

Election Campaign, Opposition and the Struggling Economy – Digest of Polish Analytics

Polish analysts focus on the results of the recent parliamentary elections and their consequences for Belarus. Experts also take a closer look at the opposition and its performance before and during the elections.

Since the economic indicators provide some worrisome trends, analysts also examine Belarus's economic position in the aftermath of Russia's entry into the WTO.

In *New Eastern Europe* Kamil Klysinski describes negative tendencies that appeared recently in the Belarusian financial market. At the same time, the analyst argues that Minsk does not respond to these increasing difficulties with adequate reforms. He indicates an increase in the amount of money in the market turnover of 21 per cent.

Another factor relates to a significant increase in demand for foreign currency when compared to supply. According to the analyst, the increasing rates of income in the state sector explains the present tendencies. The analyst notes that it is related to the September parliamentary elections. Moreover, the possible dissatisfaction of the state-owned company workers might lead to protests.

In another text for the [Centre for Eastern Studies](#) Kamil Klysinski elaborates on the current economic situation of Belarus. He comments on the loss of an important source of income from exports. This is caused by Moscow, which decided to block the re-export of Russian oil products to the EU countries without export duties. The author argues that because of such practices Minsk could have earned \$2.5bn.

The expert notes that Russia has tolerated these duty free exports since the beginning of 2011. However, due to the lack of proper concessions for the privatisation of strategic Belarusian companies, Moscow decided to sharpen its stance and cut Minsk practises. In conclusion, Klysinski suggests that the economic situation of Belarus is going to deteriorate within the next few months. The Belarusian authorities can decide to devaluate the Belarusian ruble and at the same time, seek more subsidies from Moscow.

Failed Elections Campaigning?

In a [*Bulletin*](#) issued by the Polish Institute of International Affairs Anna Maria Dyner analyses the pre-election situation in Belarus. According to her, the whole campaign had only marginal importance. She notes that because of the repressive regime imposed by the state, a dialogue between the authorities and society did not happen. Thus, the limited airtime given to the candidates, but also lack of interest in the issue among the state media, determined the pre-election mood in the society. Moreover, the analyst argues that no serious discussion concerning the situation of Belarus was carried out in public.

Dyner takes a closer look at the opposition's problems. Among the most burning issues she raises is a lack of united action, but also limited financial resources to run a campaign. The analyst critically evaluates internal divisions within the opposition and their inability to reach out to the Belarusian electorate. At the same time, the opposition parties did not manage to prepare a comprehensive political programme.

She recommends that Poland and the EU prepare a consistent and long-term programme of support for Belarus. So far temporary and short-term actions undertaken by Brussels have failed to bring about any changes. At the same time, she underlines that support for Belarusian society should remain on the EU's agenda.

The opposition's performance in the elections often appears in other comments. In a commentary prepared for the [Centre for Eastern Studies](#) Kamil Klysinski argues that the elections proved not the opposition's only weakness, but also its inability to work out a unified position had a detrimental effect as well. Moreover, the analyst concludes that since the election results have not been recognized internationally, it might lead to further isolation of Belarus and its closer cooperation with Russia.

Fragmented Opposition

In the [Korespondent Wschodni](#) Wojciech Borodzicz-Smolinski analyses the Belarusian opposition. He notes that one of the factors that helps Lukashenka stay in power is the lack of a political alternatives for society. According to him, the divisions within the opposition have two sides.

First of all, they are due to ideological factors. Nonetheless, more important are the apparent private animosities which hinder the integration process of the opposition. Borodzicz-Smolinski highlights the particular moments when the Belarusian opposition attempted to unite. One of the most crucial moments was before the December 2010 presidential elections. The analyst notes that the EU and the West still have to wait for a serious partner from those among the opposition with whom to discuss the future of Belarus.

WTO, Russia and Belarus

Kamil Klysinski also discusses, for the [Centre for Eastern Studies](#), the consequences of Russia's entry into the WTO in August 2012. Minsk will have to decrease the level of import tariffs which in consequence may require a larger opening for foreign goods. At the same time, the Russian market will have to be more open for imports from the WTO member states. Thus it will become more competitive for the Belarusian companies. The analyst notes that all of that does not make Belarus an

attractive country for investment and may delay Belarus's entry into the WTO.

The author concludes that Lukashenka argues that there have been high costs from Russia's entry into the WTO for the Belarusian economy, in order to gain more financial aid from Moscow. Minsk can also aim to export more to non-European markets, which appears as the short-term and temporary solution. Klysinki emphasises that the Belarusian regime has to urgently implement economic reforms.