U6800/readings-sm/calhoun.pdf

Commonly accepted example for illustration of the differences between ethnic and civic nationalism is an example of Germany and France. Commenting on the French model Geoffrey Best notes, that "…the French narrative traces the nation to a modem act of founding by its members, people who were not constituted properly as French (rather than Provencal or Beamaise, Protestant or Catholic) until that radically novel founding. It emphasizes the nation-making political form of the republic and the idea of citizenship"[53]. France, therefore, serves as an example of civic nationalism. It is also accomplished country's modern policy towards emigrants, who are obtaining citizenship and civic rights much more easy, than it happens, for example, in Germany. Analyzing the latter, Calhoun outlines, that "in Germany, nationalist history-writing pushes further back in pursuit of a 'naturalizing' account of German ethnicity; Germany must be rooted in an 'always already existing' ethnic identity. German nationalists from Herder and Fichte forward have emphasized ethnic rather than 'political' or 'civic' criteria for inclusion in the nation"[54]. German model is the classic example of ethnic nationalism, which is focused on the 'organic unity' of the people forming a nation, who may have cultural or genetic nature. From this perspective, members of the nation share a common heritage, language, religion, traditions, history, blood relationship based on common origin, the emotional attachment to the land, so that together they form a single nation or super-family, kinship community[55]. For cultural traditions and ethnicity to become the basis of nationalism, they must contain the generally accepted ideas (historical memory), which can stand as a reference point for the society[56]. Since the oral tradition and personal experience are often insufficient for this, the communication sources (language, print, etc.) play a crucial role. In contrast to the civic nationalism, ethnic type focuses on intuition rather than on reason, on historical

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[53] Best, G., *The Permanent Revolution: The French Revolution and Its Legacy*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1988, p. 35

[54] Calhoun C., *Nationalism and ethnicity*

[55] Smith Antony D., *Nationalism and modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism*, London ; New York : Routledge, 1998

[56] Calhoun C., *Nationalism and ethnicity*

tradition, rather than on a rational progress, the historical differences between nations, rather than their common aspirations.

Ethnic nationalism defines the nation by the common language, traditions and culture (including religion). Legitimacy of the state comes from its ability to protect the nation and promote the development of its cultural and social life. Typically, this means the state support of culture and language of the ethnic majority, as well as promoting the assimilation of ethnic minorities to maintain cultural homogeneity of the nation. Ethnic nationalism believes that a nation is based on the common origin whether real or alleged. Membership of the nation depends on objective genetic and racial factors, the 'blood'. Proponents of this form argue that national identity and a nation's right of the supreme power in the country have ancient ethnic roots, and therefore are natural.

Therefore the difference between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism is said to lie in the beginnings of the imagining of the community, relative to the actual development of a political unit. Despite the fact that this division is a classical dichotomy in the studies of nationalism, some researchers oppose rigid contrast of the two versions of nationalism. Smith[57], as well as Kohn[58], believes that in any mature nation it is possible to notice the elements of ethnic as well as the elements of civic nationalism, and it does not refer to a geographical or cultural belonging of the nation.

In the case of Belarus it is difficult to speak about the predominance of one particular kind of nationalism. The official point of view stressing that in Belarus the main source of power is the people, refers to the civil community of Belarussian citizens, regardless of nationality. On this point, national ideology also attaches great importance to the origins of Belarussian people, their mentality, national character, common values in the historical development of the people. The authorities adhere to a particular version of the history of Belarus, in which ethnogenesis Belarussians as a nation occupies an important place. Thus, ethnicity is an inherent, initial feature of

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[57] Smith Antony D., *Nationalism and modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism*

[58] Kohn H., *The idea of nationalism : a study in its origins and background*

Belarussian community, which indicates the presence of elements of ethnic nationalism in the official version. However, the official policy of the government points to the dominant role of state structures in the implementation of political action. Despite the fact that political decisions are made on behalf of the people, civil society is not an active participant in social processes. The official point of view also uses the ethnic component of national identity for propaganda purposes as a 'unifying' feature. However, the ethnicity in the understanding of the authorities rather refers to the Soviet understanding. In the post-Soviet Belarus, as well as in the Soviet Union and ethnicity is reduced to the cultural and social tradition, the symbolic representation of the national life of the people. Ethnicity is the original reason for the support of the authorities, as citizens of modern Belarus have common history, and the existing government is a logical result of the historical development. It should also be noted that such an understanding of Belarussian community in official doctrine can be correlated with an understanding of the people in the doctrine that was used in the Soviet Union. All the residents of the Soviet Union were understood as one people, regardless of their ethnicity, because they were perceived as the part of a "new historical community - the Soviet people"[59]. Also Belarussian people in the view of the official doctrine are a mixture of all residents of Belarus. It should also be noted that an alternative side, with few exceptions, supports this perception of Belarussian people on the principles of civic nationalism.

Alternative point of view also emphasizes the importance of civic nationalism in Belarus. In particular, according to the theory of V. Furs, the main alternative to the existing political regime appears to be the development of civic consciousness among the population of Belarus[60]. This view reflects the notion of the need for familiarizing with ('recall of') 'European values', which emphasize the need of the development of civil society and as a consequence the development of democracy. The 'familiarizing' with European values means the development of the French model of civic nationalism in Belarus (by the development of civil society capable of

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[59] Available online at: http://tapemark.narod.ru/kommunizm/188.html

[60] Furs, V., *K voprosu o belaruskoi identichnosti*, available online at: http://n-europe.eu/article/2008/12/05/k_voprosu_o_«belarusskoi_identichnosti»_1

'daily plebiscite'). Here it is possible to recall the idea of establishing of the National University, proposed by Vladimir Matskevich. He believes that for the development of civil society in Belarus there should be a national educational institution, which would, on one hand, provide the latest knowledge, on the other hand, allows obtaining a truly national education for the means of the future creation of truly national elite[61].

At the same time alternate sources emphasize the need for the development of Belarussian language, further research of Belarussian history, the revival of Belarussian culture. The emphasis on the Belarussian language is especially noticeable: most of the materials of the alternative sources, regardless of the subject, are written in Belarussian. In this case alternative party do not address to the ethnicity as a basic characteristic of the Belarussian people, but rather as a historic capital, inheritance, giving peculiarity of the Belarussian national identity.

Thus, the concepts of ethnic and civic nationalisms are difficult to distinguish in Belarussian situation. In many ways it happens because of the complexity of the political situation. The official and the alternative party use the elements of ethnicity in their programs. However, it is difficult to say that ethnic nationalism as an independent phenomenon is present in Belarus. Usage of the ethnicity in political struggle is also difficult because of a long existence of the Soviet tradition, in which the ethnic component was underestimated and not used for political purposes. Official government tries to present the Belarussian nationalism as the people's choice, i.e. as a sort of 'daily plebiscite'. Alternative party denies the existence of such a system in Belarus, and emphasizes that the majority of the population of Belarus is indifferent to national values, as well as it is indifferent to the existing regime.

Thus, both positions are a mixture of ethnic and civic nationalism. It is possible to speak about the fact that such a mixture is the continuation of the Soviet attitude to the ethnic group, in which nationalism and ethnicity were closely related and intertwined. In relation to such a mixture is possible to use the term

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[61] Matskevich V., *Ideja universiteta: smysl, naznachenije I zamysel sozdanija universiteta v Belarusi*, available online at: http://methodology.by/?p=2219

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'ethnonationalism', as proposed in the works of Walter Connor[62] and Donald L. Horowitz[63]. Connor, in particular, understands ethnonationalism, as opposed to nationalism, as a manifestation of ethnic interest of national groups in the fight for their interests. Connor stresses that ethnonationalism should not be confused with the loyalty to the state. Rather, in his opinion, this is a movement based on ethnic characteristics, but associated with politics in one way or another. Describing the manifestations of ethnonationalism, Connor noted that they can be seen in the post-Soviet territories. They are the result of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the Soviet attitude to ethnicity. The Soviet theory of ethnicity, as noted above, did not deny the ethnic factor, but it also gave importance to the civic one, so the mixture of two manifestations of nationalism became inseparable from each other. The result of this combination of ethnic and civic nationalism can be observed in the present-day Belarus, where the opposing nation-building projects do not distinguish ethnic and civic nationalism in their approaches, but just focus on different areas.

2.3 Modernity and nationalism

In this part of the chapter a modernist approach to nationalism will be analyzed. In contrast to the Soviet school, which believed ethnicity as initial, inalienable feature of societies which existed from the earliest periods of human society, modernism believes nationalism is a modern phenomenon, associated with industrialization, the development of technology and communications, or a part of political strategy at a local and global scale. Proponents of the modernist approach consider ethnic feelings based on differentiation of cultures and the doctrines created in this context as an intellectual construct of scientists, politicians, writers. The system of education and media transmit ethnic ideas to broad masses. The main theorists of modernist approach believe nationalism to be constructed in the modernity and be consistent with the aims and objectives of the modern world, connected to the change of collectivities from traditional society to industrial society.

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[62] Connor, W., *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University press, 1993

[63] Horowitz, D., *Ethnic groups in conflict,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985

The last is accompanied with the process of standardization of education, mass literacy, development of mass media, and political and economical centralization. Nationalism is more of imagined and constructed than it actually is. Thus, modernism sees the nationalism as a construct, created by the intellectual influence of individuals (cultural and ruling elites). Gellner pointed, that "both the principle of making national and political units should be congruent and the nationalist movements trying to secure this state of affairs are relatively modern phenomena"[64]. So, "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist"[65].

Modernist approach to nationalism is in many respects focuses on the nation state as the main spokesman of the will of national communities, the defender of their interests, as well as the structure, which, according to some researchers is the creator of the nationalist world view and the nations themselves. As noted by Calhoun, the question of the modernist approach to nationalism inevitably concerns the problem of what comes first - nationalism or the nation. Modernist approach is of the opinion that nationalism creates nation[66].

Ernest Gellner defines nationalism as a political principle, which requires political and national units matched, the controlling and the controlled subjects belonged to one ethnic group. Understanding of the theory of nationalism according to Gellner is impossible without the definitions of 'nation' and 'state'. He believes that the nation is a product of human beliefs, preferences and inclinations, the two men belong to one nation only if they recognize each other's affiliation to this nation. Precisely the mutual recognition of union turns them into being the members of the same nation. A man without a nation challenges the conventional norms and therefore is unwanted. National affiliation is not an inherent human characteristic, but now it is perceived as such. Speaking about relations between the state and the nation Gellner says that "the state is an institution or set of institutions main task of

[64] Gellner E., *Nations and nationalism*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2006, p. 52

[65] Gellner E*., Nations and nationalism,* p. 7

[66] Calhoun C., *Nationalism and ethnicity*

which (regardless of all other tasks) is the protection of the order. The state exists where the specialized bodies of law and order appeared, such as police and courts. They are the state"[67]. According to the theory of Gellner the nation and the state are meant for each other, one without the other is incomplete; their inconsistency appears to be a tragedy. At the same time Gellner wrote that original ethnic material virtually does not limit the creative freedom of nationalists in their designing of the nation. This could mean that the original ethnic characteristics do not exclude the possibility of different interpretations and build their basis of different national projects[68]. However, a number of other factors in addition to the characteristics of the original ethnic material ultimately determine more or less complete success or failure of a project. This applies to the Belarussian situation where on the basis of one (but differently interpreted) ethnic material two rival project of Belarussian identity are constructed. Thus, one nationality can be provided in two variants, which indicates that the perception of national identity is not homogeneous even within a single nation, and probably relates to the field of political struggle.

Development of the theory of nationalism by Benedict Anderson is connected with his view that neither Marxist nor liberal theory could give an adequate explanation for this phenomenon. Anderson defines the nation as an "imagined political community and it is imagined as something necessarily limited, but at the same time it is sovereign"[69]. Imagined community is different from the actual community because it can not be based on the daily face-to-face interactions of participants. Instead, its members hold in their minds a mental image of their resemblance. Anderson said, that the nation is imagined, "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellows meet with them or even hear about them, while in the mind of each lives the image of what they have in common"[70]. These communities are imagined as something limited and at the same

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[67] Gellner E*., Nations and nationalism,* p. 4

[68] Gellner E., *Nations and nationalism,* p. 96

[69] Anderson B., *Imagined Communities*, London, New York: Verso, 2006, p. 7

[70] Anderson B., *Imagined Communities,* p. 7

sovereign. Nation is limited because it always implies the existence of other nations. The nation is not the whole of humanity and the specificity of its phenomenon is precisely situated in the opposition to the other nations. Nation is sovereign because it is always striving for autonomy. Pledge of autonomy is a sovereign state. In addition, the nation is the community because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that can exist in every nation, the nation is always understood as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, this brotherhood for the past two centuries gives many millions of people the opportunity not so much to kill, but willingly die for such limited products of imagination"[71].

Anderson points out that between the period when the nation is 'imagined' by the elite, and the time, when this image, which can be called as an ideal Motherland, is approved by the majority of the corresponding community and get political clearance, can take significant time. It is very important that this process is not predetermined, that is, efforts to promote a particular version of national identity may culminate with success as well as a failure, and the actual implementation the nation-state may differ significantly from its original version. The different projects of nationality may be in conflict with each other, in particular, to claim the same territory[72]. This is what can be observed in modern Belarus.

Anderson, as well as Gellner pointed out that along with the fact that the nation has no real historical roots, which are so much emphasized; it is a product of industrial society, in particular, the development of informational technology (book printing). Culture, which appears with the appearance of printing, contributes to the integration of the national community, as printed books and periodicals present social reality in the light of the national worldview and in the national language. Calhoun notes, that "this is true not just of the contents of tradition, as folklore gives way simultaneously to 'scientific history' and national myth, but of the very medium. Not only literacy but space-transcending communications technologies from print through broadcast can play a crucial role both in linking dispersed populations and in

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[71] Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities,* p. 8

[72] Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities*

creating the possibility for producing a popular memory beyond the scope of immediate personal experience and oral traditions"[73]. Thus, according to Anderson, 'imagining' of the nation is also accompanied by 'imagining' of national history and national myth. This process in relation to the history of Belarus will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

According to Anderson, the nation-state is a natural result of the development of national community which is a product of modernization and industrialization in the world. In the situation of rapid and uncontrolled modernization increases the activity of the nationalist elites. This leads to a structural crisis (institutions are not able to function properly) and the uncertainty of life plans and careers of the members of the society. In the situation of structural crisis "people are inclined to define their community by using additional criteria" that stimulates the activity of cultural elites. Thus the formation of the national-minded people occurs. In this case, the important problem concerns the limits of the impact of elites on the ethnic group in the sense of possible strength of their effects and the possibility of non-performance of their activities[74]. In today's Belarus, we can observe two national elites, representing two projects of Belarussian identity confronting each other. Opposition elite that emerged during the Soviet Union, was dissatisfied with the status quo and sought to attain their goals. These goals were not achieved during the period of the independence of the Republic of Belarus, which explains the existence of a national opposition at the moment, according to the theory of Benedict Anderson.

Anderson also spoke about the specific form of 'linguistic nationalism' widespread at the European nations[75]. His main thesis is the proposition that every nation has its own real specific language and literary culture, which is expressed through the historic spirit of the people. In Belarus, this argument is not relevant because of the current situation of 'asymmetric bilingualism'. It consists in the fact

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[73] Calhoun C., *Nationalism and ethnicity*

[74] Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities,* p. 15-20

[75] Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities,* p. 27

that Russian and Belarussian languages are declared state languages, while the actual use of Belarussian by population is extremely low[76]. The possible reasons of this 'asymmetry' are discussed in the Chapter Three of this thesis.

Another theorist of nationalism, Eric Hobsbawm, said that both subjective and objective definitions of the nation are imperfect. The most reasonable guideline for the researcher in this field is agnosticism and therefore Hobsbawm does not assume any *a priori* definition of the nation. His hypothesis is this: every sufficiently large human community whose members see themselves as a 'nation' may be regarded as a nation[77]. He also believes that nationalism is a political program and, in terms of history, a relatively new phenomenon. In line with this concept, the group which sees itself as a 'nation' has the right to establish the territorial states of the type that emerged after the French Revolution. Ethnicity, in his view, only allows us to give a clear expression of group identity, to impress all members of the group ('us') a sense of cohesion, emphasizing their difference from the 'others'[78].

Hobsbawm elaborates on the issue of formation of national identity of the ethnic community and emphasizes the role of the 'other' as opposed to itself. He examines in detail the role played by religion (in the case of forming the nation of the Poles and the Irish), language (Hungarian) or race (Indians and Africans). But all these variables - language, religion or skin color, distinctions from any 'other' or even a whole set of these differences - do not give the answer to the process of forming a modern nation. According to Hobsbawm, nationalism can be regarded as a necessary tradition; it is a representation of the unity of the nation, people and the state, while nationalism itself is a historical form of the global process of modernizing traditional societies. The masses, as well as elite, which appear in modernity as nation-states, but also in parallel with this, act as different classes and social groups with their mind and interests, which does not fit into the national

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[76] Available online at: http://nn.by/?c=ar&i=43063

[77] Hobsbawm E., *Nations and nationalism after 1780: program, myth, reality*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 8

[78] Hobsbawm E., *Nations and nationalism after 1780: program, myth, reality, p. 75*

framework. Hobsbawm stresses the primacy of nationalism to nation itself, citing J. Pilsudski: "It is the state which makes the nation, but not the nation – the state"[79]. However, Hobsbawm acknowledges that since the World War II, the question of its own state for every nation becomes more complicated because of the problems of political nature, and migration. Hobsbawm concludes that in the modern post-war era the principle of nationality increasingly begins to fade into the background. In addition to the growing number of inter-and supra-national governmental and, more importantly, public associations, he points to the increasing difficulty of the concept of the nation itself. In the introduction to his book "Nations and Nationalism since 1780", Hobsbawm quotes E. Renan: "Incorrect view of the own history is one of the factors in the formation of the nation"[80]. Thus, Hobsbawm, following the idea of Renan, notes the importance of reconstructing the nation's history as an attempt to recreate the nation and its roots, in such a way postulating the current situation of the peoples as a natural result of the past, which has the right to exist. Chapter Four of this thesis deals with the history of Belarus examined from the official and alternative points of view. This will help to elaborate on what is the role of historiography in the process of nation building, and how official and alternative perspectives consider projects of Belarussian identity. Despite the fact that in terms of modernism historiography is only a tool of nationalists seeking to create a justification for their theories, the consideration of the two versions of the history of Belarus in this thesis will help to investigate the positions of the warring parties in detail.

The view of Hobsbawm, considering the importance of the factor of the 'other' in the formation of national identity is also reflected in the confrontation between two points of view on Belarus. This is particularly noticeable in the issue of foreign policy. The official view of the Belarussian national identity corresponds to the notion of identity, which prevailed in the period before the World War II in the USSR. The state, in this view, should take care of the development of the nation and

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[79] Available online at: http://www.librero.ru/article/gerv/natii/arpu/cozdatm_rocciickuu_naciu.htm

[80] Hobsbawm, E., *Nations and nationalism after 1780: program, myth, reality, pp. 392-393*

determine its essence, thus protecting it from external influences and threats (such as ethnic and political). Foreign policy in the BSSR was determined by the foreign policy of the USSR and was aimed at the international isolation, which was caused, according to the propaganda, by the political and economic pressure of Western countries and the United States. Propaganda in today's Belarus, also uses the terminology of political and economic pressure to justify its isolationist policy. However, in contrast to the propaganda in the USSR contemporary ideology of Belarussian state does not use the difference of economic systems (capitalism vs. socialism), but the purpose of protecting the 'equitable economic system of Belarus' from 'alien' capitalist one. In the period after the World War II the views on foreign policy of the republics of the USSR changed. Belarussian SSR became the member of the UN along with the USSR, which indicates the possibility of a freer pursuing of the foreign policy for Belarus[81].

An alternative view on the current situation in Belarus indicates the need for broad international cooperation, which is opposed to 'isolationist' policy of the official authorities. Here the need for the 'openness' of the state for external influences is taken into consideration with the condition, however, of the provided preservation and development of the national identity. An important place given to the development of bilateral relations of Belarussian national state with European countries, with is taken as the inclusion (or the 'return') to European values. National identity is taken as undeniable factor, however, is only a background for the further development of Belarussian state.

Miroslav Hroch in his study of national processes argues that the nation formation process consists of three stages. The first stage, called Stage 'A' represents a period of scientific interest, when linguists, anthropologists and historians explore folk traditions and form the basis of their 'cultural package', suitable for wider distribution. Stage 'B' is the period when politicians take from 'cultural package' what they consider useful, and use it for the patriotic agitation among the people. This is followed by Stage 'C' - the rise of mass national movement. In each case

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[81] Membership of the Belarussian SSR in the UN should be seen more as symbolic act of the recognition of merits of the country, which, however, gave it the opportunity for self-presentation in the international arena.

Hroch distinguishes particular social group (it may differ in different nations), which plays a central role in mobilizing national sentiment. Hroch notes that the phenomenon of the nation, most likely a European occurrence, should not be extrapolated to other parts of the world. At that he said that the proposed stages of development are more likely to refer to the nations that are at the beginning of its development as parts of an empire, which is ruled by another national group (thus referable to the Belarussian situation)[82].

Proposed classification corresponds to the stages of development of Belarussian nation. A group, acting on the second stage can be considered the national intelligentsia of the early twentieth century. However, the national movement that emerged after a period of agitation could not succeed (at least to the extent to which it was assumed). The result was the formation of Belarussian SSR, which enjoyed the privileges of national autonomy within the Soviet Union. Thus, the Belarussian national community has not received national state existence. Nationalist movement, developed on the way to the independence of the Republic of Belarus in the second half of the 20th century also went through the stages listed by Hroch. It is possible to speak about the Stage 'A' in the late 1970s and 1980s in which active investigation of Belarussian history and culture took place. The social movement of Belarussian People's Front, which later turned into a political party, was formed in the late 1980s. It is actively used the view at the history and culture of Belarus, which was developed in the previous period (Stage 'B'). According to the observations of most researchers independent Republic of Belarus, which emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, did not arise as a result of a nationalist movement. This can be confirmed by the all-Union referendum on March 17, 1991, when most residents (82, 7% of the population) of Belarus voted to retain the Soviet Union[83]. Thus, even if the development of the national community occurs in accordance with the periodization proposed by Hroch, this development can take other directions in the future.

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[82] Hroch M., *Comparative studies in modern European history : nation, nationalism, social change*, Aldershot ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate Variorum, 2007

[83] Shybeka, Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 395

Hroch agrees with Gellner in the understanding that the nation-state is a structure that is designed to protect the interests of the nation, promote its culture. However, Hroch said that the formation of national states is not associated with the development of capitalist tendencies in the world. He rejected the thesis of Gellner that nationalism is a product of industrial (capitalist) society, and believed that despite the fact that these two phenomena are not related, they overlap in their consequences. At the same time Hroch notices that the nation and the nationalist movement should not be confused. The latter occurs in stages 'A' and 'B', when there is a certain social stratum, exploring the national culture, developing a national vision in order to popularize it among the masses. It should be borne in mind that intellectuals and scholars of early stages of development of nationalism can 'invent' a nation only when there are real preconditions, i.e. the real ethnic culture provided. By this Hroch emphasizes the importance of the objective factors in the formation of the national community and that it is not completely 'imagined'[84].

With regard to the current situation in Belarus, the alternative national identity and its creators are more likely belong to the stage 'B', which, as stressed by Hroch, is only a nationalist movement, rather than a nation. The nation per se appears only at the stage 'C', when the idea of nationalism has already gripped the masses, which should lead to the formation of the national state. At the same time we have a nation-state, which was formed not as a result of the national movement, and therefore is not a natural result of stage 'C'.

2.4 Ethnosymbolism

Ethnosymbolist approach to the study of nationalism pays more attention to ethnicity than the modernist perspective. It also examines the phenomenon of ethnicity from a different point of view. For this reason it is important to consider it in this chapter.

The theory of ethnosymbolism is presented in the works of researchers such as Anthony Smith, John Hutchinson, Adrian Hastings and (with some reservations)

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[84] Hroch M., *Comparative studies in modern European history : nation, nationalism, social change,* p. 47

John Armstrong. According to supporters of ethnosymbolism, modernist theories overestimate the political element of nationalism, not paying attention to the culture, which does not allow making an adequate analysis of the strength of nationalist movement and the scale of the problems of national identity and emotional attachment to the national community. They also note that the modernists underestimate the problem of culture, traditions, and 'sacred sites' of nations, and too little attention is paid to issues of continuity with the past and the extent to which it is possible to design and invent traditions and symbols of the nation. Symbolic elements of the nation, its myths, values, traditions, emotionally laden area are seen by the ethnosymbolism as a constructed phenomena, which, however, is difficult to transform after creation. They are part of complexes of myths and symbols, coming from the ancient times, the ethnic core of modern nations, and reservoirs are symbolic of nations. Nationalists use them as a material to create their concepts. The leaders of national movements and the intelligentsia, seeking its national identity, selectively use elements of this reservoir, re-interpret and reconstruct them. Therefore, Smith prefers to talk not about the processes of construction of the traditions, and other symbolic attributes of nations, but about the processes of reconstructing, selection and reinterpretation of them. Particular attention is paid to issues related to the collective memory of communities because social facts owe their power of collective representations, which include the commemoration of national or ethnic past, the myths and historical areas. Therefore, in order to have such constructions, the national elites provoke an emotional response from the population and its mobilization within the nationalist project, the design must at least roughly correspond to concepts already existing in the collective memory of this population. In this case, the influence of elites on the masses is not unlimited. Smith notes that "nationalist intellectuals are important only to the extent that they articulate and help to draw the basic mood, perception, and the installation of the people that they derive from both the pre-existing symbols, memories, myths, values and traditions, as well as the needs of current moment"[85].

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[85] Smith Antony D., *Nationalism and modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism,* p. 125

The theory of ethnosymbolism explains well the situation in Belarus. There are two national elites, offering different projects of nation building, based on the historical material. At the same time nation-building projects in both cases are presented with the prospect of further development of Belarussian state, given the geopolitical situation and the international benchmarks of Belarus. Projects of national construction also take into account national historical symbols of the country, having an emotional load for the population and allowing mobilize it for the support of one of the projects.

2.5. Nationalism in East Europe after the collapse of the USSR

The causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the development of nationalism in the post-Soviet territory causes much debate. Kaiser writes about tendency of indigenization, which has been underestimated by Sovietologists. He notices that in the republics of the Soviet Union the process of the development of national elites was started, which subsequently led to the development of national movements and the disintegration of the multinational state. At the same time the Kaiser does not consider this factor to be the main reason of the collapse of the Soviet system but believes that changes in national policies of the Soviet Union led to the disintegration of relationships within the country and strengthening of national elites in each of the republics[86].

Rogers Brubaker also writes about the role of national elite development in the republics of the Soviet Union. These elites have played an important role in the events of the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, he notes that the national elites have evolved along with the 'Soviet' elites which ensure the functioning of such multinational state as the Soviet Union[87]. Speaking about the case of Belarus, we can notice that a 'dual' perception of Belarussian identity originates precisely from the

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[86] Kaiser, R. J., *The geography of nationalism in Russia and the USSR*, Princeton University press, New Jersey, 1994, p. 325-340

[87] Brubaker, R., *Nationalism reframed. Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*, Cambridge University press, 1997, p. 23-55

presence of two elites in the Belarussian Soviet republic, and later in the independent Republic of Belarus. However, the national elite was not as strong as the 'Soviet' one and did not have so many adherents among the population, so that we can observe the rule of the 'Soviet' system both in politics and in social and economic life in post-Soviet Belarus. This is also noticeable in the sphere of nation-building of the country. The statistics quoted by Kaiser, shows that the Belarussian SSR was one of the most 'russified' (influence of Russian language and culture was the most noticeable) Soviet republics. This is apparent in the data, showing wide usage of Russian language in schools and the statistics related to the recognition of the Russian language as mother tongue among the native population of Belarus. The trend is particularly explicit in the data of 1970s-1980s[88]. The natural result of the wide dissemination and recognition of the Russian language and Russian culture in Belarus, were the difficulties in the development of national consciousness.

Hobsbawm also supports the idea that the rise of nationalist movements in the last years of the Soviet Union and after its collapse was not caused by the development of national consciousness of the population of the national republics but happened due to the political factors and changes in national policies of the USSR. He writes, that "nationalism was the beneficiary of these developments but not, in any serious sense, an important factor in bringing them about"[89].

However, it should be noted that the development of national movements in Eastern Europe may have different interpretations. In accordance with one point of view, there is a connection between nationalism and democracy (as Hroch sees it)[90]. From his point of view, nationalism and democracy cause each other and consequently, the development of nationalism will make the nation to strive for the development of a democratic system (and struggle against the authoritarian Soviet regime). On the other hand, we can say that the struggle of nationalism and socialism

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[88] Kaiser, R. J., *The geography of nationalism in Russia and the USSR,* p. 256-269

[89] Hobsbawm, E., *Nations and nationalism after 1780: program, myth, reality*, p. 168

[90] Hroch, M., *From National movements to the fully-formed nation* in *New Left Review* I/198, March-April 1993, available online at: http://www.newleftreview.org/?view=1702

for determining the individual's role in the social system inevitably leads to social conflict, which we were able to observe in the collapse of the Soviet Union[91].

If we consider the first point of view in more detail, we can cite the opinion of Hroch, that "the leaders of nationalist movements aim for a very specific goal: to complete the social structure of the nation by creating a capitalist class corresponding to that of Western states"[92]. Thus, it is argued that interrelatedness of the concepts of nationalism and capitalism, when the capitalism is the basis for the development of nationalism. However, it should be noted that after the collapse of the Soviet Union the new states appeared in the world map, but some of them continued maintaining their old economical system, as, for example, it has happened in Belarus after 1994. Leslie Holmes commented on this fact as the proof that the national struggle has become a means of struggle against dictatorship and foreign domination, but not for the national values. He calls such processes as 'double rejection'. In this sense, the struggle for national independence was rather the struggle against communism[93].

There is also a point of view that nationalism was a means of filling the ideological vacuum that was caused by the collapse of the ideological system of socialism, a means of finding a new identity for the inhabitants of the newly formed states[94]. This view is also supported by Hroch, who writes that "The basic pre-condition of all national movements – yesterday and today – is the deep crisis of the old order, with the breakdown of its legitimacy, and of the values and sentiments sustained it"[95]. Hobsbawm notes that the connection between nationalism and democracy is somewhat different. According to him, it is not the nationalism that creates democracy but democratic structure of society that creates the conditions for

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[91] Bekus N., *Struggle over identity. The official and alternative Belarussianness*, CEU press, Budapest-New York, 2010p. 37-38

[92] Hroch, M., *Comparative studies in modern European history : nation, nationalism, social change,* p. 90

[93] Holmes L., *Post-Communism*, Cambridge policy press, 1997, p. 14-15

[94] Hall J., *After the vacuum: Post-communism in the light of Tocqueville*, in Markets, States and Democracy, ed. by B. Crawford, Boulder Westview press, 1995

[95] Hroch, M*., Comparative studies in modern European history : nation, nationalism, social change,* p. 96

the development of nationalism. Commenting on the situation in the USSR, he writes that "the major political changes which turned a potential receptivity to national appeals into actual reception were the democratization of politics in a growing number of states"[96].

It is also necessary to consider the point of view, which argues that nationalism and nationalist movements were not a major factor contributing to the collapse of the Soviet Union. National self-consciousness did not play an important role in this fight, it was only a means. Frederick Hertz noticed that "the demand of national self-determination is usually represented as one for liberty. Nevertheless national self-determination is by no means identical with political liberty. It does not necessarily imply a democratic regime, but merely freedom from foreign interference"[97]. Stressing this idea Schöpflin notes that in theory democratic freedoms are not related to national identity, but in practice there may be some differences[98]. Some other researchers also emphasize the direct connection between nationalism and democracy. For example, Greenfield states, that "Democracy was born with the sense of nationality. Nationalism was the form, in which democracy appeared in the world. Originally, nationalism developed democracy"[99].

In the Belarussian situation, we can observe that the process of establishing an independent authority happened in a contradictory way. The struggle for the independence of Belarus was rather a struggle for economic and political stability and protection, which could be provided by a nation-state, because the old system was no longer able to do it. In this sense, we should recall the idea of the philosopher Valentin Akudovich, who called the Belarus as 'Soviet *Vendee*'[100], implying that the demonstrations held in Belarus in beginning of 1990s were not aiming to achieve a

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[96] Hobsbawm, E., *Nations and nationalism after 1780: program, myth, reality*, p. 110

[97] Hertz, F., *Nationality in history and politics. A study of the psychology and sociology of national sentiment and character,* New York Oxford University press, 1944, available online at: http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=28125297

[98] Schöpflin, G., *Nationalism and Ethnicity in Europe*, East & West in Nationalism & Nationalities in the new Europe, ed. by Ch. Kupchan, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1995, p.53

[99] Greenfield L., *Nationalism. Five roads to modernity*, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 10

[100] Akudovich V., *Kod adsutnasti*, p. 93

new national future, but rather to acquire a habitat past in the new form of a nation-state. An alternative view on the Belarussian identity, with an emphasis on 'Western' roots of Belarussian culture, thus seeks to highlight not only the cultural but also political connection of Belarus with countries of Western Europe. In particular, it emphasizes that the Belarussian political tradition was originally developing in the direction of democracy. For this reason, Soviet totalitarianism and the authoritarianism of modern Belarus are accepted as 'alien' for Belarussians.

To conclude, we can say that both versions of Belarussian identity use both elements of ethnic and civic nationalism. At the same time both official and alternative discourse use the elements of the Soviet approach to ethnicity. The alternative side is oriented to the need of the 'return' of Belarussian culture to the 'Western' values. Both projects use the historical past of Belarus as a tool for the legitimization of their project. History and its accompanying symbolic artifacts allow the two projects of Belarussian identity to justify their arguments and load them emotionally.

Another important fact is that the formation of the independent republic of Belarus was not the result of the struggle for national priorities, but rather the struggle for independence from the Soviet Union as a centralized state, which allowed the country to preserve its social and political system that existed in the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER III

OFFICIAL AND ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO BELARUSSIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

The aim of this chapter is to revise the approaches to Belarussian national identity, presented by official propaganda and alternative research sources. The official doctrine of the nation state in the Republic of Belarus is officially called as 'state ideology' and is presented in the speeches of the main officials, monographs, ideology textbooks. Alternative approaches can be divided into two groups. The first one is represented by political opposition to the current regime. The other can be seen in the research of group of independent intellectuals.

Bearing in mind that the term 'ideology' can be viewed from different perspectives and in terms of different approaches, and is one of the most widely discussed concepts in social and political sciences; it is necessary to clarify the sense in which it will be used in further text. The state ideology of Belarussian state is, "the whole set of philosophical, political, economic, legal, ethical, aesthetic and religious ideas, values and beliefs, which are caused by the interests and aspirations of particular groups and communities, and act in letter and in spirit as an expression of the interests and needs of all society and primarily cognitive function and mobilization"[101]. Thus, the state ideology is a system of views of the official authorities on the social, economic and political reality in Belarus. It also includes the idea of Belarussian national identity, which is the basic system of ideas of state ideology. In this chapter, the author does not aim to discuss the very concept of ideology, but only an investigation of what is the essence of state ideology in Belarus. However, for a more complete characterization of the phenomenon of state ideology in Belarus, we need to keep in mind that it is introduced by the dominant

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[101] Melnik, V. A., *Gosudarsvennaja ideologija respubliki Belarus*, Minsk, 2004, p. 8

institutions of the society aiming to extend and rationalize their domination over social actors. At the same time, alternative approaches to the Belarussian identity, provided by the political opposition, represent 'the identity of resistance', formed by actors who find themselves in the situation of underestimation and the stigmatization by the logic of domination. The third approach, which will be described in this chapter, is represented by the independent intellectuals that are in intellectual opposition to the existing regime. This project is proposed by the social actors on the basis of the cultural material available are about to build a new identity, which determines their position in society and aims to transform (self-transformation in our case) the whole social structure. Such a division of views on Belarussian identity, which presents Belarus in three dimensions, reflect the generally accepted notion of duality or trinity of Belarussian reality adopted in the literature about Belarus.

3.1. The official perspective

National ideology is stated to include the theoretical basis of the national idea of Belarus, the list of Belarussian national values of the society and the basic directions of the national development, including social, political and economic spheres, as well as the government's position in international relations. The concepts of ideology are presented in a series of articles in major state periodicals, books and university textbooks. Ideology is included to the program of university education, as an obligatory course regardless of specialty chosen. Departments of ideology are an integral part of every public company in the country. Also, the ideological position of the authorities of the country is expressed in public speeches of the officials, in the field of social advertising and in policies implemented by the state.

Ideology, in spite of the multiplicity of sources of representation, is a homogeneous doctrine. Its purpose is to explain the status quo and policies of the authorities, legitimating them. It uses the specific language of presentation, reminiscent of the way of presentation of the Soviet ideological dogmas.

An important point for discussion among the developers of the national ideology presents the status of ideology as a doctrine. The question is about whether ideology is a whole set of ideas or a developed full-fledged doctrine. The prevailing

view states that the basis of ideology must have a 'scientific component'; while a set of ideas proposed by the opposition is a 'romantic vision of reality'. It is stated that 'the ideology needs to have a worldview core'. According to the advocates of state ideology, this core is the "Belarussian citizenship, national public self-consciousness and patriotism. That's the foundation upon which world view is formed". In addition, of course, there is a strong influence of economics, government policy and other spheres of social life[102].

The analysis of events and phenomena of social life happens in the key of the Marxist interpretation of social reality. The supporters of the state ideology argue that the socio-political and economic systems built in the Soviet Union had many advantages over the system of Western Europe and the United States, preaching the values of the bourgeoisie. They see Western (imperialist) type of society as dangerous for the average member of that society, because it is focused on the exploitation of 'ordinary people'. Individualism in society stands out as one of the most important negative features of this system, because it manifests itself in human rights, which are treated as an individual right of every human. Individualistic approach is stated to have possibility to harm the development and prosperity of the society as a whole. Contemporary Belarussian model is contrasted with the above described model. In the opinion of the supporters of the state ideology, human rights are supposed to be understood as the rights of society as a whole, resulting in building a 'common home' for the citizens of the state. Belarussian way of development is a mixture of the positive features of the Soviet system and the new progressive trends that will help avoid the mistakes of the Soviet regime. Thus, the current Belarussian model argues that the Soviet model of development has been organically inherent in Belarussian mentality and should continue its existence within the post-Soviet Belarussian model.

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[102] *Osnovy ideologii belaruskogo gosudarstva* ed. By S. Reshetnikov and S. Knjazev, Minsk, 2004, p. 3

In the official release of the Information and Analytical Centre under the President of the Republic of Belarus[103] entitled "Belarussian path", the authors set out the basic positions of the national ideology of the country. As the main source of the state ideology the features of the system of Belarussian society are distinguished. Ideology as a doctrine in this way acts as a generalization of the concept of social development, the source of which lies in the social being. Thus, ideology is not recognized as something imposed from above, but reflecting the natural values of the people. University ideology textbook[104] states that "it appears that the state should be interested in the development of scientific concepts related to the phenomena of 'statehood', 'ideology', 'national idea', because they can not be imposed 'from above' by artificial means, and should 'gather the crumbs'.[105]

It can be noted that the ideology source is of almost no use of the scientific component of analysis of the reality, but rather adopts the traditional Soviet clichés, based on the 'proletarian' approach to the presentation of events and phenomena that are likely provide the necessary assessment.

The authors of "Belarussian path", which was established as the official manual on state ideology, containing the basic ideas of ideological doctrine, outlines, that "the very existence of the nation involves not only the borders of the state, national currency, and the army, but also spiritually uniting its parts - mainly the culture, the very possibility of which derives from the specifics of national consciousness and awareness of their interests". The edition tells that the Belarussian people throughout their history, followed the path of awareness of their belonging to the nation and the nation is not 'invented' or 'instrumental' concept. Characteristic features of Belarussian nation were not originally given, but developed under the influence of historical events that took place in the territory. The strong emphasis is

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[103] Leading public research organization in the field of information-analytical support of the President of the Republic of Belarus and the Presidential Administration on strategic political, economic, social and spiritual life of society.

[104] The state ideology was introduced as a compulsory course in all higher educational institutions of Belarus, regardless of the specialty of the students. The ideas used are derived from the textbook, used for this source.

[105] *Osnovy ideologii belaruskogo gosudarstva,* Reshetnikov S., Kniazev, S., p. 4

made on the fact that "the historical destiny of Belarus is closely connected with the brotherly Slavic nations – the Russians and the Ukrainians"[106].

"Belarussian path" gives a list of values, organically inherent in Belarussian mentality. For example, one of the most important of these is the adherence of the people to collective values, collectivism as a way of life and thought. It is the basis of ideological doctrine. There are also other such values as defined in the book.

First of them is *social justice*. It is reflected in the existing social orientation of the state, referring to equity or the lack of competition, equal rights for all, and the inability to extrapolate market principles to social life (they are unjust). Another important value is the *sovereignty of the people.* It involves a participation in government and society through people's communities as well as people's participation in political life. This principle is stated as fundamental to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. The values of *labor and solidarity* are also noted to be understood as a socio-political kinship of power and the people. The *friendship of the peoples* is no less important for Belarussians. Here the one should understand it primarily as a friendship of Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians; union of their efforts to achieve common goals. This is reflected in the foreign policy orientation of the state, creation of the CIS and the alliance with Russia. The following value flows logically from the previous one - it '*sojuznost'* (the willing to create unions with other nations)[107]. This value is directly related to the intention of the creation of the Union State with Russia, but also emphasizes the collective nature of Belarussian mentality, which is manifested not only domestically, but also, applies to the geopolitical interests. It should be noted that the official list of national values of Belarussians does not include such values as democracy and respect for individual rights, which is emphasized by the alternative approach. These values, according to the official authorities are rather inherent to Western societies, while Belarus belongs to the Slavic peoples, which are known for the collectivism.

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[106] *Belaruskii put'*, ed. by Proleskovsky O. and Krishtapovich L., Minsk, 2009, p. 60

[107] *Belaruskii put'*, p. 89

Natalia Leshcenko, the researcher from London School of EconomicsInstitute for State Ideologies, distinguishes some supporting pillars of the ideology in Belarus, such as 'uniqueness, unity and the sovereignty of Belarussians'. She understands uniqueness of Belarussians as 'pedigree Slavs' approach, what was underlined by the President Lukashenka: *"We followed our path, and as a result we have preserved in our country, in our hearts, in our souls and brains all the sacred features of the Eastern European civilization. The Belarussians have preserved all the best, all the most valuable, which our nations have created for centuries"*[108].

In this interpretation we can notice an explanation of the origin of the name of Belarus which emerged in the mid 1990s. This explanation suggests that the country is 'white' because of the independence from Mongol-Tatar tribes which controlled Russian lands from the 13th to the 15th century. Thus, if the population of the Russian lands was 'spoiled' by the influence of the Tatars, Belarus remained 'pure', untouched.

Natalia Leshcenko, listing the characteristics of the state ideology in Belarus and their manifestation in the life of the country, also mentions the economics of government regulation - the state holds 70% of the production funds in the country, it employs between 63.6% and 80% of the working population according to various estimations[109]. She believes this is a natural outcome of a state ideology that promotes collectivism as a core value of Belarussian society. She also argues that "the pursuit of individual interest is interpreted as alien to Belarussian people"[110]. In this case, the manifestation of entrepreneurial intentions can be interpreted as a manifestation of excessive interest of the person to his or her personal life which can be understood as the detriment of society itself, which confirms the orientation of collectivist ideology. This is illustrated by Gini coefficient[111] for Belarus, reflecting

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[108] Leshchenko N., *The National Ideology and the Basis of the Lukashenka Regime in Belarus* (2008), Europe-Asia Studies, Routledge, p. 1422

[109] Leshchenko N., *The National Ideology and the Basis of the Lukashenka Regime in Belarus, Ibid*

[110] Leshchenko N., *The National Ideology and the Basis of the Lukashenka Regime in Belarus, Ibid*

[111] The measure of statistical dispersion, which is used for measuring inequality level in society (for example, in income level).

the degree of social inequality, which remains one of the lowest in the world, at 27.2 in 2008[112]. These data indicates that the distribution of income among the population of Belarus is very equal and there is not much contrast between the rich and the poor. Thus, the government provides the fairness proclaimed. Economic system of Belarus in this respect resembles the system that was used in the Soviet Union and was founded on the primacy of public ownership and equal distribution of wealth. President Lukashenka noted that Western values (the values of capitalism) are alien to Belarussians, who are "the people of community, and do not accept the absolutization of private property"[113].

Collectivist thinking is said to be a major obstacle to the introduction of liberal reforms in Belarus in the early 1990s. Western strategies of liberal reforms "did not correspond to the collectivist mentality in the post-Soviet space, moral principles and traditions, constant search for the good and justice"[114].

Ideological doctrine also emphasizes the uniqueness of the path of Belarussian society, its focus on itself. It says that, Belarus is geographically located between the Russian Federation and the European Union, which are both in political, economical and cultural sense pretend to be two possible directions of the development of the country. Despite this, Belarus should follow its own path and have its unique values in politics, economy and culture. According to the official ideology, our future does not lay in the West or in the East, our future lays in ourselves. To illustrate this thesis, the authors of "Belarussian path" give an example by John Carlyle, who in one of his works mentioned the story of the writer and linguist S. Johnson. Johnson was very poor, and while a student at Oxford, used to wear the old worn-out shoes. His friends secretly bought him shoes and put them under his door. Johnson threw them out the window. Carlyle comments on this case, arguing that "we will stand on its own grounds, whatever it would cost us. We will

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[112] Available online at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bo.html

[113] Lukashenka, A., „Doklad na seminare rukovodjaschix rabotnikov po ideologicheskoi rabote", 2004

[114] Kazlovich A. V., *Unutrypalitychnaje zytse i miznarodnyja adnosiny* in *Belarus na miazy tysjachagoddzau*, ed. A. Vaitovich et al., Minsk, 2000, p. 276

walk in those shoes, which we would be able to get, we will walk in the cold and the mud, but openly, without shame, we will adhere to the reality and the essence that nature opens to us, not visible, not the fact that it opens to the others, not us"[115].

Thus, setting forth the position that the official ideology emphasizes the idea, that the way of Belarus is unique and the historic choice of Belarussian society make further development of Belarus clear. This choice should be the demarcation method of the country and its future from the neighboring countries. Hardly one can call it as a desire to isolate Belarussian society, rather, this thesis is to be understood as an aspiration for complete independence in the political, economic and cultural sense. The state intends to act as a kind of Moses, who leads its people to a better future, thus solving problems of the people and the entire responsibility for their future. President Lukashenka, with his usual charisma in one of his speeches said that "we will go in the dugout, but we will provide the sovereignty of the country and a normal life of the people we will provide"[116]. In this way he probably wanted to emphasize the importance of the independent development of the country for himself and for the people of Belarus.

Important role in the mission of leadership plays the first and the only President of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenka whose personality, which carries a strong charismatic color, has a strong influence on the processes in the country. It is based on the legal powers set forth in amendments to the Constitution, adopted in 1996, through which the presidential status of the republic is assigned.

The personality of the President in the development of the country is emotionally charged. He is almost universally referred to as '*Bat'ka*', which comes from the traditional naming of the father in village culture. The source of this nickname is uncertain and we can barely track, whether it was the result of political PR campaign or has emerged as an evaluation of its work by the public. Whatever it is, the perception of the President as the 'father' of the people makes the image of the

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[115] *Belaruskii put'*, p. 93

[116] Available online at: http://udf.by/news/politic/39240-lukashenko-snova-zovet-belorusov-v-zemlyanki.html

entire system similar to the family. The President carries (or tries to carry) the responsibility for what happens in the country, driving it as he sees it fit. People's role in this case is to be led and to maintain the current policy. Nelly Bekus, states that the approach to the nation as a family makes the situation more understandable in emotional way. It also helps in distinguishing 'the native-ours' from 'foreign-western' and makes the process of demarcation easier[117]. Here it is possible to notice the approach 'besieged fortress' - emphasis on the fact that neighboring countries are seeking to influence domestic politics in Belarus. However, this approach is mainly used in the speeches of the president. In textbooks and monographs, it is mentioned only in passing.

Researcher Korosteleva calls Belarussian regime as demagogic democracy in which 'national leader' dominates in the political sphere, but also to a large extent in the economic field with the persecution of the opposition, favoritism, support for pensioners, control over the media and populist propaganda[118]. Such a characterization, for all the controversy of the concept, in my opinion, is the most successful evaluation of the role of ideology in the life of the state.

As was mentioned earlier, the majority of Belarussian citizens identify themselves as ethnic Belarussians. According to the census in 2009 Belarussians are 83.7% of the population. The most numerous ethnic groups that do not belong to the titular nationality are Russians (8.3%), Poles (3.1%), and Ukrainians (1.7%). This is followed by Jews, Armenians, Tartars, Gypsies, Azerbaijanis, and Lithuanians (each group to 0.1% of the population)[119]. "Belarussian path", commenting on the problems of inter-ethnic cooperation in Belarus, said that Belarussians have always been tolerant towards other nationalities. This feature should be displayed nowadays within the framework of the peaceful coexistence of nations in independent Belarus. National ideology, as the source states, must be used throughout the territory of

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[117] Bekus N., *Struggle over identity: the official and alternative Belarussianness*, p. 216

[118] Korosteleva E., *Is Belarus a Demagogical Democracy?* in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. 2003, vol. 16 (3). P. 528

[119] Available online at http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/2009/itogi1.php

Belarus for the entire population. In this case, 'national' rather refers to the state than to ethnicity. This confirms the thesis that the understanding of the nation in the context of the Belarussian reality refers to the concept of civic nation. In this regard, the ideological attitude is opposed to 'ethnic' nationalism of the beginning of 1990s, whereas modern attitude refers to the nation as all residents of the state[120].

The question of ethnic coexistence in Belarus in the absence of actual ethnic conflicts embodies the political confrontation. It concerns the question of the Polish minority in the country. Polish diaspora, despite the fact that it is not the most numerous of the presented in Belarus, however, can be regarded as one of the most active. Its work represents the work of 'Polish houses' teaching the Polish language, providing trips to Poland with the cultural and educational purposes. Poland has also introduced the so-called 'Polish Card', which is a kind of ethnic identity of the citizen of another country stating his or her belonging to the Polish nation and valid in all countries of the former Soviet Union. Belarussian side accuses the Polish diaspora in intervention in internal affairs, espionage, and attempts to arrogate to itself the right to speak on behalf of all Belarussian citizens who identify themselves as Poles. In addition, the Polish side provides asylum to people affected by the pressure of the regime in Belarus, in particular, in the form of restoration in universities of Poland for students expelled from Belarussian institutions of higher education for political reasons. In this connection with the conflict relations between the Republic of Belarus and Poland went through a series of crises that accompanied by the closing of 12 'Polish houses' out of 17 by Belarussian side[121]. The Polish side insists on the oppression of its citizens as the oppression of the national minority and 'the largest opposition force'. The last argument is effective in the political field. Polish minority is active in opposition activities, and is constantly accused for this by the authorities. Belarussian authorities prevent the registration and reregistration of Polish organization in Belarus, which compels it to act without official permission from the government.

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[120] Levjash I., *Interesy i tsennosti Belarusi* in *Belaruskaja dumka*, №11, November 2009

[121] Available online at: http://www.inosmi.ru/belorussia/20100211/158116741.html

Russians, who constitute the largest diaspora in Belarus, also have official organizations representing their interests. However, the activities of these organizations are not as widely known as the activities of the Polish organizations. The most probable reason for this is that the Russians do not feel the need to protect their national interests due to the pro-Russian nature of Belarussian politics.

Referring to the confessional issue, it should be noted that according to Gallup polls, Belarus is among the 11 least religious countries in the world. Only 27% of the population noted that religion plays an important role in their lives[122]. Based on results of the survey held in 1997, 49.4% of the population chose the option 'Yes, I believe in God'.[123] According to the data from July 2010, provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Religions and Nationalities of the Republic of Belarus, 58.9% of the population consider themselves as believers. Of these, 82.5% belong to the Russian Orthodox Church (Belarussian Exarchate), 12% identify themselves as Roman Catholic, 4% of the population belongs to the Eastern religions (particularly Islam, as well as to Hinduism (Krishna's) and Baha'i), 2% Protestant denominations (Pentecostals, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Lutherans, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.), as well as the Old Believers. According to this data, the rate of regular attendance to services is about 18% for Orthodoxs and 50% for Catholics. There are also Greek Catholics; in addition there are groups of Orthodox Christians, whose communities are not part of the Belarussian Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. According to information from the Jewish communities to the Jews themselves include 30 to 50 thousand Belarussians, but the vast majority of Jews are not active believers[124].

It should be noted that in the national ideology a great place is occupied by Christian values, which are defined as the value of Orthodox Christianity. According to the statistics, though the fact that the Catholic religion is not the religion of the

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[122] Available online at: http://www.gallup.com/poll/114211/Alabamians-Iranians-Common.aspx

[123] Novikova L., *Basic characteristics of dynamics in the religious beliefs of the population* in *Sotsiologitcheskije issledovanija*, 1998, №9, p. 93-98

[124] Available online at: http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148914.htm

majority, Catholic believers show much higher level of religious observance. This is especially noticeable in the Western part of Belarus. At the same ideology emphasizes that the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus guarantees a citizen of Belarus "the right independently to determine one's own attitude to religion, either individually or jointly with others practice any religion or no religion"[125].

No less important is the question of national language in Belarus. The official languages of Belarus are both Belarussian and Russian. However, the language situation is often characterized as asymmetrical bilingualism, since most of the population uses Russian for everyday communication. According to Census 2009, the Belarussian language at home is used by 24% of all inhabitants of Belarus, regardless of nationality[126]. Political opposition focuses on the need of the development of Belarussian language; the evidence that the national language is listed as potentially endangered languages in Europe by UNESCO is also presented[127]. Attention to the national language is one of the manifestations of ethnic nationalism. This attention is especially noticeable in the very alternative project of Belarussian identity. Anderson drew attention to the 'linguistic nationalism', common in Europe[128]. Possible to say that the need for the widespread use of the national language in Belarus, along with the emphasis on the need for the development of democratic values, is one of the hallmarks of the 'Europeanness' of the alternative project.

Philosopher of alternative direction, Vladimir Furs notes that the ideological project is unviable. Ideology offers a 'Project of Happiness', under which citizens are invited to pay for the happiness for the recognition of their fundamental subordination of the state. Furs notes, that the system thus blocking the creative potential of citizens to improve the state. In addition, it is aimed solely at preserving

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[125] Konstitutsija Respubliki Belarus, 1994, p. 5

[126] Available online at: http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/2009/itogi1.php

[127] Available online at: http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php

[128] Anderson, B., *Imagined communities,* p. 27

the authoritarian regime[129]. At the same time, many foreign observers have noted that the national ideology promoted the development of national identity in Belarus. In particular, a Russian journalist Fyodor Lukjanov says that Lukashenka "has probably done more for the conciseness of the independent Belarussian nation than any BPF or the most convinced nationalists could do"[130].

An important and interesting question is why the Belarussian state ideology seeks to maintain 'Soviet' elements in the national and state system and, thus, 'to return to the past'. One of the most common answers is that the population of Belarus, connects the Soviet past with a stable income and a quiet life under the conditions of 'socialism'. This happens because the BSSR was one of the most economically developed republics of the USSR. Another answer related to the cause of the pro-Soviet orientation is energy and resource-dependence on Russia, which makes Belarus to act as an ally towards 'the elder sister'. In that sense, Russia is perceived as the political successor to the Soviet Union.

3.2 The alternative approaches to Belarussian national identity

Perception and reality of Belarus and Belarussian national identity by the alternative side has a great diversity of research approaches. At the same time, as noticed by Nelly Bekus, these approaches are united by "the renunciation of the Russian vector of the Belarussian idea cultivated by the authorities, and the consequent denial of the national status of the existing Belarussian state"[131]. She also notices that the idea of 'Europe' becomes a symbol of alternative Belarussianness. At the same time we can't speak about the only pro-European approach.

Alternative approaches, as noted earlier in this chapter can be divided into those approaches presented by political opposition (and aimed at pro-European direction) and by the independent intellectual elite (focusing on Belarus itself).

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[129] Furs V., "K voprosu o belaruskoi identichnosti". Available online at: http://n-europe.eu/article/2008/12/05/k_voprosu_o_«belarusskoi_identichnosti»_1

[130] Lukjanov F., *Belorussia, kotoruju my ne ponimaem* in *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* № 47, 2006, available online at: http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2006/47/lu12-pr.html

[131] Bekus, N., *Struggle over identity: the official and alternative Belarussianness*, p. 197

3.2.1 The approaches of political opposition

3.2.1.1 'European Belarus'

The formulation of the European idea of Belarus is based on the definition of liberal democratic nation. This must mean that the nation as a phenomenon can be understood only in connection with a certain structure of the state. The European state system is understood by the political opposition as a guideline for the development of Belarusian state. "Europeanness' in this case is synonymous with the concepts of democracy and liberalism. Political opposition speaks about the quality of 'Europeanness" as originally inherent to Belarussians, which confirm their membership in European culture and are not consistent with the values proclaimed by the official regime. The head of the United Civil Party, Stanislav Bogdankevich notes: "We are convinced that the essence of the Belarussian national idea consists in the consolidation of the complete sovereignty of the state and the right of our people to manage their own destiny, in the revival of its moral and spiritual formations, in the flourishing national of culture, in the formation of the prosperous civil society and the democratic rule-of-law state, with its ultimate aim to provide citizens with rights and liberties as well as a worthy level of life".[132] Implied that the current regime in Belarus does not meet these requirements and, therefore, is not truly national and legitimate.

Another important principle that links Belarus with Europe, it is a factor of history. Important layer of alternative historiography stands for Europeanness of the history of Belarussian territory. As noted by Bekus, "in this context, the Belarussian nation is considered to be European not because it claims for itself the category of nation in general, but because of its tradition of shared political and moral values [with Europe]"[133]. The Soviet period in the history of Belarus, as well as the period in the Russian Empire considered in this approach as the time, which adversely affected the development of Belarussian identity.

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[132] Bogdankevich, S., *Belaruskaja natsionalnaja idea* in *Adkrytaje gramadstva*, 1 (6), 1999, available online at: http://www.data.minsk.by/opensociety/1.99/2.html

[133] Bekus, N., *Struggle over identity: the official and alternative Belarussianness,* p.198

Pro-European approach to the Belarussian identity was very popular in the early 1990s, during the so-called period of 'national revival'. During this period, much attention was paid to the development of national values and national identity. Belarussian language was declared the only official language, the history and culture of Belarus was closely studied. In addition to emphasizing of the cultural European heritage, much attention was paid also to translate the European model in practice. In particular, the implemented reforms were aiming at liberalization of the economic system, changing the electoral law. In addition, Peter Kravchenko, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus in the period up to the year 1994 speaks about the establishment of international relations between Belarus and European countries, the result of which, eventually, could become the accession of Belarus to the European Union[134].

In the policy of consideration of the cultural past, the perception of ethnic origin of Belarussians as one of the branches of 'Great Russian nation', as it was accepted in Soviet national policy, had changed to the position of understanding Belarussians as the mixture of Slavs and Balts. Rainer Lindner is estimating this change as "the road from the myth about the 'purest' East-Slavic people to the myth of 'Slavicized Balts' was the road to the West"[135].

After the end of 'national revival' of the early 1990s, pro-European position of Belarussian Peoples' Front and the parties supported it became the stance of political opposition to the regime of President Lukashenka, who chose a pro-Russian policy of the state.

3.2.1.2 'Belarus for itself'

The second group of opinions on the identity in Belarus within the framework of an alternative approach represents Belarus in terms of need to search for its own development paths. Nelly Bekus called it as 'Belarus in-between'[136]. Representatives

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[134] Kravchenko P., *Belarus at the crossroads*, Vilnius, 2007, p. 7-128

[135] Rainer L., *Natsianalnyja I prydvornyja gistoryki 'lukashenkauskai' Belarusi* in *Gistarychny almanah*, no. 4, 2001, available online at: http://kamunikat.org/usie_czasopisy.html?pubid=2121

[136] Bekus, N., *Struggle over identity: the official and alternative Belarussianness*, p. 204

of this group are of the opinion that Belarus and its people are not direct descendants of the East or West, but rather to combine the qualities of these two directions. One of the founders of this opinion was an essayist the early twentieth century Abdziralovich Ignat, who, in his essay "*Advechnym Shljaham*" ("By the eternal path"), first published in 1921, noted that "up until the present time the Belarussian people have not supported either the western or the eastern waves, letting them roll over their heads instead. Fluctuation between the West and the East and lack of genuine inclination to either side is the main attribute of the Belarussian people's history"[137]. Abdziralovich notes, that in Belarussians we can find a 'mild' combination of separate features of East and West. Belarussian national idea, in his understanding, is based on the rejection of two extreme, 'messianic' forms of either Eastern Byzantism or Western individualism. In Belarus the better aspects of the two cultural and historic types are synthetically combined, based on original forms of public life and culture[138]. Speaking of those who support this view in today's Belarus, we should mention Paval Sevjarynets, who is a well-known political activist of Belarussian Peoples' Front and its youth organization "Young Front". He notes that "the concept of Belarus as a gigantic strategic economic and geopolitical bridge between the West and Russia, Europe and Asia, the Baltic and the Black seas regions gives it a unique possibility for a genuine neutrality, a friendly openness to the West and the East, with formation of an axis of our own financial, technological, as well as cultural, interests"[139]. Thus, the position of 'Belarus for itself' shows the peculiarity of Belarussian identity, while not seeking to isolate it from the world, but rather to promote a more effective relationship. On the other hand, it can be said that the supporters of this view do not address a specific role of the small subject of

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[137] Abdziralovich I., *Advechnym shliaham, dasledziny belaruskaga svetahljadu*, Minsk, 1993, available online at: http://kamunikat.org/usie_knihi.html?pubid=9096

[138] Abdziralovich I., *Advechnym shliaham, dasledziny belaruskaga svetahljadu*

[139] Seviarynets P., *Novaja historyja*, Nasha Niva, December, 2001, available online at: http://sieviarynets.net/index.php?newsid=18

international relations, provided by few natural resources. Adaptation to the rules of international politics in the absence of external support may be problematic.

It should also be noted that the perception of Belarussians' 'not belonging' to the two polarities that surround them was noted as far back as the 1920s. It has been described in the famous play of the national writer, poet and dramatist Yanka Kupala which is entitled "*Tuteyshiya*" ('locals'). This is the name by which people defined themselves in the early 1920s, trying to emphasize that they are not Poles or Russians, not Bolsheviks or capitalists. The play is of great importance in the national culture and serves as one of the constituent elements of national identity. Nelly Bekus states that "Belarussian self-determination is achieved by means of de-identifying with the Russian and Polish context, resulting in the localization of identity outside of any cultural traditions, in the extremely reduced space of 'here'[140]. It should also be noted that this self is not only a national identity, but also to try to emphasize the non-participation in political events, the non-assigning oneself to any of the warring parties. The emphasis on non-participation at that time was made in the conditions of the Civil War in the Russian Empire and the period of German and Polish occupation during World War I.

This position was also expressed in the works of a group belonging to an alternative trend in Belarussian music (often associated with political events). The album, released by the group was called as "*Ja naradziusa tut*" ("I was born here"). It begins with the song having the same name, which won wide popularity among the youth. In addition to the approval of its territorial belonging, the song's message directs to the fact that young people are not going to leave the country, even under the pressure of the regime ("I was born here, and I live here", says the song)[141]. However, this statement also has a political sense of non-participation of the citizen in the political struggle, in the confrontation of the opposition and the authorities. Partially it can also be attributed to the commonly diagnosed 'mistrust' to politics, which is typical for the post-Soviet countries. The emphasis on belonging 'here' also indicates the emotional attachment to the land (not to the state), which belongs to the

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[140] Bekus, N., *Struggle over identity: the official and alternative Belarussianness,* p. 210

[141] Bekus, N., *Struggle over identity: the official and alternative Belarussianness,* p. 211

manifestations of ethnic nationalism. It should be noted that this emphasis is made in different forms both by the alternative party (as stated above) and the official ideology.

In these two phenomena of media space we can notice the similarity in the understanding of the concept of national identity. Locality, belonging to this territory acts as a criterion of national identity and, in some cases, of political position. However, we can see that the understanding of the territory of Belarus as 'the crossroads of Europe' and the underlining of its unique mission relates the idea of the alternative project to the same position of the official ideology, which was mentioned above. Thus, the 'uniqueness' of Belarussian mentality makes its further development unique, and gives Belarus tangible benefits. Both the official and the alternative positions agree with this.

3.2.2 The approaches of independent intellectuals

Intellectual elites, proposing the alternative to the ideology position presents their views in a great variety of approaches, which mostly support the idea of 'Belarus-for-itself' as a basement for their research. However, it should be noted that the sociological, political, and philosophical approaches to the study and Belarussian reality by the group of independent intellectuals are usually criticized for the lack of their own research perspective (they are using the perspective developed in Western Europe, acting as the main obstacle for the development of the scientific school of their own). Additionally, independent researchers themselves acknowledge the feature of the concentration of the research at the political aspect of society, while social sphere remains virtually unexplored as a big disadvantage of their studies. In this sense, the society of Belarussians remains a 'silent majority', not represented in the picture, emerging through independent research.

For a more comprehensive consideration of an alternative approach of Belarussian national identity, I tried to categorize the research approaches into two main groups by more or less related subjects as follows: (1) Post-Freudianism, (2) Post-colonialism (Belarus as 'borderland'; Belarussian national identity as 'creolity').

3.2.2.1 Post-Freudianism and the historical memory approach to Belarussian national identity

An important approach to the study of Belarus is the post-Freudian approach. This approach is not just dealing with the case of Belarus, but also with Eastern Europe, because these countries have experienced communist regimes and the World War II. It should be taken into account that in Belarus, the experience of the Soviet regime and the World War II is perceived by the post-Freudian approach as a trauma which is ignored by the official authorities. According to this approach, this fact deepens the trauma. Here the aim is not discuss the post-Freudian approach in details but to refer to some of the points elaborated by the advocates of this approach to better understand the debate over national identity in Belarus.

The analysis of the politics of memory in Belarus has been carried out by a number of authors. Researcher Oresta Losyk states, that after World War II 'mnemonic convulsions', a term used by B. Szacki,[142] swept every European country. 'Mnemonic convulsions' should be understood as attempts to remember and understand the past of the particular community. This refers to the memory (history) of the national communities, when the 'recalled' past is used as a tool for the construction of the present and the future. Eastern Europe stays under the burden of double intensity 'of fever of remembrance' (a term used by P. Nora), This term should be understood as the attempts of the national community to 'restore' the 'lost' national history, which happen 'before the Soviet Union', and to reconstruct, rethink national roots[143]: 'Transitional' situation of the Eastern European countries combines social consequences of being '*homo soveticus*'[144] and feeling the need for a new system, a need for democratization and globalization (need for being part of the world community), which are understood as the conditions of self-realization and

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[142] Losyk O., presentation *Solidarność pokrzywdzonych: perspektywy ponadnarodowej kommemoracji w Europie Wschodniej po 1989 roku* at International Congress of the researches of Belarus, September, 23-25, 2011

[143] Losyk O., presentation *Solidarność pokrzywdzonych: perspektywy ponadnarodowej kommemoracji w Europie Wschodniej po 1989 roku*

[144] *Homo soveticus* – common name for the type of identity, created by Soviet system, aimed at conservation of the existing, hostile attitude towards democracy and capitalism.

self-organization. On one hand, the region of Central and Eastern Europe is very open, and therefore, quite vulnerable to the circulation of ideas associated with the search for 'appropriate' forms of identity and understanding of the 'other'. On the other hand, the experience of colonialism and its post-colonial syndromes force Central and Eastern Europe to a fixed concentration of attention on the 'personalized community' (as used by J. Szacki), which is making a stress on the role of the individuality of the citizen. Personalized community is also often associated with so-called ideological manipulations of historical policy. The collective memory of post- and neo-colonial communities, like Ukraine and Belarus, drifts to find the balance between a classic and postmodern worldviews, This phenomenon is expressed in the concept of the 'drama of recognition', used by A. Jawłowska and which is understood by her as an identity conflict between the 'me' and 'other' (generational conflict, national, cultural, etc.)[145]

In studies which adopted this approach, the term 'solidarity of the victims', which was introduced by P. Hassner is frequently used.[146] The term indicates the fact that the government structures are often unable to provide internal security to ethnic groups. It also refers to the solidarity of those who consider themselves 'offended' by the existing regime and oppose to it. The term also extends to the political interpretation of the collective past and proposes an alternative to the speculative concepts of 'amnesty' and 'amnesia', which are commonly used in understanding of the social function of collective memory. This approach aims the 'remembering' of the history as an important aspect of gaining sustainable identity. Equally important is the aspect of historical memory which is used in the context of the deconstruction of the past, distribution and redistribution of emphasis in the history of the community. It must also be noted that from the point of view of post-Freudian approach the perception and representation of the 'other' in history can act as a symbol of solidarity, renunciation, or resentment. In the case of Eastern Europe

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[145] Losyk, O., presentation *Solidarność pokrzywdzonych: perspektywy ponadnarodowej kommemoracji w Europie Wschodniej po 1989 roku*

[146] Hassner, P., *Violence and peace: from the atomic bomb to ethnic cleansing*, Central European University Press, Mar 27, 1997

neighboring countries, which had common 'Soviet' past may serve as the 'other'. In particular, we can find the examples of Russian-Ukrainian conflicts or reproach of Poland against Russia. In this context, according to post-Freudian approach, the concept of 'forgiveness of mutual offenses' accompanied by finding out the historical truth is supposed to be used. In the Belarussian situation we can notice the silencing of any 'offenses' toward Russia (which acts as the historical heir to the Soviet Union) by the official ideology. Thus, the 'working through' of the trauma does not occur, what further deepens the problem. Alternative project of Belarussian national identity rather intends to 'recall', 'rethink' and mostly focusing on the 'offences' experienced from Soviet Union (which means Russia), including the repressions of 1930s and shootings of national intelligentsia in later periods.

Researcher Simon Lewis states that the genocides made by two totalitarian regimes (Soviet and Nazi) to which Belarus was subjected in the years 1933-1945 justify the reassessment of de-Sovietisation/national consolidation in terms of mourning and working through trauma. The traumas of mid 20th century caused by Stalinist terror and Nazi genocide have been mourned and worked through only partially. This idea is supported by the fact that only the victims of the latter have gained any kind of official recognition, both by the Soviet authorities up to 1991 and then by the Lukashenka regime after 1994. In Belarus, colonialism and memory practices are tied together in a peculiar way. De-colonization[147] must involve working through traumatic pasts and returning the memory of the unmourned dead[148].

It is necessary to pay attention to the concept of 'historical memory', used in this approach. 'Historical' or 'cultural' memory can be interpreted as "a collective concept for all knowledge, which defines the behavior and experience in the interactive framework of the community and is passed down through generations in the form of recurrent social practices and initiations", according to the concept of Jan

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[147] The term De-colonization together with de-sovietisation is used in post-colonial approach to underline the necessity of 'giving our own names', gaining own identity.

[148] Lewis, S., *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, presentation made in the International Congress of Belarus Researchers, 23-25 September, 2011

Assmann[149]. Assmann points out that the memory of the crucial events of the past is strengthened by cultural formations (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (repetition, practice and observance.) In modern society, the most important institutions of the transmission of cultural memory are the institute of education (often directly controlled by the state) and the media. Another view of the historical memory is formed as a result of incorporation and assimilation of cultural memory in the public consciousness. Cultural memory consists of common ideas about the past which are often fragmented and contradictory.

There have been several researches of the historical memory of Belarus that sought to define the essence of perception of the past. As a result, the perception of the national past is not homogeneous in different layers of the population. This conclusion was made by Belarussian researcher Aleksei Lastovsky. He points out that an especially noticeable difference in the perception of Belarussian history among Belarussians is conditioned by the generation respondent belongs. The older generation remembers much fewer events directly related to the history of Belarus and often associates 'our country' with the Soviet Union. The historical period before the Soviet Union is mainly associated with the Polotsk principality and historical figures of this period. The younger generation is much more aware of the various events and personalities of the Belarussian history. Lanstovsky notes, that this gap is not so important, and the 'generational conflict' is uncertain, because there are unifying themes that are perceived by different generations in the same way. These themes include the importance of the victory in Great Patriotic War (World War II in the Soviet Union), which is the main the focus of ideological politics[150]. The researcher concluded that the most important historical myth, constituting modern Belarussian national identity is the memory of the victory in World War II, the consistency and simplicity of this memory promotes consistency of views about the past. According to the same research, the greatest potential for strengthening of the

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[149] Assmann J., Czaplicka J., *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity* in *New German Critique*, No. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies. (Spring - Summer, 1995), pp. 125-133.

[150] Lastovsky, A., *Spetsifika istoricheskoi pamjati v Belarusi: mezhdu sovetskim proshlym i natsionalnoi perspektivoi*, available online at: http://www.polit.ru/article/2010/07/19/belorus/#aa2

Belarussian national identity has a *topos* of social perceptions about the history of Belarus of the early twentieth century, because it has two important characteristics: (1) it is unfilled with content (which allows no problem to bring in a desired content) and (2) positive-neutral perception of this period in the mass consciousness. Also, the perception of the positive role of educators Francisk Skaryna and Euphrosyne of Polotsk[151], who lived in 11th and 16th centuries accordingly, indicates that the pre-Soviet Belarussian history can also be effectively used in changing of the perception of the past of Belarus.

It should be noted that the approach associated with studies of historical memory in Belarus is one of the few approaches focusing on the practical study of social reality. Another important feature is the fact that the subject of national past is interesting both for the official and the alternative sides, because both of them understand history and historical memory as a tool of nation-building.

3.2.2.2 Post-colonial approach to Belarussian national identity

Another discourse that is used in studies of alternative intellectual elite is post-colonial studies. It represents a set of critical projects and programs aimed at overcoming the effects of economic, political, cultural and intellectual dependence of the 'non-Western world' from the 'Western' models and prototypes. In this part, the aim is not to discuss post-colonialism and post-colonial research approach. The main goal is to examine how post-colonialism is used in the research of Belarussian national identity.

It is possible to note that, the beginning of post-colonial studies dates back to late 1970s and more specifically to 1977, when the book *Orientalism* by Said was published. The discourse of orientalism, according to Said, is a complex of knowledge-power, produced for centuries in the European tradition ('West') regarding the 'East' and is closely associated with the (neo) colonial practices. By controlling the processes of knowledge production, 'West' was able to develop and enforce the image of 'the East' identity, in which 'the East' was understood as a

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[151] Religious enlightener, nun, lived and worked in XII century in Polotsk.

dependent and subordinate position[152]. Another founder of post-colonial studies is Guattari Spivak, who, in 1985, addressed Western intellectuals with the radical question of "Can the subaltern speak?" in her eponymous text. Spivak's response was absolutely clear: the oppressed (subaltern) are unable to speak, they are not able to 'break through', 'raise' their voice to the level of representation. Because of this, they are always represented by the other, speaking for them and from their name[153]. Post-colonial approaches to the past, present and future of Belarus were put forward by notable Belarussian authors, including Valiantin Akudovich, Ihar Babkou, Valer Bulhakau and Vladimir Abushenko.

Formally, the term 'post-colonial' means the period 'after colonialism', which is usually interpreted as the 'post-independence period of a country'. In post-Soviet reality, there is the debate about the formal sense of the term 'colony'. The debated issue concerns the question whether we can consider the Soviet Union as an empire or not. The alternative intellectual elite see it as a communist empire, united by a common system of Soviet ideology, with the center based in Moscow. The official point of view rejects such approach, saying the Soviet Union to be the union of autonomous republics, which had equal rights and opportunities.[154] Denying the existence of the empire, the official point of view, therefore, denies the applicability of post-colonial studies to Belarussian reality. Calhoun proposes the idea that the collapse of empires, followed by the formation of independent nation states is a protest of the ethnic form of nationalism against its civic form.[155] From this we can conclude that the multi-ethnic state of the Soviet Union collapsed as a result of the victory of ethnic nationalism in its republics. However, as already noted, the independence of Belarus is not the consequence of the nationalist movement in the country and, therefore, we can not speak about the rise of ethnic nationalism in Belarus.

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[152] Said E., *Orientalism*, London, Penguin, 1977

[153] Spivak G. Ch., *Can the subaltern speak?,* Columbia University press, 2010

[154] *Belaruskii put',* p. 53

[155] Calhoun C., *Nationalism and ethnicity*

The fact of independence, achieved by the country, as noted by L. Gandgi, is often accompanied by 'the will to forget' the colonial past, an attempt to bring the story of the heroic resistance to the forefront of the history, or even to create self-contained, closed national narrative in which the colonizer has a marginal place, or do not exist at all. In this context, post-colonialism can be seen as a theoretical resistance of this kind of amnesia and a project of 'recalling' and reinterpretation the colonial past, which includes the reconstruction of the whole ambiguity of relations of the colonizer and the colonized. It includes not only the experience of subordination and resistance, but the experience of interdependence and symbiosis.[156]

Thus, if we consider the post-colonialism in relation to the Belarussian situation, then the following must be organically included: 1) the project of deconstruction of the Soviet Union as the subject of imperial discourse, unmasking its program claims for universality, the critique of historical and cultural constraints of Soviet model; 2) the project of legitimizing of anti-discourses, program for the development and reflection of various anti-colonial policies, anticolonial nationalism problems, which fits into the overall picture of the asynchronous modernization.

The project of post-colonial studies is related to its ideological predecessor - postmodernism, which involves the deconstruction of bulky structures, decentralization. Looking at it in this way, it should be noted that one of such 'bulky' structure may be a nation and national identity. In the post-colonial studies nationality is acting as the principle of territorial belonging. The 'post-national' world in the terms of post-colonialism means post-colonial world. Alexei Bratochkin notes that "a new model of national identity of Belarussians should be focused on post-national reality of the modern world, the possibility of our inclusion in the context that goes beyond local, but not denying locality and critical processing it"[157].

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[156] Gandhi, L., *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship (Politics, History, and Culture)*. Duke University Press, 2006

[157] Bratochkin A., *Kak vlast v Belarusi konstruiruet natsionalnuu identichnost*, http://n-europe.eu/columns/2011/02/16/kak_vlast_v_belarusi_konstruiruet_natsionalnuyu_identichnost

3.2.2.3 Belarus as 'Borderland'

The theory of 'borderland' is a branch of post-colonial studies. The term 'borderland' in the philosophical sense was initially used in Latin American studies, in the 1970s. According to Mignolo, one of the leading theorists of Latin American 'borderland' theory, border is a 'space between'. Border also means being on the dividing line and having the potential to find partners for dialogue from both sides[158]. This is by no means an attitude across the border, which is enshrined by the notion of the 'frontier', which involves our location on any side of the dividing line. The situation of the borderland, in contrast to the frontier, deprives us of the illusion of shelter and we find ourselves stuck between two sides.

Researcher Olga Shparaga connects the emergence of the concept of 'frontier' with Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy. She says, that the classical Cartesian saying "I think, therefore I exist", in Kant's philosophy has taken the form of a notion that in the search for knowledge one should not refer to an outside reality (the world), but refer to the cognizing subject (consciousness). Thus, in their search for a solid base of knowledge since the 16th century philosophers concentrated on the laws of cognition itself, which opened to the cognizing subject, as it is abstracted from the world and immersed in pure consciousness. In other words, the problem lays in the fact that the consciousness separated from the world, is supposed to find its conscious self. Thus, we arrive at the problem of self-identification and identity, as reflected in the concept of the borderland. Shparaga notes, that the reality of the Soviet Union is more related to the paradigm of classical philosophy, where priority interest is situated rather in the knowable (the world) than to the cognizing subject.[159]

The current situation in Belarus refers to the paradigm of non-classical philosophy. Belarus in the cultural, geopolitical and historical sense appeared on the border, i.e., became the very border. For this reason, Belarussians in the current moment are facing the task of building themselves, searching for compromise

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[158] Mignolo W., *Coloniality, Subaltern knowledges, and border thinking: Local histories/Global designs*, Princeton University Press, 2000

[159] Shparaga O., *Poisk identichnosti v kontekste pogranichja: belaruskaja versija (pervoe priblizenije)*, available online at: http://old.belintellectuals.eu/community/print.php?id=48

between different ways of gaining identity. The main problem of Belarussian national identity from the point of view of the concept of 'borderland' is the uncertainty which is caused by the unclear geopolitical orientation ('Europeanness' or focus on Russia) and the historical context (post-Soviet disorientation, fueled by a pseudo-Soviet regime in the state). This is reflected in the peculiarities of national identification, which is further aggravated by globalization. Thus, we can see the alleged need for a definition of 'Belarussianness'. There is a need to answer the question "Who is Belarussian?", "Who are they, the citizens of modern Belarus?"

It should be noted that the borderland approach is not only applicable to Belarus, but also to Ukraine and Moldova. According to Igor Bobkov and Pavel Tereshkovich, the editors of *"Perekrestki"* ("The crossroads") magazine, the countries mentioned above are in the process of constructing their 'regionality', or regional identities. For these countries, there is a problem of understanding the "cultural self-sufficiency and self-sufficiency of its 'edge' existence". In such a situation new hybrid variants of political, economic and cultural models appear and they are "forced to find themselves on the border of democracy and authoritarianism, liberalism and conservatism, global and regional"[160].

Olga Shparaga notes that the views of Belarussian philosopher and essayist, Valjantsin Akudovich, are similar with the interpretation of Belarus as a borderland[161]. In his book, *"Mjane njama"* ("I don't exist"), Akudovich connected the absence of his own identity with the formed project of Belarussian identity and the identity of the inhabitants of the country. In the same book one can also find another remarkable metaphor – 'archipelago of Belarus', through which Akudovich captures the dissociation and fragmentation of Belarussian national culture, divided, like islands in the archipelago, by the 'waters' of Russian and Soviet culture. In his later essays, united in the book "To destroy Paris" Akudovich notes the disruptiveness of the history of Belarus and its cultural tradition, which breaks the dominance in the historical consciousness of Belarussians, rather than continuities

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[160] Bobkov I., Tereshkovich P., *Vmesto predislovija* in *Perekrestki*, № 1-2, 2004, p. 6.

[161] Shparaga O., *Poisk identichnosti v kontekste pogranichja: belaruskaja versija (pervoe priblizienije)*

and identifies it as the most important characteristics of Belarussian situation. Akudovich also notes that those bulky intellectual structures, which had a value in the past need to be destroyed. This thesis leads Akudovich to the idea that Belarus is a 'post-modern project of God', and that only the deconstruction of remnants and traces of culture, without proposing a single unifying principle as the primary, will make sense in the identification of Belarus and Belarussians.[162]

If we continue to talk about the practical sphere of 'borderland' existence, we must note that the Hungarian scholar Tamas Pal, speaking of the Belarussian 'periphery' calls it as double. In his view, Belarus, is the periphery for the Europe, since it is located outside of the European Union and has an authoritarian system of government, uncharacteristic for the European countries. He said that in Belarus there is the perception of the country being partly beneficial, since it provides additional opportunities for grants and assistance from the West. This preserves a sense of Belarussian 'uniqueness', and hinders the development of the own culture in the country. The second dimension of Belarussian periphery is that Belarus is not just in the interests of Russia, but also belongs to the 'zone of Russian culture'. But at the same time Belarus does not belong to the 'center of Russian culture zone', but is a Russian province, which hinders the development of local culture and identity. According to Tamas Pal, the citizens of Belarus, 'conserving' their identity are themselves an obstacle to the development of their culture[163].

Thus, the theory of borderland considers the Belarussian reality as a transitional stage, during which the Soviet experience and the experience of national development will be rethought.

3.2.2.4 The concept of 'creolity' as a characteristic of Belarussian national identity

Another approach in post-colonial studies related to the examination of Belarussian reality uses the concept of 'creolity'. This approach was first adopted in

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[162] Akudovich V., *Mjane njama: rozgumy na ruinah chalaveka*, Minsk, 1998, p. 7

[163] Pal, T., *Belarus sluchai osobyi, no ne unikalnyi*, available online at: http://net.abimperio.net/node/2056

Ukrainian Studies. This is particularly clear in the works of M. Ryabchuk ("From Little Russia to Ukraine: Paradoxes of belated nation-building"[164]). In Belarussian studies however, the founder of this approach is Vladimir Abushenko, who outlined his views on the theory of the Creoles in the article "Miscavige as Creole, from 'local' genealogy of genealogy 'locality'[165].

The most well-known idea of creolity as a concept was elaborated by Benedict Anderson, who talked about a special type of Creole nationalism[166]. Abushenko states that the term 'creole' emerged in colonial empires to order to refer to persons born outside of the metropolitan territory, which implies the latter's status as unequal (mainly in socio-political sense). This constituted a kind of special status of 'creolity' as a duality, and the 'borderland' as the marginality in some space 'between'. As the formation of new colonial countries of 'racial' component in 'creolity' weakened (though never completely disappeared), and 'territorial' intensified, emphasizing 'belonging to local context' (*'tuteishast'* in Belarussian situation). The so-called 'colonial culture' and 'colonial style' were following a specific model, which was 'imported' from the metropolis (the earliest and brightest example of which is the so-called Latin American 'Creole Baroque'). From the perspective of the 'center' ('people of metropolis'), the culture of 'creolity' was often qualified as a manifestation of peripheral, stylistic reduced, cultural inferiority, and even 'barbarization'. But from the standpoint of creoles, their culture expressed the particular uniqueness of 'local', 'contextual' and thereby was adapted to life 'here'. Thus, in the cultural dimension 'creolity' is, on one hand, initially dual phenomenon and on the other hand a phenomenon established through the fact of belonging to a particular place. Connection of the ethnic and civic aspects of creolity gave the rise to a particular type of national identity and consciousness, which was initially ambiguous in its very basis. Creolity called as 'locality' in the Belarussian situation

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[164] Rkabchuk M., *Ot Malorosii k Ukraine: paradoksy zapozdalogo natsitvorenija*, Moscow, 1998

[165] Abushenko., V., *Mitskevich kak kreol: ot 'tuteishei geneologii' k geneologii' tuteishasti'*, http://belintellectuals.eu/library/book/259/

[166] Abushenko., V., *Mitskevich kak kreol: ot 'tuteishei geneologii' k geneologii 'tuteishasti'*

is defined as the primary, but an unprestigious national-cultural identity. Abushenko connects the existence of such a situation in Belarus with long-term membership in the Russian (Soviet) cultural world. During the period of membership in this world Belarussian identity was often defined as 'almost' relevant to the Russian, making it difficult to form own views in the Belarussian identity.

Political scientist Andrew Kazakevich criticizes the concept of creolity proposed by Abushenko.[167] In his view, in terms of the metropolis, 'creole' people should be represented as 'bad people' who are using 'wrong language',[168] which is 'barbarizing' the metropolis culture. However, according to Kazakevich, the terms 'creolity' and 'locality' should not be confused, and, moreover, shouldn't be considered as synonymous. Creole identity refers to the need for separation from the metropolis, the proclamation of its own identity, while maintaining cultural ties with the metropolis. Belarussians have always wanted to distinguish themselves from the Russians and the Polish and this was related to the manifestation of 'locality'.

Kazakevich emphasizes that much of the research examines Belarussian identity as dual, presented opposing sides - the official and alternative. This contributes to the further isolation of the parties and an increase in the methodological and cultural gap between them. In fact, the situation appears much more complex when the opinions and ideas of the parties may overlap, interact and evolve in parallel. Thus, Kazakevich calls for a more detailed study of Belarussian reality and Belarussian identity, separation from the common stereotypes, creating 'one picture of the development'.

The same idea was expressed by Valentin Akudovich in his essay "Belarus as the space of sacred".[169] In his view, the main problem in studies of Belarus lies in the fact that the researchers believe that country remains on the ruins colonization, collectivization, Russification, Polonization. Thus, the space of the Belarussian

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[167] Kazakevich A., *Dekontseptualizatsija kreolstva* in *Palitychnaja sfera*, no 4, 2005, pp. 104-115

[168] The mixture of Russian and Belorussian languages, called as "*trasjanka*" is often used in villages and small towns. This dialect is often stated to show the level of russification of belarussian population.

[169] Akudovich V., *Natsyjanalnaja padadyhma: rakurs kantseptualnaj perameny*, available onlite at: http://bk.baj.by/lekcyji/litaratura/akudovicz01_1.htm

76

reality is 'profaned'; Belarus is placed in the field of the problem to be overcome before we go any further. Akudovich opposes such a 'total' approach, claiming for 'all or nothing' (ideology or alternative, Europe or Russia). He advocates the need for disintegration of the studies, post-modern approach to reality, and its fragmentation. We need to 'sanctify' Belarus instead of its profanation, to make it a self-contained object, a unique reality.

Paradigms of Belarussian studies, thus, for all its diversity, emphasize the role of the Soviet experience in the formation of the modern Belarussian national identity. However, the official ideology of the Republic of Belarus regards it as a natural stage of development of Belarus, focusing on the positive experience gained in the Soviet era. An alternative view rather inclined to consider the Soviet experience as negative, adversely influenced the formation and development of Belarussian national identity. In this case, both approaches consider it necessary to find further ways of development, considering the development process of Belarussian national identity as unique. In many ways, alternative and official parties tend to view each other's positions as inadmissible and not relevant to the real situation. It does not promote development of views and aggravates the search for compromise. Both official and alternative approaches use historiography to confirm their positions and disclosure of the nature of Belarussian national identity. We can also note that both approaches consider Belarussians in terms of the ideas of the mixture of civic and ethnic nationalism, i.e., as residents of the modern Republic of Belarus, regardless of their ethnic origin, who, however, have common historical past and share the importance of common ethnic symbols and values. However, the essence of these values and symbols differ in two projects. It is also important to note that an alternative approach emphasizes that Belarus and Belarusian national identity at the moment are in a crisis that needs to be overcome. This 'inferiority complex' can be treated by post-Freudian methods, or by the way, that is called by Akudovich as 'sanctification' of Belarus.

CHAPTER IV

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE NATIONAL HISTORY OF BELARUS
AS AN IMPORTANT TOOL IN THE NATION-BUILDING PROCESS

Hobsbawm suggests that the reconstruction of national history is a tool for creating a nation and its roots[170]. Smith notes that historiography is the cultural capital of the national community that allows creating projects of national development. In his view, the development of the national community occurs on the basis of ethnic material[171]. Thus, modernist and ethnosymbolist approaches emphasize the importance of historiography in the creation of a national project. The aim of this chapter is to observe the historiography of Belarus, proposed by official and alternative projects of national identity.

This chapter examines the reconstruction of the history of Belarus from early periods until the mid 1980s of the 20th century, till the moment of the dissolution of the USSR, which caused the emergence of Republic of Belarus as an independent state. The review of the history of Belarus is important, because on the one hand, it presents the historical facts that led the country to independence, and on the other hand, illustrates the perception of historical facts in terms of official history, and the history proposed by the opposition (this party also includes the views of independent intellectuals). The period before the dissolution of the USSR has been chosen due to the fact that the perception of historical facts by different parties forms a complete picture of the historical past, which resulted in independence and the modern history of Belarus. Thus, the history of Belarus until mid-1980s can be regarded as precondition and the events after the mid-1980s - as a consequence of it.

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[170] Hobsbaum E., *Nations and nationalism after 1780: program, myth, reality*, p. 35

[171] Smith Antony D., *Nationalism and modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism*

Given the fact that the investigated national identity projects considering the history of Belarus as the history of the people lived on the territory occupied by the modern Republic of Belarus, in this chapter, a comparison of historical projects will be based on the principle of territoriality. The principle of territoriality in this case means that the events mentioned in this chapter must be meaningful for the history of the territory of modern Republic of Belarus. The actual events mentioned in this chapter are presented in chronological order. The above events are the most debated among historians and often the subject of disputes and disagreements between versions of the official and alternative (oppositional) history.

Description of the events takes in the form of comparison of the positions of the official history and the alternative view, which are presented by the historians, who contrast their views to the official approach, but does not necessarily belong to the political opposition in the country. Most of these researchers belong to a group of independent intellectuals.

An important principle in the selection of facts presented by this mechanism is the development of the national community, as set out by Benedict Anderson in his book "Imagined Communities". The approach of Benedict Anderson has high explanatory power in the case of Belarussian identity. It is important to compare how the process of the development of Belarussian national identity and the concept of national history as presented by the official and alternative sources correspond to the mechanism proposed by Anderson.

Research approach to the reconstruction is based on consideration of the material presented in the two types of sources. The official position is derived from official school and college history textbooks. The alternate side is represented by the books and monographs, written by historians who do not support the official version of the history of Belarus (political oppositionists and independent intellectuals).

4.1 Ethnic origin of Belarussians

Historians agree on the fact that in the first millennium B.C. the territory of Belarus was populated by Indo-European tribes (Slavs). In 5th and 6th centuries of the first millennium A. D. The Slavs appeared of on the territory of Belarus. However

the development of the ethnic roots of the nation is a debatable issue. The biggest point of clash is the substratum of further nation formation and the origin of this substratum. At this point there are several assumptions set forth below.

There are several approaches, explaining ethnic origin of Belarussians. One of them is the hypotheses called 'Finnish', created by Ivan Laskov. It states that the ancestors of the Belarussians have been Finno-Ugric peoples assimilated by Baltic tribes in the Bronze Age[172]. The second is 'Old Russian' version that states that Belarussians as a nation were formed at the place of old-Russian ethnic community, together with Ukrainian and Russian as a result of the collapse of Kievan Rus in the 12th-13th centuries. The third version is called 'Tribe' theory created in the beginning of XX century and was elaborated in 1970s. It deals with ethnic consolidation of Slavic tribes of *Kryvichy, Radimichy, Dregovichy, Volynyane* and others on various socio-economic, political, military and religious reasons in the 10th-12th centuries[173]. Important issue, underlined by this theory is a totally Slavic origin of Belarussians, which is making the nation closer to the other 'brother nations' of Russians and Ukrainians. This theory is used by the official history approach, mainly due to the foreign policy orientation of the alliance with Russia and the attempts to create a national approving attitude toward the Soviet past, among other things, embodying the union of the Slavic peoples. It should also be noted that in the textbooks of recent years the possibility of Baltic participation in the formation of Belarussian ethnic group is also mentioned, although most Balt substrate is not given the leading role. Such changes may have two main reasons. The beginning of the new millennium was marked by more complicated relations with the Russian Federation and the possibility of changing foreign policy vector in the direction of development of relations with the European Union. On the other hand, maybe it is a sign of attention

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[172] Halubovich I., U. M. Bohan U. M., *Historya Belarusi (u kantekste susvetnyh tsyvilisatsii)*, Minsk, 2005, p. 136.

[173] Nosevich V., *Belarus: stanovlenie etnosa i „natsionalnaja idea* in Belorussia in *Rossia: obschestva I gosudarstva*, Moscow, 1998, p.15

to the results of recent archaeological research, according to which it is impossible to deny the contribution of the Balts to the development of Belarussian ethnic group[174].

Opponents of the 'Tribe' theory notice, that even taking into account the possibility of purely Slavic origin of Belarussians, it is impossible to assume that in the future it was the decisive factor of historical development, such as a common historical destiny[175]. This argument is often used as the negation to the statement of historical unity of three nations and underlines the independent way of Belarussian development.

The forth approach is called 'Baltic' theory. It was created by Vladimir Sedov. According to this approach the Balts appear as an ethnic substratum, resulting in mixing interassimilation of Slavic newcomers with the Balts, and formed the Belarussian ethnos. This theory, which emphasizes the important role of the Balts in the formation of the Belarussian ethnos in more or less radical version, is used by alternative sources. Baltic tribes are understood as the direct ancestors of Belarussian people, who later experienced Slavic influence[176].

Whether this assimilation processes was peaceful or not is discussed, and the views on this point sometimes reflect the political point of view of arguing sides. Officially the Belarussians are presented to be highly peaceful and tolerant nation, not inclined to aggressive behavior, which means that the process of interassimilation was supposed to be peaceful[177].

4.2 First state on the territory of Belarus

Most of the historians agree that the first state on the territory of Belarus was Polotsk Principality and, thereby, it is the root and the origin of Belarussian

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[174] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi*, p 10

[175] Novik J. K., Martsul G. C., Kachalau I. L., *Historya Belarusi: Padruchnik dla studentau. Part 1: Ad starazhytnyh chasou pa luty 1917 hoda,* 2003, 416 p., p.14

[176] Sedov V., *K proishozdeniju belarusov (problema baltskogo substrata v etnogeneze belarusov)* in *Sovetskaja etnografija*, 1967. No 2. p. 112—119

[177] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 13

statehood. First statehood is very important for the construction of national mythology and reflects the roots of the nation and its antiquity.

The historians of both sides agree that the city of Polotsk was first mentioned in chronicles in 862. This date, for lack of another considered, is the date of the foundation of the city. The mention of Polotsk is closely connected with the existence of Kievan Rus, powerful union of cities on the lands of the Eastern Slavs. Official history is of the opinion on the possible relative independence of the city in political terms, which makes it possible to assert the independent statehood of Belarus in the earliest periods. At the same time, according to official sources, 'an indissoluble bond of brotherly Slavic nations' (alliance of cities of Kievan Rus) was created. This combination of formal independence and political cooperation can be considered to reflect the views propagated by the official authorities in regard to the creation of the Union State with Russia. Relations within Kievan Rus illustrate the argument that 'brother' Slavic peoples always strived for the union[178].

Potential of Polotsk and the question of its independence from this union is a highly discussed issue. Kluchevsky, Russian historian of 19th century had no doubt that the city was totally obedient to Kiev[179]. Modern historical science puts this statement into question and connects it to important local legend, which is widely used as a nation-building myth. The version cited below is taken from the chronicle and accepted by both compared sources (official and alternative), while the comments to these events are controversial.

The legend tells about the mighty prince of Polotsk – Ragvalod. He had a daughter Ragneda, famous of her beauty and wisdom. Vladimir, the prince of Novgorod, wanted to take her as a wife. At the same time Jarapolk, the prince of Kiev was proposed as a potential husband too. Ragneda preferred Jarapolk and said that she "wouldn't like to be a wife of the son of a slave"[180] (there was a rumor that Vladimir's mother was a housemaid of his father). Vladimir got angry and attacked Polotsk, killed Ragvalod, two his sons and forced Ragneda to marry him. After

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[178] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 13

[179] Kluchevskii V. O. *Kurs russkoi istorii.* Moscow, 1993, p.34

several years Ragneda and Vladimir had children. Vladimir, who remained a pagan, had a few wives besides Ragneda. Ragneda was offended by it. One day she decided to kill her husband in revenge for the loss of her family and her ruined life. While Vladimir was asleep, she brought a sword over him, but he suddenly woke up. Angered at defiance of his wife, he set out to punish her, but between them was their eldest son, Izyaslav, holding a sword. He said, "Father, you are not alone here", and Vladimir was forced to withdraw his decision[181].

The official version of the story interprets the events of this legend as the unacceptability of violence against Belarussians, their striving for justice and an independent path of development, as initially inherent to Belarussian nation. An alternative source, giving its comment to this legend, says that the need to attack the city in order to capture it proves that the city was not in full subordination to Kiev or was not subordinated to it at all. This is also indicated by the revenge of Ragneda who did not want to accept resignation of subordination to the prince of Novgorod[182].

It can be noted, that the use of the history of Polotsk serves as a means of confirmation of independence from Russian lands, higher cultural of development over Russians as well as the aggressive tendencies of the Russian people which Belarus experienced throughout the history[183].

With regard to cultural development, it should be noted that the official history highlights the fact that Orthodox Christianity came to Belarus from Kiev. It was taken by above-mentioned Prince Vladimir as a result of his marriage to the princess of Constantinople. He cancelled previous marriages, including the marriage with Ragneda. She converted into Christianity and became the first nun at Belarussian lands. Official history relates the arrival of Christianity on the Belarussian land with the development of culture, literacy, spirituality, while the pagan history is far bleaker[184].

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[181] Shtyhau G. V., *Narysy historyi Belarusi*, Minsk 1994, Part 1, p. 94

[182] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi*, p. 22

[183] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi*, Vilnius, Nasha Buduchunja, 2002, p. 8

[184] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi*, p. 30

Alternative sources, while not denying the importance of Christianity in the cultural development of the Belarussian people, also suggest that the adoption of the new religion did not happen quite peacefully. Sources refer to quotations from the chronicles that speak of the establishment of Christianity 'with fire and sword' and that in Turau, the second most important city-state at Belarussian land "stone crosses sailed down the river from Kiev, and the river was painted in red". Here we consider the establishment of Christianity in a political sense, when a new religion, central clergy of which was situated in Kiev, was an instrument of political subordination of the neighbors' land. The source also emphasizes the idea that Christianity in those days and during the later centuries did not establish its entire dominion upon Belarussian lands. Many tribes have preserved elements of pagan beliefs in popular culture (which can be seen to the present day). Also, many Baltic tribes remained entirely pagan until the 14th century. Thus, the project of cultural subordination of Belarussian lands to Kiev was not completely successful[185].

4.3 Grand Duchy of Lithuania

At the end of 12th – beginning of 13th century, Polotsk Principality gradually weakened and lost its geopolitical importance. Further historical development of Belarussian lands acquired another direction. At the same time the territory of Kievan Rus experienced the attacks of Tatar Mongolian tribes from the south, which conquered almost all of the territories of East Slavic tribes except the principalities of Polotsk and Turau. This fact is often used to explain the origin of the name of the country *Belaya Rus'* (White Russia), in the sense of its being unconquered by Tatar Mongolians[186]. The issue of the explanation of the name of the country gained importance after the dissolution of the USSR as Belarus got its independence. The variant of explanation stated above was proposed in mid 1990s. It can be considered as one of the first attempts of national ideology creation by the official authorities. It is important to note that this version emphasizes the 'ethnic' difference of the

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[185] Arlou U., Saganovich G., *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi*, p. 9

[186] Trubachou A., *Ne ad belay skury I svetlyh vachei. Pogljad na etnagenes belarusau* in *Belaruskaja minuuschyna*, 1993, No 1, p.8

Belarussians from the Russians, at the same time laying the foundation for the idea of 'uniqueness' of Belarussian national community, which is used in modern national ideology of Belarus. The version used in the Soviet Union stated that 'white' characteristic of this part of 'Russia' is coming from traditional Belarussian clothes of white color and light blue eyes of local dwellers[187]. The new theory, underlining that the territory was not conquered by Tatars and therefore was 'pure', 'untouched'. This position is opposed to common Soviet statement that Belarus as a 'younger sister' of Russia always shared its fate. This variant of explanation is used successfully in the modern Belarussian ideological concept as a way to prove the independence of Belarus in relation to Russia, though with some reservations. It also the concept of 'purity' of Belarussian nation is in common use.

Since the beginning of the 13th century the Belarussian land was the subject to the attacks of the Crusaders from Western Europe. After the East-West Schism of 1054 Slavic territories turned out to be under the influence of Byzantine (Orthodox) type of Christianity. Catholic Church intended to spread its influence on these territories and was making regular military attacks on Polotsk principality. These aggression acts were one of the reasons of the weakening of the territories. This version is supported by both parties.

In the year 1235 chronicles write about 'Mindaugas' *Litva*', new state on the west of modern Belarussian territory, which had historical name of *Litva* (contemporary name of Lithuania in Russian). Later it obtained the name of Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Mindaugas was named the first prince of the state and he is often said to play the role of the 'unitor' of the new state. The capital of new country was settled in Novogradok (western Belarus) first and later moved to *Vilna* (modern Vilnius). Due to this reason and later history of the city of *Vilna* became one of national myths and is often taken as the "true capital" of Belarus ("Mecca of *Kryvich*" by poet Zhylka), separated from the rest of the country by chance. Recognition of *Vilna* as the 'true' capital is typical for alternative historical sources and contemporary literature of opposition trend. *Vilna* is a symbol of the 'lost' European values of Belarussian people.

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[187] Karsky E. F., *Belorusy*, vol. 3, Minsk, 2006, p. 234

The question of the origin and ethnic composition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania raises a lot of controversy and deals mainly with the ratio of Baltic and Slavic population in the country, as well as power relations between them. At this point there are several versions. The first version says that the most important role in the duchy was played by the Balt (Lituanian) aristocracy. Novogradok was conquered by the Balts, Mindaugas was Balt by his ethnic origin, and the Slavs were subordinated to the Balts[188]. This point of view is supported by independent and opposition historians. The other version underlines, that Novogradok was united with Litva peacefully. The majority of the population of the country was Slavic.[189] Official sources emphasize the unknown ethnical origin of Mindaugas. According to the official version, Slavic lands of Belarus happen to be merged with Baltic (Lithuanian) lands, and for this reason, all further development including propagation of Catholicism and Western influence occurred in the country[190].

The main clash point in this argument is laying in the uncertainness of the question of what do the chronicles define as the territory of *Litva* − did it belong to Belarussian (Slavic) territories or it was situated on the territory of modern Lithuania and its population therefore was Baltic (non-Slavic)[191]? R. Lyndner states, that this issue still causes debates between Belarussian and Lithuanian historians[192].

One of the most problematic issues of Belarussian history is uncertain religious situation and non-homogeneous structure of the population in the sense of religious affiliation. The territory of Belarus can't be unambiguously attributed to the zone of influence of one specific religion, because in the course of historical development Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Uniate, Judaism became influential and alternately lost power on the territory of the country. According to the common myth the illustration for that can be seen in the biography of Mindovg. He

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[188] Ermalovich M. *Starazytnaja Belarus*, Minsk, 1990, p. 316

[189] Shtyhau G. V. *Narysy historyi Belarusi*, p. 120

[190] *Ibid*.

[191] Novik J. K., Martsul G. C., Kachalau I. L., *Historya Belarusi: Padruchnik dla studentau*, p. 48

[192] Lyndner R. *Historyki i ulada*, St Peterburg, 2005, p. 457

converted into Orthodox Christianity from paganism to become the prince of Novodradok. Later, in 1353 he converted to Catholicism to be crowned as the king of Grand Duchy of Lithuania and get the support of Livonian Princedom and the Pope of Rome[193]. This fact is often used to confirm the idea that religion does not play an important role in the constitution of the Belarussian identity. However, religion often appeared as the cause of conflicts and wars on the territory of Belarus and was used for propaganda purposes.

4.4 The 'Polish' period (1385-1795)

The year 1385 is the starting point of a new chapter in the history of Belarus. It was a year when Creve union between Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland was signed. Grand Duchy of Lithuania, weakened by constant attacks of the Crusaders from the West and the Mongols from the south was looking for a political ally. In the 1480s Lithuanian prince Jagaila was invited to marry Polish princess Jadwiga and become the ruler of two countries. As a 'payment' for that he agreed to convert into Catholicism himself and promote the adoption of Catholicism among the population of Grand Duchy of Lithuania, incorporate it into Poland and pay a certain sum of money. Official sources underline that after this historical point the population of Grand Duchy of Lithuania started to experience a strong influence of Polish and Catholic cultures[194] that negatively affected the development of national consciousness. The Polish influence becomes clear in the case of the aristocratic influence on governmental bodies: full body of rights was given only to Catholic aristocracy and all the population was highly encouraged to convert into Catholicism. These conditions and the struggle for power in the state caused several civil wars.

Alternative sources notice much more damage from the spread of Polish culture, rather than from the spread of Catholicism. The book of Arlou and Saganovich even gives a version that the document of Creve union was falsified by the Polish in 16th century to legislate Polish influence on Grand Duchy of

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[193] Ermalovich M., *Starazhytnaya Belarus*, Minsk, Mastatskaja Litaratura, 1990, p.316

[194] Shtyhau G. V. *Narysy historyi Belarusi*, p. 121

Lithuania[195]. Despite the negative impact from Poland, alternative sources consider this period of Grand Duchy of Lithuania (it still remained independent in the Union till 1569) as the most successful and fruitful for the development of Belarussian culture[196].

One of the most important events of this epoch was Grunvald battle in 1410. The battle put the logical end to the period of crusaders attacks on the territory of the duchy. In this battle united army of duke Jagaila and his brother Vitaut won much more numerous armies of crusaders. This battle is used as an important issue of national mythology, supporting the point of the braveness of the ancestors of Belarussians. Modern political opposition celebrates regular anniversaries of the battle, which became the symbol of the military glory. This symbol is used to oppose the issue of the victory in the World War II, which is stressed by the official authorities.

From the middle of 15th century Muscovy Principality, which was a new state on the territory of Russia started to claim the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In Russian documents of the time such intentions were explained by the necessity of gathering all 'true' (Orthodox) Christians around Moscow. Majority of the population of Grand Duchy of Lithuania was Orthodox by religion. Alternative sources understand these intentions as expansionist policy[197]. Official textbook explains it as the intention of brother nations to create a common state[198].

For the purpose stated above staring from 1492 and 100 years onwards, Muscovy Principality had been waging wars to conquer the territories of Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Sometimes Crimean Tatars supported the Muscovy Prince. The results of the wars were different. Some territories of the Duchy were conquered by Muscovy Prince Ivan III, but later returned to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Famous battle of these times happened on 8 September 1514 near the town of Orsha. Small

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[195] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi*, p. 49

[196] *Ibid*.

[197] *Ibid.*

[198] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 90

army of Grand Duchy of Lithuania won against much bigger army of Muscovy Principality. This fact is just slightly mentioned in official textbooks[199] and highly celebrated by modern political opposition[200].

The situation in foreign policy sphere made Grand Duchy of Lithuania look for the help of Poland and a closer union with it. In 1569 a new agreement named Lublin Union was signed. If all previous agreements between Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania made a confederation of two countries, this new union created one country called Rzec Pospolita ('republic' in Polish language). The treaty assumed that the leader of the country would be the king of Poland and the great prince of Lithuania at the same time. The country introduced common currency and common foreign policy. This fact is accepted by both official and alternative sources.

We can see two types of approach to the fact of Lublin Union. The first is reflected in alternative sources, which underline the advantages of the union, such as success in wars, and military and economical support of Poland. At the same time it does not deny that the union 'opened the door to Polish and Catholic influence'. Sources welcome new opportunities, which the Grand Duchy of Lithuania got. Under these possibilities the source mainly understands the support in the struggle against Muscovy Principality, which by then had become the main military rival[201].

The other approach can be seen in official textbooks. It is stated that Lublin Union was a violent annexation of Grand Duchy of Lithuania by Poland and was a totally unlawful act, 'straight way to Polonisation and Catholicization'. Through this aggressive act, according to the official view of history, Poland imposed its culture and religion on Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which by its culture belonged to the Orthodox Christian world and strove towards an alliance with Muscovy Principality[202].

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[199] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 92

[200] Arlou U. *Ad Rgvaloda da BNR* in *Nevjadomaja Belarus*, Minsk, 2008 pp 30-73, p.49

[201] Arlou U., Saganovich G*., 10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 78

[202] Novik J. K., Martsul G. C., Kachalau I. L., *Historya Belarusi: Padruchnik dla studentau*, p. 86

The 16th century in the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a time of cultural and national development. It was strongly affected by European Renaissance and Reformation trends. This fact is widely used by alternative sources to emphasize the European nature of the Belarussian culture. Unlike the Muscovy Principality that developed in accordance with its own chronology and therefore did not experience the influence of European Renaissance directly, Grand Duchy of Lithuania developed in European history timeline. Alternative sources indicated that Grand Duchy of Lithuania was geographically the most Eastern region of Europe, which felt the influence of the Renaissance[203]. Alternative sources also use the fact that the Rzec Pospolita was the aristocratic republic by its state system as one of the arguments that the Belarussian culture is initially closer to Europe than to Russia. This allows emphasizing the fact that Belarussian political culture is initially characterized by the features of democratic system in contrast to Russia's 'Asiatic tyranny'. To prove it alternative sources emphasize the fact that the King in Rzec Pospolita was elected by the aristocracy, while the Tsar and the emperor of Russia had absolute power. In this case, we can observe the creation of contrasting, made by the alternative source, where the 'European' is understood as democratic, developed and 'Russian', which means tyrannical and barbaric[204].

An alternative source calls the 15th-16th century as the time of formation of Belarussian ethnic community. At this time in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania lived and worked the founder of East Slavic book printing Francis Skaryna. He translated the Bible into Old Church Slavonic (possibly close to the Belarussian language) and printed it using Cyrillic true type alphabet. It is also necessary to mention that although he called the language he used as 'Russian' (mostly referring to the Cyrillic alphabet, widespread in the lands of Orthodox Christianity), the inhabitants of the lands called it '*Litvin*' language, since it was used in the Lithuanian Principality[205].

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[203] Vuhlik I., *Europa tut uzo byla,* p. 217

[204] Arlou U., *Ad Rgvaloda da BNR,* p.35

[205] Arlou U., *Ad Rgvaloda da BNR,* p.44

According to Benedict Anderson, the spread of a national publishing in the national language is an indicator of the beginning of the nation formation process, as it enables the formation of the community which reads the information in the local language and has the possibility to recognize its ethnic unity ('imagine' itself)[206].

Activities of Skaryna also can be understood as the part of the process of creation of the nation in terms of the ideas of Anderson that the printing in the national language also contributes to the emergence of the possibility of a retrospective review of the roots of the nation by providing the ability to read printed materials a few centuries later. We have such an opportunity now and the personality of Skaryna occupies an important place in the gallery of the major figures of the national history.

It is necessary to note that in the preface to 'Psalms', Skaryna writes that "people have a great affection for the place where they were born and grew up". Thus, he formulated the concept of homeland, typical for the era of the Reformation. In this interpretation the importance of local roots of human being, his membership in a particular society is emphasized. Alternative sources use this fact to support the idea that the Belarussian identity was developed according to the European model, in contrast to Russia, which probably refers to the 'Asian type'[207].

Alternative also sources underline the fact, that the Bible was translated to old Belarussian eight years earlier than it was translated into English and the first book was published on the territory of Grand Duchy of Lithuania 47 years earlier than it was published in Muscovy Principality[208].

Both kinds of sources, used in the current study, pay attention to the myth that 16th century in the history of Belarus is known to be a 'golden age' of the country owning to the fact that it was the time of tolerance of the religions and political views in the country.

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[206] Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities,* p. 26

[207] Vuhlik I., *Europa tut uzo byla,* p. 216

[208] Arlou U., *Ad Rgvaloda da BNR,* p.46

Another important achievement of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is the codes of laws - Statutes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which were created in 1529, 1566 and 1588. The last one is the most famous, as it believed to make a big contribution to the world legal system. Timothy Snyder, researcher of Eastern Europe nationality processes states that: "Poland also served to communicate larger trends in European Law: whereas the medieval appropriation of Roman law never reached Muscovy, the Statutes of 1566 and 1588 demonstrate the growing importance of Roman (and Germanic) models in Lithuania"[209]. It can be expressed in the idea of law supremacy, of everyone's submission to a single body of law which runs through the 1588 Statute of Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Rouda notes, that "some articles of the Statute, for instance, the death penalty for homicide, the presumption of innocence, the limitation of serfdom, the declaration of religious tolerance, exceeded the codes of law of the Western European states at that time"[210].

At the same time the Statute of 1588 was created after the Lublin Union and is usually understood by alternative and official sources as an instrument against Polish influence. The name of the Union is not even mentioned in the document. The Statute is written in Old Belarussian language that used to be the state language in Grand Duchy of Lithuania that makes it possible to speak about the development of Belarussian ethnic community in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This fact was widely used further to oppose the opinion that Belarussian is a vernacular, peasant language, while Russian or Polish are the languages of aristocracy, languages of educated people. In fact, the use of Polish language as the official language of the country was introduced in Rzec Pospolita in 1696, when Old Belarussian was forbidden for the use in state documents of Rzec Pospolita.[211].

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[209] Snyder T. *The reconstruction of nations: Poland, Lithuania, Ukrane, Belarus. 1569-1999*. Yale University press, 2003, p. 20.

[210] Rouda U., *Zapad est' Zapad, Vostok est' ili mogut li oshibatsa krupneishie politologi sovremennosti?* in *Belotusy i rynok*, July 26- August 2, 2004, available online at: http://www.br.minsk.by/index.php?article=22606

[211] Novik J. K., Martsul G. C., Kachalau I. L**.,** *Historya Belarusi: Padruchnik dla studentau*, p. 89

An important event in the religious and social life of the country was Brest religious Union of 1596. The text below explains generally acknowledged information on this disputable issue, while later there are concrete positions in respect of this fact. At this time the forces of Counter-Reformation were winning the struggle for the beliefs of people in Europe. The main acting organization, representing the Pope, was Jesuit Church, which struggled against people converting into Protestant branch of Christianity. On the territory of Rzec Pospolita and especially Grand Duchy of Lithuania Protestant beliefs became popular in the beginning of 16th century. In contrast to situation in Western Europe where Protestantism was mainly the religion of peasants, fighting against arbitrariness of ecclesiastical organization, Protestantism in Grand Duchy of Lithuania was more popular among the nobility. Brest religious Union was conceived by Jesuits. Together with the struggle against Protestantism in Rzec Pospolita it aimed to subordinate the territory of the country to religious and political influence of the Pope and Catholicism[212].

Other important aims included the fight over the influence on population with Russian Orthodox Church and the consolidation of the population of Rzec Pospolita under one religion in order to stop religious confrontation in the country. The problem of the struggle for the people in the religious sphere was also reflected on the specifics of the national consciousness of Belarussians. Thus, in the documents of the beginning of the 20th century the population was divided according to following principle: the ones who belonged to Orthodox Church were defined as Russian, the ones who were Catholics as Polish. Despite the fact that the Belarussian nationality is not reflected in this division, it must be remembered that Belarussians in the Great Duchy of Lithuania was often called as Russians, as well as Skaryna used to call the language he printed on as 'Russian'[213].

According to the conditions of the religious Union new religion named as Uniate (now it is called Greek Catholic Church) was created. Ceremonies and the

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[212] Arlou U., *Ad Rgvaloda da BNR,* p. 50

[213] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 113

traditions were taken from Orthodox Christianity, but organization was subordinated to the Pope. Conversion process wasn't made peacefully, sometimes force was used. The role of the Union and the effect of new religion over the territory are interpreted inconsistently. Alternative sources understand the effect of the religious Union positively: it was favoring the development of Belarussian self-determination by uniting the citizens with one religion; it was supposed to put an end to religious wars[214].

Official sources speaking about the process of implementation of the religion, mention the resistance of Orthodox clergy and the people, increasing influence of Polish culture and Catholicism[215]. The conditions of the Union also called for prohibition of the opening of Orthodox churches and non-admission of the participation of Orthodox representatives in the work of local and state government, what made the Polonisation to increase. The source also underline that the main aim of the Union was to put obstacles in the way of Orthodox Church, which negatively affected the development of Belarussian national identity that were based (and is still based) on Orthodox values[216].

However, at the end of 18th century when Belarussian territory was included into Russian Empire the amount of followers of the faith of Uniate was about 80% of Belarussian population. It should be noted that under the terms of the union religious rites kept in accordance with Orthodox canons. For this reason, majority of the population was not quite aware of the difference in these two religions[217].

The beginning of 17th century was the time of discord in Muscovy Principality: crop failure, famine, death of the last tsar of the dynasty caused power struggle and social revolts. Bad times of the neighbor state were used by Rzec Pospolita as a chance to conquer it. The attempt was done indirectly, by trying to put a Polish protégé on the Russian throne. As a result of long struggle for power protégé

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[214] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 94

[215] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi t,* p. 146

[216] *Ibid.*

[217] *Ibid.*

was removed by the rebellion. Official history textbook is interpreting this attempt as a willing of two 'brother nations' (Russians and Belarussians) to live in one country[218].

The war of 1654-1667 (often called as 'unknown war') between Muscovy Principality and Rzec Pospolita is a highly discussed issue in Belarussian historical science. The war began because of the claims of Russian tsar Aleksey Mihailovich for the territory of Belarus and Ukraine as primordial territories of Moscow Princedom. As a result of the war 52% of the population of Belarus was killed, died of starvation or taken as captives to Moscow. Later the war turned into civil confrontation, because a part of Belarussian and Ukrainian population defected to Russians. Also the war is said to be the first case of well-known Belarussian tradition of guerilla, which means a self-organization of the population in defense from the enemy, widely used in World War II. The arguments around the war concern the character of the war. Oppositional sources underline the wildness and mercilessness of Russians[219], bordering on genocide.

In the middle of 18th century Rzec Pospolita was divided into three parts between Prussia, Austria and Russia. Whole Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which included modern territory of Belarus, Ukraine and Poland belonged to Russia after 1795. Unless this fact is noted in both examined sources, the main reasons of this event are highly discussed in the historical sources and versions are examined in the following text.

One of the most common reasons were the disadvantages of the political system of Rzec Pospolita, which is usually characterized as elective constitutional monarchy, where the King was elected by the nobility and the members of Royal family (in spite of this fact there were several dynasties in the country). Most of political decisions were taken by nobility ('*szlachta*'), who participated in regular sessions of state and local parliament. They also had a full legal right to influence the

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[218] *Ibid.*

[219] Saganovich G., *Neviadomaja vaina 1654-1667*, Minsk, 1995

activity of the King[220]. According to the rules of parliament sessions every representative had veto power; one veto was enough to block the decision. Nobility constituted the 10% of the population, representing varieties of regions, points of view, financial and land interests. Every noble family possessed 6-7 peasants' in average[221]. In fact, Rzec Pospolita can be called as nobility republic. Owning to disorder in the country, arguments in local and state parliaments in the period of 1652-1764, 44 out of 80 sessions of the parliament were disrupted. Between 1744 and 1762, all 11 sessions didn't happen[222]. The country was weakened by political disorder not able to repulse the influence of strong neighbors. This reason is stated in all observed sources.

Official textbook underlines the problem of Orthodox believers in Rzec Pospolita. Since Lublin Union they were incapacitated from voting and taking part in political life of the country. This led to separatism tendencies of Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the attempts to achieve political freedom or full independence of the region. Russian Empire used this situation to spread its influence in order to protect Orthodox, reinstate their rights, even with the use of force[223].

Alternative sources in this issue emphasize the aggression of Russian Empire against a weaker neighbor and the desire to acquire new land. Russian empire is stated to be colonial empire, where the colonies, as opposed to, for example, British Empire, are bordering the parent state[224].

We can not say that the division of the country didn't meet any resistance in Rzec Pospolita. The Parliament of the country introduced the new Constitution of 3 May, 1791, limiting the rights of nobility. Russian army movement inside of the country caused local military confrontations. The biggest act of resistance was the

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[220] Janowski M., *Polish Liberal Thought*, Central European University Press, 2001, ISBN 963-9241-18-0, Google Print: p3, p12

[221] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 94

[222] Novik J. K., Martsul G. C., Kachalau I. L., *Historya Belarusi: Padruchnik dla studentau.*, p. 113

[223] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi*, p.142

[224] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 114

revolt under the direction of national hero of Belarus, K. Kastushka. In spite of these measures the country was divided[225].

4.5 The 'Russian' period

After the accession of Belarussian territory into Russian Empire the new government introduced new laws and regulations. Interpretation of power change in the country in various sources is considered virtually oppositely and supported by facts of opposite character. For example, alternative sources give negative characteristic to the new situation on Belarussian territory. One of the issues of comparison they use is the fact that serfdom conditions of the peasants became stricter, verging on slavery. Russian serfdom traditions are understood as a manifestation of the 'typical eastern tyranny'[226], while serfdom in the Rzec Pospolita was closer to the European tradition of the time and soon had to be canceled. Among other negative consequences of the accession alternative sources mention that most of Catholic churches were closed. Cities with Magdeburg law were deprived these rights. Poor nobility who couldn't prove their noble rights by documents were lowered in the rank to the rank of peasants. Some higher educational institutions were closed; nobility was deprived of their right to get education abroad. Recordkeeping was shifted to Russian language; officials were obliged to speak Russian. These facts are used as the basis for the approval of the beginning of Russification processes on the territory[227].

It is important to emphasize the specificity of interpretation of the event: Rzec Pospolita is understood as European country with European traditions (rights, freedom, 'democracy', European culture) which was annexed by Asian type tyranny and came to the verge of loosing its culture[228].

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[225] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 115

[226] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 116

[227] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 122

[228] Vuglik I., *Europa tut uzo byla*, p. 213

Official textbooks emphasize the positive effect of the event, arguing that new possibilities for Belarus such as new market for local production, which would contribute into the development of the region in economics, politics and social sphere. In addition Russian policies released the territory from Catholic influence and Polonization. Russian empire introduced new functional state machinery, regulating all spheres of life, giving a new birth to the region. One of the most important interpretations made by official sources on the event is the welcome reunification of two brother nations – Russian and Belarussian, which was awaited since the end of 14th century[229].

The year 1812 was the year of war with Napoleon, called as 'patriotic war' in the Russian Empire and the Russian historical literature. Belarussian territory, owning to the location was the battlefield for this war. Napoleon's policy in respect of former Rzec Pospolita was the promise to revive the country, give the power to nobility, favour political, economical and cultural development of the region. Considerable proportion of the nobility and the part of peasants supported the proposal, joined the French army and supplied it with provisions. Alternative sources mention the existence of Temporary Government on the territory of former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.[230]. This fact underlines separatist intentions of the region, which were partly fulfilled.

Napoleon did less than he promised; he mostly used the territory as a source of necessary goods and provisions. Local nobility was disappointed in him and ceased its support; certain part of peasants started to use partisan tactics of fighting against both Russian and French armies. 25% of the population died in this war[231].

In the future the territory of Belarus would be the battlefield for several other wars against Russia, during which the population of Belarus would give some support to the attacking side in the hope of supporting local liberation struggle. As the alternative source mentions, the history of Belarus is gradually becoming a story

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[229] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 176-178

[230] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai history,.* p. 127

[231] *Ibid.*

of betrayal[232]. However, such 'treacherous' tactics shows the presence of national aspirations in the area, the formation of the national forces. This was also indicated by several uprisings against the Russian authorities that have occurred in the 19th century. At this stage it is impossible to speak of purely Belarussian spirit of this struggle. Rather, it had a Polish character or advocated for the restoration of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

In the 19th century Russia, as well as in European countries, the idea of nations and nationalism appeared. Hobsbawm associate this trend with the development of capitalist relations in the society[233]. This idea is partly supported by the fact that the nationalist movements of the 19th century often combined the struggle for national liberation of the peoples with the struggle for social equality, which led to national bourgeois revolutions.

Capitalist tendencies in the economic development of the Russian Empire in the 19th century were not as noticeable as in European countries. For this reason, resistance was mostly concentrated in the landlord class and was expressed in the creation of clandestine student societies and groups of intellectuals advocating reform or overthrow of the existing regime. In case of Belarus, such secret groups existed at Vilnius University, and after its closure at the universities of St. Petersburg. The ideas of these groups were mainly related to the fight against the Russian government and Russian domination. They called for the restoration of the Rzec Pospolita and Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The struggle of this kind of organizations was expressed in the support of the famous Decembrist revolt and organization of the uprising of 1830-1831. The existence and work of clandestine societies is covered in both examined sources, while the alternative source stresses the national component of the struggle of them[234], and the official history focuses on the struggle for social equality[235].

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[232] Vasuchenka P., *Belarus mitalahizavany, histarychny i realny* in *Nevjadomaja Belarus*, Minsk, 2008, p. 95-125

[233] Hobsbawm E., *Nations and nationalism after 1780: program, myth, reality*

[234] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 140

[235] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 184

Gradually, the ideological content and purpose of the secret societies in addition to politics also acquired an ethnic character. Members of societies were engaged in research of national culture and language of Lithuania, Poland and Belarus. This first interest to people's culture can be interpreted as the starting point of mature development of ethnographical knowledge about Belarussian tradition, which would be widely used in future. It should be noted that in ongoing ethnographic research peasantry, 'the simple people' act as an object. The subject in this case was small gentry ('*szlachta*') - educated layers of the society. So-called intelligentsia was formed[236]. It may be noted that this period corresponds to the stage 'A' on the theory of Hroch, during which the initial accumulation of ethnographic material occurs. This material will be later used for political purposes, to achieve national independence[237].

Anderson, describing the national processes of 19th – beginning of 20th century, notes that the educated strata of society play a role of 'the Baptist' the common people, explaining importance of the struggle for national values[238].

The activities of secret societies and their participation in the uprisings did not go unpunished by the authorities. In many ways, repressions and prohibitions resulting from the reaction of the authorities contributed to the slowing down of the national development. For example, after suppression of the revolt of 1830-1831, almost all Catholic monasteries, which were actively supporting the rebel were closed, masterminds exiled. The tsar introduced new regulation according to which Russian mobility was getting free land in the region, what was intensifying Russification. Polish language was forbidden to be taught in schools. The 1588 Statute was terminated. The name 'Belarus' which was used before for the eastern part of Rzec Pospolita was forbidden. Instead of it the name 'North-Western region' was introduced. Modern official history textbooks interpret these political measures

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[236] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 142

[237] Hroch M., *Comparative studies in modern European history : nation, nationalism, social change*

[238] Anderson B., *Imagined Communities*, p. 83

as logical consequence of the revolt[239], while alternative source underlines constant pressure of Russian government, which strengthened after of revolt[240].

Since 1830s the Russian Emperor gradually lost control over the country, owing to political and economic crisis in the country. In order to prevent revolution he issued a decree abolishing serfdom, but under certain conditions. This measure reduced revolutionary activity but didn't prevent new (third in a row) armed revolt in 1863 on the territory of former Rzec Pospolita. 70% of participants in the uprising were the nobility (official textbook makes the conclusion out of it that the revolt was Polish by origin[241]), 6% was clergy, 18% were peasants. Headquarters of the revolt was mostly Polish, also with the participation of Lithuanian and Belarussian activists[242].

Headquarters are divided by both types of sources into two groups according to their understanding of the revolt aims. Polish part was called as 'white' and was sounding the restoration of Rzec Pospolita in borders of 1772. It didn't have any social program. The other part known as 'red' was supporting the idea of equality of social classes, transfer of the land to peasants. According to their conception people of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine had the right to solve the question of their independence themselves. 'Red' wing was mostly Belarussian by their nationality. Leader of it was K. Kalinovsky, famous hero of Belarus, whose name is widely used in national mythology. His main motto was 'government for people instead of people for the government'. Kalinovsky was the editor and main author of the first Belarussian newspaper called as "*Muzhytskaja Pravda*" ("People's Truth"), published as leaflet before the rebellion. Alternative sources make stress on the nationality question of the 'red' wing of the revolt and underline national character of the event with regard to Belarus.

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[239] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi*. p. 195

[240] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 148

[241] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi*. p. 197

[242] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi,* p. 153

The revolt was quelled in the beginning of 1864. Kalinovsky, as most of the leaders of the rebel, was executed. One of the main reasons of the failure of the revolt along with the strength of governmental resistance was a disagreement among insurgents, who couldn't come to the compromise in the question of the aims of the revolt. This reason is particularly underlined by official sources, while alternative books stress the cruelty of revolt suppression. Alternative sources in order to describe Russian policy towards Belarus cite the words of the governor of North-Western region towards his subordinates: "Gentlemen, forget the dreams you had before, remember that if you won't become Russian by your thoughts and feelings you will be foreigners here and you would have to leave this land"[243].

It should be noted that the publication of the first Belarussian newspaper in Belarussian language by Kalinovsky is unlikely to be understood as a sign of consolidation of Belarussian nation, as Anderson treats it, speaking about the importance of the distribution of periodicals[244]. *"Muzhytskaja pravda"* by its very nature was rather a series of leaflets explaining the peasants the events occurring in the country in the Belarussian language that they can understand, allowing them to believe that, who wrote this leaflet was close to them in spirit and understood the challenges of their life. It is important to note that under the influence of Polish writing, the newspaper was published in Latin script.

We should keep in mind the fact that in spite of the activity and research of secret societies, it is difficult to speak about the existence of a national research school in Belarus at that time. Dominant approach to the 'Belarussian issue' at that moment was the so-called '*zapadnorussizm*' (west-Russian approach), developed by Russian ethnographers. It was arguing that Belarussian nation does not exist; it is just a part of Russian nation, whose language is spoiled by Polish. The best-known ethnographic work of those times was the monograph entitled 'Belarussians' by Karsky, later dubbed as 'the encyclopedia Belarusica'. It was published from 1903 to 1922 and dealt with as ethnographic characteristics and language of Belarussians. The views of Karsky were close to the ideas of '*zapadnorussizm*', but it should be

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[243] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi*, p. 144

[244] Anderson B., *Imagined Communities*, p. 44

noted that the researcher used the name 'Belarussians' for the people, who themselves often referred to as '*Litvin*' or '*tuteyshy*' (local)[245].

This concept has been part of official doctrine, developed in 1830s, and the proposed by count Uvarov to Tsar Nicholas I. Doctrine said that the core values of the Russian Empire are 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality'. At the same time nationality was understood as the nationality of Russian people, who were supposed to constitute the basis of the state. Anderson, commenting on the events of the late 19th and early 20th century in the Russian Empire, said that the first Russian revolution of 1905 was primarily the struggle of oppressed peoples against Russification, which was expressed in the national doctrine[246]. Commenting on the events of 1905, official sources do not support this idea, arguing that the main purpose was the struggle for the economic freedom, social equality and against the oppression of the nobility[247]. An alternative source brings the facts concerning Belarussian Socialist Gramada (BSG), a Belarussian political party, which played an important role in that period. One of the points in the program of this party was the creation of national autonomy. Under her leadership, in 1906 it was announced the creation of Belarussian Republic. However, this fact is mentioned in passing in an alternative source. Much more attention paid to anti-government activities of the party[248].

In the period before the 1905 Revolution and until 1916 BSG was also actively involved in the national life of the region. Leaders of the party took part in the process of publishing of well-known newspapers of this time – "*Nasha Niva*" ("Our field") and "*Nasha Dolja*" ("Our destiny"). The newspapers carried outreach and educational function in relation to the peasants. Later this period, owning to the importance of the activity of these newspapers was called '*Nasha Niva* period'. The publication of these newspapers and their publishers' activity, this campaign was an

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[245] Karsky E. F., *Belorusy*, p. 234

[246] Anderson B., *Imagined Communities,* p. 61

[247] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 199

[248] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 145

important event in national life. The newspaper appeared in the Belarussian language, at that time was considered the language of the peasants, the uneducated people. Subjects the newspaper dealt with were everyday peasant life, and the development of national culture. Small applications for children and on the topics of agriculture were also published. The newspaper also included literary works, which essentially developed the national literature and language. Periodicals mentioned above contributed to the development of national culture, the unification of the nation ('the imagination of itself', using the term of Anderson)[249]. The newspaper was published using two alphabets at the same time - Cyrillic and Latin, as the Orthodox part of the population used the Cyrillic alphabet, the Catholic used Latin.

An alternative source tells about the three types of identity, common at that time in Belarus. The first 'Russian-Belarussian' or 'imperial' Belarussians understood as part of the Russian nation. Belarussians are recognized as a separate nation, but the language of the people must be Russian, while Belarussian is a 'national' dialect as opposed to Russian as the language of the educated strata. The second 'Polish' variant of the identity declared all the inhabitants of the territory of Belarus, professing the Catholic faith as Poles. The third option, called 'the Polish-Belarussian' or 'local' differentiated the people of Belarus from the Poles and denied any affiliation to Russians. Supporters of this view called themselves as 'local' ('*tuteyshy*') or '*litvin*'. They called the territory of Grand Duchy of Lithuania as their land. Equal co-existence of the Polish, Lithuanian and Belarussian people was supposed to be provided in this state[250]. Thus, an alternative source does not mention the development of purely Belarussian national movement.

Thereby, we can see that the political and national forces in neighboring territories have had great influence on Belarus. It can be noted that related to the political events of this period, alternative sources mention a lot about the Lithuanian

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[249] Anderson B*., Imagined Communities,*

[250] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002,* p. 146

and Polish influence on Belarussians, while the official sources emphasize only the support of Russian political forces[251].

Official sources pay much attention to the tendency of working class struggle against bourgeoisie and monarchy rather than nationalist movements. Describing these events the textbook uses the vocabulary of Soviet era. The vocabulary used in the description of the rebels, along with the sense expounded, may serve as an important indicator of political orientation of the text[252].

One of the important issues that should be discussed in respect to revolutionary events is Jewish participation in political, social and cultural life of the region. Both official and alternative sources agree on the fact, that after the second partition of Rzec Pospolita by the decree of Empress Catherine II, the residence of Jews was announced only possible within the 'boundaries of the Jewish Settlement', which runs West from the Eastern border of modern Russia and Belarus. Moreover, the settlement of Jews was not possible in rural areas. Owing to high percentage of Jewish population on Belarussian territory in times of Rzec Pospolita and mass migration after the partitions, the significant portion of the population of this territory was Jewish. Yiddish language was very common in the region. After Belarus gained independence in the early 1920s Yiddish would be declared one of the official languages of the new state. In the early 20th century, the Jews created their own political party, the *Bund* (Union), which had great influence on political life and played an important role in the history of Belarus. Some researchers are stressing important role of Jewish culture in the process of building a culture of Belarussian cities.

World War I also made the territory of Belarus a battlefield. Military operations on the territory of Belarus continued in the second half of 1915 until February 1917 when the February Revolution occurred. During the war refugees immigrated en masse to Belarus, the region suffered from famine, war, German occupation authorities. Rebellion in the country continued and spread to the army, where soldiers were protesting against the conditions of service and the continuation

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[251] Smaljanchuk A., *Paljaki Belarusi I Litvy u revalutsii 1905-1907 hoda*, Grodno, 2000, 204 p.

[252] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,*. p. 195-205

of hostilities. This situation led to new revolution in February 1917 during which the Emperor was overthrown and new interim Government was installed.

4.6 Belarus after the collapse of Russian Empire

February Revolution did not solve the major economic and political problems, but led to a new October Revolution which occurred in 1917. The party of Bolsheviks came to power and began to establish a new order, introducing its governing bodies, sometimes with the use of force. These events in Belarussian history are interpreted extremely controversially, which can be noticed even in the language used. Alternative sources emphasize the use of force to establish the power of Bolsheviks and the resistance to them of local democratic and nationalist political forces[253]. Official sources are stressing 'glorious victory' of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, the victory of truth over the "rotten bourgeois and national-separatist values"[254].

One of the most discussed events of this time is the history of Belarussian People's Republic (BPR) in early 1918. The history of this state is the significant part of national mythology, founded by political opposition and denied by official sources. Alternative sources state that German occupational regime gave all nations of occupied territories wide range of national rights, including the right to get education in the native language, what influenced national development positively[255]. The events described include The First All-Belarussian Congress on the 18th of December 1917, which was disbanded by Bolsheviks as local power representatives. Alternative sources understand this event as a violation of law of the nation's self-determination[256]; officials stress the point of the congress being illegitimate itself[257].

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[253] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 163

[254] Chigrinov P. G., *Istoria Belarusi*, p. 181

[255] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002,* p. 172

[256] Kandybovich A., *Razgrom natsyjanalnaha ruhu Belarusi*, Minsk, Belaruski Histarychny ahlad, 2000, p. 23

[257] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi*. p. 294

Alternative sources give much attention to this particular period of national history, understanding it as the first mature attempt of the creation of sovereign nation state on the territory of Belarus. This state was named as Belarussian People's Republic (BPR) and was announced on March 9th, 1918 in Minsk. The state was recognized by 11 countries, including Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Turkey[258].Official sources point to the fact that the state was declared on the occupied territory and therefore could not be considered independent, especially giving attention to the fact that the government abandoned its territory together with the occupation authorities. Alternative sources go into details trying to explain the position of the government of BPR, which sought to reach an agreement with the newly independent Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, 'white' (anti-Bolshevik) part of Russia and Germany for support against the Bolsheviks, but the negotiations were unsuccessful[259]. Due to the fact that German occupation forces didn't allow BPR create its own army, the country couldn't defend itself against Bolsheviks.

After Germans left the territory, in December 1918 and the power of Bolsheviks in the region was established again, the foundation of new country called the BSSR (Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) was announced on the 1st of January 1919. Its government consisted of Bolsheviks and their supporters. Alternative sources emphasize that the movement against the Bolsheviks was still strong and give the examples of this resistance: the suppressed uprisings and confiscation of weapon in Vitebsk and Mogilev provinces in late 1918 – early 1919[260]. 2nd-3d February 1919 All-Belarussian Congress (called by alternative source as anti-Belarussian congress[261]), organized by Bolsheviks, adopted Constitution, created following the example of the Constitution of Russian Soviet Federate Republic (RSFSR).

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[258] Arlou U., Saganovich G. *10 vjakou belaruskai historyi*, p. 170

[259] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 207

[260] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002,* p. 217

[261] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*

Due to the fact that the World War I was still going on and there was redistribution of territories, the Polish occupation regime was established in the Western part of Belarus. From the February 1919 to summer 1920 region was under Polish power. Polish authorities wished to restore Rzec Pospolita and didn't take national interests of Belarus into consideration. This period is named as the second Polonization by official sources. In summer 1920 the region was recaptured by Bolsheviks. On December 30th 1922 the BSSR became the part of the new state – the USSR, where it received the status of autonomous republic.

4.7 Belarus in the USSR

World War I, two revolutions, Civil War, and occupation resulted in economical breakdown, which led to famine in several regions. In early 1920s the state introduced policies to support private enterprise, even if it was part of the conflict with the ideological position of the ruling proletariat. Official sources outline the high level of development of the region in mid 1920s, when the government changed economic policy. Alternative sources claim that 'economical miracle', which Lenin promised to occur due to the new policy didn't happen in Soviet Belarus[262], so the conclusion can be made that the policy wasn't successful.

Also, the period of early 1920s was the time of state's loyal attitude to the development of national values. At this time in the BSSR four languages were declared official: Belarussian, Russian, Lithuanian and Yiddish. State machinery and education was held in Belarussian. Belarussian State University, Institute of Belarussian culture (later Academy of Science), and national archive were created and therefore promoted the development of national education system. Alternative sources tell that national development was not entirely free, and it was controlled by the state, giving the impression of the temporality of this policy [263]. Official sources evaluate the event positively, merely stressing the problems of switching into Belarussian, as the language was not developed in official and scientific terminology.

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[262] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002,* p. 248

[263] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 252

Official textbooks also mention the fact that some of political and cultural figures of Belarus, who remained in emigration abroad since the creation of the BSSR were returning to Belarus after noticing the success of national development[264].

At this time, possibilities for research and development of Belarussian language appeared. In 1918 "Belarussian Grammar for Schools" was published by Bronislav Tarashkevich, which normalized Belarussian spelling and grammar rules in Cyrillic. These norms of Belarussian language in Soviet times were used up to grammatical reforms of 1933, when Belarussian language was made closer to Russian. In 1991 the Republic of Belarus gained independence, and the variant of Belarussian called as '*Tarashkevitsa*' after the name of its reformer began to be used in nationalist circles (after it undergone several reforms).[265]

An alternative source, speaking of the nature of Belarusization of this period describes its 'soviet', 'proletarian' character which turns to be completely different from the Belarusization of "*Nasha Niva*" time. Here, perhaps, is the beginning of the dual understanding of Belarus, the existence of 'two Belarus', which can be observed in the present situation, and which is strongly emphasized the political opposition in our time. According to this version supported by Akudovich there is Belarus of Mickiewicz and Belarus of Bagushevich. Both of these men were Belarussian poets. Mickiewicz in his poetry represented Belarus from the position of the gentry, poor nobles, in their material status rather close to the peasants. Values of their culture have been linked to the traditions of their ancestors, self-development, and political liberalism. Bagushevich in his work wrote mainly about the peasants and their hard work, extreme poverty, depression, attempting to show how bad the life of Belarussian people was. From these different representations Akudovich displays contrasting projects of Belarussian identity. Mickiewicz shows a nationalist paradigm that is supported by the political opposition in both cultural and political sense. Bagushevich gives rise to the 'proletarian' paradigm, as evidenced in the 'Soviet' identity of Belarussians. Akudovich notices here that the latter is much more

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[264] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 294

[265] Available online at: http://www.svaboda.org/content/transcript/801947.html

prevalent in contemporary Belarus. In his essay he says that "Belarus lives without us"[266].

In mid 1920s the government started the policy of nationalization of industry and agriculture. The policy included not only nationalization in economical sense of this term; it was also the policy of unification of the nation in social and cultural sense. Every innovation in the politics or the economy of the country was supported by a strong ideological base. Thus, anyone who spoke out against certain policies was understood as opposed to the ideological system of the state, against the government, against the people and the whole truth. Ideological system built a hierarchy of values and goals of the people rallied the people around declared values. It also rallied them against those who might already have opposed the regime.

Starting from the late 1920s with Stalin's coming to power the policy in the USSR and accordingly in the BSSR becomes much tougher. Shootings, forced exiles in case of disobedience become more frequent, reaching their peak in the late 1930s. First victims of the repressions in Belarus, as it is stated in alternative source, were figures of Belarussization, accused of separatism or high treason[267]. Legal system was changed so that it became possible to sentence without trial or with the trial by a commission consisting of three officials. Repressions affected 'enemies of the people', 'separatists', representatives of certain nations, '*kulaks*', clergy and strong believers, oppositionists to the Communist Party, army and NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs). Also the acts could affect members of the family of the listed above and their friends. Repressions were also applied to the books, written by subjects of political repressions and works of unwanted authors from abroad, the main idea of which was not supported by the Party. According to approximate calculation of the alternative sources, on the territory of Belarus about 600 thousands of people out of 5 million populations (1926) became the victims of repressions[268]. Official sources are not giving concrete number. Aggression was

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[266] Akudovich V., *Bez nas*, available online at: http://old.knihi.com/frahmenty/post-ackudovicz.htm

[267] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 270

[268] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 296

targeted at religion, which was announced to be 'opium for the people'. In 1938 only two of the 1445 churches (pre-revolutionary numbers) were functional on the territory of the BSSR[269].

Russian language became the most used in the region as a language announced to be the source of international communication. Alternative sources characterize it to be the period of strong Russification. They support the point of view by the fact that Russians were relocated to this territory in order to dilute national composition[270].

Thus, 1920s and 1930s are interpreted controversially by the sources used. Official sources underline the progress in industrial development, agriculture, and cultural sphere.[271] Alternative sources believe that the creation of the BSSR was a mistake and they condemn each of the political lines of the Soviet leadership, especially emphasizing the damage to national development of Belarus[272].

The World War II, which began in Europe on 1 September, 1939 for the Soviet Union launched with the Soviet-Polish war. Soviet troops entered Poland, intending to get back Western Belarus, which since the end of World War I belonged to Poland. Accession of the region occurred on 17 September, 1939. This historical fact, understood in Belarus and Soviet history as reunion of Belarussian nation and is highly celebrated at the same time is interpreted as the day of Russian aggression in Polish historical science. Another important point concerning reunion of Western and Eastern Belarus deals with the level of economical and cultural development of the regions. Official sources argue that Poland was using the territory of Western Belarus as an economic appendage, without any concern for region's economic development[273]. Alternative sources counter that at the time of accession, farmers of

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[269] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 296

[270] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 296

[271] Chigrinov P. G. *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 300

[272] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 303

[273] Chigrinov, *Istoria Belarusi, p. 301*

Western Belarus were richer than the peasants of the Eastern part[274]. Religious education and the education in local language were allowed in the Western part. Market relations were developing, while in the Eastern part the farmers were grouped into so-called collective farms ('*kolhoz*'), products of which were distributed by the state.

On June 22 1941 German army entered the territory of the Soviet Union by attacking the Brest Fortress, located on the Western border of Belarus. By the end of July 1941 the entire territory of Belarus had become a zone of occupation, where the new government established a new order. In Soviet historiography the period of the Second World War (the period from 22/06/1941 to 09/05/1945 is usually called Great Patriotic War) was seen as a heroic confrontation with the 'brown plague' of fascism and its spread around the world. The Soviet Union, 'with the blood of its soldiers saved the world from a terrible disaster'. Belarus in this historic struggle is known as a 'guerilla republic', which 'fiercely fought for victory in the harsh conditions of occupation'[275].

The story of World War II is contained in the official Belarussian historiography in the same vein. The war is given one of the most important places in the history of the state. Victory Day as a national holiday is one of the biggest events of the year in contemporary Belarus. The course of World War II history is obligatory for students of higher educational institutions regardless of specialty[276].

Both official and alternative historians agree on the point that the German occupation authorities sought to support the national interests of the occupied territory because national interests tend to run counter to the interests of the Soviet Union as a whole state and, consequently, the support of the occupying forces. The occupation authorities have created the possibility for partial self-government of the

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[274] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 310

[275] Chigrinov, *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 302

[276] Available online at:
http://dossier.bymedia.net/index.php?option=com_apressdb&view=publications&layout=entry&id=3 5327

territories, supported the development of national education and recreate religious organization.

One of the most discussed phenomena of the war is the issue of collaboration. Official sources state that cases of collaboration were rare and the collaborators were those who considered themselves to be offended by the Soviet regime[277]. Alternative sources outline the split of the society into supporters and opponents of Soviet power. Famous Belarussian philosopher Akudovich even describes the Great Patriotic war as a civil war on Belarussian territory[278]. The movement, supporting occupation authorities was much more active in the Western part, recently added to the USSR and in the South, where it was connected with Ukrainian nationalists, fighting against both Soviets and Germans.

The question about the activity of guerilla and the underground movement during the occupation period can be examined from different perspectives. Official sources consider the guerrillas as heroes, while the alternative source, detailing the events, describes robbery, murder, and the pressure on civilians committed by the guerrillas during certain periods of the war. Official sources say that during the period since mid 1943 until the end of the war, when the Red Army began to take revenge, the regions fully controlled by the guerrillas started to appear on the territory of Belarus. At these regions civilians lived an ordinary life as they lived before the war and even paid taxes.[279].

It is important to underline the nationalist movement at that time. Both sources agree on the fact, that on June, 27 1943 the second All-Belarussian Congress on occupied territory was held; all 103 participants of it declared an independent state of Belarus. They also abolished the right of the BSSR to be called the Belarussian national state, canceled agreements concluded on behalf of the BSSR and declared themselves the provisional government in Belarus.

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[277] Chigrinov, *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 305

[278] Akudovich V., *Arhipelag Belarus*, Minsk, 2010, p. 57

[279] Shybeka Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002,* p. 325

Official sources deny the legitimacy of the Congress, considering it a 'disgrace'. The source also mentions that Congress participants used so-called 'oppositional' flag of Belarus (white-red-white horizontal stripes)[280]. The flag was also used as battle-flag and the state symbol of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It also was also as a symbol of Belarussian People's Republic in 1918. The flag was later chosen as a symbol of the state of independent Belarus in 1991, but was declared a discredited by connection with the collaboration and abolished in 1994.

Figure 4.1 'Oppositional' flag and national emblem '*Pagonya*'
Source: http://lys75.livejournal.com/51304.html

A new flag of Belarus is a cloth with red and green horizontal stripes and vertical national ornament placed at the flagpole. It is almost completely restored BSSR flag except there is no hammer and sickle in the upper left corner.

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[280] Chigrinov P. G., *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 330

Figure 4.2 Official flag of the Republic of Belarus

Source: http://states-world.ru/state.php/480

Figure 4.3 Official flag of Belarussian Soviet Socialistic Republic

Source: http://sovietera.net/gerb/republics/bssr.php

The declared temporary government failed; on July 3, 1944 when Minsk was liberated from German occupation Belarus became the part of the USSR again. During the war 30% of the population died, the territory was devastated. Due to its major contribution to the victory over fascism, the BSSR along with the Soviet

Union became a member of the United Nations Organization (UNO) after signing the Statute of UNO on 26 June 1945[281].

Country's economic system was based on the planned economy system and the distribution of wealth. Regulation of production outputs, planning of construction and agriculture was carried out by the state for the period of five years. Different regions of the country had different economic specialization. All of them were dependent on the decisions of the central authority in Moscow. Belarussian SSR was known as the 'assembly line' of the Soviet Union. Here assembly plants of large agricultural machinery, machine tools, large equipment were located. Plants for the production of parts for this equipment were located in other republics of the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of the gap of economic relations, economic situation has become difficult for Belarus. Official sources, speaking about the history of the USSR, give much attention to economical development; devote entire pages to listing of innovations built factories and collective farms *('kolhoz')*[282].

Alternative sources, commenting on the economical development of Soviet Union remind that the rapid pace of economic development was provided by a strong intensity of the work force. They also focus on the fact that private property was almost absent in the state and therefore private initiative in economic and social spheres was also undeveloped. In the social sphere a private initiative was even dangerous, as political pressure was still strong. It was not possible to develop free political relations and national development was almost totally suppressed[283].

Alternative sources also write about the tough Russification politics, anti-Semitism and the continuing repression by the authorities. This policy led to the organization of secret societies to combat the current authority since the end of the war until the mid 1950s, then since the late 1960s and until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Shybeka marks a new rise of national development since the late 1960s. At

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[281] Chigrinov P. G., *Istoria Belarusi,* p. 332

[282] Chigrinov P. G., *Istoria Belarusi, p.* 334

[283] Shybeka, Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 382

this time, relatively large numbers of people interested in history, ethnology, literature of Belarus appeared. The source reports that they "remained in silent opposition to the regime"[284]. At the same time they were engaged in the study of culture and history of Belarus. Official sources don't mention these facts.

In 1986 the Chernobyl disaster occurred. Its impact directly affected at least 20% of the population and made significant part of the territory unusable. The fact of the catastrophe and its consequences are often used by the opposition as a way to emphasize the lack of attention of Soviet and modern Belarussian authorities to the population and its problems. Political opposition sources blame the Soviet regime and, consequently, modern Belarussian regime, for a low level of public awareness of the catastrophe and its possible consequences, as well as the measures against the effects. Since 1989, political opposition has been organizing the annual parade dedicated to the Chernobyl accident, attracting, therefore, the public's attention to the problems of consequences of the disaster.

As we can see from the examined positions on the history of Belarus, the approach of the understanding of the history by official and alternative sides mostly deal with the attitude to Russian state, characterizing its participation in the development of Belarussian nation. But at the same time official sources underline positive influence of Russia; alternative sources understand its influence as negative. Russia for an alternative source acts as the civilizational 'other'. They often emphasize the belonging of Belarus to European civilization, visible throughout the course of history (and therefore, initial belonging to European democracy). Underlining the 'historical values' of Belarussians, official side focuses on Belarussians' tolerance and the feeling of justice, while alternative position points out the respect to private property, understanding of personal dignity of the human being and democracy. With regard to the present, alternative sources often point out that the people of Belarus are aware of their Europeanness and, therefore, the official concept counters the nature of Belarussian nation[285]. It is important to mention, that the reconstruction of the history by opposing sides involves emphasizing of different

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[284] Shybeka, Z., *Narys historyi Belarusi 1795-2002*, p. 382

[285] Saganovich G., *Istoricheskaja politika v sovremennoi Belarusi* in *Russkii vopros*, No 2, 2009

periods of the history of the country. Thus, the alternative side focuses on the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and official - for the period of the BSSR. This indicates the geopolitical priorities of the parties.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Present study analyzed two different projects of Belarussian national identity, which compete in the nation-building of the Republic of Belarus. One of them is represented by the official ideology of the current regime in Belarus. The other project provides an alternative approach to the existing governmental policies. It is offered by the political opposition and a group of independent intellectuals. These projects are reviewed in terms of their approaches to nationalism and ethnicity considering in the framework of modern studies of nationalism. The projects are examined in the light of two main theoretical dichotomies of civil vs. ethnic nationalism and the debate between modernist vs. ethnosymbolist to national identity and ethnicity. The context of the Soviet theory of ethnos and the studies of nationalism in post-Soviet countries are also taken into consideration, as the Republic of Belarus is the successor of the Belarussian SSR, which was the part of the Soviet Union. The study also takes into consideration the features of the existing political regime, which is defined as a form of non-party authoritarianism as an important factor of nation and state building process in Belarus. The main purpose of the study is to review the projects of nation-building in Belarus from the perspective of the above mentioned theoretical alternatives, and the comparison of the projects with each other.

The study showed that both the official and alternative version of the Belarussian identity, and, accordingly, their projects of nation-building contain elements of both ethnic and civic nationalism. This conclusion confirmed the assumption, which was expressed in the beginning of the research. The elements of civic nationalism include the consideration of Belarussian people as citizens of the Republic of Belarus and the inhabitants of the territory of the country, regardless of their ethnical self-determination. This was accompanied by the understanding of the

parties that the construction of the nation-state must be based on the needs of the population (regardless of its ethnical belonging). This view illustrates the idea of Renan who defines the nation as 'a daily plebiscite'[286]. However, both approaches also use the ethnic elements in the structure of their projects. One of these elements is the development of the different versions of the history of the country. Reconstruction of the historiography confirms the fact that the opposing sides seek to trace the development of Belarussian ethnic community and, therefore, see the link between ethnicity and the modern nation. An important element of ethnic nationalism is the emphasis on the importance of the active usage of Belarussian language and the need to legitimize it as the only official language of the country, opposed to the existing official bilingualism (the argument is used by the alternative project). Another important feature is the development ('remembrance') of the national historic symbols of the country, associated with the history and culture of the people (used in both projects). This is manifested in the usage of different state symbols (such as coat of arms and flag) to represent the country. The symbols used are associated with the certain periods of the history, in which it has appeared, and therefore, the usage of them puts the emphasis on the importance of these periods for the development of Belarussian identity. Also, both projects accentuate on the emotional attachment of Belarussians to their country ('the land where our ancestors lived'). Both projects also agree that the Belarussian ethnic community was the forerunner of the Belarussian nation. They use the above mentioned versions of the history to confirm this idea. Difference in the opinions is just that projects emphasize the importance of the different periods in the history of Belarus, as well as characterize the influence of European and Russian culture on the development of Belarussian national community. Both projects underline that despite the importance of the national past of Belarus which determines the present political and geopolitical development of the country, the modern preferences of Belarussian people are the more important at the moment. Thus, the parties do not deny the ethnic factor, but stress the importance of the civic elements too. This is partly a legacy of the Soviet

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[286] Renan, E., *What is a nation?*

theory of ethnos, which considered an ethnic past as an important and undeniable factor for the development of the community, though stressed the need for further development based on the contemporary social reality. In the context of the Soviet approach, proletarian internationalism was expected to be the method for the overcoming ethnic differences, which would create a 'new historical human community - the Soviet people'[287]. Some researchers, in particular, Connor, used the term of ethno-nationalism in relation to the situation in post-Soviet states[288]. It is commonly assumed that "ethnonationalist movements signify the perception among members of a particular ethnic group that the group's interests are not being served under the present political arrangements"[289]. Connor notes that such an approach is typical for the territories where the Marxist-Leninist approach to ethnicity was applied. In accordance with the opinion of Connor, "Marxist-Leninist movements have learned to cloak their pre-revolutionary appeals in ethnonational garb"[290]. This determined the presence of the odd mixture of ethnic and civic nationalism in the post-Soviet states. It also plays an important role that in the Russian language, the term 'nationality' refers to ethnicity rather than a nation. Thus, the perception of ethnicity is separated from belonging to a particular state, even if it is a nation-state, while in Western sense these two terms don't have this connection and 'nationality' means rather a 'citizenship'[291]. This can be noted in the emphasis, which is made by the alternative project of Belarussian identity on the emotional attachment of the Belarussians to the 'Belarussian land'. The concept of the 'land' in this case does not imply the state, but only a mythical concept of the territory together with its natural

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[287] Available online at: http://tapemark.narod.ru/kommunizm/188.html

[288] Connor, W., *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University press, 1993

[289] Available online at:
http://imej.wfu.edu/articles/1999/1/02/demo/Glossary/glossaryhtml/ethnonationalism.html

[290] Connor, W., *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1984, p. 357

[291] Shanin T., *Soviet theories of ethnicity: the case of a missing term*, available online at: http://www.newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=1398

resources in which the Belarussians 'originally lived'[292]. It should be noted that the alternative project emphasizes this due to the recognition of the current government (and, hence, the state system) as illegitimate. Because of this the political opposition understand Belarus as 'people and the land they are living on', rather than 'people and the ones who govern them'. But at the same time the project uses an established stereotype of distinguishing ethnicity and nation, as well as the distinction between the country and the state.

However, it should be noted that using the term ethno-nationalism, Connor means the vigorous activity of nationalist movements in the country, which leads to regime change. In Belarus, in the period of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the activity of nationalist movements was not so widespread. It also can not be noted that nationalist movement was not widely supported by the population. As already mentioned the formation of an independent state of the Republic of Belarus after the collapse of the Soviet Union was not caused by the rise of the nationalist movement, although the latter occurred during this period. Based on the fact that the period of 'national revival' of the early 1990s lasted only four years and then was replaced by the 'dictatorship of the Soviet-type', we can say that the struggle for the independence of Belarus was rather the struggle against the communist regime[293]. But the fact that in today's Belarus it is possible to observe the presence of elements of 'Soviet socialism' should also be taken into consideration[294]. This can be an argument against the fact that the Belarussian people in the struggle for independence fought against socialism as such. Rather, the struggle was against certain of its elements.

Thus, both official and alternative positions cannot be considered to be the purely ethnic or civic, they are rather a mixture of both manifestations of nationalism. In this regard, both projects come from one theoretical standpoint,

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[292] Examples for such an emphasis on the emotional attachment to the land are the most widespread in the Belarussian literature, as well as in contemporary music project of the alternative side called as "*Ja naradziusya tut*" (I was born here), which was discussed in Chapter III of this thesis.

[293] Holmes L., *Post-Communism*

[294] Melnik, V. A., *Gosudarsvennaja ideologija respubliki Belarus*

without favoring only one of the approaches. In practice that tendency can also be observed in the field of political confrontation, as the projects tend to manifest themselves as diametrically opposed. Thus, the official authorities accuse the political opposition to be nationalists, and this term refers to a position directly opposite the peaceful coexistence of peoples within the country and abroad. According to the official authorities, peaceful coexistence is much more typical for the Belarussian people, one of the main features of which is the tolerance for other religions and foreigners due to the historical background of the living at the 'crossroads of Europe'. One of the elements of such a tolerance, in the official version, is the existence of official bilingualism in the country, even considering the fact that the Russian language usage is more common both in formal and in the everyday life spheres. The alternative position considers the prevailing usage of the Russian language the result of Russification, which was subjected to Belarus during the period of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. For this reason, the alternative position believes that the official authorities oppose the development of the Belarussian national culture and advocate for the preservation of the Soviet system by focusing on an important place in Russia and the Soviet Union in the history of Belarus. However, it should be noted that the elements of the Soviet system can be noticeable in the sphere of social and economic development of Belarus, initiated by the official authorities. The political confrontation between official authorities and the opposition, which manifests itself in the field of nation-building, is also reflected in the attitude to Europe. The political opposition emphasizes 'the European past' of Belarus, bearing in mind that Europe is the symbol of democracy. Russia, the importance of which in the history of Belarus is stressed by the official authority, is a symbol of tyranny and authoritarianism. The sides use 'ethnic' arguments to confirm their positions. The opposition notes, that Belarussians have always been characterized by the respect they had for private property and individuality of the human being. The official ideology insists that the original feature of Belarussian national character is the desire for justice and equality (as it was implemented in the Soviet socialist model). Thus, the contrast between

East and West on Belarussian territory gets the meaning of the confrontation of democracy vs. authoritarianism and individualism vs. collectivism.

Thus, we can observe that two projects of Belarussian identity have common theoretical base of the combination of ethnic and civic nationalism, but they make different accents, what is giving the impression of the duality and the opposition in the political sphere, which does not contribute to the constructive development of the sphere of nation-building of the Republic of Belarus. The lack of dialogue between the government and the political opposition, as well as the absence of the opposition in the parliament exacerbates the problem.

With the regard to the consideration of projects of Belarussian identity in the light of modernist and ethnosymbolist approaches to nation and ethnicity, it should be noted that ethnosymbolism provides significantly wider opportunities for the explanation of the Belarussian situation. However, some of the ideas of theorists of modernism are also applicable for the study of national development in Belarus. Thus, the theory of, Miroslav Hroch, with its stages of the development of the nationalist movement, well describes the development of the national movement in Belarus in the period before the formation of the Soviet Union and in the period before its collapse. As also mentioned earlier, his theory includes the stage 'A', which happens when linguists, anthropologists and historians explore folk traditions and form the basis of their 'cultural package', suitable for wider distribution. Stage 'B', according to his theory, is the period when politicians take from 'cultural package' what they consider useful, and use it for the patriotic agitation among the people. However, in accordance with the theory of Hroch, the preparing the stages 'A' and 'B' must be followed by the time of the formation of national states. The nation-state in this case should be understood as a state structure that would be the result of the nationalist movement, and would be fully consistent with the needs of a particular nation[295]. According to the alternative project of national identity, such requirements are not consistent with neither Belarussian SSR, nor modern Republic of Belarus. The absence of stage 'C' (the rise of mass national movement) in the

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[295] Hroch M., *Comparative studies in modern European history : nation, nationalism, social change*

Belarussian situation is also confirmed by the fact that the gaining of the independence by Belarus after the collapse of the Soviet Union did not happen under the influence of the Belarussian nationalist movement, although it rendered some impact on the population.

In accordance with the approach of one of the theorists of modernism, Benedict Anderson, the development of nationalism and the nation occurs under the influence of print culture, which contributed to the development of closer relations within the same cultural group[296]. With regard to the development of Belarussian identity, theory of Anderson can be successfully applied to explain the processes of formation of the Belarussian national unity and development of relationships within this unity. Thus, the appearance of printing in Belarus contributed with the development of a national language and national culture. Another important factor in the development of national culture, was the emergence of 'enlightenment' periodical press in the Belarussian language in the early 20th century (the so-called 'Nasha Niva period'), which also corresponds to the theory of Anderson.

Despite the fact that the modernist approach denies to a large extend the continuity of ethnicity and nation, some of its representatives note that the nationalists often use the ethnic material to justify nationalism. Thus, Gellner notes that the ethnic material may be often used in various ways by the national elites to create a foundation for the nation[297]. The assertion that the ethnic material can be used in various ways allows the creation of various projects on the same ethnic material and thus explains the existence of two rival projects of national identity in Belarus. It also explains the fact that the opposing sides present different justification for their projects, which appears in the reconstruction of the historiography of Belarus. However, as noted in the preceding text, these projects have a common theoretical base, and a distinction is made only in the political sphere. Gellner also notes that the failure of the national project can serve as a reason for the failure in the political life of the project, which partly explains the 'durability' of the official

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[296] Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities*

[297] Gellner E., *Nations and nationalism*

project and the existing government, which is supporting it, as opposed to the constant failures of the oppositional project in the political sphere. Eric Hobsbawm also notes the importance of politics in the construction the historiography of a particular nation, which he understood as an attempt to create a nation and its roots[298]. The two opposing sides in the Belarussian situation use historiography as a tool to justify their position and further build the appropriate policy. Hobsbawm also notes the importance of the factor of the 'other' in the development of national identity. The generally accepted fact (common in the two opposing sides) is that Belarus is situated at the 'crossroads of Europe', which means that it has contact with both the eastern and the western civilization. This suggests that for the Belarussian national identity there are at least two subjects that can act as the 'other', according to which national identity may be lined up. Based on the theory of Hobsbawm, one can say that this is one of the reasons for the very existence of two projects of national identity in the same state and with respect to the same nation.

Modernist approach to nationalism, which denies the continuation between ethnicity and nation, believes that the nation is the result or one of the accompanying elements of industrial society, which was developed under the influence of various factors of the present[299]. For this reason, this approach applied to the Belarussian situation has the potential to explain the Belarussian community as a result of the modern stage of the development. In the context of this approach such events as the development of the nationalist movement and the formation of national state can be considered. Ethnosymbolism also draws attention to the development of the nationalist movement, but understands it, paying attention to cultural elements of the national community. Much attention is paid to the continuation of a cultural tradition of ethnicity in nationalist movements and the usage of ethnic symbols of the community by the nationalist movements. Ethnosymbolism gives importance to the emotionally loaded historical symbols and the emotional attachment to the ethnic territory. In this sense, the ethnosymbolism, can be said to offer more possibilities to

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[298] Hobsbawm E., *Nations and nationalism after 1780: program, myth, reality*

[299] Calhoun C., *Nationalism and ethnicity*

explain the Belarussian situation, as it states the continuation between ethnicity and the nation (which is the modern, transformed form of ethnicity). It should also be noted that this link between ethnicity and the nation more suits the social realms of post-Soviet territories, because in that cultures these two elements constitute an unusual combination, which was called by Connor as ethno-nationalism. If we follow the interpretation of ethnosymbolism, the opposing approaches in Belarus, which offer two different versions of Belarussian national identity, appear as two national elites of one nation, which create symbolic complexes of the national symbols, historically significant for the Belarussian community, which are also emotionally loaded and based on the historical past of Belarus.

In fact, we can observe a situation in which the history of the ethnic community is being used to draw attention to different political priorities. This applies to the assertion of Smith that the ethnic material is used by the national elites in their constructions is wide but not infinite, because the process of the reconstruction of the history is not the 'inventing' of the whole picture, but rather its rebuilding and the re-distribution of accents[300]. Thus, in terms of ethnosymbolism, two projects of Belarussian identity use common material of historiography and culture of the national community make different conclusions from it. At the same time ethnosymbolism recognizes that there is a cultural continuation between Belarussian ethnic community and the present stage of the Belarussian nation.

The approach of ethnosymbolism can also be applied to the description of the combination of ethnic and civic nationalism in the projects of Belarussian national identity, which was noted in the preceding text. Thus, if at the approach of the dichotomy of ethnic and civic nationalism interpretation of the Belarussian national identity by both sides appears as a mixture, then ethnosymbolism can also see the logical sequence of emphasis on ethnicity and citizenship. Ethnic nationalism points to the link between ethnicity and nation in cultural sphere. Civic nationalism refers to the current stage of the development of Belarussian nationalism and the national community, in which ethnicity serves as the basis. The existence of different

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[300] Smith Antony D., *Nationalism and modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism,* p. 85

approaches to the perception of Belarussian national identity, and, accordingly, the process of building a modern nation-state is caused by the geopolitical situation in Belarus, as well as a kind of 'duality' of the historical development of the country.

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