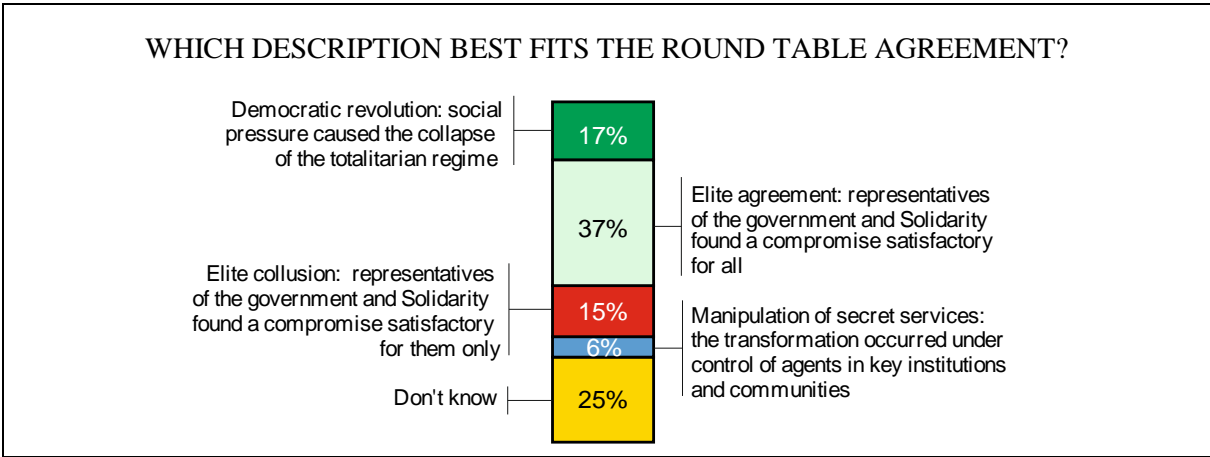


## **25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF ROUND TABLE NEGOTIATIONS**

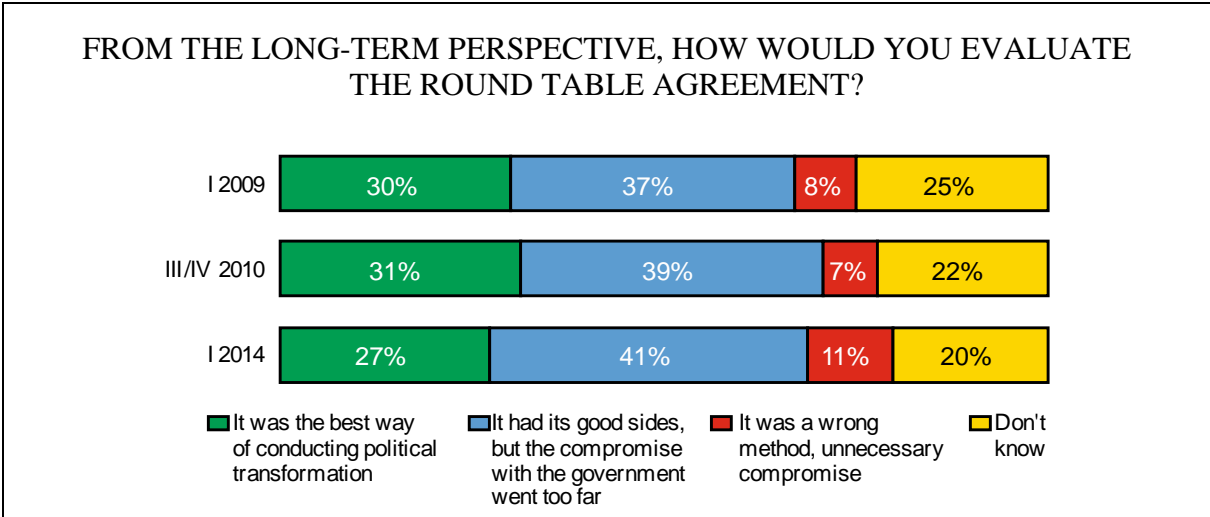
In February 1989, the Round Table negotiations between the representatives of the Communist government and Solidarity opposition started. They triggered a sequence of events that led to systemic change and, in consequence, to the collapse of the Communist system in Poland.

In public opinion, the best description for the Round Table agreement is “elite agreement”. Almost two-fifths of respondents (37%) share the opinion that the representatives of the government and Solidarity reached a compromise satisfying both sides and the Poles in general. A smaller group (17%) think that the agreement would have been impossible without the societal pressure on government; this factor decided about the collapse of the former system. Therefore, these events should rather be described as “democratic revolution”. A smaller proportion of respondents agree with the critical interpretation of these events, choosing the name “elite collusion” (15%), or expressing the view that the agreement was a front for a secret services operation enabling the elites to transfer to the free market system (6%).



Current evaluations of the Round Table agreements are marked by moderate criticism. Over two-fifths of respondents (41%) agree that this mode of political transformation had its good sides, but that compromise with the government went too far. Over a quarter (27%) believe that it was the best and most appropriate method in those circumstances. Every ninth Pole (11%) evaluates the agreement negatively, considering it to be a wrong method of conducting political change.

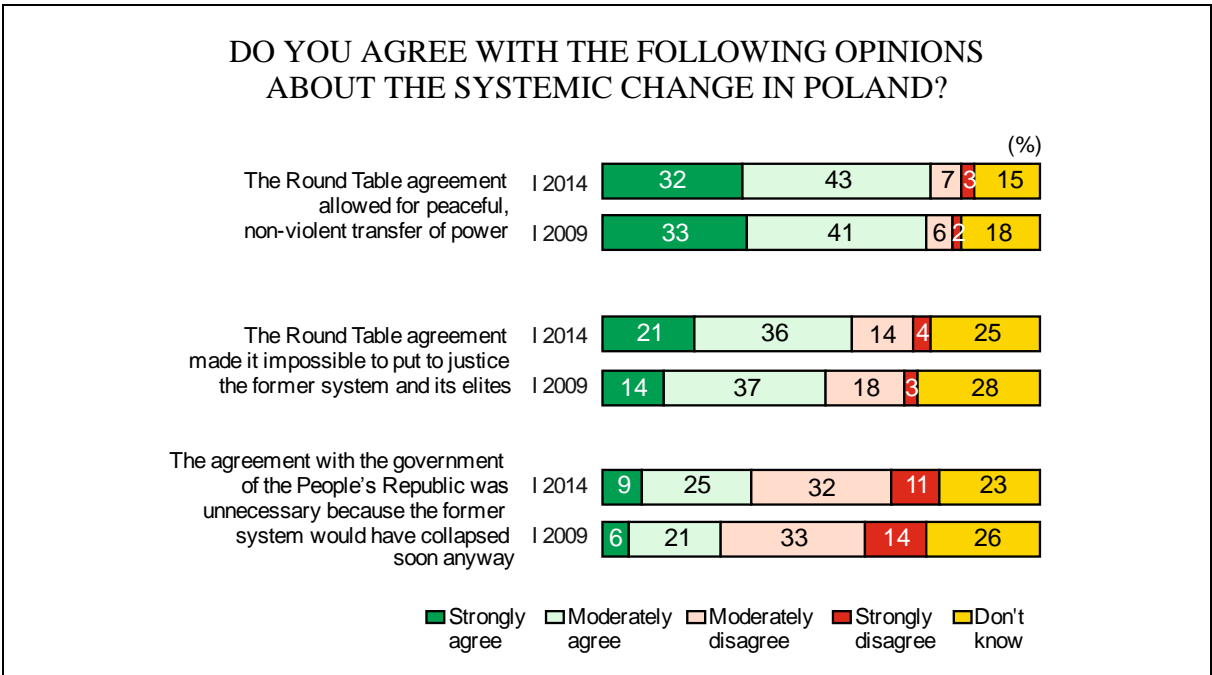
From the perspective of the last five years, opinions about the Round Table evolve. The proportion of critical opinions increases. It concerns both the strong criticism, and the moderate version. At the same time, the number of respondents who think it was the best solution diminishes.



Three-quarters of Poles (75%) appreciate the fact that that the Round Table agreement allowed for peaceful and non-violent transfer of power. At the same time, over half of respondents (57%) think that this agreement made it impossible to judge the former system and its elites. In the interpretation of past events, the belief in the role of the Round Table as a

determinant prevails: more people disagree with the statement that it was unnecessary, because the system would have collapsed anyway (43%) than agree with it (34%).

The comparison of current opinions with those recorded five years ago indicates that the conviction about the positive consequences of the Round Table remains unchanged. However, the perception of the negative sides, such as lack of judgment for the former elites, strengthens. Similarly, with the passage of time, the memory about the political constraints and the sequence of events starts to diminish. Instead, the presentist approach strengthens, in which the Round Table is interpreted as a part of an inevitable historical process. Compared with 2009, the proportion of people who think that the agreement was unnecessary because Communism would have soon collapsed anyway has increased.



More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Round Table negotiations", February 2014. Fieldwork for national sample: January 2014, N=1067. The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.