

Classical Realist and Norm-Based Constructivist Analysis of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Annexation of Crimea

Dana Tandilashvili

***Abstract:** Classical realism, the dominant theoretical tradition through the Cold War, emphasizes the struggle for power among all nations. The realist approach states that Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea for Russia's own self-interest in gaining more power. In response, many countries view Russia as not trying to work with other nations and wanting to gain power for themselves at all costs. In contrast, norm-based constructivism holds that shared ideas, expectations, and beliefs about appropriate behavior are what give the world structure and stability and that the actions that nations take in the international community, are in response to the situation that they are in. The constructivist thought is that Russia's occupation of Crimea is seen by many other nations as illegal and in violation of international norms and rules but, nonetheless, it is in response to Russia's shared interest and identity with Crimea and the Russian people living there. Researching the phenomenon through these two viewpoints has shown that the theory of classical realism provides an accurate explanation of the reasons behind Russia's decision to invade Ukraine and annex Crimea; the theory of classical realism also explains the international response Russia faced due to their actions in the region.*

Introduction

Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine dominated the news in 2014 and incited divisive debates across nations regarding the annexation. . Through the theoretical approaches of classical realism and norm-based constructivism, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea and the corresponding reaction from the international community can be explored and analyzed. Classical realism and norm-based constructivism do not agree with the reasons behind Russia's presence in the surrounding nations. While norm-based constructivism focuses on social relations that arise among nations based on common norms, classical realism holds that all nations are self-interested and put themselves above any shared interests with other nations. As both theories give reasons for Russia's actions and insight into the reactions of surrounding nations, the classical realist approach that Russia is working in its own self-interest in order to gain influence over the region fits well with Russia's actions in surrounding nations.

Realism

Throughout Russia's history, there have been many examples of Russia acting according to the characteristics of realist thought. Realism holds that the international system is constructed as a set of independent, autonomous actors with competing interests that interact in an anarchy.

The realist syllogism is that interest equals survival and survival is assured when an actor has relative power over other states.¹ Therefore, the interest of all actors is to have relative power. Realism sees the international community as a self-help system, in which each actor can only rely on themselves and their own power to ensure their survival.² In the realist theory, classical realism and neorealism differ in their reasoning behind why actors seek power. Classical realism holds that the desire for power is human nature, while neorealism states that the international system is anarchic and therefore, forces actors to seek power. Classical realists such as Hans Morgenthau, Richard Lebow, and Reinhold Niebuhr view states as akin to all human beings, in that states all have an innate desire to dominate others, which many times leads them to fight wars with one another. Neorealists such as Kenneth Waltz believe that the ultimate end goal of nations is survival and that the structure of the international system forces states to pursue power since they have no other choice if they want to survive. In contrast, classical realists hold that having power over an opponent is an end in itself.

Morgenthau's Realism

In a "Realist Theory of International Relations," Hans Morgenthau writes that the realist view of international relations is that power and survival come above morality and all other interests. He states that political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action, but, nonetheless, there is tension between morality and the requirements of successful political action. Realism holds that, although morality is important to a degree, morality does not come first when making decisions. National security is the most essential factor for decision-making and Morgenthau argues that it is the political morality of states to seek national security.³ His main point is that interest is defined in terms of power, a key point in classical realist theory. Human nature has not changed since the classical philosophies of China, India, and Greece. Therefore, as seeking power was the main interest for actors back then, it is the same today because it is human nature to seek power and aim to dominate others.

Classical Realism

Classical realists such as Richard Lebow see classical realism as a contemporary theory in international relations. In "Classical Realism" in *International Relations Theory: Discipline and Diversity*, Lebow states that classical realism is concerned with questions of order, justice, and change at the domestic, regional, and international levels. It stresses the similarities, instead of the differences, between domestic and international politics and emphasizes the importance of ethics and community in promoting stability. This approach recognizes that communal bonds are fragile and easily undermined by the pursuit of advantage and power by individuals and states.⁴ Thus, although nations may be considered friends, each nation thinks and acts in terms of their

¹D. Vrabic, "International Relations," *Value Inquiry Book Series* 276, (August 2014): 289-290.

²Murielle Cozette, "What Lies Ahead: Classical Realism on the Future of International Relations," *International Studies Review* 10, no. 4 (2008): 667-679.

³Hans Morgenthau, "A Realist Theory of International Politics," Hans J, ed. Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson, Editors, in *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 12.

⁴Richard Lebow, "Classical Realism," ed. Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 60-76.

own interest. The international arena remains a self-help system where states look for opportunities to take advantage of others and survival depends on a state's material capabilities.

Critics of the Realist View

In "The Realist Critique and the Limits of Realism," Edward Hallett Carr writes that politics are made up of two elements, utopia and reality, which are separate and mutually exclusive. There is no greater barrier to clear political thinking than failure to distinguish between ideals, which are utopia, and institutions, which are reality.⁵ For Carr, ideas, purpose and interest form a group that is held together by reason that acts as the focus of the actions that states take. Carr states that the problem with Realism is that it excludes four things, which are essential ingredients of all effective political thinking: a finite goal, an emotional appeal, a right of moral judgement and a ground for action.⁶ Realism can offer nothing but a struggle for power which makes any kind of international society impossible. With classical realism, there is no room for emotional appeal because it is an innate desire to seek power and because the most important thing is to survive. The only way to do so is to gain power- thus, not taking into consideration emotional appeal and moral judgement in relation to the actions taken towards another country.

Constructivism

Whereas realism focuses on states using material factors such as power in order to get ahead, constructivist approaches emphasize the impact of ideas in international relations. Constructivism emerged in the 1980s with an interest in the relationship between immaterial ideas and the physical world, stating that normative structures shape identity, which agents then base their interests and actions on. Constructivists focus on sociality, emphasizing the social dimensions of international relations: norms, rules, and language.⁷ In contrast to realist thinking, constructivists argue that actors do not all have one goal in mind- seeking power and doing anything to achieve it. Instead, they make choices that bring historically, culturally, and politically distinct realities into being. Therefore, international relations is a social construction, one that does not exist independently of human meaning or action. Additionally, whether the system of international relations is cooperative is a function of the historical identities of the actors involved in international relations.

Although the theory of constructivism emphasizes how ideas and identities are created and how these ideas and identities shape the way states understand and respond to the certain situation(s) in which they exist, the three types of constructivist theories differ in the methods that they use.⁸ Rule-based constructivism is based on the linguistics and definitions of rules and how these rules develop systems that guide and constrain the actions of agents. Therefore, we see

⁵Edward Hallet Carr, "The Realist Critique and the Limits of Realism," ed. Phil Williams, Donald M. Goldstein, and Jay M. Shafritz, in *Classic Readings of International Relations*, First Edition (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1939), 31-34.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Karin Fierke, "Constructivism," ed. Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 187-204.

⁸Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* (1992): 391.

constructivism at play when we research why certain people broke rules or followed them and what that means for the international community. Social Constructivism shows the effects of social variables on the formation of agents and structures in an attempt to explain and predict future international behavior. Norm-based constructivism traces the development of international norms and shows how social systems and structure are norm-based systems that account for the constitution and behavior of agents. Moreover, the ontology of norm-based constructivism is that social relations are embedded in social norms and norms are created when a sufficient number of agents accept and adhere to the norm, or rule of behavior.

Analysis of Norm-Based Constructivism

In “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” Margaret Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink define norms as a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity. The two different types of categories of norms are regulative norms, which order and constrain behavior, and constitutive norms, which create new actors, interests, or categories of action.⁹ Finnemore and Sikkink propose that rules become norms when a large number of agents accept and adhere to them. Norms are important in the international arena because they regularize behavior and often limit the range of choices that actors can take. Shared ideas, expectations, and beliefs about appropriate behavior are what give the world structure and order. Finnemore and Sikkink introduce the Norm Life Cycle, which explains that norm influence can be understood in a three step process: norm emergence, norm cascade- broad norm acceptance, and internalization. Norm emergence is persuasion by the norm entrepreneurs to attempt to convince as many states as possible to embrace the certain new norm that has been developed. The second stage is when norm leaders attempt to socialize other states to become norm followers, allowing the norm to spread through the rest of the population. Lastly, norm internalizing occurs and the norm becomes widely accepted and internalized by actors.¹⁰ After this cycle, the norm will take on its function of regularizing behavior of actors and therefore bringing stability and order.

In the chapter “Constructivism”, K.M. Fierke writes that to construct something is to bring into being an object that would not exist otherwise. This is seen in international relations with alliances and international institutions that take specific cultural, historical, and political forms that are a product of human interaction.¹¹ Unlike traditional theories of international relations, such as realism, constructivism focuses on the change at the international level, instead of the sameness of states. Furthermore, Fierke writes that the constructivist approach focuses on exploring how identities, actions, and human suffering are constructed through interactions among nations. Thus, the questions that arise are how actors engage with one another, how they define themselves and others, and how this shapes the boundaries of the world within which they act. While a realist would highlight the competitive nature of states because of the system of anarchy, a constructivist would emphasize on how, in a particular context, actors came to define their relationship in negative terms and they would see more potential for transforming the relationship into a better one.

⁹Martha Finnemore and Sikkink Kathryn. International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. International Organization (1998): 887-917.

¹⁰Ibid, 900.

¹¹Karin Fierke, “Constructivism,” ed. Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 187-204.187-204.

Critics of the Constructivist View

Although agreeing that anarchy exists, Alexander Wendt, a proponent of social constructivism, believes that the social structure of anarchy does not necessarily affect the relationship between friends and foes. In contrast, John Mearsheimer, an offensive realist asserts that in anarchy, states can never be certain that others will not attack them, whether or not they are friends, because every state is self-interested.¹² He claims that alliances are fleeting and never dependable in a self-help system and that the system of anarchy does not allow for regularized behavior. While Constructivists state that international institutions have made great progress in parts of the world, Mearsheimer argues that international institutions have not significantly impacted politics around the world because they are used by states simply to promote their own interests, specifically of security, and institutions are created to push the agenda of the powerful states.¹³ In addition, norm-based constructivism does not directly address the agent structure problem because it assumes that the agent comes first. The structure of a social system is created by the norms that are formed when a critical mass of agents accept and adhere to the norm. Thus, the agent does not create the structure, the norms create it when they are adhered to by a large number of agents. Russia's Intervention in Crimea and Ukraine

The theories of classical realism and norm-based constructivism have different characteristics that provide explanations of international phenomena. The conflict that these theories can both be analyzed to explain is Russia's intervention in Crimea and Ukraine. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 was brought on because of a disagreement between the two countries over Crimea. Located south of the Kherson region in Ukraine and west of the Russian region of Kuba, Crimea is a peninsula on the northern coast of the Black Sea. A history of the area shows that Crimea has had relations with Russia for centuries. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, Crimea became a republic within the USSR. In 1954, it was transferred to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and became an autonomous republic within the newly independent Ukraine in 1991.¹⁴ The right to control Crimea has been one of the factors adding to the ongoing tension between Russia and Ukraine. After Russia's annexation of Crimea, the tension grew into a full scale conflict between the two States, leading to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Conflict on Ukrainian Soil

In late 2013, Ukrainian President Yanukovich declined to sign a trade and cooperation agreement with the European Union. This decision resulted in massive and violent demonstrations in Kiev and other parts of Ukraine.¹⁵ As a result, in February of 2014, President Viktor Yanukovich was removed from office and an interim government was put in place, which was not recognized by Russia. Shortly after, troops started appearing in Crimea and seized control over key military and governmental buildings as well as other strategic facilities. A classical realist would use this example of Russia's actions towards Ukraine as Russia taking the

¹²John Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," ed. Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 78-93.

¹³John Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," ed. Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 78-93.

¹⁴Roy Allison, "Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules," *International Affairs* 90, no. 6. (2014) 1255-1297.

¹⁵Lada L. Roslycky, "Russia's smart power in Crimea: sowing the seeds of trust," *Journal of Southeast European & Black Sea Studies* 11, no. 3 (2011): 299-316.

opportunity to intervene and push through with its influence, seeing the instability in Ukraine.

In March 2014, the Crimean status referendum asked the people of Crimea whether they wanted to join Russia or if they wanted to keep their status as part of Ukraine. The Supreme Council of Crimea stated that the referendum was in response to their stance that the new interim government in Kiev was illegitimate and a large number of people in Ukraine were against President Viktor Yanukovich.¹⁶ Russia supported this referendum and the opinion of the Ukrainians who wanted to join Russia. Following the referendum, the Supreme Council of Crimea and Sevastopol City Council declared independence of Crimea from Ukraine and requested to join Russia. On March 18, the Russian, Crimean, and Sevastopolian leadership signed the Treaty on the Adoption of the Republic of Crimea to Russia, making Crimea an official part of Russia. On March 24, Russian troops seized most of Ukraine's bases in Crimea and Ukrainian troops were transported from their base in Perevalne, Crimea. Russian President, Vladimir Putin, justified his events in Crimea as Russia's moral duty to take care of Russian communities outside of territorial Russia and to respect Crimea's desire to rejoin the motherland. As Russia sees it, Kiev has violated an agreement, according to which Russia accepted an independent Ukraine, provided it did not go along with anti-Russian policy and did not rally with the West.¹⁷ Russia was clearly not happy when it heard of Ukraine's plans to sign a free trade agreement with the European Union, which would allow for Ukraine's slow integration into Europe's economic and military spaces.

Following the split of Crimea from Ukraine, pro-Russian demonstrations took place in the Donbass region of Ukraine which escalated into an armed conflict between the separatist forces and the government of Ukraine. The conflict grew with Russian military vehicles crossing the border into the city of Donetsk in Eastern Ukraine. There had been reports from the Ukrainian military that intensive movement and equipment from Russia was sent to the separatist controlled parts of eastern Ukraine. Russia's actions in the eastern part of Ukraine gave Ukraine no other choice but to arm itself against the Russian military in its state. Ukraine's historical conflicts between Europe and Russia have left the country divided culturally and politically, resulting in a major identity crisis. While western Ukraine is occupied by those speaking Ukrainian and aligning themselves more with the Ukrainian government and towards Europe, eastern Ukraine is dominated by those who share a cultural heritage with Russia.

Reactions of Surrounding Nations, the International Community, and NATO

Besides a few states, such as Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Russia, countries have condemned the Crimean referendum as a breach of Ukrainian sovereignty. The Mejlis of the Crimean Tartar People, the representative body of the Tartars living in Crimea, announced that they will not take part in the referendum and find it illegitimate. The chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis also charged Russia with continually promoting conflict in Crimea to keep Ukraine from pursuing a policy independent of Russia and towards Western influence.¹⁸ The position of the international community, including the European Union and the United States, is that any referendum held by the local government of Crimea without the authority of Ukraine is

¹⁶Marlene Laruelle, "Russia as a 'Divided Nation,' from Compatriots to Crimea: A Contribution to the Discussion on Nationalism and Foreign Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism* (2015): 88.

¹⁷Alexei Moiseev, "Concerning Certain Positions on the Ukrainian Issue in International Law," *Russian Politics & Law* (2015): 47-60.

¹⁸Roy Allison, "Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules," *International Affairs* 90, no. 6. (2014) 1255-1297.

unconstitutional and illegitimate. Thus, the United National General Assembly resolution was adopted that declared the referendum invalid and affirmed Ukraine's territorial integrity.¹⁹ In addition, all member states of the European Union deemed the separation of Crimea from Ukraine to be unacceptable under international law and they saw the referendum as manipulated by Russia and contrary to international and Ukrainian law. NATO claimed that the referendum was illegal according to the Ukrainian constitution, which states that questions of altering the territory of Ukraine are resolved exclusively by an all-Ukrainian referendum. On March 16, the Foreign Ministry in Georgia released a statement expressing that it does not recognize the referendum because it occurred amid pressure from Russian armed forces and was in defiance of the universally recognized norms and principles of international law, with complete disregard for the Ukrainian national laws.

Classical Realist Analysis of the Conflict in Crimea and Ukraine

Norm-based constructivist and classical realist theory can be used to analyze the crisis between Russia and Ukraine, each theory giving different reasoning behind why the conflict started, and the implications that it has brought to the nations involved and the international community. Russia's annexation of Crimea would be seen by realists as an assertion of power by Russia and an attempt to increase power in pursuit of self-interest. Classical realism affirms that states have an innate desire to dominate others and Russia is following that school of thought, because they are allowing themselves to get into a conflict with Ukraine for the purpose of bringing Crimea under their wing and increasing their territorial power in the region. It could be argued that Russia's actions align with the view of realist theorist, John Mearsheimer, that great powers seek to expand their military and economic capabilities when the overall benefits outweigh the costs.²⁰ The costs that Russia is facing are dampening its international reputation because many states are against Russia's actions, but Russia is gaining more territorial power and expanding its power in the region nonetheless. Although Russia may continue to suffer economically from the withdrawal of foreign investment and reduced access to the European energy market, these costs must not outweigh the benefits that Russia gets from having Crimea as a member of its nation. In addition, Crimea is of considerable value for the Russians because of its strategic location. Sevastopol, the peninsula's main city, has a port that gives the Russian fleet direct access to the Black Sea, allowing the Russian fleet to maintain its presence in Eurasia.²¹

A moral standard of realism is that a state's primary interest is survival of itself as an Institution of and for its people. Survival requires power over those other states that may pose a threat. Therefore, the ultimate moral obligation of the state is to maintain power relative to those that would threaten the state's existence and its citizens.²² Russia has seen the United States as a threat and is greatly against Ukraine having relations with the West. Russia's growing insecurity could play a role in why Russia is working to increasing its power over surrounding nations. A realist would claim that Russia's annexation of Crimea is to further Russia's interests as a strong

¹⁹Ibid., 1265.

²⁰John Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," ed. Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 78-93.

²¹Stephen Cohen, "US reaction to Russia in Ukraine: Time for Realism and Common Sense on Ukraine," *The Nation* (2014).

²²Michael C. Williams, "Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* (2004): 633.

power in the international community and to deter others, such as the United States from thinking they can go against Russia. The realist theory would also state that President Putin believes that Western interests are to contain Russia's influence internationally and use their own power to increase their influence in the world. Putin did not want to take the chance of losing Ukraine to the US and all the strategic benefits that come from having Crimea under its wing. Therefore, Russia chose to take charge in Crimea, preserving Russia's interests in Ukraine and attempting to keep power in the region. Therefore the realist notion that states pursue security at all costs may be an explanation as to why Russia is pursuing power outside of its own country.

Classical realist theory would also argue that Russia's invasion of Ukraine shows their blatant disregard for Ukraine and its people. President Putin realizes that Russia holds greater power in comparison to Ukraine and therefore acts upon his power without restriction. Realist theorist, Niccolo Machiavelli states that international relations are not concerned by issues of morality. It may hold relative importance between nations of equal power but in terms of superior Russian power over the inferior power of Ukraine, moral objections are irrelevant and this is proven by Russia choices and disregard for Ukraine's Concerns.²³ The loss of control in Ukraine after the ousting of Yanukovich gave Russia the opportunity to invade a weak Ukraine and exert its influence in the region, and taking out the protests by sending tanks into the country. As realists would state, nations can only maintain their independence and power if they are strong enough to deter a foe from invading. Russia, acting in its own state interest, took the opportunity to invade Ukraine because they knew they were stronger and possessed more power than Ukraine.

Norm-Based Constructivist Analysis of the Crisis

In contrast to the realist thought that power is the most important in relations among nations, constructivist theory focuses more on the cultural and historical relations that Russia has with Ukraine. Constructivism's claim that a state's identity and subsequent actions and interests are shaped by social norms, may be used to explain the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Putin has used the sense of Russian identity in Crimea to justify Russia's annexation of the peninsula. For centuries, Crimea Province was part of the Russian Republic until it was transferred to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by Nikita Khrushchev in 1954.²⁴ From a constructivist viewpoint, emotional associations to the territorial identity of a state influence how people understand policy choices. Putin argues that Crimea's cultural links to Russia are stronger than they are to Ukraine and associated his actions in Crimea with emotional attachment and ideas of identity. Therefore, the idea of a strong Russian identity in Crimea may be used to help explain Russia's interest in reclaiming it. Constructivists would look at Russia's actions as identifying with the people living in Crimea and acting according to the historical identities that the people have with one another. President Putin has stated that the steps that were taken by the leadership of Crimea were based on the norms of international law and aimed to ensure the interests of the population of its people. Russia is stating that they have committed no wrongdoing because their act to allow Crimea to be a part of Russia was a proposal from another independent nation.²⁵ In

²³Julian Korab-Karpowicz, "Political Realism in International Relation," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (2013).

²⁴Marlene Laruelle, "Russia as a 'Divided Nation,' from Compatriots to Crimea: A Contribution to the Discussion on Nationalism and Foreign Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism* (2015): 88.

²⁵Alexei. Moiseev, "Concerning Certain Positions on the Ukrainian Issue in International Law," *Russian Politics & Law* (2015): 47-60.

addition, with more than a million Russian-speaking citizens residing in Crimea, Putin focused on the nationalistic and social feelings within Crimea to legitimize his claim. Putin said his action were protecting the Russian population from the insurgency that was arising in Ukraine.

Constructivism affirms that a norm is when a sufficient number of agents accept and adhere to that norm. Therefore, Russia's argument is that Russia is taking into account the expression of the will of the people in Crimea in the referendum of March 2014, adhering to international norms and rules. Russia believes it conforms to international law, using its inalienable right to recognize a state and conclude an international treaty with the mutual agreement of the two parties involved. Furthermore, according to the federal constitutional law of Russia, admission of a foreign state into the Russian Federation shall be affected by mutual agreement of Russia and the interested state, valid in this instance.²⁶ Russia has used the properties of norm-based constructivism to hold that their claim to Crimea is within the boundaries of international rules.

States such as Georgia, the United States, and Ukraine appeal to the fact that Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine are against international rules and norms. Not only are other states against the actions that Russia is pursuing in the region, but they do not accept Russia's supposed reasons for doing so. Russia is acting in a way that is regarded by most of the world as wrong and illegal, thus against the norms of behavior that all nations should abide by in order to promote stability in the world. Constructivism states that the international system is constructed by the rules and norms of those that participate in it. Therefore, whether the system is cooperative or conflictive is a function of the historical identities of the participant.²⁷ Russia, one of the great powers, is fueling the growth of a conflictive system by going against the practices that would keep peace and security in the world. The nation is showing a negative example to others by its annexation of Crimea and forceful entry into Ukraine. Moreover, Russia did not attempt to employ any diplomatic approaches with Ukrainian officials before resorting to occupation, which sets a negative precedent of illegitimate intervention, and adds to the instability in the international community.

Classical Realist Versus Constructivist Analysis

Classical realism and norm-based constructivism each have characteristics that fit well with the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. Realism states that power is the key force driving decisions, while constructivism states that Russia's actions are influenced by its relationship with Ukraine and their identification with the Russian people in Ukraine. Classical realism states that, like any state, Russia wants power and took the opportunity to expand its influence in Crimea and Ukraine.²⁸ Although this may be the case with Russia, there may be more to why Russia wished to expand its influence in Crimea and Ukraine than just the mere fact that Russia wants more power. A part of the reason that Russia wants to gain so much power is to deter the United States from expanding its power across the region, consequently believing that it (the United States) could go against Russia in the future. The international

²⁶Ines Gillich, "Illegally Evading Attribution? Russia's Use of Unmarked Troops in Crimea and International Humanitarian Law," *Vanderbilt Journal Of Transnational Law* 48, no. 5 (2015): 1191-1223.

²⁷Karin Fierke, "Constructivism," ed. Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 187-204.

²⁸Richard Lebow, "Classical Realism," ed. Tim Dunne et al., in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 60-76.

system adds to Russia's desire for power with the fact that, in order to survive, power is essential. Thus, classical realism does not expand on the fact that although Russia may have an innate desire for power, which is seen throughout Russia's past actions, Russia is prompted also its desire to have more relative power than other nations in order to survive.

Although norm-based constructivism gives other reasons for Russia's actions besides the main point of seeking power, its explanation of Russian actions based on identity are not convincing considering Russia's past history. Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 can also be said to have been in response to the threat that the people in South Ossetia were facing from Georgia, when in reality there was no severe threat against the people and no threat that was not there before.²⁹ Why did Russia decide to take severe actions against Ukraine now and annex Crimea, and, why did Russia not take these actions earlier? One possible answer is perhaps Russia did so because it found an opening where Ukraine was weak because of the regime changes and took the opportunity to take control. Moscow identifies with ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine and Crimea for support for coercive action in Ukraine, but these communities were under no real threat. Russia's reasons of identity with the Russian people in Ukraine and Crimea do not offer significant value for the extreme behavior that Russia took against Ukraine and its people.

The aforementioned theories can both be used to explain the reaction that other states have had to Russia's actions on the international front. It is evident that many states oppose Russia's intervention and consider Russia's annexation of Crimea and later invasion of Ukraine as illegal and against international norms and rules of behavior. Both theories are similar in the sense that they would argue that the actions that Russia has taken are seen by the international community as wrong. Specifically, established Western societal and political norms can help to explain the West's opposition of Russia's annexation of Crimea and their subsequent actions directed towards pressuring Russia to withdraw their influence in Ukraine. The US imposed sanctions on Russia that have increased gas prices in Russia's cities, in turn dampening Russia's economy.³⁰ Although this is the case, no other direct measures have been taken to punish Russia for their actions. The United States, while strongly against Russia's position in Ukraine, did not take any severe measures against Russia. Classical realist theorists would argue that this is because it is in the best interest of the United States to not get any more involved than they already are. Americans have no desire nor reason to go to war with Russia over Crimea. Washington did not provide the aid and trade that Ukraine need and the European Union did not have the means to offer Ukraine economic help. Although the United States says they support Ukraine and politically they do, the US is not taking the necessary measures to send full support to Ukraine.³¹ According to realism, the international system is constructed as a set of independent and autonomous actors with competing interests, interacting in an anarchic system. Thus, each nation focuses on their own interests, whether or not they have friends who would gain greatly from their support.

Despite the condemnation of Russia for its actions in Ukraine by most of the international community, Russia was not deterred, because such condemnation did not stop Russia's course of action. The conflict in Ukraine is similar to the war between Russia and Georgia that took place

²⁹Marlene Laruelle, "Russia as a 'Divided Nation,' from Compatriots to Crimea: A Contribution to the Discussion on Nationalism and Foreign Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism* (2015): 88.

³⁰Elena Servettaz, "A Sanctions Primer," *World Affairs* 177, no. 2 (July 2014): 82.

³¹Stephen Cohen, "U.S. reaction to Russia in Ukraine: Time for Realism and Common Sense on Ukraine." *The Nation*, (2014).

in 2008, when Russia invaded the small nation of Georgia, a former satellite of the Soviet Union. Five years later, Russia threatened the territorial integrity of Ukraine, also a former Soviet Union nation, annexing Crimea and supporting separatists in the Eastern part of the country. Although the West and NATO, along with many other countries condemned Russia because of its role in surrounding nations, they did not deter Russia nonetheless. As classical realism would hold, all nations are self-interested and although it would be extremely beneficial to Ukraine, the US is not motivated to get involved any more than they already have. Similarly, NATO's posture with regard to Russian behavior during the 2008 War was not strong enough to deter Russia from again challenging another smaller and weaker surrounding nation. The Ukrainian crisis showed that, since Russia was not deterred in 2008, Russia continued thinking in its own interest and continued to spread their influence in other nations.³² Since in 2008, and then again in 2013, Russia was not stopped from invading other territories, no one can really be certain what course of action Russia will take next. A classical realist perspective would suggest that Russia will continue seeking further influence in surrounding nations. However, who is next in Russia's future sphere of influence? This question could bring grave implications for the future of the international community as a whole, if Russia does continue to act according to classical realist thought.

Although both theories go in depth in explaining the international phenomena, the classical realist theory gives a more accurate analysis of Russia's behavior and goals. The realist approach focuses on the balance of power that can be seen between the West and Russia. The theory argues that in order for the Russian state to survive, it must invade neighboring states to maximize its influence. Russia saw a chance to intervene when there was political instability and took it. Ukraine's decision to consider joining the European Union gave rise to the idea that Ukraine would like to align itself with the West. For this reason, the annexation of Crimea can be best explained by the realist view because, although Russia can use the reasons of attempting to save the Russian people from instability in Ukraine because of shared identities with the Russians living in Crimea, it is clear that Russia benefitted from its support of Crimea's position against Ukraine. Russia felt threatened and focused on its own survival, gaining as much power as they could. Even if such a scenario was not the case, Russia, seeing a chance to invade Ukraine, a weaker and less powerful state, would have taken that chance to invade just like it has done so in the past with Georgia. This tells us that it is human nature to seek power, Russia wants to get as much power as it can in order to expand its area of influence because it is better for its country and people to do so.

As realist theory holds, Russia did not take into account the suffering that its invasion would bring the Ukrainian nation and its people; instead, morality was ignored and power and the attempt at domination was seen as most important. Although norm-based constructivism can be used to demonstrate why the international community is against Russia's actions (because it is against international norms and rules), there is more to it to consider. The world sees that Russia wants to gain influence because the state has done so in the past, for example with Georgia. Therefore, it is clear that Russia's main interest is power and influence over others. The fact that states recognize that Russia wants to seek power and is not simply attempting to help the people in Crimea is evident in the reaction that other states had to Russia's behavior in the region.

As realists state that actors focus on their own gains, Russia may see the gains from its position with Crimea as another reason to continue its international agenda. The naval port of Sevastopol is essential to Russia's naval power because it is the main method of expanding

³²William Varettoni, "Crimea's Overlooked Instability," *Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2011 2011): 87.

Russia's global military power through the Mediterranean and beyond. Ukrainian military experts have argued that the structure, size and armaments of the Russian forces in the Crimean peninsula indicate Russian long-term planning with the southern regions of mainland Ukraine in mind, and that if Putin had doubted the Russian ability to gain control over Ukrainian settlements then there would have been no annexation of Crimea in the first place.³³ Therefore, one can see that Russia knew it would gain more influence and power from their annexation of Crimea, and took the opportunity to receive all of the benefits.

³³Roy Allison, "Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules," *International Affairs* 90, no. 6. (2014) 1255-1297.

Bibliography

- Allison, Roy. "Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules." *International Affairs* 90, no. 6. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, 1255-1297.
- Carr, Edward Hallet. *The Realist Critique and the Limits of Realism*. Chapter 7 in Phil Williams, Donald M. Goldstein, and Jay M. Shafritz. Editors. *Classic Readings of International Relations*. First Edition. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1939), 31-34.
- Cohen, Stephen. "U.S. reaction to Russia in Ukraine: Time for Realism and Common Sense on Ukraine." *The Nation* (2014).
- Cozette, Murielle. "What Lies Ahead: Classical Realism on the Future of International Relations." *International Studies Review* 10, no. 4 (December 2008): 667-679. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.
- Fierke, Karin. *Constructivism*. Tim Dunne et al. Editors. *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 187-204.
- Finnemore, Martha, & Sikkink Kathryn. *International Norm Dynamics and Political Change*. *International Organization*, (1998): 887-917.
- Gillich, Ines. "Illegally Evading Attribution? Russia's Use of Unmarked Troops in Crimea and International Humanitarian Law." *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 48, no. 5 (November 2015): 1191-1223. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.
- Korab-Karpowicz, Julian. *Political Realism in International Relation*. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (2013).
- Laruelle, Marlene. *Russia as a "Divided Nation," from Compatriots to Crimea: A Contribution to the Discussion on Nationalism and Foreign Policy*. *Problems of Post-Communism*, (2015): 88.
- Lebow, Richard. *Classical Realism*. Tim Dunne et al. Editors. *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 60-76.
- Mearsheimer, John. *Structural Realism*. Tim Dunne et al. Editors. *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 78-93.
- Moiseev, Alexei. *Concerning Certain Positions on the Ukrainian Issue in International Law*. *Russian Politics & Law*, (2015): 47-60.
- Morgenthau, Hans. *A Realist Theory of International Politics*. Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson, Editors. *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 12.
- Servettaz, Elena. "A Sanctions Primer." *World Affairs* 177, no. 2 (July 2014): 82. MasterFILE

Premier, EBSCOhost.

Oguz, Safak. "NATO'S mistakes that paved the way for Russia- Ukraine Crisis." *Journal Of Black Sea Studies* 12, no. 45 (March 2015): 1-12. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

Varettoni, William. "Crimea's Overlooked Instability." *Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2011): 87. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost.

Vrabic, D. "International Relations" *Value Inquiry Book Series*. 276, (August 2014): 289-290. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.

Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization*. JSTOR Journals, EBSCOhost, (1992): 391.

Williams, Michael C. "Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization*, 2004., 633, JSTOR Journals, EBSCOhost.