EUROPEAN UNION - BELARUS: A FRIENDLIER, WARMER RELATIONSHIP? THE CASE OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

After 12 years of isolation, the relations between Brussels and Minsk have been thawing starting in the last year. One of the components of the policy of re-engagement is the new initiative adopted by the EU called Eastern Partnership (EaP). This thesis sought to answer following question: what were the main reasons for the change in the EU policy towards Belarus after 2008? In order to answer the research question I formulated two hypotheses.

The first hypothesis argues that while the EU has acted according to the normative power expectations up until 2008, after that date a more pragmatic approach in the foreign policy has been at work. The second hypothesis explains this change by the increasing influence of Eastern European countries in realm of decision-making processes within the EU, which resulted in a reformed EU foreign policy towards Belarus.

These hypotheses are tested in a qualitative case study of the launching of the Eastern Partnership initiative, seen as the most important instrument that defines the new policy of EU. I will focus on the process of decision–making in regards to the adoption of the new initiative towards the Eastern European countries, using the rational actor model and the theory of formal leadership.

The results of the paper point out that the main reason for changing the EU foreign policy towards Belarus were connected to pragmatic interests in the economic and energy areas, which weakened the EU normative claims. However, EU values are still counted as political conditionality has recently re-entered the agenda. Thus, the current foreign policy is two-fold: based on rational model of acting and normative power. Moreover, the EaP is the result of the strengthened position of Eastern European countries in terms of the power hierarchy among EU members, with Poland, and the Baltic States playing an increasingly larger role.

Key words: Eastern Partnership; EU-Belarus relations; normative power; pragmatic interests; Eastern European countries; decision-making process; political conditionality
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>ENP</td>
<td>European Neighbourhood Policy</td>
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<td>European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument</td>
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<td>EaP</td>
<td>Eastern Partnership</td>
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<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprises</td>
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<td>CFSP</td>
<td>Common Foreign and Security Policy</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The thesis focuses on the analysis of the current relations between Belarus and the EU. Present approach of the EU towards Belarus is of interest due to the fact that after a long period of political isolation of Belarus, there finally emerged a need to articulate EU interests and reconsider its foreign policy to realize its interests. The thesis based on the theory of normative power of Europe provided by Ian Manners (2007). The theory of Europe as a *Normative Power* attempts to define the EU as a unique actor on international arena. Its specificity is based on the fact that it uses non-military methods in foreign relations and puts emphasis on promoting universally applicable normative principles of peace, democracy, human rights, rule of law, equality, social solidarity, good governance and sustainable development.¹ European principles and norms are at the core of EU policy inside and outside its borders. Moreover, it is argued that in the EU politics normative behaviour prevails over material consideration. This theory has been analyzed by several scholars and applied to empirical cases in order to test its validity. My research paper continues this venture by assessing the theory in light of the EU foreign policy towards Belarus and current changes in the relations between Minsk and Brussels. I turned to the *realist framework* in order to introduce a critique of the normative power Europe, specifically directed to Belarus-EU relations.

The relations between Belarus and Europe are entering a new period and one of the components of the policy of re-engagement is the new initiative adopted by the EU called Eastern Partnership (EaP). This is a new multinational forum between the EU and neighbouring states: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan.

Up until 2008 the EU policy towards Belarus was aimed at fostering European norms by applying normative tools. This policy has not prompted both democratization and liberalization of the country nor cooperation between two sides. However as Diez (1999) argues the normative concerns and rational interests are always interconnected in positioning EU in terms of other countries.² Vis-s-vis Belarus, commercial and energy interests of the EU and more specifically of the Eastern European countries explain sidetracking from EU normative agenda.

The main argument is that while the normative connotation of the EU's foreign policy towards Belarus embraces a set of universal values it also encompasses a broader set of

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rationally defined interests that require closer examination. Hence, the analysis of the EU foreign policy helps evaluate the changes in bilateral relations between Brussels and Minsk.

As the case study I will use the launch of the Eastern Partnership initiative as the most important instrument that defines the new policy of EU. I will focus on the process of decision-making in terms of adopting this new initiative towards Eastern European countries. Theoretically I will use the rational actor model of decision-making provided by Graham Allison (2008) and the theory of formal leadership by Jonas Tallberg (2006). These theories purports to explain the main actors involved in the process and the driving forces under its launch. The activities of the governments of Poland, Czech Republic, Sweden and the Baltic countries will be examined in the context of this study. These countries were chosen due to their importance in defining the policy of EU towards Eastern countries and for their significance in the current thawing in relations between EU and Belarus.

1.2. The problem and the aim of study

The main question to be tackled is: what were the main reasons for changing the EU foreign policy towards Belarus after 2008?

This thesis answers following sub-questions: what has changed in the foreign policy of EU towards Belarus after 2008? What factors influenced the launch of the Eastern partnership and invitation to this initiative of authoritarian Belarus? What is the role of Eastern European countries in the current position of EU towards Belarus?

In order to answer these questions I will apply two hypotheses. The first hypothesis argues that while the EU has acted according to the normative power up until 2008, after that date a more pragmatic approach in the foreign policy has been at work. The second hypothesis explains this change by the increasing influence of Eastern European countries in realm of decision-making process within EU, which resulted in a reformed EU foreign policy towards Belarus.

This study differs from the others in that it analyzes the most recent changes in the policy of the European Union towards Belarus using two concepts that have been seldom paired: the loosing normative power of the EU foreign policy towards Belarus and rational interests of the Eastern countries under the changes of this policy. Thus, the study adds a new perspective to the understanding the topic of the Belarus-EU relations. Empirically, the study focuses on previously unexamined documents, including the latest resolutions adopted by the EU institutions (European Parliament’s resolution on Belarus of December 2009 and March 2010) towards Belarus.

This is a very dynamic topic. The relations between Belarus and EU are currently under reconstruction and the initiative that drove this collaboration out of the dead-end is under
implementation. Thus, this topic could benefit from the further elaboration and explorations of the results of Eastern Partnership effectiveness for the EU-Belarus cooperation.

1.3. Methodology

This study is a combination of empirical and theoretical researches. My aim is to test the theoretical approach of EU being a normative power applying it on the current EU foreign policy towards Belarus.

After examining the scholarly material on the foreign policy of the EU, I came to the conclusion of that there is a relatively small interest in the European policy towards Belarus. However, this sounds to be logical. Belarus showed little interests in establishing partnership based on the principles of conditionality, looking only towards the East. The literature has more descriptive character of Belarusian domestic situation. Although some articles of the books include analysis of the EU foreign policy towards Belarus and vice versa. Another problem is lack of theoretical explanation of the policy as well as English materials written by Belarusian authors on the current issue.

This paper is based on the academic books, articles, as well as the EU official documents and information translated from Belarusian original sources. The theoretical part is focused on the books of Sonia Lucarelli and Ian Manners Valuing principles in European Union foreign policy(2007), Helene Sjursen Civilian or military power? European foreign policy in perspective (2007), Karen E. Smith, European Union Foreign Policy in a changing world (2003), Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, Tim Dunne (eds), Foreign Policy: theories, actors, cases (2008), Jonas Tallberg Leadership and negotiations in the European Union (2006) .

As far as the literature is concerned, taking into consideration the problems and limits in achieving the materials needed within Belarusian context, I mainly analyzed the official documents publicized by the EU institutions as well as analytical materials on the corresponded topic of research issued in Belarusian and English languages. The literature chosen provided me with opportunity to systematize the relations between EU and Belarus, the conditions for cooperation, the changes in the approach towards Belarus as well as theoretical framework which can be applied in my case.

In appreciating the literature written on the foreign policy of EU towards Belarus, my attention is to dwell on a currently evolving process: thawing relations between Minsk and Brussels in terms of Belarusian inclusion into the Eastern Partnership. The reason to choose this subject is two-fold: due to the subject’s up-to date nature and growing importance of Belarus within relations between Eastern European countries and the EU.

This Master thesis is organized in the form of qualitative analysis. I have chosen the qualitative method of study as it gave the opportunity to conduct in-depth research of the policy
of European Union towards Belarus and looked at the main factors that moved the relations out of the dead–end. This method is appropriate for analysis of the research question, critical evaluation of the existing literature and estimation of the facts provided.

1.4. Limitations

This study is intended to influence the debate on the EU’s role in the recent changes in cooperation between Minsk and Brussels and as such is targeted to evaluate the foreign policy of the EU towards Belarus.

The main aim of Thesis is to analyze the current changes of the European Union policy towards Belarus in the framework of the launch of the Eastern Partnership. The thesis will focus on the ability of European Union to function as norms exporter in the case of Belarus. The period is mainly covered 2008-2010.

For the assessment of the changes between Belarus and EU, due to the wide range of analysis in general, the scope has been narrowed to exclude the impact of Russian-EU relations, Russia-Belarus relations, as well as the relations with Ukraine.

A variety of obstacles were encountered in this research. It soon became apparent, for example, that exact information on the concrete Belarusian projects within Eastern Partnership would not be forthcoming. This led to a refinement of the analyzing current position of Belarus with the initiative and excluding reliance on quantitative figures. Despite these limitations, sufficient information was found to examine the current changes in relations between Belarus and EU.

1.5. Disposition

The Master Thesis is organized in three parts. The First Chapter introduces the latest changes in the relations between Belarus- EU and the main components and background of these changes. The Second Chapter tests the concept of normative power of Europe in analyzing reformation of the EU foreign policy towards Belarus. Chapter Three focuses on the hypothesis that reveals the reason of recent changes in relations based on increasing role of Eastern European countries in shaping Eastern EU foreign policy. In addition, chapter three offers remarks on the current results of the Eastern Partnership. The last chapter of this study is the Conclusion where the findings of the analysis are summarized and a conclusion is drawn.
2. THE BREAKTHROUGH IN THE REALTIONS BETWEEN BELARUS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Nowadays, the European Union and Belarus are going through an important period in their partnership. After 12 years of isolation, relations between Brussels and Minsk have been thawing over the last year. In the European Council Conclusion on Belarus of March 2008 and November 2009 it was stated that EU “welcomed the increased high-level EU-Belarus dialogue” and declared its “readiness to deepen relations with Belarus”.3

My starting point is that the coercive policy of EU towards Belarus based on conditionality appeared to be ineffective that lead to recent changes in the EU approach that now can be described as two-fold: pragmatic and value-based.

In the first few years of independence, prospects for partnership between EU and Belarus appeared to be good. In 1992 Belarus established diplomatic relations with European Community. Direct co-operation between Belarus and EU provided signing of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) in 1994 and an Interim agreement on trade. At the beginning of Belarusian Cooperation with EU, Belarus was even more oriented to Europe than Ukraine. The West welcomed the policy of Belarus towards quick relinquishing of its strategic nuclear weapons inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time Ukraine delayed relinquishing of its stocks of nuclear weapons and “demanded compensation and earned its image of a problem country in the eyes of the West”.4

Belarus declared its independence in 1991. The early years in transition from 1991 till 1994 were not very prosperous for Belarusian people, the government tried to make several steps towards democracy, however it was unable to control economic situation.5

Although EU-Belarus relations progressed soon after the EU recognized Belarus’ independence, relations began to worsen after the election of President Lukashenka in 1994 who took a course on creation of the Union with Russia. A former state farm director, Alexander Lukashenka was first elected president and “by 1997 he had become the last dictatorship in Europe”.6

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6 Ibid.
By early 1997 Lukashenka created a strong vertical structure of personal power and took total control over all spheres of state’s and people’s life.

After controversial referendum of 1996, there were adopted constitutional amendments that extended presidential power in the country. President’s ability to impose supra-presidential Constitution was a result of high control over state.7

With the 1996 referendum, the institutionalization of personalist authoritarian rule in Belarus was completed. The referendum eliminated all meaningful political competition and removed the opposition from the decision-making process.8

Thus, Partnership and Co-operation agreement between Belarus and EU has never been signed. “The Council stated in its September 1997 conclusions that the EC and their Member States will conclude neither the Interim agreement nor the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement due to the deteriorating situation in bilateral relations”.9

Belarus, being a direct neighbor of EU, has never been able to develop strong partnership with EU. Starting from 1997 EU foreign policy was based on the principle of conditionality by actually focusing on sanctions vis-à-vis Lukashenka’s political regime.

For a long time, the EU policy towards Belarus was aimed at fostering European norms by applying normative tools. The foreign policy of EU towards Belarus up until 2008 can be described as “dual-track”, combining sanctions and trade restrictiveness with promoting democracy. EU issued declarations, resolutions calling for democratic changes and combined them with support for social and democratic development of the country. At the same time the dialogue on the high level was based on the coercive diplomacy. Thus, on 2001 EU imposed visa ban on Lukashenka and other Belarusian officials, it withdrew trade preferences under Generalized System of Preferences. However, all the efforts of EU were mostly unnoticed by Lukashenka. As policy of conditions can only work if a great prize is offered.10 At the same time, Russia increased its influence over Belarus by providing low-cost energy resources and credits.

In 2004 EU launched new policy towards its direct neighbours, including Belarus, called European Neighbourhood policy (ENP). “The aim of the ENP is to avoid new dividing lines on the continent and deepen relations between the EU and its neighbours. The ENP is not about

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enlargement but it is about mutual interests in supporting reforms and modernization”. It is focused on creation of political and economic stability through effective cooperation on political and security issues, economic and trade matters, mobility, environment, integration of transport and energy networks or scientific and cultural cooperation.

Taking into consideration existing high-capacity undemocratic regime, Belarus was not able to use advantages of being member of European Neighborhood Policy. Belarus welcomed the European Neighborhood Policy without responding to basic democratic requirements. Ex-Soviet country was not interested in ENP as the prize to be paid by political elite was too high.

Autocratic rule in Belarus and absence of incentives for regime to implement European conditions have made it impossible for Belarus to benefit from the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy. EU stood ready to develop relations with Belarus further only on condition of democratization of Belarus.

Beginning late 2008 EU has been seeking closer cooperation with Belarus and started the policy of re-engagement that lead to the progress in mutual relations.

First, EU suspended the entry ban on Belarusian officials and started the campaign for reduction of visa fees. The visit of the Finnish Foreign Minister and the OSCE Chairman – in-office Alexander Stubb to Minsk in 2008 opened a series of high-level political exchanges between Belarus and EU.

In 2009 the diplomatic relations between Belarus and EU continued on the positive and progressive course. I cannot but mentioned the official visits of European commissioner for external relations and European neighborhood policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner to Minsk, visit of former high representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary General of the Council of the EU Javier Solana, visit of the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, prime minister of Italy Silvio Berlusconi and other European politicians and official delegations. At the same time after 12 years of European isolation Belarusian president made an official visits to Italy and Lithuania.

Hence, the most important instrument that defines the new policy of EU towards Belarus is launch of new initiative that is part of the Neighbourhood policy - Eastern Partnership. As the analysis has shown, concentrating more on geopolitical factors, the scholars analyzing Belarus-

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14 On 17 of April 2009 Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg paid official visit to Belarus, at the time Czech Republic was a President of European Union Council.
EU breakthrough in the relations, missed analysis of the EU policy towards Belarus and one of the most important factor that turned the relations between Minsk and Brussels from the dead-end – the launch of Eastern Partnership. However, as it is stated in the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit published by Council of the EU in May 2009 – this initiative is “a more ambitious partnership between the European Union and the partner countries”.15 “The Eastern partnership serves the shared commitments to stability, security and prosperity of the EU, the partner countries and indeed the entire European continent. By developing Eastern Partnership that encompasses Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine would have significance for the region as a whole and for Belarus in a particular way”.16

Eastern Partnership has become an important instrument to overcome the dead-end in which Minsk and Brussels have been engaged.

However, the invitation of Belarus to join Eastern partnership posed a dilemma for the EU. The proposal was made to the country with high level of human rights’ violations and undemocratic character of political regime. All in all, the introduction of EaP has become an important part of the EU current policy of re-engagement.

New approach of EU towards Belarus has mainly marked development and breakthrough in the high-level political contacts but has potential of county’s gradual engagement into European economic space.

In 2008, Belarus hit by global crisis requested a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). I cannot but mentioned the fact that the cooperation between IMF and Belarus was halted after 1995 and was renewed again in 2008. After improvement of relations between Belarus and EU, IMF had also started new phase in its collaboration and “approved US$2.46 billion Stand-By Arrangement for Belarus in support of the country's efforts to adjust to external shocks”.17

At present, the European Commission is considering a possibility to grant Belarus microeconomic credit and an opportunity to apply for loans to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank. However, the grant of European financial aid will depend on compliance with all IMF conditions and EU requirements for further democratization of the country. However, in 2009 Brussels already doubled the amount of aid it gives to Belarus in the framework of the European Neighbourhood and

16 Ibid.
Partnership Instrument (ENPI) – from EUR5 million to EUR10 million to improve safety and quality of foodstuffs.\textsuperscript{18}

Belarus being the country against which the European Union applies export quotas for textiles is subject to one of the tightest bilateral textile trade regimes amongst EU trade partners. However, on 1 January 2009 the European Union lifted quotas on 13 categories out of 34 textile products exported by Belarus. As Belarusian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Yevdachenka noticed, although these 13 categories occupy smallest share in the Belarusian export deliveries of textile to Europe, this step is considered to be important in the context of the thawing relations between EU and Belarus.\textsuperscript{19}

However, the economical effectiveness of the Eastern partnership is too soon to be evaluated, the most prospective area of cooperation is creation of the channels of communication and networks, collaboration with officials as well as with representatives of civil society.

Belarus has tricky geographical position, being between strategic interests of the EU and Russia. Thus, many reasons have encouraged the shift in Belarus-EU relations such as relations between Belarus-Russia, Belarus and its direct neighbours, EU and Russia, economic factors and financial crisis. However, one of the main reasons for thawing the relations is the changes in the EU policy towards Belarus.

As the analysis has shown, the normalization of bilateral relations between Belarus and EU mostly occurred on the diplomatic level, however positive improvements were made in the economic sphere as well. The current line of the EU towards Belarus is based on pragmatism and value-based approach. One of the most important aspects that define the current breakthrough in relations is considered to be the launch of Eastern Partnership. The EaP is initiative that has been recognized as the EU’s instrument to extend its Eastern influence. Inviting Belarus, the country with high – capacity undemocratic regime has proved the shift in foreign policy of the EU towards Belarus and the beginning of policy of re-engagement. As the analysis showed, after 12 years of isolations relations between Belarus and EU has been evolving towards more pragmatic cooperation. It is important to examine reformation of EU foreign policy towards Belarus, and fundamental components that caused the pro-active approach.


3. REFORMATION OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF EU TOWARDS BELARUS

3.1. Normative approach in the EU foreign policy towards Belarus 1994-2008

The EU has become an important global player, especially after enlargement of 2004. It has the world’s third largest population and is important in economic and financial terms. Having brought stability within its own borders it seeks to promote advantages of open market, democracy, political reforms to its neighbours. Notwithstanding, that security is one of the precondition to further developments, and it is in the interests of EU to have predictable neighbours. However, security and human affairs go hand in hand with economic and geopolitical interests of EU abroad.

The main European values have been legitimized in the EU core documents starting from the symbolic declarations made by Robert Schuman in 1950 and further developed in the period of democratization of Western Europe and enlargement of EU.20 However, what is more peculiar in the EU as it works on promotion of the same values within internal and external contexts. Thus, according to Lisbon Treaty “The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law”.

As the analysis of the EU official documents in the sphere of foreign relations showed, the main principles on which EU is based were incorporated into the foreign strategies of EU towards the third countries. The main aim of the strategy of exporting European values is to strengthen security and stability in Europe and outside.

I argue that the main reasons for changing the EU foreign policy towards Belarus were connected to pragmatic interests in the economic and energy areas, which weakened the EU normative claims. In order to examine this hypothesis I will explore theoretical aspects of the EU normative power and reformation of EU approach towards Belarus.

There are four major schools in examining the influence of EU on international area based on the essence of its power. The first school is represented by the arguments about military

capabilities of EU. Second one is based on economic potential and civilian capabilities. The third one argues the structure of EU and its role in international relations. The fourth one, the arguments of which I will use in order to test my hypothesis, is represented by the concept of normative power of Ian Manners and is based on ideas and values of EU.22

Ian Manners (2007) and George Therborn (2007) define EU as the normative power constructed on the set of values and norms that are based on historical experience. For this reason, international role of the EU is greatly influenced by the normative nature of its foreign policy and “predisposes it to act in a normative way in world politics” .23 Normative approach in the EU policy prioritizes European norms and ideas before political or economic benefit.24

Ian Manners (2007) defined universally applicable normative principles that were developed through the history of functioning of European Union and legitimized in treaties, declarations: these are peace, democracy, human rights, rule of law, equality, social solidarity, good governance and sustainable development.25 Thus, EU role in international arena is seen as norm-spreading, promoting common principles and values.26 The concept of normative power is socially constructed. It focuses on the ability of EU norms to influence not only its own behavior but behavior of its partners also.27

According to Levenex (2008) the foreign policy of EU can be defined through the concept of external governance. External governance can be explained as the transfer of EU norms to non-member states. Thus the policy of EU towards Belarus is not just international cooperation it is a form of external governance for exporting EU values and interests to the territory of its partner.28

The EU applies six main principles to export its norms. These are:
1) “Contagion” – unintentional export of norms and ideas to third countries. 2) “Informational diffusion” of norms through publishing strategic communications; 3) “Procedural diffusion”-the

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
institutionalization of relations through adoption of agreements, membership in organization. Thus we can argue that EU used this method to diffuse the main principles on Belarus; first through PCA then ENP and now through Eastern Partnership; 4) “Transference” – export of norms through the collaboration in trade, technical assistance. This method includes programs set by EU to approximate neighbours to the European standards; 5) “Overt diffusion” is based on “physical presence of EU” in third countries through establishment of delegation and embassies”; 6) The last process is called “cultural filter” and defines the impact of diffusion of international norms through the adaptation or rejection of them in the third countries.29

Towards Belarus EU used all methods of diffusion of norms, however, it had no results. This policy has not prompted both democratization and liberalization of the country nor cooperation between two sides.

The normative approach of the EU is declared in the official documents addressed to Belarus starting from 1997. EU foreign policy towards Belarus has always embedded normative aspects such as democracy, rule of law, human rights.30

In 2004 EU launched new policy towards its direct neighbours, including Belarus, called European Neighbourhood policy. The Strategy of the ENP was defined in the document “Wider Europe-Neighbourhood: A new framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern Countries” (2003) and in the European Neighbourhood Policy published in May 2004. These documents include sets of main goals towards effective cooperation between EU and its partners in different spheres such as cooperation on political and security issues, economic and trade matters, mobility, environment, integration of transport and energy networks or scientific and cultural cooperation.31 European Neighbourhood Policy aimed at increasing security within and outside European borders by sharing common values with partner countries. The ENP strengthened the normative power Europe according to which cooperation with the countries was put on conditions to the compliance to EU values.

Taking into consideration existing high-capacity undemocratic regime, Belarus has never been able to develop strong partnership with EU. Belarus welcomed the ENP without responding

to the basic democratic requirements. The main EU norms were also incorporated in the EU country strategy papers towards Belarus of 2005-2006 and 2007-2013.

In order to shape its foreign policy EU uses the instruments of soft power (i.e. diplomatic persuasion, negotiation and compromise) and hard power (based on the principle of conditionality).

The power of EU is based on the acceptance of its norms. The neighbouring countries have to adopt these norms in order to be closer to EU in economic and political terms. Thus, political conditionality is defined to be an important instrument in promotion of common European values outside EU borders.

The principle of conditionality is going through all the official documents regarding foreign policy of EU. According to Martin Holland (2002) conditionality has broad meaning and can be analyzed through different perspectives: political, economic; internal and external; positive and negative. EU foreign policy towards the third countries can be defined as the combination of political and economic conditionalities that link the rewards with the execution of policies in the third countries aimed at promotion of democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance as well as specific economic policies.

Political conditionality is defined to be an important instrument in promotion of common European values outside EU borders. “The EU’s conditionality policy in EU external relations is visible through common commercial agreements, association agreements, pre-accession strategy”. However, the effectiveness of EU in the international politics is based on the conditions of its partners to accept the norms of EU. The Belarusian government has never been able to accept the transformation of EU norms into its own territory, although formally it accepts the existence of these norms within Belarusian context.

The principle of conditionality defines the policy of EU towards Belarus after 2006 and is included in the document published by European Commission in November 2006, a non-paper

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What the EU could bring to Belarus. It sets 12 conditions implementation of which could lead to closer relations with Belarus. “The EU stands ready to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people, as soon as the Belarusian government demonstrates respect for democratic values and for the basic rights of the Belarusian people”. In this document EU promises easier travel, financial and technical support, cultural and educational cooperation in return for democratic changes.  

Five further demands were set up by European Commission towards Belarus in October 2008 aimed at improvement of poor human rights record and role of civil society. These are freedom of mass-media, improvements in electoral legislation, release of political prisoners; freedom of assembly and better conditions for registration and work of NGO’s.

Analyzing EU-Belarus relations and mainly the policy of EU towards Belarus T. Dumasy (2003) as many other researches puts the question of effectiveness of the EU policy of isolation.

Frank Schimmelfennig (2008) argues that the effectiveness of the policy of conditionality is defined by “the credible membership perspective”. Moreover, the level of domestic political power costs of adaptation of EU norms is another factor that influences conditionality’s effectiveness.

I applied the “model of external incentives” provided by Sedelmeier (2004) and Schimmelfennig (2004) to analyze the effectiveness of the EU foreign policy towards Belarus. According to it the effectiveness of the norms’ transfer predetermined by incentives to comply with the rules as well as credibility of the EU conditionality and domestic costs of their adoption. Thus, the state adopts the rules if the benefits of EU rewards exceed the cost of adoption.

Hence, the model is highly successful in analyzing the ineffectiveness of the policy of EU towards Belarus.

The main factors which influence the cost-benefit balance of EU rules adoption are:

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1) Determinacy of conditions. Thus, the rules can be adopted by the third countries if they are clearly defined and bound to rewards;\textsuperscript{44}

2) Size and speed of rewards. “The effectiveness of norms transfer increases with the size and speed of rewards”. With this argument in mind, needless to say that the EU has never defined the exact lists of rewards for Belarusian Government in case of compliance to the rules set;\textsuperscript{45}

3) Credibility of conditionality that is defined by the superiority of bargaining power of external governance and defined targets.\textsuperscript{46}

The cost of the adoption and the incentives for rules’ implementation are considered to be the driving factors forward the compliance by the thirds country.

Taking into consideration the factors mentioned above we can evaluate the effectiveness of the policy of EU towards Belarus. The EU foreign policy appeared to be ineffective due to the lack of incentives provided as well as the high cost for the regime to comply with liberal-democratic reforms that could undermine its functioning.

Since Belarus has never been suggested a membership perspective and it is governed by authoritarian regime, for which the compliance to democratic rules could mean the loss of its power, such policy did not tend to have a significant impact on the country.

Ineffectiveness of the policy of conditionality applied by EU towards Belarus can be also proved by the absence of any changes in bilateral trading relations after withdrawal from Generalized System of Preferences. EU is still one of the main trading partners of Belarus with 44% of export directed to EU in 2008 while 32% is directed to Russia.\textsuperscript{47}

For all that, sanctions are of limited effectiveness, especially against non-democratic regimes. “Dialogue and support are generally more appropriate techniques than conditionality for promoting broadened participation and competitive politics”.\textsuperscript{48} Geoffrey Harris (2000) points out that economic cooperation with Belarus could approximate political reforms in Belarus, while the policy of isolation just strengthening the political regime of Lukashenka.\textsuperscript{49}

Normative approach of EU towards Belarus had little chance to succeed. For a long time the European Union foreign policy towards Belarus was aimed at fostering European norms. Belarus had no strong incentives offered by EU in order to be normatively dependent on the EU. At the same time EU being concerned with ensuring stability within and outside its borders, has

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Geoffrey Harris, “The wider Europe” in Fraser Cameron (ed), The future of Europe: integration and enlargement, Routledge, Oxon, 2000, p.110.
always been interested in collaboration with Belarus on the questions of cross-border crime, illegal immigration, transition of gas.

EU has put its main principles of promotion of human rights, democracy on paper, has developed a legal basis with sets of tools for this purpose. Hence, formalizing of such principles made the foreign policy of EU less vulnerable to manipulation, less flexible that explain the problem of inconsistency. “In other words, despite the treaty-based requirements for consistency, the actual politics of the EU’s external relations shows a stronger tendency towards a flexible adherence to principles exercised by the EU when it comes to deciding where, when and why to press the principles it proposes to stand by”. Inconsistency is the result of consideration of economic and political significance of the third countries. Thus, the offers of trade and association agreement, financial and technical support, diplomatic recognition are made conditional on European principles and norms. 

Hence, the incentives to follow European norms which are offered to EU partners are important components defining the course of relations. The EU does not react with a coherent defense of its main principles because when dealing with political partners that are of interests to EU pragmatism prevails over values and principles. Normative concerns and strategic interests are always interconnected in EU foreign policy.

Strong adherence to the main normative prerequisites makes it less flexible in world arena. Consequently, being an international actor, EU has other goals which are stated in its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) among them economic and geopolitical interests. “The EU is an organic whole with multiple dimensions in which competing visions of deferent actors function”. Thus, energy and security dimensions are becoming more important goals within EU foreign policy that undermine normative status of the EU in world politics.

Absence of insensitivity as well as vagueness of requirements of the policy of conditionality lead to unwillingness of Belarusian government to comply with conditions set by European Commission and to reformation of EU foreign approach towards Belarus.

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50 Ibid., pp.128-129.
52 Helene Sjursen, “The EU as a “normative” power: how can this be?” in Helene Sjursen (ed) Civilian or military power? European foreign policy in perspective, Taylor and Francis Ltd, Oxon, 2007, pp.68-70.
54 Ibid.
55 Anne Morrissey Haglund, Exploring the export of European union values –the European neighbourhood policy, Vaxjo Universitet, Vaxjo, 2005,pp.4-8.
3.2. Normative power and rationale interests as the main components defining new policy of EU towards Belarus

A notion of EU being a normative power which was brought by Ian Manners has become disputable by other scholars. I will turn to the realist framework based on the arguments of Diez (2007), Sjursen (2007), Hyde-Price (2006) in order to introduce a critique of the normative power Europe, specifically directed to Belarus-EU relations. I will further argue that pragmatic interests in the economic and energy areas weakened the EU normative claims. However, EU values are still counted as norms and interests cannot be easily separated and as political conditionality has recently re-entered the agenda.

Thomas Diez (2007) argues that normative power of Europe is a self-construction strengthening integration process with new force and establishing EU identity against others rather than objective analytical concept. At the same time the notions of EU as a good power need to be revised because of the EU “hegemonic” behavior in foreign policy affairs, which means that EU could influence other partners’ values.  

However as Diez (1999) points out the normative concerns and rational interests are always interconnected in positioning EU in terms of other countries. Vis-s-vis Belarus, commercial and energy interests of the EU explain sidetracking from EU normative agenda.

The main argument is that while the normative connotation of the EU's foreign policy towards Belarus embraces a set of universal values it also encompasses a broader set of rationally defined interests that require closer examination. The EU ability to become purely normative power is far from being ideal. It will always be influenced by geopolitical issues, economical factors, lobbying interests.

The EU has considered to be a normative power weak in military dimensions but strong in economic terms. The EU uses various instruments to exert its political power, mainly these are economic, cultural and diplomatic instruments. The commitments of EU to promote human rights, democracy are the main components that define EU status on international arena. However, Thomas Diez (1999) stresses the importance of geopolitical and security factors in positioning EU in terms of other countries. Energy and security dimensions are becoming more important goals within EU foreign policy that undermine normative status of EU in world

The importance of security came into agenda on 2003 and was formalized in the Security Strategy of EU. Thus, European Security Strategy (2003) and EU Energy Security and Solidarity Plan (2008) define EU as important global player, one of its main aim is to build secure world. The EU strategy argues that the “best protection of security is a world of well-governed democratic states” and pointing out that the main instruments for securing the order are “spreading good governance, supporting social and political reforms, establishing the rule of law and protection of human rights”. However, European values and norms go hand in hand with political, economic and geopolitical interests.

Energy security is becoming the biggest concern for EU today. Those academicians who explain EU foreign policy in terms of realist perspective agree that even though the EU foreign policy is based on promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and good governance, the economic and geopolitical interests sometimes prevail over basic values. I cannot but mentioned that EU is greatly dependent on exported energy resources. One of the main suppliers of energy resources to EU is Russia. EU dependence on Russian’s oil accounts to 30% and on gas to 42%.

However, Russia is trying to apply aggressive energy policy, taking efforts of making EU’s energy market more dependent. Russia tries to increase the amounts of exported oil and gas by signing long-term bilateral agreements with separate EU Member States. It takes efforts to monopolize pipelines of Belarus, Ukraine and other Eastern European countries, increase the share of its property on European energy market that makes EU more dependent on Russia.

With their natural resources and strategic geographical position, the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus hold important potential as energy transiting and producing countries. Thus, EU governed by rational economic and national interests, undertakes steps towards diversification of supplies of energy resources.

As the analysis of the theoretical framework of the EU foreign policy has shown, it is hard to define the foreign policy from one perspective rationalist or normative, nowadays it has both components: European values and core interests. However, the developments of CFSP

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61 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
tended to move EU towards the sphere of realist approach. Hyde-Price (2006) argues that “no actor can effectively pursue its own interests in a diverse international system and claim to be doing good by other at the same time”.

I share the fact that values and norms are presented in political process between EU and Belarus, however, this is not the only factor behind the current policy of EU towards Belarus. Power is the essence of politics, thus through the help of foreign policy instruments states and their representatives always act in order to assure their national interests.

The realist goals underpin foreign policy of EU towards Belarus, particularly the goals of ensuring security of the externalized border, migration and gas supply. Thus, EU foreign policy towards Belarus can be described as combining set of security, stability, democracy, human rights - “values/security nexus”.

EU while dealing with Belarus faced limits of exportation of European values and norms. EU tried to extend bilateral cooperation basing on the policy of conditionality, although, Belarus expressed less interests in this cooperation and such policy appeared to be ineffective. It goes without saying that it is difficult to elaborate common foreign policy beyond the strong position of importance of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. For almost 12 years policy of EU of imposing sanctions and trade restrictions on Belarus has not been able to change political situation in the country and led bilateral relations to a dead-end.

The changes of the EU approach towards Belarus have been reasoned by a number of factors. First, the absence of results of EU policy of conditionality towards authoritarian regime. Moreover the war between Georgia and Russia, as well as the problems with gas transits between Russia and Belarus and Russia and Ukraine gave possibility to the EU to develop more pragmatic approach in the light of the existing conditions.

Since the time of gaining independence in 1991, Belarusian foreign policy was mostly adopted to Russian interests. Weak national identity of Belarusians and economic and geopolitical interests of Lukashenka’s regime in Russia defined his foreign policy till 2008. Belarusian decision-makers have followed integration with Russia from the beginning of Lukashenka’s presidency. Russia is the main trade partner of Belarus: one of the main importers

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of Belarusian products and the main exporter of raw and energy materials. However, starting from 2008 the situation began to change. There is a constant struggling between Minsk and Moscow in energy sphere, trade sphere and diplomatic sphere that could also explain the current changes in the EU-Belarus relations.

Consequently, one of the main reasons for thawing relations between EU and Belarus were changes in the policy of EU towards Belarus. The lack of progress in the policy of EU towards Belarus forced it to consider more flexible approach.

Starting from 2008 EU has been seeking closer cooperation with Belarus and started the policy of re-engagement that lead to the progress in bilateral relations. I argue that the Eastern Partnership initiative is the most important instrument that defines the new EU approach. Inviting Belarus, the country with high–capacity undemocratic regime has proved the shift in foreign policy of the EU towards Belarus. Inis Claude (2003 cited in Jorgensen 2007) recognizes “principle behavior of the EU in terms of application of adaptive policy to meet circumstances”.68

Being a “normative power” it is in the Declaration of Eastern Partnership adopted on May, 7 2009 where the EU formally placed mutual interests before the commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.69 This fact proves that EU foreign policy towards Eastern neighbours tends to prioritize the pragmatic interests over values. The Eastern Partnership symbolizes a change of paradigms in the foreign policy of the EU, which is defined by the change in approach to its neighbourhood.

The declaration on Eastern Partnership is divided into four areas: Democracy, good governance and stability; Economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies; Energy security and Contacts between people. These areas of cooperation can be seen within normative power framework as they bind the partners to the rule of law, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. At the same time Economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies as well as Energy security are going hand in hand with EU pragmatic interests. All in all, the EaP is aimed at approximation of EU neighbours to economic and political standards of EU, as well as commitments to providing security and stability inside and outside of EU.


The prove of rational overbalancing normative approach, more specifically EU energy interests, can be also found in the document published by European commissioner for external relations and European neighborhood policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner. It is stated that one of the main concerns for EU nowadays is security and if the EU wants to protect its own security, it needs to move on the key desires of its neighbours. “We are asking a lot, and we have to be willing to give in return” - said Ferrero-Waldner. One of the instruments for realizing new policy of European Union towards Belarus has become Eastern Partnership. “Eastern Partnership will bring stability and prosperity dividends to European citizens as well as its neighbours”.  

I could argue that the current shift in the EU foreign approach towards Belarus doesn’t mean the complete refusal of European values and norms when dealing with authoritarian regime-the explanation of it are the rational economic and energy interests, adaptive policy towards infectiveness of the policy of isolation and changes in the Belarusian foreign priorities.

Both EU and Belarus have decided to develop more pragmatic relations based on mutually beneficial spheres of interests, however the European norms and values and still on agenda. As it is stated in the Council Conclusion on Belarus adopted in November 2009, the EU is ready to deepen its relations with Belarus, however the progress will depend on further developments towards democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

As the analysis has shown, current line of the EU towards Belarus is based on rationale model of acting as well as value-based approach. Eastern Partnership is initiative that has been recognized as the EU’s instrument to extend its Eastern influence.

Ferrero-Waldner has proved that the policy of re-engagement will continue, and according to the last data of the European Commission, it is planned to provide additional EUR 200 million of financial aid to Belarus as well as to increase financing of European programmes that are realized in Belarus.

As Commissioner for development policy Karel de Gucht explained during the debates on Belarus in European Parliament on December 2009, “the core element of the foreign policy of the EU towards Belarus has to be pragmatism combined with flexibility. Such two-fold approach will lead to positive sum game with Belarus”. At the same time EU defines the importance of commitments towards democratization of the country. I cannot but mention the fact that both

73 Ibid.
Belarusian and EU officials stress the importance of improvement in relations between two sides based on sound pragmatism and mutual respect.\textsuperscript{74}

I argue that conflicts of interests between EU and Belarus will take place in the most disputable normative areas of Belarus’ democratization. Taking into consideration normative power Europe, breaking in the relations with the EU is inevitable if Belarus refuses to commit to the normative requirements of the EU. On the other hand, as the fact with EaP adoption showed, the ability of Belarus to initiate cosmetic changes towards democratization may move forward the relations of Belarus and EU on the pragmatic-normative basis.\textsuperscript{75}

As the analysis showed, the foreign policy of EU towards Belarus is losing its normative direction. Besides energy and security concern, another reason that caused the current changes is position of Poland and other Eastern European countries in their support of Eastern dimension within European neighbourhood. In the next chapter, I will analyze decision-making process under the launch of Eastern Partnership, focusing on the influence of Eastern European countries in realm of decision-making processes, which resulted in a reformed EU foreign approach towards Belarus.


4. NEW EU MEMBERS AS THE MAIN ACTORS UNDER REFORMATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN MINSK AND BRUSSELS

4.1. The launch of the Eastern Partnership through the lens of rational actor model

Nowadays, the EU is going through a re-vision of its foreign strategy towards neighbouring countries in the realm of European Neighbourhood Policy. The launch of the Black Sea Synergy, followed by the Mediterranean Union and now a new Eastern Partnership changed the ENP towards more region specific policy.

My case study is focused on the changes in EU’s foreign policy towards Belarus. After analyzing different approaches to foreign policy, I will focus on the process of decision–making in the EU foreign policy. The Eastern Partnership is considered to be one of the components of new EU strategy towards Belarus. I argue that the current changes in the bilateral relations pointing towards a tighter cooperation are caused by the position of new Member States (particularly Poland) in regards to the strengthening of the Eastern dimension and counterbalancing the Southern priorities within ENP.

The Eastern Partnership is an initiative officially proposed by Sweden and Poland, but which was supported by the efforts of many EU members, among them the ones newly added to the Union. The initiative combined the material and geostrategic interests of Eastern members of EU that pushed the question up on the agenda of both the Commission and the European Council.

Theoretically I will use the literature on the process of policy adoption and examine the main factors that influenced the direction of negotiation within EU decision-making process. Besides, I will consider the main actors involved in the process and distinguish the principal driving forces behind the creation of the EaP. Thus, I will argue that the growing influence of Eastern European countries on the foreign policy of EU changed the relations between Belarus and EU towards its thawing.

The foreign policy of EU is the complex combination of decision-making processes on different levels, involving numerous actors, structures, spheres, areas. According to Carlsnaes (2008), foreign policy is conducted by “coalition of actors on both levels: domestic and international”. The decision made by the country greatly depends firstly on “the responsible decision’ makers”: heads of state, governments, political parties. Moreover, we cannot but

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mention the importance of other ministries, lobbying firms, organizations, research institutes, mass media. Other factors that affect decision-making process are the political, cultural, national, regional, global structures within which the actors operate. All in all, it is impossible to include each of the factors mentioned while examining the process of decision-making.

Within foreign policy, three levels of analysis can be distinguished. They are: individual, state and international levels. While several actors dominate on the individual level, structures affect the state and international levels. Eastern Partnership is initiative proposed by Poland and Sweden and further supported by all the member states on the European level. Thus, analysis of EaP is mostly based on the international level, however, state level has to be taken into consideration, as it were the national-administrative actors who pushed the question to agenda of the European Commission and the Council.

There are three approaches to analysis of foreign policy depending on the importance of either structural elements, actors or combination of both factors. First approach focuses on the importance of structural factors (structure of the international system, the role of rational states within international structures, domestic power capabilities, role of decision-making bodies) that cause the country to act in particular way in decision-making process. Thus, the Eastern Partnership was developed in shared responsibilities between the national governments of the Member States as well as the Council of the EU, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the EU Council. Thus, the importance and interests of these actors as well as the role of the EU within international system have to be taken into consideration in the analysis of decision-making process.

The social–constructivist approach emphasizes the affects of norms, rules, identities on international relations and decisive role of social structures in determining the foreign-policy actors’ behavior. The foreign policy of EU comprises the elements of social-constructivist’s aspects. Thus, the EU approach towards Belarus till 2008 prioritizes EU norms. Though, the EU norms are also embodied in the EaP, it is insufficient to analyze the launch of the initiative only through the lens of values’ importance as the cooperation between EU and member countries is based on the commitments to EU values as well as mutual interests.

The second group is represented by individual approaches to foreign-policy analysis. This group consists of actor-based approaches that stress the importance of personality of actors, their

78 Ibid.
interests, believes that affect the policy-making behavior.\textsuperscript{80} EaP analysis based on individual approach focuses on the importance of European politicians’ motives as well as private and state companies seeking the realization of the interests through the launch of EaP.

As far as the analysis of decision-making process within EaP is concerned structural approach is more relevant to apply in this particular case. Studying of foreign policy documents on Eastern Partnership as well as scholar materials has shown, the adoption of the new Eastern policy was influenced by rational and strategic behavior of EU members. Thus, individual approach is not relevant as it hard to distinguish separate politicians, lobbying group, individuals behind adoption of the Eastern Partnership. In this particular case, countries acted as unified actors, pursuing value-maximizing goals, strategic behavior, thus, in accordance with realist assumptions.

Decision-making process can be viewed through frameworks of three models: rational actor model, organizational behavior model, governmental politics model. These models were introduced by Graham Allison in his research of Cuban missile crisis of 1971.

The rational actor model analyzes the case as the purposive “acts of unified national governments”. The model focuses on the national interests of the country, rational objectives, value-maximizing action, on the calculation of different alternatives, taking into consideration threats and opportunities which actor defines itself.\textsuperscript{81}

The second model – organizational behavior model analyzes the “outputs of existing organizations functioning according to regular patterns of behavior”. I cannot say but mention the fact that it is difficult to recognize government as unified actor, as it composed from different organization with “sets of standard procedures and programmes”. The final decisions made by decision-making body satisfy at least part of the interests of each of the groups participating.\textsuperscript{82}

The third model is an individual based model that focuses on intergroup bargaining, power balances within the group compounded by separate actors. In this case, researches concentrate more on the influence of individuals and interests pursuing by them.\textsuperscript{83}

I argue that rational actor model is the most appropriate to conduct profound research of the decision-making process under the launch of the EaP. First of all, it implicates the structural approach, thus strengthening the role of the national governments as well as the EU institutions in the decision-making process, moreover it takes into consideration the structure of international system focusing on the rationale-behavior of the EU within it. The organizational behaviour

\textsuperscript{82}Ibid., p.224.
\textsuperscript{83}Ibid.
model as well as individual actor model do not comprise fundamental analysis of the factors mentioned, focusing mainly on the individual – actor behavior and the bargaining power of national Governments. The EaP was a decision made by European Commission and the Council in cooperation with National governments of the EU.

The EU consists of 27 member-countries, with particular interests, ideas, preferences, goals. Thus, the “garbage can” one more model of decision-making introduced by Cohen in 1972 and elaborated by Kingdon (1984) may also apply. This model states that an organization is a combination of problems, solutions, decision-makers and the question is decided only by a “trial and error procedure”. So, the policy-making system is uncertain, “solutions are joined to problems, and both of them are joined to certain political forces”.  

The emphasis here is that policy-making process is a result of random linking of problem streams and solution streams influenced by political events. However, as scholars apply this model to EU policy-making as the most appropriate one in explaining decision-making process, I could argue that it is not relevant to my case study.  

One reason why the decision of setting EaP is not random is that national interests of the countries who were leading sides of putting the question to agenda had concrete policy ideas that were determined by their interests and preferences. Moreover, as the analysis of EU foreign policy has shown, the decision was driven by national interests of the countries that are put into bargaining process with EU member states. Thus, I consider my study case to be described through rational framework as the most appropriate one.

However, it is insufficient to view the process through only one prospective of decision-making models. As Allison argues, “the models complement each other and by combining the factors from different model it is possible to receive profound analysis of the situation”. Hence, my analysis of decision-making process will be mostly based on rational-actor assumptions, however I will also apply social-constructivist approach focusing on the importance of EU values in adoption of EaP and invitation of Belarus to become a member of it.

4.2. Agenda-setting and policy adoption within Eastern Partnership’s decision-making process

The decision-making process consists of next phases: problem definition; proposal drafting; policy adoption; implementation and evaluation.

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85 Ibid., p.25
86 Ibid., p.227
In order to determine the main driving forces under the launch of EaP and Belarus’s inclusion herein, I will examine the process of decision-making, in particular, the first three stages as the phase of implementation of Eastern Partnership is still under process.

The preparation and introduction of the policy requires high levels of experience, skills and a good knowledge of operation at the EU level. As I will argue in my analysis, before the agenda-setting process, EU members, especially those closer to Eastern border, were aware of the consolidation of efforts towards strengthening of Eastern dimension.

The Eastern Partnership was elaborated within ENP and took into consideration its disadvantages. It contains a set of concrete instruments that are defined by the specificity of Eastern region.

In the research paper I will pay attention on the role that EU members played in decision-making process. As it was argued, this is the process that has to be viewed through rational model of decision-making, thus taking into consideration the interests of states and EU itself.

One of the factors that have to be taken into consideration on the stage of opinion formation is influence of mass media. For this reason, Polish minister of Foreign Affairs Radoslaw Sikorski held a conference explaining the goals and benefits of initiative. He has stated that one of the main goals of Polish foreign policy is to support eastern European countries democratization and economic development. More stable and economically developed country will be more attractive partner for EU.\(^\text{87}\)

On March 2008, European Council adopted the French proposal of setting up the Mediterranean Initiative aimed at reinforcing the cooperation between EU and Mediterranean region’s countries.\(^\text{88}\) Paris’ successful lobbying of its project proved the necessity for the EU to promote the Eastern Partnership. Thus, Swedish-Polish proposal of Eastern partnership counterbalanced the interests between EU member states and served as structural factor influencing and fostering the decision-making process within Eastern dimension of ENP.

The Swedish-Polish proposal was put on the table of General Affairs and External Relations Council in May 2008. The proposal was aimed at strengthening regional cooperation with the EU’s eastern neighbors on the base of existing ENP. The initiative would serve to implement ambitious objectives in the sphere of viza-facilitation procedure, environmental protection, energy security, trade and cultural cooperation. The Polish-Swedish proposal was


approved as a concept under name “Eastern Partnership” in June 2008. The deepening of the EU’s integration with the Black Sea countries (introduction of the Black Sea Synergy in 2007) as well as the elaboration of the new Southern dimension, led Poland and Sweden to begin developing a new policy vis-à-vis the Union’s Eastern neighbours. The proposal was based on the German idea of “ENP plus” proposed in 2000, which implied creation of specific Eastern dimension within ENP, however at that time it did not receive enough support to be adopted.

One month after the Eastern Partnership initiative was released, EU leaders welcomed the Polish-Swedish initiative and mandated the Commission to prepare a proposal for the Eastern Partnership, which was presented in December 2008 in a Communication to the Parliament and the Council. Moreover, Russian-Georgian war of 2008 fostered the elaboration of the EaP concept. Thus, on December 2008 the European Commission announced 2008 its vision concerning the Eastern Partnership to EU member states and European Parliament.

Finally, the European Union’s Prague Summit on May 7, 2009 approved the Partnership in a Joint Declaration with six partner countries. The declaration states that the “Eastern Partnership is launched as a common endeavour of the EU Member States and their Eastern European partners (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia) founded on mutual interests and commitments as well as on shared ownership and responsibility”.

The EaP was the first initiative proposed by the new members of EU, and therefore the first successful attempt to push their national interests onto the Brussels agenda.

It is important to consider the position of the countries during the proposal drafting and policy adoption stages of decision-making. Examining the process through the rational actor model it is worth to evaluate what was the rationale behind the adoption of Eastern Partnership and what interests did the EU and especially Eastern European countries pursue when they invited authoritarian Belarus into it.

First of all, we could identify those countries who were the supporters of Eastern Partnership: the initiators (Poland, Sweden) as well as the Central European and Baltic countries. Seeing no results of the policy of isolation towards Belarus (Lukashenka’s refusal of initiating democratic reforms in the country) and having their own interests of fostering cooperation with Minsk (mainly in economic and energy sphere) these countries were against the continuation of the policy of isolation, thus, welcomed EaP as a new opening-up to regime. It is important to

90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
note that from old members there was a great support of Germany. Actually, Angela Merkel was the only Western European leader to attend the Prague European Summit on Eastern Partnership.

However, the project was not equally supported by EU members. At the beginning this new policy raised skepticism of some countries which have different geographical preferences. The fears of members were connected to three factors. First, they believed that EaP could overlap other initiatives already existing within ENP. Second factor connected to the fear of those countries that are more interested in the support of Southern dimension of ENP. The third question was connected to geopolitical issues, and Russia vs. EU battle for the sphere of influence on Eastern countries. The Netherlands was among the countries that took a principled position against the Belarusian inclusion into EaP, and pointed out on the absence of respect of human rights and undemocratic regime in the country. It followed a normative position: that Belarus would be able to become EaP member only if it complies with EU democratic principles, in a classical example of political conditionality.

Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, and some Mediterranean countries were at first skeptical to new initiative as they relied on another project for the south-east area – the Black Sea Synergy and the Union for the Mediterranean. Later, the position of these countries changed. After receiving assurance from Polish politicians and the European Commission that those initiatives would be complimentary and wouldn’t compete each other, they supported the Eastern Partnership. Thus, the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit states that “complimentarity with regional initiatives between the European Union and relevant partner countries, in particular the Black Sea Synergy, will be ensured”.

Despite the different positions of EU members towards new initiative, all in all it was received well and as a result was adopted. However, the support of all the members can be explained by the raise of rationale in EU foreign policy. The energy issues appeared to be of core priority within Eastern Partnership. The countries of Eastern Europe are strategically important to EU as all the energy roots go through these countries. For the EU member states, Belarus is an

97Ibid.
important energy transit country.\textsuperscript{99} The integration of these countries into the EU economy would strengthen Europe’s energy security. Thus, the scope of cooperation in the energy sphere under Eastern Partnership includes integration of energy markets, harmonisation of regulatory framework, improvements of energy efficiency.\textsuperscript{100}

Belarus has a common border with three European countries: Lithuania, Poland, Latvia. These countries are interested in bilateral cooperation with Belarus that could increase economic, cultural exchange. Such cooperation is profitable for both sides. Moreover, EU has to provide security within its borders, thus is interested in cooperation on illegal migration, organized crime.

One of the driving forces of Eastern partnership is considered to be Poland. After accession to EU, Poland is claiming to be a leader in the relation between EU and Eastern neighbouring countries.

The ENP has often been criticized by Poland because of its ineffectiveness and unbalanced policy towards Eastern and Southern dimensions. However, after 2004 Poland received the right to integrate its own interests into EU policy. Poland became an advocate and promoter of Belarusian question in EU. According to prime-minister of Poland Donald Tusk “Poland role as a leader in Eastern dimension of EU policy has been recognized and confirmed unanimously”.\textsuperscript{101}

Poland is interested in development of cooperation with Belarus especially within joint projects in energy sphere. Besides, Polish business elite is interested in privatization of Belarusian companies. The interests are mainly concentrated in economic area and tourism. Nowadays, there are 534 companies with Polish capital in Belarus, besides Poland is holding the 15 position in the rating of the foreign investments to Belarus. Thus, Poland and Belarus see the potential in fostering mutual cooperation.\textsuperscript{102}

In September 2009, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland initiated talks within European Parliament and European Commission on setting up new position of European

commissioner on the questions of Eastern Partnership. Thus, Poland tries to prioritize the new initiative within foreign policy of EU. However, the decision is still pending.  

All in all, the role of Belarusian neighbours in activization of dialogue between Brussels and Minsk is important for both Eastern European countries and Belarus. Even during the period of isolation Lithuania and Poland engaged in informal meetings with Belarusian officials.

Despite the principled position of EU towards Belarus, in 2006 former Polish President Kwasniewski proposed “giving Belarus a chance to leave behind its isolation and open itself to possibilities for cooperation”. At the same time, Lithuania held high-level talks with the Belarusian authorities, because of the fact that “if we don’t talk to them, Moscow will”. Latvia, Poland, Lithuania were against Belarus being removed from the Generalised System of Preferences in 2006 because they were aware it could influence their economies as well.

Eastern policy is an important vector in Czech, Polish, Baltic countries’ foreign policies as well. These countries showed the greatest interest in cooperation on energy security, migration issues, democracy promotion, economic collaboration. It is in their interests to have predictable neighbours which could guarantee stability within their territories.

So far, Eastern European countries have not ever been successful initiators of any projects within EU foreign policy. It is them, along with Sweden, who have strongly advocated greater for EU engagement with its Eastern neighbours and especially Belarus and Ukraine. However, within the EU which has many diverse members and interests, an initiative only succeeds when a strong state pays lots of attention and efforts to win the votes of other members.

Thus, to make it easier to gain EU approval among other EU members, the Poles invited Sweden to take part in this initiative. The Polish prime-minister confirmed that "Poland asked Sweden because this is a very experienced country in terms of EU affairs and also because as a country it does not border our eastern neighbors". The assistance of Sweden helped to foster the process of institutionalization of Eastern Partnership. Moreover, Sweden having experience in cooperating with EU institutes facilitated the process of bringing the question into EU agenda.

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105 Ibid.
Foreign policy priorities of the Swedish EU presidency in 2009 were strongly oriented eastwards. Thus, leadership within Eastern Partnership gave Sweden a chance to strengthen its positions within EU, especially within Eastern dimension of the European foreign policy.\footnote{Swedish Presidency of the EU, \textit{Work Programme for the Swedish Presidency of the EU 1 July-31 December 2009}, 2009 retrieved 1 May 2010, \url{http://www.se2009.eu/polopoly_fs/1.6255!menu/standard/file/Arbetsprogram%20f%C3%B6r%20det%20sveriges%20ordförandeskapet%201%20juli-31%20dec%202009.pdf}.}

One more factor influenced decision-making process within Eastern Partnership: the presidency of Czech Republic.


It was under the presidency of Czech Republic that Eastern Partnership was institutionalized. On 7 May 2009, the European Union’s Prague summit approved the “Eastern Partnership”. The summit also mandated the European Commission to put the policy into practice.\footnote{Council of the European Union, \textit{Joint declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit}, 2009 retrieved 12 October 2009, \url{http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107589.pdf}.}

The importance of Eastern dimension within Czech foreign policy rose after EU accession in 2004. It was based on the support of “Europeanization in the Eastern neighbourhood as well as economic cooperation with these countries”.\footnote{David Kral, “Czech Republic and the Eastern Partnership –from a by-product to beloved child in Isabella Albrycht (ed), \textit{The Eastern Partnership in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy and V4 agenda}, Kosciusko Institute, 2009, p.10} Czech Republic took a “pro-active” role in shaping EU foreign policy towards Eastern countries.\footnote{Ibid., p.11.}

Jonas Tallberg (2006) pays attention on the importance of formal leadership within EU negotiations. The theory of formal leadership and its importance in decision-making process is supported in practice by the example of the adoption of EaP under the presidency of Czech Republic. The chairman is an actor of power who enjoys the opportunity to influence and direct multilateral negotiations.\footnote{Jonas Tallberg, \textit{Leadership and negotiations in the European Union}, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, p.2.} Tallberg argues that the role of chair in negotiations was neglected although the formal leadership gives the country possibility to favour national interests of the country and the results of negotiations.\footnote{Ibid., p.3.}

Tallberg confirms that multilateral negotiations are not easy game played by actors with different interests, goals, thus, in order to make the process more effective, “the states delegate
functions of agenda management, brokerage and representation to the chairmanship of international organization”.\textsuperscript{115} With the Czech EU Council’s presidency the EaP has become a foreign policy priority of the Union and a lot of efforts have been put in the launching of the initiative. After the official presentation of EaP proposal by European Commission in December 2008, the new initiative did not receive support of all EU members.\textsuperscript{116} Thus, during its Presidency Czech Republic face the challenge of achieving the progress in discussion of the disputable issues of EaP before official launch of the EaP in May 2009. During the March European Council Meeting under Czech Presidency, new amendments were adopted to assure the agreement of the countries concerned. Thus, EaP March Declaration pointed out that EaP is not anti-Russian initiative, it doesn’t imply future membership to the six EaP countries and “it will be effective complementarity between the Eastern Partnership and existing regional initiatives in the EU's neighbourhood”.\textsuperscript{117} Moreover, the European Council called for “all necessary preparations to be made for the Eastern Partnership before the launching summit with the partner countries on 7 May 2009”.\textsuperscript{118} The fact that in March the Council accepted the Commission’s proposals made three months before without major changes proved a significant success of Czech EU presidency. “Our dream has come true, we have been able to adopt the Eastern Partnership,” said Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg after the Summit.\textsuperscript{119}

Tallberg pointed out that EU presidency raises the efficiency of decision-making process within EU, at the same time it helps the governing country to achieve outcomes in accordance with their interests. Moreover, one of the beneficiaries of presidency is that it “speeds up the negotiations and mitigates collective-action problems”.\textsuperscript{120} Thus, the Presidency helped to put into agenda the core priorities of the Czech foreign policy, moreover, it fostered the process of the EaP adoption and the beginning of the implementation stage of the new initiative.

One more controversial issue that the Czech Presidency had to deal with was the involvement of the authoritarian Belarus into EaP. Doubts remained till the time Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg visited Belarus and invited official Minsk to attend EaP Summit of May 2009. Being opposed to the policy of isolation towards Belarus, Czech Republic took a

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
strong position on inclusion of Belarus into EaP and enhancing cooperation between EU-Belarus.

In my case study I want to put emphasis on the importance of EU presidency in negotiating Eastern Partnership. As a consequence, the Czech case of presidency in EU proves how the country may foster to bring to the EU agenda new policy initiative which fully corresponds to its national interests. Having prepared the ground in the period before presidency, Czech Government used that time to consolidate the initiative. However we cannot diminish the role of Commission as policy initiator. Thus, it is easier for the presidency than for other members to push the question into agenda of Commission.

This part of my research proves the importance of leadership during the first stages of decision-making process: agenda setting and policy adoption. However, one should remember that leadership has to be taken into consideration on the phase of implementation of the decision as well.

Thus, the Presidency of Sweden also favoured the decision-making process on Eastern Partnership. After the Prague Summit the phase of implementation was started. Swedish Presidency began from July 2009 which helped to push the Eastern Partnership in reality. Hence, Sweden together with European Commission organized Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum as well as the First Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers Meeting.

However, the process of implementation is in progress and still much work has to be done to make the Eastern Partnership function. Taking into consideration the fact of the importance of European presidencies in leading the questions of foreign policy, obviously, the Hungarian and Polish presidencies by 2011 will give a new impetus towards implementation of the Eastern Partnership.

To summarize, the decision-making process within Eastern Partnership is considered to be complex one, due to involvement of many actors, levels and factors. I viewed the process through the rational actor model as the most appropriate one. The main initiator of the EaP was Poland. Although at first, EaP was received with skepticism by some countries, the final draft was signed and Belarus, despite being the country with the worst human rights and democracy ratings in Europe was admitted. Poland made a draft of the initiative that corresponded to the

interests of Eastern European countries and to the EU itself. I want to stress the special significance of the fact that the initiative was adopted due to the efforts of Poland and the main supporters of Eastern Partnership - Sweden and Czech Republic, who held EU Presidency during 2009.

The EaP is a result of the strengthened position of Eastern European countries in terms of the power hierarchy among EU members. Poland, Czech Republic and the Baltic countries are considered to be the most dedicated countries towards Eastern neighbours, and it is because of their position that the relations between EU and Belarus moved from their dead-end status towards pragmatic cooperation. At the core of cooperation in the realm of EaP are rational interests of the EU (mostly presented by the economic and energy motives of the Eastern European countries) and EaP members. Besides, the launch of EaP was driven by other structural factors that influenced the decision: the war between Russia and Georgia, EU position towards Russia in the competition towards the sphere of influence over Eastern countries. However, the core EU normative principles were also endorsed in Eastern Partnership Declaration.

The invitation to Belarus was made after some democratic steps of Belarusian regime: release of political prisoners, remove of barriers faced by non-government media, initiation of cosmetic economic-liberalization reforms. The official representatives of the European Commission keep saying about the main conditions of fostering cooperation between EU and Belarus – which are democratic reforms. However, there were only minor concessions and Belarus still doesn’t correspond to democratic principles of EU.

Thus, the inclusion of Belarus prompts the increasing importance of rational model of acting before normative within foreign policy of EU towards Eastern neighbours, specifically Belarus.

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However, after the quick launch of EaP it shows the decrease of rates in its development. In the next chapter of the Thesis I will explore the current status of EaP mainly focusing on EU-Belarus relations.

4.3. Belarus within Eastern Partnership today

One year passed after the launch of the Eastern Partnership. However, Belarusian and EU politicians have different assessments of the work done. Such disparity is connected with the difference in expectations for the EaP. Belarus set big hopes on the new initiative, especially in the framework of financing and the rate of projects’ realization. Lukashenka admits that EaP helped Belarus to break the political blockade and to start cooperation with the EU. However he is disappointed with the absence of visible results of the new initiative. At the same time the EU officials positively evaluate the start of the EaP. Thus, the EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fuele says that Eastern Partnership is “absolutely a success”.

Belarus, being an authoritarian country foresaw quick financing without any steps towards democratization of the country. At the same time, the EU guided by its rational interests invited the dictatorship to the EaP, however, at the stage of implementation the approach was reconsidered as two-fold: normative values and rational interests. The EU is ready to foster cooperation within economic, viza-facilitation, cultural spheres, however, “the engagement very much depends on the Belarusian leadership’s position on human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

Nowadays, the Eastern Partnership is on the stage of its development and formation. Every projects under EaP needs time for its implementation. As it was stated in the EaP Declaration, the EU applies differentiative approach towards EaP members, in order to make the policy more effective and elaborate more concrete projects adapted to the needs of every country. The EaP is a long-period initiative, thus it is impossible to expect quick results.

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129 Ibid.
The Eastern Partnership is not the first programme launched between Belarus and the EU. From 2004 European assistance was provided through the programmes of ENP mainly in cross-border cooperation of the EU and Belarus in questions of security, energy, democracy.\footnote{Georg Zachmann, Ricardo Giucci, “Eastern Partnership: Prospects for intensifying the Belarus – EU relations in the energy sector?”}, August 2009 retrieved 11 April 2010, http://research.by/pdf/pp2009e08.pdf.

It is hard to evaluate the effectiveness of already launched programmes within Eastern Partnership, as Belarusian government has not been used to make such projects public. And moreover, now the consultation within Belarusian side on these projects is held without participation of civil society.\footnote{Vladimir Matskevich, “Восточное партнерство” это пиар акция”, April 2010 retrieved 2 May 2010, http://www.newsby.org/by/2010/04/23/text14481.htm.}

So far, the Eastern Partnership is going through the stage of specification of their own areas of work, and many thematic platforms are only as declarations of intent. The declarations signed have been transformed into the implementation level. This carries a significant problem: in terms of specification of financial and procedural tools of the Eastern Partnership, preparation specific projects of cooperation between Belarus and the EU and elaboration of further strategies on future development of the Eastern Partnership. The majority of these actions are “behind the scenes”.

On 17 of December European Commission adopted the plan for financing of the Easter Partnership. Thus, EUR 600 million will be used for the next three purposes:

1) Pilot regional development programmes aimed at addressing regional economic disparities within partner countries (EUR 75 million);
2) Support of institutional reforms in the partner countries (EUR 175 million)
3) Resources on financing of multilateral dimension of cooperation. The programmes within four policy platforms named democracy and good governance; economic integration; energy security; people-to-people contacts (EUR 350 million). Moreover, multilateral dimension of cooperation also comprises Civil Society Forum and number of flagship initiatives: integrated border management; SME development; civil emergency protection; diversification of energy supplies; energy efficiency; environmental governance.\footnote{European Commission, Vandemecum on financing in the frame of the Eastern partnership, December 2009 retrieved 1 May 2010, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/docs/eap_vademecum_14122009_en.pdf.}

Belarus still has not signed Partnership and Co-operation agreement with EU, thus cannot participate in the bilateral projects of the EU (the first two groups from the previously mentioned) and it could be only engaged in the multilateral dimension. Taking into consideration
six country members and only half of the EaP budget left – Belarus can count on the small amount of projects’ financing.

Four working programmes based on thematic platforms of EaP have been recently approved for 2009-2011. At the end of 2009 - the first quarter of 2010 several projects of the Eastern Partnership were launched. Among them an "integrated border management” and “regional energy markets and energy efficiency", a Fund to support small and medium-sized enterprises, environmental and cultural projects. So far, all of these programs are at an early stage and have not been implemented yet.

A lot work was done in the realm of visa-facilitation, more specifically in the trans-border travel between Belarus and its European neighbours. Thus, Belarus and Poland signed a deal on trans-border travel in February 2009 which is now waiting to be ratified by the Parliaments of both countries. Meanwhile, Minsk is about to sign the same documents with Lithuania and Latvia, thus it will give a chance to millions of Belarusian, Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian people to travel visa-free. However, the question on the reduction of visa cost and facilitation of its receipt’s procedure is still on agenda, and is under discussion by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and EU institutions.

One of the barriers towards the cooperation between EU and Belarus is the launch of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly (the parliamentary component of the proposed Eastern Partnership). The Euronest should consist of 60 members of the European Parliament and a 10-member delegation from each of the six EaP members. However as the EU did not recognize the Belarusian election of 2008 into “national assembly” as free and fair, “inviting Belarusian MPs would mean that EU normative values are disregarded”. Thus, EU suggested to Belarus to include into the delegation five representatives of opposition and five MP’s. However, the principle of conditionality did not bring results, as official Minsk refused to participate in Euronest under such conditions. Hence, in March 2010, the EU, using its normative power proclaimed that “ten observers - representatives of civil society and democratic opposition of Belarus will participate in Euronest”. However, such participation will be only formal as this unofficial opposition delegation will have no right to vote at Euronest sessions.

Although, at the launch of the EaP EU used rational approach in cooperation with dictatorship, nowadays it proceeds with the normative policy based on the principle of

conditionality. The economic and energy interests weakened the EU normative claims, however, EU values are still on agenda as the norms and interests cannot be easily separated.

On May European Commission reviewed Country Strategy Paper drafted towards Belarus for 2007-2013 under the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument. The strategy takes into consideration recent developments in the relations between Belarus and EU. The new strategy was adopted within the Eastern Partnership framework. Thus, besides of the main goals towards fostering democratic and economic reforms the new strategy prioritizes people-to-people contacts and sectoral developments (energy, migration, customs, transport etc).

As far as financing for 2012-2013 is concerned, it will be adapted to the current goals of new strategy and is considered to be flexible. Hence, it is posed to depend on the political dialogue between Brussels and Minsk and on the Belarusian progress towards democracy.  

The normative power of Europe is also embedded in the latest European Parliament's draft resolution (in December 2009 and March 2010) on the situation in Belarus. They note that the country's authorities have failed to make significant progress in the sphere of human rights and freedoms “after initial positive steps.” The draft invites the EU to lift the sanctions permanently and speed up “the process of Belarus' integration into the European family of democratic nations” if the Belarusian authorities make enough progress on democracy next year. Thus, despite the changes in EU approach towards Belarus and current thawing in relations, the future progress is under condition of further Belarusian democratization. However, Belarus will still have its advocates on the European Union area. As the analysis showed, it is in the interests of Eastern European countries to continue pro-active position towards strengthening of Eastern dimension and cooperation with Belarus. Neighbouring countries played important role at the first stages of decision-making, however, at the stage of implementation their role cannot be neglected either. Lots of work was done towards visa-facilitation procedure in trans-border travelling, moreover, nowadays Poland and Lithuania are working on the elaboration of multilateral projects within energy, transport, cultural spheres. Taking into consideration the

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role of leadership within EU, the Hungarian and Polish presidencies in 2011 will provide EaP more support in terms of European institutions in time for its second anniversary.

The Eastern Partnership is still under formation, as the projects are being developed and approaches to each country are being defined. So far the Eastern Partnership has not delivered any visible added value for either the EU or Belarus, except the intense cooperation on the diplomatic level as well as in the realm of visa-facilitation procedure. It is still too early to evaluate the results of the EaP. When the projects in the sphere of environmental protection, energy security, trade and cultural cooperation will start to function then it will be possible to evaluate its effectiveness. Till now, “The European Union has demonstrated considerable openness to engagement with Belarus”, the future cooperation will depend on the Belarusian willingness to cooperate towards democratization of the country as well as consecutive position of the EU based on either normative, rational or both dimensions.¹⁴⁰

The results of the paper point out that the main reason for changing the EU foreign policy towards Belarus were connected to pragmatic interests in the economic and energy areas, which weakened the EU normative claims. However, EU values are still on agenda as norms and interests cannot be easily separated and as political conditionality has recently re-entered the agenda. Thus, the current foreign policy is two-fold: based on rational model of acting and normative power.

CONCLUSION

After years of almost complete isolation of Belarus, the new EU foreign approach to Belarus has induced a thaw in relations between Brussels and Minsk. The Union temporarily suspended sanction against dictatorial political regime and moved on to the policy of re-engagement through the invitation to the Eastern Partnership.

Departing from the question “what were the main reasons for changing the EU foreign policy towards Belarus?” I started with the analysis of theoretical framework of the EU foreign policy and applied theory of normative power by Ian Manners and realist assumptions by Diez (2007), Sjursen (2007), Hyde-Price (2006).

Ian Manners (2007) strengthened that the power of EU is based on the normative values rather than on material capabilities. The EU uniqueness in the international arena derives from its actions on diffusion of EU norms and its reliance on “soft power” methods excluding military forces.  

As the analysis of the EU official documents in the sphere of foreign relations showed, the main principles on which EU is based were incorporated into the EU foreign strategies towards the third countries. The normative approach of EU is also declared in the official documents addressed to Belarus starting from 1997. The power of EU is based on the acceptance of its norms. The neighbouring countries have to adopt these norms in order to be closer to EU in economic and political terms. Thus, political conditionality is defined to be an important instrument in promotion of common European values outside EU borders.

Belarus, being a direct neighbor of EU, has never been able to develop strong partnership with EU. For a long time the EU foreign policy was based on the principle of conditionality by focusing on sanctions vis-à-vis Lukashenka political regime.

Although EU acted as normative power, started from 2008 the EU foreign policy approach was changed. I used the arguments provided by Diez (2007), Sjursen (2007) to introduce a critique of the concept of normative power Europe and apply it to the case of Belarus-EU relations. Thus, energy and security dimensions are becoming more important goals within EU foreign policy that undermine normative status of the EU in world politics. This fact was proved by analysis of the recent changes of the EU foreign policy towards Belarus.

Belarus has tricky geographical position, being between strategic interests of the EU and Russia. Thus, many reasons have encouraged the shift in Belarus-EU relations such as relations between Belarus-Russia, Belarus and its direct neighbours, EU and Russia, economic factors and

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141 Sonia Lucarelli and Ian Manners, “Valuing principles in European union foreign policy” in Sonia Lucarelli, Ian Manners (eds), Values and principles in European Union Foreign Policy, Routledge, New York, 2007, p.201-204.

142 Anne Morrissey Haglund, Exploring the export of European union values –the European neighbourhood policy, Vaxjo Universitet, Vaxjo, 2005, pp.4-8.
financial crisis. However, one of the main reasons for thawing the relations were the changes in the EU policy towards Belarus that now can be described as two-fold: based on rational model of acting and normative power.

Changes in the EU foreign policy towards Belarus were called forth by many factors. First, the absence of results of EU policy of conditionality towards authoritarian regime: it has not prompted both democratization and liberalization of the country nor cooperation between two sides. The EU foreign policy appeared to be ineffective due to the lack of incentives provided as well as the high cost for the regime to comply with liberal-democratic reforms that could undermine its functioning. Moreover the war between Georgia and Russia, as well as the problems with gas transits between Russia and Belarus and Russia and Ukraine gave possibility to the EU to develop more pragmatic approach in the light of the existing conditions.

The results of the paper point out that the main reason for changing the EU foreign policy towards Belarus were connected to pragmatic interests in the economic and energy areas, which weakened the EU normative claims.

Thus, starting from 2008 EU has been seeking closer cooperation with Belarus and started the policy of re-engagement that lead to the progress in bilateral relations. I argue the Eastern Partnership initiative is the most important instrument that defines the new policy of EU. Inviting Belarus, the country with high – capacity undemocratic regime has proved the shift in foreign policy of the EU towards Belarus.

The invitation to Belarus to participate in Eastern Partnership was made after some democratic steps of Belarusian regime: release of political prisoners, remove of barriers faced by non-governmental media, initiation of cosmetic economic- liberalization reforms. However, it were only minor concessions and Belarus still did not correspond to democratic principles of EU. The inclusion of Belarus prompts the increasing importance of rational model acting before normative.

Moreover, the current changes in EU priorities of foreign policy pointing towards a tighter cooperation are caused by the position of new Member States (particularly Poland) in regards to the strengthening of the Eastern dimension and counterbalancing the Southern priorities within ENP. The initiative combined the material and geostrategic interests of Eastern members of EU that pushed the question up on the agenda of both the Commission and the European Council.

I utilized the theories of formal leadership and rational model of decision-making to test the case of the role of Eastern European countries in current changes of the EU foreign policy.

I argued that rational actor model is the most appropriate to conduct profound research of the decision-making process under the launch of the EaP. First of all, it implicates the structural
approach, thus strengthening the role of the national governments as well as the EU institutions in the decision-making process, moreover it takes into consideration the structure of international system focusing on the rationale behavior of the EU within it.

The main supporters of the EaP were the initiators (Poland, Sweden) as well as the Central European and Baltic countries. These countries are interested in bilateral cooperation with Belarus that could increase economic, cultural exchange. Such cooperation is profitable for both sides. Moreover, EU is interested in cooperation with Belarus as an important transiting country as well.

One of the driving forces of Eastern partnership is considered to be Poland. Poland after accession to EU claimed to be a leader in the relation between EU and Eastern neighbouring countries. “Poland role as a leader in Eastern dimension of EU policy has been recognized and confirmed unanimously”.\(^{143}\) Poland is interested in development of cooperation with Belarus especially within joint projects on energy sphere. Besides, there are interests in economic area and tourism.

The research proved the importance of leadership during the first stages of decision-making process as well as during the phase of implementation of the decision as well. The initiative was adopted due to the efforts of not only Belarusian direct neighbours, but Sweden and Czech Republic as well, who held EU Presidency in 2009.

The assistance of Sweden helped to foster the process of institutionalization of Eastern Partnership. Moreover, Sweden having experience in cooperating with EU institutes facilitated the process of bringing the question into EU agenda.

With the Czech EU Council’s presidency the EaP has become a foreign policy priority of the Union and a lot of efforts have been put in the launching of the initiative. The Presidency helped to put into agenda the core priorities of the Czech foreign policy, moreover, it fostered the process of the EaP adoption and the beginning of the implementation stage of the new initiative.

The economic and energy interests weakened the EU normative claims, however, EU values are still counted as political conditionality has recently re-entered the agenda. The normative power of Europe is embedded in the latest European Parliament's draft resolution (in December 2009 and March 2010) on the situation in Belarus, it is also proved by the declarations of EU officials.\(^{144}\)

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\(^{144}\) As Commissioner for development policy Karel de Gucht explained during the debates on Belarus in European Parliament on December 2009, “the core element of the foreign policy of the EU towards Belarus has to be pragmatism combined with flexibility. Such two-fold approach will lead to positive sum game with Belarus”
One year passed after the launch of the Eastern partnership. During this year, the EaP has been almost completely institutionalized, the plan of financing has been adopted and the first projects are about to be launched. However, Belarus cannot participate in full-scale in the initiative, as it has made little progress in compliance with EU norms.

Thus, despite the changes in EU approach towards Belarus and current thawing in relations, the future progress is under condition of further Belarusian democratization. However, Belarus will still have its advocates on the European Union area. As the analysis showed, it is in the interests of Eastern European countries to continue pro-active position towards strengthening of Eastern dimension and cooperation with Belarus. Neighbouring countries played important role at the first stages of decision-making, however, at the stage of implementation their role cannot be neglected either. Taking into consideration the role of leadership within EU, the Hungarian and Polish presidencies in 2011 will provide EaP more support in terms of European institutions for its second anniversary.

Although, both EU and Belarus have decided to develop more pragmatic relations based on mutually beneficial spheres of interests, the Belarusian level of commitments to EU norms will define the future bilateral cooperation.

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