**Research report** (Belarus)

Some Background:

Alexander Lukashenko, the president of Belarus. He was the President of Belarus since 1994. After that he managed to consolidate and was in power since then. Electoral system in Belarus is pretty simple; it´s a two round system, meaning that if no candidates would obtain more that 50% of the general vote in the first round, a second round would be held with the first two candidates. Even though Belarus has the two round system, there was no need for the second round since Lukashenko usually ended up with a majority in the first round since he first was elected in 1994. Including the latest election where he got 80% of all votes according to the Preliminary counts. But it seems that the last election results might be questionable, since a wave of protests and riots has erupted in Belarus’s capital Minsk. Police used stun grenades, water cannons and rubber bullets as suppression methods; it was stated by the human rights activist group that 1 protestor was killed and 120 were detained, but this was denied by the interior ministry. Protests spread all over Belarus and not only in Minsk (9-10 of August)

Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, a human rights activist and Lukashenko´s main political opponent in those elections questioned the election results and said to have received at least 60% of the votes. Even though her preliminary result state that she received 9.9%, he campaign stated that her poles had reached 70-80% in some areas. Svetlana didn´t run initially, at first Lukashenko´s opposition consisted of: Sergei Tikhanovsky, Victor Barbaryko and Valery Tsepkalo. But those three were eliminated pretty quickly and Svetlana´s husband Sergei and Victor ended up in jail. Svetlana formed a “female trio “ with Tsepalko´s wife and Barbaryko´s election agent Maria. The trio advocated for peaceful change and democratic elections , they were able to gather rally on July 30th with the NGO estimate of 60,000 people; which is the biggest rally in Belarus in a decade. After the elections, Svetlana has escaped to Lithuania.

Some important events:

On August 14th 2020, Josep Borrell Fontelles, EU high representatives for foreign affaitrs has announced that EU doesn´t accept the election results in Belarus; due to the fact that the presidential elections caused mass protests in the country. Poland and Lithuania have also announced that they are willing to help protesters. Poland created a fund to help people from Belarus get visas and support Belarus Media, while Lithuania offered medical help for protestors

On August 18th, worker strikes have started occurring in Belarus. Sviatlana has encouraged more worker strikes throughout Belarus: "The strikes are an absolutely legal and powerful weapon against the regime," "They know that, and due to that, they want to intimidate you. Leave the fear to the dictatorship. Remember that you are not alone. The whole of Belarus is with you."

"You scared the dictatorship, it is trembling with fear in front of you," “We will force the authorities who holed up in their palaces to hear our voice.”

August 23rd 2020, Lukashenko was Making claims that foreign, specifically Polish and Lithaunian troops are operating close to Belorussian border. However NATO stated that those claims are baseless, Poland and Lithuania also denied those claims and stated that Lukashenko is only trying to divert attention from the protests that are currently occurring. By this period of time, there are more than 100,000 protestors on the streets.

August 28th Alexander Lukashenko asked Putin and Putin vowed to send military aid to Belarus if protestors will undermine the political order. But the EU did ask Putin refrain from doing so. NATO secretary general Stoltenberg has stated “It’s absolutely clear from all NATO Allies that the people in Belarus, they have the right to decide their own future without interference from abroad, interference from Russia," "And, of course, have the right to have free and fair elections."

Lithuania deciding on banning Lukashenko and some other Officials from entering the country because of voter fraud.

Tikhanovskaya told the UN security council about Lukashenko: “cynical and blatant attempt ... to steal the votes of the people” “does not represent Belarus anymore.” “A nation should not be a hostage to one man’s thirst for power, and it won’t,” “Belarusians have woken up. The point of no return has passed.”. She has urged UN to place sanctions on Belarus, and she has also called for the UNHSCR to discuss HR violations in Belarus and to launch an investigation into the Belarus situation.

23rd of September Lukashenko has officially went into his sixth term during the inauguration ceremony that wasn´t announced to the general public.

Some tips for debate flow:

Europe doesn´t see the elections as legitimate in addition a European country is already applying sanctions on Belarus also UN SC was already urged to impose sanctions on Belarus. So European member states should support the idea of imposing sanction on Belarus. In addition, It is claimed that Belarus is not portraying democracy at the moment and is infringing Democratic citizen rights (especially with the “hidden” inauguration); any democratic country with strong democratic ideals, should be willing to do something regarding the matter. On the other hand, the delegate of Russian Federation should also not sit quiet and attempt to Support Belarus, since Putin and Lukoshenko seem to be on good terms with each other, since Putin did promise to send aid.

Some more interesting links and articles in the bibliography.

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