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POLITICAL STABILITY CHALLENGES IN THE EEU COUNTRIES: POLITICAL FACTORS INDEX

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This book analyses procedures for ensuring Eurasian Economic Union political stability and promoting Eurasian integration. The political factors of stability and new integration agenda of the EEU member states have been comparatively analyzed by the application of the methodology of the Stability Index of Political System with careful consideration of continually improving the context of legal obligations and harmonizing interstate relations. The book covers a comprehensive study of a number of factors determining the political stability of the EEU member states within 2000-2019. In-country and Cross-country analyses have been conducted within the framework of methodology of the Stability Index of Political System. This book is intended to be used by scholars, experts and students at universities and research centers.

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Abbreviations and Contractions

ABPA	All-Belarusian People's Assembly
C	Crime Rate
CC	Constitutional Council
CD	Civil disobedience
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CL	Civil Liberties
Conf.	Presence of Conflict
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DC	Domestic Credit
DCK	Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan
Def.	Budget Deficit
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EFI	Economic Factors Index
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investments
FITUR	Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Gini	Gini index
GMI	Global Militarisation Index
HDI	Human Development Index
IEF	Index of Economic Freedom
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Inf.	Inflation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OBOR	One Belt, One Road

Abbreviations and Contractions

P	Poverty
PFI	Political Factors Index
PR	Political Rights
RA	Republic of Armenia
RB	Republic of Belarus
RF	Russian Federation
RK	Republic of Kazakhstan
SC	Security Council
SFI	Social Factors Index
Sh.E.	Shadow economy
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SIPS	Stability Index of Political System
T	External Trade Turnover
U	Unemployment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America
W	Real Wage

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INTRODUCTION

The recent developments in the post-Soviet countries testify to the political stability fluctuations that are typical of political turbulence and transitional period in the region. The studies of the Stability Index of the Political System of the EEU countries demonstrate that each country implements internal and foreign policy processes which are unique as such; besides, the former has their peculiarities with a special ratio of regression and progress. At the same time, distinct processes which, in fact, are conditioned by the effects of geopolitical and transitional transformations are obviously displayed in that uniqueness. Various conflict zones, electoral processes followed by subsequently rising waves of civil disobedience, impossibility of a change of the government, revolutions and coups d'état or attempts to make them, political and economic crises are the processes that the countries of the region are regularly faced with. In this context, analysis of the stability of the political system of the EEU countries gains special importance.

Introduction

Today, the EEU with the founding Treaty¹ that entered into force in 2015, unites five post-Soviet states, striving to become a key initiative to link and bring together post-Soviet societies by integrating socio-economic infrastructures and deepening multifaceted cooperation. The EEU has goals in line with the EU principles; also, the supporters, promoting the idea of creating a structure, deem that the Union has the capacity to build bridges to communicate and interact with the European Union. On the contrary, the EEU is viewed by many as a destabilizing project, where Russia's superior position is clearly denoted and which restricts ordinary and systematic cooperation not only among the member states, but also with the West.

The problems existing in the national economies are one of the main obstacles that obstruct the development of the interstate structure and facilitation of economic progress. All member states of the EEU have issues in public administration sphere, as well as in areas related to sovereignty, security, corruption, rule of law and others. The opposing approaches taken by the EEU countries to various political issues notably impede the unity of the structure and its regional integration. These discrepancies can be briefly illustrated by the following examples, such as foreign policy pursued by Russia in Ukraine, politicization of Islam in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan's close relations with Azerbaijan and

¹ The Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (signed in Astana in 29.05.2014, and came into force in 02.01.2015): <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?doc-ID=95203> (26.02.2021).

Turkey, due to which relations with Armenia consistently deteriorate instigated by the Karabakh conflict.

The above-mentioned issues and their studies are certainly essential from a perspective of sustaining development and stability of the region. In this regard, the methodological toolkit of Stability Index of the Political System provides an opportunity to conduct basic, in-depth and comprehensive studies at both in-country and cross-country levels.

It should be noted that this book is an ongoing and successive study with the application of the SIPS methodology.²

The aim of the given research is to evaluate tendencies of the Political Factors Index of the SIPS at in-country analysis level, as well as to make a comparative analysis based on the stability index of the observed countries and its separate sub-indices. The research covers the period of the EEU countries gaining their independence and includes political and socio-economic processes since then, but with a more detailed and profound analysis of the developments occurred within the recent years.

The work consists of in-country and cross-country analyses.

² Aleksanyan, Arusyak (2009) "About the Model of Political System Stability Assessment (on the example of the RA)." Information Technologies and Management, Yerevan, №2:92-104 (available in Armenian); Aleksanyan, Arusyak (ed.) (2013) "The Political Stability Index of the South Caucasus, EurAsEC and EU Member States (in-country and cross-country analysis), Yerevan, Yerevan State University Press, 336 p. (available in Armenian); Aleksanyan, Arusyak (ed.) (2018) Political Stability of Newly Independent Countries under Conditions of Modernization (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Moldova), Yerevan: YSU press, 328 p.

In-country analysis includes the study of the Political Factors Index of Stability Index of Political System (SIPS) of the EEU countries covering the period of 2000-2019 years.

Cross-country analysis is a comparative analysis and estimation of SIPS of the mentioned post-Soviet countries and PFI, EFI, SFI conditioning it, which were measured during 2019.

The book is composed of an introduction, executive summary, 7 chapters and Index. The methodology of the Stability Index of Political System is presented in the 1st chapter. Chapter 2 to 6 examine Political Factors indices of stability of the political system of the countries, such as Armenia, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in a span of 2000-2019. Results of cross-country analysis combined with the scaling and a comparative analysis of the 2019 stability index of political system of the above-mentioned EEU countries are concluded in Chapter 7.

Arusyak Aleksanyan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research titled “Political Stability Challenges in the EEU Countries: Political Factors Index” was conducted under the leadership and methodological instructions of the lecturer and expert of the Centre for European Studies Arusyak Aleksanyan (Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science). Besides, Ashot Aleksanyan (Doctor of Sciences in Politics), also actively participated in processes aimed at measuring political stability of some of the EEU countries.

Within the framework of this research paper in-country analysis of the above-mentioned countries was applied to measure Stability Index of Political System (SIPS) as well as its trends within the period of 2000-2019. In reference to cross-country analysis, Political, Economic and Social Factors Indices of the above-mentioned countries were detected with provision of the countries’ rating in 2019 based on the calculated indices.

SIPS values that are measured for some years, estimated and collected by the research team for the mentioned period, may slightly differ from those correspondingly published in the previous research. This is conditioned by the fact that data are regularly in the processes of development, adjustment and

replenishment. Hence, a slight difference of collected SIPS data and its sub-indices is noticeable when compared to previous publications since the input of new data may condition the change of the lowest and highest values of some variables.

In relation to the process directed to research work, contributors used data provided by reliable sources, such as World Bank, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, International Labor Organization, and National Statistical Services as well as those supplied by international governmental and non-governmental organizations. In this context, official publications made by state authorities and local self-government bodies, speeches and interviews of high-ranking officials, expert analyses and media publications have been also observed in the SIPS report of the above-mentioned countries.

As a result of the comparative analysis for SIPS in a span of 2000-2019, a large repository of data was created.

Hence, sources that were used to collect, calculate and process data necessary for SIPS research are as follows:

1. Political Factors Index:

- 1.1. Foreign direct investments* (% of GDP/US dollars)
(World Bank indicators, data provided by National Statistical Services),

* The inclusion of this variable as a political factor is acceptable, as fluctuations of political stability will shortly have its direct influence on investments.

- 1.2. Index of Economic Freedom* (World Bank indicators, data provided by National Statistical Services),
- 1.3. Index of Political Rights (Freedom in the World report of Freedom House),
- 1.4. Index of Civil Liberties (Freedom in the World report of Freedom House),
- 1.5. Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International reports),
- 1.6. Civil disobedience (estimated by the researcher),
- 1.7. Conflict Presence (estimated by the researcher).

2. Economic Factors Index:

- 2.1. Gross domestic product per capita, US dollars (data provided by National Statistical Services, World Bank indicators),
- 2.2. External trade turnover (% of GDP/US dollars) (data provided by National Statistical Services),
- 2.3. Domestic credit (% of GDP) (World Bank indicators),
- 2.4. Inflation rate (%) (data provided by National Statistical Services, World Bank indicators),
- 2.5. Shadow economy, % of GDP (Center for Information Technology and Service at Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich)

* Index of Economic Freedom has been included in the political factors index, as it denotes guarantees for the construction of legislative body and property rights, efficiency of a judicial system and is regarded as one of the most important indicators of political stability and democratization.

2.6. Budget deficit (% of GDP) (data provided by National Statistical Services),

3. Social Factors Index:

3.1. Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme reports),

3.2. Real wage, US dollars (estimations by the researcher based on the data provided by National Statistical Services),

3.3. Employment (%) (World Bank indicators),

3.4. Crime rate per 1000 people (data provided by National Statistical Services),

3.5. Poverty rate (%) (data provided by National Statistical Services, World Bank indicators),

3.6. Gini index (World Bank indicators, data provided by National Statistical Services).

Arusyak Aleksanyan

1. METHODOLOGY OF STABILITY INDEX OF POLITICAL SYSTEM*

Arusyak Aleksanyan

The issues related to the stability of the political systems of the post-Soviet countries are often discussed in the context of reducing the possibility of ethnic conflict in the country and enhancing regional integration rather than in the context of domestic policy. In many cases, in post-Soviet countries, the rhetoric of European-Eurasian integration is used by the ruling parties as a tool for the legitimacy of political power. In particular, when a significant part of the population has a positive or negative attitude towards the European or Eurasian vectors of the country's integration.

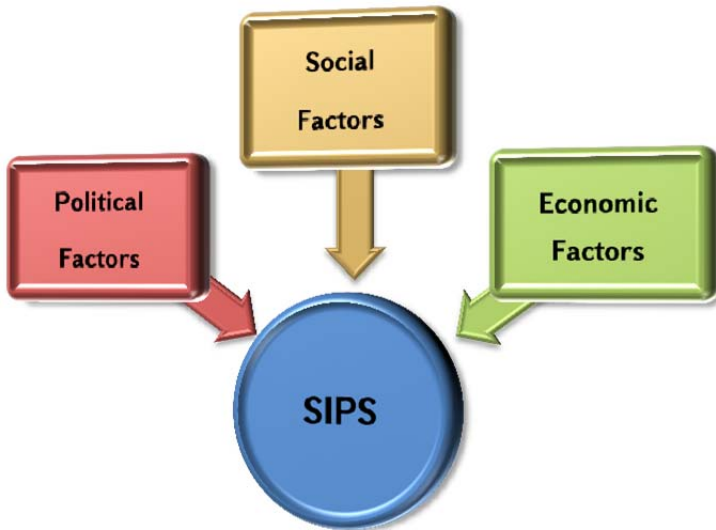
The method of constructing indices has been applied when modelling the political system stability. Thus, during the modelling process, the provision was based on the assumption

* Arusyak Aleksanyan developed the methodology to estimate the Stability Index of Political Stability (SIPS) within the scope of her PhD thesis.

1. Methodology of Stability Index of Political System

that factors influencing the political system stability can be divided into three groups: political, social and economic.*

Figure 1
Factors affecting Stability Index of Political System



* The choice of variables included in the SIPS model was made on the method of correlation matrix construction and the variable expulsion. Initially, 30 variables were included, but only variables with strong correlation were later separated ($R \geq 10,71$). The variable of Gini index was an exception, as it has a strong correlation with the level of poverty. Nonetheless, taking into account the fact that polarization of society by income is a significant and important factor in measuring the Stability Index of Political System, it was also included in the model.

Indicators of political dimensions conditioning political stability

1. Foreign direct investments (FDI)
2. Index of Economic Freedom (IEF)
3. Index of Political Rights (PR)
4. Index of Civil Liberties (CL)
5. Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)
6. Civil disobedience (CD)
7. Presence of conflict (Conf.)

Indicators of social dimensions affecting political stability

1. HDI (Human Development Index)
2. Real Wage (W)
3. Unemployment (U)
4. Crime rate per 1000 people (C)
5. Poverty (P)
6. Gini index (Gini)

Indicators of economic dimensions affecting political stability

1. Gross Domestic Product per capita, ppp (GDP)
2. External trade turnover (T)
3. Domestic credit (DC)
4. Inflation rate (Inf.)
5. Shadow economy (Sh.E.)
6. Budget deficit (Def.)

Stability Index of Political System comprises of indicators presented by official statistics, newly developed variables as well as existing indicators regularly released by renowned

1. Methodology of Stability Index of Political System

international organizations. The calculation methodology and the nature of certain variables and indices included in the model are the following:

- The Index of Economic Freedom (IEF) is measured by The Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal and is graded on a scale of 100 points (max) and 0 point (min). Countries estimated with 0-49,9 scores are assessed “repressed,” from 50-59,9 “mostly unfree,” from 60-69,9 “moderately free,” from 70-79,9 “mostly free” and from 80 to 100 “free.” The Index covers 12 freedoms: 1. property rights, 2. judicial effectiveness 3. government integrity, 4. tax burden, 5. government spending, 6. fiscal health 7. business freedom, 8. labour freedom, 9. monetary freedom, 10. trade freedom, 11. investment freedom and 12. financial freedom. To calculate SIPS 2019, IEF 2020 (*Miller, Kim, Roberts 2020*) was considered as the latter includes the indicators measured for the period covering July 01 2018 - June 30 2019. In general, IEF, as one of the essential indicators of political stability and democracy, reflects guarantees for maintaining a proper legislative system and protecting property rights. Hence, that is the reason that the index was included in the political factors. When standardizing the data, max 100 and min 0 are considered the highest and the lowest values.

- Indices of Political Rights and Civil Liberties are measured by Freedom House organization, within the Freedom in the World survey. To estimate SIPS 2019, Freedom in the World report 2020 (*Freedom House 2020a*) was used covering the developments occurred within January 01 - December 31 2019 in 195 countries

and 15 territories. Experts who report and evaluate the collected data use a combination of on-the-ground research, consultations with other experts, as well as information from news articles and nongovernmental organizations. The ratings process is based on a checklist of 10 political rights questions, which are grouped into three subcategories: Electoral Process (3 questions), Political Pluralism and Participation (4), and Functioning of Government (3). The civil liberties 15 questions are grouped into four subcategories: Freedom of Expression and Belief (4 questions), Associational and Organizational Rights (3), Rule of Law (4), and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (4). Scores are awarded to each of these questions on a scale of 0 to 4. The highest score to be awarded to the political rights checklist is 40, whereas the highest score awarded to the civil liberties checklist is 60. Total score awarded to the political rights and civil liberties checklist determines the political rights and civil liberties rating. Each rating of 1 through 7, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of freedom, corresponds to a range of total scores. Those whose ratings average 1 to 2,5 are considered “free,” 3 to 5 “partly free,” and 5,5 to 7 “not free” (*Freedom House 2020b*). In the model the standardized data are scaled as maximum value of 1 and minimum value of 7.

- Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is measured by Transparency International organization and ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption (*Transparency International 2019a*). It is based on the survey conducted by experts with a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is

1. Methodology of Stability Index of Political System

highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. The data of CPI are calculated in accordance with resources provided by a number of independent organizations, such as Political and Economic Risks Consultancy, Economist Intelligence Unit, World Bank, Bertelsmann Foundation, Freedom House, “Global Insight” World Economic Forum and etc. The survey topics correlate with issues of corruption, conflict of interests, development and implementation of anti-corruption events, government steps taken to apply sanctions and to eliminate corruption. Issues concerning the spread of corruption exist not only in the public administration sphere, but also among citizens of a state and in the mass media circles, where corruption risks may appear in small bureaucratic institutions and escalate up to the highest instances of authority (*Transparency International 2019b*). The significance of this variable is in the fact, that corruption indicators denote the quality of bureaucratic and public administration systems. During the data standardization, the highest accepted value (max) is 100 points and 0 point is the lowest value (min).

- Foreign direct investments is an investment of a capital made by a firm or individual in one country into business interests located in another country that seeks to obtain a lasting interest or other useful results in an enterprise resident in another economy. There is a mutual correlation between investments and political stability. On the one hand, investments are pivotal to define and estimate processes of country’s political stability, whereas on the other hand, political stability indicators are

heeded when initiating investment policy. The inclusion of this variable as a political factor is acceptable, as fluctuations of political stability will shortly have its direct influence on investments and data of the index included in the model is calculated for a one-year period. In the cross-country analysis, the percentage of the index to GDP is estimated.

- The variable of Civil disobedience is measured by a number of demonstrations, strikes, social unrests, particularly pressures applied against them during a restricted time. This is an important variable to estimate political stability, but considering the absence of such statistics, relying on the analyses of news reports and studies the scaling of 0-5 was settled for their assessment, where 5 is applied to estimate the highest level of disobedience, such as revolution and coup d'état and respectively 0 to its complete absence.

- Presence of conflict and its influence on the political stability is measured in the following way: the absence of conflict (0 points), passive conflict (1 point), when a state has conflicting relations with another state or states, with no active military actions; active conflict (2 points), when a state conflicts with another state/states, accompanied by active military actions. 2 points are assigned as a maximum value in the scale and 0 points as the minimum value in standardization process.

- Human Development Index (HDI) is assessed by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), where income of the population, level of education and life expectancy at birth are the dimensions used to measure the given index. As such, HDI is one of the key criteria to assess the population's welfare measured by

1. Methodology of Stability Index of Political System

a scale of 0 and 1, where minimum 0 and maximum 1 dimensions are applied (UNDP 2020; 2020b). During the standardization process, 0 is perceived as the minimum and 1 as the maximum value.

- Gini index (incomes Gini coefficient) measures the deviation of the distribution of income among individuals or households within a country from perfect equal distribution. 0 represents absolute equality and 1 point is ranked as an absolute inequality. During the data standardization, the highest accepted value (max) is 1 point, whereas the lowest value (min) is 0 points.

- Real wage describes the purchasing power of nominal wage within a fixed period of time, i.e. the goods and services that can be purchased with wages at prices specified at a particular period. The real wage is the nominal wage adjusted for changes in purchasing power. Both indicators are related to the same period. During the cross-country analysis, the average monthly wage is calculated by the indicator equivalent to purchasing power in US dollars.

The variables included in the model are expressed with different numerical units. Hence, they shall be standardized by using the following formula:*

$$X' = \frac{x_i - \min\{x_i\}}{\max\{x_i\} - \min\{x_i\}}$$

* Standardized values cleaned through the formula are measured by a scale of 0 and 1 units, applied in in-country analysis. The calculated values are transformed into a corresponding scale of 0-100 units in cross-country analysis.

$\min\{x_i\}$ and $\max\{x_i\}$ are the lowest and highest values the variable X can attain, respectively.

In cross-country analysis, the average of 3 lowest and the average of 3 highest indicators collected during the last 5 years were used for some variables as the lowest and the highest values, respectively, whereas in case of one country, the corresponding values of different time periods were used.

Calculation of Political Factors Index (PFI), Social Factors Index (SFI) and Economic Factors Index (EFI), was based on measuring difference of a simple average of standardized values that have a positive and negative impact on political stability:

$$PFI = (FDI + IEF + PR + CL + CPI)/5 - (CD + Conf.)/2$$

$$SFI = (HDI + W + U)/3 - (C + P + Gini)/3$$

$$EFI = (GDP + T + DC)/3 - (Inf. + Sh.E. + Def.)/3$$

In view of impact on political stability, political, social and economic factors have a various degrees of interrelation with each other, which was respectively formulated and calculated as such. As a result, SIPS was measured as a weighted average of those computed indices, namely PFI, SFI and EFI.*

* Weights are defined through calibration, which is particularly based on the calculation of political stability level in countries such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark and on the decision of the sub-indices' coefficient in them as well as on

1. Methodology of Stability Index of Political System



$$SIPS = (55 * PFI + 30 * SFI + 15 * EFI) / 100$$

According to SIPS formula, the most influential factor is the political one followed by social and economic factors.

As a result, the in-country index of the political system stability is estimated by the scale ranging from -1 to +1, whereas the cross-country index is measured by a ranking scale from -100 to +100 and, accordingly, political systems are classified as follows:

<i>[-100; -50]</i>	• unstable
<i>[-49; 0]</i>	• low level of stability
<i>[1; 49]</i>	• mid-level of stability
<i>[50; 100]</i>	• high level of stability

High level of political stability describes countries that are distinguished by a high level of democratization of the society's

the study of theoretical democracy provisions and existing models. In the framework of this study, weights adjustments were made in the methodology based on additional and comprehensive studies.

political life. This mentioned level is also characterized by sustainable development of the social and economic sector of the society, which provides the citizens with the system safeguarding high standards of living and effective social guarantees. In a stable political system, power changing process does not spark destabilization. Civil peace is an essential characteristic of the sustainable political systems.

Mid-level of political stability denotes those democratic processes and principles that are largely dominant in the political life of the society but are accompanied by certain shortcomings therein. The socio-economic development, complemented with some fluctuations and declines, still has a growing tendency. Flaws can occur in the sphere of human rights protection and rule of law, too. This level can be typical of authoritarian political systems, wherein stability is ensured not so much by political but mainly by social and economic factors.

Low level of stability is characteristic of the political systems where the totalitarian and authoritarian principles are mostly common compared to democratic processes. There are severe social contradictions in the mentioned systems, such as polarization of the population, poverty chiefly spread in the primary working population and enrichment for a narrow circle of people. As a result, this can trigger a big wave of civil disobedience in the country, a coup or coup attempt. Conflicts and wars waging with other states are also quite a regular occurrence.

Unstable political systems are defined for the countries with a deep crisis among authorities and loss of legitimacy, social

1. Methodology of Stability Index of Political System

conflicts, wartime situations, violation of human rights, and the use of force to suppress civil disobedience. The economy of a country is in a very critical condition, the society is highly polarized in view of its incomes. Moreover, there is a high level of poverty.

The model of SIPS enables to:

- analyze and compare political stability of a state and its trends at various periods
- compare political stability of two and more states and classify them according to their stability level measured by a corresponding scale
- pinpoint factors that have the most positive or negative impact on the political stability of the given state.

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2. DILEMMA OF STABILITY IN FOREIGN AND INTERNAL POLITICAL AGENDAS OF ARMENIA

Arusyak Aleksanyan

Pivotal issues concerning political stability have always been of significant importance when defining domestic and foreign policy agendas of the newly independent countries in the post-Soviet region. Many countries have often been faced with a dilemma in this view, i.e., either to aim current resources and inner potential at solving internal political problems and preserving domestic stability, or to prioritize foreign political challenges and issues derived from threats posing to the country's national security. Each state has adopted its own strategy to balance these two complementary and essential components of state policy. Armenia, having issues with the unresolved conflict, for decades has considered the stability of the political system primarily through the prism of external political factors, prioritizing the national security. In this aspect, the following questions are raised - were internal political agendas of political system stability ignored, was a big wave of civil disobedience in

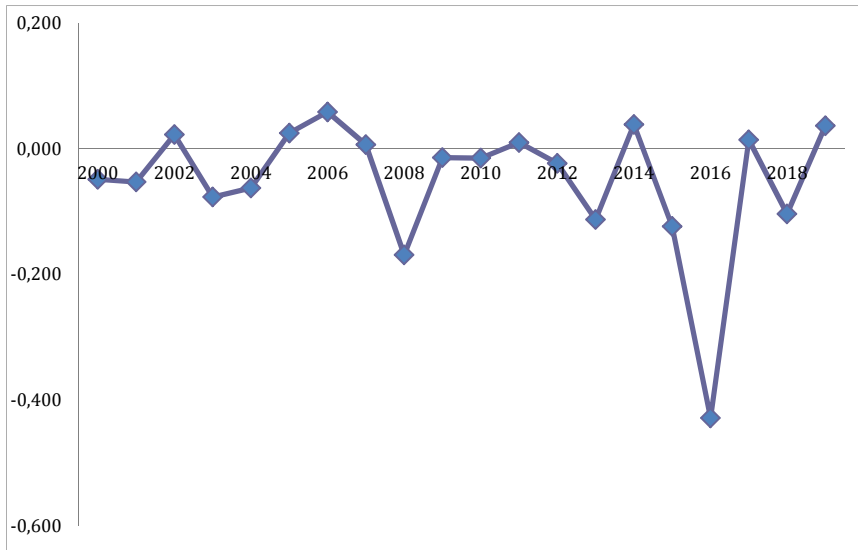
2018 considered a consequence of it, and did the change of foreign political agendas trigger a war in the post-revolutionary period?

The above-stated questions are certainly important in terms of discussing the issues related to stability of the political system of Armenia as well as exposing the current key issues.

Figure 1 depicts the political factors trends of the Stability Index of Political System (SIPS) of Armenia within 2000-2019 years.

Figure 1

Political Factors Index of SIPS of Armenia (2000-2019)*



* Source: calculations by the author.

Political Factors Index is estimated within the scale ranging from the lowest -1 to highest indicator +1.

2. Dilemma of Stability in Foreign and Internal Political Agendas of Armenia

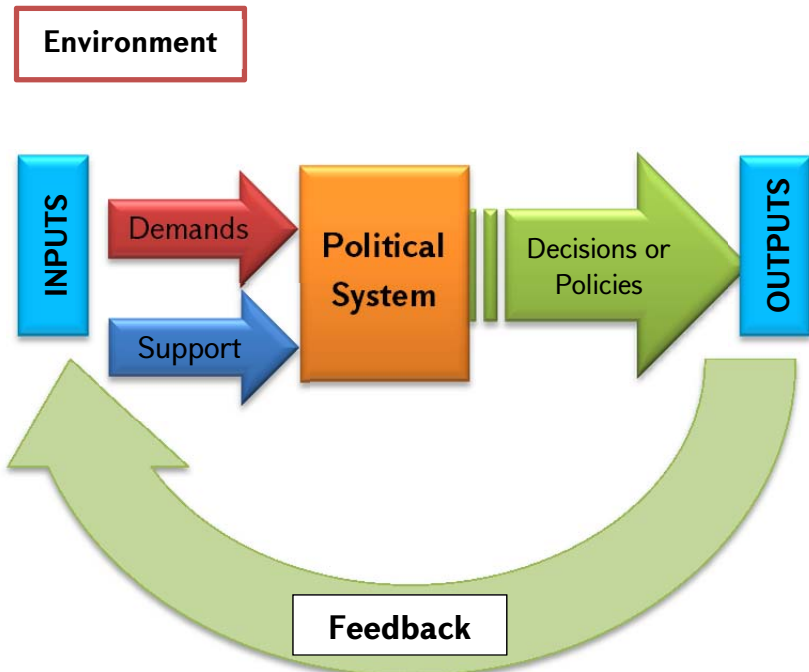
The most dramatic decline in the Political Factors Index of the Stability Index of Political System in the period under review was in 2016 due to threats and negative impact of the April war. During the mentioned year, the stability of the political system was adversely affected by the seizure of the territory of the RA Police patrol service regiment followed by massive acts of civil disobedience (*Aleksanyan 2017, 35-36; Karapetyan & Aghekyan 2016; Human Rights Watch 2017, 89-90*). The escalation of the discontent in the country for the current authorities should have been - if not the first - at least the most important alarming signal of the fact that crucial changes had taken place in the internal political agendas. It served as evidence to conclude that in order to further maintain political stability of the system, internal political processes will require as much attention as issues of external agendas and appropriate reactions of the authorities. The 2018 events indicated that the authorities were not able to ensure a balanced reaction to demands and signals of the system given by the environment (society). However, the peaceful nature of the revolution significantly reduced a potentially negative impact on political stability in 2018, whereas any revolution is deemed to have a shocking effect on the system.

By studying internal factors of political system stability, it is necessary to refer to its components, such as state government bodies, political parties, civil society organizations and movements. Interrelations among the mentioned components can be competitive and based on cooperation, or on the contrary, have a hostile and antagonistic nature and so on. A political system is relatively stable when interrelations of these components are

more or less predictable (Гришин 2015, 52-53; Easton 1957). When there is a distinct circulation between demands of the society and decisions of the state government bodies in the political system, an internal stability is relatively maintained; hence, it is possible to maintain social unrest waves under control. In reference to issues of political system functioning, an American political scientist D. Easton (1953; 1957; 1965a; 1965b) considered the factors due to which the system can maintain its integrity and stability. He proposed a political system model, which can be used to analyse both decision-making processes and their implementation methods (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

D. Easton's model of political system (Easton 1957, 384)



2. Dilemma of Stability in Foreign and Internal Political Agendas of Armenia

In the opinion of Easton, the political system reacts to environmental signals through 'inputs' and 'outputs'. Impulses from "inputs" can be in the form of demands or support. Demands of the environment relate to the distribution of goods, the regulation of political actors and processes, and so on. Meanwhile, support is expressed by tax payments, law-abidingness, willingness to participate in elections, and other kinds of support shown by the society towards the state government. Signals of 'outputs' consist of political decisions and actions, which ultimately determine the attitude of the society towards the authorities. Political decisions that always meet the demands and satisfy the environment contribute to the obtainment of support of the authorities; or else the environment brings forward new demands to the political system through feedback. Unfavourable political decisions and non-compliant actions with environment's expectations ultimately lead to a crisis of the system and disruption of stability (*Easton 1957*). Accordingly, Easton introduces an idea of the system which develops a policy that executes distribution of material and spiritual resources as well as the realization of collective goals in the society. This policy defines the issues of self-preservation of the system and stability maintenance in a constantly changing environment.

Considering key provisions of Easton's theory of political system and applying them to the political system of Armenia, it becomes evident that the above-mentioned circulation, especially in the pre-revolutionary period, was distorted and imbalanced. Moreover, feedback impulses coming from the environment failed

to be efficiently transformed into appropriate political decisions and actions. In the meantime, feedback is one of the most essential tools to overcome pre-crisis and conflicting situations. In this context, Easton, with a number of other experts, believes that tension in the political system can be alleviated through adaptation, as well as through a change of goals and policies (*Easton 1957; Bealey 1987*). First and foremost, stability is the ability of the political system to adapt to a changing reality, to quickly and effectively respond to the moods of the society, otherwise, it is achieved through authoritarianism, and as a result, we have "minimal" stability (*Jaworsky 1995, 3-4*).

The authorities in Armenia neither adapted to the changes taking place in the environment nor responded to signals coming from there. As we have already mentioned, prior to the 2018 events, processes and a large wave of civil disobedience, which took place in 2016, were one of the vivid indications of that signal, in response to which the authorities should have initiated political adaptation and set a new direction for implementing actions and decision-making processes. That failed to occur, primarily conditioned by the lack of a dialogue between the government and society. Prior to the revolution, the authorities had their entire capabilities focused on the development of foreign policy agendas, prioritizing issues specifically related to the external security component of political stability; hence those threats of destabilization became a reality that eventually impacted the external security factors as such.

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The newly formed government that came to power after the revolution in 2018, in contrast to the predecessors, disregarded the ultimate significance of foreign policy agendas mainly aimed at preserving stability in the country; therefore assuming that legitimacy as well as unique procedures for organizing discourses with the environment would ensure complete stability of the political system. Meanwhile, foreign relations are accompanied and implemented by other rules of a dialogue; besides, acting populism conditioned by the authorities' legitimacy does not have as much potential in processes related to foreign relations, as in internal political environment. Moreover, it can result in the opposite effect in the external environment, which has actually happened. As mentioned above, revolutions, in the long run, undermine political stability in the state, and given the period, drastic steps of the currently acting government may destabilize the situation too, taking into account the change of political actors combined with the formation of a new ratio of political forces. This was particularly expressed in the demand for extraordinary parliamentary elections, which was also confirmed and protected in the RA Government programme.¹ The system was, in essence, unprepared for such abrupt transitions; consequently, it was vital to sustaining a succession of gradual changes. A drastic change of political actors also affected the agenda of foreign relations. In this respect, disregard and negligence of signals, particularly threats

¹ See RA Government decision on the Government Programme, 1 June 2018 N 581-A: <https://www.gov.am/files/docs/2782.pdf?f.bclid=IwAR3J9axTDqn8Fvi-wUi6d8oAmcJLG-o5cJ2m9gImCBqDeOgtcxJMQxUQkv3U> (18.02.2021).

constituting to the state stability from the external environment, certainly had a more devastating blow on the political system of the Republic of Armenia. It will take years for the latter to both "heal" and restore its regular working abilities.

While observing separate variables of Political Factors Index of 2018-2019 SIPS of the Republic of Armenia, it should be noted, that visible improvement, namely from 5 to 4 units, was registered in the Index of Political Rights, which is estimated by the Freedom House, whereas Index of Civil Liberties maintained its previously estimated 4 units within the period in question.² The Freedom House experts mainly explain a positive change by the 2018 free held elections (*Freedom House 2019; 2020*). In this regard, it is worth mentioning that fair and free election results were natural and anticipated in the post-revolutionary period, given the emotional state of the society. All this in view, it mostly points to 'emotional democracy' rather than to institutional changes, which at that stage was too early to conclude about. Only the results of the next elections will show whether those changes took place on an institutional basis or they were just temporary.

In reference to indications of the Corruption Perception Index*, it remained the same in 2018, meanwhile, it increased from 35 to 42 points in the following year. According to the 2019 data, Armenia had a noticeable change in the ranking and

² See the official site of the Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world> (01.02.2021).

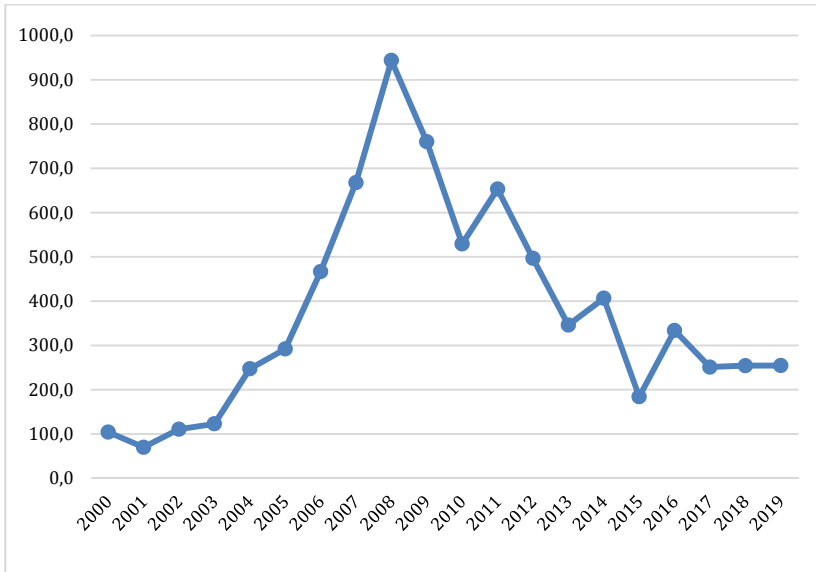
* Corruption Perceptions Index is measured by the Transparency International organization with a scale of 0-100 (it had 0-10 scale till 2012) where 0 indicates the highest level of corruption and 100 points indicate a complete absence of it.

2. Dilemma of Stability in Foreign and Internal Political Agendas of Armenia

occupied 77 place among 180 countries and territories compared to the previously taken 105 place registered in 2018.³

Figure 3

Foreign Direct Investments in Armenia from 2000 to 2019
(million US dollars)⁴



Investments are one of the most sensitive indicators for political stability. Figure 3 depicts the data aggregated for the Foreign direct investments (FDI) within the time span of 2000 and 2019. After the fall, which occurred in 2016, it almost maintained

³ See the official site of Transparency International against corruption center: <https://www.transparency.org/country/ARM> (20.02.2021).

⁴ Data source is the official site of the World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/-indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD> (01.02.2021).

its level in the years to follow, i.e. from 2017 to 2019. It is noteworthy that from 2002 to 2008 a stable growth of investments was registered. Since the history of independent Armenia, the highest indicator for investment was recorded in 2008 and constituted 944 million dollars. Nonetheless, due to a financial and economic crisis, a drastic decline in FDI was observed in 2009 then followed by a gradual downfall for the years to come (see Figure 3).

In conclusion, the Stability Index of Political Factors decreased in 2018, reaching negative (-0,104) points. However, the decline conditioned and instigated as an impact of the revolution was relatively smooth which enabled a rapid PFI recovery in 2019, resulting in a shift from negative to positive 0,037 points (see Table 1). In the post-revolutionary period, changes in the priorities, directions and approaches to the foreign policy agendas had a more negative impact on the stability of the political system. They increased risks for an already existing war, leading to large-scale military actions. This triggered a new, more dangerous situation for Armenia in the region, with an unfavorable alignment of forces. With such conditions in view, key issues aimed at maintaining security and political stability in Armenia demand thorough and multi-faceted analysis to develop a novel strategy.

Table 1

**Political Factors Index of the SIPS of Armenia
(2000-2019)***

Year	PFI
2000	-0,048
2001	-0,053
2002	0,023
2003	-0,077
2004	-0,062
2005	0,025
2006	0,059
2007	0,007
2008	-0,169
2009	-0,014
2010	-0,015
2011	0,010
2012	-0,023
2013	-0,113
2014	0,039
2015	-0,123
2016	-0,428
2017	0,014
2018	-0,104
2019	0,037

* Source: calculations by the author.

PFI, EFI, SFI and consequently SIPS indices calculated on them may insignificantly vary in comparison to the indices of corresponding years estimated in previous publications as a result of updated and newly inserted data as well as changes of minimum and maximum indices.

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3. CONSTRUCTION OF RUSSIA'S POLITICAL SPACE UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF THE "STABILITY- INSTABILITY" DICHOTOMY

Ashot Aleksanyan

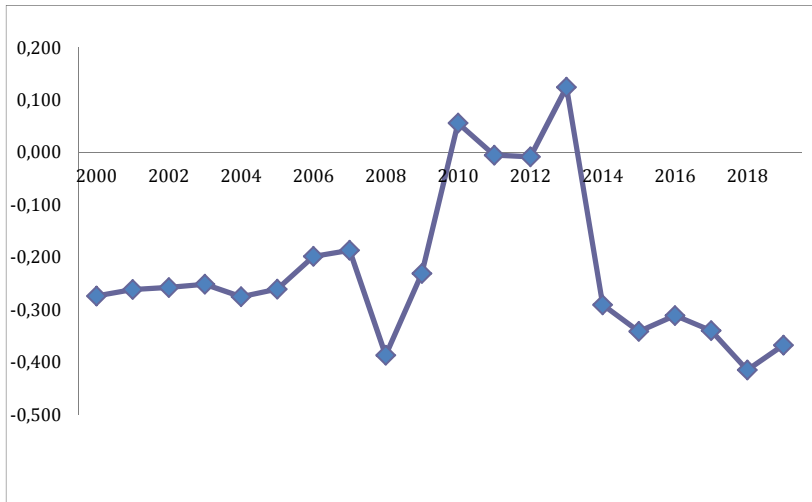
The political stability of the Russian Federation (RF) along with other post-Soviet countries is a complex concept that is comprised of socio-cultural, political-economic, political-educational aspects and which is dependent on many national and international institutions as well as numerous procedural factors. Development and implementation of appropriate steps impacted either by constructive or destructive tendencies of political factors have been vital for the country's president and ruling elite in the context of value orientations set up by federal and regional political actors, political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and different groups. All the aforementioned has formed main and additional sources of balance within the system, acting as a procedure, guarantee and prerequisite for maintaining political stability in the country. Collegial dependence of political actors has strengthened intersystem stability by reducing its correlative and situational nature. In particular, the current

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Russian ruling elite has attributed paramount importance to comprehensively indicate positive aspects and achievements of modernizing Russian state and society aiming to "break" stereotypes and alter negative perceptions that have been accumulating for centuries and to create a new and more qualified image of the country. To achieve this goal, state authorities and civil society have endeavoured to harmonize relations with each other and cooperate constructively, using the widest set of tools and innovative technologies applicable in modern realities both in information/communication and socio-political spheres.

Figure 1

Political Factors Index of SIPS of RF (2000-2019)*



* Source: calculations by the author.

Political Factors Index is estimated within the scale ranging from the lowest -1 to highest indicator +1.

Essential factors of Stability Index of Russia's Political System (SIPS) in the 2018-2019 were to be distinguished as follows: strengthening of constitutional order, fight against internal extremism and terrorist acts as well as the struggle against other most radical phenomena, such as expressions of hostility and hatred which pose a threat to domestic political stability and national security of the country. Taking into account the fact that peculiarities of priorities of the state, society and human security protection spheres are interrelated and complementary to each other, those mentioned peculiarities have to comply with the constitutional order of the country. The Russian state government may weaken provided that one of the spheres was prioritized or absolutized which, in its turn, will have negative consequences for the activities implemented by CSOs and state institutions; therefore, consequently, adversely impacting protection of citizens' interests. Civil disobedience movements and CSOs foreign funding viewed as preconditions for sustaining Russia's political stability in the security-related context, have been minimised. Besides, these aforementioned movements and CSOs foreign funding can be assumed successful due to which Russian 'soft power' model, protection of human rights and freedoms was formed. Consequently, recent efforts of the Russian political elite to resist encroachments on the constitutional order have been significant by safeguarding guarantees for sovereign federalism, protection of constitutional and legal values of federal sovereignty. Steps have been taken to strengthen state and civil society interactions, as well as effective procedures have been

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initiated and introduced to propel cooperation between public administration and local self-government bodies (*Smyth 2021, 25-34; Applebaum 2020, 172-180; Кочетков 2020, 6-23; Кочетков 2018a, 153-165; Вилисов, Пастармаджиева 2020, 6-37; Большаков, Храмова 2019, 448-459; Бронников 2018, 64-78*).

By analysing the 2018-2019 Political Factors Index of SIPS (see Table 1), it shows that regional components of stabilization processes at the current stage of civilarchic transformations and Eurasian integration have become particularly relevant. This is explained by characteristics of the transition state where the society's socio-political, socio-economic organization along with the state's Eurasian integration and its regional significance presupposes changes of the strategies to be adopted in the socio-cultural, ethno-cultural spheres. The efficient governance of state authorities is mainly conditioned by the president's centralized power, consolidation and super-consolidation of centralized (authoritarian) regime, in which the centralist management procedures are mainly embedded (*Koesel, Bunce and Weiss 2020; Бронников 2019, 6-24; Ророва 2019; Кочетков 2018b, 37-47; Головенкин 2018, 150-167*). In this regard, the stability of the governing administration is an autonomous reality, as the Russian political system successfully adapts to changes, which through self-organization maintains the quality of governance and basic functions of civil society.

Table 1

Political Factors Index of SIPS of RF (2000-2019)*

Year	PFI
2000	-0,273
2001	-0,261
2002	-0,257
2003	-0,251
2004	-0,275
2005	-0,260
2006	-0,198
2007	-0,186
2008	-0,386
2009	-0,230
2010	0,056
2011	-0,005
2012	-0,008
2013	0,124
2014	-0,290
2015	-0,341
2016	-0,311
2017	-0,339
2018	-0,414
2019	-0,367

* Source: calculations by the author.

PFI, EFI, SFI and consequently SIPS indices calculated on them may insignificantly vary in comparison to the indices of corresponding years estimated in previous publications as a result of updated and newly inserted data as well as changes of minimum and maximum indices.

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Within the period in view, negative trends in the Political Factors Index were conditioned by the ongoing sanctions imposed by the US-EU against Russia accompanied by the decline in dynamics of foreign direct investment (FDI), deterioration of the investment volumes, increased FDI withdrawal from Russian companies as well as negative influence of political factor risks (see Table 1). In fact, socio-political functioning of FDI and the significance of monetary regulation are denoted as equivalent preconditions for the sustainable development of the country. They have always smoothed inner and outer unfavourable impacts due to the cyclic nature of Russia's economic development. High rate of employment, stability of prices, quality of monetary regulation, the balance of payments and other macroeconomic indicators were directly or indirectly dependent on the dynamics of FDI volumes. In this regard, the most important task, apart from the financial stability of the country, was to ensure economic growth which was accompanied by an increase in national income.

Russia, as such being one of the main energy suppliers to the global energy markets, is at the forefront of such countries for which energy security concerns are a key issue and one of the most important priorities of a state policy. Russia's active cooperation with international energy security institutions, the volume of Russian energy exports and their dependence on the global energy pose a number of challenges in terms of the country's energy security, economic and political interests. In this aspect, Russia's one of the key issues in international policy is the

provision of national energy security. Nonetheless, it is impossible to find solutions to those issues without effective international cooperation (*Кочетков 2020, 6-23; Гришин, Линдерс 2020, 99-115; Баранов, Попов 2019, 79-86*). At the same time, conditioned by the globalization of the world economy, the stability of Russian political system has become more dependent on the provision of national energy security processes and realities of other countries, in which the latter may not be directly related to those countries, as they can often occur a thousand kilometres away from the Russian border. All these have brought forward political preconditions for Russia to further strengthen its actions in ensuring energy security in international relations. In fact, energy security of individual countries depends on the stability of the Russian political system, as well as the absence of crises in this field of international relations. The creation of these very conditions provides global energy security.

In reference to Russia's anti-corruption policy under the conditions of "stability-instability" dichotomy, corruption has negatively affected the stability of the country's political situation, economic development and public order, significantly reducing the reputation of state authorities, triggering a political tension, undermining foundations of statehood and threatening national security. In this regard, it is essential not only to study the content of anti-corruption policy but also to determine how effective were

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anti-corruption procedures which had been proposed by the state.¹

On 18 March 2018 after the ordinary presidential elections in the Russian Federation, when Vladimir Putin was elected President for a 6-year term in compliance with Article 81 of the RF Constitution,² it became evident that there had been formed a consensus between the society and ruling elite on political, socio-economic stability.

During the period under review, the "ruling party" factor continued to be one of the most pressing aspects of political science analysis in Russia's political processes; hence, becoming an integral part of the public discourse among politicians, CSOs and journalists. Concurrently, the federal government used the "ruling party" as a partner in pursuing a rational strategy, legitimizing political processes, facilitating decision-making, and increasing dependence between the political elite and parliament (*Шендякова 2019; Кочетков 2018a; Мартъянов, Быков 2018; Билюга 2018*). However, the "inactivity" of the parliamentary parties is the most controversial issue under Eurasian integration conditions. The reason is that the proper functioning of a multi-party system is inextricably linked to the evolution of the political systems of the EEU countries. Within the mentioned period,

¹ See the official site of the RF president: "Decree of the RF President from 29.06.2018 № 378 about National Plan against corruption for 2018-2020," available in Russian: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/43253> (25.01.2021).

² See the official network platform of the legal information 'RF Constitution', available in Russian: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/00012-02007040001> (16.01.2021).

neither the CSOs nor the opposition, but the ruling elite and "ruling parties" were the main driving force fostering the country's multiple parties system. In the meantime, the main goal of the opposition group is not directed at localizing the democratic processes, but, on the contrary, at weakening the existing political system as much as possible.

The results of the State Duma elections held on 18 September 2018 and the active involvement of All-Russia People's Front could serve as a piece of evidence for the fact that attempts taken by authorities to create a controlling political system, which was artificially launched with the help of administrative resources, was a failure. The political parties' structure formed in the country, as a matter of fact, turned out to be inefficient because the "ruling party" in company with All-Russia People's Front had not taken into account the current socio-economic situation in the RF. Meanwhile, a political expression voiced by the middle class, as well as growing influence of information on the society was getting more and more observable. The latter has created new opportunities and tools for citizens to unite through social networks which are conditioned by the lack of censorship and absence of the official position dominated in the government. Moreover, the Communist Party, Just Russia and the Liberal Democratic Party managed to unite and combine their efforts in the parliamentary processes and counterbalance the ruling "United Russia" party, which enjoyed and exercised strong power in the parliament.

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The main cause for the political parties' dysfunction and irregularity in the RF multi-party system lies in the fact that the former are unable to execute their key functions in the political system of the country due to their being weak and feeble. This is conditioned by the legitimate status of the President enshrined by the Constitution of the Russian Federation and accordingly, a strategy of the country's political and socio-economic development, nature and methods of its implementation and deployment are defined by the President. Moreover, in the history of Post-Soviet Russia, presidential elections had never been determined by a president's political affiliation or non-affiliation. In fact, there has been formed such a multiparty institutional system where parties cannot be held entirely accountable for their pre-election campaign promises. In compliance with the legal status of the parties envisaged by the Constitution, they cannot have a decisive role on the formation of the executive bodies even by means of parliamentary factions, as they lack effective tools for monitoring the government as such and political parties are restricted on their legislative initiatives. Therefore, procedures of civilarchic competition between political majority and minority in the parliament are also quite fragile. The point is that there has been no change in the political course during Vladimir Putin's tenure, regardless of a rating the parties or their blocs might hold or a mandate they might have in the parliamentary or local self-government body elections. It is obvious that during the period under review, stability of the country's political system, social development strategy and tactics were significantly conditioned

by the status of the Russian President accompanied by his powers and functions, which had no correlation or connection to his affiliation with any political party. On the contrary, all of Russia's presidents have been non-partisan and they have strongly underlined that very important fact.

The stability of the political system at the federal as well as regional level was based on the legitimacy of the president and ruling elite with a prevalence of personal and organizational features of legitimacy. It is obvious that the ruling elite considers a successive and continual transfer of the supreme power to be a paramount precondition for ensuring political stability in the country. In this situation, nationwide elections are not esteemed as the main means of generating and replenishing the political elite; hence, to overcome stagnation, it is necessary to improve rotation mechanisms of the upper and middle-class political elites, restoring functionality and civility of the federal and regional elections.

During the mentioned period, civil disobedience- as a unique social institute of civil society- still continues to be controversial, which is of vital importance in terms of de-bureaucratization and decentralization of public authorities, and establishment of a dialogue with the public. Despite the fact that legal procedures are applied to civil disobedience acts, the country's ruling elite kept its focus on extremely urgent issues that concern measures to curb risks of triggering "Colour revolution" and turning mass movements into a social base.

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A comparative analysis of the 2018-2019 Political Factors Index of SIPS justifies that even though the Russian political system significantly differs from the organized and market-structured societies that are very typical of Western democracies, the country's political elite eventually managed to overcome the situation described as "dynamic chaos" which had stemmed from the transition period. "Incompleteness" of CSOs and political party system is, by all means, a serious obstacle; nonetheless, tendencies for the further development of administrative procedures are noticeable in Russia. It is also worth mentioning that dynamic political transformations of the 2018-2019 SIPS contributed to significant and positive changes being registered in the socio-economic sphere. Those changes, in their turn, have induced the society to set a number of goals and their implementation will probably uplift Russia to a new stage of development, therefore leading to stabilization of the political system. It was assumed that the parties would become the main group for the citizens' political participation. Besides, the political parties, by creating procedures aimed at coordinating various social interests, would eliminate confrontation between the civil society and state by increasing the legitimacy of the government and ensuring its consolidation.

Observations of political stability dynamics in post-Soviet Russia, analysed by political, educational, ethnocultural and religious factors, indicate that they have maintained their impact both on internal and Eurasian-civil cooperation and partnership level. Moreover, the formation of close ties among the state

government system, parties and CSOs coincided with the period when constitutional and legal transformations were initiated and undertaken in the Russian Federation. The evolution of the ruling elite, consolidating the role and positive impact of the majority in the parliamentary, as well as the role of opposition parties, trade unions, and mass media, can be especially singled out in this context. It should be mentioned that the trade union movement will particularly face hard resistance in the political system of the country, which is still transforming and integrating. As the global experience demonstrates, complete development of a social state is possible when there exist and operate trade unions. Some of those principles are enshrined in the General Agreement signed between all-Russian union associations, all-Russian employers' associations and the Government of the Russian Federation for 2018-2020. It should also be noted that the role of the Russian President³ is significant in maintaining the civiliarchic principles of the agreement and attempting to improve social dialogue and propel partnership between the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FITUR) and Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs.⁴ This has contributed to an improvement of the

³ For more details see the official site of the RF President: "Vladimir Putin took part in the signing ceremony of the General Agreement between all-Russian trade union associations, all-Russian employers' associations and the Government of the Russian Federation for 2018-2020, available in Russian: <http://www.kremlin.ru/catalog/persons/340/events/56741> (11.01.2021).

⁴ For more details see the official site of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Social Charter of Russian Business, available in Russian: <http://xn--o1aabe.xn--p1ai/simplepage/sotsialnaya-khartiya-rossiyskogo-biznesa/> (11.01.2021).

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quality of workforce potential within the period under consideration, by demanding from social partners (employers, trade unions, government) to seek a balance of interests and a willingness of interaction (*Бирженюк, Ефимова, Запесоцкий и др. 2018, 136-141; Вилисов, Пастармаджиева 2020*).

A factual achievement of political stability through civiliarchic and legal procedures testifies that authorities succeeded in resolving the issues in a timely and proper manner without bringing them to a stage of conflict. Meanwhile, domestic struggle and interparty competition have gained a constructive approach, positively affecting political stability. For the first time, public or 'open' conflict, as well as political struggle have become an integral part of Russia's political life for the last decades.

The PFI curve of the SIPS decreased in 2018-2019 compared to 2016-2017 indications and continued to remain low (see Figure 1, Table 1). It is also noticeable in the 2000-2019 period when the PFI curve was registered with lower points in 2019 than back in 2000. A downfall in the PFI curve of 2018-2019 SIPS was mainly conditioned by deteriorating relations between Russia and the United States, Russia and the EU, and sanctions undermining the country's economy. The sanctions imposed on Russia restrict the entry of some Russian banks and companies into the EU's primary and secondary capital markets and prohibit both import and export of military equipment. In addition, Russia has limited access to spheres of the oil industry and advanced information and communication technologies. It should be noted, that US-EU sanctions imposed on Russia are still not the main cause of the

current state of federal and regional economic instability. The existing economic model has exhausted itself, and the solution to it is sought not through mobilization, but through a transition to the market model, with the use of fiscal and monetary policy means, opportunities for collaboration and partnership between state-owned and private sector capital (*Блинов 2020; Лисоволик 2020; Бирженюк, Ефимова, Запесоцкий и др. 2018; Гришин 2018*).

During the period under review, Russian-American relations were extremely complicated, even though the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020⁵ has stated that these relations are a priority for Russia and have a long-term perspective. In particular, Russia will strive to build an equal, full-fledged strategic partnership with the United States on the basis of coinciding interests and taking into account the key influence of Russian-American relations. In this regard, priorities underlined in Russia's foreign policy and international relations field will remain the achievement of new agreements in the field of disarmament and arms control, strengthening confidence-building measures, as well as resolving issues of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, building up anti-terrorist cooperation, and resolving regional conflicts.

The worldwide situation at the beginning of the 21st century, challenges of European-Eurasian integration in the post-Soviet

⁵ See the official site of the RF President: "National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020", available in Russian: <http://www.kremlin.ru/-supplement/424> (11.01.2021).

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space, including the global financial crisis, have equally contributed to strengthen cooperation and raise competitiveness between Russia and the EEU member states. This is applicable to Russia-US foreign policy relations, too.

During the period under review, competition between Russia and NATO in the context of increasing defense readiness gained unprecedented momentum.⁶ Although the military exercises were officially declared to pursue solely defensive aims, representatives of the opposing side considered them a demonstration of military and political force, deployment of an offensive strategy and preparation for an offense if needed. Unfortunately, in 2018-2019, as in previous years, there was still a lack of willingness on both sides to reach a mutual agreement between NATO and Russia to reduce military and political tensions and achieve a better strategy.

Table 2 shows that even though Russia's Global Military Index (GMI) scores were lower in 2018-2019 than scores registered for Armenia, yet they are of pivotal importance to maintain and safeguard the viability of military and political security systems of the CSTO member states. According to data provided by Bonn International Center for Conversion, Russia was ranked 6th in 2018 out of 154 countries, whereas in 2019, it took the 8th position out of 151 countries, (*Mutschler and Bales 2020a; Mutschler and Bales 2020b*). In addition, Russia's military

⁶ See the analytical and informative portal NATO.rf. NATO-Russia Council, available in Russian: https://nato.pf/ru/nato_russia_council.html (11.01.2021).

expenditure for 2018-2019 constituted respectively 61 and 64 milliard dollars or made up 3,7% or 3,9% of GDP.⁷

Table 2

2018-2019 CSTO members global military expenditure⁸

<i>Country</i>	<i>Military Expenditure Index Score</i>	<i>Military Personal Index Score</i>	<i>Heavy Weapons Index Score</i>	<i>GMI Score</i>	<i>GMI Rank</i>
Armenia (2018)	2,19	1,71	2,31	310	4
Armenia (2019)	2,2	1,7	2,3	310	2
Russia (2018)	2,08	0,92	2,65	283	8
Russia (2019)	2,13	0,92	2,65	285	8
Belarus (2018)	0,98	1,37	2,25	230	17
Belarus (2019)	1,01	1,37	2,25	232	17
Kyrgyzstan (2018)	1,2	0,4	1,68	164	53
Kyrgyzstan (2019)	1,15	0,4	1,67	161	55
Kazakhstan (2018)	0,91	0,37	1,84	156	58
Kazakhstan (2019)	1,01	0,37	1,76	157	60
Tajikistan (2018)	0,97	0,26	0,5	87	124

⁷ Source of the data is «Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database»: <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex> (10.01.2021).

⁸ Source of the data is the official site of «Bonn International Center for Conversion»: <https://gmi.bicc.de/ranking-table> (11.01.2021).

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Military political and economic factors have a significant impact on the stability of political system of a country in transition. In particular, a number of initiatives proposed by Russia and aimed at resuming dialogue with NATO on the limitation of conventional force in Europe were reconsidered. Nonetheless, the willingness expressed by the country's military-political leadership to upgrade relations and commence a high-level political discourse with NATO in order to lessen the tensions between them was not properly responded to. Besides, it may be testified by the history of international relations, it is impossible to achieve significant success in maintaining military-political balance with no clear and precisely defined political will. Anti-Russian rhetoric has been intensified in NATO countries, whereas in Russia there have been activated anti-Western approaches. This factor has a seriously adverse impact on civiliarchic reform and the formation of socio-political consciousness, complicating perspectives for starting a dialogue and maintaining peace. If there is no positive change in Russia-NATO relations in the near future, they may be changes of their worsening. A negative dynamics of the prospects to stabilize these relations may be triggered by a constant anti-Russian pressure exerted on the leadership of the alliance by a number of NATO member states and partners. It can be illustrated with the help of two countries, namely Ukraine and Georgia, where steps as well as other similar programs initiated within the framework of any program and aimed at activating military and political cooperation or granting NATO membership to the mentioned two countries; hence,

keeping it as a constant issue of NATO agenda, not only endanger a regional but also global military-political balance. All this aforementioned obviously contributes to the crisis in Russia-NATO and CSTO-NATO relations. In general, there has been an excessively negative attitude towards NATO's enlargement policy, especially to military activities recently initiated and launched by the alliance as such. This approach is prevalingly sustained and expressed within the military-political leadership of the country, parliamentary parties as well as among experts of other spheres. This proves the following: the mentioned two parties are not likely to mobilize all their military capabilities despite sharp criticism of each other's actions in the security area. Accordingly, both Russia and NATO pursue a dual-track approach based on strong deterrence and strong defense processes. Even though some signs showing the willingness of the parties to normalize bilateral relations were observed in 2018-2019, there are still numerous disruptive and dividing lines that result in the worsening of the situation. Some of those causes, such as regular discussions on the prospect of Ukraine and Georgia joining the Alliance, the establishment of US military bases and an increase in the military budget of conflicting parties aimed at organising defense operations can be mentioned as such.

Under such unfavourable military-political conditions, civil disobedience as well as "failures and gaps" to form a constructive dialogue and establish the real partnership between the authorities and CSOs were regularly instigated and organised by the opponents, trying to destabilize the country's internal political

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life "from above and from below". In this regard, strengthening the position of the country's ruling elite has had a positive impact on maintaining the internal political stability, creating an atmosphere of mutual trust through "trilateral" cooperation with CSOs. This has reduced the risk of destabilization by responding adequately to both internal and external threats. All the above-mentioned components justify the approach that the primary political issue of the ruling elite was and still is to ensure stability in the country. The capacity of the political regime to respond and react to domestic challenges was largely conditioned by its ability to unite federal and regional elite as well as to reach a mutual agreement and compromise between the two mentioned elites. This made it possible to improve the quality of public administration and anti-corruption policy through maintaining the stability of the political order in transition and diversity of institutions that have been increasing in the political system (*Гришин 2020; Бронников 2019; 2018*).

New challenges threatening to stability of the Russian political system were mainly conditioned by either external factors, such as globalization, the impact of European-Eurasian integration processes and tendencies to build a unipolar world order or political struggle between the ruling and opposition elite as well as the political regime in transition. It is also noticeable that the impact of economic growth on political stability of the country is ambivalent, which has somewhat lessened the supreme importance of economic indicators to sufficiently assess the stability of the political order. It is assumed that ruling and

opposition elites- in terms of political system of a country in transition- are the most significant players of the political process. Whereas internal political stability is directly dependent on the model and format of relations established between the ruling and opposition parties. Eurasianization, Europeanization and globalization processes in the post-Soviet space recur a situation posing a high risk to the modern Russian political elite by forcing them to face and defy new challenges.

To sum up, the political stability dynamics of RF reveals that in view of modernization processes applied and implemented in the political system, Russia is grouped with countries of certain risk due to the fact that prospects for modernization not only depend on consolidation ability of the ruling party and "party of power" which is also accountable for maintaining the stability of political regime but on the efficiency of socio-economic reforms.

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4. BELARUSIAN GEOSTRATEGY FOR BALANCING POLITICAL TURBULENCE AND INTEGRATION PROCESSES

Ashot Aleksanyan

Geopolitical turbulence stemmed from a sharp confrontation between Western countries and Russia in 2018-2019 brought forward new circumstances, which significantly affected international cooperation, integration and stability of the political system of the Republic of Belarus (RB). Due to high turbulence of international relations, tendencies to perceive integration processes through the prism of national interests became predominant in the country's foreign policy (*Барахвоское 2019; Буховец, Бувев 2018; Шамшур 2019*). In this context, the paradigm, when small states are unable to influence the world order due to the very unequal potential of their resources, has undergone natural changes.

Appearing at the epicenter of geopolitical confrontation, Belarus utterly commenced taking into account the nature of geopolitical processes and situation in the Union State with the aim to protect its national interests. In such a geopolitical

environment, it became possible to develop new approaches to the geostrategic development of Belarus.

During the period under review, the country's strategic role in strengthening not only Eurasian and European but also global security has increased, providing some possibility to develop mutually beneficial relations with both Western and Eastern vectors.

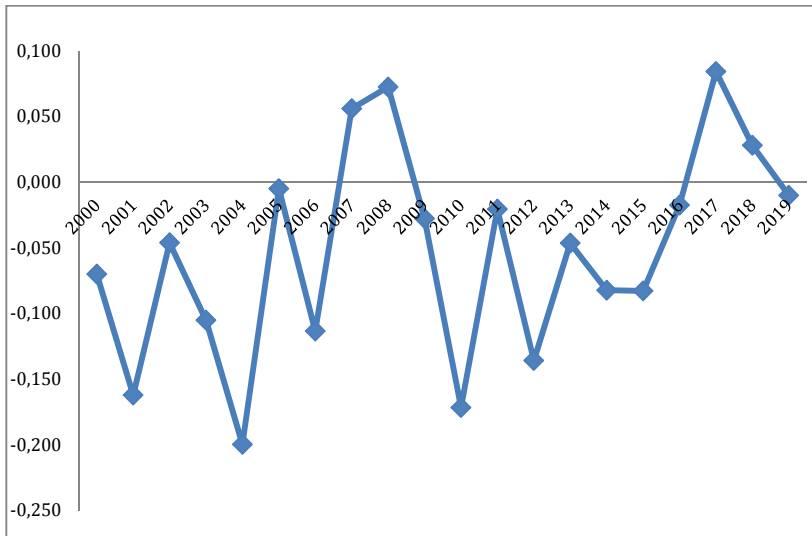
Building up the potential aimed at sustaining regional stability initiatives, Belarus seeks to distance itself from various types of confrontation by positioning the country as a potential player in international relations that can make a significant contribution to conflict prevention and resolution processes. In this regard, Belarus has significant potential for developing partnerships of geostrategic and geopolitical resources within the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the European Union (EU). The ruling elite of the country to a great extent estimates the geostrategic nature of the independent state (*Eurasian Economic Commission 2018; EEU 2018; Чесновский 2019; Глазьев 2020*).

Political Factors Index (PFI) of SIPS of Belarus fell sharply in 2018-2019 compared to the index registered in 2017 (see Table 1, Figure 1), which is an indication of an increase in political stability challenges. It particularly refers to issues relating to the effectiveness and development of the strategy of the creation of Russia-Belarus Union State, which can only be solved by jointly considering geopolitical, economic, military-political, cultural and communication components. The uniqueness of civilization, the historical experience of the peoples living in the territory of the

two states as well as traditions are the foundation for the Russian-Belarusian society to search for acceptable directions of development. Russia and Belarus jointly cooperating in integration processes have created a completely new type of a Union State, which has both federal and confederal features. However, integration relations between the two countries should be developed in accordance with a three-staged model, i.e., “region – country – Belarus-Russia Union State,” enabling the powers of all governing bodies to be defined at all levels.

Figure 1

Political Factors Index of SIPS of Belarus (2000-2019)*



* Source: calculations by the author.

Political Factors Index is estimated within the scale ranging from the lowest -1 to highest indicator +1.

Table 1

Political Factors Index of SIPS of Belarus (2000-2019)*

Year	PFI
2000	-0,070
2001	-0,162
2002	-0,046
2003	-0,105
2004	-0,200
2005	-0,005
2006	-0,113
2007	0,056
2008	0,072
2009	-0,028
2010	-0,172
2011	-0,021
2012	-0,136
2013	-0,047
2014	-0,082
2015	-0,083
2016	-0,018
2017	0,084
2018	0,028
2019	-0,010

* Source: calculations by the author.

PFI, EFI, SFI and consequently SIPS indices calculated on them may insignificantly vary in comparison to the indices of corresponding years estimated in previous publications as a result of updated and newly inserted data as well as changes of minimum and maximum indices.

Fluctuations in the level of stability in Belarus were accompanied by complementary steps initiated towards Eurasian and European geostrategic vectors in the foreign policy, directly or indirectly affecting the spheres of public life. Therefore, regardless of a political regime, level of socio-economic development, the governing traditions and its structure, a key problem of ensuring political stability is conditioned by the ability to achieve a constant dialogue and a sustainable partnership between the state and civil society. Through the history of the creation of the country's social system, it is depicted that various measures which have been applied to achieve political stability and maintain balance gained by the political forces are mainly solved by means of interpersonal relations of the ruling elite. Moreover, the state and state authorities are always the key actors in this process. Consequently, an effective and optimal institutional framework of the government is not only a real guarantee of political stability but also a significant factor for ensuring it.

During the period under review, the geostrategy pursued by Belarus altered, taking into account a number of priorities necessary for providing sustainable development and their evolutionary shift towards the sphere of economic interests. As a result, Belarusian geostrategy both in view of Eurasian and European integration sphere has been implemented in line with socio-economic goals which were based on the national interest of the strategy (*National Bank of the RB 2019; 2020; Боярчук 2019; Желиба 2018; Кузьменкова 2020; Вардомский 2019; Кечина,*

Филинская 2020). Thus, the implementation of dynamic components of the political projects and initiatives was ensured by the President of Belarus and the ruling elite in various spheres of international cooperation.

Realities that lead to the modernization of sovereignty require further improvement of state institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs) and political unions effectively assessing their civiliarchic results and abilities of impacting civil consciousness. It is evident that observance of civiliarchic rules is the most urgent issue from a perspective of conscious participation of citizens in the political life of the country and maintenance of political stability. It can be implemented on the condition that there will be guarantees for citizen-oriented activities in order to facilitate further development of the state and make effective government decisions within the framework of CSOs transformation. The All-Belarusian People's Assembly¹ (ABPA) was quite remarkable in this sense. Issues related to strengthening statehood and establishing democracy have been discussed in the framework of the ABPA, which is constantly being updated as such. With the help of ABPA activity, it was possible to reveal stages of the establishment of Belarusian sovereign statehood. The stages included strategic, multifaceted, multidimensional and compromising administrative decisions that had been developed within political stability sphere. Development of the culture of democracy in the context of

¹ For more details see the official site of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly: <https://vsebel.by/history/> (16.01.2021).

applying a social model of the economy as well as forming a legal state was taken into account. The very fact of the existence of global political projects in the foreign policy of the state is an indisputable proof of the former, which also includes the concept of "integration of integrations". As for Eurasian integration processes, the ruling elite of Belarus, taking into account peculiarities of Eurasianism, seeks to ensure the supremacy of national interests, but not to search for a new ideological doctrine. Hence, that is the reason that perspectives of Eurasianism were also highlighted in the context of the implementation of the concept of "integration of integrations". The latter has been harmoniously embedded into the process adopted by Belarus and aimed at settling territorial disputes, ensuring a higher level of stability and security by means of integration. From this point of view, Belarus is no exception. It is also guided by the principles of political pragmatism and priorities of economic integration. But the problem lies in the scope as well as in the depth of the integration vector.

The EU has had a significant impact on the country's integration strategy over the period under review (*Левенков 2019; Шевченко 2020; Голованов 2018*). The role and position of Belarus in the EU's political and economic space not only has been but is still actively discussed in Belarus, which is a neighbouring country of the EU. Although the EU has been endeavouring to instil some European values and norms within the framework of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) programme, by using various tools and mechanisms, there has been recently a certain "slowdown" in

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European integration processes. It is mainly conditioned by geostrategic interests of the Russia-Belarus Union State, as a result, demanding further strengthening of the partnership between the two countries. Objectively, it was not only necessary but also beneficial for both Russia and Belarus. By forming an alliance with Belarus, Russia has significantly strengthened its strategic position in the western direction. Belarus, in its turn, for its geopolitical situation gained reliable assistance and proper protection supported by Russia.

The processes aimed at reforming Belarusian economy and democratizing its public and political life posed both "risks" and new opportunities to the country's authorities, on the basis of which they were perceived as rather ambiguous (*Данилов, Ротман 2019; Калечиц 2018; Посталовская 2020*). Consequently, the leadership of Belarus regarded Europe dually: it being a source of opportunities to modernize all spheres of public life, whereas attempts targeted to resolve political and economic risks through them seem to be not so realistic. Attempts initially taken to establish deeper and stronger cooperation were transformed due to the escalation of conflicts, the show of mistrust, and misinterpretation of each other's goals. Another fact confirming the EU's lack of interest to establish objective and pragmatic diplomatic relations with Belarus was the freezing of inter-institutional and diplomatic interactions. The EU official institutions had ignored the Belarusian authorities for a long time, preferring to engage in a dialogue and establish a discourse with opposition and civil society representatives rather than with the

country's leadership. However, this method and tool of cooperation showed its inefficiency as well as shortcomings, which forced the EU to look for new ways to start cooperation with the Belarusian authorities.

During the period under review, the crisis in Ukraine made Europe reconsider its foreign policy approaches towards Belarus and other EaP countries in order to avoid any possible recurrence of such scenarios in the future. Belarus, particularly in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, has yet acted as a reliable, predictable partner in ensuring regional security and stability despite its non-compliance with EU expectations to be implemented in the field of political and economic reforms.

The decision of Belarus to become a member of the EEU predetermined a number of factors relating to the country's foreign policy agenda, where a strategic necessity to deepen cooperation with Russia was a key component of the agenda. On the one hand, Belarus seeks to implement strategic programmes in the economic sphere, which will be based on pragmatism and geo-economic principles² and, on the other hand, the country intends to be deeply integrated with Russia that has significantly exceeding resources. In doing so, he neutralized a number of risks

² For more details see the official site of the President of the Republic of Belarus: "A meeting on the country's socio-economic development in 2019 and approaches to further development of integration areas": <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/coveschanie-o-sotsialno-ekonomicheskome-razvitii-strany-v-2019-godu-i-podxodax-k-dalnejshemu-razvitiju-20264>; http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/coveschanie-o-sotsialno-ekonomicheskome-razvitii-strany-v-2019-godu-i-podxodax-k-dalnejshemu-razvitiju-20264/ (17.01.2021).

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affecting key issues of political and economic security, including restrictions on a number of areas of integration (*National Bank of the RB 2019; 2020; EEU 2018; Комаров 2019; Посталовская 2020*). It should be noted that Belarus has, to the fullest extent, benefitted from strategic partnership when building up relations with Russia, in view of bilateral activities, as well as within the framework of the Union State and other integration processes. An extensive bilateral agenda was determined by close cooperation established between the enterprises as well as by interrelated and complementary ties between the economies of the two states. The vectors of the military initiatives of the two countries stipulated the development of their macroeconomic and industrial resources, contributing to the reinforcement of the institutional foundations of the Union State.

In 2018-2019 there were no drastic changes in activities aimed at attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in Belarus. In 2019 the total volume of FDI amounted to 1,27 billion US dollars, which decreased when compared to those registered in 2018.³ However, the given volume of FDI contributed to the improvement of a dynamically developing and financially stable market in Belarus. In order to ensure stability in the financial sector of the economy, the Government and the National Bank

³See the official site of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus: <http://www.nbrb.by/publications/BalPay/balpay2019.pdf> (18.01.2021), the site of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus: https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/realny-sector-ekonomiki/-statistika-vneshneekonomicheskoy-deyatelnosti/inostrannye-investitsii/operativnye-dannye/inostrannye-investitsii/?special_version=Y (18.01.2021).

updated the "strategy for the development of the financial market of the Republic of Belarus until 2020"⁴ where goals and objectives were planned to transform the financial market by making it more qualified, to eliminate imbalances, to further improve regulatory approaches; hence, expanding the possibilities to develop market infrastructure with the active introduction of modern digital technologies.

"Programs of Coordinated Actions in Foreign Policy of the Union State in 2018-2019"⁵ were mainly focused on deepening and expanding bilateral cooperation in the CIS, CSTO, EEU areas as well as in international organizations, hence by safeguarding security not only in the region, but also in Europe on the whole, and increasing the role of Belarus and Russia in the fight against new challenges and threats. Strategic directions undertaken to maintain political security of the Union State are based on innovative ways of cooperation. They intend to prevent threats posing to regional and international security by using advanced and up-to-date military defense systems (*Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation 2019*). Comprehensive programs planning to take measures to correct administrative shortcomings of Belarus and Russia have been developed within the framework of the Union State, which will contribute to the development of trade and economic ties between the two mentioned countries,

⁴ See the official site of the Council of Ministers of the RB: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/8915> (18.01.2021).

⁵ About this see the official website of the Standing Committee of the Union State: <https://www.postkomsg.com/documentation/> (18.01.2021).

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expanding not only the common transport system but also the single market of fuel and energy. The Belarusian economic model features a hybrid economy with state-owned enterprises playing a key role and this is considered to be one of the problems hindering the country's development. Meanwhile, the share of private property is gradually growing due to the rapid development of the IT sector and its related services industry. Viewing all those mentioned factors through the spectre of Belarusian national interests, it can be stated that confrontation and deterioration of socio-economic, more strongly political relations with Russia do not reflect the interests of the state. This is primarily conditioned by the fact that the Belarusian economy strongly and badly depends on Russia's energy resources, as well as on a large share of goods and services exported to Russia.⁶ In addition, Russia is the largest supplier of basic goods imported by Belarus,⁷ and foreign trade agreements are also strategic in nature, as Belarus is Russia's only partner in the West.

The absence of radical reforms in the structure of the economy has limited the more dynamic flow of capital, technology and innovation to Belarus. Therefore, the country's authorities have developed a more flexible toolkit of procedures that will satisfy the conditions set by the International Monetary Fund

⁶ About it see the official website of National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus: <https://www.belstat.gov.by/ofitsialnaya-statistika/realny-sector-ekonomiki/vneshnyaya-torgovlya/vneshnyaya-torgovlya-tovarami/godovye-dannye/> (18.01.2021).

⁷ See *ibid.*

(IMF) for signing a loan program.⁸ It will certainly contribute to the recovery of the economy, increase its stability and competitiveness. But on the other hand, a strategic partnership with Russia is a key element to sustain stability of the political system of Belarus. It should be noted that even if a significant reorganization and reformation of the Belarusian economy is initiated, reconsideration of its investment environment is a long process, whereas incomes and living standards of the population will significantly decrease in the transition period, which may eventually lead to growing public discontent and emergence of new problems.

As for the priorities of anti-corruption policy⁹ implemented and pursued by Belarus, they were aimed at overcoming, suppressing and preventing corruption, as well as identifying the causes and conditions that lead to it. In particular, anti-corruption legal tools have been developed, such as measures to exert financial control over state officials and other governing bodies in order to prevent corruption, to detect its incidents at an appropriate time and hold the ones involved in corruption accountable.

In compliance with the decision made in 2018-2019 by the Republican Coordinating Meeting on Combating Crime and Corruption, a number of measures were approved and

⁸ See the official site of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus: <http://www.nbrb.by/today/internationalcooperation/imf> (18.01.2021).

⁹ See a decree of the President of the RB from 9 November 2010 N575 on approval of National Security Concept of the RB: <https://kgb.by/ru/ukaz575/> (18.01.2021).

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implemented in order to improve the quality of search operations and investigative activity and develop new ones. Within the framework of the mentioned meeting, anti-corruption programmes were initiated and carried out; besides, to improve anti-corruption legislation a number of legislative norms were adopted, and to promote CSO activities in the fight against corruption new methods and means aimed at preventing crime were reviewed.

In reference to CSOs' activities and acts of civil disobedience, balanced and planned steps have to be taken when establishing relations with the authorities so that they may play a key role in the process of democratic transformation of the country's political system. In this regard, the application of the EU EaP principles "more for more and less for less" should be extended and pursued in the civil society spheres focusing not only on the actions executed by the country's authorities but also procedures relating to human rights aspects (*EEAS 2019*).

During the period under review, a dialogue between EU and Belarus CSOs was coordinated by the efforts of the Belarusian National Platform for the Civil Society Forum,¹⁰ hence becoming an integral component of EU-Belarus relations. Additionally, civil disobedience had a positive effect on the country's political life, as it had activated it to some extent, but it had an adverse impact on the EU and Belarus relations, which are more complicated. On the one hand, EU has to admit that it lacks a toolkit to exert direct

¹⁰ For more details see the official site of the Belarusian National Platform of EaP CSF: <https://npbelarus.info/eng/category/documents/> (19.02.2021).

influence on Belarus that would be effective in improving the level of civil dialogue and internal political situation. On the other hand, any move or step initiated by the EU had a direct impact on the CSOs, by causing a disproportionate response from the Belarusian authorities. This practically means enhancing a constructive role of civil society in the procedures targeting the democratic transformation of the country's political system. Procedures to deepen EU cooperation with Belarus need to be reorganized so that active and acting CSOs in the country are able to participate in all stages of development and implementation of the European integration projects, starting from planning up to evaluation.

In Belarus, political parties¹¹ should also use this political opportunity to address some of their concerns. It is obvious that political parties have more in common with CSOs rather than differences both in Belarusian reality and practice. They have similar goals, programs, and tools. Belarusian civil society is quite politicized, but that does not mean that all CSOs have political ambitions. In the meantime, the fragmentation of the opposition forces hindered the consolidation of their highly supportive electorate and the implementation of some other civil initiatives. Given the uncertainty of the social recipient and lack of a full-fledged political base in the multi-party system, it is difficult to determine what priorities the mentioned parties have and who their leaders are. Moreover, inter-party ties and relations between political forces which have identical ideology are weak.

¹¹ About it see the official site of the President of the RB: <https://president.gov.by/ru/belarus/society/politicheskie-partii> (11.02.2021).

The fact, that political parties were denied representation in the state authorities and local self-government bodies, is considered one of those factors that have been hindering the development and formation of the basis for political parties during the period under review. They acted in compliance with the decisions of the government appointed by President Alexander Lukashenko, therefore being accountable only to him. Lacking political representation, the parties were deprived of the role of a mediator or linker, or communicator between the state and the society.

Thus, ever-increasing and continually growing confrontation between Russia and Western countries as well as an aggressive show of their military potential cause tension and uncertainty in the national security system of Belarus. In addition, the struggle for information and communication platforms has had a negative impact on decision-making procedures related to public policy and management spheres. Besides, the above-mentioned struggle had adversely impacted ensuring national security and proper functioning of the public administration system. With this risk in view, the President of the country began to strengthen measures aimed at safeguarding national security in Belarus within the framework of the activities initiated by the Union State and CSTO. In fact, a modern world order has prompted high dynamics of geopolitical processes. That is why the strategy of integration processes pursued by the Union State contains new opportunities and risks for the sustainable development of the country. Probably Belarus, in cooperation with the EU and Russia, should

consistently adhere to the rules of conducting a complementary policy, exercising some caution for a unilateral deepening of relations.

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5. COMBINATION OF SOFT AND HARD INTEGRATION MECHANISMS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES OF KAZAKHSTAN

Ashot Aleksanyan

Strategic stability of Kazakhstan is an integral part of national security, which during the 2018-2019 period contributed to the country's efficient development in circumstances of both external and internal influences, maintaining its systematic features and basic qualities; therefore, ensuring social and political stability.

There were some necessary conditions to ensure political stability, namely: efficient social institutions as well as local self-government bodies and a political system that ensured a state of dynamic social balance. This is especially noticeable during the period of prospective changes to be implemented in the sphere of economy.

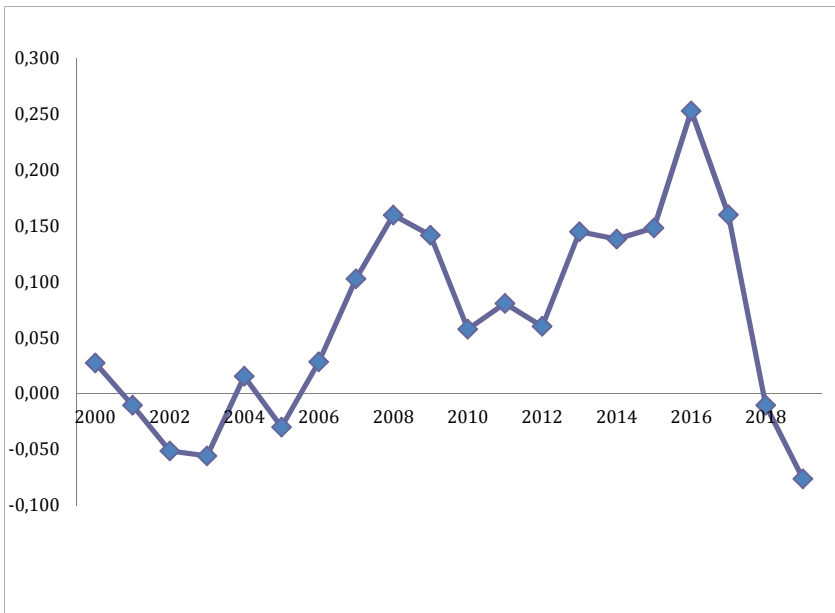
The stability of Kazakhstan's political system depends on the fact whether the latter will be able to stop and eliminate disintegration processes in the neighbouring countries. Attempts taken by Kazakhstan to implement Eurasian projects are currently in process, whereas the CIS and CSTO have not justified their

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expectations. Kazakhstan is presently struggling to implement a large Eurasian project, which should eventually result in the development of a civilized, cultural and valuable area in Central Asia.

Figure 1

**Political Factors Index of SIPS of Kazakhstan
(2000-2019)***



Political Factors Index of SIPS of the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK) sharply decreased within the years of 2018-2019 compared

* Source: calculations by the author.

Political Factors Index is estimated within the scale ranging from the lowest -1 to highest indicator +1.

to previous years (see Figure 1, Table 1). Moreover, the PFI indicator registered in 2019 was the lowest from 2000 to 2019 (see Figure 1, Table 1).

During the period under review, due to the absence or violation of some rules, various manifestations of internal political struggle and acts of civil disobedience were regarded by the country's ruling elite as a serious socio-political threat, which could lead to a rise in social unrest and a qualitative change in the political system, and, as a consequence of all these, to a collapse of the whole state. Meanwhile, the precedented political transformations that occurred in the post-Soviet space proved that not only internal political struggle but also incidents of social discontent could lead to revolutionary transformations. Although the ruling elite emphasised the importance of Kazakhstan political modernization. However, in reality, it only reached the level of displaying slogans about the necessity for modernization, which triggered vivid dissatisfaction among CSOs, trade unions, and local self-government bodies.

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Table 1

**Political Factors Index of SIPS of Kazakhstan
(2000-2019)***

Year	PFI
2000	0,027
2001	-0,011
2002	-0,051
2003	-0,056
2004	0,015
2005	-0,030
2006	0,028
2007	0,102
2008	0,159
2009	0,141
2010	0,057
2011	0,081
2012	0,060
2013	0,145
2014	0,138
2015	0,148
2016	0,253
2017	0,160
2018	-0,011
2019	-0,076

* Source: calculations by the author.

PFI, EFI, SFI and consequently SIPS indices calculated on them may insignificantly vary in comparison to the indices of corresponding years estimated in previous publications as a result of updated and newly inserted data as well as changes of minimum and maximum indices.

During the period under review, the PFI of Kazakhstan was significantly impacted with *"unstable stability" and "stable instability" situations* and, as a result, the country's ruling elite undertook not only radical political rearrangements but also the establishment of new "social" relations and formation of market economy. Nevertheless, both the President and the government of the country were concerned with the fact that the vertical and horizontal ties of public authorities are too bureaucratic and the fight against corruption is ineffective. All the mentioned issues constituted danger and might have destructive consequences. Moreover, the paradox of the situation has been expressed by the fact that modernization is a challenge to the stability of the country's political system since it contradicts the President and Government's main priorities (*Satpayev 2020; Dodonov 2020; Khassenov 2020; Baigabylov, Otar and Tokar 2020*). This became especially obvious in Kazakhstan, precisely throughout the early presidential elections which had been declared to be held in 2019, and when the implementation of the programmes aimed at modernizing the strategy should be carried out. This situation was stipulated with the sudden resignation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced on 19 March 2019, who is regarded as the oldest and most experienced post-Soviet leader. By doing so, he tried to stimulate and encourage the evolution of the country's ruling elite, to reinforce sustainable development and deepen Eurasian integration processes.

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Pursuant to Article 48 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan,¹ the powers of the President of the Republic for the remainder of the term are transferred to the Speaker of the Senate of the Parliament Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Meanwhile, this model of peaceful transfer of power initiated by the first president of the Republic of Kazakhstan pursued mainly one goal, i.e. to make political rearrangements as manageable as possible, prevent the escalation of ethnic-political conflicts and curb the activation of civil disobedience. At the same time, it is difficult to apply the term "change of government" to those events which occurred in Kazakhstan, as key levers of public administration would remain under Nazarbayev's lifelong control, and he and his family members were rendered with lifetime immunity.² It was noteworthy that Nazarbayev's voluntary resignation made Kazakhstan evolve from a Soviet republic with an outdated system of government different from that of the post-Soviet countries, and it led to bicameral supremacy, guaranteeing the influential position and extensive powers of the first president in the hierarchic construct of the country. Thus, the Constitutional amendments affected the powers and the status of the Security

¹ About it see the official site of Ministry of Justice, Insititue of law and legal information of the RK, Constitution of the Republic of Kazkhstan: http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K950001000_#z70 (16.01.2021).

² About it see the official site of the President of the RK; Constitutional Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 20, 2000 N 83-II about « About the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan - Leader of the Nation: https://www.akorda.kz/ru/official_documents/constitutional_laws/o-pervom-prezidente-respubliki-kazahstan-lidere-nacii (17.01.2021).

Council³ (SC) and its chairman Nazarbayev, but in 2018 the Constitutional Council⁴ (CC) reaffirmed Nazarbayev's right to be a lifelong chairperson of the Security Council, hence raising the status of the Security Council and significantly expanding the powers of its chairman. In fact, constitutional reforms initiated by President Nazarbayev back in 2017 played a crucial role in changing the government, as the transition from a presidential to a parliamentary-presidential system will significantly increase the role and status of the parliament by transferring some of the president's powers to the legislative branch, which will restrict the rights of Nazarbayev's successor. At the same time, the reform was supposed to balance the interests of different political groups and CSOs, by making parliament the centre of their struggle. This will help to achieve a compromise between the ruling elite and the opposition, which will result in maintaining stability. It should be noted that such redistribution of "checks and balances" between the branches of state power made the country's government accountable to the legislation of the RK, as it has to be formed with the participation of the parliament (*Constitution of the RK, Articles III, IV, V*).⁵

³ For more details see the official site of the Ministry of Justice, Institute of law and Legal information, "The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan of July 5, 2018 No. 178-V- ABM "About the Security Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan": <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z1800000178> (17.01.2021).

⁴ See the official site of the Constitutional Council of the RK: <http://ksrk.gov.kz/index.php/ru> (17.01.2021).

⁵ See the official site of the Ministry of Justice, Institute of law and Legal information, "Constitution of the RK": http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K9500010-00_#z70 (16.01.2021).

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It has become evident that the "Law about the Security Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan"⁶ has completely altered the role of the Security Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan (SC) by transforming it from an advisory and consulting body into a state one that coordinates the implementation of a unified state policy in the field of national security and defense capability of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The President of the SC Nazarbayev in consultation with others had the right to decide the composition of the SC and to issue acts relating to the field of national security. This law has defined those decisions made by the Security Council and the President of the Security Council are binding and must be strictly enforced by government agencies, organizations and officials of the Republic of Kazakhstan (*Article 6, paragraph 6*).

In reference to the early presidential elections held on 9 June 2019, which resulted in the victory of Kassym-Jomart Tokyaev, Kazakhstan became the third country in Central Asia to have recently changed its political leadership. Presidential candidate Tokayev was supported by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan and Nur Otan political party. He received 70,96% of the total votes (see Table 2).

The other six candidates nominated for the presidency of the Republic of Kazakhstan were registered from different parties and

⁶ See The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan of July 5, 2018 No. 178-V- ABM "About the Security Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan": <http://adilet.zan.kz/-rus/docs/Z1800000178> (17.01.2021).

public associations.⁷ For the first time in presidential elections in Kazakhstan, a female candidate Daniya Yespayeva, nominated by Ak Zhol political party and depute of Majilis, ran for the presidency. The Communist People's Party nominated Zhambyl Akhmetbekov, whereas Toleutai Rakhimbekov was nominated by "Auyl" People's Democratic Patriotic Party. Three more candidates were nominated by trade unions of the Federation of Trade Unions and NGOs.

Table 2
Results of early presidential elections held on 9 June 2019
(OSCE/ODIHR 2019)

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Kassym-Jomart Tokyaev	6,539,715	70,96
Amirzhan Kossanov	1,495,401	16,23
Daniya Yespayeva	465,714	5,05
Toleutai Rakhimbekov	280,451	3,04
Amangeldy Taspikhov	182,898	1,98
Zhambyl Akhmetbekov	167,649	1,82
Sadi-Bek Tugel	84,582	0,92

It is worth mentioning that pre-election processes had a negative impact on the volumes of Foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country, the decline of which was later prevented with the help of post-election stability in 2019. In particular,

⁷ See the official site of the Central Election Commission of the RK "2019 Early presidential elections of the RK": [https://www.election.gov.kz/rus/vibori-2019/\(11.01.2021\)](https://www.election.gov.kz/rus/vibori-2019/(11.01.2021)).

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almost half of EU member states reduced the number of investments in Kazakhstan's economy in 2018 (*Kazinform International News agency 2020*).

In the period of 2018-2019, transformations of procedures connected and dealing with implementation and achievement of administrative decisions had a significant impact on Kazakhstan's PFI, maintaining Nazarbayev's pivotal role in the field of security policy even after the latter retired from the position of a president. In fact, under the leadership of Nazarbayev, the Security Council became the guarantor of the stability of the society.

Nazarbayev's resignation from the presidency was summed up by his address to the Security Council of the RK on 4 February 2019. This mainly referred to an official interpretation of Article 42, Paragraph 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (*Radio Azattyq 2019a*). With this step taken, his decision to resign was approved by the Constitution, hence confirming its legality.

The response of the Security Council to his appeal, in fact, once again strengthened Nazarbayev's unique status, even though it referred to the right of the head of state to resign as well as to a necessity of clarifying some issues related to the relationship between presidential form of government and constitutional and legal status of the president (*Forbes 2019*).

In order to ensure proper and smooth functioning of the country's political system, various issues, initiated by the President Tokayev and especially those related to the improvement of social welfare were discussed at the session held by Nur Otan party. Specifically, a number of the steps which were

aimed at maintaining social stability in the country and improving the rights of socially vulnerable groups were introduced there (*Маллинсон 2019; Гулд-Дэвис 2019; Лиллис 2019*). Significant funds were allocated from the state budget to the National Fund to accomplish this mentioned purpose. However, it can be assumed that in the face of growing international tension as well as its possible repercussions within the country, Nazarbayev pursued the aim to share political responsibility with someone who was "loyal" to him by holding "the same positions." In any case, the Kazakh model and formula of transit of power are primarily aimed at maintaining as well as continuing the policy adopted and implemented by the "first president of the Republic of Kazakhstan" both in the domestic and international arena. It was apparent that Nazarbayev, being the nation's leader invested with broad powers, intended to keep his strong grip on situational developments as long as possible.

In the observed period, acts of civil disobedience were mainly triggered not only by the change of power process but also by snap presidential elections held on June 9, 2019. Despite the fact that the real opposition in the country was weak, since it lacked unity and, hence, was disrupted; nonetheless, some opposition forces managed to hold rallies in the largest cities of the country on May 1. The rallies were largely led and initiated by the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK), a social and political movement, which was banned by the Supreme Court and declared extremist in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Calls for the Kazakh population to boycott June 9 snap presidential elections and take

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to the streets were posted on social networks. A day prior to the events, despite the warnings given by the Prosecutor General's Office not to respond to provocations and not to participate in illegal rallies; nevertheless, unauthorized rallies occurred in the capital of the Republic and in other big cities (*Current Time 2019; Radio Azattyq 2019b; CABAR 2019; Vlast.kz 2019; BBC 2019; Human Rights Watch 2020*). In the wake of foreign intervention in Central Asia and activation of extremist terrorist groups, law enforcement bodies in Kazakhstan sternly prevented all attempts from destabilizing the situation. As a result, CSO peaceful gatherings and civilarchic initiatives aimed at raising public awareness of suffrage and legal consciousness suffered too. On the other hand, the growth in civil disobedience and other anti-government movements, which were not strengthened by electoral procedures, could have created a fertile ground for the intervention of various political players under the conditions of presidential powers. Especially, that the Republic of Kazakhstan contains a geopolitical interest for example for the US and EU member states, taking into account its territorial, economic and political relations with Russia and China. In addition, intensification of American influence in the Republic of Kazakhstan may hinder not only the reinforcement of China's position with its map of the "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative, but also arrangements made to create a common economic zone with Russia within the EEU. In this regard, the deterioration of the foreign policy environment around the RK is noticeable. Indeed, Kazakhstan, as Russia's closest military-

political-economic ally, may appear in a difficult situation provided the further aggravation of Russia-USA and Russia-EU relations or in case of deepening of Russian-Ukrainian crisis. That is why the country's first president united the ruling elite as quickly as possible, thus consolidating state power and aiming to make balanced decisions.

As for the anti-corruption policy, its improved indicators were of key impact on political factors indices.⁸ In this regard, President Tokayev emphasized the necessity to continue the processes of state system modernization and the establishment of a constructive public dialogue within the state. At the same time, he announced a new model of state power, i.e. "a strong president - an influential parliament - an accountable government."⁹ Its goal was to improve a multi-party system and fight against corruption, as well as to make the country's authorities more accountable to its population, taking into account public opinion on strategic related issues. Those mentioned aspects will enable the country's ruling elite to further sustain the priorities of integrated modernization procedures, which implies the implementation of joint modernization programs for the harmonious development of both industrial and innovative enterprises. It was highly

⁸ For more details see the official site of Transparency International: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2018/index/dnk#> (12.01.2021); <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2019/index/nzl> (12.01.2021).

⁹ See the official site of the President of the RK "Constructive public dialogue is the foundation of Kazakhstan's stability and prosperity": https://www.akorda.kz/ru/addresses/addresses_of_president/poslanie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-narodu-kazahstana (12.01.2021).

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prioritised in Kazakhstan to emphasize processes focusing on the country's sustainable and secure development, paying equal attention to the challenges of re-industrialization and knowledge accumulation.

It is obvious that consolidation of political actors so as steps for ensuring administrative modernization are necessary preconditions for stimulating an innovative economy and forming a knowledgeable society, as integrated modernization demands that the ruling elite should appropriately initiate qualitative changes in the political system that will satisfy requirements to facilitate not only Eurasian but also global progress. Accordingly, political actors have to get ready to face other collateral effects of modernization processes, which will create cause contradictions between strengthening the stability and modernizing of the system. In addition, the problem of the regions of Kazakhstan having disproportionate levels of development poses a threat not only to socio-economic sphere but also to the sphere of national security and territorial integrity, as separatist tendencies may intensify during economic crises. And when a state is faced with "unstable stability" or long-term disruption of political balance, the negativity accumulated in the political system reached "boiling points" and even got more intensified. In this regard, the issues of political stability and related to socio-economic development are equally and significantly addressed in each region of the country in the modern phase of sustainable and secure (balanced) development of Kazakhstan. They are to be solved mainly in the context of the proportionate development of each region.

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6. FACTORS OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATIONS OF KYRGYZSTAN

Arusyak Aleksanyan
Ashot Aleksanyan

In view of modern conditions when the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) member states are in the process of transforming their regimes, the main issue dealing with stability and national security of the political system of Kyrgyzstan has gained not only regional but also global significance¹ (*Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan 2018; Internet Postal CIS 2019*). This is conditioned by multilevel values of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the processes of transformation of the society, functions of government and local self-government bodies as well as approaches adopted by the parliamentary parties and ruling elite towards internal and external threats of Kyrgyzstan. Most of the

¹ "Циндаоская декларация совета глав государств-членов Шанхайской организации сотрудничества". *Евразийская интеграция: экономика, право, политика. 2019. (28): 107-115.*

population appears to be in the center of ideological, political and economic vacuums, as well as in the centre of clashes of national priorities and interests of the state.

In general, domestic and foreign policy factors that had preconditioned instability of the systemic transformation of Kyrgyzstan were related to the security sphere (*PA CSTO 2021*). National security issues, as a rule, have a direct impact on the principle of separation of powers and regulation of counterbalance, formation of administrative hierarchy, as well as the efficient organization of government departments and activities of public services.

Kyrgyzstan was the first Central Asian country to embark on a radical democratic transformation of political, socio-economic relations.

Kyrgyzstan was among the first countries in Central Asia that took steps of radical and democratic transformations of political, socio-economic relations. Therefore, the initial stage of transformation of the political regime of the country coincided with the processes of revival and modernization of the national statehood. However, remains of traditions of authoritarian regime inherited from Soviet times still have a significant impact on the political culture of the country. One of the biggest obstacles to the country's political modernization is coexistence and active competition between formal and informal political actors due to general deformations of the political space in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan (*Карасартов 2018; Саякбаева, Джоробекова 2021; Нурматов 2019*).

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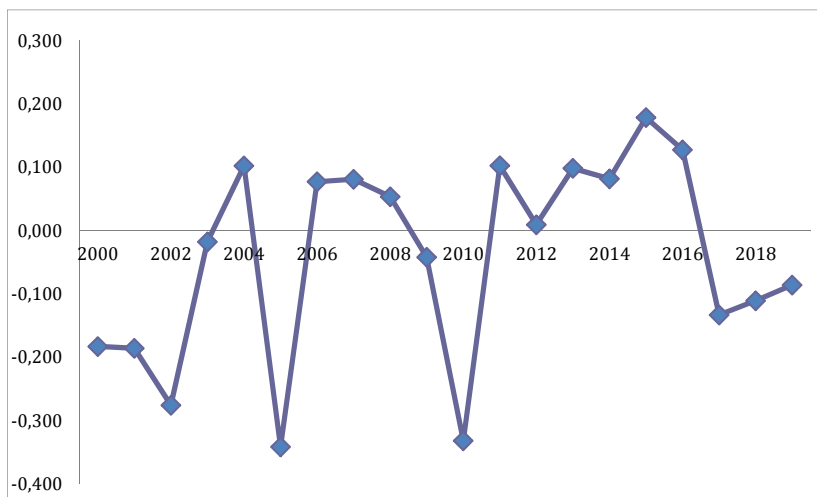
Many problems arose in 2018-2019 while undertaking administrative reforms and the stability of the political system and viability of state institutions are dependent on the solutions to them. Although during this mentioned period the political party system acquired a clearer outline of a multi-party format, it was nevertheless heavily influenced by the insufficiency of public consciousness and a low level of political culture as well as low social and political activity of the population. In particular, the rural population, which is the majority in the country, has no experience in forming political parties. At the same time, continuous growth of the number of parties neither increases their quality nor contributes to the processes of making key decisions. Despite the progress made by CSOs after the country's independence, they still do not have an influential role in the country's socio-political life.

A comprehensive study of the country's political stability reveals capacities to ensure the legitimacy of the Kyrgyz authorities and form of the government, activities of CSOs, opportunities to protect human rights and freedoms and the potential of the state's socio-economic sphere.

The evolution of Kyrgyzstan's state and political regime shows that the process of statehood formation is not accomplished yet. Now, efforts of the ruling elite taken to strengthen a naturally acting state and political regime and maintain civiliarchic stability are more essential than ever before.

Figure 1

Political Factors Index of SIPS of Kyrgyzstan (2000-2019)*



During the period under review, the scores of the Kyrgyz Political Factors Index (PFI) of SIPS are negative (see Figure 1, Table 1), but with some tendencies for improvement. In this regard, SIPS indicators provide an opportunity to summarize results of the regulatory reforms registered in 2018-2019 by displaying the resources utilised to achieve that goal; hence, predicting those tendencies that will predetermine socio-political developments in the future (*Рысалиева 2020; Майтдинова 2019; Голодова, Ранчинская, Горохова 2019*).

* Source: calculations by the author.

Political Factors Index is estimated within the scale ranging from the lowest -1 to highest indicator +1.

Table 1

**Political Factors Index of SIPS of Kyrgyzstan
(2000-2019)***

Year	PFI
2000	-0,183
2001	-0,186
2002	-0,276
2003	-0,018
2004	0,102
2005	-0,341
2006	0,077
2007	0,081
2008	0,054
2009	-0,042
2010	-0,332
2011	0,102
2012	0,009
2013	0,098
2014	0,082
2015	0,179
2016	0,128
2017	-0,133
2018	-0,111
2019	-0,086

* Source: calculations by the author.

PFI, EFI, SFI and consequently SIPS indices calculated on them may insignificantly vary in comparison to the indices of corresponding years estimated in previous publications as a result of updated and newly inserted data as well as changes of minimum and maximum indices.

In 2018-2019 the main goal of the country in order to sustain its political stability was to maintain macroeconomic stability, increase the competitiveness of the national economy, and ensure the stability of prices. Within the observed period, actions aimed at sustainable development of the country were stipulated by development programme of Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2018-2022 "Unity, Trust, Creation"² and by the concept of the regional policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2018-2022³.

The assessment of the stability of the Kyrgyz political system was based on various scenarios, i.e. fundamental, pessimistic and optimistic ones. They presupposed harmonization of the factors of stability of the political system with the processes of economic integration. It is possible with the development and implementation of effective political measures that the Kyrgyz economy will adapt to the dynamic global markets and successfully overcome negative effects of geo-economic shocks (*Курамаева 2018; Чибухчян 2019; Холодков и др. 2019; Качкын 2018; Малышева 2018*). It is evident that measures taken by the Kyrgyz government had been partially implemented due to insufficient funding of investment projects through Foreign direct investments (FDI), which increased the negative impact of economic risks on the political stability of the country. An

² Development program of Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2018-2022 "Unity, Trust, Creation", Bishkek, 2018: http://www.donors.kg/images/Программа_КР_Единство_доверие_и_созидание_2018-2022.pdf (01.02.2021).

³ Concept of the regional policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2018-2022 (Approved by the Government Decree from 21 March 2017 N 194): <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/99907> (01.02.2021).

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unfavourable external economic environment and non-complete implementation of the planned measures had a negative impact not only on the economic integration of Kyrgyzstan but also on the implementation of national projects envisaged in the country's sustainable development program.

Figure 2

**Foreign direct investments in Kyrgyzstan in the period of 2000-2019
(mil. US dollars)⁴**

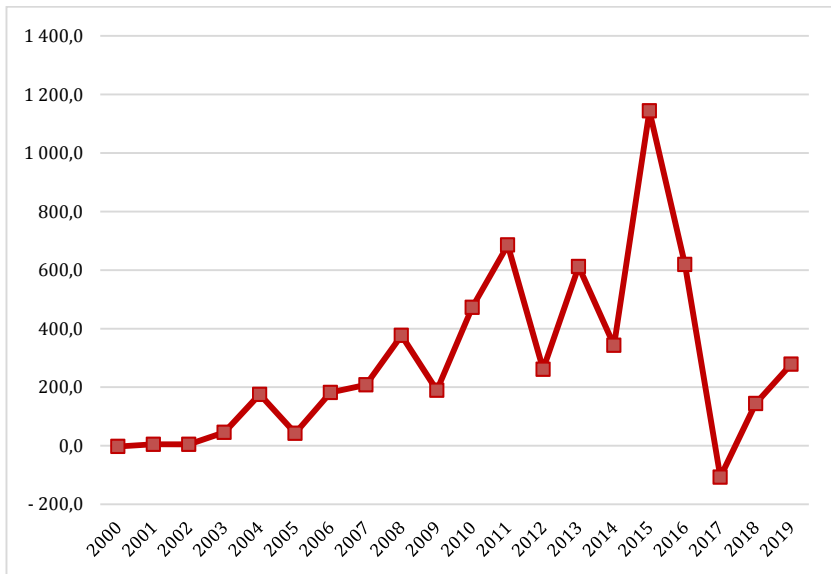


Figure 2 shows the FDI of Kyrgyzstan for the period of 2000-2019. According to these data, the volumes of investments, even though with regular fluctuations increased until 2015. The highest

⁴ Source of the data is the official site of the World Bank: <https://data.world-bank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD> (01.02.2021).

score for FDI was recorded in 2015 and it is no coincidence that the highest political stability index was recorded in that same year, as investments are the most sensitive indicators of political stability. Whereas the record low volume of investments was registered in 2017, but over the next two years it recovered to some extent.

Corruption is also one of the factors that has a negative impact on political stability in Kyrgyzstan. According to Transparency International organization, Kyrgyzstan's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)* in 2018 remained unchanged, and one point increase from 29 to 30 was registered in 2019. Hence, in reference to 2019 data, Kyrgyzstan was ranked 126th among 180 countries and territories.⁵ And despite the fact that CPI has been constantly improving in recent years, experts consider Kyrgyzstan to be among those Asian countries which have the most difficult corruption situation. In 2019 some scandalous events occurred, i.e. former president Almazbek Atambayev was arrested on corruption and abuse of power charges; besides former customs official Raimbek Matraimov and his family members were implicated in a money-laundering scheme (*Freedom House 2020*).

In 2018 and 2019 Index of Civil Liberties of Kyrgyzstan improved by one point reaching from 5 to 4 points, while the 4

* Corruption Perceptions Index is estimated by the Transparency International with the scale of 0 to 100 (till 2012 the scale was 0-10), where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.

⁵ See the official site of Transparency International organization, the global coalition against corruption against: <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/kyrgyzstan> (28.02.2021).

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points rating of the Political Rights Index remained unchanged.* Moreover, improvement in the Index of Civil Liberties has not been registered since 2009.⁶ According to the Freedom House experts, some positive change in the index was urged due to the fact that political demonstrations and rallies took place mainly without major and serious interference. Specialists have also registered other positive aspects; namely, the fact that NGOs - particularly those involved in the field of government and human rights - have participated more actively (*Freedom House 2019; 2020*).

Thus, analysing the trends in the Political Factors Index covering the period of 2000-2019, it becomes obvious that in recent years the most dramatic fall took place in 2017 due to the unprecedented decline in the volume of investments as well as increased tension on the borders of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The Political Factors Index slightly increased in 2018 and 2019, continuing to remain in the negative rating. Issues, such as ethnic conflicts, corruption, poverty, poor economic development, lack of an independent judiciary system, human rights violations adversely and continually impacted the country's political stability (*Ионова 2019; Савинов, Скорых 2019*).

During the observed period, it was noticeable that the concept of "triple transformation" consisting of political

* Indices of Political rights and Civil liberties are measured by Freedom House by the scale of 1 through 7, and accordingly, ratings with average 1 to 2,5 are considered "free," 3 to 5 "partly free," and 5,5 to 7 "not free".

⁶ See the official site of the Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world> (28.02.2021).

democratization, construction of a market economy, as well as state-building processes was incompatible. In recent years, the negative elements of transformation, such as the socio-economic crisis, restrictions on democratic rights and freedoms, and the deepening of authoritarianism have prevailed (*Воробьёв 2019a; Воробьёв 2019b; Исмаилов 2019; Пазилов, Жоробеков 2019*).

Prediction for sustainable development of Kyrgyzstan's democratic modernization in the future is possible on the grounds of an in-depth analysis of the socio-political history of the past as well as on a study of the modern political reality of sovereign Kyrgyzstan. The success of political modernization will be greatly facilitated by socio-cultural, geopolitical, economic, and political factors that will predetermine the further evolutionary or revolutionary course of political events. Consequently, in order to achieve the political modernization of Kyrgyzstan, it is necessary to timely reform subsystems of the country's political system. At the same time, political transformations must be carried out taking into account the traditional and socio-cultural features of national thinking (*Жунушова 2018; Морозов 2018; Белобров 2019; Филькевич 2020*). Despite the fact that this option is quite complicated and is of long-term nature, it is still the most realistic way to maintain and modernize the political system of Kyrgyzstan. In this regard, it is quite evident how important it is to maintain principles of consociational harmony, political stability and social dialogue that are based on the principles of partnership and other alternative approaches among the main actors in the country's political life. Provided that compromise and mutual agreement on

the most vital issues are achieved, it will be possible to move quite effectively towards the realization of the common goal pursued by the concept of political modernization, i.e. the establishment of a modern and competitive state with values and priorities typical of the society. (Бактыбаева 2020; Петренко, Варламов, Лещенко 2020). Past experience has shown that attempts to rapidly introduce liberal-democratic principles which are not typical of civilizational, historical and cultural values through administrative modernization have caused insurmountable internal contradictions between the means and goals applied to ensure the country's development, as the stereotypes of the traditional society are still prevalent in the country. Therefore, the approach with a gradual adaptation of the traditional society to civilizational structures, carried out through administrative-liberal modernization, seems to be more efficient.

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6. Factors of Political Instability in the Context of Systemic Transformations of Kyrgyzstan

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7. CROSS-COUNTRY ANALYSIS OF THE STABILITY INDEX OF POLITICAL SYSTEM OF EEU COUNTRIES

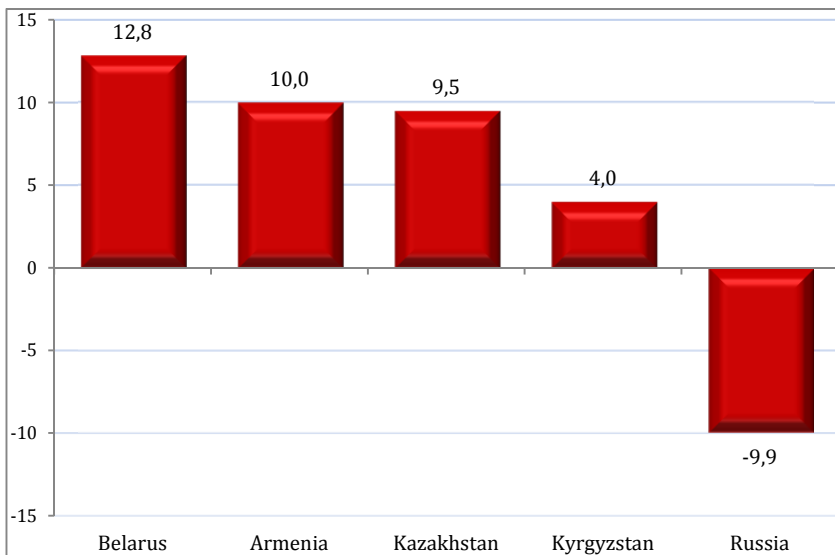
Arusyak Aleksanyan

Development of the processes affecting the stability of the political system in different countries is accompanied by unique scenarios and features. And despite the originality of these scenarios denoted in the transformation processes of the states in the post-Soviet space, a number of regularities and commonalities can be distinguished. Namely, electoral processes which resulted in aggravation of the political situation and increase in acts of civil disobedience, revolutions, or just attempts to make them or else, in some countries the emergence of the second wave of revolutions, longevity of the authorities and decline of legitimacy and etc. are the examples of regularities to be specified. By detecting them, we can conclude that they are inevitable and considered to be successive stages typical of the transformation process when, in one case, they can run more smoothly, whereas in other cases they can be accompanied with severe and dangerous "aggravations". The crisis of stability aggravates especially when the political elite tries to eliminate not the cause but the effect during these "aggravations".

7. Cross-Country Analysis of the Stability Index of Political System of EEU Countries

Figure 1 shows that Belarus has the highest indicator of political stability (12,8 points) according to the 2019 results of the cross-country analysis of the Stability Index of the Political System of the EEU Member States. Armenia comes after with 10 points, whereas Kazakhstan occupies third place with a slight difference in points (9,5). Kyrgyzstan (4) and Russia (-9,9) are positioned in the lowest two places, with the difference in the fact that the results of the latter are still in the negative range.

Figure 1
Stability Index of Political System of EEU member states (2019)*



* Source: calculations by the author.

The cross-country index is measured by a ranking scale from -100 to +100 and, accordingly, political systems are classified as follows: from -100 to -50 as unstable, from -49 to 0 as low level of stability, from 1 to 49 as mid-level of stability, from 50 to 100 as high level of stability.

According to the data accumulated, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are measured with a mid-level of stability, while Russia is estimated as having a low level. Russia's involvement in various conflicts, escalation of tension in relations with Western countries, economic sanctions, corruption, civil disobedience, and likewise negative factors continue to adversely affect the stability of Russia's political system. In this regard, it should be noted that issues that exist in the spheres of political rights and civil liberties intensify the impact of negative factors on political stability.

Table 1

SIPS of EEU member states (2017, 2019)*

Countries	2019		2017
Belarus	12,8	↓	18,3
Armenia	10	↑	6,9
Kazakhstan	9,5	↓	21,7
Kyrgyzstan	4	↑	2,7
Russia	-9,9	↓	-9,3

Comparing the data estimated for the SIPS of the EEU member states registered for 2017 and 2019, we see that all countries, except for Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, registered a decline in 2019. The decline from 21,7 points to 9,5 points in the SIPS of Kazakhstan is significant (see Table 1). This decline in political stability in the abovementioned country is due to the unprecedented rise in civil

* Source: calculations by the author. For more details about the results of 2017 cross-country analysis see *(Aleksanyan 2018, 297-299)*.

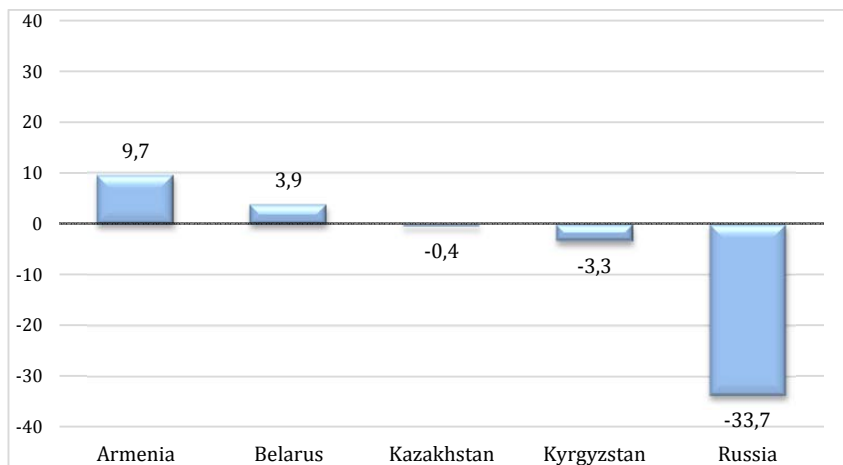
7. Cross-Country Analysis of the Stability Index of Political System of EEU Countries

disobedience. In reference to the stability of the political systems of Belarus and Kazakhstan, it should be noted that the control of the political situation in the countries with centralized executive power is exercised by means of certain authoritarian mechanisms (*Tusalem 2015; Gerschewski 2013; Mesquita et. al. 2003*). If the application of these mechanisms is accompanied by the achievement and maintenance of certain positive results in the socio-economic sphere, then the possibilities of ensuring stability become more apparent, which is relevant in the cases of Belarus and Kazakhstan. However, the use of authoritarian mechanisms aimed at maintaining stability incurs a certain amount of risk. Restrictions and pressures have a cumulative impact on society in the field of politics, which after a while can result in dangerous and ready-to-explode situations.

A positive impact of political factors stipulated some growth in the Stability Index of the Political System of Armenia. Figure 2 shows indicators of the Political Factors Index of political stability registered for EEU member states. According to the calculated data, Armenia with 9,7 points is in the lead in the above-mentioned rating table. Armenia is succeeded by Belarus, which indicators are also in the positive range (3,9). Kazakhstan (-0,4) and Kyrgyzstan (-3,3) having negative indicators took third and fourth places, respectively. Russia occupies the lowest position with a very big difference in points (-33,7). This means that political factors have the worst negative impact on the political stability of Russia.

Figure 2

Political Factors Index of SIPS of EEU member states (2019)*



Referring to the variables of the PFI of the EEU member states (see Table 2), it should be noted that in 2019 Kyrgyzstan had the highest Foreign direct investments, which is equivalent to 3,3% of GDP. The FDI indicator of other countries, compared to their share in GDP, is almost the same.

Meanwhile, Armenia with 70,6, has the best Index of Economic Freedom** (IEF) followed by Kazakhstan with a slight

* Source: calculations by the author.

** The Index of Economic Freedom (IEF) is measured by The Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal and is graded on a scale of 100 points (max) and 0 point (min), covering the 12 freedoms. Countries estimated with 0-49,9 scores are assessed "repressed," from 50-59,9 "mostly unfree," from 60-69,9 "moderately free," from 70-79,9 "mostly free" and from 80 to 100 "free." IEF registered in 2020 was taken as the basis to calculate SIPS 2019, as the former includes the indicators measured for the period covering 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019. The mentioned variable was included in the political factors, as it defines

7. Cross-Country Analysis of the Stability Index of Political System of EEU Countries

difference (69,6). According to the IEF indicator, Armenia is among the "mostly free" countries, whereas other EEU member states are considered "moderately free". Moreover, Armenia takes 34th place among 180 countries in the world, and 18th among 46 countries in the European region (*Miller, Kim, Roberts 2020, 5, 62, 89, 118-119*).

Among PFI variables Armenia, in comparison to other EEU member states, has also the best Political Rights indicator (4 points) measured by the Freedom House. Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan recorded the worst indicators of the mentioned index equivalent to 7, which states as evidence that the sphere of political rights in these countries is among the most problematic ones. In accordance with other standardized indicators measured by the Freedom in the World report,¹ Armenia along with Kyrgyzstan reported the best 4 points by Civil Liberties indicator. Hence, in view of the Political Rights and Civil Liberties average indicator, Armenia with 4 points and Kyrgyzstan with 4,5 points are rated as "partly free" countries, whereas Russia and Belarus with 6,5 points followed by Kazakhstan with 6 points are among "not free" countries (*Freedom House 2020*).

Belarus recorded with 45 points has the highest Corruption

guarantees for the construction of legislative body and property rights, efficiency of a judicial system and is regarded as one of the most important indicators of political stability and democratization.

¹ Freedom in the World report estimates events that occurred in 2019. The Index of Political Rights and Civil Liberties is measured with a rating scale from 1 to 7, where countries with average rating from 1 to 2,5 are considered "free", from 3 to 5 - "partly free", and 5,5 to 7 "not free".

Perceptions Index² whereas Russia (28) has the lowest index among EEU member states. Armenia with 42 points comes right after Belarus. Nonetheless, Armenia improved its indicator by 7 points compared to the previous year (*Transparency International 2019*).

In reference to waves of Civil disobedience³ in the EEU member states (see Table 2), it is worth mentioning that Armenia was the most peaceful country in 2019. After the revolution of 2018 which was accompanied by a big but nonviolent wave of civil disobedience, in 2019 the situation seemed to have calmed down which resulted in a significant decrease in the number of protests and demonstrations if compared to the previous years. In this regard, it should be noted that a high level of social unrest that proceeded in a smooth and conflict-free atmosphere made it possible for the revolution to be carried out with minimal shocks to the stability of the political system in 2018. Nonetheless, it should also be stated that the situation could have been much riskier than it was when considering the aspect of maintaining stability. Meanwhile, in the same year Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan were noticed for the rise in the wave of civil disobedience, which the

² Corruption Perceptions Index is measured with the scale of 0 to 100, where country registered with 0 point is highly corrupt and 100 is assigned to a very clean one.

³ The variable of Civil Disobedience is measured by the researchers with the application of 0-5 scaling, where 5 is applied to estimate the highest level of disobedience up to revolutions and coup d'état and respectively 0 to its complete. The estimation includes a number of demonstrations, strikes, social unrest as well as incidents of political arrests and murders.

7. Cross-Country Analysis of the Stability Index of Political System of EEU Countries

authorities attempted to alleviate or control resorting to various methods, including the use of force.

In terms of maintaining the stability of a political system, another essential factor such as Conflict presence should be mentioned as the region stands out for its high level of conflict; since all EEU member states, except for Belarus and Kazakhstan, have problems with their neighbouring countries or else are involved in different conflict zones.

Table 2

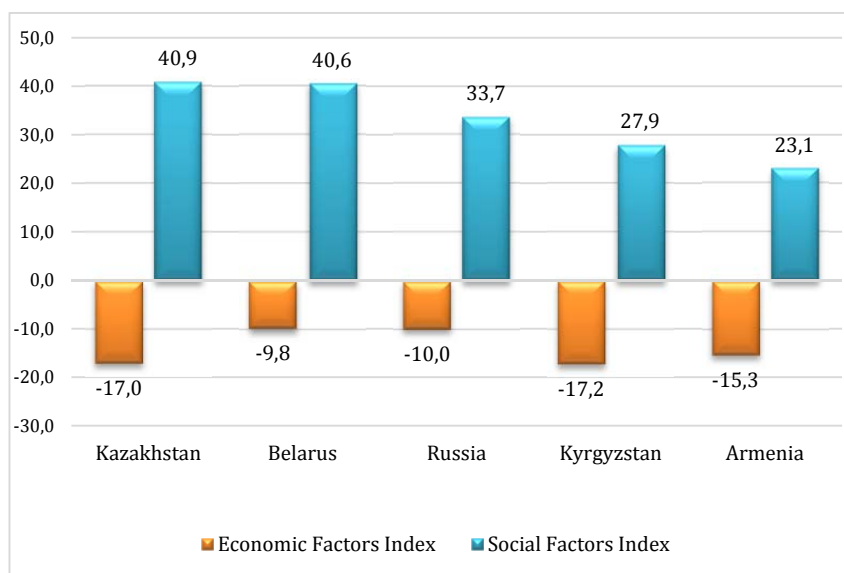
**Variables of Political Factors Index and their values
(Armenia, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan in 2019)⁴**

Variables of Political Factors Index	Armenia	Russia	Belarus	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan
1. FDI (% of GDP)	1,9	1,9	2,0	1,9	3,3
2. Index of Economic Freedom (0-100)	70,6	61	61,7	69,6	62,9
3. Index of Political Rights (7-1)	4	7	7	7	5
4. Index of Civil Liberties (7-1)	4	6	6	5	4
5. Corruption Perceptions Index (0-100)	42	28	45	34	30
6. Conflict Presence (0,1,2)	1	1	0	0	1
7. Civil disobedience (0-5)	1,9	4,1	3,2	3,9	2,5

⁴ Calculation is based on the following sources: 1 - <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>, 2 - <http://www.heritage.org/index/>, 3, 4 - <http://www.freedomhouse.org>, 5 - <http://www.transparency.org>, 6, 7 - estimated by authors/researchers (accessed on 18.02.21).

Analysing the Social and Economic Factors Index of SIPS (see Figure 3) it can be seen that Kazakhstan (40,9) and Belarus (40,6) kept their leading positions particularly in the SFI sphere, which is conditioned by favourable indicators of the Gini index and low level of poverty. In the meantime, Armenia registered with 23,1 points in the SFI took the lowest position due to low indicators of employment rate and high level of poverty (see Table 3).

Figure 3
Social and Economic Factors Index of SIPS of EEU member states
(2019)*



* Source: calculations by the author.

7. Cross-Country Analysis of the Stability Index of Political System of EEU Countries

Table 3

**Variables of Social and Economic Factors Index and their values
(Armenia, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan in 2019)⁵**

Variables of EFI and SFI	Armenia	Russia	Belarus	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan
1. GDP per capita, \$ (adjusted by purchase power parity)	14220	29181	19943	27444	5471
2. External trade turnover (% of GDP)	91	49	133	64	103
3. Domestic credit (% of GDP)	65	71	40	35	20 ^a
4. Inflation rate (%)	1,4	4,5	5,6	5,2	1,1
5. Shadow economy (% of GDP)	34,5	36,5	37,5	35,8	29,0
6. Budget surplus/deficit (% of GDP)	-1,0	1,8	2,4	-1,8	-0,1
7. HDI (0-1)	0,776	0,824	0,823	0,825	0,697
8. Real wage, \$ (adjusted by purchase power parity)	1154	1722	1479	1298	1018
9. Employment (%)	46	59	61	66	56
10. Poverty rate (%)	26,4	12,3	5	4,3	20,1
11. Gini index (0-1)	0,344	0,375	0,252	0,275	0,277
12. Crime rate (per 1000 people)	9,1	13,8	9,4	13,1	6,4

⁵ Calculations were made based on the following sources` 1, 2, 3, 9, 11 - <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>, 4 - <https://www.imf.org/>, 5 - www.cesifo-group.org/wp, 6, 8, 10, 12 - data, provided by National Statistical Services, 7 - <http://hdr.undp.org>.

a - provided some data were unavailable for the year 2019, calculations were made by using the data registered in the previous year/years and provided by the given source (accessed on 25.02.21).

In connection with Economic Factors Index, Belarus (-9,8) and Russia (-10) occupy the leading positions, while Armenia with -15,3 points comes third in the table. Kyrgyzstan (-17,2) is recorded to have the lowest EFI indicators caused by the low indicators in domestic credit and GDP per capita (see Table 3). It is worth mentioning that Kyrgyzstan among the EEU member states has the lowest level of the shadow economy, while other countries had almost equal indicators (*Medina & Schneider 2019*).

Conclusions

By summarizing the data accumulated within the 2019 cross-country analysis of SIPS, the following conclusions were made:

- Belarus, among the EEU member states, has the highest indicator in Stability of the Political System being registered with 12,8 points by the rating scale from -100 to +100. Armenia takes the second position with 10 points, while Russia has the lowest (-9,9) indicator in the political stability. Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan have the med-level of stability, whereas Russia, on the contrary, has the lowest level.
- Armenia, having 9,7 points, gained the best indicator in the PFI of SIPS. Russia registered with -33,7 has the lowest indicator caused by low indicators in Indices of Economic Freedom, Political Rights and Civil Liberties as well as the highest level of civil disobedience registered in the mentioned year.

7. Cross-Country Analysis of the Stability Index of Political System of EEU Countries

- Kazakhstan (40,9) and Belarus (40,6) have the highest indicator in Social Factors Index. Whereas Armenia among the EEU member states has the lowest SFI and is recorded with 23,1 points, which is conditioned by the highest and lowest indicator in poverty and employment correspondingly.
- Belarus (-9,8) and Russia (-10) were registered with the best indicators in Economic Factors Index. Armenia (-15,3), as such, was the third, while Kazakhstan (-17) and Kyrgyzstan (-17,2) with merely different points took the lowest positions in the rating table.

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**POLITICAL STABILITY CHALLENGES IN
THE EEU COUNTRIES:
POLITICAL FACTORS INDEX**

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The methodological toolkit to measure the Stability Index of the Political System allows conducting fundamental, in-depth, and comprehensive studies at both in-country and cross-country levels.

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