

BELARUS

Polity5 regime codes:

fac	scode	polity	pers	bmon	bday	byear	emon	eday	eyear	exec	exconst	polcomp
1X	BLR	6	2	8	25	1991	3	15	1994	7	7	6
1Xa	BLR	8	1	3	16	1994	4	10	1995	8	7	7
1O	BLR	0	2	4	11	1995	11	24	1996	8	3	3
1Oa	BLR	-7	22	11	25	1996	99	99	9999	3	2	2

PITF Problem Events:

- 1) 04/95-11/96 (ARC 04/95-11/96)

1X) Date of Change to Factional-Democratic: August 25, 1991 (independence)

Brief Explanation of Change To:

The impending dissolution of the Soviet Union induced great turmoil in the politics of the Byelorussian SSR, as it did in all Soviet Republics. The local Communist Party was largely discredited and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was distrusted. With the cascade of republic declarations of independence in late 1991, the BSSR Supreme Soviet, which was dominated by CPB delegates, also declared independence, banned both the CPB and CPSU, and nationalized party property. Public opposition to the Soviet system initially coalesced in the Belarussian People's Party but oppositional political activism was centered in the trade unions. Pressure by the trade unions and an attempt to initiate a popular referendum by the People's Front to dissolve the Supreme Soviet and hold new elections in order to overcome continued domination by former communists was rejected by the government. Factionalism follows the sudden surge in political restructuring, welfare reformation, and economic privatization dynamics and gains focus in regard to the nature of future relations with Russia. CPB Chairman Dementei supported the anti-Gorbachev coup in the Soviet Union and resigned on August 25, 1991, when the parliament voted for independence.

Identify Main Factions:

- *Pro-Russian Nationalists* — The strongest faction favors closer ties with Russia; it is initially led by Prime Minister Vyacheslau Kebich. Aleksandr Lukashenka gains prominence as Chair of the Anti-Corruption Commission, which is dissolved on April 1, 1994, after Lukashenka accused dozens of top government officials of corruption and abuse of power.
- *Pro-Western Reformers* — The opposition to the pro-Russian nationalists was organized by the Popular Front (*Adradzhenne*; formed in June 1989) and led by the Chair of the Supreme Soviet (head of state) Stanislav Shushkevich. Shushkevich was forced from office by a no confidence vote in the Supreme Soviet on January 26, 1994.
- *Federation of Trade Unions* — The trade unions first asserted their political activism following an outbreak of spontaneous strikes on April 3, 1991; their initial demands focused on disbanding Communist Party cells in factories. The unions and strike committees continued to mobilize dissent and agitate for change through 1995.

Changes within Factional-Democratic Period:

1Xa) March 16, 1994 (lifting ban on communist party; new constitution; direct presidential elections) – On February 3, 1993, the Supreme Soviet voted to lift the ban against the Communist Party, originally imposed in August 1991. On March 15, 1994, the Supreme Soviet

adopted a new constitution introducing a presidential system and direct, multi-party elections. Presidential elections are held on June 23, 1994, and are contested by six candidates, including Lukashenka, Kebich, and Shushkevich. Lukashenka wins a July 10 runoff election against Kebich, gaining 80% of the vote.

10) Date of Change from Factional-Democratic: April 11, 1995 (adverse regime change)

Brief Explanation of Change From:

On April 11, 1995, President Lukashenka threatened to forcibly dissolve the Supreme Soviet after it rejected all but one of the questions he had proposed to be put up for a popular referendum. Later that day, troops expelled 18 opposition delegates from the parliament building; the delegates were staging a hunger strike to protest Lukashenka's pro-Russian policies. Legislative elections held in May 1995 failed to elect a quorum, mainly due to the extremely large number of candidates and the stringent requirements for election (50% of the vote and 50% minimum turnout). Confrontation between the legislature and the president continues through 1995 as Lukashenka claimed that the lack of a quorum disabled legislative powers and "forced" the president to rule by decree; challenges in the Constitutional Court rule mainly against the president's usurpation of legislative powers. November 1995 elections finally establish a legislative quorum but contention between the president and legislature continue through 1996.

Adverse Regime Change: April 1995 – November 1996

A bitter, political feud between President Lukashenka and the Supreme Council (legislature) culminates in a November 1996 popular referendum. Voters strongly approve the President's initiative and institute constitutional changes that strengthen the executive office (allowing the President to rule by decree), disband the Supreme Council, and set up a new bicameral legislature subordinate to the executive.

Changes within (Type) Period:

10a) November 25, 1996 (national referendum) – On November 24, 1996, a national referendum is held and voters overwhelmingly support Lukashenka's proposed measures strengthening the presidency; voters reject the legislature's measure to abolish the presidency. On November 26, 1996, a group of legislators announced their decision to support the president and form the new legislature mandated by the referendum; the old legislature met and voted to dissolve itself. On December 4, 1996, the Chair and three other justices on the 11-member Constitutional Court resigned