



Council of European Union: Topic 2

The response to Belarusian electoral irregularities

Background:

Democracy is a form of government created by the people and instigated by the rule of political parties elected by the majority. Belarus, a country which became independent in 1991 after declaring itself free from the Soviet Union suffers from democratic oppression. The question arises: when is foreign intervention needed? The truth is that there is no concrete answer without major implications but, the undeniably strong relation this country has with both Russia and China is a partial explanation for the limited interest and action of other fully aware nations.

Electoral fraud can still be found in this modern 21st century, and Belarus is considered one of its most recent examples. Belarus's 30-year-old independence has been mostly ruled by a man named Alexander Lukashenko, who is the head and public image of the communist party "Belaya Rus". This past August, its illegitimacy was once again demonstrated with the re-election of this Communist leader, who many call "the last dictator in Europe". His part claimed to achieve an 80% majority of electoral votes. Alexander Lukashenko sustains the voting procedures were legitimate; however, protests and members of the opposition strong rejected the results, which independent observers also refuted. The government then acted against the opposition, who have become fugitives forced out of Belarus.

Current Situation:

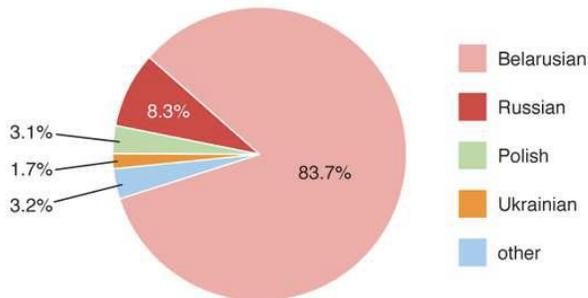
Daily protests have taken over the streets as citizens portray their discontent with the current government. Amid the covid-19 situation, not all voters were able to take part in the election, and that led to an opportunity to undertake this electoral fraud. Many opposition leaders how left Belarus, and these occurrences illustrate severe abuse of power. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, an independent candidate representing the Belarusian democracy movement, was Lukashenko's political opponent. Claiming she won the elections with over 60% of the electoral votes, she had to flee the country and is currently in Lithuania. She hopes to be recognized as the democratically elected Belarusian leader. Currently, the situation is still in the same position it found itself after the revelation of the votes on the 18th of August, 2020.



Important bloc positions:

Belarus's ethnic composition¹:

Ethnic composition (2009)



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Lukashenko's main supporters: Russia, China, Venezuela, and Iran

- **Russia:** Accepted and recognized Lukashenko as the new president and will provide comprehensive assistance to ensure the security of Belarus in the event of external military threats.

Europe:

- **United Kingdom:** Developed direct bilateral military contacts and moved British troops forward, to be deployed on the Belarusian border.
- **European Union:** Said it did not recognize the results of Belarus elections and “would shortly impose sanctions on those who were involved in electoral fraud and repression of protests.”²
- **France:** Promised to help mediate in Belarus, and called for a “peaceful transition” after Emmanuel Macron met with Svetlana Tikhanovskaya in Lithuania.

Role of NATO:

- Belarus is also part of the 30 countries which take part in the NATO treaty of alliances and foreign relationships. However, there has been near silence from **America** regarding the Belarusian fraud.

¹ “People.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/place/Belarus/People.

² “EU to Impose Belarus Sanctions over Election Fraud, Violence: Michel.” Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 19 Aug. 2020, fr.reuters.com/article/us-belarus-election-eu-idCAKCN25F1OV.



Possible solutions:

- Suspending election-rigging apparatus and ensuring that the poll is observed by outside parties
- Poland and Lithuania, the most active members of the EU regarding Belarus, succeeding in pushing the organization into action beyond the usual expressions of “serious concern”
- Military intervention
- Acceptance of continuing rule by Lukashenko (extended indefinitely)

Further reading:

- <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/12/05/the-world-should-not-ignore-systematic-torture-in-belarus>
- <https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/12/05/an-interview-with-svetlana-tikhanovskaya-belaruss-leader-in-exile>
- <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-09-01/belarus-pollworkers-describe-fraud-presidential-election> - poll workers insight on the electoral fraud
- <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/seventeen-oscenations-appoint-team-to-probe-belarus-election-fraud-torture/> - OSCE nations response
- <https://apnews.com/article/international-news-ap-top-news-europe-72e43a8b9e4c56362d4c1d6393bd54fb> - background article
- <https://www.imuna.org/resources/country-profiles/belarus/> - foreign relations of Belarus
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53799065> - article on the August fraud

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