
THE LINK BETWEEN EU SANCTIONS AND REPRESSIONS IN BELARUS

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Abstract

This article examines the relation between EU sanctions against Belarus and repressions in the country. On the basis of Reed M. Wood's theory of economic sanctions the article aims to answer the question whether EU economic sanctions promote repression in Belarus and whether more severe sanctions contribute to greater state-sponsored repression. In this article repressions are defined as violations of human rights. The article focuses is on three groups of human rights, which are closely related to the political sphere, viz., political, civic, and physical integrity human rights. Qualitative methods are used to examine whether the relation between EU sanctions and repression in Belarus exists and, if yes, what its nature is. The article is concluded by a discussion of the reasons why Wood's theoretical model cannot fully explain the case of Belarus.

Introduction

The last fifteen years may more or less be distinguished by isolation policy in the EU-Belarus relations; however, starting from 2008, small changes came to be observable in the relations of the two. Finally, after a long break senior EU officials visited Belarus; Alexander Lukashenko, in his turn, was welcomed in several EU countries; an adjustment was made in election laws; and the EU suspended sanctions and invited Belarus to participate in the Eastern Partnership program. Complicated relations with Russia, the market and cheap energy resources of which have long been the most basic support of Alexander Lukashenko's regime, force Belarus to seek a compromise. The predicament is also aggravated by the forthcoming presidential elections in Belarus. These will take place not only at the time of the global economic crisis, which inevitably has touched Belarus, but which can also coincide with Russia's annual energy blackmail. Under these circumstances, any economic support and improvement of the international

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atmosphere for the Belarusian authorities become topical issues, and the EU, at least in theory, gets a new chance to resume its relations with Belarus.

On the other hand, the experience accumulated over the past fifteen years has clearly shown that the Belarusian leader has not expressed interest in cooperation to deepen systematic democratic reforms and to improve human rights conditions for account of security, as the regime would likely collapse. Therefore, the EU needs to re-address the dilemma of eternal values and pragmatic interests, and there is a number of practical considerations in developing the relationship. Firstly, there are strategically important gas and oil pipelines crossing the territory of Belarus together with electricity lines. Belarus is also an important transit country transporting different goods. Belarus' neighbors, including Lithuania, are particularly interested in a more open relationship, because the countries actively interact within their trade, business and tourism sectors, while also facing cross-border security, visas, smuggling, international crime, environmental, ethnic minorities and a variety of other issues. As it has already been noted, pragmatic cooperation would also be useful for Belarus; however, fundamental differences in values have resulted in mutual isolation.

Over the last fifteen years this isolation has been primarily stipulated by EU sanctions against Belarus, which have been selected as the main object of this research. The sanctions issue is currently relevant since the EU should consider in the short term whether it is appropriate to renew Belarus sanctions, i.e. whether to keep on trying to develop a more positive and pragmatic promotion policy, or to re-isolate and punish the official Belarusian government for its failure in the sphere of democracy and human rights. In his recent study, Reed M. Wood, a U.S. researcher of the human rights and conflicts, reveals that the unaddressed sanctions paradox has led him to look at the issue unconventionally. His empirical research of 157 cases has shown that economic sanctions not only rarely achieve its aims, but in some ways promote the repression employed by the authority of the sanctioned country; in particular, this effect is applicable to undemocratic regimes. Thus, although in recent decades economic sanctions have increasingly been used as impact tools to promote democratic reforms and respect for human rights, recent research has shown that sanctions often contribute to the opposite effect - political and civil rights become even more restrained in the relevant state. This in turn may lead to further tightening of the sanctions and thus pose a risk of falling into a vicious circle.

Sometimes prolonged sanctions could be justified, as even unsuccessful sanctions may serve, for example, as a disciplinary or deterrent measure to avert

military actions; however, if the sanctions do not in principle hit the target – managing political elite – and cause suffering of citizens due to an increase in repression, then the legitimacy of sanctions in the light of human rights becomes a controversial issue. Generally, EU sanctions against Belarus have been recognized as ineffective, but it is unclear whether they contributed to the rate of repression in the country. Therefore the main question of this study is as follows: Have EU economic sanctions against Belarus, bearing in mind that they were used to encourage respect for human rights, not caused counter-results - greater restrictions of political, civil and physical integrity rights in this country? Since Wood's sanctions theory gives reason to suppose that the EU sanctions policy towards Belarus is likely to have contributed to the increase in repression, the main research hypothesis is formulated as follows: economic sanctions applied by the EU instigate repression by the Belarusian authorities - the more severe sanctions applied, the greater repression employed. The remaining sections of the research will attempt to ascertain whether this hypothesis is true in the case of Belarus, and if it is not, – why. Causal relationships between the variables are researched by conducting a qualitative analysis of the case of Belarus. Since it is not clear which variable is dependent and which is independent, the time factor is controlled in the present research model; i.e., an attempt is made to identify which of the variables was created first and which prompted the other variable. In her assessment of the level of sanctions and repression in Belarus, the author relies on Wood's scale of sanctions assessment as well as the data of independent human rights observer organizations.

1. The theory of the relation between economic sanctions and repressions

In international relations economic sanctions as a non-military impact tool have been used for a long time, but it has been noted that, since the end of the Cold War the number of sanctions cases, has increased significantly. According to John and Karl Muellers, in individual cases, economic sanctions could be worse than weapons¹ of mass destruction; however, in other instances they effectively and without further harm achieve the objectives set out. What does determine that?

¹ Mueller J., Mueller K., „Sanctions of Mass Destruction“, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1999, <http://web.nps.navy.mil/~relooney/EconIntel_68.pdf>, 2010 03 14.

Constructing his theory, Wood pays particular attention to the importance of the regime. Researchers have previously noted that the regime type is an important factor in determining the likelihood that sanctions² will be applied in the relevant country, as well as what their duration³ and efficiency⁴ will be. Wood complements these studies by claiming that the type of the regime is also conducive to various side effects of sanctions. In particular, when applied to undemocratic and weak democracy regimes, these are more likely to try to maintain their stability by resorting to repression. According to Wood, this is so due to the differences in the mechanism of sanctions in undemocratic regimes. Under the operating model of sanctions, these work as follows. Economic sanctions bear the real loss, which brings about the exhaustion of the resources of the target of sanctions. When directed exclusively toward the ruling elite, sanctions weaken its power, while the opposition forces, to a certain extent, become more entrenched. If sanctions are broader, then the loss soon hurts the society. This is manifested by growing public dissatisfaction, and is expressed by protests and/or support of the opposition. In any event, incumbents perceive loss as a threat to the stability of the regime and take steps to counterbalance the situation. As public and opposition discontent rises owing to exhaustible resources, the rulers primarily have to reallocate the resources, which, according to Wood, democratic and undemocratic regimes do differently.

Leaders of a democratic regime, at least in theory, are keen on the allocation of resources more broadly, as in consolidated democracies citizens' support is at the core of regime stability, and therefore lower budget does not hurt the population too badly. However, if the mass feels the impact of sanctions, the rulers are forced to find a compromise to have them abolished, since otherwise they risk losing public support, which would then give the opposition a chance to arise.⁵

In the meantime, the main regime support of undemocratic or weak democracy regimes is constituted by loyal political elite and frequently some other specific groups

² Cox D., Drury, A. C., "Connecting the Democratic Peace and Economic Sanctions", *Journal of Peace Research*, 43(6), 2006, <<http://web.missouri.edu/~drurya/articlesandpapers/JPR2006.pdf>>, 2010 05 04.

³ Bolks S. M., Al-Sowayel D., "How Long Do Sanctions Last?: Examining Sanctioning Process Through Duration", *Political Studies Quarterly*, 53 (2), 2000, p. 261, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/449280?seq=21>>, 2010 05 04.

⁴ Nooruddin, I., "Modeling Sanction Bias in Studies of Sanctions Efficacy", *International Interactions*, 28, 2002, p. 73, <<http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/faculty/nooruddi/research/sanctions.pdf>>, 2010 05 04.

⁵ Wood, R. M., "A Hand upon the Throat of the Nation": Economic Sanctions and State Repression, 1976–2001", *International Studies Quarterly*, 52, 2008, p. 493, <http://www.unc.edu/~rmwood/Wood_ISQ.pdf>, 2010 03 14.

(for example, large businesses interested in the policy of the regime leader). Thus, in such regimes preservation of the support of the loyal group is more important than the citizens.⁶ If leaders of this regime are confronted with the lack of resources, they tend to allocate the remaining resources so that support groups would suffer as little as possible, which generally disproportionately falls on the shoulders of non-elite public. Discontented citizens express their dissatisfaction by supporting the opposition, or explicitly, for example, by organizing protests, riots and so on. Oftentimes these methods complement each other and threaten the rulers⁷, but given the fact that a broader resource redistribution for the rulers is unfavourable (since then they risk losing the support of the most important groups mentioned above), the easiest and cheapest way to suppress public movements is through repression.

An interesting alternative approach to the destabilizing effect of sanctions and reallocation of resources is given in the work by Dursun Peksen and A. Cooper Drury. According to them, economic sanctions often do not threaten the elite with a schism and even on the contrary – strengthen the loyalty of the major groups to the rulers: by restricting the flow of goods and services of the state, sanctions allow the rulers to control the flow of the remaining resources. Resource mobilization makes the support groups more dependent on the incumbents, as the only way to get a “bigger bite” is to demonstrate loyalty. Thus, state power structures become more dependent on political power and can be widely used in working with opponents and suppressing mass protests⁷ (such as the case of United Nations sanctions on the Hussein regime in Iraq⁸). In this way, according to Peksen and Drury, rulers do not need to worry about the fact that they might lose the support of important groups because the specification of economic sanctions stipulates that the loyalty of these groups will grow naturally. This interpretation is broadly compatible with Wood’s final conclusion: one way or another the regime cannot stop supporting these groups, and, therefore, the portion of the resources designed to ensure the welfare of the masses keeps on decreasing and there is rising inequality, and also dissatisfaction neutralized by repressions.

In addition to the dissatisfaction of the citizens, there is another important threat of the opposition. According to Wood, regime repressiveness is promoted by the

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 493.

⁷ Peksen D., Drury A. C., “Economic Sanctions and Political Repression: Assessing the Impact of Coercive Diplomacy on Political Freedoms”, *Human Rights Review*, No 12142, 2009, p. 400-401, <<http://www.springerlink.com/content/y6524r8574x66537/fulltext.pdf>>, 2010 04 16.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 401.

fact that sanctions are often perceived as direct foreign support for the opposition⁹, especially if sanctions requirements are concerned with political reforms. Foreign support for the opposition helps to earn confidence and backing of hesitant citizens¹⁰, thereby increasing the legitimacy of the opposition. A balanced approach to parity of position and opposition forces often leads to internal instability¹¹, and it is very likely that the desire to prevent such situation from happening will encourage incumbents to resort to reprisal against the opposition even before sanctions are imposed.¹² Even a destabilized, undemocratic or weak democracy regime will not necessarily agree to comply with sanctions requirements. By acceding to the requirements of foreign forces, rulers would appear weak in the eyes of the citizens, major support groups and opposition. Meanwhile, finding a compromise and opportunity for negotiation in consolidated democracies is often seen as rational steps to avoid deepening the crisis with other countries.¹³ Thus, sanctions in undemocratic or weak democracy regimes are likely to persist, and therefore the probability of greater repression in such countries is higher.

In their works Wood as well as Peksen and Drury use Daniel Drezner's insights. Applying game theory and statistical analysis Drezner has supplemented sanctions theories by providing a description of an interesting paradox. He claims that the success of sanctions is determined not only by cost allocation and its impact at the present time, but also by implied relations between the parties in the future.

According to the author, forcing to obey, economic sanctions redistribute political power between the authorizing and penalized parties. Such redistribution of reputation is significant, if the parties have presumed that conflicts will proceed, which is far more likely to occur between unfriendly countries than among allies (the author divides relations into friendly, neutral and hostile, assessing the nature of the relationship before the introduction of sanctions¹⁴). Most allies are generally not interested in applying sanctions to each other, but if it

⁹ Wood, (note 6), p. 495.

¹⁰ Kaempfer W., Lowenberg A., "Unilateral Versus Multilateral Sanctions: A Public Choice Perspective", *International Studies Quarterly*, 43 (1), 1999, p. 50, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2600964?seq=14>>, 2010 05 06.

¹¹ Benson M., Kugler J., "Power Parity, Democracy, and the Severity of Internal Violence", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42 (2), 1998, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/174569?seq=11>>, 2010 05 06.

¹² Peksen, Drury, (note 8), p. 405-406.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 399.

¹⁴ Drezner D., *The Sanctions Paradox: Economic Statecraft and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 110.

happens, sanctions are usually mild, while the sanctioned country quickly agrees to negotiate the conditions posited. This is because the sender of the sanctions is aware of the fact that serious conflicts between parties are unlikely in the long term, while a brief loss of reputation will not have significant implications for the future; therefore, it is worthwhile to surrender in order to avoid the cost of sanctions. When disagreements arise between two hostile countries, the parties do not want to yield a point even if the sanctions' costs are high for both of them, and it is foreseeable that more conflicts will arise in the future, so that each previously made surrender might weaken the bargaining position in future.¹⁵ Thus, the paradox of sanctions may be formulated as follows: the most effective sanctions work when there is least interest in using them (the allies case), and the least effective, when there is an attempt to gain over the sanctioned state.¹⁶ According to this theoretical base, it becomes clear that sanctions encourage repression in the country where chances for the conflict between the parties in the future are big. This is because the anticipation of conflicts, when neither of the parties is inclined to yield, and thus vain application of sanctions protracts. Prolonged application of sanctions, in turn, leads to a chain reaction: sanctions waste state resources, increase inequality, create dissatisfaction and opposition support and encourage the rulers to increase repressions in order to maintain stability of the regime.

To sum up all of the above, we find that there are many reasons explaining why economic sanctions may promote repression in the sanctioned state, especially if it is characterized by a dominating undemocratic or weak democracy regime. First, economic sanctions deepen inequality in the society, and thus increase protests and higher expectations of the opposition support. Both factors threaten the stability of the regime, which encourages leadership to resort to repression. Second, sanctions are often viewed as direct foreign support to the opposition, which is also treated as an undesirable phenomenon that must be suppressed. Third, economic sanctions may contribute to the creation of a situation in which the state power structure becomes more dependent on the incumbents, therefore, if need be, they are easier to manipulate in repressions. Fourth, repressions are more likely to happen if, prior to the imposition of sanctions, the regimes have not maintained friendly relations and envisage more conflicts in the future. In such

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 4-5.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 4-5.

a case application of sanctions protracts, while prolonged sanctions, once again, increase the disjuncture in society. In addition, after the imposition of sanctions in the undemocratic or weak democracy regimes severe repression is more likely due to the fact that in these countries resources are redistributed differently from their democratic counterparts, and therefore the level of inequality is expected to be higher.

2. The severity level of EU sanctions and repressions in Belarus

Since the goal of the present research is to ascertain whether EU economic sanctions contribute to repression in Belarus, an assumption is made that economic sanctions by the EU is the independent variable, whereas repression carried out by the Belarusian authorities is the dependent variable. However, in order to establish whether the relation is assumed correctly and is not converse (or mutual), the converse relation is verified. In his study Wood employs the quantitative method and computes data by means of a computer program used for statistical analysis. It should be born in mind, however, that this research is a case-study analysis. The small amount of data allows us to choose the qualitative method, which is more suitable for the purpose in hand as it enables us to monitor the impact of third factors and account for atypical circumstances. Nevertheless, in the assessment of whether EU sanctions encourage repression by Belarusian authorities in general, and whether more stringent sanctions encourage greater repression, specific values for the variables should be assigned. To assess the severity of sanctions, we employ a sanctions strictness scale originally designed by Wood. The level of the dependent variable – repressions in Belarus – is assessed relying on the data collected by independent human rights observer organizations (viz., Freedom House, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch). Their reports and indexes are usually used by scientists carrying out research in the domain of human rights, and after the end of the Cold War these organizations are recognized as unbiased.¹⁷

¹⁷ Wood, (note 6), p. 500.

2.1. EU sanctions against Belarus and assessment of their severity

We should start by determining what tools in general are considered to be sanctions. There are two terms used in EU documents to refer to this instrument. These are “sanctions” and “restrictive measures”.¹⁸ Sanctions or restrictive measures are defined as diplomatic or economic tools, aimed at preventing illegal activities or policies, for example, which infringe the international law or human rights, do not respect the principal of rule of law or depart from democratic principles.”¹⁹ Economic and financial sanctions make a separate group of restrictive tools, which is probably the most widely used instrument for the EU to affect third parties. Economic sanctions are an especially effective tool in relations with developing countries, since the EU absorbs one fifth of the exports of developing countries, which accounts for nearly half of total EU imports.²⁰ Restrictions are not strictly defined in regulations. They may refer to import, export, restriction of services (such as technical assistance or mediation), investment, tariff preferences abolition, prohibition of capital movement and the like. There are also the so-called “smart” sanctions, which are applied to individual subjects (individuals or groups).²¹ In general, the sanctions list is not exhaustive, and economic sanctions could include all economic and financial restriction forms, based on the motives mentioned in the definition of sanctions.

Assessment of the level of severity of sanctions may be tricky. In his research Wood uses a four-point scale to assess the strictness of economic sanctions. Although an accurate assessment of the impact of sanctions is complicated, the author argues that it is nevertheless quite possible to distinguish at least three severity stages. Wood divides sanctions according to the extent of economic loss, and to the extent of coverage of sanctions. The author provides the following distribution of these restrictive tools:

¹⁸ European Commission, *Sanctions or restrictive measures*, Brussels, 2009 09 15, <http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/cfsp/sanctions/docs/index_en.pdf#1>, 2010 03 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ European Commission, *EU Trade Policy and Market Access for Developing Countries 2006-2007*, Brussels, 2008, <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2008/april/tradoc_138597.pdf>, 2010 03 21.

²¹ European Commission, “Sanctions or restrictive measures”, (note 19).

0 - normal economic relations.

1 - mild sanctions (withdrawal of foreign aid, grants, loans or credit exclusion, soft trade restrictions on non-essential goods and so on. In addition, these economic sanctions are generally accompanied by more targeted sanctions, such as travel restrictions on leaders of the sanctioned country and other diplomatic sanctions).

2 - average sanctions (import, export, investment, trade restrictions, freezing of public or private assets, etc.).

3 – strict sanctions (embargo of all or most of the vital economic activities).²²

As can be seen by the specification provided in the parentheses of the first group, Wood tends to include withdrawal of foreign support and promotion of development rather than restrictions on natural economic relations. Nevertheless, even symbolic sanctions might lead to repression, as they make the elite feel threatened, especially in cases where sanctions requirements are related to democratic reforms and human rights protection.²³ The second group - average severity sanctions - includes tools which cause real economic damage while addressing the public, and therefore form a stronger impression of a threat to the elite, as discontented public might abandon the current government. The strictest sanctions differ from average sanctions by their broad coverage and the fact that they affect vital economic activities or sectors. In announcing most severe sanctions one side completely or almost completely interrupts economic relations with the other side (e.g., the U.S. and the Cuban case). Such sanctions are comparable to an ultimatum; they carry the heaviest economic losses, and create the greatest tension between the sides, as well as within the sanctioned country.

Naturally, the scale of sanctions severity can be criticized for its abstractness. It seems that the author clearly identifies two extremes of sanctions - symbolic and total sanctions, while he places all other options in the middle group. However, as has already been mentioned, an accurate assessment of sanctions severity is complicated in the context of dynamic and complex economy, and therefore it may be argued that a more accurate classification of sanctions is hardly possible at all. Nevertheless, even having a three-level distribution of sanctions strictness is useful, as it allows monitoring not only whether the imposition of sanctions,

²² Wood, (note 6), p. 500.

²³ Peksen, Drury, (note 8), p. 408-409.

in general, prompts increase in repression, but also allows verifying if stricter sanctions contribute to greater repression.

We will now proceed to a brief overview of the history of relations between the EU and independent Belarus. We will then try to establish what sanctions the EU has imposed on Belarus and will attempt to assess the strictness of sanctions applying Wood's scale.

Shortly after the EU had recognized the independence of Belarus in 1991, close official relations became possible. Following Wood's scale, the period from 1991 to 1997 may be characterized as having normal economic relations, since at that time the EU did not apply any restrictive measures against Belarus, and even provided financial support through various projects. However, after the 1994 presidential elections, which ended in a victory for Aleksandr Lukashenko, relations began to deteriorate rapidly due to internal changes in the country. After the Treaty on the Formation of the Community of Russia and Belarus had been signed in 1996, massive protests broke out in Belarus. Internal instability in the country between the President and the Supreme Council matured the conflict, which Lukashenko resolved by exceeding his powers and organizing a referendum on constitutional changes that significantly adjusted the balance of powers in favor of presidential authority. The EU recognized the move illegal. Although throughout 1995 Belarus was still making attempts to negotiate the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU, the agreement never came into force in Belarus because of the non-democracy of the incumbent regime, persistent infringements of human rights, and the legal state principle. In 1997 the EU finally declared that it would not offer any intermediate terms of the contract. The same year, the EU suspended cooperation and froze support to humanitarian sectors as well as those that directly or indirectly encouraged democratization. These events marked the beginning of the isolation of Belarus. Russia alongside other eight post-Soviet states signed the PCA in the nineties and enjoyed its economic benefits, since the objectives of the agreement were not only to strengthen democracy, but also to foster mutually beneficial cooperation in the economic sector by promoting trade and investments, and gradually helping countries move closer to the EU economic model.²⁴ Apart from being unable to use these advantages, Belarus could not engage fully in other EU policy initiatives intended for the eastern neighbours as long as the

²⁴ Summaries of EU legislation, *Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs)*, 2007 09 07, <http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17002_en.htm>, 2010 03 22.

PCA was invalid (e.g., the Eastern Neighborhood Programme). However, we cannot maintain that these restrictive measures had a significant impact on the economic development of Belarus at the time. Economic losses in this case are more apparent than real, measurable ones, because, to a large extent, Belarus lost something that has not been regained ever since (e.g., projected investment and trade promotion tools of the PCA,²⁵ benefits of the Eastern Neighborhood Program, etc.). In this way, according to Wood's scale of economic sanctions strictness, the EU sanctions since 1997 are best described as mild.

The mild sanctions period lasted until 2006. Although throughout this period, the EU repeatedly changed the terms of sanctions and supplemented them with new ones, following Wood's classification, they did not exceed the limits of mild sanctions as they predominantly consisted of diplomatic sanctions combined with discontinuation of support. The period between 1998 and 2004 was marked by various diplomatic rows, disappearance of several opposition members, outrages of democratic principles (of which the most important was the fact that none of the opposition candidates got into the House of Representatives in 2004, and the two presidential terms limit was repealed²⁶), persecution of independent media and opposing political forces as well as other human rights violations. The EU mainly reacted by punishing the responsible officials of Belarus adapting their movement restrictions, which are deemed to be target sanctions in the category of mild sanctions. Multilateral and bilateral contacts with President Lukashenko and members of his government were kept to a minimum in 2004, while communication was exclusively informal. It extended only to programs that directly or indirectly promoted the democratic development in the country, contacts with NGOs, public figures, opposition members, and support of independent media.²⁷ However, the EU faced certain difficulties and cooperation with the non-governmental sector was not effective. The main obstacle was a series of laws published by the Belarusian authorities, which complicated provision of international support to NGOs in the country. In order to get the support organizations had to overcome a lengthy and complex project registration process; in addition, the government was able to veto projects or abolish the official status of an organization. Besides, organizations lacked

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Beldulskis D., Tomilinas T., Vileita V., *Baltarusija: misija imanoma*, Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2005, p. 61, 65-66.

²⁷ Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Belarus, *Chronology of bilateral relations*, <http://ec.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/eu_belarus/chronology/index_en.htm>, 2010 03 23.

general project development and implementation skills.²⁸ EU tools turned out to be relatively effective, and sanctions became more tightened in 2006, which, according to the scale of sanctions strictness by Wood, marked the beginning of a new stage.

In 2006 the EU extended the list of Belarusian officials, targeted by diplomatic and economic sanctions (freezing assets in the EU countries). The same year, due to the permanent disruption of trade union activities in the country, Belarus was removed from the General System of Preferences (GSP). All these sanctions, both at the state and individual level, brought about real economic losses. Belarus was no longer able to export goods of its origin to the EU duty free or at reduced rates.²⁹ Belarus exported 30% of its production to the EU in 2006³⁰, and, although the EU had not yet been the main trade partner of Belarus, due to deteriorating relations between Belarus and Russia, export to the EU was growing significantly, while the unfavorable tariff regime led to more and more losses. Presumably the cost for Belarus amounted to about 400 million Euros a year.³¹ This is not a very large sum and a greater loss in this case is the decline of international repute, which had not only political outcomes, but also the economic impact, as it created an image of the state as being unreliable and unattractive for investments.³² In this way, according to Wood's scale and because of the real economic losses throughout 1997-2006 EU sanctions may be ranked as moderately severe.

At the beginning of 2009 target sanctions for the officials were suspended with a possibility for extension, yet tariff restrictions remained in force. In the public

²⁸ European Commission, *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Belarus. Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013 and National Indicative Programme 2007-2010*, Brussels, p. 14-15, <http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/enpi_csp_nip_belarus_en.pdf>, 2010 03 23.

²⁹ Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerija, *Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio prekybos politikos metmenys [Guidelines of Foreign Trade Policy of Republic of Lithuania]*, <<http://www.eu2013.lt/index.php?808144961>>, 2010 03 24.

³⁰ European Commission, „EU-Belarus Relations“, Brussels, <http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/belarus/pdf/belarus_trade_en.pdf>, 2010 03 24.

³¹ Charter97, “EU decides to impose mini-trade sanctions on Belarus”, 2006 12 21 <<http://www.charter97.org/eng/news/2006/12/21/rada>>, 2010 03 24 in Janeliūnas T., „Between Russia and the EU: Transformational Opportunities for Belarus“, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, Nr. 19, 2007, p. 146.

³² For a detailed research about what factors influence foreign investment please look: Busse M., Hefeker C., *Political Risk, Institutions and Foreign Direct Investment*, Hamburg: Hamburg Institute of International Economics, 2005, <<http://213.241.152.197/externe/2005/k050708f12.pdf>>. According to the authors, foreign direct investment is significantly influenced by the stability of government, respect for principle of law rule, bureaucratic efficiency, external and internal conflicts in the country, ethnical tensions and democratic accountability.

discourse such changes are referred to as warming of the relations, and the situation in question is likely to fall between mild and moderate sanctions, as, on the one hand, economic losses remained similar, while on the other hand, the “new chance” given to Belarusian leaders and optimistic expectations expressed by the EU temporarily improved the international image of Belarus. Thus more countries began to speak out for the reduction of Belarus’ economic and political isolation. However, the remaining effective restrictions on the tariffs, following Wood’s scale, do not allow one to assess the relevant sanctions as softer. In this way, the period between 2009 and 2010 may be characterized as having moderately severe sanctions. Considering everything what has been said with regard to the independent variable of the study, i.e., the economic sanctions imposed by the EU on Belarus, we can assign the following values:

Sanctions case	Strictness
1991-1997 EU economic sanctions	0
1998-2005 EU economic sanctions	1
2006-2010 EU economic sanctions	2

These values will be used in the analysis of the link between the two variables in the subsequent chapters.

2.2. Repression in Belarus: relevance to the study, and measuring the repression level

After the discussion of the independent variable - the EU sanctions – we should define the term *repression* for the purposes of this study and determine what forms of repression are to be investigated. According to theory, sanctions encourage repression by creating a sense of insecurity for the incumbents who seek to maintain the regime; therefore, this kind of repression may be most accurately referred to as political repression. In the broadest sense, political repression is defined as government regulatory actions, “discriminating against persons and organizations viewed as presenting a fundamental challenge to existing powers relationships or key government policies, because of their perceived political beliefs.”³³ Since all

³³ Davenport Ch., “The Weight of the Past: Exploring Lagged Determinants of Political Repression”, *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1996, p. 377, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/448879.pdf>>, 2010 05 10.

forms of oppression and discrimination break certain human rights and liberties, authors exploring the link between sanctions and repression usually choose the human rights conditions in the relevant country as an indicator of repression. In other words, the level of repression is inversely proportional to the human rights situation in the country – as repressions increase, the human rights situation deteriorates, and vice versa. From the methodological perspective it is handy to use human rights as an indicator, since the assessment of the status of human rights across countries is carried out on an annual basis. The data collected by independent organizations and projects like Freedom House, Amnesty International, CIRI Human Rights Index or Political Terror Scale are internationally recognized and are widely used by researchers.

The classification of human rights covers a broad range of different rights and liberties; therefore, the next important step is to determine which of them are relevant to the current study and should be investigated. In his work Wood points out that there are many forms of repression; however, he confines his research to physical repression, measured by indexes of physical integrity of human rights. The status of these rights is a relevant issue in the case of Belarus, too, as violations of physical integrity rights have been one of the reasons why the EU has applied sanctions against Belarus (for example, for political prisoners, cases of disappeared persons, death penalty, and so on). However, it is obvious that not only physical integrity rights are limited in Belarus. It would be particularly important to examine the impact of sanctions on civil and political human rights in the case of Belarus, since the EU is interested in democratic changes as well as in promotion of civil and political rights in the country. This is a highly undesirable initiative for the Belarusian ruling elite, as it threatens the stability of the authoritarian regime. Therefore, it is possible that interference of the EU potentially contributes to creating the opposite effect, i.e. repression of political and civil rights. In their studies Peksen and Drury prove that the status of the political and civil rights is concerned with the application of sanctions. Using statistical analysis, the authors make a conclusion that the negative impact of sanctions for civil and political rights in most authorized countries does exist and is statistically significant³⁴; therefore, the investigation of the situation of political and civil rights in Belarus is relevant and reasonable as well.

In this way, in the present study the independent variable consists of three human rights groups - physical integrity, civil and political rights situation in

³⁴ Peksen, Drury, (note 8), p. 408-409.

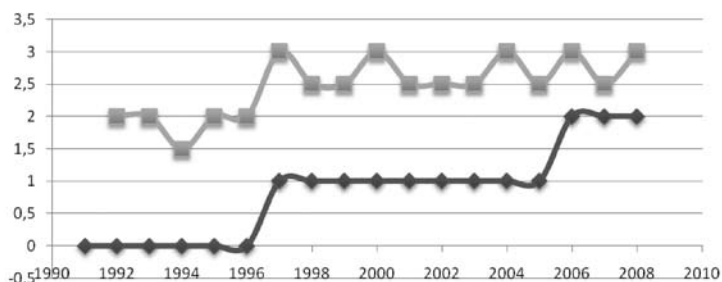
Belarus.³⁵ These groups are often used by human rights investigators in order to assess the level of political repression in the state.³⁶ Besides, monitoring of several human rights groups enables us to construct a more comprehensive view of the side effects of sanctions in the cases of individual states.

3. EU sanctions and repression in Belarus – the quest for the impact

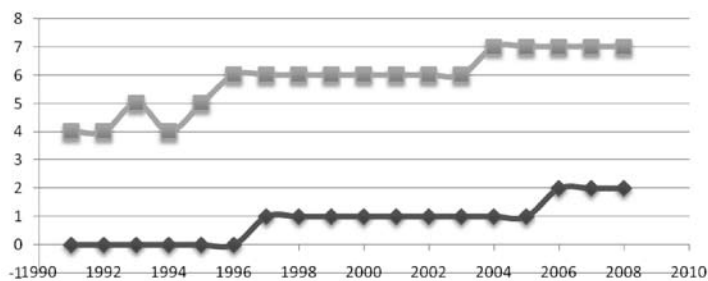
The evolution of physical integrity and the situation of political and civil rights in Belarus, while the sanctions were changing, are demonstrated in Graphs 1, 2 and 3, in accordance with Wood's assessment scale. Two significant changes in the severity of sanctions severity have been identified for the years 1997 and 2006, which divide the entire period of independent Belarus into three stages: before 1997, from 1997 to 2006, and since 2006 until now. A study of repression of the first period will help us to determine what impact the worsening relations between Belarus and the EU had on repression in Belarus, and how the imposition of EU sanctions on Belarus was associated with this repression. Analysis of the second period should reveal whether the side effects of sanctions, as described by Wood, manifested themselves, i.e. if the sanctions had contributed to even greater repression in the country in question. Investigation of the sanctions of the third period and their relation to repression will help determine whether the second part of Wood's hypothesis, i.e., stricter sanctions lead to the greater repressions, is applicable to the Belarusian case. Analysis of these three periods will form the structure of this section. The main method used is observation of the variation of variables and their interaction over time; the latter needed to determine whether variables are linked by causality. Bearing in mind the context and the potential impact of third factors we should answer the following question: the values of which variable underwent change the first and led to changes in another variable?

³⁵ For detailed information about how indexes are constructed please check: Freedom House, „Methodology“, Washington, 2006 Edition, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=35&year=2006>> and Gibney M., Cornett L., Wood R. M., “About the Political Terror Scale”, <<http://www.politicalterror scale.org/about.php>>, 2010 04 14

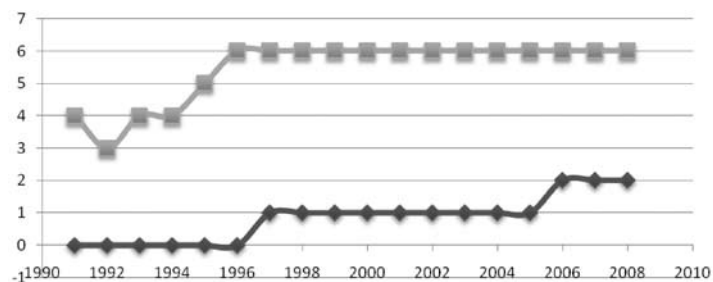
³⁶ Peksen, Drury, (note 8), p. 401-402.



Graph 1. The severity of EU sanctions (black) and the condition of physical integrity rights (grey) in Belarus throughout 1991-2008.³⁷



Graph 2. The severity of EU sanctions (black) and the condition of political rights (grey) in Belarus throughout 1991-2008.³⁸



Graph 3. The severity of EU sanctions (black) and the condition of civil rights (grey) in Belarus throughout 1991-2008.³⁹

³⁷ Mark Gibney, Linda Cornett, Reed M. Wood, *Political Terror Scale 1976-2008*, 2010, <<http://www.politicalterroryscale.org/download.php>>.

³⁸ Freedom House, "Country ratings and status, FIW 1973-2009", Washington, 2009, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=439>>, 2010 04 14.

³⁹ Freedom House, "Country ratings and status, FIW 1973-2009", Washington, 2009, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=439>>, 2010 04 15.

3.1. EU sanctions and repression in Belarus up to 1997

All three graphs show that the greatest and constant intensification of repression before the imposition of sanctions in Belarus took place in the field of political and civil rights. When Lukashenko became President, relative liberation of the political life of independent Belarus came to an end, and from 1995 onwards opposite trends were observed. In 1995, alongside the parliamentary elections, Lukashenko initiated a referendum, where the Belarusians were asked about the deepening integration with Russia, as well as about approval of Russian as the second official state language, the return of Soviet symbols, and the extension of presidential power to dissolve the Parliament. The referendum was the first significant step, while Lukashenko took the lead. At the same time Lukashenko urged citizens not to vote in the parliamentary election in order to weaken the legitimacy of the legislature. He partly succeeded in doing this as, due to citizens' passivity, it took three elections rounds to elect all the Members of Parliament⁴⁰. However, the biggest change for Parliament came about in 1996. Another referendum was held that year in order to change the Constitution. This time the referendum radically changed the balance of power between the President and the legislature, making the separation of powers as well as the checks and balances system a formality rather than anything else. The Supreme Council was transformed into a bicameral parliament - the President elected members of Council of the Republic, while the House of Representatives was elected universally. The new law gave the President vast powers to engage in the legislative process: from now on his approval was needed in all relevant matters of state funding; in addition, "under the urgent and essential necessity" the President could issue legislative decrees which did not require parliamentary approval. Practice soon showed that such "urgent" matters began to appear increasingly often. In addition, the new parliamentary sessions were short-time and during long intervals between sessions the President had a possibility to issue decrees on matters which the parliament did not agree upon.⁴¹ All these changes signified the destruction of the fragile foundations of democracy in Belarus and the consolidation of a new political system (or a return to a system

⁴⁰ Radio Free Europe, "Post-Soviet Belarus: A Timeline", 2006 02 24, <<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1066125.html>>, 2010 04 20.

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch, *Republic of Belarus crushing Civil Society. Background*, New York, 1997, <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/belarus/Belarus-03.htm#P179_18533>, 2010 04 20.

similar to the old Soviet), which Lukashenko later called “vertical presidency”. The authoritarian nature of this system - concentration of power in the hands of one person and emergence of the cult of personality – led to a situation in which political rights of the citizens were severely restricted.

The opportunities for participation in the government of alternative political powers were severely constricted not only because of the new constitutional law, but also because of the breach of law. This was due to the fact that, after the constitutional revision, Belarus’ Constitutional court as well as the court of general jurisdiction in reality had no control over the executive and were largely under the presidential influence. In accordance with the new law, the President had the authority to appoint half of the judges of the Constitutional Court, with the Senate, the formation of which also took place with the participation of the President, appointing the other half. The power to initiate proceedings was denied from the Constitutional Court, and a number of institutions which could suggest issues for consideration, was also restricted. The weakness of the Constitutional Court is manifested by the fact that in 1996 Lukashenko was able to ignore the ruling of the Constitutional Court that Lukashenko’s referendum and constitutional revisions were illegal.⁴² In addition, the new Constitution increased the President’s powers in appointing judges to the court of general jurisdiction and those to the Supreme Court, and the President could dismiss them on his own. Besides, court qualification commissions became an indirect tool to get rid of unfavorable judges.⁴³ Thus, although courts of general jurisdiction in Belarus had never been absolutely independent, after the 1996 constitutional revision, the fact that courts were subordinate to the executive power had become more apparent.

As far as civil rights are concerned, 1995 and 1996 were also marked by greater repression than previous years. Notably, freedom of belief, assembly, associations, free speech and protest were constricted the most during this period. Public media nearly monopolized all dissemination of information. During this period, independent radio and television stations were closed down; the independent press was also suppressed and persecuted. Accreditations were withdrawn from the reporters of broadcast Russian channels in Belarus. On the basis of allegedly nonobjective coverage, some reporters were ordered to leave the country. Due

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

to the audit conducted by the tax office, many NGOs were closed or received substantial penalties, including the Soros Fund Agency in Belarus. The rental price for organizations located in state-owned buildings was significantly raised⁴⁴, and many of those who could not bear the burden of taxation, had to terminate their activities.

Finally, the freedom of ideas and free speech were constricted by physical reprisals against protesters, journalists and representatives of opposition. Restrictions on demonstrations, which could result in heavy fines or arrest, were validated by the presidential decree. During this period hundreds of peaceful protesters were arrested; many of them were penalized by unreasonably high fines, based on biased investigations and in the absence of advocates in court proceedings.⁴⁵ Human rights observers registered numerous instances of excessive use of police force during peaceful protests and demonstrations. Protesters and journalists were beaten, arrested, threatened with victimization, and removed from universities or schools. Representatives of the opposition, former members of the parliament, were persecuted, arrested, and even tortured, while their families were threatened.⁴⁶

All these facts provide a general view on the human rights situation in Belarus over a period of several years prior to the introduction of EU sanctions. As can be seen, the overall trend is that of unreasonable severity of repression in all human rights groups under investigation. But what is the relation between this repression and EU sanctions applied in 1997? The EU Council adopted a formal decision to take restrictive measures in October 1997, on the ground that “violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and non-observance of the constitutional principles associated with the rule of law had become commonplace”⁴⁷. Therefore, it is clear that repression was one of the main factors which led to the imposition of restrictive measures on Belarus. The inverse relation prior to 1997, viz., that sanctions affected repressions during this period, – seems impossible for a simple reason – the sanctions had not yet been imposed. However, at this point it is worth

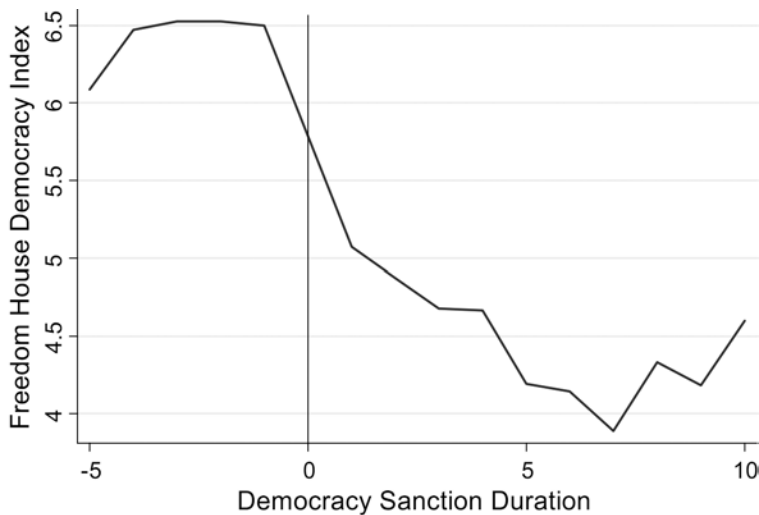
⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Republic of Belarus crushing Civil Society. Summary*, New York, 1997, <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/belarus/Belarus.htm#P83_2082>, 2010 04 22.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Police Violence and Arbitrary Arrest at Demonstrations*, New York, 1997, <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/belarus/Belarus-08.htm#P683_126175>, 2010 04 22.

⁴⁷ European Council, *Relations with the independent States of the former Soviet Union and with Mongolia*, Brussels, 1998 02, <<http://europa.eu/generalreport/en/1997/enx61097.htm#944>>, 2010 04 22.

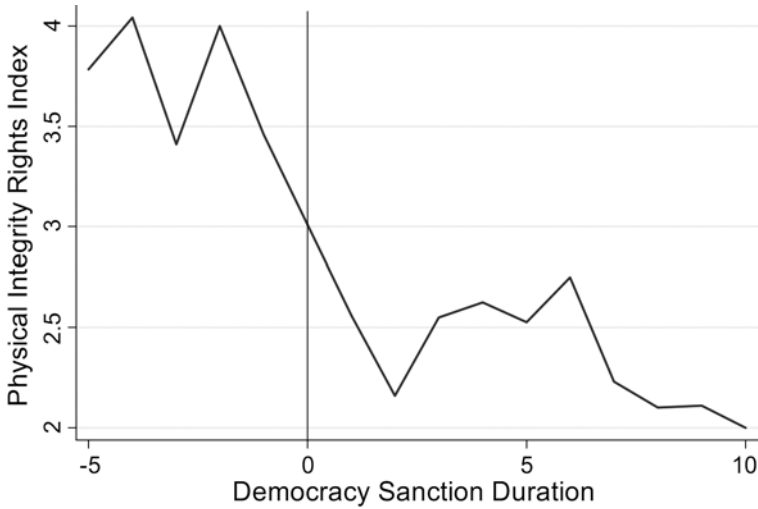
noting an interesting piece of research, carried out by Drury and Peksen. Their statistical analysis has revealed that, even before being applied, sanctions often have a negative effect on repression. This phenomenon is illustrated by Graphs 4 - 7⁴⁸. In the cases when sanctions are applied as a punishment for repression in a country (democratic sanctions), the stimulating impact of sanctions on repression is virtually impossible to observe because it blends with the repressive nature of the regime (see Graphs 4 and 5). However, this impact is observable in the cases when sanctions are applied for reasons other than repression (non-democratic sanctions). Graphs 5 and 6 show that physical integrity and the situation of political and civil rights began to deteriorate just before the imposition of sanctions. According to the researchers, this is because sanctions are not usually imposed immediately after the deterioration of the relations, as it is hoped at first that only threatening sanctions may help to achieve the desired goals. However, if the leaders of the threatened regime believe that these threats can encourage opposition and lead to protests, it is likely that, to prevent this from happening, repression will be resorted to ahead of time.⁴⁹



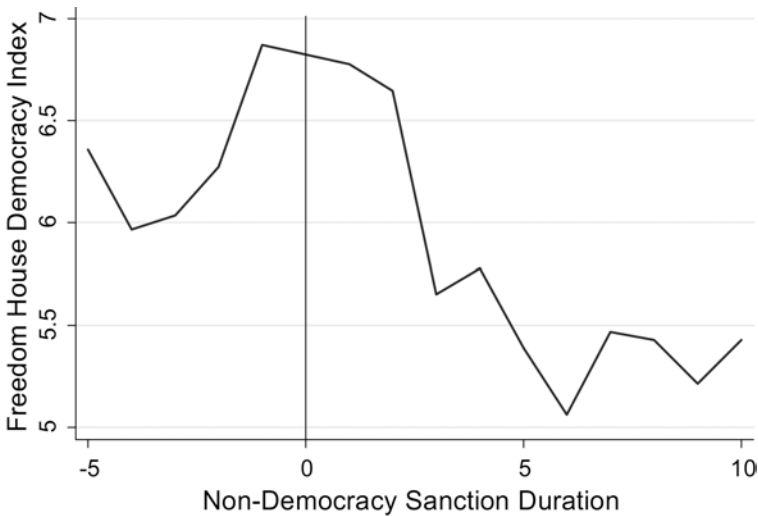
Graph 4. Dynamics of civil and political rights in the countries that were sanctioned in order to encourage democratization and respect for human rights.

⁴⁸ Drury, Peksen, (note 8) p.406-407.

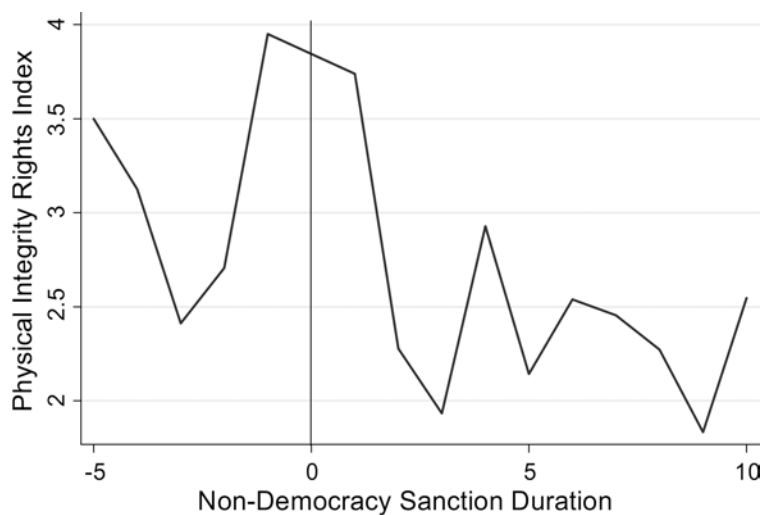
⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 405.



Graph 5. Dynamics of physical integrity rights in the countries that were sanctioned in order to encourage democratization and respect for human rights.



Graph 6. Dynamics of civil and political rights in the countries that were sanctioned for reasons other than repressions.



Graph 7. Dynamics of physical integrity rights in the countries that were sanctioned for reasons other than repressions.

On a number of occasions prior to imposing sanctions the EU officially stated that it did not recognize revisions of the Constitution of Belarus as legitimate and did not intend to justify arrests of demonstrators, persecution of the opposition and other violations of human rights in the political, civic and physical integrity domains in the country.⁵⁰ Bearing in mind that some members of the political elite were pro-Western-minded (for example, members of the Belarusian People's Front), it is possible that EU support encouraged them to resist. Besides, before the imposition of sanctions in 1997, the public protested and the government responded by strengthening the repressive apparatus: tightening laws on demonstrations and using security forces to cope with protesters, journalists and the opposition. The outburst of this protest can be seen in the curve of the condition of physical integrity rights. On the other hand, it can hardly be denied that that it is primarily Lukashenko himself who is to blame for the repression as well as his radical domestic and foreign policy reforms, which put the political elite into opposite camps and divided the society. The desire to concentrate power in a single pair of hands programs political repression, as it runs counter to the basic democratic

⁵⁰ European Commission, "Belarus", Bulletin EU 4-1997, Brussels, 1997, <<http://europa.eu/bulletin/en/9704/p104006.htm>>, 2010 04 22.

principle – to enable the citizens to participate, whether actively or passively, in the government of the state. This restriction of freedom naturally fuels discontent among active citizens who have an alternative vision of the government, which is suppressed by the expansion of the repressive apparatus. Thus, it is necessary to recognize that, in the case of Belarus, it is impossible to determine objectively whether the EU with its critical statements could lead Lukashenko regime to resort to even greater repression.

Overall, considering the period up to 1997, one may maintain that assessments made by independent observers and human rights indexes suggest that the official motives of sanctions of the EU were justified, namely, repression had led to the imposition of sanctions. Meanwhile, the opposite causality, which was described by Drury and Peksen, in the case of Belarus, is elusive. As can be seen in Graphs 1-3, the situation of civil and political rights in Belarus had stabilized as early as 1996, although, on the other hand, physical repression did intensify before the imposition of sanctions by the EU. Since this intensification was related to more active protests, some of which were pro-European, there remains a possibility that, by criticizing Lukashenko's regime, the EU might have contributed indirectly to the provocation of turmoil in the country and, consequently, the promotion of repression, as the government's response to unrest.

3.2. EU sanctions and repressions in Belarus in 1997 – 2006

Assessing the situation of human rights after the imposition of EU sanctions in 1997, we can see in Graphs 1-3 that, after 1998, civil and political repression remained at the same level. In that period physical repression in the country even slacked off a bit. This stabilization can be explained as follows: political repression stopped growing because Lukashenko's main political reforms had been implemented, the structures supporting the regime established, and the majority of the opponents of the regime neutralized. Thus protests were suppressed (the law on limiting demonstrations, issued in 1997, contributed significantly), the opposition was marginalized, and the diplomats, who supported it, were banished.⁵¹ The already usual fight against the independent press and its remnants went on in

⁵¹ Lukashuk A., "Explaining Lukashenka's hold on power", *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 7 No. 3, 1998, <<http://www3.law.nyu.edu/eecr/vol7num3/special/belarus.html>>, 2010 05 05.

the field of civil rights in 1998. The deliberate actions of the government against the opposition press are testified by a secret government memorandum of 1998 leaked to the public, which laid down the guidelines concerning the specific steps to be taken against the opposition press.⁵² In addition, at the end of 1997, an order regulating the press was issued, putting a ban on publishing articles, which “offend honor and dignity of the representatives of the government”. In 1998 the ruling was supplemented by a ban on the dissemination of slander against the President, treating it no longer as an administrative offense, but as a criminal offense. The same year a law was passed that limited export and import of information in the cases where the information content presented “a threat to national security, individual rights and freedoms and the public health and morals.”⁵³ Thus, the Belarusian government had not only destroyed all alternative opinion sources within the country, but also isolated the society from the influence of the outside world. The same year the EU countries withdrew their ambassadors from Belarus; however, the reasons for that were not related to the repression, and diplomats were driven out on the basis of Lukashenko’s initiative as an undesirable group of people. In response to the diplomatic war, the EU issued visa bans on Belarusian officials, thus reinforcing the mutual isolation.

In the next few years, the policy of EU sanctions towards Belarus did not change substantially: talks on signing a PCA with Belarus suspended in 1997 were not renewed by the EU Council, and official contacts with Belarus were kept to a minimum. The EU did not provide loans to Belarus and froze most of the technical service programs⁵⁴ and supported operation only of those programs that were directly related to the promotion of respect for human rights and democracy, and to the development of civil society. The EU Council also made the decision not to support the Belarusian ambition to become a member of the Council of Europe.⁵⁵ The withdrawal of all restrictive measures was linked to specific conditions, which Belarus was periodically reminded about throughout this period: political

⁵² Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999 - Republic of Belarus*, 1999 01 01, <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ac6a8b44.html>>, 2010 05 05.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, *Background Note: Belarus*, US Department of State, <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5371.htm>>, 2010 05 05.

⁵⁵ European Council, *Relations with the independent States of the former Soviet Union and with Mongolia* (note 45).

liberalization, respect for human rights and ensuring the rule of law.⁵⁶ However, it seems that the application of the principle of conditionality had virtually no effect on the situation of human rights in Belarus. Graphs 2 and 3 show that the situation of civil and political human rights had not changed in the period from 1996 to 2004; and only physical repression was temporarily tightened in 2000.

In their reports human rights observers relate this strictness to the parliamentary elections of 2000. Opposition activists and unreliable officials were compromised, judged and imprisoned for bribery, abuse of authority or organization of mass protests⁵⁷; several representatives of the media and the opposition disappeared.⁵⁸ Before the elections, together with the support of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), a council was established: it coordinated the opposition's activities in Belarus, and had the objective of uniting forces in the forthcoming elections. However, the council's decision to boycott the elections raised disagreements between the parties. Eventually this situation was taken advantage of in pursuit of preventing the opposition representatives to run for elections, as a boycott of the elections in Belarus is prohibited by Administrative Code. According to analysts, in this case international support resulted in creating more problems than benefits for the opposition, because the proposed methods of operation did not match the maturity of the party system and civil society.⁵⁹ However, this criticism is focused on the use of inappropriate positive policies rather than restrictive measures, which remained stable during this period; therefore, there is no evidence that any of the EU sanctions led to the violations of physical integrity rights in 2000.

Over a period of several years following the 2000 parliamentary elections, the level of repression in Belarus did not change fundamentally. Lukashenko won the presidential election in 2001, which Western countries announced being unfair and unfree. During this period, the EU renewed travel restrictions to Lukashenko and his closest fellows after the OSCE representatives had been expelled from Belarus in 2002. About that time the "step by step" program was employed in an

⁵⁶ Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Belarus, *Chronology of bilateral relations*, (note 28).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2001 - Republic of Belarus*, New York, <<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/europe/belarus.html>>, 2010 05 12.

⁵⁹ White S., Korosteleva E. A., Löwenhardt J., *Postcommunist Belarus*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005, p. 49, <<http://books.google.lt/books?id=HPjVRSvhFRAC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>, 2010 05 12.

attempt to rescue the EU-Belarus relations. Its aim was to encourage Belarus to start reforms in exchange for the development of economic relations. However, reports by human rights observers and indexes showed that neither EU's critical tone accompanied by sanctions, nor suggestions to normalize relations significantly affected the political, civil, or physical integrity rights in Belarus until 2004: throughout all this time repression remained just as severe.

2004 was the year of greater changes both in Belarus and in Belarus' neighborhood. This year was special particularly because of the EU enlargement to the Central and Eastern Europe, Belarus becoming EU's geographical neighbor. Moreover, at the end of 2003, Georgia underwent the Rose Revolution, during which the opposition forces took the power, while at the end of 2004 Belarusian parliamentary elections and referendum were to be held in order to extend the presidential term of office for an unlimited period of time. Naturally, voting results were very important for Lukashenko, who was seeking to remain in office. As a result, again, 2004 witnessed a surge of repression, its purpose being to suppress the opposition and to isolate the public from "unfavorable information". As can be seen in Graphs 1 and 2, significant deteriorations were observed in the political and physical integrity rights.

Physical repression revealed itself by politically motivated arrests of the opposition and trade-unionists. A female journalist of an opposition newspaper killed in Minsk in October, as suspected, could have fallen victim to physical political repression.⁶⁰ Demonstrations were organized after the parliamentary elections. During these demonstrations many protesters were beaten up or arrested for libel or vandalism.⁶¹ The media and NGOs, just as before every election, had to withstand increasing pressure: activities of several independent newspapers were suspended, the operation of informational websites was disturbed, and the presidential decree, issued in 2003, came into force strictly limiting NGOs and completely prohibiting political organizations to accept any financial support from abroad.⁶² The deterioration of political rights in 2004 was associated with the parliamentary elections and referendum results. This time none of the opposition

⁶⁰ Freedom House, *Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2005)*, Washington, <<http://www.freedom-house.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2005&country=6694>>, 2010 05 13.

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2005 Events of 2004*, New York, 2005, p. 356-357, <<http://books.google.lt/books?id=dYXStZToKggC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false 354>>, 2010 05 13.

⁶² Freedom House, *Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2005)*, (note 57).

representatives gained seats in the House of Representatives. Moreover, the official results of the referendum enabled Lukashenko to run for president for an unlimited number of times in the future. These changes meant that, starting from 2004, the index of Belarusian political rights was estimated at its highest value, which meant that the political rights and freedoms of the country actually did not exist anymore because of the very repressive nature of the regime.

In February, in response to the intensified repression in the country, the EU accused several high officials of being involved in the disappearance of representatives of former opposition and media. In September, the EU announced that it imposed travel restrictions on these officials in the EU countries. In addition to these specific sanctions, the EU repeatedly expressed its criticism regarding the referendum, the elections process, and the overall situation of human rights in Belarus.⁶³ However, as data showed, the following few years were not to see any significant positive change in the field of human rights - after the elections the level of physical repression somewhat diminished, while political and civil repression remained just as severe.

The steady high level of repression in 2005 can be explained by a number of important internal and external factors. First of all, in 2004, as the presidential elections in Belarus were approaching, Lukashenko, indeed, was to be alarmed by the consequences of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine: Ukrainian government was forced to adjust the electoral law and the presidential elections took place again, this time letting the opposition representative Victor Yushchenko win. In addition, Ukraine had implemented political reforms which weakened presidential powers. Considering these events in the neighborhood and the fact that an independent survey⁶⁴ in Belarus suggested that the 2004 constitutional revision was supported by less than half of the citizens, it is not surprising that the upcoming presidential elections encouraged Lukashenko to continue to rely on the repressive apparatus in order to prevent a scenario similar the Ukrainian one.

Since there were not many mass protests in Belarus in 2005, the level of direct physical repression was slightly lower. On the other hand, that year new amendments to the laws provided the repressive apparatus with even greater opportunities of legitimizing use of repression: the President now had a power

⁶³ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2005 Events of 2004*, (note 58), p. 357-358.

⁶⁴ Freedom House, "Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2006)", Washington, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2006&country=6920>>, 2010 05 15.

to order the use of firearms against protesters. In addition, the country's security services underwent special training to learn a new tactics for the dispersal of protesters. Restrictions on the press, trade unions and NGOs, persecution and discrediting of the opposition before the elections were also included in the preparations for the elections. In addition, severe penalties were foreseen for working or acting on behalf of unregistered political parties. After the enlargement of the EU in 2004, when Belarus geographically became EU's neighbor, a higher level of repressions was observed, the aim of which was to prevent international influence. The main burden fell on NGOs which received foreign support: the rules of their operation were tightened even more; punishment by imprisonment was legalized for participating in unregistered organizations; foreign funding for NGOs, political parties and persons, „who promote “meddling into the internal affairs” of Belarus from abroad“,⁶⁵ was banned completely.

2006 was an important year in the sphere of human rights because of the increase of physical repression in Belarus. Both the government, seeking to intimidate opponents before the presidential elections, and the large wave of protests, which followed after the presidential election, provoked a higher level of physical repression. As the elections approached, many members of opposition groups and their campaign workers were arrested. A few weeks before the voting the KGB security service announced it suspected that the opposition was preparing to launch a revolt and warned that protesters in the streets could be accused of contributing to terrorism and could be sentenced to very severe punishments - imprisonment from eight years to death penalty, which still runs in Belarus. However, these threats did not stop the protesters. On the day of elections about 10,000 to 15,000 people walked out in the streets of Minsk, and 500-1000 protesters were arrested. These protests resulted in more intense persecution of opposition members and leaders, their arrests, and imprisonment, and the use of other repressive measures which, as it has already been stated, considerably weakened the opposition forces at the time.⁶⁶ Lukashenko won the elections; however, it remained unclear what the actual results of the elections were, because not a single survey company succeeded in conducting an independent investigation due to government restrictions.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, on the

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Freedom House, *Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2007)*, Washington, <<http://www.freedom-house.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2007&country=7134>>, 2010 05 15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

basis of the findings of the OSCE, the EU declared the elections fraudulent and unfair, and imposed sanctions on travel visas for thirty top Belarusian officials. In May the EU extended those sanctions and froze the assets of Lukashenko and 35 officials.⁶⁸ Moreover, at the end of 2006, upon consideration of the findings of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning permanent and systematic interference with the activities of trade unions in the country, the EU temporarily removed Belarus from the GSP.⁶⁹ Thus, in 2006, the EU employed a wider arsenal of restrictive measures, which, according to Wood's Scale, was assessed as moderate economic sanctions.

After a discussion of the entire period from 1997 to 2006, we can now make several important conclusions in evaluating the link between EU sanctions and repression in Belarus. In particular, there has been no clear evidence found to prove that EU sanctions led to significant repression in Belarus during that period. For six years after the imposition of EU sanctions back in 1997, political and civil repression remained at the same level as in 1996, i.e., before the imposition of sanctions. The only human rights group that underwent some change during that period was the physical integrity human rights. It must be noted, however, that the year of presidential or parliamentary elections always witnesses intensification of political repression. The most important change of the period under consideration was intensification of political repression in 2004; however, it is difficult to envisage a direct causal relationship between EU restrictive measures and surge of repression. The main factor which determined this increase was Lukashenko's term of office, which was coming to an end and which he had to extend in such a manner as to avert the fate of Georgia and Ukraine. This was reflected in the special preparation process and security trainings taken by Lukashenko before the elections and the referendum. Of course, in the cases of the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutions, foreign intervention had important significance, but it was active support of the opposition and the non-governmental sector, promoted by positive supportive measures, that played the main role. In the case of Belarus, EU policy of isolation was to Lukashenko's benefit, as he himself sought to isolate the public from outside influences, and hence the withdrawal of diplomats and

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2006*, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006, 363, <www.hrw.org/wr2k7/wr2007master.pdf>, 2010 05 15.

⁶⁹ Council Regulation (EC) No. 1933/2006 of 21 December 2006, *Temporary withdrawing access to the generalized tariff preferences from the Republic of Belarus*, 2004, 02 14, 4.

travel restrictions imposed on political elite, high visa fees for Belarusian citizens, restrictions on various co-operation initiatives and similar isolating measures only facilitated Lukashenko's objective. Meanwhile, Lukashenko was trying to prevent the influence of EU's positive measures by controlling the press, suppressing civil initiatives and reducing foreign funding opportunities for political parties and NGOs – i.e., by strengthening repression. In sum, if the EU indeed contributed to the increase in repression in Belarus in 1997-2006, then it was probably done so by positive, rather than restrictive, measures.

3.3. EU sanctions and repressions in Belarus after 2006

The tightening of EU sanctions in 2006 is an important factor in the context of Wood's theory of sanctions, because, according to the author, stronger sanctions should contribute to stronger repressions. After an analysis of the repression in Belarus after 2006, we could verify if this has really happened.

According to the data of independent human rights observers, the level of repression in Belarus after 2006 has hardly changed. As can be seen in Graphs 2 and 3, the situation of political and civil rights in Belarus in 2007-2009 remained the same. The only field where changes did occur was the physical integrity human rights. The level of physical repression in 2007 was slightly lower, and in 2008 it increased slightly. The lower level of repression in 2007 may be associated with vulnerabilities in the opposition. Many of the members of the opposition movement "Young Front" were arrested during this period, while the opposition political parties failed to agree unanimously in the Congress of United Democratic Forces on the common position and the co-leader (Alexander Milinkevich was removed from his position of Chairman of the Board).⁷⁰ The split of the opposition during this period was very useful for Lukashenko, as it weakened the chances of the opposition to take advantage of the post-electoral public mood, and the beginning of disagreements on oil and gas prices between Russia and Belarus.

2008 was an ambivalent year in the approach to physical integrity rights – the first half of the year was characterized by relatively intense repression (increased arrests and imprisonments of opposition members and protesters), while just before

⁷⁰ Freedom House, "Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2007)", Washington, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2008&country=7351>>, 2010 05 16.

the parliamentary elections, all political prisoners were released and the Movement for Freedom chaired by Malinkevich was allowed to register.⁷¹ However, as in previous elections, not a single representative of the opposition entered the House of Representatives, and the opposition, again, was left without any opportunities to influence the legislative process. The aforementioned warming before the election was related to the increase in Russia's pressure due to higher energy export prices and privatization of Belarus' strategic companies.⁷² Besides, the relations between Russia and Belarus became more strained after the Russia - Georgia conflict, in which Russia clearly demonstrated what steps it could take in order to protect its area of influence. Meanwhile, Belarus did not recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, because in the slowly moving Russia-Belarus integration process it was important for Belarus to maintain a certain degree of independence and have its own leverage in negotiating terms of supply of energy resources.

The EU interpreted the release of political prisoners and non-recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence as Belarus' desire to reduce its dependence on the East. In this way, it used the opportunity to improve its relations with Belarus. In 2009 the EU abolished its sanctions, except for the removal of the GSP, which, at least officially, was associated exclusively with the situation of trade unions and workers' rights in Belarus, which had not shown improvement over the period. The EU demonstrated its openness, and for the first time after the 13 years of the travel ban Lukashenko was welcomed to several EU countries, including Lithuania. Belarus was also invited to join the Eastern Partnership Program. It seems, however, that these steps did not bring about positive changes in the field of human rights. Imprisonments of opposition members, dispersal of demonstrations and arrests of their protesters continued; in addition, the media was banned from documenting the events, and online press was subject to the same restrictions as the paper press.⁷³ Among the positive changes one should mention amendments to the election law, which gave more freedom in election campaigning; yet, according to experts, it still did not guarantee a fair vote count.⁷⁴ The Eastern Partnership initiative was at a dead end, too, as Lukashenko vehemently opposed

⁷¹ Freedom House, "Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2009)", Washington, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2009&country=7565>>, 2010 05 16.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Freedom House, *Map of Freedom in the World. Belarus (2010)*, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2010&country=7780>>, 2010 05 16.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

the condition that the opposition be represented in the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly.⁷⁵ In 2010, the rules for internet users became more restricted, searches of the headquarters of the independent press were conducted, and the activities of the Union of Poles were suppressed. In general, it is unlikely that the regime would be willing to change the established methods of control, and it is also doubtful whether the year 2010 could be assessed by independent human rights observers differently from previous years. Significant changes could be expected only before the presidential elections, which are to take place in December. However, long experience has shown that the elections in Belarus are usually accompanied by increased repression, and probably it would be naive to expect that this time things could be dramatically different.

Upon consideration of the period 2006-2010, we have found that throughout this period restrictive measures of the EU did not affect the level of repression in Belarus. Neither the tightening of sanctions in 2006, nor the suspension of nearly all sanctions in 2009 improved human rights conditions in Belarus. Besides, these two different strategies did not contribute to the reverse effect either: repression in the country did not strengthen significantly. Thus, a conclusion may be made that Wood's assumption on the existence of a direct correlation between the severity of sanctions and repression, has not been proved in the case of Belarus. The last section of this article will be devoted to a discussion of the possible reasons why the Belarusian example presents an exception in Wood's sanctions theory.

4. The exceptional case of Belarus

First of all, in our analysis of why Wood's theoretical model does not provide an explanation for the case of Belarus, we should return to its major assumptions. Wood's theoretical model is based on the causal chain, which can be briefly summarized as follows: economic sanctions lead to the reduction of resources in the country; therefore, the government redistributes the remaining resources in such a way so as to ensure that major groups supporting the regime do not feel their lack. Since in undemocratic regimes or weak democracy regimes the government

⁷⁵ International Press Centre, "Use EU 'carrots' carefully, says Belarus opposition leader", Brussels: Brussels Network Office, 2010 03 01, <<http://www.euractiv.com/en/east-mediterranean/use-eu-carrots-carefully-says-belarus-opposition-leader-news-290515>>, 2010 05 16.

is more centralized than in consolidated democracies, groups that do get a re-allocated share of resources are limited. Thus, in authoritarian regimes economic sanctions form greater inequality, resulting in growing discontent of citizens, which is expressed in direct protest or support for the opposition. These forms of discontent present a threat to the incumbents and are suppressed by repression. In view of this theoretical framework, the case of Belarus is special because repression increased significantly in the country, but as it has been found out, the sanctions did not considerably contribute to this intensification of repression, and therefore, the reasons should be looked for in this causal chain.

The first and most important assumption in the causal chain of the theory of economic sanctions is that sanctions determine resource reduction. If so, first it is necessary to find out whether or not EU's economic sanctions against Belarus brought about real losses. This can be done by analyzing the main economic indicators in Belarus, which are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Economic indicators of Belarus 1991 – 2008⁷⁶

Year	Foreign direct investment, net inflows (BoP, current US\$, millions)	GDP growth (annual %)	GNI per capita (current US\$)	Income share held by lowest 20%	Trade (% of GDP)	Net official development assistance and official aid (current \$, millions)	Poverty gap at national poverty line (%)
1991	...	-1	4750	187,03	...
1992	7,0	-10	4380	272,54	...
1993	17,6	-8	4230	11	...	185,87	...
1994	10,5	-12	3720	...	37	118,82	...
1995	35,16	-10	3410	9	74	222,52	...
1996	104,5	3	3590	...	85	76,37	...
1997	351,6	11	4060	10	113	54,88	...
1998	203,2	8	4480	8	104	38,98	...
1999	444,0	3	4720	...	103	38,25	...

⁷⁶ The World Bank Group, Quick Inquiry, <<http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/DDPQQ/report.do?method=showReport>>, 2010 05 22.

2000	118,8	6	5120	8	125	34,49	42
2001	95,8	5	5510	8	127	39,45	...
2002	247,1	5	5930	8	117	39,28	30
2003	171,8	7	6540	...	121	48,41	...
2004	163,8	11	7530	...	131	48,07	17
2005	305,0	9	8540	9	108	57,81	...
2006	354,0	10	9710	...	114	76,52	...
2007	1785,2	9	10800	9	117	83,76	...
2008	2158,1	10	12120	...	120	110,18	...

According to the World Bank data, after Belarus had regained its independence, the country's GDP declined every year until 1995. However, when Lukashenko concentrated power in his hands the Belarusian GDP began to grow rapidly. According to the official data, GDP growth in Belarus slowed down only in 1998 - 1999, never reaching the negative, but later began to increase again and, starting from 2004, Belarus GDP grew annually by an average of 10% (the table above does not include the data of 2009). 1996 and subsequent years witnessed nearly uninterrupted growth of foreign direct investment and trade volume in Belarus. Of course, it should be noted that disagreements over the Belarusian economic data persist. There are opinions that Belarus' GDP has been artificially inflated due to inadequate methods of calculating GDP, barter trade with Russia (i.e., trade without money when goods are exchanged upon agreement on prices, which may not correspond to actual market prices⁷⁷), printing money and high inflation, which complicates the calculation of real GDP.⁷⁸ Belarusian economic indicators can also raise questions upon comparison with relevant economic indicators of other post-Soviet states, which took more time to achieve similar economic results. However, experts argue that this uniqueness was stipulated by Belarus' rapprochement with Russia, which meant prices for gas and oil lower than market prices and trade privileges of the Russian market, where Belarus was able to sell its artificially driven industrial overcapacity. The resumed interference of the state in the economy and a slowdown in economic reforms were also important factors in

⁷⁷ Beldulskis, Tomilinas, Vileita, (note 27), p.

⁷⁸ Bandarenka., "Belarus's GDP in dollars dropped by 19%", Charter'97 Press Center, 2010 02 10, <<http://charter97.org/en/news/2010/2/10/26249/>>, 2010 05 17.

maintaining economic stability. Radical economic reforms were painful for many post-Soviet countries, however, considered useful over the long term.⁷⁹

All in all, it is widely agreed that after 1996 overall economic trends in Belarus were comparatively positive, although they were not determined by structural reforms, but mostly by external factors and instantaneous circumstances. The only period when Belarus' economic indexes significantly deteriorated was from 1998 to 1999. Looking at the volume of foreign support, we can see that, starting from 1996, the support underwent a three-fold decrease, and in 1998-1999 it shrank even more. The slowdown of economic growth in Belarus came just after 1997, when EU sanctions were imposed. Nevertheless, experts attribute this decrease to the economic crisis in Russia, as it was no longer able to buy goods from Belarus.⁸⁰ The fact that EU sanctions had little influence is demonstrated by the rapid recovery of the Belarusian economy - immediately after the end of the Russian crisis. In addition, in 2006, when the EU had removed Belarus from the GSP, the country's economic indexes showed steady improvement, despite the fact that Belarus' share of trade with the EU has been increasing and by now has nearly reached that of Russia. Therefore, one of the most compelling explanations why economic sanctions by the EU did not encourage repression in Belarus is merely because the sanctions were not able to create a discernible lack of resources in Belarus. At this point, the main factors distorting the natural model of the operation of functions are the alternative Russian market and cheap energy resources, which ensured stability of economic growth in Belarus and minimized the impact of other economic factors.

On the other hand, even a minor reduction of resources may lead to the increase in repression if the loss is very unevenly distributed, which, according to Wood, often happens in authoritarian regimes. However, the table shows that the income share of the poorest segments of Belarus changed little over time: from 11% in 1994 up to 9% in 2007. It is often highlighted that in 2000 40% of Belarus' population lived below national poverty line. Pulled out of context, this figure may seem impressive, yet this statistic dates back to the year of Russian economic crisis, (to compare: in 2004 the

⁷⁹ Bakanova M., de Souza L. V., Kolesnikova I., Abramov I., "Transition and Growth in Belarus", United Kingdom: 2004, 93, 105. <<http://www.eerc.ru/default.aspx?id=169>>, 2010 05 17.

⁸⁰ Schmidt R., "The 1998 Russian Financial Crisis. Part 3: Political Consequences and Recovery", 2009 05 24, <<http://stockbreakthroughs.com/2009/05/24/the-1998-russian-financial-crisis-part-3-political-consequences-and-recovery>>, 2010 05 17.

poverty rate was only 17%, bearing in mind that the EU average was 16%).⁸¹ The same can be said about wage growth: from 1996 to 2008 real wages of workers in Belarus increased by 2.5 times and only in 2009 was a slight decline observed.⁸² In terms of social inequality, Belarus is viewed as an exception in the general context of post-Soviet states, as it has managed to preserve the most egalitarian society.⁸³ Thus, EU economic sanctions against Belarus brought about neither a significant reduction of resources, nor an increase in inequality, which, according to Wood's theoretical model, was another important assumption for repression to take place. On the contrary, Lukashenko was able to preserve a wide range of social functions in the state and to ensure a relatively stable economic well-being, which coincided with the priorities of the passive and increasingly materialistic Belarusian society.

However, as has already been discussed in the theoretical part, the economic recession and the redistribution of resources are not the only factors responsible for the negative effects of sanctions on the situation of human rights. Another argument explaining this spillover effect of sanctions is that sanctions against undemocratic regimes are often interpreted as a signal of support to the opposition and therefore are seen as an encouragement to the opposition to compete more actively with the current government. The EU support for the Belarusian opposition is demonstrated not only by funding democratic initiatives, but can also be clearly observed in most disputes arising between the opposition and Lukashenko's team, for example, concerning election integrity or issues of political prisoners. However, an analysis of specific instances of repression implemented by Lukashenko makes the government's efforts to neutralize the positive measures of the EU much more apparent: e.g., a series of laws was issued which restricted foreign funding of political parties and NGOs. On the other hand, measures to counteract the effects of sanctions may simply be less visible, and, for example, reflect the constraints of the media, which is forced to present the motives and objectives of the sanctions in a way convenient for incumbents. Another argument discussed in the theoretical part regarding how sanctions could contribute to greater

⁸¹ European Commission, *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2007*, Brussels, 2007 02 19, <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/66>>, 2010 05 21.

⁸² Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, *Dynamics of annualized monthly employees wages (1991-2000)*, <<http://www.iiseps.org/ezarplata1.html>>, 2010 05 21.; Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, *Dynamics of annualized monthly employees wages (2001-2009)*, <<http://www.iiseps.org/ezarplata2.html>>, 2010 05 21.

⁸³ Yemelyanau M., "Inequality in Belarus from 1995 to 2007", Kiev: Belarusian Economic Research and Outreach Center, 2009, <http://beroc.eerc.kiev.ua/BEROC_WP01_Maksim_Yemelyanau-Inequality.pdf>, 2010 05 21.

repression in the country, is that sanctions create conditions under which state power structures become more dependent on political power, while this dependency can be manipulated by means of repression. This happens, again, when sanctions disrupt the circulation of resources in the country with the reduced resources being concentrated in one person's hands. As it has already been discussed, EU economic sanctions against Belarus did not result in the disruption of economic development. Therefore, the argument that the restrictive measures of the EU had created the conditions which enabled Lukashenko to manipulate power structures more easily when dealing with the opponents is wrong. Although at the time when Lukashenko came into power, Belarusian security services indeed became more dependent on the President's control, this happened before the imposition of EU sanctions. One of the first steps taken by Lukashenko was transfer of control over the Committee for State Security (KGB) to the President's authority.⁸⁴ In this way, the President could widely use security services to enforce repression and, possibly, if these services had not been subordinate to the President, some types of repression would actually be milder.

The last assumption of the theory was that, if before the imposition of sanctions the relations between the sanctioning and sanctioned parties were "unfriendly", there is a high probability that sanctions would be fruitless and protracted. This interpretation is related to repression over the allocation of resources, because the longer the sanctions persist, the greater inequality forms in the society, discontent grows and ultimately repression increases. Regimes of different types often become the so-called "unfriendly" regimes, because they are based on different principles of management and contradicting values. And, indeed, shortly after Lukashenko had come into power and carried out authoritarian reforms, the EU and Belarus relations got worse. However, as has already been mentioned, EU sanctions have had little effect on the Belarusian economy; therefore this theoretical assumption can lead only to the conclusion that the economic sanctions of the EU are likely to continue to be fruitless. This is not to mean, however, that they will promote repression. On the other hand, it is likely that under the conditions of the global economic crisis and deteriorating relations between Belarus and Russia, the Belarusian economy could become more sensitive to the restrictive measures of the EU, and the impact of sanctions on repression may increase in the future.

⁸⁴ Europa Publications Limited, *Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States 1999*, London: The Gresham Press, 1999, p. 184, <http://books.google.lt/books?id=qmN95ffFocsMC&prints_ec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>., 2010 05 21.

Conclusions

In this article we have analyzed the relationship between the EU economic sanctions and repression in Belarus. Using Wood's theoretical framework, the objective of the article was to find out whether this model, constructed on the basis of 157 cases of sanctions, explains the case of Belarus. According to Wood, economic sanctions have a negative impact on the human rights condition in the sanctioned countries, while more severe sanctions contribute to greater repressions. Paradoxically, in non-democratic or weak democracy countries this negative spillover effect of sanctions gets even stronger, although sanctions are most often imposed precisely in order to improve the situation of human rights, or to encourage democratization in the relevant countries.

In order to investigate the case of Belarus, we carried out an analysis of the situation in three human rights groups - political, civic and physical integrity - and attempted to establish their relationship with the severity of EU sanctions. It appears that, in general, the strictness of the sanctions and the level of repression in Belarus are related quantities, but mostly because the repression has encouraged the EU to impose and tighten sanctions, and not vice versa. The qualitative analysis showed that there was not a single case which would demonstrate intensification of repression immediately after the sanctions had been imposed. After the imposition of sanctions in 1997, political repression grew only in 2004, while physical repression tightened significantly every time before the presidential or parliamentary elections. Wood's assumption that stricter sanctions lead to greater repression was not valid in the case of Belarus, either. The most significant tightening of EU sanctions in 2006 was a response to the earlier increase in repression. Subsequently there were not any significant changes in the field of human rights in Belarus. However, due to the fact that during the entire period of the imposition of EU sanctions repression tightened in the country, the only possible explanation of the impact of EU sanctions on repression would be provided by the phenomenon described by Peksen and Drury: viz., an increase in repression, even before the imposition of sanctions, is stipulated by the incumbents' attempts to forestall the destabilizing effects of the sanctions. However, it is difficult to determine whether EU sanctions have had such an impact in Belarus, since the potential effect of the sanctions would have converged with the repressive nature of the regime.

In summary, it can be stated that, according to Wood's theory of economic sanctions, the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of the present research was

not confirmed, i.e. EU restrictive measures do not promote ongoing repression in Belarus (although there is not any positive effect either). The main reason why the Belarusian case is an exception is that the economic sanctions of the EU are too weak to overshadow Russia's economic influence on Belarus and to create a considerable lack of resources. In addition, after Belarus regained its independence, social inequality in the country has not increased significantly, while relatively stable economic welfare has remained the most important pillar of Lukashenko's popularity. The fact that the Belarusian society is egalitarian not only distinguishes Belarus from other post-Soviet states, but also contradicts one of Wood's theoretical assumptions that authoritarian regimes are likely to respond to sanctions by dividing roughly the cost of sanctions, thus increasing social exclusion in the society. Therefore, under these circumstances, the costs of EU sanctions are largely of symbolic value and function indirectly as a support signal for the opposition, whose revival could be suppressed by the incumbents' resort to repression. However, the impact of sanctions in this case is hardly visible and possibly merges with the impact of positive measures used by the EU.

Considering the ongoing significant changes - the global economic crisis, Russia's declining economic support to Belarus, and the upcoming presidential elections in the country - we can say that the most interesting exploration of the impact of EU sanctions lies ahead. If the EU does not abandon its sanctions policy and decides to renew the temporarily suspended sanctions, it is likely that, due to the aforementioned changes, the impact of EU sanctions against Belarus will become stronger; therefore, policy makers should act carefully in shaping the sanctions policy and assessments of the potential impact of sanctions on the condition of human rights in Belarus. In addition, it would be equally important and useful to examine the effect of EU positive tools of influence on repression in Belarus, as it is notable that some assumptions of Wood's sanctions theory would be perfectly suited for a description of the mechanism of these tools as well.