INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY AND THE EU REACTIONS TO THE RUSSIAN ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

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Abstract

This master thesis is a research conducted to uncover the way three prominent international relations theories (structural realism, commercial liberalism and conventional constructivism) would explain the different reactions of EU nations to the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and to determine which of the three theories would be most accurate in its explanations. The reason for conducting a research like this is to put the theories to the test by taking their core principles and placing them side by side with a practical IR situation. Not only could this contribute to the development of the theories themselves, but also to the academic field of IR in general.

The research was conducted by gathering different types of data regarding each EU country and then analysing it from the perspective of the three theories separately. First, data about the countries related to the core ideas of each theory was gathered: GDP and military expenditure (structural realism), share of Russian imports and exports of the total foreign trade and Russian dependency on natural gas (commercial liberalism) and the value scores on the Inglehart-Welzel cultural map (conventional constructivism). Then, information concerning the reaction of each EU country to the annexation of Crimea was gathered from news media articles, scholarly articles and official government statements. This data was analysed and across all texts re-occurring themes were identified and given a common label to be able to create a clear overview of the reactions of all EU countries. The countries were ranked according to the data gathered for each theory (i.e. for commercial liberalism the countries were ranked by economic interdependence with Russia) and displayed in a table which also showed the labels of the re-occurring themes from the reactions. Finally, the findings were analysed and discussed from the point of view of each theory by using the aforementioned tables.

It was subsequently established how the theories would explain the reactions and which theory would be most accurate in doing so. The following is a simplified summary. Structural liberalism would likely highlight that countries with high relative capabilities (economic wealth and military power) mostly supported restrictive measures against Russia because they do not fear retaliations, while many countries with low relative capabilities expressed reluctance about sanctions against Russia because they would not be able to withstand economic or military counter measures and fear for their security. Commercial liberalism would point towards the fact that countries with little economic interdependence with Russia were more likely to support sanctions because they did not have as much to lose as countries

with high economic interdependence, which mostly opposed sanctions and reacted more mildly because they wanted to preserve their economic relationship with Russia to protect their own economy. Conventional constructivism might emphasize that countries with a high score on self-expression values mostly supported restrictive measures because they differ from Russia in cultural identity and value the principles of democracy, which is why they condemned the unlawful annexation even more than countries with a high score in survival values, which share many values with Russia.

Noticeable correlations were found between the core ideas of all three theories and the reactions of EU countries, but structural realism was found to be the most accurate in its explanations. There were notable exceptions to the correlation for each theory, but only structural realism was able to properly explain these exceptions. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have low relative capabilities, a high economic interdependence with Russia and a similar score on survival values. They feared for their security but strongly supported sanctions against Russia because their alignment to stronger states allowed them to do so. Italy is powerful but was reluctant towards sanctions because they feared changes in the international power balance. Austria showed reluctance because they have been a historically neutral country out of security considerations. Romania and Poland, just like the Baltic States, are quite economically interdependent with Russia but supported sanctions because they feared for their security due to their geographical proximity to Russia.

Because of the strong correlation between reactions and relative capabilities, the often cited security concerns and the theory's ability to properly explain the most remarkable reactions of EU countries, structural realism was found to be the most accurate in its explanations of the reactions.

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Introduction

International Relations theory is in a constant state of development. Over the years it has been influenced by other academic fields like philosophy, history and economics, as well as important historical events like wars and the formation of economic alliances (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016). The birth of the academic subject of IR as we know it took place after the First World War and it has continued to evolve to this day. From the classic perspective of utopian liberalism to the contemporary post-positivist approach of social constructivism, there are numerous contending schools of thought. Each of these theories seeks to make sense of the international community in which nations interact and attempts to explain the behaviour and policy decisions devised by different countries in different situations. It would be tremendously difficult, if not nearly impossible, to establish which of these perspectives is the most accurate in an absolute sense, and I hold no illusions of being able to do so. Nevertheless, the purpose of my research is to put some of the most prominent IR theories to the test and attempt to measure the extent to which they are able to accurately explain the actions of countries in a real-life situation.

The theories that will be subjected to my research are the ones that have been the most influential in setting the tone in IR discourse and discussions for quite some time now; realism, liberalism and constructivism (Snyder, 2009) (Walt, 1998). Realism asserts that every nation will always seek to increase its own power and material wealth and state actors will generally shape their foreign policy accordingly. Liberalism argues that countries share common goals and interests and that good cooperation is effectuated through international trade, democratic rule and international institutions. Constructivism states that the identities of countries and state actors are socially constructed, and their behaviour and decision-making are shaped by these pre-constructed notions (Shimko, 2010). Because these three schools of thought are very complicated and consist of many different branches, it is important to specify which exact streams will be investigated. These theories and their streams, as well as the methods used to scrutinize them, will be further explained in subsequent sections of this document.

Theories in any academic field have to be tested in practical situations in order to assess their accuracy; IR theory is no exception to this. The bolder and more impactful the actions of a nation state are in certain events, the stronger and more abundant the reactions of the international community are likely to be. These reactions (i.e. foreign policy measures) can be analysed using IR theory. The event I have chosen to examine in relation to the aforementioned theories is the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, Ukraine. More

specifically: the reactions of EU nations to this annexation. The problem formulation to this research is 'Which of the following three prominent IR theories (structural realism, commercial liberalism or conventional constructivism) would be most accurate in explaining the reactions of each EU country to the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea?' I will elucidate the reason why a research like this should even be conducted and my motivation for choosing this particular subject and these specific streams in the problem formulation section, after which I will give a brief explanation of post-USSR EU-Russia relations and the annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

Problem formulation

The aim of my research is to measure the degree of accuracy of three prominent theories of International Relations (structural realism, commercial liberalism and conventional constructivism) when their explanations are put alongside a real IR-related set of circumstances. Realism, liberalism and constructivism consist of many branches and sub-theories. The reason for selecting *structural* realism, *commercial* liberalism and *conventional* constructivism is as follows. The very core of structural realism (or neorealism) is the absence of true international authority. The Russian invasion of Crimea seemed to confirm this state of anarchy and the possibility for a state to do as it desires as long as its relative capabilities are larger than their neighbours'. The structural realist premise of relative capabilities states that a country's level of economic and military power compared to that of other nations shapes a nation's foreign policy (Shimko, 2010). However, since the theory's conception in 1979 the share of foreign trade and investment in countries' GDP, and thereby their economic interdependence, has increased dramatically (Ortiz-Ospina, Beltekian, & Roser, 2018). Commercial liberalists argue that this economic interdependence and trade relations, and not a nation's relative power, are foremost determinants in the shaping of foreign policy (Shimko, 2010). Since many European countries are major trading partners with Russia (European Commission, 2018) and the European Union is largely dependent on Russia for its imports of natural gas and petroleum oil (Eurostat, 2018), this research could shed some light on the importance of power position vs. economic interdependence when EU nations reacted to the annexation of Crimea. Constructivism, the youngest of the three theories, argues against the validity of both of the aforementioned theories and asserts that the interests of a state and relationships within the international community are constantly constructed by social actors and are determined by notions of existing norms and identities (Shimko, 2010). In other

words: state actors make decisions largely based on what they think is expected of them in a certain set of circumstances. Conventional constructivism, as defined by Ted Hopf in 1998, seeks to distinguish identities and their accompanying social practices and then attempts to uncover how these identities might influence particular actions (Hopf, 1998). Identities of states can depend on contexts of political, historical, cultural and social nature (Hopf, 1998). Since countries within the EU have varying cultural backgrounds and social practices (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019), their reactions could be affected by their identity (based on conventional constructivist assertions). The diverse cultural identities of EU nations and the fact that conventional constructivism attempts to identify factors that influence actions make conventional constructivism very much relevant to my research, in which I will scrutinize the reactions to the annexation. If the power position, economic interdependence or identity of each EU country was the determining factor in shaping their foreign policy after the annexation of Crimea, patterns based on these criteria could become visible when analysing the countries' reactions.

As mentioned before, I do not consider it possible to prove indefinitely that one theory is superior to the others or to fully discredit one of them. Nonetheless, for the sake of future IR research and the progress of IR theory it is important to examine practical situations in the international community by looking at them from the existing perspectives, also to see whether or not they can explain *anything at all*. One thing that social sciences have in common with natural sciences is the fact that, to determine a theory's strength or find potential flaws in it, this theory has to be put to the test. Not only does this contribute to the development of the theories in question and the overall academic field of IR, it could provide more insight into the factors that dictate the formation of foreign policy and assess the gravity of peace-keeping factors in times of looming conflict. The reason why this could be particularly beneficial in the case of EU-Russia relations is because EU countries often fail to find a unified approach to Russia's rather unpredictable behaviour (Nitoiu, 2016). For the aforementioned reasons the problem formulation of my thesis is:

Which of the following three prominent IR theories (structural realism, commercial liberalism or conventional constructivism) would be most accurate in explaining the reactions of each EU country to the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea?

How I will attempt to answer this question will be explained in the theory and methods sections. The theory section also contains a more detailed description of the prominent IR

theories and how they relate to my research. First, a brief account is given about EU-Russia relations and the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

EU-Russia relations; post-USSR

The anticipated socio-political course of the Russian Federation and the development of its relationships with Western nations after the collapse of the Soviet Union became a much debated topic among scholars in the early 90s (Macfarlane, 2016). By attending the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe where the Charter of Paris was signed, Russia appeared to be willing to contribute to a unified and peaceful Europe and even, to certain extent, accept some of its liberal socio-economic values (OSCE, 1990). The subsequent fall of the USSR and the end of the Cold War created a spark of optimism among IR researchers, and the famous (yet now largely disputed) article about 'the end of history' by Francis Fukuyama, which described the indefinite prevalence of Western liberalism over other ideological systems (Fukuyama, 1989), made many people quite hopeful in regards to prosperous relations between Russia and the European Union.

Certain events in the fairly recent past, however, have shown that the Kremlin is not prepared to make as many concessions in their foreign policies as initially thought by some. Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 after the country tried to regain authority over the South-Ossetia region, creating great tension in Europe. In 2011 Russia devised a plan for a customs union with countries the EU had also recently discussed an economic partnership with (Macfarlane, 2016). Although this endeavour was only partly successful, it was another sign of a worsening EU-Russia relationship that would only deteriorate even further roughly three years later.

The annexation of Crimea

An event sending shockwaves throughout Europe, and possibly even the rest of the world, was the 2014 invasion of Crimea, Ukraine (Gardner, 2015). Prior to the annexation there were large-scale demonstrations in Ukraine, referred to as the Euromaidan protests, which were initiated after the Ukrainian government refused to sign an agreement with the EU and instead chose to enhance their ties with Russia. This lead to the impeachment of the Ukrainian president at the time and ended his government's rule. There were, however, also pro-Russian protests to oppose the pro-European demonstrations. In March 2014 Russian troops took control of the Crimean peninsula, which Russia claimed was an act to respond to the desire of the Crimean population to become a part of Russia. It was seen by the West as an illegal

invasion devised to repress European influence in Ukraine and maintain control over Crimea as a strategic military position (Gardner, 2015).

It would be an understatement to say that the annexation of the Crimean peninsula greatly damaged EU-Russia relations. Countries within the European Union have long been divided when it comes to their approach towards Russia for a variety of reasons, and even though their policies implemented as a reaction to the annexation reflected some form of unity, certain countries were more in favour of a strong reprisal than others (Nitoiu, 2016).

The reaction of each EU nation to the invasion of Crimea will be discussed in detail later in this research. The annexation itself will not be further explained. The purpose of this research is not to determine the causes or consequences of the historical event; it is to analyse the reaction of EU countries by using existing IR theories. These theories are described in the following part of this document.

Theory

The core idea of the specific streams within the IR schools of thought that will be subjected to my research; structural realism, commercial liberalism and conventional constructivism, have been briefly explained in the problem formulation section. Even though there are many different sub-streams within of realism, liberalism and constructivism, I have tried to describe the overall background of the schools of thought, as well as the sub-streams particularly relevant to my problem.

First, allow me to quickly elucidate how these theories will be scrutinized in my research and why it is done that way. Each of the three theories has a core idea about the factors that influence the way state leaders act. For structural realism, it is the military power and the economic wealth of the country itself and that of the countries surrounding it (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016). For commercial liberalism, it is economic interdependence (Shimko, 2010). For conventional constructivism it is identity (i.e. political, historical, cultural etc.) (Hopf, 1998). To be able to put the theories to the test and to answer my research question, I will have to determine which of these factors have been most influential when EU countries reacted to Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Therefore, the first step will be to gather the necessary data related to these factors for each EU country. Then, data about the actual reactions from state leaders will be gathered from sources such as scholarly articles, official statements and media sources. After all data has

been gathered, I will analyse the reactions to identify patterns among countries that fall into the same category based on the factors mentioned earlier. For example; are there similarities in the reactions of countries with a high GDP and military expenditure? Did countries with a high degree of economic interdependence with Russia react differently from countries with low economic interdependence? Did countries with similar (cultural) identities also react in the same way to the annexation?

Identifying patterns in the reactions of countries when they are categorized in different ways is important because this could reveal which factors have been most influential in shaping the reactions and, by extension, which theory explains the reactions best. A detailed description and argumentation of the research design and the data that is to be gathered will be given in the methods section. In the following paragraphs I describe the background of the IR schools of thought and the specific streams relevant to my research.

Realism

In the view of realist IR scholars, the ultimate goal every nation strives for and bases its policy making decisions on is the increase of its own power and wealth (Shimko, 2010). The scholars seen as so-called 'classical realists', among who Edward Carr, Hans Morgenthau and George Kennan are often regarded the most influential in the early stages of the development of realist theory, argue that human nature is the foremost source of international conflict and the thriving force in leaders' decision making process. Classical realism draws heavily on conservative political and social philosophy, which assumes that humans are selfish and imperfect beings by nature and often driven by compulsions of jealousy. Classical realists therefor hold a negative view of human nature in general. They maintain that, even though human beings are sometimes able to make rational and ethical decisions, our very nature is flawed and our greed compels us to repeatedly make the same mistakes.

Conservative philosophy also emphasizes the desire of human beings to belong to a group. We are social beings who draw great comfort and a feeling of self-worth from belonging to a social group, whether it is a family, subculture or national group; being a part of something larger allows us to construct our own social identity in our minds. Having an inclination to belong to a group is not necessarily a bad thing, but an equally crucial part of group identity is who does *not* belong to the group. People excluded from the group are perceived to be different. More often than not this sense of separateness gives rise to feelings of superiority towards others; a concept referred to as collective egoism.

Conservative philosophy distinguishes between rational and irrational conflict. An example of

a potential source of 'rational' social conflict is the unequal distribution of material wealth. The idea of being different and superior can be a source of irrational conflict and, according to realist thought, this trait of human nature is part of the reason why conflict is inevitable not only between individuals, but also between nations. The inevitability of conflict is one of the cornerstones of classical realist thought (Shimko, 2010).

The gravity of the influence of human nature on international relations is predominantly stressed by *classical* realists. In the particular stream of realism relevant to my thesis; *structural realism* (also called *neo-realism*), the key factor that shapes international policy is thought to be the structure by which the system of international politics is shaped (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016). Political scientist Kenneth Waltz is often seen as the father of structural realist theory. He laid out its foundations in his 1979 book called Theory of International Politics, breaking away from the behaviouristic approach of classical realism. The defining element of the international structure described by structural realism is anarchy; the fact that there is no true authority that governs all countries within the international community. This is exactly why structural realism is closely related to my research; the Russian annexation of Crimea was condemned and deemed illegitimate by many countries, but nothing has been done to reverse this occurrence. Russia acted on its own, unrestricted by any international authority because it does not exist. Organizations like the United Nations may contribute to the preservation of tranquillity and order, but there is no global government forcing state actors to adhere to a clear set of rules. Every state within the international system fulfils more or less the same functions for its citizens like enforcing the law, collecting taxes, regulating the economy and providing some form of social security. Where these countries differ, however, is in their level of power; which Waltz refers to as relative capabilities. Structural realism states that, because states want to maintain as much of their autonomy as possible, they will always attempt to increase their relative capabilities (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016).

Neo-realists assert that the anarchic nature of the international system forces nations to be concerned about their security (Shimko, 2010) because, as opposed to potential domestic threats which the police are assigned to deal with, no other faction than the nation itself is guaranteed to provide protection in a time of international conflict. When someone tries to break into your house you call the police to apprehend the burglar, but when a country is threatened with a foreign invasion, there is no true certainty that someone is capable or willing to help them. For this reason countries build up their military power, which in turn leads to other nations feeling insecure and building up *their* military power as well, resulting

in a vicious cycle. According to many realist scholars, this is the key determining factor for how nations behave and the only remotely feasible situation in which true peace could exist is when countries are equally powerful and therefor do not feel threatened by the other (Shimko, 2010).

The role of superpowers and their interaction with smaller states is another one of the key elements of structural realist theory (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016). The unequal distribution of relative capabilities creates polarities in the international system. After the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, the international structure shifted from a bipolar system lead by the Soviet Union and the United States to a unipolar system where the US was the sole superpower. Currently many believe China is on its way to become a new superpower or has already reached that status (Hu, 2011), making the system bipolar once again. According to structural realism superpowers balance each other out, but there is no consensus on whether a unipolar, bipolar or multi-polar system is the most favourable to achieve world peace. Smaller states try to make alliances with superpowers for military defence and to maintain their own autonomy (by being protected from foreign invasions). Which superpower they choose to align with depends on a variety of factors like geographical proximity and common interests (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016).

Liberalism

One of the most prominent alternative theories to realism is liberalism. Whereas realism finds its roots in a philosophical movement with a pessimistic view of human nature, liberalism draws from a school of thought that has a different opinion on behaviour inherent to human beings (Shimko, 2010). Notable figures for the development of this philosophy from the 17th and 18th century were John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant. Classical liberalists view humans as beings capable of making rational decisions that can suppress their instinctual desires and choose a course of action using logic and reason. This is in stark contrast with the conservative streams of philosophy that assert human beings are selfish and often let feelings like pride and greed get the best of them when choosing a course of action. The debate that has been going on for centuries is about humans as *rational* or *irrational* beings. As opposed to the conservative philosophical stream connected to realism in which history is doomed to repeat itself because of flaws in human nature, liberalism asserts that progression in the course of society and humanity can be effectuated through the application of rationality in domestic and international policy making. In other words: we are in essence reasonable beings that can learn from our past mistakes related to social issues and violent

conflict. There are way fewer wars now than there were a hundred years ago and the world may be even more peaceful a hundred years from now. History is not cyclical; it is linear. This is one of the arguments used by liberalists (mostly in the classical approach) as to why conflict is not inevitable (Shimko, 2010).

Just like neo-realism, *neo-liberalism* moves away from the role of human nature in international relations, and seeks to explain the workings of the international system in different ways. There are several branches within neo-liberalism that have some differences but also many similarities and overlapping arguments. *Sociological liberalism* emphasizes the positive effect of all cross-border activities, like cultural exchange, increased communication, international trade and migration, on international relations. These phenomena could lead to an increasingly similar set of values shared by different nations and thereby improve their bond and decrease the likelihood of armed conflict (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016). According to neo-liberalists the common pursuit of financial gain and well-being will eventually benefit all of society because it results in overall economic growth and prosperity. *Institutional liberalism* focuses on the international institutions created by interdependent nations to deal with shared interests and problems. These institutions not only encourage and enhance cooperation between states, but also create economic benefits by taking away barriers that could obstruct international trade. Examples of important international institutions are the United Nations, European Union, World Trade Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. These institutions came into existence relatively recently and their activities play an increasingly large role in ensuring peaceful cooperation between states (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016).
Democratic liberalism or *republican liberalism* is based on the assumption that countries with a liberal democratic political system are highly unlikely to go to war against one another. This belief is based on a number of arguments. The first one is that any existing conflicts between democratic states are often resolved in a peaceful manner through good, transparent communication. Another one is that liberal democracies share certain morals and values, laying the foundation for relatively easy cooperation. A third argument is the fact that there is a large amount of international trade and economic cooperation between democratic countries (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016).

The stream of neo-liberalism most relevant to my research is *commercial liberalism,* which sees international trade and economic interdependence as the primary forces that can keep the peace between nations (Shimko, 2010). The degree to which countries are economically

interdependent today is unprecedented. Extensive international investments and trade by companies that countries greatly rely on for their economic welfare make violent conflict a devastating blow to the economy and the prosperity of a nation. This makes war even less desirable than it was before countries' economies were entangled in a web of interdependence (Shimko, 2010). Russia is a major trading partner for many European countries (European Commission, 2018) and the European Union depends largely on Russia for the import of oil and natural gas, of which 32% and 40% comes from Russia respectively (Eurostat, 2016). The extensive economic interdependence should have implications for the relationship between the EU and Russia (according to commercial liberalism) and, thereby, could have also affected the reactions of EU countries to the Russian annexation of Crimea. Answering my problem formulation should provide insight into whether or not this was the case.

Liberalists argue against the realist premise that war and struggle for power are the key aspects that determine international relations and policy making; those factors are merely a part of it. According to liberalism, power balance is not what keeps countries like, for example, the Netherlands and Belgium from going to war; it is primarily their shared interests, economic interdependence, cross-border activities and international institutions that keeps the peace between the two. Neo-liberalism consists of all of the different variations of neo-liberalist theory described above and together they challenge the neo-realist view of international relations (Shimko, 2010).

Constructivism

Constructivism is the newest of the three influential schools of thought within the international relations theories (Shimko, 2010) that I cover in this report. It is based on the assumption that the identity and (expected) behaviour of any person, organization or government socially constructed. People's behaviour and interaction with others around them is determined by notions about identity and social norms that exist within society and depend on the context in which the behaviour and interaction take place. Constructivist international relations scholars argue that the same principles apply to state actors; they pursue actions and behaviour that conform to pre-existing ideas about how they should act in specific situations when communicating with specific countries based on their *identity*. Some examples of pre-existing ideas that can influence communication are the way a man should talk to a woman (possibly in a mild tone?), how two people from different nationalities should communicate (maybe in a more hostile way?) or how a leader addresses their people in times of a crisis (Maybe a stern tone of voice? Maybe sympathetic?). Whereas realists assume that

governments will always act based on the same principles, constructivists argue that these principles, this 'reality', does not simply exist; it is continuously constructed by social actors. Constructivist theory therefor focuses on the way leaders view themselves, other leaders and what is expected of them in terms of the correct manner of communication and actions. These leaders subsequently determine their course of action in a way that allows them to adhere to a path they think is deemed appropriate by their environment in that specific set of circumstances. Realists assume that the absence of a world government and the anarchic state of international politics inevitably results in a security dilemma (described in the section about realism), but constructivists argue that this is not necessarily the case (Shimko, 2010).

The stream of constructivism most relevant to my research is *conventional constructivism* the way it was defined by influential constructivist IR scholar Ted Hopf (Hopf, 1998). Conventional constructivism aims to distinguish identities of states and the social practices they effectuate. Then it attempts to determine how these identities affect a nation's actions, just like the goal my research is to uncover which factors influenced the reaction of EU nations to the annexation of Crimea. Identities in international politics can be of political, historical, cultural or social nature. These identities greatly influence the behaviour of state actors because all interactions take place in what Hopf describes as an 'intersubjective social context' (Hopf, 1998). Relations between state actors and the way they understand each other are formed through norms and practices, which create an identity that can affect the actions and behaviour of states. Other states perceive and come to recognize that identity and respond to it accordingly. Expectations between states and a certain degree of predictability of developments within international politics require the existence and understanding of identities. The functions identity has in society are to tell you and others who you are and to tell you who others are. Because identity tells you who you are, it greatly influences interests and thereby the choices that you make when dealing with other actors. The same principle applies to state actors; their identity, regardless to whether it is political or cultural etc., shape their preferences and actions (Hopf, 1998).

The main difference between conventional constructivism and, for example, critical constructivism is the understanding of what identity is and what it can explain (Hopf, 1998). Conventional constructivists argue that it is possible to distinguish one identity or another under certain circumstances which can influence actions or behaviour. For example; having the American or Chinese national identity has implications for decision making, not just in one situation at one point in time, but continuously. Critical realists assert that unobservable

factors exist that could also be (even more) relevant to behaviour, and therefore critical realism does not seek to explain the effect that identity may have on actions. As a result of this important difference, conventional constructivist research tends to have a more positivist epistemological stance, whereas critical constructivism often adopts a post-modern interpretivist epistemology (Hopf, 1998). Since the EU consists of countries with varying identities (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019) and conventional constructivism seeks to analyse how these identities could affect certain actions, this particular stream of constructivism is most relevant to my research.

A continuous research of substantial magnitude related to the identity of countries is the World Values Survey (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). Conducted by a global network of scientists, it maps out the values of people in countries and assigns a score to these nations based on the cultural dimensions 'traditional values versus secular-rational values' and 'survival values versus self-expression values'. The research, which started in 1981 and continues to this day, asserts that people's belief system related to these dimensions greatly influences social practices, political views and democratic aspirations (or lack thereof) (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). In other words; the dimensions can be closely linked to the identity of countries that is central to conventional constructivist theory. Countries with a high score in *traditional values* often hold religion, family-ties and nationalism in high regard, but countries with a high score in *secular-rational values* adhere less to religion and tradition. When a country scores high on *survival values* economic and physical well-being are seen as very important and there is relatively low tolerance towards other cultures. A high score on *self-expression values* indicates more tolerance towards foreigners and homosexuals, democratic aspirations and environmental protection is also deemed important (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). How these dimensions are used in my research is explained in the methods sections.

All three IR theories described above acknowledge the absence of a central global authority and the existence of international anarchy, but the differences lie in way they view the effect of this anarchy on the behaviour of nations and in the factors that they think are crucial to the shaping of foreign policy. Putting the IR theories to the test could contribute to their development, help to identify potential flaws and even inspire future research about the EU, Russia or just IR theory in general.

Previously conducted research

An investigation that is similar to mine in terms of research design the one conducted by Jurgen Schuster of the Eberhard Karls University in Tubingen and Herbert Maier of the University of Regensburg (Schuster & Maier, 2006). Their research dealt with the varying standpoint of European countries prior to the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. Some countries spoke out in favour of the invasion, while others strongly opposed it. The investigation of Schuster and Maier attempted to test the three main IR theories by looking at the reactions of European nations in a real life situation; the run-up to the Iraq invasion. The researchers formulated 3 hypotheses for neo-realism, neo-liberalism and social constructivism, respectively. The hypotheses stated how each of the IR theories would have predicted European countries to react to the US plan to invade Iraq (whether they would support or oppose it). These hypotheses were as follows:

- Neo-realism would predict that weak states support the US, while the strong states oppose them.
- Neo-liberalism would predict that the states whose public speaks out against the invasion oppose the US and vice-versa.
- Constructivism would predict that left-wing governments oppose the invasion and right-wing governments support it.

The hypotheses were tested by looking at which countries supported the invasion and which countries opposed it and if that was in accordance to each theory. This resembles my own research in certain ways, but there are a number of significant differences. I will explain what I do differently and provide argumentation for my choices.

The first, and probably most important, difference is that Schuster and Maier made strong assumptions in their hypotheses about how the IR theories would predict the standpoint of European countries, whereas I will mostly be looking for patterns in the reactions. Schuster and Maier's hypothesis related to structural realism, for example, assumed that the European states with strong relative capabilities (Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy) would oppose the Iraq war because powerful countries can confront a superpower like the US without jeopardizing their relationship, while the weaker EU countries would support the US in their plan because they want to make sure they continue to receive the superpower's support in the future. As opposed to making conclusions beforehand about how each theory would predict their reactions, I will first attempt to identify a pattern in the reactions of EU

countries to the annexation of Crimea based on structural realist, commercial liberalist and social constructivist assertions. I will explain my reason for this by using the structural realist hypothesis of Schuster and Maier as an example. While the assumption can be made using structural realism that weaker EU countries would support the United States' decision to invade Iraq, I doubt if every realist IR scholar would fully agree with this. It is true that, according to the theory of power balance, weaker states tend to align with stronger states (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016), but in this case it could also be argued that weaker EU states are inclined to align not with the US, but with powerful countries within the EU itself. For example the Netherlands might agree with Germany's decision to oppose the invasion. Germany, one of the most powerful EU countries, is not only much closer to the Netherlands in terms of geographical proximity; it is also the Netherlands' largest trading partner (OEC, 2019). The possibility exists that not all realist IR scholars would have agreed in their predictions about which powerful nation the weaker nations would choose to align with when supporting or opposing the invasion of Iraq. This makes the research more susceptible to criticism questioning its validity.

The second significant difference between my research and the one by Schuster and Maier is that there is a difference in the type of reactions of the European countries that are analysed. With the invasion of Iraq the only divergence in reactions was whether countries supported or opposed the invasion: a yes or no question. Every country in Europe, however, condemned the Russian invasion of Crimea. Therefor the divergence in their reactions was more complicated than yes or no; it was about how strong their reaction was and, for example, what countermeasures they considered to be appropriate. This is a considerable difference because it changes the way the reactions have to be analysed. As opposed to just noting either support or opposition, my research requires extensive data gathering and textual analysis to establish the nature of the reaction. In addition, the reactions also have to be compared to those of other countries to identify possible patterns or differences.

The third difference is that the research by Schuster and Maier focuses on reactions of EU nations towards a policy measure of a close ally: the United States. The relationship between the EU and Russia has been rocky for some time now and the bond is not nearly as strong as between the EU and the US (Macfarlane, 2016). My research is not about whether or not states support the decision of a close ally who made their invasion plans known beforehand, it is about the reaction to a surprise invasion by a country that had already been acting provocatively in the eyes of the West for quite some time. This, again, has implications for the

analysis of the reactions; does hostility become apparent in the reactions of certain countries? Is the desire for a peaceful resolution more frequently expressed than military intervention? These are examples of questions that can only be answered after thorough examination.

Even though my research will be quite different in certain ways, reading the report by Schuster and Maier has been very informative and helped to further shape the approach and methods used for my thesis. The exact way my research will be conducted is discussed in the subsequent methods section.

Methods

The research will be of a deductive nature to a certain extent; no hypotheses will be formulated beforehand regarding which theory is most accurate in its explanations, but some assumptions are made about the factors that each theory claims to be influential in shaping the reactions of EU countries. These are based on the core ideas of each theory. The accuracy of each theory in explaining the reactions to the Russian annexation of Crimea will be asserted by identifying recurrent themes in the reactions of countries when they are grouped based on criteria specified below. No hypotheses about the accuracy of the theories are formed prior to the data gathering and analysis because the research focuses on how each theory would *explain* the reactions and not how they would *predict* them. I will first attempt to find patterns in the reactions based on the factors listed below, after which I will assess how each theory would explain them.

1. Structural realism

Structural realism asserts that the international power structure and a country's foreign policy is mainly shaped by its level of power relative to that of other countries (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016). This level of power is measured in *economic wealth and military force*. Decision making is focused on ensuring national security and maintaining as much autonomy as possible. Weaker countries that do not have the economic wealth to maintain a large military force are least capable of defending themselves and, in times of threat or possible conflict, fear for their autonomy and safety more than strong countries with high economic wealth and a powerful military force (Shimko, 2010). By this logic, the relatively weak states in the EU might have reacted to the Russian annexation of Crimea in a fashion similar to each other and the reaction of relatively powerful states could resemble that of other powerful states. If a pattern becomes apparent in the nature of the reactions of stronger states, as well as in the

reaction of weaker states, this would imply that their relative capabilities were influential in their decision making and the reactions can, at least to a certain degree, be explained by structural realist theory.

The GDP (World Bank, 2019) and military expenditure (World Bank, 2019) are gathered using the data base of the World Bank website. The data of 2013 (the year prior to the annexation) will be used, because the data of 2014 is potentially influenced by the annexation and the subsequent economic sanctions. It is possible that a country's GDP suffered from a change in economic relations after the annexation, or that it altered its military expenditure as a result of the event. Because the reactions to the annexation are analysed, it is important to know the GDP and military expenditure from right *before* the annexation.

2. Commercial liberalism

Commercial liberalism argues that a country's primary focus is its economic welfare. The theory's main premise is that, because nations have become largely economically interdependent and do not want to harm their own economy, their foreign policy is shaped to create and maintain good trade relations. The possibility of violent conflict is avoided as much as possible because war seriously damages economy and trade agreements. This is why open trade and economic interdependence are key factors in maintaining peace (Shimko, 2010). Commercial liberalism would therefore assert that the EU countries whose economy is less interdependent with Russia (measured in *Russian imports and exports as a share of the nation's total international trade* and *share of natural gas imports from Russia*) might have reacted differently than the countries whose economy is strongly dependent on trade with Russia. This is because countries with high economic interdependence should be most cautious about potentially harming their relationship with Russia and thereby damaging their own economy. The largest Russian share in the EU market in 2013 was in the trade of natural gas; 41% comes from Russia (Eurostat, 2016), which is why it is taken as a separate valuable to measure economic interdependence. If a correlation becomes visible between EU countries' reaction to the annexation of Crimea and their degree of economic interdependence with Russia, this could confirm the commercial realist claim of the importance of trade in international relations.

Just like structural realism, data from 2013 is used to determine the economic interdependence with Russia. The data is gathered from the Eurostat database (Eurostat, 2019) and a report by the Clingendael International Energy Program (CIEP, 2015). The economic

sanctions introduced by the EU after the annexation (EU Newsroom, 2019) potentially affected the economic interdependence of certain EU countries with Russia and their imports of natural gas, therefore data from 2013 is used. The economic interdependence was calculated by taking the sum of each EU country's imports from- and exports to- Russia and then calculating the percentage that it accounts for in their total foreign imports and exports.

3. Conventional constructivism

Conventional constructivism asserts that the identity of a state and state actors imply their preferences and ensuing decisions. These identities can depend on contexts of cultural, political, historical and social nature (Hopf, 1998). As described in the theories section, the cultural value dimensions set out by the extensive research of World Values Survey can be closely linked to the way conventional constructivism describes the identity of a country. Based on the research results, countries receive a *score between -2,0 and 2,0 on traditional values versus secular-rational values and between -2,0 and 2,5 on survival values versus self-expression values* (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). If the (cultural) identity of countries was influential when reacting to the annexation, a pattern could become visible in the reactions of countries with similar scores, which would indicate the importance of identity in international relations described by conventional constructivism.

The cultural value scores were gathered from the World Values Survey website (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). The scores of their research conducted between 2010 and 2014 are used because these are their most recently published research results and it also corresponds to the period right before the annexation. The scores are on the 2 scales: traditional vs. rational values and survival vs. self-expression values.

Methods of data analysis

The European Union consists of 28 member countries. Data about all of these countries will have to be gathered to be able to answer the problem formulation of this research. For each country, the following variables (described above) will be determined:

- Economic wealth (GDP).
- Military force (annual military spending).
- Economic interdependence with Russia (Russian imports and exports as a share of the nation's total international trade and share of natural gas imports from Russia).
- Cultural value scores on the Inglehart-Welzel cultural map.

Subsequently, data about each country's reaction to the annexation is gathered from three different types of sources: news media articles, scholarly articles and official government statements. The reason for gathering the data from these three types of sources is to make sure the information about the reactions is as comprehensive as possible. Collecting government statements is important because they convey the initial thoughts and opinions of the government regarding the annexation of Crimea. However, government officials tend to be diplomatic in their use of language and, to a certain extent, emit information that is expected of them. The sincerity of their words could be questioned by media outlets, which potentially focus on different information, shedding a different light on the reaction. It is also important to take the articles of IR scholars into consideration, as they have extensively investigated the circumstances and are not just concerned with a government's statements, but also its true actions. The scholarly articles used as data sources for this research come from different reports and websites, like EU-28 Watch and the European Council of Foreign Relations, but they are valid sources of information because all articles are written by specialists in the field of international relations or political science.

It will be clear in the findings that different sources about the reaction of the same country sometimes contain different re-occurring themes/labels. This is because they touch on different topics and are written for different purposes; news articles inform casual readers with brief information, government statements convey the official public stance of the government and research articles disseminate and analyse information and discuss the scholar's take on the matter. Together they paint a comprehensive picture of the reaction of each country to the annexation.

Findings

Prior to data collection regarding the reactions to the annexation, the following information of each EU country was gathered (described in the methods section): GDP, military expenditure, economic interdependence with Russia and the cultural value scores on the Inglehart-Welzel cultural map. This information will be used during the analysis of the countries' reactions to investigate how the three prominent IR theories would explain the reactions.

A complete overview of all EU countries and their GDP, military expenditure, economic interdependence with Russia and cultural value scores is shown in table 1 on the next 2 pages of this document.

EU Country	GDP in 2013 (current USD)	Military exp in 2013 (current USD)	RU/foreign trade % 2013	WVS trad/rat	WVS surv/self
Austria	$ 430.068.712.971,87	$ 3.229.065.841,34	10.3%	0.6	0.7
Belgium	$ 520.925.468.952,94	$ 5.263.164.882,85	6.9%	0.2	1.3
Bulgaria	$ 55.555.171.009,77	$ 899.584.003,47	27.8%	0.8	-1.4
Croatia	$ 58.147.688.052,29	$ 956.952.644,05	14.8%	0.0	-0.2
Republic of Cyprus	$ 24.084.559.214,02	$ 384.925.361,05	3.8%	-0.4	-0.4
Czech Republic	$ 209.402.444.996,10	$ 2.148.784.401,09	20.4%	1.1	0.0
Denmark	$ 343.584.385.594,13	$ 4.216.647.585,34	4.8%	1.1	2.2
Estonia	$ 25.137.153.149,44	$ 479.314.460,82	37.1%	1.3	-0.8
Finland	$ 269.980.111.642,90	$ 4.161.139.945,22	35.4%	1.2	1.2
France	$ 2.811.077.725.703,59	$ 62.417.099.178,26	5.24%	0.6	1.0
Germany	$ 3.752.513.503.278,41	$ 45.930.540.563,15	9.5%	1.1	0.7
Greece	$ 239.862.011.450,10	$ 5.655.183.035,72	17.9%	0.0	0.1
Hungary	$ 135.215.704.418,96	$ 1.280.050.962,25	22.7%	0.6	-0.7
Ireland	$ 239.389.340.720,49	$ 1.195.763.444,37	1.4%	-0.7	1.2
Italy	$ 2.130.491.320.658,68	$ 33.891.913.925,21	9.1%	0.1	0.4
Latvia	$ 30.254.677.296,92	$ 283.568.932,74	44.9%	0.9	-0.9

Lithuania	$ 46.417.340.374,52	$ 354.862.149,70	57.4%	1.1	-1.2
Luxembourg	$ 61.739.352.212,30	$ 258.655.906,23	2.3%	0.4	1.0
Malta	$ 10.146.688.738,65	$ 53.789.438,88	1.5%	-1.2	0.4
Netherlands	$ 866.680.000.367,26	$ 10.226.260.324,85	10.2%	1.1	1.3
Poland	$ 524.201.151.607,19	$ 9.275.711.727,45	30.7%	-0.6	0.2
Portugal	$ 226.073.492.966,50	$ 4.724.102.082,03	4.2%	-0.1	0.0
Romania	$ 190.949.066.979,18	$ 2.452.512.981,08	13.1%	-0.4	-1.0
Slovakia	$ 98.478.349.315,33	$ 967.923.107,87	32.1%	0.3	-0.1
Slovenia	$ 48.116.256.926,08	$ 506.742.932,10	11.8%	1.0	0.2
Spain	$ 1.361.854.206.549,39	$ 17.242.959.322,00	5.4%	0.4	0.3
Sweden	$ 578.742.001.487,57	$ 6.528.737.467,32	9.1%	1.7	2.3
United Kingdom	$ 2.739.818.680.930,19	$ 56.861.759.588,28	2.7%	0.1	1.5

Table 1: Data collected about each EU country

The reactions

Three different types of sources were used to gather data about the reactions. For each of the 28 EU countries data was gathered from news media articles, research articles and official government statements. Information regarding the countries' reactions to the annexation has been gathered and re-occurring themes in the reactions have been identified. These re-occurring themes were given labels that each have a different color to create an easily discernable overview of different types of reactions. All the data that has been gathered and the identification of the themes can be found in the appendix of this document, as well as all the sources of the data. A summary of each country's reaction is shown below, but first the identified re-occurring themes and their labels are listed and explained. For the more 'abstract' sounding labels and example from the data is included.

- Russian relationship

The country's actions and/or words make it clear that the country values their relationship with Russia even after the annexation of Crimea. Example: Austria was the first country to host Putin as an official guest after the annexation (Gressel, 2015).

- Peaceful solution

The country urges the parties involved to find a peaceful solution to the problem and denounces the possibility of military intervention.

- Pro-sanctions

The country supports the EU's decision to implement economic sanctions against Russia (as well as other sanctions like visa restrictions) and agrees that these measures are a necessary retaliation to the annexation.

- Reluctant to sanctions

The country expresses reluctance towards certain sanctions introduced at EU level by questioning their effectiveness or complaining about the damage they cause to their own economy.

- Opposes sanctions

The country opposes the sanctions introduced by the EU and calls to abolish them all-together or just certain ones.

- Territorial integrity

The country urges Russia to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This exact phrase or a similar expression is used by most countries in their official statements.

- Illegal referendum

The country states that they do no acknowledge the referendum held by the Russian Federation to vote for the annexation of Crimea, and that this referendum holds no legal ground.

- Dialogue both sides

The country encourages dialogue between all parties involved to find a solution to the problem and also think it is important that Russia is included in these discussions.

- Human rights

The country expresses its concerns for the human rights situation in Crimea.

- Financial aid

The country pledges to aid Ukraine financially or through material goods.

- Strong reaction

The country reacted in a relatively strong and outspoken way by advocating for more drastic measures or initiating them themselves. Examples: Romania not only supported the economic sanctions immediately, they also called for even tougher sanctions to be implemented (Forbrig, 2015). Latvia called for strong countermeasures from EU and NATO in the form of increased military presence in Eastern Europe (Forbrig, 2015).

- Weak reaction

The country reacted in a relatively weak way by not devoting much attention to the situation or expressing a lack of significant concern. Example: Spain's diplomatic and economic relationship with Russia and Eastern Europe is not held in extremely high regard by the country and they kept a low profile compared to some other countries after the annexation (Pedro, 2014).

- Security concerns

The country's actions and/or words indicate a concern for their own national security after the annexation. Example: Estonia and Latvia are concerned about their security because they have a high percentage of Russian citizens and the countries called for more NATO military presence in their region (Forbrig, 2015).

Austria

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Russian relationship Peaceful solution	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Peaceful solution Territorial integrity

Even though Austria condemned and rejected the annexation like other EU countries and urged all parties involved to find a peaceful solution to the problem (Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014), the country has not been secretive about the fact that it wanted to maintain good ties with Russia (Bloomberg, 2014). It was the first country that invited Putin for an official visit after the annexation (Gressel, 2015). Additionally, Austria was quick to express scepticism regarding the sanctions against Russia out of fear for repercussions and some politicians even advocated for abolishing all sanctions as soon as possible (Gressel, 2015). The country does not want Eastern European countries to have to choose between relationships with Russia or with the EU, and also does not want to make that choice themselves. They want strong ties with both Russia and the EU and stated that the world would return to a 'cold war' way of thinking if this would be deemed impossible (Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Belgium

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides	Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Human rights Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides

Belgium stressed the illegality and illegitimacy of the referendum held by Russia to annex the Crimean peninsula and urged Russia to respect Ukraine's sovereignty (Flanders News, 2014). Despite of the crisis Belgium also repeatedly stated that Russia should not be excluded from negotiations and that dialogue between all parties involved (EU, Ukraine and Russia) is necessary to come to a political solution to the problem (Jadot, 2014). Even though there was some discussion about the correct severity of the sanctions, all major political parties in Belgium agreed that the sanctions against Russia implemented at EU level were necessary to put pressure on the country (Jadot, 2014). The Belgian government expressed concern for human rights in Ukraine and called for strong commitments to protect them (Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017).

Bulgaria

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Dialogue both sides Reluctant to sanctions	Reluctant to sanctions Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity	Peaceful solution Territorial integrity

Bulgaria has extensive trade relations and therefor a high economic interdependence with Russia, which caused them to react to the EU sanctions against Russia with considerable reluctance (Forbrig, 2015). They made their opinion clear that, if economic sanctions were to be imposed, they should not be of harmful nature to the Bulgarian economy or the economy of other EU nations (Bloomberg, 2014). Bulgaria stated their opposition to the introduction of additional sanctions, but felt obligated by the EU to accept the initial ones. The new government appointed in August 2014 (about 5 months after the annexation) was more assertive in their standpoint against Russia and urged the country to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity (Forbrig, 2015). Bulgaria also advocated to find a peaceful solution and that every party should be involved in negotiations (Press Secretariat of the Head of State of Bulgaria, 2014).

Croatia

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Peaceful solution Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Human rights Pro-sanctions

The relationship between Croatia and Russia suffered substantially after the annexation of Crimea. The country strongly criticized the annexation by calling it a territorial aggression (Bloomberg, 2014) and also considered the referendum preceding the annexation to be illegitimate. Croatia supported the sanctions introduced by the EU and the minister of foreign affairs even talked about the possibility of the sanctions being too 'mild' (Croatia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). Nevertheless, the country maintains strong economic ties with Russia (Šabić, 2015). Croatia expressed concern for the human rights situation in Crimea and called for all ethnic groups in the area to be respected and protected (Croatia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). The country called upon all parties involved to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict (Šabić, 2015).

Cyprus

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Reluctant to sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Reluctant to sanctions

Cyprus has built a good relationship with Russia in fairly recent history (also in USSR times) and is seemingly not eager to implement policies that could endanger this relationship (Athanasiadou, 2014). This became apparent in their reaction to the annexation. The country acknowledged the fact that Russia operated outside the boundaries of international law, but expressed reluctance towards the sanctions introduced by the EU because they could be harmful to Cyprus-Russia relationships (MacAskill, 2014). Russia is seen in Cyprus as a country that protected their rights on the world-stage as an independent country and Cypriot politicians underscored the importance of protecting this historical bond (Athanasiadou, 2014). The country accepted sanctions because it had to be solidary with the EU, but asked the EU for compensation in case the sanctions would harm the Cypriot economy (Cyprus Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Czech Republic

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Illegal referendum Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity

The position of the Czech Rupublic after the annexation of Crimea was relatively complicated and less unified than in some other EU countries. The prime minister initially voiced his opposition to economic sanctions (Bloomberg, 2014), but the government's position (or at least that of the foreign ministry) regarding the sanctions was later adjusted. Even though there was still some reluctance towards them in the sense that they were regarded as unfortunate and something the EU should strive to abolish as soon as possible, the sanctions were seen as a necessary measure against Russian actions (Forbrig, 2015). The Czech Republic called the referendum illegitimate and strongly urged Russia to halt military operations and respect Ukraine's territorial integrity (The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Denmark

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	<mark style="background:lime">Territorial integrity</mark> <mark style="background:cyan">Dialogue both sides</mark>	<mark style="background:yellow">Pro-sanctions</mark>	<mark style="background:lime">Territorial integrity</mark> <mark style="background:cyan">Dialogue both sides</mark> <mark style="background:yellow">Pro-sanctions</mark> <mark style="background:darkred;color:white">Human rights</mark>

Denmark condemned the violation of Ukrainian sovereign territory, following the EU standpoints regarding the conflict (Nissen, 2015). In their reaction to the annexation they called for a balanced approach; it should be made clear to Russia that their actions will not be tolerated or without consequence, but the EU should also strive to negotiate with Russia to find a solution together (Nielsen, 2014). Denmark fully supported the sanctions implemented by the EU against Russia and also did not rule out the possibility of further sanctions if Russia would not comply with de-escalation (Ministry of Foraign Affairs of Denmark, 2014). The Danish government also implored Ukraine to respect the rights of all citizens, including minorities (Ministry of Foraign Affairs of Denmark, 2014).

Estonia

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Security concerns <mark style="background:navy;color:white">Strong reaction</mark>	Security concerns <mark style="background:navy;color:white">Strong reaction</mark> <mark style="background:lime">Territorial integrity</mark> <mark style="background:yellow">Pro-sanctions</mark>	<mark style="background:lime">Territorial integrity</mark> <mark style="background:magenta">Peaceful solution</mark>

The very next day after Putin asked his own government for permission to use military force in Ukraine, Estonia held a national defence council meeting and asked for a strong response from NATO and the West (Forbrig, 2015). The country borders Russia and, just like Crimea, a large percentage of the population is of Russian origin (Saytas, 2014). Together with the fact that Estonia still remembers the Soviet occupation of their country very well, the annexation of Crimea raised considerable consternation in Estonia for their safety (Forbrig, 2015). This is why security concerns played a large role in the country's reaction. The Estonian government expressed contentment and support towards the EU decision to implement sanctions against Russia (Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Finland

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	<mark style="background:yellow">Pro-sanctions</mark> <mark style="background:blue;color:white">Russian relationship</mark>	<mark style="background:lime">Territorial integrity</mark> <mark style="background:blue;color:white">Russian relationship</mark>	<mark style="background:lime">Territorial integrity</mark> <mark style="background:darkred;color:white">Human rights</mark> <mark style="background:blue;color:white">Russian relationship</mark>

Even though the Finnish economy is highly interdependent with Russia, Finland accepted and supported the EU sanctions against Russia (Ponniah, 2017). The outrage among the Finnish public likely contributed to the government's statements condemning the violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity (Järvenpää, 2015). The government nonetheless acknowledged that the sanctions would hit the Finnish economy harder than most EU countries because of the large amount of trade with Russia (Finnish Government Communications Department, 2014). They therefor want to maintain relations with Russia and to continue political dialogue and negotiations. The Finnish president was the first EU leader to visit Putin in Russia after the annexation (Järvenpää, 2015).

France

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Strong reaction Pro-sanctions Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Human rights Pro-sanctions

The reaction of France to the annexation of Crimea was stronger than expected from a country that has normally been quite friendly towards Russia (Cadier, 2016). They not only supported economic sanctions against Russia because they deemed Russian actions unacceptable, but were also among the first countries to initiate the sanctions (Kremlin Watch, 2019). The government maintains the position that the sovereignty and territory of Ukraine should be completely reinstated (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). France also engaged in dialogue and negotiations between Russia and Ukraine (Kremlin Watch, 2019). Additionally, the country called on Ukraine and Russia to grant human rights organizations access to every area in Ukraine, including Crimea (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017).

Germany

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions Financial aid

Germany, the country with the highest GDP of all EU nations (World Bank, 2019), has supported economic sanctions against Russia after the annexation (Pond, 2015), but at the same time does not close its doors to economic relationships with Russia in certain sectors

(Böttger, 2015). Germany is largely dependent on Russia for natural gas, which did not seem to change after the event in Crimea (Böttger, 2015). The sanctions introduced by the EU, however, received support from the government. Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel assured the public that a military response to the crisis was out of the question and that the solution would have to be peaceful. Germany also supported the EU plan of providing financial aid for Ukraine (Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, 2014).

Greece

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Reluctant to sanctions Dialogue both sides Russian relationship	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity Weak reaction	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Dialogue both sides Human rights

Greece has had a more extensive relationship with Russia than many other EU countries. Russia aided Greece in their political issues related to Cyprus and Turkey (Koval, 2017) and these past endeavours likely influenced their reaction to the annexation. The Greek prime minister questioned the effectiveness of the sanctions (BBC News, 2016) and the government also lobbied to abolish the sanctions altogether (Koval, 2017). Nevertheless the Greek Ministry of Foreign affairs expressed their support for Ukrainian territorial integrity and called the referendum held by Russia illegal (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). Having its own domestic problems, Greece did not play a very active role in the Ukraine crisis in general (Koval, 2017). Greece urged all involved parties to negotiate to come to a solution and called for protecting the rights of all Ukrainian citizens, including minorities (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Hungary

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Weak reaction Peaceful solution	Human rights Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution

Hungary took a relatively long time before making any official statements about the annexation of Crimea and when they did, the prime minister initially told the press that the conflict is not directly important to Hungary (Feher, 2014). The country did express concern for the human rights of minorities in Ukraine, particularly the Hungarian people living in Ukraine (Forbrig, 2015). They also voiced their support for Ukrainian territorial integrity and

said that the solution to the problem has to be peaceful; without the use military force (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018). Regarding the economic sanctions Hungary showed reluctance by questioning the effectiveness and also expressed persistence on maintaining good (economic) relations with Russia (Forbrig, 2015).

Ireland

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Human rights Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Reluctant to sanctions Financial aid Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions

Following the onset of the annexation, Ireland emphasized the importance of the fact that Ukraine's territorial integrity should be respected and that Russia has to abide by international law (Ryan, 2018). The Irish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that economic sanctions and restrictive policy measures are effective to pressure Russia into engaging in negotiation (Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014). However, Ireland did not want to tighten the sanctions further unless Russia violated agreements made after the annexation (O'Connell, 2015). The government was concerned about the human rights situation in Ukraine and called for investigations of any human rights violation (Ryan, 2018). There can be no use of military force in solving this conflict according to Ireland; the solution has to be peaceful. The country has contributed financially to OSCE missions in Ukraine (O'Connell, 2015).

Italy

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Illegal referendum Reluctant to sanctions	Weak reaction Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Russian relationship Dialogue both sides

Italy's reaction to the annexation was relatively slow and, in their reaction, they called for a moderate and cooperative approach to Russia, rather than a confrontational one (Tocci, 2014). The country acknowledged the illegitimacy of the referendum (Huffington Post, 2014) and the fact that the invasion of Ukraine's territory was illegal, but it also highly values good relationships with Russia, not in the least because of energy sector imports (Waterfield, 2014). This made Italy slightly sceptical towards sanctions (Tocci, 2014). Italy also believes that Russia's ties to Europe should not be severed, because this could create a new 'iron curtain'

situation (Waterfield, 2014). Instead, the conflict should be solved through constructive dialogue that does not exclude Russia (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019).

Latvia

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Strong reaction Dialogue both sides Security concerns	Security concerns Russian relationship Territorial integrity Financial aid Pro-sanctions	Security concerns Territorial integrity

Just like Estonia, Latvia called for a 'tough response' to the annexation and has increased their budget for protection of their country by NATO (Mclaughlin, 2014). These protective measures reflect the substantial security concerns within the country, a fear that has been expressed by the Latvian government (Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). Nevertheless, the minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the country does not want to completely turn its back on Russia and that all standpoints should be taken into account during negotiations (Forbrig, 2015). Latvia has a high percentage of Russians within their population and very extensive economic relations with Russia, which the country wants to maintain if the conflict settles down. The country did support the economic sanctions introduced by the EU and pledged to provide Ukraine humanitarian aid (Forbrig, 2015).

Lithuania

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Strong reaction Security concerns	Strong reaction Security concerns Financial aid	Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions

Lithuania is no exception to the other Baltic countries when it comes to a strong response to the annexation. The nation criticized Putin's actions in an unequivocal fashion (Mclaughlin, 2014) and staunchly defended Ukraine's rights internationally (Forbrig, 2015). Lithuania did not hold back on their financial aid to Ukraine (Forbrig, 2015), spending almost as much as Ireland, a country that has a GDP almost 5 times higher than Lithuania (World Bank, 2019). Out of security concerns, the country upped its military defence and organized military exercises at their border with Russia increasingly frequent (Saytas, 2014). The Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the country will comply with the sanctions imposed by the EU and also urges other countries to do so. Failing to comply with the sanctions, the ministry said, will result in prosecution (Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017).

Luxembourg

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Territorial integrity Financial aid	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Reluctant to sanctions

After the annexation Luxembourg argued that a peaceful solution to the problem has to be found with respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity (The Luxembourg Government, 2014). Despite of this, the government of Luxembourg has declared that there is no desire to significantly harm the bilateral relationship with Russia in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine (Majerus, 2015). The country maintains that Russia should not be excluded when the EU implements international policy measures. There was a significant amount of reluctance coming from the government with regards to the economic sanctions (Majerus, 2015), which were regarded as ineffective in achieving its intended purpose and even counterproductive to solving the conflict (The Luxembourg Government, 2014).

Malta

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	N/A	Peaceful solution Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides

Malta is a small nation and has the lowest GDP of all EU countries (World Bank, 2019). No press article talking specifically about Malta's reaction to the annexation of Crimea was found. The Maltese government joined the rest of the EU in urging Russia to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity (Government of Malta, 2014) and expressed its desire for a peaceful solution to the conflict (Pace, 2014). The minister of Foreign Affairs reproached the EU for seeking free trade agreements with Eastern Partnership nations without anticipating reprisal from Russia (Pace, 2014). He stated that Russia should be involved in negotiations about Ukraine and that the EU should enable both parties to engage in dialogue with each other (Government of Malta, 2014).

The Netherlands

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Pro-sanctions	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Dialogue both sides	Pro-sanctions Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides

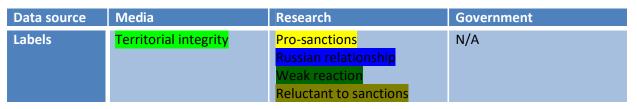The Dutch Ministry of Foreign affairs condemned the violation of Ukraine's territory and

sovereignty, but stated that, regardless of the fact that Russia's actions are unacceptable, including them in negotiations is the only way to achieve a political solution (Timmermans, 2014). The Netherlands supported economic sanctions after the annexation and favoured even tougher sanctions after the downing of a civilian airplane that contained a large number of Dutch citizens (Togt, 2015). Still, the Dutch government expressed its desire to maintain economic relations with Russia as much as possible (Togt, 2015).

Poland

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Security concerns	Security concerns Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Territorial integrity	Security concerns Illegal referendum

Poland, together with the Baltic States, is considered to have taken a very strong stance against Russia after the annexation. It has been active right from the beginning of the crisis and took economic sanctions and visa restrictions very seriously (Forbrig, 2015). Poland increased its own military budget significantly and created a plan to build missile defence systems and upgrade military vehicles in the years after the annexation (Nougayrède, 2015). The concern for their national security is shared by both the political elite and the Polish people (Nougayrède, 2015). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that NATO presence on Polish soil will be increased and that Poland will support other EU nations in securing the Baltic airspace (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Portugal

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Weak reaction Reluctant to sanctions	N/A

Portugal appeared to have a pragmatic approach towards Russia after the annexation and their relationship has been described as distant (Liik, 2018). The Ukrainian Ambassador to Lisbon was glad about the fact that Portugal supported Ukraine's territorial integrity, but asserted that the Portuguese government had not been very consistent or practical in its approach (Port, 2014). Portugal accepted the sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU, but has not been very active in mediation in the conflict (Shagina, 2017). There was a somewhat reluctant attitude towards the sanctions, which is likely because of Russian investments in Portuguese real

estate and the geographical distance from Portugal to Russia (Shagina, 2017). Portugal is the only EU country that has no publicly available statements or policy documents regarding its standpoint on the Ukraine crisis on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Romania

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Security concerns Human rights Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides

Following the annexation of Crimea, Romania asked NATO to heighten their presence and security procedures in the region, just like Poland and the Baltic States. Additionally, the nation participated in military exercises together with the U.S. air force (Forbrig, 2015). This suggests a considerable concern for their national security. The country strongly condemned the violation of Ukraine's territory (UAWire, 2018). Romania not only implemented every sanction imposed by the EU, it has repeatedly argued at EU meetings that the sanctions should be tightened even further (Forbrig, 2015). When it comes to human rights issues, the country is particularly worried about the treatment of ethnic minorities in Ukraine, as Romania itself has experienced its fair share of conflicts between ethnic groups (Forbrig, 2015). Despite of Russia's actions the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that a solution must be found by taking both the Ukrainian and Russian interests into account (Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Slovakia

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Opposes sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Russian relationship

The Slovak prime minister was one of the staunchest opponents of economic sanctions against Russia after the annexation and even called them 'suicidal' (Forbrig, 2015). The latter expression likely comes from the fact that the economic relations between Russia and Slovakia run deep (Forbrig, 2015), and that sanctions could harm this significantly. The minister of Foreign Affairs maintained that, in spite of a different opinion on international matters, good bilateral relations with Russia remained important (Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). This seems to contradict the fact that Slovakia supported the rapprochement

between Ukraine and the EU (Forbrig, 2015). Slovakia did speak up in favour of respecting the territorial integrity of Ukraine (Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014) and urged Russia and Ukraine to engage in dialogue together to find a solution to the conflict (Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018).

Slovenia

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Dialogue both sides Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Illegal referendum

Slovenia offered to act as a mediating party between the EU and Russia after the annexation of Crimea (Slovenia Times, 2014) and, although it supports Ukraine's sovereignty, Slovenia wants to preserve their good relationship with Russia (Požgan, 2015). The country called for a peaceful solution to the conflict, emphasizing the destabilizing effect that the use of military force would have on Europe (Slovenia Times, 2014). To achieve this outcome, active dialogue with Russia would be absolutely necessary according to the Slovenian government (Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). During a meeting of the Slovenian and Russian prime ministers in July 2014, they both argued that abolishing economic sanctions would be beneficial to either country (Požgan, 2015).

Spain

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Weak reaction	Human rights Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides

Spain is generally seen as one of the EU countries that is well-disposed towards Russia, despite of the fact that economic relations are not that extensive between the two countries and diplomatic ties are also not outstandingly strong (Pedro, 2014). A low profile was kept by Spain after the annexation, which could be explained by the overall lack of interest that the country has in Eastern Europe. Additionally, Spain was hit hard by the 2008 economic crisis, causing them to focus more on domestic issues, rather than foreign policy (Pedro, 2014). The Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs spoke out in favour of EU sanctions against Russia (The Local, 2014), which had little impact on the Spanish economy (Pedro, 2014). The country has asked to continuously involve Russia in political dialogue to reach a solution to the conflict
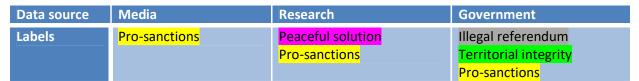
and expressed concern about the human rights situation in Ukraine (Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Sweden

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	Illegal referendum <mark style="background:lime">Territorial integrity</mark>	Security concerns	<mark style="background:lime">Territorial integrity</mark> <mark style="background:yellow">Pro-sanctions</mark> <mark style="background:blue">Russian relationship</mark>

The Swedish government reacted to the annexation of Crimea by stating that it did not recognize the legitimacy of the referendum held by Russia and that annexing pieces of a sovereign nation will never be accepted (Radio Sweden, 2014). Russia is seen as a serious threat by Sweden. Not just because it annexed Crimea and behaves provocatively in the Baltic Sea area, but also because, only months after the annexation, a Russian submarine was detected in Swedish territory (Herolf, 2015). Sweden made a plan to increase its defences in the coastal areas and Swedish islands (Herolf, 2015). The country also firmly supported economic sanctions against Russia (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014), saying it would make Russian aggression more costly. Still, the Swedish government asserted that, because it is the EU's largest neighbour, relationships with Russia should be maintained (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

United Kingdom

Data source	Media	Research	Government
Labels	<mark style="background:yellow">Pro-sanctions</mark>	<mark style="background:magenta">Peaceful solution</mark> <mark style="background:yellow">Pro-sanctions</mark>	Illegal referendum <mark style="background:lime">Territorial integrity</mark> <mark style="background:yellow">Pro-sanctions</mark>

The United Kingdom had no desire for military intervention after the annexation (Donnelly, 2015). The British public had little faith left in such endeavours after the involvement in the 2003 Iraq war. British politicians can be critical of the EU (as is apparent now more than ever, considering Brexit), but the United Kingdom supported the economic sanctions put forward by the EU (Donnelly, 2014) and even took part in designing some of the sanctions (Perraudin, 2015). In a statement of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office it was made clear that the UK considers the referendum held by Russia to be illegal and that Russia violated Ukraine's territory (UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 2014). The government has advocated for strong trade sanctions in its official statement after the annexation as well (UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 2014).

Analysis

In this section the reactions of EU countries to the Russian annexation of Crimea will be analysed to determine how the three prominent IR theories (structural realism, commercial liberalism and conventional constructivism) might explain these reactions. The analytical process will utilize the statistics gathered about the EU countries (GDP, military expenditure, economic interdependence with Russia and cultural value scores), the data gathered about the reactions and, of course, the IR theories themselves.

One step is to determine if there is a perceivable difference in the themes occurring in the countries' reactions based on the statistics relevant to the IR theory in question. For example; when exploring the explanations structural realism might offer, the potential divergence in reactions of countries with a high GDP and military expenditure and those of countries with a low GDP and military expenditure is investigated. Why, or why not, such a divergence could exist is to be established subsequently. The same principle applies to commercial liberalism and economic interdependence, and to conventional constructivism and cultural value scores.

The other part involves going deeper into particularly notable reactions of specific countries or groups of countries and viewing their actions and rhetoric through the lens of the IR theory while taking into account several factors that are important to the theory. For example; economic/military power could have influenced the response of the Baltic countries, but maybe structural realism would also point to their geographical proximity to Russia or their alignment with powerful EU countries as influencing factors.

Structural realism

The first theory that is looked at in terms of how it could explain the reactions is structural realism. Table 2, which can be seen on the next 3 pages of this document, shows the 28 EU countries ranked based on their GDP and military expenditure and the labels of the re-occurring themes in their reactions. The countries with the highest GDP are displayed at the top, while the ones with the lowest GDP are shown at the bottom of the table. The percentage of the GDP that each country uses for its military varies, but generally speaking, the higher a nation's GDP, the higher the military expenditure.

EU Country	GDP in 2013	Military exp in 2013	Media	Research	Government
Germany	$ 3.752.513.503.278,41	$ 45.930.540.563,15	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions Financial aid
France	$ 2.811.077.725.703,59	$ 62.417.099.178,26	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Strong reaction Pro-sanctions Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Human rights Pro-sanctions
United Kingdom	$ 2.739.818.680.930,19	$ 56.861.759.588,28	Pro-sanctions	Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions
Italy	$ 2.130.491.320.658,68	$ 33.891.913.925,21	Illegal referendum Reluctant to sanctions	Weak reaction Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Russian relationship Dialogue both sides
Spain	$ 1.361.854.206.549,39	$ 17.242.959.322,00	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Weak reaction	Human rights Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Netherlands	$ 866.680.000.367,26	$ 10.226.260.324,85	Pro-sanctions	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Dialogue both sides	Pro-sanctions Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Sweden	$ 578.742.001.487,57	$ 6.528.737.467,32	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Security concerns	Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions Russian relationship
Poland	$ 524.201.151.607,19	$ 9.275.711.727,45	Security concerns	Security concerns Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Territorial integrity	Security concerns Illegal referendum
Belgium	$ 520.925.468.952,94	$ 5.263.164.882,85	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides	Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Human rights Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Austria	$ 430.068.712.971,87	$ 3.229.065.841,34	Russian relationship Peaceful solution	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Peaceful solution Territorial integrity
Denmark	$ 343.584.385.594,13	$ 4.216.647.585,34	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides	Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions Human rights
Finland	$ 269.980.111.642,90	$ 4.161.139.945,22	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Human rights Russian relationship

Country	GDP	Trade	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Greece	$ 239.862.011.450,10	$ 5.655.183.035,72	Reluctant to sanctions Dialogue both sides Russian relationship	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity Weak reaction	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Dialogue both sides Human rights
Ireland	$ 239.389.340.720,49	$ 1.195.763.444,37	Human rights Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Reluctant to sanctions Financial aid Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions
Portugal	$ 226.073.492.966,50	$ 4.724.102.082,03	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Weak reaction Reluctant to sanctions	N/A
Czech Republic	$ 209.402.444.996,10	$ 2.148.784.401,09	Illegal referendum Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity
Romania	$ 190.949.066.979,18	$ 2.452.512.981,08	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Security concerns Human rights Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Hungary	$ 135.215.704.418,96	$ 1.280.050.962,25	Weak reaction Peaceful solution	Human rights Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution
Slovakia	$ 98.478.349.315,33	$ 967.923.107,87	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Opposes sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Russian relationship
Luxembourg	$ 61.739.352.212,30	$ 258.655.906,23	Territorial integrity Financial aid	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Reluctant to sanctions
Croatia	$ 58.147.688.052,29	$ 956.952.644,05	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Peaceful solution Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Human rights Pro-sanctions
Bulgaria	$ 55.555.171.009,77	$ 899.584.003,47	Dialogue both sides Reluctant to sanctions	Reluctant to sanctions Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity	Peaceful solution Territorial integrity
Slovenia	$ 48.116.256.926,08	$ 506.742.932,10	Dialogue both sides Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Illegal referendum

Lithuania	$ 46.417.340.374,52	$ 354.862.149,70	Strong reaction Security concerns	Strong reaction Security concerns Financial aid	Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions
Latvia	$ 30.254.677.296,92	$ 283.568.932,74	Strong reaction Dialogue both sides Security concerns	Security concerns Russian relationship Territorial integrity Financial aid Pro-sanctions	Security concerns Territorial integrity
Estonia	$ 25.137.153.149,44	$ 479.314.460,82	Security concerns Strong reaction	Security concerns Strong reaction Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution
Republic of Cyprus	$ 24.084.559.214,02	$ 384.925.361,05	Reluctant to sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Reluctant to sanctions
Malta	$ 10.146.688.738,65	$ 53.789.438,88	N/A	Peaceful solution Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides

Table 2: EU nations ranked by GDP and military expenditure

Support for sanctions – a matter of wealth and power?

The main retaliation of the EU against Russia for its annexation of the Crimean peninsula came in the form of sanctions, which varied from asset freezes and visa bans to targeted economic sanctions (EU Newsroom, 2019). While the sanctions were implemented at EU level and all member states were expected to comply, some countries were more supportive of the sanctions than others. The 'pro-sanctions' label indicates that a country supported the punitive measures and also acknowledged the necessity of the measures.

One thing that quickly becomes discernable when looking at the table above, is that the 'pro-sanctions' label is more abundantly present among the countries with a high GDP and military expenditure than among those with a low GDP and military expenditure. Structural realism might explain this by adducing to the divergence in *relative capabilities* (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016). Not only do the nations with high relative capabilities have a large amount of economic wealth to cushion any potential negative effects caused by the implementation of trade restrictions, they also possess the military power to defend themselves in the unlikely but nevertheless possible event that agitation over the introduced sanctions causes the situation to escalate overtime and results in a military conflict with the Russian Federation. The weaker states do not possess this economic wealth or military power and could therefore be more cautious in their support for punitive measures that could put their relationship with Russia, and indirectly their own security, at risk.

However, not every powerful state fully supported the sanctions and not every weak state was reluctant towards them. The odd one out amongst the most powerful EU countries in terms of their support for the sanctions (or rather a lack of it) is Italy. An important reason for their reluctant stance on the sanctions was the fear that Russia's orientation could shift towards the East instead of Europe (Tocci, 2014). Wanting to prevent this could be interpreted by structural realists as an exertion not to disturb the *power balance*. Previous western endeavours perceived by Russia as provocations, like the expansion of NATO, also pushed Russia closer to China (Waltz, 2000). Punitive measures could have the same effect, causing Russia to enhance its ties with China instead of Europe, disturbing the existing power balance in the international structure. Fear of this situation might have influenced Italy's reaction to the annexation.

The three Baltic States were staunch supporters of the EU sanctions against Russia, despite the fact that their GDP and military spending are among the lowest of EU countries. The structural realist explanation for this is discussed in the next paragraph.

Security concerns – alignment with great powers

Security concerns following the annexation of Crimea were highly prevalent in the three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This is easily explained by structural realist theory because the countries are in the bottom 5 EU countries in terms of relative capabilities and they and they all share a border with Russia. A lack of military power and their geographical proximity to a potential aggressor are important reasons for a country to fear for their security and loss of autonomy (Shimko, 2010). The very weakest two countries, Malta and Cyprus, did not express concerns for their national security, but are geographically distant from Russia.

If the annexation caused such a substantial concern for their security, why were the Baltic countries so adamant in supporting punitive measures that could agitate the potential aggressor and why were their reactions so strong? The answer, structural realists would likely argue, is to be found in the *alignment these weaker states made with more powerful states,* which is done by weaker states to ensure their autonomy (Jackson & Sørensen, 2016). Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO in 2004 (NATO, 2018). After the annexation Latvia was quick to call on NATO to increase its military presence in the Baltic region, and the most powerful member, the United States, was quick to oblige (Forbrig, 2015). Similarly, the Lithuanian President exclaimed great relief to be a part of NATO in the face of Russian aggression in Ukraine (Saytas, 2014). Lithuania has been criticized by some for their strong reaction and harsh condemnation of the annexation in regards to their relatively meagre economy and military power, saying the country was 'punching above its weight' (Forbrig, 2015). Their response can be clarified, however, using structural realist logic and asserting that the country felt safe to react this way mostly (if not entirely) because of their powerful allies.

Poland and Romania, who joined NATO in 1999 and 2004 respectively (NATO, 2018), also implored NATO to increase its military presence in their region (Forbrig, 2015) (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). Poland shares a border with both Russia and Ukraine and Romania neighbours Ukraine and, just like Crimea, is located next to the Black Sea. After the annexation, the Polish government pledged to modernize their military and created a 10-year

plan that would reportedly cost around 40 billion euro (Nougayrède, 2015). Poland building up its own military power despite simultaneously requesting aid from its allies could be an indication that there are doubts regarding whether or not these allies will truly fulfil their commitment if the country were to be attacked, which was also reported by the media (Nougayrède, 2015). This is why structural realists say the concept of *anarchy* is crucial to international relations: even though alliances are formed to reduce vulnerability to foreign invasions, no country has a 100% guarantee that others will come to their aid if their borders are compromised (Shimko, 2010).

Ties to Russia – additional alignments

Every country whose reaction is analysed in this research is part of the European Union and most of them have also joined (or even founded) NATO (NATO, 2018), which makes them not only allies of powerful European countries like Germany and France, but also of the United States. That does not mean, however, that additional alliances are ruled out; many EU countries maintain extensive ties to the Russian Federation. The 'Russian relationship' label can be found throughout the data of countries with both high and low relative capabilities, so at first glance there appears to be no correlation between GDP and military wealth and the desire to preserve relationships with Russia. Nevertheless, there are some important examples of countries and their ties to Russia that structural realism could shed some light on.

Greece and Cyprus stand out in this situation. Greece joined NATO in 1952 (NATO, 2018), but this alliance has not always met member countries' security needs, as became evident in the conflict on Cyprus with fellow NATO member Turkey (Koval, 2017). Fearing that Cyprus might join NATO under Turkish or Greek rule, the Soviet Union defended Cypriot independence by supplying a great deal of arms in the mid-60s (Sakkas, 2013). The soviet aid for Cyprus in times of turmoil laid the basis for good Russia-Cyprus relations. After the fall of the Soviet Union Greece sought and received help from Russia to increase their military capabilities so they could ensure the security of their country during the Balkan crises and to build up their defences against Turkey (Koval, 2017). Unfolding from these circumstances were extensive diplomatic relationships between Greece and Russia. Cyprus and Greece subsequently came to view Russia as an *alternative security provider* to NATO and the EU (Koval, 2017). These ties could still be relevant today; perhaps Greece and Cyprus do not rule out the possibility of a similar situation arising in the future where NATO finds itself unable to intervene and Russia steps in again to defend the countries' interests. This could explain the reluctance and opposition towards economic sanctions and the desire to maintain close

relationships to Russia that were apparent in the reactions of Cyprus and Greece towards the annexation of Crimea.

Austria was one out of only two countries in the top-10 highest GDP and military expenditure not to support economic sanctions against Russia after the annexation (Gressel, 2015), the other being Italy. Whereas Cyprus and Greece see Russia as an alternative security provider, Austria has different reasons not to take a hard stance against Russia. Austria adopted a state of neutrality in 1955 so that the Soviet forces that had occupied the country since its defeat in World War 2 would withdraw from Austrian soil (Gady, 2014). In other words: the fact that the country vowed neutrality towards the Soviet Union brought Austria peace and *security*. This neutrality seems to be taken into consideration during Austria's reaction to the annexation of Crimea as well (Bloomberg, 2014) (Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014), and could be interpreted as a method to ensure Austria's *national security* in the long run by not provoking Russia.

Structural realist analysis – a summary

The most important points of structural realist theory's explanation for the reactions of EU countries to the Russian annexation of Crimea are as follows:

- The *relative capabilities* of EU nations seem to have influenced whether or not they supported the sanctions that the EU implemented against Russia. Countries with a high GDP and military expenditure mostly support the sanctions because they do not fear for repercussions potentially threatening their security. This support was less frequently present among countries with low relative capabilities.
- *Alignment to powerful nations* sometimes overruled relative capabilities, particularly for the Baltic countries, who were staunch proponents of sanctions against Russia despite being in the bottom 5 EU countries in terms of relative capabilities. Just like Poland and Romania, the three Baltic countries called on their NATO allies for military protection.
- Security concerns were mostly present among nations with close *geographical proximity* to Russia. In the case of the Baltic States, low relative capabilities likely also played a role. Countries that feared for their security generally also had the strongest reactions.

o   Cyprus and Greece were more favourable towards Russia in their reaction because Russia has been an *alternative security provider* for them. Austria tried to uphold its neutrality, possibly out of security considerations.

Commercial liberalism

In this section of the analysis the reactions of EU countries to the Russian annexation of Crimea will be analysed by asserting how they would be explained in the view of commercial liberalism. Table 3 is displayed on the next 3 pages of this document, showing the EU countries when they are ranked based on their economic interdependence with Russia and the labels of the re-occurring themes in the countries' reactions to the annexation. One column shows the share of Russian imports and exports in the total international trade and the other shows the percentage of Russian natural gas in the total natural gas imports. This data is from 2013, the year before the annexation.

EU Country	RU/foreign trade % 2013	Ru % gas imports 2013	Media	Research	Government
Lithuania	57.4%	100%	Strong reaction Security concerns	Strong reaction Security concerns Financial aid	Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions
Latvia	44.9%	100%	Strong reaction Dialogue both sides Security concerns	Security concerns Russian relationship Territorial integrity Financial aid Pro-sanctions	Security concerns Territorial integrity
Estonia	37.1%	100%	Security concerns Strong reaction	Security concerns Strong reaction Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution
Finland	35.4%	100%	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Human rights Russian relationship
Slovakia	32.1%	87%	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Opposes sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Russian relationship
Poland	30.7%	64%	Security concerns	Security concerns Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Territorial integrity	Security concerns Illegal referendum
Bulgaria	27.8%	96%	Dialogue both sides Reluctant to sanctions	Reluctant to sanctions Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity	Peaceful solution Territorial integrity
Hungary	22.7%	60%	Weak reaction Peaceful solution	Human rights Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution
Czech Republic	20.4%	90%	Illegal referendum Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity
Greece	17.9%	63%	Reluctant to sanctions Dialogue both sides Russian relationship	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity Weak reaction	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Dialogue both sides Human rights
Croatia	14.8%	36%	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Human rights

				Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions
Romania	13.1%	20%	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Security concerns Human rights Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Slovenia	11.8%	57%	Dialogue both sides Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Illegal referendum
Austria	10.3%	56%	Russian relationship Peaceful solution	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Peaceful solution Territorial integrity
Netherlands	10.2%	11%	Pro-sanctions	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Dialogue both sides	Pro-sanctions Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Germany	9.5%	43%	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions Financial aid
Italy	9.1%	22%	Illegal referendum Reluctant to sanctions	Weak reaction Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Russian relationship Dialogue both sides
Sweden	9.1%	0%	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Security concerns	Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions Russian relationship
Belgium	6.9%	41%	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides	Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Human rights Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Spain	5.4%	0%	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Weak reaction	Human rights Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
France	5.24%	21%	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Strong reaction Pro-sanctions Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Human rights Pro-sanctions
Denmark	4.8%	0%	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides	Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions Human rights
Portugal	4.2%	0%	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions	N/A

				Russian relationship Weak reaction Reluctant to sanctions	
Republic of Cyprus	3.8%	0%	Reluctant to sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Reluctant to sanctions
United Kingdom	2.7%	9%	Pro-sanctions	Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions
Luxembourg	2.3%	27%	Territorial integrity Financial aid	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Reluctant to sanctions
Malta	1.5%	0%	N/A	Peaceful solution Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Ireland	1.4%	0%	Human rights Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Reluctant to sanctions Financial aid Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions

Table 3: EU countries ranked by economic interdependence with Russia

Foreign trade – a source of stability?

The main premise of commercial liberalism is a relatively simple one: increased foreign trade between 2 or more nations precipitates a certain degree of economic interdependence, further instigating the countries involved to take economic relationships into consideration before implementing foreign policy measures that could potentially affect these relations (Shimko, 2010). When the economic well-being of one nation is dependent on its ties to another nation, conflict should become less likely, especially one of military nature. The EU has extensive economic relationships with Russia across many sectors (European Commission, 2018). As can be deduced from the table above, some EU countries are more economically interdependent with Russia than others; primarily eastern European countries have a high share of Russian imports and exports in their total foreign trade.

The fact that international economic relations played a substantial role in the EU's reaction to the annexation of Crimea is incontrovertible, as many of the subsequent sanctions were trade-related (EU Newsroom, 2019). The implications of the Ukraine crisis and the EU sanctions for the economy of various countries are discussed frequently and at length in the articles that were gathered for this analysis. The word 'economic' is present over 50 times in the data and is often used in contexts discussing trade relations between Russia and the country in question, as well as the potential damage the sanctions could inflict on these relations (for reference: all articles and their sources can be found in the appendix of this document). At the very least, this indicates that economic ties are being taken into consideration when discussing the appropriate measures to deal with the situation. Furthermore, the 'opposes sanctions' and 'Russian relationship' labels are more frequently found in the reactions of countries relatively economically interdependent with Russia; likely reflecting the desire to *protect their economy and foreign economic relations*.

The restrictive measures implemented by the EU after the annexation of Crimea were seen by many EU countries as a necessary retaliation to discourage Russia from continuing their military operations in Ukraine, but not all countries were supportive of them. In its explanation for the reactions to the annexation, commercial liberalism would likely point towards a group of countries where their considerable economic interdependence with Russia could have affected their response. Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Greece all have a relatively high economic interdependence with Russia (based on the data from 2013), and all criticized the EU sanctions in one form or another. Most of them also

stressed their desire of maintaining good diplomatic relationships with Russia, despite condemning the practices instigating the conflict in Ukraine.

Slovakia's prime minister opposed the sanctions unwaveringly and even referred to them as 'suicidal' (Forbrig, 2015). Slovak diplomats also allegedly attempted to prevent the Russian deputy prime minister from being affected by any sanctions (Euractiv, 2014). The Bulgarian government was reluctant towards the sanctions and opposed further restrictive measures, mostly because they would negatively affect Bulgaria (Forbrig, 2015). Hungary questioned the effectiveness of the sanctions and persisted on preserving economic relations with Russia (Forbrig, 2015). Similarly, Greece lobbied to withdraw sanctions and to solve the crisis through dialogue (Koval, 2017). The Czech Republic, although later acknowledging the necessity of the sanctions, initially opposed them (Bloomberg, 2014) and maintained that they should be abolished when possible (Forbrig, 2015). Commercial liberalists might argue that these countries oppose sanctions not just because they could harm their economy when the EU implements them, but also because they could provoke Russia into administering counter-sanctions, further deteriorating the economic relationship.

It needs to be addressed, however, that the 4 EU countries most economically interdependent with Russia all supported the restrictive measures. This will be discussed later in the commercial liberalist analysis of the reactions.

Natural gas – Russia's sway over Europe

The extensive economic relationship between the EU and Russia has been discussed previously, but in no sector is the EU as dependent on Russia as in the import of fossil fuels (European Commission, 2018), especially when it comes to natural gas, of which 41% came from Russia in 2013 (Eurostat, 2016). The Russian company Gazprom is the largest producer of natural gas in the world, owns more than 90% of the country's resources and has a monopoly on gas export from Russia (Mikulska, 2018). The abundance of natural gas in Russia and the fact that the EU depended on Russia for 41% of the imports of such an important natural resource means that *the EU and Russia are even more economically interdependent than can be seen by just looking at the Russian share of all EU imports and exports*.

The five countries mentioned in the previous paragraph that expressed reluctance and/or opposition towards restrictive measures and were adamant about preserving their relationship with Russia imported between 60% and 96% (with an average of about 80%) of their natural

gas from Russia in 2013. Even more interesting is looking at the countries that do not have a particularly high share of Russian imports and exports overall, but do import a large percentage of their natural gas from Russia. Some of these nations conveyed reluctance regarding the implementation of sanctions; which on the surface does not appear to be caused by economic concerns, but in light of the dependency on natural gas could still be a stance taken because of such considerations. Slovenia, for example, imported 57% of its gas from Russia and told the Russian prime minister in a meeting that it would be best if all sanctions were lifted (Požgan, 2015). Many Austrian politicians also opposed the EU sanctions (Gressel, 2015), and this could be caused by the fact that 56% of the country's gas imports came from Russia. Luxembourg is another interesting example. The Russian share in its total imports and exports was only 2.3%, but the country imported 27% of its gas from Russia, which is still quite a substantial amount. Maybe their reluctance towards the sanctions (Majerus, 2015) did originate in the desire to protect their own economy.

The country with the largest economy in the European Union, Germany, supported sanctions against Russia (Pond, 2015), but was still regarded by some scholars to be reluctant in their response to the annexation (Nitoiu, 2016). Germany is the largest EU importer of Russian gas in terms of absolute numbers (Girardi, 2018). As can be seen in the table above, 43% of all gas used in Germany came from Russia in 2013, and the country only seems to be increasing its reliance on Russian gas (Vaughan, 2019). Despite the presumption previously held by some that Germany would lead the restrictive measures against Russia as one of the most powerful EU nations, the country did not fully live up to those expectations (Nitoiu, 2016). *Looking at Germany's dependency on Russian gas, this could very well be out of caution not to damage the bilateral economic relations with Russia.* The UK, another EU powerhouse, was far less dependent on Russian gas and more proactive in its approach to the sanctions against Russia (Perraudin, 2015).

Top 4 economic partners – staunch defenders of sanctions

The four EU countries most economically interdependent with Russia (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland) all supported sanctions against Russia after the annexation (Forbrig, 2015) (Ponniah, 2017) in spite of their extensive trade relations and the fact that they rely on Russia for 100% of their natural gas. Perhaps the most damaging to the commercial liberalist assertion that economic interdependence leads to avoidance of conflict (Shimko, 2010) is that the Baltic States reacted very strongly to the annexation and called for increased military presence in their region. It could be argued that the Baltic States supported sanctions because

they thought they would force Russia to de-escalate the situation and, subsequently, EU-Russia trade could continue as usual. However, this would go against the argument that other countries that are economically interdependent with Russia *opposed* the sanctions because they wanted trade with Russia to continue as usual.

Commercial liberalist analysis – a summary

The key points of the commercial liberalist explanation of the reaction of EU nations to the Russian annexation of Crimea are the following.

- o Generally speaking, countries with a relatively high economic interdependence with Russia were more inclined to oppose (or show reluctance towards) the sanctions implemented by the EU than countries with a relatively low economic interdependence. The best examples of this were Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Greece.
- o Countries with high economic interdependence were also slightly more vocal about their desire to preserve their relationship with Russia.
- o Certain countries that do not have a particularly high share of Russian imports and exports are still partly dependent on Russia because they largely rely on the country for the supply of natural gas. This could have instigated their reluctance towards the sanctions. Examples of these countries are Slovenia, Austria and Luxembourg.
- o Germany, the most powerful EU country, supported sanctions but was less proactive in their efforts against Russia than expected by some. This could be because of their dependency on Russian gas, which has not decreased after the annexation.

What commercial liberalism would struggle to explain is the fact that the three EU countries with the highest economic interdependence (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) were arguably the most confrontational and rigid in their reaction to the annexation and fully supported economic sanctions against Russia. Finland and Poland also supported the sanctions despite their high economic interdependence.

Conventional constructivism

The third and final perspective from which the reactions of EU countries to the Russian annexation of Crimea will be analysed is conventional constructivism, aided by the data of the World Value Survey. Table 4 features the countries ranked by traditional vs. rational values and in table 5 they are ranked by survival vs. self-expressions values. The reason for ranking

the countries by each category in separate tables is to be able to discern more easily if certain aspects of a nation's cultural identity could have affected their reaction to the annexation.

EU Country	WVS Traditional/Rational	Media	Research	Government
Malta	-1.2	N/A	Peaceful solution Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Ireland	-0.7	Human rights Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Reluctant to sanctions Financial aid Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions
Poland	-0.6	Security concerns	Security concerns Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Territorial integrity	Security concerns Illegal referendum
Republic of Cyprus	-0.4	Reluctant to sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Reluctant to sanctions
Romania	-0.4	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Security concerns Human rights Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Portugal	-0.1	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Weak reaction Reluctant to sanctions	N/A
Croatia	0,0	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Peaceful solution Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Human rights Pro-sanctions
Greece	0,0	Reluctant to sanctions Dialogue both sides Russian relationship	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity Weak reaction	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Dialogue both sides Human rights
Italy	0.1	Illegal referendum Reluctant to sanctions	Weak reaction Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Russian relationship Dialogue both sides
United Kingdom	0.1	Pro-sanctions	Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions
Belgium	0.2	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Human rights Territorial integrity

		Dialogue both sides		Dialogue both sides
Slovakia	0.3	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Opposes sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Russian relationship
Luxembourg	0.4	Territorial integrity Financial aid	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Reluctant to sanctions
Spain	0.4	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Weak reaction	Human rights Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Austria	0.6	Russian relationship Peaceful solution	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Peaceful solution Territorial integrity
France	0.6	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Strong reaction Pro-sanctions Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Human rights Pro-sanctions
Hungary	0.6	Weak reaction Peaceful solution	Human rights Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution
Bulgaria	0.8	Dialogue both sides Reluctant to sanctions	Reluctant to sanctions Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity	Peaceful solution Territorial integrity
Latvia	0.9	Strong reaction Dialogue both sides Security concerns	Security concerns Russian relationship Territorial integrity Financial aid Pro-sanctions	Security concerns Territorial integrity
Slovenia	1,0	Dialogue both sides Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Illegal referendum
Czech Republic	1.1	Illegal referendum Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity
Denmark	1.1	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides	Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions Human rights
Germany	1.1	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution

				Pro-sanctions Financial aid
Lithuania	1.1	Strong reaction Security concerns	Strong reaction Security concerns Financial aid	Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions
Netherlands	1.1	Pro-sanctions	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Dialogue both sides	Pro-sanctions Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Finland	1.2	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Human rights Russian relationship
Estonia	1.3	Security concerns Strong reaction	Security concerns Strong reaction Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution
Sweden	1.7	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Security concerns	Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions Russian relationship

Table 4: EU countries ranked by World Value Survey traditional vs. rational values

EU Country	WVS Survival/ Self-expression	Media	Research	Government
Bulgaria	-1.4	Dialogue both sides Reluctant to sanctions	Reluctant to sanctions Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity	Peaceful solution Territorial integrity
Lithuania	-1.2	Strong reaction Security concerns	Strong reaction Security concerns Financial aid	Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions
Romania	-1,0	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Security concerns Human rights Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Latvia	-0.9	Strong reaction Dialogue both sides Security concerns	Security concerns Russian relationship Territorial integrity Financial aid Pro-sanctions	Security concerns Territorial integrity
Estonia	-0.8	Security concerns	Security concerns	Territorial integrity

Country	Value			
		Strong reaction	Strong reaction Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions	Peaceful solution
Hungary	-0.7	Weak reaction Peaceful solution	Human rights Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution
Republic of Cyprus	-0.4	Reluctant to sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Reluctant to sanctions
Croatia	-0.2	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Peaceful solution Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Human rights Pro-sanctions
Slovakia	-0.1	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Opposes sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Russian relationship
Czech Republic	0,0	Illegal referendum Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity
Portugal	0,0	Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Weak reaction Reluctant to sanctions	N/A
Greece	0.1	Reluctant to sanctions Dialogue both sides Russian relationship	Russian relationship Opposes sanctions Territorial integrity Weak reaction	Territorial integrity Illegal referendum Dialogue both sides Human rights
Poland	0.2	Security concerns	Security concerns Pro-sanctions Strong reaction Territorial integrity	Security concerns Illegal referendum
Slovenia	0.2	Dialogue both sides Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Illegal referendum
Spain	0.3	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Weak reaction	Human rights Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Italy	0.4	Illegal referendum Reluctant to sanctions	Weak reaction Russian relationship Reluctant to sanctions	Territorial integrity Russian relationship Dialogue both sides

Malta	0.4	N/A	Peaceful solution Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Austria	0.7	Russian relationship Peaceful solution	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Opposes sanctions	Russian relationship Peaceful solution Territorial integrity
Germany	0.7	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions Financial aid
France	1,0	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Strong reaction Pro-sanctions Dialogue both sides	Territorial integrity Human rights Pro-sanctions
Luxembourg	1,0	Territorial integrity Financial aid	Reluctant to sanctions Russian relationship Territorial integrity	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Reluctant to sanctions
Finland	1.2	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Russian relationship	Territorial integrity Human rights Russian relationship
Ireland	1.2	Human rights Territorial integrity	Pro-sanctions Reluctant to sanctions Financial aid Peaceful solution	Territorial integrity Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions
Belgium	1.3	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides	Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions	Human rights Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
Netherlands	1.3	Pro-sanctions	Pro-sanctions Russian relationship Dialogue both sides	Pro-sanctions Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides
United Kingdom	1.5	Pro-sanctions	Peaceful solution Pro-sanctions	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions
Denmark	2.2	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides	Pro-sanctions	Territorial integrity Dialogue both sides Pro-sanctions Human rights
Sweden	2.3	Illegal referendum Territorial integrity	Security concerns	Territorial integrity Pro-sanctions Russian relationship

Table 5: EU countries ranked by World Value Survey survival vs. self-expression values

Traditional vs. rational values – could they be of influence?

As explained earlier in this document, the scores of the World Value Survey are closely connected to what Ted Hopf describes as the identity of a country in his definition of conventional constructivism (Hopf, 1998), because they reflect the political, cultural and social circumstances and aspirations in a country (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). Table 4 shows that certain EU countries adhere to a somewhat traditional set of values, but rational, secular values prevail in the majority of EU nations. Even the countries in which relatively traditional values persist, they mostly do so in moderation; with the exception of Malta, Ireland and possibly Poland. A high score in traditional values indicates an importance of religion in society (sometimes even in politics), acceptance of authority and a high level of national pride (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). Rational/secular values represent the opposite of these viewpoints.

It does not seem unthinkable for a country with predominantly traditional values, and therefore nationalistic viewpoints, to be more sympathetic to the Russian point of view in this situation. After all, Russia justified the annexation of Crimea by stating the vast majority of the Crimean population is ethnically Russian (rather than Ukrainian), expressed the desire to be a part the Russian Federation and voted in favour of the annexation through the preceding referendum (Gardner, 2015). Strong feelings of national pride in one's own country could create some degree of understanding for the nationalistic feelings many Crimeans allegedly had towards Russia. On the other hand, it could also have caused a strong opposition towards Russia and disapproval of the country's actions because it violated the borders of a sovereign nation state. This could create sympathy for the Ukrainian side of the conflict.

Overall, it seems difficult to discern a correlation between countries' score on the traditional vs. rational values spectrum and their reaction to the annexation. The support, reluctance or opposition regarding the EU sanctions against Russia varied among countries on both ends of the spectrum. While it is true that Poland and Romania (both traditional) had a strong reaction to the annexation and fiercely opposed Russia, so did Lithuania and Estonia (both rational/secular). The 'Russian relationship' label is also scattered throughout the table. The explanation from the conventional constructivist point of view seems more likely to point towards the survival vs. self-expression values, which also form an important part of a country's identity. This will be elucidated in the following paragraph.

Survival vs. self-expression values – the importance of democracy and emancipation

Whereas a correlation between traditional vs. rational values and the reactions to the annexation was barely perceivable, this is not the case for survival vs. self-expression values. A high score in survival values indicates that the importance of economic and physical security are stressed in society and generally means there is a low tolerance towards people with different nationalities or sexual preference. Self-expression values prioritize tolerance, gender equality, environmental protection and involvement in decision making (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019).

It can be quickly observed when looking at table 5 that there is a much stronger support for the sanctions implemented by the EU among countries with a high score on self-expression values than those where survival values prevail (with some exceptions that will be discussed later). Subsequently there is relatively little reluctance or opposition regarding these sanctions among countries with high self-expression values. Russia itself has a score that is heavily leaning towards the side of survival values; a score of -1.3 (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). The fact that they are so far apart from many EU nations that were adamant in supporting the sanctions against them suggests that they have a fundamentally *different cultural identity, which could impede mutual understanding and general sense of connectedness.* This might have led to aspirations among EU countries with high self-expression values scores to implement more severe restrictive measures, because they already feel more animosity towards a country that has profoundly different views on minority rights, gender equality and democracy. Perhaps the fact that survival vs. self-expression values (table 5) appear to have a more significant correlation to the reactions than traditional vs. rational values (table 4) is caused by the nature of these values and their importance in international relations. Traditional and rational values primarily involve religion and family values, while self-expression values cover emancipative values that give rise to human empowerment and, ultimately, democratic aspirations (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). The latter possibly holds greater sway over the perceived behaviour in the international community of one state towards another.

Democratic values could be of particularly high significance in this case, because the survival vs. self-expression score also reflects people's perception of politics and what the system should look like (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). It is only when one's physical and economic well-being are guaranteed that self-expression values become important. These self-expression values in turn give rise to the perceived importance of involvement in decision-

making and thereby the establishment of democratic institutions in society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). In other words; democracy is held in higher regard in countries with a high self-expression score. It is no secret that Russia, even though officially being a democracy, is under the rule of an authoritarian regime (Nitoiu, 2016). The country also behaved undemocratically in the eyes of the EU, as the annexation was deemed illegal and the preceding referendum illegitimate (EEAS, 2017). Countries where self-expression values, and therefore democratic values, are deemed important may have *a stronger condemnation for an authoritarian regime making undemocratic decision at international level, and thus want harsher restrictive counter-measures.*

In countries like Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Cyprus, Hungary and especially Bulgaria, self-expression values are not held in high regard. This means that, at least in some respects, they are less far apart from Russia in terms of identity than EU nations that do have high scores on self-expression values. This could have contributed to their reluctance and/or opposition towards the sanctions against Russia.

Identity vs. wealth

While there seems to be a correlation between country identity (in the form of survival vs. self-expression value scores) and whether or not countries supported sanctions against Russia, it remains important to note that countries with high scores on survival values are also generally the countries with less economic wealth (World Bank, 2019). The research of the World Value Survey showed that economic wealth is often a prerequisite for a country to develop self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2019). Thus the question remains; has one of these two factors been more influential in the reactions to the annexation?

It has been mentioned earlier that there are a few exceptions to the apparent correlation between value scores and type of reaction. The most notable ones are, just like when looking at economic interdependence, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Poland. Despite their scores leaning more towards survival values like Russia (especially the Baltic States and Romania), their words and actions exhibited fierce condemnation regarding the annexation, calling for military support and harsh restrictive measures (Forbrig, 2015). This goes against the previously made argument that resemblance in identity, democratic aspirations (or lack thereof) and other cultural values could create mutual understanding and possibly a lenient reaction.

Conventional constructivist analysis – a summary

The following points were central to the explanation of the reactions of EU nations to the Russian annexation of Crimea when looked at from the perspective of conventional constructivism.

- o Most countries with a high score on self-expression values supported restrictive measures against Russia; a sentiment possibly finding its roots in the substantial differences in identity and fundamental values, which could hinder mutual understanding and diminish sympathy for the other party's standpoint and thereby lead to a harsher reaction.

- o Conversely, many countries with a high score in survival values expressed reluctance or even opposition towards the sanctions, possible caused by their closeness to Russia in parts of their identity.

- o One of the most important elements of survival and self-expression values that might have affected the reactions to the annexation is the degree to which each country values democracy, a trait mostly found in countries with a high score in self-expression values. The decision to annex Crimea was made in an undemocratic way by an authoritarian regime, creating more adversity from nations that hold democratic values in high regard.

What these arguments related to the conventional constructivist definition of identity fail to elucidate is the fact that Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Poland were among the most outspoken supporters of the sanctions against Russia and reacted strongly against their actions in Crimea, despite being relatively close to Russia in their values.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to determine how three prominent IR theories would explain the reactions of EU nations to the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and to assess which of the three theories would be most accurate in its explanations. Hence, the problem formulation was contrived in the subsequent manner;

Which of the following three prominent IR theories (structural realism, commercial liberalism or conventional constructivism) would be most accurate in explaining the reactions of each EU country to the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea?

In order to answer this problem formulation, data related to the core premise(s) of each theory was gathered and used in the analysis of articles regarding the reactions of each EU nation to the annexation. Re-occurring themes were identified in media articles, research articles and official government statements. The perspective of each theory was then taken into account in the analysis of the articles and the re-occurring themes.

Regarding the significance of the themes

The labels created for the identified re-occurring themes helped to quickly discern differences in the reactions when all EU countries were ranked based on data relevant to the core ideas of the three prominent IR theories in question. It became clear during the analysis that certain labels marked a more significant distinction in the reactions than others. Many themes were found among almost all countries of varying relative capabilities, economic interdependence and cultural identity. This likely has to do with the collective EU standpoint of not recognizing the legitimacy of the referendum held in Crimea, considering the annexation to be illegal under international law and supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine (EEAS, 2017). The themes through which the EU countries particularly distinguished themselves in their reaction were the support, reluctance or opposition towards sanctions, security concerns, strong reaction, weak reaction and, to some extent, Russian relationship. Primarily based on these themes correlations were found between the reactions and data related to the core ideas of the theories.

The explanation of each theory

Structural realism would likely point out:

- o Countries with high relative capabilities (GDP and military force), mostly supported sanctions because they do not fear military retaliation or countersanctions from Russia. Countries with low relative capabilities were often reluctant towards sanctions because they fear (military) countermeasures that could result in loss of autonomy.
- o The occurrences of countries with low relative capabilities nevertheless supporting sanctions and fiercely speaking out against Russia (mainly the Baltic States) can be explained by their alignment to stronger states and NATO.
- o Security concerns among countries (Baltic States, Romania, Poland and Sweden) often provoked a strong reaction and were caused by geographical proximity to Russia and in some cases amplified by low relative capabilities.

- o Cyprus and Greece favoured a more lenient approach towards Russia because the country has been an alternative security provider to them in the past.

Commercial liberalism would focus on:

- o Countries that were most economically interdependent with Russia were often more inclined to oppose (or be reluctant towards) sanctions against Russia, because they wanted to protect their economy and preserve relationships with an important economic partner (primarily Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Greece.)
- o Some countries did not seem very economically interdependent with Russia by looking at their total imports and exports, but still greatly relied on Russia for their supply of gas. This could also have caused reluctance towards the sanctions in the case of Slovenia, Austria and Luxembourg.
- o Germany supported sanctions, but being the economic powerhouse of the EU, many expected the country to be more pro-active. Germany's reliance on Russian gas has only increased and large deals were made with Gazprom despite sanctions.

Conventional constructivism might emphasize:

- o Countries prioritizing self-expression values mostly supported restrictive measures, because they are distant from Russia in important aspects of their identity (level of tolerance, equality, importance of democracy etc.), which impedes mutual understanding and sympathy for Russia's viewpoints.
- o Especially democratic aspirations (or lack thereof) could have affected the reactions, as the annexation was carried out by an authoritarian government without the consent of any other country, which seemed to have angered countries with high self-expression values more than those prioritizing survival values.
- o Many countries whose identity was relatively close to Russia (at least in self-expression values) were reluctant regarding sanctions, like Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Cyprus, Hungary and Bulgaria.

The verdict

After analysing the reactions from the perspectives of all three theories and taking their different arguments into consideration, structural realism would arguably have the most accurate explanation, because of its convincing arguments and proper clarification for the

irregularities in countries' reactions. Before elucidating this further, I will discuss why commercial liberalism and conventional constructivism did not quite seem to make the cut in this specific situation.

Commercial liberalism

Commercial liberalism seemed convincing in the sense that there was an apparent correlation between economic interdependence and whether or not the countries supported sanctions, but threatening to its argument is that some countries very highly economically interdependent with Russia; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Poland, supported the restrictive measures. Reluctance and opposition to the sanctions was significantly less common among countries with a low economic interdependence with Russia, but there were also countries that expressed reluctance towards restrictive measures despite having a very low economic interdependence, like Portugal and Ireland. The fact that the 4 *most highly* economically interdependent countries staunchly supported sanctions and that the Baltic States, Finland and Poland strongly spoke out against Russia, suggests that the desire to preserve economic relationships was not the foremost determining factor in shaping their reaction to the annexation.

Conventional constructivism

The analysis from the viewpoint of conventional constructivism did seem to reveal that country identity when it comes to survival vs. self-expression values could have affected the reactions. However, some EU countries mostly resembling Russia in terms of ethnocentrism, tolerance, gender equality and democratic aspirations (all related to survival/self-expression values), still reacted very harshly, even more so than countries whose identity is much further apart from Russia. Examples are the Baltic States, Romania and Poland. Furthermore, countries prioritizing survival values (just like Russia), are also generally countries with low relative capabilities. This raises the question which of the two factors was more influential in the reaction of, for example, the 5 aforementioned countries. While conventional constructivism seemingly struggles to provide clarification, structural realism has no trouble in doing so, as will be made apparent.

Structural realism

The analysis of the reactions from structural realist point of view revealed that countries with high relative capabilities (economic wealth and military power) were more inclined to support sanctions against Russia than those with low relative capabilities, because they *have the*

power to deter possible retaliations. Notable exceptions to this principle can be explained by structural realist arguments.

To explain its reluctance towards sanctions, Italy cited their fear of Russia turning eastward (possibly to China) instead of to Europe, *which could alter the power balance in the world.* Italy possibly assumed this position because of the country's perceived importance of the strategic partnership with Russia (Tocci, 2014). Austria opposed sanctions and is historically a country that upholds neutrality in conflicts between other nations, likely *out of security considerations;* unlike many EU countries, Austria is not a member of NATO (NATO, 2018). Romania, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have low relative capabilities, but supported the sanctions because their *alignment to powerful nations* allowed them to do so. The four countries, all close to Russia and Ukraine, felt threatened and called on their NATO allies to increase military presence in their region, which was done quickly.

The strongest reactions often came from countries that were significantly concerned for their security, like the Baltic States, Romania and Poland. Security concerns were even explicitly cited as being the reason for the strong nature of their reaction. These concerns were clearly explainable by either low relative capabilities and/or geographical proximity to Russia. Countries with a weak reaction, like Portugal, Italy and Spain, are very distant from Russia and might have felt less threatened.

Cyprus and Greece expressed opposition and reluctance towards the sanctions, which can be explained by the fact that *Russia is seen by them as an alternative security provider.* This is caused by a situation in recent history during which NATO was unable to resolve their conflict with Turkey, while Russia was able to protect their interests.

Factors related to structural realist assertions seem to have been most influential in the reactions of EU countries to the Russian annexation of Crimea. The countries with the strongest or most unexpected reactions were often the same ones when looking at the reactions from the three different perspectives. Structural realism, however, was the theory that provided a clear, convincing clarification for these reactions. This does not mean that commercial liberalism and conventional constructivism are invalid theories, but it does indicate that structural realism was more accurate in explaining the reactions of EU countries to the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea.

Reflection on methodology

The methods used for this research were tailored to effectively answer the problem formulation and determine which of the three IR theories in question would provide the most accurate explanation for the reactions of EU countries to the annexation. I am quite content with the fact that I retained my initial problem formulation and actually made an assessment regarding which theory would be the most accurate in its explanations, rather than just exploring how each theory would explain the reactions. During previous research projects I was sometimes told in the form of constructive criticism that I could have been a little bolder in my statements and judgements instead of just following the 'safe' path of explorative research. This time I wanted to challenge myself and felt sufficiently confident in my judgement to go a step further.

I would generally reflect positively on the methods used to answer the problem formulation. Gathering data from different types of sources (news media, scholarly articles and official government statements) ensured a comprehensive picture of the reactions of each EU country viewed from different perspectives. The factors by which all countries were ranked during the analysis are closely related to the core ideas of the IR theories. Nevertheless, making alterations to certain aspects of the methodology could potentially have generated an even better outcome.

The main point of improvement that springs to mind would be adding more relevant factors and taking them into consideration during the analysis. For example; when determining the degree of economic interdependence with Russia for the commercial liberalist analysis, it could be interesting to include the amount of foreign investments of Russian banks or companies in the EU country in question and vice versa. When looking at the reactions from a conventional constructivist point of view, more measurable factors related to country identity and culture could be added; perhaps the cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede, or maybe the ethno linguistic composition of each country's population. It is possible that taking additional factors in consideration could give a more accurate picture of how each theory would explain the reactions to the annexation.

Another thing that would potentially improve the research is to gather writings regarding each specific theory in question from many different IR scholars and then compare them to create a good picture consisting of divergent scholarly views. This could help to obtain a more thorough understanding of what the theories actually entail. However, I made sure I selected

and studied the articles of respected scholars in the field of IR to avoid potential misinformation and ensure the reliability of the source. Despite some potential alterations that could be made, I think my choices with regards to theories, methods and data sources enabled me to construct a valid research in the field of IR to the best of my abilities.

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Appendix (all gathered articles)

Austria

Bloomberg Crimea coverage

Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann has said his country favors a peaceful solution that supports international law. "Austria has always maintained civil ties with both Russia and Ukraine," Faymann said March 4. "We have always been keen to underscore these ties, also in the EU, within a framework of our approach as Austrians of de-escalation."

Source: (Bloomberg News Reporting, 2014)

European Council of Foreign Relations – expert paper

Austria is no exception to this new club of Russlandversteher in Central Europe. Vienna was very sceptical of sectorial sanctions on Russia for fear of economic repercussions, and Austria was the first state after the annexation of Crimea to host Putin as an official guest. The warm reception he received as well as the signing of the contract to build the Austrian strand of South Stream showed that Russia will use economic and political vulnerabilities to try and subvert any common European policy. This visit was very controversial in Austria, but there are still many people who promote the lifting of sanctions on Russia at the earliest possible opportunity. In December, the foreign minister ruled out further sanctions, despite the fact that Germany wanted to leave all options on the table to increase pressure on Moscow.

Although many Austrians would favour a tougher line on Russia, politically they are neither strong nor united. Only one minor liberal party has adopted a firm pro-European position on Ukraine which has gone largely unnoticed in the political discourse. Foreign and European policy is not a defining aspect of people's political or ideological affiliation. This is why pro-European, liberal or pro-Western

forces can be found in all political parties (with the exception of the Freedom Party) and in all media and civil-society groups. But they do not join forces to push for a different political agenda.

Source: (Gressel, 2015)

Austria foreign and European policy report

Against the background of the crises in the South and East of Europe, and in particular the Ukraine-Russia conflict, it has again become very evident how important EU membership is for Austria's safety, security and prosperity. Despite existing internal differences of opinion, the EU succeeded in mediating between the parties to the conflict and in developing a united response with respect to the illegal annexation of the Crimea and to the violent separatist movements in the East and the South East of Ukraine. Notwithstanding its clear rejection of the actions taken by Russia, Austria has always supported an approach that does not force our neighbours in Eastern Europe and in the South Caucasus to opt for "either Europe or Russia". We rather advocate a policy of "as well as", providing these countries with the opportunity of rapprochement with the EU while at the same time maintaining sustainable relations with Russia. In this spirit, we also contribute actively to the reform of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which should be in a position to react in a more flexible and effective manner to the different needs and challenges in our immediate neighbourhood. Europe quite rightly does not want to – and indeed must not – turn a blind eye to such developments. And I am very gratified that right from the outset, Europe made it very clear that there must not be a military answer to this conflict, that a political solution must be sought.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sebastian Kurz: We cannot accept that international law is broken and that recognized borders are challenged in Europe once again. At the same time, we need to find a political solution reaching beyond a mere ceasefire. We need a solution offering a perspective for a free, stable and united Ukraine, a Ukraine, which enjoys strong economic ties with both the European Union and the Russian Federation. Let us not return to Cold-war-thinking where two blocs face each other. Our political guideline must be to move from a policy of "either Europe or Russia" to a logic of "both, Europe and Russia".

Source: (Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Belgium

Flanders News article

Belgium has condemned Russia's recognition of Crimea as an independent state. Belgium has also voiced disapproval of the signing by Russian President Vladimir Putin of a treaty to annex the Ukrainian peninsula. Writing in a press release Mr Reynders says that he regrets Russia's decision that comes in spite of calls from the EU not to deepen the crisis and maintain a dialogue between all the parties involved. Belgium does recognise the right of all peoples to decide their own fate, but Mr Reynders is keen to point out the 16 March referendum was not the result of negotiations. Belgium says the referendum was organised 'hastily and under pressure and without the consent of the government of Ukraine' and adds that this is the reason why the international community has unanimously declared the referendum unconstitutional and illegal. Mr Reynders adds that there has been a manifest violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine by the Russian federation. The Belgian Foreign Minister also launches an appeal to common sense adding that the

aim of the international community is a political solution negotiated between all parties involved and with full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and international law.

Source: (Flanders News, 2014)

EU-28 Watch report

Belgium has unanimously condemned Russia for its interference in the Ukrainian crisis. Overall, it supports a common line oriented towards more political solutions and mutual dialogue between the Ukrainian peoples and, indirectly, between Europe and Russia. In general, the Belgian political landscape tends to be rather unified on international issues and, regarding events in Ukraine, all the major parties have accepted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' line of incremental sanctions as negotiated at the EU level. Within the parliament, different points of view were nonetheless raised on the possibility of adopting economic sanctions towards Russia. While it is globally accepted that sanctions should be careful enough not to lead to a backfiring on Ukrainian citizens' and Europe's interests, both the N-VA (Flemish nationalists) and the Open-VLD (Flemish liberals) expressed their willingness to adopt strong sanctions. This was also the position of Green parties, although to a lesser extent.

Source: (Jadot, 2014)

Statement by Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The situation in Ukraine reminds us of the fragility of the existence of fundamental values such as protection of the Human Rights, the Rule of Law, the freedom of expression and opinion, the territorial integrity… and the need to reaffirm our strong commitment to protect them. It is of utmost importance to start a new dialogue in Ukraïne, to decentralize the State and to support structural reforms. We want Russia to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine. We will keep insisting on this essential principle. On the other hand, Russia remains an important partner and we think it is important to keep the dialogue open. In the longer run we should review the relationship between the EU and Russia independently from the present sanctions and visit together questions like human rights, trade relations, energy cooperation, and so on. In this respect, a coordination between the different European institutions (OSCE, EU, Council of Europe) is very needed. We need to speak with one (firm) voice if we want to succeed.

Source: (Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017)

Bulgaria

Bloomberg Crimea coverage

Bulgaria as a Black Sea state has a lot to lose if the region is destabilized, Prime Minister Plamen Oresharski said on March 10, urging to seek solutions to the Ukraine crisis through dialogue between all sides involved. "If the European Commission decides to use sanctions as leverage in the negotiations, they should not be at the expense of member states," he said.

Source: (Bloomberg News Reporting, 2014)

Report by the German Marshall Fund of the United States

Two elements describe Bulgaria's position on the crisis in Ukraine and Russia's actions there. The first is loyalty to the EU, the United States, and NATO, which trumps any domestic opposition or energy

dependence on Russia, and makes it hard to imagine a government going against its Euroatlantic allies. The second is that there would be relief in Bulgaria if the tensions between the West and Russia eased and no longer fuelled political rifts or endangered energy supplies and economic relations. Bulgaria has stood with its EU and U.S. allies in condemning the annexation of Crimea and joining the sanctions against Russia. At the same time, its reaction toward this crisis has been shaped by internal political dynamics. This has happened in two distinct stages that cover the periods until mid-2014 and since then, with a new government coming to power.

The government was torn, however, between obligations to the EU and domestic political and economic considerations. In March 2014, during a Russian media interview and in a meeting with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, Oresharski stated that Bulgaria opposed further sanctions against Russia. Foreign Minister Vigenin clarified in an interview that the government wanted to avoid further sanctions because they would harm Bulgaria and would not be effective; he also pointed to other reluctant EU members. In the end, though, Bulgaria did not veto the sanctions and joined the EU's actions without reservations.

The shift toward a more assertive stance came with the appointment of a caretaker government by President Plevneliev on August 6, 2014, and with the formation of a new government following the October elections. Under the caretaker government, the Ministry of Defense prepared a "Vision 2020" document ahead of the NATO Wales Summit in September 2014 that best demonstrated the turn. This document outlined the external threats to Bulgaria's security and stated that "[t]he unlawful annexation of Crimea by Russia. There was solidarity with Ukraine among the public and politicians since the EuroMaidan events coincided with year-long protests in Bulgaria against the government of Plamen Oresharski. Ukraine became the most serious threat to peace and security in Europe after WWII."1

Source: (Forbrig, 2015)

Press statement by the Bulgarian Head of State

Regarding the development of the situation in Ukraine the Press Secretariat of the Head of State is authorized to disseminate the following position of the President: The President of Bulgaria Rosen Plevneliev is following with concern the development of the situation in Ukraine after Russia's Upper House of Parliament adopted a decree which allows the usage of Russian armed forces in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The Head of State has said more than once that the only lasting solution may be achieved by peaceful means and if the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine is guaranteed. The usage of military force to occupy foreign territories is violation of the rules of international law. The President calls on the UN Security Council and the countries-guarantors of the security in Ukraine, in compliance with the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, to ensure a peaceful solution to the problem and to avoid a further escalation of the tension. In May 2014 presidential elections are due to be held in Ukraine. The people of Ukraine should alone decide what their future should be in a democratic way. If necessary, the President will convene the Consultative Council for National Security.

Source: (Press Secretariat of the Head of State of Bulgaria, 2014)

Croatia

Bloomberg Crimea coverage

Croatia's Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic was cited by the HINA news service on March 6 as calling Russia's steps "a territorial aggression" against Ukraine. "The situation on the ground is such that it doesn't offer much optimism about the future of Crimea," Milanovic was cited as saying.

Source: (Bloomberg News Reporting, 2014)

EU-28 Watch report

Since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, political relations between Croatia and Russia have grown more aloof. Aggressive Russian politics in its neighbourhood and the strengthening of its authoritarian rule at home only increased distrust. Croatia, as a member of the EU and NATO, criticized the annexation of Crimea and joined sanctions against Russia. Yet, at the same time, there were attempts to strengthen economic relations. Russia is Croatia's 8th largest export and the 6th largest import market. Oil products comprise 94 % of imports, creating an overall trade deficit for Croatia. Russian foreign direct investment in Croatia is small, with €93 million being invested between 1995 and 2014, mostly in gas stations, tourism and the banking sector. Sanctions against Russia particularly affected Croatian citrus fruit exports, entitling them for compensation from the EU.

Croatia condemned the violence in Ukraine and urged all parties to find a peaceful political solution for the self-proclaimed breakaway republics of Donbas and Lugansk. The strong position supporting territorial integrity of Ukraine has often been quoted in the media, drawing parallels with experiences of Croatia's Homeland War 1991-1995, when the country faced similar challenges. Croatian media debated the situation in Ukraine from both pro-Western and pro-Russian perspective. In February 2015 Professor Vlatko Cvrtila from the Vern University stated for the daily Slobodna Dalmacija that it is difficult to change the situation on the ground because the West is not prepared to enter into a military conflict with Russia.

Source: (Šabić, 2015)

Statements from Croatia's Ministry of Foreign affairs

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs fully supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and considers the organisation of the referendum on Crimean territory directed at disrupting Ukraine's territorial integrity and the secession of parts of its territory illegitimate. The Republic of Croatia calls for defusing the conflict, with full respect for all norms of international law, the UN Charter, the Helsinki Accords and the treaties signed. Members of all ethnic groups in Crimea should be provided full protection of their civil and minority rights, without bringing into question Ukraine's territorial integrity. As a member of the EU, Croatia considers Ukraine a place of cooperation founded on European values as well as a place where it is possible to further develop the partner relations between the EU and the Russian Federation.

Source: (Croatia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Asked to comment on the sanctions, the minister said: "Whether they are too mild will be seen once they come into effect. Some of them are automatic, so to speak, and occur naturally in situations like these, such as the ruble's devaluation and the crash of the Moscow stock exchange. This is an unwelcome step backwards for Europe. No one wants to head in that direction and all of us wish a

compromise could be reached." "Croatia's position has always been that Ukraine should be a place where cooperation between Croatia and the EU would be strengthened, a zone where free trade and the EU would overlap, which is good for both Ukraine and Russia. Right now the situation has taken a turn for the worse and these prospects have become obscured, but we have to find a way to make this happen.

Source: (Croatia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Cyprus

The Guardian – news article

It is notoriously difficult to secure EU agreement on sanctions anywhere because they require unanimity from the 28 member states. There were wide differences over the numbers of Russians and Crimeans to be punished, with countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Spain reluctant to penalise Moscow for fear of closing down channels of dialogue. The 21 named were on an original list that ran to about 120 people.

Source: (MacAskill, 2014)

EU-28 Watch report

Greek Cypriots have long regarded Moscow as the principal protector of their country's rights, primarily in the United Nations Security Council (followed by France and China), and a solid and consistent economic partner in various fields, including trade, banking and tourism. Hence, following the Crimea crisis, most political formations – except DISY – kept voicing their sensitivity regarding Cyprus's relations with Moscow, while acknowledging that, strictly or formally, President Putin's bold initiative did not un-problematically conform to international law. President Anastasiades asked from the outset that, should EU sanctions against Russian interests hurt Cyprus's sui generis relations with Russia, compensatory measures should be extended by the EU to Cyprus. To be sure, some Nicosia columnists supported President Putin openly, while identical voices were heard in Cypriot civil society. For them, such violent "Western" rhetoric against Russia's decisions has never been applied to Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus nor any serious sanctions applied against Ankara for decades. In any case, the political elite concentrated on the need to protect at all costs the country's material interests and the religious, historical, cultural and friendly bonds with the Russian people. In turn, Russian Ambassador in Nicosia, Stanislav V. Osadchyi, has stated repeatedly that Moscow recognizes the inevitability of Cyprus's siding with its EU partners.

Source: (Athanasiadou, 2014)

Statement from Cyprus Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides expressed on Monday Cyprus' position in favour of the sovereignty of Ukraine, and reiterated the need to achieve a political solution to the Ukrainian crisis, following a realistic approach. In his intervention, at the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Kasoulides supported the deployment of OSCE observers to Ukraine and underlined that diplomatic efforts must focus on averting escalation of the crisis in the regions of Western and Southern Ukraine. Kasoulides stressed that there must be a series of actions towards the government of Kiev. The Ukrainian government must adopt a series of good will measures towards the Russian speaking population of the country, including the respect of linguistic rights, and to firmly address extremist

and Nazi groups and their uncontrolled behavior. Our recommendation to Ukraine, he added, is for the country, in parallel with the financial support from the EU, to undergo extended reforms with a view to fight corruption. He noted that this is vital in order to secure the support of the Ukrainian people in the effort of the country to achieve fiscal consolidation. As regards sanctions adopted by the Council, Kasoulides underlined that in order to achieve unanimity Cyprus accepts the suggested measures. At the same time he stressed that Cyprus is against measures which will be "punitive for us and our economies". He said that in the event of any possible measures that will hit the economics of member states as Cyprus, President of the Republic Nicos Anastasiades will ask for countermeasures, in order for Cyprus to endorse them.

Source: (Cyprus Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Czech Republic

Bloomberg Crimea coverage

Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka has urged Russia to follow international treaties and said the referendum on Crimea's status violates Ukrainian laws and isn't legitimate. Prague was invaded by Soviet troops in 1968. "Russia is the one that violates the international law. At the same time, we don't belong to countries that would harass Russia with the threat of economic sanctions," Sobotka told Czech TV channel CT24 on March 9.

Source: (Bloomberg News Reporting, 2014)

Report by the German Marshall Fund of the United States

The Ukrainian crisis is without a doubt the most substantial of the external shocks that have influenced relations between the Czech Republic and Russia. And yet, unlike in Poland and the Baltic countries, even this most serious breach of European security order has not led to the defeat of the Russia-friendly orientation among parts of the political elites. On the contrary, the battle over the "true" interpretation of what to expect from Russia is more intense today than ever. In this sense, the public debates in the Czech Republic resemble more closely the situation in France or Germany than the negative consensus on Russia in the "northern tier" of post-communist countries.

While the right-wing government (in power until July 2013) stressed transatlantic ties and exhibited a rather Euroskeptic attitude, the current government aims at steering the country back into the mainstream of EU policymaking. As a consequence, foreign policy has changed in a number of areas. This has affected not only the Czech approach to EU internal issues (such as the ratification of the long-criticized Fiscal Compact), but also the policy toward other regions. The previously pronounced criticism of China, Cuba, and some other countries receded into the background and the country's strong pro-Israeli position was changed to a more balanced approach. The same change has also influenced the position of the Foreign Ministry (the main bulwark of the multilateralist approach) toward Russia and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The official line of the ministry is that the sanctions were an unfortunate but necessary answer to the Russian aggression and that the EU should ultimately strive for their removal and the restoration of normal relations with Russia, with the necessary prerequisite being the compliance by Russia with international law and the removal of Russian soldiers and weapons from Eastern Ukraine. Hence, the position of Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek is probably the closest among Czech policymakers to the position advocated by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel or the president of the European Council, Donald Tusk.

Source: (Forbrig, 2015)

Statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

The Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek led the Czech delegation in an extraordinary meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 3 March 2014 in Brussels. The reason for this gathering was a Russian action against Ukraine and latest incidents in Crimea. The Ministers called the steps executed by the Russian Federation as an act of aggression and appealed for an immediate termination of military actions. Recent development in Ukraine and unprecedented involvement of Russia in Crimea brought together the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the EU member states to the extraordinary meeting in Brussels. During the meeting the Czech Republic demanded from the EU to send a clear signal to Russia that such behaviour is unacceptable. "A sneaky occupation of Crimea must come to an end," the head of the Czech diplomacy said before the meeting. The Foreign Affairs Ministers strictly condemned Russian progress in Crimea and called it "the act of aggression" against a sovereign country. They requested Russia to immediately withdraw the units and to abide international commitments including the Budapest Memorandum in which Russia, together with the USA and Great Britain, guarantees territorial integrity of Ukraine. "Unless the situation de-escalates in a short time, we will decide to interrupt a visa liberalization dialogue between the EU and Russia and agreements about cooperation. And there is still a possibility of sanctions on the table." Minister Zaorálek stated after the meeting of the EU's 28. He also refered to an OSCE monitoring mission which should contribute to a diplomatic solution of the situation. If Russia will not allow that, "The EU will send its own monitoring mission," the Minister outlined next possible steps. "Borders of the sovereign country were violated and it happened through the means of a military force which is absolutely unacceptable. That is why we labeled the Russian progress as the act of aggression," the Czech Minister pointed out. That the situation is urgent is also apparent from the calling an extraordinary summit of EU heads of state or government, who are going to meet in Brussels on Thursday 6 March to discuss the Crimea situation.

Source: (The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Denmark

Danmark's Radio news article (translated from Danish)

Russia has invaded Ukraine. This is what the Danish Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard says after the recent escalation of the conflict between the two neighboring countries to the east. It's an invasion - at least in part. Already, 15,000 Russian troops were on the Crimean Peninsula because the whole of Russia's Black Sea fleet is there. But there are 6,000 more and more than that. So de facto, Crimea is now wholly or partly occupied or controlled by Russian troops, says Martin Lidegaard to DR News. Most recently, Ukraine has convened all the army reserves as well as closed the military airspace over Ukraine, and the situation between the two countries is at the point of failure of an armed conflict, assesses several experts against DR News. Early Sunday morning, Russian military personnel confiscated pistols, rifles and ammunition from a Ukrainian naval base and a radar station on the Crimean Peninsula. On Saturday, Russian President Putin was given a green light from Parliament's upper house to deploy troops in Ukraine. Putin's request came paradoxically several hours after Russian troops had taken several military strategic positions on the Ukrainian peninsula - including the regional Ukrainian parliament in Crimea and two airports. - You assume on the Russian side that

you want to protect the Russian minority in the Crimean peninsula. But it is a completely unacceptable way to do this after our conviction, says Martin Lidegaard.

How should NATO and Denmark react to a European country being invaded? This is the question that many countries - including Denmark - ask themselves. I can safely say that diplomacy is white-hot these hours, says Martin Lidegaard. The balance we are trying to hit is: on the one hand, to make it clear to Russia that the violation of Ukraine's integrity is unacceptable, and it is condemned in every way possible. And that it will be rolled back. "But we must also make an effort to get them to the negotiating table, as it is only a negotiated solution that can solve this problem," the Foreign Minister said.

Source: (NIELSEN, 2014)

EU-28 Watch report

Russia's recent aggressive actions towards Ukraine are of an unprecedented nature and scope in Europe since the end of the Cold War. Russia's role in solving the Ukraine conflict should, therefore, remain decisive for the EU's relations with Russia in the foreseeable future. If Russia plays a constructive role in achieving an acceptable solution to the Ukraine conflict, there is basis for re-establishing EU-Russia relations with a view to promoting mutual political and economic interests. Denmark wishes to follow the EU line when it comes to relations to Russia and is fully behind the common EU measures regarding Russia concerning its destabilizing measures towards Ukraine. However, Denmark still seeks to balance pragmatic national interests (especially strong Danish interests in sustaining the Danish-Russian cooperation in the Artic) while then not diverting from the EU track. Denmark has supported all rounds of sanctions early but not been a driving force in the process. Generally, the overall effect of sanctions on Danish GNP is very limited. However, there are certain sectors which are affected to a large extent, especially the food sector following the Russian food embargo. This is especially the Danish meat (pig) production.

The dramatic events in Ukraine during the last year and a half (Maidan, Crimea, and conflict in Eastern Ukraine) have created instability, insecurity, armed conflict and challenged the European Security System – but have also led to an intensified and deeper engagement and cooperation with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in particular. Denmark has continuously supported the EU sanctions imposed on Russia and expressed its full support of the Minsk process.

Source: (Nissen, 2015)

Statement from Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

EU's Foreign Ministers have just ended their meeting in Brussels on the current situation in Ukraine. The Foreign Affairs Council conclusions are available on the webpage of the Council of the European Union. Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Martin Lidegaard will brief the Foreign Affairs Council ("Udenrigspolitisk Nævn") on the situation in Ukraine tomorrow morning, Tuesday the 4th of March 2014. After the EU meeting in Brussels the Minister for Foreign Affairs states: "I am satisfied with the fact that a unified European Union strongly condemns Russia's actions on Crimea. This behaviour is in clear breach of international law and the UN Charter, and we call on Russia to immediately withdraw its armed forces to the areas of their permanent stationing. Russia must engage in real negotiations and respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. The current situation is alarming and deeply worrying but it is still possible to avoid an armed conflict in the middle of Europe. All parties

must contribute to the de-escalation and engage in dialogue – a dialogue which the EU stands ready to support. At today's meeting Denmark has promoted sending international observers to Ukraine. Such a proposal is highlighted in today's Council conclusions and Denmark is ready to contribute with observers. There is a need for impartial and neutral actors on the ground. Due to the lack of Russian willingness to de-escalate the conflict, the EU has today decided to suspend the preparations of the up-coming G8-summit in Sochi. Furthermore we have decided that in the absence of de-escalating steps by Russia the conflict, it will have consequences for the bilateral relationship between Russia and the EU, e.g. suspension of the current visa negotiations as well as the negotiations on the so-called New Agreement, and further targeted measures will be considered. We have during today's meeting repeated the EU's support to Ukraine. We are equally ready to look into further economic support, when a reform package has been negotiated with the international community. But today we also convey to Ukraine that it is important that the new government represents all Ukrainians not least the Russian minority. I thus encourage the Ukrainian government to ensure, that all Ukrainian citizens have an equal place in the future Ukraine. This entails both Catholics and Orthodox, Ukrainian- and Russian-speakers."

Source: (Ministry of Foraign Affairs of Denmark, 2014)

Estonia

Reuters news article

The Baltics fear Russia's military buildup over Ukraine will lead to Moscow sowing more trouble in their region after it curbed important exports last year and buzzed their borders, forcing NATO to scramble jets dozens of times. Many in the Baltics want a strong Western response, worried their region could be next if Russia senses diplomatic victory. The former Soviet republics of Estonia and Latvia have their own large ethnic Russian minorities and are alarmed by President Vladimir Putin's justification for Russian actions in and around Ukraine as protection for Russian speakers there. One pressure point could the fact that around a quarter of Estonia's and Latvia's population are ethnic Russian. Russian speakers are a majority in Narva, one of Estonia's biggest cities as well as the Latvian city of Daugavpils. There is distrust between Estonians and Latvians on the one side and ethnic Russians, who came over in their thousands during the Soviet era to work in industry. Many Russians say they have become second class citizens in the last two decades.

Source: (Saytas, 2014)

Report by the German Marshall Fund of the United States

In March 2014, a day after President Vladimir Putin had asked the Russian Federation Council to adopt a resolution allowing the use of Russia's armed forces in Ukraine, an extraordinary meeting of Estonia's National Defense Council called for strong counter-measures by the EU and NATO. 15 A few days later, following NATO consultations, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet reiterated that Russia's actions and threats against Ukraine violated the UN Charter and endangered peace and security in Europe. In the same month, Estonia's parliament adopted a statement in support of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The speakers of the three Baltic parliaments further issued a joint statement saying that the Russian Federation Council's vote to allow the use of armed forces in Ukraine violated international law and set a dangerous precedent. At the extraordinary meeting of EU heads of state and government in Brussels on March 6, 2014, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip stressed the importance of stopping Russia's aggression and of helping Ukraine in every way.

Various factors have shaped Estonia's policy toward the Russian conflict with Ukraine. First and foremost, decision-making has been influenced by security concerns. For Estonia, the scope of the crisis extends beyond Ukraine to the security of the Baltic region itself. The annexation of Crimea caused many Estonians to remember the trauma of their country's quiet submission to Soviet occupation in 1940. Crimea's military occupation and the subsequent referendum closely resembled how the Soviet Union deprived Estonia of its independence during World War II.

Another factor shaping Estonia's response to the Ukraine crisis is the pursuit of a value-based foreign policy that includes support for democracy, a market economy, and the rule of law.26 Adherence to values is linked to the promotion of national self-respect. It is a general belief of policymakers that since the 1990s the Baltic states have been back on the international map because their citizens and other people cared about values. Estonia's foreign policy circles have applauded the EU for its solidarity in imposing sanctions against Russia.

Source: (Forbrig, 2015)

Statements by Estonia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Estonia unequivocally denounces Russia's illegal steps aimed at undermining Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, foreign minister Urmas Paet told his Ukrainian colleague Andri Deshchytsia at Tuesday's meeting of the NATO-Ukraine commission in Brussels. "Estonia is continuing the policy of non-recognition in respect to the annexation of Crimea," Paet emphasised. The foreign minister urged NATO to intensify its cooperation with Ukraine and welcomed a package of measures adopted jointly to support Ukraine in the crisis situation. "In addition to the adopted measures, Estonia welcomes the strengthening of long-term cooperation and we await the corresponding resolutions at the NATO summit in Wales in September," Paet said.

Source: (Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that Estonia considers Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity essential. Paet said that the tense situation in Crimea is worrying. "We consider it necessary for international organizations like the European Union, the Council of Europe and the OSCE to send their observers to Crimea immediately," he said. "The observers must be granted complete access," he added. According to Paet, what is most important, is to resolve the situation as quickly and peacefully as possible. "The conflict must be solved through peaceful negotiations," the foreign minister said. Paet stated that Estonia is ready to resume the support of activities that will help in the development of Ukrainian society and its state governed by the rule of law. "At present, it is important to reduce tensions in the streets and various regions and to restore public confidence in the governing power," he said.

(Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Finland

BBC news article

While Finland is not a member of the Nato military alliance that has sent thousands of troops to eastern Europe to reassure Poland and the Baltic states, it has been a member of the European Union since 1995. This clearly situates it well within the West, says Suvi Turtiainen, a journalist with the Helsingin Sanomat newspaper, who is currently researching Russian perceptions of Finnish

independence. She says perceptions that Finland somehow sits in the middle between Russia and the West are misguided. "Finland has always supported the sanctions against Russia [imposed in the wake of the annexation of Crimea], even though it has had a significant effect on the Finnish economy and despite Russian tourism being really important in the eastern region," she says. And it has been a close partner of Nato since the 1990s - sending troops to operations led by the alliance in the Balkans and Afghanistan, and maintaining a relationship that is now said to be as close as it can be without Finland officially joining as a member. Yet at the same time "Finnish leaders and our current president want to keep dialogue with Russia, even through difficult times, and the dialogue is quite open and direct" including on the subject of Ukraine, says Ms Turtiainen.

Source: (Ponniah, 2017)

Investigative report by International Centre for Defence and Security of Estonia

2014 witnessed a sharp deterioration in relations between Russia and the West. The annexation of Crimea to Russia in March was a sweepingly bold action by President Vladimir Putin, and it was also a move strongly supported by a huge majority of ordinary Russians. In the following months, the role of Russian forces in Ukraine became more direct and overt, as the separatist forces were unable to cope on their own. Economic sanctions by the European Union and the United States were followed by Russian counter-sanctions. A new Cold War was at hand.

There was a strong grassroots reaction in the country to what was happening in Ukraine. The Finnish public reaction to Russian moves into Crimea was that they were wrong, unacceptable and against the basic norms of international law. Supported by public opinion, the Finnish government came out unusually strongly against Russian actions in the early stages of the conflict. For example, on 2 March, the Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy, chaired by President Sauli Niinistö, stated in a press release that "in Crimea, the use of force and threat thereof are to be condemned. They are in breach of the UN Charter and international law. The Russian military measures in Crimea are a violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Russia's move to gain control over the Crimean peninsula cannot be accepted."

At the same time, however, lines of communication were kept open between Helsinki and Moscow. During the year, President Niinistö had several phone conversations with President Putin, and on 15 August was the first EU head of state to travel to Sochi to meet President Putin with hopes of maintaining the political dialogue and encouraging a ceasefire between the parties in eastern Ukraine. To balance things out, on his trip back to Helsinki he stopped off at Kiev to meet with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. One obvious background factor for this burst of activity was that the economic sanctions established by the EU against Russia and the counter-sanctions imposed by Russia against EU countries hit the Finnish economy particularly hard. Before the sanctions were imposed, the Russian share of Finland's total trade volume was about 14 %, and it was estimated that sanctions would lead to a drop in exports and imports of about 20%. Most of the Russian trade with Finland is in energy products(oil, gas and electricity), which were not affected, but the Russian import ban hit Finnish businesses particularly hard in areas from dairy products and other food export items to transit revenues and tourism. According to Prime Minister Alexander Stubb, a 3 % shrinkage in the Russian economy, would cause a 0,5% fall in Finnish GNP. This, on top of an already ailing economy, meant that Finland would be one of the countries hardest hit by Western sanctions on Russia.

Source: (Järvenpää, 2015)

Statement from the Finnish Government Communications Department

On Wednesday 13 August 2014, the President of the Republic and the Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy discussed the current situation in Ukraine. Finland stresses the importance of a negotiated solution to the crisis. To achieve it, it is imperative for Russia to stop assisting the separatist groups. This is also what the European Union has urged Russia to do. Since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, Finland has stated that, with its actions in Ukraine, Russia has violated key principles of international law and numerous international commitments, including the Helsinki Final Act. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity have been violated. Russia's actions cannot be accepted.

Russia has not halted its support to the separatists. In these circumstances, the European Union and its Member States had no other option than to appeal to Russia and resort to restrictive measures targeted at Russia in order to encourage it to change its course of action. The EU has taken a gradual approach in introducing restrictive measures. They have been targeted at individuals or entities who actively promote the annexation of Crimea to Russian Federation and the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine. The decisions including sector specific measures have been based on an assessment of how to have the greatest possible impact on Russian policies. The restrictive measures and especially the counter-measures taken by Russia will have negative effects also on the Union and its Member States. If the impact on an individual country, including Finland, is disproportionate, it is possible to discuss the situation at the EU level.

To achieve stability, the internal development of Ukraine is also important. Ukraine's economy and system of governance are in need of significant reforms. Elections will strengthen the legitimacy of the political system. The international community, especially the Council of Europe and the OSCE, must continue to assist Ukraine to fulfil its international obligations as regards, i.a. the promotion of human rights, including the rights of the Russian speaking minority.

Finland is concerned about the escalation of tension between Ukraine and Russia and between Russia and the West. The spiral of negative developments should be stopped. All efforts to find a basis for a negotiated solution to the Ukrainian crisis are important.

As a member of the European Union, Finland seeks to influence the situation primarily through the EU. The unity of the European Union is very important for Finland. Finland's bilateral relations with its neighbouring Russia are multifaceted and extensive. Even in the present situation, circumstances permitting, maintaining a constructive dialogue between the EU and Russia and also bilaterally remain essential.

Source: (Finnish Government Communications Department, 2014)

France

News article from Expatica

French President Francois Hollande called Tuesday for a "strong and coordinated" EU response to Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, which he said Paris did not recognise. "The next European Council on March 20 and 21 must provide the opportunity for a strong and coordinated European response to the new step that has just been taken," he said in a statement. "France does

not recognise the results of the referendum held in Crimea on March 16, or the annexation of this region of Ukraine to Russia." President Vladimir Putin caused an outcry Tuesday when he signed a treaty making Crimea part of Russia, just weeks after pro-Russian forces seized the peninsula following the ouster of Ukraine's pro-Kremlin president Viktor Yanukovych. The move comes after a controversial secession referendum was held in the mostly Russian-speaking peninsula Sunday, with almost 97 percent voting to split from Ukraine.

Source: (Expatica, 2014)

European Council on Foreign Relations – expert paper

France's response to the Ukraine crisis has been more active and more determined than many would have predicted. Paris, together with Berlin, has ended up leading European efforts to resolve the conflict in the Donbas through the "Normandy Format", which eventually led to the Minsk Agreements. Paris also supported the EU's policy on sanctions, suspended its annual bilateral strategic meetings with Moscow and cancelled the delivery of its Mistral warships to Russia. France's involvement in pushing forward sanctions run counter to its previous efforts at developing economic relations with Russia.

Source: (Cadier, 2016)

Report by Kremlin Watch

France has taken a harsher tone with Russia after Russian influence in the French Presidential election. Though traditionally friendly towards Russia, France's stance grew chillier after the 2014 events in Ukraine. French politicians are not without allegations of financial or intelligence ties to Russia, even though the government's stance suffered through a radical U-turn on Russia following the annexation of Crimea. France was one of the key countries to initiate the EU sanctions against Russia, but also one of the main countries to participate in negotiations between Russia, Ukraine, and pro-Russian separatists.

Source: (Kremlin Watch, 2019)

Statements by French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs

Three years after the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, France remains firmly attached to the full restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders. The calling into question of borders is contrary to international law. It constitutes a direct threat to international security and has serious repercussions for international order, which protects the unity and sovereignty of all states. This is why the international community, the EU and France do not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. France is concerned by the militarization of the peninsular and the deteriorating human rights situation, notably affecting Crimean Tatars. In accordance with resolution 71/205 of December 19, 2016, adopted by the UN General Assembly, it is crucial that the regional and international human rights monitoring mechanisms as well as the non-governmental human rights organizations have unimpeded access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea and Sevastopol. France calls for the release of all individuals who have been detained in violation of international law

Source: (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017)

France has a policy of firmness and dialogue to move towards a political settlement of the conflict. Firmness: Based on the principle that borders in Europe cannot be changed by force with impunity, the European Union has adopted sanctions aimed at Russian and Crimean organizations, businesses and individuals. Dialogue: During the ceremonies for the 70th anniversary of the Normandy Landings in June 2014, France instigated a meeting with Germany, Ukraine and Russia on the settlement of the conflict. Since then, numerous meetings have taken place between Foreign Ministers in this "Normandy" format, and weekly telephone calls are held at the highest level.

France is also very concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. We call upon all parties to guarantee the access of civilian populations to water and electricity as quickly as possible.

Source: (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017)

Germany

Newspaper article of Der Spiegel (translated from German)

Berlin / Moscow - Chancellor Angela Merkel has accused President Vladimir Putin of having violated international law with the "unacceptable Russian intervention in Crimea ". This informed the deputy government spokesman Georg Streiter on Sunday evening in Berlin after a phone call Merkel with Putin. According to her spokesperson, the Chancellor recalled the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, in which Russia pledged to respect the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine and its existing borders. Putin also violated the 1997 Black Sea Fleet Treaty. US President Barack Obama underscored in a telephone conversation with the Chancellor that the Russian intervention in Ukraine was "absolutely unlawful", it was said on Sunday evening from US government circles. Previously, US Secretary of State John Kerry had accused Russia of violating international law. Merkel once again called on the Russian President during the telephone call to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The aim is, however, to stabilize the situation in a peaceful way. The Russian President accepted the Chancellor's proposal to set up a so-called fact-finding mission and a contact group, possibly under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to start a political dialogue.

Source: (Der Spiegel, 2014)

Article by scholars in Foreign Affairs Magazine

In his discussion of German foreign policy's supposed drift eastward, Hans Kundnani ("Leaving the West Behind," January/February 2015) suggests that Germany has resisted imposing sanctions on Russia over its undeclared war with Ukraine—a sign, in his view, that Germany might once again desert the West in a flirtation with Russia. That interpretation is little more than an urban legend. True, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has resisted blunt sanctions and has taken every opportunity to negotiate with Moscow in her efforts to de-escalate the fighting in Ukraine. But her approach is supporting sanctions, not opposing them—and it certainly is not appeasing Moscow. Armed with Germany's own example of tolerating economic pain to uphold Europe's taboo on the forcible change of borders, Merkel then convinced her 27 partner states in the EU to do the same.

Source: (Pond, 2015)

EU-28 Watch report

German-Russian relations are deemed contradictory. The German economy is dependent on Russian gas. Chancellor Angela Merkel has said that Germany would review its sources of energy in light of the crisis in Ukraine. However, in August 2015 an extension of the Nord Stream pipeline shipping gas from Russia directly to Germany was proposed. Similarly, Russia depends on Germany for importing mechanical engineering products and vehicles. In 2015, bilateral trade declined by 35 per cent compared with the previous year, to EUR 7.74 billion. In January and February 2015, German exports to Russia fell by 34 per cent, to EUR 3.07 billion, and Russian exports to Germany declined by 36 per cent, to EUR 4.66 billion.

Source: (Böttger, 2015)

Policy statement by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel

Russia's actions in Ukraine undoubtedly represent a violation of fundamental principles of international law. They would not be relativised by other international law violations. They remain a violation of international law in the heart of Europe, and it is vital that we do not simply return to business as usual, and indeed we have not done so. We have to find ways to defuse this tense and dangerous situation. The conflict cannot be resolved by military means. I say to everyone who is worried and concerned: military action is not an option for us.

Rather, this Government, along with our partners in the European Union and the United States, is pursuing a three-pronged political and economic approach. First, we are working hard to establish an international observer mission and a contact or coordination group – whatever you want to call it. We are seeking through these means to find a political and diplomatic solution to the crisis. However, one thing must be crystal clear: Ukraine's territorial integrity is not negotiable.

Second, at their meeting on 6 March 2014, the Heads of State and Government of the European Union decided to provide Ukraine with substantial assistance. We welcomed the support programme totalling 11 billion euros put forward by the Commission. Ukraine should continue to be a place in which all citizens can live peacefully together, irrespective of what language they speak – Ukrainian, Russian, Tatar or one of the country's other languages – and what faith they profess.

If negotiations do not start with Russia in the next few days – negotiations which produce results, not negotiations playing for time – the Foreign Ministers of the EU member states will move to the second stage and agree on further measures at their Council meeting this coming Monday, 17 March. These measures will include travel bans, asset freezes and the cancellation of the EU-Russia summit.

Source: (Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, 2014)

Greece

BBC News article

The Greek prime minister has said sanctions imposed on Russia over its actions in Ukraine are not productive. The EU is expected to renew sanctions in a matter of weeks. Alexis Tsipras was speaking at a joint news conference in Athens with the Russian President Vladimir Putin. Mr Putin said there would be "no discussions" about Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula that was seized by Kremlin-backed forces in 2014, leading to sanctions from the EU and US. The territory, which has an ethnic Russian majority, later voted to join Russia in a referendum that Ukraine and Western countries deem illegal.

Mr Tsipras told reporters: "We have repeatedly said that the vicious circle of militarisation, of Cold War rhetoric and of sanctions is not productive. The solution is dialogue." Mr Putin said: "As far as Crimea is concerned, we consider this question is closed forever. Russia will not conduct any discussions with anyone on this subject." Mr Putin's visit to Greece is an attempt to reinforce a relationship with one of Russia's friends in Europe at a time when diplomatic tensions continue between Russia and the EU and US, the BBC's Thomas Fessy in Athens says.

Source: (BBC News, 2016)

Research paper from Kyiv School of Economics

As NATO and EU proved unable to address the entire range of Greece's security concerns, Athens regularly sought for an alternative security provider, considering that Russia could assume this position after the dissolution of the USSR and provide support to Greek positions on Cyprus, relations with Turkey, Balkan politics, and energy security. Greece's position regarding the "Ukraine crisis" is mostly determined by Russia's role as an alternative security provider (the primary one being EU/NATO), present both on the level of beliefs and perceptions as well as actual foreign policy decisions.

Not only Greek politicians but also expert circles and general public are largely induced to interpret the conflict and to accept Russian arguments. Throughout the "Ukraine crisis" Greece reluctantly takes sides with the larger EU states, while simultaneously lobbying in favor of removing sanctions and renewing dialogue with Russia. This suggests that similar experiences and historical links do not shape Greek political choices much. Considering the relatively low priority of bilateral relations with Ukraine, the Greek attitudes to the "Ukraine crisis" should be explained via a wider framework of the nature of its relationship with Russia. Although neither Eastern Partnership nor Ukraine was among Greek priorities as Head of the Council in the first 6 months of 2014, Greece's ascension to this position happened exactly at the time of Russia's military aggression, Crimea's annexation, as well as the signing of the EU-Ukraine Association agreement. In the first days of March 2014, Foreign Minister Venizelos visited Ukraine, and throughout the rest of the year the Greek Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister supported sanctions, expressed support for the Ukraine's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty, called for reassessment of the functionality of the UN Security Council and the OSCE, supported diplomacy and dialogue, as well as a full implementation of the Minsk Agreements. Thus, in this tumultuous period Greece was firmly aligned with the general European line. But overall, being politically weakened by the debt crisis and generally inactive in the region, Greece did not take significant initiatives in conflict management and resolution, and kept a rather low profile, concentrating on humanitarian issues, and helping wounded civilians and children from affected areas in Donetsk-Luhansk region. Simultaneously, with regards to Russia, Prime and Foreign Affairs Ministers supported maintaining open channels of communication and referred to the Corfu process stressing the need to avoid 'reappearance of dividing lines in Europe'.

Source: (Koval, 2017)

Statements from the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs

"The solution to the crisis must be founded on respect for the territorial integrity, the sovereign rights and the independence of Ukraine, in accordance with international law. More specifically, the European leaders agreed that the decision of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of

Crimea on the holding of a referendum on the future status of the region is not in line with the Ukrainian Constitution and, consequently, is illegal."

"It is vital that the two sides – the Ukrainian and Russian sides – meet and talk to each other, without delay and, potentially, within the framework of multilateral mechanisms. Additionally, the European leaders decided that the EU must participate in the multilateral meetings and coordinating groups that are formulated to de-escalate the crisis. The specific actions must be aimed at, among other things, building trust between the two sides, ensuring the territorial integrity of Ukraine, protecting all citizens from intimidation, ensuring respect for the rights of all the minorities, including linguistic minorities, providing assistance for holding free and fair elections, and monitoring the implementation of agreements."

Source: (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Hungary

Article in the Wall Street Journal

BUDAPEST—Hungary's prime minister on Monday broke his silence regarding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, downplaying its immediate significance for his nation. "Hungary is not part of the conflict," Viktor Orban said, according to state newswire MTI. Hungarians are safe in Hungary and they are also safe in Ukraine's Transcarpatia region, he said. The Hungarian government is working to ensure that remains so, he added. Unlike many of his European peers, Hungary's combative prime minister had remained silent before Monday about the Ukraine crisis. Mr. Orban signed a contract with Russian President Vladimir Putin in January, getting a Russian company to expand Hungary's only nuclear plant in the town of Paks, with Moscow providing a massive loan to the country to finance the expansion. Mr. Orban's silence about the issue before Monday led to criticism by the opposition over the weekend.

Source: (Feher, 2014)

Bloomberg Crimea Coverage

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has urged Russia and the European Union to negotiate, adding that the security of ethnic Hungarians in neighboring Ukraine was a top priority for Budapest. Budapest was invaded by Soviet troops in 1956. "The European Union must take immediate steps in response to Russian troop movements," Orban said on March 4. "The steps can't be of a military nature; they must be decisive, immediate and be of an integrative nature."

Source: (Bloomberg News Reporting, 2014)

Report by the German Marshall Fund of the United States

When the crisis in Ukraine erupted, like most EU countries and the United States, Hungary was caught by surprise. It quickly found itself in a very difficult position, torn between "hawks" and "doves." The former were mostly composed of countries that were geographically close to the conflict and often directly bordered Russia and Ukraine, such as Poland and the Baltic states. The latter included the most powerful EU members. Adding to this tension was the need to reconcile Hungary's membership in the EU and NATO and the solidarity this required, with the country's manifest economic interests.

A further complicating factor related to the existence of a sizeable Hungarian minority in Ukraine. Prime Minister Viktor Orban expressed this concern when he stated in May 2014 that "Ukraine can be neither stable, nor democratic if it does not give its minorities, including Hungarians, their due. That is, dual citizenship, collective rights, and autonomy." While containing nothing new in substance, this statement was poor in timing. Many in the EU, the United States and, most importantly, in Ukraine interpreted the statement as tacit support for Russian demands of "autonomy" for Eastern parts of the country that would lead to secession.

Hungary continued to pursue a seemingly more Russia-friendly policy and — together with the Czech Republic and Slovakia — questioned the rationale of the sanctions that the EU had imposed on Russia. It also insisted on maintaining its economic relations with Russia, especially through South Stream and the Paks nuclear power station. Despite its doubts in the sanctions policy and its own emphasis on economic ties, however, Hungary never even attempted to oppose any measures taken by the EU and NATO against Russia. Instead, it approved and faithfully implemented the political decisions taken by those organizations.

Source: (Forbrig, 2015)

Statement from the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

"Hungary fully supports Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty; this has always been part of Hungarian foreign policy and will remain so in future", Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó said at a press conference on Tuesday. "In addition, Hungary is paying particular attention to the 150 thousand Hungarians living in Transcarpathia", the Minister highlighted. "In accordance with the decision of Ukrainian Parliament, martial law will be coming into force in ten Ukrainian counties on Wednesday, but Transcarpathia is not among these counties", he told the press. As he explained, it is always bad news if a state of martial law is declared in a neighbouring country, and it is in the interests of every country, including Hungary, for the countries neighbouring it to be stable and strong, and for conditions there to be peaceful. "It is bad news for us that relations between Russia and Ukraine are not moving towards a solution and a peaceful resolution", he pointed out.

Source: (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018)

Ireland

News article from The Journal

TÁNAISTE AND MINISTER for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney has reiterated Ireland's support for Ukraine and expressed serious concerns at the deteriorating human rights situation in Crimea. Speaking on the fourth anniversary of the illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by Russia, Coveney said Ireland supports Ukraine's "sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity". "We do not recognise the annexation and we continue to call on the Russian Federation to observe the fundamental principles of international law and restore Ukraine's internationally recognised borders." Coveney said the worsening human rights situation in Crimea is "deeply concerning". "I call on the Russian Federation to guarantee that freedom of expression, religion, belief and the right to peaceful assembly can be exercised by citizens of Crimea without discrimination on any grounds. "All allegations of human rights violations involving political prisoners, human rights defenders and civil society activists must be fully and properly investigated." He added that international and regional

human rights monitoring mechanisms should be "granted full, free and unrestricted access to the peninsula".

Source: (Ryan, 2018)

European Council of Foreign Relations – expert paper

Dublin's position is that restrictive measures against Russia, coupled with open dialogue and continued political and economic engagement with the various sides in the conflict, offer the best way of creating the conditions for a breakthrough. Although Ireland says that the EU should respond with one voice, its stance locates it alongside Denmark and the Benelux countries, midway between the more hawkish stance of Poland, the Baltic countries, and the United Kingdom and the more cautious position of countries like Greece, Cyprus, and Italy.

Ireland is reluctant to move to deeper sanctions unless there are massive Russian violations of the Minsk agreements. It advocates a "wait and see" approach: political dialogue should be continued and existing sanctions should be rolled over. In recent years, Ireland has made a considerable investment in developing its economic, trade, political, and cultural relations with Russia – so,the economic imperative for its strategy on sanctions is clear. Russia is the third-largest non-EU export market for Irish goods after the United States and China. Irish food and drink exports to Russia in 2013 were worth over €230 million, but since then, Irish food exporters – principally meat, dairy, and seafood – have been badly hit by Russia's retaliatory sanctions. Ireland is due to hold a general election in early 2016. Having exited its EU/IMF bailout programme and steered the country through a politically unpopular austerity programme, Enda Kenny's coalition government does not want to see the Celtic Tiger's fragile export-led recovery put at risk by worsening relations with Russia.

As a small and traditionally neutral country, Ireland has so far contributed €300,000 towards the additional costs of the OSCE operation in Ukraine and seven Irish nationals serve in the organisation's Special Monitoring Mission. Ireland has consistently stated that there can be no military solution to the crisis. This stance has been criticised in some sections of its domestic media but – as Ireland approaches the centenary celebrations of its own independence – it is a view that is unlikely to change.

Source: (O'Connell, 2015)

Statement by the Irish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

From the outset of the crisis the EU has sought to play an active role in seeking a peaceful resolution. However, continued Russian military action on Ukrainian territory is undermining efforts to achieve the political settlement we all seek for the Ukrainian people. I have joined with my EU counterparts in publically expressing a deep concern about the unfolding conflict in Ukraine, along with our firm support for Ukraine's territorial integrity.

As stated by the European Council last Saturday a mutually agreed and viable ceasefire must be accompanied by the re-establishment of Ukrainian control over its border, an immediate halt to the flow of arms, material and military personnel from the Russian Federation into Ukraine, as well as the urgent release of all hostages and prisoners. I hope that these actions will be taken without delay so as to create the conditions that can lead to the negotiated and peaceful solution to the conflict in Ukraine that we all wish to see.

The European Council also decided that preparatory work should be undertaken on further measures which could be taken by the EU against Russia depending on the evolution of the situation. Ireland believes that carefully targeted sanctions are an effective means to build pressure to engage in negotiations, mindful of the impact that they may impose on all Member States.

Source: (Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014)

Italy

Huffington Post news article (translated from Italian)

At the European Council of 20-21 March, the President of the Council Renzi made the point in Parliament on the points on the agenda of the summit, with a focus in particular on the crisis in Ukraine. The premier explained that the referendum just held "is illegitimate" and for this "there is a need for there to be concrete action by the institutions, starting with the eu weights that are part of the g8". But "the role of Russia cannot be ignored". "The guiding principle of government action - he added - is being able to collaborate with everyone for a solution to the political crisis, a solution that respects international law and does not let us get back on the iron curtain design, which is certainly only in the nightmares of some.

Source: (Huffington Post, 2014)

The telegraph news article

"Among the 28 there are very wide gaps, said Xavier Bettel, Luxembourg's prime minister, on Wednesday. "There are countries that have very different positions." Italy, which has close energy and economic links to Russia, has warned against measures that "take us back to an Iron Curtain situation". "There is the need to keep a line of dialogue open," Matteo Renzi, the Italian prime minister, said on Wednesday night.

Source: (Waterfield, 2014)

European Council of Foreign Relations – expert paper

Italy has traditionally looked at Russia through an economic rather than a geopolitical lens. Rome has deep economic and energy ties with Russia, and it has not been particularly interested in the region that Russia has traditionally considered to be its sphere of influence. This explains Italy's enthusiasm for the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002, as well as its relative passivity in the face of Russia's aggression towards Georgia in the summer of 2008. It seemed as though the Italian reaction to the crisis in Ukraine would be more of the same – but this turned out not to be the case. Italy's reaction was slow and is largely inclined towards moderation and engagement rather than confrontation. However, the Ukraine crisis has marked a gradual structural shift in Italian foreign policy towards Russia.

As late as June 2014, the Italian body politic continued to view the Ukraine crisis solely from the perspective of its strategic partnership with Russia. The partnership had to be preserved at all costs and any solution to the crisis could only be found in the partnership. That position has now changed. Russia is still seen as a strategic actor that the European Union cannot afford to ignore. But it is no longer (or at least not for the time being) seen as a strategic partner.

Italy is likely to follow Europe's line on punitive measures towards Russia, although it would advise caution on the implementation of further sanctions. This caution is clearly rooted in Italy's domestic economic interests, but it would be reductive to interpret it as entirely based on domestic concerns. Italy believes that although – and in fact, because – sanctions are having an effect on Russia's economy, they may simply accelerate Russia's turn to the east, diluting or severing the economic and societal contacts that bind Russia to Europe.

Source: (Tocci, 2014)

Statements from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Italy and its European partners strongly condemn the violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and call on Russia to immediately withdraw its armed forces. They view the political-diplomatic channel as the only way to resolve the crisis. These were the positions to emerge from the extraordinary meeting of the Council of European Union Foreign Ministers which took place today in Brussels. On Thursday 6 March an extraordinary Council of EU Heads of State and Government is planned, during which, as Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini reported, "possible targeted measures" will be evaluated. The common goal, underscored Mogherini, is to "prevent the situation in Crimea and eastern Ukraine from precipitating further". Indeed, the EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions state that "in the absence of de-escalating steps by Russia, the EU shall decide about consequences for bilateral relations between the EU and Russia".

Source: (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019)

Relations between Italy and Russia have remained strong and positive even during the critical period of sanctions imposed on Moscow by the EU and its main Western partners since 2014 following the grave events in Ukraine. Italy, while recognising Russia's clear responsibility for the unlawful annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of Donbass, has always worked to keep a constructive dialogue with the Russian Federation. We believe in an inclusive approach that encourages Russia to collaborate in finding shared solutions for the world's main challenges, including the fight against terrorism and major international crises.

Source: (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019)

Latvia

The Irish Times news article

Like Estonia to the north and Poland to the south, Latvia and Lithuania favour a tough response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine. Though seen as "hawkish" on relations with Russia, as EU president Latvia will have to mediate between members that support stronger sanctions and those that want to return as quickly as possible to "business as usual" with Moscow. "One thing we are not going to be is an 'anti-Russian or 'pro-Russian' presidency, or a presidency that does not take into account the views of all member states," said Latvia's foreign minister Edgars Rinkevics. "If we see things improving in eastern Ukraine, if Russia becomes part of the solution rather than part of the problem, we can soften or even lift some sanctions. If things get worse, inevitably we have to use this instrument." The three Baltic states, which were under Moscow's control from 1944-1991, have pledged to boost funding for Nato

protection of their airspace, and Riga is braced for more pressure from Russia during its six-month presidency.

Source: (Mclaughlin, 2014)

Report by the German Marshall Fund of the United States

Latvia staunchly supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The government has denounced the annexation of Crimea, called for a greater NATO presence in the Baltics, fought against Russian propaganda, and supported sanctions against Russia. However, Latvia has not fully turned its back on its big neighbor. Latvia's large ethnic Russian population maintains close ties with Russia, and the two countries have very significant trade ties. In effect, Latvia has kept economic and cultural doors open to Russia should the situation in Ukraine de-escalate. Latvia may advocate for the swift removal of sanctions if enough progress were made in Ukraine.

Throughout the conflict, Latvia has provided humanitarian aid and expert support to Ukraine, including treating wounded Ukrainian soldiers, conducting workshops for government and civil society on anti-corruption, organizing joint seminars for defense officials, sending electric power generators, and helping to create a European studies program for Ukrainian universities.

The Ukraine conflict has also changed Latvia's relations with Russia. As an EU and NATO member and a former Soviet republic, Latvia is on the front line of the re-emerging struggle between East and West. The crisis in Ukraine has left many Latvians afraid that their country may become the next battleground. As a result, Latvia has pushed for greater NATO protection for the Baltic states and welcomed the United States' decision to rotate some of its armed forces on Latvian territory. Despite close economic ties, Latvia has supported sanctions against Russia and fought against Russia's propaganda campaigns. In a controversial move, Latvia temporarily suspended a Russian state television channel from broadcasting in the country in order to stop what it considered hate speech. In the future, Latvia would like to provide alternative Russian-language broadcasting, possibly with the support of the EU and the United States.

Source: (Forbrig, 2015)

Statement by the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Recent developments in Russia's foreign policy, annexation of Crimea, which was done against international norms, and developments in Eastern Ukraine concern me greatly. I would say I believe all of Russia's actions are completely unacceptable in the context of international law. I would like to hope that Russia will retreat within the bounds of international law and will allow the state of Ukraine to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The matter of Crimea will remain for a long time. The world does not recognize Crimea's annexation. I believe it will remain a serious source of arguments and discussions for a while.

What we have seen over the past several years – the strengthening of the Russian military contingent in Kaliningrad, deployment of military forces along Baltic-Russian borders – has always been reason for concern. These flights are often carried out in response to NATO's activities. NATO, on the other hand, always makes sure these aircraft do not enter Baltic airspace. This is largely a demonstration of presence by Russia and an attempt to gather intelligence on the actual military potential that is present in the Baltic States. We will continue to carefully follow attempts to enter Baltic airspace. We will also continue to react with diplomatic means.

In regard to the economic level of relations, we have to keep in mind that we are neighbours and there are many different matters that need to be resolved in regard to law enforcement and economic cooperation.

Source: (Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Lithuania

Reuters news article

The Baltics fear Russia's military buildup over Ukraine will lead to Moscow sowing more trouble in their region after it curbed important exports last year and buzzed their borders, forcing NATO to scramble jets dozens of times. While all three Baltic republics have joined NATO - and Lithuania next year should be the last of the three to adopt the euro - these small countries are largely dependent on energy from Russia and have strong trade ties. "Thanks be to God, we are NATO members," Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite told reporters on Monday. Grybauskaite said she was concerned about Russian military exercises in Kalinigrad, a Russian enclave tucked between Poland, Lithuania and the Baltic sea and headquarters of Russian Baltic fleet. "We are following the situation with (Russia's) increased military readiness and drills at our borders," said Grybauskaite, adding Lithuania and Poland could bring up the issue with NATO.

Source: (Saytas, 2014)

The Irish Times news article

In dealings with Moscow, Riga will count on the support of Donald Tusk, the former Polish premier who is now president of the European Council, and on Lithuania, which is arguably the most outspoken EU critic of Mr Putin.

Source: (Mclaughlin, 2014)

Report by the German Marshall Fund of the United States

Lithuania's efforts in support of Ukraine's European aspirations made it one of the trailblazers on the issue within the transatlantic community. Some criticized the small Baltic country for trying to punch above its weight, but its support has only increased since Russia's aggression in Eastern Ukraine. It has championed Ukraine's cause in international organizations, and shown support through numerous bilateral visits by politicians and high-ranking officials.

The national security debate has moved on to a new level as a result of the crisis in Ukraine. The embarrassing fact that Lithuania had failed to reach the target of 2 percent of GDP dedicated to defense spending needed to be addressed not only by usual declarations. The parliament has finally decided on additional allocations to the national security budget. Meanwhile, large numbers of citizens joined the Lithuanian Riflemen Union, a voluntary paramilitary organization created in 1919, indicating that national security is also a concern of society at large. Parallel to that, NATO's military presence in the Baltics has significantly increased, showing that the alliance is taking the security situation in the region seriously.

Lithuanian humanitarian aid to Ukraine has exceeded €250,000, with over €130,000 transferred via international organizations. This was supplemented by different civic and charitable initiatives such as Blue/Yellow, "For Democracy. Ukraine," and the Democracy and Development Assistance Fund.

Source: (Forbrig, 2015)

Statements by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania condemns the signing of the agreement between the Russian Federation, Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the Ukrainian city of Sevastopol on 18 March 2014 as a serious violation of international law: the UN Charter, provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, other international agreements as well as bilateral agreements between Russia and Ukraine. We call Russia's action an illegal annexation of the Ukrainian sovereign territory and do not recognise the illegal joining of parts of the territory of sovereign Ukraine to the Russian Federation. We reiterate our strong support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We urge the international community to not to recognise the Russian annexation, to clearly and unambiguously condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and to take responsive measures.

Source: (Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Lithuania strongly supports Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We adhere to our strict and principled position on Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea. After the last week's reports in the media about a violation of the sanctions regime against the Russian Federation by Lithuanian companies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately approached the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Lithuania.

Lithuania has consistently fulfilled its obligations with regard to the Council Regulation (EU) No 692/2014 of 23 June 2014 concerning restrictions on goods originating in Crimea or Sevastopol in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs believes that natural and legal persons from Lithuania and other EU countries without exceptions must comply with the sanctions imposed by the EU. Individuals who violate the sanctions can be held administratively or criminally liable. Law enforcement authorities and courts, in accordance with the legal acts of the EU and the Republic of Lithuania, will decide whether individuals have violated the sanctions imposed by the EU.

Source: (Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017)

Luxembourg

Chronicle.lu news article

Discussions with the Ukrainian authorities also helped to address the crisis in eastern Ukraine, as well as the illegal annexation of Crimea. In this context, Minister Asselborn stated that "Luxembourg remains steadfast in its support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its recognised international borders and for the full implementation of the agreements of Minsk". Regretting the volatile security situation in the East, the Luxembourg Minister was particularly concerned about the militarisation of the Crimean peninsula and the Black Sea and Asov. Jean Asselborn has also confirmed a bilateral humanitarian assistance amounting to €500,000 in 2019 which adds to a total commitment of the Grand Duchy of more than €2.5 million since the beginning of the crisis.

(Chronicle, 2019)

EU-28 Watch report

The Luxembourg Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jean Asselborn, made a declaration in parliament (11 June 2015) in which he pointed out that, if the international isolation of Russia should last, that this would be counterproductive. Sanctions cannot be a solution to the Ukrainian conflict. Asselborn insisted on the fact that Russia did violate international law by annexing the Crimean Peninsula, but underlined that new relations should be cultivated with Russia. The latter should not be built on outdated foundations but should take into account the fact that the EU must resume the dialogue with Russia. "We must create a new basis of cooperation with Russia to keep peace and a certain level of normality." This quotation from Minister Asselborn is confirmed by the Minister for Economy and Trade, Etienne Schneider, who is very well aware of the fact that Luxembourg's financial sector and its industries, especially in the chemical and steel sector, are affected by the continuing economic sanctions. Luxembourg's investment fund sector is closely linked up with the Russian economy.

Moreover, Minister Asselborn's position on the EU-Russia relations is also fully supported by the Green Party, which is a member of the present Luxembourg coalition government. Isolating Russia is neither a solution for Minister Asselborn nor for the Greens. Luxembourg and the EU should not conceive a European policy project without taking into account Russia and its interests.

Unlike the Baltic States, Poland, or Sweden, Luxembourg, and even leading European member states – such as France and Germany – do not really want to jeopardize their relations with Russia too much against the backdrop of the Ukrainian conflict. In Luxembourg as well as in the other EU member states, the violation of international law and the annexation of Ukrainian territory are being strongly condemned. But there is growing opposition against the economic sanctions against Russia, which have proven to be inefficient in leading to their predefined goals.

Source: (Majerus, 2015)

Statement by the Luxembourgish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Since the start of the crisis, the EU's policy towards Ukraine has been consistent. The EU has been firm in insisting that there can only be a peaceful solution to this conflict and that it must be based on full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. At this point, we must remain firm and true to the principles of the Eastern Partnership policy that we designed. It is true that since the Georgia war in 2008, relations had been uneasy. But Crimea has been a real game-changer, leaving us no choice but to redefine the main parameters of our relation with Russia. Economic and financial cooperation that benefitted Russia as much as it benefitted us has now been replaced by sanctions against Russia. Visa liberalisation talks have been frozen, while we had to impose visa bans against those responsible for the annexation of Crimea. Negotiations that were supposed to lead to a new EU-Russia agreement have been differed sine die. At this point in time, we are all paying a heavy price for Russia's deep mistrust vis-à-vis the Eastern Partnership.

I have been a Foreign Minister for ten years now. I am very cautious about sanctions in general, as I have seen little concrete impact from sanctions over this past decade. It is a fact however that through their actions, the Russian authorities themselves imposed sanctions on their economy and on their people. While the Russian economy grew 1.3% in 2013, the IMF now forecasts a growth of only 0.2% for Russia in 2014. Investments have slowed sharply and Russia is facing a substantial

slowdown in growth potential. Will these hard economic facts bring politicians in Moscow back to reason? I very sincerely hope so.

Source: (The Luxembourg Government, 2014)

Malta

EU-28 Watch report

The government has criticised Russia's annexation of Crimea and urged for a peacefully negotiated solution of the conflict. This view is shared by the opposition. The 'mainstream' view is that it is important for the EU to maintain good relations with Russia. EU relations with the Eastern Partnership countries have to be managed better. The Foreign Minister, Dr George Vella, remarked in an interview that it was important to involve Russia during EU negotiations of association agreements with Eastern Partnership countries such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Furthermore, Dr Vella stated that the European Union was too naive in thinking that they could engage the European neighbourhood countries and offer Association Agreements, deep and comprehensive free trade areas, and hoping that Russia would not react.

Source: (Pace, 2014)

Statement by the Maltese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. George W. Vella, has condemned the latest developments in Crimea. Speaking at an extraordinary meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Minister in Brussels today, the Minister called for the full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, avoid any further provocative actions and immediately diffuse the situation. Minister Vella expressed Malta's full support for further political dialogue to prevail, noting that provocative rhetoric can easily spiral the situation out of control. In this regard, he called for the full observance of the UN Charter and relevant international agreements, as well as the provisions of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum of Understanding and other agreements.

Minister Vella urged the international community to resort to all available diplomatic tools in order to ensure the full observance of bilateral treaties between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and supported an EU role in facilitating contact between the two sides. The Minister stated that all channels of dialogue with Moscow should be utilised, including through important interlocutors such as the OSCE and Council of Europe. At the same time, the Minister stated that the EU should encourage the Ukrainian Government to engage in all-inclusive dialogue which takes into account the concerns of all minorities within its territory. He also noted that Malta fully supports the possibility of the EU forming part of an international mediation mission.

With respect to the possibility of targeted measures against Russia; Minister Vella emphasized that our priority should be to stabilise the situation and refrain from any further action that might escalate tensions, rather than build walls between us. He did not rule out the EU re-evaluating the impact that further escalation by Russia could have on future EU-Russia relations.

Source: (Government of Malta, 2014)

The Netherlands

CNBC news article

Western leaders may impose more sanctions on Russia if it takes further action after its seizure of Ukraine's Crimea, the Dutch Prime Minister told CNBC, adding that the West did not accept the Russian occupation. Dutch leader Mark Rutte said he had discussed the issue with numerous world leaders including U.S. President Barack Obama, at a summit being held on Tuesday at The Hague in the Netherlands. "I feel that we have a general agreement that at this stage we do not accept the fact that Crimea has been occupied," Rutte told CNBC Tuesday. "At the same time, we're trying to contain the issue to Crimea. And if it were to... escalate, in that case we are preparing targeted sanctions." Rutte said these targeted sanctions would hit Russia harder than they would Europe or the U.S., although he admitted there would be an "unavoidable (spillover) effect." He added: "It's difficult to foresee whether he (Russian President Vladimir Putin) will retract from Crimea or not, but I do feel that Russia senses we are serious and we want them to give up the Crimea, and at least prevent this conflict from spiraling to other regions of Ukraine."

Source: (CNBC, 2014)

European Council of Foreign Relations – expert paper

Respect for international law and support for the post-war security order are important principles in Dutch foreign policy. Therefore, when the Ukraine crisis broke out, the Netherlands strongly condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea and Moscow's support for the destabilisation of the Donbas. The Netherlands worked closely together with the EU and other international partners on the issue. When sanctions were discussed in the EU, the Netherlands followed Germany's lead as the main international mediator in the conflict; like Germany, the Netherlands at first did not favour imposing stronger economic and financial sanctions, in part because of its own economic interests in Russia.

The downing of civilian airliner Malaysia Airlines MH17, in which 196 Dutch people were killed, was an enormous shock for the Dutch public at large and a game changer for Dutch relations with Russia. From that moment on, it became clear that there could be no quick return to "business as usual". The Dutch (including the Dutch business community) became convinced that, in crafting an appropriate response to Russia's destabilisation of eastern Ukraine, tougher sanctions could no longer be avoided.

Foreign Minister Bert Koenders has talked about a new approach to Russia based on three elements:

"Muscle": reassuring East European NATO partners. The Dutch are contributing actively to NATO air policing above the Baltic states and to NATO's Response Force, with around 2,700 military personnel.

"A clenched fist": keeping targeted sanctions in place until Moscow starts working towards de-escalation in the Donbas and/or gives up Crimea (There are two separate sets of sanctions: even if Russia decides to cooperate on the Donbas, the Crimea-related sanctions will remain in force).

"An open hand": the Netherlands will maintain a critical dialogue with Russia as equal partners and based on mutual respect. Some continuation of constructive engagement can be expected, with the Dutch working to save as much of the economic relationship as possible and keeping up cooperation in areas such as education, science, and civil society.

Source: (Togt, 2015)

Statement by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

De Russische bewegingen rond de Krim zijn buitengewoon zorgelijk. Het ontneemt de nieuwe machthebbers in Kiev elke gelegenheid om zelf in een inclusief proces te werken aan een oplossing voor de spanningen in de Russisch-gezinde delen van het land. Daar waar Rusland claimt zorgen te hebben over de positie van Russische belangen in Oekraïne na de machtswisseling, moet Rusland zich beroepen op de internationale mechanismen die in het leven zijn geroepen om dergelijke zorgen te adresseren: de VN, OVSE, Raad van Europa of ad-hoc bemiddeling. Door inzet van troepen, dan wel het schermen daarmee, bedreigt Rusland de territoriale integriteit en soevereiniteit van Oekraïne en zorgt het voor escalatie van het probleem in plaats van de-escalatie. Het kabinet veroordeelt deze ontwikkelingen ten zeerste. Om verdere escalatie te voorkomen moeten de inspanningen nu gericht worden op het instellen van een inclusieve dialoog tussen alle betrokken partijen.

Het kabinet wil niet speculeren over scenario's over afscheidingen binnen Oekraïne of verdere Oost/West-polemiek. Ook op Nederland rust een verantwoordelijkheid om niet bij te dragen aan stappen die een escalerend effect kunnen hebben. De mogelijkheden voor dialoog moeten open blijven, ook met Rusland. De Russische autoriteiten zijn, hoe onacceptabel hun acties momenteel ook zijn, nodig voor een politieke oplossing. Er zijn vanzelfsprekend grenzen. Aperte vijandigheden of onbereidheid om zich aan internationaal recht en internationale verdragen te houden die Rusland zelf heeft ondertekend, kan niet zonder consequenties blijven. Het kabinet zal met internationale partners in nauw contact staan over mogelijke politieke en/of economische maatregelen die in een dergelijk geval genomen kunnen worden. Het kabinet spreekt zijn sterke steun uit voor de Europese coördinerende rol van de Hoge Vertegenwoordiger Ashton, die deze week zowel naar Moskou als naar Kiev zal afreizen.

Source: (Timmermans, 2014)

Poland

The Guardian news article

Russia's aggression against neighbouring Ukraine has changed almost everything. Poland is deeply concerned about its national security and about the degree of solidarity its western allies are able – and willing – to demonstrate. This anxiety is not limited to the ruling class, or politicians. It is deeply felt by the population. So how is Poland reacting to all this? First, it is planning to modernise its armed forces. It intends to spend a whopping €40 billion over the next 10 years on a missile defence system, attack helicopters, submarines, armed vehicles and drones. American, French and German defence industries are all lining up to compete. Second, Poland is pushing for maximum western solidarity towards Ukraine, hoping for the equivalent of a Marshall plan. If Ukraine manages to save itself from economic collapse, Poland will feel safer.

Source: (Nougayrède, 2015)

Report by the German Marshall Fund of the United States

From Warsaw's perspective, 2014 was a watershed moment in Western relations with Russia. First, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and later its support for separatists and direct engagement in the war

in Eastern Ukraine confirmed Poland's worst worries, which were planted during the 2008 Russia-Georgia War. Not only did Russia violate Ukraine's sovereignty and break international law, it has also undermined the basic premise of the European security system enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act signed in 1975. The Polish analysis is that this is not a passing crisis, but a permanent change in Russia's foreign policy, aimed at rebuilding its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, with implications for the whole continent. Poland has been active on the crisis in Ukraine since its earliest days. First President Viktor Yanukovych, then Russia, intimidated Ukraine's society's struggle for sovereignty — an aim that Poland has always supported. Poland is no less vulnerable to Russia's disregard for independence and territorial integrity than Ukraine in 2014, Kyrgyzstan in 2010, and Georgia in 2008.

Poland focused exclusively on actions that could be carried out through the institutions of the transatlantic community in response to Russia's behavior. Within the EU, it championed visa restrictions and economic sanctions while within NATO, it pushed for a reaffirmation of Article V security guarantees through practical steps to strengthen territorial defense.

Poland's policy toward the conflict is embedded within the EU and NATO debates. NATO's ability to swiftly and fully implement the 2014 summit conclusions and to come up with actions relevant to the level of threat will play an important role in reassuring Polish voters ahead of the 2015 parliamentary and presidential elections. The EU's eagerness to compensate for the losses that Russia's counter-sanctions imposed on Poland's food producers and transport companies is no less important in this regard.

Source: (Forbrig, 2015)

Statement by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

We consider the referendum held by Crimea's self-proclaimed authorities to be illegal both under international and domestic Ukrainian law. We cannot recognize its outcome. In a civilized world you do not hold social consultations under the barrel of a Kalashnikov. Nor do we accept the Kremlin's unilateral decisions to incorporate Crimea. We and the whole West will respond adequately to such conduct by Russia. We look forward to early presidential elections in Ukraine. Poland will send as many observers as possible – over a hundred. I also encourage members of this House and our Western allies to join in. The democratic nature of elections should also be important to those who call into question the legitimacy of the government in Kyiv.

It is unfortunate that all this is happening in the heat of the crisis in Ukraine, but today we are implementing a long-term security policy goal: we are increasing the actual presence of NATO units, materiel and infrastructure in our territory. AWACS surveillance aircrafts fly over Poland and Romania. The US has deployed a paratrooper company and Canada, a paratrooper platoon in Poland. A group of anti-mine ships is on permanent standby in the Baltic Sea. NATO naval forces will soon be performing their exercises. We have permanently strengthened the Baltic Air Policing mission; we are now in charge of the current mission, supported by the British, Danes and the French. The number of NATO forces in our region will increase.

We have already signed the political part of the association agreement with Ukraine. No matter how soon its economic component is signed, we are already offering concrete help to Ukrainian businesspeople and Polish entrepreneurs doing business in Ukraine. The European Union has

unilaterally abolished customs tariffs on ninety-eight percent of Ukraine's exports. Ukraine will gain almost half a billion euros a year thanks to this measure.

Source: (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Portugal

Portuguese American Journal news article

The Ukrainian Ambassador to Lisbon and the non-governmental Association of Ukrainians in Portugal this week added their voices to the near universal condemnation of Russia's intervention in Ukraine's sovereign territory that has led to the specter of war. Prior to the fast-tracked treaty signed by Russia and Crimea on Tuesday, Ambassador Oleksandr Nykonento denounced last Sunday's referendum and said the vote in favor of Crimea re-joining Russia did not represent "the real will of the people" as it was conducted under "a foreign military presence."While acknowledging that Portugal "has already given support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine," the ambassador said he would like "this voice of support to be more consistent and more practical." He also indicated he was not happy with the response of the EU to the growing crisis in his country. He hoped for more solidarity from the international community, particularly the EU. It is understood that the Ukraine wants strong political support of its territorial integrity; urgent financial support to keep afloat our economy and social support system during a transitional period; long-term economic facilities to support structural reforms and integration into EU markets. Portugal's Foreign Minister Rui Machete said after a meeting in Brussels on Monday that the EU was fully behind Ukraine and that there should be no doubt as to its political and economic support. Meanwhile, the sanctions proposed so far by both the EU and the US against what has been described as Russia's 'landgrab,' have been widely dismissed by international commentators as "feeble" and "toothless." During a debate in parliament in Lisbon two weeks ago Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho called for "for mediation and for moderation" in the way people express opinions on the crisis in Ukraine. "It's an appeal we make to all our European partners, but also to all international institutions," he said.

Source: (Port, 2014)

European Council of Foreign Relations – research report

Portugal and Russia maintain only a distant relationship; they have never had much in common. The Russian Revolution led to a freeze in their diplomatic relations that lasted from 1917 until the 1974 Carnation Revolution, which the Soviet Union influenced through its ties to the Portuguese Communist Party. The Portuguese government perceives Russia as posing a remote threat. The country's provocative manoeuvres – which since 2014 have included minor spying incidents and several violations of Portuguese airspace – have not changed this view. There is effective technical and cultural cooperation between the countries, while their economic relationship is minor but growing steadily. Since coming to power in early 2016, Portugal's left-wing government in Lisbon has adopted what it describes as a "pragmatic" approach towards Russia. Lisbon has adopted the European Union's policy on Russia, including on sanctions, but believes that there is room to develop its relationship with Moscow in areas of mutual interest.

Source: (Liik, 2018)

European Leadership Network – researcher article

Since 2014, the EU has shown unprecedented unanimity on sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine crisis. Despite diverging national interests and ranging economic dependencies on Russia, the EU's 28 Member States have managed to maintain a united policy. Although France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and Croatia have (almost) never questioned the effectiveness of sanctions as an EU instrument, they haven't been strong proponents either. Due to either their geographical distance or considerable economic ties with Russia, their support has been rather lukewarm. Spain's and Portugal's geographic distance and significant dependency on Russia´s investment in real estate and tourism has resulted in a reserved attitude towards sanctions.

Source: (Shagina, 2017)

NO OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AVAILABLE ON PORTUGAL'S GOVERNMENT WEBSITE

Romania

UAWire news article

Romania does not recognize the annexation of the Crimea and Russian presidential elections on the peninsula, LB.ua reports, citing the press service of the Romanian embassy. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania reminds that it [Romania] does not recognize the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, and therefore does not recognize the elections in this territory, and shares the position of the European Union and its member-states," the statement reads. The diplomats assured that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania also confirms its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally approved borders. As reported, the European Union does not recognize the outcome of the Presidential elections in the Russian-annexed Crimea and has called for the examination of violations that were reported by the international observers. Pavlo Klimkin, the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, provided to the Foreign Ministers of the EU at the meeting in Brussels, a list of 140 names involved in the organization of the presidential elections in the Crimea.

Source: (UAWire, 2018)

Report by the German Marshall Fund of the United States

Having initially condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea and its destabilizing actions in Eastern Ukraine, Romania continues to be vocal in its condemnation of Russia's actions in the region. It fully implements all sanctions imposed by the EU against Russian individuals and companies. Not only did Romania approve of the sanctions since they were first imposed in March 2014, it has also, alongside Poland and the United Kingdom, asked for their toughening at the EU summits in July and August 2014.

Together with Poland and the Baltic countries, Romania has also asked for increased security measures in the region, and it has fully supported and taken part in NATO operations in the region and in the Black Sea. Its air force has conducted joint exercises with the U.S. military, and assisted NATO in its air-policing efforts. The port of Constanta hosted the USS Truxtun and USS Donald Cook during their missions in the Black Sea.79 As a faithful partner of the United States and an active member of NATO, Romania agreed to host elements of the NATO anti-ballistic missile shield that Russia fiercely opposes.

Romania continues to pay close attention to the treatment of minorities in Ukraine, while remaining a consistent supporter of the country's territorial integrity. It is very sensitive to the issue of Romanian minorities in neighboring countries, and to the issue of ethnic minorities in general, as it is not itself a stranger to ethnic tensions.

Source: (Forbrig, 2015)

Statement by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses utter disagreement with the Russian Federation's action to annex the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. This is an illegitimate act and runs counter to the fundamental principles of international law, infringing particularly on the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring Ukraine.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses its concern that the Russian Federation's unilateral decision today to change the international borders is likely to fan the protracted conflicts in the neighbourhood of Romania and implicitly of the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance, risking to impair stability and security in Europe. Consistent with this approach, Romania has permanently pronounced, in a principled manner, in favour of a settlement of all these conflicts, without any differentiation, on the basis of the same criteria – respect for the norms and principles of international law, for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, within their internationally acknowledged borders – and in the framework of negotiations conducted in good faith and in an inclusive format.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs hopes that, in spite of the unilateral decision made today by the Russian Federation in connection with Crimea, dialogue and negotiations between the governments in Kiev and Moscow, also through international mechanisms, can be continued and a solution can be found that should meet the interests and sensitivities of either side and help overcome the current crisis, in keeping with the international law norms and with the wish of the states in Europe to live in peace, stability, security and prosperity.

Source: (Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Slovakia

Euractiv (Reuters) news article

At the start of this week, while the European Union's major powers were keeping up the pressure on the Kremlin over its intervention in Ukraine, Miroslav Lajcak, the foreign minister of EU member Slovakia, headed to Moscow. Without fanfare, he met Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's deputy prime minister, who days earlier had threatened to fly over a NATO state in a bomber jet and who under EU sanctions is banned from entering any country in the bloc. The meeting with Rogozin came several weeks after Slovak diplomats in Brussels had tried and failed to have Rogozin's name kept off the EU's sanctions list, three EU diplomats told Reuters, though the Slovak government has disputed that account. This special relationship with Rogozin is part of an awkward balancing act by Slovakia; preserving the economic benefits of being close to Russia while also belonging to a European Union set on punishing the Kremlin for annexing Ukrainian territory. Slovakia's prime minister, Robert Fico, has been outspoken in his view that trade ties and imports of Russian gas should come before punishing the Kremlin. Lajcak defended his visit, saying he was helping to keep lines of

communication open between Russia and the West. "Slovakia is and wants to be a trustworthy member of the EU and NATO. At the same time, it is interested in proper relations with non-members of these … organisations," he was quoted as saying by Slovak news agency TASR.

Source: (Euractiv, 2014)

Report by the German Marshall Fund of the United States

Led by Prime Minister Robert Fico, Slovakia's center-left government tries to combine two contradictory policy lines toward the Ukrainian crisis. It supports Ukraine's European integration process; but at the same time, it opposes EU sanctions against Russia. Leaders of the parliamentary opposition, including President Andrej Kiska (in office since June 2014), have criticized the government for its uncertain position on developments in Ukraine, including Russia's annexation of Crimea and the support it provides to separatists in Donbass. Fico has been one of the most outspoken opponents of economic sanctions against Russia, not least because of their impact on Slovakia's own economy. Commenting on the conclusion of the EU summit in May 2014 that acknowledged preparatory work on targeted measures against Russia, he said that tougher sanctions would be "suicidal" and "nonsensical''.

The current government supports the Eastern Partnership initiative but stresses that it should not become an anti-Russian project. Slovak pragmatists advocate an EU policy toward Eastern Europe, which prioritizes trade liberalization with Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. They welcome the conclusion of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with Ukraine and support free-trade agreements with Russia and Belarus. However, they do not consider political conditionality, which is a part of any comprehensive EU trade deal with third countries, a factor that should prevent the EU from doing business with Russia or Belarus. The pragmatist line in Slovak policy acknowledges that the country's main trading partner in the region is Russia (bilateral trade reached €8.7 billion in 2013), followed by Ukraine (€1.1 billion) and Belarus (€100 million), while other Eastern neighbors hardly figure.

Source: (Forbrig, 2015)

Statements by the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Minister Lajčák emphasized that Slovakia is a friend of Ukraine. "We are interested in good neighborhood relations, as well as intensive, constructive and mutually advantageous bilateral cooperation," stressed the head of Slovak diplomacy. He also expressed support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. He highlighted that the Slovak Government considers the annexation of Crimea earlier this year to have broken principles of international law.

Source: (Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

"Slovakia and Russia would like to have open and good bilateral relations although it is a fact that we have different views on several international issues. And this is the reason for bilateral communication, as this forms the basis of diplomacy," stated Korčok. EU-Russian relations are currently hampered by the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea. "We would welcome it if Russia and Ukraine searched for a way to meet the Minsk Agreements. This is how to move Russia-EU relations forward, i.e. to go from a monologue to a real exchange of views and goodwill to find a solution even on the issues that divide us," said Korčok.

Source: (Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018)

Slovenia

Slovenia Times news article
Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec will propose for Slovenia to act as a mediator between Russia and the EU over the Ukraine crisis as EU foreign ministers meet over the issue on Monday. Addressing reporters in Naklo (NW) on Sunday, Erjavec expressed concern over the situation in Ukraine. "Slovenia's position is that we must preserve Ukraine's integrity and sovereignty," he said, urging a peaceful resolution of the crisis. "Slovenia's position is that it is necessary to find an appropriate solution through political dialogue because a war in this region would mean a disaster for the stability of Europe and wider." "Our position there will be that it's necessary to find a solution through political dialogue and diplomacy and that it's an imperative to preserve Ukraine's integrity," Erjavec said, warning against the possibility of Ukraine's disintegration as a "black scenario". Erjavec expects the ministers will also discuss how to provide a financial aid to Ukraine as soon as possible. "The estimate is that Ukraine would need between 25 and 35 billion dollars at the moment."

Source: (Slovenia Times, 2014)

EU-28 Watch report
On the one hand, Slovenia strongly supports Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty and reiterates that the conflict in Eastern Ukraine should be solved peacefully by the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. Slovenia does not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. In July Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karl Erjavec, visited Ukraine and invited Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to pay a visit to Slovenia. Poroshenko accepted the invitation saying that the two countries entertain special relations.

On the other hand, Slovenia strives to maintain good and friendly relations with Russia. Regardless of the current sanctions relating to the events in Ukraine, Russia remains an important business partner of Slovenia. In 2014, Russia was the 7th largest trade partner and the 5th biggest investor in Slovenia. However, sanctions have a significant negative effect on the small and open Slovenian economy. In July, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev visited Slovenia to attend the memorial ceremony at the Russian Chapel under the Vršič Pass built by Russian World War I prisoners engaged in forced labour. The chapel serves as both a war memorial and a symbolic link between Slovenia and Russia.

Following the memorial ceremony, the Prime Ministers discussed the possibilities for stronger bilateral economic and cultural cooperation and agreed that it would be in the mutual interest of all to lift sanctions. Delegations agreed and signed a three-year cooperation programme in culture, research, education, and sport; cooperation programmes in healthcare and justice; and a memorandum of understanding regarding economic cooperation in third countries. Additionally, a memorandum of understanding on renewable energy resources was signed.

Source: (Požgan, 2015)

Statements by Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
In today's statement, Minister Erjavec expressed concern over the situation in Ukraine. "Slovenia's position is that the integrity and inviolability of Ukrainian borders need to be maintained," pointed out the Minister, adding that it was necessary to find a proper solution through political dialogue. A

war in this region would be a catastrophe undermining the stability not only in Europe but also beyond. On Monday, Slovenian Foreign Minister is attending an extraordinary meeting of EU foreign ministers. In addition to the preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, Minister Erjavec will speak in favour of a more active dialogue with the Russian Federation. He has announced that due to its positive relations with the Russian Federation, Slovenia would offer to act as an intermediary between the EU and the RF. According to Minister Erjavec an armed conflict in the Crimean Peninsula can still be avoided. "I believe that we have not yet come to a point where the diplomacy would be unable to prevent a conflict," he said.

Source: (Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

As underlined by the Ministry, the referendum held on Sunday, 16 March 2014, on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was contrary to the Ukrainian constitution and international law. In compliance with the above, Slovenia does not recognise its results and related decisions. Procedures conducted by the Russian Federation with a view to annexing the Autonomous Republic of Crimea are a violation of the basic international legal principles regulating relations in the modern international community. The Foreign Ministry also condemns today's use of force, which claimed the life of a Ukrainian soldier, and the taking over of Ukrainian institutions in Crimea. We urge the Russian Federation to abstain from any further actions that might cause a further deterioration in the situation in Ukraine.

Source: (Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Spain

The Local news article

Spain's foreign minister on Wednesday urged his Russian counterpart to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity after Russia said it had no authority over pro-Moscow forces that have taken control of the Crimean peninsula. Foreign Minister José Manual García Margallo also stressed the need for dialogue and cooperation during talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Madrid. Spain's top diplomat recognized Russia's key role in international affairs and said he hoped "fruitful dialogue" to end the crisis in Ukraine. He also reiterated Spain's backing of EU sanctions, agreed upon during an emergency meeting in Brussels on Wednesday. "We want the situation to calm down and we want a de-escalation," said Margallo. "Russia and the EU have to come to an understanding, they are very important players in international life," he concluded.

Source: (The Local, 2014)

European Council of Foreign Relations – expert paper

Madrid is widely considered to be one of the European capitals most receptive to the Kremlin. For observers of Spanish foreign policy, the question is no longer whether Madrid is pro-Russian or not, but why Spain sounds so pro-Russian. And the question has no obvious or easy answer. Bilateral economic relations, although promising in some sectors, are not particularly deep. Political and diplomatic relations are fluent but neither special nor strategic. The answer is to be found elsewhere, in a combination of long-term and short-term factors. Even those implementing the policies do not seem to have a conclusive argument to explain Spain's pro-Russian stance.

Spain's low profile throughout the Ukraine crisis has been the result of its traditionally low interest in Eastern Europe, the preeminent role of economic issues in its current foreign agenda, and the focus on its bid for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for the 2015-2016 period, which discouraged it from taking potentially controversial initiatives and was resolved in October 2014. Besides, since the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008, Spain has had to bear a heavy economic burden leading it to abandon previous attempts to develop a more proactive foreign policy.

The three sanctions packs on Russia adopted by the EU have so far had a very limited impact on Spain and on Russian companies with a presence in the country. Antonio Sánchez Andrés estimates that the real impact in annual trade will be €500 million. The Spanish government's main concern at this stage is that the impact will be concentrated in the agriculture and livestock sector of three regions (Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia). The unaffected companies (mainly large ones in the energy and infrastructure sectors) fear a potential fourth pack of sanctions, and Madrid is likely to oppose adamantly any effort to impose further punitive measures.

Source: (Pedro, 2014)

Statement by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In its efforts to support and assist the process of strengthening democracy, and as a clear expression of its commitment to fostering and protecting human rights and democratic values, Spain dispatched an observer to the Military Verification Mission in Ukraine and is now taking part in the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission through various monitors. Should the mission be extended, this participation may well increase.

Spain is aware of the need for all member countries of the OSCE to support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and of the entitlement of each European country to decide on its own destiny pursuant to the Helsinki Final Act. In this regard, the European Union's decision not to recognise the effects of the so-called "referendum" in Crimea, given its illegal and unconstitutional nature, is another show of support for Ukraine. Spain will continue working to find political and diplomatic solutions to the present crisis.

On several occasions Spain has also pointed out the desirability of continuing with the ongoing political and diplomatic efforts and political dialogue with Russia, with a view to keeping the door open to reaching agreements. In this regard, the OSCE – of which both Ukraine and Russia are members – is playing a fundamental role in creating confidence-building measures to help reduce tensions and avoid an escalation of the current crisis.

Source: (Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

Sweden

Radio Sweden news article

The European Union imposed sanctions Monday afternoon against nearly two dozen people for their part in the weekend referendum that saw Crimea vote to become part of Russia, Reuters reports. Foreign Minister Carl Bildt was in Brussels and took part in the meeting where foreign ministers from the political bloc levied travel bans and asset freezes against 21 people in Russia and Crimea. "The EU does not recognise the illegal 'referendum' and its outcome," the EU Council wrote in a statement.

"EU repeats call for Russia to immediately withdraw its forces in Ukraine back to pre-crisis numbers and garrisons," Bildt said on Twitter. "We will never accept somebody tearing off pieces from countries by force. That is fundamentally unacceptable in every way and will never be accepted or recognised," the foreign minister added in a later interview. "We've always had the policy of wanting to keep channels open. We had the exact discussion after the Georgian war, including foreign ministers, that we normally keep it out of this," Carl Bildt said to news agency TT.

Source: (Radio Sweden, 2014)

EU-28 Watch report

The Swedish government is strongly critical towards Russian aggression against Ukraine, including the illegal annexation of Crimea and other activities in the area. The provocative way in which Russian military forces behave around the Baltic Sea, violating the territory of Sweden and other countries, is another reason for Swedish criticism. Among them are also the increased numbers of intelligence operations and activities to influence countries in the region as well as the simulated attacks made by Russian aircraft against the Stockholm area and southern Sweden. A submarine hunt in October of 2014, in the Stockholm archipelago, resulted in confirmation of the presence of a small foreign submarine. While no country was named by the authorities, the conclusion of analysts was that its origin was in all probability Russian.

The Russian activities have had a strong impact on Swedish defence politics. They have led to a strengthening of ongoing and planned increases in defence capabilities centred on territorial defence and with a particular focus on the island of Gotland, seen as particularly vulnerable. It has also brought on increased defence cooperation with other countries, in particular Finland, as well as NATO.

Source: (Herolf, 2015)

Statement by Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

It has been our ambition to contribute to peace, freedom and stability. But we are now forced to deal with serious crises on several fronts. I am deeply concerned about developments in Russia. The act of aggression that Russia has committed against Ukraine is the greatest challenge to European peace and security since the end of the Cold War. This is accompanied by a propaganda machine in full gear. We have together agreed the fundamental rules that must apply to European peace and security. These must also apply to Moscow, now and in the future. The right of all countries to determine their own future must be respected. We therefore insist on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. The current cease-fire and the continued discussions in the Trilateral Contact Group are steps in the right direction towards achieving the purpose of the Minsk agreements: withdrawal of all Russian troops and military equipment, and re-establishment of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including Ukraine's full control of its border. The EU needs to stick together to hinder and contribute to make more costly any form of Russian aggression. We must also stand firm in the face of Russian trade sanctions and intimidation, despite the economic pain. And we will remain one of the most ambitious countries in our efforts to help Ukraine succeed. The success of the Ukrainian reform process is of enormous strategic importance to Ukraine, to the broader region and to the EU. In at least three areas, the EU and its Member States could do more: additional financial support, support of energy reforms and support to reforms needed for visa liberalisation. At the same time, we must maintain both our bilateral relations and the EU's contacts

with Russia. It is, after all, our largest neighbour. We cannot give up on people-to-people contacts with Russia.

Source: (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014)

United Kingdom

The Guardian news article

The British foreign secretary, Philip Hammond, has defended the government against accusations that it has taken a back seat in negotiations with Russia to find a solution to the crisis in Ukraine. He told MPs in the Commons the government's   policy was to provide non-lethal assistance to Ukraine and that the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, was best placed to engage in negotiations with the Kremlin. He added that the UK had played a leading role in designing sanctions packages and identifying the individuals, companies and sectors targeted by those sanctions. The shadow foreign secretary, Douglas Alexander, asked Hammond to explain why the UK had "chosen to take such a back seat" in the negotiations, citing comments made last week by General Sir Richard Shirreff – Britain's highest-ranking Nato commander until last year – that David Cameron was a diplomatic irrelevance.

Source: (Perraudin, 2015)

EU-28 Watch report

It is difficult to discern any predominant view in the United Kingdom about future relations with Russia. Current Russian policy towards the Ukraine is generally regarded as brutal and aggressive, but there is little appetite in this country for the taking of military measures to resist this aggression. British military action in Iraq in 2003 is widely regarded as having been a costly failure, making a bad situation worse. This perception colours the approach of current British political leaders to the deployment of military force outside the NATO area. Sympathy for the Ukraine is moreover tempered by a general British belief that political and financial corruption is widespread in that country and unlikely to be eradicated in any near future. It is also widely believed in this country that Russia was provoked in the matter of the Ukraine by the aggressive diplomacy of the European Union. In part, this attitude reflects a desire always to find new reasons to criticize the European Union; in part it is a considered assessment of European diplomacy in the Ukraine over the past two years; in part it reflects the view of a non-negligible minority in this country (not just on the left of the political spectrum) that Britain since the Second World War has behaved ungenerously and aggressively towards its erstwhile Russian allies in that war.

Source: (Donnelly, United Kingdom - The Eastern Neighbours and Russia, 2015)

The view is sometimes expressed that the European Union behaved provocatively towards Russia in the later months of 2013 and the early months of 2014. The leader of UKIP, Nigel Farage, attracted comment, not all of it unfavourable, when he spoke of his admiration for the political effectiveness of Mr. Putin. In general, however, the British government has been happy to co-ordinate its approach to the Ukraine with that of its European partners. This attitude is entirely consistent with traditional British support for the mechanisms of the Eastern European Partnership. It should however be underlined that this Partnership is a matter of much less public interest and concern in the United Kingdom than in many continental European countries.

Source: (Donnelly, United Kingdom, 2014)

Statement by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
The referendum was clearly illegal under the Ukrainian Constitution, which states that the Autonomous Republic of Crimea is an integral constituent part of Ukraine, can only resolve issues related to its authority within the provisions of the Constitution, and that only the Ukrainian Parliament has the right to call such referendums.

What we are actually witnessing is the annexation of part of the sovereign territory of an independent European state through military force. The fall of President Yanyukovych and the change of government in Ukraine was a massive strategic setback for the Russian government, which had made no secret of its desire to prevent Ukraine from moving towards closer association with the EU.

Preparatory work is underway for a third tier of sanctions, including economic and trade measures. The European Council will consider further measures later this week in the light of President Putin's speech today and Russian's actions in recent days. In the British Government we are clear that further measures need to be taken and in the light of President Putin's speech today we will argue at the Council for the strongest position and range of measures on which agreement can be obtained in the European Union.

We are sending technical teams to Kyiv to support reforms to the energy and social security sectors, and to work with them on their business environment and strengthen public financial management. We are also working up UK support for a flexible and rapid funding mechanism to support economic reform, further work on asset recovery, a partnership with Germany on public financial management, support to Parliamentary and local elections and so on.

Source: (UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 2014)

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