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**EXPLAINING THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE EU’S
DEMOCRATIZATION STRATEGY TOWARDS BELARUS**

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Introduction

The EU is seen as a successful promoter of democracy towards Central-Eastern European (CEE) countries, as eight post-communism countries have achieved democratic consolidation and have become members of the EU in a short period of time. Many think that the EU's policy of conditionality towards these countries has been a catalyst for their success story (Grabbe, 2006; Kubicek, 2003; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). But one CEE country, Belarus, is still under undemocratic leadership. As US President George W. Bush said during a speech in 2005: "*The people of Belarus live under the last remaining dictatorship in Europe*" (Bush calls Belarus Europe's last dictatorship, 2005).

The question why one country that lies between all the other CEE post-communism countries and shares its border with the enlarged EU has not achieved a similar level of democratization is being raised more and more in political discussions. The issue of the democratization of Belarus today is high on the EU's agenda. Furthermore, the EU has developed programs to help civil society in Belarus and to influence the regime's change, but so far the country is still being ruled by the authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenka. The EU's democratization strategy using carrots and sticks has been successful for many countries, but in the case of Belarus, so far, the strategy doesn't allow the EU to triumph.

In this research the EU's policy towards Belarus will be examined in order to draw conclusions on its ineffectiveness. Both domestic and international factors that could obstruct the intentions of the EU for democratizing Belarus will be analyzed. The democratization strategies of the EU and the US will be compared to draw conclusions on reasons of failure for the EU's policy towards Belarus. It is perceived that the EU practices a soft strategy, containing elements of conditionality and carrots and sticks. The US, in contrast, prefers a hard strategy, which is more traditional and power oriented (Cooper, 2004). Therefore the comparison of both policies towards Belarus can reveal obstacles in the strategy within the EU's policy itself.

The main objective of the thesis is to investigate the factors that do not allow the democracy in Belarus to develop. This will be done by examining obstacles within Belarus itself, within the EU's democratization policy towards Belarus, and obstacles caused by Russia's cross-conditionality offered to Belarus. The main research question will be:

Which factors determine the (in)effectiveness of the EU's democratization strategy towards Belarus?

During the research process the following three additional questions will be answered:

- What are the obstacles inside Belarus that do not allow the EU's values to spread?
- What are the obstacles within the EU's policy towards Belarus for changing the regime of Lukashenka?
- What is the role of Russia's cross-conditionality offered to Belarus in hindering the efforts of the EU?

The research will start with a theoretical part where, firstly, the concept of democracy will be described in academic terms, using Robert Dahl's five democratic principles (Dahl, 1989; 1998). In this research these principles can be applied to define deficiencies regarding democratic values in Belarus. The concept of democracy will be also described in practical terms, using the EU's Copenhagen criteria (Accession criteria, 1993). The Copenhagen criteria were created for the EU's Eastern enlargement but lately the political criterion has been adapted to assess whether a country is democratic. The political criterion will therefore be used in particular as a reference point for democratic values within the EU.

Secondly, the rationalist interpretation of the concept of conditionality used in the EU's policies towards other countries will be described and applied to the case of Belarus. Many authors have written about the EU's use of the conditionality principle in its relations with other countries, especially regarding the Eastern enlargement (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004; Kubicek, 2003; Smith, 1997, 2004). As Belarus

is not a candidate country for membership, the theory will be adapted from the EU's enlargement policy to the EU's neighbourhood policy. As a result some aspects, such as *acquis* conditionality, will be excluded. This will be one of the research's innovative aspects: both the application of the external governance model of Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier to the case of Belarus, and the application of Grabbe's model on conditionality in the EU enlargement policy to the European neighbourhood policy, as both policies are based on similar mechanisms.

Thirdly, the social learning model will be described and examined as to its adequacy for the case of Belarus. The conditionality principle has been more widely used than social learning in terms of effective democratization policy towards third countries. Although in previous debates regarding the EU's Eastern enlargement the rationalist model has been considered to be more effective (Kubicek, 2003; Smith, 1997; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004), the socialization possibility should not be excluded from this research.

Finally, the concepts of structural foreign policy and traditional foreign policy strategies will be described and adjusted to both the US and the EU way of policy making towards democratization in Belarus.

In an empirical and analytical part facts about the domestic and international obstacles for the effective democratization of Belarus will be researched and theories applied to test hypothesis and answer the research question.

The research is mainly based on an in-depth case study of the democracy promotion policy of the EU, as no other CEE country offers a reference for a comparative study of democratization. A thorough analysis of this specific case will also lead to conclusions on specific obstacles and reasons for Belarus still being undemocratic despite the foreign attention for its situation.

1. Democratic Principles

In this chapter the criteria for a country to be democratic will be examined. These elements will be defined through the Dahl's theory of democratic principles and the EU's Copenhagen criteria. Examination of the elements of democracy is important as they will be applied to Belarus to determine whether its government contains democratic elements.

1.1. Democratic Principles of Dahl

Democracy is a concept that is not easy to define, as it includes many aspects which differ regarding the context. Yale University's professor Robert Dahl is a well known political scientist, whose work has shown his great interest in democracy. Literally, democracy is defined as "*rule by the people*" (Dahl 1989, p.106). But there is a problem even with the literal definition, as it is not easy to explain what is meant by the people's rule and governing. According to Dahl (1989), democracy is a process for ruling containing essential criteria of a democratic political order.

Dahl has defined five democratic principles which can be used to assess whether a state is democratic. Dahl defines these criteria as ideal:

"Any process that met them perfectly would be a perfect democratic process, and the government of the association would be a perfect democratic government" (Dahl, 1989, p.108-109).

Although a perfect democratic process does not exist in reality, such ideal criteria can help to represent and reflect democratic values in an actual situation. Another important aspect that Dahl (1989) emphasizes is that specific historical conditions have to be taken into account for each country that is in the process of building a democracy.

The five democratic principles of Dahl (1989; 1998) are:

1. **Effective participation** – in the process of decision making, citizens have equal opportunities for showing their views on future policies and policy outcomes.
2. **Voting equality at the decisive stage** – at the decisive stage of the decision making process, citizens have equal voting rights and each vote is counted as equal. However, this criterion does not require voting equality at preceding stages. Also, it does not prescribe a particular method of voting or elections.

These two criteria, Dahl (1989; 1998) argues, enable us to evaluate many possible procedures within the state. This means that some procedures can differ in performance according to one or another criterion. Additional judgements about a particular situation are required, to ensure that the evaluation is loyal:

3. **Enlightened understanding** – each citizen, within reasonable limits such as time, has the opportunity to have knowledge of possible alternative policies and about the influence of those policies upon the citizens.

4. **Control of the agenda** – citizens has the opportunity to decide what issues are put on the agenda. As Dahl argues, this also means that they have the final say on the decision-making process:

“A system that satisfies this criterion as well as the other three could be regarded as having a fully democratic process” (Dahl, 1989, p.113).

5. **Inclusion of adults** – all adults in the country should have full citizen rights, as implied by the first four criteria.

The principles mentioned above can be seen as the academic criteria to analyse if a state or government is democratic. They will be applied in this research as benchmarks to assess the extent to which Belarus has developed a democracy.

1.2. Copenhagen Criteria

The EU itself has also defined criteria that have to be met by states in order to be called democratic and that act as requirements to become a member of the EU. At the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, regarding its enlargement policy the EU initiated three criteria for the accession of newly independent states to the EU. These are the political, economic and acquis criteria. Even though these criteria were developed for candidate states for the EU membership, the political criterion has become a framework for what the EU sees as a democratic country.

Because of its authoritarian regime, Belarus is far from being seen as a candidate state for membership of the EU. From the three criteria, in this research only the political criterion will be examined. This criterion relates most to the democratization process of Belarus, as it mainly focuses on: *“the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities”*

(Accession criteria, 1993). The economic criterion will not be applied to Belarus as the political criterion is the first necessary step towards democratization, and economic reforms can start only after the break-out of political reforms. The *acquis* criterion will not be examined as it is meant only for the EU candidate states, and therefore does not relate to Belarus.

Although these Copenhagen criteria are well-known, the EU has never given a broader definition of what these criteria imply. Furthermore, actions regarding these criteria were specified for each EU candidate state separately. When applying the criteria to a non-candidate country, it is therefore harder to identify its problems and necessary reforms. Grabbe (2006) speaks of a “moving target problem” within these criteria as they constitute very debatable concepts such as democracy or rule of law, which the EU has left open for political interpretation.

2. Promotion of Democracy

In this chapter the promotion of democracy will be examined from a theoretical point of view, by examining the concepts of conditionality and social learning. Both concepts are seen as possible indicators of effectiveness of the EU’s policy towards third countries and will be applied in this research to the situation of Belarus.

2.1. Conditionality

Conditionality became an important EU’s strategic principle after the end of the Cold War. Political conditionality was used to encourage newly independent CEE countries to establish democracy and protect human rights. The main reason for this strategy was that the EU had an interest in stability and security within the region.

Today, after the Eastern enlargement, the EU has the same objectives of stability and security within the region towards its new neighbours, which are reflected in its newly developed European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Therefore many instruments used in the EU’s enlargement policy can be adapted to its Neighbourhood Policy and the case of Belarus.

Kubicek (2003) defines conditionality as:

“The linking of perceived benefits to the fulfilment of a certain programme, in this case the advancement of democratic principles and institutions in a “target” state” (Kubicek, 2003, p.7).

Smith (1997) differentiates between positive and negative conditionality. Positive conditionality refers to benefits that the target state receives if it fulfils certain requests from the other side, in this case the EU. Negative conditionality refers to sanctions that are applied to the target state if it does not fulfil or violate certain requests or conditions.

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) distinguish between democratic conditionality and *acquis* conditionality. Democratic conditionality concerns the fundamental political principles of the EU, the human rights’ norms and liberal democracy. *Acquis* conditionality refers to conditions for implementing the EU legislation. In the case of Belarus only the theory of democratic conditionality should be applied as *acquis* conditionality refers only to the EU candidate states and Belarus is not nominated for accession to the EU.

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) suggested a model of external incentives governance that explains the variation of effectiveness of rule transfer in CEE countries. It applies in particular to the credibility of the EU conditionality and the domestic costs of rule adoption, though the impact of these conditions varies depending on the type of conditionality. For democratic conditionality, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) argue that domestic adoption costs firmly limit the effectiveness of conditionality even if it is credible and rewards are sizeable.

For the EU and CEE countries, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) name four factors on which the cost-benefit balance depends:

- Determinacy of conditions;
- Size and speed of rewards;
- Credibility of threats and promises;
- Size of adoption costs.

On the basis of the external governance model (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004)¹, the following four hypotheses can be defined for this research:

¹ Schimmelfennig’s and Sedelmeier’s (2004) hypothesis are adapted to the case of Belarus by changing the wording from ‘the effectiveness of rule transfer’ to ‘the likelihood of norms’ transfer’, therefore referring to

H1: The likelihood of norm transfer increases if the rules set as conditions for rewards are more determinate.

H2: The likelihood of norm transfer increases with the size and speed of rewards.

H3: The likelihood of norm adoption increases with the credibility of conditional threats and promises.

H4: The likelihood of norms adoption decreases with the increase of norm adoption costs for the target government.

An important aspect in the case of Belarus is the fact that “*the EU cannot exercise influence if it has no ties to the country concerned*” (Smith, 1997, p. 34). Grabbe (2006) mentions, that precise policy influence requires willing, not reluctant partners. The reason is that the coercive mechanisms of the EU are very limited. As Belarus at this point is not willing to cooperate with the EU, this could be one of the reasons why the EU cannot proceed in democratizing the country,. According to Grabbe (2006), the effects of the EU influence can be investigated by looking at the EU’s provision about legislative and institutional models, on the form of aid and technical assistance and on its benchmarking and monitoring policy.

Another important aspect emphasized by Smith (2004) is that the success of democratization in a particular state depends more on domestic factors than on international influence. She notes that support for democratization from the population is very important, although it could still be very difficult to impose democratic reforms against the government’s will. However, the scheme of conditions to fulfil and the rewards offered by the EU once the conditions are fulfilled, gives the government a clear vision of what has to be done. It also provides the government an excuse for launching unpopular reforms, as the EU can always be blamed for those.

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) emphasize that the effectiveness of the democratization policy the EU has towards third countries, using conditionality, largely depends on the initial conditions in these target countries. They argue that:

broader democratic norms not just legislative rule transfer, and likelihood in all hypotheses, the term being more appropriate for Belarus situation.

“...where strongly nationalist and authoritarian governments were in power, the domestic political costs of complying with EU conditionality proved prohibitively high...” (F. Schimmelfennig and U. Sedelmeier, 2004, p.669-670).

In such countries the request of the EU for democracy means that the local government has to give up its power, and will therefore never agree on reforms despite the rewards the EU will promise. The adoption costs for these authoritarian governments – losing their power – are simply too high.

Smith (1997) emphasizes that the EU prefers positive above negative measures when applying its conditions upon target states. Positive measures are preferred as they help to establish the conditions under which democratic principles and human rights can be protected, and they challenge the sovereignty of a target state less than sanctions do. Sanctions should therefore be imposed only as a last resort.

But there is a problem with relying on positive conditionality, as the resources of the EU are limited. To motivate a target country, the EU should increase its funding when positive developments in human rights and democratization are reached, but it is not always a case of aid allocation. Smith (1997) also emphasizes that positive measures are not an adequate response to gross violations of human rights or clear reversals in the democratic process. But negative measures are controversial as well, as they do not address the cause of human rights violations and can displace states and affect its population.

Smith (1997) has named three principles upon which negative measures should be decided:

- 1.) Guided by objective and equitable criteria;
- 2.) Appropriate to the circumstances and proportional to the gravity of the case;
- 3.) Do not penalize the population, in particular the poorest people, which implies that even if relations with government are interrupted this should have no consequences for the foreign aid the population receives.

There are however no clear guidelines about the appropriate level of response to a certain situation. Furthermore, the EU treats different partners differently, not always taking considerations of human rights and democracy into account (Smith, 1997). It is

acknowledged that the EU is not willing to break off established relationships, or especially to take negative measures in case of human rights and democracy violations.

Therefore, Smith (1997) argues that:

“Conditionality may not be the best way to promote democracy and protection of human rights: it could be more effective to strengthen economic and political links with the country concerned, thus engendering a process of internal change” (Smith, 1997, p.9).

Another relevant concept is cross-conditionality, which refers to the situation where the target state receives potential benefits from two parties. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) argue that for conditionality to be effective:

“Cross-conditionality must be absent or minor; EU conditionality would not be effective if the target government had other sources offering comparable benefits at lower adjustment costs” (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004, p.667).

In the case of Belarus, a special relationship between Belarus and Russia exist, due to their similar culture and history, and it is perceived that Russia’s offered benefits to Belarus for the lower costs can be the reason of the ineffectiveness of the EU’s conditionality. In this research it will be tested whether the cross-conditionality from Russia is present in Belarus:

H5: The presence of Russia’s cross-conditionality prevents the effectiveness of the EU’s conditionality towards Belarus.

2.2. Social Learning

The social learning model is the counterpart of the rationalist model of conditionality. It implies the logic of appropriateness which means that involved actors are motivated by common identities, norms and values. In choosing their course of action, actors choose the option they view as the most appropriate or legitimate, as opposed to the most rational option in terms of costs and benefits. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) state that the process of rule transfer and adoption is characterised by appropriateness of behaviour, persuasion and ‘complex learning’.

In this perspective, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) view the EU as the formal organisation of a European community that contains a certain collective identity

of common values and norms. The possibility of a non-member state to adopt the rules as imposed by the EU depends on the degree to which the state believes these EU rules are appropriate in the light of its collective identity, values, and norms. Therefore the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: *The extent to which a state adopts the EU norms depends on the degree to which the state believes in the appropriateness of these EU norms.*

3. Traditional Versus Structural Foreign Policy

It is perceived that the EU has a different foreign policy strategy than for example the US. The EU is seen as relying heavily on structural foreign policy, and it is often contrasted with the US as a supporter of a more traditional foreign policy. In reality however, the EU and the US choose either of both foreign policy strategies depending on the field of action.

Structural foreign policy is long-term oriented and aims at encouraging viable and sustainable political, socio-economic and security structures. The traditional foreign policy is defined as a short term and event-oriented policy, used for solving crises and protecting national interests, potentially involving military means.

Keukeleire (2004) notes that a structural foreign policy focuses on influencing long-term developments and processes. This is in contrast to a traditional foreign policy, which *de facto* pays more attention to events and actions, crises and conflicts. Keukeleire (2004) also argues that it is more difficult to influence or change the structures in which actors already operate than to influence or change behaviour of these actors for specific cases. However, once accomplished the new structures will have a more enduring and profound effect.

In summary, structural foreign policy implies three main features (Keukeleire, 2004). Firstly, a long term perspective and aim for sustainability. Secondly, interrelatedness of the various structures such as political, socio-economic or mental. And thirdly, interrelatedness between the individual, society, state and global level.

Another feature of the foreign policy of the EU is the willingness to engage with other countries. Wolfers (quoted in: Smith, 2003) defines it in terms of milieu and

possession goals. Possession goals further national interest, while milieu goals aim to shape the environment in which the state, in this case the EU operates. Wolfers (quoted in: Smith, 2003) argues that in its foreign policy the EU pursues more milieu goals than possession goals.

Various authors (Maull, 2005; Sjurzen, 2006; Keukeleire, 2004) argue that the foreign policy of the EU is focused on broader foreign policy objectives than the protection of its own interests abroad, such as the promotion of human rights and democracy. To pursue these objectives the EU applies rather distinctive foreign policy principles, preferring multilateralism, respect for international law and a concentration on non-military means to secure goals. M. Telo describes this as a structural foreign policy:

“(It) affects particularly the economic and social structures of partners (states, regions, economic actors, international organizations, etc.), it is implemented through peaceful and original means (diplomatic relations, agreements, sanctions and so on), and its scope is not conjunctural but rather in the middle and long range” (Smith, 2003, p.107).

Smith (2003) mentions a rather unique feature of the foreign policy of the EU, as it is mainly based on legal agreements. Therefore its instruments to shape international environment, such as persuasion, dialogue and positive incentives, are soft.

Maull (2005) argues that the EU exercises a gravitational pull in international relations, which is mainly based on the attractiveness of EU's markets, resources and the European lifestyle. The EU can exercise some influence over others by manipulating incentives and disincentives, but it can also use different tactics to affect outcomes. Examples are shaping the milieu of other states or their ability to behave in a civilized way, regarding the EU standards.

However, the effectiveness of the structural foreign policy strategy is denied by the realists. As Smith (2003) argues it is also often doubted by the US officials, even though the US proclaims to pursue many of the same foreign policy goals as the EU. Nevertheless, it is often assumed that the EU prefers civilian instruments, multilateralism and focuses on milieu goals, while the US does not oppose the use of military instruments, prefers a unilateral policy to pursue its interests and focuses on possession

goals. However, as a state's interests in different fields of action can vary, foreign policy strategies are never fully structural or traditional, as used strategies can differ concerning the importance of the issue.

Smith (2003) claims that the promotion of democracy and human rights are shared objectives for both the EU and the US. A hypothesis can therefore be stated to determine whether they have different foreign policy strategies towards democratizing Belarus:

H7: The EU and the US favour different democratization strategies towards undemocratic countries.

4. Belarus: State of Democracy?

In the previous chapters the main theoretical debates concerning democracy and democracy promotion were discussed, in order to develop a number of hypotheses regarding the democratization of Belarus. In this chapter the state of democracy in Belarus will be assessed by applying Dahl's democratic principles and the EU's Copenhagen political criteria.

4.1. Dahl's Criteria and Belarus

The situation in Belarus and Alexander Lukashenka's regime can be described best by a quote from Lukashenka himself, who declared on 7 January, 2005 that: "*There will be no pink, orange, or even banana revolution in Belarus*" (Burger and Minchuk, 2006, p.29).

To assess to what extent democracy exists under the regime of Lukashenka, Dahl's principles will be applied to the case of Belarus. According to Dahl's five principles, the first necessary condition for a democratic state is effective participation. This requires the citizens to be able to show their vision on future state policies and policy outcomes. In Belarus, all opinions that contradict with Lukashenka's view are considered illegitimate and those that speak freely are intimidated and imprisoned. This mostly concerns political opposition candidates who might endanger Lukashenka's position in elections, as well as participants in public protest meetings against the regime. For example, when the democratic opposition candidate A. Milinkevich claimed that the presidential elections in March 2006 were forged and demanded new elections, the deputy leader of Milinkevich's staff, Viktor Karniyenka was assaulted outside his apartment and had to be hospitalized (Marples, 2006). In Minsk, protests against these election results were dispersed by the Special Forces and several hundred protesters were arrested and taken to Akrestsina prison (Marples, 2006).

After being elected in 1994, Lukashenka already started limiting the independence of media and non-governmental organisations. However, since 2001 he exerts his power over all spheres of social, political and economic life in Belarus. That can be explained by two factors. Firstly, after Lukashenka's re-election in 2001, his popularity rapidly decreased. For example, in April 2003 only half of the rural

pensioners, Lukashenka's previous supporters, were willing to re-elect him (Silitski, 2005). Silitski (2005) explains such a decline with the fact that living conditions got much harder after the presidential elections: "*as the time came to pay for the bills inherited from the campaign*" (Silitski, 2005, p.26). Another explanation for the regime's tighter policies is the effect of political changes in similar CEE countries, starting with the downfall of Milosevic's regime and revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia. To prevent the emergence of the similar changes in Belarus, Lukashenka started to consolidate his power.

To achieve this objective, Lukashenka initiates a campaign of closing down and suspending independent media. For example, 34 independent newspapers are closed down or suspended in 2003 and 2004 (Silitski, 2005). Those independent media that remain are informed by the Ministry of Information that one more warning would mean their formal liquidation. This leads to self-censorship, as actions taken against the regime result in termination. At the same time state media receive major support from the government, as state printed press is subsidized and public institutions are forced to subscribe for it. Electronic media, an important source of information for Belarusian citizens, are also controlled by the government. Even for the Russian radio and television, traditionally an alternative information source in Belarus, some of the broadcasts are censored by the government. All these restrictions leave the Belarusian people with access to state controlled media only.

To exert control over civil society, in 2000 Lukashenka releases a decree requiring all political, labour and non-governmental organisations to re-register. Those organisations that are considered to be against the regime, would not receive an approval for further operation. The result is that out of the 1,464 organisations that applied for registration, only 94 were re-registered (Silitski, 2005). The work of NGOs is also limited by putting restrictions in place for the foreign funding of the Belarusian civil society. In mid-2002, the Belarusian government stops granting tax exemptions to EU TACIS projects, followed by a decree on all international assistance in October 2003, assuring that EU assistance would be tax exempted after going through a registration process including formal approval from the Belarusian government. This leads to governmental control over most of the external assistance. After the Orange revolution in Ukraine in

August 2005, Lukashenka issues further restrictions on foreign technical assistance to Belarus, by prohibiting technical assistance in the form of seminars, conferences and public discussions. Finally, a new law was adopted to prevent the emergence of new political parties, and opinion poll organisations became a state monopoly.

The regulations exerted upon media and civil society as mentioned above lead to a situation in which effective citizen participation in politics and state affairs is not possible, due to government restrictions and fear of punishment when an alternative vision on politics than that of Lukashenka is expressed. It is therefore concluded that the first of Dahl's democratic principles, effective participation, is not met.

The second of the five democratic principles as defined by Dahl is voting equality at the final stage of decision making. In Belarus every citizen has the formal right to vote and participate in elections. However, two problems have been indicated by international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, and the EU: firstly, the forgery of election results and secondly, restrictions towards political opposition candidates to access the public. At every election in Belarus, the OSCE and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) initiate an election observation mission in Belarus to monitor the election. At the latest presidential elections in Belarus in 2006, the OSCE concluded that the elections did not meet their requirements for democratic elections, despite the fact that voters could choose between four potential candidates. The OSCE also emphasized that the government was not willing to tolerate political competition:

“A statement by security services, accusing the opposition and civil society of planning to seize power and associating them with the terrorism, contributed significantly to a climate of intimidation and insecurity” (Belskaya, 2006, p.141).

The use of security forces to threaten both the opposition and civil society is an example of how Lukashenka violates the international election norms. Furthermore, as the state controls the media and activities of the political opposition, the opposition has severe disadvantages in their campaigns.

Therefore, even though the Belarusian citizens formally have equal voting rights elections can not be called democratic in Belarus, due to forge in the election results, the

threatening of the opposition and society and diverse campaigning conditions for Lukashenka and the opposition. It is therefore concluded that Dahl's second criterion, voting equality at the final stage of decision making, is not met.

The third criterion, enlightened understanding, requires the opportunity for the citizens to learn about alternative possible policies and their influence on them. It can be argued that this criterion is not present in Belarus, due to several reasons:

Firstly, as stated before, independent media has been eliminated, illegalised or forced to censor itself out of fear for repercussions.

Secondly, Lukashenka's opposition has very limited access to state media. At the presidential elections of 2006, theoretically all candidates were given two television and two radio broadcasts of 30 minutes each. In practice however, the television appearances of Milinkevich and Kazulin were limited by censorship (Marples, 2006). At the same time, Lukashenka appeared on national television almost constantly (Marples, 2006) and held a four hour speech at the People's Assembly.

Thirdly, the government initiates propaganda campaigns by promoting Lukashenka as the father ('batka') of Belarus and by displaying his policies as beneficial for the population. For example, Lukashenka's ability to retain stability and economic prosperity in the country is emphasized by using the agreement made with the Russian company Gazprom, that allowed stable gas prices for 2006 while, for example, Ukraine had to pay five times more (Marples, 2006).

Finally, Lukashenka uses state media to propagandize an anti-image of the European Union and Western values. Belarus' neighbouring countries, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, which became EU member states in 2004, are shown as an example of how economic reforms create poverty in certain levels of society, and how oligarchs result from the privatisation process.

Public opinion polls show that the attitude towards the idea of Belarus entering the EU decreased sharply among Belarusian citizens (Manaev, 2006). In December 2002, the support for entering the EU was 60%, but in December 2005 this was only 36.7%. That could be explained by the fact that no actual changes in the new member states were seen in the first years of their membership in the EU. The public opinion polls also show

high sympathies towards Russia. The majority of the population supports either a close relationship between the two neighbouring states, or the union of the two independent states.

From a pessimistic perspective, one could argue that the absence of independent media and the propaganda against the EU and in favour of Russia was successful in influencing the public opinion. From an optimistic perspective however, one could argue that despite these actions, almost 40% still supports entering the EU (Manaev, 2006). After all, a quarter of the Belarusian citizens has visited an EU country in the past five years (Manaev, 2006) and therefore had the opportunity to witness the living conditions in the EU with their own eyes.

As the opportunity for the citizens to learn about alternative possible policies and their influence on them is limited but not absent, it is concluded that Dahl's third democratic criterion is partially met.

Dahl's fourth principle is control of the political agenda, which implies that every citizen can decide on the issues put on the agenda. Active participation in NGOs and political parties is seen as a way for citizens to participate in politics and raise the issues they want the government to work on. As stated earlier, Lukashenka controls civil society by banning all political, labour and non-governmental organizations that are considered to be against the regime and controlling the foreign funding of NGO's. As all organizations that oppose the government meet heavy restrictions, the Belarusian civil society does not control the political agenda. It is therefore concluded that Dahl's fourth democratic principle is not met.

Dahl's fifth democratic principle requires that all adults have full citizen rights, as implied by the first four criteria. However, summarizing the conclusions regarding these criteria, only the criterion of enlightened understanding is partially met. It is therefore concluded that democracy in Belarus is absent.

4.2. The Copenhagen Political Criterion and Belarus

The political criterion of the EU's Copenhagen criteria implies that a democratic state needs to have stable democratic institutions, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and minority rights. In this paragraph it will be examined whether Belarus meets these criteria.

First, the presence of stable democratic institutions is investigated. The three main democratic institutions are parliament, government and judiciary. Such institutions are indeed physically present in Belarus; however they do not have any rights of independent decision making. Their power has been replaced by the power of the president, leaving him as the only decision-maker in the country. Regarding the Belarusian parliament, Lukashenka adjusted the Constitution of Belarus in 1996 to increase his power. The modification enabled the president to issue decrees, while previously this could only be done by the parliament. As Burger and Minchuk (2006) emphasize:

“It is noteworthy that this power has been available to most chief executives only during states of emergency” (Burger and Minchuk, 2006, p.29).

Even more noteworthy, as emphasized by the EU:

“Democratic structures have been undermined in particular by the replacement of the democratically elected parliament with a national assembly nominated by the President” (Country strategy paper 2007 – 2013 and national indicative programme for Belarus 2007 – 2010, p.3).

This implies that only those that sympathize with the president can join the parliament and once in the parliament, those that disagree with the president can easily be replaced, leaving the parliament without power.

For the government the power also lies with the president. *“...Lukashenka made a series of personnel changes so as to ensure that he be surrounded by only the absolutely loyal”* (Burger and Minchuk, 2006, p.31), which concerns also the government where ministers are chosen by their loyalty towards Lukashenka. Bureaucracy is subordinated to the regime. Lukashenka has created a centralised structure of state administration, which enacts all decisions made by the president, due to *“the ominous presence of security officers at the top positions in the government”* (Silitski, 2005, p.28). The loyalty

of bureaucracy to the government is created also through the provision of tangible material benefits, like better wages or housing opportunities (Silitski, 2005).

For the judiciary, the Constitution of Belarus states that it acts as an independent institution. However, *“The President appoints six of the twelve judges of the Constitutional Court and all other judges”* (Country strategy paper 2007 – 2013 and national indicative programme for Belarus 2007 – 2010, p.7). The president can therefore exert high influence on judiciary decisions. In practice judges receive a phone call from government officials with specific instructions on the verdict. Those that do not follow the instructions are being dismissed. Therefore, for the judiciary as well there has been a power shift towards the president.

The above displays the size of Lukashenka’s power, as he has all decision making rights and every state structure is subordinate to him. It is therefore concluded that while physically present, democratic institutions in Belarus are left without power.

To continue the discussion, the principle of the rule of law will be examined next. As described above, the 1996 amendments to the constitution basically allowed Lukashenka to issue any law he wants. He uses this power to change the law depending upon the situation and the obstacles he foresees for his regime. For example, after the Orange revolution in Ukraine in 2005 and the upcoming presidential elections in Belarus, Lukashenka issued substantial laws to restrict the emergence of political parties and the work of NGOs. At the same time he created a state monopoly of opinion polls’ entities and intensified penalties for those whose activities could harm the regime. By adjusting the laws Lukashenka increased his sphere of influence and secured himself from a potential coup. As the US department’ of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006 states on the rule of law:

“...Alexander Lukashenko has systematically undermined the country's democratic institutions and concentrated power in the executive branch through authoritarian means, flawed referenda, manipulated elections, and arbitrary decrees that undermine the rule of law” (US department’s of State Country report on Human Rights practices, 2006).

It is therefore concluded that the rule of law is seriously undermined by the power of the president.

Regarding human rights in Belarus, deep international concern has been expressed about human rights violation. The issue was raised again at the presidential elections of March 2006, when the OSCE election observing mission group stated that “*arbitrary use of state power and widespread detentions showed a disregard for the basic rights of freedom of assembly, association and expression*” (quoted in: Amnesty International Concerns in 2006 – Belarus).

The Belarusian government refuses to fully cooperate with the Special Reporters on human rights appointed by the UN. The UN General Assembly subsequently adopted a resolution on human rights violations in Belarus on 20 December 2006, asking the Belarusian government to comply with international election regulations and to stop the harassment of political opposition, NGOs and journalists.

The main human right abuses taking place in Belarus concern freedom of speech and the possession of a view other than that of the regime, as existence of those elements could affect society’s opinion towards Lukashenka. Any form of opposition against the regime can result in violence or imprisonment by the government. One significant example of oppressions of Lukashenka’s opponents is the disappearance of four publicly known persons that were presumed to have been murdered because of their activities against Lukashenka’s regime (Burger and Minchuk, 2006). Other well known public persons have been imprisoned because of their political beliefs, such as Mikhail Leonau and Leonid Kaluhin, two formers president candidates for the 2001 elections, as well as Mikhail Marynich, the Belarusian ambassador to Latvia (Burger and Minchuk, 2006). Furthermore, the freedom of speech for NGOs is oppressed by the regime, because if powerful, they could change the attitude of Belarusian citizens towards the regime. Therefore, while the West provides funding and support for NGOs to be able to operate, Lukashenka issues harsher restrictions to their existence. As Sannikov and Kuley (2006) argue, civil society in Belarus has only become political because Lukashenka’s regime sees everything as being political. Even if the objective of an NGO is to work freely in their country, they are still seen as part of the opposition to the regime in political terms.

Regarding protection of minority rights, there are some Polish and Jewish communities within Belarus whose rights are being limited by the regime. Also the supporters of a Belarusian identity are seen as contradicting to the regime's beliefs. Because of this, Belarusian schools and universities are closed while Russification is taking place.

This all leads to the conclusion that both human rights and minority right are seriously violated in Belarus.

To summarize, on all fronts the political criterion of the Copenhagen criteria is not met, as stable democratic institutions, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and minority rights do not exist in Belarus. As Silitski (2006) puts it, the regime in Belarus is a personalized system of authority. Applying the Copenhagen criteria to the situation in Belarus therefore also leads to the conclusion that democracy in Belarus is absent.

4.3. Conclusions

In this chapter, by applying Dahl's democratic principles and the EU's Copenhagen political criterion it is concluded that democracy is absent in Belarus. By the extensive use of possible instruments in all policy directions, Lukashenka is successful in preventing the emergence of a democratic environment in Belarus.

However, there are certain domestic conditions within Belarus that also explain the absence of a democratic environment in Belarus. They will be examined in the next chapter, where their impact will be measured through the (absence of) success of the conditionality and social learning policies of the EU.

5. Importance of Domestic Factors in the EU's Use of Conditionality and Social Learning

To examine the reasons why democratization is not taking place in Belarus, attention must be paid to domestic factors as well. Belarus, as the other post-communist CEE countries, gained its independence in the early 1990s. However, since then it has not moved further with democratic reforms. As explained in the previous chapter, one of the

reasons for this is the election of Lukashenka as the first president of Belarus and his subsequent consolidation of power. However, conditions were present that explain the tardiness of democratic reforms before Lukashenka's election and the absence of success in overthrowing his regime.

The theory of democracy promotion states that for successful external governance and democratization from outside, several domestic factors have to be in place in the target country. As previously mentioned, the EU's policy of conditionality and social learning has proven to be ineffective in Belarus, but effective for many other CEE countries. In this chapter it will be investigated which domestic factors in Belarus form an explanation for the lack of impact of the EU's policies. First, the period of independence before Lukashenka's rule, from 1991-1994, will be discussed. Subsequently, the period of Lukashenka's rule, 1994-present, will be investigated.

5.1. Before Lukashenka's Rule

Smith (2004) emphasizes that successful democratization in a target country depends more on domestic factors than on international influence. In particular, support for democratization from the population is necessary. After the breakdown of the USSR, most of the post-communist CEE countries were willing to (re)join Europe and were inspired by the European values. This was the initial push towards developing a democracy and market economy, allowing eight of the post-communist countries to join the EU on 1 May, 2004, which can be partly explained by the logic of appropriateness. However, there was no interest from Belarus in joining the EU and European values in the early 1990s, which can be explained by four factors.

Firstly, the majority of Belarus' population was disappointed by the breakdown of the Soviet Union, due to the loss of economic stability and a "*rapid decline of the citizens' social status*" in the newly independent country (Binkowski). In general, Belarusian people were satisfied with their lives in the Soviet Union and their main interest laid in improvement of personal welfare and maintaining their economic stability, therefore the breakdown of the Soviet Union was seen as a threat to that stability. Historically, the Belarusian society is also known by its desire for peace and stability. This is due to the large amount of casualties and suffering during the World War II,

where it is estimated that Belarus lost between a quarter and a third of its population (Shepherd, 2006). Lukashenka uses the society's fear for change frequently in his propaganda, constantly reminding to people "*how fortunate they are to have a leadership which has kept them free from conflict*" (Shepherd, 2006, p.76).

Secondly, national identity, generally considered an important catalyst for democratic reforms, was lacking in Belarusian society when Belarus became independent. Reason for this was that the USSR Russification policy affected Belarus more than any other USSR state, due to the similarity of the Belarusian and the Russian language. With the Belarusian language almost forgotten, the weak sense of nationalism had a negative influence on democratic reforms at the time Belarus became independent, and did not motivate people to forget about the above mentioned socio-economic instability.

Thirdly, another reason for the stagnation of democratic reforms is that the power of the communist elite remained after the fall of the Soviet Union. The national reformers were weak both in force and in numbers, while the elite wanted to maintain their position in society and therefore showed no interest in democratic and economic reforms. However, the Belarusian foreign policy was equally oriented towards Europe and Russia. The government was balancing between the establishing an independent state and maintaining Soviet institutions, where reforms would not have a determinant role. These doubts led to economic stagnation and high state debts, due to the necessary funding for the collective farms and military industrial complexes that were of no use anymore. The Belarusian population became disappointed with the lack of improvement in their economic situation, which led to protest voting in the first Belarusian elections.

Finally, Belarus did not have any democratic experience in its history. The constitution which was formed in 1994 was the first democratic element in Belarus, although it gave too much power to the presidential institution, and already in 1996 was replaced by a formal constitution made by Lukashenka.

From the above it can be concluded that for various domestic reasons there was little support from society for democratic reforms in Belarus at the time of the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

5.2. During Lukashenka's Rule

As stated earlier, the success of democratization depends more on domestic factors than on international influence and support from the population is necessary (Smith, 1994). The problem in Belarus is that part of the population supports Lukashenka's regime. An analysis of the opinion polls by Manaev (2006) shows the characteristics of the typical follower of Lukashenka:

"a) female, in retirement, having completed elementary education or having not completed secondary education, and b) elderly public sector workers living in villages or in the Eastern regions of Belarus" (Manaev, 2006, p.38).

The same analysis shows that electoral behaviour is most significantly determined by people's assessments of their quality of life. Therefore, 80.6 percent of those who considered their quality of life to be good planned to vote in favour of Lukashenka in the March 2006 presidential elections (Manaev, 2006). Furthermore, a pre-election poll showed that the electoral choice for these elections mostly depends on socio-economic issues, including general quality of life, employment and healthcare (Manaev, 2006). The poll also displayed that issues regarding democracy, independence or crime were considered less important for Belarusian voters. It can therefore be argued that politicians who displayed themselves as improvers of socio-economic conditions had higher chances of getting elected. It is well possible that Lukashenka was seen as such candidate, which could explain the increase in Lukashenka's support from 47.7% of the voters in 2004 to 58.6% before the 2006 elections (Manaev, 2006).

The support for Lukashenka differs between generations. Because of his socialist policies regarding unemployment, pensions and other social benefits, Lukashenka is very popular among elderly people, who appreciate the stability and can compare it to the Soviet times. The younger generation, who has grown up in an independent Belarus and is unfamiliar with the life in the former USSR, favours democracy and, eventually, EU membership (Naumczuk, Gromadzki, etc., 2001).

An explanation for the phenomenon of people freely deciding to vote for an authoritarian leader is that economic resources are concentrated in the hands of the Belarusian authorities. They are responsible for increasing pensions, salaries or reducing interest for loans. As Belarusian people show more concern for socio-economic problems

than for example for democracy, they vote for the candidate who can ensure that. It must be emphasized that Belarusian people do not necessarily see a change to democracy as a change to better circumstances, as democratic reforms might take away the current stability.

Secondly, to explain the lack of public support for democratization, the role of political opposition must be emphasized as well. In Belarus everyone with a different opinion than Lukashenka is seen as opposing the regime. Examples are political parties, NGOs, journalists and also some businessmen whose work are hindered by Lukashenka's ruling and therefore prefer democracy over authoritarian rule. Special attention should be devoted to this democratic opposition, which traditionally consists of diverse groups and numerous political parties that are *"small, urban, and often at odds with one another"* (Marples and Padhol, 2006, p.55).

The first considerable coordination between opposition activities was initiated in 1999 by the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in the form of a consultative council of the opposition political parties in Minsk. The council unsuccessfully held several discussions with the Belarusian government for the implementation of the OSCE recommendations for ending arbitrary arrests, equal access to state media and increased authority of the parliament (Marples and Padhol, 2006). In 2001 several parties left the council and its operations were stopped. However, parties kept organizing monitoring campaigns for the elections individually and nominated their candidates for the presidential elections. However, as emphasized by Marples and Padhol (2006), all those efforts had limited success, due to differences in interests among the various groups and – in several instances – to complicated relationships between their leaders.

Only in 2005 a permanent council of pro-democracy forces was formed from the Five Plus group, which is the coalition created for parliamentary elections in 2004, and encompasses six of the seven largest democratic political parties, and more than 200 NGOs (Stephen Nix, 2004) and a broader body of ten opposition parties and organizations. The objective was to hold a national congress for Belarusian democratic forces. The congress took place on September 2, 2005 and after the voting Milinkevich was named as the candidate for the united democratic opposition at the upcoming

presidential elections. It was the first time for the democratic parties to agree upon putting forward a single presidential candidate.

From the above it can be concluded that although numerous democratic opposition parties were active during Lukashenka's rule, they did not manage to combine their forces in promoting their common objective until 2005

A final reason for the EU's democratization policy in Belarus currently being unsuccessful is that imposing democratic reforms against the will of the government can be a difficult and problematic process. Lukashenka simply rejects the possibility of implementing reforms proposed by the Western external actors. Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel (2003) argue that in such case conditionality through the transnational channel - via societal actors in the target country - can be applied when neither material nor social rewards induce the government itself to comply. The recently released European Commission's document Non-paper "What the EU could bring to Belarus", shows that the EU indeed realizes the necessity to persuade both the population and the government for democratic reforms. For the population to receive the promised benefits, it contains a number of conditions the government has to fulfil. Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel (2003) state that societal actors will be open for reinforcement of reforms if their material cost-benefit balance is positive, or if they aspire to be recognized as part of 'Europe'.

A prerequisite to make this form of conditionality work, the societal actors have to be strong enough to force the government to comply. Due to their history, civil society in post-communist countries traditionally is very weak. After becoming independent, restrictions imposed by Lukashenka prevented the civil society in Belarus from further development, as their rights of operation were limited and they were threatened with security forces in case of unacceptable actions in the eyes of the regime.

With the consolidation of democratic opposition, also civil society became stronger in 2005 when they decide to change their action methods with the upcoming presidential elections. Instead of operating as NGOs, they joined for campaigning of democratic opposition candidate Milinkevich:

“Hundreds of civic activists joined regional support groups for Milinkevich’s campaign and went out onto the streets to help collect the 100,000 signatures required by law for his participation in the presidential elections” (Sannikov and Kuley, 2006, p.60) However, even though civic activists now fight against the regime more openly, they still have to convince a large part of the Belarusian citizens not to fear reforms, a change of the regime and possible punishments imposed by the government. Summarizing the above, it is concluded that civil society in Belarus is still too weak to force governmental changes and make the EU’s conditionality provided through a transnational channel work.

5.3. Conclusion

Summarizing the above, both before and during the reign of Lukashenka domestic factors had a negative influence on the democratization of Belarus. After the fall of the USSR, the Belarusian society showed little support for democratic reforms due to nostalgia for the Soviet times’ welfare and stability, lack of national identity, the power of the communist elite and absence of democratic experience in its history.

During the reign of Lukashenka, the domestic factors hindering the democratization of Belarus were part of the population supporting Lukashenka’s regime, opposition parties being oppressed by Lukashenka’s policies and the fact that these opposition parties did not manage to combine their forces in promoting their objective until 2005.

Despite these domestic factors, as stated earlier 40% of Belarusian people believe that they will join a united Europe in the future. Interest in close cooperation with Russia is higher, as when asked to make a clear choice between unification with Russia or entering the EU, the correlation between “Russo-Belarusians” and “Euro-Belarusians” is estimated as two-versus-one (Manaev, 2006). However, it seems that the Belarusian citizens did not make a final decision yet. Therefore the EU still has a chance to make its democratization policy towards Belarus successful.

6. The EU’s and the US’ Policies Towards Belarus

In the previous chapter the main domestic obstacles within Belarus which prevent the EU's conditionality to be effective have been examined. The policy of the EU itself has to be investigated as well, to reveal whether deficiencies exist that cause the democratization of Belarus to be unsuccessful. In this chapter the democratization policy of the EU towards Belarus will be examined and compared to the US' democratization policy towards Belarus, thus being more objective about the EU's achievements. The theoretical concept of conditionality will be applied to the EU's policy to examine hypotheses H1-H4. Also the theory of structural and traditional foreign policy will be applied to explain whether the EU's and US' strategies towards Belarus differ, thereby answering hypothesis H6. The chapter will be structured by using comparative elements in both the EU's and the US' policies towards Belarus.

6.1 Policy Framework and Main Documents

Both the EU and the US have defined their policies towards Belarus in a certain framework. Both also developed a strategic document containing policy guidelines and principles regarding the democratization of Belarus.

Since 2004, the EU's policy towards Belarus is defined in the framework of the newly developed European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The ENP is a common framework with *"the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and our neighbours"* (EC website: The policy: What is the European Neighbourhood Policy?) and applies to *"the EU's immediate neighbours by land or sea"* (EC website: The policy: What is the European Neighbourhood Policy?). Belarus is defined as a future member of this framework, which explains the seriousness of the EU's new policy towards Belarus. However, to become a member of the ENP, Belarus has to commit to the EU's common values of democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development (EC website: The policy: What is the European Neighbourhood Policy?).

The EU released a non-paper in 2006 called "What the European Union could bring to Belarus", which aims at the citizens of Belarus and therefore has a more informal style than other EU's documents. This non-paper lists the conditions the EU requests from the government and the rewards for the population. Although, the EU has been

involved in Belarus since the regime's formation in 1994 with the election of Lukashenka, this non-paper is the first document where conditions are clearly defined. Publishing such a document also shows that the EU uses conditionality through the transnational channel – offering benefits to people and requesting reforms from the government – as so far the government oriented conditionality did not succeed.

Democratization of Belarus is on the US agenda within the framework of “the global freedom and democracy agenda”. In January 2005, Belarus was declared by the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as one of the six “outposts of tyranny” alongside Cuba, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea and Zimbabwe (Shepherd, 2006).

The main strategic document that regulates the US relationships with Belarus is the “Belarus Democracy Act”, which was signed by President George W. Bush in October 2004. Its central aim is to promote democracy and support civil society through assistance, to sanction the regime if pressure against the opposition and independent media does not stop and to demand reports on Lukashenka's personal finances and his regime's links with rogue states (Belarus Democracy Act). Although the document determines the main objectives of the US policy towards Belarus and lists the requirements for the regime to fulfil, it basically summarizes the actions the US was already doing before. As these are now officially formulated together, this therefore displays the higher involvement of the US in the situation of Belarus.

Both the EU and the US have based their policies towards Belarus upon frameworks that require compliance with democratic norms and the rule of law. However, such determinacy in their policies can be seen only since 2004, when these frameworks and strategic guidelines were set. In earlier years the EU's and the US' involvement in Belarus was less structured and visible.

6.2. Objectives

For both the EU and the US the main objective is to democratize Belarus. Their other objectives are also similar, as both aim for compliance with human rights standards and the international election standards as defined by the OSCE, to stem the regime's harassment to the media, political opposition and civil society, to investigate the cases of the disappeared persons, and to establish the rule of law. However, there are some minor

differences between other objectives of the EU and the US, due to their different opinion on some issues. For example, one of the EU's requests towards Belarus is to abolish the death penalty, which the EU regards as one of its basic values. In contrary, the US does not include this element in their requests as the death penalty is legal in some states in the US and they do not consider it as human rights abuse.

Another concern in the EU's objectives that is not mentioned by the US is the establishment of the independent judicial system and giving back legal rights to the Parliament. These objectives show the EU's interest in consolidating institutions in Belarus, thus applying its knowledge and experience gathered during the Eastern enlargement. This is in line with Grabbe's (2006) statement that the effects of the EU's influence can be investigated by looking at the EU's provision about legislative and institutional models, thus suggesting that the EU would favour an opportunity to advice Belarus on institutional models.

6.3. Interests

In the early 1990s the EU's policy towards the countries from the Commonwealth of Independent states (CIS), including Belarus, was directed by the EU's unwillingness to enter Russia's zone of interest. The EU did not consider including Belarus or any other CIS country in the group of future member states, therefore excluding the possibility that Belarus one day could become an EU member state. At the same time the US had a Russia-centric policy and the decisions concerning Belarus were based on the policy and interests towards Russia. These aspects show that in the first years of Belarusian independence both the EU and the US preferred a Russia-oriented policy. Due to strategic interest of Russia in the CIS countries, they did not consider the democratization of Belarus their first priority.

For the EU the situation changed with the EU's Eastern enlargement, when three new member states, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, directly bordered Belarus. The concerns increased mainly because of security reasons, but also regarding humanitarian and neighbouring aspects. Because of its direct borders with Belarus, the EU's interest rose in increasing security and stability in the region by changing the regime in Belarus. Security and stability reasons also enabled EU's conditionality policy towards other CEE

countries in the early 1990s, therefore suggesting that the EU increases its democratization efforts and improves its policy to improve security levels in its region.

The US' policy towards Belarus shows its interest in the country, but the question arises whether the US is involved in the issues Belarus is facing out of moral norms or out of certain national interests. Shepherd (2006) offers two explanations. First, one of the reasons mentioned is the possible links between Belarus and the regimes of Syria and Iran, accused to be a state sponsor of terrorism. This suggests that the US is interested in democratizing Belarus as Lukashenka cooperates with such states. A second explanation is the US global freedom and democracy agenda of the Bush administration. Lukashenka's regime is an affront for the Bush administration, because it is located in Europe which is its partner for providing democracy. As Shepherd (2006) emphasizes:

“After all, if Washington is unable to deal with Alyaksandr Lukashenka's little Belarus, what hope for democratizing China, the greater Middle East, or indeed, Russia itself?” (Shepherd, 2006, p.77).

The EU's growing interest in democratizing Belarus is clear due to its proximity, but the US interest seems mixed. The US always emphasized the values of democracy and promotes democracy throughout the world, but its policy often depends on specific strategic interests within the target country. It can be argued that the US is interested in solving the issues in Belarus out of moral norms, but the US would not put all possible instruments in place for changing Lukashenka's regime, if Belarus would not be of strategic interest compared to other global issues.

6.4. Policy Instruments

Isolation Policy

The EU's relationship with Belarus developed gradually in the early 1990s as work proceeded on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), to formalize bilateral relations between the both. However, the situation changed with the election of Lukashenka in 1994 and his subsequent efforts to extend his power, such as organizing a referendum in 1996 to amend the constitution and change the nature of the political system of Belarus. The EU suspended the ratification of the PCA and the interim trade agreement. Furthermore, the EU decided not to support Belarus' membership of the

Council of Europe (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007). These actions initiated the EU's isolation policy towards Belarus. The relationship worsened after the disappearances of three opposition politicians and a journalist in 1999-2000, when the EU introduced a visa ban for four high-ranked Belarusian officials who were suspected to be involved in these disappearances (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007).

The US changed its policy towards Belarus in 1997, when the Clinton administration initiated a policy of "selective engagement" (Shepherd, 2006; Jarabik, 2006; Rontoyani, 2005), downgrading governmental relations to the level of assistant secretary of the state. Furthermore, the US bilateral assistance was not channelled through the Belarusian government anymore, except for humanitarian aid and educational exchange programmes.

Both the EU and the US display elements of isolation in their policies, thereby showing the outside world that they do not want anything in common with such a regime. However, Smith (1997) states that for expanding influence and effective conditionality, a pre-condition is to have official relationships with the target country. As a result of the isolation policy that was put in place, the EU lacked an important pre-condition to effectively influence Lukashenka's regime by using positive or negative conditionality.

The EU isolated Belarus also by having only few embassies in Belarus², and no European Commission Delegation. "*The prospect of opening a European Commission (EC) delegation was delayed due to a lack of financial resources and because Minsk was not perceived by Brussels to be a priority*" (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007, p.1). Today Lukashenka rejects the possibility of opening an EC delegation in Belarus, and the EU is represented only by a small TACIS Branch Office which was opened in 1998 for supporting the implementation of the TACIS assistance programme.

The lack of official representations of the EC and European countries in Belarus again shows the European protest against the authoritarian government. However, it also limits the EU's possibilities to meet Belarusian people and learn about problems and their causes from the main source. Therefore, the isolation policy, although showing a clear

² The countries which have embassies in Belarus are: the UK, France, Belgium, Germany, Czech Republic, and Poland; Latvia is represented in Belarus by a Consulate.

message to the international society and Lukashenka, certainly did not help the Belarusian people.

Positive Conditionality

In 2000, before the parliamentary elections, the EU first uses conditionality towards Belarus, when the EU together with the Council of Europe and the OSCE requests Belarus to comply with at least four criteria (EC website: The EU's relations with Belarus). These are to (1) return power to the Parliament, (2) ensure that opposition is represented in electoral commissions, (3) provide the opposition with the access to the state media, and (4) conform to international standards for electoral legislation. However, no rewards are promised to the regime, only the sanction of increased isolation of Belarus is mentioned if those requests continue to be violated. The EU therefore imposes conditions upon Belarus, without promising tangible rewards for the Belarusian government. One of the four factors from the external governance model on which the effectiveness of conditionality depends is the size and speed of rewards (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). The EU does not consider the importance of this factor, as Lukashenka does not see the isolation of Belarus as a failure. Therefore the strategy is doomed for downfall. As Rontoyani (2005) argues:

“President Lukashenka is not interested in gaining Western approval or being perceived as ‘a good European’” (Rontoyani, 2005, p.51).

In 2002 the EU tries to improve its relationship with Belarus by using a benchmark approach, in which step-by-step normalization of relations between Belarus and the EU will be exchanged for improvements in the protection of democratic principles (EC website: The EU's relations with Belarus). Belarus is mainly interested in the improvement of economic conditions and in particular in access to the EU's market. However, this approach fails as well, due to Lukashenka's resistance to the EU's requests for democratizing Belarus. In this case the rewards the EU promises are reasonable; however its policy fails due to the high adoption costs of limiting Lukashenka's power through the implementation of democratic conditions. On the basis of the external governance model it can therefore be concluded that although the EU offers reasonable

and attractive awards to the target state, the required conditions are unacceptable due to high adoption costs (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004).

At the same time the US due to its policy of “selective engagement” does not use conditionality to influence Lukashenka’s regime, but instead focuses all efforts on supporting civil society. The only reward the US can offer to Belarus is the perspective of NATO membership, previously proven successful among other post-communist CEE countries. However, as Belarus has close military ties with Russia and other CIS countries it is not interested in the NATO. Again one of the four factors of the external governance model, the size and speed of rewards, is not present (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). The US simply has not enough to offer to be able to influence Lukashenka’s regime.

Engaging Civil Society

In 2004 the EU’s interest towards Belarus increases, due to the EU’s Eastern enlargement and the upcoming parliamentary election and referendum in Belarus. In October 2004, few days after the elections in Belarus, the Council of the European Union reshapes the EU’s policy by developing a two-pronged approach: a policy of restricted contacts with the authorities and engagement with civil society (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007). This policy contains the same elements as the US policy of selective engagement. The EU (1) increases critical statements on the regime’s actions, (2) proclaims that funding for education, media and civil society activities will be diverted so governmental approval for such projects will not be required, and (3) increases contacts with the opposition (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007). However, the EU also maintains contacts with mid-level and local Belarusian officials to decrease the country’s level of isolation (Woehrel, 2006).

In November 2005, the EU starts with the execution of its two-pronged approach by launching a new policy towards the people of Belarus, which focuses on people-to-people contacts through (1) student and scientific exchanges, (2) scholarships, (3) youth travel, (4) contacts between small and medium-sized enterprises, and (5) training local authority officials (EC website: The EU’s relations with Belarus). This shift in the policy of the EU with more focus on the Belarusian society shows that the EU understands the

importance of the population for changing the regime and that they should not be punished because of Lukashenka's policies. The EU also uses the opportunity to educate these people about the EU and its values, how people live in Europe and what Belarus is lacking because of Lukashenka's regime.

Rhetorical Condemnation

The high involvement of the US in the issues of Belarus is noticeable from the rhetoric its high officials use towards Lukashenka and his regime. This lacks in the EU's policy, perhaps due to different interests and opinions towards Belarus by various EU member states. Already after the presidential elections in 2001, the US' president George W. Bush sharply criticized Lukashenka and called him "Europe's last dictator" (Woehrel, 2006). In 2005 a shift in the US policy towards Belarus occurred, when a new policy, making democracy promotion a key issue of Bush's administration, was developed (Jarabik, B., 2006, p.89). In 2006, in his speech about the situation in Belarus before the March 2006 elections in comparison with the situation in Ukraine, Assistant Secretary for the US Department of state D. Fried stressed the US' interest in democracy building in Belarus, (Fried, 2006). He also emphasized the US President's personal engagement in helping Belarus. George W. Bush met the widows of two disappeared opposition figures and as Fried (2006) states: "*He has spoken out, including yesterday, in remarks on International Women's Day, about the plight of those whose husbands have presumably been murdered by the regime*" (US Department of State, 2006). Other US high officials have met with Belarusian opposition and civil society as well, which shows their general interest in the democratization of Belarus.

Visa Bans and Asset Freezes

In November 2002, the US announced that it would join 14 EU countries in imposing a visa ban against Lukashenka and other top Belarusian officials due to Belarus' closure of the OSCE human right monitoring mission in the country. The visa ban was lifted again in April 2003 when the OSCE office was again reopened (Woehrel, 2006).

The EU and the US cooperate in December 2004, when both enact a visa ban and asset freezes on Belarusian officials involved in electoral fraud and human rights violations. The EU enlarges this list of people twice, especially targeting judges and public prosecutors who take part in the sentencing of political prisoners. As Jarabik and Rabagliati (2007) state: “*Local officials, such as the police or judges, have deemed this step to be the EU’s most powerful act*” (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007, p.3). The use of sanctions towards local officials can therefore be called successful, although no further progress in democratization can be noticed.

After the presidential elections in March 2006, when again serious violations of international election norms are noticed, the European Council decides on restrictive measures in the form of a visa ban and asset freeze against president Lukashenka, the Belarusian leadership and officials responsible for the violation of international election norms (EC website: The EU’s relations with Belarus). The EU also emphasizes that it will make sure that such measures do not have a negative impact on the Belarus population. As the European Commission emphasizes:

“The people of Belarus are the first victims of the isolation imposed by the country’s authorities, and will be the first to reap the benefits on offer to a democratic Belarus” (EC website: The EU’s relations with Belarus).

After the presidential elections of 2006, the US also imposes sanctions on key members of Lukashenka’s regime. On May 15, 2006 President Bush announces a visa ban for senior Belarusian leaders to the US, and on June 19, 2006 the US freezes the assets of these officials. The sanctions affected Lukashenka and his closest advisors, such as “*the head of the Belarusian KGB, the Ministers of Justice and Interior, the head of the Belarusian state television and Radio Company, and the head of central election commission*” (Woehrel, 2006, p.8).

Military Intervention

The US shows its interest not only in Lukashenka’s domestic policy, but also in his foreign policy in terms of contacts with rogue regimes. Already in April 2003, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State S. Pifer announces the existence of essential evidence that Belarus has provided weapons and training for countries and groups that support

terrorism, including Iran and Saddam Hussein's Iraq (Woehrel, 2006). In March 2006, the US administration in its report, required by Congress as part of the Belarus Democracy Act, accused Lukashenka and his regime of massive scale corruption and selling arms to states supporting terrorism such as Sudan and Iran (Woehrel, 2006). These announcements show that the US is aware of contacts between Lukashenka and rogue regimes; however the US does not yet consider heavier sanctions or other actions.

Currently, the EU and the US do not consider military intervention as feasible for Belarus, probably due to (1) Belarus' proximity with Russia, (2) the military cooperation between these two states and (3) because Lukashenka's regime does not seem warlike. However, the EU has never considered military action as an option for democratization, while US has used military intervention in several cases, based on the UN resolutions. Examples are former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq; therefore exclusion of such a powerful instrument shows that Belarus is not the highest priority on the US global democracy agenda. As Shepherd (2006) argues, as long as Belarus does not disturb the US fight against global terrorism or weapons of mass destruction and does not impose direct threat to the US, it will not be a strategic country for the US:

"...although the Bush administration clearly does want a change of regime in Minsk, it has not yet regarded Lukashenka as being of such critical importance, ..., to publicly outline its policy in such incendiary terms" (Shepherd, 2006, p.76).

Economic Sanctions

Economic sanctions are considered to be unfeasible in the case of Belarus, mainly due to the resistance of Belarusian democratic leaders to such actions (Shepherd, 2006). The EU in particular has not supported economic sanctions against Belarus as a whole so far. In contrary, Belarus currently profits from the EU tariff reductions under the Generalized System of Preferences, although these are under investigation by the EU due to Lukashenka's repression of independent trade unions (Woehrel, 2006). The EU's reluctance in determining economic sanctions towards Belarus can be explained by the *"fear of antagonizing Russia or provoking Lukashenko to cause trouble on the lengthy EU-Belarus border"* (Woehrel, 2006, p.6), for example by allowing more human trafficking to occur through Belarus to Poland. Nonetheless, the policy paper released by

Pontis Foundation on Belarusian economic dependency (2005) shows that Belarus has increased its exports to the EU and the Belarusian economy is very dependent on the trade relationship with the EU. This suggests that restrictions on Belarus-EU trading would have a serious negative impact on the country. The reason that the EU has not yet considered this as an option is that it could influence not only the regime but also people in Belarus.

The US, in contrary, in the Belarus Democracy Act 2004 has defined few economic sanctions towards the government of Belarus, which are related to the US role in the international organizations and restrictions of financing for the Belarusian government. First of all, *“No loan, credit guarantee, insurance, financing, or other similar financial assistance should be extended by any agency of the United States Government (including the Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation) to the Government of Belarus, except with respect to the provision of humanitarian goods and agricultural or medical products”* (Belarus Democracy Act, p.3). Secondly, it states that no trade and development funds can be accessible for activities in Belarus. And finally, *“the United States Executive Director of each international financial institution to which the United States is a member to has to be instructed to use the voice and vote of the United States to oppose any extension by those institutions of any financial assistance (including any technical assistance or grant) of any kind to the Government of Belarus, except for loans and assistance that serve humanitarian needs”* (Belarus Democracy Act, p.3).

To summarize, the EU and the US have used almost all possible instruments of pressure: (1) political isolation, (2) positive rewards, (3) support for society and opposition activities, (4) rhetorical condemnation, and (5) visa bans and asset freezes. The US also made use of few economic sanctions, whereas the EU considered such a policy to be unfeasible. Both states refrained from military intervention.

Applying the theory of Conditionality

Regarding the EU's conditional approach, although Smith (1997) states that the EU prefers positive conditionality against negative one, and that negative conditionality

can be used only as a last resort, the case of Belarus maybe is exceptional, as the EU has used little positive conditionality towards the Lukashenka's regime and when the Lukashenka's regime was consolidated and other means of influence did not work, negative conditionality was applied. However, that confirms with Smith's (1997) other argument that the EU is not willing to break off already established relations by implementing negative conditionality because of democracy and human rights violations, but in the case of Belarus the EU is not timid to use sanctions, as an official relationship between the both does not exist. However, that also implies that the influence of EU's conditionality is less effective if there are no established official political relationships with the target country.

In applying the external governance model's conditions of determinacy and credibility to this case, the above research suggests that declared sanctions have been implemented, proving that the EU has been determinate and credible in its negative conditionality towards the Belarusian government. Although determinacy of positive conditionality cannot be examined towards the Belarusian government as it was always refused, the EU's determinacy and credibility can be investigated through its policies towards the Belarusian society. The EU has shown interest to the Belarusian population only since 2004, when the two-pronged approach and people-to-people policy was introduced. Then the EU strengthened its support towards the population and determined rewards in the form of transchannel conditionality, of which it is doubted whether it will be successful in the current situation of Belarus. Therefore it can be concluded that the EU has been determinate and credible in its negative conditionality towards the Belarusian government. However, this can not be proven for the EU's positive conditionality towards the government of Belarus and so far seems unsuccessful towards the Belarusian population. Nonetheless, the determinacy and credibility of the EU's conditionality was explicit in the later years of its policy and focused on negative conditionality.

The above research also showed that the size and speed of rewards are often inappropriate in the EU's policy to persuade the Belarusian government, but however the high adoption costs of the EU's request was the main reason why the EU's conditionality was rejected by the Belarusian regime.

Technical Assistance

Grabbe (2006) suggests that effects of the EU's influence can be examined by looking on the form of aid and technical assistance the EU provides. Therefore, further attention will be brought to this aspect of the EU's policy towards Belarus. The EU offers technical assistance in Belarus since 1991. However, after the actions Lukashenka took to increase his presidential power in September 1997 technical assistance was suspended except for humanitarian, regionally-linked and democracy-related aid (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007). Between 1991 and 2004, 221 million euros was provided specifically to Belarus, including environmental and infrastructure projects and assistance delivered through the TACIS programme (EC website: The EU's relations with Belarus). Considering the size of the EU and the fact that this aid was spread over 13 years, this amount is not so much. Although the EU's assistance was limited to certain areas of action – humanitarian assistance for the 'Chernobyl regions' spending 12.4 million euros in 1999-2003, cross-border cooperation (16.5 million euros), nuclear safety (6.5 million euros), justice and home affairs (12.9 million euros) and other regional activities (2.7 million euros) – it stayed uninterrupted until 2002. Nonetheless, it must be emphasized that only few assistance projects, spending only 1.6 million euros in period of 1999-2003, were implemented in support of democracy development, education and rising the awareness of human rights. The reason for this was that social and humanitarian projects were politically easier to implement (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007).

The US, in contrary, has undertaken a lot of efforts since 1997 to change civil society in Belarus. Except for the humanitarian assistance and exchange programs involving state-run educational institutions, the US assistance is not provided through the channels of the Belarusian government. For the fiscal year 2004 the US has allocated \$10.14 million for Belarus, of which \$7.78 million was provided to democracy programmes. This displays the US' high interest in democratization activities (US Department of State, 2004). In 2005 the US funding for assistance increased to \$11,8 million (Shepherd, 2006). The US assistance to Belarus is meant to (1) develop civil society and support pro-democratic forces, (2) establish access to independent

information and (3) encourage the emergence of democracy in a very challenging environment. Most of the assistance is provided in the form of training and exchanges, and small grants and capacity building for local NGOs. Therefore, the US used a strategy of changing the structure of society in the long term, hoping that eventually this will lead to the regime being overthrown by the population.

However, at the same time the US interest to keep good relationship with Russia did not allow the US to make more effective decisions to fasten the regime's change in Belarus. For example, the US has been criticized for its policy towards Belarus in the early 1990s because of its Russia-centric policy. The first US ambassador to independent Belarus, David H. Schwartz, emphasized that the US policy served to discourage national reformers in Belarus, while encouraging those who wanted restoration of the Soviet Union, and finally gave a clear message to Russia that the US recognizes its hegemonic right for the "near abroad" (Shepherd, 2006). In the early 1990s, when Belarus could actually boost reforms, there was almost no economic and technical assistance from the US side. Instead, Schwartz argues that: *"Through 1995 the US provided nearly \$200 million in US surplus agricultural commodities to Belarus – a country which, as a Soviet republic, was a net exporter of food. This US "aid" did nothing other than help prop up the Soviet collective farm system – the very heart of President Lukashenka's political support"* (Shepherd, 2006, p.75). Therefore it can be stated that despite the US willingness to change societal structures and spread democratic values in Belarus nowadays, its national interest towards Russia was the most important reason why its democratization policy was not effective.

As already mentioned above, in mid-2002, the EU's technical assistance to Belarus was disturbed as Belarusian authorities stopped granting tax exemption to the TACIS projects and since October 2003 all assistance projects have to undergo a registration process and receive a formal approval from the Belarusian government. As a consequence the EU redirected some of the TACIS funds to EIDHR and Decentralized cooperation programmes, which do not need registration and approval from the Belarusian government. However, the largest part of money remained still under the TACIS programme, where projects needed to receive governmental approval.

When examining the *Action Programme for Belarus 2003*, which determines the EU's assistance towards Belarus in 2003, it shows that the programme is based solely on small projects and support to reduce the social consequences of the Chernobyl Catastrophe. This confirms the absence of change in the EU's assistance, as the assistance continues to focus on social and humanitarian activities instead of democratization.

When looking at the projects within the EIDHR program for 2003, which is the democratization (oriented) program providing funding without governmental involvement, it reveals that Belarus is not among the 31 focus countries that have been selected worldwide and would receive reinforced interest for democratization actions. This means that EIDHR activities in Belarus will be limited, except for certain regional and thematic activities. Apart from EIDHR micro projects, the only project selected for support is the abolition of the death penalty for implementing in Belarus. Among the EIDHR projects that are already active in Belarus, the one with the highest profile was the project on "independent election monitoring" with the *Belorussian Helsinki Committee*, and coordinated with the OSCE. Other EIDHR projects in Belarus are dedicated to the media (*Action Programme for Belarus 2003*).

The assistance programs for 2003 show that Belarus is not a priority for the EU and that democratization is touched upon only at the basic levels. Even though EIDHR projects can be implemented without approval from the Belarusian government, the democratization of Belarus is still not a priority for EIDHR funding. Therefore it can be claimed that insufficient money was spent on the most effective actions in building a democratic society within Belarus. Instead, the focus was on TACIS projects, which however did require governmental approval.

The critique expressed most often of the EU's assistance to Belarus is about its formality. The support for TACIS projects can be received only after the approval of Belarus' government; therefore most of the democratically oriented projects are rejected. The TACIS program therefore could hardly be seen as a good way to support democratic activities in Belarus. However, even the EIDHR programme is very bureaucratic due to highly bothersome contracting and accounting procedures, "*which have made it difficult*

to use even by the experienced EU NGOs and quite impractical for most activists in the civil society of partner states” (Emerson, Noutcheva and Popescu, 2007, p.15).

With the introduction of two-pronged approach and the people-to-people contacts idea, the support for Belarusian people was expanded and technical assistance for 2005-2006 was doubled to 10 million euros (EC website: The EU’s relations with Belarus). With the introduction of the ENP framework a new assistance instrument called the ENP Instrument is introduced to replace the TACIS programme, through which the assistance to Belarusian society and support for democratisation process will be channelled from 2007 onwards.

In the Country strategy paper 2007-2013 and the National indicative programme of Belarus 2007-2010, the EU emphasizes that in the new program towards Belarus the EC will focus on defining strategic priorities and objectives rather than specific activities or delivery mechanisms. The national allocation for Belarus under the ENPI will be 5 million euros per annum for the period 2007-2010, of which 70% will be directed at social and economic development and 30% at democratic development and good governance (Country strategy paper 2007 – 2013 and National indicative programme of Belarus 2007 – 2010). The specific objectives of EC funding for the economic and social development are to alleviate the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe, to strengthen the provision of public health care and to foster local economic development. The objectives for the funding of democratic development and good governance are to strengthen people-to-people contacts between the EU and Belarus and exchanges for NGOs, professional associations and local and regional authorities (Country strategy paper 2007-2013 and National indicative programme of Belarus 2007-2010).

These data show that the majority of EU funding is still spent on improving life conditions for people rather than to democratization related activities. The improvement of the socioeconomic situation in Belarus is important; especially as Belarusian people highly value quality of life. However, if the EU wants to foster the change of Lukashenka’s regime and improve human rights situation in Belarus, it should spend more on direct democratization activities.

Nonetheless, the EU has been able to substantially improve its impact on education, mostly by supporting the European Humanitarian University, which is now in exile in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Nordic Council of Ministers has provided around 3 million euros in three years for supporting 350 Belarusian students (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007). Additionally, after the March 2006 elections, the EU launched a new 4.5 million euros programme to support students who were forced to leave their studies in Belarus as a result of their participation in opposition activities (Jarabik and Rabagliati, 2007). The new programme will allow 200 more students to study at the European Humanitarian University and an additional 100 to study in Ukraine.

It is concluded that throughout the years the EU and the US have improved their technical assistance towards Belarus. However the focus of the assistance differs in the US and the EU policies, as the US mainly supports democratization projects while the EU spends more on social projects. This suggests that the EU is more interested in changing the quality of life of Belarusian people rather than changing the regime, even though this preference for social and humanitarian projects was initially caused by the unwillingness of the Belarusian government to cooperate.

6.5. Policy Term

Both the EU and the US initially did not define a specific policy towards the newly independent Belarus. Belarus was not perceived to be an actor of sufficient importance to change the EU's and US' policies towards Russia for. Likewise, after the election of Lukashenka, the policies remained event-oriented and therefore short-term, turning international attention to Belarus only regarding flawed elections or human rights violence.

However, since 1997 the US began to use a more coherent strategy towards the support of civil society and became more flexible towards the needs of population. The EU in contrary did not focus on politically sensitive assistance projects to avoid a political clash with the Belarusian government. So it can be argued that the US had a consistent, long-term policy towards *Belarusian society*, while the EU favoured a long-term isolative policy towards *Belarus in general*.

The US defined “*a long-term perspective strategy for building the democratic environment step by step in Belarus*” in the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, therefore being the first of the two who clearly defined its long-term interest in democratizing Belarus. Such determination was missing in the EU’s policy towards Belarus, as it did not clearly define its objectives. The EU changed its policy in 2004, when a two-pronged approach was introduced. With the new policy the EU intensified its support towards the Belarusian society and even though it is not clearly defined in its approach, some elements in the new policy represent a long-term perspective for democratizing Belarus. Examples are long term assistance and education programmes for Belarusian society, an increase in funds for Belarusian people and increasing sanctions towards Belarus officials with every election.

Therefore, it can be concluded that although in the early years of the Belarusian independence neither the EU nor the US were interested in implementing a coherent, long-term strategy towards Belarus, nowadays both have established several long-term elements in their policies.

6.6. Applying Foreign Policy Theories

Structural Foreign Policy Elements

The structural foreign policy is characterized by three main features (Keukeleire, 2004). Firstly, a long term perspective and aim for sustainability. Secondly, interrelatedness of the various structures such as political, socio-economical and mental. And thirdly, interrelatedness between the individual, society, state and global level.

The EU’s and the US’ strategies towards Belarus initially contained little of these features. First of all, the long term perspective only appeared late in the both countries’ policies, when the EU and the US realized that the event-oriented policy towards elections and human right violence does not work and a coherent policy for improving democratic conditions in Belarus had to be made. Therefore, the US defined its long-term strategy towards Belarus in the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, while the EU put some long-term elements in place in its new two-pronged approach towards Belarus.

Secondly, interrelatedness of structures is almost absent in both countries’ policies. It can be stated that the US attempted to influence society, by changing

population's opinion about democracy and Western values, while the EU focused on changing socio-economic conditions of the society, partly because this was easier than touching upon politically sensitive issues. However, the main goal for the both countries was to change Lukashenka's regime and its political structures, to make democratic reforms possible, nonetheless actions in this direction were limited to sanctions towards the authorities. So it can be argued that both the EU and the US focused only on changing the social structure.

Finally, regarding the interrelatedness between various levels, the main focus both for the EU and the US is towards the society level, as most of their funding goes to NGOs, political parties and media. The individual level is touched upon in the sphere of education and professional training, which is meant to broaden the vision of academics, students and local governmental officers. At the state level, the Belarusian government was sanctioned for non-compliance with international norms, therefore also affecting the global level. As all levels are present in the policies, it is concluded that interrelatedness of levels exists. Summarizing from the above, the strategies of the EU and the US can be called partly structural.

Another important element in the structural foreign policy approach is the non-use of military means to secure the goal. In democratizing Belarus, both the EU and the US take a very clear position not to use such means. Also regarding Telo's (quoted in: Smith, 2003) definition on structural foreign policy, which determines that policy is implemented through pacifistic means such as diplomatic relations and sanctions, both the US and the EU qualify as supporters of this strategy because of their use of sanctions towards the regime to achieve their goal rather than military intervention.

The EU's gravitational pull, as emphasized by Maull (2005), has always been its attractive markets and the European way of life, marked by "*individual freedom, prosperity and civility for its people*" (Maull, 2005, p.778), ensuring soft security guarantees. However, in the case of Belarus it did not have a chance to escalate, due to little interest in the early years of Belarus' independence from both the Belarusian population and the EU itself. Belarusian citizens possessed nostalgia for the Soviet times and did not see the EU and its values as an alternative. At the same time the EU preferred a Russia-centric policy and the exclusion of CIS countries, including Belarus, from the

enlargement perspective. The attractiveness of the US for CEE countries was participation in NATO, providing hard security guarantees to its member states. Belarus however was not interested in this option as well, due to its close military cooperation with Russia. In summary, neither the gravitational pull from the EU or the US has influenced Belarus, mainly because of its particular historical background.

Traditional Foreign Policy Elements

However, few aspects of traditional foreign policy are visible within the EU's and the US' strategies towards Belarus as well. In terms of milieu goals and possession goals there is some difference between the EU and the US, although for Belarus both emphasize that they strive for milieu goals – the promotion of democracy and human rights as global values for peace and prosperity. In contrary to the EU, the US policy contains possession goals and contrasting national interests as well, which diminish the effectiveness of the US policy towards Belarus. First of all, it can be seen that the early US policy towards Belarus was dependent on the relationship between the US and Russia. Also today Russian factors dominate the US' strategic interest and influences, as the unwillingness of the US to use military force against Lukashenka's regime might be due to the close Belarus-Russia military cooperation. Secondly, the US interest in examining Belarus cooperation with rogue regimes suggests that it has a national interest in preventing any influence of such actions towards the US. Therefore, it is concluded that although the US has defined a clear milieu goal of promoting democracy in Belarus, some of its possession goals, implying national interest, influence the effectiveness of implementing that milieu goal.

Regarding the EU's policy towards Belarus, it can be argued that with an emergence of a national interest towards Belarus also its policy improved. With the Eastern enlargement and the new EU's borders, Belarus became its direct neighbour, and therefore the issue of security in the region was raised. The EU established a new policy framework, ENP, and determined a two-pronged approach for dealing with Belarus, therefore improving its policy. The EU's actions suggest that its policies improved due to a growing national interest of security in the region. It can be concluded that the EU is milieu goals oriented and focuses on broader foreign policy objectives like promotion of

democracy and human rights, but mainly in areas which can influence its national interest, like the security and peace in its close neighbourhood.

6.7. Conclusion

To answer hypothesis H7 from a practical perspective, the main differences between the EU's and the US policies lay in their interests towards Belarus and in the instruments used in their policies. Regarding different interests towards Belarus, the EU is interested in creating stability and security in the region due to Belarus' proximity, while the US wants to improve its global freedom agenda and control Belarus' contacts with rogue regimes, which endanger the US security.

Regarding their policy instruments, it must be acknowledged that at some points they were very similar. For example, the US' policy of selective engagement and the EU's two-pronged approach policy contain many of the same elements. Furthermore, the cooperation between the EU and the US on sanctions towards the government of Belarus in 2004 and 2006 shows that their strategies do not differ that much. Nonetheless, some elements and approaches in both policies differ. For example, while the EU was still struggling with this issue, the US was much faster and determined in its decision to support the Belarusian society through assistance programmes that did not require approval from the Belarusian government. Also, the rhetorical condemnation of the Belarusian regime has been more present and visible in the US' policy than in the EU's. At the same time the EU has been in favour of a more conditional approach than the US.

Regarding foreign policy theories, both the EU and the US are using elements of structural foreign policy in their strategies towards Belarus. That these strategies have not yet transformed Belarus in a democratic country can be explained by two factors. Firstly, not all elements of the structural foreign policy are in place, as interrelatedness of structures is absent in both strategies and a long-term perspective has been introduced only few years ago. Secondly, some elements of traditional foreign policy are present in both the EU's and the US' strategies towards Belarus, diminishing the effectiveness of their strategies. To answer hypothesis H7 from a theoretical perspective, it can be concluded that the EU's and the US' strategies are similar, but differ in one important aspect: due to national interest the policy of the US becomes less effective, as other

interests are predominant, while in the case of the EU the policy becomes more effective, as Belarus has become its bordering country and thus affects many neighbouring aspects as well.

7. The Cross-conditionality of Russia

In this chapter the role of Russia in the democratization process of Belarus and in diminishing the effectiveness of the EU's democratization strategy towards Belarus will be examined, by applying the concept of cross-conditionality.

There is a special relationship between Belarus and Russia, in economic, cultural and political terms. It can be argued that this relationship is causing the EU's democratization policy towards Belarus to be less effective, because Russia is offering comparable benefits to those of the EU, but at lower costs. In this chapter it will be examined whether this statement is true and how big the influence of this cross-conditionality is.

Rontoyani (2005) argues that Russia became the only foreign policy alternative for Belarus, when international criticism towards Lukashenka's regime arose and Lukashenka was not willing to change his governance style. Russia accepted Lukashenka as the Belarusian president and kept a close relationship with him, as opposed to other international actors such as the EU and the US who more and more isolated Belarus by their policies. Tapiola (2006) even states that the Russian Federation is the only remaining country in the region that is able to influence Belarus, because of their strong historical ties, economic cooperation and the common cultural heritage. By maintaining close ties with Lukashenka's regime, Russia therefore is able to influence Lukashenka's policies, while the West does not have such opportunity due to its isolation policy.

7.1. Political Relationship

Belarusian initiatives to integrate with Russia already began before Lukashenka's first election, as first agreements on a monetary union were made in 1994 due to the collapse of the rouble zone, although never implemented. However, after Lukashenka's election the integration intensified with an agreement on the Customs Union in January 1995 and a treaty on the formation of a Community in April 1996. The treaty implied that

economic and legal systems were harmonised and a common market was implemented, followed later by a monetary union. This treaty also set up common Community institutions: the inter-governmental Supreme Council, a Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of delegates of national parliaments, and the Executive Committee, a supranational secretariat. In 1997 a Belarus-Russia Union was established together with the conclusion of the Charter of the Union that extended the integration of defence policy, justice and home affairs (Rontoyani, 2005). The integration was favoured by Lukashenka not only for economic reasons, but also because Lukashenka expected to become the leader of the Union once Russia's President Jelcin would leave his post. However, with the election of Putin as Russia's president on May 7, 2000 (President of Russia, Inauguration) this hope disappeared and Lukashenka is opposing any further political integration as it could lead to the end of his power and of Belarusian independence.

Due to personal dislike between the two presidents the development of the relationship between both countries has been frozen. However, after the Rose and Orange revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, Russia was afraid to loose even more allies and therefore intensified the support for Lukashenka's regime internationally, as Russia wanted to keep its sphere of influence there. As Trenin (2006) emphasizes:

“To the Russian leadership, colour revolutions were the result of the West using state-of-the-art political technologies to remove former Soviet republics from Russia's sphere of influence” (Trenin, 2006, p.80-81).

Therefore, geopolitics is still present within the Russia-Belarus and the Russia-Western relationship. Many among the Russian elite still see the West as adversary, but Belarus has always been a trusted partner and Russia does not want that to change.

The military and foreign policy cooperation has been the most successful aspect of the Russia-Belarus integration. In the foreign policy field, Russia and Belarus have continuously supported each other's positions in the UN, OSCE and in negotiations with third parties. Rontoyani (2005) emphasizes that Russian officials always have refrained from public criticism of the Belarusian government, despite significant pressure from the US and the EU. To compensate for such support, Belarus has always been involved in Russia-centred integration initiatives within CIS (Rontoyani, 2005).

However, Osipovs (2006) debates whether Lukashenka is the best possible candidate for ruling Belarus from a Russian perspective. Lukashenka's inconsistency in terms of his policy and decisions towards Russia is making this relationship more complicated. However, Lukashenka is seen as the more or less predictable partner, whereas the new president candidate could choose another foreign policy direction, such as the EU. Russia would then lose its exclusive priority in the foreign policy of Belarus. So even if Lukashenka may not be an ideal partner, Russia prefers that over political developments which it can not control. Lynch (2005) argues that Russia should choose his own candidate for the Belarusian president's post and do everything to get him elected. If successful, their influence on Belarusian policies would be bigger than now with Lukashenka in power. On the other side, Russia could be blamed for destroying Belarusian stability, creating a bad image in Belarusian society. It is also afraid to lose for a Western candidate in the elections, as it happened in Ukraine while supporting the candidate Janukovich.

This also confirms Osipovs' (2006) argument that Russia does not want to be seen as an active supporter of Belarus, because then:

"...Moscow would have to take responsibility for the antidemocratic situation in Belarus and this will worsen Russia's image in the world" (Osipovs, 2006, p.59).

Internationally Russia therefore talks little about the situation in Belarus, mostly only about the elections, where its opinion is always opposite to that of international organisations. For example, the Russian government supported the outcome of the presidential elections in 2006, arguing that they were free and fair, as opposed to the negative results declared by the OSCE. However, this is one of the few occasions where Russia actually invokes Belarus and its view on it. Most of the time, although staying in close partnership with Belarus, it does not want to damage its international reputation and endanger the relationship with the EU and the US.

7.2. Economic Relationship

The economic area is the main way in which Russia supports Lukashenka's regime, through subsidizing fuel and gas prices in response to the request for Belarus to maintain low transit fees for the use of their pipelines. However, the primary intention of Russia is

to maintain a close political relationship between both nations and maintain its influence over Belarus.

To describe the Russia-Belarus relationship, the dependency of Belarus on Russian resources must be emphasized. Osipovs (2006) mentions three aspects where Belarus largely depends on Russia. First for its import of resources and export of products, the Belarusian economy is highly dependent on the Russian market. Secondly, Belarus depends on Russia's political support, having an agreement on the Union state and a close relationship similar to that of Soviet times. Thirdly, rural inhabitants and pensioners of Belarus – representing a large part of the electorate – support integration with Russia, because of their preference for the stability and prosperity of the Soviet Union and the close linguistic and cultural links between both countries.

The Russian state owns 51% in shares of the country's biggest energy company Gazprom, which therefore can be used as a mechanism for political pressure. Those partner countries that are loyal to Russia receive low priced gas. The Russian gas policy can be seen as the strongest instrument of political conditionality in Russia's hands. As Osipovs (2006) calls it:

“...Exchanging inexpensive gas for political loyalty” (Osipovs, 2006, p.55).

Belarus receives the benefits it needs for maintaining the existing state of economy, in exchange for supporting Russia's position and actions politically. Such an attractive conditionality for Lukashenka is hard to prevail by the EU, as it does not have similar benefits to offer.

Although the relationship between Russia and Belarus is perceived to be good, due to the dislike between Putin and Lukashenka the gas tariffs changed few times depending on the economic or political situation at that time. Osipovs (2006) suggests that this situation of relatively stable tariffs changes if Russia would introduce market economy principles in its gas policy. At the end of 2006, Russia indeed followed such principles by significantly increasing the gas prices for Belarus. Previously gas for Belarus was offered for 47\$ per 1,000m³ (Marples, 2007), which was less than a quarter of the world price. Because of these low gas prices Lukashenka was able to subsidize Belarusian industries and keep the economy stable, one of the main reasons for his re-election in March 2006. But soon after Lukashenka's re-election Gazprom demanded that

Belarus would pay 200\$ per 1,000m³ in 2007 (Marples, 2007). Although Lukashenka was angry, from a Russian point of view one could state that Russia responded to market conditions, while still offering a lower price than those paid by Ukraine and Georgia.

Up until then, if Russia tried to introduce market principles in its relationship with Belarus, Lukashenka always resisted heavily as he realised that the market economy would put an end to his regime sooner or later. Therefore, although Lukashenka sometimes had to give in to some of Russia's requests, he always got something out of that relationship as well, knowing that his survival is most important. Russia used to give up on market principles, due to its national interest in maintaining a close cooperation with Belarus.

7.3. Societal Relationship

As stated earlier, another reason for cooperation with Russia is the Belarusian society which in large scale sympathizes with Russia, because of their common history and culture. Opinion polls show that Belarusian sympathies towards Russia are very high (Manaev, 2006). If Belarusian would have to make a clear choice between unification with Russia or the EU, today the result would be two-versus-one in favour of Russia. Manaev (2006) emphasizes:

“These attitudes are not dangerous for Belarusian state sovereignty, but they show that pro-Russian attitudes in Belarus today are higher than in any other country of the region” (Manaev, 2006, p.43).

Therefore, due to domestic and historical conditions being present in Belarus, a closer relationship with Russia is also welcomed by the Belarusian society.

7.4. Lukashenka's Individual Policy

Lukashenka's regime benefits from the relationship with Russia, and uses the cooperation with and even the conditionality of Russia to maintain the authoritarian regime. Thus, Lukashenka has a strategy of his own, not choosing the policies that allow him to maintain his power and authority in Belarus.

Lukashenka makes use of the policy with Russia in domestic politics, where the highly appreciated economic stability resulting from the cooperation leads to electoral support towards the regime.

Osipovs (2006) further states that Lukashenka keeps the issue of integration with Russia on the agenda, as it can be useful in terms of combating a potential revolution towards the regime. At the existence of revolution threats the Belarusian authority could intensify the integration process with Russia, even if conditions would not be very favourable, thereby preserving the regime's existence. It can be stated that closer cooperation with Russia is an alternative in case the regime is close to collapse. This again shows the individual strategy of Lukashenka, focusing on his own interest. Therefore, Rontoyani (2005) argues that:

“...Belarusian relations with Russia and the West have stagnated for essentially the same reason: The Belarusian leadership's unwillingness to undertake political or economic reforms that might create space for political change” (Rontoyani, 2005, p.65).

For all these years that Lukashenka is president, his policy has been to stay resistant to any external pressures for liberalising the political system or the economy. Because of this intention to survive, Lukashenka has been able to resist EU's conditionality and partly accept Russia's conditionality as long as it did not diminish his power.

7.5. Conclusions

The Russia-Belarus relationship largely depends on rational benefits for both sides, as Russia offers economic benefits and Belarus in exchange offers political loyalty. Although the relationship between both countries' presidents has not been very good lately, the beneficial aspects for both countries are more important than personal disagreements. Also the close cultural and linguistic ties between the populations of both countries strengthen the relationship. It can be argued that Russia's conditionality towards Belarus is largely influencing the ineffectiveness of the EU's policy and conditionality in particular, as the benefits Russia offers are easier accessible for Lukashenka's regime than those of the EU, where democratic preconditions have to be put in place.

Conclusions

The main objective of this research was to determine the factors that lead to the ineffectiveness of the EU's democratization policy towards Belarus. The focus was on three possible obstacles: internal factors within Belarus, obstacles within the EU's policy itself and Russia's influence on Belarus.

However, first of all the state of democracy within Belarus was examined by applying Dahl's democracy criteria and the EU Copenhagen political criterion. The examination of these criteria led to the conclusion that democracy in Belarus is absent, due to Lukashenka's policies that prevent the emergence of a democratic environment in Belarus.

Subsequently, the obstacles within Belarus that do not allow the EU's conditionality to be effective were examined. Firstly, as the main obstacle the type of Lukashenka's regime and its determinedness to survive must be mentioned. Lukashenka has refused to comply with any of the EU's conditions, as they all were democracy oriented and could therefore cause him to lose power. Secondly, an essential obstacle is the lack of support for democratization from the population of Belarus at the breakdown of the Soviet Union, due to historical and cultural reasons. Today, this is still partly present, as a large part of society is still supporting Lukashenka. They value stability, socio-economic benefits and good quality of life, which can be offered only by the regime's authorities as the country's economic resources are concentrated in their hands. Finally, an important obstacle for a successful EU's democratization policy has been the weakness of the Belarusian political opposition, as they could not unite their forces for one presidential candidate until 2005 and as activities by the Belarusian civil society were limited due to the regime's restrictions.

An important obstacle preventing social learning approach from being effective was the unwillingness from Belarus to join the EU and its European values after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, which was a catalyst for other post communist CEE countries to reform. This can be explained by the population's nostalgia for the Soviet times, lack of national identity, maintenance of communist political elite in power and lack of democratic experience in the history of the Belarusian state. Therefore hypothesis H6 which claims that *the extent to which a state adopts the EU norms depends on the*

degree to which the state believes in the appropriateness of these EU norms is confirmed, as the EU norms were not adopted to any extent by Belarus due to their disbelief in a logic of appropriateness.

Although significant domestic obstacles for the EU's policies in Belarus exist, also the external obstacles within the EU's policy itself must be considered. In this research the comparison between the EU's and the US' policies towards Belarus allowed to achieve a broader vision on the international involvement in the issues Belarus faces and clarified deficiencies in the policy of the EU. The policies of the EU and the US mainly differed in their interests towards Belarus and the influence of those interests on the effectiveness of the both policies. The influence of the EU's and the US' national interests must be emphasized. The appearance of national interests towards Belarus increased the effectiveness of the EU's policy when its national interest of security and stability within the region was endangered by bordering with the authoritarian Belarus. In contrary, the US lacks a significant national interest in Belarus, which reduced its policy's effectiveness.

Regarding the policy instruments of the EU and the US, it must be emphasized that they were similar, but differed in timing. For example the US' policy of selective engagement and the EU's two-pronged approach policy contained the same policy elements but were implemented with seven years of time difference. However, some policy instruments still differ. First of all, the US managed to find a way for supporting the Belarusian civil society through funds for which governmental approval is not necessary, while the EU funds are still mainly delivered through the Belarusian government. Secondly, the US has been more visible and consistent in its rhetorical condemnation of the Belarusian regime, while the EU has avoided such a confrontation. Finally, the EU more heavily supports a conditional approach towards the Belarusian authorities, by requesting for democratic changes in return for certain rewards.

Regarding the EU and the US foreign policy strategies, both are in favour of the elements of the structural foreign policy, as almost all aspects of such policy are at least partly implemented in the EU's and the US' policies towards Belarus. Nonetheless, in the both strategies the traditional foreign policy elements are also visible, leading to a

conclusion that the EU and the US have used both the structural and traditional foreign policy elements in their strategies towards Belarus. Therefore hypothesis H7, which claims that *the EU and the US favour different democratization strategies towards undemocratic countries*, can be partly confirmed as both the EU and the US used many similar policy instruments and preferred similar foreign policy strategies. Nonetheless some policy instruments and their intensity still differed and the EU and the US have different reasons for their interest in democratizing Belarus.

Regarding the conditionality of the EU towards Belarus, it must be argued that it was not successful due to a number of reasons.

First of all, the size and speed of the rewards was often inappropriate to persuade the Belarusian government, which contradicts with the external governance model determining that appropriate size and speed of rewards is one of the four factors influencing the effectiveness of conditionality. This research showed that the EU's rewards most of the time was insufficiently appropriate to persuade Belarusian government of changing their policies. Nonetheless, even when appropriate rewards were promised, the Belarusian government still refused to adopt EU norms. Therefore, hypothesis H2, which claims that *the likelihood of norm transfer increases with the size and speed of rewards*, is not confirmed for the case of Belarus.

Secondly, determinacy and credibility were only visible in the EU's conditionality in the later years of its policy and focused on the negative conditionality, as all declared sanctions have been put in action. Therefore, it can be argued that hypotheses H1 and H3, claiming that *the likelihood of norm transfer increases if the rules set as conditions for rewards are more determinate*, and that *the likelihood of norm adoption increases with the credibility of conditional threats and promises*, are not confirmed for Belarus.

Finally, the high adoption costs of the EU's request were the main reason why the EU's conditionality was rejected by the Belarusian regime. Therefore hypothesis H4 is confirmed as *the likelihood of norm adoption decreased with the increase of norm adoption costs for the target government*.

Regarding the Russia factor in explaining the ineffectiveness of the EU's policy towards Belarus, it must be concluded that Russia's cross-conditionality towards Belarus exists. This creates obstacles for an effective EU's policy towards Belarus, as in its conditionality Russia offers higher rewards and lower adoption costs for Lukashenka's regime. Therefore the hypothesis H5, which states that *the presence of Russia's cross-conditionality prevents the effectiveness of the EU's conditionality towards Belarus*, is confirmed.

To answer the research question – which factors determine the ineffectiveness of the EU's democratization policy towards Belarus – it must be argued that although specific domestic factors within Belarus and the cross-conditionality of Russia have a negative influence, the main reason for the ineffectiveness of the EU's democratization policy towards Belarus is the policy chosen by the EU in the 1990s. The lack of the EU's serious interest in Belarus until 2004 and its isolation policy, which allowed Lukashenka to consolidate his power and reduced the EU's possibilities to influence the Belarusian government, was the main reason why the democratization process of Belarus has not been successful. Even today, although the EU has improved its policy and provides support for the Belarusian society and sanctions the government, it does not use all possible policy instruments. Economic sanctions for example could be an effective tool for the regime's change but is opposed by the EU's policy makers. Therefore further improvements and intensification of the EU's policy might prove worthwhile in its attempts to democratize Belarus.

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