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**THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS? HUMAN  
RIGHTS REPRESSION IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

*MASTER'S THESIS*

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# MASTER'S THESIS FLYLEAF

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I confirm that I am the author of submitted *Master's Thesis: The Detrimental Effect of Economic Sanctions? Human Rights Repression in the Russian Federation*, which has been prepared independently and has never been presented for any other course or used in another educational institution, neither in Lithuania, or abroad. I also provide a full bibliographical list which indicates all the sources that were used to prepare this assignment and contains no un-used sources.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ENTRY

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**Key words:** Human rights, economic sanctions, targeted sanctions, Russian Federation, regime behaviour.

**Summary:** This thesis analyzes the possible effect of targeted economic sanctions on regime-sponsored violations of human rights in the Russian Federation. The theoretical part of the thesis provides a novel theoretical causal chain which has been constructed by combining elements of two theories: first, explaining the effects of economic sanctions on human rights and, second, the workings of “smart sanctions”. The empirical part of the thesis examines the economic effects of the targeted economic sanctions on Russia, the responsive measures of the Russian authorities and the repercussions of such measures on human rights. The research attempts to cover the period from the years 2000 to 2017, the dividing line being the year 2014 marked by the imposition of sanctions. In accordance with the theoretical causal chain the thesis investigates a set of interrelated events that have eventually contributed to changes in the enjoyment of civil and political human rights in the Russian federation.

## Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND ANNEXES .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	3
Study design .....	5
1. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	7
1.1. Definitions of the Main Concepts .....	7
1.2. What Is Already Known about Economic Sanctions and Human Rights Violations?.....	9
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	15
2.1. Methodology .....	20
3. CASE STUDY: THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.....	21
3.1. Timeline – Sanctions on the Russian Federation following its actions in Ukraine.....	21
3.2. Economic and Socioeconomic Consequences Caused by Sanctions .....	32
3.3. Human Rights in the Russian Federation.....	42
3.3.1. Control variables .....	43
3.3.2. Human Rights in the Russian Federation before the Imposition of Sanctions .....	46
3.3.3. Human Rights in the Russian Federation after the Imposition of Sanctions .....	50
CONCLUSIONS .....	54
Annex No. 1.....	57
Annex No. 2.....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	75
SUMMARY .....	87
SANTRAUKA .....	89

# LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND ANNEXES

## LIST OF TABLES

No.	Title of the Table	Page
1	Basic Forms of Economic Sanctions	7
2	Budget Expenditure for Defence, Education and Healthcare sectors of the Russian Federation, 2011-2017	35
3	Changes in the Standard of Living for the General Public	37
4	Changes in the Opportunities to Make a Decent Wage	38
5	Changes in the Nature of Russian Families' Daily Consumption	38
6	Main Grievances with the Present Government	39
7	Putin's Approval Rating	40
8	Putin's ratings on issues drop across the board	40
9	Freedom rating in the OPEC Member-Countries, 1999-2017	44-45
10	Number of Organizations Registered as "Foreign Agents"	51
11	Freedom Rating in the Russian Federation, 1999-2017	53

## LIST OF FIGURES

No.	Title of the Figure	Page
1	Classification of Human Rights	8
2	Causal Chain: from Economic Sanctions to State-sponsored Human Rights Repression	16
3	Theoretical Workings of 'Smart' Sanctions	17
4	Advanced Theoretical Causal Chain: 'Smart' Sanctions and State-sponsored Human Rights Repression	19
5	The Initial Victims of the EU and the US Imposed Sanctions	29
6	Budget Expenditure for Defence, Education and Healthcare sectors, 2011-2017	36
7	Crude Oil Prices, 2000-2016	43

## LIST OF ANNEXES

No.	Title of the Annex	Page
1	Summary of Restrictive Measures Imposed on the Russian Federation, 2014-2017	57
2	Summary of Human Rights Violations in the Russian Federation, 1999-2017	63

## INTRODUCTION

This Master thesis analyses the effect of economic sanctions on human rights repression in the Russian Federation. With the ever-increasing economic interdependence economic sanctions have become an appealing measure to counter various types of wrongdoers throughout the global political arena. Moreover, economic sanctions provide a means to interfere and influence the target country without direct violation of the principles of sovereignty, and while this measure sends a considerably stronger signal than diplomatic action it is also cheaper, in both political and financial terms, compared to military intervention. Thus, sanctions have become one of the most commonly used foreign policy instruments. In fact, the period from 1945 to the present has been named ‘the sanctions era’, as between 1945 and 1990 some form of sanctions was imposed on other states more than sixty times with more than two-thirds of these cases inflicted by the U.S.; and although since 1990 the pattern of sanctions has changed moving from unilateral to multilateral sanctions (usually under the auspices of the UN), the number of episodes has yet increased (Lopez and Cortright, 1995: 65-67). The recent imposition of sanctions on Russia – Europe’s largest neighbour-country – is an episode well worth of considerable scrutiny, as, while the world’s eyes are on the human rights violations caused by Russian-sponsored troops in Ukraine, the analysis of human rights situation within Russia itself is slightly being neglected. Therefore, this Master’s thesis will focus on the human rights situation in the Russian Federation and the possible effects of the economic sanctions.

**The Novelty of the thesis.** Most theories analysing the relationship between economic sanctions and human rights violations in the target regimes focus on the direct impact of the sanctions on the economy. To be more precise, these theories examine how a crippled economy affects the most vulnerable groups of the population and deprives them of their right to work, access to food, drinking water and pharmaceuticals or the ability to get a proper education. Therefore, the main reason why this topic has to be investigated is that the theory analysing the relationship between economic sanctions, regime behaviour and human rights deterioration is highly under-researched. In addition, while the aforementioned relationship has started to attract the attention of increasingly more scholars, most authors using this theory investigate the impact of conventional economic sanctions, while the

relationship between targeted economic sanctions and human rights remains considerably neglected. Thus, it is well worthwhile analysing whether or not *targeted* economic sanctions have provoked the Russian authorities to employ human rights repressions in order to maintain the status quo within the country. Moreover, the imposition of sanctions on Russia is a relatively new phenomenon, thus there is no literature available investigating the relationship between the economic sanctions and the suppression of human rights in this country. Due to all the aforementioned reasons the relationship between the imposition of economic sanctions and the effect on the target regime's behaviour with regard to human rights suppression in Russia ought to be investigated.

**The problem of the thesis.** There is plenty of research which has already proven that economic sanctions hurt human rights within the targeted countries because they foster the target regime's coercive behaviour as a means of ensuring status quo within the country, thus, the international community has increasingly sought to replace conventional economic sanctions by targeted or, in other words, "smart" sanctions. Such measures were also introduced in the case of the Russian Federation. As far as the Russian economy is concerned, the direct impact on the basic human rights is not yet sharply visible due to the usage of rainy-day funds by the Russian authorities, also, a relatively short period that economic sanctions have been in effect as well as due to the nature of 'smart' sanctions which directly affect only specific individuals and entities and not the general population. Yet, there are visible signs that the human rights situation in Russia may be deteriorating. The most prominent recent example being the fact that at the end of 2015 President Putin signed a law allowing Russia's Constitutional Court to determine whether or not to comply with the resolutions adopted by international courts, which means that the country's high Court can now overthrow, among others, even the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, in case these judgements are perceived as infringing the Russian Constitution's supremacy (Civil Rights Defenders, 2016). Therefore, a research problem originating from the increased employment of "smart" sanctions is whether or not targeted economic sanctions help to prevent state-sponsored human rights violations.

**The research question,** originating from the problem of the thesis: Do targeted economic sanctions cause human rights deprivations by encouraging incumbents to increase repression in the Russian Federation?

**The object of the research** is the possible effect of targeted economic sanctions on regime-sponsored violations of human rights in the Russian Federation.



### **The tasks of the thesis:**

1. To introduce the literature relevant to the research topic and to develop clear definitions of *economic sanctions* and *human rights*.
2. To construct and present the theoretical framework which would explain the relationship among “smart” economic sanctions, target regimes’ behaviour and human rights violations.
3. To apply the theoretical framework in the case of Russia and to carry out an analysis, that would reveal whether or not the human rights situation in Russia deteriorated after the imposition of targeted economic sanctions.
4. To outline the findings and to present a few suggestions for further research in this field.

The problem of the thesis and the research question lead to the hypothesis, which will be employed in the further analysis:

**Hypothesis.** The imposition of targeted economic sanctions on the Russian Federation has contributed to human rights deprivations within this country due to the fact that the intended economic hardship inflicted on the targeted entities is shifted on the general population as Russian authorities employ specific mechanisms which allow them to avoid economic pressure.

### **Study design**

This Master’s thesis will be written by employing a qualitative study design, as the main part of the research will be carried out as a single case-study. Due to its intensively analytical nature this analysis may be useful in complimenting the already existing generalizations about the effects of economic sanctions on regime repression. Most importantly, the reason why the thesis will be based on a qualitative study design is that the correlation between economic sanctions and regime repression in most other study-sources is analysed through cross-national research technique while in-depth scrutiny is slightly underused.

**Case selection and setting for the study.** The Russian Federation was chosen as a case study because it is probably the most recent country in the post-soviet space to be targeted by economic sanctions. Due to the fact that right after the Russian annexation of Crimea, economic sanctions were imposed, Crimea will also be included as a part of the study setting. Crimea will not be included in the analysis of human rights situation in Russia in pre-sanctions period as the area was an actual part of Ukraine, although its inclusion in the post-sanctions analysis is crucial due to the

widespread violations of human rights of the local people within the peninsula after the annexation. On the whole, academic observations of violations of human rights in Russia are quite common, yet up to this date there have been no visible attempts to analyse whether or not the imposition of targeted economic sanctions resulted in an aggravation of human rights within this country, thus, the author of this theses sees it as a good opportunity to contribute to the existing research of the causes underlying human rights violations in Russia.

**Research instruments.** The research instruments used in the making of this Master's thesis will include:

- *Analysis of academic literature* will be used to define the key concepts, to reconstruct a theoretical framework and describe the economic consequences of sanctions.
- *Analysis of EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine* will be employed to introduce the historical course of events and to provide an explanation of why economic sanctions were imposed, when they were imposed and which types of sanctions have been applied over time.
- *Analysis of legal acts and reports released by NGOs* will be included to detect changes in the enjoyment of human rights in Russia. The organizations include: Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Amnesty International.
- *Secondary quantitative data analysis* will be used to trace changes in the number of pre-sanction and post-sanction episodes of social unrest, as well as changes in the situation of human rights in Russia. Secondary quantitative data related to changes in the enjoyment of human rights will mostly include indicators characterizing physical integrity rights.

**Time-frame of the study.** The time-frame will include the period from 2000 till the end of 2017 (if the sanctions remain in effect before the submission of the thesis). This period will be divided into the pre-sanction period (2000-2013) and the post-sanction period (2014-2017). The time frame for the first part of the period was chosen linking it to the fact that Vladimir Putin took office in 2000 and since then the situation of human rights in Russia has started to deteriorate. The second part is clearly separated by a precise dividing line i.e. the imposition of sanctions beginning from March, 2014.

# 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1.1. Definitions of the Main Concepts

This section is aimed at providing the definitions of the main concepts, namely – economic sanctions and human rights – and some general information regarding these two concepts, which will be relevant in the further sections of the thesis.

**Economic sanctions.** There are a number of definitions of economic sanctions used by scholars throughout the research field. For the purpose of this thesis economic sanctions will be defined as ‘[t]he deliberate, government-inspired withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, of customary trade and/or financial relations.’ (Hufbauer, Schott and Elliott, 1990: 2)

Different forms of economic sanctions can be imposed depending on the target country and the reasons of imposition. Table No. 1 below introduces the basic forms of economic sanctions. There is a common consensus that the type of economic sanctions determines the severity of harm inflicted on the target’s economy. The larger the scale of the imposed sanctions the more detrimental the economic consequences in the target country are. For example, trade sanctions can devastate the local economy commonly affecting wide groups of ordinary citizens far more than the wrongdoing elites, whereas financial sanctions have a more direct and immediate impact on ruling elites, this way producing a more concentrated effect on the wrongdoers and a mediated effect on the general economic situation (Dashti-Gibson, Davis and Radcliff, 1997: 610).

**Table No. 1 Basic Forms of Economic Sanctions**

Type of economic sanctions	Function
Trade sanctions	Restriction of imports and exports to and from the target country
Aid sanctions	Suspension of financial aid
Financial sanctions	Cuts in lending and/or investment
Monetary sanctions	Aimed at destabilization of the value and stability of the target state’s currency
Seizure of assets	Deprivation of the target’s physical property/securities/bank accounts

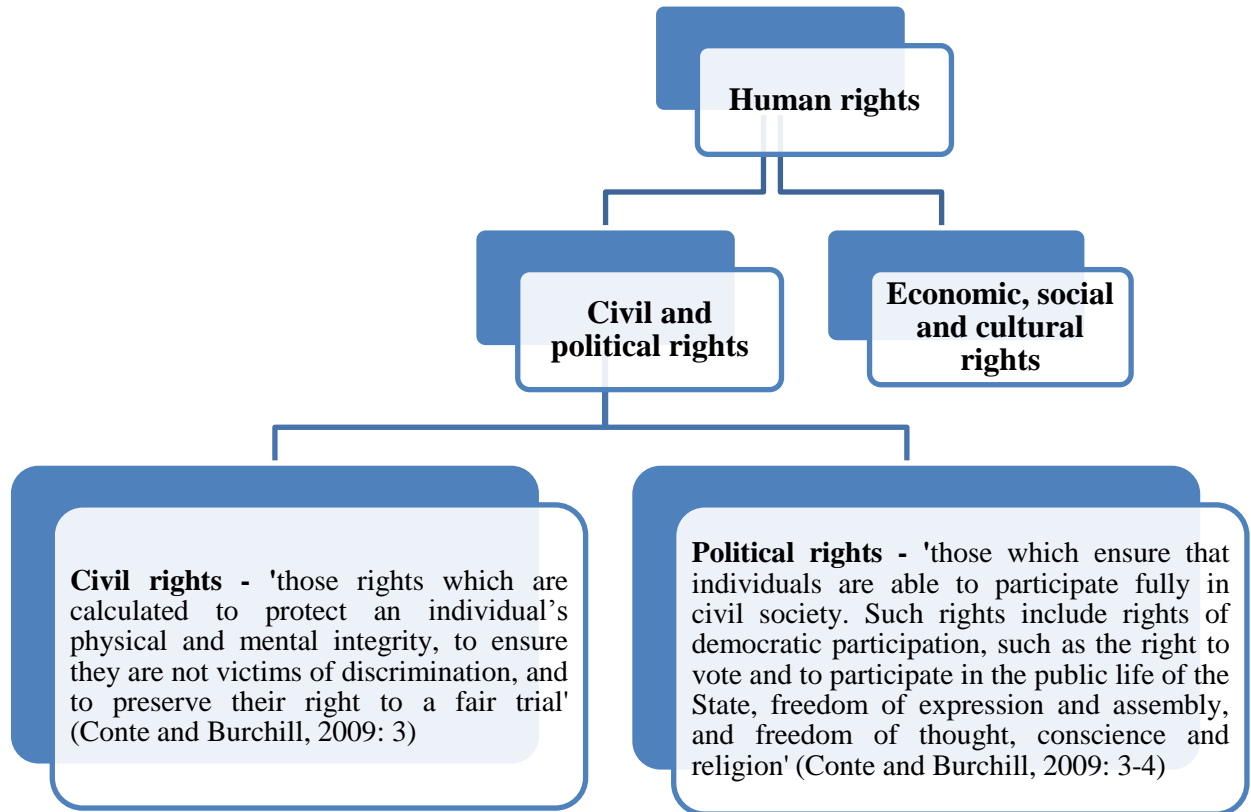
Created by the author, based on Jonathan Kirshner, “The Microfoundations of Economic Sanctions”, *Security Studies*, 1997, 6(3), 36-37.

The fierceness of economic sanctions also depends on some other factors of imposition. For example, the number of imposing parties is very decisive – sanctions that are imposed multilaterally or even universally ‘bite’ way more than those imposed unilaterally. Moreover, total sanctions hurt the targeted economies way more than their partial counterparts.

After a great number of studies have revealed the detrimental effects of economic sanctions causing severe violations of basic human rights, a new policy of sanctions was born – the idea of ‘smart sanctions’ or in other words targeted sanctions. ‘Smart sanctions’ is a policy ‘that imposes coercive pressures on specific individuals/entities and that restricts selective products or activities, while minimizing unintended economic and social consequences for vulnerable populations.’ (Cortright and Lopez, 2002: 2) Thus, the main logic of targeted sanctions is that they are supposed to directly punish the wrongdoers while escaping the violations of human rights of the general population. This concept is introduced because exactly this type of sanctions is being imposed on the case study in this thesis.

**Human rights.** The idea of human rights is a more disputable one. However, the concept of human rights in this thesis will be based on the content of certain articles presented in the internationally recognized Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). The list of human rights presented in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is comprised of two blocks, namely: (1) civil and political rights and (2) economic, social and cultural rights. The former are also known as first generation rights whereas the latter – as second generation rights (Conte and Burchill, 2009: 3). The schematic illustration of divisions among different groups and sub-groups of human rights as well as the relevant definitions are presented in Figure No. 1 below. Although civil and political rights are within the same block, in this Master’s thesis they are furtherly divided into two smaller sub-blocks because there is a great difference between civil rights and political rights and the analysis of possible violations of the two sub-types of human rights will be carried out in a different way. Economic, social and cultural rights in the selected country-case have not been affected directly due to the nature of ‘smart sanctions’ which mostly affect certain sectors and individuals instead of the general population and their basic human rights, thus this block of rights will not be furtherly analysed in the thesis.

**Figure No. 1 Classification of Human Rights**



Created by the author, based on The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

## **1.2. What Is Already Known about Economic Sanctions and Human Rights Violations?**

This section of the thesis deals with the existing literature analyzing the relationship between economic sanctions and violations of human rights in the targeted countries. This section seeks to present the general logic of economic sanctions and causal explanations that are the most prevalent in the field.

**The naïve theory of economic sanctions.** Economic sanctions have become an increasingly popular policy measure. It owes its popularity to the naïve theory of economic sanctions, according to which the logic behind the imposition of economic sanctions is that economic hardship will deprive the wrongdoers of resources necessary for their criminal activities or for the maintenance of the coercive apparatus and the status quo. The goal of the senders can be reached in some certain

ways. For example, when economic sanctions push value-deprivation of the target to its limit, the split in the leadership or between the leadership and the citizens will be inevitable and bring about surrender or willingness to negotiate (Galtung, 1967: 388). Accordingly, economic pressure on the central government will give the elites incentives to change policies while economic pressure on regime support groups will encourage these groups to pressure the regime to change course (Kirshner, 1997: 42). This logic operated well as a justification for imposition of economic sanctions in order to achieve the goals preferred by the senders.

**Counterproductive effects of economic sanctions.** However, more often than not, the naïve theory fails in practice and economic sanctions boost the repressive capacity of the wrongdoers or contribute to human rights violations in other ways.

Imposition of economic sanctions means that the target country is isolated from the global economic system so the target regime is deprived of access to global economic processes that are necessary for the respect of human rights. In fact, Mitchell and McCormick find that in certain cases political factors are less important for the respect of the physical integrity rights than economic factors and among the later – a country’s development, as measured by domestic income levels, seems to be the most decisive (1988: 497). Also, there is strong evidence that ‘trade flows may encourage a wide variety of different governments to support better human rights practices’ (Hafner-Burton, 2005: 695). In addition, it has been argued that trade fosters economic growth which means an increase in the amount of capital available to entrepreneurs and government officials (taxes), enlargement of employment opportunities and reduction in the cost of goods all of which prevent state repression as social unrest is unlikely whereas docile workforce is guaranteed (Apodaca, 2001: 589-598). Moreover, Richards, Gelleny and Sacko (2001: 229-233) find strong systematic evidence that economic development and FDI increase the odds of full government respect for political rights and civil liberties while portfolio investment (including corporate securities, bonds, notes, money market instruments, and financial derivatives) has a great impact on government respect for physical integrity rights. Unfortunately, portfolio investments ‘can be withdrawn from countries at the slightest sign any profit risk’ (Richards, Gelleny and Sacko, 2001: 229) meaning that a factor having the strongest influence on government respect for physical integrity rights is the most vulnerable to changing economic and political circumstances which emerge with the imposition of economic sanctions. Thus, by directly

alienating the target countries from economic development or participation in the global economy, sanctions actually prevent these countries from developing greater respect for human rights.

Another way in which economic sanctions cause human rights violations is the reinforcement of authoritarian rule which in turn handicaps groups opposing anticompetitive regimes. In the words of Peksen and Drury (2010: 244), '[e]conomic sanctions inadvertently help the targeted regime consolidate authoritarian power by enabling elites to enhance their ties with the key political supporters, while at the same time economically disrupting its opposition groups (e.g., an opposition party or an anti-regime social or political movement) to sustain their political relevance'. Thus, economic sanctions indirectly inhibit the political rights of the citizens within targeted countries. To be more precise, there is a 7% decrease in the average political liberties score the year after the imposition of sanctions and while limited sanctions result in a 6% drop in democracy in the receiver country, imposition of extensive sanctions causes a 16% decline in the country's democracy score (Peksen and Drury, 2010: 256). Moreover, imposition of sanctions provokes mass political action: for example, the predicted number of riots increases by 1.75 times in the presence of sanctions whereas the incidence rate for demonstrations under sanctions is 1.73 times higher than in the absence of them. Such social unrest usually provokes the targeted authorities to engage in measures that would help to maintain the status quo. More authoritarian leaders may choose to rely on coercive means of taming the opposition i.e. to employ violent means that would result in large scale violations of physical integrity rights. Therefore, it can be argued that economic sanctions as a policy aimed at enhancing the opposition movements in the targeted countries can reach opposite results, which would most often mean the suppression of political rights yet in extreme cases civil rights can be violated too.

Economic sanctions may also be counterproductive due to the fact that they often provoke the 'rally round the flag' effect. The sanctioned populations will choose to support their leaders against the foreign enemy no matter how unfavourable the policies of the authorities are. Moreover, the external economic intervention will be exploited by the authorities as a justification for the use of repressions against anti-regime groups under the guise of maintaining domestic stability (Peksen and Drury, 2010: 247). A good example of such a phenomenon is Cuba. Economic sanctions imposed by the US did not bring down Castro's regime, on the contrary, sanctions became a rallying point for the Cubans and a scapegoat on which to blame Cuba's problem as well as a justification for having for totalitarian controls (Schreiber, 1973: 405). Thus, people in the targeted countries may be

willing to sacrifice their civil and political rights as a necessary contribution to the support of their leaders. Through a smart usage of modern propaganda, the targeted government can downplay the motives of the sending nations and create ‘pluralistic ignorance’ (Galtung, 1967: 399). At the same time the leaders can fully enjoy their enhanced legitimacy. On a more optimistic note, ‘electoral authoritarian regimes, where the ruling elite is constrained by the existence of some form of elections and opposition parties, combine claims to legitimacy and use soft repression – rather than overt force – to control their citizens.’ (Grauvogel and von Soest, 2014: 648) However, while a combination of a legitimising factor and episodes of soft repression is a relatively better option than sheer hard repression alone, the repression factor remains and citizens take it for granted with no attempts to challenge the incumbents, thanks to the economic sanctions.

Probably the most common topic among scholars analysing the humanitarian effects of economic sanctions is their direct impact on the target’s economy. By infringing upon the production, importation and distribution of essential goods economic sanctions often violate the rights to life, health, social services and protection of human dignity among innocent civilians. Due to the scope of academic literature investigating the humanitarian effects of economic sanctions and the fact that most of the existing articles are carried out in the form of country-case analyses, this chapter requires a more in-depth country-by-country examination of the most prominent cases.

*The case of the former Yugoslavia.* The UN Security Council (UNSC) imposed a number of sanctions on the former Yugoslavia (mostly on Serbia and Montenegro) because of the war that had erupted from an ethnic conflict. Although the economy was already hurt by the war, the sanctions took their toll as well. In 1993-1994 60% of the total labour force was out of work, the inflation rate was among the highest in the world at 1881%, 85% of workers and 92% of pensioners were living below the poverty line, the increased price of access to education resulted in drops in school enrolment and many schools were without power supply and unable to provide teaching materials and even basic supplies such as chalk (Devin and Dashti-Gibson, 1997: 166-179). Moreover, the availability of basic pharmaceuticals declined by more than 50%, while typhus, measles, and tuberculosis were on the rise, hospital mortality increased by 30% and the suicide rate peaked to 22% (Garfield, Devin and Fausey, 1995: 461-462). Although the sanctions were in political terms at least partially effective, they considerably enhanced the already deep economic crisis thus strengthening the suffering of the civilians.



*The case of Haiti.* When Haiti's first elected president was overthrown by a military coup, the U.S. and later the OAS and the UN imposed sanctions. Between 1991 and 1994 industry employment plunged 80% while in agricultural sector it fell a total of 20%, the value of the national currency plummeted and hyperinflation occurred (Garfield, 1999: 12,17). The gasoline embargo brought about school closings or reductions to 3 days of classes per week, consequently, gross school enrolment fell from 83% to 57% in the years 1990-1994 (Gibbons and Garfield, 1999: 1500). Since humanitarian exemptions only include food and medical supplies and do not include educational supplies the quality of education kept deteriorating. Haitians' health situation got significantly worse. Despite the exemptions provided by the sanctioners, malnutrition and mortality rates increased, essential drug and food prices rose, drinking water output declined by 50%, 22% reduction in children immunization contributed to a measles epidemic and the average life expectancy decreased by 2.4 years (Gibbons and Garfield, 1999: 1501). Thus, the human rights violations inflicted by the Haitian military were further deepened by the sanctioners.

*The case of Iraq.* Soon after the Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in 1990, the UNSC imposed a number of sanctions on Iraq. Being almost solely reliant on oil, this country was hit extremely hard by the sanctions. Postwar industrial unemployment peaked at 70%, the agricultural sector employment declined significantly due to the lack of seeds, pesticides, and spare parts, the food price index increased nearly 75-fold while annual per capita income dropped from \$335 in 1988 to \$65 in 1991 and \$44 in 1992 (Hoskins, 1997: 111-113). Despite the oil-for-food program and government-provided food rations, most Iraqis were unable to afford enough food, not to mention other vital goods and services. Sanctions policy also reversed the previous educational achievements: the literacy rate decreased from 80% in 1987 to 42% in 1995, primary school enrolment rates decreased while secondary school drop-out rates increased, the school day was shortened to cater for two/three shifts a day and there were severe shortages of basic school supplies (De Santisteban, 2005: 59-71). Malnutrition and children mortality rates rocketed, immunization vaccines and simple curative medicines became scarce while high-tech equipment lacked complementary parts (Garfield, 1999: 13-16). The aforementioned deteriorations show just a few areas where economic sanctions facilitated varied human rights violations in an already war-torn country.

*The case of Cuba.* Reacting to Cuba's nationalization of American assets on the island and seeking to isolate its socialist regime in 1962 the U.S. imposed a unilateral embargo on

Cuba. After the collapse of Cuba's main supporter – the USSR – and after tightening of the sanctions, they started to bite considerably. There is a high degree of social equity in Cuba and housing, education, rationed food and healthcare remained public access goods so these were less affected by economic decline, yet the social gap between those with peso and those with dollar income has increased (Garfield, 1999: 12). However, the greatest harm of sanctions was inflicted on Cubans' right to health. Exports of medicine and medical devices/equipment to Cuba still are extremely limited, the renovation of hospitals and clinics was also hindered, malnutrition rates are high, water quality is poor, the exchange of medical and scientific information is minimal and Cubans are deprived of a number of equipment and medicines as they are only produced by the U.S. companies (Amnesty International, 2009: 5-19). In conclusion, the case of Cuba as well as the previously mentioned cases prove that more often than not economic sanctions contribute to the already grave human rights violations by directly crippling the targets' economies.

As a matter of fact, there are only a handful of academic articles which deal with the relationship between economic sanctions, regime behaviour and human rights. Yet, their findings are unanimous – basically, economic sanctions foster regimes to engage in human rights violations. Wood's (2008: 505) analysis of sanctions events and political repression in 157 countries in the years 1976-2001 shows that minor, moderate and comprehensive U.S.-imposed economic sanctions increase the probability that a state moves to the most severe category of repression to 7%, 10% and 14% respectively whereas UN-imposed sanctions raise the probability to 9%, 16% and 25% respectively. Another analysis, focusing on the imposition of economic sanctions in the period 1972-2000 and two major indicators – the level of respect for physical integrity rights by the government and the extent of political and civil liberties – has found that 'considering all sanctions for the entire time of their imposition, there is a 58% difference in average democracy score between those countries under sanctions and those that are not . . . [and] there is a 118% difference in the level of respect for human rights between those countries sanctioned and those that are not' (Peksen and Drury, 2009: 404). The only available academic article up to this date analyzing the relationship between *targeted* economic sanctions and regime-sponsored human rights repressions addresses the cases of targeted sanctions against countries in Africa between 1992 and 2008. The author finds that respect for human rights in the receiving countries is 1.74 times more probable under targeted economic sanctions when compared to the absence of sanctions (Carneiro and Apolinario Jr., 2015: 581-582). All of these findings make a

substantial contribution to the existing research on economic sanctions and human rights. However, the aforementioned are only cross-country analyses mostly focused on violations of physical integrity rights, thus, there is a lot of space for further discussions. Some related insights as well as an illustrating in-depth analysis of the Russian Federation will be offered in the following sections of this Master's thesis.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The first documented attempt to create a theoretical model explaining the relationship between economic sanctions, regime behaviour and human rights was presented by Reed M. Wood in his article "*A Hand upon the Throat of the Nation*": *Economic Sanctions and State Repression, 1976-2001*, published in 2008.

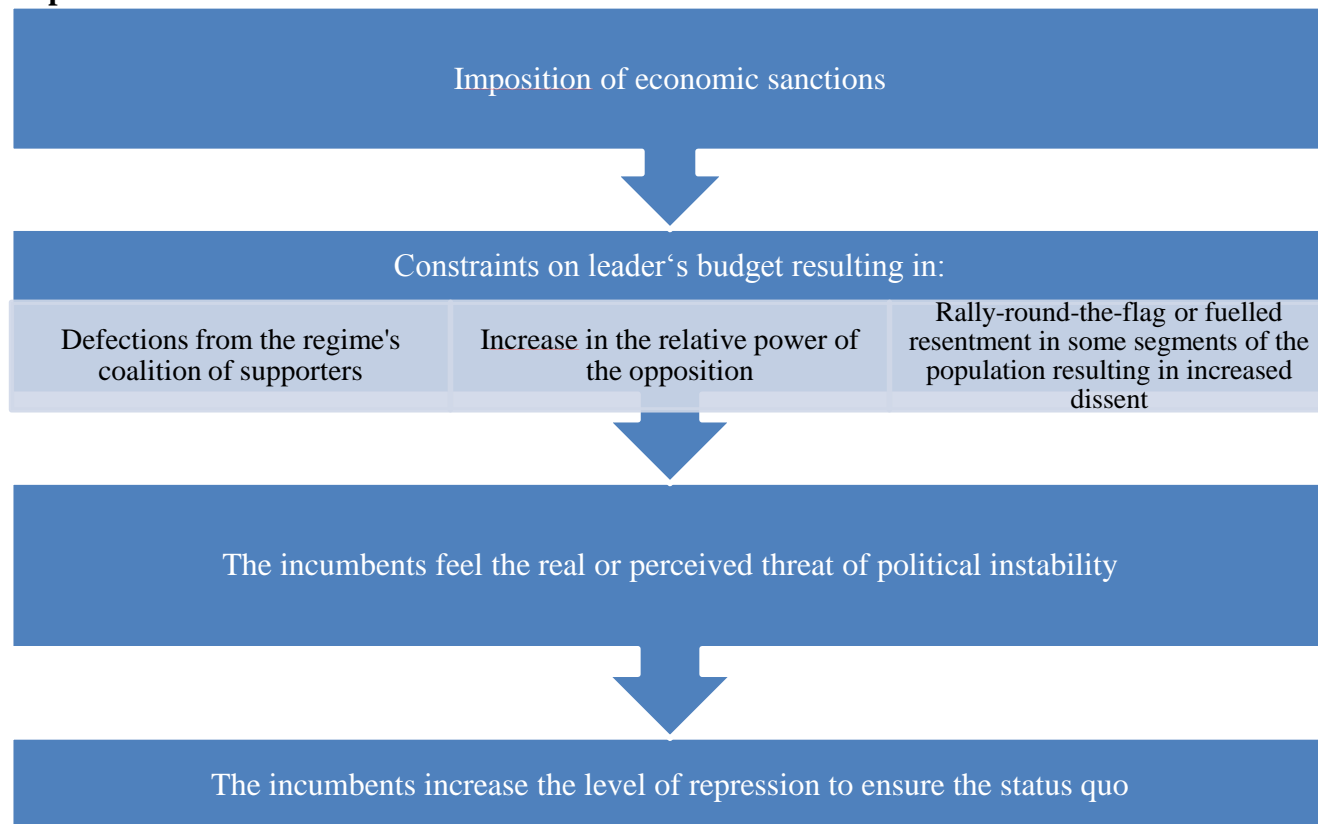
Drawing on the existing literature, Wood constructed two related assumptions: '(1) instability increases incumbent perceptions of threat and (2) increased threat perception contributes to increased repression' (2008: 491). Indeed, empirical evidence demonstrate that perceptions of threat play a crucial role in governments' respect for human rights – 'a country that started a period under the rule of law, with no political prisoners, would be expected to begin to take political prisoners and perhaps engage in torture and political executions in situations where there is a sudden, continuing, decrease in level of economic development' (Poe, Tate and Keith, 1999: 309).

According to Wood's theory, economic sanctions tighten the budget of the authorities in the receiving country this way constraining the flow of resources to the regime's coalition of supporters which in turn raises the likelihood of defections from the aforementioned coalition to a challenger. Moreover, economic sanctions encourage political opposition movements and/or contribute to the outburst of public dissent. Due to the reasons mentioned previously, targeted authorities enhance their level of repression in order to ensure the preferred status quo.

Defections from the incumbents' coalition become very much likely when 'the pool of available resources diminishes, [and] sanctioned leaders must choose between conforming to the preferences of the sender and redistributing resources in a manner that protects supporters.' (Wood, 2008: 493). In most cases the incumbents have to shift the costs of sanctions downward to the ordinary citizens. The non-elite population can in turn respond to the costs either by mounting support for the

sanctioned elite (the ‘rally round the flag’ effect) or by shifting their support from the incumbents to a challenger. Rallies are more likely when the targeted leader enjoys broad popular support and/or sanctions are imposed in the presence of extreme ideological rivalry. However, usually with the increasing economic inequality between the elites and the majority of population, more intense regime-initiated repression must be employed to maintain stability. Therefore, over-time rally may well be replaced by anti-regime movements and increased dissent which would then provoke even harsher repression. Furthermore, political opposition groups may be emboldened and encouraged to challenge the status quo by a perceived support of foreign allies and increase in the opposition’s power relative to the incumbents ‘through constraints imposed on the incumbent, access to sanctions rents, or increased public support’ (Wood, 2008: 495). Thus, Wood argues that, in one way or another, economic sanctions lead to state-induced repression. The visual illustration of the causal chain constructed by Wood is presented below.

**Figure No. 2 Causal Chain: from Economic Sanctions to State-sponsored Human Rights Repression**

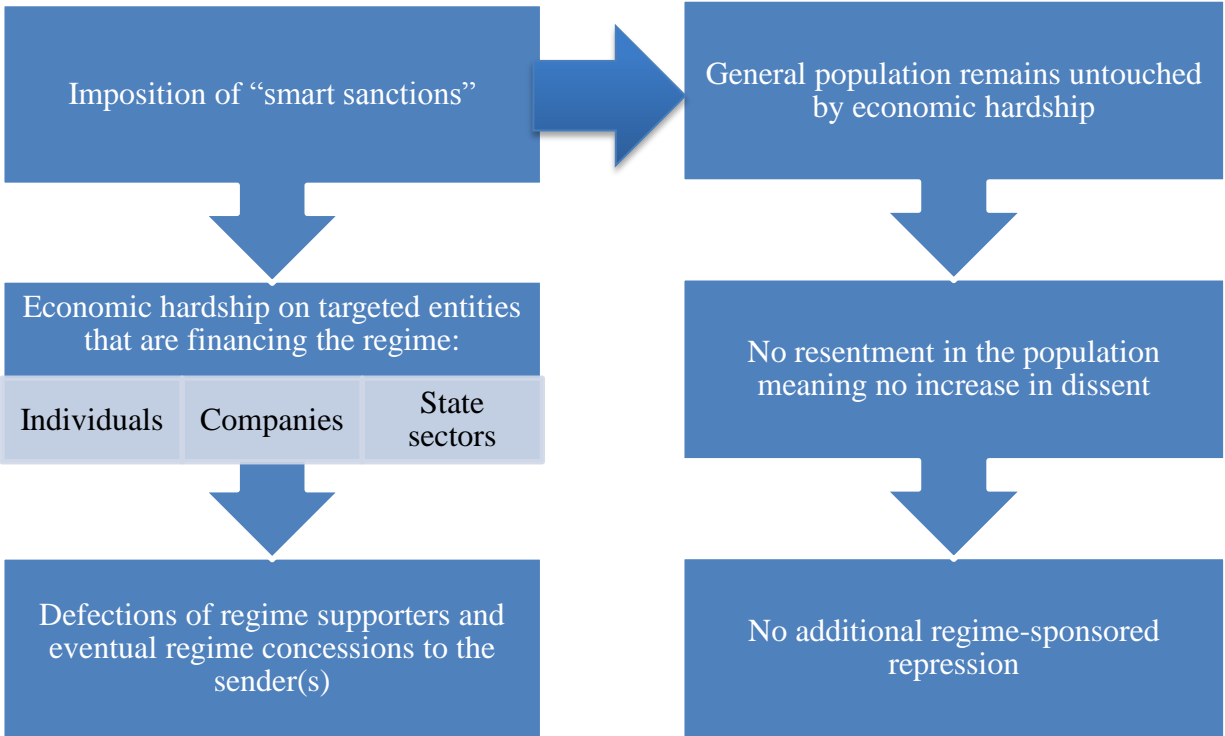


Created by the author, based on Reed M. Wood, ““A Hand upon the Throat of the Nation”: Economic Sanctions and State Repression, 1976-2001”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 2008, 52(3), pp. 489-513.

In their article published in 2009, Peksen and Drury offer a nearly identical theoretical model. Yet, they complement Wood’s theory with a valuable insight proposing that economic sanctions can consolidate the power of the regime because after their imposition the leaders enjoy an increase in their importance as suppliers keeping the ever scarcer resources concentrated in their hands, so regime-supporting groups depend on the leaders even more than before the imposition of sanctions (Peksen and Drury, 2009: 400-401). However, Wood’s theoretical framework and the one proposed by Peksen and Drury do not fully correspond to the case of the Russian Federation because the authors analyse conventional economic sanctions, thus their theoretical models ought to be revised.

In fact, a number of scholars claim that targeted or, in other words, ‘smart’ sanctions directly affecting the wrongdoing elites could prevent human rights violations of the innocent civilians which are usually mostly affected by the unintended consequences caused by conventional economic sanctions (Allen, 2007; Peksen and Drury, 2010; Peksen and Drury, 2009; Wood, 2008). The visual illustration of how ‘smart’ sanctions are supposed to avoid violations of human rights is presented below.

**Figure No. 3 Theoretical Workings of ‘Smart’ Sanctions**



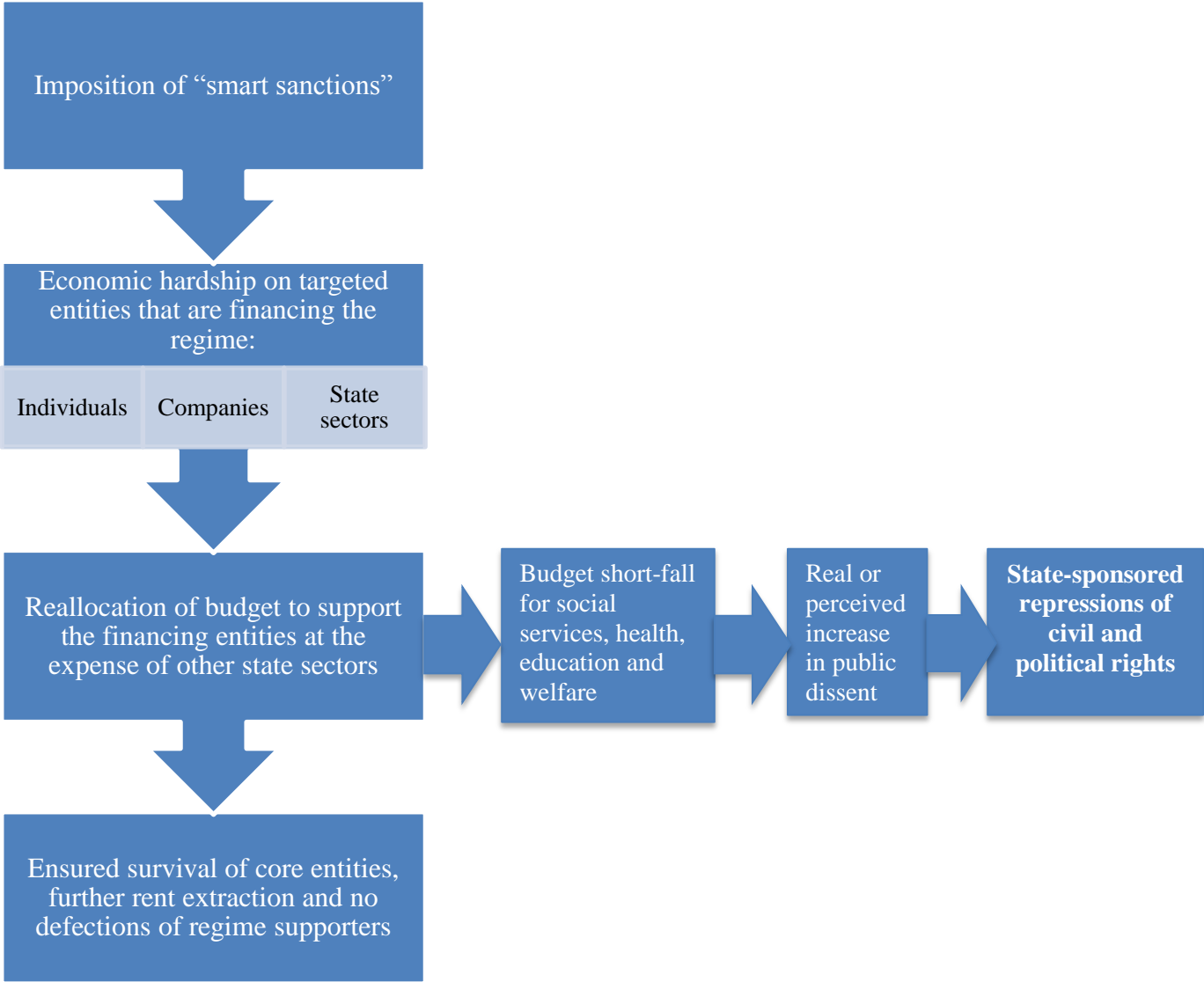
Created by the author, based on David Cortright and George A. Lopez (eds.) “Smart Sanctions: Targeting Economic Statecraft”, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002.

In order to analyse whether or not economic sanctions hurt human rights in the country-case under scrutiny in this thesis, it is necessary to construct an innovative theoretical framework which would take into account both – Wood’s theoretical model and the theoretical workings of ‘smart’ economic sanctions. Thus, the author of this thesis presents a new theoretical causal chain (illustrated in the Figure No. 4 below) which has been developed by combining the two previously mentioned theoretical models.

According to the combined theoretical model proposed by the author of the thesis, after the imposition of ‘smart’ sanctions, targeted entities that are financing the regime – individuals, companies and/or state sectors – begin to be affected by the economic hardship intended by the senders. However, restrictions on the entities providing the regime with rents provoke the authorities to engage in actions which would ensure further cohesion and rent-extraction. Consequently, the regime takes on policies related to the reallocation of the budget in order to support the financing entities at the expense of other state sectors. This way the ruling elites ensure the survival of core entities, further rent-extraction and prevent defections of regime supporters. However, budget shortfall damaging the aforementioned other state sectors, such as social services, health, education and welfare, result in increased public dissent. The increased dissent being a major threat to stability and regime viability push the ruling elites to engage in repression of civil and political rights of the general population. As a result, despite the fact that imposition of targeted sanctions should evade negative humanitarian consequences, authoritarian leaders manage to employ particular mechanisms which would allow them to secure economic resources in their hands. Unfortunately, this sort of manipulation means that the authorities need to develop a stronger repressive apparatus in order to tame public unrest. Therefore, the result after the imposition of sanctions remains the same, meaning that even ‘smart’ sanctions are unable to punish the wrongdoers without any deterioration of the human rights situation in the targeted countries.

This newly created theoretical causal chain will be employed in analysing the case of the Russian Federation, presented in the following sections.

**Figure No. 4 Advanced Theoretical Causal Chain: ‘Smart’ Sanctions and State-sponsored Human Rights Repression**



Created by the author, based on Reed M. Wood, ““A Hand upon the Throat of the Nation”: Economic Sanctions and State Repression, 1976-2001”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 2008, 52(3), pp. 489-513 and David Cortright and George A. Lopez (eds.) “Smart Sanctions: Targeting Economic Statecraft”, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002.

## 2.1. Methodology

As has already been mentioned, in the selected country-case economic, social and cultural rights have not been influenced directly due to ‘smart sanctions’ which mostly affect specific sectors and individuals instead of the general population, consequently this block of rights will not be analysed in the thesis. From the civil rights block the author of the thesis uses only the physical integrity rights due to a relatively hardly researchable repression of mental integrity rights. The physical integrity rights will be measured by the physical integrity rights indicators that are used by Wood and Peksen in their analyses. Since the two articles test this theory by carrying out cross-national analyses, a case-study analysis of Russia could, possibly, complement their findings through an in depth scrutiny of the relationship between economic sanctions and regime repression. In order to put some leverage to the analysis the author of this Master’s thesis will include the political rights variables and propose possible indicators which, arguably, might be suitable for the investigation of repression of political rights in Russia. The analysis will be carried out using the following variables:

- Dependent variable – human rights (civil and political) violations. Civil rights will be measured by changes in physical integrity indicators (extrajudicial killings, disappearances, political imprisonment). Political rights will be measured by analysing implementation of laws constraining democratic participation, such as the right to vote and to participate in the public life of the state, freedom of expression and assembly, and freedom of thought, as well as elimination of NGOs.
- Independent variable – economic sanctions. This variable will be measured employing preliminary findings on the effects of economic sanctions on Russia (loss of revenues due to suspended contracts and projects, financial isolation, lack of imported technologies, etc.)
- Control variables – effects of drops in oil prices. This set of variables will be used in order to distinguish the effects of economic sanctions from drops in global oil prices which coincided with the imposition of sanctions. Control variables will be measured by presenting a concise evaluation of human rights situation in other oil-dependent countries (Azerbaijan and Saudi Arabia) during the recent period of a drop in oil prices. If changes in



human rights indicators were not detected or were minimal, the impact of sanctions would be more robust.

### **3. CASE STUDY: THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

#### **3.1. Timeline – Sanctions on the Russian Federation following its actions in Ukraine**

In the late 2013 at that time Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich abandoned the implementation of an association agreement with the EU, choosing greater cooperation with Russia, which, in turn, provoked increasing protests culminating in the massive Euromaidan Revolution. President Yanukovich was ousted, yet the political crisis brought about clashes between the pro-western and pro-Russian parts of Ukraine. Taking advantage of this situation the Russian Federation sent troops to Crimea and after the internationally unrecognized referendum the peninsula was annexed. Eventually protests in eastern Ukraine evolved into an armed conflict between the Ukrainian government and the pro-Russian separatists who declared the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. The conflict, also known as the War in Donbass, was fueled by direct and indirect Russian intervention and is continuing up to this day. Due to Russia's actions threatening Ukraine's territorial integrity and the constant incitement of conflict in the southern and eastern parts of Ukraine, the EU, the US as well as other important global players have agreed upon taking certain restrictive measures in order to end the bloodshed on the eastern borders of the EU. Thus, this section is aimed at presenting the chronological order and concise descriptions of sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation in response to its actions in Ukraine. The section will be developed by first introducing the EU restrictive measures, then presenting the actions that were taken by the US administration, and, finally, responsive measures taken by other influential countries will be briefly mentioned.

**Sanctions imposed by the EU.** The EU restrictive measures in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine began with an Extraordinary meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 2014. After the following three days an extraordinary meeting of EU Heads of State condemned Russia's activity in Ukraine, decided to start a preparation of individual restrictive measures, namely, assets freeze and travel bans as well as agreed to suspend bilateral talks with the Russian Federation regarding visa matters and the New Agreement (Council of the European Union,

2017a). On March 17 the first measures were introduced against 21 Russian and Ukrainian officials ‘and the persons and entities associated with them for their role in actions threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine’(Council of the European Union, 2014a). The following day the Russian Federation annexed Crimea, provoking the international community to undertake further punitive actions. Indeed, a couple of days later, the list of officials facing EU travel bans and asset freezes was appended with 12 more individuals. Moreover, an already planned EU-Russia summit was cancelled and the European Council announced ‘that member states will not hold any bilateral regular summits with Russia’ (Council of the European Union, 2017a). The situation in Eastern Ukraine was rapidly deteriorating and it was a priority issue during the meeting held on April 15 by the EU foreign affairs ministers who condemned the violence of the Russian troops, subjected four more persons to visa bans and asset freezes as well as agreed on the strengthening of sanctions against individuals responsible for misappropriating Ukrainian state funds (Council of the European Union, 2014b). In May, the scope of the EU sanctions was widened enabling them to target: 1) ‘persons and entities associated with actions and policies undermining stability or security in Ukraine as well as with obstructing the work of international organisations’ and 2) ‘entities in Crimea and Sevastopol which have been confiscated or which have benefited from such confiscation’ (Council of the European Union, 2014c). Following these amendments, 13 more individuals joined the ‘blacklisters’ (the list was now comprised of 61 individuals in total) and two entities confiscated in the region faced asset freeze. In June, the Council stroke additional blows to Russia by banning imports of Crimean goods and signing the Association Agreement with Ukraine. Due to Russia’s failure to respect ceasefire and comply with the specific steps required by the Council, a new set of restrictive measures was introduced in July in order to widen the legal basis for sanctions. The set includes the following measures: 1) ‘a new list of entities and persons, including from the Russian Federation that are materially or financially supporting actions against Ukraine will be established by the Council by the end of July. Possible measures against individuals or entities who actively provide material or financial support to the Russian decision-makers responsible for the annexation of Crimea or the destabilisation of Eastern-Ukraine will also be studied’; 2) ‘the signature of new financing operations in the Russian Federation by the EIB will be suspended’; 3) ‘member states will coordinate with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to adopt a similar position’; 4) ‘the Commission will reassess and potentially suspend the implementation of EU bilateral and regional cooperation programmes with

Russia’; as well as the request to present proposals for complementary actions 5) ‘on restricting investments in Crimea and Sevastopol’; 6) ‘and international financial institutions to refrain from financing projects that explicitly or implicitly recognise the illegal annexation’(Council of the European Union, 2014d). The downing of flight MH17 fostered the EU leaders to accelerate the implementation of the aforementioned measures, and the most intense round of sanctions on Russia began at the end of July as the preparatory work for the actual actions was finalized. On July 25, the designation criteria in the legal basis for the punitive measures were again widened, moreover, 15 more individuals and 18 more organizations were subjected to asset freeze and visa bans meaning that the total number of sanctioned persons and entities responsible for actions undermining Ukraine’s territorial integrity were now 87 and 20 respectively (Council of the European Union, 2014e). On 29-31 July, the Commission decided upon a package of significant targeted economic sanctions, describing it as follows:

In order to restrict Russia's access to EU capital markets, EU nationals and companies may no more buy or sell new bonds, equity or similar financial instruments with a maturity exceeding 90 days, issued by major state-owned Russian banks, development banks, their subsidiaries outside the EU and those acting on their behalf. Services related to the issuing of such financial instruments, e.g. brokering, are also prohibited. In addition, an embargo on the import and export of arms and related material from/to Russia was agreed. It covers all items on the EU common military list. Coreper also reached agreement on a prohibition on exports of dual use goods and technology for military use in Russia or to Russian military end-users. All items in the EU list of dual use goods are included (see latest list in annex to regulation 428/2009). Finally, exports of certain energy-related equipment and technology to Russia will be subject to prior authorisation by competent authorities of Member States. Export licenses will be denied if products are destined for deep water oil exploration and production, arctic oil exploration or production and shale oil projects in Russia. (Council of the European Union, 2014f)

In addition to all that, 8 more persons and 3 more entities were added to the asset freeze and travel ban list. At the end of August the Council held another meeting and initiated the preparation of new economic sanctions targeting Russia. On September 5, Russia, Ukraine, the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics, together with OSCE observers signed the Minsk Protocol (Minsk-1 Agreement)

which was meant to bring about ceasefire in the region. Unfortunately, both sides failed to comply with the agreement. On September 12, restrictive measures against the Russian Federation were once again strengthened. This time, the major sanctions involved prohibition for EU nationals and companies to provide loans to five major Russian state-owned banks, trade in new bonds, equity or similar financial instruments with a maturity exceeding 30 days were also prohibited with regard to three Russian defence companies as well as three major energy companies, the supply of certain services (e.g. drilling, well testing or logging) necessary for oil exploration and production was suspended, nine mixed defence companies were exempted from receiving dual use goods from the EU and, finally, 24 additional individuals complemented the list of those subject to travel bans and asset freeze (Council of the European Union, 2014g). On November 28, the EU strengthened sanctions against separatists operating in Eastern Ukraine, putting 13 persons and 5 entities under asset freeze and travel ban, meaning that the total number of individuals and entities subject to EU visa ban and asset freeze were now 132 and 28 respectively (Council of the European Union, 2014h). At the end of 2014 the European Council ‘welcomed the strengthening of the sanctions on investment, services and trade with Crimea and Sevastopol’(Council of the European Union, 2017a).

In 2015, the sanctions already instigated by the EU remained in place and were complemented with additional measures. In January, after a strong condemnation of shelling of Ukrainian residential areas (especially in Mariupol) and the escalation of fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk, the European Council decided to extend the existing individual punitive measures on the 132 persons and 28 entities until September 2015 (Council of the European Union, 2017a). On February 12, Minsk-2 Agreement was signed by the same parties as previously, but the ceasefire was again fragile and temporary. A couple of days later, the EU announced that 19 additional individuals and 9 entities connected to actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity and supporting separatists were subjected to visa ban and asset freeze. On 5<sup>th</sup> of March, the restrictive measures aimed at freezing the assets of individuals that are under initial investigations on the embezzlement of Ukrainian state funds (including the former President Yanukovich) were extended and adjusted (Council of the European Union, 2015a). On March 13, the Council ‘prolonged the application of EU restrictive measures targeting action against Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence’ (Council of the European Union, 2015b), which meant that the 150 persons and 37 entities subject asset freeze and travel ban will remain under these sanctions for 6 more months. A week later, the Council decided that

the existing sanctions regime must be aligned to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, meaning that economic sanctions would only be lifted if the peace plan was implemented and Ukraine regained control over its eastern borders (Council of the European Union, 2017a). In the meeting, it was once again assured by the European leaders that the Council is fully devoted to its eastern partners. On June 19, the EU stated that it further condemned the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, therefore the restrictive measures in response to this illegal act will be extended until 23 June 2016, meaning the extension of prohibitions on imports of products originating in Crimea or Sevastopol into the EU, investment in Crimea or Sevastopol, tourism services in Crimea or Sevastopol and exports of certain goods and technologies to Crimean companies in the transport, telecommunications and energy sectors as well as goods and technologies related to the prospection, exploration and production of oil, gas and mineral resources (Council of the European Union, 2015c). A couple of days later, the European Council decided to extend the economic sanctions related to Russia's financial, defence and energy sectors until 31<sup>st</sup> of January, 2016. In September, the asset freeze and travel bans imposed on 149 persons and 37 entities, due to their actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, were extended until 15 March 2016 (Council of the European Union, 2015d). At the very end of 2015, the economic sanctions on the Russian Federation were once again prolonged, this time until 31<sup>st</sup> of July, 2016, for the following reasons: 'since the Minsk agreements will not be fully implemented by 31 December 2015, the duration of the sanctions has been prolonged whilst the Council continues its assessment of progress in implementation. The measures originally imposed in July 2014 were reinforced in September 2014. They target certain exchanges with Russia in the financial, energy and defence sectors and in the area of dual-use goods.' (Council of the European Union, 2015e)

The initiation of the EU restrictive measures in 2016 was not as intense as in the previous years, yet additional actions were taken due to the incessant Russian meddling in the internal affairs of Ukraine. On March 4, asset freezes against 16 individuals responsible for the misappropriation of Ukrainian state funds or for the abuse of office resulting in a loss of Ukrainian public funds were extended for one more year (Council of the European Union, 2017a). Almost a week later, the Council prolonged by six months EU restrictive measures against 146 people (without the three deceased people who were removed from the list) and 37 companies due to the still continuing undermining or threatening of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine (Council of the

European Union, 2016a). In June, the restrictive measures, namely prohibitions on imports of products, investment, tourism and exports of certain goods and technologies, in response to the illegal annexation of Ukrainian territories were prolonged until 23 June 2017. In addition, a couple of weeks later the EU economic sanctions imposed on Russia's specific economic sectors were also extended (this time till 31 January 2017) due to no visible progress in the compliance with the Minsk agreements. In the middle of September asset freeze and travel bans against the aforementioned 146 individuals and 37 entities were extended too, this time until 15 March 2017. On November 9, the 'blacklist' was complemented by six more individuals – '6 members of the Russian Federation State Duma elected from the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol [. . .] subject to restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence' (Council of the European Union, 2016b). The year 2016 ended with yet another European Council's decision to extend economic sanctions on some specific sectors of Russia's economy, meaning that sanctions on Russia's defence, financial and energy sectors as well as export bans for certain dual-use goods would remain in place at least until 31 July 2017, because the implementation of Minsk agreements was far from completed.

Similarly to 2016, the year 2017 proceeded also mainly by extending the already existing punitive measures introduced by the European Council in the previous years. In March, the European Council extended two of the restrictive measures – first, asset freezes imposed on the 15 individuals accused of misappropriation or waste of Ukrainian state funds by the abuse of office were extended for one more year and, second, asset freezes and a travel ban applied to 150 people and 37 entities due to their actions threatening Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence were prolonged by six months i.e. until 15 September 2017 (Council of the European Union, 2017a). On 15 June the Council once again for another year extended the restrictive measures prohibiting the EU persons and EU based companies to import products originating in Crimea or Sevastopol, to invest in this region, to provide tourism services in Crimea or Sevastopol as well as to export specific goods and technologies to Crimean companies that can be used in the transport, telecommunications and energy sectors and related to the processing of oil, gas and mineral resources (Council of the European Union, 2017b). By the end of June the Minsk Agreements had remained far from full implementation, therefore the EU extended sanctions targeting the aforementioned specific sectors of the Russian economy till 31 January 2018. As for now, the final punitive measure implemented by the EU is the

inclusion of 3 Russian citizens and 3 companies connected to the transfer of gas turbines to Crimea, because ‘Establishing an independent power supply for Crimea and Sevastopol supports their separation from Ukraine’(Council of the European Union, 2017c). Thus, up to this date the sanctions ‘blacklist’ includes 153 persons and 40 entities subject to an asset freeze and a visa ban resulting from their actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.

**Sanctions imposed by the US.** As compared to the EU-initiated sanctions against the Russian Federation, the US-imposed sanctions were not as numerous, yet no less resolute. The major part of the US restrictive measures was implemented in 2014 with the release of four Executive Orders. On March 6, Executive Order 13660 was signed, authorizing sanctions that put in place restrictions on the travel of certain persons and officials responsible for actions against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, or for misappropriation of the assets that belong to the Ukrainian people (U.S. Department of State, 2014). Less than a couple of weeks later, President Barack Obama issued Executive Order 13661, according to which Russia’s actions and policies with respect to Ukraine—including the deployment of Russian Federation military forces in the Crimea region—inhibit democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine and cause threat to its security, stability and territorial integrity as well as foster the misappropriation of the Ukrainian assets, this way constituting an extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the US, all of which provoked the US to block property of additional persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine (Obama, 2014a). A couple of days later, Executive Order 13662 was released even more expanding the scope of the previous two Executive Orders. On April 28, pursuing Executive Order 13661, sanctions hit 7 Russian government officials and member’s of President Putin’s inner circle (e.g. Igor Sechin and Vyacheslav Volodin) as well as 17 entities including some banks, oil and gas-related companies, etc. Due to the continuing violence in Ukraine, in July the US imposed its toughest sanctions closing medium- and long-term dollar funding to some of Russia’s most important entities, namely Russia's No. 1 oil producer Rosneft, its No. 2 gas producer Novatek, one of Russia’s most important banks Gazprombank and state-owned Vneshekonombank, consequently hitting the ruble and the country's sovereign dollar bonds as well as causing share drops for the aforementioned entities (The Moscow Times, 2014). In September, new US sanctions hit hard on Russia’s major energy companies (Gazprom, Gazprom Neft, Lukoil, Surgutneftegas and Rosneft), Russia’s biggest bank Sberbank and Rostec – a state corporation that mainly specializes in defence-industry production. At the very end of 2014, President Obama

issued Executive Order 13685 which blocked property of certain individuals related to the Crimea region and prohibited 1) new investments in the Crimea region by US citizens; 2) the importation into the US of any goods, services, or technology from Crimea; 3) the exportation, sale, or supply of any US-produced goods, services, or technology to Crimea; 4) and any approval, financing, facilitation, or guarantee by a US citizen of a transaction prohibited by this Order (Obama, 2014b). The most recent US decision – partly originating from the situation in Ukraine, was the Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017, which introduced the following statements:

‘This bill provides that the following executive orders, as in effect on January 1, 2017, and any sanctions imposed pursuant to such orders, shall remain in effect: (1) Executive Order 13694 (relating to blocking property of certain persons engaging in significant malicious cyber-enabled activities); (2) Executive Orders 13660, 13661, and 13662 (relating to blocking property of certain persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine); and (3) Executive Order 13685 (relating to blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting certain transactions with respect to the Crimea region of Ukraine).

Before taking any action to waive or otherwise limit the application of sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation, the President shall submit to specified congressional committees a report that: (1) describes the proposed action; and (2) certifies that the Russian government has ceased ordering or supporting acts intended to undermine Ukraine's peace, security, stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity and has ceased cyber attacks against the U.S. government and U.S. persons and entities.’ (115th Congress, 2017)

This legislation basically meant that for Russia in order to get rid of the burdening sanctions it is crucial to retreat from Eastern Ukraine and, also, that uplifting of sanctions by the White House has become barely possible as the President of the United States needs to get the approval of the United States Congress to initiate this sort of action.



**Figure No. 5 The initial victims of the EU and the US imposed sanctions: The most prominent figures and entities**



BBC, *Ukraine crisis: Russia and sanctions*, 2014.

**Sanctions imposed by other important players.** Other important global players have contributed to the actions taken by the EU and the US in order to show solidarity in condemnation of Russia’s illegal actions in the Ukrainian territories. Although not slightly less intense, the measures employed by these countries may have struck some additional blows to the Russian economy.

The first country to join the EU and the US in introducing targeted sanctions on Russia was Canada, which did it on 17 March 2014. In response to Russia’s violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Canada imposed a great number of sanctions ranging from asset freeze and dealings prohibition on designated persons, which include both individuals and entities, restrictions on certain sectors, such as the financial and energy sectors, prohibition for any Canadian to deal in new debt of longer than 30 days maturity in relation to ‘blacklisted’ persons, prohibition of export, sale, supply or shipping of specific goods to Russia or to any person in Russia for their use in offshore oil (depth greater than 500m), shale oil or Arctic oil exploration and production (Government of Canada, 2016). By 2016, Canada’s Russia sanctions list comprised of four dozens of individuals and over 3 dozen of entities, including Rosneft and Gazprom.

In 2014, due to Russia's connection with the situation in Ukraine, the Japanese government imposed a number of sanctions which involved the suspension of consultations with Moscow on easing the visa regime and indefinite postponement of talks on the potential conclusion of treaties concerning investment and space cooperation and prevention of dangerous military activities; temporal stop in visa-issuance to 23 members of the Russian state and other bodies; confiscation of the property belonging to 40 individuals connected to Crimea, as well as the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, and two Crimean entities; a ban prohibiting Russia's Vneshtorgbank, Vnesheconombank, Gazprombank, Rosselkhozbank and Sberbank to issue securities with maturities of over 90 days without special permission; initiation of inspections aimed at preventing exports of weapons and military technologies to Russia (TASS, 2016).

Beginning from 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 Australia has implemented an autonomous sanctions regime in relation to Russia which resulted in prohibition of supply, sale or transfer of arms or related materiel to Russia and items suited to exploration and production of oil as well as projects that have the potential to produce oil from resources located in shale formations in Russia; prohibition of the provision to Russia, or to a person for use in Russia, of technical advice, assistance or training, financial assistance, a financial service another service if it assists with a military activity or the manufacture or use of 'arms or related materiel' without a sanctions permit; prohibition of investment and provision to Russia or related persons of certain services related to drilling, well-testing, logging and completion services, supply of specialised floating vessels all of which could be used in exploration and production of oil in Russia; prohibition of import, purchase or transport of arms or related materiel without a sanctions permit; prohibition of the direct or indirect purchase or sale of, or any other dealing with, bonds, equity, transferable securities, money market instruments or other similar financial instruments, if the financial instrument was issued after the commencement of this measure; prohibition of arrangement to make loans or credit if the loan or credit is made to an entity specified in the Autonomous Sanctions (Russia, Crimea and Sevastopol) Specification 2015; and imposition of targeted financial sanctions and travel bans against 63 individuals and 21 entities from both Russia and Ukraine in response to the Russian threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine (Australian Government, 2017).

While not being a part of the EU, Norway also took action in response to Russia's actions against Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Norwegian Government decided to

align itself with the measures introduced by the EU and introduced similar restrictive measures - asset-freeze measures and travel bans, ban on imports from Crimea and Sevastopol and investment in this region, ban on the import and export of arms and defence-related products to and from Russia and the export of dual-use items and technology for military end-use in Russia, prohibition of the purchase or sale of new bonds, equity or similar financial instruments issued by five listed Russian financial institutions and prohibition of export of certain categories of goods to the Russian petroleum sector without prior authorisation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Norwegian Government, 2014).

Switzerland has also decided to support other European countries and ‘to take further measures to prevent the circumvention of international sanctions’ (The Federal Council, 2016). The restrictive measures introduced by Switzerland mirror the ones imposed by the EU and Norway.

Harsh sanctions on Russia and its citizens were introduced by the victim country – Ukraine. By the spring of 2017, Ukraine had sanctioned 1228 individuals and 468 Russian companies, including some popular Russian social networks Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki, the search engine Yandex, the email provider Mail.ru, some well-known IT companies, Russian TV channels Zvezda, TVC, NTV Plus, RenTV, RBC, First Channel Worldwide Network, RTR-Planet, Russia-24, the banks Bank of Moscow, Gazprom Bank and their subsidiaries – Sberbank, VS Bank, Prominvestbank, VTB Bank and BM Bank also airlines Aeroflot, Gazprom Avia, Donavia etc. (Iryna Nikolayevska, 2017). Even more strikingly, Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council released a new edition of the Military Doctrine of Ukraine which ‘recognizes the Russian Federation as a military enemy of Ukraine’ (Tyzhden.ua, 2015).

In the spring of 2014 other European countries also decided to join the EU in sanctioning Russia. Thus, Albania, Iceland, Montenegro and Moldova imposed the same restrictive measures and travel bans like the EU had already introduced a month before.

As can be seen from the sanctions timeline, the EU and the US as well as some other important global players have implemented a number of restrictive measures varying from travel bans and asset freezes to sanctions on specific sectors of the Russian economy. The majority of measures were introduced in the years 2014 and 2015, with incidence of infrequent additional sanctions in 2016 and 2017. Yet, since the beginning of the sanction period in 2014, the EU, the US and a few other countries have not refrained from extending these measures for a longer period, meaning that sanctioned entities and sectors within Russia remain under considerable economic pressure.

### 3.2. Economic and Socioeconomic Consequences Caused by Sanctions

This section will briefly suggest some possible economic and socioeconomic effects that the sanctions and the countersanctions may have produced either directly or indirectly. The sanctioned sectors of Russian economy will be investigated one by one in order to see which of them suffered most of all and, also, what actions were taken by the Russian Government to mitigate the losses. Following the segments of the theoretical causal chain, the section will further demonstrate how the actions of Russian officials have impacted some socioeconomic conditions in the country.

**Economic effects.** In mid-2014 Russia's economy fell into recession, but it would be a mistake to attribute this result to the sanctions alone. Indeed, the imposition of restrictive measures coincided with a drop in oil prices and the consequences of some peculiar structural conditions of Russian economy, both of which led to the depreciation of the ruble. Yet the impact of sanctions on economic performance in general is quite significant. Firstly, according to IMF, the initial effect of sanctions and countersanctions could have reduced real GDP by 1-1.5% meanwhile prolonged sanctions could have led to a cumulative loss of up to 9% in the medium term (Christie, 2016: 57). Foreign lending and investment, as well as cooperation in general, also plummeted due to the stigmatization of Russian companies as they have been operating in a risky country and may also anytime be put under sanctions. Consequently, there is a decline in production volumes of export commodities as well as smaller volumes of import, all of which result in a smaller pool of budget revenues, because revenue and personal income taxes make up around 20% of revenues to Russia's budget while the tax on imported goods alone averages 13.5% of the federal budget revenues (Kazantsev, 2017: 93). Apart from the impact of sanctions on the general performance of Russian economy, a more thorough analysis of the sanctioned sectors reveals uneven results.

*Agricultural sector.* In response to the Western sanctions, Russia has imposed the so-called countersanctions – an embargo on Western food products (vegetables, fruit, seafood, meat and dairy products). Though countersanctions fostered import substitution and boosted domestic food production, the imposition of the measures appeared to be counterproductive when it comes to ordinary citizens. In fact, there was a significant increase in consumer prices – the part of consumer price index (CPI) *including food only* increased even more than the CPI *excluding food* – meaning that the

purchasing power of a Russian consumer has diminished (Gros and Di Salvo, 2017: 4). According to a spokesman of Russia's Ministry for Economic Development, due to Russia's embargo on Western food imports 'Food prices rose by 31.6 percent in two years, one and a half times above the level of inflation' (The Moscow Times, 2016). In addition, not only have the food prices risen, but there also appeared numerous concerns regarding the quality of the substituted production. Thus, as far as the agricultural sector is concerned, the countersanctions have cost a lot more than the Western sanctions, yet the latter may have produced unintentional harm to ordinary citizens.

*Energy sector.* The sanctions targeting Russia's energy sector have had a limited initial effect on Russian economy, as there is still a considerable number of brownfields that are already being used for oil extraction. However, there are certain changes that may have a considerable negative impact in the middle to long term (5-10 years). Firstly, some oil giants such as Exxon, Statoil and ENI decided to cut off greenfield projects in the Arctic offshore of the Russian Federation. Despite the fact that Russia has started to engage in oil-related projects with partners from some other countries (e.g. the 50% state owned Gazprom's subsidiary Gazprom Neft announced about cooperation with Vietnam's PetroVietnam) and has begun to develop substitute technologies in the domestic industry, it is clear that the sanctions are jeopardizing the spare parts supply for some of the oil drilling platforms (e.g. half of technology in one of the Gazprom Neft's platforms originates in countries committed to the sanctions) (Aalto and Forsberg, 2015: 228-229). Consequently, already in 2014 there was a 50% decrease in the imports of equipment used in oil and gas extraction from the Western countries, whereas imports of similar equipment from China increased by 8% (Connolly, 2016: 759). Apart from a questionable quality of the technologies and spare parts produced domestically, buying these items from countries that are not committed to sanctions may be far more expensive mainly because there are fewer alternatives to choose from, besides, such purchases are being paid for in foreign currency which is becoming stronger as opposed to the devaluing ruble. All the aforementioned effects on Russia's energy sector may seem barely noticeable at the moment, yet the future may show that the sanctions have caused some truly significant damage.

*Defence industry.* The set of sanctions targeting Russia's defence industry, in fact, had no substantial macroeconomic effect. Before the sanctions Russia's defence industry used to import about 640 items from the EU and NATO members, thus Russia was once again pushed towards engaging in import substitution which will probably lead to lower-quality and more expensive products

(Russell, 2016: 7). Some specific parts necessary for the production of weapons and helicopters used to be imported from Ukraine as well but these imports were also cut off due to the recent hostile relationship between the two countries. Thus, this block of sanctions may have caused some inconveniences for Russia's arms industry though they have been minor. On the other hand, the export of Russian weapons was completely unaffected. In fact, Russia has remained the second largest arms exporter globally with arms sales still on the rise because Russia's largest customers, namely India, China and Algeria (which in 2015 received 39%, 11% and 8% of Russia's arms exports respectively) did not apply sanctions (Aalto and Forsberg, 2016: 230). However, overall it has become quite clear that this set of sectoral sanctions will not affect Russia's arms industry or economic performance that could be related to arms sales/purchases, and the imposition of these sanctions has been more of a symbolic move – the global players could not have condemned Russia's military actions in Ukraine without the official attempts of a possible prevention of the production and export of Russian weapons.

*Financial sector.* Sanctions on Russia's financial sector were specifically designed to inflict damage in the short-run. Because of the financial sanctions imposed in August, additional pressure was put on the exchange rate of the ruble, as the Russian market faced a dollar liquidity deficit – daily dollar exchange turnover of the interbank market dropped by billions of dollars and interest rates for overnight loans, which previously ranged from 0.1% to 0.2% increased to 1-1.5% by September (Orlova, 2016: 206). Western lending and investment in Russia have become negative and due to the inability to get foreign-currency credit extended, Russian banks and companies had to pay back a majestic debt of US\$104 billion in 2015 and US\$74 billion in 2015, which in turn brought about the plummeting of foreign direct investment and massive capital flight from the country (e.g. already in 2014 US\$153 billion fled the country) (Russel, 2016: 9). Unfortunately for Russia's corporate sector, those companies that are not subject to sanctions are also facing underinvestment and difficulties in getting loans from the Western counterparties due to a prevailing perception of Russia as a high risk country and the possibility that previously unsanctioned entities may well be sanctioned in the future. In addition to the aforementioned short-term effects of the financial sanctions, the consequences of the sanctions will probably haunt Russia in a longer-term too. According to a NATO economist Edward Hunter Christie (2016: 56-57): 'The longer-term reduction in foreign investment flowing into Russia, notably into the country's banking sector, would lead to cumulative underinvestment across the Russian economy, and this longer term underinvestment would gradually decrease Russia's

productivity and competitiveness, and thus its equilibrium GDP growth rate and its income levels.’ This set of sanctions has fostered local companies to turn to internal banks to get loans, putting the Central Bank of Russia under an immense pressure to provide Russian banks with extra funding as they have started to encounter various problems due to the devaluation of the ruble.

**Socioeconomic consequences.** The impact of the above mentioned Western sanctions fostered the Russian authorities to engage in certain actions to mitigate the damage. However, these actions brought about some negative outcomes that directly touched ordinary Russians.

*Budget reallocation.* Countries facing economic sanctions tend to respond in a somewhat predictable manner and Russia, in this case, is no exception, proving the hypothesis that sanctions can foster redistribution of scarce resources to allies and sectors of the economy considered vital to ensure national security, at the expense of other sectors such as education or healthcare (Connolly, 2016: 766-769). As can be seen from Table No. 2 and Figure No. 6 below, the sectors that are the most important socially, i.e. education and healthcare, have been considerably underfunded, whereas state expenditure on the defence sector appears to be a clear priority. Indeed, the data shows

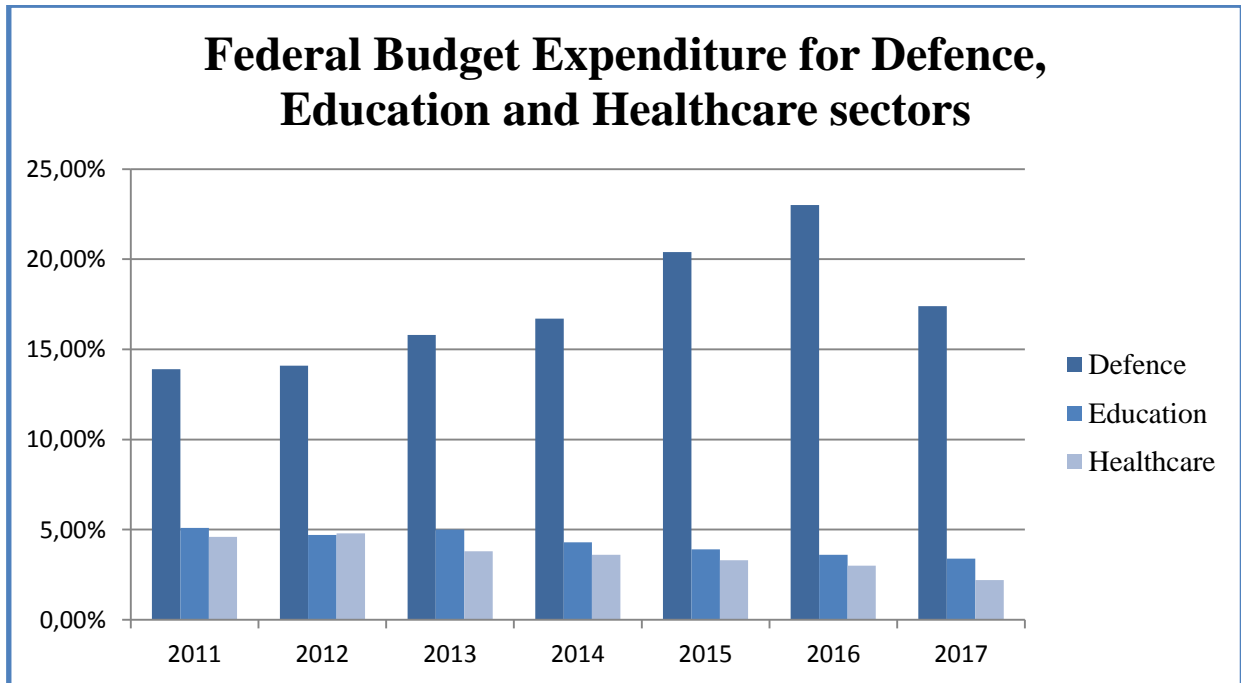
**Table No. 2 Federal Budget Expenditure for Defence, Education and Healthcare sectors of the Russian Federation, 2011-2017**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Total Budget Expenditure</b>	10.925,6	12.895,0	13.342,9	14.831,6	15.620,3	16.416,4	16.241
<b>Defence</b>	1.516,0	1.812,4	2.103,6	2.479,1	3.181,4	3.775,3	2.840
	13,9%	14,1%	15,8%	16,7%	20,4%	23%	17,4%
<b>Education</b>	553,4	603,8	672,3	638,3	610,6	597,8	549
	5,1%	4,7%	5%	4,3%	3,9%	3,6%	3,4%
<b>Healthcare</b>	499,6	613,8	502,0	535,5	516,0	506,3	363
	4,6%	4,8%	3,8%	3,6%	3,3%	3%	2,2%

Created by the author, based on Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, *Federal budget of the Russian Federation, 2017* and Школа инвестора, *Бюджет России 2017 в цифрах, 2016*.

that the percentage of state expenditure on the defence sector has been on a steady rise since 2011 and reached its all-time high after the imposition of Western sanctions. The only time that state expenditure on defence decreased was when the total budget expenditure itself had shrunk. State expenditure on

**Figure No. 6 Budget Expenditure for Defence, Education and Healthcare sectors, 2011-2017**



Created by the author, based on Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, *Federal budget of the Russian Federation, 2017* and Школа инвестора, *Бюджет России 2017 в цифрах*, 2016.

education shows a completely different pattern – although there was a slight drop in state funding in 2012, in general, up until the imposition of sanctions state expenditure on education had been pretty much consistent – around 5% of total state expenditure. After the imposition of sanctions in 2014 there was a very clear and consistent decrease in state expenditure on education which in 2017 dropped to only 3,4% of the total expenditure. State expenditure on healthcare followed a similar pattern. Though state funding for this sector had decreased already in 2013, after the imposition of sanctions each of the following years was marked by significant cuts in the state funding for the healthcare sector, when eventually in 2017 the expenditure on this sector hit its all-time low – a mere 2,2% of the total expenditure. In addition, the Russian authorities have also demonstrated ‘readiness to support both the banks and the “real sector” of the economy at the expense of federal financial resources, that is, the Reserve Fund and the National Welfare Fund’ (Orlova, 2016: 214). It is necessary to note that the data presents only the expenditure from the Federal budget of Russia and the aforementioned sectors also receive funding from the local budgets but since the Federal budget is the main element of the budget system of Russia which also determines inter-budget transfers to the regional budgets, it can be claimed that the presented data sufficiently reflects the general trend in the allocation of funding. Thus, not only



has the reallocation of resources affected the present-day education and healthcare services but the future of socially sensitive sectors of the Russian economy is also being jeopardized, whereas the ‘real sector’, i.e. defence, remains almost unaffected by external pressures such as economic sanctions.

*Living standards.* A number of public opinion polls regarding living conditions can reveal the ordinary Russians’ evaluation of changes in living standards. Indeed, opinion polls show that ordinary Russians can directly feel that the sanctions are biting, though according to the ‘smart sanctions’ theory they are not supposed to. For example, Levada Center carried out a survey at the end of 2016 including 1600 people over the age of 18 in 137 localities of 48 of Russia’s regions. The results are quite eloquent. One of the questions asked was: “In your view, how has the standard of living changed for the general public over the course of the past year (2016)?” According to the answers to this question (Table No. 3 below) living standards in the Russian Federation have sharply deteriorated

**Table No. 3 Changes in the Standard of Living for the General Public**

	Changed for the better	Changed for the worse	Hasn’t changed	It is difficult to say
<b>2016</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2015</b>	3	75	17	5
<b>2014</b>	7	57	29	7
<b>2013</b>	11	39	43	7
<b>2012</b>	11	39	46	4
<b>2011</b>	9	42	43	7
<b>2010</b>	12	42	40	6

Levada Center, *Changes in 2016, 2017a.*

after the imposition of Western sanctions. Another question in the same survey was: “In your view, how have the opportunities to make a decent wage changed over the course of the past year?” The responses, listed in Table No. 4 below, have occurred in a very similar pattern to the previous question – there was a visible decrease in the chances of making a decent wage after the imposition of sanctions (more than half of the respondents claimed that in 2015 and 2016 the opportunities to make a decent wage changed for the worse). After the Russian economy plunged into a deep crisis following the Western sanctions and the falling global prices for crude oil, some other surveys revealed that the majority of Russians (70%) consider inflation and rising prices to be their most acute problems, 66%

**Table No. 4 Changes in the Opportunities to Make a Decent Wage**

	Changed for the better	Changed for the worse	Haven't changed	It is difficult to say
<b>2016</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2015</b>	4	61	27	9
<b>2014</b>	7	46	36	11
<b>2013</b>	6	42	44	8
<b>2012</b>	10	34	48	8
<b>2011</b>	11	40	41	8
<b>2010</b>	10	44	37	10

Levada Center, *Changes in 2016*, 2017a.

of the respondents are worried about poverty and low wages and 41% consider unemployment a major problem (The Moscow Times, 2016b). According to Rosstat, in the first nine months of 2015 the poverty rate in Russia rose to 14.1 percent, compared to 12.6 percent registered during the same period in the previous year (The Moscow Times, 2015). Indeed, already in 2015 surveys indicated changes in consumption of basic necessities. A survey carried out by the Levada Center asked 1600 people over the age of 18 in 134 localities if the nature of their family's daily consumption (including food, basic necessities, medicine, use of transportation, etc.) had changed in the last 12 months: more than a third of respondents answered that daily consumption in their family had slightly worsened, while 7% of the respondents thought that it had significantly worsened.

**Table No. 5 Changes in the Nature of Russian Families' Daily Consumption**

	Aug.09	Sept.10	Sept.15
<b>Significantly improved</b>	1	2	<b>1</b>
<b>Slightly improved</b>	6	8	<b>4</b>
<b>Did not change</b>	58	59	<b>51</b>
<b>Slightly worsened</b>	27	24	<b>35</b>
<b>Significantly worsened</b>	7	5	<b>7</b>
<b>It is difficult to say</b>	1	3	<b>2</b>

Levada Center, *Economic Crisis*, 2015.

All of the aforementioned negative changes have also affected the relationship between the general public and the Russian authorities. Additionally, another survey conducted by the Levada Center asked 1600 Russians what their main grievances with the government present at that time were (see Table No. 6). Some of the results indicated no clear pattern, yet response to some other questions exposed the grievances that had been consistently growing after the imposition of sanctions: ordinary Russians seem to be most upset by the government's inability to deal with rising prices and

**Table No. 6 Main Grievances with the Present Government**

	Aug. 10	Jun. 12	Mar. 14	Feb. 15	Jan. 16	Aug. 16
<b>Unable to deal with rising prices and falling incomes</b>	47	46	41	55	48	42
<b>Doesn't provide for citizens' social security</b>	27	28	22	22	25	34
Corrupt, acts primarily in its own interests	23	29	25	19	23	27
<b>Unable to deal with economic crisis, falling production levels</b>	24	26	18	23	28	25
<b>Doesn't have a well thought out program for extricating Russia from the crisis</b>	18	19	26	29	27	23
Can't provide people with work	42	30	23	20	27	23
Low professional level	8	10	7	9	16	11
Acts in the interests of shadowy mafia capital	7	16	20	14	16	9
Ineffective in fighting crime	13	12	15	9	9	8
Acts in the interests of foreign capital	7	8	6	3	6	7
Unable to provide security for citizens, ineffective in fighting against terrorism	13	7	7	5	6	5
Unable to control the situation in the Southern Caucasus	4	4	3	1	1	2
Other	5	5	4	1	3	3
<b>No grievances with the present government</b>	11	5	12	10	5	7
It is difficult to say	6	6	6	3	6	3

Levada Center, *Grievances to the Government*, 2016.

**Table No. 7 Putin’s Approval Rating**

Year	Approve	Disapprove	No answer
2000	68	23	10
2001	73	19	9
2002	82	16	2
2003	86	13	1
2004	69	28	2
2005	73	25	2
2006	78	21	1
2007	87	12	1
2008	83	15	2
2009	83	15	2
2010	79	19	2
2011	63	36	1
2012	65	35	1
2013	65	34	2
2014	85	14	1
2015	85	14	1
2016	84	15	1
2017	82	17	1

Levada Center, *Putin’s Approval Ratings*, 2017b.

**Table No. 8  
Putin’s ratings on issues drop across  
the board**

*Approve of the way President Vladimir Putin is  
handling ...*

	2015 %	2017 %	Change
Relations w/Ukraine	83	63	-20
Relations w/the EU	82	67	-15
Economy	70	55	-15
Energy policy	73	60	-13
Corruption	62	49	-13
Relations w/China	90	78	-12
Relations w/the U.S.	85	73	-12
Civil society	-	57	-

Source: Spring 2017 Global Attitudes Survey. Q115a-h.

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Margaret Vice, *I. President Putin: The Russian perspective*, 2017.

falling incomes, the economic crisis and falling production levels, as well as by the failure to provide for the citizens’ social security and the incapacity to develop a well thought out program for saving Russia from the crisis. What is more, even President Putin’s ratings dropped due to the economic downturn, though ‘the sky-high public support is largely based on a collective hallucination -- a euphoric patriotic purple haze resulting from the annexation of Crimea and the illusion that Russia is again a superpower’(Whitmore, 2015). The general approval of Putin’s activities as the President (Prime Minister) of Russia has not significantly decreased but there is a slight downward trend. On the other hand, Putin’s ratings on certain issues have dropped significantly (Table No. 8). The most striking drops in ratings were when the respondents evaluated Putin’s handling of relations with Ukraine and the EU as well as his handling of the economy (20%, 15% and 15% respectively). All in all, it can be argued that with the contribution of sanctions to the general downfall of the Russian economy, the attitudes of the general public are consistently shifting in a more negative direction.

*Protests and the 'Russian-kind-of-social-contract'*. The recent protests in the Russian Federation are yet another indicator that despite their intended goals, targeted sanctions are actually affecting the innocent population and, consequently, their attitudes towards the authorities. Emerging from a two-year recession precipitated by Western sanctions and historically low oil prices, such scenes are becoming increasingly common all across Russia – last year witnessed more than 200 Russian protests over work-related issues, protests were up by 34 percent in 2016 compared to 2015, just over half of these came about as a result of missed or withheld salary payments (Ferris-Rotman, 2017). For the second quarter of 2017 the number of social and political protests in Russia increased by 33%, compared with the beginning of the year and they include actions related to the violation of social rights, a decline in living standards, loss of work or non-payment of wages (Kuznecova, 2017). The protesters themselves have also mentioned the main reasons for their participation. For example, a young father Grigori Petrov has started to question his previous support of President Putin: “The presidential elections showed that the majority of our country supported Putin, and I basically agreed. But politics is one thing and social issues are another. I felt I had to come out here in the cold with my wife and my child to defend our rights to free education and healthcare.” (Maynes, 2014) Elena Kovaleva, a mother of three, dissatisfied with the rising prices and cuts to education and healthcare, said: “The country has reoriented itself around protecting the ruling class. . . . And now there's no money left for problems faced by average citizens.” (Maynes, 2014) A 57-year old protester Galina Abramova complained: “Everything is bad. Education, healthcare – everything is destroyed. I want changes.” (15min.lt, 2017) All these are only a couple of examples proving that various social groups are beginning to feel the negative effects of the economic downturn. However, according to sociological surveys, even if rallies are held, the overwhelming majority of Russians (approximately 80%) do not plan to take part in them (Levada Center, 2017c). This trend could be explained by the reluctance of ordinary Russians to take part in protests as such actions would probably bring about additional negative changes rather than positive ones. Yet recently there were two major protest waves spurred by a massive corruption revealed by Alexei Navalny, despite that historically corruption levels in Russia have always been very high. This can be explained by the existence of a *Russian-kind-of-social-contract* described by Sergei Guriev (in Bukkvoll, 2016: 277) as ‘rising incomes and living standards in exchange for the unaccountability of corrupt elites’. With the burden of Western sanctions and drops in oil prices the Russian authorities have chosen to stick to their own well-being by saving

the “real sector” and state-owned companies while breaching the social contract and, eventually, gradually damaging the forbearance of ordinary Russians.

Summing up this section, it can be argued that social tensions have been rising as the Russian authorities engage in redirection of budget expenditure from socially sensitive sectors to the ones they believe are more important, i.e. defence and energy sectors. The aforementioned official figures show that state expenditure on education and healthcare has been rapidly decreasing, yet it is important to note that these figures may be somewhat prettified and the actual reality may be even more upsetting. The same applies to the opinion polls described in this thesis – most of them were carried out by the Levada Center which is considered to be the last independent non-governmental polling and sociological research organization in Russia, but it would be naïve to expect that the Russian authorities did not exert pressure on the center in order to push through some adjustments of the results. Thus, it can be admitted that the effects produced by the sanctions had not been intended and the sanctions are actually punishing the ones that are not responsible for the violations. Significant masses of ordinary citizens are not taking up the streets as was the case in 2011-2012, however, the brave ones who do participate in public protests reveal the underlying reasons of their actions – the rising dissatisfaction with the current management of some sensitive social issues. Therefore, the following section will be presenting an analysis of how the Russian authorities have chosen to respond to the rising tensions and what the consequences to the human rights in the Russian Federation are.

### **3.3. Human Rights in the Russian Federation**

*“So far they're only pushing [Putin] to dig in deeper: Toughen the policy of repression, shut up the media, continue the war in Ukraine. I can't say much about the long-term prospects.”* – Alexei Navalny (in Bershidsky, 2017)

This section will proceed by, firstly, employing some control variables i.e. presenting a concise evaluation of human rights situation in some other oil-dependent countries (OPEC members) during the recent periods of drops in oil prices. Secondly, the section will go on by analyzing the situation of human rights in Russia from 2000 to 2013, i.e. before the imposition of Western sanctions, so that a general trend in the respect of human rights after President Putin took office was visible.

Finally, the human rights situation in Russia after the sanctions will be investigated in order to detect a number of possible changes in human rights situation resulting from the imposition of sanctions in March 2014.

### 3.3.1. Control variables

This sub-chapter will present a collection of data regarding the human rights situation in the OPEC member-countries in the years 1999-2017. OPEC member countries were chosen to indicate whether or not drops in oil prices affect human rights repression. These countries were chosen because their economies are the most dependent on oil prices so they should be the most vulnerable to oil-price related shocks. Thus, this part of the research is aimed at providing some evidence that decreasing oil prices is not the main determinant when it comes to human rights violations.

Figure No. 7 below illustrates the history of oil-price fluctuations and the incidences of major drops in oil prices during the time period under review. For the purpose of this thesis, three major incidences will be employed in the investigation – the oil-price drops of 2001, 2008-2009 and 2014-2015. Table No. 9 below shows the ratings of the political rights and civil liberties in the 14 member-countries of OPEC. The ratings are provided by a well-known watchdog organization promoting human rights globally.

**Figure No. 7 Crude Oil Prices, 2000-2016**



Macrotrends, *Crude Oil Prices - 70 Year Historical Chart*, 2017.

**Table No. 9 Freedom rating in the OPEC Member-Countries, 1999-2017**

	Algeria			Angola			Ecuador			Equatorial Guinea			Gabon			Iran			Iraq		
1999	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	2	3	2.5	7	7	7	5	4	4.5	6	6	6	7	7	7
2001	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	3	3	3	7	7	7	5	4	4.5	6	6	6	7	7	7
2002	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	3	3	3	6	6	6	5	4	4.5	6	6	6	7	7	7
2003	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	6	6.5	5	4	4.5	6	6	6	7	7	7
2004	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	6	6.5	5	4	4.5	6	6	6	7	5	6
2005	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	6	6.5	5	4	4.5	6	6	6	7	5	6
2006	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	6	6.5	6	4	5	6	6	6	6	5	5.5
2007	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	6	6.5	6	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
2008	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	6	6.5	6	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
2009	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	7	7	6	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
2010	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	5	6	5.5
2011	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	5	6	5.5
2012	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	5	6	5.5
2013	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	6	6	6
2014	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	5	6	5.5
2015	6	5	5.5	6	5	5.5	3	3	3	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	6*	6	6*
2016	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	3	3	3	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	5	6	5.5
2017	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	3	4	3.5	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	6	6	6	5	6	5.5
	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating

**6** – increased Freedom House rating (1=Best, 7=Worst) with a 1 year lag

**6\*** – increased Freedom House rating (1=Best, 7=Worst) with a 1 year lag, followed by a decreased Freedom House rating in the following year. This will not be treated as a change possibly caused by the drop in oil prices because after the second year of crisis the situation improved, thus the fluctuation of freedom rating could have been caused by some other country-specific events.



**Table No. 9 Freedom rating in the OPEC Member-Countries, 1999-2017 - Continued**

	Kuwait			Libya			Nigeria			Qatar			Saudi Arabia			UAE			Venezuela		
<b>1999</b>	4	5	4.5	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	3	3.5	6	6	6	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	4	4	4
<b>2001</b>	4	5	4.5	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	4	4	6	6	6	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	3	5	4
<b>2002</b>	4	5	4.5	7	7	7	4	5	4.5	6	6	6	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	3	5	4
<b>2003</b>	4	5	4.5	7	7	7	4	5	4.5	6	6	6	7	7	7	6	5	5.5	3	4	3.5
<b>2004</b>	4	5	4.5	7	7	7	4	4	4	6	6	6	7	7	7	6	6	6	3	4	3.5
<b>2005</b>	4	5	4.5	7	7	7	4	4	4	6	5	5.5	7	7	7	6	6	6	3	4	3.5
<b>2006</b>	4	5	4.5	7	7	7	4	4	4	6	5	5.5	7	6	6.5	6	6	6	4	4	4
<b>2007</b>	4	4	4	7	7	7	4	4	4	6	5	5.5	7	6	6.5	6	5	5.5	4	4	4
<b>2008</b>	4	4	4	7	7	7	4	4	4	6	5	5.5	7	6	6.5	6	5	5.5	4	4	4
<b>2009</b>	4	4	4	7	7	7	5	4	4.5	6	5	5.5	7	6	6.5	6	5	5.5	4	4	4
<b>2010</b>	4	4	4	7	7	7	5	4	4.5	6	5	5.5	7	6	6.5	6	5	5.5	5	4	4.5
<b>2011</b>	4	5	4.5	7	7	7	4	4	4	6	5	5.5	7	6	6.5	6	5	5.5	5	5	5
<b>2012</b>	4	5	4.5	7	6	6.5	4	4	4	6	5	5.5	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5
<b>2013</b>	5	5	5	4	5	4.5	4	5	4.5	6	5	5.5	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5
<b>2014</b>	5	5	5	4	5	4.5	4	4	4	6	5	5.5	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5
<b>2015</b>	5	5	5	6	6	6	4	5	4.5	6	5	5.5	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5
<b>2016</b>	5	5	5	6	6	6	4	5	4.5	6	5	5.5	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5
<b>2017</b>	5	5	5	7	6	6.5	3	5	4.5	6	5	5.5	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	5	5.5
	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating	Political rights	Civil liberties	Freedom rating

Created by the author, based on a collection of reports published by Freedom House in the years 1999-2017, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>.

The results in the table reveal that there is no clear trend or pattern which would allow assuming that drops in oil prices could have fostered human rights violations in the oil-dependent countries. Fourteen countries and three major oil-price crises have been under review meaning that there were forty-two (3 oil-price crises per each of the 14 countries) occasions for potential deterioration of human rights. Out of the 42 occasions there were only 8 occasions when human rights deteriorated, indicating that only 19% of the cases were marked by actual deteriorations of human rights. These results show that major decreases in global oil prices are, as a matter of fact, not the main determinant when it comes to human rights violations in oil-dependent countries. Therefore, these

findings allow to control the effects of the recent oil-price drop that coincided with the imposition of sanctions on Russia.

### **3.3.2. Human Rights in the Russian Federation before the Imposition of Sanctions**

Although since the year 2000 the history of respect to human rights in Russia has revealed a large number of violations (see annex No. 3), this subsection is aimed at presenting some *major* events that occurred as well as legislation which was enacted from 2000 to 2013 in order to demonstrate how the situation of civil and political rights in the Russian Federation has changed since the day Vladimir Putin took office to the imposition of sanctions in March 2014.

Vladimir Putin's victory in 2000 was marked by widespread violations of the electoral process paving the way for further violations of political rights in Russia. Indeed, apart from a biased media coverage and ambiguities in legislation regarding financial disclosure requirements for candidates, even such radical measures as ballot box stuffing, the creation of "ghost" votes, and the burning of ballots supporting opposition candidates were taken (Freedom House, 2001). Right afterwards, the relatively independent 89 governors were removed from the upper house of parliament and put under strict control while Putin continued to centralize his power.

Several major incidences of human rights violations took place in 2001. Vladimir Gusinsky – the owner of the country's main independent media empire Media-MOST – became a victim of tax raids and arrests on embezzlement charges, which was characterized as a politically motivated move to silence one of the few independent media groups critical of the Russian government and also an effort to get rid of one of the last oligarchs openly opposed to the Kremlin (Freedom House, 2002). A part of Media-MOST – the NTV television – was successfully taken over by Gazprom, which also dispersed newspaper Sevodnya and the weekly Itogi, both of which were previously a part of Media-MOST. In a very similar vein, a Moscow court ordered the liquidation of TV-6, the only remaining Russia's national private television network wherein a number of NTV journalists had moved after it was taken over by Gazprom, meanwhile the majority shareholder of TV-6 Boris Berezovsky was forced to flee abroad after the government filed corruption charges against him (Freedom House, 2002). These two cases reflected Putin's determination to violate the personal autonomy and individual rights of its opponents though simultaneously these were some of the major

crackdowns on the freedom of the press and expression. In the same year a new law limiting the freedom to participate in the political process was enacted. According to this law parties were obliged to consist of at least 10,000 members to be registered, with at least 100 members in each of Russia's 89 regions, also, private individual donations were limited to approximately \$100 per year while contributions by foreigners and international groups were prohibited, all of which significantly limited the number of political parties in the country (Freedom House, 2002).

In 2002, a major restriction on freedom of association resulted from a law on extremism. This legislation gave the authorities a right to suspend parties or NGOs whose members were accused of extremism with 'extremism' being defined so broadly that the government had enough power to suppress opposition political activities that may not have been genuinely extremist in nature (Freedom House, 2003).

A major event that took place in 2003 was the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, proving that Putin's anticorruption campaign resulted in selectively applied measures often targeting critics and emerging political adversaries, as Khodorkhovsky, while being a chairman of the Yukos energy concern and Russia's richest and most influential economic magnate, had also actively supported pro-market opposition liberal parties (Freedom House, 2004). Khodorkhovsky's example was yet another case where personal autonomy and individual rights were violated, simultaneously exposing restrictions on freedom to participate in the public life of the State.

In 2004 a number of political rights were restricted with violations concerning the electoral process. Putin won a first-round victory with 71.4 percent of the vote in the presidential election of March 2004 without any debate and with state dominance of the media in full display and soon after that he publicly put forward a plan to further centralize control over Russia's oblasts and to affect the hiring and dismissal of judges alongside introducing constitutional reforms which would make governors appointed by the president rather than elected (Freedom House, 2005). In the same year some NGOs were raided and attacked on state owned television due to Putin's stinging attack on NGOs 'receiving funding from influential foreign foundations and serving dubious groups and commercial interests' (Freedom House, 2005).

2005 was marked by further restrictions on the electoral process and freedom to participate in the political process. Due to the amendments to the electoral law the threshold for political parties to enter the State Duma was raised from 5% to 7%, formation of electoral coalitions

was banned while in order to register would-be parties were obliged to acquire at least 50,000 members and organizations in half of Russia's 86 administrative units, all of which made it almost impossible for the parties outside Kremlin control to get seats in the State Duma (Freedom House, 2006). A social benefits reform provoked protests which were confronted with arrests and detentions inhibiting freedom of assembly. However, the protesters eventually achieved restoration of some of the benefits, which showed that the authorities were still willing to offer concessions rather than impose full control and intensify restrictions on the enjoyment of human rights. However, on a more negative note, in the same year Putin pushed through legislation which restricted the activities of NGOs as, according to him, all foreign aid to civil society organizations in the country was to be banned to block external interference in Russia's affairs (Freedom House, 2006). This piece of legislation imposed further constraints on freedom of association.

2006 witnessed further curtailment of the right to participate in the political process, as well as, freedom of expression and freedom of association. Two new laws were introduced – one of these granted bureaucrats great disposition in registering NGOs and introduced substantial reporting requirements on the groups, making it easier for the authorities to halt NGOs critical of official policy, whereas the other one - a new counterterrorism law - allowed for the banning of any organization that justifies or supports terrorism, with the term terrorism being very vaguely formulated (Freedom House, 2007). The scope of the law on extremism was also broadened, preventing parties from participating in elections if their member had previously been accused of extremism.

Some groundbreaking events changed the situation of human rights in Russia in 2008. Political rights were transgressed when the presidential election was manipulated in a way that Putin was able to install a handpicked successor—Dmitry Medvedev—and maintained real power himself as Medvedev shortly appointed Putin as prime minister. Shortly afterwards an unprecedented constitutional change was implemented extending the presidential term from four to six years and strengthening the power of the executive even more than previously (Freedom House, 2009). Putin continued the crackdown on freedom of association and 'lifted the tax-exempt status of most Western foundations and NGOs, subjecting them to a 24 percent tax beginning in 2009' (Freedom House, 2009). Despite the fact that in the following year Medvedev introduced some amendments to the NGO law which made it less comprehensive, freedom of association in Russia remained considerably restricted.

Violations of freedom to a fair trial and expression were yet again exposed in 2009 when nearing the end of his prison sentence Mikhail Khodorkovsky faced new charges in 2009, while lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, whose client had charged government employees with embezzling millions of dollars, died in pre-trial detention as, according to substantial evidence, the authorities were denying him necessary medical treatment (Freedom House, 2010).

In 2011 the main infringement on political rights was made manifest in the Duma elections. In fact, the elections were so deeply flawed that according to OSCE there were obvious signs demonstrating a ‘convergence of the state and the governing party, limited political competition and a lack of fairness’ (Freedom House, 2012). The election outcomes provoked massive protests which were met with numerous arrests and imprisonments of the participants – including a well-known opposition figure Alexey Navalny – further on violating the freedom of assembly.

In the following year Putin claimed his presidential post back and though the victory itself did not come as a surprise, political rights of ordinary Russians were once again ruthlessly trampled as the elections were marred by ‘preferential media treatment, numerous abuses of incumbency, and procedural irregularities during the vote count’ (Freedom House, 2013). With the *formal* return of Putin, two laws restricting freedom of expression and association were enacted. One of them was ostensibly aimed at targeting information that is unsuitable for children and was so broadly worded that resulted in an instant creation of a blacklist of internet outlets, initially leading to the shuttering of more than 180 sites (Freedom House, 2013). The other law ‘required all organizations receiving foreign funding and involved in vaguely-defined “political activities” to register as “foreign agents” with the Justice Ministry. Noncompliance can be punished by steep fines and prison terms’ (Freedom House, 2013). The second law was supposed to strike a huge blow to NGOs yet the organizations had to register voluntarily, thus the law did not produce visible negative effects until it was amended in 2014, as the organizations were simply refusing to register.

Additional limits on freedom of expression were imposed in 2013: Putin abolished the state-owned news agency RIA Novosti, which was known for objective reporting, and replaced it with a new propaganda tool - Russia Today, as well as introduced a law allowing the authorities to shut down – within 24 hours and without a court order – websites regarded as promoting rioting or containing extremist information (Freedom House, 2014). The President also called for a start of enforcing the “foreign agents” law introduced in the previous year, which led to hundreds of raids and

inspections of NGO offices, and though these actions seemed to diminish by the summer, the campaign allowed the Justice Ministry to dissolve the major election-monitoring organization Golos (Freedom House, 2014). At last, 2013 was marked by obstruction of freedom to a right trial – a new law on terrorism was passed and, having in mind the tradition of vaguely-defined terms in Russian laws, this piece of legislation increased the number of crimes deemed to be “terrorism” and obliged relatives of perpetrators to pay compensation for terrorist acts which, according to some critics, violated the presumption of innocence and demonstrated a restoration of collective punishment (Freedom House, 2014).

### **3.3.3. Human Rights in the Russian Federation after the Imposition of Sanctions**

The previous subsection revealed that clampdown on civil and political rights has been steadily increasing since Vladimir Putin took office in 2000. This subsection is aimed at introducing some *major* events that took place and the legislation which was enacted after the imposition of sanctions in March 2014. It will be evident that the three years after the imposition of sanctions have witnessed an unprecedented number of laws restricting civil and political rights of ordinary Russians, simultaneously proving that the sanctions could have sparked the intensification of human rights restrictions in the Russian Federation.

Right after the introduction of sanctions in 2014 there were seven serious instances resulting in curtailment of human rights in Russia. Four new laws imposing strict limits on freedom of expression were enacted. The first law prohibited advertising on cable and satellite, meaning that independent media outlets such as the only politically independent television station Dozhd and more than 100 regional cable and satellite broadcasters would be deprived of their main source of revenue (Freedom House, 2015). The second law was expected to damage the independence of key foreign-owned media as this piece of legislation limited foreigners to a 20% stake in media companies and noncompliance would possibly result in closure of the media outlets (Freedom House, 2015). Two other laws ‘required all sites with more than 3,000 visitors a day to register with Roskomnadzor as media outlets, subjecting them to legal measures such as responsibility for the accuracy of posted information . . . [and] . . . required internet companies, including foreign firms, to store the data of Russian users inside Russia, where it could be easily accessed by the authorities’ (Freedom House, 2015). Freedom of association was once again limited by a new law which raised penalties for the

widely-defined “extremism”. Freedom of assembly experienced a further curtailment due to a law which criminalized repeated participation in “unauthorized” assemblies and already in 2015 four people faced prosecution under this law (Amnesty International, 2015/16: 304). Last but not least, in 2014 the “foreign agents” law of 2012 was amended and it now enabled the Ministry of Justice to register NGOs as “foreign agents” *without their consent*, which led to an instant increase in NGOs labelled as foreign agents (see Table No. 10 below).

**Table No. 10 Number of Organizations Registered as “Foreign Agents”**

Year	Number of NGOs
NGOs which registered voluntarily	
2013	1
2014	1
2015	1
2017	1
NGOs registered by the Justice Ministry of the Russian Federation	
2014	14
2015	35
2016	28
2017	7

Created by the author, based on Human Rights Watch, *Russia: Government vs. Rights Groups. The Battle Chronicle*, 2017a.

The murder of the opposition leader Boris Nemtsov in 2015 ‘marked the first assassination of a prominent political figure since Putin came to power in 2000’ (Freedom House, 2016), demonstrating the fragility of personal autonomy and individual rights as well as dangers of freedom of expression and political participation. The same year a newly enacted law authorized the Prosecutor’s Office to classify any foreign organization as “undesirable” on the grounds of posing a “threat to the country’s constitutional order, defence or state security”, rendering without delay the presence and any activity of such organizations unlawful (Amnesty International, 2015/16: 305). The end of the year was marked by a considerable infringement on the right to a fair trial – a new piece of legislation was introduced – authorizing the Constitutional Court of Russia to declare the European Court of Human Rights’ and other international courts’ decisions “unimplementable” if they appear to be “violating” the Russian Constitution’s “supremacy” (Amnesty International, 2015/16: 306).

In 2016 some further measures were taken leading to a total curtailment of freedom of expression, personal autonomy rights and freedom of assembly. The National Guard of Russia – an

internal military force – was created to maintain public order and stifle unwanted public protests physically, meanwhile two new pieces of counterterrorism legislation were passed in order to ‘strengthen punishments for terrorism and extremism, increase Russia’s surveillance capabilities, criminalize withholding information about certain crimes from the authorities, and ease state monitoring of phone and internet communications’ (Freedom House, 2017a). Apart from that, Russians’ political rights were also trampled as State Duma elections were engineered in a way that produced a supermajority for the ruling United Russia and, by gaining a supermajority, empowered United Russia to change the constitution without the support of other parties (Freedom House, 2017a).

Having achieved full control of all the internal information assets by 2017, lately Russian authorities have undertaken certain measures allowing to extend their control of the internet. Three laws violating the freedom of expression were introduced in 2017. First, the State Duma adopted a draft law stipulating that the government may classify any media organization or information distributors of foreign origin or receiving foreign funding as “foreign media performing the functions of a foreign agent” (Human Rights Watch, 2017b). According to Hugh Williamson – Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch – “[S]adly, the bill will not simply hurt foreign media, but worse, unjustifiably limit Russian citizens’ right to access information and ideas.” (Human Rights Watch, 2017b). In addition, two new laws – a law that calls for the blocking of VPN services and an amendment to the Law on Information, Information Technology, and Information Security – will deny access to banned content, deprive users of opportunities to browse anonymously and coerce users of social media platforms and apps into registering with their mobile phone numbers, which will effectively connect their digital activity with their real identity (Freedom House, 2017b).

All in all, the last two subsections have offered a concise review of changes in the enjoyment of human rights in Russia after the year 2000. At first, Putin’s initiatives were aimed at full centralization of power and acquisition of a sufficient degree of control. The measures were taken to increase central government control over political rivals, regional leaders, and the country's media. Thus, before the sanctions Putin severely restricted the rights of the major challengers, placing *svoi* in the key positions. Human rights activists and journalists were tamed concerning their reports and constant criticism of the atrocities in Chechnya, yet the clampdown on the civil society was not as intense as after the imposition of sanctions. Indeed, although certain events and legislation passed in the years 2000-2013 proved that Putin was though slowly but steadily violating the political and civil



rights of ordinary Russians, the overall human rights situation was more or less stable (see Table No. 11 below). However, after the imposition of sanctions there was a steep decrease in the freedom rights rating presented by the well-known human rights organization Freedom House, as a crackdown on civil and political rights has intensified in the last four years. Indeed, the most extensive limits on the enjoyment of civil and political rights were imposed after the sanctions: it has become extremely complicated for independent NGOs to operate, to comply with all the state-imposed requirements and receive funding, then, public dissent is met with force employing the National Guard of Russia, any anti-Kremlin expression is being detected by full-scale surveillance and public opinions are silenced by fear of prosecution and no rights to a fair trial. Thus, it seems that in the Russian Federation the Western-imposed sanctions have brought about certain changes which contributed to specific actions, leaving extremely little space for freedom of association, assembly and expression.

**Table No. 11 Freedom Rating in the Russian Federation, 1999-2017**

Year	Freedom Rating (total)	Civil Liberties	Political Rights
1999	4.5	5	4
2001	5	5	5
2002	5	5	5
2003	5	5	5
2004	5	5	5
2005	5.5	5	6
2006	5.5	5	6
2007	5.5	5	6
2008	5.5	5	6
2009	5.5	5	6
2010	5.5	5	6
2011	5.5	5	6
2012	5.5	5	6
2013	5.5	5	6
2014	5.5	5	6
2015	6	6	6
2016	6	6	6
2017	6.5	6	7

Created by the author based on a collection of reports published by Freedom House in the years 1999-2017, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the ever-increasing economic interdependence economic sanctions have become an attractive measure to counter various types of “villains” throughout the global political arena. However, with the rising number of cases when economic sanctions have been imposed the eventual detrimental effects concerning the enjoyment of human rights in the targeted country have been raising some important questions of morality. Thus, a new type of sanctions – “smart” or targeted sanctions – was engineered so as to punish the wrongdoers without harming the general population. Thus, this Master’s Thesis has made an attempt to investigate the effects of “smart sanctions” by employing the recent example of the Russian Federation. The main aim was to prove or disprove the hypothesis claiming that the imposition of targeted economic sanctions on the Russian Federation has contributed to human rights deprivations within this country due to the fact that the intended economic hardship inflicted on the targeted entities was actually shifted on the general population, as Russian authorities could have employed some specific mechanisms allowing to reduce economic pressure.

To serve the purpose of the thesis a novel theoretical causal chain was constructed by combining elements of two theories: first, explaining the effects of economic sanctions on human rights and, second, the workings of “smart sanctions”. According to the aforementioned causal chain imposition of “smart sanctions” (1) causes economic hardship on targeted entities that are financing the regime, (2) which pushes the authorities to undertake mediating measures and reallocate the budget in order to support the financing entities at the expense of other state sectors. Consequently, these measures result in a budget shortfall for social services, health, education and welfare sectors, (3) which may provoke an increase in public dissent that the authorities perceive as a potential threat to stability. Eventually, (4) the real or perceived threat of public dissent provokes state-sponsored repressions of civil and political rights.

The components of the aforementioned causal chain have been investigated one by one through the example of the Russian Federation. To begin with, it was attempted to present the economic effects of Western-imposed sanctions on the targeted entities (sectors, companies and/or individuals). It has been revealed that, though the impact of sanctions on defense and energy sectors will only be visible in a medium to long term, the effects of sanctions on Russia’s financial sector and the consequences of countersanctions had serious repercussions on Russia’s economic performance.

The sanctions and countersanctions have reduced Russia's real GDP, foreign lending and investment, as well as cooperation in general, also plummeted leading to a decline in production volumes of export commodities as well as smaller volumes of import, all of which resulted in a smaller pool of budget revenues. Attempting to avoid some possible limitations of the thesis – namely the influence of global oil price decrease – it was decided to present some control variables. An investigation of 14 OPEC member-countries during three major instances of global oil-price drops demonstrated that only 19% of the cases under review were marked by actual deteriorations of human rights, allowing to assume that major decreases in global oil prices, most probably, are not the main determinant when it comes to human rights repressions in oil-dependent countries.

Secondly, the following component of the causal chain, i.e. the potential reallocation of the Russian budget, was under review. It has been found that after the imposition of sanctions according to official figures state expenditure on defense has continued skyrocketing while expenditure on education and healthcare has been rapidly decreasing, yet it is important to note that these figures may be somewhat prettified and the actual reality may be even more upsetting. Thus, it can be assumed that the imposition of sanctions could have actually fostered budget reallocation in Russia.

Thirdly, the author has sought to detect some changes in public attitudes which would disclose the emerging signs of possible public dissent in Russia. Although the number of protests has not reached the same level as in 2011-2012, this finding revealed a possible reluctance of ordinary Russians to take up the streets as such measures might provoke even harsher clampdown on their rights. Public opinion polls, on the other hand, demonstrate that public dissatisfaction is on the rise when it comes to the current economic situation and, especially, the destruction of the socially sensitive sectors. Thus, it can be argued that with the contribution of sanctions to the general downfall of the Russian economy, Russian authorities may perceive the aggravating attitudes of the general public as a serious threat to stability.

Finally, it was endeavored to investigate whether or not the enjoyment of civil and political rights in the Russian Federation has changed after the imposition of sanctions. An investigation of reports released by organizations advocating the respect of human rights has disclosed that, although certain events and legislation passed in the years 2000-2013 proved that Putin was slowly but steadily violating the political and civil rights of ordinary Russians, the overall human rights situation remained more or less the same. On the other hand, the four years after the imposition of

sanctions have witnessed a very steep decrease in the enjoyment of civil and political rights as these years have been marked by an unprecedented number of events and legislation releases uncovering an almost total absence of civil and political rights in the Russian Federation.

To sum up, while following the logic of the causal chain it can be claimed that the hypothesis has been proved – targeted economic sanctions in Russia have provoked a chain of events which led to a serious deterioration of civil and political rights in the country. However, economic sanctions should not be discredited. They should be considered as a “necessary evil” that, regardless of the type, inevitably causes collateral damage, nevertheless, simultaneously enabling the international community to express its position and normative statement.

## Annex No. 1 Summary of Restrictive Measures Imposed on the Russian Federation, 2014-2017

Year	Imposer	Restrictive Measures
2014 March	The EU	Decision to suspend bilateral talks with the Russian Federation regarding visa matters and the New Agreement.
2014 March	The EU	Assets freeze and travel bans on 21 Russian and Ukrainian officials ‘and the persons and entities associated with them for their role in actions threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine’.
2014 March	The EU	The list of officials facing EU travel bans and asset freezes appended with 12 more individuals.
2014 March	The EU	An already planned EU-Russia summit cancelled.
2014 April	The EU	4 more persons subjected to visa bans and asset freezes as well as agreement on the strengthening of sanctions against individuals responsible for misappropriating Ukrainian state funds.
2014 May	The EU	The scope of the sanctions widened enabling them to target: 1) ‘persons and entities associated with actions and policies undermining stability or security in Ukraine as well as with obstructing the work of international organisations’ and 2) ‘entities in Crimea and Sevastopol which have been confiscated or which have benefited from such confiscation’.
2014 May	The EU	13 more individuals and two entities confiscated in the region faced asset freeze.
2014 June	The EU	Banned imports of Crimean goods.
2014 July	The EU	A new set of restrictive measures: 1) ‘a new list of entities and persons, including from the Russian Federation that are materially or financially supporting actions against Ukraine will be established by the Council by the end of July. Possible measures against individuals or entities who actively provide material or financial support to the Russian decision-makers responsible for the annexation of Crimea or the destabilisation of Eastern-Ukraine will also be studied’; 2) ‘the signature of new financing operations in the Russian Federation by the EIB will be suspended’; 3) ‘member states will coordinate with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to adopt a similar position’; 4) ‘the Commission will reassess and potentially suspend the implementation of EU bilateral and regional cooperation programmes with Russia’; as well as the request to present proposals for complementary actions 5) ‘on restricting investments in Crimea and Sevastopol’; 6) ‘and international financial institutions to refrain from financing projects that explicitly or implicitly recognise the illegal annexation’
2014 July	The EU	15 more individuals and 18 more organizations subjected to asset freeze and visa bans (the number of sanctioned persons and entities responsible for actions undermining Ukraine’s territorial integrity totaling to 87 and 20 respectively).
2014 July	The EU	A new package of significant targeted economic sanctions described as

		<p>follows: In order to restrict Russia's access to EU capital markets, EU nationals and companies may no more buy or sell new bonds, equity or similar financial instruments with a maturity exceeding 90 days, issued by major state-owned Russian banks, development banks, their subsidiaries outside the EU and those acting on their behalf. Services related to the issuing of such financial instruments, e.g. brokering, are also prohibited. In addition, an embargo on the import and export of arms and related material from/to Russia was agreed. It covers all items on the EU common military list. Coreper also reached agreement on a prohibition on exports of dual use goods and technology for military use in Russia or to Russian military end-users. All items in the EU list of dual use goods are included (see latest list in annex to regulation 428/2009). Finally, exports of certain energy-related equipment and technology to Russia will be subject to prior authorisation by competent authorities of Member States. Export licenses will be denied if products are destined for deep water oil exploration and production, arctic oil exploration or production and shale oil projects in Russia.</p>
<b>2014 July</b>	<b>The EU</b>	8 more persons and 3 more entities were added to the asset freeze and travel ban list.
<b>2014 September</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Due to failure to comply with the Minsk-1 Agreement, new restrictive measures: prohibition for EU nationals and companies to provide loans to five major Russian state-owned banks, trade in new bonds, equity or similar financial instruments with a maturity exceeding 30 days also prohibited with regard to three Russian defence companies as well as three major energy companies, the supply of certain services (e.g. drilling, well testing or logging) necessary for oil exploration and production suspended, nine mixed defence companies exempted from receiving dual use goods from the EU and 24 additional individuals complemented the list of those subject to travel bans and asset freeze.
<b>2014 November</b>	<b>The EU</b>	13 persons and 5 entities put under asset freeze and travel ban (totaling to 132 and 28 respectively).
<b>2014 December</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Strengthening of the sanctions on investment, services and trade with Crimea and Sevastopol.
<b>2015 January</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Extension of the existing individual punitive measures on the 132 persons and 28 entities until September 2015.
<b>2015 February</b>	<b>The EU</b>	19 additional individuals and 9 entities connected to actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity and supporting separatists were subjected to visa ban and asset freeze.
<b>2015 March</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Restrictive measures aimed at freezing the assets of individuals that are under initial investigations on the embezzlement of Ukrainian state funds extended and adjusted.
<b>2015 March</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Prolonged for 6 more months the application of EU restrictive measures targeting action against Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence to the 150 persons and 37 entities subject to asset freeze and travel ban.

<b>2015 March</b>	<b>The EU</b>	The lifting of sanctions aligned to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.
<b>2015 June</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Extension (until 23 June 2016) of prohibitions on imports of products originating in Crimea or Sevastopol into the EU, investment in Crimea or Sevastopol, tourism services in Crimea or Sevastopol and exports of certain goods and technologies to Crimean companies in the transport, telecommunications and energy sectors as well as goods and technologies related to the prospection, exploration and production of oil, gas and mineral resources.
<b>2015 June</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Extension of the economic sanctions related to Russia's financial, defence and energy sectors until 31 January 2016.
<b>2015 September</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Asset freeze and travel bans imposed on 149 persons and 37 entities, due to their actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, extended until 15 March 2016.
<b>2015 December</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Measures (originally imposed in July 2014 and reinforced in September 2014) targeting certain exchanges with Russia in the financial, energy and defence sectors and in the area of dual-use goods prolonged until 31 <sup>st</sup> of July, 2016.
<b>2016 March</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Asset freezes against 16 individuals responsible for the misappropriation of Ukrainian state funds or for the abuse of office resulting in a loss of Ukrainian public funds extended for one more year.
<b>2016 March</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Prolongation (by six months) of EU restrictive measures against 146 people (without the three deceased people who were removed from the list) and 37 companies due to the still continuing undermining or threatening of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.
<b>2016 June</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Prohibitions on imports of products, investment, tourism and exports of certain goods and technologies, in response to the illegal annexation of Ukrainian territories prolonged until 23 June 2017.
<b>2016 June</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Economic sanctions imposed on Russia's specific economic sectors extended (this time till 31 January 2017) due to no visible progress in the compliance with the Minsk agreements.
<b>2016 September</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Asset freeze and travel bans against the 146 individuals and 37 entities extended until 15 March 2017.
<b>2016 November</b>	<b>The EU</b>	The list complemented by six more individuals – 6 members of the Russian Federation State Duma elected from the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.
<b>2016 December</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Extension of economic sanctions on Russia's defence, financial and energy sectors as well as export bans for certain dual-use goods until 31 July 2017.
<b>2017 March</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Asset freezes imposed on the 15 individuals accused of misappropriation or waste of Ukrainian state funds by the abuse of office extended for one more year.
<b>2017 March</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Asset freezes and a travel ban applied to 150 people and 37 entities due to their actions threatening Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence prolonged until 15 September 2017.

<b>2017 June</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Extension, for another year, of the restrictive measures prohibiting the EU persons and EU based companies to import products originating in Crimea or Sevastopol, to invest in this region, to provide tourism services in Crimea or Sevastopol as well as to export specific goods and technologies to Crimean companies that can be used in the transport, telecommunications and energy sectors and related to the processing of oil, gas and mineral resources.
<b>2017 June</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Extension of sanctions targeting the aforementioned specific sectors of the Russian economy till 31 January 2018.
<b>2017 August</b>	<b>The EU</b>	Inclusion of 3 Russian citizens and 3 companies connected to the transfer of gas turbines to Crimea (number of persons and entities subject to an asset freeze and a visa ban resulting from their actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence totaling to 153 and 40 respectively).
<b>2014 March</b>	<b>The US</b>	Executive Order 13660: Introduction of restrictions on the travel of certain persons and officials responsible for actions against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, or for misappropriation of the assets that belong to the Ukrainian people.
<b>2014 March</b>	<b>The US</b>	Executive Order 13661: Blocking property of additional persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine. In April, pursuing Executive Order 13661, sanctions hit 7 Russian government officials and member's of President Putin's inner circle (e.g. Igor Sechin and Vyacheslav Volodin) as well as 17 entities including some banks, oil and gas-related companies.
<b>2014 March</b>	<b>The US</b>	Executive Order 13662: Expansion of the scope of the previous two Executive Orders.
<b>2014 July</b>	<b>The US</b>	Closure of medium- and long-term dollar funding to some of Russia's most important entities, namely Rosneft, Novatek, Gazprombank and state-owned Vneshekonombank, consequently hitting the ruble and the country's sovereign dollar bonds as well as causing share drops for the aforementioned entities.
<b>2014 September</b>	<b>The US</b>	New sanctions hitting Russia's major energy companies (Gazprom, Gazprom Neft, Lukoil, Surgutneftegas and Rosneft), Russia's biggest bank Sberbank and Rostec – a state corporation that mainly specializes in defence-industry production.
<b>2014 December</b>	<b>The US</b>	Executive Order 13685: Blocking property of certain individuals related to the Crimea region and prohibiting 1) new investments in the Crimea region by US citizens; 2) the importation into the US of any goods, services, or technology from Crimea; 3) the exportation, sale, or supply of any US-produced goods, services, or technology to Crimea; 4) and any approval, financing, facilitation, or guarantee by a US citizen of a transaction prohibited by the Order.
<b>2017 February</b>	<b>The US</b>	Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017: Provides that the following executive orders, as in effect on January 1, 2017, and any sanctions imposed pursuant to such orders, shall remain in effect: (1) Executive



		Order 13694 (relating to blocking property of certain persons engaging in significant malicious cyber-enabled activities); (2) Executive Orders 13660, 13661, and 13662 (relating to blocking property of certain persons contributing to the situation in Ukraine); and (3) Executive Order 13685 (relating to blocking property of certain persons and prohibiting certain transactions with respect to the Crimea region of Ukraine). Before taking any action to waive or otherwise limit the application of sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation, the President shall submit to specified congressional committees a report that: (1) describes the proposed action; and (2) certifies that the Russian government has ceased ordering or supporting acts intended to undermine Ukraine's peace, security, stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity and has ceased cyber attacks against the U.S. government and U.S. persons and entities.
<b>2014 March</b>	<b>Canada</b>	Asset freeze and dealings prohibition on designated persons (including both individuals and entities), restrictions on certain sectors, such as the financial and energy sectors, prohibition for any Canadian to deal in new debt of longer than 30 days maturity in relation to 'blacklisted' persons, prohibition of export, sale, supply or shipping of specific goods to Russia or to any person in Russia for their use in offshore oil (depth greater than 500m), shale oil or Arctic oil exploration and production. By 2016 the sanctions list comprised of four dozens of individuals and over 3 dozen of entities, including Rosneft and Gazprom.
<b>2014 March</b>	<b>Japan</b>	Suspension of consultations on easing the visa regime and indefinite postponement of talks on the potential conclusion of treaties concerning investment and space cooperation and prevention of dangerous military activities; temporal stop in visa-issuance to 23 members of the Russian state and other bodies; confiscation of the property belonging to 40 individuals connected to Crimea, the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, and two Crimean entities; a ban prohibiting Russia's Vneshtorgbank, Vnesheconombank, Gazprombank, Rosselkhozbank and Sberbank to issue securities with maturities of over 90 days without special permission; initiation of inspections aimed at preventing exports of weapons and military technologies to Russia.
<b>2014 March</b>	<b>Australia</b>	Prohibition of supply, sale or transfer of arms or related materiel to Russia and items suited to exploration and production of oil as well as projects that have the potential to produce oil from resources located in shale formations in Russia; prohibition of the provision to Russia, or to a person for use in Russia, of technical advice, assistance or training, financial assistance, a financial service another service if it assists with a military activity or the manufacture or use of 'arms or related materiel' without a sanctions permit; prohibition of investment and provision to Russia or related persons of certain services related to drilling, well-testing, logging and completion services, supply of specialised floating vessels all of which could be used in exploration and production of oil in Russia; prohibition of import, purchase or transport of arms or related

materiel without a sanctions permit; prohibition of the direct or indirect purchase or sale of, or any other dealing with, bonds, equity, transferable securities, money market instruments or other similar financial instruments, if the financial instrument was issued after the commencement of this measure; prohibition of arrangement to make loans or credit if the loan or credit is made to an entity specified in the Autonomous Sanctions (Russia, Crimea and Sevastopol) Specification 2015; and imposition of targeted financial sanctions and travel bans against 63 individuals and 21 entities from both Russia and Ukraine in response to the Russian threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

<b>2014 April</b>	<b>Albania</b>	The same restrictive measures introduced as the ones imposed by the EU.
<b>2014 April</b>	<b>Montenegro</b>	The same restrictive measures introduced as the ones imposed by the EU.
<b>2014 April</b>	<b>Moldova</b>	The same restrictive measures introduced as the ones imposed by the EU.
<b>2014 April</b>	<b>Iceland</b>	The same restrictive measures introduced as the ones imposed by the EU.
<b>2014 April</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>	By the spring of 2017 sanctioned 1228 individuals and 468 Russian companies, including Russian social networks Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki, the search engine Yandex, the email provider Mail.ru, some well-known IT companies, Russian TV channels Zvezda, TVC, NTV Plus, RenTV, RBC, First Channel Worldwide Network, RTR-Planet, Russia-24, the Bank of Moscow, Gazprom Bank, Sberbank, VS Bank, Prominvestbank, VTB Bank and BM Bank, also airlines Aeroflot, Gazprom Avia, Donavia etc. Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council recognized the Russia as a military enemy of Ukraine.
<b>2014 August</b>	<b>Norway</b>	Asset-freeze measures and travel bans, ban on imports from Crimea and Sevastopol and investment in this region, ban on the import and export of arms and defence-related products to and from Russia and the export of dual-use items and technology for military end-use in Russia, prohibition of the purchase or sale of new bonds, equity or similar financial instruments issued by five listed Russian financial institutions and prohibition of export of certain categories of goods to the Russian petroleum sector without prior authorisation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
<b>2014 August</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	The same restrictive measures introduced as the ones imposed by the EU and Norway.

Created by the author, based on a collection of press releases published by the Council of the European Union in the years 2014-2017, available at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/history-ukraine-crisis/>, Executive Orders released by the President of the US in 2014, available at <https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/ukrainerussia/>, 115<sup>th</sup> Congress S.341 - *Russia Sanctions Review Act of 2017*, 2017, Norwegian Government, *Restrictive measures against Russia*, 2014, The Federal Council, *Situation in Ukraine: Federal Council decides on further measures to prevent the circumvention of international sanctions*, 2016, TASS, *Japan's Prime Minister says Tokyo will maintain sanctions against Russia*, 2016, Australian Government, *Sanctions regimes: Russia*, 2017, Government of Canada, *Canadian Sanctions Related to Russia*, 2016, I. Nikolayevska, *Ukraine expands sanctions against Russia to social media and IT sectors*, 2017, and Tyzhden.ua, *РНБО схвалила редакцію Воєнної доктрини, яка визнає Росію противником України*, 2015.

**Annex No. 2 Summary of Human Rights Violations in the Russian Federation, 1999-2017**

<b>Before the imposition of sanctions</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Type of freedom restricted</b>	<b>Events taken place/Legislation enacted</b>
<b>1999</b>	Freedom of Association	Law requiring NGOs to reregister in order to own property or maintain a bank account – greater state intervention
<b>1999</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	Creation of the Unity Block endorsed by the Prime Minister at the time – Vladimir Putin. “While lacking a political program, Unity appealed to voters on the basis of its image as a champion of the restoration of order and tough leadership, as embodied by Putin”
<b>1999</b>	Freedom of Assembly	Duma unanimously voted to expand the powers of the Federal Security Service (FSB) to fight terrorism or prevent mass disturbances
<b>2000</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	Presidential election marred by widespread fraud secured the Victory of Putin. The elections was marred by the use of some election commission staff to distribute campaign materials; ambiguities in legislation regarding financial disclosure requirements for candidates and their apparently arbitrary enforcement; the use of federal and regional government staff members to campaign for Putin; and biased media reporting of the campaign; instances of ballot box stuffing, the creation of “ghost” votes, and the burning of ballots supporting opposition candidates.
<b>2000</b>	Freedom of Expression	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reporter Andrei Babitsky was found guilty of violating Russian passport regulations while covering the war in Chechnya. He was convicted due to objective reporting of the war.
<b>2000</b>	Political Rights: Functioning of Government	Creation of seven new “super regions” headed by Kremlin appointees, most of who had backgrounds in the military or security services.
<b>2000</b>	Political Rights: Electoral Process	Legislation removing the often independent-minded 89 governors from their positions in the upper house of parliament, allowing the president to suspend them for breaking federal laws, and adopting tax reforms that could reduce their economic power.
<b>2001</b>	Freedom of Expression and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights	The country’s leading independent media empire, Media-MOST, and its owner, Vladimir Gusinsky, became the target of tax raids and arrests on embezzlement charges in 2000 that President Putin claimed were part of his anticorruption campaign. The moves characterized as a politically motivated attempt to silence one of the few independent media groups critical of the Russian government and the war in Chechnya and also an effort to rein in one of the last oligarchs openly opposed to the current Kremlin. Gazprom, effectively took control of NTV television, part of Media-MOST. Gazprom alsomoved against two other Media- MOST outlets, shutting down the newspaper Sevodnya and firing the staff of the

		weekly Itogi.
2001	Freedom of Expression and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights	A Moscow court ordered the liquidation of TV-6, the country's only remaining national private television network. The majority shareholder of TV-6, Boris Berezovsky, fled abroad in 1999 after the government filed corruption charges against him. Press freedom groups, various prominent Russian politicians, and the U.S. government criticized the order to dissolve TV-6, where a number of NTV journalists had moved after their station was taken over by Gazprom.
2001	Freedom of Religion	Following a two-year legal battle in which the Moscow prosecutor's office had been trying to ban the city's branch of the Jehovah's Witnesses for allegedly converting minors without their parents' permission and for fomenting national discord.
2001	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	A law that would significantly limit the number of political parties in Russia through stringent membership and financial requirements. Among the law's provisions, parties must have at least 10,000 members to be registered, with at least 100 members in each of the country's 89 regions; private individual donations are limited to approximately \$100 per year; and contributions by foreigners and international groups are prohibited.
2002	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	Pro-Kremlin legislators voted to strip the Communist Party of nearly all of its Duma leadership posts. The decision marked an end to the two-year power-sharing agreement between the Communists and pro-government factions in parliament.
2002	Freedom of Expression	A number of journalists and media groups faced lawsuits based largely on their unfavorable coverage of government policies. The independent newspaper <i>Novaya Gazeta</i> lost two separate libel cases. The country's last private nationwide television channel, TV-6, was closed after a Moscow arbitration court ordered its liquidation.
2002	Freedom of Expression	The government used draft changes to the media law to censor and shape coverage of the October Moscow 64isfavo hostage crisis. Amendments were later vetoed by Putin. Authorities temporarily closed a television station for allegedly promoting terrorism, threatened to shut down the independent Ekho Moskvyy radio station for airing a phone interview with a hostage taker, and allowed NTV television to broadcast only some of the statements made by the Chechen rebel leader inside the 64isfavo.
2002	Freedom of Expression	2 journalists were killed, many others faced violent attacks or politically motivated convictions.
2002	Freedom of Association	Legislation that gives the authorities the right to suspend parties or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) whose members are accused of extremism. Critics argued that the law defines extremism too broadly and gives the government too much power to suppress opposition political activities that may not be genuinely extremist in nature.

<b>2002</b>	Freedom of Assembly	New labour code entered into force limiting the right to strike.
<b>2003</b>	Freedom of Expression	Further consolidation of state control over broadcast media with the closure of TVS, the country's last independent television station.
<b>2003</b>	Freedom of Expression	Legislation that made media susceptible to closure for criticizing positions of candidates for office. Later, though, Russia's constitutional court struck down key provisions of the law that banned journalists from making positive or negative observations about candidates or parties. Still, the law's operation had a chilling effect on media coverage of politics for several months.
<b>2003</b>	Freedom of Association	Russian authorities took control of VTsIOM, the All Union Institute on Public Opinion, the country's most respected polling firm.
<b>2003</b>	Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights and Freedom to Participate in the Public life of the State	Arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, chairman of the Yukos energy concern and Russia's richest and most influential economic magnate who had actively supported pro-market opposition liberal parties. This proved that Putin's anticorruption efforts have been applied selectively and have often targeted critics and emerging political adversaries.
<b>2003</b>	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	Unknown assailants shot dead Sergei Yushenkov, a respected member of the Duma and head of the Liberal Russia Party.
<b>2003</b>	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	2003 legislative election, opposition political parties widely criticized distorted and unbalanced coverage of their campaigns. Questions of vote manipulation were raised when two liberal opposition parties fell just short of the 5 percent threshold required for representation.
<b>2003</b>	Freedom of Expression	A wave of prosecutions against scientists exposing alleged environmental crimes has created a chill in some research institutes, resulting in new worries about academic freedom.
<b>2003</b>	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	Russian authorities raided the offices of a consultant advising the election campaign of the Yabloko political party, one of several liberal groupings supported by oil magnate and Kremlin critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky.
<b>2004</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	Using the Beslan tragedy as a pretext, Putin publicly put forward a plan to further centralize control over Russia's oblasts (regions) and affect the hiring and dismissal of judges. Proposed constitutional reforms will make the post of governor appointed by the president rather than elected.
<b>2004</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	In the presidential election of March 2004, state dominance of the media was in full display, debate was absent, and Putin won a first-round victory with 71.4 percent of the vote, more than five times that of his closest rival.
<b>2004</b>	Academic Freedom	Igor Sutyagin, head of the Military-Technical and Military-Economic Policy subdivision of the Moscow-based Institute of U.S.

		and Canada Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, was sentenced to 15 years in prison based on spurious charges intended by the government to limit international cooperation among scholars. Other scientist sentenced to 14 years in prison based on similar charges.
<b>2004</b>	Freedom of Expression	Alfa Bank, a top financial institution owned by Roman Fridman – a magnate with strong Kremlin support – filed a lawsuit against the daily Kommersant, one of the country's few independent newspapers. More than 6,000 lawsuits were filed against newspapers and journalists in 2004.
<b>2004</b>	Freedom of Religion	Jehovah's Witnesses were banned from organized activity in Moscow.
<b>2004</b>	Freedom of Association	Putin launched a stinging attack on NGOs that are "receiving funding from influential foreign foundations and serving dubious groups and commercial interests." In 2004, human rights groups were attacked on state-dominated media for working against Russia's interests, and the offices of some rights groups were raided.
<b>2005</b>	Freedom of Assembly	A wave of public protests against the social benefits reform damaged Putin's public image. The new policy, which replaced privileges and in-kind benefits, such as free transportation, with highly inadequate monetary compensations for underprivileged groups, spurred demonstrations across the country. Many protesters were detained and even arrested, while top government officials issued allegations that the demonstrations had been carefully orchestrated, possibly by the same forces that organized revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia.
<b>2005</b>	Freedom of Association	After the Orange Revolution, the government heavily promoted loyalist youth organizations, such as Nashi, in an effort to crowd out potential opposition movements. In July, Putin announced that his government would ban all foreign aid to civil society groups inside Russia. Putin established a Public Chamber as an advisory body of civil society representatives to the president. One-third of its members are appointed by the president, and the presidential appointees select the remaining members. The Public Chamber has been criticized as a meaningless body created essentially as window dressing. In July, Putin announced at a meeting with human rights groups that all foreign aid to civil society organizations in Russia would be banned in order to block external interference in Russia's affairs. Legislation restricting the activities of NGOs was introduced in the State Duma in November 2005.
<b>2005</b>	Academic Freedom	Russian Federal Security Service detained and interrogated Dr. Oscar A. Kaibyshev, former director of the Institute for Metals Superplasticity Problems, on possible espionage charges.
<b>2005</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	Amendments to the electoral law raised the threshold for political parties for entering the State Duma from 5 to 7 percent; banned the

		formation of electoral coalitions; and granted party leaders unlimited control over the behavior of rank-and-file legislators and would-be parties must have at least 50,000 members and organizations in half of the federation's 86 administrative units in order to register. In practice, these changes will make it almost impossible for the parties outside Kremlin control to enter the State Duma.
<b>2005</b>	Freedom of Expression	Gazprom continued to consolidate its control over the media market in 2005 by purchasing the veteran daily Izvestiya.
<b>2005</b>	Freedom of Expression	The newspaper Kommersant received a warning from the government in February, and the ABC bureau in Moscow lost its accreditation in July, for publishing and airing interviews with Chechen breakaway leaders.
<b>2006</b>	Freedom of Association	A new law that handed bureaucrats wide discretion in registering NGOs and placed extensive reporting requirements on the groups. Critics feared that the legislation would make it easier for the authorities to shut down NGOs critical of official policy. A Nizhny Novgorod court ordered the closure of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society, which monitored human rights in Chechnya, on the grounds that an NGO cannot be headed by a person convicted of extremist activities. The new law places extensive controls on the use of foreign funds. The Russian state has sought to provide alternative sources of funding, but such support naturally limits what recipient groups can do.
<b>2006</b>	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	A new law stripped legislators of their seats if they changed parties and prohibited parties from supporting other parties during elections. Those provisions weakened opposition parties by preventing them from setting up informal coalitions; previous changes had banned formal electoral blocs. In addition, the authorities removed the option of voting "against all" from the ballot.
<b>2006</b>	Freedom of Expression	Unidentified assassin murdered investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya who had frequently criticized the Kremlin's brutal crackdown in Chechnya and the excesses of Russian troops in the region. Thirteen journalists have been killed since Putin came to power, and there have been no convictions in any of the cases.
<b>2006</b>	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process and Freedom of Expression	A new counterterrorism law includes vague formulations that allow for the banning of any organization that justifies or supports terrorism. Amendments to the law on extremism expand the definition of extremist activities to include slandering a government official in the performance of his duties. Likewise, a new law bars parties from contesting elections if one member is convicted of extremism. The new laws are so vaguely worded that they can be used to silence opposition politicians and the press.
<b>2006</b>	Academic Freedom	A new law required that the Russian president appoint the president

		of the Russian Academy of Sciences after he has been elected by the academy's general assembly. The change affects the independence and funding of the academy.
2007	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	State Duma elections were carefully engineered by the administration, handing pro-Kremlin parties a supermajority in the lower house.
2007	Freedom of Assembly	The NGO Legal Team claims that the authorities banned or dispersed almost every public protest held across Russia during 2007.
2007	Freedom of Association	The Moscow Federal Registration Service directorate announced in November 2007 that it had denied registration to 1,380 NGOs because of violations of the legislation passed in 2006, 11 percent of the 13,014 that had sought to register.
2007	Freedom to a Fair Trial	Russian citizens often feel that domestic courts do not provide a fair hearing and have increasingly turned to the European Court of Human Rights.
2008	Political Rights: Electoral process	Outgoing president Vladimir Putin manipulated the 2008 presidential election to install a designated successor—Dmitry Medvedev—and retain real power for himself as the new prime minister.
2008	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	For the first time since 1993, Russia amended its constitution to extend the presidential term from four to six years, strengthening the power of the executive.
2008	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	Following constitutional amendments, Duma will serve five-year terms instead of four-year terms as previously.
2008	Freedom of Expression	Discussion on the internet is free, but government devotes extensive resources to manipulating the information and analysis available there. Sixteen journalists have been killed since Putin came to power, with only one case resolved. Two journalists were killed in 2008. Most prominently, Magomed Yevloyev, founder of the opposition website Ingushetiya.ru.
2008	Freedom of Assembly	The authorities flew special police to Vladivostok in December to quell demonstrations against new customs fees imposed on imported cars popular in the Far East.
2008	Freedom of Association	Putin lifted the tax-exempt status of most Western foundations and NGOs, subjecting them to a 24 percent tax beginning in 2009.
2009	Freedom of Expression	Assassins continued to target the regime's most serious critics with impunity, murdering, among others, human rights activists Stanislav Markelov and Natalia Estemirova.
2009	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	The tightly controlled October 2009 local and regional elections, which gave United Russia some 70 percent of the contested seats, provoked protests, including a short-lived walkout by other parties in the normally subservient Duma. Before the elections, the authorities had eliminated most of the opposition candidates by



		invalidating the signatures they had collected.
<b>2009</b>	Freedom of Expression	At least 19 journalists have been killed since Putin came to power, including three in 2009, and in no cases have the masterminds been prosecuted.
<b>2009</b>	Freedom of Religion	The president authorized religious instruction in the public schools. The Justice Ministry empowered an Expert Religious Studies Council to investigate religious organizations for extremism and other possible offenses.
<b>2009</b>	Freedom to a Fair Trial in freedom of expression	The justice system has also been tarnished by the politically fraught cases of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who faced trial on new charges in 2009 as he neared the end of his prison sentence. The death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in pre-trial detention provided evidence that the authorities were denying him necessary medical treatment after his client had charged government employees with embezzling millions of dollars.
<b>2010</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	As of January 2011, only locally-elected politicians will be eligible to serve in the Federation Council; the change will mainly benefit United Russia, as most local officeholders are party members.
<b>2010</b>	Freedom of Expression	The brutal attack on Kommersant journalist and blogger Oleg Kashin in November 2010 was only one of many such incidents during the year, and demonstrated the dangerous conditions for reporters in Russia.
<b>2010</b>	Freedom of Assembly	Police used force to break up demonstrations protesting road construction in the Khimki forest and those asserting the right to assemble. The latter protests were held on the 31st of each month with as many days, a reference to Article 31 of the constitution, which guarantees freedom of assembly.
<b>2010</b>	Freedom of Association	Police visited more than 40 NGOs to demand documents in what they claimed was an effort to ensure that the groups were obeying the law.
<b>2010</b>	Freedom to a Fair Trial	Medvedev signed a reform that made the prosecutor general's Investigation Committee a separate agency that answers directly to the president.
<b>2011</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	Medvedev announced that he would step aside so that Putin could run for the presidency in March 2012. The move raised the prospect that Putin would serve two, six-year terms as president, remaining in office until 2024. Putin immediately said he would appoint Medvedev as his prime minister.
<b>2011</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	The deeply flawed 2011 Duma elections were marked by a "convergence of the state and the governing party, limited political competition and a lack of fairness," according to the OSCE, but many voters used them to express a protest against the status quo.
<b>2011</b>	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	Longtime Federation Council speaker Sergei Mironov of the Just Russia party, who had grown increasingly critical of United Russia, was replaced with Putin ally.

<b>2011</b>	Freedom of Expression	As the 2011 Duma elections approached, businessmen close to Putin purchased additional television, radio, and newspaper assets. Hackers attacked the website of Golos, Russia’s only independent election monitoring group on election day.
<b>2011</b>	Freedom of Assembly	In the weeks following the election, large antigovernment demonstrations—the largest since Putin came to power—were held in Moscow, with smaller protests taking place in other cities in Russia. The demonstrations, which began as a reaction to the flawed legislative elections, included demands for annulment of the election results, an investigation into vote fraud, and freedom for political prisoners. Hundreds of people were arrested, and several protest leaders were imprisoned, including prominent blogger and anticorruption activist Alexey Navalny.
<b>2012</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	The 2012 presidential election was skewed in favor of prime minister and former president Vladimir Putin, who benefited from preferential media treatment, numerous abuses of incumbency, and procedural irregularities during the vote count, among other advantages.
<b>2012</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	Medvedev restored gubernatorial elections, ending the system of presidential appointments dating to 2004. However, the new rules allowed regional officials to screen the candidates for governor, eliminating strong opposition contenders and helping to ensure that pro-Kremlin incumbents won.
<b>2012</b>	Freedom of Expression	A broadly worded new law, ostensibly targeting information that is unsuitable for children, created a blacklist of internet outlets that initially led to the shuttering of more than 180 sites.
<b>2012</b>	Freedom of Assembly	Overwhelming police responses, the use of force, and routine arrests have discouraged unsanctioned protests, though pro-Kremlin groups are able to demonstrate freely. At least 18 people were arrested at a rally on the eve of Putin’s inauguration in May 2012, and the one person tried and convicted to date received four and a half years in prison.
<b>2012</b>	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	Legislation liberalized party registration rules, allowing the creation of hundreds of new parties. However, none posed a significant threat to the authorities, and many seemed designed to encourage division and confusion among the opposition.
<b>2012</b>	Freedom of Association	A new law required all organizations receiving foreign funding and involved in vaguely-defined “political activities” to register as “foreign agents” with the Justice Ministry. Noncompliance can be punished by steep fines and prison terms. The Justice Ministry shut down the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), which apparently drew the authorities’ ire by opposing development projects.
<b>2012</b>	Freedom to Participate in the	Opposition activist Leonid Razvozhayev was allegedly abducted by Russian authorities in Ukraine, where he was preparing an

	Political Process	asylum application; forcibly repatriated; and compelled to signed a confession to charges of planning mass riots.
<b>2013</b>	Freedom of Expression	Putin signed laws that effectively outlawed LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) activism and expression and banned gay couples in foreign countries from adopting Russian children.
<b>2013</b>	Freedom to a Fair Trial	Putin issued a series of amnesties, releasing dissident businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky, however, of the 70 people that the human rights group Memorial identified as political prisoners in October, 33 remained in jail or under house arrest at the end of the year.
<b>2013</b>	Political Rights: Electoral process	United Russia won the eight gubernatorial elections. In the vast majority of cases, various legal tools were used to prevent opposition candidates from running. In an exceptional case, anticorruption blogger Aleksey Navalny was allowed to participate in the Moscow mayoral election.
<b>2013</b>	Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights	Putin signed a decree forcing state officials to give up any assets they hold abroad, leaving them more vulnerable to disfavor from the Kremlin and less exposed to international human rights sanctions.
<b>2013</b>	Freedom of Expression	Putin abolished the state-owned news agency RIA Novosti, which had developed a reputation for objective reporting, and folded it into a new entity called Rossiya Segodnya (Russia Today).
<b>2013</b>	Freedom of Expression	Putin signed a law that allows the authorities to shut down—within 24 hours and without a court order—websites deemed to promote rioting or to contain extremist information. An antipiracy law adopted in July allows courts to put a temporary ban on websites that film copyright holders believe are distributing their products illegally without first confirming whether the claims are valid.
<b>2013</b>	Freedom of Expression	Closure of the online news agency Rosbalt in October on the grounds that its website included videos with obscene language.
<b>2013</b>	Freedom of Expression	Economist Sergey Guriyev, who served as rector of the New Economic School, went into exile to avoid harassment and possible arrest for a report that was critical of the cases against Khodorkovsky.
<b>2013</b>	Freedom of Association	Putin demanded that the authorities begin enforcing the “foreign agents” law in 2013, leading to hundreds of raids and inspections of NGO offices. However, the campaign seemed to ease by the summer. Overall, the authorities filed nine administrative cases against NGOs and an additional five administrative cases against NGO leaders for failing to register under the law. Courts threw out the charges in nine of the cases. In one important case, the election-monitoring organization Golos was dissolved by the Justice Ministry.
<b>2013</b>	Freedom to a Fair Trial	Putin called for a merger of the commercial courts with the courts of general jurisdiction. The move was expected to harm the business community by reducing the independence of the commercial courts, which have ruled against the state more often than the rest of the

		judiciary.
2013	Freedom to a Fair Trial	The justice system is used as a tool to harass the opposition, forcing activists to defend themselves against what are often blatantly trumped-up charges. Navalny, for example, was sentenced in July 2013 to five years in prison on widely ridiculed embezzlement charges.
2013	Freedom to a Fair Trial	A law that increased the number of crimes considered to be “terrorism” and required relatives of perpetrators to pay compensation for terrorist acts. Opponents argued that the law violated the presumption of innocence, marked a return to collective punishment.

#### After the imposition of sanctions

Year	Type of freedom restricted	Events taken place/Legislation enacted
2014	Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	Ministry of Justice refused to register Navalny’s Party of Progress in September 2014, arguing that even though the party had submitted proof of its branches in 40 regions, the documents on 24 of them came in after the legal deadline.
2014	Freedom of Expression	TV Dozhd (Rain), the only politically independent television station, was dropped by multiple cable and satellite providers in early 2014 after angering officials with its reporting. A law enacted in July banned advertising on cable and satellite channels beginning in 2015, meaning Dozhd and more than 100 regional cable and satellite broadcasters would lose their main source of revenue.
2014	Freedom of Expression	A law limiting foreigners to a 20 percent stake in media companies. Outlets will face closure if they fail to comply with the cap by January 2017. The measure was expected to damage the independence of key foreign-owned media, including the respected business newspaper Vedomosti.
2014	Freedom of Expression	The prosecutor general instructed the state telecommunications agency Roskomnadzor to block four popular opposition-oriented websites: Ezhednevny Zhurnal, Grani.ru, Kasparov.ru, and Navalny’s blog. Dozens of other sites were blocked during the year for vaguely defined offenses such as carrying “extremist content.”
2014	Freedom of Expression	to bring blogs and social media under state control, a law that took effect in August required all sites with more than 3,000 visitors a day to register with Roskomnadzor as media outlets, subjecting them to legal measures such as responsibility for the accuracy of posted information.
2014	Freedom of Expression	A law enacted in July required internet companies, including foreign firms, to store the data of Russian users inside Russia, where it could be easily accessed by the authorities
2014	Freedom of Expression	A law that prohibits the “rehabilitation of Nazism” and the spreading of “intentionally false information” about the Soviet

		Union's World War II actions.
<b>2014</b>	Freedom of Association	A law that increased the penalties for "extremism," adding to an array of restrictions that can be used against activists and NGOs. Groups that investigated Russian aggression in Ukraine and the death of Russian soldiers there faced particular pressure from the authorities during the year.
<b>2014 June</b>	Freedom of Association	Amendment to the "foreign agents" law of 2012: authorized the Ministry of Justice to register NGOs as "foreign agents" <i>without their consent</i> .
<b>2014</b>	Freedom of Assembly	Law criminalizing repeated participation in "unauthorized" assemblies. In 2015 four people faced prosecution under this law.
<b>2015</b>	Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights, Freedom of Expression and Political Participation	The murder of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov not far from the Kremlin in February marked the first assassination of a prominent political figure since Putin came to power in 2000.
<b>2015</b>	Political Rights: Electoral Process	A law moving the 2016 Duma elections from December to September, which analysts said would give progovernment forces an advantage because fewer voters pay attention to politics during the summer months.
<b>2015</b>	Freedom of Expression	Putin decreed in May that it was illegal to publish information about "personnel losses" during "the conduct of special operations during peacetime." Existing rules had considered only wartime losses a state secret. The new measure made it difficult for investigative journalists and others to report on the deaths of Russian soldiers in Ukraine
<b>2015 May</b>	Freedom of Association	Law authorizing the Prosecutor's Office to designate any foreign organization as "undesirable" on the grounds of posing a "threat to the country's constitutional order, defence or state security", with the immediate effect of rendering its presence, and any activity on its behalf, unlawful.
<b>2015</b>	Right to a Fair Trial	Two high-profile trials, both related to Ukraine, Svetlana Davydova and Nadezhda Savchenko.
<b>2015 December</b>	Right to a Fair Trial	Law under which the Constitutional Court of Russia can pronounce the European Court of Human Rights' and other international courts' decisions "unimplementable" if they "violate" the Russian Constitution's "supremacy".
<b>2016 July</b>	Freedom of Expression, Personal Autonomy Rights and Freedom of Assembly	"Yarovaya package" - two pieces of counterterrorism legislation that strengthen punishments for terrorism and extremism, increase Russia surveillance capabilities, criminalize withholding information about certain crimes from the authorities, and ease state monitoring of phone and internet communications. Critics claimed that the law would make it easier for the authorities to stifle dissent.

<b>2016</b>	Freedom of Assembly	Putin created the National Guard of Russia, a force devoted to maintaining public order; critics noted that the body is likely to be used to prevent unwanted public protests.
<b>2016</b>	Political Rights: Electoral Process	Elections in September produced a supermajority for the ruling United Russia party in the State Duma, the lower legislative house. Following the 2011 State Duma elections, when the ruling United Russia party scored just less than 50 percent of the vote in flawed elections that sparked street protests, the Kremlin rewrote the electoral law, restoring the mixed system abandoned after the 2003 elections, under which half of Duma members are elected by proportional representation and half in single-member districts. United Russia won 343 seats in the 450-seat State Duma, gaining a supermajority that allows it to change the constitution without the support of other parties.
<b>2016</b>	Freedom of Expression	Space for independent voices in the media continued to diminish, particularly after a series of politically motivated personnel changes at the RBC media group.
<b>2016</b>	Freedom of Association	The Levada Center, among many other organizations, was added to the list of “foreign agents” by the Justice Ministry during the year; the authorities continued requiring groups that receive foreign funding and engage in loosely defined political activities to adopt the label.
<b>2017</b>	Freedom of Expression	On November 15, 2017, the State Duma, Russia’s lower house of parliament, adopted, with record speed, a draft law that stipulates that the government may designate any media organization or information distributors of foreign origin that receive any funding from foreign sources as “foreign media performing the functions of a foreign agent.” The definition appears to be broad enough in theory to be applied to a wide range of groups and people, not just media outlets or individual bloggers, but academic or nongovernmental organizations and social media platforms.
<b>2017</b>	Freedom of Expression	A law that calls for the blocking of VPN services that allow access to banned content was adopted in July 2017. The new law is likely to narrow opportunities for users to browse anonymously after it comes into effect in November 2017.
<b>2017</b>	Freedom of Expression	Another law adopted in July 2017, an amendment to the Law on Information, Information Technology, and Information Security, will force users of social media platforms and communication apps to register with their mobile phone numbers, effectively linking their online activity with their real identity.

Created by the author, based on a collection of reports published by Freedom House in the years 1999-2017, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>, Freedom House *Freedom on the Net 2017: Russia*, 2017b, Amnesty International *Amnesty International Report 2015/16: The State of the World’s Human Rights*, London, Amnesty International Ltd, 2015-2016 and Human Rights Watch *Russia: Reject ‘Foreign Agents’ Media Bill. Tramples on Free Press*, 2017b.

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## SUMMARY

**The title of the Master's thesis** – *The Detrimental Effect of Economic Sanctions? Human Rights Repression in the Russian Federation*. The thesis analyzes the possible effect of targeted economic sanctions on regime-sponsored violations of human rights in the Russian Federation.

**The problem of the thesis.** A sufficient amount of research has already proven that economic sanctions hurt human rights within the targeted countries because they foster the target regime's coercive behaviour as a means of ensuring status quo within the country, thus, the international community has increasingly endeavoured to replace conventional economic sanctions by targeted or, in other words, "smart" sanctions. Such measures were also introduced in the current case of Russia. Therefore, a research problem originating from the increased employment of "smart" sanctions is whether or not *targeted* economic sanctions help to prevent state-sponsored human rights violations.

**The object of the research** is the possible effect of targeted economic sanctions on regime-sponsored violations of human rights in the Russian Federation.

**The hypothesis of the thesis:** The imposition of targeted economic sanctions on the Russian Federation has contributed to human rights deprivations within this country due to the fact that the intended economic hardship inflicted on the targeted entities is shifted on the general population as Russian authorities employ specific mechanisms allowing them to reduce economic pressure.

**The aims of the thesis:**

1. To introduce the literature relevant to the research topic and to develop clear definitions of *economic sanctions* and *human rights*.
2. To construct the theoretical framework which would explain the relationship between "smart" economic sanctions, target regimes' behaviour and human rights violations.
3. To apply the theoretical framework in the case of Russia and analyze whether or not the human rights situation in Russia deteriorated after the imposition of targeted economic sanctions.
4. To outline the findings and to present a few suggestions for further research in this field.

**The main conclusions of the Master's thesis.**

With the ever-increasing economic interdependence economic sanctions have become an attractive measure to counter various types of wrongdoers throughout the global political arena. However, with the rising number of cases, when economic sanctions have been imposed, the eventual

detrimental effects concerning the enjoyment of human rights in the targeted country have been raising some important questions of morality. Thus, a new type of sanctions – “smart” or targeted sanctions – was engineered so as to punish the recipients without harming the general population. So, this Master’s Thesis has made an attempt to investigate the effects of “smart sanctions” by employing the recent example of the Russian Federation.

A novel theoretical causal chain was constructed according to which the imposition of targeted sanctions causes economic hardship on targeted entities, which pushes the authorities to undertake mediating measures and reallocate the budget in order to support the financing entities at the expense of other state sectors. Consequently, these measures result in a budget shortfall for social services, health and education, which may provoke an increase in public dissent that the authorities perceive as a potential threat to stability. Eventually, a real or perceived threat of public dissent provokes state-sponsored repressions of civil and political rights.

The components of the aforementioned causal chain have been investigated one by one referring to the Russian Federation. At first, it has been revealed that, though the impact of sanctions on defense and energy sectors will only be visible in a medium to long term, the effects of sanctions on Russia’s financial sector and the consequences of countersanctions had serious repercussions on Russia’s economic performance. Using a set of control variables it was detected that major decreases in global oil prices are not the main determinant when it comes to human rights repressions in oil-dependent countries. Next, it has been found that according to official figures after the imposition of sanctions state expenditure on defense continued skyrocketing while expenditure on education and healthcare was rapidly decreasing, proving that the imposition of sanctions could have actually fostered budget reallocation in Russia. The investigation of changes in public attitudes after the sanctions has found that public dissatisfaction is on the rise, disclosing the emerging signs of possible public dissent. Finally, an investigation of the human rights situation in Russia has revealed that the four years after the imposition of sanctions have witnessed a very steep decrease in the enjoyment of civil and political rights, as these years have been marked by an unprecedented number of events and legislation releases uncovering an almost total absence of civil and political rights in Russia.

The hypothesis of the thesis has been proved following the logic of the causal chain – it could be argued that targeted economic sanctions in Russia have provoked a chain of events which led to a serious deterioration of civil and political rights in the country.

## Žalingos ekonominių sankcijų pasekmės? Žmogaus teisių suvaržymas Rusijos Federacijoje

### SANTRAUKA

Šiame magistro darbe tyrinėjamas galimas tikslinių ekonominių sankcijų poveikis režimo inicijuotiems žmogaus teisių pažeidimams Rusijos Federacijoje.

Nemažai ankstesnių tyrimų patvirtino, jog bendrosios ekonominės sankcijos prisideda prie didesnių žmogaus teisių pažeidimų šalyje, kuriai taikomos sankcijos. Teigiama, jog plačios ekonominės sankcijos, turėdamos neigiamą efektą ekonomikai, skatina režimą imtis papildomos prievartos prieš visuomenę, kad galėtų išlaikyti politinį *status quo* šalyje. Atsižvelgdama į šalutinį ekonominių sankcijų poveikį, tarptautinė bendruomenė pastaruoju metu vis dažniau taiko tikslines, arba, kitaip tariant, „išmaniąsias“ sankcijas, nukreiptas prieš specifinius „baudžiamos“ valstybės sektorius ar konkrečius politinio režimo atstovus ir su jais susijusias įmones. Taip tikimasi, jog bus galima išvengti neigiamo ekonominio poveikio visai visuomenei. Būtent tokios tikslinės sankcijos taikomos šiuo metu ir Rusijos Federacijos atveju. Tačiau kol kas trūksta tyrimų, kurie atsakytų į *klausimą*, ar *tikslinės* ekonominės sankcijos padeda išvengti žmogaus teisių pažeidimų šalyje, kuriai taikomos sankcijos, ar jos vis tiek sukelia tokį patį „šalutinį poveikį“, kaip ir bendros ekonominės sankcijos.

Pagrindinis tyrimo objektas yra galimas tikslinių sankcijų poveikis režimo inicijuotiems žmogaus teisių pažeidimams Rusijoje po 2014 metų. Tyrime keliami hipotezė, jog tikslinių sankcijų taikymas Rusijos Federacijai prisidėjo prie žmogaus teisių suvaržymo šioje šalyje, nes planuoti ekonominiai sunkumai, nukreipti į sankcionuojamus subjektus, buvo perkelti paprastiems piliečiams, taip sumažinant specifiniams subjektams/sektoriams, prieš kuriuos nukreiptos tikslinės sankcijos, kylantį ekonominį spaudimą.

Atlikus tyrimą ši hipotezė buvo iš esmės patvirtinta.

Šiame darbe buvo sukurta originali teorinė priežastinė grandinė, paaiškinanti tikslinių sankcijų poveikį žmogaus teisėms. Kaip nurodoma loginėje schemoje, tikslinės sankcijos sukelia ekonominius sunkumus specifiniams subjektams, todėl režimas yra priverstas reaguoti ir perskirstyti biudžetą – taip kitų ekonomikos sektorių sąskaita paremiant režimą finansuojančius/remiančius subjektus ir ar sektorius (pvz., energetikos ar gynybos įmones). Tokie veiksmai lemia išaugusį biudžeto deficitą socialinėms paslaugoms, švietimui bei sveikatos apsaugai – tai gali skatinti visuomenės

nepasitenkinimą, kurį režimas suvokia kaip potencialią grėsmę stabilumui. Galiausiai, ši reali arba tik nujaučiama viešo nepasitenkinimo grėsmė skatina režimą imtis vis naujų pilietinių ir politinių žmogaus teisių suvaržymų, mat baiminamasi potencialiai galinčio kilti visuomenės nepasitenkinimo ir/ar opozicinių judėjimų kritikos.

Aukščiau minėtos priežastinės grandinės segmentai buvo analizuojami paeiliui, remiantis Rusijos pavyzdžiu. Iš pradžių buvo nustatyta, jog nepaisant to, kad sankcijų poveikis Rusijos gynybos ir energetikos sektoriams bus matomas tik po ilgesnio periodo, sankcijų poveikis Rusijos finansų sektoriui bei Rusijos atsakomųjų sankcijų padariniai jau dabar labai stipriai paveikė Rusijos ekonomiką. Taip pat buvo nustatyta, kad pagal oficialius duomenis, po sankcijų įvedimo valstybės išlaidos gynybai nepaliaujamai augo, o išlaidos švietimui ir sveikatos apsaugai stipriai sumažėjo. Tokiu būdu buvo įrodyta, jog sankcijos iš tiesų paskatino Rusijos biudžeto perskirstymą. Visuomenės požiūrio pokyčių analizė atskleidė, jog įvedus sankcijas, viešo nepasitenkinimo ženklų padaugėjo. Galiausiai, žmogaus teisių situacijos Rusijoje analizė parodė, kad per keturis metus po sankcijų įvedimo Rusijos žmonės patyrė ypač staigų civilinių ir politinių žmogaus teisių suvaržymą, nes per šį periodą buvo atlikta itin daug teisės aktų pakeitimų ir kitų politinių sprendimų, kurie privedė prie praktiškai visiško pilietinių ir politinių žmogaus teisių nebuvimo Rusijos Federacijoje.

Sekant priežastinės grandinės logika, šio magistro darbo hipotezė buvo patvirtinta, todėl galima teigti, jog tikslinės ekonominės sankcijos galėjo prisidėti prie stipraus pilietinių ir politinių žmogaus teisių pablogėjimo Rusijos Federacijoje.