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The Belarusian Boomerang

How the Belarusian democratic opposition influences the
foreign policy of the European Union

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This thesis has been written with all the brave Belarusians in mind, who are fighting for a democratic Belarus. This thesis has been written with my dear Belarusian friends in mind, who are like family to me. This thesis has been written with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya in mind, who is a true inspiration for me.

Жыве Беларусь

Abstract

This thesis seeks to understand how the Belarusian democratic opposition influences the foreign policy of the European Union regarding Belarus by applying the boomerang pattern from Keck and Sikkink (1998) on the case. The main argument of the study is that the boomerang pattern has to be complemented with the theory of resource exchange to understand the mechanism behind the pattern. Resource exchange holds that influence over policy can be exchanged for a valuable resource. The mechanism is expected to work because transnational advocacy networks from a country neighbouring the EU have security as a valuable resource as stability at their home state enhances both domestic and European security. The research shows that the boomerang pattern is present between the Belarusian democratic opposition and the EU. Nonetheless, the thrown and caught boomerang are not similar because the resource of security is incorporated in the caught European boomerang and not in the thrown Belarusian boomerang. Therefore, the success of the boomerang pattern depends on the process and not on the resource presented by the transnational advocacy network to the international ally. In other words, the overlap between the presented and perceived resource determines the success of the boomerang pattern.

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Abbreviations

CC	Coordination Council for the Transfer of Power
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
MEP	Member of European Parliament
TAN	Transnational Advocacy Network

1. Introduction

“[It] surprised me that I wasn’t scared with these meetings. I understand that time is limited, you don’t have time just to panic. You have to tell them something important, that is important for your country, and you understand this leader is rather powerful to influence the situation.”

(Tsikhanouskaya 2020d)

With these words, former housewife Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya gives an insight into her current role as the leader of the Belarusian democratic opposition which she took on after her activist husband was arrested (Butler 2020). She has become the symbol of the Belarusian awakening, characterized by massive peaceful protests against the authoritarian leader Alyaksandr Lukashenka and the rigged presidential elections of August 9th, 2020 (Brouwers 2020). Central to this study is how the Belarusian democratic opposition attempts to change the situation in Belarus with the help of international allies.

Therefore, the research question is: How did the Belarusian democratic opposition influence the foreign policy of the European Union (EU) regarding Belarus? The logic behind the research question comes from the boomerang pattern which holds that repression at home will push a domestic advocacy network to the international stage, where it seeks an international ally to pressure the home state (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 12). Central to the pattern are transnational advocacy networks (TANs) which are networks of actors, glued together by values, advocating for the same cause (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 9). The boomerang pattern is insightful in why the Belarusian opposition would reach out to the EU but it does not sufficiently capture the mechanism behind the expected policy change. Therefore, I will argue that the pattern must be complemented with the theory of resource exchange which holds that advocacy networks will reach out to decision-makers because the latter have the power to change policy. The decision-makers will be susceptible to the demands of advocacy networks if the networks have a valuable resource for the decision-makers (Bouwen 2002, 368; Dür & Mateo 2012, 972; Pappi & Hennig 1999, 265).

I expect that TANs from countries bordering the EU will have security as a valuable resource because a stable situation at the border will enhance both domestic and European security. This expectation will be tested with an in-depth case study of the Belarusian democratic opposition in which 801 primary sources will be analysed. The main findings of the case study are that the opposition threw a boomerang to the EU. The resource they used to appeal to the EU decision-

maker was defender of norms and values. The boomerang caught by the EU contained both the defender of norms and values resource and the resource of security because the EU interpreted the former as security. This means that both resources were exchanged for influence over EU foreign policy, even though the Belarusian opposition did not present the security resource. Therefore, the success or failure of the boomerang cannot be determined by the resource presented by the TAN, but by the whole process. When the TAN catches the attention of the international ally, then it is about the overlap between the presented and perceived resources that determines the outcome of the boomerang pattern.

This study will fill the gap in the literature concerning the mechanism behind the boomerang pattern by combining the pattern with resource exchange. Moreover, the study will show how a TAN from a country neighbouring the EU tries to influence EU policy as those TANs will adopt different strategies than their counterparts from EU member states. The findings will have implications for further research with the boomerang pattern and resource exchange as I will advocate for a more constructivist understanding of both theories.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: in chapter two, I argue that to understand the influence of advocacy networks, we must look at the broader change they envision as opposed to the contemporary dominant strand in the literature which concentrates on narrow change-oriented actors focusing on a single policy area. Thereafter, I will elaborate on the boomerang pattern and why resource exchange is necessary to complement the theory. I will focus on how the decision-makers at the international level are being convinced to catch the boomerang to give this understanding that is currently lacking in the literature. In chapter four, I will talk about the methodology of the research and the choice for an in-depth single-case study of Belarus. I will conduct the case study in the fifth chapter. In chapter six, I will reflect on how the findings align with the expectations and elaborate on what the discrepancy between the Belarusian and the European boomerang means for the boomerang pattern and resource exchange. Lastly, the thesis will be wrapped up by a conclusion in which I will succinctly present the main findings.

2. Advocacy networks influencing policy

Policy change by advocacy networks has been studied extensively in the literature (Andia 2015; Happ & Bruns 2017; Keck & Sikkink 1998; Pallas 2017; Sikkink 2005; Simmons 2009; Zippel 2004). However, so far, little work has been conducted on ‘broad change-oriented’ advocacy networks from outside the EU, whose goals go beyond a single policy field and who are bound to the restrictions of their domestic, non-democratic political environment. I will identify two dominant strands in the literature. In the first strand, the authors focus on ‘narrow change-oriented’ advocacy networks who want change in a single policy field, this in contrast to ‘broad change-oriented’ advocacy networks which aim for change in several policy fields. In the second strand, venue-shopping in the EU is central. This literature is insightful for advocacy networks active in EU member states but not for advocacy networks from non-democratic states.

2.1 ‘Narrow change-oriented’ advocacy networks

Influence is key to the body of literature about advocacy networks because the central goal of advocacy networks is to influence decision-making (Avant et al. 2010; Carpenter 2011; Dellmuth & Tallberg 2017; Keck & Sikkink 1998; Prakash & Gugerty 2010; Stroup & Murdie 2012). Concretely, the tactics used to gain access and attention, and thus influence, have been extensively studied (Avant et al. 2010; Bob 2009; Dellmuth & Tallberg 2017; Poloni-Staudinger 2008; Princen & Kerremans 2008; Princen 2011). One group of authors focuses on advocacy networks that concentrate on human rights issues (Allendoerfer et al. 2020; Avant et al. 2010; Bassano 2014; Bob 2009; Carpenter 2007; Davies 2019; Risse et al. 1999; Simmons 2009; Sikkink 2005; Zippel 2004). Tactics adopted by such networks are, among others, advocacy campaigns based on the human rights conditions in repressive states (Allendoerfer et al. 2020, 111) and making sure that your competitors will not have as much influence as you (Avant et al. 2010).

Another group of authors focuses on advocacy networks concerned with environmental issues (Andonova 2014; Braun & Dreiling 2014; McAteer & Pulver 2009; Pallas 2017; Poloni-Staudinger 2008; Swatuk et al. 2020). Those advocacy networks may adopt similar tactics as the networks advocating for human rights. For example, both kinds of networks might use international treaties as a ‘hook’ for their campaigns and to push states to be true to the treaty after ratification (Simmons 2009, 6; Swatuk et al. 2020, 1 – 2). Moreover, making sure that you

are the most influential network is also important for advocacy networks focusing on environmental issues (Avant et al. 2010). A tactic adopted by environmental advocacy networks, and not often by human rights networks, is trying to change the organisation or state from within (Braun & Dreiling 2014, 263).

These studies have deepened our understanding of the working of advocacy networks, the difficulties they face and the impacts the networks have, on which I will partially draw in the theoretical framework by elaborating on the boomerang pattern. Nonetheless, research falls short in its focus on a single policy issue and not on issues covering several issue areas: the main focus of the literature is on human rights or environmental issues and not on the broader change the networks might envision. Broad change-oriented actors aim to change more than one policy field and therefore some tactics adopted by narrow change-oriented actors are not far-reaching enough for the broad change-oriented actors. For example, the 'hook' provided by treaties is not a useful tactic for them because treaties often focus on one particular issue. I will fill this gap by studying the Belarusian democratic opposition which is a broad change-oriented actor as they plan to have an impact on human rights, the judicial field, economics and the political system of Belarus.

2.2 Venue-shopping in the EU

In the EU, many narrow change-oriented actors are actively attempting to influence European policy (Coen & Richardson 2009; Dür & Mateo 2014; Hanegraaff & Poletti 2019; Poloni-Staudinger 2008; Rasmussen 2015; Zippel 2004). The focus of one camp of authors is on venue-shopping (Coen & Richardson 2009; Dür & Mateo 2012; Poloni-Staudinger 2008; Princen & Kerremans 2008; Princen 2011), which holds that actors seek the venue that is most open to their cause (Princen 2011, 931). This literature provides insights into when and why advocacy groups choose the European level above the national level. The focus, however, is on advocacy groups operating in democratic European member states which provide the opportunity for venue shopping as there are chances to influence policy on both the domestic and EU level. In authoritarian regimes, advocacy networks often face repression which limits the possibilities to generate change domestically and therefore of venue-shopping between the national and international level (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 12; Sikkink 2005, 155). This lack of possibilities leads to different priorities and strategies of advocacy networks, for example adopting a boomerang model. The strategies of advocacy groups from non-democratic states bordering the

EU attempting to influence European policy has not been studied as much as the behaviour of European advocacy groups that have the opportunity to choose the most suitable level to generate the desired change. I will fill this gap by studying the strategy of the Belarusian democratic opposition.

To sum up, I argue that broad change-oriented advocacy networks in authoritarian countries have been understudied. The tactics and strategies used by the often studied narrow change-oriented advocacy networks in European, democratic countries differ from the ones adopted by their broad change-oriented counterparts in authoritarian countries. Therefore, I will study the Belarusian democratic opposition which does not limit itself to a single policy issue but aims to change a broad range of policy issues. Moreover, the possibilities to generate change are limited for the opposition because of the authoritarian regime of Lukashenka. Accordingly, they adopt different strategies than their counterparts in the EU.

3. How advocacy networks influence policy

To study the influence of the broad change-oriented Belarusian democratic opposition on the foreign policy of the EU well, I will use a constructivist framework. The main insight derived from the constructivist international relations' literature is the boomerang pattern from Keck and Sikkink (1998). This pattern will connect the advocacy activities of the Belarusian opposition to change in European foreign policy as it explains why domestic advocacy networks reach out to international allies and how those allies can help the domestic cause. The theory in its original form, however, does not sufficiently capture the mechanism behind policy change generated by advocacy networks (Andonova 2014, 484; Bassano 2014, 35). Therefore, I will argue that the pattern must be complemented with the theory of resource exchange to provide a solid theoretical framework explaining the mechanism behind the boomerang pattern. Resource exchange holds that advocacy networks will reach out to decision-makers because the latter have the power to change policy. The decision-makers will be susceptible to the demands of advocacy networks if the networks have a valuable resource for the decision-makers (Bouwen 2002, 368; Dür & Mateo 2012, 972; Pappi & Hennig 1999, 265).

3.1 Boomerang pattern

The constructivist idea central to the boomerang pattern is that the perceptions states have of themselves and the world are constructed by a web of social relations (Finnemore 1996, 2). Advocacy networks are part of this social web and can shape the norms, values and identities of states (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 3). Carpenter (2007, 100) points out that the best way in which advocacy networks can influence the perceptions of states is by constructing problems as international issues which means that the (national) problem will attract international attention. The Belarusian case is a good example of this as it is a domestic affair but the Belarusian democratic opposition constructs it as an international issue to reshape Belarus' norms and values. Why the opposition reaches out to the international stage intending to change Belarus' norms and values is explained by the boomerang pattern from Keck and Sikkink (1998).

The central idea of the boomerang pattern is that the possibilities for domestic change are not bound to the domestic level because domestic advocacy networks can reach out to international allies to pressure the home state to change. The boomerang pattern occurs on issues that affect local people frequently, like indigenous and human rights (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 12). Moreover, the boomerang pattern occurs when the domestic channels to generate change are

closed because either the government does not respond to the demands or responds to them with repression. Authoritarian states are characterised by closed domestic channels through which change cannot be generated and therefore those states, including Belarus, are good cases to apply the boomerang pattern on (Sikkink 2005, 157). International allies have the opportunity to amplify the domestic problems to such an extent that it is almost impossible to ignore for the domestic state (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 13). This is why the boomerang pattern is an attractive strategy for broad change-oriented advocacy networks in authoritarian countries.

The pattern is called boomerang because the path of change follows the movement of a boomerang: the boomerang throw is initiated by a domestic advocacy network that wants change at the domestic level. The farthest point of the boomerang is the international ally who may help the domestic advocacy network to externally pressure the home state. The boomerang comes back, not to the advocacy network, but the home country in general. If the boomerang throw has been successful, then the authorities in the home country will feel pressure from the international ally. Applied to the case study: the Belarusian democratic opposition throws the boomerang to the EU, which will, if the boomerang throw will be successful, pressure the authoritarian regime of Lukashenka.

Central to the boomerang pattern are not advocacy networks, but *transnational* advocacy networks (TANs). TANs consist of several actors, such as local social movements, churches, trade unions and the media who are glued together by shared values (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 9). The main difference between advocacy networks and TANs is that TANs are more social in the sense that they interact with international organisations, states and also each other (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 1). This makes that they are more involved in social networks which shape the perceptions of the state. Many TANs are concerned with topics such as human rights and environmental issues (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 9), which makes them narrow change-oriented actors. The Belarusian opposition, on the other hand, is a broad change-oriented TAN. The opposition is a TAN because it consists of several actors: the social movement led by Tsikhanouskaya is the most prominent actor, but also churches (Coordination Council 2020d) and media outlets (Coordination Council 2020b) are part of the network. The desire for a democratic Belarus is the value that glues the network together (Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya 2020a; Координационный Совет 2020). The interaction between the network and international organisations and states is evident in the working visits undertaken by Tsikhanouskaya in which she met with several political actors, such as heads of states and the

Members of European Parliament (MEP), who have the power to change the foreign policy regarding Belarus (Euronews 2020; Tsikhanouskaya 2020a, 2020c, 2020d).

The boomerang pattern appears to work well in the real world as it has been applied to cases all over the world (Allendoerfer et al. 2020; Andia 2015; Andonova 2014; Bassano 2014; Braun & Dreiling 2014; McAteer & Pulver 2009; Pallas 2017; Sikkink 2005; Zippel 2004). McAteer and Pulver (2009) looked at how multinational oil companies operating in the Ecuadorian Amazon region were targeted by TANs. The focus of the study is on corporations and therefore the authors developed a more specific boomerang pattern taking the dynamics of the corporate world into account. Andia (2015) studied a campaign by TANs against a company that had a monopoly on a drug. She applied an inverse boomerang pattern to the case in which TANs reached out to the local population in Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil and Thailand to put the monopoly on the global agenda.

Bassano (2014) applied the boomerang pattern to the Salvadorian and Nicaraguan human rights movement of the 1980s and looked at the global North/South division: NGOs from the North helping local advocacy networks from the South. Bassano (2014, 27) critiques Keck and Sikkink in that they do not take into account that the boomerang does not automatically come back: a boomerang throw does not mean a successful boomerang pattern. The international ally has the power to stop the pattern at the farthest point. This is also acknowledged by Avant et al. (2010, 205) who talk about the international allies as ‘gatekeepers’ having the power to either help a cause or to ignore it which limit its chances on the international stage. Risse et al. (1999, 18) too made this observation and created the spiral model consisting of several boomerang patterns. By elaborating on the various boomerangs, they unpack what happens at the farthest point of the first boomerang where TANs engage in lobbying to convince the international ally to pressure the home state. According to Risse et al. (1999, 23), "this "lobbying" usually involves some discursive activities in terms of moral persuasion. Western governments and publics, for example, are reminded of their own identity as promoters of human rights." They do not further discuss why the Western governments and public would react to the moral persuasion.

3.2 Resource exchange

The boomerang pattern, spiral model and the other authors mentioned above are not explicit about how the decision-makers at the international level can be convinced to help the domestic

cause, they only (implicitly) state that the decision-makers must be convinced. Here the theory of resource exchange helps out as it explains that decision-makers will be susceptible to the demands of advocacy networks because the latter has something of value of the former and vice-versa (Bouwen 2002, 368; Dür & Mateo 2012, 972; Pappi & Hennig 1999, 265).

The central goal of advocacy networks is to influence decision-making. Therefore, the networks are eager to reach out to decision-makers because they have the power to influence decision making. Influence and power are the valuable resources of decision-makers (Dür 2008, 1213; Dür & Mateo 2012, 972; Klüver 2013, 11; Pappi & Hennig 1999, 268). The valuable resources of advocacy networks vary because of the nature of the network but also due to the varying demands of the decision-makers (Klüver 2013, 11). For example, in the EU the Commission mostly needs expertise, the European Parliament (EP) requires information on the interests of the EU and the governments of the member states, directly represented in the Council of the EU and the European Council, are in need of information on domestic interests (Princen & Kerremans 2008, 1135). These different needs ask for different resources from advocacy networks and therefore the value of resources vary across the bodies that have the power to influence policy (Bouwen 2002, 370; Dür 2008, 1218; Klüver 2013, 11; Princen & Kerremans 2008, 1135).

By some, information is considered as the most valuable resource advocacy networks within the EU can have (Bouwen 2002, 369; Princen & Kerremans 2008, 1335). Others also see economic power, legitimacy, citizen support and expert knowledge as valuable resources (Davies 2019, 140; Dür 2008, 1214; Dür & Mateo 2012, 971 – 2; Klüver 2013, 3; Pappi & Hennig 1999, 265). I argue that security is a valuable resource an advocacy network from outside the EU can offer to decision-makers in the EU because of the character of EU foreign policy. Especially the foreign policy regarding the EU's direct neighbours, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), is guided by geopolitical thinking as the aim of the policy is to create a stable buffer zone which will enhance both EU's internal and external security (Schumacher et al. 2017; Happ & Bruns 2017). As the EU puts it: "the [EU's ENP] was launched in 2004 to support and foster stability, security and prosperity in the EU's neighbourhood" (EEAS 2021). Therefore, advocacy networks originating from countries from the ENP may have the valuable resource of security and stability.

This chapter leads to two expectations concerning the case study of Belarus and the EU. First, as domestic channels are closed due to the authoritarian regime, the Belarusian democratic

opposition throws a boomerang to the EU intending to pressure the Lukashenka regime. Second, the boomerang will work because the European decision-makers see security as a valuable resource. This resource is potentially available to the Belarusian opposition because Belarus borders the EU.

4. Methodology

A thorough understanding of both the actions of the Belarusian democratic opposition and the reaction of the EU is necessary to answer the research question: How did the Belarusian democratic opposition influence the foreign policy of the EU regarding Belarus? Therefore, I will carry out an in-depth single-case study of Belarus in which I will uncover both the boomerang pattern and the mechanism behind it by analysing primary sources.

4.1 A qualitative approach: an in-depth single-case study

I will conduct a single-case process-tracing study. Process-tracing focuses on the interconnected mechanisms connecting the cause and effect rather than on the causal effect (Falletti 2016, 456). In other words, the path from the trigger to the outcome is central to process-tracing instead of the outcome. This path is a chain of events and to uncover the most insightful chain, a single-case study is most suitable (Chandra 2006, 6 – 7). In the realm of politics, the chain is often made up of decisions (Van Evera 1997, 64), which makes that process-tracing in a single-case study suits the aim of this study well because central to this study is how the Belarusian democratic opposition influences EU decision-making.

Concretely, I am going to uncover a chain of two steps. In the first step, I will describe the boomerang thrown by the Belarusian opposition by uncovering how the opposition presents its cause at the EU and its member states. Thereafter, I will create the boomerang caught by the EU by looking at how the EU and its member states react to the message of the opposition and how the message affects EU decision-making. By using the logic of process-tracing, strong within-case inferences can be drawn which are suitable to test theories (Beach & Pedersen 2013, 2 – 3). Therefore, process-tracing helps with answering the research question properly as it tests whether the boomerang pattern is the logic behind the Belarusian democratic opposition influencing EU foreign policy. It must be said, however, that due to time and space restrictions, this study will be an in-depth single-case study following the logic of process-tracing rather than a process-tracing study.

A weakness of this study is that the generalizability might be low due to the low number of cases. Nonetheless, as Chandra (2006, 7) puts it: "the ambition of a mechanism-oriented approach is (...) to get us closer to a series of unique point predictions about outcomes in other countries without the expectation that these outcomes will be the same in all countries." This holds that the generalizability of the study depends on the mechanism uncovered in the single

case and not on the outcome. Following this logic, a single-case study has the highest degree of generalizability because the mechanism uncovered in such a study is more in-depth than in a study with more cases. Applied to my research, this means that the chain I will uncover between the Belarusian democratic opposition and EU foreign policy might be (partially) applicable to other cases even when the outcome in those other cases differs. Therefore the issue of generalizability in this study is minimized.

4.2 Case study: Belarus

Belarus is a most likely case because the domestic opportunity channels are closed due to the authoritarian regime and therefore the only strategy left is a boomerang pattern (Sikkink 2005, 156 – 7). Moreover, it is expected that the EU will be open to the lobby of the Belarusian opposition as the EU has a track record of reacting to crackdowns after presidential elections in Belarus by imposing sanctions (Schumacher et al. 2017, 291 – 2). This time, however, the character of the opposition is different as it is better organised than previous oppositions (Frear 2019, 136 – 7) which enables it to lobby at the EU. Overall, the Belarusian case can be designated as an "inverse Sinatra inference": if the boomerang model does not work here, it will not work anywhere (Levy 2008, 12). The most likely case design is suitable to test theories (Rohlfing 2012, 62) and, accordingly, it aligns with the choice for an in-depth case study with the logic of process-tracing. Other cases with similar characteristics to the Belarusian case are the Rose Revolution in Georgia 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine 2005. I have chosen Belarus because the ENP was launched in 2003 and the eastern dimension to it in 2009, therefore the Belarusian case provides the most relevant insights for current EU foreign policy. Moreover, my knowledge of Russian makes me able to use primary sources which add value to the analysis.

The case study spans from the presidential elections of August 9th, 2020, to the third round of sanctions imposed on Belarus by the EU, decided upon on December 17th, 2020 (Council of the European Union 2020c). The elections were the start of Tsikhanouskaya being the president-elect and Lukashenka becoming the illegitimate president. The third round of sanctions shows that the foreign policy of the EU towards Belarus is influenced by the elections. The question remains what happened in between those moments. I sought the answer in 801 documents, which include social-media posts, minutes of meetings, news articles and speeches. They were all coded with the help of the program Atlas.ti. In the documents of the Belarusian opposition,

I coded all their demands, goals and appeals to the EU and its member states. The same codes were applied to the documents of the EU to find resonance between the message of the opposition and the EU. Moreover, in the EU documents, I coded themes that came back often but were not present in the message of the opposition, such as the nuclear power plant in Astryavets. In total, 1.554 citations were coded. With these coded citations I was able to construct the boomerang thrown by the Belarusian democratic opposition and the boomerang caught by the EU.

5. How the Belarusian democratic opposition influences EU foreign policy

5.1. Trigger

The boomerang pattern is triggered by the exile of Tsikhanouskaya, who was forced by the authorities to flee to Lithuania shortly after the elections of August 9th, 2020 (Linkevicius 2020; Roth & Auseyushkin 2020). In a video clip posted on August 11th, 2020, an emotional Tsikhanouskaya said about her departure from Belarus: “but you know, God forbid, that you will face such a choice that I faced. Therefore, people, take care of yourself, please. Not one life is worth what is happening now. I... Children are the most important in our lives” (Тихановская 2020a).ⁱ A few days into exile, Tsikhanouskaya established the Coordination Council for the Transfer of Power (CC) on August 15th, 2020, (Coordination Council 2020a) which points at the intention of maintaining collective action. Moreover, a representative body was necessary as she was not able to lead the opposition anymore from Belarus, which becomes apparent in the founding message of the CC by Tsikhanouskaya: “I confirm the powers of Volha Kavalkova and Mikalai Kazlou as my authorized representatives who will coordinate the activities of my headquarters in Belarus” (Coordination Council 2020a). Thus, the authorities not only forced Tsikhanouskaya to flee the country but also to take the opposition to a higher level by, first, creating an enduring framework for the activities of the opposition. Second, by forcing her to look beyond Belarus and initiate the boomerang pattern because, quite literally, the authorities closed the domestic opportunities.

5.2 Boomerang thrown by the Belarusian democratic opposition

To influence a policy, the decision-makers must know what you want. Tsikhanouskaya repeated the basic demands of the Belarusian democratic opposition in her speech to the EP in September: “My strategy of victory [has] not change[d] since the election campaign. We demand only three basic things: release political prisoners, stop police violence and conduct free elections” (Tsikhanouskaya 2020a). During the two physical working visits to the EU (Coordination Council 2020c; Euronews 2020; Tsikhanouskaya 2020a, 2020g; Тихановская 2020c) and the twelve physical working visits to EU member states (Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya 2020b, 2020c; Tsikhanouskaya 2020b, 2020d, 2020f; Тихановская 2020b, 2020e), the Belarusian opposition voiced expectations based on the basic demands. Those expectations are: facilitating dialogue, initiating criminal investigations, imposing sanctions and helping with organizing free and fair elections (Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya 2020c; Tsikhanouskaya 2020a, 2020f; Координационный Совет 2020). Moreover, in December, a list of foreign policy

priorities was published by Tsikhanouskaya containing detailed priorities and recommendations, similarly to the demands described above, directed to Western countries (Tsikhanouskaya 2020e).

Resource exchange predicts that policy will be influenced when both the advocacy network and the decision-makers have a valuable resource for each other. The Belarusian democratic opposition presents its resource by emphasizing the state of repression in Belarus, thus appealing to Europe's identity as a human rights defender: "At every meeting with foreign politicians, [Tsikhanouskaya] tells the stories of Belarusians and what all of them go through as she does personally" (Тихановская 2020d).ⁱⁱ During an interview with Dutch media, Tsikhanouskaya said: "everything in our jails [is] made to humiliate people, to destroy minds, to break your dignity" (Hahn & Akkerman 2020). Another dimension of the resource is the shared European norms and values. Volha Kavalkova, a member of the CC, said: "Today, [Belarusians] defend the democratic values and independence of Belarus, they stand for the reinstatement of lawfulness and fair results of elections in our country" (Координационный Совет 2020).ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, when Tsikhanouskaya received a piece of the Berlin Wall from the German parties CDU and CSU, she said: "It is very symbolic because just like as Berliners and people of Germany were fighting for their freedom, rights and unity, Belarusians are doing the same things now" (Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya 2020a).

By emphasizing these two topics, human rights violations and European values, the Belarusian democratic opposition engages in moral persuasion, as predicted by the spiral model. The opposition reminds the EU of their identity as promoters of democracy and human rights (Risse et al. 1999, 23). This reminder functions as a resource because it is strategically targeted at the identity of the EU and therefore the message might resonate among the European decision-makers. Interestingly, the Belarusian opposition did not focus their narrative around the possibility of stability in Belarus and thus security. The security topic is embedded in the broader topic of geopolitics. Especially Tsikhanouskaya must be asked about geopolitics, for example by the Prime-Minister of Belgium (Tsikhanouskaya 2020f) and the German President (Тихановская 2020e). Moreover, when a journalist from an Austrian news outlet asked Tsikhanouskaya about her strategy regarding Russia, Tsikhanouskaya replied: "Russia is an important trade partner and we also want good relations with Moscow in the future. But central is our sovereignty, our independence and non-interference in our politics" (Brunner 2020). This attitude of neutrality, or being open to all geopolitical players, is the main vision of the Belarusian opposition regarding geopolitics. Pavel Latushka, a member of the CC, said to the

EP: "We are not interested in being on friendly terms with Russia against the EU, as well as that we have no interest in deepening the relations with the EU against Russia" (Координационный Совет 2020).^{iv}

To sum up, the framework of the thrown Belarusian boomerang is made up of six demands: free and fair elections, stop police violence, release political prisoners, facilitate dialogue, initiate criminal investigations and impose sanctions. This framework is covered in moral persuasion by pointing at the human rights violations by the Lukashenka regime and the European norms and values present in Belarus. Thus, the resource the Belarusian democratic opposition offers to the EU decision-makers in exchange for influence is the possibility to be true to the EU's identity as defender of democracy and human rights.

5.3 Boomerang caught by the European Union

The basic demands of the Belarusian democratic opposition voiced during the campaign – release political prisoners, free elections and stop police violence – have found their way into the EU. An MEP said during the plenary session on September 15th, 2020: “tens of thousands of Belarusians in the streets are demanding free and fair elections, and the release of all detained protesters and political prisoners” (European Parliament 2020a, 59). The other demands explicated during the working visits to the EU and some member states – dialogue, criminal investigations, elections and sanctions – are also present in the statements of the EU. During the special meeting of the European Council on 1 and 2 October 2020, it was concluded that “the European Council calls on the Belarusian authorities to end violence and repression, release all detainees and political prisoners, respect media freedom and civil society, and start an inclusive national dialogue. It agrees that restrictive measures should be imposed” (European Council 2020b, 10). This conclusion addresses all demands but criminal investigations, which is present, among others, in a report from the EP regarding Belarus (Auštrevičius 2020, 12) and an EP resolution on human rights violations in Belarus (European Parliament 2020g). Thus, the MEPs and European heads of states were, or could have been, fully aware of the demands voiced by the Belarusian opposition.

The opportunity to defend the EU's values is what the Belarusian democratic opposition poses as their resource for the EU. This resource is considered as valuable by the EU, as becomes apparent in the statement made by Josep Borrell, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: “Today the EU reacted in unity and decisively in defence of EU interests

and values, within the Union and beyond our borders. We will always stand up for international law, democracy, human rights and freedoms” (in Council of the European Union 2020a). Furthermore, there is resonance between the EU and the Belarusian opposition in their perception of Belarus as a European nation. In a report from the EP on Belarus it is stated that “the people of Belarus share a common European heritage and culture” and the crimes committed by Lukashenka “are against European values, the principles of democracy, and the will of the Belarusian people” (Auštrevičius 2020, 4 – 5).

In particular, the revelations about the human rights violations in Belarus have had an impact on the EU. On 26 November 2020, the EP voted in favour of the resolution “The continuous violations of human rights in Belarus, in particular the murder of Raman Bandarenka” (European Parliament 2020f, 31). Among the authors of the motions for the resolution are several people who met with Tsikhanouskaya and two other members of the opposition on November 12th, 2020, during an exchange of views with the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (European Parliament 2020d; European Parliament 2020e; Europees Parlement 2020). On the same date, Raman Bandarenka died as a consequence of severe beatings by the regime. When Tsikhanouskaya saw the video clip of the beatings a few days earlier, she was clearly in distress and said that she felt horrible because she thought he would die (Tsikhanouskaya 2020d). As a response to his death, Tsikhanouskaya declared “now we are going to insist on more help from European countries because we see that our authorities, they are escalating the violence” (Tsikhanouskaya 2020d). The resolution by the EP not only shows the resonance of the human rights theme within the EU but also the direct influence of the Belarusian democratic opposition on EU foreign policy.

Geopolitics is of more importance to the EU and its member states than to the Belarusian opposition, as evidenced by the European mantra of “only upholding human rights, democracy and free elections will guarantee stability and sovereignty in Belarus” (Council of the European Union 2020b, 2; Skoog 2020; Várhelyi & Šefčovič 2020). The mantra rhymes with the recommendations from the EP on the relations with Belarus: “the situation in Belarus may have a direct impact on the EU” (European Parliament 2020c, 3). Another geopolitical security issue concerning Belarus on the agenda of the EU is the newly erected nuclear power plant in Astryavets, close to the border with Lithuania (European Commission 2020, 17; European Council 2020a; European Parliament 2020c). An MEP remarked that the “nuclear dictatorship of Lukashenko presents a major threat to the security of Europeans” (European Parliament 2020b, 92).

Even though the EU does look at the crisis in Belarus from the angle of geopolitics and security, it has been stated several times that external interference is not desired to resolve this domestic crisis (Borrell 2020b; EEAS 2020; European Council 2020a). Nonetheless, the EU believes she is allowed to interfere by supporting dialogue and free and fair elections: "This cannot be regarded as an interference in internal affairs. Because democracy and human rights are at the core of the European Union" (Borrell 2020a). The EU thus puts the appeal by the Belarusian democratic opposition on norms and values in the line with geopolitics and even covers its geopolitical agenda under a normative cloak. The long term vision of the EU on the Belarusian crisis is that they expect that the European norms and values in Belarus will lead to stability and thus secure the security of both Belarus and the EU. The explicit remark of "nuclear dictatorship of Lukashenko" (European Parliament 2020b, 92) underlines this long term vision because it is exactly the dictatorship, which threatens the EU's security, of which the opposition wants to get rid.

All in all, there is a difference between the thrown and the caught boomerang. The framework of both boomerangs, made up of demands, is the same as the demands of the Belarusian democratic opposition clearly resonate in the documents and speeches in the EU. The difference between the boomerangs is in the cover of the framework. The cover of the thrown Belarusian boomerang consists of moral persuasion. The cover of the caught European boomerang contains both the moral persuasion and the EU's geopolitical interpretation of that moral persuasion.

5.4 Outcome

Regardless of the difference between the Belarusian and European boomerang, the boomerang throw was successful because there is enough overlap between the two boomerangs as the moral persuasion resource is put in line with the security resource by the EU. In other words, there is enough overlap between the presented and perceived resource. Even though EU rhetoric made clear that the moral persuasion was taken seriously, it cannot be said for sure whether this would have been the case if the security resource would not be there. Therefore, the Belarusian democratic opposition influences EU foreign policy as the *package* of resources, defender of norms and values and security, is regarded valuable enough by the EU decision-makers to exchange for influence over foreign policy. The influence is visible in the documents collectively decided upon and adopted by the EU bodies, for example, the resolution of the EP on Raman Bandarenka (European Parliament 2020g) and the conclusions of the European Council of 1 and 2 October 2020 (European Council 2020a).

All in all, it can be said for sure that the demands of the Belarusian democratic opposition found resonance within the EU as it makes up the framework of both the European and Belarusian boomerang. A discrepancy between the covers of the boomerangs did not lead to a failure of the boomerang because the overlap of the presented and perceived resource was enough for the boomerang pattern to work. Therefore, the Belarusian opposition exchanged both the presented resource, defender of norms and values, and perceived resource, security, for influence over foreign policy. The outcome of the boomerangs is that the EU pressures the Lukashenka regime to change. Regardless, the Belarusian democratic opposition is not convinced that the EU does everything it can to pressure Lukashenka. According to Tsikhanouskaya, "sanctions against Belarus' authoritarian regime do not go far enough" (in Euronews 2020).

6. Discussion

Tsikhankouskaya's exile shortly after the presidential elections forced the Belarusian opposition to adopt a boomerang pattern. The cover of the Belarusian boomerang, the narrative used by the opposition, was a moral persuasion considered as a relatively valuable resource by EU decision-makers. The Belarusian opposition seemed to underestimate the importance of the security resource and did not focus its narrative on it. Nonetheless, the resource was present in the boomerang caught by the EU because the EU interpreted the presented resource of defender of norms and values as a security resource. In the end, it was the *package* of presented and perceived resource that was exchanged for influence over foreign policy. It cannot be said whether the EU would have been interested in the cause of the Belarusian opposition without the possibility to perceive the security resource. Nevertheless, the presented resource of defender of norms and values did trigger the attention of the EU and the outcome is that the Belarusian opposition influenced the foreign policy of the EU regarding Belarus. This means that the research proves the presence of a boomerang mechanism with the logic of resource exchange through which the Belarusian democratic opposition influenced EU foreign policy which aligns with my theoretical expectations.

Unexpected is the prominence of the defender of norms and values resource in the narrative of the Belarusian opposition and, connected to that, the discrepancy between the Belarusian and the European boomerang. Whereas the frameworks of the boomerangs, made of demands, are the same, the covers are different because the cover European boomerang contains the security resource, which lacks on the Belarusian boomerang. This discrepancy between the two boomerangs could have led to a failure of the boomerang pattern and therefore the finding has implications for the theory of the boomerang pattern. Keck and Sikkink (1998, 23) do acknowledge that influence from the TANs come from the leverage they have over the international ally and that the identification of the leverage is crucial in their campaigns to generate change. Moreover, they recognize that a boomerang pattern can be unsuccessful (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 2). However, they neither elaborate on what happens when the leverage is differently interpreted by the international ally nor on what causes an unsuccessful boomerang. The discrepancy between the two boomerangs shows that the success or failure of the boomerang cannot be determined by the leverage of the TAN but by the whole process. When the TAN has caught the attention of the international ally, then it is not only about the TAN's leverage anymore but also about how the international ally interprets that leverage. Keck and Sikkink do not account for this as they only focus on the starting and ending point of the

boomerang (Andonova 2014, 484; Avant et al. 2010, 205; Bassano 2014, 35; Risse et al. 1999, 18).

The focus on the process makes both the boomerang pattern and resource exchange (more) constructivist. The constructivist focus from the boomerang pattern is on how TANs shape norms, values and identities (Keck & Sikkink 1998, 3). Keck and Sikkink do not elaborate on the constructed nature of the boomerang itself, something that does become apparent in the analysis above. The Belarusian democratic opposition constructs their boomerang in a precise way by stressing the same demands over and over and by covering those demands in the same resource again and again. The EU constructs its own boomerang by adding the security resource to the cover of the Belarusian boomerang. For resource exchange, the findings implicate that the theory is not as rational as it was presented because the exchange of resources is not that straightforward. Resource exchange does not take into account that the perception of a resource also plays a part in the decision to exchange. Therefore, there is a constructivist aspect to resource exchange. Nonetheless, the different perceptions, and thus the constructivist aspect of both the boomerang pattern and resource exchange, do not necessarily have to impact the outcome as long as the overlap between the presented and perceived resource is enough. Regardless of the discrepancy between the thrown and caught boomerang and thus the resource presented and interpreted, the EU did see the necessity to intervene in Belarus and thus the opposition got the influence they desired and the Lukashenka regime is pressured.

All in all, the analysis above shows that the success of a boomerang is determined by the interplay of the presented and perceived resource. If there is enough overlap between the two, then the boomerang throw will be successful. The moral persuasion resource presented by the Belarusian democratic opposition attracted the attention of the EU but the value was added by the interpretation of that resource as security. This combination of the moral persuasion and security resource was exchanged for influence over European foreign policy. Resource exchange is thus a good addition to the boomerang pattern as it explains when the *process* of the boomerang pattern is successful or not. Nonetheless, when combining resource exchange with the boomerang pattern it must be recognized that resource exchange in its original form is too rational and therefore the boomerang pattern must be complemented with *constructivist* resource exchange. This way, the perceptions of the resources are central which is important for deciding on the success or failure of the boomerang pattern.

7. Conclusion

The gaps in the literature this thesis sought to address were the mechanism behind the boomerang pattern and to show how a TAN from a country neighbouring the EU tries to influence EU policy. The main argument of this study was that the boomerang pattern had to be complemented with the theory of resource exchange to understand the mechanism behind the boomerang pattern. This mechanism was expected to work because TANs from a country neighbouring the EU potentially have security as a resource. After all, stability at their home state enhances both domestic and European security which would make the EU decision-makers interested in the causes of those TANs.

With an in-depth case study consisting of 801 primary documents and 1.554 coded citations, the research question: How did the Belarusian democratic opposition influence the foreign policy of the EU regarding Belarus? could be answered. The findings showed that the Belarusian opposition influenced European foreign policy regarding Belarus by constructing a boomerang consisting of six demands covered in moral persuasion. The EU caught a boomerang similar to the Belarusian boomerang but with the security resource added to the cover. The package of defender of norms and values and the security resource was exchanged for influence over EU foreign policy. These findings demonstrate that resource exchange has strong explanatory power when it comes to the mechanism behind the boomerang pattern as it shows that the success or failure of the boomerang depends on the whole process and not so much on the leverage presented by the TAN. However, the findings also demonstrated that both the boomerang pattern and resource exchange must be more constructivist as both the boomerangs and resources are constructed and susceptible to perceptions.

In this research, I have already shown that a discrepancy between the two boomerangs does not necessarily have to lead to a failure of the pattern and that the discrepancy points at the constructed nature of the boomerang. Therefore, for further research, I recommend looking into the process of the boomerang pattern and to determine to what extent there has to be overlap between the presented and perceived resource to make the boomerang throw successful. Such a study will then also add to the constructivist nature of the boomerang pattern and resource exchange as the boomerang and the resources will be considered as constructs.

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Appendix

ⁱ Author's translation of: Но знаете, не дай Бог, оказаться перед таким выбором перед которым оказалась я. Поэтому, люди, берегите себя пожалуйста. Не одна жизнь не стоит того что сейчас происходит. Я... Детей эта самая важная что есть в нашей жизни.

ⁱⁱ Author's translation of: На каждой встрече с иностранными политиками рассказывает истории беларусов и что каждую из них переживает как личную.

ⁱⁱⁱ Author's translation of: [Беларусы] сегодня отстаивают демократические ценности и независимость Беларуси, выступают за восстановление законности и справедливых результатов выборов в нашей стране.

^{iv} Author's translation of: Мы не заинтересованы дружить с Россией против ЕС, так же как и у нас нет интереса углублять отношения с ЕС против России.