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**Supervisor: Michiel Foulon**

**Student Name: Vasileios – Ioannis Tsimpidaros**

**Student Number: 1838865**

**Email: v.i.tsimpidaros@umail.leidenuniv.nl**

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## **Abbreviations**

- CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy
- CJEU: Court of Justice of the European Union
- EEAS: European Union External Action Service
- EU: European Union
- FPA: Foreign Policy Analysis
- IR: International Relations
- NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- UN: United Nations
- USA: United States of America

## I. Introduction

The present thesis seeks to provide an answer to the Research Question “How can Constructivism explain the collective decision taken by the European Union (EU) to impose economic sanctions towards the Russian Federation (Russia) after the latter’s involvement in Ukraine with the annexation of Crimea?”. The selected timeframe of the analysis will refer to the first round of economic sanctions implemented on 17 March 2014 by the EU, lasting six months. This thesis will attempt to provide an analysis of the functions of various interconnected factors leading to the decision taken by EU. For this purpose, the Constructivist approach of International Relations (IR) will be used, since the value of an assessment on that basis, draws on the fact that there have been few attempts to analyse EU foreign policy strategy and incentives behind this particular decision-making process by utilising a Constructivist approach. Since the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia, it would appear that the EU attempts to present itself as a united actor. The adoption of a common EU stance originating from its commitment, as stated in its official sanctions documents, to its Collective Identity and Shared Values, presents an interesting case if further analysed through the Constructivist lenses.

The importance of the topic and research question is that they will endeavour to provide a comprehensive interpretation of a foreign policy decision, using Constructivism as a structural approach, instead of positivist IR theories, as Realism, Liberalism and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). It will attempt to analyse the actions of the EU, yet not merely looking through the material incentives and prerequisites as other IR theories suggest. The analysis focuses on the role of basic Constructivist elements, as identities, values and interests, in conceptualising EU foreign policy decision-making process. In order to study these concepts, Constructivism provides a methodological toolkit which can assist in the analysis. The Constructivist approach is also important since, apart from its theoretical framework of analysis, fits in explaining the specific topic respectively. Inherent structural characteristics of the EU, such as the construction of “European Identity” and its “Shared Values” facilitate a constructivist analysis. The approach does not focus entirely on material interests and self-help imperatives, but entails a substantial

explanatory ability regarding the endurance of institutions. Constructivism can assist in producing an interpretation of the topic and an answer to the research question.

The case study of this thesis concerns a collective action on part of EU member states, which reached, for the first time in EU history, a consensus on foreign policy. This and the decision it led to, is contended in this thesis, illustrating the realisation of Constructivism as an interpretation. The analysis of this decision process aims at reflecting and reaffirming the constructivist approach primarily concerning the non-materiality of interests. Particularly, this thesis will attempt to demonstrate how non-material interests were put forward (i.e. EU Identity & Shared Values) and how the actors coordinated their decision in view of these concepts. The case study displays how constructivist elements were invoked by the EU in its official documents, rather than specifying other reasons. More specifically, EU concern about regional security in general was clothed under the threat of ideational factors, such as EU Identity and Shared Values. On the other hand, these ideational factors encapsulate a materialistic side, which is also equally important. The EU has also invested in these ideational factors in a materialistic way, by projecting them as an indispensable element of its existence and by promoting them domestically, yet most importantly externally. Therefore, the justification and the reasons leading to the imposition of economic sanctions will contend to have been inspired by concepts adhering to the constructivist approach.

When Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich decided not to proceed in closer cooperation with the EU, his decision led to demonstrations in Kiev. His decision to suppress them and regain control, culminated in the deterioration of the situation. Protests intensified and when clashes with the police culminated in civilian casualties, the protesters set new goals such as fighting governmental corruption. Ultimately, Yanukovich was forced to flee to Russia, and a coalition government arose out of the opposition, agreeing to hold new elections on 25 May 2013. Russia's decision to invade and annex the Crimean peninsula and hold referendums in the Eastern part of Ukraine where the majority of population was Russian-speaking, eventually split the country and escalated the crisis into civil war. The EU, along with

USA, decided to impose economic sanctions against Russia in relation to its involvement in the crisis, actions and role in Ukraine.

In order to prove an answer to the research question, this thesis will use the following structure. Firstly, it will consist of a Literature Review, which will comprise research findings concerning the main concepts of the research question. This Literature Review will provide the normative founding upon which the main analysis will be built. A section of Methodology will analyse how this research is conducted, how the findings will be assessed and how the theoretical tools can be applied in order to display the validity of the academic findings.

The thesis is divided as follows: The first two chapters deal with the analysis of constructivist notions of collective identity and common ideas as they exist within the case of EU and the gravity they hold within the institutions decision-making process. Specifically, the first chapter concerns the construction and the role of the concept of “European Identity” in the case study. According to the constructivist approach the construction of Identities is a fundamental concept in explaining international affairs and a driving force in decision-making. The second chapter is devoted to analysing the adoption of “Shared Values” and their impact on EU decision to impose economic sanctions against Russia. The third chapter will assess EU Sanctions under a constructivist approach and will focus on the case study at hand: examination and analysis of the common EU interests and ideational core domains, rather than material interests of individual member states. The empirical observations will link with the normative propositions, hence establishing the causality link. The last part of the thesis will be a final conclusion, summarising the most important findings and recapitulating the evidence, which will demonstrate the theoretical and practical cogency of the research, as a whole.

## II. Literature Review

According to the EU External Action Service (EEAS) official document (2016), economic sanctions are foreign policy tools employed to promote EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) objectives. The objectives mentioned in the document are “peace, democracy and respect for the rule of law, human rights and international law”. The economic measures are part of a broad strategy including political discourse and harmonising efforts, and designed to alter policies or activities by the target countries or individuals. EU economic sanctions are implemented along with UN relative decisions which, if necessary, can be imposed unilaterally by the institution. Finally, economic sanctions are always imposed through a CFSP Council decision implemented with unanimity. The document states that these sanctions were imposed on Russia “in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine”.

Sjursen and Rosén (2017) argue that EU action of sanctions against Russia regarding the Ukraine case was indeed a result of breach values and norms, as conceived by the EU. Its foreign policy is driven not solely by material interests and concern for security, nor by institutionalisation of the norm of cohesion. The driving force behind the EU decision was the member states commitment to protecting EU Shared Values in Ukraine. The decision to impose economic sanctions was not just a momentary reaction to Russian aggression, but the outcome of the institutionalisation regarding the norm of collaboration amongst EU member states. The divergence of interests between member states did not matter for a common response. On the contrary, they argued what would be the ideal reaction, instead of a basic compromise. According to their logic, the imposition of economic sanctions was a reaction to an emergency which in turn, indicates a long-term altering of European structures with regard to the concept of security, instead of a modification and challenge of EU power. Their findings coincide with the constructivist approach that reality is constructed through the use and apprehension of socially constructed concepts such as norms and values.

Gehring et al. (2017) examine the stance of EU when faced with the Ukrainian crisis. They argue that EU constitutes an actor, with high market power and low security capabilities. The fact that the institution is able to use its market power in order to achieve high-politics objectives, its institutionalised external relations may be the cause for opposing security interests of other actors. EU member states foreign policies were not of utter importance throughout the handling of the Ukrainian crisis. Rather, EU acted separately from its member states, as a single actor. Its response was actually a result of intensely rooted features of its institutional structure. EU actions may generate external reactions from other actors, which make the institutions incapable of delivering solutions and guidelines. The authors treat the EU as a major market power, not a conventional one. This is due to the fact that it does not possess military capabilities, as a single unit. The latter constitutes the EU as a normative-civilian power which, in turn, coordinates any collective action taken from its member states. Still, EU can influence the security interests of other actors, in this case Russia, by employing its market power to exercise coercion, i.e. economic sanctions. Additionally, it can use its aforementioned power to appeal to smaller states using positive economic motivations, thus establishing itself a regional hegemon in Europe. Consequently, EU low-politics objectives generated a threat to Russian interests in Ukraine whilst challenging Russian hegemony in the region. The imposition of sanctions was the type of response one would expect from a non-conventional military power, such as the EU. Nonetheless, the employment of EU market power in Ukraine, initiated a struggle between the former and Russia. What was meant to be a focus on economic and political reforms in Ukraine caused a power struggle in the region.

Karolewski and Cross (2017) hold the view that EU response to Russia by imposing economic sanctions shows that its move to annex Crimea was actually targeted against the EU. Its collective decision to impose sanctions constitutes it as a single actor. The unity, shown through this decision took Russia by surprise. It solidified and rendered more reliable the conduct of EU foreign policy. Nonetheless, this unity did not practically reinforce EU foreign policy institutionally. The norm of collaboration between EU member states provide a framework where future crises



would be dealt with similarly. The norm of collaboration within the EU structure renders the institution to be all the more foreseeable in any future outside challenges, or crises of such magnitude. Overall, confronted with the Ukraine crisis, EU acted as a single actor, through its institutions, by utilising a multifaceted approach. Russian attempts to put at risk EU common Identity and Shared Values, by attempting to split the EU member states, did not succeed. This was due to the institution's promptness and ability to employ all its foreign policy tools. For this reason, the authors assert that the normative character of the EU had an effect on the decision-making progression.

According to Lomtadze (2015), the use of economic sanctions against Russia was primarily driven by security concerns on behalf of the EU. The imposition of sanctions was due to a clash of European and Russian identities. Whereas EU identity was based on western values, thus affecting the conduct of its foreign policy, especially regarding security interests, Russian identity was built around the concept of regional post-Soviet countries still in its sphere of influence, thus intolerant to western involvement in Ukraine. Lomtadze stresses the importance of EU unity in imposing sanctions, and emphasises the role of material interests between Ukraine and EU, namely the signing of an Association Agreement.

In the same spirit, Hopf (2016) regards the imposition of EU sanctions on Russia the result of different identities. Russian identity, as opposed to European, is regarded as separate from Western standards and values. EU sanctions were imposed in order to reduce the level of Russian hegemony in Eastern Europe. Similarly, history and especially Russia's soviet past explain its involvement in Ukraine, since it is regarded as an undisputed part of Russia's sphere of influence. The improvement of EU-Ukrainian relations signalled Russian intervention and EU response, through sanctions.

On the other hand, Mouritzen (2017) follows a realist approach, as he asserts that the EU cannot be examined as a unified actor and proceeds to examine the crisis from certain member states point of view. The fact that there was a collective response by EU was solely in order to project power through unity. The

imposition of economic sanctions on Russia was in the framework of the balance of power concept and a part of a balancing strategy. History was also a major factor that led the EU to swiftly respond to Russian aggression, so as to avoid past mishandling of similar situations, such as the Russia-Georgian war of 2008.

Davis (2016) analyses the sanctions regime against Russia within the framework of economic and military power together with the use of economic warfare as a balancing factor between opponents. He examines European sanctions and their economic, military and political effects, concluding that the imposition of sanctions was primarily a chain of events such as the annexation of Crimea, conflicts in east Ukraine and finally the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17. He considers the sanctions as outcome of past military expenditure by western countries (NATO, USA, EU), which contributed in bringing security and balance between the West and Russia in the European region. European expansionism, through the European Neighbourhood Policy and Europe Association Agreements, drove Russia to reconsider and alter its security strategy by 2000.

The House of Lords Report (2015), on the Ukraine crisis states that the sanctions against Russia primarily displayed unity within the EU. Prior to sanctions, the EU attempted to negotiate with Russia on closer cooperation regarding Ukraine. Nonetheless, Russian intransigence was the cause of the sanctions regime. The decision to impose sanctions was effective since it set aside the divergent interests of EU member states and simultaneously clearly demonstrated European interests to Russia. EU objective was to limit Russian support to military separatist groups in eastern Ukraine, and deter Russia on any future attempts for similar actions. Sanctions were also useful in altering the balance of power in the region. Their introduction aimed at forcing president Putin to enter negotiations with the EU. Finally, the report concludes that sanctions need to be part of a more general strategy along with diplomacy through constructive dialogue. This demonstrates the character of the report since it considers the sanctions merely as a tool of pressure regarding the shift of power balances in the region.

Brzoska (2015) also deals with the topic in a similar manner by stating that sanctions are an intermediary between harsh language and war. Their imposition in the present is an automated response to any crisis that emerges, and that the Ukrainian crisis was not an exception to this rule. He adopts the realist stance, where power perspective is vital. By imposing sanctions, the rational actor, through a cost-benefit analysis, seems to pick the least costly option, in order to display strength of will.

Fennelly (2015) deals with the economic sanctions against Russia from a legal perspective. He refers to the forms of sanctions and their effectiveness and considers that their imposition, as part of economic statecraft, is not subject to any formal centralised system when international law is violated. EU integration in all institutional forms has intensified over time. The use of economic sanctions reflects EU homogeneity and the unity portrayed through its foreign policy, thus providing the institution to act autonomously when imposing sanctions. Following this logic, the EU eventually uses the option of sanctions by aiming to “Europeanise” them. Finally, since EU sanctions share the same legal basis and are decided and imposed through similar legal instruments, the Ukraine case is in general apt across all EU sanctions.

Mastanduno (2016) studies the use of economic sanctions as part of economic statecraft by using FPA as well as their effectiveness. Sanctions are used to achieve key foreign policy objectives. Part of these objectives is to alter the domestic policy of the target country, to influence its foreign policy, to affect the capabilities of a country, or eventually bring regime change to the target country. EU uses economic statecraft within the framework of its enlargement by promising third countries economic rewards in order to achieve domestic and foreign policy objectives with its neighbours. With this in mind, the EU imposed sanctions on Russia to achieve foreign policy objectives. Mastanduno concludes that despite their popularity, economic sanctions are unlikely to succeed.

Cox and Drury (2006) adopt a liberalistic approach on the use of restrictive economic measure, i.e. economic sanctions. Within the democratic peace theory

literature, main focus has been on militarised conflicts and disputes. Democracies are more likely to use economic sanctions, due to their “democratic nature”. They are more prone to sanction other types of regimes, yet it is not rare for democracies to sanction each other. When trade between two states increases, so does the likelihood of using economic coercion. Liberal democracies tend to employ economic coercion under shared values and norms, meaning that sanctions are employed when liberal values such as respect to human rights, democratisation and international law are violated.

Following that logic, Raik (2016) stresses the importance of liberal interdependence that liberal democracies and institutions, such as EU, adopt. According to this concept, trade has a positive effect on security: increased trade dictates an intensification of international norms and institutions. The fact that Russia cannot be described as a fully democratic state in the eyes of western liberal democracies is the driving force behind the imposition of sanctions by EU. The Ukraine crisis was partly due to Russia regarding EU support for democratic reforms in Eastern Europe as meddling in its sphere of influence. The imposition of sanctions questions the concept of economic interdependence, and did not contribute to further peace and cooperation between the two actors. Indeed the EU responded to the Ukrainian crisis, primarily due to security concerns and material incentives, such as the energy sector. Yet, Raik concludes that if the Ukraine crisis should be defined as a geopolitical conflict, the EU has lost, since it acknowledged that liberal ideas and values along with relations based on norms and cooperation are no longer valid. Thus, the imposition of economic sanctions is due to EU persistence to the idea of exporting its liberal values and norms.

Nováky (2015) holds the view that the EU decision for sanctions was part of a larger geopolitical agenda; i.e. a soft balance approach towards Russia. He deals with the EU as an institution with divergent interests, policies and objectives, concluding that the economic measures against Russia were purely symbolic. The EU not only lacked any hard balance approach abilities, but the divergence of interests between member states led to sanctions as the only viable option. Whereas the sanctions were imposed in settling the Ukraine conflict, they belong to a greater EU

strategic approach. Apart from sanctions, this entails additional measures, aiming at increasing the level of Ukraine resistance and providing the necessary support to the Ukrainian government and people. Nováky identifies two explanations regarding EU response to the Ukrainian crisis: a) the liberal approach (EU foreign policy driven by domestic interests of the member states) and b) the institutionalist explanation (EU institutions responsible for the conduct of foreign policy). The two approaches can be categorised as bottom-up and top-down respectively.

Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira (2015) suggest EU response to the Ukrainian crisis was swift showing support and solidarity to Ukraine. This crisis was a test for EU political and diplomatic abilities facing a crisis of such magnitude. Although the EU was dependent on Russia, in terms of material interests, such as the energy sector, the institution adopted an intergovernmental driven “Russia-first policy”. However, as events unfolded and the crisis escalated the EU adopted harsher measures. Although this can be described as a change of policy, EU response to Russia was two-fold. After Crimea’s annexation, the sanctions regime against Russia followed an inclination to negotiate with Moscow. This means that EU policy towards Ukraine, including the ambiguity regarding the latter’s membership in the Union, was in fact part of a grand strategy regarding EU-Russian relations. That strategy denotes that maintenance of short-term stability in the region would be crucial.

Consequently, the Literature Review provides certain insights for the understanding of the topic and for approaches of the analysis to be used. The aforementioned sources employed constructivist, realist, liberal, institutional and legal arguments. The main clash of these IR theories and Constructivism as observed through this Review, revealed that the element of materiality, a fundamental element of the realist theory, seems to precede constructivist normative interpretations given to the economic sanctions.

However, these theories do not holistically explain, through their materialistic accounts, EU collective action and all the driving forces behind it. Thus, the research question revisits the sanctions in an effort to counter this materialistic

approach utilized on most sources or underlining even constructivist normative interpretations. This thesis will attempt to illustrate that the aforementioned materiality behind the sanctions decision, is overcome by Constructivism, as the institutional and political construction of the EU is based on key constructivist elements. The legal arguments and institutional substance regarding the decision to impose sanctions suggest the tenacity of EU towards ideational elements utilised in constructivist analyses.

### III. Methodology

The methodology of Congruence Analysis is used in the present thesis. This is a research method for the verification of a theory through empirical observations. For that reason, its use is best suited here since the aim of the research question is to provide a Constructivist interpretation to EU sanctions imposed on Russia. In particular, this method is based on drawing inferences between normative predictions deriving from the given theory and empirical observations. The approach taken is qualitative since it facilitates an assessment of the causal links between “theoretical implications and empirical indications” (Annamalai, 2010, p.2).

The process commences with the articulation of the research question and lay out of the theory to be employed together with the case study. Congruence Analysis uses case studies to provide empirical evidence for the explanatory significance or relative power of an approach (Blatter and Haverland, 2012, p.149). The theory of Constructivism seems able to provide an answer to the research question: just as an accurate Congruence Analysis emphasises the exploration of socially central cases, the case study of this thesis can be considered as such, as the EU has collectively decided to impose economic sanctions against a third country for the first time in its history (Blatter and Haverland, 2012, p.152). This collective action within the EU framework offers a novel opportunity for the theory of Constructivism to be employed to explain this form of foreign policy behaviour. This thesis will not employ a comparative analysis between Constructivism and other mainstream IR theories due to the fact that the research scope is limited. In order to deliver a solid analysis, research is carried out by engaging with the theory of Constructivism. The next step of the methodology is to establish a normative framework through which certain propositions (i.e. EU Identity and Shared Values) are derived. Thereafter it draws on certain empirical observations, such as basic EU Treaties and documents regarding its functions and especially its conduct of foreign policy (i.e. Sanctions), as well as its Identity and Shared Values, with an aim in establishing a nexus between them and the normative propositions. The aim of empirical observations is to indicate the manner through which a descriptive theory concentrates on the most important features of reality when relating features exposing the most meaningful

and useful for social actors aspects of causal processes (Blatter and Haverland, 2012, p.149).

The collection of empirical observations, whilst achieved through discourse, requires data generations defined by the normative propositions deriving from Constructivist theory. The final step of the research method is to ascertain the contradictions and/or confirmations of the normative propositions, thus establishing the causality for the verification of the theory via the case study.



## IV. Main Analysis

### 1. EU Identity

#### *1.1. Scope of Chapter*

This chapter isolates the concept of Collective Identity as a main element of Constructivism and attempts to establish a nexus with EU Collective Identity (EU Identity). It will endeavour to examine the concept of EU Identity in relation to EU foreign and sanctioning policy. The first subchapter will consist of a brief analysis of the definitions as preconditions for the existence of Collective Identity following the constructivist approach. A formulation of normative predictions resulting from the term Collective Identity will be attained. The next sub-chapter will deal with EU Identity. It will detect empirical evidence in an effort to link it with the aforementioned normative predictions drawn from the main component of Constructivism (Collective Identity). These will provide the basis for the next subchapter, which will contextualise the existence of EU Identity as understood through Constructivism, within the framework of EU foreign policy. Lastly, the final subchapter will introduce the concept of EU Identity in its sanctioning policy as well as contrast it with other IR theories.

#### *1.2. Collective Identity in the Constructivist Approach*

Constructivism can be considered as an IR approach which stresses that power is “constituted primarily by ideas and cultural contexts”, meaning norms, ideas, identities values and culture, instead of other IR theories which emphasise that power is based on “brute material forces” (Baldwin, 2016, p.143). This is highly important for this thesis, since these constructivist concepts will be utilised as the basis of the analysis. The constructivist approach also concentrates on the concepts of rules and norms in order to better comprehend their projected meanings, due to

their mutually essential essence of ideas, norms and the identities of actors (Carlsnaes et al., 2013, p.334).

In this case, when specifically examining the concept of identity, we see that it is entrenched in an actor's self-conceptions (Wendt, 1999, p.224). In Constructivism, the concept of Collective Identity can facilitate the relation with EU Identity. Collective Identity deals with the relation between "Self" and "Other", where the former identifies with the latter (Wendt, 1999, p.229). The concept possesses the causal ability to encourage actors to define the prosperity of "Other" as part of that of "Self" (Wendt, 1999, p.229). This also applies in our case, where different member states form part of EU. The process of identifying and being identified by others is regarded as crucial to constituting "Self", while distinguishing "Other" assists in bringing together "Self" and "Other" through the concept of collective identity (Greenhill, 2008, p.345). Wendt regards that process to be altruistic, since actors become so and determine their interests on the basis of collectivity to which they belong, hence they are able to surpass challenges concerning collective action (Wendt, 1999, p.229).

A major test for constructivists is whether they can explain how actors with dissimilar interests reach a compromise. This test can be answered by the fact that actors' identities are also a prerequisite for the existence of interests and the same applies vice-versa; there are two kinds of interests according to the constructivist theory; objective and subjective (Wendt, 1999, p.231). For an identity to be produced, it is necessary to meet objective interests (Wendt, 1999, p.231). Subjective interests concern principles that conduct actors' behaviour aiming at fulfilling the prerequisites of their identity; they are considered basic for the formulation of this behaviour (Wendt, 1999, p.232). In that sense, the concept of any collective interests requires actors to act in benefit of their set, which will enable them to set aside any collective action challenges (Wendt, 1999, p.337). Hence Constructivism adds to the ideational dimension of interests not perceived solely by their materiality: if and when the actors' culture is threatened, they will impulsively protect it (Wendt, 1999, p.337). When a collective identity is fostered, actors deem the security of partner-actors as their own concern (Zehfuss, 2002, p.57).

Consequently, actors will continue to behave rationally, bearing in mind however that it is the collective group's framework in which they determine utility and rational action (Wendt, 1999, p.337). Constructivism does not regard actors entirely based on their self-interest; rather they evaluate their actions bearing in mind some major concepts. The notion of identity also provides a framework in which actors can form, shape and alter their relations with other actors (Cronin, 1999, p.18). This means that actors adhering to the same identity share common interests and may face common challenges.

Collective identity within the political framework is the feeling of sharing with others a common pledge to the community's interest; this feeling represents equality between citizens, as they comprise the overall of a political community (Kaina et al., 2016, p.37). Furthermore, the concept of collective identity, as mentioned above, coincides with forms of citizenship, such as EU citizenship (Kaina et al., 2016, p.39). Additionally, besides the division between "Self" and "Other", the political sense leads to further social inferences for citizens (Kaina et al., 2016, p.37).

From the above-mentioned analysis/information we can spot certain key normative preconditions regarding the concept of Collective Identity. They consist in the relation between "Self" and "Other" and their objective and subjective interests. This will cause the actor having identified with the collective to act rationally based on the collective's interests. The second precondition is the political and social common ground of actors sharing a Collective Identity. Their culture again sets them to share interests and most importantly, a sense of belonging in the community, which necessitates the ability to compromise in view of the general interest.

### *1.3. EU Identity as Collective Identity*

Firstly, we can realise EU Identity through discourse. The term discourse has a dual meaning: It can mean the actual EU discourse in relation to the concept of EU Identity; it can also mean the academic discourse, which theorises the term of EU Identity. Nonetheless, the term discourse regards the ways the EU or its member-

states have acknowledged the term “European Identity”. Through this discourse, the prerequisites of the relation between “Self-Other” together with their collective interests and the socio-political sharing of actors having a Collective Identity can be said to be satisfied under the notion of EU Identity, at least *prima facie*.

As of 1973, EEC countries have avowed to acquaint with the notion of European Identity in their common foreign policy relations (De Waele and Kuipers, 2013, p.12). This demonstrates that the use of the term EU Identity corresponds with their perception of “Self” and “Other” as well as the conjoined interests in the domain of foreign policy. Furthermore, the EU has attempted to institutionalise its identity through various means. The Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) identifies, interprets and applies international law while developing and upholding EU own distinct Identity (Koutrakos, 2011, p.142). International and EU law are two harmonised legal models, since international law has laid the foundation for the EU to build its identity and adopt its values (Koutrakos, 2011, p.142-3). EU has also applied certain identity technologies in order to construct a European collective identity (Kaina and Karolweski, 2013, p.33). Such technologies consist of manipulation of symbols, foundational myth making, positive Self Images of EU and finally the transfer of its identity not only internally but also to third parties outside the EU (Kaina and Karolweski, 2013, pp.33-38).

The academic sense of the term discourse can also be spotted in constructivist literature concerning European Identity where two approaches have been employed. The first provides an analysis in respect of how a collective identity correlates with a national identity (member states) and the second the ways in which collective identity links with other identities (third states) and the circumstances where different structures of “Self” and “Other” are materialized (Kaina et al., 2016, p.51). One cannot overlook how the concept of European Identity has also been constructed in connection with identities of other states, such as Russia. In that respect, the empirical evidence correlates with the prerequisite of the “Self-Other”, yet it takes the argument a step further. In this case, “Self-Other” now constitutes “Self” (EU Identity) and “Other” is defined as a non-EU member state.

Identity is also vital in linking the “social-ideational structure of international politics to actor behavior”, since values, ideas and norms form behaviours by establishing their identity (Kaina et al., 2016, p.52). To that end, constructivists argue that since states are able to create collective identities, they may interact with other states as part of a general “Self” (EU) than as an “Other” (Kaina et al., 2016, p.52). This part is central to this thesis analysis. Apart from the link between the actors’ behaviour and the socio-political prerequisite, it links with the normative prediction of “Self-Other”, yet it utilizes the previous argument. The EU, being a “Self”, formulates its behaviour, by fulfilling its subjective interests based on the perception of “Other”. In this case, “Other” now does not represent one of the EU member states, but non-EU member states.

Constructivism treats identity construction in its collective form as self-created and established upon shared ideas, values and norms (Kaina et al., 2016, p.55). This coincides with the prediction that EU Identity was a product of social-political sharing satisfying EU objective interests. Additionally, constructivism also presumes that EU Identity is founded upon EU values, hence not associated with other identities (Kaina et al., 2016, p.55). This can be in accordance with the last observation of the perception of “Others”. It may also be the result of socio-political sharing since common values are a form of such a process. Finally, constructivism can also draw conclusions from the fact that EU identity, as a form of a collective identity, respects divergence (Kaina et al., 2016, p.55) under the famous slogan “United in Diversity”. This connects with the initial prediction of “Self-Other” and also the social-political sharing prediction.

The second category of empirical observations refers to European Integration. We can further conceptualise EU Identity through the integration process. However, it is necessary to state that the analysis will not strictly contemplate the legal connotation of the term “Integration”, but as EU efforts to coordinate-subordinate legal, political and social actions.

The modification of EU institutional structure was supported by the development of EEAS provided by Article 27.3 TEU and established by Decision

2010/427/EU, 26 July 2010; it is a functional autonomous body under the authority of the High Representative, a hybrid diplomatic service. The above reforms have amplified the institution's capacities of engagement at regional and international level (Chebakova, 2008, p.9). Moreover, the presence of the EU in the international scene is strengthened by the express attribution of legal personality to it (Article 47 TEU) and the competence for the conclusion of the international agreements (Articles 4. TFEU, 216 et s.). These developments indicate the socio-political sharing and satisfaction of the subjective interest.

Historically, the development of EU Identity concept went through certain phases throughout the integration process. A direct product of the latter, the Maastricht Treaty (1992) established EU citizenship, while the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) reiterated it and complemented its dimension by outlining the term objective, not to substitute the national citizenships of member states, but to be encompassed in territorial terms the collection of specific rights (Kaina et al., 2016, pp.42-43). The objective of the construction of the term EU citizenship was an attempt to improve the incompetence of the institutions when faced with economic crises (Kaina et al., 2016, p.44). This outlines the empirical observation related to the normative predictions of the institutional efforts in relation to socio-political sharing. Still it demonstrates how changes in many forms reinforced the collective interest, even in the manner of security and prosperity. This also shows the level of rationality behind EU perception of interest.

The context of how the EU was a result of a social constructive process can be illustrated through the concept of European Integration (Christiansen et al., 1999, p.529). Just as a unit's identity cannot merely be determined with regard to a set of shared rules, it also rests on the point of recognition of the desired status by other actors (De Waele and Kuipers, 2013, p.12). The question of recognition is also central when denoting the idea of collective identity, since it manifests the process in which actors function within the international system and embrace certain identities (Greenhill, 2008, p.344).

The impact of European Integration has changed over the years, with the institution's identity affecting its interests and behaviour respectively (Christiansen et al., 1999, p.529). The idea mirrors a reality not entirely dependent on material interests, yet it is constructed via ideational, social and material ontologies (Chebakova, 2008, p.5). As mentioned earlier, the fact that the protection of Collective Identity constitutes an interest by itself presupposing that interests are indeed not only material. As a result, ideational factors can include both normative and instrumental scopes by illustrating individual as well as collective intentionality (Ruggie, 1998, p.33). Hence, the construction of the "European Identity", which Checkel (1999) refers to as "identity building process", is emphasised by EU capacity to shape the sense of "being a part" within a specific area while sharing common characteristics (Bee, 2008, p.432). Indeed, according to this logic the normative prediction of the collective objective interest applies to the protection, projection and promotion of EU Identity. Besides the materiality of interests, EU Identity assists in conceptualising itself as an ideational collective interest.

Territorial borders set the geographical space of political rule and outline the parameters in which one is subject to specific responsibilities and to exclusive rights as a member of the political community (Kaina and Karolweski, 2013, p.33). The concept of community becomes important when EU citizens cultivate a shared sense of such a community based on shared values, principles and interests that unite them beyond territorially-defined membership (Kaina and Karolweski, 2013, p.33). This especially applies in the case of political sharing, by identifying with the collective. Based on the aforementioned analysis, EU Identity becomes more solidified through further political cooperation within the EU context (Fuchs and Schlencker, 2006, p.18). A fundamental reason for the EU to construct its own identity rests on the fact that it provides it with legitimacy, since any absence of such a collective feeling would be a challenge to such legitimacy (Fuchs and Schlencker, 2006, p.11). This means that the EU makes an effort to meet its objective interests. A collective identity is a required condition for democratic decision-making as EU realisation of sharing a common destiny and the desire of its member states to cooperate, entails collective solutions for collective problems to be achieved in a

collective manner at European level (Kaina and Karolweski, 2013, p.5). EU identity incorporates all the means and practices, both palpable and imperceptible, through which it establishes itself in the international system (De Waele and Kuipers, 2013, p.240). This is also an indication that by doing so, the subjective interests are satisfied. EU acts according to its interests, by formulating its behaviour and actions respectively.

#### *1.4. EU Identity and EU Foreign Policy*

It is crucial for the topic of this thesis to demonstrate the nexus between the concept of EU Identity and the conduct of its foreign policy. This will be conceptualized again through the connection of the normative predictions regarding EU Identity and the concept of Collective Identity. The connection will also be solidified through the empirical evidence showing the effects of the concept of EU Identity to EU Foreign Policy.

Once more, constructivist arguments emphasise that identity is shaped through the difference between “Self” and “Other”, which in foreign policy terms serves as an answer to the inquiry regarding the nexus between identity and divergence. EU Foreign Policy in practice constitutes its objectives as foreign in the first place (Kaina et al., 2016, p.56). Bearing this in mind, foreign policy can be described as a procedure which evaluates EU Identity via strengthening the formation of the inner and the outer (Kaina et al., 2016, p.56). This logic entails the construction of EU Identity to replicate and constitute EU foreign policy (Kaina et al., 2016, p.58). This shows that the objective interest of the EU can be also traced in its foreign policy. EU foreign policy depends upon identity demonstration, yet the conduct of this policy also produces and reproduces identities (Kaina et al., 2016, p.56). This verifies the normative prediction of identifying “Self” to the collective and “Other” as outside that collective. The formation of collective interests, also takes place through this procedure.



EU Identity is projected through foreign policy yet at the same time it can be argued that it is constructed through the conduct of this policy; EU foreign policy is the channel through which the EU projects and promotes its identity (Kaina et al., 2016, p.57). According to this argument, all the normative predictions seem to correspond since EU views its Identity as a projection of the “Self” and through the conduct of its foreign policy, as a result of socio-political sharing. Finally EU views the projection and promotion of its Identity as both a subjective and objective interest.

On the other hand, EU foreign policy can also be the arena in which EU Identity takes its form, leading to the understanding that its foreign policy achievements would render its identity viable (Kaina et al., 2016, p.57). In the case where EU identity is in doubt by the member states national identities, the conduct of more extensive foreign policy would raise hopes for a more refurbished form of EU identity (Kaina et al., 2016, p.57). Nevertheless, such actions facilitate the attempt of EU citizens to perceive the EU as an institution which they can identify with, and at the same time render it as a more important actor on the international scene (Kaina et al., 2016, p.57). The fact that EU conducts a more extensive foreign policy leads to further socio-political sharing. In this case, the normative prediction of “Self” attempts to be further solidified in the foreign policy domain.

Finally, EU can be conceived as an international actor whose actorness is based on its “Normative Power”, which presupposes the EU normative difference (Kaina et al., 2016, p.58). The central assertion of this approach means that it retains an exclusive Identity based on shared values, ideas and norms, which in turn are promoted and projected through its foreign policy (Kaina et al., 2016, p.58). The Normative Power Europe discourse renders this approach the most relevant regarding the construction of the concept of EU Identity, given that it is assigned to project and promote universal liberal values (Kaina et al., 2016, p.58). According to Diez “the Normative Power Europe discourse establishes a particular identity for the EU through turning third parties into ‘others’ and representing the EU as a positive force in world politics. The ‘normative power’ is a practice of discursive representation” (Diez, 2005, pp.613, 626). This approach considers that the EU was formed with regard to its inherent features, projected through the progress of

European Integration, and antithetic to other actors, since the institution construes what is natural for others through its foreign policy (Kaina et al., 2016, p.59). As a result, EU Identity, which is projected externally, is established with respect to its association with others (Kaina et al., 2016, p.59). The Normative Power Europe empirical observation aligns with all the prerequisites.

The normative difference of the EU is a part of culture in relation to its socio-political sharing. This approach locates the nexus between the normative prediction of “Self” and “Other”, where “Self” is established through the existence of an EU Identity and “Other” as outside EU states. The socio-political sharing is to be seen in relation to the institution’s culture as a positive example for others. The field of foreign policy is where EU employs its mechanisms to fulfill its objective interests of projecting and promoting its Identity in order to ensure its reproduction. It also defines its actions in respect to its subjective interests. The assertion that the EU has fundamental values and promotes and projects them, especially through its foreign policy domain, will be analyzed in the next chapter.

### *1.5. EU Identity and EU Sanctioning Policy*

The EU imposed economic sanctions on several occasions within the context of its foreign policy (European Council, Council of the European Union, 2017). Sanctioning is a common practice, which can take different forms, by virtue of the different types of sanctions and procedures through which they are adopted and reviewed. There are sanctions that the EU imposes following the international legal order (UN), mixed sanctions regimes where it not only adopts UN sanctions but reinforces them with additional measures and finally sanctions the EU imposes autonomously (European Council-Council of the European Union, 2017).

As far as EU Identity within the context of EU sanctioning policy is concerned, there are certain indications, which denote constructivist elements and satisfy the normative prerequisites of the concept of EU Identity. Initially, there is clear distinction between the “Self-Others” concept, where “Self” represents the EU and

the member states they comprise it and “Others” represent the target countries (Council of the European Union Publication, 2012, Para 2). This “Self-Other” relation can be apprehended through the agency relation (Carlsnaes et al., 2013, p.336) where member states as principals provide competence to the EU to act as an agent of the imposition or implementation of sanctions. For example, the EU acts as an agent when it implements UN Resolutions for sanctions, yet also when it decides to reinforce or autonomously impose them (Council of the European Union Publication, 2012, Para 3). Nevertheless, it was the first time that the EU decided collectively to impose economic sanctions against Russia in relation to its actions in Ukraine, hence within the European continent (Portela, 2016, p.40). Up until then, the EU would act but in parallel with some of its member states. An example is the Joint Plan of Action against Iran, whereby the EU acted together with France, Germany and Britain, as well as USA, Russia and China (Joint Plan of Action, 2013). (Even in these occasions the distinct Identity of the EU is obvious, by the fact that it acted as an international actor, which is evidence of the existence of its Identity. Furthermore, EU Identity, as an International Organisation Identity, served as a reinforcing mechanism for the effectiveness of the sanctions’ adoption and implementation, as well as furthering their coercive effect (Carlsnaes et al., 2013, p.336).

Finally, the existence of EU Identity within the context of EU sanctioning policy can also be mirrored by the vivid intercommunication between EU and its member states. The insistence on “actively and systematically” discussing on sanctions or reviewing them and to be “consistent with the Union’s overall strategy” signifies the presence and pursuit of collective interests (Council of the European Union Publication, 2012, Para 4,5,6)

In contrast to other IR theories regarding the use of economic sanctions, Constructivism provides the notion of EU Identity an interpretative feature of EU economic sanctions. EU Identity as demonstrated in this chapter is an indication of common objective interests shared by EU member states and represented through the EU. This is in contrast to the theory of Realism which suggests that state interests override any collective interests when they conflict each other (Waltz, 1979). Similarly to Realism, FPA stresses on domestic policy inspired sanctions.

Nevertheless, when sanctioning, the EU seeks to ensure alignment with its objectives and legal order (Hudson, 2013, pp.162, 173). Ultimately, the liberal approach suggests strict adherence to international norms resulting and justified through institutional interconnectedness (Doxey, 1987, p.4). This is prima facie in line with constructivism. However, as it has been illustrated, the EU acts as an autonomous order in the context of foreign policy, portraying its Identity rather than simply adhering to international norms.

## 2. EU Shared Values

### 2.1. *Scope of Chapter*

This chapter will delve into an analysis of the constructivist concept of Shared Ideas. It will attempt to establish a connection between EU Shared Values and EU foreign and sanctioning policy. The first sub-chapter will contain an analysis of the definitions as preconditions concerning the existence of Shared Ideas in the constructivist approach. The formulation of the normative predictions resulting from the concept of Shared Ideas is followed by the next subchapter, which will deal with the analogy that can be made for Shared Ideas under constructivism and EU Shared Values. The research will locate the empirical evidence attempting to connect them with the normative predictions drawn from the main element of Constructivism. In short, this will lay the foundation for the contextualisation of Shared Values as an essential constituent for the conduct of EU foreign and sanctioning policy.

### 2.2. *Shared Ideas in the Constructivist Approach*

Under the constructivist approach “the structures of human association are determined by Shared Ideas rather than material forces, and the identities along with interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature” (Wendt, 1999, p.1). In contrast to the materialist predisposition of dealing with ideas in causal terms, they can also have constitutive effects (Wendt, 1999, p.24). Moreover, interests can also be ideas, since their validity derives as culturally constituted ideas (Wendt, 1999, p.41). The constructivist claim, regarding the function of ideas and social structure in international affairs, concerns primarily these constitutive effects (Wendt, 1999, p.78). According to the theory of Constructivism, when Shared Ideas are deeply internalised, their significance becomes vital for their structure (Wendt, 1999, p.255). Undeniably, ideas and norms define the structure that constructs identities, interests, and foreign policy respectively (Chebakova, 2008, p.4). Consequently, this “cyclical process of construction” concerning structure and actors, is what Constructivism regards as a

connection of structure and agency (Chebakova, 2008, p.4). Constructivism regards the connotations of material forces and the intentionality of actors as “depending largely on the Shared Ideas in which they are embedded, and as such, culture is a condition of possibility for power and interest explanations” (Wendt, 1999, p.255).

From the above, we can formulate the normative prediction that the EU is founded on Shared Ideas expressed as Shared Values; yet these Shared Values indeed dictate its actions. In order for the normative prediction to be valid, in the aforesaid theoretical context some prerequisites need to be met: they concern the fact that Shared Ideas construct Identities, hence dictate and affect the actor’s behaviour and interests. According to Wendt (1999, p.93), Shared Ideas can be utilised as methods of attaining exogenous interests, thus emphasising the materiality thereof. Additionally, Shared Ideas constitute by themselves interests, hence they acquire an ideational character.

### *2.3. EU Shared Values as Shared Ideas*

Article 2 TEU states that “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the member states in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and the principle of equality between women and men prevail”. Article 3 TEU refers to the EU objectives by stating explicitly in paragraph 5 that “In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to strict observance and development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter”.

In addition, 21 TEU states that “The Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development

and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law". The normative prediction that the EU is constructed according to Shared Values is verified through official EU discourse.

According to the treaties' provisions, EU external action is at present based on the progress of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The external action of the Union consists in developing relations and building partnerships with third countries and international organisations (Article 21.1 subparagraph 2 TEU). "Guided" by the principles "which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement" (Article 21.1 subparagraph 1 TEU), i.e. democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, equality and solidarity, the principles of the UN Charter and international law, it aims at projecting itself as a paradigm of governance in IR. The above relationships take the form of agreements concluded between EU and third countries or international organisations or EU and the member states (mixed agreements). All relevant documents refer expressly to EU Shared Values by the concluding parties.

One of the main functions of Constructivism is to recognise and analyse the effect of shared ideas, in our case expressed as EU Shared Values, throughout the constructing process of identities and the explanation of an actor's behaviour (Christiansen et al., 1999). The most important aspect of these Shared Values within the context of the EU is that they constitute a fundamental feature of EU identity (Hermerén, 2008, p.380). This means that this identity was constructed by infusing these values, indicating that the two concepts are interconnected. The above can verify the prerequisite of identity construction through Shared Ideas.

Moreover, Shared Values can be argued to have been geared by the EU integration process, through which they were crystallised and gained independent meaning, regardless of the political purposes underpinning them. Addressing the concept of Shared Values as definitive for the EU and referring to them as the driving

force of the conduct of its policy portrays the significance they retain for the integration process. Consequently, norms and values have been highly important and continue to be considered as such (Hermerén, 2008, p.376). This enhances the argument that they served as ideational interests with further integration favouring them.

Shared Values had an impact in the process of EU integration (Herlin-Karnel, 2012, p.1227). The existence of values geared and offered justification for further integration and through this they were crystallised, became institutionally important and gained institutional functionality. The identification of Shared Values and their need for existence within the EU has been essential since its establishment (Herlin-Karnel, 2012, p.1227). If we define the integration process as an interest, Shared Values were means for serving that interest.

In addition, the codification and interpretation of Shared Values is contested to be for political purposes (Hermerén, 2008, p.375). According to this logic, gains of political and economic interests exist when the EU stresses the importance of these Shared Values; this assertion can be useful when trying to explain how EU member states resolve their differences by referring to them above all (Hermerén, 2008, p.375). This verifies the prerequisite of Shared Ideas to also serve interests, apart from constituting them.

Alternatively, if Shared Ideas are considered as interests, then the EU places a set of Shared Values as ideational interests above other forms of interests. In that context, the set of Shared Values, which constitute a fundamental interest of EU, provides it with a moral aspect of its Identity (Hermerén, 2008, p.377). Since Europeans acknowledge the fact that these Shared Values provide the basis for the construction of EU Identity, resulting from the integration process (Fuchs and Schlenker, 2006, pp.14-15), they also recognise that a set of Shared Values allows them to lay the foundation of a legitimised democratic EU (Kaina and Karolweski, 2013, p.9). The argument here rests on the fact that the Ideational character of certain Shared Ideas as interests may well surpass their trait as means for achieving non-ideational interests.



#### 2.4. *EU Shared Values and EU Foreign Policy*

At this point of the thesis, I will attempt to demonstrate the nexus between the concept of EU Shared Values and the conduct of its foreign policy. This will be conceptualized again through the connection of the normative prediction regarding the Shared Ideas and the concept of Shared Values. Additionally, the connection will also be solidified through the empirical evidence showing the effects of the concept of Shared Values to EU Foreign Policy.

The field of EU foreign policy consists in discourse outlining an international actor with two features that state-actors hardly possess (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.3). The first is the stability, which the EU pursues, due to its Shared Values, developed since its creation (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.3). The second feature is that its foreign relations are guided by “ethics of responsibility” with respect to others (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.3). The case of EU foreign policy shows repeated forms of values and principles (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.4). Here, if we consider the quest stability and the “ethics of responsibility” as a foreign policy interest based on Shared Values, this facilitates the recognition of Shared Values, as ideational interests, to be fundamental for the creation of EU.

It can be stated that values are not necessarily ascribed with a moral meaning, yet it is the interpretation given within a specific community and their implementation into principles, which is vital when dealing with the concept. (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.10). Hence principles, within the EU framework are “normative propositions” that set the standards for policy-making (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.10). It is the way that these values are given a specific meaning that originates from culture and the attention to these principles regarding policy making (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.10). In the domain of foreign policy the EU applies these Shared Values and Principles, which render the institution as a global actor and finally provide it with the ability to approach issues and deal with crises according to these values and principles (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.10).

EU foreign policy cannot be comprehended if we do not mention the export and transferral of values and principles from the domestic domain to foreign policy respectively. Hence, in the Normative Power Europe approach the link between EU Identity and role as an actor is crucial (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.213). EU Shared Values are not only protected internally, but also promoted and projected externally. Internally they are safeguarded by the procedure of Article 7 TEU in conjunction with the principle of sincere cooperation (Article 4.3. TEU). Externally, in its relations with the wider world, the EU upholds and promotes its values and interests and contributes to the protection of its citizens. This safeguarding and institutionalisation of Shared Values renders them to become interests. There has been a certain tendency to describe the EU as an international actor whose behaviour is based on Shared Values in the international sphere (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.5).

By adopting the Normative Power Europe approach in foreign policy, one may assert that this is a result of normative construction of an institution inclined to act respectively in the conduct of its foreign policy (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.6). The Normative Power Europe is obliged to implement and impose its own norms, by rendering them as requirements of its own efficiency and determination together with moral unity (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.157). Such responsibilities may entail the necessity for coercion, especially in times of crises; this necessity for coercion requires that the EU may adhere to new responsibilities (Lucarelli and Manners, 2007, p.157). As a result, we can maintain that coercion may occur internally and externally. Internally in the form of setting aside the national interest of member states in favour of collective EU interests. Externally, in the form of demonstrating this collective attitude with regard to promoting and protecting its Shared Values.

The course of history presented the EU the chance to address challenges internationally, while at the same time forced the institution to deal with these challenges in a more effective way, by creating a European foreign policy domain (Chebakova, 2008, p.10). In this manner, the creation of EU CFSP should not be considered as only regulative, but also constitutive, since its purpose is to institute

EU Identity and to work towards a collective EU action regarding foreign policy decision-making (Chebakova, 2008, p.10). Since EU member states have adopted a stance of expressing their foreign policy views according to Shared Values and common objectives, they proceed to act accordingly (Chebakova, 2008, p.10). The CFSP is an EU institution which reaffirms the constructivist approach that ideas are being institutionalised within the EU context and these ideas affect the actor's behaviour and define its interests (Chebakova, 2008, p.13).

However, a problematique lies in this assertion. The fact that there may be values that are interpreted differently by EU member states or hold superior significance, in order for the EU to resume being coherent and ensure its survival within the international system, a consensus has been implemented over a set of Shared Values to be protected (Hermerén, 2008, p.377). Hence, EU is not assessed solely by economic standards, but also by value-based ones and the ways it relates to them (Fuchs and Schlenker, 2006, p.5).

By examining the EU from a macro-perspective, its robust pledge on Shared Values renders it normatively different from other institutions (De Waele and Kuipers, 2013, p.10). When the power of EU norms, values and ideas is self-defined as natural, the positive image of the EU together with its insistence of differentiating from others, renders EU Identity as quintessential example (Kaina et al., 2016, p.59). This process provides it with the ability to construct itself according to its perception on what norms, ideas and values are important, and with legitimacy to its actions regarding other actors (Kaina et al., 2016, p.59). This process grants the EU the ability to employ its identity as an example of superiority when referring to the aforementioned others (Kaina et al., 2016, p.59). Ultimately, the construction of EU identity, based on norms, ideas and values which it treats as vital, as well as in the conduct of its foreign policy, bestow it a hegemonic character over the construction process of such an identity (Kaina et al., 2016, p.60).

Consequently, these common values are also exported for the sake of good governance. All the agreements concluded with third states, i.e. in the wider framework of ENP, include declarations under which the founding values of the EU

are shared with its partners. It is apparent that Shared Values such as democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as set out within the EU in the Charter of Fundamental Rights are declared “Shared” between the EU and its neighbours and capable of serving as the basis of enhancing their relations.

### 2.5. *EU Shared Values and EU Sanctions*

The relation behind EU Shared Values and EU Sanctions lies on the objectives of the latter. EU sanctioning policy is guided by the “EU Values, democracy, peace, rule of law, human rights, international law, preventing conflict and strengthening international security” (Factsheet, 2014). These values are inspired by the Treaties and have been enshrined in EU foreign policy. The link between the constructivist conception of EU Shared Values and EU Sanctions is comprehensible for the mere reason that EU sanctioning objectives reflect EU Shared Values.

These objectives apart from determining the reasons for sanctioning, also contribute in shaping EU Identity, especially within the context of its foreign policy. This is also obvious by the nature of EU sanctions. EU sanctions are not designed to be punitive, but intended to “bring change on the target country” (Factsheet, 2014). Sanctions are the means through which foreign policy objectives are expressed and thus contribute to the relation

EU Shared Values encapsulate political, social and economic gains, thus they ensure and reinforce the coherence and integration of EU and its member states by systemising and decoding them for political and ethical purposes (Hermerén, 2008, p.375). Following that logic, the sanctioning policy of the EU denotes that the protection of these values in foreign policy also means that they are interests themselves, hence they are to be protected. Furthermore, since they also constitute material interests, for that reason the imposition of sanctions in view of a breach of these values signifies the overall strategy on behalf of the EU.

When it comes to other IR theories similarly to the notion of EU Identity, EU Shared Values under the constructivist approach are prone to provide an explanation

for EU sanctioning policy. The latter's constructivist interpretation becomes even more straightforward through EU Shared Values. Contrary to Realism, objectives and interests of member states are aligned to a set of values shaped and gradually integrated during the course of EU's institutional development. As a result, the notion of materiality of interests has obtained a more relative than absolute value. To this extent, FPA's suggestion that the driving force behind the imposition of sanctions lies on domestic interests, cannot solely explain EU sanctioning policy. Finally, the liberal approach seems to lack in solidifying the power of institutional norms on the basis of a set of values.

### 3. EU Sanctions against Russia

#### 3.1. *Scope of Chapter*

The final chapter of the thesis will deal with the collective decision of the EU to impose economic sanctions against Russia. The analysis in this chapter will be based on the theoretical outcomes of the two previous chapters. In order to answer the research question, the constructivist concepts of Collective Identity and Shared Ideas had to be examined firstly and applied in the EU concepts of Identity and Shared Values. These two concepts were also examined and portrayed in relation to EU foreign policy, demonstrating that EU Identity and Shared Values are the driving forces behind the conduct of the institution's foreign policy. This led to the conclusion, that the EU conducts its foreign policy primarily in respect to these ideational concepts.

During the course of this chapter, these concepts will be linked to the collective decision of the EU to impose sanctions against Russia. The aim is to establish a constructivism interpretation, based on the prediction that EU Shared Values and Identity shape the momentum of its foreign policy. It will do so by firstly providing an analysis of the content of key documents from EU discourse containing the measures adopted. The analysis of their content will result in the formulation of thematic categories, summarising the official documents' scope of action. These will then be used as a basis for linking the normative predictions and prerequisites of the first two chapters, with the decision to impose sanctions.

#### 3.2. *Analysis of sanctions in EU official discourse*

At this point, the thesis will analyse the content of the following key EU documents regarding the imposition of economic sanctions against Russia: The Factsheet of EU's restrictive measures (2014), the EU Council's first Decision (145/CFSP) of 17 March 2014 and Regulation (No. 833) of 31 July 2014 regarding the "restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty

and independence of Ukraine”, the Council’s Regulation (No 692) and Decision of 23 June 2014 (No. 386/CFSP) concerning “restrictions on the import into the Union of goods originating in Crimea or Sevastopol, in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol “and the Council’s Decision (No.512/CFSP) of 31 July 2014 concerning “restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine”.

The documents will be analysed in such a way so as to create thematic categories as to the content found in each of them. These thematic categories will then be used in order to facilitate the nexus of the sanctions with EU Identity and Shared Values respectively. The thematic categories are divided in terms of the scope of the sanctions imposed and not the technicalities or particulars of the legal provisions, therefore the main focus is on the documents’ recitals rather than the main provisions (since the recitals reveal the aims, framework and spirit of the Decisions/Regulations etc., regardless of the fact that they are not legally binding).

These documents were selected for the reason that they comprise the official EU decisions for the imposition of economic sanctions. Since the research question is on a decision taken within the framework of the EU, it is necessary to assess the documents on an EU level and whether they mirror a constructivist field of analysis. For that reason, the selected documents were chosen since they represent directly EU collective decision to impose sanctions.

A factsheet regarding sanctions was also included in the selected discourse, for the reason that it briefs the logic behind EU imposition of sanctions. The reason that these documents were selected is twofold. Firstly, they serve as the primary sources for the imposition of sanctions and that they have their basis on EU decision making. This constitutes them as the most central documents, for the reason that they represent the official decisions of the EU regarding the sanctions. Secondly, in connection to that, their analysis will facilitate the research question, by means of exploring the reasons given for the imposition of sanctions by the EU itself. This analysis also accommodates the research question by providing a ground for assessing the details regarding the collective nature of the decision as well as the

decision making process preceding it. Consequently, this will provide the necessary ground for exploring the ideational-constructivist elements affecting the nature of the decision. The constructivist interpretation that the research question is seeking to establish will be most suitably approached by locating the constructivist elements deriving directly or indirectly from these official documents.

### 3.2.1. First Thematic Category: Purpose, Nature and Reason of Sanctions

The thematic category below has collected every element among the selected documents which pertains to the purpose, reasons and nature of the sanctions. Common to all documents selected regarding sanctions is the promotion and protection of EU objectives, phrased directly or indirectly (Factsheet, 2014, para 1). In particular, EU aims to promote “peace, democracy and respect for the rule of law, human rights and international law” (Factsheet, 2014, para 1). The purpose is not to use sanctions as such, but to attain a “change of policy or activity” and especially “condemn the unprovoked violation of the Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation” as well as preserve its “independence” (Factsheet para 1, 145 recital 1 and 4, 832 recital 2, 512 recital 1 and 2, 386 recital 1 and 2). To that extent, the measures taken are against to the kind of “undermining” or “threatening” of anything which would be against the “Ukrainian Constitution, and persons, entities or bodies associated with them” (145 recital 4, Factsheet para 2). During the course of sanctions, potential adverse effects which could be harmful towards citizens or other “legitimate activities” of economic or other nature, such as food staff and medicine, are planned to be avoided , in view of reaching a “peaceful settlement” (692 recital 3, 833 recital 2, Factsheet para 2 and 11, 145 Article 1(5) and (6), Article 2(3)).

The sanctions are not against citizens of EU member states in terms of their entry to their countries and the latter are called to protect them by not refusing them entry and to amend their national legislation accordingly (Factsheet para 13, 145 Article 1(2)). In the context of EU citizens protection, the sanctions are aimed at avoiding the further undermining of the situation in Ukraine, which would lead to



consequences felt by the EU, Ukraine, yet also Russia (512 recital 1). Other parts of the sanctions documents highlight Russia's failure to respond appropriately, as well as to state their refusal to recognise Russia's movements or decisions (i.e. illegality of referendum and non-recognition of annexation, 145 recital (1), 833 recital 2, 692 recitals 1 and 2, 386 recital 3). The aforementioned constitute EU motivation to impose these sanctions, as well as the justifications to do so. Last but not least, another characteristic that pertains to the nature of the sanctions is that they avail for legal remedies, among them judicial review (Factsheet para 17, 833 Article 11 (3), 692 Article 6(3), 512 Article 7(3)).

### 3.2.2. Second Thematic Category: Sanctions and the International Legal Order

This thematic category sets out the approaches or responses to the international legal order in the context of adopting sanctions. While sanctioning, the EU has considered the international legal order. It does so by acknowledging the decisions of international institutions, particularly the UN, as well as showing to align itself with those (386 recital 4, 692 recital 2). The sanction policy portrays general respect for the international legal order, even by means of derogating from sanctions in "cases where a Member State is bound by an obligation of international law" (145 Article 1(3), Factsheet para 3 and 16).

### 3.2.3. Third Thematic Category: Sanctions and Actors; Decision Making and Strategy

This thematic category refers to the sanctions and the role played by the EU actors in imposing them. Among the role of the actors, the decision making and the strategies followed are of relevance to this category. The word "actors" simply denotes the roles undertaken by EU agents in order to reach a collective decision (agents as the European Council, European Commission, CFSP, Council of Ministers, member states).

The means the way EU used in attaining its objectives in relation to the Ukrainian situation, by negotiations, political dialogues, complementary efforts such as multilateral mechanisms and binding (to the EU) measures (145 recital 3, Factsheet para 1). Cooperation between the actors, namely the EU institutions and member states, was a throughout process (145 recital 3, 682 recital 1, 512 recital 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7). The initiation of binding decisions for the EU entailed the ex-ante communication of the institutions, as well as decision making procedures envisaged for in the Treaties (such as Council unanimity, 145, 512, 386 they have as legal basis article 29 TEU). This is pursuant to the call for ensuring uniformity in the application of the measures across the member states (833 recital 6, 692 recital 4). According to the general principles followed when the EU imposes sanctions, the latter may decide to follow the sanctions provided for by the UN, apply stricter sanctions or even autonomously decide to apply its own (Factsheet para 3).

#### 3.2.4. Conclusions of Thematic Analysis

The first observation to be made regarding the first thematic category is that the EU is very cautious in establishing and justifying its reasons and grounds for imposing sanctions. These are inspired by the general scheme of the Treaties. Pursuant to this observation notable is the fact that the sanctions the EU imposes are not punitive by nature. The second observation under the first category is that the EU is protective of its citizens but also of adverse and non-legitimate consequences against third party citizens and legitimate activities. In that connection, the EU does not omit to provide for legal remedies; especially in adherence to the legal requirement of judicial review. The third observation relates to the second category. The EU acknowledges and abides by the international legal order, as well as acting as an autonomous legal actor itself. The final observation under the third category is that decision making entails the close cooperation of the institutions, which signifies a process by which compromise and alignment of opinions is achieved. Under this light, uniformity is seen as necessary for the achievement of the sanctions' objectives.

### 3.3. *Connecting Normative Prerequisites and Sanctions; Building on the Thematic Analysis*

Drawing on the thematic categories of the analysis and its conclusions, this subchapter will provide an explanation of the sanctions imposed on Russia building on EU Identity and Shared Values as established in the first and second chapters. The combination of the normative prerequisites and the conclusions of the analysis, allow for a constructivist interpretation to provide a more comprehensive explanation against other IR theories which rely on the notion of materiality. The result will be reaching the normative predictions that indeed, EU identity and Shared Values guide foreign policy, and specifically the decision to impose sanctions against Russia.

#### 3.3.1. EU Identity and EU Sanctions against Russia

Firstly, as regards the purpose, reasons and nature of the sanctions they all satisfy the prerequisite of the “Self & Other” relationship. It was shown that EU uses language that clearly distinguishes between citizens of its member states and those of third countries. Thus, the distinction between “Self & Other” does not apply as a separation between member states, for the reason that EU Identity formulates a definition of citizens encompassing only those belonging to its member states. Hence, having defined “Self” as EU member states, one can observe the clear distinction between EU territory and the “Outer Other”, being a non-EU state. Ukraine constitutes a third state, which however enters under the wing of EU protection and partnership being part of the broader framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP).

The EU in this case imposed sanctions by defending the territorial integrity of its neighbour along with its own and condemned any action that undermined them. In this case the hostile “Outside Other” is Russia. Eventually, the prerequisite can be mirrored by the way EU responded with a collective voice used in the official

documents, where it would “implement, decide, promote and act” as a single actor. The decision also mirrors that EU Identity was perceived to be at stake and the EU acted according to the prerequisites of objective and subjective interests of its Identity. This means that the latter’s reproduction was in jeopardy, realised through the threat imposed on Ukraine. Evidently, the objective interests of a collective partnership according to EU values and conditions with Ukraine put subjective interests of member states in a secondary position. Lastly, socio-political sharing internally and in relation to Ukraine is, if not a resulting state, a desired one which amongst others motivated EU support to Ukraine.

Secondly, the relationship of EU and the international legal order as derived through the analysis satisfies the abovementioned prerequisites as well. By acknowledging and accepting international law, EU empowers its Identity by aligning itself with legitimised establishments of legal and political recognition. In that way it also transfers its objective interests within an international framework, whereby they obtain a higher affirmation. This also achieves better reproduction of the EU picture as an actor in foreign policy. Lastly, whereas this does not necessarily constitute part of a process of socio-political sharing, it nevertheless represents a state of international exchange of norms.

Thirdly, the role of the actors, decision making and strategy regarding sanctions, corresponds to the prerequisites of EU Identity. The binding measures taken for the sanctions were adopted in a context of collective action, unanimity and qualified majority voting. That fact strengthened the view of the EU acting as a single actor in foreign policy, as well as putting forward its objective interests. Moreover, the representation of the EU through its institutions in coordination with the member states demonstrated coherence and consistency towards a common stance. As for socio-political sharing, it is evident enough, through the process of decision making, that it has developed enough to allow for agreement and alignment of strategic options and decisions between member states and institutions.

### 3.3.2. EU Shared Values and EU Sanctions against Russia

The impact of EU shared values on the decision to impose sanctions is exhibited through the analysis of the documents provided on the previous subchapter. Firstly, the purpose, reasons and nature of the sanctions imposed confirm the prerequisites for the existence and driving force of EU Shared Values. The values can be found articulated on most of the documents, either directly stating the values protected, or indirectly through the framing of undesirable threats to EU Values through the threat posed against Ukraine. The substantiation of external action on the basis of value-motivated action legitimises the action itself, and alongside conferring characteristic traits to EU as a foreign policy actor. This legitimisation which rests on reasons of moral underpinnings, allows the EU to build, justify and substantiate its identity accordingly. It also has as a result the construction of interests, ascending from the objectives portrayed through the values. In particular, the defence of Ukraine pertains to values, as well as materialist interests underpinning EU “investment” in its foreign policy, through the ENP and other forms of third state agreements and partnerships. Along with the material interests, EU Values are considered interests themselves under threat by Russia’s involvement in Ukraine.

The relation of EU sanctions and the international legal order resulting from the above analysis fulfils once more the prerequisites of Shared Values. In this case the EU was constructed on values that are recognised and applied by the international legal order. As highlighted earlier, the exhibition of EU Shared Values to the international legal order, allowed the EU to build its Identity based on these. Not only is the EU submitted to the international legal order especially in relation to universal values, but also the protection of these values remains fundamental for the institution’s existence. To that extent, EU Values’ protection is a fundamental interest itself. Finally, as in the case of its Identity, the EU has invested in promoting these values as a core characteristic of its existence. The EU has invested materially in exporting these values not only internally, but to non-member states through the ENP and other forms of partnerships and agreements. For that reason, it defines the conduct of its foreign policy by assigning it with further legitimacy.

Finally, the role of the actors, decision making and strategy regarding sanctions, corresponds to the prerequisites of EU Values. Internally, these actors incarnate the values throughout the initiatives in the framework of cooperation. In that connection, the actors are the agents of EU Shared Values and through them they represent what is EU Identity. EU as an actor constitutes the “vessel” of these values in the context of foreign policy. For that reason they function as its ideational interests, while at the same time they guide EU action towards the pursuit of its material interests. They are also the main constitutive components of its identity, hence they hold a major role in assigning the EU the role of actorness. All these are evident through the thematic analysis of this category, whereby the actors employed strategies to realise the objectives, whereas the decision-making processes revealed consent on the part of the principals (member states).

#### *3.4. Preliminary Conclusions: Rebutting other IR Theories*

Overall, it has become evident that the decision of the EU to impose economic sanctions against Russia was a decision driven by its Identity and Shared Values. The latter's driving force resulted as a natural sequence of the structural and institutional development of the EU. The documents clearly illustrate adherence to EU Identity, Shared Values and yielding of subjective interests to common, objective ones. This is also what distinguishes constructivism from IR theories. At this point, this Thesis will strengthen even more the argument on the constructivist interpretation of the sanctions on Russia, by demonstrating the lack of other IR theories to comprehensively explain the result reached.

Before moving forward to disproving the interpretative power of other IR theories, a brief description of the role of economic sanctions in the context of foreign policy in general ([the role of economic sanctions in the EU was discussed in the first two chapters](#)) will take place. Economic coercion, in the form of economic sanctions, aims at changing the distribution of benefits by inflicting costs (Drezner, 1999, p.4). Sanctions are usually employed when there is a possibility of conflict (Drezner, 1999, p.4). The possibility of a future conflict renders the sender of

economic sanctions to be prone to coercive tactics (Drezner, 1999, p.4). Economic sanctions seem to be costly for both the sender as well as the target state, yet it is the target state that is concerned with the sanctions' consequences not in the near, but distant future (Drezner, 1999, p.4). In short, the imposition of sanctions has multiple meanings in foreign policy. It expresses the sender's sentiment of disapproving the target's actions; it also expresses the inclination of the sender to its allies that discourse is followed by action and finally serves domestic interests (Hufbauer et al., 2009, p.7). To further extend the argument, Baldwin (1985, p.372) regards sanctions as a foreign policy tool, which can have a signalling character, meaning that even though sanctions could be a costly choice, for that reason they may be interpreted as a valid one. What remains to be clarified, is under which process and motivation the imposition of sanctions is explained.

Amongst all approaches concerning the use of sanctions, the liberal approach outlines sanctions as the price the target has to pay for failing to respect its obligations and the criteria of the international community (Doxey, 1987, p.4). Liberals view that in case of autonomous imposition of economic sanctions, the employment is legitimised only if it serves the interest of the international society (Doxey, 1987, p.4). Liberalism is based on normative assumptions that states act in a coercive manner which is justified through interconnectedness. Yet, these normative assumptions need to progress into empirical observations. Whereas the liberal approach is structurally similar to the constructivist one, it lacks in justifying the existence of collective action and consensus on the basis of Identity and Shared Ideas. Indeed, the institutional nature of the EU allows for the creation of and adherence to international norms. However, EU being an autonomous international legal order and actor, it may allow itself to deviate from the predetermined legitimised foreign policy actions. On the contrary, the EU determines its approach on the basis of its internal body of values, which it then aligns to the international community. This can be explained by constructivism, on the basis of Identity and Shared Ideas. It can also explain the decision to impose sanctions collectively, which the liberal approach cannot; the notion of collectivity under constructivism pertains to notions of deeper driving forces, rather than simple institutional superiority.

Under the prism of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), the use of economic sanctions, as means of coercion, is highly dependent on states' domestic policies (Hudson, 2013, pp.162, 173). While the approach assess the concept of culture in the conduct of foreign policy, whereas other positivist theories do not, FPA is primarily concerned on the sanctions' effectiveness in the domestic domain of the sender as well as the target states. However, the FPA approach cannot explain the member states' consensus on the imposition of sanctions against Russia, since such a decision did not favour or even concern the domestic policies of all member states. One example is Portugal which due to its very small geographical proximity to Russia is not directly concerned with sanctions' consequences on Russia; another is Greece which has closer ties with Russia and economic interests vested in their relationship. Therefore, constructivism is able to explain the submission of subjective member states' interests, to a broader objective one which concerns the EU as a whole.

Sanctions under the prism of Realism may be in relation with Waltz's assumption that the international system is anarchic, composed by states which are in pursuit of their national interest (Waltz, 1979). Hence, there is an absence of a central authority which should control and decide whether to impose sanctions. For that reason, states are considered to be free to employ economic coercive instruments if they regard that their national interest is at stake. However, not all states use economic sanctions in their foreign policy. It is usually powerful states that have power and material interests internationally that will employ this coercive tool of foreign policy (Askari, 2003, p.4). Finally, Realists, as rational actors, also view the use of sanctions taking into consideration their effectiveness (Drezner, 1999). However, the theory's inefficacy rests on the fact that economic sanctions are examined based on their effectiveness and solely in relation to national interest and power. Therefore, for similar reasons as in FPA, realism cannot explain the collective decision to impose economic sanctions against Russia. Firstly, economic sanctions were not in the material interest of all the member states. Secondly, there is a central authority controlling and deciding on sanctions, emanating from the institutional structure of the EU. Lastly, there is more to be said on the reasons and



motivation for the imposition of sanctions on the basis of EU Identity and Shared Values, rather than their strict material effectiveness.

Overall, it is apparent that other IR theories lack in providing a holistic interpretation of the sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia. They either lack in explaining the deeper motives, the collective nature of the decision, or in explaining the non-strictly materialist approach of the EU. Constructivism on the contrary, provides a complete case of the reasons behind the sanctions. It traces the reasons on institutional characteristics of the EU, which can also explain the decision making leading to sanctions. Furthermore, when attempting to explain EU actions in foreign policy, we can realise the self-conception it has concerning the concept of power. The EU mirrors the constructivism's approach on power where it is produced through the social relations. which form the abilities of actors to define their environment and fate (Baldwin, 2016, p.149). In this case, EU pushed for common action, through internal consensus, to convince another actor, namely Russia, to change its stance and actions (Baldwin, 2016, p.149).

In the case of the collective EU decision to impose sanctions we can locate identification with the constructivist approach, specifically on sanctions. The nature of greatly institutionalised settings, such as the EU, demonstrated that states overcame their problems regarding collective imposing of sanctions, since they had the ability to negotiate within the EU arena to solve such problems (Carlsnaes et al., 2013, p.336).

## V. Conclusion

This thesis has provided a constructivist interpretation to the research question of “How can Constructivism explain the collective decision taken by the European Union to impose economic sanctions towards the Russian Federation after the latter’s involvement in Ukraine with the annexation of Crimea?”

This thesis firstly provided a literature review concerning the subject matter of the research question; EU economic sanctions imposed against Russia. The literature review consisted of interpretations offered by other IR theories; the research method used by this thesis was that of congruence analysis. This was utilized by making normative predictions regarding the concepts of EU Identity and Shared Values under the constructivist approach and were realised in the EU context through empirical observations. The normative prediction of the first two chapters were that EU Identity exists and that the EU was founded upon Shared Values with both guiding its foreign and sanctioning policy.

The argument of this thesis for the constructivist interpretation of EU sanctions against Russia lies on the notions of EU Identity and Shared Values. The analysis of the purpose of the sanctions, their relation with the international legal order and the decision making leading to their adoption, resulted in an interpretation that can be satisfactory under the constructivist approach. What distinguished this approach from other approaches in IR was the multifaceted reasons leading to the adoption of sanctions. The main argument for constructivism under this thesis was the insistence of the EU, as well as its collective action, towards the protection of what was conceived as a threat to EU Values and Identity.

Based on the thesis’ main analysis, we can observe how the concepts of EU Identity and Shared Values were the driving forces behind the member states’ acceptance of political and economic potential costs preceding their decision to collectively impose economic sanctions against Russia. This demonstrates the constructivist assertion that agreement and concession in the field of EU foreign policy was a result of the influence which the actors’ identity holds and the EU’s normative convergence.

The conceiving of this threat in such a way was argued to have been a result of continuous norm-building, identity and value shaping that has taken place throughout the development of the EU. European integration resulted in the creation of a special international order, which endorsed and encapsulated notions that adopted priority over materialistic conceptions of foreign policy. This was a result cultivated throughout the years, but which also took this specific expression under the circumstances of the dispute in Ukraine.

The decision to impose economic sanctions against Russia was analysed through the study of thematic categories which assessed the central documents of the EU official discourse regarding the imposition of economic sanctions. This process was decisive in solidifying this thesis' argument, that being the expansion of EU's normative power. Furthermore, constructivism offers a holistic and satisfying explanation of the sanctions decision. As demonstrated in the last chapter, the institutionalised character of EU foreign policy renders it a constructivist paradigm for examination. This can also entail the inability of other IR theories to delve into the deeper motives of the EU, taking into account its particular institutional structure, as well as their lacking in considering the collective nature of the sanctions decision. The official EU documents, regarding the imposition of sanctions against Russia, suited as an area where the constructivist approach proved to be of high interpretative value, offered an alternative explanation in comparison to other mainstream IR theories.

The constructivist approach served as a useful approach to explain EU's imposition of economic sanctions against Russia as part of its foreign policy. Furthermore, this thesis has demonstrated that there is room for further research using the constructivist approach in other fields of EU foreign policy. Ultimately, the argument of this thesis has concluded that the special character of the EU renders it to fit the constructivist assertions regarding the functions of the international system.

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