

Belarus

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Belarus, like other post-Soviet states, gained formal independence from the USSR after the coup attempt in Moscow in 1991. Belarus is coded as a democracy from independence in 1991 until 1995. Interestingly, neither Cheibub et al. (2010) nor GWF considered Belarus to be a democracy during this time. Cheibub et al. have not provided data on democratic regime type and GWF has coded the country as a party-based authoritarian regime from 1992 to 1994, and then a separate personalist authoritarian regime from 1995 continuing until 2008. Since we code these early years as democratic, supplemental sources were used to determine that from 1991 through 1993 Belarus was a parliamentary democracy and that in 1994 it was a presidential democracy (Silitski 2003; Fish 2001). Starting in 1995 we also code the country as authoritarian until 2008.

Unlike other societies, Belarus' government was not restructured immediately; the Supreme Soviet of Belarus stayed in effective power after independence. Stanislav Stanislavovich Shushkyevich was the leader of the Supreme Soviet until January 1994, and he had no political party. In 1994, the deputy of the Supreme Soviet Alyaksandr Lukashenko released a report on corruption in the government that was broadcasted live to the citizenry. This exposition had several important ramifications, including making Lukashenko very popular and causing a vote of no confidence in the Belarusian parliament for Shushkyevich. After Shushkyevich's removal, the Supreme Soviet was led by Vyachaslau Mikalayavich Kuznyatsou for a matter of days while a new chairman was selected, and then by Myechyslau Ivanavich Hryb for several months from January to July. The leadership change from Shushkyevich to Kuznyatsou is not a SOLS change since he was an interim leader. However, the leadership change to Hryb can be coded as a SOLS change. Unlike Shushkyevich who were a reformer, Hryb was pro-Soviet conservative (see Brzezinski and Sullivan 1997:788; Tsygankov 2001:135, Wilson 2011: 158ff) (Note: by our rule Belarus is democratic during this period. Thus, we do not follow GWF coding here).

In July of 1994, the constitution that the Supreme Soviet had been working on over the past months came into effect, and former deputy Alyaksandr Lukashenko won election to the presidency. His ascension to power is coded as a SOLS change because upon election, he assumed an authoritarian style of leadership and led a personalist regime. Lukashenko is still in power today.

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